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SCREENING MODERNITY AT SHANGHAI TELEVISION STATION:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF GLOBALIZATION, MEDIA,
AND CULTURAL IDENTITY-MAKING IN LOCAL CONTEXT

by

EDWARD TAD BALLEW

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Anthropology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of
New York

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Date

Vincent Bragagnolo
Chair of Examining Committee

January 30, 2002
Date

Wesley D. Lumb
Executive Officer

Professor Jane Schneider

Supervisory Committee

Professor Uradyn E. Bulag

Supervisory Committee

Professor Faye Ginsburg

External Reader

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

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Adviser: Professor Vincent Crapanzano

Combining interviews, participant observation, documentary research, and textual analysis, and this project examines the work of television producers at Shanghai Television Station in the negotiation of Chinese cultural identity generally and the construction of Chinese modernity specifically. A case study of the local experience of the cultural dimensions of globalization, this study explores how these cultural commentators employ the new medium television in the age-old yet ever-urgent task of making China modern, of constructing what scholars in transnational cultural studies have called an 'alternative modernity.' Related issues addressed include the nature of an emergent public sphere in China and the role of media in negotiating cultural identity in global context. Findings suggest that while locally constructed modernities are variously alternative, it is important to consider the

limits to such alterity in specific ethnographic contexts. Due to the technical and creative conventions of this imported medium, and to the cultural power of the rhetoric and symbolism of western modernity, STV television producers reproduce, for literally hundreds of millions of people daily, many of the cultural artifacts of precisely that version of modernity at the heart of global capitalism. Thus while China's emergent public sphere may occasion variously oppositional practice in relation to the state, it is also often a site of effectivity of the hegemonic ambitions of global capitalist culture. This thesis demonstrates then the importance of recognizing the relativity of resistance in ethnographic detail in studies of globalization and alternative modernities.

To my daughter

Theodora Ellin Ballew

whom "Oh! I love"

And to the memory of my grandfather

Robert Coleman Ballew (1910-1998)

who first taught me about centers and peripheries

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INTRODUCTION

Ethnographies are questionable representations unless they show their own genesis.

Johannes Fabian (1990)

You may ask yourself, "Well, how did I get here?"

David Byrne/Talking Heads (1984)

It's scary because we're going to change the way these people act and feel and think.

Lorimar-Telepictures executive on programming deal with STV

(Harmetz 1988)

Marginalities created both inside and outside the academy are interconnected.

Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing (1993)

Satellites are out tonight.

Laurie Anderson (1982)

Johannes Fabian must be exactly right about ethnographies and genesis, and this statement has always

seemed a succinct and useful capture of the spirit of western ethnographic anthropology in recent decades, particularly since the pronouncement that it had entered its "experimental moment." Showing the genesis is surely what ethnographers ought to do, even if they didn't, as I did, start graduate studies the year after publication of those influential statements on the matter, *Writing Culture* and *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*.¹

The question of how much genesis, however, can be especially vexing. It calls to mind that clever commercial for Honda some years back on US television, where Jack Lemmon overvoices the narrative of all the things that had to happen, some centuries ago and far away, in order for our consumer hero, the Honda motorist, to land in a midtown Manhattan traffic jam trying to get to an art opening. At what point do your representations of ethnographic genesis suffice to make the rest of your ethnographic representations not questionable? It is a challenging and optimistic "unless." I think its heart is in the right place though. Thus:

Engaging "Electrovision,"² Velocity High (Standard)

This whole thing started with a particular moment of more or less generalized hermeneutic failure, or at least

doubt; in any case a moment of unfinished-ness, incompleteness. Of course that is not entirely true. Of course, in truth, it is also redundant, as a basic, core condition. For humans anyway.

This particular ordinary moment of fuzziness, however, came during primetime on a warm Saturday evening in Shanghai, October, 1988. It mostly involved the legendary mischief of the Monkey King and a positively Bad Act on TV. Several humans were perplexed. I for one just couldn't figure it very well at all, or at least couldn't make much of the figuring stick. Of course not. Though it wasn't for lack of effort, some of it reasonably anguished.

It was the evening of the long-awaited live broadcast of the "Opening Ceremony" variety show of the 1988 Shanghai International Television Festival, the STVF, widely promoted and publicized in previous weeks throughout the Shanghai signisphere on billboards, buses, and broadsides of buildings, as well as in TV, radio and print advertising, in ancillary news-coverage publicity of related technical and programming trade shows already underway, and even in a popular lottery tie-in. It was early in my first research stay in Shanghai, where I had gone to begin exploring two aspects of the rapidly growing Chinese television, film, and advertising worlds: their

role in China's official project to increase interaction with the outside world, and their local employment in the making and remaking of Chinese cultural identities, especially those surrounding the tropes of "modernity."

I was living with the wonderful family of Huatie,³ my friend and grad-schoolmate back in New York. They were: my friend's father and mother, Agong and Apo, a Moscow-trained chemist and pharmacist, respectively; his sister, Huafei, an aircraft manufacturing technician; her chemist husband, Lan; their two year-old son, Xiaobao; and a young hardworking live-in nanny from a tiny village in Anhui province, Xiao Huang. These people most graciously opened their home to me, taught me a great deal about China and urban life in Shanghai, and, among innumerable other kindnesses, let me watch TV with them.

The whole household is here for the "Opening Ceremony." We're all in the bedroom of Agong and Apo, where the household's Japanese color TV set lives too. It is disrobed now of its red velour slipcover and nice white doily, and beaming. Huafei and Agong are engaging the screen in part through little Xiaobao, who's romping on the floor. Xiao Huang has some knitting. Lan and Agong have newspapers. I have a notebook and pen, high hopes, and gratitude for much good fortune.

The "Opening Ceremony" variety show is definitely living up to the ubiquitous STVF publicity promise of providing "A Window on the World!", of offering the people of Shanghai and beyond an opportunity to "Go Out Toward the World!", giving all indication that the following week's daily screenings of international TV shows will make this a lively and spectacular window indeed.

First up on the brightly lit, neon-heavy stage, live from the main Shanghai TV Station (STV) soundstage, a well-known female pop star from Hongkong sings the popular theme song from *Shanghai Tan*, the Hongkong-produced smash hit serial aired on STV three years prior, set in pre-revolutionary (pre-1949) Shanghai. The show's title, which means "The Bund," refers to the iconic riverfront stretch of nineteenth-century European architecture along Shanghai's Huangpu River, built mainly by European opium merchants. My housemates know the song well. Huafei and Apo recall how the show sparked a craze among Shanghai youth for the fashions of the era, when Shanghai was dubbed by some the "Paris of the Orient," "the Paradise of Adventurers," and so forth.⁴

It is an interesting and complicated performance, generic conventionality aside, expressing such historical twists and connections as: the Bund and Hongkong alike as

architectural and geopolitical artifacts of the unsavory Opium Wars of the mid-nineteenth century; colonial subjects of the latter metonymizing Shanghai as the former in the 1980s, romancing Shanghai audiences with its televised representations of this ambivalent heyday, now performing live, in encore; Hongkong becoming a world city only after Shanghai capitalists arrived, in flight from the Communists, in the late-1940s; and so on. A rich opening ceremony already.

And getting richer: Next on the unchanged stage-set, but now against the distinctive sounds and rhythms of traditional Chinese opera, comes the STVF mascot, whose charming cartooned image has accompanied much of the STVF publicity palette throughout the city these past weeks. Bouncing onto the stage, it's the legendary Monkey King, "transformed for television!", sporting a sweatshirt emblazoned with "STVF," and wielding a faux video camera. This iconic figure from the classic sixteenth-century Chinese novel, *Xiyou Ji*, or *Journey to the West*, is tonight doing battle with sundry monster-creatures onstage, characteristically teasing, taunting, playful and unfazed by their blows, just as he appears in the wonderful novel, where he serves as the mischievous, shrewd and magically protective companion of Xuan Zang ("Tripitaka" in some

renderings), the seventh-century Chinese monk selected by Bodhisattva Guanyin to make the pilgrimage to India for sacred Buddhist scriptures to take back to the Chinese emperor.⁵ But tonight he is live in primetime. And apparently catching it all on videotape.

This rich romp, spanning centuries and technologies, is then followed by a Russian "jazz singer," a shoe-in for Poster Man of anything like an Englebert Humperdink School of Coiffure, Loungewear, and Chest-Hair someone might want to start up. He sings a pop hit, then emotionally launches into "Russia, My Mother." Smiling wistfully, Agong gets nostalgic, between wipe-ups of a Xiaobao spill. He recalls his student days in Moscow and remarks how rarely they now get to see Russian performers, given the cooler relations between the former communist allies.

Shanghai's most famous ballerina, Wang Qifeng, follows the patriotic Russian, leading dancers from the Shanghai Ballet in a scene from "Nutcracker Suite." I try to keep track of the global cultural interflow, success limited. Whence, exactly, "Nutcracker Suite," and how did ballet get to Shanghai?

Next up is a sixteen year-old Japanese songstress. In presumably exaggerated juvenile voice, she sings a pop number marked by little that is identifiably Japanese save

the language, which is nonetheless punctuated by the title lyric, "Lady in Love," sung in breathy English.

She is followed by a celeb-ensemble of Chinese pop singers in the increasingly popular "We Are the World" mode. They sing a medley of songs from the nations participating in the STVF. Our home audience tries half-heartedly to determine the nationality of the various songs. Xiaobao is encouraged to dance and sing along. Apo wants to know if there's a *gushi pian* ("story program"—a movie, or serial drama) coming up. Xiao Huang has returned to her knitting. Talk begins about a famous Japanese *huaqiao* ("overseas Chinese") pop star scheduled to appear: celebrity gossip and speculation; will she sing this song or that song?; etc. Agong has been behind the newspaper since the baby-talk teenager came on, but suddenly wonders aloud, amidst the conjecture about the upcoming Japanese *huaqiao* star: "So, did she get that divorce yet?"

Accompanied by a nervous young translator not quite up to the task, next onstage comes Catherine Deneuve, the STVF's Honorary Panelist. I recall catching a star-struck glimpse of her regal-ness a few days earlier when her chauffeured sedan passed me by on a street, and how it drastically raised the bar on my constant efforts not to cause, or be, a cycling fatality. Now, as then, I note the

locale of her appearance, the former French Concession of old Shanghai, "Paris of the Orient," and wonder whether some familial history may have been part of the attraction for her participation here this week. In any case she expresses her warm translated wishes to the STVF, and then introduces the next act. It is a very talented Russian comedy duo doing a language-transcending pantomime act, which nonetheless draws only faint applause from the studio audience, despite the augmenting noise-makers.

Next up are two, um, notable, singing acts from the US, the fresh-faced "West End Boys," and "a famous American folk singer," to which I'll return below. They are followed, in turn, by a Chinese acrobatic troupe doing positively astonishing tricks, accompanied by nothing less than elephants, and a horn-playing panda being pulled in a wagon by a motorcycle coughing up dark exhaust all over the stage (I think more than one of us coughed in sympathy for the studio audience).

Finally comes the much-anticipated Japanese *huaqiao* (again, Chinese-Japanese) pop star. She performs her first number, then ratchets up the drama in introducing her second as a song written by her beloved father. With further emotion she tells how pleased she is to finally visit her parents' native home, and adds her heartfelt

"prayer that the world can unite in love, happiness and peace." She sings again, then dramatically exits, while an overvoice comes on, for the first and only time during the show, to remark how "moving and important" her performance had been. The taut ambivalence in Sino-Japanese relations—tacking between horrified collective memory of Imperial Japanese Army atrocities against civilians in Shanghai and other Chinese cities during the Resist-Japan War (a.k.a., World War II),⁶ on one hand, and on the other the ineluctable allure, in the present context of post-Mao reforms, of Japanese capital and technology—would reappear frequently throughout my times in Shanghai. It is an especially densely meaningful interchange, at several levels.

For the "Opening Ceremony" finale, a local choir sings a medley of western choral numbers in Chinese, which solicits decidedly mixed reviews from our home viewers. They are soon joined by local dancers and balloon-toting children for a performance of the STVF theme song, whose chorus repeats, "My STVF, A Window on the World!"

Finally, it's applause, bowing, waving, end of show, and CUT TO: the long string of commercials, starting with Japanese VCRs and camcorders, ending with Chinese footwear.

Reading Electrovision, Literacy Low (Standard)

Now then. What part of this did not engender hermeneutic failure? Surely none, of course, strictly speaking. But it was the two singing acts from the US, especially the second one, along with the dense antics of the Monkey King, that together produced the most memorable perplexity and reflection for me, and provide a usable "window on the world" of this ethnographic genesis.

The first US entry in this globo-variety show, the "West End Boys," had come out following the Russian pantomime duo. A wholesome-looking trio with acoustic guitars, they simply covered John Denver's "Take Me Home, Country Road," surely the first-learned English-language pop song for millions of Chinese, courtesy of John Denver's early-1980s Chinese tour and his earlier performance before then-Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping at the Kennedy Center in Washington during Deng's historic first visit to the US in 1979.⁷ The West End Boys' rendition was unexceptional enough, even flatly pedestrian, something you might catch accidentally at an outer-suburban bar or interstate truck stop, US Midwest,⁸ but apart from that nothing overly remarkable, especially compared to the other acts this evening.

It was different with the second act, "the famous American folk singer," as it was introduced. This was the Bad Act. It just wasn't anything else. My "judgment of taste" regarding this Bad Act, however tradition-governed and necessarily provisional,⁹ at the very least prompted the query, with a wink to David Byrne/Talking Heads and every ounce of their bafflement: *My God, how did this get here?* I mean, Catherine Deneuve was on this stage. Chinese acrobats were on this stage. The Russian pantomime comics, the horn-blowing panda, the Russian Englebert, the Chinese-Japanese pop star...the Monkey King was on this stage! Where on earth did this act come from? Who ordered this?! What were the pulls, what were the pushes? Was it simply the familiar combination of budgetary restraints and inadequate information on one hand, together with the bad-faith hype of very savvy, long-distance agenting on the other?

The Bad Act went like this. As likely as anyone else to be a really nice person inside, the man billed as a "famous American folk singer" turned out to be a painfully time-warped smarmfest of a 50-something crooner, American-overweight, very obviously and uncarefully toupee-ed, decked out in a pastel-area leisure-suit over a dark shirt with Evel Knievel-length, or at least Elvis-length, collar

tips, unbuttoned enough to show his lots of gold-chainery. With no musical instrument in sight, he was accompanied—very closely—by a quartet of smiling Backup Bodies/Singers: four scantily-clad and very buxom Big-Hairs straight out of a Larry Flint dinner party or maybe an old episode of *Hee Haw*. Nothing remotely hinted at either fame or folk-singing.

For their first number, "Frank"¹⁰ and the giggling quartet exchange stanzas of, presumably, "That's My Weakness Now," including:

BBSs: "He likes to park and play, I don't like to park and play, but he likes to park and play, that's my weakness now."

Frank: "She likes a weddin' ring, I don't like a weddin' ring, but she likes a weddin' ring, that's my weakness now."

BBSs: "He likes makin' love, I don't like makin' love, but he likes makin' love, that's my weakness now."

I'm not making this up.

Their next number—a similarly simple melody leaving the quartet nothing to do but be their bodies—features Frank crooning about "down by the railroad tracks, and what she did was oo-oo-wee!" Afterwards they bow and wave, but

before exiting Frank turns to the BBSs and says, "Girls, I think you have something to say"—which of course launches the earnest ethnographer into fast and furious scribblings beginning with "haven't y'all already spoken volumes, Frank?"—to which they respond, in smiling unison and just-learnt Chinese, "Thanks for inviting us to Shanghai!"

Well now.

As the resident expert I am of course getting appeals from my housemates during the remarkable performance for fleshing-out sociocultural context, for confirmation of things like popular musical genres and listener tastes in the US, fashion, criteria for becoming "famous," and so forth—especially after the plug gets pulled on the Chinese subtitles just a bar or two into "That's My Weakness Now." I try to explain why the subtitles might have been pulled. I insist this "famous singer" wouldn't be mistaken for either in the US by anyone I've ever met, from California's small-town San Joaquin Valley, to the Lower East Side of Manhattan and the Fairfax district of Los Angeles. I want to assure them that this is a routine dusted off the shelf labeled something like, "Acts So Talentless and/or Offensive There's Not Even an American Audience for Them," a relic of a by-gone era and marginal even then, etc., etc. But the truth is I'm just waiting for one of these extreme

caricatures to screech to a halt and shout out, "Live from New York, it's Saturday Night!" or something. The West End Boys are suddenly brilliant, inspired artists, downright loveable.

A week later, again in Saturday primetime, we're all back to watch the shorter STVF "Closing Ceremony" and the awarding of the Magnolia Awards, magnolia, the city flower, symbolizing "purity, justice and artistry." Catherine Deneuve and Xie Jin, the famous veteran filmmaker from Shanghai Film Studio, present the Best TV-Film Magnolia to an Australian entry. Chinese female models walk the runway wearing locally-designed fashion, all but one Western in style. We all recognize the distinctive dance step they've lifted from the showering young Asian woman in an Oglivly & Mather-produced Proctor & Gamble shampoo commercial airing several times a day on STV at the time.

Finally the Mayor of Shanghai, Zhu Rongji,¹¹ comes on to conclude the STVF with official-ese congratulations and endorsement of how the cultural exchange and international friendship fostered by the STVF serve as further confirmation of the virtues of *gaige kaifang*, or "reform and openness," China's post-1978 national policy program. It is rhetoric so familiar that my co-viewers have basically tuned out and even I can anticipate the lines.

But he ends with a phrase that under the circumstances I found especially notable: the great achievement of the STVF, Zhu says, is the way in which it has helped "make the world a smaller place."

Well, with the bubble-gum melodies and hackneyed imagery from the previous week's Bad Act still painfully with me, my response to this at the time is roughly, "Yikes." It's just not striking me as a particularly good time for a celebratory, Marshall McLuhan moment.

Monkey King's Dilemma, Ethnographer's Desire¹²

And here is where the Monkey King comes back in. Beyond the figure's charm, I'm wondering, does his creative employment as STVF mascot imply a kind of cultural brokerage, now of translocal imagery mediated in hi-velocity lightspeed, invincible against all monstrous foes and would-be obstructions, much as the *Xiyou Ji* character so valiantly aided the introduction of Buddhism to China all those centuries ago, according to that fantastical narrative? Was he being shown on the STVF stage, that is, as a figure conquering all opponents who might prevent his more contemporary cultural brokering work, the videocamera now his weapon of choice for effecting his legendary magic and invincibility?

Perhaps Monkey King's arc in *Xiyou Ji* can offer some insight (if not "illumination!"). Near the beginning of the peripatetic story, during his early career as aid in cultural brokerage, Monkey King receives his first religious name, "Aware of Vacuity."¹³ At the end, after he and fellow cultural brokers, Pigsy and Sandy, have helped Xuan Zang successfully return to the Chinese emperor with the sacred texts from India, the Buddha assigns him the name, "Buddha Victorious in Strife."

Now, as the STVF mascot, which of these might he be? "Aware of Vacuity?" How then had he missed this zenith of vacuity, ironically so palpably present, in the Bad Act? Wasn't he supposed to be fighting against this sort of unseemly obstacle? Weren't these the forces, that is, he was supposed to be battling on stage? Had he simply been too mesmerized, and busy getting it all down on videotape?

Or was it Monkey King-ascendant-to-Buddhahood, the "Buddha Victorious in Strife," on the STVF stage that night? From this anti-position, was he performing his characteristic irreverence and disdain for officialdom generally,¹⁴ the playful trickster subverting and mocking a more widely-diffused, multi-modal authority? Was his onstage battle-romp thus posed as "victorious strife" against any would-be authoritative strictures on the

cultural interflow surrounding him, whether from the Chinese state and its desire, however muddled and conflicted, to control the interflow, or from, for example, an outside/"ethnographic" observer's own anguished and conflicted desire to affect (regulate?) the flow through critical "judgments of taste," through suture-desiring clarion calls for being "aware of vacuity," however heartfelt and well-intended? What was the Monkey King doing in this particular, and general, "screening" of cultural interflow? And what was that peculiar figure, the late-twentieth century US ethnographer, myself, to make of it?

Of Cultural Identity Crises and Shifting Reference Points

However durable as an originary plot-point in the genesis-showing of the ethnographic representations that make up the present text, it was certainly a metonymic moment—and not just for the confused if earnest non-local ethnographer, as I will elaborate further in the following chapter. Since the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, the fall and arrest of the Gang of Four Cultural Revolutionaries the following year,¹⁵ the ascendancy of Deng Xiaoping's faction of "radical reformists"¹⁶ within the Chinese political leadership, and the initiation of *gaige kaifang*, their

"reform and openness" program, as official national policy beginning in 1978, the textures of sociocultural life in Shanghai, along with urban China more generally, had become especially "baroque," to borrow another image from Vincent Crapanzano (1985:xiv), drenched with multiple meanings, yet only of the most transitory fixity. Sociocultural practice and expression, indeed even the very physical fabric of the city itself, had become fields of tremendous flux and transformation, as if blanketed with cultural and spatial versions of the Riddler's querying costume on the 1960s US TV version of *Batman*: a broad cloth punctuated only by question marks, of all shapes and sizes. Shanghai, to be sure, was historically quite accustomed to being fashioned with flux in this way, but the atmosphere here in the late-1980s had become especially devoid of easy handles on questions ranging across the gamut of everyday life.

Of course this state of affairs exacerbates the already difficult challenge of ethnographic interpretation, as it ultimately comes down to making troubled readings of troubled readings, trying to comprehend how others are comprehending their world precisely when they are having trouble comprehending it; perhaps this is never not the case. However (ultimately that's what we do if we do this thing, ethnography, that's the deal we make), what did seem

clear was this fact of non-clarity, which was explained to me in such terms as "cultural crisis," "crisis of confidence," and so forth, and which I came to understand as a cultural identity crisis of positively dynastic proportions.

Two interrelated developments were central to this: a legitimacy crisis for the post-Mao leadership, and a newly-endorsed turn to the outside world for replacement answers. These cannot be overstated. History had loaded them with a profound sense of despair and urgency. Since the decentering of the Middle Kingdom brought on by China's clash with the colonizing capitalist West, especially since the early nineteenth century and the build-up to the Opium Wars of mid-nineteenth century, China had offered itself answer after answer, movement after movement, indeed revolution after revolution, all promising to correct its perceived failures to maintain a position of pride and respectability in an increasingly interconnected world, to manage its own affairs and create for its people the good life in the exemplary, advanced, civilized fashion appropriate for, after all, the Middle Kingdom, the center of the universe, whose terrestrial ruler for millennia, the Yellow Emperor, was none other than the Son of Heaven. These variations on the theme of a "Middle Kingdom

complex,"¹⁷ spanning a wide range of rhetorics and political programs, had all ultimately failed to deliver on their promises, each failure dramatically exacerbating and perpetuating a deep-seated crisis of faith. The center of the universe is a stratospheric pedestal. The crash is hard, especially when it keeps happening.

No set of answers to these age-old questions in China—which since the early twentieth century had been articulated as the question of how to make China "modern"—were anywhere near as thoroughgoing, salvationist, inculcated, and institutionalized as those of the Communist Party-state, led by Mao Zedong, after final victory over the Nationalists in 1949 for control of mainland China. This was a plan whose correctness and prospects for success were presented as absolutely assured, now both by a faith in the scientific and historical proofs of the new revolutionary politics of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, but also by remnants of this longer cultural history in which China is seen as the pinnacle of human achievement and civilization, its imperial ruler/Party Chairman the chosen Son of Heaven.

The unenviable problem for the post-Mao leadership of China's Communist Party-state was (and remains) that they were left to pick up the pieces of the crash resulting in

the failure of even this set of certain answers. This was especially the case given that the last phase of Mao's leadership, the last of its offering of absolute answers, had been the most thoroughgoing and radical of all—the infamous "ten years of chaos," as the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution came to be officially described by the post-Mao leaders very soon after Mao's death. A deified revolutionary, bolstered simultaneously by "scientific facts," and millennia-enshrined traditions of emperor-worship, is a hard act to follow. Especially when it has failed, so miserably, for so many former believers. And especially when, as the following act, composed precisely of former believers, most of whom had suffered miserably from this last failure, you must maintain and perform continued reverence toward this figure and this history, even as you seek to "correct" it.

But even this was not the biggest problem for the post-Mao leadership by this time in the late 1980s. Its much bigger problem was that by now even its new set of corrective answers, its "reform and openness" program, was seen to be failing in too many respects as well. Specifically, while the fruits of reform and openness were evident in many areas, by 1988 it had become all too obvious that they were being enjoyed first and foremost by

the nepotistic bureaucracies of the party-state apparatus and those well-connected to it. It's public face was corruption, abuse of power, unaccountability, and suppression of dissenting voices. For the Old Hundred Names, or *laobaixing*, as ordinary people are referred to in China, this was far too familiar, and therefore only more deeply disillusioning. Any authoritarian bureaucracy, Son of Heaven emperor, or autocratic Party Chairman can do the corrupt and unaccountable thing. After all this, is it possible that we've failed again?

Intimately connected to this, in both causal and consequential ways, was the *kaifang* portion of the post-Mao leadership's *gaige kaifang* formula for modernity-making. That is, just as the Dengist party-state was sowing the seeds of its own legitimacy crisis by proving that it too could practice corruption and unaccountability, it had also enshrined as official policy "openness to the outside world" as a way to learn and devise new answers on how to construct the good and modern society in China. Coming on the heels of so many perceived failures, and in the context of just-previous and now-bankrupt practices of isolation from and vilification of especially the "modern West" portion of the outside world, this was an eagerly welcomed if pendular shift. Now allowed and even required to make

this turn to the models of modernity in the outside world, Chinese society on many levels experienced a kind of flood-gates effect. How does one make modernity? Well, who better to consult than the Modern World? Again, Chapter 1 examines this process more fully.

The upshot however was that in virtually all spheres of social life in late-1980s China, old reference points were being radically questioned when not outright rejected, and new reference points from the outside modern world were being revalorized, made available, and in many ways compulsory to learn and use. In effect, the result was the creation and/or liberation of new kinds of culture-screening Monkey Kings.

Media-making and Models

Encounters at this early stage with people involved in the media industries in Shanghai illustrated the Monkey King's dilemma in equally rich and intriguing ways. Especially notable among these were my fortunate exchanges with the delightful Mr. Xu Baiyi, or Hundred-Benefits Xu, a Shanghai native born the same year China's imperial era ended (1911, with the Nationalist Revolution and the fall of China's last imperial dynasty, the Qing), and a tireless chronicler and champion of advertising in China, who began

his career as a Shanghai adman in 1928. I'd happened upon a trade magazine cover-story profile about Mr. Xu (see Wong 1988) prior to arriving in Shanghai that fall of 1988, as I spent a few days in Hongkong visiting friends and waiting for my visa and train tickets. With much luck and help from friends after arriving in Shanghai—who put into practice their frequent lesson to me that to get things done in China, "you work your connections [*guanxi*]; you don't waste your time standing in line, you go and get on the telephone line!"—I was able to meet Mr. Xu and interview him in his home on a number of occasions.

During these informative—and for me and this project, formative—exchanges, Mr. Xu was straightforward and unequivocal about the necessity of *kaifang*/openness in the particular case of advertising in China. Surely deserving of the titles bestowed upon him by the aforementioned trade magazine profile—"China ad pioneer," "the grand old man of China advertising," "doyen of China's fledgling advertising industry," "veteran adman [who] helps China's modernization drive," etc.—Mr. Xu had spent twenty years in the business in Shanghai, its primary center, before the Communist Revolution in 1949, and weathered the twists and turns in attitude toward the industry since 1949, including during the Cultural Revolution, when it was vilified as an

artifact only of corrupt capitalism and thus halted altogether. Now, in the ten years of *gaige kaifang* since 1978, advertising had been rehabilitated, and given his uniquely rich experience, Mr. Xu had been called on to advise and participate in top-level decisions on how it should be re-institutionalized and practiced. His views were remarkably clear and certain.¹⁸

"Advertising is advertising," Mr. Xu stressed over tea and cigarettes in his chilly apartment in late 1988, "and has no relation to politics or propaganda." Foreign advertising in China, moreover, has the dual advantage of both publicizing goods the Chinese people want and need, and serving as a model from which emergent Chinese advertising professionals can learn. Furthermore, without successful advertising, China cannot become developed and modern, he said, adding that the best place to find successful advertising is in advertising from the outside world. He said one of the most pressing issues in China advertising was the relative lack and poor quality of professional training programs. These largely echoed the remarks he'd made to the Hongkong journalist. Wong writes, for example, "The great chasm in China's advertising experience...must be bridged if China is to join the developed world, says Xu. And it is from foreign

experience that China can learn the most, fastest" (14). She also quotes Xu lamenting that in terms of professional training, "'the US has everything...China has nothing'," and stating more generally—and significantly in terms of the present study—that "'Foreign experience offers China a shortcut in everything, including advertising...we must learn from others and put their knowledge to good use'" (14).

That Mr. Xu's views were widely held among media professionals in China at the time was evidenced by similar comments made by others I met in advertising, television production, and filmmaking,¹⁹ as well as by articles appearing in the burgeoning trade publications, such as *Zhongguo guanggao* (China Advertising), *Guanggao shijie* (Advertising World), *Shanghai dianshi* (Shanghai Television), *Shangying huabao* (Shanghai Film Pictorial), and *Wenhui dianying shibao* (Wenhui Film Times, now defunct). One memorable example of the former took place over dinner one evening at the home of a mutual friend. In this case, the usual apologetic embarrassment I often sensed from media-makers talking about their work (or even just general conditions in China; Mr. Xu, for example, opened our very first meeting at his home by apologizing sympathetically about the "backward" bus system I'd used to

get to his house) was augmented by the suggestion that we do a TV show where I discuss and critically analyze with a local host the strengths and weakness of Chinese TV commercials. I replied that I was more interested in learning about creative intentions than in publicly judging their production values in this way, but the rest of our dinner party, locals in and out of the media industries, had plenty of friendly critical judgments to offer the STV ad producer present, whose negative views of his industry's work had been couched in much the same terms as Mr. Xu's (and whose idea it had been to do the ad-crit TV show involving me). After enough fun was had teasing the nice young man, however, the group began trying to lift his spirits by finding more positive, complimentary things to say about domestic ads. "You know, like that one for [some shampoo or something]—there, now that's a good one," someone said, and others chimed in with "right, yeah, that is a pretty good one" concurrence. Such good friends. And given their evident sincerity, it seemed this was going to work. Unfortunately: "See, that's just what I'm talking about," replied the poor guy. "We didn't even make that ad—it's a Hongkong Ogilvy & Mather-produced ad!"

Thus the turn for reference points to the outside world endorsed and even mandated by the new Chinese

leadership was certainly going on among media professionals as well, perhaps with special vigor. This early phase of my research suggested television as an especially interesting arena in which this was happening, as the explosion of this "technology and cultural form"²⁰ in China had just then been occurring on a mass scale. Nationwide the number of TV stations had gone from 32 at the start of the reform and openness period in 1978, reaching a viewing audience of 80 million, to 422 stations in 1988, now reportedly reaching 78 percent of the entire population, or roughly 800 million viewers (Li 1991). In Shanghai itself, households with TV sets had gone from 25 percent of the total in the early 1980s (Howkins 1982), to 100 percent by 1988 (Gong 1988:2).²¹

One result of this growth was that relatively suddenly an entire class of new media professionals was formed to work in a medium with unprecedented reach, yet with limited time and resources for training and professionalization. In this context, at just the level of professional pragmatics, TV producers thus needed precisely the kind of "shortcut" suggested by Mr. Xu, and were indeed turning to the professional expertise of the outside world in order to "learn the most, fastest."

Media-making and Identity-making in Shanghai
velocity and
Global Context

I thus returned to Shanghai in 1992 to carry out with more precision and focus this ethnographic study of the constructions of "modernity," and other invented traditions and cultural identities, put into the play of the public sphere by television producers and the production process at Shanghai Television Station (STV), China's largest local station, which had begun black and white transmissions in 1958, color in 1973, and whose viewing audience of 100 million in 1988 (Gong 1988:2) had grown by some accounts to 300 million potential viewers by now in 1992.

While they work in a medium whose scope has never before been seen in China, these media professionals are but among the latest in a long line of cultural commentators who have participated in the identity-making project of defining the terms of the "modern" in China, of negotiating a modern Chinese cultural identity. In this they join colleagues across space as well as time, for identity-making projects at local levels have become increasingly urgent across the globe, as flows of people, objects, ideas, and representations have reached dizzying levels of volume, speed, and spread. If McLuhan's "global village" metaphor is overstated, global interconnectedness

has surely become, in one form or another, a feature of consequence in virtually every human's everyday life. This is also, then, a study of the cultural dimensions of globalization in one locality. I will return to these issues below.

In addition to having established relationships here (and, I confess, to having simply fallen in love with the city), Shanghai was my chosen research site because of its special role and experiences as China's most cosmopolitan and diverse city, where Chinese identity-making had for generations been carried out in an explicitly, if often brutally, international and cross-cultural context. In addition, while it is unquestionably a special place, and there are definite limits to generalizing from the Shanghai experience to other parts of China, Shanghai has long played a significant political, economical, and cultural role for China as a whole—as when the Communist Party was founded in what was then its French Concession in 1921—and thus seems to warrant special attention.

With help from many friends I got the opportunity to work as a unpaid production assistant at STV for eight months of 1992. I attended pre-production meetings, helped with lighting, sound and equipment during on-location and in-studio shoots, and attended post-production editing

sessions, all for a variety of programming genres, including variety shows, current affairs/special subjects, news features, serial drama, advertising and music videos. I conducted interviews with STV production personnel both formally, structured and taped, and informally, unstructured and noted either by hand or at a later time. Much of my work was with the production staff of STV's Rural Division—*Nongcun Bu/Tai*—a newly inaugurated branch of STV charged with the mandate to produce programming for and about the roughly five million rural inhabitants of the Shanghai Municipality (and other 'peasants' within the STV broadcasting orbit, which some reported had grown to 300 million viewers!). I also gathered printed material on various aspects of television broadcasting, from newspaper program reviews and trade magazine articles to official policy documentation. And I taped and have conducted textual/content analyses of programs from all the above genres, many of whose producers I interviewed, and production I attended, assisted, or even appeared in.

It was a dynamic time—in China, in Shanghai, in the media world. Indications abounded that the eager thirst among media professionals for models for learning from the outside "modern" world was not only equal to that I'd found in 1988, but in many respects more intense. There was good

reason: the events in and around Tiananmen from April 15 to June 4, 1989, had given many in China cause for yet further disillusionment toward the Chinese government and its Communist Party leadership, cause for an even deeper crisis in confidence in local answers to painfully age-old questions, and thus only more interest in alternatives.

On only my second day at STV, a young producer of journalistic "special subjects" programs (*zhuan ti pian*) expressed this evocatively. In their dozen-person office as he and colleagues buzzed through newspapers and telephones pursuing story leads, I was reading an article from a magazine one of them had tossed from the pile on her desk. It was from the first 1992 issue of *Modern Peasant* (*Xiandai nongmin*) and had caught my attention because of the phrase in its title, "peaceful evolution" (*heping yanbian*), a key slogan employed by the Chinese leadership, especially in the aftermath of Tiananmen, to identify and urge resistance against what it saw as the agenda of Western politics and culture in its engagement with China: to accomplish through peaceful means what it could not through force, namely, the "evolution" of China toward Western capitalism and liberal democracy. Seeing this, my new friend leaned over to ask what I thought of it. I said I was just trying to understand what the term meant. He

scoffed and quickly informed me that "peaceful evolution" was already an outmoded concern held only by a very few old-guard ultra-conservatives perhaps. He explained that it had in fact been officially relegated to obsolescence by Deng Xiaoping himself on his just-concluded and widely publicized "tour of the South," where, in places like Shanghai and Shenzhen, the explosive Special Economic Zone (SEZ) neighboring Hongkong, he had pronounced, in what would prove to be his final major policy-making gesture, that the hard policy lines drawn in reaction to Tiananmen needed to be softened again, that *gaige kaifang* needed to be deepened and re-intensified, including specifically that concerns about "peaceful evolution" should not be allowed to get in the way of openness to the outside world of useful capital and ideas. The producer echoed the renewed official line that China again needs to "learn and absorb the good aspects of capitalism" that will help China develop into a modern society, and not be over-concerned with definitions of socialism and capitalism. "Now we're supposed to learn from you capitalist societies!" he explained.

Fertile expressions like these came on a daily basis during this time in Shanghai, the following chapters

narrating only a fraction of what I found to be the more evocative among them.

Television production in China takes places in a highly structured environment. All of the 586 TV stations operating in 1992 did so under a centralized, nationwide structure, administered in each local by the Radio and TV unit under the respective governmental structure (provincial, municipal, township), itself in every case overseen by the Communist Party. STV for example was thus under the administrative oversight of the Shanghai Municipal Government's Bureau of Radio and Television.

This rigid structure of course reflects the unprecedented level of state control possessed by China's communist party-state, and effects what Mayfair Yang (1988) once called a very "modern" form of power in China, but in particular the importance the Chinese party-state has always attached to, broadly, representation, public expression, and the dimensions therein of ideology and political persuasion. The media in China are considered, famously, "the mouthpiece of the Party," and thus under tight supervision. These concerns and modes of institutionalization of media ultimately follow directly out of the views expressed by Mao Zedong on literature and art in May 1942 in his talks on the subject of cultural

expression to the core leaders of the young Communist Party at their war-time base in rugged north-central China at Yan'an (a.k.a., Yenan), which were to become the template parameters of China's subsequent organization and operation of all media.²² The ultimate purpose of all media was to serve the people, Mao said, and since the Communist Party and movement were defined as the only way to adequately serve the people (indeed, to "save" them), all media were thus to serve the Party. They were to enlighten the people of China and awaken them to the real conditions of their contradiction-laden existence so that they could eventually control of it (Mao did acknowledge that cultural expression could serve people's needs for entertainment and pleasure as well). As such, all channels of communication needed to be controlled by the Party-led state (the pressing needs of war-time also contributed to this stance).

While this administrative structure has remained in place there were important shifts impacting media-making practice at STV in 1992. In line with the reform and openness program generally, the party-state had mandated that TV stations generate their own revenues to replace a decreasing state subsidy, and that they open up to programming and technical exchanges with foreign media firms as well. This meant that TV stations were at once

becoming more commercialized and more international. Thus STV itself aired the first Chinese TV commercial on January 28, 1979, as well as China's first foreign commercial on March 15 of that year, for Yangrong Medicinal Wine and Rado, the Swiss watch manufacturer, respectively (Zhao 1988:44). By the late 1980s, STV was fully self-reliant financially due to astonishing growth in ad revenues.

Thus while the party-state continued to expect media to serve the people by serving as the Party's mouthpiece, and continued to oversee the industries and regulate their content, it was at the same time telling broadcasters and other media-makers that they needed to compete successfully on the market for their survival as well. Producers therefore were under this dual mandate of political correctness and commercial appeal at once, or, as Zhao Yuezhi (1998) has recently put it, "between the Party line and the bottom line." As many at STV explained to me, this left a great deal of latitude, especially in programming other than the news (where the party-state kept its most watchful eye); as long as they stayed clear of blatant pornography, excessive violence, and advocacy of the overthrow of the Chinese government or Communist Party, they could produce whatever they felt would attract the biggest audience.

Some of the results of this new-found freedom and "learning from the outside," as shown in the following chapters, are representations and generic conventions familiar to viewers of commercial television elsewhere, including unfortunately many which from the perspective of critics of the ill effects of the commoditization of identity-making space are likely to be objectionable.

Of Cultural Critique and "Alternative Modernities"

This exploration of media-making, identity-making, and modernity-making among TV producers in Shanghai has taken its lead from a range of commentary and issues raised in cultural anthropology and cultural studies in recent years. When June Nash (1979, 1981) and Eric Wolf (1982) argued twenty years ago for studies of the ethnographic specificity of increasing global interconnectedness, they drew from both multi-disciplinary resources, and a long tradition in anthropology itself. This is a familiar history, but certain aspects offer insights on some of the more recent work on this theme, namely, the work being produced in dizzying speed and volume on, variously: "globalization and the problem of culture in world-systems" (Robertson and Lechner 1985); a "global anthropology" (Friedman and Ekholm 1985); "ethnography in the modern

world system" (Marcus 1986); "the world in creolization," or "the global ecumene" (Hannerz 1987, 1989); "a transnational socio-cultural system" (Sutton 1987); "transnational cultural studies" (*Public Culture* 1987); "transnational cultural flows" (Molund 1988); "cultural logics of the global system," or "culture, identity and world process" (Friedman 1988, 1990); "global cultural flows" (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1990); "the global cultural economy" (Appadurai 1990); "global culture" (Featherstone 1990; Smith 1990); "culture and the world system" (Boyne 1990); "the globalization of culture," or "culture, globalization and the world-system" (King 1990, 1997); "scenarios for peripheral cultures" (Hannerz 1991); "global ethnoscaples...[and] a transnational anthropology" (Appadurai 1991); "national cultures in the global ecumene" (Foster 1991); "globalization...and global culture" (Robertson 1992); "glocalization" (Robertson 1995); "transnational connections" (Hannerz 1996); "the cultural dimensions of globalization" (Appadurai 1996); and "the cultures of globalization" (Jameson and Miyoshi 1998).

