

**THE YUANMINGYUAN AS COLLECTIVE MEMORY: THE RE-  
PRESENTATION AND CONSUMPTION OF HISTORY IN LATE 20TH  
CENTURY CHINA**

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## ABSTRACT

Yuanmingyuan, more than a site, is an idea that has both historically and recently been associated with diverse ideologies and powerful group sentiments. In the 1980s, the construction of the Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park around the ruins of the early 18th century Qing imperial garden, the Yuanmingyuan, revived old associations and also created new ones related broadly to a project of nationalism in modern China.

Collective memory has been a concept casually or indirectly invoked in several studies of the Yuanmingyuan Park, and it is an effective means of describing the fluctuating and multi-faceted discourse of Yuanmingyuan as a mental construct. Nevertheless, the application of collective memory as a framework needs to be critically examined and refined. The complexity of producers as groups of people with varied motives, the multivocal representations they produce and the process of consumption undertaken by shifting collectives needs to be further elaborated both in terms of the collective memory of Yuanmingyuan and the theoretical model of collective memory itself.

This paper combines concrete analysis of representations of Yuanmingyuan, especially the Yuanmingyuan Park constructed in the 1980s; scrutiny of historical data that indicates a shift in ideas related to Yuanmingyuan; and relevant theory in order to approach an understanding of the collective memory of Yuanmingyuan—its evolution over time and how it has been related to material as well as mental constructs. This analysis of the chronological progression of the collective memory of Yuanmingyuan also accounts for the spatial heterogeneity of the idea at any given time, or the

multiple and often contradictory meanings tied up in the conception of Yuanmingyuan as a physical space. It addresses how certain ideologies have been deliberately associated with topographical space and material objects in order to embed symbolic significance aimed at constituting and reifying imagined social collectives. It also addresses the gaps between intended meanings, presented meanings and received meanings, and the complications of signification at a national level that the Yuanmingyuan exposes.

The collective memory of the Yuanmingyuan is approached as an ever-changing discourse attached to multiple meanings in order, on the one hand, to explore how similar ideas about specific historical events formed and functioned to sustain a sense of collective identity in modern China, and, more broadly, to elaborate upon the phenomenon of collective memory itself.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Annetta Fotopoulos is currently a graduate student at Cornell University working on her Ph.D in East Asian Literature. Her research has delved into such topics as collective memory and nationalism in modern China, but she also has interests in multilingual comparative studies. She received her undergraduate degree in Writing Seminars and East Asian Studies at Johns Hopkins University.

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## 1. “Our Glorious and Shameful Past”: A History Lesson on the Yuanmingyuan

In a 2008 monthly reader for Chinese secondary school students there is a dramatic monologue written by a Chinese high school student entitled, “The Yuanmingyuan’s Wish,” in which the personified Yuanmingyuan laments:

I am a letter written in blood, interweaving humiliation and pain, I am an eternal symbol of “the backwards will be beaten.” On my back I carry a past that a race cannot bear to look back upon, silently waiting among ruined walls, and, by that silence that grieves people’s hearts more than an anguished wail, continuously bringing people grief. This destined eternal life is to forever stand in this position without collapsing, to leave future people with a thread of reverie, a piece of regret, a kind of sorrow.

But, is my existence merely this? Does my history only contain humiliation? I was formerly the garden of ten thousand gardens; I am the countenance of a collapsed state, but this was done only after over a hundred years of meticulous sculpting; I formerly stood at the summit of the art of Chinese architecture; I was the essence born from the collective wisdom of a kingdom’s, a race’s, a nation’s culture. But why, no matter how glorious I formerly was, do people only remember my pain? (Chen, Sha; my translation).

In writing this dramatic monologue, the student is taking sides in a heated debate over whether the Yuanmingyuan, once an imperial garden in the northwestern suburbs of Beijing and now a ruins park in what has become a northwestern region of inner-city Beijing, should be left as ruins or rebuilt to convey its former splendor as an opulent Qing dynasty pleasance. Within the piece, the student, assuming the authoritative voice of the Yuanmingyuan itself, argues that “the Yuanmingyuan’s wish” is for the latter-- to be rebuilt as a means to cast off the humiliations of the past. The Yuanmingyuan restoration debate, which has been a major focus of many Chinese scholars’, experts’, politicians’ and the media’s attention on the Yuanmingyuan in the last several



decades, is rooted in historical assumptions that are, in the context of this piece and many other representations dealing with the Yuanmingyuan from the late 1980s onwards, presumed to be shared by the consuming audience. Who is this projected audience and what background knowledge are they presumed to have about the Yuanmingyuan's history? In this section I will attempt to address these questions by examining a historical narrative that is part of the body of "official histories" about Yuanmingyuan produced between the late 1980s and the present (2010).

I use the term "official histories" as opposed to the often-invoked singular term "official history" because I do not wish to imply that there is a singular ideologically consistent history of the Yuanmingyuan promoted by an organic entity, the Chinese state. Rather, by official histories, I refer to narratives that were approved by state authorities, share certain thematic unities and employ similar tropes and rhetoric. Official histories about the same subject may differ in specific references and ideas, and each narrative generally reflects its own contemporaneous political context, which is why even official histories of the Yuanmingyuan written between the late 1980s and the present may contain significant ideological differences. Often these differences come in the form of expansions upon former narratives' ideas so that certain thematic consistencies are maintained. In order to give an example of what an official history of the Yuanmingyuan from the 1990s is like and provide the background knowledge for understanding the above dramatic dialogue, I will examine the "Introduction to Yuanmingyuan History" ("Yuanmingyuanshi") found on the official Yuanmingyuan Park website that was published online in September of 2000 but written in October of 1994 and is also published word-for-word in a brochure sold at the Yuanmingyuan

Park bookstore just outside the Yuanmingyuan Park's main entrance across from Qinghua University in Beijing. This is one of the historical texts approved by the Yuanmingyuan Management Bureau, the government organization that has overseen the maintenance of the park area since 1976. Through a close reading of the 1994 narrative, I will attempt to illuminate both the broader historical themes presented in official Yuanmingyuan histories during this period, and the presentist discourses to which specific details of the narrative are tied. All passages presented are my own translations of the original Chinese text (See Appendix 1 for a complete transcript of the Chinese text).

In the excerpt from “The Yuanmingyuan’s Wish” cited above, the personified ruined Yuanmingyuan of the present laments about her shameful past when she was ruined. She then suggests that there was a time, further back in her history, when she was glorious. Like the 2008 dramatic dialogue, the 1994 historical narrative divides the Yuanmingyuan’s history into three distinct periods of time. Yuanmingyuan past is divided by the fault line of 1860 into a glorious heyday and a ruined afterlife, and the present-day ruins park is celebrated as a reincarnation. The text of this historical account is divided into three sections that clearly demarcate these three historical periods: Yuanmingyuan’s period of prosperity (shengqi Yuanmingyuan 盛期圆明园), its period of looting and destruction (lijie ji canhui 罹劫及残毁), and its period of protection and renovation (yizhi baohu ji zhengxiu 遗址保护及整修). The narrative of each period’s history is addressed explicitly to “the Chinese people” as its assumed audience, and interlaced with judgements that direct readers on how to interpret each period.

The first section, Yuanmingyuan’s age of prosperity, details the construction of the Yuanmingyuan garden: its inception under the Kangxi

Emperor (1661-1722) in 1707 and expansion during the reigns of his successors, Emperors Yongzheng (1722-1735) and Qianlong (1735-1796). It lists each of Yuanmingyuan's famous "Forty Scenes" (sishi jing 四十景), beautiful natural and man-made scenery, and explains that "Yuanmingyuan" was the name given to the combined landmass of three separate gardens, the Yuanmingyuan 圆明园, the Changchunyuan 长春园 and the Qichunyuan 绮春园. The narrative describes various aspects of the landscape and architecture of this massive "garden of ten thousand gardens" 万园之园, including the great Fuhai Lake 福海 and the Western Palaces 西洋楼. The Western Palaces were a group of buildings built by European missionaries at the command of Emperor Qianlong in a Western architectural style and finished in 1759, however, the narrative notes, they nonetheless, "incorporated many traditional methods of our country."

In individual paragraphs, the most important sites within the Western Palaces, the Xieqiqu 谐奇趣, Haiyantang 海宴堂 and Dashuifa 大水法 fountains are each described. An interesting tidbit about the Haiyantang is also included: the twelve statues of the animals from the Chinese zodiac that stood to each side of the fountain and spouted water every two hours replaced Western-style nude statues to produce "a masterpiece of Chinese-Western fusion." The section also touches upon the cultural relics (wenwu 文物) housed within the Yuanmingyuan—paintings, books, carvings and other fine objects made by the Qing's most skilled artists and now, unfortunately, almost all lost. "This, from one perspective, reflects the great destruction imperialist invaders' burning of the Yuanmingyuan has inflicted upon human culture," an unnamed narrator interjects.

The main thrust of this section, as summed up in its conclusion, is to highlight Yuanmingyuan's grand scale, aesthetic achievement and artistic wealth in order to posit Yuanmingyuan's greatness as representative of Chinese cultural greatness:

In general, Yuanmingyuan is truly a very remarkable, outstanding garden. You could say it collected thousands of years of accomplishments of our nation's extraordinary art of garden construction, bringing our nation's classical gardens to new heights...In fact, Westerners' esteem for Chinese gardens originated with the Yuanmingyuan. In short, Yuanmingyuan has won honor for our civilized ancient nation; formerly it was the pride of our Chinese race.

The sites and objects specifically emphasized in this section—the Forty Scenes, Fuhai Lake, the Western Palaces and cultural relics—are all relevant to the multifaceted discourse of Yuanmingyuan today and assumed to be at least somewhat familiar to the projected audience of the text.

The Forty Scenes were a combination of landscapes and architectural sights in the Yuanmingyuan designated as extraordinary by Emperor Qianlong, who had a painting made of each scene and wrote accompanying poems for them himself in 1744. This 80-page collection of pictures and poems was looted from the Yuanmingyuan in 1860 and taken to France, where it remains today in the French National Library in Paris. A copy of the collection was brought to China in 1980, and in 1983 a volume containing prints of the paintings followed by the poems was published in China (*Yuanmingyuan: Lishi 2*). This collection was one of the primary resources for scholars attempting to reconstruct the Yuanmingyuan in the late 20th century. Beginning in the 1980s, the paintings of the Forty Scenes were widely reproduced in books, banners, documentaries and brochures about the

Yuanmingyuan, ensuring their recognition by a large portion of the Chinese public.

Fuhai Lake is one of the features of the original Yuanmingyuan that was successfully dug up and refilled as part of the construction of the Yuanmingyuan Park in the early 1980s. Its tangibility today, undistinguished from the original Fuhai Lake, makes its reference in Yuanmingyuan history particularly relevant to a present-day audience. The reconstructed Fuhai lake region was opened to the public in 1985, three years before the public opening of the Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park, and is now one of the key features, besides the ruins, of the contemporary park tour.

The Western Palaces are emphasized in the narrative for a similar reason. Although a small section of the original massive garden, they survived the burning of 1860 relatively intact because they were built primarily of stone in the Western architectural tradition rather than wood, of which most of the other Chinese-style structures in the Yuanmingyuan were made. Today the ruins of the Western Palaces are the best-preserved feature of the original Yuanmingyuan. For this reason, they have come to stand for the entire park and are the object of most tourists' visit to the park or "the telos of the Yuanmingyuan tour" (Lee 169). The Xieqiqu, Haiyantang and Dashuifa fountains within the Western Palaces are singled out in particular, because they are the most complete surviving structures today and most prominently featured in the tour. The images of the ruins of the Haiyantang and Dashuifa fountains are also widely reproduced on the covers of books, brochures, maps and other commodified objects associated with the Yuanmingyuan, making them the most widely recognized images associated with the park.

The mention of “cultural relics” and the destruction of “human culture” that the loss of such relics is associated with in the 1994 narrative adds another layer to Yuanmingyuan’s cultural greatness, by suggesting that the garden is not simply great in the context of China, but in the context of the world; Yuanmingyuan is proof that China is and always was a great civilization, to be ranked among the top internationally. The words “cultural relic” (wenwu 文物) and “human culture” (renlei wenhua 人类文化) are counterparts to existing Western concepts, key terms in an international discourse about the value of sites, architecture, works of art and artifacts from a particular nation as part of that nation’s heritage as well as a greater universal human heritage. Magnus Fiskesjö explains how the concept of cultural heritage was used to bolster Chinese nationalism in his article, “The Politics of Cultural Heritage”:

In the twentieth century, Western-derived notions of cultural heritage were taken up, to accompany a new competitive national identity. This included the idea of heritage as property guarded by national laws, all according to the dominant model of property relations as the default of all social relations and of the nation-state as the default owner of its own territory and riches, on the new competitive arena of “internationality. (229).

By invoking these terms, the narrative is asserting China’s place within this discourse of national cultural heritage. An increasingly controversial part of this discourse is a heated international struggle over repatriation issues—whether or not objects taken from their original locations during earlier periods of history should be returned, and the ramifications of carrying out such returns. Beginning in the late 20th century and with increasing vigor in the 21st century, Chinese officials and self-proclaimed patriots have pursued the repatriation of what they consider China’s cultural relics, especially artifacts looted from the Yuanmingyuan Garden by foreigners in 1860. The twelve zodiac statues of the Haiyantang, mentioned anecdotally in the 1994 narrative’s description of the

Western Palaces, are perhaps the most well-known objects of China's repatriation efforts today. The 1994 narrative of the Yuanmingyuan, with its assertion of the cultural value and significance of the Yuanmingyuan and its cultural relics to not only China, but the world, invokes the discourse of cultural heritage and implicitly advocates for the repatriation of Yuanmingyuan objects. (I will discuss these ideas and how they relate to the discourse of the Yuanmingyuan in more detail in section 5).

The circumstances for the loss of these objects is recounted in the next section of the 1994 narrative: the Yuanmingyuan's looting and destruction. These events are not so much foreshadowed in the first section as lamented; they are a tragic fact that the audience is presumed to already know. The transition from the first section to the second in the narrative reads as follows: "Then this very famous garden, in October of 1860, suffered the destruction of the English-French Allied Armies' (yingfa lianjun 英法联军) barbaric plunder and became the humiliating history of our country today." The second section begins with a statement about how the pre-destruction Yuanmingyuan ought to be understood, who should be praised and who blamed: "The Yuanmingyuan's garden masterpieces and precious collections of art are all the crystallization of the blood and sweat as well as knowledge of the multitudes of laboring people." (Note that this idea is also contained in the dramatic dialogue, where the Yuanmingyuan of the past is "the essence born from the collective wisdom of a kingdom's, a race's, a nation's culture"). "They embodied the splendid culture of our country's feudal age, they also exposed the limitless extravagance of the feudal emperor."

The section then goes on to briefly reference the First Opium War (1839-1842) between China and the Western imperialist nations, the domestic

Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864), whose purpose was to “oppose the corrupt rule of the Qing Dynasty,” and the Second Opium War (1856-1860), an escalation of the imperialist aggression of the first war. The Opium Wars and the consequent destruction of the Yuanmingyuan are described as the fault of two primary agents: the corrupt Qing government and the aggressive foreign imperialists. The former’s incompetence and corruption led to China’s backwardness and inability to stand up against the West—the cowardly Emperor Xianfeng even fled the Yuanmingyuan days before the Western armies arrived, leaving it with scant defenses, the narrative notes. The latter exploited China’s weakness to invade Chinese territories and impose unequal treaties upon the feeble government.

The actual invasion of the Yuanmingyuan began on October 6, 1860. According to the narrative, French and British troops attacked the Yuanmingyuan and, although more than twenty Chinese guards fought valiantly, they were overwhelmed by sheer numbers and the French and British armies were able to enter the gates. The next day, the looting began. “The second day that the English-French invading soldiers entered the Yuanmingyuan, they were not able to resist the temptation of loot anymore; both officers and soldiers proceeded in a big group to plunder, fiercely engulfing the garden’s gold and silver valuables and artistic treasures.” A description is given “according to French and British soldiers, priests and reporters who participated or witnessed the looting.” The looting is described as a scene of mass chaos and wanton destruction, with the soldiers haphazardly grabbing and fighting over loot, smashing whatever they could not take and taking pleasure in the ransacking. “By October 9, when the



French army temporarily withdrew from the Yuanmingyuan, this beautiful garden had already been devastated into an eyesore.”

Next, the infamous burning of the Yuanmingyuan is recounted. After the Qing government had agreed to peace negotiations but before it had formally signed them, “the ringleaders of the English China-invasion force, Elgin and Grant, in order to leave a grand and severe impression of the China-invasion and force the Qing government into long-term submission, made the excuse that their prisoners had been mistreated and brazenly gave the command to burn down the Yuanmingyuan.” The entire garden was set afire, and most of the buildings and artifacts within, including palaces, temples and precious works of art, were destroyed. “According to related sources and records,” when the invaders were burning the Anyou Palace, they locked the doors, causing 300 people to be burned alive. “The atrocities of the invaders really make one want to point fingers!” the unnamed narrator interjects at this point.

In the aftermath of the burning, “the perpetrators of the arson looked upon this misdeed as a great achievement, but the upright people of the world were infuriated by this barbaric act.” Lines are cited from a letter written by the famous French author, Victor Hugo, strongly condemning his own countrymen for the Yuanmingyuan’s looting and burning and it is noted that while the Yuanmingyuan was still burning, imperial representatives signed the Treaty of Tianjin and the Treaty of Peking, ceding land over and promising to pay indemnities to England, France and Russia.

Later, the narrative explains, the Dowager Empress Cixi (1861-1904) began reconstruction efforts on the Yuanmingyuan, but had to halt them after less than ten months because of money shortages. Even after building the [New] Summer Palace (Yiheyan 颐和园), Cixi did not abandon her hopes of

rebuilding the Yuanmingyuan and had a few buildings reconstructed. In 1900, the Eight Nation Allied Armies (baguo lianjun 八国联军) invaded Beijing, “burning, killing, capturing and looting.” Ci Xi fled and chaos ensued. Local bandits took advantage of the chaos to pillage the remainder of the Yuanmingyuan, completely destroying the architecture and landscape.

Afterwards, the narrative continues, the remnants of the Yuanmingyuan were picked apart by bureaucrats, warlords, corrupt businessmen and government officials. Those who were responsible for protecting the ruins tore down sections of it and used its materials in other gardens and construction projects. The Yuanmingyuan was reduced to ruins. The section ends by reiterating who was responsible for the Yuanmingyuan’s destruction and urging the Chinese people to see it as a national lesson:

In a decade the Yuanmingyuan was destroyed. It was destroyed at the hands of the English and French invaders as well as by the corruption and incompetence of the Qing government. Its destruction is a testimony to the Western invaders’ ruin of human culture, it is also proof that even in the case of a civilized and ancient nation, the backwards will be beaten. We, the Chinese race, do not desire to bully other races, but we also will not allow others to bully us. In order to leave the tragedy of Yuanmingyuan forever in the past, strive to forge ahead, descendants of the Yellow Emperor!

This passage employs the same aphorism used in the dramatic dialogue presented at the start of this section, “the backwards will be beaten” (luohou jiu yao aida 落后就要挨打). This is a phrase commonly used in discussions of late 19th century and early 20th century Chinese history, especially in the context of the Opium Wars. It has been so often evoked in association with Chinese humiliation at the hands of imperialists that it has become virtually synonymous with the idea. One 1997 article from the journal “Methods” (Fangfa 方法) uses the aphorism with a question mark, “The Backwards Will be Beaten?” as its title and begins:

I don't mean to preach this moral to our country's public. Chinese all understand this moral--they understand it only too well; there's no need to preach it. In the past hundred plus years, the immeasurable amount of fresh blood of people with lofty ideals, the countless unequal treaties of a shamed and powerless nation, and the incalculable ceding of territories and paying of indemnities, has already engraved these famous words "the backwards will be beaten" deeply into our hearts. It would not be an exaggeration to say that it is the single most powerful spiritual motivator for us to fully invest in the establishment of modernization. (Wu, my translation).

The article is, on the one hand, a reassessment of the aphorism, and on the other, an avowal of its having been ingrained into the vocabulary and memory of the Chinese populace in the context of the Opium War defeat as something of which they are unconsciously conscious. The 1994 narrative similarly assumes a certain historical consciousness of its presumed audience, "the Chinese race."

In the narrative's configuration of protagonists and antagonists, the Chinese people, as a national group, is the victim of the Manchu government and the foreign imperialists, who are the source of the Yuanmingyuan's (and by synecdoche China's) demise. The idea that the Yuanmingyuan's destruction was a "national humiliation" (guochi 国耻) shared by all Chinese people has a long history rooted in the popular nationalism of the first decade of the 20th century, although the discourse of national humiliation itself as China's humiliation at the hands of imperialists, has also been associated with other events such as the Twenty One Demands issued by Japan in 1915. (I will address the development of the national humiliation narrative more systematically in section 3). By portraying the looting and burning of the Yuanmingyuan as a story of national humiliation in which China was bullied by imperialists, the 1994 narrative builds upon this idea from traditional narratives and promotes national solidarity premised upon ideas of shared national

culture and history, and racial alterity, a process that I will elaborate upon in section 4.

In order to perpetuate the idea that the Yuanmingyuan's burning was an injury to the Chinese people, the narrative downplays local people's subsequent exploitation of the Yuanmingyuan by naming the looters "bandits," and attributing subsequent exploitation of the gardens to "warlords" and "corrupt officials," differentiating these groups from the Chinese people. The Chinese people are the victims of all of these other groups, since it was due to the people's toil and great culture that the original Yuanmingyuan existed. By establishing these ideas, the narrative neatly doles out credit for the Yuanmingyuan's glory to the Chinese people and blame for its destruction to the old government regime and those groups outside of or opposed to the ideal of the citizen. This paves the way for the next section, in which the emergent Communist government who, as opposed to the corrupt imperial family, is "for the people," reforges Yuanmingyuan and, by analogy, Chinese cultural glory, leaving behind the era of national shame.

The third section of the narrative begins by declaring, "After the entire nation was liberated [in 1949], the Party and the People's Government absolutely emphasized the protection of the Yuanmingyuan ruins." The Yuanmingyuan became a public park and a place for the preservation of cultural artifacts. It underwent renovations that included environmental restoration efforts. "Even in the midst of ten years of upheaval, the Yuanmingyuan was, in the end, still preserved." Preservation efforts became especially vigorous after the Yuanmingyuan Management Bureau was formally established in 1976. In 1979 the Yuanmingyuan history exhibit was established and visitors swarmed to the site. In 1983 the area was formally

declared the “Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park” (Yuanmingyuan Yizhi Gongyuan 圆明园遗址公园) and, beginning in 1984, the Yuanmingyuan Management Bureau and farmers from the village of Haidian (within whose boundaries the park was built) cooperated to develop and construct the Ruins Park. After several years of reconstructive efforts, ticket booths were set up and the park was open to the public in 1988. The narrative establishes these new developments as having significance for the Chinese race:

Yuanmingyuan’s interest, tragedy, glory and shame are intimately related to the fortune of the Chinese race. Although the ruins park was only recently set in motion, it is nevertheless a great turn in the 100-year history of the Yuanmingyuan’s destruction, it is the historical beginning of the recovery of the famous garden and uncovers a new page for the history of garden development in the capital; it has become the symbol of the rejuvenation of Chinese civilization.

Since then, the narrative continues, the park has continued to undergo renovations. Many famous sites of the original Yuanmingyuan have been reconstructed, some of the ruins have been reassembled and steps have been taken for their preservation. Landscaping and reforestation work has been done in many areas. “[The park] is rich with the distinctiveness of ruins, but also has the function of a public park; it is a place to promote patriotic education, as well as a place for the people to stroll and rest.”

The narrative then reiterates that the Chinese state worked together with the farmers in the area to build the park. In 1990 and 1993 the land was formally expropriated from the farmers for the non-agricultural populace. According to the narrative, this was necessary in order to build the ruins park and protect cultural relics and historical sites. “Hereafter, along with the furthering of reform and opening and the development of the citizens’ economy, the Yuanmingyuan ruins is set to become a distinctive and well-

known spot for tourism, better serving the two civilizations construct in our country's socialism.”

“The two civilizations construct in our country's socialism” refers to the ideas of material civilization and spiritual civilization as the two keystones of a modern society that China must simultaneously pursue (Deng 17, "Shehuizhuyi" 4149). The new Yuanmingyuan Park's contributions in promoting both material and spiritual civilization in China was one of the arguments justifying its construction (*Yuanmingyuan: Lishi* 587). These ideas, associated with Chinese Communism, were widespread in Chinese political ideology of the early 1990s. As with the aphorism, “the backwards will be beaten,” the reader is presumed to be familiar enough with the terminology for it to require no explanation.

