Perspective

Mapping the Globalization in Chinese Culture

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THIS PAPER, INDEBTED to Fredric Jameson's notion of "cognitive mapping," aims to map out the totality of class relations on a global level. I agree with Eric Cazdyn that Jameson, combining analyses by Louis Althusser and Kevin Lynch, proposes cognitive mapping as a way for individuals to map spatially the configuration of today's late capitalist world; more straightforwardly, cognitive mapping is simply shorthand for transnational class consciousness (Cazdyn 138). Jameson explains that an aesthetic of cognitive mapping is necessary "to endow the individual subject with some new heightened sense of its place in the global system" (*Postmodernism* 54). However, Jameson cannot imagine what the production of such an aesthetic would be. He says, "there may, nonetheless, as with the very idea of Utopia itself, be something positive in the attempt to keep alive the possibility of imagining such a thing" (Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping" 356). As late capitalism becomes more consolidated and tightly woven, Jameson calls for new artistic forms that will cultivate this aesthetic and pave the way for any serious political project against the renewed and reinforced capitalism.

In responding to the question why he assumes that cognitive mapping is the task of the aesthetic, Jameson explains that since the new global realities are inaccessible to any individual subject or consciousness, then they must "find figures through which to express themselves in distorted symbolic ways" (Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping" 350). Jameson adds that "one of the basic tasks as critics of literature is to track down and make conceptually available the ultimate realities and experiences designated by those figures, which the reading mind inevitably tends to reify and read as

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primary contents in their own right" (Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping" 350). In other words, Jameson thinks the "group" must be abstracted, or fantasized, on the basis of discrete individual contacts and experiences and he sees aesthetic products as being more accessible to individual experiences and, therefore, as a better means of conveying global realities.

It is based on Jameson's arguments that I would try to conceptualize the effects of globalization on Chinese culture by taking into account some of the phenomena and individual experiences. But first, what is globalization? As J. Hillis Miller remarked in his talk at my Institute, "the word is somewhat odd. It means both a process and a fait accompli. Globalization is at once something that has already happened and something that is happening now, perhaps with a distant horizon to its completion" (1). It is true that we have all been globalized if we think we have all lived together on a single planet, subject to global climatic changes, and every nation has always been to some degree affected by international trade and by influences coming from outside, as evidenced by Buddhism's impact on ancient China. Nevertheless, Miller says, "everyone feels that the process of globalization has these days reached a hyperbolic stage. This justifies singling it out as a decisive factor in many realms of cultural, political, and economic life" (1). I agree with Miller, but to discuss it more specifically, I should say that globalization is nothing less than the neoliberal ideology of the free market — the capitalist market of exchange values — as the only way to economic growth and social progress. It is the general offensive of monopoly capital (transnational corporations) to maximize the extraction of profit and accelerate capital accumulation everywhere, particularly through the use of modern technology (such as robotics and information technology), and more importantly, through the political diktat of liberalization, deregulation and privatization, mediated through the triad of multilateral institutions: the IMF, World Bank, and WTO (World Trade Organization). Supposed to refurbish the old nostrum of "modernization," globalization enables rapid economic restructuring, centralization of capital, takeover and control of production resources in undeveloped societies and weak nation-states by TNCs based in the industrialized metropolis of Europe, Japan and North America.

But does this fit into the present situation in China? My answer is affirmative for several features of the process of globalization may be identified in Chinese society right now. First, since China took up the "open policy," the relatively "low tech" or "high speed," by which I refer to the means of rapid travel and shipping jet planes and rapid container or bulk shipping), has brought China closer to other parts of the world, and the world's largest population is no longer separated from the Western countries as it was before and during the Cultural Revolution. Foreign trade has been expanded tremendously from 20 billion US dollars in the 1960s to 360 billion in the last year. TV production-lines come from Japan, automobiles from Japan, US, Germany, France and Italy, and computer products from the United States — all these depend on the possibility of efficient and rapid shipment. In addition to millions of tourists each year, tens of thousands of scientists, teachers and students, including scholars in humanities, fly into and out of China to do researches, to attend conferences, to study and to lecture. This means the Chinese are becoming truly transnationalized or globalized.

