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Introduction

Martial Arts, Transnationalism, and Embodied Knowledge

D. S. Farrer and John Whalen-Bridge

The outlines of a newly emerging field—martial arts studies—appear in the essays collected here in *Martial Arts as Embodied Knowledge: Asian Traditions in a Transnational World*. Considering knowledge as "embodied," where "embodiment is an existential condition in which the body is the subjective source or intersubjective ground of experience," means understanding martial arts through cultural and historical experience; these are forms of knowledge characterized as "being-in-the-world" as opposed to abstract conceptions that are somehow supposedly transcendental (Csordas 1999: 143). Embodiment is understood both as an ineluctable fact of martial training, and as a methodological cue. Assuming at all times that embodied practices are forms of knowledge, the writers of the essays presented in this volume approach diverse cultures through practices that may appear in the West to be esoteric and marginal, if not even dubious and dangerous expressions of those cultures. The body is a chief starting point for each of the enquiries collected in this volume, but embodiment, connecting as it does to imaginative fantasy, psychological patterning, and social organization, extends "far beyond the skin of the practicing individual" (Turner and Yangwen 2009). The discourse of martial arts, which is composed of the sum total of all the ways in which we can register, record, and otherwise signify the *experience* of martial arts mind-

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and-body training, is the topic *par excellence* through which to understand the challenges of embodied knowledge, fantasy, and the body.[1]

The subject of martial arts studies may cause some readers to pause as it invokes a series of disturbing dialectical linkages between philosophy, religion and violence, self-defense and aggression, Buddhism and brutality, and points toward an Asian war machine supposedly usurped by the "evolution" of sophisticated modern (read Western) methods of remote disembodied technological warfare. The valorizing words that tether experience of various sorts to "knowledge" appear to be greased in the places where martial artists are most likely to attempt to catch hold. In Western academe, precisely because martial arts seem like an awkward pretender to "knowledge," the problems associated with embodied knowledge and scholarly resistance to it are apparent. However, studies of the body and embodiment have resisted becoming the materialistic fall guy to "mind" or "spirit." The growth of martial arts studies has almost certainly been stunted by one of the paradoxes of postcolonialism: the conceptual apparatus of embodied thinking, in its reflexive effort to liberate the body from its role as mind's subordinate other, too often goes too far in the direction of what Spivak (1996: 214) has called "strategic essentialism." The term "martial arts" signifies "Eastern" and can be accessed to champion, as a counterdiscourse to effeminizing Orientalist clichés, the contemporary paradigmatic image of the Asian-yet-masculine martial arts icon (think of Bruce Lee). To the degree that this reactionary response is highly predictable, so does the cumulative effect of Asian martial arts discourse serve, in spite of its advocates' best intentions, to reify and falsely unify the notion of a centered, stable, objective Asian culture.

Martial arts, meaning the things done to make the study of fighting appear refined enough to survive elite social prohibitions, has never been exclusively an Asian matter, but martial arts *discourse*, meaning the expectations that help order the texts and images of martial bodily training and its entourage of cultural side effects, remains predominantly projected onto the Asian body. In Western representation martial arts are powerfully associated with specifically Asian traditions and practices. The association of particular physical skills with particular kinds of socialization gathers even more complexity when we figure in the role of Orientalist fantasy. According to Edward Said (1979), we (especially the empowered "we" of the West as opposed to Asia) construct a fantasy self, and this fantasy self uses a distorted version of an Other to brace

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itself. One casts oneself into a primary role and casts the other—the fantasized Other—into an often unflattering role, thus producing a foil for the fantasized self. The very act of imagining other civilizations is its own form of war, according to extreme extensions of this model, and so we must approach martial arts as a vehicle of intercultural transmission and communication with caution and care.

Martial arts considered as embodied knowledge offers a rapidly changing, ambiguous, contradictory, and paradoxical quarry. *Martial Arts as Embodied Knowledge: Asian Traditions in a Transnational World* approaches the study of Asian martial arts with such built-in conceptual problems firmly in hand. Whereas martial arts discourse often produces "positive" images of the Asian body, a positive image, if it is a stereotype, can be demeaning even as it apparently flatters in terms of its semiotic content. Therefore, we must figure into our corrective reconsiderations that the celebration of achievement in a purely physical sphere also offers a compliment in a manner that may ultimately be a put down. The language and intellectual habits of "globalization" have begun to unsettle the illusory and not especially productive fantasies of an enduring Asian identity that is articulated within and often defended by heroic practitioners.[2] Martial arts as a discourse finds ways to discuss the consequences of bodies criss-crossing the modern world in globalized networks of transnational cultural exchange: the erotic appeal of the martial arts body is inseparable from its Otherness, and this otherness is hardly the sort of radical alterity that would produce the oriental/occidental oppositions about which so many martial artists are taught to fantasize.

For certain, Asian countries have evidenced a long-standing and lively intellectual engagement with traditional martial arts. Japanese martial arts have long benefited from university faculty interest, government support, and state investment where martial arts are utilized as "technologies of self" to build national character, bolster perceived masculinity, and to enhance feelings of self-worth, especially in the postwar miasma of defeat (Foucault 1988; Nippon Budokan 2009: 277–286). In China martial arts have long been employed as nation-building devices promoting the health and fitness of the population, especially against colonial interlopers (Brownell 1995; Farrer, this volume). Nevertheless, traditional martial arts seem to have once again entered a period of relative decline, where traditional martial art schools now compete against mixed martial arts for audience, participation and credibility.

