This book is a multidisciplinary study of Chinese modernity in the areas of literature, visual culture, and biopolitics. In his deceptively titled monograph, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present*, Fredric Jameson at one point entertains as many as fourteen possible narratives of modernity in European history, extending from the German Reformation through the French Enlightenment to the Soviet Revolution. Chinese modernity, from the mid-nineteenth century to the twenty-first century, is necessarily multifarious and open to many possibilities of narration. We may enumerate a series of successive or overlapping “modern” moments: incipient modernity in the late Qing, May Fourth bourgeois modernity, capitalist semi-colonial modernity in Shanghai-Nanjing in the Republican Era, communist revolutionary modernity, socialist modernity (1950s–1970s), the modernity of the new enlightenment in the New Period (1980s), and postsocialist modernity in the post–New Period from 1989 to the present.

The present project covers selected episodes and texts in modern China, from the turn of the twentieth century to the turn of the twenty-first. I do not limit myself to one literary form or one artistic medium, but draw on diverse materials from different media — literature, film, art, and photography — in order to better circumscribe and comprehend the nature and characteristics of China’s...
varied experiences of modernity. A central theme of the study is the dialectic of globalization and its discontents. We may date the beginning of globalization at the rise of the modern capitalist world-system. The incessant need to seek new world markets intrinsic to the process of globalization contributed to the collapse of the Chinese empire and the advent of capitalism in China. Globalization as we commonly refer to it, namely the post–Cold War era, is but the latest and most intense episode in the long history of globalization.

China’s entry into the capitalist world economy, troubled and difficult as always, has unleashed fantasies and imaginings that attempt to bypass the limitations of local and national traditions. Globalization was potentially a liberating force for the body politic. But the constant, ruthless pursuit of markets and profits entails the interruption of traditional ways of life and the destruction of old spaces of living. The teleology of modernization and globalization is thrown into crisis just as they open up new horizons. A tension exists between the universalizing, globalizing tendency of capital and the defensive enclaves of nationalism, localism, and tradition. While looking toward the future, nostalgia has become a resurgent theme in contemporary Chinese cultural production and consumption.

More precisely, I dwell here on the biopolitics of modernity and globalization in the analysis of specific texts. The body functions as a cultural, aesthetic, and historical prism through which Chinese modernity and its relationship to global modernity (or modernities) can be looked at anew. I investigate the regulation of desires, bodies, affects, and sexuality in the construction of modernity as embodied in Chinese thought, literature, film, and art.

Biopolitics

Globalization is the ineluctable human condition of our time. But globalization is not just the physical circulation of goods, commodities, industries, hardware, and capital across national boundaries. It must be felt personally in the everyday life of individuals. At a deeper level, the process involves the structure of feelings and the politics of the body, the psyche, and affects. What is needed in cultural studies is a thorough and adequate analysis of what we might call “global biopolitics.” At this point, I venture to outline some general tendencies of the global libidinal economy and at the same time describe the current state of socialist/postsocialist China, which was long regarded as the “other” of the capitalist West. The entry of contemporary China into the picture contributes to a vast and significant expansion of the regime of global capitalism and its attendant biopolitical manifestations.

According to Michel Foucault, the emergence of modernity since the eighteenth century is crucially predicated upon a new form of disciplinary regime,
“biopolitics” or “biopower.” This is a mechanism for the control and regulation of bodies, desires, and sexuality. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault introduces and elaborates upon this concept. He writes, “there was an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations, marking the beginning of an era of ‘bio-power.’ . . . This bio-power was without question an indispensable element in the development of capitalism. The latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes.”6 The surveillance of human beings for the production of “docile bodies” is critically important for the formation of subjectivities that are compatible with the needs of the modern nation-state and capitalism. The development of the technologies and mechanisms of subjectivization of the individual is fundamental to the establishment of sovereignty in the modern era. Giorgio Agamben follows up on Foucault’s thought and asserts: “the entry of *zoe* into the sphere of *polis* — the politicization of bare life as such — constitutes the decisive event of modernity and signals a radical transformation of the political-philosophical categories of classical thought. It is even likely that if politics today seems to be passing through a lasting eclipse, this is because politics has failed to reckon with this foundational event of modernity.”7

In their book *Empire*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri expand Foucault’s idea and make it into the guiding principle in the present rule of imperial sovereignty. In their reading of Foucault, the exercise of power over the body has become less heavy-handed and more diffuse, internalized, and immanent since the 1960s. Thus, they point to a paradigmatic shift from the modern to the postmodern. Biopower demarcates the shift from industrial production to postindustrial reproduction of life as characterized by affective labor, entertainment, service, and information technology. They outline three successive paradigms and stages of economic development since the Middle Ages. The first one is agriculture and the extraction of raw materials; the second one is industry and the manufacture of durable goods; and the third one is the providing of services and the manipulation of information, or the processes of postmodernization and informatization.

