

Leaving China

Media, Migration, and Transnational Imagination

Wanning Sun

ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD PUBLISHERS, INC.
Lanham • Boulder • New York • Oxford

ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD PUBLISHERS, INC.

Published in the United States of America
by Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
A Member of the Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group
4720 Boston Way, Lanham, Maryland 20706
www.rowmanlittlefield.com

12 Hid's Copse Road
Cumnor Hill, Oxford OX2 9JJ, England

Copyright © 2002 by Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Sun, Wanning, 1963–

Leaving China : media, migration, and transnational imagination / Wanning Sun.
p. cm.—(World social change)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-7425-1796-9 (alk. paper)—ISBN 0-7425-1797-7 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Mass media—China. 2. China—Emigration and immigration. 3. Migration, Internal—China. 4. Chinese—Foreign countries—Communication. I. Title. II. Series.

P92.C5 S86 2002
302.23'0951—dc21

2002001948

Printed in the United States of America

™ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.

Leaving China

World Social Change

Series Editor: Mark Selden

The Mongols at China's Edge: History and the Politics of National Unity

Uradyn E. Bulag

Transforming Asian Socialism: China and Vietnam Compared

Edited by Anita Chan, Benedict J. Tria Kerkvliet, and Jonathan Unger

*China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution: Master Narratives and Post-Mao
Counternarratives*

Edited by Woei Lien Chong

North China at War: The Social Ecology of Revolution, 1937–1945

Edited by Feng Chongyi and David S. G. Goodman

*Social and Political Change in Revolutionary China: The Taihang Base Area in
the War of Resistance to Japan, 1937–1945*

Edited by David S. G. Goodman

Istanbul: Between the Global and the Local

Edited by Caglar Keyder

Origins of the Modern World: A Global and Ecological Narrative

Robert B. Marks

*Local Democracy and Development: The Kerala People's Campaign for
Decentralized Planning*

T. M. Thomas Isaac with Richard W. Franke

Preface

The completion of this manuscript coincided with a few newsworthy events involving China on the global stage: Beijing won the bid to host the Olympic Games in 2008; China became a member of the World Trade Organization; and Rupert Murdoch's Phoenix TV finally entered the Chinese market. While these are newsworthy stories for the Western press—after all, they signify the triumph of global media culture and transnational capitalism—empirical questions about what these events mean to ordinary Chinese people are seldom considered, either in journalistic or in academic terms. How, for instance, do Chinese villagers relate to global spaces such as the World Trade Center and global places such as New York, while watching the globally transmitted images of the September 11 tragedies? Will these attacks on the United States—on a day that is supposed to have changed the world—alter the ways in which urban Chinese residents fantasize about going to America? And how will those former mainland Chinese now living in diaspora feel about being Chinese while viewing the 2008 Games on television? Although this book does not directly address these issues, it aims to provide some clues as to where the answers to these and a range of related questions may lie.

The Chinese mediascape at the beginning of the twenty-first century presents a tableau that features both the mobility of people and the movement of media images. More than ever before, people leave their village homes to go to the city, head for the prosperous south, or go overseas. Narratives of social change in contemporary China are inevitably linked to the motifs of departure, arrival, and return. Similarly, Chinese media products are also in flux, as Chinese productions are consumed offshore, and foreign images enter the

Chinese mediascape. As Arjun Appadurai, the cultural theorist of modernity and postnationalism, says succinctly, when images and people are both in circulation, the ways in which modern subjectivity is constructed become unpredictable. In this book, by constructing a narrative about the trajectories of Chinese people and Chinese images since the early 1990s, I am attempting to understand and account for this unpredictability. I seek to describe a number of key moments in the arena of cultural production and consumption whereby tension, contradiction, and ambivalence mark the variegated process of evolution in the transnational imagination of nationals of the People's Republic of China.

A number of people whose intellectual strength and integrity I admire—they know who they are—have advised me at various times that I should simply follow my heart when it comes to deciding which research projects to pursue. This book is evidence that I have taken their advice. Since I left China more than a decade ago, the feelings associated with departure and arrival, and with leaving and returning, have always colored my experience—both intellectual and emotional. Perhaps writing a book about these issues is simply a way of trying to understand and articulate—and hence come to terms with—the reality of being a Chinese migrant who has ended up as a media and cultural studies academic in the West. This is not to say that my thinking on these issues can be put to rest with the completion of this book. A few months ago my parents, who live in China, came to visit me in Western Australia. I initially puzzled and subsequently astonished them by inadvertently describing my recent China trip as *chuguo* (going overseas), rather than *huiguo* (returning home from overseas). On seeing the slightly put-out expressions on their faces—who could blame them for feeling hurt when they see that their daughter no longer considers China her home?—I realized that the business of negotiating the tension between here and there, now and then, is a lifelong career, as long as the mind stays active and curious.