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Mixed martial arts (MMA), a concoction of Brazilian *jiu-jitsu* (deriving from the Samurai art *jujutsu*), Western boxing, wrestling, and Thai boxing, currently enjoys unprecedented media popularity in Japan, America, and worldwide. From a street fighter's perspective, MMA is more practical, realistic, and combat effective than "martial sports" such as karate, judo, wushu, and taekwondo, and more grisly, bloody, spectacular, and violent than either boxing or wrestling. Founded in 1993, the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) is already estimated to be worth a billion dollars, and looks well set to overtake boxing and wrestling in terms of revenue generation through television viewing (Plyler and Siebert 2009: 26). However, it is too early to claim that the rise of MMA, dominated as it now is by American Caucasian wrestler/boxers, inevitably rings the death knell of traditional Asian martial arts. Once the initial public excitement over the simple and effective MMA techniques applied in the ring wears off they may in turn be rendered prosaic. Fighters, promoters, and mixed martial artists should continue to dip into the well of traditional martial arts so as to more fully reveal their profound embodied potential; just as so-called traditional martial artists must engage with MMA within or outside of the ring, an approach perhaps best exemplified by Donnie Yen in the Hong Kong film *Flashpoint* (2007), in a superb introduction of MMA to the Chinese martial arts action genre.

The Asian martial arts featured in this volume incorporate a global diffusion of ideas, images, and consumer goods, and present the diasporic, transnational, and organizational crossing of national, political, social, and cultural boundaries in ways that collapse the simple dualisms of traditional and modern, east and west, and of us and them. Although the regular essentialist reinscriptions of martial arts as some kind of racially specific behavior appear with dreadful predictability, the practitioners who actually produce and extend this form of embodied knowledge are properly impatient with such accounts. It is not incidental that all but one of the scholars contributing to this volume are themselves dedicated martial arts practitioners. Just as the medieval Japanese scholar-monk Dogen recommended that we study the self precisely so that we may forget the self, so too do the most traditional scholar-practitioners of martial arts disciplines know that one may immerse oneself in regionally specific traditions in ways that wear out the narrative threads that bind martial arts to an imaginary Japan, China, or Malaya. Alternately, the pursuit of Asian martial arts provides a lifelong vehicle to engage in studies of language and culture,

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philosophy and morality, traditional medicine and healing, a practice to temporarily forget the self, in order to polish the self.

Establishing the Contemporary Meaning of Martial Arts

During the previous decade the available martial arts literature has exploded, emerging upon the groundbreaking contributions of such pioneers as Donn F. Draeger (1972), Robert W. Smith ([1974] 1990), Oscar Ratti (Ratti and Westbrook 1973), and Adele Westbrook (Westbrook and Ratti 1970). Several decades later at the cusp of the new century the edited volumes of Green and Svinth (2003), *Martial Arts in the Modern World*, and Jones (2002), *Combat, Ritual and Performance: Anthropology of the Martial Arts*, have attempted to bring the study of martial arts into the "respectable" fold of contemporary scholarship (see also Green and Svinth [2010] *Martial Arts of the World: An Encyclopedia of History and Innovation*). However, except for the work of Alter (1992, 2000), Farrer (2009), Ots (1994), and Zarrilli (1998), the themes of embodied knowledge and the interdependence of embodiment and fantasy in the martial arts have by and large been neglected. The themes of embodiment, fantasy, and the body are scattered across the martial arts scholarship emerging from action film studies (Hunt 2003); dramas of resistance (Amos 1997); aesthetics (Cox 2003); religion and cults (Dumézil 1970; Elliot 1998; Shahar 2008); mysticism, spirituality, and the supernatural (Farrer 2006, 2008, 2009; Maliszewski 1987, 1996; Payne 1981); theater and combat (Holcombe 2002; Pauka 1998, 2002); violence and riots (Horowitz 2001); Japanese swordsmanship (Hurst 1998); fiction (Johnson 1987); discourses of deception (Lowell Lewis 1992); racial self-construction (Prashad 2001); emotions and violence (Rashid 1990); travel narratives (Salzman 1986; Twigger 1997); and traditional medicine (Schmieg 2005).

Associations with the body and popular culture complicate the subaltern status of the newly emergent martial arts studies. Nevertheless, efforts to launch the "discourse" (as we say on campus) about martial arts have steadily gained ground. "Discourse" can mean many things, but let us consider "martial arts discourse" to be ways of describing and interpreting the practices that are more than mere supports to the practices themselves. To draw the circle "martial arts discourse" is to select those serious discussions that not only affirm the contributions of the specific practices to an evolving way of life but also, at best, participate

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in the creative extension of these practices. To say "discourse" rather than "practice" here facilitates an elasticity that encompasses more than a professionally circumscribed, highly specialized field (although such writing and teaching certainly bolsters such a discourse).

