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Publication Date

2016

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Making the Censored Public:

The 1989 Tiananmen Square Protests in Chinese Fiction and Film

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Comparative Literature

by

Thomas Chen Chen

2016

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Making the Censored Public:

The 1989 Tiananmen Square Protests in Chinese Fiction and Film

by

Thomas Chen Chen

Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature

University of California, Los Angeles, 2016

Professor Kirstie M. McClure, Co-Chair

Professor Robert Yee-Sin Chi, Co-Chair

Initiated by Beijing college students, the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests—"Tiananmen"—shook all of China with their calls for democratic and social reforms. They were violently repressed by the Chinese state on June 4, 1989. Since then, their memory has been subject within the country to two kinds of censorship. First, a government campaign promulgating the official narrative of Tiananmen, while simultaneously forbidding all others, lasted into 1991. What followed was the surcease of Tiananmen propaganda and an expansion of silencing to nearly all mentions that has persisted to this day. My dissertation examines fiction and film that evoke Tiananmen from within mainland China and Hong Kong. It focuses on materials that are particularly open to a self-reflexive reading, such as literature in which the protagonists are writers and films shot without authorization that in their editing indicate the precarious

circumstances of their making. These works act out the contestation between the state censorship of Tiananmen-related discourse on the one hand and its alternative imagination on the other, thereby opening up a discursive space, however fragile, for a Chinese audience to reconfigure a historical memory whose physical space is off limits.

The dissertation is organized historically by time, place, and medium. Chapter 1 focuses on a Chinese state-sponsored collection of literary reportage published shortly after the June Fourth crackdown that, in my rereading today when the entire state literature on Tiananmen is itself marginalized, allows for an untimely commemoration of the protests. Chapter 2 looks at the same immediate post-June Fourth period in a Hong Kong approaching the 1997 reversion to Chinese sovereignty, analyzing the recoding of Tiananmen in two audiovisual works, in particular, that question the possibility of a Hong Kong public in the face of collusive pressure from Chinese and British authorities. Chapters 3 and 4 consider fiction and film, respectively, that illustrate the historicity and medium specificity of censorship and its contestation. The two mainland novels that I read in Chapter 3, one published in print and the other online, create sites both where the elided memory of 1989 can reenter and where a participatory readership can emerge. Chapter 4 concerns two fiction-features whose different trajectories of production and exhibition across the mainland-Hong Kong divide demonstrate the Chinese state's continual displacement of Tiananmen. As a whole, the four chapters reveal the dual aspect of censorship and its effects, both the authorized pronouncements that set its terms of engagement in making the *censored* public (Chapter 1) as well as the unauthorized reworkings generated within its sphere of influence that make the censored *public* (Chapters 2-4).

The dissertation of Thomas Chen Chen is approved.

Efraín Kristal

Kirstie M. McClure, Committee Co-Chair

Robert Yee-Sin Chi, Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2016

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank the members of my committee. Kirstie McClure has been an unwavering fountain of support since my first year at UCLA. Her dedication to scholarship and to her students is unparalleled. I can never hope to repay the countless hours she lavished upon me. Robert Chi has shown me in the classroom, in his office, and over the phone how to be the best teacher, reader, and writer I can be. No matter how serious and substantive our conversations were, he always injected therein a sense of humor and levity. Efraín Kristal has served as a role model throughout my graduate years. I will always appreciate his scholarly acumen, his level-headed wisdom, and the generosity of his friendship. Not only are their imprints on every page of this dissertation, all three have contributed immensely to the kind of scholar, teacher, and person I am today.

I am grateful to many other people at UCLA that made my seven years memorable. Katherine King was always ready to lend a hand in times of need. Shu-mei Shih is a paragon of theoretical acuity. A dear friend and interlocutor, Wang Chaohua continues to inspire me with her engaged scholarship. Perry Anderson's intellectual vigor and rigor as well as sparkling conversation are a source of awe and joy. Aamir Mufti couldn't have prepared me better for the next step in my career. Michelle Anderson and Jessika Herrera went out of their way to make sure things ran smoothly. I want to thank my friends in the Department of Comparative Literature for years of laughter and conversation. Yu-ting Huang, Nasia Anam, Tim Haehn, and Jordan Smith paved the way. I am truly lucky to enter with such a smart, funny, and good-hearted cohort in Nic Testerman, Alexei Nowak, Dana Linda, and Safoora Arbab. The late Michael Henry Heim is a legend, an incomparable translator who was at the same time the most

learned and giving person. He will be remembered.

There are many people I wish to thank beyond UCLA. Richard Klein swept me off my feet at Cornell—and at Arles. Bernard Sichère of Université Paris-Diderot has been an enduring mentor and friend. I wouldn't be where I am today without Ban Wang at Stanford, who first took me under his wing. Song Mingwei's generosity is matched only by his humility. There's nobody better to talk about Jia Pingwa with than Howard Goldblatt and Sylvia Lin. Andrew Clark is a committed translator and an erudite reader. I also want to thank the members of the Philadelphia Reading Group (费城读书组), before whom I presented parts of my ongoing work. Guobin Yang of Penn has helped me left and right during my time in Philadelphia.

I would like to thank several institutions for their financial support: the Confucius Institute, UCLA's Graduate Division, and the UCLA Department of Comparative Literature. Earlier versions of Chapter 2 were published as "Blanks to be Filled: Public-Making and the Censorship of Jia Pingwa's *Decadent Capital*," *China Perspectives* 2015/1, 15-22; and "The Workshop of the World: Censorship and the Internet Novel *Such Is This World*," in *China's Contested Internet*, ed. Guobin Yang (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2015), 19-43. I thank the editors and reviewers for their generous evaluations. Portions of this dissertation were also presented at several venues, such as the University of Pennsylvania, Penn State, and the Association for Asian Studies annual conference. I thank the organizers and participants for their comments and suggestions.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their love and support over the years. My parents have given me the freedom to find my path. My aunt Eva Chun is filled with selfless love. My cousins Liya and Su got me materials when I couldn't be in China. Ryan Gutiérrez is the best friend I could ask for. My wife Winnie has gone through this journey with me every step of the way. Her love sustains me. This dissertation is dedicated to my grandmother Wang

Shuying and to the memory of my grandfather Liu Yun, who are responsible for the best within me. They took such good care of a boy of not yet six that he had no idea what was going on in Beijing 1989.

VITA

- 2005 B.A., Comparative Literature and English, Cornell University
- 2009-10 UCLA Dean's Fellowship
- 2010 UCLA Graduate Summer Research Mentorship
- 2010-12 Teaching Assistant, Comparative Literature, UCLA
- 2011 M.A., Comparative Literature, UCLA
- 2012 UCLA Graduate Summer Research Mentorship
UCLA Comparative Literature departmental summer funding
- 2012-13 UCLA Dean's Fellowship
- 2013-14 Confucius Institute Sino-Foreign Joint PhD Scholarship
- 2014 Teaching Fellow, Comparative Literature, UCLA
- 2015 Teaching Assistant, Asian Languages & Cultures, UCLA

PUBLICATIONS

"The Workshop of the World: Censorship and the Internet Novel *Such Is This World*." In *China's Contested Internet*, ed. Guobin Yang (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2015), 19-43.

"Blanks to be Filled: Public-Making and the Censorship of Jia Pingwa's *Decadent Capital*," *China Perspectives* 2015/1, 15-22.

"Remplir les blancs : «Publicité» et censure dans *La Capitale déchuée* de Jia Pingwa," *Perspectives chinoises* 2015/1, 15-23 (trans. Florent Chevallier).

"An Italian Bicycle in the People's Republic: Minor Transnationalism and the Chinese Translation of *Ladri di bicicletta/Bicycle Thieves*," *Journal of Italian Cinema & Media Studies* 1.2 (2014), 91-107.

"Une bicyclette italienne en République populaire de Chine : À propos de la version chinoise du *Voleur de bicyclette*," *L'Écran traduit: revue sur la traduction et l'adaptation audiovisuelles* no. 4 (automne 2015), 21-41 (trans. Jean-François Cornu).

"The Censorship of Mo Yan's *The Garlic Ballads*," in *Mo Yan in Context: Nobel Laureate and Global Storyteller*, eds. Angelica Duran and Yuhan Huang (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2014), 37-49.

"Ridiculing the Golden Age: Subversive Undertones in Yan Lianke's *Happy*," *Chinese Literature Today* (Winter-Spring 2011), 66-72.

PRESENTATIONS

"Chinese Minor: Mandarin-Dubbed Foreign Cinema as Sinophone Cinema." American Comparative Literature Association Annual Meeting; March 2016, Harvard University, MA.

"Sensuous Translation: The Dubbed Foreign Film in 1950s China." Trans-: 26th Annual Conference of the Centre for Comparative Literature; March 2016, University of Toronto.

"Productive Censorship, Profitable Surveillance: New Insights on Cyber-politics in China." University of Pennsylvania Center for the Study of Contemporary China; April 2015, Philadelphia, PA.

"Radix and Radius: June Fourth as Hong Kong's 228." Global Asias 3; April 2015, Penn State, PA.

"An Italian Bicycle in the People's Republic: Minor Transnationalism and the Chinese Translation of *Ladri di biciclette*," Berkeley-Stanford Graduate Student Conference in Modern Chinese Humanities; April 2013, Stanford University, CA.

"Blanks to be Filled: Post-Tiananmen Literary Criticism, Commercialism, and Censorship," Association for Asian Studies annual conference; March 2013, San Diego, CA.

"An Other Speech," American Comparative Literature Association Annual Meeting; March-April 2012, Providence, RI.

"Keyword: Censorship," Drawing the Line(s): Censorship & Cultural Practices, 47th Annual Comparative Literature Conference; March 2012, Long Beach, CA.

"The Problem of 'Mao Style'," ASPAC & WCAAS Joint Annual Conference; June 2011, Claremont, CA.

"Without Jurisdiction: The Circulating Festival in Yan Lianke's *Happy*," The Spacing of Festive Enactments: Seventh Annual Conference of the International Association for the Study of Environment, Space, and Place; April-May 2011, New Haven, CT.

"Ban and *ban*: Censorship and Editions of Mo Yan's *The Garlic Ballads*," Redefining World History, History Grad Student Conference; March 2011, Northeastern U., MA.

"In Dialogue with Mao: Language in Yan Lianke's *Hard Like Water*," Voices from the In-Between: Aporias, Reverberations, Audiences; April 2010, UMass Amherst, MA.

INTRODUCTION

Why the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests?

One reason is at once intimate and remote. I was born in Beijing in 1983, and I was in the city during the entirety of the events. Yet I have no personal anecdote to recount, no boyish recollection of scenes on the street or images on TV. The movement influenced me another way. My mother had been accepted to a master's program in the U.S., and at the end of the summer of 1989, she started her study here. My father would join her the next year, and along with my grandparents, I followed in 1991. We would have returned to China had it not been for Executive Order 12711 of 1990 and then the Chinese Student Protection Act of 1992, which granted a pathway to permanent residency for students like my mother, and their dependents, who came to the U.S. between June 5, 1989 and April 11, 1990, when the Executive Order was issued by George H. W. Bush. In this way did Tiananmen—and a presidential decree—condition my life, which in turn conditions this present project.

Another reason is both academic and more-than-academic. Though much scholarship deals with the history and politics of the Tiananmen protests, much less attention has focused on the literature and film subsequently produced in China and Hong Kong that evoke them. In fact, no monograph-length study treats the subject. What is more, it is my very location, in the U.S. academy, that allows me to undertake a project that my colleagues in mainland China cannot do so openly, without severe consequences. Even though my ability to conduct future research in China may be affected by this current research, the implications for someone living outside or inside Chinese jurisdiction are decidedly different.

These two reasons motivate my endeavor. Tiananmen Square 1989 is the spatiotemporal coordinate in modern Chinese history whose publicness has been most rigorously suppressed.

What I am interested in are the conditions of cultural production, circulation, and reception under such a regime. What kinds of Tiananmen-related literature and film have appeared within Chinese jurisdiction? What is their relationship to state censorship? What part do they play in the public realm? These are the main questions to which my dissertation responds.

Scope and argument

This dissertation is not a survey of all fiction and film produced in China and Hong Kong that evoke the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests. (Tiananmen poetry deserves a special study onto itself.¹) My principle of selection rests on an invitation to self-reflexive reading. I have chosen texts that enact the circumstances of their own emergence and, in some cases, submergence, those that replay the recording and remembering of Tiananmen as well as its erasure. Some of them have writers as protagonists, such as a People's Liberation Army (PLA) press officer in one of the reportage pieces in the PLA-published *Songs of the Republic's Guardians* (Chapter 1), and a novelist in Jia Pingwa's *Decadent Capital* and a budding internet blogger in Hu Fayun's *Such Is This World@sars.come* (Chapter 3). Others may contain scenes of interdiction and removal, as when Shu Kei's *Sunless Days* presents footage of a razed replica of the Goddess of Democracy statue in Hong Kong and Ann Hui's "Returning Home" overlays images of a guarded Monument to the People's Heroes and an empty Chang'an Avenue, where protests previously took place, with sounds from the movement (Chapter 2), or when an entire sequence at Tiananmen Square is muted in Emily Tang's *Conjugation* and a conspicuous narrative gap distinguishes the mainland DVD version of Stanley Kwan's *Lan Yu* (Chapter 4). My objects of study all display how, when it comes to the Beijing spring of 1989, evocation and revocation go inextricably hand in hand.

¹ The two major collections are Jiang Pinchao, ed., *June Fourth poetry collection* (六四詩集) (2007), and Deng and Liang, eds., *A night of the same kind, a dawn of the same light* (一般的黑夜一樣黎明) (2011).

This self-reflexivity is not a property of the texts themselves. Rather, it resides in their interface with the reader. I as reader am activating this aspect of their meanings, including the claim that they are about Tiananmen at all. In doing so, I put into relief the contentious politics of all Tiananmen literature and film produced within Chinese jurisdiction, but especially of those that are particularly open to be read self-reflexively. My central argument is that these latter act out the contestation between the state censorship of the discourse on the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests and their alternative imagination, thereby opening up a discursive space, however precarious, for a Chinese audience to reconfigure a historical memory whose physical space is off limits. The contestation is both binary and plural. It is binary because any revivification of the events of 1989, when they are—as is the case at present—under a near total ban, is necessarily oppositional. Thus the dual signification of the title of my dissertation. On the one hand, the state is in the business of "making the *censored* public," fixing the contour and composition of the people as it sees fit. On the other hand, Tiananmen fiction and film "make the censored *public*," reanimating with recalcitrance a buried past.

Yet the contestation is also plural because the opposition is not univocal. This accounts for the asymmetry of the structure of my dissertation. Focusing on a single case study, Chapter 1 starts with an exploration of state-sponsored publications that promulgated, in the immediate aftermath of June Fourth, the authorized version of the demonstrations and their quashing. Chapters 2-4 deal with fiction and film that, though subject to state censorship to varying extents, unfold stories alternative to the government narrative. Chapter 2 considers literary and audiovisual materials from Hong Kong in the wake of the crackdown that connect the outcome of the protest movement to the British territory's imminent reversion to Chinese sovereignty in 1997. Chapter 3 reads two mainland novels that reveal the cat-and-mouse game between

expurgation and publication of the Square. And finally Chapter 4 examines two films, both shot without approval on the mainland and first released in Hong Kong, that illustrate the perils of looking back at 1989. Each of the latter three chapters discusses multiple texts at length, each of which in turn has a different vantage point on Tiananmen.

My dissertation therefore is not concerned solely with underground or banned works. Under the general problematic of the contestation between state censorship and alternative publicness, even government propaganda has a place, as Chapter 1 demonstrates. Furthermore, revisited today when a near complete shroud covers Tiananmen, these short-lived accounts can constitute for the reader a site of misappropriate commemoration. Though never censored themselves, the two audiovisual texts that are the focus of Chapter 2 show that, even prior to the 1997 Return, Hong Kong's public realm faced interference from British authorities in collaboration with mainland ones. The two novels discussed in Chapter 3, on the other hand, were banned; they are, however, currently in print—or online—in altered editions. And while both films detailed in Chapter 4 were shot on the mainland without permission, one of them (*Lan Yu*) can be found there in a snipped but not truncated version. My case studies indicate the wealth of parts that a work of art—related to Tiananmen and produced within Chinese jurisdiction, no less—can play in the relations between state censorship and the public.

Literature review and contribution

As remarked upon at the outset, much has been written on the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests in autobiography and the disciplines of social science, most notably history, sociology, and political science.² Much less scholarship treats the subject in literary and cultural studies.

² For accounts of the movement, see Richard Gordon and Carma Hinton's documentary *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*

This latter body of work includes Gina Marchetti's *From Tian'anmen to Times Square: Transnational China and the Chinese Diaspora on Global Screens, 1989-1997* (2006) and Belinda Kong's *Tiananmen Fictions Outside the Square: The Chinese Literary Diaspora and the Politics of Global Culture* (2012), which consider diasporic representations of Tiananmen in movies and novels, respectively. Kong's monograph especially emphasizes the productiveness of the events of spring 1989 for the diasporic imagination and is a sophisticated analysis of the politicization of this literary diaspora. Though her case studies are all drawn from outside of China, she nevertheless sketches in her Introduction a rubric for the investigation of literature from inside: "To my mind, that other project must above all theorize a hermeneutics of evasion, one that provides a critical framework for not just the array of aesthetic tactics adopted by PRC writers but also these tactics' specific deployment in relation to shifting political exigencies" (Belinda Kong 2012, 27). She even offers several short readings of mainland novels in this spirit, from Mo Yan's *The Republic of Wine* to Chen Ran's *A Private Life*.

As Kong points out, most literary representations of Tiananmen—and one would add cinematic ones too—have come out beyond the borders of the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.). Yet I am making the choice to look within, not only to add to Marchetti and Kong's mappings; I aim to shed light on the complex and variegated terrain of this less examined topography. Kong is right to stress the evasive strategies employed by P.R.C. writers in maneuvering through censorship. The reading of such strategies, however, cannot exhaust all interpretative strategies. For my very first chapter considers within its compass a body of writing

(1995), Timothy Brook's *Quelling the People* (1998), and Dingxin Zhao's *The Power of Tiananmen* (2004). For an account in English from the Chinese government, see Che Muqi's *Beijing Turmoil* (1990). Memoirs by student leaders include Li Lu's *Moving the Mountain* (1990), Shen Tong's *Almost a Revolution* (1990), and Zhang Boli's *Escape from China* (2002); autobiographical writings or essays by intellectuals include Liu Binyan's "Tell the World" (1989), Fang Lizhi's *Bringing Down the Great Wall* (1990), Su Xiaokang's *A Memoir of Misfortune* (2001), and Dai Qing's *Tiananmen Follies* (2005); works by Western scholars that combine memoir with analysis include Michael Duke's *The Iron House* (1990) and Craig Calhoun's *Neither Gods Nor Emperors* (1994).

characterized not by evasion but by inundation. In addition to soldiers, the Chinese state also has in its employ writers. In the years immediately following June Fourth, publications—some of which were undoubtedly literary—with press runs of up to a million copies proclaimed as loudly and directly as possible to a Chinese audience the righteousness of quelling the "counterrevolutionary riot." It was a campaign to saturate and overwhelm, to settle within a limited timeframe the public discourse on Tiananmen once and for all before shifting—after 1991, by my estimate—to the campaign to silence, which has persisted to the present.

In order to take into account such a corpus, we need a critical framework that encompasses the dual aspect of censorship and its effects, not only the unauthorized reworkings generated within its confines but also all the authorized pronouncements generated to begin with that set the terms of engagement—in other words, texts that both make the censored *public* as well as make the *censored* public. Kong is astute to observe that ever-changing political exigencies in the P.R.C. necessitate an adaptive response on the writer's part. One can go a step further and assert that the contestation between state censorship and alternative publicization is historical, i.e. time- and place-specific, and what is more, medium-specific. What we see as varying degrees of evasiveness or directness are due to specific contexts of production and promulgation.

State-backed literature like the PLA reportage collection *Songs of the Republic's Guardians* may have been disseminated widely and profusely at first, but its moment in the spotlight was brief, and its subsequent marginalization makes possible the counter-reading I conduct in Chapter 1. The fact that the textual predominates over the visual and audiovisual in Tiananmen propaganda is also no happenstance. Even today, when one uses the medium of the Chinese internet to look up "June Fourth Incident" (六四事件)—as the events of spring 1989 as a whole are generally known in China—on Baidu, the top Chinese search engine, one gets: "According to

relevant laws, regulations, and policies, some search results are not displayed" (根据相关法律法规和政策, 部分搜索结果未予显示), followed by the filtered search results. When one searches under "images" (图片), however, there is also "According to relevant laws, regulations, and policies, some search results are not displayed," but none of the results are actually related to June Fourth. A search under "videos" (视频) produces simply: "Apologies, no video results found related to 'June Fourth Incident'" (抱歉, 没有找到与“六四事件”相关的视频结果). To the Chinese government, words evidently remain more tractable than (moving) pictures.

Chapter 2 reveals that even Hong Kong before 1997 was subject to Chinese censorship, but not to the same extent or in the same way as the mainland. Neither Shu Kei's documentary *Sunless Days* (1990) nor Ann Hui's TV program "Returning Home" (1992) was censored. But the former recounts the collusion between British and Chinese authorities in restricting the public realm of a Dependent Territory transitioning to a Special Administrative Region (S.A.R.), while the latter frames for a Hong Kong public the Return to the P.R.C. as an existential threat to the viewership itself.

Through the analysis of two novels, Chapter 3 tracks the medium of text from the medium of print to the medium of the internet. Both Jia Pingwa's *Decadent Capital* (1993) and Hu Fayun's *Such Is This World@sars.come* (2006) came out in multiple different editions over time as a result of censorship. I read therein various strategies of evasion, to be sure, but I also read texts that form the context. Therefore, I give attention not only to the blank squares used by Jia in *Decadent Capital* to signify deleted writing and their tradition in modern Chinese literature, but also to the critical discourse surrounding them when they first appeared, including the later decision to eliminate them from the newest edition. For *Such Is This World*, my task consists in both interpreting its narration of the quashing of news of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

(SARS) outbreak in China alongside the repression of Tiananmen, as well as conceptualizing how the contestation between censorship and publicization is affected by the advent of the internet. The focus shifts between Hu's narrative and acts of reading and posting in the Chinese blogosphere, as I move from book to blog and back again. In so doing, I find nuances in the literary practices of writing and censoring in print and online.

The two films examined in Chapter 4 offer different responses to the physical fact that Tiananmen Square is off limits to unofficial recording. While both were shot in and around Beijing without approval, Emily Tang's *Conjugation* (2001) literally skirts the Square in picturing the tensions between the forward-looking tenor of a postsocialist society and a gaze drawn irresistibly back to an epochal event. Though Tang was born and raised on the mainland, her film was not publicly screened there and was instead registered and released in Hong Kong. Also released in Hong Kong in 2001, *Lan Yu* follows the opposite trajectory. Made by the Hong Kong director Stanley Kwan, the film was screened in China briefly before getting removed, reappearing five years later in the medium of an authorized edited DVD. It is only in comparing the Hong Kong version with this DVD that we activate the latter's negotiated meanings of Tiananmen in relation to censorship.

The above two films are also discussed in Michael Berry's *A History of Pain: Trauma in Modern Chinese Literature and Film* (2008). His monograph expands upon trauma as a central theme in modern Chinese literary and cultural studies. It tackles six traumatic events in modern Chinese history, one of which is the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests and their violent crackdown. To limit his intervention to "literature and film" is actually to sell him short. In the chapter devoted to Beijing 1989 alone, Berry offers an impressive array of readings of atrocity not just on literature and film from China, Hong Kong, and the diaspora but even on performance

art (Michael Berry 2008, 304-307).

Despite Berry's comprehensiveness, it is another study that touches on performance art which provides a blueprint for my present research. The art historian Wu Hung's *Remaking Beijing: Tiananmen Square and the Creation of a Political Space* (2005) is an interdisciplinary chef-d'oeuvre that draws on art history, architectural history, urban studies, modern Chinese history, and cultural studies. A self-reflexive project, it interweaves the historical-analytical with the autobiographical-reflective to create a dialogic brocade of collective and personal memory. Wu masterfully traces the Square's physical and contextual change from the Ming dynasty onwards, especially its role in the 20th century "as a primary site of public activity and expression" (Wu, Hung 2005, 10). One such event organized from above is the Victory March by the Eight-Nation Alliance (八国联军) occupying Beijing in 1900, while popular gatherings on the Square in the first half of the century include the May Fourth Movement of 1919 and the demonstrations against Japanese incursions on December 9, 1935.

But the focus of Wu's monograph is on the post-1949 period, when Tiananmen Square underwent a series of fundamental changes physically and symbolically. Not long after the founding of the P.R.C. on October 1, 1949, the "zero-point" of Beijing—and thus of China—was recentered from the imperial palace, where power was secret, to Tiananmen Square, where power was now on display (Wu, Hung 2005, 8). The new Square, expanded time and again after 1949 from the Ming-dynasty T-shape to the rectangle as we know it today that can hold over half a million people, is emblematic of the new China. Yet there is a tension built into its very structure: on the one hand, the Square, the new public space for the people instituted by Mao Zedong; on the other, Tiananmen (天安门), the Gate of Heavenly Peace from whose heights Mao's gaze and that of later leaders command the expanse below.

The ambivalence of Tiananmen Square played out historically in the founding ceremony of 1949, the subsequent National Day celebrations, and the massive convocation of Red Guards on August 18, 1966 at the start of the Cultural Revolution, on the one hand, and the mass memorial to Zhou Enlai on April 5 (Tomb-Sweeping Day), 1976, on the other (Wu, Hung 2005, 36ff.). The latter was a spontaneous gathering centered around the Monument to the People's Heroes—prior and precedent to 1989—when the public, no mere subjects of the gaze atop the Gate, constituted itself on the stage of the Square before being driven off.

Thus we see the publicness of the Square as ever evolving in the semi-colonial, Maoist, and post-Mao contexts. After 1949 it became a central site for visual expression—parade, painting, sculpture—in conjunction with political practice. Wu analyzes these representations, both official iconographies and unofficial recuperations of historical memory, including those that came after June Fourth. The artistic contestation of Tiananmen Square persisted through the crackdown because, as he perceptively observes, "the antagonism between the ruler and the ruled had been always there, in the very opposition between a public ground and a privileged platform" (Wu, Hung 2005, 36). It is in this tension that the political meanings of the Square, old and new, are never foreclosed.

Though Wu too detects traumatic overtones in post-1989 Chinese art that are the focus of Berry's critical enterprise, his methodology combines close readings of allegory and metaphor with a keen attunement to contextual framings. That his objects of study are two-dimensional paintings and photographs as well as site-specific forms involving performance, installation, and multimedia lends me a space not only for fruitful engagement but also contribution. Wu attests that "the Square has been—and will continue to be—a prime visual means of political rhetoric in modern China to address the public and to constitute the public itself" (Wu, Hung 2005, 16). My

dissertation extends the terms to the literary and audiovisual in concentrating on their representations of the 1989 movement and massacre. These works indeed exemplify a politics of the public in their address, whether organizing readers once again into "the people," as in the case of state publications presented in Chapter 1, or creating discursive spaces of remembrance and reappropriation, as in the case of fiction and film presented in Chapters 2-4.

In *Publics and Counterpublics* Michael Warner is also concerned above all in publics as constituted in discourse. He cautions, however, against a voluntaristic faith in this process: "The making of a public requires conditions that range from the very general—such as the organization of media, ideologies of reading, institutions of circulation, text genres—to the particular rhetorics of texts" (Warner 2005, 14). It is an understanding in sympathy with Wang Hui and Leo Ou-fan Lee's (in conversation with Michael M. J. Fischer), who make a similar point though from the opposite angle in "Is the Public Sphere Unspeakable in Chinese? Can Public Spaces (*gonggong kongjian*) Lead to Public Spheres?" (1994), part of the occasional "Etymologies" series in *Public Culture*. They were responding in part to William Rowe's "The Public Sphere in Modern China," published in 1990, a year after the Tiananmen Square protests as well as the first complete English translation of Jürgen Habermas's *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. There Rowe, in addition to mapping the historiographical opportunities opened in Chinese studies by Habermas's book, admirably delineates the etymology of the Chinese word for "public," *gong* (公), illuminating the historical polyvalence of *gong* from the common, communal, and collective to that which belongs to the imperial-bureaucratic state. Wang and Lee point out that, while Rowe finds socioeconomic parallels between European and Chinese developments, he takes less into account the historical changes in "communicative devices" and "linguistic, metalinguistic, genre, and institutional forms" that

undergird Habermas's argument (Wang, Lee, and Fischer 1994, 601-602).³ Wang and Lee are interested in the political potency of public space like Wu. They remark that in the mid-1980s, after the economic reforms were under way, there emerged a proto-public sphere in China in the form of new journals, art exhibits, and so on (Wang, Lee, and Fischer 1994, 605). These new public spaces fostered the environment in which the 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrations arose.

In their brief sketch of the post-Tiananmen scene, they reference the pressures of the market that push papers to adopt tabloid tactics—for instance, columns on sex—in order to boost sales, as well as the appearance of new transnational spaces and electronic media. What remains to be fleshed out, and where I see an area for contribution in the field of modern Chinese literary and cultural studies, is the political edge of the public realm in the wake of the June Fourth crackdown. While Rowe's survey covers hundreds and indeed thousands of years, and Wang and Lee's the twentieth century or so, my scope is circumscribed to roughly the last four decades. In the chapters to come I take heed of both Rowe's level of inquiry—the socioeconomic transformations since the end of the 1970s, the transition of Hong Kong from British to Chinese sovereignty—and Warner's and Wang and Lee's suggestions—from changes in the publishing and film industries as marketization and privatization deepen to the proliferation of internet users and forums, from the genre of literary reportage in *Songs of the Republic's Guardians* to paratexts like the preface in "Returning Home" and the afterword in *Such Is This World*. These multiple contextual levels inform my analysis of the contestation between state censorship and

³ In an earlier reading of Habermas Miriam Hansen observes the public sphere's "dual function as a *historical* category," which "offers a model for analyzing fundamental changes in relations among economy, society, and state, and in the conditions and relations of cultural production and reception" (Hansen 1991, 9; emphasis in the original). Though the "cultural" layer may be missing from his own account, Rowe does not miss it in Habermas's, as he relates: "the bourgeoisie gradually came, through its new media for articulation and discussion, to postulate the existence of a 'public,' or 'public opinion,' as 'the abstract counterpart of public authority'" (Rowe 1990, 312).

the alternative publics elicited by literature and film that self-reflexively evoke the fractious memories of the Tiananmen movement.

The scales certainly seem tipped. On one side is a vast apparatus with plenty of carrots to offer, backed ultimately by the same big stick that struck down dissent in the first place. On the other side are individuals in networks both scattered and fragile, prone to disconnection, discouragement, and disappearance. That is why an openness to a self-reflexive hermeneutics governs my principle of selecting the texts. For the present task of criticism also beckons a self-reflexivity on the part of the reader. A certain circularity, which Michael Warner describes as the first of seven characteristics of *a* public, is inscribed in its very organization: "A public might be real and efficacious, but its reality lies in just this reflexivity by which an addressable object is conjured into being in order to enable the very discourse that gives it existence" (Warner 2005, 67). Address in this equation plays a seminal role. The role, as I see it in this dissertation, calls for a conscious righting of the scales. Barred a physical space, we can nevertheless take part in activating the potential in what Miriam Hansen describes as "a discursive matrix or process through which social experience is articulated, interpreted, negotiated and contested in an intersubjective, potentially collective and oppositional form" (Hansen 1993, 201). Thus can we espy a spiral dynamic rise out of the circular, as address upon address is forwarded.

Roadmap to the dissertation

My project illustrates the persistence of a problem and follows no teleology of freedom or defeat. The treatment may proceed episodically because the history is itself in process, but there is nevertheless a structuring principle. I organize my dissertation with the same attention to history and medium that I give to my analyses of censorship and publics. Chapter 1 therefore

begins with a consideration of state-sponsored literature produced in the aftermath of June Fourth that set the terms of engagement on Tiananmen. Chapter 2 looks into the same immediate post-Tiananmen timeframe in Hong Kong. Chapters 3 and 4 concern unofficial literature and film, respectively, the former as it traverses from a print culture to an online culture and the latter as it moves from the mainland to Hong Kong and back again. As mentioned above, my sources extend beyond literary and filmic texts to include contextual evidence such as critical debates, censorship policies, and internet blogs.

Few people remember that, in the immediate wake of the June Fourth crackdown, the Chinese state, in addition to preventing unauthorized writings, issued a spate of publications that propagated its narrative of the Tiananmen movement. This campaign lasted into 1991, after which the near total blanketing that we associate with the government's handling of Tiananmen took hold. In Chapter 1, "Untimely Commemoration: Reading State Publications on Tiananmen Now," I read the state publications against the subsequently and currently imposed silence, and in doing so seek to turn official memory into alternative public memory. The chapter first surveys the wide variety of propaganda, which ranges from chronological accounts of the movement to ideological catechisms. It then concentrates on one such work that straddles the line between fiction and non-fiction called *Songs of the Republic's Guardians: Collection of Literary Reportage on Model Achievements by Martial Law Troops in the Capital* (共和国卫士之歌：首都戒严部队英模事迹报告文学集). Published by the PLA publishing house in October 1989, it contains 15 short-story-length pieces written by different authors about "the Republic's Guardians," a decoration bestowed upon soldiers killed or wounded during the quelling of the "counter-revolutionary riot." I examine its portrayal of the "befuddled" protestors, tracing it to generic conventions as well as fictional depictions of the crowd in 1920s and 30s China. Next I

analyze the *Songs*' reclamation of "the people," both through the exaltation of that exemplary public, the PLA, and through the summoning of the ghosts of Western imperialism past and present. Finally, I read the collection as a kind of "scar literature" that preserves in place not only the wounds of Tiananmen but also a provocative power for repoliticization in a time when the promise of remembrance, even for the republic's "martyrs," goes unfulfilled.

Chapter 2, "Perilous Public: Displacing Hong Kong After Tiananmen," shows that Tiananmen was subject to state censorship in Hong Kong even before the 1997 handover, and not just by China. The protests caught the territory in the middle both historically, between 1984—the year of the Sino-British Joint Declaration—and 1997, and geopolitically, between two jurisdictions. The audiovisual productions I focus on in this chapter portray state censorship, imperial and national, actual and anticipated, as the colony was transitioning to an S.A.R. of the P.R.C. They are Shu Kei's (舒琪) *Sunless Days* (沒有太陽的日子, 1990), a documentary that maps a radial model of personal and collective identification beyond roots in and ruptures from China, and Ann Hui's (許鞍華) "Returning Home" (歸去來兮, 1992), a television program allegorizing the imminent Return that dismantles the Hong Kong audience in the very instant of addressing it. By exhibiting censorship, these two works get to the heart of the issue, namely, sovereignty. They are acutely aware of Hong Kong's lack of it and of the peril of their own position. Yet it is from this position in-between that their mediation of Tiananmen imagines a public beyond the Republic.

Chapter 3, "Exhibiting Prohibition: Literary Responses from Print to Online," examines literary censorship of Tiananmen over time, from the early 1990s to the internet age. Because of the censorship, mainland authors have been able to make only allusions to the protests and their suppression. Jia Pingwa's (賈平凹) *Decadent Capital* (廢都, 1993) and Hu Fayun's (胡發雲)

Such Is This World@sars.com (如焉@sars.com, 2006) distinguish themselves by not merely evoking the protests or implying their state censorship with indirectness; they exhibit it. Jia's novel is marked by blank squares in the text that indicate words the author had to excise, and Hu narrates the Chinese government's cover-up of the SARS outbreak of 2002-2003. By comparing two editions of *Decadent Capital*—the 1993 edition with the blank squares and the 2009 edition from which they were removed—and two editions of *Such Is This World*—the authorized 2006 print edition and the online version posted by a netizen—this chapter demonstrates the productiveness of censorship. Each work makes alternative publics, creating sites both where the elided memory of Tiananmen Square 1989 can reenter and where a participatory engagement can (re)emerge.

The fourth and final chapter, "The Public Betrayed: Filming Tiananmen in a Privatizing China," concerns two fiction features that not only resuscitate the movement but also manifest the state's molding and wiping of its memory. Emily (Xiaobai) Tang's (唐曉白) *Conjugation* (動詞變位, 2001), set in the winter of 1989, tells of a group of friends coping with another friend's disappearance in the wake of the crackdown, while Stanley Kwan's (關錦鵬) *Lan Yu* (藍宇, 2001) is a love story between two men that takes place over roughly a decade from the late 1980s to the late 1990s. Both films, set in Beijing, were shot there without authorization. *Conjugation*, directed by a mainlander, was produced and released in Hong Kong; *Lan Yu*, released in Hong Kong in 2001, later came out in a mainland DVD version with Tiananmen-related scenes conspicuously edited out. In their displacements these two transregionally produced films enact the Chinese state's continual dispersal of the public that was gathered on Tiananmen Square.

In the Conclusion I first return to the question with which I opened this dissertation: Why the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests? Here I frame it in a different angle, arguing for the

significance of this political memory when so much attention, both within China and without, is trained on Chinese economic performance. I then summarize the main points of the dissertation. Finally I explore potential areas for extension when I revise it into a book manuscript for publication.

CHAPTER ONE
Untimely Commemoration: Reading State Publications on Tiananmen Now

More than 27 years later, the Tiananmen Square protests that gripped the country for seven weeks in the spring of 1989 remain a tabooed topic in the People's Republic of China. June 4th, *liu si* (六四), the date of the crackdown, is sensitive both in the calendrical year and in Chinese search engines. But one often forgets that, in the immediate aftermath of the crackdown, the Chinese state brought out a spate of publications with its own version of the events. In addition to the barring of unofficial writings, official narratives flooded the print landscape. Over a million copies of *Looking back and reflecting on 50 days* (五十天的回顾与反思) (Guojia jiaowei shehui kexue yanjiu yu yishu jiaoyu si, Guojia jiaowei sixiang zhengzhi gongzuo si, Beijing shiwei gaodeng xuexiao gongzuo weiyuanhui 1989), for instance, were issued, while *56 days of upheaval: April 15—June 9, 1989* (動盪的 56 天 : 1989 年 4 月 15 日—6 月 9 日) (Renmin Zhongguo chubanshe 1989) had a press run of 250,000.

This first chapter revisits a neglected corpus. The state campaign was short-lived. It lasted no more than three years before the near total silence that we now associate with the government's handling of Tiananmen set in. But since the campaign set the framing against which the fiction and film examined later in the dissertation jostle, it deserves to be analyzed in its own right. The following, then, is a study of censorship at work in the molding of the memory of Tiananmen. Censorship operates not solely in the intimidation or proscription of authors and their works but also in selective inscription and leaving out.

It is important to remember that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is a propaganda as well as military force. Its Central Political Headquarters is in charge of numerous organs in news, publishing, education, and the arts, such as *PLA Daily*, *PLA Literature and Art*, the PLA Arts

Academy, the PLA Song and Dance Troupe and Spoken Drama Troupe, the August First Film Studio, and the PLA Publishing House (Haiyan Lee 2011, 406). My chapter takes as its case study a publication from this last institution. Published in October 1989, a mere four months after June Fourth, the edited volume *Songs of the Republic's Guardians: Collection of Reportage Literature on Martial Law Troops' Heroic Deeds in the Capital* (共和国卫士之歌：首都戒严部队英模事迹报告文学集) compiles tales of sacrifice by "the Republic's Guardians" (共和国卫士), a decoration bestowed by Deng Xiaoping, as Chairman of the Central Military Commission, and Li Peng, as Premier of the State Council, upon killed or wounded soldiers during the quelling of the "counterrevolutionary riot" (反革命暴乱). Propaganda it obviously is, yet my project does not consist solely in dissecting a censored memory. Rather, the transformation of censorship over time makes my present review an unauthorized act of commemoration. In the reading of the state-sponsored texts against the subsequently and currently imposed silence, it is possible to turn authoritative public memory into alternative public memory.

The chapter begins with a brief overview of the variety of state publications and then proceeds to concentrate on *Songs of the Republic's Guardians*, a work of literary reportage. It first takes a look at the "befuddled" protestors, tracing the depiction to generic conventions as well as fictions of the crowd in the 1920s and 30s. Next it discusses the reclamation of "the people," both through the portrayal of that exemplary public, the People's Liberation Army, and through the summoning of the ghosts of imperialism past and present. Finally, I read the *Songs* as a kind of "scar literature" that preserves in place not only the wounds of Tiananmen but also a provocative power for repoliticization in a time when the promise of remembrance, even for the republic's "martyrs," goes unfulfilled.