This last section serves the interests of the current government regime in several important ways. It casts the post-1949 Chinese state as the new hero of the narrative who comes and restores the Yuanmingyuan, thereby casting off the shame of its destruction and renewing its glory. Where the old imperial government let the Yuanmingyuan fall because it was weak and corrupt, the new government not only has the strength and resources to undo the damage, but rebuilds the Yuanmingyuan as a public park for the people in contrast to a private pleasure of the Manchu Emperor. By reclaiming this old site of political power and reshaping it according to socialist ideology, the narrative asserts the government's legitimacy as the fitting ruler of the new Chinese nation.

The Yuanmingyuan's reincarnation as a ruins park where tourists can come to experience history also speaks to the modernity of the Chinese nation in a global arena by providing China with material evidence of its ancient

culture, a distinction seen as being possessed by all great Western civilizations:

This same China which is loaded with so much history and so many memories is also oddly deprived of ancient monuments. In the Chinese landscape there is a *material* absence of the past that can be most disconcerting for cultivated Western travelers - especially if they approach China with the criteria and standards that are naturally developed in a Western environment. (Ryckmans 2).

The Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park embodies a part of modern China's endeavor to make up for this lack, and be able to participate along with Western nations in the global arena of civilized modernity. To this end, it is presented as a symbol of "the rejuvenation of Chinese civilization."

The 1994 narrative addresses the problem of local farmers' eviction from the land that was used to build the Yuanmingyuan Park, an act that many of the residents of Yuanmingyuan resisted for years, by emphasizing the state's subsequent cooperation with the farmers in the construction of the new Yuanmingyuan Park. This was an arrangement in which local residents, who had no choice but to leave their homes and livelihoods, were paid wages by the government to work on the construction of the new park. (See Broudehoux 70-74 and note 77 on p.91).

Let us turn back for a moment to the dramatic monologue, "The Yuanmingyuan's Wish." Embedded in the student's argument is the assumption that the current function of the Yuanmingyuan ruins is to recall China's era of shame. Utilizing the pathos invoked by the voice of the Yuanmingyuan itself, the student suggests that the Yuanmingyuan be read differently, as a symbol of the glory of Chinese civilization, and that rebuilding the Yuanmingyuan would be the way to convey this message. In fact, both of these interpretations of the Yuanmingyuan--as a symbol of national humiliation

and a symbol of cultural greatness-- are espoused by official histories of the Yuanmingyuan such as the 1994 narrative discussed in this section. The student, by opposing these two interpretations as the two options for reading the park, is subconsciously subscribing to these official conceptions of the Yuanmingyuan and aiding their dissemination in the collective consciousness of other readers.

Thus far in this section, I have attempted to summarize and contextualize one example of an official narrative of Yuanmingyuan history in order to fill in the background knowledge and ideological assumptions that it posits its audience as already having, and illustrate how it speaks to a variety of discourses active at the time of its creation. While I do not claim to be an unbiased narrator, my motive, as far as possible, has been to explain how the narrative functions—that is, how it alludes to or omits specific figures, words or events—by examining its political context without passing judgement upon the narrative itself or the ideological motives invested in it. Now that I have, in some capacity, established how the Yuanmingyuan is presented in the official narrative written in 1994, I will locate the same narrative in the context of changing ideas in China about what the role of history ought to be.

In a book entitled *Mirroring the Past: The Writing and Use of History in Imperial China*, Ng and Wang write about a traditional Chinese outlook towards history where:

History was essentially the record of the operation and influence of moral forces and principles in the lives of past personages, whose behavior and agency were in turn brought to bear on the well-being of the state and society. Thus history was normative; it was a moral narrative guided by the principal didactic function of celebrating virtues and deterring vices. History was not only considered morally edifying, but it was also thought to be capable of proffering trustworthy socioeconomic and political precedents and analogies, so that it served as a most reliable guide for contemporary statecraft. The



abiding historiographical conviction held that juxtaposing and probing similar events of past and present would yield invaluable practical insights crucial for the betterment of the state and society. (Ng and Wang xi).

To what extent are official narratives of the Yuanmingyuan, like the 1994 one I examined above, continuations of this tradition of “mirroring the past in the present?” One way to address this question is to look at conclusions drawn in the narrative and what they are meant to accomplish. The section on Yuanmingyuan’s age of prosperity concludes with the assertions that the Yuanmingyuan “collected thousands of years of accomplishments of our nation’s extraordinary art of garden construction” and was “the pride of our Chinese race.” The aim of these statements appears to be to establish the Yuanmingyuan as part of a cultural tradition belonging to a Chinese race, reifying the notion that both shared race and shared culture belong to the national group, Chinese.

The second section on Yuanmingyuan’s looting and destruction concludes with the assertion that Yuanmingyuan’s destruction is “a testimony to the Western invaders’ ruin of human culture” and “proof that even in the case of a civilized and ancient nation, the backwards will be beaten.” This not only re-establishes the idea that members of the “civilized and ancient” Chinese nation share both a culture and a history, but opposes them to “Western invaders” who not only destroy Chinese culture specifically, but universal “human culture,” implicitly making them uncivilized. The contradiction inherent in the notion that China is, on the one hand “civilized” (wenming 文明) and, on the other hand, “backwards” (luohou 落后) is reconciled through the accreditation of the civilization encompassed in Yuanmingyuan to the toil and knowledge of “the multitudes of laboring people” and the accreditation of the

backwardness that led to its destruction to the “corruption and incompetence of the Qing government.”

The third section of the narrative concludes that the new Yuanmingyuan Park is symbolically “the rejuvenation of Chinese civilization” and physically “a place to promote patriotic education, as well as a place for the people to stroll and rest.” The proposed symbolic function of the new Yuanmingyuan serves to parallel the present day with the golden age of the original Yuanmingyuan’s prosperity, imposing continuity between the old China and the new China as peaks of the same continuous civilization. The self-proclaimed function of the park as a place both for patriotic education (aiguozhuyi jiaoyu 爱国主义教育) and for people to stroll and rest highlights its utility for the people who make up the national group. The term “patriotic education,” in the context of the Chinese narrative, is not meant negatively as a form of nationalistic indoctrination or brainwashing but, is a connotatively positive term, somewhat akin to civic education. Nonetheless, many, particularly non-Chinese scholars, have reacted critically to this self-proclaimed function of the park.

The discovery that the overarching intent of the 1994 official narrative of Yuanmingyuan history is to promote ideas and feelings of national solidarity, or nationalism, is perhaps, strikingly obvious; it is acknowledged within the narrative itself and by many scholars writing of the Yuanmingyuan. Yet, few of these scholars take the time to dissect such narratives and understand how nationalism is promoted within them, or what nationalism means in different contexts. A close examination of the 1994 narrative suggests that nationalism is a banner under which diverse and even, in some cases, contradictory ideologies may rally, and that, while official narratives such as this one may

distort or omit historical facts to promote nationalistic aims, this does not imply that they do so simplistically or univocally.

In their discussion of history's function in imperial China, Ng and Wang write that "the Chinese conception of history as the repository of recoverable lessons for present and future actions is an instance of the inexorable presence of the presentist motives in the endeavor to disinter the past" (xiii). They thus acknowledge the presentist motives that colored investigations and applications of the past in imperial China, while insisting that the underlying ethic was to "disinter the past" or discover its truth. They defend the traditional Chinese approach to history as a resource for moral edification in the present from contemporary critics' claims that such an approach lacks academic objectivity by arguing that imperialist scholars' approach was informed by "fidelity to what had actually happened" (xii). Whether or not we agree with this optimistic assessment of imperial historiography, it is undeniable that post-imperial historiography, particularly post-1949 Communist historiography, held a different ethic about what the function of history ought to be and how it ought to relate to the present. In the introduction to a collection of essays, *Using the Past to Serve the Present*, Jonathon Unger describes a post-1949 shift from a Confucian to a Marxist historiography, which emphasized economic and social history and class struggle, and was premised upon an idea of historical progress rather than a cyclical notion of time. Historians, instead of scrutinizing the past for its moral bearing on the present, were to be "handmaidens to the Party propagandists" who searched for "the exact timing of each of the stages of history, to fit the preconceived notions handed down to them by the Party leadership." (3). Geremie Barmé in his chapter "History for the Masses" within this collection of essays, focuses particularly on the post-Cultural Revolution

period of the 1980s and early 1990s when motivated groups, both those conforming to the Party Line and those seeking to subvert it, were distorting and fictionalizing past events to serve present agendas. Both the imperial and Communist approaches to historiography seek to use the past to justify or critique the present. The general difference seems to be that imperial historians shuffled through an established and revered tradition of the past to find events that could be interpreted to serve the ends of the present, whereas Communist historians felt justified to alter events of the past in order to fit a predetermined interpretation that served the ends of the present. These very broad ideas about how history has been viewed and used in China may not hold true for every case, however the 1994 narrative of Yuanmingyuan history examined in this chapter, and similar official histories of the Yuanmingyuan produced from the 1980s to the present, do appear to reflect an ethic of history in which the goals of promoting state legitimacy and national unity overshadow ideals of historical fidelity.

Of course, manipulating representations of history in order to support political ideologies related to state legitimacy and national solidarity is not a phenomenon unique to China and can be viewed in a modern context as part of a more global project of constituting and reifying the nation-state, in which many agents of various nationalities have participated. Nonetheless, standards of academic objectivity and ideals of history as a quest for factual knowledge, associated with vague ideas of modernity and progress, to which many 21st century scholars are committed, oppose this sort of deliberate historical distortion. These scholars seek to deconstruct narratives such as the 1994 narrative of Yuanmingyuan history examined in this chapter by

recovering pieces of history that have been left out and conflict with the ideological messages of official histories.

In the next section, I will discuss arguments and historical findings that oppose or critique parts of official Yuanmingyuan histories promoted by Chinese authorities beginning in the 1980s. In particular, I will focus on a historical account of the Yuanmingyuan written by the Australian sinologist, Geremie Barmé. This will pave the way for an examination, in section 3, of the collective memory of the Yuanmingyuan as a discursive fantasy shaped by such representations as the 1994 official Yuanmingyuan history, which are promoted by motivated agents and consumed by multiple individuals who then form a collective. By applying collective memory theory I will attempt to trace another kind of Yuanmingyuan history which, rather than focusing on historical events themselves, focuses on how these historical events were interpreted and presented among different groups in different periods of history and the various motives and ideologies that fueled Yuanmingyuan narratives. Section 4 focuses on the consumers of such narratives and the changing degrees to which representations of Yuanmingyuan affect their emotions and beliefs. By examining specific changes in the discourse of Yuanmingyuan, I seek a better understanding of how collective memories form and dissipate. Finally, section 5 takes a look at some more recent associations the Yuanmingyuan has taken on in order to address the question: what about Yuanmingyuan makes it such a potent site for collective memory formation?

## **2. Barmé's "The Garden of Perfect Brightness, A Life in Ruins": A Counter-Narrative**

Geremie Barmé wrote a very different Yuanmingyuan history in 1996, a year after he was labeled an extremist in China for his article "To Screw Foreigners is Patriotic: China's Avant-Garde Nationalists" (Gries 10) and a year before the British returned Hong Kong to Chinese rule, symbolizing for many Chinese an end to the humiliations of the Opium War era. Whether his intent or not, Barmé's narrative can be seen as a foreign scholar's response to the historical distortion and overt propaganda of the first narrative, a desire to "set the record straight." However, it also manifests the desire to explore significant changes in Chinese culture and society through the microcosm of the Yuanmingyuan's tumultuous history. Like official Chinese narratives, Barmé's narrative interprets the fate of the Yuanmingyuan as reflective of the fate of China itself, although for Barmé this is the result of major events in China's history and politics affecting the Yuanmingyuan, not any inherent symbolism tying the Yuanmingyuan to the Chinese people. In another article published twelve years later in 2008 entitled "Beijing, a garden of violence," Barmé somewhat inverts the relationship by discussing the broader history of Beijing from the mid 20th century in terms of the process of gardening, inviting the reader to view this work as an extension of his article on the Yuanmingyuan.

Many accounts of the Yuanmingyuan have been written by non-Chinese scholars since the construction of the Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park in the 1980s, often in the context of greater works on various aspects of Chinese culture or society. James Hevia in his 2003 book, *English Lessons: The*

*Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth Century China*, details the looting and subsequent burning of the Yuanmingyuan palace in 1860 in order to illustrate the pedagogical project of English imperialism, in which violence, in the form of both warfare and law, was employed as a means of establishing English superiority, and justified as a necessary part of civilizing inferior races. While acknowledging the arrogance and brutality of the English, Hevia does not romanticize the Chinese as hapless victims, but analyzes the political and ideological motivations on both sides. In his last chapter, he addresses the effects imperialism and English pedagogy have had on 20th century Chinese ideology, in particular, the conflicted Chinese nationalism that emerged, built upon an idea of national humiliation but also ambivalently grounding itself on ideas of cultural glory. In the very last section of his book, he describes the Yuanmingyuan Park as an example of one of the most “highly charged sites of national humiliation” that figures into the late 20th century state project of “producing, preserving and restoring national history” (340). The changing status of Yuanmingyuan loot from 1860 is also a subject addressed in Hevia’s book, and figures centrally in two articles he has written (See “Loot’s” and “Plunder”).

Anne-Marie Broudehoux in a 2004 book, *the Making and Selling of Post-Mao Beijing*, discusses the Yuanmingyuan in a rather different context. She details the entire history of the imperial garden, including its prosperity during the Qing, its destruction beginning in 1860 and continuing through the 20th century, and the construction of the Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park in the 1980s, primarily to show that the extant Yuanmingyuan Park is a site where history has been repackaged to serve the ideological and economic aims of the Chinese state. She describes the historical narrative promoted in the park

as a “single-stranded interpretation of history” that “while serving the nationalist cause and promoting unbounded love for the motherland...presents a clear danger by encouraging xenophobic feelings among park visitors” (81). To support a prominent theme in the book that the Chinese state’s projects of nation-building often end up hurting common Chinese citizens, she also addresses the forced eviction of farmers and other residents who occupied the land where the state decided to construct the Yuanmingyuan park, arguing that such an act “denies the equal validity of different layers of historical time, and implies that the imprints left by the Emperor and his entourage are more valuable to the nation than those of the ordinary Chinese citizens who lived at Yuanmingyuan” (82).

In another very different study of the Yuanmingyuan published in 2008 and entitled “The Ruins of Yuanmingyuan: Or, How to Enjoy a National Wound,” Haiyan Lee focuses mainly on the present day park as a site that “gathers disparate material and discursive elements into itself and binds their incompatibility into a heterotopia wherein the contradictions of post-socialism are displayed and negotiated” (160). Among the different kinds of emplacement she identifies in the Yuanmingyuan park are that of ruinscape, gardenscape and Disneyscape, representing respectively the aesthetics of ruins, renewal and commercialization. By analyzing concrete representations within the park such as museum displays and tourist graffiti, and the discourses surrounding them, both official and unofficial, she concludes that the Yuanmingyuan is “a most apt spatial metaphor of contemporary China and a schooling ground for the art of socialist neoliberal citizenship: of being able to reconcile authoritarianism and freewheeling capitalism, patriotic loyalty and



cosmopolitan sensibility, self-righteous rage and aesthetic and sensual enjoyment” 185).

Given the wealth of evocative materials on the Yuanmingyuan with which I could engage, I have chosen to address Barmé’s 1996 narrative in more depth not only because it appears in the bibliographies of all three texts I discussed above and has exercised unquestionable influence upon subsequent works about the Yuanmingyuan, but also because its focus is on presenting a comprehensive scholarly history of the Yuanmingyuan, therefore stylistically and in terms of content, it naturally contrasts with the 1994 Chinese official narrative I examined in the previous section. Structurally, Barmé’s narrative is also very different from the 1994 narrative; it abandons the tripartite life, death and reincarnation view of Yuanmingyuan history, instead starting at Yuanmingyuan’s birth as an imperial pleasure, and working through various destructive and altering stages of its history, until the garden’s 1996 state, in which the future is left open to possibility. In his introduction, Barmé presents the reader with a preview of this historical progression:

As the main imperial pleasure and the seat of government during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the Garden of Perfect Brightness flourished for over one hundred and fifty years. Its career as ruins, one that is now in its one hundred and thirty-sixth year, has been nearly as long. In many ways, the garden’s afterlife has been more eventful than its imperial heyday.

As this passage suggests, Barmé focuses more on the ruins of the Yuanmingyuan than the intact imperial pleasure, although the ambiguity of his title, “A Life in Ruins,” suggesting both that the garden’s life has been ruined and that there is life in the garden’s ruins, is in play throughout the piece. His emphasis is on the dynamics of the site, not as simply a pristine imperial wonderland in the time of Qianlong that was abruptly reduced to ruins

in 1860 and then miraculously reconstructed in the 1980s, but rather as a living site, constantly changing both materially and in the minds of people, sometimes drastically, sometimes gradually, but always changing.

Barmé characterizes the initial construction of the Yuanmingyuan not as “the crystallization of the blood and sweat as well as knowledge of the multitudes of laboring people” but as a personal project of the self-indulgent Manchu emperors, noting, “much that is taken as quintessentially Chinese today—by both Chinese and non-Chinese alike—is in reality a conflated culture born of the Manchus, a foreign, conquering people” (113). He thus problematizes the simultaneous interpretation of the Yuanmingyuan as the great cultural heritage of the Chinese people and the Manchus as corrupt exploiters of the Chinese people. If the Yuanmingyuan and the accomplishments of the Qing Dynasty are to be claimed as an essential part of Chinese heritage and the Yuanmingyuan’s destruction a Chinese humiliation, then the anti-Manchu sentiment that characterized popular Chinese nationalist politics for decades beginning in the late 19th century and framed Manchus as foreign exploiters of the Chinese people, must be reconciled with the more recent policy that posits Manchus as a Chinese minority group and proclaims the period of Manchu rule “our great Qing” (Bulag 7, quoting Lu Xun). From this perspective, Yuanmingyuan history exposes an inconsistency in the way Chineseness has been presented from past to present. To emphasize this inconsistency, Barmé, in his narrative, details the varied influences that go into the building of the Yuanmingyuan—it incorporates styles from other famous gardens in China, as well as Western architectural designs and the Manchu emperors’ architectural fancies—illustrating that, although the Yuanmingyuan

later came to be touted as distinctively Chinese, it was, in fact, the product of an amalgamation of cultures.

Barmé challenges the idea that the Yuanmingyuan's destruction was predominantly caused by the foreign invasion of 1860 by exploring the various phases of destruction to befall the garden over the past century and a half, concurrent with political upheavals and societal realities in Chinese history. He points out that, even before 1860, parts of the garden were beginning to show signs of disrepair (125). The Yuanmingyuan was not burned until half a century after its height under Qianlong. In that time, succeeding emperors were less enthusiastic about the Yuanmingyuan's maintenance and expansion, and let parts of it fall into decline while adding new buildings in a "stolid traditional mold" (130).

The infamous burning of 1860, then, becomes just another phase, albeit a rather rapid and severe phase, in the destruction of a garden that had already declined in grandeur. The circumstances of the looting and burning of the Yuanmingyuan related in Barmé's history differ markedly from the official Chinese account. The malicious General Elgin from the 1994 narrative, in Barmé's narrative, undertakes the burning of the Yuanmingyuan with the idea "that the emperor Xianfeng in particular, rather than his subjects, should be punished for the abuse of the diplomats and his duplicity regarding the peace treaty" (131). Elgin thus becomes a more sympathetic figure who, "at pains not to cause egregious harm or offense to the Chinese people," (133) must give the order to loot and burn the Yuanmingyuan, which he later regrets and for which he is later censored in Europe. Barmé's narrative acknowledges the barbarity of the looting and burning of the Yuanmingyuan but also criticizes the slanted accounts of it promoted in China:

Although without doubt an act of wanton barbarism, it is revealing that in popular Mainland Chinese accounts of the sacking of the palaces available to readers since the 1980s, one is hard pressed to find any mention of the atrocities committed by the Qing negotiators that led to this final act of vandalism. Nor, in these popular histories, are there detailed descriptions of the sly manipulations of the Qing Court in the tense days leading up to the sacking. (133).

Barmé challenges the idea that the burning of 1860 amounted to its complete destruction: “although twentieth-century accounts generally claim that the area was completely razed, contemporary records claim that the Yuan Ming Yuan could have been preserved and repaired without too great an effort” (136). In Barmé’s account, the 1860 burning of the Yuanmingyuan is only the beginning of a series of disfigurements leading to the park’s ruined condition in the 1950s when “topography alone survived” (Barmé quoting George N. Kates). Other destructive periods in the history of the garden that Barmé identifies include the exploitation of its resources by the Dowager Empress Ci Xi for the building of the [New] Summer Palace (Yiheyan 颐和园) beginning in the 1890s, the local pillaging that occurred in the aftermath of the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, the plunder of stones and wood by warlords and officials in the first three decades of the twentieth century, landscaping for farmland beginning in the 1930s and continuing for several decades, and the intermittent construction of schools, factories, housing and other buildings over land once belonging to the Yuanmingyuan. Even the 1980s “restoration” effort, considered a means of preserving the ruins by Chinese involved in the project (*Yuanmingyuan: Lishi*), Barmé sees as yet another phase in the long history of Yuanmingyuan’s destruction.

Barmé’s exposition of the various destructive forces contributing to Yuanmingyuan’s decline calls into question the official narrative of Yuanmingyuan history that posits the park’s destruction as the result of two

main events, the fire of 1860 and the plunder of 1900, and thereby opposes simplistically blaming the park's destruction on foreign aggression and imperial neglect, since the park's destruction is the complex product of a multitude of agents. In effect, Barmé overthrows the historical groundwork that makes the Yuanmingyuan ruins a perfect object of nationalistic indignation and replaces it with a complexity that demands critical analysis.

Barmé argues that by the 1950s the site of the Yuanmingyuan had lost all association with the famed garden; the Yuanmingyuan was forgotten: "Indeed, over the years the grounds of the gardens lost virtually all significance in Chinese life" (144). Not until the 1980s, when the Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park was built, was the memory of Yuanmingyuan revived in the popular mind. Barmé describes the construction of the park as "the latest phase in the devastation of the Yuan Ming Yuan" (142). Fields were dug up, lakes filled with water and trees planted. Tourist elements were introduced such as ticket booths, food vendors, gift shops and rental boats resulting in "a garishly dolled-up and picturesque socialist park" (142). By exposing the extent to which the 1980s construction of the new Yuanmingyuan Park was a brand new creation, rather than a renovation, Barmé condemns the historical connection to the ancient Yuanmingyuan as an artificial one, constructed for monetary and ideological profit:

Coming, as it did, at a time when the Communist Party was at pains to re-establish its primacy as the embodiment of Chinese patriotic sentiment, and anxious to avail itself of the great enterprise of modern Chinese history as proof that only under its leadership could the wrongs of the past be righted, the Yuan Ming Yuan was subjected to--taking a phrase from Rose Macaulay--"the destroying hand of ruin-clearers." (143).

By highlighting the myriad transformations that the site where Yuanmingyuan once stood underwent, and the new associations it acquired,

both physically and in the minds of the populace, Barmé calls into question the projected unity between the modern day public park and the historical imperial pleasure. He points out that physically, only a few scattered stones and columns, some of them recently repositioned to mimic the semblance of the long-lost buildings that they were once a part of, remain of the original Yuanmingyuan. He thus implies that the more potent connection between the Yuanmingyuan of the past and that of the present is in the perceived importance of the site to people today. Throughout his narration of history, Barmé exhibits a consciousness of what Ng and Wang call the “presentist motives” in how the historical Yuanmingyuan is remembered. He contrasts the present national significance of the Western Palaces with their disparagement by Qianlong’s successor as “a perversion of nature’s way” (127-128). He also observes how the paintings of the Forty Scenes have come to overshadow other historical representations of the Yuanmingyuan by virtue of having been widely reproduced on advertisements and mementos targeted at modern tourists (129). He notes how the decline and fall of the Qing has come to be seen as an “inevitable vector of desuetude” (130). His narrative constantly juxtaposes the history he has uncovered with the modern day perceptions of that history.

Yet, clearly Barmé himself also displays presentist motives in his unraveling of history. Where the official Chinese narrative foreshadows the Yuanmingyuan’s 1860 looting and burning as the terrible but inevitable fate that must befall it, Barmé’s narrative laments the Yuanmingyuan’s late twentieth century transformation into a public park and appropriation as a nationalist symbol in a similar fashion. He ends his narrative by expressing the hope that the future Yuanmingyuan “may grow from the rancorous confines of

a spiteful and crudely manipulated nationalism to become a ruin of grandeur and wonderment” (157).

