



THESIS/DISSERTATION APPROVED BY

May 10th 2016  
Date

Richard White

Richard White, Ph.D., Chair

Yuan Jinmei

Yuan Jinmei, Ph.D.

Fidel Fajardo-Acosta

Fidel Fajardo-Acosta, Ph.D.

Gail M. Jensen

Gail M. Jensen, Ph.D., Dean

SEDATED BY PROGRESS:

NOSTALGIA AS A FORCE FOR SELF-CONTINUITY IN CONTEMPORARY  
SHENZHEN

---

By

CHARLES WESTER

---

A THESIS

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Creighton University in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

Omaha, NE

May 2016



Scholars in different disciplines hold vastly different views of nostalgia, a powerful, pan-cultural emotional longing for an idealized past. This thesis bridges the conceptual gap between theoretical and scientific understandings of nostalgia, balancing the view of nostalgia as important to psychological health with its susceptibility to cooptation by outside forces. The example of Shenzhen, China illustrates how nostalgia enables people who feel alienated by “progress” to thrive in the face of rapid change by fostering a sense of personal and collective self-continuity. Nostalgia can be harnessed by powerful forces to project the present and future as the inheritance of a golden past. As an emotion, nostalgia does not serve any specific set of interests; its malleability makes it a tool for a wide array of politically diverse causes.

<b>INTRODUCTION: NOSTALGIA’S DISCIPLINARY GAP</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>PART ONE: COMING TO TERMS WITH NOSTALGIA</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>PART TWO: NOSTALGIA IN SHENZHEN</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<i>THE RETURN HOME: FINDING STRENGTH IN NOSTALGIA</i> .....	23
<i>FOOD: INDIVIDUAL NOSTALGIA FOR THE VALUES OF THE PAST</i> .....	29
<i>ALUMNI ASSOCIATIONS: INDIVIDUAL NOSTALGIA FOR A COLLECTIVE HISTORY</i> .....	36
<i>CONSUMERISM AND NOSTALGIA: ESTABLISHING SELF-CONTINUITY THROUGH THE CONSUMPTION OF HISTORY</i> ..	41
<b>PART THREE: POLITICAL NOSTALGIA: CREATING COLLECTIVE NOSTALGIA TO SERVE THE STATE</b> .....	<b>47</b>
<b>CONCLUSIONS</b> .....	<b>55</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>58</b>

I gaze at the old photograph, one of three I brought with me to China. In it, my mom – not yet forty – squats down next to me, perched happily inside the cardboard racecar she made for me that Halloween. Her face wrinkleless, energetic, beautiful. Her brown hair long and permed. Her figure slender, draped in clothes considered fashionable in 1988. Fallen oak leaves blanket the ground, scattered by the kind of gust we just don't get anymore.

Was autumn really once that crisp?

Was mom really once that young?

Were we really once that happy?

\*\*\*

“I like Ike.” “For a New Deal.” “For President. Harry S. Truman.” Political campaign pins – gifts from my grandfather – that make me long for the days when American presidential politics was whistle-stop tours and nationwide barnstorming. Before television and Twitter gave us endless grist for the gossip mills. I miss Grandpa.

\*\*\*

Cornfields. Back then, we let the dog run loose to chase the rabbits and birds. Meantime, we'd catch lightning bugs along the dirt road. Now, it's a Sam's Club with subdivisions stretching in all directions. No end in sight. John Prine reads hearts.

“And daddy won't you take me back to Muhlenberg County

Down by the Green River where Paradise lay

Well, I'm sorry my son, but you're too late in asking

Mister Peabody's coal train has hauled it away.”<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> John Prine, *Paradise*, John Prine, Atlantic, 1971, CD.

## Introduction: Nostalgia's Disciplinary Gap

My own nostalgic reverie embodies the “universal feeling” of nostalgia, experienced “virtually by everyone” and conceptualized similarly across cultures.<sup>2</sup> At the individual level, nostalgia manifests itself as a predominantly positive, past-oriented emotion in which one looks back fondly on life experiences or moments in time, usually through “rose-tinted glasses,” and feels a kind of satisfying sentimental longing to return.<sup>3</sup> The emotion is often triggered by “sensory cues,” like hearing a favorite song from our teenage years, seeing one’s old primary school, or encountering the familiar aroma of a certain home-cooked meal.<sup>4</sup> The balance of evidence suggests that people across different cultures share “strikingly similar conceptions” of what nostalgia is; we seem to reflexively *know* nostalgia as that emotional tug we feel when ruminating over personal memories or, more vaguely, the deep-seated sense that things were somehow *better* in the past.<sup>5</sup> Studies repeatedly assert the “adaptive” and “regulatory” function that nostalgia, like other emotions, serves in human evolution.<sup>6</sup> Among other positive traits, nostalgia bolsters self-esteem, offers reservoirs of nurturing and love, buttresses against

---

<sup>2</sup> Constantine Sedikides, Tim Wildschut, Clay Routledge, and Jamie Arndt, “Nostalgia counteracts self-discontinuity and restores self-continuity,” *European Journal of Social Psychology* 45 (2015): 52; Erica G. Hepper, Tim Wildschut et al. “Pancultural nostalgia: prototypical conceptions across cultures,” *Emotion*, Advanced online publication (26 May 2014); Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Sedikides, et al. 52.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 53.

<sup>5</sup> Hepper, et al. 13.

<sup>6</sup> Sedikides, et al.



social exclusion and loneliness, provides for self-continuity, and even protects against existential threats.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, research suggests nostalgia is a significant adaptive emotion.

But the results of a growing number of studies in the field of psychology seem to be at odds with the prevailing consensus among political scientists, literary theorists, and contemporary commentators, who generally hold to a centuries-long skepticism about nostalgia. In their view, nostalgia equates to delusion, false escapism, and manipulation. They warn of nostalgia's darker shades, where it can be packaged and sold by advertisers or wielded as a weapon by politicians crafting their version of a national narrative. One need not look far to find political slogans (Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again!") or marketing trends ("throwback" soda cans) that capitalize on a nostalgic impulse to return to better bygone days. The movie and television industries specialize in appealing to this wistful longing for the past, either through romanticized period portrayal, as in "Downton Abbey" and "Happy Days," or by cloaking a movie release in an atmospheric nostalgia, as we witnessed with the recent craze for the latest installment of *Star Wars*. A 2015 story in *New York Times* even featured a popular website dedicated to nostalgic commemorations of "dead malls."<sup>8</sup> We live, these pundits warn, in the age of the "nostalgia industrial complex," where nostalgia serves the agenda of conservative political forces and predatory capitalists colluding to maximize power and profits.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Jacob Juhl, Elizabeth Sand, and Clay Routledge, "The effects of nostalgia and avoidant attachment on relationship satisfaction and romantic motives," *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 29 (2012): 661–670; Johannes Seehusen, et al., "Individual differences in nostalgia proneness: The integrating role of the need to belong.," *Personality and Individual Differences*, 55 (2013): 904–908; Clay Routledge, et al. "The past makes the present meaningful: Nostalgia as an existential resource," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 101 (2011): 638–652.

<sup>8</sup> Nelson D. Schwartz, "The Economics and Nostalgia of Dead Malls," *The New York Times*, January 3, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Heather Havrilesky, "The nostalgia-industrial complex: What 'Game of Thrones' teaches us about TV's obsession with the past," *Salon*, June 17, 2014 (Accessed February 1, 2016).

This remarkable difference in characterization stems from the failure on both sides to offer a methodical consideration of the phenomenon of nostalgia, a social emotion which, like other emotions, is susceptible to manipulation by outside forces. Psychologists may not feel compelled to explain how a “predominantly positive” human emotion can be coopted by powerful forces to further their agenda. Meanwhile, political and literary theorists consistently fail to recognize the basic psychological truths about nostalgia in their characterizations of the large-scale social problems they blame on this “reactionary” and “uncritical” phenomenon. We need to reconcile these disparate views or, at least, engage them with each other to come to a more honest understanding of what nostalgia is and what its prevalence signals about the times in which we live. By ignoring evidence which happens to fall “outside the scope” of a particular academic discipline, we run the risk of mischaracterizing a pan-cultural emotion that clearly serves an evolutionary purpose we are only beginning to understand.

Part of the challenge is that nostalgia contains a “tumultuous definitional history” in which it has been either dismissed as a medical ailment or pathological perversion or conflated with homesickness.<sup>10</sup> As Svetlana Boym has observed, nostalgia has frustrated psychologists, doctors, philosophers, sociologists, and even computer scientists since early modern times.<sup>11</sup> Only in the last forty years have most accepted that nostalgia is a unique human emotion, and only more recently have we discovered its positive effects on the human psyche.<sup>12</sup> Despite these findings, much of the conversation around nostalgia still grounds itself in political, social, or literary criticisms without regard for the progress

---

<sup>10</sup> Sedikides, et al. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Boym XVIII.

<sup>12</sup> Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday* (New York: Free Press, 1979).

made in understanding what nostalgia is and how it functions at the most basic emotional level. In other words, it appears as though the “tumult” surrounding the meaning of nostalgia extends to the present day.

We can actually come to a clear, comprehensive conceptualization of nostalgia by understanding both the psychological realities of this complex emotion and its susceptibility to cooptation by outside agents. No view of nostalgia is complete without a systematic consideration of both. In section one I approach nostalgia from historical and definitional perspectives, noting its presence in ancient and modern literatures as well as Renaissance and Enlightenment thought before reviewing modern efforts to understand nostalgia through medical, theoretical, and psychological lenses. An historical view reveals how this emotion has translated to a variety of individual and collective expressions for a past Golden Age or a return home. Within this account the year 1688 stands as a significant turning point, as Johannes Hofer’s coinage of the term “nostalgia” moved us toward a modern scientific compulsion to define, categorize, and, largely, condemn this universal emotion. While taking stock of nostalgia’s historical trajectory, I dispel the false binaries, peddled by some scholars, which bifurcate nostalgia into sub-nostalgias, with an almost dualistic opposition surfacing between manifestations that are individual or collective, restorative or reflective, conservative or progressive, spatial or temporal. I conclude this chapter by advancing a view of nostalgia that balances its psychological realities with its potentials for cooptation by a variety of forces.

In section two, I apply my conceptualization of nostalgia to the remarkable case of Shenzhen, China, one of the world’s fastest-growing megacities. Economic liberalization and massive immigration have created an “instant city” in which the mores of today vastly differ from the collectivist focus of the past generation. Further, the vast

majority of Shenzhen's residents, dislodged from their homelands, live in a state of self-discontinuity from the physical spaces and values of home. I use personal interviews to illustrate how three manifestations of nostalgic longing – those surrounding Spring Festival, food, and hometown and alumni associations – foster a buoying self-continuity which gives people tools to cope with the frenzy of contemporary Shenzhen. After demonstrating how these “natural” expressions of nostalgia function, I explore the “contrived” nostalgias provoked by commercial and political forces, who seek to position China's transition to a consumer society, epitomized by Shenzhen's rise, as the destination of Chinese history. These forces use nostalgia to project the present as a continuation of the past, a strategy which enables them to ensure social stability in the face of rapid systemic change.

## Part One: Coming to Terms with Nostalgia

Historically, nostalgic yearning has fixated on the physical space and intangible values of either an irretrievable Golden Age of the past or a homeland from which one has been dislocated. Evidence dates back at least as far as the Bible where, in Genesis, we find the literal Garden of Eden in which Adam and Eve “were naked and felt no shame” as they lived among “trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food” until the serpent tempts Eve into eating the forbidden fruit.<sup>13</sup> The Adam and Eve story is the religious codification of human longing for a lost paradisiacal moment when we as a species enjoyed both an unspoiled habitat and an uncorrupted innocence predating our collective “fall” from grace. The Greek poets Hesiod and Ovid expressed a similar nostalgic longing in their conceptualizations of the Ages of Man, which generally devolve from a state of near divinity in which man lives off the bounty of the earth (literally the Golden Age), to their “age of iron” characterized by “continual woes, labor, evildoing, and the breaking of oaths.”<sup>14</sup> Homer’s Odysseus figures as the “archetypal nostalgic hero in Western literature” because of his “heartsick longing for home,” as opposed to an historical Golden Age.<sup>15</sup> Detained by Calypso, “...Odysseus / straining to get sight of the very smoke uprising / from his own country, longs to die.”<sup>16</sup> Much of Li Yu’s (李煜) Southern Tang poetry reminisces about an earlier era of stability and

---

<sup>13</sup> *New International Version Bible*. Genesis 2: 4-25.

