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Gladys Pak Lei Chong^a

^a Department of Media Studies, University of Amsterdam, Turfdraagsterpad 9, 1012 XT, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

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Chinese Bodies that Matter: The Search for Masculinity and Femininity

Gladys Pak Lei Chong*

Department of Media Studies, University of Amsterdam, Turfdraggsterpad 9, 1012 XT Amsterdam, The Netherlands

This article is an inquiry of why such significance has been assigned to sports in general and the Olympics in particular in China. It looks at how history and politics intersect with gender. I explain how the historicity of China's traumatic past – how it fell prey to the western imperialists – has allowed the state to draw on the biopolitical discourse that links its subjects' physical, mental and moral attributes to that of the survival and revival of a Chinese nation. This article examines the ways in which gender ideals/norms were inscribed onto the athletes' bodies that helped exemplify China's nation-building project and its pursuit of modernity. My analysis focuses on the representation of their bodies, clothes and corporal expression. Three sets of male and female athletes of three different periods were examined: (1) Liu Changchun and Yang Xiuqiong, representing the Republican China; (2) Li Ning and Lang Ping, representing the post-opening up period; (3) Liu Xiang and Guo Jingjing, representing the global China. I argue that manliness and femaleness are cultural as well as political products produced according to the needs of the nation and the state at different historical moments; and both men and women carry their share of national burden.

Keywords: the sick man of Asia; gender ideals/norms; bodies; athletes; nation-building; modernity

Introduction

Me: Why do people cast such high expectations on Liu Xiang?

Interviewee 1: Because Chinese do not know much about track and field sports, Liu Xiang as a Chinese performed so well in the track and field sports, then everyone certainly expected much from him.

Interviewee 2: The pride of Chinese, he is the fastest.

Interviewee 1: Yes, we all shared the thought that the Bird's Nest [the National Stadium] was built for him, it cost RMB 38 billion, then he withdrew from the competition ... Track and field sports, Chinese don't really understand them, interests in track and field sports are chiefly because of Liu Xiang, that's why everyone was interested in track and field sports.

Me: Wasn't there a female athlete, Wang Junxia?

*Email: p.g.chong@uva.nl

Interviewee 1: Yes, but that was in 1992, she broke the world record, or was it in 1991, then it was in the long-distance; short-distance, Asians are not good at that ... Chinese men are not performing so well in sports, for example, in this short-distance track and field sports competition, China had never had good results.¹

The rumour that the Bird's Nest was built for Liu Xiang spoke for the hope and expectations cast on a male athlete. Liu Xiang shot to fame overnight when he won an Olympic gold medal in the 110-meter hurdles in the 2004 Athens Games. This moment was discursively produced as a significant historical moment as it was believed that Chinese were not good at track and field games, just as my interviewees suggested. Liu might have been the first Chinese male who won a gold medal in track and field events but he was not the first Chinese gold medallist in these games. In fact, the first Chinese track and field Olympic gold medallist was Wang Junxia, a female athlete specialising in the long-distance track event in the 1996 Atlanta Games – not in 1991 or 1992 as my interviewee said. Wang Junxia was not the only one; Wang Liping (a female race walker) also won a gold medal in the 2000 Sydney Games. Wang Liping recalled that her participation in the female 20-kilometer race walk was not an important game in the eyes of the Chinese. When she won the game, no Chinese journalists were around. It was later when the journalists heard the news that they ran to the venue.² These female athletes never enjoyed popularity like Liu. This prompts one to ask why the significance of a male athlete winning a gold medal outweighed that of female athletes. Rather than suggesting it as yet more evidence of a male-centred/-dominated discourse, I believe this could very well be a point where gender intersects with Chineseness. The 'Chineseness' I am referring to here is linked to China's historical background and its march to modernity.

The Olympic Games are never just about sports. How a nation-state performs in sports competitions is associated with the strength of the nation: not only in terms of its politico-economic strength but also the symbolic strength of the nation as a whole.³ In the hope of demonstrating a strong and modern China that is no longer 'the sick man of Asia', Chinese athletes have embodied this dream of the nation to perform well in international sports competitions. Athletes who win gold medals in the Olympics are seen as heroes/heroines, often assigned with a star-like status. Given the popularity of many athletes in contemporary China, research on the representation of both male and female Chinese athletes is rare, anthropologist Susan Brownell being an exception.⁴ Brownell was the first to use the constructivist approach to analyse the body politics of female athletes in the post-Mao era. Yet, none so far has used this approach to study the Chinese male athletes.⁵ In fact, there is a strong tendency in Chinese gender studies to focus on women.⁶ As Jinhua Emma Teng writes, 'while our knowledge of women in China has greatly expanded, we must examine issues of masculinity as well as femininity if we wish to gain an informed understanding of gender in China'.⁷ While there are attempts to address this lack of 'Chinese men studies',⁸ studies on Chinese male athletes and their relation to nation-building remain scarce.⁹

This article seeks to scrutinise the construction of gender ideals pertaining to the Chinese athletes in the period leading up to the 2008 Olympics. Through the representation of Chinese athletes of three different Olympic moments, I study the changing perceptions on femininity and masculinity. Three questions guide my analysis: (1) what kind of masculine and feminine ideals were assigned to athletes of different time periods? (2) How did these gender ideals articulate specific versions of Chineseness? (3) How did these ideals change over time? The three sets of male and female athletes I analysed here represent three significant moments in the Chinese history: the Republican China (1919–1949), the post-opening up era (1980s) and the global China (the period around the Beijing Olympics). My analysis aims to show the interplay between gender and body, and it is structured according

to three aspects: clothing, facial and corporeal expressions. I argue that manliness and femaleness are cultural as well as political products produced according to the needs of the nation and the state at different historical moments.

Below, I first discuss briefly what historians of Chinese gender studies have written about these three periods. Next, I give a brief account on the rationale of choosing these three sets of athletes and the corpus I used for my analysis. Then, I discuss how the bodily image of the past was used to garner people's support for China's pursuit of glory in the Olympics. This is followed by my analysis on the representation of the three sets of male and female athletes. I conclude this article with a summary of my arguments and some questions for future research.

History, Politics, Gender

History and politics intersect with the production of gender. Gender scholars find that masculinity and femininity were not so directly linked to sexuality in China as in the West.¹⁰ Tani Barlow writes that for a long time, the principal site for the production of gender in China was the *jia* (lineage unit, family); woman then was defined by her role as daughters (*nü*), wives (*fu*) and mothers (*mu*).¹¹ Sex identity grounded on anatomical difference ('*nüxing*-woman') was a 'Western-inspired concept used by Republican-era reformers (1912–49)'.¹² At the turn of the twentieth century, many reformers started to relate China's weakness and backwardness to the oppressive condition of women. The once-celebrated femaleness that promoted women's seclusion from public life and bound feet was then regarded as a symbol all that afflicted China.¹³ Femaleness and maleness are mutually informing discourses, they help define each other.¹⁴ This category of *nüxing*-woman emerged along with the category of *nanxing*-man. Chinese men felt emasculated and feminised as they failed to protect their family and to defend their country from the imperialist West.¹⁵ They became the impotent Other that lacked manly strength. The ideal manliness that was once associated with the dyad *wen-wu* (literary martial)¹⁶ was challenged.¹⁷ Many reform-minded Chinese at that time blamed the Confucian tradition as the cause of China's weakness, a tradition that placed strong emphasis on the mind (literacy) and undervalued the body (physical strength).¹⁸ The ideal in social Darwinism, survival of the fittest, had convinced many that 'strong bodies' made a 'strong nation'.¹⁹ To save the nation, the bodies of men and women had to be emancipated.²⁰