The elasticity of martial arts discourse is important because the phenomenon in question concerns the nature of class and status. Supposedly people go to martial arts studios to fend off attackers in the street, but practitioners know that this is an inadequate explanation of the phenomena. However important self-defense is, *social* self-defense—defense against the slights and larger injuries associated with social class—is also very important, and becoming proficient in a martial art can offer sanctuary unavailable to those who cannot access other modes of social advancement such as a university education. Cases vary from art to art and culture to culture, but in crafting identity, moral and psychic self-defense must be considered in the analysis of martial arts traditions. To avoid closing down avenues of inquiry before they have even been noticed properly, it is necessary to examine the ways in which a *discourse* must, as much as an individual person, operate with a sometimes invisible nexus of class relations. There is already a great deal of writing about the martial arts, but the status of the media in which these writings appear is low, just as the presumable stature of a martial arts studio is typically much lower than the presumed stature of a ballet studio. Magazine writing (*Black Belt*, *Inside Kung Fu*, among others) speaks to one segment of this community of interpreters, and a there is a lone academic journal as well, the *Journal of Asian Martial Arts* (from 1991 through the present).[3] Critical anthologies such as Thomas Green and Joseph Svinth's *Martial Arts of the World* demonstrate that martial arts discourse is slowly garnering respect in the academy, a small flame increasingly fanned by the University of Hawai'i Press, well placed at the margins of North America and the Asia-Pacific (see, for example, Schmieg 2005; Shahar 2008).

A hostile interpretation might have it that serious accounts of Asian martial arts are crowded out by amateur efforts in trade magazines such as *Black Belt* and *Inside Kung Fu*, but this is not the case with other discourses that have successfully elevated themselves. For example, "popular cultural studies" and "media studies" are terms for university-certified forms of enquiry that had to distinguish themselves from fandom, but it is significant that these academic disciplines managed to do so in ways that preserved gradations of discourse. There is a kind of "class mobility" between fandom, movie reviews, "more thoughtful" movie reviews,

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and the highbrow cultural criticism of academic journal articles, each with its own awe-inspiring bibliography. Martial arts vanity publications and self-promotional materials abound. Mythical histories brace national identities—the scholar will often present her own work against such a foil in ways that contrastively present the "knowledge" of the one against the popular fantasy construction of the Other.

Essays in this volume by and large do not disown fantasy construction. Perhaps because most of the writing is done by scholar-practitioners, the work is shot through with embodied, existential commitment and so (we may speculate) there is less anxiety about authenticity. Simply put, the work in this volume stems from cross-training in the library and on the mat, and one result of this fruitful combination of theory and practice is liberation from defensiveness. This middle way must avoid two main kinds of partiality, which each stultify the discourse. Many martial artists may dismiss "theorists" who do not have the *embodied* authority of a martial arts master who has put in thousands of hours of practice. Or, a cultural historian who would not endanger intellectual credibility by being a participant-observer in what so many peers would mistake for *fighting* might need to certify himself or herself by disparaging the actual embodied pleasures and experiences that are inescapable elements of martial arts practice. At its best, martial arts discourse is a training ground in which mind and body do not pull rank on one another, mainly because they have not been artificially separated.

Essays in this volume are more concerned with the practices themselves than with criticism of the available martial literature. Nevertheless, in the last decade more work has begun to appear in the form of non-academic publications, which can provide intense and highly informative accounts of the journeys of curious martial artists who have spent decades exploring Asian martial arts. These non-academic yet scholarly practitioners have, as an addition to their intensive training, used representational media such as historical description, photography, and documentary film to salvage or preserve endangered forms of knowledge and to publicize those practices that have been overshadowed (see, for example, Frantzis 1998; Hsu 1997; Furuya 1996; Normandeau 2004; Tedeschi 2000; Wiley 1997). Despite the advent of the *Journal of Asian Martial Arts* and subsequent edited spin-off volumes, the boundaries between scholarly, journalistic, and private efforts in martial arts studies have become increasingly blurred (Jones 2001, 2002).[4]

A similar mixed bag of scholarly and amateur materials appear throughout the titles emerging from the booming martial arts publishers

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such as Frog, Shambhala, and Tuttle. Harking back to Sir Richard Burton's (1884) *The Book of the Sword*, in an early attempt to launch martial arts studies, renowned martial arts scholar Donn Draeger borrowed the moniker of "hoplology," to refer to the evolutionary study of weapons and armor, in a drive toward academic professionalism in the study of martial arts.[5] While hoplologists have made useful distinctions between civil and military fighting arts, the accounts of the International Hoplological Society remain fundamentally technical, functional, and behavioral, and are largely concerned with "how to" perform martial arts techniques, albeit located in environmental circumstance, history, and myth. While recognizing the value of such contributions, the concept of martial arts studies that we propose de-essentializes the "how to" approach in favor of a more theoretically informed strategy grounded in serious contemporary scholarship that questions the practice of martial arts in their social, cultural, aesthetic, ideological, and transnational embodiment.

