From Chinese Gooseberry
to Kiwifruit

从猕猴桃到奇异果

The Construction and Reconstruction
of Chinesehood
in Aotearoa/New Zealand

奥提耶鲁/新西兰华人的自塑与再自塑

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Sylvia Yang Yuan

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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a Chinese New Zealander's narrative of identity politics. Employing the methodology of self-analysis, the author approaches her own life history reflectively and critically, with a constant focus on the construction and reconstruction of Chinesehood in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Multiplicity and hybridity are the key themes of this work. Through illustrating the depth and width of her cultural heritage, the author challenges the stereotypical images of Chinese created by the Orientalist western gaze. The change and continuity of culture and ethnicity is another recurrent feature throughout the paper. Points of comparison have been given to incorporate the national history of Chinese at home and communal history of Chinese abroad into the personal narrative.

The last comment should be made about the use of visual elements and unconventional presentation style. Pictures, photos, and left and centered alignments are used to supplement and support verbal arguments.

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With much gratitude in mind, I hope that this narrative presents a fair analysis of the construction and reconstruction of Chinesehood in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

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燕燕的锦被

Illustration 1: *Yanyan and Her Quilt*, Author's Artwork, 1994

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Yanyan and Her Quilt

Before I start talking about China, Chinese and myself, I would like to illustrate the complexity of this subject matter through the presentation of this picture (Illustration One). This is one of my artworks accomplished during my study in Shanghai Art and Craft Institute, back in 1994. For the sake of the argument, I'll present this picture as a hybrid product of Chinese and western cultures.

1. The Picture

First of all, all the physical materials involved in completing the work are modern western products. The original picture is drawn on cardboard (versus Chinese rice paper) with black paint (versus Chinese ink). Most of the lines are drawn with fountain pen, only the black block is painted with Chinese brushes. Instead of being pasted as a Chinese scroll would be, this picture is now mounted and framed in a modern frame. Furthermore, the circular patterns, drawn by a modern compass, together with other geometric shapes such as squares and rectangles, drawn by modern rulers marked with center meters, are western abstracts. Though geometric shapes exist cross-culturally, the use of these shapes to divide and connect spaces into several subsections is very contemporary in spirit. Finally, this picture was designed at a time when I was very impressed by the work of a western artist, Aubrey Beardsley (1872-1898), who specialized in black and white illustration. This picture more or less absorbs his style.

However, a balanced appreciation of the picture has to come from both sides. When a Chinese observer thinks it is a western, or at least a modern picture; a western observer will categorize it as a Chinese, or at least an Oriental artwork. The later is also right since after all, this picture is drawn by a Chinese about a Chinese story of a Chinese maiden. It is not only Chinese, but also ancient Chinese of some sort. The defining features of this young Chinese woman are physical as well as cultural: her flat face, her unique hairstyle and dress, and the most stunning, the exquisite patterns on the quilt she carries. The animals in the picture, are either sketched out into novel images, or, in the examples of the dragon and the phoenix, are mystery creatures themselves, only existing in Asiatic legends.

Further, in a much less overt fashion, the way I allocate color and space derives from the tradition of Chinese art. The very choice of black-and-white expression can be found in Chinese calligraphy and in many classic Chinese paintings. While black-and-white artwork (e.g. sketch, etching, illustration) only exist on the periphery of western art, it has been the mainstream theme of Chinese fine art for many centuries. The influence of calligraphy and Chinese art tradition is also evident in the elaborate use of lines. Drawing, rather than painting is the dominant technique, for one can see that it is the lines of various lengths, strength, curves and thickness that bring dynamism to the picture. The black block only serves as a static background to balance off the rousing effect of the lines.

My use of lines is inherited from a long history and strong propensity of Chinese artists in manipulating lines, rather than dimensions. In the process of experimenting with rhythms, arranging patterns of different shapes and styles, and searching for harmony in an unbalanced structure, it is almost instinctual for me to go back to my early experience in calligraphy, through which I was exposed to the basic aesthetic of lines and forms in my culture. For calligraphy is a unique art that only can be built on the pictorial structure of Chinese character, proper spacing is the very first law of calligraphy (Lin, 1939:287). What our ancestors have achieved with brush and ink-stick, I achieved with pen and ink. The tools have changed, but the rationale stays the same.

The last comment should be made about the structure of the picture. Although the young woman is the character to be presented, her figure occupies only a peripheral and disproportionately small part of the cardboard. It's the dark sky and the enlarged quilt (on the right side) that catch people's eyes. Besides, the portrayal of the woman's face is

minimal, and her body is almost blocked by the quilt. This arrangement is also something intrinsically Chinese. According to Lin, Yu-tang, a famous western-trained Chinese scholar, "the most singular contrast between Chinese and Western art is the difference in the source of inspiration, which is the nature for the East and the female form for the West" (Lin, 1959: 293). It is not from sketching human models I learned the first essentials of art, but calligraphy of various styles, and paintings of plum, orchid, bamboo and chrysanthemum, the four most admired plants in Chinese art history. The shrunken size (by western standard) of the human figure reflects the lack of interest of Chinese artists in human body in general and in female body in particular.

Having made the western versus Chinese division myself, I have to challenge this dualistic differentiation between Western and Chinese as being too simplistic and too naïve. For one, the words "western" and "Chinese" are too all-encompassing to mean anything; for the other, the differences between "western" and "Chinese" are too arbitrary to mark off. I shall, in the following, demonstrate the first point, through an elaboration on the hybridity of the Chinese background of this picture; and demonstrate the second point with commentaries on Beardsley's art.

The adjective "Chinese" obviously has more defining power than "Oriental" (vaguely including both Far East and Middle East) and "Asiatic" (including all south-east nations in the Pacific rim). Nonetheless, China has gone through 5,000 years of recorded history and more than twenty dynasties, several of them ruled by foreign conquerors, who have now been absorbed into the 56 ethnic groups, which make up the entire Chinese population, spreading over a land of 9.6 million square kilometers. There is no other countries in the world today that can match China in the length of its history, the size of its territory, *and* the mass of its population. Over these years, and among these peoples, different cultures in all manifestations have been in a constant process of exchanging on this vast land. No one can precisely tell apart what is completely Mongolian, or Manchurian, or Han, or Southern style, or Northern style in a single piece of art.

2. The Story
This picture is originally drawn as an illustration of a Chinese drama story. The drama was first written by a Han writer in a Mongolian-ruled era (1277-1367). The surviving version that we can see today is only a residue of the original drama. Even if it was intact, its

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language and structure would be unusable for the modern stage. So the story is rewritten to suit a local opera in the 1970s. New characters and new plots are added to make it comprehensible to a modern audience. Every aspect of this drama, whether its composition technique, its dramatic structure, its literary features, its interpersonal dynamics, or the interpretation of its significance, has been altered beyond recognition.

Not only the literary background of this picture is built on a mixed authorship, its imagery is also a hybridity of art forms from different times. The dragon pattern is copied off a tile baked in the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. – A.D. 219), the phoenix pattern is taken from a fabric waved in the Tang Dynasty (618-906). The forms of birds and clouds are less defined, but are perceptibly at variance for the birds are *painted* into two-dimentional images, while the clouds are *drawn* with lines. Accordingly, the bird patterns are more likely from the *ZhanKuo* period (403-221B.C.), and the clouds are of a style commonly seen in the craft of Ming and Qing (Manchurian) Dynasties (1368-1911).

The literary and art hybridity of this picture listed above are by no means exhaustive, but are included to show the continuities, the changes and the associated complexities in a single name "Chinese art". Furthermore, Chinese art does not only regenerate itself through incorporating infusions of new styles, it has also, directly and indirectly, influenced World culture. I have no intention here to make an ethnocentric statement, or to portray China as *the* civilization. What I will do shortly is to remind my reader of the global circulation of materials and ideas that has been ongoing long before the term "globalization" was invented (Giddens, 1990:63).

I have acknowledged above that, I was, at the time, an admirer of Beardsley's art and deliberately imitated his style in my own works. But the other half of the story was that Beardsley's work, besides the impact of the movements of Decadence and Art Nouveau (Neret, 1998:7), was also very profoundly influenced by Oriental paintings, especially Japanese prints (ibid:12), which were in turned nurtured by Chinese art. From this perspective, my attraction to Beardsley's black-and-white graphic art is very much determined by my early training in black-and-white calligraphy and Chinese paintings. My adaptation from this artist is also very selective. For example, one will not find the same carnal fantasies and explicit expression from this picture as those in many of Beardsley's work. Instead, what I try to create is an implicit, elegant, and harmonious atmosphere that

is distinctively Chinese. The differences are not only prescribed by gender, but also by culture.

So far I have channeled my readers' attention onto the visual characteristics of the picture. Before I go on to elaborate on the significance of the quilt, I should also give a brief of the story behind it. The young woman in the picture was a servant girl. Her name was *Yanyan*, meant swallow in Chinese. She fell in love with her young master but the affection was unspoken. On one spring night, her old mistress ordered her to take a quilt to the young master. In the original drama, the story was ended by the downgrading of Yanyan to a concubine of the young master, who turned out to be a playboy. The renewed opera, written at a time after concubinage had been abandoned, changed the ending so Yanyan committed suicide on the young master's wedding day, as her last protest to his betrayal.

3. The Quilt

This picture is a snapshot which captures Yanyan's hesitation on her way to the young master's bedroom with the quilt on her shoulder. The quilt comprises the central focus of the picture. It is also the most exquisite part. The quilt is her belonging, her possession, and her heritage. The quilt is also her story, her narrative, representing her pride, her memory, her sentiment, her virginity, and her affection. Without the quilt, she is nobody. Taking such a precious thing to a young man is a symbolic action to take herself to a risky relationship that will alter the rest of her life. Before the giving and taking of the gift, she wants to re-examine it in a way that she has never done before. The symbolic value, as well as the physical weight of the quilt slow down her pace. To make her story known, she is going to reveal her hidden treasure to the public, about all the beauties, the elegance, the hybridity, the history, and the different layers of meaning interwove in this quilt. It is her story, her narrative, and it is important that she tells this narrative with her own voice. Nonetheless, even her own presentation of the quilt will still be a distortion of some sort, just like the ones told by her lover, her mistress, and anyone else. Therefore, the pattern on the original quilt can never be identical with the magnified version on the right hand. An autobiography is by no means the best and true revisiting of her own experiences.

You may wonder why I spend so much space speculating on this young woman's psyche. The significance of these re-discoveries is, after seven years since I painted this picture, that I find Yanyan's lifeworld mirrors my state of mind while writing this thesis. For an essay about cultural identity, these self-reflexive notes are as important as those more factual reportage.

The quilt that Yanyan carries is her heritage. She is a carrier of the quilt, the heritage. I am, too, a carrier of my heritage. She has a hidden treasure to show. I, too, have a narrative to tell. Without the quilt Yanyan is nobody. Similarly, without my heritage and my ethnicity, I am nobody. I am nobody in a sense that I have nowhere to belong to. The whole journey to her lover's room is marked with hesitations. In the same vein, the processes of westernization for a nation and of acculturation for an individual have never been straight forward, but full of hesitations. These transactions are particularly difficult for the Chinese because we have too rich a history to forget. Just like the value and the weight of the quilt slow down Yanyan's pace, the cultural heritage has slowed down the pace of the Chinese nation in adapting to a World culture. Yanyan is hesitant because she treasures her virginity, and her gender suggests that she should play a passive role in courtship. China is not a virgin land in a sense that America or New Zealand used to be. Nonetheless, China and its overseas communities, for a long time, have been relatively isolated and self-contained entities. In approaching other nations and cultures, we fear to lose our "quilt". That is, our culture, our memory, and our integrity.

All these contradictory "pull" and "push" factors that once troubled Yanyan's decision are also active in our struggle. Before we actually meet the other party, we want to re-examine it in a way that is different from all previous eras. In other words, we want to re-discover ourselves with the knowledge of "others". It is important to tell the narrative in a native voice. As the voice of a servant girl may not always be heard, the voice of the Chinese is often drowned by the mainstream rhymes, or equally bad, by commercialized melodies to please the dominant groups' ear. I want to tell my narrative in my own voice, not echoing that of Sociology's founding fathers, or of the Frankfurt School, or of the Chicago School, neither macro-sociologists nor micro-sociologists, neither liberal nor radical feminism. Still, you will see the influences of various western theorists in my argument, just like you've seen the impact of Beardsley in the picture. Finally, I am fully aware that autobiography is not always the best narrative, and thus invite your interpretation. One of

the challenges in writing a thesis like this is to leave enough space for the reader to exercise your own sociological imagination. I shall remember this implicitly for proper spacing is the very first law of calligraphy.

The big black square behind Yanyan is the dark sky that carves her out, but it can also be seen as a window from which she walks out, and by which she is about to speak.

倒 影

Illustration 2: *Reflection*, Author's Studio photography, 2000

CHAPTER TWO

Theoretical and
Methodological Review

There is properly no history; only biography

-- American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson,
Essays (1841) 'History'. cf. Disraeli 248:10

1. Introduction

Let me start the discussion with a fictional conversation I am having with a formal sociologist.

> *"This thesis is about the construction of Chinesehood ... ... "*
>
> "So it is going to be a systematic investigation of social membership and of socialization of individuals into society."
>
> *"... It is also about the reconstruction of Chinesehood in a de-territorialized postmodern world ... ... "*
>
> "Lots of 'post-'s, many 're-' s and 'de-'s. These terminologies are really getting fashionable."
>
> *"... This will be done on three levels ... ... "*
>
> "Precise operationalization leads to objectivity. This is your fine point so far."
>
> *"... they are the national conceptions of being Chinese at home, the communal conceptions of being Chinese abroad, and the individual conceptions of being Chinese ... ... "*
>
> "For the first two, there are a good variety of socio-political debates on citizenship, racism, nationalism, labor migration, preservation of social groups and so on. What about the third level of analysis? I suppose you want to employ the interview technique instead of the survey. How many subjects are you going to approach in order to ensure the generability and reliability of your sample?"
>
> *"... ... I am, am, going to approach myself for data ... ... "*

> "Oh! That's rather dodgy!"
>
> *"... I'll go backward and forward into world histories and personal psyches to back up my self-analysis... ... "*
>
> "Nothing else can back you up other than professional neutrality and scientific exactitude."
>
> *"... I probably have to use pictures, photos and other visual elements, too ... ... "*
>
> "Pardon me, did you say that you are composing a M.A. Thesis?

Yes, writing about myself in a thesis is rather "dodgy". It is dodgy because it is not what social scientists normally do in labs or auditoriums. A normal science has to be formal science. Bringing in the self of the author downgrades a professional to a layperson. It is downgrading because inevitably I, as the author, have to call myself "I" instead of "the author; and by calling myself "I", I lose the power of distance and disembodiment. It is dodgy also because it corrupts the very criteria of objectivity and neutrality. It is to degenerate to medieval confessional notes. Being the researcher and the researched at the same time, how can I eliminate "confounding variables" on myself, or manipulate dependent and independent variables without my own knowledge? Presenting only a single case, I lose my chance to induct any causal laws, nor can my story be used deductively to test or falsify any hypotheses. Using a human self as the unit of analysis, it is too trivial to make bold statements and too infinite to observe and measure to exhaustion. Last, it is dodgy because I, by no means, represent the statistical average Chinese. Nor do I always score within the thresholds of mathematically determined "significance". "I", being so close to my "self", have no external validation to convince my academic readers that my story is more representative than that of any other Chinese.

Besides self-introspection, there is another source of disturbance in the above dialogue, that is, multiplicity and hybridity. In the very title of this chapter, I muddle up theoretical and methodological reviews into one chapter. The vertical move between three levels of analysis is matched with a horizontal move across different disciplinary boundaries. Moving to history to explore trans-temporal backgrounds, moving to psychology to understand intra- and inter-personal dynamics, moving to English and Chinese literary traditions to sense the linguistic twists of presentation, and moving from arts to visual arts to say a thousand words in a picture. A sociology thesis has to be sociological, not a miscellaneous collection. Unable to distinguish myself from other academics or even artists, I reinforce the stereotype of sociology as a pseudo-science.

2. The Conventions of Formal Sociology

2.1   Sociology as Science

There are at least three reasons for which my decision to be reflexive and hybridic are so disturbing to conventional sociologists. The first reason is associated with the myth of Sociology as Science. The "Founding Fathers" underwent painstaking processes to establish sociology as a respectable and independent discipline in the world of science. One effort in these processes was to cut off the connection between sociology and its neighboring disciplines in the study of things human (Thompson, 1984). One of the very first things that sociology students today learn about their trade is not what sociology is, but how does the study of society differ from the study of human ideas (philosophy), the study of the human past (history), the study of individual humans (psychology), and the study of primitive societies (anthropology). The introduction of visual elements into dissertations or textbooks has been viewed with suspicion; if ever used, they are usually in the forms of numerical graphs or Parsonsian tables. However, the irony in the professionalization is that although sociology anxiously markets itself as an original and distinctive discipline, it actively imitates the mind (in theory) and the body (in method) of natural sciences (Chalmers, 1984). That is to say, sociology wanted to be the same as well as to be different. The ultimate goal for many sociologists for a certain time was to be as good as physicists, if not, as economists, if still not, as psychologists.

2.2   Theory versus Method

A related process to the institutionalization of sociology as a distinctive science is the internal division of labor between social theorists and empiricists. Those who would think

without observing operate Non-Theoretical Empiricism, while those who would observe without thinking develop Non-Empirical Theory. The example that Mills (1959) gives of the non-empirical theorist is Parsons and the non-theoretical methodologist Paul F. Lazarsfeld. Using the two extreme exemplars, Mills speculates that the fetishism of concepts stands parallel to the methodological obsession (ibid: 50). While the meta-narrative of grand theories is "drunk on syntax" and "blind to semantics" (p. 34), the equally abstract empiricism reduces epistemological issues to methodological techniques (p. 57-58). The degenerate consequence of the progress in specialization is that the theorists are only concerned with concepts, and concepts only, whereas the empiricists are only concerned with methods, and methods only, both leave actual matters of social inquiry unattended.

However, the division has never been as clear-cut as I have so far led the reader to believe. The traditional therapies to the schizophrenic split between theory and research are induction, deduction, verification, and falsification. Merton's (1957) advocacy on the power of "middle-range concepts" is another attempt to reconcile "minor working hypotheses" and "master conceptual schemes" (p. 24). From this angle, this division and the link between the poles can be seen as a purposeful endeavor to help further specialization of the social science as a whole. It is through the processes of abstraction, generalization, or of operationalization and hypothesizing, that sociologists become scientists. It is the trained ability to move forward and backward from particular to general, from mundane to abstract, that legitimizes the sociological project of "converting philosophy into science" (Mills, 1959:60). Furthermore, the very dualistic demarcation between the inquirer and the inquired incorporates both hands-on and hands-off sociologists to the world of natural scientists.

2.3 Individual versus Society

In addition to the theory-method dualism, there is the anxiety about the tension between the individual and society that is evident in almost every key sociologist's work. This "interminable tension between the subjectively creative individual human being acting upon the world, and the objectively given social structure constraining him or her" (Plummer, 1983:3) was at the core of sociological inquiry since the very birth of social science. In Dawe's (1978) generalizing language, it is a tension that can be found through "all varieties of Western social, political, moral and creative thought and work, from

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philosophy and ethics to the novel and the film" (p. 364). With such a collective consciousness, sociologists frequently borrow ideas and findings from two neighboring disciplines, history (the societal level of analysis) and psychology (the individual level of analysis). Despite the vast amount of work done on this matter, social scientists have not yet found the golden mean out of the extremes of oversocialized and undersocialized modes. Giddens' structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) and Granovetter's redefining of "emeddedness" (Granovetter, 1985) are just two recent attempts to reconcile structures and agency. Nonetheless, with the still prevailing trend towards positivism or realism, more primacy has been given to structure over agency. Therefore, Marx's humanism becomes Marxist historical materialism, the voluntaristic Parsons becomes the systemic Parsons, and the "breaching" Garfinkel becomes the "deep-ruled" Cicourel (Dawe, 1978:364). Some sociologies have even gone so far as to eliminate the subject altogether in order to take off in a way that "no human element could contradict" (Chiari, 1975:169).

Within such a scientific discourse, presenting my thesis more artistically and less scientifically, bridging the gap between theory and method non-inductively, non-deductively, and non-falsificatively, simultaneously embodying the doubt and the doubter, and interweaving the individual into structures, are all suspicious practices to conventional sociologists. I may have made you wonder, why I have gone to lengths to disqualify myself. My intention in the last few pages is, though, to set up the right scene against which I can introduce several peripheral sociologies that share the same "dodgieness" with me, the kind of "dodgieness" that is increasingly seen as a treasure rather than a threat. And that is the kind of treasure that I am inspired by and want to take on.

3. The Simmelian Sociology

Georg Simmel is one of these great sources for many peripheral sociologists. He becomes such a source because he has been and still is a marginal sociologist himself. In his introductory book on Georg Simmel, David Frisby (1984) describes a number of key features of Simmel's work that destined him to fall outside the holy trinity of Marx, Weber and Durkheim. In the midst of the process of making sociology a distinctive science, Simmel refuses to confine himself according to *the* "sociological" discourse, nor does he believe that the very specialty of any single science can exhaust the totality of reality. Caught between the rigid choices of "to think" or "to observe", Simmel is able to escape both systemic modes of conceptualization and positivist empirical reductionism.

Facing the individual-society dilemma, Simmel exhibits his intellectual creativity to go beyond either "society as an autonomous entity" mentality or a "thorough-going individualist foundation" (Frisby, 1984:49).

3.1   On Heterogeneity

Few readers can overlook Simmel's heterogeneity. This heterogeneity is multilateral. Even within a single piece of work, Simmel is concerned with a diversity of ephemeral *materials*, approaches it with erratic jumps of different *thoughts*, plus the sheer variety of *themes* and *perspectives* (Frisby, 1984:16). His vision of the society is multi-layered, and thus his approach is multidisciplinary. This hybridity leads his readers to recognize him as a sociologist, a philosopher, a psychologist, a historian, an aesthetician, or even an essayist from one moment to another. Working in a philosophy department, giving sociology lecturers, seeing through the "psychologistic concept of society", talking about "social reality as historical reality" and "social actors as historical entities", communicating with an aesthetic mode of presentation in many of his essayistic writings, Simmel shows a strong reluctance to attach to any single school of thought (ibid:21-41).

For Simmel, there exists no privileged starting point for sociological analysis because everything interacts in one way or another with everything else in the social web (Simmel, *Urber sociale differenzierung*, cited in Frisby, 1984 : 60). Being able to start out from any point in any direction and arrive at any other, Simmel enjoys the intellectual freedom of making connections between seemingly unrelated phenomena. The gift of connecting and combining is a gift of a wanderer. Being a Jew in Germany and being a modern man in the city, he lives as "an alien in his native land", and thus is to be "near and far at the same time" (Coser, 1965 : 1). Simmel is an "eternal wanderer" between peoples, materials and ideas (Kracauer, *Georg Simmel*, cited in Frisby, 1984:17). And the image of a wanderer is the ultimate intersection of his/her multiple roles.

My thesis displays the same heterogeneity. I, too, use a multidisciplinary approach to match the width and depth of the subject matter. If Simmel spins a social web, I spin a cultural web, neither can be exhausted within a single "science". Immigration is about *historical* continuation, *economic* necessity, *demographic* movement, *psychological* reorientation as well as *literary* and *artistic* renaissance. Being a Chinese in New Zealand and going back to China as a New Zealander also make me an alien in both lands, and a

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wanderer between two cultures. While in New Zealand, I am a guest at best, a peril at worst. On the other side of the planet, China is no longer a place to live but to visit, to return to but not to stay. It is this stranger role that empowers me to be "near and far at the same time" and at any place (Coser, 1965:1), to develop the very quality of "anthropological strangeness", and thus to unify and connect timely or spatially unrelated peoples, materials and ideas. It is with this in-between consciousness Simmel accomplishes most of his work, and it is the very foundation that I want to lay out for this current thesis.

3.2   On the Philosophy of As-If

The perception of an ephemeral and alienating modernity leads Simmel to ask a general but profound question in the chapter title of *Sociology* (1908) "How is Society possible?" My question in this thesis is less general, equally profound but more paradoxical: "How is being a Chinese possible in New Zealand?" With a multidisciplinary scholarship, Simmel applies the philosophy of *As-If* to the domain of sociology (Frisby, 1984:15). According to this pragmatism, human knowledge consists of justified fictions that enable you and I to act *as if* it were true (Honderich, 1995:894). Simmel's own as-if cynicism leads to a Kantian understanding of his above question. If we accept John O'Neill's (1972) phenomenological interpretation of Simmel's question: "How is Society *made* possible?" in his controversially entitled book *Sociology as a Skin Trade* (pp. 167-176); then, we can start the skin trade of the making of overseas Chinesehood. My answers to these questions are not only at the Kantian level of how knowledge of Chinesehood can be possibly erected as a science (i.e. sinology), but also at a more substantive ground of how Chinesehood can be possibly constructed and reconstructed.

3.3   On Sociological Impressionism

Yet, Simmel has more to offer. He signals to his spiritual heirs an alternative conception of sociology as something creative and aesthetic, an alternative way of knowledge creation as art making. Deliberately distancing himself from Sociology as Science, Simmel present his work with idiosyncratic materials and essayistic format. In his book *Sociological Impressionism: A Reassessment of Georg Simmel's Social Theory*, Frisby (1981) represents Simmel as an artist of modernity, a sociological impressionist. His works are paintings of multitudinous odd connections, epics of transitions in urban fashions and gestures, comedies of fleeting moments of interactions, and artifacts of social vignettes. He draws

references from images and meanings, rather than hard facts. He believes that "the typical is to be found in what is unique, the law-like in what is fortuitous, the essence and significance of things in what is superficial and transitory" (Simmel, 'Soziologishe Aesthetik', translated and cited by Frisby, 1984:64). In addition to its content, Simmel's work distinguishes from scientific report in its physical form: fragmentary structures, aesthetic semantics, absence of figures and graphs, and a shortage of reference to the findings of predecessors and contemporaries. Simmel's sociology is his personal art, irreducible and irreproducible. Simmel's strength lies in his ability to simmelify everything with his own stamp (Frisby, 1984 : 26).

Simmel's position has later been taken up in two sociological works: C. Wright Mills's *The Sociological Imagination* (1959) and Robert Nisbet's *Sociology as an Art Form* (1976). Mills elaborates what Simmel calls the "trained eye" and suggests that the training of sociologists should start and end in the cultivation of the sociological imagination. Nisbet, likewise, pins down the very alternative that Simmel has been signaling, and gives the Simmelian sociology a defining name. While witnessing "the End of Science" (the title of John Horgan's 1996 book), more of us hope to see a merging of science and arts. Actually, *Collins Thesaurus* (1992) has quietly listed science and arts as alternative words. In Simmel's foresight back in the Nineteenth Century, sociology is the most able discipline to perform such synthesis.

Emulating Simmel, Nisbet and Mills, I present here a piece of sociological art. Immature and disorganized as it may appear to you, it is nonetheless irreducible and irreproducible. I am the idiosyncratic, unique, the fortuitous and transitory in which you can find the typical, the law-like as well as the essence and the significance. It is art, rather than science that can capture the total meaning of my identity politics and the total beauty of my cultural heritage. In this impressionist tale of the field, data are more interwoven than compartmentalized, tone is more personal than neutral, and semantics are more poetic than scientific. Meanings alternate with reasons, so do images alternate with numbers. My style of referencing is minimalist because cultural norms, values and legends are like circulating cash assets whose source or estate is no longer recognizable. I invite you to go through the pilgrimage with me, to immerse yourself in it, to wander around, rather than observe it, study it, evaluate it or just mark it. I invite you, also, to release your

subjectivity from the neutral ivory tower, to regain your right to be moved, delighted, surprised and even angered in this work.

3.4   The Use of Visual Arts

If you have accepted my invitation to Sociology as Art, you will soon, too, put up with the use of visual arts in this thesis. The relative absence of visual arts in sociological work (not even allowed in Simmel, Nisbet and Mills's works) is peculiar. This peculiarity can only be understood in relation to the conception of the English language. The English-speaking community has long regarded language as a rational science, a possession that distinguishes mind from body, human from animals, the literate from the illiterate, adults from children, and in some circumstances cultured men from natural women (Sydie, 1988). The rigor and logic of the Latin family languages lies in their phonetic principle, conceptual abstraction, and alphabetic orderliness. The training in such languages is alleged to play an elementary role in shaping the rational mind, be it Greek, English or German. And for it to be scientific and abstract, it should not be muddled up with pictorial images (Crystal, 1995).

However, this notion of language is extremely Euro-centric for it ignores the nature of the world's most spoken language: Chinese. In comparison, the Chinese language is less rigorous and less abstract. While the multisyllabic European languages lead to a straightforward transcribing from spoken words to written words, the monosyllabic Chinese leads to the development of an entirely different written language: the characters. Less trapped by phonetic representation, Chinese characters rely more on images and meanings, less on sounds. In other words, written Chinese is made up of strokes rather than letters, not spelt but drawn. The independence of the written language from spoken language helps to universalize the characters trans-historically and cross-culturally (Lin, 1939:205-210). A given Chinese character has the same meaning not only in different parts and ethnic groups in China, but also in neighboring nations such as Korea, Japan, and Annam (the Chinese name for Vietnam) regardless of its pronunciation (Mancall, 1968: 64-65). Chinese characters, being so different from the alphabetic European languages, are often referred to as "symbols" or "signs" in English, revealing a suspicious attitude regarding Chinese as a pseudo-language. From such a language the Chinese did not develop positivist sciences, but great literature and arts. Calligraphy is such a profession that overlaps literature and arts. Prior to the introduction of the fountain pen and ball-point

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pen, every literate person had to practice the calligraphic skill with brushes, a tool that is only used in Europe to paint rather than to write. Thinking of the pictographic and ideographic Chinese character and the aesthetics of calligraphy, the introduction of pictures into theses stops seeming so wild after all. Language can be pictorial as well as logical, science as well as art.

Nonetheless, the use of visual elements is not a Chinese invention, it has had its tradition in western social science. In the earliest days (1896-1916) of *The American Journal of Sociology*, 244 photographs were used in 31 articles (Stasz, 1979). Many of the early Chicago studies included arrays of photographs, too. During the 1970s, a small group of American sociologists coined the term "Visual Sociology" with exhibitions of their photographic work (Plummer, 1983 : 28). The scope of Visual Sociology can be extended to include not only photos, but also pictures, scripts, colors, or even variations in fonts and formatting. This tradition is, of course, very marginalized. Mainstream sociologists do not see that pictures and photos are as equally powerful tools as graphs and tables. I have always felt that Said's *Orientalism* would be much more compelling had he inserted between his forceful argument Jean-Leon Gerome's *Slave market* and *Phryne before the areopagus*, John Frederick Lewis's *The reception* and *The siesta*, and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres's *Bain Turq (The Turkish bath)*. All of these oil paintings, with another 35 more, were reproduced in Reina Lewis's (1996) subsequent book *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation*. The imagery of women in these pictures are vivid examples of western voyeurism of Oriental sexuality and femininity.

Two major works of Chinese New Zealanders use visual elements generously. One is the four-volume monument *Windows on a Chinese Past*, painstakingly accomplished by the Otago historian James Ng (1993-1999); and the groundbreaking biographical recording *Home Away from Home (1990)* and *Dragons on the Long White Cloud (1996)*, collected by the Auckland professor Manying Ip. In these books, figures and tables alternate with numerous photos of landscape and people, sketched maps and plans, photocopies of records, and "Yellow Peril theme" cartoons. I am especially impressed by the photos of New Zealand Chinese women in Ip's books. The bodily imageries of these women, firm, confident, healthy, elegant, able-bodied and reserved, are silent criticisms to the western stereotype of passive and weak Oriental women.

My use of pictures and photo in this thesis will, too, be more positive than negative. There are two major categories. One is of the pictures that I painted in China prior to my immigration to New Zealand. And the other is of the studio photos that I had taken when I visited China as a New Zealand citizen. Each chapter is prefaced with a picture or photo, symbolizing and summarizing the thousands of words in the subsequent pages. If the painting of the pictures represents the construction of Chinesehood, then the reinterpretation of these pictures represents the reconstruction of the same cultural identity. It is by these visual and verbal representations of the changing Chineseness that I dissolve various Yellow Peril stereotypes in western societies, and disrupt the reductionist gaze of western sinologists.

In the same vein, I also choose to present this paper in an unconventional format. Left alignment for the main text, justified for the quotations, centered alignments for the poems, scattered Chinese characters, alternate to create an impression that is physically different from orthodox academic reportage.

3.5   On Time and Space

I have one more point to make before we can leave Simmel. Simmel is the very first theorist who identifies the spatial effects of human existence. Talking about a sociology of space, Simmel stresses the human experiences of space. For example, the filling in of space, the transformation of what is previously empty and void into something "for us". His notion of "stranger" is also defined in spatial terms. The wandering of the Simmelian wanderer renders a conceptual detachment from every given point in space (ibid : 130). In other times, Simmel's sense of space is much more specific, materialistic or worldly. Simmel describes the worldliness of his work as below:

> "Perhaps I could have achieved something that was
> also valuable in another city; but this specific
> achievement, that I have in fact brought to fruition
> in these decades, is undoubtedly bound up with the
> Berlin milieu." (cited in Frisby, 1984 : 22)

The time and space that he has been in shapes the very way that Simmel approaches modernity. The metropolitan Berlin at the turn of the century epitomizes modernity of

the time. With all the intersections of conflicting currents, this urban center is intensely affected by a multiplicity of intellectual and moral tendencies. This is what enables Simmel to capture the ephemeral, fugitive and contingent nature of modern life with richly presented fragments of reality, to emerge as the first sociologist of modernity (Frisby, 1981).

