Diasporic Chineseness after the Rise of China
Communities and Cultural Production

Edited by Julia Kuehn, Kam Louie, and David M. Pomfret
Contemporary Chinese Studies

This series provides new scholarship and perspectives on modern and contemporary China, including China's contested borderlands and minority peoples; ongoing social, cultural, and political changes; and the varied histories that animate China today.

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China Rising: A View and Review of China’s Diasporas since the 1980s
Julia Kuehn, Kam Louie, and David M. Pomfret

China-on-the-Rise
In recent times, the concept of the Chinese diaspora has begun to be reconceived in relation to the global phenomenon referred to as “the rise of China.” This phrase has been widely used to describe the situation whereby a previously American-dominated and Western-oriented world order has been (or presumably soon will be) succeeded by a new bipolarity ushered in by the ascendancy of the People’s Republic of China (PRC; hereafter China). This ascendancy has proceeded from the rapid economic growth delivered by the Chinese government after 1978 through market reforms and political liberalization. China’s growth has been so rapid that in January 2009, its National Bureau of Statistics could boast that China had overtaken Germany to become the world’s third largest economy in terms of GDP. By 2011, it had risen further, overtaking Japan to become second only to the United States of America.

While the “rise of China” to the status of a global superpower in the last quarter-century has created much angst and anticipation, it has also raised fundamental questions about affiliation and identity for diasporic Chinese groups in the West. In effect, this global shift has presented overseas Chinese communities with the challenge of accommodating new cohorts of economic migrants. Moreover, the transnational flows of people, goods, and ideas that have accompanied and constituted this shift have radically altered conventional (if overly simplistic) perceptions of the Chinese diaspora as a one-way process. Migrants making the return journey have re-engaged with the notion of diasporic origin as they have reconnected, through new personal and professional links, with China. While the significance of the economic and financial strategies of diasporic Chinese to this process has been widely acknowledged, much less has been said of the ways in which the individuals and communities that constitute this group have begun to negotiate China’s ascendancy, reconfiguring and re-evaluating its meanings, both practical and symbolic. This is a significant oversight, given that diasporic
Chinese have been making a special contribution within the realm of culture to reimaginings of the nation, national consciousness, and national identity in the last quarter of a century. This volume, therefore, sets out to make an original and distinctive contribution to the broader debate on diasporic Chineseness precisely by considering the representational and symbolic dimensions of these developments through engaging with specific examples of Chinese cultural production and representation.

From the late twentieth century into the early twenty-first century, a period marked by the advent of “New China” or “China-on-the-rise,” Chinese artists, writers, filmmakers, and other cultural producers have reinterpreted and represented China and Chineseness to global audiences. A new-found cultural vitality and self-assurance has pervaded cultural and intellectual production and has been given expression in a variety of cultural domains. For example, while those involved in China studies have for decades debated the social, historical, and political changes in, and implications of, this new economic superpower, the discipline of Chinese Cultural Studies has also recently gained momentum within the academe.

The transnational and global reach of an economically and culturally booming China has been given a further boost by numerous co-productions between China and Hong Kong, notably in the film industry, before, and especially since, 1997. Mention of Hong Kong calls to mind the fascinating and complex spaces of the Chinese diaspora and the issues of nation, identity, politics, economics, belonging, alienation, and mobility that those spaces raise. In the context of the Chinese diaspora – be it in Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand, North America, the United Kingdom, or elsewhere in the world – socio-cultural concerns about community, culture, and communication are always closely intertwined with living “abroad.”

_Diasporic Chineseness after the Rise of China: Communities and Cultural Production_ addresses the nexus between the political and economic rise of China and the cultural productions that this period has produced in the sites of the Chinese diaspora. It asks how this “New China” has influenced not only diasporic communities, culture, and communication but also more general critical and theoretical notions of “diaspora.” For the rise of China has inspired those in the vanguard of the cultural production of Chineseness to write and rewrite the ways in which the communities of which they are part articulate their “exile.” Through its focus on representation, the book takes up the question of how this momentous and ongoing shift in cultural and economic power has impacted the cultural strategies adopted by members of Chinese diasporic groups. It examines how they have rethought and reinterpreted identity, community, and other paradigms through culture. It
explores the creative response to this shift and how this shift has been materialized in literature, the visual and performing arts, and other cultural practices within diasporic groups. The “culture” in the title of our collection refers to the works through which cultural producers have developed and given expression to diasporic Chineseness in relation to the Chinese nation-state through various media in recent years. Our book analyzes examples of these creative engagements and how they relate to representations of diasporic affiliation, which is referred to by the term “communities” in the title.

