

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: WAITING FOR 2008 OLYMPICS: POLITICS
 BETWEEN PEOPLE, THE WEST AND THE
 CHINESE STATE
 Tan Zhang, Doctor of Philosophy, 2010

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In this dissertation, I primarily examine the power complex formed by the People/the peoples, the Chinese state and the West, particularly its embodiment before the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. This dissertation will adopt Giorgio Agamben's theorizing of People/peoples to map the dialectical power dynamics through which the state sovereign of China tended to reinforced itself through hosting the Beijing Games. In addition, by engaging critical theories of cultural studies, I hope to avoid structural formalism caused by relying on one particular theory. Thus, by bringing post-colonial theories, theories of intersectionality, theories of transnational feminism and theories of globalization together, I want to capture the role discursively played by the West that shape and reshapes the People/the peoples.

The focus of my empirical study is the People/the people. Each chapter explores one group of individuals – the peoples confined by constructed identities. According to Agamben, the People/the peoples are nothing but pure construction by the power of the state. Although the People/the peoples are sometimes “fragmentary multiplicity of needy and excluded bodies” (Agamben, 1998), it is often the case that the People/the peoples resist the power, acquire new subjectivities, and even actively engage in power negotiation with the state and the West. In this sense, the People/the peoples are not what Agamben theorized “bare life” that can only unconditionally subject themselves to the power. Instead, they carry the potential to disrupt power construction by forming transcendental subjectivity.

Following Andrews' (2008) suggestion of embracing Physical Cultural Study, I employ a variety of qualitative methodologies to articulate the dynamic power complex. By doing so, I hope to make my limited contribution to breaking the confines that the power used to construct the People/the peoples, and possibly leading China to its proper place in this cosmopolitan world.

WAITING FOR 2008 OLYMPICS: POLITICS BETWEEN PEOPLE/PEOPLES,

THE WEST AND THE CHINESE STATE

By

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DEDICATION

To people who ever had an Olympic dream.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| CHAPTER ONE: Introduction | |
| Desiring Desires – Weaving an Olympic Dream..... | 1 |
| Abhorring the Abhorrent – Making a New Cosmopolitanism | 5 |
| The Gazing West..... | 10 |
| The State and Its <i>People</i> | 18 |
| The <i>peoples</i> | 24 |
| State, <i>People(s)</i> , and West..... | 29 |
| Theory..... | 37 |
| Methods..... | 40 |
| My Olympic Games..... | 43 |
| CHAPTER TWO: From Colonial Birth to Neoliberal Death: The Geopolitics of Preserving the Old Beijing | |
| A Spectacle of Remembrance..... | 60 |
| Neo-Conservative Liang Family and Its Intellectual Residue..... | 64 |
| In the Name of Chineseness..... | 69 |
| Neoliberal Encroachment..... | 82 |
| Coda..... | 85 |
| CHAPTER THREE: New Beijing; New Toilets; Great Olympics: Tourist Gaze and Urban Reformation | |
| From an Urban Adventure to an Organized Commercial Tour..... | 92 |
| Dislocation in China..... | 95 |
| Creating the Historical Present..... | 97 |
| Disappearing Labor Value in Western Non-Places..... | 101 |
| Producing Toilets as Non-place in Beijing..... | 106 |
| Making a New Beijing..... | 112 |
| Selling the New Beijing..... | 118 |
| CHAPTER FOUR: Beijing and Beijingers | |
| Ambivalent Beijingers..... | 122 |
| Salient Geographical Identities..... | 124 |
| In the Post-Mao Beijing..... | 134 |
| Reinventing Beijinger and Beijing Culture..... | 139 |
| You Are Not a Beijinger..... | 143 |
| Coda..... | 149 |
| CHAPTER FIVE: From <i>Turandot</i> to <i>Jasmine</i> : the Historically Situated Political Aesthetics in National Representation | |
| <i>Turandot</i> : An Imperial Imagination of Chinese Nationality..... | 155 |
| <i>Jasmine</i> : The Expression of Colonial Melancholia..... | 161 |
| Rebirth of <i>Turandot</i> and <i>Jasmine</i> in Diverse Artistic Genres..... | 164 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| The Allegorical Nationalism..... | 171 |
| Coda..... | 177 |
| CHAPTER SIX: Let's Transcend: An Agambenian Reading of the Paralympics | |
| Experiencing the Transcendence..... | 180 |
| Paralympics as a Transcendental Right..... | 181 |
| A Brief Introduction of Agambenian Theories..... | 183 |
| The Most Uncanny Thing..... | 192 |
| The State of Exception..... | 198 |
| Coda..... | 205 |
| CHAPTER SEVEN: I am an Athlete; I am not Disabled! | |
| Reading Disabilities through an Intersectional Lense..... | 210 |
| A Chinese Singularity?..... | 213 |
| Class..... | 218 |
| Sexuality..... | 221 |
| Gender..... | 227 |
| I am an Athlete, Not a Person with Disabilities!..... | 230 |
| Conclusion..... | 233 |
| CHAPTER EIGHT: Janus-faced Cosmopolitanisms in/out Cyberspace: Boycott and Anti-Boycott of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games | |
| Olympic Movement in History: Sports beyond Politics..... | 239 |
| Theorizing Contemporary Cosmopolitanism..... | 243 |
| Making the "China Threat" in the post-Cold War Era..... | 245 |
| The Tibet Issue..... | 248 |
| The Darfur Issue..... | 251 |
| Protecting the Olympic Torch for China..... | 255 |
| A Progressive Ethnical Cosmopolitanism?..... | 266 |
| Coda..... | 270 |
| Chapter NINE: Epilogue: Making China Cosmopolitan? | |
| Bibliography..... | 279 |

Chapter One: Introduction

DESIRING DESIRES – WEAVING AN OLYMPIC DREAM

In May 2008, a documentary film called *Dream Weaver 2008* was released in China. The director of the film, Gu Jun, dedicated seven years and collected a huge amount of materials on how Chinese people prepared for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Quoting the director's words from one of her television interviews:

The purpose of this film was to provide a small footnote for 1.3 billion Chinese people who were weaving their dreams in the past seven years by using the Beijing Olympic Games as one of the threads.

As the only film produced in China for the Beijing Games, *Dream Weaver 2008* was appraised by the Chinese official media as a contemporary epic for the nation. Unlike other documentaries that follow one narrative thread, the film juxtaposes six seemingly unrelated stories and addresses six different groups of people simultaneously.

The first story was about the National Stadium, the so-called Bird's Nest. It covered advertising for stadium designs, screening of submitted plans, finalizing the ultimate plan, and overcoming various technical and engineering obstacles during the construction. The design of the stadium went through many rounds of a strict selection process because the stadium was to be a symbol representing the Chinese culture in this global age. The architectural expression has to be culturally Chinese as well as cosmopolitan.

The second story is about urban relocation. Residents of a suburban village,

Wa Li Xiang, moved to modern high-rise subsidized by a large amount of financial relocation compensation. On the site of their homes, the Bird's Nest and the Olympic Park were to be built. One relocated family was chosen by the director of the film to represent generational disparities – a young couple was excited about moving to a modern flat; their parents were nostalgic to maintain their old life-style. However, this generational conflict did not prevent them from working for the Beijing Games as volunteers all together.

The third story is about security policemen in Beijing. Throughout the seven years prior to the Games, policemen experienced rigorous training in order to be prepared to secure the Games. The fourth story is about well-known hurdler Liu Xiang who won gold medal in Athens and continued training to compete for the gold medal in the Beijing Olympics. The last story is about selecting and training youth female gymnasts for the Beijing Games. More than several hundreds of young gymnasts went to Beijing as candidates in 2002, only a tiny fraction of these candidates was selected to be on the national team. Six years later, only six of candidates represented China and competed in the Beijing Games. However, all of these gymnasts hold an Olympic dream.

According to the director, the film was originally named *Marching to 2008*. Although she felt that the word “March” could be perceived to reflect a political sense and would not embody the strong desire of the Chinese people to host the Games. The desire of a group may be ideological or even arbitrarily imposed; but the desire of the individuals, called a dream, should be enabling and spontaneous. The title “Dream

“Weaver” embodies not only the passion of the Chinese people towards the Games, but of the great efforts made by them to make their dreams come true. Not surprisingly, besides downplaying a nationalist tone, “Dream Weaver” also implies another layer of meaning – certain dreams just would not come true regardless of how much effort was made. For instance, in the documentary, three talented gymnasts managed to retain on the national team after rounds of competition. Tragically, one of them severely injured her hip at the end of 2006 and ended her gymnastics career forever. Playing out a dream infers linking imagined and desired objectives with tangible things of the real world. The ending might be pure ecstasy, hapless desperation or reconciliation with a harsh reality. Nevertheless, it does not stop one from weaving a thread of the Beijing Games into one’s life trajectory.

After Beijing won the bid to host the 2008 Olympic Games in 2001, the media claimed that through the Games, China would march into a brand new era. Seven years later, this type of optimistic and nationalist discourse is still lingering in media. But the Games itself no longer is just associated with national discourse, but has been incorporated into the daily practices of millions of Chinese. I witnessed how athletes with disabilities picture their dreams: “...if our team can win the national championship, we will go to Seoul for another game next August. If we manage to win that game as well, then you will definitely see us in 2008!” I also witnessed others projecting their dreams:

“Regardless successful or not, the Games will bring a more promising China.”

“After the Games, the housing price will go down;”

“The Games will re-position China in the world;”

“Chinese athletes will win more gold medals and bring more glory to the nation,”

“The Games will make the city more open and accessible,”

“The Game will bring more opportunities to Beijing, and perhaps myself a better career,”

“The Games will bring tons of tourists and tons of business to Beijing.”

Entering a new global age, Chinese people are no longer subordinated to the state ideologies that suffocate all alternatives other than a communist vernacular culture. Once freed from the suffocating culture promoted by the state, they soon devote themselves to making a new national culture that can better accommodate their own interests and desires.

Although the Olympic Games is generally considered as a pivotal strategic response of cities or states to the exigencies of globalization (see Black & Westhuizen, 2004), the political dialectics elicited by the Games goes beyond marketing power, global political order and national identity. The Olympic Games is not just a beneficiary strategy used by the “semi-peripheral” polities and cities to attract global capitals and media attention, and is not just a survival tool used by the authorities and regimes to divert critical attention generated by the public. For the public, hosting the Olympic Games is not only about refreshing subjective memories of personal and national past, but about acquiring new identities, fulfilling personal desires, and

attaching new meanings to the subjective self in this more globalized world, or in Gu Jun's words – weaving a dream. Therefore, the Games is not only a collective and nationalistic project but also an artful representation of personal desires in people's daily life.

ABHORRING THE ABHORRENT –MAKING A NEW COSMOPOLITANISM

“Exporting humane value,” a phrase that Chinese people got very familiar with in 2008, actually resulted from an Olympic Games-related media crisis. On December 28th 2007, the sports channel (CCTV-5) of the China Central Television (CCTV) held a nationally broadcast ceremony to temporarily change its name to Olympic channel. During the ceremony, Hu Ziwei, a famous television anchorman, appeared on the ceremonial stage unexpectedly and condemned her unfaithful husband Zhang Bin, who is one of the most well-known sportscasters in China and the host of the ceremony. Rather than criticizing Zhang directly, Hu made a seemingly irrelevant announcement:

As the wife of Mr. Zhang Bin, rather than in my normal role as a TV anchorman, I would like all of you to spare me a minute. Today is a special day for The Olympic Channel, and it's a special day for Mr. Zhang Bin, and for me it's a special day too. Because just two hours ago I found out that, besides me, Mr. Zhang Bin has been maintaining an improper relationship with another woman.

Next year is an Olympic year, and all eyes will be watching China. But as a French diplomat once pointed out, if Chinese people don't have any humane

values to export to the world...

Forced to leave the stage, Hu was stopped from finishing her condemning speech. Although her argument does not sound relevant to her husband's scandal, and her presence was completely deleted by the CCTV from the ceremony show broadcasted nationwide, some journalists who were present at the ceremony recorded this event with camcorders and circulated the clip on the internet. In the video clip, Hu was wearing a trendy Burberry coat and denounced her cheating husband with her professional tone, as if she was announcing daily news. Within days, this media crisis had been turned into a widely known controversy, both in mainland China and diasporic Chinese communities.

Hu's articulation of "exporting humane values" soon became a popular cyber phrase. Some people used the phrase to ridicule Hu and Zhang's failed marriage; some condemned Hu for arbitrarily bringing her private affairs to public sphere; others criticized Zhang's immoral behaviors; many just use this phrase to jokingly greet each other in cyber conversation by replacing "have you eaten?" and "how are you?" with "have you exported humane values?" But there are still some people that agree with Hu, as one commented:

Although Chinese people are getting rich, the saddest thing in our time is that we spontaneously give up our moral values. When Confucianism and Communism are no longer appealing to us, the society is permeated with Western individualistic desire for sex, money, status... Does hosting the Olympics really make us a difference? Does a perfect Games make us a

better member of the world community? My answer is No! In the past thousands of years, we exported Zen Buddhism, Confucianism and many other cultural components to the rest of the world. Today, when we are celebrating a life-time opportunity to host the Olympics, we only have a desperate wife telling us what is the right thing to do – you gotta export humane values! But the problem is: do we really have anything to export?

From the argument, we can tell that some Chinese people develop a self-conscious antagonism to Western liberalism, and hold enthusiasm in their search for a new cosmopolitan humanity with Chinese characteristics.

In Mao's era, nothing in one's life was private, and everything was linked to the grand project of Communist Utopia. Thus, those having sexual relation without the sanction of marriage would be charged with hooliganism and denounced in public settings. When Chinese people became adept at embracing capitalism to fulfill their desires, including sexual desire and desire for wealth, they also found many side effects of capitalism. "It would be ideal for neoliberalism to get rid of public morality, but both state and society need to maintain it, at least a little, to produce self-regulating desires rather than allow desire to veer toward passionate excesses" (Rofel, 2007, p. 154). Therefore, the negotiations of what is the proper humane value and what should be incorporated in the cosmopolitan culture reveal an unstable process of conflict over what counts as beneficial and proper rather than adverse and immoral capitalist practices (Rofel, 2007).

On the one hand, the discourse of the American dream shapes Chinese

subjectivities and produces a perpetual desire to pursue the American lifestyle as an approach to internalize cosmopolitan subjectivities. Nevertheless, the project of possessing cosmopolitanism is definitely multi-faceted, systematical, intersectional, and sometimes contradictory; just as Hu Ziwei positioned herself as a cosmopolitan urbanite with her Burberry coat, her highly gendered “professionalism,” her quotation from a French diplomat, and her resentment towards Western humane values. On the other hand, borrowing certain cultural and economic practices from the West does not indicate that Chinese people would accept Western culture as a whole. Therefore, the Western conjunction of capitalistic individualism and consumer culture was torn apart in this unstable Chinese context – just like Hu Ziwei eager to make her private matter public, insisted exporting Chinese humane values, and attributed the failure of her marriage to the failure of social morality for unconditional acceptance of Western humane values.

For many Chinese, their antagonism towards liberalism and neoliberalism is not just embodied through condemning Western individualism and promoting Oriental collectivism, or even nationalism. Instead, the public culture values a new version of collectivism that differentiates itself from the *People* – a revolutionary collective promoted by Maoist socialism. For instance, although the American dream is still one of the most tangible approaches through which one can approve his/her meritocracy, many overseas Chinese have generated a new definition of individual success: the successful ones include those returnees who can not only enrich one’s materialistic life but also: 1) bring back cutting-edge technology and help China to achieve

breakthroughs; 2) distribute knowledge learned from the West to China; 3) involve themselves in China's political reformation and policy making to make the Chinese society more egalitarian; and 4) help China to build enterprises that can compete against, or even surpass, transnational corporations. Besides highlighting one's materialistic achievement, this type of moral desire conveys a strong sense of cultural nationalism by focusing on the collective interests of Chinese people. However, it does not indicate that they reach an unconditional compromise with the state power. As a matter of fact, it represents a strong intention to revive Confucian morality that stands besides or even above the state regime, and so they can impose some moral restraint over the regime. In other words, by taking social responsibility through sacrificing their political freedom, returnees want to promote collective social interests, identify with the people, and assign themselves a socially progressive role – giving voice to the people. By doing so, they may force the government to act as a responsible player. This type of strategy is also widely shared by many, including Hu Ziwei – only through recouping themselves as defensive and victimized maneuvers, can they promote their moral epistemology. Meanwhile, through sewing their own interests to the interests of the collectivity of the *People*, they wish to get credits for sharing the same value with the *People* and being a part of the *People*.

In the meantime, the desire to make a better China means not only to make China into a strong, moral, wealthy and egalitarian nation, but also to make its citizens' values cosmopolitan, in other words to export humane values to the rest of the world. As Girard (1977) notes, to desire means not simply to desire an object but

also to imitate a model's way of desiring. No doubt, the superiority of the Western lifestyle is enabled and sustained by Western ideologies, the capitalist system and state apparatuses. Therefore, to make their moral standard something superior to that of the West and transform their standard to cosmopolitan standards, the Chinese people can only identify with a rising China that may facilitate the exportation of their humane values to the rest of the world.

THE GAZING WEST

Seven years ago, the West generally expected that the Beijing Games would push China to accept secular democracy. Seven years later, the expectation is largely considered a failure in that the Beijing Games have not significantly changed the political situation in China. In addition, China's more prominent position in the world system manifested through the Games is criticized, challenged and feared by many in the West. Although the Games was seen by the Chinese government as an opportunity to project a new global image for China, the new global image of China elicits a crisis in the West.

Entering the new millennium, the tension between China and the United States reached a new height. On the one hand, the project of New American Century launched by the United States failed to win the War on Terror, but indirectly contributed to China's economic prosperity (Arrighi, 2007). On the other hand, in the West, particularly in the United States, "independence of media has been compromised in some unprecedented ways" (Butler, 2002, p. 177). Although the economy of the United States has been tightly connected with that of China through

neoliberalism, the interconnectedness could not break the East/West dichotomy. Often told by media, the American masses generally believed that the Chinese government took the United States on hold through purchasing U.S. government debt; the Chinese economy undermined the U.S. industry by selling its manufactured products at below market prices; global outsourcing has greatly benefited China but left unemployment in the United States. What the media reluctant to reveal is how the neoliberal economic policy of the United States dragged China into the global economic system to rescue the United States from economic crisis (Arrighi, 2007). Under the contemporary strictures on media, the call for dual thinking regarding what makes China such a “monster” can barely be heard. Just as Butler (2002) notes,

It is the same binarism that returns us to an anachronistic division between “East” and “West” and which, in its sloshy metonymy, returns us to the invidious distinction between civilization (our own) and barbarism” (p. 178).

Although it is highly inappropriate to use the term “East” to refer to China’s position as much as to use the term “West,” the East/West dichotomy is still alive on subjective dimension and reinforced by various discourses.

As a result, in the Westerners’ eyes, the promise made by the Chinese government – to host an Olympic Games that embodies environmentalism, technology and humanitarianism – is a hoax played by a habitual criminal. Therefore, the Games was a cultural monstrosity is produced, making the West the scrutinizing audience of an on-going documentary named “China Watching” (Chow, 1991, p.84).

Thus, from one perspective of the new image of the Games, we see the Games as a

meta-narrative composed of various voices situated in the chronicling of a national historical event, as the director of *Dream Weaver 2008* tried to express. From another perspective, it is a spectacle in which all representational voices are suffocated, leaving inscrutable gestures of a monster – the Chinese state – for the Western audience to scrutinize.

In 1980, when the Moscow Olympic Games was held, the world was geographically and ideologically divided with conflicts often fired between the capitalist and socialist camps. In 2008, China had become a discursive *Other* that one (the West) cannot not face and accept. Thanks to the World Trade Organization, the Chinese government has tightly woven the labor power of the Chinese people into the network of the global economy in the past seven years, and tremendously strengthened its economic might. However, by associating itself with the global economic assemblage, the Chinese state refuses to give up its role as a dominant regulator and prevents new types of regulation and legislative items to emerge. More strikingly, when the Western media enjoys more media freedom in China, and is ready to present a monstrous China to the world, it first confronts unexpected criticisms from the Chinese people.

To many Westerners, the monstrous China they are facing today is more difficult to interpret than ever before. Although the image of the monster as Communism is long familiar to many Western audiences, the threat of the monster was largely imaginary until products carrying the labels of “made in China” flooded the Western market. On the one hand, the reading of the monster has not been

changed significantly: either a monster may collapse at anytime (see Chang, 2001; Shirk, 2007); or a monster can kill ruthlessly in any moment promoted by scholars who advocate China as a threat. On the other hand, the monster has closely tethered itself to the overall Western world through stock shares, bonds, foreign currency reserves, imported commodities as well as economic diplomacy. Even though the former Communist image has been replaced by a relatively tame appearance of a capitalistic Chinese regime, the Western world is still hesitant to give up its “captivity narrative” of the once nailed monster –Communist China.

All the media discourse made the Western public hesitant to accept the claim made by the Chinese government – this nation will promote harmony, and rise peacefully as a responsible superpower. As Peerenboom (2007) notes,

Critics fear that unlike Japan, which during its economically powerful years did not attempt to challenge the Western powers, China is likely to take advantage of its growing economic and geopolitical influence to defend and advocate, even in the face of Western opposition, rights policies and a normative vision of the world at odds with current rights policies based on secular liberalism (p. 4).

Evidently, the foremost concern was the totalitarian nature of the Chinese state. An opinion widely shared by Western media was that, if the Chinese regime were to usurp the Olympic Games to promote anti-Western xenophobia and facilitate its hegemony against universal human dignity, the Beijing Games may restage the scene of the 1936 Berlin Games. Even in the intellectual circles, the comparison between

Beijing and Berlin is often made by many (see Kruger, 2004; Brownell 2004). The second concern was regarding the tremendous influence China could generate to shape the current world order. As Samuelson (2004) puts it,

All we know for certain is that we really don't know. With a country as big as China undergoing so much dramatic change – moving from a “command and control” economy to a market system – the chances that anyone has a complete picture of what's going on are slim or nonexistent. In a smaller country, our ignorance wouldn't matter much. But in China, it's slightly terrifying (p. A27).

Unlike Japan and South Korea, China is not militarily depending on the United States and docilely handing in a protection payment on time. Also, China is not a city-state like Hong Kong and Singapore that barely have any natural resources. Its geopolitical position, military might and economic dominance in East Asia make the state more precarious to the West.

The most urgent task of reading China is interpreting its economic reform. Although David Harvey puts the portrait of Deng Xiaoping along with those of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan on the cover of his book— *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, the Chinese regime does not completely comply with a neoliberal prescription. In the economic realm, the Chinese state never gives up acting as a “visible hand.” It actively regulates the flow of capitals, disciplines labor power, negotiates global trade agreements, controls currency exchange rates, and sets the prices of crucial resources and products on the domestic market. As World Bank

official Agarwala (2002) notes:

China is perhaps the best example of a country that has listened to foreign advice but has made decisions in the light of its own social, political, and economic circumstances... Whatever else may be the basis for China's success, it was definitely not a blind adoption of the policies of Washington (p. 96-96).

Using its labor capital as stake, the Chinese state makes itself the biggest winner in the neoliberal game while many of the Third World nations suffer failure. When the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the American government along with its G7 partners promote free market and grant more freedom to private financial institutions, the heavy state intervention in China appears irrelevant or even arbitrary. Although Castells (1992) identifies that, to the Chinese state, "economic development is not a goal but a means" to its nationalist power (p. 56-58), the highly improved living condition also makes Stiglitz (2002) affirm that the Chinese state never confused ends (the welfare of the population) with means (free market economy). Thus, not only are the strategies adopted by the Chinese state obscure to read, the priority of its goal is hard to identify.

In the field of international politics, the practices of the Chinese regime are also obscure. It insists the inalienable authority of state sovereignty by continuing to promote its old diplomatic agenda from the 1960s: no hegemony, no power politics, no military alliances, no arms race. In 2004, on the top of four Nos, Hu Jintao proclaims "four yeses: confidence building, reducing difficulties, developing

cooperation, and avoiding confrontation” (Arrighi, 2007, p. 292). Launching the Shanghai Coordinate Organization (SCO) was one of the materializations of the Four Yeses agenda in facilitating territorial economic cooperation. When the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) radically expanded itself in Eastern Europe in the name of regional security and human rights, the Chinese government was rather reluctant to turn the SCO into a military alliance. When the United Nations (UN) troops were sent to Kosovo to make peace by overriding state sovereignty acknowledged by the UN charters, and the United States militarily occupied Afghanistan and Iraq in the name of defending human rights, the four Nos agenda seemed outdated. Nevertheless, it did not prevent the Chinese government to actively embrace economic diplomacy through bilateral and multilateral agreements with other states to win over political partners across the world.

Inscrutability of the Chinese regime set a challenge for the West to accurately visualize and capture this “monster.” As Arrighi (2007) comments, the confusion that surrounds Deng’s reform is symptomatic of widespread misconceptions of China’s development and the overarching role taken by the state. Furthermore, cultural homogeneity makes the authoritarian state extremely elastic and durable over other possible types of state structures such as confederations, loose empires or city-states. When most Communist regimes stepped down from power, the Chinese state demonstrated unparalleled adaptability by reconfiguring its relationships with the neoliberal doctrine. The confusion forces many to rethink what neoliberalism is and what role it plays with the nation-state to enable neoliberalism for its own interests.

Rather than defining neoliberalism as “an economic doctrine with a negative relation to state power and a market ideology that seeks to limit the scope and activity of governing,” Ong (2006a) suggests to consider neoliberalism as a governing technology – “a profoundly active way of rationalizing governing and self-governing in order to ‘optimize’” (p. 3). In other words, the state is not a passive victim that voluntarily gives up its authority to free market but a sophisticated player that strives to maximize its benefits by claiming economic freedom. Through negotiation, the Chinese state authorities accomplished the pragmatic goal of forcing the West to grant more trading privileges, accept regulative terms, and bring in technologies; the Western companies also gained substantially from the Chinese government, with cheap labor without unions, tax reliefs and access to the Chinese market (Chow, 2002).

Often, initiating or joining the global economy functioned in ways that strengthened the nation-state in the short term but weakened its authority in the long term, particularly when the state is forced to give up its control over its capital. It is very true for the United States, as David Harvey (2003) notes,

The vast quantities of capital fixed in place act as a drag upon the capacity to realize a spatial fix elsewhere....If capital does move out, then it leaves behind a trail of devastation and devaluation; the deindustrializations experienced in the heartlands of capitalism ...in the 1970s and 1980s are cases in point. If capital does not or cannot move... then overaccumulated capital stands to be devalued directly through the onset of a deflationary

recession or depression (p. 116).

When the state has to make a choice between deindustrialization and deflation, allowing the capital to move is a seemingly better option. It also helps to understand why former President George W. Bush commanded a political mandate to transform life in the United States by “preparing our people for the challenges of life in a free (market) society,¹” leaving the economic losers to blame their inability to accommodate the new global order. It offers us an opportunity to witness that “the specific, often specialized rearrangements inside this highly formalized and institutionalized national apparatus that enabled that shift” (Sassen, 2006, p. 6).

The shift from the arrangement of nation-states to a new global order might depend on multiple capabilities of nation-states, particularly their capabilities to enable the shift (Sassen, 2006). As Sassen (2006) predicts that, along with growing prominence of a global economy, the capabilities of nation-states will gradually diminish until they are replaced by a new global governmentality. Diluting rivalries among the major state powers could be used to exemplify the emerging governmental capability of the emerging global system (Sassen, 2006). However, this prediction for the emerging apparatus of global institutions and dynamics is heavily relying on the historical trajectory of Euro-American lineage. As a result, it tends to downplay the power hierarchy and cultural heterogeneity embedded in the emerging global order.

THE STATE AND ITS PEOPLE

Early modern Europe realized an institutionalization of checks and balances

¹ Bush pledges a broad push toward market-based policies. New York Times, Nov. 4th, 2004.

among towns and tribes, while ancient China gave birth to a totalitarian and inclusive empire (Hui, 2005). Since its first unification in 221 BC, China had been governed by a highly rational and meritocratically-selected bureaucracy, a political system that anticipated similar developments in Europe by almost two thousand years. Although the imperial state was always an embodiment of ruthless oppression of the people, its historical vicissitude and cyclical repetition transformed the apparatus of state to a meaningless resumption that hardly carries a rational mission other than continue itself (Agamben, 2000). This irrational inertia can be discerned from Chinese mass' fantasy of reiterating the habitual reproduction of the feudal states – we still exist when the other three ancient civilizations have long gone. As Chow (1998a) points out, “this fantasy (to history) says: The trick of our success is the ability to stick it out – to absorb every external difficulty into ourselves, to incorporate even our enemies into our culture. We endure, therefore we are” (p. 128). When the history of the people can only be narrated and remembered through the history of the state, the privileged cultural endurance of the people has been conflated with that of the state.

When the irrational inertia of the state was violently interrupted by modernity, the history of endurance transformed itself to a history of mourning and loss (Eng & Kazanjian, 2003). “To articulate the past historically,” Benjamin (1969) insists, “means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger . . . to retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to man singled out by history at a moment of danger” (p. 255). In modern history, the whole notion of China and the Chinese ethnical and cultural identities were invented through the clash between

Western imperialist power and Chinese feudal state (Liu, 2004). Even though the Chinese state struggles to achieve modernization, its tragic encounter with Western power also justifies its revival of ancient Chinese learning through which a holistic Chinese worldview is formed through reintegrating cultural fragments (Liu, 1995). When the state tradition is challenged or disrupted, the history with continuity becomes a “just” means to restore a (Chinese) Empire, to exclude an aggressor, to compensate a victim, and to create fear (Foucault, 1977). The violent construction of Chinese nationalism in late-imperial China was discursively connected with various pre-modern cultural elements which overarch the fantasy of resuming the cultural endurance (Liu, 1995).

The redemption of the subjective loss could not be fulfilled until another strong state – the Communist China – was established to resume this special fantasy over endurance. Not only did the state redeem the loss, it also claimed itself as the only means for the people to record their own histories. Dirlik (1987) observes the Chinese communist state:

If it does not bring the proletariat (or the oppressed classes) into the forefront of history, it at least makes them into a central component of the national struggle – as a referent against which the fate of ideas and values must be judged (p. 37).

It is the first time that China becomes the People’s Republic that can fend off imperialism and cultural oppression, making the nation truly of and for the people. Through manufacturing the grand collectivity of the *People*, the state presents itself as

an internal jurisdiction for the *People* (Agamben, 2000). Using dialectic between a desire of inclusion and a fear of exclusion, the state not only promoted “the idea of a containable and countable population, the idea of a reliable census, and the idea of stable and transparent categories” (Appadurai, 2006, p. 6), but also imposed an inclusive but hegemonic subjectivity for all its citizens. For every citizen of China, only by signing a contract with the nation and subjecting oneself to the state sovereignty can they enter the state-promised Utopian space for the *People*.

However, created by the state sovereignty, the imaginary collectivity of *People* was “usurped by the state to picture a classless society, to project a *People* without fraction, and to facilitate *peoples’* subjectification” (Agamben, 2000, p. 34). Rather than carrying political progressiveness, “the *People* as a whole and as an integral body politics ... (is) an inclusive concept that pretends to be without remainder ... (and) the total state of the sovereign and integrated citizens” (Agamben, 2000, p. 31). Once the state fails to keep its Utopian promise, the collective singularity – *the People* – soon turns itself to a sanctioned violence that can overthrow the sovereignty for the sake of promised Communist Utopia (Benjamin, 1996). Taking the 1989 Tiananmen accident as an example, when the state confronts the *People* that it cannot represent and discipline, the only thing the state can do is to use violence against the collective “singularity that wants to take possession of belonging to itself as well as of its own being-into-language,” (Agamben, 2000, p. 89).

In the post-Tiananmen era, the Chinese state no longer keeps reinforcing the collectivity of the *People* but tends to re-create fractions to stabilize its authority. In

other words, the state divides the *People* into *peoples* with conflicted interests and phrasing them as “fragmentary multiplicity of needy and excluded bodies” (Agamben, 1998, p. 177) to be fed. As Chow (1998a) laments:

China’s foremost problem of governance, overpopulation, is approached not as a problem that can and should be solved gradually, but rather as an immutable fact – an immutable fact that is, moreover, cast in the form of an *essential lack*, the (potential) lack of food. Such, then, is the attitude of the Chinese authorities: it is inconceivable that the West tell China what to do on the issue of *human rights because human rights in China simply means having enough to eat* (p. 117).

Thus, the state flexibly responds to social instabilities by adjusting its internal structure through variegated sovereignty to accommodate a turbulent neoliberal society and manage the fractions it re-created (Ong, 2006a).

In the meantime, the state scrambles all the class-based identities and grants the people more individual “freedom” to enjoy materialistic “good life” (Agamben, 2004). For instance, rural residents can move to the city “freely” to adopt urban life, even though the freedom in the city is exploitative and second-class; the new comers to the city can “freely” manifest meritocracy and achieve their urban citizenship through acquiring housing and through consumption; individuals are granted more freedom to articulate the subjective desires rather than to speak through the language of the nation-state; and intellectuals can “freely” express their artistic mind and pursue economic benefits as long as they do not directly challenge the authority of the state.

By governing people through freedom and in relation to freedom, the state can somehow differentiate its current form from that of its totalitarian and arbitrary past (Rose, 1999 & 2004). “As liberal discourse converts political identity into essentialized private interest, disciplinary power converts interest into normativized social identity manageable by regulatory regimes” (Brown, 1995).

Since it adopted neoliberalism, the Chinese state has lifted more than 200 million people above the poverty line, and enabled a large fraction of its population to enjoy a modernized good life (Yao, 2000). Following the nations in southeastern Asia, the state uses Confucian cultural essentialism to explain its economic success. Inside China, the state proposes culturally based national-building to constitute popular discourse of nationalism to achieve an inconspicuous disseminated overlap between the nation and the state (Zhang, X., 2001b). In a large context of Asia-Pacific, the state promotes a homogeneous Chinese culture, and establishes *Special Economic Zones* to attract investment from overseas Chinese. This strategy of variegated sovereignty soon generates a tremendous economic influence that goes beyond the geographical boundary of the state. As Ong (2006a) puts it,

Unlike the EU, which was forged through multilateral negotiations...the regional space informally called Greater China is the outcome of the administrative strategies of a single state, China, in pursuit of greater cross-border trade. Greater China... is the spatial production of a state-driven scheme to integrate disarticulated political entities economically as a detour to eventually political integration (p. 98).

In the meantime, the cultural discourse of neo-Confucianism, which had been dismissed since the establishment of the People's Republic, was revived by the Chinese regime to a grand, dynamic and fluid process of sovereignty that glues all political and economic archipelagos (Ong, 2004; Bell, 2008). The rhetoric of "Greater China" or "Cultural China" proliferating nowadays cannot blur the distinction between notions of the nation based on culturalist ethnocentrism and those based on modern, if not post-modern, economic rationalism" (Zhang, X., 2008, p. 109). Particularly, the Beijing Games is narrated by the Chinese regime as a symbol of the renaissance of Chinese culture at large, attempting to create transnational Chineseness based on cultural homogeneity. To capture the nature of state sovereignty, Agamben (2000) suggests that the political potentiality does lie in dialectic between a collectivity of *People* and fraction of *peoples*, both are created by the sovereignty to sustain its power.

THE *peoples*

When neoliberalism entails deep imbrications with the national, and gains prominence in global culture, "processes of denationalization allow, enable, or push the construction of new types of global scalings of dynamics and institutions; other times they continue to inhabit the realm of what is still largely national" (Sassen, 2006, p. 1). China definitely stands as the latter one, when the state skillfully plays the dialectic of *People* and *peoples*, and extends Chinese cultural nationalism beyond its geographical boundaries. Thus, the predominant position of the Chinese state tends to confirm the singularity of itself as an irrational and inconceivable *Other* – a perpetual

enemy for neoliberalists as well as universal human rights. When this nation-state is not victimized by the dramatic global change, the only victim that can be identified must be its people – the people still live with, and can only live with, national discourse. Nevertheless, Sassen (2006) argues:

The institutional and subjective micro-transformations denationalization produces frequently continue to be experienced as national when they in fact entail a significant historical shift in the national (p. 2).

Therefore, this grand manifestation of transnational nationalism as a part of the denationalization process is actually an expression of cosmopolitanism through national forms.

This vocalization of cosmopolitanism through national tone, however, does not necessarily anticipate what Sassen (1995) expected – global economic and political citizenship built upon transnational political institutions and economic agencies. Particularly, the transnational political and economic networks have not contributed to a politically progressive subjectivity of global citizens in China. Instead, when the Chinese state loses its ideological control and projects a picture of the “good life” to its *People/peoples*, the ever confined personal desires and individualistic subjectivities ramble on. For instance, Chinese intellectuals tend to rebuild a cultural hierarchy with a small circle of elitism, which had been discarded and even condemned when the regime promoted the Communist vernacular mass culture during the Cultural Revolution (Wang, 1996). Other intellectuals warmly embraced the Western cultural market, and tried to circulate their works around the

world as global cultural currency (Zhang, X. , 2001b). Influenced by Deng's slogan "To get rich is glorious," even Tiananmen pro-democracy dissidents tended to take the commercial road once released from prison (Arrighi, 2007). Maximizing personal wealth soon became a socially accepted ethic, when the ideology of the egalitarian achievement and Communist leadership were still lingering in people's cultural memories. Ownership of wealth, along with on-going social stratification, becomes a crucial factor that constitutes one's subjective understanding of self.

Besides emerging class-based identification, previously discouraged individualistic expressions were released. New social elites pursued sexual desires without considering moral responsibility, such as the aforementioned Hu-Zhang controversy. New gender identities, geographically based identities, national identity, bodily-based identities and other socially constructed desires were juxtaposed in booming metropolises for recognition and justification. Therefore, along with their hegemonic and tactical state, the *peoples* of China also participated in creating cosmopolitanism in this neoliberal age through expressing their self-interests and staging their desired identities. The widely manifested liberal individualism entangled with governmentality of the state lie in the efforts by the Chinese state and its *peoples* to overcome their socialist past, assimilate strength from the global culture, and lead China toward its proper place in a cosmopolitan globalized world (Rofel, 2007). However, when they finally overcame their socialist past, they encountered various social inequalities and suppression brought by economic and cultural freedom.

When the state established free markets through policies, socially corrosive

effects of moneymaking became unavoidable. The ones who have greatly benefited from the change are not only the offspring of the party elite, but also former urban proletarians who accumulated personal wealth through privatization of previously public-owned enterprises. The widely manifested meritocracy and individual achievements used by these new social elites to conceal their contribution to new social inequality, condemned the socialistic equalitarianism in the past, and constructed new capitalistic moral economy. According to Adam Smith's political economy, if we perceive the role played by the state as the *visible hand*, then the *invisible hand* are *peoples* who pursue their own interests. As Smith (2003) theorizes an *invisible hand*:

As every individual, therefore, endeavours as much as he can both to employ his capital in the support of domestic industry, and so to direct that industry that its produce may be of the greatest value; every individual necessarily labours to rend the annual revenue of the society as great as he can. He generally, indeed, neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it ... he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention (p. 572).

Although Adam Smith (2003) uses *invisible hand* as a metaphor to explain the unintended economic consequences caused by individuals' economical practices, its implication is also valid in sociocultural sphere. In certain cases, when the state tends to mitigate stratification and grants a better materialistic life for all, an *invisible hand*

diverts the direction that social reformation intends to move. Even some seemingly righteous resistance is to achieve personal gains, and furthers marginalization of some invisible *Others*. In the meantime, some social groups that benefited from the state policies voluntarily gave up their political radicalism, passively attaching their personal fate with that of the state, and created new social worlds of class segregation.

Rather than summarizing the interests of the *peoples* in the neoliberal age as maximizing their economic gains, the manifestation of interests may not always be as apparent as we expected. Instead, the variety of interests is not only embodied through more discursive cultural manners, but also linked to politics in previous epochs.

Although the neoliberal cosmopolitanism largely dominates the economical sphere, it fails to fully erase the historical trajectory through which the contemporary cosmopolitan culture came into being. For the *peoples* who have benefited from the state and economic reformation, a selective version of genealogies was deliberately chosen and modified in order to justify their private gains. Therefore, the *peoples* are marked by contradictory themes, and they could not be mechanically put in the category of *subalterns* dominated by the state.

For the state, the vicissitude of its precedents becomes the primary reason to maintain cultural solidarity and sustain its arbitrary claim of authority. In other words, “the dream of regaining China’s stature as an empire and the post-colonial desire to attain material and moral parity with the West have motivated much of China’s actions in the post-Cold War world” (Rofel, 2007, p. 12). Most importantly, the dream is not only the dream of the Chinese state in the name of the *People*, but also that of

its *peoples*.

Moreover, the purposeful revival of historical roots to justify ones' political action, by the state or the *peoples*, is not only to fulfill political interest, but also to project a new cosmopolitan morality. In other words, because we (both the state and the *peoples*) are forced to give up so much in the past, we are not, and will not be, oppressive to others. We are just getting what we deserve. Both the state and the *peoples* uphold its moral superiority through transforming the victimhood, formed through ones' subjective understanding of history, into the very means of cultural politics to "affirm a moral vision that things have been, should be, and could be different" (Lee & Yang, 2007, p. 7).

The moral economy adopted by the Chinese state and its citizens not only leads them to embrace the cultural and political movement that constitutes the global culture, but entails them to create a new cosmopolitan culture (Rofel, 2007). There was a commentary on how to properly position China in the world system and what to do to avoid repeating the mournful past. For instance, the proper path that China takes should never be assigned by the West. Not only should China never engage in wholesale privatization and marketization assigned by neoliberal economists in the West, but it should export its value system. The project of "world reordering" is not just a project proposed by the state. Instead, the desire of the Chinese people to construct cosmopolitan Chineseness is largely tethered with the desires of the state.

STATE, PEOPLE(S) AND THE WEST

Whatever the position one might take, the confusion that surrounds the

situation of contemporary China is symptomatic of widespread theoretical misconceptions about the relationship between the state, the *People* (or *peoples*), and the West. In my dissertation, the task is not only to articulate the political conjuncture composed of three crucial parties: the state, the *People* (or *peoples*) and the West, but also to critically engage and disengage different theoretical approaches.

First of all, I engage post-colonial theory and subaltern studies to interpret the East-West dichotomy, although neither the Chinese state nor its people are fully subjected to the Western power. China is neither a superpower to collapse nor a monster that no one can take hold. Neither are the Chinese people brainwashed and indifferent to the suppressive state nor are they xenophobic and hysteric Communists. In addition, the construction of Chineseness, regardless if it focuses on the state or the people, is not a unidirectional process. Instead, the Chinese state and its people actively contribute to construction of Chineseness and afford it new meanings.

Second, I adopt Giorgio Agamben's theory to study the ambivalent and arbitrary state. Although the state is suppressive to various social groups - it does not and can never be able, to handle its people like simply biological life. On the one hand, the Chinese government announces new initiatives to expand welfare for farmers, waives agricultural tax, launches a universal healthcare system, cuts taxes for the urban low-income people, and postpones privatization of land. A predatory state would not tend to adopt such a set of reform policies. On the other hand, Chinese people are extremely savvy about how to interpret international/domestic politics and adept at skillfully fighting for their personal interests. Rather than leaving the socialist

slogan “serving for the People” in history, they use their socialist heritage to press the government and strive for their own interests. Therefore, the state is not a pure Agambenian sovereignty that is eager to eliminate the exceptions that challenge its philosophical order; the people are not always the bare life that only has two options to choose: to be killed or to be subordinated.

Third, I use theory of intersectionality to investigate complex identity politics. Although all identities are discursively constructed by power, some subordinated and socially marginalized groups are intending to change the power structure that shapes their identities. Particularly, certain seemingly subalterns are not always undertaking the role of victim and carry the political agency. In my dissertation, even though I could not speak for the most marginalized social groups, I agree with Spivak (1996) that the most subordinated or marginalized social positions should not be fetishized. As a matter of fact, the socially marginalized groups never stop wrestling with ambivalence, just like Chinese people’s dilemma towards the new global culture brought by the Beijing Games – the thing they desire could be abhorrent.

All chapters are related to the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Each of the chapters presented a banal scene (or an allegorical image), through which we discerned various contradictions embodied through the Games. To Chinese people, the Beijing Games is not only a sign indicating China’s march to the global world but also a venue through which they can possess cosmopolitan subjectivities. To the West, when the Olympic Games, an embodiment of world peace and a celebration of trans-cultural unity, was hosted by China, everything shiny, particularly those

constructed by the nation-state, become susceptible. For example, the massive project of beautifying the urban environment of Beijing was done to conceal the backwardness of the city caused by the totalitarian state. The radical modernization of the city lead to brutal destruction of the ancient urban layout and indicated the failure of the regime to modernize the nation as a whole. The coercive relocation must have been intended to expel the marginalized social groups from the urban space and maximize the monetary benefits of the local regime. All relocated families were subject to governmental persecution and suffered homelessness. For the athletes, the training was abusive in that their training is not driven by self-interest but the interests of the government. Not only were their bodies just a means to achieve certain ends desired by the state, but they were forced to handle a tremendous amount of pressure. Their success was to be the success of the manipulative project of nation building, but their failure was only their own. Moreover, rather than signaling social development of the Chinese society, the triumph of Chinese athletes with disabilities further proved that the state exploited the most socially marginalized groups to cover its cruel abuse of human rights. Briefly, the discourse regarding the Beijing Games was largely driven by a humanitarian desire for universal justice, attempting to reveal “facts,” and rescue oppressed Chinese victims from endless sufferings. Each “fact” listed above became a real starting point for me to model my consciousness.