<sup>14</sup> Gary Meltzer, *Euripides and the Poetics of Nostalgia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 34.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 33.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Lattimore, trans., *The Odyssey of Homer* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967): I: 57-59.

personal freedom, before Song invaders overtook the Tang elites and forced Li into exile.

His “Midnight Song” typifies his grief-tinged nostalgic musings:

How can a man escape life's sorrow and regret?  
What limit is there to my solitary grief?  
I returned to my homeland in a dream,  
As I awakened, I shed two tears.  
Who now will climb up those high towers?  
I remember those clear autumn scenes.  
Those past events have lost their meaning,  
They disappear as in a dream.<sup>17</sup>

These passages showcase that, long before nostalgia had its name, humans across civilizations – individually and collectively – looked with rose-colored glasses into rearview mirrors reflecting paradises lost.

Ancient Greece itself became the object of civilizational nostalgia during the Renaissance, when “rediscovered” texts from classical antiquity prompted a foundational shift toward the humanistic method of learning and new approaches to art, literature, science, math, and music. Niccolò Machiavelli described entering his library as tantamount to visiting “the antique courts of the great men of antiquity... Without false shame I talk with them and ask them the causes of their actions; and their humanity is so great they answer me. For four long and happy hours I lose myself in them. I forget all my troubles... I transform myself entirely in their likeness.”<sup>18</sup> Later, Enlightenment philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau would exhibit a high degree of nostalgia for both humanity’s bygone Golden Age and his own personal past. In his search for the “happiest and most durable epoch,” he reached all the way back to the period of human

---

<sup>17</sup> Li Yu, “Midnight Song,” from “How Can a Man Escape Life’s Sorrow and Regret?” Accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.chinese-poems.com/y10.html>

<sup>18</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli as quoted on “The Rediscovery of Classical Antiquity,” *The Met Museum*, accessed April 16, 2016, [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/clan/hd\\_clan.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/clan/hd_clan.htm)

development at “a middle position between the indolence of our primitive state and the petulant activity of our egocentrism.”<sup>19</sup> Rousseau calls this state of relative savagery “the best for man” and muses that human civilization has led “toward the decay of the species.”<sup>20</sup> In *Confessions*, he observes that his childhood memories grow stronger as he grows older, “as though, already sensing life slipping away, I were trying to catch hold of it again at its beginnings.”<sup>21</sup> As Dennis Walder notes, Rousseau grapples here with the impassable “gap between the present writing self” and “the past that self is trying to capture” – a sense of personal self-discontinuity similar to that of Li Yu – which ultimately produces his “characteristic note of loss and yearning, of nostalgia” which also characterizes later romantics like Wordsworth, Proust, and Goethe.<sup>22</sup>

By the time Rousseau pined nostalgically for his fading childhood and those halcyon days of human savagery, a young Swiss doctor had already given a name to a medical condition characterized by intense sentimental longing to return home. In 1688 Johannes Hofer used the term “nostalgia” to describe the deteriorating physical condition of dozens of Swiss mercenaries who, serving in the lowlands of France or Italy, yearned to return to their homes in the Swiss mountains. Hofer combined the word’s constituent Greek roots, *nostos* (homecoming) and *algia* (pain), to describe the soldiers’ yearning to bridge the impassable physical divide to return home. Hofer theorized that this “neurological disease of essentially demonic cause” was the result of “earlier damage to

---

<sup>19</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Discourse on the Origin of Inequality” (London: Hackett, 2011): 65.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions* (Oxford: World’s Classics, 2000): 20.

<sup>22</sup> Dennis Walder. “Remembering Rousseau: Nostalgia and the Responsibilities of the Self,” *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 3 *Connecting Cultures* (2005): 425.

the soldier's ear drums and brain cells by the unremitting clanging of cowbells in the Alps."<sup>23</sup> Perhaps our English loan translation, "homesickness," more clearly underscores the dual aspects of nostalgia in Hofer's original conception: a physical illness rooted in a separation from home. Hofer likely would not have recognized the writings of Rousseau, Li, and Machiavelli as "nostalgic" because, unlike his soldiers, the objects of their yearning were not the physical space of home; they were childhood memories, past dynasties, and shattered civilizations. Although Hofer's articulation of nostalgia does not hold up under empirical scrutiny, Boym rightly asserts that we should not "smile condescendingly" on his efforts to define and "cure" nostalgia.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, three centuries after Hofer coined the term, the meaning of nostalgia remains the source of intense disagreement among scholars spanning the disciplines, most of whom still seek a cure – if no longer by medical treatment, then by psychological reorientation.

For about two hundred years after its "discovery" as a medical malady, the consensus understanding of nostalgia continued to revolve around the principle of spatial dislocation – from one's homeland, specifically – but, by the mid-nineteenth century, scientists emphasized the pathological qualities of what they alternately termed an "immigrant psychosis," a cousin of "melancholia" and a "mentally repressive compulsive disorder."<sup>25</sup> Soldiers and immigrants remained most at risk. American military doctor Thomas Calhoun viewed nostalgia with particular disdain, deriding it as unmanly,

---

<sup>23</sup> John Tierney, "What is Nostalgia Good For? Quite a Bit, Research Shows," *The New York Times*, July 8, 2013.

<sup>24</sup> Svetlana Boym, "Nostalgia and Its Discontents," *The Hedgehog Review* 9, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 10.

<sup>25</sup> Tierney, "What is Nostalgia Good For? Quite a Bit, Research Shows."



unprogressive, shameful, and conducive to daydreaming.<sup>26</sup> Efforts to rid patients of nostalgia included hypnosis and induced regurgitation.<sup>27</sup> By the turn of the twentieth century, a crucial shift in defining nostalgia had taken place. Andreea Ritivoi has demonstrated how nostalgia no longer was conceived as a “consequence of geographical displacement” but, instead, as a cogitation “strictly” containing a “temporal dimension” featuring a “happier past” and a “defective present.”<sup>28</sup> In fact this was simply a rediscovery of an aspect of nostalgia quite apparent in Genesis, ancient Greek thought, Tang Dynasty poetry, and Renaissance humanism. However, because it implies dissatisfaction with the features of the present, nostalgia recast as an “intense awareness of the past” – a kind of sentimentality fixated on former times, as opposed to former spaces, or former spaces and times – still drew the ire of “progressives” repelled by an ostensible urge to spatialize, in the present, features of the past.<sup>29</sup>

Twentieth-century scholars, while largely avoiding explicit characterizations of nostalgia as a disease, have mimicked Hofer and Calhoun in their quest to eradicate nostalgia and reorient toward “progress” those who “suffer” in its grips. No one attacked nostalgia more forcefully last century than Susan Stewart, who labeled it “always ideological”; “hostile to history”; and claimed it rears “a face that turns toward a future-past, a past which has only ideological reality.”<sup>30</sup> Others panned nostalgia’s “reactionary

---

<sup>26</sup> Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* 3-6; Walden 424.

<sup>27</sup> Julie Beck, “When Nostalgia was a Disease,” *The Atlantic*, accessed May 1, 2016. <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2013/08/when-nostalgia-was-a-disease/278648/>

<sup>28</sup> Andreea Ritivoi, *Yesterday’s Self: Nostalgia and the Immigrant Identity* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002): 29, 34, 36.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 28.

<sup>30</sup> Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, quoted in Jennifer Ladino, *Reclaiming Nostalgia: Longing for Nature in American Literature* (University of Virginia Press, 2012): 6.

bent”; called it “history without guilt”; and criticized its cooptation by “right-wing forces to gloss over past wrongs and glorify tradition as justification for the present.”<sup>31</sup> More recently, Dominic Sandbrook has warned against “cowering” in nostalgia’s sentimental “false escapism.”<sup>32</sup> These critics denounce the kind of “retrospective idealization” in nostalgic longing as a denial of history and an enemy of progress.<sup>33</sup> Because nostalgia may dovetail with a regressive impulse to whitewash a problematic past, they condemn this “seductive” and “manipulative” phenomenon and its delusional interpretation of history.<sup>34</sup>

To demonstrate nostalgia’s “fatal attractions” scholars have tended to fixate on historical examples in which nostalgia has been used to “glorify tradition” in deeply problematic ways. Nostalgia for colonialism has been a favorite target for criticism. Maurizio Peleggi has chronicled how some of Southeast Asia’s colonial-era hotels, like Singapore’s Raffles Hotel, “exploit their historical cachet to the fullest in their marketing strategies” in order to appeal to a certain “colonial nostalgia” which pervades the region’s tourism industry.<sup>35</sup> These hotels, through strategic architectural detailing and by playing on colonial lore, strive to create a “semblance of historical authenticity” and a “discursive authority” attractive to Western tourists.<sup>36</sup> Derek Gregory, examining marketing

---

<sup>31</sup> Ladino 5; Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1991): 688.

<sup>32</sup> Dominic Sandbrook, “It’s time to kick our addiction to nostalgia,” *The Guardian*, September 30, 2006 (Accessed February 1, 2016).

<sup>33</sup> Jonathan Bate, *John Clare: A Biography* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2003): 21.

<sup>34</sup> Boym, “Nostalgia and Its Discontents” 13.

<sup>35</sup> Maurizio Peleggi, “Consuming colonial nostalgia: The monumentalisation of historic hotels in urban South-East Asia,” *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 46, no. 3 (2005): 255.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

brochures for Egypt's travel industry, has uncovered advertisements touting that tourists will be "transported through time to years gone by...to romantic Victoriana" and boasting of the "nostalgic authenticity" which awaits the voyagers.<sup>37</sup> One piece offers "a window onto the ancient world" through which travelers can watch the "timeless scenes" which stretch back nearly "5,000 years."<sup>38</sup> The operating assumption for both Peleggi and Gregory is that tourism industries around the world use nostalgia to reconstruct, in a real, spatial way, a deeply troubled past. The romantic tint of nostalgia indeed "glosses over" the horrors of colonialism and, moreover, this spatializing can be effectively marketed and sold to consumers.

In recent decades, theorists have attempted to "recuperate" nostalgia by offering alternative articulations to nostalgia as a kind of one-dimensional "regressive historicism."<sup>39</sup> While not the first, Boym's classic *The Future of Nostalgia* is the best known of these projects, which generally contrast two varieties of nostalgia. Boym returns to the word's Greek roots in contending that "restorative nostalgia" obsesses in the *nostos*, the home, and seeks to overcome the *algia*, the pain, "through a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home."<sup>40</sup> Restorative nostalgia tempts us "to relinquish critical thinking for emotional bonding" and focuses with "paranoiac determination" on creating

---

<sup>37</sup> Derek Gregory, "Colonial Nostalgia and Cultures of Travel: Spaces of Constructed Visibility in Egypt, 1820-2000," in *Consuming Tradition, Manufacturing Heritage: Global Norms and Urban Forms in the Age of Tourism*, ed. Alsayyad, Nezar (London: Routledge, 2001): 114.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Coombes, Anne. *History after Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa*. (Duke University Press 2003): 125.

<sup>40</sup> Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* XVIII.

a “phantom homeland” for which the nostalgic goes to great extremes to restore.<sup>41</sup> “Reflective nostalgia,” by contrast, “thrives in *algia*, the longing itself, and delays the homecoming – wistfully, ironically, desperately.”<sup>42</sup> The “antidote” to its restorative binary, reflective nostalgia carries no compulsion to spatialize the object of its longing; it simply “lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and another time.”<sup>43</sup> Here Boym reintroduces *space* as an important aspect of nostalgia, distinguishing the restorative propensity to “conquer and spatialize time,” from the reflective tendency to “cherish shattered fragments of memory” and “temporalize space.”<sup>44</sup> A second crucial difference Boym sees is that, while restorative nostalgia often belongs to the group (or, at least, is foisted upon the group), reflective nostalgia “is more oriented toward an individual narrative that savors details and memorial signs.”<sup>45</sup> Restorative nostalgia, the strain dismissed by many as reactionary and regressive, dwells in *nostos*, seeks to spatialize time, and often pertains to the group. Reflective nostalgia grounds itself in *algia*, seeks to temporalize space, and generally belongs to the individual.

