Critical Asian Studies
37:1 (2005), 053-076
Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

FINDING A PLACE

Negotiations of Modernization and Globalization among Rural Women in Beijing

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the ways in which modernization and globalization are experienced, negotiated, and understood by women in rural-to-urban migration in contemporary China. In the last two decades, labor mobility in China has increased dramatically, with millions of people leaving the countryside for the promise of money and a modern life in the coastal special economic zones such as Shenzhen and in the global cities of Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. This article discusses the narratives of rural migrant women working in the city of Beijing. A striking feature of these narratives is the variety of conflicting evaluations of *place* presented, not just by different women, but also by the same individuals. For example, the stated wish to stay in the city as long as possible often conflicts with complaints about the hardships faced there. Conversely, it is very common for women to describe their home in the village with fondness and nostalgia, but to say that they never want to go back. The author of this article aims to understand the conflicting evaluations and desires about both geographic and social place that these women express, and the dilemmas they face in trying to "find their place." Key to the paper is an analysis of how local discourses on modernity, gender, and rural/urban difference shape — in both symbolic and material ways — modernization and globalization and their consequences for individuals' search for a place in the world.

> *Wang Lan*:[1] I came to Beijing in 1995. My home is in Shaanxi. I'm twenty-two this year.…When I first came to Beijing, my single aim was [pause], that is to say, at home I really wanted to go to school, but my family was very poor. So I thought if I could come out, I'd have an opportunity to study, it was just for that aim that I came.…

ISSN 1467-2715 print/1472-6033 online / 01 / 000053-24 ©2005 BCAS, Inc. DOI:10.1080/1467271052000305269

> [*Author*]: You've been here such a long time. Do you feel you now count as a city person?
> *Wang Lan*: No, I'm still not a city person. I face a lot of suffering. My future — at the moment I have nothing. This city has given me an opportunity only to solve my problems of food and clothing, my survival. But I feel my future is very hazy. So I don't feel like I belong in this city. And in this city I receive a lot of discrimination, a lot of unfair treatment. In the eyes of these people, outsiders are contemptible....
> [*Author*]: Do you want to stay here long-term or do you think you'll go home?
> *Wang Lan*: I really like this city, so I'd very much like to stay here long-term. There are a lot of opportunities here. At home — my mum, that generation — they get married, have kids, die, that's their whole life, it's very poor, they just work in the fields and they have absolutely no status, they're just housewives. So now my ideal, my goal, is to use my opportunities here to develop and give full play to my own worth — I want to continually study and perfect myself, so that I can become part of the city as fast as possible. Now China has already entered the world,[2] so it's in contact with the whole world. Here I can see the culture and history of the whole world. I really want to develop myself and I can do that here. Even though Beijing has given me a lot of pain and lots of bad impressions, on the whole people mature through struggle. (Author interview, Beijing, November 2001)

This article examines the ways in which modernization and globalization are experienced and their meanings shaped at the most intimate, personal level, taking women in rural-to-urban migration in China as a case study. In the last two decades in China, one of the most significant corollaries of the state's efforts to develop a market economy and "join tracks with the world" (*yu shijie jiejui*) has been a huge increase in labor mobility, as economic restructuring has enabled both domestic and international capitalists to exploit cheap rural labor, while growing rural/urban inequalities have led to a flood of people out of the countryside lured by the promise of money and modernity in the coastal special economic zones such as Shenzhen and the global cities of Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. Similar to immigrants in other countries, these migrants have only limited citizenship rights in the cities. Under China's household registration system, introduced in the late 1950s, every person is classified according to place of residence and as belonging to either agricultural or nonagricultural households. Transferring from rural agricultural to urban registration is usually extremely difficult. Governments, employers, and others in urban areas, especially the large metropolises, commonly discriminate against those who do not have a local/urban household registration. For example, municipal governments impose regulations limiting migrant employment to a narrow range of poorly paid, menial jobs; employers provide migrant workers with none of the job security or welfare benefits extended to local urban workers; urban schools charge exorbitant fees to enroll migrant children; and public security bureaus conduct frequent "clean up" campaigns to demolish migrant settlements and deport migrants.[3]

This article is based on research conducted with members of the Beijing Migrant Women's Club (*Dagongmei zhi Jia*), a nongovernmental organization set up in 1996 by the editorial office of the journal *Nongjianü* (Rural Women). Today the Club has a membership of over four hundred, most of whom are young rural migrant women. Its aim is to provide these women with a place to get together and share experiences, socialize, and participate in discussions and classes in literacy, English language, and basic computing skills.[4] Some of the information contained in this article is drawn from the findings of a questionnaire survey conducted with one hundred members of the Club in the year 2000.[5] In addition, the article draws on interviews and conversations with twenty-two members of the Club conducted during July-December 2001 and December 2002.[6]

As illustrated in the interview extract above, a striking feature of the women's discussions is the variety of conflicting feelings they have about place. For example, the stated wish to stay in the city as long as possible is often at odds with complaints about the hardships faced there. Conversely, women commonly describe their home in the village with fondness and nostalgia, but say that they never want to go back.

In order to understand these conflicting representations of place and desires about place, this article builds on a combination of two propositions that have been expressed in recent social science literature. The first is that interconnected aspects of modernization and globalization — the development of technologies that increase flows of goods, information, ideas, and people; and increases in commerce both within and between nations — result in a fragmen-

tation, multiplication, and flux in the identities or subject positions that are available to, or forced upon, individuals, groups, and societies. As Craig Calhoun puts it,

> the modern era brought an increase in the multiplicity of identity schemes so substantial that it amounted to a qualitative break, albeit one unevenly distributed in time and space. In the modern era, identity is always constructed and situated in a field and amid a flow of contending cultural discourses....The tension and even incommensurability among the various discourses — at the extreme where they claim autonomy — appears not just as an "external" difficulty for individuals but as a series of contradictions within the "subject-self."[7]

Modernization and globalization have been occurring unevenly across the world since the eighteenth century. However, their consequences have been felt far more intensely and by far more people across the world since the late twentieth century, with the advent of what has been variously described as "modernity at large," "late modernity," and "postmodernity."[8] Since then, the multiplication and fragmentation of identity schemes have increased and become more widespread as a result of new electronic media and large-scale movements of people[9] and by late capitalist industrial strategies of "flexible accumulation." These last aim to reduce turnover time in both production and consumption, for example by dispersing production to countries with lower wages and fewer labor controls, by introducing more flexible work regimes and short-term labor contracts, and by promoting rapidly changing consumer fashions and an aesthetic that celebrates difference and ephemerality.[10]

In contemporary China, I suggest, the migration of people from rural to urban areas is emblematic of twentieth and twenty-first century modernization and globalization. By this I mean two things: First, at the macro level, rural-to-urban migration is a key outcome of the strategies of "flexible accumulation" of both domestic and international capitalists, enabled by a state that has tried to promote rapid economic growth and integration into the global market by stimulating geographical and social mobility on an individual level while at the same time maintaining key institutions of social differentiation and control such as the household registration system. Second, for individuals, movement across the rural/urban divide in China results in experiences of dislocation and the multiplication of different, often clashing, subject positions, that are typical of the experience of modernization and globalization.