Propagating the protests

The censorship of Tiananmen began before June Fourth; the state publications that came after were a continuation and expansion of the campaign that started during the movement. The collection of government materials *It is necessary to take a clear-cut stand against disturbances* (必须旗帜鲜明地反对动乱) (Zhonggong zhongyang xuanchuanbu 1989a), for instance, titled after the infamous April 26 editorial in the *People's Daily* (人民日报), had a preface dated June 2nd and a press run of 400,000 copies later in the month. But with the suppression of Beijing on June 3rd and 4th, the war of words ratcheted up. In addition to regular pronouncements from the recaptured press, the state churned out books and pamphlets profusely.⁴ Of all the titles I surveyed (and cite below), 37 of them came out just in the second half of 1989. The spate was short-lived, however. That number dropped to 14 by next year, and to 6 by 1991. As far as I could ascertain, none appeared after.

In terms of space, the production—not to mention distribution—was widespread. Beijing was the hub, the center of China's publishing industry as of the protest movement. Yet publications issued from over a dozen cities throughout the country, from the northeastern Shenyang to the southern Guangzhou, from the coastal Shanghai to the central Zhengzhou to the inland Chongqing. This geographical range reflects the reach of the demonstrations themselves, which extended to more than 100 cities (Link 2009, 7).⁵ While most non-Beijing works also mainly concern Beijing, some of them are decidedly local in scope, such as *The story of the disturbance in Chengdu* (成都骚乱事件始末), compiled by the editorial department of *Sichuan Daily* (四川日报) (Sichuan ribao bianjibu 1989), and *A sudden look back at 1989: selection of materials*

⁴ While there are doubtlessly more, the only audiovisual material I can locate is *Wave the Republic's Flag: A Record of the Quelling of Beijing's Counterrevolutionary Riot* (Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun zongzhengzhibu xuanchuanbu 1989).

⁵ See Unger 1991.

from a survey of 400 Wuhan-area college students in their own words (蓦然回首：武汉地区400名大学生调查学生自述材料选编), published by the Hubei People's Publishing House ("Daxuesheng jiaoyu de huigu yu sikao" keti zu 1991).

A few Beijing books, on the other hand, aim abroad. Published in traditional Chinese script still used in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and certain overseas communities,⁶ *Record of Beijing's spring-summer turmoil* (北京春夏風波實錄) explicitly states in a preface that its addressees are "Chinese foreign nationals, Chinese nationals, and countrymen in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan" (廣大華僑，華人，港澳同胞和台灣同胞) (Qiao Youxuan 1989).⁷ *Beijing Turmoil: More Than Meets the Eye* (Che 1990b), from the Foreign Languages Press, and *The Truth About the Beijing Turmoil* (Li, Jiang 1993), from the Beijing Publishing House, are two publications in English, the former a translation of *Beijing's turmoil from beginning to end: an intellectual's observation and reflection* (北京風波的前前后后：一个知识分子的观察·思考) (Che 1990a).

Whether the readership is foreign or domestic, we can distinguish within the entire corpus at least five *modi operandi*. The five are the imperative, the pedagogical, the reflective, the historical, and the literary. They are far from constituting mutually exclusive categories but instead are meant to provide a provisional typology of the mass of materials. In the first mode I count propaganda of the heavy-handed sort, those that speak blatantly with the voice of command, such as *Resolutely support the Party's Central Committee's decision to resolutely quell the counterrevolutionary riot* (坚决拥护党中央决策坚决平息反革命暴乱) (Zhonggong zhongyang xuanchuanbu 1989b), *Defend the socialist republic* (捍卫社会主义共和国)

⁶ A simplified Chinese script was instituted in mainland China beginning in the late 1950s.

⁷ *56 days of upheaval: April 15—June 9, 1989* (動盪的56天：1989年4月15日—6月9日) (Renmin Zhongguo chubanshe 1989) and *How Chinese people view Beijing's riot* (中國人如何看北京的暴亂) (Xinxing chubanshe 1989) are also in traditional script.

(Zongzhengzhibu xuanchuanbu, Jiefangjunbao bianjibu 1989), and *Unswervingly uphold the people's democratic dictatorship* (始终不渝地坚持人民民主专政) (Gonganbu zhengzhibu xuanchuanbu 1990), promulgated by the publicity departments of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the PLA Central Political Headquarters (总政治部), and the Ministry of Public Security's Political Department (公安部政治部), respectively.

The second mode speaks in the pedagogical voice. Since students initiated the movement and populated its ranks, they are naturally the subject as well as the target audience of many publications. In an effort to discredit student leaders and intellectuals who supported the cause—its "elites" (*jingying* 精英)—the National Board of Education (国家教委) produced *The "elites" and the unrest* ("精英"与动乱) (Guojia jiaowei sixiang zhengzhi gongzuo si, Zhongguo jiaoyu baoshe 1989) and *A record of the words and deeds overseas of defected "elites"* (叛逃"精英"海外言行录) (Guojia jiaowei sixiang zhengzhi gongzuo si, Zhongguo jiaoyu baoshe 1990).⁸ The China Youth Publishing House (中国青年出版社), on the other hand, provided what are essentially two textbooks, *Quelling the counterrevolutionary riot: collection of study materials* (平息反革命暴乱：学习材料汇编) (Zhonggong Beijing shiwei xuanchuanbu 1989a) and *The truth behind the student movement, unrest, and counterrevolutionary riot: selected materials* (学潮·动乱·反革命暴乱真相：资料选编) (Zhonggong Beijing shiwei xuanchuanbu 1989b), while the Beijing Communist Youth League (共青团北京市委) compiled a *70 days' major events* (70天大事记) aimed at "league members and youths" (团员，青年) (Gongqingtuan Beijing shiwei 1990). The self-styled "collection of news stories" (通讯集) *Collection of valiant deeds of the*

⁸ Two other similar volumes are *The bad records of the unrest's "elites"* (动乱"精英"劣迹录) (Zhongyang Beijing shiwei yanjiushi 1989) and *The true visage of contemporary China's "elites"* (中国当代"精英"的真面目) (Shi You 1990).

Republic's guardians (共和国卫士英烈集, 1989), on the other hand, trumpets its being part of "a campaign to help primary and secondary school students study and develop 'love for the Communist Party of China, love for the socialist fatherland, love for the People's Liberation Army'" (为了帮助中小学生学习, 开展“热爱中国共产党, 热爱社会主义祖国, 热爱人民解放军”的活动) (Zhongguo jiaoyu baoshe, Beijing jieyan budui 1989, 3-4).

The addressees of the above books are not limited to students. The same pedagogical logic applies in *Answers to legal questions on the stopping of the unrest and quelling of the counterrevolutionary riot* (制止动乱平息反革命暴乱法律问题解答) (Beijingshi sifaju fazhi jiaoyu jiaocai bianxie zu 1989), authored by a "teaching material compilation group" (教材编写组) within Beijing's Justice Bureau. For those in school as well as in the public at large, catechism is the method of choice, as testified by both *Current affairs and reflection: secondary school students' Q and A on current affairs politics (May 1989-March 1990)* (时事与思考: 中学生时事政治学问答 (1989年5月—1990年3月)) (Wu, Songnian 1990) and *Answers to questions on the study of Deng Xiaoping's important speech about utterly quelling the counterrevolutionary riot* (学习邓小平重要讲话彻底平息反革命暴乱问题解答) (Zhonggong Beijing shiwei xuanchuanbu lilunchu 1989). Each of the 12 chapters in *1989: Looking back and reflecting after the unrest* (1989: 动乱后的回顾与思考) is organized around a question, such as "What role did 'Voice of America' play in this unrest?" (在这场动乱中“美国之音”扮演了什么角色?) (Li, Jinkun 1989). It is a method taken up by the provinces too, which made their own contributions. Liaoning University Publishing House (辽宁大学出版社) came up with *500 questions on quelling the counterrevolutionary riot* (平息反革命暴乱 500 题) (Zhonggong

Liaoning shengwei gongchandangyuan zazhishe 1989), while Hubei added to the curriculum "*Memorandum of the riot's quelling: selection of study materials* (平暴"备忘录": 学习材料选编) (Zhonggong Hubei shengwei xuanchuanbu 1989).

Guangdong's Bureau of Higher Education, however, adopts a different model with *Looking back on the past, thinking about the future* (回顾过去, 思考未来) (Zhonggong Guangdong shengwei gaodeng xuexiao gongzuo weiyuan hui 1989). We may be caught off guard by the ruminative quality of this title, but the language of reflection that is prevalent throughout the materials warrants its own mode. *Motherland, please listen to me: reflections of the capital's college students after the turmoil* (祖国妈妈请听我说: 首都大学生在风波后的思考) (Gongqingtuan Beijing shiwei, Beijingshi xuesheng lianhehui 1990), collected by the Beijing Communist Youth League (共青团北京市委) along with the Beijing Student Union (北京市学生联合会), also supplements a note of repentance. Words like "looking back" (*huigu* 回顾),⁹ "thinking back" (*fansi* 反思),¹⁰ "reflection" (*sikao* 思考),¹¹ and "memorandum" (*beiwanglu* 备忘录) not only signal the past, as all the works necessarily do, coming after the event. They gesture remembrance. They perform an approach to Tiananmen that is opposite of the one that reigns today. Far from wiping it from history, several texts even situate it in a larger context, such as *Record of ten years of student movements (1979-1989)* (十年学潮纪实 (1979-1989)) (Chuan, Fu 1990), *Mirror to a history of pain: the spread of bourgeois liberalization and its lesson* (痛史明鉴: 资产阶级自由化的泛滥及其教训) (Hua, Yuan 1991), and *Analysis of modern China's national issues* (中国近现代国情问题剖析) (Zhu, Yuhe and Yang, Hongbo 1991).

⁹ Li, Jinkun 1989.

¹⁰ Li, Qian, and Wang, Desheng 1989; and Tang, Shaoming 1990.

¹¹ Yuan, Ding, and Xu 1990.

The historical mode makes up the largest share.¹² Besides chronicling the events of the protests as a whole, a subset of books like *A register of riot-quelling heroes* (平暴英雄谱) (Guangming ribao chubanshe bianjibu 1989), *A register of heroes and record of experiences* (英雄谱经验录) (Shenyang junqu zhengzhibu 1989), and *Inscriptions of history* (历史的碑文) (Chen, Shenggen 1989), a volume on the role of the military police, are devoted to honoring those responsible for the crackdown.¹³

Closely related to this subset is a category of works that operates in what I call the literary mode. Among all state publications, there are texts that, by self-presentation, project a decidedly literary bent. They include those that echo the literary canon, such as *One Day of Martial Law* (戒严一日) (Zongzheng wenhuabu zhengwen bangongshi 1989), named after a seminal work of reportage literature edited by the famed author Mao Dun (茅盾), 1936's *One Day in China* (中国的一日);¹⁴ *Those most worthy of our love in the new era: record of Beijing martial law troops' heroic achievements* (新时期最可爱的人：北京戒严部队英雄录) (Zhong, Bu 1989), which answers another well-known piece of reportage (from the Korean War), "Who is the Most Worthy of Our Love?" (谁是最可爱的人) of 1951; and *Record of red and black* (红与黑的纪实) (Zhongguo renmin wuzhuang jingcha budui, Shanghai shi zongdui zhengzhibu, *Ren yao jian bianjibu* 1989), partly compiled by the editorial department of a periodical that takes its title from Liu Binyan's (刘宾雁) renowned 1979 reportage piece, "People or Monsters" (人妖之间). Texts

¹² Beijing gonganju zhengzhibu 1989; Guojia jiaowei sixiang zhengzhi gongzuosi 1989; Li, Yun et al. 1989; Qiao 1989; Qin 1989; and Zhonggong Beijing shiwei xuanchuanbu 1989.

¹³ Others include Zhonggong Beijing shiwei xuanchuanbu 1989; Zhonggong Shandong shengwei xuanchuanbu, Zhonggong Laiyang shiwei xuanchuanbu 1989; Zhu, Chao 1989; and Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun zongzhengzhibu 1990.

¹⁴ *One Day in China* had previously spawned 1938's *One Day in Shanghai* (上海一日), 1949's *One Day Crossing the Yangtze* (渡江一日) on the last decisive victory of the Communists over the Nationalists, and 1956's *One Day in the Volunteer Army* (志愿军一日) on the Korean War.

in the literary mode also include those issued by "literature and arts publishing houses" (*wenyi chubanshe* 文艺出版社), such as *Days of martial law* (在戒严的日子里) (Zheng, Nianqun 1989), *Record of quelling the riot* (平暴纪实) (Ye 1990), and *The iron horse galloping to defend Beijing* (铁马驰骋卫京华) (Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun zonghouqinbu chechuanbu 1990).

I choose as my case study *Songs of the Republic's Guardians: Collection of Reportage Literature on Martial Law Troops' Heroic Deeds in the Capital*, which narrativizes Tiananmen with the "Republic's Guardians" as the military as well as literary heroes. It may be objected that *Songs* as well as all state productions are a travesty of history and memory, that even—or rather, especially—the "eyewitness account" (*mudu ji* 目睹纪)¹⁵ traffics in the most heinous distortions and omissions. My central task here is not to set the record straight. Instead, I follow the formerly official lead and look back, not so much at Tiananmen itself as at its composition. *Songs*, as a self-consciously literary text, has even more license to be creative than accounts that advertise the "truth" (*zhenxiang* 真相).¹⁶ False it may be in fact, such evocation is nevertheless faithful to the publicness that is the legacy of the 1989 protests.

The benighted crowd

Since its beginnings, "reportage literature" (*baogao wenxue* 报告文学) has sought to construct collective forms of consciousness and identification.¹⁷ In China *baogao wenxue* was first used and promoted by the Chinese League of Left-Wing Writers (中国左翼作家联盟) in

¹⁵ Jiangxi renmin chubanshe 1989.

¹⁶ Zhonghua renmin gongheguo sifabu xuanchuansi 1989 and Zhongyang dangxiao de jiben luxian yanjiu keti zu 1989.

¹⁷ For a detailed look at the origins of reportage literature, especially the role played therein by the Czech writer Egon Erwin Kisch, see the chapter "Literary Reportage in the Left-Wing Movement of the 1920s and 1930s" in Rudolf Wagner's *Inside a Service Trade* (Wagner 1992, 325-357).

1930 (Laughlin 2002, 1). The form gradually underwent canonization and institutionalization from the 1930s onwards, though only after the Cultural Revolution did the idea of reportage as an independent literary genre take hold (Laughlin 2002, 19-20). *Songs of the Republic's Guardians*, in keeping with tradition, comprises 15 pieces on 16 "guardians" as well as other individuals and groups. There is no mention of an editor, though a preface penned by a certain Guo Linxiang states that the pieces are by "writers and news workers within the military" (军内作家, 新闻工作者). Not only do the subjects form a collectivity, their authors, 19 in all, also belong to one. Certain phrases appear verbatim in every piece. These include "the masses ignorant of the truth" (不明真相的群众) for gatherings of protestors, or alternatively, "thugs mixed into the muddle-headed people" (混杂在糊涂人中的暴徒), which unfailingly foreshadows violence on the former's part. Whenever a "thug" (*baotu* 暴徒) opens his mouth, it is almost always to shout in reference to a soldier: "Kill him!" (打死他!). But if a soldier uses his gun at all, it is to "fire a warning shot into the sky" (向天鸣枪警告). The repetition of these same formulae throughout the collection bespeaks not just the careful control of the pieces but the subsumption of authorship under a master code. These army writers themselves are in a perilous situation. They have to write in this code, all the while knowing full well that there are other casualties out there, other stories of heroism and sacrifice.

We have a portrait of one such military author in the *Songs*. The piece "He used his life to finish a last news item" (他用生命写完最后一条新闻) is not much of a portrait, however, for all we essentially learn about the press officer (新闻干事) Yu Ronglu (于荣禄) is that, after "thugs" and the "masses" (*qunzhong* 群众) attacked and stopped the vehicle in which he was riding, he got out and proceeded on foot, meeting his end on the way to Tiananmen Square (PLA

1989, 161-162). Yu's life, as the title of the piece indicates, is not as important as the news he produced. Shortly before his death he had apparently written "Suspicion, understanding, love: the masses' changing feelings towards martial law troops in a certain Beijing suburb" (疑虑, 理解, 热爱—京郊某地群众对戒严部队的感情变化) (PLA 1989, 160). Whether this article is descriptive or proleptic, trying to enact what it purports to report, it is a useful reminder that the war of publicity, of realigning the public, was waged from the beginning. Yu Ronglu continued to contribute to the state campaign after his death, and not just with the news of his own martyrdom. On his remains was allegedly found a manuscript titled "Soldiers: the homeland's interests trump all else" (军人: 祖国的利益高于一切); this was later published in the *People's Liberation Army Daily* (解放军报) (PLA 1989, 161-162). He is the only "guardian" whose exemplarity lies not as much in his life as in his writing.

As for the *Songs of the Republic's Guardians* as a whole, it harks back to early reportage, especially to two subgenres: war and public demonstration. The conversion of everyday space into a combat zone echoes the former, while the depiction of large gatherings of people recalls the latter. The passage below from "Loyal souls soar to the green hills" (忠魂轻飏上翠微),¹⁸ one of the three pieces on which I focus that relates the burning to death of six soldiers, displays both elements:

Their sacrifice took place neither beneath the enemy's knife nor upon a smoke-filled battlefield, but in Beijing, the capital of 1.1 billion people, on avenues with modernized buildings and facilities. What they faced was not a fully armed enemy wearing camouflage, but a bustling crowd wearing all colors of clothing, within which may be their friends, their brothers and sisters...

他们的牺牲不是在敌人的屠刀下, 不是在硝烟弥漫的战场上, 而是在十一亿人民的首都北京, 在有着现代化建筑和设施的大街上。他们面对的不是全副武装的, 穿着

¹⁸ The title alludes to two poems by Mao Zedong, "Reply to Li Shuyi" (答李淑一) (1957) and "Reply to a Friend" (答友人) (1961), the former of which commemorates the martyrdoms of Mao's second wife, Yang Kaihui (杨开慧), and Li Shuyi's husband, Liu Zhixun.

迷彩服的敌人，而是熙熙攘攘的，穿着花花绿绿衣服的人群，人群中也许有他们的亲友，有他们的兄弟姐妹..... (PLA 1989, 97)

A city that in peacetime is the setting of "modernization" (*xiandaihua* 现代化) is thrown back in time, as it were, by the "counterrevolutionary" havoc wreaked by the unrest. First proposed by Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping enacted the "Four Modernizations" (*sige xiandaihua* 四个现代化) in the domains of agriculture, industry, science and technology, and national defense at the watershed Third Plenum of the 11th Central Committee in 1978. This modernization program is now in jeopardy because the very seat of government is in jeopardy. But the threat is no ordinary one. It is indeed nonviolent, and the image of the unarmed "crowd" (*renqun* 人群) not only defies the legitimacy of its suppression by force but also, with its "all colors of clothing," represents the broad, variegated base of the movement.

If the avenues of Beijing constitute a public space that needs to be reclaimed from a motley populace, then the central square to which they lead is even more crucial. Tiananmen Square was where it all began on April 15, 1989, when spontaneous tributes to the deceased Hu Yaobang soon swelled to popular demonstrations. Such uses of the square are unacceptable, which is strictly for picture-taking, as we learn in another passage from "Loyal souls soar to the green hills." Witness the consternation of two soldiers when they pay a visit during the protests:

We originally wanted to take photos in front of Tiananmen and send them to our parents. When we excitedly arrived at Tiananmen Square, we were shocked: all we saw were forests of tents, trash everywhere, all kinds of banners and flags waving chaotically, the sound of loudspeakers and shouts causing a headache. Huaiqing said to me indignantly: How did our capital get defiled like this!

我们本来想在天安门前照张相，给父母亲捎回去。当我们兴致勃勃地来到天安门广场时，大吃一惊：只见帐篷林立，垃圾遍地，各种布条旗子东倒西歪，喇叭声喊叫声吵得人头晕。怀庆气愤地对我说：我们的首都怎么被糟踏成了这个样子！ (PLA 1989, 86)

The only occupation allowed is the momentary one of standing in front of a camera. All other

ones, especially those that might endure, can only be desecrations of a hallowed ground. The heterogeneity of that space at that time—with a multitude of banners flying in addition to the People's Republic's flag, with loudspeakers in the hands of people and not just affixed to the top of light poles—stuns the soldiers, unaccustomed as they are to this kind of repurposing of the public. They may not have wound up taking pictures and sending them to their parents, but the above passage is a souvenir sent to us in the present, when the sanctified ritual of posing before Tiananmen has resumed its place.

"Reportage" is a leftist cultural legacy, coined in the 1920s by German communist writers from the French *reportage* to refer to investigative reports on the labor movement that were agitational in nature (Laughlin 2002, 2). In the reportage of *Songs of the Republic's Guardians*, however, public demonstration is deplored. The masses are merely "bustling" (熙熙攘攘), as noted above, or gawkers at the "bustling scene" (热闹的场面) whose involvement is the passive one of "joining in the bustle" (赶热闹) (PLA 1989, 3). Although crowds have been portrayed as acted upon rather than capable of agency as early as the Western-Han *Shiji* (史記), or *The Grand Scribe's Records* (Saussy 2006, 251), the characterizations in *Songs* aim to conjure up the figure of the crowd as voyeur in modern Chinese literature, most notably that of Lu Xun. In execution scenes from the oft-cited "The Real Story of Ah-Q" (阿 Q 正传) (1921-1922) and "Preface" (自序) (1922) in *Outcry* (呐喊) to "A Public Example" (示众) (1925) in *Hesitation* (彷徨), "spectators" (看客) invariably exercise a cannibalistic gaze. Lu Xun shifts the lines of conflict from the state vs. society to the crowd vs. the individual, as Haiyan Lee observes (Haiyan Lee 2007, 235). *Songs*, in turn, shifts them from the crowd vs. the individual to the benighted crowd of bystanders vs. the enlightened collectivity of the PLA.

We see in reverse the literary trend that Marston Anderson espies between the 1920s and the 1930s, when "the vengeful, persecutory crowds of 1920s' fiction, who had as often as not instilled feelings of terror in readers, were replaced by unified, purposeful political aggregations, that is, the masses" (Marston Anderson 1990, 201).¹⁹ In the *Songs'* depiction of human congregation, there is instead the devolvement from masses to mobs. Metaphors from those earlier times reappear, such as the elements of wind, water, and fire ("tide," "tempest," "torrent") and the animal and insect kingdom ("frenzied tigers," "swarms") (Marston Anderson 1990, 185). Individuals lose their minds and are swayed by inhuman forces: "The innumerable heads under the streetlights were like a black river, swelling to and fro. As soon as the squadron neared Xidan, it was broken up and submerged by the black waves" (无数的人头在路灯的照射下，如同一条黑色的河，涌过来又涌过去。一中队刚接近西单，就被黑色的浪分割淹没了。) (PLA 1989, 190).

Yet the seemingly natural phenomenon has an unnatural cause: guileful words sweep it into commotion. Earlier we remarked upon the pandemonium of the square that repels the two soldiers. Elsewhere too the protestors are portrayed as incapable of speech, emitting instead mere noise: "all kinds of tones and pitches, hoarse, shrill, aged, puerile, mixed with shameless whistling, formed an ear-splitting wave of sound" (各种各样的调门，沙哑的，尖厉的，苍老的，稚嫩的，夹裹着无赖的唿哨，聚合起一种刺耳的声浪) (PLA 1989, 203). Complementing this kind of portrayal is the imputation of rumor-mongering and lying to those "with ulterior motives" (别有用心), which encompass both student leaders and "thugs." Instead

¹⁹ Not all conceptions of the crowd were negative in the 1920s. A fascinating examination of Zhu Qianzhi's (朱谦之) celebration of the irrational crowd in his 1921 *Philosophy of Revolution* (革命哲学) appears in Tie Xiao 2012. For a study of the transformation in discourse of the crowd both in intellectual and in artistic works from the late Qing to the 1930s, see Tie Xiao 2011.

of causing a headache, these words inflame the gullible masses. A scene from "Forward, forward, forward...: deputy division commander Zhao Guohai" (向前, 向前, 向前...—记副师长赵国海), the second of three pieces that I focus on, shows two college students plying their trade:

"City residents! Countrymen! We come from Tiananmen Square, we witnessed everything that happened there. We cannot but tell everybody with grief that the nation's heart, beating rapidly these many days for democracy, has just shed scarlet blood..."

This extremely agitational speech, like smoke released from a magic bottle, spread its black wings wider and wider, soaring smugly high in the sky.

People's feelings were infected, from silence to vigor, from excitement to frenzy, eyes shooting sparks, teeth flashing light. The whole world seemed to be trembling from those teeth.

"You can't speak nonsense without evidence!" Zhao Guohai's hoarse voice interrupted the college student's speech. He knew the danger of his situation and even more the weight of responsibility he carried.

"Without evidence? This is a bulletin just come from Tiananmen Square. If you don't believe it, read it to everybody yourself."

The college student put the "bulletin" in Zhao Guohai's hand. Guohai returned it without looking at it.

"市民们! 同胞们! 我们刚刚从天安门广场回来, 耳闻目睹那里发生的一切, 我们不得不沉痛地告诉大家, 那多日来为争取民主而急遽搏动的民族之心, 已经淌出了腥红的血....."

极富煽动性的演说, 象是从魔瓶里放出来的烟雾, 越来越宽地拓展开黑色的翅膀, 得意洋洋地凌空飞翔。

人们的情绪被感染了。由沉默而昂扬, 由激动而疯狂, 眼睛喷着火, 牙齿闪着光, 整个世界仿佛都在齿缝间瑟瑟颤抖。

"不能没有根据地乱说!" 赵国海嘶哑的声音打断了大学生的讲演。他知道自己所处环境的险恶, 但更懂得肩上所负责任的沉重。

"怎么没有根据? 这是刚刚从天安门广场发来的快报, 不信的话, 你给大家念念。"

大学生把"快报"塞到赵国海手里, 赵国海看也没看, 又塞了回去。(PLA 1989, 206-7)

This passage stands out for its presentation of college students. For elsewhere, scenes of dialogue between students and authorities, borrowing the catechistic format of a strain of state production noted earlier, are in actuality question-and-answer sessions. Military cadres play the masters, while the pupils are reduced to responses like "These words made the college student blush and

say repeatedly: 'It is so, it is so!'" (一席话说得这位大学生脸刷的一下红了, 连声说: 是这样, 是这样!), "Students and soldiers applauded together in agreement" (学生同战士们一起鼓掌表示赞同), and "Several students said with a smile: 'What you say is right, what you say is right!'" (几名学生笑着说: “说的对, 说的对!”) (PLA 1989, 240-1).

In the scene above Zhao Guohai may accuse the college students of "speaking nonsense" (乱说), but by giving them, when they are presumably in a state of urgency, a highly stylized opening—"the nation's heart, beating rapidly these many days for democracy, has just shed scarlet blood"—the author suggests that these rabble-rousers are only too artful in rhetoric, easily manipulating their audience. He or she condemns the "extremely agitational speech" (极富煽动性的演说), describing the listeners thus "infected" (*ganran* 感染) in monstrous terms, as frenzied beasts with flashing teeth and eyes on fire. The soldier Zhao Guohai is the lone voice of reason amidst a sea of rage. Thus does a member of the state apparatus assume the role of defiant dissident.

But we know that, if not specifically on Tiananmen Square, civilian blood was shed all around it. And yes, "people's feelings were infected" (人们的情绪被感染了). The passage above preserves this truth. What rises unbidden from the "magic bottle" is the genius of reportage as a genre, in the mobilization of the disaggregated into a collective. In the face of passion Zhao Guohai supposedly appeals to rationality by emphasizing evidence, but in the end it is he who refuses rather than refutes the evidence presented by the other side. His gesture of not looking is synecdoche for the Chinese state's censorship of alternative Tiananmen memories. The scare quotes around "bulletin" (快报) intend its duplicity, but the real fear resides in the fact of its publication, its status as a competing publicity in a mediascape previously monopolized by state

organs. Hearing a new speech, the public are moved "from silence to vigor" (由沉默而昂扬). It is this movement that causes "trembling" (*chandou* 颤抖).

Who speaks for the "nation" (民族) is the crux of the matter. The college students call the crowd "countrymen" (*tongbaomen* 同胞们), and the public they address is not only the concrete audience gathered around them, not only a public within the designated public that is the P.R.C, but an alternative to that public. They claim the "nation's heart" (民族之心) in the name of the people. "The people" (人民), like "the nation," are signifiers at the core of the contestation, and it is the state's primary task in the wake of June Fourth to quash their equivocality. The following exchange, from the piece "A symphony of fire and blood: Cui Guozheng" (火与血交响曲—记崔国政), demonstrates what is at stake:

People gathered around from all directions like the tide.... A middle-aged man came forward, patting Cui Guozheng on the shoulder and saying smugly: "Hey soldier, look, is the power of the people great or what?"

Guozheng said: "Of course the power of the people is great, but can you represent the people? Can those who obstruct military vehicles and oppose the Liberation Army represent the people?"

人们像潮水一般从四面八方围上来...一个中年男子走上前，拍着崔国政的肩膀得意地说：“喂，当兵的，你看人民的力量伟大不伟大？”

国政说：“人民的力量当然伟大了，可是，你就能代表人民吗？阻拦军车，和解放军作对的人能代表人民吗？” (PLA 1989, 59-60)

Cui Guozheng cleverly turns the issue into one of "representation" (*daibiao* 代表): those blocking the PLA's way may be people, and a lot of people, but they are not *the people*. Cui's questions render his interlocutor "speechless in response" (无言答对) (PLA 1989, 60). But the latter did not know that the final answer would not hinge on "the people" at all. Rather, it hinged on "power" (*liliang* 力量).

The might of the military triumphed on June Fourth. Yet the outcome of the battle over "the

people" remained uncertain. The state was well aware that brute force alone could not remold the republic. Representation, as Cui Guozheng stressed, would be paramount to this project. And so, in addition to aimless crowds, vicious thugs, and vainglorious leaders of the movement, *Songs of the Republic's Guardian* drew up a pantheon of worthies. It is to this model public that we now turn.

History lessons

The Chinese state cannot afford to destroy the totality of protestors. For theoretical support it turns to Mao's classic distinction of antagonistic and non-antagonistic relationships.²⁰ Soldiers are urged to "concentrate your hatred on an extremely small number of provokers and plotters of the riot and a small group of bad elements, strictly carry out orders, carefully distinguish between two different kinds of contradiction" (...把仇恨集中在极少数煽动策划暴乱的人和一小撮坏分子身上, 严格执行政策, 注意区分两类不同性质的矛盾。) (PLA 1989, 158). An "enemy" of the people must be quashed. Resolving a non-antagonistic contradiction among the people, however, involves reorienting those temporarily led astray. Among the other state publications we find efforts to convince like *The bankruptcy of the "Goddess of Democracy"* ("民主女神"号破产记) (Hua, Yan 1991) and *Dispelling confusion* (破惑集) (Liu, Jia; Tang, Shizhao; and Li, Gengchen 1991). Here in *Songs*, on the other hand, the schema is emulation.

The protagonists of the collection are the Republic's Guardians. While the names of student leaders such as Wang Dan (王丹), Wu'erkaixi (吾尔开希), and Chai Ling (柴玲) are not mentioned anywhere in the text, the guardians' names frequently appear in the piece titles. This

²⁰ For "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People" (关于正确处理人民内部矛盾的问题) in English, see Mao, Zedong 1957.

singling out of individuals among the throng in Chinese reportage dates from the Korean War, when the writing became concerned with the subjective consciousness of heroic figures (Laughlin 2002, 218-221). Thus not only does the *Songs*' approach connect with a national tradition of narration, the illustrious past of the People's Liberation Army itself furnishes a mythos upon which *Songs* can draw.

Songs constantly reminds readers of the fact that the collectives of the PLA and of the CPC which it serves have been in existence for a lot longer than the collective centered on Tiananmen Square. There are repeated evocations of the Army's and the Party's history, which are inextricably bound with the history of nation-building. They include fighting in the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1937-1945), "volunteering" in the Korean War (1950-1953), and aiding the 1976 Tangshan earthquake relief effort (PLA 1989, 7). Therefore, the soldiers who quell the counterrevolutionary rebellion that is the Tiananmen Square movement are carrying on the glorious mission of forging and maintaining the body politic. The Guardian Cui Guozheng, for instance, comes from a revolutionary family himself (PLA 1989, 68 *ff.*). And those who give up their lives in doing so, the martyrs of June Fourth, join an undying rank of 20 million who have previously fallen for the People's Republic (PLA 1989, 97). This number, across time, dwarfs the numbers in demonstration across China.

The Republic's Guardians—or rather, *Songs of the Republic's Guardians*—carry out what Robert Chi calls "identification under the sign of memory" (Chi 2003, 156). It is memory that strikes out an entire other history that informed and inspired the protestors' cause. In their important article "Acting Out Democracy: Political Theater in Modern China," Joseph Esherick and Jeffrey Wasserstrom analyze the 1989 protests as "symbol-laden performances whose efficacy lies largely in their power to move specific audiences" (Esherick and Wasserstrom 1990,

839). The students did indeed, consciously or unconsciously, make use of a "repertoire" of actions and follow "scripts" both national and international, pitting their "theater" against state "ritual." But to extend Esherick and Wasserstrom, the Chinese state, especially in the mountain of materials produced after June Fourth, tried to rewrite the students' scripts and sever certain associations. If the Tiananmen movement is to be situated in history, then the connection made is not to the May Fourth Movement (五四运动) of 1919, when another Beijing government failed to respond to popular demands, but to the effects of "bourgeois liberalization" (*zichan jieji ziyouhua* 资产阶级自由化) on the reform era. As with "liberalization" (*ziyouhua*), the "Beijing Students' Autonomous Federation" (*gao zi lian* 高自连) and the "Beijing Workers' Autonomous Federation" (*gong zi lian* 工自连) mask the "ulterior motive" of the "self" (*zi* 自). Never mind that they draw on the Independent Self-governing Trade Union (*Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy*) and the Independent Students' Union (*Niezależne Zrzeszenie Studentów*) in Poland. The Beijing federations are mentioned always in scare quotes, as if they were publics in name only, their autonomy from the Party organization a proof of their private interests.

In contradistinction to these sham ones, the People's Liberation Army, and specifically the Republic's Guardians, exemplify publicness. They forsake the individual for the greater good. There is not a little of the iconic Lei Feng (雷锋, 1940-1962), the PLA soldier lionized in a massive campaign after his death for his selflessness and service to the people, in the protagonist of the piece "Police hero: Li Guorui's story" (警营雄杰—李国瑞的故事): "Thus towards his own pleasures Li Guorui is 'miserly;' towards the collective, however, he is 'generous'" (李国瑞对自己的吃喝玩乐是如此的“小气”，但他对集体却很“大方”。) (PLA 1989, 181-2). The "family" (*jia* 家) is not only a private realm that needs to be transcended; Li revalues the word

itself: "He loves his mother, who gave birth to him and raised him, but he loves even more the family that is the army" (他爱生他养他的母亲, 但他更爱部队这个家) (PLA 1989, 176). Affiliation, Party and army, overtakes filiation in the piece "You, too, were a college student" (你—曾经也是个大学生) as well, where Wang Jinwei (王锦伟) is thus addressed in the second person: "But when family matters and army matters came into conflict, the pole on your shoulder would start to lean: the 'big family' far outweighed the 'little family'" (可一旦家里事和部队上的事发生冲突时, 你肩上的挑子就开始倾斜了: “大家”的重量远远超过了“小家”。) (PLA 1989, 147). It would be a mistake, however, to assume that familial structures are therefore crumbling. Instead, the "big family" is a continuation of the "little family," replicating the latter's structures of power. As Wang Jinwei's mother relates, "When he was little he listened to me; when he grew up he listened to the Party" (这孩子小时候听我的话, 长大了听党的话。) (PLA 1989, 150). In the course of natural growth the latter takes up the seat of command and obedience.

Women do not fare well in *Songs*. As seen from above, actual mothers—as opposed to the Party surrogate—are always getting left behind. True to the piece's title, "A star in the solar system" (太阳系里一颗星), a certain Political Commissar Ma (马政委) does not go home to visit his gravely ill mother but stays with the army in its time of need (PLA 1989, 6), while the Republic's Guardian Wang Qiang (王强), on leave to see his sick mother, rejoins his unit prematurely (PLA 1989, 32). Brides are not spared either. In the piece "Phoenix in the fire" (火中的凤凰) the martyr Liu Guogeng (刘国庚) protests to his superiors, who want him to stay behind: "Does my own wedding matter? Going to Beijing to carry out the order is the big matter" (我个人的婚事算什么? 到北京执行任务是大事) (PLA 1989, 38). The only kind of defiance

allowed is carrying out the order.

All these sick mothers and spurned brides are not the only women in *Songs*. There are none among the Republic's Guardians, and most are indeed presiders of the private domain who raise heroes and/or mourn their untimely deaths. But the collection supplements their function as conveyor belts—of young men into the service—by staging their own entries into the public. A woman can share center stage with a man by rescuing him, as is the case in "Deep feelings at a critical moment: Major General Zhang Kun and female worker Ma Zhanqin" (危难之时见深情—张堃少将和女工马战琴) (PLA 1989, 213-222). And save for a short introductory section, the entirety of "Loyalty written in blood—Ma Guoxuan's story" (血写的忠诚—马国选的故事) is told from the first-person perspective of Ma's fiancée, Ren Suxia (任素霞). A 20-year-old girl from the village, Ren was suicidal when she first heard of Guoxuan's death (PLA 1989, 102), personifying the type for whom romantic love is everything. It comes as no surprise that she is successfully and fully integrated by the end, deciding to join the army like Lin Daojing (林道静) and Wu Qionghua (吴琼花) before her—the former a once suicidal woman who eventually joins the movement to resist Japanese incursions in Yang Mo's (杨沫) 1958 novel *Song of Youth* (青春之歌), and the latter a slave who comes to fight in *The Red Detachment of Women* (红色娘子军), Xie Jin's (谢晋) 1961 film. Through her own voice, we hear her transformation from a melancholic woman into an ecstatic revolutionary: "I have only one wish now: to take up Guoxuan's gun, carry on his legacy, and give all of myself to the Party!" (我现在只有一个愿望: 接过国选的钢枪, 继承他的遗志, 把自己的一切献给党!) (PLA 1989, 118). The Party saved her life, and in return she kills "herself" (*ziji* 自己) in a different way.

By contributing to the cause in whichever way they can, these women align themselves with

an entity greater than the domestic unit. Though only Zhang Zhen is decorated as a Republic's Guardian in "Road of fire and song of blood: five-and-a-half hours in the life of the soldier Zhang Zhen" (火路血歌—战士张震一生中的五个半小时), his sisters receive commendation too for their sacrifices behind the scenes. The author concludes the piece with this panegyric: "I hope that whoever wishes to remember Zhang Zhen remembers also his younger sister Xiaojie, his youngest sister, as well as the numerous people who have nurtured and helped him. Since the names of these numerous people cannot all be remembered, please remember their generic name: the people" (我希望, 凡是想记住张震的人, 也请记住张震的大妹张小洁, 他的小妹, 以及哺育和帮助过他的许许多多的人。许许多多人的姓名不可能都记住, 那就请记住总称—人民。) (PLA 1989, 136-7). "The people" (*renmin* 人民) reappears, linked to "numerous people" (许许多多的人). But the protestors, no matter their number, can never constitute the people. They do not have the right to "name," which belongs to the authority behind the author.

The more salient word is "remember" (*jizhu* 记住), which appears four times in two sentences. Remembrance and its shaping, and not simply deletion, form the censorship project. After the clearing of the square on June Fourth, the campaign shifts, as we have observed, to writing, including about other recording practices, seen in the following lines from "A star in the solar system," the third of three pieces I focus on: "Some people are afraid of not getting into the foreign reporter's shot and getting forgotten by history; they willingly serve as extras for the foreign reporter, heading straight for the camera, smiling to reveal a mouthful of yellow teeth" (有些人甚至生怕上不了洋记者的镜头, 会被历史遗忘; 而甘当洋记者的群众演员, 直冲镜头去, 咧开满嘴黄牙笑。) (PLA 1989, 9). The foreign reporter (*yang jizhe* 洋记者) records, yet in this history the Chinese figure only as "extras" (*qunzhong yanyuan* 群众演员), used by the

reporter for his "foreign" (*yang* 洋) narrative. "Extras" in Mandarin Chinese literally means "mass/crowd actors." Those who would want to "act" in front of a foreigner cannot be a part of the "masses" (*qunzhong* 群众). There is the not so subtle suggestion of (self-)orientalization, the "yellow" teeth fawning for the camera's Western gaze.