Second, transnational corporations such as IBM, NEC, Microsoft, AT&T, Samsung, Siemens, Alstone, etc. have entered China to expand their business, penetrating the local markets, funding universities for their own future interests, supporting sports to benefit from advertisements. For instance, IBM donated a big sum of money to Beijing University and NEC funded the games of Go. These transnational corporations make investments, build factories and sell their goods in China as well as in other countries. If one stands on a sidewalk in Beijing, one will see all kinds of automobiles with foreign brand names, such as Audi, Volkswagen, Buick, Honda, and Citroën. Masao Miyaoshi said, "a truly 'transnational' corporation . . . might no longer be closely tied to its nation of origin, but adrift and mobile, ready to settle anywhere and exploit any state including its own, as long as the affiliation serves its own interest" (4). This seems to mean that the new kind of corporation, instead of being responsible to a particular nation, owes its only allegiance to itself and to the global capitalist system. We have heard so much about the decline of the nation state in America because of the proliferation of transnational

corporations (people even say a Bill Clinton may have less actual power than a Bill Gates in determining what happens on a global scale) Although there has not appeared any clear sign of such decline in China, the privileges or special policies given to foreign companies for their investments seem to me to be an unconscious or covert subjection of the nation state to world capital. National boundaries in this sense become permeable and fragile.

Third, the rapid development of new communication technologies is changing the texture of social life in China, particularly in its big cities. It is reported that more than eight million people in China are using the Internet or the World Wide Web. And these new services engage every Internet user in more or less instantaneous communication with other people almost anywhere in the world, thereby contributing with a vengeance to globalization in all its aspects. The Internet, or the World Wide Web, puts everyone in connection with and in possession of an enormous incoherent multimedia database, including music, advertising, stock market quotations, and "IT chatrooms" of all kinds where people can exchange views on line. The people who use the Internet or the World Wide Web are "inhabited by a new sense of democracy and freedom" (7), for they not only can escape the censorship but also can create new and constantly shifting forms of assembly in cyberspace. These new conditions may eventually facilitate the globalization of values, lifestyles and ideologies, thus greatly weakening the centralized state power of Chinese society.

Since China is in the process of globalization, its culture would certainly be somewhat affected. I would say that there are, among many others, important effects of these concomitant forms of globalization on Chinese culture. Here I define culture as what Jameson has said. Culture "is not a substance or a phenomenon in its own right, it is an objective mirage that arises out of the relationship between at least two groups. This is to say that no group 'has' a culture by itself: culture is the nimbus perceived by one group when it comes into contact with and observes another one" ("On 'Cultural Studies'" 33). Now let me go to the three effects one by one, which I take as interrelated with one another.

One effect is the thriving, as compared with the 1960s and 1970s, of so-called cultural exchanges between China and the West. In

the past two decades, Western ideas, theories, literature and art, as well as sciences and technologies, economics and ways of management, introduced into China through globalized capital and through all kinds of exchange between China and the West, seem to have prevailed over the scene of cultural life. As is said, "in a decade we have covered a literary course that had taken the Western writers a whole century, and we have experienced all the conceptions that occurred in the West."[1] As a result, there appeared differing attitudes toward Western culture: embracing it, resisting it, and assimilating it through criticism.

Generally speaking, the younger generation including those under thirty-five, is more enthusiastic towards Western theory and thinking. They prefer modernity to tradition, taking almost everything Western as advanced; much less burdened by cultural tradition and history (though they may have been influenced unconsciously), they are fascinated by the images of Western consumer society provided by mass media believing it necessary for China to follow the Western paradigm of modernity both socially and culturally. Some radicals even go so far as to say that they do not read any contemporary academic works by Chinese writers, for there is nothing new in them. The middle-aged intellectuals in general assimilate Western culture with a critical view, trying to combine Western culture and traditional Chinese culture. These people think that the long tradition of Chinese culture is rich in resources, not only for the Chinese themselves but also for people all over the world. While appreciating the value and usefulness of Western theories and thoughts, they maintain that these should be assimilated with a critical view based on the Chinese tradition. To put it another way, immigration is seen as an enrichment of Chinese culture but the elements of Western culture will generally be explicitly seen as alien. Since the Chinese tradition is seen as self-sufficient, the imported elements will be transformed in accordance with the Chinese conventions. The imports, then, will be viewed positively. But the old generation is quite different. They see the import of Western culture as intrusion and threat to their own cultural identity. It seems to these people that tradition implies a consensus among the Chinese people, and any rupture or weakening of this consensus by the