What is martial arts studies, then? A murkily fluid set of characteristics flows over terms such as "martial art," "martial sports," "martial traditions," and "martial ways" (Jones 2002: xi–xiv). The object of study is called "martial arts" in everyday parlance, and by this phrase most people mean to indicate a primarily Asian combative practice that may or may not have a grand genealogy. Two exceptions to the "Asia rule" would be *capoeira* and Brazilian *jiu-jitsu*, the latter seeming to come from Japan but owing at least as much to Greco-Roman wrestling. Most martial arts, apart from the two exceptions and other explicitly modern forms such as judo, claim extensive lineages going back even to Bodhidharma or beyond. Judo is clearly a modern invention in which the martial element is somewhat displaced by athleticism and fitness; practices such as taekwondo and hapkido are sometimes given questionable family trees that do not credit any Japanese influence whatsoever. This is not to say, in the manner of the voguish academic reflex, that everything in the world was invented in the nineteenth century. Perhaps it is best to say that we have to consider the relationship between martial arts and history in two ways: there is the question of historically accurate information, but we also see the ways in which a historical narrative is a semiotic form of martial prowess—the rhetorical magnification of historical imperturbability is an action against rival martial arts communities and a defense against their attacks on credibility.

Martial arts historiography poses formidable challenges, but it is widely accepted that many martial arts traditions have survived centu-

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ries of transmission. Martial arts are microcosms of culture *par excellence* for the way in which the practices and communities interact with and sometimes organize other ways of knowing and being, including what we tend to call philosophy, religion, magic, medicine, and theater. For some, "martial arts" may be little more than a set of combat skills developed to defend one's self, friends, and family—this is the predominant Western paradigm. In Asian cultures, as essays in this volume show again and again, the "self" that is defended extends beyond the nuclear family and often tends to involve community, religion, nation, and state. A martial arts school invariably signifies something more than a fighting school, and cutting-edge work in what we are calling martial arts studies investigates discourses of power, body, self, and identity (Zarrilli 1998); gender, sexuality, health, colonialism, and nationalism (Alter 1992, 2000; Schmieg 2005); combat, ritual, and performance (Jones 2002); violence and the emotions (Rashid 1990); cults, war magic, and warrior religion (Elliot 1998; Farrer 2009; Shahar 2008).

The word "martial" is relatively clear, but the notion of a martial "art" generates a bit more resistance. Similar to the work of a high-level craftsperson, martial arts demands high levels of self-control, but martial arts discourse tends to also include moral and psychological training that modernist trends have marked as "old-fashioned" or Victorian. The practitioner supposedly learns, according to the conception that prevails in Asia, Europe, and in the Americas, that even the greatest warrior has to overcome or *craft* his or her self (Kondo 1990; Zarrilli 1998).

The importance of martial arts for the study of embodiment, fantasy, and the body becomes immediately apparent to anyone who attends one of the actor's training workshops run by the martial artist, performance theorist, and theater director Phillip Zarrilli, which involve training in the Indian martial art *kalarippayattu* (see also Zarrilli 2002). Here, actors, from a standing position, swing their heads back and forth between their outstretched legs, in an exercise that causes the participants to experience the peculiar sensation that their heads are somehow passing through the floor. Strange and profound bodily or psychosomatic experiences are a characteristic of martial arts training, where specific *techniques du corps* raise questions pertaining to the boundaries of the bodymind, the peculiarities of the senses and of the horizons of perception (Blacking 1977; Mauss 1979). In the terms of Spinoza, echoed by Deleuze and Guattari (2002; see also May 2005), the question becomes "of what is a body capable?"

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Farrer's research on the Malaysian martial art *silat gayong* led him to observe people putting their hands into cauldrons of boiling oil without being burned (Farrer 2009). While physicists such as Jearl Walker (1997) have attempted to debunk such ritual ordeals as phenomena explainable in secular terms operating outside the realms of magic, religion, or mysticism, clearly, under the correct conditions and given the proper training, the body is capable of realizing the embodied fantasy of invulnerability and of withstanding an assault of boiling oil. The boiling oil bath is not merely an exotic isolated instance, but one example of a multitude of martial discursive knowledge formations that inform the traditions of Asian martial arts, often blended with heroic tales, myths, and legends. In the past martial discursive knowledge formations have typically been bound to secret societies and tied to secret rituals; yet as these discursive practices have spread to all regions of the globe, former social and religious ties have frequently been attenuated, giving rise to new forms of transnational social organization. The essays collected here set out to investigate martial knowledge as it exists in the contemporary world through a discussion of embodied fantasy, of how the social body trains martial arts, and of self-construction in an era characterized by transnational diasporic identity formation.

Research Methods and Martial Arts Studies

Research methods used in the study of martial arts include methods derived from a diverse array of disciplines including history, hagiography, archaeology, biological anthropology, physics, and kinesics. This volume demonstrates methodologies derived from interdisciplinary social sciences and the humanities including literary and filmic analysis, sociological autoethnography, and practitioner and performance ethnography. Of course, ethnographic methods may not be possible or feasible for historical, filmic, or literary studies, where the researcher may instead gain access to the field through vicarious experience.

For martial arts studies, ethnography and autoethnography, augmented by interviews, film, and photography are so far the predominant ways to transmute martial arts practice into "knowledge." These methods best serve to help us approach martial arts *experience* as opposed to discursive forms that may often displace the most experientially direct ways of knowing. With Zarrilli's (1998) groundbreaking book on the South

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Indian martial art *kalarippayattu*, the method of "performance ethnography" made its debut for studies in martial arts. Performance ethnography is understood to refer to a method of participant observation where the observer joins in and learns the performance genre. The difference between "performance ethnography" and "practitioner ethnography" is largely theoretical. *Performance ethnography* links to the performance theory pioneered by Victor Turner (1988) in *The Anthropology of Performance*, which has subsequently spun off into social anthropology, performance studies, and theater studies, whereas *practitioner ethnography* connects to a long-established body of sociological literature, particularly to works in deviance, health, and education.