After the new China was established in 1949, *funü* – female family member – was to replace *nüxing* as a social category. Chinese feminist Li Xiaojiang suggests that *nüxing* contains the word *xing* (sex) and this was considered inappropriate for the gender equality promoted by the regime.²¹ In fact, the state emphasised 'a uniform and unified national culture' and any markers of difference would be suppressed.²² The androgynous image of female (dressed in dull colours and looked like soldiers) was a response to the criticisms of Chinese femininity of the earlier time.²³ Emily Honig writes, 'one had to act like a man; to behave as a woman risked being labelled a "backward element"'.²⁴ She also observes that the idea of gender equality was more a one-way street as women had to act and compete like men but men rarely took up any traditional female roles and duties.²⁵

From the late twentieth century onwards, the presence of capitalism and global culture brought by reform and open policy has led to drastic changes in gender norms. Gender difference, especially female sexuality, becomes prominent. Women studies scholars, however, doubt that if the pursuit of femininity reflects 'real freedom' as they also observe that the market reforms have become unfavourable for women in the labour force.²⁶ Both Harriet Evan and William Jankowiak believe that one could trace more continuity between

gender norms in the reform era and the previous decades than was often assumed.²⁷ In Evans's study of changing images of the ideal wife, she finds the idea that women will only fully realise themselves through wifehood and motherhood remains strong.²⁸ Whereas, Jankowiak writes that Chinese men strongly believed that masculinity is acquired through becoming successful or accomplishing something.²⁹ The market reforms brought anxiety and confusion to these men as they felt the need to define their masculinity through 'success' yet they were uncertain what defined 'success'.³⁰ It only becomes clearer today that success is defined by the marketplace, rather than holding a government position or educational achievement. Brownell, writing against the backdrop of the Beijing Olympics, writes that the demand of sexual women in the recent decades could very well implicate the return of male potency as China becomes stronger and more powerful internally and externally.³¹

Corpus

The three sets of male and female athletes are chosen to represent these three historical moments in the Chinese history. Representing the Republican-era, Liu Changchun and Yang Xiuqiong are selected for their associated links to the Chinese Olympic history mentioned by the Chinese media. Representing the post-opening up period, Li Ning and Lang Ping are chosen for their popularity in the 1980s and also their recent reappearance in the 2008 Games. Representing the global China, Liu Xiang and Guo Jingjing are chosen for their huge popularity during the 2008 Games – in terms of media attention and the amount of advertising endorsements.

The corpus I use includes TV recordings, weekly and monthly magazine articles published in 2008, interviews I conducted in 2008, and my own observations. From the large amount of TV recordings, I have selected the Olympic programmes produced by China Central Television (CCTV) and advertisements shown on both CCTV and Beijing Television (BTV) that used athletes as spokespersons. The CCTV Olympic programmes include *Sports News*, *CCTV9 Daily News Report*, *Olympics Approaching*, *The Road to Glory – Sprint*, and *Olympiad & China*, a 10-episode documentary programme broadcast in July 2008 (hereafter *Olympiad*). The two films I use are *The One Man Olympics* and *Dream Weaver*. I attended the premiere of *The One Man Olympics* (hereafter *The One*) on May 17, 2008 at the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Auditorium.³² Although *The One* was largely funded by the government,³³ it was not promoted as the official Olympic film. *Dream Weaver* was the official Olympic documentary film; its production was supported by the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympia. The weekly and monthly magazine articles published in 2008 I have chosen include *Lifeweek*, *China Newsweek*,³⁴ *Bazaar* and *Executive*.³⁵ I have also included in my analysis interviews I conducted with the directors of both films mentioned above, Hou Yong and Gu Jun, and with Olympic volunteers.

Body, Nation, the Olympics

'The sick man of Asia' has been discursively mobilised to shape Chinese attitudes towards sports, body and nationalism. In narrating China's century-old Olympic dream, the links between sports, fragile Chinese bodies and China's humiliating past are often drawn. The story unfolds as follows: the dynastic empire under the Qing government was too weak to defend itself against the invading western imperialists. China's incapability of defending itself gave it an insulting title – 'the sick man of Asia'. Images about the old China – often depicting men in pigtailed looking malnourished, tired and slave-like in poverty-ridden

settings – were shown in *Olympiad* (Figures 1–3). Their frail bodies, coupled with their expressionless faces, gave the impression that they lacked both physical and emotional strength. What contrasted sharply was the manliness embodied by the powerful imperialist West. Western men were seen to wear short hair and fit-to-body clothes, an image of fitness and neatness that they would be ready to take on any physical action (Figure 3). Chinese men's pigtails and their loose clothes in the form of *cheongsam*, *changpao* or *dagua* made them look clumsy and effeminate.

To visually manufacture a sense of collective pain, these images borrowed the reductionist and self-orientalising stereotypes about China and the West: the fragile and effeminate Chinese versus the strong and masculine West. This representation of Chinese men eliminates versions of Chinese masculinities that are, for example, defined by the *Wen-Wu* dyad,³⁶ or *caize* (the fragile scholar).³⁷ The representation of a clear Chinese–western divide, despite its attempt to manufacture a sense of shame and nationalistic sentiments, enhances the Orientalist way of seeing the West and the Orient.³⁸ China is presented as the West's feminised Other. These archival images of Chinese men show how the Orientals have orientalised themselves: how they come to understand themselves through the eyes of the West and how they evaluate themselves through the standard set by the West. Rey Chow points out that orientalism as a way of seeing 'can be used by natives and non-natives alike'.³⁹ The repetitive performances of the Chinese male bodies vis-à-vis the western bodies shape one's perception on what constitutes manliness and what needs to be done to achieve this norm. Interestingly, the female body, for example the bound feet, is absent in these representations. A plausible explanation would be that women are not the primary defenders of a country, whereas men are often made to carry the burden of defending the country physically. Just like the infamous 'sick man' label, the primary focus is the sick *man*, not woman.

What these bodily images of the past convey is a biopolitical discourse that links the development of subjects to the overall strength of a nation.⁴⁰ China is strong when its men also become strong. Modern sports and physical activities are presented as the answers to save China.⁴¹ Sports performance is shown to symbolise the strength of China and its people. Poor performances of Chinese delegations in international competitions like the Olympics (e.g. the 1936 Berlin Games or the 1952 Helsinki Games) are shown as failures of

Figures 1–3. Images of Chinese men shown in *Olympiad* (courtesy of China Central Television).

the people and the country. It brings back the whole history about China's humiliating past and the shameful 'sick man' title. To do well in the Olympics is presented as a necessity for the state and for the people. This nationalistic sentiment has existed since Republican China, and has persisted till today. Sports and the athlete's body have come to play a symbolic role in the development of a 'new' China and the rise of Chinese nationalism.