intrusion of Western thought means deculturation. Therefore, they try to glorify Chinese culture by heavily emphasizing the otherness of the "alien" thoughts. For them, China cannot let free exchange rule the relations between China and the West without mortally imperiling the Chinese mind and morality. When this sense of threat is born out of a frustrated feeling of superiority, and especially when young people praise the invading cultures, it leads to an extremist nationalism in which Western culture is viewed in an entirely negative light. In fact, the old generation takes a stand closer to the government, though the latter understands that it cannot shut the door if it wants to keep its power and develop its economy. Its slogan of "oppose liberalization and Westernization" is no doubt a contradictory claim: it celebrates on the one hand the irreducible specificity of Chinese culture in itself and, on the other hand, it advocates implicitly the universality of its values. But how is it possible to make the notion of universality congruent with the claim of cultural specificity? The only way is to deny "the other" the status of a valid culture: only Chinese culture is universally the best, whereas others are harmful.

The second effect of globalization on Chinese culture is even more problematic. With the establishment of transnational corporations in China, there seems emerging a privileged class that consists of high-ranking Chinese employees of foreign companies and of China's state-owned as well as private enterprises. They are not many in number, but they are rich and influential. They drive fancy cars, buy Western-style houses, and live as bourgeoisie. They try to act as the global managers of transnational corporations, who hook up with other global managers around the world and form "the trans-national capitalist classes."

The leading representatives of this transnational capitalist class in China are those nicknamed as "prince party," sons (and daughters) of high-ranking officials of both the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) and the government. This group of people benefiting from the power of their fathers have inherited the political power structure and try to perpetuate the social hierarchy for their own interests, but on the other hand, they keep close contacts and alignments with foreign capitalists so as to protect their own capital invested or deposited abroad against any sudden reversal of

fortune in the future, for they know that people hate them for their usurpation of property through their power connections. Under such circumstances, China might become a country which could adopt the market economy system while ideologically and politically continuing its hierarchical system somewhat like a semi-feudal society. That amounts to saying that China may follow Singapore's model of neo-Confucianism in the foreseen future: highly centralized politically but totally free economically. But in a long-run perspective, China must develop into a new society, for its political system must adapt itself to its economic system as predicted by many Marxists.

Meanwhile, this group of people of the transnational capitalist classes have become, to a certain degree, the models for young people who desire to be rich and live comfortably, thus disseminating a consumer ideology bent on constructing subjects who are to be locked into the consuming world, or to put it in another way, breaking down subjectivities to reconstruct people as consuming subjects. Here perhaps we should think of the invisible functions of capital or money that may have strong impact on people unconsciously. This might be exemplified by the "Bar Street" and "Food Street" in Beijing. In the east part of Beijing, close to the embassy area, there are two lanes full of private bars. Every evening, particularly during weekends, hundreds of young Chinese and foreigners would go there to enjoy themselves, drinking, dancing, listening to pop music or watching live performance. It seems to me that those young Chinese live like the youngsters in the West. The "Food Street" is also called "Ghost Street" because it fills the entire night with colourful lights sparkling everywhere. The people who go there to eat are divided into three groups in general: those who go there at seven or eight o'clock in the evening are people who want to enjoy the food; those who go there at midnight are the ones who want to satisfy their hungry stomachs because they have played Majiang all evening; and those who go there at two or three o'clock or even later are escort girls and underground prostitutes (this kind of business is illegal but there is still quite a lot of it). And since there is business the whole night, there are always taxi drivers hanging around.

The two streets can be regarded as a special cultural phenomenon: globalization has brought more foreign companies to Beijing and with the expansion of their business there has emerged a population of foreigners and Chinese white-collar employees. These people and the "the capitalist class" have enough money to afford a high-class lifestyle. But with the increase of unemployment and lay-offs of workers, many young girls who have no way to survive or who want a better life but do not want to toil for meagre pay have become escort girls or underground prostitutes. I think all these have something to do with globalization, either directly or indirectly. And to a certain degree, they disseminate the consumer ideology of capitalism that may shape the growth of the younger generation in China.