Most of this work offers two kinds of correctives to previous studies of, broadly, globalization. The first is to underscore, however incidentally and in different terms, Eric Wolf's point of three decades ago, that "The contact

between the capitalist center, the metropolis, and the precapitalist or noncapitalist periphery is a large-scale cultural encounter, not merely an economic one" (1969:278). That is, these studies have offered an important corrective to the earlier models of understanding globalization coming for example out of dependency studies, underdevelopment studies, and world-systems studies, which tended to focus more strictly on political-economic dimensions globalization.

The second virtue many of these later works share is their efforts to remember power in cultural practice. Not only do they concur, that is, that globalization involves cultural dimensions in addition to political-economic ones, they also emphasize that cultural processes of meaning-making are always embedded in particular social and historical contexts, and as such in the relations of social power characterizing those contexts.

The present study has drawn on many aspects of this work. Thus the focus on media-making itself agrees with Ulf Hannerz's view that previous lack of treatment of this aspect of contemporary life can only be due to "a very willful disregard, or the most unthinking commitment to the ethnographic routines of the past" (1991:18), and with Arjun Appadurai's observation that "More persons throughout

the world see their lives through the prisms of the possible lives offered by mass media in all their forms" (1991: 198). More generally, this study shares the view of "imagination....[as] a peculiar new force...in social life today" (Appadurai 1991:197), and certainly that ethnographies should thus seek to "capture the impact of deterritorialization on the imaginative resources of lived, local experiences" (ibid.: 196).

Most specifically, this study responds to two sets of suggestions coming out of this work. Following Marcus and Fischer (1986) for example, who provide an insightful critique of over-homogenizing models of globalization, I have sought to locate ethnographically "diversity in what appears to be an ever more homogeneous world...the critical perspectives and possibilities for alternatives that exist in the lives" of people in a given locality (133). Similarly, following the advice and predictions of Appadurai and Breckenridge (1990), for example, this study has also aimed to discover the ways in which the "modernity" being constructed in China is an "alternative modernity." Thus this work has taken the mandate of "cultural critique" to give voice to especially the oppositional, resistant responses of various localities, social and individual, to incursions of the global

capitalist system, following Marcus and Fischer (1986); and it has taken the mandate of "transnational cultural studies" to find specifically "alternative modernities" in local modernity-making practices, following Appadurai and Breckenridge (1990).

The concluding chapter elaborates how this study failed in these assignments, however, and discusses the critical and theoretical reasons why. In a nutshell, and as a thesis statement, my failure to find an "alternative modernity" in the culture-brokering screenings of media professionals in Shanghai was due to the same impossibility that would attend the task of finding its purported opposite—some originary, essential, or Western "modernity"—in this or any other locale. Essence-searching through any identity-making practices is always going to locate only transitory meaning in the signifisphere, however urgent, heartfelt, or socially consequential it might be, and this does not stop being the case just because we are searching for something alternative to what we have constructed as originary and unsavory, however morally and politically valid are our judgments and reasons for wanting the difference. A Faustian dilemma, then, is already present in our use of culture and language, and doesn't go away even when we know

we're right: these marvelous and distinguishing human tools allow, require, and set us up to make and find meanings that are livably solid, despite our repeated lessons from everyday life that solidity, tragically or not, only always melts—even if we can and must socially do things with the versions of it we continue stubbornly, imperatively, to locate.

NOTES

¹ Clifford and Marcus (1986) and Marcus and Fischer (1986).

² The Chinese word for television is *dianshi*, which combines characters for "electric" and "vision/visual."

³ Unless otherwise indicated the names of Shanghai people appearing in this study with whom I had personal contact are pseudonyms, and the translations from the Chinese, verbal and written, are my own.

⁴ Especially rich among the many recent English works on early twentieth century Shanghai are Bergere (1981, 1989), Clifford (1991), Goodman (1995), Hershatter (1997), Honig (1986), Fu (1993), Lee (1999a, b), Lu (1999), Martin (1996), Wagner (1995), Wakeman (1995), Wakeman and Yeh (1992), Catherine Yeh (1996), and Zhang (1999). The city also plays an important role in MacKinnon and MacKinnon's (1988) amazing biography of the amazing Agnes Smedley; Rand's (1990, 1995) and Friesen and MacKinnon's (1987) fascinating studies of Western, "China Hand" journalists in China before 1949; Seagrave's (1985) exhaustive study of the unsurpassed historical influence of Shanghai's Song family; and Kahn's (1975) account of US Foreign Service officers in China before 1949, including how they were scapegoated during the McCarthy witch hunts, and how their subsequent expulsion from the US State Department would mean, by the 1960s, that the State Department lacked any expertise on Asia in general, which fact even Robert McNamara would later admit resulted in tragically misguided US policy and military action in the war in Vietnam (see McNamara [1995:31] on "our ignorance about Southeast Asia"; see also the urgent self-defense by the first person Senator McCarthy publicly accused, the widely-respected China scholar, Owen Lattimore [1950], whom McCarthy branded the "top Russian espionage agent in the US"). English classics on Shanghai from the era include Miller (1937), Hauser (1940), much of Carl Crow's (1937, 1940) and John B. Powell's (1945) popular accounts, and of course the great *Man's Fate (La condition humaine)*, by Andre Malraux (1984 [1934]). Examples of Shanghai's recent fascination with its own history, especially the 1930s (two popular restaurant/bars in 1999 are named after the decade),

include Xiong (1996, 1997), Xue (1999), Yang (1999), and Zheng (1999).

⁵ Waley's (1943) translation of parts of Wu Cheng'en's 16th-century *Xiyou Ji* (*Journey to the West*) as *Monkey* has long been popular in the West. A terrific recent account of Xuan Zang, the remarkable historical figure who actually made the journey, travelling for sixteen years from China's seventh-century capital, Chang'an, along the Silk Road of Central Asia and throughout India, is Wriggins (1996). Xuan Zang spent twenty years after returning translating Buddhist texts which would continue to be influential into the twentieth century, including the famous Heart Sutra, "whose words 'Form is Emptiness, Emptiness is no other than Form' are still recited by Zen Buddhists all over the world" (Wriggins, 192).

⁶ A recent powerful account of this experience causing a stir is that of non-professional historian Iris Chang (1997). Her account has been both dismissed and praised by academic historians.

⁷ Along with this cozy feting of the Chinese leader in political circles, Deng's anti-Maoist policies of reform and openness had earned him further praise in the Western press, including being named *Time* magazine's Man of the Year in 1979, which honor he would receive again in 1986. Ironically, the only other Chinese figure to date to receive this honor twice in his lifetime is Jiang Jieshi, a.k.a. Chiang Kai-shek (MacKinnon 1994), bitter enemy of Deng and Mao throughout their political lives.

⁸ This was just prior to the nostalgic country music explosion in the US, which hopefully worked well for the West End Boys.

⁹ To be sure, such em-practicing of "judgments of taste" is based on historically developed "distinctions," all of which can be traceable and contextualized in power relations most fruitfully through a historical and "social critique," to rearrange the terms of Bourdieu's (1984) classic study on the matter. It is also always constrained by specific historical and tradition-bound horizons and hermeneutic methods for arriving at truth-claims, following Gadamer (1996, 1987). My hope throughout this study then is to foreground without being too cumbersome the

provisionality of my interpretations and claims. I want this to appropriately correspond to a more general underlying premise, that of the necessary elusiveness of essences. To jump ahead just a bit further, another premise is that the postulate, "essential elusiveness," despite the performative contradiction at its core, needn't create any more nihilist fatalism than "life ends in death," though it can certainly create as much. On performative contradiction in theoretical formulations see Holub's (1991) discussion of the debate between Gadamer and Habermas on hermeneutics, Jay (1992) on Habermas-poststructuralists debates and (1993) on Breton's critique of Bataille, Eagleton (1991) on ideology, and Ricoeur (1981, 1986) on the Gadamer-Habermas debate and the general problem of ideology. Ricoeur locates the rub in "Mannheim's paradox," which asks, "If everything is ideological, then how is it possible to have other than ideological discourse on ideology?" (1986:157). Cf. Mannheim (1936).

¹⁰ A pseudonym I use in slightly fond memory of a colorful if occasionally terrifying step-grandfather, R.I.P. boilermaker and WWII-vet, who I am convinced single-handedly made Brillcream and AquaVelva what they are today. Or were then. And okay maybe he had some help from Mickey Mantle with the Brillcream.

¹¹ At this time Zhu was Mayor of Shanghai and Jiang Zemin was General Secretary of the Shanghai branch of the Communist Party. By the late 1990s of course they'd become Premier/Prime Minister Zhu and President Jiang, the two most powerful officials in all of China, representing the ascendance in Beijing's central government and party apparatus of Shanghai-based power and politics. Another expression of this is the fun anecdote currently circulating about the frustration of Li Peng, the former Premier commonly held in infamy for his hard-line stance toward demonstrators at Tiananmen in 1989, over his need these days for an interpreter from the Shanghainese during top-level meetings in Beijing. For recent accounts of high-level politics in post-Deng China see Baum (1994), Goodman (1994), Chen (1999), and especially Misra (1998).

¹² Apologies here again to Vincent Crapanzano (1986, 1992a).

¹³ These title translations are from Waley (1943).

¹⁴ In earlier versions I've added the qualifier, "Rabelaisian," to describe this irreverence and disdain, abandoned now for its inapt cultural transposition. There are however interesting analogies despite the cultural distance. Not only is Monkey King's irreverence to authority similar to Rabelais' *Pantagruel* (see Bakhtin's [1968] very influential reading), there is also historical correspondence between *Xiyou Ji* (1592 on most accounts; but Wu Cheng'en, dead by then, had been writing the stories, themselves of great oral-historical age, for quite some time prior to 1592) and *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, Rabelais' (1944) five comic novels published between 1532 and 1564. More interesting still is a narrative analogy. In the fourth book (1552), *Pantagruel*, now a sage, and roguish companion Panurge journey to the "Oracle of the Divine Bottle" for an answer to Panurge's question whether or not he should get married, having failed to find the answer in France in book three (in which Rabelais skewers French institutions and conventions relating to marriage, love and sex). The Oracle, it turns out, "lay in Upper India, close to Cathay or China" and offers the straightforward answer, "Drink!" Monkey King's travels then, both in *Xiyou Ji* and on the 1988 STVF stage, could be seen as occasions of his heeding just this kind of advice, to partake of translocal cultural mediations in his case, whether Buddhist and seventh-century, or mobile-capitalist and late-twentieth century.

¹⁵ Including, of course, Mao's (fourth) wife, the former actress Lan Ping, best known to history as Jiang Qing, but actually born Li Jinhai. Roxanne Witke's (1977) biography (*Jiang Qing's request for and authorization of which was cited among her "counterrevolutionary" crimes, notably*) remains fascinating reading. Guo Hua's (1998) recent two-volume offering of snapshots of early Chinese cinema and movie stars also contains interesting detail of this charismatic figure.

¹⁶ Misra (1998) uses "radical reformist" and "moderate reformist" to describe Chinese leaders and positions in the reform era, rather than the more conventional 'reformer/conservative' dyad. Her important point is that no one within the Chinese leadership since 1978 has actually been opposed to the reform and openness agenda *per*

se, and that policy debates have thus been over detail and questions of degree.

¹⁷ See Tu Wei-ming (1991) on this "Middle Kingdom complex."

¹⁸ They also appear in Xu's many publications on advertising, apparent in some cases even in the title. See for example, Xu (1986a,b, 1988a,b, 1989, 1990), and Xu and Xu (1988).

¹⁹ For interesting discussions in translation from people in the Chinese film industry, see the volumes edited or co-edited by George Semsel (Semsel 1987; Semsel et al. 1990, 1993), especially Chen (1993) and Wang (1993). Of course much has been written in English on Chinese filmmaking, beginning with Jay Leyda's (1972) pioneering work. Important recent work includes the volumes edited by Berry (1991), Browne (1994), and Lu (1997); Chow's (1995) textual readings of Fifth Generation films; Zhang's (1997) discussion of the Fifth Generation phenomenon; Zha's pieces on Chen Kaige (1995a) and the Fifth Generation broadly (1995b); and the overviews by Pickowicz (1994, 1995) and Reynaud (1998); Marion (1997) and Zhang and Xiao (1999) are stunningly encyclopedic.

²⁰ The phrase is of course the subtitle of Raymond Williams's (1974) early work on television, which he used to underscore the necessity of treating television as technology that is never separable from its concrete social employment as a culture-shaping form.

²¹ John Howkins' (1982) *Mass Communication in China* is to my knowledge the earliest book in English on the media system in the PRC. Subsequent book-length treatments have included Chang (1989), Lee (1990, 1994), Lull (1991), Jones (1992), Fu and Cullen (1996), Zhou (1996), Lee (1997), Mueller and Tan (1997), Hong (1998), and Zhao (1998). Not surprisingly, the earliest journal articles on the subject appeared in business-oriented publications, like *The China Business Review* (e.g., Seto 1985 and Wyman 1985; cf. Peerenboom 1995, and Atkinson 1997a, b). *Gazette* began publishing more scholarly accounts in the early 1990s (e.g., Wang 1992, Chang et al. 1993, Xu 1994, Hao 1995, Zhao Yuezhi 1996, Culbertson 1997, and Wei and Weaver 1998), as did a few other journals (e.g. Calhoun 1989,

Stross 1990, Li 1991, Zhang 1993, Huang 1994, *Journal of Communication* 1994, Liu 1994, Rofel 1994, Lee 1995, Schell 1995, Wu and Pola 1995, Yu and Sears 1996, Zhao Bin 1996, 1998, and Liu 1998). Additional useful studies have been Pei (1994), Polumbaum (1994), and Yang (1997). For China's media history prior to the PRC era, see Baark (1997), Judge (1996), MacKinnon (1997), Stranahan (1990), Ting (1974), and the classic accounts of Britton (1933), Chao (1931), Lin (1936), and Tong (1950).

²² See Mao (1967). Also reprinted in Denton (1996) and McDougall (1980), who examines in depth its various subsequent edits in Chinese and translations into English.

CHAPTER ONE
MODERNITY-MAKING IN TIMES OF CRISIS:
CHINA IN "REFORM AND OPENNESS"

Now I realize what modernization is like.

-Deng Xiaoping, touring a Nissan factory in Japan, 1981¹

*Only through opening to the outside can there be
modernization.*

-*Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], November 25, 1988²

In fact, modernization is precisely westernization.

-Director, Shanghai TV Rural Channel, 1992

Socialism and collectivism are primitive and backward.

*Only with modern individualism and freedoms of self-
development do you get progress, technological achievement,
and so forth.*

-STV producer summarizing his *Modern Man*, 1992

China Learns Quality Control.

-Front page headline, *Asian Wall Street Journal*, Sept 20, 1999

This chapter examines the larger context in which STV producers have been doing their work in media-making, identity-making and modernity-making. Again the major plot point in the construction of the environment sketched above in the Introduction had been the implementation in 1978 of *gaige kaifang*, the post-Mao party-state's official program of "reform and openness," as the means of achieving the grail-objective of "the Four Modernizations"—of agriculture, industry, defense, and science and technology—which Zhou Enlai had first advocated in 1975 in the waning years of the disastrous Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). In direct reaction to the policies of these latter "ten years of chaos," as they had become known, Deng & Co., at the historic Third Plenum of the Party's 11th Central Committee in December 1978, initiated the twin policies of decentralizing, market-oriented economic reforms (*gaige*) and openness to the outside world (*kaifang*) as the new program that would make China modern.³

The *gaige*/reform component, consisting of the decentralization of economic decision-making and the widening role of markets throughout the economy, had first been implemented in 1978 in rural areas of Anhui and Sichuan provinces, the latter where both Deng and radical reformist protégé, Zhao Ziyang, had ties, but soon went

nationwide.⁴ At its core was the "household responsibility system," which enabled households to contract to the state to manage productive resources—a plot of land, a pond of water, livestock—the fruits of which, after meeting state-procurement quotas, they could now take to market and sell for profits at prices deregulated by the state. In the urban industrial sector, responsibility for production was similarly localized, with cooperatives, collectives, or individual factory directors now contracting to the state to meet quotas beyond which they could earn profits and redistribute them among workers and/or reinvest them for greater productive capacity. Workers too began to be compensated for productivity, through piece-rate pay, bonuses, and contracts of their own, rather than receiving a flat salary from the state completely unconnected to work actually performed.⁵ In addition, in both rural and urban contexts economic *gaige* also created space for the emergence of the *getihu*, or "individual entrepreneur." Similarly through contractual arrangements with the state, these industrious figures had now become commonplace along the streets, alleys and sidewalks of Shanghai, selling goods like clothing or services like shoe repair from mobile carts, or offering a meal from a curbside apartment-

turned-restaurant, or a haircut in a former state-run parlor, or similarly converted (or not) residence.⁶

The *kaifang*/openness component of the new program meant openness to the outside world, diplomatically, to be sure, but primarily as a complement the market-oriented economic reforms in making China open to inflows of foreign capital investment, as well as the intellectual and technological know-how that knew how it should be managed and distributed. Of secondary importance to the leadership, but with dramatic if nebulous effect more generally, *kaifang* also meant openness to the artistic, entertainment and more broadly cultural inflows from the outside world. In addition, and with even more ambivalence, the leadership intended at least in theory that *kaifang* would also involve various measures of openness in domestic political and cultural practice.⁷

The consequences of these reforms had been dramatic.⁸ By every measure, the Chinese economy grew by leaps and bounds after 1978, registering double-digit growth rates in GDP virtually every year throughout the 1980s. The credo espoused by the leadership had become, as Orville Schell (1984, 1994) notes, "to get rich is glorious," and a burgeoning class of *nouveau riches* responded with vigor first in the countryside, especially in the fertile coastal

and southern regions, and soon in the cities. In this new formula for becoming modern it was now okay, the Dengist leadership assured China and the world alike, that some people "get rich first."⁹ From 1983 onwards it was officially "socialism with Chinese characteristics" (*you Zhongguo tese de shehuizhuyi*) that China was practicing, however ambiguously, and for Deng there would even be moments of indifference whether China should be surnamed *Zi*, "Capitalist," or *She*, "Socialist," so long as the forces of production developed and the people prospered in measurable ways. What mattered now was economic development, and just as Deng's famous Sichuan proverb argued that a good cat is one that catches mice regardless what color it is, so too was a good economic policy defined as that which achieved growth and development.¹⁰ The Dengist leadership had indeed put "economics in command," as noted China scholar Stuart Schram (1984, 1988) put it, even if they had to "come close to defining socialism as anything that works" (1988:182) along the way.

Similarly, the relative relaxation in the post-Mao party-state's political and ideological vigilance over all aspects of life had brought welcome relief. In contrast to the Mao-era, when political movements/campaigns (*yundong*) defined everyday life and "the reach of the state" (Shue

1988) extended through to the micro-political and somatic levels of people's minds and, especially in the case of women of child-bearing age, their bodies, the reform era had witnessed a palpable retreat. I not only met people here in 1988 for example who had never attended a political/thought study session at their *danwei*, a staple of life according to the western sinological literature on which I had been trained up to this time,¹¹ I also met Party leaders in charge of such things at their *danwei* who had personally done away with them because, they explained, they were simply "a waste of time and space." Even my living arrangement itself was a remarkable sign of political thaw. That my friend and classmate had been so sure there'd be no problem staying with his family was the first indication of this, and sure enough it was a full week before a representative from the neighborhood committee finally came knocking—or tripping the electronic doorbell, I should say, which beeped out, in our case, the quick melodies of "Joy to the World" and "Deck the Halls" (the apartment directly above us had "Happy Birthday"). To my even greater fortune and surprise, the *Gongan Ju* (Public Security Bureau, China's police) took only fifteen minutes or so to issue me a temporary *hukou*, or residence permit,

when we went downtown to register my presence, as the neighborhood committee rep had politely asked us to do.

Moreover, while it had done so in fits and starts over the course of the 1980s, the *kaifang* component of reform had liberalized the public-cultural sphere in a fashion reminiscent of Hundred Flowers campaign of 1956-1957 in which Party members and the masses alike were encouraged (albeit only briefly) to "let a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred schools of thought contend."¹² Cultural policy had by now been put on the books mandating things like greater democracy and "transparency" in political process and decision-making, freer expression in the press and culture industries, and intellectual inquiry based not on "red" political correctness as emphasized under Mao, but rather on the methods of "science," "seeking truth from facts," and "practice as the sole criterion of truth" employed by "expert," technically-trained intellectuals.¹³

Intellectuals in all disciplines working both in the academy and in the more strictly Party and government apparatus alike had indeed responded vigorously to the thaw and begun to engage in wide-ranging heated debates and studies, drawing especially from their engagement with newly-available theories and researches from the outside world, which *kaifang* had even more resolutely mandated as

necessary to reform.¹⁴ Cultural discourse had thus begun to flow across domestic and international space as never before in PRC history, especially in contrast to the immediately preceding "ten years of chaos" of the Cultural Revolution, when the stakes of any discursive deviation from the unidirectional flow of the Party's narrow line, as many of these newly liberated intellectuals had personally experienced, were nothing short of life and death.¹⁵ New work in the humanistic fields in particular, from philosophy to literary studies, had emerged with such vigor in this relatively open context that by the late 1980s it had drawn the appellation, "culture fever" (*wenhua re*).¹⁶

In heights of drama by turns ironic, comedic and tragic, however, the exuberance and dynamism across the spectrum of social life in late-1980s China had a positively nasty undertow whose effects cannot be overstated and would continue to reverberate for years to come. By late 1988, it had pulled the grounding out from under everyday-life efforts to variously stabilize and secure, from those of ordinary people trying to hammer out a living, and artists and intellectuals trying to understand a living, to those of the party-state trying to maintain a structure of living.

"*This storm*," intones Laurie Anderson, sampling from Walter Benjamin, "*This storm...is...Progress*,"¹⁷ and it is not an inapt capture of both the tenor and its perceived source in late-1980s Shanghai and China at large. Indeed, just days after the viewing of the dynamic STVF described above then-General Secretary Zhao Ziyang would express it in a strikingly similar idiom in his October 26, 1988, Report to the Third Plenary Session of the 13th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China: "While we must learn how to swim in the sea of commodity economy," he admonished the Party and the people of these stormy times, "we must make sure not to be devoured by the maelstrom."¹⁸

The maelstrom, in turn, had grown out of precisely the *gaige kaifang* formula for modernity devised and implemented by the party-state. By 1988, Stuart Schram (quoted above) was certainly not alone across the seas in his confusion and even chagrin over the new formula. While the reform and openness program of "socialism with Chinese characteristics" had achieved desirable results by many measures of standard of living and been celebrated in the popular press and scholarly literature both at home and abroad, and no one seriously advocated a return to the hyper-collectivist days of Mao, an undercurrent of deep

public concern had by now developed into widespread discontent over many of their consequences.

In daily economic life, for example, the unsavory effects for my hosts had registered in such areas as heightened work pressures for all as the state steadily cut funding to their *danwei* ("work units"). The budget for Agong's research institute had been cut a full fifteen percent the previous year, with the state mandating that the institute seek outside sources of funding. Similarly, budget cuts and market reforms for Huafei's aircraft industry *danwei* had diminished some of the social services it once provided, such as child-care, putting her in the bind of essentially working in order to pay the live-in, Xiao Huang.

Equally close to home, the reforms had deeply affected the procurement of basic goods, like food, a topic of often heated and extended commentary every day. In the past, state subsidies kept prices low to go along with low wages for urban workers. Key goods like rice, edible oil, eggs, milk, and meats were rationed and procurable only with coupons distributed through one's *danwei*. This system of course had served other functions as well—such as prohibiting rural-to-urban migration, thus stabilizing rural and urban population ratios,¹⁹ and effecting political

control more broadly²⁰—but accordingly left no role for cash-transaction markets. Now however, given the new quasi-religious belief in the virtues and power of markets as key to development and modern-making on the part of the party-state leadership, market spaces had popped up all over Shanghai and were crammed full of daily migrating responsibility-system farmers hauling their floral and faunal foodstuffs to the big city for big profits. Urbanites like my housemates welcomed the greater variety of goods, but since their wages had largely been held frozen they struggled to keep up with the inflated market prices. Things had gotten particularly bad over the past few years, they frequently noted, inflation becoming an increasingly pressing problem.

Further afield, Shanghai and other coastal cities had become inundated with rural migrants bucking the *hukou* system in pursuit of higher-wage jobs, and worker unrest had emerged due to rising unemployment, their own perception of declining social status,²¹ and what they saw as unfair and incompetent management practices, with some 100 strikes and widespread harassment of management being reported in 1988 alone. Meanwhile, disagreements between farmers and the tax/quota collectors of the state procurement apparatus in the countryside had broken out

into an alarming number of reported cases of bloody violence, as "getting rich first" for one side meant something at odds with "responsibility" for the other.²²

The most significant and disheartening new development in reform-era China however was surely the wide recognition that not only were there growing disparities in wealth and opportunities across a still ostensibly socialist society, the primary beneficiaries on the affluent end were all too often the same old elites of the pre-reform era, namely, Communist Party members and their kith and kin. Even more than inflation and the insecurities of increasing commercialization, corruption, nepotism, and abuses of power in the economic arena on the part of Party members and those well-connected to them had deeply undermined the public image and political legitimacy of themselves and their policies. For the *laobaixing*, or "Old Hundred Names," as people commonly refer to ordinary people, such abuses of power as local officials illegally raising prices on grain and securing the choicest responsibility-contracts for themselves and their cronies had reached scandalous and disillusioning proportions.²³

The leadership itself was of course becoming painfully aware of such growing discontent and the widespread "confidence crisis," as one paper reported around this

time.²⁴ Speaking to interviewers from *New Perspectives Quarterly* (1988a:8-9), an exclusive US world affairs magazine, Politburo Standing Committee member Hu Qili, for example, would acknowledge that corruption was "something the people hate very much," that "everyone is complaining...[and] some people are saying it is like the old days" of now-castigated Mao-era abuses of official privilege. Premier Li Peng in the coming months would also acknowledge the party-state's lagging "credibility among the public" and the urgent need for "clean government."²⁵

In fact these new iniquities had just been addressed at the highest levels in the Party's new three-component policy program spelled out in the aforementioned Work Report of Zhao Ziyang to the Party Central Committee. "It is mandatory to improve the economic environment and rectify the economic order while keeping to the general orientation of carrying out reforms and opening to the outside world," Zhao had proclaimed. "Improving and rectifying" were specifically to alleviate inflationary pressures and stamp out official corruption alike. Zhao vowed that the party-state would "resolutely deal with and rectify the chaos....ban all acts of raising prices against the state regulations....and punish 'bureaucratic profiteering'." Speaking on more internal Party affairs he

warned "those who disregard the interests of the whole, go their own way...and violate discipline...that the party will certainly enforce its discipline and absolutely will not tolerate anyone who turns a deaf ear to earnest admonition." Indeed, the "maelstrom" to which Zhao referred, as cited above, was precisely "the maelstrom of corruption," which he acknowledged was "what the masses abhor most."

However, as was widely recognized, there remained stark reminders of the difference between rhetoric and reality, or "theory and practice," as Mao used to stress. While China's top leaders had devoted much energy and substantial resources to the formulation of new theories, in part through the *kaifang* endorsement of honest intellectual inquiry, all in the effort to "correctly understand" and "reunderstand" history itself,²⁶ there was much to indicate that the theoretical soundness of official policy to modernize via "socialism with Chinese characteristics" had become secondary for many top leaders to their delights and interests in seeing improvements in such increasingly fetishized abstractions as GDPs, per capita incomes²⁷ and consumption patterns, productivity and efficiency rates, balances of supply and demand, and other newly-authoritative indicators of progress, development,

and modernity on the one hand, and seeing their friends and families be the ones to "get rich first" on the other. Whether due to any inherent contradictions in "socialism with Chinese characteristics" and the "socialist commodity economy," and thus the practical impossibility of "correctly understanding" them, or to a Faustian default of privileging the near, in time and social space, many of China's leaders had continued to dismay and alienate the *laobaixing* by defying their own anti-corruption policies, or at least equivocating on their own commitments to take them seriously.

"Minor mistakes are no big deal; we should go ahead with reform in big steps," paramount leader Deng Xiaoping would pronounce in an unpublished talk in January, 1989.²⁸ "The one good thing about all this," Politburo Standing Member Hu Qili had observed to his international interlocutors via *New Perspectives Quarterly* (*ibid.*)—as part of his overall assurance that China's market reforms were here to stay, since, as he put it, "capitalism has no patent right over the market economy"—"is that we can see that China is bubbling with dynamism," elsewhere offering the readership of a new Chinese magazine the pep-phrase, "we must certainly not become afraid to eat for fear of choking."²⁹ And for all the righteousness of his September

1988 Work Report, with its promises "to resolutely deal with and rectify the chaos.... punish 'bureaucratic profiteering'," and exhortation to avoid being "devoured by the maelstrom of corruption," Zhao Ziyang would within weeks offer a decidedly less urgent and more ambivalent perspective on the matter: "Regarding so-called profiteering on the part of the sons and daughters of cadres," he offered, in response to concerns expressed by other top leaders about corruption and nepotism, "as long as the money is paid, there is no problem." ³⁰

Alas of course there was a problem, and even Zhao's remarkable addendum that "that's the way the market law operates" could not entirely perform the gargantuan and calisthenic apologetics and legitimizing function he surely intended, for by this time not only his present company but the *laobaixing* knew all too well that among "the sons and daughters of cadres" profiting most extravagantly from "socialism with Chinese characteristics" were precisely his own, not to mention Deng Xiaoping's.

Nor had the leadership shored up lagging support through its practices in the more cultural and political spheres of *gaige kaifang*, perhaps to say the least. Despite the liberating effects of "seeking truth from facts," but also largely because of them, artists and

intellectuals had come to find and hold dear "truths" and "facts" that made them all the more dissatisfied with the leadership, its performance and even its agenda.

Most immediately disillusioning had been the party-state's own wavering inconsistency in making the rhetoric of *kaifang* intellectual work a consistent reality in the first place. Too often moments of openness had been followed by all too familiar backlashes.³¹ From Wei Jingsheng's arrest in March 1979 for famously calling for the "fifth modernization" of democracy in a key "big character poster" of the Democracy Wall movement, initially endorsed by Deng Xiaoping himself, and the subsequent constitutional ban on such posters in 1980; to the attack on Peng Ning's film adaptation of Bai Hua's *Bitter Love* in April 1981 and the subsequent Deng-led Anti-Bourgeois Liberalization campaign a few months later and Anti-Spiritual Pollution campaign of late 1983 and early 1984; to the ban on publication of Liu Binyan's essay *A Second Kind of Loyalty* in March 1985 just months after then-Propaganda Bureau chief Hu Yaobang had declared an end to anti-liberalization campaigns in December 1984; to the student demonstrations November 1986 to January 1987 in Hefei, Shanghai and Beijing denouncing official meddling in local elections in Hefei, and the subsequent expulsion of

prominent Party dissidents Fang Lizhi (whose outcry over the Hefei elections had sparked the demonstrations), Liu Binyan, and Shanghai writer Wang Ruowang, and yet another Anti-Spiritual Pollution campaign from January to May 1987--in all these flarings of the fruits of *kaifang*, the party-state had reacted, ineluctably many came to feel, much as it had in the past, as in the late 1950s for example, when it determined that the "Hundred Flowers" it had cultivated were more like "poisonous weeds" that needed exterminating, which the Anti-Rightist campaign of 1957 promptly and effectively proceeded to do. Indeed it was surely not lost on many that the political hatchet-man of the 1957 Anti-Rightist campaign had been none other than the spry Deng Xiaoping, who now thirty years later could still be heard sanctioning political reform and openness in one moment (June 1986, for example, at a top-level meeting) and vowing to beat the drum of anti-bourgeois liberalization for "another fifty years" in the next (September 1986, at the 6th Plenum of the 12th CPC Central Committee). To be sure, it was no doubt appreciated during the 1980s that these crackdowns had lacked the full virulence of such earlier campaigns, but their very occurrence, the suffering they wrought, and the perceived contradictions they embodied had fostered ever-deepening disillusionment among the

intellectual-laboring prominent and rank and file alike. As prominent dissident writer Liu Binyan, an originator of "reportage" literature (*baogao wenxue*) often critical of the Party, would soon tell the *New Perspectives Quarterly* and its influential readership, the Party's credibility had by now been "completely destroyed," and all indications were that this was, at most, only the slightest overstatement.³²

China's Crises: Of Vacuums and Fill

Thus it was an atmosphere of decisive cultural flux in which we sat taking in the remarkable Opening Ceremony of the STVF in October, 1988. Indeed in replay after replay my ethnographic education during this time centered around daily lessons of a profound "crisis of faith" (*xinren de weiji*) saturating the Chinese discursive air, pervading social arenas from the public to the private and in a seemingly incessant stream across both time and the social spectrum. It was one of the two most consistent and insistent themes I encountered. A materials engineer put it most succinctly in the first explicit verbal reference I encountered to this "crisis of faith."³³ "What are you reading that for?" he asked as I sat pouring over a party-published study guide to the work report Zhao had delivered at the October-November 1987 13th Party Congress. "It's

all just empty talk, no one here believes it anymore. There is a real crisis of faith in the party and government these days, you know. In fact a lot of people in China now believe that capitalism achieves development much better than socialism does. Just look at Taiwan compared to China, or South Korea compared to North Korea, or West Germany to East Germany!"

The international referencing here was most apposite, for this was the second of the two most common themes I read in the discursive air at this time. Urgent expressions abounded of the loss of faith in party-state programs and authoritative value on one hand, and of the desire and desirability of turning to the outside world for new authoritative answers on the other.

As noted above, it was precisely the party-state's own program that had, especially since 1978, not only allowed but mandated this very turn in the first place. The practice of "seeking truth from facts" it now endorsed was also to be carried out, per official policy, by seeking truths and facts from the outside world, through comparisons with other countries' "positive experiences" and performance in various measures, and through the learning of the knowledge systems that ostensibly both described and produced these positive experiences.

Primarily this meant the learning of Western economic theory and practice, but also their philosophical and more broadly cultural underpinnings as well.

A recent study of influential reform-era intellectual work, co-authored by one of its principals, Jin Guantao (Chen and Jin 1997), shows this avid and widespread commitment among scholars to the *kaifang* policy of "learning from the outside world." Within the party-state establishment, for example, the policy research arm of Zhao Ziyang's radical reformist camp, the *Tigaisuo* (Institute for the Reform of Economic Structure), had been "organized along the lines of specialization of Western economics," resulting in the usage of survey and statistical analysis "which for the first time provided a firm, objective basis for the making of reform policies" (147). Also within the established institutional structure, outward-looking journals emerged, such as *Translations of Foreign Works on the Philosophy of Science*, *World Science*, *Science and Philosophy*, and *Journal of Dialectics of Nature*, which together became known as the "'four windows into the Western world'" (102).

Among those involved in these journals were a number of Beijing-based younger-generation "cultural activist" intellectuals. Beginning in the early-1980s and drawing

from the "Beijing Spring" Democracy Wall movement, these young progressives had begun to push the political envelope by organizing what the authors call *minjian* (lit. "amongst the people;" loosely, "civic") associations, and by publications of *minkan* ("people's publications"), with various degrees of semi-autonomy from the party-state. Most important among these were the *Towards the Future* book series, the Academy of Chinese Culture, and the *Culture: China and the World* book series, all of which centered on the heady turn to the outside world. With many personnel interconnections, all three flourished especially during the "golden triennium" (147) of 1984-1986, when China's intellectual "ground was so fertile, indeed crying out for fresh ideas" (127).

Thus the *Towards the Future* book series, whose editorial staff sought to achieve in China the kind of "enormous cultural influence" of the French Encyclopedists and Japanese *Iwaname Library* in their respective settings, provided "fresh ideas" in the form of titles by its own outward-looking editorial staff on one hand, and "translated works introducing new ideas from the West" (109) on the other, all of which flew off the shelves by the hundreds of thousands across China when first released in 1983. The Academy of Chinese Culture, in turn,

sponsored conferences and offered very successful advanced short courses and correspondence courses in pursuit of its mission "to revive the teaching of traditional Chinese culture, to initiate dialogues with overseas and Western scholars, and to promote comparative studies of Chinese culture" (153). These courses, which "proved irresistible to the culture-starved young people of socialist China" (155), often featured over half their lecturers from overseas and were organized and sponsored "with active international participation" (156).³⁴ An even more decidedly international frame marked the *Culture: China and the World* book series, which "had its origins in the Beida [Beijing University] tradition of Western philosophy.... [and] took its mission to be a second rendezvous with the Western philosophical mainstream, that is, to renew the infusion of Western thoughts and ideas into China" (159; orig. emph.). Its very impetus had emerged out of the three major conferences between 1978 and 1981 on Western philosophy, the second of which led to the founding of the Chinese Association for Research in Modern Western Philosophy (160), and its core activities were the *Modern Western Classics* series of translations, the first batch of which in 1986 consisted of "some one hundred titles...with almost all important modern Western thinkers and

philosophers represented—Freud, Nietzsche, Husserl, Heidegger, Jasper, Sartre, Buber, Weber, Benedict, Parsons, Roti, and so on...[which] immediately created a sensation" (171), and the *Culture: China and the World* journal, whose mission statement in the June 1987 inaugural issue reasoned, "'If China is to go towards the world, then it follows we also have to make Chinese culture go towards the world; if China is to modernize, then it follows that Chinese culture would also have to modernize'" (167). Accordingly this group was also central in coining the widely employed and influential phrase, *zouxiang shijie*, or "to go towards the world," a *zeitgeist* expression to be found across discursive arenas in late-1980s China, from scholarship to politics to commercial promotion and marketing.³⁵

Altogether, according to Chen and Jin, these three bodies of work "generated a flurry of similar activities all over the country" (178),³⁶ including such outward-looking series as *Towards the World* from Hunan, *Translations of Twentieth Century Western Philosophy* from Shanghai, and two others from Beijing, *Twentieth Century* and *To Face Modernization, To Face the World, To Face the Future* (179). The *wenhuare* ("culture craze") "popular cultural movement" they pioneered during the 1980s had thus

created an "intoxicating atmosphere" (171) that effected no less than "the awakening of Chinese intellectuals" (182), allowing them to revisit questions about the virtues and failings of "China's past and its powerful cultural heritage," and to see "cultural development as related to the outside world and the future" (182).

The intellectual turn to the outside world for re-understandings of economics was especially enthusiastic. A most intriguing instance was the September 19, 1988, meeting in Beijing between Zhao Ziyang and the Nobel Prize-winning economist, Milton Friedman. A Hong Kong *Economic Daily* reporter present at the time first covered the event in an October 12, 1988, article called "Many Similarities, Few Differences"—a piece "reprinted in many places all over the world....[and] appreciated by readers on China's mainland and also in Taiwan and various places in the world"—and then followed up in the February 2, 1989, *Economic Daily* with a transcription of the two-hour conversation. "[D]eeply touched by their objective discussion about the economic reform in China," the journalist, Chang Wu-chang, called this meeting of minds "a precious historical event," and his influential transcription "a milestone...[that] any scholar who is interested in the history of China's economic reform (such

scholars will be numerous) will certainly not put aside," predicting also that it "will have a definite influence on readers' impressions of Zhao."³⁷

The rhetorical power of all this language—from the face-to-face pragmatics and performatives between Zhao and Friedman, to the journalistic entextualization, metatextualization, and worldwide mass-mediation—was by all indications not overstated, and gives considerable credence to Harvard philosopher Tu Wei-ming's (1994:14, 167) remarks the following year that the writings and commentary most influential on domestic Chinese affairs since 1950 have been those done outside of China in academic, business, press, and political circles. In any case this fascinating exchange between Zhao and Friedman of "many similarities, few differences" does indeed offer significant "impressions of Zhao" but by extension also of China's auto-critique, its new program of building "socialism with Chinese characteristics," and the role of China's turn to the outside world for the new underlying understandings.

"You are a professor but I am only a student...and so you should speak more and I will mainly listen," said Zhao to open the talks, with revealing if slightly anachronistic traditionalism, and he would close them with gratitude for

Friedman's "good opinions" and "beneficial suggestions," along with the assurances that he and his colleagues would study them "conscientiously" and more emphatically that "the reform in China will never change." In between however he revealed that their studies had long since begun, such that "now China's academic circles basically hold a consistent view" already quite closely aligned with Friedman's neoclassical beliefs in the universal necessity of free-enterprise and market determination coupled with a non-interventionist state in economic process. Even Zhao's and the party-state's somewhat opposed official view on the non-interventionist state component was underplayed, and not just out of politeness, as evidenced in his remark that "I agree that bankruptcy is good" in reference to official policy that unprofitable state-run enterprises should go out of business if they can't compete on the market.