This book is also the outcome of many years' consumption of Chinese media, including press, films, television dramas, and, recently, Internet materials. I take seriously John Hartley's (author of *Uses of Television*) urging to television academics to "go on, watch more television." I am, when it comes to watching TV, closer to the status of a confirmed addict than to that of an occasional abuser. Through this intimate relationship with the small screen, I have come to appreciate the importance of treating media representations as significant cultural texts through which the lived experience of individuals is mediated and made public and visible. This experience of immersing myself in the fictitious world of the screen also teaches me that human affect, desire, and feelings are crucial, yet somewhat elusive, social experiences, which we must take into account in seeking to understand the social transformations and transitions of a given society. Similarly, the experience of consuming media—the diverse ways in which people see a film, watch a show on television,

or visit a website on the Internet—mundane and trivial as they may be to some, nevertheless hold significant answers to the ways in which modern subjectivity is (trans)formed. For this reason, I am thankful to the many participants in my ethnographic audience research (many of whom prefer to remain anonymous)—particularly, Liu Jingyuan, Huang Cheng, and Gao Xiangzhu, with whom I spent many pleasurable hours, watching TV, eating, talking, and telling stories about being Chinese.

Parts of this book are revised from articles published over the last couple of years. Although they have been substantially developed and rewritten here, I would like to acknowledge these journals for giving me permission to draw on these materials. They come from “A Tale of Two Chinese Villages: Television, Women and Modernity,” *Asian Journal of Communication* (Asia Media and Information Center) 11, no. 2 (2001): 18–38; “To Go or Not to Go to America: Cinema and the Desiring City,” *Hybridities: Cultures, Identities and Theories* (Oxford University Press) 1, no. 2 (2001): 1–21; “A Chinese in the New World: Television Dramas, Global Cities, and Travels to Modernity,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* (Routledge, Taylor & Francis) 4, no. 1 (2001): 25–44; “Media Events or Media Stories? Time, Space and Chinese (Trans)nationalism,” *International Journal of Cultural Studies* (Sage Publications) 2, no. 1 (2000): 81–94; and “Internet, Memory, and the Chinese Diaspora—The Case of Nanjing Massacre Websites,” *New Formations* (Lawrence & Wishart) 40 (2000): 30–48. An early version of the first section of chapter 8 also appeared as “Semiotic Over-Determination or Indocritainment: Television, Citizenship, and the Olympic Games” in the Routledge-Curzon volume *Media in China*.

Individual chapters in the book have at different stages benefited from advice and feedback from a number of people, including Justine Lloyd, Stephanie Hemelryk Donald, Harriet Evans, Yao Souchou, David S. G. Goodman, Michael Keane, Helen Wilson, Peter Mares, Glen Lewis, and Norbert Ruebsaat. Elizabeth Jacka, John Sinclair, and Chua Beng-huat offered useful advice on the early stage of preparing the manuscript proposal. Special thanks to James Donald for putting friendly pressure on me to get the book published, and many friends—most particularly, Justine Lloyd, Mark Gibson, Vera Mackie, John Fitzgerald, and Steve Mickler, from whose thoughts and ideas I have often benefited. My liaison with the China Provincial Research Centre at UTS-UNSW over the past five years has given me opportunities to go to China regularly, so I am indebted to both David S. G. Goodman and Hans Hendrichske for their support. Michael Cunningham provided technical support in reproducing visual images, and Jane Mumery was unfailingly competent in her copyediting assistance. Pi Dawei from *Beijing Review* kindly supplied the artwork for the front cover. Thanks, of course, go to Susan McEachern at Rowman & Littlefield for her advice and support.

