The introduction's placing of Chinese "politics of citizenship" in relation to the situation elsewhere, echoed in the conclusion by a "right to the city" (Harvey) that in reality always favours one population at the expense of another (p. 199), is a high point in the book (p. 10). However, this issue is immediately absorbed into another, familiar in studies on China through work such as that of Solinger (1999) or of Chloé Froissart (2013) in France: that of the state mechanisms of a repressive Chinese power and discourse that converge to oppress and stigmatise the *nongmingong*. One might say of this narrative thread, present to a greater or lesser extent depending on the chapters, what Greenhalgh (2010: 2) said of another "master narrative" concerning the Chinese state (this time, that of the imposition of the one-child policy); not necessarily false, but neither the only true narrative nor the most interesting one.

Above all, because this fixed narrative thread takes as a given the discursive construction of the migrant as "the inferior Other" (p. 56) – a theme that is present throughout the book whilst never directly constituting the subject of its research – it seems to consider as meaningless and without effect the changes in the discourse of the Chinese media between the time when the "flood" of migrations was barely tolerated and the current age of "segmented inclusion" (p. 9), to use the author's extremely useful chronological categories. It is as though the compassionate presentation of deserving and suffering *nongmingong*, omnipresent in the media at the time when the author was carrying out her studies, was just a ploy, and that only the open forms of rejection and disdain, which certainly persist, tell the truth about the Chinese discourse.

In the last chapter, for example, the author relates an intriguing scene (p. 195): Jiawen, a respondent, tells other young migrants about his appearance on a TV reality show. To attract the sympathy of the viewers, he was advised to say, "crying while smiling," that his family were working terribly hard in the hope of buying an apartment in Shanghai so that the two children could continue their education. He did not recognise himself in this tale of misery, but "it doesn't matter," the producer told him, "you don't need to mean it; you just need to say it." At this point, Jiawen and the other young migrants to whom he is telling the story burst out laughing. The author interprets this laugh only as the confirmation of the impossibility of buying an apartment in Shanghai. She does not see the troubling proximity between the story imagined by the producer and mocked by Jiawen, and the narrative she herself suggests immediately after: Jiawen's fight to live in Shanghai, his mother's hard effort to buy a house in their home village, the restrictions that he must place upon himself to allow his younger brother to continue his studies, the apartment that they will therefore never be able to buy in that city (p. 195-6). As a result, the questions that the proximity between the two stories raise do not find their place in the narrative of the oppression of migrants. This thread in effect never ceases to reactivate the implicit division, concerning the *nongmingong*, between knowledge – the social sciences embodied in a 95% Anglophone bibliography – and the discourse, a combination of manipulation and prejudices expressed by the media and the Chinese public. But this division is impossible to maintain: the same sentiments, the same ideas, even the same authors can be found on both sides. And one cannot help but wonder if the researcher could not have extended her considerations, in a reflexive gesture, to that well-worn "master narrative" of oppressed migrants. The analysis would doubtless have lost none of its qualities – its ambition, depth, or even its political force.

Translated by Elizabeth Guill.

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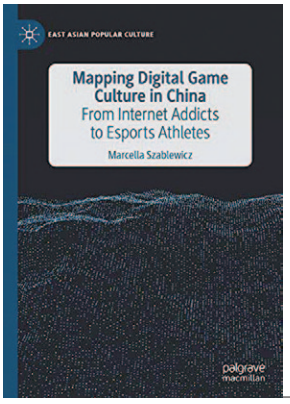

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GE ZHANG

As its title suggests, *Mapping Digital Game Culture in China* is an ambitious book that tells a story of Chinese gamers via "a situational analysis" (p. 14) of "social relations, imaginaries and discourses that flow through and around digital games, not about the games themselves" (p. 168). Although this topographical view reproduces perspectives and themes that are not too original in themselves, as other scholars have dealt with them, it does come with a distinctive personal trajectory, as the author did fieldwork in China throughout the last decade. The book is a sustained asymmetry of vignettes, anecdotes, interviews, participant observation of events and spaces, microhistories of spatial transformations, discourse/textual analyses of media coverage, online videos, memes, and so forth. The book by no means attempts to

be a comprehensive history or historiography of digital games in China, nor should the reader expect that from it. Instead, the author's disposition of artefacts, spaces, events, terminologies, categorisations, socialities, discourses, and most prominently affects "evoke" (p. 23) digital games as the medium "through which youth grapple with the challenges of contemporary life" (p. 23). Each of the aforementioned angles can be self-sufficient; together they produce an effective synergy, although overall clarity sometimes suffers due to the lack of a clear diachronic narrative that links all the artefacts, discourses, events, and spaces. The book takes a roundabout approach that circumvents discussing actual videogames and gameplay. However, this is not necessarily a drawback, because the project is much larger than digital games in themselves. Indeed, it tackles the "sideway mobility" (p. 115) in the intermediate zones between mainstream prejudices (e.g. among parents, for whom gaming must be justified) and subcultural prestige (e.g. hardcore gamers, for whom the whole discursive battleground of justifying games is not worth the trouble since they are already marginal). Below, I will introduce the body chapters and briefly discuss them.