Friedman in turn opened his remarks with equally revealing prefatory sentiments expressing an authority asymmetry evidently felt across the room: "After listening to your analysis of China's economic situation, I think you have the makings of a professor!" he offered, and if this deserves the benefit of the doubt for its presumable politeness, its whisper of patronizing condescension would be amplified after Zhao demurred with a laugh, "I only

studied in high school." "We should not confuse the degree of knowledge with the time spent in school," advised the sagacious Nobelist in reply, adding profoundly that "some people learn nothing after spending many years in school, but others possess profound knowledge though they have been in school for a short time only." While Zhao perhaps showed the more substantial politeness by merely replying with reference to "an old Chinese saying" to the same effect, and not emphasizing as he undoubtedly could have that this saying itself probably pre-dated even the historical possibility of the distinction in the cultural lands from which Friedman's proffered wisdom derived, nonetheless Zhao clearly had long-since granted tremendous authoritative weight to Friedman's political-economic religion, which the latter proceeded to effectively proselytize, in the familiar terms whose profound power derives from their apparent and seemingly irrefutable common-sense character:

I have spent many years studying the situation of a number of countries which have carried out reforms...and all of them think that their own situation is special. However there are some common factors in all types of different environments which are applicable to all countries. For example, the

fundamentals of chemistry and the basic principles of economics are applicable to all countries. The most basic principle is the relationship between economic prosperity and private property rights. There is an important but simple economic law which you know and agree with, that is, one is more cautious in spending one's own money than other people's money. This explains why township and town enterprises operate more efficiently than state-owned enterprises, and why private enterprises are even more efficient. Therefore, the delegation of power of the central authorities is the key to the problem. The more power is delegated, the better it will be.

Though he had prefaced his remarks with the disclaimer that "I don't fully understand the specific situation in China and am not an expert," and said that therefore he was "not going to talk about the specific situation in China," Friedman nonetheless went on to apply his 'universal chemistry' to the "three problems: inflation, price reform, and the vitality of enterprises" then facing China. Per his understanding of "economic law" Friedman offered the chemically-certain truths that states mustn't meddle in either prices or enterprises, but rather allow the market

exclusive determination. "Enterprises should have vigor," he said, adding that "the most important thing is to create an environment of competition....[and] what is most important is that we should enable everyone to run a shop or an enterprise freely."

He drew special rhetorical force from reference to other countries' experience with these universal processes. On "the freeing of prices," including exchange rates, for example Friedman related how he "began to understand this issue 33 years ago, when I was an economic advisor to the Indian finance minister," and proceeded to tell the foreboding tale: "At that time I suggested to the Indian Government lifting controls on foreign exchange, and freeing exchange rates. But the Indian Government did not accept my suggestion. It is precisely because they failed to accept my suggestion that the living standard of the people cannot be improved. Their present living standard does not differ greatly from that 30 years ago." He also warned Zhao more generally to avoid the mistakes of Yugoslavia—after assuring him that "I have visited Yugoslavia several times"—namely, the failure "to transfer property rights to workers" and other individuals, or what he called "the halfway 'stalemate' of reform....of neither

advancing nor retreating," a condition that simply "must be avoided."

Other very significant references by Friedman to the international laboratory include: "The present conditions in China [in particular in banking] are similar to those in the West 150 years ago....The near neighbors of China...have been developing very rapidly. What they have done in 30 years is equal to what the West did in 200 years....China's near neighbors have learned from the experience of the West....I hope that the Chinese people will become richer and more powerful. I also wish China success in its reform....The development of the Chinese economy is also beneficial to the United States. This is friendly competition, rather than a clash of economic interests."

The "many similarities, few differences" celebrated by the Hong Kong journalist were thus quite evident between the strange bedfellows, the Communist General Secretary and the neoclassical Nobelist Professor. Again the local engagement with these ideas had been ongoing for some time, and their virtues already extolled and widely implemented in official policy. One humorous and revealing quip from Friedman came after Zhao began to acknowledge the argument for floating exchange rates. Zhao said it had been a

Chinese-American economist who had proposed this to him two years previous, as the latter had done to the Taiwanese leadership, but before he could elaborate why China could not entirely adopt this advice, Friedman jumped in at the mention of said economist to report, "He was my student."

Just weeks then before the STVF was introducing to Chinese viewers the "famous American folk singer," and the intrepid ethnographer was trying to figure out what the Monkey King was making of the act, Zhao Ziyang was tuning in to a refresher from Milton Friedman on 'universal economic chemistry,' designating himself as Friedman's "student" as well. Within days, moreover, he would confirm this status for himself and China's top leadership in the new policy platform at the Third Plenum of the 13th CPC Congress in late September. While "rectifying the economic order, improving economic conditions, and deepening the reforms," the official tri-tag of this Congress, involved deviation from Friedman in the area of price controls, overall the emphasis was indeed upon expanding the role of markets and free enterprise, staples from the Friedman stables of 'power/knowledge'. That Friedman was pleased with his pupil was evident enough during the "historic meeting"—"I appreciated very much what the general secretary said just now: Reform in China must be continued,

and the orientation will not change"—but received confirmation in the "Christmas letter" he and his wife wrote to their circle of intimates after touring China, according to the giddy Hong Kong journalist: "We have a good impression of this person and his wisdom," they wrote of Zhao, "He is guiding China to rely more on market operation. He has profound knowledge of economic problems, and is determined to enlarge the scope of the market. He is willing to experiment and learn, and listen humbly to the suggestions and opinions of other people."

Zhao was not the only humble listener and good student. Shanghai economists I met just as Zhao and Friedman were exchanging "many similarities, few differences" for example reported that Nobelists Friedman and Paul Samuelson were indeed all the rage in Chinese economics circles, and the Chinese press was full of analyses and official pronouncements on the economy employing precisely this brand of "neoclassical economics" theories and models, as Edward Nell (1973:87) described them (using a chart from Samuelson in fact). Thus by the late 1980s a widespread faith in the invisible-hand magic of markets in the work of modern-making seemed to have created a new religion.

"The key to the establishment of China's new economic order lies in the market...[and] to allow markets to function properly, there is only one solution: expand them," said Wang Jiye (1989:24,21), director of the State Planning Commission's Research Institute. "Noted economist" Liu Guoguang, Vice President of the Chinese academy of Social Sciences, in a February 1989 interview, would both confirm and indicate the influence among policy-makers of Friedman's view on how to deal with inflation: "The present problems are chiefly inflation which has been caused by a failure to control the money supply...We must carry on a tight fiscal programme over the next two or three years...there is no other choice. *The rest of the world has taught China this lesson. It's the other nations that showed us we must tighten up, prepare to cut back some output and growth figures so we can have a stable, healthy economy in the coming years*" (Beijing Review 1989:20, 21; my emphasis). "The reduction and eventual elimination of mandatory plans is the prerequisite for the regulatory role of the market mechanism," concluded a 1985 Chinese study of the reforms, subsequently translated into English (Reynolds 1986). Hu Qili's (*New Perspectives Quarterly* 1988b:7) reminder noted above that "capitalism doesn't have the patent right over the market economy" was but an echo of

such foundational *gaige kaifang* lines like Deng's remark c.1980 that "socialism can play the market too" (quoted in Xing 1998:133), and even "moderate reformer" Chen Yun's 1979 thesis that while it remained (at that time more squarely) secondary and subordinate to planning, the market was "absolutely necessary" (quoted in Xing 1998:22). The Mao-era program of "striving for egalitarianism," announced the press, "is a leftist mistake; some people should be allowed to get rich first."³⁸ Indeed, according to one approving western economist, China's seventh Five-Year Plan (in 1986) was largely "a product of discussion with the [World] Bank" (Howe 1987:110).

The "profound knowledge" and willingness to "learn and listen humbly" that Friedman so admired in Zhao Ziyang had helped generate many other remarkable domestic re-understandings of economics, perhaps beyond even Friedman's desires. New theorizings of socialism and capitalism, for example, pointed to evidence of commonality rather than antagonism between the two systems, such as the presence in both of central planning and market mechanisms, some even redefining contemporary capitalism as itself transforming toward a more socialist character, offering publicly-traded stock corporations as evidence of a form of "public ownership." Chinese management practices were roundly

criticized as "backward," unscientific, and even in desperate need of Taylorization per the c.1911 scientific management theory of Frederick Winslow Taylor (Feng and Zhang 1986:109). Education itself in management and economics was similarly castigated and deemed in need of such knowledge-infusion (ibid.; Wang Z. 1988a, 1988b; Xia et al. 1987; Yu 1988), further in line with the *gaige kaifang* premise that "China cannot develop without the outside world" (Wang Z. 1988a:2).³⁹ Much as in Friedman's precise calendar of evolution, moreover, often the disparity between China and the rest of the world was quantified by officials and scholars alike, from Deng's frequent pronouncements on the number of years "behind" the modern West are various aspects of Chinese society, to scholarly calculations of lag in such areas as number of computers produced and their average random access memory, number of robots produced, tonnage of ships constructed, and so forth (Yu 1988:68). Other remarkable re-understandings included theses that "capitalist...science and technology, and business management expertise have no political, class character" (Xia et al. 1987:8), and that China's "absorbing and using several billions, even hundreds of billions, of US dollars of foreign capital, importing advanced foreign technology, and advancing our

own economic development" have as little to do with "economic imperialism" as "the presence of several hundreds of billions of US dollars in foreign capital investment within the US" (Wang Z. 1988c:33).⁴⁰

By late 1988 then the epistemological underpinnings and empirical findings alike of these new understandings had become so compelling that only rarely were they criticized or questioned. Importantly, what was decidedly criticized and questioned however was the implementation and execution in practice on the part of the Chinese leadership and party-state apparatus. Popular discontent and crises of faith, that is, were being expressed not toward these new understandings of things like "how the market law operates" *per se*—only Long March veterans in the CPC now put out to pasture might have still questioned this—but rather toward the latest ineptitude exhibited by the Chinese leadership in their failure to implement the new knowledges correctly, whether through corruption and nepotism, or just waffling, incompleteness or incompetence.

Thus a worker friend in Shanghai placed primary blame on the Chinese leadership for the fact that *renminbi*, or "people's money" was not convertible on the international market and worth less domestically (on the black market) than the convertible *waihui*, or Foreign Exchange

Certificates (FEC), a source of shame he described eloquently: "How can we *laobaixing* feel any sense of pride or confidence in ourselves, our people, our country, when the money for which we work so hard, which is so important to us—the people's money—is deemed to be of such little value?" The Shanghai economists who reported the popularity of Friedman and Samuelson similarly were more critical of relative performance of Chinese compared to foreigners than of the relative merits of economic theories, summing up their discussions with me about high-profile foreign investment projects making the news in late 1988 with the marveling remark, "Ah, those foreigners, they really know how to do business!" Likewise, the chief engineer of the Shanghai Municipal Residential Development Corporation spoke with me about some of these projects as well, in particular the towering John Portman-designed and developed business complex then being built across from the old Soviet-inspired Shanghai Exhibition Center, and the first sale of land-use rights to a foreigner in PRC history, just closed in August 1988, which granted 13,000 square meters of Shanghai real estate to a Japanese firm for a renewable 50-year term for US\$30 million.⁴¹ His only complaint about these was that the party-state's continued

regulations and restrictions had prohibited more of them, and earlier, *contra* the logic of market economics.

Even the intriguing episode of the Baoshan Steel factory elicited more auto-critique than critical reflection of China's *kaifang* policy and practices themselves (on Baoshan see Kokobun 1986; Ishikawa 1987). In perhaps the most important large-scale project of the new *gaige kaifang* era, China inked a deal in December, 1978, to import Japanese industrial plant (itself fresh out of a domestic market and on the global trail for new ones) for several projects including a steel factory north of central Shanghai in Baoshan district. By early 1981 however the persuasive Japanese feasibility studies had proven over-sanguine as China could not meet its financial obligations and construction at Baoshan (and elsewhere) was forced to a halt. Only later that year did it start up again, and only after Deng himself—just returned from Japan and apparently enlightenment at Nissan as to “what modernization is like,” as quoted in the epigram above (Kokubun 1986:39)—met with the interested Japanese delegation in late 1981 and agreed on a loan from them for the necessary re-start funds, to the tune of US\$1.33 billion. While Baoshan would become a model and lightning rod for China's *kaifang* linkage with the global economy,

many in China nonetheless shared the Japanese view that it had been the Chinese who bungled at Baoshan in the early phases, demonstrating yet again the flawed ineptitude of local/national leaders.⁴²

Famously, of course, this pervasive and deep-seated discontent amongst the Chinese public toward its leadership and more general 'national performance', and the outward turn for new understandings and measures of critique, were not at all new. The historiography of China in many languages is replete with descriptions of this centuries-old cultural identity crisis and its complex turn to the outside world for assistance in resolution. In language remarkably similar to expression noted above for the *gaige kaifang* era, Chinese officials and intellectuals have for the past 150 years sought to re-stabilize the terrain underlying everything from cultural and personal identities to state-making, art-making, and economic wealth-making, which had been so badly destabilized by the encounter with European expansionism, especially after the Opium War of 1839-1842. As Yu (1994:141) observes, "From 1917 onward, efforts to repossess the center of culture for China on the part of Chinese intellectuals generally take the form of incessantly seeking to import the latest products in the cultural market from the West." (Yu

1994:141). In richly various ways, involved in this program were such important figures as, Wei Yuan (1794-1856), Feng Guifen (1809-1874), Zeng Guofan (1811-1872), Li Hongzhang (1823-1901), Wang Tao (1828-1897), Zhang Zhidong (1837-1909), Xue Fucheng (1838-1894), Zheng Guanying (1842-1923), Yan Fu (1854-1921), Kang Youwei (1858-1927), Tan Sitong (1865-1898), Sun Yatsen (1866-1925), Cai Yuanpei (1868-1940), Zhang Binglin (1869-1936), Liang Qichao (1873-1929), Wang Guowei (1877-1927), Chen Duxiu (1880-1942), Lu Xun (1881-1936), Hu Shi (1891-1962), and Liang Shuming (1893-1988).⁴³

Indeed, it was precisely this painfully rich history itself that underwrote what seemed to be an ever-intensifying, almost exponentially, widespread malaise regarding the local and faith regarding the non-local. Despite their "profound knowledge" and willingness to "learn and listen humbly," in the authoritative view of Milton Friedman, the problem for Zhao and the Chinese leadership was, again, that theories they had thus learned about how "the market law operates" had glossed as many deep contradictions as Friedman's package of neoclassical-economic understandings consistently does. In other words, Zhao's quip about market laws performed the same level of abstraction as Friedman's view that "the fundamental laws

of chemistry and the basic principles of economics are applicable to all countries." Meanwhile, the lived social realities these abstractions glossed were, on the one hand, the privileged access to the fruits of these "laws" being enjoyed primarily by Zhao's and other Chinese leaders' close associates and others well-connected to the party-state, and on the other hand, the actual attitude-in-practice held by the inflowing acolytes and practitioners of Friedmanian free-enterprise, such as that expressed right around this time on the front page of *The Asian Wall Street Journal* (1988) by John Frisbie, head of the Beijing office of the US-China Business Council, addressing foreign investors interested in establishing newly allowed wholly-foreign-owned enterprises in China: "it can be a real advantage to run a factory as one likes," Frisbie confirmed, "without having to worry about Chinese concerns."

NOTES

¹ Deng is cited in Kokubun (1986:39).

² See Ai (1988).

³ At the longer work conference convened by the Central Committee immediately prior to the Third Plenum, Deng's pivotal closing talk on December 13, 1978, entitled "Liberate Thinking, Seek Truth from Facts, Face Forward United As One" (*Jiefang sixiang, shishi qiushi, tuanjie yizhi wangqiankan*), would essentially become the platform of the Third Plenum itself, and by the 1997 15th Party Congress be lionized as "the manifesto initiating the theory of the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics" (Xing 1998:5). Castigating the "leftist" errors of the Cultural Revolution and the Gang of Four radicals, Deng endorsed Hu Fuming's (1978) milestone treatise on "practice as the sole criterion of truth," declared "the liberation of thought a major political problem," and argued that "without smashing ossified thinking and massively liberating the thought of both cadres and the masses, the Four Modernizations are hopeless" (quoted in Xing 1998:4). Accordingly, the Third Plenum "resolutely ceased using the slogans, 'class struggle as the guiding principle' and 'continuous revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat,' and made the strategic decision to shift the primary emphasis in Party work to the construction of socialist modernization," exhorting all sectors of society to work collectively to "struggle toward making China a socialist, modernized power-nation by the end of the century" (Xing, 6). See Research Office of the Secretariat (1987) for selections of the original Third Plenum communique, and FBIS-CHI 12/26/78 for partial English translations. More recent Chinese accounts include Feng and Zhang (1986), Xia et al. (1987), and Su (1988), and in translation in Reynolds (1986). The *China Quarterly*, edited at the School of Oriental and Asian Studies at the LSE/U of London, featured running coverage in English of reform policy; see for example Schram (1984, 1988), Pye (1986), and Sullivan (1988) on domestic policy and politics, and Ma (1986), Kokubun (1986), Ishikawa (1987), and Kueh and Howe (1984), and Howe (1987) on *kaifang*-related international trade aspects. Wong (1988) was an early stock-taker on rural industry.

⁴ Pat Howard's *Breaking the Iron Rice Bowl* (1988) remains in my view the best English-language account of the early years of rural reform, well complemented by Selden (1993) and Parish (1985). Perry and Wong (1985) and their contributors—including a New York stockbroker and an instructor at the US Air Force Academy—analyze the reforms from an essentially neoclassical-economics standpoint, which of course is a very political standpoint as well, and thus predictably conclude that the only drawback of China's marketizing reform is that they don't go far enough, i.e., that the state still exercises too much control. Economist Barry Naughton, one of the contributors, has been prolific and consistent in maintaining this line of analysis up to the present (e.g., 1995a, 1995b, 1998). Indeed it is the predominant 'way of seeing' the Chinese economy, and now not only in the outside world but also in China as well, as I discuss below. More recent studies of the countryside in reform include more ethnographically based work such as Friedman, et al. (1991), Huang (1998), Kipnis (1997), Yan (1996), Wilson (1997), and the last parts of Seybolt's (1996) delightful personal history of a village leader in Shaanxi province.

⁵ Urban industrial reforms awaited official implementation until the 6th National People's Congress of June 1983 (see Premier Zhao's 1983 Work Report). Early work in English on industrial reforms includes Shirk (1985) and Walder (1986). Rofel (1992, 1999) provides yet richer ethnographic detail.

⁶ I was often cautioned about *getihu* operations and their proprietors, who were of "low culture/education" (*wenhua bijiao di*) and cared only for money (*quanbu weile zhuanqian*), and advised, if I must patronize them at all, to carry my own *kuaizi* (chopsticks) and to be sure to wipe off the bowls, glasses and ceramic spoons before eating, as most local patrons I saw in fact did. On this emergence of the *getihu* see especially Tom Gold (1989a, 1989b, 1990). More recently Nevitt (1996) has written on business associations comprised of these individuals and their implications for the contours of civil society in China, and Pearson (1997) provides a more extensive treatment of these and other issues surrounding this burgeoning "new business elite."

⁷ The necessity and virtues of *kaifang*/openness from Chinese perspectives are extolled in Su (1988), especially contributions by Wang Zhiping (1988a, b, c) and Yu (1988), which echo the view expressed in the *Renmin Ribao* quote in the epigram above. By 1984 Deng was calling openness, and especially the importation of foreign capital, "an indispensable supplement" to China's socialist construction (see Deng 1987). In English, in addition to the *China Quarterly* sources in note 1 above, Howell (1993) is one of the few focused studies on *kaifang* policy, examining its economic aspects.

⁸ General overviews of China in reform have been flying off the presses the past decade. Xing (1998) is extraordinarily thorough and useful. Thorough English accounts include Rosenbaum (1992), Walder (1996), Benewick and Wingrove (1995), Fewsmith (1994), and Goodman (1994). Discussing reform era China in terms of "civil society" in particular, which I address further in Chapter 4 below, are Brook and Frolic (1997), and White (1996).

⁹ First endorsing this in his epochal December 1978 talk at the Work Conference of the CPC Central Committee (see note 1 above), Deng would reiterate it nearly twenty years later in what would prove to be his crowning policy-shaping gesture, his 1992 inspection tour of the south, where he announced from Shenzhen, the dynamic SEZ inland from Hong Kong, that it was acceptable that some regions get rich first (Xing 1998).

¹⁰ Deng began using the feline metaphor in the 1970s, according to Baark (1997:37n.33), at first too close to the Cultural Revolution not to incur some wrath in doing so. "Socialism with Chinese characteristics" appears to have first been used officially by Hu Yaobang in his September 1, 1982, Report at the 12th CPC Congress (Hu 1982). Deng explained it further in a June 1984 talk to Japanese representatives to a Sino-Japanese conference held in Beijing (Deng 1987). Dirlik (1989) provides an insightful discussion in English.

¹¹ Influential texts portraying such thoroughgoing political control that were widely used in Western college courses on China in the mid-1980s, when I began my studies, include Schurmann (1968), Parish and Whyte (1978), Whyte and Parish (1984), and the 1984 first edition of Chan,

Madsen and Unger (1992). The degree of party-state control described in especially the latter three of these early accounts may have been over-emphasized, however, for due to restrictions at the time on foreign research in China itself, these studies were based on interviews conducted in Hong Kong in the late 1970s among people who had recently chosen to immigrate there from the mainland. Despite the select-ness of this group however these accounts provided a rare and early glimpse of mainland life up to the reform era. Part of the effect of *gaige kaifang*, in turn, was to gradually open up research opportunities for foreign scholars. Unfortunately, among the first allowed in included moralizing zealots with a political axe to grind, such as Stephen Mosher, so access continued along an only occasionally smooth road. Margery Wolf (1985) provides an account of the difficulties doing fieldwork in China later in 1980, and unfortunately even she is reduced in places to surprisingly indignant anger toward Chinese authorities with the nerve to monitor and regulate her access to people and places she wanted to study.

¹² In part as a reaction to Krushchev's historic denunciation of Stalin at the Twentieth Party Congress in February, 1956, Mao initiated the Hundred Flowers movement at a Politburo meeting in April, 1956, reiterating it the following year (Mao 1977a), when unrest in Hungary and Poland underscored the dangers of Stalinist cults of personality and oppression of dissent and intellectuals in general (see Brugger 1981 and Lawrance 1998 for overviews). By late 1957, however, the flowers began looking like "poisonous weeds" to Mao and many others, and so began the counter-measure, the "Anti-Rightist Campaign," which in many ways foreshadowed the Cultural Revolution of the following decade. See Quan (1995) for an insightful retrospective on the "Double Hundred" movement from the perspective of journalism in particular, written by a widely revered and very influential Shanghai journalist whose career spanned five eventful decades, the late great Quan Yimao.

¹³ The "red-expert" distinction had been debated among top leaders in those terms before and after the Great Leap Forward in the late-1950s, but, as Brugger (1981:235) shows, the terms were essentially a reformulation of the "virtue (de)-ability (cai)" distinction made during the Yan'an period (c.1936-1945), where ideal Party cadres were

expected to possess both qualities, political commitment (red/virtue) and expertise (expert/ability). Thus Mao's emphasis on redness can be overstated, as he certainly argued for the importance of expertise on many occasions (Brugger *ibid.*). Similarly, the renewed emphasis on *shishi qiushi*, or "seeking truth from facts," by the post-Mao Deng-led leadership was also a restatement of one of Mao's own central tenets stretching back to the Yan'an period as well, when he used the phrase as his calligraphed inscription for the new Central Party School (Goodman 1994:88). Mao first used the term officially in the 1938 talk, "The Position of the Party in the People's War," and first elaborated it systematically in the 1941 talk, "Transforming Our Way of Learning" (Wang 1999). Meanwhile, the term itself dates back to scholarly discussions amongst Han (dynasty) Studies specialists during the Qing dynasty (*ibid.*). Among the post-Mao leaders, Deng (1984a) renewed the emphasis in July 1977, making the connection to Mao explicit nonetheless, and Chen Yun (1977) made the call official in *Renmin Ribao* soon thereafter. Deng's (1984b) talks at the historic Third Plenum in December 1978 explicitly centered on the method, identifying "seeking truth from facts" as one of the central tenets and most important contributions of Mao Zedong Thought, and moreover, the way forward for post-Mao China. It is worth noting that both Mao and the Dengist faction were employing this politico-epistemological argument just as each was embroiled in a trenchant and epochal political struggle for the leadership of China, albeit separated by roughly forty years.

¹⁴ Again the break with Mao can be overstated, even on this issue of learning from the outside world. To be sure, Mao's anti-imperialism was fervent, consistent, and often vividly expressed (among my favorites is the headline of a July 1945 editorial Mao wrote anonymously: "F. Hurley [US Ambassador to China], Chiang Kai-shek, and the *Reader's Digest* Are a Menace to World Peace!" [see Schram 1969:400]). However, and the Dengists would take this lead, Mao also consistently maintained that "as for foreign culture, it would be a wrong policy to shut it out, rather we should as far as possible draw on what is progressive in it for use in the development of China's new culture" (1967a [1945]:255; see e.g. 1977b [1956] for similar statements). Mao was thus not the xenophobe often suggested in Western accounts. Still, the post-Mao program

was much more insistent on this need to learn from the outside world.

¹⁵ See Goldman (1981) for discussion of the experience of intellectuals during the Cultural Revolution in particular, and Goldman, et al. (1987) on intellectuals in China more generally.

¹⁶ In addition to Chen and Jin (1998), see Barmé (1999), Chen (1995), Gu (1999), Liu Kang (1993, 1998), Lu (1995), Wang Hui (1998), Wang Jing (1996), Xu Ben (1998), and Zhang (1997) for more on the late-1980s "culture fever."

¹⁷ Anderson's (1989) sample from Benjamin in her "Strange Angels" is presumably drawn from his evocative reading of the Paul Klee painting, "Angelus Novus," which ends with the passage, "This storm irresistibly propels [the angel] into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress" (Benjamin 1969a).

¹⁸ This translation is from FBIS-CHI (10/28/88:19). See Zhao (1988:4) for the original as published in the *People's Daily*.

¹⁹ Selden (1993) notes that after high rural-to-urban migration in the 1950s, "in the years 1960-1976 the Chinese state presided over an historically unprecedented urban-to-rural migration of forty-eight million people" (166).

²⁰ To live legally in cities you needed an official *hukou*, or residence permit, and in order to get that you needed some affiliation with a *danwei*. This system had been tightly regulated during the Mao era and forms part of the system of political control wielded by the party-state in China that Walder (1986) terms "neo-traditionalism." In the reform era the party-state both lessened its grip on this system and lost significant control of it, as rural-to-urban migration intensified in response to increasingly deregulated labor markets. See Cheng and Selden (1997) for recent discussions of the role of the *danwei* and *hukou* systems.

²¹ *Hong Kong Economic Times*, March 17, 1989, citing a Federation of Trade Unions report, which found that 56% of workers—a most valorized class during the Mao era—now

complained over the declining social status of the worker. See *China News Analysis* #1382 (4/1/89):3.

²² See Perry (1985) for an early account, which points out also that often the groups of farmers violently protesting the party-state had been organized along lines of the traditional patrilineages, precisely the power base of "rich peasants" the party-state had targeted and toppled in the Land Reform campaigns of the early 1950s, the earliest years of the People's Republic. Hill Gates (1996) provides an excellent macro-historical account of the traditional and contemporary power of these patrilineal descent groups, showing especially the ways in which they have and continue to control and commoditize women's labor in production and reproduction. Goldstein and Kaye (1993) report on more recent rural unrulies.

²³ By late-1988 the State Council had begun setting up grain dispatch inspection stations to check illegal price hikes, with limited success (see *China News Analysis* #1379 [2/15/89] on "Grain: the problem that will not go away"). *China News Analysis* #1382 (4/1/89:8), covering the new "privately-run enterprises," reports one survey revealing privileged access for officials to the new opportunities of reform: "72.43% of rural entrepreneurs have been village secretaries, production team cadres, or held responsibilities in rural enterprises...[while] 48.44% are Party members (the national ratio is lower, but still quite substantial: 15%) and 31.43% are delegates to People's Congresses or Political Consultative Conferences."

²⁴ See FBIS-CHI 08/03/88:20.

²⁵ For Li Peng's worries about "our credibility among the public," see FBIS-CHI 12/07/88:19. His statements on the need for clean government in the March 1989 Government Work Report to open the Second Session of the Seventh National People's Congress is excerpted in Li (1989).

²⁶ For important revisions and statements of what the new understandings should be, see FBIS-CHI 12/09/88:32 on "Major Breakthroughs in Economic Theories;" FBIS-CHI 12/5/88:52 for "a correct idea of the current reform situation" and "the socialist commodity economy" in particular; FBIS-CHI 02/01/89:39 on "transitional socialism theory;" FBIS-CHI 02/01/89:43 on "a new understanding of

contemporary capitalism;" and perhaps most remarkable, FBIS-CHI 12/09/88:27 for a call "to understand once again," and to "reunderstand modern capitalism [as] a prerequisite for reunderstanding socialism," in particular the idea that "modern capitalism" is best characterized by "social capitalism," due to the preponderance of shareholder-owned stock companies.

²⁷ Indeed, in the original formulation of the *gaige kaifang* program, the two stated goals were the general Four Modernizations, and the specific quadrupling of per capita incomes by the year 2000 (Goodman 1994:91).

²⁸ See translated excerpts in FBIS-CHI 01/30/89:25.

²⁹ Here Hu was writing for the inaugural issue of *Xuexi* [Studies] magazine, as reported by Zhangshou Henan Provincial Service. See FBIS-CHI 12/06/88:32.

³⁰ These remarkable words in translation can be found in FBIS-CHI 1/27/89:22-7.

³¹ Again much has been written on this love-hate relation between the party-state and intellectuals in the PRC era, to say nothing of this crucial dynamic throughout China's long history. The sweeping thumbnail that follows draws from exhaustive accounts of the 1980s by Chen and Jin (1997), Gu (1999), Wang (1996), Zhang (1997), and from the stunning works of Geremie Barmé (1996, 1999; Barmé and Minford 1988; Barmé and Jaivin 1992). For a similarly impressive study of the matter in the Mao era see Cheek's (1997) politico-intellectual biography of tragic Deng Tuo.

³² See interviews with Liu in *New Perspectives Quarterly* (Liu 1988) and *New York Review of Books* (Liu 1989).

³³ Earlier in the year, in addition to the August 1988 newspaper expression noted above (note 24), the crisis idiom had been employed in scholarship appears in Li and Fang's (1988) discussion of the 1980s *wenhuare* (culture craze), as noted in Chen and Jin (1997:182, n.46).

³⁴ The younger originators had persuaded marquee luminaries like Liang Shuming and Feng Youlan to front the group, providing prestige and vestigial traditionalism alike. The latter was also evident in the explicit

modeling of the Academy on the tenth-century tradition of *shuyuan* (lit. book institutes) private academies, which these 1980s intellectuals admired as noble *minjian* institutions enjoying both autonomy from and influence upon the official state. Intriguing further parallels, which I can only point to at present, are suggested but not pursued in a footnote on the *shuyuan* by Chen and Jin: the *shuyuan* "derived much of its spirit, discipline, and organization from Buddhist and Taoist monasteries which flourished in the dark interregnum between the Tang and the Song Dynasties..., grew into a widespread *minjian* institution of great influence during the Northern Song Dynasty..., [and as the] Song was a weak dynasty constantly being harassed by the barbarians states to the north, *shuyuan* came to be identified with the concerned Chinese intellectual and his commitment to maintaining national identity and culture" (149, n.44). In other words, just as these latter-day salvationist intellectuals tacked between the contradictory positions of operating an Academy of [Essential] Chinese Culture in part through "active international participation," so too did the ostensible bastion of pristine Chinese culture to which they turned for indigenous models, the *shuyuan*, emerge from an engagement with global cultural interflow (in the form of Buddhism and Taoism) and a sense of threat to the "identity and culture" of essential Chineseness. Here then is a glimpse at the historical depth of these quandaries facing Chinese cultural producers, as elaborated below and throughout the present study. It also calls to mind of course Owen Lattimore's (1940) extraordinary history of the centuries of dynamic cultural interflow along the *Inner Asian Frontiers of China*.

³⁵ Remarkably, though details aren't given by Chen and Jin, the *Culture: China and the World* group also made deals with publishers in Taiwan (170), a most impressive indication of the extent of *kaifang* during this time.

³⁶ Mostly understated, narrative devices like this throughout Chen and Jin's study suggest a privileging of these three groups as originators of the "popular cultural movement" they describe, with profound implications. The book is called *From Youthful Manuscripts to River Elegy*, which brackets these events with two projects in which co-author Jin Guantao played a significant role. However, what the narrative builds up to is in fact the pro-

democracy movement that culminated in the 1989 demonstrations at Tiananmen, which were indeed influenced by the activities Chen and Jin narrate, particularly the six-part *River Elegy* program that appeared on China Central Television (CCTV) in June 1988, discussed further below. Frequently however one is left to wonder whether the authors' privileged threesome were quite as instrumental, and activities elsewhere in China (or even Beijing) quite as derivative, as their narrative suggests.

³⁷ Chang Wu-chang's (1989) transcription and preface are translated in FBIS-CHI 02/02/89:23-28, from which these and the following quotes of Zhao and Friedman are taken.

³⁸ See FBIS-CHI 08/08/88:43).

³⁹ Tony Saich (1994:265 n.11) reports more recently even a "decline in the importance of Marxism" in Chinese education, noting that "the People's University in Beijing, a top Party training institution, has dropped courses on Marxism, scientific socialism, and the scientific nature of national economic planning from its 1993-1994 academic program," adding: "Dropped courses will be replaced by courses on international trade and business management, and marketing. Similarly, mid-level and senior Party cadres attending programs at the Central Party School in 1992 and 1993 were being instructed on how to deal with the intricacies of a market economy."

⁴⁰ Two additional remarkable analyses from China in the late 1980s, the focus of a seminar paper (Ballew 1989), include a *People's Daily* commentary on how costly was the Qing closed-door policy in the nineteenth century (Dai 1988; see FBIS-CHI 08/11/88), and a study of "stubborn handicrafts" in late nineteenth and early twentieth century China (Xu 1988). The former presents post-Opium War history as the story of benign and natural foreign commercial interests being stymied by Chinese ignorance, resulting in a grand "lost opportunity" for the Chinese. The latter laments the stubborn persistence of local Chinese cotton handicrafts in the face of foreign-led mechanization, a mark for the author of "backwardness."

⁴¹ See FBIS-CHI 08/10/88.

⁴² *The New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman (1999) has just reported as I write on the pervasive global spread of this sort of popular no-confidence vote in local leaderships around the world due to their perceived failures to lead their unacceptably developed societies to prosperity as measured by essentially neoclassical economic indicators. At a USAID-organized seminar in Sri Lanka on "competitiveness," Friedman watched and listened as business leaders and journalists from across South Asia were enthralled by former Costa Rican president Jose Maria Figueres's "spellbinding description of how Costa Rica got Intel to set up a factory there, started to bring the Internet into all its schools and successfully adapted to the Information Revolution." "The audience of South Asians was awed," Friedman writes, "and when it came to question time, several people stood up and asked Mr. Figueres: 'Would you run for president of my country?'" As a Sri Lankan banker put it, people were leaving the talk saying "'If we don't have that kind of competence within our own country, why can't we just hire it?'"

⁴³ This is a complex and tremendously fascinating history, with a correspondingly rich historiography; among the major works in English, see Alitto (1979), Chang (1971, 1987), Chow (1960), Chu and Liu (1994), Cohen (1974, 1997), Denton (1996), Dirlik (1978), Grieder (1970), Hayford (1990), Lee (1973, 1983), Levenson (1967, 1971, 1972), Lin (1979), Link (1981), Schwartz (1964), Schwarcz (1986, 1994), Spence (1981), Tang (1996), Tu (1991, 1994), Wright (1957), and Zhang (1996). Never without a sturdy measure of at least ambivalence toward the outside world, the deep fascination many felt, as well as the real-world issues in terms of which they felt such fascination, are revealed in the following diary entry of Zeng Guofan (1811-1872), leader of the Qing forces in putting down the Taipings at mid-century but later an advocate of substantial reforms, especially in the area of Qing openness to foreign science and technology (e.g., the steamship). On the telescopes a Chinese friend had sent him in 1861, Zeng wrote: "Feng Chu-yu sent me two telescopes which he purchased in Canton. I went upstairs and experimented with them. They are really exquisite. Objects at a distance of half a li were brought as near as if they were in the courtyard within reach. Whether the material is copper, iron, or wood, once it is in the hands of foreigners, after chiseling and polishing, it becomes useful, beautiful and an attractive object."

This makes me think that after polishing and smelting, the material things of this world can have their nature change and produce new characteristics, how much more true should this be of man and learning" (quoted in Baark 1997:1). In some ways this already goes beyond the later dictum, first articulated by Zhang Zhidong (1838-1909), of *zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong*, or "Chinese learning for substance, Western learning for application/use," and, although Zeng was a lifelong Qing loyalist, his remarks adroitly foreshadow the much more "radical antitraditionalism" (Lin 1979) and iconoclasm of the later May Fourth generation.

CHAPTER TWO
XIAXIANG FOR THE '90s:
THE SHANGHAI TV RURAL CHANNEL AND POST-MAO URBANITY
AMIDST GLOBAL SWIRL¹

Social relations do not disappear in the 'worldwide' framework. On the contrary, they are reproduced at that level. Via all kinds of interactions, the world market creates configurations and inscribes changing spaces on the surface of the earth, spaces governed by conflicts and contradictions.

Henri Lefebvre (1991)

The study of urbanization is a study of that process as it unfolds through the production of physical and social landscapes and the production of consciousness.

David Harvey (1985)

It is especially important to recognize the effects of the industrial revolution and the growing world market on peasant segments the world over.

Eric R. Wolf (1955)

*'City' is a concept that shades off into the countryside.
In fact, there are many different kinds of 'rural' areas in
China...*

Lynn T. White III (1981)

Reification is treacherous; cities do not act. People do...

Hill Gates (1996)

Shanghai is more beautiful than ever.

Shanghai Statistical Bureau Information Office (1998)

What happens to our dichotomies then?

Ann Anagnost (1994)

"Xiaosa yi dian..."

The summer day in 1992 had begun more or less as usual. The three offices of the new *Nongcun tai*, or Rural Channel, were bustling with activity at Shanghai Television Station (STV) in one of its two main production and office buildings. People were on phones, scanning the papers for leads, carrying tapes to post-production, arranging shoots, brainstorming with colleagues, or just settling in to their new work spaces. I'd filled the colorful thermoses with water from the boiler in the airshaft downstairs and taken them up to the slender office of the Rural Channel's Arts &

Entertainment unit (A&E). Emptied Nescafe jars with stout pinches of tea were filled with hot water, Kents and Marlboros touched with tiny flames. The young migrant men from Subei regions of the lower Yangzi delta, housed in makeshift semi-structures recently tacked up just outside, had long since begun with the power saws and drills and jackhammers from their various precarious perches amidst the bamboo scaffolding, working away at the new office and production facility, with guest-house, going up adjacent to this one, a shell of its former self, really, after first Italian then Singaporean monies had been pulled in the wake of the Tiananmen tragedies of 1989, putting punch in the "political" in global political-economy for STV. All the din and hum and perpetual motion you come to expect in that "big giant construction site" (local parlance) Shanghai has come to represent in the 1990s. Or rather re-represent.

The Rural Channel was set to go on the air in just a few weeks, beginning with a live Opening Ceremony primetime variety show on the 8th day of the 8th month at 8 o'clock—all very auspicious since *ba*, or eight, rhymes with *fa*, or get rich and prosper, making 8s just generally good to have in Shanghai at the time, in phone numbers, license plates, addresses, timeslots²—and subsequently offering three and a half hours of programming each evening on one of the five existing channels then available in Shanghai. This first

"narrowcasting" experiment in the annals of Chinese television had been launched through a joint initiative between STV, the Municipal Bureau of Radio and Television, and the Municipal Rural Work Committee. Its mandate was to offer news and entertainment programming for and about peasants (*nongmin*), especially the roughly 5 million living in the suburbs and counties (*jiaoxian*) and villages (*nongcun*) within the Shanghai Municipality, with the express aim to "play a powerful role in advancing (*tuidong*) the modernization of the Shanghai countryside."³ Its staff of about sixty young educated Shanghainese had been culled primarily from within STV, but also included a few crossing over from radio and others selected through examinations. They were spread amongst the News unit and Special Topics unit in addition to A&E, each with its own tight office space abuzz with commotion these past weeks.

Soon an A&E crew was ready for one of its first forays into the Shanghai countryside for some on-location shooting. Chen Ming,⁴ the producer of a weekly show on Chinese opera to be among the flagship A&E offerings, had organized the group to compile the on-camera testimonials from a diverse demographic of ruralites to be aired as promotional bumpers during the *Opening Ceremony* variety show. A delightfully bright and entertaining expert on Chinese opera in his late-thirties, who had previously worked in radio and would

occasionally and without warning launch into a few bars of "O Sole Mio" or something similar in a quite beautiful baritone, who was full of heart-rending stories of familial history, and whose remarkable coiffure invited speculation on its authenticity and, occasionally, adhesiveness, Chen was in his inspired and more or less default sketched-out-genius mode: "Are we...did you...is there...have they...should I...? Okay, 'Tsgo!" Set to go out with him were three of the other eight A&E members: Qu Tanrong, who'd worked in security before broadcasting and had a manner of squinting-smiling-smoking strangely reminiscent of James Dean, would work the lights; Mu Zhenqing, a reserved young woman new to the business who kept broadcasting textbooks at her desk, would help with sound and the small playback monitor; and Mao Yinghua, the golden-hearted ever-dependable veteran, would come along to do the camerawork and more or less anchor the group technically, since he alone had significant production experience. I rounded out the crew as VTR/misc.-toting production assistant lackey slash ethnographic fieldworker, just happy to be there.