You and I might seldom think of how the cities that we live in shape us. Nor might we think very often of the era that we live in. The time and space of our socialization are often internalized into the bottom of our unconsciousness, molding our bodies as well as our minds, determining the very way that you and I eat and sleep. Had I been born in feudal Beijing, the heart of the Middle Kingdom, the base of the Forbidden City, surrounded by numerous artifacts left by Dynasty after Dynasty, Emperor after Emperor, I would bind my feet tiny, coil my chignon every morning, eat lots of noodles and buns, treat myself with Peking roast duck, live in a *Si-he-yuan* (a distinctive quadrangle residential pattern, exclusive to Beijing), move around in a sedan-chair, fly kites as a sport, entertain myself with Peking Opera and cross-talks, having the Double Seven Day as Valentine Day (falling on the 7th of July in the Chinese lunar calendar), make reed leaf dumplings on the Duan-wu Festival (falling on the 5th of May in the lunar calendar), moon cakes on the Middle Autumn Festival (unknown as the Moon Festival in English) and dumplings on Spring Festival, speak the embryonic form of what latterly is called Vernacular Chinese, pronounce in an accent close to mandarin, converse with a few sinolized Manchurian and Mongolian slang, prove my identity with genealogy, respecting Confucius as a saint, worship Buddha as a god, and recruit concubines for my husband.

Had I been born in the tropical Taiwan prior to the Nationalist Party's occupation, I would regard myself as an "indigenous Taiwanese" (although the actual indigenous group is the *Gao-shan* people), antagonistic towards both communist and nationalist authorities, eat lots of rice noodles, seafood, bananas and pineapples, treat my family with radish cake and fish cake, entertain myself with the *Ge-zai* Opera, speak Ke-jia dialect and maybe some Japanese (for Japan had colonized Taiwan for 40 years), learn *Guo-yu* (the Taiwanese synonym for mandarin, meant the national language), use *zhu-yin* romanization system, worship *Ma-zu* (a goddess), develop an Island mentality (the Taiwanese interviewee, cited in Yuan, 2000), and feel more comfortable among Americans and Japanese than Mainland Chinese.

Had I been born by a refugee mother in New Zealand during the World War II, I would make soy sauce and ferment black-beans myself, sleep at the back or the top of the family shop, rotate apple boxes or potato bags for fun, drive trucks or vans to auctions, endure either the fruit-shop freezer or the laundry steaming copper, learn my first math lesson from giving change to customers, speak one variation of Cantonese at home but English at school, know fewer than 100 Chinese characters, pay respects to the dead on the Qing-Ming Festival, celebrate the Double-Tenth Day (the nationalist party's national day) but miss out Chinese New Years when unable to get a Chinese calendar, nod to every Chinese on the street, know the father and mother of nearly every Chinese over the country, put up with the "Ching-chong Chinaman" song, stay in the school yard for an extra hour when the police raid the Chinatown for opium, report to the police with an "Alien Registration Form" when travelling domestically, anticipate thumb-printing on the "Re-entry Permit" when traveling abroad, or expect to be sent back to China with my mother and siblings as soon as the war is over, develop a ghetto mentality, aspiring to run my own grocery shop (most of the details are taken from Ip, 1996).

But, I was born in contemporary Shanghai. So I cut my hair short most of the time, wear jeans more often than cheongsam, eat more rice and river fish, treat myself with the triple-yellow chicken (a special species of free-range chicken exclusive to Shanghai) or the *Da-zha* river crab, live in *Shi-ku-men* (a distinctive Shanghai residential arrangement: a wooden door within a stone frame, plus a two-storied flat with a front yard), surrounded by more colonial buildings than classical Chinese architectures, go about by bus, bicycles or taxis, play table tennis, listen to the Yue Opera, the Shanghai Opera, as well as imported pop songs, celebrate International Women's Day on 8th March, International Labor Day on 1st May, International Children's Day on 1st June (most of these "international" days are only observed in a few communist countries), regard 1st rather than 10th of October as the National Day, speak both Shanghainese and *Pu-tong-hua* (the Mainland synonym for Mandarin), learn English rather than Japanese or Russian at school, write simplified Chinese characters, using the Pin-yin romanization system, prove my identity with the Residence Booklet and the Identity Card, expect to preserve my surname after marriage and to continue a career after the one-off child-bearing (i.e. the One Child Policy), assume that one day our leader will "liberate" Taiwan, but hold on to a cynicism towards politics, develop a forward and outward port mentality, feel less historical but more international.

These lists of comparisons should have given you some idea about the role of territory in the making of identity. However, the construction of Chinesehood is only the prologue to this thesis, followed by a more extensive account on the reconstruction of Chinesehood. The subsequent chapters are laid out according to spatial changes and the meanings associated with these changes. If Shanghai territorializes my identity, then, Auckland re-territorializes it. All other cities that I, as a global citizen, may visit, live in or otherwise associate with de-territorialize my identity. The goal is to achieve, for myself and my readers, a positive "new ethnicity" that is multi-territorialized. The fact that I settle in Auckland, New Zealand is of equal importance. Had I immigrated to New York or Tokyo, this thesis would have a different outlook. . I might not even write this paper in English. Likewise, I would be much less likely to talk about indigenous matters due to the spatial segregation of American Indians, but more about Black politics and Affirmative Actions. Immigration, after all, is a spatial matter. If, according Simmel, the sociological meaning of spatial forms can be analyzed from at least five aspects: the exclusiveness of space, the boundaries of space, the locating of social forms in space, the perceived proximity and distance, and the possibility of moving from place to place (Frisby, 1984:127-130); the subject of immigration is qualified for all these levels of analysis. Immigration is to test the *exclusiveness* and *boundaries* of previously defined spaces. It is to relocate the *located* social forms in space. It is also a confusing *perception of proximity* and distance. Finally, immigration is about *moving* from one place to another place. It can be a one-stop moving. It can also be a series of moving, or a U-turning.

4. The Life History Tradition

Although I find traces of multiplicity, aesthetics and spatiality in Simmel's work, none of these qualities necessarily supports biography, especially autobiography, as a legitimate way of creating sociological knowledge. Therefore, I shall seek elsewhere for epistemological support. In his groundbreaking book, Wright Mills (1959) uses the notion of Sociological Imagination to unify individual and society, while he uses the idea of Intellectual Craftsmanship to unify theory and research. In the humanist science, neither the reason in pure theorizing nor the information obtained by pure research alone is sufficient to make sense of the self or the world. What we need is a quality of mind that can animate reason (theory) and information (research), link personal feelings and experiences with impersonal structures and transitions, compare life story with world

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history, and bridge the kind of men and women we are becoming with the kind of history-making we are part of. He names such a quality as the Sociological Imagination. This kind of Imagination enables us to grasp problems of history, problems of biography, and problems of a social structure in which biography and history intersect. "That is the mark of the classic social analyst", Mills concludes (1959:7).

Although Mills does not mention Simmel in the subsequent list, he follows with some sparklingly Simmelian statements:

> "For that imagination is the capacity to shift from one perspective to another – from the political to the psychological; ... from the theological school to the military establishment.... It is the capacity to range from the most impersonal and remote transformations to the most intimate features of the human self – and to see the relations between the two." (p. 7)

Mills, too, agrees that the gift of connection comes from the Simmelian wanderer:

> "In large part, contemporary man's [sic] self-conscious view of himself as at least an *outsider*, if not a *permanent stranger*, rests upon an absorbed realization of social relativity and of the transformative power of history. The sociological imagination is the most fruitful of this self-consciousness." (p. 7, italics mine)

In the above argument, Mills goes a step further and suggests that every sociology student should learn to wander outside commonsense understanding. The fruit of the wandering is the Sociological Imagination.

Life history is a preferred approach to develop and refine the Sociological Imagination, or Sociology as Art. This approach or style has gone by various names – human document,

personal document, personal story, life story, narrative inquiry, biographical method, and oral history. None of these names can be found in the 1994 edition of *The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology* (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner, 1994). The closest entry that can be found is "case study", but the description given to it further marginalizes the status of this methodological style.

> "... a case study cannot provide reliable information about the broader class. But it is often useful in the *preliminary* stages of an investigation ......" (p. 46, italic mine)

There have been moments in sociological history, when it looked as if such methods would finally establish themselves as a central sociological discourse. That moments go and go in Symbolic Interactonists' studies, phenomenological research, ethnomethodological research, psychoanalytical case studies, anthropological field studies, and ethnographical tales. Those moments have come and gone, and until very recently most sociology students only had the most passing acquaintance with the miscellaneous category, micro-sociology. However, toward the end of the Twentieth Century, we witness a renaissance of this humanist style. This renaissance is a response to at least three epistemological questions.

4.1   Will a Story Suffice?
First, the turn *to* biographical methods is a turn *away* from positive empiricism (e.g. Chamberlayne, Bornat & Wengraf, 2000). There is a wide recognition that social science, in its positivism, determinism and social constructionism, has become detached from lived realities. This biographical turn is only one of the manifestations of a shift in thinking, a paradigm change, or a change of knowledge culture. It affects not only the orientations of a range of disciplines, but their interrelations with each other. Since personal story has been employed by sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, educators, business schools, journalists or even novelists, this formative or deformative approach has brought an array of otherwise self-defined disciplines closer together. Advocates of this style do not discard the importance of disciplinary commitment, but insist that such commitment should be multidisciplinary.

Due to the multidisciplinary approach of life history, Chamberlayne and his associates (2000) ally this renaissance with other re-orientations in human studies (pp. 5-8). For example, the biographical turn parallels "the linguistic turn" in literary criticism, which prioritizes the mediating role of texts, or representation styles. The renewed interest in biographizing also accentuates "the historical turn in the human sciences" (the title of McDonald's 1996 book). Personal stories are vivid demonstration of the historical evolution in structures, agencies and actions. Analogue is even drawn between painting and narrative since one is a visual representation that shapes space while the other is a verbal representation of reality that shapes time (Vanhoozer, cited in Polkinghorne, 1995:18). A similar analogy is alleged to be between life histories and photographs for both are vivid illustrations of abstract concepts and aggregate statistics (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992 : 2). Wagner (1979) even suggests five modes of photographical research, for which the highest mode is "narrative visual story" (pp. 16-19). The life history method is thus the closest to artistic documentation.

4.2   Will My Story be a Better Story?

If the biographical turn answers the validity question "Will any story suffice?", the narrative focus on the individual deals with the question of representability "Will my story better than anyone else's?" The tension between individual and society is not an elitist's concern, but a mundane problem central to everybody's everyday experience in modern societies. In conventional social theories and research, the final goal is sometimes not to constitute the subject, but to dissolve it (Levi-Strauss, 1962). The goal for narrative analysis is, on the other hand, to reconstruct the individual. The rationale behind such a goal is that social influence shapes not only classes and communities, but also private self-understanding and individual life course. Representing commonality and uniqueness simultaneously is an epistemological as well as a technical question that has already been tackled by Simmel and Mills. Simmel and Mills are able to make such bold statements because they have established much formal status elsewhere. The right to tell a different story is hard earned. I, too, have to earn the right to tell my story by demonstrating my mastery of conventional academic knowledge in length.

If I had chosen a more conventional methodology, interviewing 30 Chinese New Zealand woman and recording their life histories, I would never have been able to gain the same width and depth as I do with my own story. A key reason is that I do not only think as a

Chinese, a woman, a Christian, a New Zealander, or a global citizen, but also think as a sociologist, a psychologist, a historian, a novelist and an artist. This is not to say that my story is better than others'; but that the *way* I can present my own story is better than the way I could possibly present other people's stories. In terms of the vulnerability of the informants, I can never dig their psyche as ruthlessly as I do to myself. That is because I am protected with all the special knowledge on identity politics while they are not. Introspection is a disturbing process. Many people survive or endure by "deliberately" not being aware of all the paradoxes and hybridity of their identities (Linda Tillman Rogers, cited in Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995 : 119). No social researcher has the right to initiate a process of unpacking these complications. In the name of "informed consent", both the storytellers and inquirers understate the negative emotional and psychological consequences of life sharing. With no solution in sight, most life historians continue "practicing therapy without a license" (ibid : 127).

Telling and analyzing my own story also minimizes other ethical issues concerning life historians. Michelle Fine describes academic research, including the biographical method, as 'ventriloquy – the researcher uses the voice of the researched to speak our own message (cited in Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995:115). The dilemma of representation is ever present in writing about "others". If only the storyteller's voice is heard, my authorship is in question; if only my voice was heard, my authenticity is in question. Telling my own story, in principle, legitimizes both my authorship and authenticity. Likewise, if fear of misrepresentations limits the range of interpretations, analyzing my own story renders much more analytical freedom to bring in diverse explanations. I can then concentrate on the intersubjective bond between my reader and myself, rather than that between the storytellers and myself. Finally, in listening to other people's stories, I can never be sure that what I have been told is factually and meaningfully true to the teller. In addition to their honesty, I have to rely on other people's quality of memory. There is always the possibility of missing out a point or two, and of going back to the teller for additional information. A self-analysis narrative bridges the gap between the life as lived, the life as experienced, the life as told and the life as represented. In pursuing the epistemological aim of braiding the knower with the known, I embody the normal triangular relationship between the teller, the narrative and the recorder of the narrative (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995 : 27). Being both the doubt and the doubter, I can fill out the missing links in data by going

back to my own memory at any time. My memory is as good as anyone else's, plus that, I have a better control over accuracy.

4.3   *Will Any Story Stay the Same?*

The third question is on reliability: "Will my story remain the same yesterday, today and tomorrow?" Another way to put it: "If I cannot represent others, how can I represent myself?" Such questions disturb the very consciousness of an inquiring mind, shake the foundation of human knowledge, and disqualify any statements starting with "I ... ". Subjectivity is the key to the answer. The greatest turn, among the various turnings listed above, is the turn to subjectivity. As Catherine Emihovich (1995) summarizes in the title of her article 'Distancing passion', conventional social science is about separating the doubt from the doubter, divorcing self from experience, pursuing knowledge without being involved, holding imagination at bay, becoming self-referential without intimacy (p. 40). The power of the life history lies in its ability to bring reason and emotion together, waving subjectivity into objectivity. Good narration reflects the multiple, contradictory truth for our time, providing diversified perspectives and diagnoses of our changing, tangled and contradictory society. What interests microsociologists most is precisely what the macrosociologists find most discomfiting – the factitiousness of the tale. Unlike usual qualitative research that continues to operate within the same kind of paradigm space as the survey, narrative analysis gives primacy to subjectivity. Narration, the sociologically read biography, is both a process and product, both a method and phenomenon, referring to the structured quality of experience to be studied, and the pattern of inquiry for its study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994 : 416).

The kind of narrative presented in this thesis is not the matter-of-fact realist tale, nor the character-building confessional tale, but a multilateral and momentary impressionist tale. Borrowing, again, the term from visual art, John Van Maanen (1988 : 101) defines the impressionists' self-consciousness and innovative use of materials as the key link to sociological writing. Capturing a worldly scene in a special instant or moment of time, impressionist paintings and tales are stamped with highly personalized marks. In order to evoke an open and participatory readership, the storyteller, in this case I, draw the audience into an unfamiliar story world and allow you to see, hear, and feel as I saw, heard and felt. Instead of color, form, light, stroke, hatching, overlay and frame, my materials, as a sociological artist, are words, metaphors, phrasings, legends, imagery and experiences.

The strength of impressionist tales is built with evocative language and image, a beauty that draws us in as it transforms our imagination. The peculiarities of these tales are best summarized in Maanen's own words:

> "Impressionist tales typically highlight the episodic, complex, and ambivalent realities that are frozen and perhaps made too pat and ordered by realist or confessional conventions. Impressionist tales, with their silent disavowal of grand theorizing, their radical grasping for the particular, eventful, contextual, and unusual, contain an important message. They protest the ultimate superficiality of much of the published research in social science – ethnographic or otherwise. Fieldworkers are sometimes conscious that the *art* they practice is to provide an account of or even paper over a deeply uncertain world. The pen as *camera obscura*. Impressionist tales of the field bring such matters to light, for they attempt to be as hesitant and open to contingency and interpretation as the concrete social experiences on which they are based." (p. 119, italics mine)

Subjectivity shall not only come from the story-teller, but also from the story-listener. Tales of one's culture are never finished. My story can be told differently at different times, with a different audience. The magic of a participatory readership is that meanings can be worked on again and again. Understanding our cultures, yours and mine, is a lifetime enterprise. Our cultures change just as we ourselves change. The movement of a life cannot be stopped by a story. Both my audience and I are in the middle of our stories and cannot be sure how they will end.

5. Cautious Notes

The act of telling one's story is an act of creating one's self in the consciousness to give order and meaning to events that have no "intrinsic or immanent relations" (Hatch &

Wisniewski, 1995 : 129). Nonetheless, this kind of telling is an alienation because the process of telling requires giving the teller away and diminishing the teller (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995 : 32). Even to tell my own story is to invent myself, to select what I will tell, to suppress what I will not tell, to forget semiconsciously what might be crucial to my audience or even to myself. The life as presented, like the life experienced and lived, is influenced by the social and cultural contexts.

In addition to memory errors and defensive mechanisms, I am also bound by the discourses and expressions made available to me. The range of rhetoric, information and perspectives that one can be exposed to is limited by time and language skills. I, like anyone else, do not have infinite time to read all the "relevant" references, nor do I have the time to wait for everything to be translated into English or Chinese, not to mention the fact that I could not possibly see future works that are still developing in some great minds. The kinds of discourses and materials that I come to gain acquaintance with inevitably shape and limit how I construct the current version of the life lived so far, how I organize and express myself through narration, and how such a life can be understood and represented in text. I inherit narratives already codified by others and populated with others' meanings. As a self, I narrate my world to give it form and meaning; but at the same time, I am being narrated because the forms I use to narrate are not my own – "they belong to other times, other places, other contexts" (Peter McLaren, cited in Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995 : 122).

If I make any truth claim here, it claims to be "momentary truth" or "as-if truth". The text is celebrated as a momentary expression of transient and precarious pseudo-coherence. In the present-time analysis of the "text of the moment", nonetheless, you can still expect to see continuities of people, materials, ideas, and identity. That is because the past is a dynamic, living past, an experience "open to interpretation and reinterpretation, to meaning-making in and for the present" (Billy Ayers, cited in Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995 : 114). This momentary truth is also an "as-if reality". The writer and the reader of narratives have to write and read as if the world was real, or more precisely, as if the world was more than a text, more than a momentary text (Emihovich, 1995 : 44). Given its focus upon the construction and reconstruction of identities and the self over time, a sociologically read autobiography provides important insights into how the 'narrative of the self' is developed and how it is transformed continuously in relation to the ways that

we are represented in the cultural systems that surround us" (Andrew Sparkes, cited in Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995 : 123).

If you accept my position that the individual has no permanent, essential, or fixed identity, but assumes different identities at different times so that identifications are continually in a state of flux, fleeting opportunities, the question of reliability is no longer relevant here. Because I am the object as well as the subject, my subjective understanding of the objective me at the completion of the thesis is different from that at the beginning, and changes at every moment of writing. Should I feel I do have a unified identity, this is only because I construct a comforting "narrative of self" about myself. The writing process is a process of mediation and negotiation. It is a process to mediate the space between the self that tells, the self that told, and the self that listens. Such a process returns a story to the writer that is both hers and not hers, that contains her self in good company (Grumet, 1991 : 70).

6. The Question on Criteria

Maybe it is unfair, after all, to ask questions about validity, representability and reliability on qualitative research in general and narrative inquiry in particular. If narrative inquiry is art making, then, what do validity, representativeness and reliability have to do with a piece of art. The nature of the biographic methods, particularly self-analysis autobiography demands a different array of criteria to establish and evaluate quality. Although written more than 60 years ago, the seven principles underlined in Dollard's book *Criteria for the Life History* (1935) still provide a good guideline. Attention is given to cultural context(s), the embodied nature of the protagonist, the influence of significant others, the process of life-choice decision making, the historical continuity or the embedded pattern of the characters, the storied outcome in a temporal order, and meaningful interpretation on the part of the researcher. In a more up-dated collective work, Hatch and Wisniewski (1995) send out questionnaires to established life historians and synthesize their opinions on the methodological issues. They define all evaluative yardsticks as "emerging criteria" to maintain a deliberate distance to anything "set" or "firm". A great variety "emerges" out of the responses: adequacy, aesthetic finality, accessibility, authenticity, believability, closure, credibility, compellingness, continuity, explanatory power, fidelity, moral persuasiveness, persuasiveness, plausibility, resonance, sense of conviction, trustworthiness, and verisimilitude (Hatch & Wisniewski 1995 : 129).

6.1   *Fidelity*

I want to conclude this chapter by discussing one criterion of the list, and one that is not in the list but is frequently mentioned by qualitative researchers. These two criteria are my personal parameters guiding the writing of this thesis. The first criterion is fidelity. In his article 'Fidelity as a criterion for practicing and evaluating narrative inquiry', Donald Blumenfeld-Jones (1995) summarizes three key features that the notion "fidelity" can bring to the field. First of all, fidelity requires narrative inquiry meeting requirements of both social science and art, particularly fictional art. Citing Susanne Langer, Blumenfeld-Jones favors presentational abstraction in art over generalizing abstraction in science. The former includes particularized sensory experience while the latter excludes those for the purpose of predication and regularity. Through narration, the researcher becomes a storyteller and the informants become characters. (I, however, play both roles simultaneously.) Narrative inquirers can adopt the style of some contemporary artists to "just stimulate in a direction rather than dictate exact interpretation" (ibid:30-31). I, too, do not want to hinder the active role that you play in the reproduction of meaning with my own endless self-reflexivity. I present a different imagination here, but still, there are plenty of space for you to imagine for yourself. I shall not imagine *for* you.

Second, the "thick description" of a narrative should cultivate an intersubjective bond between the teller and the listener, and a resonance between the storied life and its cultural and social context. I am presenting a relatively unfamiliar story, it is my obligation to make my story intelligible to you. However, nearly every field tale is "relatively familiar". It is the curiosity of the unknown that initiates many of these studies. For a long time, the lingering existence of qualitative research in the family of sciences is preserved in its specialty of eliciting "indicatives" or "variables" for formal research. The contribution of these exploratory studies lies in the transformation of the unknown to known, the unfamiliar to familiar, through the building of intersubjective and resonating bonds. In this current tale, even if you don't speak a word of Chinese, never know a Chinese personally, never been to a native Chinese territory, you will still have some faint ideas of how language shapes our thoughts, how social membership is maintained and social differentiation is negotiated, and how alienation can be experienced through prejudice, discrimination, isolation, or merely being different. Even if all that fails, you and I still share a world history and a global environment. It is this pseudo-essentialist belief that makes the writing and the reading of this thesis possible.

Third, Blumenfeld-Jones (1995) states that crafting fidelity is a moral process that differs from truth claims. In this distinction truth is taken as what *factually* happened and fidelity as what it *means* to the teller of the tale. Truth treats an event objectively while fidelity does it subjectively (p. 26). Blumenfeld-Jones gives strong emphases to faithfulness, duty and obligation in any research that works through issues of knowledge, control, and power. Exposing oneself to another in the research process requires mutual trust, respect, and commitment between the teller and the listener. And I expect you, too, honors the self-report of the author in the current thesis.

6.2   *Empowerment*

The moral point that Blumenfeld-Jones is making serves as a stepping stone to the second criterion of narrative inquiry; that is, empowerment. In the postmodernist circle, there is a conspicuous escapist tendency in the shift from acting to talking (Soper, 1990: 147-151). Many social scientists have given up the ultimate moral and political role in their work. This nihilistic pessimism limits all academic work to intertextuality in the belief that there is nothing to do because nothing can be done. Writing an autobiography is inevitably a political attack on such scholastic resignation. Contesting identity politics from an embodied perspective does not try to do everything (meta-narrative), or the other extreme, do nothing (nihilism), but something; even if it is only something to stir up the water, or scratch the surface, it still provides a better way to break through to the next level of understanding. Moreover, this individual contestation can be extended to communal and national levels. Reading, reflecting and debating on a fellow Chinese's autobiography, or contradicting it with one's own is by no means an off-hand or neutral experience. Empowerment, here, renders a collective consciousness-raising project that is made through multiple levels of self-historicizing.

My thesis is also inevitably a challenge to the Eurocentric generalization of non-western countries and populations. More specifically, my recalling of my days in China shatters the fantasies of western sinologists about the Chinese at home, while my articulation of my experience in New Zealand subverts much of the conclusions drawn from western socio-psychological research on the Chinese abroad. The western social science discourses have never been sufficient in explaining urban western societies, let alone in explaining societies that exit in other times and spaces. How many social scientists are aware there exists a

conceptual alternative to the Greek dualism that allows interchangeability (the *yin-yang* Order), a class system that is other than the capitalist stratification or the Indian caste (i.e. *shi-nong-gong-shang*, gentry, peasants, manual workers, and merchants), a historical condition that does not fit neatly to feudalism, capitalism, colonialism or communism, a colonized people who are capable of assimilating their colonizers, and women who are determined to outlive all the tyrannies with dignified silence.

However, my thesis is not to be read lightly as just another Oriental novelty. It is not roast dog tacking on roast pork, or snake soup served besides chicken soup, or any new trinkets replacing old trinkets. On the contrary, my work is a deliberate and serious attempt to disrupt the Orientalist gaze. This intention leads to a slightly different sense of empowerment, a Saidian obligation to replace the Western stereotypes with a self-portrait. My story, my narration is an alternative to systematic and organized knowledge such as Sinology.

7.   What is the Thing Called Sinology?

I have been so far, using the word Sinology without explanation. You may have developed many assumptions about what this thing that I refer to as Sinology. Since it has a "-logy" suffix, it must be a science-like thing, an academic thing, a formal thing, a study or a knowledge of something else. You are quite right. Sinology is a specific segment of Orientalism that is dedicated to the study of China and Chinese people in the Mainland. The prefix "Sino-" is an old name for China. Under such a professional name rather than the less defined ones (such as the African Study, the Study of East Asian countries), Sinology claims truth on its subject, making statements and analysis that are alleged to be even "truer" than what the Chinese can claim themselves. The mission of Sinologists is to represent the Chinese for "they cannot represent themselves" (Marx, cited in Said, 1995, as an epigraph), or if they do, they often fail to do it in a scientific way.

When I say that things Chinese are "relatively unfamiliar", I mean that they are not all new to the west. This "peculiar" nation has been since antiquity "a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (Said, 1995 : 1). It is an ever-lasting interest to peep through the iron curtain to see the forbidden city, in times of feudalism, colonization or of communism. The development of Sinology as a science in the later nineteenth century went hand in hand with the colonization in the Far

East. French, Germany, Britain, America, Russia and Japan, where Sinology was getting professionalized, were the main imperialist powers in China. They shared the wealth and land as well as the knowledge. Many dictionaries, encyclopedias, bibliographies, annals, handbooks, translations of Chinese classics, and other major works were published since then. This ambitious and solemn scholarship can be best represented by the American Sinologist John King Fairbank. Out of the 57 publications, *The United States and China* (1948), *The Cambridge History of China* (editor), *The Chinese World Order* (editor, 1968), *China's Response to the West* (1954), *China: A New History* (1992) are the foundational textbooks that every student of Sinology has to read. His influence is so prevalent that Paul M. Evans (1988) names his book *John Fairbank and the American Understanding of Modern China*. There are two common features emerging from the titles of Fairbank's masterpieces. The first is a solemn ambition to exhaust the history and the culture of a nation in one or two books. And the second is a paradoxical focus on modern China, or more precisely, China since 1842 from its full encounter with the West. Domestic events are only supplied as a backdrop to detailed record of every historical moment of the Sino-foreign relationship. Only in relation to the West, particularly the United States, does China have a real meaning, or a meaningful existence.

This thesis, nevertheless, lacks such solemnity, ambition and focus. It is deliberately made to be an alternative to the systematic and organized knowledge that Fairbank and his associates have institutionalized. In his Afterword to the 1995 printing of *Orientalism*, Said (1995) introduces a sharp contrast between Napoleon's *Description de l'Egypte* and an Egyptian writer's chronicles, which is ideal to make my point here.

> "The studied solemnity and grandiose accents of Napoleon's *Description de l'Egypte* – its massive, serried volumes testifying to the systematic labors of an entire corps of *savants* backed by a modern army of colonial conquest – dwarfs the individual testimony of people like Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, who in three separate volumes describes the French invasion form the point of view of the invaded. …Napoleon's is an 'objective' account from the standpoint of someone powerful trying to hold

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Egypt within the French imperial orbit; Jabarti's is
an account by someone who paid the price, was
figuratively captured and vanquished." (p. 334)

The relationship between America and China is far subtler than that between France and Egypt, but the difference still counts. In many introductions of his books Fairbank painstakingly asks his fellow country folks to put aside their presumptions and prejudices in order to see China objectively as it is (e.g. Fairbank, 1958:1-12). However, it is his neutrality that enrages me. My rage must be unintelligible to most Americans and New Zealanders alike. What is wrong to be objective and neutral? Neither of us is wrong. My emotional reaction cannot be shared by people that have never been conquered or colonized. Equally, I cannot "remain cool" as those people do. Yes, Fairbank's account is a "progress" from the "Yellow Peril" account. He leads his American readers from history as imagined to history as happened, but what I expect to see is history as experienced. It is important to know China objectively, but it is equally important to know China subjectively, not from the inquirer's subjectivity, but from the subject's subjectivity. Fairbank's history is, at best, a predominant realist tale with confessional attachments. It is *felt* differently from, for example, Liang, Qi-chao's anxious desire to reform China, Wang, Guo-wei's suicidal commitment to China, Lin, Yu-tang's passionate defense for China, Yuan, Zhi-ming's confessional cry for China, or even Lu, Xun's ruthless criticism about China. The facts, dates, statistics, documents and descriptions organized in Fairbank's book do not answer my sentimental questions: How could a human talk about fellow human beings' suffering so calmly as if they were the laboratory rats and rabbits? How could those events and treaties that have hurt generations of Chinese are dealt with lightly, although factually, as if they had never cost any pain? Despite his accuracy and scientism, Fairbank fails to paint a complete picture. What he omitted is emotion and this omission is vital.

8.   Conclusion

The presence of my personal story, (unknown to Fairbank, or would be ignored by him had he still been alive, for being insignificant, incomplete, irrelevant or idiosyncratic) is nonetheless a reminder that there is another side to the Sinological meta-narrative. Fairbank may know more facts about modern China than I do, but I have more feelings about China than he does. By no means Fairbank is able to experience the same history as

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I do. He writes first and foremost as an American and for the benefits of the United States of America. What Said (1995) says about Orientalists is quite appropriate for Sinologists:

> "for a European or American studying the Orient there can be no disclaiming the main circumstances of *his* actuality: that he comes up against he Orient as a European or American first, as an individual second. And to be a European or an American in such a situation is by no means an inert fact. It meant and means being aware, however dimly, that one belongs to a power with definite interests in the Orient, and more important, that one belongs to a part of the earth with a definite history of involvement in the Orient almost since the time of Homer." (p. 11)

Sinologists and Orientalists alike can spend their lives studying China or India, yet find the culture hard to like. Their detached attitude tells as much about the East-West relations as their arguments and data. They may, at the end of their career, still wander about the same question as they began, "What does a Chinese want?" This is not a light question. It is the same question that Freud asked about his female patients: "What does a woman want?" (cited in Partington, 1996 : 294).

I do not want to overstate my disappointment and sometimes resentment with Sinologists. In completing this thesis, I have benefited much from their insights of some sincere and honest arguments. Fairbank and some of his successors are well informed and carefully balanced scholars who make valuable contributions to the western understanding of China and to the Chinese's understanding of the West. Fairbank is one of the few westerners who are aware of the particularity of their perspectives. He explicitly asks "all historians ... [to] preface their work with an autobiography and summary of their cosmology" in order to show "their individual variations" in intervening historical evidence and conclusions (a letter to Alan Sweezy, 5 August 1995, cited in Evans, 1988:1). Basing on this premise, Sinology will continue to operate as "a limited, rather dull but valid discipline of scholarship" (Albert Hourani's remark about Orientalism, in his March 1992 letter to

Said, cited in Said, 1995 : 341). Probably any academic discipline is just as limited, as dull and as valid as Sinology. Fairbank's documentary research and my autobiography *together* constitute a fuller historical experience, out of which others shall evolve, and before which others existed.

妆奁

Illustration 3: *Dowry*, Author's Artwork, 1993

CHAPTER THREE

My Youth in Shanghai –
The Territorization of
Chinesehood

Which I wish to remark,
And my language is plain,
That for ways that are dark
And for tricks that are vain,
The heathen Chinee [sic] is peculiar,
Which the same I would rise to explain

-- American poet Bret Harte,
The Heathen Chinee: Plain Language from Truthful James (1870)

"When you know,
hold that which you know,
and when you do not know,
admit that you do not know
– that is knowledge

知之为知之, 不知为不知, 是为知也

--Chinese philosopher Confucius 6th Century B.C.

"He who knows does not speak;
he who speaks does not know"

知者不言, 言者不知

--Chinese philosopher Laotse 6th Century B.C.

1. Introduction

I am a Chinese. But I am a very specific Chinese. I am a Chinese of a specific time and space, embodied with a specific gender and ethnicity. In censuses of western countries, "Chinese" is a one and for all category for all ethnic Chinese, while there are 56 ethnic groups in China (including Taiwan). I am from one of the 56 peoples. However, before I state who I am, it is easier to state who I am not. I am not a Chinese of the dynastic era, nor a Chinese of the semi-colonial Republic, but a Chinese who grew up in the 80s of the Communist People's Republic (*time*). I am not an island Chinese (e.g. Taiwanese), nor an inland Chinese, but a Chinese who lived in the coastal metropolitan Shanghai (*space*). I am not Manchurian Chinese, nor Tibetan Chinese, but Han Chinese (*ethnicity*). I am not a Chinese man, but a Chinese woman (*gender*). One can taste from the above statements the confusion of the various connotations of the very term "Chinese". But I shall confuse you further with more tossing around of words to show how this word can refer to different meanings in different contexts. "I am not a citizen of China but a Chinese citizen of New Zealand" – the word is *political* in the first place but *cultural* in the second. "I am a Chinese who can speak Chinese" – the word refers to the *people* at one time and to the *language* at the other. There are as many meanings and synonyms of "China" and "Chinese" in English as there are in Chinese.

The time, space, gender and ethnic specificities of my Chinesehood shape my body and my mind; determine my political and cultural subjectivity. Therefore, I am a Chinese woman who does not walk with bound feet. I am a Chinese without a queue. I am a Chinese who believes Taiwan and Tibet are part of China's territory. I am a Chinese who knows less about Confucianism than a western sinologist, but more about Marxism than a member of the western bourgeois.