Nearly every contemporary theoretical treatment of nostalgia works from Boym’s ideas as its starting point. The idea of “two nostalgias” has especially gained prominence in the last decade. Jennifer Delisle prefers to differentiate the “*experiential nostalgia* of individuals” from “the *cultural nostalgia* created by national memory, myth, and

---

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. XVI, XVIII, 354.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. 354, XVIII.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 41.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. 49.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

simulation.”<sup>46</sup> Experiential nostalgia is “based on individual lived experience” and, like all nostalgia, likely “influenced by elements of fantasy, the distortion of memory, and the impact of the present inherent in the nostalgic condition.”<sup>47</sup> Because the referents of individual nostalgia are usually idealized youthful memories and romanticized versions of deceased relatives, Delisle sees these personal expressions as “therapeutic” and basically harmless.<sup>48</sup> Cultural nostalgia, on the other hand, “mobilizes” a collective “to remember a moment of public history *as a group*.”<sup>49</sup> Such moments typically include battle victories and a mythical national origin that separates the nation from “the other.” In this context, “personal emotions are subsumed by mass-produced cultural frameworks” as cultural nostalgia often assumes the “rhetorical voice of nationalism.”<sup>50</sup> Delisle advocates vigilance against this national/cultural collective nostalgia that, she worries, might be “politically dangerous.”<sup>51</sup>

Jennifer Ladino, in her book, *Under the Sign of Nature: Reclaiming Nostalgia*, embarks on a similar quest to “reclaim” nostalgia by highlighting the “spatial characteristics” which have been “latent” since its original diagnosis as a medical ailment in 1688.<sup>52</sup> Ladino reminds us that “the past has a material, geographical reality as well as an ideological narrative one,” so we cannot ignore expressions of nostalgia affixed to

---

<sup>46</sup> Jennifer Delisle, “‘For King and Country:’ Nostalgia, War, and Canada’s Tomb of the Unknown Soldier,” *The Dalhousie Review* 85, no. 1 (2005): 17.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* 31.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* 19.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* 31.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Ladino 6.

tangible physical objects.<sup>53</sup> For example, when nostalgic longing affixes itself to “nature as an object” – a backyard tree or a nearby stream – instead of an abstract idealized past, our “notion that the past is ‘only ideologically real’” loses credibility.<sup>54</sup> In literature, a character’s relationship with a certain landscape may work in a “performative, strategic manner” to incite a reader’s “insightful critique of present-day concerns” when, after the landscape is destroyed, the character exhibits a deep nostalgic yearning for it.<sup>55</sup> For Ladino, the environmental conservationist and architectural preservationist channel a progressive nostalgia because their desire to save certain buildings or landscapes does not necessarily point to a regressive ideology (though it certainly can); a felled forest or razed building provokes a kind of appropriate nostalgic spatial longing.

Ladino, like others who have accepted Boym’s dualistic conceptualization of nostalgia, functions as an apologist for a certain kind of nostalgia which ostensibly complements a vague notion of “progress.” For her, spatial nostalgia can be “insightful”; Delisle finds individual experiential nostalgia “therapeutic”; Boym clearly sympathizes with “reflective nostalgia.” It is as if nostalgia were a coin with two sides, a kind of emotional Jekyll and Hyde – as long as we avoid “regressive” nostalgias we sidestep the failures of yesterday, continuing the linear march of progress. This kind of thinking contains two major shortcomings. First, almost all of this theorizing ignores the expanding insight into the precise psychological attributes of nostalgia, an oversight which has opened a major fissure between arguments grounded in theoretical case studies and the results of scientific experimentation. Second, the efforts to exonerate certain

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 10.

“types” of nostalgia rely on a theoretical sleight of hand in which the various agendas of outside actors who appeal to personal nostalgia are conflated with the emotion itself, leading to an overstatement of the anti-progress “dangers” of nostalgia.

In the last ten years a more methodical, scientific approach to understanding nostalgia has served to “rehabilitate” nostalgia both from accusations of being an emotional perversion and from conceptualizations largely divorced from empirical psychological evidence. Clay Routledge has led the effort to place nostalgia “under the empirical microscope” and “contrast it with other modes of thought” to determine its true meaning.<sup>56</sup> The results of dozens of studies shed light on both the causal “triggers” of nostalgic longing and the adaptive and regulatory roles it plays in the human psyche. In a way these studies confirm one assumption undergirding much of the foregoing critical theory on nostalgia – that it responds to “situations that trigger negative emotions, feelings of loneliness, and perceptions of meaninglessness” or, in Ritivoi’s language, a “defective present.”<sup>57</sup> Specifically, self-discontinuity – the perception of contrast or severed links between the past and the present self – appears to be the most powerful nostalgia trigger. Major life destabilizers like occupational crises (e.g., lay-offs), health problems, relationship breakups, and the death of loved ones have been shown to instigate discontinuity, but less dramatic life events – like growing old, for Rousseau – can also provoke it.<sup>58</sup> In this way, critics at least partially anticipated the primary “cause”

---

<sup>56</sup> Clay Routledge, “The Rehabilitation of an Old Emotion: A New Science of Nostalgia,” *Scientific American* online. (Accessed 24 March 2016).

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Krystine Irene Batcho, “Nostalgia: A Psychological Perspective,” *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 80 (February 1995): 131-143.; J. Best and E.E. Nelson, “Nostalgia and discontinuity: A test of the Davis hypothesis,” *Sociology and Social Research* 69 (1985): 221-233.

of nostalgia. However, it is not just any “defective present” nostalgia addresses; it responds to a particular kind of present – one that makes the past self less recognizable to the present self.

Further, critical theorists have failed to understand what it means for nostalgia to “respond to” a state of self-discontinuity, often mistaking the effects of self-discontinuity for nostalgia itself. The distinction here is crucial. Self-discontinuity is a cognitive state often riddled with “fears, discontents, anxieties, and uncertainties” and associated with “harmful consequences” like unethical decision making, heightened anxiety, ineffective coping strategies, and, in extreme cases, suicide.<sup>59</sup> These are the symptoms, often wrongly ascribed to the nostalgic person’s view of “progress,” of the present self lacking continuity with the former self. Nostalgia, by “marshalling our psychological resources for continuity” acts as a “natural and transient” “antidote” to these negative emotional states.<sup>60</sup> Nostalgia allows us to form links with our former selves and restore the sense of an identity with continuity, which, in turn, combats the negative emotions instigated by self-discontinuity. While the precise mechanism through which this emotional regulation occurs remains unclear, the most “plausible” ways include: a “strengthened sense of belongingness or acceptance”; the instilled perception that life is meaningful; and a more

---

<sup>59</sup> Davis 34; M.J. Chandler, et al., “Personal persistence, identity development and suicide: A study of native and non-native North American adolescents,” *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development* 68, no.2 (2003); Hal Hershfield, et al., “Short horizons and tempting situations: Lack of continuity to our future selves leads to unethical decision making and behavior,” *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 117 (2012): 298–310. doi: 10.1016/j.obhdp.2011.11.002; M.J. Milligan, “Displacement and identity discontinuity: The role of nostalgia in establishing new identity categories,” *Symbolic Interaction* 26 (2003), 381-403; Sadeh, N., & Karniol, R., “The sense of self-continuity as a resource in adaptive coping with job loss,” *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 80 (2012), 93–99. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2011.04.009

<sup>60</sup> Davis 34-35; Sedikides, et al., “Nostalgia counteracts self-discontinuity and restores self-continuity” 59.



“vivid” and “relevant” connection to the past self.<sup>61</sup> Practically applied, nostalgic reverie may “alleviate” negative self-discontinuity in emotionally vulnerable groups like prisoners, hospital patients, nursing home residents, immigrants, and even first-year university students and thus contribute to better psychological health in these populations.<sup>62</sup> Accusations of nostalgia being regressive contradict the evidence. Nostalgia is an emotional “resource” which establishes “psychological homeostasis by regulating the dynamic between self-discontinuity and self-continuity” and thus helps the self cope with – not resist – change.<sup>63</sup>

I understand that the theoretical concern with nostalgia lays more in its manifestation as collective desire to restore a whitewashed history, as opposed to its psychological aspects as an individual human emotion. The insinuation has been that one person’s “individual sickness,” while on its own perhaps innocuous, somehow either contributes to a collective will to restore a problematic past or results from a top-down effort by powerful conservative forces to instigate a nostalgia that serves its agenda.<sup>64</sup> Boym, for example, worries about the “institutionalization” of nationalistic nostalgia as “state policy” based on an “emotional contract, stamped by the charisma of the past,” and she is hardly alone in her warnings in this vein.<sup>65</sup> The logic here is that collective nostalgia, when leveraged by institutions of power, acts as a dog whistle call heard only

---

<sup>61</sup> Sedikides, et al., “Nostalgia counteracts self-discontinuity and restores self-continuity” 60.

<sup>62</sup> King, L. A., et al., “Stories of life transition: Subjective well-being and ego development in parents of children with Down syndrome,” *Journal of Research in Personality*, 34 (2000): 509–536. doi:10.1006/jrpe.2000.2285; Sedikides, et al., “Nostalgia counteracts self-discontinuity and restores self-continuity” 60.

<sup>63</sup> Sedikides, et al., “Nostalgia counteracts self-discontinuity and restores self-continuity” 60.

<sup>64</sup> Boym, “Nostalgia and Its Discontents” 8.

<sup>65</sup> Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* 14-15.

by the members of a favored majority, who are then “mobilized” to actually *achieve* the restoration of a delusional, glorified historical state of affairs. Cultural nostalgia, therefore, threatens to re-victimize those who suffered in a misremembered history, marginalize those who do not understand the coded language of collective nostalgia, and, of course – the familiar argument recycled since Hofer – resist “progress.”

First, we cannot escape the fact that nostalgia misremembers the past in shades of rose. This “charisma” is an essential part of nostalgia. As Fred Davis originally theorized in his 1979 *Yearning for Yesterday* and subsequent studies have confirmed: “Nostalgia helps the individual construct continuity of identity by: encouraging an appreciative stance toward former selves; excluding unpleasant memories; reinterpreting ‘marginal, fugitive, and eccentric facets of earlier selves’ in a positive light; and establishing benchmarks in one’s biography.”<sup>66</sup> Nostalgia buoys the self by reaching into a reservoir of support, belongingness, and meaning. Admittedly delusion is mixed into the reservoir. However, the suggestion that emotions should not be grounded in delusion or that, somehow, the objects of emotions must be “accurately perceived” for emotions to be legitimate is insupportable. Fear, for example, frequently originates in a distorted sense of risk; humans fear a wide range of statistical improbabilities like plane crashes, nuclear meltdowns, and terror attacks. This does not make fear an illegitimate emotion – it becomes very useful when crossing paths with a bear. Nostalgia, similarly, cannot be dismissed on its face simply because its referents are cast in a “positive light.”

Second, we must distinguish collective nostalgia *per se*, which indeed exists as a group-level emotion, from the outside forces who might appeal to a sense of collective nostalgia to further a particular agenda. While the literature on collective nostalgia

---

<sup>66</sup> Davis 35-46.

remains scant, we know that dynamics of self-continuity affect collectives in a similar way as individuals. Specifically, “people value a sense of collective self-continuity – a sense that over time and situations, key aspects of the identity of their group or organization remain stable.”<sup>67</sup> The perception of self-discontinuity in the collective leads to a variety of “damaging” effects, including social unrest, a weakened sense of group identification and, most pertinent to this discussion, resistance to change.<sup>68</sup> Again, critics often blame this collective resistance to change, this “regressive historicism”, on nostalgia when, in reality, the perceived “threats to collective self-continuity” are what “elicit resistance” to change.<sup>69</sup> It follows, then, that what restores collective self-continuity also strengthens collective openness to change. Daan Van Knippenberg, et. al suggest that “engendering a sense of continuity of the collective self may be the more viable option in the majority of organizational change processes – not to mention the option that seems to be more attuned to organizational members’ well-being.”<sup>70</sup> In other words, those who wish to enact change – including those who view this change as “progress” – can bolster support for their agenda by projecting the change as the continuation, not break, in the collective identity. Nostalgia, with its ability to foster this very self-continuity, can play a powerful role – quite a different reality from accusations about group-level nostalgia’s regressive nature.