The second proposition this article develops is that places are important focal points for intense personal feelings and desires, and for the construction of both group and individual understandings about identity and social relations. Thus, for both communities and individuals, feelings of belonging to a particular place, and conversely of being "out of place," are often central components of a sense of identity. However, the rapid and long-ranging movement of both people and information characteristic of modernization and globalization often multiplies the number of places in which individuals and groups have an emotional investment or with which they have personal connections.[11] This becomes a central aspect of the multiplication of subject positions, such that the

problem of trying to work out their place in the world in both the social and geographic sense becomes a much more central dilemma for both individuals and groups.

I will sketch out the contours of this dilemma as it is experienced by rural migrant women in contemporary Beijing. For while, in an abstract sense, the dilemma is shared by people across the globalizing world, the ways in which it is experienced are locally specific. My aim is, first, to identify the conflicting understandings and desires about place and identity that are expressed by Chinese migrant women when they talk about their search for a place in the world. Second, I seek to explain how these different understandings and desires come about in terms of migrant women's individual negotiations of dominant social norms and discourses. I argue that for these migrants the dilemma of finding a place in the world is crucially shaped by particular, locally specific discourses relating to gender, rural-urban difference, and modernity.[12] The effects of these discourses are such that, although modernization and globalization do produce a multiplication of subject positions, the multiplication is by no means unbounded: Only a limited range of subject positions is imaginable to any one person, and the possibilities for realizing these imagined subject positions are constrained.

The article next examines rural Chinese migrant women's search for a place in the world from three different angles. The first section examines images of place in these women's reflections on their pasts in the countryside; the second discusses the understandings of place that emerge when they explain why they migrated to the city; and the third and final section analyzes their representations of the city and the countryside as places in which to live in the future and the long term.

The Place Left Behind

Almost all of my interlocutors spoke of "bitterness" (*ku*) and hardship in the countryside and of the limitations that poverty and sexism placed upon their lives prior to migration to the city. Qiao Xue, for example, was born in 1981 and grew up in a village in Shaanxi. She has four older sisters, one younger sister, and a younger brother. Her parents, she said, were feudal and superstitious and cared more about males than females (*zhong nan qing nü*), and so kept trying for a son. Other villagers made comments about her family because "they thought we had too many children. They had particularly low regard for girls [*tebie dui nühaizi kan de te qing*]." Qiao Xue left for Beijing at the age of sixteen, before finishing junior high school, because the family could not afford to continue her education.[13]

Examples such Qiao Xue's appear to confirm an image of the Chinese countryside as a backward "other" that is common to both the western and the urban Chinese imagination. Yet it is important to note that accounts of hardship were not dominant components of my interlocutors' narratives. In fact, the majority of the members of the Migrant Women's Club with whom I talked, including those who mentioned hardships, reflected positively on life at home in the countryside in the context of their past. Typically, they remarked that as children

their lives had been happier and more carefree than they presently were. Qiao Xue, for example, said:

> I was happier then [as a child]. Even though I didn't have anything much good to eat or good clothes to wear because there were so many children, I still feel that I was happier then than now. I didn't have to think about anything.

Expressions of homesickness and nostalgia were common, especially among younger women who had been in the city for a relatively short time, and among those who had left a spouse and children behind in the countryside. For example, Ma Hua, a 28-year-old woman from Guizhou, left her husband and one-year-old child to come to Beijing three years ago. At first, she said, she found living in Beijing extremely difficult. Her separation from her family caused her much pain; she found her work as a cleaner very tiring; she did not understand things in Beijing and found Beijing people unpleasant. Gao Xinran, a 21-year-old from Hebei, had been in Beijing only three months when I met her. Already engaged to a man in her home county, she had postponed her wedding and come to Beijing against the wishes of both her own parents and her fiancé, in what she herself characterized as a desperate last-ditch effort to experience a little freedom before marriage closed in upon her. She was, however, very aware of the contempt with which she and her fellow migrants were viewed by Beijingers and of the ways in which the company at which she worked as a cleaner exploited its migrant workforce. She was lonely and she missed home terribly. Life in the countryside was more comfortable and relaxed than in the city, she said. When I said "but farming is hard and full of suffering, isn't it?" she countered that during the busy season it was, but otherwise one was free to arrange one's own time. She also said that the city was very *luan*, meaning chaotic,

and unsafe, the air in Beijing was bad, and living conditions were cramped. Furthermore, she claimed, country people were warm, whereas city people were cold and they looked down on others.

In light of the anxieties, alienation, and hardships they suffered in the city, migrant women such as these idealized their past in the countryside, looking back on it as a time of carefree happiness and freedom, located in a set of intimate and harmonious family relationships, in a place of space, safety and tranquility, where life proceeded at a relaxed pace and villagers treated each other warmly and with respect.

This image contrasts sharply with the stereotype of the Chinese countryside as being the backward "other" of the modern city.[14] But then, in China as elsewhere, the nostalgic image of a rural idyll has long played as important a function as the constitutive "other" in discourses on urbanity and modernity as has the image of rural backwardness. Thus, in the early twentieth century, modernizing urban intellectuals decried the backwardness of the countryside, and took upon themselves the responsibility of enlightening the peasant masses, while simultaneously mourning a loss of connection with the idyllic traditional countryside.[15] The same set of images can readily be seen in post-Mao literature, television, and film, in which the countryside is alternately depicted as the repository of backwardness and as the focus for nostalgia.[16] In both sets of images, the countryside is denied "coevalness" with the city, to use Johannes Fabian's term.[17] In other words, the countryside is constructed as belonging to and epitomizing the past, while the city is the place of the present and the future — of modernity, progress, and development.

Migrant women's narratives both draw upon and contribute to discourses of modernity that deny coevalness between rural and urban. They are exposed to these discourses most powerfully in the city, but also prior to migration, in the village. Thus, on the one hand, as will become clearer in later sections of this article, not only have women's representations of the countryside as "backward" been colored by their experience in the city, but their original motivations for leaving home have also been shaped by discourses of modernity through which the city was presented as a desirable contrast and alternative to the "backward" countryside. On the other hand, their nostalgia resonates closely with an image of the countryside as being a more peaceful and more moral place than the city, which is also found in contemporary, popular nostalgic discourse in both the city and the countryside. In particular, it echoes and contributes to a nostalgia for the Maoist era. Such nostalgia for Maoism has been prevalent in both rural and urban areas since the 1990s, but it is particularly marked in rural areas where villagers today feel that they have lost the moral and political status they gained under Mao as members of the revolutionary poor peasant class.[18]

While they express a nostalgia for the countryside of the past, these women's narratives also suggest an understanding of the countryside *as* the past — as a place that has been, and should be, left behind. It is noteworthy, for example, that few of the many women I talked with were nostalgic about the countryside, and very few expressed any desire to return there. Moreover, I have encountered very few expressions of pride in the home village among migrant women,

nor have I observed or heard of any sustained effort on the part of the members of the Migrant Women's Club to preserve or share memories, or to maintain aspects of village life or native-place culture in the city. Thus, while many of the Club's members were interested in photography, and often shared with me and with one another photographs that they had taken at tourist sites around Beijing, they very rarely showed photographs of themselves or others in their family or village and did not display such photographs in their living space.