It is because of this sort of effect that some Chinese economists say that globalization has worsened the effects of the destructive paradigm of "growth and development." Instead of economic prosperity and social stability, globalization has brought about economic turmoil, political and social tension, and widespread devastation to the world's people and resources. The gap between the rich and the poor is widening rather than narrowing. The systematic assaults on labour are dissipating the working class gains, causing widespread unemployment, job insecurity, and loss of benefits. The peasants' limited gains in agrarian reform are likewise being reversed, resulting in more landlessness, rural unemployment, and penury. These are views worth further discussion but I do not have space to address them here.

The third effect of globalization is perhaps the most far-reaching, by which I mean the transformative effect of the rapid development of new communications technologies that I mentioned above. Walter Benjamin long ago argued that new technologies, new modes of production and consumption, all the changes inaugurated by nineteenth-century industrialization, had already created a radically new human sensibility and therefore a new way of living in the world. All the present changes, according to Benjamin, may produce a new way of being human, new modes of sensual perception, just as printing technology did in the past. These effects may bring about the development of "new electronic communities, communities . . . leading to a mutation of

perceptual experience making new cyberspace persons" (Miller 10). Although this is becoming true, the more direct and practical effect on the Chinese is the advent of Western ideologies to China in various forms. Today one may sit before a computer screen, surfing on the Internet, and get information in an unforeseen way. This information, including various forms of ideologies, would certainly have some impact on the user's mind, no matter whether he is conscious or unconscious of it. As an article in *Beijing Evening Post* says, "whether you see Internet as a new way of life or as a bubble economy, it has indeed emerged and is affecting our life, including our culture."[2] As a result, the control of ideology by the government might be weakened, the power of the nation-state declining, and finally a full-fledged civil society emerging. This may seem like a nightmare or a dreadful sight in science fiction, yet we have to imagine the possible effect even though we cannot prophesy it. In reality, China seems to be caught in a dilemma: in order to realize its "modernizations" and improve the living conditions of the people and enhance its position in world affairs, China must continue its open policy and develop high technologies; but in doing so it cannot stop the influx of Western ideologies which it regards as detrimental to its political stability and destructive to its social system.

In such circumstances, the Chinese government often resorts to nationalism. The official newspaper *PLA Daily* (Feb. 8, 2000), for example, declares that there is an "information colonialism" intruding upon China. So painstaking efforts are being made to work people up into nationalism, both in word and in deed. The most striking instance of the government's nationalistic indoctrination occurred when the NATO bombed the Chinese Embassy in Yugoslavia. Such renewed nationalism has a large following among Chinese intellectuals, the reason for which has been diagnosed as capitalist globalization. They view globalization as centred on and serving only the interests of the US, although there is no guarantee that Americans themselves see globalization in the same light (indeed some Americans see themselves as victims rather than beneficiaries of globalization because more and more foreign-made goods are taking up the shelf space at local stores and some good jobs have disappeared). Thus, like victims of globalization

elsewhere in the world, many Chinese have come to identify the borders of their nation as a crucial line of defense against the threats to their embattled style of life — even when the threats come largely from China's state-owned corporations. At the same time, the country's deteriorating ethnic conflicts and tensions have motivated many Chinese to seek in an ideal of national wholeness and a shared concept of citizenship the power capable of offering a resolution to or a transcendence of the differences among diverse nationalities.

The revival of Chinese nationalism in a defensive, cultural posture has somehow left Chinese cultural critics in a state of confusion. In the present stage of capitalist expansion, with its progressively more extensive system of transnational corporations, there has appeared a new social order in which all conditions of production and reproduction have been directly absorbed by capital, abolishing the boundary between society and capital, capital itself having become social. "Capitalism is now a globalized algorithm or axiomatic that functions like a single city, of which the states are neighbourhoods or sectors" (Robbins). On the other hand, the rapid development of communications technologies, with the Internet and World Wide Web, has created an immense machine that endlessly proliferates connection after connection and would probably lead to the abolishing of ideological boundaries between different societies and states. In such circumstances, what will happen to China, to its society, its culture, and its cultural identity? What strategies should China adopt? What attitudes must we assume as intellectuals or cultural critics? These are questions that we have to consider seriously.