---

<sup>67</sup> Daan Van Knippenberg, et al., “Leaders as Agents of Continuity and Resistance to Collective Change,” in *Self Continuity: Individual and Collective Perspectives*, ed. Fabio Sani (New York: Psychology Press, 2008): 175.

<sup>68</sup> Fabio Sani, “When subgroups secede: Extending and refining the social psychological model of schisms in groups” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 31 (2005): 1074–1086. doi: 10.1177/0146167204274092; Jolanda Jetten and Paul Hutchison, “When groups have a lot to lose: Historical continuity enhances resistance to a merger” *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 41 (2011): 335–343. doi:10.1002/ejsp.

<sup>69</sup> Daan Van Knippenberg, et al. 175-179.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

In the remainder of this work, I reexamine nostalgia in light of the recent work done to understand its precise psychological function as a coping mechanism for, not barrier to, change. Specifically, I consider the case of Shenzhen, China, one of the world's fastest growing megacities, to illustrate how nostalgia enables individuals and groups to thrive despite feelings of personal and collective discontinuity. In Shenzhen, individuals who participate in nostalgic longing for an idealized past are often well-adjusted, even to conditions that render the values of yesterday "passé." Conversely, those for whom the pressures of Shenzhen deny an emotional connection to the past struggle to stay positive without nostalgia's buoying force. My case studies illuminate the tranquilizing power of nostalgia on those whose values have been assaulted by the trajectory of China's "progress." Even when provoked by outside forces, like commercial or political interests, nostalgia works to "engender a sense of the collective self" and retains its attractive emotional pull. This is achieved through commercial nostalgia's invitation to "experience" history through consumption and by political forces' ability to define "progress" as the destination of the collective's idealized history. As such, nostalgia has the potential to both heal individuals disaffected by modernization and to justify political or commercial agendas by casting them as inheritors of heritage.

## Part Two: Nostalgia in Shenzhen

### *The Return Home: Finding Strength in Nostalgia*

Shenzhen's history is often framed as that of the "Instant City," the "miraculous" outcome of an economic experiment that transformed a small cluster of fishing villages into a first-tier Chinese city and one of the world's fast-growing megacities.<sup>71</sup> Typical accounts retrace the city's thirty-five-year journey from its pre-reform condition as a "rather backward rural area," through its evolution to a "hastily put together frontier town," to, finally, its arrival as an "international modern city."<sup>72</sup> While my goal in this section is to go beyond standard accounts of Shenzhen as an Instant City, I do think anchoring our discussion in Shenzhen's historical development reveals how it became the cauldron of self-discontinuity it is today. Runaway growth in population, wealth, and urban land use has destroyed the former ways in which individuals and collectives perceived themselves. Shenzhen's high temporary migrant population and continually climbing skyline breeds a kind of perpetual discontinuity for those who remember China as a nation primarily of peasant collectives. It also epitomizes life in a "new China" where economic pragmatism has replaced ideological collectivism as the foremost guiding principle for both government and families. Nostalgia, in characteristically mutable forms and voices, dominates much of the individual and collective psyche of the city as people struggle to find stability and meaning in a milieu of change at lightning speed.

---

<sup>71</sup> Nicolai Ouroussoff, "Instant City: China's Wild West Gets Tamed," *Harpers*, June 2013, Accessed online February 7, 2016.

<sup>72</sup> Irene Hardill, "The Shenzhen Experiment," *Geography* 71, no. 2 (1986): 147.

In 1978 the Communist Party of China embarked upon a series of national reforms known as Reform and Opening Up (*gaige kaifang*, 改革开放), a major policy shift that created the so-called “Shenzhen experiment.” Targeted as one of four Special Economic Zones (*jingji tequ*, 经济特区) for market-oriented economic reforms created by de facto national chief executive Deng Xiaoping (邓小平), Shenzhen became a testing ground for a more liberal path to economic development. Deng’s reforms conferred on Shenzhen a more open regulatory scheme, allowing for “foreign specialist personnel” to gain work authorization and relaxed internal migration controls.<sup>73</sup> At the time, Shenzhen and Luohu (at the time a separate village, today a district in eastern Shenzhen) “were only stop-over places for travelers and were basically market towns serving the needs of nearby villages and providing some daily labor to Hong Kong,” with a population of approximately 30,000 residents.<sup>74</sup>

Since Reform and Opening Up, Shenzhen’s population has grown at an astounding – if not alarming – rate. In 1980, Chinese officials forecasted Shenzhen to grow to 800,000 residents by the year 2000 and, ultimately, reach a population cap of just more than four million at an unspecified point in the future.<sup>75</sup> Actual population growth has shattered those figures: In 1984, just four years after its designation as an SEZ, Shenzhen’s population had already increased tenfold from its 1980 level, to nearly 300,000, and by 2000 neared eight million, ten times the initial projection for that year. The latest official estimate, from the end of 2014, places the official population of

---

<sup>73</sup> D.R. Phillips and A. G. O. Yeh, “China Experiments with Modernisation: The Shenzhen Special Economic Zone,” *Geography* 68, no. 4 (1983): 294.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* 291.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* 294.

Shenzhen at 10.78 million, a number which many say skews low.<sup>76</sup> Juan Du, who considers the number of SIM cards activated within Shenzhen the most accurate indicator of its daily population, suggests the current population could reach as high as 22 million.<sup>77</sup>

The population boom in Shenzhen has been fueled almost exclusively by domestic and international migration. The “overwhelming majority” of the Chinese migrants hail from villages where “local rather than personal poverty is an important push factor” for migrating to Shenzhen.<sup>78</sup> Many are unskilled “temporary” laborers who, more often than not, see Shenzhen in terms of the remittances its growing economy enables them to send home.<sup>79</sup> They typically work low-paying jobs as construction laborers, housemaids, janitors, and factory workers and live in Shenzhen’s notorious crowded “urban villages” (*chengzhongcun*, 城中村), low-cost housing complexes built by native Shenzheners in the 1980’s. While an increasing proportion is women, most of these migrants are still men, two-thirds of whom migrate to Shenzhen without their spouse and children, who stay back in the home village.<sup>80</sup>

Auntie Hu, a fifty-year-old migrant from rural Hunan Province, earns 2,500 yuan per month doing full-time janitorial work at the local primary school, income supplemented by the 1,800 yuan from her evening job as a housemaid for a wealthy

---

<sup>76</sup> “Overview,” Shenzhen Government Online, accessed Feb 2, 2016, <http://english.sz.gov.cn/gi/>; Juan Du, interview in Asia Society.

<sup>77</sup> Juan Du, interview in Asia Society.

<sup>78</sup> Thomas Scharping, “Selectivity, migration reasons, and backward linkages of rural-urban migrants” in *Internal and International Migration: Chinese Perspectives*, ed. Hein Mallee and Frank N. Pieke (Oxford: Routledge, 2004): 75, 83.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* 79.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.* 75.

Shenzhen family. Together, this income, from a sixty-hour workweek, still puts her below the unofficial average Shenzhen salary of 5,500 yuan. The youngest of seven children, Auntie Hu somehow manages to send money home each month to her parents and the five siblings who remain there. Although she feels immense pressure to provide for the older and younger generations – she has a son and grandson, too – Auntie Hu accepts her hardscrabble existence with a simple “*mei banfa*” (没办法), the Chinese phrase indicating roughly “there is nothing I can do about it.” For sixteen years she has worked this hectic schedule, but the last three years have been especially difficult because she has only traveled back to Hunan once. When she first moved to Shenzhen, she traveled back to Hunan twice yearly, for both Spring Festival and early October’s Golden Week holiday. Now, facing pressures to support her family amid rising costs of living, Auntie Hu stays in Shenzhen during holidays to avoid a complete loss of salary and the expense of train tickets. Her devotion to home compels her to make ends meet, but I get the sense that she might benefit from a trip back to her Hunan village to reconnect with her family and with her past.

By staying in Shenzhen, Auntie Hu misses out on what has become the national celebration of nostalgia: the “Spring Movement” (*chunyun*, 春运). Once called “the largest human migration,” the rush home to celebrate the Lunar New Year holiday with family and friends prompted an estimated 2.91 billion journeys nationwide in 2016.<sup>81</sup> For residents of Shenzhen, Spring Festival offers an important opportunity to return home and reach into the reservoir of connectedness, familial support, and self-identity they often lack in Shenzhen, where most hold temporary work status (*zanzhuzheng*, 暂住证).

---

<sup>81</sup> “Carpools Catch On During China’s Spring Festival Travel Rush,” *Shenzhen Daily*. February 2, 2016, accessed April 11, 2016, [http://www.szdaily.com/content/2016-02/02/content\\_12794038.htm](http://www.szdaily.com/content/2016-02/02/content_12794038.htm)



The entire holiday evokes nostalgic reminiscing for a mystical past – not just the rosy childhood memories of red envelopes (*hongbao*, 红包), the televised New Year’s variety show, and generally “warm feelings” of family in celebration, but also for the lost magic of past Spring Festivals. Nostalgia’s ability to offer an uplifting “sense of belongingness or acceptance” and a meaningful connection to the past makes the Spring Movement an important source of emotional sustenance for Shenzhen’s migrants. It allows them to see their current struggle in Shenzhen as a sacrifice for those with whom they share a happier past.

Celebrating Spring Festival in Shenzhen does not confer these emotional benefits on Auntie Hu, who continues to struggle with the pressures of the city’s frenzied pace. “Completely different,” she says, as she shakes her head, of her Spring Festival experience in Shenzhen. The sight and touch of loved ones, the smell and taste of home-cooked specialties, and the sound of laughter at home all instigate a much more visceral nostalgia than the makeshift party she organizes for her small family in Shenzhen. It is obvious Auntie Hu wants to go back to Hunan but refuses to neglect the financial duties she perceives as daughter, sister, mother, and grandmother. She is trapped in an economic machine with no time for nostalgic reminiscences. Although she works tirelessly to contribute to her family in Hunan, the “vividness” and “relevance” of this past fades the longer she does not return home. In turn, her quotidian struggle assumes a Sisyphean quality; her weakening connection to home obscures the reasons for her ceaseless grind.

Auntie Hu is a woman to whom celebrating nostalgia has been denied. She misses home, but defers the homecoming in an effort to maximize her production in Shenzhen’s ruthless economy. Her feelings of nostalgia remain – she feels it when she

thinks of all of her siblings as children again – but their power is muted without the “sensory cues” she might encounter back in Hunan. She clearly feels the strain of economics in “new China,” but, without the reinforced sense that her present life connects to her past, her sacrifices carry extra weight. She does not dare to offer a critique of Reform and Opening Up, but I read her dispirited mien as the outcome of someone trying to survive amid extraordinary change without the full psychological boost nostalgia offers.

\*\*\*

*Food: Individual Nostalgia for the Values of the Past*

A short walk in any direction from my apartment in southeast Bao'An District leads to a variety of regional culinary specialties, from six-table alfresco stalls serving Lanzhou's famed pulled noodles or spicy Hunan fare, to large national chain restaurants specializing in Sichuan-style hotpot (*HaiDiLao*, 海底捞) or hearty northwestern cuisine (*XiBei*, 西贝) at the nearest megamall (*HaiYaBinFenCheng*, 海雅缤纷城). Because seemingly every city in China boasts its own "local specialty dish" (*dangdi tesecai*, 当地特色菜) and because Chinese people strongly identify with the distinct flavors of their home region, food works as a very powerful nostalgia trigger in a city where the vast majority of residents are migrants. The steamed bun (*mantou*, 馒头) seller, whose stall sits just a block from my apartment, fondly remembers how the steam from her cooking barrels was the only source of heat keeping her warm on frigid mornings in her hometown in Northeast China. Her daily routine of preparing, steaming, and selling buns connects her with her home – and the past life she led – thousands of miles away. Likewise, members of a particular regional diaspora in Shenzhen can consume "home-cooked" meals thanks to the expanding array of chain restaurants serving regional specialties and the increasing availability of diverse produce and cooking ingredients at supermarkets.