Service, information, and knowledge involve the production of *immaterial labor*. The personal computer is a model of communicational immaterial service. Hardt and Negri explain the notion of affective labor in the following words:

The other face of immaterial labor is the *affective labor* of human contact and interaction. Health services, for example, rely centrally on caring and affective labor, and the entertainment industry is likewise focused on the creation
and manipulation of affect. This labor is immaterial, even if it is corporeal and affective, in the sense that its products are intangible, a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, or passion.  

What I would like to pursue further at this juncture is the globalization of affective labor, of “in-person service” across national boundaries. Global affective labor covers a vast terrain of human interaction and trafficking, actual or virtual: health service, child care, domestic work, online dating, correspondence marriage, immigrant sex work, entertainment, tourism, digital information, and so on. The global circulation, production, and rendering of affective labor have further created a new shape of biopolitics that Foucault himself did not live to see. Here, I will illustrate several points.

First of all, the libidinal economy, or the economy of affect, is often structured in the same way as the global market economy and operates in accordance with the logic of supply and demand. The new geopolitics of affective labor across national and regional boundaries liberates citizens from the political oppression of the old nation-state and frees them from the economic conditions of scarcity, unemployment, overproduction, and overcapacity. There exists a privileged group of “flexible citizens” who navigate the geography of the world with ease while seeking opportunistic gains. At the same time, this global biopolitics subjugates human beings to new forms of commodification, control, exploitation, and victimization. The new global biopolitics could be repressive or liberating, depending on the specific conjecture of circumstances. We may call this phenomenon a neoliberalist economy of affect.

Second, the questions of victimization and agency are both important in transnational transactions of labor and affect. So long as globalization continues, discontents will be its by-products. Globalization could widen the already existing disparity between the rich, powerful, and upwardly mobile and the disadvantaged, marginal, and disenfranchised. Domination, exploitation, and abuse of men and women occur in the global economy. In the famous words of Karl Marx, the primitive accumulation of capital is barbaric. Yet the power relation embedded in each and every instance of transnational interaction should be examined case by case. As an anthologist researching correspondence marriage between Western men and Asian women observed, “women involved in correspondence relationships are not merely pawns of global political economy or the victims of sexual exploitation, nor are men simply the agents of western sexual imperialism.” Men and women can be both the agents of change and subjugated to manipulation and domination in a given process.

Third, I wish to point out that in the overarching global economy, nationality and nationalism do not altogether disappear; now and then they surface
and obstruct otherwise smooth business transactions. More important, even if traditional and ancient antagonisms between nation-states no longer exist, the geopolitical unconscious, history, and memory can stubbornly persist and motivate the actions and desires of individuals against the interest and logic of global capital.

Affective labor is immaterial and intangible yet corporeal and in-person. The physical dimension is palpable in this new global service industry. Citizens of rich countries fly to developing countries in search of affection, comfort, and even marriage that are difficult to obtain in their home countries. Third-world subjects render such service to people from the rich countries willingly or without a choice. Some of them also migrate to the metropolitan West in search of work and wealth. What should be emphasized is the symbolic and cultural dimension of such types of “immaterial work.” Citizens from formerly colonized and disadvantaged states also seek out such satisfaction and fulfillment from affective laborers of former or present dominant powers. Although the era of colonialism and imperialism has ended, what we witness is a living postcolonial and postimperialist imaginary of vindication, satisfaction, and prestige on the part of third-world subjects. This is the domain of desire and fantasy. The global market economy of affect thus prepares the ground for the reversal of old economic and power relationships between the rich and poor, the empowered and dispossessed. Cash can be exchanged for affective labor. Hence the geopolitical unconscious surfaces even after the physical disappearance of old geopolitics. Residual nationalist sentiments and fantasies can both prohibit and motivate the desires and actions of people from a particular region.

In their book *Anti-Oedipus*, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari comment on the internal schizophrenic contradiction of capitalism. In their words:

[Capitalism], through its process of production, produces an awesome schizophrenic accumulation of energy or charge, against which it brings all its vast powers of repression to bear, but which nonetheless continues to act as capitalism’s limit. For capitalism constantly counteracts, constantly inhibits this inherent tendency while at the same time allowing it free rein; it continually seeks to avoid reaching its limit while simultaneously tending toward it. Capitalism institutes or restores all sorts of residual and artificial, imaginary, or symbolic territorialities, thereby attempting, as best it can, to recode, to rechannel persons who have been defined in terms of abstract qualities. Everything returns or recurs: States, nations, families.  