Through examining these contradictions, we may “break through old narratives of change and seeing fresh ones” (Jameson, 1998, p. 376). Frow and Morris (2000) note, “cultural studies often tends to operate in what looks like an eccentric

way, starting with the particular, the detail, the scrap of ordinary or banal existence, and then working to unpack the density of relations and of intersecting social domains that inform it” (pp. 508). Each of the chapters started from an allegorical reading of social contradictions related to the Beijing Games. The question my dissertation addressed is not how Chinese people enabled the Games in China but how they negotiated with the gaze from the West and the oppression from the state. Taking the Beijing Games as a primary site, I work outwards, upwards, sideways and so on from it to unpack the density of social relations that inform it (Frow & Morris, 2000). By connecting these allegorical images to deeper power struggles, I hope to articulate the power conjuncture formed by the Chinese state, the West and the People/peoples.

In my dissertation, each of the chapters focuses on one social entity formed through contradictions, and all entities related to the Beijing Games and involved in the political conjuncture formed by the state, people(s), and the West. All the chapters are based on intensive empirical observations. In terms of subject matter, the chapters can be generally divided into two sections. One section addresses geopolitics, namely the urban space of Beijing. The other section illustrates biopolitics of people with disabilities. Chapter Two begins with construction of architectural Chineseness. Dating back to the imperial era when the Oriental culture met the West, I trace the genealogical trajectory through which the discourse of “protecting the Old City” came into being.

Chapter Three addresses the tourist gaze by focusing on an urban tourist site, the Beijing alleyways (also called Beijing Hutongs). The Hutong Tour became

popular around 1992, when Deng Xiaoping made his tour to southern China and encouraged further economic reformation to attract foreign capital. The opening door not only attracts foreign direct investment but also foreign tourists who were looking for distinctive cultural features in the urban hinterland of Beijing. The global tourism greatly enabled the transformation of the landscape of the city as well as the local understanding of what the city should look like.

Chapter Four projects the trajectory of the ever-changing housing policies advocated by the socialist government along with different versions of urban utopia constructed by its ideologies. By tracing the trajectory, we can make sense of the contesting powers that shape the urban space of Beijing in the pre-Olympic era through the capital and the housing market. These housing-related ideologies picture Utopias at different historical epochs. Rather than forming a harmonious continuity, these ideologies embody tensions and fractures between these epochs. The tension and fractures of ideologies further indicate the arbitrary nature of the nation-states. The illusionary narratives of Utopias are nothing but governing tactics by which the state disciplines the urban space and reinforces its legitimacy.

In Chapter Five, I turn the attention to the construction of a geographically related identity—Beijinger. Different from the social scheme of the Western society, the social texture of the Chinese society is not so much mediated by race and gender as it is in the West. Instead, it is heavily delineated by geographical lines, specifically the urban-rural chasm. Living in the political, economic and cultural center of China, Beijinger is not only a local identity that symbolizes extraordinary political

consciousness and cultural rootedness, but also a representation of geographical hegemony. Hosting the Olympic Games makes the ambivalence of this local identity more salient than ever before. Through tracing the genealogy of the urban space of Beijing, I want to reveal the making and remaking of this local identity.

Chapter Six focuses on a highly gendered indigenous folksong – Jasmine. This folksong has been frequently used in widely-broadcasted cultural-political settings, particularly in mega-sports events such as the Olympic and Paralympic ceremonies. It almost becomes the secondary national anthem as *God Bless America* is in the U.S. This chapter specifically focuses on the musical presentation of China in these sporting events and ceremonies where nationalism and social subordination are contested and achieved. It is also an effort to scrutinize the versatility and ambiguity of musical aesthetics in the sports realm.

Heavily borrowing from Giorgio Agamben's theories of sovereignty and exception, Chapter Seven reflects on the repressive nature of a global system – the Paralympic Games. I want to reveal the invisible power embedded in this particular global system and its discursive influence on people, which distorts their understanding of their own bodies. It makes them believe that, only through endless negation of their physical bodies, here I mean punishing training and disciplining of their disabled bodies, can they eventually achieve the transcendence of physical materiality.

Chapter Eight is an ethnographical study of Chinese athletes with disabilities. Through interviews and participant-observation, I analyze the articulation of athletes

with disabilities, and investigate how intersectional power of class, gender, sexuality, national identity, and body difference shape their subjective understanding of their disabled sporting bodies. Particularly, I want to address how the athletes' desires for social belonging and acceptance contour the way that they identify with able-bodiedness. In addition, how they use this identification to differentiate themselves from other people with disabilities.

Chapter Nine investigates the power dialectic between Western cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitanism with Chineseness. After the Tibet turmoil in March 2008, a global protest against the Beijing Olympic Games, which had been discussed and planned in cyberspace, went beyond the virtual reality and widely manifested itself as a cosmopolitan movement during the global Olympic torch relay. As a response, the Chinese diasporic communities used cyberspace to organize pro-Olympic/pro-China demonstrations across the world, which later sparked nationalism in mainland China. I employ cyber ethnography to contextualize the worldwide boycott of the Beijing Games by articulating its social conditions, and delineate the politics through which cosmopolitanism with Chineseness is enabled as a counter-force of the boycott.

The chapters tend to be, but are not strictly arranged, in a chronological order. Instead, there are chapters overlapping in time. For example, Chapter Two and Chapter Six map the same post-colonial trajectory from different perspectives: architectural and musical aesthetics. Chapters Three and Four have time overlaps by addressing the post-1949 urban change but with different focuses. Chapter Two and

Nine both address the Western construction of Chineseness; however, the dialectical counterparts of the Western construction in different eras vary. The Chinese architects and oversea Chinese interpret their appreciation of Chineseness in distinctive approaches. As Grossberg notes, cultural studies is about integrating rigorous theories, empirical research and political commitment (Wright, 2001). Neither do the chapters embody direct connections with each other, nor do they share the same tone. However, the critical stance and political commitment I take towards the state, the West and the *People* (or *peoples*) remains.

THEORIES

My dissertation is a limited endeavor to characterize the contexts that contain and embody physical culture and urban complexes of the contemporary China. The dissertation tried to capture dynamic social formations of Chinese society “without falling into the twin traps of reductionism and essentialism” (Slack, 1996, p. 112). Therefore, I try to approach contemporary China from various perspectives and conceptualize it with different theories and methods to avoid reductionism.

Stuart Hall (1983) notes that the commitment to “the process of theorizing” is the essence of cultural studies in that it is the engaging and grasping of something of the truth about new historical realities (p. 84). In the meantime, he also reminds us that using structured theories as rigid templates runs the risk of simplifying power conjuncture and formalism. As Hall (1980) insists,

The unity formed by this combination or articulation, is always, necessarily, a “complex structure”: a structure in which things are related, as much

through their differences as through their similarities. This requires that the mechanisms which connect dissimilar features must be shown – since no necessary correspondence” or expressive homology can be assumed as given. It also means – since the combination is a structure (an articulated combination) and not a random association – that there will be structured relations between its parts, i.e., relations of dominance and subordination (p. 325).

Therefore, the primary goal of my dissertation is to map the power relations of the global/local conjuncture.

The primary structure of the dissertation is overarched by Orientalism, post-colonialism, and transnational feminist theories. The adoption of these theories is not only for their accurate delineation of the relations of dominance and subordination in post-colonial context in general and the contemporary Chinese context in particular, but also for the powerful political agency embedded in these branches of theories that may change the uneven relationship for the better. However, the global power politics has significantly changed the political and economic landscape of China. The argument that China has been subjected to colonial power and experienced extreme substantial poverty becomes a more misleading rather than convincing statement in this new millennium. Thus, the adoption of Orientalism, post-colonialism, and transnational feminist theories should avoid arbitrary reductionism of historicity and ensure the attention is focused on the mechanism that contributes to the more contemporary cultural practices. Thus, the adoption of these branches of theories sets

a challenge for me – linking the somehow rigid theories to an ever-changing configuration of the powers, tracing their historical trajectory, and possibly re-articulating the system of dynamics.

When the discourses of Orientalism, post-colonialism and transnational feminism are widely circulated and employed in Third World contexts, they have to mediate and negotiate with the specter of Marxism and resilient local culturalism. The various discourses intertwine together and form an extraordinary power complex. Although they appeared objective and interest-free, theories are always connotatively linked with interests of certain social groups. Along with the dynamics of power complexes, the interest groups represented by these theories are also changing. Taking the discourse of protecting old Beijing City as an example, Orientalism, developed from a theory that narrates colonial oppression to a tool that the local intellectuals use to showcase their cultural capital and attack state hegemony. This type of self-Orientalism, furthermore, becomes a discursive domination constructed by the local intellectuals over the people. On the other hand, facing the multi-layered and discursive domination, the people present fractured identities and are unable to form any transcendental possibilities.

Hall (1985) points out for us, the link of social relations “can be dissolved and replaced by new connections because it has ‘particular conditions of existence’ that must be constantly renewed” (p. 113-114). Therefore, it is crucial to articulate and re-articulate the shifting processes of power struggles rather than confirming theoretical formalism and claiming a determinant social structure. Before I entered the

final stage of my dissertation writing, I decided to use Giorgio Agamben's theory of state sovereignty and bare life as my theoretical underpinning. However, as I approach my subject matter, I gradually realized that the politics I wanted to conceptualize is far more complex than a dichotomy of absolute domination and unconditional suppression. Rather than surrender their lives to the state, the People/peoples never stop showcasing their resistance through either straightforward or savvy means. In addition, the relationship between the Chinese state and the West does not comply with what many Orientalists theorize that the Chinese state subordinates to the West, and exists as the exception. Instead, they form a discursive compliance with significant tension in between. As a result, I constantly changed my choice of theoretical standpoints and supplemented my interpretation of various theories. The power plurality of the contemporary moment is so contradictory, showing that it is impossible for a scholar to fully embody social relations with a single theory. Only through a re-articulation of the changing condition of the different social groups and post-colonial theories, can relations among the People/peoples, intellectuals, state and the West be accurately conceptualized.

METHODS

Constant shifting theoretical underpinning means one has to face the challenge of strategically adopting the most appropriate method/methods to facilitate re-articulation. As Slack (1996) puts it, "articulation is not completely 'sewn-up' method but rather a complex, unfinished perspective that continues to emerge genealogically. Second, articulation should not be understood as simply one thing... it

has thus emerged unevenly within a configuration of those forces and carries with it ‘traces’ of forces from one piece of scholarly interpretation to another” (p. 115).

Therefore, to grasp the shifting processes of power struggles, I have applied multiple methodology to use the Beijing Games as a venue to interpret the relationship between the state, the West and the People/peoples.

The nine chapters included use distinctive methods and adopt different tones to facilitate articulation. For Chapter 1, Chapter 4 and Chapter 6, I intensively use historical materials. By reformulating the interpretation of the historical past, I tend to reveal how the past discursively shaped the contemporary social politics. Other chapters, including Chapter 2, Chapter 3, Chapter 5 and Chapter 9, primarily engage discourse analysis, including TV interviews, newspaper articles, novels and documentaries, to describe social dynamics and struggles.

In addition, I conducted long-term ethnographical research to gather first hand data on a particular social group – athletes with disabilities. Through active participatory observation, I tried to capture a non-stereotypical portrait by study their subjective realm. The field work for Chapter 7 was conducted at a major city in China with a population of over 10 million. My field research primarily involves working with two teams: one female wheelchair basketball team and one mixed (being men and women) team of wheelchair fencing. Both teams are local teams sponsored by the local government and are prepared to compete with other local teams to make the China team for the Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games. Athletes must participate in regular training for six days a week to be able to compete. Housing accommodation,

food, beverages, sportswear and equipment as well as daily training subsidies are allocated by the municipal government. The coaches of each team are able-bodied former professional athletes. Besides spending two months in the training center with the two teams, I also worked as a volunteer for one national champion competition for wheelchair fencing, which was hosted in another major city in China. Being a volunteer and traveling with the wheelchair fencing team offered me opportunities to interview athletes from other parts of China. Throughout the research, my role was a Ph.D. student in an American university and a potential social worker for people with disabilities.

More uniquely, I adopted cyber ethnographical analysis to study overseas Chinese's anti-West social movement prior to the Beijing Games. This unique methodology allowed me to capture exciting social dynamics during which the People/peoples, the Chinese state and the West directly confronted each other. Following the boom of information technology, cyber ethnography has been widely adopted in the sociology of sports and physical cultural studies to critically examine "the role that the Internet plays (or does not play) in the everyday lives of those who react to and interact with sports-related global forces" (Wilson, 2007, p. 469). Ethnography in cyberspace has been used to study various sports-related social movements (Sage, 1999; Lenskyj, 2002; Knight & Greenberg, 2002; Wilson, 2006). Due to the invisibility (or absence) of infrastructure, cyberspace not only provides a link to the networked complexities of communication, interaction, and information exchange in late capitalist technological culture (Dean, 2001, p. 244), but also has

often been perceived as a place for political progressiveness. It is generally believed that new social movements in cyberspace assisted by Internet technology have the potential to embrace new characteristics (diversity, decentralization, informality and grassroots democracy) in lieu of former characteristics – unity, centralization, formality – imprints of old-fashioned social movements, now mostly bureaucracies, or what Max Weber anticipated as an “iron cage” (Donk, Loader, Nixon & Rucht, 2004; McCaughey & Ayers, 2003, Crampton, 2003; Webster, 2001). If cyberspace is a place where positive social change is nurtured, the boycott of cyberspace toward the Beijing Games could be seen as a global technologically facilitated revolutionary movement.

MY OLYMPIC GAMES

To re-articulate the relationship between the state, the West, and various social groups, I not only needed to critically engage theories and methods to articulate changing social dynamics mediated by factors such as class, race and gender, but also had to establish dialogues with various parties I investigate. Having dialogue with the other can change our preconceptions through falsifying or extending our theories (Johnson, Chambers, Raghuram, Tincknell, 2004). As King (2005) points out,

It assumes that all scholarship is partial (that is, incomplete and partisan) and that our research methods and theories cannot be usefully distinguished from their social origins and institutional locations for these origins and locations shape the research questions that we ask and the processes that we follow.

However, research in cultural studies goes further than other methodologies that refuse claims to objectivity in that it is always undertaken – explicitly –

as a response to and intervention in political and social condition (p. 28).

Adopting certain theories and choosing certain methodological approaches to achieve articulation are often pre-conditioned and relevant to one's political stance. Insisting dialogue with the other, therefore, can facilitate us to give up insistence of objectivity.

Through dialogue, we can recognize our partiality and achieve better knowledge through self-reflection (Johnson et. al., 2004). In addition, having reflection is not solely about examining society, culture and history, but also contextualizing our ever-changing positionalities as researchers (Johnson et. al., 2004).

Gramsci (1971) once reminded us,

The starting point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is “knowing thyself” as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory (1971, p. 324).

Researchers of cultural studies come to the subject matters they studies with a particular biography –a path through many formations and reformations of culture and identity (Johnson et. al., 2004, p. 45). In other words, by having dialogue, the power relations we involved and our material and psychic investments in existing identities are also changed. Although the researching self can express desires for the other by merging with the objects of research, the self can also take a critical distance from its others by making a dichotomy with an “us” against a “them” (Johnson et. al., 2004, p. 47). The ultimate goal of research is able to turn the difficulties of having dialogues with the other into something that can contribute to our knowledge construction and

self-transformation.

When one is involved in research that lasts longer than four years, it is barely possible to hold one's opinions and political epistemology consistent. During the four years, my political consciousness and epistemological perspective, as well as the political condition of the society, have experienced significant changes. As a native Chinese, who grew up under socialist ideology, and received training in critical theories in the West, I have to constantly shift my political position, voluntarily and involuntarily. People/peoples, the Chinese state and the West are not just the subject matters I study. Instead, each of them contributes to the formation of my identity. Therefore, by criticizing these three parties, I was forced to adopt new methods, examine and re-examine my political stances, adopt and give up certain theories, and refresh my understanding of the society as well as my subjective self. Throughout the research process, I engaged the self-other dialogue. By criticizing the West, the State and the People/peoples, I also carried a project of self-reflexive critique. It greatly changed my decisions about who to talk to, who to ask, which pieces of evidence to use or discard (Johnson, et. al., 2004).

To avoid claiming absolute objectivity, I included a relatively subjective account of my personal experiences throughout the preparation of the Beijing Games as an indispensable footnote for my critical engagement.

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In 1996, when I first moved to Beijing for collegiate education, I brought a cosmopolitan dream to be realized in the city. Beijing University of Physical

Education (BUPE) was never an option, until one of my previous gymnastics coaches suggested me to consider sport management major. According to him, all graduates can obtain a position in the State Committee of Sports and Physical Education (SCSPE). “The study load is light,” he did not forget to tell me “you can play tennis every day!”

Besides the light study load, what made this university really attractive to me was the career path. In the 1990s, working for the government was definitely not the most popular choice for college graduates in that foreign companies could pay much higher salary. However, working for the SCSPE was rather different to me. Not only can a position in the SCSPE grant me an apartment, a Beijing *hukou* and a decent salary, it also can afford me a exciting lifestyle that most white collar employees at foreign companies can never think of. Working for the SCSPE means that you have the opportunities to host different sporting events in different cities, visit many foreign countries along with attending international competitions, and make friends with world-class athletes.

What was unexpected is that this career path suddenly became intangible in 1998. Former premier Zhu Rongji launched radical reformation to downsize governmental bureaucracy, and enhance efficiency and competitiveness of state-owned enterprises (SOEs). Zhu’s assertiveness in international affairs and China’s survival of the 1997 economic crisis largely won him high-level popularity, allowing him to tackle challenging social problems and pushing further economic reformation. Zhu’s radical measures resolved certain problems but created some new

issues. For instance, Zhu's radical restructure of SOEs increased their profitability by laying off workers. In addition, to dealing with governmental corruption and bureaucratic redundancy, Zhu re-evaluated governmental agencies, established a strict procedure for recruiting governmental officials, and cut non-productive (or non-profitable) organizations or urging these organizations to be self-sustainable.

After evaluation, the SCSPE lost its status as a state committee, and was forced to accept a low-ranked title – the National Bureau of Sport and Physical Education (NBSPE). Not only that, the number of governmental officials that the NBSPE can recruit decreased dramatically. Some sports centers, such as those for soccer, basketball, ping-pong and badminton, were forced or encouraged by the bureau to make profit by operating commercial leagues nationwide. For some sports that do not have wide domestic popularity, the national centers were pushed to become independent non-governmental organizations: performing certain governmental responsibility on the one hand, but carrying various commercial activities on the other. Sports such as mountain climbing and tennis are in this category. For sports that have little potential to go marketization, such as weight lifting, boxing, and some winter sports, the bureau is only willing to provide a certain amount of funding, making the sports to survive on the elite level for the sake of nation-building.

As a result, an employment hierarchy emerged, with the ones in the national bureau on the top and the ones works for sports centers, particularly the centers dealing with unpopular sports, on the bottom. A small number of officials that was

directly employed by the bureau can still enjoy allocated apartments. Those who work for various sport centers could no longer enjoy this benefit but encouraged to recur to the emerging housing market.

The graduates in Class 1998 of sport management encountered an unparalleled difficulty in their job hunting. Many ended up going back to their hometowns with the broken Beijing dream. It is extremely difficult for college students who do not have Beijing *hukou* to land a satisfactory job in the city. Since I enrolled the BUPE, it was the first time that I saw many students studying in the library, in order to go to graduate school or study abroad. It was also the first time ever in my life that I sensed that my life trajectory was so much influenced by a social change.

In 1998, the city of Beijing was growing aimlessly. The Loop Three was the primary transportation pivot of the city; the construction of the Loop Four was just initiated; and the Loop Five was still under proposal. The BUPE locates in the northern suburban where the so-called city life was barely sensible. In my spare time, one thing I really liked to do is standing on a passenger crossway above the Loop Three, watching vehicles bypassed me swiftly at night. This scene gave me a strong feeling that the city is running away, leaving me abandoned. Although the feeling was psychological alienating, I still performed it as one of my rituals. What unexpected is that years later I could consider this city, which once made me feel lost and alienated, as my second hometown.

My depression did not last very long. In fall 1998, in a class of sports sociology, Dr. Lu Yuanzhen brought up a matter for classroom discussion – bidding

for the Olympic Games. He asked us, if China has decided to bid for another Olympic Games, which city should the government choose as the host? The question triggered a fierce discussion. Some of my classmates believe that Shanghai as an emerging world city can better represent the progress China has made. Others argue that only Beijing should be the most legitimate city to represent China. Overall, all my classmates wanted Beijing to be the host city, since we desperately need more opportunities. Only an Olympic Games can drive the government to make more investments in sports.

In the end of the class, Dr. Lu confirmed that he recently served on a consulting committee for the NBSPE to discuss the issue of bidding for the 2008 Olympic Games. There were three proposals: Beijing, Shanghai and a jointed host by Hong Kong, Shenzhen and Guangzhou. The third proposal was intended to manifest Hong Kong's continuous prosper under the Chinese regime, showcase the booming manufacture zone in the Pearl River Delta, and promote a geographical proximity to the Chinese diasporic communities in Southeast Asia. Dr. Lu also confirmed, although Shanghai and the joint host won popularity in the committee, the final pick was still the political and cultural center – Beijing. Ten years later, I still clearly remember that the cheers we released almost overthrew the lecture hall. Long before many media agents, I already knew the city and the nation would expect a revolutionary change.

After graduation, many of us, including me, joined the grand project of preparing for the bidding. For family reason, I could not stay in China and witness the moment that Beijing won the Games in July 2001. However, the geographical

distance never stops me from paying attention to every little progress China made for the Games. However, the Western media always associated the Beijing Games with a monstrous image of socialist China, and constantly compared it with the 1936 Berlin Games. It did not make me worry, since the majority of American people seemed too busy to concern what is going on in another remote country. A booming economy after the September 11 got them fully occupied. Therefore, when I started my study at Maryland, I thought my dissertation would be a research on China by taking a detached position and a relatively “objective” vision. The role of the West never came across my mind. However, the detachment I assume was collapsed later on.

In September 2004, I just moved to Maryland and started my cultural studies journey. I was soon overwhelmed by the study load and the inconvenient off-campus transportation. I almost missed all the television coverage of the 2004 Athens Olympic Games, and only managed to watch some random coverage of the Paralympic Games. During the closing ceremony of the Athens Paralympic Games, a group of Chinese artists with disabilities staged a five-minute show as an invitation to the Beijing 2008 Games. Several instrumentalists with disabilities performed a folksong called *Jasmine* with traditional Chinese musical instruments. Following the folksong, a group of female performers with challenged hearing offer a thematic dance, called *Bodhisattva with Thousands of hands*.

The dance was based on Chinese Buddhist folklore. In an ancient kingdom, a widowed king has three daughters. Against her father’s will, the youngest princess refused to subject herself to marriage and converted herself to Buddhism. To punish

her, the king forfeited the princess's royal rank and confined her by force. However, the king was later diagnosed with a fatal disease, which can only be cured by a medicine made of his direct relative's hands. The two elder princesses refused to surrender their hands by using the excuse that they have to take care of their husbands. The youngest princess cut off her hands voluntarily but ended up losing her life. Buddha was deeply moved by the princess' unconditional sacrifice and filial piety, giving her divine status and thousands of hands to help people in need.

The dance perfectly symbolizes the embedded cultural meanings. The golden background and costumes as well as the sound of ancient chime bell all indicate the context of a royal family. The rarely heard ancient music produced a solemn but tragic atmosphere. On the stage, the dancers' calm expression under the specially designed lighting effect created goddess-like images, indicating neutralized sexuality of the princess. When I first watched the dance, I was stunned by its magnificence but felt extremely uneasy. As my friend puts in her blog, the sensed grandness was fantastic but certainly generated unspeakable negative feelings. Have not had chances to touch gender theories, I only knew that the whole dance made me feel inspirational, but sense extreme depression at the same time. And, there is definitely something wrong.

Eight years later, I gradually understood the dancing narrative by incorporating feminist theories and Agamben's theorizing of bare life in my understanding. An aging king without male successor symbolizes an endangered blood lineage and a declining national sovereignty. The punishment on the princess is to discipline her sexuality and exploit her reproductive ability. The princess'

insistence of chastity indeed anticipates her unconditional loyalty to the supreme patriarchal power. By narrating a story of a royal family, the boundary between ordinary families and the state was blurred. In addition, it grants the narrative a tremendous grandeur by telling every bare life: only by unconditionally surrender your life to the state sovereignty, can you transcend your disposable flesh (the materiality) and achieve immortal divinity. The persuasion was so discursive that a natural fear of death was replaced by an inspirational voluntariness to giving up one's life for sacred sake.

The dance and the Paralympic Games raised my interests to study athletes with disabilities. Having little knowledge of various theories and methods like in-depth discourse analysis, I decided to approach this subject matter by ethnography. Through close interaction with athletes with disabilities, I realized how they use the identity of athletes to differentiate themselves from other disabled people. And, the reason for them to do so is that their basic rights to enjoy their gender role and family warmth as well as to perform their sexuality were ruthlessly taken away. They desperately need the Beijing Paralympic Games to change their status and obtain more opportunities, just like my classmates and I desperately expected the Beijing Games to give us a brighter future.

During my 2005 field trip to Nanjing for a national wheelchair fencing championship, I interviewed many athletes. Among them an attractive female fencer from Shanghai got my special attention. She was the national champion but failed to defend her title in the 2005 championship. The result greatly hurts her chance to make

Team China for the Beijing Games. I have to admit that the reason I paid special attention to her was not solely because of her previous performance, but the desperate expression on her beautiful face. When I started the interview, she still had tears lingering in her eyes. I tried my best to comfort her. She kindly showed her appreciation. Suddenly, she raised her head and asked me, “Do you know how much I want to go to Beijing (Paralympic Games)? Do you know how much I want that gold medal? I dream about it every day...” After a short silence, “Never mind...,” she said. When I asked whether I can take her pictures, she agreed without hesitation and posed for me with a big smile.

After my Nanjing trip, I kept visiting training centers for athletes with disabilities in Beijing. One of the centers was adjacent to the Southern Loop Three. Every time, I went to the center, I have to trespass a strange urban community, often called “village within city.” Driving on the Loop Three, you can only see numerous skyscrapers. Behind some modern buildings, people sometimes may discover a village like residential compound with an old style public toilet that can be found by following the stench. Residents are not often Beijing natives but rural migrants who speak inscrutable dialects.

One of my college classmates, who was familiar with the surrounding area, gave me some background information. In the late 1990s, the municipal government tended to renovate this area, but failed to reach an agreement with local residents (here he means residents with Beijing hukou) on compensation and relocation packages. The native residents are still expecting to receive better compensation, but

the government and real estate developers have no desire to initiate a negotiation, both due to the prohibitive relocation cost and relatively low return for investing real estate in the southern city. Most native Beijingers who live here have obtained modern flats through other channels, thus rented out their old houses to rural migrants for profits.

My classmate also briefly introduced the dramatic change of the southern city he witnessed throughout the years. His parents were among the most elite gymnasts in the 1960s and later worked for the SCSPE. They lived in an allocated apartment close to the SCSPE in the southern city. According to him, because all sporting agencies were semi-military, all the earlier sporting organizations and facilities carried military and defense functions. Therefore, the locations of sporting facilities, including the BUPE (located in the northwestern suburb), the SCSPE (the southeastern suburb), the Workers' Stadium (the eastern suburb), the Capital's Stadium (the western suburb) and many others, were deliberately planned. Until 1990, the Asian Game Village in the northern suburb distinguishes itself from older sporting facilities by carrying new social meanings and functions, and permanently breaks the balance between the southern and northern cities.

In 2005, the struggle over who has the legitimacy to stay in the city was getting fierce. Public debates and news regarding forceful relocation and demolition of ancient buildings constantly made headlines in major domestic media, and attracted foreign media's attention. In the meantime, the Beijing Games also became a target for public criticism for eliciting these undesired urban changes. The construction of a series of public transportation facilities, including the Line Four, the

Loop Five, and the new Metro system, does not alleviate the growing traffic pressure, but keeps attracting new migrants to the city. More and more Beijingers discard their old bikes and buy new cars, gradually turning the city into a gigantic parking lot. In 2005, standing on the passenger bridge above the Loop Three, I no longer felt alienated, because all drivers were patiently waiting under the bridge. All these urban changes make me to doubt whether the Beijing Games would bring happiness to its people. It also leads my research to a new direction – urban change – and pushes me to adopt new methods and angles for spatial analysis.

Without geographical proximity, I started to use internet to communicate with people who live in the city and gather their opinions about the on-going urban change. On the one hand, I registered membership on various internet forums on Beijing urban life, including real estate, transportation, education, architecture, traveling, cuisine, urban photography and so on. I also followed personal Blogs, particularly those documenting life in Beijing. On the other hand, I closely followed media coverage of Beijing's urban changes by both domestic and foreign media. Furthermore, I collected contemporary literature and art works, including novels, documentaries, memoirs, pop music and movies on Beijing. Most importantly, I greatly benefited from historical records and academic research on urban studies. All these materials help me to form a more comprehensive understanding of the city's past trajectory, current dilemma and various layers of conflicts and negotiation that shape its future possibilities.

Because of my heavy reliance on cyber ethnography, how English media and foreign travelers talk about Beijing gradually attracted my attention. By collecting

those works by Expats, short-term/long-term visitors, and foreign reporters who work in Beijing, I have another opportunity to re-visit the theory of Orientalism and its configuration within the contemporary context, such as Chinese intellectuals' self-Orientalism.

In 2007 and the early 2008, when the Chinese government and Chinese people were making their last effort to make the Beijing Games perfect, the trend of demonizing the Beijing Games in Western media was getting severe. At that time, I was still planning to use Agamben's theory to conduct an analysis of the Bodhisattva dance, using a critique of the Chinese state to conclude my dissertation. However, the turbulence of global politics soon pushed me to another direction. Following the outbreak of Darfur genocide, critiquing China and challenging the Beijing Games soon became the Western media's habitual practice. Because of language barrier and media censorship, the Western media can only reach the Chinese domestic audience in a very limited degree. Nevertheless, it had generated a tremendous influence on Chinese diasporic communities.

On *Unknown Space*, debates between pro-China and pro-West parties were often turned to fierce arguments or even mutual insults. In early 2008, on the most popular board – *China News*, which was under the charge of a pro-West board master, a large number of pro-China IDs were banned from publishing their opinions. After the turmoil happened in Lhasa Tibet on March 14th 2008, the board master of *China News* kept banishing pro-China voices, by only allowing criticism of the Chinese government to be published on the board. To protest, many pro-China IDs collectively

abandoned *China News* and moved to *Military* – a board under the charge of a patriarchic board master.

This cyber movement (or revolution) was so successful that it made the once ever most popular *China News* falling out of the category of popular boards. On *Military*, pro-China IDs intensively discuss the possibility that the Lhasa turmoil may swing Taiwan’s presidential election and other possible consequences. Many held a very pessimistic opinion on Taiwan’s election; some even anticipated an immediate war across the Taiwan Strait; a few, who still care about the Beijing Games, lamented that all the effort made for the Beijing Games would be wasted. Such a negative and pessimistic atmosphere in *Unknown Space* set a tone for their following pro-China political actions. After the pro-China Kuomintang Party under the leadership of Ma Ying-jeon won the presidential election, the tension across the Taiwan Strait was suddenly eased. Overseas Chinese had not enjoy a moment to celebrate their “heavenly blessed China,” soon encountered large-scale organized protests of the Olympic torch during the torch relay in Western countries.

During this political turmoil, I actively participated in cyber discussion in *Unknown Space*, criticizing China’s ethnic policies on Tibet and firmly opposing all forms of boycotts against the Beijing Games. On April 8th 2008, when I browsed *Unknown Space* in the morning as usual, what caught my eyes were calls for donation for the pro-China/pro-Olympic demonstration in San Francisco and news about how a Chinese female torch bearer with disabilities was physical assaulted by protestors during the torch relay in Paris. All pro-China IDs were gathered in *Military* and *San*

Francisco. From the news picture, I saw the female wheelchair fencer I interviewed in 2005. In the picture, she sits on a wheelchair and holds the torch firmly. At the very moment, I could barely hold my emotion in check. I soon completed a donation through Paypal. Three hours later, the organizers of the demonstration announced that they have raised enough money for the demonstration, and my donation was returned.

From April 9th, the pro-China/pro-Olympic Games movement spread out from San Francisco to all cities that hosted the torch relay. Eventually, it ignited a nationalistic movement in mainland China and boosted the passion of the Chinese people to the Beijing Games to a new height. As an active participant of this cyber movement, I experienced a similar psychological transformation as my friend narrated in her blog – the self was expanded to an unprecedented degree. In other words, during this cyber movement, I felt a complete conflation between China and me. It forced me to discard my plan of concluding my dissertation with a critical examination of the sovereign state of China but to re-examine the dynamic and complicated conjuncture formed by the state, the West and the People/people.

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From the beginning stage of my research, I approached the subject matters as if I was an objective and distanced researcher. By going to the field and taking “raw materials” from the suffering of the oppressed, I did realize and reveal my privileged position acquired through education in the West. When I started my project on the urban space of Beijing, I started to notice that writing about the subject matter involved me in a contest between “being-in-itself” and “being-for-an-other” (Chow,

2003). The contest forced me to undergo a dramatic transformation of my subjective consciousness, so that my consciousness is no longer only about the object (the other) but also about one's self (Chow, 2003). By criticizing the West, I reminded myself not to aestheticize the value of minority positions, be it China's position in the world system or my intellectual position in diaspora. Furthermore, when I investigated suppressed groups, I also declared my self-interest –developing my intellectual career in the West. When I critically analyzed the Chinese state, I was protesting against my nationalistic self. In other words, by waging a war against the West, the Chinese state and the People/peoples, I waged a war against myself and made my research a journey of recovering a new self. Therefore, my dissertation is not only a contextualization of the Beijing Games but also a subjective footnote for my intellectual journey.

Chapter Two: From Colonial Birth to Neoliberal Death: The Geopolitics of Preserving
the Old Beijing

Every appearance that manifests human beings thus becomes for them improper and factitious, and makes them confront the task of turning truth into their own proper truth.

--Agamben (2000, p. 97).

A SPECTACLE OF REMEMBRANCE

In 2004, the Beijing municipal government announced that, except for few government selected ancient urban areas, the majority of the Old City of Beijing, including numerous ancient valleys and traditional courtyards, would be demolished. According to the government, the demolition would be followed with a rebuilding of a pedestrian commercial district and modern residential areas. Even though the municipal government did not publicize its motivation for this urban reformation, to most Chinese citizens, its motivation was evident in that the government continued to present to the world a “New Beijing” for the coming 2008 Olympic Games.

The announcement had an impact on a number of groups. On the international level, various media or individuals lamented the irrational hegemony of the Chinese government for destroying an invaluable cultural heritage. In addition, many predicted that it is almost unavoidable that such large-scale urban renovation would elicit coercive relocation, during which native residents’ interests would be sacrificed for this grand urban developmental project. Therefore, various human rights organizations began to initiate new campaigns to expose the on-going violation of human rights in China.² On the domestic level, various websites were launched by

² According to Michael Meyer (2008), the author of *The Last Days of Old Beijing*, the United Nations Educational,

people who identified themselves as Beijing natives, to protest the on-going urban demolition and to unleash a wave of nostalgic sentiment.³ Instead, a multiplicity of activities was on going in this cyberspace: people launched discussions on potential alternatives that could preserve the ancient urban space but still facilitate the transformation of Beijing into a modern metropolis; certain people wrote memoirs regarding their childhood spent in the Old City; some participants organized activities to record the demolition of ancient urban areas by using high-tech appliances, like digital cameras and camcorders. Many Beijing natives uploaded their video clips and pictures to websites. Some of the pictures present traditional aesthetics through highlighting the architectural styles of Beijing courtyards; others provide portraits of the mundane life of Beijing natives who were still living in these to-be-demolished courtyard houses. However, this spectacle of remembrance is not only limited to the those directly affected. Famous artist Zhan Wang, historian and ecological activist Liang Congjie, writer Feng Jikai and other well-known intellectuals all participated in grand discussions about preserving the Old Beijing and criticized the government. Well-known guitar player Xia Yan and popular music singer Zhang Hongliang composed rock-and-roll songs to memorialize their courtyard childhood. As Feng Jikai puts it, “We are going to host a ‘humanistic Olympic Games’ (the official slogan of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games). The on-going demolition of Old Beijing is against such a humanistic ideal. The Old Beijing is not only a cultural heritage of the

Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) expressed its concern with the Beijing government over the protection of historical and cultural heritage as early as 2002. Both the Human Watch and Amnesty launched campaigns to reveal and protest against coercive relocation in preparation for the 2008 Olympic Games.

³ For instance, oldbeijing.org and bbs.oldbeijing.org are the cyber forums sponsored by people who identify themselves as native Beijing residents to memorize the disappearing ancient city.

Beijing people, but a heritage for the world.”

This local-based cultural movement can almost be interpreted as an alliance between Beijing natives and Chinese intellectuals against the hegemony of the post-socialist state and conspiracy of global capitalism. If we make a careful examination of this spectacle of remembrance, we can clearly tell that it is a movement of a collection of groups. Therefore one might ask: how do the masses and intellectuals share a similar sentiment of nostalgia and grief? What kind of identity-politics is played out? What kind of mechanism is working to bringing the intellectuals and the masses together? How should we understand this spontaneous and collective mourning of loss in the greater globalization context in which the local and national cultures are downplayed? How does the individualist and liberalist rhetoric of nostalgia of intellectuals and collectivist lyrics of local identity by the masses compatibly play out?

Freud (1923) ever points out that identification with a lost object has “a great share in determining the form taken by the ego and that it makes an essential contribution towards building up what is called its ‘character’” (p. 23). Across different cultural contexts, the boundaries between the common vernaculars and intellectual discourse always have been well delineated and defended. Sharing one “character” based on the common loss or embracing one identity for the identical political interests is possible but is destined to contain evident or hidden tensions and contradictions. The embodied collective mourning is not composed of a diversity of individuals “but a diversity of groups each with its own language, spatial position,

dynamics and relationship to the (diminishing) physical environment” (Laughlin, 2000, p. 37).

This collective and spontaneous mourning, at first glance, tends to confirm the singularity of the Chinese state as an irrational and inconceivable Other. It stimulates people to wonder when the Chinese state can finally become a civilized member of the world nation community, and when it will stop being irrational against a universal humanitarian system of values? However, the naturalization of the Chinese state as an Other may also run the risk of simplifying the on-going political complex. As Zhang Xudong (2001a) remarks, “the habit goes unchallenged – both inside and outside China – to view everything in the PRC through the imagined totality of the government and its official policies and rhetoric” and “to see anything extragovernmental as instantaneously and naturally subversive, progressive and good” (p. 3). Therefore, the irrationality of the Chinese nation-state, either as a constructed or an essential feature, also calls for critical inquiry.

To solve this paradox, in this chapter, I focus on the role of Chinese architects and then investigate a constellation of processes to map out the contingent power dynamics that shaped and keep shaping the urban space of Beijing. “A focus on the material inscriptions of power in the everydayness of the city involves a consideration of how power can be sustained through architectonic forms” (Gandy, 2006, p. 498). The processes that I will explore include the socio-cultural politics, through which construction of Chinese architecture and the Beijing courtyard culture are achieved, the interaction between local politics/culture and global flows, the participation of

state in the transformation of urban spaces for Beijing's global future, and the embracing of a cosmopolitan subjectivity in a global scheme. In order to achieve these goals, I have to trace the historical trajectory through which the discourses of historical preservation, particularly the preservation of architecture in Old Beijing, came into being.

NEO-CONSERVATIVE LIANG FAMILY AND ITS INTELLECTUAL RESIDUE

The emergence of the notion “preserve the Old Beijing” is interwoven with the prominent intellectual Liang family in China. Liang Qichao (1873-1929) is among the six intellectual political activists who advocated a constitutional reformation to the Qing monarchy (1644-1912). Borrowing from the Meiji Restoration as a paradigm, Liang Qichao, along with his peers, suggested that the Qing government engage in self-reformation on both institutional and ideological levels for modernization. Even though Liang's political reformation was violently terminated by the political conservatives in the Qing government and he was forced into exile in Japan, he kept endorsing the Qing monarchy during the early republican era of China.

The son of Liang Qichao, Liang Sicheng (1901-1972) is among the first generation of Chinese students to travel abroad. Liang studied architecture at the University of Pennsylvania and Harvard University, and established one of the first architecture programs in China after he came back from the United States. Later, Liang also taught at the Architecture School at Tsinghua University and conducted a thorough field research on traditional Chinese architecture in north China during the

1920s and 1930s. His academic works include *A Pictorial History of Chinese Architecture*, which is generally considered to be the first modern study of Chinese traditional architecture. In addition to academic research, Liang Sicheng was also actively involved in the restoration of various historical architectural sites, including the Forbidden City and the Temple of Confucius, and designed landmark architectural works, such as the National Monument for People's Heroes in Tiananmen Square in 1951⁴.

Liang Sicheng remarks that "Beijing is an unparalleled masterpiece of city planning" and should be preserved as an entire complex (quoted from Wu, 1999, p. 6-7 & p. 10). Working as the director of Beijing's Urban Planning Commission for the new People's Republic, Liang proposed to develop a new urban center to host the communist party government and governmental employees at the western suburb of the old Beijing. Nevertheless, for many historical reasons, Liang's plan was not accepted by the Communist government. First, to Mao Zedong and many left-wing party leaders, Beijing is a symbolic repository of feudal sovereignty. The primary goal of the communist party was to eliminate various social and cultural hierarchies, which cannot be achieved only by facilitating economic equality. To Mao, creating a communist culture, including communist architectural aesthetics and communist urban space, was also critical to the communist nation building. The city of Beijing, as the political center of communist China, has to represent a communist ideal and anticipate utopian spatiality. Second, the lack of an economic basis is another reason

⁴ See *Liang and Lin Partners in Exploring China's Architectural Past*, by W. Fairbank. University of Pennsylvania. Also, further information can be found in *Writing a Modern Chinese Architectural History: Liang Sicheng and Liang Qichao* by Li Shiqiao.

that the communist regime adopted the old urban center as its host (Wu, 1999). By the time the new People's Republic took power, China had just gone through the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) and the Civil War (1945-1948) and anticipated the Korean War (1950-1953). The financial situation forced the Communist party to maximize the utilitarian values of the old Beijing rather than initiate a grand urban project. In addition, it was believed that Liang's proposal – building an independent modern urban center in the western suburb – might lead to various transportation issues and possibly accelerate the deterioration of the old urban center which already faced increased derelict housing (Wu, 1999). Therefore, the spatial production in Maoist China, particularly in the case of Beijing, was not only due to the socialist mode of spatial production, but also due to the historical condition of materialistic scarcity and weak planning power in a peculiar socialist/Third World national context (Lu, 2006).

Taking the urban center of old Beijing as its political center, the communist party immediately faced the issue of providing housing for employees and improving the living conditions of the residents. Many modern residential compounds, designed purely for utilitarian value rather than aesthetic merit, were gradually scattered within the old city and in its close suburbs, which disturbed the indigenous and aesthetic cosmology of the old city. Simultaneously, the dramatically increased population density not only facilitated an expansion of living space but also challenged the transportation infrastructure of the old city. As a result, many ancient living compounds were demolished to launch modern road systems, including a beltway

(also called ring road) surrounding the old city and radial roads that connect the urban center to suburbs.

Thus, Liang Sicheng's enthusiasm for traditional Chinese architecture, particularly his ambition to protect the old city of Beijing as a whole, was dampened in the 1950s. From 1950, ancient city walls were gradually demolished⁵. The continuous urban demolition and renewal projects in Beijing led to the first confrontation between Liang Sicheng and the communist party (Hu, 2006). On the grass-roots level, a story regarding Liang's endeavor to protect the city wall is still circulated by word of mouth. It states that prior to the demolition of the city walls for modern transportation – the current Second Ring Road and subway system – Liang Sicheng leaned against the city wall and cried out loud. Liang's desperation can also be traced in Mao Zedong's speech, as he put it in 1958, “antique can be good, and also can be bad. Someone cried when Beijing dismantled the city walls and gateway entrances, which indicated the political attitude” (quoted from Hu, 2006).

The triumph of communist ideology on Beijing urban planning in the 1950s somehow predicted a more radical social movement against historical and cultural heritage during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). During the Cultural Revolution, except for limited significant historical sites such as the Forbidden City, Confucius Temple and the Summer Palace, many historical sites were pulverized or destroyed by Red Guards for their feudal aesthetics which represented a cultural hierarchy. Prior to

⁵ As an outgrowth of their function as military nexi during the feudal era, Chinese cities tend not to possess urban “cores”; rather, they are generally walled (Gaubatz, 1999).

the Cultural Revolution, Liang had been identified as an extreme rightist and was frequently exposed to public criticism. Liang's death during the Cultural Revolution is generally believed to be as a result of party persecution and therefore carries a strongly tragic sense.

To the general public, Liang's tragic death and his insolvable melancholia have been closely aligned with the catastrophe of the old city of Beijing. In the post-revolution era, Liang's architectural and aesthetic beliefs keep shaping public understanding of urban spaces. In the Architecture School at Tsinghua University, the most prestigious university in China, a group of architects who inherited Liang's thinking, insist on resuming his preservation-oriented urban planning agenda. For instance, Wu Liangyong, a professor and the chairman of Tsinghua architecture school, in his work *Rehabilitating the Old City of Beijing*, reflects on Liang's theories and raises a new approach which he calls "organic renewal" (Wu, 1999). Taking both the preservation of urban fabric and architectural styles into consideration, Wu (1999) favors preservation of the urban structures of the old city gradually adopting these ancient features into modern life. Different from Liang Sicheng, Wu (1999) is not only concerned with preserving the architectural aesthetics of the ancient urban fabric, but also calls for the protection of the organic nature of the ancient neighborhoods. Wu designed the redevelopment of Ju'er Hutong (Ju'er alley) and was actively involved in the construction process.