My search for identity did not start from my days in China, but without an overview of my timed and spaced background, it is impossible to understand the depth and complexity of the identity crisis of many Mainland Chinese immigrants. In other words, no understanding about the *re*-construction of Chinesehood in New Zealand can be comprehensive without an understanding of the construction of Chinesehood in China.

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2. Time

I was born one year before the conclusion of the Cultural Revolution and the death of the two decisive figures Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou; and one day after the death of the leader of National Party in Taiwan, Jiang Jie-Shi, who despite all other political disputes with the Mainland communist party, believed Taiwan was part of China. If according to Ashcroft and Ahlwalia (1999), Edward Said's "uniquely punishing destiny" was pre-determined many years before his birth (p. 1), then, the social and political dynamics that shape the "Chinese destiny" long predate my struggle with identity.

2.1   A Post-Mao Era

My childhood and teenage years fell in the 1980s. The 1980s were a post-Mao era, "post-" in the sense not only of going "beyond" but also going with both "continuities and discontinuities", as Edward Said (1995) commented on the use of the same prefix in similar words such as post-modernity and post-structuralism (p. 350). Mao's time ranged from 1949 (marked by the founding of PRC) to 1976 (marked by his death). It was the time of the cold war; it was also the time of cruelty toward one's fellow country folk. It was also a time marked with ideological purification and totalitarian politicization that were to promote a unified national consciousness and collective solidarity.

According to Chun (1996), the ending of the Cultural Revolution was not followed by an immediate disillusion with Maosim, but rather by intellectual debates between metaphorical appeals to historical cultural roots and restoration of the earlier golden era of socialist humanism. These debates over national identity sparked further discussion on the nature of culture, with a renewed interest in comparing and contrasting aspects of Chinese and Western culture (Chun, 1996:118-9). One example of this fruitful introspection was the controversial TV documentary *He Shang*, translated as *River Elegy* or *the Death Song of the River* (Su & Wang, 1989). The River refers to the Yellow River, wherefrom the Chinese civilization originated, contrasting to the Blue Ocean, which symbolizes the Greek-Western culture. The name of the programme surprisingly echoes a familiar western discourse of scientific racism: "the dying race" and the "decadent empire". But it is a self-reflective rather than an internalized identification with the colonizers. It is a collective mourning for its humiliated past with the longing for a dignified future, rather than a justification of subordination to imperialism. Furthermore, it is more of a challenge to fundamentalist patriotism and the totalitarian ideology, than to Western domination. It

gives a negative answer to the long-standing question of national identity: "Will our culture save us?" At the conclusion of the show, the authors suggest that after the age of the River shall come the age of the Ocean. It is not surprising that such a stirring voice was carried over to the democracy movement of 1989 and led to its June Fourth suppression (Chen & Jin, 1997). Shortly after, all publications of *He Shang* were banned.

I was only 13 at the airing of the show. Living in the eighties, listening to my parents and their friends talking about *He Shang* in relation to various movements and campaigns during the 50s and 60s, struggling to make sense of the familiar yet strange terms from their conversation: "up the mountain and down the country", "the Big Leap", "Joining and settling in a brigade", "the Hundred Flowers Blossom", I often found myself living in a different age from them. How much I could comprehend it at that age was not a question here, rather, watching something like *He Shang* stirred my interests to read more critical books on Chinesehood available in the 1980s, such as the Taiwanese writer Bo, Yang's *The Ugly Chinese* (1986) and Xu, Hong's *The Chinese Disease* (1989). Reading books that are about the Chinese, by the Chinese and for the Chinese in turn pushed my unquestioned boundary of being Chinese. It is a discussion and negotiation among the Chinese in the absence of Western gazes.

There are two things worth noting in the comparisons made in *He Shang*. First, the comparison was made between the old China and the youthful West, rather than with other ancient civilizations such as the Arab, the Jewish, the Indian, the Egyptian, or the Persian empires, an omission that is recently picked up by Yu, Qiu-yu and his associates in another TV documentary *A Sigh for Each Millennium* (2000) at the turn of the new millennium, a theme that I shall come back to later in this thesis. Second, the comparison is made between the singular China and the plural West. This unbalanced marching derives from a collective memory of the invasion of the national sovereignty by multiple imperialist powers, a different time and space that I shall introduce now.

2.2   *Post-Colonial Era*

If we go further back in time, the 1980s is also a post-colonial era. Since the first Opium War (1842), time in China was marked with intermittent wars and unequal treaties with westerners; space in China was split into treaty ports and non-treaty inland, between which the Chinese became aliens on the land on which they had lived and died for 5000

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years. I use the all-inclusive word "westerners" deliberately to match the heterogeneity of foreign powers of the time: the British, the French, the Germen, the Americans, the Russians, the Portuguese, the Spanish, plus the Eastern imperialist, the Japanese. If the mere occupation of China would kill Japan in that War, it would defeat any other imperial power. As Lord Salisbury put it in 1881: "When you have got a ... faithful ally who is bent on meddling in a country in which you are deeply interested ... You may renounce – or monopolize – or share. Renouncing would have been to place the French across our road to India [read China]. Monopolizing would have been very near the risk of war. We resolved to share" (cited in Said, 1995:41). That was how the colonists negotiated. That was also why we were forced into the two Opium Wars (1840-2, 1858), the Anglo-French invasion (1857-60), the Sino-French War (1883-5), the Sino-Japanese Jiawu War (1894-5), the Scramble (among imperialists) for Concessions (1898), the Boxer War (1900), and to the Treaty of Nanking with Britain (1842), the Treaty of Kulja (1851) with Russia, the Treaty of Tientsin with Britain, France, Russia and the United States (1858), the Treaty of Aigun (1858) and of Peking (1860) with Russia; and still to witness the burning of the Yuan Ming Imperial Garden, the loss of Ili to Russia (1871), the Sack of Peking, the Massacre at Nan-Jing, the split of Mongolia, and many more ... ... (all the dates and the name of the events are taken from Twitchett & Fairbank, 1978). Our land was raped, and it was a gang rape.

With all the tearing scars, wounds, loss, and humiliation rather than mere "sore spots", a simple and rigid anti-imperialism is a logical reaction, just like a simple and rigid anti-communism was a logical reaction when the Americans *lost* China after 1949. The postcolonial era in China is marked by strong anti-imperialism and de-colonialization, that is far more acute than the mild post-colonialist theories of the West (Ning, 1997: 35). From a very early age, I learned about imperialism and its devastating consequences in an empirical sense, and I came abroad only to see a more sophisticated and completed picture of imperialism and neo-imperialism. My anti-imperialism socilization forms the very base on which I build my understanding of western radical discourses in sociology, anthropology, feminism and cultural studies. In China I talk of "China and the West" while in the west I talk of "the West and the rest", and in between the fate of China fits well in the picture of the worldwide civilization project. So I theorize my experiences. China is my experience and the West provides me some theories. When I theorize my

experience, China is my experience and the West provides me some theories for illuminating that experience and, ironically, for resisting the power of the western gaze.

2.3   A Post-Confucianism Era

There is still a third milestone. Both the post-Mao and post-colonial eras are a post-Confucianism era. Post-Confucianism is a misleading word, for "Confucianism" has long been used as an analytical fetish in western scholars' vocabulary, whether they are sinologists, psychologists, economists, philosophers, missionaries or journalists. I choose this word to invoke a familiar western representation of classical Chinese culture. Chinese classics are as diverse as they are interwoven. This is best illustrated in the way by which ancient Chinese lived Confucian lives, wrote Buddhist poetry permeated with Taoist sentiments (Lin, 1959: 65). If 1949 –1976 is Mao's era, the 1840s – 1940s is the semi-colonial era, then the entire dynastic feudalism (B.C. 200 – 1911) is the era of Confucianism. In the post-Confucianism era, Confucianism and its associated traditionalism was first challenged by the May Fourth cultural movement (1919), and then humiliated in the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), rejected by *He Shang*'s authors, and condemned by Chinese Christian converts.

As a result, Confucianism is as alien to the mainland Chinese as it is to westerners. In the schooling that I went through, classic literature was taught as a special unit, in which Confucius teaching only comprised one or two lessons. No special respect was paid to this sage. He was redefined as an educator, a philosopher, a politician, one among many historical figures. Laozi (the founder of Taoism) was not even included in the curricula perhaps due to Taoism's association with superstition and religion. Buddhism is of course strictly excluded. Post-Confucianism is as spaced as it is timed. While Confucianism was buried into collective amnesia in Mainland China, it enjoyed a Renaissance among ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia regions in the self-Orientalizing political rhetoric of "Confucian nationalism", "state Confucianism" or "Confucian capitalism" (Ong, 1997). Another way of putting it, the "post-ness" of the post-Confucianism era in China is one of discontinuity, while in Southeast Asia it is one of continuity.

3. Space

3.1   *The Internationalness of Shanghai*

If any historical moment is a time "in-between", my moment in China is a time floating

from Maoism to Post-Maoism, and from Post-Maoism to Dengism (Deng Xiao-ping's era).

It is not only a time of transforming the Cultural Revolution to Cultural fever, but also of

bridging post-colonialism to neo-colonialism. Shanghai is the best place to experience the

historicity of China for our purpose. Rapidly rising from a fishmen's county, to a treaty

port in 1842, and to an international metropolis by the late Twentieth Century, Shanghai

carries the least traces of the Confucian agrarian society. Opened up for foreign trade and

shipping according to the Treaty of Nanking, Shanghai has the most grievous scars of

Western and Japanese colonialism (Yang, 1997; Twitchett & Fairbank, 1978). Mirroring

the entire country, the city of Shanghai was once carved into fragmented territories leased

by various imperial powers, spaces that by acts of inclusion and exclusion were

constructed into Concessions, Settlements, or Municipalities. The district that I grew up in

was previously a Japanese concession. It is also where the infamous sign "Dogs and

Chinese not Admitted" had been publicly displayed. Every time on passing the waterfront

colonial architecture and the Huang-Pu Garden, one recalls the humble time of this space.

In addition to colonization and imperialism, Shanghai has also experienced other

paradoxes of modernity: it saw the development of native and Western capitalism, as well

as the formation of the communist party (1921). Urbanization went hand in hand with

industrialization. Skyscrapers were built side by side with the Subei ghettoes. The

aristocrats were exiting the stage which bourgeois were entering. The smoke of opium

merged with that of cigars. Manchurian chengshams alternated with western suits. The

division of labour, and the segmentation of "races" worked in conspiracy with the division

of space. It was simultaneously a "Paradise for Adventurers" and a "Cradle for

Revolutionaries". It is the city that when the American sinologists talk about "the loss of

China", they cannot help themselves not to talk about "the fall of Shanghai" (the title of

Noel Barber's 1979 book).

3.2   *The Nationalness of Shanghai*

In both pre-Mao and post-Mao eras, Shanghai has been, and is, as national as it is

international. Besides having the largest collection of foreign residents in China, Shanghai

is perhaps also the city with the largest migrant population from the rest of the country.

Both my father and my mother are children of rural migrant families. As decedents of

migrants, Shanghainese are more likely to uproot again. Unsurprisingly, the city consists of the largest number of Chinese to go abroad and return from abroad (Yang, 1997, pp. 289, 312).

Because there were more migrants than natives in Shanghai, the city identity has always been a contested notion, in the same way that it has been for the personal identity of individual Shanghainese. I am a Shanghainese, but my province is conventionally stated to be my father's hometown, the Shen county of the Zhejiang province, although I was born in my mother's hometown, the Luoshe town of the Jiangsu province. Like the location of Shanghai, which is at the adjacent point of the above two provinces, I am neither Zhejiangnese nor Jiangsunese but something in between, a Shanghainese. This in-between-ness is magnified on a national scale. Shanghai is north of Canton and south of Peking. Therefore, Shanghainese is a synonym for Northerners in Canton and a synonym for Southerners in Peking. Shanghai is an in-between space; Shanghainese has many in-between meanings. Traveling outside Shanghai, as close as Suzhou, where my older uncle lived, and as far as Kunming where my younger uncle lived, I had to, as a Shanghainese, face welcoming gestures at one moment and hostility at the next. Shanghainese, to the rest of the Chinese, are like Aucklanders to the rest of New Zealanders. It stands for a mixture of virtues and vices: modern but conservative, smart but over-calculative, mellow but arrogant, sophisticated but cowardly, well-informed but narrow-minded; just to name a few.

Shanghai can be anything. One can speak in China of a Shanghai style, a Shanghai personality, a Shanghai atmosphere, a Shanghai mistress, a Shanghai mind and be understood. The linguistic unit "Shanghai" has been chosen to name a pop song (i.e. *Shanghai in Nights* by the famous singer Zhou, Xuan), an alternative form of performing arts (i.e. the *hai*-style Peking opera), a psychological trait (i.e. the term "Shanghai mind" coined by western merchants), several Hollywood tales (i.e. *Shanghai Express* in 1932 and *the Shanghai Gesture* in 1941), a noun for Chinese (as a city's name), a verb for English (in one Oxford Dictionary, 1988:1051, *Shanghai* is listed as a slang that means "making someone unconscious with drink or drugs and then carry him off to be a seaman on an outgoing ship") and many more. Shanghainese is the Other to non-Shanghainese as non-Shanghainese is the Others to Shanghainese. Likewise, there are as many internal Others as there are external ones, a point I shall turn next.

4. Ethnicity

4.1   Being Han

I am a Han in Shanghai. Being Han means that I am not ethnic. I am a Han, which means I am a Chinese without further qualifications while a Manchurian is a Manchurian-Chinese, a Mongolian is a Mongolian-Chinese and so forth. My status as Han secures my identity as a Chinese more than anything else. Neither the time that I will live over nor the space that I will walk across, but my "race" marks my essentiality. Mongolians lived in inner Mongolia, Manchurians lived in Manchuria, Tibetans lived in Tibet, so I was unaware of the presence of ethnic minorities in Shanghai. Ethnic minorities are people that I expect to see mainly in national autonomous regions, just as the tourists expect to see native Americans in their reserve land. I knew that there were 56 ethnic groups in China, but that was a different knowledge that requires special expertise. I also "knew" that we "liberated" Tibet, civilized them from a slave society to communism, so my Tibetan brothers and sisters had lived happily and gratefully since. I knew too that my Muslim classmate could go to an intermediate school with a lower grade as only in such an arrangement would we then be "equal". I knew that many came to study in mainstream universities so they could be better sinolized, something that I was naturally qualified in. I knew that while we could only have one child, they could have two children like the country folks so their "races" would be preserved. I knew so I could judge. I know about them just as the white Americans know about native Americans, white Australians know about aboriginals, and Pakeha know about Maori.

Historically, in the Han's mental hierarchy of creatures, the barbarians are just above beast but below the Han (*Hua-sha*, an alternative terms for the middle kingdom) (Qi, 1991). Long before the birth of western scientific racism, the Han developed a typology to name the "barbarians" living around the middle kingdom. This racial typology creates an artificial geo-demography: the Northern barbarian is *Da*, the Southern barbarian is *Man*, the Eastern barbarian is *Wo*, and the Western barbarian is *Yi*. The Han's fantasy of Others can be best illustrated in the two tales of wonder: *Xi-You-Ji* (Translated by Dr. Timothy Richard as *A Mission to Heaven*, cited in Lin, 1939: 261, the Chinese original written in the Ming Dynasty) and *Jing-Hua-Yuan* (literally meaning "the fate as the flower in the mirror", written in the Qing Dynasty). Whether on their pilgrimage to India or their merchant business, the Chinese Marco Polos encountered a miscellaneous alternation of giants, dwarfs, fairies, novel creatures, men with bounded feet, evil spirits, animal incarnations

and many more. The normality and superiority of the Han protagonists were challenged, threatened but finally succeeded or at least survived. Spacing their tales on wonderlands, the Han authors were able to project their own fears and desires that were forbidden in a Confucian society onto the Others.

4.2   The Others in Chinese Civil Life

Nonetheless, being a Han, we also have our grief. Historically, we were submitted to alien rulers, once to the Xianbeis (304-439), once to the Mongolians (1277-1367) and last to the Manchurians (1644-1911). However, they colonized our bodies while we colonized their minds. These barbarians ended up using Han names, wearing Han dress, speaking Han language, composing Han poetry, adopting the Han's imperial examination system, and the Han's Confucian feudalism. The Mongolians refused to be assimilated so we drew them back to Mongolia a hundred years later; the Manchurian were well assimilated so we let them rule us for nearly 300 years. We are as good at assimilating the aliens as the westerners were in assimilating the natives; so good that even the Jews in Henan started to eat pork (Lin, 1939: 33). As a convention we call the last empire not "Qing Dynasty" (*Qing-Chao*) but the "Manchurian Qing Dynasty" (*Man-Qing*). However, being a "barbarian" ruler, the Manchurian emperors had better ways of unifying other "barbarians" in their territories than the proceeding Han emperors and the later Han communists. By incorporating Mongolia, Xinjiang and Tibet into a tribute empire, the Manchurian Qing expanded the map of China twice as much as the proceeding Ming Dynasty. If the dynastic order finished at the end of the Ming Dynasty, then, Manchuria, Tibet as well as Xinjiang would have claimed its independence outside the republican China according to the one-nation-for-one-state nationalist discourse. Because of the ethnically diverse Qing Dynasty, so we could today speak of China not as a Han nation state, but as a state of 56 nations. In other words, the very claim of territorial integrity made by today's Han national leaders is based on what the Manchurian Empire had achieved three hundred years ago.

The fact that I am, like many fellow Chinese, able to read, write, or to some degree identify with the Manchurians is very much a sociological question; a question about the Self and the Other, about inclusion and exclusion, about moving between boundaries, about shaping imagined communities, about negative assimilation and positive acculturation, and above all, about the dynamic nature of social membership. Pleasure

would not be the likely emotional response to things Manchurian had I been born in the late 17th Century, when the Manchu troops just massacred Yangzhou for ten days and Jiading (the very county where I spent four years in the boarding institute) for three times, both places were so close to Shanghai. My attitude toward the Manchurian then would be very similar to that of the generation of my grandparents toward the Japanese in the late 1930s, having just witnessed the massacre of Nan-Jing, the bombing of Shanghai, the attack of Hong Kong, and the sexual slavery of the women. Had Japan won the War and ruled China thereafter, would I consume things Japanese as easily as I consume things Manchurian today? Despite all my patriotic reluctance and defensive denial, the identification with Japanese culture is very evident in Taiwan and other ex-Japanese-colonial Southeast Asian states. This thought is particularly disturbing to me as it challenges the very notion of being Chinese for Chinese at home. Even well informed sinologists such as John Fairbank use "Han" and "Chinese" interchangeably while it was only the case up to the end of Ming Dynasty (1643). Nonetheless, if being Chinese can evolve from being Han in the Ming Dynasty to being Manchurian in the Qing Dynasty, and to being one of the 56 ethnic groups in the Republic, what is there, then, that essentially stops the Chinese being Japanese?

The Han culture did not save the noble savage, nor did it save the entire country from western colonialization. Nonetheless, in the early nationalists' argument, discourses of anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism were closely interwoven with that of anti-Manchurian rather than anti-Confucianism. Duara's (1997) article on the construction of the idea of China among East South Asia overseas Chinese, presents a vivid example of how the two discourses could be joined causally: that colonial expansion by the western powers was made possible only by the support of each of their states, and that the condition of the overseas Chinese (mainly Hans) was the consequence of despotic rule by an alien race. Thus to restore the Han to their pristine greatness in the progress of world history was to overthrow the Manchu (Duara, 1997:53-54). The Chinese culture, that in the last few thousand years had preserved itself through sinolizing various others, encountered an Other that was no longer sinolizable. Sinolization was giving way to westernization. Consequently, what we saw in the last two centuries were that ethnic groups have been Hanised as the Hans have been westernized. In this sense, the Han is the "in-between" group that filters western values and institutions to non-Hans.

4.3   The Subei People

In addition to worldly others and domestic others, there are various regional others in Chinese civil life. A closer to home example is the Subei people in Shanghai. The Westerners are always remote, the Japanese are still foreign, the Manchurian are already sinolized, so the Subeinese fill the gap of the "Internal Other". Being the people from the Northern (*Bei*) part of Jiangsu Province, Su-bei people are also called Jiangbei people. I, as a child, had very little idea about Subeinese. The only way that I could identify them was by their Subei accent. I, in my teenage years, liked to learn some novel words from other dialects such as the *Shen* County dialects from my paternal grandparents, the *Wuxi* dialect from my maternal grandparents, the *Suzhou* dialect from my cousin, and the Beijing style mandarin from cross-talkers (a folkform), but I had never imitated a single word of the Subei dialect. Somehow instinctively I knew there was something unaesthetic about things Subei. This sense of appropriateness was confirmed later by my father's response to my decision to buy a red vest. He was annoyed so much: "This is what Subeinese wear!" if I didn't want to downgrade myself to a Subei girl, I should cultivate a more sophisticated and urban taste.

The fate of Subeinese was far more disheartening than the matter of language and color. Once, our neighbour asked my Mother to introduce some young men as her daughter's marital partner, she said: "Oh, the last thing, anyone but not a Subeinese." After she left, I asked my parents why not Subeinese. They couldn't really explain. But marrying Subeinese was really seen as downward mobility, whether from the middle class to the working class, or from the working class to a disadvantaged substratum. Over the years, I gradually found out that several senior women that I knew subsequently got divorced, and all of their husbands were Subeinese. Suspicions became reality. I felt that I had to take the unspoken rule of marital happiness and familial integrity seriously: "Well, maybe I shall never marry myself to a Suibei man."

A few years later, upon reading the chapter on "racism" in the second edition of Giddens' *Sociology* (1993), the only examplar that helped me make sense of the "Burakumin" in Japan (pp. 251-252) is the Subeinese in Shanghai; similarly, in the Bible study, the Subeinese in Shanghai was also the most benign examplar that helped me understand Jesus' status as a Nazarethian in Israel. Like Burakumin and Nazarethian to the rest of the respective populations, there is no agreeable physical distinction between Subeinese and

non-Subeinese. However, in a communist society where everyone is presumably proletarian, the vulnerability of Subeinese is racialised. In her article "Invisible inequalities: The status of Subei people in contemporary Shanghai", Emily Honig (1990) attributes my privilege over Subeinese to a unique form of social stratification in Shanghai, that is, inequality based on "native-place identification" (provinciality) (p. 273). In addition to the taboo of intermarriage, of Subei dialect, and of gaudy red or green garments, Honig also identified other social and economic consequences of having a Subei origin, such as the residential pattern of the Subei ghettos, the educational system of reproducing a Subei army of laborers, the perpetuation of stereotypical Subeineses in the comedy troupes, and the periphery status of the Subei Opera in Shanghai.

The historical root of these prejudices and discrimination was class in nature. Coming Shanghai to as famine or flood refugees, Subei people were over-represented in the underclass in Shanghai. The contempt for the Su-bei underdog was so persistent that the influx of Subeinese into the communist elite could not overturn it. When Shanghainese were unhappy about the municipal authorities some would say, "No wonder we have so many problems – our leaders are all from Subei!" (Honig, 1990:277). Honig goes on to show how the meaning of "being Su-bei" has been contested and shaped. It started as a neutral term, literally refer to the native place where Subeinese come from. It then signaled a more general meaning of being menial labourers, of being poor, unsophisticated, and backward. Eventually this term became a synonym for "anything distasteful" (ibid: 282).

Having no Subei origin meant that I didn't have to disguise my identity, that I could admit my provinciality without hesitation, let my grandparents talk in their own dialects at any time and place, openly watch the operas from my parents' hometowns, enjoy better educational and residential resources, and have a greater marital choice.

5. Gender

5.1   An Overview with Lin

If I was really privileged by being a non-Subeinese, being a young woman in China was somewhat a disadvantage. Gender inequality in China is a well-recognized and well-acknowledged component of social stratification. There are many great men in Chinese (and Western) history that I like, but if one day I come across something they said about women, then I'll never like them again. Lin, Yu-tang is one of these men. In his

masterpiece *My Country and my People* (1939), the chapter "Women's life" provides the exact materials for the purpose of my review: the modern author's own chauvinistic writing probably tells us just as much about women's suppression in China as his philosophical review on the forefathers' gender ethics.

For Lin, the chapter on women had to be a separate chapter, "women's life" is something outside, behind, or otherwise not belonging to the man's world. Women were not discussed in his introductory chapters on "The Chinese People", "The Chinese Character", and "The Chinese Mind". Although he concluded that "the Chinese mind is akin to the feminine mind" (p. 76) and went on to defend this femininity of the nation's mentality, he was more concerned about men's minds rather than women's. Likewise, in his later chapters on "Social and Political Life", "Literary Life", "The Artistic Life" and "The Art of Living", he mentioned very little about women's achievements, let alone women's expertise such as embroidery or child-bearing, for things women had all been finalized in the single discrete chapter.

Lin started his chapter from the section title "the subjection of women". He traced back the philosophical roots of gender inequalities as far as the *Book of Changes* and the *Book of Poems*, two books centuries older than Confucius. The notions of *yin* and *yang* in the first book, later taken up by both Laozi and Confucius, were essential to the understanding of gender relations in China. Dividing the cosmos into polar complements, *yin* represents feminine qualities while *yang* represents masculine qualities. Although the feminine *yin* is somehow below the masculine *yang*, the two are alleged to transpose one another as equal complements (Lin, 1939: 131, 133).

One folk song in the *Book of Poems* recorded sexual inequality upon the birth of infants:

> "When a baby boy was born
> he was laid on the bed and
> given jade to play with,
> and when a baby girl was born
> she was laid on the floor and
> given a tile to play with."
> (p. 131, translated by Lin)

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Despite the ascribed preference for male heirs, there was no trace of the seclusion of women in the same collection. Lin, like his western counterpart Jean-Jacques Rousseau (as discussed in Gatens, 1994), speculated that, "woman was not subjected until she was civilized" (Lin, 1939: 131).

By civilization, Lin meant Confucianism. It was Confucius who suggested the thorough replacement of patriarchy to matriarchy, the separation of women from men even within the family, and the division of space and labor along gender lines. Lin did realize that desirable femininity, as defined by Confucius, was from the male point of view, but he was also convinced that "with their economic dependence and their love for conventions, women *accepted* them" (p. 133, italic mine). While the original Confucius emphasis on societal and familial harmony at the expense of women was mild, it was soon pushed by his successors to extremes. Several centuries later, the subjection of women became so internalized a woman literate preached for "the three obediences and four virtues" for women. The three obediences were:

> "when a woman is in her maiden home she obeys
> her father; when married she obeys her husband;
> and when her husband dies she obeys her son." (p.
> 134, translated by Lin)

Then, came the worship of virginity and chastity, the drowning of baby girls, the institutionalization of concubinage, the rise of courtesanship, the fetishism of bound feet, and other forms of oppression and sexualization of women.

Having said all these, Lin, who was in his entire book passionately defending China, turned around and asked: "Have women really been suppressed in China, I often wonder?" He firmly believed, "Chinese women are not the type to be easily suppressed" (p. 137). Lin, as an in-between spokesman, captured the misunderstanding between the two cultures of his time that still holds some validity today:

> "Westerners are apt to imagine Chinese wives as
> mute slaves of their husbands, although actually

Chinese husbands, on the average, are fairly reasonable and considerate beings; while Chinese are apt to think that, because the westerners have never heard of Confucius, therefore Western wives don't look after their husbands' laundry and stomachs, but simply go to the beach in pyjama suits or live in a continuous round of dancing-parties" (p. 141).

His observations and speculations had been solid and sound until he began to speculate on why Chinese women had not really been suppressed. For one, the codes of gender behavior had never been rigidly carried out as he observed:

"The women are expected not to be garrulous, not to gad about from family to family, and not to look at men in the streets. But many of them are extremely garrulous, many of them gad about from family to family, and many of them look at men in the streets." (p. 139)

More importantly, "Women have been deprived of every right, but they have never been deprived of the right to marry" (Lin, 1939:138). Lin certainly knew that the patriarchal marital system was also a site of oppression, but he believed that as wives and as mothers, women had the best weapon for power to rule in the home. It seemed logical to Lin that because women were given the right to marry so "[they] *want* to marry. Their *instinct* is right. What is wrong in marriage? What is wrong in *protected* motherhood? (p. 140, italics mine)". He did not finish here. "Besides, women have always the weapon of sex, which they can use to great advantage. It is nature's guarantee for the equality." (141). Through the essentialization of women into maternal goddesses and sexual objects, Lin, like many other of the gentry literates, re-domestified and re-sexualized women.

Well informed and western trained, Lin was fully aware of the effects of the modernization of gender relations in China. In the 1930s, his knowledge of western feminism went only as far as Wollstonecraftian emancipation. On the one hand, he celebrated the effects of liberal feminism for the good of Chinese womanhood and

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therefore of the race" through an enlightened motherhood (p. 163). On the other hand, he had cultural feminists' fear about the danger "of desexualization and of the total loss of the womanly woman" (p.163). My reaction to his concern was also two-fold. On the one hand, I admire his ability to think beyond, at his time, the "to be equal is to be emancipated" paradigm and the courage to state "The idea of women trying to ape men in their manners is in itself a sign of women's bondage. Let women be proud of their own sex, for only in the fulfillment of their sex and its grave responsibilities will they be truly great" (p. 163). On the other hand, I find his chauvinism as expressed in the following paragraph distasteful:

> "The Chinese men are now faced with the dilemma of choosing between the modern girl and the conservative girl for a wife, the ideal wife has been described as one 'with new knowledge but old character.' ... While I regard the increased knowledge and education as an improvement and approaching the ideal of womanhood, I wager that we are not going to find, as we have not yet found, a world-renowned lady pianist or lady painter. I feel confident that her soup will still be better than her poetry and that her real masterpiece will be her chubby-faced boy. The ideal woman remains for me the wise, gentle and firm mother." (p. 148)

5.2   *The Shanghai Women*

Having studied and lived in Shanghai, Lin would not omit the "Shanghai women" in his study of women in China. In a rapidly modernizing and commercializing metropolis like Shanghai, capitalism, native as well as colonial, added new elements into gender politics. Following the separation of work from home was the gender stereotype of the producing man versus the consuming woman (Vickery, 1993). Alienation in a male-dominated workplace, in addition to the proletarian alienation of the end products, working women often retreated back to the household. It was under the terms of this culture of production, that Shanghai women, like their western sisters in New York and London, moved between the world of consumption and the world of domesticity. This was what

enabled Lin to link sexuality and economics into his chauvinism in which women were sexualized as well as commodified:

> "To-day the salesgirls in the department stores of Shanghai still look with eyes of envy on the married women with their fat handbags, and wish they were buying instead of selling. ... Most of them know instinctively which is the better thing. ... The primeval urge of motherhood – formless, wordless and vague and strong – fills their whole beings. The maternal urge causes the cosmetic urge, all so innocent, so natural and so instinctive, and they count the savings from their starvation wages which hardly suffice to buy them the mesh stockings they are selling themselves." (p. 140)

The connection between women and modernity made by Lin was a worldwide feature of modernists' writing. In Miriam B. Hansen's (2000) analyses of Shanghai 1930s silent films, she found the metaphor of women as the contradictions of modernity in these Chinese melodramatic stories was as evident as those in the Russian, Scandinavian, American and French silent cinemas. The body of women functions as metonymies or allegories of urban modernity, "figuring the city in its allure, instability, anonymity, and illegibility, which is often suggested through juxtapositions of women's faces and bodies with the lights of Shanghai, abstracted into hieroglyphics" (p. 15). The continuities and discontinuities of various forms of femininity parallel the clashes between traditionalism and modernity.

Shanghai has the country's earliest and greatest film-making enterprise. What makes the early Shanghai-made films so memorable is their ability to oscillate among different types and incompatible identities, particularly the identities of the "New Woman". The term was so fashionable that it was chosen as the title of a film starring the famous actress Ran, Lin-yu. The bourgeois wives and white-collar salesgirls in Lin's depiction were only two kinds of "new women" in Shanghai. Zhang (1995) distinguishes four more types of new city women in the 1930s Chinese films: the conventional woman who represents traditional values and is rewarded with an "ideal" marriage and "blissful" family life; the

woman who indulges in fantasy, sentimentality, and sensuality; the career woman who oscillates between the ideal of self-realization and selfish stardom; and the politically progressive "militant" who serves as the voice of conscience for the leftist movement. Hansen (2000:16) sees this typology as more differentiated than that of the western melodramatic binarism of maternal innocence and fallen womanhood. The variety of femininity as portrayed in popular culture of the 1930s is by no means exhaustive. The diversity of Chinese womanhood multiplies as time evolves, space unfolds and ethnicity emerges.

5.3   My Aunt

An informative illustration of the negotiation process of alternative forms of femininity is the life story of the "significant other" in the construction of my own gender identity. This significant other is my Aunt. My Aunt was born in a little village where the options for girls were either to be a child bride or an opera player. She chose the latter as she thought it was a trade in which she could make a living. She earned independence through her performing arts in the Yue Opera, but that was also a humiliating independence. Escaping from the familial patriarchal tradition, she had to depend on a societal patriarchal system of male tutors, troupe leaders, theater and stage owners, and male audiences. All had a say of what to act and how to act as a woman in a woman's role. That is to say, to play women's roles as a woman differs from playing women's roles as a man, as was the case in Peking Opera. When she played her roles, she was also a plaything in the masculine gaze.

Like the early social theorists who professionalized sociology (Hughes, Martin, & Sharrock, 1995), my Aunt professionalized the Yue Opera. She was to the Yue Opera just as Dr. Mei Lan-Fang was to the Peking Opera. Through establishing sociology as sociology in the academia, the founding fathers established their academic identity as sociologists; likewise, through shaping the countryside Opera art into modern performing art, my Aunt shaped her gender identity as a "New Woman".

The Yue Opera, was in many aspects, a woman's art. The rise of the Opera was closely associated with the new feminist agenda of the May Fourth Renaissance (1917). It was acted exclusively *by* women (even the male roles were played by women). It was mainly *about* women's life affairs, their genesis and wits, their romance and marriage, their joy and

sorrow, their beauty and character. It was also *for* women. Since the 1940s, the audience was largely made of housewives, female students, and women factory workers (Lu & Gao, 1997). Being an actress, she played an in-between role to seek alternative womanhood for the roles she played as well as for herself with her woman audience. Throughout her career, she played a great variety of roles: misses, aristocrats, heroines, widows, empresses, princesses, servant girls, incarnated spirits, court ladies and Muslim beauties. But she would not play the role of courtesan or concubine unless they were more of patriots than that of prostitutes. That was how much she hated the sexualization of actresses in particular and of women in general. Only by dignifying her trade and her roles, she dignified herself.

