seeking are also part of the picture (see my article "The lure of car culture: Gender, class and nation in 21st century car culture in China," *Women, Gender & Research* 1, 2015, pp. 96–110). In general, consideration of gender differences in the daily use of cars is missing in Zhang's book, which could have brought in the more complex concept of new inequalities within a class. For example, in 2013 Chinese women drivers only made up 22 per cent of all drivers in China. How does this affect daily practices and preferences among this interview sample?

Last but not least, it has to be appreciated that Zhang provides an empirical study of the coming of the car era in the southern province of Guangdong. This account challenges the big narrative of the early reform period of the 1980s and 1990s as wild and free. She demonstrates how the arrival of cars – including from the outset smuggled cars in Guangdong – was connected to various institutions and a certain informal legitimacy. Zhang's book invites further comparative studies of significant metropolises such as Shanghai and Beijing which may have taken slightly different paths, not least with the development of the metro system and smart-bike sharing in recent years.

Driving toward Modernity provides a nuanced inroad into a significant dimension of contemporary middle-class practices and shows how the car-driving middle class has become part of the new social order. Yet, this work invites further studies in terms of location, class, gender and generational divide, as well as the air pollution and noise brought about by the automotive regime.

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Mirrorlands: Russia, China, and Journeys in Between
ED PULFORD
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Ed Pulford's recent book *Mirrorlands*, based on several years living and travelling in the region, as well as formal training in social anthropology at the University of Cambridge, offers a fascinating account of a region that is of strategic interest but remains poorly known. Pulford's rare linguistic skills – he speaks Korean in addition to being fluent in both Russian and Chinese – give him unfiltered access to local interlocutors, and thus place him in a unique position to write this much-needed account.

The book opens in Moscow and closes in Beijing, the first and last chapter devoted to each capital city respectively. The bulk of the narrative however coils its way around the border itself, taking the reader back and forth between Russia and China, shining a light on the lives of borderlanders. While the majority of the latter are Russians and Chinese, numerous ethnic groups also call the region their home. From Tatars to Evenks, Oroqens to Koreans, Pulford expertly reveals the complex ethnic mosaic of the people who live in the region as well as their histories on both sides of the border. Chapter two on multiethnic Siberia and chapter four on Inner Mongolia in particular provide an excellent overview of this ethnic diversity.

The two chapters that bookend the journey also seek to highlight the many political, social, and cultural entanglements between the two countries. Pulford's account of Moscow reveals various layers of Chineseness and, conversely, the Beijing chapter

uncovers the significant influence that was played by the Soviet Union in the second half of the 20th century. The first and last chapters thus nicely illustrate the book's organizing metaphor of mirror as interface.

In tracing its eastward journey, *Mirrorlands* remains in conversation with travel accounts by Chinese authors such as Qu Qiubai, who, along with other Chinese intellectuals in the early 20th century, looked up to the Soviet Union as political inspiration. This travel literature provides an important cultural background to Pulford's encounters and conversations with locals, and helps him triangulate the cultural affinities and misunderstandings that continue to shape Sino-Russian interactions. Pulford's rare ability to speak both languages and to be equally at ease with both cultures ensures the narrative is well balanced and never privileges one side over the other. We are told human stories about both nations – again revealing "a trove of common experience" despite much mutual ignorance (xvii) and an occasionally "mutually exploitative Sino-Russian dynamic" (p. 125).

This balanced approach is in fact one of the strengths of the book. Pulford uses sources in both Russian and Chinese, something only very few scholars are able to do. *Mirrorlands* makes in this sense an important ethnographic contribution to Chinese studies. Unlike the majority of books on China's borders, which have focused on internal dynamics and, much more rarely, on outsiders looking in (see for instance Martin Saxer and Juan Zhang, *The Art of Neighbouring: Making Relations Across China's Borders*, Amsterdam University Press, 2016), *Mirrorlands* is unique in its deft winding in and out of the border, uncovering human stories from both sides.

The notion of mirror deployed by Pulford is potentially a powerful one, but unfortunately it remains somewhat under-explored. In the preface of the book (xv) he writes that the Sino-Russian dynamic recalls two vast mirrors "offering an image of one to the other that appears at once inverted and yet also extremely similar." There are some occasional great insights, like his remark that each side appears to "prefer a simulacrum of the other over direct contact" (p. 81), but a deeper discussion would have been welcome. The ways in which urban branding – particularly in the cases of the Chinese border towns of Manzhouli and Heihe described in chapters four and five – is both energized and subverted by emulation and mimicry could have been further developed. More could also have been made of the book by Yuri Slezkine (*Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North*, Cornell University Press, 1994) which uses productively the metaphor of the mirror to convey the skewed relationship Russians historically entertained with indigenous populations of the Russian Arctic.

While this is essentially a trade book privileging personal histories over dry academic analysis, there was nonetheless leeway for the author to integrate some of his anthropological insights. Had he done so, the book could have made a significant contribution to anthropological literature on the region. As a trade book, *Mirrorlands* is unlikely to be adopted for courses on China, East Asia or borders. It remains nonetheless a great resource to gain knowledge about a remote but strategic region, and about the Sino-Russian cultural interface.

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