Course instructor:	Dr. R. Rutten
Course title:	Power and Protest in Asia
Degree programme:	MSc. Contemporary Asian Studies

University of Amsterdam

Graduate School of Social Sciences

State power and personal sovereignty in the Cultural Revolution

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Student number	6156304
Assignment number	Paper
Date of submission	6 April 2010
Page count	16
Word count	4,475

“This is the spirit in which I wrote English. I chose not to overstate the cruelty of the era because it has already been recounted ad nauseum. The faces of the perpetrators and of those who suffered have been described with such passion, as if China’s tragedy stemmed entirely from good people being too good and bad people being too bad. I find such descriptions revolting.” Taken from the afterword of Wang Gang’s *English* (2009: 312).

How do people cope? How do different people cope differently with the biopolitical projects of state? These questions are the subject of this paper. I will attempt to answer these in the context of the Cultural Revolution, China's period of violent political upheaval and socialist reform that took place between 1966 and 1976. The Cultural Revolution also forms the background to *English*, a semi-autobiographical novel by Wang Gang (2009), situated in China's far-western Xinjiang province. The author tells the story of his growing up in Ürümqi, capital of Xinjiang province. At the time of the Cultural Revolution Ürümqi was a "*bleak backwater*" in the author's own words (Wang, 2009: 5). The author's experiences in Ürümqi, a backwater on the periphery of Chinese state, means that the experiences described in *English* are both particular to Xinjiang as well as general to other Chinese 'peripheries'. They are particular in that Xinjiang at that time had a tendency to bring certain types of people together – a point that I will come back to later. At the same time, as a reviewer of the book points out, "there might be thousands of 'Love Lius' in other parts of China" (Humes, 2009). Love Liu is the protagonist of *English*. It's through his eyes, and the relationships he builds with the people around him – his parent and other adults, his classmates and friends, his teachers and his English teacher in particular – that Wang Gang provides a glimpse at what life was like in China at the time of the Cultural Revolution. Various reviews, taking a perspectives on these relationships, have been published following the English translation of the book. Particularly noteworthy is Danwei's interview with the author (Goldkorn, 2009) [1].

I will instead situate my analysis in a reading of the Cultural Revolution as a biopolitical project of the state. The modern state's yielding of biopower was first described by Foucault in a series of lectures at the College De France between 1975 and 1979 (Foucault, 2004). In these lectures Foucault describes how, at the advent of political modernity, the nature of sovereign states changed. In pre-modern societies the sovereign made its presence felt primarily through the application of a disciplinary power; a power with which to discipline individuals by way of threat and punishment. This power over individuals was, to quote Foucault, one by which "*sovereignty took life and let live*" (Foucault, 2004: 247). The new power yielded by modern nation-states is a regularising one that is applied not to individuals but to populations as a whole. This regularising power of the modern sovereign is not a power to take life and let live, but instead one that consists in "*making live and letting die*" (idem). Whereas in pre-modern societies epidemics were a treat that loomed over the population and had the capacity to

[1] See also Summers (2009) and Quartly (2009).

kill indiscriminately, the biopower of modern nation-states focusses instead on endemics – the perpetually detrimental influence of disease on such things are birthrate, life expectancy and rate of death, all of which influenced the productive capacity of the population. Biopolitical projects of state aimed to increase this productive capacity by improving levels of sanitation, hygiene, et cetera. Foucault identifies the clinic – prisons, clinics, and mental institutions – as the quintessential place for the expression of this biopower (Nikolopoulou, 2000: 130).