Lin, Yu-tang (1939) was quite right to link women's endurance of family autocracy with the general Chinese's endurance of political autocracy (p. 138). My Aunt is one of those ever-rebellious "New Women" who survive and outlive all the social-political hegemonies in China, be it the feudal patriarchy, the conservative National government, the Japanese occupation, the Communist regime, the Cultural Revolution, or the post-Mao commercialism.

5.4   *My Mother*

If my Aunt's life story is an extraordinary narrative of the gendered nature of her time and space, my mother's is more representative of the generation that she belongs to. After having wasted much of her most productive years in the Cultural Revolution (age 19 to 29), she sought a different approach to self-realization – moving overseas. Past state policies had caused many Chinese to desperately try to leave China for a better future. The "leave-the-country fever" (*Chu-guo-re*), as it was literately called in Chinese, reached its peak around the Tiananmen incident of 1989 (Yang, 1997). My Mother left China in July 1990 for her visa application was held in the New Zealand Embassy due to the chaotic sino-western diplomatic relationship during the Post-Tiananmen year. Although the Mainland Chinese was more internationally mobile in the post-Mao era, to emigrate was still, in terms of my mother's age and gender, a very bold personal action.

Living in the late 1980s' Shanghai was the benign "push" factor in her decision-making. As mentioned before, Shanghai was the city with the largest Chinese migrant population from the rest of China, and perhaps the city with the largest number of Chinese to go abroad and return from abroad (Yang, 1997:312). Having migrated herself from a rural-

town to a mega-city, living among people who had overseas connections, exposed to images of historical and recent overseas Chinese in various forms of popular culture, it was a natural mental practice for her to think about emigration seriously. The time factor was as crucial as the space factor for it was economically impossible to afford travel and living costs overseas in the mid-50s to mid-60s as everyone was living on a starvation wage, politically impossible to leave China during the subsequent decade of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), and was diplomatically impossible until 1987 when New Zealand deregulated its conservative immigration policy.

Next, personal networks played a crucial role in shaping and stirring her goal setting. Years before my Mother handed her application to the New Zealand Embassy, all the three sons of my Aunt went overseas, two to the USA and one to Hong Kong. Her cousin and my father's nephew went to Japan as international students. One of her best friends immigrated to Australia accompanying her husband, while one of my father's old friends immigrated to Canada as the principal applicant. Resettling overseas was satirically called "joining an overseas brigade" (*Yang-cha-dui*). This expression conjures up the image of city people in the Cultural Revolution going down to the harsh life of the countryside, an experience that some of these people had personally gone through. In my mother's own reflection, she described the decision to go overseas as a process of personalization. She started to know about overseas Chinese as a historical phenomenon, she then heard about friends' friend's adventures as stories, watched it on TV as a drama series, later attended friends and relatives' farewell parties as social occasions, and finally, she packed up and "took off" herself as a life change.

Beyond the personal cycle there was a new media genre of semi-autobiographical and semi-fictional accounts of the experiences and fortunes of people who had lived in Japan or western countries. These books, soap operas, articles, TV interviews, spoken dramas, and paper ads transnationalized the audience by arousing paradoxical feelings about capitalism, creating temporary reality of foreign metropolises, approximating the images of the audience and protagonists, and more often than not, disseminating a new womanhood. In this 1980s' popular culture, we also saw the function of a woman's body as the site for contestation. If in the 1930s film, the "vernacular modernism's" (Hansen, 2000) struggle between urban power and rural purity were played out through narratives about women's life change, then, in the 1980s' media industry, transnational postmodernism was also

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embodied on the figure of a woman as a new site of cultural production. One gendered fantasy of recent overseas Chinese was that women were alleged to be more mobile and successful in adapting to host cultures and places, whereas men were seen as more rooted to the home culture and national space (Yang, 1997:314). This was probably why most male consumers of these narratives found that the disturbing thing about capitalism is not only the ruthless competition but also "the new kind of independent women" (ibid: 308). Most of them had of course forgotten that in the 1950s and 1960s, their western brothers were also threatened by whatever the liberation that the Communist order could bring to woman.

Maybe it was the call for alternative conceptions of womanhood, besides economical improvement, that "pulled" my mother, who instead of becoming a "stay behind wife" (the title of a spoken drama), let my father become her "stay behind husband". Her choice for New Zealand was quite random. It was the first country she applied and she was accepted. Combining her gender and national status, she engaged in the massive process of what the sociologists of immigration had been studying for decades.

5.5   *Myself*

The construction of my gender identity in China was also full of paradoxes and multiplicity. On the one hand, I would mock the controversial Confucius statement: "Only the women and the villain are hard to deal with" and reformulate similar rhetoric with close girl-classmates. Such reformulations of tradition often required twisting the Chinese language. Like the andocentric tone of English writing (e.g. "mankind" stands for both sexes), gender inequality was built into the Chinese language. For example, talking about marriage, there are different verbs for each sex, for women it is "marry out" or "marry off" (*jia*), while for men it is "marry in" (*qu*). There is even a word for "marrying a concubine" (*na*), for which the closest English word would be "fetch" or "take". One of my teenage mottos was that: "she shall not marry out, he shall not marry in – they shall just get married." Admiring the two Significant Others, my Aunt and my Mother, I was consciously developing a sense of self-reliance and self-sufficiency from a very early age. Like many young Shanghai women, I stepped into a process of pursuing a professional career and becoming financially independent.

But on the other hand, I found that being an educated courtesan and a beloved hetaera in ancient China was just as exciting as being a professional graphic designer in the late Twentieth Century. To teach men a sense of romance and to cultivate their ear for music was no less meaningful than the mission of modern nurses and teachers. Despite all his chauvinism, I inevitably agreed with Lin's view that the Chinese solution to monogamy, taking a concubine, was as "moral" and "rational" as the western alternative of keeping a mistress (Lin, 1939: 155); and that the romantic love from courtesan and concubine complemented the earthly love of the wife and Mother (Lin, 1939: 155) perhaps in the same way that Laozi's existentialism complemented Confucius Positivism in the making of the Chinese psyche.

Recalling the past in an "anthropological strangeness", my identification with ancient courtesans and concubines can be interpreted as an identification with romantic love. Immersing myself with the discourses of classic poetry and drama librettos, I was converted to the "Religion of love". In her book *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir writes eloquently on how women adopt romantic love as a religion, pinning their hopes for material, emotional, and spiritual transcendence on a godlike lover:

> "Since she is anyway doomed to dependence, she will prefer to serve a god rather than obey tyrants – parents, husband, or protector. She chooses to desire her enslavement so ardently that it will seem to her the expression of her liberty; she will try to rise above her situation as inessential object by fully accepting it; through her flesh, her feelings, her behavior, she will enthrone him as supreme value and reality: she will humble herself to nothingness before him. Love becomes for her a religion."
> (Beauvoir, 1974: 713-714)

The Chinese side of the story is best summarized in Lin's description of Chinese love poetry and songs:

"Chinese songs of love are songs of absence, of departure, of frustrated hopes and unquenchable longing, of rain and the twilight and the empty chamber and the 'cold bed,' of solitary regret and hatred against man's inconstancy and the castaway fan in autumn, of departing spring and faded blossoms and fading beauty, of the flickering candlelight and winter nights and general emaciation, of self-pity and approaching death."
(Lin, 1939: 151)

Buying into all the elaboration and refinement of Love, I found myself embodied with a particular presentation of feminine emotion that was narcissistic, infinite, transcendent, enduring, passive, tragic, self-destructive, masochistic, after all, a willing sacrifice to her man. It didn't even have to be a particular man, but man in general for "being in love with man she is in love with life" (Lin, 1939:149). My body overlapped with the images of waiting women and abandoned women, and my mind was giving way to the very thing that trapped generations of western and eastern women from being emotionally independent.

There were also other consequences of the gendered process of socialization. I preferred history over philosophy, literature over sciences, and arts over technology. Up to immigration, I stood aloof from any foreign languages since the Chinese ideography was so different from all the other major languages in use today. In order to read classic literature, I taught myself the traditional form of the characters (Chinese characters had been simplified in Mainland) while I had never been inspired to build up a sizable English vocabulary, a language that was too abstract, too rational and too precise for a Chinese literate to learn. In learning history, I read over and over again the five-volume *Up and Down of the Five Thousand Years in Chinese History* but could never reach the end of the first volume of *The Five Thousand Years of World History*. In learning literature, I focused more on the feminine heritage: poetry, novels and dramas. In the four Classical novels, I got very familiar with the monument of Chinese home life *Red Chamber Dream*, while was never able to finish the rest: *Three Kingdoms, All Men are Brothers*, and *A Mission to Heaven* in which men dominated all the plots. To the few translated western novels that I

read, the elaboration of Honore de Balzac and the profundity of Victor Hugo impressed me most. Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* were my favorite stories of western women's life because they resonated in many ways the Chinese romance tragedies, whereas I could not stand the abstraction and rationality in *Jane Eyre* and *Pride and Prejudice*. In operas, I enjoyed more of the feminine Yue Opera than the masculine Peking Opera, and I was not able to appreciate western Operas. In popular culture, I watched more love stories than martial arts ones, and I never liked imported pop songs. In arts, I was more specialized in Chinese black-and-white calligraphy and linear drawing than western sketches and color paintings. I preferred to wander my brush with my imagination than mimicking still life. I kept away from anything aggressive, abstract and over-rational, that is, anything in conflict with my national and gender identity. I was in love with my country as much as I was in love with my gender. In many ways, I embodied the gender stereotypes of what a "typical" Chinese girl should learn, read, consume and create.

6. Conclusion

So there I was before I came to New Zealand, a Han Chinese young woman growing up in the 1980's Shanghai. That was the East part of me. However, my Mother asked my father and I to join her in New Zealand once she got settled. All of a sudden, I was about to become one of those overseas Chinese, a role that I had never been socialized to or prepared for. I was like the bride in the picture (Illustration Three), surrounded with all her heritage and dowry, for some she will take with her and for others she will leave behind. Wedding, in many cultures, is a life change full of paradoxical feelings and meanings: joy and sorrow, longing and fear, excitement and anxiety, sexual and moral, sentimental and instrumental, harmonious and conflictual, freedom and restraints, taking and giving, losing and gaining, individual and familial, leaving one world and entering another, so many qualities that can be shared with the life change of immigration. Her Chinese parents want her marrying in red, whereas her English in-laws want her marrying in white. At this momentary threshold from monoculture to biculturalism, from purity to diversity, the bride looks forward and backward in uncertainty and unsettledness. Yet, the wine has been drunk, the tea has been taken, the birthdays have been matched, the betrothal gift has been paid, and the bridal sedan chair is forthcoming (these are all ancient Chinese martial customs). There is no time to withdraw, no time to compromise and no time to turn back, although she had never met her husband, knew little about the in-law

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family, and may not be able to speak their dialect. In the same vein, our house was sold, our furniture given away, our farewell parties were closed, our luggage was packed, and our air-tickets were paid, I had to leave for New Zealand although I had not brushed up my English, nor learned much about the host country's Dominion present and the Colonial past. Nonetheless, the East was going to meet the West.
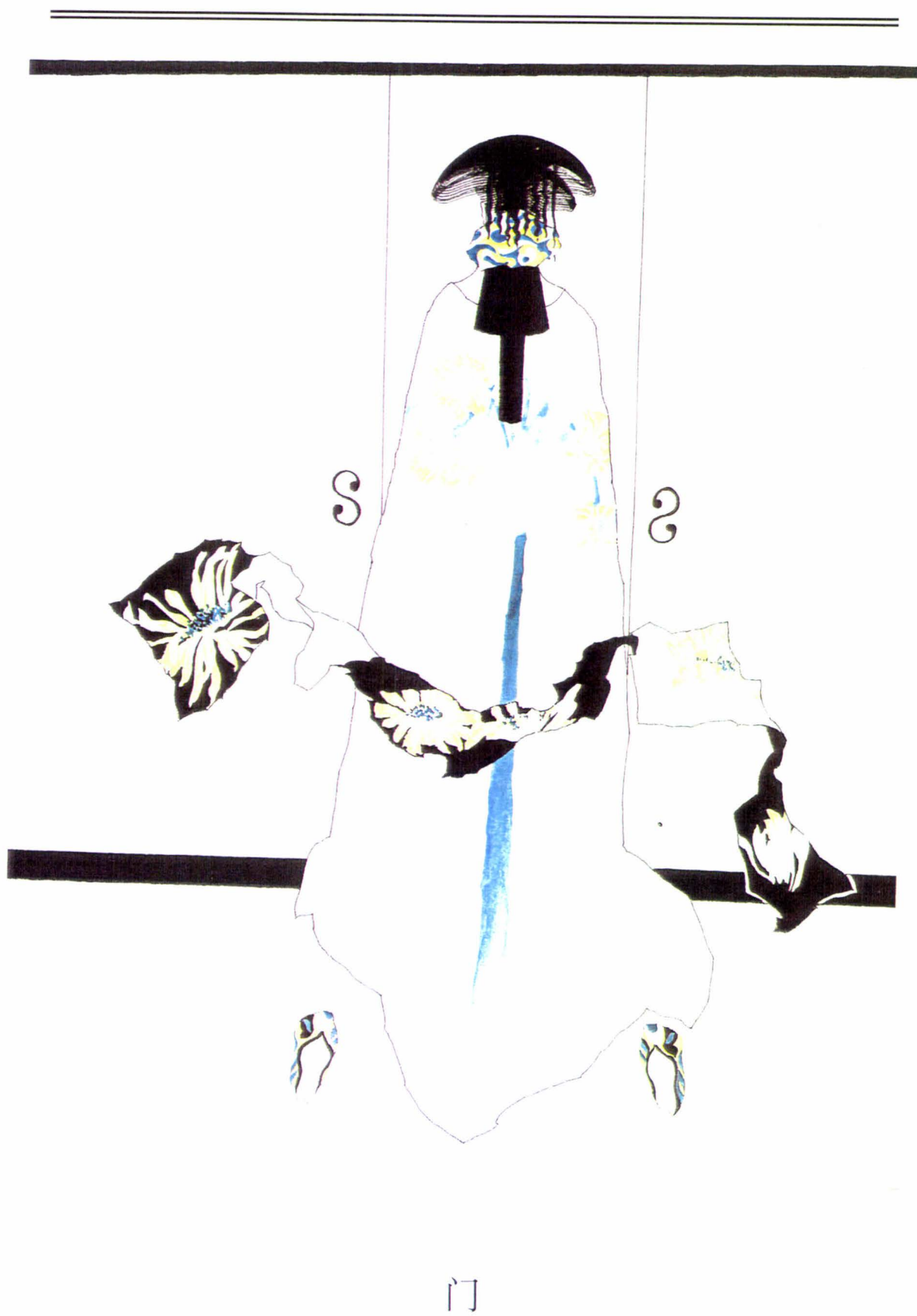
Illustration 4: *The Doorway*, Author's Artwork, 1993

CHAPTER FOUR

The Art of Grafting –
The Re-territorization of
Chinesehood

1. The Point of Grafting

Immigration is not only about shifting people, it is also about shifting materials and ideas in times and spaces. The time and space of one's entry determines his/her destiny in the new world. The time and space of my entry to New Zealand is March 1995, Auckland. The year 1995 is a specific time. It is in the peak influx of Asian immigration. It is when New Zealand was experiencing an "economic miracle" (Spoonley, 1997). It is when the State shifts from a bicultural constitution to a multicultural reality. It is when the housing prices are shooting up and demand for English-as-second-language teaching is at its greatest. It is when the Auckland churches, instead of sending missionaries overseas, begin domestic evangelical missions. It is also when racial tensions between old settlers and new arrivals are on the rise, and the new stereotypes of "cunning Asians" are brewing (Ip, 2000:3).

1995 is also a significant year for the small community of which my mother is part. By then, she had been in New Zealand for nearly five years, changed several manual jobs, gone through some serious illnesses, as well as established a circle of friends. Most of her friends, like her, had by then obtained Permanent Residency, and impatiently been waiting for their family to come to New Zealand. It is a time when the "bachelor" life of these pioneers has come to an end, and a time for the community to start to watch their spouses and children develop and excel. I, yet, was hardly aware of these transitions and processes.

In March 1995, I had just begun my immigration journey while everyone else in New Zealand seemed to be in the middle of his or her stories.

In notions such as "organic solidarity" and "Gesellschaft (association)", Durkheim, Toennies and several other early sociologists observed that modern city life is made up of a multiplicity of locales; each gives the individual a different role to play (Hughes, Martin & Sharrock, 1995). By playing a unique set of roles in the intersection of these locales, each individual develops his or her individuality. My time in Auckland can be carved into at least three of such spaces: the home, the classroom, and the workplace.

1.1   The Home

My first home in New Zealand is the Ellerslie Unit. The Ellerslie neighborhood and the particular accommodation, a two-bedroom self-contained rental household in conjunction with other flats, in many ways shapes my first impression of this country.

The particularities of this space can be better understood when compared with Chinese living patterns in different times and spaces. For example, my mother had a very different living experience in her early days. There were several flats well known to her circle of friends, each occupied by a group of Chinese men and women. Even today, when they meet, they still talk in the old terminology: "Did he live in so-and-so's flat?" and they will carry on the conversation by recalling some old stories or even romances that happened in those flats. Two or three people shared a bed or a room. A room, in other days, meant any sizable space, including bedrooms, study rooms, family rooms, dining rooms, rumpus rooms or even corridors. These flats were compressed dormitories really. The rent they paid ranged from $8 to $25, a sum which sometimes included household expenses. When my mother moved to live with a Pakeha-Philippine couple and started to pay $50 for her own room, everyone thought she was too extravagant. It was, too, a bold action for her to rent a two-bedroom unit under her own name, while most of her women friends were flatting or living with their male relatives.

Living in the Ellerslie Unit is also different from living in the back or top of a family shop. Growing up in a family shop instead of a family home, although it might sound odd or radical, was a common memory for descendants of old Chinese settlers. Since the separation of home from work is identified as the key transition of modernization,

working from home, or more accurately, living in the workplace, was for decades one of the fundamental things that demarcated many Chinese children from mainstream New Zealand childhood. Manying Ip's book records the social consequences of the spatial arrangement in one Chinese New Zealander's own words:

> "We lived in the fruitshop ... From an early age, I was taught to smile to customers, to be polite. ...I knew I was different, I knew I was Chinese, and so I had to always bite my tongue. I could never be honestly open. When you live in a shop, the customer is always right. That was business. ...Business-wise, we had always to be courteous, and put our head down and never be rude." (Ip, 1996:73)

By contrast, Ellerslie is a suburb to live in rather than to work in. Ours is the last unit of a row of four, located in a non-exit street. I am particularly happy with the Ellerslie Unit because back in Shanghai, I spent four years in a boarding college, living with seven other students in one dormitory and sleeping on the top of a bunk bed. During weekends and holidays, I shifted from one place to another, periodically lived with my aunts, uncles, grandparents, and other relatives or friends. I felt homeless in the constant shifting. My mother, on the other side of the globe, provides me with a shuttle upon my arrival. It is the first time in my life I have my own room. The two-bedroom unit seems rather spacious and luxurious to me. In such a place of peace and quietness, I enjoy the front lawn, the backyard wild blossoms, and particularly the bird singing that awakens me each morning. Nonetheless, like most of the new comers, I get bored very soon after a few idle days. After all, I did not come to New Zealand to retire.

Living in the Ellerslie Unit is still different from living in a mortgage-free family home in Howick like children of affluent Hong Kongese or Taiwanese families. I am very conscious of the family's straitened economic circumstance, and the fact that we are *still* renting. Although for many New Zealanders, the ultimate family goal is to have a mortgage free home, owning a house has an additional significance to Chinese immigrants. The Chinese have a tradition to invest money in real estate rather than enterprises; the lack of security felt in a new land makes such a need even more pressing. "Living in someone else's

country" is a collective consciousness shared by overseas Chinese. Even if we don't have equal opportunities elsewhere, "at least," as one of my friends remarks succinctly, "the piece of land where we sleep on shall be our own". For a long time, the family goal for many Mainland immigrants is to save enough for a housing deposit. We achieved it in two years. As a family, we only moved once, from the Ellerslie Unit to the Glenfield family home.

Living in the Ellerslie Unit is also different from living in the San Francisco's Chinatown. Historically, the small number of New Zealand Chinese had never formed any full-blown ghetto (Lane, 1970). The new Chinese immigrants, too, scattered over the greater Auckland area. Apart from certain parts of Howick, there are very few tightly compressed Chinatowns in the Nineteenth Century sense. Although it is said that many Chinese reside along the Ellerslie-Panmure Highway, I don't meet many in the neighborhood. Even if I run into them in the street, there is no obligation to nod to one another as the early Chinese New Zealanders were obligated to.

Furthermore, people who start their life in the Northcote or Glen Innes state houses or an inner city flat will develop a very different view of New Zealand. People who share the same household with their landlords will experience different dynamics of social interactions. People who can afford to home-stay with English speaking families will have a better chance of melting into the mainstream. People who rent apartments or studios already confidently know their way around (Yuan, 1998). My own experience and research resonate with conspiracy literature on the impact of living pattern on immigrants: that the location, quality, nature and length of a particular kind of accommodation shapes or reflects one's acculturation to the host society (e.g. Church, 1982; Furham, 1986; Lewins, 1990; Pedersen, 1991).

The physical connection of the units symbolizes the invisible networks in the Chinese community. The unit in which we live was previously rented by my mother's friend. Because it was old and damp, the rent was low. My mother had an unofficial agreement with her friend: they would let my mother know if they wanted to move out. Since my mother was the first one on their private waiting list, she got the flat that she wanted through this personal connection. In the same vein, another of her friends asks her to spy on other tenants. If any one else moves out, she would tell him. That is how her friend

gets his unit; and that is probably how the entire row gradually becomes Chinese-occupied, and how most Mainlander Chinese get their desired rental residencies.

Apart from housing information, Chinese neighbors and friends exchange other information about the new world as well as tangible opportunities. My mother often gets sewing outwork from her friends, and my father has for a time been employed by our next door neighbor. Our unit and the units or houses of other Chinese are the sites of social connections. These connections have never been very strong, but the strength of these social relations lies in its not-so-strongness.

Granovetter is probably the first economic sociologist who comments on the strength of weak ties in relation to network formations (e.g. Granovetter, 1973). Weak communal ties, often seen by sociologists as a contributor to interpersonal alienation in modern societies, redefined by Granovetter as an indispensable quality to individual opportunities and their integration into communities. Weak ties, whether at the individual or communal levels are more adaptive than strong ties. The people who refer jobs to my parents are acquaintances (weak ties) rather than friends (strong ties), because the people we don't know very well often move in different circles from ours, and therefore have access to different sources of information. If the early Chinese miners exemplify a self-enclosed group of strong internal ties, today's Chinese immigrant community exemplifies a community that is woven with weaker internal ties, but more external contacts with other communities, and thus can link members of different groups more interdependently.

In these loosely knitted networks, we invite, or are invited, for dinners or barbecues, introduced to other Chinese, old and new ones, the pioneers or their families. There are rented houses, bought houses, simple ones and elegant ones, some built with brick-and-tile, others with weather-boards, still others with cedar-blocks. Every house has a character. This is very different from most houses in Shanghai, identical and tightly occupied. The conversations during dinners and barbecues concentrate very much on coming and settling in New Zealand. There is news about whose family has just arrived, whose are about to come, who finds a better job, who is now entitled to the dole, who has bought a house, who has become a real estate agent, who has started a tertiary course, whose daughters and sons excel in the secondary school. There is also recall of the delights and sorrow of the

bachelor days, tales of new marital conflicts, complaints of rising housing prices, and of the squandering behavior of some affluent Hong Kongese and Taiwanese teenagers.

The topics of these conversations change with the rise and the fall of New Asian Immigration Wave, with announcements of new immigration policies or post-immigration services, and with other significant restructuring of the Chinese community. By comparison, the same group in 2001 would be talking about exiting and reorienting the New Zealand life: who has gone to Australia, who is about to return to China, who has bought a dairy, who has sold his shop, who resigns from work to run his/her own business, who has completed a degree, who has just had a second or third child, whose son has beaten other candidates to secure a high-demand job, whose daughter has forgotten Chinese, and whose elderly parents now live apart from them. There would be, instead, recall of the boom days of a sound economy, tales of inter-generational conflicts, complaints of declining housing price, and of the squandering behavior by Mainland international students.

Back to 1995, I soon lose interest in the little Chinese enclave. I want to improve my English and know more about the wider world. Although the home-stay option is too expensive, it is still possible to flat with English speakers. The other push factor is the adolescent desire for independence. My parents are very upset with my decision to move out but can say nothing about my high-sounding excuse of learning English. In the search for suitable flats, I find that ethnic segregation in housing is profoundly maintained. It is not only hard for Asian immigrants to be accepted by a mainstream flat, it is equally hard for them to recruit local people as their tenant. Spatial segregation between different groups mirrors and deepens the general ethnic segregation as repetitively confirmed by overseas and New Zealand research (Bell, 1977; Rex & Moore, 1967; Rex, 1973; Pearson, 1980).

I end up living with a Diasporic Indian couple. The husband comes from Malaysia and the wife from Fiji. When I start tertiary study in the Albany Campus of Massey University, I find a close-by flat through my mother's Chinese friend's Pakeha neighbor's friend (a very weak tie). The landlord is again an immigrant who emigrated from England 25 years ago. My own experiences in the two ethnic-mixing spaces turn out to be unpromising. I have little chance to practice English with both landlords. Instead, I a spend long time each day

chatting with my parents and other Chinese friends over the phone, since it becomes the only way to reduce loneliness. I get very little out of the participant observation of the host family. I wonder, as a social scientist, what are the confounding variables in my personal experiment. Maybe it is because I do not live with a nuclear family. Maybe because I do not have many opportunities to dine with the landlords at dinners, a time people socialize. Or maybe because I find alternative ways of learning English beyond the household, and thus the landlords are no longer important. Or I may confound the knowledge that I have learnt elsewhere with that I learnt in the flats. At the end, I am much happier and more inclined to live with my "own people" when I have learnt enough English and local knowledge to move about.

1.2   The Classroom

One of the alternative ways to develop English skills is to attend language school. Therefore, the second social space of my immigrant life is the classroom. Here, I only refer to language class. The tertiary classroom will be elaborated on more extensively later. Public language classes in early 1995 are overwhelmed by the number of applicants. I remember that people used to line up outside the reception door at 4am in order to get a better position on the waiting list. I have to sit two language tests before I can learn any English. I fail the first one straight way. The level of difficulty is so great that the Polynesian examiner apologizes to the group: "Sorry, it wasn't me who made these questions up." I think of him as very kind and humorous. His remarks reveals the distinct informality of New Zealand culture.

Fortunately, I pass another test at the then Auckland Institute of Technology and enroll in an intermediate class. Before the admission, I have taken a couple of community language classes and several private tutorials run by Christian New Zealanders. The last language class I attend is a paper offered to international students by Massey University. My experience in these classes echoes that of the English flats. Recalling it after six years' time raises more disappointment than a sense of achievement. I have at least three criticisms of these classes.

First, because the ratio of native speakers and non-native speakers is always one (the teacher) to the number of students (ranging from 10 - 20), the chance to have interactive and constructive English conversations is rare. The fact that teachers are normally

unavailable after class further reduces the opportunities. Most discussions and games are carried out between the students. I speak more and more often in the classes as I become confident about my oral English among other non-native speakers. However, people like me can dominate the already scarce classroom communication that is most needed by those whose oral expression is not so fluent.

Second, the New Zealand education system uses a flexible approach to language teaching, which heavily relies on classroom interaction rather than printed materials. Therefore, few of the classes use set textbooks; if they ever do, they never work through the text. Each day, we are given a few copies of randomly selected exercises or casual materials (e.g. paper news) that can be totally different from day to day. Without a systematic thread leading us through the course, students are often disoriented by the lack of integrity between these fragments. To keep the students interested, the teachers introduce various games, hot-topic debates and other amusements into the classroom in the hope that we will remember words, phrases and expressions through laughter and excitement. This is very different from my idea of the "classroom" space shaped in China, and perhaps in most other Asian countries. What was omitted in the training of these teachers is the recognition of the education styles in their students' home countries, that perhaps for the majority of them is based on memorization skills. Moreover, such a naturalistic approach is age blind as well as culture blind. As adult students we do not come to the classroom for fun, and we understand the necessity of discipline.

Obviously, such random curricula fail to lead to any efficient development of vocabulary and grammar. I am particularly shocked by the teachers' poor knowledge in grammatical rules. They rarely teach about grammar; if they do, only the simple rules and structures. What really frustrates me is that though they correct my grammar, they can never explain to me *why* my sentence is wrong. Because of this vital omission in the teaching, I have to "tiptoe" with my English writing on a "trial-and-error" basis, until one magic day something clicks and I understand the rules myself. Since then, I feel grateful to my teachers (including both Chinese and English lessons) in Shanghai, who taught grammar methodically and tested it ruthlessly in exams. Although I, like all my classmates, loathed the dull and dry stuff, this early training in syntactical and morphological structures, became extremely valuable in learning a foreign language, especially when the native speakers of the language cannot explain it themselves.

The third reason, I think, is the most profound reason why I never found these classes satisfactory. The language class always reminds me of kindergarten. Language learning is normally associated with children and the way the English language is taught in these classrooms makes the connection even more real. What really put me off is not so much the repetition of elementary grammar that we learnt a long time ago in Shanghai, or the childish games we have to play, but rather a lack of intellectual stimuli. Although the teachers are kind and polite, there is always a subtle patronizing suspicion about how far we can go beyond Pidgin English. Our immature English expressions almost lead the teachers and other New Zealanders to believe that we are emotionally and intelligently infantile.

I still can remember one such incident. In the Intensive Class of Academic English organized by Massey University, when the teacher is asked to explain the word "circumstance", she pauses, thinks and replies: "Don't use 'circumstance', it is too difficult for you." Only because she cannot make the word intelligible to us, she thinks that we will not be able to use it. "Use simple words, write simple sentences." No matter how wise it is, this kind of advice always sounds like an insult to my intelligence. It is the very thought that I will never be able to express the same depth and sophistication of my ideas in a foreign language as freely and artfully as I do with Chinese that hinders my pursuit of second language learning from the very beginning. These teachers' recommendations confirm my fear. Their teaching reveals neither the science nor the art of the English language, undermines the students' ambition and underestimates their potential. If these classes cannot teach a Chinese to use "circumstance", then, what can they teach after all?

Mistakenly, I think of the language classes as the magic Fordist workshop in which alphabets, words, phrases, grammar and expressions can be assembled into my mind just like parts, elements, engines, wheels and tyres to a car. That through such a McDonaldization, an efficiency-enhancing process of standardization (Ritzer, 1993), I will become an instant Kiwi. I am still not certain, today, whether my negative sentiments about these language classes have more to do with my overestimation of their teachings or over-ambition about my own learning. But it is clear to me, when the Government changes the English Language Bond of $20,000 to "pre-purchase of English Language

training" for non-English speaking immigrants, the New Zealand politicians are really showing an overconfidence in the quality of English teaching in this country.

Having said all that, I want to balance my argument about language classes with some positive notes. The value of these classes lies first in the process. It is in the seeking, applying, competing for and completing these courses that I come into contact with the bureaucracies of the New Zealand education system, which comprise a significant aspect of post-immigration support. Since most students are facing the same problem and are in the same boat, we do provide emotional support as well as practical help to one another. The Summer Intensive Class of Massey Albany is a good example. Talking to new and second year students prior to the commencement of the semester really helps me to familiarize myself with a system that is totally new to me.

It is, also, in these classes, I start to have close and regular encounters with the "wider communities". By this, I do not only refer to the mainstream Pakeha culture, but also the wider Chinese communities outside my mother's circle, as well as other immigrants. Contacts with Pakeha and later Maori cultures lead to "kiwization", contacts with Chinese from different parts of China and of the world lead to nationalization, and contacts with other immigrants lead to internationalization. These three processes together are the main themes throughout my acculturalization. Every class consists of a mini United Nations, and every student, as well as the teacher, opens a window. It is these embodied carriers of cultures, who bring infinity into the definite space of classrooms. It is through the overlapped or multilateral windows that I see nations that are near and far, lands that are vast and small, cultures that are familiar and strange. It is where I notice that when we, the Mainlanders, follow a British English System, most Taiwanese speak with an American accent. It is where I discover that there are means of coming to New Zealand other than Family Reunification, and that the majority of students are invited through the Point System or Business Category. It is where I meet Chinese with whom English is the only communication media between us (e.g. Hong Kongese who cannot speak Mandarin). It is where I really begin to think about what does it mean to be a Chinese, before I think about what does it mean to be a Chinese New Zealander.

1.3 The Workplace

Another space that triggers the same thought is the workplace. The places that I have worked can be divided into three categories. The first is the Chinatown workplace. All of my Chinatown jobs belong to the catering trade: takeaways, restaurants, and cafeteria. The very first job is unpaid. Shortly after my arrival, my mother places me in the Takeaway that she used to work for and hopes that I can improve my English through talking to the customers. For the first few nights, I find myself totally useless, not only because I have to speak and listen to all the Chinese dishes in English, but also because those so called Chinese dishes are not the same kind that I used to know. The irony is that most of the New Zealand customers have clearer ideas of what they want for Chinese food than I do. It was not until four years later when I came to read some material on the Sociology of Food, that I was able to explain about my alienation to the Takeaway food. Following are the connections that I have made between the theories and my experiences.