The person to whom I am most indebted to is Mark Selden, whom Rowman & Littlefield had the genius to appoint as a series editor. I have yet to meet Mark in person, but judging from the many editions of "track changes" he has left on electronic copies of all my chapters, and the tons of e-mail correspondence we shared, I have come to be convinced that he indeed does exist and is not simply a cyberian figment of my imagination. To this day, I remain amazed by the breadth of his intellectual curiosity, his capacity to understand and accommodate difference across disciplines, and, above all, his unfailingly fair and frank feedback. I am just downright lucky to have him as an editor.

I have the good fortune of being married to Jim Beattie, whose support and understanding for my work manifest themselves in too many ways to enumerate here. This book is dedicated to him, and to my parents in China, for always being "there."

Contents

Preface	vii
Introduction: Leaving China	1
1 Going Home or Going Places: Television in the Village	21
2 Going Abroad or Staying Home: Cinema, Fantasy, and the World City	43
3 Arriving at the Global City: Television Dramas and Spatial Imagination	67
4 Haggling in the Margin: Videotapes and Paradiasporic Audiences	91
5 Fantasizing the Homeland: The Internet, Memory, and Exilic Longings	113
6 Eating Food and Telling Stories: From Home(land) to Homepage	137
7 Fragmenting the National Time-Space: Media Events in the Satellite Age	159
8 Chinese in the Global Village: Olympics and an Electronic Nation	183
Conclusion: Toward a Transnational China?	211
Bibliography	219
Index	231
About the Author	243

Introduction: Leaving China

On May 10, 1999, some eighty Chinese students gathered outside the U.S. embassy in Tokyo to protest NATO's bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. Waving Chinese flags and photos of Chinese journalists killed in the bombing, these Chinese students from various universities in Tokyo also handed the U.S. Embassy a letter of protest against the United States and NATO.¹ Meanwhile, anti-American sentiment soared in urban China. For three days, university students staged anti-American riots outside the U.S. embassy in Beijing, forcing it to close down. A few days after those riots, the protest took an interesting turn: The students gathered outside the embassy again, this time with another demand, that the United States immediately reopen its visa office.²

The Americans are not the only ones the Chinese students love to hate. In August 2001, Feng Jinhua, a Chinese national who has lived in Japan for many years and currently works as a professional there, was arrested for painting "you deserve to die" (*gai si*) on the Yasukuni Shrine (the shrine commemorating Japan's war dead, including eleven men convicted as war criminals at the Tokyo Tribunal) to protest the Japanese prime minister's official visit to the shrine on August 13, 2001.³ Meanwhile, growing numbers of Chinese have found their way to Japan as tourists, students, and prospective immigrants. In 2000, Japan, for the first time, allowed Chinese to visit Japan on tourist visas, requiring each to deposit 50,000 yuan (over U.S.\$6,000) as a guarantee of their return to China.⁴ Around the end of 1999, Kyoto immigration officers took twenty-eight Chinese nationals into custody on suspicion of illegally entering and staying in Japan by passing themselves off as relatives of two Japanese women who lived in China before the China-Japan

War. The incident followed the relaxation of Japan's immigration rules, allowing relatives of former Japanese settlers in China to migrate.⁵

Despite repeated examples of anger directed particularly toward the U.S. and Japanese governments, and despite the sometimes less than hospitable reception of the host nations, the trend of going abroad—temporarily or permanently, as students or visitors, legal and otherwise—seems unstoppable. For millions of Chinese who have never set foot on foreign soil, the world out there remains a place of perpetual fascination. As a popular Chinese song puts it: “the outside world is indeed fantastic” (*waimian de shijie heng jingcai*). Acting out these fantasies sometimes can prove costly. In June 2000, fifty-eight Chinese nationals, each paying a “snakehead” an average of U.S.\$22,700 to go abroad, were found dead in the back of a refrigerator truck at the southern English port of Dover, trying to enter Britain illegally. The Chinese official media release expressed its sympathy to the relatives of these want-to-be migrants, but blamed the “snakeheads,” and to a lesser extent, some Western nations’ asylum-granting system, for the tragedy.⁶

These vignettes reveal a scenario of danger, poignancy, unpredictability, and even irony, which marks the transnational imagination of Chinese nationals. What lends potency to the dangerous fantasies entertained by those prospective illegal immigrants who are prepared to risk everything, including their lives, in order to leave China? Will the desire to improve one's lifestyle and fortunes through migration—in the case of Chinese nationals wanting to go to Japan—fragment or dislodge a memory of China's former enemy? And how do we account for the obvious ambivalence in the Chinese students' imagination of the United States and Japan, countries that they want to go to, yet hate with passion? What is the position of the Chinese government in these variegated transnational practices, and to what extent are the media responsive to, and constitutive of, such uneven, unequal, and sometimes schizophrenic processes?

