INSCRIBING WOMEN ONTO BODIES:

An encounter with performance, photography and video art from Beijing and Shanghai 1999-2016

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ABSTRACT

Since the turn of the millennium, many contemporary Chinese artists have used their own bodies or actors' bodies in their performance, photography and video art. These artworks become nodes in the communication of meaning about bodies and gendered categories. This project focuses on how selected objects of contemporary Chinese art represent 'women.' The category 'women' is understood in this project as not a socially constructed gender or essential sex, but as a role (or roles), practices and attributes linked to gender and sex identity, which can be inscribed onto bodies, including represented bodies. Scholarship at the intersection of contemporary Chinese art and gender has tended to focus on patterns emerging in the outputs and practices of exclusively female-identifying artists. By comparing the outputs of female-identifying and male-identifying artists, this thesis moves forward the debate relating to gendered authorship in international contemporary art and localized contemporary art discourse.

Artworks by seven leading contemporary Chinese artists are re-assessed, or given scholarly attention for the first time. The framework of this thesis combines two analytical categories: Michel Foucault's 'biopower' and turn of the 20th-century anarcho-feminist He-Yin Zhen's *'nannü*.' Data for this project was collected and has been analysed using an approach of 'the encounter.' This comprised multi-sensory, emotional, entangled and embodied singular engagements with artworks, artists, archival materials, studios and cities.

This thesis finds in the discourse a complex, leaky, and fragmentary representation of 'woman' that exists in constant negotiation with an 'ideal,' 'consumed and consuming,' highly restricted, sometimes subjugated feminized body. The two 'women' are not necessarily exclusively represented by either female or male-identifying artists. However, the female-identifying artists are 'speaking a truth' of gendered experience through their representations of 'women.' The female-identifying artists do not necessarily disrupt the binary genders, but they communicate the complexity of the attributes inscribed onto 'women.' The artists both acquiesce to and critique the circulating powers that contribute to inscribing 'women' onto bodies.

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DEDICATION

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NOTE ON HANYU PINYIN AND CHINESE NAMES

This thesis uses hanyu pinyin as the romanization system for Chinese words. A glossary of all Chinese words and acronyms included in thesis is included in Appendix 1. The glossary includes Chinese simple characters, hanyu pinyin and English translation. The only exception to use of pinyin are well known versions of proper names, such as Confucius. Chinese proper names are family name first, given name second. Because the case studies in this thesis include two pairs of artists with the same pinyin surname, sometimes it is made clear who is being referred to by using surname, initial or the artist's full name when under other circumstances only the surname would be sufficient.

PREFACE

In 2012 I visited Shanghai for a month as an arts journalist and guest of Shanghai University and Art World magazine (*Yishu Shijie*). My aims were broad. I wanted to find out more about contemporary art produced in China, to engage with contemporary art from a different context and to see the work within its cultural context. Particular encounters started to sharpen my inquiries. Walking gently around vast quantities of Liu Jinhua's delicate, headless-female ceramics piled in his studio. Meeting curator Wang Weiwei in the show she had curated in the elegant, light, sweeping spaces of the Museum of Contemporary Art (MoCA) in the centre of People's Park. Witnessing Simon Fujiwara's *Rebekkah*, 2012 installation in its static march down the stairs at Power Station of Art as part of Shanghai Biennale. To visit these exhibitions, I was traversing a city with 42 times the population of the UK city where I was living at the time. There were a lot of bodies around me, people that I would never get to know rushing past. Interfacing all the time with representations of women and bodies in contemporary art discourse, were representations of women and the female in museum objects, fashion, advertising, political rhetoric and the performances and practices of the everyday. I became interested in the experiences of my counterparts, 20-something women working in the arts. Similarities and differences in our home lives were the topic of conversation at formal dinners and informally in the offices of the magazine. There were nuances in the expectations that we had for ourselves, and the regulation of our bodies and choices in our respective contexts by the authorities, our families and other cultural discourses. Questions began to percolate about cultural translation, the meanings of representations of women in contemporary Chinese art, and the role of contemporary art as a node in gendered meaning-making. I started to respond to these questions by writing about them.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

> I depict female bodies, maybe deep down I feel comfortable using female bodies because I am familiar with female bodies.
>
> (Ma, Q., 2018)

> The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration.
>
> (Foucault [1971] in Rabinow, 1991:83).

Inscribing women onto bodies

Around the turn of the millennium, the contemporary art world of the PRC was in the ascendant, with increasingly strong ecologies in ever more Chinese cities able to support contemporary artists in professional practice (Wu, 2014; Gladston, 2014b; Wang, 2015). Contemporary artists from China were increasingly represented at global biennials, triennials and other art fairs (Yung-Wen, 2017). The ascent and growth of contemporary Chinese art continues to this day, with gender firmly enmeshed but not always acknowledged in its rise (Welland, 2018). Gender is given less attention in reflections on contemporary Chinese art in the 1990s and 2000s than other debates, such as the intersection of the global and the local and the usefulness of this binary (Ong, 2012; Cheung, 2013). The marginalization of gender in the debates occurs despite the fact that around the year 2000 there was an increase in the number of artists representing female bodies in contemporary performance, photography and video art (Merlin, 2018a).[1]

Outside of art discourse, the 'consumed and consuming' (or following Lisa Rofel, "desired and desiring") female body had firmly arrived in the PRC in the 1990s, in glossy magazines, adverts, online content and other media, promoting an aspirational globalized lifestyle (Mereweather, 2004; Rofel, 2007). The PRC joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and announced its full participation in globalized capitalism in a negotiation that ended in 2001. Meanwhile, the (re)production of real people in the PRC was tightly

[1] This was corroborated by my own research using the collection databases of M+ Sigg Collection, Hong Kong and White Rabbit Collection, Sydney, Australia.

managed through *jihua shengyu zhengce*, the birth planning policy, more commonly translated into English as the 'One-Child policy.'[2] Attention has not yet been given, as this project does, to the intersection of the globalized body, Chinese Communist Party (CCP) interventions to manage population, and representations of female bodies in contemporary Chinese art. The question this thesis asks is how might representations and management of female bodies outside art discourse affect the way that 'women' are represented within examples of contemporary Chinese art? Moreover, does the gender identity of the artist – their gendered subjectivity – matter in how they represent 'women'? This thesis examines seven contemporary Chinese artists. The processes and parameters of making a selection of objects to examine in this thesis is discussed in this chapter.

Harriet Evans understands the category of 'women' as "representational practices and attributes associated with being female" (Evans, 1997:10) rather than a stable object. 'Women' translates into several context-specific terms in Chinese, as Chapter Two of this thesis will explain. I use 'women' in this investigation because it is a broader category, which changes in meaning according to attributes and practices in a given context, rather than always being understood through biological discourse. Evans explains that in Mandarin Chinese there is one word *xing* meaning sex, sexuality and gender, therefore in the word '*nüxing'* (woman), for example, there is an underlying presumption of biological essentialism that has affected "the symbolic category 'woman,'"[3] and therefore women's lived experiences in the Chinese context (1997:28). This underlines the importance of focusing on relationships between language, cultural discourses and real life in relation to understandings of the category 'women.' Tani E Barlow has traced the theorization of 'women' in the Chinese context by focusing on feminist texts, shifts in language and the cultural landscape (1991, 2004, 2013). Barlow argues that in the early 20th century, "the event of women emerged historically

[2] The nuances of the One-Child policy, which is not evenly applied throughout the PRC, will be discussed in Chapters Four and Five.
[3] There are multiple translations of the word 'women' into Chinese, as the second chapter of this thesis will address.

in part because commercial advertising alleges that it did, and in part because at roughly the same time, a subjective claim – "I am a woman" – began to be voiced" (2013:53). This is further assertion of a close relationship between language, images, practices and 'reality,' in this case as applied to the category 'women' and how it is understood in Chinese discourses. Barlow's research argues for attention to how discourses can intervene in creating, reproducing or challenging attributes of femininity and womanhood. Evans also offered in the late 1990s a compelling reason for giving the Chinese context continued scholarly attention in relation to women and gender, she wrote:

> At a time when being female may involve threats to a girl's existence, and when the violation of women's rights is inseparable from culturally constructed views of women's sexual function, the contrasts between the official rhetoric of sexual equality and the lived experiences of women in every part of China are probably greater than at any other time since 1949.
>
> (Evans, 1997:32)

Building on the theoretical and anthropological work of Evans, Barlow and others, and informed by scholars researching aspects of gender in contemporary Chinese art, this thesis investigates representations of 'women' and female bodies in contemporary Chinese art. This thesis understands representations of women as bodies inscribed with 'practices and attributes' that contribute to an understanding of the category 'women.'

The idea of the body as inscribed surface comes from French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984). For Foucault, the body itself exists as a surface inscribed by discourse and non-discourse. In this thesis, the focus is not on a philosophy of the body (it does not ask: are we looking at 'real bodies'?). Instead it borrows Foucault's language in order to describe the ways that represented bodies in artworks could be understood by audiences as 'women.' To do this, it asks what attributes are inscribed onto bodies, to communicate that they are 'women.' The artists inscribe the attributes, but attributes are also inscribed by the ways that bodies are disciplined and managed in reality. To explore this idea, I use Foucault's theory of biopower. Foucault used the category of 'biopower' to encompass the powers that affect the discipline of

bodies and the management of populations, the two concerns of this thesis. Yet, as will be discussed in Chapter Two, Foucault neglected to discuss how gender and gendered categories (such as 'women') were implicated within the flow of biopower. This necessitates an additional theory within the analytical framework of this thesis. Chinese anarchist feminist He-Yin[4] Zhen (c1884-c1920) theorized that a top-down but also circulating power (similar to how Foucault describes biopower) was (re)creating the binary genders in order for governments to consolidate power and promote ownership of property (Liu, Karl, and Ko, 2013). He-Yin's theory, which she termed *nannü,* also proposed that gender (or gendering) intersected with class. *Nannü* is used in this thesis to extend biopower, as explained in Chapter Two.

The existing scholarly works at the intersection of gender and contemporary Chinese art focus principally on the practices and artistic outputs of female-identifying artists[5] (Tao Yongbai and Ling Shi, 1995; Liao Wen, 1999; Tong Yujie, 2009; Cui, 2015; Teo, 2016; Guest, 2016; Merlin, 2018a).[6] Their scholarship provides a departure from the dominant narratives of contemporary Chinese art that privilege male artists. Their approaches and findings are, however, distinctly different from this thesis which seeks to problematize representations of 'women' and give equal attention to the outputs of female and male-identifying artists. This thesis compares the outputs of female-identifying and male-identifying artists in order to question how they represent 'women' and explore gendered subjectivity. My approach shares the use of the analytical category *nannü* with Sasha Welland's book *Experimental Beijing: Gender and Globalization in Chinese Contemporary Art* (2018). However, Welland's aim is not to question the ways that 'women' are represented in objects of contemporary art, but rather to focus on networks of practice, zones

[4] This thesis follows Liu, Karl and Ko in using He-Yin Zhen's name with her father and mother's surnames hyphenated as He-Yin Zhen herself preferred (2013) . He-Yin Zhen has sometimes been referred to in other literature as He Zhen.

[5] There are scholarly works investigating masculinity in contemporary Chinese art, but they are less common. Katie Hill discusses representations of masculinity in her book chapter 'Why the Manic Grin? Hysterical Bodies: Contemporary Art as (Male) Trauma in Post-Cultural Revolution China' (Jiang, 2007).

[6] Liao Wen and Monica Merlin do remark on the differences between the outputs of female- and male-identifying artists, but they do not give equal attention to the outputs of both categories of artists (Liao Wen, 2007; Merlin, 2018a).

of encounter and the experiences of female artists in Beijing (2018). In common with Welland, I contend that gender has been enmeshed with the political and cultural economic factors that have formed the discourse of contemporary Chinese art. The next section of this chapter will briefly explain the origins of the discourse, giving attention to gender.

The political and gendered stakes of contemporary Chinese art discourse

The selection of works in this thesis are all drawn from the discourse of contemporary Chinese art. Here it is appropriate to ask, what is 'contemporary Chinese art'? Does it differ from 'contemporary art' or 'international contemporary art' and, if so, in what ways? The category *zhongguo dangdai yishu* can be translated as 'contemporary Chinese art,' however, this category and its translation present a number of questions. Contemporary Chinese art is a category that has been the object of historicization and discursive formation through symposia, peer reviewed journals, art press, catalogues and scholarly books, temporary exhibitions, online platforms, collections and collecting. These are also the means by which artworks are canonized. Contemporary Chinese art is demarcated within the international contemporary art landscape by being the object of specific debates, which effectively engender the discourse. These debates include: what to include in the category, whether it includes artworks produced globally by the Chinese diaspora, how the works relate to or depart from *zhongguo xiandai yishu* (Chinese modern art) and how the contemporary turn in the PRC has been engendered or affected by Communism and Neoliberal capitalism.

There are different 'stakes' (Munroe in Goldstein, 2017) for contemporary Chinese artists in comparison with their counterparts holding citizenship of democratic neoliberal countries. Contemporary Chinese art is inextricable from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) social contract with Chinese citizens. This unspoken contract requires that citizens stay away from critiquing government in return for support in pursuing individual economic prosperity (Cook and Dimitrov, 2017). Like the 'Chinese internet,' contemporary art is subject to local authority regulation, and, consequently, self-regulation by individual actors. The 'stakes' of contemporary art production in China, as

well as its intersection with questions of gender and gendered category-making make it urgent as an object of study in and outside of China. What follows is a short history of contemporary Chinese art focusing on the role of political shifts and gender in the formation of the discourse.

From 1911-1949, The Republic of China was under semi-colonial influence, under constant threat of invasion from Japan, whilst rival governments struggled to hold onto power against warlords. During this time there was a commercial art market, a thriving film industry based in Shanghai and photographers were experimenting with new techniques and technologies. Professional female- and male-identifying artists made a living producing various kinds of artistic outcome, and formal art training was conducted in Chinese higher education academies. The scholar-literati system of classical landscape painting continued alongside those practicing in the so-called 'Western style' of oil painting and other traditions. Western style painting had developed into its own localised discursive practice; some proponents, including a small number of female-identifying artists, spent long or short periods of time in cultural centres outside China, including Tokyo and Paris.

Barlow terms the period 1911-1949 "colonial modernity" (2004:36) but it is also termed elsewhere 'Chinese modernity.'[7] During this time, the kin structures that had defined womanhood were being critiqued and new possibilities theorized by feminist activists, Communists and the May 4th and New Culture Movements. Some of the theorized possibilities were implemented in 1949 when the Chinese Communist Party won the civil war and party chairman Mao Zedong became Paramount Leader of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Mao established a new rhetoric of gender equality and simultaneously dismantled the existing structures for cultural production. Art was obligated to operate as Communist propaganda, not to be practiced for its own sake or commercial purposes. Plays, films, ballets, song, literature, poetry, photography and oil painting were all harnessed for nation-building and the Communist mission. Many of these cultural products depicted an

[7] Gao Minglu points out there has been much debate in the PRC about *xiandai* (modernism) in art and other discourses in China (Gao in Enwezor, Condee, Smith, 2009:133-164).

(imaginary) female body embodying Communist principles. This included images in propaganda posters, the woman driving a tractor on a one yuan banknote issued in 1960 (Figure 1.1), and the 'model opera' ballet productions *The White Haired Girl* (Figure 1.2) and *The Red Detachment of Women*.[8]

Artistic production during the period of Mao's Chairmanship was often collaborative. Untrained artists worked alongside those who had previously been trained in the academies, producing artistic works and art criticism. Many artists had their art education disrupted or suspended as the art academies were no longer in operation. A binary emerged between 'official' art that corresponded to Communist party directives, and so-called 'dissident' art that did not. Dissident art included art produced for its own sake. Groups such as the No Name Group (a group including female- and male-identifying artists that was retrospectively characterised as *avant-garde*) were producing unofficial 'art for arts sake' during evenings and weekends after they finished their official working day (Figure 1.3). The No Name Group met in Beijing's parks, passing knowledge about painting techniques from older to younger group members and holding exhibitions in their homes under constant fear that their 'dissident' art would be discovered.

The final approximately 10 years before Mao Zedong's death in 1976, are called the Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution (GPCR). The atmosphere of China shifted to one of chaos and often violence, inflicted by young 'Red Guards,' who meted out criticism on people they deemed to be breaching the social and political order.[9] The rules of the social order were changing all the time. The flow of information into and out of China was tightly controlled, and knowledge about developments in art outside would have been limited. After Chairman Mao's death in 1976, Paramount Leader Deng Xiaoping inaugurated

[8] Many of these cultural products were produced under the auspices of Chairman Mao Zedong's wife Jiang Qing. However, they were not produced with what Dai Jinhua would call a "female subjectivity" (Dai, 2002). Rather, the female characters populated an ideographic scheme that continued to position men at the apex of a system of values where its male leader Mao Zedong took the paternalistic role for the nation.
[9] Many of the representations of Red Guards showed them as young women. Children also featured in propaganda imagery. (Evans and Donald, 1999)



Figure 1.1. One yuan bank note, 1960. Image credit unknown



Figure 1.2. Detail from the poster for the ballet *The White-Haired Girl*, 1972. 77 x 53cm. Image courtesy of the British Library ORB. 99/178



Figure 1.3. Wang Aihe (1953, Beijing) *Moonlit Night*, 1974. Oil painting.
Image credit unknown

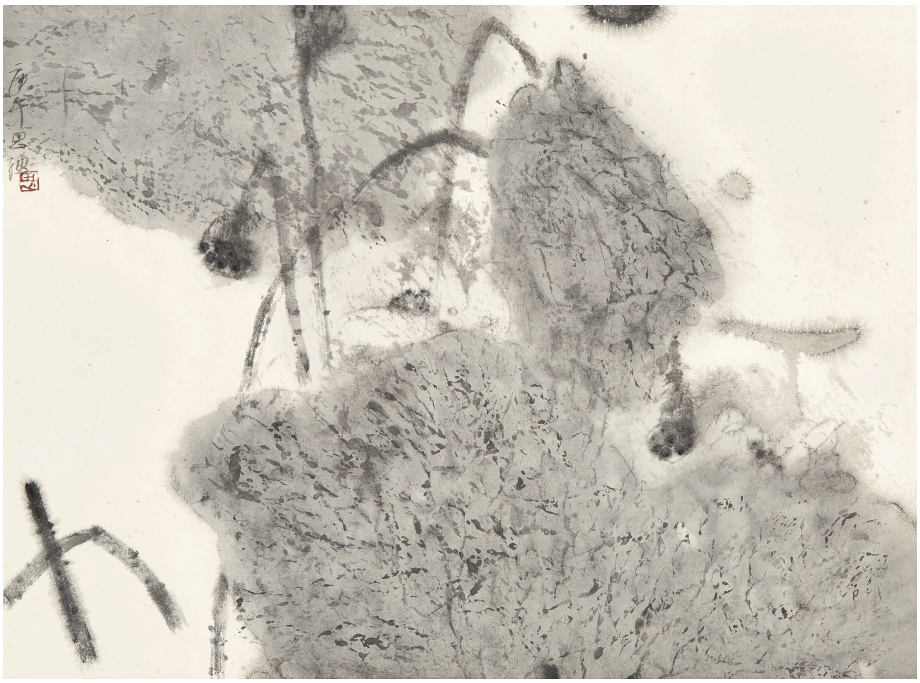


Figure 1.4. Zhou Sicong (1939-1996 Tianjin) *Lotus*, 1990, ink on paper.
Image credit unknown

a 'new China.' Deng aimed to develop China's economy whilst maintaining Communist governance. He turned local authority bureaucrats into "CEOs" (Ang, 2016) encouraging innovation, competition and, increasingly, engagement with global capitalist markets. Alongside this, China's "opening up" to the West involved restructure of the cultural and information economies.

Outside China, Western modernity during the 1950s, 60s and 70s had shifted to what could be called 'contemporaneity.' The (Western-dominated) international art world had new artistic strategies that came to be described as 'contemporary art.'[10] From the early 1980s, information about art and developments in feminist theory began flowing into and out of China in a telescoped fashion rather than chronologically. This information combined with rapid economic growth, local dialogues, re-establishment of traditional practices that had been banned during the GPCR, and the re-opening of art academies.

For Wu Hung, Chinese contemporaneity and contemporary Chinese art are defined by interaction between the global and the local (Wu, 2009:291) with artists themselves in the role of mediators between local and globalized discourses (Wu, 2009:301). There is a risk that this definition relies on, or infers, an already established contemporary art outside of China, which, one could extrapolate, China began to replicate from the 1980s onwards. However, to read Wu Hung in this way ignores the complex local "dominant, residual, and emergent" (Williams, 1977:121-127) discourses (artistic and otherwise) in China, and the different stakes for artists in the PRC. Although a separate discourse, contemporary Chinese art is in constant dialogue with and shaping international contemporary art discourse. For Wu Hung, mediating between localised discourses and global ones relies on the artists and their artworks travelling internationally (Wu, 2009:301). All of these possibilities:

[10] According to Tate, the Institute for Contemporary Arts (ICA) was founded in London in 1947, which signals the approximate starting point for 'contemporary art,' whereas the New Museum of Contemporary Art New York defines the starting point as 1977 (Tate, n.d.a). The date of 1977 co-incidentally aligns with the end of the GPCR in China.

international travel, mediation, the exchange of knowledge and international exhibition, resumed for Chinese artists resident in the PRC in the 1990s, enabling a contemporary turn.[11]

It has been argued that following the end of the GDPR, as artists were released from the obligation to produce propaganda, there was also a resumption of a 'suspended' modern art, *zhongguo xiandai yishu* (Figure 1.4). Without requiring engagement with contemporary international discourses, proponents of *zhongguo xiandai yishu* were able to begin producing 'art for arts sake,' which critiqued the modes of its own production, and resumed using subject matter, practices, media and lines of inquiry from before 1949. Chinese modern art (*zhongguo xiandai yishu)* and contemporary art (*zhongguo dangdai yishu)* from the 1980s onwards were separate, sometimes interacting, discourses. This thesis, following Wu Hung, understands contemporary Chinese art as emerging during the 1990s, distinct from a suspended modern art, but asserts that political, artistic and gendered developments throughout the 20th century form an integral part of the discourse.

During the early 1980s cultural producers in China enjoyed relative freedom to experiment and to display their work. One group of beneficiaries of this freedom was the avant-garde (contemporary) art collective 85' New Wave. The story of the *China/Avant-garde* exhibition of February 1989 (Figure 1.5), which bought together several works by the 85' New Wave will be mentioned again in Chapter Four of this thesis, which focuses on one young female-identifying exhibitor, Xiao Lu. The June Forth Incident, later that same year, June 1989, bought an abrupt end to the period of freedom for artists. The artists and their practices became associated with the pro-democracy campaigners massacred in Tiananmen Square, Beijing's famous landmark. Local authorities moved to restrict the production and display of, especially politically engaged or politicized, contemporary art practices.

[11] Moreover the 1980s and 1990s is the period in which the internet began to expand across America. Professor Qian Tianbai sent the first email from China in 1987 (CERNET, 2001). Expansion across China took place from around 1994 and steps to restrict internet usage were implemented from 1997.



Figure 1.5. *China/ Avant Garde* exhibition graphics, Beijing, 1989. Image credit unknown



Figure 1.6. Lin Tianmiao (1961 Taiyuan), *Thread Winding*, 1995 installation. Image credit unknown

In the early 1990s, some artists grouped together in artists' colonies such as *Beijing Dong Cun* on the fringe of the city, or held apartment exhibitions akin to the display practices of the No Name Group. Whilst these practices were out of sight at the time, documentation of performances by Ma Liuming and Zhang Huan and early works by Wang Gongxin and Lin Tianmiao (Figure 1.6) (to give just a few examples) originally only shown to their artist peers, are now part of the canon of contemporary Chinese art. Meanwhile, 'Political Pop' and 'Socialist Realism,' were representing contemporary Chinese art on the international stage. These styles, mostly produced by male-identifying artists, are understood as a means of processing of the events of the GPCR. Political Pop combined propaganda imagery and styles with irreverent humour and aesthetics inspired by US mid-20th-century Pop Art. Socialist Realism and Scar Art were also processing the legacies of Soviet and propaganda imagery, and the traumatic and alienating experiences of the GPCR. Female-identifying artists were processing these experiences, too, but did not typically work in these styles. In 1999, art curator Liao Wen published the book *Nüxing zhuyi zuowei fangshi: nüxing yishu* (Feminism as a Method: Women's art). Liao argues for consideration of female-specific responses to the trauma and women's experiences of being 'ungendered' in the GPCR, when they were compelled to masculinize their appearance and behaviour. Liao argues that modern artists such as Zhou Sicong (Figure 1.4) returned to 'feminized' styles in the 1990s as a response to these gender-specific experiences. Since Liao put forward this proposition, there has been much debate about the existence of a separate discourse of *nüxing yishu* (women's art) and its usefulness to female artists (Liao, 2007, 2017; Merlin, 2018a).

By the time that China had fully entered into the World Trade Organisation in 2001, demonstrating full engagement with globalized capitalism, the contemporary art ecology of the PRC was active, thriving, and continuing to grow rapidly. Despite tension with the authorities, the 1990s saw a burgeoning of agencies and infrastructure for contemporary art in China. Deng Xiaoping understood the importance of cultural production for (new) China. Artistic producers and practices from the PRC began exerting 'soft power'

internationally. During the 1990s many of China's big cities including Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou and Hangzhou established the interdisciplinary art courses, auction houses, galleries, art fairs, biennials, triennials, publishers and other agents and organisations required to engender and support thriving contemporary art ecologies. In the next section I will describe the art worlds of Beijing and Shanghai in more detail.

Contemporary art in the PRC has been almost entirely supported by private money, collectors, individual philanthropists and corporate sponsorship, rather than public funding bodies, therefore it is intimately connected with China's economic success. The 2000s have seen contemporary Chinese artworks selling for upwards of 12 million USD at auction (Sotheby's, 2019). The highest sale prices, most prominent exhibitions and the hard-back exhibition catalogues with essays by well-known curators and art historians continue to be the preserve of male-identifying artists, who often work in the medium of paint. The infrastructure supporting contemporary artists in professional practice in large cities of the PRC continues to grow, as does the profile of Chinese artists on the global stage. Contemporary Chinese art and art history, like other localized variants of international contemporary art, is prompting a reassessment of the Western-centric contemporary canon in Western galleries, collections and academies.[12] However, as Welland suggests, activities historicizing contemporary Chinese art often do not acknowledge the role of gender, even while it is almost exclusively male-identifying artists who achieve prominence in and outside of the PRC (2018). This thesis contributes to addressing this common omission.

Real bodies, researcher subjectivity and the selection of cases

This thesis focuses on the output of seven artists whose artworks have been acquired by collections that specialize in contemporary Chinese art. The process of selecting the works and the role of 'researcher subjectivity' in this process are described in this section. All of the artworks in this thesis represent

[12] The Tate Research Centre: Asia was established in 2012. In 2018, Tate put on permanent display at Tate Modern the work Dialogue, 1989 remade 2015 by Xiao Lu, which they had acquired. The same year they held the symposium 'Gender and Contemporary Chinese Art.'

real bodies engaged in performance art, or otherwise digitally or mechanically documented in photography and video. The definition that Tate uses for performance art is: "film, video, photographic and installation-based artworks through which the actions of artists, performers or the audience are conveyed," they add, "More recently, performance has been understood as a way of engaging directly with social reality, the specifics of space and the politics of identity" (Tate, n.d.b). These two aspects – conveying the artists in performance, and engaging with social reality and identity – correspond to the understanding of performance art used in this thesis. Many of the pieces analysed in Chapters Three to Six were conceived as video installations, but they would still classify as performance art using the above definition. I have included the additional categories – video art and photography – to eliminate ambiguity. Attributes of 'women' and womanhood can be inscribed on female bodies in other media (sculpture, works on paper, ceramics and so on). However, by focusing on digital, mechanical and performative representations of bodies, I expand the discussion to include the interplay of inscriptions on the audiences' body and the artists' bodies, as well as proposing how the artworks could be a node in the regulation of bodies in real life and in how the category of 'women' is understood.

By focusing on cities in the PRC (Mainland China) I can be more specific about the context and discussion of the management and meaning of bodies than if I included contested parts of China or artworks produced by the Chinese diaspora, even though artists based in these regions would be included within the definition of contemporary Chinese art proposed by Wu Hung (2009:290- 308).[13] I selected my short list of case studies from Beijing and Shanghai. Beijing is the capital city of the PRC. It is also China's centre of politics, finance and contemporary art. As indicated in the section above, the establishment of Beijing as a global centre of contemporary art began in the 1980s when artists were producing work in communities and their apartments. It began to formalise when in 1995 Beijing's Central Academy of Fine Arts

[13] Even if continuing to focus on Mainland China only, it would be possible to extend this project in the future by interviewing artists in Guangzhou, Hangzhou and even Macau, based on the long-list of case studies discussed further on in this section.

(CAFA) moved, initially temporarily, into one of the factory buildings in a large complex called Joint Factory 718 at the periphery of the city. Joint Factory 718, which produced military and civilian equipment, had gone into decline when Paramount Leader Deng Xiaoping withdrew government funding for factories. CAFA was followed in occupying factory buildings in the complex by artists and other creatives renting space for studios. The artists were followed rapidly by galleries, both commercial and those building collections. In 2001, art book publishing house Timezone 8 moved to the factory. The factory complex was awarded the status of special art zone, known as '798' (Figure 1.7), named after one of the individual factory units. Since then many art zones have formed in Beijing. From the 1990s artists would move from other parts of China to Beijing because there was an infrastructure there that would support their professional practice.

Meanwhile, by the 2000s, Shanghai also had many art districts, art schools, galleries, private collections, commercial galleries, vast warehouse-sized studios and a thriving art ecology augmented by Shanghai Biennale, which has been running since 1996. Shanghai is a port city with a unique history that has engendered a different tone to its urban lifestyle, media and art discourses. Shanghai is associated with commerce, international dialogue and with 'the new,' whilst Beijing is perceived as taking more seriously the responsibility of representing Chinese history and the legitimacy of Communism. The art worlds of Beijing and Shanghai are the most important centres within the PRC in an industry that is defined by (international) interaction and mediation. The two field sites raise questions about the differences between these two art worlds and between the visual histories and legacies in these locations, specifically relating to the representation of women and female bodies. However, the selection of my cases and the structure of comparative analysis of artists does not ultimately enable a comparison between the cities, as I will return to in my concluding chapter.

The interaction between the seven case studies and the theoretical framework in my project aims to produce a new way of thinking about the wider field. The case study artists are all represented in the White Rabbit Collection, Sydney,



Figure 1.7. Beijing 798 art district. Image courtesy of slangdesign.com.



Figure 1.8. White Rabbit Collection. Installation view. Image courtesy of White Rabbit Collection and University of South Australia, Sydney.

Australia (Figure 1.8) and the M+ Sigg Collection. It is impossible to quantify the field of contemporary (Chinese) art discourse and to establish how many artists and galleries are active, what their missions are and whose work they are collecting (and selling). However, there are 500 artists in the White Rabbit Collection, and there are 325 artists in the M+ Sigg collection, many of which overlap with each other and those discussed peer-reviewed articles and scholarly monographs. Therefore I take them to represent the field, albeit imperfectly. A selection of seven case studies from these sources allows for in-depth analysis of individual artworks.[14]

Selecting seven case studies is a different approach to, for instance, Thomas J Berghuis' *Performance Art in China* which attempts to map an enormously complex field involving hundreds of artists, in order to argue for "the mediated subject in art" (2006). Berghuis can find this in almost all works as it includes the artist subject involved in artistic production. It is also different to Shuqin Cui's book *Gendered Bodies Towards a Visual Art in China*, which describes the work of over 100 contemporary artists in a range of media (performance, works on paper, installation, painting, sculpture and so on) to establish a discourse of gendered women's body art that entwines with Chinese modernity and produces a modern female subject (2015). Neither Berghuis or Cui discuss selecting cases specifically, although they describe the periods of field research that led them to find the artists they discuss. By contrast, in *Rewriting Modernism*, Phyllis Teo selects just three case study artists: Pan Yuliang, Nie Ou and Yin Xiuzhen (2016) to represent modern Chinese art throughout the 20th century. Teo describes how the subjective selection of her case studies has been made to provide a juxtaposition of "different generations [in a] deliberate attempt to create new opportunities for comparative studies of female artists in China" (2016:11). Having such a small group of case studies represent a long period of time, including artists working in and outside of China and within different art discourses, makes Teo's project more concerned with leaps,

[14] In comparison to the quantity of literature and resources available to guide researchers in other research methods, Gerring and Cojocaru point out that there is relatively little literature available that discusses the theories, methods and ethics of selecting cases (Gerring and Cojocaru, 2016).

ruptures and departures than continuities. Teo, Berghuis and Cui are not as transparent about their methods of selecting cases – and the role of researcher subjectivity – as I would like to be here.

For this project there were two stages to selecting the cases, which intertwined with two periods of field research. First, I compiled a long-list of contemporary artworks that figuratively represented 'women' and female bodies in the media of photography, performance and video art by artists based in the PRC (Appendix 2). I excluded pregnant bodies because what interested me was the theoretical implications of the management of populations, and how this might affect any woman. To include representations of people pregnant and mothering would have required different research questions, different scholarly grounding, different contextual information and even different research methods. To produce the long-list I cross-referenced M+ Sigg Collection, Hong Kong and White Rabbit Collection, Sydney. These collections were chosen because they specialise in contemporary Chinese art, they have many holdings, an international profile, their collections are accessible and they have a scholarly rigor to their collecting policies.[15] The M+ Sigg Collection is to be displayed at M+ Museum, Hong Kong and has a team of researchers and curators working with it; likewise, the White Rabbit Collection is interpreted by curatorial staff, PhD and Post-doctoral researchers. Being represented in these collections is one way that artists' work becomes canonized.

I selected my case studies within the date parameters 1999-2016. This marks a period in the PRC during which engagement with globalized capitalism, and the presence of visual discourses of consumed and consuming bodies, overlapped with the continued enforcement of the One-Child policy. My long-list of case studies corroborates Monica Merlin's contention that female artists in Mainland China began to use their body in their artistic practice much more from around the year 2000 (Merlin, 2018a). The turn of the millennium was also the moment in which the PRC joined the World Trade Organization. The

[15] If suitable alternatives were available, it would have been beneficial to include a collection not established by a Western philanthropist.

end date of the study is 2016. My field research took place in 2016 and 2017, meaning the latest that the works had been produced, displayed and discussed was 2016. From 2013 the One-Child policy, which had applied to most urban Han Chinese couples since the late 1970s, begun phasing out in order to address a demographic crisis. In 2016 the Chinese Communist Party (CPP) shifted to a Two-Child Policy for Han Chinese urban couples (the policy will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five). In addition, 2016 is only two years after Paramount Leader Xi Jinping gave a speech in which he encouraged artists to produce, "more substantial, moral, warm-hearted artistic work [about] people's great path, the era's requirements for progress [and] carry forward the Chinese spirit," (Xi in Boehler and Piao, 2015). The research for this project took place during a moment in which the impact of Xi's rhetorical shift, and the shift to a Two-Child policy, could not be fully assessed. The date parameters 1999-2016 may therefore also represent a time before another significant shift in the discourse of contemporary Chinese art within the PRC.

The long-list included artists based in cities other than Beijing and Shanghai. However, the artists I most wanted to meet with were based in these two cities, the two most established centres for contemporary art in the PRC. The short-listing process was informed by my first phase of field research in 2016. In Shanghai, similarly to my first encounter with the city in 2012, I spent time amongst many bodies. I saw pairs of Grandparents steering their single grandchildren around the paths in People's Park – the same park that hosts the marriage market[16] – and discussed marriage, family and career choices with the people I met. Encountering artists and contemporary art concerned with bodies against the backdrop of Shanghai, led me to the framework of Michel Foucault's theory of biopower (Foucault, 1976, 2004). This theoretical category, discussed in Chapter Two, enables an analysis of attributes inscribed on bodies relating to the discipline of bodies and management of population. For attention to gender and the production of the category of 'women,' as I will explain in Chapter Two, I needed an additional analytical category. For

[16] The Shanghai People's Park marriage market is an opportunity for parents to 'advertise' their children as suitable marriage partners for the attention of other parents. They will often hand-write a list of their qualities including salaries and hang it up along paths in the park.

this I have used anarchist-feminist He-Yin Zhen's analytical category of *nannü,* which I will discuss in Chapter Two. The theoretical framework informed the short-listing process, and simultaneously the fieldwork led to the framework.

For Gerring and Cojocaru, research using case studies can "potentially [shed] light on a broader population, which it represents in an imperfect manner" (2016:3). This 'imperfection' can also be understood as what Reichertz calls "researcher subjectivity" (2015) which is often taboo in social science research, but is being confronted in practice-based curatorial research (Loughran and Mannay, 2018). My short-list selection is a product of my 'researcher subjectivity,' guided by the theoretical framework that I am using to analyse the works themselves, biopower and *nannü*. An example of how this subjectivity came into effect was my meeting with artist Yu Ji (born 1985 Shanghai) in her studio in Shanghai in 2016. Yu Ji often produces stone sculptures of bodies and her own body has been an important part of her output (Figure 1.9). The aspects of most interest to me in Yu Ji's work, which came to light in our encounter, are how the corporeal body interacts with materials such as stone, how the body is implicated in the production of installation and sculpture, and how her artist-led exhibition production and practice interacts with other discourses, such as theatre (Yu, 2016). As Yu Ji's work prompted such different questions and reflections it seemed unproductive to analyse her work using the framework I selected for this project. It followed, then, that not all of the artworks on my long-list would be appropriate for investigation through the framework, or appropriate to help answer my research questions. The case studies in my final short-list would be those that I felt represented bodies enmeshed in different discourses of biopower, and those that were actively engaged with concepts of gendered representation itself.

The final selection of case studies are: female-identifying artists Chen Lingyang, Xiao Lu and Ma Qiusha; and male-identifying artists Xu Zhen, Ma Liuming, Yang Fudong and Yang Zhenzhong. The short-listed case studies, including individual works of interest, are listed in Appendix 3. Making a selection of seven artists allows for deep analysis, comparisons according to



Figure 1.9. Yu Ji *Mountain, "Reading Aloud" (Text/Situ)*, 2017. Image courtesy of the artist.

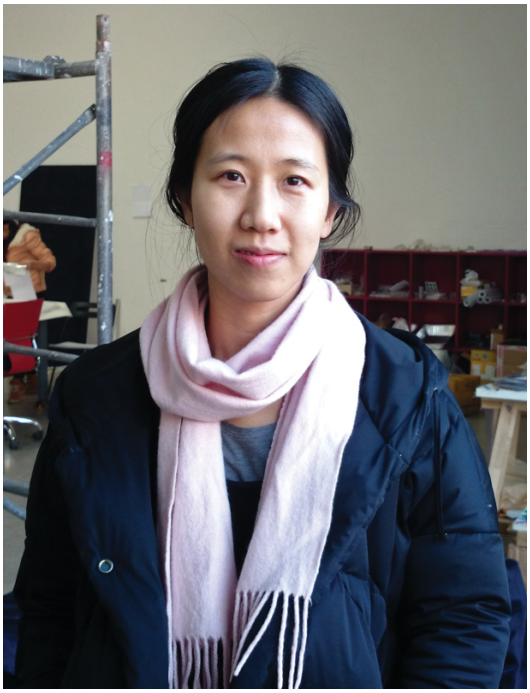


Figure 1.10 Ma Qiusha. Photo by and courtesy of Michael Young and Art Asia Pacific.

gender identity, and space to discuss the wider context relating to discourses that discipline of bodies and manage the population in the PRC. I selected three female-identifying and four male-identifying artists in order to dedicate a whole chapter (Chapter Five) to female-identifying artist Ma Qiusha (born 1982 Beijing) (Figure 1.10) whose work addresses both poles of biopower.

Methods and ethics

This project was conducted in the discipline of Critical Theory and Cultural Studies within the department of Cultural, Media and Visual Studies at the University of Nottingham, UK. In this section I will explain the ethical concerns and the research methods that I used to collect data, and in Chapter Two I will explain the theoretical framework I used to produce the analysis. This project uses a triangulation of three main research methods: semi-structured interviews with the artists, archival research conducted at Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong, and comparative textual analysis. Triangulation offers different perspectives on the same questions and qualitative findings. Underpinning, enabling and running throughout the research methods is an approach of 'the encounter,' which I will also explain in this section.

<u>The encounter</u>

The encounter foregrounds my role as the researcher and all the embodied, transformative, biased, emotional responses that I had to encountering artists, artworks, places and archive material. The interaction between data acquired through the research methods could, furthermore, be seen as a series of encounters, rather than an intention to find a true and definitive answer to the research questions. 'The encounter' as I will explain draws on approaches from human geography and anthropology and art pedagogy. This project is the first to use 'the encounter' approach, combined with comparative textual analysis and the analytical categories of biopower and *nannü*, in the research of contemporary Chinese art.

The word 'encounter' can have a negative connotation, suggesting a meeting of two different elements that are forced, perhaps unwillingly, to contend with one another. But the encounter can also be productive. Boulton-Funke argues

that encounters with contemporary artworks themselves can be a pedagogical tool prompting new conceptions of the everyday and the self (2014). My project is one of analysing art objects, rather than using artworks to support other kinds of research; however, Boulton-Funke's conceptualisation of the power and productive potential of 'the encounter' relates to 'the encounter' in this project. For Boulton-Funke, "The encounter creates resistance or disruption to normative thought by drawing on the affective disruption to perceptions" (2014:8). This is echoed in Helen Wilson's writing about encounters in the field of human geography, she writes, "Encounters *make* difference" (2017:455). Wilson argues that a key discussion is "what potential [encounters] might hold for catalysing change" and transformation (2017:451). In this project I both made encounters happen (between myself and artists, between the case studies I was comparing) and then I related and translated these encounters and their transforming affects (which were the basis for my interpretation) into the written thesis. 'The encounter' corresponds to the best practice for cultural studies research advocated by Michael Pickering in his book *Research Methods for Cultural Studies*. Pickering quotes Angela McRobbie in calling for "the empirical, the ethnographic and the experiential" in cultural studies research (Pickering, 2008:4).

I use 'the encounter' rather than the term 'ethnography' because I want to emphasize the importance and potential of shorter temporalities that do not extend to acculturation or involve processes of 'fitting in.' 'The encounter' is not disembodied or objective. Elspeth Probyn writes about how the body itself (one of the objects of concern in this thesis) will tell you when you are "out of place" (2005). Probyn also argues that bodies can bridge the gap between the truth and representations of the body (1991:118). The encounter can be uncomfortable. 'The encounter' was an opportunity for myself and my research subjects to perform in our roles (Deleuze, 1995:95), the interviewees as artists and art historians, myself as researcher. Moreover, it was an opportunity for the artists to speak their truth, the Foucauldian concept of *parrhesia* ([1983]1999), which is an important part of my analysis, as I will expand on in Chapters Three to Six. I am transformed by the encounter, and so too, potentially, are the artists I am writing about.

There are further ethical and political aspects to 'the encounter,' which I continue to consider. Helen Wilson writes that the encounter is "an event of relation," and a "specific genre of contact" that calls into question "meaning, power, temporality, ethics and scale" (2017:452). Wilson further argues that the encounter is coded with traces of coloniality and uneven power relations; it relates to tourism, the encounter forms the city and describes the role of the stranger (2017). The encounter can also be considered using Mary Louise Pratt's terminology of the "contact zone" (1991). For Pratt, the contact zone was a site of colonial encounter, destabilization and unequal exchange (1991). The question of uneven powers in the encounter relates to my field sites – Shanghai and Beijing – which in the 19th and early 20th centuries were affected by foreign powers. The question of coloniality and power also relates to the flow of power in the discourse of contemporary Chinese art and the privileged position of the researcher.

This project requires constant reflection on imperialism and coloniality as I am the person who emerges from the encounter to write and reflect on it, in English. In this thesis the reader only hears my account of the encounter. In translating experiences and emotions of encounter into this thesis, I found it unproductive to contain all 'ethnographic' material in one chapter. It needed to be woven through all of the chapters and all of the analyses. 'The encounter' encompasses ethnographic experience, but it is also part of the textual analysis that I produce and the presentation of the analysis in this thesis. I use several different writing styles throughout this thesis, sometimes changing from paragraph to paragraph. The writing itself is therefore comprised of encounters between episodes in the artists' studios, descriptions of artworks that are sometimes temporal or site specific, thick description (to use Geertz' 1973 term) of the Chinese context, and analysis using academic language through the theoretical framework. In this way, the research methods translate into writing.

I travelled to the PRC for two periods of field research, primarily to visit artists in their studios. Studio visits, email dialogues and semi-structured interviews

were encounters with the artists, their artworks, their modes of production, and with the PRC. The artists all appeared to me to be comfortable with the role of "mediator" between local and international discourses, corresponding to the way that Wu Hung defines their role within the discourse of contemporary Chinese art (Wu, 2009:301). My aim was for the sum of all parts of the encounter in all its complexity to actively challenge, change or disrupt my thinking. During the first stage of field research in Shanghai, I augmented the artists' interviews with attending the ballet *The Whitehaired Girl* at Shanghai Theatre, visiting Tang dynasty sculptures of female figures at Shanghai Museum and visiting the holdings of the Shanghai Propaganda Poster Art Centre, thinking all the time about how these representations inscribed women onto bodies. In Beijing I considered the same questions at the 798 art district and the Former Residence of Soong Ching Ling museum. I considered these questions as I watched the sun go down through the open ceiling of American artist James Turrell's *Gathered Sky | Skyspace*, 2012, surrounded by young, middle class Beijingers. The encounter is formed through a myriad of decisions, variables and chances; the encounter does not always have an end.

Encountering alone does not produce data, it needs to be combined with a method (or methods) of recording. The encounter is intimately connected with the other methods of collecting data for this project: selecting cases, semi-structured interviews, archival research, comparative analysis and writing. I made audio recordings of the interviews, took photographs and wrote field notes. The field notes speak to the affects and entanglements of the encounter; changes in my thinking, emotional responses and empirical and ethnographic details that seemed important at the time or became more important later. Field notes are a way of holding on, imperfectly, to what is observed or thoughts prompted by the encounter. The subjectivity and selection involved in field note writing and analysis are necessary parts of authorship. In my case field notes also bear the legacy of the large amount of writing about art that I have done previously for various readers and purposes. The following is an excerpt from my second field trip notebook, in Beijing in 2017. I visited Ma Qiusha and Ma Liuming's studios on separate days and I wrote this a few days later whilst still in China. This text could be considered part of a process of

reconstructing memories of the encounter or the beginning of a process of drawing threads together; it is presented here with minimal editing,

> At every meeting this week there was tea, variously ritualized. Ma Qiusha was more casual, passing me loose oolong leaves in boiling hot water in a mug as though it was an obligatory part of experiencing China – for Muyao[17] and herself she had large Starbucks coffees. It was bitter and the leaves kept invading my mouth. Although I quite liked holding the large, hot white cup.
>
> Ma Liuming and Cindy were drinking tea when I arrived. […] Sipping tea from a tiny saucer-like cup helped me get through this interview. I am not sure where I started thinking about it, but tiny cups means that the gesture of generosity – filling up the cup – happens over and over.
>
> (Pittwood, 2017)

Much later, someone asked me whether I had given enough thought to how the artists, specifically Ma Qiusha, may be performing Chineseness for a Western audience. In the episode related above, Ma through her rituals of hospitality deliberately offers something different, and more Chinese, to me as the only Westerner in the room (although she does not make herself an object that is more 'Chinese'). The relationship between the field notes and questions arising related to the analysis demonstrate that the encounter can help to illustrate some of the complex entanglements, emotions and affects that exist in processes of cultural studies research. In the passage above when I refer to 'getting through this interview,' I am alluding to having acute tonsillitis. This came on after spending my first night in Beijing lying on the concrete floor of US artist James Turrell's *Gathered Sky | Skyspace*, 2012 for four hours. Looking up through the rectangular hole in the roof, the setting sun filled the architecture and my eyes with vivid changing colours and gradually took away its warmth (the onset of my illness may or may not be connected to this intense and physical experience so soon after a long haul flight). I lost my voice almost completely for a couple of days, but my 'semi-structured' interviews were still effective due to the preparation of the questions in advance and my

[17] Muyao and Cindy were professional interpreters from Beijing that I engaged during my second field trip.

relationship with the interpreter. I learned that I can communicate curiosity and extend friendliness without a voice.

