

Elizabeth LaCouture, *Dwelling in the World: Family, House, and Home in Tianjin, China, 1860–1960*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2021. ix + 364pp. 40 figures. 2 tables. \$145.00 hbk. \$35.00 pbk. \$34.99 eBook.
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What did it mean for China's new middle class to live in the Republican-era Tianjin (1912–49)? In this empirically rich, theoretically sophisticated and fluidly written monograph, Elizabeth LaCouture uses *jiating* (translated as either 'family' or 'home', depending on the context) as an analytical lens to explore the everyday experiences of Tianjin's urban elites. *Jiating*, Lacouture argues, was a crucial space where Chinese men and women produced and articulated their class and gender identities and fashioned their own conceptions of modernity during the first half of the twentieth century. The title of this book – *Dwelling in the World* – draws out the distinctively globalizing aspects of the city of Tianjin in its treaty-port-era incarnation. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Tianjin was the largest port city in northern China and home to up to nine foreign concessions, each of which functioned like a micro-colony. A Chinese resident living in Tianjin experienced the world by confronting multiple languages, encountering various foreign and Chinese architectural styles, and consuming goods from across the globe at home. 'Tianjin', LaCouture suggests, 'was perhaps the most international city in the world during the first half of the twentieth century' (p. 4).

The chief goal of the book, to use LaCouture's own words, is to 'write the history of the modern home into the history of modern China, and to write the history of Republican-era Tianjin and its elites into the history of the Chinese city' (p. 268). In so doing, LaCouture is broadly engaged with a wide range of historiographical debates and secondary literature. Building on the European and American scholars' works on class and gender history, LaCouture reveals the fallacy of using 'past Euro-American experiences as historical theory' (p. 9) to analyse the historical conditions of China. This is most clearly manifested in LaCouture's approach to the concepts of 'middle class' and 'domesticity', both of which, according to her, did not map neatly onto Chinese status and gender formation. The most interesting and provocative intervention of this book lies in its methodology: drawing upon an impressive array of primary sources – ranging from municipal reports, colonial records and social surveys to architectural fieldworks and women's pictorial magazines – LaCouture constructs a multifaceted and interdisciplinary archive of *jiating*. Such an archive allows LaCouture to delve into the lived experiences of Chinese men and women, thus offering a 'counterhistory to Chinese nationalist and foreign imperialist historical narratives' (p. 12) that tend to perpetuate ideological discourses at the expense of ordinary people's agency.

Dwelling in the World is divided into three parts along the line of Henri Lefebvre's theoretical concepts of 'conceived', 'lived' and 'perceived' spaces. Part I (chapters 1–3) focuses on how social relations and spatial design were 'conceived' by politicians, ideologues, scholars and urban planners. It introduces different socio-political systems and ideologies that informed everyday life in Tianjin's urban society in the first half of the twentieth century. On the one hand, the

emergence of *xiao jiating* (small family) during the Republican era superseded the late imperial Chinese concept of *jia* that encompassed family, home and house into one word. On the other hand, the presence of multiple empires within one confined urban space gave rise to the city's colonial-capitalist system, under which property became 'a source of masculine individual identity and political power' (p. 118). Part II (chapters 4–6) examines how Chinese urbanites 'lived' at home in cosmopolitan Tianjin. With a broad spectrum of western and Chinese spatial technologies, architectural structures and material objects available at their disposal, Chinese urban elites created their modern home and house in Tianjin through selective combination. In the meantime, women's magazines presented another meaning of modern home: 'the site of middle class affect and individual subjectivity' (p. 213). The last part (chapters 7–8) investigates how Tianjin urbanites perceived the connection between social space and family in the second half of the twentieth century. During this transitional period, the connection between housing and class/status formation became increasingly strengthened, and eventually consolidated when the Chinese Communist Party took power in 1949.

Tianjin's complex fragmented colonial administrations, its *sui generis* cosmopolitanism and its local elites' ingenuous ways of combining and juxtaposing western and Chinese elements would have made it rather tempting for LaCouture to claim the city's distinctiveness over its comparability and commensurability with other historical contexts across the globe. *Dwelling in the World*, however, does exactly the opposite. LaCouture's broad-ranging study has set a new high standard for urban historians to study a local urban society from a global and comparative perspective. *Dwelling in the World* will certainly be of interest to historians of modern China, urbanism, gender and class, as well as colonialism and empire, and deserves as diverse of a readership as it aspires to engage.

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Paul Watt, *Estate Regeneration and Its Discontents: Public Housing, Place and Inequality in London*. Bristol: Policy Press, 2021. xiv + 506pp. 54 plates. 14 figures. 7 tables. Bibliography. £75.00 hbk. £26.99 pbk.
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For over a decade, the urban sociologist Paul Watt has tirelessly documented the regeneration of council housing estates in London, focusing on the experience and resistance of residents living through the regeneration of their estate, often seeing their homes demolished and communities fractured. The book draws upon extensive fieldwork in 14 London housing estates, most of which are 'later' estates built during the 1960s and 1970s, such as Aylesbury or Heygate, although others – like Clapham Park or Woodberry Down – are examples of estates built immediately after World War II. The author is not preoccupied so much with the origins of