This suggests an orientation very different from that of overseas migrants elsewhere, for whom the preservation and observance of home traditions is often central to the maintenance of community and individual identities.[19] It is also somewhat surprising, given the common assumption that Chinese migrants strongly identify with native place. Networks among people from the same region in China are important to migrants looking for employment and housing.[20] However, such networks are generally not maintained through shared cultural activities.[21]

Rather than conveying pride or enthusiasm for their home village, when migrant women express nostalgia or a longing for home they most commonly highlight the hardships and dislocation that they suffer in the city. Furthermore, the homesickness itself is represented as a weakness. For example, Ma Hua, while extremely homesick, nevertheless said that she had learned to put up with the suffering. If you come out to work, she said, you have to expect to suffer, so from now on she would not complain about missing home or about working hard or getting tired. Numerous other women said that most of the fellow villagers with whom they had originally migrated had missed home so much that they had been unable to bear it and had soon returned to the village. These women presented themselves as superior by saying that while they too missed home, they felt that they would lose face by going home empty-handed after such a short while, and so they had stayed on.

Finding a New Place

To date, most analyses of motivations for migration in China at the micro as well as the macro level have emphasized economic factors.[22] Among members of the Migrant Women's Club, however, strictly economic motivations seemed less important than a desire for new experiences and personal development. Thus, Figure 1 shows that, when asked their main reasons for leaving home, 24 percent of respondents to my 2000 survey of the Migrant Women's Club cited the backwardness of their hometown or the poverty of their family (*jiaxiang luohou, jiali qiong*) as an important reason for out-migration. However, the most frequently cited reasons were "to develop myself" (*xiang fazhan ziji*) (49 percent), "to broaden my horizons" (*xiang kaikuo yanjie*) (38 percent), "to exercise independence" (*duanlian yixia ziji de duli shenghuo nengli*) (33 percent), and "for my education" (*weile ziji de jiaoyu*) (30 percent). Another 23 percent of respondents said that they left home because there was "nothing to do at home," a phrase that points not just to a lack of employment and therefore income, but also to a sense of boredom.[23]

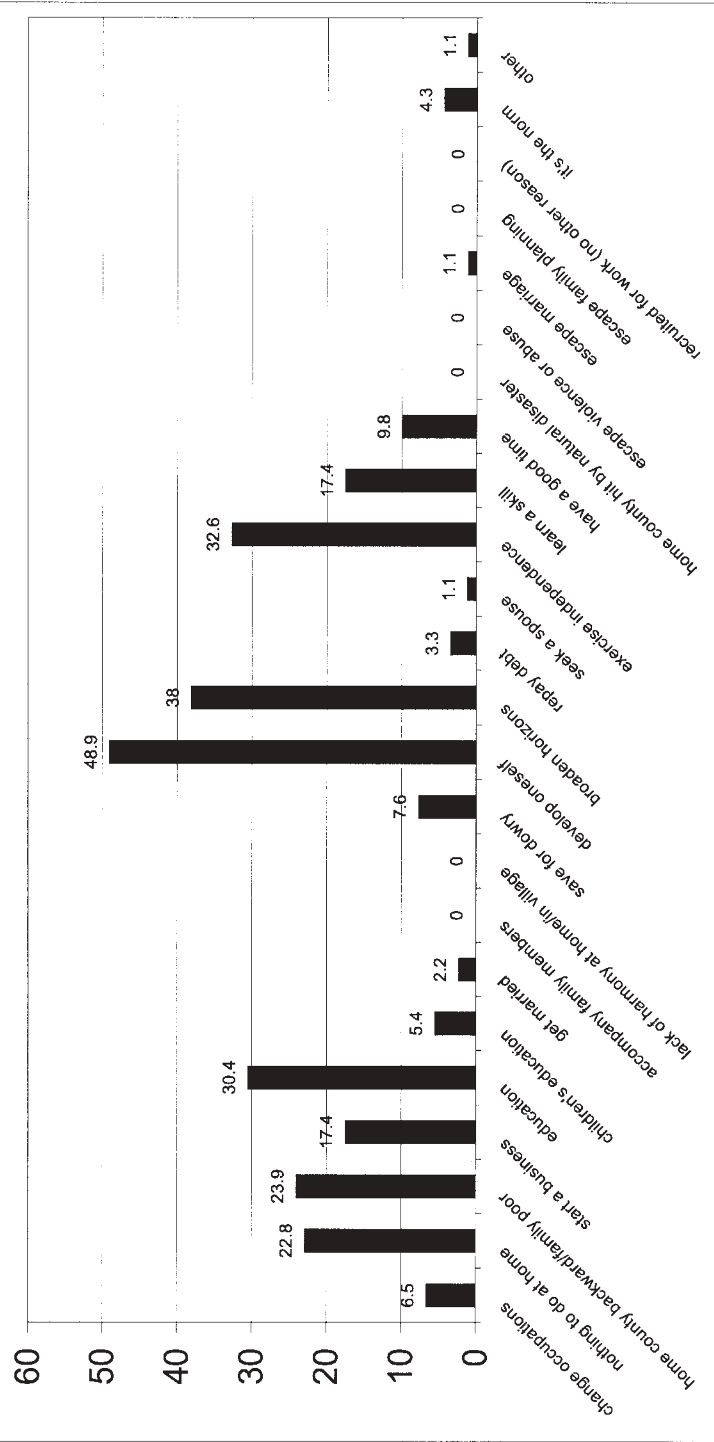

Figure 1. Reasons for leaving home
(as percentage; N = 92)

Given their youth and the fact that the majority were single, these women were not surprisingly more interested in exploring the world, testing new identities, and exercising independence than older, married migrants, and less concerned with providing a secure future for their families. They were also more influenced by new social norms and discourses, particularly by the spread of television culture across the countryside; by the allure of urban and global consumption-based capitalism and modernity that television advertisements and popular programs promote; by the state's recent emphasis on the need for "self-development" (*ziwo fazhan*) and an improvement in "human quality" (*suzhi*) as vital ingredients in national development; and by the claim that migration to the city is the key to "self-development" and high quality for young rural people. Statements to this effect are common in the mainstream media. Under Mao the countryside could be a site for young people, both male and female, to become political activists and model laborers and thereby join the national march of revolution and progress, albeit as lesser participants than industrial workers. Today, however, the countryside is portrayed as a place of stagnation, and in order to be a part of the nation's project of development and modernization, it is claimed, a young rural person must migrate to the city (and then return to reinvigorate the countryside).[24] In the words of one article published in the Communist Party's *Ban Yue Tan* [Half Monthly Forum], young rural-to-urban migrant women

> have taken the lead and bravely left the closed-up world of farm and field. Through life in a strange city they have been baptised in civilization [*shoudao wenming de xili*] and increased their abilities. They have awakened their thousands of brothers and sisters in the countryside and led them toward the great classroom of the city to be tempered and trained by the market economy.[25]

Gender and marriage patterns also play an important part in unmarried women's reasons for wanting to migrate. First of all, young women are often considered marginal to the rural economy. Farm work is already being done by their parents, parents-in-law, brothers, or other male relatives, and the little off-farm employment that is available is also dominated by men. In some cases even domestic chores are taken care of by an older woman or may only take up a couple of hours of a woman's day, leaving her with "nothing to do." In other cases, while a woman may be busy with child care and domestic work, because such chores do not bring in an income they are so devalued in rural China that they are not considered "work" — they are "nothing."[26] Thus, the phrase "nothing to do," which many respondents to my survey cited as a reason for migrating to the city, connotes not just inactivity and the boredom that goes with it but also a sense of worthlessness.