With the endeavors from other scholars and students from Tsinghua Architecture and advocates of urban preservation, including historian and ecological

activist Liang Congjie (son of Liang Sicheng), preservation of Old Beijing has gradually become one of the central issues of Beijing urban planning. On the one hand, these architects and scholars, who inherit Liang's intellectual heritage, use their access to domestic public media, such as news paper interviews and TV talk shows, to raise public consciousness about the importance of preserving Old Beijing. For instance, Liang Congjie and another radical architect who endorses the notion of reconstructing Beijing as a global modern city debated on a TV talk show, which was broadcast nationwide. On the other hand, along with the globalization of higher education and academic communication, more Chinese students and scholars have entered the circle of Western academia. Positioning themselves in the Western system, these Chinese architects and architectural scholars facilitate the circulation of Liang's urban conservationism around the world as a transnational intellectual currency.

IN THE NAME OF CHINESENESS

It requires only a brief acquaintance with the vicissitudes of the Liang family within the context of these turbulent political times to note that the significance of Chinese traditional architecture has never stopped being contested and rewritten. It let us to examine "Whether the emergence of a national perspective – of an elite or subaltern nature – within a culture of social contestation, can ever articulate its 'representative' authority in the fullness of narrative time" (Bhabha, 1994b, p. 206). Among the various historical conjunctures, I am more interested in how traditional Chinese architecture, which represented utilitarian functions and symbolic values in the feudal era, have become the target of knowledge production. In the republican era

(1912-1949) following the closure of the Qing Monarchy in 1912, the City Walls stopped carrying military functions, and ancient courtyard houses were no longer associated with aristocratic status. The epistemic-political-institutional value system of the Chinese feudal society seemed to dissipate gradually. As Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) remark “objects or practices are liberated for full symbolic and ritual use when no longer fettered by practical use.” (p.4) When Liang Qichao witnessed that his proposal of a constitutional monarchy lost political currency, his son Liang Sicheng soon discovered treasures from the monarchy’s spatial residuals.

Nevertheless, its spatial residuals had undergone a cultural transformation through which the relationship between architectural spaces and value was now encompassed by the embodiment of Chineseness and a mechanism of knowledge production on Chineseness (in this case, Chinese architecture). In other words, during the transformation, the old urban space of Beijing shifted its role from the production of feudal space to a space of knowledge production. Such a seamless transition created an illusion of absolute knowledge (Lefebvre, 1991). This intricate and overlapping set of geopolitical transformation lays the foundation for a perpetual traffic in ideas of nationhood, peoplehood and selfhood (Apparudai, 1996). It permanently confines some Chinese architectural intellectuals in irresolvable melancholy for the disappearance of ancient urban space. This melancholy, or perpetual longing for the loss of a Chinese aesthetical heritage, directs us to reflect on the original discovery of the treasure, namely Liang Sicheng’s announcement of Beijing City as “an unparalleled masterpiece” and as an object of aesthetic scrutiny.

In *Translingual Practice*, Lydia Liu (1995) points out that self-congratulation on the part of Chinese intellectuals regarding the Chinese holistic world and Chinese essence is a result of theoretical borrowing from Western modernity. A similar argument is presented by Lupke (1995), “(t)he twentieth century in general has been a period during which Chinese intellectuals have looked to the West for all sorts of models whereby to reconceptualize cultural values in China (p. 130).” As a matter of fact, Liang Sicheng’s life trajectory fully embodies this colonial cultural hierarchy. As a Chinese elite intellectual who was born in Japan when his father was in exile, Liang Sicheng finished his education in the West. During his time at the University of Pennsylvania, Liang studied under Paul Cret, who advocates pushing architecture toward a new classicism (Farnham, 1998). Negotiating between the aestheticism of traditional Western classics and the rationalism of technological novelty, Cret asserts that “the past must not be forgotten as a distinct and constituent part of the present” (Farnham, 1998, p. 264). However, Cret also had to compromise with rational modern engineering to find the most satisfactory synthesis.

Returning to Liang Sicheng’s sentiments over Chinese traditional architecture, if we can frame his neo-conservatism within the historical disjuncture between East and West in the modern epoch, the Chineseness that Liang highlights in architectural knowledge, therefore, can be naturally linked to the Chinese nationalistic struggles over ethnicity, civilization and national identity. According to Liu (1995), disenchantment with the materialistic culture of the West seems to facilitate Chinese scholars to look for alternative solutions by reviving the symbolic resources of their

native culture and remaking cultural pride. While Cret still had to wrestle with engineering rationalism to rescue the declining Western classics, Liang insisted that the great civilization is still well preserved in China.

Rather than characterize Chinese architecture as “backward” and “inferior” to Western classics, Liang Sicheng announced that Chinese architecture is a national treasure beyond the value system delineated by the Western classics. Here, I want to borrow Spivak’s (1985a) inquiry of the emergence of Marxist feminist canons – what subject-effects were systematically effaced and trained to efface themselves so that a canonic norm might emerge?—to investigate Liang’s consciousness of naming the Chinese architectural classics. In *Scattered Speculations on the Question of Value*, Spivak (1985a) trenchantly points out, “(w)hen we feminist Marxists are ourselves moved by a desire for alternative canon-formations, we work with varieties of and variations upon the old standards (p. 74).” Throughout the canon-construction, the feminist subject has to prove that the existing Canon is not transcendental and that exceptions exist outside the boundaries of the Canon as a differential. Through establishing analogical equivalence between the Canon and the exceptional differential, the subject can legitimize the value of the exception she recognized within the logic of the Canon. Thus, value could be realized by using an analogy to bridge the metonymy (the exception) with the metaphor (the Canon) rather than solely through Marxist labor production (Spivak, 1985a). In other words, rather than challenging the value of the Canon, feminist Marxism confirms the value of classical Marxism by bringing the exception they identified in to the Marxist value system.

To construct the equivalence of exchange between the Canon and the exception, the subject-effects, in other words the subjective desire for value, must be effaced or rearticulated. In the account of Liang Sicheng's construction of aesthetical values of Chinese architecture, his arguing for Chinese singularity could be interpreted as restoration and preservation of knowledge for the sake of the Chinese nation and culture building. His internal drive is indicative of an anxiety to rescue authentic cultural China from the extinction brought by imperialist nation-states. However, due to the asymmetrical structure between the modern West and China, his efforts to valorize and promote China are being made through a priori surrender to Western theoretical domination and an unconscious downplay of the cultural contestation between East and West.

Not only deferring to the order of Western canon, Liang also adopts the Western consciousness. As Spivak (1996) remarks, "consciousness is not thought, but rather the subject's irreducible intendedness towards the object" (p. 109). Clifford (1988) further theorizes the construction of a Western subject through two strategies: property ownership and repetitive exhibition of what is being owned. The two strategies can be clearly located in Liang's endeavor to historicize Chinese architecture and the endless effort of getting his work *A Pictorial History of Chinese Architecture* published in Western academia (Lu, 2007). The strong sense of ownership is accumulated through Liang's systematic study of thousands of pieces of architecture in North China. Using photography and drawings, Liang wants to prove to the world the "authenticity" of Chinese architecture with its distinguished foreign

features fossilized in pictures and photography. Even though Liang was subjected to ideological criticism during the Cultural Revolution, considered the most disastrous epoch for Chinese intellectuals, he never stopped trying to publish his “*A Pictorial History*” in the West. This work’s final publication in 1984 in the United States has been widely addressed by Chinese scholars to demonstrate his intense desire to show these national treasures to the World (see Rowe & Kuan, 2003; Li, 2003; Lu, 2007).

Even though Liang’s construction of architectural Chineseness is by no means Eurocentric, Chinese architects and scholars who inherit Liang’s thoughts tend to naturalize this construction by ignoring the influence generated by the West. If we take a historical account into consideration, it is evident that the Orientalist studies of Chinese architecture definitely did not originate from Liang. Instead, the colonial power never stopped its efforts at “domestication” of Chinese architecture since the early 19th century (Dirlik, 2005). Nevertheless, rather than directly referring to Western orientalist studies of China, Chinese intellectuals manifest an enthusiasm to embrace self-orientalism by framing Chinese architecture as an absolute Other. The type of self-Orientalization could be interpreted as a desire for a collective agency of self-representation. In order to circumvent Marx’s dictum in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* that “They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented,” Chinese architects and intellectuals are interpellated to embrace “a compulsory self-ownership,” to repetitively show their allegorical cultural existence (Chow, 2002, p. 123). Zhang Xudong (1994) even theorizes that, generally Chinese intellectuals’ “heritage” is either associated with the Western symbolic order or the

Chinese gentry tradition. Nevertheless, in this case the collective desire to be a subject of knowledge production should not be severed from its discursive connection with Western modernity. Therefore, their embracing architectural Chineseness and the formation of a collective consciousness vis-à-vis an aesthetical heritage should be understood as a complex configuration between the Western symbolic order and the nationalist spirit of Chinese gentry. It further reveals that their persistent pursuit for cultural autonomy preconditions the following loss of the identified “national treasure” during Mao’s era. Their narcissistic self-consciousness of ownership also predicts an irrevocable trauma when their mission of preserving Chinese essence fails.

To some Chinese cultural studies scholars, the most valuable feature of Maoism is the revolutionary concept of erasing difference not only in economic terms but also in a cultural dimension (Liu, 1997). In other words, creating a homogeneous and inclusive proletarian nation is achieved by “creating new linguistic and aesthetic forms that are not only national and popular, but also revolutionary and proletarian” (Liu, 1997, p. 75-76). Mao’s political aesthetics also accurately reflect on the architectural style in post-1949 China. In Beijing, socialist architectural style, adopted from the Soviet Union, emerged in the middle of traditional residential compounds. During the Cultural Revolution, spurred on by Mao’s propaganda, some historical architectural pieces were demolished or destroyed by “Red Guards” to erase any residue of from the Confucian and bourgeois eras. In addition, one of the major effects of this public aesthetic was to replace individual subjectivity with a collective proletarian consciousness. As a result, intellectuals, including architects and scholars,

became the target of condemnation or persecution. In particular, those intellectuals trained in the West who held onto the idea of protecting the Chinese cultural heritage were perceived as a bourgeois class undermining the grand communist project. Their experiences also led to Chinese intellectuals' hostility toward the Cultural Revolution by defining the era as a "carnavalesque suspension of social hierarchy" (Lu, 2004, p. 561).

During the Cultural Revolution, trying to disrupt the town-country dichotomy, Mao urged urban youth and intellectuals to leave urban educational institutions and immerse themselves in the rural proletarian culture. At the same time, Mao highly encouraged reproduction as an attempt to prepare army reserves – for the anticipated Third World War between socialist and capitalist camps, or possibly between the Soviet Union and China – and to fulfill grand communist projects. In addition, ideological struggles were given priority over economic development and infrastructure construction. When the Cultural Revolution came to an end after Mao's death in 1976, the accumulated population and people returning from the rural areas made urban housing among the most urgent issues facing the Chinese government. Addressed by different scholars, in the pre-1949 era, urban Beijing had a very low population density. In most cases, one single-story courtyard house could usually host one to three families. Compared to the post-Mao era, one courtyard house could host more than five or six families without private toilet and bath. Under such conditions, a sense of privacy becomes luxurious.

Severely deteriorating living conditions and various social issues have been

reflected in mass media culture. For instance, acclaimed author Liu Heng, a Beijing native, published his novel *Garrulous Zhang Damin's Happy Life (Pinzui Zhang Damin de Xingfu Shenghuo)* and provided a fictional account of a Beijing native Zhang Damin who lives in one of these ancient courtyard houses. The novel depicts the various social conflicts that arise out of such harsh living conditions. For instance, Zhang competes with his younger brother over who should have the right to bring the wife to their already overly crowded courtyard. Expecting a baby, Zhang has to build a room in the yard, which causes a fight between Zhang and his neighbor. Zhang's youngest brother feels perpetual hatred towards the whole family and the courtyard lifestyle. In the finale, the Zhang family can resume their happy life in a modern apartment. Because of its popularity, this novel was later converted into other media formats, such as a film, a series of TV shows, and a local opera.

Even though housing conditions in the post-Mao era were severely deficient, what is unexpected is that the adverse physical environment forced the neighbors in the courtyard houses to generate an unusually close relationship. In other words, sacrifice of privacy is compensated by a sense of community. Wu Liangyong's (1999) field research in Beijing courtyard houses reveals the following: someone who had a night shift could ask his/her neighbor to keep quiet during the daytime; children were looked after by their neighbors when their parents were absent, and neighbors made visits with each other on a daily basis without prior announcements. Even though Beijing courtyard residents suffer material scarcity, drug usage and criminal acts – which are usually prevalent in Western urban ghettos – are rare.

To mitigate the housing shortage in Beijing and satisfy the need of modern subjectivities, the dilapidated urban places had to be turned into modern residential spaces. According to Wu (1999), in 1987, Beijing launched a practical experiment to renew derelict courtyard houses in the old city. No longer being targeted as the people's enemy, a group of scholars and architects from Tsinghua University, under the leadership of Wu Liangyong, had a chance to resume their pre-revolution mission – transforming ancient residential living areas into modern habitats without devastating the Chinese architectural aesthetics. Thus, in the post-Cultural Revolution epoch, “cultures condemned to extinction in an earlier period have found renewed life in service to aspirations for ‘alternative modernity’ (Dirlik, 2005, p.44-45).”

What makes Wu and his colleagues, the post-revolutionary intellectuals, different from Liang Sicheng is a new notion they proposed – heritage preservation should not be limited to architectural aesthetics. Preservation of the urban fabric and traditional neighborhoods both deserve sufficient considerations, an initiative described as “organic renewal.” In other words, one of the most valuable features of the old Beijing is its commune culture, “a contrastive rather than a substantive property of certain things” (Appadurai, 1996b, p. 12). No longer represented as a stigmatized pre-modern lifestyle and related to an embarrassing absence of privacy, life in Beijing courtyard compounds has suddenly become a treasure for Beijing natives, architects and urban planners.

At first glance, we might assume that Wu and his colleagues take a humanistic turn. But an in-depth examination reveals that their practices have not been freed from

the influence of East-West intellectual exchanges. In Wu's (1999) reflection on the Ju'er Hutong project, he mentions that, influenced by Jane Jacobs' (1970 & 1992) writing on the drastic clearance of urban slums, he decides to rank organic renewal as his top concern. In response to Jacob's writings, which "highlight the relationship between the deteriorating physical environment in blighted areas and the consequent loss of tax revenues, the increase in government subsidies, and the worsening of crime and social delinquency" (Wu, 1999, p. 64), once again, Chinese architects and urban designers witness the disenchantment of modern urbanity and discover that a new treasure, namely a sense of community, is well preserved in Beijing courtyard compounds.

Nevertheless, the theoretical position taken by Jane Jacobs (1970 & 1992) is far from politically progressive. If we take a deeper reading of Jacob's agenda of urban planning, it is evident that crime prevention, urban tax revenues and upgrading the physical environments are her primary concerns. From this perspective, the liberal political position Jacobs takes is to call a political order into question as an attempt to reinforce and preserve a state sovereignty rather than overthrow it (Brown, 2005). Jacob's position could be mistakenly perceived as taking the political stance of the marginalized social groups but it indeed treats the subalterns as objects of knowledge production and populations to discipline. Even though "Western critics take pride in their objective, liberalist, and pluralistic approaches, it is a mistake to believe that their practice has been free from the influence of political contingencies" (Liu, 1993, p. 16). Just as Barne (1989) laments:

Technocrats reformulate the social contract, one in which consensus replaces coercion, and complicity subverts criticism. Censorship is no longer the job of a ham-fisted apparatus, but a partnership involving artists, audiences and commissars alike. This is “progressive censorship,” and it has an aesthetic all of its own (p. 62).

Accordingly, Wu’s campaign to preserve the sense of community in his urban planning and architectural design is also a disciplinary tactic, since interpersonal closeness is manipulated to control potential criminality in the gradually gentrified city. Privileging the sense of community which is still well “preserved” in the old Beijing, Chinese architects and urban planners have successfully raised the public’s consciousness about its possession of this substantive cultural property. The public’s subjective fantasy over the ownership of this cultural property is fully articulated in various works of literature and media products showing the uniqueness of their urban experiences. For instance, in *Garrulous Zhang Damin’s Happy Life*, due to pressure from his neighbors, Zhang Damin has to build his housing extension without cutting a big tree. After several rounds of negotiations with his neighbors, Zhang ends up allowing the tree to grow through his roof. Feeling rather embarrassed, Zhang still maintains an ebullient attitude and enjoys his “happy” life. He even names his newborn baby *Zhang Shu* (*shu* means tree in Chinese). Similar mass media products, built upon individual fantasy and the nostalgia of Beijing natives, circulated in the market in post-revolutionary China (Li, 1996). What is problematic is that this enchantment with Beijing courtyard life embodied in various textual works is more often portrayed

as an essential feature belonging to a special group defined by locale rather than a byproduct of China's special historical trajectory. A closer look at the sense of community in Beijing courtyard compounds suggests that the sense of interdependency cannot be understood without the high housing density and the communist equalitarianism promoted during the Mao era. As a matter of fact, this sense of community was never a patent exclusively belonging to Beijing natives but a nationwide phenomenon. Nevertheless, the privilege afforded by architects to Beijing courtyard life sanctions a special cultural superiority to Beijing natives and preconditions the aforementioned spectacle of remembrance. The cultural superiority of being a Beijing native has caused and is still causing endless identity politics. Therefore, identification of Beijing courtyard life as cultural heritage not only reserves a potential space to reinvent new identity politics, but also erases the modernity's complex becoming (Dirlik, 2000; Wang, 2004).

Partially due to Maoism's revolutionary and anti-intellectual traditions, Chinese intellectuals are reluctant to acknowledge that the sense of commune in courtyard compounds was shaped by Maoist Communism. Furthermore, positioning the courtyard life as a cultural property, Chinese intellectuals demonstrate their intention to build alliances with the powerless urban residents. Unlike Liang Sicheng, who was exclusively preoccupied by Chinese classic aesthetics, contemporary Chinese architects have shifted their aesthetical attention from the Chinese architectural essence to Chinese cultural patterns. By doing so, Chinese intellectuals strategically compete with the state over the "Chinese people" for their ever

conflicting interests with the state (Chow, 1995, p. 114). Therefore, their deliberate cultivation of the aesthetic object – courtyard life – is indeed politically contingent.

NEOLIBERAL ENCROACHMENT

After finishing the follow-up studies for the first three phases of the Ju'er Hutong Rehabilitating Project in 1993, Wu Liangyong (1999) notes, apart from several problems already identified, that his organic renewal project is practically feasible and deserves further generalization. According to the result of Wu's study, residents generally report that their living conditions have been greatly improved. In addition, most residents agree that their privacy is better protected without losing the sense of commune (Wu, 1999). Most significantly to Wu (1999), the traditional architectural aesthetics, that is the Chineseness, is well preserved. In his follow-up study, Wu (1999) also acknowledges that the successful realization of the Ju'er Hutong Rehabilitating Project cannot be separated from the Beijing housing reform policy, otherwise, the project could remain "an idea on paper" (p. 185). Wu (1999) notes that the developers reported that they had "a slight profit" from it (p. 202). Therefore, Wu (1999) claims "the high cost of redeveloping housing in the Old City suggests that it should be commercialized in order to make development of infrastructure and public service improvement financially feasible" (p. 191).

The housing reform that Wu refers to was initiated by the Chinese government in an attempt to gradually commercialize the housing market. The Chinese architects obviously forgot Marx's theorizing of the nature of capitalism: capitalism is not about making profit for self-survival but maximizing profit for self-expansion. Apparently,

the approved “slight profit” cannot satisfy the gluttony of capitalism. When Chinese architects were ready to generalize their organic renewal project, the radically commercialized housing market was no longer willing to accommodate their aesthetical experiments. The comparatively higher price to build the Chinese traditional architecture and the relatively low population density (in order to maintain the sense of closeness) all became excuses for developers to favor high-rise apartment buildings. To the municipal government, mitigating the housing shortage for local residents with subsidized prices as well as collecting taxes from commercial apartments is their primary mission. Particularly, when the Chinese state joins the game of urban commercialization as the most advantaged player (see Gu & Liu, 2002; Zhou & Logan, 2002; He, Li & Wu, 2006; Wu, Xu & Yeh, 2007), the Chinese architects find that they cannot maintain their aesthetic and humanistic grounding in the neoliberal turbulence with Chinese characteristics. In addition, marketization of land use rights has led to skyrocketing housing prices, which make housing in the old city no longer affordable for most courtyard residents. What is ridiculous that many older residents in the new Ju’er Hutong sold or rented their residences out to wealthy consumers, either Chinese new rich or expatriates, who are attracted to Wu’s synthesization of modern architecture and traditional style. Therefore, “residents have been displaced by upwardly mobile professionals, including quite a few foreign tenants, who consider it a nice place to live” (Li, Dray-Novey & Kong, 2007, p. 274). As Zhao (1997) ridicules, commercialization is “indeed what the intellectuals called for as part of liberalization, but once it came, they despaired” (p. 37).

In the meantime, the aesthetic agenda of preserving authentic Chineseness is also under attack. A group of radical Chinese architects has started to challenge Liang's synthetic approach. As they point out, the architectural style valued by Wu Liangyong and other traditional architects is tantamount to reproduce "an abstract modern body with a Chinese roof – a sentimental, scenographic regionalism with a strong connotation of imperial nationalism" (Li, 2000, p.392). This trend in architecture echoes the post-allegorical phase in other domains, such as literature and film production, aiming at challenging Jameson's (1985) stereotypical theorizing of the Third World as perpetual national allegories. No longer privileging the metaphor of Chineseness, Li (2000) argues that the Chinese traditional "ideals" have prevented Chinese architecture from marching towards a global culture. Rejecting the notion "the more ethnic, the more international" (Visser, 2004, p. 286), radical Chinese architects and architectural students tend to adopt a new architectural language to escape the irrevocable nostalgia of old and are eager to be integrated into the World value system without being an Other in the margin. Therefore, in the 1990s, postmodern designs and indigenous expression were juxtaposed in the urban space of China and contested for legitimacy.

The contestation between the local and global architectural forms is along with a subjective transformation that the ever highly privileged identity – Beijing native – has been replaced by an emergent cosmopolitan subjectivity. Along with Beijing embracing global capitalism, the Chinese government has demonstrated a tendency to transform the big city as a denationalized space – a site that welcomes foreign talents

and captures circulating global values rather than a space for tourists' short stay (Ong, 2007). When Beijing competes with other Asian cities, such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Taipei and Shanghai, for talented foreigners to work and stabilize capital, its local identity has to be downplayed in order to create a space to accommodate heterogeneous identities and cosmopolitan subjectivity. Ethnic Chinese returnees – those educated in prestigious Western institutions with working experiences in transnational corporations, and who enjoy a cosmopolitan lifestyle – override various Chinese local identities and destabilize the original meaning of urban citizenship. Embodying global value, their presence soon makes the nostalgia for Beijing courtyard life fall out of fashion. Even the most nostalgic Beijing artists who protest the urban renewal projects are eager to embrace a cosmopolitan subjectivity after packing up their nostalgia for sale in the global media market (Liu, 2004; Visser, 2004).

CODA

By showing the intertwined relationship between Chinese architecture, the old city of Beijing and Chinese architects, I want to provide an “unsentimental analysis of the intellectual elite” (Zhang, 1997, p. xi). To read the modern Chinese cultural genealogy, its discursive connection with the Western modernity has to be prudently examined. However, in many works by Western architects and scholars, there is a tendency to treat changes of Chinese cityscapes as an unreadable singularity. For instance, on the one hand, Broudehoux (2007) acknowledges that, “China emphatically signaled that it no longer wished to ‘catch up’ with the modern world,

but that it had arrived on the world stage and now strived to get ahead” (p. 385). On the other hand, she laments, by destroying Beijing’s historical and cultural landscape, the Chinese government “has annihilated part of the city’s competitive advantage and erased the particularities that had give Beijing its distinctive flavor” (Broudehoux, 2007, p. 389). The type of national narration is so ambivalent that it is caught between continuous progress and timeless impasse (Bhabha, 1994b). Not only can we categorize Broudehoux’s argument as a Jamesonian reading of the Third World, but we may also reveal the anxiety over the disappearance of “anachronistic space” (McClintock, 1995), upon which she can heighten our sensitivity to differences and sustain her allegorical reading of Chinese urban space. In addition, making the Chinese state an irrational Other conceals the discursive influence of the West which contributes to the prevalence of neoliberalism in Chinese urban space.

Meanwhile, there is also an orientation for Chinese architects and scholars to conceptualize the reconfiguration of Chinese urban spaces and architectures through a Chinese chronicle (see Wang, 1997; Li, 2000; Lu, 2006). To a certain degree, it reveals a narcissistic Sino-centralism and an arbitrary understanding of history as constituted of isolated fractions. The evident nostalgic sentiment in their writing signifies not only their success in transforming Chinese architectural aesthetics and authentic Chinese culture into intellectual currency to circulate in a world of value, but also their failure to maintain the value of their ownership, which finally leads to the perpetual loss of their possessions.

In this section, I have no intention of reiterating the nostalgia of intellectual

elites but choose instead to understand this spectacular nostalgia as a historical conjuncture. As Dai Jinhua (1997) remark:

If history reveals its own footsteps in the process of a continuous flattening out of space, then contemporary Chinese people are fortunate to encounter history and to witness this process of revelation (p. 146).

I do not want to celebrate the idea that Beijing has successfully shaken off its label as an inconceivable Other and integrated itself into the global assemblage. In fact, we have to be critical of the “liquid nature” of the assemblage (Bauman, 2000) as well as the possibility that the global assemblage shifts its center (the West) to its periphery (China). In the case of the cityscape of Beijing, the reality is that no matter how radically Chinese architects promote post-modern aesthetics, all the landmark architecture of the city – including the national theater, the new headquarters of the CCTV *the Boxer*, the 2008 Olympic Stadia *Bird's Nest*, the National Aquatics Center *Water Cube*, and new Capital Airport – were designed by foreign firms to express Western modern aesthetics. Chinese radical architects are still scorned as “superficial” and “less educated” (see Rowe & Kuan, 2003). The West still dominates the means of global cultural production and endlessly generates exclusion/inclusion within the global value system.

Through rearticulating the role of Chinese architects in the historical trajectory of Beijing’s urban space, I hope to raise the consciousness of the socio-historical mechanism through which this contemporary spatial organization came into being. By reflecting on the emergence and disappearance of the specifically

national/local cultures and their replacements, I suggest that the on-going transformation of Beijing's urban space is a result of a complex dialectic between external global culture and domestic reproduction of the national tradition, which makes contemporary Beijing the "loci of the practices of predatory global capital" (Appadurai, 2000, p. 627). Rather than solely criticizing the Chinese state as an inconceivable Other, Chinese intellectuals in general, and Chinese architects in particular have to reflect on their geopolitical unconsciousness. Only through generating creative strategies to wrestle with global capitalism and the sovereign Chinese state, can they offer political intervention to the neoliberal urban culture.

Chapter Three: New Beijing; New Toilets; Great Olympics: Tourist Gaze and Urban

Reformation

It is happening more and more often that in pornographic photographs the portrayed subjects, by a calculated stratagem, look into the camera, thereby exhibiting the awareness of being exposed to the gaze. This unexpected gesture violently belies the fiction that is implicit in the consumption of such images, according to which the one who looks surprises the actors while remaining unseen by them: the latter, rather, knowingly challenge the voyeur's gaze and force him to look them in the eyes.

-- Agamben (2000, p. 93-94).

In chapter two, I addressed that Chinese intellectuals, particularly Chinese architects, have greatly contributed to the construction of Chineseness in architecture. The language of national culture and the idea of national essence do not just circulate in a symbolic plane. As Bhabha (1994b) have noticed that there is always an ambivalent relationship between people who write the national language and those who live it. Rather than being totalized and fossilized, the national culture generates wide dissemination of meanings and symbols to different social groups (Bhabha, 1994b). Thus, people who are separated by national geographical and cultural boundaries participate in the on-going politics – producing and reproducing the national culture; drawing and redrawing the national boundaries. In this chapter, I take the Beijing courtyard compound as an example to capture the power dynamics through which global tourism produces the meaning of cultural specificity for the local.

Beijing courtyard compounds (or Beijing hutongs, means alleyways) have long been objects of Western fantasy. When the first groups of Western tourists visited the ancient residential compounds in Beijing, their exotic architectural styles and the unspeakable sense of community intimacy had a peculiar hold on the Western

imagination. During the last two decades, the aesthetical, historical and cultural values of courtyard compounds have been widely recognized by certain Westerners, but disdained by others. Beijing courtyard compounds have been portrayed sometimes as an urban legend – by preserving a peerless sense of commune in a metropolis – or as an urban slum where modern civilization is totally abandoned.

Typical of those who hold this antipathetic view are short-term travelers, who are very much disappointed to see that Beijing courtyard compounds have no significant difference from Western urban ghettos, other than having worse hygiene conditions than the Western ghettos. As a blog user who just traveled back from Beijing offers a negative comment:

Beijing has these amazing old neighborhoods known as Hutongs, full of tiny houses in mazelike back alleys. Problem is, since most of these neighborhoods are ancient, there is no running water, so each neighbor has its own toilet area, which you can always find by following the ammonia stench [sic].

Similarly warnings can be easily located on the internet or in tour guidebooks.

At the same time, many foreigners who are living in Beijing for the long-term, particularly artists and writers, hold a different view. For instance, American architect Tim Geisler (2000) comments on public toilets in courtyard compounds:

Some of the structures themselves, despite the unpleasant odor, have quite friendly atmospheres inside as well as out, with inventive skylights and doors with exotic shapes. Many also have no dividing walls between toilet holes, making casual on-the-stool chats quite convenient (p. 217).

Besides analyzing the public toilets from the dimension of architectural aesthetics, Geisler (2000) further addresses the on-going urban demolition and toilet upgrade projects. Regarding the disappearance of the old toilets, Geisler (2000) expresses a strong nostalgic sentiment, as he remarks, “but the memory of them, the anecdotes and quips, the political rhetoric, and the social habits of the Chinese people will live on long after those curious little architectural urbanites have returned to dust” (p. 219).

Other than Geisler’s (2000) special taste of architecture, in *The Last Days of Old Beijing*, Michael Meyer (2008) who works as a voluntary school teacher in the *hutong* area offers a narrative and humanitarian account for the public toilet:

A child runs in, wearing the school-issued yellow baseball cap whose printed characters announce SAFETY. The hat makes kids visible to cars. *Hutong* traffic is mostly bicycles and the occasional mule cart, but rules are rules. A backpack weights the boy down, and he struggles to keep balance while lowering his pants. He crouches, looks up, rises, makes a small bow, and yells, “Good morning, Teacher Plumblossom!” (p. 8).

From these vivid articulations, we can clearly discern the Westerners’ ambivalent and contradictory understanding of toilets in courtyard compounds. This ambivalence has been extreme and volatile in the case of ancient urban space of Beijing and it continues to shape our understanding of the local culture of Beijing and its public toilets.

FROM AN URBAN ADVENTURE TO AN ORGANIZED COMMERCIAL TOUR

Since the middle of the 1990s, foreign tourists in Beijing started to have one more option on their travel itinerary- Beijing *hutongs* - the narrow urban alleys in the courtyard residential compounds. In *Transformation of Beijing Hutongs and Tourism Development*, Choe (2005) offers a detailed account of the emergence of the *Hutong* Tour. A local businessman, Xu Yong, realized that foreign tourists are intensely curious about these old courtyards. However, the local residents, in the 1980s and early 1990s had a strong resistance to foreign tourists' interruption of their daily life. According to Choe (2005), the local residents in courtyard compounds frequently refused to allow foreign tourists to take pictures of their living environments. When Xu realized the commercial potential of these ancient courtyards and registered a company – Beijing Hutong Cultural Development LLC – he not only needed to negotiate with local governmental agencies, but also had to convince the local residents to change their hostile attitude towards foreign tourists. From 1992 to 1994, Xu dedicated two years to make the first organized commercial tour to Beijing *hutongs* possible through negotiating with local bureaucracies. What was unexpected was that, along with the Forbidden City, the Great Wall and the Summer Palace, the Beijing *Hutong* Tour soon became a “must see” spot for foreign tourists. On the city streets of Beijing, a regular scene was the foreign tourists boarding traditional tricycles or rickshaws, holding cameras and screaming with excitement. When foreign tourists arrive, flyers with pictures and English explanation are distributed to them to introduce the *Hutong* tour through which they will learn about the real life of Beijing

natives.

Residents in the courtyard compounds also realize the commercial value of their living environment and their life style. Some of the residents sign contracts with tourism companies and local administrative agencies in order to cater to foreign tourists, such as showing tourists around their courtyards or providing traditional Chinese food to their “guests.” Since the late 1990s, taking pictures and taping video have been generously allowed to satisfy the curiosity of foreign tourists. Residents, regardless of age and gender, have been used to posing naturally in front of foreign tourists’ who wish to capture the moment for posterity. Without doubt, the changing attitude of the native residents demonstrates their transformation from “pedagogical objects” to “performative subjects” (Bhabha, 1994b). By doing so, they successfully incorporated “national culture” into their daily life. The boom of the Beijing *Hutong* Tour, furthermore, confirms the cultural value of the Beijing courtyards, which has been claimed by Chinese intellectuals, including famous historian Liang Congjie and architect Wu Liangyong, even though the cultural and aesthetic values of the Beijing courtyard compounds are manifested through immediate commercial values. They are delighted to see that the aesthetic and cultural values with which they identify are further confirmed by foreign tourists. Having a culture, the culture of Beijing, truly becomes an opportunity to select and cherish an authentic collective property (Clifford, 1988, p. 237), regardless of whether the value of the cultural property is assigned from different perspectives by a multiplicity of social groups.

After the Beijing municipal government announced that most of the

courtyard compounds would be demolished for modern upgrades, many foreigners who lived in Beijing for the long-term, foreign media reporters, first time tourists in Beijing and scholars who were interested in Chinese issues, all autonomously participated in a campaign against the demolition. Some foreign freelancers wrote memoirs to recognize their happy life in the ancient urban area. Many short-term visitors joined Beijing natives to record with modern technological devices the last scene of the courtyard compounds. If we say that the existence of the identity of “Beijing natives” is still legitimate in that they have lived in these courtyards for decades and have cultivated a deep sense of “place” and geographical and cultural “rootedness,” the obsession with courtyard compounds expressed by these foreign visitors is somehow inscrutable. Most of the foreigners had never lived in these courtyard compounds. It forces one to ask: what type of political dynamics are involved in this traveling and cosmopolitan subjectivity vis-à-vis the local geopolitical complex? What political mechanism makes the vernacular residential compounds in ancient Beijing an object for the fantasies of Western travelers? Is this political mechanism that produces values from Beijing vernacular housing identical to that of Chinese intellectuals and Chinese architects? How should we interpret this type of value production in the grand context of globalization? What are the meanings or values that the new urban space of Beijing tends to present to the world?

At the same time, from all of the pictures taken by foreign tourists, I discovered one interesting phenomenon, namely their obsession with Beijing’s public toilets. On the one hand, foreign tourists use their cameras to record the cultural and

aesthetic differences they locate in the ancient urban space of Beijing; on the other hand, they publicize their subjective shock when they encounter the filthy public toilets, particularly in the ancient courtyard compounds. Therefore, their ambivalence, the intertwining loathing with obsession with Beijing's ancient urban space, deserves special scrutiny. In this chapter, I explore the construction of an anachronistic temporality and spatiality through the tourist gaze by investigating displacement and gaze. By doing so, I want to reveal how Western cultural hegemony generates discursive effects on the local culture by making it fragmentary and contradictory, and how the cultural hegemony enabled by state, racial, gender and class politics is relocated to an alien urban context in China.

DISLOCATION IN CHINA

To many Western scholars, large scale displacement in China is only a new social phenomenon in the post-Mao era and one that has occurred along with radical urbanization and industrialization when China embraced capitalism. As a matter of fact, from 1949-1976, socialist China was never short of large scale displacements. In the 1960s, as a part of the project of creating a progressive vernacular culture, youth were encouraged to travel around the nation to exchange revolutionary opinions and to challenge geographical constraints. From the 1950s to 1980s, skilled workers, engineers, teachers and administrative personnel were encouraged to go to “backward” regions, usually with abject poverty and minority groups, such as in Tibet, Yunnan and Xinjiang, to facilitate modernization in these peripheral territories of China. In addition, as an attempt to break the urban/rural chasm, urban youth were

sent to rural areas to learn the vernacular culture of peasants. During the Cultural Revolution, millions of Red Guards visited Beijing to witness Mao Zedong giving his revolutionary orders in Tiananmen Square.

These large mass dislocations during the Mao era, motivated by national socialist ideologies, provide a distinctive contrast with the displacements of the post-Mao epoch, which were generally driven by economic benefits, individualist ambition and tourist fantasy. Beijing, originally a destiny for socialist pilgrims, has been gradually transformed into a place to get a better education, better pay and more working opportunities as well as a wonderland for tourists, Chinese and Westerners. However, traveling, to a large extent, generates different cultural meanings to Chinese and Western subjects. To most Chinese, traveling around the world, literally, indicates social status and signifies the possession of a cosmopolitan subjectivity. Having experiences of traveling to Europe and North America are still relevant to high social prestige. While tours to Oceania, Sweden and Greece displayed in luxurious consumer magazines lies beyond many Chinese people's incomes, plenty of local commercials advertise for tours to other parts of China or reachable foreign destinies, including Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand or Korea. To people in north China, a two-day tour to Beijing belongs to the most affordable category with many classical tourist spots highlighted including the Great Wall, the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace, the Temple of Heaven and a series of tombs of the Ming monarchy (1368-1644). To Chinese travelers, these tourist landmarks represent Beijing and are a part of the national culture. It is evident that Chinese tourists are

totally indifferent to Beijing courtyard compounds (or Beijing *hutongs*), not only for their lack of monumental features of China's "nationstate" (Oakes, 1998, p.49), but also for the poverty and backwardness that they have come to represent. During the Mao era, one of the ideological themes is repetitively "speaking bitterness" (Anagnost, 1997 & Rofel, 1994) and highlighting materialist scarcity to form a revolutionary collective. In the post-Mao era, when Chinese decided to forget the revolutionary and impoverished past, and stride to catch up with Western modern temporality, they surprisingly encountered Westerners who returned to the premodern spatiality looking for their lost sense of historicity.

CREATING THE HISTORICAL PRESENT

History becomes something to be established and managed through tours, exhibitions, and representational practices in cinema, literature, and other forms of cultural production.

- Kaplan (1996, p. 35)

Clifford (1992) takes the question of how cultural analysis constitutes its objects regardless of whether the objects are from other societies, traditions or communities, and how an Other place is bounded in space and time. Taking the Beijing *Hutong* Tour as an example, the obsession of foreign tourists with ancient Beijing courtyard compounds is nothing but a misplaced search for temporal and spatial authenticity. In Beijing's courtyard compounds, tourists can witness how complex interpersonal connectedness is well preserved in a foreign urban space and can possibly restore themselves in a profound sense of place. In the 1990s, foreigners

who worked in Beijing could only choose to live in certain residential areas, including the Asian Games Village and the Ethnic Chinese Village. What surprised the Beijing municipal government is that it received more and more requests from foreigners, asking to live in the dilapidated *hutong* areas. According to Choe (2005), many foreigners who live in Beijing believe that Beijing *hutongs* have an unspeakable yet unique charm. More and more foreigners with a strong curiosity toward the courtyard culture choose to live with Beijing natives in the courtyards.

Some foreigners who live in courtyards even direct short video programs to introduce *hutong* culture to the West. Many short videos can be easily located on public websites, such as YOUTUBE. For example, during an interview for a short TV program called “Hutong Chronicles,” Michael Meyer, an American writer/volunteer who has lived in Beijing courtyards for many years, comments on the on-going urban demolition in Beijing during the interview: “...what is more valuable has been lost, what is priceless has been lost is this community texture, a non-American way of life... what was dense with humanity on the street... I always said that when I go back to America, I immediately feel lonely.” In the video, Meyer was chatting with an elder Chinese female regarding the party he participated in the prior night, as if he can only gain access to a full, authentic and un-alienated self in an alien culture. The elder Chinese woman was happy for Meyer having a good time. Meyer, obviously, believes that this non-exclusive nature is an essential feature of Beijing courtyard culture.

Obviously, Meyer fails to realize that the humanity and mutual interpersonal

dependence in Beijing courtyards is compensation for the deteriorated living conditions and material scarcity in the Communist epoch. An exploration of the sense of commune in Beijing courtyard compounds suggests that the sense of interdependency cannot be understood without considering the high housing density and the socialist equalitarianism promoted during the Mao era. What is more problematic is that this enchantment to Beijing courtyard life is more often portrayed as an essential feature exclusively belonging to a geographically defined group –Beijing natives, rather than interpreted in China’s special social and historical context. As a matter of fact, this sense of commune was never a patent exclusively belong to Beijing natives but a nationwide phenomenon. When Meyer celebrates his successful escape from a sense of loneliness deeply embedded in the Western context, he mistakes the priceless hospitality he encounters as an essential nature of a folk culture by severing it from its historical conjuncture, especially the courtyard culture as a Communist legacy, and believes it is the treasure that Western modernity has lost. In Meyer’s account, what he constantly addresses is “what has been lost” which signifies a strong nostalgia for, as well as a sense of, inevitableness. As Tuan Yi-Fu (1998) theorizes, modern people usually feel a strong need to engage with other human beings but also realize that this type of direct contact is more common in premodern times, and more common among people with little material means due to necessity (p. 92). Modern people need privacy and interpersonal distance to maintain their hygiene conditions and a subjectivity of self.

Narrating Beijing courtyards as anachronistic space is also well revealed in

photographs taken by Western tourists. In many blogs and cyber photography galleries, foreign visitors who have been to Beijing exhibit their pictures, many of them in black white or in fading color. Some of them even offer a brief introduction and highlight that these scenes can no longer be located in current Beijing. These pictures are intended to “create a distance between oneself and the world, and thus to constitute it as something picture-like – as an object of exhibit” (Mitchell, 1989, p. 229). At first glance, tourists use black and white photography to better present aesthetics of Chinese urban space. What is generally believed is that “photography is what manufactures a present that will forever be new and clear” (Chow, 1993, p.169). In this case, the deliberate manipulation of photographic color tends to create a distorted temporality in that it is the anachronistic space making the Western visitors experience the present as a past. The projected anachronistic nature of the Beijing urban space reverses the embedded power relationship between seeing and being seen. In these pictures, the being seen is no longer a form of powerlessness, but a powerful agent to preserve history and present a spectacle to the viewers. It disguises the fact that the temporal chasm created by these pictures makes Beijing natives forever frozen in a graphically mediated history. In this history, another type of non-place is presented through a spatial and temporal “distance which indicates that adversaries (between the being seen and the seeing) do not belong to a common space” (Foucault, 1977, p. 150). These mediated images not only eliminate the possibility to restore the subjectivities of Beijing natives from visual abstractness, but also disguise the fact that it is the Western tourists who transcend spatial boundaries and distort temporality

and appropriate “history.”

DISAPPEARING LABOR VALUE IN WESTERN NON-PLACE

If we say that the tourist’s gaze and the visibility it creates represent an Orientalist power in the post-colonial context, another question we need to explore is: what political mechanism enables the tourist’s gaze and tourist’s visibility (Urry, 1990)? To answer this question, it is necessary to revisit the construction of “non-place” in the Western context, which cannot be realized without creating “innocent” and “alienated” traveling subjects.

In *Escapism*, Tuan Yi-Fu (1998) argues that one facet of human nature is a reluctance to accept reality, and escaping the reality is a universal tendency. Rather, Marc Auge (1995) provides a different approach to understand the seemingly universal desire to escape by referring to it as an issue of disappearing, temporality. Indeed, the desire to escape is not historically universal but only prevalent in *supermodernity* during which people can no longer have interaction with organically social places, but are trapped in non-places. In *supermodernity*, the homogenization of needs and consumption patterns makes people no longer able to distinguish between the past and the present and therefore, they lose the sense of temporality (Auge, 1995). A similar argument also appears in Jameson’s (1984) analysis of postmodernity, as he comments, “this mesmerizing new aesthetic mode itself emerged as an elaborated symptom of the waning of historicity, of our lived possibility of experiencing history in some active way.” (p. 68)

In non-places, people not only lose their ability to interpret the present along

with the waning of the historicity, but also are exposed to inescapable solitude (Auge, 1995 & 2002). Given the space for public transport as examples (airports and metro stations), what is manifested in these public spaces is a “collectivity without festival and solitude without isolation” (Auge, 2002, p. 30). In non-places, personal interactions are purely instrumental and contractual; the solitude, caused by alienation of the modernity, however, is perpetual and inescapable to people in modern cities. Therefore, industrial zones and supermarkets lure modernists to visit the ancient places to get references to understand the contingent present (Auge, 1995, p. 74).

Auge is definitely not the only western intellectual longing for the sense of places. Georg Simmel (1971) and Walter Benjamin (1999) have generated similar melancholia in different stages of development of modernity by using terms like “the blasé attitude” or “flaneur” to critique the alienating nature of modern urban spaces. Probably, because of the inescapable solitude in non-places, traveling subjects are more often portrayed as individuals alienated in Western modern/*supermodern* contexts and looking for emancipatory potential in foreign pre-modern contexts. Their dislocation (or displacement) and exploration of distant places become “a cult of interpersonal intimacy” which is “a psychological compensation for the loneliness” (Bauman, 1996, p. 33). With such a desire for interpersonal intimacy and a sense of place, vagabonds even become a metaphor of “apparent freedom to move and so to escape the net of heretofore locally based control” (Bauman, 1996, p. 28).

However, the claimed transparent and alienating nature of non-place and innocent traveling subjects also attract critiques. Tomlinson (1999) poses a question

regarding the functional, abstract and unmediated nature of non-place. As Tomlinson (1999) points out that, to people who work for public transportations, the non-place is not a non-place but their working places. Therefore, the bourgeois melancholia of traveling subjects is enabled by structural exploitation of people who facilitate the operation of these non-places. Furthermore, in *Empire*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000) suggest a more radical understanding of a non-place as an Empire – a smooth space of imperial sovereignty. “Empire is the non-place of world production where labor is exploited” (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 210). Within the abstract and transparent non-places, “the very qualities of labor power... can no longer be grasped, and similarly, exploitation can no longer be localized and quantified” (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 209). Not only has labor value disappeared in these non-places and become immaterial, but also substantial resistance against exploitation has faded away. Therefore, the neutral, anonymous and unmediated nature of non-places is masked by savage capitalism that projects the spatial hallucination to disguise its constitutive contradictions (Zimmer, 2006).

