

Authorizing a Disability Agency in Post-Mao China: Deng Pufang's Story as Biomythography

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One day in early 1971, officials of Beijing University (Beida) arrived at the 301st Brigade Military Hospital. They entered and approached the bedside of a former Beida graduate student, a young man who had lost the ability to walk two years earlier. The officials told the young man they wished to transfer him elsewhere to convalesce. Still the dutiful student, he consented, and in the afternoon he was packed into a jeep and moved to the Qing He Shelter (Qing He Jiuji Yuan) 45 kilometers northwest of Tiananmen Square.

Originally a nursing home for women, Qing He had become a place of last refuge for a variety of people following the Korean War. Wounded veterans without family were brought there and gradually all sorts of what Chinese then often called *fei ren* (social outcasts, lit., “garbage people”) ended up at Qing He. These outcasts included orphans, the mentally impaired, the deaf and mute, the chronically ill, and persons with other forms of bodily difference that were viewed locally as highly delegitimizing. According to published reports, conditions at the shelter were dire at the time when the former Beida student arrived. Most residents slept six or seven to a bed. Medical care was unavailable. Meals were usually nothing more than rice, bread, and small amounts of vegetables.

Before his arrival at Qing He, the young paralyzed man was already quite melancholy, as one of his biographers recounts. For, by then, the people plotting against him had already succeeded at stripping him of his cherished possessions: “his party membership, his university diploma and credentials, his fully healthy body, [and] his family” (Qin 1992:205). But once deposited at the shelter, the man’s mood quickly devolved from melancholy to despair, feeling as he did that his tormentors had gone out of their way “to throw him into the nadir of Chinese society,” “to turn him into living refuse” (1992:205–206). This mood shift is not difficult to understand, given the man’s situation in the winter and spring of 1971. During those first few months at Qing He, he was placed

alone in a small room without plumbing and left to handle his own incontinence with nothing more than a rag.

What I have described thus far is an episode from the authorized biography of Deng Pufang, the eldest son of Deng Xiaoping, one of China's top government leaders in the late 20th century.¹ This episode of Deng Pufang's Qing He shelter experience and other episodes of his life—his imprisonment by Red Guards, his crippling, and his partial rehabilitation—are widely known across large parts of China today, primarily because the state-controlled media has promoted these accounts as the foundational story in the formation of a government disability organization, the China Disabled Persons' Federation (Zhongguo Canji Ren Lianhehui). Launched by Deng Pufang and others in 1988, the federation is China's first nationwide government organization specifically devoted to assisting "disabled persons" (*canji ren*); and it has done more than any other institution in China to develop a specific branch of biomedical care: rehabilitation medicine.²

Although modest in size when compared to China's government ministries, the Disabled Persons' Federation stands out in part because it promotes rights discourses (in a sociopolitical context that external observers often view as bereft of such discourses) and in part because of the reputed speed with which it has grown since its founding. Federation documents state that within six years of its launch, the federation possessed more than 45,000 chapters nationwide and within seven years it had provided over two million citizens with various forms of rehabilitation treatment.³ Why did this organization emerge? And why has it proliferated so quickly?

Transnational and National Governance

Federation growth may be attributed to the support it has received from various branches of the Chinese government that have outfitted it with a considerable degree of material—durable resources (e.g., financial outlays, office buildings), intellectual capital (e.g., publishing houses, research institutes, access to mainstream media outlets), and personnel (e.g., administrators, clinicians, social workers). These government agencies have done so to a good degree because the party-state leadership has seen the federation as fulfilling a wide variety of transnational and national agendas (see Kohrman 1999).

Over the last several decades, international organizations (e.g., the United Nations, the World Health Organization, Rehabilitation International) have drawn on modernist discourses of development to position disability assistance and rehabilitation medicine as markers of national development. Partially in response, a host of Chinese state agencies did not just support the federation's formation in the 1980s but since then, have methodically celebrated the federation as emblematic of PRC attainments of modernity. These same agencies have also touted the federation's existence as institutional proof of China's commitment to fostering a distinctive national civility, one that is on par with or exceeds international standards of human rights.

More squarely in the domestic arena, these same agencies, in internal state documents, have regularly rationalized their support for the federation on the grounds that it has the capacity to serve as a valuable moral buttress for Chinese Communist Party (CCP) authority. As is well known, since the PRC's founding, the party-state has based its right of ascendance largely on its capacity to generate "national progress." And following Mao's death in 1976, the party-state has defined and pursued such progress increasingly through radical reductions in its welfare responsibilities and the growth of market competition—both of which have been dependent on, among other things, the cultural celebration of neoliberal individualism.

As they have gone about underwriting the federation and extolling it as indicative of the CCP's commitment to "serving the people," as illustrative of the party's high moral stature, government agencies have positioned the federation as a barrier against popular disgruntlement toward the post-Mao leadership's decimation of previously established social guarantees.⁴ Moreover, the party-state has used the federation to strengthen its neoliberal-like discourses. By popularizing the category of "disability" in terms of a classless medical model that pathologizes the "disabled" as atomized persons with mechanistic failings of individual bodies (rather than people suffering from the failings of society),⁵ it has provided resources to care for only a token number of the more than 60 million persons officially recognized as disabled in China today. The party-state has positioned the federation in a way that it helps in the dual project of steering the Chinese population away from expecting comprehensive state redress of inequality and toward accepting as "normal" an image of the self-directed, competent, "able-bodied" person.⁶

To be sure, these transnational and national moves of governance and normalization have not been lost on China's citizenry. In discussing the federation with me, quite a number of PRC residents, particularly urban intellectuals, have underscored a variety of these moves and how they have been catalysts for federation development. But in general, over the last decade, most people who have talked to me about the federation's growth have tended to downplay or pass over these moves and have instead emphasized a different social force as fueling the federation's expansion: the bodily presence of Deng Pufang himself. And what is particularly interesting here is that when new or old acquaintances speak to me about the role Deng Pufang has played in the federation's formation, it is less in terms of how he has leveraged his father's authority for federation development or benefited himself by serving broader party-state interests of governance. Instead, what people have regularly emphasized is Deng's disablement. Time and time again, people have said to me that if not for the young Deng Pufang's journey into paralysis, the federation would not exist today.

On one level, that people attribute such sociopolitical significance to Deng Pufang's paraplegia is not surprising. Deng and his federation associates, in their efforts to develop the federation bureaucracy over the last decade, have carefully deployed and packaged his persona, particularly his bodily presence.

This has involved more than having Deng Pufang preside as the federation's central authority figure at nearly all the institution's key events. It has entailed a particular bodily display at such events. During these events and in the many federation-generated visual representations (photographic and video) of them, Deng Pufang sits assuredly not in a four-legged chair like others around him but on a wheelchair. Moreover, when one queries high-ranking federation officials about him, they attest to the vital use they and Deng Pufang have regularly made of what they refer to as his "highly visible disability" (*hen mingxian de canji*). They say that in order to generate resources for the federation, clear away intragovernmental hindrances to federation growth, and curry goodwill for federation objectives, they have found it indispensable to keep Deng and his wheelchair in constant motion, moving across the elite landscapes of China and the world as a public figure meeting with Chinese and foreign dignitaries.

But how is it that Deng Pufang's bodily presence has become so influential for the emergence of a new apparatus of normalization and social assistance? How are we to understand the ways that productive forces of biopolitical governance have been embedded within and directed through this elite man's "bodiliness" (Turner 1995)?

Missing Affliction

I would suggest that these questions point us to areas of social formation yet to be adequately explored by anthropologists. Although anthropologists have shown a growing interest in "studying up" in recent years, and although cases of biomedical institution building spawned by elite bodily experiences have become increasingly commonplace—the "humanitarian" efforts of Franklin Roosevelt, Queen Noor of Jordan, Eunice Kennedy Shriver, or the current King and Queen of Thailand are probably the most oft-noted—rarely have anthropologists examined these kinds of cases.⁷

Of course, this is not to say that anthropologists have been uninterested in the relationship between individual actors and the formation of "biobureaucracy" (the intersection of biomedicine and institutionality). Indeed, over the last two decades, ethnographers of science and medicine have been keenly interested in examining the ways culturally embedded participants come to construct biomedical apparatuses, be they psychiatric treatments, medical-school curriculae, or molecular research centers.

At the risk of overgeneralization, it can be said that to date, much of this interest has led researchers in one of two broad directions: The first has been the study of the ways biomedical providers, researchers, and teachers (what we might call "biocrats") produce, learn, reconfigure, and extend biomedical knowledge and techniques in the context of global–local change (see, e.g., Latour 1979; Luhrmann 2000; Rabinow 1996; Young 1995). The second has centered on people whom anthropologists have largely treated as distinctively different from biocrats, people whom we might call "the afflicted." In this latter approach, anthropologists have explored how, as the afflicted move through everyday experiences of suffering and encounter biomedical institutions, specific

somatosocial processes prompt them to support, resist, or reconfigure those institutions (see, e.g., Desjarlais 1997; Kleinman and Kleinman 1991; Lock 1993; Ong 1995). This second stream of research, it should be acknowledged, has been closely tied to the study of embodiment, a form of analysis centered around how bodies may work as existential and practical mediums through which human action, intentionality, and/or agency are generated (Bourdieu 1977, 1990; Csordas 1994; Turner 1992).