The writings of Phillip Zarrilli, Bryan Turner, Thomas Csordas, and Victor Turner, among others, have raised the intellectual bar for studies in performance, embodiment, the body, and martial arts, to the point where martial arts studies has become a viable academic pursuit, one that should incorporate the relevant findings of the "how to" approach, but not be reduced to it. To some extent, for martial arts studies, the gated community of "academic knowledge" remains locked in an ivory tower, but for the most part the gate is wrought of only one idea: that martial arts cannot really be an art since the practices involve more *repetition* rather than *individual expression* or *stylistic innovation*.

Martial arts, whether familial, sect, temple, clan, caste, class, civil, university, police, or military exist in competitive environments, and have emerged from collective or community responses to violent, adverse, agonistic, and repressive conditions, only to be incorporated in their turn into the war machine and the state in its effort to monopolize the means of violence. Commandos, police, and other state functionaries and military personnel have long appreciated and appropriated the relatively straightforward and easily taught techniques of the martial arts, redefined as "unarmed combat" to provide both a last-ditch line of defense, and a means of harnessing precise levels of force geared toward elimination, or the capture, control, and manipulation of bodies. Alongside the rise in combatives, numerous modern martial arts have emerged as a response to colonialism, oppression, and defeat. After World War II the Japanese martial arts of karate and judo were explicitly constructed as "self" engines tied to moral and national reconstruction, just as the Chin Woo Athletic Association emerged as a response to Japanese colonial aggression in Shanghai earlier in the twentieth century. This is not to say that such ultra-traditional, nationalistic, consciousness-raising, and deliberately

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moral endeavors necessarily produce martial arts that are ineffective in combat, only that the primary rationale and mission of the martial art, whether for performance, theater, nation building, military, or civil defense or gambling, organized crime, or street fighting must be accounted for. Continuous practice, combined with reflective awareness, and ruthless analysis unlocks the paradox of embodied tradition, where the pivotal experiential structures of martial embodiment, including the underlying philosophy, moral, medical, spiritual, and kinesic principles are revealed as the foundations of embodied knowledge upon which the martial arts are based. In short, whether practiced, devised, or employed for the purposes of rebellion and resistance, or utilized in order to maintain or ameliorate the status quo, or harnessed toward oppression and domination, at a highly advanced level of practice all genuine martial arts are inherently geared toward some form of ongoing transformation and reconstruction.

The Essays

The essays collected here are located under the rubric of three broad categories: part 1 details "embodied fantasy," part 2 presents findings from research concerning "how the social body trains" in martial arts, and part 3 engages "transnational self-construction." These categories overlap and interlock; essay placement is not absolute because considered individually the essays each interrogate most if not all of these central themes and their placement is essentially a matter of degree rather than of difference. Although emerging from a wide variety of academic fields all the essays are descriptive and explanatory. Several essays discuss Chinese and Japanese martial arts in China and Japan, as well as in Southeast Asia, Africa, and Europe; one essay concerns indigenous martial arts in Southeast Asia (*silat*); and one concerns the United Kingdom and India (*kalarippayattu*). It appears that a global "recentering" of Asian martial arts has occurred, where *kali*, *kalarippayattu*, *silat*, and others have pulled the "center" south down from the Far East (see also Jones 2002; Green and Svinth 2003). However, the essays presented here demonstrate that diasporic and transnational networks of social and cultural exchanges displace the embodied fantasy of some imagined historical or geographical Mecca for Asian martial arts.

As any filmgoer knows, the idea of abilities "stranger than fiction" has always taken pride of place in martial arts discourse; and martial arts

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biography, autobiography, and ethnography all contain rich elaborations on the same basic story: that by training the body properly one may enter an alternative space, one not characterized by disenchantment. Individual re-enchantment can also be an embodied, lived allegory of social re-enchantment. The empowerment of the individual body becomes, with the national and transnational mappings that are constant features of martial arts discourse, not only a figuration but also an embodiment of the empowerment and even enchantment of larger, communal selves. The social body also undergoes martial arts training, and such training combined with the embodied fantasies of myth, legend, travel, and tourism culminate in processes of diasporic identity construction and reconstruction with national and global consequences for the ways in which martial "traditions" are transmitted and received, in addition to being represented and understood.