For the most part, due to the nature of the artworks involved in this project, I was not able to encounter the works in the gallery context and I have had to re-construct an understanding of individual works from fragments of encounters. In the case of the original performances by Ma Liuming and Xiao Lu especially, the audiences encountering the works were limited, many of the events I discussed with them happened 10 years or more before I began my research. I watched videos of Ma Liuming's performances at Asia Art Archive, and I watched videos of some of Xiao Lu's works with her at her studio. In 2018, Tate Modern, London put Xiao Lu's first significant work *Dialogue*, 1989 remade 2015, on display in their permanent collection room 'performer and participant,' and I encountered the work there. In 2014, I had encountered a piece by Yang Zhenzhong titled *Long Live the Great Union*, 2011 when it was on display in a multi-venue presentation of Chinese artworks titled *Harmonious Society*, part of Asia Triennial Manchester 2014. *Long Live the Great Union*, 2011 used the same technology of breaking one image into fragments to be viewed through a peep-hole as *Summer*, 2009, one of the works of interest to me in this project. I could not see either the series of photographs *Twelve Flower Months*, 1999-2000 or the video installation *Yue Jing Jing*, 2002, which were the works most of interest to me by Chen Lingyang, on display; but I did spend significant time with the *Twelve Flower Months* (2001) artist's book and Chen Lingyang sent me installation photographs and a detailed description of *Yue Jing Jing,* 2002. Yang Fudong's *The Coloured Sky: New Women II*, 2014 went on display in Seoul and Tokyo during the course of this research project, but not anywhere in the PRC or Europe where I might have been able to access it. I did; however, encounter his video installation *My Heart Was Touched Last Yea*r, 2007 on display in the exhibition *China Dream*, part of Liverpool Biennial 2018, and I exchanged emails with curator Philipp Bollman about his experience of exhibiting *New Women*, 2013 by Yang Fudong in Germany. I encountered many of Ma Qiusha's works in her eponymous solo exhibition at the Centre for Contemporary Chinese Art (CFCCA), Manchester in 2013; I refer in this thesis

to notes that I took about the show in 2013. I watched other videos by Ma Qiusha when she gave me the password to access them on vimeo.com.

Encountering also took place beyond the artists' studios and exhibitions. I encountered traces of the works through looking at images in catalogues, video documentation, the artists' personal websites, their galleries' websites, and reading existing analyses about the artists' work. I now understand 'encountering' as being a long or short term, curated, planned or accidental process, not simply an unwilling meeting between two people. The encounter builds over time; temporality, knowledge, analysis and emotion fold into it.

Semi-structured interviews

I conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews during periods of field research in 2016 and 2017 with art historian Liao Wen and artists Yu Ji, Xiao Lu, Ma Liuming, Ma Qiusha, Yang Zhenzhong and Yang Fudong, using interpreters (translators). I exchanged several emails with Chen Lingyang in a dialogue partially conducted in Chinese and partially in English, and Xu Zhen responded in Chinese to questions by email. There were ethical and safety concerns to address before I began my research, for myself and for my interview participants.

Women's rights and feminism in the PRC can be an area of controversy. A group of feminist activists in Beijing called the 'Feminist Five' were detained in March 2015 for a protest that borrowed very much from performance art strategies to bring attention to the issue of harassment on public transport. It is relatively uncommon for artists to be detained as they wield soft power and cultural and economic capital. However, prominent artist Ai Weiwei who uses the language of activism and discusses human rights was detained for four months by the authorities in China in 2011. Throughout the period of my research Amnesty International has bought attention to the detention of human rights activists in the PRC by the CCP (Amnesty International, 2017). In 2019, a curator (who shall remain here anonymous) reported censorship triggered by the word 'archive,' suggesting an objection by the CCP to re-interpretation of the past through using primary documents. To mitigate against risk to my

interview participants, I sent a project information sheet in advance, which outlined my concerns and how I would use the data (Appendix 4). I began with very open questions, only steering to focus on particular works, to let the artists move within topics they were comfortable with, as I will elaborate further on in this section. I sought and was granted ethical approval for this research from the Ethics Officer at The University of Nottingham in 2016.

Feminist activism and feminist theory are tangibly controversial in contemporary Chinese art discourse (Guest, 2017). Artist Xiao Lu, one of my interview participants, has been inconsistent about categorising herself as a feminist (Xiao, L., 2017; Merlin, 2018b). During my research I witnessed the chair of a panel of female contemporary Chinese artists at Tate Modern, London in 2018 skilfully deflect questions about intersectional feminism. Art historian Liao Wen confirmed in our interview that publishers in the PRC are nervous about topics related to feminism and art (Liao, 2017). I made it explicitly clear to my subjects that they were not being classified as feminist activists in the course of my work. There may well have been self-censorship at play, but as artist Cao Fei described in an interview with *The New York Times* in 2015, walking up to the boundary line of political acceptability is what contemporary artists in China are particular are expert in. Cao Fei was quoted as saying, "Everyone knows where the red line is, they don't need to discuss it […] Many of the older artists will want to walk near the line. They want to walk right along it, but not cross it" (Cao in Qin, 2015). This relates to the different stakes for Chinese artists, which differentiates the discourse of contemporary Chinese art from the wider field of international contemporary art, as discussed earlier in this chapter. The limit of what was acceptable for discussion was part of the nature of 'the encounter.'

Other English-speaking scholars, including Paul Gladston (2011, 2013, 2014) and Luise Guest (2016) have gathered data for their research by conducting interviews with contemporary Chinese artists using an interpreter, as I did. Gladston found the interviews he conducted provided such a rich source of information that he reproduced a selection of edited and re-constructed English-language translations of interviews, without additional analysis, as the

book *Contemporary Art in Shanghai Conversations with Seven Chinese Artists* (2011). For Gladston, reproduction of these interviews provided an opportunity "for the presentation of information, ideas and opinions that might otherwise be overlooked as part of the writing of conventional forms of art-historical/critical narrative" (2011:15). Whilst Gladston acknowledges the "distinct problems and difficulties" (2011:16) he has as an Anglophone scholar interviewing contemporary Chinese artists, he suggests that the resulting book is a document of the "production of new, collaborative envisionings of meaning." (2011:17). Reflecting on my own use of interpreters, I found that they helped with cultural translation as well as linguistic translation, and this was part of the transformational potential of the encounter. As they and I discussed how concepts could be translated from one cultural context and discourse to another, this mitigated against the possibility of imperialism and coloniality in my interpretation of the artists' responses. In this thesis, I will not be presenting large amounts of the transcribed and translated text from the semi-structured interviews. Rather, I understand the interviews as one part of the encounter and therefore as an element within a process that impacted my thinking and informed my interpretation of the artists' work. Silences, omissions and moments of awkwardness during an interview, which are hard to capture in a transcript, sometimes impacted as much as what was said. The analyses in this thesis are mine, though they were produced through collaborative processes of finding new meanings through interviewing, translation and the encounter.

The studio visits and interviews were arranged either by email or WeChat directly with the artists or in liaison with the artists' assistants, using contact details provided by curators or organizations that they and I had previously worked with. Once we agreed that we would meet, I sent the artists the bilingual (English/Chinese) project information sheet, outlining my project and including a series of questions relating to the use and storage of the data (Appendix 4). This would immediately have begun to influence the artists' perception of me and my project. The interviews were 'semi-structured,' meaning that I prepared questions in advance, structured around the works that I was interested in. Because of this, the questions were not the same for each

artist. I did not limit myself to the questions prepared in advance, as I wanted to be able to follow fruitful lines of inquiry on the day. Flexibility within the questions contributed to the friendly atmosphere researchers are urged to create in interview situations (Davis in Pickering, 2008:64). The interviews provided an entirely original (and un-replicable) data set for this project; the artists may well have responded differently on another day or with a different interviewer or interpreter. Moreover, as Bartlett wrote in the 1930s, memories are reconstructed and subject to "distortion… assimilation… levelling… [and] sharpening" (1932) meaning that every time descriptions of events are repeated it will likely be a slightly different version with little relationship to the original events. The idea of loss and gain relates to both practices of interviewing, and also to the production of knowledge by researchers outside of their own cultural contexts. I do not speak Mandarin Chinese fluently nor have I lived in the PRC. However, as an arts writer with connections to an art magazine head-quartered in Shanghai and 15 years of experience working with contemporary art, I speak the 'international language of contemporary art' arguably better than a Mandarin-speaker with no contact with the discourse. By the 'international language of contemporary art,' I mean, to a certain extent, the International Art English (IAE) identified by Rule and Levine, characterised by a particular vocabulary and syntax and used by "artists and curators […] gallery owners and directors, bloggers, magazine editors and writers, publicists, collectors, advisers, interns, art-history professors," and which Rule and Levine propose is a tool of ascertaining if someone "does or does not get it" (2012). Rule and Levine write:

> IAE has a distinctive lexicon: *aporia, radically, space, proposition, biopolitical*, *tension*, *transversal*, *autonomy*. An artist's work inevitably interrogates, questions, encodes, transforms, subverts, imbricates, displaces—though often it doesn't do these things so much as it serves to, functions to, or seems to (or might seem to) do these things. IAE rebukes English for its lack of nouns: Visual becomes *visuality, global* becomes *globality*, *potential* becomes *potentiality*, *experience* becomes … *experiencability*.
>
> (Rule and Levine, 2012)

This could be seen as an example of English cultural imperialism; however, hallmarks of IAE include traces of other languages, existing in a constant

process of translation. The artists were not always confident that they had perfect English, but we shared an artistic lexicon, grammar (albeit in translation) and points of reference. Moreover, I found the processes of securing and conducting the interviews were helped by my understanding of the political economic and discursive conditions that are required to produce contemporary art, including an understanding of the roles of agents, art press, exhibitions and assistants. My 'outsiderness' was not always a hindrance and I do not wish to hide it in the framing of this research. Being outside of the culture I am researching encourages me to see categories as formed and forming rather than 'natural.' I am not affected by loyalty or biases that might form part of the analytical filter of those within the contemporary Chinese art *guanxi* (approximately translated as 'localised relationships of power and affect in social networks'). Whilst not producing my own linguistic translation has the potential for loss, the interviews with the artists through translators presented a huge potential for gain: extending my knowledge into new areas, allowing my perspective to transform, bringing difference into focus and concentrating my mind on that moment of encounter, to be followed by analysis through discussion (with the translators and others) and writing.

Archival research

I conducted research at Asia Art Archive (AAA), Hong Kong to corroborate and augment the information provided by artists in interviews, and also to reveal slippages and departures between their accounts and other commentators or other types of documentation material. I visited the AAA for three-day periods during both phases of my field research. The AAA is an archive and library co-founded in 2000 by Claire Hsu and Johnson Chang. It holds personal artist and curatorial archives, reference books, monographs, exhibition catalogues, periodicals, and ephemeral materials, digital and video material relating to contemporary art from Asia. Although the AAA is probably the best bilingual (English/Chinese) source of material on contemporary Chinese art, like any collection there will be gaps and absences (Tali, 2018). Therefore, I did not treat the material in the AAA or in books held at the AAA uncritically.

My experience in the archive was, as with other elements of data collection understood as 'encounter,' neither unembodied nor objective. My time in the archive was 'imperfect' (defined by constant decisions about what to engage with) subjective and transformative. Particularly important encounters included handling Chen Lingyang's *Twelve Flower Months* (2001) artist's book (discussed in Chapter Three); watching documentation of Xiao Lu's *Dialogue* and *pistol shot incident*, 1989; and watching footage of Ma Liuming performing as *Fen Ma Liuming* from the early 2000s (both of which discussed in Chapter Four). Using archival material I was able to locate and then offer an alternative or a challenge to existing "canons of truth" (Walshaw, 2008:324) and knowledge. Besides the AAA, other archives I accessed were online. I used the artists' own websites and their gallerists' websites to find the existing discourse and arguments about the artists, as they often stored or linked to English-language articles. Throughout each of the case study chapters I will incorporate references to the existing discourse, interpretations and arguments relating to each artist.

Comparative textual analysis

The final method, and crucial part of the analyses in Chapters Three to Six, is a comparative textual analysis. I argue that selecting cases and putting them in groups for comparison constitutes a method of data collection. It was only through the creation of these relationships that an analysis could occur. In Chapters Three and Four the comparisons are between pairs of artists (Chen Lingyang and Xu Zhen; Xiao Lu and Ma Liuming). Chapter Five is dedicated to Ma Qiusha, and her work is compared to male-identifying artists Yang Zhenzhong and Yang Fudong in Chapter Six. The selection of cases enabled a comparison along the lines of binary gender because the M+Sigg Collection and the White Rabbit Collection did not hold works by openly trans or non-binary artists who were engaging with representations of women and female bodies. The comparative analysis structure was a consideration during the selection of the cases. Xu Zhen's works were chosen for inclusion in this thesis because they superficially appeared to have commonalities with Chen Lingyang's works, as well as because Xu was inscribing a female symbol (menstrual blood) on a body otherwise coded as male. Ma Liuming's work was

also of interest because he has been understood by curators and scholars as challenging the gender binary by inscribing attributes of womanhood onto his body. Through the theoretical framework, which will be explained in the next chapter, commonalities and differences in the texts according to the gender of the artists emerged.

Thesis outline

This thesis contends that the discourse of contemporary Chinese art includes representations of 'women' affected by patriarchal mechanisms and circulating powers controlling individuals and the social body. These powers affect the attributes of 'woman' inscribed onto bodies and therefore how 'women' are represented. In the examples discussed in this thesis, there are representations of consumed and consuming feminized bodies, alongside more complex, 'leaky,' and fragmentary representations of 'women' that exist in constant negotiation with the 'ideal,' 'consumed and consuming' feminized body. The two different 'women' are not necessarily exclusively represented by either female or male-identifying artists. However, audiences can understand using artists' words and writings that explorations of 'women' by female-identifying artists are practices of speaking the truth. This truth is a representation of the complex negotiation between real experience and the parameters of womanhood constructed by representations of ideal bodies and discourses that manage genders and population. Meanwhile, attempts by male-identifying artists to challenge the gendered category of 'women' is a practice that occurs only within the discourse of contemporary Chinese art, and cannot be understood as a practice of speaking the truth. In their representations of 'women,' this thesis finds, they largely reproduce dominant discourses and normative attributes of 'women.'

In Chapter Two Key Words, Theories and Discourses, I discuss two words (women and bodies) from my research questions, and two words (biopower and *nannü*) that constitute my theoretical framework. The analytical categories of biopower and *nannü* will help to explain the relationship between 'bodies' and 'women.' Biopower optimizes the body. *Nannü,* argues for attention to the reproduction of the binary genders, often through the same discursive forces

that transmit biopower. Chapter Two will address the limitations of Foucault's theories in respect to gender, and therefore why *nannü* is required. The chapter also outlines how women, bodies, biopower and *nannü* have previously been considered in scholarship focused on the Chinese context.

In Chapter Three, Menstrual blood, I compare the work of female-identifying artist Chen Lingyang and male-identifying artist Xu Zhen. The chapter examines Chen Lingyang's photographic series and artist's book *Twelve Flower Months*, 1999-2000 and her video installation *Yue Jing Jing*, 2002. It will compare Chen Lingyang's work to Xu Zhen's photographic series *The Problem of Colourfulness*, 2000 and his interactive installation *Untitled – female hygiene*, 2001. The chapter describes my encounter with Chen Lingyang's artist's book, and contains information related by the artists. The chapter argues that Chen Lingyang uses normative attributes of beauty and biologically essentialised imagery (menstruation) in order to articulate a womanhood defined by being contained within strict boundaries. Chen in the same work transgresses the boundary. In her later work, Chen is more specific about transgressing the representation of womanhood found in the glossy, globalized, lifestyle magazines that discipline bodies. Xu Zhen's work, meanwhile, inscribes a male body with female attributes and a tampon with male attributes. In so doing he problematizes gendered representation and demonstrates that transgression can reinforce binary gendered categories.

In Chapter Four, Sperm, I focus on the work of female-identifying artist Xiao Lu and in particular her performance and video titled, *Sperm*, 2006. This performance, I propose, exemplifies the intersection of CCP biopolitics and other forces of biopower operating in the social body. These forces produce gendered meaning-making even though they are complex and sometimes contradictory. 'Women' acquiesce to pronatal biopower through wanting children, but their fertility choices are highly controlled in this context. 'Men' meanwhile are inscribed as carriers of bloodline. In the work of Xiao Lu's contemporary, male-identifying artist Ma Liuming, is the other side of this gendered management of populations and complex combination of biopower and biopolitics. Chapter Four offers a re-assessment of Ma Liuming's

performance persona – *Fen Ma Liuming* – in which he inscribed his own body with female and male attributes. This performance persona disappeared around 2004. Using his later paintings as a lens to reassess his earlier performance work, he can be seen as inscribing and reproducing a subjugated woman who is not the principal reproducer of human life or bloodline.

Chapter Five, One Child, is dedicated to the artist Ma Qiusha. In her extensive catalogue of works representing female bodies, Ma exemplifies both poles of biopower: the discipline of the body and management of populations. She represents hyper-feminized, consumed and consuming female bodies, and much more complex, 'leaky,' fragmentary 'women.' It is Ma that provides evidence that these two 'women' are not exclusively represented by artists of one gender identity or the other, but also who confirms the importance of gendered subjectivity because throughout her practice she is speaking her truth of womanhood. Ma spills blood relating the story of her early life and 'cultivation.' She presents 'women' formed through specific beauty paradigms, and others whose bodies do not conform, instead 'leaking' throughout their public and private lives, and she utilises the trope of the young, beautiful, globally connected, consuming female to relate specific anxieties about the use of the female body to distract us from the realities of modern life.

Chapter Six, The Young-Girl, is the final case study chapter. I introduce the output of male artists Yang Fudong and Yang Zhenzhong. The two male artists are from a generation earlier than Ma Qiusha, discussed in Chapter Five. However, the works that they produced around the same time engage with ostensibly similar representations of idealized, disciplined female bodies. This chapter contrasts their outputs and compares them to Ma Qiusha. The chapter finds that their work emphasises the gender binary as well as inscribing female bodies as consumed and consuming by a male gaze.

In Chapter Seven I will reflect on how 'women' are inscribed onto bodies in my case studies and on the efficacy of my theoretical framework and methods. I discuss the bodies that are 'missing' from the selection of case studies, and propose future directions for this research.

CHAPTER TWO: KEY WORDS, THEORIES AND DISCOURSES

> …"women" was a name for the least respected rank, whereas her responsibilities were more numerous than those of others. Women have been bound and burdened with tasks; they have been exchanged as gifts; and they have toiled and worked for others.
>
> (He-Yin Zhen in Liu, Karl and Ko, 2013:115)

> The position that the body is constructed is one that is surely, if not immediately, associated with Michel Foucault. The body is a site where regimes of discourse and power inscribe themselves, a nodal point or nexus for relations of juridical and productive power. And, yet, to speak in this way invariably suggests that there is a body that is in some sense there, pregiven, existentially available to become the site of its own ostensible construction. What is it that circumscribes this site called "the body"?
>
> (Butler, 1989:601)

This chapter discusses four words. The words are 'women,' 'body,' 'biopower,' and '*nannü*.' The discussions will underpin the analyses in Chapters Three to Six. The first two 'women' and 'body' relate to the use of these words in the research question of this thesis. In the research questions ('how might representations and management of female bodies outside art discourse affect the way that 'women' are represented within examples of contemporary Chinese art?' and 'does 'the gender identity of the artist – their gendered subjectivity – matter in how they represent 'women'?') I am problematizing the word 'women.' I ask how 'women' are represented, but in order to do this I need to discuss what 'women' is. This thesis is concerned with the discourse of 'women' in the Chinese context and the role that contemporary art can take in reproducing established discourses or actively challenging or critiquing them. This chapter begins with a section asking 'what is 'women'?' What comprises this category and what creates the composition of the category 'women'? The discussion is grounded in discourses of 'women' in the Chinese context and the pertinent literature.

Theorizing 'women' has been the project of feminists inside and outside of China (although it is not just through feminist discourse that the category 'women' is formed). Another focus of feminist theory is 'the body.' The

composition of the category 'women,' is intimately related to 'the body,' as it is onto bodies – both real and represented – that the term 'women' is applied. The second section of this chapter discusses 'the body' and discourses of the body in China. In so doing, it identifies some of the key departures between understanding the body in the West and understanding the body in China. The case studies in this thesis were chosen because they represent bodies onto which 'women' are inscribed in various ways. Therefore the discussion extends 'what is a body' into 'what is a represented body' and how do the two relate? This section includes a discussion of Michel Foucault's theories of the body and representation.

The third and fourth sections of this chapter are different from the first two sections. They discuss the terms 'biopower' and '*nannü,*' in order to outline the theoretical framework to be used for the analyses in Chapters Three to Six. Nevertheless, these words are also intimately connected to 'women' and 'body' and that is why this framework helps to answer the research questions. Michel Foucault's theory of biopower describes the powers that affect bodies: that discipline and optimize bodies and which manage populations, the reproduction of bodies. In the third section, which introduces biopower, I explain that Foucault did not use his theory to discuss the uneven ways that biopowers affect bodies according to their gender identity (female/male, women/men, or other possibilities). Specific disciplinary regimes, I argue, are meted out on bodies identified as belonging to 'women.' Foucault can help with the articulation of disciplinary regimes and how they affect bodies. These disciplinary regimes, moreover, are in effect what produces the category and its differentiation to those bodies identified as 'men.' This is where the theory of biopower meets *nannü,* a theory outlined in the final section of the chapter. *Nannü* is He-Yin Zhen's theory of how powers produce the separate categories of 'women' and 'men.' *Nannü* encourages attention to the formation of 'women,' and the affects that the separation of 'men' and 'women' has on people inscribed as one category or other. This attention to the binary genders (female/male, women/men) and their formation is no less urgent over 100 years after He-Yin Zhen formulated her theory.

Women

The category of 'women' is highly complex and contested transhistorically, transnationally and specifically in the Chinese context. This section will introduce scholarship relating to linguistic and cultural translation of the term, and its theorization relating to the Chinese context. 'Women' is not the same as gender, nor is it a gender, but it is gendered. Gender is a relational category that refers to the constructedness and characteristics of sex identity, whether within a spectrum or a binary. With the category 'women' a binary has already been established, the category is always already working to promote the gender binary and sex difference. For Harriet Evans, 'women' is the "representational practices and attributes associated with being female" (Evans, 1997:10) rather than a stable object. The categories of 'women' and 'gender' have developed through locally specific cultural texts, historical events and other "dominant, residual, and emergent," (Williams, 1977:121-127) discourses, in particular medicine.

Feminist historians focusing on China and elsewhere have done extensive work producing genealogies of these terms either in the discipline of women's studies or using gender as a category of analysis. Locally specific genealogies of women and gender intersect with globalized discourse and are affected by class and race (Scott, 1986:1055). This, albeit with less attention to global(ized) categories of race, is what is argued by He-Yin Zhen in her theory of *nannü,* which is the final key word of the four that will be unpacked in this chapter. He-Yin along with many other scholars in and outside of China have contributed to three main strands of feminist scholarly inquiry on China identified by Hershatter and Wang: kinship, the impacts of the Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution and making "the invisible visible," by writing women into histories (Hershatter and Wang, 2008:1404-1405). Of concern in this thesis are the attributes of the category 'women,' and processes of category making. However, in focusing on the attributes of the category 'women' and its making, this thesis makes a contribution to Hershatter and Wang's three strands of feminist scholarship on China as well as to questions of authorship and gender.

'Women' can only be understood within linguistic and semiotic systems. As Trinh T Minh-ha says, and Tani E Barlow relates, "Women as subject can only redefine whilst being defined by language" (Barlow, 1991:132). Barlow has traced the theorization of 'women' in the Chinese context by focusing on feminist texts (because theorizing women is a feminist endeavour), shifts in language and the cultural landscape (1991, 2004, 2013). Barlow argues that in the early 20th century, "the event of women emerged historically in part because commercial advertising alleges that it did, and in part because at roughly the same time, a subjective claim – "I am a woman" – began to be voiced" (2013:53). This suggests a close relationship between language, images and 'reality,' in this case as applied to the category 'women' and how it is understood in the Chinese context. Contemporary Chinese art, therefore, is one node in the shifting understanding of the category of 'women.'

'Women' (in English) is used to describe some adult human beings.[18] The category includes people assigned female at birth who continue to identify as female (cis women, those who were identified as female at birth and continue to identify as female), and intersex and transgender people who identify as women. 'Females' in animals and humans tend to be the term for those that produce eggs in the processes of reproduction, and, in the case of mammals, females have the ability to gestate children within the body. However, as Judith Butler has observed, within human culture, the ability to produce eggs and the processes of pregnancy and childbirth have never made people into females and women, they were always already categorized as such (Butler,

[18] The category of 'adults' itself is a contested and shifting category formed through legal and cultural events and discourse. The conferral of adult status is often enacted through ceremonies or obtainment of certain milestones and criteria. In the UK in 2018 the age of becoming an adult is generally considered to be 18. Paradoxically in the UK, 16 year olds can marry with parental consent, give their own consent to sexual intercourse and legally bear and care for their own children, whilst classified as minors and unable to drive a car or buy alcohol, tobacco or fireworks. The capacity to be self-sufficient is a consideration in the UK with regards the conferral of adult status. Similarly in China, the age of no longer being classified as a minor is 18. Ceremonies in Ancient China to confer adulthood reportedly took place at different ages: 20 for men and 15 for women in some regions, and 13 for all in others. In 2018, adulthood in China notionally includes the criteria of being able to financially support one's own parents, although that is likely to shift again as the cost of housing continues to rise in urban areas. Since the 1980 Marriage Law, the age for marriage in China has been 22 for men and 20 for women.

Osbourne, Segal, 1994).[19] The capacity to bear children is one of the attributes associated with the category 'women;' however, an individual's capacity to gestate babies does not render them a 'woman.' This is in part why the selection of contemporary artworks in this thesis does not include pregnant or post-natal representations of bodies. This thesis will; however, take into account how the theoretical capacity to gestate babies, nurture children and care for others remain attributes of 'womanhood,' often prescribed by those outside of the category. The production of the binary genders, and in particular women, is crucial for managing populations and disciplining bodies. This will be explained later in this chapter using the categories of Michel Foucault's biopower and He-Yin Zhen's *nannü*.

In the English language, the word 'woman' has its origins in the Old English *wīfman,* meaning adult female human being, where *wīf* was the prefix meaning female.[20] In Old English, as now, *man,* which came from the German word *mann*, could mean both male-gendered human and a general term for human beings irrespective of gender. There are contemporary English language terms synonymous with woman, such as 'lady,' which has etymological origins in conferring class status. In contrast, Chinese written language has two entirely separate characters for female and male human beings, *nü* (女) and *nan* (男), and a gender-neutral character for person *ren* (人). The Chinese characters for female and male contain traces of attributes inscribed on the binary genders from the social context where they originated (which itself was a long period during which the characters evolved through several generations of different scripts.) The pictographic *nü* character is understood as a woman on her knees. The *nan* character, meanwhile, combines the characters for field and strength, suggesting the attributes and role that men should perform. The characters separate the binary genders into the spheres of public and private, strength and weakness. The attribution of these characteristics and roles could be seen as a

[19] Moreover, during the last 10 years as trans men are becoming public with their pregnancies and live births. The processes of producing eggs and bearing children does not affect their gender identity as men. Searching English-language databases, little information is available regarding the pregnancies of trans men in China.
[20] *Wīf* evolved later into the separate word 'wife.' Sometimes it is incorrectly stated, even in reputable dictionaries, that the word *wīfman* was a composite of 'wife' and 'man.'

structure in which to manage bodies and populations, and the basis of a framework in which individuals should live within society.

The *nü* and *nan* characters are often used in combination with other characters (such as: *nüren*, female person, *nanren,* male person; and the early-20th century neologism *nüxing*, female sex, with its equivalent *nanxing,* male sex). There are many words with particular meanings within specific cultural, temporal and discursive contexts that translate from Chinese into English as 'women,' further destabilising the idea of the concrete category of 'women.' Researching the genealogy of the linguistic 'woman' in China and its meanings within specific social contexts was the project of Tani E Barlow, leading to her article 'Theorizing Woman: Funü, Guojia, Jiating [Chinese Women, Chinese State, Chinese Family]' (1991). Later, in her book *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism* (2004), Barlow writes a genealogy of theorizations of 'women' and Chinese feminist theory. With a debt acknowledged to Barlow's research, I will sketch an outline of what women have been in China and how both language and representations of the body have been entwined with the production of 'women' and their constitution of self-hood.

Eva Kit Wah Man proposes that Ancient Chinese philosophy, the discourse that produced categories of personhood and kinship relations, excludes the possibility of women as a subject (2016:13). In pre-modern China, the reality for many especially lower-class women, not unlike the picture globally, was bleak. A word for adult women before the 20th century was *funü*, conceived within "Confucian family philosophy [containing a sense of] a person in the patriline," (Barlow, 2004:37). *Funü* is a composite of the words for spouse and daughter; a category of persons not defined by their individual personhood. Many women in Imperial China especially of the upper classes were restricted to the home, and many endured the violent, disabling cultural practice of foot-binding, which was finally banned around 1912.[21] However, during the Song

[21] Dorothy Ko produced a revisionist history of foot-binding that challenges the male imposition of foot-binding onto female persons of no agency. Ko proposes that foot-binding was closely related to bodily labour and the conferral of upper class status, and therefore women took a complex role in binding the feet of their daughters (Ko, 2007).

dynasty (960-1279) women could inherit property, during the Tang dynasty (618-907) figurative sculptures were produced of women riding horses and otherwise engaging in public life, and there were examples of female rulers. China's female rulers included Tang dynasty Empress Wu Zetian (624-705) and Qing dynasty Empress Cixi (1835-1908). Empress Cixi, who manoeuvred her way to power, governing on behalf of the young male emperor, took control of her own visual representation through inviting photographers and painters to court. Cixi utilized visual representation to embed herself in narratives of modernity and reposition herself on the axes of gender and power (Pang, 2007; Hogge and MIT, 2010). Cixi; however, either did not want to or could not change the lives of ordinary women and how the category of 'women' was understood. Her case does correspond to scholarly re-assessments that suggest women in China before 1911 were not completely without power.

Emily Hahn writes, "It is fairly obvious to anybody familiar with the Chinese temperament that the women of the upper and middle classes […] had never been nonentities in society, even during pre-Revolution days" (Hahn, 1941: xvi-xvii). The revolution Hahn is referring to was the overthrow of the Imperial rulers and the creation of the Republic of China in 1911-1912. Hahn's view is supported by the tradition of female-authored poetry that Kang-I Sun Chang and Haun Saussy document in their book, *Women Writers of Traditional China* (1999) and is certainly the view of Dorothy Ko who in her book *Teachers of the Inner Chambers* identifies networks of female poets, teachers, journalists and editors in 17th century Jiangnan province (1994). Although their womanhood was constituted through networks of power that produced inequality, many female cultural producers inscribed their own attributes and selfhood through different cultural practices. Feminist activist Qiu Jin[22] (1875-1907) used public speech-making, poetry, martial arts and cross-dressing in a Western man's suit (*xizhuang*) as tools for promoting her

[22] Qiu Jin was executed in 1907 aged 31, under the authority of Empress Cixi (1835-1908) and the Guangxu Emperor (1871-1908), for her part in a revolutionary plot. The last Imperial ruler, the Xuantong Emperor, later known as Pu Yi, was overthrown in 1911 and the Republic of China was established in 1912. Qiu Jin was later revived as a Communist martyr hero.

brand of nationalistic feminism. Qiu Jin and He-Yin Zhen separately produced feminist journals, undertook transnational collaborations and engaged in translating feminist and critical theoretical texts from the West and Japan.

The year 1911 marked the end of feudalism and imperial rule and the inauguration of the Republic of China. Sun Yat-Sen became the Republic of China's provisional President. However, behind this transfer of power, other shifts were taking place in Chinese modernity, the creation and consumption of images and the changing "attributes and practices" of the category of 'women.' Since China's forced 'opening up' to global trade in the 19th century, foreign powers had established factories producing goods such as silk, and women were sent to work in them, which corresponded to the breakdown of the female-interior, male-exterior Confucian framework. Barlow contends that alongside mass production, commercial advertising formed a language that women could use to articulate themselves within Chinese modernity. Moreover, she argues women and feminism "are foundations of modernity no matter how modernity is qualified" (2013).

Transnational debates about women's rights were taking place before 1911, involving both female and male authors and theorists. (These included Qiu Jin and He-Yin Zhen who had both travelled to Japan and were involved with feminist groups there.) Debates about women's rights and the women question were also a characteristic of the May 4th Movement and New Culture Movements (c1915-1919), movements led by anti-Imperial students and intellectuals who were critical of the Republican government and had a vision for a more modern and globalized China. In the 1920s, the neologism *nüxing* emerged, the sexed female subject, grounded in discourses of modernity and global capitalism, or what Barlow calls "colonial modernity" (2004:36). Around the same time and into the 1930s and 40s, *xin nüxing* (New Women) and *modeng gou'er* (modern girls) emerged. They wore transnational modern fashion, worked and engaged in life outside the home and typically lived in urban areas, appearing in advertising, film, print media and reality (Stevens, 2003; Ying Hu, 2000; Barlow, 2013).

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), who emerged as a political force during the Republican era, moved to overwrite '*nüxing*,' changing the meaning of this category to a femininity that was "Westernized," "bourgeois," "individualist," "erotic" (Barlow, 2004:38). The CCP reinstated *funü* as the word for 'female Chinese comrade' and women continued to be produced as entities entwined with the identity of China's nationhood. The *funü* was ungendered or masculinized, with a central role in propaganda imagery, albeit always slightly disempowered in relation to her male comrade counterparts (Evans, 1999:73-74). The CCP with Mao Zedong as its chairman, came to power in 1949 after a civil war. The woman question and woman's rights were part of the foundation of Chinese Communist principles and rhetoric; however, the requirement that women work outside the home led to a 'double-burden' of public and domestic work and responsibilities. Professor Li Xiaojiang describes the Communist *funü* as 'unsexed' or 'ungendered,'[23] and she argues that liberation was only secured in exchange for the erasure of public female sexuality. Tani E Barlow relates:

> […] Maoist women had no body. The ideologically constructed *funü's* body did not menstruate, give birth, feel sexual desire, or seek out pleasure. If the positive features of *funü* were that it enabled individual women to achieve and affirm the rights of women in positive terms, the negative features of massified women were that she could not confirm her difference from man affirmatively.
>
> (Barlow, 2004:275)

During the period 1949-1976 the CCP limited debate and exchange with the world beyond China. It was not until after Chairman Mao Zedong's death in 1976, the new Paramount Leader Deng Xiaoping 'opened up' China again to international trade and interaction of goods, culture and information. This meant another set of changes for the category of 'women.'

With the new market-led economy came a resurgence of *nüxing*, a more eroticized and feminine woman constituted within global capitalism. The late-20th century *nüxing* appeared along with an influx of images of white women.

[23] Sex and gender both translate as the Chinese word *xingbie.* For Li, what is at stake is the erasure of the feminine sex, which is not so much neutralized in her view as masculinized (Li in Barlow, 2013).

Louisa Schein argues that consumption of this imagery was part of performances and practices of modernity (1994). It was during this time that commercial imagery and glossy women's magazines began to sell a new globalized lifestyle and a new globalized female subject. The case studies in Chapters Three to Six are drawn from the period 1999-2016 and woven throughout will be references to the glossy *nüxing* and the lifestyle and the China that she signifies. From the 1980s onwards change has been rapid in China, but there is evidence to suggest that rights for women have gone backwards during this time (Hong Fincher, 2014). The One-Child policy came into effect around 1979 (its phasing out began in 2013, replaced with a Two-Child policy in 2016) and its effects have been extensive and complex, with women experiencing its positives (on their education and agency) and its negatives (creating a gender imbalance). As the policy was in effect from the late 1970s, and it created new categories of people, its traces affect all case studies in this thesis. A discussion of the policy and its gendered affects is included in Chapter Five. Feminist Cultural studies academic Dai Jinhua argued in the 1990s that women were still not adequately authoring their own subjectivity (1995, 2002), and therefore potentially understandings of the category 'women.' The intersection of gendered subjectivity and understandings of the category 'women' is central to this thesis.

Bodies

The case studies selected for analysis in this thesis are representations of the physical structure of human beings, bodies. More specifically, this thesis is concerned with representations of bodies that have attributes of 'woman' inscribed upon them. Questioning what is a body and how it is implicated in gendered meaning-making has been the project of feminist theorists and others concerned with existential questions, meta-ethics, philosophy and critical thinking in China and beyond. Like 'women' and 'contemporary art,' the body is not a concrete object that can travel across cultures and discourses; therefore, what is (or can be a framework for understanding) a 'body' in China? Addressing this question is the book *Bodies in China* (2016) by Eva Kit Wah Man. Man's book suggests that some of the problems that Western feminists have in asking 'what is the body' within a Western male theoretical

tradition (of which Michel Foucault is part), could be helped by looking to Chinese discourses of the body. Specifically, Man looks at how Chinese thought could break down the "mind-body dualism" of Western philosophy, and at how Chinese thought could be useful to Western feminists attempting to de-stabilise biological discourse.[24] Man also considers whether the subject of women is possible in Ancient Chinese thought. Alongside these philosophical questions, Man analyses case studies of bodies and bodily expression in art discourse. Man's case studies include female contemporary Chinese art performance artist He Chengyao,[25] embroidery practice, fashion, sex work and sport. Man pays particular attention to the shifts that came with "the integration of the Chinese economy with global markets" and consumerism on desire and pleasure. Addressing these concerns and case studies, Man explores the (re)production of 'femininity' in relation to bodies.

These questions of 'what is the body' and 'who does it belong to' relate to the thesis' questions of gender subjectivity and how 'women' are represented in these artworks, in a number of ways. It calls into question the "representational practices and attributes" (Evans, 1997:10) that we identify as producing 'femininity' or 'womanhood' in these works, inscribed onto particular bodies. The practices and attributes that the audience might observe or encounter in the works that are understood as producing women in a particular cultural context may well pre-exist the artist's intervention. Yet the artist has brought them into (transnational) art discourse and therefore made these bodies, comprised of inscribed surfaces, into the objects of our analyses. The practices and attributes of womanhood reproduced in the works are, in some of the case studies, produced by artists that identify as male. Therefore, although 'femininity' and 'womanhood' are inscribed on bodies by regimes of power and culture, they are also in these cases products of imaginations and practices by artists who are not categorised by culture and power – or in fact self-identified – as being women or female. The femininity of the bodies, their inscription as women, is

[24] Highlighting the productive aspects of medical and biological discourse was the project of Foucault in *The Birth of the Clinic* ([1963] 1973) although his focus was on the creation of madness rather than the creation of gender(s).
[25] He Chengyao was on the long-list for inclusion as a case study in this project.

created using a male gaze and a male imagination. Given this, we could even understand some of the bodies in the case studies as actually male bodies rendered to look like female bodies.

Complicating this further, do we, the audience, take ownership of the bodies through encountering the artworks? Or are we taken ownership of and therefore gendered through the encounter? The question of taking ownership of the object of the body through seeing (encountering) bears the traces of a specific gendered genealogy, because the objects of analysis here are derived from the wider category of international contemporary art discourse. There is a heterosexuality and imbalance of power (re)produced through this discourse because part of its origins are in the history of Western art where heterosexuality and the imbalance of power have been endlessly reproduced through gazing (producing masculinity) and being gazed upon (producing femininity). Which is not to say that artists cannot subvert this trope, but I propose that the feminization of the seen and the masculinisation of the seer happens until it is deliberately disrupted. Some references will be made to pre-existing tropes and powers of seeing and being seen in the case study chapters, because this is a method of inscribing (gendered) attributes onto the body.

Scholars have observed that in Chinese art discourse the body, in particular the unclothed body, is not as visible as it is in Western art discourse. This was the subject of John Hay's chapter 'The Body Invisible in Chinese Art?' in the book *Body Subject & Power in China* edited by Angela Zito and Tani E Barlow. Hay suggests that Western art historians only look for representations of nude bodies in art because we have been trained to see within a Western (art historical) tradition (1994:43). Hay's statement "There is something peculiarly Western about the current obsession in Western cultural studies with "the body" (1994:43) although written around 25 years before I embarked on this project, perhaps explains some of the awkwardness when explaining my project to Chinese artists who may not consider representations of bodies as important to either their individual practices or to the discourse of contemporary Chinese art overall. Yet it is not that bodies were not present or important, Hay argues, as much as they existed in Chinese visual culture in

metaphors, or through attempts to represent *qi* (the vital force of any living entity) (Hay, 1994:44).

In contemporary Chinese art the body is prominent and therefore has been given significant attention by researchers. Thomas J Berghuis' book *Performance Art in China* outlines a theory of the 'mediated body in art' that goes beyond the conventional parameters of what has been understood as constituting performance art practice.[26] For Berghuis, the body is mediated through both embodied artistic processes and representation of the body in contemporary Chinese art (2006). Closely related to this, Lee Ambrozy proposes that the origins of performance art in China can be (partly) traced back to how the body is used in calligraphic tradition (Ambrozy, 2015).[27] This thesis follows Berghuis and Ambrozy in considering 'the body' in art as comprising both the artist's body engaged in practice, and the represented body (and, in my case, as previously mentioned, a third set of bodies, those of the audience). Although this thesis will focus on the represented bodies, the bodies of the artists' – whether or not they are represented in the case studies – and the audience's bodies will be taken into account in the analyses in Chapters Three to Six of this thesis.

This thesis builds on the contention of Silvia Fok in her book *Life and Death: Art and the Body in Contemporary China*, that the corporeal body is deliberately being used by artists in China to explore the themes of life, death and the role of the social body (2013). Fok does not characterise this set of concerns as biopower. For Fok, representation of 'real' bodies in art is a sub-set of contemporary Chinese art worthy of scholarly attention separately to representations of the body in other media (painting, sculpture, digital avatars and so on); however, unlike my own project, Fok also considers the meanings

[26] Scholar Tong Pui Yin submitted her thesis *An Account of Development of Performance Art in China from 1979-2010* at University of the Arts London in 2015. Her project, which included attending and staging multiple performance art events, has yet to be published but is available online.

[27] Neither Berghuis or Ambrozy mention the possible role of Gutai in the development of performance practice in contemporary Chinese art. The Gutai group, founded in the Japan in the 1950s, were hugely influential world-leaders in performance art practice. This suggests that focusing on objects within National parameters may obscure transnational spheres of influence and connection.

of non-human bodies in contemporary Chinese art. In the book *The Body at Stake: Experiments in Chinese Contemporary Art and Theatre* the editors begin by outlining an argument for how political ideology and publicly accepted metaphysical thought can change the relationship of the individual to their own body within different cultural contexts (2013)[28]. Zhang Nian writes, using language that resonates with the theories of Foucault, but also reflects ideas coming from Confucianism: "The body acts as the primary arena for the self and it is a product of struggle and action" (2013:23). In Confucian thought, there is no inner self, rather the self is constructed through ritual and action and constituted through kinship (Puett and Gross-Loh, 2016). This understanding of the body corresponds to the understanding of 'women' as comprised of 'attributes and practices.' It leaves open the question of who has agency to decide the attributes and practices, rituals and actions that produce gendered individuals.

Michel Foucault is one of the theorists whose work contributes to the theoretical framework for this thesis. His category of 'biopower' is discussed later in the next section of this chapter. Foucault was also concerned with the body and the question of whether bodies are, "constituted within the specific nexus of culture or discourse/power regimes," and therefore whether or not there is "materiality or ontological independence of the body outside of any one of those specific regimes" (Butler, 1989:602). If this is the case, that bodies may not exist outside of specific regimes of power, there is even more at stake in analysing represented bodies, as this thesis does. Judith Butler identifies a paradox in Foucault's writing: that he suggests both that the body is entirely constructed, and that the body exists as a pre-discursive surface on which it is inscribed by culture and regimes of power. This thesis follows Foucault in believing there is a great deal at stake in analysing the cultural powers at play relating to the body (and in this case, gendered categories applied to the represented body).

[28] There are some chapters in this book that deal with gender, which will be discussed in the final section of this chapter.

The body in Foucault's writing intimately relates to questions of representation. In the painting *Las Meninas*, 1656, as Foucault highlights in his book *The Order of Things*, artist Diego Velázquez represents in paint the reflection of the person viewing the artwork, making the viewer's body part of the way that the piece operates. The viewer must stand, embodied, in front of the painting to see themselves inscribed in paint as the artist himself. There are therefore in *Las Meninas*, 1656 three bodies: representations of bodies that were affected and even produced by forces of power in the 17th century painted by Velázquez, the artist's body which had engaged in artistic practice to produce the work, and the audience's bodies viewing the work and (represented as) staring back in the mirror. Likewise there are three potential bodies to consider in the artworks analysed in Chapters Three to Six of this thesis. Firstly, there are represented bodies "constituted within the specific nexus of culture or discourse/power regimes" (Butler, 1989:602) that are sometimes representations of the artists' own bodies and sometimes not. Secondly, the artists' bodies constituted in regimes and discourses of power engaged in artistic practice that reproduces discursive (bio)power regimes or interrupts them by inscribing on the surfaces of the represented bodies. Finally, there are the audiences' bodies, which are also constituted within power regimes. Onto the bodily surfaces of the audience, the artist can inscribe certain attributes, reproducing, acquiescing to or critiquing and speaking the truth about (bio)power.[29] The audience's bodies are often compelled to interface with the artworks in certain ways that inscribe particular attributes.

The represented bodies raise another question: are we seeing a body that belongs to someone, or are we seeing a body that now belongs to the artist and extends their subjectivity? What the artwork is showing to the audience inscribes certain attributes; therefore, do our bodies too become an extension of the artist and the artwork? Or, in fact, is this how power regimes operate to inscribe onto and construct the body, and is this just one example of it happening? I will consider these subsidiary questions throughout my analyses.

[29] The idea of speaking the truth, and specifically the concept that Foucault discussed called *parrhesia*, will be introduced more fully in Chapter Four of this thesis.

The final two sections of this chapter look at the powers that circulate to produce gendered meanings and bodies. It is in Chapters Three to Six that I discuss how artworks can both reproduce the effects of these powers and speak their truth to critique and challenge circulating, disciplining powers.

Biopower

The theoretical framework of this thesis combines the categories of 'biopower' and '*nannü*.' Michel Foucault (1926-1984) discusses the theory of 'biopower' in his book *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1 The Will to Knowledge*, in the chapter titled 'Right of Death and Power over Life' (1976) and in his Lectures at the Collège de France, which took place from 1970 until his death in 1984. Foucault explains that biopower has "two poles" that form the "technology of power" from the 19th century onwards, and so are linked to the development of capitalism with the body as capital (1976). The two poles are: the disciplined or optimized "body as machine," and "biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary" (Foucault, [1976] 1998:139). This thesis is interested in both of the two poles that Foucault contends make up the concept of biopower. Biopower is part of the theoretical framework because it addresses how categories (of people) and practices (producing personhood) come to occur in reality. It deals with real problems of existence, how people come to be and continue to exist in relation to power. Biopower enables the framing of contemporary Chinese art and the bodies implicated within it as both targets and agents of the discipline and management of bodies. Foucault's theory is used to position contemporary Chinese art objects within wider stakes of communication and gendered meaning-making. Moreover, these stakes are nationally-bounded because methods of controlling bodies and the social body are specific to nations. The examples of contemporary art in this thesis are all produced by artists living and working in the PRC, rather than including the work of the Chinese diaspora, because the management and discipline of bodies varies across the globe and through time.