Food is socially converted and consumed. We all eat by nature, but what and how we eat is very much socially constructed. Takeaway food is a perfect example of how a food system can be constructed and reconstructed. Globalization of dining habits has given rise to a "World Cuisine". Paralleling the West-to-Rest process, such as McDonaldization, is the multi-directional diffusions of ethnic cuisines into the West of immigrants in which Chinese food is a part (Mennell, Murcott and Otterloo, 1994). Overseas Chinese food differs from indigenous Chinese food in two main ways: it is commercialized and Westernized (Song, 1997) to suit the western customers' taste buds. First of all, the fact that Chinese food is sold and purchased in a place as takeaways is a very much westernized transaction. Second, the design of the menu contains the artificial division between snacks and main dishes and the equally artificial combination of spring roll, samosa, and fish'n-chips. Certain dishes are excluded for business reasons and others are included. For example, duck gizzards and chicken feet are definitely kept out while carrots and corn are stuffed into spring rolls. Wontons are deep-fried and fish are covered in lemon sauce. What also interests me is the translation from the Chinese dish name into English. I distinctively remember one word I learned in that Takeaway, "combination" for "Combination fried rice". Although accurate and precise as it is, the word "combination" conveys a cold and abstract sense of scientism that inevitably loses the poetic and common-sense warmth revealed by the Chinese name of the dish, 什锦炒饭. Chinese culture cannot be reduced to a western science, not even the name of a dish.

The Takeaway menu is a brutal gesture signaling to a fresh-off-the-boat Chinese, what the West think the Chinese eat, and that is the only kind of Chinese food they will eat. New Zealanders consume Chinese food because it is different from their mainstream diet, but that difference has to be familiar. In a fast-food, fast-service setting, no consumer cares about the authenticity of the product, its cultural meaning, its technical sophistication or its historical origin. The Chinese food system is reduced to a historyless and cultureless flat image, a trans-temporal and trans-territorial hyper-reality that only exists in a social space called the takeaway. My alienation is not only that of the modern worker's alienation to the homogenous products. I am alienated also because, in the very space of the Takeaway, I become a powerless witness of how our food can be corrupted into something beyond recognition. That corrupting process is Orientalization and I have no say in that process (Said, 1995). But the real tragedy is that it is the Chinese themselves who perpetuate the process. It is the owners, chefs and order-takers of every Chinese Takeaway, who physically reproduce the stereotypical foods to their western customers' satisfaction on a day-to-day basis. Every time I recommend a dish to the buyer, I call the name of the dish to the kitchen, I toss the deep fried wonton into a paper bag, I hand over the order to the buyer, I function once more like a little "Chinaman in a quasi-Chinatown", and the rolls, the pork, the eggs, the rice, the noodles and the wontons get fetishized once more in the same ethnic enclave. The food Orientalizes me as I Orientalize the food.

Using my experience in the Takeaway, I find my first paid job subsequently in two Chinese restaurants, Jade Garden in Remuera and Sun World in the City. Both are quite established and both have now closed down, which shows how much the Chinese catering trade has changed since the New Asian Immigration Wave. I am as useless in the Restaurants as I was in the Takeaway, because the Restaurants operate in a still different language and system. The official language is Cantonese and the food type is Yum Cha. Except those from the Canton Province, all the Mainland staff have to struggle with the two-folded language barriers. With New Zealand customers it is English while with Hong Kongese customers and the boss it is Cantonese. In the small Takeaway, I only have to deal with non-Chinese customers; while in Restaurants, I am expected to cooperate with other Chinese staff. Because of the dialectical demarcation, I am often left out in the informal network of the waiting staff and excluded from the after-work activities such as tip sharing. I am the "Other" in the front stage as well as in the back stage.

Yum Cha is as new to me as to a New Zealander. There are four to five regional styles in Chinese cuisine. Yum Cha belongs to the Canton Cuisine while I am only familiar with the Jiang-zhe Cuisine. Being a Shanghainese Chinese does not necessarily mean that I can instantly transform to become a Canton Chinese. What is special about Yum Cha is not only its cooking style but also its serving style. It is neither menu ordering nor buffet dining. Parcels of prawns, buns, dumplings, fish balls, and rice rolls are displayed in mini steamers or small plates, stacked in a trolley, and pushed from table to table. After the customers choose what they want to eat, the server should leave the specific dishes on the table and tick the corresponding box on the order sheet. The cashier will calculate the bill according to the number of ticks. Customers can still order main dishes from the menu and those orders are to be recorded on the back of the order sheet. There are also other unspoken rules: do not show customers any food before the tea is served; spring rolls are to be cut in half before the customer's eyes; Moulong sauce goes with beef balls whereas soy sauces goes with beef rice rolls; filling out the tea if the teapot lid is tipped up etc. Hardly any training will be given in the restaurants and I frequently break the rules.

Most of the Mainland immigrants use employment in Chinese restaurants as a stepping-stone while searching for better jobs or supplementary income to the starvation student allowances while studying. But there are also Chinese immigrants who, for various reasons, are trapped into the catering trade, rotating from restaurant to restaurant year after year. I have to choose which path to follow. Prior to the introduction of the Point System, the Chinese catering trade in New Zealand was dominated by Cantonese-speaking immigrants. The increasing presence of non-Cantonese speaking Mainlanders disrupts the homogeneity of this occupational niche. This has caused some antagonism between the groups and contributed to my estrangement. The Shanghainese supervisor says to me, "You should be in the University, not restaurants". It seems to be a natural decision to step out of the Chinatown ghetto and never come back.

Therefore, my employment in both Restaurants is short-lived. I resign from it to prepare for the hard-won language class and soon find a part-time position in a Chinese Cafe. The first day I attend the AIT language class is also the first day I start working in the Cafe. Ironically, I am the most experienced waiting staff among the four newly recruited waitresses, all of them are Mainlanders and none of whom is Cantonese. The joy is not

only to stop learning Cantonese but also to work with young Chinese women who come from the same region, arrive around the similar time, and are of similar age. It is the first time I find an in-group feeling in the workplace. Three of us are Shanghainese and we become close friends very soon. Yvette also lives in the Ellerslie neighborhood and Ether also comes to New Zealand with her family. Residential approximation and situational similarity bring us even closer to one another. Their home coincides with my home, their family overlaps my family, and their company makes me feel more at home.

If the overlapping of spaces can bring identification, the clash of two spaces can also bring embarrassment. The Cafe targets affluent Hong Kong and Taiwan tertiary students, for Pakeha or Maori students go to mainstream cafes and Mainland students normally bring lunch to save money. The drama then plays out between two kinds of Chinese, the rich East Asian paying customers and the humble Mainland waiting and kitchen staff. The drama goes on smoothly as long as the customers are always customers to the waitresses, and the waitresses are always the waitresses to the customers. Ether gets very sick of working in the front stage of that Cafe because she often runs into fellow students there. Twenty minutes ago, she plays the role of a student with her Hong Kongese and Taiwanese classmates in lecture room. But now they meet again in the Cafe. Here, she plays a different role, serving her classmates. The next day, when she meets the classmates again, she feels that they are no longer equals because they know what she does in a different space. Although she and her classmates only know one another by sight, that nearby space is a constant reminder of her inferior economic status. Thus, she later changes her job to a dishwasher, retreating into the back stage of the catering service.

I understand Ether implicitly because I've gone through a similar incident. On the last day of one communal language class in which I am the only Mainlander, the entire class comes to the Jade Garden Restaurant for a Yum Cha lunch. Five minutes later, my classmates sit down as customers, and I serve as a waitress. When they see their young classmate pushing the food-trolley in a restaurant uniform, the whole table laughs, and I feel quite hurt. However, I do not feel the same embarrassment when my AIT Mainland classmates visit the Cafe because I know that we are all of the same economic class and restaurant jobs are what they have done or will do when they are pressed for money.

The second category of my employment space is the mainstream workplace. I have worked for the Sky City Casino for four years. My AIT classmates tell me about the open recruitment of the Casino. I look up the word "casino" and still apply on the Open Day. At that time, I grab any opportunities to get into the mainstream workforce. I end up recruited as a cleaner, euphemistically called Environment Service Attendant. On the first day, I meet other seven to eight other Mainland Chinese employed in the same team. All of them come through the Point System. Doubtless, cleaning is not the kind of work that can bring any job satisfaction to any of us. What troubles my Chinese workmates and I here is not so much about cultural identification but class identification. I always regard myself as a member of an intellectual family for both of my parents were in what in English we call "white collar" positions. For thousand years the norm in China has been that the intellectuals shall not perform manual work. All of a sudden, we find ourselves working side by side with members of the working class. What my Mainlander workmates and I go through mentally is the same as the father of Bickleen Fong who came to New Zealand in the 1920s.

> "Father had already learnt some English in China, but he hated life in New Zealand. ... He was a scholar, and he felt frustrated that he had to do menial labour with his hands. In China there is a saying, 'With a rush in my hand, I need not depend on anyone anywhere.' That shows the status of the literati. Having left China, Father never enjoyed the status to which he was entitled as the eldest son of a ... gentry family." (Ip, 1990 : 103-104)

Although it arises as an individual issue to Chinese intellectuals who immigrate here through the Point System, to overcome that mental barrier means to negotiate between the reality abroad with a tradition of thousands of years at home.

Not surprisingly, in less than six months' time, all of the Chinese cleaners transfer to the Gaming Department, and either become dealers, table clerks or slot attendants. Although they are still overqualified for these positions, they can at least get rid of "menial labor". By then, I have been left behind as the only Chinese in the cleaning team, longing for my

own internal transfer. A few months later, my application to work in the Finance Department is approved. When I first start, November 1996, there are only four Chinese (including myself) in the three shifts. When I leave the Casino in May 1999, Chinese make up about half of the cashiering team.

As a sociology student, I reflect often on the reasons why the Gaming and Cashiering Departments of the Casino stay as a preferred workplace for immigrants, and why the Casino maintains a large portion of immigrants in its workforce. On the immigrants' side, it is due to the lack of employment opportunities elsewhere. Numerous research and statistical figures have shown that the government's original intention of replacing local brain drain vacancies with imported talents is unfulfilled (e.g. Boyer, T. 1996; Ip, 2000; Ongley, 1996). Overseas professionals, including Mainland Chinese, experience extreme difficulties in finding suitable jobs that are equivalent to their positions at home. Despite their professional training and educational credentials, only 20.5 percent of the Chinese who have arrived New Zealand since 1986 are actively employed in the workforce (unpublished statistical data, cited in Ip, 2000). Compared with restaurants and factories, the Casino is, for a time, a fashionable place for the Chinese immigrants to get in. However, the application procedure of a formal employer like Sky City Ltd. is quite complicated. One has to go through three to four rounds of interviews, screens, testing and credit checks before he/she can be accepted. Therefore, the final job offer brings a sense of pride and achievement to an immigrant applicant. Once one gets in, the opportunities for internal, national or even cross-Tasman transfers are open, particularly for dealers. There are few companies in New Zealand that provide training in such international transferable skills. Chinese doctors, managers, engineers, teachers and the like, who are no longer able to use their professional knowledge in a casino setting, complement their linguistic hindrance with numerical and organizing competencies that are built on past education and work experiences. Sometimes, their bilingual skills make them valuable interpreters in such an international entertainment site. The Chinese staff are loyal employees as long as opportunities for alternative employment are scarce.

My experience in the Casino fits well in the above framework. The desire to work in an English environment pushes me into the job, and the relatively good pay for a student job pulls me into staying on. Nevertheless, I had never thought that one day I had to and would be able to make a living on my arithmetical abilities. Adaptation is about

resocialization. In that resocialization, I rediscover and redevelop peripheral skills that were overlooked, and no longer regard myself purely and solely as an artistic and literary person. The process of rediscovering and redevelopment unfolds with surprises and delights. Just like I find my arithmetical aptitude in the Casino, I later find my communication aptitude in customer services, logical reasoning in the sociology class, entrepreneurship in the family business, and the ability to learn a foreign language and a foreign culture in the adopted country in general.

What I am capable of doing is not what I enjoy doing. Most of the time I work part time in the Casino, and thus am quite detached from the workplace community. I unconsciously maintain the detachment because I do not want to pin myself down as a cashier. My identification shall lie elsewhere. Cashiering is only a semi-skilled dead-end job that leads to no career. My Chinese colleagues and I deserve better employment had we had equal opportunities in the New Zealand job market. In his critical analysis of the high-achiever stereotypes of overseas Chinese, Cheng (1997) finds that Chinese employees are overrepresented in highly quantified disciplines, or professions and occupations that require minimal verbal proficiency. They also tend to concentrate in peripheral specialities and are underrepresented in management, especially senior management positions. The glass ceiling serves as the major barrier that hinders the upward mobility of many experienced Chinese employees. The gradual overrepresentation of immigrant workers in the team appears to me as a serious warning that the Cashiering Cage has become another occupational ghetto.

On the Casino side, the forming of the ghetto appears to have strategic value. The Casino as a whole has a very high turn over, and the cashier team is particularly unstable. The stress for accuracy, the passive smoking air, the highly structured break times, restricted autonomy, the unusual working hours and for the supervisors the rotating shifts, together form an unpleasant working environment. Instead of improving working conditions or rising remuneration, the employer decides to replace the "spoilt" local workforce with much more docile and manipulatable immigrants. Once employed, the two major groups, Chinese and Philipino, both regarded as model minorities, precipitate down to the base of the workforce, stabilize the team, preserve a collective memory about the human and technical history of the team, and thus slow down the overall floating rate of knowledge and personnel. With such a sizable reserve army, the Employer is able to continue

operating under current employment conditions. Similarly, having the immigrant employees substantiated at the base of the occupational ladder, mainstream New Zealanders are pushed for quicker upward mobility. Immigrant staff are loyal employees, as long as alternative employment for them is scarce.

But the Chinese do resign. I am delighted to see that through these individual gestures, the Chinese break the stereotype of docile Asian employees. I am delighted, also, to see the Chinese resign for something that is not traditionally regarded as what Chinese do, something that is beyond the various occupational ghettoes that the Chinese are confined into. The third workplace is, therefore, the boundary-pushing workplace. There are common sense beliefs in western countries that the Chinese are naturally talented in some things but not in others. Ironically, those beliefs change from time to time and from country to country. In pre-modern western understanding, the Chinese are alleged to be good at agriculture; in the later Nineteenth Century, the Chinese become good at gold mining, in the early decades of the Twentieth Century, market gardening and running fruit-shops or laundries; for the overseas born Chinese generation in the 1950s and 1960s, it is the legal professions, accountancy, and medical sciences; the 1970s' era of Hong Kong working class immigration, takeaways and other catering services; the globalization age, computer science, physics, biochemistry and other natural sciences.

The above changes reflect an on-going struggle in which the Chinese keep pushing the boundaries imposed on them and the western countries keep redefining and re-confining the boundaries in order to comprehend the changes within an essentialist framework. Such reproduction of specific racial stereotypes is part of a more general project of Orientalization in which western countries "manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively", "by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it" (Said, 1995:3).

Having grown up in China and been an artist and literati myself, I know that the Chinese are as good artists, actors, musicians, novelists, playwrights, politicians, craft-makers, tailors, photographers, managers, consultants, philosophers, poets, historians, sociologists as they are good merchants, chefs, scientists, accountants, and doctors. I am very discouraged and somehow terrified to see an all-around nation to be reduced to a collection

of one-dimensional robots in alien lands. It is through such fetishism that the dominant culture controls the shape and development of a minority community. The negative impacts on the Overseas Chinese community that I have already witnessed include the creation of occupational ghettoes (although some niches are prestigious and well-paid), the overrepresentation in a narrow range of quantified occupations and the still underrepresentation in others, the denial of full self-realization, and the limitation of educational and employment alternatives. Despite the superficial differences between the Chinatown catering trade and the Cashiering team, my job changes have never gone beyond the stereotypical expectation of what a Chinese should and can do.

However, where there is power, there is also resistance. The Foucauldian notion of power is useful here for at least two reasons. First, Foucault establishes the interdependence of knowledge, subjectivity and power as the pivot of his discussion (Foucault, 1980). That is, modern power does not operate through repression, but through how we feel about ourselves, our public identities and private thoughts, emotions and other forms of subjectivities. Second, Foucault includes resistance as an equally important form of power as sovereign power, disciplinary power, bio-power, and the capillary power network (ibid). In the Foucauldian worldview of modern society, power itself is variegated, draws upon many different resources and can be found in a diversity of sites and social relations within which points of resistance will open up (Layder, 1994:102). If the West asserts power over the Chinese by defining their employability, then the Chinese assert their resistance by redefining it themselves.

The pushing and keeping of boundaries is an ongoing process, and the Chinese of the new millennium have already made their way around. I am glad to discover the Chinese, while in small business, operate fashion stores, gift galleries, lunch bars, ice cream stalls, bakeries, butcheries, dairies, florists, coffee-and-muffin cafeterias, photo-developing outlets, hairdressing, antique shops, herbalist and acupuncture clinics, commercial cleaning, building teams, gardening services, funeral and cemetery services, future telling and geomancy consultancy, and even tailoring businesses. I am also delighted to see the Chinese, while in mainstream organizations, take untraditional roles such as historians (e.g. Dr. Jim Ng), tertiary professors (e.g. Manying Ip), politicians (e.g. Pansy Wong), electricians, banking consultants, real estate agents, mortgage or insurance brokers, librarians, midwives, nurses and kindergarten teachers. If these Chinese employees are

more directed to serve the Chinese or Asian communities, the younger generations penetrate much further into the core. I am, thus, even more encouraged seeing more and more young Chinese enroll for mainstream subjects such as architecture, fine arts, English literature, psychology, pharmacy, aviation, performing arts, media studies and sociology.

Long before I can elaborate on the above explanation, I start to work for a boundary pushing Chinese, Mr. Kong of the K. J. Framing Gallery. Since Mr. Kong shares the same surname as Confucius, he names his workshop "the Confucius Gallery" in Chinese. Mr. Kong is the pioneer Chinese immigrant in the picture framing and gallery business in New Zealand. His apprentices, or employees, one of whom is my father, subsequently open three more picture framing shops in Auckland. It is amazing to think that all Auckland Chinese framers know each other and have at one time or another worked for the same boss. In Mr. Kong's gallery and later my parents' gallery, I do not only learn a new trade, a new set of terminologies, but also a new cultural zone, a new aesthetic, new color codes, a new cult for candles and soaps, a new conception of living and giving, and a new sense of interior decoration. In the buying and selling of New Zealand artists and painters' work, we become acquainted with David Stone's oil painting, Nancy Tichborne's water colors, Lawrence Letch's screen prints, Grahame Sydney's South Island landscape, Fiona Holroyd-Whyte's Auckland scenes, Sallie Clough's floral collage and Evelyn Page's nude that most Chinese are not familiar with. It is from the old portrait photos, children's paintings, certificates, wedding photos, holiday snapshots, cross-stitches, and other 3D ornaments people bring to frame, we come to sense their values and treasures, their history and reality, their memories and celebrations in a way and to a depth that other Chinese rarely do.

On the other hand, the Chinese galleries have opened a window on Oriental arts to New Zealanders. We bring in unique craft works such as zi-sha clay teapots, carved wooden stands, and antique window boards. We also provide services that bridge the two cultures together. One such service that we offer to the community is to translate one's English name into Chinese characters and write them on rice paper with calligraphy art. For example, the name "Dianna" can be translated as 黛安娜, the first character refers to "a black pigment used by ancient Chinese women to line their eyebrows", the second "peaceful or tranquil", and the third "beauty". Later, we begin to write four-meter Chinese idioms with English subtitles. Occasionally, people come in for English translations of

Chinese poems or vice versa. What I want to stress here is the time factor. My family only begins to be able to do this after four years of accumulation of skills and materials since our reunification in New Zealand. Giving us a bit more time and a bit more space, the new Chinese community can contribute to New Zealand a lot more than wontons and spring rolls.

1.4   The Link

The spaces that I move between are much more varied than those open to the old Chinese settlers who were more or less restricted to the mining field, the opium den and the gambling house in the late Nineteenth Century; and the family shops or market gardens in the early Twentieth Century. This greater spatial freedom corresponds to a greater tolerance of diversity on the part of mainstream New Zealanders, and the greater economic and political strength on the part of the new Chinese immigrants.

The link between these spaces is the family car. My mother is one of the very first people in her circle who bought a car and learned driving. For driving is commonly constructed in New Zealand as an area of white male expertise (James & Saville-Smith, 1994). Even today, Chinese people are surprised to know that a woman in her fifties does most of the driving in the family.   Having a car and a driver in the family is an essential element to kick off life in New Zealand. It is disastrous for a whole immigrant family to rely on public transport or other people's good will. With reliable transport, my mother picks us up from the airport herself, takes me to language schools and night shift work, delivers outwork to her friends' place, shops around, and visits local attractions such as Mt. Eden, One Tree Hill and Half Moon Bay.

I get my learner's license one month after my arrival, but did not get the restricted license until five years later. When I lived in the Ellerslie Unit, I used to watch and hear our neighbor backing out their car like a bullet with a gunfire-like noise, and wonder whether I could ever do it myself. My hesitation to get a full driving license can be explained by a practical reason: the other three members of my family drive and can take me around; and the gender reason: driving is socially constructed as a male enterprise.

But there is also a much more profound cultural dimension to this learning: learning to drive is learning a new culture. This hidden aspect has not become clear to me until,

shortly after I get my full license, I hear it from someone else's words. In research on job satisfaction of Chinese employees, my interviewee, a Taiwanese I.T. engineer, insightfully likens acculturation to driving:

> A: "... I always take it – just like what you do with your research – as a project. I *do* immigration just like one learns how to drive, or how to swim. I tell myself: I am learning one more thing – how to be an immigrant. Thinking this way, I find whatever I have to do is part of the process of that learning.

> Q: *"How do you know whether you have finished the learning?*

> A: "We [referring to the interviewer and himself] are both learning it. As you know, it is very difficult. How can I tell whether I have finished the learning? Just like how can you tell whether you have learnt how to drive? If one day you crashed into another car, you would say that you had never learnt how to drive. – To me, if I have a feeling that I am no longer afraid of entering another ethnic group, I would say that I've passed the test. I am more or less in it. Just like if you were confident enough to drive any car, not just your own car, then, you would say, more or less, you can drive. ... " (Yuan, 2000, 6th Interview, translation mine)

I am almost stunned by this analogue. It is not until I become a full citizen of New Zealand, that I desire to get a full driver's license. It is not until I feel at home in the adopted country, that I have the confidence of becoming a good driver. It is not until I am able to move comfortably between two cultures, that I want to move around Auckland freely. It is not until I am sufficiently at ease to make English phone calls, that I know how to turn around the power steering wheel. It is not until I have built enough vocabulary to

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read the paper without a dictionary, that I seriously add mileage to my car. Driving has become more than a motor skill. It also represents to me the aptitude, the confidence and the ability to create a "home away from home" (the title of Ip's 1990's book).

2. The Greater Field of Cultivation

Yet, I have one more space to present. Like in the home, the language class, and the workplace, I need to, in that space, reconcile conflicting values, negotiate between different aspects of the self, reorient my goal, recycle my knowledge, and to renew old skills and develop new ones. That space does not only provide a particular set of terminologies and conceptions of what I am talking about here, it also predetermines the very form of my current expression: the writing of a thesis. That space is the Academy.

Near the completion of the AIT language class, everyone is talking about what to do next. I suddenly realize that it is another time to make new decisions. It is *the* norm for children of recent Chinese immigrant families to get a tertiary qualification, preferably from a formal university. So, going to the Academia seems to be the only option for me. But the Academia is not an easy place to enter.

Due to the "problem of immigrant students", a problem that is new to New Zealand Academia prior to the New Asian Influx, most Auckland tertiary institutions begin to require proof of English proficiency for the new academic year. That means that I have to sit a language test and obtain a score prescribed by the institute. A number of professional tests have been developed for this purpose: TOFEL, IELTS and Cambridge Five. I have never liked the idea of taking language tests. It is not a challenge to me but an insult. The design of these tests is based on an assumption that the human ability and knowledge of a foreign language can be reduced into a number of compartments (e.g. listening, speaking, reading and writing) and can be observed and measured individually. Besides my doubt about the validity of these tests, I am also dismayed about the requirement that only non-native speakers are required to take these tests while native speakers are admitted, even though some of them may not be able to obtain the prescribed score if they were also required to sit the tests. Like most psychology or intelligence tests, language tests do not always reflect what they are supposed to evaluate. But, people who are targeted to take these tests have no say about the use of the tests in the controlling of tertiary enrollment. The only way to resist is passive inaction. Deciding not to take any of these tests, I am

taking on the position of those Chinese scholars in feudal times who preserved their integrity and dignity by refusing to go through the imperial examination system.

Then I heard that Massey University does not require proof of English proficiency and it has a campus in Albany, Auckland. I finally enroll as the special admission category. I do not really know what to choose to study. I would have enrolled for Chinese literature if I could make the lecturers believe that I was not a native Chinese speaker. I want to do something different from what most overseas Chinese do, but I still want to set a foot in the camp. So I select Business Psychology as a compromise. My tutor of "Written Communication" discovers my persistent interest in social affairs from my essays, and recommends that I take an introductory sociology paper as an elective paper. That is how I come to the world of sociology.

When I decide to join the mainstream social and political thoughts of the western society, I am very much like the woman entering the doorway (Illustration Four). Before she made the decision, she might have waited by the door for company. She has watched people come and leave, walk pass it, mock at it, ignore it, sneer at it, scared off by it, none has enough courage and enthusiasm to physically go though it. So she decides to go by herself. Her back image is a bold gesture to the world she leaves behind. She is determined to walk with bare feet so she shakes off her scarf and shoes. She does not know what to expect on the other side of the door but she knows instinctively that it is going to be a lone journey, as hinted by the narcissus embroidered on her cloak. She also decides that one day she will come back and tell her people what is happening in the world of western social sciences.

2.1   The Difficulties

My tertiary learning is full of difficulties. It is difficult for me because everything is taught and learned in a foreign language; and it is not everyday English, but academic English; not general academic English, but English in specialized fields; not any specialized fields, but two fields, psychology and sociology, that heavily depend on fine features of the English language: rhetoric, discourses, eloquence, semantics, speeches, texts, lyrics, and meanings. It is not the same kind of English that I have learnt in the takeaways, or the Casino, and it is far more sophisticated than what the language school can teach. Social sciences inevitably deal with meanings, often with multiple layers of meanings, but meanings are so vulnerable to manipulations of the very linguistic forms that carry it. Unlike in literature

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studies, the communication of meanings in social studies are highly structured in forms of scientific reportage or logical argument, rather than in fiction, poetry, drama, or prose. What I have to adapt to is what the founding psychologists and sociologists had to adapt from the scientific community: a disembodied passive voice, an enthusiasm for jargon, the preference for nouns over verbs, long words over short words, and rare words over common words. In short, academic learning requires the learning of an elaborate and alien linguistic code (Bernstein, 1975).

These superficial features of formality are only manifestations of a much deeper, pervasive, and subtle hidden curricula. These less visible forms are based on a particular disciplinary culture, a particular mode of thinking, a particular style of knowledge making, and a particular history of thoughts. In her article on the style of academic training, Emihovich (1995) articulates that part of the socialization process for novices into a discipline is to understand the conventions and to develop a sense of what is appropriate. The shaping of scholar identity is in ongoing negotiation with personal identities. The universalization of these particularities and peculiarities does not only alienate me from my own heritage, but also various disenfranchised groups of the native speakers: the Maori, the Pacific Islanders, the women, the working class students and the like. With all its sterility, abstraction and rationality, the tertiary classroom is a space that is only friendly and familiar to a middle class Pakeha elite, even more so than the space of the secondary and primary classrooms in this country (McCulloch, 1992; Shuker, 1987).

I feel particularly vulnerable in the Academia because, unlike the native marginalized groups, English is my second language. Furthermore, unlike the Point System immigrants, I have no former training in higher education. I feel worse still than the younger immigrant children for I have no knowledge of the New Zealand education system. These feelings of inferiority are intensified by the lengthy isolation and loneliness I have to put up with in the Social Science Faculty. From year to year, and from paper to paper, I have been the only Chinese in the class. Deliberately choosing to do something different from other Chinese, I simultaneously long for the company of "my own people" that is easily available in Business and Computer Science Faculties. My body makes me a stranger in the psychology and sociology classes while my mind makes me a stranger among the Chinese community on campus. I always wonder what I could achieve if I had a greater chance to

interact with fellow students, to discuss ideas and arguments learned in the lectures, and to participate in group assignments.

Being unique is to be lonely. Being a Chinese in the social science field is deemed to be a lone journey. This loneliness is not only about a lack of physical fellowship but also a lack of pioneering scholarship. The Eurocentric nature of sociological and psychological knowledge becomes clearer and clearer as the semester passes. I finally realize that I am learning about other's societies and other's psychical states that have little relevance to my own. My world is not their world, my history is not in their history, my society is omitted in their society, my humanity is ignored by their humanity, my language is Romanized by their language, and my culture is cited, if it is ever mentioned, only to define their culture. China is either a traditional society, a Third world country or a communist state. Chinese issues are always immigration issues. The concepts, theories and research findings are not prepared to explain a nation that has never been visited by the founding fathers of social sciences. This knowledge disables me, rather than empowers me, to talk about my own experiences. How good is the bipolar notion of capitalist-proletarian class relations in explaining the everyone-as-proletarian communist society? How good is the argument on gender relations in the nuclear family in explaining women's lives in extended families? And how good are the findings on American Africans, Maori and overseas Chinese in explaining the inter-group relations of the 56 ethnic minorities in China?

It takes me years to digest "the fixation of rationality" in western social theory. The Greek rationalism resonates in Weber's speculation of modernity, in Parsons's functionalism, in the alleged differences between religion and science, in decision-making theory, in economic formulas, in arguments between quantitative and qualitative researchers, in feminists' critiques of patriarchy, in post-colonial theorists' reflections on colonialism, in Habermas's defense of the Enlightenment, and even in the post-structuralist disenchantment with language and the postmodernist suspicion of modernity. It seems to me that the western world starts and ends in rationality. To me it is irrational to devote so much human talent in elaborating on this single concept for rationality hardly bothers a Chinese like me.

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2.2   *The Role of Language Learning*

Linguistically disadvantaged and culturally alienated, then, how can I survive in the western Academia? In other words, how is it possible to be a Chinese social scientist? Looking back from today, there are at least four reasons contributing to my survival and sometimes success. First, it is to do with the role of language. Learning a new subject in a foreign language can be a hindrance, but can also be an incentive. When I meet the challenge, it becomes a double achievement. What alternate in my mind is a simultaneous accumulation of concepts and vocabulary. I can still remember distinctly the contexts in which I learned certain words and certain meanings of these words. On neuropsychology, I come to know the word "hemisphere" as half the brain rather than half the earth; on research, the word "variable" as a noun rather than a adjective; on schools of theories, the word "perspective" as viewpoint rather than an art of drawing, and many more. The content may be boring, the style may be dull, the theory may be dry, or the experiment may be silly, but the linguistic form is still fresh. There are always new words, new phrases or new expressions to discover.

What my monosyllablic mother tongue has instilled in me is a strong propensity for terseness and refinement in the choice of words. Lin, Yu-tang (1939) uses the example of poetry as the extreme form of mincing in the Chinese language. Perhaps only in China there exits a metre of exactly five or seven syllables to each line as the standard metre, saying probably as much as two lines of English blank verse. This economy of words produced a style where each word is carefully weighed to its finest nuance in sound-value and is surcharged with meaning (Lin, 1939:210). As a lover of Chinese poetry, playing with words has never been a chore for me. The pursuit of the perfect conceptual equivalence between a Chinese expression and an English expression alone deserves my full dedication.

In another book, Lin, Yu-tang (1959) has commented on the differences between Chinese and English, which resonate only too well with my experiences with the two languages.

> "There was something in the character of the Chinese language which invisibly but most emphatically changed one's mode of thought. The modes of thinking, the concepts, the images, the very sounds of words are so different between the

English language and the Chinese. ... If I were to write two essays one morning on the same subject with the same ideas, one in English and the other in Chinese, the essays, themselves would come out differently because the flow of thought, following different imagery and allusions and associations, would automatically lead into different avenues. ... The ideas themselves come wearing a different dress and complexion when one speaks a different language because the words have a different timbre and different associations. Hence, studying Chinese, I began to think as a Chinese, and thinking as a Chinese I understood and accepted certain truths and imagery almost instinctively. The leap between the two languages so different as the Chinese and the English was somewhat bizarre. The English in me laughed at the smooth, shining pebbles of Chinese monosyllabism, and the Chinese in me recognized the greater definition and exactness of English thought but also ridiculed its jumble of incredible abstractions." (pp. 58-59)

Therefore, Lin (1939) concludes in the earlier book that

"Translation from English into Chinese is hardest in scientific treatise, while translation from Chinese into English is hardest in poetry and decorative prose, where every word contains an image." (p. 80)

The fact that I study science (even though social science) rather than arts subjects in English eases the learning process, for sociology and psychology alike are first developed in the West, and for both science and the English language share common characteristics of rationality, rigor, exactitude and abstraction. That congruence does not exist between social science and the Chinese language. Congruence, though, can be found between

poetry and Chinese, as both share common qualities of crispness, ambivalence, subtleness and imaginary. If I had chosen to major in Chinese literature and thus had to present the ambivalent five or seven metred Chinese poetry in succinct English; or if I had studied social sciences in Chinese and thus tried to understand the foreign ideas via translations, I would have had to endure even greater alienation. Translation is distortion and reduction through which the beauty of either language loses inevitably in the mere act of paraphrasing (Derrida, 1972: 31). Translating Chinese poems into English is a tragedy while translating English technical terminology into Chinese is a comedy. There is almost an instinctive impulse in me to confine the use of English to one kind of work and Chinese to another in order to keep the two linguistic worlds separate and intact. Therefore, in Chinese I write poems, novels, dramas, libretto, and diaries; in English I write experiment reports, formal essays, argumentation and business letters.

This correspondence between knowledge and language and the compartments between the two languages enable me to preserve a mental integrity. Only in the English context, I can comprehend or even appreciate the kind of social sciences that at one time or another talk of human life in terms of "quotas of ambition", "standardization of anger", "operationalization of love", and "coefficients of happiness". I do not think I can ever do the same in Chinese. I had never read or written any argumentative essays in Chinese for fun when I was in China. The philosophical discussions in River Elegy (*He Shang*) was about the maximum Reason and Logic that I could stand, but those discussions were also phrased in a gracious poetic style.