In a extension to Foucault's analysis of biopower, Agamben instead located the exemplary place in which biopower takes shape in the internment camps of Nazi Germany (idem). The original sin of political modernity – which is not original at all; it had already been identified thousands of years ago by Aristotle and his contemporaries – is described by Agamben as the subsumption of 'bare life' under the power of the sovereign (Agamben, 1995). In the modern nation-state bare life (*zoē*), as opposed to politically qualified life (*bios*), and the happiness of men becomes central to the political project. For centuries this situation had been the exception of the city-state, but with the advent of modernity the exception has instead become the rule. What we see in the concentration camps of Nazi Germany is the banning of some people out of the polity; the law of the sovereign applies to the people in the camps by not applying anymore. The modern political order of necessity gives rise to such situations of state endorsed racism, which Agamben refers to as states of exception. He predicts that we will see more aberrations such as the concentration camp as modernity envelopes the world, and he identifies examples in cases of genocide and the airport terminal, where asylum seekers submit before a law that doesn't apply to them. Socialism is similarly implicated. The communist utopia faltered before the dictatorship of the proletariat, when instead of an institutionalised state racism, enemies were identified based on class (Agamben, 1995: 12). "*It can even be said that the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power*" (idem: 6).

That the Cultural Revolution may fruitfully be analysed as such a biopolitical project of the state is shown by Farquhar and Zhang (2005). According to Farquhar and Zhang, China was implicated in western biopolitics by its wholesale adoption of socialist (western) ideology. Their analysis focusses on self-cultivation or *yangsheng* practices taking place in the parks of contemporary Beijing among its (predominantly) elderly residents. Farquhar and Zhang read in these practices not just the continuation of traditions indigenous to China, but also a nostalgic remembrance of and resistance against the upheaval of recent Chinese history, in particular the Cultural Revolution. "*In modern situations in which the*

history and development of the nation-state forms part of the daily consciousness of the people," so they argue. "*Questions of state sovereignty and legitimacy are not absent in daily practices*" (Farquhar and Zhang, 2005: 305). The history and development they refer to here is the Cultural Revolution, when "*a continuing revolution (...) was not exactly a guarantee of domestic harmony*" and "*the collectivist organization of the party-state (...) reorganised personal life around public projects*" (idem: 309); the Cultural Revolution as China's own state of exception. To Farquhar and Zhang, contemporary *yangsheng* practices are the creation of personal spaces away from the sovereignty of the state, where people cultivate the self and create forms of pleasure in memory of the all-consuming biopolitics of the Cultural Revolution (idem: 321).

Taking a cue from Farquhar and Zhang, and with reference to Wang Gang's *English*, I will argue that such practices of self-cultivation were not at all absent at the time of the Cultural Revolution. By selectively using examples taken from Wang Gang, I will first attempt to describe the power structures in which Love Liu, the protagonist of *English*, grew up. I will then move on to describe how the people around Love Liu were subjected to the biopolitical projects of the state by means of these power structures. Here I will highlight ways in which people conformed to the demands of the state and how they allowed themselves to be co-opted in order to survive. In the third part I will turn to ways in which people created such 'personal spaces of sovereignty' as described by Farquhar and Zhang, in order to cope with the pressures of daily life in communist China at the time of the Cultural Revolution.

Social structure and the 'social contract' of the Cultural Revolution

> *"I did not go home immediately but waited for Sunrise Huang on her way home from school. It was dusk. Walking by herself, she sang along with the music coming from the compound loudspeaker: 'Glorious light radiated on Peking's golden hills / Chairman Mao, that golden sun / What a warm light, what a loving sight, / It makes serfs' hearts shine bright.'" (Wang, 2009: 236).*

> *"'You! Go back to the classroom now and write a self-criticism statement. It has to be thorough and soul-searching!' Garbage Li walked to the door. He then stopped and turned around. 'Mr. Principal, what is a soul?' he asked. The principal was about to say something. 'Soul...,' he began, then changed his tack. 'Don't worry about what it is, just go and write your self-criticism.'" (Wang, 2009: 79).*

> *"I forgot to tell you that Sunrise Huang's family lives in the same building as I did. Her father had renounced the KMT, the Nationalist party that lost the civil war in 1949 against the Communist Party. He was a major general. (...) The building I lived in was filled with former KMT generals." (Wang, 2009: 27).*