We signed out the Sony-dominated equipment from the second-floor tech room, past the castaway domestic-brand equipment piled along the hallway attracting dust and snuffed-out cigarettes, then finally got away, fairly smoothly all in all, save Qu Tanrong's burnt ankle from an

up-ended thermos and the more minor datum that we'd overshot our departure time by half an hour or so, a good mark actually.

Then off we drove for the ruralite soundbites. Destination: Songjiang County, southeast of downtown Shanghai, one of nine within the Shanghai Municipality at the time and home of half a million people. The clogged city streets of Shanghai soon gave way abruptly, in part per the Garden City urban design theories of Ebenezer Howard, to the vivid agricultural greenbelt immediately surrounding the city.⁵ As cigarettes from around the world were tossed around the van Qu explained that the giant satellite dishes and microwave tower lurching in the distance, looking urgent and about to utter Cold War words amidst the day-glo green fields of freshly transplanted rice shoots, had been built expressly for the historic Nixon visit in 1972. The driver's laminated Mao portrait with red tassel hung from the rear-view mirror, swinging and dancing to the beat of potholes, dodges and darts, stops and starts.⁶ Chen Ming waxed epic on how "without Songjiang there'd be no Shanghai!", and offered a quick Berlitz of local history with characteristic narrative flair, as well as another brief on his own family's heritage in a more well-known nearby town, including, wistfully, his proud if unconsummated kin relation (they'd never communicated,

though he tried once) to an internationally famous architect now living in the West. Which he diagrammed nicely for me on his hand.

Fittingly in several respects, Chen Ming's opera show was called *Nanqiang Beidiao*, meaning literally "southern accent, northern tone" but also an idiom for "speaking with a mixed accent," according to the *Hanyu chengyu cidian* (1992). For this would prove to be a day positively brimming with admixtures of many kinds, linguistic and regional dialect-ical, for sure, but also politico-cultural, social, spatial, across all sorts of human regions, intersecting and blurring identities, much as the epigrams introducing this chapter variously suggest, and indeed, as the history of dynamic Shanghai itself would suggest.

Any insights these episodes might offer on questions of "reconceiving the urban" or the old "urban-rural continuum" problem would thus have to do precisely with this interflowing complexity and blur as fundamental urban conditions.⁷ As Vivienne Shue (1995) has so evocatively put it recently, urban life in 1990s China presents "...a jolting cacophony of possibilities and prospects...[where] truths are found everywhere...[amidst a] jostle of options;" "newly scrambled," "decidedly mixed," "shifting realities" and "perplexing blend" are other vivid and apt images she offers. Yet to lay stress in these directions is not to

offer a reconceptualization at all, really, but rather a reminder of some anthropological ideas of considerable heritage about things like cities and urbanity, which nonetheless have much in common with more current ideas often dubbed 'post-[whatever]'. The stress on open-endedness, flux, urban blur that I want to extend here, however compatible with anti-essentialist positions of late, turns out to have a long history in anthropology, even if these earlier coordinates are often overlooked.

Of "Jolting Cacophonies"...

First stop in Songjiang County was a dusty road at the edge of the county seat, Songjiang Township, population 91,000 (Fung 1996), thirty km from central Shanghai up the Huangpu River. Blurry urban interflow ratchets up a notch here already. Waiting roadside for our arrival was Li Mei, a forty-something woman in a black jumpsuit wearing a watch-ring and lots of perfume whose husband, introduced as a writer but not joining us, had worked with Qu at STV Channel 2. Directed by Li Mei, we soon arrived at the Songjiang County Workers Club where she introduced us to a trio of hosts with whom we sat amidst doilies, glass tabletops, tea and cigarettes in a nice reception room. Our hosts were the Director of the Club, a smooth man in his mid-forties; the Vice Chairman of the Songjiang County General Workers Union,

an amiable round man, fifty-ish, who spoke with a slight lisp; and the pleasant woman representative of the Communist Party, similarly round and fifty-ish, who would remain almost completely silent the entire time.

And you may ask yourself (with due apologies to David Byrne and Talking Heads of course): Where is the beautiful *nongcun* the *Nongcun tai* is supposed to be engaging? Where's the "Rural" in the Rural Channel?

Well. . .

The crew gave a general introduction to the new unit of STV. Chen Ming, animated as usual and oblivious to the very fine kinship diagram on his gesticulating hand, began by saying we'd come to Songjiang largely because of Qu's acquaintance with Li Mei and her husband, reminding his hosts (as if!) how hard it is to get things done in "women *zhongguo*" (our China) without such links of *guanxi* (networks of relations, connections), and expressing his hopes this encounter would be the start of a fine and fruitful relationship.⁸ He explained further that we were there also to elicit feedback from ruralites on the kinds of programming they would like to see and to videotape some of their statements. More specifically—and here his generalized pre-production anxiety began speaking—we'd come especially to videotape people saying they'd like to see a

particular kind of show like, well, *Nanqiang Beidiao*, for instance.

Mao Yinghua, the more seasoned and savvy of the group, soon interjected, with touching mercy for Chen Ming, to counteract his rather mercenary tone. He provided a more general and efficacious intro which emphasized how the Rural Channel aimed to redress STV's relative neglect of viewers in the Shanghai counties by producing programming directed explicitly at their tastes and interests, employing hosts, for example, fluent in local language usage, and giving voice to local concerns. "You've never had this stage before," he said, "Now you do...Our target/object is you."⁹

The Vice Chairman politely began their response by corroborating the necessity of friends and good *guanxi*, and then moved on to the familiar outline of the effects of post-Mao reform and openness (*gaige kaifang*) on the local community, namely, the rise in the standard of living—"shenghuo shuiping tigao le," intoned with the frequently accompanying rise of the hands from the belly upward and out, as if to express the viscerally, somatically sensed promise of and yearning for this particular social history—and the corresponding increase in consumption and spending on leisure and cultural activities, such as are held at the Worker's Club. Volleying back in what might be called the *keqi bisai*, or contest in politeness, of *guanxi* practice in

China, he insisted the crew had spoken too kindly and that it was they who promised to gain most from the work of the Rural Channel, not vice versa. The Club Director also chipped in on how economic development has led to increased demands for leisure and cultural activities in Songjiang, and described the *redian*, or 'hot-spots,' in local entertainments, such as the 20-odd performance/dance schools, the three ten-yuan Kala-OK (karaoke) houses (reflecting relatively high consumer spending), the Kala-OK nights many *danwei* (work units) host on occasion, and the various activities held at the Club itself for its one million annual visitors.

...But here: let's have some lunch.

We adjourned to a private dining room for a meal of many spectacularly tasty dishes and toasts to and fro. Conversation here was more informal and turned on some remarkable current event topics, like the coincidental deaths of five STVers under the age of forty in the previous year, which you wouldn't expect to get outdone but very plainly was, hands-down, no contest, by their account of the young Director of the local (re-transmitter) TV station who'd very recently tumbled off the top of the TV tower in broad daylight and of course died on the spot. To which, of course, our collective response could only have been, "...Wow." Or something very close to that.

Overall it was quite a successful meet-and-greet, a good schmooze, productive networking. Chen Ming at one point was even moved to raise his glass to warmly toast the hosts and marvel, with perhaps a touch of hint-dropping too, "Oh, we've gained so much already and we haven't even started shooting!" It was now after one o'clock and it's true we hadn't shot a frame.

But soon enough we were back in the reception room setting up a shot. After some cajoling the Vice Chairman agreed to *shangjing*, or "get on the lens", and say a few words himself. He sat behind a table in front of the camera, crew, lights and microphone, no whisper now of his recent minor tipsiness. Chen Ming went over his lines with him about the level of local interest in *Nanqiang Beidiao* and the direction "they" would like to see it take in terms of content—nudging him to use the more colloquial *lanmu* (program) rather than the newsy, doctrinaire *zhuanti* (special subject/topic), to say, "I feel that...", rather than the official-ese "According to policy..." and to plainly state what "people want to see." In addition to *Nanqiang Beidiao* of course. The Vice Chairman lit up a cigarette to take the edge off: long deep nervous drags, yes, that would do it.

Now the camera rolled and the Vice Chairman was off, a pitch or so higher than at lunch but off nonetheless,

delivering his lines without prompting in *putonghua* (Mandarin) through a thick local accent.¹⁰ He was a bundle of self-conscious nerves, despite the nicotine. Chen Ming was cheerful, encouraging and patient. But after a few takes he felt compelled to go to the reluctant and increasingly tense Vice Chairman and awkwardly yet very skillfully first compliment him on his content, but add too with all the limited delicacy possible under the circumstance, "um, perhaps...would you mind if we combed your hair?"

Oh, and another thing: "*Xiaosa yi dian.*" A touch more "urbanity," if you will, a notch more refined and relaxed. Even Li Mei, the liaison person, joined in on this, exhibiting clearly and multisensorily (clothing, accessories, perfume) that she'd long-since fashioned out a strong sense of what that meant for herself. "Sophisticate up," the man was effectively instructed and directed by his unusual guests.¹¹

The Vice Chairman did manage to get through it. When it was over, though, an evocative off-camera scene captured some of the tensions in the episode. The Vice Chairman had come around to watch the playback on the small Sony monitor. Li Mei, the Club Director, and some other locals who'd amassed as an impromptu studio audience teased him good-naturedly, though it didn't loosen him up much. He was

still self-conscious as could be. As he leaned over to watch himself on the screen, hands joined behind his back, he kept fidgeting with this object between a thumb and forefinger that he'd clearly been working over for some time and had by now rendered completely unrecognizable, at least for a few moments. Finally I realized it was the transmogrified remains of the filter of that tranquilizing cigarette. I wondered if he'd noticed putting the thing out bare-handed while the camera was rolling.

...and Fuzzy Dichotomies

Recognition challenges abounded, to be sure. Things were clearly fuzzy, distinctly blurred. Interflowing, usually contradictory, discourses and identities and practices were all around. This contingent of Rural Channel urbanites for example had come out to the hinterland as part of an official, state-mandated program to serve the countryside, primarily by giving it voice, by representing it. In this sense they shared a similarity with the urban youth of the Mao-era *shangshan xiexiang* movements, which sent in just the decade after 1968 some 17 million urban youth (including two of these Rural Channelers!) "up the mountains and down to the countryside."¹² They too had intended to serve the peasantry and by extension the entirety of the revolutionary Chinese body/subject, in their

case by learning from them how to be properly revolutionary, how to work the soil and identify with the masses, and by helping communicate central policy to local levels.¹³

Yet in significant contrast to these earlier movements, but also in contrast to the very rhetoric of their own newer project, these wielders of highly powerful technologies of representation 'in the age of electronic reproduction' (cf. Benjamin 1969), these post-Mao sojourners *xiaxiang*—these people here were telling the locals in the hinterland specifically how to be, and that they should be, more urbane, sophisticated, refined. They were effecting a powerful kind of ventriloquism, in Anagnost's (1994) insightful and evocative image—'here is your voice, this is what to say'—but importantly a ventriloquism no longer seeking to inscribe and speak unified revolutionary subjects, but rather sophisticated, stylish, cosmopolitan ones, "As Seen on TV!" one might say. These were new "distinctions," that is, following Bourdieu (1984), new terms of and for "the judgment of taste," made on dramatically reconfigured fields. *Xiaxiang* in the 1990s isn't just not your grandfather's *xiaxiang*. It's not even your older sibling's *xiaxiang*. Or even that of your own youth.¹⁴

Such generalized ambivalence toward the rural, ranging from deep respect, albeit often condescending, to occasional

contempt, was not uncommon among the urbanites at the Rural Channel. On the very first trip to the Shanghai countryside, some weeks previous, to meet with local leaders for introductions and feedback, and under the candied cadence of Canto-Pop radio in an air-conditioned bus, the young urban media professionals spoke of their understandings of the new Rural Channel's mission in terms that would recur throughout my work with them. Consistently underlying their accounts was a familiar syllogistic line of argument: China is predominantly rural; rural areas are "backward;" to make China modern you need to address rural backwardness. "If you can't solve the rural problem you can't solve the China problem," one sub-unit leader explained. Another young man of 21 added that "150 years of post-Opium War tears/bitterness are enough to eat," and felt certain that ending that unsavory diet had to begin with improving life in the vast countryside. Others remarked the need to urbanize the rural areas outside of Shanghai, pointing to satellite-town development and the explosions of rural industry as steps in the right direction.¹⁵ Another bright young producer said he wanted to do a piece on rural housing construction, yet not to show them as enviable fruits of reform and progress, but to reveal that "while they may look nice on the outside, inside they're really rustic and backward."

This kind of urbanite ambivalence has been noted for widely divergent contexts, from the contentious concepts of city and country during British industrialization examined by Raymond Williams (1973), to the "localist" and "cosmopolitan" images of rurality among workers on the Zambian Copperbelt illuminated by James Ferguson (1992). As noted, it has long been well-remarked for China, and repeats some of the tropes identified by Cohen through which urban elites have throughout the post-imperial period, but particularly during the early 20th century, constructed the peasantry "as a culturally distinct and alien 'other,' passive, helpless, unenlightened, in the grip of ugly and fundamentally useless customs, desperately in need of education and cultural reform" (1994:154-155).¹⁶ Zhang Yingjin's (1996) excellent recent study details similar representations in the film and literature of this period in which the rural is represented as the backward, boring and benighted dead weight on China's efforts to become modern. As Zhang notes, while a rural idyll was occasionally drawn in these texts to contrast with the perceived evil city (e.g., by Li Dazhao), more common were May Fourth writers such as Lu Xun, Peng Jiahuang, Tai Jingnong, and later authors like the *xiangtu zuojia* (native soil writers), who saw China's countryside as "the country of no hope," site of life that is "backward, ignorant, intolerable, stubborn,

stagnant, suffocating, and sterile" (1996:15). In their rich discussion of an abiding problematic in Chinese historiography pitched in fresh, potentially useful terms—i.e., of mass culture, popular culture, and mass communications, rather than cultural integration, high-low culture, state-society relations, or other more familiar China studies problematics—Lee and Nathan (1985) also describe the 20th century "decline" and "estrangement" between city and countryside, wherein "urban intellectuals...speculated about the peasant mind as if the villages were on another planet" (394). Interestingly, these images and representations parallel the process of "internal orientalism" that Louisa Schein has insightfully examined in the context of Han-[gendered]minority relations in China (1996, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2001).

These images of conflict on the other hand contrast dramatically with those offered in such foundational accounts as Frederick Mote's on "an urban-rural continuum...as an aspect of Chinese psychology.... reinforc[ing] the organic unity of rural and urban" (1977:103). Nor do they square easily with Rhoads Murphey's influential vision of traditional China, which suggests "[t]here was no denigration of rural circumstances and values, but rather, on the part of many of the urban elite, a longing for the countryside, to which they would retreat

whenever they could, and to which they almost invariably retired" (1984:192). According to Murphey, the "rural sector was recognized as the source of at least as much wisdom and virtue as the city...[and] conscientious officials...found rural virtues more important than urban" (*ibid.*). To illustrate he quotes a 17th century imperial official putting it flatly: "'Goodness develops only in the village, evil in the city'" (*ibid.*).

Clearly these divergent accounts are due to their referring to different types of urban elites, one of the traditional-imperial order, as Murphey calls it, and the other of the post-imperial 20th century. On the other hand the two sets of urban elite may well not have disagreed had they the same object in mind in the first place. Murphey's image of the "retreat" of wealthy and mobile gentry and officials to the pastoral countryside to reflect, rest, do art, poetry and scholarship in their gardens and pavilions, is surely not what 20th century intellectuals have had in mind in their musings on the Chinese countryside. Nor of course does this account of "retreat" exhaust the totality of "rural circumstances and values" in any case. Indeed it would seem to scarcely touch it. The voices of common agricultural laborers of the countryside, the vast majority of its inhabitants, is typically muted in the historical record. But presumably the urban elite of Murphey's

traditional-imperial China did not exactly have these everyday lives in mind when they romanticized rural life. Murphey does note that his selective picture depends on elite written accounts, acknowledging that few of these champions of rural life "were sages or self-denying philosophers" (*ibid.*). He might have added also that neither were they the back-laboring cultivators sweating in the fields.

A similar difference in attitude that may prove to be more apparent than real would be that between these post-Mao urbanites and the revolutionaries of the Maoist era generally. Thus Mao's and others' widely remarked "anti-urban bias" would seem to contrast with these more recent cosmopolitanist distinctions valorizing the urban.¹⁷ Certainly they are different. On the other hand Kirkby (1985) and Fung (1981), for example, show persuasively that Maoist policies toward the urban were designed to make urban places work better, albeit along radically different lines, rather than deriving from some visceral aversion to them. Mao was clearly critical of China's cities and demonstrably championed the countryside. But it seems helpful to stress that he was critical of cities as they were then organized and functioning. Designs to control and shape cities in a new image do not necessarily reflect desires to obliterate them. As Whyte and Parish (1984) note, along with Kirkby

and others, the communists' relation with and attitudes toward the cities also grew out of being effectively expelled from them by the Nationalists from 1927.

...But Wait, This Is Not My Beautiful Nongcun!

Apart from these issues however, another fuzzy problem that should be nagging at you right now, to return to the Rural Channelers' entreaty for more urbanity in the Shanghai hinterland, is the point that this episode is not even taking place in "the countryside" in any completely transparent respect. Songjiang Township has been a settled market town site since at least the Song period, possibly the Tang or even Sui.¹⁸ In 1959, it was officially designated a "satellite town" of Shanghai, and had a population here in the 1990s of some 91,000 (Fung 1996). In what sense then had the "rural" even been accessed by the Rural Channel in the first place? The Vice Chairman of the Worker's Union was the vice chairman of a worker's union, after all, not a peasant association. The Director of the Worker's Club was similarly not one of a peasant's club. And Li Mei, the fashion-conscious suburbanite, obviously had strong ties, social and stylistic, to the cosmopole of Shanghai. So where are the peasants?

Here emerges a set of vexing spatial and definitional issues about where "the urban" stops and where "the rural"

stops, and where either might begin, and I would like to handle these in a particular way: I would like to sidestep them. But not just for cowardly reasons. Indeed I'd even advocate the exercise, and here I find alignment with that aspect of the foundational works of Mote, Skinner, Elvin, and Murphey and others which emphasizes the porousness and heavy-traffic interactions historically between country and city in the scapes of China. For the Shanghai region, this border-fuzziness and permeability has been fundamental for centuries. What Elvin calls its characteristic "shifting landscape" (1977:442) refers to its deltaic geomorphology but also conveys the dynamism of its water-way trade history. More recently it has been the site of tremendous socio-spatial blur generally. The demographic interflow alone conveys a sense of Shanghai as space of flux: its population in 1945 was ten times what it was in 1842, the year before it was declared a treaty-port city after the Opium War (Wakeman and Yeh 1992:1); in just the years between 1910 and 1927 the population doubled, from 1.3 million to 2.6 million (Goodman 1995:2). Further, as Goodman's extremely illuminating study shows, these population shifts entailed dramatically intensified interaction among diverse identity groups, especially those organized in terms of native-place associations: "throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,

immigrants comprised at least 75 percent of the total figure" of the Shanghai population (*ibid.*). Honig also highlights Shanghai's internal heterogeneity and interflow with outlying regions in her excellent studies of the constructions of Subei identity and the various unsavory discriminations toward groups so designated (1992a, 1992b). Even more recently, during the PRC era, when "hard edges" were supposed to obtain between city and country (Davis 1995, Naughton 1995a), what Lynn White refers to as the "connections between the green and grey cities" of Shanghai (White 1981:257; cf. 1996, and Fung 1981, 1996) continued to be extremely fluid and to defy any neat taxonomies into urban and rural categories. "There was no place to build the city walls," writes White (1981:267) of this Shanghai spatial blur throughout the 1949-1966 period.¹⁹

Thus the fixing of boundaries of various sorts in the Shanghai region proves impossible, whether it is between the rural and urban, the rustic and urbane, or the modern and backward. This is a liberating assumption in my view, not a defeating one, and is akin to insights emerging in widely divergent discussions, from fresh discussions of "space, identity, and the politics of difference",²⁰ to those of media audiences, cultural identity, "poetics and performance," and dialogism and hermeneutics²¹—all of which place emphasis on boundary permeability, the impossibility

of closed systems, however equally constant are human efforts to "fix" across these lines, to "center," in Vincent Crapanzano's (1992b) image.

Yet neither are these only recent perspectives. Eric Wolf wrote for decades on the fundamental interconnectivity amongst social and cultural units and the need therefore to attend to "the total social field of which they are a part" (1955:455), to recall and adopt from even "the diffusionists...their distrust of the automatic or organic coherence of culture" (1984:396). Indeed, as Wolf points out, much earlier expressions of flux and blur across sociocultural space, as we might call it today, include Alfred Kroeber (1948) on peasants as "part-societies and part-cultures," always only in relation to "a larger population" (284), and Alexander Lesser (1961) on "social fields" and the need to "conceive of human societies—prehistoric, primitive, or modern—not as closed systems, but as open systems," rather than assuming "the myth of the primitive isolate" suggested in the works of Robert Redfield and others (42).²² Exemplary of such a translocal and transhistorical perspective, Wolf argues (1967), and pertinent to the present context, is Owen Lattimore's magisterial study of the ebbs and flows of forms of social organization on the *Inner Asian Frontiers of China* (1940).

Dramatic spatial interflow, in other words, has been observed in China for quite a long time.

Thus to discern the experience of things like "urbanism as a way of life" (Wirth 1938), or "the cultural role of cities" (Redfield and Singer 1954), or similar objects pursued by the influential Chicago school of "human ecology" and urban studies, must proceed, in contrast to the strategies employed by these pioneer urbanists,²³ from the assumption of interflow, of always-negotiable boundaries. As Nan Ellin shows in *Postmodern Urbanism*, a rich and insightful survey of western urban design theory and trends since the 1960s, reconceptualizations of the city as far back as Marx and H. G. Wells stressed the breakdown of "the distinctions between city, suburbs, and countryside" (1996:245; cf. 1999). She shows further that by now urbanists, urban designers and architects have abandoned such projects as "searching for the essence of urban" (Guldin 1996:265), and instead tend to offer blurrier images like "the 'non-place urban realm'...the 'anti-city'...the 'centerless city'...the term 'post-urban'...collage city...the megaburb, the technoburb...cyburbia...exopolis...the new city...and the 100-mile city" (Ellin *ibid.*).

This is not at all to deny, say, Mumford's point that "the psychological import of the wall must not be forgotten"

(1938:55), to suggest either that there is no discernable difference between urban and rural, or even less that conceptualizations of such differences make no difference in everyday social life. They demonstrably do, as the above episode seeks to convey. Such distinctions, such essentialisms-in-action, like identity practice in general, are fundamental human manufactures. It's what we do, whether at the level of freezing or fixing phonemes, however momentarily, or at the level of valorized distinctions among marks of fashion and style in bodily comportment. Stressing the non-fixity of such boundaries as those between urban and rural thus does not deny the existence of these, but rather allows fuller if more complicated access to them by extension, for it forces us to log into their ethnographic detail in process, practice, and production, across dynamic social fields, rather than seeking taxonomies of their ontological presence or absence within. It is socially significant that identifications of urbanity and rurality are being formulated in the diverse fields of Shanghai, and that they are forming the basis of social action and interaction. It was also socially significant that critical commentary on the alienation of city life appeared in the 18th and 19th century poetry of Wordsworth and Tomson (Williams 1989), and that of the Song poet-official Su Dongpo (Murphey 1984:190), long before Simmel's and Wirth's

go at it, just as it is that such essentializing conceptualizations about the country and city, if of a different content, are alive and well across China today, as Guldin (1996, 1997) documents so well. However, these aren't bespeaking an "essence of urban" that sits fixed somewhere, like a stake in the ground, waiting to be located, pulled up and re-plotted on the graph of the urban-rural continuum.

What they do express is precisely the disruption of dichotomies by interflowing cacophonies amidst the fundamental flux and open-endedness of social fields, be they urban, rural, *desakota*, or something in between, and consequently the availability of these fields to serve as locations of the negotiation, co-production, and contestation of cultural identities as socially empowered/-ing practices, always in-production. Thus the fields of Shanghai are indeed being tilled, inscribed and reconfigured, as Lefebvre suggests, as "spaces governed by conflicts and contradictions" (1991:404).

There is however an important further particular: especially in the era of enthusiastic and officially mandated *gaige kaifang* ("reform and openness to the outside world"), this tilling or reproduction of space, as Lefebvre, Wolf, Harvey, Anagnost and a host of others might also note, is a consummately global process, one proceeding for its own

re-presentation to "the evaluative gaze of foreign capital," in Anagnost's phrase (1994:279). This "evaluative gaze" of global capital—and its thus far insatiable appetite, we might add—constitutes a (*sic*) primary principle giving shape to the spaces of Shanghai in the 1990s. It imparts "selective, preferred directionalities," to combine insights of Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, and Eric Wolf, respectively,²⁴ to the ideas, identities and distinctions being put into social practice on these fields. Urbanity, rustic, backward, modern need contain no fixed content in order to be useful for the flow of global capital, as the mere proliferation of these and other identities, distinctions, marks of significance, offers yet greater volume of commodifiable surfaces.

The more the merrier, for the flow of capital. Where there is a surface in the signifisphere, there is a Way for commodification. That's the *Dao* it is, so well put in the theme song of global capital: "*I'd like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony...*"

Thus "the proliferation of local identities, all of whom may be speaking the same language but producing meanings of their own" (Anagnost 1994:278), is an ongoing process in the newly reorganized scapes of Shanghai. Entreaties—some more some less "violent" in Lefebvre's sense of all abstraction, from language to identity

practices, entailing a certain violence—by figures perceived as relatively cosmopolitan forwarded to figures perceived as relatively rustic, whether they live in towns or villages or indeed within dense cityscapes, like the Subei people in central Shanghai, to sophisticate up, become more poised, urbane, cosmopolitan, are being put into sociocultural play on the newly reconfigured globally connected spaces-to-be-commodified of Shanghai. And as the Vice Chairman's de-flamed filter, fidgeted to oblivion, suggests to me, these entreaties are conveying effective meaning, if it nonetheless remains incompletely unified meaning, always contestable. For the diverse figures of the Shanghai hinterland, the Rural Channel urbanites know what (at least part of) *xiaosa* is, and it matters. Just as, in the previous movements of urbanites *xiaxiang*, the Vice Chairman, or his equivalent, knew effectively what *gou geming* ("revolutionary enough") was, and that mattered too.

But in the post-Mao, post-Communist era of globally produced social spaces in China, the meanings and identities constructed by and through speaking subjects are certainly more open to debate, to creative contestation. There is now, in this historic interface between China's "urban" and China's "rural," greater room than ever before for the proliferation and diversity of such meanings and identities. Globally produced space, space configured and inscribed by

global capital, is simply vaster social space. The work of meaning/identity in the age of commodified and electronic reproduction, again to sample a patch from durable Benjamin (1969), is something that takes place on almost unthinkably large terrain. One of the consequences is that, at the same time there is significant effectivity in the hinterland of cosmopolitan estimations, there is also on another level greater room for contest and negotiation over who's speaking, who's inscribing, who's representing. And in the fields of Shanghai, in stark contrast to the hypodermic image of cities "dispatch[ing] urban culture into the hinterland in a systematic and insistent fashion" (Strand 1995:402), the discursive contest has been decidedly joined, by local figures seeking to re-write a bit of the terrain.

Blurry Urban Interflow Some More

...Back in Songjiang County, there was a quiet man at lunch at the Worker's Club. He'd sat there just listening to conversation about mutual benefit between the crew and its hosts, the limits of science, the strengths of *qigong* and so forth. I was unsure who he was and why he was there, though Li Mei, who apparently knew him, had mentioned he was from a local factory.

His interests soon cleared up. For when the crew reiterated its desire to tape some locals, including young,

old, male, female, Li Mei and the quiet man chimed in to report that the manager at his factory was a 26 year-old man. Perfect.

Taking leave of the kind hosts at the Worker's Club, expressing gratitude to the Vice Chairman and Club Director and our desires to return soon, we piled into the van, squeezing in the country-kickstanded bicycle the quiet man had apparently rushed to lunch on. The driver excelled against odds through the sharp corners and tight streets of the older sections of town. Dodging pedestrians, cyclists, other vehicles of assorted type, and chickens, and peppered with now frantic now teasing directives from our gallery of navigators, the driver finally got us back out amongst the flood-irrigated rice fields heading for our next stop, (where, for his part, the first order of business was the day's second-most desperately needed smoke!).

For the crew the most striking thing about the Shanghai Angli Biotechnological Foods Factory ("Only," as a transliteration; "Hi-Powered" as another meaning), a modest complex on the edge of Songjiang Township bordering the rice fields, was its state of readiness for our arrival. Some calls had been made. Equipment extracted from the odd berths of the van, we were immediately taken to a reception room where a handful of people were waiting. Tea was served in summer glasses as we took our places around a prepared

table, and cigarettes flew up and down and across the table, from both sides, but with the delicate balance in volume deftly siding with the hosts. Across the table sat two sanitary figures in professionally white coats, both looking very laboratory and scientific. The man was in his fifties, attractive, intelligent if stressed face. The woman was in her thirties, sharp, serious and focused. Other figures sat back or off the table. The young factory manager, also dressed in white hygiene, busied himself supplying cigarettes and filling tea glasses, or having it done.

Suddenly it was obvious. We'd been ushered into a full-throttle pitch session, a deft maneuver in the post-Mao goldrush for ever-precious publicity.

The Bioscientist Man began. Trained at and still affiliated with a top university in Shanghai, he had helped develop a *koufuye*, or oral liquid, for Shanghai Angli. *Angli Yihao Koufuye*—"Only/Hi-Powered #1 Oral Elixir"—was good, high-powered stuff all right, a "modern bioengineered product," according to the packaging of the samples festooning the table. He told stories of its success and was clearly proud of the wonders of *Angli Yihao*. But there was an anxiety seeping through his presentation as well, and it soon brought a rather abrupt stop to the introduction, a decided cut to the chase: marketing was killing them, he said. The sky-high costs of advertising were prohibiting

them from distinguishing *Angli Yihao* from the countless other *koufuye* products out there, and "...we were hoping you could help."

With that and some uncomfortable resignation he turned it over to the Bioscientist Woman. Whatever mystery might have remained regarding the purpose of our unexpected reception here at Shanghai Angli was now immediately resolved. She was very happy to host us and tell of *Angli Yihao*, she said, how it prevents aging and many other miraculous things. She launched into a presentation clearly prepared and delivered in the curious discursive style emerging in reform-era China in which the language of marketing and commercial persuasion bears a striking resemblance to that of political campaigns and "struggle" of the Mao era, referencing and reproducing some of its tropes and figures of ardent commitment, passionate belief, fever-pitched tries of persuasion. The stock rhetorical devices were of course familiar to the crew, sitting them back in their seats even more, somewhat taken aback, but ultimately sensing the inevitability as well. Even the other hosts, and indeed the woman herself, seemed to recognize the routine. Winding down finally, a bit self-conscious, she closed by reiterating her colleague's concerns and hopes for the Rural Channel's promotional assistance.

There was a pause. The crew had pretty much powered down.

"Well!" says Chen Ming, un-reclining from his chair, trying to pipe up and seem awake, fill the silent void, preempt any offense or hurt feelings, "we've certainly gained a lot of fine knowledge regarding your factory and product here." Echoes of his toast at lunch, it seemed. "It's really just a pity we don't have time to hear more about it...see, what we really came out here for is to..."

Qu Tanrong was perhaps less tactful. He'd been listening, sitting still, smoking. He'd been the target of most of the Bioscientist Woman's eye contact and language both. Initially I'd assumed this was due simply to his magnetic good looks and central seat. But then there was the Sony 330 video camera in front of him too, randomly placed on the table, but directly between he and she, serving then as the fulcrum over which her communiqués were delivered and aptly illustrating how the issue 'on the table' was in fact on the table and all about representation, imagery, and publicity. *Xuanchuan*, what at least used to mean propaganda, is no longer in the 1990s even primarily about strictly political propaganda, as in the Mao era. Its multivalent connotations center now around the cluster of meanings involving commercial publicity,

plugs, public relations practices, straight-ahead advertising.²⁵

"Look," began Qu, "you're really talking to the wrong people here. See, our unit in the Rural Channel is Arts & Entertainment. We've come out here to make a kind of commercial ourselves. For ourselves, for our own show. You know?" He explained that the crew would be happy to introduce the situation to Special Topics, the more appropriate unit of the Rural Channel for this sort of thing, and that we indeed hoped to maintain this relationship and return for further projects, but what we really were after on this particular day, which was now stretching well into the afternoon, were some statements of local interest in *Nanqiang Beidiao* committed to videotape. Like we were mentioning at lunch over there?

The Bioscientist Man, appearing to feel a bit sullied by this dip into crass promo-commercialism, apologized for their urgency, saying "your face is very wide" so just this opportunity to tell the crew of the wonders of *Angli Yihao* was worth it to them, adding, to further account for their stress, that it was a very busy time for them at the factory, where they were currently rather understaffed. Sure they could help us. As the factory manager was sent to find a young woman to join him on camera, Mao Yinghua leaned over to explain to me that this was a problem in many rural

enterprises: planting season comes along and people choose or have to work in the fields, leaving factories like this one under-staffed.

The factory manager returned shortly with a young factory woman. The factory woman was not introduced and said nothing. Her gloves and hair-stuffed hat were the same lab-white as her coat and she was preoccupied, clearly having been interrupted, and perspiring. After a few words about what we wanted we adjourned and headed for a shooting locale.

By the time we reached the small building just around back of the reception room, she had resumed her work hurriedly changing hoses and switching valves amidst the industrial plumbing attached to and connecting two large vat-like boilers in an open airy room divided horizontally by a platform, a boiler on each level. She glanced our way a few times, waiting for instructions, but otherwise worked busily, with the brilliant greens of sun-drenched rice paddies glowing through the open windows behind her.

Finally we were set up. Chen Ming began to coach the two young "candid" commentators, now gathered near one of the boilers. With the VTR and monitor set up next to the tripod-ed camera and in the hands of the pros, I was moving about taking pictures.

But suddenly we were making a change, moving to another location. I asked Mao and Qu why the change as we hoisted the equipment and followed Chen Ming leaving the building discussing the matter with the Bioscientist Woman, Bioscientist Man, factory manager and Li Mei. The factory people don't like the backdrop, the guys told me, too generic and no tags of their factory or any of their products. Mao and Qu said they preferred the boiler room setting themselves, "but what are you going to do, these people want a little publicity out of it, a little *ruan guanggao*."²⁶ There were several other options, exteriors and interiors of various sorts, but soon it became clear that Chen Ming and the factory people were leading the group down the driveway out toward the factory entrance. Li Mei came back toward us and confirmed the evident: they wanted to shoot the scene with the factory entry gate and signage in the background. Well that was it for Mao and Qu, who'd only reluctantly left the previous setting. This was all the excuse they needed. Saying the signage idea was way too forced and predictable, they stopped, feet planted, and insisted: "Back to the boiler room!"

So we started back. The factory people, with Chen Ming negotiating and navigating through the treacherous social waters along with them, again scampered in front of Mao, Qu and myself, but went back in the other direction to the

first reception room, and began hastily preparing an adjacent room for the shot, arranging boxes and bottles of *Angli Yihao* and other enterprise significata in a glass case behind a table, trying to get the persuasion through Chen Ming to the other two²⁷ to effect a more beneficial backdrop, this key and badly needed representation and strategic signification. But by this time Mao and Qu were determined: Nope, boiler room. And we finally set up there again.

Now came the negotiations on the linguistic component of this high-stakes representational practice. Chen Ming resumed going over the lines with the young and attractive factory manager and factory woman. The former was placed in the foreground, the latter in the background, both roughly 'working' as they were being interviewed. The lines were simple and straightforward.

Factory Manager: "People always say we young people don't like traditional Chinese opera. But the truth is not that we don't like it; we just don't understand it. I would like to see some programs introducing opera knowledge and history and so on."

Factory Woman: "Yeah, I actually like Yueju [one variety of local opera], especially [Moumou's] performances. And so do all my friends!"

The two amateurs performed well, the crew was pleased. As we began to dismantle and head off however, Qu couldn't resist asking the young factory woman, before she sped back to work: "Do you really like it?" She'd already been notably perturbed by other aspects of the shoot, as when Chen Ming's habit of holding a shot long enough after the delivery of a line to enable him to do dissolves or other editing maneuvers prompted her to keep speaking, ad-libbing what she thought the crew wanted to hear, further explaining with evident imaginative and well-intended effort what she liked about traditional opera and why, only to be told none of that was necessary, "all we need is your line..." But this really tripped her up. "Keyi," she shrugged, or something like, "Ts'okay I guess," with the implied note of "...like, what do you want?" And back to work she went. Qu didn't press it but appeared completely un-persuaded.

With much remaining undone of Chen Ming's desired demographic, we packed our complimentary bottles of *Angli Yihao* and modest marketing info sheets and bade farewell to the anxious and ultimately unsatisfied folks at Shanghai Angli. We drove along the dirt roads transecting nearby rice paddies. We stopped, rather randomly, where we could see some people planting rice shoots in the watery fields, piled out with our equipment and started off along the built-up footpaths separating the paddies in search of

others willing to reflect in our not-so-candid camera. Juxtaposing, when not altogether obliterating, the wide, spread-toed barefoot imprints in the clayey paths with those of our own sneakers, high heels and one broken pair of resoled wingtips from a Brooklyn Salvation Army, we were now looking for the elderly of the intended sample of ruralites, but first had to stop when we came upon a young man with pant-legs rolled up almost knee-deep in muddy water, who had, with luck or unluck, just happened to reach that end of his paddy as we walked by. He'd been furiously transplanting the shoots, working backwards plunging the roots of the fine green blades quickly into the mud ten inches apart, three across, stepping back, three across, step back. Chen Ming caught him. Sure, whatever, he said, though he continued to plunge the odd shoot into the water whenever he could.

Again the voice was not his, but he was at least provisionally willing: "We peasants work hard, and after a long hard day in the fields, some dinner and a wash, we like to watch television, especially [moumou-style] opera." Ever meticulous Chen Ming had some reservations about part of it, and managed a couple of takes but soon got the message from the young man, who'd been anxiously glancing at the other two planting next to him who were pulling away toward the other end of the paddy, that he had more pressing matters to

attend to. We thanked him for letting us interrupt his work...but by the way could you point us in the direction of some older people we might interview, those people in the next paddy over maybe? He shrugged, said he didn't know them, and began making up lost ground.

We returned to the van, where the driver slumbered in idling air-conditioning parked next to freshly built homes of the rural *baofahu* ("nouveau riches"). Sweat was trickling down Chen Ming's face but he trudged off nonetheless in pursuit of an older woman wielding a hoe-type implement who flatly said no, non-negotiable, and then on to another, who finally acquiesced by nodding us toward a storage shed and threshing ground back out in the middle of the paddies. Here we found our seniors, a barefoot couple of no apparent relation and very apparent tremendous age, who in turn obligingly presented Chen's pitch for the programming promised on *Nanqiang Beidiao*. With the heat, our exhaustion, and I think respect for their age, these two required only a couple of takes apiece.

We ended our fruitful day in Songjiang with a visit to two of its tourist attractions along our route home, Square Pagoda, built in the 11th century, and Drunken-Poet Bai Pond, heart of a lovely garden where a Ming painter once lived, followed by a Qing official, who renovated and named it after the Tang poet, Bai Juyi, famous lover of wine. By

the time we reached the latter, however, it had gotten late and we were told, crossing the road, that the place was closed. The crew was unfazed. Collectively, reflexively, they made for the side gate, where we met a gatekeeper good at his job. Closed, sorry, nope, see ya. He didn't seem remotely movable. Once he was appropriately decorated, however, and looking like a walking vendor with all the cigarettes dropped in his shirt pocket, between his fingers, behind his ear, the man finally gave in. But he had conditions and he was serious about them: one quick walk-around and only two at a time. As Chen, Mao and myself took our turn at the gate, a man sharing a wink and a nod with the gatekeeper momentarily crept through, tackle box and fishing pole in hand. Glances of clarity, registered recognition, low-grade embarrassment, all these were exchanged, and the gatekeeper got grumpier.

It was a fitting end to a day of interflowing interests across the radically transforming fields and spaces of Shanghai. Urbane sophisticates, carrying explosively powerful technologies to the hinterland seeking to fix and represent "peripheral" identities,²⁸ both impacted local cultural practice and were forced to confront or conform to local maneuvers. A complex kind of "gift economy," in Mayfair Yang's (1994) phrase, but this one in post-Mao *xuanchuan* or reform-era representation, had to be engaged

throughout, from the *guanxi* with entrée-providing, suburban sophisticate, Li Mei, to the check-in, future oriented meeting with the local officials, to the bartering with the people at Shanghai *Angli*, and finally to the oddly analogic access contest at the pond of Drunken-Poet Bai with its gatekeeper, who acted much like the Rural Channelers had earlier, arbitrating the terms of access to a significant resource, as if Bai's pond were full of the paper and ink and brushes he used to make his poetry, available now, if you're in with the right Gatekeeper, for the re-creation of signage, consumable imagery, but now designed to reach the viewing eye and listening ear in order to trigger the attached consuming/desiring body into a specific kind of action, a body consumable then in turn itself as nourishment for the reconfigured, re-spatialized body social in post-Mao post-communist China, in the newly selected economy of commoditized equivalences. Productive in very specific ways, it is, to pilfer a wordsmith, if not Drunken Poet, of another place and time, a calculus of "the convergence of consumer desire—not that people want the same things, necessarily, but that they want the same range of choices" (DeLillo 1997). Or are confined to them.