In areas where out-migration is common the departure of a large proportion of the village's young people further contributes to the sense of boredom, worthlessness, and loneliness of those left behind. In fact, it is debatable which came first — out-migration or the widespread notion that there is nothing to do in the village. Certainly, the opportunity to "see the world," combined with the promotion of a dominant discourse about the superiority of the city, has greatly

exacerbated the feeling among young women that there is nothing to do in the countryside.

For single women, marginalization in the rural economy is compounded by patrilocal, exogamous marriage practices and by the assumption that the main thing that lies ahead for them is marriage and departure from the natal family and in most cases the village. For a single man, in contrast, the assumption is that in the near future he will bring in a wife and take over the running of the family economy. This does not prevent young men from migrating — in fact, nationally, more single men than women leave their village in search of work, but it may mean that young single men have a different orientation toward migration. A number of studies claim, for example, that single sons who migrate remit more than daughters because of the pressure on them and their families to construct a new house to attract a bride.[27] More generally, men may be more inclined to view migration as a way of fulfilling their obligations as a family breadwinner, whereas young women may feel those obligations less strongly and may therefore be relatively "free" to pursue more individually oriented goals.

While impending marriage might, to some extent, free women from economic obligations, women also often view marriage as a looming threat. In my survey of the Migrant Women's Club, only one respondent said that her out-migration was motivated by a wish to escape marriage. However, in their conversations with me, my interlocutors time and again confirmed the significance of escaping, or at least delaying, marriage in the countryside. They suggested that the desire to escape marriage in the countryside and the desire to pursue self-development in the city are closely related. A future in the countryside means, to these women, being married to a rural man, having children, and working in the fields. The image that this conjures up is very different from the rural idyll that is painted by migrant women reflecting nostalgically upon their childhoods. It entails low status, predictability, monotony, and drudgery, and an end to autonomy and to the pursuit of personal hopes and aspirations. This is the backdrop to their desire to leave the village in search of self-development.

Beyond dreading the confining ties of marriage per se, young migrant women often express a particular aversion to marriage into agricultural households in which traditional patriarchal attitudes are strong and women are doomed, as they see it, to lives of servitude. This feeling of dread is often informed by the observations of their mothers and of other older married women in the village. The sense of dread has long characterized young rural Chinese women's outlooks on marriage, but in recent times women feel this dread more acutely, ironically because new ideas and new possibilities have emerged through migration and a growing level of communication between villages, cities, and other parts of the world. These mean that young rural women hope and to some extent expect that migration will provide a route out of the married life in the village that their mothers have led. Yet, although the length of migrant sojourns away from home has been increasing in recent years (see below), extremely high obstacles to settlement in the city mean that most migrants — male and female — continue to return to the countryside after less than a year in the city. Scholars have shown that migration increases the resources, including per-

sonal power and autonomy, of some returning migrant women. However, the majority go back to lives of marriage, domestic work, and agriculture not so very different from those of their mothers' generation. Having tasted the freedom and excitement of single life in the city, many of these women find it difficult to adjust to married life in the village and express high levels of discontent.[28] The example these women provide can only reinforce among younger village women a desire to taste the freedom of the outside world and a dread of returning and marrying in the village.

The Place of Desire

Scholars and government officials have assumed that rural migration in China is mostly seasonal and/or circulatory, that rural migrants still see "home" as being in the countryside, and that their sojourns away from that home, though they may be repeated, are brief. There is some evidence, though, that migrants' sojourns are increasing in length and that increasing numbers of migrants view their residence in the city as long-term. In Beijing, the 1997 census of the floating population reported that 64 percent of migrants had been away from home for more than six months.[29] By 2002, that figure had increased to 74 percent.[30] Some studies also indicate that women migrants tend to stay away from the village for longer periods than men. A large-scale survey conducted in 1995 by the Ministry of Agriculture found, for example, that among rural migrants from Sichuan and Anhui, the average length of time away from home was 9.3 months for men, but 10.7 months for women.[31] Other studies indicate that among migrants residing in large cities, women express greater satisfaction with their situation than men, and a greater desire to stay there permanently.[32]

My own study is not representative of all migrants, or even of female migrants, for most of the women I talked with had been in Beijing for some years and expressed a desire to remain in the city in the long term. In the following section, however, I will try to extrapolate from what I learned of the desires and aspirations of my interlocutors to suggest why significant, and possibly growing, numbers of migrant women wish to stay away from their "home" in the countryside for as long as possible, despite the discrimination and hardships they face in the city.

In my survey of the Migrant Women's Club, 37 percent of respondents answered "do not know" in response to the question "If it is possible, do you think you will live long term in Beijing [*ruguo keneng ni xiang zai Beijing changqi shenghuo xiaqu ma*]?" Another 30 percent indicated that they would not stay long term in the city, and 33 percent said they would (N=92). The high percentage of respondents who answered "do not know" is a reflection of the sense of uncertainty and ambivalence that migrant women feel about their future in the city. The 33 percent figure for those saying they would stay in the city is higher than has been reported in other studies. All the same, conversations with members of the Club suggested to me that this figure underestimates the extent to which migrant women commonly wish to stay in the city.[33]

Most of my interlocutors said that life in the city is hard. The city offers them the opportunity for little more than basic survival. They find that they can earn

just enough to get by in the city or, if they are doing well, to send a bit of money home each month, but they can do little else. They live in poor-quality housing and struggle to find work that is relatively stable, where the wage is not too low and their employers not too abusive. The jobs they find generally involve tiring, menial work and provide few opportunities for advancement or the acquisition of transferable skills. They also feel lonely and constantly looked down upon by urbanites. Those in employment have very little leisure time, their movements and contacts with others are often restricted by their employers, especially in the case of live-in maids and workers in small sweatshops, and, in any case, they usually lack the money and the energy to go out in their time off work.

For all this, many said that they enjoy a sense of expanded horizons and of freedom and autonomy in the city. The potential opportunity for self-development, especially by taking classes and learning skills that might improve their employability, was also important to many of these women, even though few had the money, energy, or time to attend such classes. As Wang Lan indicates, the sense of being at the heart of global modernity, and the aura of excitement associated with this, was another important attraction of the city, and especially of the capital Beijing. Again, this was most times more a matter of hope and imagined possibilities than of present reality. But despite the harsh reality, the belief that the city holds the possibility for developing oneself and being a part of a more exciting modern world continued to be a powerful incentive for these women to remain in the city for as long as possible. Ruan Shilin, a 23-year-old who had been in Beijing for five years told me:

> I definitely won't go back [to the countryside] in the short term. In Beijing I have things I want to do. If you go home there's nothing much to do. Of

> course, there are things you can do — you can farm — but [pause] I feel I definitely couldn't go back in the short term. Because now Beijing has entered the world and it's won the bid for the Olympic Games. The pressures here are very great. You might feel if you go home there's no pressure — you can feed and clothe yourself without feeling pressured — but it's boring. Even though working outside is full of suffering — you go to work at seven in the morning and don't finish till nine in the evening, and in the evenings it's cold and you feel very tired — but, still, it's interesting. After all, we're young. Maybe when I'm fifty I'll feel "aiya, it's so cold in winter, having to get up to go to work." [pause] But now when I phone home, nothing much is happening.