The impulse to find some answers to these intriguing questions is the driving force behind the writing of this book. In choosing to call it *Leaving China*, I hope to record my observations mostly from the vantage point of Australia—albeit an antipodean position—of various ways in which China has been “left.” The first of these “leavings” was by way of outbound migration—including temporary and permanent ones. Since the start of economic reforms in the late 1970s, successive waves of scholars, students, and business people have left the country to go to various corners of the world, with the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Japan, and Australia being their most popular destinations. While some of these students have stayed on and settled in their host countries, others have chosen to return; many have become perennial travelers, repeatedly traversing the territorial and cultural spaces of both homeland and host country. At the turn of the new century, traveling abroad continues, with increasing numbers of young Chinese going

overseas for self-funded undergraduate study. According to the official figures released by the Chinese Ministry of Education, since the start of economic reform, 370,000 Chinese students—self-funded and state-funded—have gone overseas, with a return rate of one in three. Out of the sampled groups, roughly 40 percent went to the United States, 22 percent to Japan, and 6 percent to Australia, followed by Canada, France, and U.K.⁷ This seems like a conservative figure and clearly does not include the family members who have gone overseas to be with the students. Even Japan, a country known to the Chinese for its exceptionally stringent immigration policy, now allegedly hosts 200,000 mainland Chinese, not including the 50,000 who have overstayed their visas and are living in Japan illegally.⁸ In June 2001, the spokesperson of the Chinese Ministry of Education announced that the Chinese government does not approve of sending Chinese students abroad for primary and secondary education, a belated recognition of the growing numbers of students going abroad at earlier ages. Although the government thinks that it has done the right thing to allow hundreds of thousands of students for tertiary and postgraduate education for the past two decades, it cites the loss of Chinese culture and premature exposure to unhealthy Western influence as the main reasons for discouraging Chinese nationals from going abroad for primary and secondary education.⁹ Apart from outbound Chinese going abroad to study (*liuxuesheng*), hundreds of thousands of Chinese now annually cross the national borders for purposes of tourism, business, and visiting friends and families. The borders between Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macao, and the mainland have become increasingly porous; Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand (dubbed *xing ma tai*) have been the favorite tourist destinations for China's affluent urban residents and "new rich"; and sizable numbers of people enter the United States, Canada, Australia, and some parts of Europe regularly for personal and business reasons.

The concept of departures and arrivals, like that of borders, can be reconfigured to include both imaginary and real travels. In addition, the leaving of one's *homeland*—denoting the crossing of a national border—should not be considered a distinct species of event from that of leaving one's *hometown*. Both can more usefully be seen as subspecies of the wider notion of leaving *home*. Leaving one's hometown therefore entails a parallel process of mobility to leaving one's homeland, and, within China, this mostly takes the trajectory of rural to urban, north to south, hinterland to coast, and coast to international. The interconnectedness between, and hence the need to link, these two types of movement lies in the fact that, first, they may represent different stages of movement in the life of one individual; and second, both migrant groups need to negotiate a similar set of tensions and challenges brought about by their (sometimes voluntary) displacement.

Leaving China considers not only the movement—both actual and prospective—of people within or beyond China, but also the ways in which media