**Diasporic Chineseness, Cultural Nationalism, and the State**

While the world was still reeling from images of the massacre of Chinese protestors during the Tiananmen demonstrations in June 1989 and the collapse of the Berlin Wall in November of the same year, followed closely by the demise of Communism altogether in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, diaspora was emerging as an important concept in literary and cultural studies. Those at the forefront of this developing field focused their attention on diasporic groups that they understood, as a result of their dispersal, to inhabit spaces across or between national spaces. In the very movement of these individuals and groups through transnational networks, scholars identified possibilities for liberation from the nation-state, which was often perceived as oppressive, coercive, or monolithic. Diaspora functioned within the academy as an analytical category that could be used to challenge assumptions about the indispensability of the nation to individual and collective identity.

The Chinese government’s 1989 crackdown and the impending handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997 triggered waves of diasporic movement from Hong Kong. The liberatory potential of diaspora quickly gained momentum in literary and cultural deliberations over what it meant to be Chinese. For the elite of Chinese cultural producers and intellectuals, a group accustomed to the privilege of moving through diasporic networks, suggestions that a challenge to the interconnectedness of state and nation might be constructed on the heterogeneity and hybridity of “displaced” subjects held a special fascination. Investigations of “Chineseness abroad” emerged at the forefront of new contributions to diaspora and “East-West” studies.

Wang Gungwu’s seminal works on the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia gave rise to the growth of studies of Chinese people overseas, from those who were sojourners to those who were settlers in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Many stayed and became naturalized in their new homelands. Many also returned to China and played an active role in the momentous changes there. Most were happy to lead ordinary lives wherever they found themselves, and very few indulged in debates on national or ethnic...
identity politics. It was not until late in the twentieth century that scholars such as Ien Ang, Shirley Lim, Rey Chow, and Sau-ling Wong began to give more theoretical depth to the area of investigation that crystallized into Chinese diaspora studies. Their creative and critical contributions to the area of Asian American writing gave momentum to this field as it emerged on the intellectual agenda – in the wake of postcolonial studies and in parallel with transnational, cosmopolitan, and (later) global studies – to become an established critical category.

Although the tendency in the academe had hitherto been to discuss the Chinese diaspora in rather reductive terms related to flows of capital and commerce, Asian political discourse in this period – and in particular, speculation over the remarkable economic growth of Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan – focused greater attention on the role of culture in this economic, political, and national-transnational ferment. In this context, the ideas of the influential scholar of Confucianism Tu Weiming, who argued that a renewed sense of “Chineseness” located within the diaspora might serve as an example for a centre supposedly in moral and cultural decline, gained ground. Tu advanced the concept of a “cultural China” as an area of cultural homogeneity spanning diasporic nodes. However, to some, especially those who felt themselves to have been assimilated into the cultures and contexts in which they lived or to be pursuing autonomous projects, claims for such an imagined community of exiled Chinese intellectuals sounded like an appeal to an (elitist) ethnic fundamentalism. While diasporic Chinese – whether “nationalist,” “cosmopolitan,” “assimilated,” “transnational,” or “multicultural” – had often been defined in terms of such supposedly coherent cultural norms, these norms themselves were and are, as intellectuals have pointed out, undergoing constant adaptation.

Moreover, as increasing economic and political influence began to augment the authority of the Chinese state in the years that followed, predictions of a dominant periphery ran up against evidence signalling the enduring importance of “the nation” in debates over identity within diasporic communities. In the last two decades, the Chinese Communist Party itself has been an important galvanizing force behind the reassertion of the nation. As it pursued a shift away from the economic tenets of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist thought toward party-state nationalism, the government developed a “Patriotic Education Campaign,” which was launched in 1991 and proceeded alongside systematic ideological and institutional efforts to cultivate Chinese nationalism among diasporic communities. This shift in policy saw younger members of these communities, in particular, re-envisioned as “new migrants.”
a generation supposedly marked out by its sentimental attachment to, and affinity with, the rising Chinese nation-state and its modernizing projects.\textsuperscript{8}