2.3 *Confucianism*

The second factor contributing to my survival in the Academia is to do with the Confucianistic discipline that the Chinese education system has built in me. Confucianism, doesn't it ring a bell to you? Confucianism, whatever it means, has never been too new to the West. Along with other Oriental despotism, Oriental splendor, cruelty and sensuality, Oriental ideas, sects and wisdom, Confucianism has been domesticated for local European used since the Enlightenment. Sinology, therefore, like Orientalism, shall not be seen as a purely airy European fantasy about China, but a systematic grid for filtering through the Orient into western consciousness (Said, 1995:6).

Taken as an authentic feature of an essential 'Chinese culture,' this classic philosophical school has been thoroughly fetishized as an object of cultural analysis by scholars studying overseas Chinese, particularly as an explanatory element within the postwar celebratory narratives of Chinese business success associated with the economic rise of the Asia Pacific (Nonini & Ong, 1997: 21). Reversing Max Weber's (1951) gloomy assessment of the economic potential of Chinese culture, numerous books and journal articles have been written about "Confucian familistic culture" as a collectivist ethic, predilection for hard work, and respect for education, has helped to fuel the community's economic spurt (e.g. Harrell, 1985; Pye, 1988; Redding, 1990; Rozman, 1991). However, Greenhalgh's (1994) historical study of 25 Taiwanese family enterprises suggests otherwise. She found that the division of labor and reward in these firms was not a natural reflection of tradition but a political construction of the family heads, who were pressed to build his firm out of family resources by several features of the national and global political economies. Therefore, she argues that the Confucian thesis is a form of Orientalist economic discourse that has not only reproduced Orientalist constructions of Chinese culture, but also discouraged the discovery of subjugated knowledge that have let a new, flexible form of capitalist accumulation built on the exploitation of gender and other social inequalities.

My practice of Confucian discipline is just another case study that deorientalizes the myth of Confucianism. Instead of being represented by sinologists, it is my turn to tell the readers in what ways I am "typically Confucian". What I want to stress here is that I was neither *naturally* born industrial and methodical, nor had I been successfully *oversocialized* to be a Confucius disciple through the mass reproduction of the Chinese education machine. On the contrary, I was a well-known problem student in the Shanghai Art and Craft Institute, skipping classes, running home, late for morning exercises, perfunctory about assignments, and listening to my walkman while the teacher talked. My study attitudes and habits did not improve much in the language class days. But, social sciences at the tertiary level seemed to be a real challenge, a challenge deserving the full range of my intelligence. Besides, I know implicitly that had I stayed in China I would never have been able to get into a university due to the fierce competition for admission, and that it has been quite a mission to get into a New Zealand university since I refused to take any language tests. That is why I start to recycle certain values and practices of my Chinese heritage, and to impose on myself once again the kind of Confucianistic discipline that I used to keep in reaching of a goal.

According to social linguist Fishman (1985, 1989), language and culture interpenetrate and contextualize one another in the most intimate way. The former serves a part, an index and a symbol of the later (Fishman, 1985:xi). The Confucianistic discipline of any Chinese child starts from the learning of the Chinese language. Since there is no phonetic correspondence between the monosyllabic sound and the ideogramic character, learning Chinese is to learn at least two languages, the spoken Chinese and the written Chinese. After years of remembering which sound for which character and a great number of homonyms, I face a further discrepancy between living Chinese and literate Chinese. Like anyone who is interested in classic Chinese literature, I have to go through still another painful learning curve to grasp ancient Chinese idioms and the traditional form of the characters on top of the simplified form. All these demand lengthy and intensive memorization. Anyone who masters such a language must have developed a great faculty of memory; and a good memory is my most powerful tool to cope and excel in the current evaluation system of social sciences.

In psychology papers, the tests and exams are designed to assess the learnt knowledge of past findings and "facts" rather than a student's intellectual potential to inquire into the human inner world. The answer to a multiple-choice question can be widely different if we used a different textbook or a different edition of the same book. I soon learn that as long as I memorize all the details on the printed-paper and all the answers of the preliminary tests in the study guide I will know exactly which number to tick. That is what I do for exams, and that always works. That is how it is possible for me to finish a full-hour multiple-choice questionnaire in five minutes with a 90% accuracy. The only paper that I did not earn an A grade in was Community Psychology, an unconventional paper that has too little to memorize but too much to create.

Although I rapidly rise to the top of the class, I have never liked the mechanical learning and evaluation style, nor have I ever regarded myself as a gifted psychologist. I am clearly aware that I can outwit a real genius for psychology in those tests not because I have greater insights into the human psyche but because I am so used to the business of recalling a date, a name or a trivial fact from an unnoticeable corner of a specific page of a specific book. I know that I would not be able to obtain the same grade if I had to design and carry out a creative experiment, to apply psychoanalytical techniques to clinical cases, to record the interpersonal symbolic interaction in a real life situation, or to compose a fictional diary of an obsessive-compulsive disorder patient. I am luckier than my western classmates

because the current examination style in psychology resembles, incidentally or not, the ancient practice of Confucius scholars.

The world of sociology depends much less on the faculty of memorization and specific textbooks but more on the faculty of comprehension and synthesizing different works. The lecturers normally warn the students not to waste their time guessing exam questions. Every time I hear it I overhear it. I cannot take this general advice to New Zealand students because I am the only Chinese in the class. I am different so I have to make myself an exception and persist in the way that works for me. When the exam proceeds, I will list all the previous exam questions in my review file, prepare a complete essay answer for each question, as I normally do for essay-form assignments, and memorize it word by word, sentence by sentence with every spelling trick and fine grammatical feature. Having made sure that I've prepared enough questions to cover the range of topics that will be assessed in a final exam, I never fail to recollect the exact answer off the top of my head. That is what I do for exams, and that always works. I am often the first student who submits the exam answer booklet since no other students would bring to the exam room a personal collection of questions *and* full edited answers.

2.4 *Taoism*

But I cannot always rigorously develop the memory skill, always read textbooks, always guess exam questions, always carefully conjecture the teacher's mind, always rehearse spelling and grammatical tricks, always recollect dates and names, always analyze matrixes or cross tabulations, always calculate significance or coefficients, always seriously adhere to the symmetry of the bell-shape curve, always absorb the endless debate on rationality, always synthesize Marxism with functionalism, always accept scientific findings with naivete, always blissfully manipulate independent variables, always fool myself into believing that the answers to multiple-choice questions are also the answers to real life, always work joyfully in a stupid drudgery of intermittent observations and measurements in order to conclude that "the primary function of sugar in the manufacture of ice-cream is to sweeten it", a statement that can also be made by a moment of common sense and intuition (cited in Lin, 1939 : 82). When I am tired of all of those, I withdraw from the Confucian work ethic and retreat to the world of Taoism, an alternative way of life provided by another Chinese philosopher Laotse.

Lin, Yu-tang sums up the essential differences between Confucianism and Taoism more succinctly than I could:

> "Man [sic] has a deeper nature in him which Confucianism does not quite touch. Confucianism, in the strict sense of the word, is too decorous, too reasonable, too correct. ... The man who enjoys slightly rebellious hair and bare feet goes to Taoism. ...the Confucian outlook on life is positive, while the Taoistic outlook is negative. Taoism is the Great Negation, as Confucianism is the Great Affirmation." (pp. 109-110)

Moreover,

> "... Confucianism ... has too much realism and too little room for fancy and imagination. ...... Taoism, [however] accounts for a side for the Chinese character which Confucianism cannot satisfy. ... Taoism is the romantic school of Chinese thought, as Confucianism is the classic school. ... it stands for the return to nature and the romantic escape from the world, and revolts against the artificiality and responsibilities of Confucian culture." (p. 111)

Therefore, Confucianism and Taoism together nurture a balanced Chinese character:

> "For Taoism is the playing mood of the Chinese people, as Confucianism is their working mood." (p. 111)

In another book, Lin (1959) reiterates his conclusion slightly different:

> "For Taoism and Confucianism are, as I have said, only two facets of the Chinese soul, one of action, of doing and believing; the other of being, of doubting,

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and wondering, which invest life with a dreamlike quality." (p. 111)

The Confucianist in me "builds and strives", while the Taoist in me "watches and smiles" (Lin, 1939:52). If, historically, Taoism has provided a safe retreat for the Chinese heart when their flesh were submitted to trials and tribulations, it also provides a balm for my Chinese soul when my brain is bombed by plain facts and dull figures (ibid). If the poetry of Taoism has made the rigor of the Confucian pattern to life endurable (ibid), it also make my industrious study bearable. If the Taoist romanticism has saved Chinese literature from "becoming a mere collection of eulogies on the imperial virtues and a rehash of moral exhortations" (ibid:53), it also save my essays and assignments from dreary theoretical or methodological elaboration as well as mindless admiration of founding fathers. All my good essays, those do not only please the markers but also myself, are all imbued with this Taoistic spirit. "Taoism and Confucianism are the negative and positive poles of Chinese thought which make life possible in China" as well as in New Zealand (ibid:53).

The Confucian part of me likes rigorous English, while the Taoist part of me likes ambivalent Chinese. The Confucian part of me enjoys studying sciences, while the Taoist part enjoys arts, poetry and operas. The Confucian part of me admires urban prosperity, while the Taoist part admires rural simplicity. The Confucian part of me identifies modern progress, while the Taoist part identifies ancient gradualism. The Confucian part of me persuades me to excel in order to honor my family and my nation, while the Taoist part whispers that it doesn't really matter if I fail to recall some of the garbage.

If Confucianism refers to a humanitarian instrumentalism, then Taoism refers to a naturalistic lifeworld. When I skip classes, daydream during lectures, enroll in social sciences rather than commerce or computer sciences, refuse to take language tests, sneer at the Truth and the Progress, ignore teachers' advice, abandon Reason for reasonableness, or to compose a "dodgy" master's thesis, what is really behind me is the Taoist philosophy of *laissez faire* and cynicism. It is Taoism that enables me to muddle through the 150 years of mutually contradictory sociological thinking in three years, to reconcile the incompatibility between the teaching of psychology and the teaching of sociology, to read and write about the ongoing anti-Chinese movements over the globe that I cannot stop, to laugh off the arrogance, ignorance and hypocrisy of Sinologists and non-Sinologists whose

attitudes I cannot change, and to endure and outlive the alienation and isolation in a Eurocentric campus that I cannot reform.

2.5   *The Political Incentive*

The final incentive for me to do well in the western academia is the desire to know *the* other. To the Chinese, there is only one other, and that is the Indo-European West. Coinciding with one of her recurrent cycles of decay, the 1840 invasion of China by the West kicked off a tragic start for a century long unequal contact between the East and the West. The bilingual and bicultural writer Lin (1939) records the giving and taking in the first fifty years as such:

> "Some fifty years ago the Chinese were impressed only by European gun-boats; some thirty years ago they were impressed by the Western political system; about twenty years ago they discovered that the West even had a very good literature, and now some people are making the slow discovery that the West has even a better social consciousness and better social manners." (p. 264)

Lin adds later in the book that

> "But the gift of the West is given to China in two hands, in one hand the arts of peace and in the other the arts of war, and she has to take both." (ibid: 336)

Never losing faith in the extraordinary vitality of the Chinese culture, Lin announces his confidence to his western audience once again,

> "That is a rather large morsel for an old and proud nation to swallow, but perhaps China is big enough to swallow it." (ibid:264)

In the process of swallowing, many paradoxical feelings are developed about the West, a culture or a nation that cannot be assimilated as easily as the Manchurians. The West is the

Heaven; the West is also the Hell. The West has a civilization; the West also exhibits barbarianism. The West brings gunboats; the West also brings hospitals. Any Chinese who lived after the 1840s lived under the shade of western influence. It has become almost an innate desire for a Chinese, whether at home or abroad, to explore the culture that has caused so much admiration and hatred in my motherland, and that has changed the outlook of my country to such a radical extent that all the previous conquerors of China had failed to reach. There is also a great curiosity for a modern Mainland Chinese immigrant to visit a culture that has given rise to Marxism, to espy capitalism in a living laboratory, to indulge oneself in materialism, to test the water of democracy and egalitarianism, and to verify various other myths circulated about the West. There is nothing more appropriate than the study of western social sciences to fulfill these missions.

The way in which my curiosity in the West differs from the Orientalist gaze that occurs in the East is the historical fact that it was the West that invaded China not visa versa. The goal of Contemporary Chinese is only to get economically, politically, militarily and academically better armed for "a rainy day". That "rainy day" may well involve storms of shots and shells, as history has already proved. Being a self-contained and self-sufficient country, China has never shown the enthusiasm to "know" and to "save" the Others. But in order to prevent others from "saving" us, actually, to "save" us for the second time, I and other Chinese alike can no longer immerse ourselves in a carefree manner in the fragrant wine and the well-brewed tea, or to look at life quietly over the teacups, or to boil life down to its essence from the gossip over the teacups, or to add another word on human philosophy at an interval of five hundred years, or to discover the last rhythm in calligraphy, or to experiment in new ways of cooking sharks' fins, or to spell the alpha and omega of the art of sleeping, or to cultivate any other arts of living (Lin, 1939: 129-130, 310). Instead, we have to spare some time to reflect on our past defeats and current failures with surveys in the family of nations, to filter through the dross and cream of our heritage in the light of others, to dig out the common root of the human suffering in the past century's world history, and to mold our images in response to the images that our former colonizers have imposed on us. There is nothing more appropriate than the study of western social sciences to fulfill these missions.

In the study of social sciences, I am wistfully enlightened, just as a western student would be wistfully enlightened by the various Chinese schools of thoughts. I am enlightened by a different system of ideas, *and* the ruthless internal criticisms to these traditions. Only in

social sciences, rather than in commerce or computer science, with the Marxist criticism of capitalism, the Frankfurt School's criticism of modern instrumentalism, and the postmodern school's criticism of Enlightenment meta-narratives, a Chinese will be exposed to the two sides of the coin. Playing the rules of the game in argumentation and researching the degree and variety of social problems, I sight the tender spots of western thoughts and western society. In my feminist class, I discover that despite all the democracy, liberty, rationality, enlightenment, modernity, egalitarianism, sciences, suffrage, emancipation, unbound feet and monogamy, modern and postmodern western women are not less sexualized and subjected than the ancient Chinese courtesan and concubines. Likewise, indigenous and Third World theorists alike chant still more Elegies for the Mother River of western civilization. To be trained in a western campus, in this sense, empowers me to make sharper and deeper criticisms of western oppression and hegemony than do Chinese scholars at home.

I do not know how you, presumably a westerner, would feel when visualizing a lone, young, and little Chinese woman sitting in the corner of an auditorium, upon reading and listening to all the weakness, failures and turmoil of the West with interest, and sometimes with satisfaction and pleasure, start to think that after all China is not so bad. But I know from the Pearl S. Buck's (1939) Introduction to Lin, Yu-tang's *My Country and My People* that the Chinese of the thirties had the same turning around from their inferiority complex after witnessing the World War and the Depression (p. ix). I also know from Edward Said's (1995) Afterward to the 1995 print of his book *Orientalism* that he has had a similar pleasure in listening, uninvited, to the early inter-Orientalist pronouncements and discussions, and in making his scholastic response known to both westerners and non-westerners (p. 336). Although he has to put up with the unalterable fact that he cannot argue face to face with those long dead Orientalists and to let them "say what they said in the way they did" (ibid: 41), Said still wants to celebrate his personal traversing, delayed or not, between the East-West divide, "a procedure of crossing, rather than maintaining barriers" (ibid: 336-337). I too, as a Chinese gooseberry, should celebrate my own grafting into the field of the West, and yet retain organic connection with the place I originally grew up.

Before celebrating my own process of traversal, I anticipate some of the potential criticisms. When I write the paper in English, cite western scholars' works, and adopt western radical discourses, I am consciously aware that my work will be no longer accepted

as authentically Chinese by the Chinese at home, and that my paper will be better received and understood in my adopted country than my motherland. I confirmed my fear of rejection when reading Wang Ning's (1997a, 1997b) critical notes on postcolonial theorists such as Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha. As a Chinese scholar from the Peking University, Wang does not identify with any of these scholars. While discussing the role of non-western academics in western countries, Wang holds a strong cynical position towards Said:

> "on the one hand, as an Oriental descendent, he has all the time been recollecting the once-powerful Orient in history, feeling sad about its disappearance; on the other hand, as a high-ranking scholar in the West, he cannot help feeling proud of himself, especially qualified to deal with the 'Orient' as an 'other' which is unfamiliar to mainstream Western scholarship but with which he has countless ties". (Wang, 1997b:59).

In another article, Wang generalizes his criticism of Said to postcolonialism in general:

> "On the one hand, they always promote their academic research by constantly criticizing Western culture and theory from their unique perspective; on the other hand, they cannot escape the shadow of Western discourse and Western influence now that they live in the West and use exclusively ... the English language... So to Third World people they are actually playing a double role: as critics of colonialism in the West and as advocates (and examples) of a sort of neo-colonialism in the East". (Wang, 1997a:39)

Unsurprisingly, Wang disproves the appropriatness of postcolonial theories in analyzing the Chinese cultural context. As a western critical discourse, he states, the political tendency of these theories is often compromising and uncertain, and thus cannot represent

the interest of Oriental and Third World intellectuals (Wang, 1997a:35). Although Wang primarily addresses his criticisms to established postcolonial theories and theorists, I will not be astonished if Wang sees my paper as just another colonized work in which western theories or ways of thinking are borrowed in the reconsidering and reinterpreting of Chinese culture to actually produce still something "other" to the West (Wang, 1997a:43). The discrepancy between Wang's and my position, once again, shows the hybridity and complexity of Chinesehood. Borrowing the concluding message of Chapter Two, Wang's criticism and my thesis *together* constitute a fuller experience, out of which others shall evolve, and before which others existed.

3. Conclusion

My personal acculturation journey parallels a national as well as a worldwide journey of self-strengthening in ex-colonial territories. Counting the length of my stay in New Zealand first in days, then in weeks, months and now in years, I suddenly find myself having passed through the doorway, and more so, become the doorway, an intermediary that has to bear the heavy meanings of the two cultural worlds. This is the point I will be making in the next chapter, and this time I preface my monologue with a poem: the Bridge Poem.

The Bridge Poem
by Donna Kate Rushin

I have had enough
I am sick of seeing and touching
Both sides of things
Sick of being the damn bridge for everybody

Nobody
Can talk to anybody
Without me
Right?

I explain my mother to my father my father to my little sister
My little sister to my brother my brother to the white feminists
The white feminists to the Black church folks the Black church folks
To the ex-hippies the ex-hippies to the Black separatists the
Black separatists to the artists the artists to my friends' parents

Then
I have got to explain myself
To everybody

I do more translating
Than the Gawdamn U.N.

Forget it
I am sick of it

I am sick of filling in your gaps

Sick of being your insurance against
The isolation of your self-imposed limitations
Sick of being the crazy at your holiday dinners
Sick of being the odd one at your Sunday Brunches
Sick of being the sole Black friend to 34 individual white people

Find another connection to the rest of the world
Find something else to make you legitimate
Find some other way to be political and hip

I will not be the bridge to your womanhood
Your manhood
Your human-ness

I am sick of reminding you not to
Close off too tight for too long

I am sick of mediating with your worst self
On behalf of your better selves

I am sick
Of having to remind you
To breathe
Before you suffocate
Your own fool self

Forget it
Stretch or drown
Evolve or die

The bridge I must be
Is the bridge to my own power
I must translate
My own fears
Mediate
My own weaknesses

I must be the bridge to nowhere
But my true self
And then
I will be useful

--Cited in Moraga, Cherrie & Anzaldua, Gloria
(1983) (2nd. ed.) (eds.)
This bridge called my back: Writings by radical women of color.
New York: Kitchen Table.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Making of a Chinese Social Scientist – The De-territorization of Chinesehood

1. Introduction

If Said (1995:27) thinks that the life of an Arab Palestinian in America is disheartening, then what should be said about the life of a Chinese in contemporary New Zealand? Let me start my reflection with a series of incidents, which all happened in the Academy. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to scrutinize every aspect of the life of a Chinese New Zealander in response to the opening question, I therefore shall limit my demonstration only to one space, a crucial space.

2. Being the Bridge

2.1   *The Stage of Naiveté*

Until Semester One of 1996, the Academy seemed to be a neutral and pleasant place. Toward the end of Semester One, I was introduced to an AIT student who was conducting research on cross-cultural communication. He interviewed me and asked me to give examples of cross-cultural misunderstandings and conflicts. I remember I could only think of very trivial matters. In responding to his question: "whether you have encountered any overt racism?" I said with all my naiveté: "No, I haven't. New Zealand people are friendly people". At that time, I sincerely believed what I said in the statement because I was so

busy with my study that I had no time to read the paper, listen to the radio or watch the TV in which a great deal of moral panic about the "Instant Kiwis" was on full display. It was not until a year later, that I understood that the year I arrived and my first year in the Academy was when the xenophobic reaction toward the New Asian Immigrants was most heated. Nor did I have any knowledge about the nation's prejudices and discriminations against the old Chinese miners and their descendants, the poll tax, the thumb-printing, the denial of citizenship, and the murdering of the old Chinese miner by the anti-Chinese propagandist Lionel Terry (Ip, 1995; Ng, 1993-1999).

On the other hand, however, I am not all that wrong with my answer. New Zealanders are friendly people as long as the Chinese do not take their jobs, do not bring in Asian diseases, do not eat what they consider pets, do not threaten their white womanhood, do not pollute their green and clean garden cities with opium smoke, do not step out of their places in the market gardens, fruit-shops or laundries, do not mistake their roles as Chinamen and Chinagirls, and do not come in large numbers so the white men can show the generosity of maintaining a racially harmonious state.

2.2   Forms of Racism

The vacuum of my ignorance is not to be kept for very long, since the country's immigration problems have attracted so much public attention that social science lecturers had to incorporate them into their curricula. The first encounter, however, was far too strong. In one lecture in Introductory Sociology in the Semester Two, the class is scheduled to watch a video on South Island skinhead racism. I will never forget that experience. Although the key victims in the video are Indian people, and I cannot recall or pick up anything on Chinese, I instinctually know that we are in the same boat. It was the very first time I was exposed to the brutal and dark side of my adopted country and my unwelcome status as an unconventional immigrant. It was also the very first time I knew that physical differences of the Chinese could attract so much hatred, that people could be seen as a member of a *Race*, that some New Zealanders seriously wished to draw us out of the land, that there were people literally calling us pigs and swine. I came to know all these in an almost face-to-face intensity and vividness as the video continued. I could believe neither my eyes nor my ears. My very first reaction was to be stunned as I had never expected this, and never believed in the inferiority of my people or the superiority of others. Then I was shocked and terrified by the threats of the white supremacists. What

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can I do to pacify the antipathy? Learn more English? Go to beaches more often? Start playing rugby? Observe more New Zealand customs? No, what they despise is what I cannot change: the color of my skin, my hair and my eyes. What could I possibly do in other people's country and other people's classrooms? Would the silent audience sitting around me do anything to stop the abuse of other New Zealanders? In a state of powerlessness and hopelessness, I am choked with tears in the darkness.

I have since developed all the post-traumatic symptoms that I had only become acquainted with psychology textbooks (e.g. Davison & Neale, 1994:158-159). Recalling it. Repressing it. Denying it. Developing amnesia of it. Pretending it has never happened. Today, I discuss it with a detached clarity and calmness, or even treat it as a clinical case. But for years, I was not able to talk about my feelings and thoughts upon viewing the video. And for years, I did not have enough courage to visit the city of Christchurch. Christchurch has a different meaning to me than for other New Zealanders. Even today, I am still not hard enough to watch the video again for the purpose of this thesis. The irrationality of my various phobias can tell about the harm of racism as much as whatever I would conclude had I taken the second look of the video. It is not something that anyone wants to go through again.

However, a year later, I have to go through the same trauma again. By then, I think, as a defensive mechanism, that I am better informed and trained in the social science realm and I could therefore handle the incident more objectively and rationally if I had to face it again. Another video crashes my naiveté again. That video is on recent Asian immigrants, shown in a Social Psychology tutorial. I watch the video with other students and gradually I feel I become the video. I feel like I am being watched for I am the only Asian in the tutorial room. When we start group discussion I feel even more uneasy. When a Pakeha woman asks me if I can share my immigration experience with the group I find myself unable to speak. My silence brings more attention. In the dark Sociology auditorium, I am invisible and powerless. In the small Psychology tutorial, I become visible but still powerless. I even don't have the power to stay invisible, to stay unnoticed, or to be excused from the discussion. I attract the specific attention again because of the unalterable features of my skin, hair, and eyes.

Since then the real phobia starts. I can be never certain about when and where I will lose my cool. I begin to be oversensitive to anything Asian. The remark of a New Zealand-born Chinese cited by Manying Ip (1996:9) also applies to me: "All my life I have always regarded myself as Chinese. Suddenly these last few years I have become Asian." I begin to theorize my emotions and irrationality psychologically and sociologically. I become reticent and watchful. I begin to sit in the back row seat where I can run out of the room unnoticed "just in case".

Often, when nodding to a smiling classmate, some nasty questions flash through my mind: have his or her grandfathers participated in any of those anti-Chinese campaigns? Has his or her father signed the petition to release Lionel Terry? Or did himself or herself, when they were young, sing the "Ching-chong Chinaman" to the children of the local Chinese laundry? Would he or she smile in the same way if I told him or her that I eat duck gizzards? Does he or she greet me to express hospitality to a newcomer, or to conceal his or her hidden contempt, or just a mindless gesture of sociability? Am I in his or her eyes a Chinese immigrant? An unwelcomed alien? Or just another fellow New Zealander in a sense that "we are all New Zealanders"? Even when I go across a zebra line at a busy intersection, I feel intimidated by my own visibility. I do not know whether I feel this way because I am the only one going across the zebra line or because I am the only Asian going across it? Would anyone shout "go home" at me just as someone does to my friend? Would anyone throw stones at me just as someone does to my flatmate? Or anyone runs over me just like Lionel Terry shot old Joe Kum? Being a social scientist, I am only too conscious about the irrationality of my thoughts but I cannot help myself thinking about them. These questions drive me mad and keep me quiet. Borrowing Lin's (1939:264) terminology, that is a rather large morsel for a young and lone woman to swallow, and I don't know if I am strong enough to swallow it.

Before I have swallowed and digested all the complications associated with cross-cultural living, I have to re-experience the trauma whenever my uniqueness elicits curiosity. In the first lesson of Community Psychology, everyone has to introduce themselves to the class. And I am again the only Chinese in the classroom. We first do it in pairs and then in groups. If I had to introduce myself again to the class, I would definitely step out of the classroom. My peers asked me too many questions and made too many compliments that are only for the immigrants: Where do you come from? Which part of China? How long

have you been here? Do you like New Zealand? Had you learnt any English before you came? Your English is good. These questions remind me of my foreignness and visibility to the mainstream classroom. They are the same kind of questions and compliments that I have been taking and answering for the last three odd years. I do not want to see myself take and answer still the same kind of questions in another three years. When can I skip these opening rituals and get straight into some more local and ordinary everyday questions? Five years? Ten years? Twenty years? Or never?

There are still more examples. In the very first lecture of the sociology paper New Zealand Society, the lecturer stirs up the students' sociological imagination by posing a question that is seriously concerning the public: Can Asians drive? Or more politely: Can Asians drive well? In the session on psychological consequences of birth order in the General Psychology class, the tutor insists that I share my experiences as an only child in my extended family back in China to the class. In the session on sexual assault of the Introductory Sociology class, the tutor asks me what a Chinese girl would do if she was raped? In the session on romance and love of Social Psychology, the tutor asks me how do the Chinese love and court? Or while waiting for the bus, someone inquires: "Tell me about China" in roughly five minutes. That is when I want to yell to the world: "I am sick of being the damn bridge for everybody! I am sick of filling in your gaps! I am sick of mediating your womanhood, your manhood or your humanity! I am sick of being different! Leave me alone! Ignore me! Pretend that I am not here! Or that I have never been here!"

3. The Impotence of Western Social Sciences in Theorizing Chinesehood

At the same time, the radical discourses in social sciences are not all that satisfactory. This is a paradox. On the one hand, my differences make me extremely visible; on the other, my uniqueness makes me incredibly invisible. Economic theorists attempt to romanticize the fragile miracle of the East Asian four little dragons (for unknown reasons sometimes this is known to the English readers as the four tigers) and the success of "Confucian capitalists". Labor migration theorists, in the same vein, perpetuate the myth of "modal minority" of the overseas Chinese community, celebrating an imagined upward mobility that overcomes the century-long discrimination. Theorists of ethnic relations continue to classify the Chinese case as an immigration issue rather than as part of the general debates on national identity. Feminists, when discussing footbinding and the

gender implication of the One Child Policy, assume Oriental women to be just another White Women's burden; when not discussing Oriental femininity, mainstream feminists still assume that the white sisterhood can unite all women in the globe. More often than not, China and things Chinese are totally absent from the curricula. All one can expect from western curricula for social sciences is "Chinese exceptionalism" or as Dudbridge (1996) calls it: "the sinification of social science".

> "... the case of China is now used more frequently to test and modify general models, structures and processes of change in areas such as politics and economics. ... If the analyst wishes to present inconsistencies and departures from the general, or from other case studies, as a sign of profound difference and explanatory cultural elements, then China's difference and uniqueness may become still more entrenched." (Hodder, 1999:71)

3.1   Knowing China

You may think that all these theories, speculations, and the curiosity expressed by the class provide greater space and better opportunities for me to introduce my culture and my community. On the contrary, these discourses and curiosity actually disable me and mute my voice. It disables and mutes me in two contradictory ways. On the one hand, I hear the theorists say "We *know* China" in the same way that Orientalists say "We *know* the Orient". Said's works are of crucial value in discussing "the consequences of knowledge" (Said, 1995:32). In the statement that "China is a Third-World country" or "The Chinese are hard-working people", China or Chinese is known as a category, an object that is ontologically stable, and a fact that is epistemologically reducible. Such a category, object or fact is made believable because there has been "history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West" (ibid:5). I mentioned in the beginning of Chapter Two that when I was starting my life in New Zealand, everyone else was in the middle of his or her story. In the former part of these stories they had developed the vocabulary, imagery, and rhetoric to finish the rest of their story telling. China and Chinese is just one element of such prior knowledge. Their knowledge base is so powerful because it has "both an internal consistency and a highly

articulated set of relationship to the dominant culture surrounding it" (ibid: 22). The dominant culture may be evolutionism, liberalism, Marxism, egalitarianism, psychoanalysis, functionalism, scientific racism or capitalism. The hegemony of the knowledge of various "others" overrides not only what some more independent, or more skeptical, story-tellers could say about China and Chinese, but also what a Chinese wants to say about China and Chinese. In short, Orientalism, including western knowledge about China, should be grasped "as a set of constraints upon and limitations of thought" that allow "Europeans to deal with and even to see Orientals [including Chinese] as a phenomenon possessing regular characteristics" (ibid:42). While this knowledge enables them, it disables me, for I bring in a different historical memory and life experience to the story-telling stage.

Apart from some genuine attempt to understand a different culture, there are also power dimensions in this process of making and retaining knowledge. When the American poet Bret Harte makes the truth claim that "The heathen Chinee [sic] is peculiar" (cited in Partington, 1996:327), he implies a superior position of the knowing race over the race to be known. In contrast, the Chinese, under his pen, is made "a subject race, dominated by a race that knows them" (Said, 1995:35). Supremacy is associated with his *knowledge* of China more than with the military or economic power of the state he belongs to. Being confident of his ability to "rise above immediacy", to abstract beyond himself, to penetrate "into the foreign and distant", (ibid:321) that is, to *know*, and to know better than the Chinese can possibly know themselves, Harte and modern Hartes alike, represent China with their dominating frameworks. Such frameworks allow western scholars to dedicate their entire academic life to Sinology or Overseas Chinese studies without going to China, without learning the Chinese language or even without talking to a Chinese. In this sense, knowledge of China, because generated out of strength, *creates* China, Chinese and their world. Because China can be created independently from its actual state, there are one thousand and one Chinas. Just as "there was (and is) a linguistic Orient, a Freudian Orient, a Spenglerian Orient, a Darwinian Orient, a racist Orient" (ibid:23); there has been merchant Marco Polo's China, Jesuit Matteo Rocci's China, idealist Max Weber's China, materialist Karl Marx's China, Mary Gertrude Mason's China, liberalist Archibald Little's China, scientist Josepg Needham's China, communist Edward Snow's China, sinologist John Fairbank's China, to New Zealanders, Robin Hyde's China, and Rewi Alley's China. These China and Chinese are valid as long as the authors think they are. It is such

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arrogance that invalidates anything that I might say as a defensive mechanism. How similar is the study of China to psychoanalysis? What psychiatrists might say to their patients: "You must have wanted to sexually possess your mother. You deny it because you want to repress it, you marry your wife because you want to replace it, you explain your love for your mother as filial piety because you want to rationalize it", Sinologists would say to the Chinese in a similar manner. China studies theorists know about the Chinese just as psychiatrists know about their patients.

3.2   *Wanting to Know China*

On the other hand, I hear another voice saying "China is so different that we know nothing about it." Anything from that remote land or about that peculiar people is deemed to be interesting. Tell us about China, where women are women, where anything can happen: the bound feet, the concubinage, the courtesan, the green tea, the snake meat, the silk and the silkworms, the rice paper, the ginseng roots, the lanterns, the Oriental garden, the emperor, the mandarin ducks, the jasmine, Buddhism, Zen, the future-telling, the ancestor worship, the dragon, the Great Wall, the Forbidden City, the buried army, the Cultural Revolution, the One Child Policy, anything novel, anything different, anything will do. The yearning to preserve pure cultures before they have been corrupted by the force of globalization never ceases. Citing T. E. Lawrence, Needham elaborates the European's "love of the glamour of strangeness" that has been echoing throughout the centuries:

> "Chinese culture is really the only other great body of thought of equal complexity and depth to our own – at least equal, perhaps more, but certainly of equal complexity; because after all, the Indian civilization, interesting though it is, is much more a part of ourselves. ... But Chinese civilization has the overpowering beauty of *the wholly other*; and only the wholly other can inspire the deepest love and the profoundest desire to learn." (Needham, 1979:176, italics mine)

People who express such desire to learn the wholly other often hold another essentialist assumption that nothing can be more legitimate than for a Chinese to talk about China. These people grant me the right to speak for my own culture because of my physical outlook, even though I have never taken such a right for granted. The fact that I am a woman makes me more legitimate to discuss gender issues than a Chinese man. When they ask me questions about things Chinese, they rarely realize that to assume the answer is to speak for 1.3 billion people, a 9.6 million square meter territory, 5 thousand years of history and 56 ethnic nations, plus that, all that has to be done in five minutes. Facing such a curiosity expressed by my New Zealand classmates, teachers, neighbors, or customers over the counter, I often feel tempted to fabricate something totally outlandish about China, and to see if I will be believed; since so many odd things have been said about China, and these things are believed as long as they are said. What my audience is after is not the authenticity of my talk but something non-western, something out-of-the-way, for anything can happen in a remote land, among a strange nation, outside the western world.

