

that analyses “built around concepts such as nation-states, diaspora, or even transnationalism have a tendency to focus on movement to and outcomes in a specific location [. . .], to the neglect of motivations and relationships with other places,” principally the *qiaoxiang*. Instead, he explains that he has sought in this book to explore the historical context of a single *qiaoxiang*, “the specific ‘native place’ within China of those who travelled,” an angle that in his view diaspora studies often neglect, together with the “*huaqiao* ideals and intentions” (p. 199) that explain and legitimize much *huaqiao* behavior.

This is a powerful, original, and creative study, clearly argued and meticulously researched over a period of many years (most of the chapters have previously appeared as articles). It will be interesting to see how the scholars Williams criticizes react to his book, which fearlessly and systematically takes issue with all previous studies in the field and proposes a new approach to Chinese migration and settlement overseas.

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Ying Xiao. *China in the Mix: Cinema, Sound, and Popular Culture in the Age of Globalization*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2017. xi, 313 pp. Hardcover \$65.00, ISBN 978-1-4968-1260-5.

Xiao Ying’s *China in the Mix: Cinema, Sound, and Popular Culture in the Age of Globalization* offers a unique, acoustic angle on a hitherto missing chapter in the studies of Chinese cinemas in the post-Socialist period, roughly from the mid-1980s to the second decade of the twenty-first century. At the intersection of Chinese studies, cinema studies, and sound studies, it spells out, on the one hand, how to situate Chinese cinemas amidst a variety of brilliantly hued cultural expressions within an increasingly connected world and, on the other, how a close examination of uses of sound (popular music, dialects, the *acousmètre*, silence, noise, dubbing, etc.) sheds new light on the studies of familiar figures like Chen Kaige, Zhang Yimou, Zhang Yuan, Jiang Wen, and Jia Zhangke.

For some readers, this book might call to mind two highly influential works—Andrew F. Jones’s *Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial*

Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age and Jean Ma's *Sounding the Modern Woman: The Songstress in Chinese Cinema*—with its inquiry into the connections and intersections of music and film industries. Beyond its different historical and geographical scope, Xiao consciously foregrounds her methodological innovations, most important of which is perhaps what she calls “mixing.” Xiao takes the concept—also the title of the book—from the act of audio mixing, which “involves disassembling and reassembling the original before rendering into a multi-track recording and a new palette in which the discrete tracks are made sense of and given new life to each other” (p. 17).¹ As a metaphor for critical acts, mixing is different from montage in that it requires disassembling as its very first step and does not necessarily imply contradictions between its discrete elements. In contrast to the common yet problematic understanding that film or music analysis is more or less an act of disassembling the piece, this mode of analysis equally emphasizes the processes of disassembling and reassembling, manifesting itself as a dialectical structure of viewing, listening, perceiving, feeling, and analyzing that mediates the cinematic or musical text with scholars’ own consciousness, sensibilities, and creativities. For Xiao’s project, performing the critical act of mixing could be said to be a triple task. At the level of film music, mixing, at the very least, means to be capable of recognizing various instruments at play and making sense of how they sing to each other. Echoing Altman’s conjecture of “*mise-en-bande*—in parallel and correspondence with that of *mise-en-scène*—that foregrounds ‘the interaction among the various components making up the sound track’” (p. 7), this approach calls for a language for sound analysis that is as competent as our visual analysis system.² At the level of sound-image relation, mixing means to draw attention to, and indeed champion, the experience of listening to film (you can close your eyes, if you wish), and to “resuscitate sound as part of an integrated audiovisual experience” (p. 235). Here, the multivalent concept of mixing articulates itself as “synchresis” (a word that Michel Chion has coined by combining “synchronism” and “synthesis”): “the spontaneous and irresistible weld produced between a particular auditory phenomenon and visual phenomenon when they occur at the same time” (p. 6).³ At the level of sociocultural expression, mixing, again, comes to the fore: if traditional binaries have “disassembled” popular and high art, experimental and commercial cinema, China and its global contacts, Xiao seeks to (re)mix them. What has emerged from Xiao’s investigation is a far more complex and multifarious field of cultural production in which heterogeneous voices are sounding out, and in which commercial and political demands continue to compete with one another.