'I can compete!' – Liu Changchun and Yang Xiuqiong

The modern Olympic Games, re-created after the Greek Olympic Games 3000 years ago, symbolise the origins of western civilisation. Participating in the Olympics signifies China's ambition to pursue modernity and to catch up with the western Others. This ambition was articulated in the first Chinese translation of Olympiad – *wonengbiya*, (literally meaning 'I can compete'), a term coined by Song Ruhai, the first official Chinese representative to the 1928 Amsterdam Games.⁴²

Liu Changchun is described as China's first Olympic athlete.⁴³ His life story and his pursuit of the Olympic dream were brought up repeatedly in the Chinese media in the period around the Beijing Games. *The One*, a 24-episode TV series *Chasing Dream*, and many documentary programmes are some of the known examples. Liu was portrayed as a doomed national hero born in a time of turmoil. Despite all the challenges surrounding him, Liu never gave up and he managed to represent China in the 1932 Los Angeles Games. He embodied not only the dream of China, but also the ideal Chineseness – patriotic, tough and resilient. The archival news images of Liu before embarking on the Olympic journey showed how he embodied this national dream.⁴⁴ Liu's clothes – a *cheongsam*, unlike the others in suits – displayed his embodiment of the nation's ambition. And, yet, his stern face and his covered-up body seemed to suggest that he was burdened by the nation. In contrast, Zhang Xueliang⁴⁵ stood next to him looking confident and relaxed; the nation did not weigh down on him as it did on Liu, as shown in Figures 4 and 5. His suit empowered his position, showing that he was a modernised Chinese who could bridge China and the outside world (Zhang made China's Olympic dream possible

Figures 4 and 5. Images of Liu Changchun (left) and Zhang Xueliang (right) shown in *Olympiad* (courtesy of China Central Television).

by donating 8000 yuan for Liu to go to the 1932 Olympics). In the filmic representation, *The One*, Liu was usually shown wearing western-style clothing but when it came to moments emphasising his cultural and national identity – as a son to his father, as a husband to his newly wed wife, as a father to his soon-to-be-born child, as a compatriot to his Chinese counterparts and as a Chinese in front of Japanese invaders – he wore clothes that reminded the audience of his Chineseness.

In many of the archival images, Liu was mostly seen wearing shorts and sleeveless shirts. The display of his body empowered him, allowing him to show off his manliness just like western men. In his university days at Northeastern University, Liu's outstanding track record made him the centre of attention. Liu at that time looked confident (if not flamboyant), a confidence enabled by his athletic physique. As Figures 6–8 show, he was posing: eyes looking straight at the camera, arms open leaning on his hips, legs apart and chest out showing his torso. He was not only aware but also proud of his Figure (Figures 6 and 7). Nevertheless, once he took on the mission to represent China, his body became the vehicle for a nation's dream. His flamboyance gave way to modesty (Figure 8).

In *The One*, Liu's manliness (played by Li Zhaolin) was made visually explicit through his tanned, trained muscular body – a built body – and a masculine body image widely seen in the West (see Figures 9 and 10). This bodily image showed that China was still burdened by the past and it sought to be recognised just like the West. The West still maintained a dominant position over China, at least on the cultural and symbolic levels.

In the premiere, Li Zhaolin looked more like the boy next door instead of the Sparta-like warrior shown in the film. His skin colour was fair and he did not appear to be very muscular. The director Hou Yong said the following in our interview:

I did not think of it as a Western body type, I think this physique materializes what we understand as body beauty, it shows a contrasting image of what the West thought of China, the 'sick man of Asia'. Chinese people at that time, because of malnourishment, they were rather skinny, not like now. I think it is a better image, the Liu Changchun in our mind was a healthy and strong person, though it's not quite like this in real life. Chinese athletes in 100m and 200m sprints are not that muscular, experts can tell that he [Li, the actor playing Liu Changchun] is not a short-distance runner. Well, he used to run 100m and 200m, when he went to the film academy he started bodybuilding ... I told him to get tanned, this would look

Figures 6–8. Archival images of Liu Changchun shown in *Olympiad* (courtesy of China Central Television).

Figures 9 and 10. The filmic representation of Liu (played by Li Zhaolin) in *The One*.

healthier, save some efforts on make-up, he also lost some weight for this role, this helped change his muscular body, from a broader body built to a slender one.

What Hou said could be quite contradictory, if not confusing: he sought to create a counter-image to the 'sick man' title yet he refused to see this filmic representation of Liu was one that moulded after a western body type. The ideal manliness projected on the body of Liu (Li) was a muscular body, an archetype defined by western standard.⁴⁶ This built physique speaks to the need for an affirmation of Chinese manliness. A hard and contoured body protects Chinese masculinity from being submerged into the image of the effeminate Oriental. As Dyer writes, 'bodybuilding in popular culture articulates white masculinity'.⁴⁷ This built physique need not be a white body *per se*; yet, it is a globally appealing body as it is shown in Hollywood films and embodied by celebrities.⁴⁸

Another point of reference is the tanned body. Tanning is something white people usually do; a tanned body is usually identified as a symbol of wealth, leisure and a healthy life style.⁴⁹ For a long time, a tanned Chinese body has been associated with low social status as the skin colour would suggest outdoor labour such as farming or migrant labour, whereas fair (white) skin colour has been associated with wealth, high social status and literati as one does not need to work outdoors. Only in recent years has the tanned body become popular for it suggests a healthy lifestyle. This paradoxical development is a good example showing how the aesthetic body beauty is constructed and how it can be modified and shaped if a particular form is valued higher. What appears to be a beautiful and healthy body type can never be taken for granted. Foucault writes in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*,⁵⁰ every discourse has a genealogy and the discourse of a beautiful body is no exception. The body image embraced in *The One* is presented as if it tries to rewrite Chinese manliness at the turn of the twentieth century.

Much of the information related to China's Olympic history in the early days was on male athletes. Information about female athletes then was scanty. Thus far, only two female athletes have been mentioned, they were Yang Xiuqiong and Li Sen. Li was a track sprinter – the first female track and field athlete to represent China in the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Her name and her life story were rarely heard of. Yang, a swimmer, became first known by

representing Hong Kong at the Fifth National Games in China in 1933. It was said that her outstanding swimming records gave her instant fame and the title of ‘the beautiful mermaid’. Yang was presented in *Olympiad* as if she was the first and only female athlete; while Li was only briefly mentioned in a sentence. The producer of *Olympiad* has chosen to define Yang through her beauty first, then the fact that she was one of the athletes representing China in the 1936 Games (see Figure 11, the subtitle reads ‘Yang Xiuqiong, known as the beautiful mermaid, had participated in the 1936 Berlin Games’). Her beauty – often linked to her modernness – was given the centre of attention, as made evident by portraits and interview clips of her (Figures 11–13). Her short and slightly curly hair, her gracious smile, her slender physique in swimsuit and her confidence in speaking to the public drew the audience’s attention to her beauty. She exemplified the archetype of a modern feminine beauty in the 1930s. Her modernness was made visible by her swimsuits, something that might look ordinary to most of us today but not in early twentieth-century China. In the hope of emphasising this point, the producers of *Olympiad* juxtaposed a clip of Guo Jie (a male discus thrower participating in the 1936 Games) in this section. Guo said:

At that time sandals, plastic sandals were new. How could women wear that, the toes would be exposed. Then when I arrived in Shanghai, as a guest to my friends’ home, then I saw women wearing sports shoes, those you could see the toes inside, then I thought how strange, how could it be accepted? I was like this [conservative].

If exposing toes was considered unconventional, then a swimsuit would have been even more controversial in the old China. The message that Yang embodied the quality of a modern woman was strengthened by the fact that she was elected by the *Young Companion*⁵¹ as one of the 10 model modern women in the 1930s, a fact highlighted by *Olympiad*.

According to the *Young Companion*, an ideal modern woman would be equipped with one of the following criteria:

Virtuous and helpful to husband like Song Meiling; with artistic skills like He Xiangning; well-known and famous like Hu Die; literally gifted like Ding Ling; swimming so well like Yang Xiuqiong.⁵²

These women were praised for their distinguishing qualities – as a presentable wife with diplomatic skills, an artist, an actress, a writer and an athlete – all of them had

Figures 11–13. Images of Yang Xiuqiong shown in *Olympiad* (courtesy of China Central Television).

achieved something beyond their traditional roles as a daughter, a wife or a mother. They were not only talented but also well known for their love for the nation. They stood out as a contrasting image of the oppressed weak women with bound feet. Being emphasised as a model modern woman,⁵³ Yang helped constitute and perform a feminine ideal China that sought to embrace at that time. By representing Yang as a modern woman and by bringing in the discourse of model women, China's dedication to embrace modernity was reaffirmed and enunciated. It also showed that China was on the path of becoming a strong modernised nation.