The development of these two broad approaches—one centered around biocrats, one focused on the afflicted—has been of great importance because it has promoted deeper understandings of the ways that people in various social contexts may be, at once, biomedicine's objects and its complicit framers. But in their attempt to discern how actors in different settings shape biomedical apparatuses, champions of these two approaches have to date largely overlooked what for numerous biobureaucracies appears to be a potent catalyst of growth: elite affliction.⁸

Subjectification

This oversight is further noteworthy, given a set of analytical issues raised by Michel Foucault. As is well known, in the latter part of his career, Foucault often examined what he called "subjectification." For him, subjectification was a set of historically and socially specific processes that allowed people, initially elite Europeans, to become heroically oriented ethical subjects: "They were a set of operations that worked on many levels of the European elite's lives: on [their] bodies, on their own souls, on their own thoughts, on their own conduct" (Foucault 1980). And they involved at once externally induced discipline and self development, that is, the "way a human being turns him- or herself into a subject" (Rabinow 1984:11).⁹

In his last writings, lectures, and interviews, Foucault began to consider how subjectification might relate to the creation of new social movements and institutions and thus new modes of normalization and medicalization. In terms of his own research on the history of the self in Europe, he struggled to see how individual cases of subjectification could precipitate "an attempt to normalize the population" (Foucault 1984:341). But he increasingly urged other scholars to probe this question.¹⁰

Since then, although Foucault's oeuvre largely pertains to Europe, academics who live in many parts of the world—including China—have become more and more engaged with his theory.¹¹ Among these scholars, a number have begun exploring issues loosely related to subjectification in a variety of contexts, including late-imperial and modern China.¹² But this upsurge in Foucault-informed research notwithstanding, to date, few scholars have examined how subjectification may be implicated in the creation of what in our modern/postmodern epoch has been one of the most significant structures of normalization: biomedicine.

In response to this gap and in response to those intellectual lacunae already mentioned, I wish to examine the narrative composition of Deng Pufang's

story as the means by which he has become the pivotal figure in a new biomedical bureaucracy in China. To understand how Deng has been positioned in contemporary China as an engine of growth for the China Disabled Persons' Federation, it is necessary for us to examine how his life story has been made particularly meaningful. I hope to demonstrate that at play within the story is a specific "technology of the constitution of the self which cuts across symbolic systems while using them" (Foucault 1984:369) and that this "technology" has allowed Deng Pufang's biography to become not just agency laden but politically pivotal for the proliferation of the federation.

In the pages that follow, I will probe subjectification from a distinct perspective. Inspired by contemporary China scholars' insights on narrativity, I will explore how Deng Pufang's coming-into-disablement has been formally narrated as a morally infused signifier about subjectivity and its relationship to suffering, nation making, and social responsibility. I will argue that a specific set of discursive techniques unique to China's post-Mao context has enabled Deng Pufang's subjectification to become itself a discursive force for the emergence of a new biobureaucracy, the China Disabled Persons' Federation.

Methodology and Narrativity

Before proceeding, I should note that in this article, I do not provide an account of how Deng Pufang and others "built" the China Disabled Persons' Federation.¹³ Rather, my analysis of the structuring of Deng Pufang's story follows its chronology only up to 1981, several years before the federation's founding. It must additionally be noted that most of my information about Deng Pufang does not come from the usual methods medical anthropologists use to gather information about illness: one-on-one interviews with a sick person, with the sick person's kith and kin, and/or with their health-care providers. Rather than relying on interview transcripts, such as those from my relatively brief 1998 conversation with Deng Pufang,¹⁴ my sources for this article tend to be far more publicly accessible. Indeed, my sources are predominantly the very same windows through which most people in China have been permitted to peer into Deng Pufang's life. They are hagiographic texts: articles published by the federation's media outlets and *The Deng Pufang Road* (Qin 1992), a book-length biography written by one of Deng Pufang's friends and political beneficiaries who interviewed him at length.¹⁵

Together these hagiographic texts comprise something akin to what, for many in China, has become a foundational narrative for the China Disabled Persons' Federation, what we might see as a publicly circulated storyline of Deng Pufang's subjectification, a tale about how he came to be a man with a disability and an advocate for disability assistance. They comprise what I call a "biomythography of statesmanship," a celebratory story of how Deng Pufang—owing to links between his birth position and his surrounding social world—came to develop a vocational intentionality: a desire, a calling, to assemble institutional assistance for China's inclusion in an emergent trans-national category of the afflicted (i.e., persons with disabilities).¹⁶

How should ethnographers treat such a narrative and what can they learn from examining it? I would contend that rather than seeing it as spurious and thus as an invalid object of scholarly inquiry, we should handle it as numerous anthropologists—including those working in the anthropology of China and of medicine (e.g., Ann Anagnost [1997], Arthur Kleinman [1995], and Lisa Rofel [1999])—have in recent years been treating narratives about life and bodily experience: as truth claims that are always framed by and constitutive of personal, political, and historical contingencies. We should explore Deng Pufang's biomythography for what it is: a complex brew of fact, elision, obfuscation, genre, discourse, and ideology.

Toward this end, I draw overtly on anthropological insights about a broad set of narrative forms known as "speaking bitterness" (*suku*). From China's May Fourth Movement (1919) to the present, speaking bitterness has become ubiquitous across the PRC as a set of narrative techniques for representing suffering, often subaltern experiences of suffering. In recent years, speaking-bitterness techniques have also been frequently employed for the production of *shanghen wenxue* ("literature of the wounded" or "scar literature"). This genre is composed of stories in which elites, most of whom are intellectuals, describe their persecution at the hands of Maoist radicals.

Transgressing received academic boundaries between literary studies, history, and anthropology, Rofel (1999) and Anagnost (1997) have illuminated ways that scar literature and other speaking-bitterness genres have been pivotal for the production of key sociopolitical phenomena, specifically Chinese nationalism, CCP authority, and subjectivity.¹⁷ Among her insights, Rofel points out that speaking bitterness has established narrative tropes for subject making and resource allocation, in which China's citizenry regularly have been

called on to claim heroic stature in the eyes of the nation-state. . . . Speaking bitterness created the conditions of visibility for a new socialist subject, one whose dilemmas in life might lead to state-sanctioned rewards. Such rewards might range from symbolic praise to concrete manifestations in terms of . . . state power itself. [1999:141]

How have speaking bitterness genres carried out such sociopolitical labor? In part by greatly focusing on bodies, Anagnost argues. As many readers of speaking bitterness know, bodily experiences are commonly invoked. Indeed, it could be said that in most speaking-bitterness expressions, bodies function as central topics of narration; they are what Anagnost calls a "privileged signifier of the 'real'" (1997:18–19). This intensive attention to bodies, she says, helps speaking bitterness to produce a "politics of presence" (1997:4), in which the orator claims to have or is attributed with having the force of history. By narrating one's own or another's unfolding encounters with the sociopolitics of the 20th century, and by narrating those encounters in terms of bodily experiences, particularly extreme bodily affliction, "the national subject is made to embody abstract conceptions" and to become "emblematic of the nation speaking with the voice of history" (1997:4).

In this article, I wish to contribute to an analysis of speaking bitterness as well as a politics of presence. By exploring how his body has been scripted into hagiographic texts, I aim to highlight the ways in which Deng Pufang's corporeality has been vested with "the power to speak with the force of history" (Anagnost 1997:4). In doing so, though, I also strive to expand Anagnost's "history of presencing" (1997:20) into a new domain. Although sharing her interest in the effects of narrative on Chinese nation building, class consciousness, and identity formation, my goal is to explore how these effects can converge to generate the seedbed for a further effect in a new biobureaucratic formation. My agenda is to show how bodily narration has worked to furnish Deng Pufang's subjectification story with a unique governmental authority, one that has been pivotal for the creation of a new biomedical/welfare apparatus in China.

The Deng Pufang Story: The Early Years

The Deng Pufang storyline, as most often presented to the public, falls into four chronologically ordered phases. In each, Deng's body works as a privileged signifier of the "real." In phase one, specific bodily practices allow Deng to become incorporated into a distinctive hyperelite, male, socialist subject position. In phase two, Deng Pufang makes efforts to ameliorate the sociopolitical disruptions wrought by the Cultural Revolution, efforts that lead directly to his paraplegia. In phase three, facing a strange mix of persecution and privilege, Deng Pufang struggles to address his health-care crises. And in phase four, as a consequence of social change and ongoing challenges with bodily suffering, Deng Pufang comes to a new consciousness about the need for institutional support for people in China whom he understands to be "persons with disabilities."

To make sense of Deng Pufang's presencing in phase one, we need to start by illuminating the contradictory social world he and his siblings were born into. In the PRC, the term *gaogan zidi* (lit. "the children of high-ranking officials") indirectly references the special privilege (*tequan*) they command due to their parent's rank. An important aspect of their experience, particularly among their older cohorts, is the deep structural paradox that underlies their lives: On the one hand, children like Deng Pufang and his siblings were thrown at birth into a setting of great privilege that swaddled them in a level of social status unfamiliar to nearly all other Chinese people. On the other hand, they grew up at the epicenter of an egalitarian revolution that was acutely hostile to the notions of private property, inheritance, and social domination. From the beginning, Deng Pufang and his paradoxical situation gradually began to fuse, and, eventually, aspects of his body-self and his social context became inextricably entangled with each other (cf. Bourdieu 1977:87–88; Connerton 1989:72).