If at the core of Xiao’s book is the question of mixing, then each chapter of this book could be understood as a specific “mixing” scenario. In chapter 1, with an in-depth reading of *Yellow Earth* (dir. Chen Kaige, 1984), Xiao gives a

vivid depiction of the rise of Northwest Wind (*xibei feng*): to a certain extent, the musical style known as Northwest Wind was awakened by the sound tracks of early “Fifth Generation” works, many of which were adapted from “root-seeking” (*xun gen*) literature. Chapter 2 continues to explore film-and-music cross-production with new acuity through the legendary collaborations between director Zhang Yimou and composer Zhao Jiping, perhaps best exemplified by *Red Sorghum* (1987). Marshaling ideas of musical rhythm, physical engagement, elliptical speech, and evocative silence, the first two chapters lay out the research parameters with which the book deals by revisiting the Chinese New Wave cinema of the 1980s from an acoustic and inter-medial perspective. Central to chapter 3 is the figure of Cui Jian, the godfather of Chinese rock: in tracing his voices, images, personas, and iconographies in an array of Chinese films, Xiao explicitly rejects the oversimplified understanding that reduces Chinese rock to a symbolic act of rebellion; instead, she treats Chinese rock ‘n’ rock films as a lens that takes views of “the traumatic and confounded postsocialist experience and the ‘lost’ generation in search of identity against the backdrop of urbanization and globalization” (p. 78). Such an urban youth framework also unites chapter 3 and chapter 4. Chapter 4 goes on to chart the symbiosis of urban youth cinema and popular music, especially in works of Jia Zhangke. Xiao argues that the twenty popular songs tagged into *Platform* (2000), as well as Jia’s maverick use of dialects, contribute to a *vérité* stylization—though, both devices, it must be noted, do not necessarily speak for truth in reality. In chapter 5, Xiao turns to the politics and poetics of the so-called Leitmotif (*zhu xuanlü*) films, most of which have multilingual soundtracks, engaging their state-sponsored mechanisms, commercial pursuits with trans-cultural borrowings and translations, especially in the context of China’s negotiation with and response to contemporary Hollywood. Chapter 6 concludes the book by scanning the fluid and mutable presence of hip hop across film and popular music, across actual public venues and cyberspace. The whimsical Grass Mud Horse (*Cao Ni Ma*) style that hatched and flourished on Chinese Internet offers “a fresh twist on Chinese hip pop” (p. 222), drawing a full circle to Xiao’s discussions of state regulations and cultural appropriations, and of rebellious spirit and youth culture.

Sounding the historical, political, and sociocultural complexities in a manner attuned to the multiple registers of sound, a detailed portrait of post-socialist China comes into view and into audibility. Privileging the experience of listening to films, *China in the Mix* ultimately gestures toward a new way of perception. At a time when cinema seems to go inevitably 3D, 4D, and increasingly interactive, Xiao’s book will continue to generate new lines of inquiry as we think more about what a new

dimension of perception means to cinema, and to cinema and media studies—that of taste, smell, and touch.

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NOTES

1. I am taking up the opportunity to correct a typo (“reassembling” rather than “resembling”) in this sentence. I would love to thank Xiao Ying for confirming this.

2. The seminal notion of *mise-en-bande* is proposed by Rick Altman, along with McGraw Jones and Sonia Tatroe, see Rick Altman, McGraw Jones, and Sonia Tatroe, “Inventing the Cinema Soundtrack: Hollywood’s Multiplane Sound System,” in *Music and Cinema*, ed. James Buhler, Caryl Flinn, and David Neumeyer (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), 339–359.

3. I am citing Xiao’s citation of Michel Chion. See Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 63.