3.3   Collecting China

In addition to such sheer curiosity, there is also the urge to collect. In his essay 'On collecting art and culture', James Clifford (1988) discusses collection-making as an appropriationistic act which creates the illusion of adequate representation while helping only to define the collector's self. On the contrary, the collectable, once placed in the museum, suffers a loss of individual identity. It becomes so apparent to me that in China I live as an individual, but in New Zealand I live as a category, a *race*, or an ethnic group, that is, as a collectable of the multicultural zoo. I am expected to play the role of Chinagirl, in the same way as Trinh, T. Minh-ha (1989) is expected:

> "It is as if everywhere we go, we become Someone's private zoo. ... We no longer wish to erase your difference. we demand, on the contrary, that you remember and assert it. ... Now I am not only given the permission to open up and talk, I am also encouraged to express my difference, my audience expects and demands it; otherwise people would feel as if they have been cheated: We did not come to hear a Third World member speak about the First

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World, we came to listen to that voice of difference
likely to bring us what we cannot have and to divert
us from the monotony of sameness." (pp. 82, 88, 89)

The coming of Asian immigrants and Asian cultures to some New Zealanders is like a romantic travel at home: "If we cannot go the Orient, the Orient has come to us". Trinh's and my audience are the same kind of consumers who read *Wild Swans*, *Daughter of Shanghai*, and/or *Seven Years in Tibet*. They may also be interested in watching martial art films and/or Zhang, Yi-mou's films such as *Red Sorghum*, and *Raise the Red Lantern*. They may also seriously practice several oriental spiritualities, and regularly visit ethnic restaurants. They may also be inspired by the calligraphic characters printed on T-shirts, scarves, candleholders, fashion bags, cushions, coffee mugs or duvet covers, and collect them to create an oriental atmosphere in households that have exhausted all western interior styles. However, they do not care about the meaning of the characters, whether they are Korean, Japanese or Chinese, for all these Far Eastern characters look alike to one another but look different from the too rational, too familiar alphabetic European language.

In their book *Orientalism: Visions of the East in Western Dress*, Martin and Koda (1994) trace the entering of Orientalism into the "hyperbolic vocabulary of postmodern design" (p. 33). A postmodern designer can allow a draped sleeve to suggest Ali Baba, add a zebra pattern to evoke North Africa, a pagoda-shaped hat to imitate ancient China, or a paper parasol to signal Japan, but seldom does he/she define the garment so that one can connect to a specific time and place (ibid:51). Whether it is Chinoiserie, Japonisme or Turquerie is no longer important, the new paradigm of dress requires no specific anthropological origins but a style that justly belongs to the world, or a picture everywhere yet nowhere (ibid:13, 77). Wearing such attire is more than a frivolous and fanciful act, but an imperial gesture, a gesture signifying worldly knowledge (ibid: 17). It is the habit of the West to combine and generalize the various Easts. Saris and dhotis from India, kimonos from Japan, cheongsam from China, ikat and pantallons from the Middle East, sarongs from Thailand – these intact cultural elements become the raw materials of a cooked western end product to enable the body transference of western consumerism. If mere collection is assimilation, leveling the idiosyncratic to be similar to one another; then, the combination and generalization in fashion design is fabrication, creating a familiar other without the

others' approves or acknowledgments. Such fabrication is prevailing in textile and decorative arts because in fashion art "there is neither East nor West", but "the ends of the earth" (Rudyard Kipling's verse, cited in Partington, 1996:398). Orientalism in western fashion is always an unquenchable dream and an unending journey.

Moreover, such postmodern fabrication is also evident in other areas of contemporary culture. In his seminal essay "Postmodernism and consumer society", Fredric Jameson (1983) lists *Chinatown* (1974) as an example of the nostalgia film. In the imitation of dead styles through the voices or masks from museums, in the failure of the new and the imprisonment of the past, another media theorist Marchetti argues that "*Chinatown* does not even pretend to try to evoke an actual place, but, rather, it conjures up an image, an imaginary construct of past representations from other mass-mediated sources" (Marchetti, 1993:202). Moreover,

> "In fact, bits and pieces of anachronistic representations of Chinatown figure prominently in many postmodern films. Removed from their original historical contexts and drained of meaning, "yellow peril" clichés coexist with antiracist discourses, anachronistic opium peddlers interact with urban reformers. Chinatown functions as pure style with neon dragons, pop songs, lion dances, and displays of martial artistry, forming a part of postmodern popular iconography." (pp. 202-203)

It is against such a background picture of the "hyperreal Third World" or of "domesticated otherness", I can better understand my New Zealand acquaintance's curiosity and questions about China and the Chinese. It is from a position in the middle of the global McDonaldization of cultural icons, that a Pakeha student asks me to talk about China at the bus station in the same way as she scans through the fast-food menu while waiting at the drive-through pass.

4. Bicultural Constitution versus Multicultural Reality

From the "wholly other" (Needham, 1976:176) to the "comfortable other" (Spivak, 1989: 275), the Chinagirl, alongside the Japanese geisha, the Philippine maids, and the Thai prostitutes, remains nameless. Such "absent presence" in Spivak's term, or "the invisibility of visibility" in my own term, is made literate by the bicultural constitution in this country. The Treaty of Waitangi is at the basis of the bicultural nature of Aotearoa/New Zealand in which there are two peoples in one state. Within this context, the Treaty establishes the legitimacy of Pakeha presence over all subsequent immigrants, and suggests that Maori are British subjects should be absorbed into the body politic of British New Zealand. In her article "(in)visible bodies? Immigrant bodies and constructions of nationhood in Aotearoa/New Zealand", Rodhika Mohanram (1998) elaborates on how the official rhetoric of biculturalism denies the multicultural reality. Under the aegis of biculturalism, Mohanram argues that, the bodies of Maori and Pakeha are assimilated and represented as that of the New Zealander. The dilemma is this: either the Treaty can only legitimise the presence of people of British ancestry in New Zealand or biculturalism, as it is predicated on Maori/Pakeha relations, cannot hinge on the Treaty. Therefore, Mohanram concludes that this "slippage from Treaty to Pakeha to whiteness reveals that biculturalism as it is now conceived is predicated not on British affiliation, but on race – whiteness and blackness that does not extend beyond the Maori" (p. 27). It is precisely within this notion of biculturalism that the non-white, non-indigenous New Zealander is disavowed.

Although indigenous people and immigrant people share an historical understanding of western imperialism, each has a different project of reterritorialization. The indigenous seeks to reinvent their subjectivities by renegotiating the past and rightfully asserting their association with the landscape. In contrast, the immigrants attempt to renegotiate their identities between home and exile, experiencing marginalization on two fronts: as outsider to the indigenous, and as racial Other to white settlers (Jaber, 1998). Chinese immigrants, when unexpectedly exposed to the Treaty debate, feel like an unwelcome guest witnessing a familial quarrel. Most of them will shrug it off as most Pakeha still do. However, as a social science student, the Treaty issue is part of my curricula. I do not deny that at one time or another I wish to skip these classes. It is not only because I have to struggle with the Maori words that cannot be found in my English-Chinese dictionary, but also because I have to wait for so many sessions before we can get on to immigration issues. Even in the

immigration session, often the last session, the bulk of the space is given to Pacific Islanders, while "the Chinese" is tucked into one or two supplementary articles for after-lecture reading. The fact that "the Chinese" is included in the curricula at all is because their "wholly otherness" and their attracted antipathy serve as a perfect example of the "alien immigrant". Jewish, Indian, British, South African or Dalmatian students will be even more disappointed because their nations are not even mentioned in the class, for they are not different enough.

Having internalized the essentialist conception of biculturalism, I argue, with a good faith, in an essay that we, as new comers, should respect the country's historical choice (Yuan, 1998). In the light of the outrage and alienation expressed by many non-Maori, non-Pakeha immigrants towards biculturalism (e.g. Wittmann, 1998), what I have actually done is to repeat an old reminder to fellow Chinese: "know your place". If in a monocultural society our place is on the periphery; in a bicultural society our place is nowhere. Just as my essay reflects my own uneasiness about my identity in a foreign land, Manying Ip (1995) points out that "mainstream New Zealanders' wariness towards the new Asian immigrants is but a manifestation of their own fundamental unease about their identity" (p. 199). That uneasiness derives from the country's fundamental conflict between her historical heritage with the British Empire and the geo-economic realities of her position within the Asian Pacific Rim. The physical presence of the new Asian immigrants is a constant reminder of this conflict, to which many people are not yet ready to face up to (ibid).

The communal dislocation felt by overseas Chinese also operates on an individual level. My idiosyncratic circumstances make me extremely invisible in the normal range of social science inquiry. In the countable literature on New Zealand Chinese, Chinese and non-Chinese researchers concentrate either on the old settlers or the new influx of professionals and entrepreneurs. People coming to the country in other categories are largely left out of the scope. I have not yet spotted anything, a line or two, written about the sub-community that my mother belongs to, let alone about their children. Bringing neither skill nor money, I for a long time feel that I don't deserve to be here, and feel the urge to justify to myself why I am here and how I am here. Moreover, despite the researchers' sensitivity of the regional effects of Hongkongese, Taiwanese and the early Cantonese generations, no one has yet paid any attention to Shanghainese. Most research tucks Chinese from different parts of China into the all-inclusive category: Mainland Chinese, in

which the provincial stamps of Shanghai, Beijing and other coastal or inland cities of China are conflated. Besides the regional differences, there is also an age difference. The subjects of the research, professionals and entrepreneurs, are often in their thirties or forties, while I have just begun my twenties. I am too young to be one of the wealthy "astronauts" and too old to be their "home alone" children. I am neither a checkbook immigrant, nor a walking money bag, nor a winning applicant of the Point System, nor an international student. Defining myself in these negative terms, I become a no-body. As a no-body, I fit no-where. My uniqueness renders my loneliness in the world of social sciences. Nor can I go back to the doorway to share my loneliness with my own people (refer to Illustration Four) because they are either unable to discuss it in sociological terms, or unable to appreciate the significance of ethnicity in my personal and academic life.

5. Revisiting the Quilt

Nonetheless, because I am already here, I have to be somebody somewhere. If I hadn't done social science studies, I would never have known the nasty details of institutional racism, social stratification, assimilation, imperialism, and internal colonialism. Without this disturbing knowledge I would stay ignorant but cheerful. But once I have learned it, I cannot unlearn it. I have forever lost my naiveté. When I came to this country, I brought a quilt with me. Over the years, this social science knowledge added to the weight of the quilt. As the weight of the quilt grew, the carrier of the quilt also grew. Maybe it is not so much about myself, but something about the quilt. Maybe it is not myself that makes me somebody, but my quilt does. When myself takes me somewhere, my quilt drags me otherwise. It is time now for me to go back to my quilt and to find out more.

5.1   Discovering Han Chauvinism

After all, I realize that I am no longer a Shanghainese to the rest of the Chinese. To most New Zealanders, I am like a Su-bei people to Shanghainese, or a Nazarethan to Hebrews. In terms of my physical and cultural differences to Pakeha New Zealanders and Maori New Zealanders, my role is more of a Manchurian Chinese to the Han Chinese. Only having been put into the shoes of the Other, do I begin to understand – as the first constructive effect of my acculturation journey – the plights of ethnic minorities in China, particularly the case of the Manchurian. Being a former imperial ruler, the Manchurian is always subject to the cynicism of Han chauvinism. When reviewing some of the popular

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novels, movies, and opera plays that are based on legendary narrative, I begin to develop more insights into the racist discourses that had previously gone unrecognized.

The cynicism of Han chauvinism towards the barbarian rulers is semi-consciously underwritten in all the scandalous legends about the Manchurian court. Tales of Manchurian Emperors, Empresses, princes and princesses have been an ever-lasting theme in popular culture. I was a loyal consumer of these Royal stories, both historical and fictional. Like others of the Han audience, I derived pleasure from things Manchurian: the *changsham* dress, the *chignon* hairstyle for women, the queue for men, and the few fashionable Manchurian words. Consuming these images was not only an escape from ordinary life, but also from ordinary history. These tales were made intelligible to me via the Han performers or authors in Chinese. In only one film that I saw had I actually heard a few sentences of the Manchurian language. In these opera dramas, folk art performances, love novels, martial art novels, poems, TV series, the Manchurian Other became a spectacle through which historical paradoxes and complications could be melted into air, or a screen onto which forbidden desires and fear could be projected. Consuming things Manchurian elicits pleasure to both modern Han and Manchurian through a collective reconstruction of an internalized other, something familiarly different. It is when and where we Han can Orientalize the Manchurian ruler, racialize their men and women, represent their culture, re-create their history, and after all rationalize our submission to them.

Similar to what Marchetti (1993) identifies from the Hollywood portrayal of Asia, interracial sexuality is also a strong theme in these Manchurian tales. Given the limited space here, I choose three legends to make my point. The rise of these three legends marks three stages of the Han Captive Complex. The first legend is about the mother of the first Emperor of the Manchurian regime, the Empress Xiaozhuang. It is said that she re-married her husband's brother. It is also said that the same Empress had sexually enticed a Han high-ranking captive to surrender to the Manchurian regime with her husband's knowledge. The savage woman had turned our men into traitors. Here, the moral laxity of this Empress, of her husband and her son, and of her husband's brother forms a sharp contrast to the chaste widowhood worshipped by the Han Confucian scholars. Sexuality overwrites the political role that this minority heroine had actually played in history. The Han storyteller domesticates the savage female into a familiar category for Han women:

You-wu (women as beautiful but dangerous things). The notion of *You-wu* serves a pivot point that bridges the Han chauvinism toward the Manchurian woman with male chauvinism towards women in general as examined in western feminists' work. Just as Freud believes that "penis envy" makes women "hostile to" and "in opposition to civilization" (Freud, 'Civilisation and its discontents', cited in Pateman, 1994:108), Hegel believes that when the everlasting irony in the life of the community, that is, women, "hold the helm of government, the state is at once in jeopardy" (Hegel, 'the phenomenology of mind', ibid), Rousseau believes that "the disorder of women" engenders all the vices that perish a people (Rousseau, 'Politics and the arts', ibid). The word "disorder" is used in a dual sense in both the arguments of western social or political theorists and the folk story of the Manchurian Empress. More specifically, the socio-political sense of civil disruption overlaps the individual sense of bodily-mental malfunction in the image of a lusty woman politician who is subject to her boundless sexual passion (Pateman, 1994:108).

If the first legend rejects the legitimacy of the alien ruler by condemning their femininity, the second legend makes one step closer to acceptance of it through a symbolic sinolization of the Manchurian Emperor. The protagonist is the Empress's son, Emperor Shunzhi. It is said that he fell in love with a Han courtesan, Dong Xiaowan. If Xiaozhuang embodies the entire Manchu as something with excessive energy, sensuality and terror, then Dong embodies the Han as a passively resisting victim, violated yet impenetrable. The idea behind this story is that if we cannot resist the barbarian ruler, at least our women can resist the love of the barbarian men. One important reason that Dong should never engage in a willing romance with the Emperor was that she was already married to a well-known Han scholar as a concubine. Therefore, the honor of her husband's family is contaminated as long as her chastity is contaminated. Dong, as humble as a courtesan, represents the superior Han morality over the barbarian aristocrats, both men and women. The storyteller gives the Han woman the charge to include and exclude the foreign, the alien through her sexuality. Dong is said to be forced to die by the Empress Xiaozhuang. The death of this Han woman preserves her chastity as well as elevates and ennobles the Manchurian man by perpetuating his love for her as pure and holy. What is even more dramatic is that after the death of Dong, Emperor Shunzhi decided to forsake his status as emperor to become a monk. Becoming a Buddhist or Taoist monk was a common practice for Han scholars in times of dynastic change. The Manchurian emperor's retreating to an

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unworldly role in a Han manner, to many Han audiences, signals a silent gesture to give up the right to rule the Middle Kingdom.

If the second legend spiritually assimilates the Manchurian protagonist to adopt Han values, the third legend physically transforms him to be a male Han, a legitimate ruler. It is said that the Emperor Yongzheng, when he was still a prince, exchanged his new born daughter with a Han official's new born son as a well-planned conspiracy because he was not able to bear a male heir himself. This Han boy later became Emperor Qianlong. Qianlong' six tours to the Southern part of the Yangzi River is said to be an intermittent search for his biological father, also as a metaphorical search for his real cultural roots and racial identity as a disguised Han. This self-deceiving narrative appeals to generations of Hans because the implication that since the fourth emperor of the Qing Dynasty, we Han had regained our kingdom through the paradoxical figure of Qianlong, a Han Emperor of a Manchurian Empire. The body of Qianlong unifies the conquer and the conquered, and thus rationalizes the full acceptance of the Manchurian regime. The choice of Emperor Qianlong was deliberate because he was, after Emperor Kangxi, the most successful ruler throughout the Dynasty. A Han Emperor has to be a good Emperor.

All of these legends are fictional; deriving from ignorance of Manchurian customs and historical facts. If western Orientalism of the Arabic world reflects the actual economic and military supremacy of the Occident over the Orient, being a conquered nation, the Han had nothing left but moral superiority over their Barbarian captor. However, nearly a century after the fall of the Manchurian Empire (1911), tales of Manchu are still in fashion. Despite the originality of these later narratives, the framework stays the same: the monologue of Chinese, the well-sinolized Manchurian Court and aristocracy, the quotation of Chinese literature and idiom, the realization of a Confucian ideal of society evolve alongside the exotic costume, novel Manchurian words, mystical witch dance, the interspersion of even more exotic Tibetan and Muslim princesses altogether helping to perpetuate the images of familiar others.

5.2   Reappreciating Essentialism

The second beneficial effect of being an Other is that understanding more and more about the western world only makes me become more and more Chinese. That is, I begin to discover more of my own cultural capital that was largely ignored in the past. Having had

the comedic language lessons, I appreciate more of the solemn and rigorous approach of language teaching in China. Having lived in mixed flats, I rely more on the familial solidarity of my own household. Having raised my speaking and written English skill to the academic level, I want to keep up my Chinese to the same standard. Having sung numerous English hymns, I still immerse myself deeper in the few Chinese melodies handed down to this date. Having read Psalms and other English poetry, it is still the five or seven-metred Chinese poems that really touch my heart. Having typed English all day on the computer, I wish I could start practicing Chinese calligraphy again. Having been disappointed by positivist western medicine, I now only go to Chinese herbalists for healing.

The most remarkable experience is the encounter with New Zealand born Chinese. At a Dunedin based Conference on Overseas Chinese, I meet with and talk with an everyone-knows-everyone-else community of New Zealand Chinese descendants. All of a sudden, the figures in Manying Ip's books *Home Away From Home* and *Dragons on the Long White Cloud* come to life. But they are more than just research subjects to me. During the interactions I almost surrender to the position that there is something *essential* that makes all of us culturally Chinese. Even though they express their ideas in English, they remind me strongly of my aunts and uncles in China. My aunts and uncles would have said the same things to me with the same body language in Chinese. They display a sense of humor that is too familiar to neglect. They preserve an honest enthusiasm for food that cannot be possibly nurtured in a western culture that does not even have a native word for cuisine. I discover such affinity again and again despite the fact that they were brought up in a different hemisphere, that they have undergone bitter assimilation in a bicultural society, that their connection with the Chinese history stops around the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) or the Civil War (1945-1949), that most of them are not able to speak more than ten Chinese words and write more than five Chinese characters.

All these changes inevitably make me think that a Chinese is essentially a Chinese, that Chinese is an essential part of our identity that is ultimately unalterable. As a social scientist, I am always skeptical about essentialism. As a member of the "inferior" sex and an "inferior" race, I have developed even more disgust and suspicion about such a concept that contributes so heavily to my multilateral forms of disadvantage. While the social scientist part of me refutes the truth claims of essentialism, the everyday part of me urges

me to hold on to a black-and-white solution to the dilemma "to be Chinese" or "not to be Chinese". When I indulge myself in a Yum Cha restaurant, watch an opera VCD (Video CD), reiterate a Tang Dynasty verse, I can no longer firmly state that essentialism is cultural redundant. Instead, I am almost tempted to believe that there is something in my nerves, my genes, my blood vessels that determines the nature of my senses, my thoughts, my feelings and my behavior, just as it determines the color of my eyes. Having said that, however, there is nothing essential in a Chinese going to Yum Cha, for I had never had Yum Cha in Shanghai. And there is nothing essential in a Chinese watching VCDs for VCD is the kind of electronic accessory rooted in western technology. And still there is nothing essential in a Chinese reiterating a Tang Dynasty verse for thousands of overseas Chinese do not even speak Chinese let alone any Chinese poem. While I think that I have become more and more Chinese, I have to acknowledge the fact that my sense of being a Chinese is no longer the same as it was when I was in Shanghai China. In Shanghai, I would be more likely to treat myself with river fishes and the triple-yellow-chicken (a special species of free-range chicken exclusive to Shanghai) than Yum Cha. I would be more likely to go to theaters to watch live opera performances than watch VCDs.

6. Other Bridges

The last few years of my immigration life have formed a circle, starting from the Chinese culture and coming back to the culture, although it is not the same culture that I knew six years ago. To generalize, my spiral personal pilgrimage parallels the national journey described in Pearl Buck's introduction to Lin, Yu-tang's book about China and Chinese. Writing in 1939, she opens the historical picture with this very first line:

> "One of the most important movements in China
> to-day is the discovery of their country by young
> Chinese intellectuals." (p. vii)

She then summarizes on the circular journey of discovery accomplished by two generations of Chinese:

> "A generation ago the most progressive of their
> fathers were beginning to feel a stirring discontent
> with their own country. ... ... In this atmosphere of

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change, the present intellectual youth of China has grown up. ... ... Intellectually they have been forced to the same great omissions that China has made physically. ... ... Then followed a period of despair and frenzy and increased idealistic worship of the West. ... It was a time when the inferiority complex was rampant in China, and the young patriots were divided between mortification at what their country was and desire to conceal it from foreigners. ... ... What would have happened if the West had continued prosperous and at peace cannot be said. It is enough that the West did not so continue. The Chinese have viewed with interest and sometimes with satisfaction the world war, the depression, the breakdown of prosperity, and the failure of scientific men to prevent these disasters. They have begun to say to themselves that after all China is not so bad. ... perhaps China was right in olden times, and perhaps it is just as well to go back and see what the old Chinese philosophy was." (pp. vii-ix)

6.1   The Bridge of Lin, Yu-tang

The book that Buck is introducing to us is one of those confident reflectionary notes on Chinese culture by the western-trained scholar Lin, Yu-tang. Better than any experimental arrangement in a laboratory, I come to read the book just at the right time of my acculturation, a time when I have come back to re-examine the Chinese culture. By now I can agree heartily with Lin that the western pursuit of Reason and Progress will bring more harm than enlightenment because I have an entire body of critical discourses and postmodern disenchantment to back me up. I am too, glad to read that the characteristics that Lin defines as Chineseness are mellowness, patience, pacifism, contentment and conservatism because I have heard too many sensational rumors about the awakened Yellow Peril. I am thoroughly arrested by Lin's flowing, gracious and humorous writing style because western textbooks and journal articles have never taught me alternative ways

of expressing alternative cultures. Any good book about China is a guide to re-visit, re-discover, and re-experience my own culture. There are always aspects of my culture that are too familiar to make a fuss about. There are also aspects of my culture that have been forgotten, gone unrecognized, or deliberately hidden, until brought to my attention by people like Lin.

Reading Lin's work also helps me to link my own experience with the national history. When Lin reminds me that:

> "A Chinese never writes a treatise of ten thousand, or even five thousand, words to establish a point. He puts down only a note about it, leaving it to be sustained or disproved by posterity on its intrinsic merit." (p. 84)

I then understand why I find writing up a 35,000 word thesis as not only physically draining, intellectually challenging, but also spiritually discouraging. When Lin identifies that

> "With the profound intellectual upheaval that is going on in Young China's minds, we have ... [shown] great sensitiveness toward foreigners in revealing anything Chinese, which simply means a lack of self-confidence. ... ... there is probably as little real independence of thinking as there ever was in old 'China'... These are the ugly features of the period of transition, and they in time will wear off, when China becomes politically better organized, and its soul has less sensitive spots. (p. 265)

I then understand that, just like my motherland disorients itself in the middle of a transition, I cannot get along with other ethnic groups because I cannot get along with myself. Lin has also offered a prospect that when I become more confident about myself and my "quilt", I will be less likely to care about what people say, to imitate the "mainstream", or to hide my quilt. One day I will be able to laugh off the 1870 statement

"The heathen Chinee is peculiar" as easily as the 2000 years old Confucius statement *"Only the women and the villain are hard to deal with"*. When Lin unfolds that

> "We eat crabs by preference, and often eat barks by
> necessity. ... ... unless we are honest about it [i.e.
> eating as joy] we will never be able to lift eating and
> cooking into an art. ... ... We are unashamed of our
> eating. ... ... The Chinese accept food as they accept
> sex, women and life in general." (pp. 317-321)

I then understand that, despite his sexist language, behind the success of Overseas Chinese in the catering trade, there is a profound national history of food ways. It is with such unhypercritical philosophy that the Chinese have exhausted every possible way of cooking a single ingredient, and transformed every part of an animal's body into a delicious dish.

But when Lin pictures that

> "Amidst wars and pestilence, surrounded by her
> poor children and grandchildren, Merry Old China
> quietly sips her tea and smiles on, and in her smile I
> see her real strength." (p. 6)

I am left with nothing to comment or react to, but am absolutely stunned by the power of his imagination and expression. Lin, like many other great Chinese, serves as a role model to me. Since the late Nineteenth Century, changing global political relations gave western writers the license to drop the manner of the polite guest. When western governments no longer felt the need to deal politely with the Chinese government, western writers often no longer felt the need to write as though they had been well-treated guests who should only say nice things about their host. Consequently, almost every aspect of China and her inhabitants were made objects of laughter by westerners (Ebrey, 1999). The Chinese have no Protestant work ethic, no real religion, no individuality, no liberty, no egalitarianism, no social mind, no privacy, no capitalism, no science, no oil-painting, no piano, neither sense of humour nor of beauty, they do not even have an alphabet. Many of these sarcastic remarks are still circulating in the present day. Lin's book is very much a

Chinese's response to the western abuse. With his fine pen he draws a positive China, a China that is defined in its own terms, rather than in terms of what it lacks. The way he presents his understanding of our country and our people, mellow, gracious, humorous and confident, is as equally arresting as the content. It is only against such a positive sense of nationhood that one can develop a positive selfhood.

Responding to the stricture that Chinese lack the western character of strength, courage and "guts", Lin presents the Chinese character in a "vision of mature man [sic] of mellow temperament" who is "at peace with himself [sic] under all circumstances, building for strength and endurance rather than progress and conquest" (Lin, 1939, pp. 40, 42). Responding to the stricture that China cannot step out of infantilism and stagnation, Lin replaces these terms with "a prolonged childhood" to summarize the potential adaptability, flexibility and pristineness (ibid:38). Responding to the stricture that the Chinese are unsophisticated, Lin treasures the "simplicity" as a great word among the Greeks and the Chinese since it is the ideal of simplicity that instructs the Chinese to enjoy the fewer things that they have rather than to invent more things but less time to enjoy them (ibid:96). Responding to the stricture that China lacks specialization, Lin states that "Chinese education emphasizes the development of the all-around man [sic], and Chinese scholarship emphasizes the unity of knowledge. ... where they fail in analysis, they achieved in synthesis" (ibid:230). Responding to the stricture that the Chinese mind lacks masculine qualities, Lin openly matches the analogy between the Chinese mind and the feminine mind that is full of healthy common sense, synthetic, concrete and intuitive, ideal to solve the problem of happiness rather the problem of progress (ibid:76). Responding to the stricture that the Chinese do not know self-assertion, Lin predicts that after another century of hot-heated progress, and restless self-assertion, the West will outgrow its youthful rawness and to learn to take a more tolerant view of life and of each other, for tolerance is the greatest quality of Chinese culture, and tolerance will "become the greatest quality of modern culture, when that culture matures" (ibid:56). Responding to the stricture that the Chinese is unconcerned about progress, Lin claims that "[a] younger civilization may be keen on making progress, but an old civilization, having seen naturally a great deal of life, is keen only on living" (ibid:307). Responding to the stricture that the Chinese does not treasure time, Lin describes how "[w]e do not ache to reach the foot of the mountain when we are in the middle of the lake, and we do not ache to be at the top of the hill when we are at its foot. We drink what wine there is in the pot and enjoy what

scenery there is before our eyes" (ibid:327). Responding to the stricture that Chinese do not have a sense of humor, Lin illustrates how the Chinese look upon the drama of human life as a comedy show (ibid:68). Responding to the stricture that the Chinese is indifferent, Lin reminds his readers that "behind the Chinese flat, unemotional face is concealed a deep emotionalism, and behind his sullen, decorous appearance resides a carefree, vagabond soul" (ibid:272). Responding to the stricture that China lacks legal systems, Lin suggests that "Chinese justice is an art, not a science" (ibid:77). Responding to the stricture that China lacks political stability, Lin emphasizes cultural stability and familial solidarity. "... rulers may come and rulers may go, but the Chinese families will remain Chinese families" (ibid:33). "They wanted survival for their families, and they achieved it for their nation" (ibid:37). Responding to the stricture that China lacks industrial development, Lin articulates that "the rural mode of life was always regarded as the ideal" (ibid:33). It is the Chinese instinct that guides us "to choose the agricultural civilization, to hate mechanical ingenuity and love the simple ways of life, to invent the comforts of life without being enslaved by them, and to preach from generation to generation in their poetry, painting and literature the "return to the farm" (ibid:34). Responding to the stricture that China lacks Science, Lin sneers at the "stupid drudgery" of empirical research and tortuous analysis and asserts that the Chinese common sense and intuition is perhaps much healthier (ibid:84). Responding to the stricture that the Chinese lacks Reason, Lin elaborates on reasonableness, the double appeal to external reason *and* to flexible human nature (ibid:85). Responding to the stricture that China lacks long epics, Lin announces that "Chinese poetry is consummate in the art of sublimation, suggestion and artistic restraint. The poet does not try to say all he [sic] has to say. His business is but to evoke a picture, making a pen sketch by a few swift, clear strokes" (ibid:235) and leaves the rest to the reader's imagination. Responding to the stricture that Chinese novels lack structured plots, Lin suggests that "the tempo of the Chinese novel reflects very well the tempo of Chinese life. It is enormous, big and variegated and is never in a hurry. The novel is avowedly created to kill time, and when there is plenty of time to kill and the reader in no hurry to catch a train, there is no reason why he [sic] must hurry to the end" (ibid:263).

6.2   *The Bridge of Yu, Qiu-yu*

Nearly seventy years slipped between Lin's time and my time. Some of Lin's representations no longer reflect contemporary Chinese life. Neither I nor Lin misunderstand China, because China is changing just as we are changing. In the past seven

decades, the Chinese have managed to industrialize and specialize in many areas, produce some of the world's best scientists and capitalists, compose many short novels and long poems, and thereby change our outlook. Notwithstanding, there is one core quality the Chinese have not yet changed. That is, pacifism. The biggest irony is for the previous colonizers of China and the current imperialists of the Asian Pacific rim, America and Japan, to accuse China of being militarily and politically dangerous. This resurgence of the Yellow Peril myth, when read psychoanalytically, is a defensive rhetoric to compensate for the frustration generated by the declining dominance of old colonial power and to project the imperialists' continue international hegemony onto their ex-victim that has never good at evangelism. In this vein, China has been a problem, or even a disaster, to the United States of America because, firstly, China's revolutionary order contradicts the western cultural values:

> "China has been a problem because she was a different type of society, outside the Western scheme of things, a mature state organized on fundamentally different principles. Her enormous size, bigger than all the rest of East Asia together, meant that her culture and way of life could not be obliterated. But essentially her problem was not of size but of difference." (Fairbank, 1958:11)

Such great disparities in values between China and America and the West in general, will tend to keep the two worlds apart indefinitely. Furthermore, not only China, but the Asian half of humankind is entering upon an era of change which the West has precipitated but which they cannot control (Fairbank, 1958:5). What a regret: "the century during which the Chinese had to learn to live in our Western world is past" (ibid:320). That is what concerns the American politicians the most. Therefore, Fairbank reminds his fellow countrymen that:

> "Our China problem is fundamentally one of values, and this is what involves our feelings." (ibid:4)

And later,

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> "More broadly, our problem in China is only
> the forefront of our problem in all of Asia."
> (ibid:5)

Worse still, the revolutionary change has not led China to capitalism but to communism. Since 1949, China represents both the evil of communism and the evil of the Yellow Peril, to which the capitalist West fear losing their ascendancy in economic and military power, or at least, their bargaining power. Stalemated by narrow loyalties and embalmed in domestic party politics, the American China policy has been no more creative than their original reaction to it. Nearly ten years after the founding of The People's Republic of China, Fairbank still records that:

> "In avoiding this intellectual effort we have
> attributed the rise of Communism in China to
> Kremlin plots, to wrong policies in Washington, to
> treachery among ourselves, even ... to the
> machinations of professors, paying no attention to
> the brutal facts of life in China where the
> Communist take-over actually occurred. (ibid:1)

To this end, the rise of Communism ruptures once again the fragile fabric of international order in the Far East that is contrary to the Westerner's crude assumptions. The American response to the new China has less to do with the welfare of the Chinese people but more to do with their own hegemony in the Asian Pacific Rim:

> "A totalitarian China seems to threaten the future of
> our way of life. Must the densely populated,
> underdeveloped peasant-bureaucratic societies of the
> East all go Communist?" (ibid:318)

Still thinking in terms of a contrived rather than real Communist take-over, "our loss of China", "our China problem" or that "we should never have permitted it", American senators rarely realize that the American people had no adequate solution for China's problems before 1949, nor have they now (ibid:2). A hostile attitude towards China runs

the risk of creating a self-fulfilling prophecy – treat China as an enemy and it may become one (Ross, 1997:33). That is why Fairbank had to spend pages and pages of elaboration before he could convince his American readers of the bold statement that "the first step toward the truth is to acknowledge the historical fact that it is the west who invaded China not China invaded the West" (Fairbank, 1958: 432). And it is also why Hodder (1999) urges western politicians to give China more space in international affairs, to encourage and engage China with more equality and respect for China should be given free rein to construct its own stylized images.