Global capitalism is, then, a schizophrenic process between the endless, indefinite expansion of capital and the limiting, defensive mechanisms of the nation-state, tradition, and religion. A tug of war exists between the decoding
and deterritorialization of flows of capital and desire on the one hand, and the recoding and reterritorialization of old institutions on the other. This will become evident in the examples of biopolitical manifeststions that I will now present.

The Geopolitics of the Libidinal Economy and the Ethnography of Desire

The trafficking of categories of people in the global biopolitical order is growing in scope and frequency. Transnational corporeal service and the migration of affective labor have become increasingly part of people’s daily existence. Pen pals, Internet dating, mail-order brides, foreign nannies, maids, sex workers, and tourists demarcate the new zones of human interaction. Most melodramatic is perhaps the flourish of a vast network of transnational dating services across oceans and continents. There are countless Web sites advertising transnational dating and marriage. Women from Asia and Eastern Europe with disadvantaged economic backgrounds seek men in the West. Dating tours are organized on a regular basis to go to those countries to meet women. For example, American agencies such as A Foreign Affair, Anastasia, and European Connections are among the biggest companies in the trade that specialize in Eastern Europe. Established in the early 1990s, they organize tours to cities in Russia and Ukraine regularly. Each boasts that not a single scheduled tour has ever been nor ever will be canceled. Every male client shells out thousands of dollars and is guaranteed to meet no less than six hundred women in three “socials” on a romance tour.

It is informative to examine the advertising strategy of such transnational marriage agencies. The 2002 promotion tour videotape of European Connections is a case in point. It exhorts rich foreigners, especially Americans, to travel with the company to Russian and Ukrainian cities: Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Kyiv, Odessa, and Dnipropetrovsk. In the section on Kyiv, the camera pans across the landscape of important sites in the city. While the soundtrack plays a Ukrainian folksong in the seductive voice of a female singer, the camera leads the viewer to the birthplace of Kyiv, the Dnipro River that runs through the city, and above all to the extremely masculine Monument to Victory. The knowledgeable viewer cannot help but be reminded of the grisly battles between the mighty Red Army and Nazi Germany in World War II. The heroic efforts of the Soviets ultimately defeated Hitler and saved Europe. Yet the scene soon becomes a very feminine landscape by featuring beautiful, receptive local women presumably desirous of marriage with American men. A couple of sexy young female swimmers (modern mermaids?) wearing bikinis emerge from
Dnipro River, smiling, waving, and walking toward the camera — and possibly you, a potential American traveler. At a Kyiv reception or “social,” countless Ukrainian women parade themselves in front of the camera making seductive gestures, again all over the soundtrack of an exotic, enticing Ukrainian folk-song sung by a female singer. These women are eager to meet you, to be chosen by you. In the videotape, the American bachelors give personal testimonies one after another about the quality and superiority of East European women: for example, “If you dropped a group of women of this quality in a bar in America, there would be a riot”; “These women have all the qualities that American women are missing”; “I have never seen so many beautiful women all in one place.” And the comments go on and on. The awe felt for the former Soviet Empire melts away, and one is now warmed by the multitude of foreign women wanting rich Western men.

The video segment on Odessa is equally appealing, especially for connoisseurs of world cinema. The opening shot is one of the enchanting Odessa Steps (Potemkin Steps) in spring, a place that was immortalized in Sergei Eisenstein’s Battleship Potemkin. The Odessa Steps sequence has been a textbook example of montage, being cited and recycled in later films, such as the sequence “Station Steps” in Brian De Palma’s The Untouchables. Once again, the sort of violent struggle in the original film and later imitations is nonexistent in the video promotion. The Odessa Steps, and the Odessa Opera House, which was the target of bombardment by the rebellious battleship Potemkin in response to the massacre of ordinary people on the steps, are now soothing sites of an exotic, peaceful, and friendly city that invites foreign males to rendezvous with its beautiful local women. In fact, tourist maps and street signs in cities such as Kyiv and Odessa prominently point to the exact locations of dating agencies for the convenience of the male visitor from afar.

The global circulation of bodies is facilitated by a capitalist economy of demand and supply. The commodification of the body, and more specifically the fetishization and consumption of the foreign body, often results from a geopolitical asymmetry in wealth and power. Mating with the foreigner on the other side of the ocean is a main manifestation of such geopolitics of biopower, or “geobiopower.” A sense of satisfaction is derived from being able to mate women or men from a present or former dominant geopolitical power, be it the former Soviet Union or mainland China. The patron from a rich country meets, dates, and weds a partner from a presently poor but historically dominant power. Sexuality breaks down barriers of nationality, ethnicity, age, and religion. It is the equalizer of all things, but at the same time it operates on the principle of social and economic inequality.