The narrative of Love Liu's adolescence, and the relationships he forms with the people around him, are almost exclusively restricted to the confines of his compound – his work-unit or 'danwei'. The communist work-unit for social control has been described at length for the North Korean context by Lankov (2006: 3-6). This work-unit is part of the National Stalinist System of North Korea, which was modelled on similar systems in other communist countries, most notably the Soviet Union and China. The organisation of the work-unit has been likened to that of a 'social contract' (idem: 3); it is the place where the exchange between regime and society takes place. Through the work-unit, the regime commits itself to provide social stability, labour and subsistence requirements such as food to the population in exchange for tacit approval of its administration. Social control takes place within the confines of the work-unit, and in North Korea food distribution was organised by the Public Distribution System (PDS). The National Stalinist System may have been more pervasive in North Korea, and it may have extended over a longer period of time, but it is clear from *English* that similar systems for social control were in place in Ürümqi at the time of the Cultural Revolution. Relationships, both personal and professional ones, are restricted to the danwei, and a coupon system similar to the PDS plays a pivotal in the life of Love Liu, especially for obtaining such luxury items as meat. The North Korean social contract is peculiar because of it's pervasive organisational life (idem: 3). But even this is replicated in Xinjiang to some extend in such organisations are the Young Pioneers, the People's Militia and the army. I will come back to the role of such organisations to people's careers in a later section.

The analogy of the National Stalinist System to the compound at the centre of Wang Gang's *English* extends beyond such structural organisation. Self-criticism sessions (idem: 4) and the writing of 'thorough and soul-searching' self-criticisms are a pervasive aspect of Love Liu's experience. On top of that the system of social hierarchy, or sŏngbun system (idem: 7), has some analogy in China as well. In North Korea all families were designated to belong to a 'main', a 'wavering', or a 'hostile' group within the population. These designations allegedly indicate the level of commitment to the regime and to communism. What is more, these group classifications were hereditary, which made it very difficult for people to escape from a social stigma once their family was labelled as wavering or

hostile. The wavering strata contained people that had been part of the bourgeoisie prior to North Korea's communist revolution. The hostile group contained families that had fought against a communist take-over. People from these two strata were generally shunned from the city and from the centres of power (idem). The Chinese Communist Party didn't codify it's social hierarchy to any degree comparable to that of North Korea, but that isn't to say that social stigma played no role in Love Liu's work-unit. With Ürümqi located on China's periphery, it is telling that a great number of the people living in Love Liu's danwei are ex-Kuomintang nationalists and other 'bourgeois elements'. Love Liu's father is himself a graduate from the prestigious Tsinghua university in Beijing. The animosity between 'bourgeois elements' and those who pride themselves on their communist credentials is a running theme throughout *English*.

> *"They gripped each other's hand for a long while. I thought they were trying to imitate Zhou En-lai, then the prime minister. Their eyes were piercingly sharp, their gestures authoritative, their chins lifted, and their chests puffed out. Their handshake was rhythmic, and it is burned in my memory. It was the first encounter between them I had witnessed, and it was like two rivers finally converging. Maybe they would go their own ways eventually, maybe they would both end up in the ocean. But in that long moment the sparkle of their smiles was like the foam of rushing whitewater misting in the sunlight." (Wang, 2009: 102-103).*