Rather than constituting a natural formation, the lack of interpersonal intimacy in non-places is deliberately constructed by abolishing labor-power from recognition and measurement. Thus, non-places should “be positively defined both by the intensity of the mobilization and by the consistency of the biopolitical nexus of labor-power” (Negri, 1999, p. 83). And travelers’ insistence on the alienating nature of non-places is tantamount to broadcasting their fabricated victimhood and erasing their discursive class domination over disappearing labor. To traveling subjects, the

disenchantment of the everyday non-places can only be realized through further exploitation of affect values from service labors. Therefore, “travel cannot even be imagined as a modern experience without also recognizing its reliance on the uneven distribution of power” (Oakes, 1998, p. 19). The “non-place” in the western context is where labor, exploitation and power intersect, and its biopolitical nature deserves critical inquiry (Hardt & Negri, 2001).

Going beyond Hardt and Negri’s (2000) classical Marxist analysis, McClintock (1995) affirms that the biopolitics of non-places is also highly gendered and racialized. In *Imperial Leather*, Anne McClintock (1995) uses “the labor of leisure” as an explanation of how labor-power is abolished in Empire/non-place. When the middle-class embraced a fetish of whiteness and a cult of cleanness to achieve “middle-class” identity, the economic value of the domestic servants had been converted to symbolic value of “cleanliness” for exhibition. What we often miss is that the construction of cleanliness is violent and contradictory. On the one hand, “the fetish for clean clothes was eloquent of a systematic attempt to erase from the view any visible trace of domestic work” (McClintock, 1995, p. 163) by female servants; on the other hand, female servants in Victorian households were configured as representations of disorder, disease and contagion.

In contemporary Western society, cleaning rituals are still regularly performed yet barely recognized. The cleaning of private spaces is either performed by racial minority females or working housewives. The invisibility of domestic work is still overridden by the symbolic value of labor. In addition, sanitization of public

spaces is still largely maintained by minority females. For instance, a cultural geographical study of locker rooms conducted in Canada shows that,

(T)he caretaker's of these ...locker rooms are women and men of Chinese, Portuguese and Eastern European ethnicity. The locker room is a space of employment for these racially minoritized bodies; they work to keep locker rooms respectable (Fusco, 2006, p. 71).

Similarly to domestic servants in the Victorian era, these female janitors start their work before people arrive. The imprint of their labor, as long as the racial and gender inscription carried by their bodies, is erased with the cleanness left as a perpetual spectacle for exhibition. Dirty locker rooms or toilets are symbolically associated with moral inferiority, laziness and a threat to hygiene. Therefore, the purpose of cleanliness in non-places is still largely an embodiment of a policing of social hierarchies of class, race and gender.

At the same time, the middle-class fetish for cleanness was also manifested in a foreign context along with the expansion of imperialist power, and its manifestation, in turn, changed the social and spatial order of the foreign context. McClintock (1995) uses the "soap saga" to narrate how colonial subjects use cleaning rituals to demarcate body boundaries and police social hierarchies which are colonized on the bottom (p. 33). McClintock (1995) also remarks:

The poetics of cleanliness is a poetics of social discipline. Purification rituals prepare the body as a terrain of meaning, organizing flows of value across the self and the community and demarcating boundaries between one community

and another. People who have the power to invalidate the boundary rituals of another people thereby demonstrate their capacity to violently impose their culture on others (p. 226).

Once the social discipline of cleanliness emerges from the center of *Empire* and achieves a status as new moral norms for daily life, it further transforms into a new notion of right. In the name of guaranteeing contracts and resolving conflicts, the new notion of right inscribes authority, disguises its arbitrary coercion and serves to expand *Empire* (Hardt & Negri, 2000). All these hegemonies are embodied in the practices of disciplining the toiletry space in Beijing courtyard compounds. In the following section, I will use public toilets in Beijing courtyard compounds as an example to articulate the hegemonic “cleanliness” in the West as it is imposed on the urban space of Beijing.

PRODUCING TOILETS AS “NON-PLACE” IN BEIJING

Those upon whose bodies the tourist gaze falls strive themselves to mediate the construction of that landscape in order to maintain their own subjectivity, to make their experience of modernization one that is meaningful and potentially liberating.

- Oakes, 1998, p. 12.

With the increasing culturalization of tourist practices and commercialization of tourist culture, tourism has generated a profound influence on the toured communities (Morris, 1995). China is no exception. Since the Chinese state announced the reformation and open door policy, the number of foreign visitors has

never stopped increasing, except for a short period following the 1989 Tiananmen upheaval. For most foreign visitors, the geographic scope they can reach is still largely limited to several major cities, such as Beijing and Shanghai. In the meantime, in the Western publication market, guidebooks to encourage Westerners to visit China have become popular.

In most of these guidebooks, brief introductions are usually juxtaposed with impressive colorful pictures. The scope of introduction can be wide, ranging from food, local customs, weathers, security conditions and traveling tips. Most guidebooks for potential travelers to China mention that China, in general, has a very foreigner-friendly environment. Therefore, well-prepared travelers can fully enjoy exploring the Chinese cities, as long as they pack enough toilet paper and brace themselves for the bizarre design and horrible hygiene condition of Chinese toilets. Certain guidebooks even give a special note, cynically describing the public toilets in Beijing courtyard compounds as “shocking” and “beyond imagination.” Traveling tips regarding the toiletry space in Beijing are not only limited to tourist guidebooks. Along with the boom in internet technologies, the exchange of photographs and video clips has become part of our daily entertainment across the globe. In many of these public websites, one can easily locate videos and pictures about public toilets in Beijing taken by Western tourists.

In the past two decades, the growth of foreign tourism in China’s major cities has not only resulted in the construction of hotels, shopping areas and commercial facilities that are designed to accommodate the needs of Western visitors, but has also

elicit a revolutionary change in public toiletry spaces. From the late 1990s, the Chinese tourist agencies in Beijing started campaigning for a clean and modern city in order to accommodate the tremendous growth of the tourist industry as well as business travelers. As a response, many hotels and modern facilities in Beijing were updated or built according to international standards. According to the campaign, the hygiene conditions of Beijing's tourist facilities have elicited many complaints from foreign visitors; therefore, improving the hygiene condition was taken as a priority in order to compete with other Asian nations on the international tourist market. In a mass campaign to make Beijing a better place to live and visit, the propaganda says:

If we do not make an effort to improve the environment for foreign visitors, we will lose our market competition to other Asian nations. In addition, the improvement of hygiene condition will also bring convenience to ourselves and reflect the achievement of our modernization.

At first glance, this type of rhetoric serves not only the "collective" interests of Chinese people, but also repaint the image of China to outsiders. The linkage between hygiene conditions and making a profit for the collective "we" has consistently been a feature of such rhetoric. Indeed, such rhetoric justifies "collective interests" through claiming that tourist business creates more jobs, although most of the job increases are low-paying and temporary service jobs as "the level of demand for such services is highly volatile and unpredictable" (Urry, 1990. p.74). The availability of these jobs is more often a pretext for the government to encourage unemployed individuals, such as workers laid off by state-owned enterprises, to actively engage themselves in the

booming tourist economy. In addition, many service jobs are taken by immigrants who are looking for a better future and more opportunities in Beijing. During an informal talk with a manager of a four-star hotel in Beijing, the manager noted:

These service workers (fuwuyuan) come and go. We have to do recruiting all year around. Why? Because they think they are underpaid and constantly look for better paid positions. But the reality is, no hotel would want to pay a higher price for service workers – only if they can speak good English to cater to foreign visitors directly. But most of them just have a middle school or higher school education. By the way, we are not afraid of losing them; there are tons of new people arriving in Beijing everyday.

During the conversation the manager also stated that her hotel is much cleaner than many hotels that are popular to foreign visitors. However, when China first opened its doors, the number of clean hotels was rather limited. Thus, the first few hotels that adopted international hygiene standards soon became the first choice of many foreign tourists. Later on, foreign visitors exchanged this type of information by word of mouth. Even though her hotel, according to her narrative, is identical to other four-starred hotels in the world, many foreign visitors refuse to take the risk of staying in an unknown hotel.

This phenomenon also clearly projects the ambivalence of the short-term foreign visitors. On the one hand, they are eager to witness the “shocking” and “beyond imagination” experiences in person and to record those cultural transgressions through videos and pictures. In order to do it, they have to place

themselves close enough to the filthiest materials and subject themselves to what they call – a “traumatic” psychological risk. In other words, they have to actually disgust themselves and use their victimhood to prove the authenticity of the filth they have intentionally “encountered.” Using the authenticity of the filth, they can prove the authenticity of the foreign culture they experience. On the other hand, they always choose to stay in the well-known clean hotels in order to secure a true modern subjectivity.

Their ambivalence is hard to make sense of without referring to Bauman’s theorizing of scrupulous packaging shocks with safety. Bauman (1996) remarks, “(I)n the tourist’s world, the strange is tame, domesticated, and no longer frightens; shocks come in a package deal with safety” (p.29-30). Therefore, it was precisely these imbalances of social power that afford the tourist the “compulsive and perpetually deferred pleasures over filth” (McClintock, 1995, p. 78). It suggests the psychological trauma that the foreign visitors claimed is nothing but an affirmed package of safety with their intensive scopic desire over filth. They are obsessed with witnessing the fragile nature of social boundaries, which are arbitrarily established by modernity. At the same time, they tend to maintain a safe distance between social boundaries and themselves, and then claim their dominant status as arbitrator of the social order.

In the 1990s, more and more modern hotels, either with direct foreign investment or as joint ventures, were erected in Beijing. The international brand names such as Hilton, Hyatt, Marriot, Fairmont and Westin, guarantee global service and hygiene standards. These non-places are “centrally conceived and controlled...

and devoid of distinctive substantive content” (Ritzer, 2004, p. xi). Some of them have hyper-ethnic decorations for their lobbies and provide exotic Chinese foods which have been assured to be well-handled by Western stomachs. In these hotels, U.S. dollars can be redeemed for Chinese currency; major credit cards are accepted. Certain social rules that are widely adopted in Western contexts are also enforced here. For instance, unlike other Chinese service providers, service providers in these non-places are expecting tips, particularly foreign currencies. In order to maximize convenience for foreigners, many of these modern hotels are located in the commercial and business centers or the diplomatic district where embassies are hosted. Therefore, these non-places are nothing but a spatial extension of the Empire.

In order to facilitate the adventure of Western visitors in the urban space of Beijing, in 2001, the tourist agency established a new star classification scale for toilets in tourist spaces, similar to the globally standardized classification of hotels. The tourist agency, sponsored by the municipal government, has the authority to award a plaque to toilets if they are maintained to the hygiene standards established by the tourist agency. Consistent conformity with the standards is maintained through frequent inspections by governmental agencies’ personnel. The plaque, usually in Chinese and English, shows the star level of the toilet, indicates the degree to which that the toilet complies with the global hygiene standards and reminds the foreign tourists about hygiene conditions. Thus, the competition for star-ranked or for higher ranked status is a ceremony of objectification that distributes toilet space onto a bureaucratic grid for the purpose of specification and judgment (Anagnost, 1997, p.

100). Through administrating the toiletry space, the state agency becomes an arbiter of everyday practices the interests of foreign tourists.

Another practice of the government tourist agency is to promote hygiene toilet culture to the public through public events. For example, the host of the World Toilet Summit in 2004 in Beijing further demonstrated the Chinese state's resolution to sanitize toiletry space and promote a new version of civility, referring to international hygiene standards of toiletry spaces. One of the themes of the Summit was that having a clean toilet is a human dignity and a right. Using foreign tourists' complaints of Chinese toiletry facilities, the civil discourse tried to create subjectivity through shame for "the failure of the Chinese people to embody international standards of modernity, civility, and discipline" (Anagnost, 1997, p.76). It urges Chinese people to be sensitive to inferior hygiene conditions and encourages Chinese tourists to report to local government agencies as a way to protect their rights as consumers. The recently established Federation of Consumer Rights Protection has announced its new working emphasis of protecting the right of tourist consumers. This recently emerged right discourse further jeopardizes the status of lower-class service providers in Beijing through transforming their labor power to transparent exhibitiv values. When Chinese tourists take up the rights discourse produced in the West, they are reinforcing a hegemonic Western representation through a non-Western subject (Narayan, 1997, p. 45).

MAKING A NEW BEIJING

In the display windows of the world market, such "primitives" are the toys,

the fabricated play forms with which the less powerful (cultures) negotiate the imposition of the agenda of the powerful.

- Rey Chow (1995, p. 201).

Is a city truly a concentration of social economic production of the local or a nodal point within a global system of flows? This debate between Henri Lefebvre and Manuel Castells is not only a disagreement between local and cosmopolitan urban epistemologies, but also a debate between industrial and post-industrial urbanites. Since the Chinese government announced the demolition project, it seems that the party leadership is determined to reform Beijing into a global metropolis rather than a place of local production.

Inside the Loop Two Highway of Beijing, the area where courtyard compounds are predominant, construction of many shopping zones was initiated right after the demolition project. In the area close to where Michael Meyer lives, the traditional merchant zone will be replaced by a modern shopping pedestrian street. Rather than fully filling this inner urban area with modern and postmodern masterpieces by Western architects, many urban shopping zones are designated to preserve or represent architectural Chineseness. Rather than refurbishing the old buildings, the new consumption area has buildings with complete modern interiors and a Chinese traditional external look. The new shopping area will be the host of many transnational brand names, including McDonald's and Starbucks, as well as traditional Chinese boutiques. A part of this systematic facelift, even the very few courtyard compounds that the government decides to preserve, are all renovated and

equipped with modern public toilets. The renovations tend to preserve the authentic old Beijing by using grey bricks and vivid color painting of windows.

Such change is not only limited to the ancient urban area in Beijing, but has been happening in smaller consumption spaces, such as restaurants, bars, and shops. Since the late 1990s, many restaurant owners in Beijing have started to decorate their restaurants according to the old fashions in different historical periods of China. A restaurant, therefore, is no longer a purely functional space but a fully embodiment of the owner's aesthetic taste and cultural capital. For instance, some restaurants tend to create a spatial miniature of Chinese gardens. Guests can only pass an old style wooden bridge to access the dining area, and underneath the bridge, the presence of red carp and turtles offer the tourist an excursion into ancient China. In many restaurants, waiters and waitresses are dressed in ancient costumes from different dynasties, serving customers amid Chinese traditional music. Some luxury restaurants invite musicians to play ancient Chinese instruments, such as zithers and Chinese flutes, to construct a peerless "authentic" consumption of Chineseness. By the year 2007, the retrospective decoration has become fashionable, and has been adopted by many less expensive restaurants. The change to restaurants is obviously welcomed by foreign visitors. More and more modern high-rise office buildings are sites of one or two stylistic Chinese restaurants to accommodate the need of Chinese and foreign business elites. A scene often seen in these hyper-real spaces with Chinese characteristics is that, Chinese and foreigners discuss their business issues in English.

Nevertheless, the broader change to the urban landscape of Beijing is not

warmly welcomed by foreign visitors. As a British writer Matthew Plowright let comments in his blog:

I've always been amazed by the Chinese desire to reconstruct all their "historic" sites to make them appear as if they had been built in 2007 not 1707. This is a view that is commonly felt by foreigners and foreign visitors to China: many express disappointment at the lack of, for want of a better word, authenticity, of many historical sites in the country (Retrieved from: <http://www.cibmagazine.com.cn/theyuansorises/index.php/2008/02/19/new-build-history/>).

The disappointment of foreign visitors can be anticipated when they arrive in Beijing and see a faux-ancient Chinese thoroughfare with the Golden Arches of McDonald's rather than authentic courtyard compounds. The only Chineseness they can sense is through the paint, which "is barely dried on the ancient calligraphy style shop signs" (Plowright, 2008). By talking to a taxi driver who was a Beijing native who used to live in a courtyard, Plowright (2008) surprisingly found out that this Beijing native does not appear to be too nostalgic about the change. A shop owner in the ancient shopping area even confirmed to Plowright that foreigners would love the new shopping pedestrian street, because it is both new and "old". In the end, Plowright (2008) even warned that, when the past of China is demolished, its appeal as a tourist destination will be lost, which easily reminds us of the rhetoric used by the government tourist agency – if we cannot provide a hygienic environment, we will lose our business.

In the aforementioned scenario, it seems that all the renovation and architectural facelifts prepared for Western tourists is indeed eliminating what really attracts them. As Plowright claims, what attracts the foreign tourists is “authenticity.” It further raises the question of what represents “authenticity” of Chineseness. Who has the authority to identify, recognize, and justify “authentic” Chineseness? And, who has the responsibility to stage the “authenticity” for whom? If there is a dialectic dynamic of staging and viewing (as well as acting and judging), where is the agency located in the dyad?

For this section, I was inspired by Rey Chow’s (1993, 1995 & 2002) theorizing of coercive mimeticism. Borrowing from Frantz Fanon (1991), Homi Bhabha (1994b) further elaborates that in the post-colonial context, the colonized subjects are forced by colonial discourse to mimic the colonial authority. To Bhabha (1994b), the mimicry itself in turn menaces “the narcissistic demand of colonial authority” (p. 126). In the case of the transformation of urban Beijing, neither the Chinese government nor individual business owners intend to fully embrace the mimicry project to eliminate the Other Chineseness. The change definitely does not present any menace to the Western modernity, since all the renovation was conducted in a great effort of preserving “Chineseness.” The use of grey bricks, graphic color painting in traditional calligraphy, the old-fashioned decoration of restaurants, and the traditional Chinese music played through imported audio systems are all evidence of an endeavor by the Chinese to reconstruct “Chineseness” for foreigners. Nevertheless, Chinese are blamed for the loss of the authenticity of an ancient non-Western

civilization. If we say the mimicry is disavowed for a potentiality of presenting a threat to the colonial authority, what make the Westerners discredit the self-mimeticism by the Chinese?

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Rey Chow (2002) raises a question regarding self-mimeticism by asking “what is the condition of the ethnic subject who feels she must try to resemble, to appear as herself— to be ethnic” (p. 108)? In the aforementioned scenarios the juxtaposition of a fabricated “nostalgia for a historical past with the commodity is not accidental,” as Anagnost (1993) remarks, “the desire for one excites the desire for the other” (p. 595). The reconstruction of space in Beijing is initiated when the gazed ethnic objects, the Chinese government as well as Chinese business owners, learn how the colonial vision is organized and started to take an active role in staging what the gazers desire. When the Chinese mistakenly assume that foreigners like to see the exotic portions of Chinese architecture and culture, but dislike seeing filthy toiletry facilities in ancient courtyard compounds, the Chinese constitute a spectacle according to the way Western vision is organized. Therefore, the very state of being looked at is shaped by the way gaze is organized (Mulvey, 1975).

What Chinese do not expect is that Western tourists are willing to see the primitiveness and the backwardness of Chinese culture as well. They are willing to witness the spectacles of filth and the absence of interpersonal distance in courtyard compounds. The “authentic” Chineseness, according to Plowright (2008), can only be located in buildings built in 1707 rather than in 2007 and can only be represented by

non-mimetic and spontaneous Beijing natives. In other words, if a self-mimeticism is inevitable, it has to “convey the ‘original’ without leaving its own traces” (Chow, 1995, p. 184). When Chinese take their initiative to present Chineseness, it is the Western tourists who remain at the center and whose gaze serves as the hinge of the entire narrative of Chinese urban space. When the Chinese encounter critiques from the West, which phrases their ancient urban space as “beyond imagination,” Chinese actually have two choices: eliminate their ethnic features and stage a fake Chineseness or subordinate to the ethnic interpellation for a Western conceived but inferior authenticity (Chow, 2002). Thus, Chinese are constrained in a dilemma: either be primitive or be a failure to present original Chineseness.

SELLING THE NEW BEIJING

The city surrendered itself to sight, bowing to the demands of the gaze; it neither shocked nor corrupted the eye and even allowed itself to be constituted as an image – one that edified and signified order.

Laporte (2000, p. viii).

In the stories of urban demolition in Beijing and the urban legend of public toilets in courtyard compounds, the Western gaze is one of the most significant powers that incite the on-going change. Nevertheless, it is the power of the Chinese state, the efficiency of transnational estate developers, the influx of Chinese tourist capital and the efforts of individual entrepreneurs such as restaurant owners that enable such dramatic urban change. Some may argue that the collective agency of these subjects does not do any good but creates a modern version of a cultural Other.

In the past one hundred years, China has not stopped seeking an alternative to achieve modernity. When modernity is finally granted, it still carries an ineradicable Chineseness which perpetually positions China under the Western gaze. What deserves attention is that, rather than staging an urban space identical to Western modern metropolises, Beijing chooses to deliberately present itself as a modern city with cultural distinction. Hardly can we interpret the urban strategy of Beijing through the glocalization paradigm (Robertson, 1995), which highlights local resistance and celebrates cultural heterogenization, since the original drive of China to change Beijing was to satisfy the gaze of Western tourists and make profits from their satisfaction.

However, the on-going urban transformation in Beijing also seems to manifest China's global ambition. For instance, the construction of a series of global architectural landmarks, including the new CCTV building, the National Theatre, the National Stadium (the Bird's Nest) and the National Aquatics Center (the Watercube) all associated with "cosmopolitanism with Chinese characteristics" (Rofel, 2007, p. 111). The Chinese state is no longer interested in passively accepting a position in a cultural and political conjuncture forced by the West, but rather wants to actively engage in recreating a new global context (Rofel, 2007). So, rather than joining the so-called global cities as a late comer (Sassen, 1991), Beijing should launch "a national project about global reordering" (Rofel, 2007, p. 20) through which China's position in the world system could be renegotiated. From this perspective, the fabricated Chineseness in urban Beijing produces meanings on both local and global

levels by wrapping a package of “Chineseness” and insisting the world to buy.

Nevertheless, the spectacle of urban Beijing should not be read as a hybridized city but as a “contact zone” (Pratt, 1992, p. 6-7) where powers collide into and support each other, and reinforce the exploitation of marginalized social groups. Therefore, we should be cautious of the naturalized non-places in the West and their expansion to Chinese urban space. In addition, we should also be keen to the role played by the Chinese nation-state in the reproduction of non-places in China, particularly how it arbitrarily presents a new Beijing and uses the symbolic meanings of this new urban space to negotiate its political capital in the world system. In the next chapter, I will explore how housing policies were/are manipulated by the Chinese nation-state to secure a social order through projecting Utopian narratives of the city.

Chapter Four: Beijing and Beijingers

During the preparations for the 2008 Olympic Games, news regarding coercive relocations occurring in Beijing often made headlines in Western media, referring to the Chinese government as “totalitarian,” and the people as “victims.” Other media reports lamented urban regeneration project in Beijing was violence against civilization in that it destroyed the materialistic carrier of Chinese culture. The claim was well echoed by artists, musicians, and writers, particularly those who were born and raised in Beijing. Different from Chinese architects who created Chineseness against the West (as I addressed in Chapter One), these native intellectuals often referred to the culture they defended as not only the culture of old Beijing but also the culture of China. It seems that they were implying a message – Beijing is the only legitimate embodiment of cultural China, therefore the culture of Beijing is the national allegory, deserving protection of every citizen. Many people agreed with these native Beijing intellectuals that most Chinese cities were suffering for cultural anemia by aimlessly adopting cultural elements from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Seoul, Tokyo and New York. Beijing, even though it is the political center of a totalitarian regime, never stopped producing politically active individuals, such as politicians, artists, musicians, activists, scientists, etc.

Influenced by these Beijing native intellectuals, many migrants who had just arrived in Beijing believed that they should be responsible for the fading Beijing culture, even though they rarely paid attention to the disappearing local cultures in their home provinces. As a result, Beijing became the only city where demolition of

ancient residential buildings became politically sensitive and controversial, even though Beijing is not the only city in which ancient architecture was demolished. As a matter of fact, the radical urbanization and an exploding demand for housing caused by migrant population were not exclusively staged in Beijing. Across the nation, old housing was torn down to accommodate new residential high-rises. The local media rarely painted portraits of the change as violence against cultural heritage, but often gave a snapshot of the interest in the conflict between residents, new migrants, real estate developers and the local government. Rather than perceiving the on-going demolition as a disaster of cultural legacy, the local media tended to interpret it as a political conflict.

It urges me to ask, what affords the urban reformation in Beijing one more layer of cultural and political meaning? What make the sentiments attached to the ancient urban space more nostalgic? To answer these questions, the seemingly fossilized local identity of Beijing, recently emerged urban migrants in the city, and cultural construction of native places deserve special scrutiny. In this chapter, I will de-naturalize the seemingly fossilized but indeed volatile identity – Beijinger – by tracing its genealogy.

AMBIVALENT BEIJINGERS

A Beijing native, also known as a Beijinger or an Old Beijinger, is generally considered the identity for people who were born and raised in Beijing. The various characteristics attached to this identity are contradictory but still can be generally summarized as generous, politically conscious, talkative and cosmopolitan. Rather

than being a new urban phenomenon, the political consciousness of the Beijingers has a long history. As Strand (1993) identifies, as early as the republic era (1912-1949), “public awareness of issues, and the persuasiveness of small and informal gatherings of like-minded persons with shared interests, were basic facts of political life in Beijing” (p. 171). This pattern of social life is so valued by the local people that it has been transformed into a performative aesthetics of their daily practices. Beijingers are often proud of themselves as being knowledgeable and curious about various domestic and international political issues by contrasting themselves with the utilitarian and money-driven merchant culture of the Pearl River Delta (Guangzhou) and the Lower Yangtze River Delta (Shanghai). They generally believed these characteristics to be a result of their geographical proximity to China’s political center. There is a well-known old saying – leaning against the wall of the imperial city – to portray this local identity’s geographical proximity to the sovereign power. Having the geopolitical privilege to witness all major political and diplomatic spectacles in China, Beijingers are often self-claimed as having a political cosmopolitan vision.

This type of cosmopolitan vision claimed by Beijingers is unique for its cultural rootedness in that they understand the world but are still subjectively centered in China. In other words, their cosmopolitanism carries Chinese characteristics. Carrying a strong sense of nationalism, Beijingers praise themselves for their cultural rootedness and their resistance to capitalist rationality. In media and in daily life, this cultural rootedness of Beijingers is always compared to the rootless nature of Shanghai natives by Chinese intellectuals. Shanghai people are generally recognized

as longing for diaspora due to their obsession with economic benefits and admiration of Western culture. In contrast to that of Beijingers, the local identity of Shanghai people is generally interpreted as influenced by its colonial legacy.

All local identities carry ambivalent meanings. When the people try to eulogize the identity they embrace, they are negatively labeled. Beijingers are no exception. For instance, their sensitive political consciousness is often juxtaposed with their political inability or political inertness. Their enthusiasm for political issues is often portrayed as compensation or a default option to their inability to catch up with the trends of the global economy. In many cases, *pin* (in Chinese it means garrulous) is the word broadly used to characterize Beijingers. *Pin* not only indicates their talkative nature, but further implies their inferior working ethics – all talk; no action. Their generosity is sometimes interpreted as “saving face.” In certain cases, it indicates that they can obtain easy money through their geopolitical advantage. Therefore, the generous Beijingers are also compared to penny-wise Shanghai natives and hardworking Cantonese. In order to scrutinize the ambivalence of this local identity, namely Beijing, a careful examination of the cultural construction of geographical imagination, namely identification with native places, in Chinese history is necessary.

SALIENT GEOGRAPHICAL IDENTITIES

According to Honig (1996) and Duara (2000), very few aspects of an individual’s identity in China are more primary than native place. Many studies even show that native-place ties played a significant role in urban politics prior to the

formation of the People's Republic. Goodman (1995) reveals that in the republic era (1912-1949), urban space became a platform on which the old culture and new culture were on display, and native-place solidarities had greatly mediated Chinese urban residents' imagination of the nation and their political engagement of urban social organization. The co-existence of native-place organizations and new social institutions, such as workers' unions, both shaped the daily politics of urban residents and newcomers to cities. Strand (1993) further elaborates that in the republican era, "use of native-place loyalties as a means of developing a core of followers and extending one's influence was a well-established strategy in Chinese urban politics" (p. 226). In some extreme cases, certain criminal organizations and secret societies were organized based on locality ties.

As Oakes (2000) reveals, regionalist texts shared three common features: 1) enclosing regions, treating them as coherent cultures without acknowledging interaction with other regions; 2) establishing a sense of cultural purity and authenticity; 3) offering a set of features of folk culture that are readily commodified (p. 674). All three of these features can be identified in the process through which the local identity of the Beijinger came into being. Taking the "coherence" of Beijing's local culture into consideration, we can clearly see that the term "Beijinger" continues to carry new meanings. Most striking is that during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912), there was no such a generic name for a population as "Beijingers." Dong (2003) suggests, "Imperial Beijing was a city of hierarchy, expressed not only through the walls that marked status and ethnic segregation but also through architectural

features” (p. 30). Residents in Beijing during the Qing dynasty were not only dichotomized according to their ethnicities but geographically divided. The inner city of Beijing, with the imperial palace located in the center, was divided into eight sections for the eight banners for Manchu people to live. Considered the loyalist social group, the Manchu bannermen lived closest to the Forbidden Imperial City and guarded the safety of the monarchy (Dong, 2003; Li, Dray-Novey & Kong, 2007). For a Manchu, the size, location and the architectural style of his residence was determined by his banner affiliation and aristocratic rank, which is usually associated with his blood connection with the Qing monarchy as well as the hereditary rank of his ancestry (Dong, 2003). City planning for imperial Beijing represented the “disposition of bodies” through which the hierarchy of Qing power was expressed (Elliott, 2001).

In order to maintain its sovereignty over the ethnic majority Han group, the Qing monarchy adopted Confucianism to sustain the privileged status of Han intellectuals, using the imperial exam to select Han intellectuals to serve for bureaucratic positions. Certain loyal Han elites were awarded with Manchu status but were still forbidden from living in the inner city. Instead, the Han elite officials, intellectuals and common people intermingled in the outer city. At the same time, the Qing government did not permit Manchu bannermen to do business and practice crafts, which were forbidden in the inner city as it represented low social *habitus*. Instead, “they enjoyed regular monthly allowances of grain and yearly cash incomes” (Dong, 2003, p. 219) in the outer city. The original intention of this restriction was to

keep Manchu bannermen militarily active or pursuing bureaucratic positions through imperial examination. However, the stagnant imperial bureaucracy could not keep bannermen from abusing their social status by spending their allowances on luxury goods and entertainment in the outer city. According to Strand (1993), “there were popularly regarded as having lost their martial spirit and retained an unwarranted sense of entitlement” (p. 13). As a result, by the time the Qing Dynasty collapsed in 1912, many Manchu families soon suffered poverty for their lack of skills and had to sell their possessions, including antiques and residences. The ethnical-geographical divide of Beijing was blurred when some Han merchants and political elites took over the courtyards from bankrupted aristocratic bannermen.

Nevertheless, the fall of the feudal monarchy did not bring Beijing any prosperity but left it stagnant for several decades. In 1928 Beijing lost its status as the national capital to Nanjing and was renamed as Beiping, becoming a dilapidated city without any self-sustaining economy (Dong, 2003). According to Dong (2003), in 1931, 32.7 percent of the workers in the workers’ union in Beijing were unemployed (p. 80). The number of non-unionized labor should be far higher than this number. A large rural population moved to Beijing due to frequent military confrontations between warlords in north China. Dong (2003) notes that “these peasants were not attracted to the city by employment opportunities; rather, they were driven from the countryside by hardship or wars” (p. 221). Although the municipal government tended to revive Beiping as a tourist city, this plan was frequently interrupted due to a severe deficiency of financial support. This situation was further exacerbated when the

Japanese army made inroads into Beijing in 1937. Wealthy families and merchants, even major educational institutions left Beijing to the south of China to avoid warfare. When Beijing regained its old name and the status as the capital city of socialist China in 1949, many architectural landmarks in Beijing were in ruins.

In the republican era, although we witnessed endless labor movements and militancy in the urban sphere, the decisiveness of native place worked against the development of transcendental identity and class consciousness among workers (Perry, 1995). The retreat of imperial state power, embodied through the presence of fractured warlord politics and the intervention of foreign powers, paved the way for the proliferation of new economic and social organizations and the rise of civic activism (Bergere, 1997). When the regime of the People's Republic took power, the strong civic social and economic organizations had been replaced by a strong state power that was eager to put identities to native places on hold.

A careful reading of the modern history of China tells us that during the Mao era, local identities, considered as a feudal residual, were suppressed in order to formulate a grand vernacular culture to achieve Communist ideals. In this era, a geographical fetish did exist, but was often linked with a communist revolutionary heritage. For instance, the hometown of Mao Zedong, Shaoshan County (now Shaoshan city) in Hunan province, became a sacred place for communist pilgrims. As already mentioned, during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), millions of Red Guards (youths with Communist beliefs) traveled to Beijing to witness Mao's speech in Tiananmen Square. In addition, certain places were named as *ge ming lao qu*

regions with revolutionary traditions. Most of these revolutionary regions were related to the political and military history of the Chinese Communist Party. For instance, Jiangxi province has many revolutionary regions because the Communist guerrilla bands used to have military bases in the Jiangxi mountainous areas. Another famous revolutionary sacred place is City Zunyi in Guizhou province where Mao Zedong took over the military power and assured his military strategy of “rural attacks the urban” in the party and launched the legendary Long March. Most of these revolutionary regions are rural and impoverished places due to the military strategy of the Chinese Communist Party to avoid military confrontation with their enemies in major cities. Nevertheless, unlike the post-Mao identification with local cultures, the geographical fetish attached to these revolutionary regions was constructed by the communist ideologies, and was therefore, nationwide. As a result, various local identities were downplayed for their noncompliance with the communist ideology.

The transformation of the social structure from strong and diverse intermediate organizations to an atomic state entity can also be detected by examining the change in Mao Zedong’s social propaganda (Zhao, 2001). In an essay finished in 1919, Mao identified three types of voluntary associations – worker unions, student and educational associations, and native place associations – and predicted that these associations (small Chinas) would provide the potential to construct a grand China (cited in Goodman, 1999). On the one hand, Mao recognized the potential contradictions among small Chinas; on the other hand, he demonstrated optimism that the small Chinas could form an inclusive unity. In 1937 Mao wrote his legendary

essay “Combat Liberalism,” in which he suggests to adopt an “active ideological struggle” to ensure unity within the Party and to motivate the revolutionary organizations. In the essay, Mao (2007) clearly identified native-place solidarity as a symptom of liberalism:

To let things slide for the sake of peace and friendship when a person has clearly gone wrong, and refrain from principled argument because he is an old acquaintance, a fellow townsman, a schoolmate, a close friend, a loved one, an old colleague or a old subordinate...: this is one type of liberalism. (p. 103)

During the Eleventh Session of the Supreme State Conference in 1957, Mao (2007) further claimed social forces and groups which resisted socialist unity as enemies of the people. Not only were solidarities based upon native place condemned, but also sentiment over native places was devalued. Instead, individuals were told that they should be ready to give up their geographical affiliation and respond to the call from the Party and to relocate anywhere the Party needs them.

Besides its cultural endeavor to create a homogeneous culture as an approach to realize communism, the Chinese communist regime also reconstructed an all-inclusive institutional system to consolidate its power. Through constituting the universal *hukou* system with a work-unit system in the urban areas as well as a farming commune system in the rural regions that cover every single Chinese citizen, “the state was for the first time in history able to penetrate society down to the village and factory level and to effectively engage in radical transformative programs according to utopian visions” (Zhao, 2001, p. 41). As a result, all medium-level social

institutions, including native-place organizations, independent workers' unions and professional associations, various criminal and religious secret societies, were also fully eliminated (Zhao, 2001).

Strictly under the control of the state, random and autonomous dislocation disappeared; native culture and social relations based on native-places were suppressed. Diverse and hierarchical urban culture was replaced by a universal and progressive socialist vernacular culture. One piece of the evidence of the control of native/local culture was the successful promotion of standardized Chinese (so called *putonghua*) pronunciation as the only formal language to be used in official and educational settings as well as in public media. *Putonghua* is officially defined "to have Beijing speech as its standard pronunciation, the northern Chinese dialect as its base dialect" (cited in Guo, 2004, p. 46). As Lydia Liu (1999) has observed, adaptation of a language more or less signifies adaptation of a culture. Therefore, the successful promotion of *putonghua* over a variety of Chinese dialectics symbolizes the dominance of a socialist vernacular culture over a multiplicity of Chinese native cultures. However, there is an exception among many native cultures. Although the Beijing dialect was chosen by the regime to be the language of China, the native culture of Beijing was suppressed along with other native cultures by giving up its cultural characteristics. In this sense, Beijing had lost its geographical singularity and became a substitute name for the Party, its regime structure and the mass vernacular culture promoted by the regime. In other words, the Beijing dialect became the language of the socialist state, and Beijing culture was forced to become the cultural

allegory of the nation.

However, the strong state control could not alleviate poverty and social chaos in the urban areas. The government of the People's Republic faced cities with no mature industry, a large unemployed population suffering with dilapidated housing as well as a lack of transportation. The housing problem was particularly acute in that housing shortages, dilapidated conditions, and a lack of proper sewers or water supply in most residential areas were foremost concerns to communist governors (Zhang, X., p. 1997). Taking Beijing as an example, the demography of the city of Beijing in 1949 was composed of artisans, small business owners, low-waged service workers (such as rickshaw pullers), unemployed homeless and a small portion of industrial workers. As Dong (2003) points out, the Republican Beijing (1912-1948) did not develop an industrial system. Nevertheless, according to orthodox Marxism, craftsmen and small business owners did not carry a proletarian agency. In order to make Beijing a representative communist city and reduce unemployment, a large urban industrial sector had to be established to transform the predominant population of the city to a progressive and politically conscious collectivity of proletarian workers and replace various organizations with a strong structure of state. It soon turned Beijing into one of the biggest construction sites for industrial factories in China.

As a result, during the Mao era, "the state socialist regime had long been concerned with the production of new socialist subjects and it ... insisted on inculcating state-authorized subjectivities in the populace" (Lee & Yang, 2007, p. 10). The endeavor to create a collective "we" went to an extreme during the Cultural

Revolution (1966-1976). One of the frequently adopted strategies of the communist regime was to suppress various identities while calling on the masses to participate in a communist vernacular culture. Under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, Chinese masses devoted themselves to endless ideological movements. For each ideological movement, the party regime identified one theme; and the masses used the theme as a guide for their political practices in their daily lives and as a weapon to attack their class-based “enemies.” For instance, during the Cultural Revolution, Mao Zedong affirmed that “revolution is not criminal, revolt is justified” and encouraged the Red Guards to attack any feudal historical and cultural residual as well as social elites in bureaucratic institutions. It upset the social hierarchy and demolished local cultural heritage a frequently staged scene in urban China.

As mentioned previously, prior to the Cultural Revolution, Beijing was a big industrial site where the recently constituted proletarian working class demonstrated its unprecedented passion for production. During the Cultural Revolution, Beijing soon became the largest ideological battlefield in the nation. Massive campaigns were initiated against the “people’s enemies,” including intellectuals, party bureaucrats and the anti-revolution Right (Andreas, 2007). Guided by Mao’s directive, the Chinese masses were granted the “four great freedoms” to write Big-Character posters, to speak out freely, to air one's views fully, and to hold great debates and massive demonstrations to denounce and attack any identified people’s enemies (Huang, 1996). It in turn transformed the urban space into a symbolic chaos without any sense of authority or hierarchy, or as Zizek (1994) puts it a “carnavalesque suspension of social

hierarchy” (p. 55).

During this mass movement, in order to comply with ideological propaganda, everyone was suppressed to various degrees. However, it also made the Chinese masses experience a collective fantasy. Famous Chinese film director Jiang Wen, who is also a Beijing native, and who found himself at the center of an ideological battlefield, explained this dilemma in his controversial movie *In the Heat of Sun*: “people in the West forget that that era (the Cultural Revolution) was a lot of fun... The Cultural Revolution was like a big rock-and-roll concert, with Mao as the biggest rocker and every other Chinese person his fan.”⁶ The chaotic equalitarianism represented the Maoist ethos about the superiority of the proletariat and afforded the masses the political consciousness to defend the Maoist equalitarianism. This proletarian equalitarianism was not only fully staged during the Cultural Revolution; it became branded onto the collective memories of the Chinese masses and is constantly used by Chinese people to justify their participation in politics during the post-revolution era.

IN THE POST-MAO BEIJING

Although local cultures were not highlighted in the Mao Era, the bodily practices of local cultures were not fully eliminated during the Cultural Revolution. For instance, Brownell (2001) notices that local cuisines were well preserved, then commercialized in the post-Mao era for the tourist industry and popular consumption

⁶ Andrew Solomon, “The Howl That Could Free China,” *New York Times Magazine*, December 19, 1993, 70, quoted by Rey Chow in her introduction to *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema*. P. 30, also by Tonglin Lu in her *Fantasy and Ideology in a Chinese Film: A Zizekian Reading of the Cultural Revolution*, *Positions*, 12, 2. p. 556.

(p. 125). In addition, in the post-Mao era the opening ceremonies of the Chinese National Games became a contest of local cultures rather than a showcase of the homogenous communist national culture (Brownell, 2001, p. 131). In post-Mao China, when the residual effects of feudalism were no longer denigrated as a cultural poison undermining the grand communist project, but were viewed as an historical legacy that extended Chinese culture and justified the Chinese nation-state, it became a rich reservoir where people endlessly explored cultural capital to decorate their new social *habita*. At the same time, the historical legacy became the nexus at which people traced the superior/inferior characteristics of local identities, such as Beijingers.

In the 1980s, Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms soon brought about rapid economic development and material prosperity. At the same time, unbalanced economic developments and stratification crumbled the proletarian equalitarianism vis-à-vis the collective fantasy of the socialist utopia. The first wave of economic investment, brought by ethnic Chinese from Taiwan, Hong Kong and other nations in Southeast Asia, created an economic miracle in south China, mainly in the Pearl River Delta (including Fujian and Guangdong provinces). Following investment from the Chinese diasporic community, the second wave of investment, mainly from Western developed nations, reproduced another economic center in the Yangtze River Delta (including Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces). Even though workers were also unemployed in south China, they enjoyed many more opportunities in the market economy than their peers in the north (Lee, 2007). In north China, the situation was rather different. The state-owned industrial enterprises, which were developed in the

Mao era, faced competition from the coastal area in southeast China. Lacking the resources to upgrade their technology and diversify their products to meet the needs of consumers, state-owned enterprises in north China experienced extreme difficulty. To overcome economic stagnancy, the party adopted a series of practices, such as large scale layoffs and privatization of state-owned enterprises, which led to severe corruption.

Encountering the economic boom in southeast China, Beijing's geographical prominence was severely diminished in the 1980s. On the one hand, residents of Beijing had the advantage of being the first to witness the economic development and democracy of Western society through global media. On the other hand, Beijing was the host of China's leading academic institutions where elite intellectuals serve. It made Beijing the center of the cultural and political movement in the post-Mao China. In *The Power of Tiananmen*, Zhao Dingxin (2001) records that when the state loosened its control on propaganda, commercial, cultural and political activities mushroomed in the post-Mao era. The mainstream media was full of intellectuals' diagnoses of the Chinese economy and society, all of which contributed to the economic and moral crises of the state. After comparing the activities of college students in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong in the 1980s, Zhao (2001) revealed that when students in Guangdong were busy on their small business projects, Shanghai students were obsessed with TOFEL and GRE tests, Beijing students were honing their political sensitivity by participating in endless conferences and seminars held by radical left-wing intellectuals.

What is intriguing is that left-wing intellectuals used Maoist strategies, such as the four great rights to achieve a Rousseuian understanding of democracy (Zhao, 2001, p. 61). For instance, the earliest and one of the most well-known political dissidents, Wei Jingsheng (a Beijing native whose first name means “born in Beijing”) posted his big character poster on the Democracy Wall in 1979, attacking the socialist regime as a “dictatorship” and calling for democracy. Another cultural icon is heroic nonconformist Chinese rocker Cui Jian. Influenced by Western rock-and-roll music which was imported into China through illegal channels, Cui vividly articulated the melancholic and angry mentality of Chinese people, particularly those in North China. In his legendary song “Nothing to My Name,” Cui represents the cruel social reality that Chinese people have to face in the post-Mao epoch. By frequently using quotations from Mao Zedong, Cui’s music can be interpreted as either expressing an irrevocable nostalgia for socialist equalitarianism or as a ruthless satire towards the quixotic utopia. When the fantasy of a socialist utopia collapses, materialistic scarcity and social inequality become more unbearable.

As Barrington Moore (1978) remarks, what may trigger rebellion against the social order is often moral outrage rather than materialistic hardship. It can be used to explain why a massive national solidarity was well maintained throughout the Mao era even though everybody was extremely impoverished. The studies of Chinese workers in the post-Mao era show that they were discontent because they no longer carried the social privilege for being the proletarian class (Unger & Chan, 2007; Lee, 2007). In addition, the economic reformation that happened in state-owned enterprises

made them the most vulnerable collectively. Not only had the previous job security and welfare, such as free education and medical care, been gradually banished, but also the economic reformation made bureaucrats in their enterprises the new rich. Throughout the economic transition, the changing policy was always taken advantage of by bureaucrats and leaders in state-owned enterprises. In certain cases, administrators in public sectors abused their power during the process of privatization of public properties. This practice further exaggerated urban residents' outrage towards social orders.

One Beijing worker who was a political activist during the 1989 Tiananmen Square protest appeared in the documentary *The Gate of Heavenly Peace* and described the situation thus:

My mom said, 'in the past, we had low wages but had no problems to raise three kids. Now you have your own jobs, why do we feel the money is short?' These comrades greedily usurp public resources and prevent workers from getting any resources. Why is that? I can get [resources] too if you can get them!