But food instigates more than nostalgia for home; it can be a powerful way for the individual to participate in a broader collective nostalgia. Mary O'Donnell has chronicled how "food nostalgia" enables "Old Shenzheners" – those who came to Shenzhen "to demonstrate...political commitment to economic reform" yet still believed

in the intrinsic good of socialism – to link “food memories” to their experiences of “work brigades in the countryside” during Mao Zedong’s (毛泽东) political rule.<sup>82</sup> For Big Sister Liang, the subject of O’Donnell’s 2010 article “The Cultural Politics of Eating in Shenzhen,” the nostalgic pangs triggered by eating a certain style of cornbread, for example, embody “an ostensible appeal for the values of socialist society” – namely, that the state’s “raison d’être” is to “feed the people.”<sup>83</sup> Each encounter with Shandong-style steamed cornbread conjures up rose-tinted retrospectives of being “rusticated” in the work brigades, when the communist spirit of working for the collective good promised to sustain the country. Big Sister Liang, along with other Old Shenzheners who came to Shenzhen in the 1980’s and early 1990’s, brought a commitment to socialist values with them to remake Shenzhen in the spirit of the revolution. Her nostalgic longing fixates not only on Maoist China, but also on the “Old Shenzhen,” when, at least in her memory, the city resembled “a commune, in that everyone was working for a common aim” and when, for a moment, Old Shenzheners like her experienced the “fulfillment of the revolution.”<sup>84</sup>

Big Sister Liang’s “food nostalgia” reflects a self-discontinuity prompted by a jarring shift in social values, embodied as swiftly widening wealth disparity and social stratification. In thirty-six years, Shenzhen has transformed itself from a base for manufacturing, garment making, and the other low-tech, labor-intensive industries that played to its comparative advantages of cheap labor and low cost of production, into a regional and global leader in high-tech industries of computer software, biotechnology,

---

<sup>82</sup> Mary Ann O’Donnell, “The Cultural Politics of Eating in Shenzhen,” *The Journal of Critical Food Studies* 10, no. 2 (2010): 34.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* 38.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

and finance. Per capita nominal GDP has risen sharply, increasing from the 1980 level of 720 CNY to 4,032 CNY by 1994, to 164,664 CNY in 2014 (nearing the nominal GDP per capita of countries like Spain and South Korea).<sup>85</sup> But the dividends of this economic boom have not been enjoyed evenly. In 2012, China's Gini coefficient – an index which measures a nation's wealth inequality – placed it in a band the World Bank describes as “severe income inequality,” ranking third most unequal among the world's twenty-five most populous countries.<sup>86</sup> Separate reports estimate that the top one percent of China's population now controls one-third of the country's wealth. What Kenneth Rapoza described as a “common scene” in Beijing – “poor locals offering candy and window washing services for the nation's one percent rolling by in a Beamer” – can very well be said about Shenzhen, now, arguably, China's wealthiest city.<sup>87</sup>

A critical contributor to wealth disparity in Shenzhen, like elsewhere in China, is the country's household registration (*hukou*, 户口) system, which has long distinguished “urban” from “rural” residents. In the *hukou* system, city registrants historically enjoyed preferential access to services in education, health care, and pensions and benefited from a concentration of resources in cities. Rural residents in China's planned economy, meanwhile, were prohibited from moving off the countryside excepting, for example, the rare occasion when a rural student managed to test into university, in which case his or

---

<sup>85</sup> “2014 年深圳人均 GDP 达 14.95 万元 居副省级城市首位,” last modified February 5, 2015, accessed February 20, 2016, [http://district.ce.cn/zg/201502/05/t20150205\\_4527300.shtml](http://district.ce.cn/zg/201502/05/t20150205_4527300.shtml)

<sup>86</sup> Gabriel Wildau and Tom Mitchell, “China's income inequality among world's worst,” *Financial Times*, January 14, 2016, accessed April 23, 2016, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/3c521faa-baa6-11e5-a7cc-280dfe875e28.html#axzz46tOmrax>

<sup>87</sup> Kenneth Rapoza, “The China Miracle: A Rising Wealth Gap,” *Forbes*, January 20, 2013, accessed April 23, 2016, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kenrapoza/2013/01/20/the-china-miracle-a-rising-wealth-gap/#2042639c6012>

her *hukou* would be temporarily transferred to the location of the college. Reforms in the 1970's and 1980's effectively allowed peasant farmers (*nongmingong*, 农民工) who had been ejected from state collectives the opportunity to seek employment in booming coastal cities like Shenzhen. The gradual, continuous liberalization of the *hukou* system enabled a freedom of movement for rural peasants, who could now attain temporary work authorization (*zanzhuzheng*, 暂住正). While *hukou* reforms indeed created new opportunities for social mobility, they have also codified urban-rural classism into urban economic development policy, with glaring quality-of-life discrepancies between those with permanent Shenzhen *hukou* and those with temporary work authorization permits. In effect, Shenzhen's wealthiest include the relatively small number of original Shenzhen natives (*bendiren*, 本地人), as well as the roughly three million who have "earned" permanent Shenzhen *hukou* by virtue of advanced degrees, employment offers from state-owned enterprises (*guoqi*, 国企) or public institutions like hospitals and schools, and large private companies like app developer Tencent. The vast majority of Shenzhen's population carries the *zanzhuzheng* which, other than granting a legal right to live and work in Shenzhen, offers little in the way of public benefits.

In the face of this social stratification and the concentration of wealth in the upper echelon of Chinese society – especially if this represents Deng's vision for "socialism with Chinese characteristics" (*Zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi* 中国特色社会主义) – it is no wonder why an idealistic socialist like Big Sister Liang would feel alienated from the China she once knew. Contemporary Shenzhen, and Chinese socialism itself, no longer reflects the common values that she and her socialist comrades espoused in the early days of Shenzhen's development. In fact O'Donnell observes a "changing historical

consciousness” wherein so-called New Shenzheners’ “commodified appetites” embody the “selfish” view that food is consumed according to one’s personal desires.<sup>88</sup> This starkly contrasts with Old Shenzheners’ nostalgia for “socialist meals” in which individual self-sacrifice often enabled the feeding of the larger collective.<sup>89</sup> The younger, wealthier Shenzheners of today share neither socialism’s food memories nor the communal values they convey; Big Sister Liang’s son cynically views his mother’s preference for northeastern-style cornbread as “just another fad in which personal taste and a desire to try new foods were the important considerations.”<sup>90</sup> New Shenzheners “not only dismiss” but actively “mock” the idea of self-sacrifice for the common good.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, for them “what constitutes ‘good fortune’” is a question of “personal desire and private ethics.”<sup>92</sup>

The derision with which New Shenzheners look upon this kind of nostalgia is symptomatic of a broader failure to understand older generations trying to find meaning in a China they no longer recognize. As is often the case with those who scorn nostalgia, New Shenzheners view the question in terms of modernization and progress. As O’Donnell notes, “New Shenzheners pride themselves on their city’s efficiency, sanitation, and progressive policies, which are explicitly connected to the project of modernization.”<sup>93</sup> For them, Liang’s food nostalgia seems like the delusional rejection of

---

<sup>88</sup> O’Donnell 37-38.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. 36.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. 37.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

modernity's "clean interiors" and "soap and toilet paper in spotless bathrooms" in favor of the tumultuous Cultural Revolution, a time when those with urban *hukou* were often harshly "rusticated" and lived on rationed rice and corn gruel and urinated in open fields.<sup>94</sup> But this misreads how nostalgia functions here – as an internal quest to find meaning in memories where progress meant something else and where the good of collective took priority over "personal desires." The values of Old Shenzheners, while at odds with those of the reigning political, economic, and values systems, reinforce a standard of morality in the midst of a modernization project rife with corruption. Big Sister Liang, while admitting her commitment to socialism is "passé," credits her nostalgic flashes with keeping her "honest" when "confronted" with the "many temptations" of bribes and kickbacks she encountered in her role as a construction supervisor.<sup>95</sup> In other words, nostalgic longing for the days of a higher "political morality" does not indicate an opposition to modernity – Liang "often argued there was nothing wrong with earning money" – it allows the self to operate in modernity in a way consistent with values forged in the past.<sup>96</sup>

Big Sister Liang reminds me of my Grandma Turtle, who liked to talk at length about the frugality and hard work she valued as a young woman coming up during the Great Depression. Food often triggered her nostalgia, too; she would marvel especially the abundance of meat at backyard cookouts, an amount she could not have fathomed as a teenager in 1930's Youngstown, Ohio. She told of breadlines and scrap salvaging. Implicit in her nostalgic reminiscences was the critique that Americans had strayed from

---

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. 35.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. 37.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. 38.



the values that, in her mind, made it a strong society: thriftiness, sacrifice, and simple gratitude. These values, like those cherished by Big Sister Liang, stayed with my grandmother through the point at which they became “passé” in a culture of overabundance, overconsumption, easy credit, and ballooning debts. Neither my grandmother nor Big Sister Liang advocates the “trans-historical reconstruction” of two greatly troubled eras in their nations’ respective histories. Their nostalgic longing for the values of an admittedly idealized past reinforces their sense of a continuous self-identity across two vastly different worlds. These women echo the sentiments of the authors of the Bible, Ovid and Hesiod, Machiavelli, and Rousseau; they sense that we as humans, from one generation to the next, fail to live up to the standards our ancestors set. These memories do not reject modernity; they see, in the rose shades of fading memories, room for improvement.

\*\*\*

*Alumni Associations: Individual Nostalgia for a Collective History*

Mr. Liu typifies the kind of economic success story shared by many for whom circumstances allowed a Shenzhen permanent hukou. A 57-year-old native of Yancheng in Jiangsu Province, Liu embodies a familiar narrative of the many that flocked to Shenzhen in the 1990's and 2000's and found considerable material success. Around 2000, then in his forties and faced with a successful but stagnant engineering career in a tiny provincial "factory town" in Jiangsu, he looked to Shenzhen, where his older brother had recently moved to further his career as a cartographer. Liu saw promise in Shenzhen's economic growth and, in 2002, found work as a low-level manager with the property management division of the Shenzhen Metro Management Company, a state-owned enterprise whose main project is managing the city's fast-expanding metro lines. Seeing the choice as one between certain decline and the promise of prosperity, Liu and his wife moved to Shenzhen, where they quickly received permanent Shenzhen *hukou* as a result of his job at a state-owned enterprise. Aside from the couple's joint income, which now sits far above the median salary level in Shenzhen, the Liu family, among other lucrative ventures, has ridden Shenzhen's property market, turning an initial purchase of a sixty-square-meter apartment in central Futian District into a series of well-timed investments which have all fetched handsome profits.

Mr. Liu does not hesitate when asked if he made the right decision in leaving Yizheng. Once a jewel of China's state-owned Sinopec, the factory town now languishes behind the province's more diversified economic centers like Nanjing, Suzhou, and Changzhou. Cut off from the nation's growing rail and road infrastructure improvements and unable to offer a competitive standard of salary, education, or health care as China's

major cities, Yizheng lost many talented residents like Mr. Liu over the previous two decades. Mr. Liu and his wife spend at least one Saturday afternoon each month, often more, to gather with several such migrants, old friends from Yizheng who relocated to Shenzhen around the same time. The conversation at these “gatherings” (*juhui*, 聚会) invariably turns to nostalgic reminiscing about former times in Yizheng, almost always fixating on either the happy simplicity of life in Yizheng or the values that people shared. Auntie Zhang and Mrs. Yu share a retrospective feeling that the relative poverty of the factory town was acceptable because they “didn’t realize they were poor” and because “everybody was equally poor.”<sup>97</sup> Everyone remembers the town’s excellent primary school, novel-for-the-time theme park, and the sense of camaraderie residents shared.