It is true that the West's media spun their own self-affirming Tiananmens.²¹ But what if we place the emphasis somewhere else? We can do so by moving an adverb: the protestors would no longer be "afraid of not getting into the foreign reporter's shot" and instead be *not* afraid of getting into the foreign reporter's shot. Or any shot. Not afraid of getting edited by CNN or identified by the MSS, the Ministry of State Security (国安部). For it is important to remember that the media, foreign and domestic, were not the only ones with cameras. *Songs of the Republic's Guardians* contains several examples of the state filming for its own purposes. Later in "A star in the solar system," for instance, we find that its "video cameras captured clearly the scene at that time. Every thug's visage and voice were recorded into the file" (当时的情景, 摄像机照得清清楚楚。每个暴徒的嘴脸及其说话声都记录在案。) (PLA 1989, 28), and that the cameras "worked busily, marking from different angles the wanton thugs as well as their assistants and accomplices" (忙碌地工作, 从不同的角度盯住猖獗的暴徒及其帮手和帮凶) (PLA 1989, 29). But regardless of the surveillance, people appeared, coming into the public and together as a public, in what could only have been a surprise performance. They were indeed "extras," constituting a congregation unaccountable to any camera lens or shot (*jingtou* 镜头).

It soon becomes evident who is the one afraid in regards to the camera and the history it can remember. A military officer orders the foreign reporter to turn over his camera and film, citing

²¹ For a critique of Western codings of Tiananmen as a different form of Orientalism—China not as essentially other but as generally same—see Vukovich 2009.

martial law. When the reporter's interpreter tries to keep the car door closed, the military officer responds: "Are you a Chinese? If so, open the door" (你是中国人吗? 是, 就开门。) (PLA 1989, 9). After he confiscates the equipment, he gives the reporter the best possible explanation of censorship in the P.R.C. as a jurisdictional matter: "the law doesn't need to be explained; it only needs to follow the law" (法律不需要解释, 它只要依法行事) (PLA 1989, 9). "To his surprise," however, "not a few people actually speak up on the foreign reporter's behalf, rebuking him for interfering with press freedom" (不想, 竟有不少人替洋记者说话, 指斥他干涉新闻自由) (PLA 1989 9-10). Livid, the officer again wonders "whether there is still a Chinese soul inside those people" (那些人的心里是否还有一点中国人的灵魂在。) (PLA 1989, 10).

Within the community projected by *Songs*, "press freedom" (*xinwen ziyou* 新闻自由) and "Chinese" (*zhongguoren* 中国人) cannot be imagined together. By defending the former, the interpreter as well as the others betray the latter. In fact, "freedom" (*ziyou* 自由) in general is suspect, as we behold in this depiction of an intellectual through the eyes and ears of the soldier Wang Qiang, from a later scene in "A star in the solar system:"

He heard some celebrities lecturing on freedom and democracy.

Pushing up a pair of glasses on his nose with his forefinger, a lecturer hurled abuse at China's history, denounced China's present, and smeared the image of the Chinese nation. Whoever's words were the most cutting and whoever's abuse was the harshest received the most welcome applause and cheers. The fevered listening audience all raised their fingers in the shape of scissors, as if to cut something.

他听到一些名人发表自由与民主的演讲。

演讲者用食指推一推鼻梁上的眼镜, 疯狂谩骂中国的历史, 指责中国的现实, 丑化中华民族的形象。谁的词锋最尖锐, 谁骂得最狠, 谁最受到掌声喝彩声的欢迎。狂热的听众都伸出剪状的手指, 好像要剪掉什么。(PLA 1989, 15-16)

The lampoon of the bespectacled intellectual is a familiar one in a Communist iconography that exalts the triad of "worker, peasant, soldier" (*gong nong bing* 工农兵). Like the two college

students discussed previously, this "celebrity" (*mingren* 名人) knows how to work the muddle-headed public to the point of frenzy. The most striking image is the V-sign, here viewed by Wang Qiang with incomprehension. Together with "freedom and democracy" (*ziyou yu minzhu* 自由与民主), they compose a semiology that is not just foreign and unintelligible to the bedrock of the Chinese nation but inimical.

As one of the "four gentlemen of the square" (广场四君子) who staged a hunger strike days before June Fourth, Liu Xiaobo (刘晓波) was certainly a "celebrity." *Songs* does not mention him by name, but he is the "madman" (*kuangren* 狂人) referred to here: "What other evidence is needed? That madman who wants China 'be a colony for 300 years' is sitting on Tiananmen Square. That is the most dangerous omen" (难道还需要例证么, 那个想要中国“做三百年殖民地”的狂人就坐在天安门广场上。那是最危险的凶兆。) (PLA 1989, 16).²² A couple of pages later the author again summons the memory of "national shame" (*guochi* 国耻) in order to mobilize nationalist feeling: "If the 'Eight-Nation Alliance' were to stage a comeback, if invaders snatched your ear and were about to slit your throat, you'd probably scream: 'Save me, Liberation Army'" (倘若“八国联军”卷土重来, 倘若侵略者揪住你的耳朵要动刀抹你脖子时, 你大概会喊: 快来救命呵, 解放军) (PLA 1989, 18). Comprising Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, the "Eight-Nation Alliance" (*baguo lianjun* 八国联军) intervened in the suppression of the Boxers (*yihetuan* 义和团) at the turn of the 20th century. It has come to symbolize foreign imperialism in modern China in general. The PLA is the P.R.C.'s protector. Those who intone the praises of freedom and democracy are compradors who would trade away China's sovereignty, a nationhood regained

²² For more on Liu Xiaobo's comment, see Fallows 2010.

from colonial oppressors by the Communist Party of China. But these are not the only wounds from the past that *Songs* refreshes for the post-Tiananmen public. In the next section we look at the more graphic ones suffered by the Republic's Guardians in their martyrdom.

Scar literature

"Social problem reportage literature" (问题报告文学), as opposed to reportage on particular events, became prominent in the 1980s.²³ As if influenced by the trends of the genre, social problems appear even in this work of reportage. Unemployment, the rural-urban divide, and the breakdown of public welfare—all of which exacerbated in the reform era and fed the discontent of the 1989 protests—are but a few peeping through the cracks. Seeing an old man beg for food, the soldier Ma Guoxuan, in "Loyalty written in blood," says to him: "Why did you come here for work? Can't you get rich by farming at home?...Even people in town are looking for employment; it's not easy finding work" (你何必出来做工? 在家里好好种地, 不也一样致富吗...城里还有人待业呢, 找活干可不那么容易。) (PLA 1989, 114). The old man does not dispute with Ma. In "Road of fire and song of blood" rural poverty is again the issue. The soldier Zhang Zhen's sister Zhang Xiaojie—the object of commendation cited earlier—gets leukemia, and the family does not have the money to pay for her treatment (PLA 1989, 129). Of the four "thugs" captured and interrogated in "A star in the solar system," three are "drifters" (*mangliu* 盲流), migrants from the countryside with no prospects in sight (PLA 1989, 13).

But we are in postsocialist times after all, when economic reforms have lifted the country's standard of living. We therefore find passages in *Songs* that unmistakably lament the hardships not of the "old society" (旧社会) of pre-1949 China commonly depicted in high socialist works,

²³ See Yingjin Zhang 1993.

but of the socialist era itself. "Phoenix in the fire," cited earlier, paints the tough days thus: "The year Guogeng was born, it was the time of 'Rather socialism's grass than capitalism's sprout.' Each work point was worth five, six cents; a whole day's labor couldn't bring in half a yuan" (国庚出生那年，正赶上“宁要社会主义的草，不要资本主义的苗”的岁月，一个工分值五六分钱，劳动一天挣不了几角钱。) (PLA 1989, 34). Not just indigence but also an ideological straitjacket constricted those years. Now, as is evident, exchange value has sprouted while use value has been mown.

Arguably the nadir of the socialist period was the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (无产阶级文化大革命), which officially lasted from 1966 to 1976. *Songs of the Republic's Guardians* connects the 1989 movement with the memory of those ten years: "Our country already experienced the pain of 10 years' turmoil, which left in many people's hearts a scar hard to erase" (我们国家已经历了 10 年动乱之苦，在许多人心里都留下了难以磨灭的伤痕。) (PLA 1989, 202). "10 years' turmoil" (*shinian dongluan* 10 年动乱) is the semi-authorized designation of the Cultural Revolution. The Tiananmen Square protests are another "turmoil" that reopens the "scar" (*shanghen* 伤痕). Both events, the state suggests, brought about chaos and crime.

By picking at that "scar," *Songs* consciously aligns itself with "scar literature" (*shanghen wenxue* 伤痕文学), a wave of works in the years after the Cultural Revolution steeped in emotional trauma. *Songs*, however, incarnates the trauma, graphically illustrating the injuries sustained by soldiers in quelling the protests. The depictions are detailed and gruesome, full of burns, blood, and bullet-ridden bodies. To outmatch the words and images testifying to civilian casualties, the collection offers eyewitness accounts from local residents, signed and dated,

which directly counter the "rumors" that soldiers killed. The passage below, from "Police hero," vividly captures the violence committed against the Guardian Li Guorui:

In the early morning of June 4th, a shocking and pitiful scene appeared at the Fuchengmen overpass: from the northern side of the yellow-gray cement railing was hanging upside down a body still breathing, mutilated in its entirety, its skull cracked open, its limbs broken, dark-red blood and white brains dripping from the bridge onto the cement ground below from time to time.

这是6月4日清晨，在阜成门立交桥出现一幅触目惊心的惨景：北侧灰黄色水泥栏杆上倒挂着一具尚未断气的躯体，全身血肉模糊，脑壳开裂，臂残肢断，殷红的鲜血混和着白色的脑浆，不时地洒溅在桥下的水泥地面上 (PLA 1989, 168-9)

The picture is meant to elicit the most visceral responses from the reader, painting in brutal strokes the outrage that continues to be perpetrated, for the picture is not a still life: the body is still breathing, the blood and brains still dripping. If indeed the perpetrators hung the body on display, then this passage reenacts the spectacle, a work of agitprop that, like the incendiary rhetoric attributed to student leaders and intellectuals, seeks to stir elemental passions.

In tandem with this portrait of one is a group sculpture of collective victimhood, for as Haiyan Lee observes, "the aestheticization and de-individualization of death is indeed the essence of the military sublime" (Haiyan Lee 2011, 409). While the former is "shocking" (*chumu jingxin* 触目惊心), the latter invites the viewer to tarry. "A star in the solar system" crafts this assemblage of heroes in agony:

The military vehicle has already been burned into a pile of coal. The burnt-black corpses of the five soldiers are embraced in unity. Perhaps they had hugged their burning comrades one by one and in the end came together, a collectivity of friendship burned to death.

军车已被烧成一堆黑炭。五个军人焦黑的遗体抱成一团。他们也许是一个一个地抱着被烈火烧伤的战友，而最后都抱在一起，成为一个被烧死的友爱集体。(PLA 1989, 23-24)

In life the soldiers formed a unit, and in death the fire has forged their eternal monument. Their final performance of togetherness is supposed to catalyze the reunification of its beholders.

Should the beholders need help, "Loyal souls soar to the green hills" provides this template: "...the hundreds of millions of viewers in front of the television nearly all gaped in shock at the crimes of the thugs. Their hearts trembled vehemently; tears flowed from the eyes of not a few people" (...电视机前的亿万观众几乎都被暴徒们的罪行震惊的张大了嘴巴, 人们的心在剧烈地颤抖, 不少人的泪水夺眶而出) (PLA 1989, 72). Not only does the writing evoke a unanimous public into being, it acts out how *its* public should react upon reading it. As with the two college students' rumor of bloodshed on the square, the effect aimed for here is "trembling" (*chandou* 颤抖).

Unanimous feeling is again the means and the end in "A symphony of fire and blood:" "At this moment, 7 p.m. on June 8th, 1989, China Central Television is broadcasting the news. If there are 1.1 billion viewers in front of the TV screen, one can say with certainty that, if they have not betrayed their conscience, all will feel shock and indignation" (此刻, 1989年6月8日19时, 中央电视台正在播放新闻联播。如果电视荧屏前有11亿观众的话, 可以肯定地说, 只要良心没有出卖, 谁都会感到惊愕, 愤慨) (PLA 1989, 54). These lines underscore the temporal dimension. A community dispersed all over the country is nevertheless unified in (Beijing) time. Whether the audience has a "conscience" (*liangxin* 良心) is not the issue. What is, though, as *Songs of the Republic's Guardians* demonstrates, is whether it has imagination.

Watching the appointed show at the appointed hour is one's public duty. The parents of Li Qiang (李强), one of the six martyrs commemorated in "Loyal souls soar to the green hills," partake in this communal experience: "June 15th, 1989, 7 p.m.: time for China Central Television's *National News Bulletin*.... Husband Bo Shangxue and wife Li Aiqun, concerned very much with the development of the current political situation like every family all over the

country, have also sat down early in front of the television" (1989年6月15日19时, 中央电视台新闻联播节目的时间到了.... 薄尚学, 李爱群夫妇此时和全国各地的千家万户一样, 非常关心时局的发展, 也早早的坐在了电视机前) (PLA 1989, 71). The *National News Bulletin*, literally "news simulcast" (*xinwen lianbo* 新闻联播), is shown simultaneously at 7 p.m. every day by many if not most terrestrial channels in China. Since the early 1980s, the *National News Bulletin* has been the only regular CCTV program to have "must carry" status across all broadcasters (Ying Zhu 2012, 76). If the TV is on at that time, one is perforce tuning in "like every family all over the country" (和全国各地的千家万户一样). To be sitting down in front of the TV is also not to be out marching in the streets.

But out they do go. The masses "ignorant of the truth," now enlightened by the truth and, what is more, ignited by the texts and images of sacrifice and suffering, have once again awakened. No longer a "black river" (黑色的河) and "black waves" (黑色的浪) (PLA 1989, 190), they proceed in single file: "One group after another, a mass of thousands upon thousands attended the memorial service of martyr Yanpo" (...成千上万的群众一批又一批祭奠着艳坡烈士。) (PLA 1989, 196). Such a gathering allegedly flows forth from the feelings of the public, found also in "Loyal souls soar to the green hills:" "Cars slowed down passing through here, going past gently; many bicyclists voluntarily got off their bikes here, coming before the martyrs' portraits to mourn silently. Here a spontaneous mass grieving continued day after day" (路过这里的汽车, 放慢了速度, 徐徐通过; 许多骑车人在这自动下车, 来到烈士遗像前默默致哀。一个群众性的自发的悼念活动在这里一天接一天的进行了下去。) (PLA 1989, 74). The "voluntary" (*zidong* 自动) and the "spontaneous" (*zifa* 自发) complement the organized, for the author goes on to list, among other attendees, some "famous writers" (著名作家) (PLA 1989,

75). These writers only lay down wreaths, while the "entire workforce" (全体职工) of a certain furniture factory composes an elegy to the six martyrs, which would be a greater collective achievement than *Songs* itself (PLA 1989, 83).

The commemorations "continued day after day" (一天接一天的进行了下去). Then one day, they stopped. They could not start again, even though they were far from complete. In *Songs of the Republic's Guardians* we find pledges of remembrance that, not long after their utterance, were broken. Pledges like this one from "Phoenix in the fire:" "A hero's statue should be made for the Republic's Guardians at Xidan Road in the capital: this statue will be grand and perfect, spotless and flawless, forever smiling on the passing pedestrians" (应该为共和国卫士在首都西单路口塑一尊英雄雕像，这雕像高大完美，洁白无瑕，永远向过往的行人微笑。) (PLA 1989, 43). And this one, from "A symphony of fire and blood:" "The day of June 4th, 1989 will be written weightily upon Chinese history" (1989年6月4日这一天，在中国的历史上将被重重地写上一笔) (PLA 1989, 60).

It would be too easy to remark upon the irony of these words with our benefit of hindsight more than 27 years later. Instead of scoffing at them, let us observe them. In rereading them we realize them, turning official memory into alternative public memory. There is a promise within the pages of *Songs of the Republic's Guardians* that people can not only privately mourn but commemorate publicly.

According to the U.S.-based Tiananmen historian Wu Renhua, the General Political Department wanted to conduct a big celebration on June 4, 1990, the one-year anniversary of June Fourth.

But members of the Politburo Standing Committee, including Deng Xiaoping, forbade it.²⁴ Wu dates the end of the government propaganda campaign to around that time. As mentioned previously in the chapter, the last state-sponsored publications on the Tiananmen Square protests that I know of appeared in 1991. I do not pretend to give a definitive explanation for this timing. Yet I offer this concurrence: in 1991 the national flag raising ceremony in Tiananmen Square was changed from an occasional to a daily ritual (Haiyan Lee 2011, 411). Such a practice could be construed as innocent under other circumstances. But what if we are to understand state propaganda not as the opposite of what is censored but as a facet of the total project of censorship, which is not mere restriction but a filtering comprised of both erasure of some forms of public expression and promotion of others? If *Songs of the Republic's Guardians* is a product of the censorship of Tiananmen, as I have argued, then so is the national flag raising ceremony that takes place at every dawn where the Goddess of Democracy once stood. The state's manipulation of the memory of Tiananmen did not end with the surcease of its publication campaign. Rather, it took on everyday as well as momentous, spectacular forms, such as the 2009 National Day parade on the 60th anniversary of the founding of the P.R.C. and the Victory Day parade held in September 2015 to mark the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II in China. Every public pageantry performed on Tiananmen Square as long as the 1989 protests are disavowed is an act of censorship. These state rituals of what Haiyan Lee calls the "military sublime" reveal that the current authority and legitimacy of the Party-state is built upon the continual process of Tiananmen's bleaching and blotting.

I have connected what took place in the immediate aftermath of June Fourth with what continues to take place in mainland China today. We know that the then British colony of Hong

²⁴ "The Historian of the Tiananmen Movement and the June Fourth Massacre – An Interview With Wu Renhua (Part Two of Two)," *China Change*, June 4, 2016. Accessed June 29, 2016. <https://chinachange.org/2016/06/04/the-historian-of-the-tiananmen-movement-and-the-june-fourth-massacre-an-interview-with-wu-renhua-part-two-of-two/>.

Kong was very much invested in the protests. Hong Kong students went to Tiananmen Square in solidarity, and numerous local marches and even hunger strikes attracted popular support. If a state campaign dominated the mainland in the wake of the massacre, what was the situation for Tiananmen-related literary and audiovisual production in a territory not yet under Chinese sovereignty? Which particular forms of censorship were involved? How were publics foreclosed or made possible? The following chapter addresses these questions.

CHAPTER TWO
Perilous Public: Displacing Hong Kong After Tiananmen

As a Special Administrative Region (S.A.R.) within the People's Republic of China that enjoys certain freedoms, Hong Kong today is a bastion of the remembrance of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests. On every June 4th, the Victoria Park, among other places, fills with commemorators who hold candles in vigil. Though its limited autonomy is continually under threat from the Chinese state, the region is indeed special for the liveliness of its public realm where across various media, from the press to the cinema, the meaning of Hong Kong and its place within China are regularly and hotly debated.

This chapter, however, sets its sights on Hong Kong in the immediate post-Tiananmen years, that is, before the British colony was returned to China. As I will show, Hong Kong was subject to Chinese censorship even then. The 1989 protests caught the territory in the middle both historically, between 1984—the year of the Sino-British Joint Declaration—and 1997, and geopolitically, between two jurisdictions. The works I focus on in this chapter portray state censorship, imperial and national, actual and anticipated, as the colony was transitioning to an S.A.R. of the P.R.C. Censorship was and is not the only threat to the Hong Kong public. Yet by exhibiting it, these works get to the heart of the issue: sovereignty. They are acutely aware of Hong Kong's lack of it and of the precariousness of their own position. And it is from this position in-between that their self-reflexive mediation of Tiananmen imagines an identification beyond the nation. In an unsettling time, they unsettle themselves to trace transregional trajectories.

This chapter focuses on two audiovisual works that appeared within three years of 1989. Though a documentary, Shu Kei (舒琪)'s *Sunless Days* (沒有太陽的日子) (1990) does not

chronicle the events of the movement. Instead, this cinematic essay mainly comprises interviews with family, friends, and acquaintances all over the world on its aftermath. Depicting a post-Tiananmen Hong Kong caught between British and Chinese jurisdiction (and their censorship), the film nevertheless maps, with the very pathways of its filming, a radial model of communal identification beyond roots in and ruptures from China, continually constituted through both convergences to and divergences from the national.

"Returning Home" (歸去來兮) (1992), on the other hand, provides a much more despondent view of the territory in the face of 1997. Directed by Ann Hui (許鞍華) for the Hong Kong television series *Below the Lion Rock* (獅子山下), the episode is ostensibly about the Taiwanese singer Hou Dejian (侯德健), recounting his immigration to China in 1983, his involvement in the Tiananmen Square protests, and his subsequent detention and expatriation. But by presenting Hou as an allegory for the British colony as it approaches *its* Return, the program, filmed entirely in China and Taiwan, dismantles the Hong Kong audience in the very instant of addressing it. Not only is there no home for Hong Kong in China, no border-crossing can replace this impending demise. There is no public without the Republic.

The chapter begins with a consideration of a work by Shu Kei that appeared before *Sunless Days, Romance of Tiananmen: June Fourth Real-Time Fiction* (天安門演義：六四實況小說) (1989). Despite being written by a Hong Kong author and published in Hong Kong, the novel is fixated on China, essentially leaving the territory out both spatially and temporally. The next two sections examine Hong Kong's negotiation of nation and identification after June Fourth not only in the interviews of *Sunless Days* but also in its quotation of two other films within, including Hou Hsiao-hsien's (侯孝賢) 1989 film *A City of Sadness* (悲情城市). Finally, the last section

reads Hong Kong between the lines of "Returning Home" and its ultimately stateless protagonist. While the autonomy of the S.A.R. continues to hang in the balance today, this chapter returns to the crucible of the early post-Tiananmen years.

Nowhere in particular

As in China, Tiananmen-related publications proliferated in Hong Kong in the years immediately after the June Fourth crackdown. In addition to accounts and analyses both diagnostic and prognostic of the democracy movement and the ruling regime, several novels by popular writers bring up the event in varying capacities. The ghost stories in Lilian Lee's (Li Bihua 李碧華) collection *Old and new spirits of Tiananmen* (天安門舊魄新魂, 1990), including "Lost object in Tiananmen" (失物在天安門), "No time for love" (來不及戀愛), and "Mom is informing against me" (媽媽檢舉我), take place in Beijing before and after June Fourth. Eunice Lam's (Lin Yanni 林燕妮) *To live for me* (為我而生, 1990), on the other hand, captures the restlessness of life in post-Tiananmen Hong Kong. While sharing Lam's setting, Yi Shu's (亦舒) *Wounded city* (傷城記, 1990) concerns the tensions between the two generations of a family.

No work of literature, however, was hotter off the press than Shu Kei's *Romance of Tiananmen: June Fourth Real-Time Fiction*, published in Hong Kong in November 1989, a month after *Songs of the Republic's Guardians* (discussed in the previous chapter) came out in China. Like *Songs*, *Romance of Tiananmen* is a novella that mixes the literary with the journalistic, a more or less chronological account of the protests from their beginning in the Hu Yaobang tributes on April 15, 1989 to their violent end on June Fourth. It shares many traits with the PLA collection, even though the two reside at opposite ends of the ideological spectrum. But

more importantly for the purposes of this chapter, they differ from each other in one key respect. While *Songs* clearly emerges from the Chinese state, *Romance* lacks a definite place, composed instead of globalized flows of images and information.

Published in Hong Kong by a Hong Kong author, *Romance of Tiananmen* nevertheless conveys hardly any locality, spatial or temporal. A preface by the Hong Kong actor Alfred Cheung (張堅庭) remarks upon the novella's value as "historical material" (史料), an evaluation presumably made in contradistinction to the whitewashing and distortions coming out of the mainland. But if *Romance* was composed against Chinese censorship, it does not publicize this censorship or its own location outside the latter's borders. The text evinces almost nothing of the territory's situation between British and Chinese jurisdiction or of the looming 1997 Handover. There are only three mentions of Hong Kong, one what a Hong Kong student says about the hunger strike on the square that might as well be spoken by a Chinese (Shu, Kei 1989, 39), and the other two I will broach towards the end of the section. Everywhere else is China. The narrative imagination is thoroughly occupied by the fate of the republic.

In this way does *Romance* resemble the state-produced *Songs of the Republic's Guardians*. The heroes are different but the heroization is the same. To call the novella a "romance" (*yanyi* 演義) is, first, to identify with the Chinese literary tradition. The Ming masterwork *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*sanguo yanyi* 三國演義) is set in the 2nd-3rd century AD, from the end of the Han dynasty to the Three Kingdoms period. *Investiture of the Gods* (*fengshen yanyi* 封神演義), another Ming-dynasty *yanyi*, is set even further back in the Shang (16th-11th century BC) and Zhou (11th-3rd century BC) dynasties. Though its most famous examples are set in the distant past, and Tiananmen belongs to the immediate one, the romance not only offers the author a model for fictionalizing history but also imbues a current event with historic

proportions. Recalling the mass demonstration on April 27, Shu Kei intones: "History will not forget that day, and every day after that day, all the way until June Fourth!" (歷史不會忘記那一天，和那一天以後的每一天，直到六·四！) (Shu, Kei 1989, 21). The student leaders themselves view their endeavor in epic terms. Wu'erkaixi (吾爾開希) speaks of "completing the historical mission" (完成歷史使命), while Wang Dan (王丹) offers this declaration: "No matter how this student movement may end, it will certainly be the most glorious period in Chinese history" (這次學生運動無論將以什麼形式結束，肯定都會是中國歷史上最輝煌的一段日子) (Shu, Kei 1989, 88). Whether the author is quoting their actual words imports less than the fact that their voices are seemingly melding with his.

Romances recount the battle of good versus evil where moral judgments are readily handed down among heroes and villains.²⁵ Shu Kei is unabashedly partial, admitting to "shaping the noblest, most lovable image for a few young heroes blooming with youth, with which to contrast with that group of doddering, ruthless, and fierce old devils" (替幾名青春煥發的少年英雄塑造出最高貴，最可愛的形象，從而對比著那群雞皮鶴髮，心狠手辣，面目猙獰的老魔頭) (Shu, Kei 1989, 13). There are deifications of the students that *Songs* reserves for the "Republic's Guardians," with Wu'erkaixi, for instance, thus introduced: "Above his head was sunlight" (他頭上頂著的是陽光) (Shu, Kei 1989, 16). Members of the state apparatus, on the other hand, receive the blanket treatment that *Songs* bestows upon "thugs" and "instigators." Those who attend Hu Yaobang's official funeral service are "four thousand mostly decadent old people" (四千個絕大部分都是腐朽的老人) (Shu, Kei 1989, 15). The State Council spokesman is

²⁵ Moss Roberts breaks "romance," *yanyi* (演義), into two components: *yan* (演) as the continuous development of the plot and *yi* (義) as its moral significance and message (Roberts 1991, 952).

characterized as "the vulgar-looking Yuan Mu" (面目猥瑣的袁木) with "a dog-like face that makes one sick" (叫人噁心的狗臉) (Shu, Kei 1989, 22-23).

But the subtitle of *Romance of Tiananmen* is *June Fourth Real-Time Fiction*. Shu Kei appears to have coined "real-time fiction."²⁶ "Real-time" (*shikuang* 實況) literally translates as "actual conditions." It is most often used, however, to describe a live TV broadcast. Thus what distinguishes "real-time fiction" from reportage (*baogao wenxue* 報告文學) or literary non-fiction (*jishi wenxue* 紀實文學) in general is its conceit of immediate mediation. Its aesthetic is not of the "on-the-spot" (*xianchang* 現場) variety.²⁷ The book's back cover trumpets "Shu Kei's relying on all sorts of media information" (舒琪籍著各種媒體諮詢) for its composition. Precisely because of this reliance, however, the story hovers like a satellite, with little grounding either in the area it obsessively "covers" or in Hong Kong, the land of its launch.

The media played a big part in how the events of Tiananmen unfolded, and it is fitting that Shu Kei portrays this entwinement. Journalists from the world over arrived in Beijing not long after the protests began, and even more came for Gorbachev's state visit in mid May. One of the students' first demands was to hold a dialogue with the government and, more importantly, to have it recorded and broadcast. They engaged with international media and consciously addressed a global audience. At the end of the hunger-strike manifesto of May 13 (included in *Romance of Tiananmen's* appendix), they even make this direct appeal: "The world's public opinion, please support us!" (世界輿論，請聲援我們！) (Shu, Kei 1989, 151). Chinese media members did not merely report from the sidelines either. They marched down Chang'an Avenue,

²⁶ It did not, however, gain much subsequent purchase. A search for "real-time fiction," *shikuang xiaoshuo* (實況小說), in WorldCat found only three other books, two published in Hong Kong and one in the mainland, all from 1993 or later.

²⁷ For a discussion of the "on-the-spot" in contemporary Chinese documentaries, see Robinson 2010.

made their own demands for press freedom, and engaged government officials in dialogue themselves.

But some of Shu Kei's writing is lifted directly from the news, so to speak. For example, the sixth chapter begins with the May 19 visit to the square by Zhao Ziyang (赵紫阳), the then General Secretary of the Communist Party of China who was sympathetic to the students' cause. From black, as the director describes, "the screen cuts to a subjective shot capturing Zhao Ziyang from the front" (畫面硬割入。主觀鏡跟著趙紫陽的正面) (Shu, Kei 1989, 57). This is exactly the iconic shot of Zhao on the square in the early morning hours, as seen, for instance, in Richard Gordon and Carma Hinton's documentary *The Gate of Heavenly Peace* (1995). Here, it is but the transcription of a free-floating image relayed around the globe.

The televisual permeates *Romance* to the point that a filmic terminology saturates its vocabulary. An "extreme long shot" (大遠景) sets the scene (Shu, Kei 1989, 70). A character's entrance becomes "a young girl walked into the frame" (小姑娘走入了畫面) (Shu, Kei 1989, 69). The "cut" (*ge* 割) (Shu, Kei 1989, 105; 110), the "fade-in" (*danru* 淡入) (Shu, Kei 1989, 35; 89), and the "dissolve" (*rongru/rongjie* 溶入/溶接) (Shu, Kei 1989, 62) effect transitions. Other scene changes are described as movements of the camera (Shu, Kei 1989, 69; 73). And "close-ups" (*texie* 特寫) are reserved for noteworthy details (Shu, Kei 1989, 16; 81-82; 115). Even other writing—the poem "Madwoman" (瘋女人)—cannot be simply copied on the page; it needs "subtitles" (*zimu* 字幕) (Shu, Kei 1989, 109-110).²⁸

In addition to "actual conditions," "real-time," as remarked earlier, implies both medium and *immedium*. It is the logic of the work of art in the age of instantaneous worldwide transmission.

²⁸ Shu Kei quotes from it near the beginning of *Sunless Days*, discussed in the next section. It is also found in its entirety, along with nine other Tiananmen poems, in *Romance's* appendix.

Not only does the author use the "Intercut" to indicate synchronic events (Shu, Kei 1989, 23), he speaks of the following sequence as a "Montage:" "The screen simultaneously superimposes images of various student protests in cities and provinces like Shanghai, Nanjing, Hangzhou, Guangzhou, Hunan, Hubei, Shaanxi, Fujian, and Chongqing, and then expressions of support from various places overseas like the U.S., Canada, France, England, Hong Kong, and Macau" (畫面同時疊印著滬，寧，杭，穗，湘，鄂，陝，閩，渝各大省市不同規模的學生大遊行，然後是美，加，法，英，港，澳等來自海外各地的聲援) (Shu, Kei 1989, 26). The "screen" (*huamian* 畫面) can take us anywhere because it is equal everywhere. All places are interchangeable, and Hong Kong and Macau—whose 1999 reversion to Chinese sovereignty was settled in the 1987 Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration—are rattled off in the same breath as places in China and the West, when they belong to neither.

And there is no "us." As pervasive as the language of cinema is in *Romance of Tiananmen*, there is no reference to any spectatorship, or readership, for that matter. It addresses no public on the ground directly, appearing in a place that hardly appears therein, consumed with where it could never be consumed. The third and final mention of Hong Kong explains the investment in the latter, when its students in Tiananmen Square proclaim: "Only if China has democratic freedoms will Hong Kong have hope" (中國有民主自由，香港才有希望) (Shu, Kei 1989, 72). It is only in this conditional construction—"Only if...will..." (有...才...)—that Shu Kei, in a real-time romance set to the clocks of Chinese literary heritage and the globalized televisual media, introduces local time for the first time. *Romance of Tiananmen* is one way that Hong Kong dealt with the 1989 movement: by investing all of its hopes and imagination in China.

The last five words of the above citation form a question—not addressed in *Romance*—that underlies the other two works this chapter will examine. Instead, the novella opened with these

questions in the hypothetical: If it were a movie,

Who is the director? Who is the scriptwriter? Who conceived this topsy-turvy, turbulent, passionate as well as frightening, mournful, and tragic script? And who is designing scene after scene of grandeur and majesty?

導演是誰？編劇是誰？是誰構思這樣一個翻天覆地，波譎雲詭，澎湃激情之餘卻又叫人不寒而慄，既淒厲復悲壯的劇本？又是誰在設計那一幕又一幕壯觀磅礴的場面？(Shu, Kei 1989, 13)

Shu Kei never made this movie. The movie that he did make, which came out the following year, was nothing like the one he just described, even though filming began before the novella was published.²⁹ It is not a fiction-feature but a documentary. And though it, too, travels to Canada and England, as well as Australia, Italy, and Taiwan, it does not lose its bearings.

Radical reactions

As in the literary field, films with glancing references to June Fourth came out not long after the massacre. Images of tanks charging unarmed civilians pop up in locales from the Philippines in Eric Tsang's (Zeng Zhiwei 曾志偉) *Fatal Vacation* (安樂戰場, 1989) to Vietnam in Tsui Hark's (Xu Ke 徐克) *A Better Tomorrow 3* (英雄本色 III 之夕陽之歌, 1989), Taylor Wong's (Huang Tailai 黃泰來) *Stars and Roses* (愛人同志, 1989), and John Woo's (Wu Yusen 吳宇森) *Bullet in the Head* (喋血街頭, 1990). A replica of the Goddess of Democracy statue (民主女神) in New York's Chinatown presides over the ending of Clara Law's (Luo Zhuoyao 羅卓瑤) *Farewell China* (愛在別鄉的季節, 1990), while June Fourth appears as a news item in Allen Fong's (Fang Yuping 方育平) *Dancing Bull* (舞牛, 1990). Michael Mak's (Mai Dangjie 麥當傑) *Underground Express* (省港旗兵 4: 地下通道) (1990) depicts the role of Hong Kong criminal gangs in helping wanted student leaders escape from the mainland in its fictionalization of

²⁹ In the foreword to *Romance* Alfred Cheung mentions being interviewed by Shu Kei for *Sunless Days*.

Operation Yellowbird (黄雀行动), the rescue effort implemented by members of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements in China (香港市民支援愛國民主運動聯合會), activists, and CIA and British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) agents that did indeed use smugglers and crime syndicates.

Shu Kei's *Sunless Days* (1990), on the other hand, takes a documentary approach. But it almost never happened. With funding from Japanese state broadcaster NHK to make a film about Hong Kong, Shu Kei had planned to tell the story of Hou Dejian, the Taiwanese singer who had moved to China in 1983 by way of Hong Kong. It was to shed light on the British territory's mediating role between the P.R.C. and the R.O.C.³⁰ Then Tiananmen happened. Hou was very much involved in the movement, singing at the May 27th "Concert for Democracy in China" (民主歌聲獻中華) in Hong Kong and starting a hunger strike with three other people, including Liu Xiaobo (刘晓波), on Tiananmen Square on June 2nd.³¹ Following June Fourth, he was apprehended, his whereabouts uncertain. And so Shu Kei's project on Hou Dejian shifted to the protests.

Yet it is still about Hong Kong. Titled *Sunless Days* in English and Chinese (沒有太陽的日子), its Japanese title, when it was broadcast there, better captures its perspective: *A Hong Kong Filmmaker's Tiananmen* (ある香港映画人の天安門). Despite opening with student leader Chai Ling's (柴玲) words recorded in hiding in the city of Wuhan—"Today is 1989 A.D., June 8th, 4 p.m. I am Chai Ling" (今天是公元一九八九年六月八號下午四時，我是柴玲)—and despite

³⁰ For more on *Sunless Days*' backstory, see Zhang, Jingbei 2010.

³¹ The 12-hour-long "Concert for Democracy in China" on the island's Happy Valley Racecourse on May 27, 1989 featured over 100 performances by stars such as Teresa Teng (鄧麗君) and Anita Mui (梅艷芳). The concert raised more than 10 million Hong Kong dollars, which partly went to purchasing sleeping bags and tents for the students occupying the Square. Some of the songs, such as "For freedom" (為自由), were written expressly for the movement.

presenting eyewitness testimonies from a couple of the interviewees, the documentary does not, like *Songs of the Republic's Guardians* and *Romance of Tiananmen* do, aim at historical truth. Rather, it approximates a filmic essay—hence the title's gesture towards Chris Marker's *Sans soleil* (1983)—on the aftermath, composed mainly of interviews with family, friends, and acquaintances and interspersed with the director's own narration, commentary, and reflections.

Shu Kei has been active in the Hong Kong film industry since the early 1980s, as director, scriptwriter, producer, and critic. Among the friends he interviews are the movie personalities Alfred Cheung, Deanie Ip (葉德嫻), and Manfred Wong (王文雋). But he works as a publicist as well.³² It is in this role, in addition to interviewer, that he also appears in *Sunless Days*. We see him with the Taiwanese director Hou Hsiao-hsien at the 1989 Venice Film Festival for the premiere of *A City of Sadness*, for which Shu Kei was in charge of the "overseas strategy" (海外統籌).³³

A City of Sadness would win the Golden Lion that year.³⁴ Yet it is another beast that Hou covets. Interviewed by Shu Kei in a hotel room in Mandarin—or the "national language" (*guoyu* 國語), as it is known in Taiwan—he appears deflated rather than elated. He speaks of the prize as something "purely cinematic" (電影對電影)—literally, "movie to movie"—as opposed to one that is "awarded by Chinese" (中國人頒的). He wants a Golden Horse (金馬獎) because "the Golden Horse Award is our own" (金馬獎是自己的). Founded by the Government Information

³² His credits in this capacity include Tian Zhuangzhuang's (田壯壯) *Li Lianying: The Imperial Eunuch* (大太监李莲英, 1991), Zhang Yimou's (张艺谋) *Raise the Red Lantern* (大红灯笼高高挂, 1991), Chen Kaige's (陈凯歌) *Farewell My Concubine* (霸王别姬, 1993), Wong Kar-wai's (王家卫) *Ashes of Time* (东邪西毒, 1994), Zhou Xiaowen's (周晓文) *Ermo* (二嫖, 1994), Jiang Wen's (姜文) *In the Heat of the Sun* (阳光灿烂的日子, 1994), and Fruit Chan's (陈果) *Made in Hong Kong* (香港制造, 1997).

³³ He was also responsible for the overseas publicity of several of Hou's earlier films, such as *A Time to Live*, *A Time to Die* (童年往事, 1985) and *Dust in the Wind* (戀戀風塵, 1986).

³⁴ An authoritative account of events surrounding the win can be found in Chi 2004.

Office of the Republic of China in 1962, it is now officially called the Taipei Golden Horse Awards.³⁵ That ceremony is a completely different experience: you are "in your own country, you know everybody" (在自己的國家, 都是自己認識的) and "everybody's Chinese" (都是中國人). Here in Venice, Hou says he feels uncomfortable at the press events, made to do things that are "not our Eastern custom and style" (不是我們東方的習慣和 style), using an English word in the very sentence he posits an essential "East" (*dongfang* 東方).