The subsequent surges in nationalist sentiment observed among members of diasporic Chinese communities attracted much scholarly attention and were illustrated with reference to some quite spectacular (and by now well-known) incidents.\textsuperscript{9} For example, the website www.huaren.org, set up to speak for diasporic Chinese who felt themselves to be victims of racial prejudice, manipulated ethnic essentialism in the case of the rape of Chinese women in Indonesia. The anger expressed within diasporic communities connected across new media networks with a state-level response from China. Second, after the Olympic torch relay ceremony in Europe during the summer of 2008 was accompanied by violent criticism of the human rights violations perpetrated by representatives of the Chinese state, young diasporic Chinese themselves organized large-scale counter-protests supporting the Olympic Games in Beijing.\textsuperscript{10}

Both incidents are suggestive of how essentialist, cultural nationalist conceptions of Chineseness continued to flow through diasporic networks, in some cases serving the interests of the Chinese state. As the People’s Republic of China redefined its cultural space within and beyond the so-called Great Fire Wall, in accordance with its augmented global role, the frameworks for a place-based imagination from which the idea of community proceeds also shifted. Although new media technologies facilitated virtual networks, they did not necessarily diminish nationalist or statist interventions in the cultural politics of diasporic communities. New technologies sustained nationalist efforts within some communities and contexts to re-engage with diasporic Chineseness and even to integrate diasporic audiences into official nationalism.\textsuperscript{11}

These examples are illustrative of the profound implications that the rise of China has had for diasporic groups living in the West. China’s ascendency has presented them with a series of new dilemmas, as well as opportunities and challenges. Long-established hierarchies of cultural and economic opportunity encouraged earlier generations of transnational Chinese to interpret Western cities as “frontiers” of economic and political “freedom.” These older generations were mostly labourers whose stays in countries outside China were prompted by economic necessity. The majority had received little formal education in China before they left. However, since the late 1990s, the number of young Chinese going abroad to attend colleges and universities has increased dramatically, and the number who have chosen to return to China has also increased at a rapid rate. The rise of China, accompanied by a shift
away from state policies envisioning overseas Chinese as an economic resource toward the valorization of this group and its contribution to “modernization,” has brought into question deeply ingrained assumptions about moving to and living in the West, as well as about departing from and returning to China.

Reterritorialization, Representation, and Diasporic Generations

The “return” has become a more and more prominent socio-economic phenomenon in recent years. According to Chinese Ministry of Education statistics, the percentage of Chinese who departed as students or researchers and have returned to China has increased dramatically in the last ten years. This apparent reversal of what authorities had referred to as a “brain drain” in the 1990s has brought increasing numbers of the so-called haigui, or “sea turtles,” back to China. The impact has been to further stimulate re-evaluation of “the West.” Both diasporic communities and returnees have revisited definitions of nation, identity, community, and culture. Cultural producers, who have often been at the forefront of engagement with these questions, have (re)interpreted and represented them in their work. Within the domains of the academe and cultural production, the concept of diaspora and how it might be relevant to Chinese living both inside and outside the national borders of China has acquired new importance and complexity. The time is ripe for critical reflection on how, exactly, Chineseness has been refashioned in the wake of the rise of China.