While Mr. Liu’s friendships from Yizheng provide him a sense of personal continuity in constantly morphing Shenzhen, he derives more tangible benefits from his formalized connections with both the Yancheng hometown association and the Yancheng University alumni association. These associations are salient evidence of nostalgia’s capacity to bolster a sense of social connectedness. Meetings of the hometown association (*laoxianghui* 老乡会) and alumni association (*xiaoyouhui* 校友会) often bring together established, mid-career males like Liu for badminton matches and banquet-style meals, where they engage in informal information sharing about everything from Shenzhen’s soaring housing prices to the latest rumors about development projects in Yancheng. Amid the nostalgic reminiscences – Mr. Liu’s brother, “too poor to afford a pillow,” warmly recalls the pillow his girlfriend bought him in college – serious business negotiations also take place. Mr. Liu invested in a startup venture he learned

---

<sup>97</sup> Informal interview, Shenzhen, November 2015.

about at a meeting of the alumni association, a project that will soon go public and earn for Mr. Liu millions of Chinese yuan. When asked if he has friends in Shenzhen from outside of his home province, Mr. Liu hesitates. He can name only one: last year, he made friends with a man from Hunan living in the same apartment complex. This is not atypical for members of the alumni association and mirrors more formal studies which show that home-province-based relational networks play a significant role in career advancement for migrants to Shenzhen.<sup>98</sup>

Mrs. Yan, Mr. Liu's sister-in-law, explains to me why these associations often become a place to find friends, business partners, doctors, and other "trusted contacts" for navigating life in Shenzhen. In Chinese, the prefix *tong* (同) indicates the "sameness" of a shared experience, as in classmates, (*tongbantongxue*, 同班同学, "same class"), colleagues (*tongshi*, 同事, "same work"), and even those with whom we sat together at a shared meal (*tongzhuo*, 同桌, "same table"). "When we find someone who is *tong* with us," Mrs. Yan says, "we immediately have a feeling of trust because we experienced something together. This is very important for Chinese people."<sup>99</sup> Establishing a "feeling of trust" takes on immense importance for virtually every transactional relationship in scandal-prone contemporary China. In the past year alone, local or national news stories have featured tainted childhood vaccinations, a catastrophic landslide, and malfunctioning escalators, stoking already heightened fears of rampant corner-cutting in Chinese society. As Mrs. Yan continues: "Doing things with someone who shares a past with us leaves us able to "rest assured" (*fangxin*, 放心). The

---

<sup>98</sup> Scharping 90.

<sup>99</sup> Informal Interview, Shenzhen, April 23, 2016.

insinuation here is that members of the associations – united by their respective participation in collective nostalgia – share a set of values that transcend the myopic, money-driven whims of an often corrupt development machine. By extending the “positive light” of nostalgic longing beyond one’s individual memories, collective nostalgia uses the fondness for an idealized past as a tool to protect the group from outside threats. It engenders Mr. Liu’s inherent trust in those from Yancheng. Nostalgia connects them in the present, via the shared memories of a “happier past,” and makes them allies in their contemporary struggle for survival, which strengthens them each as individuals and the association as a collective.

The overall strength of the associations, as well as the individuals’ allegiance to the group, stems from members’ belief in the special, unifying power of a shared “charismatic” past. This kind of entity-oriented collective nostalgia scares Boym and Delisle, who see this kind of “restorative” or “cultural” longing as precursor to the marginalization of group outsiders by the “monsters” it “breeds.”<sup>100</sup> To be clear, there is no difference in the “kind” of nostalgia in which Mr. Liu partakes and that which Boym and Delisle condemn: Mr. Liu’s reflexive belief that association members are more trustworthy – and, for that matter, the broader Chinese preference for those with whom they have *tong*-ness – is no different than one American’s belief that the mystique of the Revolutionary War bonds her to a fellow American. This affinity for a mythical past, on its own, strengthens connections between group members by promoting a sense of shared self-continuity. While the merits of strong group identification are debatable, the intimation that this kind of collective nostalgia differs from less the ominous “reflective” or “experiential” nostalgia lacks substantiation. Nostalgia does not seek to victimize

---

<sup>100</sup> Boym, “Nostalgia and Its Discontents” 10.

those outside the shared memories of collective history. But it can be used by forces that do.

\*\*\*

*Consumerism and Nostalgia: Establishing Self-continuity through the Consumption of History*

One of the principal criticisms of nostalgia is its susceptibility to opportunistic takeover by outside actors who seek to further a particular agenda. Above, I discussed the phenomenon of “colonial nostalgia,” in which the global travel industry, according to Peleggi and Gregory, projects an atmospheric nostalgia in its marketing literature and hotel spaces in an apparent effort to drive consumerism. Dai Jinhua views the consumption of “nostalgic” literature and film during the 1990’s as the reflection of “a culture, a fashion, a cultural, psychological, and consumerist need and wish fulfillment.”<sup>101</sup> I find that these observations, while accurate in their suggestion that nostalgia can induce consumerism, miss the more important question of *why* nostalgia wields the power it does as a lubricating force for consumption, for there is nothing revelatory in noting that emotions drive consumption. The more relevant question relates to what “consumerist need” and “wish fulfillment” appeals to nostalgia satisfy in the marketplace.

Maya Nadkarni, in her analysis of nostalgia in post-socialist Hungary, suggests that commodifying and consuming nostalgia are the “means by which the present is disarticulated from recent history.”<sup>102</sup> She sees nostalgia as an attraction to the “aura of

---

<sup>101</sup> Dai Jinhua, “Imagined Nostalgia,” *boundary 2*, 24, no. 3, *Postmodernism and China* (Autumn 1997): 149.

<sup>102</sup> Maya Nadkarni, “‘But It’s Ours’: Nostalgia and the Politics of Authenticity in Postsocialist Hungary” in *Post-Communist Nostalgia*, ed. Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012): 194-195.

singularity” which a monument or historical period attains “at the time of its passing.”<sup>103</sup> In the context of post-Soviet Hungary, Nadkarni interprets the “consumption of the detritus of official state culture” as a way to differentiate “the ‘Soviet past’ and the ‘Western present.’”<sup>104</sup> This argument becomes especially “tidy” when one considers the very act of consumption to be the essence – Nadkarni calls it a “fetish” – of capitalist societies.<sup>105</sup> Of course the problem with Nadkarni’s paper is that it relies on a characterization of nostalgia in direct opposition to its demonstrated psychological function. Nostalgia responds to situations that trigger self-discontinuity – in this case, a Western present at odds with a Soviet past – by fostering a sense of self-continuity. People do not feel nostalgic in order to “disarticulate.” Consuming nostalgia for an idealized Soviet past likely reflects the collective’s effort to experience their own history, an act which confers continuity upon the group identity.

Indeed, the promise of self-continuity is precisely the “consumerist need” that those who “sell” nostalgia offer. Dai actually has very keen sense of this. In her 1997 article “Imagined Nostalgia,” she focuses on the consumption of nostalgia in cinema, literature, and television in 1990’s China to demonstrate that “imagined nostalgia” was neither a “trend of thought” nor an “undercurrent that resists the systematic progress of modernization,” but rather, simply, a “fashion through which contemporary Chinese participate in the global consumerist paradigm.”<sup>106</sup> One of the paradoxical outgrowths of the explosive speed of development in China, she argues, is that, as modernization creates

---

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. 194.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. 195.

<sup>106</sup> Dai 144.



a wealthy consumer class by “flattening out” authentic historical spaces, these new consumers increasingly clamor to experience the very history their wealth has destroyed.<sup>107</sup> Consuming an objectified nostalgia – old Communist propaganda posters or the litany of novels and films furnished by Dai and Chen, for example – promises to “rebuild a kind of imagined link between the individual and society, between history and the present reality, in order to provide a rationale for our contemporary struggle and to impart to us some sense of comfort and stability.”<sup>108</sup> This conceptualization squares with the body of psychological evidence about nostalgia; products that connect us with our own sense of history – even a history we did not experience firsthand – will attract those seeking to mitigate feelings of societal or personal discontinuity.

This explains the ongoing project at GanKeng Hakka Village (*gankeng kejia xiaozhen*, 甘坑客家小镇), where redevelopment promises to transform the fourteenth-century ruins of the Hakka outpost into a major tourist attraction in the Buji sub-district of Longgang District, Shenzhen. The \$24 million USD investment project, funded by the local government and cultural organizations, focuses on repairing 150 dilapidated houses of the original Hakka community, constructing an outdoor shopping center, preserving the ancient examinations hall and watch tower, and connecting the entire compound to Shenzhen’s urban center with a sleek new transportation station. In a city with a paucity of noteworthy historical monuments, investors are betting that tourists will prefer take in the Hakka village while sipping a milk tea at a boutique café, rummaging through curio shops, and enjoying the scene from the waterside terrace at one of the forthcoming high-end restaurants or bars. Meanwhile, visitors can also learn a bit of Hakka history from

---

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. 146.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. 160.

the staked placards scattered throughout the village. The redevelopment, by coating a historical monument with the sheen of consumerism, offers urban elites a chance to “experience” a history they fear modernization threatens. Like buying the detritus of Soviet state culture, visiting Hakka Village becomes a way to connect to the collective history by consuming a productized version of it. The consumer seeks neither to reconstruct this past nor distance herself from it; the act of consuming history allows her to situate the present on the continuum of collective historical experience.

I do not think that this literal commodification of nostalgia is the only way that commercial interests can capitalize on consumers’ desire for self-continuity. Sometimes a sense of continuity can be achieved simply by creating a backdrop of atmospheric nostalgia that convinces consumers that their shopping experience – regardless of what they buy – somehow connects them with their personal or shared histories. To illustrate this point, I want to consider the atmospheric nostalgia at Shenzhen’s OCT Happy Harbor shopping district (*huanle haian*, 欢乐海岸), a massive entertainment and business complex in Nanshan District replete with business centers, hotels, stores, restaurants, cafés, an amphitheater, IMAX, and many other state-of-the-art facilities designed to induce high-end consumerism. Opened in 2011, Happy Harbor markets itself as a “new experience of international coastal life” and the “new model for ecological culture” (*guoji binhai shenghuo xin tiyan*, *doushi shengtai wenhua xin zuobiao*, 国际滨海生活新体验, 都市生态文化 新坐标). The avant-garde architecture, pop music cascading from speakers in the public square, and glistening window fronts collectively project an aura of futuristic and innovative consumerism.

Ironically, however, through the heart of this ultrachic complex winds a warren of walking streets emitting an ambiance clearly designed to provoke nostalgia for China's past. From the architectural detailing, to crisscrossing bridges over man-made streams, to the glow from hung lanterns illuminating storefronts and immaculately manicured garden areas, much of Happy Harbor evokes a prototypical Chinese scene from an anonymous dynasty in the distant past. Perhaps aspects vaguely resemble one of Suzhou's famed imperial gardens or Hong Village, a UNESCO heritage spot near the slopes of the mystical Yellow Mountains. Here, nostalgia *per se* is not for sale (though it is inside the Happy Harbor mall, where jade sellers and tea paraphernalia stores make a more direct overture to the nostalgic sensibilities of customers with thousands of disposable Chinese yuan on hand). Instead, it sets the mood for the throngs of shoppers, situating international consumerism on the continuum of Chinese history. To those who grew up in Maoist China, where to be called a "capitalist roadster" was the ultimate insult, it signals beyond doubt that this center of consumerism proudly bears the imprimatur of the official keepers of Chinese culture. Indeed, as Dai notes, this kind of strategic appeal to nostalgia renders modernization "no longer the miracle of the 1979 reform of an old China in decline but an always integral part of the history of China."<sup>109</sup> Far from an attempt to "disarticulate" a communist past from a capitalist present, the appeal to nostalgia at Happy Harbor is part of an effort to situate both of these realities on the singular continuum of Chinese history.

Developments like Shenzhen's OCT Happy Harbor legitimize global consumerism's place in the Chinese economic development model by allaying fears that

---

<sup>109</sup> Dai 159.

the “giddy and aggressively rapid” growth of the “anonymous big city” will strip away the ability of urban elites in contemporary China to experience historical China.<sup>110</sup> Dai sees commercialized nostalgia as an illusory “ray of hope” for the Chinese people, struggling to make sense of a country that has replaced ideological communism with the “ideology of progress,” by inviting them to participate in their history through the very mechanisms of modernization which “truncate” the nation’s “enduring visible history.”<sup>111</sup> In other words, to answer the original question of *why* nostalgia makes a good partner for commercial interests: it offers the delusion that the consumer is a participant in the past being sold or, in the case of Happy Harbor, invoked. Through this participation, people draw a connecting line between present and past which enables them to adapt and assent to drastic paradigmatic shifts. Lu Hanchao notes how the paradoxical explosion of interest in Mao Zedong memorabilia amid the frenzied commercialism of 1990’s Shanghai reveals nostalgia as “positive, spirited, and receptive” to changes in mainstream Chinese culture, not as a subversive conservative critique.<sup>112</sup> This view of nostalgia comes much closer to the psychological evidence than Nadkarni’s theory that nostalgia-fueled consumerism seeks to “disarticulate” history from the present. Nostalgia consumption is a stabilizing force, fostering identity continuity in the individual and collective. It allows history – admittedly, one misremembered – to survive, to stay relevant in, and, most powerfully, justify the present.