The simultaneous cult and debasement of mainland women in Hong Kong
and Taiwan’s sex trade and marriage service are worth examination.13 “Mainland sisters” (dalu mei) and “northern sisters” (beimei) are financially poor, yet they come from mighty China. As advertised, these women are supposed to have an attractive physique and possess qualities that are lacking in women from Hong Kong and Taiwan. At the same time, they are stigmatized as sly, opportunistic gold diggers threatening the stability of Taiwanese and Hong Kongese families. Nevertheless, some patrons and would-be husbands derive a sense of superiority and conquest from mating with mainlanders. In certain streets and alleys of Mongkok, Yaumatei, and Shamshuipo in Hong Kong, glitzy neon signs attract the eyes of the locals and offer the availability and prices, in Hong Kong dollars, of varieties of women: mainland Chinese, Thai, Filipina, Malaysian, and Eastern European. The packaged sumptuous body of the mainland Chinese woman, especially from northeast China, is a desirable, exotic object for the southern Chinese male, whose wealth translates into power in such corporeal transactions.

The contradiction between territorial nationalism and the borderless transnational sex industry sometimes explodes on the front page of news media. The
story about a Japanese sex-tour group in southern China became the national headline in September 2003. About 380 Japanese male tourists, ranging in age from sixteen to thirty-seven, visited the southern Chinese city Zhuhai, just north of Macau. The hotel management called in about five hundred Chinese prostitutes from various nightclubs to serve this group. These women arrived at the hotel to participate in an orgy of sexual transaction. It would have been another ordinary episode in the bustling transnational sex tour industry, but this time, an indignant Chinese customer at the hotel, a Mr. Zhao Guangquan who happened to be staying at the hotel for a conference, leaked the news to the media. A Japanese tourist was quoted as saying, in Chinese translation: “We come here to play with Chinese girls!” (Women jiushi lai wan Zhongguo guniang de!). Each Chinese girl was paid 1,200 to 1,800 yuan to spend a night with a Japanese client in the hotel. The timing of the Japanese visitors was a politically sensitive day, September 18, a “National Day of Shame” (guochi ri), upon which the Japanese had invaded and occupied northeast China in 1931. This was the seventy-second anniversary of Japanese invasion of northeast China. Nationalism and historical memory blocked the transnational libidinal flow based on
the economic principle of free exchange between money and service. Chinese-language newspapers and Web sites across the world reported this event and provided forums for venting nationalistic sentiments.

Here are two of the newspaper headlines reporting and commenting on the case:


Scandal in a Luxury Hotel: Licentious Sound and Lascivious Laughter on the National Day of Shame.15

The lines “courtesans did not know the pain of loss of a country, and still sang ‘Flowers in the Backyard’ across the river” (Shangnü buzhi wangguo hen, gejiang you chang Houting hua) are two well-known lines from the poem “Mooring at Qinhuai River” (Bo Qinhuai) by the famous late Tang Dynasty poet Du Mu (A.D. 803–853). The original poem laments the oblivion of history and the vanquishing of a country in the hands of a decadent court. The last emperor of the short-lived Chen dynasty in southern China, posthumously titled Chen Houzhu, composer of the song “Flowers in the Backyard,” lost his throne and country as a result of indulging in sensual pleasures. The site of the poem, Jinling, was the capital of several Southern dynasties, which were conquered one after another. The poet Du Mu wrote the poem about the decline of the late Tang dynasty and reminded his readers of a lesson from the past. In more recent historical memory, it is also in the same city now called Nanjing, through which the Qinhuai River runs, that Japanese soldiers committed unspeakable atrocities, massacring and raping hundreds of thousands of Chinese civilians in 1937. The infamous incident has been known as the “Rape of Nanjing.”16 In this instance, both ancient and modern Chinese history was too painful for the average Chinese to tolerate the sexual extravagance of the Japanese tourists. “The conscience of the nation” forbade the unobtrusive flow of transnational transactions. The nation was forced by public opinion and the media to interfere in an otherwise smooth regional border-crossing libidinal economy.

The unfortunate Chinese “pimps” were arrested, and some of them were sentenced to life imprisonment. The site of the event, a five-star hotel — Zhuhai International Conference Center Hotel (Zhuhai guoji huiyi zhongxin da jiedian), was shut down by the government for a while. The spokesperson of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kong Quan, also felt it necessary to comment on the event. He instructed foreigners to obey Chinese laws and urged the Japanese government to better educate its citizens on such matters.17 Thus can
nationalism disrupt the normal rhythm in the channeling of libidinal drives and desires in transnational circuits—temporarily.