In 2006 Barmé wrote an essay entitled “A Year of Some Significance,” in which he sympathizes with the Chinese intellectual, Yuan Weishi, whose “Modernization and History Textbooks” caused the section of the newspaper in which it was published to be suspended, as well as other critics of the Communist government’s distortion of history and media censorship (See Yuan). Barmé concludes: “When it comes to China, there is a lot of history to recover before questions of veracity and achievement can be productively explored. History might not repeat itself, however the stymieing of basic rights means that the histories of years past continue to haunt the present.” This statement reveals something of Barmé’s motivations in writing his Yuanmingyuan history. The state-promoted 1994 Yuanmingyuan history examined in section 1 can be taken as an example of the kind of obfuscation of history that Barmé denounces. Barmé’s narrative, then, is his attempt to uncover historical veracity.

Nonetheless, there are places in which Barmé’s history opposes the Chinese official histories without accounting for other versions or interpretations of events. Wong Young-Tsu in his 2001 book, *A Paradise Lost: The Imperial Garden Yuanming Yuan*, gives an account of the 1860 burning of the Yuanmingyuan that differs significantly in its interpretations from Barmé’s account. In Wong’s narrative the Qing Court representative, Prince Gong, who is charged with negotiating peace with the foreigners, desperately tries to prevent the calamity of Yuanmingyuan’s looting and burning by pleading with the intransigent Lord Elgin. In contrast, Barmé’s account paints Prince Gong as a dirty negotiator who “after numerous prevarications, bluffs and acts of

deception on the part of the Qing Court,” takes the members of the English and French peace delegation hostage and tortures them. A third account of Prince Gong as a traitor to the Qing Empire, which Wong disputes, also exists and was popularized in the Zhang Guantian play, “Yuanmingyuan” (See Wong 139, Cheng 20a and “Garden”).

Outrage over the poor treatment of English prisoners of war, both the Barmé and Wong narratives agree, is the reason behind Elgin’s decision to burn the Yuanmingyuan. However, Wong argues that the prisoners, after a period in which they were mistreated, were given the treatment of “honored guests” under prince Gong in his desire to facilitate peace (138) and returned on October 13 as an amiable gesture, but that their return caused Elgin to become irrationally angry because “they told their horrible stories of their imprisonment, not to mention that some of them did not return alive” (146). Wong argues that “the European prisoners were, indeed, being mistreated, but they were mistreated by the long-standing Chinese prison system. No evidence whatsoever indicates that the Qing authorities, let alone the Xianfeng emperor, ever authorized the mistreatment of the European prisoners.” He then cites a document from 1860 that stipulates that the prisoners must be comfortably provided for and were not to be tortured or humiliated. (148). Barmé’s narrative, on the other hand relates, “Of their number eighteen died and, when their bodies were eventually returned to the Allied Forces in October 1860, even the liberal use of lime in their coffins could not conceal the fact that they had suffered horribly before expiring” (131). While Barmé’s and Wong’s accounts do not directly contradict each other factually, each directs the reader’s sympathy towards a different side. Lord Elgin, who is a relatively sympathetic character in Barmé’s history, is a tyrant in Wong’s whose



“powerful emotion of anger and self-righteousness” is used to “justify his violent action,” and who originally “contemplated not only the demolition of all the palaces in and out of Beijing but also the abdication of the Manchu monarch Xianfeng” (148). In addition, Wong quotes the reactions of three Chinese to the burning of the Yuanmingyuan to give an impression of the tragedy of the event to the Chinese people.

Barmé’s description of what, in China, is notoriously identified as the second burning of the Yuanmingyuan by the imperialist Eight Nation Allied Armies in 1900, is confined to one small paragraph and does not mention the destruction caused by the foreigners, only the destruction caused by Manchu bannermen:

Following the occupation of the imperial capital by foreign troops, soldiers were also billeted in the imperial gardens. Bannerman, whose villages surrounded the Yuan Ming Yuan, having found themselves defeated and without effective leadership, now formed marauding gangs and ransacked the ground in search of profit. They reportedly destroyed all of the remaining trees and building of the gardens in the space of a month (139).

Wong’s account, on the other hand, attributes the greater part of the destruction and theft to the foreign invaders who were “even more numerous and vicious than those of 1860” (181) and relegates the Manchu bannermen and other “native bandits, thieves and riffraff” to opportunistic looters. (182).

Wong also provides a description of the 1980s park reconstruction project that, while for the most part including the same facts as Barmé’s history, is sympathetic to the Chinese state’s objectives. Wong describes the building of the Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park and construction process as a necessary step for ruins preservation and a successful tourism venture. About the very same event that Barmé explains as “the latest phase in the

devastation of Yuanmingyuan,” Wong declares, “No one will dispute the fact that the creation of the park has helped historic preservation” (193).

Rather than debate which historian’s Yuanmingyuan history is more “correct” and risk becoming embroiled in questions of historicity, I seek to contribute to the scholarly discourse of Yuanmingyuan by asking a question not specifically addressed in any of the works related to Yuanmingyuan I have covered in this chapter. Both the 1994 Chinese official history and Barmé’s history, along with the accounts of virtually every other scholar writing about the Yuanmingyuan after the 1980s, agree that the Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park was aimed at promoting nationalism. But, why in the 1980s, was the Yuanmingyuan, as opposed to other potential nationalist symbols, chosen to be a central figure in the state-supervised campaign to promote nationalism? Why invest so much money and so many resources into building the Yuanmingyuan Park around ruins that had been neglected and ignored for decades? Furthermore, why have the Yuanmingyuan Park and official histories promoted in the 1980s been so successful in capturing both national and, more recently, international attention?

Conceptualizing Yuanmingyuan as a place of historical import is not sufficient to address these questions because the Yuanmingyuan’s historical import was largely re-constructed in the 1980s along with the physical site of the park. Before this time, as Barmé relates in his narrative, (and which is corroborated in other sources) the physical site that had once been called Yuanmingyuan was claimed by farmland, factories, schools, government buildings and landfills and had largely lost its association with the famed imperial garden. I propose that collective memory is a more effective framework with which to conceptualize the Yuanmingyuan and address these

questions because it posits Yuanmingyuan as a changing discourse in which shifting collectives participate and accounts for the existence of an idea of Yuanmingyuan as ideologically important, even when the Yuanmingyuan as a physical site had acquired other associations and most people were not actively aware of this idea. Framing the Yuanmingyuan as a collective memory allows us to relate the changing material site of the Yuanmingyuan as a body of representations to changing mental conceptions of Yuanmingyuan, and place both within political contexts. It accounts for the dynamism and multivocality of Yuanmingyuan as an ever-changing and complex discourse. Moreover, rather than directing us towards an evaluation of history according to standards of objectivity and fidelity, it shifts our historiographical focus to a history of ideas, of what is believed in any given time, or what J. Friedman calls “fetishism,” which he argues “should not be understood in terms of misrepresentation of reality, but as the very form of lived reality itself whose representational properties are simply incommensurate with that to which they refer” (Friedman 19). In the sense suggested by Friedman’s idea of fetishism, the collective memory of the Yuanmingyuan at any given point, that is, what people believed about it, is more relevant than the site’s factual history to understanding its significance in China.

### **3. Remembering the Yuanmingyuan: The Ongoing Discourse Between Producers, Representations and Consumers**

It is not my intention here to plunge into a deep historical or theoretical discussion about collective memory nor do I claim to have the expert knowledge to do so. Ultimately, I intend, through a directed application of selected scholar's theories on collective memory and my own inferences to utilize collective memory in my description of the ideologies, opinions and notions surrounding the Yuanmingyuan site in Beijing from approximately the 1980s to the present. Therefore, very briefly and somewhat oversimplistically, collective memory, whose first use as a term is attributable to Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) and whose conception has been variously debated and refined by subsequent scholars, I take to refer to a shared notion about a given subject among a social collective. In my use of the term, I rely heavily on an article by Wulf Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory studies," in which he proposes that collective memory be conceptualized as:

the result of the interaction between three types of historical factors: the intellectual and cultural traditions that form all our representations of the past, the memory makers who selectively adopt and manipulate these traditions, and the memory consumers who use, ignore, or transform such artifacts according to their own interests. (180).

This triangular model, which can be seen as an adaptation of the rhetorical triangle, is by no means a comprehensive model. Nonetheless, I find that if applied with an awareness of its limitations and in conjunction with other theories, it is a useful point of approach for conceptualizing what the historical memory of the Yuanmingyuan is and how it is being produced. However,

before I begin to inscribe my own arguments onto each of the triangle's corners, I must identify two principles at its base:

1. The collective memory of a thing or event has no definitive point of origination. Although we might suppose that traditions come first, and it is these traditions that producers utilize in making new representations, the traditions themselves must have been at some point produced and producers must first have been consumers to conceive of them. Even if, for example, we say that the Yuanmingyuan's construction is the point of origination for the idea "Yuanmingyuan", it is unclear at what point the Yuanmingyuan became widely enough known to become a collective memory and what combination of representations achieved this, and what representations the producers of these representations had themselves consumed; in other words, the relationship between the three groups, representation (understood both as tradition and its re-presentation, something that is periodically altered), producer (the agent that alters the representation) and consumer (the one interpreting and remembering the re-presentation) is dialectical.

2. Collective memory is not a static and definable set of ideas, but a dynamic web of impressions, a discourse going on among a group about a central subject. When I discuss the collective memory of the Yuanmingyuan, I am referring to the discourse going on in the minds of people, who form a collective by virtue of participating in the discourse, and investigating some of the ways in which this discourse was shaped and emerged as an active subject.

In positing the Yuanmingyuan as a collective memory and drawing upon Kansteiner's model, I seek to overturn the oversimplification common in descriptions of the present-day Yuanmingyuan Park that posit it as a tool of

the Chinese state to promote an “official memory” that inculcates nationalism into the Chinese people. In terms of the model, this is equivalent to positing the Yuanmingyuan’s collective memory as a discourse between the producer as the Chinese state; the representation as the Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park; and the consumer as the Chinese people.

It is problematic, on many levels to take “the Chinese state” as an organic body with ideological consistent aims and the sole agent behind Yuanmingyuan Park’s production. If we take the Chinese state as an administrative organization, then it is composed of multiple hierarchical branches and employs multiple individuals with different responsibilities and potentially conflicting opinions. It is not “the state” then that acts, but individuals that act on behalf of the notion “state”. Even if we wanted to propose that it is government officials who produce the Yuanmingyuan narrative, this too is not quite accurate since many individuals who associate themselves with the state approve, alter or censor representations but do not necessarily produce them. The planning and construction of the Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park, for example, was undertaken by a large group of people of different occupations and from different disciplines whose disagreements sparked highly publicized and drawn-out debates (See *Yuanmingyuan: Lishi* and *Yuanmingyuan: Chongjian*). Therefore, the producer of the Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park or even the narratives found within it was neither unitary nor “the state.” The idea that “the state” is a unified entity governing a nation is itself an imaginary projected by those who claim to act on its behalf, a mechanism for legitimization that functions similarly to a collective memory in that it derives authority from people’s collective belief in it.

It is equally problematic to posit the Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park as a single-stranded representation that embodies the producer's intentions. The actual Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park that opened to the public in 1988 and has continued to be expanded since then, occupies a huge space filled with various exhibits, banners, advertisements, images, stands, shops, restaurants, natural scenery, works of art and architecture in addition to the ruins themselves. In other words, within the park itself is a multitude of representations that cannot possibly communicate a unified and directed meaning. Furthermore, an examination of the historical narratives in the park shows that although they are certainly historically reductive and their explicitly espoused ideological messages may fit under the banner "nationalism," they are, nonetheless, multivocal and have no shortage of internal contradictions, as is apparent in the tripartite representation of Yuanmingyuan history I outlined in section 1.

As for the consumers of these representations being "the Chinese people," what collective memory, as a mechanism for creating and reifying group unity, reveals, is that "the Chinese people" was never an existing collective to begin with except insofar as it is a politically-constituted group or an imagined idea. Representations like the official histories of the Yuanmingyuan construct ideas of cultural and historical unity and posit them as belonging to the whole political collective of Chinese. But the political collective is not precisely the consumer of the representation, because the consuming collective is defined precisely by who consumes the representations, an ever-changing and non pre-determined group. The narratives within the Yuanmingyuan park posit the existence of a Chinese nation composed of Chinese citizens who share the cultural glory and

historical humiliation symbolized by the Yuanmingyuan; in some cases they even inclusively address them as “we the Chinese people.” This assumption may be accepted and internalized by those who consume the representations, but, ultimately, the collective is not determined by the intended target of the representations, but is constantly being re-membered based on who is being exposed to and accepting the representations. In other words, one only becomes “Chinese” by consuming representations that assert one’s Chineseness and accepting their premise, although the representations themselves present “Chinese” as an already-existing inherent quality.

In short, identifying what the collective memory of the Yuanmingyuan is and how it came to be is a much more complicated process than most scholars writing about the Yuanmingyuan would care or feel the need to undertake. Still, careless references to collective memory, both in discussions of the Yuanmingyuan and within topics relating to the humanities in general, must be acknowledged and addressed if the Yuanmingyuan on the one hand, and collective memory, on the other are to be better understood.

Jan Assmann, a German Egyptologist, refines Halbwachs’ original concept of collective memory as shared memory among a social group by breaking it down into communicative memory or “every day memory,” short-lived and disorganized presentist memory referenced through casual interactions; and cultural memory, inherited memory that binds a group to a specified past as a means of “concretion of identity” and reification of group unity. (See Assmann or Kansteiner’s summary in ““Finding” 182). He further subdivides cultural memory into two types: “Cultural memory exists in two modes: first in the mode of potentiality of the archive whose accumulated texts, images and rules of conduct act as a total horizon, and second in the



mode of actuality, whereby each contemporary context puts the objectivized meaning into its own perspective, giving it its own relevance” (Assmann 130). Assmann’s divisions are useful in historically locating the collective memory of the Yuanmingyuan that emerged in the 1980s. The Yuanmingyuan is a site with a long physical and representational history dating back to its inception in the early 18th century. Various notions of the Yuanmingyuan have waxed and waned in and out of popular consciousness at different periods of its history. The notion of the Yuanmingyuan that arose in the 1980s was not new in the sense that it was predicated upon older notions, what Kansteiner calls “tradition” and Assmann’s “potential cultural memory.” It was new in the sense that these traditions or potential cultural memories were re-presented to fit the cultural context of 1980s China and the ideological motives of the representers. These re-presentations (similar to what Eric Hobsbawm calls “the invention of tradition” in his book of the same title) resulted in an active cultural memory of the Yuanmingyuan. What is not made clear Assmann’s discussion of the two types of cultural memory is what happens during the transition between the deliberate re-presentation of potential cultural memory and its solidification into active cultural memory. I would argue that in order for active cultural memory to exist, the new representation must be accepted by a collective, and it is this acceptance, not the presentation itself that defines an active cultural memory as active. In other words, Assmann neglects the role of the consumer in constituting collective memory. Perhaps then, it is useful to define a third category of cultural memory, infelicitous (to borrow an adjective from J. L. Austin’s ideas about performativity) cultural memory, that is, potential cultural memory that has been re-presented by producers but not accepted --either ignored or immediately forgotten—by consumers.

But who identified “the Yuanmingyuan” as an idea that needed to be reinterpreted in the first place? Who went about reinterpreting it and who ultimately decided upon which reinterpretation to convey to society? The collection of essays edited by Rubie Watson in *Memory, History, and Opposition Under State Socialism* construct their arguments about popular resistance upon the premise that authoritative socialist states like China monopolize on cultural memory by propagating an official narrative of historical events and stifling dissident versions. This is a common theme in studies that touch upon modern Chinese historical memory, envisioning Communist China as the paragon of an authoritative propaganda state.

Anne-Marie Broudehoux, in a similar vein, observes how the Chinese state has appropriated the Yuanmingyuan to convey a specific politically-motivated historical narrative:

Despite the huge criticism of the administration’s commercialization of the Yuanmingyuan, few observers have objected to the state’s exploitation of the ruins for patriotic purposes. Seldom disputed are the selective version of history and the single-stranded, goal-oriented story told by the plaques, films, museum exhibits and books displayed at Yuanmingyuan (80).

Both Broudehoux and Watson describe how individuals resist the homogenizing force of official history. Watson in her essay, “Making Secret Histories: Memory and Mourning in Post-Mao China,” suggests that resistance comes from personal memories of historical events that contradict official ones. Broudehoux, in her chapter, “Selling the Past: Nationalism and the Commodification of History at Yuanmingyuan,” suggests that the populace resists official memory by embracing alternate associations:

[T]he greatest resistance to the state’s narrow reading of the ruins comes from the general public. There appears to be a much greater willingness on the part of the population to forget and forgive the misfortunes of the past, and to embrace the fully global consumer

culture, whose hegemony is threatening that of the Chinese state” (83).

However, Haiyan Lee, in presenting her own interpretation of the modern day Yuanmingyuan Park, directly objects to Broudehoux’s implication that holding another interpretation of Yuanmingyuan history excludes or subverts the nationalistic interpretation promoted by the state:

While there is no doubt that the official narrative tells a reductive story, it is a stretch to claim that the official memory is contested by visitors just because they pay scant heed to the message-bearing plaques and instead take sentimental pleasure in the poetic aura of the ruins that seem to connect them to far away landscapes in time and space. (183).

Both Watson’s and Broudehoux’s arguments assume that “the state,” as a unified body, is the producer of an “official narrative” that conveys a unified meaning, which is promoted in the Yuanmingyuan. Government-sponsored propaganda and media censorship certainly play a major role in shaping collective memory in China, however, cultural memory production is an extremely complicated process that involves multiple actors and ideas, which words like “the state” and “official narrative” do not capture. It would be more accurate to say that the design of the Yuanmingyuan and the historical narratives in its museums and exhibits were scrutinized, edited and approved by motivated agents who identified themselves with the state. While in some cases textual histories displayed in the Yuanmingyuan were reprinted word-for-word in other literature meant for popular consumption, this does not mean that every text or other form of media representing the Yuanmingyuan and approved by government authorities was ideologically consistent or “single-stranded,” especially considering the rapidness with which nationalist ideology tends to change in China. The actual production of the Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park and the historical narratives within it were efforts that had numerous

contributors, not all of them affiliated with the state, and were informed by numerous ideologies, some contradictory.

Having established this, I want to draw attention to what Lee's objection brings out about the relationship between the producer of the Yuanmingyuan narrative, the ideologically-charged narrative that it creates, and the people that consume this narrative. The producer (whether or not it is "the state"), does not directly convey a collective memory to the consuming populace. Rather, the producer produces a narrative that is embedded with political intentions. This narrative is then interpreted by people who, individually, may or may not subscribe to those intentions. There is a gap between the producers' intentions and visitors' reception that leaves room for modification or alternate interpretations, especially if a visitor has also received representations that compete with the ones presented in the park or is oblivious to them. State officials or other invested individuals may try to stifle other representations in order to promote official representations endowed with approved intentions, but, as Lee points out, for visitors to ignore these intentions and embrace alternate interpretations is not equivalent to resistance. To resist the producers' intentions would be to identify them and deliberately oppose them. Watson's idea of individuals clinging to personal memories that contradict state-promoted "official memory" resembles this more closely. What Broudehoux's idea of "resistance" brings out is the fact that producers did not actually create the collective memory of the Yuanmingyuan; rather, individuals working on behalf of "the state" widely propagated selective representation that encompassed their producers' intentions while stifling other representations that encompassed other intentions in order to increase the likelihood of these approved representations dominating collective memory.

Nonetheless, because first, consumers have the agency, or we might more appropriately say, the necessity, to interpret meanings and second, state officials are unable to stifle all competing representations, the actual collective memory that came to be did not necessarily conform to the producers' intentions. In this sense "memory production" is an inaccurate mode of description, since it is not memory that is produced, but representation, and it is through consumption of this and other representations that memory is formed.

The relationship between producer, representation and consumer here is analogous to the relationship between author, text and reader developed in literary theory, where the intention of the author is not necessarily absorbed by the reader since the medium of the text creates a plurality of possible meanings that may be interpreted. Collective memory is further complicated by the fact that there are a multiplicity of texts by a multiplicity of authors with a multiplicity of potential meanings that convey ideas about a given subject. When several individuals are exposed to a similar pool of representations about a particular subject and form a similar notion about that subject based on these representations, they form a collective based on that similar notion, and that notion is called collective memory. The interpretive gap that exists between the representation and consumption of cultural memory also exists between its production and representation. The multivocality of the Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park that Lee conceptualizes in terms of simultaneously existing differentiated space or "heterotopia" (a Foucaultian term) and Broudehoux posits as contradicting "the state's narrow reading of the ruins," is actually a feature of the Yuanmingyuan site as a production, that is, a representation, an articulation of a preexisting idea, like a text. Its ability to be

produced is predicated on its ability to be interpreted, its not having one predetermined meaning. Connecting the corners of the triangle, producer and representation, with the process, production (requiring articulation); and the corners, representation and consumer, with the process, consumption (requiring interpretation) illustrates the fact that memory production is not direct, but mediated, and that mediation leaves room for multivocality. Conceptualizing the model in terms of dynamic processes also highlights the mutability of collective memory as something that is continuously changing as a result of the discourse between the three agents, producer, representation and consumer.

Those acting on behalf of “the Chinese state,” then, were not the sole producers of the representations encompassed in the Yuanmingyuan Park built in the 1980s, but they nonetheless exercised a major influence upon how the park was constructed, what representations were included in the park and the dissemination of these representations to the public. But why was the Yuanmingyuan, as opposed to something else, chosen to be presented as a national symbol in the first place and why in the 1980s as opposed to in another period? In order to answer these questions, I must first historicize the collective memory of the Yuanmingyuan. The history of the idea, like the history of the site, is long and complex, and was, from the early 20th century onwards, intimately related to the discourse of national humiliation.

Paul Cohen in a section of the book *China Unbound* entitled “Remembering and forgetting national humiliation in twentieth-century China” describes how popular consciousness towards the discourse of national humiliation (guochi 国耻) waxed and waned in China over the course of the 20th century, and how this was connected to a persistent concern among

intellectuals that the population was forgetting its shameful past. Cohen's analysis is roughly divided into three chronological periods, each encompassing a period of time when national humiliation was felt by intellectuals to have been forgotten and the subsequent efforts at revival that this sense triggered. I will briefly summarize the main points of Cohen's narrative, since from the early 20th century onwards, the discourse of Yuanmingyuan became intimately associated with the discourse of national humiliation and as a result changes in popular consciousness towards the Yuanmingyuan were often directly connected to changes in popular consciousness towards national humiliation. Although Cohen never uses the term "collective memory," within his chapter he, in effect, describes the historical course of the collective memory of national humiliation in China.

According to Cohen, the Chinese national humiliation discourse was introduced in the early 1900s, mainly in the writings of "a small (albeit rapidly growing) minority of Chinese intellectuals" (169) in an effort to promote a collective sense of Chinese nationalism that they felt was lacking. National humiliation in this period referred to the humiliations China suffered at the hands of foreigners during the Opium War era. Commemoration of this unhappy period of history was meant to inspire outrage at the humiliations inflicted upon China and a desire to redeem the country, thus promoting a sense of national unity among the populace. This popular nationalism generally opposed itself to the Manchu state and contributed to the Xinhai Revolution of 1911. Japan's issuance of the Twenty One Demands in 1915 sparked popular outrage and national humiliation was subsequently written into the Chinese school curriculum. That same year a National Humiliation

Day was established and the slogan “never forget the national humiliation” (wuwang guochi 勿忘国耻) was widely dispersed.

Ironically, this contributed to national humiliation’s loss of vigor as a means to promote popular nationalism through the 1920s and 30s, as its repeated invocation and utilization for various commercial and political aims rendered it trite. In 1927 when the Nationalist Party came to power, it began to exercise tight control over National Humiliation Day observances and public displays of nationalism, fearing that popular nationalism posed a threat to the authority of the state. Despite scholars’ persistent laments that the national humiliations had been forgotten and calls for revival, there is a sense that popular feeling towards the injustices wrought by foreign imperialists continued to dampen.

National humiliation was, for the most part, forgotten by the end of the Cultural Revolution in the 1970s when most of the Opium War generation who had experienced the humiliating events directly had grown old or passed away. This forgetting was lamented by some intellectuals. It was not until the 1990s that the narrative of national humiliation was reemphasized by the post-Mao Communist state to suit the political agendas of the time and again used to fire up a state-affiliated Chinese nationalism. (For other accounts of national humiliation and its significance to Chinese nationalism, see James Hevia’s section “National Humiliation (Guochi), Liberation (Jiefang), and the Construction of the Patriotic Chinese Subject” in the last chapter of his book, *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China*; and Peter Gries’ section “A Century of Humiliation” in *China’s New Nationalism*). The waxing and waning of national humiliation in Chinese popular consciousness that Cohen describes can loosely be understood in



terms of Assmann's division of cultural memory into potential and active memory—the first a dormant collection of past ideas and the second an idea awakened in social consciousness that draws upon the first for material but manifests presentist views. However, in attempting to concretely apply this division to the timeline of the national humiliation narrative a problem of defining boundaries emerges.