I am not in a position to argue on all the questions in detail. But in a general response to them, I would trace rather briefly the history of cultural imports in China. Cultural expansion, or the travelling of culture — to borrow from Edward Said's conception of "Travelling Theory" (Said 226-47) — is not difficult to understand. But in China it has been misunderstood in two ways: to see the import of foreign culture as being in conflict with traditional Chinese culture; to see the import of foreign culture as a new thing which started only in modern times. These two misunderstandings have caused some strange conceptions about the imports of foreign

cultures, including contemporary Western theories. First of all, I want to emphasize that what is thought of as a traditional or in-herent culture, or a system of knowledge, is nothing homo-geneous at all — it is rather a product of inter-cultural influences from the very beginning. We can see from history that culture in itself is defined by absorption and assimilation, which in fact is the reason why it has existed and developed. Usually an old culture or a culture with a long history — such as Chinese culture — has more potential or capacity for absorbing and assimilating other cultures. But theoretically speaking, cultural imports of a society at the beginning arose from its reliance on geographical environ-ments: different places had different cultures in ancient times, owing to the low level of productive forces. In fact not only the formation and development of a culture was conditioned by geographical environments, but also its expansions and dissem-inations. However, with the development of productive forces, people became more capable in their struggle with nature, and the geographical conditions became less important than before. Thus cultures of different regions began to have contacts and establish some relationships with one another. Since different regions had different cultures and since cultural developments in different areas proved to be uneven and unidentical, naturally there occurred cultural exchanges. In the early stages of the history of international exchange, the exchanges or cultural import and export were somewhat equal. But with the progress made in production, the balance was upset and imbalance emerged, which generally speaking was in accordance with the evolution of human history but was conditioned by various factors such as race, nation, and language. However, in the history of culture, exchanges among different regions were conditioned by relations between people and geographical environments as well as by relations between different peoples. The former points to the conquering of continent, ocean and space, which enabled people of different regions to have contact more easily and directly and thus began their cultural exchanges; the latter refers to the social, the political and the economical relations such as immigration, colonization and trade, which promoted or forced or prevented the cultural exchanges between different regions. The two types of

relations, in the final analysis, were both conditioned by relations between humankind and nature.

As for China, its cultural imports can be traced back to the Shang (sixteenth to eleventh century B.C.) and the Zhou (eleventh century to third century B.C.) Dynasties. And in works of the Warring-State Period (475 – 221 B.C.), for instance in Xun Zi's "The Rules of Emperor," there were already descriptions of these imports. Xun Zi believed that China could and should absorb things from the East, the South, the West, and the North. But in the course of Chinese history, there had been a special phenomenon in cultural development: sometimes it turned to the conservative and even to a closed-door policy because of its strong historical heritage and long tradition. Therefore, the imports of knowledge increased and decreased alternately. In general, there are two great movements of importing foreign cultures: the first one during the Han (206 B.C. – A.D. 220) and the Tang (A.D. 618 – 907) Dynasties, and the second one in the Qing Dynasty (A.D. 1644 – 1911). The first one took place when China was at its strongest and most prosperous, whereas the second one arrived when China, weak and backward, had been reduced to a semicolonial country. The first one brought in Indian Buddhist culture while the second one mainly brought in Western sciences. Of course, there have been many other cultural imports, such as from Persian culture in the Han Dynasty, from Roman culture in the Wei and Jin Period (A.D. 265 – 556), and from the classic culture of the Mediterranean countries during the Ming (A.D. 1368 – 1644) and the Qing Dynasties. But the most important and massive imports occurred during the above-mentioned two movements.

The influx of Buddhism or Indian Buddhist culture can be traced back as early as A.D. 2, the first year of Yuan Shou of the Han Dynasty. At the beginning the imports were done through foreign monks, who came to China to propagate Buddhist doctrines which seemed to the intellectuals of that time treasures from an unknown world, somewhat like the postmodern theories to the Chinese in the mid-1980s. Later, many Chinese intellectual monks such as Fa Hu and Fa Xian went to India by the silk-route to learn Buddhist doctrines, in much the same way that Chinese students or visiting scholars rush to Western countries today. They learned