Chapter Two describes internet cafés or *wangba* (網吧) as a "liminal space" (p. 35) for their ambiguous status. The *wangba* is often recalled as a nostalgic space of great social atmosphere, but shunned by schools and parents, and generally stigmatised because it was considered "unclean" (p. 36) and "chaotic" (p. 42) in both hygiene and spirit – embodied by the "unproductive society youth" (p. 47) who "do nothing but dance and play on the Internet to fill the time" (p. 41). For the same reason, there was also a simultaneous perverse transgressive pleasure in being in this illicit space. As internet cafés are gentrifying and withering away from their former "glory" and stigma, the spatialised socio-economic differences that once culminated on *wangba* transferred to other urban spaces, but the memories lived on. As the author puts it, "internet cafés (…) for the young people who actually experienced them (…) are monuments to the pressures of maturing in contemporary Chinese society" (p. 47).

The third chapter traverses almost the entirety of Chinese internet history to locate how the discourse of internet addiction as a moral panic came into being in the early 2000s, peaked in 2009, receded after 2010, and rose again in 2016, all of which corresponded to specific events that precipitated governmental responses. In particular, internet addiction was largely attributed to the widespread popularity of the so-called "internet games" and *wangba*. In analysing how internet addiction was visualised in the press, the author considers the discourse as "efforts to mould youth, the Internet and the market for digital products" (p. 53). Specifically, the analogy to opium was to counter the foreign cultural pollution of Chinese "spiritual civilisation": for example, *wangba* were likened to the opium den as a lower-class space. The author shows that internet addiction was not simply a "government-engineered response but rather the result of a complex web of actors and overarching cultural/historical concerns" (p. 75).

Following the earlier discussion on a societal level, anxiety about digital games, class mobility, and productivity (most evidently exhibited by parents), Chapter Four continues with the "dividing practices" (p. 11) that separate the *wangluo* (網絡, internet) games and *danji* (單機, single player) games. In stating that "*wangluo* games were considered *addictive* while *danji* games were understood to be *athletic*" (p. 89), the author accurately captures that the Chinese definition of "internet games" is in fact a socio-technical process of (re)producing both social stigma and a healthy "spiritual civilisation," rather than a technological description or a genre of games. The "totalising" (p. 107) discourse juxtaposing a skilled or even "patriotic leisure" (p. 91) in single player/e-sports games versus an addictive and potentially decadent lifestyle in internet games is "a disingenuous rhetorical construction rife with inconsistency" (p. 102) as the two often overlap. But the discourse was nonetheless maintained, not out of confusion but in a concerted effort by both kinds of gamers to tactically justify their leisure for its skills and athleticism as well as to distinguish it from internet addiction.

Chapter Five focuses on how a "spiritual homeland" of both a "social and a geographical reality" (p. 115) is carved out by Chinese players in MMOGs (massively multiplayer online games) such as *World of Warcraft* (hereafter WoW), to put it concretely, against the other reality of the "unruly nest" (p. 113) of student dorms. In contrast to dominant narratives of stigmatisation stipulated in the previous chapter, online videos such as the series *I am MT* and *War of Internet Addiction* are "an important space in which gamers can vent their frustrations with the game or its regulation" (p. 117). The "affective register" (p. 120) of the sense of belonging in MMOGs depends on the virtual worlds being "both an escape from the Real World and an alternative means of achieving mobility within it" (*ibid.*): the friendships, camaraderie, and even marriages built through the guilds and raids. In response to the escapism and nostalgia in players' narrative of WoW, the author coins the term "sideway mobility" – attainable through a MMOG where equality and meritocracy are warranted by quality game design (e.g. not "pay-to-win").

Chapter Six furthers this discussion on escapism and nostalgia via the "affective chasm" (p. 131) of losing hope in good job and marriage prospects reflected in internet memes and slang such as *diaosi* (屌絲, loser) and *jiyou* (基友, gay/gamer friend). These terms subtly articulate young people's "anxieties about their inability to cultivate prescribed heteronormative relationship" (p. 140). The "male loser trope" of *diaosi* is comparable to the "incel"[1] identity in its crisis of masculinity; but instead of incels' aggressive politics of male (and White) entitlement that has gained reactionary momentum, *diaosi* mostly centred around retreating to a modest politics of "affective deficit" as "they are, in essence, not allowed to grow *up* in the heteronormative sense of the word" (p. 158). The author does not pick a side in terms of being optimistic or pessimistic but insightfully acknowledges how the government and media organisations are already harnessing internet culture, and how these "collective affective identifications" are readily "co-opted and resold" (p. 173) by corporations.

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1. Short for "involuntary celibate."