A good example of this fusing—one of the earliest—was in regard to his naming. Biographical accounts suggest that, through naming, Deng Pufang was positioned within not only normative expectations of daily life, such as a gendered division of labor, but also within the CCP's imaginary of China's

past and future. Deng Pufang's mother, Zhuo Lin,¹⁸ had trouble breastfeeding her newborn son so she enlisted the services of a pro-Communist farming family (Deng 1995). That family's wet nurse, who nourished the child with her peasant (and, thus, revolutionary) body, gave him the "milk name" Pangzi, or Chubby. When the time came for Pangzi to attend school, his parents honored Deng Xiaoping's closest military colleague, Commander Liu Bocheng, by giving Liu the cherished task of choosing a formal name for their son. Liu fulfilled this task by splitting the sound *pang* into two sounds, *pu* and *fang*; he then chose the two ideograms for these sounds that translate as "simple" and "righteous."¹⁹ The Deng family apparently was thrilled with Liu's selection. Qin Yan, author of *The Deng Pufang Road*, relates, "Not only did the name *embody* [the family's] deep love and wishes for New China's future, but it also *embodied* memories of the many who sacrificed themselves for military victory" (1992:100, emphasis added).

As Deng Pufang and his siblings entered early childhood, their parents pressed them to help the Maoist project. The main way Deng Xiaoping and Zhuo Lin pursued this course was by pointing their children down an "educational road" so that they would have the skills to be China's future leaders (Qin 1992:107). For Deng Pufang, this involved testing into and attending the finest schools China had to offer, many of which were all-male (or mostly male) institutions and filled with the progeny of both revolutionary martyrs and top military figures. Deng Pufang's educational road, however, entailed more than just attending classes with boys of elite communist backgrounds and taking exams. For the developing Deng Pufang, school life involved learning a number of embodied disciplines.

This is exemplified by a story Pufang reputedly related to Deng Xiaoping and Zhuo Lin in 1952, just after the Deng family moved to Beijing. Pufang was attending his first day of third grade at the most elite primary school in China, Bayi, which was specially created for the "flowers of the fatherland." His classmates included the offspring of military martyrs, mid-level communist functionaries, and high party and army figures such as Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Zhu De, and Ye Jianying.

My teacher chided me for not sitting straight in my chair. Afterward, the teacher questioned me as to whether I avoid sitting up straight because at home I have lots of sofas to lounge around on. I said to the teacher, no, and explained that the reason [I slouch in my chair] is because I am too fat. When the class heard that, they all broke out into huge laughter. [Qin 1992:111]

This excerpt, I would suggest, articulates most importantly that Deng Pufang's childhood required him to mold his body to fit Maoist ideals, at times causing him to experience struggle and humiliation. Although an emphasis on vertical posture is not unique to the China of Deng Pufang's youth, the concept of the upright (*zheng*) resonates strongly with the young Maoist state's project for erecting a strong national body politic—a project that Chairman Mao crystallized on October 1, 1949, when he proclaimed from Tiananmen Square the country's

founding: “The People’s Republic of China now stands up” [*Xianzai Zhongguo Renmin Gongheguo zhanqilai*].

In addition to postural training, accounts of Deng’s childhood also emphasize various activities centered around movement (*dong*). These activities, or “symbolic gymnastics,” as Bourdieu (1977:2) would call them, convey messages about Deng’s paradoxical engagement with Maoist ideals and his bodily embrace of the social standing afforded him as the male scion of Deng Xiaoping. As Deng Pufang matured, one activity to which he and his siblings were often exposed and that played a significant role in their rearing was manual labor (*laodong*). Deng Xiaoping often organized his family into a manual-labor brigade (*laodong dui*) to toil outside the home. The more difficult tasks were assigned to the Deng males, rather than to the females (Qin 1992:122).²⁰ Another group of activities pertaining to movement that were central to Deng Pufang’s childhood were sports (*yundong*). Some of Deng’s fondest childhood memories involve attending athletic events at large stadiums with Deng Xiaoping or joining his father for swims at the club reserved for high officials (Gaoji Ganbu Julebu) or the special resort provided for them at the Beidaihe seashore (Qin 1992:117). Deng Pufang also frequently played ping-pong and badminton throughout his secondary and university schooling. In the summer months, he and his elite male classmates organized swimming outings to lakes in central Beijing and to the Summer Palace. And together with his largely male academic cohort,²¹ Deng played organized basketball until the onset of the Cultural Revolution.

As with all representations of Deng Pufang’s childhood, there is no single way of interpreting his sporting life. Biographical accounts of Deng’s sportiness seem to confirm his patrician pedigree, for in the early years of the People’s Republic, sports largely took place in relatively formal public settings (e.g., schools, military bases, government compounds). Yet many Chinese urbanites have told me that representations of Deng Pufang’s athleticism may also be understood as articulating a broad-sweeping allegiance to both Maoist and Euro-American principles of modernity, nation building, and subjectivity. Possibly because of his early exposure to a wide variety of biosocial discourses that accompanied Marxism’s introduction to China and fueled the rise of nationalism in late-19th- and early-20th-century China—discourses such as biomedicine, eugenics, and social Darwinism (see Dikotter 1992)—Mao fervently championed sports and lashed out at China’s erstwhile idealization of the sedentary scholar-official (Brownell 1995:57; Spence 1990:308). Mao articulated this view as early as 1917, when he published an essay entitled “Study of Body Training,” (*Tiyu zhi yanjiu*) in which he describes athleticism as a source of Western domination and thus a necessity for China’s own salvation, economic development, and nation-building.²²

Before it shifts to the events leading up to Deng’s paralysis, one of the last episodes chronicled in *The Deng Pufang Road* is his admittance to university. In 1962, Deng Pufang completed his secondary studies, took the nationwide university entrance exam, and was admitted to Beida. This account of Deng’s

college entrance, I would suggest, conveys complex social information about his absorption into the paradoxical world of the children of high-ranking officials. Almost since Beida's creation, many in China have considered it the finest university in the country. To win admission during the Maoist epoch, students were required to fulfill several demanding criteria. They needed not only to graduate from top secondary schools and achieve the highest entrance-exam scores but also to possess impeccable socialist credentials (both ascribed and achieved). Yet there was at least one more criterion for admission, namely, good health. Even today, all Chinese universities require prospective students to take and pass a physical exam (*shenti jiancha*).²³ For the 18-year-old Deng Pufang, the exam was never a concern. In the words of a Number 13 Middle School employee, Teacher Li, "[Pufang's] body was perfect. He loved to play ball. He loved to do manual labor. And he was tall" (Qin 1992:135).

Phase Two: Cadre Conflicts

Phase two of Deng Pufang's biography describes the events leading up to this "perfect" body's crippling. Here, the narrative follows the lines of classic speaking-bitterness literature. Not only does it tell the tale of an upstanding citizen who is wounded as a consequence of unbearable sociopolitical predicaments, it tells it in terms of a cast of known agents acting within specific contexts. As such, it uses what Anagnost describes as "telescoping vision," a technique that lies at the "very heart of" speaking bitterness when used as a revolutionary narrative: a mode of representation that violently collapses "abstract forces into adversaries who can be identified in local sites of struggle." Owing to these metonymic reductions, we are able to see the wounded subject as the "material embodiment" of history in the making (Anagnost 1997:27).

The fact that Deng Pufang's hagiography has furnished him with special bodily authority stems in part from the "known personalities" (e.g., Deng Xiaoping, Mao Zedong, Jiang Qing, Liu Xiaoqi) that this and subsequent phases of his story invoke and in part from the "local sites" wherein Deng Pufang is situated. Because his biographers (Deng 1995; Qin 1992; Ruan 1992; Wang n.d.) offer us, the viewing public, insight into a cast of characters who are already well known to us (and who are known to possess the power to speak with the authority of history), Deng Pufang's wounding takes on a heightened sociopolitical presence, one that far exceeds that of most Cultural Revolution "victims." By allowing us to peer into the adversarial relationships of China's elite and to see Deng's paralysis as a product of his "virtuous" attempts to respond to those adversarial relationships within contexts such as Beijing University, his biographers help to inscribe Deng Pufang's body with a historical force few in China today possess.

To understand how this works, it is necessary to highlight further features of Deng's subjectification. In particular, it is necessary to relate one of the key objectives of his childhood to what is now understood by many in China to have been the political landscape of his adolescence and early adulthood. Without question, an objective underlying Deng Pufang's rearing as a "flower

of the fatherland” was social reproduction: for him to join the PRC’s largely male officialdom and to become a Chinese Communist Party *ganbu* (cadre).²⁴

Though seemingly innocuous to non-Chinese speakers, most well-educated PRC residents today are aware that during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, the term *ganbu* was a topic of fierce contention among the nation’s most well known and powerful leaders, particularly Chairman Mao, Deng Xiaoping, and Mao’s heir apparent in the 1950s and early 1960s, Liu Shaoqi. Owing to the recent traffic in and out of China of what we might call post-1949 “court chronicles”—some written by academic historians, others by journalists and eyewitnesses—a large percentage of well-read Chinese citizens know that Mao, Deng, and Liu all felt that cadres should be quick, efficient, and disciplined; but beyond that, they had deep disagreements on the subject. Whereas Deng, Liu, and others within the party leadership increasingly believed that cadre competence needed to be defined more in terms of technical skill, the chairman tended to equate competence with political purity. In the idiom of the period, Deng and Liu and their allies felt it was more important for cadres to be “expert,” while Mao and his closest colleagues primarily emphasized their being “red.”²⁵

This disagreement became particularly significant after the Great Leap Forward proved to be a catastrophe.²⁶ In the early 1960s, with the devastation still unfolding, Deng, Liu, and others took steps to change government policy and sideline Mao. Instead of pursuing economic growth by having cadres push communist theory, the Deng and Liu group demanded that cadres champion more pragmatic scientific, economic, and managerial techniques. Along these lines, they directed cadres to revive the rural economy by allowing farmers to produce for themselves, rather than for the collective. At the universities, they ousted those they viewed as ideologically minded officials and replaced them with more scientifically oriented scholars (Schneider 1989).