In the last decade, a number of anthologies have been published that have begun to investigate the role of culture producers and cultural products in this network of nation, diaspora, identity, community, and communication. The editors and contributors of Asian Diasporas: Cultures, Identities, Representations (2004); Culture, Identity, Commodity: Diasporic Chinese Literatures in English (2005); Reading Chinese Transnationalisms: Society, Literature, Film (2006); Diasporic Histories: Cultural Archives of Chinese Transnationalism (2009); and China Abroad: Travels, Subjects, Spaces (2009) have done good work in this field, to name just a few. However, engagement with several key themes distinguishes Diasporic Chineseness after the Rise of China from these other anthologies. First and foremost, this collection reviews the changes that diaspora in general and diaspora studies more specifically have experienced since the 1980s. In this study, pioneers of this critical field of scholarship and established scholars examine how the rise of China has had an effect on their (previous) understanding, theorization, and representation of “the Chinese diaspora.”
Second, and related to the first point, this book highlights the significance of the “personal voices” of and within diasporic Chineseness. While it remains committed to the analysis of the “representation” of the Chinese diaspora through its various cultural products – as do the above-mentioned collections – our collection adds lived experience to these analyses. The personal voices of diaspora vary a great deal. They range from those of the pioneering critics of Chinese diaspora studies to those of diasporic writers and artists and anonymous returnees. But what these voices have in common is their reflection of the changes in the scholarly and personal understanding of (life and identity in) diaspora and the related issues of nationality and nationalism. The essays in this collection thereby serve to illustrate how diasporic intellectuals are engaged with the geopolitical shifts that influence Chinese people in different social settings. They add to our understanding of diaspora by examining the relevance of these imagined communities to other groups beyond the “ivory tower.” Together, they provide a sense both of the detachment and separateness intrinsic to diaspora and of the multiple incongruities of the diasporic Chinese experience. They reveal the diverse strategies adopted by a range of intellectuals, artists, and “everyday people” confronting diasporic Chineseness in the age of the rise of China, and they provide new insight into how nation, identity, and diaspora are mutually produced.

Third, in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, as the Open Door Policy stimulated movements within China as well as an outflow of those referred to as “new immigrants” and encouraged tens of thousands of overseas Chinese to make the return journey, new importance was attached both to the “minorities” who moved across its internal and external borders and to the nature of diasporic engagements with, and within, the nation. Indeed, as Tseen Khoo and Jacqueline Lo point out, “the term diaspora now includes ethno-cultural groupings (e.g., Gypsies and Kurds), racialised groupings (e.g., Black, Indigenous), country-defined communities (e.g., Iranian, Somalian), transethnic and transborder linguistic groupings (e.g., Francophone and Anglophone), and global religious communities (e.g., Catholic),” leading them to conclude that “there has been a ‘diasporisation’ of diaspora studies.” In response, Shu-mei Shih, for example, has proposed a new direction in the study of Chineseness based on people who use the Sinitic script.

What it means to be Chinese is being negotiated across cultures, and Chinese diasporic subjects have been shaped by and have confronted very different forces on the ground in the nations of settlement in relation to wider global shifts. Chineseness has therefore become differently re-embedded in the process of diasporic relocation. As Allen Chun suggests, “The very
nature of identity as a selective process in the mind of individual subject-actors grounded in local contexts of power and meaning makes the possibility of ‘Chinese’ identifying with a common discourse a hopelessly impossible task.” In other words, location is critical to representations of Chineseness. Hence, while a “detrimentalization” of nationalism and the nation-state has occurred, and is integral to diaspora, this book also investigates the “re-territorialization” of literary and cultural studies.

It is precisely the embedding of “culture” in local contexts of power that produces diverse expressions of Chineseness. Although the very mobility of diasporic Chinese renders them constituents of a “detrimentalized” nation (or a diffuse nationalism), diasporic groups, wherever they are, continue to engage with notions of the homeland. They remain key participants in and contributors to imaginings of the nation and of national consciousness and national identities. Because of their participation, the profound shift in the meanings ascribed to the bounded space of the Chinese nation-state has, over the last three decades, had a corresponding impact on the various ways in which cultural producers currently “read,” and have read, diaspora. The rise of China has inspired new reflections on how a national identity may be embedded in, or even at odds with, specific socio-political grounds.

This collection shows how experiences and performances of “reterritorialization” through literary and cultural media are also important. From the haigui struggling to develop strategies that will allow them to remigrate to mainland China, to “hyphenated” Chinese intellectuals and writers making the return to the “homeland,” reterritorialization challenges us to rethink our understanding of links between the diasporic community and the mainland. It brings into sharp relief the modes and means through which the individuals who form part of these diasporic groups have engaged with changed, and changing, notions of “nation” and “homeland” and have devised and participated in imaginings of the nation and of national consciousness and national identities. It also illustrates how the state’s appropriation of certain ethnic minorities within the mainland as a tool of “soft power” in the service of efforts to promote cultural nationalism has left these communities facing a sense of “exile,” of being “strangers in their own homes.” This sense, in some respects, is similar to that experienced by Chinese living beyond the geographical borders of the Chinese nation-state.