Embodied Fantasy

The metanarrative of individualistic martial arts self-regeneration has several key stages. First, a martial arts hero undergoes grave insult or even intense physical abasement. Most martial arts "fight to the death" movies have this plotline; for example, see *Blood Sport* (1989) starring Jean-Claude Van Damme. Ralph Macchio's character had to overcome just this sort of humiliation in *Karate Kid* (1984), which he could not have done without the help of Mr. Kesuke Miyagi, the Okinawan-in-exile with a permanently romantic soul played by actor Pat Morita. Perhaps a bad person intentionally cripples the hero's brother, or perhaps the hero's sister faced with rapists instead chooses, honorably, to kill herself, as did Su Lin (played by Angela Mao) the sister of Lee (played by Bruce Lee) in *Enter the Dragon* (1973), the first kung fu movie produced by a major Hollywood studio. Sometimes the CIA can be involved as well, such as in Steven Seagal's revenge fantasy, *Hard to Kill* (1990). The audience member, so the theory goes, supposedly feels weak and can thus identify with the weak almost-murdered hero, who will later be recognized as strong. Consumers of martial arts fantasy, it could be said, harbor a wish to become "the most unstoppable son-of-a-bitch" people ever knew. The cinematic fantasies are the publically shared cultural texts in which the wounded hero gathers the pieces of his or her life together through the redemptive, if vicious, aid of an Asian master, exemplified by Pai Mei

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(played by Chia Hui Lui), ripped unceremoniously from his own historical time into modern times for Quentin Tarantino's 2004 film, *Kill Bill 2*, so that he may teach Beatrix Kiddo (played by Uma Thurman) the fabled one-inch punch, which comes in handy for her to blast her way out of a coffin while buried alive.[6]

Our arrangement here begins with "embodied fantasy" at the individual level, but the individual triumph allegorizes national anxieties as well, and the essays in Embodied Fantasy examine the correlations between the individual, national, and international levels of interpretation. In "Some Versions of the Samurai: The Budō Core of DeLillo's *Running Dog*," John Whalen-Bridge discusses the ways in which the American novelist Don DeLillo pursues the dislocation and subsequent rearticulation of transnational martial arts conventions. DeLillo takes a series of utterly conventional plotlines—CIA conspiracy thriller, martial arts fantasy, and an investigative journalist on the hunt for an expose—individually conventional devices, that become surreal when combined, probably because the assemblage violates the ideologically effective convention of asserting the individuality of the quest. DeLillo points out the ways in which the embodied knowledge of martial training, Samurai ethical norms, and American sexual freedom alter meanings and conventions as they migrate from dojos to popular media to highbrow fiction.

Essays in this section demonstrate the ways in which martial arts, both as a practice and the subject around which a field of representations is organized, bridges the divide between body and mind that have prevailed in Western forms of self-understanding. In the novel discussed by Whalen-Bridge, we see martial arts as a figural activity that can tell us about the interrelated reasoning and physical practices of characters while at the same time presenting, swathed in irony, an ideal form of embodied mind against which to measure various more compromised ways of life.

Paul Bowman's "The Fantasy Corpus of Martial Arts, or, The 'Communication' of Bruce Lee" crosses the divide in another way. Bowman's article primarily wishes to reveal the deconstruction of the "fantasy versus embodied reality" binary that is a reoccurring theme of martial arts discourse. Drawing on Derrida, and biographical considerations of Bruce Lee, and popularizers of Zen Buddhism such as Alan Watts, Bowman illuminates a continuous process of mutual development between body and imagination. If Bowman examines the transnational deployment of martial arts discourse as way to encounter fractious divides productively *from the Western* side, examining Bruce Lee's films alongside popular songs

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and movies such as Jarman's *Ghost Dog*, Jie Lu's "Body, Masculinity, and Representation in Chinese Martial Art Films" approaches similar matters via a consideration of Chinese cinema in relation to Chinese attitudes toward gender and the body. There can be no simplistic division between East and West in a discussion of martial arts discourse, and Jie carefully situates Ang Lee's films within a cultural buffer zone between East and West, one in which a transnational cultural product has been "made possible by Hollywood capital, a pan-Asian star cast, and a well-known international team."

While it is often said that Western philosophical traditions programmatically present spirit as superior to body in ways that Far Eastern cultures would not, Jie's carefully nuanced discussion shows how Asian philosophical traditions are, at distinct historical moments, more or less of the same mind, as it were, about the body, and, in a dialectical manner, in direct opposition to Western attitudes: "Mao Zedong tempered his body in physical education. A strong body became a precondition for making a modern (male) subject and building a strong nation" (101). The Maoist body had to be yet constrained, lest eroticism divert the body-energies that were meant to be organized, and so we cannot, even for a moment, rest in lazy binaries. Jie's historically rich approach makes alignments between the imagined body and the embodied political stakes and outcomes with admirable clarity: "[d]e-erotized, both the proletarian body of Mao's China and Lee's self-displayed body were used to symbolize the political power and national strength and/or to redefine Chinese masculinity and reconstruct the image of cultural China" (102).

How the Social Body Trains

Findings derived from anthropological fieldwork concerning how the social body trains are presented here by de Grave for the Indonesian martial art (*pencak silat*) and by Rennesson for Thai boxing. Before commencing with an outline of the individual chapters, taken together it may be noted that each implicitly or explicitly engages the notion of rationalization. Max Weber's typology of action, including rational action (formal and substantive), affective action, and traditional action, also includes another type of action linked to the body that has rarely been developed. The essays in this section offer different ways to approach bodily action: de Grave explains the distinct sensory or body rationality of Javanese

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martial arts that employ a far broader conception than the basic five senses commonly accepted in the West; Rennesson probes the interconnected network of bodies that become locked in a "polymorphous clinch" through participation in Thai boxing matches in the local, national, and international arena.