Before I move on to describe the ways in which people conform to and escape the biopolitical projects of the Cultural Revolution, I need to say something about my conception of social movements. The above-mentioned quote, reminiscent of Charles Tilly's poem on the lived, the individualising and collectivising aspects of rebellion (Tilly, 1991: 600), is useful in this regard. This exchange takes place between Love Liu's father and Second Prize Wang, his English teacher. Both of them are graduates from China's top universities; Love Liu's father has even been on a study-exchange abroad. As a result both of them are not beyond suspicions of holding bourgeois ideologies. Second Prize Wang was exiled from Shanghai for just such a reason. Exchanges between them are scarce, but this exchange shows that both of them want something more, something better for Love Liu than what Ürümqi and the Cultural Revolution can offer. It's one of the few moments in the book where people 'openly' exchange such rebellious thoughts. Social control during the Cultural Revolution didn't allow its subjects to coalesce in revolt around

hidden transcript. The rigidity of the social structure was very individualising in this way. But I don't completely disagree with James Scott (idem: 595-599). This exchange shows that some such hidden transcripts existed and were shared on rare occasions. But as will be shown in the next two sections, most of the time people were left to their own devices to make sense of events around them.

***Power* or how to be subjected to the projects of state**

> *"'I'm joining the People's Militia,' Sunrise Huang said, breaking the silence. (...) 'Now we can still study for half a day while spending the other half laboring,' said Second Prize Wang, carefully wording his response, much as he did in his English classes. 'Members of the militia have to give up their studies completely. They have to participate in patrolling, drilling, and shooting practice every day. In other words, once they take up guns, they are different from you ordinary student... revolutionaries.' 'This is as it should be. We revolutionaries are different from you ordinary people,' she corrected him." (Wang, 2009: 247).*

> *"Suddenly I thought of something: 'Tell me, is it true what people say, that Chairman Mao will live for 200 years?' My mother's expression immediately changed. She whacked me hard with her chopsticks. It happened so fast, I didn't have time to flinch. 'How should I know?' she snapped. Father looked at him, his face had turned ugly." (Wang, 2009: 38).*

> *"'What was written on the wall?' I asked. 'Down with Chairman Mao.' The class supervisor said it or me. The instant the words left his mouth he became terrified. Guo Pei-qing was a timid man from a 'bad' political background in Shanghai. His face changed color. 'Mr. Principal, I – I – I intended nothing more than to remind him,' he wailed." (Wang, 2009: 59).*

The question is not why people submitted to the power of the state, or why they made sense of the Cultural Revolution. Love Liu experienced events that took place around him, he didn't have to rationalise them. Wang Gang's *English* doesn't provide reasons. The question should therefore be how the biopolitical project of the state took place, how power was enforced through the structures introduced previously, and how people conformed to their environment. This approach is similar to that taken by Rutten in her investigation of popular support for the CPP-NPA in the Philippines. Along with researchers on revolutionary movements in Latin America, Rutten argues that we should avoid looking for 'big causes' but that we should instead study local interactions and "*trace the*

microprocesses that produce [this] support" (Rutten: 1996: 111); the *how* explains the *why* (idem: 113). Transposing her argument from the context of a counter-hegemonic struggle to that of a hegemonic order allows us to make further comparisons between the two situations. With regards to creating commitment for a cause, Rutten identifies several stages. Firstly, the Chinese work-unit provides benefits to its residents, just like the NPA movement does to the people it has mobilised. Such mobilisation takes place through mass organisation; Rutten points specifically to organisations for men, women, and the youth (idem: 130). In *English* such organisation takes place in the army, the Young Pioneers and the People's Militia. The latter two were aimed specifically at the youth. Benefits that young people could draw from participation in the People's Militia are similar to those of the activist youth group described by Rutten: "*[it] gave them a vivid sensation of being part of a larger movement*" (idem: 133). Often youths joined such groups for fun, but members of the People's Militia subsequently enjoyed better career prospects because they became the bearers of ideology. Participation in mass organisations allowed one to move up in the institution of the work-unit and gain further benefits from it (idem: 130). People that didn't participate in this two-stage process faced coercion by the community.