Yes, only temporarily. The arbitrariness of national interference cannot out-last the long wave of economic necessity. Half a year later, business goes on as usual in Zhuhai. The closed hotel is reopened, and Zhuhai is flooded with male tourists from Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China. The legendary old streets are again lined with hundreds of sex workers who attempt to pick up passers-by as their customers. The sex industry thrives more than ever because, ironically, the incident of the Japanese tour group has made the place even more famous/infamous. The owner of an entertainment business in Zhuhai is quoted as saying the following: “Zhuhai depends on this (sex industry)! After being shut down for half a year, nightclubs big and small lost tens of millions of yuan, not including related businesses. If things are not relaxed, Zhuhai will be finished.”18 The body revolts against the surveillance and control of the state. More important, the imperative of the global libidinal economy, with all its thrills and cruelty, forbids the long-term halting of the circulation of desire and capital.

Transregional Desire in the Film Culture of Greater China

The regional and transregional trafficking in libido, bodies, and money within Greater China is common and far-reaching. Some films from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and mainland China are indicative of the situation. One good example is the Hong Kong film *Durian Durian (Liulian piaopiao*, dir. Fruit Chan, 2001). Xiaoyan, a beautiful young woman from the city of Mudanjiang in Dongbei (northeast China), comes to Hong Kong to work in the sex industry. The first half of the film is set in Hong Kong, and the second half in Mudanjiang after she returns from Hong Kong because her visa has expired. There is a strong contrast between the desolate, empty landscape of postsocialist Dongbei and the glitzy, dizzying, fast-paced, busy street scenes of Hong Kong as a hotbed of capitalism. Toward the end of the film, former cultural workers (male dancers) and Xiaoyan’s friends in Mudanjiang, now unemployed, organize a dance troupe to work for a local nightclub. Their transformation into entertainers in a nightclub is reminiscent of the fate of unemployed male workers in the British film *The Full Monty (1997)*, in which the workers in postindustrial Sheffield have no choice but turn into male strippers in a nightclub. The film illustrates a historical postmodern shift from industrial production to service, entertainment, and affective labor. What happened to a country of the advanced West is now unfolding in a formerly third-world country like China.

Dongbei was a major base of industrial production in the Mao era. But as its dilapidated, antiquarian factories went bankrupt and closed down one after an-
other, millions of people became jobless. Wang Bing’s epic documentary, *West of the Rails* (*Tiexie qu*, 2003), offers precisely such a chronicle of the decay of a once industrialized, prosperous district of Shenyang and the dire consequences for the working class. With the decay of old industries and the highest number of laid-off workers from China’s state-owned enterprises, Dongbei is the biggest supplier, along with Sichuan province, of sex workers in the country even though prostitution is officially illegal in China. Leaving the old home in search of work, whether Mudanjiang or Shenyang, is the logical and inevitable choice of many men and women, like Xiaoyan in *Durian Durian*, when the socialist wealth system collapses and people have nothing to turn to except helping themselves.

A new generation of Chinese leaders now targets Dongbei for the nation’s future development. With the decline of the so-called Shanghai gang (Shanghai bang) in Chinese politics, Dongbei is on the priority list of development under Premier Wen Jiabao. At the end of the film, Xiaoyan (Qin Hailu, herself an actress from Dongbei), the heroine, performs a role in an old Chinese opera on a stage in her neighborhood. The camera zeroes in on a close-up of her face, highlighting her refusal to go back to Hong Kong and her realignment with traditional Chinese virtues. Thus, the film signifies the change from old-fashioned industrial production to biopolitical reproduction — namely, the production of affect and service; yet the sanctity of virtue halts the smooth flow of sexual transactions based on the principle of free exchange between money and service.

Given the pervasive extent of the libidinal economy for sale, Edward Yang’s film *Mahjong* (*Majiang*, 1996) is an indignant indictment of the degeneration of social mores in Taiwanese society. The film focuses on an underground transregional and transnational network of male and female prostitution in Taipei. Yang presents vivid portraits of these characters (Ginger, an American woman running an international escort service in Taipei; Marthe, an innocent French girl who was almost lured into prostitution while in Taipei; a gang member named “Hong Kong,” a gigolo at night; Markus, a British national who was fond of picking up local ladies for short-term relations). Red Fish’s father, a married rich Taiwanese businessman, was obsessed with his mistress from Hong Kong, Angela, who depleted his coffers. Many scenes of the film were shot on location at Hard Rock Café and TGI Friday’s in Taipei. Locals and foreigners come to such places to socialize and make business deals. Here foreigners pick up locals or locals enjoy a taste of foreigners in the flesh trade. Indeed, such international hotels, cafés, and restaurants have become the literal contact zone between the local and the global in Asia’s metropolises.