Regarding the individual essays, in "The Training of Perception in Javanese Martial Arts," French anthropologist Jean-Marc de Grave presents remarkable findings from his research into the Javanese martial art *pencak silat*. In Java, where up to ten senses are described, the understanding and classification of the senses is broader than it is in the West. De Grave considers the Merpati Putih style of *pencak silat*, originating from Yogyakarta, Central Java, in order to document the training of tactile and proprioceptive senses that are said to detect subtle vibratory frequencies (see also de Grave 2001). A dramatic test for such abilities is stopping a ball kicked toward a goal while wearing a blindfold, or negotiating a field of standing obstacles while blindfolded.

Merpati Putih, one of the principal schools of *tanaga dalam* (inner power), is renowned in Indonesia for its breathing exercises and for the training of elaborate skills such as the ability to sense *getaran* (waves, vibrations). This secularized training is rationalized through collaboration with medical, military, and sports professionals. According to de Grave, on the basis of breathing exercises and special concentration techniques, practitioners develop "true inner feeling" (*rasa sejati*) and develop particularly sensitive perceptual abilities allowing them to perceive the immediate environment without the need to see it. The development of peculiar sensory awareness is also harnessed to other applications such as the breakage of hard objects, including metal files, tempered steel targets, concrete slabs, and ice blocks.

De Grave illustrates a process where practitioners "may develop abilities that resemble a touch intensified to the extreme" (135) and where through "remote blind detection" blind people become able to negotiate obstacles in the outer environment as if they could see them, thus allowing them to "move around practically like seeing people" (134). Far from attempting to debunk such phenomena, de Grave notes the convergence of indigenous empirical methods with recent findings in the neurosciences, and discusses the links between "actual perception" and the "active imagination" (137). He concludes with the question of whether modern people would prefer to relate to "external media cognitive objects"—cars, computers, and so forth—or develop their inner potencies (140).

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The next essay on training the social body articulates the aesthetic, pragmatic, national, and international aspects of the social definition of the fighter's body. In "Thai Boxing: Networking of a Polymorphous Clinch," Stéphane Rennesson reveals the relational, hierarchical, and competitive networks of Thai boxers in the Kingdom of Thailand. According to Rennesson, professional Thai boxing (Muay Thai) was originally a form of martial tradition that rapidly began to grow into a sporting form of prize fighting in the late nineteenth century.

To avoid essentializing the individual fighter's body, Rennesson takes a "dynamic heuristic perspective" that focuses upon the "polymorphous clinch," a multivalent notion that articulates the dyad of two boxers from different stables or "fighting exogamies" as they are framed in any particular boxing contest (156). For dramatic purposes, and to a lesser extent for training, Thai boxers are understood to be naturally "artists" or "attackers," where attackers typify a stereotype of the darker skinned, more stocky Isan fighters from the northeast of Thailand, compared to their lighter skinned compatriots to the south. Predominantly tall and slender "artists" emphasize skill and technique over the strength and tenacity of stocky "attackers," however, these categories are not absolute, fixed, and immutable, but fluid, relational, and open to negotiation and amalgamation depending on the way promoters, managers, and journalists frame any two boxers who are to fight. Hence, Rennesson states that "[p]ugilists' bodies can't be taken for granted but must be regarded as temporary states, results of small adjustments that are modified following the stakes they embody in each and every fight" (156). The endless fights involving the co-relational defining and redefining of the boxers' bodies serve to manifest competitive local identities at the regional or national level, only to fuse in combination to define "Thai" national identity as *both artist and attacker* in international competitions whether against foreign contestants in Thailand, or where Thai nationals fight overseas.

Transnational Self-Construction

Welton, Chan, and Farrer consider issues of self-construction as they relate to transnational martial arts training. Welton evaluates authenticity, travel, and tourism for *kalarippayattu* in India and the United Kingdom, Chan contemplates Japanese martial arts in Zambia and Zimbabwe, and

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Farrer illustrates social memory and the maintenance of Chinese diasporic forms of cultural capital in contemporary Singapore.

Martin Welton in "From Floor to Stage: *Kalarippayattu* Travels" discusses training in the Indian martial art *kalarippayattu* from the standpoint of actors training for the British theater. Welton proceeds from the perspective of his own "field-research training in *kalarippayattu* as a performer traveling between the United Kingdom and India," predominantly in Northern style *kalarippayattu* "at the CVN Kalari in East Fort Thiruvananthapuram between 2000 and 2004" (168). He says that "the significance of 'travel' to the chapter is that it not only draws attention to the fact of movement—that culture/s as well as people travel—but that it identifies movement as the meeting point of body and culture (Rojek and Urry 1997: 10; Welton 162).

For Dean MacCannell (1976) tourism drives the search for authentic encounters, and Welton questions to what extent *kalarippayattu* may offer access to the authentic. Welton notes that in the transfer from floor to stage, *kalarippayattu* has moved from India to Britain and from Malayali to non-Malayali bodies. The key issue concerns the processes of embodiment for *kalarippayattu* as a transnational practice, and whether learning *kalarippayattu* for the stage constitutes an authentic embodiment of the martial tradition. Welton's response to the challenge of inauthenticity and "fears over the diminution of *kalarippayattu* as a necessarily *martial* art" is to say that *kalarippayattu* has not been engaged purely as theater by the traveling practitioners, but that it has become a daily practice that has "subverted" their existing embodiment (175; Alter 2004). Actors have developed a means of paying attention with their bodies, a "somatic mode of attention," that informs their work (Csordas 1993). Hence the issue of authenticity is resolved in quotidian engagement with the movements of *kalarippayattu*.