Context is closely interrelated with ethnicity and culture in the construction of identity. Through its case studies of cultural production, this collection examines the variety of ways in which the adoption of multiple identities may allow individuals to engage with communities on a social level. These
engagements may decentre the authority of cultural hegemony, without necessarily destroying the boundedness of identity, through the articulation, rearticulation, and communication of these challenges in a variety of media. The individual essays in this volume examine the ways in which diasporic Chinese have developed and mediated their personal, ethnic, and national identities in an ongoing engagement with the contexts in which they have settled. They also examine how culture producers have negotiated recent transformations in local contexts. The chapters in the volume focus on rather specific cultural struggles, experiences, and representations of specific locations – Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, North America, and Tibet – bringing these to bear on theoretical insights about changing notions of nation and diaspora which, as will emerge, vary widely and are therefore far from essentialist.

Fourth, this study engages with the rearticulation of diasporic Chineseness at a moment when new technologies are liberalizing speech within diasporic communities. Recent developments in social media, political and personal blogging, networked activism, and coalition building may have seen youth at the forefront of attacks on conventional paradigms, standard models, and established hierarchies. A key consequence of this has been that “older” forms of understanding of what it means to be Chinese have been reworked or have fallen into abeyance. Ways of understanding what it meant to be Chinese may even have undergone something of a generational shift, as evidenced by the different strategies adopted by those who consider themselves to be “naturalized” or assimilated and by those young people whose migration has been more recent. This shift needs, we suggest, to be understood in relation to a rising China. The essays that follow have therefore been grouped precisely in order to highlight the complex development of diachronic and generational differences within the diaspora. For example, the grouping that deals with the film genre juxtaposes representations of diasporic Chineseness in films such as Dim Sum in the 1980s with those of Lust, Caution in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Together, the essays make more easily discernible the tensions that have emerged in the wake of diasporic strategies as culture producers have explored intergenerational relationalities through the authoring and reauthoring of narratives that posit alternative histories and identities.

In what follows, our contributors reflect on the significance of various different media to the highly complex processes of cultural production: in effect, the “framing” of these processes through a variety of genres, texts, and lenses. The collection begins with an analysis of intellectuals’ personal voices
beyond and outside academia. Because the border crossings of large numbers of people back into (as well as out of) China in the last three decades, have created new kinds of diasporic Chineseness and understandings of Chinese nationalism and culture, the first three essays place particular emphasis on the theme of the “return.” They nuance claims for the diasporic Chinese as a post-national, cosmopolitan community of “transnational yuppies” and highlight the conundrum posed for those who would seek to understand links between the diasporic community and the mainland by emphasizing the importance of flexible identity and multiple territorialities negotiated by transmigrant individuals.17

If the rise of China has prompted intellectuals to revisit the extent to which they “identify” with the national regimes in which they – or earlier generations – pursued assimilation, it has also inspired, among some, a pronounced disinclination to view themselves as part of a single universe of discourse. Yet, as this volume also shows, simultaneously and paradoxically, an imaginary transnational fundamentalism – extending to Chinese everywhere – has endured through this period. It may even have intensified. Ien Ang’s “No Longer Chinese? Residual Chineseness after the Rise of China” addresses this issue. Ang examines the ways in which notions of hybridity and transnationalism, which have been central to thinking about diasporas, have changed profoundly with China’s emergence as a new global superpower. The essay considers the implications of the rise of China for the construction and experience of diasporic Chinese identities and asks whether space will remain for vernacular, localized, hybrid Chinese diasporic identities or whether they will instead be increasingly overpowered by the homogenizing, essentializing, and nationalizing force of a global China. Ang explores this conundrum by reflecting on modes of diasporic cultural transfer in the broader context of international relations and global historical change in the twenty-first century. Her reconsideration of global Chineseness not only sets the tone for the volume by bringing under critical reconsideration the conventions of the “East-West” dynamic but also sits in complementary relation to the final essay, Kwai-Cheung Lo’s re-evaluation of Chinese within the borders of a rising China.

For some, physical distance from the mainland presents useful opportunities for transcending divisions within Chinese nationhood. It allows the pursuit of alternative ways of cultural self-identification. However, as a result of China’s triumphant embrace of capitalism, others have felt compelled to re-evaluate the state-led “project” of Chinese modernity. Within the overarching frame defined by the contributions of Ang and Lo, Chapters 3 and
4, by Ouyang Yu and Kam Louie respectively, examine this re-evaluation from the perspective of the migrant intellectual and entrepreneur.