The mainland Chinese feature film *Purple Sunset* (*Ziri*, 2001), directed by Feng Xiaoning, describes the adventure of a Chinese man, a female Russian
soldier, and a Japanese schoolgirl in Dongbei in the final days of World War II. Lost and having drifted away from their respective national groups, they must help each other in order to survive and move out of danger. The front cover of the VCD case advertises the film with the following enticing words: “A story of a Chinese man and two foreign women in a vast sea of forest” (mangmang linhai zhong yige Zhongguo nanren he liangge waiguo nüren de gushi). But to expect a romantic story about a dashing Chinese male’s dalliance with two foreign women would be far from the truth. In fact, the Chinese man is no more than an ignorant young peasant, who does not even know how to handle a grenade or a gun. Towering and strong, yet feminine and attractive, the Russian woman soldier, Nadjia, shines in comparison to her two Asian companions. She is the real soldier who protects the weak Chinese man and the Japanese girl. And, by extension, Russia is the protector and victor vis-à-vis China and Japan.

A climactic moment in the film is a sequence when she hears the news of the surrender of Japan broadcast on radio from Moscow, at which point she takes off her clothes and throws them up to the sky, wearing nothing but her birthday suit. Over the soundtrack of the famous Russian folksong “Kalinka,” she jumps into a river and swims. The long shot of the camera focuses on the naked woman soldier running toward the river through a deep forest. The display of full nudity is intended to be ennobling and uplifting, signifying the beauty of the Russian woman soldier as well as Russia’s liberation of northeast China from Japan at the end of World War II.

Beijing, the capital of Red China, is a nodal point in the international flow of libidinal desires. Foreigners sometimes speak of a “German street” near Yansha Shopping Mall (Lufthansa Center) where German tourists and businessmen gather to drink, socialize, and scout. Yet, the Russian quarter is most appealing to the senses and lower instincts of the human body. Near Yabao Road and Ritan Park, a section of the city is lined up with East European restaurants with Russian signs and shops filled with commodities ranging from expensive fur coats to cheap daily necessities, all catering to the needs of Russian business people. At night, a nightclub is populated by a huge number of sex workers from the former Soviet Union and (Outer) Mongolia, as well as China. While the sign at the door occasionally proclaims loudly against prostitution (“Severely Punish Illegal Prostitution!”), the bright neon lights beckon to would-be Chinese voyeurs and flaneurs, inviting them to come inside and participate in active transactions of the flesh.

The circulation of people, commodities, natural resources, and libidinal energies across the Sino-Russian border continues, alternating with acceleration and pause. It is reported that some 3.26 million Chinese have migrated and settled in Siberia since the end of the Cold War. The Russians embrace this with a mixture of joy and fear. The influx of Chinese immigrants adds new
fuel to the economy and replenishes the declining Russian population in the Russian Far East (6.70 million). But Russia fears that it will lose its sovereignty over the area in the long run. While the transregional migration of populations is speeding up, old-style Realpolitik remains. China and Japan, two big oil importers, have been courting Russia to build oil pipelines to export Siberian oil to them. While China urges Russia to build pipelines to the Chinese city Daqing, Japan has been trying to persuade her to extend the pipelines to the Russian city Nakhodka, located on the Pacific shoreline, so that Russian oil can be exported to all the countries in the Asian Pacific — Japan, Korea, and China — rather than depending on the need of just one country (China). Russia has been carefully calculating the geopolitical advantages of each plan even though it might take a longer time and be more costly to build a particular proposed route from an economic point of view. Once again, nationalist sentiments obstruct the smooth transactions of the global economy. Historical rivalries among China, Russia, and Japan in the Far East affect present economic considerations.

In 2003, The Fifty-third Miss World Beauty Pageant was held in scenic Sanya, Hainan Island, China. Guan Qi, a twenty-one-year-old, 1.79 meters (5 feet 11 inches) tall statuesque beauty from Jilin Province, Dongbei (northeast), captured the Chinese title in the preliminary Chinese round of contests in September 2003 and won the third place in the Miss World Pageant later in the year, while a beauty from Ireland received the world title. This was the first time the Miss World competition was held in China; but the latecomer to the game was the most enthusiastic new member. China also hosted the next Miss World Pageants in 2004 and 2005, three times in a row. Thus, the Chinese organizers had a golden opportunity to further China’s fledgling fashion industry and beauty products. In this way, too, China joins the rest of the world in the production and exhibition of beauty, affect, and desire.

While analyzing various mediums and dissecting recurrent themes, this book is organized in a chronological, historical sequence. I begin with literature in the late nineteenth century, traverse the mid-twentieth century, move on to performance and installation art in the late twentieth century, examine transnational Chinese cinema, and finally review the representation of the modern city in multimedia.