Foucault sees power, including biopower, as productive, and not always negative; it produces knowledge. He wrote, power "doesn't only weigh on us

as a force that says no; it also traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourse" (Foucault, 1980:120). Biopower can be understood as being produced and exerted through all elements of the *dispositif*, which is the apparatus,

> consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions–in short, the said as much as the unsaid.
>
> (Foucault [1977] in Gordon, 1980:194-228)

The elements of the *dispositif* that this thesis will concentrate on are: medical discourse,[30] the family, self-regulation, top-down (the CCP), capillary power (which I will explain below) and contemporary Chinese art discourse. Foucault did not give much attention to the role of producing (binary) genders in the discipline and management of individual bodies and the social body. However, I argue that the gendered categories 'women' and 'men' are (re)produced with cultural, temporal and discursive specificity by medical discourse, the family, self-regulation, top-down and capillary power, which is why biopower needs augmentation with *nannü*, as will be discussed further on in this chapter. Contemporary Chinese art (and the wider discourse of international contemporary art) is a node within the circulation of (bio)power, communicating and reproducing meaning about gendered categories and bodies.

(Bio)power does not travel in one direction but is circulating constantly. Speaking truth and acquiescence to (bio)power can occur at the same time in response to different aspects transmitted through the *dispositif*. Foucault conceptualises part of this circulation by introducing the idea of "capillary power" ([1977]1995:198) in his book *Discipline and Punish* (1977). He defines capillary power as: "penetration of regulation into even the smallest

[30] As mentioned, Foucault focused on medical discourse in his genealogical work *The Birth of the Clinic* (Foucault, 1963). Giorgio Agamben who has also talked about biopower in his work, writes "sovereign power […] is now achieved massively and on a daily basis by pseudo-scientific representations of the body, of sickness and health, and by the "medicalization" of ever wider spheres of life and of the individual imagination" (2015:210). Agamben, like Foucault, did not focus on gender.

details of everyday life" ([1977]1995:198) and "power at its extremities, in its ultimate destinations, with those points where it becomes capillary, that is, in its more regional and local forms and institutions" (1980:244). Capillary power is a way to understand practices of surveillance that Foucault describes in *Discipline and Punish*. It is also useful in studies focusing on late 20th and early 21st century Chinese context, where sovereign power[31] (the CCP) filters down to local authorities, mouthpieces and practices, including the government-backed women's organisation All Women China Federation (AWCF) and the (alleged) 50 Cent Army[32] (*wumaodang*). But it also refers to powers circulating that are not top-down – all of the *dispositif* – including medicine, the family, and self-regulation; all of which take a role in regulating population and optimizing bodies.

Foucault's writing was conceived in and relates to the Western context. In order to discuss particular concepts, such as madness and sexuality, he produced genealogies. Genealogies were a method of writing histories that took a concept in the present that seemed to be concrete and universal, and traced it back through a specific, often ruptured, cultural and temporal path to demonstrate where and how these categories and concepts came into effect (were produced or constructed). Foucault excluded from his genealogies any analysis of how gender is constructed or how power produces inequality/patriarchal systems that produce and disadvantage women, even though his methods can be used to produce such an analysis. Jana Sawicki in her book *Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, Power and the Body* relates how Michel Foucault suggested that rather than spend time analysing his texts, Sawicki should use his methods for her own – feminist – projects (1991). Foucault himself was concerned with who is speaking about what topic. Foucault's genealogy method can be applied to non-Western context. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Barlow produces a "discontinuous"

[31] 'Sovereign power' is how Foucault describes the force with ultimate power to set down laws in any given context. Given that the CCP is the founding and ruling party of the PRC, they would qualify as a sovereign power.
[32] This is the colloquial term given to netizens suspected to be posting constant small items of propaganda and support online in favour of the Chinese Communist Party, for a small payment, as part of the party's tactics to control the Chinese internet. This group's existence is conjecture, there is no evidence that they exist and this practice occurs.

genealogy of Chinese feminism in her book *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism* (2004) to demonstrate engagement with the woman question by feminists throughout 20th century China. In so doing, she challenges the suggestion that there is no tradition of feminist activism and theory in China.

Another feminist critique of Foucault is that his sites of discipline are usually 'housed' within structures: schools, hospitals, prisons. Sandra Bartky, proposes expanding Foucault's concept of discipline to include consideration of a "disciplinary regime of femininity" (1988). However Lois McNay finds Bartky's proposal to be too weighted towards a separate history of discipline of 'women' that ignores how men and women are caught up within changes occurring in society (1991:133). This is where He-Yin Zhen's category of *nannü* could be helpful. For He-Yin Zhen, circulating powers continuously remake the binary genders as part consolidating control. It was the production of genders that concerned He-Yin, rather than a disciplinary regime that affected 'women' more so, even if the outcome of the production of (uneven) genders was the subjugation of women. In order to undertake my own project, He-Yin's theory is required to facilitate cultural translation and account for Foucault's neglect of gender(s). Using Chinese feminist theory in conjunction with Foucault's theory will go some way towards avoiding the violence of using 'white theory' to examine non-white bodies, which is problematic as scholars including Sara Ahmed have observed. In a tweet Ahmed wrote, "This should still not happen: when practice is used as an example (referencing black and brown bodies) and theory is used as a frame (referencing white minds). But it does still happen" (Ahmed, 2018). Despite this, this thesis finds Foucault's 'biopower' and genealogy method useful, because they provide a link between power, representation and existential questions relating to life and the body. But Foucault's theories cannot be used uncritically or without the use of feminist attention to gendered category making, in order to address the questions of this chapter.

Whilst Chinese feminism is not known about or referred to much within the discourse of contemporary Chinese art, as interviews with the artists confirmed

(Xiao Lu, 2017; Ma Qiusha, 2016; Yang Fudong, 2016; Yang Zhenzhong, 2016; Ma Liuming, 2017; Chen Lingyang, 2017), Michel Foucault's theories have travelled to China and into art discourse. In 2014, the Red Brick Art Museum, Beijing, and the Institute for Cultural Studies at Capital Normal University, collaborated on the (Chinese-language) symposium, *Michel Foucault in China*.[33] Foucault's theories travel easily into art discourse perhaps in part because Foucault bought art into his theories.[34] Notably Foucault wrote about Diego Velásquez, René Magritte and Andy Warhol in order to problematize representation. Catherine M. Soussloff goes so far as to propose that we could understand Foucault not only as a philosopher, but as an art historian (2009:743). This gives additional weight to the extraction of one of his theories for my own project of analysing contemporary art.

My thesis is not the only scholarly work to use Foucault to look specifically at contemporary Chinese art. However, so far, it is the only one to focus on questions about gender(s) and gendered categories in objects of contemporary Chinese art using Foucault as part of its framework.[35] Raino Isto used Foucault as a framework to analyse the work Xu Bing and Gu Wenda (Itso, 2015:195-216). In this article, Isto uses biopower to make a connection between organic-non-human material in contemporary Chinese art and the production of identities. Important to mention here are the books *Chinese Surplus: Biopolitical Aesthetics and the Medically Commodified Body* (2018) by Ari Larissa Heinrich, and Sheldon H. Lu's *Chinese Modernity and Global Biopolitics studies in literature and visual culture* (2007). Both of these books use a biopolitical framework and include case studies from contemporary Chinese art. However in these books the contemporary Chinese art cases form

[33] This included the papers: 'Bio-politics and Telling the Truth: Subject - Power – Truth' by Zhang Xu, and 'From Bio-politics to Thanatopolitics [a word meaning the mobilization of populations]' by Zhang Kai. The forth session was titled 'Foucault and Art' and included the papers 'Foucault and Spreading of Contemporary Art' by Qin Siyuan and 'Foucault's Painting Studies and 20th Century Paradigm Changes in Art History' by well-known art critic and academic Lu Mingjin.

[34] It could also perhaps be because the questions that he poses about bodies and populations have implications beyond art discourse and pay attention to meta-ethical questions of existence.

[35] Shuqin Cui makes two small mentions of Foucault in her book *Gendered Bodies Towards a Women's Art in Contemporary China* (2016) but it is not central to the analytical framework.

a minority of the case studies or examples within projects of critical discourse analysis. In chapter one of Heinrich's book, they focus on the 'flesh artists,' including Zhu Yu, Sun Yuan and Peng Yu, who produced performances and art objects around the turn of the millennium using or referring to cadaver or body parts. Referring to these artists, Heinrich argues that their study situates this phenomenon,

> against the backdrop of an evolving historical and transnational aesthetic "environment" that is distinguished by both the literal and the figurative materialization of an increasingly dissociated corporeal aesthetics—a culturally "composite body" with interchangeable parts whose emergence coincides with the beginning of the machine age (and therefore the age of biopolitics).
>
> (Heinrich, 2018:18)

Heinrich's biopolitical concerns lie away from disciplining the body, managing the population and producing gendered categories (the focus of my thesis), and into literal and figurative trading of organs, labouring bodies, and human rights: new regimes of corporeal experience and human body capital in the globalized, transnational post-colonial world. Heinrich takes a similar methodological approach to my thesis when discussing the cadaver group (flesh artists) by contrasting their new reading with the existing narratives of interpretation by art critics and curators.

Sheldon H. Lu's project is more similar to my thesis in its definition of 'biopolitics', in that it looks at the disciplining of "desires, bodies, affects and sexuality" (2007:2). One section of Lu's book comprising two chapters refers to contemporary Chinese art. Lu makes reference to the examples of artists Ma Liuming and his contemporary Zhang Huan in one of his chapters (2007:71-92). Lu argues that Ma Liuming's performances in his feminized persona (*Fen Ma Liuming*), "defy the biopolitics of traditional patriarchal authority by opening up the questions of gender bending, cross-dressing and sexual ambiguity [contributing] a broad international politics of multiculturalism in art" (2007:71-72). As will be presented and discussed in chapter four of this thesis, my analysis of the work of Ma Liuming – using *nannü* as well as

biopower, and reassessing Ma's earlier performances in light of his work in the early 2000s – reach a very different conclusion to Lu.

Outside of the analysis of art, or of art objects within a wider discourse analysis, several scholars have used biopower as their framework for analysing phenomena, developments and objects within China.[36] Susan Greenhalgh uses this framework for her books *Governing China's Population: From Leninist to Neoliberal Biopolitics* (2005, co-written with Edwin A. Winkler), *Just One Child* (2008), and *Cultivating Global Citizens: Population in the Rise of China* (2010). The topic of these books are especially pertinent to Chapter Five of this thesis. Additionally, the time-frame that *Cultivating Global Citizens* addresses (2004-2009) makes her study the background against which the artists examined in this thesis Ma Qiusha, Xiao Lu, Ma Liuming, Yang Fudong and Yang Zhenzhong were practising.[37] Greenhalgh proposes that governing population, specifically reducing birth rate and investing in "population quality, or human capital in all its manifest forms" (2010:113) has been central to China's late-20th-and-21st-century ascent. Greenhalgh asserts the link between scientific discourse and the ideology and methods of controlling population in China (2008). This resonates with Gary Sigley's article 'Suzhi, The Body, And The Fortunes of Technoscientific Reasoning in Contemporary China' (2009). Sigley makes an attempt to culturally translate biopower, or rather he identifies two concepts in China that he says constitute "a distinctly Chinese form of biopolitics" (2009:541): *suzhi* (quality, of people and population) and *weisheng* (hygiene) (2009). This suggests that Foucault's list of what constitutes biopower ("health, hygiene, birthrate, life expectancy [and] race" (Foucault in Gordon, 2010)) cannot be taken as categories that translate directly between the West and China, even in the present moment of, to use Tomlinson's wording, globalized "complex-connectivity" (1999).

[36] Scholar Hentyl Yapp and James Garrison in his doctoral thesis *The Aesthetic Life of Power Chinese and Western Insights into the Rituals of Subject Life*, 2007, have both identified nodes of connection between Foucault's theories of the self and Chinese thought.
[37] Chen Lingyang's work was being frequently displayed and responded to during this period, although she was not as active as the others in producing new work during this time.

The body and nationhood were linked in Susan Brownell's book *Training the Body for China* (1995), which also uses a biopolitical framework. More recently Malcolm Thompson argued strongly for embedding the family into an idea of what constitutes biopower in his article 'Foucault, Fields of Governability, and the Population-Family-Economy Nexus in China' (2012). The work of Thompson, Brownell, Greenhalgh and Sigley will help me to 'culturally translate' biopower throughout this thesis. They have informed my understanding of "health, hygiene, birthrate, life expectancy [and] race" (Foucault, [1978-1979] 2010) in the Chinese context before and after the year 2000, enabling me to propose how my selection of contemporary Chinese art objects is implicated in the circulation of biopolitical discourse and biopower.

Biopower and biopolitics can contradict and conflict on the surface of the body. What is missing, however, from Foucault's theory of biopower is a sense of the agency of the body (the individual) in challenging the dominant discourses that inscribe attributes onto its surface. This thesis addresses this using the Foucauldian category *parrhesia*, which Foucault uses to describe practices of speaking the truth, even if it is dangerous and a risky tactic for the speaker, and his theory of technologies of the self. This category of *parrhesia* will be discussed in Chapters Three to Six where it is used to describe the ways in which the artists articulate their own identity in relation to the powers and practices of gendering constantly affecting them and their bodies.

Nannü

The second part of the theoretical framework, adjoining with biopower, is *nannü*.[38] *Nannü* is a category originally theorized by feminist activist He-Yin Zhen and discussed in the book *The Birth of Chinese Feminism* (Liu, Karl, Ko, 2013). The word already existed in Chinese language when He-Yin made use of it. It is a composite of 'man' and 'woman' or perhaps more accurately 'male' and 'female' as relating to categories of people, even without the person (*ren*) suffix. *Nannü* could be approximately translated as 'gender.' However,

[38] Because to translate *nannü* as gender would be insufficient, I follow Liu, Karl and Ko in communicating *nannü*'s untranslatability by using the pinyin word throughout this thesis.

what was of central concern to He-Yin was the constant (re)production of a binary gender divide, the (re)creation of 'normative' women and men at any given moment up to the time she was writing. Although *nannü* accounted for the creation of both 'men' and 'women,' He-Yin's focus was on women as they were the category that were marginalized and subjugated. He-Yin addresses the creation of attributes and practices in the production of 'women' and the question of who authors these ideas. For example, He-Yin remarks, "men knew full well that docility was not a good virtue but nonetheless made women abide by it. Does this not imply that they were banishing women from the realm of the human?" (He-Yin in Liu, Karl and Ko, 2013:131).

I contend that He-Yin's category is still relevant over 100 years after He-Yin proposed it. The creation of binary gendered categories of persons persists in the 21st century in China and beyond. He-Yin's category encourages attention to why these categories persist. I use He-Yin's theory not only because it was created by a woman in China, but also because there is no other theory I can find that argues for this same point. The theory of 'gender' as discussed in the West throughout the 20th century does not promote attention to the ongoing reproduction of binary gendered categories of people. Moreover, in this thesis I am concerned with the relationship between the category of 'women' and the concept of consumption in a capitalist and globalized context. He-Yin's theory links binary gendered categories of people to property and consumption. The production of (binary) gendered categories of people, for He-Yin, was closely connected to the increase in China of owning personal property. Without individual ownership of land, livestock and so on, there would have been no need to 'own' marital partners (specifically men owning wives), slaves, servants or concubines. Without property there would have been no reason to create categories of people without agency and personhood. As Liu, Karl and Ko elaborate:

> [He-Yin's] critique demonstrates that the normative function of *nannü* is not only to create "gendered" identities (which it also does) but also to introduce primary distinctions through socioeconomic abstractions, such as the eternal and the internal, or to such cosmic abstractions as yang and yin.

(Liu, Karl and Ko, 2013:14)

He-Yin Zhen was writing around the turn of the 20th century. Within her texts she both reflected on historic circumstances, and compared the China she saw around her with the treatment of women at that time globally. He-Yin's theory could be applied to the reproduction of genders beyond the Chinese context, and, as here, well beyond her lifetime.

He-Yin Zhen's writing has been bought to an English language readership by Liu, Karl and Ko's text. What is unclear is the extent to which He-Yin's theories are known about, or have ever been known about, within China but Liu, Karl and Ko suggest He-Yin had been side-lined in history. The artists in this thesis were not aware of He-Yin Zhen, or of theorists who are very well known within academic feminist discourse on China, including late 20th-century academics Li Xiaojiang and Dai Jinhua (the latter of whom is still active) (Xiao Lu, 2017; Ma Qiusha, 2016; Yang Fudong, 2016; Yang Zhenzhong, 2016; Ma Liuming, 2017; Chen Lingyang, 2017). The reason that *nannü* has been chosen to complement biopower in the theoretical framework of this thesis is because He-Yin's theory fills the gaps that Foucault leaves. Foucault gave little attention to the production of gender(s) and gendered categories. He-Yin, however, is focused on the (re)production of the binary genders through what Foucault would have called discourse and non-discourse (*the dispositif*).

He-Yin Zhen understands 'women' as "a transhistorical global category – not of subjective identity but of structured unequal social relations - that had been constituted through scholarship, ritual, law and social and labour practices over time, in China as elsewhere" (Liu, Karl and Ko, 2013:9). He-Yin was an anarchist who advocated for the removal of government as well as the abolition of individual property. Government for Foucault and for He-Yin Zhen is important within the circulating, controlling power of the *dispositif*. For He-Yin, the separation of women and men was one of the aims of political and moral institutions in order to consolidate power and govern the population (2013:13). He-Yin considers the women question in relation to "patriarchy,

imperialism, capitalism and gender subjugation as global historical problems" (Liu, Karl and Ko, 2013). It is the argument of this thesis that contemporary Chinese art contributes to gender-making and the creation of gendered categories, and bears traces of other nationally-bound and global discourses (and non-discourse) in the way that attributes of women are inscribed onto bodies. *Nannü* is a word that this thesis can use to name these practices of gendered category making, but also a word to use for the (re)production of the separation of 'women' and 'men.' Separating 'women' and 'men' – by giving them different characteristics or by making 'women' the 'other' – is a method of inscribing attributes that many examples of contemporary Chinese art in this thesis use.

This thesis is not the first scholarly work to use *nannü* in an analysis of contemporary Chinese art. Sasha Su-Ling Welland uses ethnography and "feminist attentiveness to power dynamics" (2018:8) to examine the shift in the relationship between contemporary art, the city of Beijing, the global art world and the Chinese authorities during the period from 1989 to 2008 in her book *Experimental Beijing: Gender and Globalization in Chinese contemporary art* (2018). Welland argues that the rise of contemporary Chinese art during this period is inextricable from the marginalization of women artists within the discourse, she brings attention to "sidelining of gender in the story of art" (2018:16)[39]. Welland grounds the book in feminist debates within China – as this project does – rather than the existing scholarship relating to contemporary Chinese art. This enables her to set the questions of women and feminism in art against the dominant masculine avant-garde artworld of China and to find a new narrative without the binary of *nüxing yishu*/masculine art. For Welland, *nannü* stands for "the ongoing production of social abstractions and marking that create hierarchy, inequality,

[39] This sidelining was evident in the exhibition *Art And China After 1989 Theater Of The World*, which was first on display at the Solomon R Guggenheim, New York USA in 2017 and which I encountered at the Museo Guggenheim Bilbao in September 2018. This was both in terms of the number of female-identifying artists in the selection, which was very small, and the role of gender in the narrative and framing of the exhibition and its historiography of contemporary Chinese art.

and injustice" (2018:24) in a similar way to how the category of *nannü* will operate in this thesis.[40]

Welland's work stands out as being most closely aligned to this thesis, amongst a rich literature exploring the production of contemporary art by female-identifying artists in China, as discussed in Chapter One, the introduction to this thesis. Welland's first engagement with performance art and questions of women in contemporary Chinese art was curating the exhibition *Cruel/Loving Bodies* in 2004, the idea for which evolved from a panel Welland chaired at the conference titled *A Century of Chinese Feminist Thought* at Fudan University in Shanghai in 2002. Welland's aim for the exhibition was not simply to present the work of women, but to explore "in various embodied ways, an intersection of Chinese and gendered identity" and disavow "any particular claims of what a man or woman is or should be, or of what it means to be Chinese" (2005:17). In the exhibition, Welland took the position that contemporary art and feminism are inherently transcultural, extending this to consider constant border crossing and "social regimes of surveillance" (2005:20) as acts of violence against the body. Welland does not mention Foucault, but her position adds weight to the defence of doing so in my own work, and the role of surveillance particularly arises in Chapter Five of this thesis. This thesis is in agreement with Welland in arguing that "the female body remains a persistent and marked ideological battleground in a way the male body rarely is" (2005:31). By focusing on in-depth textual analysis in Chapters Three to Six this thesis aims to explore and compare the markings (I am calling them inscribed attributes) on represented bodies in examples of contemporary Chinese art.

[40] In parallel to the publication of Welland's book, an explicit call for scholars to use the analytical category of *nannü* category was made by Harriet Evans at the event *Feminism in China: Activist, Artist and Academic Voices* at the University of Westminster, convened by Derek Hird in 2018.

CHAPTER THREE: MENSTRUAL BLOOD

> Shanghai winter is cold and disgusting like a woman's period.
> (Wei Hui, 2001:86)

> As long as women have been giving birth, the female body has served as an obvious yet multidimensional source of a culture's metaphors for cosmology, creation, gender and family relations, and even politics. At the same time, medical, moral, religious and other discourses on the female body have used it as a vehicle for expressing larger cultural values and agendas, whether consciously or not.
> (Wilms, 2005:183)

Twelve Flower Months

A vintage mirror gives a yellow tinge to what it reflects. Next to the mirror and its reflection are narcissus flowers, also yellow. The plant stems are almost entirely absorbed by a blackness that leaks onto everything not the recipient of raking light. In this photographic image (Figure 3.1), the first in a set of twelve, there are two frames: the mirror and the parameter of the image itself. The mirror, a wooden frame with oval-shaped glass, sits on an unseen surface. The parameter of the image is a square with one corner at its apex. The artist who produced the image, Chen Lingyang, says the carefully chosen parameter shapes of the twelve images refer to traditional Chinese gardens. Specifically, the shapes echo windows (*chuangkou* or *louchuang*[41]) and doors in garden walls.[42] Each of the twelve images in this photographic series contains a flower. After narcissus come in sequence: magnolia, peach (Figure 3.2), peony, pomegranate, lotus, orchid, osmanthus, chrysanthemum, poinsettia, camellia and plum (installation view Figure 3.3; a full set of images can be found in Appendix 5). Flowers have particular meanings in Chinese culture, many relating to virtue, purity and prosperity. The narcissus is the first image of the series because it is the flower of Chinese New Year. For some it might

[41] *Chuangkou* is the word for an open window shape in a garden wall. Another term is *Louchuang,* which translates as 'leaky window,' meaning that the view through the overall window opening is partly obscured by a decorative design. Whether 'leaky' or fully open, Chinese garden windows generally are not filled with glass.

[42] The Chinese words for a door in a garden are: *yuandongmen* 'round door,' or *yueliangmen* which translates as 'moon gates.'



Figure 3.1. Chen Lingyang, *Twelve Flower Months – month one narcissus*, 1999-2000. Photograph. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 3.2. Chen Lingyang, *Twelve Flower Months – month three peach*, 1999-2000. Photograph. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 3.3. *Twelve Flower Months*, 1999-2000 installation view at
Museum der Moderne Salzburg, Austria.
Image courtesy the artist and Museum der Moderne Salzburg, Austria.



Figure 3.4. Advertising calendar for Eveready batteries, 1931.
[Note the peony above the figure of the woman and the moon gate behind.]
Postcard, copyright Dal Housie Enterprises, Orchard P. O. Box 0248, Singapore 9123.

evoke the Greek myth of Narcissus[43] who drowned after gazing at his beauty in a pool of water, but this does not arise in my interview with the artist (Chen, 2017). The twelve images together form a calendar, tracing the course of one year. Calendars are important for mapping time and celebrations in China. In the early decades of the 20th century following the advent in the previous century of mass printing, *yuefenpai* calendars in Mainland China were used as a vehicle for advertising, depicting beautiful, healthy, modern, women with flowers or in gardens (Figure 3.4). The photographic image at hand, Narcissus, could be described as beautiful, and it depicts a female body, or at least part of one. In the mirror we see the back of two thighs and the creases underneath female buttocks. A dripping line of vivid red blood falls from genitals unseen down the back of one thigh. The twelve images each show a body menstruating and represent one menstrual cycle.[44] In *Twelve Flower Months,* 1999-2000 *seventh month – orchid* (Figure 3.5) a leg dripping with blood almost reaching the ankle divides the circular composition in half. In the other eleven images of the series, sections of menstruating bodies are revealed to the audience via the reflections in mirrors. The bodies are always fragmented, always incomplete. The beauty of the images contrasts with the surprising even jarring opportunity to gaze on a menstruating body. Never able to meet the eyes of the object of our gaze, we, the audience, become furtive intruders in the highly-curated, intimate and beguiling space in which she bleeds.

Chen Lingyang and Xu Zhen

This chapter offers encounters with four works: *Twelve Flower Months,* 1999-2000, a series of photographs and an artist's book, and video installation *Yue Jing Jing*, 2002 both by female-identifying artist Chen Lingyang (born 1975 Yiwu, Zhejiang); and by male-identifying artist Xu Zhen (born 1977 Shanghai), a series of photographs titled *The Problem of Colourfulness*, 2001, and *Untitled Female Hygeine*, 2001, a participatory installation. Both artists

[43] This myth is explored in the Chinese young teen fiction novel *Shuixian yi cheng liyu qu* (Narcissus, Gone with the Carp) by Zhang Yue Ran (2011).
[44] Women of child-bearing age may have a menstrual cycle of 28 days, 12 in one year. The moon takes 27.322 days to rotate on its axis. This approximate alignment is what prompted cultures in China and beyond to propose a link between menstrual cycles and the phases of the moon (Norgaard, 2000; Zhang, Yan, Ma and He, 2016).



Figure 3.5. Chen Lingyang, *Twelve Flower Months – month seven orchid*, 1999-2000.
Photograph. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 3.6. Gustave Courbet. *L'Origine du monde*, 1866.
Image copyright and held by the collection of Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.

depict menstrual blood on bodies, this and the fact all of the works were produced at the turn of the millennium is the basis for comparing their outputs in this chapter. In Chen Lingyang's works, this chapter will argue, the artist explores the boundary edge of the category 'woman.' The attributes that Chen inscribes onto the body as 'woman' are sometimes normative (beauty) and even biologically essentialized (menstruating) other times angry or even 'mad'. However, in my encounter with Chen's work and in dialogue with the artist I find that these attributes are used to communicate an overall meaning of fragmentation of her own female identity, and multiple forms of transgression of the boundary edge of womanhood. Therefore I contend that the use of menstrual bleeding and beauty could be understood as ways to communicate the 'edge' of the category, rather than requisites of womanness. In contrast, Xu Zhen's work takes a substance (menstrual blood) coded as female, but this substance does not render his represented bodies as 'women.' This chapter focuses on the pole of biopower that regulates and disciplines individual bodies, and discusses the arrival in the PRC of the consumed and consuming body. This discussion continues in Chapters Five and Six.

Chen Lingyang (born 1975 Yiwu, Zhejiang) is a female contemporary artist who was active until around the mid-00s. Chen graduated from Central Academy of Fine Art (CAFA), Beijing in 1999, the same year that she began to produce *Twelve Flower Months* 1999-2000 and the menstrual blood-based work-on-paper that preceded it, *Scroll*, 1999. Chen was studying at CAFA during a period of rapid expansion of the contemporary art ecology in Beijing and the increasing prominence of contemporary Chinese art on the international stage. By her own account, graduating from art school was an unsettling time for Chen. It was her isolation and self-reflection, she describes, that led to making work using her menstrual cycle as theme and medium (Chen, 2001).

The *Twelve Flower Months* 1999-2000 series was produced as large wall-hanging photographic prints (Figure 3.3) and a commercially printed artist's book, published in 2001, with text in Chinese and English. In the early years following the production of the *Twelve Flower Months*, 1999-2000 series,

Chen sometimes struggled to secure opportunities to exhibit the work in China due to the content of the images (Chen, 2017). However, in less than two decades the series secured its position as a canonical piece of contemporary Chinese art, widely exhibited and held in major collections. Curator Li Xianting in the *Twelve Flower Months* monograph describes the piece as "a milestone in the development of Chinese contemporary art" (Chen, 2001). Less widely-discussed is Chen Lingyang's subsequent menstrual blood-based work, the video installation *Yue Jing Jing*, 2002, which was exhibited at the first Guangzhou Triennial in 2002 and then at Taikang Space, Beijing, PRC.

Around the same time as Chen Lingyang in Beijing was focusing on the theme of menstrual blood in her work, in Shanghai male-identifying artist Xu Zhen created the photographic series *The Problem of Colourfulness*, 2001. Xu Zhen came to prominence with the single-channel video *Rainbow*, 1998 (3'12"), which was selected for inclusion in the 2001 Venice Biennale and is now held in the M+ Sigg Collection. The video camera's lens in *Rainbow,* 1998 isolates a fragment of a person from behind, their torso from the shoulders to below the waist. Slaps that sound like shots are heard, the audience sees the flesh becoming redder and more inflamed, but the moment of violent contact has been edited out. *Rainbow*, 1998, has been described as sharing qualities with the output of the American conceptual artist Bruce Nauman (born 1941 Fort Wayne, Indiana, USA) (Moore and Elliott, 2014). In the 20 years since producing *Rainbow*, 1998, Xu Zhen has become a very influential and successful artist, who has been the subject of much debate. In 2009, he founded 'Madein Company' to bring critical attention to the phenomenon of artists overseeing the production of their art in factories, and a pun on 'Made in China.' *The Problem of Colourfulness*, 2001 has a similar aesthetic to *Rainbow*, 1998. The former work is held in the collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp (M HKA) but barely mentioned in any existing Anglophone scholarly literature.

The uncanny visual resonance and shared theme of Chen Lingyang's *Twelve Flower Months* 1999-2000 and Xu Zhen's *The Problem of Colourfulness*, 2001, has been commented on anecdotally (Smith in Wu Hung et al, 2002:14;

Forward, 2006). However, the two artists' menstrual blood and menstruation artworks have not been analyzed as they are here, in relation to the discipline of bodies by menstruation taboos and the discourse of the family. Nor have they been compared in how they impact the production of the category 'women.'

A kind of "split"

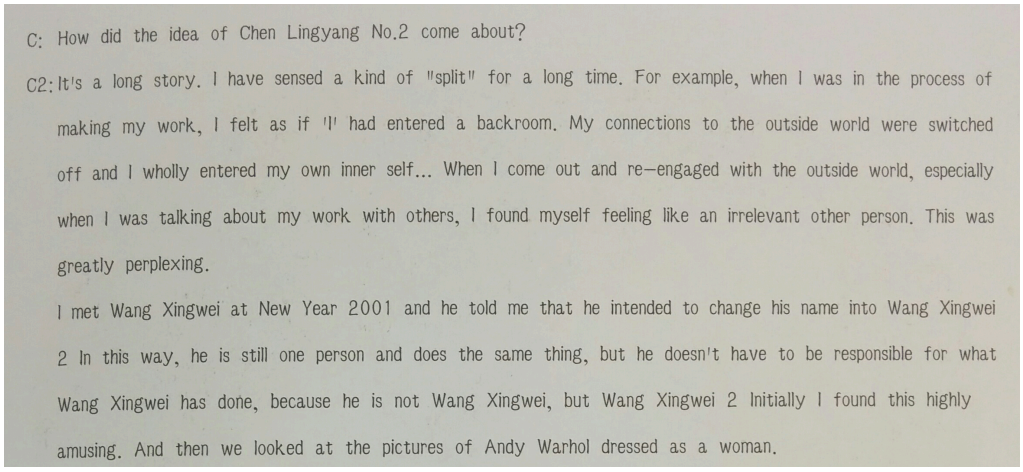
In the Asia Art Archive, a quiet library that holds art books and archive material, tens of stories high up in urban Hong Kong, I found a copy of the *Twelve Flower Months* artist's book (2001). The pages of the book open out in a subtle evocation of a traditional Chinese handscroll (Figure 3.7). In the book, Chen's photographs are reproduced along with curatorial essays and a curious transcript of an interview between 'Chen Lingyang 1' and 'Chen Lingyang 2.' This transcript is reproduced in the books *The Body at Stake: Experiments in Chinese Contemporary Art and Theatre* (Huber and Zhao Chuan, 2013) and *Chinese Artists Texts and Interviews: Contemporary Chinese Art Awards* (1998-2002) edited by Ai Weiwei[45] with a forward by Uli Sigg.[46] Until I saw the text and the images reproduced together it was difficult to understand the interview transcript as a paratext of the photographic series. They have a very different tone. The images are sultry, even sexy, whilst the interview text is critical, cheeky, irreverent and self-reflective. In the transcript, Chen Lingyang directly refers to multiple or fragmented identities. Chen writes, "I have sensed a kind of split for a long time," […] "Before my parents I played the role of the good daughter. This is totally outside of anything to do with the art that I am engaged in" (2001) (Figure 3.8). The "split" (for which the split between 'Chen Lingyang 1' and 'Chen Lingyang 2' is a metaphor) is between 'inner

[45] Ai Weiwei (born 1957 Beijing) is a controversial political activist and a successful globally-exhibited contemporary artist and architect. Ai was detained for almost three months by the Chinese authorities in 2011. After a period when he was refused a passport, Ai resumed international travel in 2015.

[46] Uli Sigg's personal collection of contemporary art from China was donated to the M+ Museum in Hong Kong, which is due to open to the public in 2018/19. The M+ Sigg collection was one of the resources used to select the case studies for this thesis, as discussed in the methodology section of the introduction chapter. The M+ Sigg collection holds all twelve photographs of the *Twelve Flower Months*, 1999-2000 series. Some examples are also held by the White Rabbit collection, Sydney, Australia.



Figure 3.7. *Twelve Flower Months* (2001) artist's book. Image taken by Linda Pittwood at Asia Art Archive, April, 2016.



C: How did the idea of Chen Lingyang No.2 come about?

C2: It's a long story. I have sensed a kind of "split" for a long time. For example, when I was in the process of making my work, I felt as if 'I' had entered a backroom. My connections to the outside world were switched off and I wholly entered my own inner self... When I come out and re-engaged with the outside world, especially when I was talking about my work with others, I found myself feeling like an irrelevant other person. This was greatly perplexing.

I met Wang Xingwei at New Year 2001 and he told me that he intended to change his name into Wang Xingwei 2. In this way, he is still one person and does the same thing, but he doesn't have to be responsible for what Wang Xingwei has done, because he is not Wang Xingwei, but Wang Xingwei 2. Initially I found this highly amusing. And then we looked at the pictures of Andy Warhol dressed as a woman.

Figure 3.8. Section of a page from *Twelve Flower Months* (2001) artist's book. Image taken by Linda Pittwood at Asia Art Archive, April, 2016.

self' and the public performance of identity, and between her professional life as an artist and the expectations of her family. 'The family' are an important discourse historically in the production of the category 'women,' gendered meaning-making, the discipline of the body and the management of populations. Applying the idea of "the split" to the photographs, we can see a divide or split visualized by the use of mirrors and fragmentation of the body. We could also understand "the split" as the dual role her photographs take between contributing to an understanding of the category of 'women' (which can be produced by any person regardless of sex identity and gender) and producing a work relating to her own narrative; her own isolation, and her own menstrual cycle.[47]

Considering Chen's transcript and her photographic images together, along with other statements that the artist has made, it is possible to understand *Twelve Flower Months*, 1999-2000 and Chen's artist's book as an attempt by the artist to tell her own story. Therefore we could use Michel Foucault's term *parrhesia*, the practice of speaking one's own truth, which will be discussed further in Chapter Four. Chen Lingyang also seems to be suggesting that the inscriptions on the body that create and define its womanhood are not consistent as the female body moves between contexts. A split emerges between the lived reality of men and women within a society that prescribes contradictory things for them, or inscribes contradictory attributes upon them. It is a male-identifying artist, Wang Xingwei (born 1969, Shenyang; lives and works in Beijing), who proposed the idea of the split artistic persona to Chen Lingyang. For Wang this device relates to how his work is understood in relation to his current and past projects. The split for Wang is not anything to do with an inconsistence or dissonance between his professional and personal identities. It does not refer to a split or adjustment in Wang's maleness or masculinity, or even the way he performs and understands himself as he passes

[47] The feminist academic Dai Jinhua talked in the 1990s about the production of female subjectivity in feature film as being very rare (1995). The female subjectivity Dai refers to is simple the narrative format of a story told from a female character's perspective. Dai's contention is explained more fully further on in this chapter.

through temporal and contextual changes.[48] For Chen Lingyang; however, 'the split' is about the way that her gender identity is understood in context. The line in the text "And then we looked at pictures of Andy Warhol dressed as a woman" links Chen Lingyang's self-reflective paratext to international (Western) contemporary art discourse and hints at a gendered question of performance. Performative gender identity was the prevalent feminist discourse in the West in the 1990s. However, as this chapter will discuss, Chen asserts that she had not read and did not actively seek out texts on gender theory before she created *Twelve Flower Months*, 1999-2000. The question of whether to frame Chen Lingyang's work using Western feminism has been asked by He Jinli. He argues that Chen's work is better placed within the context of local (Chinese) discourses and the lineage of traditional Chinese art-making practices (He in Wiseman and Liu, 2011: 147-169). It was through correspondence with the artist that my understanding of the development of Chen Lingyang's work became more nuanced, but also that I came to understand both of Chen's menstrual blood works as concerned with representation of 'women' in shifting contexts.

Continuity and shifts

Chen Lingyang related to me by email that as well as thinking about isolation when she created *Twelve Flower Months*, 1999-2000, she had been thinking about 'nature' and Daoism (Chen, 2017). Whilst the inscription of beauty and 'Chineseness' onto the bodies in the photographs were obvious to me in my own encounter with the work, these additional inscriptions were not. Daoism is a philosophy originating with the teachings of Lao-Tzu in the 6th century BCE. It emphasises humility and union with nature, simplicity and self-reflection. Whilst religions often focus on faith and deities, Daoism focuses on ritual and ways of being. Daoism has often been represented in visual art discourse in China. In *Twelve Flower Months*, 1999-2000, the placement of Chen's body and other objects are precise, as well as spookily unreal, appearing to be almost floating in space. Chen's intention was to capture

[48] Wang Xingwei has produced several oil on canvas paintings exploring the interactions between - and relative status - of female and male characters. His intentions for how these should be understood, and his underlying ideological position are ambiguous (Pittwood, 2014).

rhythm of time through the body, and she intended her use of flowers to symbolise the relationship of the body to the rest of the (living) world. Chen Lingyang could be understood as using Daoism to propose an essentialised biological and indigenous discourse of gender. However, when considered alongside the paratext and its reference to fragmentary or "split" identity another possibility becomes possible. Chen Lingyang may have deployed Daoism in her earlier work as part of the precise plotting of her own entry into a male-actor dominated discourse (contemporary Chinese art). Daoism and beauty were ways to distract, or at least counterbalance, the potentially controversial topics of menstrual blood and the fragmentary nature of (female) identity. Chen could be understood as trying to create an image of Daoist harmony of the body and nature with the images, and simultaneously reflecting on the impossibility of this task with her writing (another "split").

Chen's next menstrual blood work, *Yue Jing Jing*, 2002, was, according to the artist, conceived with different intentions. Chen writes (my translation):

> After I created *Twelve Flower Months*, 1999-2000, I begun to learn about feminism [*nüxing zhuyi*], because other people interpreted the work as feminist. After that, I conceived and created *Yue Jing Jing*, 2002, which by contrast is from a woman's [*nüxing*] perspective, although it continues the menstrual theme.
>
> (Chen, 2017)

This suggests that by the time she made *Yue Jing Jing*, 2002, Chen was no longer concerned with a careful (harmonic) balance. *Yue Jing Jing*, 2002 inscribes the woman protagonist with quite different attributes (fierceness, anger, humour, madness). The piece is no longer linked to nature or to Daoism. It could be seen as the next stage after the transgression of the boundary. By stating that *Yue Jing Jing*, 2002 was produced 'from a woman's perspective,' it suggests that Chen Lingyang had somehow healed "the split" by fully transgressing it. Even if one followed He Jinli's argument and used Chinese indigenous traditions (such as Daoism) to frame *Twelve Flower Months*, 1999-2000; Chen Lingyang's framing of *Yue Jing Jing*, 2002 as feminist opens up possibilities of more complex frameworks for analyzing these works.

Producing work from "a woman's perspective" suggests another kind of split; one between the binary genders. This is a continuity between both of Chen Lingyang's works. Chen could be understood as reflecting a gendered society but also as reproducing it, therefore participating in the ongoing binary gender formation described by the term *nannü*.

Leaking over the boundary edge

Along with her menstrual blood, the figure in Chen Lingyang's photographs leaks out of the unspoken acceptable modes of behaviour for female bodies on public display in China.[49] Menstruation is almost always a secret, private act, often tinged with fear and shame, and rarely portrayed in visual culture. In the 1970s, Western second wave feminist activist artists used menstrual blood in work that was intentionally shocking in its tone, strategies and use of menses. It was only much later that this kind of practice was canonized within Western art history. Chen's work, unlike the Western feminists, retains a tension between the beautiful and shocking; more importantly, between social restrictions for women, and transgressing these restrictions.

The claustrophobic scenes that Chen Lingyang constructs are interior spaces that evoke her own feelings of isolation. For those aware of the phenomenon, they may also seem like an echo of the women of Imperial China who were confined to the home. Although the extent of the practice of restricting women to the 'inner chambers' (*gui*) is contested, it became a powerful imaginary in literature and poetry authored by men in late Imperial China (Xiaorong, 2013;Wang, 2003). The male writers celebrated women's beauty only within this private world, separated from the public world of men. Later the *gui* became the setting for a more expansive exploration of gender by female writers (Xiaorong, 2013). Chen Lingyang's construction of the boundary which she then transgresses could be understood as an echo of the way in which the female writers of late Imperial China used the setting of the *gui*. The writers used the *gui* to invoke a boundary, which they then transgressed to

[49] Traditional scholar-literati Chinese ink painting did not have a tradition of depicting unclothed female bodies (Hay in Zito and Barlow, 1994). There were unclothed female bodies in Western oil painting practiced in China in the early 20th century.

explode the myths of women's homogeneity, lack of agency and their lack of participation in cultural production. In so doing they produced writing with female subjectivity.

In Chen's photographs, the boundary edges of the photograph and the normative attributes of 'women' represent the boundary of the category of 'women' and the forces that discipline the body. Chen further emphasises the boundary edge by using the mirror as a frame within the frame, and by fragmenting the body, which cannot be fully contained within the parameter of the image. The way that the body is abruptly cut off and attention drawn to the genital area, for me, recalls the painting *L'Origine du monde*, 1866 by Gustave Courbet (Figure 2.6). Courbet like Chen used a pre-existing mode of image making (the female nude) to bring attention to the act of voyeurism. Courbet's painting is the logical end point of gazing on the nude, female body, as much as it a highlighting of existential questions relating to the corporeal and represented body.[50]

But neither in Western art history or Chinese art history are there other prominent examples of other artists combining beauty and menstrual blood, claustrophobic restriction and social transgression, quite as Chen Lingyang has done. Combining these elements has the effect in *Twelve Flower Months*, 1999-2000 of creating an ambiguity (or "split") in the attributes of 'women' the artist inscribes on the body. Chen reproduces the idea of women as beautiful, virtuous and close to nature within a conception of Daoist harmony. Yet, she interrupts this woman, whom she places within a frame, with menstrual blood. Seen through the discourses of medicine and taboo, her 'woman' prompts feelings of disgust and anxiety, as this chapter will go on to discuss. Chen presents a 'woman' for whom beauty, harmony and 'naturalness' are not the extent of her womanhood.

[50] The statement here refers to the work as it has always been publically presented as a final piece. Whether Courbet conceived of this work as such an extremely abrupt crop of the body is contested, as a fragment was found showing a head which could have been part of the original work, perhaps altered for a particular client. One of the subsequent owners of *L'Origine du monde*, 1866 before it came to the collection of the Musee d'Orsay was the French psychoanalytic theorist Jacques Lacan (1901-1981).

Powerful and polluting

Menstruation in China, and elsewhere, is taboo. The specificities of this taboo and the ways in which it is constructed and reproduced may offer some further insight into the methods and nature of the attributes of womanhood that Chen is inscribing onto the bodies in her photographs. Menstruation taboos intersect with methods of constructing gender, and controlling bodies. Two long-standing notions about menstrual blood in China are that it is "powerful" and "polluting" (Chu, 1980; Song, 2012; Remoiville, 2017). Menstrual blood is considered dirty and associated with sex, which is also considered unclean, and even with death of the foetus (Chu, 1980). The ways in which body fluids are understood in ancient China, specifically in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) did not follow the same lines of distinction as Western medicine (Lan, Wallner, Jandl, 2010). Life-giving blood substances (*xue*) include breast milk and semen. Menstrual blood is considered separate to life-giving blood. As part of being "polluting" and "powerful," menstrual blood was understood as having the potential to attract or repel ghosts, another association with death.

Foucault highlights the potential of hospitals and medical discourse in the Western context to conceive of the body and to govern it through dividing and disciplinary regimes in *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963). For Foucault, hospitals are a crucial part of the *dispositif*, in which biopower circulates. In the discourse of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)[51] menstrual blood and reproduction were understood to distinguish men from women, and required women to receive gender-specific treatments and therapies (Furth, 2001; Song, 2012; Valussi, 2008). In TCM discourse, not only do conceptions of the body appear, but also highly influential and enduring ideas around women's fragility (both physiological and psychological) and men's role in their protection and education as fathers, husbands and physicians. Yet how much of these ancient or traditional understandings of menstrual blood, and by extension the differences between men and women, endure in the present? Furth cautions

[51] TCM originated in Ancient China and is still practiced in the 21st century. As well as having different conceptions of the body, health and ailments to Western medicine, TCM has different therapeutic systems and treatments. TCM practitioners use exercise, diet, herbal therapies and methods including acupuncture and tai chi to treat the body and mind.

that often anthropological studies put too much credence on the "power" and "polluting" aspects of menstruation in contemporary China, as there is little evidence that these ideas inform the contemporary attitude of menstruating women themselves towards menstruation[52] (Furth, 2001:291). Furth does, however, suggest that they could be a continuing source of male anxiety regarding menstrual blood and, by extension, anxiety towards female bodies and women themselves (2001). Furthermore, as Pinkston summarizes "many sources have converged on the idea that menstrual taboos were made to protect men" (Pinkston, 2010). This suggests that the taboos themselves were used to emphasize a gender divide (finding women to have "powers" that men did not have) as well as to emphasize men's importance (the taboos would keep men safe from the "pollution" of menstrual blood). This is exemplified by the notion of the 'blood pond' and the rituals that surrounded it, which still took place in China as recently as 2010[53] (Song, 2010). In blood pond rituals, deceased married women who had menstruated and had children, or women who died in childbirth, would in death be cast into the blood pond unless their family performed the ritual. This fate befell them because their blood had been spilled onto the ground. Song relates that this practice likely came from India via Buddhism and was combined with Daoism and Chinese folklore (Song, 2012:63). Sometimes women could only be redeemed in death by transforming into a man, emphasizing men's superiority and cleanliness (Song, 2012:78). In sum, a contemporary unease, anxiety or disgust relating to menstruating and menstrual blood has deeper and more complex culturally specific roots; "powerful and polluting" is a useful shorthand.

Menstruating is not simply something that some humans do and others do not, but was part of the way that genders themselves have been culturally separated along the male/female binary and is linked to the different attributes inscribed on male and female bodies, with males privileged within this scheme.