A City of Sadness premiered exactly one hundred days after June Fourth (Chi 2004, 75). Though its shooting finished in March 1989, before the Tiananmen protests erupted, critics drew immediate parallels between the protests and Taiwan's 228 Incident (un)represented in the film.³⁶ "228" refers to the day after February 27, 1947, when a confrontation in Taipei between a woman cigarette seller and an official enforcing the government monopoly on tobacco sparked an island-wide uprising that was eventually suppressed by Nationalist, or Kuomintang (KMT 國民黨), troops. The incident led to the deaths of tens of thousands and the imposition of martial law over the next four decades. Shu Kei's own reaction after watching *Sadness* for the first time was: "I was completely struck dumb, stupefied. How can they be so alike? Everything has recurred?" (我整個人就傻了、呆住了, 怎麼會這麼像? 所有的事情又再出現?) (Zhang, Jingbei 2010). And so Wu Nien-jen (吳念真), who co-wrote the film with Chu Tien-wen (朱天文), would co-write *Sunless* with Shu Kei.³⁷

³⁵ *A City of Sadness* was snubbed at the Awards later that December, receiving only two nominations for Best Director, which Hou won, and Best Actor, for Chen Sung-young (陳松勇) in the role of the eldest Lin brother, Lin Wenxiong.

³⁶ For a reading of *Sadness* not as a historical film about a past event but a historiographical one about coming to terms with history, see Chi 1999.

³⁷ Wu's other writing credits include such works of New Taiwanese Cinema as the omnibus *The Sandwich Man* (兒子的大玩偶, 1983), Edward Yang's (楊德昌) *That Day, on the Beach* (海灘的一天, 1983), and Hou's *Dust in the Wind* (1986).

Hou Hsiao-hsien, too, sees many similarities between 228 and June Fourth. But he attributes them to a long substratum underlying the two moments. The "chronic structure of political power" (政權長期的結構) and the "manner of struggle" (鬥爭方式), he observes, are both "things very traditional to the Chinese" (中國人非常傳統的東西), and "the Chinese have no way of escaping from this difficult situation" (中國人沒有辦法脫離這種困境). If there is a certain fatalism in this pronouncement, it is not altogether negative. Hou loves China for its "depth and duration" (深遠, 悠長), by which "you can't help being moved" (沒有辦法, 會讓你感動). Those who know the director for his contributions to the localistic aesthetic of the New Taiwanese Cinema in the early 1980s would surely be surprised to hear him affirm China as the "most fundamental [*genben* 根本; literally, "root-origin"] power of all my cinematic creations" (我所有電影創作最根本的力量). In fact, he does not use "China" at all: "no matter how the mainland changes, it is still the root-source [*genyuan* 根源]" (大陸不管怎麼變化, 還是根源). It is sentiments such as these that Tu Wei-ming captured, in a 1991 issue of *Daedalus*, when he spoke of how "the ubiquitous presence of the Chinese state—its awe-inspiring physical size, its long history, and the numerical weight of its population—continues to loom large in the psychocultural constructs of diaspora Chinese" (Tu 1991, 16).³⁸

China's "depth and duration" are hinted by Chai Ling's recorded speech, cited earlier, that opens *Sunless Days*: "Today is 1989 A.D., June Eighth, 4 p.m. I am Chai Ling." They are also execrated in a poem at the beginning from which Shu Kei quotes (in Cantonese). The speaker of "Madwoman" (瘋女人), written in May 1989 on Tiananmen Square, thus apostrophizes China: "I've been buried alive with you for millions of years" (我白白地陪葬了你幾千萬年). A later

³⁸ Belinda Kong believes that Tiananmen was on Tu's mind (Belinda Kong 2012, 129).

reference to "China, a father who kills his own sons" (中國，一個殺死自己兒子的父親) is the flipside of Chai Ling's apostrophe at the documentary's end: "The Republic, you have to remember, you have to remember these children who have fought for you" (共和國，你要記住，你要記住這些為你奮鬥的孩子們).³⁹ The language of "roots" crops up elsewhere as well. The Beijing poet Duo Duo (多多) arrived in London on June 4th for a 10-day reading tour and could not go back.⁴⁰ His interview takes place outdoors at the start of fall, and he paints Beijing in September and how much he misses it. "China" for him is a habitat with its own trees, climate, and language. Apropos of the outdoor setting, he says he now has "no home to return to" (無家可歸) and has to write in a "foreign linguistic environment and totally different cultural-historical context" (陌生的語言環境和完全不同的文化歷史背景). When he was home, he considered himself a thoroughly Westernized person. Here in London, he comes to the conclusion that "wherever you go, you're Chinese" (你走到哪裏，是個中國人). He has become, stranded in a strange land, a "root-less person" (沒有根的人).

Shu Kei's Hong Kong interviewees are not to be outdone in homesickness by a Taiwanese and a mainland exile, though the actors Deanie Ip and Alfred Cheung represent two different trajectories. As Ip relates in her interview, she used to not care about what happened in China. Even when she learned of Hu Yaobang's death and saw student protestors on TV, she felt no connection: she did not think she was Chinese, as she put it. Only in May, while she was on a plane from Cannes to Paris and reading a newspaper report on Beijing students and residents blocking the advance of the People's Liberation Army while giving the soldiers food to eat, did

³⁹ China as father is also a familiar trope in the Hong Kong imaginary. See Li, Cheuk-to 1990.

⁴⁰ Belinda Kong relates the cases of other poets—Bei Dao (北島), Yang Lian (楊煉), and Gu Cheng (顧城)—who were abroad at the time of June Fourth and who subsequently could not return. See Belinda Kong 2012, 3-4.

she have a moment of epiphany. Inside her, too, was "flowing a Chinese person's blood" (流著中國人的血). Distance made her heart, like Hou Hsiao-hsien and Duo Duo's, yearn farther.

Alfred Cheung, on the other hand, had to come closer. Like Deanie Ip and nearly everyone else in Hong Kong—as in China and the world—Cheung first encountered the Tiananmen protests via mass media. He recalls seeing the coverage and wondering if it was real: "even though I was watching TV, I couldn't feel it" (即使是看著電視，也感受不到). And so he went to Beijing and stayed until after the crackdown. Though he does not describe in the interview his experiences on June 3rd and 4th when the storming of the square took place, he does pass on an exhortation from a Beijing taxi driver: you must tell the world what you saw. Because Cheung was there in person, he is in turn qualified now to function as medium: Tiananmen—Cheung—the world.

Thereafter, TV is no longer the same. Once when he was in a restaurant (as he recounts), a cook watching a report on the June Fourth suppression said: "the army's killing people, how fun!" (軍隊殺人，真過癮). The restaurant's boss responded: "Are you a Chinese or not?" (你是中國人嗎). Cheung went a step further. He began to choke the cook, forcing him to apologize. He justifies his action by saying it resulted from what he had "witnessed" (目睹) in Beijing. The implication is that, if you were a Chinese, you could view June Fourth only in one way. Cheung enforces this one way with violence, if at the individual level, like the kind he "witnessed."

It is a common reaction, in times of crisis, to impose homogeneity amidst heterogeneity. That is why, in response to a question about how to read June Fourth in terms of gender at a conference held not long after, Rey Chow replied: "we do not, because at the moment of shock Chinese people are degendered and become simply 'Chinese'" (Chow 1989, 24). Five years after

Tiananmen, Chris Berry reviews Chow's answer and offers the opposite diagnosis. He argues that "a simple unity of the Chinese people is precisely what the Tiananmen Square Massacre renders impossible.... At and after this moment of shock, it is not possible to be simply one of the Chinese people, and that collective noun is shattered into a series of positions produced in relation to the massacre" (Chris Berry 1994, 43). Berry repeats Chow's "simply" to underscore his complication of "Chinese."

But there is another repetition that reveals Chow's and Berry's positions to be similar in another respect. Both refer to the "moment of shock," June Fourth as the defining moment, "degendered" or "shattered." Both responses are radical, predicated on either roots or ruptures. "Chinese" is the radix that is either traced back to or severed forever, with June Fourth as the trigger. But what if we substituted the "Tiananmen Square Massacre" in Berry's formulation with another historic event—in Hong Kong, for instance—as in "a simple unity of the Chinese people is precisely what the [Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984] renders impossible...At and after this moment of shock, it is not possible to be simply one of the Chinese people, and that collective noun is shattered into a series of positions produced in relation to the [declaration]"? Or a historic event in Taiwan, the 228 Incident: "a simple unity of the Chinese people is precisely what the [228 Incident] renders impossible...At and after this moment of shock, it is not possible to be simply one of the Chinese people, and that collective noun is shattered into a series of positions produced in relation to the [incident]"?

There could be many others. My point in making these substitutions is to demonstrate that there is no one moment at and after which either fusion or fission is simply taken for granted. This is not a reiteration of the hybridity of identity. What I espy, in the back-and-forth movement of *Sunless Days* as it travels from Hong Kong to places all over the world and back, and to other

films and back, is a model of identification that I would like to call radial, to take inspiration from the documentary's title. China is one point in this constellation, which is temporal as well as spatial. 1989, 1984, and 1947, for example, are all points to which and from which people continually converge and diverge. Considered separately, every convergence or divergence is radical. Considered together, they compose a radially. The nation has its pull, the empire retains its orbit, but there are other tugs too. For as far as the film roams, its base remains Hong Kong.

June Fourth as Hong Kong's 228

Co-produced by Japan's NHK, *A Hong Kong Filmmaker's Tiananmen* was broadcast on Japanese television. *Sunless Days*, however, was never shown on Hong Kong TV, screening instead only at the Hong Kong Arts Centre (香港藝術中心) and the Hong Kong International Film Festival (香港國際電影節) (Rayns 1997, 94). The documentary contains within it another one whose reception foreshadowed its own. It is a short about the making of a replica of the Goddess of Democracy statue in Hong Kong on which more than 20 filmworkers, including Shu Kei, collaborated. They offered the film for free to 130 local movie theaters. None accepted. The only place that exhibited it was the Arts Centre.

In the short, two artists involved with the replica's creation at the Hong Kong Art School (香港藝術學院) tell of school officials' intimidation of students participating in the project, some of whom then backed out. One of the artists, Huang Renkui (黃仁達), questions the students' "political awareness" (政治醒覺): if the Chinese government was going to let them make the replica without interfering, then there would not have been a June Fourth in the first place. The replica went up on June 18th (Figure 1). In the end, though, it was allowed to stand for only three

weeks and then moved to an abandoned laboratory at the University of Hong Kong. Footage from *Sunless Days*, shot in September 1989, captures it forsaken and in pieces (Figure 2). A month later, the statue along with the lab would be razed.



Figure 1: The replica of the Goddess of Democracy in Hong Kong.



Figure 2: The replica in ruins.

This is the special situation of Hong Kong. It is both where the Goddess of Democracy is resurrected, and where it is destroyed one more time. Yet it would be mistaken to attribute this censorship solely to the Chinese government. While the pressure certainly stemmed therefrom,

another sovereign power applied it locally. As the P.R.C. only recognized the U.K.'s sovereignty over the territory as temporary and therefore did not want to establish an embassy or consulate, the Xinhua News Agency (新华通讯社) in Hong Kong served as its de facto embassy there. In a letter to Xinhua's Hong Kong branch in late October 1989, the then political consultant to the Hong Kong government, William Ehrman, wrote: "The Hong Kong government has no intention of allowing Hong Kong to be used as a base for subversive activities against the People's Republic of China" (quoted in So 1997, 56). The letter went on to note the arrest of demonstrators from the anti-Beijing April Fifth Action Group (四五行動) and that "the Hong Kong government has recently rejected a proposal for a permanent site for a replica statue of democracy." The "Hong Kong" in "Hong Kong government" stands for "British," or rather, vice versa. Showing the arrest of the demonstrators, Shu Kei mentions this letter as well as the seizure of news footage of the demonstrations from TV stations. In spite of and because of the cognizance of its own precariousness, *Sunless Days* nevertheless exhibits not only Tiananmen but also collusive state censorship.

Without sovereignty, Hong Kong had no say in the Sino-British negotiations of the early 1980s. Here, after June Fourth, it is again at the mercy of the twin jurisdictions. One way out would be simply to leave, and that is the route taken by several of Shu Kei's interview subjects, including his two brothers. Since they are imperial subjects, first and foremost, in possession of a "British National (Overseas)," or BN(O), passport, they are able to immigrate to other outposts like Australia, where Shu Kei's elder brother has been teaching, and Canada, where his eldest brother moves with his family after Tiananmen. For Shu Kei's friend Manfred Wong, on the other hand, June Fourth played no significant part in his decision to relocate his family to Canada. Even before then he was uncertain how long the BN(O) passport would last, and about

Hong Kong's future, both in 1997 and in 50 years thence, when the "S" in the S.A.R. is scheduled to be cancelled. He sent his wife to Toronto to give birth to their son so he would not be born "without a nationality" (沒有國籍).

While in Toronto Shu Kei also talks to a playwright named Winston Christopher Kam. But the director does not introduce him as such, instead calling him by his much less used Chinese name, Gan Zhuolin (甘卓麟). He also describes the latter as a "Chinese" (中國人) who does not even know the Chinese language. Kam relates, in English, a transformative episode in his life similar in outline to that most famous story of transformation in modern China, Lu Xun's account in the "Preface" (1922) to *Outcry* (吶喊) of his giving up medicine for literature. In Kam's account, too, the former self is in a foreign place. He was walking down a sidewalk in Los Angeles when a white man spat in his direction. That was all. Yet it was enough to make him go from engineering to writing plays whose primary theme is "the whys of being Chinese."

The question is precisely "why." Like Duo Duo, Deanie Ip, and Lu Xun before him, Kam's moment of "Chinese" recognition happened remotely. As he surmises, "I don't think a lot of Chinese are aware they are Chinese until they are really cast in a position where they are surrounded by non-Chinese; then it really hits them." But Kam was born in Trinidad and then moved to Canada—not exactly places brimming with Chinese. What he has done to himself since that sidewalk encounter, then, is what the person who spit in his direction did. Racism is radical, and Kam has internalized a racialized conception of identity. Shu Kei only perpetuates this conception in his framing of the interview, pronouncing that Kam "cannot cast off his identity as a Chinese" (擺脫不了中國人的身份).

His framing of a poem betrays another impulse for uniformity. Vertical Chinese text in white on a black screen is a notable feature of Hou Hsiao-hsien's *A City of Sadness*, conveying what

people in the story are writing and reading. Shu Kei employs this presentation for the student leader Wang Dan's "Days of not smoking" (沒有抽烟的日子), which is shown in lines of traditional characters that read right to left (Figure 3). But as we know, starting in the 1950s and solidifying in the 1960s, writing and publishing in China were carried out in simplified characters, in addition to horizontally and left to right. Whereas in the setting of *A City of Sadness* in the 1940s the Chinese script could still serve to unify the plurality of speech, by the time of Tiananmen, not to mention *Sunless Days*, that singularity had been fractured for decades.



Figure 3: Wang Dan's poem "Days of not smoking."

Languages are points of identification as well as dis-identification. After winning the Golden Lion at the awards ceremony, the *City of Sadness* delegation went out to celebrate. On the streets of Venice, as Shu Kei relates, Hou Hsiao-hsien and the others from Taiwan sang songs in "Taiwanese" (*Taiyu* 台語).⁴¹ For the first time in a film where the filmmaker himself moves with facility not only from location to location but from language to language—Cantonese, Mandarin, English—Shu Kei admits to incomprehension where mutual intelligibility is expected. He immediately felt like an outsider: "Even though we're all Chinese, I am a Hong Konger, they are

⁴¹ On "Taiwanese," *Taiyu*, as a "geographic misnomer," see Yingjin Zhang 2013, 1 n. 1.

Taiwanese" (雖然都是中國人，但我是香港人，他們是台灣人).

Shu Kei also films Hou and others holding a flag in celebration (Figure 4). He calls it the Taiwanese flag, missing from a flagpole amidst others bearing national flags, not allowed to be flown at the film festival due to pressure from the Chinese government (Figure 5). But to be precise, it is not the Taiwanese flag but *another* Chinese flag, the flag, dating from 1928, of a Republic of China that claims to be *the* China against a People's Republic of China founded in 1949. The former, like Hong Kong, has its own sovereignty issues, which—at least at that time—flare less at home than abroad, where its claims collide with those of the latter.⁴²



Figure 4: Hou Hsiao-hsien in the middle with the flag of the Republic of China.

⁴² At the Berlin Film Festival in 1986 Hou's *A Time to Live, A Time to Die* was labeled as "Taiwan/China." His previous entries in Nantes were also labeled as "Taiwan/Chine;" only with *Dust in the Wind* did it become "Taiwan" (Udden 2009, 76-77).



Figure 5: The bare flagpole third from the left.

Without its own national flag, *Sunless Days* instead mobilizes a transregional network of production. With Japanese funding like *A City of Sadness* and even the same co-scriptwriter, the parallels between the two films run deep. Shu Kei even includes, towards the end of *Sunless*, a clip from *Sadness*. It is where Wen-ching—played by Hong Kong actor Tony Leung Chiu-wai (梁朝偉)—the deaf-mute photographer and the youngest of four sons of the Lin family, is standing on a platform with his family as a train passes (Figure 6). He then gets ready and takes a family portrait (Figure 7). Shu Kei introduces this clip by quoting what Wen-ching's wife, Hinomi, later writes to a relative, after her husband has been taken away: we did consider fleeing, but in the end there was no place to flee to. By inserting *Sadness* into *Sunless*, Shu Kei reasserts Hong Kong. *Sadness* becomes not just about Taiwan. Nor is Taiwan's 228 Incident like China's June Fourth. Rather, the parallel consists in June Fourth being for Hong Kong what 228 was for Taiwan, a historical cauldron in which issues of identity and difference combusted with volatile urgency.



Figure 6: Lin Wenqing and family on a train platform.



Figure 7: Posing for a last photograph.

Earlier in *Sunless Days*, when Shu Kei is in Australia, his elder brother asks him to obtain a "political safeguard" (政治保險)—in other words, a permanent resident status in a(nother) country—as a backup for the post-1997 Hong Kong scenario. Shu Kei chooses not to. Like the photographer, Shu Kei stays put. The picture that the former leaves behind is of a private unit soon to be torn apart by political circumstances. The images that the latter captures presents a public realm with an uncertain fate. We know that Wen-ching was most likely executed. What will happen to Hong Kong? Shu Kei leaves the question unanswered. But another work that

appears two years later, in 1992, will give a desolate response to the problem of staying still or departing.

Public and republic

Ann Hui's "Returning Home" appeared in the 1992 season of *Below the Lion Rock*, the first season after 1989. Its subject, a Taiwanese singer who moves to China, would seem on its surface an inapt choice. Launched in 1972 as an occasional TV series produced by Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK 香港電台), the territory's public broadcaster, *Below the Lion Rock* quickly became popular for tackling topical social issues of the times, such as urban housing, sanitation, crime, and marginalized peoples. Now a renowned filmmaker, Ann Hui was an early contributor to the series with acclaimed episodes like "Road" (路) and "Boat People" (來客), both from 1978, which deal with drug addiction and Vietnamese refugees, respectively.⁴³

A synopsis of her "Returning Home," however, would indicate no relation to Hong Kong. It traces Hou Dejian's immigration to China in 1983, his involvement in the Tiananmen protests, his repatriation to Taiwan in 1990, and his departure again in 1992, this time for New Zealand. Only snippets of news reporting in Cantonese hint at a Hong Kong framing. The filming itself takes place solely in China and Taiwan, and the main actors—including Hou—are all Taiwanese. Yet a preface shows the way in which the episode is to be read. This is the text, set against an alarmingly orange background, that fills the first screen:

One Country, Two Systems' implementation fast approaches; you and I urgently need to choose the direction. In this difficult moment, a legendary figure who took the road earlier than us, his choice of direction and experience, in some respects can serve as a reference; this man is Hou Dejian.

⁴³ Shu Kei was the co-scriptwriter of "Boat People." He was also the overseas publicist for Ann Hui's *Song of the Exile* (客途秋恨, 1990), whose script was written by Wu Nien-jen.

一國兩制的實踐即將來臨，你和我都急需要選定路向。於此舉步維艱的當頭，一個早比我們上路的傳奇人物，他的選向和經歷，某層面上正堪借鏡，這個人，就是侯德健。

The opening words are "One Country, Two Systems" (一國兩制), the method of governance devised by Deng Xiaoping in the early 1980s for the eventual reintegration of Hong Kong, Macau, and even Taiwan into the P.R.C. For Hong Kong in August 1992, when "Returning Home" aired, that fate was less than five years away. Despite Deng's assurances that the British colony's economic and legal system would remain unchanged for 50 years from the Return, the sense of pressing uncertainty is palpable from the passage. Hui presents choice in terms of not stance but direction. Staying still is impossible when the ground under one's feet is ever inching towards a different jurisdiction. Yet it is "hard to take a step" (舉步維艱), the literal translation of "difficult" above.

Not only does the program address the viewers—"you" (你)—directly, it draws them into a distinct community—"you and I" (你和我), "us" (我們)—in which the filmmaker also belongs. Author and audience face the crossroads of Hong Kong 1997 equally. For it is a reading as well as viewing public. The prefatory text makes spectators both literally read and read figuratively. The story of Hou Dejian can "serve as a reference" (借鏡)—or, literally, "be used as a mirror"—for self-reflection. Hong Kong, while not on view, lies between the lines, and the public is called to communal extraction. Yet as I will argue, the very public that "Returning Home" summons into being in the beginning is disbanded by the end.

We first see footage of Hou in 1980 with a crowd of most likely Chinese Vietnamese refugees at a Taipei camp (Figure 8). He is performing the composition that made him famous, "Descendants of the Dragon" (龍的傳人, 1978), which sings of ethnic Chinese, no matter how

distantly dispersed, yearning for their homeland in all its historical and physical majesty.⁴⁴ Hou then goes root-seeking in 1983, and there are photographs, paired with his own song "Returning Home" (歸去來兮), of him offering sacrifices to ancestors in Sichuan (Figure 9).⁴⁵ Then comes Tiananmen. Hui uses clips of TV coverage of the dense square, with Hou as one of the "Four Gentlemen" (四君子)—along with Liu Xiaobo (刘晓波), Zhou Duo (周舵), and Gao Xin (高新)—who announced a 72-hour hunger strike on June 2, 1989 (Figure 10). Hou is wearing a T-shirt for the "Concert for Democracy in China," where he performed "Descendants of the Dragon." The song was frequently sung en masse on the square.

⁴⁴ It is also the theme song of a Lee Hsing (李行) film bearing the same title, translated into English as *Land of the Brave* (龍的傳人, 1981), produced by the Republic of China's Central Motion Picture Corporation (中央電影事業公司) in response to the loss of U.S. recognition in 1979 and the Formosa Incident late in the same year. The film includes a cameo by Hou Dejian.

⁴⁵ The title is taken from a 5th-century Tao Yuanming (陶淵明) poem, "Lyric of returning home" (歸去來兮辭), in which the poet disclaims his departure from the world of officialdom and his return to his countryside home.



Figure 8: Hou Dejian playing in front of refugees.



Figure 9: Hou offering sacrifices to ancestors in Sichuan.



Figure 10: The 72-hour hunger strike on the square.

The square was cleared before the 72 hours were up. "Returning Home" skips the violent suppression and instead turns to the regulation of the memory afterwards. In an August 1989 *People's Daily* (人民日报) interview, later broadcast on China Central Television (CCTV)—and excerpted in "Returning Home"—Hou stated: "I did not see with my own eyes anybody getting killed" (我沒有親眼看到有人被打死). At the time he received much criticism internationally for such comments. He was thought to be complicit in censorship, bowing to state pressure when earlier he had been the movement's champion. Hui's film then moves to the present of March 1992. In an interview in Beijing, both Liu Xiaobo and Zhou Duo attest that Hou was speaking the truth: that was indeed his experience on June Fourth. Tales of Tiananmen Square awash in

blood were then swirling in the foreign media, Liu says. Hou was caught in the publicity war between the Chinese government and the world.

That both sides were guilty of distortions is no doubt true. But "Returning Home" reveals more. The interview of Liu Xiaobo and Zhou Duo takes place in what appears to be a hotel room, with the curtains drawn. Extreme close-ups of the subjects impart a sense of not intimacy but confinement. Clandestine shooting is evident later in the episode too. There are night shots of Chang'an Avenue and Tiananmen Square, both devoid now of the crowds of protestors that filled them three years ago. The evacuation was and is not voluntary. Hui shows a guard pacing in front of the cordoned-off area around the Monument to the People's Heroes, where tributes to the just deceased Hu Yaobang set off the protests on April 15, 1989 (Figure 11). She also overlays images of the avenue and the square with sounds from the movement: chants, sirens, and the singing of "The Internationale." These are shards of a past swept from the filmic present.



Figure 11: The Monument to the People's Heroes in 1992.

On the night before a press conference on the occasion of June Fourth's one-year anniversary, where Hou Dejian, Zhou Duo, and Gao Xin were to call for the release of Liu Xiaobo and other political prisoners, the three of them were taken into custody.⁴⁶ The bulk of "Returning Home" consists in a reenactment of Hou's detention (presumably in a hotel on the outskirts of Beijing). There are three main players: Hou, a good cop, and a bad cop. They argue over Hou's words as quoted in the foreign press and over what constitutes free speech, rumor-mongering, and defamation of the Party and state. Force lies behind the reasoning. Hou is eventually made to write a "self-criticism" (自我批評), and what he does write the bad cop crumples, demanding a

⁴⁶ The press conference was to be held in Hou's home on May 31, 1990. Hou was taken away on May 30th. For a fuller account, including of Hou's eventual repatriation, see Jaivin 2001.

"confession" (交代) rather than an "explanation" (說明和解釋). A higher-ranked official later shows up with a threat: if Hou were not "special" (特別), they would lock him up for years. There are two paths before him: either prison or expulsion from the country. If he cooperates, good will come to his friends, including Liu Xiaobo.

The reenactment was shot in Taiwan with a cast of local actors, the stage actors Chao Tzu-chiang (趙自強) and Chin Shih-chieh (金士杰), for instance, portraying the good cop and the bad cop, respectively.⁴⁷ Taiwanese, then, figure as Chinese in the dramatization, and Taiwan as China. It is more than a convenient arrangement because Hou is there. Taiwan also performs as an alternative "Chinese" space where memories related to Tiananmen can be staged. The detention and interrogation that originally transpired in secrecy is made public precisely because Taiwan is not China.

But there is one Taiwanese actor not in a Chinese role: Hou Dejian. In addition to playing himself, he is cast by Ann Hui as Hong Kong. It is no coincidence that the official refers to his "special" (*tebie* 特別) status. As the opening words of the program point unambiguously, the British colony was in the process of becoming "special," transitioning to a "Special Administrative Region" (*tebie xingzheng qu* 特別行政區) of the People's Republic of China. Therein lies Hou's role for a Hong Kong audience: his "use as a mirror."

What does the mirror of "Returning Home" present to us? That there is no place for Hong Kong in China. The images of reunion with one's kin and countrymen (Figure 9) and of solidarity for a social and political cause (Figure 10) are annulled not so much by the June Fourth crackdown, not depicted, as by the persistent state censorship that the program highlights. It is

⁴⁷ Other parts include Kao Cheng-peng (高振鵬) as the higher-ranked official and Kevin Tsai (蔡康永) as one of the guards.

not a matter of China's socialism and Hong Kong's capitalism. Deng Xiaoping's famous tour of coastal cities in the Chinese south, during which he affirmed the continuing and deepening of economic reforms, concluded in February 1992. In a scene shot in Beijing that March, we hear the song "Chairman Mao is the dearest" (毛主席最親) play after the Taiwanese pop hit "Waking from a dream" (夢醒時分) in a karaoke and dance club. Even the wife of the bad cop, we learn, is a "self-employee" (*getihu* 個體戶) who supposedly makes more in one day than his two-months' salary.

It is because Hong Kong, like Taiwan, is not China that a program like "Returning Home" can be broadcast on television. Yet those same images of the barren Monument to the People's Heroes in the dark will have no local outlet starting on July 1, 1997. That is why the British colony is never pictured. Its excuse from the narrative prefigures its imminent eclipse—a reflexivity that Ackbar Abbas would call "using disappearance to deal with disappearance" (Abbas 1997, 8). The clandestine shots of the street and square signal not merely the emptying of the alternative public that were the Tiananmen protestors, but also that the same destiny awaits the Hong Kong public. The very episode they are watching will go the ghostly way of the sounds of the movement.

Hou Dejian and Hong Kong alike have nowhere to turn to. The singer was able to hold a press conference upon his second "return,"⁴⁸ and appear on TV,⁴⁹ but Taiwan, too, is a place in transition where he (still) does not feel at home.⁵⁰ He takes the film crew to the sites of his childhood, but it is less another root-seeking than a visit before departure. Hou left Taiwan for

⁴⁸ At the press conference Hou asks "whether Taiwan welcomes my return and accepts my return" (臺灣是不是歡迎我回來，是不是接受我回來).

⁴⁹ His personal life is dredged up for excoriation on a show called "Woman Woman" (女人女人).

⁵⁰ Interviewed in the present, he speaks of post-martial law Taiwan as having "too much money, too much freedom" (太多的錢，太多的自由).

China in 1983, and at the end of the program he is off once again. With an airport terminal in the background, the closing shot displays these words: "On April 16, 1992, Hou Dejian left Taiwan again, heading to New Zealand, but he said: after getting in order his immigration papers, he will again return to Taiwan" (一九九二年四月十六日, 侯德健再度離開台灣, 邁向紐西蘭, 不過他說: 在搞妥移民手續后, 他還會再回台灣。).

Two texts thus bracket the program. Hong Kong may not be mentioned in the latter but it remains the referent. Just as the singer could stay neither in China nor in Taiwan, so the Hong Kong public has no realm either in the P.R.C or in the U.K. Gone are the "you and I" and "us" of the preface as the collective splinters into individuals each going his or her separate way. The opening image of "Returning Home" showed Hou alongside his audience, ethnic Chinese united in song no matter their nationality or lack of it. Now, his lone voice accompanies the closing credits, reciting from his song "We were all young once" (我们都曾经年少). And he himself has become a stateless refugee.

Ejected from the P.R.C for his Tiananmen-related activities, Hou rejects the R.O.C. in an act of self-determination. Yet it is a dis-identification that seems to bring little solace. His re-identification is reduced to materiality, encapsulated in mere "papers" (*shouxu* 手續). As they are handed over by the British to the Chinese, the people of Hong Kong, too, can choose to leave and seek other associations. But it is an alternative that, far from glimmering with the glamour of transnational mobility, promises only bleak prospects.

The 1989 Tiananmen Square protests caught the Hong Kong populace in the historical bind of the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration and the 1997 return to China. This chapter has demonstrated that, even prior to the Handover, the territory was subject to Chinese as well as

British censorship. Portraying both the actual and the anticipated kinds, the works I have focused on illustrate the uncertainty of Hong Kong's position in relation to sovereignty. It is through their mediation of Tiananmen that they probe identity and community in the face of repatriation.

If these were the quandaries that Hong Kong artists confronted after June Fourth, which challenges confronted mainland writers not employed, like the contributors to *Songs of the Republic's Guardians* (discussed in Chapter One), by the state apparatus? The following chapter looks at nongovernmental works of literature that evoke the 1989 protests despite and through a powerful censorship. What was the situation of the publishing industry in the post-Tiananmen years? What strategies did writers use to get around the taboo? How did the advent of the internet change the conditions of production, dissemination, and reception? These are the questions I turn to next.

CHAPTER THREE
Exhibiting Prohibition: Literary Responses from Print to Online

Chapter One revisited the state-sponsored publications on Tiananmen that blared the indisputable verdict. This chapter examines literature from the mainland that can evoke the events only subtly. Its emphasis shifts from censorship attempting to fix the contours of the public realm—making the *censored* public—to novels that defy the drawing of those contours—making the censored *public*. These works open up alternatives to the official deposition and disposition through both their narrative as well as the circumstances of their production, circulation, and reception. I will therefore give a basic context of the publication industry before delving into the case studies.

Prior to the economic reforms that began in the agricultural sector at the end of the 1970s and spread to other sectors in the early 1980s, book prices were set at a standard rate based on the number of sheets used.⁵¹ Distribution operated along essentially three routes: books were fed into the state educational system, passed among *danwei* (单位), or work-units, or sold through the only bookstore in town, the state-run Xinhua Bookstore chain (Barry 2007, 83). With the reforms the publishing industry transformed. Marketization was the governing principle in the reduction of state subsidies and purchases, the lifting of controls on prices and resource allocation, and the decentralization of distribution, as Xinhua Bookstore lost its exclusive rights of distribution in 1985. Foreign enterprises can now take part in distribution and sales, but as a result of negotiations prior to China's entry into the WTO in December 2001, foreign investment in publishing is limited to joint ventures.⁵²

To this day publishing itself remains centralized in structure. No book can be published in

⁵¹ For an informative account of how much writers were paid in the socialist period, see Link 2000, 129-133.

⁵² China started negotiations for WTO entry in 1986 (Rui Zhang 2008, 107).

China without an International Standard Book Number (ISBN), which only the General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP)—recently incorporated into the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT)—can issue. GAPP’s major functions include examining and approving the establishment of new publishing houses, distribution units, cooperative enterprises, and Sino-foreign joint ventures; drafting, implementing, and supervising copyright laws, development policies, publication regulations; and censorship (Barry 2007, 70-71). Publishers submit a list of titles they plan to issue during a certain period of time and they are then given a block of ISBNs (Barry 2007, 139). But the 1980s saw the entrance into the industry of "cultural studios" (*wenhua gongzuoshi* 文化工作室). Acting as literary agents in a sense, these unofficial, technically illegal publishers find an author, buy the rights to his or her work, then sell the title to an official publisher, with the cultural studio and publisher sometimes sharing production costs, responsibilities for marketing and distribution, and profits (Meyer 2005). The cultural studio can also buy a book number. Many state-owned publishing houses have trouble staying afloat in market conditions, and since a cultural studio is allowed to prepare content for a publisher, it sells the publisher the rights to a work for a specified amount. The publisher then attaches an ISBN to it and sells it back to the cultural studio in a separate contract and for a greater amount than the original sale. The difference is the cost of the ISBN (Barry 2007, 81 and 89). The cultural studio prints the title with the ISBN, and the book enters the market legally under the official publishing house’s name. It is therefore difficult to assess how many cultural studios exist, though estimates range from 5,000 to 10,000 (Barry 2007, 87; *The Economist* 2009).⁵³

Yet structural legacies of the socialist planned economy are still in view today. Despite

⁵³ For more on unofficial publishing and distribution, see the chapter “‘Second Channel:’ Book Dealers, Agents, and Cultural Studios” in Shuyu Kong 2008, 65-94.

recent government drives at consolidation of publishing houses into publishing groups, publishing is still very much administered according to the *tiao-kuai* (条块) system. Down the vertical line of governance, the *tiao*, each ministry, sub-ministry, or national industry can operate a publishing house. For example, the Ministry of Commerce has the China Commerce Publishing House, the All-China Women's Federation has the China Women's Publishing House, and the Ministry of Water Resources has the China Water Power Press. On the horizontal plane, the *kuai*, each province or municipality runs publishing houses in certain domains. Thus, Jiangsu has Jiangsu People's Publishing House, Jiangsu Educational Publishing House, Jiangsu Literature and Art Publishing House, Jiangsu Science and Technology Publishing House, etc. In addition to these national- and provincial-level publishers, some major cities, such as Dalian in Liaoning province, are allowed to have one publishing unit of their own, as are China's 55 ethnic minority nationalities (Barry 2007, 82). There are nearly 600 official publishers in China, more than a third of which are located in Beijing.

Censorship has become decentralized. Though Xinhua-only distribution was briefly reinstated in September 1989, for instance, during a campaign ostensibly against pornography—books by the deceased Hu Yaobang, the under-house-arrest Zhao Ziyang, and the pro-student intellectuals Liu Binyan and Fang Lizhi were also considered dirty (Yi Chen 1992, 569 and 581; Kraus 2004, 93)—the administration has come to rely for the most part on "in-house" censorship. If a publisher issues a book that turns out to be problematic, the consequences can be manifold, ranging from being fined and having the title recalled, to the editor losing his or her job, receiving no more ISBNs for a certain amount of time, or even getting its publisher's license revoked and shut down (Barry 2007, 140 and 149). And so the editors themselves are in charge of pre-publication censorship, while the GAPP/SAPPRFT manifests its authority only post-

publication.

This accounts for the absence from China of any unofficial literature that directly depicts the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests. Wang Lixiong's *Yellow peril* (黄祸, 1991), which opens with a reimagination of the aftermath of June Fourth, had to be published abroad under the pseudonym "Confidential" (保密).⁵⁴ Mainland works can only make glancing references, or have been read as allegories.⁵⁵ Among the former, Wang Shuo's (王朔) *Please Don't Call Me Human* (千万别把我当人), first published in the fall of 1989, contains a scene where the protagonist stands in front of approaching tanks.⁵⁶ Two stories by Zhu Wen (朱文) in the 1990s, "Little Brother's Performance" (弟弟的演奏) and "Reeducation" (再教育), facetiously portray a 1988 student protest and a vengeful girlfriend spurned in 1989, respectively.⁵⁷ The protests and their crackdown form the hazy context of one section in Chen Ran's (陈染) *A Private Life* (私人生活) (1996).⁵⁸ Again, Tiananmen is but a minor reference in the century-long time-span of Xu Xiaobin's (徐小斌) *Feathered Serpent* (羽蛇) (2004).

In this chapter I focus on two novels that distinguish themselves not only by evoking the Tiananmen movement or implying its state censorship with their allusiveness or publication outside the mainland, but by exposing its censorship, rendering it visible. They are Jia Pingwa's (贾平凹) 1993 *Decadent Capital* (废都) and Hu Fayun's (胡发云) 2006 *Such Is This World@sars.come* (如焉@sars.come). I read Tiananmen, ostensibly absent, into the former, while the latter refers to the events themselves. In *Decadent Capital* the censorship is extra-

⁵⁴ For a clear-eyed historical contextualization of this novel in 20th-century Chinese political fiction of the future, see Chaohua Wang 2015.

⁵⁵ Such an allegorical reading of Mo Yan's *The Republic of Wine* (酒国) can be found in Xiaobin Yang 1998, 7-31 and Belinda Kong 2012, 24-25.

⁵⁶ See Belinda Kong 2012, 25-26 for a brief discussion.

⁵⁷ For a brief discussion of the former, see Belinda Kong 2012, 26-27.

⁵⁸ For an analysis of *A Private Life* through the lens of privacy and the city, see Visser 2002, 179-187.

diegetic: Jia Pingwa draws blank squares in the text to indicate offensive words that had to be deleted. In *Such Is This World*, on the other hand, the censorship is diegetic: in Hu's narrative the protagonists combat online censorship with a variety of means. This chapter exhibits literary censorship over time, from the early 1990s to the internet age. Despite this censorship, both works turn it to advantage, each bringing it to light and making it play a role in the work itself. In doing so, each work engages the reading public in different ways, generating possibilities that censorship, as the authoritative form of reception, tries to preclude. The two novels in their multiple editions make publics in response to censorship, creating sites both where the elided memory of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests can reenter and where a participatory engagement can (re)emerge.

Set in the 1980s in the fictional provincial capital of Xijing (西京), *Decadent Capital* follows the celebrated writer Zhuang Zhidie through various extramarital affairs as he battles a lawsuit and tries to finish a novel. Jia's novel was wildly popular upon its first publication in 1993. Offering plenty of sex and a bleak view of Chinese society under reform, it was also highly controversial, not least because of the blank squares strewn throughout the text to represent erotic descriptions edited out by the author. The novel was banned in 1994 but rereleased in 2009 with one major change: the blank squares were replaced by ellipses. I argue that these blank squares not only make public censorship itself but, by opening blank squares within a depoliticized narrative present, preserve a place both for harking back to 1989 and for a participatory public to reemerge in post-Tiananmen China.

Hu Fayun was born, along with the P.R.C., in 1949. His writings were first published in the 1980s, but he achieved renown only with *Such Is This World@sars.com*. The novel has a no less tortuous publication history than *Decadent Capital*. It narrates a middle-aged woman's

experiences on the Chinese internet, especially during the time of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak of 2002-2003. Not only does it portray the government cover-up of SARS, its own publication history enacts state censorship. The website that first published it in 2004 was quickly shut down, and when it appeared as a book in 2006, it was listed on a list of "illegal publications." This chapter not only analyzes the novel's narration of censorship but traces its own censored lives. Its multiplicity is a product of participatory communities.