GlobalAccess Contest Joined: Getting Urbane, Getting Modern

Reconfigured for/by global capital, the fields of Shanghai are thus sites and occasions of social contests in a new key. Surfaces geomorphological, bodily, and digital are being fragmented, segmented, partitioned and identified, then constantly re- all of that, to make themselves available for the inscriptionings of commoditized value, per the agreed, if never finally so, standards of global capitals.²⁹ The outcomes of the contesting identity practices, the contest of positions, are always on one level an empirical matter. If Shanghai *Angli* failed on that day in 1992 to completely achieve its desires, if the Vice Chairman was indeed slightly terrorized by the urbanites' urbanity, and if the local Songjiang TV station that had so publicly and tragically lost its young Director had been just a re-transmitter of non-local programming without production facilities of its own—if, that is to say, there was in fact on this day asymmetry in who had voice and the power to represent—certainly these were not fixed states of affairs, but rather always fluid ones, temporary dichotomies amidst the cacophonous, plurivocal, "baroque textures of...everyday life" (Crapanzano 1985:xiv), to be lived in everyday/-place practice, perhaps even ethnographically explored and represented, but never finally fixable more firmly than this either way.

Yet there is an historically unifying common cause across these fields that has exercised and practically dominated intellectual life in China for generations—from the late-Qing reformers, to May Fourth and other nationalists, including the communists—and that is the project to craft a livable modernity, emically understood: to make China modern, to progress, develop, advance, and improve the quality of life. Surely the *zeitgeist* of the current reform era as well, as Rofel (1992) notes and I have explored (e.g., Ballew 1991, 1992), the quest to become “modern” has been an abiding, pervasive, and shaping reality.³⁰ As Jonathan Friedman points out, however, “modernity is a local product of commercial global systems, that is, a form of identification, or perhaps *habitus*, that arises in determinate local transformations of conditions of existence,” and further that “...its embodied images and things inform processes of identity formation throughout the larger world” (1994:212-213). That such essentializing fixity, as I’ve emphasized, is a human impossibility does not deter our compulsion to fix nonetheless, however fleetingly, for as Friedman goes on to note, the category “modernity” has as “one of its central features...precisely the principle of alterity, by which all specific forms and practices are necessarily arbitrary and temporary” (213).

Thus as the peculiar tilling of the Shanghai sociospatial fields proceeds apace, the historically urgent task of constructing a Chinese modernity takes place in a very specific context, however internally modulated and constantly in-process, that imparts upon this task a "selective, preferred directionality." Global capital and the interflow of its substantive "modernity" together configure this as a space of hegemony. It does not dictate the concrete forms and contents of the identity practices played out in this space. It never does, as hegemony is a never-ending story, an always incomplete history, an unfixed condition anti-secured, if by nothing else then by the tyranny of the simple sweeping second hand, the constancy of change, motion in the system.³¹ Such hegemonic contexts and the identities practiced therein, again like phonemes, have no essence. They are never perfectly present, in either dimension, temporal or spatial. They are rendered nouns only regrettably and misleadingly, much as culture is, suggesting and offering fixed essences, despite their intractable impossibility. They are thus only the efforts to em-practice such would-be stable essences—the ever-fleeting if no less vital centers-that-cannotbutmust-hold—that we might see or experience in the lived world. But they always happen in a contextualizing space configured by determinate processes not necessarily of their own making.

Thus it seems useful to recognize the occasional/spatial limits to the project of constructing "alternative modernities" posed by such hegemonic contextualization, to acknowledge that the locally lived response to ever-intensifying interflows of globalization is not always and everywhere "of the jolly and 'creative' sort" following Friedman (1995b:422), often suggested in studies of the local in the global, but also is the site of interested power.³² Such celebrations of alterity and resistance, while compatible with our own sense of alternative identities, if not positively schizophrenic/rhizomatic ones (Deleuze and Guattari 1983), and indeed preserving of the alterity required by anthropology and area studies, often turn primarily on mere recognition and reiterations of the facts of broad cultural diversity in a very wide world. When Kala-OK performance and knowledges deemed "alternative" because they contain an alternative content (Moore 1996) are offered as proof that the dynamic, interflowing cultural parameters of globally mobile capital are radically fragmented at local levels, reworked out of all recognition, and indeed out of all effectivity, then we have lost track of the relations and processes of something that matters quite a lot: power, empowered practice, (em)power(ed)/knowledge. We forget the basic structuralist lesson—even if it comes forcefully from

among others Michel Foucault, so often framed a poststructuralist³³—that resistance of necessity has an object, that to which it is contrasted or opposed, even if this opposite itself never stays still or present and is always but discursively inscribed.

Thus it was the effectivity and success, however partial and fragile, of the fragmented and partitioning culture of global capitals and modernities that so frequently appeared in the Shanghai counties that year, not merely their happy failure or “the happy juxtapositions of many different sets...between center and periphery” (Wolf 1967:463). This effectivity appeared in disparaging remarks on the backward peasants and the producers’ own backward equipment. In the hi-impact estimations of hairdos, personal accessorizing skills, “growth” and leisure spending per capita, and myriad other bright marks of “urbanity,” of symbolic capital-laden distinctions. In the sacralization of Deng Xiaoping’s allegorical indifference to the color of the cat (black or white, as long as it catches the mouse) and whether China’s economy is surnamed Socialist “She” or Capitalist “Zi”, as long as it *develops*, according to globally accepted indicators. In the related thirst for international capital and gazing attention.

It was visible too in that newly built rural home where the façade of the second-floor balcony, in a large,

permanent, and painstakingly mounted custom-made mosaic, prominently bore the inscriptions, "KENT" and "[the characters for *jianpai*]," it's Chinese equivalent, just for the cachet of it, for the distinctive marker, for all the world.

It was also evident in the fact that dear hapless Chen Ming's *Nanqiang Beidiao* itself was bound for low ratings on the Rural Channel, whose audience, as the *Angli Yihao* factory woman could have predicted, would strongly favor shows of pop music videos from around the world for their music television. Or in Qu's only partially exaggerated remark one day, as Paul Newman and Orson Welles sweated through *The Long Hot Summer* on a Rural Channel office TV set, "...see, Chinese culture is already gone!" It appears also in the ubiquitous objectified, eroticized, fragmented figure of woman on STV and Rural Channel programming alike as just so many surfaces to be beautified, or subject positions from which to variously serve men. And most overtly this effective global cultural flow showed up repeatedly in straight-ahead interview statements from STV production professionals that the substance of China's modernity should closely resemble that of the West. As the Rural Channel Director himself put it in one of these interviews, "In fact, modernization is itself precisely westernization."

Interested Interflow

One of the first uses in English of the term "urbanity," according to the *OED*, appears in the 1848 first volume of Macaulay's *The History of England*, where he refers to "...that exquisite urbanity, so often found potent to charm away the resentment of a justly incensed nation" (1934:338). It refers to King Charles II's apology for his "unconscionable time dying" and the trouble it might have caused to those attendants who'd stood around his bed all night watching it in 1685, apparently not a characteristic note of royal consideration and concern, but, for Macaulay, a positively exquisite note in the symphony of what would later be called political legitimacy. It is of course about another time and another place, but it speaks to a process at the heart of the representations and identity practices related above from the dynamic fields of the Shanghai Municipality. In their work crafting a version of modernity replete with much of the palette of global capitalist renderings of 'modernity' and its radically persuasive imagery of the good life, progress, and development, in their carrying this imagery of *xiaosa* out to the Shanghai countryside, Rural Channel producers were mediating, if not channeling, an urbanity potent indeed to charm away resentment, such as any resentment that may develop

locally/occasionally over the ways in which global capital interflow is reconfiguring and reinscribing and reidentifying the spaces of Shanghai. The 'modern' and 'urbane' answer such potential reactions with a shimmering vision of possibilities.

There are, that is, such things as "DevelopMen" in the world, if I can borrow a typo from the future (see below) from the Songjiang *xuanchuan* people, and they are persuasive creatures. "Develop Men" are pre-packaged to the hilt, dripping with the signatures of internationally consensual distinctions and rhetorical power. They know about things like progress, development, growth, decline, efficiency, backwardness, and modernity. They're seductively good to think with, incorrigibly, almost irresistibly. They are inscribed in textbooks and white papers and music videos. They work at the World Bank and the IMF, at the US Departments of Commerce and State, and in the countless academic departments, ostensible NGOs, and private commercial firms and financial institutions that are so extremely well-wired with these policy-makers. They are very urbane.

Alternative urbanities then, like alternative modernities, are in this context identities hard to figure, hard to imagine. Of course, that the task must nonetheless be joined is nothing short of globally, environmentally,

humanly imperative. We can talk sliding signifiers, decentered subjectivities, and epistemological relativism until the cows come home, as my sharecropper grandfather might have said, but can we really just play language games with the question of environmental sustainability in this world? If global-ambition consumer capitalism, flash with the signs of the Modern, allows for—again, even demands—local difference in the contents of consumption, is it sufficient to merely celebrate the alterity and bypass the comfy linkages with systemic power and asymmetry, as well as the rather uncomplicated yet deadly serious idea that the world can simply choke on too much plastic and fossil fuel emission? In refusing to critically address the effectivity of the rhetorics and identities of a particular modernity—The RuggedIndividualConsumerModerne, or, You Are What You Buy—we are shying away from an important task, indeed shirking an imperative responsibility.³⁴

In the van on the road back from Songjiang that day, looking at the two enormous satellite dishes blossoming in a distant field as the sun went down, I remembered the point made on an earlier occasion by the head of the A&E unit, a bright, gifted young leader and dear friend. “Even if, say, traditional Chinese opera disappears,” he’d said, or any other of a number of cultural transformations occur as China goes global where an artifact of quintessentially “Chinese”

culture is replaced by those of consumer-capitalist culture, well, even if this did happen, "...China will still be China."

Without question, I say. But for the sake of the global community no less, just let's remember how pleasurable yet temporarily satiated will be the empowered structures and processes of this spectacular and radically effective "urbanity," this exquisitely potent, resentment-lifting and charming xiaosa.

After word: Bulletin from Songjiang, Light-speed and

Blinking

For a taste of how Songjiang people have more recently been utilizing new opportunities to re-inscribe and represent their place, if still in relation to its administrative neighbor, Shanghai, try the following exercise. Log on to "Shanghai on Internet" (1998) on the World Wide Web at <www.sh.com>, go past the online shopping opportunity, and click on "Districts & Counties." This will take you to a page blinking at the top with "Shanghai Needs Investment," listing hyperlinks to the thirteen Districts, six Counties and one New Area now comprising the Shanghai Municipality, each with its own animated, rotating gold star (also here is a link to the "Regulations of Shanghai Municipality for Encouragement of Foreign Investment").

Click on our "Songjiang County." Your first greeting, again, blinking at the top, will be "Investment & Developmen [sic]" followed by several more hyperlinks. Click on any of these. Among the things you can learn are: that "the Songjiang CCP Committee, the government and the local residents in all walks of life, adhering to the policy of reform and opening to the outside world and making full use of the industrial advantages in Shanghai, are doing everything possible to improve the investment environment and to develop the export-oriented economy;" that 680 firms have been established in the past decade in Songjiang with foreign investment from 27 countries totaling US\$1.8 billion; that "due to the sincere cooperation and concerted effort between the domestic and foreign investors, the foreign-invested enterprises in Songjiang have got rich economic profits and formed its own characteristics;" that "the people in Songjiang, under the correct leadership of its Party Committee and the county government, with their most broad mind and warmest sincerity, are determined to open the door to the outside world even wider and to create the best investment environment for the domestic and overseas businessmen...Songjiang is the broad land for fighters, the ideal place for investors and the best partner for cooperators. It is a wise decision for all domestic and overseas businessmen to invest and initiate industry in

Songjiang. They are warmly welcome and bumper harvest belongs to those working diligently in Songjiang."

Further digitalia in this neighborhood will tell you that the first phase of the new Songjiang Industrial Development Zone has been completed, where on 2.5 square km of new Songjiang space "100 foreign invested enterprises have settled down, with a total investment of about US\$600 million...[and that] Hitachi, Kenwood...Minolta...from Japan, 3M from U.S.A., Nestle from Swiss and some other well-known international corporations from more than 20 countries and regions have settled down in the zone." You'll also find very detailed "Procedures for Foreign Investment," a list of "Preferential Policies," and much information on education, health care, transportation and communications, housing and hotels in Songjiang, including the price of land for lease.

Another route leads to blinking banners calling Songjiang "A Paradise for Investment," a "Convergent Place of Entrepreneurs," "A Good Place to Build Large Industries" (<<http://www.sh.com/zone/sjiz/sjiz.htm>>). Further, "Songjiang is catching the attention of the world for its great development at an unprecedented speed...[and] the Management Committee of Songjiang Industrial Zone welcomes investors from all countries to come here and will do its utmost to provide services as complete as possible." "We

look forward to more investors' coming," the voice adds, "and are fully convinced that we both will achieve great development under our mutual efforts."

As in the Shanghai Municipality at large, active agents in Songjiang have clearly been busy, in reconfigured space. They have taken new Great Leaps Forward in situating/getting situated in the potential pathways of global capital, straining with Great and positively Digital effort to sparkle and catch the globally prized "evaluative gaze."

NOTES

¹ A modified version of this chapter appears in Chen, et al. (2001). See Ballew (2001).

² Curiously, the explanation I most often heard was that the derivation of this link was from the Cantonese pronunciation of "eight," a high-tone "bat," even though of course Cantonese is not local language in Shanghai. There were many other such fashionable translocal/-linguistic associations in Shanghai at this time bespeaking interesting issues in linguistic ideology, but they are unfortunately beyond the scope of this chapter. I'm grateful to Stevan Harrell for his suggestion to clarify this. I might add, revising in the rain in Shanghai in 1999, eights are still highly valued. A friend, for example, pointed out that one of the things that made my cell-phone number both easy to remember and auspicious alike is that it contains the sequence, "168," or *yao[yi] liu ba*, which sounds close to *yilu fa*, or roughly, "Road to Riches."

³ From "Brief Introduction..." (1992:1), which elaborates the mission thus: "The Rural Channel will publicize/propagandize (*xuanchuan*) rural and agricultural work in a prompt and timely fashion and popularize the scientific, educated and prosperous countryside. It will explore and probe rural reforms, and showcase today's rural customs and conditions, and the styles and scenes of the times for the contemporary peasant. It will serve as a helping hand in peasant life, and advisor to agricultural production." All translations herein are my own unless otherwise indicated.

⁴ These personal names are all fictitious.

⁵ Fung (1996) suggests Howard-inflected planning ideas were actually implemented in the Shanghai area only with the satellite-town projects of the late 1950s, though they'd been first propounded in China by none other than Sun Yat-sen, who was also first to advocate the development of Shanghai's Pudong area, an interesting point also noted by Anthony Yeh (1996) and MacPherson (1996). Chan (1996) and MacPherson both note that greenbelts and satellite-town planning had also been part of the 1946 Master Plan for Shanghai, while MacPherson's account suggests they may have even been part of planning efforts begun by native Chinese in 1926-1927, which achieved remarkable successes during the following decade despite the war with Japan. Gaubatz (1995)

provides a useful overview of PRC urban planning, especially in the reform era.

⁶ One of Geremie Barmé's more recent stunning achievements (1996; but see 1999, a positively astonishing piece of work) provides rich accounts of this and other artifacts of "the cult of the great leader." See especially his introductory essay, "The Irresistible Fall and Rise of Chairman Mao," and Hou Dangsheng's (1996) piece specifically on these portraits as cabdriver talismans.

⁷ Benchmark discussions of the urban-rural continuum include of course Elvin (1977), Mote (1977), Murphey (1984), and Skinner (1977a, 1977b). Strand's (1995) recent discussion of urban-rural relations points to Rawski (1985) pointing to Liu (1970) arguing that at least by the late Ming, in Strand's words, "cities now began to dispatch urban culture into the hinterland in a systematic and insistent fashion" (p. 402). Cf. Liu's "radiating diffusion" cited by Rawski. I'll come back to this somewhat hypodermic characterization below.

⁸ The role in China of such networks of *guanxi* has received extensive scholarly attention. For recent accounts in rural settings see Yan (1996) and especially Kipnis' (1997) insightful and wonderfully written study of a village in North China, and Wilson's (1997) rich account of *guanxi* and the varieties of gifting, also in the Shanghai *jiaoxian*, very near Songjiang in fact. For the urban setting see Yang (1989) and especially (1994), a wide-ranging account stressing the role of *guanxi* networks in emergent Chinese civil society. Walder (1986) and Oi (1989) also provide important analyses of how *guanxi* networks link up with political relations and processes more generally in the PRC era.

⁹ The term was *duixiang*, which can also mean prospective marriage partner or girl-/boyfriend.

¹⁰ The Vice Chairman was evidently aware that TV programming is supposed to use *putonghua* more or less exclusively in Shanghai. In fact, however, there would prove to be some shows, including parts of episodes of *Nanqiang Beidiao*, where Shanghainese was allowed. It depended on the context and appropriateness, I was told by the head of the A&E unit. For example, when a well-known Shanghai opera star hosted *Nanqiang Beidiao* one episode, she was allowed to use Shanghainese in her introductions to

segments; and of course the segments, this time featuring *Huju*, Shanghai's local opera, were in Shanghainese as well. Very interestingly, this prominent performer believed strongly that Shanghainese should be more common on local programming, though her views on this very interesting issue of linguistic ideology have remained rare or at least dormant in my experience. She also believed, with not a little contempt, that what one heard on the street was a corrupt version of the finer form, in which she was of course exceedingly fluent, present in *Huju*. Obviously these are tremendously interesting questions of linguistic ideology and other matters that would be wonderful to study.

¹¹ I'm grateful to Lyn Jeffery for remarking the semantic nebulousness of the term, *xiaosa*. I've understood and translated it as including the equally nebulous notion of "urbanity" based on a dictionary entry (*Concise...*) listing "urbane" as its meaning, but mostly on explanations I was given during fieldwork, including particularly lucid and entertaining ones by Mr. Dong Zhongmin, dearest friend and Shanghai Film Studio costume designer *extraordinaire*, whom I'd like to thank as well. Still it should be kept in mind that the term is indeed multivalent.

¹² This figure is from Whyte and Parish (1984:19), who specify that it covers only the decade after 1968 and compares to a total urban population of only some 100 million. White (1996) makes the important point that urban-rural relocations had occurred long before the *shangshan xiaxiang* movements of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), such as in Shanghai in the mid-1950s when numbers were even vaster than at any time during the Cultural Revolution, but that the former are far less well-remarked because they involved workers, rather than the vocal and literate intellectuals of the latter movements.

¹³ Bernstein (1977), Selden (1993) and White (1978, 1996) treat the movements extensively, and for an evocative fictional account of the encounter between urbanites and ruralites engendered by this program, see Liu Zhen's "The Girl Who Seemed to Understand" (1983). On the role of sent-down youth in village affairs, especially in the 1964-1979 period, Chan, Madsen, and Unger (1992) remains an excellent account, useful also in teaching, as is Seybolt's (1996) fresh biography of a village leader in northern China, which also illuminates some of the dynamics between villagers and outsiders/workteams. Huang (1998) and Friedman, Pickowicz,

Selden and Johnson (1991) provide fine detail over long timeframes in other rural settings.

¹⁴ I am grateful to Stevan Harrell for pointing to the limits of this whole analogy, given the difference in scale—four TV producers in one day hardly compare to 17 million youth over a decade. My intention is indeed to stress the differences as much as the similarities, for example that while the Rural Channel and earlier *shangshan xiaxiang* movements alike share the quality of being urban-to-rural Projects on a Mission, officially mandated by the state, the language, broadly speaking, through which they operate is vastly different, as the above episode seeks to show. I can't quite agree however that the analogy breaks down because the Rural Channel project is too narrow and ignorable in comparison. Indeed it is only more narrow on one end, so to speak, in that the urbanites involved are so few. With television however these few urbanites can engage such vast numbers of people—the one-to-many quality of broadcasting—and with spectacular sight and sound. This in my view is quite consequential, just as the earlier more physical movements *xiaxiang* were. Among other things it represents the 'economy' afforded the state by such new technologies—and this even without the formal existence of any Rural Channel—but what interests me more in the present context are the new and ever re-New-ing terms of engagement and "distinctions" across these specific dynamic social fields encoded as 'urban' and 'rural'.

¹⁵ Rural industrialization in China has been widely examined. Naughton (1995a) expresses the enthusiasm of many observers about the efficacy of rural industrialization in getting neoclassical-economic indicators up or down, as the case may desire. Elsewhere, employing the same analytical toolkit, Naughton has written more broadly of how China has achieved its economic growth primarily "out of the plan" (1995b), and more recently of how China's financial reforms have been performing (1998). China studies work in the West has largely ignored, or silenced, the powerful ideological function served by these 'ways of seeing' political economy. Despite their long-noted limitations in accounting for economic process and practice even in capitalist economies (Nell [1973] is an early and persuasive statement), such analytical discourses are of course quite effective in the global spread of capitalist structures and process. Yet isn't this worth another more critical look? It would seem safe to say, for example, that far fewer Eastern Europeans or Russians believe as whole-heartedly now, in the late-

1990s, in the beneficent invisible-hand power of "free" markets, or the explanatory efficacy of supply and demand, per capita GNP, productivity and growth rates, and the like, as did prior to 1989, when very sophisticated analyses, well-entrenched theories, and vast literatures made these categories out to be analytical—and prescriptive and proscriptive—manna from on high, Modern and Scientific.

¹⁶ Cohen also refers here to more extensive treatment of this history by Hayford (1990) and Potter and Potter (1990). For more excellent explication of the emergence in China of these and related terms, discourses, representations, and concepts, see Lydia Liu's amazingly rich study of "translingual practice" (1995).

¹⁷ Mao's writings are indeed replete with fodder for this characterization, from his identification of the peasantry as the "vanguards of the revolution" in the 1927 "Report on an Investigation..." (1975), to the 1942 mandate that literature and the arts serve the peasants (as well as workers, soldiers and even petty bourgeoisie) in his "Talks at the Yen-an Forum..." (1967b). Fei Xiaotong is among others pegged as harboring the anti-urban bias, not least because he wrote in the late 1940s that "at present the growth of great urban centers is like a tumor from which China is suffering" (1953:138). Recent comments or re-emphases on a generalizable Maoist anti-urban bias are present in Naughton (1995a), Kipnis (1997), and Tang (1996a). I thank Connie Clark for drawing my attention to Kirkby's critique of the anti-urban bias characterizations.

¹⁸ Johnson (1995) says Songjiang is the new name for Huating, a market town from the Song of the late 10th century (36-37); elsewhere however she writes that "the identities of several new port towns begin to emerge in the Sui and early Tang periods...includ[ing]...Songjiang on the Huangpu River" (29). Stevan Harrell (pers. comm.) points out also that Songjiang was urban before Shanghai and that the area was long known as "Su-Song-Tai."

¹⁹ White's next line is that in the epigram above, on spatial 'shading' (268). Johnson (1995) too provides a detailed account of Shanghai dynamism over the *longue durée*, namely 1074 to 1858, though I find her downplaying of the role of foreign interaction generally unconvincing, and her remarkable sanguinity regarding the effects of the opium trade specifically disturbing (14-15).

²⁰ The title of the first issue of *Cultural Anthropology* under Fred Myers' editorship, a theme issue edited by James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta; apart from the latter's joint and individual pieces, see especially Malkki (1992) and of course Rofel (1992).

²¹ Shifts in audience studies toward more processual, active-viewer perspectives are insightfully traced by Morley (1992, 1996a, b) and Hay, Grossberg, and Wartella (1996). Bauman (1996), Hall (1996), Friedman (1994) and Giddens (1990, 1991) are most illuminating on cultural identity. Bauman and Briggs (1990) provide a very useful survey of studies of poetics and performance across a wide range. And Vincent Crapanzano's (e.g., 1986, 1990, 1991, 1992a, 1992b) many works on hermeneutics and the dialogic are especially illuminating.

²² Lesser (43) in turn draws the social field notion from British social anthropology, citing here Firth's (1951:28) point that "[f]ields of social relations, not clear-cut societies, must be the more empirical notion of social aggregates." Lesser also points approvingly to Sjoberg's (1959) critique of closed-systems thinking, which, interestingly, is also applauded by White (1981:241), who notes Sjoberg's "splendid disdain [for] 'city-limit sociology'", but which is explicitly castigated, in less than kind terms, by Mote (1977:109), who thus appears all in favor of an urban-rural continuum as long as it's on his sinological terms and not those of an unschooled impostor.

²³ An excellent discussion of the Chicago school of urban studies is in Hannerz (1980), whose work has continued to employ illuminating references to these and other precursor traditions to what often seem to be new concerns in the literature today. See for example his pioneering article, in the emerging literature on what June Nash (1981) referred to as "the ethnographic aspects of the world system" on "the world in creolization" (1987); his discussion of "the global ecumene" (1989), a concept employed by Kroeber in 1946; and his piece on "the cultural role of world cities" (1993), in part a turn on Redfield and Singer's famous article. Further insights from Hannerz on culture and globalization are to be found in a recent collection of essays (1996) and his extended treatment of cultural complexity (1992).

²⁴ Williams (1973) writes of "selectivity" in effective dominant culture, Hall (1980) of "preferred readings" encoded in media texts, and Wolf (1984) of "characteristic

directionality" imparted to ideas by modes of mobilizing social labor (but see also Wolf's [1999] more recent and extended treatment of the relations between ideas and power). Central to each of these ideas is their insistence upon lack of closure, their recognition with Gramsci (1971) of the fundamental incompleteness of hegemony. In Williams's words, these qualities of culture are "continually active and adjusting" (39).

²⁵ This shift is evident in the translation of the term into English in two widely used dictionaries. In the popular *Pinyin Chinese-English Dictionary*, compiled between 1971 and 1978, *xuanchuan* is defined as: "conduct propaganda; propagate; disseminate; give publicity to;" its examples of usage are: "propagate Marxism-Leninism Mao Zedong Thought / disseminate communist ideas / publicize the Party's general and specific policies / spread propaganda among the masses / [and] in doing propaganda we must consider our audience." It is attached to other characters or compounds to mean: "propaganda car / instrument (or means) of propaganda or publicity; mass media / propagandist / picture poster / propaganda (or publicity) material." By reform-era 1986 and the publication of *Concise English-Chinese Chinese-English Dictionary*, however, *xuanchuan* is defined as follows: "I (verb) 1. Disseminate; publicize; propagate...[as in] publicize traffic regulations, [and] make known the importance of environmental protection; 2. Spread propaganda; propagandize... [as in] both parties are busy propagandizing about their own policies. II (noun) 1. Dissemination; 2. Propaganda...[as in] there has been too much propaganda about the horror of war." Obviously these are fascinating shifts well-reflective of larger social ones in the past couple of decades.

²⁶ This nebulous and very interesting category covers infomercial-type content, but also, for example, the kind of publicity a store gets by a story on the news or a newsmagazine, or that bestowed upon an enterprise or even development zone by virtue of its hosting a variety show, though these may also be denoted by the term "*xuanchuan*."

²⁷ Mu Zhenqing was out of the loop here. On this occasion this was due primarily to her inexperience, this being one of her very first shoots, but as discussed elsewhere women production personnel, from actors to editors to producer/directors, did often have to deal with a variety of gendered asymmetries in their work.

²⁸ Much like this text in your hands of course.

²⁹ I draw here also from Castells' (1989) description of urban space being transformed into "space of flows superseding the meaning of the space of places....a variable geometry of production and consumption, labor and capital, management and information—a geometry that denies the specific productive meaning of any place outside its position in a network whose shape changes relentlessly in response to the messages of unseen signals and unknown codes" (348). I only object to the imagery of supersession and denial here, which seems counter to that of flow, to the extent it implies closure. The geometry of Shanghai, at least, is certainly still changed by vividly seen signals and known codes, in addition to these more nebulous ones.

³⁰ Important recent discussions of modernity in China are Anagnost (1993, 1997), Chow (1991), Duara (1995), Lee (1999), Liu Kang (1995, 1996, 1997), Lydia Liu (1995), Oakes (1999), Ong (1996, 1997), Rofel (1999), Schein (1999, 2000), Tang (1996b), and Yang (1988, 1996, 1997), among others, as I discuss in other chapters, especially tracing the distinctions between the rhetorics and emic understandings of the concept on one hand, and its more etic analytical ones on the other. It is important and useful in my view to try and distinguish the blurry lines between modernity as a normative category and modernity as a more heuristic, analytical one.

³¹ These are fundamental qualities of hegemony consistently stressed by every serious employer of the notion I have read, which fact however is so often relentlessly forgotten or glossed by transcendent critics who can't resist the easy mockery of that Straw Figure, Total Domination, in whom no one actually believes in the first place, least of all people who find hegemony or something like it useful to think with, from Gramsci to Williams, Wolf, Hall, Eagleton (1991; 1996), Jameson (1998), Berman (1982; 1992), or even Chomsky (1998).

³² A range of excellent and important work (e.g., Appadurai and Breckenridge 1988, 1990, 1996; Appadurai 1990, 1996; Yang 1996, 1997; Ong 1996, 1997; Chatterjee 1993) contains moments of this relative emphasis, which hopefully is the best way to conceptualize the distinction. Marcus's (1986; cf. Marcus and Fischer 1986) influential call to specifically seek out that at local levels which is resistant or oppositional to the culture of the world-system

seems to foreclose attention to the points where/when this doesn't appear. It does however serve the disciplinary legitimacy crisis—i.e., no difference in the globalized world → no need/room for anthropology → find difference. For a most recent examination of the "alternative modernity" problem see the special issue of *Public Culture* on precisely this theme, especially Gaonkar's (1999) introduction and the articles by Charles Taylor (1999) and Thomas McCarthy (1999).

³³ As Stuart Hall notes, when Foucault calls for "'not a theory of the knowing subject, but rather a theory of discursive practice'" (1970:xiv, in Hall 1996:2), it is indeed a call for the decentering, but "not the abandonment or abolition of 'the subject'...[rather] a reconceptualization—thinking it in its new, displaced or decentered position within the paradigm" (Hall *ibid.*).

³⁴ Two excellent and provocative films, useful in the classroom as well, addressing the relations between identity, consumption, media, and environmental sustainability, are *The Ad and the Ego* (Boihem and Emmanouilides 1996) and *Advertising and the End of the World* (Jhally 1998). For an excellent recent discussion of "the culture-ideology of consumerism" as a globalizing phenomenon, see Sklair (1998), as well as in the same excellent volume the chapter by Harvey (1998), a sober critique of over-utopian/naïve environmentalisms, and the chapter by Martinez-Alier (1998) on the problem of "environmental justice" worldwide. See also Durning (1992) for a big take on one of the Big Qs, *How Much Is Enough?*.

CHAPTER THREE

GARDENS OF VISUAL DELIGHT:
 VARIETY SHOWS, THEME PARKS, FEUDAL DECADENCE,
 AND 'CIVIL SOCIETY' AT THE GLOBAL MARKET—
 OR, MEDIA ON THE MAELSTROM MODERNITY

Anthony Giddens' well-known likening of modernity to an experiential maelstrom, in which the processes of disembeddedness, time-space distantiation, and reflexivity characterize social experience,¹ finds rich illustration in the fields of Shanghai, as noted in the previous chapter. As Prasenjit Duara (1995) has recently shown, the locally Chinese experience of 'modernity' in something like this sense has long-since engendered local discursive formulations much like what are today conceived of as questions of "civil society." Duara argues, that is, that even the nineteenth-century Qing reformers, such as Kang Youwei, were seeking to institute change in ways much like later or western efforts to construct a "civil society." Further, Duara reveals that the objective of these conflicted late-Qing Confucianists was to make China modern, rather than the weak, crumbling imperial monolith they saw it to be. This chapter explores further aspects of the swirling spaces of Shanghai of the 1990s which speak to

these questions of an emergent "civil society" in China, and again, of an "alternative modernity".

A Tale of One County-That-Is-Not-Another

We're standing at neighboring urinals taking a break from a large, festive banquet at Government and Communist Party headquarters in one of the nine counties outside of Shanghai, summer of 1992. Pretty wobbly, I think we both recognize it nonetheless as one of those liminal ethnographic moments. My friend, a Special Subjects producer at Shanghai Television's new Rural Channel, who smokes heavily and even more now that he's become a new parent, a grand-student of China's most famous anthropologist (his sociology professor had studied with Fei Xiaotong) who'd seemed to intuitively appreciate why I was here doing ethnographic fieldwork among TV producers at Shanghai Television Station, a young guy with an easy, wise smile and nice as can be, my friend breaks our silence with an unclean exhale and complicated chuckle. "Bo'le," he says, "...Let me tell you something. Things here are changing so fast... We don't even know where they're headed." It was early in our friendship. His pity was touching.

Such radical blurrings in time, space, and cognition anti-etch themselves all across the diverse, dynamic scapes

of 1990s Shanghai, as well as, by many accounts,² much of the rest of urban China. Media such as television play a central role in these processes of boundary blurrings, representations, reproductions. They are deeply involved in the transformation and co-reproduction of spaces not only sociocultural, geographical and local/global, but also occasionally, as I'll try to relate below, literary, extraterrestrial, and theme park-ic as well. Dizzying. Like my friend said.

This banquet we're at is a kinetic vortex of some of this swirl. The Rural Channel has just been established and is on a fact-finding, relation-building mission to its second Shanghai county in as many days seeking to introduce itself to local leaders and local issues.

We've taken our seats around the large reception room at HQ. Before our hosts actually enter the room the Rural Channel's Director, a tightly wound mass of energy in his mid-forties who punctuates speeches with lively references ranging from Karl Marx to Alvin Toffler, gets our attention. Monday we move into our new offices, he tells the five women and twenty men. As a new unit of STV, equipment allocation is going to be a challenge and take some time to set up. Beginning Monday then we'll have to get busy on the phone using all our social power to solve the equipment problem so we can get cracking.

This reference to social power is germane to the entire visit here in the Shanghai hinterland. Our hosts soon arrive and the interflow of strategic social graces begins. The Director begins by introducing himself and the three male department heads, and explains that the new Rural Channel people have come to begin learning in-depth about local rural affairs in order to better report and publicize them via the new branch of STV. It is an instance of the practice of *xuanchuan*, or publicity, in its new and improved reform era variant. Previously of course *xuanchuan* was much closer to the meaning consistently still attributed to it by both the Chinese Communist Party and western Cold War journalism alike (and not a few scholars too): "propaganda." Media, for example, were tools of propaganda, whose purpose was to propagandize, or publicize, the goals of the Communist Party. But now, in the days of high-Reform in contrast to high-Mao, when you hear someone talking about *xuanchuan* in the halls of say, STV, you are almost always hearing them talk about straight commercial advertising, promotion, or publicity.

If there is rich contradiction here however it is in the Party program itself, for it is that which has in fact dictated this shift in semantics. The decentralizing market-oriented and globally-oriented reforms of the past two decades (*gaige kaifang*) have given explosive rise to not

only yearly GDPs and other neoclassical economic indicators, but also to a promo-advertising industry generally, and the television medium in particular.³ In addition, operationally, TV stations like STV have been cut loose of the cash cow of the state and told to make it on their own wiles, which has meant, since STV aired China's first TV advert, for Swiss Rado watches in 1979, commercial prowess. It is the state's own policy then to move *xuanchuan* from more conventionally political 'propaganda', to promotion, publicity, POP advertising.⁴ Recent announcements by President Jiang Zemin at the Communist Party Congress of September 1997 that the state will sell off some 10,000 of its 13,000 state enterprises are merely among the latest expressions of sociocultural blurrings in post-Mao China, further fuzz on the screen of the official policy of "socialism with Chinese characteristics," the curiouser and curiouser social formation harder and harder to distinguish from variants of capitalism, which has been formulated and presided over by a nominally Communist Party-state determined to retain political reins.

Back at HQ, the head of the county-seat township is the first local leader to volley back after the Director's intro. Welcome, welcome, warmly welcome, but the first 'rural affair' that leaps to mind is the devastating fire that just wiped out lots of paper products from a local firm

headed for export to the US (some charred remains of which we would see on the road back to Shanghai that night). Apart from this he gives some overall figures for the county: 486 square kilometers of earth, home of half a million people, transportation and infrastructure being improved, etc. He's clearly proud of local history, recent economic performance and its overall contribution to the Shanghai municipality, noting that the previous year this county was number one in the country in terms of amount contributed to the state and that it provides one quarter of the produce consumed by Shanghai. Clearly these were the things he'd like to see publicized and reported back to Shanghai.

But the main message we're getting revolves around the fact that the foreign trade portion of the county economic sectoral makeup is only sixth-largest. These local officials very much want that to change and have no trouble being persuaded that this is one area in which these Rural Channel media people can help.

As in any endeavor to define identity, the township head was here speaking in reference to another entity, in this case Chuansha County on the other side of Shanghai. Just a few months earlier what would prove to be Deng Xiaoping's last major gesture shaping China's official policy had occurred during his well-publicized 'tour of the

South'.⁵ The overall effect of this sojourn was to solidify *gaige kaifang*, the post-1978 twin pillar policies of market-oriented reform and openness to the outside world, after some political debate had emerged in the wake of the Tiananmen tragedies of 1989 about whether these needed to be cooled lest they lead to similar results. While in Shanghai during this momentous tour, Deng had particularly encouraging things to say about the Pudong New Development Zone in Chuansha County just east of downtown Shanghai across the Huangpu River, facilitated surely in no small part by former Shanghai officials like Jiang Zemin and Zhu Rongji, then well along in becoming Deng's successors as China's paramount leaders.

Such a nod of approval by Deng Xiaoping himself could scarcely be topped in terms of potent *xuanchuan*. In its wake, Pudong and by extension Chuansha County became even greater lightning rods for renewed talk and commitment among the central leadership of putting "economics in command," as Stuart Schram (1984) once put it.⁶ Pudong was thus designated something of a poster-place for development and modernity in reform-era China. The key ingredient in this program was the attraction of global capital investment, and Pudong was famously scoring heavily.⁷

"There's a cultural difference between here and Chuansha," the township head continues. "We're an historic

cultural center, not a center of commerce." Again there is evident pride—"the cultural/educational level of our youth is high and many are currently studying abroad," he adds—but also deep lament. He notes that Shanghai Municipal leaders have only recently loosened some constraints on locally initiated efforts to engage in international trade and attract foreign capital, and mentions the nearby factory that has contracted to make parts for Volkswagen's Santana cars coming off the line in the central Shanghai VW plant, and the Taiwanese computer maker with operations here. But much more is desired. He gives us the price per square foot of commercial space they hope to charge in the new "open" (to foreign capital) industrial/commercial park they want to build, and emphasizes the point that it's "a lot cheaper than Pudong!" He also reports that the local tertiary industry is being aggressively developed as well, including hotels, shops, and residential construction for the prospective global capitalist they hope to attract.

Here is who and what we are now: worthy. Spread the word.

And here is where I too am inserted. The Rural Channel Director has introduced me, just after the three subheads. He's told them I'm here studying how the Rural Channel is 'covering' the countryside. He expressed his hope that I may serve as a latter-day Edgar Snow, reporting to the

Outside World the glorious successes of reform and modernization in the Chinese countryside just as Snow had done during the Communist Revolution. Our hosts really liked that part. They "warmly welcomed" me very much.

The next local leader focuses on 'culture'. Highlights of the seven-century history include the delectable *xiaolong bao* dumplings, China's fifth largest Confucian temple, dating from the Ming dynasty, a garden also from the Ming, a bridge from the Yuan dynasty and the native homes of famous landscape artists and other cultural figures from the Qing and even Nationalist periods. Descendants of some of the latter, we learn, are among the valued tourists when they visit from Taiwan to pay their filial respects to these figures, despite the fact they were, and officially remain, bitter enemies and traitors of the current Chinese state, which this speaker now represents. But the pearl of the moment in these more 'cultural' realms is the new 6.5 million yuan sports arena under construction, with foreign investment, which they hope will host some of the East Asian Games or similar money-making events.

Finally a third local leader, the Propaganda Bureau Chief, takes the floor to talk about local "consciousness." He cuts a curious figure. Much more subdued than the other two, he mentions a center for child training and a kindergarten that have opened recently, and expresses high

hopes and warmest wishes and welcomes to the new media enterprise. But this figure isn't nearly the local booster the others are. Later he will drink hard at lunch, not particularly with the rest of us. For now he just sort of trails off, turns to his colleagues and says, "I don't really have anything else to say."

Next we go to a sumptuous feast of local delicacies, including all the *xiaolong bao* we could eat, and lots of the potent, water-clear *baijiu*. We're under a lovely pavilion covered with vines and the toasts are animated and many. I am toasted, with further reference to Edgar Snow and my potential role in giving global *xuanchuan*. The township head joins in on this, welcoming me back any time and urging me to tell the West about the fabulous investment opportunities available out here.