Despite the repeated emphasis on modernness, most of the criteria mentioned in the model modern women still reflected the feminine ideals emphasised by the Confucius tradition: the four virtues of moral behaviour, proper speech, good manners and diligence.⁵⁴ A model modern woman was still by and large defined by being a good and presentable wife who knew her place, acting and behaving properly, as well as having artistic and social skills to please others. As Duara points out insightfully, there was this 'tension between the desire to modernize (the lives of women as well) and to conserve the truth of their regime in the bodies of women'.⁵⁵ Despite the desire to modernise women and China, women were still largely seen as the site, the body that preserved the authentic 'unchanging essence and moral purity of that nation'.⁵⁶ Yang's athletic skills appeared to have made her stand out as a new modern woman of her time. However, her active public appearance and social life⁵⁷ were said to be the cause of her doomed destiny when she was forced to divorce her first husband to marry a warlord, Fan Shaozeng, and become the 18th concubine of him. Her athletic life also stopped from that moment onwards, as *Olympiad* unfolded her life story. Implicitly, this seemed to suggest that Yang was punished for her unconventional role.

China Emerging – Li Ning and Lang Ping

Mao Zedong was the first to realise the importance of sports in both domestic and international politics in China.⁵⁸ The excellent performance of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European socialist nations in the 1952 Helsinki Games marked these countries' ascent in the international political arena. China was driven to achieve better sports results to demonstrate that the country had leaped forward and was doing well in all aspects. During the Cold War, China cut its connections with most of the international sports organisations. It had not sent a delegation to the Olympics for three decades. When Deng Xiaoping came to power, he made policy changes to reconnect China with the world. Sports again played a crucial role. In 1984, the Chinese delegation to the Los Angeles Olympics won its first gold medals in history.

Li Ning and Lang Ping were amongst the athletes in the Chinese delegation to the 1984 Olympics. Both of them won gold medals. In the eyes of Chinese at that time, they were the hero and heroine. Li Ning, a former gymnast, is widely known as the 'Prince of gymnastics'. His outstanding performance in the Games – three gold medals, two silver medals and a bronze medal – turned him into a household name and a celebrity. His Zhuang ethnic background was rarely brought up and was submerged into the large and encompassing family of the nation. Lang Ping, also known as 'Iron Hammer' for her powerful spikes, was a member of the Chinese volleyball team.⁵⁹ It was said that her powerful spikes helped brought many championships to the female volleyball team in the 1980s.

In the early 1980s, though China had started opening up to the world, significant changes in gender norms did not appear till the 1990s.⁶⁰ At that time, under the national flag, there is no individual – only a collective identity as a Chinese person. Female athletes appeared to be as hard and tough as their male counterparts. Lang Ping at that time

(see Figures 14 and 15) looked androgynous: she was tall, flat-chested and slender in built; her boyish short hair, her swift responses, her hammer-like hard strikes, her determination and her full attention in the competitions all displayed traits that would usually be identified with manliness. Lang's image paralleled that of the Iron Girls – 'with her steel shoulders and desexualized look'⁶¹ and 'who were said to rival or exceed men in their capacity for heavy labour'.⁶² Unlike Yang Xiuqiong, Lang Ping's 'beauty' was not derived from her physical feminine attractiveness, but from her competitiveness and her capability of bringing glory to China. This sexless image of the female athlete is said to be a result of the sports system under Mao's regime. According to Brownell:

In the 1980s, sportswomen were still the product of a sports system that subjected boys and girls to the equalizing effects of a uniform military discipline, intentionally erasing gender differences. Removed from their families and put into sports boarding schools, they were trained into military-style discipline from a young age. Sports team rules were especially draconian with respect to gender and sexuality.⁶³

Rather than erasing gender differences, the sports system like other aspects of social life asked female athletes to downplay their feminine side and to act and behave like their male counterparts. As alluded to above, gender equality concealed the fact that women had to be like men, not vice versa. Li Ning, who, because of his exceptional performance in gymnastics, was called a prince – a term referring to a desirable man; while Lang Ping got the nickname 'iron hammer' – a tool. A prince and a tool!

These athletes were trained to put sports and national glory ahead of everything else. Lang operated her daily body movement like a machine. Her duty was to perform and function well in competitions. Even when the female volleyball team won a championship, they were not allowed to smile or show any signs of joyfulness. Lang said:

We were taught not to smile when we played volleyball, we needed to take it seriously, when you smiled, you gave people the feeling that you did not take things seriously. That's why even when we had a lot of emotions or thoughts, we could not show them on our face.⁶⁴

Her daily bodily experience was one that required the self to manage, regulate and discipline. Her gender and sexuality were minimised and rendered invisible – yet, not insignificant as a female athlete was still expected to hold up more than half the sky.

Figures 14–16. Images of Lang Ping (courtesy of China Central Television).

China's historical burden required women to perform their role to appear strong and modern, and this need to be performed and re-enacted through repeated victory and triumphant moments. The feminine norm here was not so much about bodily beauty, attractive appearance, but about how a female athlete brought glory to the nation. This would be what Marilyn Young called 'socialist androgyny', paraphrased by Hershatter, 'with women portrayed as political militants and military fighters alongside men, generally under their benevolent political guidance'.⁶⁵ Gender roles that were ascribed onto female athletes were inseparable from the national duties assigned to them. The *new woman*, as Hershatter rephrases Dai, 'became either a heroic woman warrior ready to sacrifice herself for the revolution or a mother who embodied the suffering of the masses and their capacity for endurance'.⁶⁶

The smile, one of the most basic forms of affect, could be read as not taking things seriously and therefore needed to be regulated. When Li Ning failed to live up to the people's expectations in the 1988 Seoul Olympics as he trapped and fell in still rings and pommel horse competitions (Figure 17), his immediate reaction on site was to smile. This innocent and somewhat embarrassed smile (Figure 18) brought him severe criticism within China. Yang Ming, a reporter from Xinhua news, said, 'I found it especially hard to put up with, or say I could not possibly understand, you have already made such a mess, you at least should show remorse, how could you smile?'⁶⁷ It is not hard to imagine that Li was using his smile to cover up his embarrassment and shame. As the title 'Prince of gymnastics' suggests, Li was seen as the man representing the country – a legitimate heir of a nation. His body represented literally the body of China, and this body became the laughing stock of others. The prince would not be exempted from discipline and punishment when he brought embarrassment to China.

From his fall to his ascendancy as a well-acknowledged successful businessman, Li allegorically embodied the dream of the nation: from the impotent 'sick man' to today's great power. His life story parallels the discourse of coming back, a discourse is often gendered and assigned to men (Figure 19). A 'real' man should not fear failure, what matters is how he can endure hardship and stand up again. Being the owner of a sport company, his success was widely recognised by the public. Manhood and

Figure 17. Li Ning falling from pommel horse; Figure 18. Li Ning smiled right after the fall; Figure 19. Today's Li Ning (courtesy of China Central Television).

accomplishment in material terms, especially in the marketplace, are mutually reinforcing in today's China.⁶⁸

Compared to *the prince* of the past, Li in 2008 appeared to be a cautious, knowledgeable and sophisticated man. His corporeal style – grey hair with receding hairline, wrinkled face, his stout body, serious and polite but reserved manners – reminded one of the image of a successful (business)man. A man did not need to be good-looking but he needed to present himself as a man with substance (wisdom) and resilience. His masculinity was affirmed by an official albeit physically demanding act as he ran a lap of the stadium while being suspended in mid-air to officially announce the opening of the 2008 Games by igniting the Olympic cauldron. This act was as if to suggest that he represented a 'real' Chinese man who connected the cultural credentials and physical skills of *wen* and *wu*.⁶⁹ The dream of a century was officially completed by a 'real' Chinese man. This seemingly extravagant act could be read as a rite of passage – a ritual that signifies a man's progress to manhood – for Li Ning and for China.