---

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. 146-147.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Lu Hanchao, “Nostalgia for the Future: The Resurgence of an Alienated Culture in China,” *Pacific Affairs* 75, no. 2 (2002): 170.

### **Part Three: Political Nostalgia: Creating Collective Nostalgia to Serve the State**

We have seen how an individual's participation in collective nostalgia can be a powerful force for self-continuity. Both Mr. Liu's preference for Jiangsu natives and Big Sister Liang's collectivistic morality stem from a sense that their present identities are inextricably bound to their past participation in, and continued nostalgia for, a shared happier past. This bestows on them a high degree of self-continuity and personal stability despite a drastic change in external circumstances. Commercial interests capitalize on this hunger for self-continuity by leveraging products and atmospheres that offer consumers a chance to participate in a golden past. Similarly, political forces in Shenzhen have leveraged the stabilizing power of nostalgia by provoking a collective longing for a history that Shenzhen shares with Hong Kong. In so doing, they aim to position Shenzhen as not just in the vanguard of a new China, but also the continuation of an old China that held the promise of great economic strength. In this way, they seek to legitimize Deng Xiaoping's pivot toward market economics by touting Shenzhen's success as a forerunner for the entire country's prosperity.

Shenzhen symbolizes the new China after Reform and Opening Up, the "miraculously" successful experiment of capitalist reforms. As Mary O'Donnell has observed, Shenzhen was the stage "from which the Chinese Communist Party first broadcast its intention to transform the socialist system" by "integrating the powers of capitalist production into the production of socialist politics."<sup>113</sup> But for the committed ideological communists of "old China," like Mr. Liu and Big Sister Liang, the drastic change in economic systems also irrevocably disrupted the country's foundational values.

---

<sup>113</sup> Mary O'Donnell, "Attracting the World's Attention: The Cultural Supplement in Shenzhen Municipality," *Positions* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 93.

Many in older generations, and even some born in the post-Reform era, feel the negative effects that discontinuity often portends: feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, and hopelessness. The enormous pressure of daily living in Shenzhen takes its toll on migrants like Auntie Hu, who scramble to stay afloat amid the rocketing cost of living. While some enjoy white-collar jobs at state-owned enterprises offering the security of an “iron rice bowl” (*tiefanwan*, 铁饭碗), others toil in the harsh working conditions of factories like Foxconn, where, in 2010, a spate of suicides was uncovered. “Progress” has also destroyed the physical environment. The proportion of land described as “urban land” in Shenzhen increased from nine percent in 1980 to 40 percent in 2010.<sup>114</sup> Meanwhile, land described as “agricultural” and “forested” has decreased from 16 percent to two percent and 56 percent to 46 percent, respectively.<sup>115</sup> The Chinese idiom “moving mountains, filling oceans” (*yishan tianhai*, 移山填海) quite literally describes the approach to development pursued by Shenzhen authorities since Reform and Opening Up. Government officials face the challenge of justifying market reforms that have created enormous wealth inequality and anxiety in a professedly communist country.

Nostalgia has become one tool by which, at least rhetorically, Communist officials can legitimize market reforms. By calling on a mythical past shared with Hong Kong, Chinese officials position Shenzhen and, by extension, all of China as the rightful heir to Hong Kong’s economic prosperity – a future it would have had “were it not for a

---

<sup>114</sup> Qian, Jing, et. al, "Urban Land Expansion and Sustainable Land Use Policy in Shenzhen: A Case Study of China’s Rapid Urbanization," *Sustainability* 8, no. 1 (2015).

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

cruel twist of socialist fate.”<sup>116</sup> The 1997 handover of Hong Kong from the United Kingdom to the People’s Republic of China, O’Donnell notes, “enabled a re-telling of the history of Xin’an County, a rhetorical gesture that provided a cultural means for appropriating Hong Kong through state representations of family lineages and local tradition.”<sup>117</sup> As Chinese planners affirmed their preference for market-oriented development, especially after the ascent of Chairman Hu Jintao (胡锦涛) in 2002, Hong Kong became not only a symbol of what Shenzhen and, by extension, China *could become*, but, in as far as Hong Kong had always been Chinese, what China *already was*.

Shenzhen and Hong Kong are, in fact, descendant from the same ancestors of the late Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279 CE), the point at which continuous habitation in the area now known as Shenzhen likely commenced.<sup>118</sup> United as the political administrative region of Xin’an County during the Ming Dynasty, inhabitants of this largely rural expanse shared a common language (Cantonese) with wider Guangdong but subsisted in relative insularity on fishing and local agriculture.<sup>119</sup> These pre-colonial centuries, in which Beijing ruled Xin’an from a distance, are the basis of a shared Xin’an past.<sup>120</sup> British imperialists, who prized Hong Kong for its strategic location in the imperial race for world hegemony, struck a blow at this shared cultural past with the First

---

<sup>116</sup> Mary Ann O’Donnell, “Becoming Hong Kong, Razing Bao’an, Preserving Xin’an: An Ethnographic Account of Urbanization in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone,” *Cultural Studies* 15, no. 3/4 (2001): 425.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.* 432.

<sup>118</sup> “Overview,” Shenzhen Government Online, accessed February 2, 2016, <http://english.sz.gov.cn/gi/>

<sup>119</sup> John Garver, *China’s Quest: The History of the Foreign Relations of the People’s Republic of China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

Opium War, which ultimately ended in the unequal Treaty of Nanking in 1842 and the ceding of Hong Kong Island and the New Territories to the British Empire.

Over the next century and a half, Hong Kong and Xin'an (by 1913 called Bao'an) diverged. The British invested in Hong Kong education and infrastructure as it became a critically strategic entrepôt for Britain's Pacific imperial designs (or, more cynically, state-sanctioned opiate trafficking). Xin'an, meanwhile, received little attention from provincial or imperial authorities on the mainland as the Qing Dynasty collapsed at the turn of the century and, eventually, China descended into a period of chaotic, fragmented warlord rule in the interwar years of the twentieth century. After the Second World War, the Communist Party took power and "closed" China while Hong Kong "was integrated into the Pacific strategic circle forged by the U.S. in order to contain the potential threat of an emerging socialist China."<sup>121</sup> As a result of the ascent of the Chinese Communist Party in 1949, Guangdong Province received scant investment from government planners, who feared the province's proximity to Taiwan, the Philippines, and South Vietnam made infrastructure there "vulnerable to attack" from the United States or the Chinese Nationalists.<sup>122</sup> As Hong Kong developed a reputation as "an ideal place for business and financial opportunities," Shenzhen languished as that "rather backward rural area" we encounter in perfunctory accounts of the city's history.<sup>123</sup>

On the heels of the catastrophic Cultural Revolution and riding a wave of economic pragmatism, Deng Xiaoping implemented the twin policies of Reform and

---

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. 371.

<sup>123</sup> Zhang Pinggong, *Culture and Ideology at an Invented Place* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013): 54.



Opening Up in 1978, ushering in development at “Shenzhen speed.” Officials cited Shenzhen’s geographical proximity to Hong Kong as impetus for selecting it to become a “major adjunct” to the highly industrialized economy to the southeast.<sup>124</sup> The idea was to combine “cheap Guangdong labor and land with Hong Kong’s industrial manufacturing needs to produce goods for global markets.”<sup>125</sup> In practice, Deng also leveraged the fact that relational networks remained strong between Xin’an and Hong Kong, even after the British conquest. Zhang Pinggong writes that “the flow of people and goods has never ceased before and after the closure of the border due to geographical proximity as well as cultural dependency, including shared faith, customs, cultural values, and lifestyles.”<sup>126</sup> Hong Kong investors played a significant – if not decisive – role in catapulting Shenzhen to its status as a major financial and trading center on the mainland. Weiping Wu has documented how fully seventy-eight percent of the \$1.45 billion USD in FDI contracted in Shenzhen between 1986 and 1994 flowed from Hong Kong, much of it in the same low-tech, labor-intensive industries that flourished in Hong Kong in the 1960’s and 1970’s.<sup>127</sup> The “long-established” links in trade, culture, and language between Shenzhen and Hong Kong served as “the primary determining factor underlying Shenzhen’s success” – a success, Wu argues, that “certainly” was not guaranteed without “major benefactors” from Hong Kong.<sup>128</sup> Indeed, more than half a millennium of historical ties and the associated “cultural proximity” and “kinship networks” of the

---

<sup>124</sup> Hardill 147.

<sup>125</sup> Garver 372.

<sup>126</sup> Zhang 54.

<sup>127</sup> Wu Weiping, “Proximity and Complementarity in Hong Kong-Shenzhen Industrialization,” *Asian Survey* 37, no. 8 (1997): 773.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.* 791.

former Xin'an County neighbors, created favorable conditions for the rise of the Instant City.<sup>129</sup>

These relational networks solidified through the 1980's and 1990's despite Beijing's official posturing, which treated Shenzhen and the other SEZ's as experimental islands of market capitalism in an ocean of authoritarian socialism. By literally enclosing the Shenzhen SEZ within a three-meter-tall barbed-wire fence wall, Communist Party authorities hoped to achieve dual goals of attracting investment to a clearly defined economic zone and minimizing the "overspill" to other parts of China the "undesirable effects of Western influence and economic policies."<sup>130</sup> In a sense, even after Reform and Opening Up, Chinese officials sought to disarticulate Shenzhen from its shared ancestral past with Hong Kong, even as policy changes brought reunited them through economic cooperation. Fears of "contamination" by "Western" influence visualized Hong Kong in a way fundamentally *different* from Shenzhen, even as old kinship networks gained newfound strength on the ground.

With the Shenzhen model of economic liberalization gaining momentum throughout the 1990's, the 1997 transfer of Hong Kong afforded an opportunity for the state to "appropriate" Hong Kong as a part of the shared heritage of historical Shenzhen, and thus as a vision of China's successful future. Appeals to nostalgia for Xin'an become the ideal tool through which the "Prodigal Son" Hong Kong can be airbrushed into the public memory of Shenzhen. John Bodnar has written how states construct versions of "official culture" on the "basis of timelessness and sacredness" to convince citizens of the

---

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Phillips 290.

“valor” of their collective history.<sup>131</sup> Examples of an emergent “official culture” version of Xin’an history include government projects to restore Ancient Nantou City (*Nantou gucheng*, 南头古城) and DaPeng Fortress, efforts O’Donnell insists are meant “to evoke the pre-Opium War unity of Hong Kong/Shenzhen in the territorial form of Xin’an.”<sup>132</sup> Nostalgia for Xin’an also litters “news articles and documentaries that emphasize this common history” as well as in “popular songs and television soap operas” that play up the “historical connection” between Shenzhen and Hong Kong.<sup>133</sup> The effort to “restore” Hong Kong within Chinese history has evidently worked. Eric Kit-wai Ma notes how the cultural boundary between Hong Kong and the mainland “becomes fuzzier and more unstable” as Hong Kong culture is “re-Sinicized” and “its brand of modernity is exported, reproduced and localized in other parts of China.”<sup>134</sup>

Nostalgia for the “ShenKong” collective history of Xin’an takes on added significance when one considers that the descendants of Xin’an, the original Shenzhen “locals,” constitute a small minority of Shenzhen’s population today, so much so that Mandarin long ago replaced Cantonese as the lingua franca here. Further, the effort is hardly limited to Shenzhen; as Kit-wai demonstrates, the appropriation of Hong Kong as Chinese is a nationwide phenomenon. To me this suggests that government efforts to reunite Shenzhen and Hong Kong are simply the façade through which they justify – by showing that the historical destiny of all Chinese is the prosperity of contemporary Hong

---

<sup>131</sup> John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992): 13-15.

<sup>132</sup> O’Donnell 435.

<sup>133</sup> O’Donnell 432.

<sup>134</sup> Eric Kit-wai Ma, *Desiring Hong Kong, Consuming South China: Trans-border Cultural Politics, 1970-2010*. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012): 28.

Kong – Deng Xiaoping’s economic reforms. Nostalgia powerfully states this case, as it evokes personal and collective links between the mythical past – regardless whether it was experienced firsthand – and a present in need of explanation. The Communist regime profits from its stabilizing effect on individuals and groups who feel alienated and broken by cultural, political, or personal change. Amid the daily pressures of life in Shenzhen, nostalgia bestows meaning, connectedness, and purpose to people like Auntie Hu, Big Sister Liang, and Mr. Liu. They see their lives in continuity, some more than others, with their pasts. They see Shenzhen – and their roles in its “progress” – as one step in the national march toward a future justified by nostalgia for the past.