[52] Commercial advertising for menstrual hygiene products in China would suggest a more open attitude in the 21st century towards menstruation. These include an advertisement featuring a secret agent using a sanitary towel as a weapon, and the cheerful cross-platform social media character An Xiaoqi used to advertise sanitary brand Kotex (Thoughtfulcreative, 2013).
[53] Song does not indicate how prevalent this ritual was or is, or the geographic extent of the practice. It stands here as an example of a ritual linked to menstruation taboo within the Chinese context that has continued in some form into the 21st century.

Menstruating women are inscribed as more dangerous, dirtier and closer to death. Because of the role of menstrual blood in constructing an unequal gender binary, the attributes of 'woman' that Chen inscribes on her bodies transcend biological reality. She is not, in my interpretation, simply reproducing or promoting biological essentialism. More importantly, she is inscribing represented bodies with "powerful" and "polluting" menstrual blood, and activating a 'male' disgust, anxiety and fear towards female bodies. In activating this disgust and anxiety Chen Lingyang inscribes the audiences' bodies as the (heterosexual male) gazer. The gazer beholding her body is surprised and alarmed but may also enjoy the experience of seeing her body. I felt this thrill of intrusion when I encountered the intimate, feminine, private space of the *Twelve Flower Months* (2001) artist's book. Turning the pages felt like so many small intrusions. I had permission to gaze because there was no gaze returned to question and confront my motivations.

Menstruation is a sign of fertility and linked through medical discourses to reproduction. Chen Lingyang was born before the implementation of the One-Child policy, which will be discussed further in Chapter Five. However, the policy was in effect from the late 1970s, and would have affected her own family planning choices. This context may in part explain why Chen Lingyang perceived her own identity as particularly fragmented in relation to her family. Han Chinese culture has had a preference for boys due to historic but enduring cultural expectations that boys will provide for their parents in old age. Partly because of the One-Child policy, dominant attitudes towards girl-children are in flux (Lin and Mac An Ghaill, 2017). Boy preference can be understood as a form of biopower, as well as a form of uneven binary gender-making, *nannü*. Whilst boys were historically preferred, girls were necessary in order to conceive and gestate their own children in due course, continuing to produce a population and continuing the (patri)lineage of each family. The family could be understood as an organism concerned with its own survival.

In the Chinese context, as will be discussed further in Chapter Four and Chapter Five, the family has a particularly complex and tangled relationship with government. The CCP governance of the population filters through the

discourse of the family, but their aims are not always in alignment. Biopower and biopolitics coalesce on the female body, in particular women of childbearing age who are being prepared for pregnancy by these forces. Pregnancy and childbirth ensures the survival of families, whilst pregnancy and birth are controlled by government directives. Simply creating human capital was not the extent of the Communist project, as we will see through all the case study chapters of this thesis. The discourse of *suzhi* (quality) required that people be cleaner, healthier, educated and consuming, having a particular impact on who was created and how they were valued. It was not until the 20th century that reproduction and survival of people - population management - became an issue beyond each family unit, and became a major concern for government. Thompson argues that China came to conceive of its having a 'population' somewhere between 1900 and 1930 (2012:46). It was the project of the Nationalists (1911-1949) and the Communists (1949-present) to employ governance of population in China in the interests of the national economy, changing forever the meaning of bodies. When China 're-opened' to the world following the death of Chairman Mao in 1976 followed by the inauguration of Paramount Leader Deng Xiaoping and a return to a market-led economy, concern with population governance intensified rather than receded. Chen Lingyang's photographs in this context could be seen as conceptualizing the intense gaze of surveillance on her by family (with her as the "good daughter" surrounded by objects representing traditional Chinese culture) and the other forces of biopower inscribing gendered value upon her body.

Chen Lingyang herself makes a link between bodies and the capitalist context when she writes, "Chinese people's bodies […] have become a medium displaying the relationship between privilege and profit" (Chen in Huber and Zhao, 2013:212). Bodies, human capital, are inscribed with meaning along the axes of population, kin structures and consuming (the latter will be discussed in relation to Chen Lingyang's video *Yue Jing Jing*, 2002 later in this chapter). Chen Lingyang as one of the urban educated middle class is subject to new rules of engagement as she negotiates with the new discourses established in the globalized capitalist economy (in her case, contemporary art discourse) and the (bio)power of the family. Under these intense and conflicting gazes, Chen

Lingyang's body shatters into fragments (the "split") drawing our attention to one of her principle values as human capital and the reason for this surveillance – her theoretical capacity for pregnancy – and how it comes to represent herself and her own 'woman problem.'

Gender historicized and translated

During the 1990s, whilst Chen Lingyang was studying art at CAFA, and later producing *Twelve Flower Months*, 1999-2000, how were the categories of 'women' (*nüren, funü, nüxing*) and 'gender' (*xingbie*) understood in the Chinese context? A high-profile event which may have altered thinking about gender and womanhood, at least making them topics for public debate in China, was The Fourth World Conference on the Status of Women held in Beijing, PRC in 1995. The event was subtitled 'Action for Equality, Development and Peace.' It could potentially have compelled ordinary people and those outside of academic feminist discourse – such as artists – to reflect on the impact of Communism and capitalism on the category of women. The GPCR had ended around 20 years prior, but it cast a long shadow over the market-led economy of PRC.

Jiang Zemin, President of the People's Republic of China, remarked in his opening speech at the Fourth World Conference on the close association between the status of women and the establishment of the nation of the PRC: "The Chinese Government has always regarded gender equality as an important measurement of civility. The Chinese women have become masters of the state and society since the founding of the People's Republic." He also reproduced a long-term discourse that women held greater responsibility for nurturing rather than action: "[…] What is more, women have made a special contribution to the reproduction of human race. It is they who have nurtured generation upon generation of new lives, among them millions of heroes, scholars and poets […]"[54] (Jiang, 1995). The global framework for the conference, contained within the official documents, was the positioning of the

[54] He echoes the discourse of 'Good Wives and Wise Mothers' that took hold in Japan in the Meiji Period (late 19th Century) and affected feminist and women problem discourse in China in the early 20th Century.

debates between the end of the cold war and the turn of the millennium. The situation for women within and across continents and contexts, including for different classes of women within China in the 1990s, was extremely uneven (Evans, 1997). For China, the 1990s was an opportunity to reflect on the role and status of women during a period of rapid urbanization and economic growth almost 20 years on from the end of the height of Communism.

What was concerning feminists and others in China at the moment of the conference was whether – as it had not being a female/woman-led change – the impacts of Communism were as positive as they appeared; and what the impacts of the market-led economy would be (Li, 1983; Liao Wen, 2007). Feminist film and cultural studies scholar Dai Jinhua wrote in the mid-1990s, "to this day, China remains a country in which women enjoy more rights and freedom than in many other places" (1995:256); however, Dai also summarizes, "China is experiencing an unprecedented and dramatic historical transformation […] rapid modernization and commercialization […however] the social and cultural status of women is undergoing a tragic decline" (1995:278). Of course, He-Yin Zhen had already theorized at the end of the 19th century that no form of government was conducive to women's liberation, and that it was in the interests of government to produce gender and class in order to enact control (2012).

Min Dongchao documented the importance of the topic of 'gender' (*xingbie*) at the 1995 conference (Min, 2016). Feminist academics in the PRC found this category assisted their own theories and projects (Min, 2016). The word *xingbie* already existed, a composite of *xing* meaning 'sex, nature and essence' with the character *bie* meaning 'separation, classification.' During the 1990s, *xingbie* connected with an international discourse concerned with theorizing the constructedness of gender, as distinct from discourses of essential (biological) sex. 'Women' were therefore understood as formed within this confluence, of gendered rituals and practices and their essential qualities and biological destiny. For Dai Jinhua there was another issue, that of female subjectivity in cultural production. Dai Jinhua wrote: "The causes of women's hardship lie not only in the fact that they have no language of their own […]

but also in the fact that contemporary Chinese women have gradually lost the qualities that made them female – lost the discourse of femaleness" (1995:258). This closely relates to the subsidiary question of this thesis, what difference it makes to the attributes of 'woman' the artists are inscribing onto bodies, whether artists identify as female or male.

Yue Jing Jing and the desiring consuming capitalist body

Along with changes to the public debate and understanding of womanhood in the 1990s, a significant shift at this time was the arrival of the desired and desiring, consumed and consuming capitalist body in magazines and other media (Rofel, 2007; Mereweather, 2004). The arrival of a new disciplining regime of capitalist bodies may have implicitly influenced Chen Lingyang in the production of *Twelve Flower Months*, 1999-2000 (against which she was perhaps resisting by focusing on a 'natural' body). They became an explicit feature of her next menstrual blood work, *Yue Jing Jing*, 2002.

In December 2002, Chen Lingyang exhibited her installation *Yue Jing Jing* (越晶晶), 2002 (Figures 3.9-3.12) at The First Guangzhou Triennial Guangdong Musem of Art 'Experimentation Continues,' in Guangzhou, PRC.[55] The installation comprised a single-screen video in a darkened room (the artist refers to this screening-space as the 'garden shed'), with various objects and materials leading towards the entrance to the screening area. The title is a pun as the characters sound like a girl's name, but also translate as something like 'Menstruation Fairy' (Chen, 2017). The artist refers to the protagonist of the film in English as 'Fairy.' The narrative video tells the story of Fairy working in an office in Beijing's transforming urban cityscape, wearing a skirt-suit, inflicting menstruation onto her colleagues both male and female whilst menstruating herself. It could be a dream that Fairy has, it could be reality within the universe of the film. The objects and materials that formed part of the installation created a surreal space preparing the audience for the

[55] The installation was re-made at Taiking Space, Beijing, PRC and in the exhibition *Difference: 貳 + ZWEI* in 2003.



Figure 3.9. Chen Lingyang (1975 Zhejiang) *Yue Jing Jing* (2002). Installation shot Guangzhou Triennial 2002. Image courtesy of the artist.
[Note the entrance to the screening room top left]

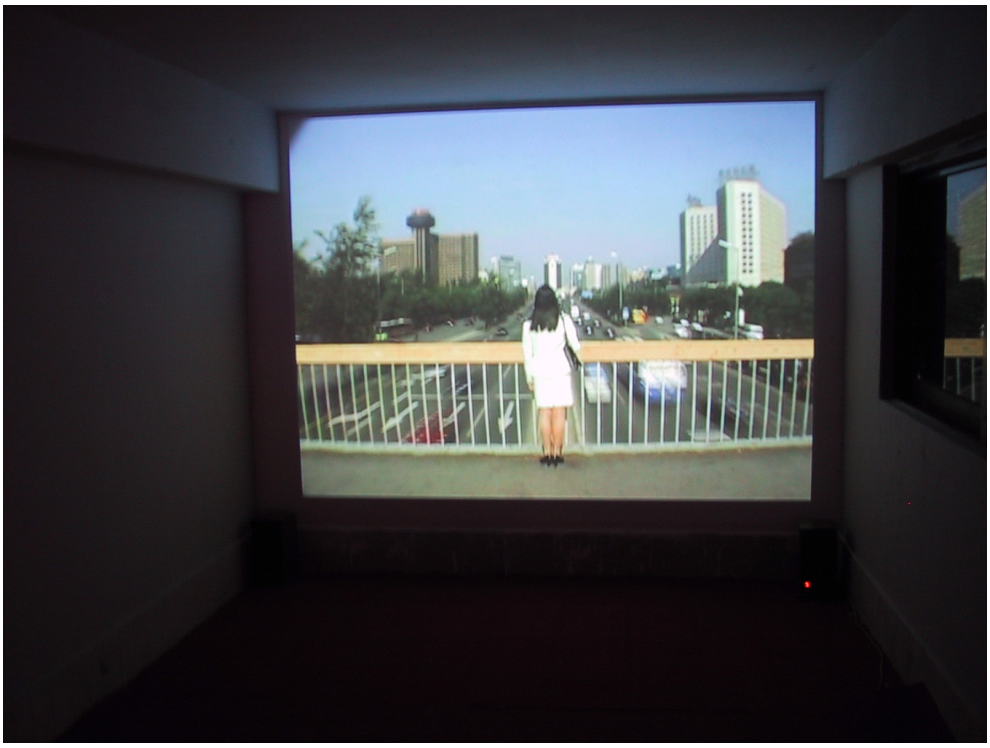


Figure 3.10. Chen Lingyang (1975 Zhejiang) *Yue Jing Jing* (2002). Installation shot Guangzhou Triennial 2002. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 3.11. Chen Lingyang (1975 Zhejiang) *Yue Jing Jing* (2002). Installation shot Guangzhou Triennial 2002. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 3.12. Chen Lingyang (1975 Zhejiang) *Yue Jing Jing* (2002). Installation shot Guangzhou Triennial 2002. Image courtesy of the artist.

stylized reality of the film. Fairy's belongings were haphazardly presented in a bathroom-bedroom space she might have occupied outside the screening area, including make-up, magazines, laundry drying on the line, furniture and a toilet, all atop a dazzling red carpet. The lamp and mirror are fixed at precarious angles, creating a sense of drama, chaos and unreality.

The magazines that Chen Lingyang collected to use in the installation were women's glossy fashion and lifestyle titles. Onto the images of models advertising international brands such as Helmet Lang, and Hong Kong retail outlet 'Saint Jack,' the artist had crudely drawn a thick line of menstrual blood running down their clothes in red marker pen. *Yue Jing Jing*, 2002 is different in tone, scale and scope to *Twelve Flower Months*, 1999-2000. In the earlier photographic series, the artist inscribed onto the bodies normative attributes of beauty to beguile the audience and invite them into an intimate space, whilst utlising "powerful and polluting" menstrual blood to represent the transgression of the boundary of 'women,' and invoke anxiety in those who intruded in the space to gaze upon her body.

In *Yue Jing Jing*, 2002 the audience may be briefly beguiled by Fairy's girly, messy room, before being viciously attacked with her menstruation. In the catalogue for the Guangzhou Triennial, Chen writes,

> A girl works, a smile on her face. Suddenly she is transformed into a martial arts fighter, her sword made of cotton and tissue, she thrashes around. After a while, as if at the end of a day at work, she walks home. Blood suddenly appears to be flowing down her leg to which she is oblivious.
>
> (Chen in Wu, 2002:454)

Chen inscribes humour and "ridiculousness" (Chen Lingyang, 2017) fierceness and anger onto her protagonist's body. These attributes (rather than beauty) counterbalance the audience's feelings of disgust and fear as the heroine weaponizes menstruation against her co-workers, the magazines and the 'ideal' women inside them. In our dialogue, Chen also described *Yue Jing Jing*, 2002, as [it could be] "a moment of madness for any woman around us" (Chen, 2017). This suggests that Chen wanted the audience to be able to relate to

Fairy and to sympathize with her sudden moment of "madness" and anger.[56] The setting of globalized, urban Beijing is more universal than the unreal *gui* of *Twelve Flower Months*, 1999-2000. *Yue Jing Jing*, 2002 corresponds to a problematic trope of female hysteria; but most importantly the 'woman' inscribed onto the body of Fairy is reacting to the boundaries and restrictions placed upon her. Chris Berry describes how in Asian women's film: "the dream of modernity was unattainable but there was also no possibility of return to any benign tradition," Berry conceptualises this as a 'blockage' (2013:18). Berry could be using 'blockage' in a similar way to how this chapter uses 'boundary.' Following Berry, the tangible frustration and anger Fairy exudes could be a response to this 'blockage;' trapped between tradition and the future. The leaking of blood could be a breaking through of this immobility.

Glossy lifestyle and fashion magazines provide blueprints for how to live and understand the self in specific cultural and temporal contexts. They can therefore be understood as a site of Foucauldian discipline as they demonstrate the requisite: "training and standardization […producing] subjects by categorizing and naming them in a hierarchical order […] through a rationality of efficiency, productivity and 'normalisation'" (Barker, 2000:226). Western glossy magazines titles had started to arrive in the Chinese market in the 1980s and 1990s: *Elle China* launched in 1988 and *Cosmopolitan China* in 1993 (Chen, 2016). More titles launched after the turn of the millennium. The bodies that came to discipline Chinese women through these media, initially, were white. For Louisa Schein, the importation of white female bodies into China by means of images of women in bikinis and lingerie did not necessarily map onto the heterosexual gaze or ideas about beauty in the Chinese context, but rather it signalled the desire to be globalized subjects (1994:142). The magazines, marketed to women in China's expanding urban environments – women like Fairy – cost several times the price of local print titles. They prescribed that women present themselves according to the new globalized

[56] Lovene identified a recurrent theme in Chinese cinema of the 'mad,' troubled, female artist (2014).

beauty paradigm, and regulate themselves as desiring subjects and objects of desire (Rofel, 2007).

Chen Lingyang corrects the mis-representation of the glossy, desiring and consuming *nüxing* (following Li Xiaojiang's suggestion that the Capitalism-produced *nüxing* re-emerged to replace the Communist *funü,* as discussed in Chapter Two) in the magazines with her marker pen. The insertion of menstrual blood into the discourse of consumed and consuming ideal woman in Chen Lingyang's *Yue Jing Jing*, 2002 interrupts the fantasy of the ideal with "powerful" and "polluting" menstrual blood. The blood exposes the representations of impossibly beautiful 'women' in the magazines who do not represent bleeding, breathing women in reality but are sent to discipline them to be desired, desiring, consumed and consuming. The blood could also be understood as exploding the immobility between tradition (nature, Dao) and the globalized future. The blood Chen draws onto the bodies reduces the power of the 'woman' who exists only within the discourse of the magazines to inscribe attributes onto the bodies of women in reality.[57]

The Problem of Colourfulness

Chen Lingyang inscribes the bodies in her work with meaning using the visible leaking of menstrual blood, emphasising both the 'naturalness' of women as well as their 'constructedness' within the disciplining boundary edge of the category itself. Around the same time as Chen Lingyang produced her menstrual blood works in Beijing, in Shanghai male-identifying artist Xu Zhen also produced a photographic series of bodies leaking menstrual blood. Xu Zhen's series of photographs is titled *The Problem of Colourfulness*, 2000. I asked both artists if they were aware of the other's works, or if they produced their works within some sort of dialogue. Both said no (Chen, 2017; Xu, 2018). The similarity is so uncanny that this seems almost unbelievable; however, the timing of their production is such that it is conceivable that neither had seen each other's pieces on display before they conceived of their

[57] In Chapter Six I will discuss the piece *Summer*, 2009 by Yang Zhenzhong in which a woman is represented as reading a glossy magazine.



Figure 3.13. Xu Zhen (1977 Shanghai) *The Problem of Colourfulness*, 2000, C-print, 193 x 155 cm. Installation view, 'Useful Life', Shanghai, 2000. Courtesy the artist, ShanghArt Gallery, Shanghai and M HKA, Antwerp.



Figure 3.14. Xu Zhen (1977 Shanghai) *Untitled – female hygiene cotton*, 2001. Timer, cotton textiles, iron. Installation view.

own bodies of work.[58] Xu Zhen's photographs were first displayed in the exhibition *Useful Life* (Figure 3.13) held in Temporary Space on Dong Daming Road, Shanghai, PRC in 2000, co-curated by the exhibiting (all male-identifying) artists: Xu Zhen, Yang Fudong and Yang Zhenzhong.[59]

The Problem of Colourfulness, 2000 photographs show unclothed bodies from the back. There are 11 images in the series: a full height portrait and a close up view of buttocks, a complete body reclining, two cropped sections, and a set of six fragments of the body cutting off around the waist or mid-thigh. The audience cannot see the figures' genitals or faces, but the bodies appear to be male; they are lean, muscular, without hips and have short hair. The only challenge to the otherwise seemingly straightforward task of identifying the gender of the bodies, which the artist seems to ask of the audience, is the bright red blood, which runs in lines down the back of thighs or is smeared on the skin under the buttocks. In addition to the unlikeliness of a body that looks like this menstruating (although it is not impossible) the lines of menstrual blood are too red and too like brush strokes to have been produced by the body. *The Problem of Colourfulness*, 2000 images are similar to Xu Zhen's earlier video *Rainbow*, 1998 in turning an intervention on the anonymized body into something abstract, painterly, even beautiful. If Xu Zhen and Chen Lingyang's works were not conceived to be in a dialogue with each other, we can conclude that around the turn of the millennium a number of artists were engaging with the question of what it means to be a woman (or a man) and how these categories are affected by images and visual discourses. It is also possible that Xu Zhen is making a reference the artist Ma Liuming who was working in the early 1990s in Beijing. Ma Liuming's performances, which are examined in Chapter Four, inscribed attributes of 'women' and 'men' on his body in his performance persona *Fen Ma Liuming*.

[58] The timing of the artists producing these menstrual blood works also coincides with a genre of popular fiction in China called 'body writing,' in which the authors wrote vividly about the human body and body fluids. Hongwei Lu argued that writers in this genre, including Wei Hui whose quotation is used as an epigraph for this chapter, were analysing the impacts and realities of transnational capitalism (Hongwei, 2017).
[59] All items from that exhibition were acquired by M HKA, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp after re-staging the exhibition 2009-2010. Selected works by the artists Yang Zhenzhong and Yang Fudong are the focus of Chapter Six of this thesis.

The M HKA collection, which holds the full photographic series of *The Problem of Colourfulness*, makes two salient points about them. The first that they are beautiful unashamed bodies and that the menstrual blood does not render the bodies "abject," and the second a contention that: "we have reached the historic moment when media and the virtual shape our environment and interfere with reality" (M HKA, 2018). The audience do not have to intrude in a private space in order to gaze on their bodies, which have seemingly escaped the association of menstrual blood with "power," "pollution," femininity or the requirement for different kinds of treatments and understandings with hierarchies of sex difference. The bodies are not isolated and removed from people, as the *Twelve Flower Months*, 1999-2000 bodies are. Neither are they weaponizing menstruation out of anger or madness.

When asked about the starting point for conceiving the idea for his male menstruating bodies, Xu Zhen replied that he wanted, "men [to] feel the presence of women" (Xu, 2017). This statement suggests that Xu wants the male members of his audience to imagine the presence of women on their own bodies through an empathetic engagement with his photographs; and, moreover, that his main audience is male. It suggests that he wants to challenge the qualities of "power" and "pollution" relating to menstrual blood, but through a male subjectivity, for a male audience. This series of photographs, then, is quite different to male imaginings of women, which tend to be critical of women in reality or prescribe an 'ideal' form for them to take. Xu Zhen suggests that the red painterly lines alluding to menstrual blood were themselves 'the presence of women;' therefore, it is not the gender of the male bodies that is altered.[60] The bodies in his photographs are therefore not inscribed as 'women,' even though attributes of womanhood are inscribed upon them. The artist said to me that the pieces are,

> not about female body, but the difference in gender and the sense of strangeness to our own and others' bodies. It's my curiosity on why is

[60] The series could also have been a reference to the performance art of Ma Liuming, who will be examined in the next chapter.

> there such a difference and how does it lead to such a different attitude towards man and woman.
>
> (Xu, 2018)

Xu Zhen's works reveal more about how he contends that the category of 'men' is unshakable, immutable, perennially concrete. Perhaps for him the category of 'women' is as concrete as is the category of 'men.' This does not seem so for Chen Lingyang and her exploration of "the split."

Not long after *The Problem of Colourfulness*, 2000, Xu Zhen went on to produce another work on the topic of menstruation, the installation *Untitled – female hygiene cotton*, 2001, which takes the everyday object of the tampon and transforms it into monumental, minimal, architectural and masculinized work of art that stands several feet taller than the audience (Figure 3.14). He conceived the work for his solo show at Shanghai BizArt Art Center in 2001. The piece is a participatory installation, the audience can use their own bodies and strength to set the sculpture in motion and watch it sway. Part of Xu Zhen's interest in this piece was the tampon's resonance with the phallus, he wrote that they are, "very similar and complementary in function" (Xu, 2018). *Untitled – female hygiene cotton*, 2001, signals a shift in Xu Zhen's thinking towards his subsequent work focusing on the intersection of art, commodities and spheres of production. For Xu Zhen it is not the boundary edge of gendered categories that is of interest, but rather other boundaries, such as pornography (Xu, 2018). With *Untitled – female hygiene cotton*, 2001, he has demonstrated that an item usually inscribed as 'female' can be inscribed with normative attributes of 'man' (strong, phallic, monumental). It is therefore a complement to *The Problem of Colourfulness*, 2000. In both pieces the combination of gender attributes inscribed only serves to reinforce the gender binary.

The artists' gender identities

Placing side by side *Twelve Flower Months*, 1999-2000 and *The Problem of Colourfulness*, 2000 has the surprising effect of making the former seem more artificial. The drips of blood in both instances are so carefully placed as to

seem unreal.[61] The question of the authenticity of the menses in *Twelve Flower Months*, 1999-2000 has been raised by other researchers. Zhao Chuan in *The Body at Stake* says, "…in *Twelve Flower Months* everything has become an artificial image" (2013:211). The audience does not actually know if the artist did take a photograph every month as she would ask us to believe, the audience does not even know for sure that it is the artist in the photographs. However, importantly for the interpretation in this chapter *Twelve Flower Months*, 1999-2000 is framed by Chen Lingyang as the speaking of her truth.[62] It is the story that is real, not necessarily the blood.

This is not the case for *The Problem of Colourfulness*, 2000, which hinges on artifice. In Xu Zhen's photographs, truth and representation are questioned. The artists' intentions, then, are markedly different. But is this because of the artists' gender identity? The audience would never associate menstrual blood with a male-identifying artist's 'own truth.' Because the audience knows that the artist is male and he has used a male body onto which he has applied 'menstrual blood,' it suggests that the underlying themes of the work are artifice and representation. This being so, the gender identity of the model in the photographs is uncompromised. What Xu Zhen's works and Ma Liuming's works (which will be discussed in the next chapter) have in common is that the paratexts and artists' interviews surrounding the works explain that their testing or challenging of gendered categories only exists within art discourse. Which is not to say that the works cannot transmit gendered attributes that contribute to an understanding of gendered categories. Xu Zhen's work, for example, could be understood as asserting the immutability of gendered categories.

In *Yue Jing Jing*, 2002 Chen Lingyang explores an idea that is not possible within the field of her own life. Specifically, weaponizing menstruation against

[61] In fact, there is also one frame of the *Yue Jing Jing*, 2002 video where a drip of menstrual blood running down Fairy's leg looks uncannily similar to the photograph *Twelve Flower Months – month seven orchid*, 1999-2000; perhaps a deliberate reference by the artist to the earlier work, perhaps meant to reveal that in both instances the menstrual blood is applied to rather than emitted from the body.

[62] This can be understood using the Foucauldian category of *parrhesia*, which will be discussed in Chapter Four.

the globalized, desiring, consuming, unbleeding, 'ideal' representation of womanhood. Yet the audience can still perceive the work as being rooted in Chen Lingyang's experience, even if it is a metaphor for her own anger towards the restriction of the category 'woman.' This is a difference in the way audiences can understand Chen Lingyang's attributes of womanhood and Xu Zhen's. Audiences understand Chen Lingyang's work to be based on her own experience and her own truth. That said, the discourse of contemporary Chinese art and the way that Chen produces her images enables her to communicate attributes of 'womanhood' using formal qualities, symbolism, metaphor and so on. The metaphor of the transgressed boundary, in conjunction with Chen's reference to "the split," means the audience can understand 'women' as being a category that shifts according to its framing. Viewed through a lens of He-Yin Zhen's category of *nannü*, we can see the category of 'women' as always already contextualized and politicized. The category itself disciplines the body, and the category is formed through the discipline of the *dispositif*. 'Women' as a category is defined by its limitations within its temporal and cultural context (disciplinary regimes), and Chen Lingyang represents in her work a womanhood lived in negotiation with this category. In this chapter my concern has been the first pole of biopower, the discipline of the body. In Chapter Four, I look more closely at the second pole of biopower, management of populations.

CHAPTER FOUR: SPERM

> In Chinese culture, every Chinese person knows this Confucian phrase: "the body is a gift from one's parents", meaning that we should value the things given to us by birth. This is by no means simply a biological expression since "a gentleman's morals originate in conjugal relations", the origins of ethics is the body.
>
> (Zhang in Huber and Zhao, 2013)

> […] the bodies of individuals become valuable treasures for the nation, not just in terms of labor (this is in itself nothing new), but most critically in terms of the life of subjects that are born, marry, reproduce, and die. Life itself becomes something that requires regulation and protection […] In other words, this represents the emergence of a distinctly Chinese form of biopolitics.
>
> (Sigley, 2009:541)

Sperm

Xiao Lu's immaculate house is in a large but quiet artists' colony outside Beijing. The grey concrete architecture punctuated with flora against a grey sky might look brutal if there were fewer angles and less glass. Outside a lonely chair-swing hangs vacant. Xiao Lu, hair sharply cut with a shock of pink, is welcoming. Inside her home, spread on a glass dining table, are cups and pots for tea, bowls of strawberries and sesame seeds. "After I wrote my book," she conveys through an interpreter about half way into our conversation, referring to her autobiographical novel *Dialogue* (2010), "I felt something empty in my heart. I felt a strong feeling that I wanted to have a child. I was 44" (Xiao, 2017). I had arrived for the interview already interested in Xiao Lu's video *Sperm*, 2006 (15'41") (Figures 4.1 and 4.2) based on her attempt to conceive. At Xiao's suggestion we watched it together. The video documented a performance-installation Xiao Lu produced at the Kanga Hotel, Yan'an, PRC, as part of a more extensive programme of exhibitions organised by curator Lu Jie called the Long March Project. During our encounter it was clear that the piece remains important to Xiao Lu over 10 years on from its creation, and the artist revealed she is in the process of writing a second autobiographical book about her life and art, titled *Sperm* (Xiao, 2017).



Figure 4.1. Xiao Lu (1962 Huangzhou) *Sperm*, 2006. (Video documentation still). Performance and video documentation. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 4.2. Xiao Lu (1962 Huangzhou) *Sperm*, 2006. (Installation). Performance and video documentation. Image courtesy of White Rabbit collection and the artist.

The *Sperm*, 2006 video intercuts Xiao Lu installing in the gallery at Kanga Hotel, Yan'an, PRC (the date on the screen is given as 20 May 2006) with an artists' talk event at the venue. The performance *Sperm*, 2006 pivots on an invitation Xiao Lu issued to the audience to donate their sperm, which she would use for a round of in vitro fertilization (IVF).[63] On the gallery there were empty vessels and a fridge with a mirrored exterior ready to receive the donated sperm. The donations would be anonymous, although Xiao Lu expressed a preference for the donor to be an artist.

At the artists' talk, Xiao Lu, artist Liu Dahong and other and unnamed male and female persons discuss the provocation that Xiao Lu has put forward with her piece. Everyone is sat in a circle; Xiao Lu isn't separated from the group by a stage or any distance. Reactions become heated, even agitated, and sometimes Xiao Lu appears vulnerable in the face of the emotional reactions of others. It was difficult to watch the artist being put in this position whilst she sat beside me in her home. In the video, Xiao Lu describes the research that she has undertaken at the sperm bank, which led to her deconstruction of the concept of conceiving a child. For her, it no longer is understood within the framework of a [heterosexual, married] relationship. Xiao Lu is asked by someone, "have you considered this may be crossing a line?" Issues of inheritance and religious ethics are also raised. A woman asks whether Xiao Lu – if she went ahead with IVF using one of the on-gallery donations – would be able to "endure this psychologically," and she questions whether Xiao Lu would be happy to conceive a child whose father could have any background, including being "a farmer," "off the street" or "a waiter from this hotel."[64] The same woman praises Xiao for her "courage" in raising this personal topic. Xiao imagines a hypothetical conversation she will have with the unborn, un-conceived child, when she will respond to inquiries about the father that simply: "they are from sperm." The group debate the imagined sperm donor's denied rights, but also the likelihood that they would later bear responsibility

[63] IVF is a procedure to treat infertility that can only be conducted in a specialist hospital or facility. Mature eggs are collected, fertilized with sperm and the embryo is then transferred to the uterus. The process does not always lead successfully to pregnancy and live birth.
[64] It is notable that she raises this issue of status and class in Yan'an, site of Chairman Mao Zedong's 1942 speech where he declared that all art is for the people.

for the child. Responding to the question of responsibility, Xiao retorts: "When you men are out and looking to woo some ladies, do you ever think of these things, these responsibilities?... I believe that sperm and money aren't that different." To this last remark a man counters: "she's turning men into suppliers." The performance-installation does not yield any donations of sperm.

The epilogue in the video is the following text in Chinese and English:

> **About the work Sperm**
> **The Long March is a manifesto**
> **the Long March is a propaganda**
> **the Long March is a sower of seeds - Mao**
>
> **A male sperm and a female egg meet. Essence**
> **A male and female mind meet. Spirit**
> **Harmony of essence and spirit, human hopelessness.**
> **Energy.**
>
> **Essence, energy, spirit as one, the way of life.**
> **Seeking all three: No time, too old, no luck.**
> **Retreating and seeking only one. Choosing essence (spirit)**
>
> **Performance Method**
> **1. Participants**
> **Male (sperm donors): no age limit**
> **Female (sperm recipient): Xiao Lu, 44**
> **2. Time period**
> **First instance: May 21-23, 2006**
> **3. Men willing to participate in the project take a bottle from the work Sperm located in the lounge of the Long March Yan an Project s Yan an Forum on Art Education in the Kangda Hotel, deposit sperm samples into the jars, and return them to the refrigerator.**
> **4. The sperm recipient will undergo artificial insemination during her fertile period each month using the sperm thus collected.**
>
> **Result**
> **The first attempt to collect sperm in Yan an failed**
>
> (Xiao Lu, *Sperm*, 2006)

A disappearing act

Sperm, 2006 by Xiao Lu is held in the collection of Judith Neilson in Sydney, Australia (the White Rabbit Collection), but has been given very little Anglophone scholarly attention. Xiao Lu (born 1962 Huangzhou) first emerged as an artist in the late 1980s; however, most of her notable and most-discussed works were produced after she returned to Beijing in 2004 following a 15 year art-making hiatus. Generally the focus of English-language scholarly research about the artist is Xiao Lu's earliest piece, *Dialogue*, 1989 and the *pistol shot incident*. For *Dialogue*, 1989 Xiao Lu fabricated two telephone booths with a black and white image inside each one, female and male figures, seen from the back.[65] The work was selected for *China Avant-Garde*, an exhibition at China Art Museum Beijing curated by Gao Minglu in February 1989 (discussed in Chapter One of this thesis). On the opening day, Xiao Lu fired two shots into her installation (the *pistol shot incident*), ran and away and hid, before turning herself into the authorities (Figure 4.3).

The piece caused controversy for a number of reasons. It seems that Xiao Lu did not arrange this performance in advance with the curatorial team (it was; however, filmed by the event official videographer Wen Pulin). A male artist who became Xiao Lu's romantic partner, Tang Song, spoke on her behalf about the work despite her later assertions that he did not participate in planning the act. Moreover, the artists' community in Beijing felt that the performance contributed to nervousness from the local authorities about contemporary art after 1989. The other factor in this was the June 4th incident the same year. In the existing scholarship, Adele Tan focused on the mis-attribution of the *pistol shot incident* as a co-authored piece (with Tang Song) and its subsequent politicization (Tan in Hopfener, Koch, Lee-Kalisch, Noth, 2011). Shuqin Cui examined *Dialogue*, 1989 and the *pistol shot incident* within a framework of pain (Cui, 2016:112-117). Sasha Welland argued that the subsequent interpretative narrative of *Dialogue*, 1989 and the *pistol shot*

[65] *Dialogue,* 1989 (recreated 2015) is now in the collection of Tate Gallery, London (Figure 4.4).



Figure 4.3. Xiao Lu (1962 Huangzhou) *Dialogue and the pistol shot incident*, 1989. Image courtesy of the artist.

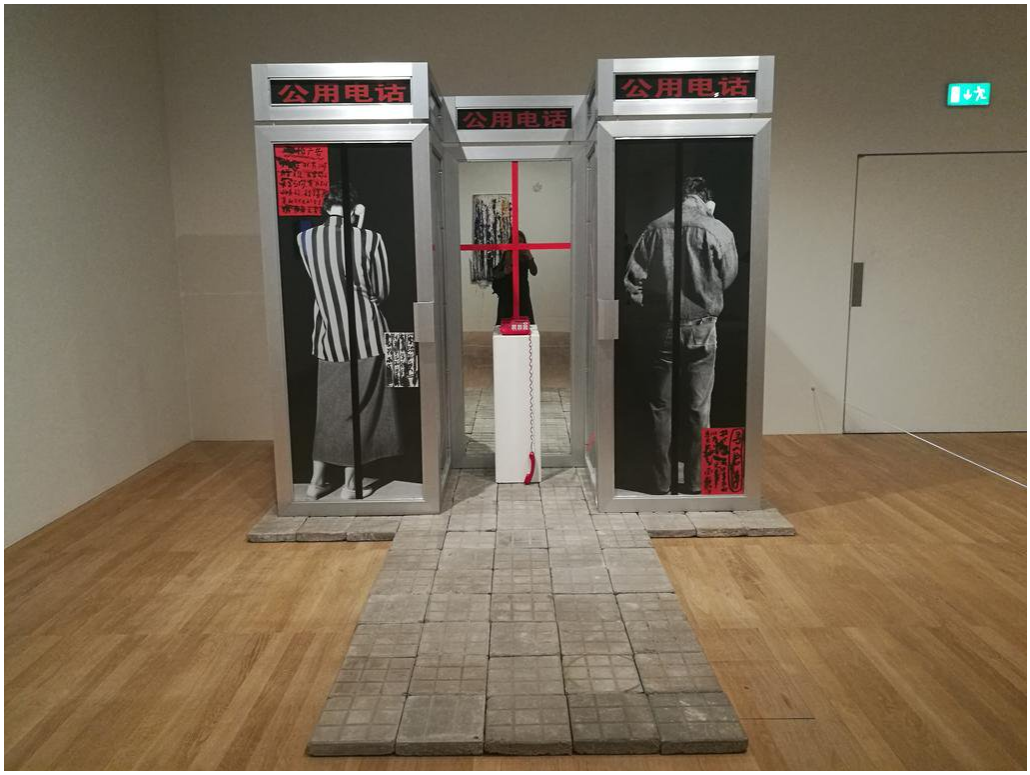


Figure 4.4. Xiao Lu (1962 Huangzhou) *Dialogue*, 1989 recreated 2015 on display at Tate Modern, London. Image by Linda Pittwood, reproduced courtesy of Tate Modern, London and Xiao Lu.

incident is evidence of "a disappearing act [where woman artists vanish replaced by] a masculinist avant-garde preoccupied with its place in the nation and the world," (2018:57).[66]

The historical timing of *Dialogue*, 1989 means that it is often discussed as part of describing the turn towards contemporaneity in Chinese art in the 1980s (Li Xianting, 1989; Wu in Smith, Enwezor, Condee, 2008; Gladston, 2014). It is more unusual for scholars to research, or even refer to, other works by Xiao Lu, who is still active and producing performance art, sculptures and text-based works. White Rabbit Gallery, Sydney have made available an interview with Xiao Lu where she discusses *Sperm*, 2006 amongst other works (White Rabbit, 2017)[67] although there is no analysis accompanying their interview footage. In the article 'China's contemporary women artists emerge – Xiao Lu's art work world,' the authors discuss the performance-installations *Dialogue*, 1989, *Sperm*, 2006 and *Wedding*, 2009. The authors of that article argue that with this group of works Xiao Lu is deconstructing and rejecting compulsory heterosexuality (Zhang and Elias, 2012) but they do not question the attributes of 'womanhood' that Xiao Lu inscribes onto her own body in her output.

Management of Populations

Chapter Three of this thesis focussed on how the category of 'woman' itself disciplines bodies. This chapter focuses on the other pole of Foucauldian biopower, outlined in Chapter Two, management of populations. To do this, the chapter will compare the work of Xiao Lu, in particular the piece *Sperm*, 2006, with the work of Xiao's contemporary, male-identifying artist Ma Liuming. Ma Liuming is best-known for his performances of the 1990s and

[66] This corresponds to the framing of the exhibition *Art and China after 1989: Theater of the World*, which was first staged at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York in 2017 and in 2018 was re-presented at the Museo Guggenheim, Bilbao. In this exhibition Xiao Lu's *Dialogue*, 1989 was briefly mentioned in a graphic panel, and female-identifying artists in general comprised a minority of the sixty artists' work on display. The reason for starting the exhibition at 1989 is explained as being because it was "the end of the cold war," diminishing the effect of political incidents within China on contemporary art discourse.

[67] Tate Gallery, London have made available online an interview conducted by Monica Merlin at Xiao Lu's studio in 2013 (Merlin, 2018b). *Sperm*, 2006 is mentioned but is not the focus of the discussion. I will refer to their conversation about feminism further on in this chapter.

early 2000s, where he "acted" (Ma Liuming, 2017) as the feminized character *Fen Ma Liuming,* often combining his long hair and unclothed body with feminine make up. I argue that Ma Liuming and Xiao Lu's work are impacted by the same forces of biopower, which diminish the role of the female in the reproduction of human life, and yet define the category 'women' through their obligation and desire to bear a child, often inscribing them as 'closer to nature' and 'nurturing.' The other part of the framework, *nannü*, encourages attention to what constructs gender, many of which (in He-Yin's theory) are the same factors (discursive and non-discursive) that manage populations and discipline the body in Foucault's biopower. The three editors who translated and theorized the writing of He-Yin Zhen to make her theories accessible for English speakers wrote,

> One of He-Yin Zhen's major points in her intellectual practice was to elucidate how "woman" as a transhistorical global category – not of subjective identity but of structured unequal social relations – had been constituted through scholarship, ritual, law, and social and labor practices over time, in China as elsewhere
>
> (Liu, Karl and Ko, 2012:9)

This chapter will contextualise the pieces within the discourses of birth, IVF, bloodline and marriage in the PRC in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

A frame of 'biopolitics' was ostensibly applied to Ma's work in the catalogue accompanying his solo exhibition *Gender Performativity and Bio-politics* at Art Changsha in 2011 (Lu, 2011). However, in the catalogue essay a definition of what is meant by biopolitics is not offered. The essay argues by turns for Ma's *Fen Ma Liuming* performance as a "resistant body […] refusing power and authority" (2011:31) then for an understanding that Ma was "communicating with nature" (2011:41). Lu Mingjun notes that Ma Liuming has not produced performance art since around 2004. But Lu does not ask what this absence in Ma's output means for the attributes of womanhood that he inscribes on his body. Ma's output is central within the development of Thomas J Berghuis' theory of the mediated subject in art (2006). Berghuis argues that Ma Liuming's work focuses "attention on the stereotypifications of

race and gender that are played out on the body," (2006:104) and that, for Ma and his contemporaries, "the naked body serves as a kind of language to reflect the innermost feelings of the self" (2006:110). However, for Carlos Rojas, Ma's nudity instead (or additionally) serves as an assertion of his 'maleness' (Rojas in Chiang, 2012:199-223). Katie Hill's interpretation of Ma Liuming supports this reading. In Hill's book *The Political Body in Chinese Art: Posters Politics and Performance*, she refers to the stark and "powerful" presentation of the body in early 1990s performance, including the work of Ma Liuming. Hill goes on to say that "Although Ma's work might seem to engage with sexual ambiguity […] there is nevertheless a male, even patriarchal psychological mode in this work which acts to subsume the female or consume it" (2004:12). This chapter expands on Hill's argument, and Welland's contention about the disappearing female in the avant-garde. Hill's book was published the same year that Ma Liuming's son was born, replacing *Fen Ma Liuming* as the central character of his output, as this chapter will contend. As the research underpinning this thesis took place over 10 years after Hill's, it has the benefit of a different vantage point from which to assess the changing status of the 'female' (specifically meaning a shift in the attributes of womanhood) in Ma's output in the post-2000 period.

The biopolitics and biopower of IVF and birth

Before returning to an analysis of *Sperm*, 2006 and to introduce the work of Ma Liuming in more detail, this section will provide more contextual information about births and IVF in China and the scholarly work already done to analyse these phenomena with a framework of Foucauldian biopower. In the PRC, the governance of births has geographically and temporally-bounded specificity.[68] It is much more nuanced than simply the well-known One-Child policy, which will be further discussed in Chapter Five. From 1 June 1995 the Maternal and Infant Health Care Law came into effect. This law required both women and men to undertake a pre-marital medical examination (PMME) and

[68] It is outside of the scope of this thesis to provide a comprehensive comparison of the different ways births are governed within China and elsewhere, for instance in the UK. However, the author is informed by her own experience of IVF, pregnancy and childbirth within the period 2013-2015 undertaken and all expenses covered by the free-at-point-of-use UK National Health Service (NHS).

present their certificates in order to marry. The aim of this was to identify persons with genetic diseases, infectious diseases or 'relevant mental diseases.' In the event of serious genetic disease, physicians would offer long-term contraceptive measures as a requirement before the couple could get married (providing they would still both consent to marriage). The objective of the law was to "prevent new births of inferior quality… in response to an increasingly heavy burden of disability in the nation and some dubious local practices in regulating reproduction" (Guo, 2012:1). However, China had already made "phenomenal" gains in improving maternal and infant health since 1949, and there are arguments that the PMME did not extend these any further as it could not indicate the likelihood of the most common birth defects: congenital heart defects, neural tube defects, cleft lip and palate, and Down syndrome (Guo, 2012).

Whilst the concept of eugenics in Western discourses is generally perceived as negative, the discourses of *yousheng* (superior births) and *suzhi* (quality – of people) is looked upon more positively within the Chinese context, and commensurate with Communism's overall mission to ensure the care and contribution of every person in the social body. The Maternal and Infant Health Care Law was controversial and attracted criticism from the Western scientific community who were concerned that it could lead to a "Nazi style eugenics programme" (Guo, 2012:3). It should be noted that the law came into effect after the One-Child policy at the end of the 1970s, and there were already cases coming to light of coercion in relation to upholding that policy. Maternal and Infant Health Care Law and the One-Child policy (and their administration) are specific examples of the CCP's biopolitical practices. Amendments have subsequently been made to the Maternal and Infant Health Care law, and the compulsory requirement for a PMME was abolished in 2003, during the timeframe of this thesis but before Xiao Lu produced *Sperm*, 2006. Yet what remains is the requirement for a birth permission certificate, and these are only given to heterosexual married couples. Single women and same sex couples, even those who have had marriage ceremonies outside of China, cannot be given permission to have a child, whether by intercourse or by IVF. Conception without permission could mean a fine or a more extreme penalty,

and children born outside the regulation may not be able to access schooling, health services or welfare. It creates legal and illegal births, citizens (comrades) one the one hand, and *heihaizi* (literally: black children) who are not registered, on the other. Illegal status may well have been the situation for Xiao Lu's theoretical baby. Voluntarily having a baby as a single mother, with or without IVF, is a radical and problematic choice in China.

Quite apart from, or as a precursor to the legal apparatus, births and babies in the PRC have been conceptually framed as being for the benefit of the state, as Greenhalgh points out this is the difference between 'family planning' and 'birth planning' (2008:46). For Greenhalgh, "state birth planning is a unique intervention of PRC statecraft" (2008:46) and, with consideration of Michel Foucault's category of governmentality, she argues that science and birth-planning are central in the PRC's transformation from Communism to 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' in the late 1970s and 80s, when the One-Child policy came into effect. Power over life, Greenhalgh further argues, involves: "state bureaucracies, professional (knowledge-based) disciplines and self-governing individuals" (2008:7). From this we can extract that babies and baby making are inherently politicized in the PRC, and only more so when produced in the discourses of biology, medicine and science.

