

Part two on “urban interventions” begins with Nancy P. Lin’s stimulating chapter, which explores the early practice of the Big Tail Elephant group in 1990s’ Guangzhou. Convincingly demonstrating how the group’s urban-centric performances were distinct from Chinese performance art of the period, Lin articulates how the group’s “urban insertions” represented “an entirely new approach to site-based engagements with the urban environment” (p. 194). In chapter seven, Chris Berry explores the work of Cao Fei, examining her significant and sustained response to contemporary Chinese urbanization through several of her most critically acclaimed works – *RMB City*, *Whose Utopia* and *Haze and Fog*. Berry demonstrates how the artist’s “magical metropolises” constitute an aesthetic as well as ethical response to China’s rapid urbanization, one which might suggest the possibility for alternative rather than oppositional spaces of criticality. Elizabeth Parke’s chapter is another of the volume’s highlights, exploring urban migrant presence through the numerological graffiti of Beijing streets – the illicit and hastily drawn phone numbers and scrawled advertisements used to obtain fake certificates (*banzheng*). Parke considers their contested position as an act of defacement, a form of public calligraphy and one of the capital’s most conspicuous “public secrets.” Providing an important footnote to previous chapters by calling for “an urbanism from below rather than that of the aerial” (p. 262), she reveals the role of *banzheng* as evidence of contested “rights to the city” (p. 263).

Of the volume’s ten chapters, five have previously been published in a special issue of *China Information* and although the commissioned chapters do compensate for this, the editors acknowledge that “more detailed research on the specificity of visual arts in different cities in Mainland China beyond Beijing and Shanghai is needed” (p. 27). While many of the contributions focus on established figures, a discussion of the work of a younger and more diverse range of artists and film-makers could have counterbalanced the presence of works which have been discussed extensively in previous scholarship. Similarly, the editors’ statement that “ethnographic methods have not gained prominent recognition in visual art studies” (p. 22) ignores recent contributions by Sasha Su-Ling Welland and Winnie Wong. That being said, the strength of this volume lies in its ability to address the speed, scope and scale of Chinese urbanism from a range of interdisciplinary perspectives, providing detailed and engaging case studies that will be of interest to students of art history and urban studies, as well as those interested in learning more about ongoing artistic responses to China’s hyper-urbanization process.

ROS HOLMES

ros.holmes@manchester.ac.uk

Mapping the New African Diaspora in China: Race and the Cultural Politics of Belonging

SHANSHAN LAN

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In recent years, African migration to China has become a “hot” research topic. In *Mapping the New African Diaspora in China*, Shanshan Lan goes beyond the dominant migration perspective by turning her ethnographic lens to the contestation and co-production of racial knowledge in southern China. By deploying the term “racial

learning,” which she defines as “the development and accumulation of knowledge about racial differences and racial hierarchies through daily life experiences in various transnational, local, institutional, and communities settings” (p. 10), Lan intends to go beyond mainstream Western racial theory and address “the racial triangulation between China, Africa and the West” (p. 5). However, she expands this idea in subsequent chapters in an implicit way. What Lan mainly discusses throughout the book are multiple dimensions of what she terms the “China–Africa encounter,” through which she presents a complex and fluid landscape of the mutual stereotyping and co-dependence of the Chinese and the African migrants (mainly Anglophone migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa) whose livelihood revolves around international trade in Guangzhou. By incorporating two seemingly contradictory practices, racial othering and the making of social intimacy, that are simultaneously working in the construction of racial knowledge at the grassroots level, this book successfully complicates the issues of race and inter-racial interactions in China. However, apart from chapter six, which examines African–Chinese romance and marriage as a by-product of international trade, this book’s focus on race is economic-political, and is mainly within the public sphere. Aspects of sexuality and intimacy, which may add interesting layers to the negotiation of racial knowledge and social affinity, are not included explicitly.