Li re-emerged as a high-profile comeback hero, whereas Lang's reappearance in 2008 gave rise to a somewhat ambivalent situation. Women, as the primary child-care providers, are often assigned the role as 'transmitters of traditional culture',⁷⁰ and 'the upholders and preservers of "our culture"'.⁷¹ In 2008, Lang became the coach of the U.S. female volleyball team (Figure 16), one of the key opponents of the Chinese female volleyball team and also the opponent against whom she and her teammates had competed in the 1984 Los Angeles Games. Coaching is comparable to the maternal responsibility of teaching and guiding the offspring; her new role as a coach for the U.S. team could be an unpatriotic act: instead of coaching the Chinese and helping them to win, she was helping the opponents. Her role as a U.S. coach was read with mixed messages. Various Internet forums had discussion threads on whether Lang Ping was a traitor to the Chinese nation.⁷²

In comparison with Li Ning's attention-grabbing comeback and popular media appearance, Lang's showing-up in 2008 seemed to be a low-profile reappearance. Her previous record of bringing glory to the nation was marked as part of China's sports history. Unlike Li who ignited the Olympic cauldron, Lang was selected by the United States Olympic Committee as a torchbearer in San Francisco – not by the Chinese and not on Chinese soil. This seems to suggest that she played little role in present-day China.

Sports and Market – Liu Xiang and Guo Jingjing

Images showing how Liu Xiang won the 110-meter hurdles in the 2004 Athens Games were the most frequently shown Olympic clips on Chinese television in the period around the Beijing Games. Figures 20 and 21 are some examples. Liu was shown wearing a red-yellow sleeveless sports shirt that bore the word 'China' in the middle. The Liu Xiang depicted here was young, confident and determined (his determined face in Figure 20 reminds one of Bruce Lee), energetic and swift, expressive and passionate (Figure 22). The recurrence of these images turned Liu into a regularised body, a body that was to signify a new hegemonic image of Chineseness – the rise of China that spelled confidence, certainty and fearlessness. Unlike the athletes (e.g. Li Ning and Lang Ping) of the earlier generations, Liu could express himself unrestrainedly.

After 30 years of reforms, China has gained strength and a place in the global arena. It eagerly looks for channels to express this acquired power and confidence that dispels the humiliating 'sick man' title. Liu's victory in the 2004 Games presented this desire of the nation to express a *new* kind of manliness, a masculinity that was assertive, confident and lively. In an interview, he said that:

Figures 20–22. Images of Liu Xiang (courtesy of China Central Television).

[They] can't run faster than me! Haha! ... Only I myself can beat me, that is to say, I am competing with myself. I was only thinking about the Chinese track sprint competition, grab it [the championship], now I got it, I grab the national flag and run a lap of the stadium. Come! [I] will win more in the future, let them know what Asian swiftness is.⁷³

What these images did was to consolidate an alternative gender performance, in which the Chinese/Asian body claimed victory over the hegemonic 'Western' bodies.⁷⁴

Liu symbolised this hope of the nation. He was a national model (hero) that the government promoted, as the slogan 'learn from Liu Xiang', paralleling that of 'learn from Lei Feng', revealed. What Liu symbolised was strengthened, re-emphasised and re-enacted through the many advertisements he endorsed. In 2007 alone, he took up advertising endorsements for 14 companies including Visa, Nike, Yili, Lenovo, etc. In 2008, everywhere one went, one could find images and news of him. He was the megastar of China. His symbolic significance was revealed by the fact that he was given the privilege and the prestige of being the first torchbearer in the 2008 Games. As shown in Figure 22, he received the torch from China's president Hu Jintao: the torch was passed from the political icon to the symbolic icon of China. Liu held the torch high with vigour and pride to declare his mission to support and uphold the nation. The day that Liu Xiang was going to compete was scheduled on August 18, 2008 (2008-08-18) – with eight being the auspicious number for Chinese, just like the Opening ceremony (2008-08-08). It was supposed to be a historical day, a day that Liu would help China recover its potency symbolically.

When Liu withdrew from the Olympic Games, the whole nation was shocked. The great expectations and the dream of seeing Liu create another historical moment were shattered. A volunteer interviewee who was stationed in the Bird's Nest witnessed the moment and said it was the most unforgettable moment of his volunteering service:

When Liu Xiang withdrew, I was very angry. I felt like being cheated. All the reports said that he had fully recovered, and for the last two years he had very good results, I trusted him a lot ... We all expected a lot from him. But, all of a sudden, he had this severe injury, I found it all very strange, the spectators also found it strange, nobody understood what 'withdrawal' meant, they asked us if it meant he would move to the other heat, or if it was a change of competition date and time, we said we also had no clue. Many spectators became very

Figures 23 and 24. Images of Liu Xiang when he withdrew (courtesy of China Central Television).

emotional; some swore and scolded at people around. Some spectators refused to leave the venue, they just sat there, even the police came to persuade them to go, an old man, really quite old, he just sat there, and he refused to go, no matter how we persuaded him. When the venue was empty, he finished the food he brought to the venue. After that, he left; it gave a lonely and disappointed feeling.

The official media immediately took up the responsibility to guide viewers how to react and understand the events. Commentators said 'He [Liu] was under a lot of stress placed on him by the nation; his body, his right ankle, at this very moment, I think he just could not bear it anymore'.⁷⁵ Another commentator highlighted the fact that Liu knew the importance of this competition, if it was not a really impossible circumstance, he would not have withdrawn.⁷⁶ A press conference was held immediately after the match to explain Liu's withdrawal.

After Liu's withdrawal, two sets of images were shown constantly. The first was when Liu Xiang turned around, one could only see his back (see Figure 23); and in the second set Liu was almost naked – topless, with only a pair of short pants and the Nike tailor-made running shoes (Figure 24). In both images, his back-facing posture and his semi-nakedness stood in painful contrast with the images of him before the withdrawal, which were front-facing, looking confident and assertive. His slender body, with lean muscles, small waist and seemingly soft skin and his avoidance of eye contact with his head down (looking shy and mysterious) made him look soft and effeminate. This image in fact reminds one of the scholarly men of *wen*, as in Kam Louie's *Theorising Chinese Masculinity*. Louie suggests that the softer, slender and scholarly-looking men of *wen* are perceived to be more desirable and more masculine than the muscular bodies.⁷⁷ The male volunteers I talked to did not seem to think that Liu was manly and many criticised Liu for not acting like a man – being weak and backing down to physical pain and pressure; whereas, the female volunteers were in general more sympathetic towards him, a sympathy for a fallen hero and not so much of admiration or attraction.⁷⁸

After Liu Xiang's unexpected withdrawal in the 2012 London Olympics, various companies put forward advertisement campaigns – 'trauma ads' (*shangtong guanggao*)⁷⁹ – to help boost Liu's 'positive' (manly) characters such as resilience, persistent and heroic

strength of facing failure. Durex (a popular brand of condoms) writes in its official *weibo*, 'the fastest man is not the best man, the one who insists on till the end is the real strong man'.⁸⁰ Yet, others mocked his manliness. One male clinic published a full-page ad using the photo of him holding his ankle in great pain at the London Olympics, it says: 'Plunge as soon as [it] starts! Prosermia, man's inexpressible pain!'⁸¹ From the people I talked to and the *Facebook* posts I came across, there was quite a mixed reading of Liu: some rather cynical and others more sympathetic. But, in general, many stop associating him to the *new* assertive Chinese masculinity. Just as Jankowiak writes, Chinese perception of manhood is built upon and defined by the public perception of success. Liu's withdrawals did call his masculinity into question.