In what follows I first look at *Decadent Capital's* depiction of the post-socialist literary landscape. I then analyze the critical discourse surrounding its infamous blank squares, both their appearance in the first edition and their disappearance from the reissue. Next, by way of a brief consideration of their place in modern Chinese literary history, I contend that the blank squares not only make public censorship itself but also constitute the space of alternative engagement, whether harking back to an elided past or projecting into a future yet to be written. Turning to *Such Is This World*, I examine the online censorship depicted in the novel. The next section traces the novel's own travails through censorship, including contributions made by a reader-netizen who reveals the workings of this censorship. I then follow the author to his blog, which gathers a community of reader-commentators who maneuver around online restrictions. The final section returns to the novel, from which Tiananmen is both removed and reinserted as people form collectivities in the three intertwining worlds: fictional, virtual, and real. By comparing two editions of *Decadent Capital*—the 1993 edition that has blank squares with the 2009 edition from which they were removed—and two editions of *Such Is This World*—the 2006 print edition with the online version posted by a netizen—this chapter demonstrates the productiveness of censorship in its generation of alternative responses.

The literary marketplace

First published amidst a veritable uproar in the summer of 1993, Jia Pingwa's *Decadent Capital* signaled perhaps more than any other work of the reform period the transformation of the publishing industry. There were rumors (promotional ploy or not) of bidding wars and a million-yuan advance, and over a dozen publishers vied for the novel before it was even completed.⁵⁹ After Beijing Publishing House won the book contract, demand was so high that it sold its printing rights to six other presses.⁶⁰ Then in January 1994 the ban was pronounced. Printing and distribution were stopped, copies were recalled, and not only were the publisher's profits confiscated, it was assessed twice the amount in fines (You 2009).⁶¹ Then editor at *October* Tian Zhenying, a Shaanxi-native who had professedly read the manuscript of *Decadent Capital* nine times in a row and so moved Jia that he gave her the rights, was forced into early retirement (Jiang, Wenjuan 2009).

Speculated on for months—perhaps another ruse to drive up sales—the ban, when it did come, came as no surprise. For the text, marked as it is by manifest instances of self-censorship, still contains a healthy dose of explicit sex, as seen in this scene featuring the protagonist, the celebrated writer Zhuang Zhidie (庄之蝶), and his mistress Tang Wan'er (唐宛儿):

Tang Wan'er was going to take off her shoes and stockings completely, but Zhuang Zhidie said he preferred her with heels, lifted her legs and, standing by the bed, started to do it. □□□□□□ (the author has deleted three hundred seventy-nine characters) She was screaming, attached yet in motion. Zhuang Zhidie had never experienced this, and immediately his male desire for conquer bounded. He counted to a hundred and didn't come early, surprising even himself. Tang Wan'er's face had long flushed, her hair wild, yet she sat up and said: "Let me change position for you!" She got off the bed and bent

⁵⁹ In discussing the reception of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988), Aamir Mufti observes "forms of mass 'consumption' other than 'reading' in the narrower sense of that word," including rumors, media coverage, gossip, hearsay, and commentary (Mufti 1994, 309).

⁶⁰ The literary journal *October* (*Shiyue*), also published by the Beijing Publishing House, had been awarded the periodical contract first, which is considered separate under Chinese copyright law.

⁶¹ For the theory that the ban came late so the General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP) could profit more from the fines, see Xiao Xialin 1993, 112.

over the side. Zhuang Zhidie still didn't come, his eyes fixing on a blue birthmark on her left butt, not saying a word, only hyperventilating. She paused to take off her shoes and stockings, □□□□□□ (the author has deleted two hundred thirteen characters) Zhuang Zhidie drunkenly watched her contort like a worm, her lips quiver, eyes roll, then emit a sudden yell, □□□□□□ (the author has deleted fifty characters).

妇人要脱下鞋去，彻底脱掉袜子，庄之蝶说他最爱这样穿着高跟鞋，便把两条腿举起来，立于床边行起好事。□□□□□□（作者删去三百七十九字）妇人沾着动着就大呼小叫，这是庄之蝶从未经历过的，顿时男人的征服欲大起，竟数百下没有早泄，连自己都吃惊了。唐宛儿早满脸润红，乌发纷乱，却坐起来说：“我给你变个姿势吧！”下床来爬在床沿。庄之蝶仍未早泄，眼盯着那屁股左侧的一颗蓝痣，没有言语，只是气喘不止。妇人歇下来，干脆把鞋子丝袜全然脱去，□□□□□□（作者删去二百十三字）庄之蝶醉眼看妇人如虫一样跌动，嘴唇抽搐，双目翻白，猛地一声惊叫，□□□□□□（作者删去五十字）。（Jia, Pingwa 1993, 85）

It is passages like this one that caused such a controversy upon the novel's publication. Publicists and favorable critics drew immediate comparisons to *The Plum in the Golden Vase* (*Jin ping mei* 金瓶梅), the erotic masterwork of manners of the late Ming.⁶² Many others, however, registered disappointment if not disdain. Born in 1952 in Shaanxi, Jia Pingwa had been previously acclaimed for his series of writings, both fictional and nonfictional, set in the rural region of Shangzhou (商州) in the province's southeast, works that paint the simple and peaceful lives of villagers in the early reform years. Now, not only has he abandoned the countryside for the city, he has been co-opted by the latter's hedonism and consumerism, peddling pornography.

The debate on literary commercialization began in the late 1980s over Wang Shuo and his best-selling "hooligan literature."⁶³ The charge of "selling out," frequently found in the Jia Pingwana, cannot be separated from the question of "serious literature" (*yansu wenxue* 严肃文学) and "popular literature" (*tongsu wenxue* 通俗文学) and their very bifurcation, an issue that was going to escalate with Peking University's conferral in 1994 of an honorary professorship on

⁶² As one scholar observes of *The Plum*: "Hundreds of years of critical discourse on the novel have focused on how the reader should respond to the sexual content of the novel" (Tina Lu 2010, 110).

⁶³ See Jing Wang's "Wang Shuo: 'Pop Goes the Culture?'" (Jing Wang 1996, 261-286).

Louis Cha, the Hong Kong author of wildly successful martial-arts fiction (*wuxia xiaoshuo* 武侠小说) published under the penname of Jin Yong (金庸).⁶⁴ It is no coincidence, then, that *Decadent Capital* contains two references to Jin Yong. The complaints of Niu Yueqing (牛月清), the wife of Zhuang Zhidie who operates a bookshop, reflect both the Jin Yong vogue and the conditions of the book market:

Got a batch of Jin Yong's martial-arts books. They sold well at first, but who would've thought that five bookshops would suddenly open on that street, all selling Jin Yong? Monkey see, monkey do. Now we're overstocked.
进了一批金庸的武侠书，先还卖的可以，没想到那一条街上，哗哗啦啦一下子又开了五家书店，又全卖的金庸的书，南山猴——一个磕头都磕头，货就压下了。(Jia, Pingwa 1993, 73)

Not long afterwards an associate of Zhuang Zhidie's, Hong Jiang (洪江), suggests a scheme to market a martial-arts novel written by "Quan Yong," the Chinese characters for Quan—全—and Jin—金—being similar (Jia, Pingwa 1993, 74). It is surely ironic that the businessman of letters—the very figure of lamentation and deprecation in criticisms of Jia—is variously incarnated in *Decadent Capital*. Besides Zhuang Zhidie there are three other eminent "cultural loafers" (*wenhua xianren* 文化闲人) in the city of Xijing (西京), or "western capital," where the story is set. The artist Wang Ximian (汪希眠) forges famous paintings and then spends the gains on women; the calligrapher Gong Jingyuan (龚靖元) sells his brushwork to fund a gambling habit; and this is how a friend of Zhuang's describes Ruan Zhifei (阮知非), the Qin opera performer turned leader of a song and dance troupe:

his performers are all contract workers; those that proper troupes don't dare to hire he hires, those songs they don't dare to sing he sings, those costumes they don't dare to wear he wears. And so in the last five years they traveled all over the country, selling out every show, money showering down like snowflakes.

⁶⁴ For more on this subject, see Pingyuan Chen 1999, 113-133.

演员全是合同聘用，正经剧团不敢用的人他用，不敢唱的歌他唱，不敢穿的服装他穿，所以前五年之间走遍大江南北，场场爆满，钱飘雪花一般往回收。(Jia, Pingwa 1993, 14)

For Ruan Zhifei—as for the creator of Ruan Zhifei, so it seems—the breaking of taboos is what brings in the cash. The venerable arts of ages past, whether it be Chinese painting (*guohua* 国画), calligraphy, or Qin opera—or, if we are again to extend the comparison to Jia Pingwa himself, the classic Chinese novel—are not so much given up as retooled for more profitable purposes in the postsocialist era. Thus Hong Jiang advises Zhuang Zhidie on the secret to success:

Look at the times, it's very sensible for a literatus to do business. One's name is a source of wealth; you're wasting it if you're not using it. How can you get rich just by writing? One novella can't even trump a single character of Gong Jingyuan's. (...) Writing books can't beat selling books, and selling books can't beat compiling books. A lot of bookstores now compile their own books, either scoring a book number from a publisher or simply printing underground. All that they compile are little volumes of sex and murder, not even bothering with proofreading, print runs of hundreds of thousands of copies—raking in the dough!⁶⁵

现在什么时候了，文人做生意正当得很哩，名也是财富，你不用就浪费了，光靠写文章发什么财，一部中篇小说抵不住龚靖元一个字的。（...）写书的不如卖书的，卖书的又不如编书的。现在许多书店都在自己编书，或者掏钱买出版社一个书号，或者干脆偷着印，全编的是色情凶杀一类的小册子，连校对都不搞，一印几十几百万册，发海了！（Jia, Pingwa 1993, 73-74）

Is this another instance of Jia's self-referentiality, and if so, to what extent does this playing point to his complicity? We will return to this question later in the chapter. Suffice it to say here that one could hardly find a more disheartening portrait in contemporary Chinese literature of the state of the culture industry. *Decadent Capital's* opening sentence identifies the setting as the 1980s, but the cynicism that drips from Hong Jiang's remarks above and the story as a whole is more in line with the novel's composition in the 1990s. Jing Wang sees the 1980s as marked by both utopian fervor and impending crisis (Jing Wang 1996). Nowhere in the narrative, however, is the idealism associated with the decade that bridges the introduction of "reform and opening

⁶⁵ There is mention of another money-making writer of sex and violence later in the novel (Jia, Pingwa 1993, 186).

up" (*gaige kaifang* 改革开放) in 1978 and the crushing of the 1989 protests to be glimpsed. Instead, intrigues, affairs, swindling, and bickering dominate the plotline. Given a cast of characters filled with the cultural elite, the total absence of discussions of aesthetics, current events, or social issues among them is revealing. It does not mean, though, that Jia offers no perceptive depictions of the profound shifts urbanites witnessed in the reform period, as the following vignette illustrates:

Zhuang Zhidie turned into the street but didn't see a single banner on display. The signs now read "ad headquarters" and "business card workshop." The residents already up were hanging sample ads on their stalls and storefronts. Puzzled, Zhuang Zhidie asked a fellow, "How come there's no one making banners on this street anymore?" The fellow said, "Don't you know the song 'Follow your feelings'? Back then the Communist Party was always holding meetings, and when there are meetings there have to be banners, and everybody on this street lived off those banners. Now the Party's all pragmatics and economics. The banner business slumped, but ad campaigns were launched everywhere, and people couldn't leave home without business cards. Who would've thought that with this change, our business is actually ten times better than before!"

庄之蝶进了街里，却未见到一面锦旗挂着，而新有人家店牌都换了“广告制作部”，“名片制作室”，已经起来的街民纷纷在各自的地面和领空上悬挂各类广告标样。庄之蝶感到奇怪，便问一汉子：“这街上怎么没有制作锦旗的啦？”汉子说：“你没听过《跟着感觉走》的歌吗？那些年共产党的会多，有会就必颁发锦旗的，我们这一街人就靠做锦旗吃饭；现在共产党务实搞经济，锦旗生意萧条了，可到处开展广告战，人人出门都讲究名片，没想这么一变，我们生意倒比先前好了十多倍的！” (Jia, Pingwa 1993, 346-347)

This immensely popular song appeared in Taiwanese singer Su Rui's 1988 album *Taipei-Tokyo* (Taibei-Dongjing). Not counting bootlegs, it sold 800,000 licensed copies in China before getting banned after June Fourth (Kristof 1991). China's furious economic growth since reform is a well-worn headline in media reports East and West. What the above anecdote highlights, though, is the transition from one kind of publicness to another, signaled by the replacement of banners by advertisements and business cards. The former display *before* the public the authority of the Party-state, while the latter vie *for* a public with power to purchase.

The passage above is also notable for another reason: it makes a reference to the socialist era,

one of the astoundingly few in the novel that are always brief and glancing.⁶⁶ Remnants of the era are reduced to artifacts as from an archaeological dig. A fan bearing the calligraphy of Kang Sheng (康生), that Cultural Revolution hatchet man, as well as a scroll of Mao Zedong's own calligraphy turn up (Jia, Pingwa 1993, 158). Yet they function precisely as antiques, objects to be treasured or traded, and no longer as talismans. Needless to say, the legacies of the socialist experiment persist in the People's Republic to this day. But within a framework that is decidedly postsocialist, *Decadent Capital* makes no mention of the former nationalization of industry, collectivization of agriculture, and communalization of daily life. No specter of Marx or Mao hover over Xijing, no trace of the utopian program. It is as if that previous chapter of Chinese history that spanned approximately 30 years existed in some remote, curious past.

Herein lies Jia's telling treatment of time. For in no way can we attribute it to shortsightedness. The "western capital" of Xijing is an obvious stand-in for Xi'an, the capital of many ancient dynasties (and the current capital of Shaanxi province, where Jia was born and continues to live and write). The novel resonates with innumerable echoes from the distant past, and vestiges of the glory days of a now "decadent capital" litter the diegetic décor: pieces of the crumbling city wall, rusted copper cash, centuries-old ink stones.⁶⁷ The odor of decay is heavy and spreads from Xijing to elsewhere in the province, as Zhuang Zhidie relates:

Tongguan, my hometown, was historically the most important pass in Shaanxi's Guanzhong plain, the setting of countless heroic tales. Ten years ago the county seat moved and the old walls fell into ruin. I went back to take a look not long ago and sat and sighed for half a day on the tower of the ruined wall.

我老家潼关，历史上是关中第一大关，演动了多少壮烈故事，十年前县城迁了地方，那旧城沦成废墟。前不久，我回去看了，坐在那废墟的楼上感叹了半日。(Jia, Pingwa 1993, 45)

⁶⁶ Another can be found in the scene where Zhuang Zhidie's friend Zhao Jingwu speaks of how in 1950 Xijing's poor residents moved into the courtyard house (*siheyuan*) that his family owned, never to leave (Jia, Pingwa 1993, 44).

⁶⁷ For a penetrating examination of historical nostalgia in *Decadent Capital*, see Rojas 2006, 749-773.

It is thus far from the case that the narrative lacks a historical frame of reference: the disintegration of the present is etched against a backdrop of former grandeur. The fate of the capital is mirrored in the fate of the characters, especially of the protagonist, all of whose relationships break down and who at the end tries to flee the city, only to die at the train station. There is no way out of this dystopia. Because of the parallel with Xijing/Xi'an's trajectory, the social, moral, and physical decline and degradation that unfold in the story seem inevitable, inescapable, immutable. That is why in 2009, on the occasion of the novel's republication, the author Ma Yuan (马原) said in an interview:

30 years ago Chinese intellectuals would be ashamed to talk about money, but by now I've seen so many writers bow and kneel down before power and money. More and more I see certain people around me becoming more and more like the Zhuang Zhidie type in *Decadent Capital*.

30 年前中国知识份子还耻于谈钱，但是今天，我见了太多作家在权力和金钱面前的卑躬屈膝。我越来越看到身边的一些人越来越像《废都》里庄之蝶那一类人。
(Li, Pei 2009)

A tale that supposedly takes place in the 1980s and was written in the 1990s rings no less true in the 2000s. As the logic of the market penetrates further into China's "creative industries" in the new millennium, the novel only seems to gain in prescience, no more so than when it is repackaged for sale 15 years after the original ban. But in his comments above Ma Yuan slips in an element—"power, authority" (权力)—that is not readily apparent in the force field through which Zhuang Zhidie and his "cultural loafer" cohort move. The addition—power plus money—suggests that the book's re-release, aside from considerations of artistic vindication, has to be viewed in light of these twin vectors.

The squares in question

Perhaps to distance itself from the media circus surrounding the 1993 publication, the 2009

publisher, Writers Publishing House (作家出版社), did not hype the unbanning. In fact, *Decadent Capital* was reissued as part of a trio of new editions, safe in the middle, flanked by two untainted works, the 1987 *Turbulence* (*Fuzao* 浮躁) and the 2005 *Qin opera* (*Qinqiang* 秦腔). One can surmise various reasons for the “rehabilitation:” the sex is no longer so shocking; or Jia Pingwa has in the meantime won the prestigious Mao Dun Literary Prize for *Qin opera*; or those at the GAPP who handed down the ban are no longer there. In terms of the editions themselves, however, there are some concrete differences. The 1993 book features a rather dull cover with the characters *Fei du* in typescript and the centerpiece basically a crumbled sheet of paper with a purplish cloud in the background. The color design of the 2009 book, on the other hand, can be described only as hot pink. In lieu of the mechanical title of 16 years ago, Jia’s own dashing calligraphy runs down the cover. We are reminded that even the state-owned Writers Publishing House, run by the Chinese Writers Association (CWA, 中国作家协会)—of which Jia is a member—now has a division devoted to market assessment (Shuyu Kong 2008, 47).⁶⁸

Preceding each of the three novels in the new edition are three introductory essays by three esteemed literary critics: editor at *People’s Literature* Li Jingze (李敬泽), Peking University professor Chen Xiaoming (陈晓明), and Sun Yat-sen University professor Xie Youshun (谢有顺).⁶⁹ These essays serve to legitimize the republication of a work that was, in the words of the

⁶⁸ For the transformation of Writers Publishing House from essentially an in-house publisher for the Chinese Writers Association to a “best seller machine,” see Shuyu Kong 2008, 43-54. Founded in 1953, the CWA is modeled after the Soviet literary administration, composed of a national-level organization and provincial branches. It is not a civic association; though its membership of approximately 6,000 is voluntary (and competitive), it is officially controlled and the professional writers attached to it are on the payroll of the government (Link 1984, 25). In addition to running the Writers Publishing House, the CWA publishes several of the most prestigious literary journals in China, including *People’s Literature* (人民文学), *Harvest* (收获), and *Poetry Periodical* (诗刊), as well as journals of literary criticism such as *Contemporary Writers Review* (当代作家评论) and *Shanghai Literature* (上海文学). It also awards the top literary prizes in the country, the Mao Dun Literary Prize and the Lu Xun Literary Prize.

⁶⁹ Chen Xiaoming’s considers Jia’s oeuvre as a whole, while Xie Youshun’s focuses on *Qin opera*. I discuss Li Jingze’s below.

1994 official ban, “low in character, mixed with pornographic descriptions” (格调低下, 夹杂色情描写) (Hao 2008; Zhang, Hong 2009). Fifteen years later, the “pornographic descriptions” have remained intact. Not one character from the original has been removed, as the media liked to report. But there *was* change to the text. What Jia Pingwa had “self-censored” in 1993 was censored a second time, this time for good. In the 2009 edition the blank squares—□□□□□□—were replaced by ellipses—……. Replaced, too, was the count of deleted characters by “(here the author has made deletions)” ((此处作者有删节)). In some instances, the evidence of deletion was deleted altogether.⁷⁰

Li Jingze, author of the first prefatory essay in the new edition, “On Zhuang Zhidie” (庄之蝶论), proposed the change (Zhang, Hong 2009). This is how he justified in part the decision: “By drawing the blanks, he exhibited prohibition and at the same time transgressed the exhibited prohibition; indeed because of this he incurred and it served him right to incur censure” (通过画出来的空缺他彰显了禁忌, 同时冒犯了被彰显的禁忌, 他也就的确因此受到了并且活该受到责难。) (Li, Jingze 2009, 1). The words that certainly jump out are the overbearing “served him right” (*huogai* 活该). This tone of criticism recalls certain initial reactions to the squares, which upon their appearance immediately became an object of fulmination in some quarters (not to mention titillation in others). One commentator from 1993, for example, similarly took the high road of finger-wagging: “...every ‘□□’ is a trap. Jia Pingwa wants adolescents to imagine things when they come across ‘□□.’ Jia Pingwa should suffer the rebuke of conscience” (...那每一个“□□”都是一个陷阱。贾平凹让青少年面对“□□”去想象什么。贾平凹应该受到良心的谴责。) (Xiao, Xialin 1993, 140). Youthful imagination should always be guarded against.

⁷⁰ Compare, for example, Jia, Pingwa 1993, 468 with Jia, Pingwa 2009, 415.

Another commentator summons nationalist outrage, deeming Jia's squares “a false challenge of the censorship of publications intended to curry favor with readers in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the West who are antipathetic to the institution of publishing in Mainland China” (对出版检查制度的虚假挑战，是用于讨好港台以及西方对中国大陆的出版制度有反感的读者。) (Duo 1993, 155). The following respondent, however, saw in them a relaxation of policy, the very transparency that Li Jingze castigates: “...compared to that deletion method of ‘cutting but not letting it be known whether it was cut or where it was cut,’ this is certainly more open and respectful of the author and can be considered a kind of progress” (...这比起那种“割了却不知是否割或割在哪里”的删节方式，当是更坦率而且比较尊重作者的，这应该说是一种进步。) (Xiao, Xialin 1993, 152).

To return to Li, he traces the provenance of the blanks to the edited clean editions of Ming and Qing erotic fiction. He does not, like commentators before him, accuse Jia of arousing his readers’ carnal fantasies, or even of commercialism. Rather, Li finds him guilty of shirking authorial responsibility:

I believe that the essential immorality of those “□□□” is this kind of sneaking away by Zhuang Zhidie, this kind of irresponsibility. Jia Pingwa strongly felt that he was powerless to touch, imagine, and describe certain things inside this character’s mind and body; he could not make Zhuang Zhidie bear definite personal responsibility for his actions, including moral and ethical responsibility. And so he cleverly performed a masterful maneuver, gathering ghosts of the past, rendering this person absent.

我认为，那些“□□□”之根本的不道德就在于庄之蝶的这种溜走，这种不负责。贾平凹强烈地感觉到在这个人物的身心之中有些事物是他无力触摸，想象和言说的，他无法让庄之蝶为自己的所作所为承担明确的个人责任，包括道德和伦理责任，于是，他机巧地使出腾挪大法，招来昔日幽魂，让这个人变成了不在。(Li, Jingze 2009, 2)

Li Jingze wants Zhuang Zhidie to stay in place, to suffer for his immoral behavior lifelong imprisonment in the dystopian diegesis. Zhuang might pay with his life at the end, but death is an

insufficient finality. That is why Li, in the re-authorized edition, assumes the responsibility to remove those blank squares, closing the doors through which Zhuang—and Jia Pingwa—can abscond. And this time the intervention comes not from the GAPP but from within, as it were, from an editor, a critic, a colleague.

Li's verdict appears to be diametrically opposed to the position argued below by a commentator in 1993. Both criticize the blank squares, but far from allowing protagonist and author to escape, they are like walls that ultimately prevent the reader from entering, ruling out any input, as this extended excerpt asserts:

The most eye-catching and commented-upon thing in *Decadent Capital* is “□□□□□□ (the author has deleted ×× characters).” This device of course is the affectation and pretense of fear and respect toward social prohibition and discursive power. It obviously imitates the cultural apparatus that deletes text to guarantee that the rules of discourse are not broken. But the contradiction here is that the original deletions of sections of text that overstep discursive limits rest upon the existence of an undeleted “original,” and the existence of this original edition is taken for granted by everyone (such as the expurgated *Plum in the Golden Vase*); it is simply that discursive norms have erased and wiped it clean. But Jia Pingwa has bestowed upon the “author” a double identity. The one expurgating here is not the cultural apparatus but the “author.” “Author” and “expurgator” have bizarrely become one: writing and deleting parallel each other. Any reader confronting this infinitely reproducible text will discover that he or she has not the slightest chance or possibility of filling in those “□□□□□□.” These deletions play with—and strongly entice—the reader. Jia Pingwa uses this method to suppress the author’s authority even as he reforges that authority another way. For no reader’s imagination can ever solve the riddles; no reader can discuss equally these abstruse deletions with the author. Thus, the fabricated deletions become the token and code of this style, the most enticing in the story of Zhuang Zhidie. This is also a token and code moving towards consumption and the market.

《废都》中最引人注目的，引起读者议论最多的是“□□□□□□（作者删去 xx 字）”。这一模式当然是对社会禁忌和话语权力的装腔作势的故作畏惧和尊重，这显然模仿文化机器为保证话语的规则不被打破而对文本的删节方式。但这里的矛盾是，原有的对文本的越出话语的限制的部分的删节是存在未被删节的“底本”的，这一始源的“版本”的存在是人所共知的（如被删节的《金瓶梅》），只是由于话语规范对之加以消除和擦抹。但贾平凹却将“作者”本人赋予了双重的身份。这里进行删节的不是文化机器。而是“作者”。“作者”/“删者”诡异地同一化了。作与删变成了同步的过程，任何读者在面对这一被无穷复制的文本时会发现，他完全没有任何机会和可能补足这些“□□□□□□”。这些删节变成了对他的戏耍，也是对他的强烈的吸

引。贾平凹以这种方式抑制作者的权威，但又以新的途径重建了这一权威。因为任何读者的想象永远不会有一个谜底，任何读者都无法与作者平等地讨论这些玄妙的删节。于是，这种虚构的删节就变成了这个关于庄之蝶的故事的最为吸引人的风格的表记和代码。这是一个走向消费和市场的表记和代码。(Xiao, Xialin, 236)

Whereas Li Jingze, in securing Zhuang Zhidie within the text, locks himself in as well, this commentator treats the blank squares as an interface, oriented towards the reader/consumer, whom they do not merely entice. Rather, they are a tease, a consummate commodity that beckons but never satisfies. The foresight of this reading is remarkable, for we could say it pertains less to the 1993 than to the 2009 edition. It is in the new *Decadent Capital* that we find the barefaced reassertion of authority, intoned from the intellectual high ground of a backward-gazing prefatory essay, along with the shedding of all accountability. Both the squares and the count of deleted characters have been removed, nullifying any ability on the part of readers to "discuss equally" (平等地讨论). Order has been restored as the roles of not just author and expurgator but also producer and consumer are once again fixed.

At the time of the 1993 publication, myths of an original, unexpurgated edition circulated—as well as pirated “unexpurgated editions” themselves with the blanks filled in, so to speak. We have learned from Jia Pingwa's subsequent interviews the story behind those blanks followed by "(the author has deleted n characters)" (Zha 1995, 149; Hao 2008). He did not write out the sex scenes completely, knowing they would never see the light of day, and in revision he made some further deletions. Then the editor made some more, and Jia added the blanks and the number of deleted characters. The " n ," therefore, does not correspond to the actual number of characters taken out.

May we then conclude that Li Jingze's editing constitutes a rectification? The story of *Decadent Capital*, from 1993 to 2009, has not changed in the slightest, as the publisher and

reviewers are fain to point out. After causing so much controversy, after provoking so much rebuke, have the blank squares—tiny price tags on our lecherous thoughts, little escape hatches for our weaker selves—been finally, legitimately effaced? After all, the novel has now been proofread for the erroneous and the extraneous: the count was a sham, and the blanks had nothing there.

Reconstituting the public

This is not the first time that blank squares have appeared in modern Chinese critical discourse. In May 1934, in “More on ‘……’ ‘□□□□’” (“……” “□□□□” 论补), written under the pseudonym Man Xue (曼雪), Lu Xun humorously remarked that “……” is foreign, imported, and (according to him) post-May Fourth, while blank squares are “domestic products” (*guohuo* 国货) (Lu, Xun Vol. 5 2005, 511). (Lu Xun also observes that more and more “x x” can be found in publications, which, he says, is something imported from Japan.) He had in mind ancient writings on bamboo strips whose missing or indecipherable characters are transcribed as □'s. He was responding to a piece called “On 「……………」 「□□□□□」” (「……………」 「□□□□□」 論), published earlier in the month by the writer Xu Xu (徐訏) in the bimonthly journal that features the style of the “short informal essay” (*xiaopinwen* 小品文), *In the World of Men* (*Ren jian shi* 人間世), where Xu was also an editor (the chief editor was Lin Yutang 林语堂). As Xu declares in this piece, “The fact that ‘□□□□’ ‘……………」 are already commonly encountered in the news in newspapers and the telegrams of important personages is already a problem encountered by everyone” (至於已經到了「□□□□」 「……………」 常常在報上的新聞中或要人通電中可以找到，那已經是誰都找得到的問題了。

) (Xu, Xu 1934, 21). For Xu, the blank squares evince a reluctance or inability to say—due to mental laziness or cowardice—what ought to be said. It is a problem affecting all of society, and he lauds scientists like Darwin, for example, for daring to say—that we come from apes—what others dare not, and writers who are able to describe what readers cannot find words for.

Lu Xun was critical of the “short informal essay” style (and of Lin Yutang who championed it).⁷¹ In his response he follows Xu in deploring the appearance of the blank squares in contemporary publications. But the reasons he gives are quite different. It is a phenomenon, he says, that makes two sets of people happy: the government censor, who sees that his work is done for him, and the reader, who is aroused by the fill-in-the-blank squares. He believes it to be a kind of commercial deception, the selling of something not there:

Nowadays all things have to be bought with money, and so naturally all things can be sold for money. But the fact that even ‘nothing’ can be sold for money is rather beyond expectations. Once you know this, however, you then understand that rumor-mongering can now be considered an ‘honest way’ to make a living.

现在是什么东西都要用钱买, 自然也就都可以卖钱。但连“没有东西”也可以卖钱, 却未免有些出乎意料。不过, 知道了这事以后, 便明白造谣为业, 在现在也还要算是“货真价实, 童叟无欺”的生活了。(Lu, Xun Vol. 5 2005, 512)

The encroachment of capitalist ethics into the cultural and intellectual domains, especially in Shanghai where Lu Xun lived at the time, certainly perturbed him.⁷² A mere six months after the response above, however, Lu Xun was assessing the blank squares differently. In “The demons of the Chinese literary scene” (中国文坛上的鬼魅) of November 1934, he observed that Nationalist government censors no longer allowed authors to leave blanks in place of words struck out (Lu, Xun Vol. 6 2005, 162). He also referred to the system of pre-publication censorship instituted that June after a meeting in Shanghai between authorities and publishers

⁷¹ See Lu Xun’s “Lunyu yinian” (“A year of *The Analects*”) and “Xiaopinwen de weiji” (The crisis of the short informal essay) in Lu, Xun Vol. 4 2005, 582-593.

⁷² The quintessential tale of Shanghai industrial and financial capitalism in the 1930s is Mao Dun’s 1933 *Midnight* (Ziye). For an overview and critique of scholarship on commerce and culture in republican Shanghai, see Yeh 1997.

(Lu, Xun Vol. 6 2005, 162). Blanks were touched on again a year later in "Preface to *Decorative Literature*" of December 1935: "1934 was not like 1935. This year, because of the 'Chitter Chatter Emperor' incident, the press and publication censorship department was at a loss. It even fired seven censors, and it appears that newspapers could keep blank what was deleted (the technical term is 'open a skylight')" (Lu, Xun Vol. 5 2005, 438). As an editorial note explains, "Chitter Chatter Emperor," published in May 1935 in the Shanghai-based *New Life* (*Xin sheng*), criticized the institution of monarchy in reference to the Japanese emperor. In part to appease Japan and in part to suppress "progressive" opinion, Nationalist authorities shut down the weekly and sentenced the editor-in-chief to 14 months in prison (Lu, Xun Vol. 5 2005, 440). It was becoming clear that blank squares resisted rather than assisted the work of censorship.

Perhaps he remembered a blank square in his own fiction. It appears in "Medicine" (药), published in *New Youth* (*Xin qingnian* 新青年) in May 1919. Old Shuan (老栓), believing it will cure his consumptive boy, buys a steamed bun soaked in blood, which, we learn, was spilled from a revolutionary just executed. Near where Old Shuan makes the purchase is a place called Ancient Blank Ting Kou (古□亭口) (Lu, Xun Vol. 1 2005, 465). As the editors of Lu Xun's *Complete Works* tell us, this is an allusion to the martyrdom of the famed revolutionary Qiu Jin (秋瑾), killed by Qing troops in July 1907 at a place called Xuan Ting Kou (轩亭口) in Lu Xun's hometown of Shaoxing (Lu, Xun Vol. 1 2005, 475). In the story, then, the character *xuan* (轩) is replaced by a blank square.

We do not know who was responsible for this, whether Lu Xun himself sketched the square in the manuscript. But we do know that, whichever the case, the little square serves as a kind of post-it note to remind readers of someone no longer there, or—to use another metaphor—a blank memorial tablet erected right there on the page for a past event that still could not be written

about directly. We may recall that, in the massive editing of books for collection in the Qing Emperor Qianlong's *The Emperor's Four Treasuries* (*Siku quanshu* 四庫全書), offending characters and sections had to be replaced with other characters; no blanks could remain (Guy 1987, 193). In "Medicine" as in *Decadent Capital*, the blank square performs censorship, revealing it as a force that does not merely come down at the end to cut or cross out but one that is present from the beginning, constitutive of writing itself. Like Lu Xun before him, Jia Pingwa writes through censorship, his work not so much marred by it as formed with it. What separates Jia's novel is its 1994 ban. In his case, therefore, the target was not only certain contents of the book but the book in its entirety. The novel's clandestine lives had begun even before the ban; Jia stated in an interview that he has over 70 pirated versions in his collection (Mu 2005, 27). But the ban drove its public underground. Though the pirate economy kept it alive—twelve million copies, official and bootleg, have supposedly been sold—reception became technically an illicit undertaking (Di 2009). Gone were all public discussions of the novel.

In many ways *Decadent Capital* enacts censorship's vitiation of the public as well. Absent from the narrative is anything resembling a public realm in the strong sense. Corruption is prevalent from the press to the judicial system: newspaper articles are all paid for, and judges are open to influence (Jia, Pingwa 1993, 131-132). The government is no different. Zhuang Zhidie seeks to win favor for a court case of his by marrying his pretty housemaid to the mayor of Xijing's handicapped son. Although politics at the national level is not depicted, Zhuang does imply that they simply replicate the local: "A Central Politburo meeting is probably like this too: a few people talk it over at someone's home, and a state policy is settled" (中央政治局会议恐怕也是这样，几个人在谁家这么商量了，一项国策就定下来。) (Jia, Pingwa 1993, 277). Behind their public façades these institutions are driven by private dealings. The following is a

rumination—coming from the consciousness of a cow from whose teats Zhuang Zhidie drinks milk directly—on the lack of anything truly collective in the city's public life:

What makes man, from the harmony and love of a village or hamlet where everyone knows everyone's grandfather's pet name and whose chicken it is running around, come to a city where each family has its own unit and you close the door as soon as you've entered and suddenly nobody acknowledges anybody? So many people on the streets—I breathe in the air you breathe out, you breathe in the air I breathe out—people crowded on buses, crammed into theaters, but they stare without knowing one another. Like sand, you can grab a handful; when you let go, the grains come apart. Add water and they drift apart even further!

使人从一村一寨的谁也知道谁家老爷的小名，谁也认得土场上的一只小鸡是谁家饲养的和睦亲爱的地方，偏来到这一家一个单元，进门就关门，一下子变得谁都不理了谁的城里呢？街巷里这么多人，你呼出的气我吸进去，我呼出的气你吸进去，公共汽车上是人挤了人，影剧院里更是人靠了人，但都大眼瞪小眼地不认识。如同是一堆沙子，抓起来是一把，放开了粒粒分散，用水越搅和反倒越散得开！（Jia, Pingwa 1993, 141）

The city should be the site of the public, yet the passage, with familiar tropes of alienation despite population, presents its ostensible absence: even when people gather in the public space of a bus or theater, they do not constitute a community sharing something in common. What the rest of the novel illustrates, however, is the exact opposite of strangers. Residents of Xijing know each other only too well. Far from separating like sand, they are inextricably entangled in a bog of relationships. If there is nevertheless no public, it is due not to the urban as such but precisely to its ruralization. The intimacy of village life is transplanted onto the dynamics of a city. It is not that people do not speak to one another. They talk too familiarly, unable to put aside their private interests, mutual or conflictual, for any broader horizon.

Herein lies the danger of Jia Pingwa's performance of censorship. I disagree with one critic who believes the blank squares to represent only a "minor technique:" "That the author of *Decadent Capital* uses this maneuver to parody the 'cleaning' of texts is indeed innovative, but it is a pity that this kind of parody of previous texts is only a minor technique in *Decadent Capital*;

it does not develop into the attitude of the entire text" (《废都》作者使用的这一手段，作为对“洁本”行为的戏仿（parody），确实有创新意义，但可惜这种对前文本的戏仿，在《废都》里只有一个小小的技巧，未能成为整体的文体态度。) (Xiao, Xialin 1993, 146). Parodic reflexivity, as the "cultural loafers" illustrate, is indeed characteristic of the work as a whole. But to what extent is Jia complicit in the very things he pokes fun at? Is he critiquing the man of letters who opts for lucre, or is he profiting from his very portrayal? And more importantly, is his playing a mere reproduction of the effects of censorship without offering a way out? Just as the Chinese state, ever since the 1989 protests that centered on a public square, has aimed to close alternative publics, so too does *Decadent Capital* seemingly represent no alternatives. Though Jia cannot be accused of glorifying the venal characters in his novel, as testified by their deplorable outcomes, Zhuang Zhidie's failed escape and ultimate demise—not to mention his inability to finish a novel he is working on—might simply mirror the impasse facing an author writing in post-Tiananmen China. This is the threat. The blank squares as well as the narrative itself reenact the impairment and perversion of the public.

As shown earlier, many commentators aired their stance on those squares when the novel was published in 1993, as if to compensate for not standing on another square that had been cleared four years previously. In fact, through debating *Decadent Capital*, Chinese intellectuals, quieted if not silenced since the military crackdown on public demonstrations in 1989 and the general clampdown on public discussions afterwards, found their voices again.⁷³ Riding on the industry in the book was another albeit much smaller industry in its commentary, as evidenced by these titles, all from 1993: *What's wrong with Jia Pingwa (Jia Pingwa zenme la 贾平凹怎么*

⁷³ A concomitant debate that fed on and into the controversy surrounding *Decadent Capital* is expounded in the authoritative chapter "Ideologies of Popular Culture: The 'Humanist Spirit' Debate" in McGrath 2008, 25-58.

啦), *Decadent Capital, decadent who?* (*Fei du fei shei* 《废都》废谁), *Taste of Decadent Capital* (*Fei du ziwei* 《废都》滋味), *Decadent Capital and "Decadent Capital Fever"* (*Fei du yu "Fei du re"* 《废都》与“废都热”), *Riddle of Decadent Capital* (*Fei du zhi mi* 《废都》之谜), and *Decadent Capital, oh Decadent Capital* (*Fei du a Fei du* 《废都》啊, 《废都》). The novel may not have portrayed any publics but it did bring them about, both reading publics and critical publics in the press and periodicals.

These publics were shut down upon the 1994 ban. With the 2009 unbanning and their being allowed once again to assemble openly, what is needed is a reassessment of Jia Pingwa's blank squares. Their banishment from the new edition confirms that they were and have always been the most offensive aspect of the novel. Whether one regards the banishment as a distortion or a revision, it calls for a critical retort, by which I do not intend a return. I have no office to restore the squares, or to carry out a recount of the "deleted characters." Yet re-viewing the text is a gesture I fully own as a reader who can only figuratively re-place the replaced. My objective consists in both a public-making of censorship—"exhibiting prohibition"—and a public-making against censorship, the re-summoning of a dispersed aggregate.

Every blank in *Decadent Capital* is an *ou-topos*, a not-place inserted to say no to the engulfing dystopia that appears all but ineluctable. This *ou-topos* is not also an *ou-chronos*: it is not beyond time but precisely a threshold for time to flow over and wash over the seeming permanence of a demoralized and disillusioned, post-(Tiananmen, socialist, golden age) present. The blank squares open not only onto a future unforeclosed but also into an elided past. We will recall that the narrative manifests hardly any recollection of the socialist epoch. Curiously enough, it also contains an admonition against man's historical amnesia, coming again from the milk cow:

The cow really wants to tell humans about the past, but it's a pity that the cow doesn't speak human. So when time and again humans forget the past and, after things have passed, flip through thread-bound annals, sighing "the shockingly familiar in history," the cow scoffs in his heart at the pathetic humans.