Cohen points out that the “forgetting” of national humiliation to which intellectuals so anxiously referred had a different meaning in each time period: “at different historical junctures, patriotic intellectuals expressed concern either about their countrymen’s complete indifference to this theme or their inability to keep it in focus for more than a short while or, late in the century, their fading memory of the imperialist interlude in China’s recent history” (169). In the late Qing (early 1900s) forgetting meant that “Chinese, unlike other people, were somehow impervious to national shame” (148). In the early republican period (1910’s-1930’s), with the proliferation of national humiliation media, the concern was that Chinese, “erupted in anger for a short time but then promptly forgot the source of their anger and retreated to their original condition of indifference” (148). From the 1970s, however, when “the humiliations of the past were no longer of immediate, personal experience” (148) the problem became one of the new generation being literally unconscious of the humiliations. As a supplement to these ideas, Cohen also offers one Chinese writers’ assertion that there are two kinds of “not forgetting”: “the easy kind conveyed in writing and by word of mouth, and the truly efficacious kind that was inscribed in people’s hearts” (156). The three meanings of “forgetting” as indifference, short-lived concern, and unawareness prevents a neat designation of the humiliation narrative as potential or active memory at any

given time period. In practical terms, we might say that a potential memory's transformation into active memory seems to be the result of two factors: a heightened emotional identification with the subject and an expansion in the collectivity aware of the subject.

Yet, the boundary between the two types of cultural memory remains indefinable. Assmann describes active cultural memory as a reshaping of potential memory into a contemporary context, but if, as Cohen seems to argue, memory is something that is continuously changing, continuously being reshaped in a contemporary context (even if that context actually weakens the memory), then any attempt to distinguish the temporal phases of a memory as potential and active would be somewhat arbitrary. At the same time, Cohen's account describes the status of the national humiliation narrative in terms of three generalizable periods in each of which the memory of national humiliation was weak and then gained prominence. If we are to use the term "active collective memory" to describe this ascension to prominence then we must modify the term to not only imply that a previous memory has been reshaped into a contemporary context, but that this has been accompanied by an expanding collective of consumers and a heightened emotional feeling among the collective towards the subject of memory (although how to quantitatively measure this still remains a problem). This can also be understood as the requirement that the representation be accepted by the consumer, without which we said a collective memory would be infelicitous. Then the "forgetting" that Cohen describes in the late Qing and early republican eras can be understood as the infelicity of the collective memory at those times. These designations are useful in historicizing the collective memory of the Yuanmingyuan that became prominent in the 1980s, which will

help us approach the issue of the production of Yuanmingyuan memory in this period.

Representations of the Yuanmingyuan and opinions about it have existed since the original garden's inception in the early 18th century. Court artists painted scenes from the Yuanmingyuan and poets, most notably Qianlong himself, wrote poems about them. Foreigners who were privileged enough to visit the garden also wrote accounts of its splendor. Still, it is difficult to assess what the collective memory of the Yuanmingyuan was in the 18th and 19th centuries or who constituted the collective that remembered it. It is also unnecessary for the purposes of this paper to pursue this question further. (For sources that focus on this period in Yuanmingyuan's history see Danby, *Yuamingyuan: Lishi* and Wong). After the burning of the Yuanmingyuan in 1860, the act was generally condemned in Europe as the needless destruction of art, mourned by the imperial family as a personal loss, and lamented in the poetry of some Chinese scholars as the loss of a beautiful imperial garden. (Wong 164). However, in the immediate aftermath of 1860, there is no evidence to suggest that the general populace saw the destruction of the Yuanmingyuan as anything other than the destruction of the Manchu emperors' pleasure, nor was it yet presented as an affront to the Chinese nation as a whole. Min-Ch'ien Tyau in his 1922 history, *China Awakened*, argues that it is only in his time that "the people have begun to realize what it is to be the citizen of a free and independent sovereign state" where "one's family interests no longer are supreme, because the state, not the family, is today paramount" (124) and that in 1860: "most Chinese, when they saw the flames of the Summer Palace, read in it not the weakness of China, but the decadence of the Manchu house" (183).

A shift in popular perceptions of the event seems to have occurred in the early 1900s when, after the further destruction of the garden that took place in the aftermath of the Boxer Rebellion, Chinese intellectuals began to invoke the Yuanmingyuan in their writings as a concrete symbol of Chinese national humiliation in order to promote a feeling of Chinese solidarity that they felt was lacking. Republican era nationalists, Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei both wrote about the profound sense of shame they felt at viewing Yuanmingyuan loot abroad, Liang in 1893 and Kang in the early 1900s. (Hevia, "Loot's" 336 and *English* 334). From this period on, the discourse of Yuanmingyuan was intimately tied to the discourse of national humiliation and, it is because of this link that the Yuanmingyuan was ultimately deemed worthy of commemoration in the 1980s.

The local looting of Yuanmingyuan valuables in the aftermath of the Boxer Rebellion, the ongoing exploitation of Yuanmingyuan building materials from the 1870s through the 1930s, and the utilization of the land for farming and construction from approximately the 1930s through the 70s all seem to indicate that the Yuanmingyuan was not considered worth preserving before the 1980s. How do we explain this apparent neglect of the site, knowing also that, beginning in the 1900s, Yuanmingyuan was tied to the narrative of national humiliation and endowed with national value? Cohen offers a partial answer to this at the end of his article, where he points out that the national humiliation narrative "did not have the same significance or salience in every period. Nor, at any given juncture, was it uniformly prevalent among all segments of the population, or equally energized even within a given segment at all times" (171). In other words, the collective memory was not always active, and the collective that remembered shifted in different time periods. As

noted above, in the early 20th century national humiliation was invoked by a small group of intellectuals who used the concept to promote an anti-Manchu popular nationalism that contributed to the Xinhai Revolution of 1911. The ruined Yuanmingyuan in this period was presented by Chinese intellectuals as an example of the brutality of the foreigners and the incompetence of the Qing regime. The Yuanmingyuan site itself was still under the jurisdiction of the Qing government under Cixi, who deemed the site irreparable after the destruction wrought in 1900 and continued to exploit it for building materials to construct the Yiheyuan.

Japan's issuance of the Twenty One Demands in 1915, sparked an upsurge in popular nationalism and the national humiliation narrative was formally taught in school and commemorated on an established National Humiliation Day. Yuanmingyuan, as a recent symbol of national humiliation was also cited by intellectuals, but they had no control over the physical site of the Yuanmingyuan, which was still nominally the property of the last emperor, Puyi, after his abdication. Republican authorities and warlords took advantage of Puyi's weakness to exploit the site, claiming its remaining treasures for themselves and taking many of its building materials for use in new construction projects. (Wong 183). This examination of history reveals that: 1. The memory of Yuanmingyuan in the early 20th century was focused on the historical moments of 1860 and 1900 when imperialists had invaded and wrought destruction on the site, exposing China's weakness. The physical state of the Yuanmingyuan was probably not a major consideration in this period, and even if it had been, the producers of the Yuanmingyuan narrative (intellectuals) did not have any authority over the physical site since the site was officially under the jurisdiction of the Qing rulers and later exploited by

warlords. 2. The collectivity actively consuming this memory of the Yuanmingyuan as a site of national humiliation shifted in this time period, beginning with only a few intellectuals, expanding to some of the greater populace and expanding even more after 1915, but then becoming emotionally weaker.

In 1924 the Nationalist Army expelled Puyi from the Imperial Palace and took over Beijing's historical sites, including the physical site of the Yuanmingyuan. As the Nationalist Party consolidated its power in the late 1920s, the national humiliation narrative was converted from a popular movement to an official one. New authorities acting on behalf of the state began to supervise National Humiliation Day celebrations and other public displays of nationalism in an attempt to exercise control over cultural memory production. "The idea wasn't to make all memory of China's past disappear, but rather to assert the state's prerogative to serve as arbiter of what was to be remembered--and how" (Cohen 170). In addition to National Humiliation Day itself, several specific humiliating events were commemorated on other dates, including the foreign invasions of 1860 and 1900 that resulted in the destruction of the Yuanmingyuan. (Hevia, *English* 334). The new regime, however, did not support preservation of the Yuanmingyuan ruins, but authorized even more pieces of the site to be sold off for money beginning in 1928. In 1931 a group of scholars organized an exhibition of Yuanmingyuan documents and artifacts and proposed the idea of protecting the ruins of the Yuanmingyuan as a means of preserving culture as well as the memory of national humiliation (*Yuanmingyuan: Lishi* 427), but this idea was not pursued by the government. Why did members of the Nationalist government, who were attempting to legitimate their authority by monopolizing on cultural

memory at this point, not see in the Yuanmingyuan site ideological opportunity and take steps to preserve it as the post-Mao regime of the 1980s would do half a century later? The most direct answer to this is that the presentist aims of the time did not call for it. In response to the immediate threat of the Japanese, the Nationalist government had shifted the discourse of national humiliation to focus specifically on Japan's Twenty One Demands of 1915 as the exemplary moment of national shame to be commemorated. Since a specific hatred of the Japanese was deemed more useful than a general hatred of the foreign imperialists in this period, the burning of the Yuanmingyuan was no longer the central symbol of imperialist aggression. Preserving the site of Yuanmingyuan was not deemed necessary for promoting the national humiliation narrative, especially since the site had already been unproblematically neglected for several decades.

Beginning in the 1930s the site of the Yuanmingyuan was steadily converted to farmland and utilized for new construction projects, causing it to become further distanced from its associations with either the Qing imperial garden or national humiliation. In the midst of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), the national humiliation narrative continued to focus on the historical moment of the Twenty One Demands and the Chinese population continued to be more-or-less unimpressed by repeated references to national humiliation in the media. Cohen, re-articulating an idea proposed by Prasenjit Duara, states: "Nationalist ideals are kept alive and become part of a person's sense of self via such mechanisms as the formal education system. But in people's actual lives these ideals often retreat into a passive mode and are given active expression only under special circumstances" (164). But what is the ideal of nationalism, what causes it to retreat, and what are the special

circumstances under which it is given expression? These problems can be addressed by looking at nationalism's relationship to collective memory.

In exploring this relationship, I will use Naoki Sakai's conception of nationalism developed in his essay, "Nationality and the 'Mother Tongue,'" in the context of 20th century Japan, a concept which, I argue, is equally applicable to 20th century China: "Nationality is constituted through representations of community conveyed through a regime of fantasies and conceptual forces; it is the sentimental feeling of the "we" enabled by these regimes within modern national communities" (3). If we take the "representations of community" that Sakai refers to as the representations that inform the collective memories of consuming collectives, then nationalism is the feeling embedded within these collective memories. To selectively reframe Sakai's argument in the context of collective memory: nationalism is foremost a feeling; it is an emotional identification with a presumed national collective that comprises the nation based on a feeling of common cultural and historical heritage. But the collective that actually forms the nation is politically constituted and has no innate culture or history in common to keep it united. As Sakai puts it: "there is no reason whatsoever that culture must symbolize ethnos or nation in the absence of a discourse that attributes certain cultures to ethnic or national identity" (13). Collective cultural memories create the notion of a national collective with a common culture and history, thereby promoting nationalism and reifying the unity of the nation. Because of the limitations of the mechanism of representation, the collectives that consume these cultural memories are not necessarily equivalent to the whole political collective that forms the nation, nor is it a preexisting national collective that consumes cultural memory; rather, shared cultural memories are what



constitute the national collective. It is nationalism, the feeling of cultural identification with China and Chinese, that projects the notion that a collective culture and a collective memory of that culture are shared by an entire national collective.

The mechanisms Cohen refers to that keep nationalism alive are the representations that produce cultural memory. Cultural memories promote nationalist sentiment, but expression of this sentiment only occurs when a new event recalls these memories in the context of their immediate relevance to the present. For example, the memory of the burning of the Yuanmingyuan as a national humiliation may promote, in someone who identifies themselves as Chinese, a feeling of nationalism, but this nationalism only warrants expression when something new happens that recalls the memory and gives it new meaning, like the public auctioning of items that were looted from the Yuanmingyuan at the time of its burning in 1860 (I will explain this further in section 5). The reason that the Twenty-One Demands inspired strong nationalist sentiment in the immediate aftermath of the event in 1915, but this sentiment did not persist through the ensuing years, is that in 1915, the event was new and immediately relevant, whereas by the 1920s it had lost its presentist grounding.

Christopher Hughes in his article, “Interpreting Nationalist Texts: a post-structuralist approach,” addresses the elusiveness of a comprehensive definition of Chinese nationalism, showing that it was never a unified idea, but always discursive—attaching itself to a vast assortment of often contradictory ideologies, jargon and images at different times and among different collectives. Positing nationalism as a feeling embedded within cultural memories helps explain this versatility; in order for nationalist sentiment to

manifest outwardly, cultural memories had to be continuously recalled and associated with new ideas relevant to each given time period and the target collective being addressed, thus nationalism over the years acquired many different associations based on the groups that absorbed cultural memory and the relevant politics of each time period.

This hypothesis can be applied to the emergence of Yuanmingyuan into popular consciousness in the 1980s. The idea that the burning and looting of the Yuanmingyuan by foreigners in 1860 and 1900 was a national humiliation was an old trope with roots in the nationalist movement of intellectuals in the 1900s. The desire to revive the memory in a present context came out of the perceived need to promote nationalism in the 1950s after the new Communist regime had come to power and needed to establish itself as the legitimate head of a unified nation, China:

The constitutive role of national humiliation and its resulting anti-imperialism were, therefore, the central element in the construction of a new China by Chinese communists. Indeed, one might argue that the very foundation of the People's Republic was established on the unity forged through liberation (*jiefang*) from humiliations of Western imperialism. (Hevia, *English* 334).

Reconstructing the Yuanmingyuan was a concrete means to revive the narrative of national humiliation and posit the new era as an era in which China as a unified nation with a shared history and culture had been liberated from this humiliation under the new leadership. However, due to political interruptions and practical difficulties, this project took several decades to come to fruition.

In 1951, just two years after the founding of the People's Republic of China, Premier Zhou Enlai expressed a desire to preserve the Yuanmingyuan ruins and rebuild the garden when the means to do so were found. In other

words, Zhou, a prominent government leader, recognized the ideological value in Yuanmingyuan. His wish to protect and renovate the ruins was a wish to preserve and revive the Yuanmingyuan's memory for nationalistic purposes. Although a substantive revival of the park did not take place until more than three decades later, and although what the specific ideological messages of the Yuanmingyuan were to be had not yet been hammered out, it was at this point that Zhou publicly recognized the Yuanmingyuan's potential value to the idea of nationhood in the new People's Republic of China, put the utilization of Yuanmingyuan on the political agenda and thus brought Yuanmingyuan back to social consciousness, kindled the flame that would become the Chinese people's new memory of the infamous Yuanmingyuan.

Starting in 1956, in response to Zhou's proposal and environmental concerns about the dying ecosystem around the Yuanmingyuan, the Beijing Municipal government requisitioned the land, designated it for cultural protection and tried to refurbish its plant life. It is arguable whether the Yuanmingyuan was completely forgotten in the 1960s and 70s as Barmé suggests, but this short-lived preservation attempt was undone as crop shortages compelled an increasing number of people to reoccupy the land for farming in the late 1950s and early 60s. Reforestation efforts were halted in 1961. They were not renewed for almost two decades because of the advent of the Cultural Revolution, which dominated Chinese politics and society from 1966-1976. Afterwards in 1976, a block of land encompassing many of the Yuanmingyuan ruins was put under the jurisdiction and protection of the Yuanmingyuan Management Bureau and preservation efforts were renewed. In 1977, five pieces of stone from a Yuanmingyuan fountain and two marble tripods that had been lying around the grounds of Beijing University were

returned to what had been marked as the Yuanmingyuan. This was the first time that anything had been deliberately returned to the Yuanmingyuan, signifying the site's new status as a part of cultural heritage to be preserved rather than exploited. In the next two years, teams began to tidy up some of the ruins. Vice Premier Gu Mu came to inspect the site in February of 1979, and in November of the same year, a history exhibit was open to visitors. Yuanmingyuan was also designated as an important site for protecting cultural artifacts. However, these small-scale renovations were not enough to affect the targeted national collective. In order to attract large-scale popular attention and deliver a political message that would be collectively remembered by most of the nation, the Yuanmingyuan had to become something worth seeing, something that would incite emotion, a real national monument.

In 1980 the first serious discussions about how to accomplish the monumentality of the Yuanmingyuan began (*Yuanmingyuan: Lishi*, Wong 187-188). Participants in these discussions included scholars, architects, environmentalists and government officials. While opinions differed about to what extent and how the area should be refurbished, it was unanimously agreed that the ruins should be preserved for their cultural significance and value to the Chinese nation. There were many ideas about what the renovation of the ruins would accomplish. The primary aims ultimately agreed upon are summarized nicely in a 1986 article, "A New Phase Beginning the Protection, Renovation and Use of the Yuanmingyuan Ruins": "All along, the objectives for renovating the Yuanmingyuan were to make Yuanmingyuan become an important site for advancing patriotic education, tourism of sights in the capital, research on Chinese traditional gardens, and interaction about international history and culture" ("Kaichuang Yuanmingyuan Yizhi Baohu,

Zhengxiu yu Liyong de Xin Jumian” 开创圆明园遗址保护，整修与利用的新局面 in *Yuanmingyuan: Lishi* 535. Also see *Yuanmingyuan: Lishi* 593-594 and the epilogue in Wong).

Yuanmingyuan had long been linked with national humiliation, but the narrative to which Yuanmingyuan was linked in the 1980s and 90s was significantly different than the narrative to which it had been linked in the early 1900s because the political aims it was to accomplish were different. Cohen, in discussing national humiliation, identifies two major ways in which the narrative of the 1990s was different from that of previous ages: 1. It emphasized Chinese victimization by imperialists and China's heroic resistance, rather than Chinese deficiencies. 2. It presented the humiliations as something of the past that had been redeemed instead of something in the present to be redeemed. The emergent narrative of the Yuanmingyuan in the 1990s supports Cohen's description of these new emphases in the national humiliation narrative: 1. Elaborate accounts of the glory of the original Yuanmingyuan were juxtaposed with the violence of Yuanmingyuan's burning in 1860, emphasizing imperialist brutality rather than Chinese deficiency. 2. A third phase of Yuanmingyuan history, the renovation of the Yuanmingyuan ruins and opening of the Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park was presented as a symbol of China having left behind the era of humiliation and emerged as a rich and powerful modern nation under the Communist government.

This second change served to project the new Communist government as the heroic leader of a Chinese people that had always been great, but had been victims of both the old Manchu regime and the foreign imperialists. This was entirely different from the nationalist ideas promoted by intellectuals in the early 1900s that emphasized, first, the need for reform of Chinese culture itself

as one of the causes of defeat by the West, and, second, the need for a new regime to replace the incompetent Qing state. Late Qing incompetency was certainly renewed as a theme in the 1980s narrative, but its purpose was to legitimate the current regime as worthy by contrast. Unlike the nationalist narratives that originated with intellectuals in the 1900s, the 1980s Yuanmingyuan narrative was overseen by state-affiliated groups as a means to promote official nationalism, as the narrative of the Twenty One Demands had been overseen by the Nationalist Government in the 1920s and 30s. In the 1990s, the Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park became part of a “patriotic education” campaign meant to reinvigorate the populace after the death of Mao with a new sense of Chineseness that did not rely as heavily on Marxist ideology.

The idea of Yuanmingyuan functioning as a tourist site reflects the post-Mao China upsurge in commercial projects meant to promote economic growth. Broudehoux in *The Buying and Selling of Post-Mao Beijing*, describes how the construction of the Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park, among many other 1980s and 90s construction projects, fit with a new demand for consumerism and tourism that accompanied the period’s rapid economic growth. She dubs the park’s orientation towards tourism the “commodification of history.” Many proponents of the Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park’s construction saw it as an economic venture as much as a means to promote nationalism.

The third and fourth major aims of the Yuanmingyuan park construction project to promote “research on Chinese traditional gardens” and “interaction about international history and culture” are closely related. As far back as the aftermath of the Opium Wars, there had been a persistent concern that Chinese culture’s inferiority was the root cause of China’s defeat by the foreign

imperialists. Under Mao's leadership China had even tried to eradicate all traces of traditional Chinese culture during the Culture Revolution of the 1960s and 70s. However, in the 1980s and 90s, a sudden reversal occurred. Along with the emergence of the state-legitimizing idea that China had been redeemed from past humiliations, a concerted effort to assert China's place among the other modern nations of the world, no longer as an inferior subject but as a powerful nation-state, began. In an age where national identity was validated by the notion of a shared culture and history, this meant that China had to reacquire a celebrated cultural tradition. Five thousand years of Chinese history and culture were thus reclaimed (and to some extent fabricated) in representations promoting cultural memory. The project of researching the original Yuanmingyuan as an exemplar of the traditional Chinese art of garden construction, a technology, which at the time far surpassed that of the West, contributed to the reclamation of culture that would boost Chinese nationalism and help prove China's qualification as a civilized nation-state.

This in turn fed into an increasingly hot international discourse about "world heritage," where each nation would showcase its artistic, architectural, natural and historical monuments and artifacts to the rest of the world with the understanding that all were part of a shared human culture. Ironically, this utopian ideal fed the competitive desire for each nation to use such "cultural relics" as a means to assert the superiority of its own nationality. China, too, joined the competition and began to renovate, and in some cases create sites that could be showcased as Chinese heritage sites. The Yuanmingyuan Park was absorbed into this project. (A more detailed discussion of this ensues in section 5).

If the construction of the new Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park and the historical narrative it communicated were meant to serve all of these aims -- nationalistic, economic, cultural and international, which, while all in their own way tied to a broad idea of national progress, were different and complex, how was it possible to convey a unified and clear message for popular consumption? One of the implications of the diversity and complexity of aims that went into the construction of the Yuanmingyuan Park, is that neither the producers of the park, nor the official narrative they promote, were as unified and directed as many critics of the Yuanmingyuan park's single-stranded nationalistic propaganda seem to suggest. Although the overarching goal of Yuanmingyuan was "nationalism," and the historical narrative to which it was attached was historically reductive, the various ideologies to which nationalism was tied at the time caused the Yuanmingyuan Park as a representation to be anything but straight-forward. What the Yuanmingyuan should represent and how it should represent it were the subjects of discourse among a large group of scholars, politicians, environmentalists and architects in the 1980s. Further debates about how the Yuanmingyuan Park should be expanded and whether the original Qing dynasty pleasure should be reconstructed or not continued throughout the 1990s and early 21st century. The construction plan that was approved for execution by the Beijing municipal government in 1983 and executed over the next several years was already an amalgamation of somewhat varied ideological expressions.

Furthermore, the practical, environmental and logistical demands of actually building a park in a given space with a limited budget were also prominent subjects of discourse and played a major role in the way the park was presented. No matter how rigorously the construction of the park was



overseen in order to preserve the nationalistic vision agreed upon, the physical park, as a translation of an already multivocal vision, could not ensure a communication of all that was intended. Even after the park's public opening in 1988, renovations and expansions continued and temporary exhibitions were set up, all manifesting presentist aims. Not only does this problematize the notion of a unitary idea, "official nationalism" being promoted by an organic body, "the State" through the representation of the Yuanmingyuan Park, but it makes any sort of standardized popular reception nearly impossible.

The modern day Yuanmingyuan's supersaturation of meaning, or existence as a "heterotopia," as Haiyan Lee describes it, applying a term from Foucault, seems to be the product, at least partially, of the fact that the intentions that went into the building of the Yuanmingyuan were overly complex and actually inhibited a simple articulation in the structure and an unproblematic absorption by the populace. This is perhaps one reason why the memory of Yuanmingyuan today is, once again, becoming infelicitous. Haiyan Lee criticizes collective memory as a theory that lacks the ability to capture the plurality of simultaneous meaning encompassed in the site of Yuanmingyuan:

Collective memory provides an insufficient analytical framework because it privileges diachrony over synchrony, and time over space. It speaks only to the monumental dimension of Yuanmingyuan, thus implicitly endorsing the anti-restorationists' desire to make it a strictly symbolic space whose value is bounded up with the past (184).

But the Yuanmingyuan's supersaturation of meaning does not, as Lee claims, suggest that collective memory is an insufficient framework through which to conceptualize it. Rather, it suggests that collective memory, which encompasses both time and space, has been misapplied or misunderstood in its previous associations with the Yuanmingyuan. Lee's criticism amounts to a

warning that scholars who invoke collective memory must be careful not to privilege diachrony over synchrony. This is not to say that the concept of heterotopia with its spatial emphasis or other concepts are invalid modes of description for the Yuanmingyuan. However, I maintain, collective memory is an effective framework for understanding how the material site of the Yuanmingyuan as a representation relates to the mental conceptions of Yuanmingyuan embedded in memories and how these memories are socially affected in political contexts.