From his confession, we can discern that Beijing workers neither had an interest in critiquing the privatization of state enterprises and encroaching capitalism, nor did they hold idealistic views on Rousseuian democracy as Chinese intellectuals did. As a result, , Beijing residents stood along with students in 1989 Tiananmen demonstrations, blocked major venues to stop military forces entering Beijing, and became involved in physical confrontations with troops (Zhao, 2001, p. 218). As

Giorgio Agamben (2000) keenly noticed, “the notions of democracy and freedom are too generic to constitute a real goal of struggle” (p. 89). When the Chinese state found out that it was facing a multitude, which is something that it could not and did not want to represent, it could only resort to violence (Agamben, 2000).

In the post-1989 era, the state primarily employed two strategies to disintegrate the alliance between college students and Beijingers. First, the state generously offered Beijingers housing ownership through privatizing public property. Second, the state loosened the control of its *hukou* system and allowed more college students to gain formal *hukou* status in the city through meritocracy, allowing the state to deliberately create antagonism and competition between the natives and new arrivals. In the meantime, the loosening *hukou* system enabled a tremendous number of migrant workers from the rural areas to pursue an urban dream.

REINVENTING BEIJINGER AND BEIJING CULTURE

During the cultural battle, intellectual Beijing natives played a significant role in reinforcing their local identity. In the 1980s, Beijing natives enjoyed a great advantage of witnessing Western culture and economic advancement, which had cultivated a strong anarchist sentiment among Beijing natives. In the post-Tiananmen era, another well-known rocker, He Yong used his anger to project his nostalgia to the old Beijing lifestyle that was disappearing along with urban renovation and modernization in a song called *zhonggulou* (Bell and Drum Towers, which are the remains of the demolished inner city wall). In the end of He Yong’s music video, he jumped into an icy lake during a severe winter to protest his demolished *hutong* home.

He Yong's nostalgia, therefore, is intermingled with his resistance against the state sovereignty as well as social changes. This type of nostalgia was not only limited to Beijing rock and roll musicians, other Beijing intellectuals, including painters, sculptors, installation artists, documentary producers and curators, all demonstrated a strong nostalgia through a variety of aesthetical representation. Within Shibo Wang's documentary of Chinese radical artists in the 1990s – *Swing in Beijing*, sculptor Zhan Wang laments “the huge changes in Beijing are like the snow covering your footsteps: you don't know where you are coming from. I have lost the sense of belonging.” Nevertheless, the nostalgia of these intellectuals was rarely related to the bygone socialism but particularly tied to their cultural rooting of the local, since none of them would like to go back to the Mao's age when individualistic and artistic expression was outlawed. They carefully teased out the cultural elements of the local from their socialist past and reassembled these elements to present their erasable nostalgia, as if they only experienced the local culture without ever encountering the socialist past. Therefore, to the radical Beijing intellectuals, “the past does not just exist as aesthetic principles chosen for their suitability to ‘modern taste’: rather, “modern taste” is created with the very fragments of the past” (Dong, 2003, p. 16-17).

In the meantime, their resistance to the socialist past cannot be severed from their cosmopolitan ambition, since the Beijing intellectuals who tried to retain and revive Beijing culture were no longer contented to position their identity in the domestic realm. The globalization occurring on both economic and cultural spheres forced and lured Beijing intellectuals to position their localized subjectivities in the

nexus of global culture and to accumulate transnational social capital. All the Beijing radical artists were eager to show Western audiences their ambivalence, rooted creativity along with cultural transcendence. As Visser (2004) narrates, Beijing artists are longing for “a new form of Chinese art – one which meets international standards rather than merely promoting the nativist notion” (p. 286). Therefore, we witness a large number of Beijing performance artists travel to North America and Europe showcasing their high arts, which critique the on-going urban demolition in Beijing (Visser, 2004).

Their obsession with the local culture and the ambition to achieve cultural transcendence inevitably eliminated the political progressiveness (Lee & Yang, 2007). In the field of rock music, the political retreat was even more evident. In a television documentary of Chinese rock music and the founding father of Chinese rock music Cui Jian, many young rockers frankly spoke about the historic limitation of radical rock music in the 1980s and early 1990s. One Beijing rocker said,

We don't really understand *Nothing to My Name* and people's emotional echo to this song in the 1980s. It is hyperreal or even hypocritical to repeat *Nothing to My Name*. We have everything now. We do rock music because it is from the West and it is cool. I don't feel we are fighting insects too. We are just rockers.

Nevertheless, the fading political consciousness did not prevent the younger generation of Beijing rockers to express their urban nostalgia. In 1993, during an interview conducted after the Chinese Rock concert in Berlin, Wang Yong, one of Cui

Jian's peer musicians, puts it this way:

The goal of my music is to go global... Even though the Chinese rock music is born out of politics, it does not mean that being political is the only way to keep your rock music Chinese. My music is about rhythm, but is still under the umbrella of Chinese rock music.

In 2004, Xia Yan, a Beijing native guitar player who is widely recognized as a Chinese shredder, composes a guitar song *Beijing Hutong* dedicating to his *hutong* memory. Bridging western guitar techniques with the rhythm of the Beijing opera, Xia Yan delivers his sentiment in a sensitive, almost romantic demeanor. The anger and despair embedded in He Yong's *Bell and Drum Towers* have been completely replaced by purposefully demonstrated Western techniques and a deliberate integration of Chinese and Western music ingredients. The intention to embrace apolitical artistic expression is not only limited to young rockers, some earlier rockers either took a commercial turn without any announcement or declared their move to the global market in the name of promoting local culture. This very act of aestheticization is in itself political (Zhao, 1997, p. 36). Initially, the aestheticization represents that they were eager to detach themselves from political radicalism and justify the liberal position they embraced. When they joined the global cultural assemblage, these Beijing native artists were reluctant to be burdened by historic and political residues. When they gave up their historic responsibility, they unavoidably lost their political ability to speak for the people.

YOU ARE NOT A BEIJINGER

The intellectual boom in Beijing cannot be separated from its economic advantages, historical-political lineage, geographic proximity to the political center and accessibility to the Western culture. On the grass root level Beijing natives contend that vibrant and cultural expression is an essential feature of Beijing culture. “For city people without elite status, politics meant either accepting the logic of elite representation and protection” (Strand, 1993, p. 18-19) or to use the elitist logic to achieve their own gain. It further reaffirms that the cultural essentialism created and promoted by intellectuals and *Orientalistic* foreigners can only heighten people’s sensitivity to differences and facilitate identity politics.

After the government privatized public housing and offered Beijingers housing ownership, Beijingers’ discontent towards the local municipal government vis-à-vis the Chinese government in the 1980s and early 1990s had been replaced by a special psychological sentiment of lack in the past, namely the materialistic scarcity and deteriorated housing condition in Mao’s era. No longer feeling disgruntled or disillusioned for being materially under-privileged, Beijing natives generally did not acknowledge their gain from the government’s policies. Unger and Chan (2007) describe the situation thus: “indeed, their collective view is that they are entitled today to generous treatment” by the state “precisely because they had materially sacrificed and been deprived during the decades under Mao” (p.133). Even though Beijing natives were economically stratified, this type of self-entitlement could be discerned among both socially and economically privileged groups and the disadvantaged

groups, such as unemployed workers.

As the group that has greatly benefited from the government housing policies, Beijing natives realized that it is difficult or even immoral to use their economic loss to justify their stay in the center of Beijing. Thus, they stopped claiming themselves as “economic losers” but instead a social group whose cultural distinction and uniqueness are stripped by the on-going urban change, and threatened by the in-pouring of outsiders. For instance, “when crime and disorder began to increase in the 1990s, Beijing residents blamed it on the outsiders; who were migrating to the city in search of prosperity” (Brownell, 2001, p.129). Although Beijing natives could not maintain their daily life without relying on rural migrants’ low cost labor, it did not prevent Beijing natives from blaming migrant workers from the rural areas as the cause of over-population and social disorder. Directly challenging new arrivals’ legal status in the city, Beijing natives emphasized their “legal status” and spoke for the hegemonic *hukou* system.

Besides using their “legal” status to suppress migrant workers from the rural areas, Beijing natives tended to borrow cultural capital to empower themselves in the ideological battles against new urbanites who gained formal *hukou* status through meritocracy. For instance, an identity of an Old Beijinger was invented to delineate the boundaries between the Beijing natives and new legal migrants – college graduates who obtained *hukou* through employment.

As one college graduate who obtained Beijing *hukou* through employment argued in cyberspace:

Who has the authority to define Beijingers? What makes a person a Beijinger?

I did my college education in Beijing, I have Beijing *hukou*, I work for a privileged and profitable state own enterprises, I own spacious housing in Beijing. Ridiculously, some Beijing natives claim that I'm still not a Beijinger.

In response to this argument, one Beijing native satires:

I see your desperation to be a Beijinger. But all I can tell you is that it is impossible to transform a country pumpkin to a Beijinger, no matter how many flats you own in Beijing and how much you make. If you never live in a courtyard, you don't like to drink douzhi (a local drink made of soy), you don't appreciate Beijing opera and Beijing drum-songs... You will never become a Beijinger.

From this argument, it is evident that the identification with native place is “not something that one is but something that one does” (Lipman, 1996, p. 99) and what spatial experience one has or has ever had.

To secure their economic interests, Beijing natives are anxious to defend and delineate the borders which were transgressed and effaced by radical urbanization and domestic migration. When they are actively engaged in distinctions making and redrawing border, the local cultural essences they refer to are rather fragmentary and inconsistent. For instance, when Beijing natives speak about Old Beijing, some of them refer to it as the “historically recent Republican Beijing” (Dong, 2003, p. 2), promoting a vision of peaceful, vernacular and organic culture for working and lower classes. Nevertheless, they downplay the political history of republican Beijing –

when warlords, the Nationalists, and the Communists, competed for political energies of city residents (Strand, 1993, p. 19).

Other Beijing natives assign Old Beijing and Beijing culture to the Imperial Beijing. In documentaries *Mysterious City of Ancient Alleyways* (2004) and *The Lost City* (2006), the volatile nature of “Old Beijing” is vividly represented. The film makers included not only cricket fighting, pigeon-petting and Beijing opera to feature Beijing *hutong* culture, but also covered some members of Manchu imperial families without addressing their imperial power over the ancient inner city. Regardless the fact that pigeon-petting and cricket fighting were widely adopted customs across north China, Beijing opera was originally brought to Beijing by theatrical troupes from Anhui and Hubei provinces. Therefore, Beijing culture is not a monolithic form, but a coalescence of many local cultures.

The flexibility of past displacement by Beijing natives is extraordinary in that they claim exclusive ownership of various cultural practices and their identification of different types of past elitism. In his remarks on genealogy, Foucault (1984) points out “a history that always encourages subjective recognitions and attributes a form of reconciliation to all the displacements of the past” (p. 86). As the cultural protectionism of Beijingers is criticized in cyberspace, a Beijing native internet user argues that it demonstrates Beijing natives’ political consciousness and bravery by contrasting these identifiable features with the money driven new migrants, be state sponsored college graduates or state-condemned rural workers. He/she even attributes the bravery to the legacy of Manchu banner men who possessed aristocratic status,

warrior spirits and political activism. This re-articulation of Manchu culture negates the fact that, during the republican and Mao era, Manchus were seen as morally deficient for their economic dependence on the imperial state (Dong, 2003). The romanticized Manchu imperial culture definitely does not include the historical memories of violent feudal sovereignty and ruthless ethnical segregation between Han and Manchu populations. Therefore, this particular construction of identity is “characterized precisely by its suspension in time and by its effort to possess the object at the same time as it distances itself from it” (Dillon, 2000, p.223). “Whereas the invention of tradition entails the development of utterly new habits under the banner of timeworn custom, recycling involves the expedient patching up of genuinely old and all-too-used articles in an attempt to pass them off as authentically new” (Dong, 2003, p.16). More willing to seek their identity roots in more hoary epochs, Beijing natives rarely link their social and political superiority with the more contingent socialist state and the *hukou* system. It further reveals that their goal of culturalization and historicalization of their native identity is an original rupture produced by self-generation and “more directly linked to participants’ private interests” (Shi, 1997, p. 19).

At the end of the documentary *The Lost City*, a young Beijing woman firmly asserts, “I want to protect Beijing spirit; I want to protect Beijingers; I want to keep Beijingers on their land!” Her articulation implies arbitrary protectionism in an extremely tactical way –denying Beijingers’ economic dominance by retreating to a position of “subordination.” Since we are forced to give up our culture, we are not

oppressive to other people. In other words, Beijingers use their “subordination” to uphold the superiority of their local identity through transforming victimization into the very means of economic/cultural domination. The discourse of “salvage a dying culture” is used to forge a sense of injustice and “affirm a moral vision that things have been, should be, and could be different” (Lee & Yang, 2007, p. 7).

In the meantime, Beijing natives’ animosity towards college graduates and migrant workers never extends to the third type of outsiders—foreign travelers. When the *hutong* tour became a “must see” tour for foreign visitors, Beijing natives joined efforts with local tourist agencies to provide local cuisine for foreigners. Some also provided a brief introduction of their living environment by combining fabricated native folklores with some historical facts. Many rickshaws – the most popular transportation device in the republic of Beijing – were prepared by tourist companies for foreign visitors to explore the maze-like ancient alleyways, although many rickshaws pullers were migrant workers who just arrived in the city. Some Beijing natives modernize their courtyard houses and turn them into profitable hostels. It offers foreign tourists a set of well-packed experiences, carrying both exoticism and functionalism. Therefore, besides extracting political power from historical memories, Beijing natives also turn their historical legacy into museum pieces to facilitate commercialism (Wang, 1996, p. 116). Although Beijing natives’ “fascination with ‘Old Beijing’ is in part a product of the commercialization of history, and it does not interrupt the public’s rush to a more comfortable lifestyle away from the crowded courtyards and alleyways” (Dong, 2003, p. 3). By doing it, they give up their culture

voluntarily.

CODA

By scrutinizing the geopolitical and cultural identity of Beijing natives, as continuously in the process of being created and given new meanings, we can understand social, economic, and cultural aspects of Chinese urban history from an entirely new perspective. Embedded in a global context and a historical trajectory, the native place identity of Beijing is apparently linked to the contested terrain of class and *habitus*, urban culture, demographical mobility and the changing policies of sovereign state. The formation and transformation of native place identity cannot be simply understood as a singular entity but “in relation or contradistinction to other identities in particular local and historical contexts” (Honig, 1996, 145). It requires us to embrace the complexity of identity politics, including “creation, invocation, and manipulation of notions of cultural distinctiveness to establish self/other dichotomies among people in a shared political and economic system” (Honig, 1996, p. 146), particularly a system shaped by global capital power and sovereignty of the nation-state.

In the final chapter of *Modernity at Large*, Arjun Appadurai (1996b) defines “locality” as a contextual complex with phenomenological quality, “constituted by a series of links between the senses of social immediacy (p. 178). The emphasis on contextual nature of “locality” implies an embedded dialectic – “locality-producing activities are not only context-driven but are also context-generative” (Appadurai, 1996b, p. 186). The dialectical complex between locality and context is evident in the

historical trajectory of urban Beijing and will keep shaping subjectivities of different social groups in the urban space.

In the meantime, Appadurai (1996a & 1996b) further explore the significance of locality in the context of the crisis of the nation-state. He argues that human mobility within the nation-state “challenges the orderliness of the nation-state” and “encourages the emergence of translocalities” (Appadurai, 1996a, p. 42). In the case of Beijing, although people from different localities in the Beijing urban space can easily be located, we can barely discern a tendency to embrace translocalities and a tendency to challenge the state order. In socialist China, territorial integrity was crucial to state-sponsored ideas of sovereignty. Thus, *hukou* system was organized and executed to fulfill the state’s control of body through geopolitical tactics.

Rather than forming a new mass politics, the co-presence of rooted and floating populations in the city wages endless identity politics, producing discourses to reinforce their entitlement and exclude others. The endless politics of identities disguises the alliance between the capital and the state. Status, native place and division of labor all contribute to the invisible barriers among the masses and prevent the formation of a conscious and politically radical multitude (Hardt & Negri, 2004). The display of these divisions in public makes the power network between the capital and the state difficult to unravel and to challenge.

Chapter Five: From *Turandot* to *Jasmine*: the Historically Situated Political Aesthetics
in National Representation

*Here is a beautiful jasmine flower,
Here is a beautiful jasmine flower.
Perfumed blossoms fill the branch,
Fragrant and white for everyone's delight.*

*Let me come and pick a blossom
To give to someone,
Jasmine flower, oh jasmine flower*
(-www.ingeb.org/songs/molihua.html)

“Jasmine” is a Chinese folk song generally believed to be a ballad originating in the southeast of China from the late period of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 AD) (Chang, 1999). In different territories, people perform it through a broad variety of dialects with minor mutations on its melody. In terms of lyrics and rhythm, “Jasmine” has different local editions, but its theme is relatively static as the lyrics shows that it is explicitly sexualized. Generating meanings on two levels, “Jasmine” might ostensibly be a eulogy of the natural beauty and fragrance of flowers; or it could be a tacit glorification of femininity. Its capability of eliciting the intention of possession hints at a hidden order underlying universal sexual libido: the conquest of femininity.

In the 2003 World Championship of Figure Skating at Washington DC, Chinese skaters Xue Shen and Hongbo Zhao presented their fabulous performance of *Turandot* - amid a modified version of “Jasmine” and won the gold medal. As Harman, Garbato and Forberg (2008) put it:

Their long programme was set to Vanessa-Mae’s *Fantasy for Violin and Orchestra* on themes from Giacomo Puccini’s opera *Turandot*, and it was

masterfully choreographed by Lea Ann Miller. The arena had a feeling of great anticipation as these reigning world champions took the ice. Perhaps never have any skaters seized a big moment as they did. The programme exuded phenomenal energy and emotion from the opening move. As they continued to execute each technical element to perfection, the energy and emotion from them and the audience continued to escalate. Despite incredibly difficult elements, every moment of the programme enhanced the grace, beauty and drama of Puccini's great music (p. 95).

In 2004, this highly gendered indigenous folksong was staged in the closing ceremonies of the 2004 Olympic Games and the Paralympic Games at Athens as a part of the invitation to the 2008 Olympic Games at Beijing. In the closing ceremony of the 2004 Olympic Games, a young girl from China performed a solo of "Jasmine"; and in the closing ceremony of the 2004 Paralympic Games, a group of instrumentalists with disabilities performed "Jasmine" with traditional Chinese musical instruments. The frequent use of this folksong in such widely-broadcasted cultural-political settings can be easily interpreted by outsiders as promotion of Chinese culture to the world marketplace. However, because of its highly gendered characteristics, one can hardly put it in a category of "high art" to signify supremacy of Chinese culture on the international stage. Instead, for China, a nation with a lengthy history and profound cultural legacy, this "Jasmine" fever, offering an inferior and stereotypical cultural representation, seems to reveal many underlying paradoxes: what meanings does it signify as a cultural symbol to its domestic and foreign

audiences? Who chooses “Jasmine” and for what purposes?

In sports domains, gendered discourse is always one of the topics that scholars are attentive to (Daddario, 1997; Duncan, 1990; Graydon, 1983; Hillard, 1984; Kane, 1988). Many criticisms, targeting gendered artistic genres and texts, reveal how the public media uses different techniques to control female subjectivities (Daddario, 1997; Modleski, 1982). Beside commercialized television programs, the ceremonies attached to mega sports events, due to their popularity, have become the targets of cultural critiques. Particularly, the political influences of these ceremonies are so imperative that participants and spectators use such words as “crying,” “patriotism,” and remembrance” to describe their subjectivities (MacAloon, 1981 & 1984; Slowikowski, 1991). The nostalgia, discursively embedded in these ceremonies, may promote a hegemonic sense of solidarity and community (Slowikowski, 1991). For instance, in the study for the opening ceremonies of the Nagano 1998, Sydney 2000, and Salt Lake City 2002 games, Hogan (2003) uses Stuart Hall’s (1992) term -“narrative of nation”- to interpret these ceremonies. On one hand, these ceremonial projects are used to promote and construct national identities; on the other, they reflect and facilitate the maintenance of current social hierarchies. Rather than comparing ceremonial presentations offered by different nation-states, this chapter specifically focuses on a piece of musical presentation of China in these sporting events and ceremonies where nationalism and social subordination are contested and achieved.

In terms of artistic genres, music is traditionally perceived as the most rarefied, abstract, and specialized of all superstructural activities (Jameson, 1983a, p.vii-viii). Its political potential had been generally recognized until the Frankfurt School broadly promoted a critical analysis of music. Adorno (1976) argues, that “(m)usic is not ideology pure and simple; it is ideological only insofar as it is false consciousness” (p. 63). Music makes people forget, makes them believe, silences them and ruins the sensibility of men (Attali, 1983). It possesses “the strongest affinities with that most abstract of all social realities” (Jameson, 1983a, p. vii). Rather than possess meanings in itself, it can only be conceptualized and materialized through the systems of power it serves (Attali, 1983). In addition, the discursive relationship between music and sport has been investigated by scholars in sports sociology and physical cultural studies (see Bateman & Bale, 2008). Therefore, a critical analysis of music has to involve a critical scrutiny of the systems of power and their genealogical changes, as an attempt “to decipher this superstructure for a sound form of knowledge” (Attali, 1983, p. 4).

Trying to decode “Jasmine” as a cultural and aesthetical symbol, this chapter attempts to contour the genealogical circulation and configuration of this folksong as an effort to articulate it as a shifting conjuncture where a group of powers with overarching discourses – not only nationalism but many others including colonialism, decolonial nativism, and global capitalism – contest their legitimacies. I argue that, for “Jasmine,” the “situation-specific function of its aesthetic” can only be comprehended “through sedimented layers of previous interpretations” (Jameson,

1981, p. 9). In past historical moments, its rhythm has been shaped by diverse powers in different contexts to become adapted in different musical genres. We can neither read it as a psychoanalytic shift on private and subjective levels nor as an embodiment of a historical romanticism. I try to radicalize its analysis with greater historical materiality, which provides the potential of political configurations. In other words, it represents an effort to scrutinize the versatility and ambiguity of aesthetics, both in the Western and Chinese contexts (Liu, 2000).

TURANDOT: AN IMPERIAL IMAGINATION OF CHINESE NATIONALITY

As Nietzsche (1989) once remarked, “Hearing something new is embarrassing and difficult for the ear; foreign music we do not hear well” (p. 27). Staging something absolutely foreign to the rest of the world is risky in that it involuntarily elicits the sense of *Other*. “Jasmine,” even though it is exotic to the majority of Westerners, is not absolutely heterogenic. As a matter of fact, it is not only far from new, but a result of Oriental and Western cultural exchange. To trace its proximity to Western audiences, we have to be attentive to the extended genealogy of the cultural exchange between the Orient and the West.

With the longest and strongest continuous state tradition in documented history by far, the Chinese feudal regime never stopped promoting its independent sovereignty and an uncompromising pride for its enduring cultural and political hegemony (Zhang, X., 2001, p. 320). Based on historical records, the cultural and commercial exchanges between China and the rest of the world can be traced back for thousands of years (Hobson, 2004). The well-known travel book written by Marco

Polo in late 13th century might be the earliest material upon which the Western world formed an incipient image of China. MacKenzie (1995) identifies Orientalism at the pre-modern stage as an artistic genre resulting from cross-cultural amalgamation, emerging in different disciplines such as patterns, textiles, ceramics and so on. In this epoch, according to MacKenzie's (1995) statement, Orientalist articulation was an endeavor to incorporate different cultural forms in more positive and constructive ways. For instance, in the field of drama, the famous Italian dramatist Carlo Gozzi (1720-1806) produced the famous *Re Turandot* in 1762 to materialize his exotic imagination about China. Based on an ancient fable, Gozzi developed a narrative about a Chinese princess who "remains a very human figure, who is an early spokesperson for women's liberation" (DiGaetani, 2001, p. 57). Her resistance to marriage is a challenge to the universal male sexual hegemony and a showcase of the intellectual power of the female (Ashbrook & Powers, 1991). Gozzi's drama achieved enormous and unprecedented success in his age.

The balance of power between the Orient and the West, it should be noted, collapsed along with the outgrowth of modernity. Said (1979) argues, that starting from the late eighteenth century, the interchange between the Orient and the West was characterized by a dramatic change in which *Orientalism* had become an ideological institution symbolizing Western authority over the Orient. In short, *Orientalism* represented a strategic tool to generate panoptic control over the Orient in a variety of domains - political, scientific, military, religious, aesthetic and so forth (Said, 1979).

Many artistic works produced in this specific period were no longer directly

borrowing genuine oriental characteristics transmitted to the West; instead Western artists creatively integrated Oriental artistic components in their works to objectify the Orient structured by the modernization process (MacKenzie, 1995). To date, the success achieved by these Western artists continues to generate a prevailing influence, so much so that some of these works are still contesting our aesthetic epistemologies by disseminating the modern Western version of history in an apolitical approach.

As one of the cultural byproducts of this historical time, a new version - also the most classical version - of *Turandot* came forth from Gozzi's *Re Turandot*. Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924), one of the greatest Italian opera composers, produced the best and perhaps boldest variation of Gozzi's play in 1924 (DiGaetani, 2001). According to Maehder (1994), it is a fully mature opera not only in terms of Puccini's own output but also as the last descendant of the Italian operatic tradition of the nineteenth century, and it reflects in both its dramaturge and its music the ideas that were currently sweeping across Europe (p. 278). Ashbrook and Powers (1991) claim that, *Turandot* is the last masterpiece of the operative grand tradition to have proved itself over time and the last moment of the "Golden Century" of Italian opera. Moving from darkness, hatred, fear and death to light, love, trust and life, Puccini's *Turandot* fully interprets the nature of modernity in a metaphorical way (DiGaetani, 2001). Through these binary pairs, *Turandot* continues to show the contingent nature of modernity in a specific historical period of expansion and colonization when the Fascist regime (1922-1943) dominated Italy (Liao, 1993; & Wilson, 2005).

In Puccini's *Turandot*, the Chinese princess, the pioneer of feminism in

Gozzi's opera, was replaced by an icy Chinese princess (Ashbrook & Powers, 1991; Fisher, 2002; Tommasini, 2004). She averts marriage by requiring her suitors to answer three riddles; those who fail are subject to decapitation. Her palace is decorated with the skulls of her would-be husbands (Platt, 1998, p. 2). The role of Turandot is to fully incarnate the wicked wisdom of Oriental culture as well as the incredible beauty which is always a dangerous seduction to righteous Western civilization. Liao (1993) states, in Gozzi, the Chinese crowd consists of slavewomen, eunuchs, soldiers, priests, and an executioner. But Puccini wanted a group of 'homeless' Chinese people, who could be easily swayed and were clearly in need of both leadership and direction (Liao, 1993, p. 71-72). Their bloodthirsty nature, Liao (1993) argues, is fully demonstrated by their enjoyment of the decapitation spectacle. It also fully signifies the Chinese mass as an aimless mob waiting for guidance towards enlightenment. The Tartar Prince Calaf, in Puccini's narrative, is portrayed as an agent, a savior and a leader who is capable of civilizing this anachronistic and inferior space. As a sun god he ends the unconsciousness, suffering and unhappiness of the Chinese people and brings love and life back to the old palace, to the Chinese people, and finally even to the princess (DiGaetani, 2001, p. 59). She finally becomes the passionate wife of Calaf, a decision which complies with the universal rule of cultural dependence of women on men (Ashbrook & Powers, 1991).

In order to "find a Chinese element to enrich the drama and relieve the artificiality of it" (Puccini, 1974, p. 272), Puccini incorporated several Chinese melodies derived from a music box into his opera (Ashbrook & Powers, 1991;

Metzger, 2003; Weaver, 1994). As a partial work of his search for authenticity of Chineseness, “Jasmine” (*Mo-li-hua*) was chosen with several other ballads by him for their “heterophony and advanced polyrhythmic patterns” (MacKenzie, 1995, p. 164). In terms of musical presentation, *Turandot* is easily seen as an unconscious manifestation of racial arrogance in that the “authentic” Chinese melodies were victimized by Puccini’s monster orchestra (Ashbrook & Powers, 1991, p. 10). The pentatonic “Jasmine” melody continues to be associated directly with *Turandot*, on or off-stage, throughout the opera as one of the most important rhythms (Ashbrook & Powers, 1991, p. 90).

As the final work of Puccini, *Turandot* achieved enormous success after the author’s death in 1924. Its beautiful lyric soprano, remarkable costumes, dreamy solos, marvelous ensemble work, and so forth enchanted a male romantic imagination about the Oriental world. From its initial staging in 1926 to present, artists have never wavered in their interpretation of this grand and legendary work (Berger, 2005). Since the 1960s, *Turandot* has been a staple of the repertory, even though it does not belong to the most frequently performed operas due to the prohibitive resources required to stage it (Berger, 2005, p. 268). The classic status of *Turandot* once again reaffirms the idea that it is the summit of Puccini’s achievement as a music-dramatist. Just as Maehder (1994) puts it, Puccini is the one who fuses the diverse European traditions in both dramaturge and music, and in so doing greatly influenced the contemporary music and opera (p. 278).

Nevertheless, the success Puccini achieved in the artistic domain has also

attracted critiques from multiple perspectives. As Said (1979) notes, in reference to Orientalist projects, the success of Puccini can never be exempt from the influence of the historicity of his material world. In this opera, “women’s representations of the Orient are more clearly attributed to chronological periods and set into their historical contexts” (MacKenzie, 1995, p.13-14). In addition, this “alternative female discourse” (Melman, 1992) on the Orient is heavily fractured, signifying the fragmented subjectivities of Western women under the pressure of universal modern discourses. The demonstrated indifference to human life, a supposed characteristic of the Chinese mass in *Turandot*, was neither a realistic portrait of feudal China nor an accurate representation of the full-length trauma China encountered throughout its lengthy modernization. Influenced by this type of discourses, European audiences were convinced that, China is a kind of *non-place*, without any trace of history and context but full of ineffable mystery (Liao, 1993). Chinese music, to Puccini, is the ideal raw material for a modernist project of self-invention in the name of art (Liao, 1993, p. 74).

Quintessentially, aesthetics is a discourse of modernity, for it articulates the intrinsic contradictions of modernity through the most concrete and “sensuous” arrangement (Liu, 2000). As a result of self-invention, *Turandot*, the most exotic project for an imagined anachronistic world, represents the contradictions and ambivalence inherent in the modernity crisis of the West – the age of Fascism (Liao, 1993). Only by elaborating a dramatic singularity of the “Other”, can the integrity of Western modernity be recognized and sustained (Liao, 1993). Therefore, “Jasmine,”

as one primary component of *Turandot*, is not an aesthetic adoption, but a re-appropriation of “originality” for discursive political purposes.

JASMINE: THE EXPRESSION OF COLONIAL MELANCHOLIA

Let us say, in a Western context, that “Jasmine” represents the artistic perfection of *Orientalism*; in the local context, it rather crystallizes the traumatic journey of China in seeking modernity. Classicism embedded in *Turandot* represents the tradition built upon European domination; and the melancholic romanticism of “Jasmine” expresses the resistant beliefs and practices of folk culture in the colonial era (Gellner, 1992). The prevalence of “Jasmine” was incipiently associated with the decline of feudal Chinese society in the 19th century, and coincidentally or not, was connected with the tragic encounter of China with Western modernity.

A look into the history of modern China will make it clear that the Chinese route to the modern has never been a smooth one (Zhang, X., 2000, p. 430). Until the middle of the 19th century, Chinese feudal society was suddenly interrupted by the Western imperial power. China, the nation which used to claim itself as the “central Empire” possessing the “prototype of civilization” (Cranmer-Byng, 1962, p. 341) soon showed its inability to fend off Western intrusion. The failure of self-defense from the West turned the claim of “central Empire” into a ludicrous self-reflection.

Similar forced intrusion by the modern also happened to Japan, a country historically perceived by Chinese people as a derivative of the Chinese prototype civilization. However, the Meiji Restoration in 1868 terminated the military superiority of the West over Japan and fulfilled its mandate for modernization, turning

Japan into the most dangerous menace to China. Suffering oppression from military, diplomatic and economic perspectives from both the West and Japan, the Chinese feudal regime could hardly initiate any movement to realize national renaissance, but tried to imitate the Western track for modernity. For instance, the Chinese feudal government did not even have a national anthem. Based on some folktales, a Chinese ambassador had to perform “Jasmine” as the national anthem in some international diplomatic events (Peng, 2005). The Chinese feudal regime initiated “colonial mimicry” (Bhabha, 1994b) by sending students to the West, with a hope of learning from the West. The first generation of Chinese students, therefore, can hardly disconnect themselves from pessimistic activism concerning their declining nation and culture. These students also used “Jasmine” as their national anthem in certain public settings to express their strong nostalgia vis-à-vis cultural dislocation and irresolvable melancholy (Peng, 2005).

Symbolizing the vulnerability of jasmine flowers, “Jasmine” became the tie connecting the hopeless project of national renaissance and “a disillusioned soberness about the terror of fantasized reality” (Liao, C. 2000, p. 276). What is intriguing and historically revelatory about “Jasmine” is that it contains the tragic plot for the fall of an Empire called China. People became melancholic and nostalgic precisely because of their profound awareness of death and history; the fall created a condition of ontological nostalgia for the a golden bygone epoch (Fox, 1976, p. 120). Even though the age of the Chinese feudal regime can hardly been identified as a “golden epoch” by the Chinese mass, the fracture of national integrity, caused by external forces, has

cultivated a form of melancholia for the past rather than resolute disavowal (Khanna, 2003). The usage of “Jasmine” could be interpreted as an aesthetic expression of “demetaphorization” (Khanna, 2003) - a symptom of melancholia and fear - through musical discourses.

The enlightenment, which was a harbinger of Western modernity, accelerated the collapse of the Chinese feudal regime, but failed to guide China towards modernization. The failure of colonial mimicry seems to indicate the following notions: Western civilization cannot be adopted in China as a whole; and modernization cannot be achieved through simplistic mimicry of the West. The bankruptcy of the colonial mimicry project forced Chinese intellectuals to take a heroic journey of exploring another self-autonomous way to modernity (Tang, 2000). Their radical exploration started in 1919 with the first cry for science and democracy by Chinese intelligentsia, and was not anticipated to become the motif for the rest of the century.

A radical intelligentsia is typically the result of a cultural crisis which may jeopardize the continuity and integrity of a national culture and dramatically transform the major structure of its society (Turner, 1994). Even though Chinese intellectuals indeed obsessively embrace the essentials of Western modernity – the rationality of industrial standards and social norms – a sense of cultural otherness facilitates them to perceive the process of modernization as a moment of alienation and nurtures a national consciousness which is more susceptible to the possibilities of eclecticism, synthesis, alternativity, pluralism, and negativity (Zhang, X., 2000). The

consciousness of the eclectic, synthetic and alternative forms of modernity, to a certain degree, might contribute to China's move to communism- "unquestionably the most radical and brutal form of Chinese modernity" (Zhang, X., 2000, p. 432).

REBIRTH OF TURANDOT AND JASMINE IN DIVERSE ARTISTIC GENRES

As Anne McClintock (1995 & 1997) asserts, all nationalisms are gendered.

Following this statement, McClintock (1997) further notes, the temporal representation of nationalism is also gendered:

Women are represented as the atavistic and authentic body of national tradition (inert, backward-looking, and natural), embodying nationalism's conservative principle of continuity. Men, by contrast, represent the progressive agent of national modernity (forward-thrusting, potent, and historic), embodying nationalism's progressive, or revolutionary, principle of discontinuity. (p. 92)

According to this classification, the pre-revolutionary Chinese nationalism is certainly a feminine one. The nationalist project under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, antithetically, is a manic masculine movement facilitated by a "revolutionary mass culture" (Tang, 2000, p. 3).

After the seizure of state power, the Chinese socialist nation-state promoted a folk culture campaign as a part of a larger multicultural project, which was soon replaced by a Marxist cultural hegemony. As a betrayal of the Marxist principle of economic primacy, the Chinese communist regime, under the leadership of Mao, privileged the culturalist tendency as an alternative to modernity (Liu, 2000). This culturalistic aesthetic was so hegemonic that all literary and artistic genres and forms

of expression had to be in accordance with the communist modern project. Pervasive cultural works produced in that period were all created by the “ideological state apparatus that operates to systematically interpolate the individual in an imaginary relationship” (Tang, 2000, p. 171) with communist Utopia. Without any entertaining and cathartic ingredient, literary and artistic works exclusively possess a crystallizing function of communist ideology by encapsulating a Utopian desire (Tang, 2000, p. 195).

In the public cultural sphere, a dichotomy of proletarian and bourgeois worldviews operated pervasively in that any narrative which failed to embrace class struggles lead by proletarians was condemned as bourgeois contaminated (Yang, 1999). From a gender perspective, Mao radically proclaimed that “women can hold up half of the sky.” On one hand, it defiantly oppressed the central component of Confucian patriarchy; on the other, it successfully incorporated and absorbed women into a state apparatus (Yang, 1999, p. 46). This communist state apparatus, buttressed with an overarching masculine nationalism, completely erased feminine discourses and images from the public sphere. Consequently, traditional and folk cultures were forced to hibernate; the rhythm of “Jasmine” was silenced. Based on Lenin’s contribution to Marxist theory, which grants socialist regimes the legitimacy to nationalism (Rai, 2002), a masculine image of China, closely tied to the communist nationalist project, was constructed by hegemonic culturalists.

Following Mao’s era, the reforms set forth by Deng initiated a phenomenal economic development which shaped Chinese society as much within the spiritual

sphere as in the realities of daily life. Encountering global capitalism, the Chinese regime progressively steered adjustments on infrastructure to facilitate economic growth, but kept employing Marxist ideology as a theoretical justification for its authority. The controversy between superstructure and infrastructure, has unavoidably contributed to the emergence of a variety of problematic representations of the painful truth.

The relationships between China and the logical imperatives of the marketplace are far from simplistic and one-sided; rather, the relationships are disordered, often paradoxical and unexpected, and of irreversible and juxtaposed complexity involving “a multidimensional mixture of production and effects of the global economy and capitalist market system, new technologies and media, expanded judicial and legal modes of governance, and emergent modes of power, sovereignty, and resistance” (Kellner, 2002, p.293). In this way, the relationships between China and global circuits of capital is a potent example of the ways in which nationalisms, internationalisms and transnationalisms interact in complex and frequently potent and emotive ways (e.g. Zhang, X., 1997; Zhang, L., 2001). Huntington (1996) argues, the modernization of China should not be confused with the unconditional adoption of western ideologies, cultures and institutions. Especially in the cultural domain, the global/local contestation cultivated a hybrid Chinese national representation expressed through “transnational reimagining of national cultures” (Silk & Andrews, 2001, p. 186).

To scrutinize the emerging Chinese national cultural image, the role of

Chinese intelligentsia has to be examined. Confronting the internal fracture between capitalized daily reality and a communist theoretical superstructure, the Chinese intelligentsia, has once again, proven to be incompetent at resolving this conundrum (Zhang, X., 2001b). For them, this dilemma reveals them to be as schizophrenic as the state itself (Zhang, X., 2001a, p. 15). Meanwhile, a market economy, which brings transnational investment to Chinese media, has provided them opportunities to participate in various forms of cultural production (Yang, 1999). Influenced by the state and transnational capital, the Chinese intelligentsia has involuntarily undergone a process of specialization, academicization, and professionalization while losing their ability to speak for their own class, the people, and the entire nation (Liu, 2000). Hence, the secularization of Chinese intellectuals in distinct orientations diversifies their practices, enriches and complicates the local meanings of cultural discourses in general and aesthetics in particular. In many cases, the culture they produce has become “a commodity not only in form but also in content” (Habermas, 1989, p. 166). Diversification of “Jasmine” in different artistic genres, as a result of cultural commercialization, exemplifies the schizophrenic nature of Chinese intelligentsia.

In 1998, to celebrate the 140th anniversary of the birth of Giacomo Puccini, *Turandot* was staged in the Forbidden City at Beijing by Zhang Yimou, probably the most famous modern film director in China. For the first time, the imaginary character of this ancient Oriental legend finally had been materialized in a place to where it belonged rather than a floating non-place. In terms of artistic expression, based on Zhang Yimou’s own words, he tried to inject Chinese emotional language and

sensibilities to reflect the power of Chinese (re)-imagination (Platt, 1998). The content of the opera has also been slightly modified, since no Chinese would accept the portrait of the Chinese mass as a blood-thirsty mob waiting for the decapitation of failed suitors. Thus, some sections, including music and chorus, were excised (Subercaseaux, 1998). The overall project cost \$15 million, and generated a tremendous influence both in China and abroad. Foreign audiences were satisfied to see *Turandot* in ostensibly Chinese opulence through Zhang Yimou's interpretation of the European fantasies (Metzger, 2003); to Chinese audiences, even though they are not the targeted population of the show, it imposed a violent and deviant image of the cruel princess as being Chinese (Platt, 1998).

Metzger (2003) argues, that staging *Turandot* in the Forbidden City was a mega event during which the Chinese government and production team garnered a dream deal that employed thousands and raised millions (p. 215). Through the show, Beijing—an intercultural fantasy island—manipulated its old cultural stereotypes for monetary purposes (Metzger, 2003, p. 216). It is typically true that driven by the global economic upheavals, cities adopt different tactics to constitute place-specific differences through a re-commodification of city images representing local history (Robins, 1991 & 1997; Rowe & Stevenson, 1994; Whitson & Macintosh, 1996; Silk & Andrews, 2001; Andrews & Cole, 2002; Silk, 2002). In this case, staging *Turandot* in the Forbidden City can be explained as a “hallmark event” through which Beijing redefines its position in relation to a consumption economy (Rowe & McGuirk, 1999, Silk, 2002). Later Zhang Yimou relocated *Turandot* from Beijing to France and Korea,

and earned considerable profits.

Inspired by Zhang Yimou's creativity, many other cultural products pertaining to *Turandot* emerged to cater to the aesthetical consumption of the mass. For instance, besides the Italian opera edition, it also appeared in other artistic genres including ballet and many Chinese local Operas—Sichuan opera and Yu opera. Tan Dun, a Chinese musician won an Oscar for his score for *Crouching Tiger and Hidden Dragon*, cited “Jasmine” from Puccini's *Turandot* rather than the original melody for his symphony (Deschênes, 2004). In 2003, Xue Shen and Hongbo Zhao offered an athletic version of *Turandot* in a widely covered international competition, exposing Western audiences to a synthesis of modern sports and Western imaginary classics materialized through two foreign bodies.

The substantial enthusiasm of staging *Turandot* demonstrated by the Chinese intelligentsia has provoked both critiques and challenges. In spite of having achieved widespread recognition for the economic miracle—not to mention its assertiveness in the international political sphere—China is still repeating its aesthetic ideologies according to the colonial power structure and selling its feminine past, as if the Chinese culture is only a feminine symbol without any vocal agency. Emphasizing this particular cultural phenomenon, Peng (2005) laments that Chinese can only seem to express their culture through the established symbolic norm that the West used to fulfill its exotic imagination. Moreover, Peng (2005) further raises his questions for Chinese intelligentsia at large: what is the authenticity of Chinese culture? How to explore the quintessence of Chinese culture? How to present it to the world as an

alternative to the Oriental/Occidental dichotomy?

Turandot fever in China, on first impressions, is a result of cultural *glocalization*: “the tendency for the promotion of cultural identities of indigenous peoples to be co-ordinated in political movements at a global level” (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 69). Based on Tomlinson’s viewpoint, *Turandot* fever is the localization, vernacularization and hybridization of a Western high culture—namely Italian Opera—in another alien and inferior cultural context. In the meantime, the new shifting cultural landscape of China and the new cultural experience transform the aesthetic of *Turandot* by imposing new meanings on it. For instance, in the version of Sichuan opera, the central role was not even the icy Princess but the slave girl Liu, who embodies all the traditional virtues supposedly carried by Chinese females. Through the re-centerring of the subject matter, “wile became guile, trickery became magic... and effeminacy was transformed into grace” (Appadurai, 1996b, p. 96). In another case, musician Tan Dun cites, reworks, and imitates other music in order to give his melodies a fresh context as an attempt to construct a disoriented musical mosaic (Deschênes, 2004). In this sense, the Orientalistic romance of *Turandot* was re-activated by the Chinese intelligentsia through an exploration of the substitute codes and a creative renewal of the raw materials needed to accommodate an increasingly secularized world. To Chinese intelligentsia, renewing cultural raw materials might imply their dilemmatic position vis-à-vis indigenous and global cultures. Their dilemmatic position, in some respects, predetermines the hybridity of their cultural products - in this particular paper - the various versions of *Turandot*.

THE ALLEGORICAL NATIONALISM

In 2004 Athens, when Beijing Mayor Qi Liu received the Olympic flag, few Chinese, sitting in front of their televisions, could have their emotions in check. Encountering the irresolvable uncertainties and turbulences (social stratification, emergence of gender subordination, dramatic urbanization, unemployment and fading of traditional moralities, and so forth.) brought by social reformation and globalization, the Chinese mass finally found something certain from the waving Olympic flag—a common destiny towards the near future. Particularly, this destiny seems optimistic in that it prefigures a stronger and more democratic China, a continually growing economy, and most important—better lives for individuals. To many Chinese, the Olympic torch in China not only acknowledges China's contribution to the Olympic movement in past decades, but also signifies a vital fact: that China was gradually erasing its “otherness” which had resulted from its political isolation in history and was transforming its relations with the external world towards an optimistic direction. However, strong and discursive state structures only treat economic development as a means rather than an end (Castells, 1992; Yang, 1999). Many nationalist projects it adopted, including hosting the Olympics, are “the vital responses to infrastructural realities...as attempts to resolve more fundamental contradictions” (Jameson, 1985, p. 78), which may otherwise jeopardize the legitimacy of the Chinese nation-state.