牛实在想把过去的事情说给人听，可惜牛不会说人话，所以当人常常忘却了过去的东西，等一切都发生了，去翻看那些线装的志书，不免浩叹一句“历史怎么有惊人的相似”时，牛就在心里嘲笑人的可怜了。(Jia, Pingwa 1993, 140)

The story, we will remember, is set ostensibly in the 1980s, which makes the socialist epoch its immediate past. We will also remember that the novel was written in the early 1990s, which makes the 1989 movement *its* immediate past. Both of these immediate pasts are glaringly missing from *Decadent Capital*. Jia Pingwa's "forgetting" of them enacts his characters' as well as his contemporaries' short-term memory loss in their headlong rush for riches and turn-ons. But it is more than a forgetting. The blank squares are emblems of censorship, that enforced omission. They stand in, then, for the recurring *ou-topos*—the not-place and not-motif—that is Tiananmen Square. In this way does a graphic hiatus—□ □ □ □ □ □—represent a historiographic one.

Objections will no doubt be raised that I am twisting Jia's blanks, which we all know signify sex too hot to print, without the "philosophy."⁷⁴ *Decadent Capital* may have been written four years after the protests, but there is precisely not the least hint of them, or of national events and debates on social ills. If there is politics in the narrative, then it is the politics of one-upsmanship: the calculation of interests, the exchange of favors, and the jockeying for advantage in the web of desire.

That could have been argued at one point in time. But with the censorship of the squares in 2009, 16 years after the novel's first appearance and 20 years after Tiananmen, what has become

⁷⁴ I am referring to the *livres philosophiques*, underground literature popular in the 1780s that was part pornography and part lampoon of monarchy and church, the subject of Robert Darnton's classic *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France*.

clear is that the challenge they pose lies in their alternative publicness. To substitute for blank squares ellipses is to blot out the former's receptivity. Those little squares, measuring no more than a few square millimeters on the page, are windows to worlds of meanings as well as yearnings. And they were closed, shrunken to the true void—as opposed to the blank—that is the black dot, neither because they were some “token and code moving towards consumption and the market”—the state-mandated direction for decades—nor because they let the author shirk responsibility for what he wrote, but because they called on the reading public for a reengagement and response not predetermined. They pointed forwards to the myriad possible ways of filling them, and backwards too, designating the open space of a public square on which people had collected one late spring, functioning as visual cues or bookmarks holding the place in the pages of history. That is why the 2009 re-release is not so much a loosening of censorship, or even industry trumping ideology, as a repackaging of strategy to shape the public. The blank squares could not be allowed to rest in peace underground. The banned book had to be brought back to life, only to be subjected to another violence, the clearing of its squares a reenactment of what happened on a June night, those ellipses without count like so many bullets echoing in the dark.

Decadent Capital, first published in 1993, exemplifies the travails of post-Tiananmen publicity in the print era. In the following sections I turn to Hu Fayun's *Such Is This World@sars.come*, which first appeared online in 2004 and is paradigmatic of the internet era. Like Jia's novel, it eventually came out in multiple editions as a result of censorship. But in lieu of blank squares, its exhibitions of prohibition as well as the reading publics engendered are predicated on the existence of cyberspace.

The advent of the internet

Ever since China connected to the World Wide Web in 1994, writings both academic and journalistic abound on Chinese internet censorship and its verso, resistance: their forms and contents (China Digital Times; Larmer 2011; Xiao and Link 2013), their challenges (Zittrain and Edelman 2003; Wines 2011; King, Pan, and Roberts 2013), and their prospects (Wines, LaFraniere, and Ansfield 2010; LaFraniere 2012).⁷⁵ What is lacking, however, is their conceptualization as a distinctive kind of production, including alter-production. I choose "alter-" in lieu of "counter-" because the latter reduces resistance to censorship to a binary struggle. "Alter-production" captures better the heterogeneity of responses, which include direct opposition, to be sure, but do not comprise it solely.

"Counter-production" also suggests that censorship is intrinsically "counterproductive," automatically self-defeating. One scholar has astutely analogized the effects of censorship to that of autoimmunity: "State censorship, moreover, is autoimmune, in the sense that even as it attempts to prohibit disseminations of proscribed ideas by controlling channels of communication, it simultaneously produces unexpected, self-debilitating results" (Tsai 2011, 78). That censorship often draws attention to what it tries to suppress is certainly true, as was the case with *Such Is This World@sars.com*.⁷⁶ And it would indeed be convenient to apply the

⁷⁵ For a useful overview of the subject, see Wacker 2010. A benchmark study of the Chinese Internet in general is Yang 2011.

⁷⁶ In the comments section to Hu's first blog entry, a blogger (Meng Ge Ma Li 蒙哥马丽) talks about the novel's "ban" piquing his interest: "Hearing that your work was banned, I hurriedly searched online and downloaded it. I came across your blog and took the liberty of entering. What glory to have your work among the eight banned books!" (看到楼主的大作被禁, 赶忙从网上找寻并下载。/偶尔看到楼主的博址, 冒昧来访。作品能列为八大禁书之例, 光荣啊!) (Hu November 21, 2006). Another blogger (hqwxyz) is similarly motivated: "The Selection Department of the CPC is truly a good guide to modern must-read books. I heard your work was banned and immediately bought a copy online. After reading the first few pages, I thought, 'Is this a publishing ploy? Even this book is banned?' Only half way through it did I realize how perceptive this department truly is" (中*选*部真是现代必读书的好指导老师。听说大作被禁, 立马到网上买到一本。看了前几页后心想: "是不是书商搞的鬼, 这书也要禁?" 看到一半时才知道该部门真是很有眼光。) (Hu November 21, 2006). The "Selection Department of the CPC" (*zhongxuanbu* 中选部) is a pun on the Publicity Department of the CPC (*zhongxuanbu* 中宣部).

analogy to a narrative of the state's failed attempt to quash reports of an epidemic outbreak. Yet autoimmunity's emphasis is on reflexive destruction, while what I wish to highlight is production and alter-production—which, again, is not a reflex but a response—that are labor-intensive.

This process can be conceived in terms of a "workshop." There are at least four attributes of the workshop: creative labor, collaboration, experience, and public-making. They derive from both censorship and the internet. Thanks to the latter, "barriers to entry" into public discourse have never been lower in China: with increasing online access, more and more people are "publishing" (texts, images, videos) and participating publicly (commenting, forwarding, "liking") and, in consequence, potentially forming publics. This unprecedented popularization of public-making gives rise to the unprecedented popularization of the experience of censorship. This is not to claim that censorship has become more totalizing than ever. Precisely because it is much less so than during the socialist period, it is all the more open to experience. In the postsocialist period before the digital age, not getting published could be ascribed to the "natural" barriers of merit and market. Now, however, when one's online publication is taken down, censorship (and not economics or aesthetics) is pointed as the culprit. A public grows: the censored public.

When Hu Fayun finished writing *Such Is This World@sars.come* in 2004, China had been connected to the internet for exactly 10 years. The first private Internet Service Provider was founded in 1995, a year after China became wired (Yang 2014, 135). By then there were some 94 million users, a large number, to be sure, but only seven percent of the total population (China Internet Network Information Center 2005, 4). The Chinese internet's youth at the time explains the trajectory of Hu's novel, which traces a coming of age. Except the heroine is a middle-aged widow and the age is digital.

At first Ru Yan (茹嫣) uses the internet only to stay in touch with her son, who introduced it to her before he left for graduate school in France. With the handle "Such Is This World" (*ru yan* 如焉), she then joins an online community of parents with kids studying abroad. Soon, however, she is exploring the vast world of the Chinese Web, which for her is a land of revelation and daring:

Her biggest shock was reading a great many works that had never made it into print. These writings had a point of view, with respect to their theoretical foundations, political doctrine, and conceptual framework, which at first was somewhat troubling to her. Ru Yan was the kind of person who had never concerned herself with politics and theory, and her indifference implied a certain skepticism and disapproval. But these articles, novel and incisive, with their recklessly bold judgments, mesmerized her even as they frightened her. They also gave her access to raw facts—the true facts of historical events that had been neglected or buried or repackaged, so that this history now began to reveal a disconcerting face. (Hu 2011, 153; translation slightly modified)

最大的震动，是她读到了许多在报纸书刊上不曾有过的文字。这些文字的观点、理论、思想、概念开始都有些让她骇怕。茹嫣一直是一个不太关心政治和理论的人，这种不关心，暗含着一种排斥和质疑。但是那些新锐犀利的文字，那些胆大得有些猖狂的说法，让她恐惧又迷恋。还有真相，一桩桩被尘封被掩埋被改装的历史事件的真相，以一种撼人心魄的面目显现出来。(Hu 2006, 78)

The world of print and the World Wide Web appear in juxtaposition. If the former is equated with restriction and distortion, then the latter equals freedom and truth. The internet is portrayed as an altogether new media, in fact an *immedia*, providing its public with direct access to "raw facts" (真相) that bypass any "repackaging" (改装), not just by censorship but even, it is implied, by the narrative and the commodity form. If Ru Yan is unaccustomed to this rawness, then it is relished by Damo (达摩), the novel's other main character, a lay intellectual who works as an electrician. With a website of his own and highly active online, he is the master craftsman to her apprentice. He later tells Ru Yan why he no longer publishes in print journals: "But they don't offer the freedom you get online, where you can write whatever you think. After that, writing for the standard periodicals is like putting a halter on a wild horse" ("但是没有网上自在，怎么想

，就怎么写了。给正规报刊写，总像一匹野马要套笼头一样") (Hu 2011, 191; Hu 2006, 101). The internet is where one can both read more widely and publish with more ease. Ru Yan, only a browser at first, begins to post personal pieces—about her son, about the rain—that draw praise from members of the online forum to which she belongs.

But her honeymoon is brief. It turns out there are online halts after all. Not long after Damo's paean is the novel's first depiction of internet censorship, regarding a "strange disease" (怪病) that will later be diagnosed as SARS. Ru Yan has in the meantime become the moderator of the forum, and when posts mentioning this strange disease disappear, members think she is the one deleting them. When Ru Yan herself tries to spread the word, she receives this seemingly automatic response: "SERVER ERROR: Your message is temporarily unable to be posted" ("服务器故障，暂时不能发帖") (Hu 2011, 201; Hu 2006, 106). Thus is censorship masked behind technical difficulties.

But netizens soon sense they foul play. In the passage below they invent an abundance of alternative names for SARS in order to elude filtering:

The odd thing was that both '*feidian*' and 'SARS,' as soon as they came into use, became proscribed vocabulary on the forum. Any post containing them would be detected and automatically blocked by a software monitoring system. Users found ways to camouflage their messages. The disease came to be denoted as 'FD,' 'flying point,' 'boiling point,' 'using a lot of electricity,' 'worn-out mattress'; or as 'murder,' 'scatter to death,' 'incredibly stupid'...all that mattered was that people could figure it out. The surveillance of the Internet has honed people's ability, untaught, to decipher the intended meaning of muddled Chinese compounds. This trick doesn't work, however, against censorship operated by hand. (Hu 2011, 326-7; translation slightly modified)

蹊跷的是，“非典”也好，“萨斯”也好，这词儿刚刚出来，在坛子上就成了非法字眼，凡帖子里有了它，便会被一套系统自动检测出来并禁止帖子发出。于是网民们用起变脸戏法，将非典换成 FD，换成飞点，换成沸点费电废垫或杀死、撒死、傻死……总之只要人看得懂就行。网络管制，让许多人无师自通地学会了从乱七八糟的汉语组合中读出真义的本事。但是对于那些由人动手的封删，却是没有办法对付的。(Hu 2006, 179)

My focus here is not on the techniques of resistance—the Roman alphabet, puns, etc.—but on the kind of production. The netizens persist in publicizing SARS, coming up with ever creative ways to do so. Their coding may not work against individual censors, yet it precisely forces censorship's production to become, at least in part, manual. We begin to realize how much human input, in this age of algorithmic generation, is demanded from both sides. The scanner cannot supersede the eye. What is more, neither the eye of the netizen nor the eye of the censor is "untaught" (无师自通), unschooled in the ways of decryption. Coding and decoding are experienced communally: they may not be taught directly but they presuppose a public intelligibility of writing and reading practices handed down the ages. The collaboration is therefore synchronic and diachronic in nature, relying on both the sharing of the present and the sharing of the past. The ends differ but the means are the same, everyone—censors included—teaching and learning from one another throughout the production process.

Such is the apprenticeship of Ru Yan. As mentioned above, she goes from a reader to a writer, sharing within a small community only personal and poetic musings in the beginning. But after undergoing the censorship of posts about the strange disease, not only is she undeterred from subsequently making public her brother-in-law, a doctor in southern China, getting infected, she also enlists Damo's help in dissemination. She herself is more practiced this time around, hiding the public concern of her article, which her partner in crime immediately reposts elsewhere, under the innocuously private title "My brother-in-law..." (姐夫.....) (Hu 2011, 269; Hu 2006, 145). We could say this is her first workshop product.

Ru Yan was not previously interested in "politics" (政治) (Hu 2011, 153). She is also contrasted with her deceased husband, who "cared a lot about affairs of state" (关心国家大事) (Hu 2011, 92; Hu 2006, 44). She becomes politicized, however, not in the sense of protesting in

the streets, but in the sense of engaging in another kind of manifestation: making public discourse and making discourse public. Her forum's former moderator, Lonely Goose (孤鸿), warns her that they are renting webspace from a commercial site, "with clear regulations that we can't publish news articles of a political nature" (有明文规定不能发布时政新闻类文稿). One can infer that Chinese commercial websites that sublet space to fora like theirs are themselves subject to another landlord's terms of lease, the only landlord in town. Ru Yan asks to see the regulations, to which Lonely Goose replies: "This kind of regulation is itself top-secret: no way are you going to read about it" (此类规定本身也是机密, 怎么会让你看到?) (Hu 2011, 270; Hu 2006, 146; translation slightly modified). Not only is SARS kept under wraps but the wraps themselves are shrouded in obscurity.

It is evident that *Such Is This World* dramatizes censorship: of the internet, of news of SARS, and of June Fourth, as we will later see. If it is the antagonist, then Ru Yan and Damo are certainly the protagonists. The two of them are joined in the agon by unnamed netizens who propagate Ru Yan's piece (with an addendum by Damo):

This post began to spread at once from one website to another, like that staple of horror films, the self-replicating monster. And in its wake, on each website, there followed a swirl of intense commentary. Hard on its heels followed a tidal wave of deletions. But as the post was deleted in each place, it was speedily re-posted. The wave crashed on the shore, obliterating the footsteps which the monster had left in the sand; but as soon as the wave receded, the invisible monster left another line of footprints. (Hu 2011, 242-243)

于是, 这个帖子就在一个个网站上蔓延开来, 像恐怖片中那些能够自我复制的怪物。每一个帖子后面, 都汹涌着一片跟帖。

紧接而来是一阵删帖大潮。删了贴, 贴了删, 海水哗地扑上来, 沙滩上那怪物的足印就消失了, 海水刚刚退下去, 那看不见的怪物又踩出一片足印。(Hu 2006, 145)

We will remember that, in *Decadent Capital*, the milk cow that suckles Zhuang Zhidie compares the urban populace to a handful of sand that can never coalesce. Here, footprints on the sand are

synecdochical for a portion of the online populace. These prints indicate neither identity nor replication. What they have in common are not the same ridges on a toe-tip but the direction in which they tread. They may be washed by wind and wave, but posting, reposting, and commenting are the steps they take together towards the public realm.

Hu Fayun's narration of censorship stands in sharp contrast to *Decadent Capital*, where the writer Zhuang Zhidie, much more of a public figure than either Ru Yan or Damo, confronts no apparent censorship; it is the other writer—the extra-diegetic "author"—who both encounters and performs it. Perhaps it comes as no surprise that non-diegetic performances of censorship appear in *Such Is This World* as well, not just by the author and not just in one edition. The novel has a publishing history no less eventful than that of Jia Pingwa's.

The workshop of the world

Hu Fayun completed *Such Is This World@sars.com* in March 2004. He originally wanted to publish it in print, but plans to do so fell through because of the banning of two other 2004 works, Zhang Yihe's (章诒和) *The past is not like smoke* (往事并不如烟) and Chen Guidi (陈桂棣) and Wu Chuntao's (吴春桃) *Will the Boat Sink the Water? The Life of China's Peasants* (中国农民调查) (Hu 2011, 3). The former is a memoir of the Anti-Rightist Movement of 1957 by the daughter of the prominent "rightist" Zhang Bojun (章伯钧), while the latter is a work of investigative reportage by a husband-and-wife team. This is how Hu relates what happened next with the novel:

In the summer of 2005 an old classmate Xiao Yuan forwarded it to a friend's website. Not long afterwards, the website was shuttered. Thereafter *Such Is This World@sars.com* circulated as an electronic text among friends acquainted and unacquainted. Between fall and winter it reached the hands of the incoming editor-in-chief of *Jiangnan*, Yuan Min. She immediately asked a friend Ding Dong to tell me that she really liked it and hoped to

publish it in the first issue of her literary journal's revised edition. And so at the start of spring 2006, *Such Is This World* entered the world as intactly as possible.

2005 年夏天，老同学肖远将它发到一位友人的网站，不久之后，网站关张。从此，《如焉@sars.com》便在相识或不相识的友人间以电子文本流传。秋冬之际，《如焉@sars.com》到了正要赴任《江南》杂志主编的袁敏手里，她当即让朋友丁东转告我，她很喜欢，希望能在改版后的《江南》第一期上用。于是，2006 年初春，《如焉@sars.com》以尽可能完整的面目出世。(Hu 2006, 272)

Half a year later it came out as a book as well. The above bibliographical sketch appears in the afterword of the edition published by the China Radio International Publishing House (中国国际广播出版社) in October 2006. The following January, however, in a closed-door meeting with publishers, a senior official of the General Administration of Press and Publications (GAPP) identified a "list of illegal publications" (非法违规出版书单); *Such Is This World* was one of the eight works named.⁷⁷ Though there was never an official ban, Hu's novel could no longer be advertised (Hu 2011, 4).

But the story of its publication does not end there. Sina (新浪), one of the largest online media companies in China, operates both a blogging and a microblogging platform. In March 2009, in the comments section of Hu's first Sina blog entry, which is verbatim the 2006 afterword quoted from above, a blogger named Shi Yan Wu Tian (食砚无田) shared his project of comparing the book version with the version that had first appeared online: "I spent two days collating the two versions of *Such Is This World* and 'caught' all the deleted text, which I offer blog buddies to read. The abridged version of *Such Is This World* cut approximately 8,000 characters (including punctuation)" (化了两天多时间，对《如焉》两个版本对照浏览，把《如焉》中被删部分的文字全部“捉”了出来，供博友一读。《如焉》删节本共删除约八千字(含标点符号数)。)(Hu November 21, 2006). He then proceeded to post the differences right

⁷⁷ Among the other works on the list is another by Zhang Yihe, *Performers Past* (伶人往事) (BBC Chinese 2007).

in the comments section. In April, however, he related the censorship of his posts and directed readers to another website: "Oftentimes I would post and get deleted, post and get deleted, so I'm no longer going to post here. Interested blog buddies can go to 'Hu Fayun Bar' to see the complete text" (且经常发了被删, 删后再发, 故不再这里发了。有兴趣博友可到“胡发云吧”看全文。) (Hu November 21, 2006). "Hu Fayun Bar" is an online fan forum, where under the topic "*Such Is This World@sars.come* cut parts" (《如焉@sars.come》删节部分), Shi Yan Wu Tian has indicated not only the deletions within parentheses but also where each deletion occurs in the book edition and how many characters are deleted each time (Shi Yan Wu Tian).

Before we examine Shi Yan Wu Tian's alter-production, we can perhaps posit that it took its initial cue from Hu himself. For in the 2006 book's afterword the author makes two references to censorship, first the shuttering of the website on which the novel initially appeared, then its appearing in the journal *Jiangnan* "as intactly as possible" (以尽可能完整的面目). Elsewhere Hu is much more graphic. In an online post he speaks of his original version being altered in different ways by the journal and the book, describing the latter thus: "Though its core is not hurt, it is nevertheless an injured edition, like a girl walking out of a growth of thorns whose face, legs, and arms are streaked with blood" (尽管尚未伤筋动骨, 但也可算是伤残本了。宛如一位少女, 走出丛丛荆草, 脸上, 腿伤, 胳膊上, 留下了条条血痕。) (Hu November 24, 2006). Traces of injury, though not preserved within the text like Jia Pingwa's blank squares, are nevertheless hinted *around* the text, tracks that may indeed have sent Shi Yan Wu Tian on his hunt: the figure of bodily wholeness lost beseeches recovery and restitution. It matters little that even the original is constituted through censorship, as will be shown below. For what we have here is not merely an exhibition of censorship but its enactment: the novel both narrates it and

lives it.

Shi Yan Wu Tian can also infer from Hu's afterword that an "intact" (完整) version exists online.⁷⁸ This version is an alter-production: denied printing and distribution at first, *Such Is This World* circulated alternatively. We will remember that an old classmate of Hu's submitted it to another friend's website. "Friend" (友人/朋友), in fact, appears three times in that short excerpt cited above, a testament to the collaborative, manual effort that sustained the novel while it was in limbo. Elsewhere, in an interview on Phoenix Satellite TV-US (凤凰卫视美洲台), Hu remarked that the novel had first made a splash overseas. The video of the interview did not pass Sina's censorship, but its transcript was provided by another "net friend" (网友) (Hu February 12, 2010). Transmission was never automatic, passing through hands both named—Xiao Yuan, Yuan Min, Ding Dong—and unnamed, all those who ushered *Such Is This World's* publication. That the internet kept it alive is not an argument for technological determinism. It is the human being who breathes life.

It took Shi Yan Wu Tian two days to catch the differences between the online version and the 2006 book. When he publicized them, he went from a reader to a writer, similar to Ru Yan, for which he himself was repeatedly censored. Thus is the reenactment of censorship propagated and proliferated from the author to his public. Hu Fayun gave a series of lectures on the Cultural Revolution at Wuhan University, the transcripts of which he posted on his blog. The text of the eleventh and last lecture, however, was repeatedly deleted despite Hu's various efforts. Other bloggers suggested posting it elsewhere, but Shi Yan Wu Tian's attempt was likewise censored: "I just reposted on my own blog your deleted essay (the 11th) and incurred the same deletion.

⁷⁸ A Hong Kong edition came out in 2007, advertised bilingually on the front cover as "一字不删足版全本 UNCENSORED EDITION."

Evidently this is not a place for speaking" (刚才我在自己的博客上转载先生被删文章 (之十一), 同样遭遇被删, 看来这里不是说话的地方。)(Hu November 19, 2009).⁷⁹

As in every workshop, learning is hands-on and handed down. Hu Fayun's sharing of his experience enables Shi Yan Wu Tian's own experience, which the latter in turn shares with other netizens. And he gains an audience as well. Many bloggers thank him for the collation, including one Lao Jiao (老礁) who raves about the work's potential: "What can be gleaned from the deleted parts and what can be derived by comparing them to the authorized edition extend far beyond the words themselves. Years later, there may be the birth of a new field called 'comparative editions,' and at that time people will remember brother Wu Tian's pioneering work" (从删掉的部分能读出的, 和与允许出版的版本的比较能分析出的要远远多于字面本身。一些年之后, 或许会有叫做“版本比较学”的新学科诞生呢, 届时人们就会记起无田兄的发轫之作。)(Hu November 21, 2006). Lao Jiao follows Shi Yan Wu Tian to "*Such Is This World@sars.com* deleted parts" at Hu Fayun Bar, where he continues: "I've always thought that finding the differences between a book's 'abridged edition' and 'intact edition' and then comparatively analyzing every section and sentence is a unique and even highly effective method to understand the current 'climate'" (我一直认为, 找出一本书的“删节版”和“完整版”的区别, 并逐段逐句对照分析, 是了解时下的‘风情’的一个独特甚至极有效的手段。)(Shi Yan Wu Tian). The restoration of the repressed facilitates this task of political meteorology. To test what he has suspected all along, he launches a topic in the forum called "Recreational analysis of *Such Is This World@sars.com* cuts (1)" (《如焉@sars.com》删节趣析 (1)) (Lao, Jiao).

⁷⁹ Hu was able to post the 11th lecture only more than two years later in "A secret blog entry" (一篇“私密博文”)(Hu February 26, 2012).

We will not delve into Lao Jiao's hermeneutics. What his "publication" reveals—as do Shi Yan Wu Tian's and Hu Fayun's—is the (alter-)productiveness of censorship, especially in the internet age. On the path from the plural *Such Is This World@sars.come* to "*Such Is This World@sars.come* deleted parts" to "Recreational analysis of *Such Is This World@sars.come* cuts (1)," roadblocks resulted neither in dead-ends nor so much in detours as in diffusion. Not only did the novel stay alive but multiple lives were engendered. It bears emphasizing that this productiveness is not of the mass or recursive kind but of the workshop variety: it is characterized by mutual instruction and the forming of alternative publics. Nowhere is this dynamic more on display than on Hu Fayun's Sina blog, which the next section surveys.

From book to blog

In a comment to his own first blog entry, which, as noted before, is *Such Is This World* the book's afterword, Hu complains of the opacity of censorship: "I originally wanted to post some pieces, but there are always sensitive terms or other problems, but they don't give a 'list of bad terms' either, so it often takes a lot of effort" (本想贴几篇东西，老是说有敏感词或其它问题，他们又不给一个“坏词表”，常常很费功夫。) (Hu November 21, 2006).⁸⁰ The "effort" (功夫) is the manual trial and error required to avoid automatic filtering. Liu Xiaobo had been taken into custody in December 2008 for co-authoring Charter 08 (零八宪章), a manifesto circulated electronically that called for democratic reforms in China. In December 2009 he was sentenced to 11 years in prison. A week after Liu's winning of the Nobel Prize for Peace on October 8, 2010, Hu derides its cover-up: "An event known the world over, an event on which the leaders

⁸⁰ An interview he conducted with the Hunan-based *Morning Weekly* (晨报周刊), which is posted on his blog, is titled "Hu Fayun: Many topics in the unnamed forbidden zone can be gradually 'desensitized'" (胡发云：许多莫名禁区中的话题，是可以慢慢“脱敏”的) (Hu February 11, 2009).

and governments of all countries voice their views, an event destined to go down in the annals of history—to conceal it in the internet age betrays an ignorance and madness that belong to an end-time fairytale" (一个世人共知的事件，一个各国政府及政要纷纷表态的事件，一个注定要载入史册的事件，在互联网世纪，竟然想遮蔽它，这样的愚昧和疯狂，是一个末世的童话。) (Hu October 16, 2010). These words are followed by an image of various titles of entries deleted, so we see why Hu cannot be more explicit about the Nobel: his current text is already the product of much "effort."⁸¹ In case readers are unaware of the context, an unsigned poster offers an explanation that can only be encrypted: "Talking about no bell peas price one buy L I U X I A O B O" (言若贝尔禾口平斗夕大为文 日尧汙皮所得。). These hieroglyphics, decipherable or not, nevertheless render one thing transparent: instead of initiating talk about Liu and the prize, they direct it to censorship itself. Other bloggers begin to share their own stories, such as Ge Shi (隔世): "I once wrote a commentary that contained Mr. Hu and Zhang Yihe's names as well as the titles of their two banned books, which got deleted" (我曾写过一段评论，有胡老师和章诒和的名字以及被禁的两本书名，也被删了。). Proscription of one form—a book, for instance—entails proscription of others by association, including the name of the same book. The experience of proscription widens from the writer of the book to writers of the name of the book. A public grows: the censored public.

By the middle of the following year Hu is castigating the imposed silence on another world event: "Yeemen, Yeegypt, Twonisia, Libbya, Cyria...these nations not often within our purview—within a single night, they made this big country of ours appear this wretched, made a certain power this terrified, to the point that it cannot say their names" (ye 门, ai 及, tu 尼斯,

⁸¹ The blog entry "Today is the first day of heavy snow here" (今天这是这儿的第一场大雪) is simply an image of 15 deleted titles (Hu December 15, 2010).

里比亚，xu 利亚.....这些常常不在我们视野之内的民族，一夜之间，让我们这个泱泱大国显得如此的猥琐，也让某些势力如此的恐惧，以至不敢叫出他们的名字。) (Hu June 5, 2011). He is referring to the Arab Spring, the series of revolutionary protests and civil wars that erupted in the Arab world beginning in December 2010. The wordplay Hu resorts to presents the visual testimony to what he is attesting. A month earlier he was already commenting in code in the entry "lby" (Hu May 14, 2011). When one visitor asks what "lby" means, someone gives a more decodable answer: "Li%by%a%" ("利%比%亚%"). Another blogger, on the other hand, offers a reflection on this back-and-forth: "One can tell between the lines of Mr. Hu that this text (only so many words) underwent numerous rounds of 'protection'—incessant changes and combinations—in order to remain here, and so it is secretive and abstruse, like a riddle for people to guess at" (从发云先生这段文字的字缝里看出，这些文字（寥寥数字）也经历了数次的“保护”后、在不断变换词语的搭配才得以留存在此，所以变得隐讳艰涩，像一段谜面，任人去猜想。). The blogger recognizes that the writing on display is only the result of a laborious experiment. Yet the result risks becoming "secretive and abstruse" (隐讳艰涩) to the point of incomprehension and incommunicability. This danger, ever present, asks for a communal response that unites elucidation with ingenuity.

The other side is a collective too, composed of Party-state censors as well as "in-house" web administrators (网管) who monitor their own sites. Hu prefaces his comments on the Libyan revolution in the entry above with a challenge to the latter: "Sina's web admins, you've worked hard; I've already made you work for a long time. Here's another one; keep on working. History will remember you" (新浪的网管，辛苦了，已经让你们劳碌了好长时间。再来一个，继续劳碌。历史会记住你们。) (Hu May 14, 2011). They must have put in overtime the previous

Christmas: the entry "The beautiful Christmas present given to me by Sina web admins" (新浪网管给我的美丽的圣诞礼物) contains an image of the deletion of an essay posted two years earlier (Hu December 26, 2010).⁸² An anonymous blogger rejoins: "Happy new year, web admins! Wish you earn more and work less in the new year. Be smart: when someone is checking, block some stuff; when that person leaves, restore everything. In the future we will certainly recognize you heroes on the 'invisible front'" (网管新年好! 愿你们在新的一年里, 多拿钱, 少干活。多动脑筋, 有人检查时就屏蔽一下, 人一走就还原。将来我们一定会知道你这个在“看不见的战线”里的英雄。)。The remark may be in jest, but unlike Hu Fayun's, this direct address does make an appeal. The message generated automatically after every deletion is "Dear Sina blog buddy: Your piece '—' has been deleted by the administrator. We deeply regret the inconvenience caused you" (亲爱的新浪博友: 您的文章《—》已被管理员删除。给您带来的不便, 深表歉意)。In the comments section of another entry, another anonymous poster even shows empathy: "The web admins' conduct is understandable, because it is their job. Their apology means that they too know what they do is wrong, but they can only obey the command from above" (可以理解网管的行为, 因为这是他们的饭碗。道歉说明他们也明白做的不对。但只有听从上面的意指。)(Hu October 16, 2010). It is a point Hu well appreciates. Back in an August 2008 entry he did not fault any individual after his interview was distorted in a newspaper.

Fundamentally speaking, this is not the problem of a particular journalist, or even that of the decision-making editor or chief editor, but the problem of our institution of the press.

⁸² The essay is "Lin Zhao, how we love you" (林昭, 我们如何爱你). First labeled a rightist in 1957, Lin Zhao spent long bouts in prison where she maintained her steadfast belief in human rights and freedom. She was secretly executed in 1968 at the age of 35. She has since become a symbol for unrelenting opposition to political oppression and tyranny. An acclaimed documentary on her life is Hu Jie's (胡杰) *In Search of Lin Zhao's Soul* (寻找林昭的靈魂) (2005).

For many years now, our news does not report on newsworthy reality but rather carries out the propagandistic aims handed down by certain ministries or certain persons. Under this institution of the press our many journalists who loved and respected journalism are ultimately "forced into prostitution."

从根本上说，这不是某一个记者的问题，甚至也不是最后操刀的编辑、总编的问题，而是我们的新闻制度的问题。多年来，我们的新闻并不是真的需要反应那些有价值的新闻事实，而是要完成某些部门某些人物下达的宣传意图。我说，这样一种新闻制度下，我们许许多多满怀对新闻事业崇敬热爱的从业人员，最后都被“逼良为娼”。(Hu August 30, 2008)

Three years later, in "No anger, only pity" (不生气，只有悲悯), he reiterates that his anger is not aimed at the web administrators themselves: "I am not referring to some specific person, but to the system that they serve and live off parasitically" (不是说哪一个具体的人。而是他们所服务并寄生的制度。)(Hu October 9, 2011). It is clear he feels more than pity for these brokers of censorship.

Under the same entry someone named teddybear shares with the blog community his experience both of censorship and in maneuvering around it: "I also always get 'Deared' by Sina's admins, so I set up a blog at Blog China, where there's censorship too, but every piece goes through. I link what Sina deletes to there" (俺也是总被新浪网管“亲爱”呀，后来俺就在博客中国建立一个专栏博客，那边也审查，但是篇篇都能通过，新浪删的俺就链接到过去。). Instead of outflanking, a Mo Lei 2008 (默雷 2008) advocates a more confrontational tactic, with the help of Sina's microblogging service, Sina Weibo: "Mr. Hu, make your essay into a long Weibo and post it, open multiple Weibo accounts and post it simultaneously. There are many avenues in the information age—work those SOB's to death" (胡老师把文章做成长微博发吧，多开几个微博同时发。信息时代渠道多，累死那帮 SB 吧。). Hu asks how it can be done, to which the same blogger replies: "The search tools of those SOB's work only on text; they are powerless against images" (SB 们的搜索工具只能用于文字，对图片内容是无能为力的。).

In true workshop spirit he goes on to explain how to combine small images (of text) into a long one.

Hu learns about long Weibos, but he must have already known, whether through his own experience or from somebody else, that images elude automated detection. For a day earlier, an hour after the removal of the text of "That night of affliction" (那一夜，焚心煮骨)—an account of his wife resolving, despite seeing on television the bloodshed of the night before, to go to a long planned meeting in Beijing on June 4th, 1989—Hu posted the essay as an image (Hu October 8, 2011). In fact, visual plus textual production is a common feature of June Fourth-related entries. In "June 4, 2010" ("2010年06月04日"), named after the date of the post, Hu is pictured standing beside a replica of the Goddess of Democracy statue on the University of British Columbia campus. He writes, "On a little square I saw that beautiful goddess. I know some things have not disappeared" ("在一个小广场，我见到那个美丽的女神。我知道，有些东西，并没有消失。") (Hu June 4, 2010). Someone under the name of Tian E Zhi Lü (天鹅之旅) echoes the sentiment: "Yesterday I and a few net friends went to the square. As we were about to leave, we agreed to come back next year, come back every year, making it an inextinguishable agreement" (昨天我和几个网友去了广场，分别时大家相约明年再来，每年都来，让它成为一个不灭的约定。). Hu responds: "As long as the square is there, the memory will be" (只要广场在，记忆便依然。). The entry on the same day the following year, "Untitled" (无题), is simply a picture of a gardenia with drops of water on it (Hu June 4, 2011). Communion in this community is nearly telepathic. A reader comments: "Thinking alike" (同念); another: "Do not forget this day!" (勿忘这一天!). When Hu's Sina Weibo account was frozen on June 4, 2013, one blogger wrote, "The web admin is reminding you that today is a

special day, reminding you not to forget this day" (网管在提醒你, 今天是个特殊的日子, 提醒你不要忘记这个日子。), while a second quipped, "Six four is too sensitive. I don't even plan on celebrating my six four birthday" (六四太敏感了。我都不打算过六四岁生日了) (Hu June 4, 2013).

These elliptic messages and images act out both the remembrance of June Fourth as well as its enforced forgetting. We will find a corresponding performance in *Such Is This World*. Just as no impenetrable wall seals off the virtual world from the real world and vice versa—Hu Fayun sharing his visit to the UBC campus and the Goddess of Democracy with the online community, a group of "net friends" (网友) gathering offline to observe an anniversary—so the fictional world of the novel is interconnected with these two worlds. It is to this world that we now return, while at the same time weaving through the other two.

In parentheses

Lu Xun, in collecting his miscellaneous essays (杂文) into independently published volumes, used to add a black dot beneath every character—the Chinese equivalent of underline—that had been taken out by editors or Nationalist censors upon initial publication in the Republican-era press. In our digital era Shi Yan Wu Tian has done something similar to Hu Fayun's text, reinserting as well as marking out (with parentheses) what was cut (from the 2006 book). Both gestures exhibit censorship, yet Lu Xun's punctuates the writer's defiance of it, while Shi Yan Wu Tian's is a figure for it. The parentheses can be viewed as gashes, the unhealed and unhealable wounds of an "injured edition" (伤残本). They also perform the grammar of censorship. For to parenthesize is to judge extraneous and expendable. The removal of the

parenthesized, as my own sentences above in this paragraph demonstrate, would not cause any structural damage. Nothing essential, you could say, would be lost: my paragraph would still read smoothly.

Shi Yan Wu Tian puts the parentheses back in place, revealing just how much of *Such Is This World* was deemed dispensable. Not all excisions were censorial in nature.⁸³ But mere editing cannot account for the repeated elision of references to inglorious events in P.R.C. history, including the campaign against the so-called Hu Feng clique of 1955, the Anti-Rightist Movement of 1957, the Great Leap Forward of 1958-61, and the Cultural Revolution of 1966-76.⁸⁴ These events have all, in the post-Mao period, been officially reevaluated, so their censorship targets further reevaluations that venture beyond the verdicts pronounced once and for all. The Tiananmen Square protests of 1989, on the other hand, have received a different treatment: a near total blanketing. Thus their mentions are rigorously prevented from the 2006 book.⁸⁵

Tiananmen Square nevertheless occupies a central position in *Such Is This World*. In this 70-chapter novel an extended sequence spanning chapters 36 to 38 recounts the transformation of the character Maozi (毛子), Damo's longtime friend, from a free-thinking intellectual who supported the 1989 protests to a defender of the regime whose writings adulate its leaders. One can tell from Shi Yan Wu Tian's restorations that even the online version is constituted through

⁸³ In a chapter on Mo Yan's *The Garlic Ballads* (天堂蒜薹之歌), I argue that the distinction between editing and censoring—and between revising and self-censoring—is not always easy to pinpoint. But the fact that editing and censoring sometimes blur does not mean the two are indistinguishable, a point I do not make sufficiently clear there. See Thomas Chen 2014.

⁸⁴ Compare, for example, Hu 2006, 12 with Hu 2011, 34; Hu 2006, 28 with Hu 2011, 65-66; Hu 2006, 29 with Hu 2011, 68; Hu 2006, 72 with Hu 2011, 141-143; Hu 2006, 111 with Hu 2011, 209; Hu 2006, 128 with Hu 2011, 239; and Hu 2006, 236 with Hu 2011, 427-428.

⁸⁵ In addition to the passages to be discussed, compare Hu 2006, 63 with Hu 2011, 124-125; Hu 2006, 72 with Hu 2011, 141; Hu 2006, 118 with Hu 2011, 221; Hu 2006, 120-1 with Hu 2011, 226; and Hu 2006, 126-7 with Hu 2011, 236-8.

ensorship. The 1989 protests are alluded to as "that public disturbance" (那一次风波) at the "start of spring" (入春) (Hu 2011, 224; Hu 2006, 119), and in June Fourth's aftermath—"early June of that year" (那年六月上旬) (Hu 2011, 223; Hu 2006, 119)—Maozi sobs in his room: "It's too frightening, it's just too fucking frightening" (太可怕了, 狗日的太可怕了) (Hu 2011, 225; Hu 2006, 120). These oblique references are in the original and not the result of editorial alteration.