Sperm, 2006 specifically raises the possibility of scientific intervention on Xiao Lu's body to help her to create a baby: IVF, which is an inherently gender asymmetrical procedure. As M'Check and Keller describe: "IVF practices clearly illustrate that persons, parents and parenthood are not givens; rather, they are achieved in a process" (Smelik and Lykke, 1999:64). The development of IVF within China reveals another aspect to the circulation of biopower in this context: a tendency towards pronatalism, which is not necessarily state-led. Wahlberg argues that the main drivers enabling the phenomenally fast development and routinization of IVF in the PRC since the 1980s (the first baby born in China using IVF techniques was in 1988) in parallel with a state project of restricting births, are an appetite for scientific advancement, combined with pronatalism and the desire for quality births (*yousheng*) (2016). IVF was legalized in 2003 for married couples with a birth

permission certificate. Underneath and in parallel to state directives, there persists a stigma around childlessness in China (Tang, 1995; Zhang and Liu, 2007; Djundeva, Emery and Dykstra, 2017) that has contributed to the demand for IVF services. Confucianism, the corpus of ancient texts that along with Daoism and Buddhism form an enduring part of Chinese identity, is profoundly pronatal (Tang, 1995). The structure of the family in the Confucian system, as well as the endurance of ancestor worship rituals to the present day, emphasize the ongoing importance of heterosexual procreation within marriage and its centrality in the constitution of the Chinese subject. It is reinforced in language, Chinese character for good, 好 *hao*, combines the characters for female and son. This biopower can be understood as transmitted by self-governing individuals and by the social body itself, contributing to the feelings that Xiao Lu internalizes and relates on camera towards the end of *Sperm*, 2006: "I have to give birth to a child. I have to" (Xiao, 2006).[69] In *Sperm*, 2006 Xiao Lu's body can be understood as the target and agent of biopower. Biopower courses through the capillaries of art discourse, the family and the state. The actors sat around Xiao Lu in *Sperm*, 2006 represent different contradictory and aligning elements of the *dispositif* disciplining her body and choices.

Dancing in chains

In our interview at her studio, I asked whether Xiao Lu was aware of or influenced by any Chinese women's studies theorists (such as Professor Li Xiaojiang or He-Yin Zhen). Xiao Lu said she was not, and that she did not consciously engage with feminist theories from the West either, with the exception of having read Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949, first translated into Chinese 1972) (Xiao, 2017).[70] This is despite having been involved in an exhibition titled *Bald Girls* in Beijing in 2012 with two other

[69] In the article 'A Woman's Choice? — On Women, Assisted Reproduction and Social Coercion' Søbirk Petersen critically analyses whether assisted reproduction should be offered at all, given that patriarchal societies have coerced women into desiring children (2004).
[70] Min Dongchao found many of the women's studies academics and theoretical feminists in China that she interviewed claimed to have read de Beauvoir's book but they were actually influenced by the title (2017).

artists, that explicitly identified the artists and the show's aims as feminist.[71] Another book that Xiao Lu said had influenced her was the autobiography of American-French ballet dancer Isadora Duncan. Duncan's book *My Life* (first published soon after the dancer's death in 1927) was translated into Chinese soon after its publication and was an influence on a generation of female writers (Wang, 2008). For Xiao Lu, as well as citing a touchstone autobiography and being a female writer herself who has published an autobiographical account, the story of a ballet dancer might resonate with her due to the themes of self-regulation, identity and the disciplined body.

A short time further on in our conversation, Xiao Lu described the circumstances in which she practices her art using the Nietzschean phrase "dancing in chains," contending that in China: "artists have freedom within restrictions, and the restrictions can be good for art" (Xiao, 2017). Although evocative, Xiao Lu's usage of this phrase is slightly inaccurate. For the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) who first used this expression, he intended the chains to be a metaphor for restrictions that artists put in place themselves. Nietzsche says that to be creative artists should follow this process: "first to impose upon themselves a manifold constraint […] then to invent in addition a new constraint, to impose it upon themselves and cheerfully to overcome it, so that the constraint and the victory are perceived and admired" (Nietzsche, [1880] 2011: 810-811). In Xiao Lu's usage the chains seem to be closer to Foucault's concept of discourse, disciplinary regimes or the *dispositif*. Foucault's *dispositif* includes self-regulation as well as forces affecting the body from outside of it. Xiao Lu suggests a set of restrictions operating from outside of the artist, but that within these regulatory frameworks, she proposes, creativity and art can be achieved. This gives us a departure point from which to think about how Xiao Lu inscribes attributes of womanhood on to the body, and indeed what attributes.

[71] In Monica Merlin's interview with Xiao Lu in 2013, now available on the Tate Gallery website, Xiao Lu says that she was happy for the artists who asked her to participate to frame her work as feminist, as long as they knew she had not conceived of it as such (Merlin, 2018b).

In *Sperm*, 2006, Xiao Lu uses her body to represent constrained bodies. Bodies constrained first and foremost by – as we can understand it within this interpretative framework – the restrictive biopolitics of birth and IVF within early-21st century China. In China more starkly than in many places, there are legal and illegal births, creating legal and illegal people. Moreover, the legal framework and birth regulatory policy in China intersect with cultural pronatalism. Xiao Lu has been actively encouraged by a pronatal culture to marry and give birth to one healthy child.[72] Her (female) body is a resource of the state, as much as is the sperm that she seeks in order to conceive a child. Placing *Sperm*, 2006 within a framework of biopower and *nannü*, allows us to consider her entire body and all choices about the body as the target of pronatal biopower and CCP biopolitics, inscribed as a resource of the state. Conversely, as we will see, the male body is inscribed as part of a lineage of family and a continuation of bloodline. The genders are inscribed with very different values and purposes: the female body as a vehicle for the reproduction of comrades, the male body as comrades themselves who embody the continuation of family. Xiao Lu reproduces the idea that women strongly desire children; it is not so much that they are defined by having children, as defined by the desire to have them, and defined by having their desire and their choices publicly owned. This corresponds to Sarah Stevens contention that ever since the Republican era in China, the womb itself became a public space (2004:665). Xiao Lu's body is central to the narrative of *Sperm,* 2006. She makes it the focal point of a debate, she is almost always in the shot; making her own womb a public space for the audience to comment upon, and even intervene in, by donating sperm.

Xiao Lu is also constrained in *Sperm*, 2006 by her personal narrative within a gendered society. The piece is in effect another chapter in her autobiographical story, which involves both gallery-based performances, video documentation and autobiographical novels that re-interpret her artworks after the event, and

[72] The one child policy was rolled out around 1979 when Xiao Lu was 17 years old. The policy has always been unevenly applied; however, in Beijing, Han Chinese couples were limited to one child from the late 1970s until 2015 when Xiao Lu was 53. In 2015 the restriction was loosened to two children per couple.

are positioned by the artist as important paratexts. The first instalment of this autobiography was *Dialogue*, 1989 and the *pistol shot incident*. In her book released 20 years later, Xiao Lu retroactively frames the piece as being a response to formative trauma, including a broken heart and sexual assault. Following the incident she emigrates to Australia and engages in a relationship with artist Tang Song. Tang refuses to have a child or marry her. Fifteen years later she leaves him, with – at age 42 – little time left to explore options for conceiving a child. The 'woman' constructed in *Sperm*, 2006 is one that is created by a series of impressions and inscriptions left on the body, and by the absence of certain things that create women within society at that temporal and cultural moment. In her studio, Xiao Lu explained that after *Sperm*, 2006 she did undertake one round of IVF with sperm donated by a married, foreign "extremely good looking" (Xiao, 2017) friend of hers living in Beijing, but it was not successful.

Sperm, 2006 was not the final instalment in Xiao Lu's autobiographical body of work. It was followed by the performance *Wedding,* 2008 (Figure 4.5) and the installation *Love Letter*, 2011 (Figure 4.6). In *Wedding*, 2008 Xiao Lu rose from a coffin to triumphantly marry herself (she has never been married in real life). Whilst the performance acknowledges that women are often defined by heterosexual marriage, or by desiring marriage, Xiao Lu eliminates this desire and closes this circle by putting rings on both her left and right hands. *Wedding*, 2008 seemed to reverse the woman of *Sperm*, 2006 who had been formed by the inscriptions that culturally and temporally specific biopolitics had left on her body. In *Wedding*, 2008, Xiao Lu challenges this category of 'woman' who is defined by (desiring) heterosexual marriage.

The year before I met Xiao Lu in Beijing, I met artist Yang Zhenzhong[73] (born 1968 Hangzhou) in Shanghai and he made a point about marriage. When asked about representing young women in his work, he said he did so because of their confidence, which in his view surpassed their male counterparts until they were married when their relative levels of confidence reversed (Yang, Z.,

[73] Yang Zhenzhong is one of the case study artists in Chapter Six of this thesis.



Figure 4.5. Xiao Lu (1962 Huangzhou) *Wedding*, 2008. Performance.
Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 4.6. Xiao Lu (1962 Huangzhou) *Love Letter*, 2011. Charcoal and herbal medicine.
Image courtesy of the artist.

2016). There is not sufficient space in this chapter to adequately discuss marriage in the PRC; however, marriage, like baby and gender making in this context, is inherently political. The institution of marriage was critiqued by Mao Zedong before he became Chairman of the PRC, and he implemented marriage reform in 1950. However, whilst concubinage and coerced marriages were outlawed, problems such as familial pressure to marry and the pressure to put assets into the husband's name upon marriage remained (the latter point is evidenced and discussed in Hong Fincher, 2014). The intense pressure to engage in heterosexual marriage has led to specific spatially-bounded phenomena such as the match-making market I witnessed in People's Park, Shanghai and 'contract marriages,' sometimes called fake marriages (*jia jiehun)* in the PRC between homosexuals of the opposite sex. Like Chen Lingyang's *Yue Jing Jing*, 2002, the topic of *Wedding*, 2008 is the production of uneven genders in contemporary China. The attributes of womanhood in these works include the capacity to resist normative gendered behaviours.

Yet the next work we can use to trace Xiao Lu's autobiographical story, *Love Letter*, 2011 returns to a more ambiguous position. The 'woman' of *Love Letter*, 2011 is comparable to the 'woman' in Chen Lingyang's work who is defined both by the restrictive category of 'women' and its transgression. *Love Letter*, 2011, comprised a taxonomy of TCM herbs prescribed for pregnancy. Xiao Lu was never pregnant. The artist says that the piece was a love letter to the friend with whom she had attempted IVF with at some point after producing the piece *Sperm*, 2006. It re-establishes the connection between bodies and medical discourse, re-inscribes a woman who desired a baby. The piece is a thank you to the absent male with whom she could have achieved the aim of conceiving a child, it is also a reference to Xiao Lu's radical attempt to have a baby. Perhaps this piece undoes the assertion in *Sperm*, 2006 that Xiao Lu was able to remove emotions, and male bloodline, from the process of conception. It is the relationship between her, a female, and her male 'sperm donor' that remains, when a pregnancy did not. The biopower that encourages heterosexual coupling and the production of children remains forcefully inscribed on the bodies unseen.

Fen Ma Liuming

Around four years after Xiao Lu produced the work *Dialogue* 1989 and the *pistol shot event*, a group of young artists unconnected to Xiao Lu (who was then residing in Australia) set up *Beijing Dongcun* (Beijing East Village) artists' community in Beijing, PRC. The community were deliberately trying to separate themselves from other artistic activity taking place in Beijing, and from normative life at that time, by relocating to the edge of the city. Members of the colony included Ma Liuming, Rong Rong, Duan Yingmei, Zhu Ming, Xing Danwen and Cang Xin[74]. Most of the artists started by producing oil paintings, but over time started to produce performances in front of small audiences of peers. Female-identifying photographer Xing Danwen and male-identifying photographer Rong Rong documented many of the performances. Ma Liuming had graduated with an MFA from Hubei Institute of Fine Arts in 1991. His first role in a piece of performance art, which pre-dates the establishment of *Dongcun* and Xiao Lu's *Dialogue*, 1989, was assisting with *Suicide Project*, 1988 by Wei Guangqing. For Wei's work, Ma performed and was photographed simulating various acts of committing suicide. Ma produced paintings as well as performances throughout the 1990s, and from the mid-2000s resumed almost exclusively working in paint. However, Ma's performances are what he is known for. This chapter examines the longer trajectory of the attributes of he is inscribes as 'woman' by re-assessing his earlier work in light of 'the disappearance' of *Fen Ma Liuming* around 2004, when the artist starts to assert his role as a father and carrier of bloodline.

The catalyst that prompted Ma to begin prolifically producing performance art seems to have been a visit to the artist's colony by UK artists Gilbert & George. Berghuis relates that Ma felt the British artists did not have much to say in response to the work being produced at *Beijing Dongcun* (2006:103). In a relatively impromptu act, Ma concealed a sack of red paint in a ceiling, he climbed onto a table shirtless, his long hair loose, reached up and pierced the bag, causing his body to be covered in red 'blood.' Ma gave the piece the

[74] Many of whom were considered in the long list of artists for this doctoral project as they represent the body in their lens media work and to some extent explore the categories of women and gender.

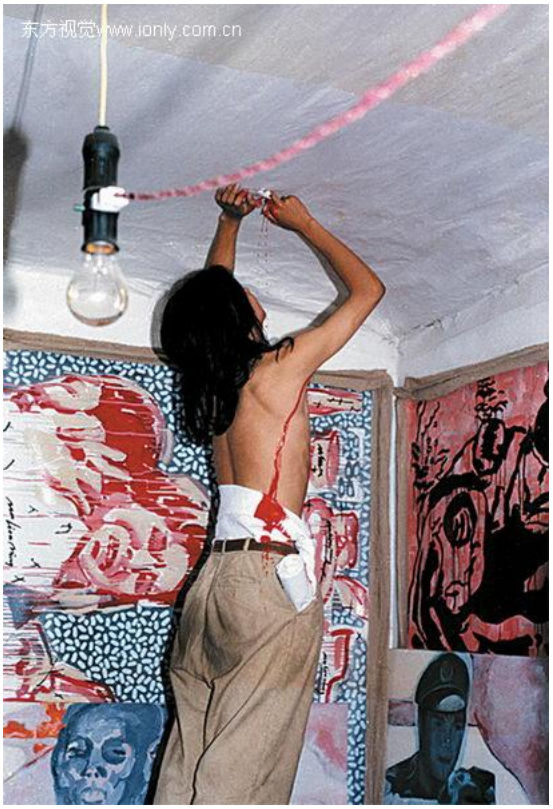


Figure 4.7. Ma Liuming (1969 Huangshi) *Dialogue with Gilbert & George*, 1993. Performance. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 4.8. Ma Liuming (1969 Huangshi) *Fen Ma Liuming*, 1993. Performance. Image courtesy of the artist.

title *Dialogue with Gilbert & George*, 1993 (Figure 4.7). At the time the young artist was not explicitly exploring or questioning gender with this work; however, it has been retrospectively feminized and positioned within a discourse of birth. In an essay by the renowned female curator Yuko Hasegawa, curator Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (MOT) and professor of curatorial and art theory at Tama Art University, Tokyo, Japan in the book *Ma Liuming* (2011), Hasegawa writes: "This performance was to become Ma's first intercourse with his audience, and this was how the hymen covering his protected inner world was torn" (Hasegawa in Ma Liuming, 2011:190). Carlos Rojas extends this to suggest another reading where the blood is uterine and Ma was 'giving birth' to himself as a performance artist (Rojas in Chiang, 2012:205).[75]

Later that same year, Ma invented the character that he called *Fen Ma Liuming* (Figure 4.8). *Fen* (芬) is a female name meaning fragrance, but is also a homophonous pun, pronounced the same as the Chinese word meaning separation (分) (Berghuis, 2006). The separation (or "the split" to link back to Chen Lingyang in Chapter Three) of Ma and *Fen Ma Liuming* could refer to the maintenance of his own autonomous male identity alongside his female persona. It also could refer to the 'natural' binary separation of men and women (*nannü*) even whilst he is representing a person who is bringing attention to and transgressing socially constructed binaries of male/female and man/woman. In his earliest performance as *Fen Ma Liuming*, Ma wore make up and female clothing, earrings and polished nails, and was photographed looking like a (female) fashion model in a series of poses.[76] There are also images of him in the process of being made up and transforming into his feminized character, that now constitute part of the work itself.

[75] The discourse of birth is a notable contrast to the 'ejaculatory' power of Xiao Lu's performance, which prompted the question of whether she had been able to conceive of the *pistol shot incident* independently as a young woman (Tan in Hopfener, Koch, Lee-Kalisch, Noth, 2011).
[76] In the performance *Fen Ma Liuming Walks the Great Wall*, 1988, Ma Liuming is also photographed in a style reminiscent of high-fashion imagery.

It is important to note that dressing as a woman, given the timing of the performances and their location in the PRC, was a direct contrast to dominant norms of masculinity. During Mao's Chairmanship, Chinese comrades both male and female had been encouraged to take on a masculine appearance, wearing simple clothing, trousers and often Lenin or Sun Yat-Sen suits. 'Westernization' in the form of feminine clothing, make up and so on could trigger ritualised public shamings. It was no less outside of the mainstream in 1993, over 15 years after the death of Mao, against a backdrop of a return to "gender norms" (Hong Fincher, 2014; Liao, 2017) when women were expected to be more feminine in appearance, whilst men were expected to be dominant, hardworking and masculine. *Fen Ma Liuming* was a representation of a body released from both 'revolutionary discipline' and the restrictive normative constructs of 'female' and 'male' in the 1990s. This body resisting control, however, was only possible within a specific discursive context. Ma Liuming's appearance in the early 1990s lent itself to his being made up as a woman, and he could have passed as one. But very quickly he moved to avoid being mistaken for a transvestite "in real life" (Rojas in Chiang, 2012:207). Ma also stated: "..I was trying to express beauty, never rebellion or homosexuality" (Ma, 2011:44). Following his first *Fen Ma Liuming* performance in a dress, Ma always performed unclothed, contrasting his made-up feminine face with his exposed male genitals.

Jingzi

At Ma Liuming's studio, surrounded by his new paintings, he pours me many cups of tea in tiny cups, repeating this act of generosity over and over throughout our meeting. Ma is inconsistent about how much his early performances were conceived to engage with questions of gender. At one point he says that he was "trying to show the public a mixed gender, showing them both sexes," then he says he was "trying to show more of the character itself, another way of living," and later he concedes "when I was making the work, I didn't think too much about what I wanted to say" (Ma, 2017). More important to Ma seems to have been the interaction ('dialogue') between himself and his local peers and international counterparts, as well as exploring the power and taboo of the unclothed body. But in the process of making the work and



Figure 4.9. Ma Liuming (1969 Huangshi) *Fen Ma Liuming Says*, 1993. Performance and photographic documentation Beijing Dongcun, PRC. Image courtesy the artist and Changsha: Hu Ning Fine Arts Publishing.

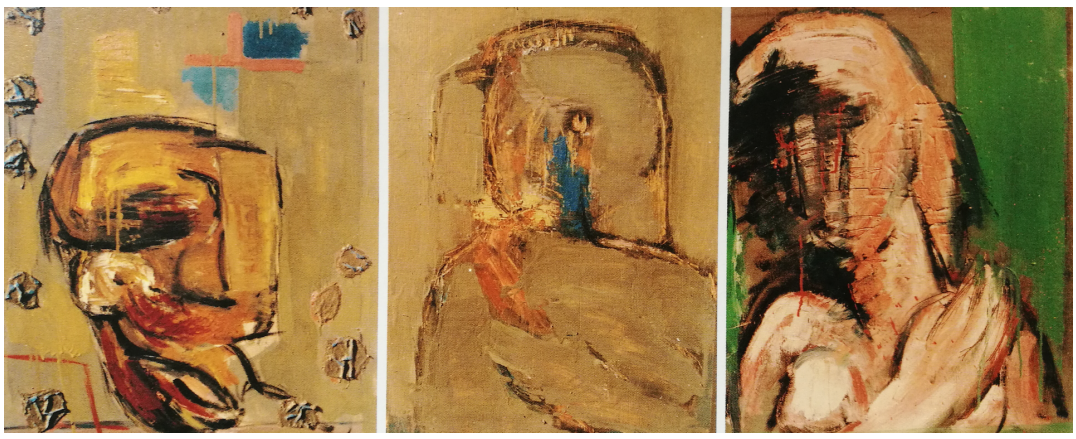


Figure 4.10. From Left to Right: Ma Liuming (1969 Huangshi) *Woman and Child, 1990; Girl, 1990* and *Portrait of a Woman*, 1990. All oil on canvas. Images courtesy the artist and Changsha: Hu Ning Fine Arts Publishing.

displaying it, he constructed a character that inscribed attributes of both 'women' and 'men' onto his body. Ma bought to my particular attention the work *Fen Ma Liuming Says*, 1993 (Figure 4.9). Ma described this to me as his "coolest" artwork (Ma Liuming, 2017). In the black and white photograph, the lens focuses on *Fen Ma Liuming*'s face. Her body is unclothed and she appears to be masturbating or at least holding her penis in her hand. *Fen Ma Liuming* looks tired, even vulnerable. Around the artist is a group of men watching, their shoes circle the edges of the photograph and we the viewer, standing where the photographer stood, completes the circle. Whether deliberate or not, the image looks like a subversion of the image of the *odalisque*; a recurrent image in Western art from the Renaissance to modernity, where a subservient woman reclines partially or totally naked under the male gaze. Ma is inscribing women with this role – as muse, as subservient – but retains his power through his exposed genitals and the event of ejaculation.

Sperm (*jingzi*) in China is understood to be the carrier of the *jing* (essence) from father to child (essence would also be passed from mother to child via the ovum). *Jing* is the essence of a person, enabling "birth, growth and reproduction" (and it crudely, but not exactly, translates into Western medical discourse as 'hormones' (Jarmey, 2003:16)). *Jingzi* links both to the genetic make-up of a man's children, the 'essence' of himself and male lineage. The spilling, or suggestion of spilling sperm in *Fen Ma Liuming Says,* 1993, we could understanding as being a process of consolidating power and displaying Ma's essential self before an audience – of men – that may otherwise subjugate him as a female. The gaze itself is represented in Ma's performance by the audience that surrounds him. The audience could be understood as transmitters of regulation and normativity, and we the viewer, standing in the circle, are one of them. The circle of people in this photograph are similar to the embodied *dispositif* of forces in the video Sperm, 2006 by Xiao Lu; but her we are disciplining through surveilling, gazing, not commenting. However, the title suggests that Ma is telling his own truth with this work, Foucault's *parrhesia,* which will be elaborated on further on in this chapter. Ma's 'truth' is his masculine, ejaculatory power. The 'woman' inscribed on his body is the vulnerable, subjugated odalisque presented for the gaze.

The disappearance of Fen Ma Liuming

In 1990, before Ma moved to *Beijing Dongcun* and developed the *Fen Ma Liuming* character, he painted a series of oil on canvas paintings with the titles: *Woman and Child, Girl* and *Portrait of a Woman* (Figure 4.10). The theme of the first painting corresponds to a common Western art history-Christian archetype originating in the idea of Christ child and the Virgin Mary. In Ma's painting *Woman and Child*, a person, apparently nude and exposing bare breasts, cradles a young child protectively in her arms, their heads gently touching. There is continuity between the three paintings: all of them appear to show unclothed bodies in a painterly style influenced by Western modern art, specifically the Expressionist movement. Taken together with his *Fen Ma Liuming* character, Ma could be said to have exhibited, in the 1990s, a sustained interest in themes of femaleness and gender identity, including mother-child relationships. But as he moved into the 2000s there was a definite shift. From 2000 onwards, Ma performed as *Fen Ma Liuming* less and less, ceasing altogether around 2004. He continued to paint bodies and explore the meanings of bodies in his paintings, but none of these were female or mothering bodies. Ma painted himself performing as a baby (combining his face and a baby's body) from the late 1990s and early 2000s (Figure 4.11). Transferring performance to the canvas enabled him to avoid the changing meanings of his corporeal body as he aged.

But there was another event that might have compelled him to stop feminizing his body and exploring 'womanhood.' Ma Liuming had a son in 2004. From this point, the themes of fatherhood and his son seem to entirely replace the themes of the female and women in his output. Oil on canvas painting *Ma Haikun No 10*, 2009 (Figure 4.12) is one example. References to his son Ma Haikun run throughout the book *Ma Liuming* (2011). At the end of the book is a double-page spread of black and white images of Ma Haikun, who at the time the book was published would have been around six years old. In an essay in the book titled 'Metamorphosis of the subject' by Eleanora Battison,



Figure 4.11. Ma Liuming (1969 Huangshi) *Baby no.4*, 2004. Oil on canvas. Image courtesy the artist.



Figure 4.12. Ma Liuming (1969 Huangshi) *Ma Haikun No 10,* 2008-9. Oil on canvas. Image courtesy the artist and Changsha: Hu Ning Fine Arts Publishing.

an Italian art critic and curator who lived in Beijing between 2005-2010, Battison makes a connection between Ma's work and his son's birth. Battison folds the idea of Ma and his own son together and saying that one of Ma's paintings represents: "birth by caesarean section… a real central vertical fissure… filled with the image of the artist's face or of his son" (Battison in Ma, 2011:59). In another essay in the same book curator Lu Peng writes, "This new baby was not Fen Ma Liuming, but life Ma Liuming created […] the artist wished for his own life to be extended indefinitely" and he quotes Ma Liuming as saying, "…the child was an extension of my own body, which related to my previous works on body language" (Ma, 2011:42-43). There is no mention in the book of Ma's wife or his son's mother.[77]

Ma Haikun is important conceptually to his father's output, specifically in the media of painting and sculpture, from the time of his birth. What the photographs, paintings and paratexts relating to Ma Haikun also do is underscore the importance of male virility and the continuation of lineage. Perhaps they also demonstrate the impossibility of 'woman' in the conception of 21st-century Chinese fatherhood. The book *Ma Liuming* (2011) positions *Fen Ma Liuming* as a supporting character within Ma Liuming's overall body of work, despite the international fame and critical attention that this performance persona earned for the artist. Within the biopolitical context of China, children and lineage take on a new specificity after 1979 with the introduction of the One-Child policy; a restriction on reproductive freedom that led to, or existed in parallel to, a heightened culture of pronatalism. Ma Liuming is reproducing in his post-2000 output the wider context of pro-natalism, and the biopolitical requirement in contemporary China to have a single, healthy child. But moreover, as the female and mothers, who had previously been inscribed onto his body as 'woman' using the attributes of 'nurturer' and 'subjugated odalisque,' disappear from his output, he moves to reproducing a cultural preference for boy children and an understanding of the family as a continuation of male lineage and bloodline.

[77] This is also true of the social media feeds of male contemporary Chinese artists Ai Weiwei and the Gao Brothers, who regularly intersperse images of their work with images of their children with little to no representation of the children's mothers.

Speaking truth onto bodies

In Chapter Three I mentioned Michel Foucault's concept of *parrhesia* and in the last section of this chapter, will elaborate on that concept.[78] In *Sperm*, 2006 and *Fen Ma Liuming Says*, 1993, we have a video and a photograph where bodies are central, the bodies are 'speaking their truth,' and an audience is present. Michel Foucault talks about practices of speaking truth using the category *parrhesia* (Foucault, 1983). It is not that Foucault is concerned with what the truth is, but his interest is in the speaker making the audience aware that they are speaking their truth, and the fact of their speaking publicly. At first appearance this seems quite separate from the category of biopower, but it refers to a practice by which information is conveyed, and so can help address our question of how inscriptions are made upon the body. The criteria of *parrhesia* that Foucault sets down are that, "the speaker makes it manifestly clear and obvious that what he says is his own opinion," says what they know to be the truth and "that a speaker says something dangerous - different from what the majority believes" (Foucault, 1983:3). In *Sperm*, 2006 as we have discussed, Xiao Lu's truth corresponds to pronatal biopower, a cultural pressure on citizens of the PRC to have one healthy child. However, her proposed way to conceive a child is controversial ("dangerous – different") within the group she is directly speaking to, and within the wider legal context in the PRC. This nuanced combination of acquiescence, reproduction and criticality towards the dominant discourse epitomize Xiao Lu's practice of speaking her truth, affected by biopower circulating from different sources in different ways and filtered through different discourses.

The 'woman' that Xiao Lu constructs through this practice shares similarities with other women in real life, and departs from them. For Xiao Lu in *Sperm*, 2006 the documentary video is focused on the reaction to the conceit of the work as much as it is documentation of the performance of the work itself. Xiao Lu interacting with the group is as important as her very presence; the actors in the video could be understood as representation of disciplinary regimes and all elements of the *dispositif* acting on Xiao Lu's body. Xiao Lu

[78] *Parrhesia* will also be important in Chapter Five.

argues in the video that the most important motivation for her is to have a child, and this transcends all the contrary arguments that the *dispositif* might present to her. Therefore, we can understand *Sperm*, 2006 as a practice of *parrhesia* as much as it is representation of the practices dividing binary genders (*nannü*). The 'woman' that Xiao inscribes is one that fiercely pursues conception of a child, despite the regulatory frameworks that she is operating within. She is motivated in her mission to fight the obstacles of her own body to conceive. It is pronatal forces that are dominant in this variant of womanhood, but at the same time the child she imagines is not produced within a male lineage. The child would be entirely her own and in this respect she presents a challenge to Chinese cultural conception of subjecthood and bloodline, and the group around her who are defending the rights and assets of the imagined male sperm donor.

Although the pronatal and patriarchal forces that inscribe 'womanhood' onto Xiao Lu are also affecting the gendered representations of the work of Ma Liuming, Ma Liuming's 'truth' is his gendered experience as a 'man.' When he inscribes attributes of womanhood onto his body in his work of the 1990s and early 2000s it is an imagination of woman that corresponds to the dominant discourse. He inscribed women as beautiful, submissive, nurturing and mothering. After 2004, the attributes of 'womanhood' he represents are the absence of 'woman' from a conception of bloodline and human reproduction. Once he assumes the role of the father in his work this is incompatible with inscribing attributes of 'woman' onto his body. His earlier artistic experiments contrasting and fusing attributes of 'woman' and 'man' are replaced by representation of the patriline. In the work of Xiao Lu and Ma Liuming, affects caused by the same circulating CCP biopolitics and other forces of biopower ultimately reproduce the binary genders (*nannü*). The next chapter will focus on one artist, Ma Qiusha. The chapter will focus on one particular event of CCP biopolitics, the One-Child policy, but will discuss how this event intersects with other forces disciplining woman's bodies within early 21st-century globalized China.

CHAPTER FIVE: ONE CHILD

> Cultivated with all endeavour by my parents.
>
> (Ma Qiusha, 2007)

> The success of the regime's project to modernize population/reproduction has hinged on the creation of three general categories of persons or subjects: "the reproductive woman," charged with lowering the birth rate, "the quality child," the embodiment of superior body and mind; and "the good mother," tasked with nurturing the perfect child. (Fathers, because they were not the primary biological reproducers were treated as irrelevant.)
>
> (Greenhalgh, 2010:40)

Two encounters

In the gallery of the Chinese Art Centre in Manchester,[79] UK in 2013, Ma Qiusha (born 1982 Beijing) mounted her first UK solo exhibition. It was on that occasion I first encountered her work and was able to watch her speaking about it. On display in Manchester were: whole-wall-projected single-channel video *All My Sharpness Comes From Your Hardness*, 2011 (25' 29") and found-object installation *Two Years Younger Than Me*, 2011, comprising bottles of Ma's grandfather's beard clippings from when the artist was two years old until his passing in 2011 (Figure 5.1). Also on display were: wall-based watercolour, *Fog no. 6*, 2012 which the artist said in her talk at CFCCA represented how in her childhood bedroom, "every night moonlight pierced the curtain, like a lullaby singing me to sleep" (Ma, 2013); and video installation *From No.4 Pingyuanli to No.4 Tianqiaobeili*, 2007 (7' 53") (Figure 5.2).

As this chapter will go on to discuss in detail, Foucault's *parrhesia* is a useful category to discuss Ma's work. Ma has described how art for her is a language through which she can be more daring than in spoken word and 'real life.' At CFCCA, Ma spoke with tangible emotion about the political-personal context of her output. Autobiography, childhood, familial relationships and self-reflection were the threads that bound the selection in her eponymous show. *From No.4 Pingyuanli to No.4 Tianqiaobeili*, 2007 (7' 53"), a piece Ma

[79] The Chinese Art Centre has since rebranded as the Centre for Contemporary Chinese Art (CFCCA).

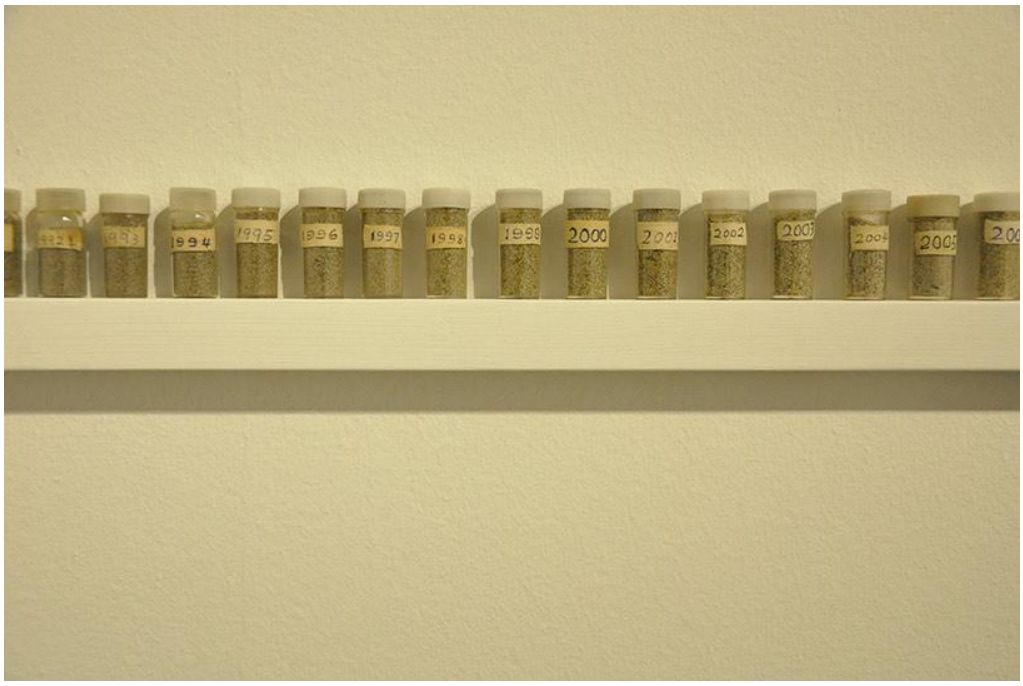


Figure 5.1. Ma Qiusha. Exhibition at the Centre for Contemporary Chinese Art, Manchester, 2013. Image courtesy the artist and CFCCA

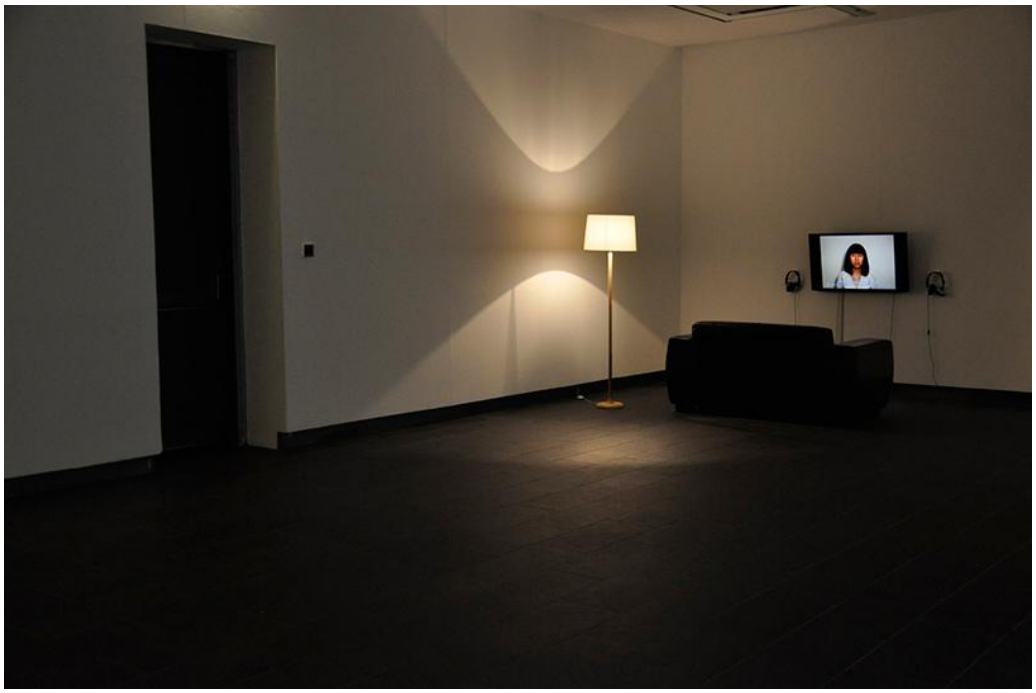


Figure 5.2. Ma Qiusha. Exhibition at the Centre for Contemporary Chinese Art, Manchester, 2013. Image courtesy the artist and CFCCA

created during post-graduate study in the US, was displayed on a single screen mounted on the wall.[80] The audience were invited to sit on a black settee in front of the screen and listen to the audio through headphones underneath the light of a standing lamp. The effect was intended to resemble a domestic scene, corresponding to the two childhood homes that Ma refers to in the piece's title. A short distance away, a facsimile door in the wall was another reference to domestic architecture in Beijing. In *From No.4 Pingyuanli to No.4 Tianqiaobeili*, 2007, Ma is all we see on screen, seated, shown from just above the waist, shoulder-length hair, clothed in a simple, white top against an off-white, plain backdrop. Ma explained to me later that she intended the picture on the screen to resemble an ID photograph (Ma, 2017). In this piece, Ma could be understood as somewhere between her unvarnished, 'real self' and an anonymous everywoman. Ma delivers a monologue for just under eight minutes without moving from her seated position.

Four years after I visited her UK solo show, I met Ma Qiusha in Beijing. We reached her studio in Shunyi district after driving for over an hour from the intensity of Beijing's streets filled with people, bodies always moving, cars, bicycles and rickshaws, out into quiet roads between flat fields and agricultural buildings. Between the farms and warehouses are pockets of artists and creatives looking for space and value for money within reach of the capital. The exterior appearance of Ma's studio is not dissimilar to the neighbouring farm buildings, but inside it is light and spotlessly clean, with an abundance of grey concrete floor and white walls to view new artworks as they would be seen in a gallery. On arrival, as the only Westerner I am singled out to receive a cup of hot tea, with loose leaves that invade my mouth. I am pleased to receive it after a long drive. Ma Qiusha hands my Chinese interpreter a large take-out cup of coffee from American chain Starbucks (where this outlet was in relation to the studio I do not know) and drinks the same herself. Possibly her intention is to give me a fully 'Chinese experience.' Examples of Ma's newest body of sculptural work, the ongoing series *Wonderland* are laid out

[80] The description of this artwork comes from an unpublished review article that I wrote about the exhibition in 2013.

flat on the concrete floor and hung on the wall. The sculptures are based on the pink-sand-coloured nylon tights that her mother – and all the other mothers around her – wore in the 1980s. The tights are wrapped around sections of concrete that have been roughly broken into fragments by being dropped on the floor and put back together after wrapping, like a jigsaw. One iteration of the work, displayed at Beijing Commune in 2016, is displayed on the floor beneath Ma's three-channel video *Avatar*, 2015 (4'00'') and single-channel video *Mars*, 2016 (3'53''), seeming like an extension of the sandy-landscapes in those two films. In the studio, piles of tights are waiting on the floor and on tables to be washed and sorted. Ma has assistants, but I do not see them that day.

Two poles of biopower

Representations of women, womanhood and female bodies abound in Ma Qiusha's output. In this chapter several of Ma Qiusha's works are analyzed and a number of attributes and themes relating to 'women' in her work discussed. Based on my encounters with Ma Qiusha and her work, I contend that Ma frames much her work and life within a particular historic moment and geographic location, and a specific example of CCP biopolitics, the One-Child policy. Given this, and the recurrence of the female body and female experience in Ma's work, her output provides compelling examples from which to ask how she inscribes 'women' onto bodies, and what attributes she inscribes, using the framework of biopower and *nannü*. Ma Qiusha is a younger artist than the others in this thesis and the only one born after the roll-out of the One-Child policy. Ma emerged as a professional artist into a different art ecology than the others. In Chapter Six one of the representations of women who emerges in Ma Qiusha's work will be compared to the women in examples of video installations by two male-identifying artists from Shanghai, Yang Fudong and Yang Zhenzhong.

In Chapter Three I argued that Chen Lingyang's artworks could be understood as exploration of how the category 'women' operated to regulate and discipline female people, causing a fragmentary identity as female-identifying people moved between contexts and discourses. One of the forces of biopower

disciplining the body that Chen portrayed was a category of 'women' formed through glossy women's magazines. In Chapter Four I argued that Ma Liuming and Xiao Lu produced works affected by forces of biopower and CCP biopolitics concerned with the management of populations. A 'woman' is created in Xiao Lu's work through a complex entanglement of acquiescence and criticality towards her socio-political circumstances. In this chapter I consider both poles of Foucauldian biopower: the discipline and optimization of bodies, often through surveillance, and the management of populations. Specifically, this chapter will contextualise Ma's output within CCP biopolitics (the One-Child policy) and the biopower exerted by family, by digital and advertising culture and the surveilling gaze. This chapter argues that these forces affect the attributes inscribed onto the bodies that create 'women' in Ma's output, but at the same time she is critiquing them.

There has been interest in Ma Qiusha, and in particular the piece *From No.4 Pingyuanli to No.4 Tianqiaobeili* (2007), by the English-language art press, who often use her work to demystify China and discuss the One-Child policy (Yan, 2012; Song, 2015; Young, 2016). However, up to 2018, there is little academic scholarship about the artist in English or Chinese. Luise Guest profiled Ma Qiusha in her book *Half the Sky* (2016) using an approach that closely resembles the method of the encounter in this thesis; however, Guest's aim was to showcase and introduce the artist rather than to analyze her works. Ma was one of 10 artists given parallel solo shows in Changsha in 2011, resulting in the monograph *Dissociation | Ma Qiusha: The Boundary* (2011) edited by Wang Yalei. Wang's intention, similarly to Guest, is principally to introduce the artist and her output from around 2005-2011 to readers. Wang discusses the fact that Ma makes work as a 'female artist.' For Wang, Ma uses materials such as milk and water to approach the topic of sexualised violence from a female point of view. Wang contends that male-identifying artists' work often refers to dirty aspects of life, whereas Ma's work although it deals often with body fluids, is clean (2011:33). This chapter contends that Ma's perspective on 'women' is due to her gender identity, but actually the 'woman' in her work is complex and often 'leaky.' For Jessica Draper, alongside many other case studies, Ma's use of mouths, teeth and the abject presents a

challenge to the ephemerality of performance art (2013). Ma Qiusha was mentioned briefly in an additional small number of scholarly articles discussing many artists and the themes of affect, female languages and genealogy (Monor, 2014; Guest, 2016; Brower, 2018) but neither they nor Draper specifically question how 'women' are represented in Ma Qiusha's work.

From No.4 Pingyuanli to No 4. Tianqiaobeili

Ma Qiusha was born around three years after the roll-out of the One-Child policy in the PRC. Ma does not refer to the One-Child policy by name in her monologue in *From No.4 Pingyuanli to No.4 Tianqiaobeili* (2007), but she alludes to its gendered effects. Ma explains that her parents had expected to have a boy. They had picked a name for a boy: Shang Di, taking her father's family name, Shang. Her name: Ma Qiusha, follows the matrilineal line taking her mother's surname, Ma. This is not the common naming system in China, where generally all children would be given their father's family name, although it is not illegal to pass a mother's surname to their child within heterosexual marriage, nor is it uncommon for women to keep their own family name after marriage.

Ma says in Mandarin Chinese (the video is subtitled in Chinese and English): "I has [sic] always been considering my name is Shang Di if I was a boy," invoking an alter ego as the boy who never was. This boy could not ever be conceived legally within the One-Child policy as her parents had given birth to a healthy daughter. Ma goes on to say that although her mother confessed disappointment that she was a girl, she was not neglected and every attention was paid to her. Ma describes herself in the monologue as "cultivated with all endeavour by my parents." This cultivation came with a belief that their only child should excel at something. Without ever hinting in her face that she was amused by the black humour of the story, Ma describes how age six her parents bought her an accordion that cost 560RMB (around 56GBP or 80USD) the equivalent of 10 months' salary at the time. Ma had to give up lessons because she was not strong enough to bear the weight of the instrument. The narrative continues to describe a childhood characterized by emotional,

practical and financial encouragement from her parents that quivers on a knife edge, almost tipping over into pressure, surveillance and scrutiny. After Ma showed skill in drawing at eight years old she was sent for lessons with (although she does not name him in this video) the internationally renowned contemporary artist and later her professional mentor, Song Dong (born 1966 Beijing). Whilst in her extracurricular drawing lessons, Ma's mother would look through the window and watch her daughter drawing, or sit beside her "nipping" the flesh of her leg if she considered Ma's drawing imperfect. Ma felt that her mother was always watching. Around this point in the video it becomes obviously painful for Ma to tell her story. She explains that without her parents' support she would not have been able to study for her BA at Central Academy of Fine Art, Beijing (CAFA) and then on to further study in the USA. Her parents' sacrifice meant selling their house and repaying the debt over 10 years. Eventually Ma stops talking, the camera zooms closer into her face. Ma removes a razor blade from her mouth, which we realise has been there for the whole duration of her story, making telling her story emotionally, literally, and increasingly painful.

Biopolitics and the One-Child policy

In particular since 2010, but continuously since the 1990s, maternity leave rights (Guo and Xiao, 2013) including pre-maternity leave (Brown and Xin, 2008), the gender pay gap (Chi and Li, 2014; Xiu and Gunderson, 2014; Xiu, 2013), gendered educational attainment (Zeng, Pang, Zhang, Medina and Rozelle, 2014; Lee, 2012; Lei, Shen, Smith and Zhou, 2017) and even menstruation leave[81] in China have been topics of public discourse. This discourse has been generated through online debate amongst netizens, articles in print and online media, the scholarship cited above and many more examples. This suggests that public life, in particular for female-identifying people and mothers, is constructed through a continuous – and often intrusive – negotiation of government policy (CCP biopolitics), the biopower of family,

[81] China Daily in 2016 reported that four regions of China: Ningxia Hui, Anhui, Hubei and Hainan had implemented policies allowing for around two days a month of paid menstruation leave. Whether these policies are still in place or have much take up is not known. China Daily reported in the same article that research in Guangdong province in 2015 (methodology and citation unknown) indicated that take up for this kind of leave was low (Liu Wei, 2016).

the market, and public discourse itself. The bodies that Ma represents in her artworks – she hardly ever represents male bodies – are caught in these negotiations. Ma Qiusha's own reproductive choices were a topic of speculation for her mentor in international art press, he wrote:

> Currently, China is the only country that enforces a one-child policy. However, 2013 marked the implementation of the second child policy (married couples in which either parent is an only child may also have a second baby). Ma [Qiusha], who became a mother that same year, remains conflicted about whether to take advantage of the reform.
>
> (Song Dong, Art Review 2015)

It is problematic within China to critique the One-Child policy. Dr Kailing Xie of University of York, and Dr Liu Ye of Kings College London have both researched the 'Two-Child policy,' which was rolled-out from 2013 and replaced the One-Child policy in 2016. Ye and Xie confirmed that feminist academics in China are not yet critically assessing the One- (or Two-) Child policies and their affects on women (Xie, 2017; Ye, 2017). However, Chinese (diaspora) and non-Chinese academics outside of China are doing so (Greenhalgh, 2008; Fong, 2004; Hong Fincher, 2014; Lihong Shi, 2017). Yet Ma Qiusha is demonstrating the complexity of the policy through her artworks, by representing women and critiquing notions relating to female-identifying people of her generation, whilst at the same time navigating the discourse of Chinese contemporary art to establish herself as a professional artist in Beijing and internationally. Ma Qiusha is a 'post-80s' (as she refers to herself, the generation born in the 1980s) Han Chinese person, who corresponds to Greenhalgh's categories of the "reproductive mother […] quality child […and…] good mother" (Greenhalgh, 2010:40). Ma benefited from all of her parents financial and emotional support, and has a daughter who may grow up an only child as well. Ma herself sits at the centre of this complex locally-and-historically specific entanglement of forces contributing to the category of 'women.'