Sanskrit and brought back books with them, and translation of Buddhist classics became a fashionable thing almost automatically. Then some translation institutions were set up, which can be compared to the Bureau of Translation in present China. During the Tang Dynasty, translation reached a glorious high peak in its history. The Buddhism-centred Indian culture was assimilated into Chinese culture in almost every area, including religion, morality and ethics, customs, art, literature, architecture, etc., which contributed to shaping what is known as the Great Tang Culture. And it was in this period that the basic style of Chinese culture became established. Viewed from this perspective, the so-called inherent Chinese culture is, one can argue, anything but homogeneous. However, the Buddhist culture was transformed as soon as it was brought into China. For instance, Indian Buddhism was mixed with Chinese Confucianism and Daoism when its doctrines were translated into Chinese. All these combined formed the Chinese version of Zen-Buddhism, which, considering personal experience to be everything, generated another change: philosophers of the Song Dynasty appropriated Buddhism and, by combining its doctrines with Confucianism and Daoism, inaugurated the Idealist School of philosophy (*Lixue*) prevailing in the Song and Ming Dynasties. Actually, even the Buddhist figures became transformed when they migrated to China. As is well known, Guanyin is originally a male Buddha, but in China he has metamorphosed into a female Buddha and is worshiped as a goddess who controls childbirth.

During the Ming and the Qing Dynasties, Western culture began to be brought into China — a prelude to the second great movement of importing foreign cultures. Due to the resistance of the conservative yet powerful group of intellectuals, the import of Western culture during the Ming and early Qing Dynasties was comparatively small and even had stopped for about a hundred years after 1757. Not until 1862, when the official "Translation Office" was set up, did the import of Western culture turn to a new page. At the same time, many Christian missionaries came to China after 1858, which tremendously enhanced the import of Western culture as well. Following the Translation Office in Beijing, a number of translation institutions were established in Guangzhou,

Shanghai, Tianjin, Fuzhou, and other coastal cities. This means that the import was supported and endorsed by the imperial Qing government at that time, despite fierce factional struggles among the government officials. The Qing government even issued an educational regulation in 1902, which decreed that Western culture be taught as a course in schools.

The second great movement of cultural imports has two distinct characteristics. First, the import bears a political colour — China was undergoing a cultural, social, and political crisis, and new knowledge and new theory was in great demand in order to rejuvenate Chinese society. Liang Qichao, Yan Fu and Zhang Taiyan, for example, proposed to follow the West in "open[ing] and exploit[ing] the wisdom of the people." Second, more works of social sciences and philosophy were translated, which exert much impact on the social situations in China at that time.

Since the beginning of 1980s, many Western theories have been introduced and translated in China: New Criticism is welcomed for its close reading of the text, and is used to interpret traditional Chinese works, particularly classic poems; structuralism as a methodology is also borrowed, resulting in some fairly enlightening analyses of metrical verse and folk narratives; psychoanalysis, especially the kind related to the stream of consciousness and monologue, is celebrated as an efficacious way to change the traditional narratives and to invent new literary styles; phenomenology, with its emphasis on the subject's consciousness of the world, is sanctioned as one of the most plausible approaches in the study of man's relationship with nature; deconstruction is readily accepted partly due to some of the assumptions it shares with native Daoism; finally, works of Western Marxists such as those of Fredric Jameson, Perry Anderson, Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton are regarded as a development of Marxism and as of great use in reexamining the Chinese orthodox Marxism.

From the above brief description of cultural imports, it is not difficult to see that culture is always travelling and there is no culture that can be completely independent or can be separated from others. Any culture in the world has to be defined in relation to other cultures. Therefore, in the present situation of globalization, we must think of culture as part of the process of globalization as well. We

may take different positions towards the process, but no one can stop it. The only valid tribute to it is to use it, "to make it groan and protest."

However, the process of globalization, both economically and culturally, is full of contradictions or paradoxes, caused by the monster machine of capital. The expanding of capital breaks and reconstructs the world apparatus. Although it functions beyond the boundaries of nation-states, it does not take the opportunity to dismantle them. Rather, it conspires with nation-states and establishes a relationship of mutual benefits. Capital seems a world organization that can decide almost everything. But it will not replace the nation-state. In fact, capital uses the government of nation-state to overcome obstacles it may encounter in its expansion and the government organizes social forces for capital so as to reinforce its rule over the nation-state.