While the dynamism of the city exerts a powerful pull, my interlocutors indicated that the desire not to return to the countryside — because it is too poor, villagers' thinking is too "backward" and "feudal," farming is too draining, and they would not be able to readjust to rural life after living in the city — is often an even stronger motivation for remaining in Beijing. The longer they stayed in the city, the more this feeling grew, despite a realization that their future in the city would also be limited. Zhang Ning had been in Beijing for eight years when I first met her in 2001. She had recently married another migrant and the couple lived in a cramped, rented room in a migrant settlement on the outskirts of the city. Zhang Ning had been unemployed for eighteen months and felt that her future prospects for employment and for self-development were bleak. However, when I asked her about prospects back in her husband's home county in Hebei, Zhang Ning said that there were no industries there and she did not know how to farm. "I feel that if you made me go back to live in the countryside now, I wouldn't be used to it. I feel that I've been here eight years and studied a few things and if you told me to go back I wouldn't be willing." Like many women who had been away from the countryside for some years, Zhang Ning said that her thinking had changed a great deal in the time she had been in Beijing. After she had worked in Beijing for a while, and participated in the Migrant Women's Club, she said,

> My worldview broadened a lot, and I wasn't just trying to earn a bit of pocket money the way I had been when I first came out, or thinking I'd just come out to have a look. I wanted to find a way of living for myself. I didn't want to go back because going back there'd be no way to find a life, only farming. It'd be as if I'd never come out. If you want to do something like run a factory, if you don't have capital you won't be able to. It's too backward. A lot of young people have left. Mostly it's just old people and children at home, and those who can't leave because they're sick.

Despite the hardships they faced as "outsiders" without local registration in Beijing, Zhang Ning and her husband had no thoughts of returning, either to her home county in Anhui or to his in Hebei. His family, she said, had not built a new house, "so if I went back there I wouldn't have anywhere to live, so I'm not going back. His parents just live in a mud house in the mountains."

Caught between disillusion about their possibilities in the city and the disheartening prospect of a return to the countryside, single migrant women often

express their dilemmas through their anxieties about, and deliberations over, marriage. The pressure on young women to marry is enormous, and this, combined with their struggles and sense of alienation in the city, leads the majority of single migrant women to return to the countryside to marry when they are in their early to mid twenties. There are signs, though, that their experiences of migration are leading increasing numbers of rural women to delay marriage.[34] Away from home, and earning their own income, young rural women often gain self-confidence and feel they can postpone marriage later than would normally be possible in the village. Their exposure to modern urban values also means that they often expect to have more say in whom they marry. Many seek marriage with a fellow migrant, who may or may not be from the same province as themselves. They hope that such men, because they have had some exposure to the world as a result of migration, will be more open-minded and less conservative than the average rural man, whom they disparagingly refer to as "dirt head, dirt brain" (*tutou tunao de*).[35] Some women who marry fellow migrants return to settle in their husband's home village and have children there. When allowed to by their in-laws, some return to the city to work, both before and after their children are born.[36] Others, like Zhang Ning, remain in the city, at least for a time.[37]

The dilemmas that young single migrant women face in finding a place for themselves are such that they are often vague and indecisive when asked about their aspirations. They talk simply of living "one day at a time" (*zou yitian, suan yitian*).[38] At the same time, though, many feel that time is running out on them because they are approaching an age when they will be considered "old maids" too old for anyone to want to marry. This anxiety is compounded by the understanding that most urban employers in the manufacturing and service sectors prefer to hire migrant women in their teens and twenties and commonly sack women past the age of thirty.[39]

Although most migrant women conform to the dominant rural expectation that they return to the countryside to marry in their early twenties, a few people have voiced concern about the social consequences of the large number of unmarried rural women in their late twenties and thirties who have already lived in Beijing for several years and now have little chance of marrying. For example, two studies argue that a failure to marry and have children by the age of twenty-five is reinforcing a sense of rootlessness and an inability to adapt back to rural life among increasing numbers of migrant women.[40] Others worry about the economic security of single rural women who stay long term in the city. One of my migrant interlocutors, who herself was unusual in having married a Beijing man and settled in the city, lamented that a younger sister, who worked in a beauty parlor in Shenzhen, was already older than thirty but was destitute (*yi wu suo you*):

> She hasn't married and she doesn't have children. She's more than thirty and she doesn't have her own family. When she gets to forty, she won't be able to find work, how will she live in the city? I'll have to look after her. She has an older sister, but what about all the others? So, how come I can stay in the city? It's just because I have a husband. If I didn't have a husband here I don't know how I'd manage either.

Of the twenty-two female members of the Migrant Women's Club with whom I had in-depth discussions, only five expressed a clear wish or plan to return to the countryside. I sketch out two of their positions below because their cases illustrate a number of issues that are common to young rural migrant women trying to find their place in the world. Liu Yu left her home village in Sichuan at the age of seventeen in order to earn some money so that her younger brother and sister could go to school. When I first met her, Liu Yu was unhappy in the city and wanted only to return home. However, her future in the village had been greatly compromised by the fact that she had been raped by her employer in her first job in Beijing as a maid. Apart from an older male cousin whom she had contacted for help when she was in hospital, no one in her village knew that Liu Yu had been raped. Word did get out, though, that she had been in the hospital and this, combined with a general anxiety about the loose morals of women who left home to work, was enough for villagers to suspect that Liu Yu was a "fallen woman." Rumors caused Liu Yu's fiancé, to whom she had been engaged before her migration, to call off their wedding. Even before this happened, Liu Yu felt that, despite being in love with her fiancé, the stigma of rape meant that she had to end their engagement and that she would never marry. Even if she could find a man willing to marry a "fallen woman" she would always feel bad about herself and it would always be something in the way between them.

Several months after the rape, Liu Yu recovered enough to work and found a job in a factory in a Beijing suburb. She had conflicting thoughts about her future. On the one hand, she wanted to return home in order to look after her parents, who suffered from ill health, and because she disliked living in the city. On the other hand, she did not know what work she would do back in the village. Unlike most migrant women she was not averse to returning to farm work, but

she doubted she had either the skills or the strength to be a farmer and felt that, in any case, such work would not bring in enough money. She was hopeful that she might find work in one of the factories that had been set up in her home county in the last few years, but with only three years of schooling she did not rate her chances highly. Then there was the problem of marriage and what people would say about her in the village, and she was afraid of running into her former fiancé. For the time being, Liu Yu said, it was all too hard to think about. She would just take each day one at a time and try to have a bit of happiness for herself.

In early 2003 Liu Yu returned to her natal village. Shortly afterward she wrote that she was back at home but it wasn't really her home. She explained:

> In China the only home a girl can have is that of her husband once she has married. Where I live now is my younger brother's home, not mine. I don't want to marry. My parents are angry at me for that and I feel my future is uncertain. I am tired of living. I'm another year older already. Sometimes I wish that time would stop and go no further. That way I would no longer cause my family such trouble.