The 'One-Child policy' is not as monolithic as the tidiness of this English-language epithet suggests. The Chinese name for the policy is *jihua shengyu*

zhengce, which more accurately translates as birth planning policy. It is a top-down, systematic project of birth regulation and CCP biopolitics which was rolled out from 1979, affecting Han Chinese couples in urban areas in particular, with some exemptions. The BBC reported that in 2007 the CCP "claimed that only 36% of its citizens were limited to having one child," (Parkinson, 2015), which could still have meant almost 500 million people.[82] Accordingly, it has been the object of study for many demographers, sociologists and other scholars within and outside of China, some using a Foucauldian theoretical framework. Its effects on the sex ratio (Li, Yi and Zhang, 2011; Jiang, Li, Feldman and Sánchez-Barricarte, 2012), educational attainment (Lee, 2012), gender relations (Hu and Shi, 2018) aging population (Hou and Li, 2011), obesity levels (Min et al, 2017), maternal health (Wu and Li, 2012) and so on continue to be studied.

Notably, Susan Greenhalgh, using a framework of Michel Foucault's governmentality, suggests that the policy is entwined with the use of technology in CCP statecraft, and is central to China's bid to create "global citizens" (Greenhalgh and Winckler, 2005; Greenhalgh, 2008, 2010). The policy was devised by Chinese rocket scientists given the task of reducing the population of China and raising GDP (Greenhalgh, 2008; Fong, 2015). Malcolm Thompson adds to this that the One-Child policy is a product of China's intellectuals and government realising in the early part of the 20th century (prior to the CCP taking power in 1949) that it had "a population" with characteristics beyond the numerical (2012). This meant a population with varying levels of, for example, health, education, and specific to the Chinese discourse, the potential for *yousheng* or 'quality births' (Thompson, 2012). Thompson furthermore argues, and this chapter will explore it in relation to the case study, that the family played a vital role within both the One-Child policy and governance of population in 20th century China (2012). Within the framework of this thesis, the emergence of capitalism, the family and the

[82] Neither the percentage nor the figure of 500 million have been adjusted to take into account the number of people of childbearing age affected; it is unclear if the CCP took this into account within its percentage.

CCP's top-down birth regulation will be considered discourses of biopower that operate together to produce 'women'.

The One-Child policy was piloted in specific districts prior to its roll-out in the early 1980s and there have always been some couples excluded from its enforcement, such as ethnic minority groups[83] and some rural farming communities. Couples in some districts could sometimes be given permission to have a second baby if the first had a disability or was a girl. It was left to local authorities to decide how strictly to enforce the policy and the cost to individuals for transgression. Fines have been broadly adjusted according to income. The highest reported fine was 7.5 million RMB in 2013, likely intended to make an example of filmmaker Zhang Yimou for having his third child without a birth permission certificate (BBC, 2014). There was a political economic imperative for imposing high fines as the local authorities were able to keep all monies collected and decide where to allocate them. There have been reports of extreme methods implemented by local authorities to keep to their birth quotas, including mandatory sterilization after a second baby, regular mandatory pregnancy tests, the incarceration of extended family until an abortion is performed, or forced late-stage abortion. These methods have been the focus of the media discourse outside of China relating to the One-Child policy.

In 2013, it became possible for pairings of adults where one or both was an only child to have two children. Then in 2015 it was announced that the policy would transfer to a 'Two-Child policy' for all, and couples were actively encouraged by the CCP to have two children to reduce the impact of an aging population. Some commentators saw this as a signal of the policy's phasing out, but there is no indication yet that births will become unregulated. As discussed in Chapter Four, all married couples must apply for a birth permission certificate before they conceive. This is the beginning of an administrative process that regulates births and provides, for legitimate babies,

[83] Ethnic minority groups were and are not excluded from birth regulation, rather they are permitted to apply to have and to register two or more children born within heterosexual marriage.

a *hukou* or housing registration certificate linked to their parents' hometown location, access to schooling, healthcare, welfare, a pension and so on. Besides the babies that were not born,[84] the policy has produced *heihaizi*, or 'black children,' live births that were not permitted and remain unregistered. These babies exist outside of the system and cannot go to school. Their own offspring are likely to be excluded from legitimacy as well. The production of legitimate and illegitimate people extends the uneven modernity that Greenhalgh talks about when she says: "The private selves emerging in today's globalizing economy are highly differentiated, and some of those distinctions are produced by the [Chinese] state's efforts to create varied kinds of persons needed for the success of its globalization project" (Greenhalgh, 2010:xiii). In addition, the One-Child policy was a product of longer-term attitudes and trends relating to people, births and population within China. Due in part to this longer history, the policy has had (contested) gendered consequences that can also vary according to whether people are born in urban or rural areas.

Because of the cultural preference for men and boys, the One-Child policy was devastating for Chinese families and the notion of family and (male) bloodline. The implementation of the policy was probably only possible as it came so soon after several decades where every person was made to feel their lives and bodies were part of the Communist project. Before 1949 it was understood that family was constructed through a male lineage.[85] Women would leave (or never be fully part of) their own families before being married into their husband's, where they would occupy a limbo status until they gave birth to sons.

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[84] The CCP claims that 400 million births have been prevented in the duration of the policy. This figure is useful to the CCP as a way to argue that they reduced carbon emissions during a period of intense manufacturing and urban growth. This figure is highly contested, using as its benchmark for birth projections a small time-period during the 1970s. An argument against the policy is that 'modernity' and campaigns that preceded the One-Child policy, such as the 'later, longer, fewer' campaign, were just as if not more likely to steadily reduce births without the need for coercion. Comparable Asian countries that experienced a drop in birth-rates during the last few decades provide evidence for this.

[85] Mao Zedong, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China 1949-1976, to a certain extent critiqued the role of family and marriage in the interests of his own form of feminism; however, what replaced them was not individualism but a sense of the nation as family with himself as the patriarch (Gilmartin, 1995). The docile bodies of the people were primed to accept whatever acceleration or deceleration of childbearing was necessary to support the nation.

The question of whether the One-Child policy has been positive or negative for the women it has produced is a complicated one (Yuen Ting Lee, 2013). Journalist Mei Fong relates in her book that many of the sterilizations carried out to ensure adherence to the policy were performed on women, despite vasectomies being easier and cheaper. This is likely, Fong contends, due to chauvinism (2015). Scholars have suggested that China in the 20th century has as many as 30-40 million 'missing women' (Jiang, Li, Feldman and Sánchez-Barricarte, 2012:469) which includes female children never born, unregistered live births, infanticide and women and girls denied scarce food and health resources. It was not, according to their findings, the One-Child policy that caused the sex ratio imbalance, which was generally higher before 1949, peaking in the late 1940s. However, from the introduction of the policy until the year 2000 there has been a steady increase in the imbalance and it now vastly exceeds the level during the Great Famine in the late 1950s (2012:470).

In the 1970s the birth-rate was around 5.8 children per woman, in 2013 it was 1.7 children per woman.[86] Having less babies could be understood a benefit for individual women. The lukewarm response to the 'Two-Child policy' suggests that couples, especially in the cities where real estate prices are high, perceive it as easier, more affordable or for another reason preferable to only have one child. Liu Ye undertook fieldwork relating to the take up of the 'Two-Child Policy.' By email, prior to publishing her findings, she told me: "I would not suggest that these women are passive recipients of patriarchal norms and values. At least one finding is clear from all the narratives. These women's career prospects will be jeopardised if they decide to have another child" (Liu, 2017). This suggests that whilst there is still gender inequality in China, resisting the 'Two-Child policy' is a way that women are able to become parents whilst continuing in their careers.[87] Being the first generation of

[86] This figure in itself demonstrates that the One-Child policy has lowered the birth-rate but not down to one child per female woman. What is unclear is whether this figure includes unregistered women and girls, in which case the number of births per woman would be even higher.

[87] This invokes Song Dong's quotation at the start of this chapter where he speculates on whether Ma Qiusha will take up the opportunity to have another child. Women and married couple's reproductive decisions and desires, albeit within a restricted set of choices, is clearly a

women to grow up during the One-Child policy appears to have benefitted (urban) women's careers. Girls born after 1980 represented the sum of many parents' hopes and dreams – and their daughters would be their emotional and financial support during old age in a nation with only basic elderly care provision.[88] More women would go to university and be encouraged to be ambitious and pursue careers, including higher education overseas, such as in the example of Ma Qiusha.

Parrhesia

Ma Qiusha in her studio seems open to my lines of inquiry, which is focused on female bodies and womanhood, and she responds to my questions at length. It seems that Ma wants to tell the story of her own truth, rooted in her gendered experiences. A general remark by Ma Qiusha about gender was reported in Art Pacific Asia magazine:

> Gender is a broad impediment for women. Women get married and have children, and like me [Ma had her own daughter in 2013] they drop out for one whole year and can't do anything other than have ideas and make notes . . . Men do not have these kinds of problems. The majority of female artists in these circumstances just get on with something else.
>
> (Young, 2016)

Ma participated in both the symposium *Gender in Chinese Contemporary Art* at Tate Modern, London in 2018 and the exhibition *Genders Engender* at Taiking Space, Beiijing the same year. These events and quotation suggest that Ma is engaged with gender questions and amenable to surrounding her artworks with intertwining narratives of gender and personal experience. But more importantly, these narratives are embedded within her artworks, and she

matter of public discourse. But yet it is perhaps only within the specific set of circumstances in China that a senior male artist would ever speculate about a younger female artist's family planning decisions.

[88] One notable phenomenon that demonstrates that management of health and life (biopower) is not always top-down is the grass roots protests against factory construction, such as the protests in Shifang, Sichuan province in 2012. People living locally to a prospective new copper factory protested that its impact on health was too great, even when weighted against the jobs it would create. This is perhaps an impact of the One-Child policy as parents of small families are ever-more invested in their children's health and survival (BBC Radio 4, 2017).



Figure 5.3. Ma Qiusha. *No.4 Pingyuanli to No.4 Tianqiaobeili*, 2007. Single-channel video (7’ 53”). Video still. Image courtesy of the artist



Figure 5.4. Ma Qiusha. *All My Sharpness Comes From Your Hardness*, 2011. Single-channel video (25’29”). Video still. Image courtesy of the artist

inscribes attributes of womanhood onto bodies through practices of *parrhesia* (as already touched in in Chapters Three and Four): the use of storytelling, voice, and the difficulty – and even risk – of speaking the truth.

In *From No.4 Pingyuanli to No.4 Tianqiaobeili*, 2007 (Figure 5.3) the conceit of the video is not simply the telling of personal account and autobiography, but the difficulty of telling her story. The blade sits in Ma Qiusha's mouth throughout the duration of the story and cuts her tongue to the point that she can hardly speak the words. This difficulty, combined with the gendered theme and the context of the One-Child policy, suggest that the complex emotions and situations involved render it hard to verbalize her truth. When we talk together about this work, Ma explained that the pain of the razor blade represented the emotional intensity of the parent-child relationship rather than simply pain caused by this relationship (Ma, 2017). This could have been the case if Ma cut other parts of her body whilst she spoke; but it is significant that the tongue, the organ of voice, is what became damaged and impeded. It is difficult for minorities and the marginalized, especially in the context of an unelected political regime, to speak their truth. It could even be dangerous, another requirement for fulfilment of the criteria of *parrhesia*. According to Foucault to be a *parrhesiastes* the speaker must experience some element of personal risk by speaking their truth.

Towards the end of his career, when Foucault was elaborating on the concept of *parrhesia* he defined it as a speech act where it is manifestly clear that the opinion is the speaker's own and that they have expressed all of their innermost feelings (1983). In an artwork, and specifically a performance, other aspects can join with the practices of speaking the truth to also communicate inner feelings. It is still a useful category; however, because it diverts the question from what is true, to whether the speaker wants us to understand we are hearing their truth. Although *From No.4 Pingyuanli to No.4 Tianqiaobeili*, 2007 is explicitly about her own story, Ma is contributing to our understanding of a culturally, geographically and temporally specific 'woman.' Difficulty speaking is an attribute of 'woman' she inscribes on her body.

The CCP itself changed the status of the category of women when it came to power and created the PRC; however, whether its policies and political ideology created absolute gender equality is contested. Families in particular seem to uphold some sexist traditions, which have contributed to, for example, female-identifying people being kept from the accumulation of wealth in the PRC's real estate boom (Hong Fincher, 2014). The picture is complex, as exemplified by Ma Qiusha's video. Female children are also very wanted, partly due to their perceived greater capacity for emotional support, but also because parents love their children, even if they are often caught between biopowers controlling the number of children or promoting gender preferences. Ma was born during the early years of the One-Child policy, and likely for her family and others it took time to react to the new restrictions on family size and what this meant for the how the concept of 'family' was understood. In Ma's life, she was not particularly empowered to speak her truth, and the nature of this truth is complex. But in making this artwork she is able to speak her truth, and portray the complexity of doing so.

It is notable that *From No.4 Pingyuanli to No.4 Tianqiaobeili*, 2007, includes the shedding of blood, which is part of the essence of individual personhood, and the substance that ties families together through bloodline, as discussed in the Chapters Three and Four. There are other examples of female-identifying contemporary artists in the PRC using blood, including Chen Lingyang, and Xiao Lu. Xiao Lu produced the performance *Polar*, 2017 where she cut her hands trying to escape from inside an ice structure with only a small knife. In Shuqin Cui's book *Gendered Bodies Towards a Women's Visual Art in Contemporary China* (2016), Cui utilises 'gendering pain' as one of the four thematic sections in a survey of women artists in China using the body (although she does not discuss the work of Ma Qiusha.) Cui points to a pertinent controversy within the discourse of Chinese contemporary art regarding women using their own body as a medium. Cui relates how artist Zhao Yue produced a performance work challenging the idea of the female body as beautiful, sexy consumer commodity by, in front of an audience, using a razor blade to mutilate her face. A response by a male critic, Wu Wei, was to denounce Zhao's performance as a work of art because Zhao "failed to locate

the medium… within the framework of a designated discourse as a critique of sociocultural problems," Zhao was further criticised for replicating the tactics of Western feminist performance art (Cui, 2016:118).

Within the framework of this thesis, we can see Zhao's work as addressing sociocultural problems, critiquing the disciplining of female bodies and female persons as 'consumed' and 'consuming' with the market-led economy of the PRC in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The addressing of this gendered female problem is perhaps what meant that male critic Wu Wei could not see the meaning of Zhao's work. Moreover, this episode from Cui's book points to the boundaries of discourse within which Ma must negotiate. Blood and bleeding could be a metaphor for pushing past the discursive boundary. Similarly to Chen Lingyang's work, discussed in chapter three, the attributes of 'women' that in *No.4 Pingyuanli to No.4 Tianqiaobeili*, 2007 Ma Qiusha inscribes relate to persons limited within a socially-constructed category, socially disciplined, but also literally disciplined by her mother 'nipping' her flesh. Ma seems to suggest that a response to this 'cultivating' discipline of the body could be to live, breathe and bleed out of the restrictions.

Another of Ma's very well-known works that extends the idea of the self as the product of discipline is the single-channel video *All My Sharpness Comes From Your Hardness*, 2011 (25' 29") (Figure 5.4). In this work, Ma does not deliver a monologue, there is no dialogue at all, so it does not correspond to the category of *parrhesia*; however, it is autobiographical and communicates Ma's feelings about cultivation of self. The audience can see only a woman's legs on the screen, wearing black and white ice skates. As the video starts, so too does an unseen vehicle that propels the person along on their back, their ice skates scraping on the tarmac. During our interview, Ma explained that the route the legs travelled was from her parents' house to her grandparents' house, an emotional and autobiographical tracing of place and time (2017). In the gallery in Manchester in 2013, this already long video looped round and round with nowhere for the audience to escape the torturous scraping sound. Ma's legs were projected almost life size on the gallery wall. The combination of the title and the visual metaphor suggest that forces (disciplining powers)

are propelling the protagonist whether they like it or not. The implication is that these forces change the person: they become constituted as a subject by these experiences, not simply a victim of them. In this way it corresponds to Michel Foucault's later work on agency and cultivation of the self, amid the effects of other disciplining forces. Foucault outlines four technologies: - production, sign systems, power and self - which he contends work together. 'Technology of the self' permits,

> individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform I themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.
>
> (Foucault, 1982)

Power had been Foucault's concern in his earlier work. Particularly in his later years, Foucault's concern shifted to how people interacted with power. Ma Qiusha's work can be understood as talking about how 'the self' that she knows has been constituted in relation to external power(s). The skates become sharp as she is dragged by force. Viewers of *All My Sharpness Comes From Your Hardness*, 2011 are invited to consider the linguistic ambiguity of 'sharpness,' encapsulating both aggression and mental agility.[89] *All My Sharpness Comes From Your Hardness*, 2011 can be understood as continuing the idea established in *From No.4 Pingyuanli to No 4. Tianqiaobeili*, 2007 that discipline enacted on the body does not simply victimise but can be harnessed as a form of resistance, creating a knowledge of the self. Ma Qiusha inscribes onto the body in *All My Sharpness Comes From Your Hardness*, 2011 the capacity to transfer external discipline into skills, resilience and mental agility. For Foucault there is no essential self even as we resist control, "practices are always determined by the social context" (McNay, 1992:3-4). However, Foucault is not entirely negative about the production of docile bodies and their transference into "useful forces" through "maximum efficiency" and discipline ([1975] 1976). Ma Qiusha, with the topic of this video, and in fact

[89] This also applies to the Chinese version of the work's title: the word *rui* translates as sharp, keen, vigour and fighting spirit; *qi* means manner, and the two words taken together, *rui qi*, mean drive (translated as sharpness).

with the practice of making her artworks, could be understood as undertaking a practice of knowing herself and effecting agency as a young, middle class, 'quality' (*suzhi*, of persons, or *yousheng*, quality born) Chinese woman in early 21st-century Beijing. For Ma the body is at the centre of knowing the self.

Ingesting and emitting fluids

From No.4 Pingyuanli to No.4 Tianqiaobeili, 2007 is not the only one of Ma Qiusha's works to depict or infer bodily fluids. Other body-fluid and body-part-works by Ma Qiusha include the Milk series, which comprises photographs, paintings and a single-channel video, *Milk Body*, 2007 (6'48"); the photographic series *Gift*, 2009; three-channel video *Red/White/Yellow*, 2011; and the single-channel video *Rainbow*, 2013.[90] Because of the importance of this theme in her output, this section will briefly analyze examples from all of these series of works. Also germane to an investigation of biopowers disciplining the body is Ma Qiusha's single-channel video work *Must Be Beauty*, 2009 (4'08'') (Figure 5.5).[91] Ma lies on her back on white sheets, perhaps on a bed, wearing a tight lace vest, ingesting beauty products in a frenzy. The white cream comes from pots, bottles and tubes placed all around her. The aesthetics recall magazine advertising imagery. The inverse of emitting fluids (such as blood), this work is nevertheless addressing disciplining forces. In this case, the beauty industry which adapts our bodies but also our sense of self; internally and externally, materially and socially disciplining the body. The grotesqueness of Ma ingesting the products recalls the intervention of menstrual blood on the models in the magazines of Chen Lingyang's installation *Yue Jing Jing*, 2002, discussed in Chapter Three.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, unlike the other case study artists, Ma Qiusha emerged as a professional artist in the early 2000s into a fully-formed contemporary art ecology in China, under the mentorship of Song Dong who

[90] The found-object installation *Two Years Younger Than Me*, 2011, which uses Ma's Grandfather's beard clippings also involved real items emitted from the body; however, it will be omitted from further analysis here because it is not concerned with female bodies, womanhood or matrilineal relationships.
[91] The conceit of this piece may relate to the Chinese expression 'eating bitterness' (*chiku*), meaning that one should endure and be cheerful in the event of hardship.



Figure 5.5. Ma Qiusha (1982 Beijing) *Must Be Beauty*, 2009 (4’08’’). Video still.
Image courtesy of the artist



Figure 5.6. Ma Qiusha (1982 Beijing) *Milk-Computer, 2007.* Colour photograph
Image courtesy of the artist

already had established his international career. So too did Ma reach adulthood when the capitalist economy, globalization and beauty industry were in full effect in the PRC. Ma has spoken about being witness to the transition from the PRC of the 1980s where material things and consumables such as beauty products and hosiery were scarce (One Item, 2018) to the early 21st century when they were abundant.[92] Despite their generation gap, Chen Lingyang and Ma Qiusha are both responding to the imposition of disciplining forces of globalized bodies and consumerism. These forces target female-identifying people in particular, compelling them to consume and be consumed. The beauty industry and the arrival of the glossy, globalized consuming body represent a hybrid of transnational companies' commercial interests in selling consumables in the Chinese market, and the new consuming body that the CCP required for its new role within globalized capitalism. Through the act of ingesting the beauty products, Ma critiques the globalized consuming category of 'woman,' by bringing an extreme caricature of this woman to her audience's attention.

Cut off at the legs by the top of the frame of the image, a female person stands wearing dark-coloured tights and boots on top of a desk. The person is standing on top of loose papers and in front of a computer showing a *Yahoo!* home page advertising cars, possibly linking to news items, maybe some click bait. The placement of the person, standing on the table at the viewer's eyeline, is jarring and confrontational. Cascading down the outside of the person's clothes and shoes, seeming as though emitted from the body, is a white fluid. The title of the work suggests the fluid is milk. *Nai* means milk, breast and to breastfeed, but the word used in the title of the piece in Chinese is *niunai*, 'cow's milk.' Milk spills down the person's legs and onto the floor where it drips, pools onto and potentially damages whatever it finds, in this case papers on the desk. The photograph *Milk-Computer*, 2007 (Figure 5.6) is simple in its composition, not a pretty or beguiling image, but not outright unpleasant.

[92] This theme recurs in the work of Song Dong, and particularly in his installation comprising of the objects that his mother held onto throughout her life, *Waste Not*, which has been re-presented many times in galleries all over the world. Ma later addressed this change more directly in the series of sculptures *Wonderland*, 2016, using concrete wrapped in her mother's nylon tights, which I had seen being produced in Ma's studio.

Disarming maybe, prompting echoes of the panicky feeling that your own body is, or may be, leaking in a public place. It is one of a series of photographs in which various different (apparently) female-identifying people are shown from below the knee to the ground. The series includes images titled: *Milk-Sofa, Milk-Doll, Milk-Road* and *Milk-Toilet,* referring to the different settings in each image. The people in the photographs are often standing in unnatural positions, such as on top of a bench, on the yellow lines painted on the tarmac road, or just stood on stairs, sat on a sofa or the edge of a bed, whilst white fluid runs over the tarmac and down nylon tights, drips onto toys on the floor.

The fluid could be milk spilling as the people try to drink it. But the photographs also bring to mind lactating breasts, amniotic fluid signalling the start of labour, menstrual blood, in particular the large quantity of blood that the body emits following childbirth, semen departing the body after sexual intercourse, urine or vomit. The spilling fluid could even be the surreal after-effect of a body that imbibes white creams and lotions (as in *Must Be Beauty*, 2009, which the artist actually produced the following year). If the piece is seeking to connect the category of women to the discourse of 'nature,' it seems an awkward and utterly unromantic 'naturalness.' What the piece seems to suggest is that the normal functions of the body, emitting fluids, are awkward and problematic in the context of modern life. Modern life is represented by tarmac roads, computers and other scenes of the interior or exterior urban environment, or highly constructed 'natural' scenes, such as a park. Modern life itself is the disciplinary regime, therefore, that seeks to discipline the ordinary functions of the body. The photographs exemplify the discomfort and inconvenience of corporeality. As in *From No.4 Pingyuanli to No.4 Tianqiaobeili*, 2007 the fluid emitted from the body seems to signal the parameter of the category of 'woman,' created by social discipline, which ignores the functions of the body, its capacity for ugliness, inconvenience and leaking. Moreover, the piece could represent the insufficiency of the socially constructed category of 'women,' which disciplinary forces attempt to inscribe



Figure 5.7. Ma Qiusha (1982 Beijing) *Milk Body*, 2008 (6' 48"). Video still.
Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 5.8. Ma Qiusha (1982 Beijing) *Gift*, 2008. Colour photograph.
Image courtesy of the artist.

as clean, beautiful and un-bleeding. Applying a gendered logic, one could see the women in these photographs as struggling against a masculine built environment, activities, and even clothes, that do not make appropriate space for them and their bodies. Post-GPCR PRC is a country that has an expectation that women will work in the public sphere (Pittwood, 2018) and bear at least one healthy child, and yet female-identifying people in China still have difficulty addressing the 'double-burden' of private domestic labour and public work. Ma Qiusha's *Milk* photographs seem to suggest an incompatibility between the body and social, modern, late-capitalist, and even online, life.

In single-channel video *Milk Body*, 2008 (6' 48") (Figure 5.7) and the accompanying editions of photographs, the body is no longer standing. It is lying down as though the victim of illness, injury, violence or exhaustion. Images of the body are fragmented like crime scene photographs. Black hair lies in a pool of milk on the wooden floor. The body is Ma Qiusha's. Milk spills from between her legs, which lie with out-turned feet at the end of doll-like legs. More so than in the *Milk* photographs, the *niunai*, appears to stand for blood, like the way that a blue liquid is substituted in sanitary product advertising. It flows from the body the way that blood would flow. Ambiguity is central to the conceit of the work, which would be more gruesome and less beguiling if it were a body bleeding red-blood. Ma is wearing tights that have one red leg and one green. The colours could symbolize 'luck,' 'communism' or China itself (red), and 'nature' or 'uncontaminated' (green), but whether they do in this instance is left unclear.[93] Ma's eyes are never shown. In the video, the photographic fragments that break the body apart are bought together, and we can hear breathing and see twitching. The audience is not told what has harmed the body. An aggressor is not pictured. For art critic Wang Yalei, writing in the catalogue for Ma's solo show *The Boundary* in 2011, *Milk Body*, 2008 invoked sex, he wrote, "sex after all is connected with control and being controlled in [a] sexual relationship," (Wang in Lu, 2011:34). Unlike the

[93] The artist used coloured tights in other works. In the photograph *Milk-road*, 2007 a woman's legs are shown in tights that have one black leg and one purple. In the single-channel video *Rainbow* (2011) spattered tomato juice is shown in greater contrast against legs wearing white tights.

video *All My Sharpness Comes From Your Hardness,* 2011, which the artist would produce later, *Milk Body*, 2008 does not seem to represent a woman who has cultivated them-self despite or using the forces disciplining the body. In the framework of this thesis, sex and relationships could be examples of disciplinary regimes that could be acting on the body. But so too could the force that has exhausted the Milk Body be the social body, the built environment, consumerism or the family. The 'woman' inscribed onto the body is exhausted or victimized. The bodies that awkwardly, uncomfortably bleed or emit 'milk' in the photographs were not empowered to save themselves, not able to harness adversity, not able to know themselves and to survive in this hostile terrain. The destruction of the body by disciplining forces appears to be a particular representation of 'women' that Ma Qiusha does not feel that she can omit from her body of work.

The following year, Ma produced the series of photographs titled *Gift*, 2009. In one of the images, Ma is unclothed, with smooth skin and a slight smile on lipstick-painted lips. She is cut off by the frame of the image above the breasts and below the nose. Around her neck is a string of teeth, her Grandmother's dentures. In another of the *Gift* series (Figure 5.8) Ma, still wearing her necklace of teeth, tenderly cradles a human skull, pulling it into her body. She looks down on it with a caring smile as its empty sockets look upwards at her. In the interpretation for Ma's solo exhibition at Beijing Commune gallery in 2010, in which she exhibited this work alongside others produced around that time, it said that the artist used "the sensitivity of details to show all intersections of life as it is for a young woman" (Beijing Commune, 2010). These words, although vague, give weight to using Ma as a case study to ask what attributes of women and womanness she inscribes onto bodies in her work. What Ma represents in the image is the intersection of the artist's understanding of her personal experience, her social reality of living as woman, and her reflection on what this category ('women') means for those around her. *Gift*, 2009 combines an allusion to women's theoretical capacity to bear children, and presumed capacity for tenderness (in this case cradling the skull), with the taboo of body parts and dead bodies. *Gift*, 2009 closes the gaps between the living and dead, ancestors and future children. In so doing, it

illustrates women's new – extended and enhanced – role within the PRC of the One-Child policy era, as not just reproducers, physically gestating babies, but also carriers of bloodline. Where bloodline had always been considered to be the exclusive preserve of males in Chinese culture, as discussed in Chapter Four,[94] Ma Qiusha's body is the sum total of two individuals' (her two parents') genetic inheritance and bloodline.[95] This new category of 'women' in the One-Child era, which Ma Qiusha has inscribed on her unclothed body using body parts, occupies all roles in the reproduction of people and population, all roles in the constitution of the family.[96] Ma Qiusha is, ""the reproductive woman," charged with lowering the birth rate, "the quality child," the embodiment of superior body and mind; and "the good mother," tasked with nurturing the perfect child"" (Greenhalgh, 2010:40). In addition, women of the One-Child era are inscribed as representations of the lives of the past, tasked with the worship of their ancestors of all genders.

The three-channel video work *Red/White/Yellow*, 2011 (4' 39") (Figure 5.9) is an abstracted or extracted body, the only work in this section not to include – albeit sometimes only as fragments – complete bodies encased in skin. The body in *Red/White/Yellow*, 2011 is frozen blocks of blood, milk and urine encased in latex condoms. The combination of milk and condoms, and the wider context of Ma's output, suggests that they come from a body with the capacity to conceive and gestate babies (if indeed they are all drawn from a single body).[97] The substances are slowly melting back to liquid at room temperature, a process sped up on screen. Drips of condensation form on each the exterior of each block. There is no flow, no breath, no *qi*. But there is still a body on which to inscribe attributes. The group of liquids could represent

[94] Not all of China is or was patrilineal in its understanding of bloodline, however, this has typically been the dominant discourse. The Mosuo ethnic minority, also called the Na people, located in the region of Yunnan, PRC have historically had matrilineal structured societies.
[95] Two years later, Ma produced the found-object installation *Two Years Younger Than Me*, 2011, which also signalled her interest in her genetic inheritance. The work, comprising her Grandfather's beard hair in medicine bottles as he had collected it, also used body parts to explore familial connections and genealogy.
[96] Perhaps this is a reason for the unwillingness of 'One Child' women to have two children.
[97] The topics of gestating and nurturing babies is present in Ma's work before she became a parent.

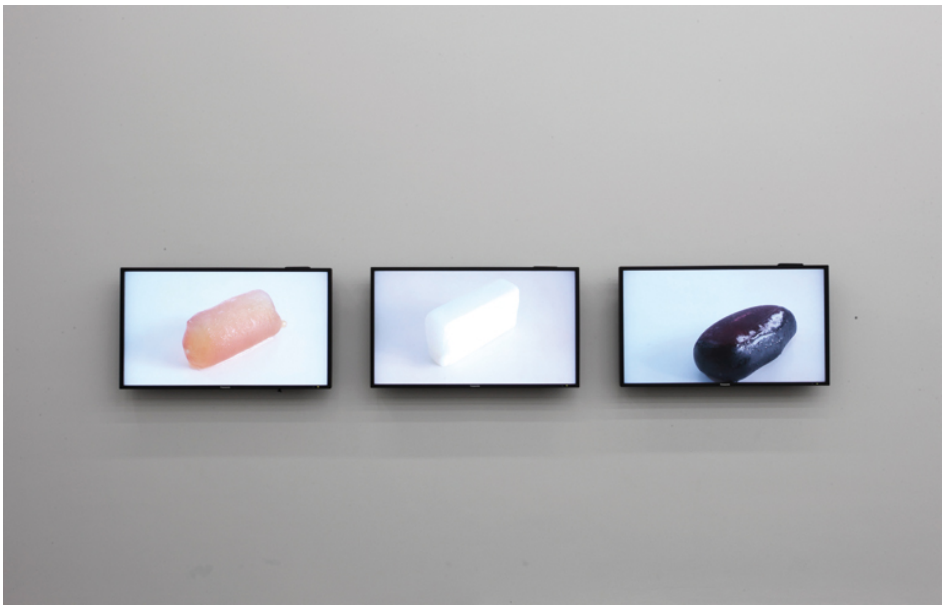


Figure 5.9. Ma Qiusha (1982 Beijing) *Red/White/Yellow*, 2011 (4' 39"). Video still.
Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 5.10. Ma Qiusha (1982 Beijing) *Rainbow*, 2013 (3' 32"). Video still.
Image courtesy of the artist.

blood - family, milk - reproduction, urine – bare life, imbibing and expelling water and energy to live. The liquids in their frozen state are contained, managed, existing within certain parameters. Their capacity to disgust has been restricted. This piece could be understood as a metaphor for the management of bodies in reality, particularly in the spatially-bounded context of the PRC, where bodies are rendered legal or illegal before birth, fertility choices are caught between CCP biopolitics and cultural and family biopower. The taxonomy of substances that have been frozen into blocks in this video belong not to individual bodies and selves, they are not known to the self, but belong to the population, are enmeshed in its health and management.

Bodies with the capacity for pregnancy are carefully managed (rendered as 'women' with particular regulations and responsibilities) because they affect the production of new bodies, yet as discussed in Chapter Four, they are side-lined in the conception of bloodline. Furthermore, as a group they constitute a number of theoretically 'missing' persons. *Red/White/Yellow*, 2011 is the end point of a particular logic of bodies, dividing them into parts with particular meanings and functions, similar to the calcified schematics of TCM and Western biomedicine. The containment within latex and the fact of being frozen could operate as a metaphor for self-regulation or censorship. The silent processes of thawing could show the viewers how 'useful bodies' age and decompose, returning not, in this case, to the earth but to blobs of liquid within sterile, white surroundings. The 'woman' inscribed in *Red/White/Yellow*, 2011 recalls Xiao Lu stood by the empty fridge containing her hopes and dreams for a child, suspended between acquiescence to pronatal biopower and navigating the legal restrictions on births that the CCP imposes, even at the same time as the PRC desperately needs babies to prevent a population crisis. Moreover, the two artworks recall how Greenhalgh pinpoints the role of science in CCP statecraft and its creation of "global citizens" (Greenhalgh and Winkler, 2005; Greenhalgh, 2008, 2010). The transcultural category of 'woman,' an important image of the 'global citizen,' forged as much though media as (Western) biomedical technology, is enmeshed within the works of both Xiao and Ma. The two artists are not only exploring their experiences of womanhood, but

critiquing the constitution of 'women' within and by wider discursive and non-discursive forces.

Sonorous staccato musical notes. A series of glasses and glass vessels glide across the screen, nothing inside them. The faces of young female-identifying actors cast their eyes down. Silver gem stones on white-lycra collars. Viscous, bloody tomato juice pours and drips noisily from beyond the frame of the screen down into the vessels. Some lands inside the glassware, some messily slides down the sides. They begin to fill up. The soundtrack becomes more synthetic and digital. The actors are holding hands, dressed as though competing or performing in ice-skating displays. The splatters of tomato juice bring a sense of violence, splattering up legs in white tights. In the final scene, actors crush tomatoes awkwardly with their ice skates. Ma Qiusha's single-channel video *Rainbow*, 2013 (3' 32") (Figure 5.10) picks up threads from many of Ma's previous works. Tights are used deliberately in the *Milk* photographs, the *Milk Body*, 2008 video, and in Ma's later *Wonderland*, 2015 sculptures. Ice skates are central in *All My Sharpness Comes From Your Hardness*, 2011. Disciplined bodies engaged in sport, in that case female divers, feature in the single channel video, *Embrace*, 2011. Ma does not shy away from using real flesh in her work, in her video *Token*, 2011 (7' 25") she throws bloody animal organs, including intestines, from a moving car to a soundtrack of heavy breathing; yet in *Rainbow*, 2013 Ma uses tomatoes as a proxy for blood. This could be because real blood – or even theatre blood – in its liquid state, trampled under ice-skates and spattering onto legs, would render the video too gruesome.

But also, what we see in *Rainbow*, 2013 is a group of female-persons locked in a production process. They are tasked with changing a raw ingredient into something for consumption, and as they do, they are marked with the violence of the act. To crush the tomatoes they use their physical labour and also their 'sharpness' – the ice skates – which we had seen in Ma's video from two years earlier. All the time that they are engaged in this labour, producing the liquid which hovers in a limbo of transubstantiation between blood, flesh and food. They are dressed identically and in an aesthetic of performance, ice skating

outfits ready for competition day. They would be ready to perform, to be on public display, were it not for their blood (tomato)-spattered legs. Such is the risk of wearing white. The piece appears to be asking the audience to question the ethics of production. It could allude to the health risks of working in Chinese factories, where the reality of losing fingers (Barboza, 2008; Gransow, Zheng, Leong and Ling, 2014; Qiu, Gregg, Crawford, 2014) must seem a world away from life as middle-class Beijinger, or for that matter people in Western countries whose material culture is often 'Made in China.' The PRC has a rate of employment of female-identifying people higher than many other countries, but it shares problems with the rest of the world like the gender pay gap, there are extremely high levels of sexual assault against female factory workers (China Labour Bulletin, 2013), families are divided by the need to migrate for work opportunities, and there are poor conditions and pay generally in the factories. Bodies are disciplined, made useful, at what cost? Whether or not a deliberate reference to life in the factories, Ma appears with *Rainbow*, 2013 to inscribe onto the bodies a womanhood in which people, bodies, are locked. The actors are compelled to work hard, dress beautifully, regulate each other by holding hands in a chain. There is little acknowledgment here of individual feelings or agency, little opportunity to know the self, or escape from these processes. The artist has shifted from using her own body to offering the audience her own perspective of womanhood in contemporary China.

Avatar

In the time between making *No.4 Pingyuanli to No.4 Tianqiaobeili*, 2007 using her own body, and *Avatar*, 2016 (4' 00") (Figure 5.11) using actors, there was a significant shift in the wider, visual and public discourse of the female body and the technology available to represent and distribute the body. Even before 2016, the middle-class youth of China, as with most developed countries, was compulsively using social media. This created new ways to view, regulate and discipline the bodies of – in particular – young female-identifying people. Online platforms implicated in the regulation of bodies in real life include websites permitted behind the 'Great Firewall,' such as Weibo and WeChat, and global platforms such as Instagram and Twitter, which are not officially



Figure 5.11. Ma Qiusha (1982 Beijing) *Avatar*, 2016 (4' 00"). Video still.
Image courtesy of the artist



Figure 5.12. Ma Qiusha (1982 Beijing) *Take a Walk*, 2016 (2' 57"). Video still.
Image courtesy of the artist

permitted but nonetheless engaged with from within the PRC using VPNs.[98] The images and activities of women on these sites present new ideals for women's appearance and behaviour, operating as disciplinary technologies encouraging self-regulation and the regulation of others, and bringing with them new paradigms for the body. Rofel had already described in *Desiring China*, written before the global ubiquity of the internet, how (for a particular international upper and middle class) complex-connected-globalization was developing new paradigms in the PRC through fast food restaurants, TV, music, novels and fashion. These were producing Chinese subjects that desired consumables, sex, travel, to try new food and over-achieve in education and work (Rofel, 2007). Moreover, Rofel had highlighted the centrality of 'daughters' within the new schemes of citizenship. The first One-Child daughters had turned 21 at the turn of the millennium. Many of them would have had children of their own by the time Rofel wrote her book.

It is the intersection online and offline of globalization, consumption, desiring and womanhood, which Ma addresses in the three-channel video, *Avatar*, 2016. The piece specifically refers to the experiences of the middle-class 'One-Child' or 'post-80s' generation in the PRC. Each screen contains one object against a background of sand: a martini glass filled with an orange-coloured cocktail, a Chinese-language Christian bible and a golden shoe. They seem loaded with some sort of symbolism but their meanings are not made clear. Perhaps cosmopolitanism, faith and fairy tales? Now we see more of the soft, clean sand and hear the sound of loud buzzing. We start to get glimpses of three young, beautiful, ethnically-Chinese, female-identifying people in black bikinis and sunglasses. Their unblemished skin glistens with sun cream or sweat. The clunk of large wooden prayer beads being moved along a string. Cries of seagulls and the exaggerated sound of water pouring or lapping. Cut to three images of small white clouds against a blue sky. The camera resumes exploring beautiful skin. One person eats a banana, another tries to read the bible as the pages flip loudly in the wind. The high-pitched noise becomes

[98] VPN stands for virtual private network. It enables users to access the world wide web from servers in other countries and by-pass localized restrictions.

more and more agitated and urgent until the buzzing resumes. Then the people are gone, leaving only footprints in the sand. The lens zooms out, their artefacts have been left behind and they are nowhere to be seen. We zoom further and further out until we see that the sand is not at the seaside or a beach at all, but on the back of a refuse truck. Finally we are left with a single image on the middle screen, the truck, the only vehicle driving down a straight suburban or country road.

Avatar, 2016, exemplifies Rofel's 'desiring.' The bodies are inscribed as actively desiring – desiring cocktails, sandy beaches and blue skies – and they are desirable; desirable to the heterosexual male gaze, desirable as a beauty paradigm for female aspiration. But some of Ma's symbols complicate this message, perhaps problematizing 'representation' itself. The bible is probably the most incongruous symbol. Ma explained that it represented the change from faith being seen as something eternal by Chinese ancestors and elders, to faith as simply another temporary and transient part of life for younger people (Ma, 2017). In addition to representing 'desire,' the other important element of this video is 'seeing behind the screen.' We are shown that the sand and its inhabitants are on a constructed, artificial beach, not 'the real thing.' Whilst the women exist within the frame of the screen showing us only beautiful skin and loaded symbolic artefacts, the truck that they are on is heading towards an unknown, unseen location. They are not the drivers.

Unlike in *All My Sharpness Comes From Your Hardness*, 2011 the 'women' of *Avatar*, 2016 are not aware of any force acting on them other than the strong wind flipping the pages of their reading material. Rather than representing how disciplinary technologies could create a resilient 'cultivated,' 'quality,' 'post-80s' woman sharpened by her experiences, the women represented here are more ephemeral; they are superficially of high quality (*suzhi*) but in reality the forces that discipline them are causing them to hurtle unknowingly towards an unspecified, perhaps terrible, future. Ma in *Avatar*, 2016 uses the new category of 'woman,' in order to express a personal anxiety about what the 'avatar' represents: what is behind the screen, under the surface or beyond the social media highlights reel. *Avatar*, 2016 seems to be a piece expressing concern

about women's lack of control and agency in this new world. The figure of the desiring and desired, consumed and consuming 'woman' does not only appear in the work of Ma Qiusha. She appears in the work of male-identifying contemporary Chinese artists Yang Fudong and Yang Zhenzhong. The final chapter of this thesis will compare their use of this 'woman' to Ma Qiusha's.

Surveillance

Looking, and more specifically surveillance, is a theme within Ma Qiusha's work that she harnesses as a method of inscribing attributes of 'women' and 'womanhood' onto bodies. The theme is most precisely and deliberately used in Ma's two-channel video *Take A Walk*, 2016 (2' 57") (Figure 48). In this video we see two almost mirrored images. A person, who seems young and female from the information that we have as the audience, is walking away from us barefoot on cut grass. She holds a heavy-duty metal chain, although we never see what the chain is attached to. It could, in fact, be her who is chained. As only legs are shown, the work has a strong visual connection to her earlier works *All My Sharpness Comes From Your Hardness*, 2011 and *Rainbow*, 2013.[99] The soundtrack to *Take A Walk*, 2016 is a continuous high-pitched noise that we never determine the source of – it could be insects or machinery – contributing to an unrelenting horror-movie-esque sense of foreboding. Around half way through, the screen briefly turns completely black, and then we find ourselves in front of the person, who is walking towards us now, at the same steady pace. Eventually the camera speeds us up and away, we lose sight of the person altogether and the screen fades to black.

The female-person is an actor, not Ma. They are held in position by both the chain and the frame of the video. Moving the viewer from front to back gives the audience a more embodied role within the video. But we are not chasing, not listening, only viewing: surveilling. Put into context with *No.4 Pingyuanli to No 4. Tianqiaobeili*, 2007 and *All My Sharpness Comes From Your Hardness*, 2011 it is possible to see an additional (invisible) aspect to *Take A*

[99] Although faces are shown in *Rainbow*, 2013, it is the legs that enact the labour of crushing the tomatoes and the legs that are splattered with tomato-blood.

Walk, 2016, the allusion to disciplinary forces. The female actor is being physically held by the chain, the frame of the video and the sense of threat, but also by the very act of being surveilled by us, the viewer(s). This could link back to the (parental) scrutiny that the artist described in *No.4 Pingyuanli to No 4. Tianqiaobeili*, 2007. The disciplinary properties of the act of looking is something that Chen Lingyang (in Chapter Three), Xiao Lu and Ma Liuming (in Chapter Four) also utilised in their work. Surveilling the bodies of women used to be possible only by those in close physical proximity to them, their partners, parents, neighbours (the social body) and each other, but now, as the final section of this chapter will address, new technologies have enabled this to happen on a constant, networked and globalized scale.

Technology of the self(ie)

In our interview in 2017, Ma explained that she planned to move away from working so much with the body. *Take a Walk,* 2016 and *Avatar,* 2016 are some of the latest and maybe last pieces that she produced using female actors. One of Ma's reasons for moving away from this theme is because of the volume of video and photographs of the female body published online, produced by ordinary netizens rather than professional photographers and artists. At first glance Ma's work might be confused with this profusion of imagery (Ma, 2017). Ma suggested that her future work would need to differentiate itself from 'selfies.' Selfie taking and publishing is a practice that has been described as, "compulsive self-imaging […] engendering a new consumer-based language in the visual realm" (Murray, 2015:491), they are 'self-portraits,' often taken on a mobile phone, distributed via websites and social media. Ma's work does have a visual resonance with online content, because she reproduces its aestethics in order to be critical of it. In 2013, Ma Qiusha produced a series of photographs of her student-friend, and 'post-80s' peer, titled *Dan*, 2005-2013 (Figures 5.13 and 5.14). In this series, Ma appropriated images that her friend had posted on social media (Qzone and Weibo) over eight years.

This is the only series by Ma Qiusha where the artist does not use her own body or engage professional actors. In one photograph only large eyes can be



Figure 5.13. Ma Qiusha (1982 Beijing) *Dan*, 2007. Digital print.



Figure 5.14. Ma Qiusha (1982 Beijing) *Dan*, 2006. Digital print.

seen behind a coyly placed arm, in another Dan more strongly resists the gaze with hands covering her face, in another Dan stands in underwear next to a plant pot, elsewhere Dan is looking down at a mobile phone. Each one represents 'self-imaging,' and records a highly staged practice of performing for the camera, and performing online by distributing the images. For gallery display, Ma printed the low-resolution images very small, no bigger than a postcard, mostly smaller, and positioned them within deep white mounts and minimal frames. There are no captions, no 'like' buttons, the status of the images has been elevated within the hierarchies of visual culture. 'Dan' seems to have inscribed normative attributes of beauty (she conforms to the category *baifumei,* a slang term meaning white, rich, beautiful) onto her body, and opted voluntarily into the disciplinary regime of the online. But what compels her to distribute her body in this way? What does she aim for by engaging in these practices? By being gazed upon? Is Dan the true author of these images, which are so similar to so many others online? What would it mean not to participate? Ma Qiusha's work brings these questions to the gallery context and the audience's attention. Ma's repurposing of the images of Dan produces a conceptual work that I propose engages with the very questions that this thesis asks: how are women represented in these works? What attributes are inscribed on the bodies? How are they inscribed? Why?

The images of Dan are reminiscent of the female bodies in *Avatar*, 2016 which were desirable and desiring distractions from a more sinister reality. The *Dan* photographs demonstrate further issues with online representations of female bodies, specifically the difficulty in interpreting images of female bodies online, where metadata including authorship information is often lost and images are re-posted, re-appropriated, re-distributed, videos are screenshotted, and so many images of 'women' are consumed. The images themselves become the transient items that Ma alluded to in *Avatar*, 2016. The images themselves are consumables. Yet Ma Qiusha's elevation of the images to the gallery context demonstrates that this practice can also be one of individual agency, of constructing the self and self-image, in ways that are constantly evolving (Cara Wallis found that mobile technology is constructing new subjectivities amongst entrepreneurial women in rural China (2014)). It is only

by transposing the images into the gallery context that the complexity of the attributes of 'women' inscribed onto the bodies could be explored. This transposition highlights the very fine knife-edge differences between disciplinary regimes and practices of speaking truth, and exercising technologies of the self against disciplinary regimes of biopower. Questions of the role of online spaces in disciplining and distributing the body remained a concern of Ma's after the *Dan* series, further explored in *Avatar*, 2016.