In “Twenty Years in Migration, 1989-2008: A Writer’s View and Review,” Ouyang Yu provides a powerful, provocative, and deeply subjective insight into the case of the Chinese intellectual migrant. The essay picks up on the issues of identity, identification, and globalism introduced by Ien Ang and, employing a strikingly different vernacular and an approach that is symptomatic rather than analytical, opens up important questions about reflexivity and representation. The essay – disgruntled, forthright, and combative in tone – nuances earlier studies of Chinese cultural identity focusing on assimilationist tendencies within migratory movements to the West and tracks a sharpening sense of individual difference vis-à-vis specific host cultures: in particular, those of Australia and Britain. It examines the revised expectations and orientations that result from the bitter experience of the costs of migration and highlights the constraints and conventions encountered in the intellectual “marketplace” of the West. In his essay, Yu critically reassesses the meaning of diasporic “freedoms” in the light of this reinterpretation and explores the motives for a “reterritorialization” as an important stratagem of the intellectual migrant.

By contrast, Kam Louie’s “Globe-Trotting Chinese Masculinity: Wealthy, Worldly, and Worthy” reveals strategies adopted by business migrants for successful deal making as they travel back to China. Unlike portrayals of the merchants and compradors of traditional and modern times, in which wealth creation was seen as the result of immoral and exploitative practices, the materialistic and hedonistic pursuits of these entrepreneurs are shown to be part of their business acumen in the international marketplace. While China’s rise could indicate a cultural renaissance, the phrase refers primarily to an economic phenomenon. The political and moral soul searching so common only a decade or so ago has given way to monetary concerns. For both the individual and the collective, success is measured almost entirely in financial terms, and a worthy gentleman is seen as one who is both wealthy and worldly.

In order to provide new insights into the contextually and temporally specific development of diasporic Chineseness since the rise of China, this collection looks to two overlapping and mutually constitutive levels: the individual and the community. To simultaneously counterpose and complement the personal experiences with contemporary scholarly and theoretical debates on diasporic Chineseness experienced by various subjects and in various cultural representations and manifestations, the volume develops
discussion of how theories of the mutual constitution of “the nation and diaspora within a Chinese frame” have been rearticulated from the late twentieth century by those giving expression to it through the literary genre.

In Chapters 5 and 6, the contributors discuss the textuality of literary-cultural productions from the new perspectives opened up by the theorizing of a rising China as nation and in diaspora. They track the ongoing struggle over historical, social, and personal representations of Chineseness and the three-way negotiation between group, host, and home country in various media. Although some Chinese seek to divest themselves of their ethnicity, they may at times choose to invoke Chinese culture to advance their own interests, whether economic, ideological, or nostalgic. Focusing on Maxine Hong Kingston’s historicizing of the diaspora of Chinese civilization, Shirley Geok-lin Lim provides a key vantage point on this problem from the North American perspective in “Textual and Other Oxymorons: Sino-Anglophone Writing of War and Peace in Maxine Hong Kingston’s Fifth Book of Peace.” She highlights Kingston’s appeal to the possibility of the Chinese diaspora as a planetary pacifist movement – that is, of a diasporic supercultural Chineseness embodied in the “figure of peace.” Lim’s reading of Maxine Hong Kingston’s writing brings into focus the complex tensions between the absolutism of the state and the collusive relationship that diasporic Chinese may maintain with it in Chinese and foreign contexts.

In “The Autoethnographic Impulse: Two New Zealand Chinese Playwrights,” Hilary Chung examines the recent explosion in creative explorations of Chinese New Zealand identity by a new generation of artists and writers of Chinese descent amid a new wave of Chinese migration in the wake of the rise of China. The juxtaposition of Chung’s essay with Lim’s again allows the divergent responses of generations of cultural producers to be drawn out. Focusing on the work of young Chinese New Zealand playwrights, Chung identifies a common impulse whereby the classic autobiographical claim to authenticity of identity has been combined with an ethnographic focus that seeks to authenticate the location of the historical Chinese community within contemporary New Zealand. Such an impulse is suggestive of how space can be carved out for diasporic Chineseness in such a community, given the particularistic commitment to a paradigm of multiculturalism within biculturalism. This, she argues, in turn provides conditions in which a productive engagement with notions of China-on-the-rise can develop.