The small community of the work-unit is the ideal environment for ideological monitoring and coercion of its members by its members (idem: 141), and such regulatory and disciplinary processes of power form a pervasive part of the descriptions in *English*. In the Chinese work-unit at the time of the Cultural Revolution such powers also pervaded the household. Parents didn't trust their children, and husbands didn't trust their wives and vice versa. The concrete ways in which such powers took shape are described in some detail for the emerging Laos internet community by Mayes (2009). Taking a cue from Foucault's description of the workings of disciplinary and regulatory powers, he describes the panoptic vision that is felt by members of the community, and which inhibits them from sharing their rebellious thoughts and deepest feelings on-line (Mayes, 2009: 108). It is clear from the second quotation mentioned above that this 'panoptic nightmare' extended into the households of Love Liu's work-unit, even when other members of the household could be entrusted with such information. This 'Orwellian self-consciousness' (idem) forms a way of governance in itself, and is expressed most directly in such actions as silencing and self-censorship (idem: 114). Love Liu and his contemporaries are repeatedly beaten into complacency by their parents, their teachers, and their community leaders, and adults strictly monitor each another for counter-revolutionary and bourgeois thoughts. Children are particularly vulnerable to such ideological monitoring and disciplining. This is because

youngsters, especially students, were shown some leniency in China at the time of the Cultural Revolution. The bourgeois actions of Love Liu and his friends weren't attributed to them, but rather to their parents' detrimental influence. Ideological misdemeanour by Love Liu would reflect badly on his parents, providing a big incentive for them to 'reform his thoughts' by disciplining.

The special status enjoyed by youths and students throughout the rule of the Chinese Communist Party is similar to the student identity described by Weiss (2009). Both the Chinese Communist Party and student movements in China trace their history to the May 4th movement (Weiss, 2009: 505). The party traces its ideology back to this movement while events in 1919 provide students with a special identity and legitimacy to raise ideological concerns with the authorities. The nature of this student identity is described in detail by Weiss (idem: 500-506), who argues that its typically extended to both students as well as university staff. The Cultural Revolution didn't deny students their special legitimacy – on the contrary even – and I will come back to the opportunities for protest provided by this student space in the next section. The situation was quite different for China's intellectuals, who were branded as counter-revolutionaries at the start of the Cultural Revolution. Many were sent to the countryside, and the presence in Love Liu's life of many graduates from China's most prestigious universities is an indication of the 'intellectual containment' and the confined campus environment (idem: 504; 517-520) provided by a work-unit on China's periphery, far away from the power centre.

Protest **or how to create spaces of sovereignty**

> *"Sunrise Huang stuck a big character post in front of the administration building. It was titled 'My First Big Character Poster,' exactly the same as Chairman Mao's poster that started the Cultural Revolution. (...) He [Second Prize Wang] ripped it down and tore it to shreds. 'How dare you interfere with the 'four freedoms of the Red Guards' – the right to speak out freely, air one's views fully, to write big-character posters, and to hold great debates?' someone demanded." (Wang, 2009: 164).*
>
> *"'Guess who killed Bai Wen?' Father asked. Mother paused. 'He killed himself,' she said.' 'No, his wife killed him.' Mother seemed puzzled. Father continued: 'He would not have died if his wife had been like you. Men who commit suicide are really killed by their wives.'" (Wang, 2009: 12).*

“Second Prize Wang wore a dark grey tunic, similar to Mao’s but with only one breast pocket. A silver pen was clipped to it. His collar was higher than usual, making his neck look long. (...) His refined posture met our expectations – English simply had to come from a man like him. The scent of cold cream was with him wherever he went. When he walked past me, I could sense a minty coolness from his breath.” (Wang, 2009: 20).