Several months later she was back in Beijing, once more working as a maid. A letter explained:

> I really didn't want to come back to Beijing, but I had no choice. The gossip in the village was so frightening and I couldn't take villagers' old ways of thinking. To be a farmer and have my own farm — that's just a dream now. Coming back to Beijing I feel so lost. Today is the first day of the new year.…For three years I've worked hard to be a normal, happy girl, but today I still have tears pouring down my face. During the day I can steel myself to smile, but in the evening I face my shadow and I know I'm alone. Sounds so poetic, doesn't it? My whole life is a tale of sorrow and misery.…But I'm just one of millions of migrant women workers.

Deng Yiyan is my second example of a migrant woman who expressed a desire to return to the countryside. Originally from a village in Shandong, Yiyan migrated to Beijing in 1989 at the age of seventeen because her relations with her family were tense; she felt that she had had no status or autonomy at home and her contribution to the household economy was unrecognized. She worked in Beijing for many years, but her ambition was to return to the land, and during her spare time she studied accounting and read up on fruit farming techniques. After saving up for a while she gave up her job in Beijing and went home. She explained:

> I thought I'd go home and go into business with members of my family. I thought I could plant fruit trees or else seedlings, because you can earn a lot of money planting seedlings. I've had a look at the market. Everyone cursed at me. Then they sent me away. They wouldn't agree. They felt that the status of peasants is very low and it's full of hardship. They felt that if you work in the city it's clean, while in the countryside you spend the whole day covered in mud and it's very dirty. Moreover, other people will look down on you, and the conditions are poor. They said that, as a girl, I might be able to marry into the city and change my fate — that city people

> have better lives than rural people.…I thought I'd sign a contract [with local government] to run an orchard. But I'm not the head of a household, so I couldn't do that independently. That is to say, even if you have money, you can't necessarily be the one to make the decisions. Girls can't do anything in the countryside. You can only become independent of your parents once you've married, but then you must do as your husband says. If my family had been willing for me to stay at home, they could have let me take my portion of land. But they wouldn't let me, they believed I was just a dependant.

Deng Yiyan disagreed with her family that the countryside was too dirty and too poor. "I don't think earth is dirty…and farming isn't necessarily hard work — it depends how you do it." She had read several books on agriculture and had various ideas on how to farm more efficiently, how to process agricultural products, and how to sell them in the city for a larger profit. But her family just laughed at her.

> I thought I'd earn some money and do things on my own. What I didn't expect was that as a girl I wouldn't have the power to do that. Even if I just grew vegetables, if I took them to sell in the city I'd make more profit than just farming. What's more, I could get them interested and make them believe me, so that they would no longer envy city people and would like the countryside. I really hate them. I hate the people in my home village. I feel I've done so much studying and it's all been for nothing. Later, when I came back [to Beijing] I didn't feel like doing anything. I was really pissed off.

When I met Deng Yiyan in 2001 she was twenty-nine and single, and had been in Beijing for almost thirteen years, although during that time she occasionally had returned home for short periods. At the time, she was employed in a real estate firm, having previously worked a long string of jobs, including as a maid, a hospital orderly, a cook, a canteen manager, an accountant, in an advertising company, and as the owner of a clothing stall. She still hoped to marry and have a family because she was lonely, and because "that way it's more convenient, because Chinese people's opinions on this are still very strong." Her other ambition was to buy some land in the countryside to set up a farm and start an elderly people's home without having to get her family's permission.

Deng Yiyan's aspirations to return to the land and her forthright repudiation of the assumption that city people have better lives than country people run counter to dominant official and popular urban discourses on development, modernity, and the superiority of the city. They are also very different from the views of most rural migrants and villagers, such as Deng Yiyan's family, among whom the superiority of urban life is generally taken to be simple common sense. Some migrants are drawn home to the countryside by homesickness or by a sense of obligation to their rural families and to their home village. Many others return to the village because of pressure from their family, because they feel that an urban future is beyond them, or because of harsh experiences in the city. The great majority, nonetheless, equate the city with desirable modernity and self-development, while the countryside is associated, at best, with security

and stasis. Deng Yiyan is extremely rare among migrant women in perceiving the countryside as a potential site for both self- and collective development.

As an exception to the rule, Deng Yiyan's narrative illustrates the potency of discourses relating to rural/urban difference and modernity, and their hold on the mind-sets of urbanites, ruralites, and rural migrants alike. Like Liu Yu's, Deng Yiyan's narrative also demonstrates the power of discourses on gender, sexuality, and marriage in shaping women's sense of place. Thus, Deng Yiyan is unusually vocal about the restrictions that gender places on rural women and bitter about the fact that gender discourse has both pushed her out of the village and thwarted her return to it. And yet, for all her rebellion, Deng Yiyan longs to be able to conform to gender and marriage norms, because to be outside of them is both less "convenient" and lonely. In the narratives of both Deng Yiyan and Liu Yu, as in fact in those of many others, one gets the sense that gender is at least as important as discourses on rural/urban difference in shaping women's desires regarding place and the possibility of them achieving those desires.

Conclusion

In contemporary China, as elsewhere, modernization and globalization have been accompanied by an increased dominance of discourses that privilege the city as the site of modernity and development. These discourses and the denial of coevalness between countryside and city that they entail have become so thoroughly absorbed in the outlooks and subjectivities of individuals that to hear a rural migrant deny the superiority of the city and advocate the country-side as the site of self- and collective development is truly startling.

Both at the level of dominant national discourse and at the level of individual experiences, subjectivities, and narratives, however, understandings of moder-nity and of the place of the city and the countryside are thoroughly entangled with gender relations and with discourses and practices relating to age, mar-riage, and the life-course.

Patrilocal, exogamous marriage practices mean, for example, that impending marriage lends a different coloring to migrant women's and migrant men's re-flections on the countryside. For men, marriage marks the achievement of iden-tity as a full member of his community and the assumption of responsibility for the maintenance and reproduction of his family. When a rural migrant man in the city thinks back on his home in the countryside, he is most likely to think of it as the primary locus of his identity and in terms of a continuing tie and commit-ment. For women, in contrast, marriage has always marked a radical disjunc-ture: a departure from her natal home, a loss of autonomy, a loss of support from kin and friends, and the assumption of heavy new responsibilities and tasks, under the authority of scarcely known in-laws. The rupture and loss of identity that looms with marriage may well mean that rural migrant women look back upon their childhoods in their natal families in the countryside with greater nostalgia than do male migrants. It also means, though, that compared with men migrant women tend to see a future in the city as holding greater po-tential for development than life in the countryside, and they commonly view a return to the countryside with greater anxiety and dread than men.

This picture is complicated by gender inequalities and by discrimination and sexual violence against women. Relative to men, young women migrants have fewer chances of advancement in terms of income generation, skills acquisition, and the achievement of status in the public sphere in both rural and urban areas, and are more vulnerable to sexual exploitation and violence. They are also more subject to censure with regard to their sexual morality and behavior.

We have, here, a complex weaving together of dominant discourses and personal subjectivities, and of "tradition" and "modernity": "Modern" development involves urban employers making full use of "traditional" gender inequalities and rural marriage practices to exploit young rural migrant women as a cheap, expendable labor force. It also involves "traditional" sexual discrimination and sexual violence, directed disproportionately against young rural migrant women. And yet, young rural migrant women are often the most enthusiastic proponents and subjects of urban, globally oriented "modernity" and "development," in large part because of their positioning in, and negativity toward, "traditional" rural gender relations and marriage practices. However, as we have seen in this article, how all of this pans out in the actions, experiences, and stories of rural migrant women varies, in surprising and sometimes tragic ways, from one individual to another.