Nowadays, for a female athlete to be popular, her appeal lies largely in her youth and beauty. There were many successful female athletes who had won Olympic gold medals and brought glory to the country, but not many of them were as popular and well liked by commercial enterprises as 'the princess of diving', Guo Jingjing (Figure 25). The emphasis now is not on the toughness of a woman and her compatibility to a man; rather, it lies in feminine beauty and youth next to the athlete's athletic skills. The latter has become more like a decorative and promotional item that helps to sell better. This renewed interest in femininity through a strong emphasis on gender difference corresponds to the social changes led by 30 years of economic reform.⁸² Lisa Rofel argues that this resurging emphasis on gender difference is 'a critique of a failed Maoism and an assertion that "natural" gender roles had to be recognized in order for China to reach modernity'⁸³; as consumption and commodification of these bodily images and pleasure are to signify the modern like the West. In Evans' words, the consumption of this beautiful and fashionable young female 'blur clear distinctions between the "Chinese" and the "West"'.⁸⁴ This change of trend makes one wonder if Lang Ping would be active in today's China, how would she look? And would she be as popular as in the 1980s?

Guo was not only acclaimed for her athletic achievements but also for her physical beauty. Media images of her often focused on her youth, innocence, vitality and bodily

Figure 25. Guo Jingjing (courtesy of China Central Television); Figure 26. Guo Jingjing in a McDonald's advertisement.

beauty with slender figure, long hair, fair skin tone and her smile. Her beauty conformed to the hegemonic ideal of feminine beauty circulating in modern China: fair skin, slender body and young. Moreover, her not-yet-married status (as in 2008) allowed her to be the object of fantasy, as a potentially eligible and chaste girlfriend or wife. As a princess, she was the object of desire and the object of gaze for the public. It was said that she earned over RMB 10 million in a year, and she had numerous endorsement contracts with international and Chinese corporations such as Coca Cola, McDonald's, Red Earth, Yili, Avon, etc (Figure 26).⁸⁵ Guo exemplifies a modern feminine model, a subject equipped with the skill to serve the nation but also a beauty that could be turned into wealth and abundance. Serving the nation and pursuing wealth can go in tandem.

Her relationship with Kenneth Fok,⁸⁶ the son of a Hong Kong tycoon, had added extra glamour to her as a media celebrity in both mainland China and Hong Kong. This romantic relationship has drawn a lot of media attention. There were numerous rumours about her marriage to the Fok family to become the wealthy of a wealthy tycoon. Like a fairytale, it ends when the princess meets the prince, and that they would live happily ever after. Guo could be a very good diver but ultimately what society wanted to see is if she could marry well, retire to the domestic sphere and lead a life of abundance. Evans seems right to point out that the normalised value for a girl still lies in how well she marries, not how much and how well she achieves.⁸⁷

Her popularity in the commercial sector had earned her the title 'the queen of advertisements'.⁸⁸ This title, unlike her title of princess, signified power and control in the advertising industry; however, it could be read as a mixed message – with admiration but also fear, fear of her growing strength and wealth, and therefore, she needed to be disciplined and tamed.

As 'the queen of advertisements', Guo reached a celebrity status comparable to the stars and actresses in the entertainment industry. The fame and the wealth she derived from endorsements could turn Guo into a threat that challenged the male ego – her wealth made her independent, her fame made her unreachable to the layman. Her achievement has turned her, at the same time, into a subject of criticism in the media. For instance, in *Executive*, she was criticised for being stiff and rigid in media interviews. Given her popularity, she was however placed only in the 10th place in a special report on Olympic stars. The title of the report, with both English and Chinese language, was called 'Aesthetic fatigue' and '*shenmei pilaode guanggao tianhou*' (the fatigue-looking advertising queen),⁸⁹ suggesting that the media consumers were fed up with her. It wrote at great length about Guo's problems, for example, complaining that Guo had the same rigid unnatural smile in all advertisements, even going so far as to say that 'some people even think that the more you look at Guo Jingjing, the uglier she becomes'.⁹⁰ Today's China requires not only a female athlete to bring glory to the country, but also how she needs to present herself to the media and the population. When it comes to the latter, it often forces the female athlete to perform the *expected* femininity: being pretty, pleasing, diplomatic and media savvy. When she fails to meet these expectations, she is punished and criticised as bored, self-conceited, arrogant, ignorant, etc.⁹¹ It is a paradoxical development: she is liked for her beauty, but her beauty has also turned her into a threat. The princess will become a queen some day, and the latter is not always welcome.

Conclusion

Rey Chow, writing in response to the 1989 demonstrations in China, raises the following questions related to gender as an analytical category:

The problem is not how we should read what is going on in China in terms of gender, but rather: what do the events in China tell us about gender as a category, especially as it relates to the so-called Third World? What are gender's limits, where does it work, and where does it not work?⁹²

The Olympic Games are such events that urge one to engage with the question on what the Olympic Games told us about gender as a category in China. Much has been written on the role of women and China's nation-building project, but not so much has been written on the role of men in it. Thus, I find it necessary to look into how Chinese men – in events like the Olympics – took their share. Instead of seeing Chinese women as the perpetual victims of inequality and oppression, my analysis shows that men and women both carry their share of national burden. Through the three time frames and the three sets of athletes, I have shown how these gender ideals as analytical categories are only useful if one brings the other factors – in this case, history and politics – into consideration.

The repeated articulation of the insulting title 'the sick man of Asia' and the recurring images of the sickly and frail bodies in China's narration of its humiliating past served as a perpetual reminder of how Chinese needed to transform themselves – both physically and mentally – to strengthen the nation. By contrasting images of fragile Chinese male bodies with images of strong and confident male Caucasian bodies, the manliness embodied by the western Other was not only made explicit but also clear that those were the types of bodily style that should be embraced. The western bodies were bodies that regulated and were being regularised as the ideal masculine bodies. Chinese men underwent self-transformation to acquire this aura of manliness. Liu Changchun, discursively described as the first Chinese Olympic athlete, exemplifies this transformation. The images of him, both in archival and filmic representations, articulated a manliness (short hair, no pigtails, looking neat and tidy and muscular) similar to that of the western bodies. Although Chinese women have long been associated with the struggle between tradition and modernity, they were hardly shown in these Olympic media materials. This does not mean that they were free from the struggle. Rather, one could see that the strength of the nation was still largely linked to the men. Yang Xiuqiong, the first female Olympic athlete, was portrayed as a beautiful modern woman of her times. Unlike the traditional woman with bound feet, Yang was active and confident. Her modernness was to contrast with the traditional roles borne by woman in the domestic sphere. Yang came to represent China's pursuit for modernisation. And, yet, despite this emphasis on her unconventional characters, her doomed fate – forced to be the concubine of a warlord – seems to suggest that her modernness was praised but not encouraged.