But Shi Yan Wu Tian's parentheses disclose what was, including Maozi's involvement in the movement: "...Maozi had been active, even making two trips to Beijing, (signing petitions, marching, writing essays, speaking at colleges). He had been in the limelight" (Hu 2011, 224; translation slightly modified) (...毛子一直很活跃。到北京都去了两次。(签名, 游行, 写文章, 到高校讲座。)风云一时。) (Hu 2006, 119; Shi Yan Wu Tian). Following Shi Yan Wu Tian, I have inserted parentheses into A. E. Clark's translation. They enclose Maozi's past participation, retroactively struck out so that it could never have been part of the past. In a way they also perform Maozi's own stifling of the memory. His colleagues thought that "Mao N.N. had gone mad (at the sound of gunfire in Beijing)" ((北京枪声一响,) 毛××就疯了) (Hu 2011, 226; Hu 2006, 120; Shi Yan Wu Tian), and indeed he was diagnosed with "temporary insanity with amnesia" (一过性精神失常并发失忆症) (Hu 2011, 227; Hu 2006, 121). The diagnosis is spot-on, for his insanity is temporary and his amnesia is not. Maozi soon recovers and ascends the academic ladder, now penning, instead of essays for the movement, encomiums of government policies. He is both thanked and thankful:

A fine position, a good income, a nice car and a beautiful home, a lovely wife and a promising son . . . he had it all. (In candid moments he often said that Deng was The Man, and Maozi gave him unqualified support. Without old Mr. Deng, Maozi would never have had this good life. A man must show gratitude to his benefactor. Not long

after that public disturbance, when Maozi changed direction, this was a major reason why.) (Hu 2011, 230)

功名利禄，香车华屋，娇妻虎子，加上一表人才，一个男人的福气就都到齐了。（毛子多次坦率说过，他几乎是无条件拥护邓大人。没有邓大人就没有他毛子的幸福生活。一个人要知道感恩。在那场风波之后不久，毛子转弯，这也是一个重要原因。） (Hu 2006, 122-123; Shi Yan Wu Tian)

It is enough to know that Maozi is living the life in post-Tiananmen China. That this life is the reward of a conscious volte-face, his reverencing of the man who ordered the crackdown on the demonstrations in which he took part, is unimportant: it can be forgotten without harm. So the writing between the curved lines is negated without a trace, until Shi Yan Wu Tian retraces both the writing and the lines. But by interpolating them, he not only qualifies our understanding of Maozi's course of development—which the original online version would provide—but also reenacts the role that censorship has played in China's course of development since June Fourth. Like the writer Zhuang Zhidie and his artist friends in *Decadent Capital*, Maozi is a member of the intellectual and cultural elite. Whereas the former are ostensibly motivated only by greed and lust, violence and the fear of that violence—and not houses and cars—set in motion the latter's change in course. The parentheses not only resuscitate "the sound of gunfire" but also make public how another form of violence has shaped the Chinese public. To read them in conjunction with Jia Pingwa's blank squares is to view Zhuang Zhidie in a different light. His dissipated and turbulent way of life, and not censorship, may appear to have obstructed his writing. But the blank squares that his author draws are not just extra-diegetic after all: they are his as well.

There are hazards involved in exhibiting prohibition. But Jia Pingwa was not deterred. Neither was Hu Fayun. And neither was Shi Yan Wu Tian. Neither were all the bloggers who partook in the alter-production. And neither were Ru Yan and Damo. In the face of a sensitive administration, they all refuse to desensitize themselves. All three worlds—fictional, real,

virtual—are interlinked and not ranked. That Shi Yan Wu Tian is only an online identity, that Ru Yan and Damo are characters in a novel, do not diminish their productiveness. Near the end of *Such Is This World@sars.com*, a conference is organized for Wei Liwen (卫立文), an old intellectual—in fact, an alleged member of the Hu Feng clique—who was Damo and Maozi's mentor and who died of SARS. When the conference is forced to be cancelled at the last minute, Damo does not desist:

(Damo wrote a piece: “A conference devoted to one man’s life and work, convened in the mind.” At the conclusion of the essay he quoted from the song which Teacher Wei had sung as he lay dying:

*In unity there is strength. In unity there is strength,
A strength like that of iron and steel.
Open fire on the fascists, let the whole undemocratic system be wiped out!
Facing the sun, moving toward freedom and a New China,
Glory to the ends of the earth!*

Damo had this piece serve as a preface to the dozens of essays he’d received as tributes to be shared at the conference, and he posted them all to his website, *Word and Thought*. Two days later, the site was shut down and deleted. Damo was prepared: he had already made a zipfile suitable for download, for he knew that these voices would be propagated, even as the light from a star continues to spread out through the universe for thousands of years. Other websites were quick to pick this up, for they saw it as an act of love and memorialization for the old man as well as a kind of intellectual torch relay.) (Hu 2011, 477-478; translation slightly modified)

(达摩写了一篇东西：《一次在心里开过的追思会》。在文章最后，引用了卫老师弥留时唱的那首歌：团结就是力量！团结就是力量！这力量是铁，这力量是钢，朝着法西斯蒂开火，要一切不民主的制度死亡！向着太阳向着自由向着新中国发出万丈光芒！

达摩将这篇文章作为引言，连同这次收到的数十篇文稿，一起发到了自己的网站上。两天之后，达摩的“语思”就被停掉了。

达摩预先做了准备，将那一些稿子打了包供下载，他知道，这些声音早已经传布出去，就像光，从一颗星星上发出，千年万年，也会在宇宙中前行。

一些其他的网站很快就有了那一批东西。那既是对一个老人的爱与祭奠，又是一批思想者接力的火炬。) (Hu 2006, 265; Shi Yan Wu Tian)

"In unity there is strength" (团结就是力量) is a People's Liberation Army song from the early 1940s, i.e. before the establishment of the P.R.C. As we can see, the entire citation is parenthesized, meaning that a fictional passage removed from a real book is restored in a virtual

copy. This censored fictional passage also narrates censorship in the real and virtual worlds, precisely of a commemorative, congregative act. It is about an aborted real-world event that, nevertheless, in its virtual incarnations achieves an even greater public, thanks to expertise and the contribution and collaboration of many.

Both *Decadent Capital* and *Such Is This World@sars.com* answer the call for literary commemoration and con-gregation. They offer an alternative conception of reading and reception, a meaning that encompasses the work of production, publication, circulation, and dissemination as con-tributive and col-laborative. They show that the trying and testing of censorship is always a work in progress, not only carried on hand in hand among interconnected worlds but handed on, as light continues to shine after the star itself is gone.

Drawing blank squares in the text and marking out excised passages with parentheses are distinctly literary practices. The following chapter shifts the attention to two films shot without permission on the mainland. How do film sounds and images evoke the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests despite the taboo? What strategies do filmmakers who want to shoot and/or exhibit in China have to employ? And how are the mass gatherings that were the Tiananmen demonstrators depicted, or not? I address these questions next.

CHAPTER FOUR
The Public Betrayed: Filming Tiananmen in a Privatizing China

Michael Berry rightly points out that, "As the first Chinese atrocity to have played out in real time on television sets across the globe, the Tiananmen Square Massacre has been more closely linked with the visual memory in popular memory than any other incident of mass violence in modern China" (Michael Berry 2008, 319). Even more than words, pictures and videos are unruly. That is why textual materials far outnumbered filmic ones in the state's promotion of its narrative, as we saw in Chapter One. In Chapter Three, we tracked the turning of texts into images by netizens in order to bypass automatic detection. At the time of this writing, when one searches "June Fourth Incident" (*liusi shijian* 六四事件)—as it is commonly known in China—on Baidu, the top Chinese search engine, one gets "According to relevant laws, regulations, and policies, some search results are not displayed" (根据相关法律法规和政策, 部分搜索结果未予显示), followed by the filtered search results. When one searches under "images" (图片), however, there is also "According to relevant laws, regulations, and policies, some search results are not displayed," but none of the results are actually related to June Fourth. A search under "video" (视频) produces simply: "Apologies, no video results found related to 'June Fourth Incident'" (抱歉, 没有找到与“六四事件”相关的视频结果). Tiananmen's censorship by the Chinese state, therefore, operates differently across the literary and (audio)visual forms.

As with the Chinese economy at large and the publishing industry discussed in the previous chapter, the film industry also underwent reforms beginning in the 1980s. Just as decentralization and privatization were hallmarks of the publishing sector, there were similar developments in the production and distribution of films. Whereas state publishing houses sold ISBNs to "cultural studios," state studios in the 1990s sold licenses to private production companies or collected

“management fees” from foreign studios for co-productions that were "co-" only on paper, since co-productions are exempt from the quota on imported films (Rui Zhang 2008, 64). Starting in 1998, private companies were even allowed to apply for production and distribution permits on a case-by-case basis (Ying Zhu 2003, 149). In the next year some state-owned studios also began to be restructured as joint-venture companies with private investment or merged into entertainment conglomerates that integrated production, distribution, exhibition, DVD production, and sales.⁸⁶

In the domain of cinema as of literature, censorship has decentralized. Before 2003, a complete film script had to be submitted to the film bureau for approval before shooting could begin. (Starting in 2003, only a synopsis was required beforehand.) The finished film then had to undergo screening before being allowed to be publicly released. Due to the high costs of production, film companies themselves thus constitute an initial level of inspection. This explains why no aboveground films produced solely in China confront the events of Tiananmen, just as literary works can make only glancing references. Some of these films, including Zhang Yimou (张艺谋) and Yang Fengliang's (杨凤良) *Ju Dou* (菊豆, 1990), Zhang Yimou's *Raise the Red Lantern* (大红灯笼高高挂, 1991), and Yu Benzheng's (于本正) *Fatal Decision* (生死抉择, 2000), have been read as allegories of the movement.⁸⁷ Then there are films made underground without authorization. Wu Wenguang's (吴文光) *Bumming in Beijing* (流浪北京, 1990) is generally considered the first such film in reform China.⁸⁸ A documentary composed of interviews with five artists filmed in Beijing from August 1988 to October 1990, it avoids any mention of spring 1989. Another underground documentary, Wang Guangli's (王光利) *I*

⁸⁶ For examples, see Rui Zhang 2008, 110-112.

⁸⁷ For a reading of *Fatal Decision*, see Michael Berry 2008, 348-352.

⁸⁸ Zhang Yuan's (张元) *Mama* (妈妈, 1990) was the first self-funded feature-length film (McGrath 2008, 131-132).

Graduated (我毕业了, 1992), does contain interviews with college students who briefly but vividly recall those events. In the two fiction features *In the Heat of the Sun* (阳光灿烂的日子, 1994), directed by Jiang Wen (姜文), and *Platform* (站台, 2000), directed by Jia Zhangke (贾樟柯), the connections to June Fourth are faint to the point of inscrutability.⁸⁹

The reason I choose Emily (Xiaobai) Tang's (唐晓白) *Conjugation* (動詞變位, 2001) and Stanley Kwan's (關錦鵬) *Lan Yu* (藍宇, 2001) for analysis in this chapter is that not only do they evoke the 1989 Tiananmen Square movement, they also manifest its censorship on the Chinese mainland. Both films were shot there without permission. Though its director is from the mainland, *Conjugation* was produced and released in Hong Kong. *Lan Yu*, on the other hand, was a Chinese-Hong Kong co-production. The original 2001 version contains scenes related to Tiananmen, which were, however, conspicuously edited out of the DVD release in the mainland in 2006. In their displacements both transregionally produced films enact the state's continual displacement of the public that was gathered on Tiananmen Square.

Conjugation is Emily Tang's first film, shot in 16mm film and self-produced, with her company, Tang Films Ltd. (唐氏電影工作室), registered in Hong Kong. Set in Beijing in the winter of 1989 after Tiananmen, it was filmed entirely on location. The shooting had to be clandestine, with much of it done either indoors or at night. The film tells the story of a group of friends struggling in the aftermath of the June Fourth crackdown, at a loss as to what to do with their lives and, more specifically, what to do with two legacies from Tiananmen Square: a box of donations collected during the protests, and the absence and presumed death of a friend named Foot Finger. Though set in 1989, the film was not made until a dozen years later. This delayed

⁸⁹ See the analyses of these two films in Ying Bao 2013.

depiction not only juxtaposes two conditions of censorship—the state's inculcation immediately following June Fourth and the ban afterwards—but also, with the missing body at the heart of the narrative, figures the post-Tiananmen dispersal of the collective body.

Born in Hong Kong in 1957, Stanley Kwan is the acclaimed director of such films as *Rouge* (胭脂扣, 1987) and *Centre Stage* (阮玲玉, 1991). Like Tang's *Conjugation*, his *Lan Yu* also takes place in Beijing but over roughly a decade from 1988 to the late 1990s.⁹⁰ It is a love story between two men, the wealthy businessman Chen Handong (陳捍東) and the poor college student Lan Yu. In their tumultuous relationship filled with betrayals and reconciliations, what shows through, I argue, is the vitiation of the public interest by the private, whether romantic or financial. By comparing the 2001 Hong Kong version with the 2006 mainland version of *Lan Yu*, I demonstrate that the publicness represented by the protests of 1989 is not simply forgotten in the increasingly privatized postsocialist China but actively erased.

In the sections that follow I first examine *Conjugation's* depiction of post-Tiananmen life under state control. The second section focuses on the missing person who haunts the narrative, representative of the collective body that has been disappeared. The third section analyzes the splitting of the public portrayed in *Conjugation* and the film's evocation of an alternative public. As the chapter shifts the consideration to *Lan Yu*, I look at the displacement of the masses organized by Stanley Kwan. I argue that not love but cronyism is the central bond among the main characters. Finally I conclude with a detailing of the 2006 mainland version, whose "inconsequent" censorship leaves a gap for the memory of Tiananmen to resurface. While *Conjugation* concerns the immediate period after June Fourth, *Lan Yu* is situated within the larger moment of postsocialist privatization. Unlike literature, films are made with live actors,

⁹⁰ In an interview the director states that the action takes place over 10 years, although no narrative cue validates this assertion. See Kwan 2003.

actual people with physical presences. Both movies, in gathering a body of people without authorization, perform memories of Tiananmen and, in the displacement and mutilation of their exhibition, the Chinese state's prohibition of alternative collectivities.

Tenses in tension

There is an ostensible reason why Emily Tang's film is called *Conjugation* (*dongci bianwei* 動詞變位). Born in 1970, Tang studied Western Languages and Literatures (西方语言文学) at Peking University, from where she graduated in 1992. She was in school at the time of the 1989 protests, like Xiaoqing (晓青), the female protagonist who is studying French. Early on in the film we see an instructor teaching in class the *plus-que-parfait*, or pluperfect (愈過去時). The instructor describes this tense as pertaining to an action completed before a past action. She is played by the director herself (Bloom 2009, 208) (Figure 1).



Figure 1: The director Emily Tang as the French instructor.

That the director chooses not mood, person, number, or voice but tense to illustrate "conjugation"—which in Chinese literally means "verbs changing positions"—bespeaks the importance of time in the film. At the end of the class the instructor explains to the students why there are so many lessons to review: "because of the suspension of classes last semester, the curriculum was disrupted; we have to catch up" (上學期因爲停課, 打亂了教學計劃, 我們必須趕進度). The film opened with three successive white titles on a black background: "The Year 89" (八九年), "Winter" (冬), and "Beijing" (北京). "Last semester," then, refers to the spring of that year. But the student protests that gripped the nation are not mentioned: the chain of events, the "because" (因爲), stops at the "suspension of classes" (停課). Students are exhorted to make up for lost time so that nothing will be amiss. They will have caught up when no disruption could have taken place at all. In this way does the past impinge upon the present and the future upon the past.

Not that the student movement is on Xiaoqing's mind. In class she is not taking notes on verbs—literally "movement-words" (*dongci* 動詞) in Chinese—but rather jotting down nouns: items such as towels, detergent, and condoms that she and her boyfriend, Guo Song (郭松), plan to purchase for their new home, a rented room in a Beijing alleyway (*hutong*). She is preoccupied by the present and not the pluperfect, and it is she herself who has undergone conjugation, having "changed positions" (*bianwei* 變位) from the square she used to occupy (as we will learn) to the studio she now wishes to furnish, her attention absorbed by the private realm in lieu of the public. When she does review French later in the film, she uses binoculars to look at the post-it notes she affixed to the studio ceiling. Instead of providing a distant view, whether into the future or into the past, these binoculars are trained on verbs in the present tense.

She is near-sighted indeed.

If tense is chosen to illustrate conjugation, there is also a reason the pluperfect is chosen to illustrate tense. For from the perspective of this 2001 film, the story takes place in the past of winter 1989; the past perfect, that which took place before this past, is precisely the Tiananmen Square protests of the preceding spring. The conflict of *Conjugation* lies in its tenses, so to speak, which are embodied in Tang herself: the figure of authority who wants to speed along as if the disturbance never happened, and the director who returns to the past, or rather, the past of the past, the event not pictured that set the story in motion.

This conflict between forward acceleration and backward pull is evident in many places. At the factory where Guo Song works, a placard counts down the number of days until the Asian Games of 1990, which Beijing hosted from September 22 to October 7 of that year.⁹¹ The first time the placard is seen there are 282 days left; a later shot of the countdown shows 264 days. This future-oriented number goes down, while an ascending one, the number of days since June Fourth, is not counted. When we first see Guo Song in the factory, a woman cadre lectures him on the importance of the upcoming Asian Games. She orders him to participate in a dance group that will compete with other groups for a spot in the opening ceremony. She names two imperatives for "recently assigned college graduates" (剛分來的大學生) like him: "first, heighten your sense of organization; second, your discipline" (第一, 提高你們的組織性; 第二, 紀律性). After June Fourth, public declarations of one's position—*biaotai* (表态)—showing allegiance to the regime were demanded first from national- and provincial-level officials and military commanders: "These *biaotai* of party and military elites were followed by similar

⁹¹ This countdown recalls—and prefigures narratively—the 30-foot-high Hong Kong Clock erected on Tiananmen Square in 1994, which can be viewed as China's response to political developments in Hong Kong after June Fourth (Wu, Hung 1997, 351-2). The placing of the clock on a square of monumental buildings is a spatiotemporal insertion of the Return's "'micro narrative' into the grand narrative of revolutionary history" (Wu, Hung 1997, 336).

performances in schools, factories, research institutes, and administrative bodies across the nation as virtually every urban citizen was required to account for his or her actions since April and publicly announce solidarity with the new hard-line policies" (Esherick and Wasserstrom 1990, 843). Guo Song's participation in the dance would enact his recovered allegiance.⁹² When we next see Guo Song in the factory, he is indeed rehearsing the group dance (Figure 2). Though he is visibly disgruntled, his body is nevertheless being trained, partaking in movements "organized" and "disciplined."



Figure 2: Guo Song in a group dance practice at the factory.

The cadre is not directing Guo Song simply to the future. Her words draw upon a past too, as well as the authority of long-instilled canons. "Sense of organization" (組織性)—or esprit de corps—and "discipline" (紀律性) are not broached haphazardly. They are the exact two qualities

⁹² For a brief consideration of *biaotai* as *biaoyan* (表演), or performance, see Esherick and Wasserstrom 1990, 842-3.

mentioned in a scene halfway through the 1956 film *Battle on Shangganling Mountain* (上甘岭), a red classic about the Battle of Triangle Hill (1952) in the Korean War, or the "War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea" (抗美援朝战争), as it is officially called in China. When the dashing central figure, the company commander Zhang Zhongfa (连长张忠发), leaves the mountain stronghold without authorization to take out enemy bunkers, his superior the division commander (师长) scolds him over the phone: "In the face of this cruel battle, we need even more a heightened esprit de corps and discipline" (在这种残酷的斗争面前，我们更需要有高度的组织性和纪律性).

The transplantation of these two qualities to *Conjugation*, and to the speech of a factory cadre, indicates the militarization of society in post-Tiananmen Beijing. We are reminded that martial law, instituted on May 20, 1989, is still in place, that People's Liberation Army troops are still stationed in the capital. Guo Song is now expected to acquire soldierly virtues, when soldiers were the ones who crushed the demonstrations he had joined. The cadre even speaks of the dance group in terms of a military formation: "The bureau plans on sending a phalanx..." (局裏準備派个方陣).

The reference to *Battle on Shangganling Mountain* is far from fortuitous. When Guo Song and his friend Tian Yu (田雨) are in the latter's home drinking beer, this movie plays on television. Alongside their conversation is the famous song "My Fatherland" (我的祖国), sung by the nurse and soldiers yearning for home as they are holed up in a cave on Triangle Hill. Later in the night, after Guo Song has fallen asleep on the couch, Tian Yu is watching the scene towards the end of the movie where the People's Volunteer Army (PVA 人民志愿军) is about to retake lost positions. We hear the shout "Company Commander, let the people of our fatherland

hear the news of our victory!" (连长，让祖国人民听到我们胜利的消息吧！), followed by the sound of machine gunfire. These are the last words the soldier Little Yang (小杨) proclaims before he blocks a bunker's gunfire with his own chest so that his company can overrun the enemy. This *act* of bravery is based on the real-life heroics of the famed Korean-War martyr Huang Jiguang (黄继光), who in turn was inspired by the martyrdom of an actual Soviet soldier whose movie he had seen.⁹³

Tian Yu, watching *Shangganling* in his living room, is not going to reprise Little Yang's role. But the rerun, coming after the crackdown, reminds the viewing public of the sacred duty of soldiers PVA as well as PLA to defend the nation. Those whom they fight have to be the enemy, whether encroachers from without or counterrevolutionaries from within. *Conjugation* shows (as *Songs of the Republic's Guardians*, discussed in Chapter One, itself testifies) that in the immediate aftermath of Tiananmen, there was not a wholesale burial of the event. Rather, the TV programming and the factory cadre's choice of words (re)call the audience to a glorious tradition of obedience to command and sacrifice for the fatherland.

In place of the bullet-ridden body of Little Yang (and Huang Jiguang), however, *Conjugation* holds open a space for a body that is never seen. In fact, we do not even know what happened to it. It does not present itself and so cannot serve as a model to imitate or emulate, whether a spectacular dance or death. Instead, belonging to the pluperfect, it haunts the narrative past, not so much in reference to its own person as to a people, a body public that, along with him, went missing.

The disappeared body

⁹³ For the connection between the Soviet soldier Alexander Matrusov—or rather, *Private Aleksandr Matrosov* (Рядовой Александр Матросов, 1947)—and Huang Jiguang, see Thomas Chen 2014, 95-6.

Remainders from the quashed movement litter *Conjugation's* landscape, including its main characters. After the initial titles of "The Year 89," "Winter," and "Beijing," the film opens with a tracking shot of a public bus depot. As the camera scans the buses parked for the night, a couple on a bicycle emerges from their midst: Guo Song pedaling slowly, with Xiaoqing seated in the back, holding onto him. They are in motion from the very beginning, like the camera itself. Then they stop, and Guo Song goes from bus to bus trying to open doors. He eventually manages to do so, and through the windows we dimly see the two of them making love inside (Figure 3). Only then does the movie title, *Conjugation*, appear.



Figure 3: Xiaoqing and Guo Song make love in a public bus.

The public buses also carry ghosts of the past. During the Tiananmen protests, they were stationed at the northern end of the square, where they were used not only as transportation but also as dorms, canteens, student command headquarters, and medical clinics for hunger strikers (Hershkovitz 1993, 413). They are therefore a reminder of the time and place where Guo Song

and Xiaoqing in fact met (as we later learn), and of the passions of that spring. Where a multitude of bodies huddled, only two now hug. Outside the bus and showing the windows' partitions, the camera frames an enclosure where the couple engages in the most private of acts in the most public of sites.

The two may also be conjugating there because they do not have their own place yet. In the next scene they are again on the bicycle, this time moving into the room they are renting inside a family compound. As they enter the passageway of the residence, the radio is heard faintly in the background. It is difficult to make out the news broadcast against the street noise and dialogue, but snippets that can be heard include "troops garrisoned in the capital" (首都駐軍), "People's Armed Police Headquarters" (武警总部), and "cutting down on expenditures" (節省開支). The broadcast is publicizing both a socialist ethos of frugality and the physical presence of a state that has reestablished "headquarters."

The scene exemplifies the film's meticulous composition. The sound of the radio fades and disappears while Guo Song and Xiaoqing are in their new room talking about the placement of furniture. The fade out is no happenstance. The director draws our attention to it, for next we hear the mother of the family, the landlady, send her son out to buy new batteries for the radio. That the state broadcast fails to penetrate Guo Song and Xiaoqing's room implies that they have found a private sanctuary that would shield them from external interference.

It turns out, however, that even this realm is precarious. When they return home one evening, the landlord tells them that the police will be coming later to check on IDs, rooting out "random elements" (閑雜人員). The term typically refers to those without a proper *hukou* (戶口), or residency status, but as cohabiters without a marriage certificate, Guo Song and Xiaoqing too belong to this category of the population with no stable position. They go back out into the night

and wind up again in a public bus. But it is more than a love nest this time. Ultimately used as barriers against tanks on June 3rd and 4th, the buses conjure the dead.

If the square is where Guo Song and Xiaoqing gained each other, it is also where they lost another. Emily Tang's choice of music is likewise meticulous. One uncredited song, played while Guo Song and Xiaoqing are eating at a restaurant, is "Bloodstained Glory" (血染的風采). Originally composed in 1987 in remembrance of Chinese soldiers who died in the Sino-Vietnamese War of 1979, it is arguably the song most associated with Tiananmen, sung both during the movement as well as in subsequent commemorations (in Hong Kong, for instance). In the bus that night Xiaoqing hums Taiwanese singer Chyi Chin (齊秦)'s "Probably in Wintertime" (大約在冬季).⁹⁴ It is a song about missing a loved one, the first-person voice hoping to come home "probably in wintertime." We will remember that the story takes place in the winter of '89. Xiaoqing suddenly stops humming and says to Guo Song that she just thought of "Foot Finger" (腳趾). Then for the first and only time in the film, a discordant music mixed with ambulance sirens plays, as if to shatter the possibility of return of this "Foot Finger."

The missing person is known by this nickname.⁹⁵ Time and again *Conjugation* marks his loss. Yet it is not a "scar film" (*shanghen dianying* 伤痕电影), for its representational scheme utterly eschews the melodramatic. There is no blood and gore, no flashback to the moment of martyrdom, no spectacle of any kind. Foot Finger himself, like June Fourth, is never depicted, much less in a heroic fashion. And though he was full of "charisma" (魅力), as the character Big Jack (大貓) later says, he was far from being a student leader of the movement. His charisma

⁹⁴ Shu Kei, in *Romance of Tiananmen*, mentions it as a song frequently sung on the square during the protests (Shu, Kei 1989, 94).

⁹⁵ "Foot Finger" is the translation that the film's subtitles give. A literal translation of the Chinese name would simply be "toe."

derived from his playing music, with which he is always associated.

This is the second time Foot Finger is mentioned. Earlier that day in a playground, as Xiaoqing is listening to a long-haired guitarist perform another Chyi Chin song, "Blank" (空白), Tian Yu tells Guo Song that he would not hire this guitarist for the café he is opening "if Foot Finger were still here" (要是腳趾還在). He is invoked again during a hotpot dinner in Tian Yu's home. After Big Jack's comment about Foot Finger's charisma, Guo Song says, after some silence: "Too bad we can't hear Foot Finger's songs anymore" (可惜聽不到腳趾的歌了). If a forward gaze and a backward gaze are embodied in the figure of Emily Tang, then song and silence are disembodied in the figure of Foot Finger.

At the hotpot dinner the four college friends—Guo Song, Tian Yu, Big Jack, and Little Fourth (小四)—talk about how Guo Song and Xiaoqing got together on the square that summer. Big Jack attributes Guo Song landing Xiaoqing to the former's "grand performance of romantic passion" (浪漫主義激情大表演).⁹⁶ His participation in the protests was indeed a "grand performance" (大表演) in the sense that, when the curtains came down on June Fourth, Guo Song as well as his friends did not continue to act. Like the vast majority of people who once took part, they try to move on with their lives, putting the show and its bloody finale behind them. It was not a voluntary end. The curtains dropped on them like a cudgel.

Driven from Tiananmen Square, they have no choice but to "change positions." The hotpot dinner is a send-off for Little Fourth, who has been accepted to a U.S. graduate school. Even though Little Fourth received a full scholarship from the university, he cannot go unless he either "serves the country for six years" (為國家服務六年) or pays his alma mater 20,000 yuan.

⁹⁶ See Chapter One for a discussion of Joseph Esherick and Jeffrey Wasserstrom's well-known essay "Acting Out Democracy."

According to Dingxin Zhao, work prerequisites were in place both before and after 1989, though he does not mention fee-bought exemptions: "The rule that bothered students the most concerned the work prerequisites, according to which a bachelor's degree holder had to work in China for at least five years, and a master's or doctoral degree holder for at least two years, before going abroad" (Zhao 2004, 133). Big Jack, on the other hand, now works at a liquor factory in Fenyang, Shanxi province.⁹⁷ That Big Jack and Little Fourth, who is mentioned as working in a soy sauce factory, have such jobs may be related to their participation on the Square, as Dingxin Zhao states: "Until the late 1980s, the state took responsibility for assigning every university student a job upon graduation. Under this system, students with poor marks, a bad political profile, or uneasy relations with school authorities often got poor jobs" (Zhao 2004, 106). Tian Yu meanwhile runs a café furnished with chairs stolen from the school where he used to teach. Guo Song changes position too. Unable to suffer any longer the bossy cadre—who in another scene reiterates the "significant and profound historical meaning" (重大和深遠的歷史意義) of the Asian Games, which would let the whole world see "the cohesion between our Party and the Chinese nation" (我們黨和中華民族的凝聚力)—he quits the factory job. No success story ensues. He goes from the rock of an imposed collective to the hard place of the privatized.

Tang paints no glamour on the self-employed man (*getihu* 个体户) adrift in the postsocialist sea. Guo Song is forced to hawk scarves on the street. At first reluctant due to self-esteem, he eventually hollers out the wares (Figure 4). The director proceeds to slow down the image track so that his movement no longer matches his voice; she then adds non-diegetic music. The effect not only is jarring but resonates visually with the factory dance rehearsal—choreographed to

⁹⁷ This may indeed be a nod towards Jia Zhangke (贾樟柯), whose first two feature films, *Xiao Wu* (1997) and *Platform* (2000), are both set in Fenyang, his hometown. Xstream Pictures (西河星汇), founded by Jia, Yu Lik-wai (余力為), and Emily Tang's husband, Chow Keung (周強), would produce Tang's next film, *Perfect Life* (2008).

"Strong Winds of Asia" (亞洲雄風), not the official but the most popular song of the Asian Games—where he moved in step with other employees to the instructor's call (Figure 2). As one scholar observes, both the group dance and the scarf selling are degrading performances (Bao 2013, 219). Guo Song's stage has shifted from Tiananmen Square to factory grounds to back street.



Figure 4: Guo Song hawks scarves on the street.

Another sequence captures his conjugation in time. On his way back from purchasing wholesale merchandise outside Beijing, Guo Song passes by his former university. We next see him in a lab coat conducting an experiment (Figure 5). This is the film's most striking image, its tenses—present, past, conditional—in unresolved tension. But only for a moment. Guo Song is then shown on the outside looking in at the laboratory where he presumably used to work (Figure 6). The window bars underscore how out of reach his past and possible selves are. His old dorm

room, which he goes on to visit, is similarly forbidding, as the current tenant thinks he's nuts.⁹⁸



Figure 5: Guo Song in a lab coat.

⁹⁸ The song playing inside as the tenant opens the door is "The Story of Time" (光陰的故事) by the Taiwanese singer Lo Ta-yu (羅大佑).



Figure 6: Guo Song looks into the lab.

The scientist manqué is lugging around a bagful of socks and gloves. At the hotpot dinner, Big Jack remarked that when Guo Song was in college, he wanted to win the Nobel Prize (which Guo Song now denied). In an even earlier scene, when Guo Song was still working at the factory, he and Xiaoqing rode home past the dormitory of a science institute. Xiaoqing noticed many dark windows in the building and wondered whether they could move in: "Aren't you a young scientist?" (你不是年輕科學家嗎?). Guo Song gathered himself before rejoining: "I am now a worker, a member of the ruling class" (我現在是工人，屬於領導階級). His reply collides two tenses: the main clause is true, while the appositive is a holdover from the previous era that no longer applies in the postsocialist present.

In the film there is also a holdover from the pre-Tiananmen past. It is a package of poems by Haizi (海子) left behind by Foot Finger that ends up in Guo Song's hands. The writings of this famous poet, who committed suicide at the age of 25 in March 1989, a month before the protests

began, are frequently read as dating from an idealistic 1980s cut short by June Fourth.⁹⁹ The package was handed down from someone to Foot Finger. After he went missing, his girlfriend gave it to Tian Yu, who then passes it on to Guo Song. Interspersedly throughout the latter two-thirds of the film, we hear excerpts read aloud by Guo Song interiorly. His present voice thus carries past and past perfect timbres.

Xiaoqing herself is a holdover. She invariably evokes an event that refuses to remain in the simple past and continuously barges into the present perfect. Just as the long-haired guitarist is Foot Finger's substitute, and Guo Song's voice substitutes for Foot Finger's (and Haizi's), so does Xiaoqing, whom Guo Song gained during Tiananmen, substitute for Foot Finger, whom everyone lost. In a later scene in the film Tang groups the latter and two of his surrogates together. Xiaoqing has quit school and begun to work in Tian Yu's café. There she asks the guitarist to play more Chyi Chin music, saying that a friend used to sing his songs really well. When the guitarist asks about the friend, she replies that they got to know each other in the summer: "But not long after we met..." (可是認識沒有多久). She does not finish this sentence, and only after a while does she add, holding a candle in vigil, as it were: "They say he disappeared" (他們說他失蹤了) (Figure 7). Xiaoqing may have replaced Foot Finger, but she does not remove his place.

⁹⁹ Such commentaries can be found in Maghiel van Crevel's chapter "Thanatography and the Poetic Voice: Haizi." Repressed lament over June Fourth was moreover projected onto Haizi's death (van Crevel 2008, 103).



Figure 7: Xiaoqing remembers Foot Finger.

The "they" in "they say he disappeared" is purposely vague. It could refer to the authorities, for we learn in another scene that "disappearance" (*shizong* 失蹤) is the explanation school officials gave to Foot Finger's parents, who, without a body to mourn, can only take home a picture that their son took.¹⁰⁰ Or "they" could refer to Guo Song and friends, who, in their disposal of another legacy from Tiananmen, become complicit in the "disappearing" of Foot Finger.

Splitting up

That legacy from Tiananmen is a box of donations collected during the movement (Figure 8). The donations are brought up indirectly and directly several times throughout the movie as the friends grapple with what to do with them. In the end, however, in the scene after Xiaoqing tells

¹⁰⁰ It is not certain whether it is a photo of Foot Finger or a photo he took.

Guo Song that she is pregnant, we see Tian Yu take the box from under his bed and split the money into four portions. Contributions from the public in support of a collective cause are now distributed among individuals. This private appropriation parallels that of other assets in the story, including classroom chairs for Tian Yu's café, a dorm mattress for Guo Song and Xiaoqing, and a cafeteria tricycle for transporting that mattress from the school where Tian Yu taught.¹⁰¹



Figure 8: The "donation box" (募捐箱) is taken from underneath Tian Yu's bed.

More is at stake than postsocialist privatization. It is underwritten by the state's scattering by force of the publicness that was the Tiananmen Square movement. The doling of the donations among Tian Yu, Guo Song, Big Jack, and Little Fourth bespeaks the betrayal of both the movement's ideals as well as Foot Finger. Just as the latter's death is of no account to the

¹⁰¹ It is interesting to note that, though one cannot tell from Tian Yu's spoken reply, when Guo Song asks him where he gets the capital to open the café, that he used some of the donation money, the English subtitle—"I...I still have some money on hand"—implies otherwise.

authorities, so do his friends no longer count him. After Guo Song takes his share, the scene shifts to a clinic where Xiaoqing is getting an abortion, which in Chinese literally means "artificial miscarriage" (人工流产). Part of Tiananmen's legacy, then, is used for an unnatural, premature termination of life, like Foot Finger's and hundreds of others'.

The soundtrack is completely mute as Guo Song and Xiaoqing ride home in a taxi after the procedure. They pass Tiananmen Square on their left (Figure 9). Guo Song's eyes look away; Xiaoqing's, at first closed, open feebly. The next shot shows Tiananmen, the Gate, seen through the right side window (Figure 10). Their gazes are actively avoiding the square. It is where their love began, but they drive by it now when their love (child) has just been aborted. The "grand performance of romantic passion" of the spring has been subdued to silence. The blatant muting of the soundtrack amplifies the flagrant muting of Tiananmen voices.



Figure 9: After Xiaoqing's abortion, the couple ride in a taxi past Tiananmen Square. The Mao Mausoleum and the Monument to the People's Heroes can be seen through the side window.



Figure 10: Tiananmen, the Gate of Heavenly Peace, from their car window.

We have remarked upon *Conjugation's* painstaking sound and music design. In the film's penultimate scene Tian Yu tells the guitarist to stop playing since there are no customers, adding that the music is ugly. The music associated with Foot Finger that suffused the spring of 1989 is now bereft of a public. A familiar sound takes the place of music in the next and final sequence. Guo Song and Xiaoqing are moving out of the *hutong*, and they do so to the same sound to which they moved in: news radio. This time the broadcast is loud and clear. It announces the impending lifting of martial law in parts of the capital on January 11, 1990, in consideration of the "great victory" (偉大的勝利) of the "appeasement of the unrest and counterrevolutionary riot in Beijing" (平息在北京發生的動亂和反革命暴亂). The announcement concludes with an oblique reference to the wave of revolutions that have swept the Soviet Bloc, including Poland, Hungary, and East Germany: "No matter what kind of turmoil occurs in the world, we will unswervingly walk down the socialist path" (不管世界上發生什麼樣的風波，我們都將堅定

不移地沿著社會主義道路走下去).

We associate the radio broadcast with the family compound where we first heard it at the start of the film. When the sound reappears at the end, it again apparently emanates from the residence, as it begins while Guo Song and Xiaoqing (with the landlord's help) are loading their belongings onto a truck. But what starts out diegetically soon becomes not so much non-diegetic as supra-diegetic. The radio announcement follows Guo Song and Xiaoqing without interruption to the moving truck, continuing even after the image goes black. In the first instance the radio ran out of battery power. Now it is seemingly not subject to material constraints, forever trailing the couple. The words of the state do not merely bracket the film: their concluding iteration portend omnipotence, omnipresence, and endless duration in time.

Guo Song and Xiaoqing are in motion from the moment we meet them, biking through the bus depot. They use their bike again to move into the rented room. Then after the abortion, the two of them are moving but passively, carried along in a taxi past Tiananmen Square. Now, as they sit in the bed of the truck, they do not touch each other, in motion without emotion, carried again listlessly to we know not where this time (Figure 11). The bars behind them in fact recur throughout the film (Figures 3, 6, 9, and 10). It is a visual motif that suggests not only the forbidden and the forbidding but also the captive. Guo Song and Xiaoqing do not stare, their mouths are not open, and they have no wings. But they too are facing backwards as onwards they jolt, their belongings strewn before them like ruins. They are swept into the future's "homogenous, empty time" on a "socialist path" they cannot escape.



Figure 11: Xiaoqing and Guo Song ride on a truck, having moved out of their rented room.

Little Fourth has left for America. Big Jack has returned to Shanxi. Tian Yu's business venture has failed. Guo Song and Xiaoqing have become estranged. And Foot Finger is dead. The last place and time all of them were together was Tiananmen Square 1989. But their "movement-word," once whole, has since then undergone conjugation and disintegration. They are displaced and dispersed as the Party-state consolidates its numbers. When the woman cadre is lecturing Guo Song for the first time in her office, other colleagues are seen (Figures 12 and 13). The second time, when she also reminds him that "so many pairs of eyes in our factory are staring at you" (咱們廠裏有那麼多雙眼都在盯著你), another woman sits in the background (Figure 14). The threat of ferreting "random elements" is relayed first by the landlord, then by the landlady, and finally by a policeman himself. The earlier radio announcement begins in a man's voice before switching to a woman's; the later one returns to a man's. Guo Song and Xiaoqing are outlasted and outnumbered.



Figure 12: The woman cadre with another colleague at the factory.



Figure 13: A factory official, Guo Song, and the woman cadre, from left to right.



Figure 14: The woman cadre reiterates to Guo Song the historical significance of the Asian Games, while a colleague sits in the background.

This is the somber note on which *Conjugation* ends. But another story within this story gives glimmers of hope—if they, too, are ultimately ambivalent. It is actually a series of three stories that Xiaoqing first begins to tell customers while working at Tian Yu's café (Figure 15).¹⁰² In the first installment we learn that the protagonist is a woman abused by her husband who kills him with a knife but then does not know what to do with the body. When Xiaoqing continues the story the next time (Figure 16), the woman has chopped the corpse into pieces and put them inside a pickling pot underneath the bed. At the end of this installment Xiaoqing introduces the woman's two-year-old son, who has yet to learn to talk.