## Conclusions

Outside forces, like those with political and commercial interests, often capitalize on nostalgia's ability to bestow meaning, connectedness, and strength on those who feel skeptical about the course of "progress." This, to me, is the best way to understand nostalgia's "threat." It hands those powerful enough to define progress a tool with which to cast the present and the future as the destiny of the past. This future can be a kind of "restoration" of the past, as Boym envisions in post-Soviet Russia. But nostalgia can also be used to justify futures which look entirely different, as with Shenzhen's extraordinary rise from backwater to megacity. The politics of nostalgia are paradoxical. Critics who condemn nostalgia in one breath likely invoke it in the next. Those sickened by a "conservative" nostalgia for 1950's American stability may view the contemporary campaign for expanded minority rights protections as the continuation of the mystical Civil Rights movement led by the heroic Martin Luther King, Jr. Nostalgia responds to the threat, alienation, and discontinuity of the present by grasping for a golden past. Forces of discrete political and commercial objectives can leverage nostalgia to further their particular agendas, provided they successfully engender the individual or collective sense of self-continuity. Even "natural" nostalgia can, to a certain extent, provide a tranquilizing or stabilizing influence in the face of systemic change. Mr. Liu's nostalgia for his hometown and Big Sister's food nostalgia allow them to adjust themselves, in a way that is "true" to their pasts, to an economic machine bankrupt of old Chinese values. Auntie Hu, deprived – in her eyes, by this machine – of the Spring Festival homecoming, conversely, visibly struggles to cope with the mounting pressures of life in Shenzhen. Those who allow themselves to fully engage in nostalgia for "old China" seem more able

to assign meaning to their past lives in a way that escapes those who are focused on running in the hamster-wheel of contemporary Shenzhen.

We need to move away from the conceptualization of different “types” of nostalgia. Different referents of nostalgia exist – one’s childhood, a mythical collective past, one’s homeland, etc. – but nostalgia is always the experience of sentimental longing to return to an idealized past in space and time. By tolerating some nostalgias as “therapeutic” or “reflective” and dismissing others as “dangerous” or “reactionary,” scholars assign nostalgia a value in terms of a morality of “progress,” a concept loaded with relativism. Just like we must be careful to separate our fears, angers, or joys from both their objects and their origins, we must understand nostalgia’s psychological purpose – to bolster perceptions of self-continuity – as well as the agendas of those who may provoke nostalgia for their own interests. Nostalgia itself has no morality; it simply longs for a connection between future, present, and past. The writers of the Genesis story and epic Greek poetry, Machiavelli, Rousseau, Li Yu, Big Sister Liang, and Mr. Liu all cope with feelings of personal, societal, or civilizational discontinuity by longing for a better past. Those who strategically induce nostalgia, like the Chinese government and multinational corporations, employ nostalgia to further an agenda, a policy, or a worldview. In a world of rapid change, we would do better to ask ourselves a more relevant question:

Whose progress?

\*\*\*

We don't see lightning bugs much anymore. They don't take well to urban sprawl, I hear. Damn shame. I guess my kids' summers won't be as magical as mine.

John Prine again:

“Then the coal company came with the world's largest shovel

And they tortured the timber and stripped all the land

Well, they dug for their coal till the land was forsaken

Then they wrote it all down as the progress of man.”

## References

- Batcho, Krystine Irene. "Nostalgia: A Psychological Perspective." *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 80 (February 1995), 131-143.
- Bate, Jonathan. *John Clare: A Biography*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2003.
- Best, Joel and Edward E. Nelson, "Nostalgia and discontinuity: A test of the Davis hypothesis," *Sociology and Social Research* 69 (1985), 221-233.
- Bodnar, John. *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books, 2001.
- "Nostalgia and Its Discontents." *The Hedgehog Review*, 9.2 (Summer 2007). University of Virginia Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture.
- Chan, Thomas M.H., and R. Yin-Wang Kwok. "Economic Development in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone: Appendage to Hong Kong?" *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science* 19, no. 1/2 (1991): 180-205.
- Chandler, Michael, Christopher Lalonde, Bryan Sokol, and Darcy Hallett. "Personal persistence, identity development and suicide: A study of native and non-native North American adolescents," *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development* 68, no. 2 (2003).
- Chen, Wendy and C.Y. Jim. "Amenities and Disamenities: A Hedonic Analysis of the Heterogeneous Urban Landscape in Shenzhen (China)". *The Geographical Journal* 176, no. 3 (2010): 227-240.
- Coombes, Anne. *History after Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa*. Duke University Press, 2003.
- Dai Jinhua. "Imagined Nostalgia." *boundary 2*, 24, no. 3 *Postmodernism and China* (Autumn 1997), 143-161.
- Davis, Fred. *Yearning for Yesterday*. New York: Free Press, 1979.
- Delisle, Jennifer. "'For King and Country'": Nostalgia, War, and Canada's Tomb of the Unknown Soldier." *The Dalhousie Review* 85, no. 1 (2005): 15-32.
- Faure, David. "An Exploratory Study of PingShan, a Hakka Village Cluster to the East of Shenzhen." *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 32 (1992): 180-192.



- Garver, John W. *China's Quest: The History of the Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Gregory, Derek. "Colonial Nostalgia and Cultures of Travel: Spaces of Constructed Visibility in Egypt, 1820-2000." In Alsayyad, Nezar. *Consuming Tradition, Manufacturing Heritage: Global Norms and Urban Forms in the Age of Tourism*. London: Routledge, 2001.
- Hardill, Irene. "The Shenzhen Experiment." *Geography* 71, no. 2 (1986): 146–148.
- Hepper, Erica G., Wildschut, Tim, Sedikides, Constantine, et. al. "Pancultural nostalgia: prototypical conceptions across cultures." *Emotion* 14, no. 4 (Advance online publication, 2014): 733-747.
- Hershfield, Hal, Taya Cohen, and Leigh Thompson. "Short horizons and tempting situations: Lack of continuity to our future selves leads to unethical decision making and behavior," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 117 (2012), 298–310. doi: 10.1016/j.obhdp.2011.11.002.
- Jetten, Jolanda and Paul Hutchison, "When groups have a lot to lose: Historical continuity enhances resistance to a merger" *European Journal of Social Psychology* 41 (2011), 335–343. doi:10.1002/ejsp.
- Juhl, Jacob, Elizabeth Sand, and Clay Routledge. "The effects of nostalgia and avoidant attachment on relationship satisfaction and romantic motives." *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 29 (2012): 661–670.
- Juhl, Jacob, Clay Routledge, Jamie Arndt, Constantine Sedikides, and Tim Wildschut. "Fighting the future with the past: nostalgia buffers existential threat." *Journal of Research in Personality* 44, no. 3 (2010): 309-314.
- Kammen, Michael. *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*. New York: Knopf, 1991.
- King, Laura, Christie Scollon, Christine Ramsey, and Teresa Williams. "Stories of life transition: Subjective well-being and ego development in parents of children with Down syndrome," *Journal of Research in Personality* 34 (2000): 509–536. doi:10.1006/jrpe.2000.2285
- Ladino, Jennifer. *Reclaiming Nostalgia: Longing for Nature in American Literature*. University of Virginia Press, 2012.
- Ma, Eric Kit-wai. *Desiring Hong Kong, Consuming South China: Trans-border Cultural Politics, 1970-2010*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012.
- Meltzer, Gary. *Euripides and the Poetics of Nostalgia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

- Milligan, Melinda J. "Displacement and identity discontinuity: The role of nostalgia in establishing new identity categories," *Symbolic Interaction* 26 (2003): 381-403.
- Nadkarni, Maya. "'But It's Ours': Nostalgia and the Politics of Authenticity in Postsocialist Hungary" in *Post-Communist Nostalgia*, ed. Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille. New York: Berghahn Books, 2012.
- Ng, Mee Kam, and Wing-Shing Tang. "Theorising Urban Planning in a Transitional Economy: The Case of Shenzhen, People's Republic of China." *The Town Planning Review* 75, no. 2 (2004): 173–203.
- O'Donnell, Mary Ann. "Attracting the World's Attention: The Cultural Supplement in Shenzhen Municipality." *Positions* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 67-97.
- "Becoming Hong Kong, Razing Bao'an, Preserving Xin'an: An Ethnographic Account of Urbanization in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone." *Cultural Studies* 15, no. 3/4 (2001): 419-443.
- "The Cultural Politics of Eating in Shenzhen." *The Journal of Critical Food Studies* 10, no. 2 (2010): 31-39.
- Peleggi, Maurizio. "Consuming colonial nostalgia: The monumentalisation of historic hotels in urban South-East Asia." *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 46, no. 3 (2005): 255-265.
- Phillips, D.R., and A.G.O. Yeh. "China Experiments with Modernisation: The Shenzhen Special Economic Zone". *Geography* 68, no. 4 (1983): 289–300.
- Qian, Jing, Yunfei Peng, Cheng Luo, Chao Wu, and Qingyun Du. "Urban Land Expansion and Sustainable Land Use Policy in Shenzhen: A Case Study of China's Rapid Urbanization." *Sustainability* 8, no. 1 (2015).
- Ritivoi, Andreea. *Yesterday's Self: Nostalgia and the Immigrant Identity*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Confessions*. Oxford: World's Classics, 2000.
- "Discourse on the Origin of Inequality." London: Hackett, 2011.
- Routledge Clay, Jamie Arndt, Tim Wildschut, Constantine Sedikides, Claire Hart, Jacob Juhl, and Wolff Scholtz. "The past makes the present meaningful: Nostalgia as an existential resource." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 101 (2011): 638–652.
- Routledge, Clay. "The Rehabilitation of an Old Emotion: A New Science of Nostalgia." *Scientific American*. 10 July 2013. Web. 24 March 2016.

- Sadeh, Noa and Rachel Karniol. "The sense of self-continuity as a resource in adaptive coping with job loss," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 80 (2012), 93–99. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2011.04.009
- Sani, Fabio. "When subgroups secede: Extending and refining the social psychological model of schisms in groups." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 31 (2005), 1074–1086. doi: 10.1177/0146167204274092.
- Scharping, Thomas. "Selectivity, migration reasons, and backward linkages of rural-urban migrants" *Internal and International Migration: Chinese Perspectives*, ed. Hein Mallee and Frank N. Pieke. Oxford: Routledge, 2004.
- Sedikides, Constantine, Tim Wildschut, Clay Routledge, and Jamie Arndt. "Nostalgia counteracts self-discontinuity and restores self-continuity" *European Journal of Social Psychology*. 45 (2015): 52-61.
- Seehusen, Johannes, Filippo Cordaro, Tim Wildschut, Constantine Sedikides, Clay Routledge, Ginette Blackhart, Kai Epstude, and Ad J. J.M. Vingerhoets. "Individual differences in nostalgia proneness: The integrating role of the need to belong." *Personality and Individual Differences*, 55 (2013): 904–908.
- Van Knippenberg, Daan, Barbara Van Knippenberg, and Andrea Bobbio. "Leaders as Agents of Continuity and Resistance to Collective Change," in *Self Continuity: Individual and Collective Perspectives*, ed. Fabio Sani. New York: Psychology Press, 2008.
- Walder, Dennis. "Remembering Rousseau: Nostalgia and the Responsibilities of the Self." *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (2005): 423–430.
- Wu, Weiping. "Proximity and Complementarity in Hong Kong-Shenzhen Industrialization." *Asian Survey* 37, no. 8 (1997): 771–793.
- Xiao, Jin, and Mun C. Tsang. "Human Capital Development in an Emerging Economy: The Experience of Shenzhen, China: Research Note". *The China Quarterly* 157 (1999): 72–114.
- Xie Zuozheng, Zhong Genrou, Yu Hongbing, Tian Ning and Wang Yisen. "Research on Shenzhen's Role in Facilitating the Transformation of Chinese Migrant Workers." Survey Office of the National Bureau of Statistics in Shenzhen, China. Accessed January 30, 2016.
- Zhang, Pinggong. *Culture and Ideology at an Invented Place*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013.