It took Ma another five years after the *Dan* series to start considering a move away from telling female stories, from female perspectives, and using female bodies. But before she did, Ma had created a huge volume of work that investigates the category of 'woman,' of which a selection was analyzed in this chapter. Ma's artistic inquiries are affected by and critique the disciplinary regimes of CCP biopolitics and the biopower and surveillance of family, online and consumerism. Ma uses categories of 'women' created by these regimes in order to critique the regimes, and looks at how disciplining discourses can enable a knowledge of the self.

In Chapter Six a 'woman' formed through disciplinary regimes also emerges. She looks a lot like the woman in *Avatar*, 2016. The final case study chapter of this thesis will focus on the first pole of bipower: the discipline and optimization of bodies. The case studies in Chapter Six are produced by two male-identifying artists. The chapter will conclude with a comparison of the 'women' in Yang Fudong and Yang Zhenzhong's outputs and the 'woman' of *Avatar*, 2016 by Ma Qiusha.

CHAPTER SIX: THE YOUNG-GIRL

> The figuration of woman is […] closely bound up with the anxiety of constructing a viable, cultural, racial, and national identity: the anxiety of modernity. And as such, the woman, whether figured as the normative old image or as a new image yet to be fully defined, must be an over determined sign whose meanings are inescapably linked to local as well as global politics.
>
> (Ying, 2000:4)

> The fantasy offered by the beautiful woman and her accompanying modernity feature in these advertisements is directly connected to the power of exchange value, which in turn empowers the woman only if she consumes.
>
> (Pang, 2007:129)

Holding up (half of) the candy coloured sky

Immersed in the gallery blackness, five large screens, some oriented landscape others portrait. The five screens blaze with intense sunsets, palm tree silhouettes, simple dwellings made from sticks and cloth, strings of lights, freestanding translucent filters, candy-coloured skies over clean sand. Static images blur into moving ones, a looping non-linear narrative plays out over all five monitors. The soundtrack is a combination of sound effects and ambient music, no dialogue whatsoever. Featured on almost all of the screens all of the time are three beautiful young women. The one-piece swimming costumes and bikinis they wear are inflected with nostalgia; the appropriate attire for a childlike dreamscape of a gap year beach party. Splashing in the water, adorned with a snake, holding a conch shell up to one ear, carrying a gas lamp whilst in the background a fire burns, gazing up to the skies and into the eyes of the viewer. One tickles another and plays with her hair, she responds by hitting back with a pillow. One strokes the face of a horse; behind her, a young woman ballet-dances past elegantly in a red and white polka dot peplum bikini. Often they are posed as if waiting for the click of a camera shutter, perhaps on a rock or on the sand, billowing sheets in an artificial breeze are the only indication that we are watching a moving image. Their facial expressions are mostly towards the middle of the emotional spectrum. Not entirely joyous or exactly angry or completely sad. The three women sit down to a table piled

high with food. A close up shot of a large piece of fruit shows that it is covered in flies.

Yang Fudong and Yang Zhenzhong

The questions of this chapter, following on from the previous three case study chapters, is what attributes of 'woman' do male-identifying artists Yang Fudong (born 1971 Beijing) and Yang Zhenzhong (born 1968 Hangzhou) inscribe onto female bodies in selected examples of their artistic output. In representing female bodies, what is their intervention in the definition of the category 'women,' and what are the methods that they use to inscribe attributes onto bodies. It will focus on four main artworks: multi-channel video installations *The Coloured Sky: New Women II*, 2014 (described above, Figures 6.1 and 6.2) and *New Women*, 2013 by Yang Fudong; and *Summer*, 2009 and *Exam*, 2012 by Yang Zhenzhong. To analyze the works, this chapter will consider four discourses of representation of the female body to which these works correspond, and how through the work's relationship to these discourses attributes are inscribed onto bodies to create 'women.' The discourses are: New Women and Modern Girls, the trope of The Young-Girl (a capitalist spectacle), the image of the consumer, and the disciplinary regime of the predatory male gaze.

As in Chapter Three of this thesis, this chapter focuses on the second of the two poles of Foucauldian biopower: discipline of the body, rather than the management of populations. I contend that these discourses discipline bodies by establishing unobtainable ideals that do not relate to lived reality. What is absent from the case studies themselves, I argue, is a robust critique of these discourses. A critique of the disciplinary regimes that produce the category 'women' (and therefore of gendered meaning-making) is what is offered by selected works by Chen Lingyang (discussed in Chapter Three), Xiao Lu (discussed in Chapter Four) and Ma Qiusha (discussed in Chapter Five). Although some of the 'women' represented in Ma Qiusha's output resemble those discussed in this chapter, I argue at the end of this chapter that they are used very differently.



Figure 6.1. Yang Fudong (1971 Beijing) *The Coloured Sky: New Women II,* (2014) five channel video installation (video still). Image courtesy of the artist and Galerie Marian Goodman, Paris.



Figure 6.2. Yang Fudong (1971 Beijing) *The Coloured Sky: New Women II,* (2014) five channel video installation (installation view). Image courtesy of the artist and Galerie Marian Goodman, Paris.

The five-channel video installation *The Coloured Sky: New Woman II*, 2014 (15' 48") by Yang Fudong is filled with small, intriguing gestures, symbols and interactions. I met Yang Fudong in the restaurant of an expensive hotel, a setting that I recollect was almost entirely gold and white. He repeated to me a statement he has also written about the piece, that he intended it to feel like, "holding a candy wrapper up to the sky" (Yang Fudong, 2016). In my view, this comment obscures the discourses referenced in the work's title following the colon, 'New Women II,' and obscures the centrality of the female body in the video. Yang Fudong is well-known within the contemporary art world of the PRC and beyond. He has focused on female bodies and representations of women in several of his single-channel, multi-channel and photographic pieces. Nowhere in interviews or paratexts surrounding his output does he address exactly what his intention is when working with the female body or representing womanhood, despite the female body and women being, "an over determined sign whose meanings are inescapably linked to local as well as global politics" (Hu, 2000:4) in Chinese visual culture, up to and including at the present moment.[100]

The Coloured Sky: New Woman II, 2014 pre-dates Ma Qiusha's three-channel video installation *Avatar*, 2016, discussed in the previous chapter, by a couple of years. The artists discussed in this chapter are based in Shanghai, over 750 miles away from Ma's studio in Beijing, and are around 10-14 years older than Ma. However, the young women in *The Coloured Sky: New Woman II*, 2014, and other case studies in the chapter, appear to conform to the same trope as those in Ma Qiusha's piece: the desiring and desired (Rofel, 2007), consumed and consuming, globalized, ideal, *suzhi* (quality), body. They are beautiful young woman straight from the pages of a magazine, a TV or online advertisement, they could be an influencer (real or AI-generated) on a social media feed. They could be the same women that featured in the promotional

[100] The reference in the section title to 'half the sky' refers to Chairman Mao Zedong describing the importance of women in Communist China in a speech he gave in 1968. The Communist revolution is missing from the account of 'New Women' in China that Yang Fudong tells through his two installations, as will be explained later in this chapter.

material for the 2008 Beijing Olympics (Figure 6.3) or from content Yang Fudong produced for a 2010 campaign for luxury brand Prada (Figure 6.4).

Yang Fudong and Yang Zhenzhong have many exhibition monographs and are mentioned in prominent, scholarly surveys of contemporary Chinese art (Berghuis, 2006; Gladston, 2014; Wu, 2014). However, there are only a limited number of examples of scholarly research focused solely on them, and none that focus on their use of female bodies or representation of 'women' and womanhood. Chris Berry wrote an article focusing on Yang Fudong's use of "gestural cinema," which I will mention here and revisit later on. For Berry, Yang Fudong's use of "gestural cinema," focusing on body movements and facial expressions rather than dialogue and linear narrative, has two possible benefits for the artist (2014). The first is that it is supported by the "political economy of the transnational gallery circuit" (2014:18) because the works do not need some form of linguistic translation into multiple potential languages. The second is that, Berry argues, using gestural cinema Yang Fudong can create within a wider socio-political context that is not conducive to critique of the status quo, a critical space "that makes us aware of what is excluded," an absence that is both ethical and political (2014:27). Berry does not refer to either *The Coloured Sky: New Women II*, 2014 or its predecessor Yang Fudong's multi-channel video installation *New Women*, 2013 as case studies. Yet as these two multi-channel videos by Yang both use gestures instead of dialogue, Berry's contention is important to consider in this chapter.

A still image from *The Coloured Sky: New Women II,* 2014 was used as one of the cover images of the catalogue for Yang Fudong's solo exhibition at the Yuz Museum, Shanghai, PRC in 2015. However, the curator of that show and main essayist for the catalogue, Wu Hung, barely mentions the work. The book includes a transcript of an interview with Yang Fudong by Zara Stanhope, Principal Curator and Head of Programmes at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, New Zealand, the venue that co-commissioned the piece along with ACMI, Melbourne. A Caucasian female curator thought that the piece was worthy of critical attention when the Chinese male curator did not; however,

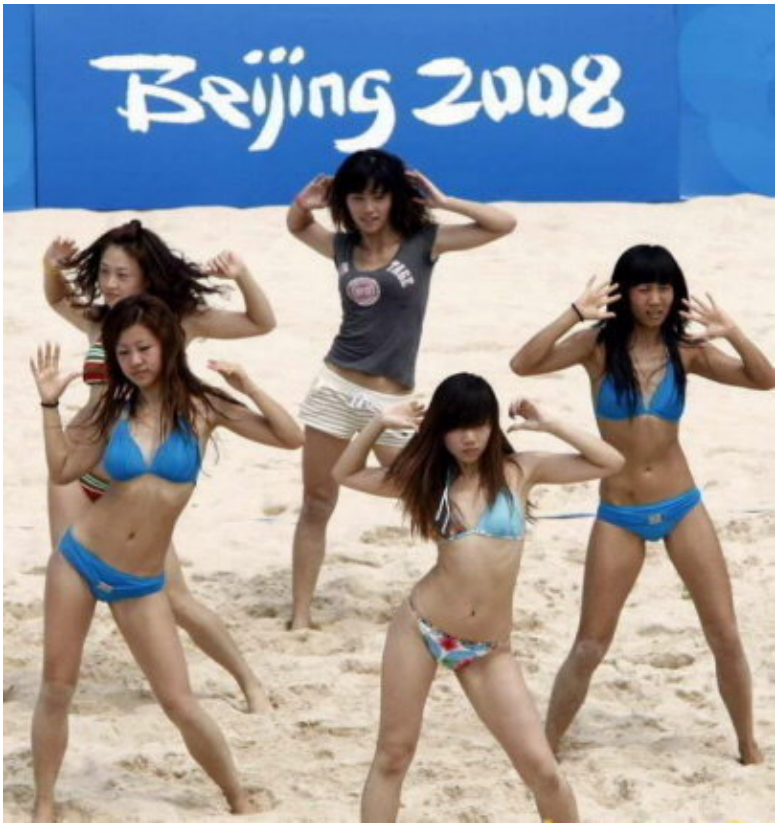


Figure 6.3. Beijing Olympics 2008 promotional imagery.
Image courtesy of The Huffington Post.



Figure 6.4. Yang Fudong (1971 Beijing) and Prada. *First Spring*, 2010 (9'17") (video still).
Image courtesy the artist and Prada.

Stanhope does not ask the artist much about the meaning(s) of the representation of women in the work. When she asks the artist to introduce the work and explain the link to *New Women*, 2013 he says: "The film talks about the image of an ideal woman," (Stanhope in Wu, 2015:172) a coy but pertinent statement given the focus of the analysis in this chapter. Christopher Moore for art magazine Randian wrote about *The Coloured Sky: New Women II,* 2014. Moore argues the piece is, "not a projection of desire but an unseen girl's dream about growing up—the projection is self-centered" (Moore, 2015). In opposition to Moore, this chapter takes the view that dreamy representations of infantilized, mute young women by Yang Fudong (and Yang Zhenzhong) has a different affect, operating as a force – and affected by forces – of biopower that discipline bodies as part of the ongoing processes of reproducing the binary genders and inscribing bodies with particular attributes to create 'women.' Desire is very much inscribed as an attribute onto their bodies, in the view of this chapter, and the gazing audience is inscribed as desiring them.

New Women and Modern Girls

New Women, 2013 (11' 07") (Figures 6.5 and 6.6) is shot in black and white. Five screens float in blackness, the light they generate reflects in pools on the black floor. In each of the videos, playing concurrently, the lens focuses on a group of ethnically-Chinese female actors[101] in liminal, minimal *mise en scènes*. They are nude, mostly with 1930s-style hair and makeup, white-light highlighting their unblemished skin and the definition of their backs, lower legs, buttocks and breasts. The world within the video is full of decadent transcultural objects: cherry blossom, handheld-fans, Art Deco furniture, Grecian columns, elegant curving planters, ottomans, mantelpieces floating in space, heavy wooden desks, white feathers, upright mirrors, glass chandeliers. In some scenes along the ground creeps a gentle cloud of fog. Often the white background is decorated with the shadowy traces of trees. At one moment, a female actor stands in the background with her back to the lens, hand on hip, whilst a headless and armless faux-antiquity sculpture atop a plinth occupies the foreground. Later an actor holds the sculpture at the waist, showing off its

[101] The actors are from Shanghai, PRC; Hong Kong and Sydney, Australia.



Figure 6.5. Yang Fudong (1971 Beijing) *New Women*, 2013, five channel video installation (detail) 5 channel video installation, courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery.



Figure 6.6. Yang Fudong (1971 Beijing) *New Women*, 2013, five hannel video installation (installation shot). ShanghART H-space Exhibition View on May.9, Photo by Alessandro Wang, courtesy of the artist and ShanghART Gallery.

dramatic chiaroscuro. The settings seem designed to showcase the female bodies, which are reflected in the mirrors, reclining on the ottomans, positioned on a large white spinning wheel. The actors move slowly, furtively, sometimes making movements that are closer to dance. One actor makes her body echo the shapes of Grecian sculptures. The line between the decorativeness of the objects and the decorativeness of their bodies is blurred. They lay their heads on furniture and fittings, creating an atmosphere of melancholy. Sometimes the actors position themselves against each other, impassionately laying heads on breasts, or just creating a composition with two bodies, looking at each other, looking at us. The uncredited soundtrack sounds traditionally Chinese to my inexpert ear. There is no dialogue. Included in the exhibition of the work at ShanghART gallery there was a poem that Yang Fudong had written, creating atmosphere but not obviously contributing to meaning. It has something of the same effect as the creeping fog, making the scenes hazier:

It seems so real
A distant and intimate world
Heat in the air
Someone is singing tenderly
However it
Stood there quietly
Despite the wind
Took its past
Everything is so much alike
Like a dream
Push the door softly and walk in
Or just stay standing where you are

(Yang Fudong, 2013)

One of the methods that Yang Fudong uses to inscribe ‘women’ onto bodies is through his titles. They suggest a connection with a longer discourse of ‘women’ and particular tropes of womanhood in China. ‘New Women’ and ‘Modern Girls’ were discourses historically located in the late Qing and the

Republican era. The use of the word 'new' in the discourse and within Yang Fudong's titles for *New Women*, 2013 and *The Coloured Sky: New Women II*, 2014 suggests that the category 'women' can be reinvented, always already inscribed with different meanings. Although it does not seem that Yang Fudong intends to fully engage with 'New Women' discourse, having referenced it so specifically, I will unpack it here.

This transnational term 'New Woman' emerged at the end of the 19th century and was refracted through an international feminist project, coming to have specific meanings in the Chinese context. The term was variously applied (at the time and retrospectively) to feminist activists, fictional characters, and individual actors, with the shared characteristic being women who had economic, political, creative and social agency over their own lives. The origin of the term and concept 'The New Woman' is attributed to Sarah Grand, the penname for the Irish-English writer Frances Elizabeth Bellenden Clarke (1854-1943) in 1894. Grand's work was concerned with a critique of the institutions that repressed women and girls, such as loveless marriages. She explored these ideas in novels as well as treatises.

The passage of this term into Chinese is presumed to have come via Japan. The Seitō society[102] who produced the magazine Seitō (1911-1915), a publication concerned with gender relations explored in literature and essays, embraced the term 'New Women,' (in Japanese *shin-fujin*) to describe themselves, despite the Japanese media having used it pejoratively to suggest women who were Westernized and engaged with the seedy aspects of urban life. Raichō Hiratsuka, co-founder of Seitō, was originally concerned with theorizing the elimination of gender, but moved towards what could be seen as 'difference feminism,'[103] combining the work of authors such as Ellen Key of Sweden with socio-political pressures from within Japan. Key advocated a gender-

[102] Seitō is a translation of the term 'Bluestockings', which was attached to female intellectuals and gender questions as early as the 18th century, although the exact origins and meanings are contested. The Japanese usage of 'Bluestockings' seems to suggest affiliation with an international project.
[103] This may well have impacted on pioneering Chinese feminist theorist Li Xiaojiang's theories 70 years later.

essentialist feminism, which was positive about the differences between men and women, promoted love marriages and valued above all else women's roles as mothers, championing legislation that would protect mothers in marriage and economically (Lowy, 2004). For Hiratsuka, Key's theory combined well and yet was crucially different to the state-advocated "good wives and wise mothers" ideology in Japan. This ideology transferred to China and embedded itself forcefully. The 'New Woman' Hiratsuka envisaged was a modern, educated mother and moral wife in a love marriage, who may well have combined domestic duties with paid work outside of the home.

Translation, then, is an important element of the presence of the 'New Woman' concept in Japan and China, but also, Hu Ying argues, central to its very nature (2000). Hu contends that the 'New Woman', like new conceptualizations of China itself in the late Qing and Republican periods, was formed in response to knowing more about the "other" beyond China. The 'New Woman' and 'New China' were constructed inexplicably from one another; formed in a negotiation of cultural continuity, embrace and resistance to new ideas and influences, and cultural translation. For the reformer Liang Qichao, Hu explains:

> The figuration of woman is […] closely bound up with the anxiety of constructing a viable, cultural, racial, and national identity: the anxiety of modernity. And as such, the woman, whether figured as the normative old image or as a new image yet to be fully defined, must be an over determined sign whose meanings are inescapably linked to local as well as global politics.
>
> (Hu, 2000:4)

By the 1930s the 'New Woman' appeared in a number of places, notably, but not exclusively, she was present in the writings of Communist author and political theorist Ding Ling. She was a character device in mainstream films with her own recognisable aesthetic, and she was the conception of womanhood that appeared in advertising imagery (to be discussed later in this chapter as 'the consumer'). For Sarah E Stevens, the 'New Woman' concept in China was more complicated than it appeared, there were two aspects to this sign: "the new woman *xin nüxing*" was one and the "the modern girl *modeng*

gou'er" was the other (2003). The 'New Woman' and the *modeng gou'er* look similar, both with: "short hair and stylish, modern clothes" (2003:86); the way that they differ comes in the way they function in the text and what they signify. Stevens suggests that both the 'New Woman' and the *modeng gou'er* were positioned in opposition to 'good wives and wise mothers', she also explains:

> In the figures of the New Woman and the Modern Girl, contradictory views of women's bodies parallel contradictory views of modernity itself. As New Women, women stand for the nation and its quest for modernity—modernity understood as an admirable state of civilization, strength, and progress. At the same time, as Modern Girls, women are used to represent fears for the modern nation and the drawbacks of modernity—modernity understood as a state of danger, individual alienation, and cultural loss. […] Often associated with leftist and progressive intellectuals, the New Woman is equated with the positive aspects of modernity. As such, she is educated, political, and intensely nationalistic.
>
> (Stevens, 2003:83)

As the 'New Women' of Stevens' primary concern are in the fictitious writings of Ding Ling, Mao Dun, Shi Zhecun and others, there is another element to the 'New Woman': her transition in the narrative from a bourgeois to a Communist, or at least to leftist intellectualism. The 'new' of 'New Women' therefore also relates to the centrality of politics in new conceptualisations of China and specifically the change from Nationalism to Communism. Stevens goes on to say that as well as in male-authored writing that critiqued the changes happening in China, the *mondeng gou'er* was employed in female-authored writing to suggest the struggle of women in finding their voice and "disillusionment with the promises of modernity" (2003:83). Male anxiety is written by, for example, equating the female body to colonized China, as Stevens describes using the example of Yuan Yecun who writes euphemistically of the female body: "Whether old-handers or first-timers, they immediately scale the banks to the port and then go upstream towards the north" (Yuan in Stevens, 2003:99). Stevens suggests that the terms 'New Woman' and *mondeng gou'er* were not always accurately used to exemplify the two distinct characters she describes, but that she has categorised them thus

to illustrate the different ways in which the modern woman in China was used in cultural and political representation. Yihong Pan finds a similarly complex picture in the way the 'New Woman' was used in film (2011).

'New Women' was, importantly for Yang Fudong, the title of a feature film produced by the Lianhua Film Company, based in Shanghai, directed by Cai Chusheng and released in 1935. Yang Fudong's video installation *New Women*, 2013 was first exhibited at the 2013 Toronto International Film Festival and the feature film *New Women*, 1935, directed by Cai Chusheng was shown alongside it as part of the programme.[104] During our interview, Yang Fudong explained that the unclothed female bodies with a 1930s inflection to their hair and makeup were a reference to the Chinese-American actor Anna May Wong (Yang Fudong, 2016). Wong (1905-1961) was born Wong Liu Tsong in Los Angeles, California, USA (Figure 6.7). It is notable that Yang Fudong identified Anna May Wong as inspiration, as the actor was better-known in the US during her career than she was in China (Hodges, 2004). Wong epitomizes the transcultural 'flapper' style of the 1920s, which was recognisable in sartorial choices and the styling of film stars from Shanghai, Hollywood and elsewhere. Yang Fudong reproduces this flapper style in the hair and makeup of the actors in *New Women*, 2013. Yang Fudong did not mention by name the actor Ruan Lingyu[105] (1910-1935) (Figure 6.8), who played the lead part of Wei Ming in Cai Chusheng's *New Women*, 1935.

The plot of *New Women*, 1935 focuses on Wei Ming, a divorced music teacher in Shanghai with a young daughter, aspiring to be a published writer. Wei begins to gain some recognition as a writer, but it is revealed that she only receives this as a young woman due to positive discrimination. Wei rejects the sexual advances of her school friend's husband, who then uses his privileged position as an educated, professional male doctor to have Wei fired from her job. When she is forced to prostitute herself to pay for her daughter's medical

[104] Yang Fudong's *New Women*, 2013 was displayed in the same room as the film *Away with Words*, 1999, a trilingual film (Japanese, English, Cantonese) by Australian-Hong Kong cinematographer Christopher Doyle.
[105] It is possible Yang Fudong felt Ruan Lingyu was too obscure to mention to a Western interviewer, as he did mention her name in an interview with Lu Jing.



Figure 6.7. Anna May Wong in a publicity shot for the film *Piccadilly*, 1929 produced and directed by E.A. Dupont. Image provenance unknown.



Figure 6.8. Ruan Lingyu. Image provenance unknown.

expenses, Wei's first client is the same friend's husband. At the end of the film Wei attempts to kill herself, and though she declares that she wants to live, it is too late and she dies. The film was supposedly loosely based on the real event of actor Ai Xia's suicide, and in a horrific twist, the actor Ruan Lingyu committed suicide herself following the film's release. It is unlikely that Yang Fudong intended his work to deeply connect to the tragedy and misogyny of *New Women*, 1935 and the transnational complexity of 'New Woman' and 'modern girl' discourse. In fact, I contend, Yang Fudong empties the sign of the 'New Woman' of much of its meaning, by making the women nude, voiceless and body-objects for the male gaze.

Female nudes are common in Western art but not in Chinese art history (Hay in Zito and Barlow, 1994:42-77) nor were female actors generally nude in Chinese films of the early 20th century.[106] The very fact of presenting the bodies nude in *New Women*, 2013 inscribes them with traces of an interwoven transcultural art and film history, including a Westernized tendency for female bodies to be objects of the male gaze (Mulvey, 1989). This gaze, as discussed in Chapter Four and later in this chapter, inscribed bodies and women as subservient and lesser than the male persons viewing their bodies, both the artists and the audiences. This gaze inscribed their bodies as body-objects, not as selves with perspective, points of view and agency. Christopher Moore in the art magazine *Randian* makes a connection between the aesthetics of *New Women*, 2013 and the examples of the female nude in the work of pioneering photographer Lang Jingshan (1892-1995 born Huai'an, China) who lived and worked in Shanghai and Taiwan. In Lang's photographs, the nude female subjects often interact with a single object such as a pot or guitar (Figures 6.9 and 6.10) or an item such as a tree, they often look melancholy. Journalist Zhang Junmian relates the story of Lang's model being beaten by her father for posing nude for the photographer in the late 1920s (Zhang, 2013). Using nude bodies means that Lang Jingshan's work has been recorded by (art) history as ahead of its time, risky, connected to international discourses and 'modern.'

[106] There are examples of female nudes produced in the 1920s and 1930s including by artists Xu Beihong and Chang Yu who were based in China and engaged in international modern art discourse.



Figure 6.9. Lang Jingshan (1892-1995) *Indecision*, 1933 Photograph.
Image provenance unknown.



Figure 6.10. Lang Jingshan (1892-1995) *Lady*, 1928. Photograph. Image provenance unknown.

Transposed to a different time, removed from their original 'modern' context, the nude has long been stripped of its risky connotations in China. Rather, nudes are the legacy of an intertwined transcultural 20th century art history in which women were more often gazed upon than gazers or producers.[107] Moreover, I can find no evidence that the gestural space (following Berry) Yang Fudong leaves is filled with critical reflection on the category 'woman.' The attributes he inscribes on the bodies in *New Woman*, 2013 are normative beautiful, glamourous, feminine, sexualised but also listless and detached from reality. Yang Fudong inscribes the female bodies in *New Woman*, 2013 as body-objects to be consumed by the (art) market and the audience's gaze, as un-speaking as a headless Antiquity sculpture.

Trope of The Young-Girl

Yang Fudong's *New Women*, 2013 is the first instalment. It was followed the next year by multi-channel video installation *The Coloured Sky: New Women II*, 2014, which was described at the beginning of this chapter. *The Coloured Sky: New Women II*, 2014 has a dreamy quality, seeming to represent memories rather than actualities. Yang Fudong has made several works where, as in this work, female actors/models are dressed in swimwear. In a globalized world bikinis invoke: holiday photographs curated on social media accounts, international travel for leisure, affluence, lingerie advertisements, beauty pageants, sports, and cheerleading; healthy, disciplined bodies. The fashions in *The Coloured Sky: New Women II*, 2014 are inflected with 1920s nostalgia; however, the installation is less rooted in a particular time period than its predecessor. The fact of its being in vivid colour, and the way that the feminine bikini-ed actors could have stepped from a TV advertisement, makes these representations with an object of contemporary art also connected to a globalized (middle-class) 21st-century contemporaneity. The two works form a timeline representing modernity and contemporaneity. The height of the Communist era in the PRC (circa 1949-late 1970s), during which time women were compelled to wear masculine fashions and efforts were made to eliminate

[107] When I visited ShanghART gallery in 2016 I was told that Yang Fudong's *New Woman*, 2013 had been censored in Shanghai. There was no evidence of this although it may have been self-censored by the gallery.

class structures, has been removed from this history. Yang's two *xin nüxing* works omit the era of the *funü*, the female comrade.

As mentioned, Yang Fudong, in our interview, asserted that the audience should have a feeling when encountering the work "like being a child holding a candy bar wrapper up to the sky" (Yang Fudong, 2016; Yang Fudong in Wu, 2015:162). He went on to disagree with the suggestion that the female actors' role was to seduce the audience (Yang Fudong, 2016). Yet the female bodies in the work are objectively desirable. Moreover, their age on the cusp of adulthood combined with their desirability means that they conform closely to the trope of 'The Young-Girl.' This trope was codified by anonymous French collective Tiqqun in 1999 in reference to late-capitalist France. The Young-Girl is both an agent of biopower and its target, obsessed with her own body to the detriment of acquiring knowledge about the self. She is found in media discourse "reformatted by the Spectacle and biopolitically neutralized" [108] (Tiqqun, [1999] 2012:17). Yang Fudong opines that the women in his works hold "secrets" (Yang Fudong 2016). Tiqqun describe how, "The Young-Girl sees herself as the holder of a secret power: the power of commodities" (Tiqqun, [1999] 2012:12). In *The Coloured Sky: New Women II*, 2014, and also in Tiqqun, there is an 'othering' of the female; they are not ordinary human beings. Rather they are inscribed with powers,[109] mystery, ephemerality, and positioned within economies of consumption. Their lives are analogous to fresh fruit, which will soon turn bad. The female actors in Yang Fudong's *The Coloured Sky: New Women II*, 2014, are inscribed as ephemeral and secretive and 'other' by the absence of dialogue, by the un-realistic nature of their surroundings, by their enigmatic facial expressions, and by gestures that oscillate between childlike behaviour (splashing in water, pillow fights) and dance. Their mystery is created from the point of view of the viewer, who is then inscribed as ordinary, mortal, real, and male in contrast.

[108] Spectacle is capitalized in Tiqqun as it refers to Guy Debord's theory *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967).
[109] In the Chinese context, a historic example of this effect was the 'Red Lanterns,' female fighters in the Boxer Uprising of 1900, whose real physical strength and fighting capacity was diminished by claims that they possessed supernatural powers (Kazuko Ono, [1978] 1989).

For the male viewer of *The Coloured Sky: New Women II*, 2014, the female bodies and the contemporaneity that they represent are not just beguiling, they are an unobtainable fantasy constructed by a male-identifying artist. For Laikwan Pang, modernity is an unobtainable myth or fantasy often represented by the female body (2007). Pang traces the production of modernity represented by the female body in early 20th-century film and advertising; but much of what she says can be applied to the post-Communist era and to Yang Fudong's works in this chapter specifically. Pang challenges the idea of modernity as fixed in time, saying: "there is a notion of "new-ness" constituting the magical sense of modernity, but the constant transformations also construct a certain stability that made modernity an unchanging and unending configuration and allure" (2007:210). Moreover, Pang writes, relating to her case studies: "the fantasy offered by the beautiful woman and her accompanying modernity feature in these advertisements is directly connected to the power of exchange value, which in turn empowers the woman only if she consumes" (Pang, 2007:129). Extending Pang's thesis, I argue that Yang Fudong's female bodies that come to be inscribed with modernity, consumption and being consumed. They become signs representing only those things, bodies inscribed with only these attributes, they lose their ability to represent lived reality, yet they contribute to the disciplining of real bodies. The female bodies in *The Coloured Sky: New Women II*, 2014 are rendered to look like women, they contribute to an understanding of the category 'women.' They do not represent a female perspective or the lives of women in reality, much in the same way that Tiqqun's 'The Young-Girl' who emerges through advertising and media discourse, does not and cannot.

Additional evidence of how the female body is used and 'women' inscribed in Yang Fudong's work as the unobtainable fantasy of modernity in the capitalist PRC comes in the form of his work *About the Unknown Girl – Ma Sise*, 2013-2015 (Figures 6.11 and 6.12). This series of photographs and film was presented as an installation at Yang Fudong's Yuz Museum, Shanghai solo show in 2015. The intention of the work was to produce a long-form portrait of one actor whom Yang Fudong had worked with, "a story about the life of one girl" (Yang Fudong in Wu, 2015:140) which would question the relationship



Figure 6.11. Yang Fudong (1971 Beijing) *About the Unknown Girl – Ma Sise*, 2013-2015. Video and still photograph installation. Image courtesy of the artist and ShanghART.



Figure 6.12. Yang Fudong (1971 Beijing) *About the Unknown Girl – Ma Sise*, 2013-2015. Video and still photograph installation. Image courtesy of the artist and ShanghART.

between acting, characters representation and 'real life'. However, emerging through an interview with Wu Hung, the work becomes more about Ma Sise's inaccessibility to the male artist, Yang Fudong says, "her bookings make it difficult for her to work with my long-term project" (2015:155) […] "I will just have to wait for her" (2015:156). Ma Sise embodies the unobtainable fantasy of modernity, the glamourous unobtainable film star. If Yang Fudong's intention is to tell something of her perspective or illuminate the process of her shifting from one character and performance to another, this does not emerge from the first iteration of the installation. Ma is consistently beautiful, styled, made up and carefully lit and directed in every image; they are not informal images, she is never other than 'ideal,' she does not breathe or bleed out from these ideal parameters. Her interiority is never known. In relation only to his representations of the female body and womanhood, whilst Yang Fudong might, as Berry asserts, be creating a critical space, what he seems to do with this space is to cleave apart the binary genders, women inscribed as a metaphor for an always unobtainable modernity.

The consumer

The image of the female urbanised consumer emerges in the market economy of the Republican era (1911-1949) in calendar posters, advertisements (Figure 6.13), periodicals and other print culture, with echoes of her appearing in films and novels (Johnston Liang, 2004; Barlow, 2013; Evans and Donald, 1999; Pang, 2007). However, she is not present in *scholar-literati* ink painting. This tradition in the early years of the 20th century held firm, barely modifying itself to represent the changes going on within China's cities. In 'Western style oil painting' a 'modern' female urbanite appears in the work of artists including Guan Zilan, Zhang Xuan, Ni Yide and Pang Xunqin, as well as the work of female-identifying Pang Yuliang who was working from Paris, France for most of her career. Pang Xunqin (1906-1985 born Jiangsu) produced work representing a particular anxiety and criticality towards modern life (Figure 6.14), which he communicated through combining representations of female bodies and modern urban womanhood with references to the grittier aspects of urban life, sometimes in a cubist style. In a statement with an uncanny echo of



Figure 6.13. Advertising calendar for the P P Gocheco Go Sing Goe Co, 1933.
Image courtesy of the Shanghai Propaganda Poster Art Centre.

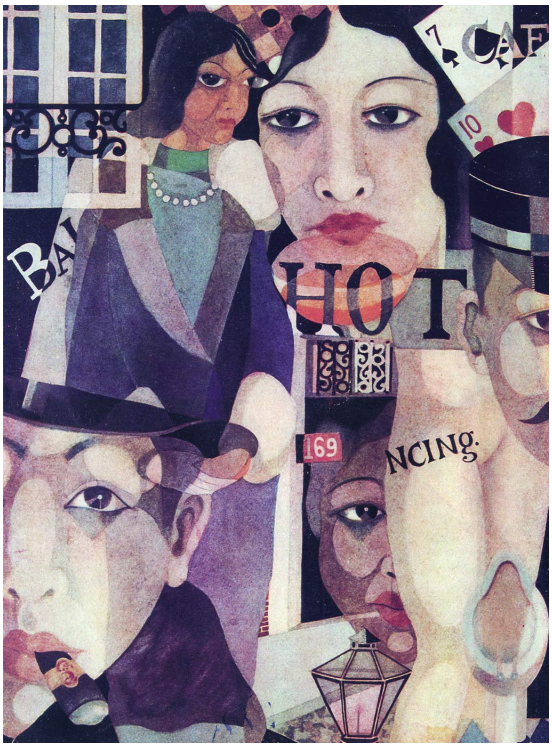


Figure 6.14. Pang Xunqin (1906-1985) *Suchlike Paris*, 1931. Watercolor on Paper.

Yang Zhenzhong's point of view (whose work will be analysed in this section and the next) Pang Xunqin described some of his works as "stimulated by his revulsion against the overwhelmingly crass emphasis on money that he found in Shanghai society after his return from Paris" (Andrews and Shen, 2012: 78). The male consumer, meanwhile, is invisible in the Republican era. In the early 20th century the masculine, whether performed by a male or female body, is associated with political engagement and this continued to be so throughout the period of Mao Zedong's chairmanship of Communist China (1949-1976). Due to a direct ban on advertising (Vig, 2015:7) the image of the consumer disappears after 1949, having no place in the centrally-planned economy.[110] The ban on advertising was revoked in 1979 when it was decided that individual consumption would help to develop the Chinese economy.[111]

Some scholars have argued that the market economy of the Republican era provided the basis for the 'globalized China' that emerged in the last decades of the 20th century (Chow, 2004; Xin and Belk, 2003). Therefore, the image of the (female) consumer we see in the 21st century could be the successor of Republican era imagery.[112] 'Consumption' and 'consumers' in China since the 1990s, and the way that they relate to nationalism and globalization, have been the objects of extensive scholarly attention since the turn of the century, suggesting that they cannot be understood in simple terms (Croll, 2006; Griffiths, 2013; Lu, 2008; Gerth, 2003; Wang, 2015; Zhang, van Doorn and Leeflang, 2012; Yu, 2014; Latham, Thompson and Klein, 2006). Yet, usefully, Vig summarises: the female body, consuming goods and meaning, has long been, "a metaphor for broader society and modernization… a conduit for a multitude of expectations and fears" (2015:1). Yang Fudong in the previous section asserted continuities between the Republican era and the post-GPCR

[110] The disappearance of the consumer coincides with the disappearance of public demonstrations of female sexuality during Mao's Chairmanship, observed by feminist Li Xiaojiang (Li in Barlow, 2013b), hinting at a relationship between the two, whether co-incidental or in some way causal.
[111] A short time after this, along with artistic production, advertising was one of the discourses targeted by the Anti-Spiritual Pollution campaign (1983-4) for bringing with it Westernization and the erosion of Chinese values.
[112] Challenging the theory of the female body as central to these discourses, L.H.M. Ling argued in 1999 that it is in fact a "globalized hypermasculinity" that became a powerful object of the imagination in East Asia during the 1990s (1999:277).

PRC, drawn through images of the modern female body as a metaphor for fears and expectations of modernity, potentially aligning with his fears of the unknowable female. In Yang Zhenzhong's work, even more so than in the output of Yang Fudong, we see an overt representation of consumed and consuming 21st century female bodies.

One person at a time can walk up two steps and look at four bodies through a viewing hole. The wall conceals us from their view, even if they had eyes to return our gaze. Their feet are visible below the table, their upper bodies partially obscured by the table, their faces have been omitted entirely by the parameter of the photographic image. As we look from this position, fragmented images suspending from the ceiling and supported from the ground align to reveal the bodies. The bodies, the people with no facial identities, are sat in a café drinking coffee or milkshakes, all wearing fashionable strappy shoes and short skirts. They are refreshing themselves, perhaps before or after a day spent shopping on Nanjing Road.[113] One flips casually through a glossy magazine. Our view is mostly under the table, between their legs, and up their short denim skirts. Yang Zhenzhong compels the audience to be physically complicit in the work, he foregrounds the audience's act of seeing. But more than this, perhaps he could be understood as inscribing the bodies of the audience members as predatory, libidinous, heterosexual males.

This piece is titled *Summer*, 2009 by Yang Zhenzhong. Unlike Yang Fudong who refuted the suggestion that the women in *The Coloured Sky: New Women II*, 2014, were deliberately chosen and presented in a way to seduce the audience (Yang Fudong, 2016), Yang Zhenzhong agreed with the suggestion that the women in *Summer*, 2009 (Figures 6.15 and 6.16) had been chosen because they were beautiful and enticed the viewer to engage with the work (Yang Zhenzhong, 2016). Moreover, he confirmed that they were chosen to represent the capitalist economy. The gazers, 'men,' are not entirely omitted from the artist's critique, but nevertheless they hold the power. The 'women'

[113] Nanjing Road is a main shopping street in the city of Shanghai, PRC.



Figure 6.15. Yang Zhenzhong (1968 Hangzhou) *Summer*, 2009 site-specific installation. Courtesy of the artist and ShanghART Gallery, Shanghai.



Figure 6.16. Yang Zhenzhong (1968 Hangzhou) *Summer*, 2009 site-specific installation. Courtesy of the artist and ShanghART Gallery, Shanghai.

are inscribed as the gazed upon, lesser than, flippant, idle, sexualised, consumed and consuming, and not able to return the gaze. *Summer*, 2009 is not the only work by Yang Zhenzhong in which he presents young women as being inextricable from the capitalist economy in China, the two simultaneously inscribed as each other.

I interviewed Yang Zhenzhong at his large, bright, white, studio in 2016. Whilst he poured the tea we talked at length about the role of the female bodies and womanhood in his output and his perception of young women in real life. Yang Zhenzhong described the women he had featured in the video installation *Let's Puff*, 2002 and single channel video installation *Exam*, 2012 (the latter will be discussed in the next section) as well as the women in *Summer*, 2009 as having been chosen because they represented "Nanjing Road […] the commercial world, trade, and shopping" (Yang Zhenzhong, 2016). His ambivalence towards capitalism and consumerism seemed to be the driver for producing these works, which relied on his inscribing the female body as representing these phenomenon.

The 'women' in selected examples of Yang Zhenzhong's output, and particularly in *Summer*, 2009, are body-objects, inscribed as desirable, desiring, modern, urban, consumed and consuming. Consuming coffees, consuming and leisure time, consuming a globalized lifestyle. They are the kind of represented bodies that discipline bodies in real life to be thin, beautiful and buy things. There is a definite connection between *Summer*, 2009 and advertising imagery. The women fall within category of the 'urban sophisticate,' identified by Hung and Li in a quantitative analysis of tropes of women represented in glossy magazines (Hung and Li, 2006:8-9). The scale, tone, lighting and high resolution of his photography is reminiscent of commercial imagery, although Yang Zhenzhong disrupts this by fragmenting the images.

Summer, 2009 makes an poignant comparison with Chen Lingyang's video installation *Yue Jing Jing*, 2002, discussed in Chapter Three. Chen had hand-drawn menstrual blood running down the models' legs with a red pen, making

the idealized bodies into 'leaky' bodies that resisted the parameters of the category of 'women' that the magazines produced. In *Summer,* 2009, the women flip the pages of magazines, but also resemble the bodies reproduced within them. What subverts the images is the particular method of gazing that the audience are compelled to perform. In *Summer*, 2009 it is important that the women have been photographed as if in a public place because Yang Zhenzhong is trying to capture a sense of confidence and freedom, the artist opined: "compare women and men at the same age, the girls have more freedom, they are more free than the men… In Shanghai. …They go to public places, they are beautiful and wear sexy clothes" (Yang Zhenzhong, 2016). This could be seen as positive and post-feminist, or even an example of Li Xiaojiang's 'market feminism.' Pioneering feminist academic Li Xiaojiang's theory has so been so-called as she argued that the market would enable women to construct their own feminine identity, rejecting the masculinisation of the Communist era (Li in Barlow, 2013). However, in *Summer*, 2009 the young women are critiqued for engaging in a lifestyle of consumption and desire. They are disciplined and regulated, even attacked, by the gaze. A critique of capitalism is being played out in conflicting inscriptions on the four female bodies.

The trespassing, predatory gaze

Two young women, aged around 16-18, are in a bedroom reading Maoist-Communist texts from a piece of paper. Learning these texts by rote is a mandatory part of the notoriously difficult Chinese high school examination (*gaokao*). They roll around on the bed, comfortable in each other's company, legs and arms on display under summer dresses that often ride up to reveal lacy under garments. The video has a candy-coloured palette, the young women are dressed in white and yellow on a pink bedspread. They have been eating Western(ized) junk food, cookies and crisps, the packets left on the table beside the bed. We can see a unit full of Chinese books. Another significant

item in the shot is a Super Mario[114] soft-toy, [115] which emphasizes their youth, idleness, silliness and their position as a node within a complex-connected (Tomlinson, 1999) globalized world. They laugh as they read from a piece of paper sentences such as these, translated into English subtitles on the screen:

> The nature of socialism is preconditioned by socialist public ownership […] abolishing exploitation and eliminating polarisation […] macroeconomic regulation […] lies on the periodicity of basic conflict of capitalism […] Proletarian revolution is historical progress moving ceaselessly […]
>
> (Yang Zhenzhong, 2012)

The conceit of Yang Zhenzhong's single-screen video installation *Exam*, 2012, (23' 37") (Figures 6.17 and 6.18) is the juxtaposition of the serious and political nature of the Maoist-Communist texts and the examination the women are studying for, and their bodies inscribed as modern, global, youthful, urban, erotic and affluent. *Exam*, 2012 is even more explicit than *Summer*, 2009 in using young women as a sign for the capitalist economy, and inscribing on female bodies a critique of capitalism under Communist governance in the PRC. In person, Yang Zhenzhong was unapologetic about finding the link between women and consumerism (in real life) self-evident and unquestionable (Yang Zhenzhong, 2016). This is despite the fact he has been successful in the industry of contemporary art in the PRC, which relies on commercial sponsorship and private money. An anecdote Yang Zhenzhong gave to Bijana Ciric as part of the research process for the exhibition *History in the Making: Shanghai 1979 till 2009,* 2009, highlights his ambivalence,

[114] The Super Mario character was created by designer Shigeru Miyamoto for Japanese computer game company Nintendo. After a few revisions, Miyamoto settled on the character's identity as an Italian plumber from New York, USA and Mario first appeared in a computer game in this form in 1982.

[115] Other Chinese artists have foregrounded transnational cartoon and video game characters in their work and used them as part of a contrast of capitalism/communism. For example, in Cao Fei's single-channel video, *East Wind*, 2011, the film follows a truck decorated as Thomas the Tank Engine as it travels around Beijing. The title of this work refers to the Chinese communist-era transport manufacturing company, which itself refers to a speech that Chairman Mao made in 1957 when he referred to the PRC as the 'East wind' prevailing over the 'West wind.' Thomas the Tank Engine was originally a book character by British writers Reverend Wilbert Awdry and his son Christopher Awdry, the character became a house hold name internationally after being adapted as a TV series in the late 1970s/early 1980s.

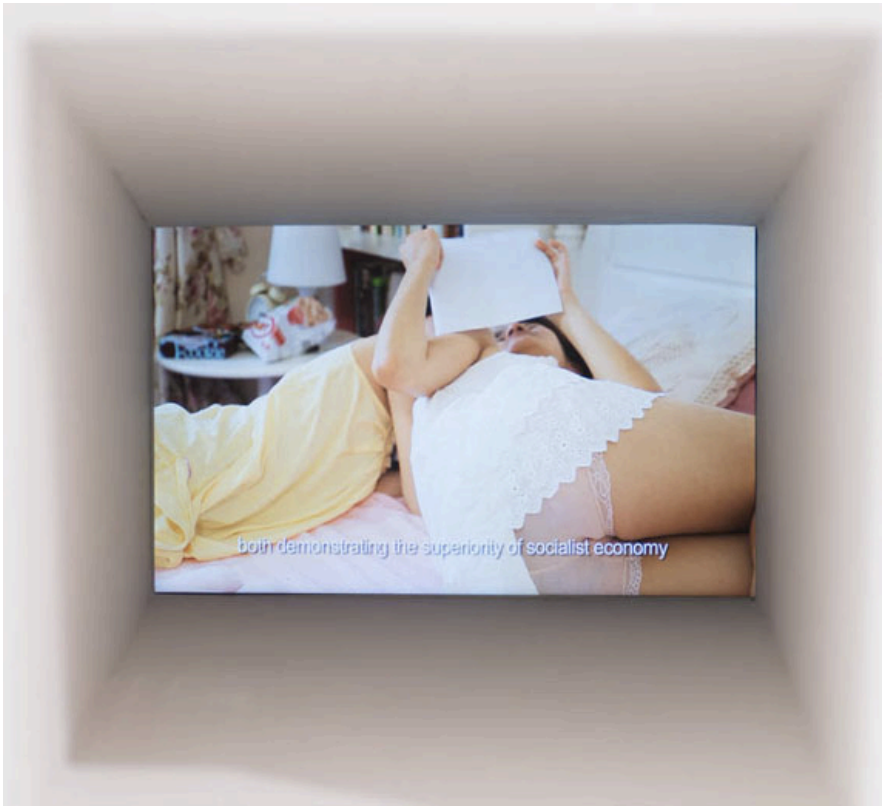


Figure 6.17. Yang Zhenzhong (1968 Hangzhou) *Exam*, 2012 single channel video installation.
Image courtesy of the artist and ShanghART gallery.