images, media formats, and media practices themselves travel. Alongside the movement of people within and across national borders, we see an increasingly deterritorialized flow of media images, as well as the adoption of new media formats and practices. For instance, the project of the Chinese state to promote patriotism offshore would not have taken off without the Chinese Central Television (CCTV hereafter) now covering its satellite footprints in many parts of America, Europe, and Oceania. While Chinese newspapers may still be physically restricted to largely domestic circulation, their electronic versions—including both provincial and local publications—are nevertheless accessible via the Internet to those living outside China. At the end of 2000, the Ministry of Information under the State Council in China granted sina.com, a leading Internet media and service company for Chinese communities worldwide, permission to publish online news, making sina.com the first private Internet company in China to receive official approval to publish news and information on the Web. Official Chinese news organizations such as the New China News Agency (Xinhua) and CCTV provide both print and online versions and participate in the staging of media events that may be of national and global interest. Also, documentaries about Chinese living overseas, produced by migrants themselves, are broadcast on national television in China, while television dramas originally screened nationally in China find their way within weeks into video stores in Chinatowns in major world cities; websites maintained by Chinese communities in America, Europe, and Australasia link three continents through a regular feed of cultural products from the PRC “motherland”; and Star TV brings endless channels of Chinese television to the homes of those former PRC citizens around the world who can afford to have a satellite dish on their roof. A transnational imagination is also evident in screen productions emanating from the PRC, which increasingly feature foreigners, foreign locations, and Chinese in foreign settings. For instance, less than a decade since the making of the famous *Beijing Native in New York*, Zheng Xiaolong and his wife—both having lived in the United States as *liuxuesheng*—took their crew to St. Louis, in the heart of the United States, and produced *Treatment* (2000) (*Guasha*), the first Chinese joint production shot in a foreign location, marking the entry of Chinese film production into transnational spaces. For another example, in 2001 CCTV completed the production of *A Modern Family* (*modeng jiating*), a drama series about three children in a family who are involved in interracial marriages or love affairs. Shot in China, Korea, Malaysia, and Australia and involving actors and crew of the four countries, this drama of transnational romance is also scheduled to be screened on Malaysian and Korean television.¹⁰

Finally, “leaving China” refers to the vicarious travels of millions of Chinese media consumers borne aloft by their imaginations. That is, the book also explores the ways in which the forces of globalization have had an impact on media production and consumption in China in the reform era and the

ways they have shaped the formation and transformation of a Chinese transnational imagination. When the movement of people and the flow of images are brought together, rendering unpredictable what Appadurai calls the “self-imagining as an everyday social project,”¹¹ the meanings of place, space, community, and nation become unstable and contestable. Although some people’s lives have been changed for the better by travel, others’ have been severely disadvantaged by it. Some have chosen to travel; others have had migration thrust upon them. Some people’s travel has facilitated the process of their transnational imagination, others’ has hindered it. This book explores the ways in which the movement of both images and people within and across the national borders of the PRC have had an impact on the “work of the imagination”¹² and also considers the nature of the relationship between these two kinds of movement. I am interested in both those who travel and those who may or may not travel, but nevertheless participate in the production and consumption of images and narratives of travel, hence contributing to the formation of transnational subjectivities. For instance, during the last decade or so, narratives of Chinese going to cities within China or going abroad—either literally or in their imaginations—have frequently been the subject matter of cinema, television dramas, novels, and popular journalism, gradually but definitely transforming the social imagination of space and place among Chinese audiences.

CHINESE TRANSNATIONALISM

A project that is concerned with departures and arrivals¹³ must recognize that, quite often, the traveler’s imaginary construction of foreign and unknown places precedes her or his actual arrival in these places; sometimes, it replaces actual travel altogether. Given this, it is crucial not only to attend to the transnational subjectivity that develops within those who actually migrate, but also to recognize and explore this phenomenon within those who have not, will not, or cannot leave. Bizarre, stupid, or tragic as they may sound, the recurring media stories of some Chinese nationals willing to pay their lifetime saving—and many times more—and endure untold humiliations and risk death or being caught in order to be smuggled to more affluent countries serve as sobering reminders of the danger and the power of transnational imagination. In this book, the investigation of the formation of a transnational imagination involves a number of things.

First, it calls for a fine-grained analysis of the significant narrative forms and discursive strategies used in representing transnational space. This includes looking at how those who are immobile fantasize about faraway or unknown places, and how those who have resettled remember experiences of familiar places about their lives prior to geographical displacement. These acts

of fantasy and remembrance take place in a proliferation of spaces—mediatized or actual—all of which have an impact on the formation of transnational spatial imagination. For instance, the China Central Radio's *Lunch Hour* (*wu jian yi xiao shi*) runs *Winds from Abroad* (*hai wai lai feng*) on Sunday. Featuring conversations with mainland Chinese now studying or working overseas, the show is popular with domestic audiences for its capacity to "transport" the audience to unfamiliar places.