The Cultural Revolution got underway by Mao calling upon China’s youths to effect the communist revolution and counter bourgeois elements in the population. Hence the student identity remained a legitimate space for the expression of rebellious ideas even as it was much diminished by the structure or ‘campus ecology’ (Weiss, 2009: 502) of the work-unit. The student space was further ‘intellectually contained’ by the large tracts of time during which schools were closed down (idem). There wasn’t much in way of order and continuity to the education of Love Liu and his friends. What is more, few students would openly admit to enjoying the benefits of education; joining the peasant class or the army, and becoming a communist revolutionary, for example through the People’s Militia, was seen as a much more respectable goal in life. Yet while intellectual containment was restricted to such concrete devaluation of the student space, the normative dimension (idem) of the student identity remained intact. Love Liu and his friends were given great leeway in recognition of their status as students and bearers of the ideology. This normative value of the intellectual was also in place just prior to the 1989 Tiananmen massacre, of which Weiss, quoting Calhoun, comments:

“To be a student – an intellectual-in-the-making – was not a casually adopted role; it was a matter of basic personal identity. It has resonances with images of intellectuals going back thousands of years in CHinese history, and it was also manifest in the way people spoke, dressed and comported themselves.” (Calhoun, cited in Weiss, 2009: 518).

The difference, then, between the time of the Cultural Revolution and the student movement of 1989, from the perspective of the Chinese periphery in the 1960s, is that the collapse of the system of work-units had put back in place the concrete dimension of the student identity. Whereas in 1989 students were able to take to the street in mass rallies, the incidental small-scale protests of Love Liu and his friends were confined to the work-unit.

Another form of protest that was, in a way, ‘open’ in that it was a public affair and allowed it’s protestors to withdraw from the power exercised over them by the work-unit, was an appeal to ethnicity. I will not dwell on this aspect for long as ethnicity isn’t a major theme in *English*. Only one of the people in Love Liu’s work-unit is identified as an ethnic Uyghur of mixed Han-Uyghur descent, and on several occasions this identity allows her to threaten with a retreat into her ethnic and religious community in the south of Xinjiang. Near the end of the book she follows through with this threat and disappears “*like a sheet of newspaper carried away in the night wind*” (Wang, 2009: 288). I compare this form of rebellion with a retreat in cult movements, which Adas (1981: 234) identifies as one form of avoidance protest. She travelled far to shift her ‘patron-protector’ (idem) from the work-unit to another community, which was founded in part on religious institutions.

Adas finds expressions of avoidance protest, “*by which dissatisfied groups seek to attenuate their hardship and express their discontent through flight, sectarian withdrawal, or or other activities*” (idem: 217), mostly in the pre-colonial contest state. In the colonial or modern state violent protest against the disciplinary and regulatory power of the state takes the upper hand (idem: 239-242). Yet I argue that in Agamben’s state of exception, such as the Cultural Revolution, violence and direct confrontation is only possible at great cost to oneself. The only way open to people that are subjected to such biopolitical projects is an individual and individualising avoidance or retreat into one’s personal space. As a result other expressions of avoidance protest identified by Adas can also be found in the experiences of Love Liu. At some point Love Liu runs away from home and finds himself in the company of people know as drifters, ‘bandits’ (Adas, 1981: 236) that have withdrawn from the structure of the work-unit to roam the country, begging and thieving for a living. “*Kids like me thought of ‘drifters’ as a swearword that meant the same as thief, bastard, thug, or robber*.” (Wang, 2009: 234). An altogether more moribund way of flight is suicide. Suicide is a common occurrence among the adults in Love Liu’s life, which the protagonist explains as a flight not just from the oppressive environment of the work-unit, but also from the ideological monitoring and self-disciplining household.

Personal sovereign spaces that would be more familiar to Farquhar and Zhang (2005) can also be found in *English*. These forms of avoidance protest closely resemble Adas’ theatrical entertainment (Adas, 1981: 236), except for that they are individual experiences or shared with a very select group of people. Occasionally Love Liu’s parents take out the phonograph to listen to western classical music in spite of their fear of eavesdropping neighbours. Love Liu’s retreat into the study of English, together with his English teacher

and another student from his class, can also be read as the creation of such a personal space. In the case of the English teacher this retreat into English is accompanied with a gentlemanly disposition, the wearing of cologne (cold cream), tailored suits, crisp shirts, and leather shoes – behaviour that he shares with his favourite student. The maintenance and propagation of this 'gentlemanly disposition', only reluctantly tolerated by the community, is essential to his own sense of self-worth. Yet all the characters that create such sovereign spaces for themselves are invariably accused of bourgeois behaviour at some time during the narrative.