The 1980s was a time when China tried to re-insert itself in the global arena. Sports achievements in the Olympics were of particular significance. Athletes were tools that brought glory to the nation. Their bodies were trained like machines, their corporeal expressions were regulated to look serious and smiles were prohibited. Li Ning and Lang Ping, because of their achievements, became hero and heroine of their time. The significance of the nation seemed to surpass all differences, including gender. The discourse of gender equality – a product of the Communist China's modernisation project – disguised the fact that female athletes had to look and act like their male counterparts, not vice versa. Lang Ping looked androgynous, and she was hard and tough like a man. The feminine ideal embodied by Lang was not her physical beauty but her capacity to compete and bring glory to China. Li Ning, for his outstanding performance in the 1984 Olympics, was praised as a charming prince – a legitimate heir of a nation. Nevertheless, when 'the prince' failed to live up to the nation's expectations (as he failed in the 1988 Games), he was dispelled and severely disciplined. The ideal manliness in the 1980s demanded man to

function as a capable body of the nation. Li Ning's recent appearance in the 2008 Games as a successful businessman coincided with the larger and timely discourse of China's great rejuvenation.⁹³ He was presented as an ideal Chinese man who embodied the *wen-wu* attributes.

The twenty-first century is a time when China fervently wants to display its strength and confidence, as the West's equivalent Other. Female athletes might have outperformed their male counterparts in many sport fields; their achievements might have been acknowledged; and yet, they sought to find an occasion to cleanse the humiliating 'sick man' title and to reclaim their potency symbolically. Liu Xiang's unprecedented achievement in the 110-meter hurdles in the 2004 Games and his confidence and bright spirit were widely appraised as a *new* kind of manliness reflecting the rising China. However, when he failed to represent the country and subsequently failed the dream of the nation, his masculinity was called into question. What Li Ning and Liu Xiang revealed is this persistence in defining manhood through success and accomplishment.

The twenty-first century is also a time when the market intersects with the nation. For a male athlete to be popular, he need not be good-looking; yet, for a female athlete to be popular, her feminine beauty is of great value. The interest in emphasising feminine beauty has grown ever-more prominent in today's China. Different from Lang Ping's time, sports achievement becomes an accessory item for promoting a female athlete. Guo Jingjing exemplifies this. In her one sees a resurgent emphasis on female's physical beauty – pretty face, slender figure, shy and sweet like the girl next door, a desirable object that appeals to the larger market. This emphasis of physical beauty, on the one hand, is a response to the failed Maoism that promoted gender equality by making women act like men. On the other hand, it is a phenomenon echoing with the larger trend of consumption and commodification of bodily images as a way to signify that China would be as modern as the West. Femaleness and maleness are mutually related, the demand of female sexuality could also reflect that Chinese men are regaining its manliness as opposed to the past.

To conclude, my analysis has shown that different sets of gender ideals have been constructed to respond to China's century-long pursuit of modernity and its zeal to catch up and be acknowledged as the West's equivalent Other. 'The sick man of Asia' has been a discursive tool produced to remind the population of China's endless struggle between the past and the modern and promising future. With the emphasis on 'man' in 'the sick man of Asia', the nation needed 'strong Chinese men' to showcase a strong China to the world. Though women occupied a significant role in this modernity project, their significance was overshadowed by the nation's zeal to cleanse its past humiliation – a more prominent role played by the men in terms of inter-national relationship. When the male athletes failed to live up to the expectations, they were subjected to more severe punishment. The three female athletes analysed here have demonstrated the ways in which feminine ideals – from being freed from the slave-like condition to erasing gender differences to the resurgent emphasis on feminine beauty – have changed throughout the last century. These changes seem to be more salient, if one compares them to the masculine ideals. Yet, if one looks more carefully, the feminine ideals placed on women are in response to the seemingly eternal struggle with tradition and modernity. Women are required to perform their modernness by taking up roles outside the domestic realm while keeping their traditional roles intact, as they are expected to be pleasing, obedient, diligent and patriotic. The society still evaluates femaleness through motherhood and wifehood. There is more continuity than it appears. Gender is not only about men and women, but also about how gender as a category intersects with the nation, the imagined western Other, and more recently, the gaining importance of the market.

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Notes on Contributor

Gladys Pak Lei Chong is a lecturer at the Amsterdam University College. She received her Ph.D. from the Department of Media Studies, University of Amsterdam. Her doctoral research develops the Foucaultian concept of productive power through examining the ways in which the Chinese government mobilized the population to embrace its Olympic project through deploying various sets of strategies and tactics. She has published on subjects related to Chinese governmentality, China's use of soft power, place-making and Olympic security. Her research interests lie in power-relations, governing strategies/tactics, processes of subjectification, the politics of identity and youth culture. She is affiliated to Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis.

Notes

1. This was taken from my interviews with Olympic volunteers whose serving point was at the Bird's Nest.
2. *Olympics Approaching*, shown on April 19, 2008.
3. See, for example, Dai, "Behind Global Spectacle;" Dong, "Women;" Brownell, *Training the Body*; Mangan, "A Personal Perspective;" Close, Askew, and Xin, *The Beijing Olympiad*.
4. Brownell, *Training the Body*, "The Body and the Beautiful in Chinese Nationalism," "Making Dream Bodies in Beijing" and *Beijing's Games*.
5. This constructivist approach has been applied to western male athletes. Some examples are Bonde, "Gymnastics;" Staurowsky, "Getting beyond imagery;" Jensen, *Body by Weimar*; and Gaucher, "Black Males in the Stadium."
6. Louie and Edwards, "Chinese Masculinity;" Brownell and Wasserstrom, *Chinese Femininities/Chinese Masculinities*; Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity*; de Kloet "Gendering China Studies," 286; Teng, "Construction of 'Traditional Chinese Woman'"; Hershatter, "State of Field."
7. Teng, "Construction of 'Traditional Chinese Woman'," 144.
8. See, for example, Jankowiak, *Sex, Death and Hierarchy*; Louie and Edwards, "Chinese Masculinity;" Zhang, "Tiananmen Square;" Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity*; Brownell and Wasserstrom, *Chinese Femininities/Chinese Masculinities*; Geng, *Fragile Scholar*; Berry and Farquhar, "How Should Chinese Men Act;" Brownell, *Beijing's Games*. In the diasporic contexts, some examples are Fung, "Looking for My Penis;" Chow, "Smaller is Better."
9. Wang's "Capitalizing Big Man" is one of the very few. Wang argues that Yao Ming's popularity is a cultural political event connected to China's desire to become "big," the global capital and the expectations of Asian American.
10. Li Xiaojiang, Charlotte Furth, and Tani Barlow in Brownell and Wasserstrom, *Chinese Femininities/Chinese Masculinities*, 25 and 32.
11. Ibid., 28.
12. Ibid.
13. See, Duara, "Regime of Authenticity;" Hong, *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom*; Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters*; Brownell, *Beijing's Games*; Brownell and Wasserstrom, *Chinese Femininities/Chinese Masculinities*.
14. Louie and Edwards, "Chinese Masculinity."
15. Brownell and Wasserstrom, *Chinese Femininities/Chinese Masculinities*, 29.
16. In "Chinese Masculinity," Louie and Edwards argue that Chinese masculinity is different from the West. They propose to understand Chinese manhood from Chinese historical backgrounds. They put forward the *wen-wu* dyad to understand Chinese masculinity. Louie, in *Theorising Chinese masculinity*, points out that while *wen-wu* are in harmony, *wen* has always been more respected in elitist discourse of Chinese manliness.