Figure 6.18. Yang Zhenzhong (1968 Hangzhou) *Exam*, 2012 single channel video installation (installation view, video displayed inside the hole in the wall).
Image courtesy of the artist and ShanghART gallery.

awareness, critique and even disdain towards capitalism and the role he sees female people taking within it. In this quotation Yang Zhenzhong is referring to the exhibition *Art for Sale*, 1999, which was based on the concept of the supermarket:

> We did a lot of things to raise money for this exhibition […We were eventually sponsored by multinational water brand] Evian and Deutsche Bank. Evian was interested because the exhibition was presented on Huaihai Road. [116] That was where their target consumer group, trendy young ladies, loved to hang out most. They saw this as a chance for brand promotion. As for the bank, its director said [he would support the exhibition]: "Because my girlfriend loves your art."
>
> (Yang Zhenzhong in Ciric, 2014:374)

Of course it is entirely permissible for artists to reflect on the political economies of art and its production. But for Yang Zhenzhong to explore the complex intertwined economies of money, geography, culture and consumption, the female body must be inscribed with certain attributes and critiques. Moreover, his audience must be able to understand the inscriptions that he writes on the body. Although the object of his critical lens may be capitalism within communist governance, the female body becomes both canvas and node within his artistic inquiry. Yang Zhenzhong's critical lens directed towards communist governance and capitalism belies its complex intertwining in reality. Frith and Yang write regarding the women's magazines that launched in the PRC urban markets in the 1990s that they "contain consumer ideology that fits comfortably into the current government economic plan" (2009). But more importantly, what is at stake in Yang Zhenzhong's output is a reproduction of stereotypes of women as vacuous and unthinking consumers. In reality it is often female-identifying people who have little control over finances in the PRC, they are excluded from accumulation of real estate wealth (Hong Fincher, 2014) and market research has found they do not spend as much on consumables and leisure services as their male counterparts (Ren, 2016).

[116] This street is another major shopping destination in Shanghai, considered by some more upmarket and less aimed at tourists than Nanjing Road.

The way that *Exam*, 2012 has been displayed and curatorially framed has further inscribed particular attributes onto bodies and in so doing intervened in the definition of 'women.' A gender divide is established with 'men' inscribed as essentially different, and even as predatory. The installation was first displayed in the artist's solo exhibition *Passage*[117] - *YANG Zhenzhong* in 2012 at TOP Creative Park, Shanghai, PRC, where the artist has his studio. In this instance it was shown on a very small screen, embedded in a stud wall structure. The audience had to look through a small hole in the wall to see the video, intensifying a sense of intrusion into the bedroom, even voyeurism, that corresponds closely to *Summer*, 2009 but also to Chen Lingyang's *Twelve Flower Months*, 1999-2001. Unlike Chen's work, where we intrude in a private space to view a body that is bleeding out from restrictive attributes of womanhood, the bodies of the women represented in *Exam*, 2012 are presented to be pleasing to a heterosexual male eye.[118] The presentation of the Exam, 2012 video in the *Passage* exhibition was designed to allow the audience to indulge in a private viewing experience, which given the age of the actors and how they are presented, is deeply unsettling. Similarly to *Summer*, 2009, the audience's bodies are compelled to be heterosexual, male, intruders. The gaze of the male viewer operates to discipline the bodies and regulate their activities. Moreover, the artist's gaze regulates and disciplines both the female bodies on display and the unseen 'male' viewer, who is made to feel slightly ashamed of their looking.

Exam, 2012 was displayed alongside relief-style paintings suggesting tunnels and corridors, corresponding the show's title. The e-book that accompanied Yang Zhenzhong's later solo exhibition *Trespassing* described *Exam*, 2012 as illustrating:

> […] a complicated dynamic between two unexpected topics. The subjects of the video are two young women wearing nothing but suggestive silk undergarments. The way in which they interact is intimate and nearing erotic. They share laughs and seem to play around in a childish nature, and do so on a bed. The camera assures the

[117] 过道 could also be translated as 'aisle'.
[118] This presumes that the work does not aim to challenge the dominant discourse of compulsory heterosexuality.

> audience of the erotic nature as it films the bare legs, full lips, and other such highly feminine parts of the women. Still, among this pleasant and questionable scene, YANG places a strikingly surprising topic: politics. [it is a] politically powerful video, in which he illustrates the relationship between modern Chinese politics and the youth of a nation.
>
> (ShanghART , 2013)

The text omits to mention that the artist is compelling us to perform in a libidinous role in viewing these young women. Yet in other ways, the title, *Trespassing*, and the presentation of the video emphasizes the theme of intrusion in the work. This piece is interesting to consider in relation to the psychoanalytic concept of the 'male gaze.' The male gaze concept came from Western feminist film studies, first introduced by Laura Mulvey. For Mulvey, cinema was reproduced to support the patriarchal world that engendered it. Therefore, woven into the discourse of the film industry was the structure of: "women […] as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectators within the auditorium" (Mulvey, 1989:838) and "women as image […and…] men as bearer of the look" (Mulvey, 1989:837). We can see this relationship of (female) object and (male) look reproduced in Yang Zhenzhong's work, yet unlike much film that uses this schematic, we are made to feel seedy and uneasy about trespassing and gazing in *Exam*, 2012 and *Summer*, 2009. With the power to consume by gazing comes a complicity in the capitalist economy. Whilst the female bodies are rendered and reproduced as powerless in many ways, and whilst they are inscribed as sirens luring the male gaze, the artist does not reward those whose acts of looking sexualise and consume these bodies with an experience of unashamed viewing pleasure.

Comparing Avatar

In what ways are the 'women' inscribed onto bodies in this chapter the same or different to the 'women' of Ma Qiusha's *Avatar,* 2016? The 'women' in this chapter and in *Avatar*, 2016 are inscribed with contemporaneity: they hold mobile phones suggesting connectivity, they eat junk food, coffees, consume cocktails, read glossy magazines, they wear bikinis. In *Exam*, 2012 the work's conceit is a contrast between Maoist texts and infantilized-globalized young women. It is important for the success of the piece that the audience

understand this contrast, and that female bodies must represent (be inscribed with) globalized capitalism. This is also true of *Avatar*, 2016. An important difference with *Avatar*, 2016; however, is that the conceit of the piece is in its layers of meaning. The title itself refers to attributes of a character standing in for 'real bodies' behind. The use of the female body inscribed with normative attributes of 'woman' (beauty, femininity) and inscribed with hallmarks of capitalism and contemporaneity in Ma Qiusha's work is inscribed with its own capacity to distract us from other 'realities.' The audience looking at their bodies as the lens lingers on smooth skin is immediately shown to be a folly. So too, perhaps, is that mode of being, where focusing on appearance of one's body, and the desiring and consuming of capitalist culture takes precedent over everything else. In *Exam*, 2012, the audience is compelled to view the female bodies as a libidinous male. In *Avatar*, 2016 the artist takes us one stage deeper to interrogate the effect of looking.

This difference in concept and approach could be the result of the gender identity of the artists. Although Ma Qiusha is reproducing 'The Young-Girl' capitalist trope that she sees around her in contemporary visual culture, she does not take this at face value, she considers what affect it is having, what purpose it serves, perhaps because it is her body that stands to be disciplined by this regime in reality. Yang Zhenzhong meanwhile, equally ambivalent towards contemporary capitalism in China, is unquestioning of the trope of young women as consumers. He reproduces this trope in order to critique contemporary society. He produces a critical disciplinary (male) gaze.

The women of *The Coloured Sky: New Women II*, 2014 and *Avatar*, 2016 could inhabit the same world, albeit Yang Fudong's work has a more candy-coloured palate. As with the examples of work by Yang Zhenzhong in this chapter, there are stereotypical inscriptions onto female bodies rendering them 'women' that Yang Fudong reproduces without question. The female bodies in his installation are inscribed with contemporaneity and beauty, they are desirable and 'othered,' they are metaphors for modernity and unobtainability. The framework of biopower suggests that these bodies are part of a disciplinary regime that creates hierarchies of bodies, that regulates and

manages them. The 'othering' meanwhile – suggesting 'women' are mysterious keepers of secrets – could be understood as part of the ongoing process of binary gender production articulated by He-Yin Zhen's category of *nannü*.

Ma Qiusha produces more than one kind of output representing female bodies. Many of her representations of 'women' intersect with her practice of *parrhesia*, the speaking of her – potentially dangerous - truth. Xiao Lu (in Chapter Four) and Chen Lingyang (in Chapter Three) also produce work I would put in this category. The other body of Ma Qiusha's works reflect on representation (of female bodies) itself and practices of looking (surveilling) female bodies. I would put Yang Fudong and Yang Zhenzhong's work representing female bodies into this latter category. Yang Fudong and Yang Zhenzhong's work could be understood as 'avatars,' bodies inscribed with attributes of womanhood, but in fact representing their own (male) gendered experiences and anxieties. But I think what is more accurate is to say that they are reproducing acts of looking, and using surveillance and representation of female bodies to address their particular aims. But as they do this, they omit the critical reflection on the acts of looking and desiring female bodies that can be found in Ma Qiusha's *Avatar,* 2014 and *Must be Beauty*, 2009. What is at stake, then, is that Yang Fudong and Yang Zhenzhong are reproducing young, globalized, beautiful bodies and the act of looking at them, reproducing dominant ideas of womanhood and femininity and the idea that 'women' are body-objects to be gazed upon and have attributes inscribed onto their bodies about which they make no response.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

> Individuals' social experiences in any given society are often incredibly homogenized, and such coherency is often achieved through a shared body of texts.
>
> (Laikwan Pang, 2007:209-210)

> The individual is not to be conceived as a sort of elementary nucleus, a primitive atom, a multiple and inert material on which power comes to fasten or against which it happens to strike, and in so doing subdues or crushes individuals. In fact, it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals. The individual, that is, is not the vis-à-vis of power; it is […] one of its prime effects.
>
> (Foucault, 1980: 98).

Who is she?

The globalized 'woman' is everywhere. She is wearing a black bikini at the beach, she is dressed fashionably and buying clothes on Nanjing Road in Shanghai. She is advertising products on TV and in the pages of a glossy magazine. She is imagined. She embodies international capitalism, embodies localized nationalism. She is an avatar representing other bodies and other experiences beneath the surface. She is a surface on which meaning and attributes are inscribed. Her body is shiny, healthy and disciplined. Her body is a node in gendered meaning making. Her body is at the intersecting economies of bodies and consumption. She is the kind of body and the kind of person that society wants. Society wants to consume her and wants her to consume the products that will drive the economy. It is no surprise that she appears in objects of contemporary Chinese art, from around the moment that the PRC signals its full engagement with global capitalism and onwards. Moreover, it is little surprise that all representations of 'women' represented in contemporary Chinese art have to negotiate their identities with her.

In the four case study chapters of this thesis: Menstrual blood, Sperm, One Child and The Young-Girl, the outputs of female- and male-identifying artists have been compared. The four chapters build up a picture of the attributes inscribed onto the body surface that became understood as 'women' in selected

examples of contemporary Chinese art. This thesis does not prove or disprove cognitive or essential sex. It does not require that we make the assumption that all works by female-identifying artists contribute to an understanding of the category 'women' or of gendered meaning-making. However, it argues for attention to gendered subjectivity. It finds that artists who are themselves the subject of disciplining forces that reproduce the binary genders, produce tangibly different artistic representations of 'women' according to their own gender identity. This thesis demonstrates that female- and male-identifying artists have been using their artistic practice to examine the category of 'women' critically since at least the year 2000. The female-identifying artists produced work depicting a negotiation with the parameters of the category 'women,' which sometimes meant reproducing normative attributes of 'womanhood' in order to bring attention to them. The female-identifying artists did not reject the gender binary, often they reproduced gender difference, but they displayed constant questioning about the boundaries of the category 'woman' and the forces that discipline women. The female-identifying artists produced work that pointed to how different parts of the *dispositif* could simultaneously act upon the body. They represented bodies simultaneously acquiescing to discipline and challenging it. Their experiences involved a negotiation with forces that sought to regulate their bodies, emphasise the binary gender divide and use their bodies within management of the population. This includes a negotiation with representations of globalized 'consumed and consuming' 'women,' which had arrived in the PRC in the 1990s, coinciding with the contemporary turn in Chinese art.

What differed between the female and male-identifying artists was that even when the female artists were putting forward a controversial or absurd provocation through their artistic outputs, they made it clear to the audience that their practice was an act of truth-speak. The male-identifying artists in the Chapters Three to Six also investigate the boundaries of gender categories, and the attributes of gendered categories. The male-identifying artists, in my interpretation, were affected by the same forces of gendering and biopower, but with different results. The male-identifying artists' representations of women (the attributes of women they inscribed) were often used as a means to

think critically about topics other than womanhood, including globalized capitalism. Their practices of inscribing attributes of 'women' were used to ask more general questions about gender, masculinity and male bloodline, or to explore what is permissible and possible in contemporary art discourse. In some cases, female bodies were deliberately used to represent always-unobtainable modernity or capitalist consumption. The affect of inscribing these attributes onto 'women' in the work of the male-identifying artists is the reproduction of the stereotype of the vacuous consumer or the subjugated voiceless *odalisque*. What this thesis has also demonstrated is that it does not have to be through using the medium of a female body that attributes of womanhood are conveyed.

Encountering contemporary art from Beijing and Shanghai 1999-2016

What are, or might be, the impacts of representations of 'women' in objects of contemporary Chinese art? Whilst it is difficult to ascertain the quantity and quality of engagement with contemporary art in China (or anywhere), there is much evidence of the rise of the impact and engagement of contemporary Chinese art within international art discourse (Wang, 2015; Kee, 2018; Welland, 2018) and its important role in cultural translation (Gladston, 2014a). The work of Chinese artists is visible around the globe in biennials and triennials, and they obtain high sales figures at auction. It is a discourse that in some aspects protects itself from censorship and shifting political priorities in the PRC, as it is deployed as a form of soft power (Yao, 2017). That said, it is a discourse that is shaped by both CCP economic policy, regulations on art and communication in the PRC transmitted through "capillary power," self-censorship by the actors involved, and by the international art market. Contemporary Chinese art is part of the lineage of an art discourse that was politicized (and gendered) by Chairman Mao. When I first visited China in 2009, Xi Jinping was yet to take power as President of the PRC, chairman of the Central Military Commission and China's 'Paramount Leader.' By the time I undertook my field research in 2016 and 2017 Xi's rhetoric had changed the political course of the PRC. In 2014, as I touched on in the introduction chapter, Xi Jinping said the following as part of a longer speech (it was released as a translated English-language transcript in 2015):

> Our nation's writers and artists should become the savants, the pioneers, the early advocates of their era. Through more substantial, moral, warm-hearted artistic work, they should write about and document the people's great path, the era's requirements for progress, highlight the beauty of convictions and integrity, carry forward the Chinese spirit, bring together China's might and inspire all of the nation's people of every ethnicity to vigorously march towards the future.
>
> (Xi in Boehler and Piao, 2015)

Some of the pieces studied in this thesis were produced in and after 2014 – the year of Xi's speech quoted above – and all of the semi-structured interviews took place after this time. While the future directions of contemporary Chinese art remain unknown, this thesis investigates a selection of cases and encounters inextricable from the rise of contemporary Chinese art, its constant re-politicization, and contemporary Chinese art's relationship with gendered meaning-making that goes back at least as far as its origins in the GPCR.

My encounters

The encounter approach has been an effective way to understand shorter, singular experiences and moments than comprise typical ethnographic research. This way of framing my research enabled me to understand my own work as not about speaking for, but rather being taught, informed and changed by encounters. Spending time in Shanghai and Beijing led me to the framework of biopower and *nannü,* as the management of people's health, lives and family planning choices were never far from media discourse and everyday conversation. Particular encounters with artworks and with the artists changed the trajectory of my interpretation and findings. Encountering Chen Lingyang's artist's book, alongside having a dialogue with her by email, transformed my interpretation of her two menstrual blood-based works. My interpretation shifted towards one that found them both to be explorations of negotiation with (and transgression of) the category of 'women,' even whilst foregrounding the artist's own corporeal experiences. My interviews with Xiao Lu and Ma Liuming drew my attention to particular flows of power in their works, and led to consideration of 'truth speak.' Multiple encounters with Ma Qiusha and her work enabled me to see her as speaking the truth of a life at the intersection of two poles of biopower. Meeting Yang Fudong and Yang

Zhenzhong emphasised to me how different their intentions were when representing 'women,' compared to Ma Qiusha's, even at the same time as there was a visual resonance. However, 'the encounter' also emphasises the final arguments as my own, comprised through a myriad of interactions and decisions. This thesis is the outcome of processes of knowledge production affected by my body, the artists' bodies, my line of inquiry and very many other factors.

The encounter is a methodology that could be applied to other research questions in the Chinese context, to discourses other than visual art, or to other cultural contexts. Moreover, the encounter combined with a theoretical framework that combines biopower and *nannü* could be applied to other discourses and cultural contexts. In the future I could extend 'the encounter' method to include follow-up interviews and reflections on initial meetings. The approach could be used as the underpinning for curatorial outputs or online resources, which in themselves provide encounters for new audiences. In these instances there would also be scope for audience-based empirical and textual analysis research. However, the encounter approach is most concerned with describing the journey of a researcher and interpreter; the pain, pleasure, shame, confusion, discomfort and transformation of embodied encounters with art, people, archives and place.

The encounter between biopower and *nannü*

Using the category of 'biopower' meant that this thesis could examine both the discipline of bodies and the management of populations. This helped to position contemporary art as a node of gendered meaning-making. The category He-Yin Zhen conceived at the turn of the 20th century *nannü* has proven to be the necessary and complementary theory to biopower. Using *nannü* as part of the framework has confirmed for me the richness, complexity and theoretical usefulness of Chinese feminism. By placing He-Yin Zhen and Michel Foucault in an encounter with each other, a useful framework emerges that is neither simply contemporary or historic, female or male-authored, Chinese or Western, localised or transcultural, and which positions the CCP as part of a bigger system of circulating powers. This thesis follows Sasha

Welland who found the category of *nannü* useful in her project examining gender in the rise of the contemporary art world of Beijing; and Min Dongchao, Eva Kit Wah Man and Harriet Evans who have argued that Chinese feminism has much potential for addressing the problems and questions articulated by Western feminism (Min, 2017; Man, 2016; Evans, 2018). My contribution furthers their argument that Chinese feminism has applications beyond localized academic discourse.

Also important to extend biopower has been the category of *parrhesia*, in order to understand the artists responses to forces that discipline, manage and gender their bodies. *Parrhesia* is a technology of the self. By speaking the truth onto represented bodies, in particular the female-identifying artists could understand and create their identities even as the forces of biopower and *nannü* were inscribing attributes onto their bodies. Speaking the truth could include both acquiescing to and critiquing these forces. As Foucault writes "there are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised" (Foucault in Gordon, 1980:142). This is exemplified by the truth spoken onto and with bodies.

Missing bodies

Reflecting on my findings and my method of selecting cases, the most jarring element is the bodies that are absent. There is an absence of reference to female economic migrants and the experiences of 'women' of ethnic minorities in China.[119] Moreover, representations of womanhood by and of trans women and publicly-out homosexual artists did not emerge through the collection databases and so were not analyzed in this thesis. Through my process of case study selection – examining artists collected by the M+ Sigg and White Rabbit collections and artworks in the media of performance, photography and video

[119] These women are the subject of fiction and non-fiction books including *Factory* Girls by Leslie T Chang (2008) and *Northern Girls* by Sheng Keyi (2016). However, the contemporary artworks do correspond to the trend in literature of 'body writing,' exemplified by the fiction book *Shanghai Baby* by Wei Hui (1999) and the increased use of the female body in art emerges at a similar time.

– examples of work by these groups did not emerge.[120] Therefore I cannot comment on whether more diverse representations of womanhood exist in different sub-sets of art discourse or in contemporary art by younger artists in China. However it may be that in such work the gendered categories of 'women' and 'men,' or even representations of the corporeal body, are starting to be less important. By selecting cases from artists who had been extensively exhibited, collected and written about, I am aware that I am reproducing biases that might exclude certain types of work and artists from canonization, as well as conforming to perhaps limited definitions of 'contemporary Chinese art.' Moreover, to participate in the discourse of contemporary art involves engagement with specific networks that are hard to access without higher education or contacts therefore it is undertaken by those within a particular class demographic.

One of the strengths of the *Inscribing Women onto Bodies* project is the potential to apply the empirical, theoretical and analytical approaches I developed for this project to other case studies, in order to focus on slightly different questions. For example, the particular selection of artworks I analyzed made it difficult to compare the work being produced by artists in Beijing and Shanghai, a question I returned to in my thinking several times. The cities were represented almost entirely by either side of the binary gender identification divide. To draw conclusions about the differences in attributes or experiences of womanhood between the two cities would require a selection that includes artists of similar ages and gender-identities, even if this meant not comparing 'real bodies.' For instance, it could be done by comparing representations of 'women' in the internet art of Lu Yang, a female-identifying artist from Shanghai born in 1984, to Ma Qiusha's *Avatar*, 2016. There is also the potential to expand the study into other regions of the PRC, Greater China or the Chinese diaspora. With this in mind I have included an initial selection of 'missing bodies,' additional artworks that I encountered during my research

[120] Ethnic minority groups in China produce contemporary art which is globally presented and displayed. However, no examples fitting my parameters emerged through these collection databases.

but excluded from this thesis, in Appendix 6. The artists are: Peng Yun (born 1982 lives Macau), Chen Qiulin (born 1975 lives Sichuan), Xiaoxuan Zhou (born 1989 Guangzhou, PRC based London, UK known as Whisky Chow), and Yijun Liao (born 1979 Shanghai, PRC, based Brooklyn, USA known as Pixy Liao).

The particular artist whom I would have liked to include as a challenge to all of the parameters I put in place for selecting cases is Wu Tsang (born 1982 Worcester, Massachusetts, USA, based USA and Berlin). Wu is trans and uses female pronouns, does not speak Chinese and did not visit China until 2005. Her father left Mainland China in 1949 and emigrated to the US via Hong Kong. Despite not fitting in the restrictive parameters that I set for the project, Wu Tsang made an important contribution to representing Chinese 'womanness' with her installation and single-channel HD video *Duilian*, 2016 (30'00") (Figures 7.1 and 7.2) which I encountered in Hong Kong in 2016, during the first phase of my field research. The installation, involving multi-media artworks, a single-channel video and a programme of events, were the outcome of long-term research and workshops, some of which was a partnership between the artist and Spring Workshop Hong Kong. The impetus for the research was the story of Chinese feminist Qiu Jin.[121] Wu Tsang focused on lesser-known aspects of Qiu Jin's story, including her poetry, and her friendship and possible romance with Wu Zhiying, a female person played in *Duilian*, 2016 by Wu's transgender partner Boychild. Wu Tsang in her retelling of Qiu Jin's story questions the category 'woman,' asks how artists can intervene in history-making, and asks what is a contemporary Chinese artist if not an artist engaged with Chinese culture? Her project challenges the parameters or usefulness of the category 'contemporary Chinese art.'

Final thoughts

The case studies that I selected were produced by artists who were born, live and work in the PRC. They represent a negotiation of the localized

[121] Qiu Jin is a Communist hero who was executed for attempting to overthrown the last imperial emperor in China.



Figure 7.1. Wu Tsang (1982 USA) *Duilian*, 2016 (30'00") (installation shot at Spring Workshop). Image courtesy the artist and Spring Workshop.



Figure 7.2. Wu Tsang (1982 USA) *Self Inscription*, 2016. Photogravure originally commissioned and produced by Artpace San Antonio. Image courtesy the artist and Artpace San Antonio.

contemporary artworld, international contemporary art discourse and their own existence as (gendered) citizens of the PRC. Biopower is one way to understand a globalized ideal 'woman' who arrived in the PRC in the 1990s who that regulates bodies, as well as a way to understand the local-specificity of the ways that bodies and populations are managed in the PRC. This management and discipline is undertaken by the CCP, cultural traditions such as Dao and TCM, the family, and capitalist interests. Sometimes these forces align, other times they play out their differences on the bodies of 'women.' Forces of biopower are historically located, and they may have different contours of potency in different parts of China, according to wealth, class or discourse or over time. However, I argue they have contributed to distinct differences in the outputs of female and male-identifying artists when inscribing women and womanhood onto the bodies they represent.

The case studies suggest ongoing processes of binary-gendered-meaning-making with all the inference of how those categories could be used to exert power and discipline that He-Yin Zhen theorized at the turn of the 20th century. My case studies demonstrate complexity and criticality towards gendered categories within a discourse, contemporary Chinese art, that is politicized, policed and gendered. I argue that it is important to question here what attributes are inscribed onto what kinds of bodies, how and why, and to interrogate the relationships between language, images, practices and 'reality.' Because shared texts, including artworks by both female and male-identifying artists, have the potential to transform understandings of the category 'woman' for those that encounter them.

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APPENDIX 1: GLOSSARY OF FOREIGN TERMS AND ACRONYMS

AAA	亚洲艺术文献库	Asia Art Archive. Public library and archive of material relating to contemporary art from Asia. Located in Hong Kong
AWCF	中华全国妇女联合会	All Women China Federation. Organisation founded in 1949 to promote gender equality and represent women in China in line with CCP directives
baifumei	白富美	Expression referring to women that are pretty, wealthy and have fair skin
Beijing Dongcun	北京东村	Beijing East Village. Artist community active in the early 1990s on the outskirts of Beijing
biopouvoir	(French)	Biopower. Concept developed by Michel Foucault (see pp 68-75)
CAFA	中央美术学院	China Central Academy of Fine Arts
CCP	中国共产党	Chinese Communist Party (*zhongguo gongchandang*)
chiku	吃苦	Chinese idiom translates as ‘eating bitterness’ meaning to endure hardship
chuangkou	窗口	Window
dao	道	Daoism (‘the way’) a religion and philosophy of Ancient China
dispositif	(French)	Term meaning ‘discursive and non-discursive,’ the said and unsaid. Used by Michel Foucault
fen	芬	Fragrance
fen	分	Separation

funü	妇女	Women
GPCR	文化大革命	Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution. Socio-political movement circa 1966-1976 with the aim of purging traditional and capitalist elements from Communist China
gaokao	高考	The National College Entrance Examination of the PRC
guanxi	关系	Relationship, social networks, to concern, to affect
gui	闺	'Inner chamber' the rooms in which women were confined at home in Imperial China
heihaizi	黑孩子	'Black children,' children born outside of the One-Child policy and that do not have household registration
hukou	户口 / 户籍	Household registration system of Mainland China and Taiwan
ICA	(UK)	Institute of Contemporary Art. Art Centre established 1947 in London, UK
IVF	(UK)	In vitro fertilization.
jia jiehun	假结婚	'Fake marriages' marriages entered into consensually by two opposite-sex gay people
jihua shengyu zhengce	计划生育政策	Birth planning policy (One-Child policy). Rolled out in the late 1970s
jing	精	'Essence' understood as stored in the kidneys in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)
jingzi	精子	Sperm

louchuang	漏窗	'Leaky window' a window in a Chinese garden partially filled with a design
M HKA	(Acronym of Belgian name)	Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp, Belgium
mise en scènes	(French)	The arrangement of scenery and setting in a film
MOCA	上海当代艺术馆	Museum of Contemporary Art, People's Park, Shanghai
modeng gou'er	摩登狗儿	'Modern girl'
nan	男	Man
nanxing	男性	Male sexed person
nannü	男女	'Man-woman.' The production of the divide between the binary genders. Term used by theorist He-Yin Zhen (see pp75-79)
nai	奶	Milk
nanren	男人	Male person
niunai	牛奶	Cow's milk
nü	女	Female
nüren	女人	Female person
nüxing	女性	Women, sexed female subject
nüxing yishu	女性艺术	Women's art
parrhesia	(Ancient Greek)	Concept used by Michel Foucault meaning 'speak the truth'. Also *parrhesiaste* meaning one who uses *parrhesia*
PRC	中华人民共和国	People's Republic of China

qi	气	Vital energy in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)
ren	人	Person
rui	锐	Sharp, keen, vigour
ruiqi	锐气	Drive, sharpness
shehui xingbie	社会性别	Gender
shin fujin	(Japanese)	'New Women' (新婦人)
suzhi	素质	Quality
TCM	中医	Traditional Chinese Medicine
xiandai	现代	Modernism
xin nüxing	新女性	'New Woman'
xing	性	Sex, sexuality, gender
xingbie	性别	Gender
xizhuang	西装	Western-style men's suit
xue	血	Life-giving-blood
weisheng	卫生	Health
WTO	(USA)	World Trade Organisation. Deals with the global rules of trade between nations
wumaodang	五毛党	'50 Cent Army.' Colloquial term given to netizens suspected to be posting constant small items of propaganda and support online in favour of the CCP in return for small remuneration.
yuandongmen	圆洞门	Round open door such as in the wall of a Chinese garden

yuefenpai	月份牌	Calendar poster
yueliangmen	月亮门	'Moon gate.' An alternative term for the open doors in a Chinese garden
yousheng	优生	Superior births
zhongguo dangdai yishu	中国当代艺术	Chinese contemporary art, Contemporary Chinese art
zhongguo xiandai yishu	中国现代艺术	Chinese modern art, Modern Chinese art

APPENDIX 2: LONG LIST OF CASES

Surname	Forename	Dates	Gender	Lives and works	Artwork title(s)
Cao	Fei	b 1978	Female	Beijing (originally Guangdong)	Creamy Role, 2002, photograph
Chen	Lingyang	b 1976	Female	Taiwan (no longer a practicing artist; lived and worked as an artist in Beijing during the 1990s and early 2000s)	Twelve Flower Months, 1999-2000, photograph series Yue Jing Jing, 2002, video installation
Chen	Qiulin	b 1975	Female	Chongqing (originally Chengdu)	Peach Blossom, 2009, video
Cui	Xuiwen	b 1970	Female	Beijing	Lady's Room, 2000, video
Duan	Yingmei	b 1969	Female	Germany (formerly Beijing)	Clown, 2001, performance
Fang	Lu	b 1981	Female	Beijing	Girlfriends (or women Prime Ministers), 2014, video
Ma	Liuming	b 1969	Male	Beijing	Fen Ma Liuming Says, 1996, performance
He	Chengyao	b 1964	Female	Beijing	Opening the Great Wall, 2001, performance
Hu	Xiaoyuan	b 1977	Female	Beijing	See, 2012, video installation
Jiang	Zhi	b 1971	Male	Beijing	Attitude, 2010, video installation
Kan	Xuan	b 1972	Female	Beijing	A Happy Girl, 2002, video
Liu	Zheng	b 1969	Male	Beijing	The Chinese, 1997, photography series

Ma	Qiusha	b 1982	Female	Beijing	All my sharpness comes from your hardness, 2011, video
Peng	Yun	b 1982	Female	Sichuan / Macau	Jeiyu's Debutante, 2013, video
	Rong rong and inri	b 1968 b 1973	Female Male	Beijing	Caochanghi, Beijing Series, No. 1, 2004, photographs
Wang	Qingsong	b 1966	Male	Beijing	Safe Milk, 2009, photography series
Xiao	Lu	b 1962	Female	Beijing	Dialogue, 1989, installation, performance
Xing	Danwen	b 1967	Female	Beijing (originally Xi'an)	Born with the cultural revolution, 1995, photography series
Yang	Fudong	b 1971	Male	Shanghai	The Coloured Sky: New Woman II, 2015, video installation
Yang	Zhenzhong	b 1968	Male	Shanghai	Exam, 2012, video installation
Yu	Ji	b 1985	Female	Shanghai	Silence Practice, 2010, performance
Zhang	Hai'er	b 1957	Male	Guangzhou	Lee Lyna, Royal Court Hotel, Beijing, 2006[122]

[122] The subject of this photograph is a trans woman prostitute.

APPENDIX 3: SHORT LIST OF CASES

Surname	Forename	Dates	Gender	Lives and works	Artwork title(s)
Chen	Lingyang	b 1976	Female	Taiwan (no longer a practicing artist; lived and worked as an artist in Beijing during the 1990s and early 2000s)	Twelve Flower Months, 1999-2000, photograph series Yue Jing Jing, 2002, video installation
Ma	Liuming	b 1969	Male	Beijing	Fen Ma Liuming Says, 1996, performance
Ma	Qiusha	b 1982	Female	Beijing	From No.4 Pingyuanli to No.4 Tianqiaobeili (2007) video installation All your sharpness comes from your hardness, 2011, video Avatar, 2016, video installation
Xiao	Lu	b 1962	Female	Beijing	Sperm, 2006 installation, performance
Xu	Zhen	b 1977	Male	Shanhai	The Problem of Colourfulness, photographic series, 2001
Yang	Fudong	b 1971	Male	Shanghai	New Woman, 2013, video installation The Coloured Sky: New Woman II, 2015, video installation
Yang	Zhenzhong	b 1968	Male	Shanghai	Summer, 2009, photographic installation Exam, 2012, video installation

APPENDIX 4: PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET

The Performed and the Unsaid: deconstructing the gendered female body in photography, performance and video from China 1984-2014

明场与暗场：解构中国摄影、表演及影像艺术中的女性身体，1984-2014

Project Information Sheet for interview participants
为受访者撰写的项目信息说明

Student name: Linda Pittwood 林达夏
学生姓名：林达夏
Institution: University of Nottingham, UK
机构：英国诺丁汉大学
Project title: The Performed and the Unsaid: 明场与暗场
Funded by: Midlands3Cities Doctoral Training Partnership
项目资助：Midlands3Cities Doctoral Training Partnership
Supervisors:
Professor Paul Gladston (University of Nottingham)
Professor Joshua Jiang (Birmingham City University)
导师：葛思谛教授（诺丁汉大学）
姜节鸿教授（伯明翰城市大学）

Contact details 联系信息

ajxlp@nottingham.ac.uk / lindapittwood@hotmail.com
@lindapittwood
HiLJPittwoodWeChat

Yes ☐ 是	No ☐ 否	I understand that I can request for data to be anonymous and, if I chose to do that, there will not be any connection between the personal information provided and the data 我了解我可以要求数据为匿名，并且，如果我选择这样做，研究中的个人信息和数据之间将不会有任何关联
Yes ☐ 是	No ☐ 否	I understand that there are no known risks or hazards associated with participating in this study 我了解参与这项研究将不会产生任何已知风险
Yes ☐ 是	No ☐ 否	I confirm that I have read and understood the above information and that I agree to participate in this study 我确认我已阅读并了解以上信息，并且我同意参与此项研究
Yes ☐ 是	No ☐ 否	I confirm that I am over 16 years of age 我确认我的年龄为 16 岁以上
Yes ☐ 是	No ☐ 否	I consent to my data being transcribed 我允许我的数据被转录
Yes ☐ 是	No ☐ 否	I wish for my data to be kept anonymous 我希望我的数据被匿名保管
Yes ☐ 是	No ☐ 否	I consent to my data being transcribed and to be identified by name and job title in written forms of dissemination 我允许我的数据被转录，并在书面形式的传播中属姓名和职业名称
Yes ☐ 是	No ☐ 否	I consent to an audio/video file of my participation to be used with any available identifying factors from any presentation of my data including research dissemination [and knowledge exchange activities with non-academic partners] 我允许我参与此项目的声音和影像文件以及任何可辨识身份的因素，用于任何数据呈现，包括研究的传播［和与非学术伙伴进行的知识交流活动］

Project description 项目介绍

My doctorate project is concerned with the female gendered body in Chinese art in the media of photography, video and performance, produced and displayed in Shanghai and Beijing 1984-2014. Using interviews to capture new data, combined with archive research and secondary literature, and a deconstructive analytical approach, it will explore the myriad meanings of the female body in the work of around twenty artists.

我的博士研究关注中国当代艺术中的女性身体，特别是在 1984 年至 2014 年间在北京和上海创作并展示的摄影、影像及行为艺术。通过采访收集新的数据，并结合档案和二手文献的研究，该项目将运用解构分析的方法论研究二十多位艺术家的作品中女性身体所体现的丰富意涵。

介绍背景的章节将勾勒出自二十世纪之初至今，中国性别研究的谱系。研究分析将运用性别研究"地图"，并问询当下文化与政治经济是如何辅助我们理解艺术作品的。该研究将对方法论保持自省，探究理解中国当代艺术的各种方法是如何具有争议的。

我运用批判理论和文化研究的方法研究这个题目。我希望这个项目能够成为跨文化翻译与对话的更广阔的努力的一部分。我的目标将是提供对这些作品可能的意涵的一种记述，并非是一种确定的"真理"或"历史"。

此次收集的数据将成为我的论文的一部分，在我完成论文之际将被上传到诺丁汉大学的在线论文库，并可供开架阅览。此外，这些材料将可能被用于会议文献、杂志文章、书籍章节、讲座、电子资料或一本新的专著出版物。参与帮助这个项目的翻译们将被要求销毁所有材料。

Signed (participant) 签名（受访者）	
Date 日期	
Signed (student) 签名（学生）	
Date 日期	

Please note the following

请注意以下内容：

- Participation is voluntary
  此次采访本着自愿参与原则
- Participant identification is voluntary
  受访者自愿选择是否公开身份
- If participants have asked to be anonymised, their views will not be connected to their work in any way
  如果受访者要求匿名，他们的观点将不会与其作品有任何关联
- Participants are free to opt out of the research at any time – including withdrawing permission for their interviews to be used – without prejudice
  受访者享有在任何阶段退出该项研究的自由，包括取消作者对他们采访内容的使用权，并不承担任何后果
- Data will be stored securely
  数据将被安全存储

Please complete the following questions 请完成以下问题

Yes ☐ 是	No ☐ 否	I confirm that the purpose of the study has been explained and that I have understood it 我确认此项研究的目的已被解释清楚，我已经明白
Yes ☐ 是	No ☐ 否	I have had the opportunity to ask questions and they have been successfully answered 我有机会提问，并得到了满意的答复
Yes ☐ 是	No ☐ 否	I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason and without consequence 我了解我对此研究的参与是完全自愿的，我可以在没有原因并不计后果的情况下，在任何时候退出对这项研究的参与

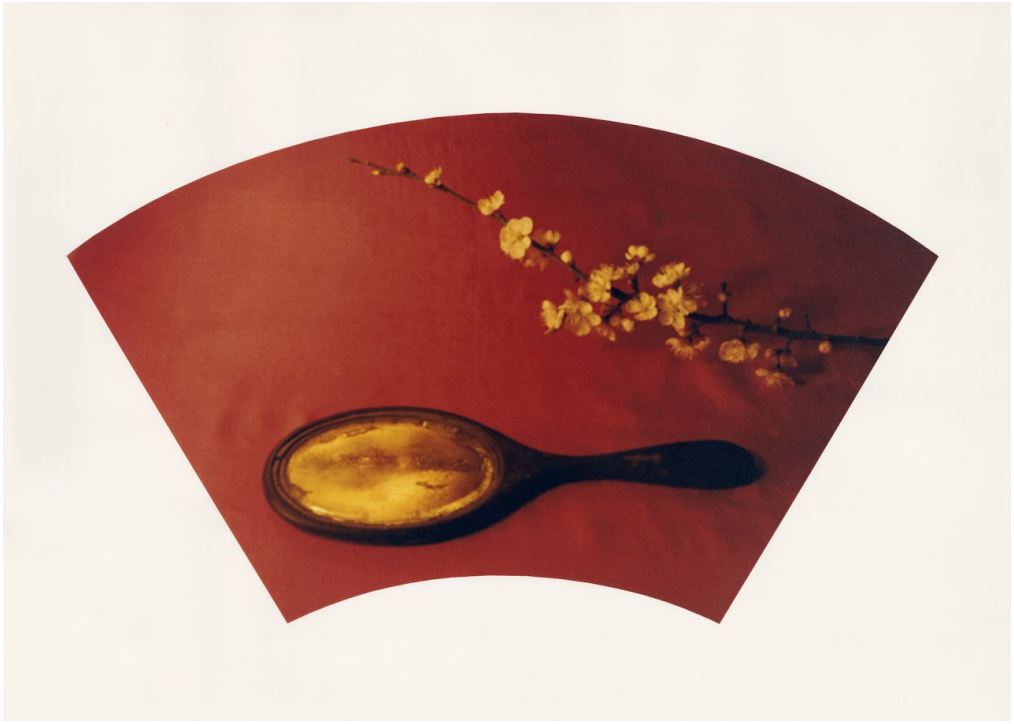
APPENDIX 5: TWELVE FLOWER MONTHS, 1999-2000



Chen Lingyang, *Twelve Flower Months – month one narcissus*, 1999-2000.
Photograph. Image courtesy of the artist.



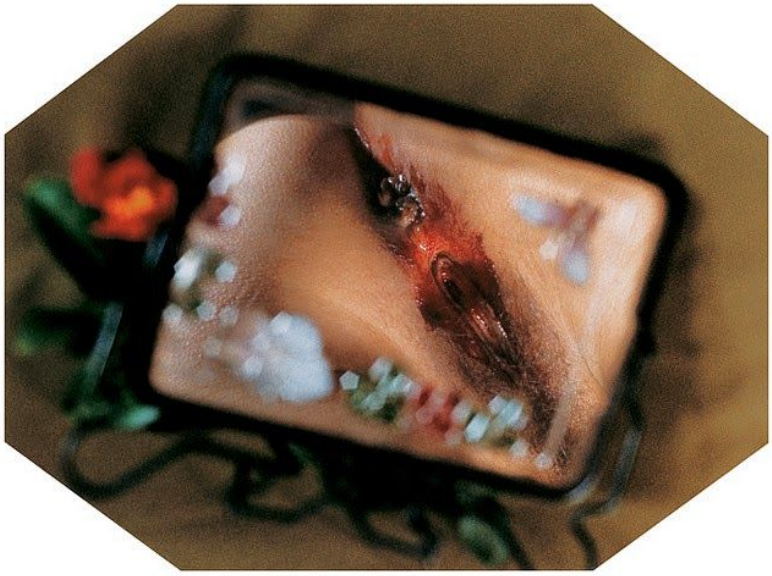
Chen Lingyang, *Twelve Flower Months – month two magnolia*, 1999-2000.
Photograph. Image courtesy of the artist.



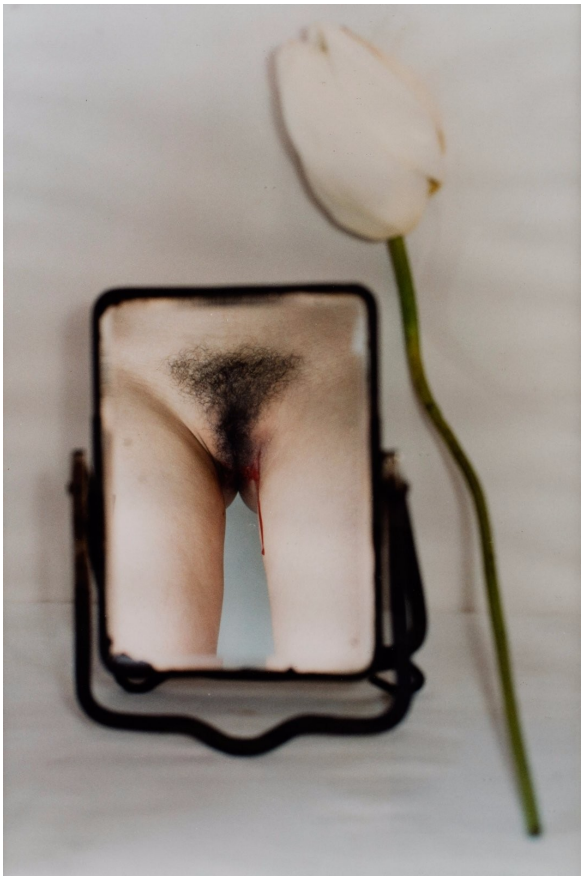
Chen Lingyang, *Twelve Flower Months – month three peach*, 1999-2000.
Photograph. Image courtesy of the artist.



Chen Lingyang, *Twelve Flower Months – month four peony*, 1999-2000.
Photograph. Image courtesy of the artist.



Chen Lingyang, *Twelve Flower Months – month five pomegranate*, 1999-2000.
Photograph. Image courtesy of the artist.



Chen Lingyang, *Twelve Flower Months – month six lotus*, 1999-2000.
Photograph. Image courtesy of the artist.



Chen Lingyang, *Twelve Flower Months – month seven orchid*, 1999-2000.
Photograph. Image courtesy of the artist.



Chen Lingyang, *Twelve Flower Months – month eight sweet smelling osmanthus*, 1999-2000.
Photograph. Image courtesy of the artist.



Chen Lingyang, *Twelve Flower Months – month nine chrysanthamum*, 1999-2000.
Photograph. Image courtesy of the artist.



Chen Lingyang, *Twelve Flower Months – month ten poinsettia*, 1999-2000.
Photograph. Image courtesy of the artist.

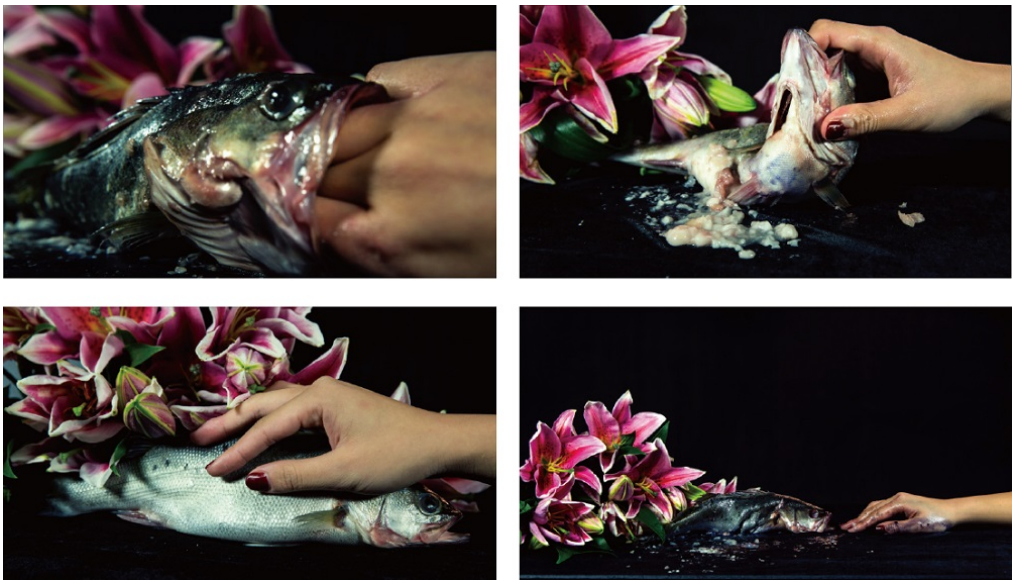


Chen Lingyang, *Twelve Flower Months – month eleven camellias*, 1999-2000.
Photograph. Image courtesy of the artist.



Chen Lingyang, *Twelve Flower Months – month twelve plum*, 1999-2000.
Photograph. Image courtesy of the artist.

APPENDIX 6: MISSING BODIES



Peng Yun. *Miss Melissa and Mr Fish at 2.31pm*, 2013 (7'47") (video still).
Image courtesy of the artist



Chen Qiulin. *Ellisis Series No 3*, 2001. Photograph. 86 x 58cm.
Image courtesy of A Thousand Plateaus Art Space



Whiskey Chow. *Unhomeliness*, 2018. Performance. Centre for Contemporary Chinese Art, Manchester (CFCCA). Image courtesy the artist and CFCCA



Pixy Liao *Hang in There*, 2015 Experimental Relationships Series. Photograph digital c-print. 37.5 x 50 cm. Image courtesy the artist and Leo Xu Projects.