Even if the overarching intent of Yuanmingyuan's planners was to convey a singular monumentality that emerged through a sense of linear historical progression, the actual memory of the Yuanmingyuan in the minds of the people is both discursive and heterogeneous. A conception of the Yuanmingyuan that equates producers' intentions with consumers' memory without considering the mediation of an interpretable and multi-faceted representation is an insufficient model for understanding Yuanmingyuan's complexity. Collective memory identifies similar strands in the memories of people, who through this similarity form a collective. The task of the scholar who uses collective memory to conceptualize these similarities is then to explore the representations and social interactions that may have contributed to them. "Collective" does not deny heterogeneity or suggest teleology. It is a description of the symptom of associative similarity within memory, one that can be explained by examining the social communications that influence memory formation. "Memory" also does not imply that it is complete memories that are similar; if we want to be more precise we should say that what is similar is not whole memories but the part of the memory that is associated with a specific subject. For example, when I say the word "Yuanmingyuan", the

collective of people who have been exposed to representations of the Yuanmingyuan will instantly be bombarded with memories that have association with the signifier, whereas people outside the collective would not have these memories to which they could refer. Individuals within the collective might have different memories attached to the word, “Yuanmingyuan,” but the overarching sense of what Yuanmingyuan is would be very similar. This similarity can be accounted for by a pool of widely publicized and dispersed representations, and these representations, can, in turn, be traced back to producers with specific ideological intentions. Of course, what actually occurs is a much more complex and non-linear dialogue between producers, representations and consumers. The thing called “collective memory” is not actually a specific group of memories that is shared, but similar associations about a given subject embedded within the memories of multiple individuals. Thus, the term “memory” when applied to a collective is metaphorical.

The historicization of the collective memory of the Yuanmingyuan from the 1900s to the 1980s that I attempted in this section has major implications for the concept of collective memory itself. It exposes the unclear boundary between Assmann’s ideas of potential and active collective memory, since collective memory is always in flux. What is changing is not only what is being remembered, or the content of the collective memory, and who is remembering, or the collective, but also the degree of emotion connected to the remembering. The history of the Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park’s gradual production suggests that a body of representations can have multiple producers with multiple intentions, which further contributes to the representations’ inherent multivocality.

In the next section I will examine the consumer of the Yuanmingyuan park (the park being understood as a body of representations contributing to the collective memory of the Yuanmingyuan) in order to support the argument developed in this section that the collective that remembers a cultural memory is not the same as either the producers' target collective or the ideological group whose unity the cultural memory is meant to reify. This problematizes Assmann's notion that cultural memory serves the purpose of "concretion of identity" from which a group derives awareness of unity, by showing that the group is constituted and unified by the shared memory itself; there is no preexisting unified group except in the imagination of those who have consumed the cultural memory.

#### **4. The Collective that Remembers, Its Imagined Identity and Why It Forgets**

In the last section I examined the production in the 1980s of the Yuanmingyuan Park as a representation, the older ideologies it built upon, its historical and political contexts and the ideological intentions that went into it. In section 1, I presented a 1994 history of the Yuanmingyuan that is representative of other official histories written from the 1980s to the present, and in section 2, I introduced a text counter to this, one not only “unofficial,” but that sought to undermine some of the specific ideological agendas of the first. These three sections have contributed to addressing the production of Yuanmingyuan memory as a process enacted by producers through the medium of representations. In this section, I will address the third and most ethereal side of Kansteiner’s triangle: the consumer of these representations.

However, before I begin I must draw attention to the practical difficulties of gauging what people in the consuming collective think about Yuanmingyuan, how they feel and what combination of representations resulted in these thoughts and feelings. The scope of memory, as something spanning through time and space, is very large, the consuming collective itself is unstable and individual responses to representation are colored by various factors. To boast a deep understanding of what the collective memory of the Yuanmingyuan is today would require me to conduct a detailed ethnography over a long period of time and involve rigorous data collection, a task, that, unfortunately, does not fit the scope of this paper. Still, based on my extensive

textual research and the more modest ethnographic work I did, I will venture some hypotheses about this elusive question.

The difficulty of trying to concretely pinpoint and articulate what the collective memory of the Yuanmingyuan actually is became apparent to me when I was researching the Yuanmingyuan in China over several months in the summer of 2009 and the winter of 2009-2010. Yet, as I talked to dozens of Chinese people about the Yuanmingyuan, both on and off-site, in Beijing and in two other major Chinese cities, Hangzhou and Shanghai, I was increasingly convinced that an observable collective phenomenon existed, a phenomenon that was taken for granted by my interlocutors, although conceived of as “common knowledge” not “collective memory.” From the numerous conversations I had in which I casually mentioned that I was studying the Yuanmingyuan without explicitly pushing it as a subject of conversation, I began to notice two very interesting patterns: first, every single person I talked to (all part of the urban population, including students, taxi drivers, restaurant owners, hotel staff etc.) recognized the name “Yuanmingyuan.” Whether or not they were clear about its history or had been to the present day park, they had all heard of it, knew, to some extent, what it was. This was not the case with my American peers and acquaintances (who were mainly in China for the purpose of studying Mandarin), most of whom neither knew what the “Yuanmingyuan” or “Old Summer Palace” were, although almost all had heard of the [New] Summer Palace (Yihe Yuan 颐和园). Second, to my mention of Yuanmingyuan, every Chinese person who pursued the subject in our conversation responded with a reference either to the present day site such as, “Oh, have you been there?” or a reference to the history of the place such as “Oh, the place that was burned by the foreigners?” In other words, the two

dominant associations of “Yuanmingyuan” I encountered were as an extant public park and as a historical place, and often the two connotations were intermingled.

Sometimes I pursued the first association by asking those who had been to the site what they thought of it. Responses ranged from, “it’s a beautiful place,” to “the ruins are really interesting,” to “there’s not really much to see.” I found that there was a significant difference in response between Chinese tourists, who came from outside of Beijing to see the infamous ruins of the Western Palaces (which requires an extra ticket fee) and would often gloss over the rest of the enormous park, and local Beijingers, who mostly went to enjoy the natural beauty of the larger park, either glossing over the ruins or ignoring them entirely (opting not to pay the extra ticket fee). Among Beijingers, who comprised more than half of my conversants, there was also a noticeable difference in perspective between people of different generations. Most of the middle-aged to elderly people I talked to who had been to the site responded, “Of course I’ve been to the Yuanmingyuan!” A few young people in their twenties I talked to, on the other hand, complained of the high ticket prices to view the ruins and dismissed the place as somewhere for history enthusiasts. My sample was too small and disorganized to draw any firm conclusions, but we might speculate that difference in regard towards the Yuanmingyuan between the young and old indicates that popular reception of the Yuanmingyuan park has changed from the 1980s to the present.

When I asked people about the history of the Yuanmingyuan, the response I received often preserved a common theme along the lines of, “everyone knows the place was burned down by the foreigners,” and yet when I pressed for details, several people confused the history of the Yuanmingyuan

(built at the command of the Kangxi Emperor in the early 18th century) with the Yiheyuan (built at the command of the Dowager Empress Cixi in the late 19th century). Also a point of confusion for many was whether the park had been burned down by the French and English Allied Armies (yingfa lianjun 英法联军) or the Eight Nation Allied Armies (baguo lianjun 八国联军) and around what time frame this had been.

The Yuanmingyuan being conceived of both as a present day public park and as a historical imperial garden that was burned down is, on the surface, neither problematic nor contradictory if we compare it to other sites of historical interest like the Parthenon or Gettysburg and speculate that all such sites must have changed before and since the historical horizon for which they are primarily remembered. What is relevant, though not necessarily unique, to the Yuanmingyuan as a site of collective memory is that between being the imperial garden that was burned down (originally the garden was three parks, one of which was called “Yuanmingyuan,” but they were later taken as sections of a single park called “Yuanmingyuan”) and the modern day public park (the entire park is commonly called “Yuanmingyuan” but the section containing the ruins of the Western Palaces is called “the Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park” and sometimes “Yuanmingyuan” actually refers to this), the two most memorable parts of its history, there was a period of time in which it was not widely remembered as the “Yuanmingyuan”, but was nameless and unbounded land that was divided, used and named for various purposes like farming. In other words, there is discontinuity in the use of the name “Yuanmingyuan” which leads us to epistemological and etymological questions about what constitutes the unity of the subject, Yuanmingyuan, and whether the name “Yuanmingyuan” should be taken as referring to one evolving site in



two distinct time periods or two distinct sites. I will not pursue these theoretical questions any further, but want to note that the word “Yuanmingyuan” generally has at least two referents and that this problem would not exist if the present day public park were called something else. The narrative promoted within the park suggests that its producers intended for the modern day park, as a representation meant to spread cultural memory, to be interpreted as one evolving site.

Jan Assmann makes a division in collective memory between what he calls communicative memory and cultural memory that is relevant to this discussion. Communicative memory has a “limited temporal horizon” (127) and is “based exclusively on everyday communications” which are characterized by a “high degree of non-specialization, reciprocity of roles, thematic instability and disorganization” (126). Cultural memory, on the other hand, has a fixed temporal horizon that is distanced from the every day. Assmann characterizes it in 5 ways, by its: 1. “concretion of identity” or ability to reify group unity, 2. “capacity to reconstruct” or its ability to relate to a contemporary situation, 3. “formation” or objectivization of communicated meaning, 4. “organization” as something institutionalized, and 5. “obligation” as a system of values. (Assmann 130-131, also see Kansteiner’s summary in “Finding” 182).

By this division, we might categorize the modern day Yuanmingyuan Park as a subject of communicative memory and the imperial garden, Yuanmingyuan that was burned down as a subject of cultural memory. Assmann asserts that “the transition [between everyday communication and objectivized culture] is so fundamental that one must ask whether the metaphor of memory remains in any way applicable” (128) to which, of course,

he answers in the affirmative. But in the case of the Yuanmingyuan, this fundamental distinction is not so obvious because the cultural memory was revived by means of communicative memory. People went as tourists to the heavily advertised and very modern Yuanmingyuan Park where the historical imperial garden and its destruction were represented as part of their national cultural heritage and history. The Yuanmingyuan Park served simultaneously as a place for everyday enjoyment and as a national monument; thus it was a place where communicative memory and cultural memory could both be formed without clear distinction. The Yuanmingyuan presents a problem for Assmann's distinction between communicative and cultural memory because it illustrates that the two affect each other and can overlap; it thus challenges the validity of making a distinction. Assmann argues that "no memory can preserve the past," therefore one of the defining characteristics of cultural memory is that it "relates its knowledge to an actual and contemporary situation" (130). In the case of the Yuanmingyuan, the cultural memory of the historical garden as a symbol of national humiliation was infused in the public park when it was built, but, at the same time, the new park was incorporated into the historical narrative so that it too took on historical and cultural significance as a symbol that national humiliation had been redeemed. As part of its project to become a symbol of progress, not separate from it, the Yuanmingyuan park sold itself as a place that the populace could come to for leisurely enjoyment. It posited itself, on the one hand, as a site of cultural memory, marking the new historical horizon of Chinese modernity in the present, and, on the other hand, as a site of communicative memory where people could come for casual enjoyments. In other words, part of the historical horizon to be remembered was located in the present, which problematizes

Assman's conception of communicative memory as near and cultural memory as distant.

In terms of Kansteiner's triangle, old representations are re-formed by producers with presentist ideas to produce new representations. These new representations, the revisions of older ones, communicate to consumers in the present about a reconceptualized past while masking this reconceptualization, passing this past off as the always-having-existed past. In this way the communicative memory (notion resulting from casually remembered representations—conversations, TV programs, books etc.—about a given subject) actually is the cultural memory, which disguises itself as a memory of the past, when it is in fact a memory of the present take on the past. The fundamental flaw in Assman's idea of cultural memory, then, is that he views it as memory of the past influenced by the present, when, in fact, it is memory of the present influenced by the past.

The consumer of collective memory has no access to history except through how history is presented in the present (unless he has directly experienced the past, in which case, his personal memory is likely to be different from or retrospectively reshaped by the collective memory). The agency of the producer lies in the fact that his representation is in no way bound to any real objective past, although, if his new representation is to be successfully presented to consumers as history, he must be aware of extant representations, particularly the widely-accepted ones (traditions) whose authority can help his representation be accepted by consumers as cultural memory. This is precisely why new representations that aim to create cultural memory generally base themselves on older ones. The "official" memory of the Yuanmingyuan, that is, the memory that was encouraged by representations

that were overseen and promoted by government officials whose aim was to reinforce state legitimacy, is a product of this principle's application. In exploring how the consumption of representations resulted in a collective memory of the Yuanmingyuan, our question then becomes: to what extent was the official memory felicitous? More concretely, we can ask: how effective has the Yuanmingyuan Park been as a representation intended to promote a cultural memory that inspires nationalism?

Since we have established that it is difficult to gauge the thoughts and feelings of people in the remembering collective, a more practical but indirect way of addressing this question is to look at representations produced after the Yuanmingyuan Park brought the idea of Yuanmingyuan into the center stage of popular consciousness in the 1980s. These new representations can be seen both as products of and additions to the discourse that constitutes the collective memory of Yuanmingyuan. They are the products of people who first consumed previous representations, participated in collective remembering, and then re-presented this memory in order to themselves become producers.

There are two fairly well-publicized representations concerning the Yuanmingyuan that I have encountered that contradict parts of what is commonly understood as the official narrative. Although the "official narrative" is, first of all, composed of many narratives and the product of many individuals, and secondly, subject to changing ideologies and changing standards of approval by government authorities, for the sake of the argument, let us assume that there is enough thematic unity within the Yuanmingyuan narratives approved by government officials between 1980 and 2010 for us to distinguish between this type of "official narrative" and ones that have not passed through the bureaucratic system of approval and do not share the

same thematic unity, or “unofficial narratives”. As a practical model, we can take the narrative discussed in Chapter 1 as an official narrative. The first unofficial text I want to name is the scholar, Yuan Weishi’s, critique of Opium War history that was censored by government officials after it was published. Yuan’s text not only contradicts official ones by challenging their historical accuracy, but, more significantly, directly undermines their ideological aims by identifying the mode of nationalism promoted in their narratives as one that uses notions of alterity to inspire emotion, and proposing an alternative mode of rational critique:

It is obvious that we must love our country. But there are two ways to love our country. One way is to inflame nationalistic passions. Traditional Chinese culture has deeply ingrained ideas such as “Chinese and foreigners are different” and “if you are not my kind, then your loyalties must be opposite to mine.” Our thinking is still poisoned by them today. The latest edition is this: if there is a conflict between China and others, then China must be right; patriotism means opposing the other powers and the foreigners. In this selection and presentation of historical materials, we will only use those that favor China whether they are true or false. The other choice is this: we analyze everything rationally; if it is right, it is right and if it is wrong, it is wrong; calm, objective and wholly regard and handle all conflicts with the outside. (Yuan).

This text was censored by government officials in order to prevent its being widely consumed and accepted into collective memory.

The other text I want to address is a play by Zhang Guangtian simply called “Yuanmingyuan” that was not censored. This is perhaps because, while thematically it contradicts official narratives by turning a critical eye on the Chinese people for their own destruction and exploitation of the Yuanmingyuan, it retains the official images of the Qing court as corrupt and incompetent, and the foreigners as mean-spirited and barbaric. Therefore, despite a redistribution of blame, the play does not subvert the nationalistic

goals of official narratives, but actually serves to strengthen them by supporting the idea that the Yuanmingyuan is the national cultural heritage of all Chinese people and suggesting that the Chinese people must take self-responsibility for their own crimes through the preservation of the Yuanmingyuan and protection of its cultural relics. The basic themes of official Yuanmingyuan narratives—that the foreign imperialists were barbaric aggressors, that the Qing court was corrupt and incompetent and that the Yuanmingyuan is a cultural product of the Chinese national collective, are all uncritically supported.

In an issue of *China Heritage* where Yuanmingyuan is the featured subject, one article holds up Zhang's play as an example of how "cultural producers are vague, ill informed or purposely evasive in their depiction of how the Anglo-French Expeditionary Force of 1860 came to destroy the garden palaces of the imperial court" ("On Stage"). The implication is that, despite the recent proliferation of references to the Yuanmingyuan in Chinese popular media, most representations are complicit with official narratives and actually serve to further promote rather than contradict their historical essentialism. The portrayal of the Yuanmingyuan in two other popular productions, the fictional film, "The Burning of the Yuanmingyuan" (Huoshao Yuanmingyuan 火烧圆明园) that came out in 1983 when plans were still being laid for the Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park and the issue was particularly hot, and the imaginative tele-series, "Palace Painter Castiglione" (Gongting Huashi Lang Shining 宫廷画师郎世宁) that came out two decades later in 2003 both seem to support this assertion. The first is a fictionalized narrative about the young Nalashi, the future Dowager Empress Cixi, and the genesis of her rise to power, with the Yuanmingyuan as the primary setting and its burning as the

climax of the movie. The movie is not actually about the Yuanmingyuan, although there is a historically improbable scene where the Emperor Xianfeng enthusiastically shows Nalashi the Dashuifa fountain of the Western Palaces, which Barmé notes in his history had already fallen into disrepair by the end of Qianlong's reign (See Barmé, "Garden" 126-127 and Kraus note 32). The reason behind the foreigners' invasion of the Yuanmingyuan is not explained and the foreigners are portrayed as blood-thirsty barbarians.

"Palace Painter Castiglione" is a comic drama featuring the renowned Canadian sinophile, Da Shan 大山, as the historical Italian missionary Guiseppe Castiglione. The humor of the series centers around the bumbling mishaps and naivete of Lang Shining (Castiglione) and his (fictional) forbidden love for the court princess. The Yuanmingyuan, as the Qing emperors' primary residence from Kangxi on, is the setting for most of the scenes. Halfway through the series Lang Shining is charged with building the Western Palaces (Xiyanglou 西洋楼) by Emperor Qianlong. In one episode, in what could be read as an explicit espousal of the themes of Manchu corruption found in the official Yuanmingyuan narrative, an upright official criticizes the extravagance of the project and expresses a concern for the suffering populace. In another episode, Lang Shining is charged with building a temple for one of the emperor's concubines, Xiang Fei. Xiang Fei, "The Fragrant Concubine," is an enduring figure in Yuanmingyuan mythology and her temple is among the ruins of the Western Palaces still extant today.

The use of Yuanmingyuan tropes and the parroting of themes espoused in official narratives that is identifiable in the popular media between the 1980s and today might suggest that the state-promoted official narratives, even if not entirely successful in promoting strong national sentiment, were at least

successful in shaping the historical consciousness of the producers of popular media. Although, on the other hand, they might also suggest that the state censors have been particularly vigilant about barring representations of the Yuanmingyuan that overtly contradict official themes from entering into popular television. In any case, the thematic similarities between official and unofficial representations of the Yuanmingyuan increase the likelihood that these themes are accepted by consumers.

Daniel Lynch in his book, *After the Propaganda State*, argues that the post-Mao boom in commercialism and technology, which have caused an explosion in the dissemination of advertisements and information, has made it more difficult for the authoritarian Chinese state to exercise tight control over representation and communication. As a result, information that contradicts or dilutes official narratives is more accessible, it is easier for people to express critical opinions uncensored and the populace is less likely to subscribe to state propaganda. Although, on the other hand, he argues that while the zeal of the populace towards state-promoted ideals characteristic of the Mao era has faded away in the post-Mao reform period, overshadowed by a more practical enthusiasm for material progress, historical beliefs and cultural values are still largely influenced by the state through media production and censorship. Yuan Weishi's essay on the historical inaccuracy of Chinese history textbooks is one example of how when unofficial narratives explicitly criticize or contradict official narratives in a way deemed threatening to the status quo, they are promptly censored by state agents. While these state agents no longer can claim comprehensive domination over all that is produced and disseminated to the Chinese populace, censorship allows it to suppress select content that is deemed dangerous to the nationalist ideology



from which the state derives its authority. In other words, state officials no longer produce collective memory; rather they are major shareholders in the mechanism of production, representation, and are able to take down the most threatening of their competitors to ensure that those affiliated with the state retain a heavy influence over collective memory.

Perhaps the most influence state officials exercise over collective memory is through school curriculum. School curriculums and textbooks have long been used as ideological tools for legitimizing social and political regimes, promoting national unity and pride, and instilling new generations with state-approved knowledge and social values (Wang, Zheng). The national humiliation interpretation of Opium War history was officially taught in schools beginning in 1915 (Cohen; Hevia, *English*). Although the curriculum has since undergone periodic editions, with the production of new textbooks to match the themes of each new era, the still overtly subjective and factually inaccurate Opium War history taught in the 21st century China has drawn criticism from both domestic and international scholars. In his article “Old Wounds, New Narratives: Joint History Textbook Writing and Peacebuilding in East Asia,” Zheng Wang describes how in 2005, Chinese, Japanese and South-Korean scholars joined forces to write a more balanced and inclusive textbook of modern East Asian history in an attempt to address the problem of historical distortion and national bias that has sparked international controversy and political tension in the last decade. Despite the broad support for and relative success of this effort, Zheng Wang concludes that government-approved, nation-centered accounts of history remain the norm in all three countries’ scholastic curricula and it will likely take decades for such reform efforts to

yield observable results in shaping the historical memory of each nation's populace.

Today the Yuanmingyuan narrative is instilled in most Chinese citizens from a very young age; in fact, the patriotic education movement associated with the Yuanmingyuan was purposefully targeted towards grade school students. The Yuanmingyuan history on the official website cites that one tenth of the students visiting the Yuanmingyuan history exhibit set up in 1979 were elementary and middle school students. In 1983 the Beijing municipal government announced the Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park's status as a site for the patriotic education of the youth. In the ensuing years, busloads of children were frequently shuttled to the site to learn about their country's past humiliations. Haiyan Lee, in her article about the Yuanmingyuan as heterotopia, recalls her own field trip to the Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park as a college freshman in 1986 and describes a group of high school students she encountered on her second visit nearly twenty years later (Lee).

It is significant to note that while Yuanmingyuan history is considered a quintessential part of the patriotic education of the Chinese youth, it is often presented differently in materials directed at foreigners. The dominant purpose of the Yuanmingyuan narrative when directed at a Chinese audience is not simply to convey what happened in history, but to inspire nationalism by promoting identification with the proud and humiliating moments of national history. On the other hand, when the narrative is directed at a foreign audience who, as outsiders, could not possibly identify with the pride and humiliation of the Chinese nation, its purpose becomes to inform foreigners about a history of which they are presumably ignorant. Often, the Yuanmingyuan narrative is simply omitted from materials directed at foreigners.

For example, the book *Common Knowledge About Chinese Culture* compiled by the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council in side-by-side Chinese and English, and frequently distributed to foreign students studying abroad in China, has a chapter on “Ancient Chinese Architecture” that includes sections on “The Imperial Palace” and “Classical Gardens” and mentions both the Forbidden City and the [New] Summer Palace as well as a host of other more obscure venues, but not the Yuanmingyuan. There is also a chapter on Cultural Relics that includes coins and bells but makes no mention of the famous cultural relics from the Yuanmingyuan. This omission is significant considering Yuanmingyuan’s prominent status within China as the archetypal Chinese garden and the culmination of thousands of years of Chinese cultural knowledge. If the motive of the book is to promote the greatness of Chinese culture to an ill-informed Western audience, why was the Yuanmingyuan excluded? Perhaps since the only visible elements of the Yuanmingyuan’s former glory that remain are Western-style ruins, the park is not deemed an ideal object of display to convey the idea of Chinese cultural greatness, or perhaps it was feared that the nationalistic Yuanmingyuan narrative would alienate a Western audience or even be construed as xenophobic.

Whatever the reason for this omission in the book on culture, its sister volume, *Common Knowledge about Chinese History*, contains a brief account of the Yuanmingyuan’s burning in a separate box to the side of the main text. The English text written underneath the Chinese reads:

Situated in the northwestern suburb of Beijing, the Yuanmingyuan Garden (the Old Summer Palace) was a resort of the Qing emperors during the height of summer. It was a world renowned imperial garden. In October 1860, during the Second Opium War, British and French allied forces captured Beijing. They plundered the

Yuanmingyuan Garden and destroyed the treasures they could not take away. In order to cover their deeds, they burned the garden to the ground. Three days and nights, fire and smoke could be seen in northwest Beijing. (189).