What was Deng Pufang’s position during this period? His biographers suggest that to a large degree, it was one of filial allegiance to his father and his father’s policies. He joined the Communist Youth League in his sophomore year of high school, and a short time afterward, he became a member of the Chinese Communist Party. Two years later, he was accepted into the technophysics department at Beida. The department, then nearly an all male program, had just been created as part of Deng and Liu’s mandate for building a national infrastructure based on rational planning and “high” technology.²⁷ In 1966, as Deng was completing his bachelor of science degree and preparing to start a master’s degree in nuclear physics, he and thousands of other students throughout China went off to the countryside to help with the Four Cleanups, a campaign launched by Deng Xiaoping and Liu Shaoqi to educate rural cadres in the ways of “scientific management.”

Despite this seemingly salutary merging of Deng Pufang’s life and his father’s policies, texts like *The Deng Pufang Road* emphasize that as he progressed through college, his filial devotion increasingly put him at risk. This Qin attributes directly to the Cultural Revolution (1966–76) and his responses to it.²⁸ As much as he could, Deng Pufang tried to discourage the Cultural

Revolution almost from the moment he learned of its launch, in June 1966, when he and his classmates were returning to Beijing after months in the countryside promoting the Deng and Liu agenda. The site of most of these dampening efforts—Beida—is quite significant. Possibly more than any other venue in China, Beida is generally recognized across the PRC today as having served as a key spawning ground for the Cultural Revolution. Indeed, it is viewed as having been something of a laboratory for the radical policies that would eventually engulf the country.

After they heard about the Cultural Revolution over the loudspeaker when their train was pulling into Beijing, Deng Pufang and his classmates went directly back to campus, forgoing stops at any of their family homes along the way. What did the group find on their arrival at Beida? The campus was in a state of political fervor. Plastered on walls everywhere were large posters denouncing—sometimes metaphorically, sometimes directly—the policies promoted by Liu and Deng. Students of reputedly good (nonbourgeois) family backgrounds had formed paramilitary groups, named Red Guards, to insure that the Cultural Revolution would be carried out, and the Red Guards were starting to clash openly with resisters (Qin 1992:174–175). Deng Pufang’s early responses to this fervor were to intervene on behalf of students attacked because of their “bad” family background and to communicate what was happening at Beida to his parents. At one juncture, we are told, he even went so far as to tear down a large-character poster (*dazibao*) filled with pronouncements attributed to Jiang Qing, the wife of Mao, and deliver it by bicycle to Deng Xiaoping (1992:179).

It should be noted that here, as in the other phases of Deng’s story, his biographers never reveal either his or their own views about Mao. A good case in point is Ruan 1992, which appears in a China Disabled Persons’ Federation publication. Although chronicling how Deng was increasingly harmed by the Cultural Revolution and its leaders, Ruan never expresses any judgments about Mao. More to the point, as is the case with Qin’s book-length biography, nowhere in Ruan’s essay is Mao specifically blamed for Deng’s difficulties specifically or the Cultural Revolution more generally. Instead, as is the case with Qin, Ruan casts the blame on “leftists” or named figures from the Maoist camp, people such as Nie Yuanzi, the Gang of Four, and Kang Sheng, all of whom they call everything from “fascists,” “feudalists,” to “dictators,” and “murderers.” In this regard, Ruan and Qin seem to walk a fine line: they use the idiom of speaking bitterness to criticize known personalities while at the same time they—and by extension Deng Pufang—remain in compliance with long-standing party rules, which limit open criticism of Mao’s political life.

Deng Pufang biographers Qin and Ruan continue to walk this fine line as they explain his growing predicament from 1966 to 1968. This was an intensely tumultuous period when the Cultural Revolution spread from Beijing to nearly every community in the PRC, inflicting shock and suffering on millions. It was also a period when Maoists continued to chip away at Deng’s and Liu’s authority. They labeled them China’s number one and two “capitalist

readers,” promoted diatribes against them in the press, directed Red Guards to demonstrate incessantly outside the two leaders’ homes, and then imprisoned Liu and sent Deng and his wife to live under house arrest in Jiangxi Province.

Deng Pufang’s existence during this period is described not only by way of a telescoping vision but also through the use of Deng’s body as a privileged signifier. For instance, Qin Yan tells us that, as this period progressed, a Deng family meeting delivers a severe somatosocial blow to Deng Pufang and his filial self when Deng Xiaoping announces to his children that soon, he might be of dubious value to them. Somewhat cryptically, he advises that rather than follow their parents’ path, his children should take a “detour.” After the meeting, Deng Pufang returns to Beida and falls into a state of deep depression. He ignores his personal hygiene, eats little, and rarely gets out of bed. Even his classmates’ pleas for him to cheer up and join them in some basketball (and their accusations that he is acting like a girl for not doing so) are of little use in unseating his malaise (Qin 1992:183–185).

Yet in this phase of the story, by far the most important representations—for Deng Pufang’s contemporary presencing, for the creation of his biomythography, and for the positioning of his subjectification as discursive effect—are those surrounding his crippling. Here, narrative attention to telescoping and bodily signifiers is thorough. According to Ruan (1992), in the spring of 1968, as leftist-induced chaos raged throughout much of the country, one of the most notorious Maoist activists at Beida, Nie Yuanzi, directed the Red Guards to detain Deng Pufang and his sister Deng Nan (a Beida sophomore). The two were imprisoned in separate rooms of the campus physics building. Deng Nan was released relatively quickly, but Deng Pufang was held for four months. During the detention, Red Guards subjected him to repeated interrogation, lengthy periods of food and sleep deprivation, and other kinds of abuse. As the months passed, Deng’s captors became increasingly agitated by his unwillingness to give a full self-criticism. Eventually they proclaimed that if he did not comply with their wishes—if he did not state everything he knew regarding the party, admit anti-Maoist sentiments, and expose his mother and father as traitors—his party membership would be revoked and his academic credentials invalidated (Ruan 1992:2). Deng’s subsequent moves are robustly described in *The Deng Pufang Road* as antifascist, sacrificial, and protective of family, party, and nation. Deng declared, once again, that he would not provide the denunciation his captors demanded. He then surreptitiously penned this note:

I am infinitely devoted to the party and to Chairman Mao. But owing to the Cultural Revolution, which I don’t understand, and particularly owing to questions about my father, which I don’t understand, things are being said that should not be said. This talk directly relates to secrets within the nucleus of the proletarian leadership that cannot be disseminated. The rebels demand that I talk. But I cannot talk. Under this situation there is really no road left for me to travel. [Qin 1992:190]

Next, after receiving permission to use the bathroom, Deng performed an arresting act of embodiment: he attempted suicide by throwing himself out of a third-story window.

Phase Three: The Body in Pain

On the way down from the window, Deng's body bounced off a steel guide wire and flipped before thudding to the ground (Qin 1992:198). After relating these vivid details, Qin repeatedly returns to a theme Deng's other biographers regularly use to depict his postfall existence: the body in pain. This representational emphasis, it should be noted, is central to the main question being explored here: how speaking-bitterness techniques have enabled Deng Pufang's subjectification to be fashioned into a significant force for a new institution of biomedical intervention.

Since their inception, speaking-bitterness genres have repeatedly invoked the body, particularly the body in pain. This theme has been not only a defining feature of speaking bitterness but a central mechanism by which these genres have promoted national subjects (Anagnost 1997:18). By "giving voice" to experiences of corporal and psychic suffering fueled by historically framed injustices (such as Japanese colonialism or the Cultural Revolution), speaking bitterness has helped the CCP foster moral, knowable citizens, deserving and recognizable subjects who are ready to revivify and rectify the polity.

Unlike most book-length speaking-bitterness stories set during the Cultural Revolution, in which once-upstanding citizens (say, intellectuals or government officials) find their lofty official status comprehensively inverted and themselves facing related afflictions, Deng's story has an important distinction: his first few years of postfall suffering are frequently marked by substantial privilege. In phases three and four of his story, like most literature of the wounded, Deng is visited by attack and calamitous misfortune, and he struggles with intense pain. But his situation is not that of constant dispossession. Rather, he is frequently described as convalescing in situations of relative luxury.