The book consists of an introduction, a short conclusion and seven main chapters. The introductory chapter lays out a general background of Africa–China relations followed by a discussion of key scholarly debates on race and racism in China and elsewhere. The first and second main chapters give an overview of the political economy of the African diaspora in China and the key characteristics of China–Africa encounters, followed by a discussion of the construction of racial knowledge as shown on the Chinese internet. Chapter three discusses the business and daily interactions between African migrants and Chinese migrants from other regions of China at the grassroots level, along with the issues of trust and misunderstanding due to language and cultural barriers. Chapters four and five illustrate the inevitable construction of “illegality” through multi-scalar regulations enforced by the Guangzhou police to control African migration. This “illegality,” in turn, provides a strategic means to “circumscribed mobility,” in which Africans’ invisibility from the state becomes an advantage. Chapter six explores how the practice of trans-locality of African–Chinese families produces a cosmopolitan imagination for the couples and their inter-racial children. Nevertheless, they are contained by limited business opportunities and legal issues faced by the African population. While business and romance offer crucial opportunities for creating inter-racial affinity, chapter seven addresses religious practices among the African migrants and Chinese Christian groups in the Yide Catholic Church and underground churches in Guangzhou, and the evangelism of the Chinese population by African believers. It questions the extent to which racial, social and linguistic boundaries may be transcended in this particular religious encounter.

Lan’s method of inquiry is primarily ethnographic. The research is mainly based on interviews and participant observation in her frequent fieldwork visits to Guangzhou from Hong Kong, where Lan worked, as well as field trips to Yiwu – another Chinese city with a high concentration of Africans – and Lagos in Nigeria between the years of 2012 and 2014. Apart from that, Lan explores policy and legal regulations concerning foreign migration to China, as well as media sources on the representations on Africans in China.

Lan’s ethnographically rich work touches on several interesting issues. She is right in pointing out that China’s racial conception is associated with historical and economic particularities (such as the discourse on *suzhi*). I believe such a claim can be equally applied to the construction of racial ideas from the African counterparts in

this “China–Africa encounter.” A triangular perspective as Lan proposes has the potential to contribute to a “decolonization” of the conceptions of “black race” and “yellow race,” which are primarily produced in a binary confrontation with the “superior white race.” Furthermore, Lan’s book invites more comparative works on the experience of being “black” (*heiren*) and being “white” (*bairen*) in contemporary China. One minor issue is that the wide range of topics about African migrants’ transnational experiences that are covered by the seven main chapters comes at the cost of the depth of the book’s overall theoretical discussion.

Nevertheless, Lan’s book provides a compelling ethnography of the life-world of a number of Africans in southern China, which is an invaluable addition to the expanding scholarship of China–Africa studies and studies of race and inter-racial relationships in contemporary China. It is suitable for a wide range of undergraduate and graduate courses on race and identity politics in China, migration and law, international marriage and China–Africa relations among others. It is also a stimulating read for anyone interested in Africans’ presence in China.

YU QIU
qiuyu06@gmail.com

The Energy Security Paradox: Rethinking Energy (In)security in the United States and China

JONNA NYMAN

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What do different understandings of energy security do? How do they influence economic, social and environmental agendas of different states? Jonna Nyman answers these questions by problematizing the very notion of “security” in energy politics and conceptualizing it in a way that allows her to examine how and with what effect different state and non-state actors frame energy as a security matter.

Two key theoretical propositions anchor Nyman’s analysis. First, security is a practice, “something that people do” (p. 24). Second, security has neither an inherent meaning nor an intrinsic value but is never neutral. As a result, Nyman approaches security as “a powerful tool for change” (p. 32) and distinguishes “negative” and “positive” energy security. She applies this theoretical framework to detailed case studies of the energy security practices of the two largest energy producers and consumers and the largest carbon dioxide emitters – the United States and China. Examining the actions and habits that “common sense” energy security produces in the US and China, Nyman identifies a security paradox: in both countries “state energy security practices result in less security for states, human beings, and the environment” (p. 7).

In chapter three and chapter five, Nyman offers a brief overview of the development of energy policy-making and planning in China and the US, and discusses key dimensions of energy security in both countries since 2004, including legislation and regulation, production and consumption, the policy-making process, and intersections between energy security and foreign policy. Further, the attention shifts to energy discourses that create and sustain the dominant readings of energy as a security issue. Nyman’s analysis demonstrates that “common sense” understandings of energy security in the US and China reproduce “negative” security practices. Both the US and China focus on avoiding sudden changes in the availability of