This text is ostensibly a direct translation of the Chinese text above it. While I am certainly not advocating the idea that a single authentic translation of the Chinese text exists, I must point out that factually the English translation communicates two ideas that the Chinese text does not: 1. The assertion that the Yuanmingyuan was “a resort of the Qing emperors during the height of summer.” The Chinese says that the Yuanmingyuan is “another palace of the Qing emperors” (Qingchao huangdi de bie Gong 清朝皇帝的别宫) but has no mention of summer. The English seems to be trying to justify the common English-language appellation “Old Summer Palace,” which has no equivalent in Chinese and, as Wong Young-tsu notes in his introduction, is actually quite misleading since the emperors, starting with Kangxi, in fact occupied the Yuanmingyuan as a primary residence. 2. The assertion that “fire and smoke could be seen in northwest Beijing.” The Chinese text says that “smoke clouds enveloped the entire city of Beijing” (yanyun longzhaole zhengge Beijingcheng 烟云笼罩了整个北京城). The English text seems to be trying to de-hyperbolize the Chinese. Similarly, the way in which words are chosen or omitted from translation in the English suggests a watering-down of highly connotative rhetoric. “They plundered the garden’s treasures clean” (jiang yuannei zhenbao qiangjie yi kong 将园内珍宝抢劫一空) becomes simply “they plundered the Yuanmingyuan Garden.” “Precious cultural artifacts” (zhengui wenwu 珍贵文物) becomes simply “treasures,” and the soldiers’ “crimes” (zuixing 罪行) become “deeds.” I am not arguing that the textbook’s English translation is wrong, but, rather, that the translator is aware of the

change in audience and his connotative choices accordingly reflect a desire to soften the condemnatory impact of the Chinese words.

Another example of this phenomenon can be found in the official Yuanmingyuan website's English translation of the history of the Western Palaces (this is not the same as the much longer introduction to Yuanmingyuan history detailed in section 1, which is not translated). If we contrast the English translation given of the second to last paragraph with my own attempt at a detail-oriented translation, we have:

Parts of these stone buildings survived the fire of 1860, and still stand today as a reminder of the national tragedy.

As opposed to:

When Yuanmingyuan was plundered in 1860, many of these Western-style palaces survived because they were built mainly of stone. After a century of hardship, they are still standing, warning the people of the present not to forget the blood and tears of history.

My intention, again, is not to suggest that the website translation is wrong and mine correct, but to point out that in the former the English words have been pared down to suit the audience addressed and thus do not have the same rhetorical effect as the Chinese. The assertion in the Chinese that the ruins are “warning the people of the present not to forget the blood and tears of history” (jingshi shiren wuwang xueleishi 警示世人勿忘血泪史) exposes a subjective narrator who is actually addressing the Chinese people and prescribing the way in which the ruins must be read—as something unforgettably painful, their own blood and tears. These same words could not properly be addressed to a non-Chinese audience without alienating it because contextually the blood and tears would be someone else's; the emotional empathy needed to feel the urgency of the warning to not forget would not exist. This is why the English translation is pedagogically aloof; it

informs a non-Chinese audience of the objective function the ruins have for Chinese as a “reminder of national tragedy.”

My examination of references to the Yuanmingyuan in China and Beijing travel guides yielded similar findings about the difference between those written in Chinese and those written in English. While each of the ten China travel guides that I examined that were written in Chinese for a Chinese audience included the Yuanmingyuan, often as a must-see Beijing site, the one English-language China travel guide that I found in Chinese bookstores did not include the Yuanmingyuan, and of the three English-language Beijing travel guides I examined, only two of them included the Yuanmingyuan. The description of the Yuanmingyuan in each of these was brief and its tone was objective.

In the Yuanmingyuan Park itself and on the park’s website very few texts are translated. Everything on the website, including its historical account of the Yuanmingyuan (described in section 1), historical timeline, and all of its image captions, are exclusively in Chinese. The only exceptions to this are the introductions to each of the park’s main tourist sights whose translations are taken directly from a tourist brochure that can be purchased at the park. In the Yuanmingyuan museum found within the Western Ruins section of the park, all information except a brief introduction of Yuanmingyuan history in English and a reproduction of Victor Hugo’s letter to his friend in French is exclusively in Chinese. Within the Western Palaces section of the park, brief tablets in front of the ruins of each identifiable building are accompanied by English translations, but a side display about cultural artifacts that have been lost abroad (liushi haiwai 流失海外) is exclusively in Chinese.

In the greater tourist park, signposts are translated into English, but exhibition displays such as those in the Twelve Zodiac Animal Head Exhibition are not. At the gates of the Yuanmingyuan, visitors can hire a tour guide to personally explain Yuanmingyuan's history or rent an audio headset for a lower price, but both of these tools are exclusively in Chinese and thus completely inaccessible to non-Chinese speakers (in contrast to the [New] Summer Palace and Forbidden City, which both offer English-language tour guides and audio headsets available in a variety of languages). In general, what all this amounts to is a visually-oriented experience for the non-Chinese speaker that does not convey a strong sense of what the history of the Yuanmingyuan was, why it was important or how different sections of the park are related. Where the park aims to inculcate Chinese citizens with a sense of national responsibility, it keeps non-Chinese largely in the dark through linguistic exclusion. Richard Kraus picks up on this when he remarks "[the park's function as a symbol of victimhood] is often missed by non-Chinese: a group of American university students who visited the Yuanming Yuan in 1987 believed the ruins to be the result of the Cultural Revolution's infamous Red Guard vandalism" (198). Indeed, even scholars outside of China seem to be confused about the Yuanmingyuan. Young-Tsu Wong, in the introduction to his 2003 book-length study of the Yuanmingyuan, lists several ill-informed references to the Yuanmingyuan by Western scholars and criticizes the few existing English-language studies on the topic as lacking rigorous scholarship. (2). The Yuanmingyuan has certainly received more international attention in the years since the publication of Wong's book, both in academic scholarship and popular media, though, much of this is in connection with the Yuanmingyuan zodiacs (discussed in section 5).

One could argue that linguistic exclusion in the modern Yuanmingyuan Park is due more to an unwillingness to invest the funds and resources necessary to translate the park experience for foreign tourists than deliberate politically-motivated exclusion. Since Yuanmingyuan is a much less popular tourist spot for foreigners than sites like the Forbidden City and [New] Summer Palace, such an investment might not prove economically expedient. At the same time, Yuanmingyuan's weaker appeal to foreign tourists can be explained in part by the fact that that from the park's inception in the 1980s it was not actively targeted at foreign audiences.

The critique of some Western scholars that the Yuanmingyuan's historical narrative promotes xenophobia stems from its overt use of alterity to promote national unity. The Yuanmingyuan history promoted in the Ruins Park's museum is a shining example of what Zheng Wang identifies as a universal tool of nation-states: "simplistic narratives that flatter their own group and promote group unity by emphasizing sharp divergences between themselves and other groups" (104). In this narrative, the British and French soldiers who burnt down the Yuanmingyuan are dehumanized as barbaric aggressors in order to form a contrast with the Chinese people as hapless victims. This binary is asymmetrically presented through the rhetoric of the narrative so that the audience identifies with the victims. The narrative is thus not meant for reception by a non-Chinese audience since such an audience, unable to identify with the Chinese victims, would naturally read in the rhetoric of the narrative a critique of itself as foreign other. This theory suggests that the same representational strategies that encouraged the entry of the Yuanmingyuan into Chinese collective consciousness inhibited it from being marketable to a foreign audience. On the other hand, this does not indicate



that the representations in the park are wholly accepted by Chinese park visitors.

The first time I visited the Yuanmingyuan was in the summer of 2008. Completely unaware of the park's historical significance at the time, I was invited to the park by a close local friend of mine and her parents to accompany them on an excursion they made every summer. Although our primary objective was to enjoy the gorgeous summer scenery, and this is what we did with the majority of our time there, for my benefit, we also paid the extra ticket price to venture into the area that contained the ruins of the Western Palaces. I was astonished when I saw the apparently European-style ruins upon which numerous Chinese were happily clambering. My friend prefaced her explanation of the site by saying that usually her family would not bring foreigners to the park, but because of my half-Chinese heritage, I too should know about the shameful national history. Needless to say, this left a deep impression on me. As I became more familiar with the Yuanmingyuan, I realized that what she had done was include me as one of the victims of Yuanmingyuan's tragic history by virtue of my Chinese bloodline and impress upon me the inculcated responsibility that was impressed upon her since youth: to remember. And yet, this was only the beginning of our trip; after a brief survey of the ruins, we headed back towards the beautiful lake area to stroll and take pictures.

It seems to me that the official explanation that the Yuanmingyuan ruins are metonymy for the humiliations China suffered during the Opium War era is imprinted on the minds of the consuming populace as a sort of national doctrine, comparable to how the assertion in Christian doctrine that "the cross symbolizes Jesus' death for our sins" is imprinted upon the minds of

consuming Christians (and many non-Christians as well). Yuanmingyuan's symbolic significance has passed the stage of being interpretable; "national humiliation" is a set referent for the signifier "Yuanmingyuan." And yet, the solidification of this referent does not preclude other referents, just as the cross can have other connotations as well.

What is occurring with the collective memory of the Yuanmingyuan seems somewhat analogous to what Cohen argues about the national humiliation narrative in the 1920s and 30s: it was not literally forgotten, but became trite through repetition. If we accept the premise that historical forgetting is the result of a dampening emotional appeal to a given signifier, then remembering is encouraged by just the opposite—a linkage of a given signifier with a strong emotional stimulus. Sakai names this emotional stimulus "sentimentality" and posits it as the prerequisite for promoting the belief of national unity: "In order for an event that occurs in one part of the national community to be felt as if it belonged to the whole community, a mechanism for diffusing sentimentality must exist here" (17). Sakai goes further to say, "Sentimentality is analogous to the types of emotion one experiences when, on the basis of formalities rooted in preconceived ideas, one forms a stereotype of another and then respects, scorns or fears him or her. Diffusion of these emotions is rooted in a community's possession of a common etiquette or patterns of behavior" (17). Among the devices Sakai identifies that diffuse sentimentality among a national community are, "the discourse of national culture" and "national history" (16). Both of these discourses can be thought of as discursive collective memories, and I want to propose that, at the most basic level, the device for promoting national sentimentality, or nationalism, is representation.

My friend's visit to the Yuanmingyuan ruins, then, was a display of sentimentality demanded by the etiquette embedded within her memory of the Yuanmingyuan that she received through representations. Because the representations she received promote the assumption that the collective who ought to share these sentiments is "the Chinese people" as an all-encompassing ethnic group, my friend unconsciously assumed that I too, as part of that ethnic group by blood, ought to be bound by the same code of etiquette and share the same feelings of sentimentality. And yet, it seems that the obligation of sentimentality, to feel a certain way in a given circumstance, does not always translate into real emotion. We might speculate that the "indifference and passivity...in the mood of the Chinese populace" that Cohen identifies as characteristic of the memory of national humiliation between 1915 and the mid-1930s was a case when the etiquette that demanded sentimentality continued to exist but did not result in genuine emotion. The kind of complete forgetting, then, that Cohen attributes to the 1970s when the new generation was chronologically distant from the national humiliations, would be when even the etiquette that obligates sentimentality is not present or acknowledged.

But what explains the transition between proper sentimentality that manifests genuine emotion and obligatory sentimentality that manifests only performance? Cohen identifies two phenomena that accompanied the popular indifference of 1915 to the 1930s: 1. a manipulation of the content and import of what was to be remembered during yearly celebrations and, 2. a displacement of the emotion associated with national humiliation onto other political issues or even commercial products (156). This suggests that the discourse of national humiliation, on the one hand, lost its original integrity that

pointed to an uncomplicated story and moral, and, on the other, lost its singular monumentality as it was trivialized by its association with a variety of other agendas. Unclear about what precisely national humiliation was supposed to mean any longer and without a sense that it was particularly important, people were no longer moved by its invocation, but because etiquette demanded that national humiliation “not be forgotten,” they continued the performance of commemoration. The official lessons were repeated as truisms but they had lost their underlying significance.

A similar obfuscation of meaning seems to have occurred in the discourse of the Yuanmingyuan between the 1980s, when the Ruins Park was first being built, and the present, which has seen numerous architectural and ideological renovations. As discussed in the previous section, the narrative of Yuanmingyuan history that was presented in the 1980s and 90s drew upon the previous idea of the ruined Yuanmingyuan as a symbol of national humiliation, but added to this narrative a new phase of Yuanmingyuan history in which the renovation of the Yuanmingyuan ruins and opening of the Yuanmingyuan Park became a symbol of China having left behind the era of humiliation and emerged as a powerful modern nation. This latter idea seems somewhat inconsistent with the old exhortation inscribed on a wall that was dedicated to the Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park in 1997: “never forget the national humiliations” (wuwang guochi 勿忘国耻). The one turns towards the bright future where China is one among the powerful nations, while the other seems stuck in the dark past when China was the victim of the foreign powers. Is the average Chinese visitor to Yuanmingyuan supposed to mourn the past or embrace the future, to resent the foreigners or to take his place among them, or is possible to do both simultaneously?

This ambiguity is present in the Yuanmingyuan museum exhibit within the Ruins Park. The last sentence of the brief preface, the only text translated into English in the museum reads: “[The Yuanmingyuan’s] sufferings reflect from an angle the humiliation imposed on the Chinese nation by the imperialist powers since the Opium War and the garden itself is an epitome of the fate of the Chinese nation in modern history.” What this fate is supposed to be becomes clear in the last phase of the exhibit, which starts with a plaque entitled “the Yuanmingyuan’s new life,” proceeds through the Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park’s construction, reopening and renovations, and ends with a plaque entitled “a window opened to the outside” that features pictures of important Chinese and foreign personages posing happily together at the Yuanmingyuan. If this contradiction is part of the reason for popular apathy, it never consciously occurs to most Chinese visitors, who, once they have taken the expected snapshot in front of the iconic Dashuifa fountain, might sweep through the easily-overlooked and unimpressive museum exhibits, then walk along the picturesque Fuhai lake back to the park’s main entrance. The question then is, was popular sentimentality towards the Yuanmingyuan from the 1980s ever anything but performance? If the sight of the ruins does not inspire genuine nationalist sentiment, then what does?

In the 1980s when the Yuanmingyuan was being constructed, the discourse of the Yuanmingyuan was associated with the increasingly popular international discourse of cultural heritage. This association grew into a more specific preoccupation with the repatriation of Yuanmingyuan loot in the 21st century, when the existing collective memory of the Yuanmingyuan, with its potential for inspiring nationalistic passion, was re-framed to fit this new context through the potent images of the twelve zodiac animal heads from the

Haiyantang fountain of the Western Palaces, loot that was stolen by French and British soldiers in 1860. This displacement of emotion associated with the Yuanmingyuan to a new subject, while promoting nationalism on the new front, may have contributed to the pragmatism with which many people seem to regard the Yuanmingyuan ruins today.

## **5. Recycling the Memory of Yuanmingyuan: Cultural Heritage, Zodiacs and Repatriation**

In this section, I will illustrate how the collective memory of the Yuanmingyuan was recycled in the 21st century as it became increasingly entangled with the discourse of national cultural heritage, in simple terms, the idea that historical artwork, architecture and other objects are representative of both national and universal or human culture. Cultural heritage is a discourse with its own complex history, both in a global context and within the specific context of China. Therefore, while it is necessary for me to locate the turn in the Yuanmingyuan discourse towards repatriation of Yuanmingyuan loot that had been stolen almost a century and a half before in a historical context, broader issues of cultural heritage are not my focus, nor is it my aim to use the example of Yuanmingyuan to take a position in the ethical debate over repatriation of cultural heritage items currently raging. Rather, I use the debate in the context of Yuanmingyuan as a case study, and concern myself with it only insofar as it helps me to explain the phenomenon of Yuanmingyuan's versatility and evocativeness in terms of collective memory. That said, this undertaking requires an explanation of both the global trends of national heritage leading up to the 21st century and their domestic manifestations in China. Magnus Fiskesjö introduces these effectively at the beginning of his article about 21st century repatriation issues in China, "The Politics of Cultural Heritage":

China is not a country but an idea, which was reformulated in the twentieth century to fit with the hegemonic world nation-state system. This involved a reformulation not only of the idea of the Chinese empire, but also of the remains of the past—including artifacts that once served as the mystified insignia of power of mighty rulers, or as

the tokens of refinement and civilization, or simply as the ostentatious playthings of the wealthy; and also objects previously unknown unearthed by modern archaeology, that is, artifacts left by people living in “China” long before China became China. Similar to what has happened in other “countries,” these objects have been recast as “national cultural heritage,” and are believed to carry the essence of a Chineseness reaching back “5000 years”—a claim inseparable from the new contemporary global politics of representation in the arena of competing nation-states (where, one might say, modern China claims participation based on “civilizational antiquity” and “unbroken continuity”). (228).

Just like the construction of the Yuanmingyuan Park in the 1980s, the call for repatriation of Yuanmingyuan loot as objects of cultural heritage in the 1990s can be broadly attributed to the project of Chinese nationalism. At the same time, as Fiskesjö suggests in his article, the repatriation initiative has broader historical and political ramifications that can be traced through the 20th century.

The earliest legislation concerning the protection of cultural heritage in China was the ordinance, “Measures for the Protection of Ancient Sites,” passed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the declining Qing dynasty in 1909, probably in response to the exploitation of the Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang by foreigners in 1907. (Lai 82). In 1931, after the Nationalist Party had come to power, additional legislation was passed to protect ancient artifacts, signaling the beginning of a modern conservation effort spearheaded by Liang Sicheng, the son of reformer Liang Qichao (Murphy 47, Lai 82). In the 1950s, after the chaos of World War II and the establishment in 1945 of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a mediator of cultural heritage disputes on the international front; and the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) headed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1949 on the domestic front; the new Chinese state began to



institutionally embrace the idea of cultural heritage. Cultural Relics (Wenwu 文物) magazine began publication in 1950 and announced a directive by the Government Affairs Bureau calling for the protection of cultural relics and architecture (“Zhengwuyuan”). The terms *wenwu* 文物, “cultural relic,” and *guobao* 国宝, “national treasure,” seem to have been used frequently in mass publications around this time (this insight is based on database searches). In 1950, provisions regarding the excavation and export of art and archeological items were issued. Conservation efforts, however, were complicated by conflicting construction efforts and debates about what to preserve and how to preserve it. (Lai 86). In 1961 a circular was passed listing 180 specific cultural relics, sites and monuments to be protected (Lai 87, Murphy 183-184).

The new emphasis on the protection of cultural artifacts may seem at odds with the ensuing Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), in which huge amounts of material culture were systematically destroyed by the populace at the direction of Chairman Mao Zedong in an attempt to obliterate the old and outdated remnants of the former feudal society. David Murphy, in his book about Chinese legislation concerning items of cultural heritage, *Plunder and Preservation*, briefly addresses this problem by framing the Cultural Revolution in terms of a political factional struggle and drastic ideological turn with self-evident contradictions even in its own time:

It may well be argued that the destruction wrought by the Cultural Revolution was never intended as an attack on Chinese history or culture *per se*, but rather was the extreme result of political necessity. Mao’s apparent attack on Chinese history was the ultimate contradiction. Up until the Cultural Revolution, he had always used history to accommodate the goal of the revolution: the Communists promoted and exploited nationalism by exhorting the people to cherish their cultural tradition...However, once Mao feared that his enemies were using history to wage a contemporary fight against him, he immediately ascribed to them the perceived worst features of Chinese history--imperialism and feudalism. (50)

Despite the Mao-instigated mass cultural destruction, some Party leaders were still concerned with cultural protection. In 1967, when the Cultural Revolution was just beginning, the State Council Opinion Concerning the Protection of Cultural Relics and Books, which “though couched in the mandatory revolutionary slogans, was actually aimed at saving sites” (Murphy 49) was passed. Other legislation aimed at the protection of cultural artifacts was passed in the latter years of the Cultural Revolution.

The turn from destroying traditional culture to again cherishing it seems to have been as drastic as the ideological reversal of the Cultural Revolution had been. In the 1970s, perhaps influenced by the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage of 1972 whose aim was to protect cultural sites of global import, the discourse of cultural heritage in China was reframed from its previous more narrowly anti-imperialist focus to a focus on national patrimony or “cultural nationalism” (Murphy 3-4). Beginning in the 1970s, there was an increased popular consciousness about cultural heritage issues and a proliferation of legislation regarding cultural property, which grew to include artifacts, books, architecture, art and natural sites. The 1982 “Law of the People's Republic of China on Protection of Cultural Relics” put forth “not changing the original condition” as the primary principle from which to approach conservation efforts, although debates about how and to what extent sites should be preserved in tempo with simultaneous construction efforts continued. (Lai 87). Beginning in the 1980s, national efforts at cultural preservation were formally identified with international aims of preserving world culture. The UNESCO Convention of 1972 provided for an official list of world heritage sites whose protection UNESCO would support. The government of each participating

nation was to nominate sites to be included on the list and justify them according to criteria laid down by the convention. China ratified the convention on December 12, 1985 and immediately began to submit sites for approval. To date in 2010, 38 sites have been approved and more than 50 additional sites have been submitted and are on the tentative list for approval. (“World”).

The 1980s construction of the Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park was, from the start, aimed at protecting the ruins as part of cultural heritage. This is explicitly stated in the declaration signed by government officials in 1980 calling for the park’s construction (*Yuanmingyuan: Lishi* 466-473). Considering this fact, it is notable that Yuanmingyuan was not submitted to the UNESCO list of world cultural sites, although whether or not it should be submitted and under what principle of protection, were the subjects of a heated debate in 2008 that was strongly connected to the debate beginning in the 1980s about how to preserve the ruins and whether or not the Yuanmingyuan should be completely rebuilt to resemble the flourishing mid-18th century imperial garden (Chen, Yongjie). In this sense, the Yuanmingyuan preservation debate of the 1980s was the culmination of the “ferment of competing values” about the protection of cultural heritage. (Lai 88).

As established in section 3, the idea that the looting and destruction of Yuanmingyuan in 1860 and 1900 was a national humiliation has existed since the early 20th century. In some cases, Yuanmingyuan loot that had been taken by foreign imperialists and not the Yuanmingyuan site itself was presented as the catalyst for feelings of national humiliation, as when, in the early 1900s Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei wrote about the shame they felt at viewing Yuanmingyuan loot abroad. (Hevia, “Loot’s Fate” 336 and *English* 334). The theme of Yuanmingyuan loot that has been lost abroad (liushi haiwai 流失海

外) being a part of national humiliation is represented in the Yuanmingyuan Park museum displays, although it is difficult to determine whether this was the case since the museum's opening in 1979 or one of the periodic updates contributed since then. In one of the display panels, the images of two of the twelve zodiac heads that were originally part of the Haiyantang fountain but looted in 1860, are shown and the location of each of the heads is listed in a block of text in the center. The locations listed on the display are now outdated, indicating that it has not been updated at least since the year 2000.

The 1997 return of Hong Kong from British hands to Chinese jurisdiction was considered a major turn in the national humiliation narrative, signifying the end of the “century of humiliation” (bainian guochi 百年国耻). Parallels are often drawn between Hong Kong, which was ceded to England in the 1942 Treaty of Nanking at the end of the First Opium War (1839-1842) and Yuanmingyuan loot that was taken by English and French soldiers in 1860 shortly before the conclusion of the Second Opium War (1856-1860), as parts of Chinese heritage that were stolen by imperialists and whose retrieval is part of China's mission of redemption from that shameful period of history. After the repatriation of Hong Kong in 1997, a lantern festival was held in the Yuanmingyuan in celebration and a “never forget the national humiliation” (wuwang guochi 勿忘国耻) wall was erected, featuring the text of the “unequal treaties” from the Opium Wars and detailing a history of imperialism in China. Having tasted the triumph of Hong Kong's return, and the upsurge in popular nationalism it provoked, government officials began to pursue the repatriation of cultural relics looted from China with increasing vigor.

The Yuanmingyuan zodiacs were bronze statues with humanoid bodies and heads designed to resemble the twelve animals of the Chinese zodiac. They were originally positioned six to each side around the head of a circular fountain, the Haiyantang, which kept time by spouting water from a different head every two hours. The fountain was designed by the Italian painter and architect Guiseppe Castiglione under the employ of Emperor Qianlong as part of the Yuanmingyuan's Western Palaces. The heads were removed from their positions on the fountains and taken by French and British soldiers during the Yuanmingyuan's looting in 1860.

Often in narratives describing the zodiacs as objects of Chinese cultural heritage, a historical description ends with the 1860 looting, after which the account jumps to recent events of the 21st century. However, a scrutiny of the history of Yuanmingyuan loot from 1860 to the present reveals that objects looted from the Yuanmingyuan took on different meanings as different conceptions of value emerged. Viewing Yuanmingyuan loot as objects of Chinese cultural heritage is a relatively recent phenomenon reflecting a deliberately imposed value scheme. The historical trajectory of the value of Yuanmingyuan loot intersects with the discourse of cultural heritage in China around the late 1970s and early 1980s when the Yuanmingyuan Park and official narratives to accompany it were being constructed. In other words, Yuanmingyuan loot was seen as part of Chinese national humiliation since the early 1900s, but did not take on a specific significance as relics of cultural heritage that must be repatriated until the 1970s.

