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- 1 Ever since the early twentieth century, and until today, Shanghai has been a center for photography and image producing culture. William Schaefer's book focuses on this aspect of the city's history. The author shows how the transformation of the visual culture through photography and other related technologies for the printing and the distribution of images was crucial for the development of modernism in China. This transformation triggered a reflexion about the very nature of images, about their relation to the subjects and objects they represent, to geographical environments, material cultures and histories. Important aspects of the rare and formerly mostly unpublished pictures that William Schaefer uses for his research are fragmentation and collage or reassembling. The title *Shadow Modernism* refers to a quote by modernist writer Mu Shiying who describes Shanghai as "transplanted from Europe" and "paved with shadows"; these shadows being the traces of a quasi non-existing past of the relatively young city. Photographic practices provided a forum for the reflection about the traces of culture, ethnicity, and history. Schaffer argues that photography was a central modernist art form in China, but unlike painting, that as a national art form had to represent the identity of the modern Chinese republic, never was practiced as a medium for realist representation. Being a practice present in everyday life, photography rather represented the facets of a fragmented reality than intact images of a whole social and cultural environment. Photo layouts, shadow photography, and photomontage created recomposed images of the modern Shanghai in unexpected and surreal ways. Schaefer's analysis of unknown material, such as photographs, photomontages, cartoons, paintings, but also experimental fiction and poetry is thorough and original. He shows the practice of picture making as a mode of thinking the modern as a condition of fragmentation and displacement. Including a good biography, this both original and well-researched book is a must-read.