In the first part of the book, “Literature and Biopolitics,” I trace the trajectory of the body in modern Chinese literature. The focus is on the adventures, pleasures, and sufferings of the male body as well as female body in the writings of selected Chinese writers from the late nineteenth century to the late twentieth. I begin with the utopian longings of a Chinese thinker-writer in the late nineteenth century, Wang Tao. Even before Kang Youwei, Wang envisioned a
grand union (*datong*) for the future of China and the world. Moreover, he fantasized about a free transnational libidinal economy between Chinese citizens and foreigners across borders and oceans. As the last great master of the classical tale (*wenyan xiaoshuo*), Wang wrote charming stories in a traditional format that exude a remarkable modern sensibility. They narrate Chinese males’ imaginary travels across the world, where they fall in love with people from other countries. His tales of fantasy project a zone of uninterrupted free flow of polymorphous desires, a world that brings together people from different parts of the planet.

Control of the body is of critical importance throughout the twentieth century. I analyze the stories of two male writers, Yu Dafu from the May Fourth period in the first half of the twentieth century and Zhang Xianliang from the socialist era in the second half of the twentieth century. While Yu’s characters are free-roaming male wanderers socially displaced and psychologically alien-

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Guan Qi: Miss China and Second Runner-Up in Miss World Pageant. City of Sanya, Hainan Island, China, 2003.
ated, Zhang's characters live their lives in the confined space of labor camps. But what is common to the two writers is their exaggerated self-portrayal of the lack of libidinal fulfillment. Society or the state denies them a legitimate channel through which to discharge libidinal energies. In both cases, the plight of the individual is closely related to the fate of the nation at large. Socialist modernity requires the rigorous disciplining of the body. Prisons, labor camps, and penitentiaries are all important sites for the ideological and physical control of the human mind and body. Sexual impotence and regained potency in Zhang's novel are related to the changing political economy of the socialist state as a whole.

Michel Foucault points out that the regulation of the body has become less cumbersome and heavy-handed in the West since the 1960s. The form of control is more relaxed, diffuse, and internalized. In retrospect, this change also indicates a paradigmatic change from modernity and industrial society to postmodernity and postindustrial society in the West. However, during the 1960s and throughout the Mao era (1950s to mid-1970s) in China, the exercise of power through the regulation of the body was brutally intense. This is attested by the “labor camp novels” of writers like Zhang Xianliang. The libidinal economy is regulated in a harsh manner for the construction of a socialist modernity.

China's belated entry into postmodernity is in step with its economic transformation from socialism to postsocialism. China has accelerated its assimilation into the global capitalist market economy since the early 1990s. As a result, the libidinal economy has also changed from one of deficit to surplus. It is the overflow of libidinal energies that a young generation of female writers describes in vivid detail. Furthermore, the emergence of polymorphous desires and rampant sexuality in their works is simultaneous with the rise of a new media technology, namely the Internet. The Internet has played a key role in spreading such writings to tens of millions of Chinese readers beyond the limits of national censorship. The flourishing of female sexuality thus has to do with the transformation of serious citizens into virtual netizens owing to the invention of such a new communication technology.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the Chinese female body begins to enjoy the thrills of sexual orgasm, especially with the help of foreign males in China's urban centers. I refer to the writings of authors like Wei Hui. Her best-known novel, *Shanghai Baby*, delves into the private sensations and exhilarations of female sexuality in the time of transnational capitalism. This is a period of Chinese history when bodies, desires, and sex circulate much more freely in metropolitan centers. Her sensations as a daydreamer, shopper, stroller, and female flaneur in the streets of Shanghai are described with psychological exactitude. What should be noticed is the emasculation of the Chinese male and the fetishization of the foreign body. In the novel, the female protagonist's Chinese
lover is an impotent drug addict, whereas her German lover is a masculine (and huge!) businessman. There is a vivid (nauseating) description of their spirited lovemaking in a public toilet. In the “Postscript” to a Chinese edition of Wei Hui’s works, the writer herself says that she received a phone call from her German lover just as she finished the last lines of the novel. This is a deliberate proof that the author herself as a Shanghai lady was indeed satiated by a German man in real life. The Chinese female writer thus contributes to the perpetuation of the image of inadequate Chinese masculinity — a familiar Fanonian complaint about devastating interracial sex for the indigenous male!

The second part of my book, “Art: From the National to the Diasporic,” looks at avant-garde art and tackles the body more directly and viscerally. Zhang Huan’s and Ma Liuming’s body and performance art takes the human body as the very theme, material, and medium of their works. They visibly enact the production and reproduction of life and the disciplining of the body. Zhang Huan’s early art dwells on the social, political, and existential dimension of the human subject in postsocialist China. After his immigration to the US, his performances addressed the issues of immigration, diaspora, and cross-cultural identity. Ma Liuming experiments with bodily and gender transgression. His own body was literally disciplined by the Chinese state — he was detained by the police for an art that was perceived as lewd behavior. In the evolution of their art through the 1990s, there has been a significant change, especially in the case of Zhang Huan, from an obsession with the body politic of the socialist nation-state to an engagement with global biopolitics — namely, the body politic of migration, globalization, and multiculturalism, a shift from the national allegory of the existential state of the third-world subject to transnational identity politics.