In 1860, after the English and French soldiers' disordered looting of the garden, the English commanders, in an astute attempt to restore order and authority, confiscated all of the items and held an auction just outside the

Yuanmingyuan, in which each soldier could bid freely for the items he desired. Money from the auctions was then divided among the soldiers according to rank. Afterwards these items made their way back to Europe, where the best were given to the English queen Victoria for her personal collection. The rest circulated among the international art market and found their way into private art collections and public exhibitions. Objects illegally looted from the Yuanmingyuan by Chinese between 1860 and the early 20th century often were sold to wealthy foreigners and circulated through the same channels. Hevia observes that even in this period, objects looted from the Yuanmingyuan had various meanings:

They could signify the orderly reconstitution of the British army and the disorderly conduct of the French, the humiliation of the emperor of China, the expanded sovereignty of the British and French monarchs, the situation of things Chinese in a global discourse on the curiosities of non-European peoples, and, as commodities, the common sense of capitalist market exchange. These meanings adhered to the objects once they left China and began to circulate in an alien environment on the other side of the Eurasian land mass. (Hevia, *Plunder* 133-134).

Auctions that included loot from the Yuanmingyuan among other objects were frequent from 1860 on, particularly in Europe and the United States where demand for such objects was high. At first the objects were sold as “curiosities”—a somewhat condescending term used by Europeans to describe strange or exotic objects, including those taken from foreign lands—but, from around 1915 onwards, when the loot began to be labeled more rigorously according to a classification system developed by Stephen Bushell, items were increasingly endowed with value as legitimate international art. The art market became more globalized as the 20th century progressed and auctions of Chinese Dynastic art were held in China beginning in the mid-1990s, where such items held the status of high art according to

European standards. (For details about Yuanmingyuan loot and auctions see Hevia, “Loot’s” and “Plunder;” and Kraus, “When”).

In the last decade, the Yuanmingyuan zodiac heads have captured the attention of the international media and provoked patriotic outbursts in China on account of a series of controversial auctions. In 2000, sellers Christies and Sotheby held a pair of art auctions that included among their merchandise three bronze zodiac heads from the Yuanmingyuan: the tiger, monkey and ox. Other auctions of zodiac heads had taken place in New York and London in 1986 and 1989, but had gone largely unnoticed by the Chinese media. According to one Chinese article written in 2000, Taiwanese businessman, Cha Chenyang, had purchased the monkey head in 1986 and the ox, horse and lion’s heads in 1989, ostensibly out of patriotic sentiment. He initially refused to sell these objects to non-Chinese foreigners (laowai 老外), but eventually caved to business pressure and ended up selling them off, after which they changed hands several times before three of them ended up on the auction market in Hong Kong in 2000 (Xi). Much of the controversy of the 2000 auctions arose from the fact that they were held in Hong Kong, the only recently repatriated Chinese territory whose return had been widely celebrated in mainland China as an end to the century of imperialist humiliations inflicted upon the Chinese nation. Chinese government officials issued a statement urging that the auction be stopped, claiming that it was “insulting and deeply painful to the Chinese people to have these things sold before their eyes” (Kraus 199). Wide media coverage of this in China led to an outpour of popular indignation both online and in the Chinese press. The reaction was so strong that the foreign media also covered the story. The auction continued despite these complaints and, in the end, the Poly Group, a nationalist Beijing

company with close ties to the People's Liberation Army, under the conviction that the heads must be reclaimed for China at all costs, purchased them for a hefty sum of 4 million US dollars.

Richard Kraus in his article, "When legitimacy resides in beautiful objects," describes the Chinese military-based Poly Group's reclamation of objects that were originally looted by British soldiers as an act that served to legitimize the current Chinese government and its army as heroes reclaiming the cultural treasures lost by the corrupt and feeble Qing regime. Certainly, there is this element behind the drive for repatriation. Cultural objects have long held ties to political legitimacy both universally and in China specifically, especially after the division of national artifacts between Taiwan's National Palace Museum in Taipei and the People's Republic of China's Palace Museum in Beijing (Elliott; "Heritage").

The campaign to repatriate the zodiac heads continued after the auctions of 2000. In 2002 the China Cultural Relics Recovery Fund was established (Cuno 101). In 2003 Macau businessman, Stanley Ho, purchased the pig head for 770 thousand US dollars, and in 2007 he purchased the horse head for the much-inflated price of 8.9 million US dollars, donating both to the Poly Museum in Beijing (Zhao). There was a more recent clamor in 2009 over the auction of two more Zodiac heads, those of the rat and rabbit, by a French collector, Pierre Berge. The Chinese government protested that the rat and rabbit, as looted goods, should be returned to China and that the auction should be cancelled. Berge issued a highly politicized counter-statement sarcastically offering the two heads in exchange for the application of human rights in China and Tibetan freedom. The Chinese media was flooded with reactive statements, one article declared: "To use 'human rights' to abduct



cultural relics is both ridiculous and lamentable” (Zheng, Suchun). To complicate matters further, when the sale did take place from February 23-25, the bronzes were awarded to wealthy Chinese bidder Cai Mingchao, who subsequently defaulted on his payment of \$40 million US dollars. Originally, Cai presented this as a bold act of patriotism to prevent the sale of China’s cultural heritage and was praised in the Chinese media as a national hero (McCabe). However, later Cai stated in an interview that he had defaulted out of fear that the statues would not be allowed to enter China and was condemned in the media for inflating the price of the zodiacs, making it more difficult for China to complete its mission of repatriating all of the zodiac heads (“Cai”).

Critics have pointed out that, as art that is actually quite mediocre, the heads are not worth nearly \$40 million dollars and that the Cai episode indicates the patriotic fervor to reclaim zodiac heads has perhaps gone too far. The question of why repatriation efforts have focused on bronze animal heads originally sculpted by an Italian missionary that have little resemblance to traditional Chinese art, in particular, as opposed to other less ambiguous objects of Chinese cultural heritage also emerges. The 2000 Hong Kong auctions that began the zodiac repatriation initiative, in fact, also included a large hexagonal vase that had been looted from the Yuanmingyuan, but this attracted much less attention than the zodiac heads. (Kraus 199). It would seem that the undue attention placed on the zodiacs is largely due to their convenient representational qualities as lost pieces of the still-extant and iconic ruins of the Western Palaces.

Because the Western Palaces were the predominant surviving feature of the Yuanmingyuan and the Haiyantang fountain on which the zodiac statues

once rested was already well-known by Chinese in 2000, it was easy to transfer the nationalistic connotations that had been meticulously infused into the ruins through representation over the past two decades metonymically to the zodiacs. Readily marketable images of the zodiac bronzes juxtaposed with the widely recognized image of the ruined Haiyantang fountain, and historical explanations linking them to the national humiliations already associated with the Yuanmingyuan flooded the Chinese media and quickly caught the attention of the foreign press. By means of effective propaganda, the Western-style, artistically unremarkable bronze statues became symbols of Chinese cultural heritage whose sale was no longer merely a diversion for connoisseurs of historical artwork, but held political stakes for the entire Chinese nation.

The reason why the 2000 auction as opposed to the previous auction of Yuanmingyuan zodiacs a decade before was so emotionally provoking to Chinese was that it occurred at a time when the discourses of Yuanmingyuan's looting, national humiliation and cultural heritage had all become active in popular consciousness, and at a site where these discourses could be conveniently activated in association with each other. This association was no coincidence, but reflected the aims of producers of representations, among them Chinese government officials and people in the Chinese media. The 2000 auctions provided the ideal opportunity to explode the latent nationalism embedded in each of these discourses.

In 2008, "The Chinese Zodiac in Haiyan Tang of the Old Summer Palace Exhibition" was assembled in the Yuanmingyuan Park along the path leading to the Western Ruins section. The banner in front of the outside of the exhibit is captioned:

148 years of parting—the 12 animal heads of the Haiyantang reunite at Yuanmingyuan

4 years of refinement—the first global exhibit of the 12 zodiacs with animal heads and human bodies  
20 years of exploration—the fruit of Yuanmingyuan cultural property is exhibited. (My translation).

Arithmetic reveals that the three years referenced are 1860, 2004 and 1988, signifying respectively, when the zodiacs were first looted from Yuanmingyuan, when three zodiac heads that had been repatriated (the third in 2003 by Stanley Ho) were put on national display in the Yuanmingyuan for a brief period, and when the Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park was formally opened to the public. However, whether these dates and their significance are readily apparent to visitors reading the banner is questionable. The interior of the exhibit, advertised as free, features sketches of the original Haiyantang fountain, a couple pieces of statues from the site of the ruins locked in display cabinets and full-size replicas of each of the zodiac bronze heads mounted upon wooden bases with the location and status of each relic engraved in gold upon them. Smaller scale replicas of the original full-body statues are also displayed. In addition, zodiac paraphernalia including stuffed animals, miniature bronze statues, books and keychains are sold at the small gift shop at the end of the exhibit and also in other gift shops throughout the Yuanmingyuan Park. (Based on multiple visits in the summer of 2009; the exhibit was closed for the winter when I returned in December of 2010). Representations of the zodiacs in park displays and commodified objects as well as popular media representations of the zodiacs in the news and in other television programs have contributed to a wide-spread and active collective memory of them within the broader collective memory of Yuanmingyuan.

In the previous section, I proposed that the current collective memory of the Yuanmingyuan as a symbol of national humiliation is growing increasingly

infelicitous, that is, the etiquette embedded within collective memory that demands acknowledgement (not forgetting) of and sentimentality (nationalism) towards the Yuanmingyuan as a symbol of national humiliation continues to exist, but authentic emotions are no longer evoked by the sight of the physical ruins. I suggested that this infelicity was at least partly the result of a process of emotional displacement, by which obligatory emotions associated with the Yuanmingyuan ruins were given new outlets through association, making the original site less centrally relevant. In section 3, I hypothesized that while cultural memories may promote nationalist sentiment, expression of this sentiment only occurs when a new event recalls these memories in the context of their immediate relevance to the present. I now propose that the Yuanmingyuan zodiacs became catalysts for popular expressions of nationalism in the 21st century through a process of emotional displacement, in which the sentimentality associated with the Yuanmingyuan ruins in general was metonymically displaced onto the zodiacs, which had become immediately relevant through the auctions of 2000; this led to an explosion of authentic patriotic sentiment. On the other hand, the emotional displacement that served to incite this patriotic sentiment also served to diminish the emotional potency of the actual site of the Yuanmingyuan ruins, since emotional authority gradually stopped being associatively invested in the zodiacs through the ruins and became directly accessible through the zodiacs themselves. In summary, the collective memory of the Yuanmingyuan that was revived in the 1980s primarily through the emblem of the Yuanmingyuan ruins, has, in the 21st century, shifted its focus to the zodiac heads as its central symbol. This shift was necessary because the ruins as symbols were growing

trite and becoming increasingly overshadowed by other associations within the park.

This idea can be used to expand upon what Haiyan Lee proposes when she calls the Yuanmingyuan a “super-sign” (in reference to a term used by Duara) and explains:

Such symbols acquire their potency and legitimacy precisely owing to the broad participation of cultural actors, not least the state, in converging signifying practices. But the more prominent a symbol becomes, the more liable it is to subversive appropriations, and thus it must be subjected to government surveillance. This explains why the state has been unsympathetic toward the anti-restorationist cause aimed at safeguarding the official memory. (184).

Conceptualizing the Yuanmingyuan as a collective memory has shown that if government surveillance is to continue to be successful in utilizing the symbolic potency of Yuanmingyuan, government officials, rather than focusing their efforts on enforcing the status quo, must seek, as producers, to re-appropriate the Yuanmingyuan’s symbolism with new focuses through emotional displacement. However, whether “Disneyfication” will provide that focus or serve to further diffuse the Yuanmingyuan’s symbolism remains to be seen. It is likely that when new associations fail to re-focus emotional potency, and, as a result, the collective memory of Yuanmingyuan and its emotional impetus become too diffused, it will again become infelicitous and, as in the mid 20th century, eventually forgotten—at least until new producers with new ideological aims step forth to re-articulate the memory and re-assert its power through new representations for new collectives to accept, ignore or re-appropriate.

## Conclusion

In this paper, I have sought to invert traditional conceptions of the Yuanmingyuan as a historical site with strong nationalistic connotations, by framing Yuanmingyuan foremost as an evolving idea and illustrating how this idea has been re-introduced into popular discourse through association with physical sites and material objects. In articulating this theory I have conceptualized collective memory according to a triangular model in which interactions between producers, representations and consumers create a collective notion about a given subject that changes over time. I have used this theory and historical analysis of how the Yuanmingyuan was presented at different periods in the 20th century to further develop ideas about both how collective memory functions and how the collective memory of Yuanmingyuan was produced and received. One of the objects of this paper has been to address the question of why the idea of Yuanmingyuan has been so potent in forging cultural memory in the 1980s. I have shown that the Yuanmingyuan's historical link with national humiliation gave it an emotional charge that could be reignited in new contexts and that the physical site of the Yuanmingyuan garden and material remnants associated with it provided tangible symbols that were easily represented to large audiences. Thus Yuanmingyuan's multivocality and re-interpretability as a symbol, rather than subvert its ideological message, allowed it to be manipulated to fit new contexts while exploiting old sentiments.

My work is by no means a comprehensive answer, but, rather, is meant to suggest that further research is needed if the phenomenon of collective memory and Yuanmingyuan in particular are to be deeply understood. Further

inquiry into the Yuanmingyuan would benefit from a more sophisticated analysis of the wealth of media depicting the Yuanmingyuan and more extensive ethnographic data to gauge popular reception. Another useful method of approach would be to compare Yuanmingyuan to other historical sights of cultural memory, both foreign and domestic. For example, the Parthenon in Greece is a well-researched site around which a similar kind of fantasy of national continuity has been projected (Hamilakis). The “Elgin Marbles” and calls for their repatriation have incited nationalistic passion and received global attention in a way that already invites comparison to the Yuanmingyuan zodiacs without the Elgin family connection, which links the father and son to the burglary of the Parthenon and Yuanmingyuan respectively. Two other Chinese sites the Yuanmingyuan might be fruitfully compared with are the Forbidden Palace (Gugong 故宫) and Chengde 承德, both former imperial palaces that are now modern tourists destinations and have been represented with specific ideological motives quite different from Yuanmingyuan. (See Hamlish and Hevia, “Restoration”). It is my hope that further studies of collective memory that deconstruct deeply entrenched fantasies such as “the state” and “the people” will yield more refined insights into how signification functions at national and global levels and how collective beliefs are formed.

## APPENDIX

“Introduction to Yuanmingyuan History” taken from the official Yuanmingyuan Park website: <http://www.yuanmingyuanpark.com/zy/ymysjs.htm>. (1994).

### 圆明园史介绍

历史上的圆明园是由圆明园、长春园、绮春园（万春园）组成。三园紧相毗连，通称圆明园，共占地5,200余亩（约350公顷），比颐和园的整个范围还要大出近千亩。它是清代封建帝王在150余年间，所创建和经营的一座大型皇家宫苑。雍正、乾隆、嘉庆、道光、咸丰五朝皇帝，都曾长年居住在圆明园优游享乐，并于此举行朝会，外理政事，它与紫禁城（故宫）同为当时的全国政治中心，被清帝特称为“御园”。园于1860年（咸丰十年）被英法联军劫掠焚毁。

### 盛期圆明园

北京西北郊一带具有山、泉、湖、沼之胜，历来是封建帝王及亲贵显宦缔构行宫苑园之所。至清代康熙、乾隆时期，社会经济有显著发展、国库充盈，清帝为了追求“宁神受福”的园居生活，从而在这一带兴起了空前规模的园林建设局面。

圆明园最初是康熙皇帝赐给皇四子胤禛(即后来的雍正皇帝)的花园。在康熙四十六年即公元1707年时已初具规模。同年十一月，康熙皇帝曾亲临圆明园游赏。雍正皇帝于1723年即位后，拓展原赐园，并在园南增建了正大光明殿和勤正殿以及内阁、六部、军机处诸值房，御以“避喧听政”。乾隆皇帝在位60年，对圆明园岁岁营构、日日修华、浚水移石、费银千万。他除了对圆明园进行局部增建、改建之外，并在紧东邻新建了长春园，在东南邻并入了绮春园。至乾隆三十五年即1770年，圆明三园的格局基本形成。嘉庆朝，主要对绮春园进行修缮和拓建，使之成为主要园居场所之一。道光朝时，国事日衰，财力不足，但宁撤万寿、香山、玉泉“三山”的陈设，罢热河避暑与木兰狩猎，仍不放弃圆明三园的改建和装饰。



圆明园：主要兴建于康熙末年和雍正朝，至雍正末年，园林风景群已遍及全园三千亩范围。乾隆年间，在园内相继又有多处增建和改建。该园的主要园林风景群，有著名的“圆明园四十景”（即正大光明、勤政亲贤、九洲清晏、缕月开云、天然图画、碧桐书院、慈云普护、上下天光、杏花春馆、坦坦荡荡、茹古涵今、长春仙馆、万方安和、武陵春色、山高水长、月地云居、鸿慈永祐、汇芳书院、日天琳宇、澹泊宁静、映水兰香、水木明瑟、濂溪乐处、多稼如云、鱼跃鸢飞、北远山村、西峰秀色、四宜书屋、方壶胜境、澡身浴德、平湖秋月、蓬岛瑶台、接秀山房、别有洞天、夹境鸣琴、涵虚朗鉴、廓然大公、坐石临流、曲院风荷、洞天深处），以及紫碧山房、藻园、若帆之阁、文源阁等处。当时悬挂匾额的主要园林建筑约达600座，实为右今中外皇家园林之冠。

长春园：始建于乾隆十年（1745年）前后，于1751年正式设置管园总领时，园中路和西路各主要景群已基本建成，诸如澹怀堂、含经堂、玉玲珑馆、思永斋、海岳开襟、得全阁、流香渚、法慧寺、宝相寺、爱山楼、转湘帆、丛芳榭等。其后又相继建成茜园和小有天园。而该园东部诸景（映清斋、如园、鉴园、狮子林），是乾隆三十一年至三十七年大规模增建的，包括西洋楼景区，长春园共占地一千亩。悬挂匾额的园林建筑约为200座。

绮春园：早先原是怡亲王允祥的赐邸，约于康熙末年始建，后曾改赐大学士傅恒，至乾隆三十五年（1770年）正式归入御园，定名绮春园。那时的范围尚不包括其西北部。嘉庆四年和十六年，该园的西部又先后并进来两处赐园，一是成亲王永理的西爽村，一是庄敬和硕公主的含晖园，经大规模修缮和改建、增建之后，该园始具千亩规模，成为清帝园居的主要园林之一。至此，圆明三园处于全盛时期。嘉庆先有“绮春园三十景”诗，后又陆续新成20多景，当时比较著名的园林景群有敷春堂、清夏斋、涵秋馆、生冬室、四宜书屋、春泽斋、凤麟洲、蔚藻堂、中和堂、碧享、竹林院、喜雨山房、烟雨楼、含晖楼、澄心堂、畅和堂、湛清轩、招凉榭、凌虚亭等近30处。悬挂匾额的园林建筑有百余座。绮春园宫门，建成于嘉庆十四年（1809年），因它比圆明园大宫门和长春园二宫门晚建半个多世纪，亦称“新宫门”，一直沿用至今。自道光初年起，该园东路的敷春堂一带经改建后，作为奉养皇太后的地方；但园西路诸景，仍一直是道光、咸丰皇帝的园居范围。该园1860年被毁后，在同治年间试图重修时，改称万春园。

圆明园是人工创造的一处规模宏伟，景色秀丽的大型园林。平地叠山理水，精制园林建筑，广植树木花卉。以断续的山丘、曲折的水面及亭台、曲廊、洲岛、桥堤等，将广阔的空间分割成大小百余处山水环抱、意趣各不相同的风景群。园内水面约占三园总面积的十分之四，在平地上人工开凿大中小水面，由回环萦流的河道串联为一个完整的河湖水系。园内又缀叠有大大小小的土山250座，与水系相结合，水随山转，山因水活，构成了山复水转、层层叠叠的园林空间。使整个园林宛如江南水乡般的烟水迷离，真可谓：虽由人做，宛自天开。

圆明园的园林造景多以水为主题，因水成趣，其中不少是直接吸取江南著名水景的意趣。圆明园后湖景区，环绕后湖构筑九个小岛，是全国疆域《禹贡》"九州"之象征。各个岛上建置的小园或风景群，既各有特色，又彼此相借成景。北岸的上下天光，颇有登岳阳楼一览洞庭湖之胜概，"垂虹驾湖、蜿蜒百尺、修栏夹翼、中为广亭。波纹倒影，滢漾楣槛间，凌空俯瞰，一碧万顷"。西岸的坦坦荡荡，酷似杭州玉泉观鱼，俗称金鱼池，"凿池为鱼乐国，池周舍下，锦鳞数千头。"圆明园西部的万方安和，房屋建于湖中，形作卍字，冬暖夏凉，遥望彼岸奇花纓若绮绣。雍正皇帝喜欢在此居住。圆明园北部的水木明瑟，用泰西（西泽）水法引水入室，转动风扇，"林瑟瑟，水冷冷，溪风群籁动，山鸟一声鸣。"乾隆皇帝喜欢在此消暑。长春园西湖中的海岳开襟，在白玉石圆形巨台上建有三层殿宇，远远望去好似海市蜃楼一般。

福海之中的蓬岛瑶台，取材于神话中的蓬莱仙岛，原名蓬莱洲。相传，秦始皇曾派遣一个名叫徐福的人，率领千余名童男童女，出海东渡，去替他寻仙境、求仙药，以企长生不老。这当然只能是"海客谈瀛洲，烟涛微茫信难求"。而雍正皇帝则让工匠在圆明园的东湖之中用磷岫巨石堆砌成大小三岛，象征传说中的蓬莱、瀛洲、方丈"三仙山"，岛上建有殿阁亭台，"望之若金堂五所。玉楼十二"，并按"徐福海中求"的寓意，把东湖命名为"福海"。在福海四岸另外还建有十多处园林佳景。福海，东西、南北各宽五、六百米，加上四周小水域，共约35公顷，相当于北海公园的水面。这里水面开阔，景色秀丽，每于端午佳节，在此举行大型龙舟竞渡活动。七月十五日夜，清帝于此观赏河灯。冬日结冰后，皇帝乘坐冰床在福海赏游。福海实际上是圆明园的水上娱乐中心。

圆明园还有个显著特点，就是大量仿建了全国各地特别是江南的许多名园胜景。乾隆皇帝弘历曾经六次南巡江浙，多次西巡五台，东巡岱岳，巡游热河、盛京（即沈阳）和盘山等地。每至一地，凡他所中意的名山胜水、名园胜景，就让随行画师摹绘成图，回京后在园内仿建。据不完全统计，圆明园的园林风景，有直接摹本的不下四五十处。杭州西湖十景，连名称也一字不改地在园内全部仿建。正所谓：谁道江南风景佳，移天缩地在君怀。

乾隆皇帝南巡之后，在圆明园先后仿建有四处江南名园。其中之一即福海西北的安澜园。乾隆二十七年南巡时，曾以海宁的陈氏隅园作为行馆，并赐名“安澜园”。弘历很喜欢该园结构佳妙，回京后就在圆明园四宜书屋左右，仿其位置进行改建和增建。园成之后，也题名叫“安澜园”，当时仿建的另外三处名园，都在长春园内。一处是乾隆二十三年，在思永斋东院，仿照杭州西湖汪氏园而建的小有天园；一处是乾隆三十二年，仿照江宁（即南京）瞻园而建的如园；一处是乾隆三十七年，仿照苏州著名园林而建的狮子林。如园和狮子林，都分别有16个以上风景点。圆明园的西峰秀色，是雍正、乾隆二帝每于七月初七，设七夕巧筵的地方。这里可远借西山景色，河西岸有一组叠山，松峦峻峙，山涧之中瀑布飞流急下。在此近观仰视有如庐山的峻峙气势，取名叫“小匡庐”。坐石临流，仿自绍兴会稽山阴的兰亭。建于雍正朝，俗称流杯亭。东晋王羲之等文人雅士，曾于永和九年三月三（即上巳日），会于会稽兰亭，曲水流觞，赋诗修楔（祭祀活动），被传为佳话。圆明园的这座兰亭，在仄涧中，奇石峭列，激波分注，建有三开间的重檐敞亭。乾隆四十四年，收集到历代书法名家“兰亭序”帖6件，再加上大学士于敏中和弘历自己的手迹，合为“兰亭八柱册”。乾隆皇帝让把此亭改建为八方，并换成石柱，每柱刻一帖，这就是著名的圆明园兰亭八柱。廓然大公，后来也总称双鹤斋，仿无锡惠山的寄畅园而建。这一景的北半部，是乾隆中叶，仿照盘山静寄山庄的云林石室的山石，叠石而成的。嘉庆诗赞“双鹤斋”：结构年深仿惠山，名园寄畅境幽闲。曲蹊峭茜松尤茂，小洞崎岖石不顽。人们知道颐和园的谐趣园，是仿惠山寄畅园建的，其实，当时在圆明园也仿建有寄畅园。只是两次仿建意境各有千秋。武陵春色，摹写的是陶渊明《桃花源记》的艺术意境。建自康熙末年，雍正朝时叫桃花坞，曾是弘历读书的地方，书室叫“乐善堂”。此景，号称有山桃万株。苏州阊门内旧有一处桃花坞，相传是唐伯虎的故居。圆明园的桃花坞，虽然袭用其名，但桃花之盛远不是吴下所能相比。