I wish to suggest that this representational jumble of pain, persecution, and privilege has been vital in forging Deng Pufang's subjectification as a discursive force and for presencing Deng Pufang as embodying great political power and moral authority. In recent years, when I ask people in Beijing or other PRC cities to explain Deng's current governmental influence, they regularly tell me that in addition to it emanating from his disablement, his authority emanates from his father, particularly from his father's *guanxi* (sociopolitical network). And when I press them further, saying, "Well, Deng Xiaoping has been dead for several years now. Why does his *guanxi* still give Deng Pufang so much power?" The answer often is because Deng has benefited from his father's network nearly all his life and that owing to his unique status as Deng Xiaoping's son, he was forced to suffer great trauma during the Cultural Revolution and thereafter to live with enduring discomfort.²⁹ In other words, their explanations indicate that for many people, there is a degree to which, on the one hand, Deng's current hyperelite status seems preordained, and on the other

hand, it is understood to be restitution for his persecution and intractable struggles with bodily damage.

In phases three and four of this story, by depicting Deng as being treated sometimes with malice but more often with privilege (and always in a state of pain), his biographers have fueled these two aspects of his presencing. They have helped promote the view that Deng belongs in the hyperelite spheres of the party-state and that he is particularly deserving of such a position. To see this, one need only look at the following stories, which involve encounters with malevolence and privilege. One should likewise pay close attention to the telescoping vision of the narrator, who situates Deng's body in pain amidst knowable settings, people, and historical events.

Moments after his fall from the third story of the Beida physics building, as he is regaining consciousness on the pavement, Deng cries out for medical assistance. But because of his, the Deng family's, and the nation's political situation, care is not easily found. For many moments, people just stand watching Deng writhe in pain. Eventually, a few people intervene: they carry him to the university clinic. Medical personnel block their entry, however. The people then decide to transport Deng off campus to the emergency ward of the nearby Beijing Medical College (BMC) hospital. When nobody is looking, they run away. Doctors again refuse treatment. He remains in a BMC hallway lying unattended until nightfall, at which time hospital officials order an ambulance to return him to the Beijing University clinic. On reaching campus, the ambulance crew leaves him on the ground alongside the clinic's front door and then speed off (Qin 1992:190, 198–199).

After spending the night paralyzed and lying alone, university clinic workers bring Deng in and leave him on a bed in an empty corridor. After several days, a worker assigned to watch over Deng's class, Wang Fengwu, wins approval from Mao and Zhou Enlai to have Deng admitted to one of Beijing's best orthopedic centers, Jinshuitan Hospital. There, doctors discover through X rays that Deng has shattered his first lumbar and 12th thoracic vertebrae. They also learn that owing to an infection of unknown origin, he is running a high fever. When they cannot break his fever or diminish his paralysis despite months of in-patient care, the Jinshuitan staff move Deng to Beijing's 301st Brigade Military Hospital, which was, and still is, an exclusive medical facility providing the finest clinical services in China to the nation's highest government officials (Qin 1992:200–204).

Deng resides at the 301 Hospital for over two years, until the day in early 1971 described at the beginning of this article. On that day, Beida radicals remove him from the 301 and deposit him at the Qing He shelter. As the weather begins to warm in the late spring, one of Deng's younger sisters finds her way to the shelter. She breaks into uncontrollable fits of crying when she finds her brother in the most abject of conditions: alone in a dark room "splattered thick" with the products of his incontinence (Qin 1992:206).

After making sure he is bathed, the sister gives money to the Qing He staff in hopes they will provide her brother with better care; she then leaves the shelter

to return to central Beijing and sends her parents a letter in which she vaguely states that he is sick and in a shelter. Still unaware of their son's paralysis, Deng Xiaoping and Zhuo Lin respond by penning a letter to Mao. They state that although they are elderly and have nothing to do, they retain the capacity to feed and shelter their son and hope he can thus be sent to them. As a consequence, in the summer of 1971, Deng Pufang is delivered from the capital to his parents' residence in exile in central China (Qin 1992:215, 219).

Deng and Zhuo soon find a way to have their son readmitted to hospital and change his and their family's plight. In September 1971, they hear of the failed coup d'état led by Lin Biao, Mao's heir apparent, and Lin's subsequent death. Deng and Zhuo draft another letter to Mao. This time they request that their son be permitted to receive medical treatment in Beijing. In response, Zhou Enlai issues a central-government document directing that Deng Pufang be returned to the 301 Hospital. And, shortly thereafter, Deng Xiaoping's guards place Deng Pufang and his sister Deng Rong aboard a train heading north (Qin 1992:219).

In the aftermath of Lin Biao's failed coup, pressure grows within the party to thwart expanding hostilities from the Soviet Union and to curtail the excesses of the Cultural Revolution. The pressure leads, in part, to the political rehabilitation (*huifu*) of many cadres who were purged in the late 1960s (as well as Nixon's 1972 Beijing visit). During that wave of change, Deng Xiaoping and the rest of his family are brought back to Beijing in February 1973; later that year, Deng is reinstated as vice premier (Qin 1992:223).

After the Deng family's return to Beijing, Zhuo Lin immediately visits her son at the 301. There she learns that because of Jiang Qing's interference and because of the rustication of urban medical personnel during the Cultural Revolution, doctors have been unavailable to provide her son with significant attention. Zhuo reportedly becomes furious and—mirroring her husband's attempts to establish a desired state of normalcy in Chinese political life—she takes additional steps to normalize her son's health status. Using the family's reclaimed political authority, Zhuo personally arranges for top Beijing physicians who are scattered across China to travel back to the capital and care for her son and the rest of the hospital's patients (Qin 1992:223).

Curiously, however, the main outcome of these efforts is not curative, but informational: the creation of new knowledge for Deng Pufang about rehabilitation medicine and his body. In the early 1970s, Deng learns that, in the past, members of his medical team had unsuccessfully applied to government departments for the creation of a rehabilitation medical hospital of international caliber (Wang n.d.:4). In 1974, these surgeons at the 301 Hospital operate on Deng to learn why, during the previous six years, the extent of his paralysis has expanded from the top of his legs to his chest. Because the surgeons' findings are reported in such detail by Qin, because the findings mark a bioepistemological amplification of Deng Pufang's body as a privileged signifier of the real, and because they express strong messages about his historically contingent sufferings

and, thus, his reputed claims to a special moral and national authority, they are worth reporting here:

The shattering of the 12th thoracic and first lumbar vertebrae burst surrounding blood vessels. The released blood slowly spread up the cavity of the spinal column like a hematoma and compressed the nerves between the 12th and the sixth thoracic vertebrae. . . . Since the hematoma was not eliminated, the spinal tissue died under six years of pressure. This caused Deng Pufang's paralysis to spread from the level of his upper legs all the way up to his chest. [Qin 1992:224]

Moreover, the surgeons are surprised that the blood released into Deng Pufang's spinal cavity did not spread further, something that would probably have killed him, they say. They also are disturbed by the realization that, if Deng Pufang had been given better treatment six years earlier (i.e., if the blood between his 12th and sixth thoracic vertebrae had been removed), his paralysis would be far less severe (Qin 1992:225).

Phase Four: New Subject Making

In phase four, Deng Pufang's journey from undeserving victim to hero (Rofel 1999:142), moves toward its climax. In chronicling this movement, his biographers portray Deng as possessing new realities, new authority, and new political intentions. They do this partly by using the narrative techniques discussed above and partly by tapping more intensively a set of categories: humanitarianism (*rendaozhuyi*), disability (*canji*), and biomedicine (*xiyi*, lit., "Western medicine"). These categories have increasingly been invoked throughout China in recent decades, and they have been pivotal in establishing Deng Pufang's political stature and indispensable in the formation of the China Disabled Persons' Federation.

By deploying these categories, Deng's biographers are again turning to long-established speaking-bitterness practices. Anagnost posits that by drawing so heavily on universalizing Euro-American categories—history, society, class, progress, the individual—producers of speaking bitterness during the early to mid-20th century helped create the existential foundation necessary both for the proliferation of nationalism and Marxism and for CCP domination (1997:8). She contends that by regularly invoking such universalizing categories, speaking-bitterness producers nurtured a new metaphysics and subjectivities that were vital to the communist nation-state. The metaphysics—largely that of modernist teleology—portrayed Chinese experience as lacking and backward and Western existence as worthy and developed. The oft-promoted subjectivities were generally those of exploiter/exploited (e.g., landlords/landless peasants, capitalists/proletarians); yet they also included a new modernizing elite stratum: A communist leadership whose legitimacy hung on its intent to build a modern nation and to empower the very subaltern subjects whom its own discourse, enabled by speaking bitterness, helped instantiate (1997:20).

If it is true that speaking bitterness facilitated the dissemination of Western-generated universalizing categories, the production of a modernist teleology, and the formation of Marxist subjectivities, and that these were important in vesting the CCP with the authority to govern the nation, it would seem that such techniques are similarly at play in the last phase of Deng's story. However, as in the first three phases, there are also differences in how speaking-bitterness techniques work to fashion Deng's elite embodiment into a discursive force. The first of these differences is that, as mentioned, rather than just promoting universal signifiers such as history, progress, and the individual, Deng's biographers have deployed the globalizing categories of humanitarianism, disability, and biomedicine in this phase. Second, instead of just working broadly to legitimize the CCP, the deployment of these new categories works to support the Deng Xiaoping political agenda and even more specifically, to imbue Deng with a contemporary, elite, internationalist agency.