Paralleling these exhortations from western sinologists, there should be some voices from the Chinese side, from another Lin, Yu-tang of the Twenty-First Century. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to scrutinize all the contemporary arguments about Chinesehood developed by Chinese scholars. Among these scholars I will only introduce one brilliant writer, and among whose fruitful insights I will quote the re-interpretation of only one symbol of China.

The writer is Yu, Qiu-yu and the symbol is the Great Wall. There are at least three reasons for me to choose Yu, Qiu-yu. First, although Yu's work is presented in Chinese and mainly to the Chinese mass, he aspires to see or to produce "great works that not only contain the real pith of Chinese culture, but also deeply touch other cultural groups of the world" (Yu, 1999: 401, translation mine). Second, although Yu is not western-trained in the same sense as Lin is western-trained (i.e. graduating from a missionary college), he has traveled worldwide and actively engaged in cultural dialogue with Japanese, English and non-English speaking scholars. In his recent work *A Sigh for Each Millennium* (2000), he reinterprets the survival of Chinese culture, for himself as well as for the nation, not only in the light of the success of western culture but also of the collapse of other ancient cultures. Third, although I only have a limited space to present his reflection on the positive quality of Chinese culture, Yu is not a hot-headed patriot or a simple-minded nationalist. In many of his other works, he has made ruthless attacks on the dross of the same culture. That is, Yu's pride in the Chinese heritage is not inspired by a self-flattering enchantment, but based on a rather balanced argument and broad knowledge of alternative developments.

There are also three reasons for me to choose the subject of the Great Wall rather than other symbols of Chinese culture. First, the Great Wall is commonly regarded by the Chinese as a symbol of national achievement. The human-made nature of this Wall is as significant as its historicity. During his reign from 221 BC to 206 BC, the Qin Emperor linked and extended the smaller and earlier walls together to the embryonic form of today's Great Wall. The Wall has been further extended and reconstructed during subsequent dynasties. Today, it is acknowledged as one of the greatest wonders of the world, snaking aback and forth for twenty to thirty thousands of miles with double interior walls that are wide enough for four cavalries to ride abreast in some sections. Few structures built around the same time have survived 2,500 years of intermittent civil wars. The Great Wall, in this aspect, is greater than the geographical symbol of the Yellow River and the mystical totem of the Dragon.

Second, the Great Wall does not only inspire yesterday and today's Chinese but also impresses generations of westerners. As early as 1765, in Diderot's Encyclopedia, the Wall was favorably compared with the pyramids of Egypt (cited in Wood, 1995:98). The Wall is also used as a yardstick to measure the authenticity of traveler's tales about China. The failure of Marco Polo to record the Wall becomes the strongest reason to suspect that he had never been to China (Wood, 1995: 96-101). It has even been said that the Great Wall is the only human-made structure visible to the naked eye from the moon although it is apparently not wide enough to be seen from such distance (Wood, 1995: 97). Choosing such a familiar item makes my illustration more intelligible to a western community.

Third, the Wall is always subject to alternative interpretation. Apart from being a symbol of national pride, the Great Wall also carries negative meanings to the Chinese. For example, it is a sign of imperial tyranny since thousands of Chinese have died in the construction of the Wall. The meaning of this signifier changes as the circumstances of its signified, China, changes. The most profound criticism comes from *River Elegy*. Reflecting on the nation's maritime defeats during the late Nineteenth Century, the authors do not only croon an elegy for the River, but also for the Wall.

> "If the Great Wall could speak, it would speak in
> honesty to its Chinese descendants that it was,
> rather, a huge monument of the national tragedy

built by the fate of history; that it could not stand
for prosperity, progress and glory; that it could only
stand for self-enclosure, conservatism, futile defense
and coward-like passivity. But because of its
enormity and historicity, it brands the national spirit
with megalomania and self-deceiving. Oh, the Great
Wall, why should we keep extolling you?" (Su &
Wang 1989:33, translation mine)

The criticism of this national symbol manifests a much deeper anti-traditional mentality.
The confessional narration of this TV documentary ends up with the call for a spiritual
rebirth thereby to abandon the "yellow" culture of the earth and to transform to the "blue"
culture of the ocean (ibid:100). Throughout the narration, the yellow earth represents the
conservative Chinese culture and blue ocean represents explorative western culture. And
the comparison and contrast with general western culture is the key theme of comparative
studies in China up to the *River Elegy's* generation.

Yu, Qiu-yu, too, is critical about the "Great Wall Complex" of our nation. In "The back of
a Dynasty" (Yu, 1998:46-67), echoing the question of Emperor Kang-xi in the Qing
Dynasty, he asks his reader "Could these bricks really defend a great empire? Where would
be our defense line if we had no Great Wall?" (ibid:51). Instead of repairing the visible
Wall, the Emperor wished to build an invisible Wall through annual military
demonstrations and maintaining goodwill with minority nations of the northern
borderland. Therefore, throughout the Qing Dynasty, the Great Wall had been largely left
out in the cold.

Only two years later, Yu changes his negative attitude towards the Great Wall in the
groundbreaking book *A Sigh for Each Millennium*. This book is basically Yu's diary of the
"Millennium Tour" that was organized by the Hong Kong Phoenix TV Channel. The
route of the Tour covered Greece, Egypt, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan,
India, Nepal and other sites of ancient civilizations. Yu went with a group of directors,
editors, photographers and drivers, and completed the Tour just before the new
millennium. Coming from a culture of five thousand years of history himself, having seen
too much wars, poverty, death, diseases, social turmoil, hostilities, decadence, corruption,
particularly historical ruins at the birthplaces of other ancient cultures, Yu begins to think

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of the miraculous continuity and survival of the Chinese culture. Upon his return to China, the first thing he does is to pay respect to Abraham and Isaac of the Chinese nation at the Temple of Yao and the Tomb of Huang (Yu, 2000:462). But it is only at the foot of the Great Wall, Yu finds the answer.

> "I shall salute to the Great Wall. Eventually I really understand the essential meaning of the Wall. That is, self-preservation and peace-keeping. A civilization of such enormity has kept this gesture since antiquity. It is really a big fortune for the entire human race." (Yu, 2000 : 429, translation mine)

In the Shang Dynasty (1783 BC – 1123 BC), Egyptians had gone on an expedition to western Asian; in the time of Confucius (551BC –474BC), Persians had gone on an expedition to Babylon and Egypt; in the time of Qu Yuan, Alexander of Greek was on his expedition to Egypt and Babylon; and both Persians and Greeks had reached India. The only ancient civilization exempted from these antediluvian world wars was the Chinese (Yu, 2000:428). But today, Greek, Roman, Arabic, Hebrew, Babylonian, Persian, Indian empires, as observed by Yu, have disappeared, declined, been assimilated, or are in a state of total turmoil. Only the Chinese have retained a cultural and national continuity, and still demonstrate a renewed strength in recent economical and political growth. Yu marches a long cycle to return to Lin, Yu-tang, "rulers may come and rulers may go, but the Chinese families will remain Chinese families. ... The Chinese wanted survival for their families, and they achieved it for their nation" (Lin, 1939: 33, 37).

From the idiosyncratic experiences of many individual Chinese intellectuals we see a recurrent pattern of the U-curve turn to Chinese culture. For Lin it started shortly after his graduation from the best college for English in China, when he discovered that his Puritan Christian education cut himself off "not only from Chinese philosophy but also from Chinese folklore" (Lin, 1959:34). For Yu it happens toward the end of the one hundred traveling days, which are made of step-by-step measuring of the deserts, the highlands and the mountains, mouthful-by-mouthful drinking of the Nile River and Indus River, inch-by-inch groping of the ruins, with tears and sighs of the millennium as well as yesterday's perplexity and today's terror (Yu, 2000:448, translation mine). For me the need emerges from the five years immigration life in New Zealand, where I have had fuller and lengthier

exposure to alternative cultural modes. Although the turning points are different for each one of us, we have all been at one time or another in our life touched by the greatness of our heritage, for which Yu has expressed so beautifully:

> "We have always been snuggle up to her, suck her; but at the same time blame her, despise her and denounce her. She exhausted thousand years of wit and strength to walk out a way; but we often jeer at her as why she didn't choose another way. She had tried her best to preserve some of her heritage, reputation and dignity against all historical storms; but we often say lightly as why she preserved these at all. We have been pampered, spoilt, flippant and impudent, complaining either of her wrinkly face or of her plain complexion. Only after we have traveled far and near away from her, we began to be astonished, to be ashamed and to be remorseful."
> (Yu, 2000:451)

As we construct and reconstruct the Great Wall along the national borderland, we construct and reconstruct our cultural identity along personal boundaries. If military demonstration and inter-ethnic goodwill were the invisible Wall for Emperor Kang-xi, then what is the invisible Wall for today's China? And what is the psychological Wall for today's Chinese, particularly overseas Chinese? Yu's commentaries on the Wall in the above two articles have provided a two-fold answer to the question on contemporary Chinesehood. Thinking in terms of the Confucius doctrines of Golden Mean, Yu does not suggest any extreme positions such as cultural fundamentalism or anti-traditionalism but a more balanced and gradual blueprint. On the one hand, it is crucial for the Chinese to continuously hold on to pacifism and other mature qualities of an old nation for future self-preservation and global peace-keeping; on the other, it is also important for China to drop the iron curtain and the brick fence in order to know the world as the world knows her. This position is equally valid in reconstructing the communal and individual wall for overseas Chinese. Military defense at home, diplomatic strategies, political assertion in the United Nation meetings, transnational corporations by East Asian entrepreneurs, parliamentary presentation in multicultural societies, multidirectional Diaspora

towers or bastions of the Great Wall of the Greater China, the "ungrounded empire" (the title of Nonini & Ong's 1997 book).

7. Conclusion

It has taken me five years to build my own Great Wall in my psyche, to draw a mental map of the de-territorized Greater China, to be the bridge not only for others but also for myself, mediating my own fears and weaknesses. Five years may be a long time for those New Zealanders who want to see the Kiwi Silicon Valley overnight (Ranginui Walker, cited by Ip, 1995:193). But five years is a short time to a nation that emerges from a history of five thousand years, and that used to view the rise and fall of a hundred years as a historical twinkling. After five years in New Zealand, the quilt is no longer the same quilt, the gooseberry is no longer the same gooseberry, and the maid is no longer the same maid. But I have not realized all the fruits of acculturation until I travel outside the adopted country. Writing the paper at this particular stage of my life span, I am able to wind up my narrative with my visit to China as a New Zealand Chinese. The self-analysis of any immigrant will not be complete without an account of what is known in social science as the "reverse cultural shock".
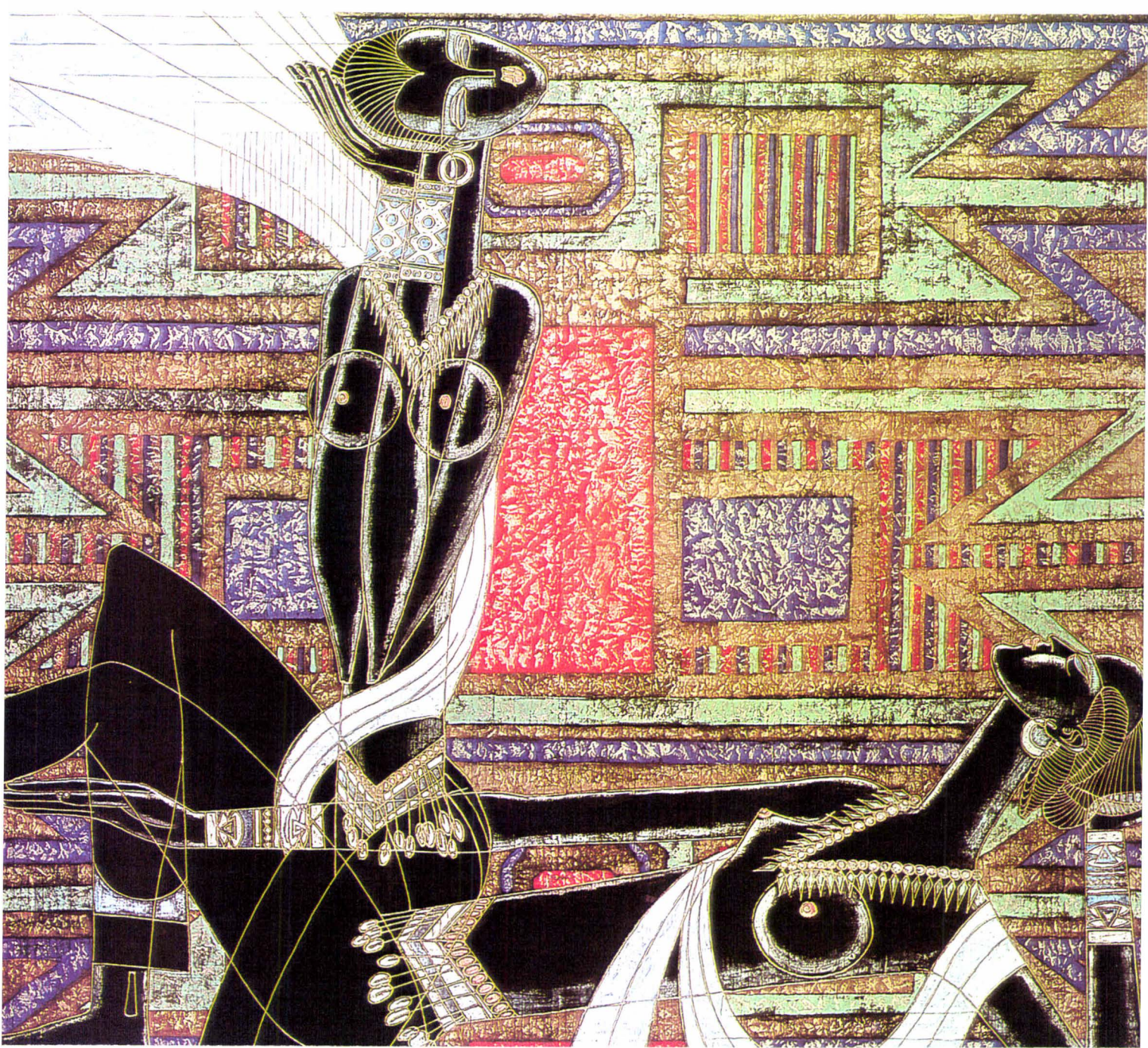
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Illustration 5: Author's Imitation of
Ding, Shao-guang's Screenprint *Muse*, 1994

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

The Reverse Cultural Shock

1. Expectations and Preparation

Nearly six years have slipped by between my arrival and my first visit to China. As I start to restrengthen myself with my Chinese heritage, I start to miss China. I long to take a different look of my motherland with a refreshed eye. The encounters with new Chinese immigrants and recently with Chinese international students further urges me to visit home. In my interactions with them, I become more aware of my own Chinesehood as well as theirs. There are moments of insight reminding me about how much I have changed since I came here and how much China has changed since I left there. The arrival of recent Chinese pushes me further toward the role of New Zealander that I am not yet ready to take. My subtle feelings of estrangement and confused identity are very much like what the New Zealand born Chinese feel about the post-1987 new Asian influx of which I am part. The China in my mind pauses at early 1995, I have to rely on these fresh-off-the-boat Mainlanders to fill out the gaps of my knowledge. I long to see myself what has made these Chinese so different from me.

The question of who I am becomes, to me, a Chinese social scientist, a theoretical as well as a personal matter. In Stuart Hall's review of the question of cultural identity (Hall, 1992), he elaborates on Kevin Robin's distinction between identities of Tradition and identities of Translation (Robin, 1991). People with tradition-oriented identities attempt to restore the former purity of the national culture and recover the unities and certainties which are felt as being lost. On the other hand, people with a translated identity or people whose identities are in translation, accept that identity is subject to the play of history,

politics, representation and difference (Hall, 1992:309). One part of me may be inclined to retreat to Tradition, while the sociologist part of me is consciously aware that Translation is an inevitable fruit of immigration, that I am irrevocably the product of several interlocking histories and cultures. Do I really, like the Iranian Briton Salman Rushdie, want to celebrate the unexpected hybridity with a love-song to my mongrel selves (Rushdie, 1991:394)? Am I prepared to be culturally rejected or even condemned by other Chinese as Rushdie has been rejected and condemned by other Muslims? These questions remain unanswered until I have taken the opportunity to exercise my double consciousness back to the original land from where Kiwifruit was introduced.

My longing for China, therefore, is more than ordinary homesickness. It derives from a desire for cultural return, a revisit to one's roots. But I only want to go back to China for a visit. I have no desire at all to go back to China to die, as the Chinese miners of the Nineteenth Century longed for all their lives. I cannot imagine what had occurred in the dreams of these Chinese pioneers, but I have been dreaming three or four times a week about my forthcoming visit to China for a year before I actually take off.

There are two major scenarios in the dreams. The first is about the means of travel. I either miss out the flight, or I arrive in China in an unexpected manner at odd times and places. If the "missing out" synopsis reveals my fear of not realizing my plan, the "unexpected arrival" synopsis reveals my urge to get to China as early as I can. The second scenario is about the kind of shops that I wish to visit. Only two types of shops occur in the dreams: food courts and book-shops. In the various cafes, noodle shops, restaurants, cafeterias, snack bars and wonton stalls, I often feel anxious about the sheer amount of choice, but the dreams always terminate before the order actually reaches me. The story about book-shops is even more grievous ---- I am never able to find one in the dreams. You might have expected me to dream about the Great Wall, the Yellow River, the Forbidden City, or the pandas, something magnificent, or at least symbolic. No, my dreams are shamelessly concrete and materialistic. But these dreams reveal the two large areas that I, as a Chinese, have been deprived of most in a western country. In this sense, my dreams are authentic Chinese dreams for the Chinese have shown a prolonged interest in dining and have an utterly different language to read.

In all the dreams, there is a sense of time pressure. I am constantly pressed by fear and anxiety that my visit is too short to do everything I plan to do, to experience every emotion and psychological reaction that the research says that I will experience, that to see what I am exposed to see, to eat what is made edible, and to read what has been written to read. In short, I am overwhelmed by the vastness of China.

On the day I eventually sit in the plane, I still feel a sense of unrealness. Is it really going to happen? Have I really not missed the flight? Is this plane really going to take me to Shanghai? However, after 22 hours of flying and transferring, when I eventually arrive in Shanghai, the feeling of unrealness and enchantment dissolves at once. Time and space have been compressed in the modern travel, I don't feel that I am actually entering another continent on the other side of the planet that I have been away from for nearly six years. Shanghai seems to be a nearby town such as Hamilton that I can visit once every month. This "as-if" quality that so easily accompanies time-space experiences renounces the territoriness of my Chinesehood, and perhaps of every Diasporic Chinese. In the search for the "real me", I do not know where does the New Zealand part of me end and where does the Chinese part of me start. That is the moment when I understand why we need to go beyond the place-bound theorization of a pre-global social science (Touraine, 1989), implied in terms such as territory, region, and nation-states in the study of Chinese identities. This is also when I understand why Ong and Nonini use the phrase "Ungrounded Empires" to refer to the Greater China, a China that is made up of both Chinese at home and abroad, a China that constantly changes its shape while operating across all recognized borderlines (Ong & Nonini, 1997:20).

2. The Lack of Shock

It has been repetitively found in western social sciences that immigrants who have had prolonged stays overseas will experience estrangement when returning to their respective countries (e.g. Corey, 1992; Polyzoi, 1985; Brabant, Palmer & Gramling, 1990). Keeping my thesis in mind, one of my goals for this visit is to live through, if not to observe and measure, the reverse culture shock in the light of identity formation. The biggest cultural shock is, contradictory to what research concludes, the lack of cultural shock. I find myself easily indulging in food courts and book-shops. Books, tapes, and VCDs alongside finless eels, triple-yellow-chickens and river crabs are so solid and will not be melted into air. Crowds, shopping complexes, subways, taxis and everything else unfolds smoothly and

matter-of-factly but I can no longer find any excitement in it as I do in the pre-return dreams. I am not wrong in speculating that Shanghai and the modern China it represents have changed, just as I and the post-1987 New Zealand that I entered have changed, but maybe that we have changed in the same directions.

I identify three transitions in which both Chinese in China and Chinese in New Zealand have been involved. The first is nationalization. Prior to emigration, I socialized mainly with Shanghainese and spoke most of the day the Shanghai dialect. After I came to New Zealand, I speak Shanghainese only at home, but Mandarin in the Chinese community that is made up of Chinese coming from various parts of China. In every bring-a-plate feast, I come to taste dishes of different Chinese cuisine systems. While many Shanghainese emigrate overseas, many non-Shanghainese migrate to Shanghai. This inter-city migration influx brings a large non-native population to Shanghai, just as to any other Chinese city. It becomes a common practice to speak the common language, known as Mandarin to the West, in the public sphere, particularly in the catering trade and retail services since waiting staff and shop assistants are increasingly made up of rural migrants. Likewise, those migrants who have gone through the tertiary system have found employment in both public and private organizations, and thus the common language becomes the official language in the workplace. Along with the mixture of people, there is also a familiar soft multiculturalism. Just as immigrants have brought ethnic cuisine to many western countries, inter-city migrants have brought their provincial cuisine to the city they dwell in. Rice noodle of Yunnan, Steamboat of Sichuan, stuffed lotus root of Hangzhou, and of course roast duck of Beijing and Yum Cha of Canton all can be found in the streets and lanes of Shanghai. If the Shanghainese cannot travel the rest of China, the rest of China has come to them as to the rest of the world.

The second common transition is internationalization. Internationalization is sometimes also called Globalization, both refer to "those processes, operating on a global scale, which cut across national boundaries, integrating and connecting communities and organizations in new space – time combinations, making the world in reality and in experience more interconnected" (Hall, 1992: 299). Since I came to New Zealand, I did not only meet Chinese from China, and New Zealanders from New Zealand, but also immigrants from other parts of the globe. My neighbour can be a Korean, my tenant can be a Canadian, my lecturer can be a South African, my midwife can be a Taiwanese, my supervisor can be an

Australian, my manager can be a Welshman, my work-mate can be a Philippino, my classmate can be a Fijian, and my pastor can be a Singaporian. Not only has the globe become a village, but also the village has become global. Shanghai shows a similar trend of internationalization. Paralleling the inter-city migrants from Beijing, Canton, Sichuan, and Xinjiang there are expatriates and returned emigrants from the States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and various non-English speaking countries. As a rootless global citizen, I can belong at one and the same time to several homes, but I am tied to none.

In addition to the diversification of population, another consequence of globalization is the growth of cultural homogenization. In such a global postmodern world, New Zealanders and Chinese come to have shared global identities, as customers for the same goods, clients for the same services, audiences for the same messages and images (Hall, 1992: 302). Truth has been made universal because the world has become globalized [this is not a quote from Hall]. What I can buy in Auckland – Italian pizza, American hamburger, Korean barbecue and Japanese sushi – I can also find in Shanghai. There may be more transnational corporations and international brands in Shanghai than in Auckland. Romanization of street names, bilingual signs for historical buildings, tourist attractions and public as well as private organizations, and the increasing presence of visible and invisible foreigners, are all marks of a local international community. "Spanish villa or Singaporian apartment? You name it, we have it."

The third common transition is the resistance to the force of homogenization, that is, the process of localization. When I go to a Chinese community in Auckland I realize how Shanghainese I am; when I go to another New Zealand city or town, I realize how much of an Aucklander I am; when I go to Australia, I realize how New Zealand I am. Self-knowing is a continuous response to the encounters of various others. This construction of identity does not only operate at the personal level, but also the communal and national levels. The influx of non-Shanghainese also intensifies the need to define what makes a Shanghainese a Shanghainese. This kind of provincial nostalgia can be found in films, books, soap operas, operas, websites and other media products, as well as in the way people dress, eat and observe festivals. There are reprints of old essays and novels and reproductions of old films dating back to the Treaty port days. There are tailors making Shanghai style cheongsam and mandarin-collar coats. There are also column articles tracing cultural phenomena that are exclusive to Shanghai. The process of localization is going on

in many places in China. With a history of five thousands years, any city, county, town and village can dig out its own honorable past. Against the homogenizing national and global background, I see a more diversified notion of Chinesehood, actually, Chinesehoods.

Over and above the three common transitions summarized above, there is still another reason that disables my ability to experience any acute cultural shock back home. In New Zealand I am a Chinese New Zealander, while in China, I am a New Zealand Chinese. What would shock a native New Zealander – the density, the pollution, the vastness, the opulence, the variety – would not shock me because these are what I used to grow up with. Similarly, what would shock an inland migrant, mobile phones, mortgages, recruitment agencies, privatization, overseas holidays, personal cars, would not shock me either because I have become acquainted with these modern artefacts in a developed country elsewhere. My dual consciousness disenchants all the novelties of the city to dull familiarities.

3. Forms of Shock

Nevertheless, it would be misleading to state that I feel at home in Shanghai. The uneasiness starts even before I land in Shanghai. In the Korean Airline flight, after failing to converse with me in Korean, the Korean elder asks me: "Are you a Chinese?" As soon as I say "Yes" I realize my dilemma. Being an overseas Chinese, I can no longer answer such a question with a straight yes. People's Republic of China is one of the few states that does not allow its citizens to hold more than one citizenship. If I came to apply for New Zealand citizenship in the 1950s or 1960s, I would have had to renounce my Chinese citizenship as required by the New Zealand government. In the 1990s I still have to give up my Chinese citizenship when receiving my New Zealand one, but this time it is stipulated by the Chinese diplomatic law. That incident reminds me of Timothy Brennan's statement that the word *nation* refers both to membership of the political nation-state *and* identification with the national culture (Brennan, 1990: 45). Am I a Chinese? Bodily and culturally I am; but legally and statutorily I am not.

I am not alone in this "yes, but ... " identity impasse. A Taiwanese Chinese once remarked on the difficulty he encountered in defining himself in New Zealand. He cannot introduce himself as a Chinese because he is no longer a Mainland Chinese. Nor can he introduce

himself as a Taiwanese because he does not want to identify with Taiwan-born Chinese. Nor can he introduce himself as an ethnic Chinese because that sounds more like a Singaporian Chinese. Nor can he introduce himself as an Indo-Chinese because that lines him with Cambodian or Vietnam Chinese. Nor can he introduce himself as a overseas Chinese because he has only become an expatriate after he came to New Zealand (Yuan, 2000). That is the complexity of being a Chinese.

Being an invisible foreigner in China, I do not attract the kind of attention and curiosity I do in New Zealand. But I am very conscious about my own foreignness. The first word I say in China is an English word. When I answer a phone, I start with "hello". I talk to myself in English. I long for decent English conversation as much as for genuine discussions of Christianity. I miss the weekly home group bible studies, the convenience of a personal car, the beaches, bushes and seagulls as well as the informal dress code. On the other hand, I can no longer recall the route of the buses that I used to take daily, I fail to recognize the Queen Street of Shanghai, but the most embarrassing thing is that I cannot express myself effectively and skillfully in the Shanghai dialect. For the first week, my sensitivity to the sound of the dialect is highly challenged. It takes me up to a minute before I can pick up what people are talking about. My response time to written Chinese is also very slow. I often misread the character at first sight. All of these are marks of a prolonged overseas life, and reminders of my New Zealandness.

Moreover, I find myself passionately defending my adopted country in China, just as I passionately defend my motherland in New Zealand. To many Chinese today New Zealand is still an "undiscovered country" (Gong, 2001: 40) just as China is still a "mystical land" to most New Zealanders. I remember one incident between my uncle and I.

> U: In the Korean War, a Korean solider once asked a Chinese solider about how big China was. The Chinese solider showed him a small teacup and said "This is Korea" and showed him a big teapot and said "This is China." This analogue is still valid today ---- New Zealand is the teacup while China is still the teapot.

I: What!

U: That Chinese solider was later chided by the senior officials because he had hurt the ally solider's national sentiments.

I: You, too, have hurt my national sentiment.

U: Well, we still see you as a Chinese.

They still see me as a Chinese. Will they see my children as Chinese if they marry with non-Chinese? Will they see my grandchildren as Chinese if they cannot talk in Chinese? Inevitably I am a Chinese, inevitably I am also a New Zealander, and inevitably I have to play the role of the bridge between Chinese and New Zealanders, as well as between my own Chinesehood and New Zealand identity. I am the kind of bridge that is built to stop the Orientals mocking the Occidentals in the same way as the Occidentals do to the Orientals. I am the bridge that is built to break the New Zealanders' ignorance about China as well as Chinese ignorance about New Zealand. I am the bridge that intends to stop the Han Chinese patronizing Pakeha as well as Maori New Zealanders as they used to, and still do, to the Manchurians. Inevitably I will find that I am a lone bridge in China just as I am a lone bridge in New Zealand. I am lone because of the smallness of New Zealand, the inferior status of social sciences in the academia, and the uniqueness of my immigration experiences.

I find myself like the women in the picture (Illustration Five), with two selves splitting from a unified body. The duality of my consciousness and outlook will forever mark my individuality. Against my New Zealand half and my Chinese half is the zip-zappy interwoven rainbow of Chinese culture and New Zealand culture. There must be an internal bridge that negotiate the two selves within me before I can negotiate the two national identities of the two countries.

Notwithstanding this, it is not only that people neglect my New Zealandness, but I too cannot find the kind of China and Chinese that I have been longing for in my daydreams. Contemporary Chinese seem to have dropped the mellowness, patience, the contentment

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of their grandparents, have lost the humor to look upon life as a stage, and have abandoned simplicity for advancements. They no longer go to opera dramas for a "kick" out of life (Lin, 1939:249). They no longer compose five-metred poems to cleanse their souls (ibid:229). They no longer accept life as it comes and enjoy what they have already got. They no longer kill their time by reading a loosely plotted classical novel; actually, they no longer have much time to kill. In arts, they no longer search for calm and harmony in a dragon-fly, a grasshopper or a piece of jagged rock (ibid:274). In calligraphy, they no longer explore every possible style of rhythm and form from "the branches of the plum flower, a dried vine with a few hanging leaves, the spring body of the leopard, the massive paws of the tiger, the swift legs of the deer, the sinewy strength of the horse, the bushiness of the bear, the slimness of the stork, or the ruggedness of the pine branch" (ibid:277) for none of these plants and animals can be easily seen in a Chinese city. With the popularization of personal computers in China, the younger generations have typed more characters than they have handwritten. Many have never lifted a Chinese brush in their lives.

Nor does the contemporary education system continue to emphasize an all-around development and the unity of knowledge. It no longer teaches young Chinese to maintain a balanced life, with both Confucius moralism and Taoist naturalism. The nation as a whole becomes keener on making progress than on enjoying life. Lin seems to have foreseen the discontinuities in the process of modernization or the Shanghainization of China when he proclaims that "Shanghai is not China, but Shanghai is an ominous indication of what modern China may come to" (ibid:305). Modern China has seen too much of "throwing overboard all the best and finest in their social tradition in a mad rush for things Western without the Western tradition" (ibid.).

It is such collective amnesia of the nation's greatest tradition, the art of all arts, the art of living that makes me wonder whether Lin really captured the essence of Chinesehood or did I misread his work. Neither I nor Lin misunderstand China, because China is changing just as we are changing. The China as described by Lin and as understood by me is, after all, an imagined community (the name of Anderson 1983's book). Identity in Translation can no longer be understood as a firm set of qualities, but an ongoing process of grafting. The vastness of China has always been misunderstood and misrepresented, not only by non-Chinese but also by Chinese ourselves. However, the limits of our imagination should

by no means reduce the richness of the nation's past, the hybridity of the nation's present and the potentialities of the nation's future. Having said that, the limits of our imagination should not intimidate us from continuously writing and representing China. If Chinesehood is a "moveable feast", then the identity of each Chinese is a "moldable dish". There are one thousand and one Chinas, Lin's and mine. With each other's unique insights we contribute to the greater picture of the Greater China.

4. Conclusion

My journey of identity-seeking pauses at the end of my visit to China. Detouring through the narratives and reflections of my self-analysis, you and I have reached the end of this thesis. At the end of the journey, as well as the thesis, please allow me to wind up my words in a Chinese gesture, bold yet reserved. More than sixty years ago, Pearl S. Buck elaborated her parameters in judging good analyses of Chinesehood in her introduction to Lin's *My Country and My People*. I believe these comments are still valid today and have checked the quality of the current thesis against her well-thought criteria myself. While marking my paper, would you think over her criteria in addition to the western academic yardsticks that you are bound to use?

> "A book about China, worthy to be about China ... must be *frank* and *unashamed*, because a real Chinese have always been a proud people, proud enough to be frank and unashamed of themselves and their ways. It must be *wise* and *penetrative* in its understanding, for the Chinese have been above all peoples wise and penetrative in their understanding of the human heart. It must be humorous, because humour is an essential part of Chinese nature, *deep, mellow, kindly humour*, founded upon the tragic knowledge and acceptance of life. It must be expressed in *flowing, exact, beautiful words*, because the Chinese have always valued the beauty of the exact and the exquisite. None but a Chinese could write such a book, and I had begun to think that as yet even no Chinese could write it, because it

seemed impossible to find a modern English-writing Chinese who was not so detached from his [sic] own people as to be alien to them, and yet detached enough to comprehend their meaning, the meaning of their age and the meaning of their youth." (Buck, 1939: xi, italics mine)

This is the kind of bridge that I want myself to be, or to become: a modern English-writing Chinese who is not so detached from her own people as to be alien to them, and yet detached enough to comprehend their meaning, the meaning of their age and the meaning of their youth.

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