17. Perry and Dillon write that the image of bandits, an opposite to the official ideals of masculinity, was used as symbols to redefine masculinity during the revolutionary movements, in "‘Little Brother’ in the Cultural Revolution," 196.
18. Mencius' famous words "Those who work with their brains rule; those who work with their brawn are ruled" vividly capture this deep-seated belief. With the emphasis on memorisation of the Classics, the civil service examinations (the method of selecting government officials from the population) practised since the Song dynasty discouraged all physical activities in the society in Guoqi, "Body Beautiful."
19. Caffrey, "Prologue: Beijing 2008," 1010.
20. The elites at that time were mainly Han people and their nationalistic sentiments were largely Han-centric, excluding the ethnic minorities living in China. See, Duara, "Nationalists Among Transnationals."
21. In Brownell and Wasserstrom, *Chinese Femininities/Chinese Masculinities*, 31.
22. Brownell, "Making Dream Bodies in Beijing," 125.
23. Honig, "Maoist Mappings of Gender."
24. Ibid., 266.
25. Ibid.
26. Brownell and Wasserstrom, *Chinese Femininities/Chinese Masculinities*, 332.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., 33.
29. Jankowiak, "Proper Men and Proper Women," 363.
30. Ibid.
31. Brownell, *Beijing's Games*, 120
32. The premiere began with a minute of silence for the dead and injured of the Sichuan Earthquakes on May 12, 2008; and it ended with a long session of discussions with many senior official figures.
33. The production was largely financed by the Beijing Forbidden City Film Company, and partially by CCTV6 (the film channel of China Central Television) and a Hong Kong company. In our interview, the director told me that the funding provided by the Beijing Forbidden City Film Company was from the Beijing government.
34. Both *Lifeweek* and *China Newsweek* are weekly magazines. I read them regularly during my fieldwork in 2008 and paid special attention in the period around the Olympics.
35. Some examples of readings in these magazines include "Li Ning: Beyond Our Century-Old Dreams;" "Guo Jingjing."
36. Louie, "Theorising Chinese masculinity."
37. Song, *The Fragile Scholar*.
38. Said, *Orientalism*.
39. Chow, *Writing Diaspora*, 7.
40. Sigley, "Liberal Despotism."
41. See, for example, Close, Askew, and Xin, *The Beijing Olympiad*; Brownell, *Beijing's Games*.
42. Episode 1 "I Can Compete" of *Olympiad*.
43. Some say that the first ethnic Chinese who participated in the Games was Chiu Teng Hiok, who represented Britain in the 1924 Paris Games. See Marquand, "An Olympic Hero."
44. Episode 1 of *Olympiad*.
45. Zhang Xueliang, known as the Little Marshal, was the son of Zhang Zuolin, a warlord in Dongbei. The Xi'an incident (1936) – in which he kidnapped Chiang Kai-shek and forced him to unite with the Communists to fight the Japanese invaders – turned him into a hero in Mainland China.
46. Dyer, *White*.
47. Ibid., 148.
48. De Kloet, "Gendering China Studies."
49. See, Dyer, *White*, 155. Yet, in recent years, the trend has experienced slight changes: too much tanning is a signifier of the working class.
50. Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*.
51. The *Young Companion* was said to be the most influential magazine that promoted progressive thinking in early twentieth-century China. Many influential intellectuals such as Lu Xun and Yu Dafu had written for the magazine.

52. Song Meiling was the wife of Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of the Kuomintang, therefore also known as the First Lady of the Republic of China (ROC). He Xiangning was a female revolutionist who fought alongside Dr Sun Yatsen and a famous painter in the early twentieth century. Hu Die was a famous actress during the ROC. She was known to refuse to act in a Japanese propaganda movie. Ding Ling was a well-known woman author and social activist supporting Communism. These women were well-known of their times, yet, to me, Yang was the least heard of. If it was not for this documentary, I would not have known her and her contribution to Chinese sports history. This shows how the past is selectively called into the present to furnish a collective memory for the Chinese viewers. This was taken from *Olympiad*.
53. According to Hershatler (2007), the modern new woman envisioned by the revolutionaries in the May Fourth Movement "would be educated, employed, independent, concerned with public life, and attentive to the plight of women more oppressed than she" in *Women in China's Long Twentieth Century*, 86.
54. The four virtues are mentioned in the proper conduct of women in traditional Chinese culture – The Three Obedience(s) Four Virtues.
55. Duara, "Regime of Authenticity," 299.
56. Ibid., 296.
57. Yang was often shown socialising with other celebrities or famous people in Shanghai in the 1930s.
58. Close, Askew, and Xin, *The Beijing Olympiad*.
59. The Chinese female volleyball team was highly popular in the early 1980s. Brownell writes that "the greatest standouts were the national women's volleyball team members, who became national heroes and a focal point for the revival of Chinese patriotism when they won the world championship in 1981," in "Challenged America," 1183.
60. Brownell and Wasserstrom, *Chinese Femininities/Chinese Masculinities*, 331.
61. Zhang, "Mediating Time," 98.
62. Hershatler, *Women in China's Long Twentieth Century*, 95.
63. Brownell, *Beijing's Games*, 110.
64. Ibid.
65. Hershatler, *Women in China's Long Twentieth Century*, 95.
66. Ibid., 97.
67. Episode 4, *Olympiad*.
68. Jankowiak, "Proper Men and Proper Women," 363.
69. Kam Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity*.
70. Teng, "The Construction of the "Traditional Chinese Woman," 122.
71. Wilson, *Finding a Voice*, 39.
72. Examples are: "Pinglun: nimen shuo Lang Ping "panguo," woxiaole" [Comments: You Said Lang Ping Committed "Treason," I Laughed 2008. The 2008 Olympic Report], available online at <http://2008.163.com/08/0817/16/4JIGSEC600742QDT.html> (accessed August 31, 2008); "Cong Lang Ping xianxiang kan jingying panguo de kepaxing," [The Lang Ping Phenomenon Reveals the Horrifying Side of Elites' Treachery Acts], available online at Sina Blog, http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_54e8f0c60100bcje.html (accessed August 10, 2011).
73. *Olympics Approaching*.
74. Chow, "Smaller is Better."
75. *Live Report of the 110-M Hurdle Competition, Liu Xiang Withdrew*.
76. Ibid.
77. Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity*.
78. These were taken from my interviews with Olympic volunteers during the 2008 Games.
79. "Fangchan guanggao eyi yingshe Liu Xiang shangtui, wangyou: kaifashang tai qude" [Property developer mocked Liu Xiang's withdrawal. Netizens: Commercial companies lack decency], available online at <http://finance.people.com.cn/stock/n/2012/0809/c67815-18705573.html> (accessed October 30, 2012).
80. "Liu Xiang genjian duanlie shangye jiazhi mengdie jiangbei Lin Dan qudai" [LiuXiang's Achilles Rupture, Commercial values plunged and replaced by Lin Dan], available online at http://finance.21cn.com/newsdoc/zx/2012/08/08/12609933_3.shtml (accessed October 30, 2012).

81. "Nanke yiyuan guanggao Liu Xiang boxing zhongqiang gouqi Liu Xiang aoyun diedao huiyi" [Male Clinic Advertisement, Liu Xiang was used, Bring back bad Olympic memories], available online at <http://sports.kankanews.com/mingxing/2012-09-27/1552058.shtml> (accessed October 30, 2012).
82. Evans, "Sexed Bodies."
83. Rofel, *Other Modernities*, rephrased by Hershtatter, *Women in China's*, 46.
84. Evans, "Sexed Bodies," 373.
85. *Executive*, "Guo Jingjing."
86. Henry Fok Ying-tung, the head of the Fok family, was seen as the most powerful Hong Konger who had political connections with the PRC. The Fok family is not only politically influential, but also very wealthy. Kenneth Fok is the grandson of Henry Fok. Guo and Fok were married in November, 2012.
87. Evans, "Past, Perfect or Imperfect."
88. *Executive*, "Guo Jingjing."
89. "Guo Jingjing," 61.
90. *Ibid.*
91. *Ibid.*
92. Chow in Hershtatter, *Women in China's*, 116.
93. Chong, China Rejuvenated?

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