In early 1977, Deng finally leaves the hospital and moves home. This return to a situation of family normalcy is closely tied to a number of monumental "achievements." These include the arrest of the "fascist dictators" known as the Gang of Four, Deng Xiaoping's ascent to the position of China's "paramount leader," and the promulgation of his sweeping political platform of making China a more normal/modern nation by opening its doors to "Western" investment and science (Qin 1992:234–237).³⁰

For Deng Pufang himself, his departure from the hospital is most meaningful because it allows him to reclaim the erstwhile trappings of his patrician and, as I have emphasized, androcentric childhood. Rather than just staying at home, he feels compelled to venture out into the public sphere, to play badminton and ping-pong from his wheelchair, to tinker with advanced telecommunication equipment at a television station near the Deng house, and to make chauffeur-driven visits to old chums around Beijing. As he tries to regain some of what he once had, he begins to identify himself not just as a member of an elite but as a member of, and possible advocate for, a different group of people. After he moves home, he continues to interact with acquaintances from Qing He and the 301. These include mostly men of a similar age who, like him, struggle with problems of immobility. Their social backgrounds vary widely, from uneducated polio survivors to injured soldiers of high Communist Party pedigree. Deng's connection with and sense of nascent responsibility for this cross-section of Chinese men is strongly foregrounded in a statement he makes on his first return visit to Qing He in early 1977. In what comes across as part remembrance, part promise, Deng Pufang reportedly tells his Qing He friends, "I will never forget all of us disability brothers (*canji germen*)" (Qin 1992:231).

Some four years later, this vaguely worded statement crystallizes into a concrete conviction to act programmatically on behalf of the "disability brothers." Once again, the interaction of bodily trauma, China's quickly changing political landscape, and known social actors is of overriding importance in triggering this project. One morning in 1979, as Deng Pufang rises from bed, a

family attendant notices a large protrusion on his back. Doctors discover that a thoracic vertebra has sustained new damage and that bone fragments are moving around freely in his spinal column. The doctors immediately readmit Deng Pufang and restrict his movement. Their greatest fear is that the fragments might cause a major blood vessel to rupture, which could kill him. That fear is compounded by the fact that orthopedic specialists are at a loss on how to resolve the crisis (Qin 1992:238).

According to Ruan 1992, the way the crisis is resolved relates directly to the very policies Deng Xiaoping is then implementing to transform the national polity. With his promotion of national development through the integration of “Western” scientific techniques, groups of North American scientists begin to visit China in the late 1970s. One of the first groups is a team of elite U.S. physicians. Shortly after this group arrives in Beijing in the spring of 1980, doctors approach one of the group members—Dean MacEwen, a former president of the American Orthopedic Association—and ask him his views about a specific case. MacEwen studies the case file and tells the hospital staff that their “Soviet-trained” doctors have made errors in treating the patient and that the only way he can survive is through a set of complex procedures requiring surgical equipment then available in only a few Western medical centers. At this point, the staff disclose the identity of the patient and ask MacEwen to see whether he can find a hospital in North America willing to provide care for Deng Pufang (Ruan 1992:4).

On his return to the United States, MacEwen contacts a long-time orthopedic colleague, Gordon Armstrong, of Ottawa Civic Hospital, and asks if “in the spirit of humanitarianism” special accommodations could be arranged.³¹ Armstrong, whose parents were missionaries in precommunist China, offers to operate on Deng free of charge and to convince his hospital and the Canadian health-care system to cover all in-patient costs. And so at the end of September 1980, Deng Pufang flies to Ottawa with a nurse, personal physician, and translator. Nine days later, the surgeries begin (Ruan 1992:4).

While describing many features of these procedures, Deng Pufang’s biographers seem to place far greater importance on another aspect of his time in Ottawa: the decisions he makes during his postoperative period. Armstrong’s plan is for Deng to spend nearly a year in Ottawa recuperating and undergoing physical therapy at the Civic Hospital. But Deng demurs. The calculus behind his resistance is heard in his own retrospective account in both *The Deng Pufang Road* and in a widely circulated pamphlet published by a federation agency. In the pamphlet, Deng is recorded stating “When thinking of the thousands upon thousands of disabled people in my country who were desperately crying for appropriate rehabilitation services, I decided to go back home immediately to help establish our own rehabilitation centers” (Wang n.d.:4). So, shortly after his surgeries, Deng had himself moved from the hospital to the nearby Chinese embassy. Like Armstrong, Canada’s prime minister visited the embassy and pressed him to return to the Civic Hospital. But Deng could not be deterred:

Being a Chinese person, [Pufang] placed his motherland and its people first and foremost in his heart and as a disabled person, he placed all . . . who are disabled . . . before all else. . . . Deng Pufang could not avoid inheriting this burden; he could not avoid inheriting the hardships of his motherland, of his Chinese compatriots, and of his fellow Chinese disabled people. [Qin 1992:244]

And so in February 1981, after five months in Canada, Deng flew back to Beijing, prone and wrapped in a suit of plastic. He was happy and excited, Qin tells us. For, even though his health was far from certain, he was secure in his intent to become an agent for a new form of government-sponsored, science-based intervention for disabled people in China. He was “eager to introduce to China the spirit of modern global humanitarianism: the concepts of rehabilitation medicine, and the systematic science of rehabilitation technology” (Qin 1992:244).

Conclusion

Since I began researching disability issues in China, I have been repeatedly taken aback by the degree to which many PRC citizens, particularly well-read urbanites, have regularly spoken to me about Deng Pufang. For example, during a recent trip to Beijing, a middle-aged man from Beijing, Chen Lu, said the following in response to what was a very general question:

Oh, so you’re interested in the work of Deng Pufang. If it wasn’t for him, if it wasn’t for all that happened to him during the Cultural Revolution, China’s disability situation would be really different. Because of what he’s had to live through, we have the Disabled Persons’ Federation.

Something equally noteworthy is that when I chat with people who are relatively knowledgeable about the Disabled Persons’ Federation, they often wish to provide me with detailed information about Deng Pufang’s body and Deng’s personal experiences with paralysis. For instance, quite regularly, people have communicated details like the following:

I once read an article that said Deng Pufang’s Canadian doctors had to place a lot of steel in his torso to support his spine. So now he can’t get by a metal detector without alarms ringing.

Oh, I know a great deal about Deng Pufang. I read somewhere that he can only sweat on half his body.

I learned in a newspaper that since his crippling, Pufang’s hearing isn’t very good in one ear.

Only a few months ago, while dining with my family in a restaurant near our home, another such anecdote was conveyed to me by a waiter who had immigrated to California three years ago from his native Beijing. When I mentioned to him I was working on an essay about Deng Pufang, the waiter regaled me with information about the efforts Zhuo Lin had made during the early

1970s to arrange for Shanghai doctors to treat her son. The waiter said he had read this information somewhere, although he could not recall precisely where.

That so many people inside and outside of China know something about Deng Pufang's life and body and that they view the two as being pivotal in the establishment and development of the China Disabled Persons' Federation is not coincidental. As senior federation staff explained to me, when initially engaging in the realpolitik of creating for themselves and the disabled a new bureaucracy from within the party-state, they quite deliberately disseminated accounts of Deng Pufang's painful journey into disablement. To enable specific activities—for example, leveraging Deng Pufang's filial prerogatives as the male scion of Deng Xiaoping, soliciting large sums of state and foreign resources, and overseeing the federation's expansion—the federation leadership carefully packaged Deng Pufang's melodramatic tale for public consumption.

Initially, they deployed aspects of this tale, which I have come to call a biomythography of statesmanship, quite subtly, circulating them conversationally among CCP powerbrokers and other potential federation benefactors. But in the late 1980s, their subtlety gave way to an approach that was far more forthright and publicly oriented: Pufang's confidants and beneficiaries arranged for his narrative to be disseminated widely through China's electronic media and in popular books such as *The Deng Pufang Road*. A main reason for this change, my closest acquaintances within the federation's upper echelons have said, was the need to improve Deng's and the federation's stature in the wake of the 1989 political upheavals. In the spring of 1989, many of China's prodemocracy demonstrators criticized both Deng Pufang and the federation as paradigmatic examples of elite government corruption. The criticism not only tarnished Deng Pufang's public image, it undermined the federation's expansionary agenda for a time.³²

What lasting insights might the Deng Pufang story provide future scholars who are interested in studying the intersection of subjectification, suffering, and biomedical formation? For anyone interested in political economy, the history of science, cultural studies of the body, or medical anthropology, it might seem quite straightforward that government officials would use the suffering of a political luminary to help them build a powerful institution. Still, we must ask how does this actually occur? What processes allow it to happen?

As I have argued throughout this article, the establishment of the China Disabled Persons' Federation involved the production of a powerful story, and this entailed using a specific set of narrative techniques. I have shown that Deng Pufang's biographers have deployed a number of discursive patterns—many of which are integral to China's historically sedimented speaking-bitterness genre—to create for Deng a politics of presence. Using these techniques and categories, his biographers convey a tale in which a fusion occurs (involving a man, specific sociopolitical contexts, and a special array of characters and categories) that presences the man as a moral champion of an emergent institution of health care, social assistance, and governance. As such, his biographers seem to be involved in something that closely resembles Foucault's

late-life proposition regarding subjectification, wherein an elite subject is not only “invited or incited to recognize [her/his] moral obligations” (1984:353) but becomes a force for new institutional modes of social assistance and normalization.

Yet in addition to demonstrating how discourse can position elite self-development as being informed by and serving biobureaucratic formation, I believe there is something more the Deng Pufang story can teach us about subjectification, something that I feel should be a vital component of future studies. This point is well highlighted by the life, not of Deng, but of Qin, his most well-known biographer.