After Qi Liu's appearance, a sweet little girl, in a white skirt, gave a moving solo performance of “Jasmine.” Weeks after the little Chinese girl's solo in the closing

ceremony of 2004 Olympics, “Jasmine,” once again, was staged in the closing ceremony of the 2004 Paralympic Games at Athens by a group of Chinese instrumentalists with disabilities from the Chinese National Association for Artists with Disabilities. They used Chinese traditional musical instruments to present the most authentic version of “Jasmine” to the world. What is unexpected is that their performance, without astonishing artistic skillfulness, was met with great nationalist exaltation within China.

This spontaneous and popular nationalism could never be exempted from the influence of the nation-state, and the state soon harnessed this outpouring of nationalism to its own service (Brownell, 2001, p. 215). Back from Athens, and basking in positive feedback from the public, these artists were instantly a source of interest to the domestic media. More fascinating, they were soon chosen by the Chinese government as social role models in a recent media campaign. For example, a TV program, targeting audiences nationwide, was created to introduce how the artists with disabilities suffered to fulfill their dreams. As well as being Chinese athletes with disabilities, these artists are “portrayed as winners, competitors, and patriots” (Stone, 2001, p. 62); and how the dominant power trains their impaired bodies for its own interest is totally missed. Their achievement in artistic terms, along with the haul of 191 gold medals by Chinese athletes with disabilities on the top spot of the final medal standings, demonstrates how China has become involved in the promotion of universal humanism and democracy.

Nevertheless, in the two aforementioned scenarios, neither a result of

globalized cultural consumption nor an expression of colonial melancholy toward imperial power may explain the appearance of “Jasmine” in the global political settings. Compared with the semi-colonial age, the current post-revolutionary image of China, with unprecedented economic and political strength, also differs radically from the kind of traumatic experience of feminine nationalism formed in China’s long, arduous quest for survival, change, and revolution in the age of colonialism and imperialism (Zhang, X., 2001b, p. 321). However, as a result of its modernization and marketization reformation, Chinese society is never free of tensions and contradictions (Liu, 2000). To sustain its economic development, the Chinese government has tried to ameliorate the tension and conflicts within the nation through ideological control and by invoking the spirit of nationalism (Liu, 2000). In order to avoid resistance from the mass, the popular discourse of nationalism has been fundamentally reconstituted so that it is no longer the coerced state rhetoric of patriotism but an inconspicuous disseminated overlap between the nation and the state (Zhang, X., 2001b). In the meantime, the presence of the Chinese nation-state is no longer ideological but discursive and metaphoric (Zhang, X., 1997). Through the pedagogy of national humiliation, the solidarity achieved is even more powerful than that through promotion of cultural supremacy. This new popular nationalism is often expressed and emotionally felt in a transnational context, such as the television coverage of Olympic ceremonies (Hogan, 2003; Silk & Andrews, 2001; Yang, 1999).

Reconstituted national rhetoric, in an attempt to blur the boundaries between nation and state, has been frequently used by different nations in Olympic ceremonies.

For instance, in 1998 Nagano, the Japanese also used Puccini's opera – *Madama Butterfly* – to assert its national pride in a non-threatening way (Hogan, 2003).

Juxtaposing the Chinese presentation of its national character with its Japanese counterpart, the similarity among the two is that both present a passivity of national characters. *Madama Butterfly*'s major character is “suffering and sacrificing for her Western love (Hogan, 2003; Kondo, 1997); “Jasmine” demonstrates an extremely feminine, and therefore vulnerable, side of Chinese culture. Meanwhile, the difference between the two ceremonial presentations is also evident. The Japanese simply adopted a cultural symbol created by the West; the Chinese insisted on their “authentic” indigenous content.

Strategically used as positivist essentialism (Spivak, 1985b), “Jasmine” seemingly approves a national character of maintaining its beauty after endless ordeals. Antithetical to that of the Western culture, the beauty is not overbearing and oppressive, but implicit and enduring. It does not celebrate its recent achievement of modernization but the “successful accommodations of the old institutions to modern technology” (Jameson, 1998, p. 62). Moreover, to the general Chinese audience, the configuration of “Jasmine” in various international ceremonial occasions, provoking a hoary imagination – a femininized “We” – is capable of making its audience conscious of a commonality, namely the humiliating past. The consciousness is political. As Spivak (1985b) puts it, under the leadership of nationalist elites, the boundaries between success and failure of the collective become blurred in that the most successful historical record can only be crosshatched by cognitive failure, by

which she means the colonial subordination in the past. Thus, the recent accommodations of the old institution, including economic achievement and political assertiveness, hosting the Olympics as well, can only be signified on a semiotic chain that symbolizes the painful journey to modernity. Particularly, to date, tales of China's political repression and terror have more to do with the political, ideological, and commercial objectives of the Western media (and the national interests that lurk within) than with what is really happening in China today (Liu, 2000, p. 127). Compared to the pre-revolutionary period, the contemporary imagined "We" provides the possibility of forming solidarity rather than experiencing apolitical narcissistic pleasure for one's own wounds of being alienated from modernity.

Bhabha (1994a) notes, this type of national representation "is the mark of the ambivalence of the nation as a narrative strategy and an apparatus of power" (p. 292). It not only rests on a symbolic dimension but is performative as a political technology of guidance. The Chinese mass was enforced, unconsciously by "Jasmine" – "the volatile intersection between aesthetics and politics" (Gibbons, 2003, p. 5) – to identify with the hoary terror and pain as well as to appreciate their aesthetic experiences of the present, because the audience can easily connect their individual experience with the experiences of nation at large. The audience represents not only the historical object of a nationalist pedagogy given over to or constituted by a historical origin or event, but also the agent that may initiate bodily signification through participating in the reproduction of nationalist discourses (Bhabha, 1994b, p. 297). That mental experience naturally contributes an undivided loyalty to, and a

collective sacrifice on the past of the Chinese for, the cause of the nation (Zhang, X., 2001b, p. 321-322). The artistic repertoire can hopefully turn up new possibilities, or at least prevent the rigidification or reiteration of old conventions (Liao, C. 2000, p. 276). As Attali (1985) puts it, “the sacrifices and music, the rites and the laws have a single aim; it is through them that the hearts of the people are united, and it is from them that the method of good government arises.”

In order to achieve this uniting effect and to create loyalty, the nationalist narrative has to create an insoluble *Other* discursively (Bhabha, 1994b). In this case, the *Other*, who cannot appreciate the indigenous aesthetics of “Jasmine,” rises naturally. Nairn (1977) and Buell (1994) for example, call nationalism, “the modern Janus” with two faces, one looking backwards and one forwards. Mastery of local culture – bodies of customs, religion, literary and artistic modes of production, and, of course, language – works as a border guard to differentiate the We from the *Other*, by downplaying anything beyond indigenous knowledge (Armstrong, 1982; Bhabha, 1994b; Derrida, 1993; Trinh, 1989 & Yuval-Davis, 1997).

To the *Other* – Western audience of the Olympic ceremonies, “Jasmine” is not a marker of their foreignness to Chinese culture. Instead, it could be deciphered as a wounded and inferior Chinese masculinity and national pride seeking to repair itself through a deployment of female symbols (Brownell, 1995). Furthermore, a voluntarily staged, exotic, vulnerable and feminine image might stand as a symbolic flirtation, in order to fulfill her lust. Thus, the invitation to the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games could be interpreted by a Western audience as China’s exposure of herself for

further capitalist penetration and its willful embrace of globalization. She enjoys the penetrating process, and meanwhile economically benefits from it. When the two types of Western subjectivities confront Chinese nationalism, a fierce friction can be easily anticipated.

CODA

In conclusion, I suggest that rather than being a fixed cultural symbol of tradition, “Jasmine” is a resource full of internal contradictions, which is used selectively by different agents in various social projects within specific power relations and political discourses in and out of certain collectivities (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 43). It is a use of gendered language in order to serve distinct political purposes (Kaplan, 2004). It was adopted by Western intellectuals in a Fascist era, by Chinese nationalist elites during the semi-colonial period, by contemporary Chinese intelligentsia in a globalizing capitalist age, and by the current Chinese nation-state to invent a nationalist imagination in Olympic ceremonies. Throughout the process of constructing ideal citizens’ subjectivities, “Jasmine” was used to define the connection and solidarity within the boundaries of collectivities and contour the boundaries between different collectivities. It does not suggest a Surrealist assertion that, “Jasmine” is a set of floating signifiers without ever resting on any univocal signified. Particularly, its endurance notwithstanding changing historical and material contexts, is never simplistic cloning, but is sustained through symbolic resonance between those in power and collectivities they want to discipline (Yuval-Davis, 1997). Put more simply, Power enables its samsara in aesthetics.

On the other end, we not only need to tackle “the language of those who write it,” but also “the lives of those who live it” (Bhabha, 1994b, p. 1). “Jasmine” is alive in the symbolic sphere but more animate in reality. Within the imaginary space it constructed, people negotiated and are negotiating their identities through examining the self and objectifying the Other. It provides a sublime pleasure of fear and an aesthetic appropriation of “pain.” Taking the format of music, the discourses are so discursive that none of them can be identified as an ideological affirmation of cultural supremacy and historical priority; however, no one can deny its power to generate changes by presenting certain collectivities vis a vis the consciousness of “stereoscopic experiences” (Jameson, 1983b) through a wordless narrative. Just as Jameson (1983b) would have it:

the proper political use of pleasure must always be *allegorical* ... the thematizing of a particular “pleasure” as a political issue ... must always involve a dual force, in which the local issue is meaningful and desirable in and of itself, but also at one and the same time taken as the figure for Utopia in general, and for the systematic revolutionary transformation of society as a whole. (p. 13)

However, the figure for Utopia, especially that elicited by national allegories, is never the one for the *People*. The “Utopia” is constructed by those in power through erasing various subjectivities and silencing voices of multiple social groups. In addition, the opacity of cross-cultural understandings can be easily manipulated by powerful agents as a means to reach certain ends. The political implications of

material allegories beg for our transnational critical reading of their maneuverability in their historical and contingent deployments, for the national project appears interminable (Alarcon, Kaplan & Moallem, 1999, p. 6). Only by tracing the desire, terror or pleasure beneath the aroma and beauty of “Jasmine” can we possibly remap the boundaries of different collectivities and renegotiate the power within and between them.

Chapter Six: Let's Transcend: An Agambenian Reading of the Paralympics

EXPERIENCING THE TRANSCENDENCE

The opening ceremony of the Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games welcomed 80,000 audiences to the National Stadium to witness one of most inspiring scenes. To prevent staging a grand ceremony with few audiences, the organizational committee decided to make the ceremony truly for the people. Not only did most domestic audiences receive their tickets for free, but also every ticket holder was given a complimentary gift package for attending the opening ceremony. In addition, the Chinese government had promised that China would hold the Paralympic Games as serious as the Olympic Games. The opening ceremony of the Paralympic Games, therefore, was to be as spectacular as that for the Olympic Games.

As it promised, the government staged a marvelous show. After nearly two-hours-long show staged by thousands of young dancers, Chinese media stars and a large number of performers with disabilities, the Paralympic torch finally arrived the stadium. When many were still guessing how the Olympic cauldron would be lightened, the last torch bearer, who is also a three-time Paralympian champion, Hou Bin slowly hoisted himself and his wheelchair up on a rope to reach the fifty-meter-high cauldron. When Hou was climbing up the rope, the whole audience was mesmerized, and music was silenced. Until Hou lightened the torch, the audience hailed with tears. As many said, if the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games was to showcase cultural specificity, the one for the Paralympic Games is definitely to celebrate cosmopolitanism. Regardless race, gender, class and cultural root, one can

hardly resist the extraordinary and emotional moment when people heartily celebrate Paralympic spirit. Regardless what type of bodies you possess – able or disabled – everyone felt the spiritual touch. At that moment, transcendence was crystallized, as if it would last forever.

PARALYMPICS AS A TRANSCENDENTAL RIGHT

As a transnational institution established in 1989, the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) is often perceived as an evident manifestation of the globalization of humanitarianism. Even though its political, economic and cultural influence is not as prevailing as the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the IPC has successfully expanded its institutional infrastructure and promoted its mission– to enable Paralympic athletes to achieve sporting excellence and inspire and excite the world – across the globe. It is only recently that, its status as one of the most prominent the transnational organizations to empower people with disabilities and struggle for their social equalities in general and their human rights to play sports in particular has been gradually recognized by the public. For instance, in the first International Paralympic Symposium on Disability Rights, the IPC demonstrated its passion to embrace human rights discourses and claim its role of advocating the human rights for both Paralympic athletes and citizens with disabilities at large (Farkas, 2004). Its inspiring mission along with the global coverage of the quadrennial Paralympic Games has passionately affected people with and without disabilities in different social settings.

The growing prominence of transnational regimes, such as the IPC, has played

an important political role in reshaping subjective knowledge of human rights through deemphasizing citizenship rights legitimated by states and prioritizing postnational conceptions of human rights (Sassen, 2006, p. 287). It signifies the rise of human rights initiatives and a new form of global biopolitics (Grewal & Kaplan, 2001). The construction and circulation of universal human rights discourse for athletes with disabilities do not solely rely on transnational institutions such as the IPC, but could be enabled by the grass-roots organizations and national agencies with a variety of political agendas. In the Western context, activists, intellectuals and transnational agencies oftentimes use human rights approaches to secure dignity and well-being for marginalized social groups, including people with disabilities, and improve their disadvantaged status (Ellis, 2005; Kidd & Donnelly, 2000; Stainton, 2005; Stein, 2007; Yamin & Rosenthal, 2005).

Compared to many other universal rights discourses, the rights discourse advocated by the IPC – everyone has the rights to play sports – seems culturally transcendental. Having 162 nations as its members, the radical expansion of the institutional structure of the IPC further approves the transcendental nature of its slogan. Nevertheless, through tracing the materialization of various human rights discourses in different cultural contexts, we discovered that universal human rights do not always empower marginalized social groups (Mullally, 2006; Narayan, 1997). For instance, Brittain's (2006) study shows that, with the global spread of the Paralympic ideologies, many nation-states use the Paralympic Games as for political purposes. However, for some under-developed nations, they are facing a dilemma. On the one

hand, if they do not offer institutional supports to athletes with disabilities, and do not send athletes to participate in the Paralympic Games, they will be labeled as being reluctant to embrace humanitarianism. On the other hand, if they provide sufficient financial and institutional supports to athletes with disabilities, they are critiqued for exploiting athletes with disabilities for the political interests of nation-states.

Needless to say, developed nations are themselves far from having achieved the humanitarian ideals promoted by the IPC. In the West, most people with disabilities are still largely marginalized. The opportunities to participate sports, particularly competitive sports, are still largely determined by the economic status of athletes. In addition, many activists in Western nations are campaigning for governmental supports on sports for the disabled. Therefore, we cannot simply take the expansion of the Paralympic regime as a manifestation of universal humanism. The claimed universal nature of its ideology deserves our critical investigation.

In this chapter, I will adopt a different theoretical and ontological stance, proposed by Giorgio Agamben, to reveal the nature of the Paralympic Games as a sovereignty built upon oppression of the majority of people with disabilities, particularly how it disguises itself through human rights discourse and medical discourse. In addition, I tend to reveal the mechanism of the Paralympics through which it portrays itself as an access to transcendence for people with disability in particular, and inspire the rest of society.

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION OF AGAMBENIAN THEORIES

Giorgio Agamben has a discreet taste for dialectics (Negri, 2007). Because the world of academia is obsessed with the panopticon of biopower (Foucault, 1977), contextualization of power (Hall, 1978), global modernity (Appadurai, 1996b), assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), Empire (Hardt & Negri, 2000) and global neoliberalism (Harvey, 2005), we have been so accustomed to the powers immersed in our life that we almost tend to understand the imminences of power as a part of our overall life. Agamben, however, insightfully reminds us to go back to Hegelian dialectics to rethink a question: what is the metaphysical foundation of dialectics - Being or beings? According to Negri (2007), “the point of this was to produce true, politically directed, and ethically characterized knowledge that would be directed toward a possible redemption of humanity” (p. 111).

Heidegger (1962) defines Being (Agamben uses the term “bare life”) as an entity with essential disclosedness - in Hegel’s term, pure nothingness, and beings as negativities that tend to but never outstrip Being (Agamben, 1991, p. 3). Contrary to Heidegger, whose ontological realism located the experiences of life, Agamben (1991) argues that bare life with pure nothingness should be restored as the foundation of dialectics. Agamben (1991) remarks, because the essence of Being is disclosedness and nothingness, it is unspeakable and unrepresentable. When the originality of Being encounters the negativities of beings, Being gives up its nature of nothingness and becomes “the experience of life” – the term Heidegger uses for the entity emerges after Being experiences beings. Different from the ineffable Being, the experience of life is expressible, and therefore, becomes the foundation of Western metaphysics –

various beings. As already mentioned, even though negativities of beings have permeated Being, it can never surpass Being, since metaphysics cannot be sustained beyond the existence of Being. Rather than dissecting and scrutinizing the experience of life as a singular entity, Agamben is seeking nothingness, or the bare life, a state that has not been encroached upon and grasped by beings. In other words, he uses bare life as a departure to demonstrate the nihilistic and ungrounded nature of beings.

Starting from language, knowledge, grammar, artistic expression (such as prose composing and painting), history and aesthetics, Agamben deconstructs various beings (Agamben, 1991, 1993a, 1993b, 1995 & 1999). Through these works, he tries to demonstrate a paradigmatic methodology to construct a large group of phenomena as Foucault did with his “panopticism” (Raulff, 2004). For instance, in his deconstruction of arts and aesthetics, Agamben (1999) reveals to us that both arts and aesthetics, as beings, are achieved through the self-annulment of artists and critics. As Arnold (1962) notes, in all branches of metaphysics, including knowledge, theology, philology, history, art and science, tend to see the object they study as it really is, but they can never grasp the object. Nevertheless, what we often fail to realize is that the works of art and aesthetical critiques are themselves original ruptures between the objective materiality and subjectivity of sensitivity. Artists and critics experience the ruptures, but finally surrender to an integration through self-annulment. When the transcendence of arts and disinterested art critiques become expression, the ungraspable or illegible part of materiality and sensitivity is abandoned. When artists and critics are engulfed by the unconsciousness of the negation of themselves and the

abandonment, the signified transcendence of arts and disinterestedness of critiques become their life. Thus, they sustain themselves through fatal self-negation, which is equivalent to “self-alienated spirit” (Hegel, 1977) and “death” (Heidegger, 1962). By doing so, Agamben uses his philological weapon to destruct the nothingness of arts and aesthetics.

More recently, Agamben shifts his target from elusive Western philosophical metaphysics to more a sensible immanence – biopolitics as the being. By addressing the most contingent political events such as Guantánamo Bay, which operate under the sovereignty of the United States government, and refugees whose fate is mediated by national and international laws, his works – *Homo Sacer* and *The State of Exception* established his preeminence in the domains of political sciences and sociology. In general, redefining Foucauldian biopower and biopolitics, Agamben affords the two terms new meanings. In general, Agamben’s biopolitics is different from Foucauldian biopolitics on the following points: 1) the relationship between life and power; 2) the origin of the sovereignty of power; and 3) the topological relationship between exception and norm.

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1990) notes:

For a long time, one of the characteristic privileges of sovereign power was the right to decide life and death....It was no longer considered that the power of the sovereign over his subjects could be exercised in an absolute and unconditional way....But if someone dared to rise up against him and transgress his laws, then he could exercise a power over the offender’s life (p.

135).

Foucault further remarks that what enables the operation of power is no longer the state sovereignty but norms and knowledge. Foucauldian biopolitics ascribe the emergence of norms and the normalization of bodies and minds under the panoptic gaze. Assuming responsibility to life, the purpose of Foucauldian biopower, therefore, is to seize, to calculate, to invest and to optimize life in a positive way. Foucault (1990) keenly realizes that death is power's limit, illegible secret and perpetual anxiety (p. 138). Nevertheless, he does not offer further elaboration on the relationship between death and productive biopower. Even though Foucault indicates the discursive nature of power, some of his arguments imply that power is outside of life, and power's function is self-evident. For instance, Foucault (1990) argues "it (power) is over life" (p. 138); "power gave itself the function of administering life" (p. 138).

Rather than departing from life, Agamben starts his destruction from the illegible secret of power – death. On the one hand, Agamben brings Hannah Arendt's (1958) critique of the modern for its prominent centering of normal biological life and the decadence of the political realm to critique the "positive" and "productive" nature of biopower as claimed by Foucault. To Arendt, political life, rather than biological life (or sufficient life), is the most critical element to live a "good" life. On the other hand, he borrows from Carl Schmitt (2005) to investigate the lacuna of death Foucault left. For Schmitt (2005), we can only grasp the nature of sovereignty through its exceptions, since the nature of sovereignty is the decision on the state of exception. In other words, power (or sovereignty) does not only aim to include life under the

protection of law (or rational knowledge) but also exclude life through identifying exception. Meanwhile, Schmitt (2005) advocates Foucault's (1990) belief that sovereignty stands outside the law. In other words, the sovereignty uses its power to make laws and create exceptions.

Agamben (1998) agrees with Foucault that "the modern Western state has integrated techniques of subjective individualization with procedures of objective totalization to an unprecedented degree" (p. 5). However, Agamben (1998) remarks that the inclusion and normalization of life are never something exclusively belonging to the age of modernity, and are not completely productive. Instead, since absolutely ancient age of the West, the production of a biopolitical body has become the original activity of sacred sovereign power (Agamben, 1998). By surrendering life to the rule of the sacred, man attains biological and political rights granted by the juridical order in the name of the sacred. Therefore, when power captures life under the political order, life is subject to political power and experiences exclusive inclusion. Here once again, Agamben (1998) brings back Arendt (1973) who claims that there is no absolute distinction but inner solidarity between totalitarianism and democracy. The trick of modern democracy is that it presents itself as a vindication and liberation of life, using freedom, naturalness and happiness to mark life's subjection (Agamben, 1998, p. 9-10), and hides its arbitrary exclusiveness over the life it includes.

Apart from including life, the sovereignty also creates exception. The exception is achieved through exclusion. However, the relationship between exception and rule is not what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe, namely that "sovereignty

only rules over what it is capable of interiorizing” (p. 445). Instead, the rule, suspending itself, gives rise to the exception and at the same time, maintains a dialectical relationship with it (Agamben, 1998). On the one hand, laws claim exception as being unlawful, implying that it is “a free and juridically empty space” (Agamben, 1998, p. 36). It does not necessarily mean that, inside of this sphere, the force of laws disappears. Rather, “inside this spatial and temporal sphere, anything could happen as long as it was held to de facto necessary according to circumstances” (Schmitt, 1974, p. 67). This indeterminacy could be manifested as indifferent abandonment or killing without charge of homicide (Agamben, 1998).

Even though Agamben owes theoretical debts to Schmitt and Foucault, he also points out the idea that power (law or sovereignty) as it stands outside of life deserves reconsideration. Agamben (1998 & 2005) claims that law stands both inside and outside of life. According to Derrida (1989), law cannot derive its validity from its own repetitive performativity (from inside), since “conservation in its turn refounds, so that it can conserve what it claims to found” (p. 997). Therefore, law can only be derived from life but at the same time objectifies life through violence. In order to prevent itself from suspension and to maintain its monopoly, law uses what it promises – “guarding lives” and “granting rights” – as an end to justify its violence and appeal to justice. In the meantime, it disguises its end as the subordination of citizens to law (Benjamin, 1996, p. 241). When we lose consciousness to the violence of law and are happy with the rights awarded by law, law becomes the norm of life. In other words, law becomes our life. For the Paralympic Games, when we celebrate the

rights for people with disabilities to play sports and to attend international competition, we may not be conscious about how the rights offered by the IPC have imposed certain norms to people with disabilities.

Agamben (1998) agrees with Schmitt that there is a dialectic relationship between exception and law, but he dissents with Schmitt's opinion that this dialectic is nothing but an arbitrary decision by the sovereignty. Agamben borrows from Benjamin who elaborates that the existence of exception does not demonstrate the sovereignty's power to decide. Antithetically, the exception stands as a catastrophe of the sovereignty. Technically, the law encounters exception, when its juridical machine can no longer function according to its norm. By announcing exception, law extends its violence beyond its own boundaries by legitimating violence with legal status in the name of maintaining its "natural" order. Agamben (1999) defines this relationship between the rule and the exception as "inclusive exclusion." Claiming the exception of law to be purely transitory and temporary in nature (Rossiter, 1948), the sovereignty refuses to answer: "What becomes of the law after its messianic fulfillment" (Agamben, 2005, p. 63)? Furthermore, by establishing a willed state of exception or fictive crisis, the government shows its tendency to make the provisional abolition of the distinction among legislative, executive, and juridical power a lasting practice (Agamben, 2005, p. 7). Just as Benjamin (2003) laments, the state of exception becomes the rule. Therefore, "being-outside, and yet belonging: this is the topological structure of the state of exception" (Agamben, 2005, p. 35).

According to the argument above, the sovereignty operates through a dialectic

between *exclusive inclusion* and *inclusive exclusion*. Equivalent to Foucauldian biopolitics, the former “optimizes” life to sustain its own operation and disguises its exploitative nature over bare life. The later allows the rule to emerge through excluding “bare life” as exception and extend its power over the exception in the name of life. Agamben’s biopolitics, therefore, is the metaphysical dialectic that contributes to the blurred boundaries between life and politics.

Taking the Paralympic Games as an example, the Paralympic Games parallels itself with the Olympic Games. Even though the Paralympic Games claims itself as the exclusive venue for people with disabilities to liberate themselves, it can only position itself on the secondary position to the Olympic Games. The Paralympic Games enjoys much little media coverage and attracts less public attention. For instance, both BBC and NBC covered the opening and closing ceremonies for the Beijing Olympic Games during their prime time, but neither of them covered the ceremonies for the Beijing Paralympic Games. As a result, the global celebration for people with disabilities and the exclusive venue through which people with disabilities could possibly liberate themselves became an event almost ignored by the mainstream. Except for the secondary status of the Paralympic Games, athletes with disabilities also have to face less social respect and supports. In the following sections, I will apply Agamben’s dialectic destruction, primarily from his works to reveal: 1) the transcendence of the Paralympic spirit is grounded on nothingness; 2) the majority of people with disabilities are abandoned as the exception of the Paralympic sovereignty.

THE MOST UNCANNY THING

In the beginning of *The Man Without Content*, Agamben (1999) uses Nietzsche's critique of Kant to explain the unlimited growth in the value of the arts and remarks that, "only because art has left the sphere of interest to become merely interesting do we welcome it so warmly" (p. 4). The transforming power of art is so strong that art "can lead to happiness as easily as to ruin" (Agamben, 1999, p. 4); therefore, there is nothing more urgent than a destruction of aesthetics by clarifying the purification of interests attached to the arts.

If we agree with the notion that art can present us with happiness and ruin at the same time, we can probably draw a felicitous analogy between art and the Paralympics. The latter is supposed to move us from peerless desperation about the ruined body to ecstasy of transcendence beyond the corporeal materiality. This duality is not only experienced by spectators, but also by athletes with disabilities through bodily movement. From this perspective, the body of a disabled athlete is *allegorical*, since it is material but generates something beyond its materiality. On the one hand, the athlete is the Being suffering within the objective confines of the corporeal; on the other hand, intending to present the Paralympic spirit, he is a being who demonstrates unlimited subjective potentialities. Performing with his body to the spectator, at that very moment, he attains a unity of his Paralympic subjectivity and materiality of disabilities. However, in the meantime, his being is also experiencing an unachievable lacuna between the subjective and objective worlds. As Agamben (1999) narrates the schizophrenia of the artist:

The artist then experiences a radical tearing or split, by which the inert world of contents in their indifferent, prosaic objectivity goes to one side, and to the other the free subjectivity of the artistic principle, which soars above the contents as over an immense repository of materials that it can evoke or reject at will (p. 35).

If the work of art shows the competence of artists to free their souls from secular contamination, the performance of athletes with disabilities represents the power they exert to erase the socio-cultural stigma notched on their bodies and to create transcendence beyond their flesh. Therefore, the athlete with a disability is also a living contradiction.

In his work, Agamben (1999) also explains how the worldview of artists is imposed to others through the self-negation of artists. To form and modify the world, the artist's body becomes his instrument to project his worldview (Agamben, 1999). To remove his personal interests from the expression of his works, he can only modify and inspire the world by negating his body as a nothing. The transcendence he wants to attain is a duel to the death, because when his spirit attains absolute freedom, he no longer needs material carrier. In the case of the disabled athlete, his body is a repository of all the causes and origins of the discrimination and restriction he encounters in the secular world. However, in the Paralympic arena, he can only negate all the material barriers brought by his body by showing his capacity to transcend. Rohrer (2005) puts it thus: "By acting as if we have no needs, we may perpetuate a 'super cripp' image – disabled people can do anything we want if we only try hard

enough” (p. 48).

Generating influence to spectators in the Paralympic space, athletes with disabilities seem to achieve their freedom by performing in public sphere. According to Hannah Arendt, freedom is “action (that) requires a public space where it can be assimilated by an audience of peers who by turns may judge and be inspired” (Grumley, 1998, p. 57). Taking her opinion into consideration, the Paralympic Games seem to work as such an ideal public space in which freedom can be achieved through agonistic actions of competing for preeminence. By “agonistic” action, Arendt means that practices which are no longer bound to the biological life process and for the purposes of equality and “common good.” In such a public space, private interests should not be presented, since work intending to maintain the necessity of the biological process of life will never become the means to freedom (Arendt, 1958). This notion complies with the essence of the Paralympics for its transcendental inspiration and negation of secular interests. The performance of athletes with disabilities is not simply a demonstration of their excellence, according to Arendt, but a political act for universal freedom and justice. Thus, in such a sacred public space, we should only have Heroes rather than people.

Even though Arendt agrees that freedom is associated with a humanly constructed institutional artifice and morality (Grumley, 1998, p. 66), what she fails to recognize is that, “the notions of ...freedom are too generic to constitute a real goal of struggle” (Agamben, 2000, p. 89). Due to the discriminatory treatment and hardship they encounter in daily life, many people with disabilities tend to dis-identify

themselves as people with disabilities (Huang & Brittain, 2006). Success in international disability sport can offer athletes an increased sense of personal empowerment, positive subjectivity and even tangible material benefits (Huang & Brittain, 2006). Thus, being a person with a disability is both a public and private matter. One's heroic action in the public space cannot be dissected from a suppressing privatized existence. Working to maintain individual biological life cannot be totally separated from acting in the interests of the Arendtian politics of freedom and justice.

Summarily, being the creator of his absolute freedom and destroyer of his material content (body), the athlete "strives for the objectivization of his world" (Agamben, 1999, p. 38). However, no matter how hard he tries to achieve transcendence and negate his personal interests, his performance cannot come into existence without material conditions. In the meantime, the increasingly innocent experience of the sport spectator corresponds to the increasing danger inherent in the athlete's experience, because the transcendence – expected by spectators – might destroy the objective existence of the athlete. Therefore, when Paralympic transcendence is presented by an athlete with disabilities to the world, a dialectical negation of his body is ongoing.

According to the IPC, the transcendence of the Paralympic spirit embodied by athletes with disabilities is not only essential, but abstract and detached from any individual interests. When the spirit is presented, it is alien not only to the athlete himself for its body negation, but also to the spectator. As someone who does not possess the subjectivities of the athlete and who does not experience the athlete's

secular material hardship, the spectator more often insists his appreciation of the transcendence of the Paralympic spirit. In addition, he is convinced that his appreciation can free himself from his own objective alienation and help him to approach a state of unspeakable transcendence. It is similar to the ironical engraving Agamben (1999) offers in his critiques of aesthetics - a boorish man who barely understands what art is, but assuredly believes that art is something extremely valuable and can realize his self-transformation. Thus, the Paralympic spectator is also experiencing the most radical split, for what his principle is what is most alien to him (Agamben, 1999, p. 24). In addition, the spectator's experiences tell him that the principle of daily life is suppression, and thus, he consciously hopes to pursue the transcendence which is absent in his life. To understand the performance of athletes with disabilities, the spectator has to fully consent to the transcendental spirit – the principle, which has been fully deprived of material content of the athlete as well as of the spectator. In this regard, any spectator, regardless of his cultural and historical context, will admire its essence which takes “him from the live tissues of society to the hyperborean no-man's-land” (Agamben, 1999, p. 16) of spirit. What the spectator does not realize is that, the athlete is doing what the spectator is doing but in a more clumsy way (Rohrer, 2005), and the athlete is still suffering social alienation rather than enjoying the transcendence his bodily performance indicates.

Not only do they experience negation, but spectators also experience difficulty in delineating the boundary of the “real” Paralympic. In *Critique of Judgment*, Kant (1951) defines the four characteristics of aesthetic judgment. The

criteria indicate that art should be totally disinterested; it tends to pursue universal satisfaction; it possesses purposiveness without a purpose; and, its universal satisfaction cannot be conceptualized. According to Kantian aesthetics, it seems we can only define art through a negative way in that we can only identify what non-art is and separate it from art (Agamben, 1999). Positing Kantian norms within the framework of the Paralympics, it also makes perfect sense. By assuring the universality of the Paralympic spirit, we can only recognize what is NOT Paralympic rather than identify what it is. First of all, the Paralympic spirit, essentially, cannot be conceptualized, because it is not derived from something of daily materiality. Its universality has freed it from national or cultural boundaries; therefore, it loses its geographical and cultural reference. In addition, athletes should not carry any personal interests. Any practice contaminated by personal benefits and self-satisfaction will be identified as non-Paralympic. Furthermore, athletes with disabilities have to obey the various rational rules and regulations constituted by the IPC. Under these laws and regulations, the spectator and the IPC can sensitively practice their judgment on “what is not the real Paralympic spirit.” Any transgression of rules and disobedience of regulations may be labeled as non-Paralympic.

Even though the spectator will never undergo the body/spirit split experienced by athletes, it does not prevent the spectator from judging what real Paralympic transcendence is through a series of negations. Here, another unbridgeable lacuna emerges. It seems that the transcendental and pure spirit of the Paralympics can only be identified through engagement of a rational calculation of laws and regulations.

That is to say, a pure transcendence of the material world can ironically only be enabled by moral and ethical laws of materiality. These man-made standards and rules purify man's approach to an elevated stage beyond man. In other words, we work as the reference for ourselves.

Under the sacred Paralympic flame, athletes with disabilities give up their intimate unity with their material and believe that they can attain a state of transcendence; spectators deem that they are witness to a divine power that can bring them to transcendence. Cheering and tearing, both parties sense that they are an uncanny enigma and put their mind in tune with the divine world (Agamben, 1999, p. 34). Within this agonistic public space – the Paralympics – transcendence becomes the perpetual rule, and the material life is abandoned as an exception. In this semi-autonomous sphere (for existential intervention of moral and ethical laws), athletes and spectators, voluntarily or compulsorily, consciously or unconsciously, suppress their material content, making the Paralympics their most uncanny experience – one approaching a spiritual transcendence of nothing.

THE STATE OF EXCEPTION

In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt (1958) explains:

According to Greek thought, the human capacity for political organization is not only different from but stands in direct opposition to that natural association whose center is the home (*oikia*) and the family (p. 24).

Outside the public sphere of political actions (the *polis*), people live a life in which persuading speech cannot make sense. Forcing people by violence and through orders

is the only way to deal with people characteristic of life outside the *polis*. Therefore, freedom, to Arendt, can only be achieved in a public sphere.

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt (1973) further clarifies that having the right to act in the public sphere depends on one's capability to have rights. However, claiming one's own rights may be alienating to others, since "we became aware of the existence of a right to have rights...and a right to belong to some kind of organized community, only when millions of people emerged who had lost and could not regain these rights" (p. 295-296) in the sphere beyond the *polis*. When some groups present themselves in the public sphere for their rights, others might be positioned in the *oikia* and subjected to violence.

If we perceive the arena of the ancient Olympic Games as a *polis*, the right to have rights, obviously, only belongs to male citizens rather than male slaves and women. Non-citizens who entered into the divine space of the Olympics would be subjected to the death penalty. If we examine Aristotle's notion of "good life," even males with disabilities may not possess the right to have rights, at least full rights:

Or as the eye, the hand, the foot, and each of the parts of the body seem to have their work, must we then suppose that alongside all of these man similarly has a certain work? And what then might this be? The simple fact of living seems to be common even to plants, but we are seeking something that is proper to man (quoted from Agamben, 2007, p. 3).

To Aristotle, without proper functions for each body part, one can hardly be defined as man, because man should be "born with regard to life, but existing essentially with

regard to the good life” (Agamben, 1998, p. 7). Particularly, the right to have rights, for able-bodied male citizens, in such an ancient democratic context, was awarded by the divine sovereignty.

In *Political Theology*, Carl Schmitt (2005) makes a creative statement that the sovereignty of the modern state is the secularized and neutralized theological sovereignty. The divine power of the ancient age has been transformed to power embedded in state jurisprudence (Schmitt, 2005). In the meantime, the citizens identified by the divine power are replaced by people who are born and remain free and equal in rights. Women, people of colour and slaves join this broad category of people who share “common consciousness.” Schmitt (2005) deems this transformation as a progression of human rationality since the voice of the people substitutes the voice of the God.

If we take the Olympics as an instance, the inclusion of women, people of color and people from a lower class indicates a “myth of the creative power of the democratically equal populace” (Strong, 2005, p. xxviii). The emergence of the Paralympic movement, therefore, could be perceived as distributing the right to have the rights of participating sports to people with disabilities. The right discourse apparently plays a significant role in including people with disabilities in general and athletes with disabilities in particular into the *polis*. The seamless distribution of liberal domestic democracy enables its universal extension. (Agamben, 1998). It seems that the space of the *oikia*, where violence rules, has disappeared.

As Agamben (2000) remarks, “where there is a People, there shall be naked

life (p. 35).” First of all, Agamben (1996) notices a fact that the citizen status – the right to have rights – is no longer closely associated with divinity. Almost all European nation-states grant equal human rights to their citizens and consider this natural granting as the foundation of state sovereignty. The structure of the nation-state is traditionally defined by three elements – territory, order and birth. The state mechanism is used to operate upon regulating individuals who violate this triad. The role of the state is to eliminate life that increasingly cannot be inscribed into the order overarched by the triad (Agamben, 2000, p. 43). However, after World War I, most European states started to reserve the right to denaturalize and denationalize their citizens (Agamben, 1996). From this sense, the proposition - “all ones born equal”- is replaced by the idea that “citizens have to show themselves deserving of citizenship” (Agamben, 1996). Meanwhile, the politics of making decisions by the state sovereignty has been reconfigured to a politics of making choice for citizens – choosing to become a deserving citizen or not.

This political reconfiguration can also be adopted to understand the biopolitics of the Paralympic Games. The right to play in the agonistic space of the Paralympic games is portrayed as a right for people with disabilities to choose a physically active lifestyle. From an Agambenian perspective, this right is never naturally granted. Athletes, thus, have to approve that they deserve the right to compete in the Paralympic Games through their bodies. For most athletes with disabilities, winning is assumed as the only end by promoting physical excellence. Under such a rule, natural body movement has been transformed to gesture. As

Agamben (2000) puts it, “the gesture...opens the sphere of ethos as the more proper sphere of that which is human (p. 57).” The gesture itself becomes the destiny of various bodies. Only through complying with certain gestures regulated by ethos can success be realized, and the transcendence that is promised by the Paralympics be expressed through the body. When the ideal gesture is realized, every human being has lost his or her sense of naturalness in that “contingency and necessity become indiscernible” (Agamben, 2000, p. 53). Therefore, the gesture becomes the rule whereas the natural body is transformed to the state of exception.

Nevertheless, under such a rule, most people with disabilities cannot inscribe their bodies into the order under which Aristotle’s “good life” for human could be achieved. Their right to act in the agonistic space of the Paralympic Games is revoked for the sake of the rights and freedom of athletes with disabilities to embrace an active lifestyle. Their lawless bodily movements disclose the secret of the body fetishism of the Paralympics. In other words, their presence characterizes the state of emergency of the bodily ethos as embraced by the Paralympics. The universal right discourse loses its voice in the exception, because their body presents a “catastrophe of the sphere of gestures” (Agamben, 2000, p. 51).

What of people who can neither start nor complete the simplest form of gestures? How about people who do not even understand the norms of “good life” that support and sustain the gesture? In order to resolve this paradox, some have suggested that we need to replace the universal human rights discourse with medical discourse for people with disabilities. Unlike the power of state sovereignty, which comes as if

from the outside and marks the space to eliminate, the biomedical power seems more moderate and productive in that it sets its goal as saving life. Under medical discourses, “biomedicine as a body of expertise might assist peoples to achieve greater heights of personal enrichment through personal and individual freedom (Bishop & Jotterand, 2006, p. 207). Anyone who is against it is against “the just distribution of the fruits of technology (Bishop & Jotterand, 2006, p. 209).

Even though the emphasis on biopower, to people with disabilities, is on “finding a cure” (Rohrer, 2005), it cannot disguise its limit that it cannot save all the life. Therefore, biopower assigns itself another divine responsibility, to identify the “life unworthy of being lived” and to guarantee other situations as a whole in its totality (Agamben, 1998). Agamben (1998) acknowledges, “the sovereign is entering into an ever more intimate symbiosis not only with the jurist but also with the doctor, the scientist, the expert and the priest” (p. 122). The distribution of medical discourses is no longer coercively conducted by the nation-state, but worked through by promoting certain ethical standards. It is no longer a question of seeking to identify and violently eliminate or constrain those defective individuals, or to promote the reproduction of those whose biological characteristics are most desirable, in the name of the overall fitness of the population, nation or race (Rose, 2001, p. 6-7). Instead, being “abnormal” or having a lower quality of life indicates only one possibility in a field of choice. As Nikolas Rose (2001) remarks:

Agamben and Bauman are undoubtedly correct in suggesting that, over the course of the 20th century, there was no such clear distinction between

preventive medicine and eugenics, between the pursuit of health and the elimination of unfitnes, between consent and compulsion (p. 3).

The one that makes the decision is no longer the divine or the state sovereignty. Every citizen has the right to make the wise choice and benefits from his or her decision. In the meantime, the biopower also awards abnormal individuals the right of death. The threshold between violence and right, law and nature, becomes a zone of indistinction (Agamben, 1998). The operation of medical discourses of biopower is similar to that of the state sovereignty. To the sovereign, human rights only function under normal circumstances. When it deals with exception, any violence can be applied in order to “restore” human rights, including unconditional violation of human rights by revoking the basic right to have rights. Just as Rohrer (2005) declares:

The worse the economic and social conditions of people with disabilities are, the more people will “choose” to die; the more people who “choose” to die, the more refusal to provide services and access will seem to be justified by the “inevitable” unbearability of life with disability. Eventually, assisted suicide will be the social expected “solution” to severe disability (p. 58).

In addition, presenting certain life as a risk to the common well-being of men, the biopower creates a “fictitious state of exception”, “fancied emergency” or even “willed state of exception” to justify the necessity of exclusion (Agamben, 2005). In responding to this fictitious and catastrophic exception, the biomedical power safeguards its norms and its applicability to the normal situation (Agamben, 2005, p. 31). In other words, the biopower excludes life in the name of the common well-being

of life.

Agamben (2005) notes that “in order to apply a norm it is ultimately necessary to suspend its application, to produce an exception” (p. 40). The emergence of the Paralympic movement indicates a norm of compulsory able-bodiedness (McRuer, 2002) to people with disabilities at large. Even though it portrays itself as a vehicle of humanitarianism, its propaganda of inclusion through participation in competitive sports is antithetical to social acceptance for disabled bodies. Just as Agamben (1998) remarks, a humanitarianism that separates biopolitics cannot fail to reproduce the isolation at the basis of sovereignty (p. 134). In addition, elimination of the state of exception, such as “mercy killing” or “death by grace,” was offered to people and fetuses with disabilities in the name of humanitarian consideration (Agamben, 1998, p. 140). In the case of the Paralympic Games, compulsory able-bodiedness embodied by athletes with disabilities becomes the rule; the majority of people with disabilities who fail to inscribe their bodies into this order become the state of exception.

CODA

Agambenian biopower, different from Foucauldian inclusive biopolitics, is actually a dialectic between exception and norm. Under the biopolitics of the Paralympics, humanitarianism becomes the new sovereign order of violence (Edkins, 2000). The Paralympic sovereign is not simply a dialectic between the majority and the minority, exception and normality. Instead, it is a dynamic dialectic between inclusive exclusion and exclusive inclusion.

In order to attain full civil rights and benefits, the able-bodied individuals and the athlete with disabilities must remake themselves as legal subjects who are consistent with the requirement of normativity (Shildrick, 2005a). From this perspective, every human being is a potential exception in that political and civil rights are only given to us according to biopolitical strategic deliberation (Ek, 2006). Under the Paralympic sovereign, athletes with disabilities not only need to comply with certain gestures that represent the ethos of human beings, but also need to alienate their secular materiality in order to present transcendence. Even for spectators with able bodies, who identify with the transcendence demonstrated by the athletes with disabilities, the alienation of their material life becomes the only factor sustaining their life. The transcendent sublime can only be realized through violence and a quasi-sacrificial or totalizing logic (LaCapra, 2007, p. 129). Both parties are immersed in the “eternal joy of becoming- that joy which also encompasses joy in destruction” (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 110).

To the majority of disabled people who are excluded from the Paralympic Games, particularly those who have severe disabilities, their social status is further jeopardized. When they confront sublime human rights discourse, they are excluded for the sake of the freedom of athletes with disabilities. When they encounter innocent medical discourses, they are immoral beings who can only enjoy the right to choose death over life. As a catastrophe of norms, they are the exception to norms but subject to violence beyond norms. Only by eliminating the catastrophe from existence or abandoning it to the space of invisibility, can the norm fulfil its self-legislation as the

totality of life.

In the end of *The State of Exception*, Agamben (2005) notes, the sovereignty, by constituting a fictive emergency, tends to transform itself into a killing machine. The only possibility to halt the machine is to articulate the link between violence and law as well as between life and norm. Thus, to fulfil a destruction of the Paralympic sovereignty, the links between humanitarianism and the right to death, between rights and lack of all rights, and between integration and exclusion should be delineated.