Notes

1. In order to protect identities, the names of all interlocutors referred to in this article have been changed. A few personal details have also been changed.
2. China's accession to the World Trade Organization was formally announced the day before this conversation took place.
3. In this article, the term "migrant" refers to a person whose relocation is not accompanied by a transfer of household registration. The Ministry of Agriculture estimates that in 2002 roughly nineteen out of every one hundred rural laborers worked away from home, and that rural out-migrants (including those who had moved to both rural and urban areas) numbered 94 million ("Rural-to-Town Labour Force on the Rise," *China Daily,* 23 January 2003). Nationally, about 30 percent of rural-to-urban migrants are women. For further discussion of the numbers and demographics of rural-to-urban migrants, see Tamara Jacka and Arianne Gaetano, "Introduction: Focusing on Migrant Women," in *On the Move: Women and Rural-to-Urban Migration in Contemporary China,* ed. Arianne Gaetano and Tamara Jacka (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 20-24. In the 1990s and 2000s, reforms were introduced to make it easier for rural migrants living in small towns to transfer to nonagricultural urban household registration. In larger cities, however, such a transfer remains almost impossible for the majority. In the early 2000s the State Council issued directives aimed at improving the circumstances of migrants in urban areas. See Jacka and Gaetano, "Introduction," 19-20; Guowuyuan Bangongting [General Office of the State Council], "Guoban: Zuohao Nongmin Jincheng Wugong Jiuye Guanli he Fuwu Gongzuo" [General Office of the State Council: Improving Management and Services for Rural Labor Migrants Entering Cities], www.people.com.cn, 16 January 2003. Local governments and employers, however, have been very slow to implement these new policies. For further discussion of the circumstances of migrants in Beijing and of recent reform measures taken by the central government, see Tamara Jacka, *Sisters and Out-*

siders: Rural Women in Urban China (Armonk N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, forthcoming, 2005).

4. For further information on *Rural Women* and on the Migrant Women's Club, see their website at http://www.nongjianv.org.
5. The questionnaire was prepared by myself, with help from the women working in the Migrant Women's Club office, and was administered by the women in the office and by my research assistant, Arianne Gaetano. The questionnaire was anonymous and confidential and respondents were self-selected. Ninety out of one hundred respondents were women. Their ages varied between seventeen and thirty-five, but most were in their twenties. Thirteen percent were married while another 7 percent were engaged (N=99). One respondent had not finished primary school and about 16 percent had primary school education. Of the remainder, most had either junior or senior high school education (46 percent and 30 percent respectively). Seven percent had been educated to the tertiary technical level (N= 97). In the month prior to the survey, 60 percent of respondents were in waged employment (N=82). The largest proportions were employed in the service sector (55 percent) and as factory workers (16 percent) (N=64). Only 9 percent of respondents had urban household registration before coming to Beijing, but at the time of the questionnaire that had increased to 12 percent. Respondents came from a range of different provinces, but the largest numbers were from Shandong (34), Henan (18), and Shaanxi (7). These figures correspond roughly to the demographics of the Club membership as a whole, and indeed to the demographics of migrant women in Beijing more generally. The average length of time that respondents had spent in Beijing — 3.2 years — was, however, somewhat longer than the norm; most migrant women spend between six months and three years in the city (Beijingshi Tongjiju [Beijing Municipal Statistical Bureau], *Beijing Tongji Nianjian 2002* [Beijing statistical yearbook 2002] [Beijing: Zhongguo Tongji Chubanshe, 2002], 579). The questionnaire included sixty-nine questions on a range of topics, from reasons for migration and length of sojourn in Beijing, to occupation and housing in Beijing, to perceptions of identity and aspirations for the future.
6. Altogether over these two periods, aside from participating in Club activities and interacting frequently on a casual basis with Club members, I conducted a total of fifty-five hours of formal, audiotaped interviews with twenty-two female members of the Club. These women came from rural areas all over China and ranged in age from sixteen to thirty-eight. Most worked as maids, office cleaners, or factory workers. Three were married with one child each, the rest were unmarried and without children. At the time, two of the married women were without work. One of the women had been in Beijing for just a few months, but the remainder had lived there for at least a year, most having migrated to the city in the mid to late 1990s. Four had been in Beijing for eight years or more.
7. Craig Calhoun, "Social Theory and the Politics of Identity," in *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity,* ed. Craig Calhoun (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994), 12.
8. See, for example, Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991); David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Cambridge, Mass., and Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).
9. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large,* 3-4; Angelika Bammer, "Introduction," in *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question,* ed. Angelika Bammer (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), xi.
10. Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity,* 141-88.

11. Doreen Massey and Pat Jess, "Introduction," in *A Place in the World? Places, Cultures and Globalization,* ed. Doreen Massey and Pat Jess (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 1-2.
12. In this article, "discourses" comprise bodies of social knowledge and also the language, structures, and practices through which those bodies of knowledge are produced and conveyed (Alec McHoul and Wendy Grace, *A Foucault Primer. Discourse, Power and the Subject* [Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1993], 31-56). Discourses embody relations of power, setting the conditions and the rules that enable and constrain what can be imagined, said, practiced, and even felt, how, and by whom. "Discourses of modernity" enable and constrain collective ideals of "modernity" and understandings of who and what are "modern." In this article I distinguish between "discourses of modernity" and "modernization," which refers to processes of material and cultural change, but of course the two are related. I examine some of the ways in which modernization, as it is manifested and experienced in the particular context of contemporary China, is shaped by a locally specific discourse of modernity, as well as by discourses of gender and rural/urban difference.
13. Nine of my interlocutors were born after the one-child policy was introduced in 1979, but none were single children. Three completed primary school, the rest left after completing junior high school. It is possible that in future cohorts of migrant women fewer will feel that their education was stymied by the combination of sexism and large family size. However, single daughters are still extremely rare in the countryside. It has always been the case that most villagers have got away with having a second child if their first was a girl, and since the beginning of the 1990s this has been allowed in official policy nationwide.
14. This image of rural life also contrasts with numerous journalist, academic, and official reports of life in the countryside that document gross inequalities, severe poverty, and underdevelopment in some areas, high levels of suicide, especially among young women, and alarming and rising levels of violent conflict, directed both at local officials accused of corruption and injustice and against other villagers. See Jonathan Unger, *The Transformation of Rural China* (Armonk, N.Y., and London: M.E. Sharpe, 2002), and Jiang Wenran, "Unimaginable Poverty, Unbelievable Tragedy," *South China Morning Post,* 14 February 2004.
15. See, for example, Li Dazhao, "Qingnian yu Nongcun" [Youth and the Countryside], in *Li Dazhao Wenji* [The collected works of Li Dazhao] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1984 [1919]), 648-52.
16. Examples include the television series *Heshang* [River Elegy] and the film *Huang Tudi* [Yellow Earth].
17. Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).
18. Diane Dorfman, "The Spirits of Reform: The Power of Belief in Northern China," *positions: east asia cultures critique* 4, no. 2 (1996): 269.
19. See, for example, Pnina Werbner, "Stamping the Earth with the Name of Allah: Zikr and the Sacralizing of Space among British Muslims," in *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe,* ed. Barbara Daly Metcalf (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 167-85.
20. For discussion, see Dorothy Solinger, *Contesting Citizenship in Urban China: Peasant Migrants, the State, and the Logic of the Market* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1999); Scott Rozelle et al., "Leaving China's Farms: Survey Results of New Paths and Remaining Hurdles to Rural Migration," *China Quarterly* 58 (June 1999): 367-93; Xiang Biao, "'Zhejiang Village' in Beijing: Creating a Visible Non-State Space through Migration and Marketized Traditional Networks," in *Internal and International Migra-*

tion. Chinese Perspectives, ed. Frank Pieke and Hein Mallee (London: Curzon, 1999), 215-50.