In early 1995—three years after the publication of *The Deng Pufang Road* and shortly after Qin’s husband had successfully springboarded from a high federation post to become party secretary of an important city in China’s interior—I had the opportunity to talk with her briefly in Beijing about factors influencing her book. Qin summed up her reasoning for writing the biography as follows:

My motives were quite personal. Because I attended the same elementary school as Pufang, because I had to live through Cultural Revolution chaos, and because my husband and I have struggled to deal with our child’s own disability, we’ve come to feel very passionate about Pufang’s disability work. . . . Moreover, when we realized how the demonstrators’ attacks [in 1989] had injured Pufang’s integrity and, therefore, the federation’s chances for significant growth, a number of us close Pufang friends felt it our responsibility, our duty, to chronicle his troubled life. And it was plain to us that we had a very good story, one that would sway many people. . . . We knew we had all the right pieces, everything necessary to make Pufang our nation’s most famous and respected disabled person.

Qin’s comments are certainly intriguing for the candor with which they seem to acknowledge the narrative components (“all the right pieces”) that she used to depict Deng Pufang as “China’s most famous and respected disabled person” and to make his corporal presence particularly meaningful and thereby potent. But there are other facets of her comments that I find equally intriguing and instructional for the study of subjectification. They are (1) that Qin portrays her decision to write about Deng as personal and moral, (2) that she couches her explanation in terms of painful aspects of her own life trajectory, and (3) that she frames this trajectory by tapping some of the same narrative components I have analyzed above. Just as she used telescoping vision, body in pain tropes, and universalistic categories such as history, nation, and disability to tell the Deng Pufang story, she now draws on these very components to situate her writing of *The Deng Pufang Road* within a personal and moral narrative. This narrative, particularly as it pertains to her raising a “disabled child,” is not something she has avoided airing in public. On the contrary, she has broadcast it extensively through *Mama* (1990), a semiautobiographical film for which she wrote the script and in which she played the leading role of a mother struggling with a 13-year-old “mentally disabled” (*zhili canji*) son. Like *The Deng Pufang Road*, this film draws heavily on speaking-bitterness techniques.

The degree to which someone like Qin has gone out of her way over the last decade to presence both Deng Pufang's and her own life, to presence both Deng Pufang's and her own life, using speaking-bitterness techniques to do so, and the degree to which she has been politically positioned to disseminate these narratives sheds light on an important issue that Foucault and subsequent scholars of subjectification have rarely, if ever, explored. When studying elite self-development and how such development can work as a potent personification of governmental agency, one needs, no doubt, to be attentive to discourse production. But one should also attempt to go further and study how such discourse production is intersubjectively incited by many people's bodily engagements with symbolism, power, and, indeed, pathos. Widely circulated biographical accounts of patricians who spawn new biobureaucracies are always more than the products and extensions of symbolism. Not only are such accounts about historically situated persons who at times may have lives marked by unexpected affliction, they are also always generated by other historically situated persons—friends, publicists, professional biographers. And the self-development of these latter persons may be informed by fusions of discourse and bodily experiences that, in fact, parallel those informing the accounts these people generate. Possibly because of this complexity, anthropologists and others who are researching biobureaucratic formation have, to date, rarely examined elite affliction. But if we are to fulfill our goals of understanding how people of all backgrounds can be implicated in the creation of institutional structures of science, technology, and medicine, it is towards just such complexity we must direct our attention.

Notes

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1. As with all Chinese names, the surname Deng appears before the given name Pufang. I will be referring to Deng either by his surname or his full name, especially where his surname alone might cause confusion alongside mentions of his father Deng Xiaoping and other family members. In some cases, quoted passages will refer to him by his given name of Pufang alone.

2. The first disability organization established under Deng Pufang's leadership was the China Disabled Persons' Welfare Fund. It was established in 1983 to finance the building of China's first major rehabilitation-medicine hospital, the China Rehabilitation Research Center. When the Disabled Persons' Federation was founded in 1988, the Welfare Fund became a subordinate branch of the federation. Today, the fund exists in

name only. Although the fund and federation can be seen as China's first nationwide organizations specifically providing services to disabled persons, at least two organizational structures predated them and served allied categories of people. The first was the China Association for the Blind, Deaf, and Mute, established in 1960 after the amalgamation of a number of smaller organizations. The history of these smaller organizations dates to before the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and is rooted in educational approaches to visual and auditory limitations, many of which were initially introduced in China by American missionaries. In 1988, the association (and the schools it had established) was absorbed by the Disabled Persons' Federation. The second organizational structure of note is part of the military. In the 1930s, the Red Army began providing benefits to injured soldiers. In 1950, the military expanded its entitlement infrastructure and started extending specialized health care to "revolutionary crippled soldiers" (*geming canfei junren*). In the late 1980s, as part of the Disabled Persons' Federation's attempt to rid government of what the federation leadership considered to be a derogatory term (i.e., *canfei*), "revolutionary crippled soldiers" was changed to "revolutionary injured and disabled soldiers" (*geming shangcan junren*). Although some biomedical practices aimed at aiding persons with disabling conditions were introduced in China as a consequence of Soviet exchange programs in the 1950s and 1960s, rehabilitation medicine (*kangfu yiliao*) did not become a widely recognized field of health care in the PRC until the 1980s. During that decade, with the Disabled Persons' Federation lobbying the party-state to promote rehabilitation medicine, and with the increasing contact between Chinese public-health officials and Western rehabilitation-medicine organizations, China's rehabilitation field gradually grew to encompass an ever wider variety of often ill-defined services, some public, some private. Today, these services continue to proliferate. Most of them are located in China's urban centers and thus are of limited use to the majority of PRC citizens who live in the countryside.

3. However, federation claims of institutional growth should be viewed with a good degree of skepticism. Federation documents themselves indicate that in 1993 possibly as many as 96 percent of the institution's 45,117 offices were what I would call "virtual chapters." These usually consisted of little more than a federation plaque outside a local Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA) office and a few local MCA officials already charged with multiple tasks who discharged federation duties along with the rest. Regarding the federation's rehabilitation-care outreach, the *Work Program for Disabled Persons during the Ninth Five-Year-Plan Period, 1996–2000*, states: "Altogether 2.08 million disabled persons have been rehabilitated to varying degrees, among whom 1.07 million cataract patients have regained eyesight, 39 thousand persons with low vision have improved eyesight, close to 60 thousand polio victims have had improved body functions after orthopedic surgery, 100 thousand mentally retarded children have improved their ability of cognizance and independent living, and 450 thousand patients with serious mental illness have received comprehensive treatment" (China Disabled Persons' Federation 1996:5).

4. Much of this propaganda has been hollow, however. Although the federation has grown quickly, the assistance it has afforded people (a good portion of which is fee-for-service rehabilitation medicine) remains miniscule when compared to what was once offered by China's erstwhile Maoist social guarantees.

5. The Chinese state's current term for "disability" is *canji*, which, like its more derogatory cognates *canfei* and *feiji*, did not originate with the socialist era. Although *canji* is present in documents as early as the Tang dynasty (C.E. 618–906), it was rarely used in idiomatic or formal Chinese until the founding of the China Disabled Persons' Federation.

Since the late 1980s, in conjunction with the federation's founding, *canji* has appeared more and more often in the government-directed media and has taken on greater biomedical meaning. The medicalization of the term *canji* was intensely concretized when in 1987 the State Council recognized five categories of disability ("the blind," "the mentally disabled," "the physically disabled," "the mentally ill," and "the deaf and mute") and defined these categories in terms of biomedicine. These categories and their criteria were created for the 1987 National Sample Survey of Disabled Persons, China's first nationwide survey of disabled children and adults, which was done at the behest of the nascent federation, international agencies such as the United Nations, and other Chinese government offices.

6. Several contradictory points need noting here. First, during the post-Mao era, the party-state has often railed against individualism (*gerenzhuyi*) in the government-run media. It cannot be denied, however, that the success of the party-state's post-Mao market-oriented policies have been greatly dependant on ideas of the rugged entrepreneurial individual. Second, as noted at the outset of this article, by 1996, the federation claimed to have extended rehabilitation medicine to a sizeable number of people (two million of the more than 60 million PRC citizens recognized by the state as disabled). But, it would be a mistake to see this provision of care as filling the vast void left by the dismantling of the Maoist welfare system—a system that most significantly serviced urban residents but which also had locally funded features such as village-based health care that were of great importance to rural residents. Third, although China has often been characterized as possessing a sociocentric culture, it has long been marked by ethics of personal responsibility and egocentrism (Fei 1947:22–37). What is unique about the post-Mao transition, however, is that whereas during the Maoist era, the dominant message across society was that people should be self-sufficient so that China as a whole could be self-sufficient, after Mao's death, *self-sufficiency for personal gain* increasingly became an equally dominant, if not preeminent, message.

7. In the last few decades, an increasing number of ethnographers have recognized that to better understand social formation, especially processes of social change and domination, it is necessary that they investigate not only the middle or bottom of any social hierarchy but also the top (see, e.g., Allison 1994; Gusterson 1996; Marcus and Hall 1992; Nader 1972; and Yanagisako 2000).