Second, studying transnational imagination means asking the question as to what mobility—of people, capital, and images—does to localities through individuals' constructions of a sense of place. Some Chinese mainlanders now living in America challenge the "hegemonic" Chinese translation of American cities, suggesting, for instance, that "Washington" could be called *hua sheng tun* ("peanut village"), not *hua sheng dun* ("prosperous fortress"). Face-tious and frivolous as this may be, it seems to suggest—albeit in a small way—the demise of a cargo-cult mentality about "America." Canberra, the capital of Australia, though officially translated into *kanpeila*, is now often referred to by the mainland Chinese-language newspapers in Australia as *kanjing*, resonating with Beijing, the capital of the PRC. Could this be read as a signifier of an imperialistic desire—however inchoate—of some people from the Middle Kingdom? Of particular relevance to the investigation of the construction of a sense of place is the need to examine the changing styles of imagining "the city"—both the "international global city" that acts as a magnet for Third World migrants and the "internal global city" to which Third World rural "migrants" gravitate within their own country.

Third, the inquiry into the formation of a transnational imagination necessitates looking at the ways in which individuals engage or identify with the imagination of people in other places, especially in other national spaces. This includes those many Chinese who have not been overseas, but who identify with the experiences and thoughts of those who have. It also includes Chinese who have left China to live in transnational spaces, and who continue to engage with the imagination of those who have remained "at home." Beijing Television Station's multiple-episode sitcom *Liumei Fangke* (Chinese Tenants in an American House, 1997), for instance, is hilarious to both the domestic audiences and diasporic audiences seeking fun (*zao le*) from "chewing the fat" (*tiao kan*) precisely because it cleverly appropriates a political language reminiscent of the socialist era in China to talk about the lives of a bunch of Chinese living in contemporary America. Fourth, building on, and closely related to, the first three concerns, this investigation into transnational imagination entails looking into the ways in which various forces—economic, social, and political—come to facilitate or inhibit the formation of a particular kind of transnational subjectivity. In other words, I want to show that the formation of transnational imagination is an uneven, unequal, and disjunctive process. The proliferation of media images of the "successful

man" (*chengong renshi*) is contiguous with the omission and the marginalization of other social groups, such as laid-off factory workers and rural migrants.¹⁴ My inquiry into the lives of a group of rural women migrants in Anhui now working in Shanghai, for example, suggests that since leaving the village, many have had less time, energy, and opportunities to consume transnational images from media and participate in the act of imagining.

Chinese transnationalism has been studied at a number of levels: the cultural politics of Chinese societies across several geographical entities;¹⁵ the circulation, financing, distribution, and marketing of Chinese cultural products in the age of transnational capitalism;¹⁶ and the production of transnational subjectivities via the representation and consumption of Chinese national, cultural, ethnic, and gender identities of both individuals and communities in mainland and diasporic contexts.¹⁷ This book focuses on this last dimension, but does not exclude the first two. In doing so, it highlights the moment at which the entire nation started to travel to new places—real or imaginary, literally or vicariously. While some want to leave their home(land) for good, others imagine a possible return. It is the variegated nature of this transnational imagining—be it through physical traveling, through identifying with travelers in the everyday consumption of media images, or through other enabling media practices such as the use of videos and the Internet—that is the object of investigation for this book.

My investigation is premised on the following assumption: that the tension between the global and the local is a universal problematic of disjuncture between global late capitalism and the resurgence of nativism. Anthony Smith has identified the tension as one between global culture, which is memoryless and deterritorialized, and national culture, which is time-bound and location-specific.¹⁸ My book takes this tension as its point of departure and seeks to examine a number of ways in which the movement of both people and images reworks and rearticulates the self, spatial imagination, and cultural memory, in both China and certain diasporic Chinese groups worldwide. This tension is particularly pronounced in the case of cultural flow into and out of the PRC. This, as I consistently argue throughout the book, is because unlike elsewhere, the formation and transformation of Chinese transnational consciousness is punctuated, at each crucial moment, by the towering presence of a strong state. It is also burdened by a tenacious national memory of imperialist subjugation and a revolutionary history of resistance to imperialism.

By focusing on a number of ways in which transnational Chinese subjectivities are produced as a result of growing mobility within China and out-bound migration to the West in the reform era, this project addresses the issue of mobility per se, and, in doing so, bridges the customary divide between internal migration studies and diasporic studies. In addition, by looking at the impact of mobility on the imagination, it points to a range of ways in which cultural identities and subjectivities are renegotiated. Through a historically