In the process of globalization, culture has become a special vehicle for the expansion of capital. To put it another way, capital is penetrating every space of cultural production; it is bringing different cultures much closer than ever before through electronic media and changing the original features of each culture. Let me give you an example. In Beijing's high-tech area Zhong Guan-Cun, China's "Silicon Valley," where most computer companies are located, one can see many young Chinese women peddling CDs, DVDs, and even software, holding children in their arms — a way to escape police and to protect themselves. Most of those women come from backward villages of distant provinces such as Anhui, Sichuan. In a certain sense, they are participating in the process of globalization since they are hired by high-tech companies and connected with transnational corporations one way or the other. They sell low-priced CD, DVD, CD ROM and software which are counterfeit products reproduced out of the originals without any sort of permission, but in doing so they are indirectly linked to and controlled by globalized capital itself and thus involved in the process of globalization. In other words, capital has a supplementary function that can reorganize the non-capital elements in production and distribution. As may be known, almost all modes of production exist in China at the present moment — from the primitive to the most advanced, including the feudal, the socialist, and the capitalist — but all can be adjusted through capital or

controlled by capital. It is capital that takes the primitive products of mountain villages to the supermarkets in cities to be sold together with high-tech commodities and links the incompatible modes of production linked to each other. In such a way, the developing countries and advanced countries can coordinate through capital and form a new economic order: globalization.

In such a situation, culture may, among other things, reconstruct itself in company with the expansion of capital. As we all know, transnational corporations disseminate a consumer ideology that affects the construction of the subject; that is, they transform people into a consumer subject. Once people become consumer subjects, they would fall into the category of ideology of transnational corporations and would be somehow influenced by the global capitalist system and lose more or less the characteristics of their original cultural identities. Therefore, it is a crucial question to pose here: how to keep one's cultural identity in the process of globalization?

A culture must define itself in relation with other cultures and cultural identity is related to its self-definition. Within a culture, there is an awareness of a common identity, which implies that there is a striving toward the presentation of this identity. But if a culture is constructed in opposition or relation to other cultures, it implies that other cultures may interfere in its autonomy or its identity.

In the process of globalization, transnational capital has changed not only the relations between different groups but also their cultural identities. Usually the changes take place imperceptibly and unconsciously. As mentioned earlier, globalization has impacted Chinese culture both economically and ideologically and the construction of Chinese culture is changing gradually and globalization may even affect its identity. Indeed, in addition to the increase of transnational corporations in China, new advertisements of foreign products are seen every day in newspapers, on TV screens, and on buildings and streets in most cities. Young Chinese speak English as a fashion, and "hello," "bye-bye," "cool," and "taxi" have become pet phrases and are replacing their Chinese equivalents. Fashionable Western clothes, hair-styles, and furniture are being imitated. McDonald's restaurants have spread all

over Chinese cities and are greatly loved by young kids. Divorce is increasing, family ties are becoming looser, and unmarried people are living together. All these may imply that to a certain extent Chinese traditional culture is disintegrating.

Yet I have to stress that what I have just described are mostly phenomena in big cities in China. For in the vast country areas, particularly in remote villages, things stand very much different though they may be linked to the process of globalization indirectly. Recently I have visited some villages, where I found out that people there still live almost in the same way as they did 40 years ago. Except that they now have enough food to fill their stomachs and own slightly better-furnished houses to live in, they largely remain imprisoned in the old tradition — old customs, old morals and ethics. For instance, every couple wants to produce a male heir to continue the family line although that risks being punished by the local government for violating the birth-control policy. (Local government officials say that they are caught up in a dilemma: if they punish those who have violated the birth-control policy, they will feel guilty of infringing human rights; but if they do not punish them, they will be unable to carry out the birth-control task and they themselves will be punished. Therefore, they would get some strong young men to take individuals to hospitals and force them to have oviductligation or vasoligation.) This makes me think that things in China are very complicated. In a sense we may look upon China as representing the present situation of the world: underdeveloped countries, developing countries, and advanced countries are forming a new world order in a cooperative as well as a conflictual way, just like what is going on in different areas in China. We intellectuals, both from East and West, or South and North, should have an internationalist view and work together more closely to achieve a better understanding of the world and to make it a better place to live.

NOTES

1 *Guangming Daily*. 28 Mar. 1997: 5
2 *Beijing Evening Post,* 30 Mar. 2000: 12.

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