I'm trying to keep up. Conversation at our table inevitably leads to the question how to proceed for China, another pleasant young Rural Channel producer finally explaining to me, "look, it doesn't matter whether it's socialism or capitalism, what is important is that you develop economically; if capitalism didn't result in economic development you would want to get rid of it too...yes, we all think that, all except for a very few revolutionary officials."

I wonder if one of these exceptions is the Propaganda Chief over there. He's within earshot. But he seems elsewhere, primarily concerned at the moment with getting quietly polluted with the *baijiu*.

Finally we are back in the big reception room, very festive, more relaxed than during the introductions. Packages of imported cigarettes are being tossed or handed out around the room by our hosts, who even prevail upon all five of the women among our group to light up, a rare sight up to this time during my stays anywhere in China (one woman, whom I've never before seen smoke, is producing perfect smoke rings). We're munching seeds and watermelon and drinking tea amidst the continued volley of mutual benefit talk and excitement about the Rural Channel giving good *xuanchuan* and the local officials being good social lubricants.

Suddenly we're clapping in time as one of the local officials is dancing with the future anchorwoman (*zhuchiren*) of the Rural Channel News.

The contrast with wealthy and high-profile Chuansha County again is instructive. We had been there on a similar trip the day before. A stark contrast. In Chuansha the welcoming was much less warm, the banqueting less intimate and obsessed over (it took place in a nearby restaurant, rather than on the HQ grounds), and the distinct message

conveyed from the local leaders that A) they had all the publicity they needed, due to the Pudong area, and B) it would thus be the Rural Channel people who would benefit most from this relationship. Rural Channel people were pouring the tea water for the local officials in Chuansha, not getting warm toasts, imported smokes, and definitely not spins on the dance floor!

It's at about this time that I'm looking for the men's room break, needing a pause, blurred by all the movement. My friend has come in, delivered his devastating line, and now we're standing there, returned again to our absorbing silence by the irrefutability and jarring comprehensiveness of what he's said. It's one of those simple truths that can alternatively flip a switch for ethnographers, or bring them to their knees. Yet I press on in the gargantuan hermeneutics of all this radical motion; an occupational hazard, you know.

But speaking of this remarkable commotion in the practices of Shanghai media producers, it does indeed seem to express the sense of modernity Giddens provides, noted above, as well as the spatial reconfigurations produced by globally mobile capitalisms. In addition, there is further evidence here of the similar reconfiguration of the social space of gifting in representation. Both have implications

for the question of civil society and the public sphere in China and the shape these are taking.⁸

The presentation of placed identities in these two counties for the consumption and re-presentation by powerful media is pitched in terms of an explicitly global frame. The name of the game for these sociopolitical entities is getting international capital investment. If ever there were a prototype of the kind of production of space by global political-economic process described variously by Lefebvre, Castells, Harvey, Soja, Giddens and others,⁹ Greater Shanghai is it.¹⁰ This terrain is getting tilled, figuratively and literally being transformed, in preparation for and as an invitation to the holy grail of global capital. From sociocultural spaces, like place-based identities, to physical landscapes, Shanghai and its environs is reproducing itself in the image that a potent ideology has depicted to be the Way to Be, specifically the way to be Modern. Giddens' time-space distanciation, disembeddedness, and reflexivity are central to these transformations. Place histories (e.g., of Ming gardens and Yuan bridges) are re-presented for contemporary purposes, ones that can travel, ideally at the speed of light. Space is abstracted (Lefebvre) from place-based context and made to appear of the (commodity) quality for which global capital is always on the chase, or as Marx put it, chasing

capitalists around the world to find. And all this practice is justified precisely in the terms of one of the most potent of all products of western modernity's "reflexivity," namely neoclassical economics, that powerful constraint against meaningfully "alternative modernities."¹¹

On the other hand, one productive way of thinking about these transformations in China has been through the prism of what Mayfair Yang calls the gift economy in socialist China operating through networks of social relationships, or *guanxi*.¹² Yang draws the explicit link from these practices to the formation of a nascent non-state sphere of activities *minjian*, or 'among the people' in China, finding in such networks of *guanxi* an emergent space offering much the same functions as civil society and the public sphere has offered in the West, albeit with localized character.

Obviously an important part of what the Rural Channel was doing—and this applies to all the STV production crews I worked with—was engaging in what might be called a gift economy of representation, the gifting that surrounds specifically the production and dissemination of publicizing, *xuanchuan*-ing imagery. The Director's exhortation to get on the phone and utilize "social power" noted above merely provides a sense how 'out' this issue is. A central concern in everyday practice at the Rural Channel was precisely to effectively and productively "la (pull, but

cultivate, broadly) *guanxi*." An evocative and succinct expression of this was provided by a young producer one hot afternoon speeding across rough rural roads in a taxi when she said, after we'd been sent off from a local factory with gifts of their wares after doing a short feature story on their enterprise: "We have a saying in TV journalism these days: 'If you lack something at home, just go do a story on it'."¹³ Even the cab driver joined the chuckle of recognition.

As Yang notes, this expresses a nexus of social practice that is variously alternative to state power in China, and can be seen as an important facet of any *minjian* public sphere of civil-social action. Just as market-oriented reform has created social spaces in which individuals and organizations, such as trade associations, are able to operate at varying degrees of distance from the party-state, so too has market-oriented reform created spaces of media practice in which ideological and even institutional control grows increasingly beyond the immediate reach of the party-state.

The Rural Channel is a case in point. To be sure, the Rural Channel and all other 'channels' of mass communication in China are state-owned and supervised. Yet it is paradoxically by this very same supervision and control that the media in China have become such spaces of multivocality,

even heterodoxy and indeed contestation.¹⁴ Beginning in the late-1970s but accelerating especially after the major broadcasting policy shift of 1983,¹⁵ television stations throughout China were cut loose from the direct administrative control of the central government (namely, the Ministry of Radio, Television and Film under the State Council in Beijing, or the local variant thereof under local government). This has meant two things. First, operating revenues were no longer provided by state subsidy, but were to be earned through advertising by the individual stations. Secondly, responsibility for programming—including production, importation and scheduling—were likewise shifted down to the local stations which were encouraged to make decisions, of course, in terms of market, commercial success. At the same time, and while there remains local and temporal variation, the reins on content have been loosened. Indeed, at one point in a high tide moment of official laissez-faire ideological standing, namely 1988, the ranking official on ideological matters, Hu Qili, was able to say unequivocally that the content of film and television should be decided by what the market bears/demands, and even that “the Party has no say in the matter.”¹⁶

The multivalent heterodoxy thus engendered appears then both on and behind the screens of Chinese television. The

social organization and political economy of TV representational practice has gone from one of state-employees reproducing the programming dictates of party-state officials and organs to one of quasi-independent producers conceiving their own shows and organizing them, both in terms of content and the social relations of production, along the contour lines of their own more or less far-flung social networks of *guanxi*. This means one's network becomes vital at every point of the production process, from conception of content, to the setting, the selection of talent and crew, the procurement of equipment, transportation, meals, sound stages and editing time in post-production studios, and even, in the case especially of advertising, program placement and scheduling.¹⁷

The extent to which this state of affairs creates spaces in which groups and individuals in China are able to engage in a practice of civil society is difficult to ascertain at any given point, and depends in the first instance on the precise semantics of the heuristic device 'civil society'. Even assuming a broad definition of civil society as entailing variously liberating autonomy and disengagement of "society" from "state," the gift economy may often form a dubious model in that, as Uradyn E. Bulag points out (personal communication), a) the gift economy has been and remains central to the party-state's socialist

redistributive system itself in China, and b) it is a practice individuals often find to be a downright onerous burden.¹⁸ Many would also question the 'civil-social' virtues of those aspects of the gift economy that border on or entail corruption, abuse of power, or blatantly illegal activities. In media production in particular, the above-noted quip about the material benefits of matching one's home appliance needs, for example, with one's journalistic work, speaks to a problem many in Chinese journalism circles consider rampant and the greatest threat to the integrity, legitimacy, and utility of their profession.¹⁹ While, for example, the *New York Times* may well seem intent on persuading us of the contrary, not all subversions of the Chinese state are noble and worthy of celebration, however giddy they may make many Westerners.

In addition, and perhaps most trenchantly problematic, it is far from clear how useful or appropriate it is to even apply the category of civil society to China in the first place. At the very least, as Jane Schneider notes (personal communication), the cultural and historical embeddedness of the concept in Western discourse and practice must be acknowledged, including its narrow understandings of "individual citizen-subjects making it on their own 'merits'," and its corollary blanket suspicion and even excoriation of common patron-client relations and processes.

Kenneth Dean (1997) makes the strong statement, in fact, that the concept is indeed entirely too Western-centric and thus of virtually no use in understanding Chinese society.

Certainly any strict version of the ideal type, civil society, is far too ideal for any social formation, West or East, North or South. China, for example, is ultimately not exceptional in the presence there of clientelism and gift economy as pollutants of civil-social purity. Ask Marc Rich, or any of the Iran-Contra figures forever pardoned by the first President Bush (and now filling many high-ranking positions in Washington).

In terms of the debate over these issues in China, and assuming again a more flexible and thus durable notion of civil society as entailing social space relatively open to practices directed and willed by non-state forces, I would argue for the importance of precisely such interstitial spaces as TV production, which offer up a rich if all but incomprehensible cacophony and blur of the official and non-official, public and private, domestic and foreign, political and commercial. They are not tidy spaces. They do not allow for the easy certainties and diagnostics we might seek through the lens of "civil society." But I think they are where we are likeliest to find the clearest possible contours, even if they'll never be that clear, of

the general spirit of ideally emancipating civil society in China.

This stress on the "baroque textures" (Crapanzano, *op. cit.*) of these interstitial Chinese spaces is somewhat at odds with both sides of one prevailing debate in the mostly western (and mostly political science-oriented) literature on this question in the context of China. On one side, in brief, the view is taken that the emergence of a democratizing civil society in China will take place both gradually and within the ambit of non-official voluntary associations, organizations joined say by members of a common trade, and operating completely outside the party-state apparatus.²⁰ On the other side, the hypothesis is that democratizing civil society will only come about through more or less radical political action and change, along the lines of the aborted movements in this direction present in Tiananmen Square in the spring of 1989.²¹

I do tend to share the gradualist hypothesis of White and others (1993; White et al. 1996), in contrast to the more alarmist one, but I disagree that the key locations or such developments are solely the voluntary associations. I would argue that it is precisely the in-between places White eliminates from consideration—family/kin relations, workplaces and firms, both official and non-official—where much of the most significant social practice bearing on

civil society will occur. There seems to me no strong reason why these loci, so important in the formation of civil society in the West, should not also be at least significant in China. To the contrary, given the centrality of the household-based and kin-ordered consumption unit of the domicile in tandem with the publicity-machined consumer capitalist firm in the shaping of civil society in the West, these social spaces in China should be points of first consideration in "the search for civil society" (White et al. 1996).

However, the above cases of the Rural Channel in the two counties offer still another angle on this question, namely the role of global capitalism in at least helping to determine whatever it is anyone might variously define as civil society in China in the first place, and thus its intractable involvement in modern power in China. Essentially this involves what Yang herself describes in discussing the changes to the "art of *guanxi*" brought about in the wake of the increased commodification and market relations of the reform period, and the heightened integration of China into global political economic frameworks. The workings and applied arts of *guanxi* as a set of practices taking shape from the dictates of power peculiar to state socialism and its distributive economy are, in the reform/openness era, now deeply inflected with

the dictates of the market, 'exchange value', commodification. If the "modernity of power" in China has been of the distinct sort that is produced by state socialism, as Yang suggests, the forms of power emerging in the reform/openness era are but a variant form of modern power, no less hegemonically ambitious and capable, and showing significant semblance to those of advanced/global capitalist modernities.²² It is undeniable that the forms of power put into practice in the distinctly western version(s) of modernity are differentially appropriated in China and reworked to co-exist with local variants. On the other hand, some of these very elements are at work transmogrifying local practice to great efficacy. The increased importance of money transactions and the commodification of everyday life, again noted by Yang, are breaking down this local alterity and reproducing the dictates of an essential feature of the Modern West, namely, global capitalist process.

While hosting the Rural Channel, Chuansha officials, for example, had dispensed with much of the affective, personalistic, gifting gestures of the art of *guanxi* described by Yang. Their concerns had been transformed more in the direction of the straight 'exchange value' of instrumental, calculative practices. They lived in social space recast in the mold amenable to global capital,

consciously, with vigor, and in line with official policy, the now state-mandated program for achieving the modern. As many people expressed to Yang, the art of *guanxi* takes tremendous energy and resources. Cash transactions, for cab rides and commercial *xuanchuan* alike, are often much easier. Chuansha officials seemed more concerned with and confident in these forms of practice. As a site of slightly less intense global integration and commodified form of modern power, this other, poorer-cousin county still operated in part in the increasingly obsolete terms of the gift economy so efficacious under conditions of state-socialist modes of power.

Thus the tale of these two counties and their reception to the promises of the Rural Channel offers insight into the direction of the shifting terms of power in reform-era China. Fundamentally this is a shift which brings into increasing coordination and coexistence the state form of bureaucratic power, well documented by Yang and others, together with the forms of power inherent in the rationality, calculation, impersonality of global capitalism(s). A result is the re-inscriptions of social spaces like the Shanghai hinterland with marks of the consumable, a co-production, along with local practicing agents, of a specific kind of space, which in turn become sites of contestation, as between competing invitations to

capital investment. This is not straight reproduction of some universal commodified space shot through with some universal medium of power. There is nothing simply straightforward about this process, nothing identically isomorphic with the production of spaces elsewhere in the world and in history. There is however the crucial shared quality that these spaces are produced to be appropriable or at least useful to commercial capital. Modern bio-power is versatile; reflexivity, disembeddedness, time-space distanciation—these can all be instituted in a variety of contexts, put together with many other things, even those apparently diametrically opposed, like socialism and capitalism.

State socialist power as has existed in China this half-century is thus not the only kind of modern bio-power. It is one kind, and in this sense it is/was a meaningful "alternative modernity." But it's over now, or at least so radically modulated as to be essentially incoherent. More importantly, it has been enthusiastically buried by a local project to adopt the measures of global capitalism, the rhetoric of development, and the disciplining knowledges that attend these processes. Thus a critique of power in the context of China should focus not only on moribund, deeply in-crisis state power,²³ not only on the 'modernity of state-socialist power' generically (cf. Rofel 1992 in

addition to Yang's work), but increasingly on the 'power of global capitalist modernities'. The most efficacious form of power operating in China in the reform/openness era is precisely the hegemonic power of the epistemologies of modernity that attend, aid and abet, the global flow of capitalist processes and relations. This is not at all to say that hegemony equals the annihilation of difference. To the contrary, a fundamental source of hegemonic power is precisely its ability to accommodate diversity. Indeed, the cultures of capitalisms demand that diversity.

Further 'Gardens of Visual Delights'

Back in the swirls of Shanghai there is additional evidence of the shaping of local practice by spatial production practices attending the flow of global capital, and of the role of local media like the Rural Channel in this process of co-production.

Not far from this banqueting site nor from Chuansha County, near the shores of Lake Tai and the famous pottery making region of Yixing, lies another site of radically transmogrifying spatial co-/re-production.

Daguan yuan is the title of several things spanning some of these regions in China. It can be translated as Park of Splendid Vision, Garden of Visual Splendor, or, as in one well-known English translation, Park of Delightful

Vision.²⁴ Most immediately for present purposes it is the name of a variety show produced by the Rural Channel as one of its flagship Arts and Entertainment programs. The original derivation, however, is located in chapter fourteen of Cao Zhan's classic late-eighteenth century novel, *Honglou meng*, or *Dream of the Red Chamber*. Here "dakuan yuan" is the name of a large and elaborate garden constructed by the wealthy Jia family to house and variously please the Imperial consort accompanying a Jia-family daughter on her rare visit to her natal home, which she has been granted to make, along with his other concubines, at the benevolent behest of the Emperor himself.

In between the TV show and the Qing dynasty novel there is a theme park called *Dakuan yuan* situated some 30-odd kilometers outside Shanghai. Here the Garden of Visual Delights (my preferred rendition) described in the novel has been recreated, enclosed, gated and made accessible to the ticketed only. It features beautiful pavilions in traditional Chinese architectural style, rock gardens and ponds, frequent open-air performances of various sorts, concession stands with snacks and souvenirs, picnic areas and garden paths for strolling. A Garden of Visual Delights.

In the beginning there was a deal between the TV show and the theme park, yet further practicings in the gift

economy of representation, or 'the applied art of *xuanchuan*'. Through a personal connection between one of the Rural Channel's producers and someone at the theme park, an agreement was reached whereby the show would get a sponsorship fee and shoot segments on location at the park, with the crew's meals and lodgings, if necessary, either covered or arranged and other needs generally facilitated, in exchange for the *xuanchuan* it would give the park, not only from the setting's recognizable background visuals, but from closing credits as well at the end of each weekly episode (first Friday nights, then Saturday nights, primetime). The *Da Guanyuan* crew thus shot out at *Daguan yuan* the park several times, usually just for its attractive background settings for the female hosts' narratives, which were intercut with the various pre-recorded segments featured in each show. Occasionally however, they shot some of the live performances taking place there, such as ethnic dance.

Of course the theme park is, generically, a site *par excellence* of the production of the commodified space of modernity in Giddens' terms. Disembedding, distanciation, and reflexivity are present in extremes at such a place. Particularly interesting among the contradictions at this specific site is the fact that what has been reproduced here, and commodified on the assumption of its

consumability, its desirability for local projects of entertainment and identity formation alike, is a space representing the precise social order which had been the object of radical revolutionary rejection, not only by the current Chinese communist state, but by the Nationalist one preceding it. *Da Guanyuan* had been the site of what used to be called feudal aristocracy, serving as a geographic artifact of classed and gendered prerogatives held by wealthy landowners in pre-revolutionary China, the principle agents of the Confucian patriarchy even the Nationalists sought to overthrow. Indeed, a common reading of the original eighteenth-century novel suggests that even its own author, those centuries ago, was holding these scenarios up for castigation of the cultural and moral corruption of the leisured elite. That a park on this theme would get built in socialist China is surpassed in dizzying juxtapositioning only by the fact that no one even mentioned the irony in all my time working on this show.

Further indication of the new dictates of socio-spatial production in and around Shanghai is the fact that the deal between *Daguan yuan*-the-show and *Daguan yuan*-the-place eventually turned sour. Despite the 'personal connections' and the skillful practice of the art of *guanxi* in establishing the arrangement, the increasingly commodified terms of the art of *xuanchuan* broke the deal apart over

simple disagreements about the strictly monetary value of the *xuanchuan*. The place, undoubtedly pressed to pay the interest on the foreign investment that built the park, simply wanted more than the show was willing to give.

The dynamic juxtapositionings and interminglings present in media practice in and around Shanghai are visible not only in the physical and social spaces through which the camera travels, but also in those it enframes and represents. There is significant swirl on the screen of the Garden of Visual Delights, in other words, as well as around and behind the camera. Let me close with just a bit of this utterly maelstrom-ic flux, what even might be deemed perfectly postmodern pastiche if the term postmodern weren't so redundant.

Episode #15 of *Daguan yuan* opens with pre-recorded imagery of aeronautics and space exploration. The young female hostess soon comes on from atop the control tower at Shanghai International Airport to say, you guessed it Dear Viewers, this episode is about "the conquest of space." Next we cut to a playful few minutes of a European flying trapeze troupe wowing a live audience at a circus, then back to the hostess, and then to a five-minute montage of mostly foreign flight experimentation imagery, from drawings and early attempts to high-tech rocket ships and jet planes, all

against the soundtrack of electronic dance music and aeronautical sound f/x.

Closing out this segment are rocket launches and anti-aircraft surface-to-air missile firings.

The hostess returns with a few remarks about Chinese "creativity" in this area of conquering space (off-camera conversation inadvertently edges in here), and then we go to playful boys and girls flying kites amongst the goats on a mountainside. This turns out to be from the film *Tian Meng*, or *Dream of the Heavens*, a recent melodramatic official-ese Chinese movie dramatizing China's space program development. The children reach a grassy summit and the camera begins to pan as a boy points in the distance with excitement...CUT TO: their neighborhood rocket-launching pad just over the hill in the next valley. These clips are intercut, further, with documentary footage and stills of figures like Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai and a spry Deng Xiaoping inspecting jets and rockets while the *Tian Meng* theme song belts on. There are lots of tracks up and down the length of rockets, and depictions of high-tech Big Science, concluding, as the theme song does, with a launch.

Quick reference is next made by the hostess to humanity's impulse to "aestheticize" flight, and then we go first to Euro-American ice skaters ("ballet on ice" in on-screen Chinese text) and stunt flying ("ballet in space").

Next there are astronauts walking on the moon and finally a US "moonwalking" breakdancer in a video circa 1981 for a song called "Street People."

This is some journey!

Next the hostess introduces a new audience-participation contest to be featured on *Daguan yuan*, called the "Hundred Cultural Questions Contest."²⁵ Each week, she explains, questions on "cultural subjects" will appear in graphic text on-screen at the end of the show. The first five correct responders will be named "Garden of Visual Delight Lucky Viewers of the Week!" and will get to request a song/musicvideo on both *Daguan yuan* and the wildly popular *Hao Ge You Ni Dian* video-request show also produced by the Rural Channel (and proving to be the highest rated show in Shanghai, 'urban' or 'rural').²⁶

Finally the dizzyingly peripatetic episode ends, as do all on The Garden of Visual Delights, with this week's "MTV Sightseeing Tour," the segment featuring a musicvideo clip that closes out the show each week. Tonight it's the popular "Let the World Be Filled With Love," or "Let Love Fill the World," (*Rang shijie chongman ai*), the theme song from the epoch-making 1986 Beijing concert of the same name. Dubbed the site/occasion of "'the birth of rock and roll in the mainland'" (Jin 1993:6, cited in Efirid 2001), this concert, featuring 100 of China's pop stars, including Cui

Jian, widely regarded as progenitor of Chinese rock music, drew direct inspiration from the Euro-American "We Are the World" African famine benefit concerts of the previous year,²⁷ and had been televised nationally. For this final ensemble rendition of *Rang shijie chongman ai*, the stars are all on the stage, alternating turns singing their apparently earnest plea for love and peace and all that's human and good. "Heping," the two-character compound meaning "peace," is projected in strobing, digital blue on the dark backdrop above them.

The lyrics are emotional and thickly allusive references to dreams of the heart that won't burn out; faint distant voices, perhaps from the future, stirring the surging waves of the heart; heading for tomorrow; hopes of an end to tears, hatred, bloodshed and separation; the creation of a beautiful home for all; how the sun keeps revolving [sic], as it has since ancient times, and the cherishing of those desires as boundless as the universe; the fervent "hope that the day will come when the great ocean washes the desert in its blue, and the Gospel of Peace spreads everywhere, and we can face our forbears with a smile." The chorus begins with "year after year" and alternates amongst "we're heading toward tomorrow," "we welcome tomorrow," and "we'll always have tomorrow," to close out. The best sentiments.²⁸

During the instrumental interlude we cut away for more documentary footage of China's national rocket-launching experiments and more from the movie *Tian Meng*; the space shuttle even makes a (very brief) appearance amidst the revelry of rocketry and the conquest of space. At one point a man is affixing a large pointy red cone on the end of a rocket vessel. Launches and more launches, further homage to, if not visual strokings of, the National Rocket. Now back to the concert of love and peace and the end of bloodshed. "Let the World Be Filled with Love Rockets," is sort of the vibe we're getting here.

This high-test disparateness abounds in previous visits to the Garden of Visual Delights. The week prior to the above paean to the military and loving 'conquest of space', the Garden presented Part II of "Record of Flirtatious Folkways" (*Minsu fengqing lu*), a two-part series reflecting the head writer's interest and expertise in international dance and performance.²⁹ Preceded by one on Chinese performance, this episode focused on foreign performances of various kinds, employing the same format of the hostess introducing segments composed of pre-recorded pastings.³⁰

While it manages to remain terrestrial this episode takes us conceptually and geographically all over the place as well, from festive scenes of Australia, North and South America, and Europe, to a Buddhist-inflected Thai New Year

parade, an female African American "street singer" circa 1968 singing a tuneful version of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, then to the sober hallelujah chorus of the St. Anglia Choir singing hymns in a cathedral. Next stop is a "Zambian Black Person Dance" on "the open country of Africa where dance plays a major role in tribal ritual," according to the subtitles added over footage of outdoor dance, drumming and singing, as in this instance, "where the forceful rhythms symbolize the subjugation of the body by mysterious energies." We also see the people of Brittany dancing in a field maintaining the ancient tradition of the "Herdsman Dance." Then we're on a beach with Brazilian dancers with strong thighs and colorful costumes, then on to an Argentine meadow where costumed dancers do "Carnival Dance...originally a form of religious dance, but now to be found in any kind of ritual celebration."

Next is a superb Japanese male mime dancer, barely clothed and trying to hold on to the tether suspending him over a menacing web below (he doesn't make it), and then we are back in South America for a rodeo and trick-riding show in a circular arena, followed by a bull-fight at the point of four daggers in the slow-moving beast's shoulders, both of which are played against the soundtrack of a rousing, circus-esque horn-section rendition of "Old MacDonald Had a Farm."

Now it's on to Rio and "Brazilian Dance" during carnival, featuring dancing bodies in spectacular and scant costumes as a backdrop to a thin male dancer in a suit that looks like it's made out of aluminum foil. He's followed by a dozen costumed Spanish³¹ women dancing and singing the "Wine Bottle Dance" with bottles of wine perched atop their heads, and then a long Euro-American mixed ballet ensemble doing the "Charleston Dance" on a stage set with wagon-trains, livestock feeders and bundled corn stalks. Then comes an intense Flamenco performance by a serious black-clad, black-haired Spanish woman in a courtyard with clapping and guitar accompaniment, and finally a long ballet duet of, according to the graphics, "Venetian Carnival."³²

Meanwhile the hostess has been coming to us from various scenic outdoor spots on the grounds of the former Shanghai estate of Song Qingling, middle-born of the famous and immeasurably influential Song sisters,³³ who became Madame Sun Yat-sen and an official heroine of the Communist revolution, in stark contrast to her younger sister, Song Meiling, who became Madame Chiang Kai-shek, wife of the Nationalist leader and officially hated enemy of the People's Republic. I'm reminded how Madame Chiang has been recently castigated in the Chinese media, when her faux pas at a dinner with Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt—she did the throat cutting gesture when asked what the Chinese

government would do in the case of such labor unrest as had recently erupted in the US, prompting Roosevelt to compliment her on her eloquence but also remark that she had something to learn about democracy—was used to illustrate one kind of Chinese backwardness in the identity-crisis lament of the Beijing-produced TV series *He Shang* in 1988. You can buy tickets and tour the old Song homestead there in the former French Concession, when they're open. The absence of crowd clutter in the background demonstrates, and I recall from being there, that the place wasn't open during these hostess tapings.

Finally, after this week's "Hundred Cultural Questions" appear against the backdrop of Taj Mahal stills and the romantic bubble-gum sounds of French pianist Richard Clayderman (a giftless but happy performer—Liberace minus the talent, let alone the style—whose career had been resuscitated, if it had ever breathed at all, by a recent tour of China), it's time for the "MTV Sightseeing" finale.

As it happened I had actually just joined the Garden producers in post-production one day just as they were compiling this final segment.

"Bole, give some translation here," so they could mount explanatory subtitles. It was a German rock video, in German. Happily there were English subtitles. The hostess had introduced it by noting that just as Strauss had defined

a period of music history, rock and roll clearly defined the twentieth century. Then: "Okay, viewing friends, next on this week's MTV Sightseeing Tour, get ready to witness an extremely magnificent scene—a rock concert on a flatbed truck right in front of the birthplace of music-god Beethoven!"

I sat down and we went through it. Sure enough, as advertised, the two guitarists, a bassist, a drummer, and a lead singer were performing on the flat-bed in front of Beethoven's birthplace in Bonn, which appears to have been converted into some sort of museum. People looking out from the windows look far from amused, confirming this is not an invited performance. Shades of punk, otherwise standard and pretty pedestrian rock. Lots of blond hair, very simple production values, and the predictable, even requisite for the genre, performance of anger.

The song's title is not given. The lyrics however begin a bit ominously and build slowly into firmly disturbing terrain, bringing new weight to the otherwise generic rock angst: *In a time where life makes you robot-like / the greatest fun is TV at night / Man is like a clock work, programmed, / and no one resists / Just a few kids feel sick with it / When the sun sets it's dawn for the Droogs / small gangs gather ready to hunt / Hey, here comes Alex / Curtain up for his horror show / Hey, here comes Alex*

*/ Curtain up for his horror show. On the crusade against
order / and the apparently happy world / they celebrate
destruction / joy when victims scream / Nothing stops their
raging fury now / Hey, here comes Alex / Curtain up for his
horror show / [REPEAT. Twenty against one until blood flows
/ with clubs and rocks / crack that head / the next victim
is already in line / while you're still asking / Why aren't
you doing anything, God? / Hey, here comes Alex / Curtain up
for his horror show [REPEAT, REPEAT, END]*

Well then. So I do the translations. We all recall recent newspaper reports, discussions and so forth about neo-Nazi, Hitler youth resurgence in Germany.

Ah ha, well, well, say the guys. We'll just leave out the translation then. The show's made after all, and tomorrow's showtime. It's still very eye-catching, isn't it?

Just like the tracks up and down the National Rocket, and the footage of blistering anti-aircraft artillery, as the young trendies sing about peace and love, and a hundred thousand other expressions of radically disembodied reflexion in 1990s China. Just like the plastic candy wrapper on the beach at sparsely populated Chongming Island, north of Shanghai in the mouth of the Yangtze River, never preceded by the technologies that lead up to it, but suddenly, immediately there, now, to stay.

The German rock band's name was *Die Toten Hosen*, or Dead Trousers, and I'm told by brilliant composer Ellen Harrison and brilliant architect Udo Greinacher that this is German slang for, roughly, "nothing's happening, it's dull, nothing's going on." But something's definitely happening on and around the TV screens, the cameras, and the scapes of Shanghai, a proliferation of new spaces in hyperspeed transformation, splintering a zillion ways, yet always useful for a special reproduction.

"Globalization...is a process of uneven development that fragments as it coordinates..." (Giddens 1990: 175).

NOTES

¹ See Giddens (1990) for detail of this image of modernity, and (1991) for discussion of its implication for identity-making practices under modern conditions, and (1994) for further elaboration of "reflexivity" in particular. The "maelstrom" image is reminiscent of course of Marx and Engels' famous phrase, "all that is solid melts into air," so richly elaborated, in turn, by Marshall Berman (1982).

² See, e.g., Chen and Parish (1996); Davis, et al., eds. (1995); Gates (1993); Gold (1989b); Li (1997); Tang (1996a); Unger (1993); and Whyte (1992, 1997) for discussions of urban experience in post-Mao China. For the first collection of specifically urban ethnographies in contemporary China, see Chen et al. (2001). Compare also Zhang's (1996) insightful literary historical treatment of the 'urban' and 'rural' in Chinese literature and film, as well as his "Afterward" perspectives on the contemporary era.

³ These figures are always remarkable. For advertising: In 1979, the first year of the reform era and time of China's first TV advert (on STV January 28), there were 10 ad agencies in all of China. By 1992, when the current study was being conducted, there were nearly 17,000 (Hong 1994). Over this period nationwide advertising billings grew on average between 43 and 50 percent annually (Chan 1995a, 1995b; Liang and Jacobs 1994; Cheng and Schweitzer 1996), from about US\$1.7 million in 1979 to US\$1.6 billion in 1993 (Huang 1994; Hong 1994). Not to be outdone, 1994 witnessed billings of US\$3.8 billion, a jump of between 72 percent (according to Peerenboom 1995) and nearly 140 percent (using 1993 figures from Chan *op. cit.*).

For television: After China's first two TV stations began operating in 1958 (one in Beijing, one in Shanghai), by 1979 there were a total of 32 nationwide (Li 1991; Huang 1994). A decade later there were 422 and by 1992 the number had risen to 676 (Hong 1993; Wang and Chang 1996). The number of television sets in use during this period went from 3.4 million to 200 million (Huang 1994), with a person-to-receiver ratio going from 280:1 to 4:1 (Hong 1993). Accordingly, audience size went from 78 million in 1978 to 800 million in 1992 (Huang 1994), or some 75 percent of the total population of China (Wang and Chang 1996). A more recent report states that in 1996 the viewing audience in China had reached 950 million, with cable systems alone

reaching 40 million households (Atkinson 1997a). *China Entertainment Network* (1997) reports that television reached 84.8 percent of the population in 1995 and 86.1 percent in 1996, both figures which correspond to over a billion people, and suggest that China seems well on-track to reach the goal of 90 percent television reach by 2000.

⁴ I learned this ad industry acronym for 'point-of-purchase' advertising from Mr. Xu Baiyi, the delightful "doyen of China advertising" who has written (e.g., 1986, 1988, 1990) and lectured extensively in China on the advertising trade, employing insights derived from his nearly 70 years in the business in Shanghai.

⁵ For excerpts in English of some of Deng's speeches during this pivotal trip, see Deng (1994). Among the many accounts in Chinese is Yuan and Han (1992).

⁶ Schram's phrase here in turn refers to a statement by Mao after the disastrous Great Leap Forward (1958-60) that official policy would put "politics in command" in order to stamp out official corruption and dishonesty, alleged culprits of Great Leap failures. See Lawrance (1998) for a concise account, Dali Yang (1996) for the exhaustive treatment, and parts of Seybolt (1996) and Chan et al. (1992) for village-level detail of the pivotal Great Leap Forward.

⁷ As noted in the previous chapter, excited visions of Pudong development date back at least to Sun Yat-sen in the early twentieth century. These most recent plans however, for the Pudong New Development Zone, were announced by the Shanghai government in late 1990 and were getting reported by, e.g., *Beijing Review* and the *Far Eastern Economic Review* beginning then; see Jing (1990) and Cheung (1990). Even venerable anthropologist Fei Xiaotong got into the celebration, waxing excited about "turning Shanghai into a 'mainland Hongkong'" (Fei 1990). Early western reports include Binns (1991). For figures of foreign investment in Pudong since 1990, see *Beijing Review* (1996).

⁸ Discussion of civil society and the public sphere in China, including the challenges of applying these analytical categories firmly derived from historical experience in the West (e.g., as described by Habermas [1984, 1987, 1989]) to non-West contexts, appears most usefully in Brook and Frolic (1997), Calhoun (1989, 1993), Gold (1990), Huang (1993), Rowe (1990, 1993), Strand (1990), Wagner (1995), Wakeman

(1993), Walder (1989), White (1993, 1994), White, Howell and Zhang (1996), and Whyte (1992).

⁹ See Lefebvre (1991), Harvey (1985), Soja (1989), and Castells (1980) in addition to Giddens *op. cit.*

¹⁰ At a workshop on urban China in September, 1997, the report circulated that anywhere from one-quarter to one-half (depending on who was speaking) of all the world's skyscraper cranes were at that moment being used somewhere in Shanghai.

¹¹ Appadurai and Breckenridge (1990).

¹² Yang treats this most exhaustively in (1994, 1988, 1989). See also Gold (1985), Kipnis (1997), Smart (1993), Walder (1986), Wilson (1997) and Yan (1996) for additional accounts.

¹³ "Ni jiali qeshao shenme, ni jiu qu caifang shenme." *Caifang*, to interview, has come to be used in a broader sense of "covering," as a story, among STV producers.

¹⁴ I have written elsewhere on this (Ballew 1991, 1992), as has Schell (1994, 1995).

¹⁵ See Fu and Cullen (1996), Xu (1992), and especially Zhao (1998) for overviews of China's media policies in general. Hong (1993, 1998), Huang (1994), Li (1991), and parts of Zhao (1998) provide detail on television policy in particular.

¹⁶ See the interview in *New Perspectives Quarterly* (1988).

¹⁷ This is explored further in the following chapter.

¹⁸ More recently (summer 2000), the head of a development company operated by Shanghai's Nanshi District government spoke of this over lunch one day (itself set up by a mutual friend hoping to arrange a business deal with him for a relative). Between half-hearted bites of fine cuisine, and much more ardent drags of cigarette, this influential official businessman stated succinctly that at this point in his career he'd much rather do business with a complete stranger, as "doing business with friends or relatives is just exhausting!" Present company excluded, I was led to believe, as the mutual friend, while frankly seeking favors from the man, had provided his company's developments with

lots of publicity in the recent past, in her capacity as a (very prolific) local TV producer...

¹⁹ Zhao (1998) contains a thorough and excellent chapter on the issue of corruption in 1980s-1990s Chinese journalism.

²⁰ This is the view presented in White et al. (1996) and White (1994, 1993).

²¹ McCormick (1994) represents this position. See the exchange with White (1994).

²² See Habermas's (1987: 383-386) related discussion of parallels in the crisis tendencies of bureaucratic state socialist systems and advanced capitalist systems.

²³ To describe state power in China this way is not at all to suggest it does not operate at all, of course.

²⁴ See the McHugh English translation of Kuhn's German translation of Cao (1958).

²⁵ She has to dodge the microphone here, and I regret to say it was my day on boom.

²⁶ Now I was the (sham) first winner of the contest and we cut next to my humble abode (a dorm room at the Music Conservatory of Shanghai) where I answer (after some rehearsal) the rather arcane questions to claim my prize and dedicate the next song/video.

²⁷ Rob Eford (2001) makes this connection explicit, and refers to Chinese writers (e.g., Jin 1993) who do the same.

²⁸ There are many interesting layers of significance of this video and its production. Generally speaking however it's worth noting that the song/event foreshadows two of the biggest events in China of the past decade, the 1988 TV series *He Shang*, or "River Elegy," which turned on the metaphor of the blue/azure ocean of the outside "modern" world and the yearning desire that it cleanse the murky Yellow River of China's backwardness, and the Democracy Movement at Tiananmen of the following year, which emerged from this same caldron that produced *He Shang*. For the Chinese script of *He Shang* see the authors Su and Wang, eds. (1988), and Cui, ed. (1988). For some of the copious commentary in Chinese, see Cao (1988), Deng (1988), Feng (1988), Jiang Kongyang (1988), Jiang Yihua (1988), Mei

(1988), Su (1989), and Wang Huning (1988). Wakeman (1989) offered an early comment in English. An English translation of the script and commentary appears in Su and Wang, eds. (1991).

²⁹ He taught performance studies at a prestigious local university, working in television part-time.

³⁰ The tape came from the STV archive, where producers could look through a kind of card catalog and check out tape held by STV, which had been obtained through barter or similar exchange with production units both domestic and foreign, or, more rarely, purchase.

³¹ This is how they are introduced and appear stylistically and linguistically, yet the graphic saying "Wine Bottle Dance" (*jiuping wu*) adds in parentheses "Hungary."

³² These two long ballet pieces reflect the writer's particular interest in this form of dance.

³³ For a recent account of the fascinating Song family, see Seagrave (1985). Perhaps the earliest book-length treatment is Emily Hahn's (1945) *The Soong Sisters of 1941*. Hahn was a close friend and champion, especially of the youngest, Song Meiling, and her husband Chiang Kai-shek. Writing also for *The New Yorker*, Hahn was a central figure in what came to be called the China Lobby, led by Henry Luce, *Time* magazine, and lots of missionaries and anti-communists, which was very effective at ensuring continued support for Chiang and the Nationalist government even when popular support against it was clear to most foreign observers, including other journalists and the experienced officers of the U.S. Foreign Service stationed in China. See Kahn's (1975) *The China Hands*.

CHAPTER FOUR

NEW-REVOLUTIONARY INTERSTITIALITY:
 OF COMMERCIAL GENDERING, 'DEEP CULTURE'
 AND FLIGHTS OF FOREIGN FANTASIA

fantasia fanta'zia, fæn'ta:zI(e), -'teI- a. Ital. *fantasia* (see *FANTASY*), lit. 'fancy', hence 'an instrumental composition having the appearance of being extemporaneous' (Tommaseo). // 1a. Mus. 'A composition in a style in which form is subservient to fancy' (Stainer and Barrett). // b. transf. and fig. 1818 E. Blaquiere tr. Pananti's Narr. Res. Algiers xix. 367 These excesses called fantasias, or paroxysms of passions. // 1880 J. H. Shorthouse J. Inglesant xxvi. 372 Wandering amid this brilliant fantasia of life, Inglesant's heart smote him. // 1921 D. H. Lawrence *Sea & Sardinia* 41 Every wretched bit of would-be extra chic is called a fantasia. // 1935 H. G. Wells *Things to Come* v. 33 Long lines of steel-helmeted men. Lorries full of men. Lorries full of shells. Great dumps of shells. A fantasia of war material in motion.

From *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989)

The previous chapter on "The Garden of Visual Delights"—as both the weekly variety show and the theme

park—explored further tensions and contradictions arising in the reconfiguration of Chinese spaces, physical and cultural, occurring as China ever-avidly logs into the flows of globally mobile capital. If there the focus was particularly on the ways in which market-based relations and commodification were compromising the extent to which local Chinese projects of constructing a vibrant and rewarding (in their terms) “civil society” and “modernity,” this chapter looks at the constraints these same basic contextualizing social fields place upon other specific identity-making projects, namely, those representing gendered selves, and those representing locality-as-the-non-Fantastic-the-non-CosmoAesthetic.