8. To be sure, anthropologists interested in embodiment and social suffering have at times examined groups (e.g., Jackson 2000; Myerhoff 1978) and individuals (e.g., Greenhalgh 2001; Murphy 1990) occupying relatively well-off class positions. Yet such studies of elite affliction have been sparse in number and rarely have they given attention to questions pertaining to the building of biobureaucracies.

9. For further information on subjectification (*mode d'assujettissement*), see Foucault 1997. In most of his late writings, Foucault used the term *self-formation* to refer to the constitution of personhood (e.g., 1985:28). Throughout this article, I frequently make comments about broader issues of social and institutional formation; therefore, I have opted for clarity's sake to diverge from Foucault's original phrasing and instead use the term *self-development*.

10. For instance, Foucault stated, "[One] has to take into account . . . the points where the technologies of domination . . . have recourse to processes by which the individual acts upon himself. And conversely, [one] has to take into account the points where the technologies of the self are integrated into structures of coercion or domination" (Keenan 1995:424).

11. Although Foucault's writings are nearly all about Europe and deal with the social production of historically specific concepts and practices, branches of China's academy over the last decade have embraced many of his ideas. To date, most of Foucault's major works have been translated into Chinese, many by Liu Beicheng. Drawing on these translations, many younger PRC academics (including legal scholars and anthropologists) have invoked Foucauldian concepts and found them applicable to their local topics of inquiry. Other Chinese scholars, however, have questioned the relevance of Foucault's European-derived ideas to China's distinctive history and its past and present approaches to specific social categories such as body, self, and power (Wang Mingming, personal communication, December 5, 2000).

12. A number of scholars working in non-European contexts have turned to the notion of subjectification in recent years, although not necessarily from the classic Foucauldian perspective of the elite. See, for example, Alter 2000, Bailey 1999, Butler 1997, Fernandez 1980, Kondo 1990, and Stein and Wright 1995. In U.S.-based China studies, recent inquiries into the formation of subjectivity, some of which have not been in direct dialogue with Foucault's notion of subjectification, include Anagnost 1997, Barlow 1991, Farquhar 1998, Hubbert 1999, Lee 1999, Litzinger 2000, Ong 1996, Yang 1997, and Zito 1997.

13. This is a topic I have detailed elsewhere. See Kohrman 1999.

14. Many medical anthropologists hail from elite Euro-American institutions and have therefore been schooled in the Enlightenment vision of personal disclosure and its elevated truth value. As such, it has not only been relatively easy for many medical anthropologists to move across or down social hierarchies to seek out "informants" to gather information outside the public eye, but they have, moreover, found it imperative to do so. Yet when it comes to the project of studying elite embodiment—particularly that of the hyperelite—anthropologists cannot expect their Euro-American scholarly subject positions to facilitate research access (Gusterson 1993). In the summer of 1998, after many failed attempts on my part and the intervention of his Canadian surgeon and coinciding with President Bill Clinton's visit to Beijing, federation officials arranged my (to date) only interview with Deng Pufang. Although this interview ran for more than twice the time allotted, it lasted only an hour. The interview did not provide much in the way of new insight into Deng Pufang's life story.

15. In addition to Qin 1992, I also draw from the narratives of Ruan 1992, Wang n.d., and Deng 1995. However, Qin's is perhaps the most widely known in China. These accounts are fairly consistent in the way they narrate Deng Pufang's life. Subsequent references to Deng's biographers (or, perhaps more accurately, his hagiographers) are references to these officially recognized texts, although I rely most heavily on Qin. For more information about the genre of biography and hagiography in modern China, see Di and Shao 1994.

16. I use the phrase "biomythography of statesmanship" to foreground important methodological and analytical issues at play here. These include the public nature of the data examined, their sociopolitical constructedness, and the degree to which this constructedness draws on a variety of modernist genres to forward an agenda that serves the aims of state-building, as well as patriarchal claims to authorize the nation. I am also drawn to the term *biomythography* because I find it helpful for highlighting interconnections between biological and biographical production, epistemology, and Otherness. For additional applications of "biomythography," see Haraway 1991:174 and Lorde 1982.

17. For further discussions of "literature of the wounded" or "scar literature," see Barne and Lee 1979, Honig 1984, and Siu and Stern 1983. I owe special thanks to Lisa

Rofel, Gail Hershatter, and Miyako Inoue for encouraging me to engage the anthropological literature on “speaking bitterness,” particularly the work of Anagnost (1997).

18. Zhuo Lin was born Pu Qiongying. According to official accounts, she changed her name in the late 1930s because, after graduating from Northern Shaanxi College in Yan’an, she began training as a communist spy inside Japanese-occupied China. In 1938, Zhuo married Deng Xiaoping. She was his third and last wife, according to official accounts. Together, they had five children.

19. Chinese naming practices have a long and rich history (Ning 1995:3). Many are linked to ancient ideas about the social, corporal, political, and temporal embeddedness of personhood. As such, the decision of what formal personal name to give a newborn often involves several factors, including the perceived “constitution” of the infant, as well as the family’s desire to augur a specific future and/or to enshrine certain events (Watson 1986:621–622). Today, as in the past, it is quite common for newborns to be given an informal name. As the child matures, a ceremony is often held at a time of the family’s choosing to give the child a formal name.

20. Pressing large numbers of people to participate in manual-labor projects was a tactic the party deployed often during the 1950s and 1960s in hope of speedily modernizing the nation and instilling in the general population the tenets of selfless obedience to authority and respect for proletarians and peasants.

21. Of the students enrolled in the two classes in the department of technophysics during Deng’s first year at Beida, only four or five were women (Qin 1992:153).

22. When Mao’s essay was published in English in 1978 the title was translated as “Study of Physical Education” (Mao 1978). But a more accurate translation, I would suggest, is “Study of Body Training.” For an excellent discussion of how sports have become a part of the Disabled Persons’ Federation’s program, see Stone 2001.

23. Over the years, the universities’ entrance physical exam has prevented untold numbers of Chinese from enjoying the benefits of higher education.

24. This is conveyed in a description of Deng’s elementary school: “The students of Bayi were to have a glorious rearing . . . and, through hard work, gradually they were to become the revolutionaries’ hardworking successors” (Qin 1992:114).

25. Over the last decade or so, information of this kind, as well as far more lurid details about the elite CCP leaders’ lives, has been circulating in and out of China through a variety of media including Hong Kong journals, translations of U.S. academic texts, and pirated copies of books such as *The Private Life of Chairman Mao: The Memoirs of Mao’s Personal Physician* (Li 1994). More recently, the Internet has also been a medium for such information.

26. A national campaign orchestrated and promoted by Mao, the Great Leap Forward (1958–61) was a set of policies aimed at mobilizing “the masses” and redirecting their energies toward rapid industrialization. Today, the campaign is nearly universally viewed by observers as a colossal failure and the primary cause of a famine that may have taken as many as 30 million lives in the early 1960s (see Becker 1996; MacFarquhar 1997).

27. Beida soon divided the technophysics department into the departments of high-energy physics and nuclear physics. Nuclear physics then became Deng’s primary scholarly focus.

28. The Cultural Revolution, a set of sweeping social transformations and political upheavals that took place in China, aimed at reviving the ardor of the Communist revolution of 1949 and directing it toward a more political and less technocratic path (Madsen 1984; Meisner 1986). Historians usually recognize the Cultural Revolution as starting in

1966 and ending with the death of Mao in 1976. Today, many China scholars interpret the creation and management of the Cultural Revolution as calculated moves by Mao and his followers to reassert their ascendance over the party-state in the wake of the devastating failure of the Great Leap Forward (e.g., MacFarquhar 1997; Spence 1990).

29. To be sure, one other possible explanation for Deng Pufang's authority needs mentioning: the fact that the PRC's party-state has long afforded adult children of its elite personnel significant political status. Today, this is evidenced by the large number of children of high-ranking officials holding high government posts.

30. In April 1976, Maoist leaders once again purged Deng from his government posts. But within the year, Deng, together with his close military allies, choreographed what would be his final return to the apex of the Chinese government system (Evans 1995:219). In October (a month after Mao's death), elite troops arrested the Gang of Four. In July 1977, Deng was reappointed to his vice-ministership, to the Politburo, and to the Military Affairs Commission. Between 1977 and 1978, the Deng group gradually pushed through a set of policies that stressed modernizing China through foreign investment and technology. They also pressed for students to train both overseas and within a revamped Chinese university system, liberalized the economy, and called for the party to "rehabilitate all those wrongly condemned going back to the year 1957" (Spence 1990:656).

31. In North America, the total bill for the kind of treatment MacEwen recommends (including postoperative therapy) can run to nearly a half million dollars. Because the Deng family did not have such a large sum of money and because they could not draw on Chinese government funds, such a bill needed to be shouldered by others. To this end, MacEwen initially investigated Deng's being treated at a U.S. military hospital. But because Chinese-U.S. détente was still in its infancy and was a political minefield for Chinese and American politicians, such special military accommodations were not possible (Ruan 1992:4).

32. Owing to the 1989 public criticism of Deng Pufang and the Federation, the party-state leadership forced the dismemberment of one of the Federation's largest sources of income, its nationwide trading company Kang Hua. In the preceding years, Kang Hua had frequently been the target of muted criticism within the CCP for what in hindsight is known to be the company's rampant abuse of the special tax- and duty-exempt status it enjoyed as a Deng family-sponsored welfare enterprise.

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