圆明三园共有一百余处园中园和风景建筑群，即通常所说的一百景。集殿堂、楼阁、亭台、轩榭、馆斋、廊庑等各种园林建筑，共约16万平方米。比故宫的全部建筑面积还多一万平方米。园内的建筑物，既吸取了历代宫殿式建筑的优点，又在平面配置、外观造形、群体组合诸多方面突破了官式规范的束缚，广征博采，形式多样。创造出许多在我国南方和北方都极为罕见的建筑形式，如字轩、眉月轩、田字殿、还有扇面形、弓面形、圆镜形、工字形、山字形、十字形、方胜形、书卷形等等。加之在园林布局上，因景随势，千姿百态；园中各景又环环相套，层层进深，形成了丰富多采、自然和谐的整体美。法国传教士王致诚，曾有一段形象的描述，他说：圆明园的建筑，形式变化较多，而且参差不齐，不落窠臼。它的每一座小的宫殿，都仿佛是按照奇特的模型制成的，像是随意安排的，没有一座与其他一座雷同。一切都如此饶有兴趣，人们不能在一览之下，就领略这幅景色，必须一点一点地仔细研究它。

圆明园的寺庙园林，也是反映我国古代文化的一个侧面。安佑宫（鸿慈永祐），是按照景山寿皇殿的旧例建造的。用来祭奉康熙、雍正皇帝“神御”，是园内的皇家祖祠。宫为九间，正脊重檐歇山，以黄色琉璃瓦覆顶，是园内体量最大的一个建筑物。周围有乔松偃盖，中轴线南端有两对华表，给人以庄严肃穆之感。方壶胜境，位于福海东北海湾岸边，是按照幻想中的仙山琼阁建造的，据史料记载，这里供奉有2200多尊佛像，有30余座佛塔。这处建筑的前部底座以汉白玉砌成“山”字形，伸入水中。整个建筑体态庞大，金碧辉煌。每当清晨薄雾初起，该建筑在烟雾中时隐时现，宛如琼阁瑶台一般。这处建筑的格调和气势，是我国现存园林建筑中所少见的。舍卫城，是一座典型的佛教建筑。据说是仿照古代印度桥萨罗国都城的布局建造的，城内共有殿宇、房舍326间。康熙以来，每当皇帝、皇太后寿诞，王公大臣进奉的佛像都存放在这里。其中有纯金的、镀银的、玉雕的、铜塑的，年复一年，竟达数十万尊。圆明园遭劫掠焚毁，仅此一处所造成的损失，无论是经济价值还是文化艺术价值，都是难以用数字估量的。

清帝为了追求多方面的乐趣，在长春园北界还引进了一区欧式园林建筑，俗称“西洋楼”，由谐奇趣、线法桥、万花阵、养雀笼、方外观、海晏堂、远瀛观、大水法、观水法、线法山和线法墙等十余个建筑和庭园组成。于乾隆十二年（1747年）开始筹划，至二十四年（1759年）基本建成。由西方传教士郎世

宁、蒋友仁、王致诚等设计指导，中国匠师建造。建筑形式是欧洲文艺复兴后期"巴洛克"风格，造园形式为"勒诺特"风格。但在造园和建筑装饰方面也吸取了我国不少传统手法。

西洋楼的主体，其实就是人工喷泉，时称"水法"。特点是数量多、气势大、构思奇特。主要形成谐奇趣、海晏堂和大水法三处大型喷泉群，颇具殊趣。

谐奇趣：是乾隆十六年秋建成的第一座建筑，主体为三层，楼南有一大型海棠式喷水池，设有铜鹅、铜羊和西洋翻尾石鱼组成的喷泉。楼左右两侧，从曲廊伸出八角楼厅，是演奏中西音乐的地方。

海晏堂：是西洋楼最大的宫殿。主建筑正门向西，阶前有大型水池，池左右呈八字形排引有十二只兽面人身铜像（鼠、牛、虎、兔、龙、蛇、马、羊、猴、鸡、狗、猪，正是我国的十二个属相），每昼夜依次辍流喷水，各一时辰（2小时），正午时刻，十二生肖一齐喷水，俗称"水力钟"。这种用十二生肖代替西方裸体雕像的精心设计，实在是洋为中用，中西结合的一件杰作。

大水法：是西洋楼最壮观的喷泉。建筑造形为石龛式，酷似门洞。下边有一大型狮子头喷水，形成七层水帘。前下方为椭圆菊花式喷水池，池中心有一只铜梅花鹿，从鹿角喷水八道；两佣有十只铜狗，从口中喷出水柱，直射鹿身，溅起层层浪花。俗称"猎狗逐鹿"。大水法的左右前方，各有一座巨大的喷水塔，塔为方形，十三层，顶端喷出水柱，塔四周有八十八根铜管于，也都一齐喷水。当年，皇帝是坐在对面的观水法，观赏这一组喷泉的，英国使臣马戛尔尼、荷兰使臣得胜等，都曾在这里"瞻仰"过水法奇观。据说此处喷泉若全部开放，有如山洪爆发，声闻里许，在近处谈话须打手势，其壮观程度可想而知。

万花阵，是仿照欧洲的迷宫而建的花园。它的主要特点是：用四尺高的字图案的雕花砖墙，分隔成若干道迷阵，因而称作"万花阵"。盛时，每当中秋之夜，清帝坐在阵中心的圆亭里，宫女们手持黄色彩绸扎成的莲花灯，寻径飞跑，先到者便可领到皇帝的赏物。所以也叫黄花阵或黄花灯。虽然从入口到中心亭的直径距离不过30余米，但因为此阵易进难出，容易走入死胡同，清帝坐在高处，四望莲花灯东流西奔，引为乐事。

西洋楼景区，整个占地面积不超过圆明三园总占地面积的五十分之一，只是一个很小的局部而已。但它却是我国成片仿建欧式园林的一次成功尝试。这在我国园林史上，在东西方园林交流史上，都占有重要地位。它的兴建，曾在欧洲引起强烈反响。一位目睹过它的西欧传教士赞誉西洋楼：集美景佳趣于一处，凡人们所能幻想到的、宏伟而奇特的喷泉应有尽有，其中最大者，可以与凡尔赛宫及圣克劳教堂的喷泉并驾齐驱。这位传教士的结论是：圆明园者，中国之凡尔赛宫也。

圆明园体现了我国古代造园艺术之精华，是当时最出色的一座大型园林。乾隆皇帝说它：“实天宝地灵之区，帝王豫游之地，无以逾此”。而且在世界园林建筑史上也占有重要地位。其盛名传至欧洲，被誉为“万园之园”。法国大文豪雨果于1861年有这样的评价：“你只管去想像那是一座令人心神往的、如同月宫的城堡一样的建筑，夏宫（指圆明园）就是这样的一座建筑。”人们常常这样说：希腊有帕特农神殿，埃及有金字塔、罗马有斗兽场，东方有夏宫。”“这是一个令人叹为观止的无与伦比的杰作”。

圆明园，不仅以园林著称，而且也是一座皇家博物馆，收藏极为丰富，堪称文化宝库。雨果曾说：“即使把我国（法国）所有圣母院的全部宝物加在一起，也不能同这个规模宏大而富丽堂皇的东方博物馆媲美。”园内陈设豪华精美，收藏有大量的艺术珍品。据目睹过圆明园的西方人描述，“园中富丽辉煌之景象，非予所能描色揣称，亦非欧洲人所能想见”。“各种宝贵的珍品，均积聚于此皇家别墅，千门万户之中。”上等的紫檀雕花家具、精致的古代碎纹瓷器和珐琅质瓶盖，织金织银的锦缎、毡毯、皮货、镀金纯金的法国大钟，精美的圆明园总图，宝石嵌制的射猎图，风景人物栩栩如生的匾额，以及本国其它各种艺术精制品和欧洲的各种光怪陆离的装饰品，应有尽有。

圆明园内收藏有极为丰富的图书文物，现仅举几例。文源阁，是仿照宁波范氏天一阁而建的藏书楼，为著名的皇家北四阁之一，建成于乾隆四十年。阁中收藏乾隆钦定《四库全书》和康熙《古今图书集成》各一部。《四库全书》是我国古代最大的一部综合性丛书，收书3400余种，有近8万卷，36000余册。体现了我们国家的古代文明，显示了中华民族的伟大气魄。因《全书》篇幅浩瀚，当时又择其尤要者，编成《四库全书荟要》，计12000册。《荟要》共抄两部，

一部贮在故宫漪藻堂，另一部收藏于长春园含经堂的东厢“味腴书室”。另外，含经堂还有一外著名文轩--淳化轩，是专为收藏著名法帖《淳化阁帖》摹版而建的。《阁帖》原是北宁淳化三年（992年）摹刻的，包括王羲之、王献之乃至苍颉、夏禹、孔子等99人的书法名迹。帖分十卷，是我国的第一部大型丛帖，被誉为诸帖之祖。乾隆年间，根据《阁帖》的北宋“初拓赐本”，经过精审更定之后，进行钩摹刻石。历时三载，至乾隆三十七年（1772年）春，将所摹刻的144块帖版，镶嵌于淳化轩前的24间左右回廊之中。这就是著名的《乾隆重刻淳化阁帖》。不用说圆明园劫毁时，园内收藏的《四库全书》、《全书荟要》、《古今图书集成》、《淳化阁帖》摹版等珍贵图书文物，都未能幸免于难。这从一个侧面可反映出帝国主义侵略者火烧圆明园，对人类文化所造成的巨大破坏。

当然，任何事物都不会是十全十美的。圆明园如此之大，又是由几朝皇帝陆续扩建、改建的，加上封建帝王腐朽意识的影响，无论由哪个角度看，也还是有不足的。但是，就总体而言，圆明园确实是一座非常出色的优秀园林。可以说，它集我国几千年优秀造园艺术之大成，把我国古典园林推向一个新的高度。当年，凡目睹过其盛况的人，都说它确实是好。一些西方人，对中国园林刮目相看，也正是从圆明园开始的。总之，圆明园为我们这个文明古国赢得过荣誉，曾经是我们中华民族的骄傲！

然而，正是这座举世名园，竟于咸丰十年，即1860年的10月，遭到英法联军的野蛮洗劫的焚毁，成为我国近代史上的一页屈辱史。

### 罹劫及残毁

圆明园的园林杰作和艺术宝藏无一不是千百万劳动人民血汗和智慧的结晶，它既体现了我国封建时代的灿烂文化，也暴露了封建帝王的挥霍无度。由于封建统治者妄自尊大，闭关锁国，至清代中叶，整个国家的科学技术已大大落后于西方，阶级矛盾日益尖锐，1840年（道光二十年）西方殖民主义者挑起侵华战争--第一次鸦片战争；随后国内又爆发了反抗清王朝腐败统治的“太平天国”革命。

1856年10月，英国和法国在沙皇俄国和美国的支持配合下，联合发动了新的侵华战争--第二次鸦片战争。其目的是要攫取更大的殖民利益。他们先在广州两度挑起战端，但未达到预期愿望。为了对清政府直接施加压力，就决计陈兵京城。侵略军于1858年5月近逼天津，清政府被迫分别与英、法、俄、美签订了丧权辱国的"天津条约"。

1860年（咸丰十年）7月，英法侵者军舰队再次闯到大沽口外，以英法公使进京换约为幌子，一面武力进逼，一面诱以"讲和"。而又屡屡节外生枝，条件愈益苛刻，目的在于陈兵京师，逼清廷就范。面对侵略者的计谋，腐败无能的清政府却委曲乞和，迟迟不定战守之策。因而痛失歼敌战机，致使侵略军长驱直逼通州。9月21日，通州八里桥决战我军失利，次日晨，咸丰皇帝仓皇自圆明园逃奔承德避暑山庄而去。名为"北巡"，实则置祖宗社稷于不顾，自逃性命。从而造成都城无主，百官皆散，军卒志懈，民心大恐的危机局面，这就从根本上动摇了对入侵者的坚决抗御。

10月6日，英法联军绕经北京城东北郊直扑圆明园，当时，僧格林沁、瑞麟残部在城北一带稍事抵抗，即行逃散。法军先行，于当天下午经海淀，傍晚即闯至圆明园大宫门。此时，在出入贤良门内，有二十余名圆明园技勇太监同敌人接仗。"遇难不恐，奋力直前"，英勇抗击。但终因寡不敌众，圆明园技勇"八品首领"任亮等人以身殉职。至晚7时，法侵略军攻占了圆明园。管园大臣文丰投福海而死。

10月7日，英法侵华头目闯进圆明园后，立即"协派英法委员各三人会议分派园内之珍物。"法军司令孟托邦当天即函告法外务大臣："予命法国委员注意，先取在艺术及考古上最有价值之物品。予行将以法国极罕见之物由阁下以奉献皇帝陛下（拿破伦第三），而藏之于法国博物院。"英国司令格兰特也立刻"派军官竭力收集应属于英人之物件。"法英侵略军入园的第二天就不再能抵抗物品的诱惑力，军官和士兵们都成群打伙冲上前去抢劫，恶狼般地吞噬着园中的金银财宝和文化艺术珍品。

据参与的目击过劫掠现场的英法军官、牧师、记者描述：军官和士兵，英国人和法国人，为了攫取财宝，从四面八方涌进圆明园，纵情肆意，予取予夺，手



忙脚乱，纷纭万状。他们为了抢夺财宝，互相毆打，甚至发生过械斗。因为园内珍宝太多，他们一时不知该拿何物为好，有的搬走景泰兰瓷瓶，有的贪恋绣花长袍，有的挑选高级皮大衣，有的去拿镶嵌珠玉的挂钟。有的背负大口袋，装满了各式各样的珍宝。有的往外衣宽大的口袋里装进金条和金叶；有的半身缠着织锦绸缎；有的帽子里放满了红兰宝石、珍珠和水晶石；有的脖子上挂着翡翠项圈。有一处厢房里有堆积如山的高级绸缎，据说足够北京居民半数之用，都被士兵们用大车运走。一个英国军官从一座有500尊神像的庙里掠得一个金佛像，可值1,200英镑。一个法国军官抢劫了价值60万法郎的财物。法军总司令孟托邦的儿子掠得的财宝可值30万法郎，装满了好几辆马车。一个名叫赫利思的英军二等带兵官，一次即从园内窃得二座金佛塔（均为三层，一座高7英尺，一座高6.4英尺）及其他大量珍宝，找了7名壮夫替他搬运回军营。该人因在圆明园劫掠致富，享用终身，得了个“中国詹姆”的绰号。侵略者除了大肆抢掠之外，被他们糟踏了的东西更不计其数。有几间房子充满绸缎服装，衣服被从箱子拖出来扔了一地，人走进屋里，几乎可遮没膝盖。工兵们带着大斧，把家具统统砸碎，取下上边的宝石。一些人打碎大镜子，另一些人凶狠地向大烛台开枪射击，以此取乐。大部分法国士兵手抡木棍，将不能带走的東西全部捣碎。当10月9日，法国军队暂时撤离圆明园时，此处秀丽园林，已被毁坏得满目狼疮。

正当清政府对侵略者屈膝退让，答应接受全部“议和”条件，择日签约时，英国侵华头目额尔金、格兰特，为了给其侵华行为留下“赫然严厉”的印象，近使清政府长期俯首帖耳，竟借口其被俘人员遭到虐待，悍然下令火烧圆明园。10月18日、19日，三四千名英军在国内到处纵火，大火三昼夜不熄，全园化为一片火海，烟雾笼罩，火光烛天。相距20多里的北京城上空日光黯淡，如同日蚀，大量烟尘灰星直落巷衢。这座举世无双的园林杰作、中外罕见的艺术宝藏，被一齐付之一炬。事后据清室官员查奏，偌大的圆明三园内仅有二三十座殿宇亭阁及庙宇、官门、值房等建筑幸存，但门窗多有不齐，室内陈设、几案均尽遭劫掠。自此同时，万寿山清漪园、香山静宜园和玉泉山静明园的部分建筑也遭到焚毁。

据有关材料记载，10月18日，英国侵略军烧毁安佑宫时，因他们来得突然，主事太监又反锁着安佑宫的大门，所以，当时有太监、宫女、工匠等共300人，被活活烧死在安佑宫。侵略者的暴行，令人发指！

圆明园陷入一片火海的时候，额尔金得意妄行地宣称：“此举将使中国与欧洲惕然震惊，其效远非万里之外之人所能想像者”。放火的主使者把这种行径看作了不起的业绩，而全世界的正直人们却为这野蛮的罪行所激怒。雨果在1861年写道：“有一天，两个强盗走进圆明园，一个抢了东西，一个放了火。仿佛战争得了胜利便可以从事抢劫了……。在历史的面前，这两个强盗，一个叫法兰西，一个叫英吉利”。这段话代表着千百万正直人的心声。

圆明园的罪恶之火、耻辱之火还在熊熊燃烧之时，奉命留守北京的恭亲王奕訢，就全部承诺了侵略者的一切条件。不久即分别与英、法、俄诸国交换了《天津条约》文本，签订了《北京条约》。这样，帝国主义列强不仅霸占了我国的九龙司和北部的大片领土，勒索去1600万两白银的巨额军费赔款，并且大大加强了对清政府的政治、军事控制和对我国人民的经济、文化侵略。苦难深重的中华民族，进一步陷入了半殖民地的深渊。

圆明园被毁后，仍为皇家禁园。同治年间在慈禧太后的授意下，曾试图择要重修。当时拟修范围为20余处共3,000多间殿宇，主要集中在圆明园前朝区、后湖区和西部、北部一带，以及万春园宫门区、敷春堂口清夏堂等处。但开工不到10个月因财力枯竭被迫停修。此后，慈禧太后虽然修了颐和园，但并未完全放弃修复圆明园，直至光绪二十二年至二十四年，还曾修葺过圆明园双鹤斋、课农轩等景群。1900（光绪二十六年），八国联军入侵北京烧杀掳掠，慈禧太后挟光绪皇帝逃奔西安，京畿秩序大乱，八旗兵丁、土匪地痞即趁火打劫，把园内残存及陆续基本修复的共约近百座建筑物，皆拆抢一空，使圆明园的建筑和古树名木遭到彻底毁灭。

其后，圆明园的遗物，又长期遭到官僚、军阀、奸商的巧取豪夺，乃至政府当局的有组织地损毁。北洋政府的权贵们包括某些对圆明园遗址负有保护责任者，都倚仗权势，纷纷从园内运走大批石雕、太湖石等，以修其园宅。诸如京畿卫戍总司令王怀庆、巡阅使（后贿选为民国总统）曹锟、步军统领聂宪藩、

京师宪兵司令车庆云、公府秘书长王兰亭等都有此般劣迹，仅京兆伊（相当于后来的北平市市长）刘梦庚一人，在1922年秋季25天内，就强行运走长春园太湖石623大车、绮春园云片石104大车。当时先后驻防西苑一带的陆军十三师、十六师、国民军十一师、东北军五十三军、宋哲元二十九军等。都曾强行拆除圆明园围墙，私行出售砖石，或用以圈建西苑操场。颐和园、中山公园、燕京大学、北平图书馆等处，也相继运走大批石件。30年代初，在翻建高粱桥经海淀至玉泉山的石碴公路时，经北平市特别政府批准，将圆明园南边（4800米）和东边的虎皮石围墙全行拆除，砸成石碴用以铺路。于此前后，还多次公开变价批卖园内的大城砖、虎皮石和云片石，乃至西洋楼残存的大理石石柱等，这样终至圆明园沦为一片废墟。

一代名园圆明园，毁灭了。它毁于英法侵略者之手，也毁于清政府的腐败与无能。它的毁灭，既是西方侵略者野蛮摧残人类文化的见证，又是文明古国落后了也会挨打的证明。我们中华民族不想欺侮其他民族，但也决不允许别人欺侮我们。为了让圆明园的悲剧永远成为过去，努力奋进吧，炎黄子孙们！

#### 遗址保护及整修

全国解放后，党和人民政府十分重视圆明园遗址的保护，先后将其列为公园用地和重点文物保护单位，征收了园内旱地、进行了大规模植树绿化。在十年动乱中，遗址虽然遭到过一些破坏，但它毕竟被保住了：整个园子的水系山形和万园之园的园林格局依然存在，近半数的土地成为绿化地带。十几万株树木蔚然成林，多数建筑基址尚可找到，数十处假山叠石仍然可见，西洋楼遗址的石雕遗迹颇引人注目。尤其是1976年11月正式成立圆明园管理处之后，遗址保护、园林绿化有明显进展，西洋楼一带得到局部清理和整理，整个遗址东半部的园林道路、园杯设施从无到有，逐年有所改善，来园凭吊游览者有大幅度增加，圆明园园史展览馆，自1979年11月举办以来，至今累计接待中外观众近400万人次，其中十分之一为中小学生集体参观。国衰园毁，盛世兴园。在中华大地振兴之际，圆明园遗址迎来了新的春天。1983年，经国务院批准的《北京城市建设总体规划方案》，明确把圆明园规划为遗址公园。同年，北京市政府拨出专款，修复了长春园的东北南三面2,300米虎皮石围墙。在中央改革精神推动下，在北京市和海淀区政府及圆明园学会等社会各界的关心支持下，1984年9月

圆明园管理处与海淀乡园内农民实现了联合，采取民办公助形式，依靠社会各方面力量，共同开发建设遗址公园。从而使遗址保护整修工作迈出有决定意义的一步。首期工程是整修福海，1984年12月1日破土动工，历时7个月蓄水放船。1985年孟冬接着整修绮春园山形水系，至次年初夏完成。这两期工程均以挖湖补山为主，并修建园路桥涵和园林服务设施，清整古建基址，进行绿化美化。两年动土方40万立方米，使110公顷范围的山形水系基本恢复原貌，其中水面55公顷。福海中心蓬岛瑶台东岛的“瀛海仙山”亭和西岛庭院，绮春园的新宫门，以及西洋楼的欧式迷宫（万花阵），均已在原址按照原样修复。后又经两年整修提高，遗址公园初具规模，于1988年6月29日，正式向社会售票开放。6年来，园内游人已超过1,000万。圆明园的兴衰荣辱，是同中华民族的命运紧密相连的。遗址公园虽然只是刚刚起步，但它却是圆明园百年残毁史的重大转折，是名园复苏的历史性开端。也揭开了首都园林发展史新的一页，成为中华文明复兴的象征。

最近6年来，圆明园遗址公园的整修建设，又取得了较大进展。主要进行了6个方面的工作；一是继续完善提高了福海、绮春园两景区的绿化美化、园路桥涵和服务设施。二是园林遗址的清理整理水平有明显提高。这两个景区已有蓬岛瑶台、涵虚郎鉴、观澜堂、别有洞天、涵秋馆、天心水面、凤麟洲等十余处遗址，清运碴土，廓清石建基址，整理临水台基，界定遗址范围，立石镌刻盛时图景，供游人凭吊。三是择要修复了几处景点，如绮春园的仙人承露台、鉴碧亭和浩然亭，福海别有洞天的四方亭等。四是全面补砌了绮春园东半部的河湖自然石驳岸，计4,960延长米。五是全面清理整理了西洋楼遗址的西半部，清运碴土16,000立方米，廓清谐奇趣、蓄水楼、养雀宠、方外观、五竹亭、海晏堂等各座古建基址及喷水池，并归位大批台基柱壁等石件。六是从1992年12月起，全面整修长春园山形水系，至1994年4月基本竣工。共动土方20多万立方米，浚挖河湖水面28公顷，整砌石驳岸9,500延长米，整理山形42座，使该园山形水系均基本恢复原貌。并整理了海岳开襟、思永斋、流香诸、得全阁、鉴园、狮子林等处园林遗址和临水台基；挖掘复位乾隆御题匾诗刻石31件；种植各类乔灌木35400余株（丛），栽种莲藕10公顷。至此，圆明三园整个东半部（200公顷）已初步连片建成遗址园林。如今的圆明园遗址公园，已是山青水碧，林木葱茂，花草芬芳，景色诱人。它既富于遗址特色，又具备公园功能，是一处进行爱国主义教育及人民群众游憩的好去处。

由国家与园内农民联合建园这一形式，经数年过渡，全面开辟遗址公园的条件渐趋成熟。按照首都建设总体规划的要求，为加快遗址公园建设步伐，国家于1990年和1993年分两批正式办理了遗址公园全部占地的征用手续，将园内原以土地谋生的农民转为非农业人口，并安置其劳动力从事园林建设。这就为在圆明三园范围内全面建设遗址公园、保护文物古迹创造了全新的条件。今后，随着改革、开放的深入和国民经济的发展圆明园遗址定将建成一处别具特色的游览胜地，更好地为我国社会主义的两个文明建设服务。

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