Film has provided an especially vital medium for the expression of diasporic identity, but the historical poetics of visuality, deeply entrenched within transnational capital, are also closely connected to the politics of the modern
nation-state. Visuality – what becomes or is made visible – is in itself intrinsically an economic, political, and cultural phenomenon that can reveal much about the politics of culture within Chinese diasporas. Chapters 7 and 8 discuss this further. Rey Chow’s “The Provocation of Dim Sum; or, Making Diaspora Visible on Film” focuses discussion on an earlier generation of diasporic Chinese and the important transitional moment of the 1980s. During this period, as the rise of China as an economic superpower commenced, Chinese Americans were taking advantage of their increasing visibility within US media to articulate a new vision of China. Illustrating her argument with the example of Wayne Wang’s Dim Sum (1985), Chow shows how, in this period of transition, film mediated between two distinct visions of China: one represented by older diasporic Chinese populations in North America and the other by a new generation of Chinese Americans who were carving out a more prominent presence in various US media domains. The essay shows how diaspora (in this case, a particular Chinese diaspora) has been dealt with through the medium of film. It discusses both the specificities of filmmaking and pertinent links between the works of contemporary Asian directors and the earlier moments of film in the first part of the twentieth century. “Slowness” and the image of the mother both emerge as aspects of these specificities in Wayne Wang’s handling of his subject.

The theme of tradition is revisited in this discussion of diasporic film with Cristina Demaria’s analysis of Ang Lee’s Lust, Caution (2007). In her essay “Performing Bodies, Translated Histories: Ang Lee’s Lust, Caution, Transnational Cinema, and Chinese Diasporas,” Demaria analyzes this recent film adaptation of the homonymous novella by Eileen Chang. Shot in China by a Chinese crew, made partly with Chinese funding, and directed by Ang Lee, a filmmaker identified with transnational cinema, the film represents the dynamic contemporary culture of Chinese cinema. Demaria’s chapter connects with Chow’s essay, which discusses the other end of the period under study, one marked by “the contemporary global problematic of becoming visible.” While Chow examines Wang’s exploration of diaspora through aesthetics, Demaria shows how Lee uses the lenses of politics, history, and gender. While the mother is a key figure for Wang, Lee is fascinated by the image of the spy, who performs the effacement of personal (national?) identity and in whom the challenges of navigating across boundaries and borders and negotiating dual loyalties (including the betrayal of the nation) can be read as a metaphor for cosmopolitan citizenship and transnational cinema. Demaria argues that in the context of ongoing efforts within the Chinese diaspora to reconfigure the relation between centre and margin, Lust, Caution
emerges as a film that expresses and embodies the complications involved in the crossing of boundaries and the generational challenge of addressing the repressed conflicts of China’s tumultuous past.

Chapters 9, 10, and 11 deal with art, performed and exhibited, from the 1960s to the present day. Sau-ling Wong’s “Dancing in the Diaspora: ‘Cultural Long-Distance Nationalism’ and the Staging of Chineseness by San Francisco’s Chinese Folk Dance Association” examines the medium of dance in order to explore the tensions that have developed between different generations of diasporic Chinese over articulations of Chineseness. She considers the significance of dance in the construction and defence of a sense of community within this particular Chinese diaspora and shows how this medium has been used to construct and defend an essential Chinese identity predicated on a centrifugal cultural ideology. Accounting for the considerable incorporative power that these essentializing tendencies possessed for a generation of diasporic Chinese grappling with a profound sense of estrangement, she then tracks the diminishing appeal of such performances after the rise of China.

Yiyan Wang’s “Tyranny of Taste: Chinese Aesthetics in Australia and on the World Stage” presents us with both case studies and a larger theoretical debate about changing/changed notions of the Chinese diaspora. Introducing the art practices and products of Chinese Australian artists such as Wang Zhiyuan, Guan Wei, Guo Jian, Hu Ming, Zhou Xiaoping, and Shen Shaomin, Wang also enters the debate that is at the heart of this volume: with an Australian art market “mad about” Chinese art and with a number of Chinese artists settling in Australia and receiving Australian citizenship but then, often after decades, returning to China, how do we need to rewrite the critical understanding of this Chinese Australian diaspora? Clearly, in an age of global and transnational art distribution and production, the concept of diaspora has become much more fluid, flexible, and open than pioneers in the field initially suggested.