Bloodshed, terrorism, violence, and international conflicts have become the order of the day in the new world disorder, especially since 9/11. War and peace are the themes of two prominent Chinese diasporic artists. Qin Yufen’s installation *Beautiful Violence* and Cai Guo-Qiang’s explosion series capture our embattled situation in a prophetic manner. Their installations explore the relationship between borders and borderlessness, between nationalism and globalization, in our time in most compelling art forms.

The third part of the book, “Sinophone Cinema and Postsocialist Television,” is an exploration of mass visual culture. I analyze artistic reactions to the multiple, uneven effects of globalization and modernization on both the physical landscape of China and the interior psyche of Chinese citizens. In Chinese films and television dramas produced in the 1990s and early 2000s, the viewer often sees nostalgia for bygone socialism and a critique of present postsocialist and postmodern schizophrenia. Nostalgia for the socialist past — huaijiu in Chinese, or *Ostalgie* (“nostalgia for the east”) in a German neologism —
addresses the sensitive zones of affect, memory, and sentiment in regard to the socialist legacy.

The chapter on the representation of the Chinese state and Chineseness around the time of Hong Kong’s handover to mainland China in 1997 looks at the various shades and discourses of nationalism in films produced in China, Hong Kong, and Hollywood. Again, we see the contradictions between nationalist ideologies and a transnational ethos in the imaginings of the self and the other in our time. The chapter on dialects and language in Sinophone cinema attempts to draw a typology of the varieties of Chinese-language films and their functions in relation to identity formation. More important, it interrogates the boundaries of China as a nation-state and Chineseness as ethnicity.

The fourth part of the book, “Cityscape in Multimedia,” is an investigation of contemporary Chinese urban space. Popular cinema as well as experimental photography and art chronicle and describe the destruction of urban space and past communal ways of life, and contest the teleology of globalization and modernization. I offer examples of popular cinema that capture the everyday life of contemporary Chinese citizens as they struggle to make a transition from the vanishing space of the socialist lifestyle to the new capitalist economy of commodities. These films include A Beautiful New World (dir. Shi Runjiu), Shower (dir. Zhang Yang), and A Sigh (dir. Feng Xiaogang) from the late 1990s and the turn of the twenty-first century. The dialectics of flux and stability, destruction and reconstruction are also vividly presented in the photographic works: Wang Jinsong’s Chai (Demolition), Standard Family, and Parents, and Hong Hao’s series Spring Festival on the River. Nostalgia for the past may be the psychological state of many people; meanwhile, the commodification of the past is also an inevitable ingredient of the mass media in contemporary Chinese cultural entertainment.

Cui Xiwen’s video art Lady’s takes a peek at female bodies for sale in a nightclub at a famous international hotel in Beijing. As a woman artist, she looks at the commercial circulation of female bodies from behind the scenes. Hong Hao’s photography Beautiful Images in Focus foregrounds the act of voyeurism and fantasy, with the male camera eye looking unabashedly at the female body. The tortuous nude males in a cramped living space in Gao Brothers’ photography/performance art remind the viewer of the gruesome surveillance and control of bodies, desires, and sexuality in modern China.

Toward the end of the book “Historical Conclusion: Chinese Modernity and the Capitalist World-System” reexamines the history and implications of China’s belated integration into the capitalist world system. It looks back over centuries of time at the ocean trotting by the Chinese fleet headed by Zheng He in the Ming dynasty. I also invoke the ever fascinating theory of datong (Great Commonwealth) by the utopian thinker Kang Youwei at the turn of
the twentieth century. As contemporary China is poised to embark upon new rounds of global seafaring in the economic and cultural realms, it is important to delineate its imperial past and its purportedly socialist present.

The Postscript, “Answering the Question: What Is Chinese Postsocialism?” revisits a frequently used but vaguely defined term in modern and postmodern Chinese studies. I trace the genealogy of “postsocialism” and point to the real relevance of the idea for the examination of everyday life in contemporary China.

Overall, the book aims at painting a broad picture of social life and the private self in the formation of Chinese modernity in a global context as seen in various forms and media. Bare life, or biopower, along with its explosion and control, damming and channeling, exuberance and destruction, constitutes a large part of the subject of the book.

The steady advance of capitalist globalization has absorbed and united countries and societies from disparate locales of the planet for the recycling of materials, goods, currencies, and affects across national borders. Without exception, a nominally socialist state such as China has also been locked into the busy global commerce in body, libido, and service as well as trade in the traditional economic domains of industry, manufacturing, and finance. Cultural critics ought to be sensitive to the dialectic of globalization and stay alert to actual patterns of domination and enslavement, as well as to emergent opportunities for liberation and justice.