Nevertheless, it does not necessarily mean that the Paralympic Games cannot absolutely exist as a way to “good life.” Thus, Agamben (2005) borrows from Benjamin to redefine “good life” as life that “cannot be appropriated or made juridical” (p. 64). In contrast to Aristotle’s definition of “good life” which has been designated for human beings, Agamben (2000) asserts:

The “happy life” on which political philosophy should be founded thus cannot be either the naked life that sovereignty posits as a presupposition so as to turn it into its own subject or the impenetrable extraneity of science and of modern biopolitics that everybody today tries in vain to sacralize. This “happy life” should be, rather, an absolutely profane “sufficient life” that has reached the perfection of its own power and of its own communicability – a life over which sovereignty and right no longer have any hold (p. 114-115).

It is also a call to deactivate the sovereignty of the Paralympics. As Agamben (2005) pictures that “one day humanity will play with law just as children play with disused objects, not in order to restore them to their canonical use but to free them from it for

good” (p. 64). Therefore, we should re-construct the Paralympic Games neither as sacrifice to divine power nor as demonstration of human rights or spectacle promised by medical discourse, but as a sphere for play devoid of value and play of the Agambenian “good life.”

Chapter Seven: I am an athlete; I am not disabled! : Identification with

Peoples with Disabilities

In a recent television show hosted by the Phoenix Television, former Chinese gymnast Lan Sang proudly asserted, “I never consider myself as disabled.” Ever a hopeful Olympian, Sang represented China to participate in the 1998 Goodwill Games in Uniondale, New York. In a warm-up vault, she accidentally dislocated her C6 and C7 vertebrae and severely cracked her spinal cord. After a year of unsuccessful rehabilitation in the United States, she returned to China for further treatment. Despite of her disability, Sang never stops trying to live an independent life. Moreover, Sang actively involved in various public activities to help people with disabilities in China. For instance, Sang played an active role to promote building cities accessible to all. In 2002, she was admitted by Beijing University to study media and communication. She often appeared in TV shows as a commentator for disability sports and gymnastic events. She also trained for the 2008 Beijing Paralympic Games. In 2007, she received her bachelor degree and joined Star TV, a leading media agency in Asia. In 2008, Sang launched a charity fund after her name for injured athletes. Demonstrating extraordinary passion and courage to the public, Sang won herself a nickname –“angel on wheelchair.”

In contrast to many disabled people who are unwilling to talk about their experiences in public settings, Sang is very outspoken about her injury, her frustration, and the painful role changing from a promising elite gymnast to a person with severe disability. In the show, she told the host that it is natural for disabled people to be

reluctant to engage with the social world, because they are afraid that people from the outside may see them differently. The host asked Sang, “Do you feel you are different after the injury?” Firmly and spontaneously, Sang responded to the host:

No, I never think I am different. Indeed, I never consider myself as disabled!

I always tell myself, if other people get my injury, can they achieve what I achieved? Others may think you are different (as a disabled), but you can’t just treat yourself differently.

I am injured, but I can’t just stop wearing nice makeup and showing my beautiful side to people. I have to sit on wheelchair, but I can’t just stop buying nice skirts and dresses. Yes, I am sitting on the wheelchair, and you can’t see my figure and my lines. But I still want to be beautiful as much as before! Once I was in a party with my former teammates, they thought someone did the makeup for me. They were wrong; I spent two hours and did the whole makeup by myself.

From Sang’s articulation, it seems that her conception of disability is not so much an imposed social construction but a subjective constitution. Sang resisted the social labeling of “people with disabilities” by affirmatively defending her full commitment to gender. Using gender – a social constituted concept, Sang justified herself as normal and attack another social construction – disability. It makes me to ponder how do other athletes with disabilities perceive themselves, and why.

READING DISABILITIES THROUGH AN INTERSECTIONAL LENSE

Based upon the notion that the major systems of oppression are interlocking

– an idea raised by feminist theorists (Combahee River Collective, 1983; Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 1990; Yuval-Davis, 2006), intersectional analysis has been adopted by scholars to explain the discursive and complex construction of differences of race, gender, class and sexuality (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 1990). Garland-Thomson (2002) furthered that the varieties of disability should be added into intersectional studies in an attempt to further our understanding of contradictory and situational identities and to facilitate social integration of subalterns. In addition, Garland-Thomson (2002) encourages us to integrate disability as a category of analysis through which we can deepen, expand or even challenge feminist theories.

Primarily informed by (Black and Third World feminist) standpoint theory, some scholars further suggest that integration of people with disabilities into society can only be achieved by understanding their political and epistemological stance (Mahowald, 2005). Only if we interpret a multiplicity of interlocking identities through the stance of the people with disabilities, can we better understand how disability as a social category is constructed or imposed through various avenues of exclusion and inclusion. Furthermore, we can understand their subjective understanding of their bodies and probably initiate individual or collective political intervention.

Influenced by Foucault and Derrida, queer theorists, including Judith Butler, Eve Sedgwick, Gloria Anzaldua and Donna Haraway, suggest that taking the political standpoint of certain marginalized social groups not only runs the risk of victimizing and disempowering these social groups but also reinforcing the various categories of

identities. Noting the impossibility of gender politics vis-à-vis subversive gender category, Butler (1993) remarks, “if...gender is part of what decides the subject, how might one formulate a project that preserves gender practices as sites of critical agency?” (p. x). Queer theorists suggest that we adopt flexible and transcendental subjectivities to overcome the boundaries formed by various identities politics. Rather than reifying and naturalizing constituted identities, we should emphasize the performative aspect of the body and upset various binaries by queering our subjectivities and performativity. When it was first invented, queering (or queerness) was designated as a political strategy only for gays and lesbians against the heterosexual regime. Along with its expansion and radicalization by queer theorists, queerness has been broadly embraced as a means of disordering other identity regimes, including gender, race, class and even disability, and to showcase the agency of subaltern groups.

Taking athletes with disabilities as an example, it seems that their athletic performativity could be interpreted through both queer and standpoint theories. Their active engagement of athleticism can be seen as either an affirmative statement of their political standpoint as people with disabilities or a queer agency blurring the boundary between ableness and disabledness. As Shildrick (2005a) suggests, “Disability is a highly complex and intrinsically ambiguous designation, that cannot be addressed adequately by positivist and binary based models of analyses alone” (p. 768). Crenshaw (1991), Collins (1990) and Eng (2001) argue that, isolating one identity from the others as if they were distinct categories of analysis can only serve

the political, economic and cultural hegemony of a dominant social order. In this chapter, I want to tackle this question: Are the boundaries between disabled and able bodies secured or contested through symbolic performativity of their athletic bodies? To do so, I examine how athletes with disabilities negotiate various forces that tend to construct a multiplicity of identities within the parameters of class, gender, sexuality and able bodiedness. In addition, I want to reveal that their identification with “athlete with disabilities” is neither a historically universal concept nor a politically progressive one, but one that takes shape within the social and political conjuncture.

A CHINESE SINGULARITY?

To study sports for the disabled in China, the influence of the Paralympic Games cannot be ignored. As one of the most influential non-governmental institution that facilitates social integration of people with disabilities through sports, the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) promotes a cosmopolitan ideal that everyone has the right to play sports. The IPC already has 162 nations as its members since its establishment and has significantly changed the social image of people with disabilities. Nevertheless, through tracing the materialization of various cosmopolitan ideologies in different cultural contexts, we discovered that cosmopolitanism do not always empower marginalized social groups (Beck, 2002; Pheah, 2006; Mullally, 2006; Narayan, 1997). For instance, Brittain’s (2006) study shows that the success of disabled athletes in the Paralympic Games is not comparable with the economic condition of nations. Instead, the reality is that athletes from under-developed nations have better achievement in the Paralympic Games. Therefore, we have to be critical to

the idea that certain nation-states use the Paralympic Games to leverage their political capital (Brittain, 2006).

However, for some under-developed nations, a dilemma that they are facing has not attracted the attention it deserves. On the one hand, if the under-developed nations do not offer institutional support to athletes with disabilities and do not send athletes to participate in the Paralympic Games, they will be labeled as being reluctant to embrace the spirit of Paralympic humanitarianism. On the other hand, if they provide sufficient financial and institutional support to athletes with disabilities, they might be critiqued for exploiting athletes with disabilities for the political interests of nation-states. In the case of China, the significant achievements of Chinese athletes with disabilities in the late 1990s and in the new millennium are suspect from a Western viewpoint. In Stone's (2001) work on sports for the disabled in China, she points out: first, sports for the disabled in China are the exclusive preserve of a limited number of elite athletes in segregated events. Stone (2001) further shows that, the success of Chinese athletes in international competitions jeopardizes the social status of ordinary Chinese disabled people by asking "how far might the apparent 'failure' by the majority of ordinary Chinese disabled people to get out of poverty and make it in the mainstream (p. 62)?" Stone (2001) also recognizes that the high-level support from the Chinese government enables sports for people with disabilities to disguise its state dictatorship. On the one hand, ordinary Chinese disabled people have very limited access to international disability sport; on the other hand, disabled athletes are forced to train harder to achieve medals in international competitions (Stone, 2001).

Even though Stone (2001) admits that the Chinese government had no economic capacity to provide sufficient welfare benefits and social support to millions of disabled people, she still conveys an underlying message that the marginalization of the majority of people with disabilities and the achievement of Chinese elite athletes is indeed a human rights issue in China.

Meanwhile, Brittain's (2006) work also draws our attention to developed nations to see how much they have done for people with disabilities. The British government did not provide sufficient funding to its Paralympic sports until London started to bid for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The United State manipulated injured soldiers from Afghanistan and Iraq wars to promote nationalism (Batts & Andrews, 2008). Needless to say, developed nations are themselves far from having achieved the humanitarian ideals promoted by the IPC. Across national boundaries, most people with disabilities are still severely marginalized. The opportunities to participate in sports, particularly competitive sports on an international level, are still largely limited by the class background of people with disabilities. Some training programs still largely rely on charity funding to maintain their daily operations. In addition, many activists are struggling for more governmental supports for the disabled sports, due to the low chance of getting commercial endorsement and philanthropic endorsement. Nevertheless, it does not prevent the West from directing its gaze and release frequent rhetorical invocation against China. In many parts of her work, Stone (2001) accentuates the post-Mao body culture for people with disabilities as "only restricted to the few, the strong, the

winners” (p. 63), as if the Paralympic movement in the Western world has successfully integrated the majority of people with disabilities. Stone’s intention of simplifying all issues regarding China to “human rights issues” or even as cultural issues, to Narayan (1997), is indeed a colonialist schizophrenic analysis through taking an enlightening position. The accentuation of the human rights situation in other national contexts not only constitutes cultural Others, but also reinforces “the moral and cultural superiority of ‘Western civilization’ and its ‘civilizing mission’ (Narayan, 1997, p. 57).” In the meantime, her missionary stance contributes to her blindness to various inequalities formed in the western context in particular and global context at large.

Rey Chow (2002) further theorizes the gaze projected by the West to China as a multi-layered politics of mimeticism. As Chow (2002) remarks:

The first level of mimeticism has to do with the imperative, created by Western imperialism and colonialism of the past few hundred years, of the white man as the original...the original, so to speak, exists as the sole, primary standard by which the copy is judged... the colonized subject must nonetheless try, in envy, to become that from which she has been excluded in a priori manner...She is damned if she tries; she is damned if she doesn’t (p. 104).

Regardless of whether the colonized subjects try or not, “for those who distrust it, mimesis is suspect because it results in an objectified image, yet the image is, ultimately, not the problem; the act of imitating, of copying, is” (Chow, 2002, p. 101).

Using the gaze, the colonized subject is confined to where it should stay (Chow, 2002). Meanwhile, the West is exempt from any gaze and examination since “there is only one destiny. And that is white,” (Fanon, 1991, p. 10), and makes the colonized a permanent inferior copy (Fanon, 1967; Bhabha, 1994b; Chow, 2002).

In this Chapter, I do not want to deny the fact that the Chinese nation-state tactically employs the Paralympic Games to justify its sovereignty, demonstrate its role as a good citizen in global politics, highlight its “peaceful rise” and desire to embrace human rights and democracy (Mittelman, 2006). The achievement of Chinese athletes with disabilities is deployed as an indicator of the embracement of human rights by the Chinese state sovereignty. Nevertheless, I also want to emphasize that the institutionalization of the Paralympics in China and the tremendous success of Chinese athletes with disabilities have to be understood as a compromise by the Chinese sovereignty for a sense of legitimacy and security, and ultimately, a sense of empowerment in the global power dynamic. Due to the fact that global politics is always taking place inside national boundaries, the phenomenon of global dynamics is often mistakenly perceived as being locally constructed. Through participating in the global Paralympic movement, athletes with disabilities contest and subordinate to the changing power dynamics on both national and global levels. Therefore, rather than being a work that reinforces the notion of singular Chineseness, the analysis I pursue here tends to serve as a modest, albeit critical model for the continued cross-cultural interrogation of the commonalities and differences of athletes with disabilities.

CLASS

Of the two teams for which I conducted my research, the class status and family backgrounds of athletes varies dramatically, from an abandoned orphan to a medical doctor and a former professional soccer athlete who was accidentally disabled. Some of them have stable financial assistance from their families; some rely on governmental welfare subsidies for the disabled; some athletes who were injured during their work receive compensation for the disabled from their former employers or local governments on a regular basis; and several athletes still maintain stable employment in public institutions.

Due to the difference of class background, the athletes I interviewed demonstrate different levels of motivation to participate in competitive athletic training. For instance, one female athlete, who was abandoned since she was born because of her disability, thinks that participating in athletic training is a way to escape the suppressing and disempowering confines of an orphanage institution, to obtain a higher financial subsidiary for athletes with disabilities allocated by the government, and probably as a way to access other opportunities which cannot be provided by the orphanage. As she said,

In the orphanage, what they are supposed to do is to feed you, dress you up and make sure that you are not sick. Don't expect them to do anything else beyond that, since they are not responsible for you. You are not supposed to do anything other than stay full and healthy.

Due to her class constraints, she is more dedicated to training, and demonstrates a very strong will to win in the National Championship. Without a satisfactory

performance in the national games, she cannot justify her stay with the team and will possibly be sent back to the orphanage.

Another female player who is from a lower class family in a rural area mentioned to me that participating in competitive athletic training is a default option rather than a choice made based on her preference. She wants to do independent study at home, apply to colleges for the disabled, and eventually have a stable career commensurate with her education. But her family cannot provide enough financial support for her education. Staying at home, she can only run a small variety store in a very confined environment to supplement her family financially. During the interview, she complained that she cannot afford the expensive tuition to fulfill her dream of attending college. I told her that there might be some colleges that offer education for people with disabilities at lower rates. She mentioned that two players on her teams have access to computer and internet at home. Internet access provides them a privileged position to locate various services and opportunities available for people with disabilities. She further reveals that she has not had an opportunity to use a computer yet. Thus, she does not even know what material to study in order to be enrolled in special colleges for the disabled. Because the preferential policy in China encourages retired athletes to obtain higher education, she is hoping that her athletic performance may make her eligible for higher education with a tuition waiver and lower academic standards. In addition, she saved the monthly training subsidiary allocated by the government for her new wheelchair and was content with the financial independence she achieved.

For male athletes, most of them receive sufficient financial support from their families or their employers; however, their disabled bodies become an obstacle for them as they climb the social ladder. A disabled professional soccer athlete and a young surgical doctor lament that they have had to give up their ambition and compromise with the cruel social reality. The young surgical doctor who works in a prestigious hospital told me his role is more like a role model for all the disabled patients rather than a real doctor. The former soccer athlete rather conceives that playing wheelchair sports is a secondary choice to continue his career as an athlete. Still having a sporting body, he acknowledges that the honorary value of being a professional soccer player is no longer preserved. They both told me that they no longer feel comfortable socializing with their (former) friends and colleagues. In addition, they no longer feel secure in their social class and are forced to make long term plans for the rest of their life. Two other male athletes who have less severe disabilities still maintain their employment within public sectors. Nevertheless, they clearly realized that the possibility for them to be promoted in their workplace is rather slim. Even though they are protected by law and do not need to be concerned about unemployment, an atmosphere of alienation and ignorance at the workplace is still evident in that some social activities, such as group mountain climbing and camping, become luxurious and embarrassing to participate. One of the male athletes recalled that he won a title in the previous nation championship. The success once again brought him back to the center of attention in his workplace for a short period and gave him an opportunity to showcase his ableness.

The result suggests that lower social class further exacerbates the negative influence brought about by disability. Athletes from a lower class are more prone to use their bodies as a means to escape a deteriorated social status – more often than to escape their social confines. For athletes from a higher social class, even though they are less socially confined, having disabilities has significantly changed their lifestyles and career path. Failing to be incorporated into the labor system not only jeopardizes their access to economic capital, but also harms their social capital and prevents them from attaining cultural capital. Disabilities have jeopardized their legitimacy to stay in their social class. Therefore, they are more prone to use sports to restore their status.

Nevertheless, success in the sporting arena might give them a better chance to access social and economic capital but cannot fully integrate them in the global economy of labor. Irrespective of either the nation-state or the Paralympic institution, athletes with disabilities are trained to succeed in the sporting arena rather than in the labor market. During the interviews, many athletes told me that they consider participating in athletic training to be their only way out of this predicament but they are unsure how big the possibility is for their efforts to pay off. In other words, these athletes with disabilities are conscious of the fact that they are needed for their athletic performance rather than their labor power. Even in Western nations, successful athletes with disabilities are primarily cheered for their performance. Their economic condition and employment are rarely addressed by the public media.

SEXUALITY

As mentioned before, one female athlete uses internet access to make friends.

Even though access to a computer and internet provides her the opportunity to socialize with the external world, she is still hesitant to go out and meet her (romantic) friends. In the cyber community, she portrays herself as an athlete who fully dedicates her time to intensive training and competition. Whenever some friends invite her to dates, she will use different excuses, such as conflicts with training and competition schedules, to decline invitations. Particularly in China, most professional athletes are under the strict discipline of a semi-military system. The public is always curious about the life of professional athletes. Therefore, none of her cyber-friends ever call her role in question. She mentioned to me, making friends on-line gives her a ratification of being wanted by others, even though it is barely possible to maintain this friendship if she reveals the fact that she is an athlete with a disability.

The young surgical doctor with the spinal cord injury above T 10 level has an able-bodied girlfriend. Nevertheless, neither his family nor he is optimistic about this relationship because of his inability to perform sexual activity. To both the athlete and his father, failure to perform sexuality is an insurmountable obstacle to a sustainable marriage. The athlete is deeply immersed in the guilt of not being able to fulfill his sexuality and to satisfy his girl-friend. On the one hand, he wants to maintain this relationship; on the other hand, he is consciously aware of his selfishness and the instability of their potential marriage. His father is more concerned that this marriage may make his son more vulnerable, if one day his wife decides to divorce him. In addition, his father believes that it is pointless to even start such a marriage without sex. When I implicitly suggest maybe it could be an alternative choice for his son to

seek a romantic relationship within the disabled community, his father disputed my idea and deemed that it will be burdensome not only to the athlete himself but also to the family.

Not only do the close family members of athletes hold the idea that having a disability (severe disability in particular) shuts the door for them to have a sexual relationship or marriage with able-bodied people, but most athletes with disabilities perceive themselves as not being sexually attractive and dismiss the idea of marriage. From the field research, I found out as above that their sexualized understanding of disabled bodies is definitely a double-standard in that it only applies to other disabled people rather than themselves. For instance, during an informal group interview, female athletes jokingly told me that they have reached an agreement – they all will try to marry guys with “high-quality” (guys with able bodies) rather than “second-class products” (disabled guys) in the training center. Among all the female players I interviewed, only one athlete has developed a romantic relationship with an able bodied person following her injury and successfully turned this relationship into marriage. This female athlete becomes the role model for the whole team. She told me, the reason that her husband wants to marry her is not only because she has a minor disability, but also for her strong motivation to be independent. Moreover, her husband perceives her as an athlete, which is totally different from other dependent and demanding disabled individuals. Another female athlete, during the time of my field research, had a serious relationship with a male athlete in the same training center. Notwithstanding, she still perceives her boyfriend as an individual even with

his disability, but he is highly convenient, mobile and flexible. She also emphasizes the fact that her boyfriend can easily pass for an able-bodied person.

The strong intention of disabled athletes to associate with able-bodied individuals through marriage, to some extent, reflects the deficient social resource available for them from the society. Therefore, they can only go back to the most basic social institution – family – for assistance. In addition, they expect to somehow erase the stigma of being a disabled individual through a marriage with an able-bodied individual. Marriage with another person with disabilities undoubtedly reinforces the stigma. Thus, athletes with disabilities perceive marriage with another disabled as an option they “cannot not have.” In the meantime, marrying another disabled individual, to them, only exacerbates the inconvenience they encounter in their daily life.

Nevertheless, the majority of athletes who have severe disabilities, both male and female, show that they are consciously aware that it is impossible (or less likely) for them to have a marriage with an able-bodied person. The same situation also applies in a Western context. As Asch and Fine (1997) note, “the public assumption is that this woman is a burden and her husband is either saintly or a loser himself” (p. 245). Similarly, an able-bodied woman married to a disabled man will be eulogized as an embodiment of “traditional virtues” of Chinese women. Compared to other compliments, a moral acclamation is more suffocating to able-bodied people in that it prevents any moral deviance, particularly sexual deviance against family values.

Even though many athletes with disabilities conceive marriage with

able-bodied individuals as an “ideal” marriage, they are also consciously discerned that marriage with an able-bodied person may not bring them happiness and the sense of home that the normal heterosexual family promises, because they believe that such a marriage could be unequal and oppressive from the beginning. Even though their wives and husbands could be supportive and considerate, it would not help them to escape from the feeling of guilt. For example, the only female athlete in the team who married an able-bodied man, during our conversation, keep emphasizing that her husband is “a VERY good person,” and they have a very happy family life. It seems that his kindness to her and the success of their family are something completely incomprehensible, and all the happiness she speaks of can only be attributed to his essential personality. Therefore, their successful marriage, transcending the able/disable binary and outside the norm, is only an unspeakable exception.

McRuer (2006) remarks that little notice has been taken of the connection between heterosexuality and able-bodied identity. Able-bodiedness, even more than heterosexuality, still largely is perceived as a nonidentity, but the natural order of things (McRuer, 2006, p. 1). As Shildrick (2005b) argues, we witness the significance of the psycho-social aversion not only to disabled bodies in general, but to the interface of sexuality and disability more specifically. By breaking the dyad between able-bodiedness and heterosexuality, the sexuality of people with disabilities is also severely challenged. So strongly is “proper” sexuality associated with one particular set of standards –able-bodiedness – that those outside the standards have been naturally castrated by the public or family members (Shildrick, 2005b).

Foucault always affirms that the power generates endless refusals, which are usually embodied as counter-discourses. Nevertheless, we should also pay attention to the “continual and circular process of internalization and externalization” (Eng, 2001, p. 20-21) under the refusing power. It is manifested as internalized feelings of self-contempt and self-rejection as well as externalized negation of their identity as “people with disabilities” and degradation of other disabled people in general. In the case of athletes with disabilities, refusals to acknowledge themselves as disabled are conducted through participating in athletic training and embracing the identity of athletes. Through their physical performativities, athletes tend to “repudiate the literal meaning of the word disabled” (Garland-Thomson, 2002, p. 22). However, their way of repudiating “disabled” is dilemmatic and self-contradictory, because the refusal to claim disability identity is often adopted by athletes to justify their pursuit of marriage with able-bodied people while denying the possibility of marriage with other disabled. In other words, “their words ... serve to disassociate them from the identity group of the disabled” (Garland-Thomson, 2002, p. 22). Nevertheless, it is evident that being athletic is not enough to rescue athletes with disabilities from the bankruptcy of the dyadic project on heterosexuality-able-bodiedness. The discourse of able-bodiedness is so strong and discursive that athletes have fully internalized it. The internalization of the presupposition of able-bodiedness positions athletes in an ambivalence between full embracement of heterosexual marriage with able-bodied people and self-castration elicited by a sense of guilt.

GENDER

Maintaining or performing sexually seems luxurious to most severely disabled athletes; however, they still invest in the project of gender performance in a relatively generous way. Because of the intensive training schedule, inconvenient access to the surrounding areas, and the disturbing stares outside of the training center, athletes (except for the ones on employment) choose to spend most of their time in the center. Male athletes in general believe that participating in athletic training makes them look and feel like a man or at least makes them feel more masculine. Particularly, they hope to develop their muscles through physical activities. Therefore, compared to female athletes, male athletes are more enthusiastic about participating in strength training and care about having the proper diet for muscle growth. One male athlete proudly mentioned to me that people on the street once asked him whether he was a soldier or a policeman before his injury. He also told me that he thinks these male non-athletes with disabilities do not look normal for their weak and shrinking bodies: “they don’t even look like humans, not even close to looking like a man.”

The sense of supremacy for being an athlete is not limited to male athletes. The social isolation does not prevent female athletes from pursuing fashion, such as clothing, makeup and jewelrys. Every month, they choose to go out together for shopping (or just window shopping) in the downtown area. One player comments that the accessibility in the downtown areas has been greatly improved but is still not convenient enough for people with disabilities. For example, more and more public restrooms have toilets designated for wheelchair users, but many departmental stores are not equipped with fitting rooms large enough for them. She further attributes her

unfashionable look to inaccessibility. On a daily basis, after training, they comment on the current fashion in TV shows and soap operas and plan what to buy during the next shopping excursion.

Many other female athletes tend to avoid wearing plain uniforms, opting instead for colorful and feminine sporting wear. Three female athletes dye their hair and sport fashionable hairstyles. Only one relatively older female athlete did not show any enthusiasm for fashion and she was critiqued or kindly blamed for “not taking care of herself.” On the team, two female basketball players wear makeup during their training every day. They even showed me that their makeup is sweat-proof. When I ask them why they do that every day, they both affirm that they have been used to wearing makeup even prior to having disabilities. They do not see having disabilities and being athletes as contradictory to their gender role.

Even though female athletes are disabled and confined in a small space with few opportunities to showcase their femininity to males, they believe it is not a good excuse to give up their gender project. As one female player insists, she applies makeup not to attract attention from males, but to make herself self-confident. They further emphasize that if they stop using makeup just because they have disabilities, people may think having disabilities makes them no longer qualified for being female. However, the elder female athlete in the team demeans the act of applying makeup during the training. As she cynically puts it, “applying makeup every day won’t make you less disabled.” This phenomenon prevails not only in China, but also in other social contexts. As Garland-Thomson (2002) notes, the excessive confirmation of

normal femininity, in certain cases, is necessary to counter the social negation of disabled women's sexuality. As disabled activist and writer Eli Clare reminds us, even though sexual objectification disciplines performativity of femininity, its absence is also detrimental to female subjectivities (quoted by Rohrer, 2005). Disability brings desexualization of females, while at the same time, triggering excessive gender projects to compensate for the potential loss of sexuality. I suggest, for gender performance, female athletes who wear makeup are critiqued by their peers for the unacceptably transgressive performativity of femininity and their embodied anomaly (Shildrick, 2005a). West and Zimmerman (2002) argue, "women can be seen as unfeminine but [this] does not make them 'unfemale.'" (pp. 11)" In this case, the power of the able/disable binary is evident in that athletes with disability can display their ableness in sports, but it does not make them closer to the ideal gender role.

Most athletes with disabilities attempt to incorporate ideal gender images through intensive investment in gendering projects, and insist that the gendered self is their authentic self. However, "these images remain stubbornly exterior to them" (Eng, 2001, p. 111). From Lacan's essay "The Mirror Stage," we know that the willed identification has to be validated by the social collective to maintain the self-sameness. The gender project, initiated by female athletes, was even negated by their peers for its impossibility to transcend the chasm created by disabilities. For the elder female athlete, rather than contributing to self-care, the gender project further reveals their impotence to reverse the coercive inscription made by stereotypical images of disabled bodies.

I AM AN ATHLETE, NOT A PERSON WITH DISABILITIES

Through a critical investigation of the production and reinscription of class, sexual and gender identifications, we can see that the construction of the identity of “athletes with disabilities” is not fully an embodiment of pure political agency but a conflicted and ambivalent process. Athletes demonstrate their agency to liberate themselves from social oppression, but their self-emancipation is always contradictory and politically constrained. Sometimes, it involves self-negation and self-rejection; in other cases, they adopt practices of exclusion and estrangement against other people with disabilities to showcase their identity as athletes.

During my field research as above, athletes with disabilities often emphasize to me that they are athletes rather than people with disabilities. For instance, one athlete puts,

When we win medals, they hang the Chinese flag and play the Chinese anthem.

We glorify the nation as much as they (athletes with able bodies) do. However, they get all the honors, benefits and attention, whereas we get nothing!

This punitive ordering between able-bodied and disabled athletes, at a first glance, is a hegemonic construction by the nation-state for exploiting the athletic ability of the disabled for political interests. A careful examination of the relationship between the Olympic Games and the Paralympic Games reveals that the two are never a pair of political equivalents. Therefore, the self-willed embracement of the Paralympic ideology by athletes with disabilities is misaligned and compromised in the very first place.

Even though it is preconditioned that the Paralympic movement cannot help people with disabilities to achieve “genuine” equality with able-bodied people, it leaves athletes with disabilities “forever in combat with his (her) own image” (Fanon, 1967, p. 194). Gravitating toward idealized images of athletes, athletes with disabilities make their life an endless production of “stories of overcoming.” For example, the first day of my field research, the coach reminded me to not help these athletes; otherwise, I might hurt their self-esteem. Athletes with disabilities, in some cases, behave in an extreme “independent” way to demonstrate their ableness. During my field research, one Chinese female athlete from Beijing told me:

Last time we had a tournament in Wuhan (a city in central China), I stopped eating and drinking the day before we got on the train. I don’t want to bother others to take me to the bathroom. You know, it is very crowded on the train. So, I didn’t pee in 12 hours on the train. I am proud of what I did. I hate to burden others, especially when someone is eager to offer help.

This case was very typical during my field research. Not only are some athletes with disabilities reluctant to accept any social assistance from volunteers, they also discourage their family members from showing their affection. For example, some athletes live on the second floor in an apartment building without an elevator. They insisted on climbing the stairs by themselves in front of me and their family members.

Similar to Fanon and Bhabha’s theorizings of the discursive construction of racial subject, the behavior of athletes with disabilities illustrates the coercive power that produces these culturally idealized images of able-bodiedness and elicits their

psychic faith and bodily mimicry. Trying to overcome the boundaries between disabled and able bodies, athletes with disabilities comply with compulsory able-bodiedness. However, their mimicry of the able-bodiedness can hardly gain any social validation from class, sexuality and gender perspectives. The structured able-bodiedness works in tandem with class, sexuality and gender to foreclose disabled athletes' access to the mainstream normativity, including higher social class, heterosexual marriage and ideal femininity and masculinity. These social invalidations keep eliciting a consciousness of their disabled bodies and force them to admit their disableness in spite of their "self-willed" identification with athletes.

Rather than achieving a coherent sameness with able bodies, athletes with disabilities present a "hapless doubling" (Bhabha, 1994b). The self-consciousness of their bodies and the idealized image of able bodies not only encourage them to dis-identify with their own bodies, but also lead to their fragile and incoherent subjectivities. On the one hand, they constantly speak about their ableness but cannot liberate themselves from self-negation. Their guilt to their able-bodied partners and their pride in being able to pass for able-bodied people reveals nothing but an unbridgeable lacuna between their desired image and the mirror image of themselves. On the other hand, they demonstrate an over-determined hysteria to people who tend to offer help. Living in a hegemonic space structured for people with able bodies, athletes with disabilities, no matter whether they are willing or not, have to ask for help or encounter good-intention. Even though the Paralympic Games promote an ideology of independence and transcendence of social and corporeal barriers, a fact

that cannot be denied is that the Paralympic Games are largely enabled by able-bodied people, playing roles like coach, organizer, volunteer and so on. During my field research as above, I was told by coaches and volunteers who work closely with athletes with disabilities that they are very sensitive and prone to over-react. As one volunteer says,

You just don't know what to do and what not to do. Sometimes, you try your best to be considerate to them. They often got mad at you, since you are making them feel useless. So, I only do what they tell me to do. Then they think I don't have initiative. Or even more, I am blamed for putting them in hardship on purpose.

As Eng (2001) remarks, “ the hysterical condition ... indicates the failure of the social order to produce successfully those it seeks to name and to regulate successfully those it seeks to deny” (p. 176). At the same time, this hysterical condition also highlights the ambivalent role played by athletes with disabilities, that is, shifting from hero to victim. As the hysteric symptom, Eng (2001) encourages us to explore a question regarding whether hysteria contests or conserves the dominant order of things. In the case for athletes with disabilities, it urges us to rethink the sensitive reaction by disabled athletes as an over-determined symptom by the social hierarchy of bodies or an embodied agency.

CONCLUSION

Obviously, having a disability (or disabilities) generates a significant impact on the life of individuals. From the chapter, I found that the presence of disabilities

distorts the intersectional construction of social life across various parameters, such as class, gender and sexuality. Compared with other binaries that are used to map and construct physical differences, the lacuna between able and disable bodies is more difficult to bridge in that the alternative of able-bodiedness is absolutely abnormal and deviant. We can argue that the modernist ideal privileges separation and autonomous being, and all bodies strive and fail to attain normative stability (Shildrick, 2005a). However, there are limits beyond which the body in deficit takes up the position of an unreclaimable difference (Shildrick, 2005b, p. 331).

In addition, what we can see is that people with disabilities are severely disempowered in that their structured able-bodiedness threatens their psychic and bodily existence. Different from the findings of Huang and Brittain's (2006), the result of this chapter showed that athletes with disabilities refuse to define themselves as disabled people. In an attempt to incorporate the images of able-bodied individuals, they embrace the identity of athletes to differentiate themselves from people with disability in general. However, their attempt still cannot emancipate them from the stigma of bodily deviance.

I also found that the theorizing of racial subjectivity by Fanon, Bhabha and Eng can be applied to the refusal to identify themselves as people with disabilities. Nevertheless, the solidarity emerged within minority racial groups can be hardly located within the community of athletes with disabilities. Garland-Thomson (2002) suggests that the refusal to claim disability as an identity is due to the lack of a non-oppressive language for this social group as for many racial groups. Nevertheless,

from my ethnographic study, I can barely find any initiative from disabled athletes to take standpoint politics by investing in emancipatory or resistant language and practice against their marginalized social position. Instead, they are subject to the intersectionality of power and recur to various other power dimensions to better themselves by repeating or even reaffirming the values of the able-bodied system. Therefore, we can see the tension of applying standpoint theory to understand the practices of athletes with disabilities.

Taking queer theory as a framework, I found out that the subjectivities of athletes are not as transcendental and fluid as queer theorists suggested. Instead, I want to argue that the “queerness” demonstrated by athletes with disabilities is an embodiment of the compulsory able-bodiedness (McRuer, 2002 & 2006), or a slavish mimicry of the able-bodied people. Using quotation marks here, I want to reveal that their queerness definitely has no connection to progressive or radical political projects. Even though I am not trying to take the position of blaming the victims, it is equally important to not conflate the conflicted identifications with the desired identities. In other words, we should not confuse subjection with progressive transgression. In the conclusion chapter of the “Bodies that Matter,” Butler reminds us to critically queer as an approach to achieve the possible within the impossible. Even though Butler reminds us that the “success” we can achieve is always conditional, it still implies that queering in a critical way can still afford us certain mobility within the rigid structure of power. Using my ethnographic study of disabled athletes in this chapter, I want to raise critical consciousness on various limitations of being queer between certain

binaries, in this case between able and the disable.

In addition, using the colonial and post-colonial theorizations of race in the analysis of the formation of the subjectivities for disabled athletes, I want to disclose that the identity of athletes with disabilities is neither singular nor natural, but a complex social construction through intermingled class, gendering and sexualizing strategies. Without exploring class, sexuality and gender conjunctures of athletes with disabilities, we cannot investigate the discursive formation of the identity as athletes. Just like Fuss (1993) points out,

Fanon asks us to remember the violence of identification, the material practices of exclusion, alienation, appropriation, and domination that transform other subjects into subjected others. Identification is not only how we accede to power, it is also how we learn submission (p. 14).

Therefore, we have to understand the self-identification with athletes and disidentification with people with disabilities as a hybridized subjectivity that tends to resist but finally compromises with the dominant norm. In the meantime, the hybrid result of athletes' subjectivities forces us to reconsider the political agency of the Paralympic Games. Rather than blurring the boundaries between able and disabled bodies and alleviating the marginalization of people with disabilities, the Paralympic Games reproduces the hierarchy of bodies and promotes the able-bodiedness under a disguise of cosmopolitan ideal. Even though the Paralympic Games provides limited number of disabled people an opportunity to gain media attention and better social life, the hypervisibility of athletes with disabilities facilitates us to expand our critique of

its mechanism that renders the majority of disabled people invisible and reinforces the social structure exclusively for the able-bodied. Thus, the Paralympic Games exemplifies how “both mainstream and minority, remain invested in the normative identifications, stereotypes, and fantasies that maintain the dominant social order” (Eng, 2001, p. 4). It also urges us to propose political alternatives that can truly liberate the disabled “Others” and challenge prejudiced able-bodiedness.

Chapter Eight: Janus-faced Cosmopolitanisms in/out Cyberspace: Boycott and Anti-Boycott of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games

On March 24 2008, the Olympic torch lighting ceremony was held in Greece, officially launching the XXIX Olympic Games that will be held in Beijing in August 2008. It not only announced the global torch relay, but also ignited a global protest against the Beijing Games. Following the path taken by torch relay, pro-boycott protestors converged in major cities in England, France, and the United States, and drew widespread media attention. Rather than an immediate and autonomous social movement, this global protest had been discussed, proposed and planned in cyberspace since China won the bidding for the 2008 Olympic Games.

According to Western media, following a peaceful demonstration in Tibet on March 14, the Chinese government cracked down on the demonstration with military force⁷. In response to the unrest in Tibet on March 14, the boycott of the Beijing Games went beyond cyberspace, transforming a symbolic demonstration in cyberspace to a global social movement. The torch relay for the Beijing Games suddenly became one of the global media's major headlines.

Following the turmoil in Tibet, the premier of China, Wen Jiabao, in a speech

⁷ After March 14th 2008, Western media primarily reported that the Chinese regime violently cracked down peaceful demonstration in Tibet. Regarding what happened in Tibet, the Chinese media reported it as a riot orchestrated by the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government in Exile. Most overseas Chinese tended to believe the Chinese media for two reasons: first, the Tibetan Government in exile tries to use the Olympic Games to maximize media attention; second, Taiwan was in the final stage of its 2008 presidential campaign. The Democratic Progress Party (the DPP, the pro-independence party) has ruled Taiwan from 2000 to 2008. During its ruling, the DPP tended to achieve the economic independence of Taiwan by restraining Taiwan's investment in mainland China as a means to prepare for Taiwan's independence in 2008. Nevertheless, the Kuomintang (the KMT) – the opposition party in Taiwan – had significantly led the polls because of its pro-China and neoliberal economic policies. Following the unrest in Tibet (eight days before Taiwan's final election), the KMT candidate Ma Ying-jeon was harshly criticized for his pro-China agenda and labeled as "selling Taiwan" by the DPP. Eventually, Ma Ying-Jeon only won 58% of the votes. Overseas Chinese generally believe that Taiwan's election was influenced by the turmoil in Tibet. Particularly, the unrest happened only in eastern Tibet, where the Dalai Lama has strong religious influence. To most overseas Chinese, the riot in Tibet was an organized conspiracy, attempting to jeopardize the Beijing Games and to swing Taiwan's election. The later is more disastrous because it may push the Chinese regime to use military force against Taiwan.

urged against politicizing the 2008 Olympic Games. Shortly thereafter, China's President Hu Jintao asserted that the Tibet issue was an internal affair of China. Nevertheless, the widespread international attention on the upheaval in Tibet has made the politicization of the Beijing Olympic Games inevitable. In Western countries, many media celebrities and politicians have made public statements suggesting a boycott of the Beijing Olympic Games. Meanwhile, many well-known athletes proclaimed that they would skip the opening ceremonies. Black & Bezanson (2004) ever predicted that, much like the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games, the Beijing Olympic Games may facilitate an improvement of human rights conditions and political liberation in China. Nonetheless, all the protests have demonstrated that, rather than resulting in social change in China, the Beijing Games might become another major controversy in Olympic history for triggering a movement of cosmopolitan dimensions.

OLYMPIC MOVEMENT IN HISTORY: SPORTS BEYOND POLITICS?

The official policy of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) is to keep politics out of sports. However, throughout much of the history of the Olympics, various entities have adopted sporting events as a venue to express political opinions. Rather than representing an apolitical celebration of universal humanitarian values through athletic competition, the Olympic Games have staged political and symbolic struggles "that have been manufactured in particular kinds of historical and social circumstances" (Cashmore, 2000, p. vii; also see Schaffer & Smith, 2000; Bass, 2002; Kruger, 2004). For instance, the Olympic Games during the Cold War became the tool

of two superpowers, the US and the Soviet Union, to showcase their might and promote their ideologies (Shaikin, 1988; Wagg & Andrews, 2007). The confrontation between the US and the Soviet Union led to the boycotts of 1980 Moscow and 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games. Although China was not the most prominent player of Olympic politics during the Cold War, it had never stop claiming “Sports and politics don’t mix” on the one hand, but the Olympic Games as a political battlefield on the other hand⁸(see Brownell, 2004 & 2007).

Since 1984, the Olympic Games have become commercialized media spectacles, allowing the global market to declare the final stage of human history (Jameson, 1998b; Andrews, 2006). Even though neoliberalism introduced the post-Cold War Olympic movement into its golden age by eliminating various political alternatives (Andrews, 2006), the recent global protest against the Games seems to bring us back from “the end of history” (Fukuyama, 1989) to a Cold War politics.

Nevertheless, the campaign to boycott the Beijing Games is unique in that it is the first time that a boycott of the Olympic Games has gone beyond the political conflicts between nation-states and manifests itself as a global complex involving many entities. Particularly, the involvement of individuals, which was enabled by Internet technology, makes many to believe that the Olympic political movement is no longer driven by state institutions and political elites, but has become a bottom-up transnational movement. To a certain extent, cyberspace enables protesters to

⁸ Competing to be the legitimate representative of China with Republic of China (ROC, Taiwan) in the IOC, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) only attended for the 1954 Helsinki Olympic Games. From 1952 to 1975, the ROC replaced the PRC as the representative of China in the IOC. Until 1984, the PRC rejoined the Olympic Games in Los Angeles, pushing the ROC to attend the Games as a territory of China (Brownell, 2004).

transcend geographical boundaries and become truly cosmopolitan in reach and impact.

The interpretation of cyberspace as the new public place for progressive social movements is overarched by Habermas' theory of an inclusive "public sphere." What is often deemphasized is that these spaces are almost always influenced or deliberately constructed by agents in power with concrete institutional infrastructures or discursive cultural roots. Moreover, because of its dependence on the affordability of technological infrastructure and services, access to this "public sphere" is unequal (Haywood, 1995). Thus, the expressive self in cyberspace is not a free agent but historically conditioned, class based, politically restricted individual.

The cyberspace of networks not only provides a platform for individuals' expression, but also enables the emergence of cosmopolitan politics with new characteristics – an end of geography and temporal compression (Virilio, 2000). The disappearance of distance and compressed temporality allows a universal voyeurism as well as a transnational panoptic vision (Virilio, 2000). Circulating a tremendous volume of texts and images across the world, cyberspace does not offer equal care or attention to each its passenger it carries (Virilio, 2000). The staged "virtual reality" is not a random navigation through the networks of cyberspace, but a selective "amplification of the optical density of the appearances of the real world" (Virilio, 2000, p. 14). Therefore, to critically study cosmopolitan politics in cyberspace, we need to consider these new features of cyberspace.

The emergence of cyberspace pushes the boundaries of the traditional

methodology in that it no longer requires geographical proximity for a researcher to establish interactive relationships with targeted groups. Particularly, it allows the researcher to easily establish interaction with invisible subalterns or even to construct productive dialogues with antagonistic groups (Gergen & Gergen, 2003; Wilson, 2007). The researcher can stay in a corner of the world but witness the whole process of a grand social movement. However, the tremendous amount of information also greatly challenges the traditional approaches of data collection locations, arrangements, content analysis, etc. (Hine, 2000). Therefore, the researcher must maximize his/her exposure of fragmentary information in cyberspace and to take into account different political stances (Hine, 2000).

For this chapter I have been tracing the emergence of a cyber social movement – boycotting the Beijing Olympic Games – since 2006. Witnessing the burgeoning amount of cyberspace information about the boycott, I had anticipated that a large counter force – namely, Chinese nationalism – would emerge before the Games. However, I did not anticipate that Internet technology would enable the Chinese diasporic communities to develop cosmopolitan counter force to wrestle with the worldwide boycott, producing a struggle between two breeds of cosmopolitanisms. Cyberspace for overseas Chinese allowed me to witness a worldwide movement with ethnic characteristics. In this chapter, I suggest that the cosmopolitan politics, both boycott and anti-boycott of the Beijing Olympic Games, is a representation of a global/local power conjuncture rather than a manifestation of cosmopolitan humanitarianism. The narrative of cyberspace as an autonomous and transparent

public space disguise the powers that enable this politics, and naturalize the political and economic inequalities embedded in the cosmopolitan rhetoric. Through contextualizing the historically and politically conditioned agency of different parties who participated in the global social movements and overarched by cosmopolitanisms in cyberspace and social reality, I hope to raise critical consciousness about the political complexity of cosmopolitan politics – in this case, a contest between pro-boycott and anti-boycott of the Beijing Games – for the sake of future political intervention.