The importance of this question of how Chineseness has been rearticulated is signalled here by the fact that this book commences with an examination of Chineseness – indeed, its re-evaluation beyond the borders of a rising China – along a by-now-familiar East-to-West etiology and concludes with a study that considers how “minorities” within the national borders of China are provoking a reappraisal of diasporic engagements with the nation.

Kwai-Cheung Lo, in “Reconfiguring the Chinese Diaspora through the Ethnic Minorities,” studies the ways in which those on the periphery of “China” have been selectively, though spectacularly, appropriated into demonstrations of “Chineseness” by those working through official channels to represent the “new” China to the world. In doing so, Lo’s contribution sheds
new light on the importance of communities drawn along lines of ethnicity to the ongoing reconfiguration of the notion of Chineseness in the Chinese diaspora. The chapter highlights the importance of ethnic traditions as a source of legitimacy – that is, the role of ethnicity in the construction of a cultural taxonomy of the nation – and the importance of ethnic minorities to diasporic community formation. In the wake of China’s rising global status, members of diasporic Chinese communities have also re-embraced their ethnic identities and built closer bonds with their ethnic homeland. Lo shows how history has served as an axis along which allegiance to the homeland has been redefined. In this way, diasporic Chinese have engaged with tradition both by reinventing it and by seeking to dispense with, or elude, its grasp. Lo reminds us of how, through the performance of “ethnic dance,” neo-nationalism draws on similar kinds of images to the cosmopolitan diaspora. In this regard, diasporic Chinese may (wittingly or not) serve as a cultural and financial resource for Chinese nationalist projects oriented toward transnational reunification strategies. Standing in complementary relation to Ien Ang’s chapter, Lo’s essay rounds out this volume by showing how the rise of China and the accompanying intensification in antagonistic relations with internal “minorities” have sparked heated debate and considerable controversy over what it means to be Chinese in the twenty-first century.

A Rising Discourse
Together, the contributions in this volume explore the ways in which nation and diaspora have been mutually constituted after the rise of China. They show that as the meaning of links between host societies and China have changed in response to this shift, so too has the concept of the Chinese diaspora in cultures and communities (including academic communities). As the contributors show, diasporic Chinese have used a variety of media to give expression to their sense of the ambiguity and fluidity of multicultural experience and, in particular, essentialist discourses of Chineseness. China-on-the-rise thus provides a mechanism for the re-exploration of ethnie and new theoretical discussions of diaspora as an alternative focus to the nation.

The essays in this collection provide new evidence of the many ways in which individuals have fashioned and refashioned imagined communities in terms of both deterritorialization and reterritorialization. During a period marked by their acquisition of greater visibility, diasporic Chinese subjects have participated in a discursive politics that reconfigures the relation between centre and margin. The return “home” has been communicated in various media in such a way as to reinforce the sense of being part of a “third culture.” The essays also show that diaspora, as a kind of “third culture,” needs
to be understood in relation to global networks of culture rather than merely national communities. That is, a diasporic ethnic identity is not something that is defined by either the point of origin or the nodes in the transnational network across which migrants move.\(^1\) The essays in this volume draw attention to the role of communication through culture in the construction of individual and community identity, following a major shift in perceptions of a Chinese “heritage” subsequent to China’s rise.

Together, the chapters gathered here explore China and Chineseness in specific temporal-spatial contexts and elucidate the many varieties and dimensions of Chineseness abroad. They shed light on ways in which new memories, new allegiances, and new self-identities have emerged and been formulated in the last three decades. The contributors show how Chineseness has been mediated and materialized, related to and asserted, against the nation-state. They reveal how the ethos of a transnational and diasporic way of life runs up against other social values – values related to social class, gender, sexuality, and generation – in productive relation, and against the nation-state itself. As such, the essays demonstrate the significance of locality and locatedness to diasporic Chinese cultural politics. Finally, it is hoped that the international case studies presented here will serve both as a provocation to and a timely signal of the promise of further comparative and contextual analysis of the efforts undertaken in recent times, at a variety of levels, to adapt, accommodate, and fundamentally reconfigure the symbolic meanings of diasporic Chineseness after the “rise of China.”