Conclusion

> *"'I miss my English teacher. I miss Second Prize Wang,' I whined. (...) Suddenly Father looked up. 'I wronged your English teacher.' (...) 'Why didn't you sing me even one song in English when I really needed to hear it?' Father was at a loss, as if I had shouted at him. Tears began to pool in his eyes. 'Your father is a pragmatist. I always did what I thought was best for you.'" (Wang, 2009: 305).*

There are other recurring themes in Wang Gang's *English* that are indicative of the ways in which people cope by creating sovereign spaces for themselves at times of great social upheaval. Similar to the student space, poverty also puts one beyond suspicion of bourgeois ideals, as is shown by Love Liu's raucous best friend, Garbage Li. A retreat into one's work – "*The opportunity to work again was all that mattered to him. He was a complete pragmatist.*" (Wang, 2009: 217) – forms another pervasive way in which the characters of Love Liu's life withdraw into personal spaces. From my argument so far the ways in which people cope with the power relations of the work-unit are clear. What all these expressions of avoidance or protest have in common is that they are ways of creating individual spaces of sovereignty. Few 'hidden transcripts' are shared by more than one or two people at a time. Except for a few select groups of people – students, the poor – the questioning of power relations was confined the household and the individual. The social structure and the pervasiveness of the disciplinary and regulatory powers of the state were, I've mentioned it before, very individualising in this way. Hence the biopolitics of the Cultural Revolution nurtured a kind of pragmatism among its subjects.

The final chapter takes Love Liu's life forward by several decades. Coming out of the Cultural Revolution, Love Liu's father clearly sees and even regrets his pragmatism of that era. This is clear from the above-mentioned quotation. In light of Tilly (1991), Love Liu's father saw clearly the 'jagged' path he took through the tumultuous year's of the Cultural Revolution; he was, in his own words, a pragmatist. But he also sees a neat line from *a* to

b, a hidden transcript that he ought to have followed. What prevented his own moral upstanding were the rigid power structures of the Cultural Revolution, China's own state of exception. People, Love Liu's father among them, were in constant fear of being banned from the city, of having the law applied to them by no longer applying, of being labelled a bourgeois element and an enemy of the state. And so Love Liu's father conformed, only to later regret not standing up for his own beliefs. From here it's just a small leap to see Love Liu's father in a Beijing park, cultivating the self in ways similar to those described by Farquhar and Zhang (2005), in protest of his actions to which he was both forced and consented to under the biopolitical regimen of the Cultural Revolution.

Such is my understanding of power and protest at the time of the Cultural Revolution. Sure enough, other accounts of this era raise instead the numerous and violently gruesome atrocities committed by the Red Guards throughout the same period. But this story has been – to speak with Wang Gang's words raised at the start of this essay – "*recounted at nauseum*". It's not the only story that deserves to be told. Others, like Wang Gang's *English*, provide a different perspective on the oppressive power structures that pervaded people's lives at the time. It's a story that's not been heard quite frequently enough. Like Adas' lamenting the fact that avoidance protest has too often been snobbed by academics of protest movements (Adas, 1981: 217), so too has the story of everyday life in China's state of exception been confined to a few references in the non-fiction literature. Very little seems to have been published in academic journals, apart from perhaps the account by Farquhar and Zhang of retrospective protest in Beijing's parks. Further analyses of experiences such as Love Liu's would heed the literature on everyday life referenced in this account (Farquhar and Zhang, 2005: 305). I've deliberated avoided this literature due to time constraints, but I expect this field of enquiry to provide further valuable insights; insight that can extend our understanding of how to cope with living under repressive regimes of modern biopower.

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