The Interstitial Hates a Vacuum

After hours on a warm fall Tuesday evening at the Shanghai Film Studio (SFS), a crew is working on a TV commercial. On a stage-set in one small portion of one of the several cavernous sound studios at SFS, the on-screen talent—a young woman, a baby and a grandparent-aged couple—occupy the make-believe domestic space of the set. Props include a crib, a fresh-cut flower arrangement, and an oversized stuffed rabbit. Accessorized with pearl bracelets and long geometric earrings, The Young Mother is

heavily made up and coifed in a curled bob, a few long bangs ready to stylishly harrass, and wears a long pearl-white evening gown, satin-sheen. The Grandparents are in more understated makeup and western-style casual wear. The backdrop is a backlit latticework sparsely adorned with faux vines. The crib is on a platform at the rear, as if on the far perimeter of a sunken family room. It is not what anyone would call realist set design.

Surrounding the stage-set are the dozen or so production personnel, working busily, navigating among themselves and the mechanics of their craft (film, not tape production in this case): the electric cables on the floor, the dollies and tracks, the camera equipment and lighting (for film, not tape in this case), the heavy rigging overhead of pulleys and ropes and joists for the palette of backdrops that can be mobilized by these, the stage-set construction materials of wood and steel, and so forth. There are strong men doing lighting and general grips, a cameraman and his assistant, a makeup woman, costume woman, and the director/producer, as well as a few on-lookers.

It is a setting full of standing between or amidst, in any case, of interstitiality. Indeed, the setting is one of increasingly many in the post-Mao reform era occupying newly reconfigured social spaces that are neither here nor

there, so to speak, much as discussed in previous chapters. They are interstitial in relation to anything that might be called "official" or "state-ordered" on one hand, and to other realms of potentially non-official, public, civil, popular practices ordered to some degree outside this official space, on the other. Victor Turner's (1967) notion of liminality would seem an appropriate trope for this scene as well, for just as Ndembu ritual is an occasion/site of re-presenting and reflecting upon cultural knowledges in performative spaces nonetheless conventionalized, so too is this TV commercial a representation of imagery on which viewers can reflect, symbolisms that can effect a contemplative cultural pause, even while still taking place in (the studio) and through (state-owned TV) official channels sanctioned by dominant culture.

The social relations of this production alone offer fascinating glimpses of liminal practice in the emergent, still fuzzy interstices of post-Mao Chinese society. The production is taking place precisely both within the physical and social space of official, state-owned China and outside it: though it is created here at state-owned SFS and will be aired on state-owned STV, this is a strictly freelance job.

The dapper young director, Tang Yankong, a talented, enterprising, and very successful commercial producer well known and respected in the TV and film worlds—not least because of his previous incarnation as a poet of some national critical acclaim—has arranged everything related to this job through his own personal network of *guanxi*. Originally and still technically an STV employee, he has contracted with a locally based Sino-foreign joint-venture pharmaceutical firm to create a twenty-five and fifteen-second spot for one of its products. He has organized the crew and talent, rented out equipment and studio space/time, and will, if necessary, help the client place the ad with TV stations, all through his extensive *guanxi* network. For their part, the talent and crew are also working outside their formal employments, getting paid here not by the state through their *danwei* (work-unit; in this case SFS for most), but directly from the director's budget, having been contacted either by Tang directly or joining the crew as assistant to a key figure Tang has already hired (such as the cameraman or lead actor; the makeup person and costume designer usually go together as well).

This informal economy of representation has been operating for some years now, but beginning here in 1992 it

has become somewhat officially sanctioned through the state's call for people to engage in "di'er zhiye," second, or sideline, occupations. Now not only allowed but encouraged to do sideline work to supplement incomes that the state is increasingly unable to keep in-step with inflation and the rising costs of basic goods and services previously provided by the state but now for sale on the markets, people all over have busied themselves working odd jobs in odd hours, inevitably arranged through *guanxi* networks in this industry.

Further bespeaking the informality of this interstitial economy, not only the landing of this kind of work but the pay operates through personal relations, and depends, within agreed ranges, upon the proper, successful cultivation of these. This point is made by one of the lighting grips here this evening, a man I'd first met on the set of a TV serial drama being filmed at a leprosy hospital outside Shanghai by a film director from Beijing using Beijing and Shanghai talent and Shanghai crew, on which this man was Production Manager. A very sweet rough-handed man in his mid-fifties, a veteran SFS employee whose striking gruffy face gets frequently punctuated by a wonderful whole-face smile, he has just come over from a nearby studio where he's been working on another ad-shoot

this evening. It comes in waves, he says, and he's always eager to take any ad work he can find when he's in town and not on location somewhere on a film, because they're short, usually requiring but two days, and they pay well. He added that pay for his position can range anywhere between 120 and 300 yuan per spot, the exact amount within this range "depending on how you do your *guanxi*." The best way, he has found, is to simply say to the director, "It's up to you, pay whatever you think is appropriate." Whatever the figure for a particular job, given the monthly base salary for this kind of production work of about 250 yuan, this is a substantial income supplement. The rest of this crew is also mainly from SFS, on-board primarily through the cameraman, a friend of Tang's, who is one of the most talented cinematographers at SFS.

The work moves along. Tang, as usual for him and for virtually all production personnel I've been meeting and working with, is embarrassed and even apologetic to me about the poor technology and slow pace, lamenting what he has to work with as compared to foreign producers. Adding to his exasperation, he's also getting teased by some of the crew about his frequent calls for the lights, etc., to be turned off. He is paying for the electricity after all, but this kind of cost-consciousness is not overwhelmingly

the norm here at SFS.

Woman of the New Revolution, Position A

The commercial Tang is making is for one of the joint-venture's medicinal *koufuye* (oral elixir), a supplement of Vitamin D and calcium to add to an infant's milk or formula, which, so the commercial will say, "cures rickets".¹ This type of commercial is a very familiar one in the world of TV advertising in China. Chan (1995b) reports that pharmaceuticals are consistently advertised more than any other single type of product throughout China, and this certainly corresponds to what appeared on the TVs of Shanghai during this project. There are very interesting issues here regarding the commercials' claims of the curative powers of these medicinal products—which are widely considered suspect and increasingly coming under tighter state regulation, as Chan notes—as well as their linkage with the epidemiologies and treatments of traditional Chinese medicine and its relationship to the 'modern science' of western medicine.

This particular example however is significant, for present purposes, in its narrative and characterizations themselves. It provides a glimpse at the sorts of representations that are being created in this recently-

tilled interstitial and liminal space of cultural production. Of particular significance are its representations which spatialize both gendered identities and a gendered division of labor, drawing mutually implicated linkages-as-contrasts from the domestic nursery to the world of global business.

CUTting TO: the commercial as finished product, the first item of note is that, despite the many takes of the Grandparent's proudly playing with Baby, or helping Young Mother take care of him, in the end the Grandparents are back on the proverbial cutting-room floor, now replaced by outdoors scenes shot at a park. Otherwise the on-screen narrative remains of the fairly straightforward before-and-after transformations induced by the *koufuye*. There is no actor dialogue, only an authoritative male overvoice narration added later.

Thus we open with the pretty Young Mother, in jewelry and evening wear, holding the swaddled Baby in her arms. She is pacing in maternal bliss against the latticework backdrop near the crib. The male overvoice comes on to intone that the "wonderful and great feelings of mothering can be completely spoiled (shadowed) by a child with rickets," and the text graphic appears at the bottom identifying, as per state regulation, the drug code number

assigned to the product by the Shanghai Municipal health authorities.

Next are several quick edits of Young Mother doing her best to cope with the frustrations as she sits beside the crib trying to comfort the crying and kicking Baby and feed it a bottle. Finally, with tears and fashionable bangs clouding her view, she turns to face the faux window, which initially glows with bright light that illuminates her tormented face and then turns into a frame for a split image of the Baby wailing from two different angles. Text graphics appear here, saying vertically on the left, "Symptoms of infant calcium deficiency," and horizontally on the lower right, "Sweating, excessive teariness, and wailing at night during sleep time,"² as the overvoice advises, "watch closely for these symptoms."

Now we go to a close-up of the bottle and its packaging on display as the overvoice intones after a dramatic pause, "Yingkangli Oral Elixir has special efficacy for the prevention and treatment of rickets," and this is backed up by further graphics saying the medicine "specifically cures infant calcium deficiency and rickets."³ Next we see the Young Mother adding drops of Yingkangli—which combines the characters meaning hero, health and benefit in its name—to Baby's bottle, as per the

overvoiced instructions, and feeding the bottle to the calmed child. Cut now to her serene countenance in the same pose in which we've just seen her in despair, and then suddenly to a park, where she (in the same wardrobe) sets Baby on the grass to romp around his stroller in his colorful jumper and ball cap, then to a close-up of him smiling. The overvoice adds the reminder that "Mama's peace of mind can only come with giving her children Yingkangli [Heroic Health Benefit]."

Finally we see Young Mother smiling and strolling in the park with a very Pregnant Friend, nodding her head to the Friend's gestural "For me?" Suddenly two men are visible in the background, both dressed in suit and tie, Man One carrying a businessman's briefcase, Man Two at Young Mother's elbow, awkwardly holding a box of Yingkangli toward the camera, into which he's looking as well, as the two women play out their exchange. Now we pan down the extended belly of Pregnant Friend to the box of Heroic Health Benefit Young Mother is giving her. As the overvoice proclaims, "Yingkangli—For the great feeling of mothering all day," we see the product close-up, with the graphic saying, "Yingkangli—Makes children healthy and mothers proud." Throughout the spot are the string-orchestrated sounds of Brahms' famous lullaby.

Revolutionary Liminality

Back in the dynamic spaces of the cavernous SFS studio the crew is breaking for a *kefan*, or "guest meal," dinner from the styrofoam boxes being passed out by the sanitation white-robed SFS cafeteria staffer from the back of his three-wheeled flatbed cycle. Rice and some hacked chicken, disposable chopsticks.

"Hey everyone, how's the revolution?"

Pedaling slowly into the area comes Zhang Jianya, a prolific and well-known filmmaker at SFS, just then doing post-production on his latest feature, *San Mao Congjun Ji* (*San Mao Joins the Army*), a comedy-adventure inspired by a 1930s comic strip about a mischievous boy named "Three Hairs." Almost everyone on the crew knows him, especially since the cameraman is Zhang's frequent cinematographer. There is laughter at the joke and greetings and everyone chats for a while, munching away. Tang finally prevails upon the crew to get back to work, nervous about wasting costly time.

"All right, let's go guys," acquiesces one of the crewmembers as Zhang rides away, "back to the revolution!" A few more chuckles.

It is very apt, and also a bit jarring given the

context of this very official space. But evocative too of the 'standing between' going on here, both in terms of institutional and social practice, and the practice of representation. It is indeed revolutionary that right here within the very spaces of official party-state power and control, not only is an informal economy of signs going on outside this sphere of power, it is doing so right under its nose. And joking about it. Indeed, the structural/institutional 'revolution' here is mirrored throughout reform-era China, again, as the state encourages decentralization and increasing reliance on market processes. Just a few days prior in fact, over long hours of dim sum (a trendy import from Hongkong at the time) I'd been getting one of several lessons from Zhang about the next stage of the film world's revolution, which would see an opening up of distribution channels domestically, effectively breaking the monopoly of the state-run China Film Distribution Company, and allowing the emergence of essentially private domestic production companies that could raise funds and make films independently, resulting in a film industry "more like you have in Hollywood, in the West."

It is also interesting to note that for Zhang, and presumably most of the others in the crowd in his

generation (in their forties or so, though many in the crew were younger), 'doing revolution' (*gao geming*) is of course a language heavily laden with significance, and thus possessing potent punning powers. He'd been one of the millions of Chinese youth mobilized by the cult of Mao and the energy of mass movements to pour heart and soul into the doing of "The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" some twenty years earlier. That he is now still a member of the Communist Party of China, and about to become one of the top officials at all of SFS, merely emphasizes the dynamism, the flux, the contradictory yet creative energies present in all this interstitial space.

There is another aspect however of this informal, interstitial gift/*guanxi* economy of signs that is significant. If this episode illustrates the in-between character of the social relations and practices of making an ad in reform-era China, the signification itself, the content, also reveals the kinds of imagery being constructed in this in-between discursive space, the privately arranged television commercial.

As noted, the narrative of this particular pharmaceutical commercial is both straightforward and in my experience very typical⁴ of its genre on China's TV screens. Several aspects of the content would be amenable to

interesting hermeneutics, such as the packaging and pitching of the product both as a *koufuye*, a traditional, locally-known and presumably trustworthy category, and as a "Vit.D" and "calcium" supplement produced by modern science at the Shanghai SINE Pharmaceutical Company, Ltd., a joint venture using foreign capital and know-how. Indeed, the Chinese name of the company (of which "SINE" is a very approximate homonym), is *Xin Yi*, composed of the two characters meaning "confidence" and "friendship," respectively. Perhaps the same logic that pitches the product in both 'modern' and 'traditional' terms has also formulated the company name to similarly span these potential divides, thus broadening the appeal: *Xin Yi*, the confidence of modern science and the intimate friendship of the culturally familiar *koufuye*.

More visible in this spot, however, is a certain imaginary directionality virtually ubiquitous across several genres of Chinese television in the post-communist era of *gaige kaifang*. For shorthand, this consists of the stock gendered characters 'Woman-as-Beautifiable-Domestically-Grounded-Mother/Nurturer' and 'Man-as-Cosmopolitan-Businessman'. He and She are all over the fields of Chinese "Electrovision". I have noted this trend earlier, but will here rehearse a few of its common

features.

Firstly, represented here is a dramatic division not only of labor, but of the very socio-physical spaces of action, as between the domestic/private and public realms. The Young Mother [*nb: cap these, here down*], subject of the narrative and target of the commercial message, is confined almost entirely to the domicile, however little it looks like any actually existing Chinese home. Further, as noted, even the slight sociability of the Grandparents, joining her for some domestic scenes with the Baby during the shooting, ends up being denied her as it gets eliminated in the final cut. This less bleakly solitary and actually much more likely and realistic scenario⁵ somehow doesn't make it into the final narrative of 'the great feelings of mothering'.

When Young Mother is let out of the house the continuity in her role is represented by the formal gown she's still wearing. Even outside, here in the park, she is present in strictly maternal space, from playing with toddler around the stroller to advising her just slightly anachronistic mirror image, the Pregnant Friend, all against the backdrop of 'nature' in the park.

Importantly though, both figures of this prototype dramatically embody another kind of labor they are

allowed/required to perform, along with their work as domestic Mother/Nurterer. They also both assiduously engage in fashioning projects of self-beautification. Nevermind how they've budgeted both the time and disposable income to keep themselves looking this way, at home under stress or in the park at ease. Apparently it's all part of the mothering sublime. Of course just as the mothering role presupposes another, so too is this work in self-imagination grounded in part in this same particular other: the Husband and his desires. The eroticization of this fashionable mother not only appears in linkage to the child and domicile, and of course to the selection of an attractive young actress in the first place, but also is visible in the gown she wears throughout, which bears the distinctive imprint of formal evening wear on one hand, and a much more private nightgown on the other.

The Husband, for his part, doesn't even appear until we are outside, in the social public. Not even the slightest oblique sign of him appears in the domestic setting, and his complete disengagement from this space and the childcare that goes on there is further represented in his not being addressed at all in the overvoice narrative, whereas the words "mama" and "mother" are repeated several times. When we do see him, along with the even more

distant husband of his wife's Pregnant Friend, it is for but a few seconds in the background as the two women talk in the park.

The two men's detachment from the concerns of the domicile and mothering, and their identification as markers of the public and specifically of Commerce-on-the-Go, are further expressed in their attire, but also in the brief action they do perform. The second man is but a blip suit and tie carrying a briefcase, remote in the background and visible for a very brief second. He is clearly *occupied elsewhere*. The more visible Husband is similarly disembedded from the setting, but not only by his being confined to the public space of the park versus the private space of the home and by his own wearing of the International Businessman's Uniform. This figure is lifted completely out of the narrative as well, just as he remains inserted in it, as he walks alongside the women in the park carrying the small box of medicine just inside the frame, facing it toward the camera. That he actually looks into the camera as he displays the medicine merely detaches him further from this exchange to do with private matters, even though it's taking place in the public outdoors. His suit and tie and presence only in public place him elsewhere, at a distance from things domestic and the mothering sublime,

but to drive the point home he acts completely outside this sphere even when it comes out, so to speak into the public: he's strictly engaging the viewer/camera. And this not only disengages him from the concerns of this sphere. It also emphasizes his linkage to the specific public sphere indexed by his uniform, that of commerce, worldly public interchange. No adventures in the land of colic and body fluids for him. Even when he's there he's not there. He's otherwise occupied. Busy, as in full of busi-ness.

These are exceedingly familiar figures across the audiovisual-scapes of Chinese TV, perhaps particularly present in commercials but also very common in other genres. The only other iconography that matches these in terms of the frequency of appearance in Chinese programming that is not explicitly represented here in this particular spot, is the imagery of translocality, of foreign fantasia, the global sublime. To be sure, I do see it here, even if implicit. The businessman in a suit and tie carrying a briefcase is so consistently linked to international frameworks and processes that I take this as a reference attending the imagery more or less automatically. Most of the time the guesswork is unnecessary, as other symbols of transnationalism almost always accompany the Man in the Business Suit character, as if woven into the very fabric

of that outfit. But the reference is not drawn directly in connection with Heroic Healthy Benefit oral elixir and the gendered and spaced division of labor in reform China.

Pitching the Flight Fantastic, Tripping on Plights

Globastic—Or, Woman of the New Revolution, Position 2

By this time in research work in Shanghai, I confess to having become a little benumbed by the repetitiveness of this particular palette of imagery and characterization employed in productions I observed being made or viewed during broadcast. Certainly there were further aspects of what I was privileged to witness there on this set that would have repaid attention, more questions to ask, always someone else whose perspective might provide more complexity, nuance, or just mundane information. But I'd begun to glaze over a bit this evening, given in to fatigue and distraction and already started down that self-loathing path of guilt over the yawning distance between my observations and notes and anything that might stack up to a "thick description;" and then I'd even begun the bitter reaction to this self-castigation by trying to remind myself that in truth this methodological mantra is strictly masochistic and what I should be doing is looking for a phone to call Clifford Geertz—or should it be Malinowski?

—with a piece of my mind.

But before this slide gets too terribly underway, Tang shows me the script for another commercial he is preparing to make. It's for a line of luggage from "Shanghai Aisi," or "Shanghai Ace," a local joint-venture firm funded with Hongkong capital. A quick read, over by some lighting waiting to be used, is re-energizing. The narrative follows a young woman's journey from her humble beginnings on an old run-down (po) street, to and through the cosmopolitan circuit of airports and foreign lands, a story thus embodying that other set of tropes on the global sublime just mentioned. Naturally it caught my attention both as an artifact of this latter commercial genre, but also as what appeared to be a freshly alternative depiction of a woman, quite different from the stock figure of domesticity, the private sphere, beautified bodily surfaces and nurturance of men. Here was a woman not only detached from the private nurturing performance of childcare but also located out in public realms of cosmopolitan translocality. Tang graciously let me come along to see how she would fare.

A couple of weeks later I'm waiting, as instructed, early one morning in front of the hotel where Tang lives.⁶ Huang Baohua, the same SFS cinematographer from the *koufuye*

spot is here again, along with several of the same crew from that job, yet another arrangement in the informal economy of signification. We're hanging out in and around the SFS bus parked outside Tang's hotel, loaded with the equipment, waiting to get mobilized. Finally, one of the key props for the day shows up—a late-model white Lincoln Town Car—and Tang comes down from his room with the striking young female lead, Wang Lin, and Xiao Zhu, the makeup woman set to work on the project. I'm delighted to see Xiao Zhu, having met her first through my dear friend, the inspired and talented SFS costume designer, Dong Zhongmin, on the leprosy hospital set, where she was doing makeup and, at down moments, impresario work on the handheld Tetris game then taking the whole of Shanghai it seemed by storm. She introduces me to the costumes man for the day, an STV employee, and helps break the ice with other crew members I haven't met by identifying me as a friend of friends.

Soon we're off and eventually out on the tarmac at the Shanghai Rainbow International Airport. Again we're waiting though, equipment untouched and nearing one o'clock in the afternoon. Tang's not pleased with the wardrobe for the leading lady, a floral print dress, which had indeed been a tall order in the first place, asking the hapless

STV costume man to make it based on but a photograph. Nor is Tang satisfied, on further reflection, with the car, the bright and shiny new Lincoln, which has Shandong plates and is owned by a joint venture here in Shanghai whose boss someone on the set knows. He wants it instead for tomorrow's shoot at another location.

So we're waiting, on the bus, on the tarmac, in the breeze. People are napping. A yellow suit is chosen to replace the failed dress, and an older, less striking Chrysler limo eventually materializes out of somewhere across town, somewhere along the *guanxi* grapevine. But there's still no action and people begin chiding Tang for being too particular and under-organized.

Today's assistant director, Nian Muqiang, continues remarks from a previous day's conversation about how *luan*⁷ things have gotten in the Chinese film, TV and advertising world since 1986. A stocky balding man in his forties with Martin Van Buren sideburns, Nian had done camera work at STV since 1979 but now, like Tang, focuses on freelancing, Nian under the frequent employ of an audiovisual company started up with Hongkong investment by a well-known actor from the 1930s, which often gets called "STV3" because most employees are former or current STV employees and, Nian says, because some three-quarters of domestic ads aired on

STV are produced by the company.⁸

"It's anarchy!" Nian is venting. People used to be much more responsible (*you zerengan*) and better organized, they used to take pride, he says. But now, and since the mid-1980s, things are different. He's talking about the period after the watershed media policy shifts toward decentralized control introduced in 1983,⁹ whereby local stations and administrative organs have been increasingly, as per *gaige kaifang* generally, allowed more decision-making powers in how to organize production. It is ironic that Nian, who is about to open his own company with Taiwanese money, describes the resulting trends as "anarchic" and negating of a "sense of responsibility" among production personnel. The term for anarchic, *wuzhengfu de*, means literally "without government," which is largely what the entire reform process has driven toward, resulting not only in general decentralization but also allowing media production arrangements like this one we're part of today (to say nothing of course of the firm Nian is planning to start up). Moreover from the outset in the late 1970s the cornerstone of *gaige* has been precisely the by-now fabled "responsibility system," or *zerenzhi*, whereby social entities, be they individuals, households, or collectives, contract with the state to take

'responsibility' for the production of a given good or service, which they are then able, after meeting state quotas in kind or cash, to dispose of as they wish, including on newly established free markets.¹⁰

Perhaps unusually perturbed by the day's inactivity thus far, Nian goes on to complain that it's this way all over, across economic sectors and *danwei*. He even goes so far as to say that the role of *guanxi* in media production has gotten out of hand, though his own network has arranged much of this project itself, including the Chrysler limo at the last minute. He scoffs at recent rhetoric coming out of the Shanghai Bureau of Radio and Television (SBRT), the party-state's administrative arm overseeing these media, about promoting competition in the industry amongst stations and amongst divisions within stations alike, expressing pessimism about the prospects for true and fair competition when *guanxi* play such an important role. I mention the recent buzz about a growing conflict between two units within STV. "No shit," he says, "Exactly my point. You know who the head of [the plaintiff in the disagreement] is? Only the go-between of Gong Xueping! How convenient is that? How are you supposed to compete against that? The Bureau Director's go-between!"¹¹

Huang Baohua and some of his SFS crew chime in here as

well to talk about the general situation in the film industry. They've recently worked Second Unit on local filming of a Hongkong film about Shanghai in the 1920s, an experience which among other things drove home for them how "bitter" (*ku*) it is working in the Chinese film industry compared to the cushiness in the industry elsewhere in the world. Huang laments the "strange/viscous circle" (*guai quanzi*) in which tight funds beget tight funds: the state-run studios have limited production funds, this leads to poor quality films which confirm the public's low estimation of domestic product, which of course leads to low box office and therefore small budgets for the next year's round of pictures. This is why, he goes on, echoing an oft-voiced lament from across the film industry, Chinese filmmakers are always on the hunt for foreign production funds.¹²

Finally things start moving, the green light coming at last to post up out pretty far onto the tarmac where several commercial jets are parked. The airport *guanxi*-man a wiry middle-aged man, appears to have struggled to deliver what he'd promised, presumably this access, but seems to have damage control well under way. He gives me his business card, which lists his employ at the airport, and says to contact him any time I'm coming through.

The scene involves some stationary and tracking shots of the Lead Woman leaving on a jet-plane, "Ace" bags in tow, dressed in the yellow suit. The wind is up almost too much and Tang is otherwise his usual detail-fretter, from the lighting to body movements and facial expressions, but he seems to have faith in his crew, particularly Huang, which, by all accounts, is well justified. Apart from the Lead Woman other actors are a Business Man and two young men dressed as Bellhops wheeling around Lead Woman's luggage cart; presumably their mysterious presence at the airport is to be understood as their having accompanied Lead Woman all the way from the customer service-award winning hotel, or as just what you get at an international airport.

As usual I'm taking note also of the transnational commercial signage surrounding the setting, potentially available for inclusion within the frames, or more passively but effectively demanding it by their mere spatial high-frequency, their presence. Thus in the more peripheral, background areas I see jets from Air Ukraine, Aeroflot, Air China itself, Japan Airlines. A veritable UN of aircraft and it provides the simple, welcome reminder that global interflow is a great deal more complicated than any binarist image of a US-dominated center variously

imperializing the periphery would suggest. I also notice, though, that McDonnell-Douglas and Boeing aircraft, with Pratt & Whitney and General Electric jet engines under their wings, are under almost all of these paint jobs. But it's still an important reminder.

Closer to the cameras and action, I see how Tang and the crew have positioned other weighty cosmopolitan iconography, other insertion points where the global steps into or is placed into the local. One of the Bellhops in particular looks like he belongs in a very different ad, for example. Not only are the most visible and prominently displayed bags on his cart those bearing the names Adidas and Fitto, making it seem like one of these sporting transnationals is footing the bill for all this publicity. The cart itself, in accidental consequence of a completely unrelated arrangement between the airport authorities and a Korean consumer electronics firm, is showing the camera and its 300 million viewers the trademark Samsung. I decide these companies and the apparatuses of marketing and promotion they employ are surely aware that such accidental and gratis publicity is a happy by-product of just being out there in the public realm, part of the visualscapes of life—they know everything at this point don't they? Every way every thing can promote any thing? I just wonder how

it all gets calculated and negotiated.

"Man of all knows no other kind—wear has it's comfort, that's fit." In English, under "Mondo Giovane" on another piece in this phantasmagoria of to-die-for worldliness. The language alone, nevermind the semantics and syntax, just the language itself, as potent signifier in and of itself. On the Adidas bag: *"Around a theme of functionality required for tennis, Adidas is always making us feel the waves of the age,"* then in three languages, English, French and German, *"The brand with the 3 stripes."* And then again in English alone: *"Since 1920."*¹³

Finally we reload the heavy machinery back on the bus after getting the few scenes, of Lead Woman waving goodbye, of Business Man showing his briefcase to her, and head off to the next location. It's too dark by the time we reach the park around the Shanghai Zoo for more exterior scenes, so our next stop, after the Rainbow International Airport, is the Japanese-built Nikko International Hotel. Inside we're met by the hotel's Chinese *gongguan* man (public relations man), the connection Tang and Nian are tapping for this arrangement. Unlike the airport man, who seemed eager to go out of his way to assist, this man appears distracted and hassled by the crew's presence, as if he's 'gifting' at an extra degree of personal remove. No one

seems to really know him well and Nian confirms that the connection is actually with someone else at the hotel. From the outset he is trying to hurry things along and can't have any idea that these people are just getting started and are used to working very late hours.

After some waiting, for the *kefan* dinners to get delivered (not from the hotel), and for the arrival of some foreign 'actors' someone is rounding up from one of the university campuses around town, the crew sets up in one of the reception rooms. The scene calls for a variety of shots of the Lead Woman and Business Man mixing with an international crowd over drinks and a piano player. The Marie Antoinette bust at the doorway, here at the Nikko International of Shanghai which serves almost exclusively the Japanese business traveler, evocatively metonymizes the entire scene of transnational, transtemporal swirl.

Here we are, to create a setting, a structure of feeling, to express the desirability and thus the pleasure and consumability of translocally-produced (ACE is a joint venture with foreign capital) luggage and its efficacy in transporting you into the foreign fantasia of the global sublime.

The first set-up has the Business Man and a Foreign Business Man entering past Marie Antoinette into the room

showing their Ace bags to each other, establishing commonality in taste, mutual respect and presumably better business prospects between them. The Foreign Business Man is played by a guy from something called the Center for National Security Studies in Washington DC who tells me he's here studying China's economic changes and its impact on the environment at Fudan University. He's clean-cut and wearing his own suit and tie. Tang will pay him a couple hundred yuan for the evening.

The next scene moves into the reception room proper and features Lead Woman making rounds through the well-attired international crowd, drinks in hands. Tang is directing her to float through past the piano and the bar cart, as the Business Man, the Foreign Business Man and two European Women, played by two European students also from Fudan, mill in the background chatting. Once again cans of Coca-Cola and packages of Marlboro and Kent and 555 cigarettes are stationed about for inclusion in the frame, and although it looks initially like the Tia Maria, Cointreau, Chivas Regal, Remy Martin, Martell and other imported liquors on the bar cart are being shot facing away, they are in the end oriented label-first toward the camera. In the action the Lead Woman comes past the piano to stand near the bar cart. She takes in the setting as

she does so, gazing at the Business Men and the European Women in the background, drink in hand, then turning to the camera as she comes to a stop in front of the bar cart, and looks nearly straight into the lens with an evocative expression of marvelous contentedness over her fortune, as if her dreams have unbelievably come true.

One of the takes puts the Center of National Security Studies guy at the piano as the Lead Woman walks by. He taps out "God Bless America" for a while. Then "Dixie." I imagine him in class at the Center, being taught how to do this for such occasions.

The third scene calls for the Lead Woman and European Women to sit at a table together in friendly conversation, while the camera pans down to hold on the Ace pocketbook they're all admiring.

By the time we leave it's well after midnight and the Nikko *gongguan* man has long run out of things to nit-pick about and is nowhere to be seen.

Next morning our first shooting location is a small wooded hillside at the park surrounding the Shanghai Zoo. The Lincoln is back and figures centrally in the two main scenes of the morning. The first revolves around the Lead Woman, now in a flowing white sleeveless dress, being sent off by her younger brother, Didi, who has toted her Ace

baggage on the back of his very ordinary bicycle, bids her farewell, and watches with lip-biting envy as she gets into the Lincoln with the suited and tied Business Man and they buzz away. The second scene calls for a fourth character, the plainly dressed, understated Nainai, or (usually paternal) Grandmother, played by an elegant middle-aged veteran of the Film Studio. She is with Didi at the same spot where he'd sent Lead Woman off, but this time they're welcoming her home. In a long shot Lead Woman runs to embrace Nainai, the Lincoln and the Business Man in the background behind her. Foreshadowing things to come, Didi is off to the left but now carrying a briefcase, the pitiful bike and plain outfit now absent.

The dynamic between Tang and the crew is smoother today, a convergence of the crew's greater if merely resigned patience and the better organization and efficiency Tang's managed to bring out. Much of the remaining and inevitable lulls are around Huang and (mostly) his stout SFS grips and camera guys moving the dolly, tracks, lighting and camera equipment around amongst the several set-ups; a second camera would save a great deal of time and energy, to say nothing of the additional creative possibilities, but has thus far in such production work been both prohibitively costly and simply unavailable,

so that even if a producer now wanted to budget one in they would scarcely have the experience to use it.

But some of the lulls of course involve the actors and their costume changes, makeup, and so on, and thus afford some cigarette time with the camera guys and reflections on their work. They've all worked on foreign productions filming in China, a couple on the *Shanghai 1920* project, one in Beijing on Bertolucci's *The Last Emperor*, and were also at least around during the local filming of Spielberg's pre-war Shanghai-set *Empire of the Sun*.

Inevitably discussion turns on comparisons between foreign production practice and local production practice. Partly of course this is due to their interlocutor, the American interested in Chinese TV and film. But clearly too it was a topic these people have contemplated a great deal, having emerged strongly during their experience with these foreign productions. The central issue is efficiency, in a word. They tell of the conflicts with the non-Chinese speaking Euro-American crews over the pace of work, of frustrations on both sides, that one guy who was a real asshole but turned out to be a good drinking buddy, at least for one night.

Their earnestness was striking, though I couldn't be much help. They asked me for confirmation, or

disconfirmation, of some of their impressions. Does it seem like we're less efficient and more lazy because they use more people on their crews, or do they all actually work more "maili" (sparing no effort, working with all one's strength and energy)? They're conflicted about these questions, switching between these modes of self-doubt and more critical takes on the 'others' and their harsh over-zealousness. Yet as in so many spheres of discussion in China today the balance lies in the assumption that there are many areas in which the foreigners know How to Do It while the Chinese do not. One man describes an observation he says has always puzzled him. Working with an American crew he'd seen them rush out to set up the equipment and test the lighting for a scene at 7:30 every morning, when as far as he could tell they would always wait until between 9:30 AM and 2 or 3 o'clock in the afternoon to shoot anyway, when the natural light was best (he gives the light-meter figures of good ranges). What were they doing, he asks me, why do they go to all this trouble. But he's not just being critical. Clearly he's genuinely puzzled and wanting to know, yet somehow expecting to hear reason and justification. I can't be of much help, of course, and leave him still to wonder, "you know they look at us and see we don't do it that way, and they call us lazy. . . but

is it that we're lazy, or that they do go overboard, do more work than is necessary?"

China's post-Opium War post-daoism: not what's the Way to Be, but how's the Way to Do?

After an interior shot of Business Man's briefcase inside the Lincoln and one of the Lincoln scooting away with the cosmo-couple to the airport and beyond, we pack up and head to the next location.

Fahuazhen Road, which could mean either Franco-Chinese Village Road or Brilliance of Law Village Road but given its location in the former French Concession must refer to the former, is a mid-sized street in western Shanghai near Jiaotong University and the new Holiday Inn, combining residential and commercial one and two-story structures. Just off Fahuazhen, connecting it with Huaihai Road, formerly the Rue de Joffre, the main French Concession boulevard, is little Xianghuaqiao (Fragrant Flower Bridge) Road, mainly residential but with a few household-commercial nooks, and described by the script and everyone in the crew as "run-down, shanty" (*po*), a quintessential 'old street' of Shanghai.

Here we are to get shots of Lead Woman's point of origin in her transnational travelogue, the *po* place¹⁴ in which she has lived with Nainai and Didi but from which Ace

luggage is taking her beyond the horizon. We are to get her leaving the old neighborhood, but also, in an important plot point of the twenty-five second narrative foreshadowed at the zoo park, we are to get Didi leaving as well, seeing him trade in his casual wear and old knapsack for a business suit and Ace briefcase and embark himself on that trip over the rainbow.

Thus far the crew has managed to avoid the usual common feature of on-location shooting: the throng of onlookers. Not here. Though the local Neighborhood Committee has been contacted and asked for cooperation and assistance and the *Gonganju* (Public Security Bureau, or police) has been marshaled to close off the street to through-traffic, this does little to curb the ebb and flow of bodies on Fragrant Flower Bridge Road, since it is largely pedestrian and bicycle-trafficked anyway. The crowd makes its presence felt, quite literally. It doesn't help matters that in addition to the regular equipment and costumed and made-up actors sticking out all about, Tang feels he needs some crane shots here as well as those from street level, so this enormous contraption of yellow steel framing from SFS is here as well, with or without Tang or Huang seated atop it, attracting any attention that might have missed the general hubbub passing through.

I the sore-thumb *yangren* (foreigner, esp. westerner) don't help either, even though I'm on cordoning-off duty, holding rope with several others to try to keep this small section of the street clear for the shooting, and thus unusually neither in front of nor behind the camera. The woman in front of me however is impressed neither with my exotic otherness nor with my rope-holding abilities (I'm not doing a very good job). She is from the little street-side stove selling sweet fried *binggan* and oily *youtiao* snacks, which Tang and the crew have incorporated into the peripheral scenery for local flavor, though they've manned it with a middle-aged male actor rather than this woman dressed and capped in state-sanitary white, who may or may not appreciate the break from work, probably depending on whether and to what degree she's part of 'gaige China'.¹⁵ Perhaps it's the coal dust on her shoulders, the fallout from her heated job working a stove fueled by those semi-solid cylindrical coal bricks, that booted her off the set.

Whatever the case, she's there, along with scores more. With bodies filling spaces with a kind of skill and urgency most westerners would be unable to duplicate—given our far broader personal space horizons and do you realize your elbow is in my back and your leg is actually touching mine and really I can do without that much information on

your recent shampooing and culinary adventures—I suddenly find myself in the laughable state of irritation at the general degree of disregard for we cordoners and our ropes. There I am, ethnographic Gawker Supreme getting peeved by the unflinching gawking neighbors. I try to take comfort in the speed of my recognition of the irony. Right.

Others among the crew are losing patience too, though, stepping up their verbal admonitions to stay back, out of the frame, out of the crane's line of movement. The man here from Ace, the client, asks during a break whether crowds like this gather around filming locations in the US as well. I say sure, when they can, as far as I know. Lead Woman Wang Lin asks the same thing later. Her tone is much more disapproving of the gallery, sure that in the outside world the filming of a commercial is not such a big thing, embarrassed that 'her people' don't just get over it. On the other hand, there is that distinct difference between the way our bodies are being coincidentally touched physically whereas hers, during the takes, is the object of quite intentional visual gropings and not just from the camera. The sheer sleeveless white dress, fitted on top and with a flowing mid-calf skirt, though fully underlain with modesty-ensuring backup fabric, may well add to her feeling of over-exposure.

The first shot is done pretty quickly and consists of close-ups of Lead Woman smilingly looking behind as she walks, and of the pocketbook at her hip. For the latter she is directed to heighten attention to the trademark on the piece with a hand motion by softly tracing her finger tips across the black leather just above the gold-lettered "ACE."

The second and third set-ups are the most complicated. First there is the scene where Lead Woman is exiting the low, dark and narrow doorway of the old home here on *Po* Street. She is carrying an Ace suitcase with brother Didi trailing behind with another. The two figures silently speak volumes. Mostly confined to the shadowy recesses of the passage, Didi is clearly bumming out: downcast eyes focused on the ground, somber face nowhere near a smile. Lead Woman on the other hand is positioned coming into the light of the outside, face looking distantly skyward full of anticipation. There is a threshold they are both stepping over, but Lead Woman takes it completely in stride, scarcely requiring a brief glance, while Didi never lifts his eyes from it.

There is a slight difference in interpretation between Tang and the Lead Woman, Wang Lin, about this scene. On the first takes she comes out with the uplifted eyes and

gaze of anticipation that while possessing clear excitement and overall positive energy do also contain an element of uncertainty, some slight hint of apprehension. Here the character is leaving one world to journey into a vastly other one, and Wang has apparently read this as an experience that might involve some level of doubt, fear of the unknown, some small dread.

"Cut," basically, is what Tang thinks. He wants something brighter. They discuss it briefly and Wang obliges, in the end displaying a more excited, slightly even playful look as she walks into the light of neverland.

By far the most difficult and time-consuming shot of the day, of the entire production in fact, is the crane shot showing Lead Woman walking along with Didi, her Ace luggage balanced upon his plain bicycle, past the quaint artificeries of *Po Street*. While most of the crowd is again being asked to stand aside out of the picture and crane's way, Tang and the crew also tap its resources for some performative ad-libbing. Four or five schoolboys are marshaled in to run through the street past the Leads. A woman and her grown daughter are asked to stroll along behind, as is an elderly man. Another fellow with a bicycle obligingly pedals toward and beyond them along his way, and a younger woman and her daughter are placed at the

street griddle buying snacks from the actor playing vendor. Perhaps most evocatively, an elderly woman from next door to the earlier, 'point of departure' scene, probably in her eighties but possibly her second century too, wearing homemade slacks, fabric shoes and a quilted jacket with loop-and-cluster fabric buttons, agrees to perform one of her daily tasks for the scene, so there she is whisking out the shit bucket in the gutter as the Leads walk by, apparently oblivious to them and the distant, high-stakes waters they're navigating. For their part, Lead Woman acknowledges the old woman laboring basely, glancing down as she passes, with not a haughty or snide expression but rather somewhat fondly, even though equally clear is an 'oh, how quaint' note about her and she quickly becomes preoccupied avoiding any splatters on her bright white dress.

Finally we get Didi leaving *Po Street* himself, first with determination and resolve though still plainly dressed and carrying an old beat up backpack, but then smartly attired in a tan business suit and tie, patting, as if with thanks and newfound confidence, his attractive Ace briefcase as he walks off with a smile and a similarly clad friend, stepping optimistically into a new day, bravely into a whole new world.

For the final scenes we now head back to the Film Studio, where a stage is set as a private Japanese dining room. Here Lead Woman and Business Man are escorted by traditionally dressed 'Japanese' young women, played by additional freelance actors Tang is employing, into the room and seated on the cushions, exchanging pleasantries with them presumably about the Ace handbags atop the low table.