21. A minority of rural migrant settlements, such as "Zhejiang Village" in Beijing, present an exception, maintaining a well-developed sense of native-place-based community through shared cultural activities, restaurants selling food from the native place, etc. (See Xiang Biao, "'Zhejiang Village' in Beijing"; and Li Zhang, *Strangers in the City: Reconfigurations of Space, Power, and Social Networks within China's Floating Population* [Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001]). However, most migrant settlements are more heterogeneous and have a weaker sense of community than Zhejiang Village.
22. For examples, see Alice Goldstein and Sidney Goldstein, "Migration Motivations and Outcomes: Permanent and Temporary Migrants Compared," in *China: The Many Facets of Demographic Change,* ed. Alice Goldstein and Wang Feng (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1996), 198; and Thomas Scharping and Sun Huaiyang, *Migration in China's Guangdong Province: Major Results of a 1993 Sample Survey on Migrants and Floating Population in Shenzhen and Foshan* (Hamburg: Institut für Asienkunde, 1997), 45-47.
23. Most respondents to this survey indicated that they made the decision to leave home on their own. Respondents were asked to identify up to three of their most important reasons for out-migration. The percentages in figure 1 (p. 000) therefore add up to more than 100 percent.
24. Yan Hairong, "Spectralization of the Rural: Reinterpreting the Labor Mobility of Rural Young Women in Post-Mao China," *American Ethnologist* 30, no. 4 (2003): 1-19.
25. Wang Shucheng and Li Renhu, "Wuwei: Baomu Xiaoying" [Wuwei: The effect of the nanny], *Ban Yue Tan* [Half Monthly Forum] 8 (1996): 24.
26. Tamara Jacka, *Women's Work in Rural China. Change and Continuity in an Era of Reform* (Cambridge, New York, and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 101-19.
27. See Rachel Murphy, *How Migrant Labor Is Changing Rural China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 107; Qian Cai, "Migrant Remittances and Family Ties: A Case Study in China," *International Journal of Population Geography* 9 (2003): 471-83; Sally Sargeson, "Building for the Future Family," in *Chinese Women: Living and Working,* ed. Anne E. McLaren (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 159. These findings are in contrast to studies in other countries, which show that daughters usually remit more than sons (Murphy, *How Migrant Labor Is Changing Rural China,* 107.)
28. Rachel Murphy, "The Impact of Labor Migration on the Well-Being and Agency of Rural Chinese Women: Cultural and Economic Contexts and the Life Course," in Gaetano and Jacka, *On the Move,* 264-65; Lou Binbin et al., "The Migration Experiences of Young Women from Four Counties in Sichuan and Anhui," in Gaetano and Jacka, *On the Move,* 236-39.
29. Dudley Poston and Chengrong Charles Duan, "The Floating Population in Beijing, China: New Evidence and Insights from the 1997 Census of Beijing's Floating Population," *Texas Population Research Center Paper,* 98-99-06 (1999): 17.
30. "Beijing Qunian Wailairenkou Yu 386 Wan Ren" [Last year, Beijng's outsider population exceeded 386 Million], *Zhongguo Xinwen Wang* [China News Net], 21 January 2003; http://www.cpirc.org.cn.
31. Cindy C. Fan, "Out to the City and Back to the Village: The Experiences and Contributions of Rural Women Migrating from Sichuan and Anhui," in Gaetano and Jacka, *On the Move,* 184.
32. See, for example, Sidney Goldstein, Lian Zai, and Alice Goldstein, "Migration, Gender, and Labor Force in Hubei Province, 1985-1990," in *Re-Drawing*

Boundaries: Work, Households, and Gender in China, ed. Barbara Entwisle and Gail E. Henderson (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2000), 214-30.

33. In another survey, when 175 migrants were asked "Do you want to work long term in the city?" over half replied that they did not want to and another 22 percent said they did not know. However, subsequent interviews revealed that those who said they did not want to remain in the city actually meant that they believed they had no option but to return home (Zhao Shukai, cited in Murphy, *How Migrant Labor Is Changing Rural China,* 231-32, n. 67).
34. Delia Davin, "Migration, Women and Gender Issues in Contemporary China," in *Floating Population and Migration in China: The Impact of Economic Reforms,* ed. Thomas Scharping (Hamburg: Institut für Asienkunde, 1997), 311.
35. Louise Beynon, "Dilemmas of the Heart: Rural Working Women and Their Hopes for the Future," in Gaetano and Jacka, *On the Move,* 142.
36. Until recently, scholars generally assumed that most migrant women returned to their villages to marry and bear children, and did not migrate again. However, based on data from a survey of over 3000 women from Anhui and Sichuan provinces, Kenneth Roberts et al. argue that the situation has changed since the late 1990s. Today, it is common for married women from Anhui and Sichuan to migrate, both with and without their children. See Kenneth Roberts, Rachel Connelly, Zhenming Xie, and Zhenzhen Zheng, "Patterns of Temporary Labor Migration of Rural Women from Anhui and Sichuan," *China Journal* 52 (July 2004): 50.
37. A minority of rural migrant women look for an urban husband who, they hope, will enable them to stay in the city. However, most rural women recognize that the bias against an urban man marrying a rural woman is so great as to make such matches rare. This bias stems in part from serious practical concerns. One concern is that an urban worker in the state sector who marries someone without local household registration is not entitled to subsidized rental housing from his/her work unit. Another concern is that household registration is usually inherited from the mother. Therefore, the child of a couple in which the mother does not have local registration will also not be entitled to local registration, and will face discrimination in education, as well as in housing, employment, and other aspects of life. In August 1998 the State Council approved a change in policy, allowing children to inherit household registration from either of their parents. However, local governments, especially in larger cities, have been slow to implement this reform. By 2003 it had still not been systematically implemented in Beijing.
38. Tamara Jacka, "Working Sisters Answer Back: The Representation and Self-Representation of Women in China's Floating Population," *China Information* 13, no. 1 (1998): 69-70.
39. Beynon, "Dilemmas of the Heart," 144-45.
40. Feng Xiaoshuang, "The Costs and Benefits of Rural-Urban Migration: A Report on an Inquiry Conducted among Rural Women Employed in the Service, Retail, and Other Trades in Beijing," *Social Sciences in China* 18, no. 4 (1997): 52-65; and Tan Shen, "Zhongguo Nongcun Laodongli Liudong de Xingbie Chayi" [Gender differences in the migration of the rural labor force]. Paper presented at the International Conference on Rural Labor Migration, Beijing, 1996; cited in Beynon, "Dilemmas of the Heart," 144.

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