THEORIZING CONTEMPORARY COSMOPOLITANISM

To explore the dynamics of the cosmopolitan politics generated in and beyond public cyberspace regarding the boycott of the Beijing Games, I borrow a theoretical framework from Ulrich Beck, Paul Rabinow, Pheng Cheah, and Bruce Robbins on cosmopolitanism to study the boycott. In his theorizing of globalization, Ulrich Beck (2000) indicates that we are experiencing a “transition from a nation-state world order to a cosmopolitan world order” (p. 83). Unlike many theorists who define the contemporary moment as postmodern, Beck (2000) asserts that we are still in a continuum of modernity that he names as the second stage of modernity. In the first stage of modernity, international law tends to maintain the order of sovereign states; in the second stage, in a cosmopolitan society, the international law of human rights “goes over [the] heads of nations and states and addresses individuals directly” (Beck, 2000, p. 84). This cosmopolitan order of human rights is dialectically manifested through two components – Western military humanitarianism and civic cosmopolitan

humanitarianism. For military humanitarianism, some Western nations, under the leadership of the United States, have initiated military actions in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq through circumventing the United Nations (UN) Charter and directly violating human rights in the name of defending human rights. Beck (2000) reminds us that this type of “human rights precedes international law” is a manifestation of a power conjuncture as well as a system of cosmopolitan morality (p. 85). For civic cosmopolitan humanitarianism, we see the emergence of the cosmopolitan “good intentions” of world citizens, often described/reported in by Western mass media and supported by an institutionalized neoliberal individualism (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). It is often manipulated by Western sovereign powers to disguise and naturalize the political and economic interests embedded in their militant projects. By giving Western individuals subjective rights and justifying individuals’ choice as the legitimate choice of the nation-states, “the cosmopolitan project both entails the national project and extends it” (Beck, 2000, p. 92).

From an economic perspective, it is unlikely for the cosmopolitan solidarity manifested in Western developed nations to end global economic inequality (Cheah, 2006a). Actually, the Western cosmopolitan vision is enabled by the economic inequality it tends to erase, because cosmopolitanism is “an ideological reflection of global capitalism” (Cheah & Robbins, 1998, p. 8). Therefore, “the transnational activities we are witnessing today are not new cosmopolitanisms but are instead aporetic cases of nationalism as given culture in a cosmopolitical force field” (Cheah, 1997, p. 160).

The “civil-military-humanitarian” (Beck, 2000) and civil-capitalist-humanitarian (Cheah & Robbin, 1998; Cheah, 2006a& 2006b) complexes are constructed through flexible political tactics and achieved through discursive transformation of the public’s subjective awareness. However, “there is no cosmopolitanism without localism” (Beck, 2002). The activities of “progressive” social movements have to connect to the nation-state and capitalist interests, either through a direct or discursive manner (Cheah, 2006a). As a response to Paul Rabinow’s (1996) call for critical cosmopolitanism, I will contextualize the global boycott against the Beijing Olympics and its counter force by articulating its political and historical conditions. Particularly, I explore how cyber-technology enables the expression of two versions of cosmopolitanisms and disguises their embedded political forces.

MAKING THE “CHINA THREAT” IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA

Rather than an issue emerging after the Cold War, identifying China as the enemy of cosmopolitan politics cannot be understood without tracing the ideological rivalry between communist and capitalist superpowers in the second half of the 20th century. Since the Sino-Soviet split in 1959, China has not stopped balancing its position between the two superpowers through playing triangular politics with the United States and the Soviet Union (Waltz, 1979). Although China established a diplomatic relationship with the United States through “Ping-Pang diplomacy” in the 1970s, the Tiananmen turmoil in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union soon resulted in China replacing the Soviet Union and surviving the Cold War fantasies

(Silk, Bracey & Falcous, 2007). In the sphere of competitive sports, following the Tiananmen incident, the presence of Team China at international sporting arenas has always been associated with the country's totalitarian regime and a tracking record of human rights violations in Western media.

Nevertheless, China's pariah political status did not prevent it from ascending to a new economic hegemony during the 1990s. In 1992, Deng Xiaoping demonstrated to the West that China could and will maintain its social stability, dedicate to economic development, and welcome investment from worldwide. Through a series of economic incentive policies, China's foreign direct investments dramatically increased by 150% from 1992 to 1993, and maintained that momentum through the 1990s (Ash & Kueh, 1996). The state-granted social stability also attracts foreign technology from the developed nations. Once a triangulation of capital, technology and China's low-cost labor is formed, it generates a powerful economic momentum, allowing China to resume the economical miracle of East Asia after the 1997 Southeast Asian financial crisis and the events of September 11 (Arrighi, 2007). Nevertheless, the double-digit figure of economic growth of China in the 1990s could not have been achieved without the US embrace of the Project for a New American Century (Arrighi, 2007). To undermine the socialist regime of the Soviet Union, the Reagan-Bush government adopted neoliberalism to strengthen US economic power. It minimized the size of its government by pulling away the power of the state over economy and giving economic autonomy to transnational corporations (Giddens 1998; Giddens 1999; Harvey, 2001; Arrighi, 2007). In the meantime, by promoting the

maximization of profits, neoliberalism led to the creation of new economic regions, which sometimes extended beyond its original state borders. To a certain extent, the Reagan-Bush neoliberal policy greatly enabled China's economic growth.

Meanwhile, a booming domestic economy, rapid urbanization, expanding export processing and domestic consumption have increased China's demand for energy and other critical natural resources (Zweig & Bi, 2005). Rather than adopting hegemonic military strategy, China meets its energy demand primarily through bilateral trade and diplomatic relations. China's crude oil imports are from Russia, Canada, Australia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Angola, Sudan, Congo, Brazil, etc. (Zweig & Bi, 2005). Among major oil importers to China, African nations establish partnerships with China for both economic and geopolitical interests – not only because China is willing to build infrastructure in African nations, but also because many African nations are politically marginalized or even suppressed by the West (Zweig & Bi, 2005).

Even though Western scholars and political observers have long identified China as a potential threat to the United States (Kristof, 1993; Huntington, 1996; Krauthammer, 1995; Bernstein & Munro, 1997), it was not until very recently that the notion of the "China threat" was re-affirmed by Washington and redistributed to the American public through the media. In 2005, the China National Offshore Oil Company (CNOOC) announced its intention to buy the US oil company Unocal. The news elicited a panic in the US Congress, blocking the CNOOC from making the bid (Arrighi, 2007). In 2008, China along with the Sovereign Wealth Funds of other Asian

and the Middle East nations further salvages investment banking behemoths from the sub-prime loan crisis. All these phenomena led Washington to adopt a new strategy to deal with the growing “China threat,” which was fed with its own neoliberal policies. However, China’s economic, political and military influences force Washington to maintain diplomatic relations with China, but to use a variety of tactics to contain China’s development and undermine its political influence.

THE TIBET ISSUE

One of the most frequently used strategies is to attack China’s human rights record; and one of most frequently addressed human rights issues is the Tibet issue. Rather than condemning the Chinese regime forthrightly, the method of pressing China is usually done more discursively and strategically. For instance, in the meeting with the Dalai Lama, in October 2007, George W. Bush praised the Dalai Lama as a “universal symbol of peace and tolerance, a shepherd of the faithful and a keeper of the flame for his people” (Retrieved from: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21320198/>). Rather than addressing the embedded power complex directly, Washington purposefully erased its political goal and paraphrased a political issue on a moral dimension. According to most Western media, the Dalai Lama is a peaceful spiritual leader of the Tibetan people against the oppression of the Chinese regime. A Hollywood movie *Seven Years in Tibet*, directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud and starring Brad Pitt, became the most tangible source for the Western audience to learn about Tibet. As a result, many Western Internet users joined the cyber campaign for boycotting the Beijing Games in the name of a “free Tibet.”

The US media tends to de-emphasize certain facts: Tibet is recognized as Chinese territory not only by the UN, but also by the majority of UN member states that have official diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. Recently, de-classified documents from the US State Department have revealed that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) provided financial support and military assistance to the Dalai Lama from the 1950s until the early 1970s (Kramer, 2006). In addition, The US regime and Western media strategically depoliticized the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government in exile by promoting a fictive public memory of Tibet. Through a politics of selective cosmopolitan remembrance, Western media romanticized Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism prior to the 1959 exile; the undeniable reality is that the pre-1959 Tibet and the Tibet in Exile have never been a Shangri-La without tension and violence (Lopez, 1998). Instead, this idealized Tibet, invoked by the Dalai Lama and further invented by the Western media, erases the historical and current violent conflicts between different sects of Tibetan Buddhism⁹. When "Tibet and the Tibetan people are portrayed as innocent sacrificial offerings immolated in the horror of the Chinese invasion and occupation" (Lopez, 1998, p. 203), what is denied is Tibet as having a materialist history and a contested political reality. When Tibetan culture and the Dalai Lama are universalized and depicted as the cosmopolitan embodiment of peace, spirituality, freedom, and passion, the political activism of "free Tibet" becomes a mirage. Not only are these generic and universal concepts socially

⁹ In *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West*, Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (1998) provides a critical account of Tibetan Buddhism. Rather than a religious singularity, Tibetan Buddhism is a juxtaposition of various sects of Buddhism. Lopez Jr. quotes a Tibetan saying to narrate the situation – each valley a different language, each lama a different dharma system. Since its exile, the Tibetan Government in exile never stopped fighting against other sects of Tibetan Buddhism for being the singular representative of Tibet.

constructed, but also it is by no means possible that these concepts can be politically materialized (Agamben, 2000; Brown, 1995).

In the meantime, through telling the one-sided and fragmentary history of Tibet, the media shows to its audience that China is a singular and inscrutable problem. Rather than study Tibet's history and its current realities, rumors, such as "the Chinese regime murdered millions of Tibetans" and "the Chinese conducts cultural genocide on Tibetans," are circulating in cyberspace. Because of the absence of institutional restrictions on cyberspace, such rumors have fully overridden the reality that Tibetans are one of the ethnical minority groups exempt from China's "One Child Policy," the growth of Tibetan population is much greater than the national average (Yan, 2000). And, Tibetans can practice their religion freely, if they do not engage in separatism.

By emphasizing the violation of human rights occurring in China, Western media's role in the underpinnings of this cosmopolitan morality suggests that China is the only spectacle deserving of everybody's political attention and righteous action. However, even the most economically developed nations cannot guarantee their citizens, particularly for the minority groups, the full human rights they promote. Western media also distracts the public attention of Western society away from the exclusion and debasement of their ethnic minorities and facilitates public unconsciousness regarding the struggles for independence elsewhere. For instance, Western media frequently gives priority coverage to China's issues and highlights the boycott and protests of the Beijing Games during the Olympic torch relay. Phrased by

Butler (2004) as a cheerleader for the Bush administration, the American media barely mention the protests around the world against the independence of Kosovo and against George W. Bush inviting Georgia and Ukraine to join NATO. When unrest in Tibet met another global media spectacle – the torch relay for the Beijing Games – an “information bomb” with maximized optical density (Virilio, 2000) was ignited, sending kinetic energy through cyberspace.

THE DARFUR ISSUE

The second strategy used by the West to contain China is to publicize “Darfur Genocide.” According to Beck’s (2000 & 2002) theorizing on the transition from an inter-state world order to a cosmopolitan world order, China has to be constructed as the *Other* at an international level because of its growing economic might and political assertiveness. The depiction of China as a violator of universal human rights pushes the international macro diplomatic struggle between the West and China to an individualist humanitarian struggle, because the imaginary China violates the moral-value system of every individual in the West. When the masses in the West form a perpetually endangered subjectivity under the discourse created by the Western nation-states and media, everybody is justified to criticize China in the name of defending sacred rights. And, the “genocide” in Darfur becomes the second most legitimate reason to boycott the Beijing Games and protest during the torch relay.

Besides securing their fictively endangered subjectivities in “risk society” (Beck, 1992), in many cases, the Western masses often use China and universal human rights discourses to secure their moral superiority. Numerous Internet users

suggest boycotting the Beijing Games because of PetroChina's economic investment in Darfur, Sudan. Showing the world a relationship between the two-billion-dollar investment by PetroChina and the religious and ethnical conflicts in Darfur, most Western Internet users do not know about the investment made by the American construction corporations in Iraq¹⁰. Mentioning China's interests in Sudan's crude oil, Western Internet users are definitely unable to picture how American politicians are using the Darfur issue for their self-interest. For instance, during the 2008 US presidential campaign, to showcase her keen diplomatic consciousness, Hillary Clinton proudly acknowledged herself as the first senator to recognize what happened in Darfur as "genocide" and to draw attention to China. On the one hand, the West wants China to keep playing the role of "world factory" to keep its inflation rate low as it did for the past two decades; on the other hand, China's seeking of energy overseas is constantly labelled as unethical. Especially, what has not been told to the American public is that "China's fear about a backlash and the potential damage to its strategic and economic relationships with the United States and Europe have prompted Beijing to put great effort into demonstrating that it is a responsible power" in the Darfur issue (Kleine-Ahlbrandt & Small, 2008, p.46). Regarding stopping the ethnical and religious conflicts in Sudan, China has played an unprecedented active role by forcing the Sudanese government to agree not to abuse military forces.

Although the US deputy secretary of state, John Negroponte comments that China has "played a pivotal role in brokering the agreement" (Kleine-Ahlbrandt & Small, 2008,

10 The United States Agency for International Development offers construction contracts to five major American companies, including Bechtel Group, Inc., Fluor Corporation, Halliburton Company, Louis Berger Group Inc., and Parsons Corporation.

p. 47), it could not stop the US media and American politicians from using the Darfur issue to stir up anti-China sentiment among the American masses. It makes American Internet users take their moral superiority for granted and play the role of cosmopolitan fighters for justice.

By taking the social inequality in the Western context as natural, these Internet users in the West are indeed defending their hegemonic regimes. With an *Other* deliberately chosen by the Western nation-states and constructed by the media, people in the West can be distracted from the (racial, gender and class) oppression and exclusion occurring within their own social context but which keeps generating what Charles Dickens (1998) called “telescopic philanthropic” attention to another continent that they have only fragmentary knowledge. Simultaneously, characterizing China as a singular spectacle and the source of a moral crisis (Chow, 1991), American politicians and the media unite “Right and Left in such a manner as to facilitate the ongoing myth of a single, undivided American culture” (Chow, 1998b, p. 99).

Although the boycott of the Beijing Games began soon after Beijing won the bid in 2001, it was highly restricted in cyberspace. In January 2008, the largest Internet search engine, Google.com, provided 63,500 matches for “boycott Beijing Olympics.” All the entries can be generally divided into three categories: from Western media and governments; from various political organizations, such as pro-Tibet independence organizations; and from individuals in their personal blogs. In addition, boycotting the Beijing Games is one of the popular topics in various on-line forums and chat rooms. In youtube.com, the largest video sharing website in the

world, numerous video clips relevant to “boycotting Beijing,” “free Tibet,” and “save Darfur” can be easily located. In many cyber discussions, Western Internet users identify the pathology of the Chinese masses by saying “most Chinese people have little willingness to demonstrate against their government in order to pressure it to change.” Portrayed as being indifferent to their human rights condition, Chinese people are excluded from the discussion of their own rights and often labeled as “commies” and “frantic Chinese nationalists.” The labeling further reveals the fact that cosmopolitanism, at least in this case, is rather a representation of sovereignty, which maintains its integrity through constant inclusion and exclusion (Agamben, 1998). A dialectical dynamic between “de-nationalization and re-nationalization” (Beck, 2000, p. 98) is going on through which a “harmonious” cosmopolitan society and its enemy – China – come into being.

After the unrest in Lhasa and eastern Tibet on March 14 2008, the boycott was no longer confined in cyberspace but widely manifested as large protests in cities that hosted the Olympic torch relay. Not only Tibetans in exile, but also Western masses who are enthusiastic to “free Tibet” and “save Darfur” participated in the protests. During a boycott of the Beijing Games during the torch relay, individuals from different countries, including the US, England, France, and many other nations, for cosmopolitan solidarities. Joining this grand movement from different parts of the world through the Internet, the political activism that protesters demonstrated transcended geographical borders.

PROTECTING THE OLYMPIC TORCH FOR CHINA

When the torch relay moved across Western nations and encountered “free Tibet” and “save Darfur” protestors, the Western media was given another opportunity to make a media spectacle and demonize China. When the Olympic torch-lightening ceremony was interrupted by activists who were waving Five Ring handcuff flags behind Beijing mayor Qi Liu, a fierce discussion regarding the Beijing Games and the torch relay was ignited in Chinese diasporic cybercommunities. The factions within these communities were evident in that some condemned the West and the Dalai Lama’s conspiracy, and others ridiculed the Chinese regime for caring only about economic development but not improving China’s human rights conditions and polishing the global image of China.

When the Olympic torch arrived at London on April 6, it had to be protected by a large number of policemen. Even though some Chinese students and ethnic Chinese people in London had organized a celebration of the Beijing Games, they were greatly outnumbered by pro-boycott protestors and barely covered by any mainstream Western media. During the torch relay in London, physical confrontation occurred between the pro-China/pro-Olympic and pro-boycott demonstrators. Angry Chinese students and ethnic Chinese in London soon started a cyber campaign, calling for protecting the Olympic torch as it traveled on the next legs of its relay journey, particularly in Paris and San Francisco. Chinese students and local ethnic Chinese in France soon responded to the call and organized a pro-China/Pro-Olympic Games demonstration. At the same time, the first large demonstration called for “condemning

Western media's distortion of China" and "celebrating the Olympic Games," was organized in Toronto, Ontario by Chinese students and local ethnic Chinese living in Canada through the Internet on April 6th 2008 (technically the second day after the torch relay in London).

At this time, the Chinese community in the US was still holding a fierce cyber debate. The fraction of the Chinese community in the US has historic roots. The majority of student protestors in 1989 Tiananmen Square immigrated to the US as graduate students or refugees, and kept challenging the Chinese regime. Compared to Chinese students in the United Kingdom, Canada, and France who pay their tuition to get education in the West, most Chinese students in the US enjoy their universities' financial support, and are often engaged in cutting-edge research in engineering and the sciences. Since most of them obtained or will obtain employment in research institutes, universities and transnational corporations, they intend to justify their upper-middle class status through meritocracy and consider themselves as superior to Chinese students in other Western nations. On the one hand, they eager to align their stance with ethnic Chinese, who use flexible citizenship to negotiate with various states and to maximize their economic gain (Ong, 1998); on the other hand, they are willing to approve themselves as the social elites of China by embracing a role of pushing China's political and economic reformation. Just as Dirlik (2004) puts it, "diasporic elites in turn have proven to be quite adept at manipulating diasporas as well as nation-states in the pursuit of status and power in global class formations" (p. 495). As a matter of fact, the establisher of the biggest Internet forum for Chinese in

the US – *Unknown Space* (www.mitbbs.com)– was a former student protestor in Tiananmen. He and a group of Chinese students at Beijing University and the Chinese Academy of Science established the first Chinese Internet forum to facilitate democratization in China. Because of Internet censorship in China, the establisher brought the server to the US when he was a Ph.D. student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Nevertheless, Chinese students who came to the US in the late 1990s and the early 2000s witnessed China’s economic miracle and its gradual political changes, as well as the disintegration of the Soviet Union. They no longer celebrate the anti-government ideology held by their earlier generation. The collapse of the Soviet Union and 1997 East Asia financial crisis made them realized that “the denationalization of the state merely serves the predatory rights of global capital” (Cheah, 2006b, p. 492), and jeopardizes economic development in China. Not only do they hold a disapproving attitude about China for embracing the shock therapy to achieve democracy, they also challenge the universal validity of the Western democracy, and are conscious about the conflicted interests between China and the West. Therefore, a battle between “traitors of China” and “frantic nationalists” is long lasting in *Unknown Space*.

In the end of March 2008, French president Nicolas Sarkozy gave a speech urging the Chinese government to hold dialogue with the Dalai Lama. Sarkozy hinted that he might refuse to attend the opening ceremony of the Beijing Games if the Chinese government failed to initiate such a dialogue. In April 7, when Paris’

Olympic torch relay was severely disrupted by the pro-boycott protestors, the Chinese organizers of the relay extinguished the torch twice in order to maintain the security. Tibetan flags and five ring handcuff flags hung outside of the city hall of Paris. Many French facilitators of the torch relay wore “free Tibet” T-shirts. One French torch bearer even carried a Tibetan badger. Pro-boycott protestors chanted “Shame on China” “Stop Killing” to the torch bearers and pro-China/pro-Olympic Games demonstrators. When Western media was still obsessed with the continuum of “free Tibet” protest against the Beijing Games, Chinese people in Paris, since they had been told by their peers in London to do so, sent pictures and video clips of the torch disruption in Paris to diasporic Chinese communities across the world on the same day of the relay.

One of the video clips and many pictures address an attractive Chinese female Paralympian (Jin Jing) wrestling with pro-boycott protestors to protect the Olympic torch. When the pictures and video clips started to circulate on the Chinese cybercommunities in the US, they soon attracted a huge number of overseas Chinese who usually are not attentive to political issues and the Beijing Games. As one Internet user spoke of the sudden politicization of his/her subjectivity in cyberspace:

I was far from being a fan of the Chinese government. I didn't support the Olympic Games, which I think is a big party held by the Chinese government for foreigners rather than for the Chinese people. But if the West wants to use Tibet issue to resume their imperialism and undermine China, I feel I have the responsible to do something. We are no longer the “sick man of East Asia!”

The rhetoric of “sick man of east Asia” reflects not only the fragile physiques of Chinese people in the past sporting competitions but also the incompetence of Chinese regimes in late imperial and the republic eras (Brownell, 2008). When the endeavor of China to embrace cosmopolitanism is prohibited by the West, a collective involuntary memory of China’s semi-colonial past – a nation-centered historiography – immediately emerged to justify political actions that conflate their cosmopolitan interests with that of the current Chinese nation-state.

On April 8th, 2008, in *Unknown Space*, topics such as “When the whole world betrays China, what should we do?” “Should we allow what happened in Paris in San Francisco again?” soon override the voices of pro-Tibet independence and anti-government groups. Autonomously, overseas Chinese in San Francisco used *Unknown Space* to organize a demonstration to welcome and protect the Olympic torch, and celebrate the Beijing Games. When they found out from the Internet that the pro-boycott activists had rented two aircraft to carry banners, some senior users of *Unknown Space* immediately launched a Paypal (e-commerce business allowing payments and money transfers to be made through the Internet) donation, in order to pay for airplanes to carry pro-Olympics/pro-China banners. Within a couple of hours, more than 20,000 US dollars were raised, and the organizers soon made an announcement to hold the donation account. After paying two aircraft for banners carrying and buying Chinese national flags, on-line discussants reached another agreement to vote for a number of pro-China/pro-Olympics Internet users who do not live in San Francisco and to use the rest of the donation for a half of their airfare to

travel to that city. Based on their seniority in *Unknown Space* and the record of their previous articulation, more than twenty users of *Unknown Space* were awarded this prize. From places as far as Atlanta, Washington D. C. and Toronto, many other users of *Unknown Space* claimed that they would travel to San Francisco and finance their own trips.

The campaign was not geographically limited to San Francisco. Chinese students and ethnic Chinese used the Internet listserv sponsored by Chinese Students and Scholars Associations at various universities and clubs to organize their travels to San Francisco overnight from places as far away as Los Angeles and Seattle to protect the Olympic torch. Chinese Students and Scholars Associations in University of Southern California, California Institute of Technology, University of California at Berkeley, Los Angeles, Irvine, Davis, and others all sent Chinese students to San Francisco by bus. Many Chinese not affiliated to these educational institutions organized carpools on the local discussion boards in *Unknown Space*.

On the same day, another major activity in *Unknown Space* was to choose “a theme” for the demonstration. Even though most forum users were sparked by biased Western media reports on China, an agreement was soon reached that the goal of this demonstration is to celebrate the Beijing Games and attract attention from the media. Therefore, besides carrying the Chinese national flags, they also decided to bring American flags as well as the banners of the Olympic Games to avoid confrontation with local Americans. Interestingly, many forum users who claim themselves as Tiananmen protestors in 1989 reminded Chinese protestors to be rational and to

engage struggles strategically. Therefore, many of them made posters on China's enthusiasm to the Olympic Games and printed color pictures of the recent attack on the Chinese Paralympian torch bearer in Paris by pro-boycott protestors.

When a large number of pro-China/pro-Olympic protestors showed up at the AT&T Park in downtown San Francisco on April 9th 2008, not only pro-boycott protestors but also reporters for Western media were shocked. Numerous Chinese demonstrators waved flags and banners with the logos such as "Beijing Olympic Games," "One World; One Dream; One China," "No politics in Olympics," "Welcome to Beijing," etc. As a Chinese Internet user from San Francisco later put it: "it was the largest Chinese party I ever attended since I came to the US, bigger than any Spring Festival parties held by the local Chinese communities! The Olympic Games bring us together!" Another Internet user commented on the power of *Unknown Space*: "I drove from Los Angeles to see the torch. I don't know anybody in San Francisco. But when someone asked me whether I was on *Unknown Space*, I suddenly felt that I was with my siblings. *Unknown Space* rocks!"

The designated route of the torch relay had been changed by the City Council to maintain security; and no physical confrontation occurred between the pro-boycott and pro-Olympic/pro-China protestors. The presence of pro-Olympic/pro-China protestors in San Francisco was deliberately downplayed by most Western media. One of the CNN's reporters even pointed to a group of pro-Olympic/pro-China protestors who were holding Chinese national flags as protesting against the Beijing Games. It further reveals the discursive power of censorship exerted by the American media.

Rather than helping the American people to understand complex interdependency of the global political community, the media becomes an extension of the state sovereignty.

Due to the media sanitization, before the torch lighting ceremony, few Chinese in mainland China realized that pro-boycott groups had demonstrated in front of most Chinese embassies in Western nations and the UN headquarters in New York. Since late March, many overseas Chinese in the US and Europe had started to post pictures in the most popular cyber forum in mainland China– *Tianya Club*. During the torch relay in San Francisco, several Chinese at *Tianya Club* were conducting live reports on the torch relay to Internet users in mainland China. From *Tianya Club*, the information was further distributed to Chinese diasporic communities across the world. After the San Francisco relay, many of the pro-China/pro-Olympic protestors published and circulated their experiences on the Internet. Furthermore, they called for a campaign of “global torch protection” to diasporic Chinese communities in cities that would host the torch relays. In Buenos Aires, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Canberra, Nagano, and Seoul, Chinese students and ethnic Chinese were soon mobilized through local chat rooms and Internet discussion boards, to protect the torch from being interrupted by the pro-boycott protestors. As a result, pro-China/pro-Olympic protestors have largely swamped the pro-boycott protestors at the torch relay legs that followed.

After April 9, the emphasis of Chinese students and ethnic Chinese in North America has shifted from torch protection to large scale demonstration against

Western media distortion and the celebration of the Beijing Games. Large gatherings have been organized in Seattle, Los Angeles, Chicago, Atlanta, Houston, Ottawa, Vancouver, Boston, Salt Lake City, New York City and elsewhere. On the campuses of many American universities, including University of Michigan, University of Southern California, Duke University, University of Texas at Austin, Harvard University, Yale University, University of Pennsylvania, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, State University of New Jersey, University of Illinois, John Hopkins University and many others, Chinese students organized activities to celebrate the Beijing Games or hosted workshops on the history of Tibet. These campaign organizers use Internet listserv or mailing lists to share their experiences of organizing workshops and educational materials, including pictures, posters, academic books and PowerPoint presentations. Chinese students and local ethnic Chinese communities also used local Internet forums to organize assemblies in London, Paris, Berlin, Manchester, Frankfurt, Sydney and Auckland to condemn Western media for demonizing China as well as to celebrate the Beijing Games. When Chinese students and ethnic Chinese started to realize that the Western mainstream media barely gave any coverage to their protests, they adopted tactics from the pro-boycott campaign, using the Internet to make themselves visible. Responding to a call for “waging a perpetual guerrilla war in youtube.com,” many uploaded self-made video clips to youtube.com to express their anger towards the bias of Western media against China. Made by a Chinese Canadian, a video clip - “Tibet WAS, IS, and ALWAYS WILL BE a part of China” – was uploaded to youtube.com in late March. By the beginning of

May, this video clip has received more than 210, 000 comments, placing it the third place as the all time “most discussed” video.

When the Chinese diasporic communities use the Internet to organize various pro-Olympic/pro-China campaigns, Internet users in mainland China have realized that the rosy image of “One world; One dream” painted by Chinese mainstream media was fabricated. Even though hosting the Olympic Games has attracted domestic criticism on issues such as compulsory relocation, restriction of driving private cars to reduce pollution, corruption and high investment in sporting facilities, the enthusiasm of Chinese youth to the Beijing Olympic Games has been phenomenal. For instance, across the nation, more than 960,000 citizens participated in nationwide competition, fighting for 11,534 seats of the Olympic torch bearers (Retrieved from: www.i-olympic.com/Torchbearer_selection_process_basically_complete-c_28-pc_2-p.html). The Beijing Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (BOGOG) announced that it needs 150, 000 volunteers for the Games. During the first day of public volunteer recruitment, the BOGOG received more than 150, 000 on-line applications from Beijing citizens. Overall, more than 150, 000 college students in Beijing applied to be volunteers for the Olympic or Paralympic Games. To most Chinese youth, hosting the Olympic Games to Beijing is not only invitation for China to join in the global cultural mainstream, but also to provide them an approach to possess cosmopolitan subjectivity.

When overseas Chinese sent pictures and video clips regarding how pro-boycott protestors interrupted the Olympic torch relay in London, Paris and San

Francisco, a cyber-nationalism was soon stirred in mainland China. Stories, pictures and video clips of how overseas Chinese protected the Olympic torch and fought against media distortion were widely circulated in various domestic websites, online discussion groups, and on-line chat rooms. *Tianya Club* and *Sohu Network* (one of the most popular commercial websites in China), soon started a cyber campaign, calling Chinese people to donate Chinese national flags, Beijing Olympic flags and other pro-Olympic banners for pro-China/pro-Olympics protestors overseas. Because a pro-boycott protestor physically attacked Paralympican torch bearer Jin Jing during the Paris relay, and the Paris city Council awarded the title of honorary citizen to the Dalai Lama, Chinese Internet users called for a nationwide boycott of French products, particularly targeting the French retail giant – Carrefour. A rumor that Carrefour Corporation sponsored pro-boycott protestors further heated this Carrefour boycott. Millions of Chinese Internet users changed their MSN and QQ (a Chinese equivalence of MSN messenger) names to “support the Olympic Games; boycott Carrefour” and sent cell phone text messages to each other. During April 2008, in several cities in China, including Wuhan, Hefei, Changsha, Qingdao and Zhuzhou, thousands of protestors gathered in the front of Carrefour supermarkets to boycott the company and celebrate the Beijing Games. Some young protestors even held a portrait of Mao Zedong and hoped to send a message to the current Chinese regime that they want a more politically assertive government like the one that existed under Mao. By the end of April 2008, “Carrefour” has been censored by the Chinese government from all Chinese Internet search engines to bring the nationalistic mania under control.

A PROGRESSIVE ETHNICAL COSMOPOLITANISM?

This set of events provides an occasion for an exploration of the new politics of Olympic movement and the formation and articulation of cosmopolitanism with Chineseness in cyberspace. Even though it is not the first time the diasporic community used cyberspace to extend their political agenda and organize assembly (see Ong, 2003; Landzelius, 2006), it is definitely the first time that a large Chinese diasporic Internet-based movement is directly triggered by an Olympic sporting event. Through the Internet, the migrant Chinese communities generated an unprecedented influence on the domestic politics of mainland China. The geographical displacement of diasporic communities, which was often associated with political inability, can no longer restrict diasporic Chinese communities from embracing political activism on both national and global dimensions. Through circulating information in cyberspace, their political engagement transcends the boundaries delineated by the nation-states; their political actions enabled by Internet technology also “engendered a yearning for a new kind of global ethnic identification” (Ong, 2003, p. 88). One Chinese protestor in US remarks in *Unknown Space*: “we wanted to host the Olympic Games for the world. If they don’t want us to host a successful event for the world, let’s unite together and make the Games a party for Chinese in the world!” This type of assertion clearly reveals a desire of overseas Chinese to embrace cosmopolitanism through the Beijing Games (Brownell, 2008) and a determinant “domestication of cosmopolitanism by way of renegotiating China’s place in the world” (Rofel, 2007, p.111). Although cosmopolitanism is often presented as an entirely new conjuncture

or a universality without any local cultural attachment, the recently manifested cosmopolitanism with Chineseness works as a spatial mediator between China and the West as well as a temporal arbiter between China's semi-colonial past and its capitalist present. It also reveals the multiplicity of cosmopolitanisms.

Like the cosmopolitan politics calling for boycott of Beijing Games, the widely manifested cosmopolitanism with Chineseness is far from being politically progressive. Regarding the "global torch protection," many overseas Chinese commented:

Although Western media tries to brainwash us, what can't be changed is that we are always proud of being Chinese, and we are always critical to the West. The West tries to use the Olympic torch to torch China, but ends up unite Chinese people across the world. Thirty years of Open Door policies, Western media only makes Chinese people more Chinese than ever before!

From these comments, we can clearly discern that the cosmopolitan Chineseness is highly volatile, and the globally manifested ethnic identity through the recent cyber movement should not make us to assume overseas Chinese a unified and progressive diasporic community (Ong, 2003). Playing the role of "righteous" third party between the East and the West, overseas Chinese portrayed their culturally rooted cosmopolitanism as a political ideal and normalize new forms of inequality embedded in this cosmopolitanism with Chineseness. Overseas Chinese claim that the nationalistic fever they demonstrated is completely autonomous and cosmopolitan, since it is not orchestrated by the totalitarian Chinese regime. But the nationalist fever

they ignited in China has surely been employed by the Chinese regime to justify its legitimacy and fend off criticism. Moreover, their cosmopolitanism with Chineseness cannot be achieved without their geopolitical dislocation from China. Nevertheless, “spatial freedom and movements we associate with diasporas and market-driven mobilities are no guarantees of the spread of human rights” (Ong, 2006b, p. 242). Exempted from the power of the Chinese nation-state that forces the Chinese masses to give up their political life and invest in caring their biological life, overseas Chinese tend to ignore a fact that the economic development in China coexists with severe social inequities. When they used the Internet to denote cosmopolitanism with Chineseness on both local and global level, the 0.8 billion mainland Chinese who do not have access to the Internet were silenced. As a Chinese Internet user in the US lamented, “When we overseas Chinese confront Western media’s distortion of China, we simply dismiss injustice and inequalities in China.”

In addition, the cosmopolitanism with Chineseness that overseas Chinese express in cyberspace is overarched by a particular version of historical memory of China – namely the semi-colonial past of China. The collective memory of China’s humiliating past is embraced and reworked to constitute “a specific moral interpretation of the past” (Unger & Chan, 2007, p. 133). Their memories of “having been materially deprived contributes to their moral discourse of having earned favored treatment in the present day” (Unger & Chan, 2007, p. 133). The type of moral economy is fully embodied through a poem “My friends, what do you want from us?” which has gained tremendous popularity in Chinese cyber communities

since the Olympic torch relay started.

When we were called sick man of Asia, we were called the Yellow Peril.
When we are billed to be the next superpower, we are called the China Threat.
When we were closed our doors, you smuggled opium to open markets.
When we embrace free trade, you blame us for taking away your jobs.
When we were falling apart, you marched in your troops and wanted your
“fair share”...
And piece by piece we put our nation together again,
all of a sudden, “Free Tibet” you screamed, “it was an invasion!”...
When we tried Communism, you hated us for being communists
When we embrace Capitalism, you hate us for being capitalists...
When we buy oil, you called that exploitation and genocide.
When you fight for oil, you called that liberation...
When we were silent, you said you want us to have free speech.
When we were silent no more, you say we were brainwashed-xenophobics...
Enough is enough, enough hypocrisy for this one world.
We want One World, One Dream, and peace on Earth.
This big blue Earth is big enough for all of us.

Later, a video clip was composed based on this poem and widely circulated in and out of China. Not only has it justified any conduct of the current Chinese regime in the name of maintaining China’s territorial integrity, it also uses the Western capitalistic imperialism to legitimize China’s active participation in global capitalist exploitation (Wang, 2003). Juxtaposing China with the West, particularly on how to acquire crude oil, the author deliberately portrays a passive, innocent and victimized China, plea for its “One World, One Dream” Olympic ideal. Through playing “discrepant cosmopolitanism” (Clifford, 1992), overseas Chinese tend to disguise China’s “success at climbing the competitive hierarchy of international division of labor and maintaining its position there” (Cheah, 2006b, p. 495). Therefore, rather than deconstructing the Chinese nation-state, overseas Chinese serve to extend the power of the nation-state and contribute to “the ethnicization and racialization of

politics globally” (Dirlik, 2004, p. 500).

CODA

Briefly contextualizing the boycott of the Beijing Games and tracing the whole trajectory of the anti-boycott of the Games from virtual to social reality, I suggest that both versions of cosmopolitanisms represent a global/local power conjuncture rather than a manifestation of transcendental humanitarian ideals. On the one hand, the worldwide boycott is not an interest-free cosmopolitan social movement (Beck, 2000 & 2002; Cheah, 1997& 2006). On the other hand, the anti-boycott manifests a desire of Chinese diasporic communities to project their cosmopolitanism with Chineseness (Rofel, 2007). “Cosmopolitanism is constituted differently, and thus through exclusions that return to haunt its politics” (Rofel, 2007, p. 113). Therefore, we should promote a critical cosmopolitanism – “an ethos of macro-independencies with an acute consciousness ... of the inescapabilities and particularities of places, characters, historical trajectories and fate” (Rabinow, 1996, p. 56) – and examine how the cosmopolitan rhetoric is justified and sustained with concealed political and economic interests in and out of cyberspace.

As a place where multiple cosmopolitanisms are staged and contested, cyberspace should be taken by sport sociologists and physical cultural scholars as a significant location for academic studies and political engagement (Wilson, 2006 & 2007). We have witnessed how the Internet technology creates media miracles, but sends other information into exile. Even though some rumors or distorted information keep circulating in cyberspace, we can barely put them under constraint. Another

phenomenon I noticed in this cyber cosmopolitan politics is that the more emotionally appealing and generic the cyber articulations are; the more attention or responses they received. For instance, the suggestion of establishing constructive dialogues between the East and the West, no matter by the Chinese or the Western Internet users, were often dismissed. Logical arguments and rational political engagement are often discouraged in cyberspace for the limited attention that Internet users can give. For example on youtube.com, the discussions of video clips relevant to the boycott almost become an ideological battle between “commies” and “imperialists.” Thus, the play of identities in cyberspace also distorts the political transparency, interrupts the political rationality, diminishes political investment (Benhabib, 1995; Dean, 2001), and reduces global political complexity to a dichotomous Black-or-White fallacy. These characteristics of cyber politics make cyberspace far from the ideal public sphere proposed by Habermas.

The flaws of these cosmopolitan projects in this chapter raise a question regarding how to build cross-cultural communication in the virtual age for the common good, particularly through global sporting events. Therefore, we should be conscious of the historical trajectory of cosmopolitanism and how universalistic rhetoric has shaped our subjective consciousness and preconditioned the way we enter interpersonal politics in cyberspace.

The boycott of the Beijing Olympic Games has elicited similar cyber activism for boycotting the Vancouver and London Games for different political motives. It further urges us to develop cross-cultural languages and free our

personalized politics from the rigid structure of cosmopolitan rhetoric in both virtual and secular realities through global sporting events.

Chapter Nine: Afterword: Making China Cosmopolitan?

After the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, many friends of mine in China updated their MSN Spaces. Some of them closely involved in preparation for the Games; others worked for various media agents. One of them works for the CCTV Olympic Channel (the sport channel), covering all gymnastics related sporting news. She documented her feelings during the Beijing Games in details.

Before the Games, she wrote:

I went to the media center today. I think all the senior gymnastics reporters have to agree, this is the best we ever have. Best layout, best equipment, and best volunteers. The gym is beautiful. Such a beautiful gym should be used to witness triumph. I can't wait any more... They (foreign reporters) will be shocked, and they will remember it.

During the Games, she wrote:

I have worked with gymnastics for eight years. Today, I experienced the most exciting and emotional moment in my career. The first time, in China's history, we won the Olympic (women's) team gold! When they (Chinese female gymnasts) were on apparatuses, my hands were shaking, and my tears were pouring... From my angle, they are so tiny that I'm almost afraid that their supple bodies can't bear the pressure. But, they delivered!

When Cheng Fei (a world-class gymnast from China) concluded her floor exercise, the audience was exploding! In a gym that can accommodate thousands of audience, I couldn't find any vacant seat. Red flags were

waving in front of my eyes... I want to say “thank you” to everyone, the gymnasts and the audience. Thank you for doing this for China... Thank you for doing this for me.

After the Games, she wrote:

After the closing ceremony, I left the Bird’s Nest. Watching the fireworks, I couldn’t help myself from screaming. Yes, I behaved like a kid, screaming with tons of people surrounding me. I still can’t believe the Games is over. I was so much occupied by it, as if my life is all about the Games. Walking towards the Metro, I asked my friends whether they feel nostalgic. “Surely do!” they told me.

In the past weeks, I sensed another side of me – emotional and hysterical. I sometimes doubted the mineral water I drank was actually energy drink. The self was no longer the small self I was familiar with. It has been enlarged by millions of times. Like a hot balloon. The feeling was fantastic but certainly had some side-effects. Now, I feel extremely exhausted...

Her self-narrative was very representative, not only for Chinese people who experienced the Games in Beijing but also for many who watched the Games via TV and internet. During the Games, a new record was made in the *Unknown Space*. Four months after the record set by *San Francisco* board on April 9th 2008, when overseas Chinese organized Pro-China/Pro-Olympic demonstrations, *the Olympic Games* became the most popular board, and set a new record with 3867 users visiting the board at the same time. Inside and outside of China, the Beijing Games truly become

a thread waving in people's life and bonding them together.

For me, the feeling attached to the Games is much heavier and more complicated than nostalgia. By tracing the Beijing Games, I kept having new understandings of the city, the nation, the peoples and myself. It often confuses me whether I was discovering a new side of me or the subjective self I was familiar with has been changed during the process of exploration.

Widely known, the Beijing Olympic Games were used by the Chinese state to justify its authority and reinforce its prominent position in the global world. However, the Games is not just a means for the state to reach its ends. In my dissertation, I have shown that the Beijing Olympic Games has become a venue through which Chinese people develop cosmopolitan consciousness, project their desires and fulfill self-interests. In the meantime, the Beijing Games also became a site where new East-West dichotomy is constructed in a global context. The Beijing Games that the state, the peoples and the West have tied together from intellectual debates, public protests, identity struggles, and musical expression manifests itself as a global conjuncture.

The discourse of protecting the Old Beijing promoted architectural Chineseness, while the subjectivities of the advocates were indeed heavily mediated by the West. Those foreign visitors who have recognized the value of the Old Beijing debated and negotiated how to protect the city for the interests of tourists and the residents. They actually contributed to the dramatic change occurring in the city. New comers of the city learned how to possess ownership of the city through housing

consumption. As a counter-force, old Beijingers adopted strategies to make urban subjectivity exclusively for them by constructing a certain version of history. Folk song Jasmine was constantly chosen by the state to embody Chineseness on global stage to imply a twisted nationalistic sentiment. Athletes with disabilities alleged their identification with athletes rather than people with disabilities. Oversea Chinese protected the Olympic torch for China and insisted to host an Olympic Games only for Chinese in the world. Each of these allegorical images, with disparate quality, demonstrates the tension between the West, the Chinese state, and the peoples. By participating in the power conjuncture of the Beijing Olympic Games, they were brought together and became a cultural entity.

Forming a cultural entity called the Beijing Games does not prevent them from facing ambivalence. For Chinese people, the Beijing Games brought them a compelling and ambivalent challenge: what it means to be Chinese in this global world, and where they should position China in this global system? Globalization is an ongoing process of fraught cultural encounters that are inherently unstable. Only by tracing the historical contingency and mapping the on-going dynamics of these encounters can we possibly interpret the paradoxes presented by these allegorical images. Throughout the process of interpreting these allegorical images, I not only engaged critiques of neoliberalism and nationalism, but also scrutinized various identity projects shaped by the on-going globalization. In the pre-Olympic Games times, what are the meanings and practices of being a cosmopolitan Chinese in this global world? It was the question I try to explore by having dialogues with others, and

the question I constantly asked myself. It seems the Beijing Games has offered an answer.

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By the end of year 2008, many of my Chinese friends added a blog entry called “My 2008.” Similar writings, reviewing the eventful 2008 and looking forward to 2009, prevailed on the internet. Regardless lengths, genres and contents, most writings addressed following events: Tibet riot in March, the Olympic torch relay in April, Sichuan earthquake in May, the military conflicts between Russia and Georgia, the Beijing Game in August, poisonous infant formula in September, and financial crisis in October. Taking a deeper look, it is not a writing about one’s personal experience but one’s subjective interpretation or recording of the turbulent contexts. As the peoples, they sometimes are no longer just being a counter-force or resistance against the state or the West as subalterns. For instance, the Chinese state used the Beijing Olympic Games to reinforce its state sovereignty; its people, however, use the Games to acquire global subjectivities. Sometimes, the people form alliance with the state or the West; other times, they are involved in the power negotiations and give up their self-interest involuntarily.

In their blogs, they wrote about themselves as if they totally ignored the tension between the state, the West and themselves. They are writing as if they are China; they are writing as if they are the world. Although they are limited by their context and confined by various power-constructed identities, they still can form cosmopolitan imagination. This type of transcendence could be a sign of hope for a

cosmopolitan community to come into being.

Does this type of emerging cosmopolitan subjectivity indicate a political possibility anticipated by Sassen (1995) that the People/peoples eventually adopt global economic and political citizenship built upon transnational political institutions and economic agencies? I would say, probably not. Does it anticipate that peoples can finally escape various traps and confines of identity politics by going beyond various constructed differences and embracing cosmopolitanism? It is possible that this question will be resolved in practice before it is resolved in theory. Will the cosmopolitan subjectivities lead China toward its proper place in a globalized world (Rofel, 2007)? Maybe.

I want to borrow a verse from Gu Cheng to conclude my dissertation: Dark nights give me dark eyes, but I shall use them to seek light.

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