¹⁰² Emily Tang's mother, Zhang Yihe, tells a variant of these stories in *The Woman Liu* (刘氏女), first published in 2011. Liu Yueying murders her epileptic husband, dismembers the corpse, and keeps it in a preserved-vegetable vat under the bed. When the husband's older sister visits two years later, it is Liu's son, a year old at the time of the murder, who asks whether it is time to eat dad's meat. Zhang's novella is based on her experience with an inmate in prison during the Cultural Revolution. See its fourth and fifth chapters.



Figure 15: Xiaoqing telling the first installment of the story.



Figure 16: Xiaoqing telling the second installment.

We might surmise that Xiaoqing's development of the story is influenced by her suspecting,

in the meantime, that the donation money has been split among the friends, for she finds money in a drawer at home one day. So the husband is chopped up like the donations and, like the donations box, kept under the bed. The *duo* (剁) meaning to chop is also homonymic with the *duo* in *duotai* (墮胎), the common term for abortion. The third and final installment takes place only after Xiaoqing has learned that Foot Finger, or rather his family, did not receive a portion of the money (Figure 17). The woman in the story tells others that her husband "has disappeared" (失蹤了). At first, people do not believe her, but as time passes, they start to, and then, "after more time has passed, nobody brought up this disappearance any longer" (日子再一長, 已經沒有人再提起失蹤這一事). Years later, even the woman herself no longer remembers clearly. One day the dead man's sister comes to visit and asks about her brother. The woman replies that he disappeared a long time ago; everybody knows that: "She said it with her heart at ease, because she thought nobody would know the truth" (她說得很心安, 因為她以為再沒有一個人會知道事實真相). But in the middle of the meal her son, who was two-years-old at the time of the murder and who has been mute all these years, suddenly speaks: "Is dad's meat inside the pickle pot ready to be eaten?" (泡菜缸裏爸爸的肉可以吃了嗎?).



Figure 17: The final installment.

As Xiaoqing is telling the story—in bed with another man—Guo Song is in the kitchen of the café turned hotpot restaurant, first sharpening a knife, then shaving red slices of mutton that pile the screen (Figure 18). Like the woman in the story, he wields a knife, guilty by association not of actual murder but of disappearing Foot Finger a second time. The light of Xiaoqing's cigarette even recalls the candlelight she was holding earlier in the café. Michael Berry observes that the boy's question at the end echoes the allegorical cannibalism in Lu Xun's "Diary of a Madman" (狂人日记) (Michael Berry 2008, 339). But there are resonances with his "The New Year's Sacrifice" (祝福) as well. When Xiang Lin's Wife (祥林嫂) tells the story of her boy's death to fellow villagers, they are at first sympathetic. They become not only apathetic but annoyed, however, as she repeats the story over and over again. In Xiaoqing's version, the murderess' story of her husband's disappearance is received over time with disbelief, then belief, and finally apathy. A lie repeated often enough and with conviction is eventually bought and, what is more,

forgotten.



Figure 18: The meat that Guo Song shaves piles the shot.

The ending of Xiaoqing's tale allows for a certain optimism. *Conjugation* appeared in 2001. One could say that for 12 years, Emily Tang, like the boy in the story, was mute. But just when one thinks that silence would reign, that all have already accustomed themselves to apathy and mendacity, it is those who were seemingly too little or young to know anything who speak up. To the objection that what was lost in Tiananmen Square 1989 was negligible, unimportant, as expendable as a "foot finger," they respond that this foot finger is connected to a foot, this foot to an ankle, this ankle to a leg, and so on. It is a part that points to the whole to which it was attached. *Conjugation*, too, is but a unit. Yet it enacts a remembering of what was dismembered. It is a recollection of the split apart.

But the telling is much more ambivalent. Not only does the space in which Xiaoqing speaks, from a café to a hotel room, become more private; her audience shrinks. Her listeners go from

three (Figure 15) to one (Figure 16) to none (Figure 17), for the man in bed may indeed be asleep. Her story ended with a question, and it is another question that trails Emily Tang's story: Will it, too, go the way of Xiaoqing's storytelling, Foot Finger's songs, and the poems he left behind, that is, will it, too, be deprived of a public? Just as its characters were driven from the square into vagrancy, so was *Conjugation* displaced from where it was filmed, having to move to Hong Kong to be produced, post-produced, and released.

Thus does the condition of spectatorship mirror the quandary of privatization depicted in the film. But there is another audience forged by Emily Tang's film, whose appearance in Hong Kong is just one facet. With wiles, the self-conscious connection of the private with the political, and the help of a countless crew of people, Tang does not ultimately betray powerlessness in dealing with traumatic memory, censorship, and displacement but convokes an alternative publicness. In the following sections we turn to a film that, like *Conjugation*, was released in Hong Kong in 2001. Stanley Kwan's *Lan Yu*, however, would trace a different trajectory. Yet wiles too were needed to gain a public on the mainland.

"Just background"

In the late 1990s a novel called *Beijing Story* (北京故事), written by a certain "Beijing comrade" (北京同志)—beginning in the mid 1990s "comrade" (*tongzhi* 同志) became another word for "queer" (Michael Berry 2008, 314)—circulated widely in Chinese-language cyberspace, first appearing in September 1998 on the website Chinese Men's and Boys' Paradise (中国男人男孩天堂) under the title *Mainland story* (大路故事) (Ryan 2016).¹⁰³ The author turned out to be a Chinese woman living in New York. Producer Zhang Yongning (張永寧),

¹⁰³ Its English translation came out in 2016 (Bei, Tong 2016).

who is from the mainland, brought the story to the attention of Kwan, who is openly gay. The filming was done in China without permission with a mostly mainland crew. Kwan described Chinese authorities' attitude as "one eye is closed, one eye is open:" "We made the film in Beijing, and the Film Bureau people knew we were there" (Kehr 2002).

What is the place of June Fourth in the narrative, renamed *Lan Yu*, which like the novel is told from his lover Chen Handong's perspective in an extended flashback after the former's death? According to the director, it is a crucial one. The relationship between Chen Handong and Lan Yu is at first characterized by the exchange of money for sex and vice versa. A poor college student in Beijing, Lan Yu is set up with the businessman Handong by the former's acquaintance and the latter's junior associate, Liu Zheng (劉征). Then comes June Fourth, which, says Kwan, "turned out to be the moment of their commitment" (Kwan 2003). In a later interview he again calls June Fourth "the moment that Chen Handong commits to Lan Yu" (Michael Berry 2005, 454). As to the event itself, "for me it was just background." The protests and the crackdown may only be adumbrated, yet they propel the two protagonists into a new chapter of devotion.

It turns out, however, that these descriptions are not an entirely accurate representation of the story. For in the aftermath of June Fourth, Handong does not commit to Lan Yu. He buys for the now college graduate a car and a villa, but these gifts, though much larger in nature compared to the money and clothes he gave in the beginning, do not betoken a watershed in their relationship. In fact, a mere five scenes after June Fourth, Handong meets Lin Jingping (林靜平), a business interpreter whom Handong will marry in hopes of starting a heteronormative family. During the breakup Handong shouts: "I spent a lot of money on this damn house! How are you going to repay me?" (我陳捍東花在這破屋子上的錢還不少呢！你還怎麼報答我吧你！). Lan Yu responds by taking off his pants and asking: "What position would you like, boss?" (老闆喜欢来

哪种姿势?). Money and body are still the bases of reciprocity. Not much has changed since their initial breakup, before June Fourth, when Lan Yu caught Handong with another man. At that time Handong roared: "You think Liu Zheng can find you another client as lavish as I am?" (你以為劉征還能再給你找一個像我出手那麼闊綽的客人?). Lan Yu's mock self-degradation reverberates from this earlier insult.

If as a political event it is "just background" and as a personal event it is of no great moment, Kwan's June Fourth is nevertheless significant for portraying the conclusion of an era in which the masses are an actor. The sequence of scenes occurs near the end of the first third of the movie and lasts a little over seven minutes. In the first scene it is daytime on June 3rd and the fan is blowing in Handong's office. He complains of the air conditioning not being fixed, and when an employee explains that a strike has been going on for weeks, the capitalist replies: "On strike? Fake fucking altruists! Aren't there other workers? Besides those strikers, are all the workers in the capital fucking dead?" (罷工? 裝他媽什麼善男信女! 不知道換批工人? 全首都的工人除了罷工都他媽死絕了?). He cannot comprehend people who act against their own economic interest for a public cause.¹⁰⁴

If this cause affects his life at all, it does so only as a nuisance. In the next scene it is later on the same day in the same place, and as Handong and his associate Liu Zheng are talking in the foreground, we hear hubbub from outside, signifying the commotion in the streets. For the two of them, the protests are precisely background noise, preoccupied as they are with private concerns. In the previous scene Handong was waiting for a fax from East Berlin, and here Liu Zheng is

¹⁰⁴ There is much debate on the participation of workers in the Tiananmen Square protests. Zhao Dingxin contends that "...if we examine the role of the Beijing Workers' Autonomous Union through such criteria as leadership, sources of material resources, and major activities and participants, it becomes obvious that the union was basically only an appendage of the student movement" (Zhao 2004, 176). Others argue for the union's importance, especially after the declaration of martial law on May 19 (see, for instance, Walder and Gong 1993).

worried for his wife, who is having a difficult delivery.

Only when Handong's brother-in-law, Luo Daning (羅大寧)—played by the producer Zhang Yongning—pays a visit (as Liu Zheng leaves) does the movement impinge upon Handong. Daning tells Handong that the square will be cleared that night and, more importantly, that he saw Lan Yu there picketing. Handong drives out into the night in search of his ex-lover, whom he has not seen in months. Gunfire and explosions crackle, and from inside his car (a Mercedes), he sees a rush of people bike past him, some carting casualties (Figure 19). Yet despite being in their midst, Handong is not among them. Shielded in his sedan, he is not part of the crowd moving collectively in the opposite direction (Figure 20).



Figure 19: From inside his car Handong sees people biking and carting the wounded.



Figure 20: Handong in his Mercedes as people flee in the opposite direction.

In the end it is Lan Yu who finds Handong. The latter has fallen asleep against the wheel, parked outside the former's dorm on a deserted campus. They embrace (Figures 21 and 22). Seeing Lan Yu a little scraped, Handong hugs him again (Figure 23). The next shot is of the two of them in each other's arms in bed, presumably in Handong's apartment, with Lan Yu weeping (Figure 24). Stanley Kwan has accomplished the remarkable feat of not simply singling out but isolating them from a mass activity in which they both took part. Handong literally approaches the movement, as seen above, but in order to locate the one individual that matters to him. Lan Yu, as Daning informed Handong, worked as a picketer in the swarming square. But when he shows up next to Handong, he is by himself. Neither protagonist is depicted with people. The scattering of a collective body of thousands from the square and its environs culminates in the reconnection of two bodies.



Figure 21: Finding each other after the crackdown, Handong and Lan Yu embrace.



Figure 22: The embrace, with the camera on Handong's face.



Figure 23: The embrace, with the camera on Lan Yu's face.



Figure 24: The two in each other's arms as Lan Yu weeps.

The embrace is a central image in *Lan Yu*, appearing—and reappearing—at many junctures.

When Handong takes Lan Yu to the new villa in the suburbs he has bought for him, Lan Yu hugs Handong at the staircase. This image is replayed later in the story. As Lan Yu gets up to leave after Handong breaks to him his intention of starting a family with Lin Jingping, the hug flashes briefly onscreen, followed by Lan Yu's face, suggesting what he suddenly remembered—the one instance in the film when the director interrupts Handong's narrative point of view. In fact, if one had to pick a "moment of their commitment," it would be roughly two-thirds into the 86-minute film, after Handong has divorced Jingping. The reconciliation takes place in Lan Yu's apartment, epitomized in two actions. Handong first asks for a hug (Figure 25). Then he uncontrollably seizes Lan Yu in his arms, overcome with emotion (Figures 26 and 27).¹⁰⁵ These shots and their sequence parallel the embraces of the earlier reunion, when they met after the crackdown (Figures 21, 22, and 23). But the outcome the second time around is different: from this point on, Handong will stay faithful to Lan Yu until—and even beyond—the latter's death.



¹⁰⁵ The shot of Handong clasping Lan Yu is replayed in black and white just before the credits at the film's end.

Figure 25: Lan Yu's hand on Handong's back, as they embrace in the former's apartment.



Figure 26: Handong seizes Lan Yu uncontrollably.



Figure 27: The camera on Lan Yu's face during the second embrace.

We will recall that at the end of the June Fourth sequence, Lan Yu is weeping. His grief functions as a pivot between two eras, socialist and postsocialist, each with its own kind of grieving in the film. After his father's funeral, Handong tells Lan Yu that he did not shed a single tear. But he remembers crying for several days when Chairman Mao died in 1976. In fact, his name, Handong (捍东), signifies "protect (*han* 捍) Mao Zedong (东) Thought" (Michael Berry 2008, 316). Lan Yu then shares a similar memory: every man and woman in his village cried at the time too. One can attribute such mass mourning to Mao's personality cult, especially during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). Howsoever regarded, the concomitant sense therein of a communal experience is decidedly absent by the end of the film, when Handong's solitary sobs, upon seeing Lan Yu's dead body, resound in the morgue.

If Lan Yu's tears result in part from getting back together with his first love, it is safe to assume that they are also occasioned in part by the bloodshed he witnessed. In other words, he is crying not just for himself and Handong but for a collectivity. He cries for its dispelling, which is also its death. For this is the last time in the film that fellowship is pictured, when multitudes act in unison, fleeing the violence while not leaving behind the fellow wounded. A radio announcement finishes the entire sequence: "June 4th, 4:30 a.m." (六月四號，凌晨四點半). This is when troops surrounding the Square began to advance towards the Monument to the People's Heroes, where the last group of protestors was holding out. Thereafter, the Tiananmen Square protests vanish completely from the film, leaving no imprint or echo.

The time of the immediately following scene could be as many as three years later (if Lan Yu was a freshman during the protests). The couple are in the car Handong bought for Lan Yu as a graduation present, on their way to the villa bought for him too. The radio is now playing "How

can you bear seeing me sad" (你怎麼捨得我難過). This popular love song by the Taiwanese singer Huang Pin Yuan's (黃品源)—from his 1990 album *Thoughts of a man in a supporting role* (男配角心聲)—comprises three choruses that contain a total of 18 "you" (你) and "I" (我). It is nearly the only song in the entire movie—nearly, because there is one other song heard but faintly.

It appears during the June Fourth sequence: in the scene after Daning's visit, Handong is still in his office, lost in thought. From the open window we hear "In unity there is strength" (團結就是力量).¹⁰⁶ A People's Liberation Army song from the early 1940s, it was popular throughout the socialist period. It was also one of several left-wing songs sung by students during the Tiananmen movement. What distinguishes it from "How can you bear seeing me sad" is not simply its hymning of "unity" rather than romance—there is no "you" or "I" in the former—but its execution. Faint though it may be, it is distinctly voiced by many. We do not see the "many" in this scene, but it is the same many whose bodies are carted away later that night, which we do glimpse.

Like the embrace, "How can you bear seeing me sad" is a leitmotif that recurs several times diegetically (and once non-diegetically, extended over the last six minutes of the film into the credits). The embrace and the song are emblems of the private displacing the public after June Fourth, when the state dissipated the gathering on and around Tiananmen Square. But Stanley Kwan does not stop there. This shift is born out not just by the couple in place of the crowd, sex in place of solidarity. Rather, as I will argue, Kwan portrays postsocialism especially post-Tiananmen as crony capitalism, which, as practiced in reform China is built upon the time-

¹⁰⁶ For more on this song, including its lyrics, see my previous chapter.

honored Chinese construct of *guanxi* (关系), commonly translated as "connections."¹⁰⁷ In *Lan Yu* the couple is implicated in the coterie, and one's sex partner is also one's business partner. If people no longer link arms but instead wrap them around each other, then they also light each other's cigarettes and clink glasses. If rousing anthems are drowned out by plaintive refrains, then those plaintive refrains are muffled in turn by hushed conversations.

From comrades to cronies

This is not to suggest that there is actually no love or desire between Lan Yu and Handong, that their relationship is founded solely on commerce. Crony capitalism precisely does not preclude the bonds of love, friendship, or kinship; it derives from them. Yet it renders family more than family, friends more than friends, lovers more than lovers. This "more" is called profit. I shift my focus from the two protagonists to two seemingly minor characters, Liu Zheng and Daning. The former, as we know, is Handong's business associate, the latter Handong's brother-in-law. It is through the lens of Handong's relations with these two other men that I examine the relations between Handong and Lan Yu. I do so not to depreciate the representation of queer sexuality in the film, but to show that in Kwan's postsocialist, post-Tiananmen China desire, gay or straight, is enmeshed in a network of interests.¹⁰⁸

We will remember that it is only through Liu Zheng that Handong and Lan Yu meet in the first place. We do not see Lan Yu, however, in the scene in the club where Liu Zheng will introduce him to Handong. Instead, we see Liu Zheng and Handong watching him and talking about him. Liu Zheng was actually procuring him, a college student in desperate need of money—we later learn he is from a village in the Northeast—for another businessman, a certain

¹⁰⁷ For a distinction between cronyism and *guanxi*, see Khatri, Tsang, and Begley 2006, 63-64.

¹⁰⁸ For a sophisticated reading of queer desire in *Lan Yu*, see Eng 2010.

Executive Wang (王總) who is willing to pay 1,000 yuan for Lan Yu's services. But what is noteworthy about their tête-à-tête is less what is said than how it is framed. They begin behind a sliding door, which takes up nearly half of the shot (Figure 28). Then they move to the bar, where again the door conceals more than half of another shot (Figure 29). Finally they proceed back to the door, where they pause before Handong approaches Lan Yu (Figure 30). These framings suggest that they are not so much conversing as conspiring, their gaze both libidinal and predatory. The obscuring door encloses a space of secrecy from which both of them spy on their prey.



Figure 28: Liu Zheng and Handong behind the sliding door, checking out Lan Yu.



Figure 29: They move to the bar and continue to talk about Lan Yu.



Figure 30: The two pause for a moment at the sliding door before Handong approaches Lan Yu.

On Chinese New Year's Eve Handong brings Lan Yu to his mother's home. He is introducing

Lan Yu to his family for the first time (as a college classmate's brother), but the narrative attention rests not thereon. For this is also where we first meet Daning. And instead of a New Year's Eve dinner with everyone around the table, the episode concludes with a private talk between Daning and Handong (Figure 31). Both the length of the shot and the composition emphasize their privacy. Not only do the windows in the back mark out an interior and an exterior—Daning's wife and Handong's sister, Yonghong (詠紅), is seen passing by the window, to the left of Daning's head—the frames in the foreground, too, indicate a peeking into intimate space. This intimacy is again highlighted towards the end of the scene when Yonghong interrupts their conversation by knocking on the window from the outside to call them to dinner (Figure 32).



Figure 31: Handong and Daning have a private talk on Chinese New Year's Eve in Handong's mother's home.



Figure 32: Yonghong calls her husband and her brother to dinner.

They were talking about Handong's business, and Daning brought up his "contract with the Ministry of Foreign Trade for a 30-million-yuan loan" (跟外貿部那個三千萬貸款的合同). The pricing of loans by financial institutions based on "connections" rather than credit risk is one of the hallmarks of crony capitalism. Many analysts believe that bad debts contributed critically to the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997, though China came away largely unscathed.¹⁰⁹ Although never stated explicitly, it is evident here and elsewhere that Daning works in the government, whether at the municipal or central level, for Handong asks him if the loan has been approved. Daning does not know but reassures him: "your connections (*guanxi*) are so strong" (你關係那麼鐵). *Guanxi* is mentioned in the next scene as well: an athletic guy whom Handong picked up is posing—in underwear that Handong gave him—in front of the bathroom mirror in Handong's place. He wants to enter the modeling world: "But I can't get in without connections (*guanxi*)" (

¹⁰⁹ See, among others, Hughes 1999 and Pagano 2002.

可是沒有關係進不去啊)。There are hints in the film that Handong's privileges result not only from the network that he himself has cultivated but also from his father's position. While this is not as explicit as in *Beijing Story*, where Handong's father is a high-ranking cadre whose connections help his son's business prosper, Handong does mention that his father's funeral was arranged by a Party secretary (書記), and that "some ministers" (幾位部長) sent wreaths.

Daning proves himself to be on the government inside again in the June Fourth sequence discussed above. He pays Handong a visit on June 3rd to "deliver a message in person" (捎个口信): "I can't talk about this thing on the phone" (這事，電話裡沒法講). The message is that the square will be cleared that night. He also adds he saw Lan Yu around the square. Just as Liu Zheng brought Handong and Lan Yu together the first time, it is Daning who plays the go-between this time. But this scene more than facilitates the reunion of ex-lovers. After Daning enters Handong's office and closes the door, the camera lingers outside (Figure 33). Through the door's window we see their hands touch as Handong lights Daning's cigarette. What we are about to (over)hear, against the backdrop of a mass movement, is the confidential sharing of valuable information by an insider within his closed, personal circle.



Figure 33: Handong lights Daning's cigarette before the latter tells him Tiananmen Square will be cleared that night.

There are two plot twists in the final third of the movie after Handong's divorce and recommitment to Lan Yu. In both cases either Liu Zheng or Daning is presiding. One morning Handong receives a call, presumably from Liu Zheng, informing him of the arrest of a bank chief (行長). This bank chief must be a member of their coterie, for later that night Handong and Liu Zheng are sharing a drink in the dimly lit office, pondering their own fate (Figure 34). Handong knows what his charges will be—"smuggling, bribery, illegal fundraising" (走私, 賄賂, 非法集資)—and he wonders if his arrest warrant is imminent. Liu Zheng is no mere subordinate: just as in the beginning of the film Handong got to know Lan Yu through his contacts, so now the associate says he can get the warrant delayed for a few days. The boss is not without contacts himself. In a subsequent scene, right before he is arrested, he is able to procure for Lan Yu, who previously wanted to study in the U.S., a passport as well as guarantees from domestic and American banks. As for a visa, he hands him the business card of someone who used to handle

the matter in the Ministry of Foreign Trade. It is a gesture of love, certainly, made possible only by the deployment of his crony forces.



Figure 34: Liu Zheng and Handong confer in the office after Handong gets in trouble.

We next see Yonghong and Daning visit Handong in a detention center. The two may sit equidistantly in front of him, but in the shot the brother-in-law is closer than the sister (Figure 35). Handong is afraid to implicate Daning, who assures him that in his statement to authorities, "we are in-laws, nothing else" (咱倆是姻親關係，也沒其他的). This very stressing of "nothing else" proves the opposite. Yonghong tells her brother that his personal and company assets have been frozen pending investigation. Handong is dispirited: "Without money, Liu Zheng can't smooth things over no matter how hard he runs around" (沒有現金，劉政就是再努力地奔走也是疏通不來的). Then Daning whispers the way out: three million yuan. Liu Zheng mortgaged his house but that was not enough. Lan Yu, however, heard about it: he sold the villa Handong

gave him, Daning says, and along with the rent money he has collected over the years and his savings, he brought over the cash.



Figure 35: Yonghong, Daning, and Handong in the visiting area.

One of the main grievances of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protestors was corruption in the form of "official speculation" (官倒), whereby government officials and those with ties to them took advantage of China's transition from a completely planned to partially market economy in the early reform period. At the beginning of the 1980s a "dual-track price system" (价格双轨制) was implemented under which state-owned industries could purchase designated supplies at plan prices and sell their production above the state quota at market prices. "Official speculation" occurs when supplies bought at state-controlled prices are sold on the open market for a lot more. Although Handong does not specifically engage in this form of corruption, it is clear that his business has benefited much from government connections. The irony lies in Lan Yu, who once participated in the movement that denounced such collusion, now knowingly abetting an

offender. The villa, doubtlessly bought with tainted money in the first place, is exchanged back into money—supplemented by the little rentier's income and savings—to be used as a bribe for the release—and reinsertion into the cycle—of a man guilty of bribery. The chants of the square are vanished indeed.

If Lan Yu acted out of love, then more than love he shall receive. In return he gains full acceptance into the club. Handong is out—after a few months' stint in jail and a fine for tax evasion, as we later learn—and he, Lan Yu, Yonghong, Daning, and Liu Zheng are celebrating in Lan Yu's apartment (Figure 36). The family dinner which we missed on New Year's Eve years ago is belatedly recompensed. Yet this is not your typical family gathering; neither Handong's mother nor his brother is present. The party is composed of not just family but also a colleague and a lover. There is, however, a single association that fits them all: they are all partners in crime. Five is the unit, not the masses collected on the square, not the couple entwined in bed.



Figure 36: Daning and Handong play a drinking game.

If the five form an unusual grouping, it is not because Lan Yu, or rather his and Handong's evident relationship, presents a threat to heteronormativity. In fact, Stanley Kwan downplays in this scene the homosexual in favor of the homosocial. Handong, Liu Zheng, and Daning—"the guys"—are shown at table (Figure 37); "the girls"—Yonghong and Lan Yu—are seen preparing food in the kitchen (Figure 38). Lan Yu has been embraced, to be sure, but more as a sister-in-law than as a gay man. The moment he appears as gay is the same moment he disappears as man. He is rendered one woman next to another while the men, Handong seated between Daning and Liu Zheng, play their drinking games (Figure 36).



Figure 37: Liu Zheng, Handong, and Daning celebrate after Handong is released from prison.



Figure 38: Lan Yu and Yonghong preparing food in the kitchen.

It is no coincidence that Handong receives news of Lan Yu's death during his first return to the office, while Liu Zheng is with him. His partner, who at the beginning of the film apprised him of Lan Yu, now near its the end apprises him of the state of the company's finances. Despite the tax evasion fine, lawyers' fees, and other expenses, there is still enough left to restart the business. In other words, the two of them will have a second life together. It is at this moment that Handong receives the phone call. But if the earlier phone call bearing news of a cohort's arrest presaged his own, then this one sets him free.

For in a sense Lan Yu has to die, and a construction site accident is a fitting finish. Just as Handong cannot remain bound in prison, so must Lan Yu not hold him captive. The price to be paid for the unfreezing of the former's capital is the freezing of the latter's head (Figure 39). Handong has to stay in circulation. And that is why we see him blurring through Beijing in his car at the end (Figure 40), in the dynamic flow of another round of creative destruction—the

"demolition-construction" (拆迁) that Handong says Beijing is constantly undergoing (Figure 41). Lan Yu was but one of its victims. Others had fallen on June Fourth, obstructions cleared from the way of China's development.



Figure 39: The corpse of Lan Yu.



Figure 40: Handong speeding through Beijing in his car.



Figure 41: The construction site where Lan Yu lost his life.

Inconsequent cutting

Lan Yu premiered in Cannes in May 2001. A month after the film opened in Hong Kong in November of the same year, it was screened on the mainland. But the only public exhibitions took place during China's first-ever Gay Film Festival (同性恋电影节) from December 14 to 23, at Peking University, Tsinghua University, and nearby coffee shops (Zhen 2007). The organizers of the festival, students of Peking University's film association, had reached out to the producer Zhang Yongning for a 35mm print (Zhen 2007). Tickets to *Lan Yu* sold out (Cristini 2003, 27). Not long after the screenings, however, authorities at both Peking and Tsinghua cut short the rest of the campus events and the entire festival had to relocate to the coffee shops (Zhen 2007).

The Chinese media had reported on *Lan Yu*, especially when it won, a week before the Beijing festival, four Golden Horse awards in Taiwan, including Stanley Kwan for best director and Liu Ye (刘烨) as Lan Yu for best actor. Numerous outlets such as the Xinhua News Agency (新华社), *Beijing Evening News* (北京晚报), and *Beijing Youth Daily* (北京青年报) covered the festival itself (Zhen 2007). No cuts must have been made to *Lan Yu*. Several articles thereon mentioned the full frontal nudity.¹¹⁰ One reporter even brought up the June Fourth sequence (Chu 2002).

The film had received in Hong Kong a "Level III" rating—"Persons Aged 18 and Above Only"—for its sexual explicitness. Zhang Yongning applied at China's Film Bureau (电影局) for its mainland theatrical release; approval was not granted (Friess 2002). In 2006, however, five years after its original release, VCD and DVD copies of *Lan Yu* were distributed in China. Pirated VCDs of the film had first surfaced on the mainland around the time of the Gay Film Festival. A Chinese netizen (who mentions the festival) claims to have bought a pirated VCD in Beijing in December (<http://www.xici.net/d3661066.htm>; accessed August 8, 2014). A *New York*

¹¹⁰ See, among others, Zeng, Wobu 2001.

Times article from January 2002 also reports such disks being sold on the street in China (Friess 2002). In 2001 nearly 40 million pirated audiovisual materials were confiscated (Jinying Li 2012, 545). By 2006, that number reached nearly 50 million.¹¹¹

The 2006 version was not only official; it was edited. Three scenes are cut from this edition. The first one is the nude scene involving Lan Yu and Chen Handong—played by Liu Ye and Hu Jun (胡军), respectively—on their first night together. The second one is when Daning pays a call to Handong's office: the part where he talks about the clearing of the Square is removed; we only hear him mention that he saw Lan Yu on the square. The third one is the entirety of Handong driving out in search of Lan Yu later that night, their reunion in the parking lot, and their embrace and Lan Yu's weeping in bed. The edited version jumps from Handong's room on the night of June 3rd to the scene in the car that Handong gives Lan Yu as a graduation present several years later.

The cutting of the nude scene is smooth; it in no way disrupts the flow of the story. But the cutting of June 3rd and 4th is abrupt. We see Daning enter Handong's office, and the next shot is him immediately leaving it, telling Handong about glimpsing Lan Yu on the square on his way out. Something is conspicuously missing from that sequence. The same illogic jars when we jump from Handong in a bathrobe outside his bathroom to Lan Yu and Handong somehow back together in a car. The discontinuity of the narrative indicates that something of consequence was taken out. It is through its censorship from the mainland edition that we comprehend the place of Tiananmen in *Lan Yu* neither as historical background nor as a personal moment. To remove June Fourth would make the film inconsequent.

Curiously enough, the 2006 edition was not simply shortened. In fact, it was advertised as the

¹¹¹ For a rich account of piracy facilitating an underground realm for cultural circulation and consumption in the context of a repressive regime, see Jinying Li 2012.

"producer's extended version" (制片人特别加长版). For in addition to the three cuts discussed above, there are two added sequences that lengthen the movie from 86 minutes (in its Hong Kong release) to approximately 100. One of the sequences expands upon the relationship between Handong and Lin Jingping, the woman to whom he was married briefly. Procured by Liu Zheng as well, Jingping was at first an interpreter for Handong in his dealings with businessmen from another postsocialist country, Russia (Figure 42). Even while working as interpreter, she told the Russians, in Russian, that in the future she hoped to "meet as business partners." In the sequence of four scenes added to the mainland version, we find out that her and Handong's interactions are mainly financial in nature. In one scene she borrows his company funds to speculate in the housing market and make money for her private account—in direct contrast with Lan Yu, we will remember, who would later sell his house not for personal profit but to save Handong. In another she asks Handong if he has sold her stocks for her. It turns out that she, too, balks at heteronormative conventions: whereas Handong wants a child, she gets an abortion, never having wanted one. As soon as this transaction falls through, they terminate their relationship, and Jingping asks for a five-million-yuan divorce settlement.



Figure 42: Lin Jingping interpreting for Handong and Russian businessmen.

The other sequence evokes Tiananmen. It occurs towards the end of the movie, the last scene before the day that Lan Yu dies. It is winter, and Handong and Lan Yu are outside in the snow. Handong wants to hear Lan Yu sing a song. And what song does Lan Yu start singing but "The Internationale:" "Arise, slaves afflicted by hunger and cold..." (起來，飢寒交迫的奴隸) (Figure 43).¹¹² Handong interrupts him, not wanting to hear this song. Lan Yu replies: "Besides this, there's nothing else" (除了這個，再沒別的了). Then he remembers "How can you bear seeing me sad" and begins to sing this song, in which Handong joins.

¹¹² This French song by Eugene Potter was first translated into Chinese from the Russian in the early 1920s by Qu Qiubai, a Communist leader at the time.



Figure 43: Lan Yu sings for Handong "The Internationale."

"The Internationale" was one of the most popular songs sung en masse on Tiananmen Square in spring 1989. It resurfaces here, in an edition from which the casualties of Tiananmen have been deleted. The fight has been lost, and even Lan Yu the picketer has joined the other side. But the song survives, even if quickly eclipsed, as a residuum of a movement that sang of an alternative publicity. As Robert Chi observes, at stake in the singing of "The Internationale" was "the very notion of the past as the origin for a plurality of other possible futures, for roads not taken" (Chi 2007, 241). Now Lan Yu is singing it alone, and to one person. Nevertheless there are consequences to his obstinacy: "Besides this, there's nothing else." We will remember that the entire story is told through Handong's flashback. If we interpret the cuts to the mainland edition diegetically, then Handong gets to live because he blocks out Tiananmen not so much from his memory as from his recounting. Lan Yu, however, has violated the taboo. Therefore he has to pay the price of his life.

Shot in and around Beijing, *Conjugation* and *Lan Yu* not only evoke the 1989 movement but also perform its censorship, the former with a muted scene at Tiananmen Square and the latter with an "inconsequent" gap in the mainland DVD version. In their movement from mainland to Hong Kong and vice versa, they illustrate the continual displacement of the publicness that was Tiananmen in a postsocialist China where private ties and crony coteries are the only alternatives. Though their tenors are far from triumphant, neither are they defeatist. Instead, these films confront erasure with recalcitrance.

This fourth and final chapter on unauthorized films that straddle mainland China and Hong Kong, along with the first chapter on Chinese state propaganda, the second chapter on early post-Tiananmen literary and audiovisual productions from Hong Kong, and the third chapter on mainland literature, completes my survey of the Tiananmen Square protests in Chinese fiction and film. In addition to summarizing the main points of my dissertation, I discuss the significance of the protests as attention inside and outside of China is increasingly absorbed by its economic performance. I finish by pointing to ways that the project can be expanded as the dissertation is revised into a book manuscript.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation opened with the question: Why the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests? Another way to frame it is: why are the protests still significant? Since the June Fourth crackdown, the Chinese state has seemingly only accrued authority. Far from bringing about a decisive shattering of Party legitimacy, the bloody repression ushered in an era of superlatives. China now touts the world's second largest economy. Instead of merely serving as cheap labor in the global sweatshop, Chinese individuals and companies are buying up American lands as well as brands. Urban students today partake of a lifestyle which rivals that of students in the U.S. In fact, many of the former, taking advantage of the rapid rise in wealth, have joined the latter in American classrooms all over the country, enjoying a freedom of movement and consumption that their college counterparts who gathered on Tiananmen Square 27 years ago could hardly dream of.

They and the rest of their compatriots have the right to ditch the memories of 1989 as their country continues its forward march down what commentators have dubbed the "China century." At the same time, however, we cannot overlook the Chinese state's suppression of efforts to recall the contentious meanings of the past into the public. Of all the major historical events in modern China, the Tiananmen Square demonstrations are arguably the most rigorously censored of all. For not only did they occupy the center of the nation, they projected on the most public of spaces alternative visions of what China and its people could become. It is the political dimension of these visions that the current regime, no matter its economic successes, cannot countenance.

My dissertation aimed to make a contribution to the field of modern Chinese literary and cultural studies by unveiling the rich variety of fiction and film produced in China and Hong

Kong that evoke the 1989 protests. Of the entire body of such work, I focused on texts that are particularly open to self-reflexive reading, those that perform their own precarious appearance and imminent disappearance. For they materialize the conflict between a rigorous state censorship that attempts to blot out essentially all references to and representations of the protest movement, on the one side, and the endeavors to re-publicize its polyvocality, on the other. I painted this conflict asymmetrically. Chapter 1 set the stage of the official verdict on the "counterrevolutionary riot" promulgated by the government in waves upon waves of publications in the immediate aftermath of the June Fourth bloodshed. Chapters 2-4 examined recordings and recuperations, from Hong Kong audiovisual materials' negotiations of the event in relation to the impending Return to Chinese sovereignty in Chapter 2, via the two mainland novels in Chapter 3 that figured the absent Square with the orthography of blank boxes and parentheses, to Chapter 4's films that used silences and gaps to recapture a hushed, edited past.

These preceding chapters demonstrate that "banned" or "underground," or an aesthetics of evasion, cannot encompass the totality of Tiananmen-related fiction and film from within Chinese jurisdiction. State propaganda on the movement and its crushing may be marginalized now, but a massive campaign fueled its growth and spread in the years between 1989 and 1991 (by my surmise). The novels considered in Chapter 3 were banned and the films in Chapter 4 could not be shot with official approval, to be sure, yet they each took a distinct path on the way (back) to the public, whether through the reissuing of an altered edition (*Decadent Capital*), reposting by an avid netizen (*Such Is This World@sars.come*), moving to Hong Kong for register and release (*Conjugation*), or cutting out an "inconsequent" scene (*Lan Yu*). Chapter 2, on the other hand, reveals that Hong Kong prior to the 1997 Handover was not as impervious to Chinese censorship as one may expect. In fact, British and Chinese authorities collaborated in

reining in a “dependent” and soon-to-be “special” public realm.

The making of alternative publics characterizes my readings. In Chapter 1 I looked at state-sponsored literature whose revisiting today constitutes an unwelcome commemoration. Chapter 2 explored the June Fourth aftermath through a documentary and a TV program that probed questions of identity and community in Hong Kong. With its open spaces in the text and with its online readers and rewriters, *Decadent Capital* and *Such Is This World*, respectively, rendered possible a participatory reception, elaborated in Chapter 3. Chapter 4, finally, pitted reminders of collective good—the donations box in *Conjugation*, images of rescue efforts on the night of June 3rd and 4th in *Lan Yu*—against the postsocialist and especially post-Tiananmen ethos of deepening privatization. All the works turn what was monopolized and then privatized over to the public, so that every reader and viewer can reread it, re-view it, and re-appropriate it.

My case studies affirm that specificity of time and place is crucial to the analysis of publics and their contention. China is not only not Hong Kong but the China of the early post-Tiananmen years is not the China since then. Hong Kong before and after July 1, 1997 are obviously not the same locale, but the former, during its transition between sovereignties, cannot be construed simply as a British colony. Chapters 3 and 4, moreover, place emphasis on medium specificity, tracing the historicity of post-Tiananmen print culture and internet culture as well as the mainland-Hong Kong divide in the prohibition and exhibition of film.

I have limited the geographical scope of this dissertation to China and Hong Kong. One potential task for future research is to broaden the area in treating overseas literature and film too. The conditions of production, circulation, and reception of these works are certainly different, yet they nevertheless can and do have publics within Chinese jurisdiction, mainly in the semi-autonomous S.A.R. that is Hong Kong and in the no less censorious but less

manageable spaces of the Chinese internet. Though the audiences they address may be located primarily abroad, no impenetrable wall—including the infamous Great Firewall—restricts their range absolutely. Especially as China's "soft power" expands globally, the compromised circumstances in which Chinese writers and filmmakers work may be experienced by those outside its jurisdiction proper. There are already numerous cases of foreign journalists as well as academics denied visas, or expelled from China, for their coverage of political issues deemed taboo. It is far from inconceivable that creative artists on the outside begin to reflexively picture the contestation between Chinese censorship and an alternative politics of the public in China as well as in their own endangered spaces.

Another way I plan to expand upon the current project is to eventually translate it into Chinese for publication in Hong Kong or online. This agenda is related to the proposed widening of my objects of study just mentioned. I, too, am located on the outside. And as I stated at the outset of this dissertation, it is this location that allows me to embark on such an enterprise in the first place. But in addition to addressing a readership in the U.S. academy, I cannot ignore the latent audiences in China. Such a transfer would of course entail more than translation. Yet the borders of the public are porous. Just as Chinese censorship may be exported to the U.S. publishing industry, film industry, and educational industry, and just as overseas literature and film find their way to Chinese eyes and ears, so will I attempt to forward, as suggested in the Introduction, my research to addresses on the mainland.

I am far away. But the publics I hope to constitute are precisely not predicated on physical presence. It is not written in stone that, within China, Tiananmen cannot be spoken about forever. The fiction and film I have focused on in this dissertation map the terrain of contention temporally and spatially. They point towards a future time when Tiananmen Square 1989 can be

reconfigured in the where of the mainland. Despite emerging from contexts of censorship, they show that the contestation is always ongoing, changing with the passing of time, varying by place, complicated by multiple media. They dispute the not-here and the never. The publics inside Chinese jurisdiction and I share at least one thing in common: our barring from the Square since June Fourth. It is this fellowship that binds us in a circle which, growing outward, traces spirals in the sky oriented towards a new horizon.

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