By now people are more or less completely spent, exhausted by the long day, but Tang is determined to get the shots with uncompromising standards. One of the grips, a very strong man known for his massages, is zonked out on the floor, in a much deeper sleep than earlier on Po Street when he lay on a neighborhood cot during a break, completely unfazed by the woman whose berth it was who saw him look at her and then just roll over again.

It's another late-hours work day for the crew, but they've managed to finish all the shooting within the two days they'd allotted, leaving Tang with just the post-production editing and overvoice lay-over. By all accounts, as the gruffy production manager above has indicated, well worth the weekend of overtime labor for all involved. The minor actors each net a couple hundred yuan, probably less than the foreign stand-ins hired but a decent

amount. The Leads receive more, maybe double. And for Tang, whereas working in the straight employ of say STV on an entire show, half-hour and possibly one-hour of programming, may earn him 50 yuan on top of his 250 yuan base monthly salary, for an ad like this with but a medium-high budget (around 40,000 yuan), he stands to receive several hundred yuan himself. Very lucrative interstitiality here.

Small wonder then that Tang gets razzed when he drops by STV a few days later, teased and called Mr. Moneybags and the like by the greenish gang of one division within the station who lack the time and resources precisely because of their fixity right here smack in the middle of 'official space' rather than outside along the interstices. Tang is well-liked, however, and widely admired, and it's all in good humor. Indeed, STV's envy of freelancers like Tang is actually quite tempered by the fact that opportunities for in-betweening, in media and elsewhere alike, are sprouting up all over.¹⁶

As are most of Tang's commercials, the finished spot has a uniquely polished look and feel. Much of this is, again, due to the talent he's able to convene and their working with film as opposed to the more common (in ads) tape. But, as he puts it, there is a relatively "dream-

like," soft-brushed tint to the whole thing that sets it apart from the usual fare. "Visual poetry," he calls it.

As usual, he has cut three slightly different versions, two twenty-five second versions and one fifteen second version. The narrative arc remains the same in all three, obviously tightened in the short piece. The difference between the two longer pieces rests in the very slight relative emphasis on the journey narrative itself in one and product display in the other. All three will be broadcast.

Thus we open with Lead Woman exiting the dark doorway out onto *Po Street* followed by Didi; the soundtrack of slightly melancholy but increasingly upbeat strings begins here and continues throughout. Again her bright dress, bright uplifted smiling eyes, the ease with which she passes over the threshold into the light, all contrast sharply with Didi's downcast somber eyes, dark clothing, confinement to the dark passageway, and preoccupation with the threshold below, which we in fact never see him finally span. Laundry hangs next to the doorway as Lead Woman steps into the light. An old bicycle handlebar is visible. She is embarking largely.

We then see the medium closeup of her two suitcases riding atop Didi's bicycle, then to an overhead long shot

tilting downward showing the two walking through the bustling quaint street, Lead Woman light of step, Didi sober, amidst the passing cyclist, the trailing strollers, the sundry adorned residential facades, broken sidewalk, door-side chair, mother and daughter stopping for snacks. And then of course the shit-bucket lady, stiff brush of splivered bamboo bundled with twine in her hand, bent at the waist scouring away into the gutter, as Lead Woman saunters by giving wide berth to any errant splashes. Now come quick closeups of Lead Woman smiling back over her shoulder into the light, then of her fingers softly stroking the pocketbook.

Now we leave *Po Street* for the park, where Lead Woman greets Business Man across the top of the Lincoln in a long shot, Didi trailing up behind with the bike and luggage but largely blocked out by a foreground tree. Then in a medium three-shot Lead Woman is giving Didi an assuring, consoling pat on the shoulder as Business Man ducks into the driver's seat in the foreground after being nodded to by Didi, who then looks forlornly at Lead Woman before she enters the passenger door. Inside the car Business Man then passes his briefcase to the back, holding it at closeup to end the scene. We cut to Didi's yearning envy in a medium-closeup watching the two depart, then back out to a long shot of

the Lincoln screeching away (never mind the dirt road), Didi standing with bike, watching motionless, catching a shock of sun reflecting from the Lincoln window as it turns away.

Next it's to the airport. Lead Woman, now in the yellow suit, watches Business Man reach for something inside his briefcase, a jet in the background and third person's arm on the left of the frame. Next a Bellhop pushes the luggage cart quickly across the frame, and then we go to Lead Woman following Business Man toward the jet, turning back with a sympathetic departing glance. With resignation yet undiminished desire, Didi returns the look (even though, oops, his backdrop is now again *Po Street*, and we've already seen the two say goodbye). We then see him standing behind Nainai as they watch in the distance back on *Po Street*, she with concerned resignation, he now trying to offer her assurance with new-mustered confidence all will be well.

Next it's to the cocktail party, where Lead Woman can barely believe her great fortune. We see Business Man comparing briefcases with the Euro-American Business Man as they enter the room. Lead Woman is in a stunning gold and burgundy sleeveless dress with traditional-Chinese collar and long earrings, holding a beverage, smiling past the

pianist seated in the foreground, then turning to take in the scenery behind her of the international groups in chit-chat, coming to a stop in front of the rolling bar, then turning back toward the camera with a look of near enrapturement at the moment about her. Also here we see Euro-American Business Man display his Ace briefcase on a table next to some flowers, joined just before the cut by Business Man's briefcase inserting into the frame next to it. And we see Lead Woman smilingly talking with a Euro-American woman, presumably about her handbag, which we pan down to hold upon.

Meanwhile, back on *Po Street* amidst running school-kids, picturesque *youtiao* sticks, and the old lady still carrying the earthy bucket, Didi is resolving with a friend to embark upon a similar journey. In a closeup we see him head off with purpose, looking over his shoulder at what he's leaving behind, his old decrepit backpack hoisted upon his back.

We cut now back abroad, where Lead Woman continues her cosmopolitan sojourn in Japan. After being escorted in by two traditionally adorned young Japanese women in a medium-close three-shot, Lead Woman is seated on floor cushions at a low dining table inside a private paper-walled dining room amongst the four traditionally dressed Japanese women,

Business Man by her side. They exchange bows and smiles over the Ace bags on the table.

Now back to *Po Street* and Didi's transformation. With the first smile we've seen on his face and a bounce in his step, Didi too is departing *Po Street*, nice tan business suit complementing his smart Ace briefcase. His friend is similarly attired, and they are heading for exciting endeavors. With a seeming mixture of gratitude and confidence, Didi pats his upheld Ace briefcase, as if to express thanks and assurance, as the two step out into the beyond.

Back at the park, the Lincoln has just pulled up and Lead Woman, now in the conservative navy skirt and vest over the white button-up, runs to embrace Nainai in front of the car, at the point where she'd departed Didi, who now stands behind Nainai, be-suited and be-briefcased, a new man. Business Man waits respectfully back by the car.

The single line of copy now comes on in the male voiceover saying, to match the eight characters superimposed across the top of the scene, "*Aisi aixin, baorong tianxia.*" Then we get a closeup still of an attractive three-piece set of Ace luggage on display, with the Ace logo on bottom right, and finally a quick zoom onto the graphic bearing the red Ace logo on top against the

white background, followed in black-on-white by "ACE" in English with the ® mark at the end, "Bags & Luggage" also in English on the next line, and finally "Shanghai aisi" in calligraphed and traditional Chinese characters on the last line, as a second male voiceover reemphasizes, "Shanghai Aisi!"

The language alone here in this final frame metonymizes the entire text's dominant theme celebrating the allure of foreign fantasia. "ACE," the English brand-name of a Hongkong-Chinese joint venture bears the cache of the international language, as does the tag-on, "Bags & Luggage." Their indexical functioning is paramount: the overwhelming majority of viewers cannot read these words but certainly can recognize them as the language of the outside modern world. Even the Chinese has a foreign reference, as "Shanghai Aisi" is the roughly homophonic rendering of "Shanghai Ace" into Chinese. The character "ai" furthermore is written in the original complex form as it would be in Hongkong or Taiwan, rather than the official simplified form of the PRC.¹⁷ Even the copy phrase, "Aisi aixin, baorong tianxia" has a global frame of reference: "all under heaven" (*tianxia*) is contained (*baorong*) in "Aisi aixin." Again, "Aisi" is a transliterated homophone for the English brand-name, Ace. It also performs a more

poetic function in connoting the pleasing literal meaning of "loving thoughts," so that the powerful English "Ace Bags & Luggage" is complemented in Chinese by something like 'Loving Thoughts Luggage'. Further poetic efficacy is accomplished by adding "aixin," which sounds similar to "aisi" and similarly connotes the pleasing meaning, "loving hearts." Thus altogether the language conveys that "Just as loving thoughts and loving hearts do," generally but also as in the story of Lead Woman and her departure from and return to kin Nainai and Didi, "Ace/Loving Thoughts Bags & Luggage hold all under heaven."

Especially, however, what they hold under heaven includes the dreamy flight into the cosmopolitan world outside China that Lead Woman has taken and Didi is about to take, the narrative of the text itself, composed of a string of potent contrasts celebrating the global fantastic while denigrating that in the local which has stubbornly remained unchanged. Thus *Po Street* and its pedestrians and bicycles and base earthy daily routines that might get on your dress, versus international airports, cosmopolitan cocktail parties, and imported luxury sedans, artifacts of modern glamour carrying modern glamour (Lead Woman and Business Man) carrying modern glamour (Loving Thoughts Luggage) to modern glamour (the world outside); local

darkness and downcast eyes versus global light and the hopeful gaze upward; casual wear¹⁸ versus the business suit; and the beat up military surplus backpack versus the Loving Thoughts Briefcase.

Yet, as discussed in a previous chapter, such a strictly textual reading has its limitations. There is much media scholarship and cultural studies based on what is essentially this kind of hermetic hermeneutics, such as varieties of structuralist or semiotic film and media theory or the content analysis traditions.¹⁹ At bottom the issue here is essentially of a piece with the problem of "ethnographic authority." It is what Crapanzano has called "Hermes dilemma" and more recently, "the problem of knowing better and being wrong,"²⁰ but here applied to the case of interpreting texts of moving imagery. Formal textual analysis can appear insightful and it has the advantage of relative ease—certainly in the late-twentieth century everyone is a media critic—but one is still left with the problem of hermeneutic approximation: How do you know that's what it means?

While I do not pretend to have overcome these in some senses insurmountable dilemmas of interpretation, of reading and writing, broadly, it did prove useful to me, as hoped in the earliest formulations of this study, to have

inputs from other methodologies to flesh out the picture, to complement, cross-check and inevitably complexify.

One example is actually a tempering operation accomplished by the textual analysis itself in relation to my 'participant-observations' of production practice on the various sets and locations described above, or the "direct reactive observation" (Bernard 1985) component of my research methodology. Out on the tarmac at Shanghai International Rainbow Airport, I was struck by the overwhelming volume of foreign consumer product signage all about, both that incidentally visible and that being employed in the representations being created, inserted into scenes as markers of alluring lifestyles and scenarios. Had I based a critique of Chinese TV producers' representations of modernity or cultural identity broadly too heavily on these practices alone, the effect would have been to overstate, to some degree, the role of these signs of 'foreign fantasia'. Why? Because they didn't end up in the final product. The Adidas and Fitto signage, for example, doesn't even appear in any of the three cuts of the commercial, nor is the Samsung brand-name on the luggage cart much more than a moving blur. Similarly, all the attention I paid at the Nikko International Hotel to the transcultural signage being inserted into the scenes

there would have created another skewed account of these representational practices, for much of it too was left on the cutting room floor; the liquor bottles, for example, though intentionally faced label-first toward the camera are visible in the finished spot only from the necks up.

Alternatively, observations on the set also provided perspective which tempers the reading of the text as a completely unmodulated performance of desire and adulation toward the fantasia of the modern outside world. The performative interventions of Wang Lin, in the role of Lead Woman, provided a view that in practice there is a level at which this desire may indeed be modulated. Thus in the scene where her character emerges from the shadowy doorway on *Po Street* to embark upon her journey, Wang Lin's first inclinations were to go for some emotional complexity, to express a trace of doubt or uncertainty at the onset of such a variably distant journey. A similar ambivalence was apparent in the scene where she passes by the old woman with the night bucket. From my cordoning station closer to her than the camera was during this scene, I was afforded a view again of more nuanced expressions in her brief engagement with this 'scenic' character. From this vantage point Wang Lin's glance down at the old woman clearly bore a note of respect and even fond appreciation. It wasn't

the straightforward condescension implied in the contrasts between their characters, but a more dense expression working to diminish the distance between these nonetheless very different figures, to span the built-in divides and make a human connection.

Thus, without these observations of local complexity in practice, this broadly-cast set of representations could easily be read, from the text alone, as undiluted adulation toward a global fantasia, a veritable celebration of the non-local cosmopolitan world, where its "every wretched bit of would-be extra chic," in a phrase from D. H. Lawrence, is held up as a fantastic sign of sophistication itself. An almost "hypodermic" model of cultural and media imperialism suggests itself from this text without an appreciation of these kinds of micro-interventions.

Still, the text of the TV commercial does possess a degree of its own autonomy and indeed sort of ontological preponderance in relation to what I observed in practice. The finished product is cast broadly out into the world and it has a frame around it, literally with each shot and more temporally with its beginning and end. The fact is that all the local modulations I witnessed on the sets do not themselves appear in the finished spot. The representational text that actually got out there into the

world beyond its local spaces of production contains nothing of, for example, Wang Lin's attempts to performatively complexify matters. While the "encoding" practices of this media text did embody interesting modulation and complexity, the end-product nonetheless works to produce a "preferred reading" or set of them, in Hall's phrase. Altogether, the encoding generates what Williams called a "structure of feeling," or what Wolf has called a certain "directionality," contained in the text.²¹

It is interesting to consider how this encoding, and dis-encoding, can take place. One reason why Wang Lin's alternative performative interventions were in the end utterly effaced had to do with fairly straightforward gendered asymmetries of authority in the creative process of TV production in Shanghai. While many women work as producers, conceiving and writing and directing a variety of programs, their creative authority may well encounter more resistance from various crew members than that of a male producer. But certainly here in the common case where a young woman is acting a lead part and all the key figures behind the camera are men, the woman's authority is quite limited. Thus when Tang and Wang differed on the mood of Wang's expression coming out into her new journey at the opening of the commercial, the former easily prevailed. In

the final product then, Wang's injection of complexity is gone, erased in favor of the expression of upbeat excitement and eager anticipation directed by Tang. Now the preferred reading is that Lead Woman is embarking on the journey without hesitation and with all positivity. She is walking into and seeing the light after all, and it even appears to be coming straight from the heavens above. Any alternative reading or structure of feeling is rendered almost impossible. The encoding is limiting.

Yet it would be unfair and inaccurate to overstate Tang's Confucianist patriarchal chauvinism. He has, after all, created a narrative centered on a relatively liberated woman character. Particularly in contrast to the Young Mother of the Heroic Health Benefit *koufuye* ad discussed above, Lead Woman here is a relatively independent young woman, who if not single is at least not a mother. Furthermore, she is quite literally out of the house and engaged in an obviously vibrant career. Indeed, stepping out of the domicile into the brave world outside is the first action we see her take. Not only is she not exclusively being or providing a womb, she is leaving one. She is both stepping out of the domestic, kin-ordered womb, where her forebear Nainai, vestige of tradition, remains, half-shadowed and half-lit, and indeed stepping out of the

national womb as well. This is anything but a woman confined to the home. She has been emancipated from that exclusive sphere and is now very much in public, navigating through positively global cosmopolitan space.

There are however very interesting more formal factors which played an important role in this particular encoding process. First, again not to completely gloss his performance of engendered power, Tang's actions during the doorway scene were dictated also by the fact that he was working in a medium with very clear goals: to sell products. The formal generic dictates of the half-minute TV commercial tend to call not for Wang Lin's perhaps more realistic dramatic portrayals, but for positive associations, unmodulated desires, clear allure. Thus a woman traveling with Loving Thoughts Luggage, when Loving Thought Luggage is paying for the report, is going to be excited about the trip, certainly not apprehensive. Wang Lin's ultimate performance of the eager anticipation Tang called for at this moment, that is, was not simply the product of gendered asymmetries in authority on the set, but a dictate of the genre in which these people were working.

Other technical constraints contributed to the structure of feeling of the piece as well. Shot selection

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and formal dictates, for example, played a crucial role in the erasure of Wang Lin's gestures toward the night bucket woman. Both the long-shot—in this case the overhead crane shot of Po Street where Lead Woman walks past the busy old woman—and the half-minute TV commercial form alike, turn crucially on juxtapositioning and contrast for signifying efficacy. As the form exists literally in seconds and the long-shot casts a wide frame around usually busy imagery, the only thing possible when the two are combined is to set up relatively clear, potent contrasts. Neither the time nor the space here is available to offer complex detail of say, facial expression. Thus the grammar and syntax of this long-shot and split-second frame, whose narrative called for but the briefest acknowledgment of the elderly woman by Lead Woman in the first place, works to highlight not the commonalities but the sharp contrasts between these two distant and sketchy figures, despite Wang Lin's efforts to convey a connection. You can no more see her sympathetic glance toward the old woman in the finished spot than miss the fact that she alone in the darkly clad crowd is wearing a bright white dress. The nuance is erased and nullified in favor of the potent oppositions between the two women's ages, wardrobe, sociospatial action and somatic practice, the only sort of signification that

is allowed by the grammar of this particular form and genre. What we see instead is the distinct yet distant contrastive figure in the lone white dress on *Po Street*, clearly going places, light of detached step, gracefully navigating around the quaint local hazard so as not to get her dress soiled. Any modulation of the 'foreign fantasia' theme that might have been accomplished by Wang Lin's performative interventions gets defused, nullified, again with final-cut broadcasting implications.

Further textual factors counteract the alternative potential of this TV commercial in its representation of various cultural identities. While the characterization of woman here contains these refreshing elements of relative emancipation, the narrative undercuts this in the end, folding back upon itself to nullify its own liberatory theme, both in contradictions running throughout and in terms of its final narrative arc. While she is not bearing any children for them, nor nursing their illnesses or serving them food—as she very often is across various genres of TV programming in China—woman here is nonetheless strongly defined in terms of her location between and amongst men. First of all, of course, a central plot point of *Lead Woman's* narrative is her being fairly literally passed from one man to another, from Didi

to Business Man over the Lincoln in the park, out of the local and into the global. Didi even soberly nods to Business Man across the car as if to accede, if somewhat grudgingly, to the transfer. Further, during her trek amidst foreign fantasia, Lead Woman is distinguished not by any intellectual, creative or entrepreneurial acumen, but is essentially 'presented' as an object of beauty being feted wherever she goes for her accessorizing talents, thus serving as little more than an eye-catching inter-adorning adjunct to the Loving Thoughts Luggage.²² Much like her alter-ego the actor Wang Lin, Lead Woman's action is confined largely to 'representing' on behalf of a man.

Finally, Lead Woman is constrained by the narrative to nonetheless serve a conventionally nurturant role after all, despite signs to the contrary, for she ends up having nurtured Didi up into the cosmopolitan world himself, where he too will presumably follow in the footsteps of Business Man (who has long left his Po Street and appears only in the cosmo scenes). That the journey into the hyper-public spheres of the global fantasia these men are taking is still somehow more public, more serious and important, than woman's is figured by the briefcases they hold in various scenes in contrast to the pocketbook toted by Lead Woman. And perhaps most climactically, Lead Woman does indeed come

home in the end, returning to the Nainai womb, which, after all, like Loving Thoughts Luggage and loving hearts generally, especially nurturant female ones like Nainai's, "holds all under heaven."

This preferred reading thus creates a discursive space in which the foreign, the outside world of modernity, the non-local, is held up as a realm of marvelous fantasia. Several of the figurative uses of "fantasia" listed in its entry in the *OED* are relevant in this context. When Lead Woman takes in her cosmopolitan lot at the cocktail party, then gazes off into the distance with a sigh, she indeed appears to be experiencing the "paroxysms of passion" Pananti witnessed in the performative "fantasias" of early-nineteenth century Algeria. She is much like Shorthouse's Inglesant, feeling her "heart smote [her]" as she wanders "amid this brilliant fantasia of life."

Fantasia is also a useful metaphor in its sense of denoting extemporaneousness, for this is at the heart of commodified culture and its consumerist rhetoric, which turns on the appearance of being off the cuff, having the ease of no forethought, just a dance amongst the extra-chic. It's a life where "paroxysms of passion" just happen upon you, as in Lead Woman's sigh over all the CosmoAesthetics about her. On the other hand, the musical

genre, fantasia, is characterized by its emphasis on style over substance, on trying to maintain the illusion of extemporaneity, but of course this is a ruse—there is structuration in the machine still.

Still, this image of extemporaneous global social life full of 'heart-smoting' wonders performs a powerful ideological function. It is the image of possibility and modernity, which accounts for its particular power in the Chinese context, as the recent past is painfully a time of much impossibility, and modernity has been the long sought-for but still distant grail. But it is an image of a very particular possibility and modernity.

Thus perhaps the image Wells provides of a "fantasia of war material" might well fit for this process of mobile consumerist culture touching down, through active local agents, all over the globe.

Info from another research method fleshes this out. The globality and celebration of foreign fantasia seemed emphatic to me. So I asked Tang about it. Here is where we get the rich contradictions and complexities. For Tang believes essentially that the imagery of modernity borrowed from the West is not going to hurt Chinese culture. To the contrary not only are for example these gendered representations not a worry, the production techniques of

the outside world are patently better and should be flatly imitated by local producers. There are better and worse productions and ways to make media. Sure some of the imagery is going to change local cultural conceptions. In that sense, yes, "peaceful evolution" is definitely happening. But this isn't a worry. This is in fact mostly a good thing. In the end, our culture is simply too strong, too deep, to be victim of cultural imperialism or westernization. New syntheses should incorporate new elements. Cultures and societies should change and be open to outside influence. It's not going to make China not China. We're not being transformed out of all recognition. But we are improving.

Again the rub for analytical critique of these processes is how to be critical of dis-empowering constructions that attends the "fantasia of war material" flowing with globally mobile capital, while at the same time acknowledging local strength, resistance, and agency. At the very least however the thoroughgoing commodification of global cultural space constrains the alterity any local modernity may seek to construct.

NOTES

¹ This then is similar to the "Angli Yihao" product described in Chapter Two above. The yearned for publicity the Angli people had in mind was to compensate for being unable to afford the kind of full-blown commercial production described in the present chapter. The fact that this firm is a joint-venture with foreign capital figures centrally into this difference with Angli, manufacturer of "Hi-Powered No. 1" *koufuye*.

² "xiaoer quegai zhengzhao" and "chuhan, duolei, yejian shuijiao tiku," respectively.

³ The overvoice portion of this contains some ambiguity. The spoken line is: "Fangzhi gouloubing Yingkangli koufuye juyou texiao." Literally, this translates as, "To prevent and cure rickets, Yingkangli Oral Elixir possesses special efficacy." *Texiao*, however, can also mean "a specific," in the more clinical sense of being a "specific drug," or an effective cure. Even more explicit in this direction is the graphic, which states flatly that the elixir "specifically cures" (*zhuanzhi*) these maladies.

As Chan (1995b) points out, there are many borderline cases of pharmaceutical commercials violating, or coming very close to it, official regulations against unfounded claims of curative powers or effectiveness. Official advertising regulations have scarcely kept pace with the practice of advertising, though not without an effort: issuance of official revised regulations from the Central Administration for Industry and Commerce, the state organ within the State Council of China overseeing the advertising industry, has taken place fairly regularly in the reform era, once each in 1982, 1987, 1988, 1992, and again in 1994. As Chan notes, however, effective regulation is far from having been reached. Indeed so ineffective has it been that we have the anomaly of a Hongkong scholar (Chan) calling for more, rather than the usual much less, state intervention.

⁴ Which is not at all to say that the production values in Tang's work overall are typical. They are not. The extra care he takes and talented assistance he mobilizes shows in his relatively polished product.

⁵ I think it would be safe enough to say that in China it is more likely than not that a mother caring for a sick

child at home would have company, if not from parents or in-laws then from other relatives, neighbors or friends.

⁶ This alone indicates how extraordinarily lucrative has been his career as a freelancer working the interstitial realms of liminality that surround reform-era media. Very few individuals could afford the costs of this lifestyle.

⁷ *Luan*, or chaotic, is a durable blanket epithet used for generations to describe many sorts of social disorders in China. Perhaps the most common usage in the reform era is the now-official designation of the Cultural Revolution as the "Ten Years of Chaos." Perhaps its apparent special semantic weight resides in its situation within a Confucianist culture which has for centuries placed a great deal of value on order, equilibrium and correct relationship and role performance.

⁸ Indeed, Tang had arranged today's ad in part through the auspices of this firm, which for a slight fee provides him with the necessary identity and permit to rent the equipment, hire the crew, arrange studio, on-location and post-production facilities, and just generally produce the ad.

⁹ See Zhao (1998), Fu and Cullen (1995) and Stross (1990) for overviews.

¹⁰ There are many accounts in many languages of the responsibility system and reform process in China. Those that contain the word 'miracle' or some derivation thereof in their titles alone would fill a basket, especially, though not at all exclusively, in the popular press. Good recent scholarly accounts are Blecher (1995), Chai (1997), Fewsmith (1994), Jacka (1997), Naughton (1995b), Selden (1993), Walder (1996), Dali Yang (1996) and Zhou (1996). I continue to find Pat Howard's (1988) early account most thorough and insightful, though it unfortunately is rarely discussed or cited.

¹¹ Gong Xueping, who would soon become Vice Mayor of Shanghai, is at this time the powerful head of the SBRT.

¹² For insightful recent discussions of the ever-shifting fields of China's film industry, see Chow (1995), Pickowicz

(1993, 1994, 1995), Zha (1995), and Zhang (1997, esp. part 3).

¹³ "Since 1920". . .? Here I go. Look there, on the identical jackets two of Huang's assistants are wearing: The Adidas name and logo again. Wait, these are some of the promo-wear from the Hongkong movie on which they worked second unit with Huang. You know, jackets with the film title embroidered on the back or something. Look closer: oh yeah, that's right, the title of that film was *Shanghai 1920*. Hey.

Well that keeps me busy for a while. I think about Adidas starting up in Weimar Germany just as the scapes of Shanghai are bustling with social and political intrigues that are hammering out the image of "Shanghai" as both something bad you get and the 'Paris of the Orient', and sowing the seeds of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party in that house in the French Concession just a year later, wondering whether Adidas went on to make uniforms for the Nazis or something, recalling that pair of soccer cleats from the fifth grade, pondering the new German coach of the Chinese national soccer team and what he's had to do with "Adidas" and the three stripes getting on the jerseys of all the players this year. Looking for that "theme of functionality." I decide I'm not up to making the connection after all.

I'm still not, and sad about it. "The waves of the age. . ." There's got to be something I can do with that. Perhaps in another revision. Right now I have to go pick up my daughter at the airport. A different airport.

¹⁴ I have just now realized that non-Chinese speaking readers may well read this to sound like a southern US rendering of 'poor place', which would be perfectly apt if completely coincidental. The Chinese term "po" is pronounced more like 'pwo', the o sound not really corresponding to anything in English, ending more with a very slight ah sound, perhaps like a Long Islander might say the word "awe."

¹⁵ The logic here of course, offered by rational choice economic theory and the person on the street in China alike, is that if someone is still working strictly for the state and stands to gain nothing but the same salary and benefits regardless of their work performance on a given day they will welcome such interruptions. If this woman

had "contracted responsibility" for this productive labor however, agreeing to meet the state's quota but free to profit from what she produces beyond that, then of course she'd be miffed. Reform-era China is a happy site of field days for rational choice theory fans.

¹⁶ Within academia the term for engagement in this kind of sideline money-making pursuit is "xia hai," or literally to 'jump into the sea', as in the sea of commerce and worldliness. Nor were the enterprising ideas of my friends in the media world confined to the media. Of the many more and less formal business propositions I personally was invited to participate in, essentially as the ostensible linkage to foreign hard-currency capital investment, one particularly elaborate one was presented by a group of seasoned media professionals who wanted to start up a fast-food delivery operation. A strong part of the proposal, in addition to the fact that these people were identifying a need and market that they personally knew full well truly existed and wasn't at all being tapped, was their assurance that, given their backgrounds and nation-wide *guanxi* in the media, publicity and promotion, well, this was a no-brainer. I wouldn't necessarily call entrepreneurial forecasting one of my long suits but there's not a doubt in my mind that this would have been a spectacularly successful business venture.

On the other hand, the television industry in Shanghai would have lost some of it's best talent as well.

¹⁷ The number of strokes for many Chinese characters is reduced in simplified form, a system devised by the PRC government soon after 1949 to facilitate literacy. Original complex characters are still used in Taiwan, Hongkong, Singapore and other communities of Greater China. "Ai" in this copy phrase is the only one rendered back into complex form because it is the only one of the four—*shang, hai, ai, si*—that had been simplified in the first place.

¹⁸ Indeed, even here the marker is already extra-local. The main characters are already in western-style casual wear, which contrasts with many of the others on Po Street, but would have contrasted not so long ago with anyone on any street in Mao's China, where such artifacts of western decadence as the collared button-up and denim jeans were nowhere to be seen, completely overwhelmed by the blue and green cotton workers wear on virtually all bodies.

¹⁹ As Geraghty (1996) notes in discussing feminist approaches to media, in general studies in film have tended to focus more on textualist readings, while those in television have placed more emphasis on an active audience/reader. Mulvey (1975) and other writers in *Screen* during the 1970s especially are prime examples of the former, while Morley (1980, 1992, 1996a) and Seiter et al. (1989) represent the latter; Morley's (1996b) exchange with Curran (1996a) over Curran's influential earlier statement (1990; cf. Curran 1996b) provides a useful survey of the stakes and issues in audience research. Excellent overviews of the approaches include Inglis (1990), Moores (1990), Thompson (1990, 1995), and Kellner (1995). For more quantitative-oriented content analysis approaches, see Rosengren (1981).

²⁰ See Crapanzano (1986, 1994) for articulation of this useful metaphor, and (1995) for the latter formulation, which appears in a very interesting multi-logue on the ethico-political stakes of doing human sciences; see the *Current Anthropology* exchange between Scheper-Hughes (1995) and D'Andrade (1995) as well as the comments, especially by Nader, Friedman, Ong, Rabinow, Harris and others in addition to Crapanzano.

²¹ Stuart Hall's first articulations of the encoding/decoding of media texts appear in a seminal article apparently first produced in 1973, but reprinted in fuller version as Hall (1980). Raymond Williams concept of structure of feeling comes from Williams (1973). And Eric Wolf's remarks on directionality appear in Wolf (1984).

²² In the one scene that most explicitly shows work being done on this ostensible business trip, Lead Woman's role is both adorning and subtly eroticized. In the medium three-shot on the tarmac where Business Man opens his briefcase and reaches inside as Lead Woman watches, the action begins with Business Man lifting the briefcase with one hand, the index finger one which is pointing erectly down from the handle, and follows as his other hand emerges to lift up the briefcase from underneath. This sudden emergence of his flesh-colored hand appears against the shadows of his dark suit exactly in front of his groin area, which is more or less where Lead Woman is looking. As the bag lifts, so does Lead Woman's hand from her side up to her neck to rest

there as Business Man opens the container. She is in a pose of anticipation, touching her neck as if to steady her swoon, oh my, as she watches first the man's erotica exposure and now his foray into the enclosure.

On the other hand, the movement of her hand is undoubtedly merely to call attention to the briefcase.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

ON UNFINISHABLE PROJECTS AND UNFORTUNATE NOUNS

The naming of varieties of "modernity" has become a favorite pastime in the humanities and social sciences. Faubion (1988) writes of "possible modernities." Appadurai and Breckenridge write of "alternative modernities" (1990:78) and "public modernities" (1995:1). Featherstone et al. (1995) have collected essays on "global modernities." Ong writes of "an alternative vision...[and] an increasingly autonomous definition of modernity" (1996:60), elsewhere of an "alternative modernity" (1997:194-195; Nonini and Ong 1997:3). Pred and Watts (1993) write of "hypermodernity." Lisa Rofel (1999) writes of "other modernities." Scott Lash writes of yet "another modernity" (1998). And this doesn't even consider all the treatments of modernity using the various and dreaded "posts."

Ironically it is almost unfailingly the case that these reformulated alternative 'ies are couched in terms of opposition to purportedly unitary, monolithic/-logic conceptualizations of "modernity," seeking thus to instantiate difference from the latter. At one level they are expressions of what Derrida calls a desire to lose

style. The operation performed by these critiques is precisely that which is the object of their critique: the positing of an essentiality. 'There is no single fixed stable essence of "modernity",' they rightly argue, 'because—they wrongly continue—there exist in the world essentially different ones'. This is mere substitution, if not phallogocentric desire for the loss of style.

As long as we are working in nouns we are working in reification, flailing at one with an unwieldy other, employing a lie to finally prove a lie. Persuasively (no more, no less), reflexive reason and rationality have been empracticed—regardless by whom and whatever their ostensible relationship to whatever notion of "modernity"—to formulate for example the story that says there are no red lights, only the seeing of red lights, and the agreeing, always provisional, that certain of these red lights commit people to governed behavior when they do this seeing of these certain red lights. They have also formulated the story that there is no bottom bedrock essence of "value," only provisional agreeings over values, and myriad other stories saying that the signifier-signified relationship is only about humans agreeing, or making bets on agreeings, in specific social practice. Love, a no-hitter, free trade, and fair play are all thus

always and only on the ceaseless slide of specific significationings, increasingly moving in hi-velocity and lightspeed on ever more slippery slopes, now guaranteeing a warm secure future and the world of possibilities, now flashing blank and breaking wretched hearts.

Analytically, my inclination is toward the scrapping of the thing-ificationings altogether, especially those slipping in under cover of their negation. "Modernity," like all identities, is an unfortunate misplaced noun, despite all the social actions of friendship and enmity, creative experimentation and "terrorist aesthetics"¹ it has engendered, and continues to engender. You can live it all kinds of ways, through currency-devaluation restructuring programs or a flawlessly restored '55 Chevy Bel-Air. Just don't go looking for it, or 'looking for to name it', as some of my kin might say. There will never be any there there, except that which is liable to slide. At the blink of an eye, anguished or euphoric.

More evocative and usable story-telling—i.e., theorizings you can live (with), even take home to Mom—would abandon the holy-grail search disguised as the Crusade Against Holy-Grail Searching, and instead declare its ineluctable grounds; cf. "ungrounded empires" as phallic substitution (Ong & Nonini 1997). In any case it

would proceed in pursuit of the only possible objects to be 'found' in the world: objects-in-motion, significationings-in-practice, entextualizings and empracticings that are specifically instantiated—as in, potentially at least, an instant.

Most certainly these will show variation and difference. But there lies their contribution to human understanding, rather than whether or not they add up to an essence that can be used to inductively prove either the self-contradicting impossibility of essences generally, or the claim that another particular essence is wearing no clothes. Remember, we're saying we should bag the essences because they are now/here to be found.

Thus the good-hearted search for "alternative modernities" that appears to have become the prescribed method of global cultural studies is both a foreclosing of possibilities, and an impossibility, all at the same time. *A priori* theorizing of "alternative modernities" as that which is produced in local practices responding to the cultural dimensions of increasing global interconnectedness effects the same foreclosure as any *a priori* theorizing, besides being not much fun.

Further, it seems scarcely to move beyond repeated observations of "the fertile fact" that has exercised the

anthropological imagination since its very inception (which surely dates back to about the time of hominid language acquisition): there is much diversity in humankind.

In recent years (the past 10-500), "globalization" has been constructed and deconstructed, bought and sold. It has inspired and depressed, emancipated and killed. It has had much energy and fertility. No one has been able to find it.

Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd (1997) have made a recent contribution to the work of/on globalization. Their approach is exemplary and proceeds from the premise that "neither the postmodern conception of the transnational nor the liberal assumption of the congruence of capitalism, democracy, and freedom are currently adequate" (1997:1).

Further:

We understand the transnational to denote the stage of globalized capitalism characterized by David Harvey, Fredric Jameson, and others as the universal extension of a differentiated mode of production that relies on flexible accumulation and mixed production to incorporate all sectors of the global economy into its logic of commodification. It is the tendency of such understandings of transnationalism to assume a

homogenization of global culture that radically reduces possibilities for the creation of alternatives, in confining them either to the domain of commodified culture itself or to spaces that, for reasons of mere historical contingency, have seemed unincorporated into globalization. [here they note Harvey 1989, Jameson, etc.] It will be our contention, to the contrary, that transnational or neocolonial capitalism, like colonialist capitalism before it, continues to produce sites of contradiction that are effects of its always uneven expansion but that cannot be subsumed by the logic of commodification itself.

Lowe and Lloyd go on to suggest that studies on the matter should amass "an affirmative inventory of the survival of alternatives in many locations worldwide," with an aim "not in identifying what lies 'outside' capitalism, but in what arises historically, in contestation, and 'in difference' to it (1997:2).

Exemplary or not, there seem not to be an innovation here, despite the impressive phrasings. Harvey and Jameson would probably be surprised to learn that they are at odds with the argument, "to the contrary," that contemporary capitalism "continues to produce sites of contradiction

that are effects of its always uneven expansion but that cannot be subsumed by the logic of commodification itself," for example. Lowe and Lloyd, like so many other conflicted grand theorists of anti-grand-theory regarding globalization, want to hold on to recognition of western/capitalist power while at the same acknowledging local agency, resistance, "outside"-ness, or the salvationist being of "in difference" to it. They want to avoid the perils of "the dominant ideology thesis" dressed up for dread by the likes of Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner (1980), while at the same time championing the cause of downtrodden comrades who valiantly try to get out from under it, deftly eliding the "it" in the process. That neither pole of signifiers manages to keep its hold on such relentlessly sliding signifieds merely confirms the intractable problem of, again, substituting one *faux* firm essence for another.

The present study has explored practices of identity-making in the specific context of media production at STV carried out in the palpable experience of globalization and articulated in terms of representations of modernity. I have sought to show how in one specific, ethnographic case-study of "the anthropology of the changing native," in Malinowski's evocative if surprising phrase from 1929,

there are differentials of cultural and political-economic power which limit the possibilities of resistance to global capitalism, however eager we are to find it.

I would not seek a 'global' application of these findings, again if for no other reason than the tyranny of the sweeping second hand which constantly dislocates meaning. I do not believe, that is, that agency is somehow erased by the aforementioned power differentials. The specific relations between power and agency, local and global, are ever-ethnographic questions.

I would say however that the project of crafting a "modern" identity in today's world is, if not DeLillo's (1984) "airborne toxic event," a globally-borne common event for humankind. We are all globally engaged in the modern project of identity-making at specific places and times in a framework extending across almost unbounded dimensions of space and time. It is a historically determinate condition fostered by the spread of capitalist structures and processes, themselves grounded in an anti-logic only of incessant change. We are moderns in method—i.e., a practice, in practice. That there is diversity in the substance of "modernities" around the world is a fact of the human condition long acknowledged. Reflexivity through language, reason and rationality, its

institutionalization and structuration, the disembedding of cultural understandings, and the increasing interconnectedness of human experience across the globe are all hallmarks of this modern condition and it is experienced by all persons and groups.

This does not suggest homogenization. The world's peoples and cultural configurations are not becoming substantively the same. They are not converging on the same exact identity. They are however converging on the same method, the same procedures of identity-making and modernity-making.

Thus methodologically, the modern project is not being meaningfully subverted by localized "alternative modernities." The presence of localized difference of cultural practice does not constitute meaningful "alterity." It is merely the expression of what legitimated the establishment of disciplinary anthropology in the first place: cultural difference across a wide, wide world.

Cricket is played differently and imbued with novel significance in India or the Caribbean in contrast to England (Appadurai 1995; cf. Manning 1981)? Philosophical and theological discourse in Africa calls into question the content of western Enlightenment-derived thought (Moore

1996)? People speak different languages in different places?

Why are these expressions of alternative modernities rather than simply (not simply) cultural differences? Better yet, why are they not merely instances of identity-making, empracticed though they are through the institutions and epistemological procedures of what we call western modernity?

The fear is that this would imply sameness and deny local agency (for individuals and groups). Yet this fear is only justified with a static image of both identity and modernity.

Alternatively, if we see identity-making as an unfinished and indeed unfinishable project—stability never comes—then we can examine practices and processes in specificity without worrying if they show influence from 'outside' sources. Likewise, if modernity is understood as an experience of loss and rupture that will never fully heal, then we can appreciate and assume that "it" is never the same everywhere, and yet it defines both our condition and our way of responding to that condition. The actual empracticed responses will vary substantively. But our method for formulating them—and for critiquing them—will remain what many call "modern": through reflexive reason

and rationality we come up with our tactics for pressing on, most often though not necessarily always through the institutions others before us have collectively, via the same cultural procedure, formulated to contain these very practices of modern reflexivity, however much we may decide by the same procedure that any number of these institutions need smashing.

Trying to break out of these is akin to trying to break out of the epistemological dilemma altogether: a human impossibility. Modernity as epistemology and condition is like kinds of language. Never finally stable, it is the global human method.

NOTES

- 1 This is Alberto Moravia's (1987) memorable phrase.

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