Stephen Chan, from the standpoint of comparative sociology combined with personal reflection, continues the theme of martial arts travel and self-construction in a transnational world. Chan is the inheritor of a private family system of Japanese martial arts and bases this highly personal account upon more than thirty years of experience in learning and teaching martial arts in Asia, Europe, and Africa. Like a riddle, the essence of Chan's account is located in the title of his essay, "The Oriental Martial Arts as Hybrid Totems, Together with Orientalized Avatars."[7] Here insights drawn from severe self-reflection reveal themselves through a hybrid of confessional autobiography blended with sociological critique.

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By situating the oriental martial arts as "hybrid," Chan reflects not upon the combination of supposedly once "pure" martial traditions, but upon the recreation, reconstruction, and repackaging of Japanese martial arts (originating from Southern China via Okinawa) according to various national and international cultural demands, and upon his own dissemination of a "heretical" karate syllabus to Zambia and Zimbabwe, derived from lessons in New Zealand and from "dojo-hopping all over London" (191). Via "totems," Chan conveys how "*traditional culture*, whether martial or otherwise, is never how it seems," and shows that in Africa, with the commercialization of schools that arose from his own free-of-charge teaching he was "reduced finally to the substance of celluloid and video" (197). Chan as "oriental avatar" was displaced for "a hybrid of oriental appearance (vocabulary, costume, rituals) and African autonomy within African customary hierarchies. . . . The amalgam was held up as a totem that could not be defiled" (197). Chan makes a wry self-reference with his notion of "orientalized avatar" (200). He refers to his initial reception in Africa, where to be a Chinese man in the 1970s meant that he could feel safe in even the roughest areas due to the embodied fantasy of oriental invulnerability made transnational by the films of Bruce Lee. However, the avatar status is no longer relevant today, because, in Chan's words "democracy and neoliberalism have crowded out the idyll of the avatar," where Chinese identity may now merely convey the status of a racist immigrant storekeeper (196). Chan continues that "[t]here is nothing oriental any more. It is everything to do with a debate between internationalism and nationalism. . . . Whether orientalized or internationalized, [karate] is a form of paternalized control" (198).

D. S. Farrer's "Coffee-Shop Gods: Kung Fu in the Singapore Diaspora" resumes the themes of self-construction and transnational martial arts training through an ethnographic analysis of social memory in the maintenance of overseas Chinese identity among kung fu masters in the Southeast Asia. Farrer's essay is drawn from a thirty-month-long "performance ethnography" of Chinese kung fu in Singapore, augmented by visits to China, Malaysia, and Thailand in the company of Singaporean kung fu experts, and focuses primarily on Chin Woo (Jingwu) supplemented with findings from Hong Sheng Choi Lai Fut. The inquiry into social memory was prompted initially by people who asked how the kung fu masters could remember all the moves in the long routines they perform. Considering the role of embodied social memory in relation to practice and performance led Farrer to inquire not solely what the moves

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represent or symbolically encode, but what it means to remember them. Such embodied remembering relates to a rich cultural tradition, one in which myth, legend, and story are maintained and transmitted through performance genres including Chinese opera, lion dance, and kung fu.

In order to learn Singaporean kung fu and come to an understanding of "the dagger society" (the Singaporean kung fu masters) the researcher must be prepared to "enter the coffee shop" (210). Considered as an external kitchen, and the primary social space outside of work and the home, the coffee shop is an important vehicle of the Chinese diaspora. Learning kung fu in Southeast Asia involves participating in the lives of the fictive kinship group, where the *sifu* takes on a fatherly or avuncular role. After each kung fu session kung fu practitioners would gather in their coffee shop, where the *sifu*s would often debate the origin and meaning of the kung fu forms.

The stylized movements of kung fu contained within the set routines provide a rich vein of symbolic representation based upon the movements of animals, heroes, assassins, immortals, and deities, that often refers to the heroes of *The Outlaws of the Marsh* and *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. The most prevalent deity to appear in Singaporean coffee shops is Guan Gong, the God of War, claimed to be the founder of *ying jow* (Eagle Claw) kung fu and of *baguazhang* (Eight Trigrams). Guan Gong is normally depicted carrying a halberd, and kung fu practitioners learn to use this heavy weapon as part of their daily practice. However, the myths are of secondary importance to the ability to practice or teach kung fu, where the "coffee shop gods" are the human and not merely the symbolic patrons of the establishment.

According to Singaporean kung fu masters, much of the kung fu they teach was lost in China due to the Cultural Revolution and the promotion of modern *wushu*, regarded as martial dance. This led Farrer to conclude that "[t]he martial arts culture at its richest is produced through an active remembering, simultaneously enacted and immanent. . . . an external memory, the overseas Chinese martial arts exist as a vast reservoir of Chinese cultural capital, one that has the potential to be reinvested back into China" (203). To relegate martial practices to simply the performance of cultural or national identity merely demotes such activity to passive "pretence." In discussing the social significance of kung fu in Singapore with masters of the art in the coffee shops, where martial arts discourse is truly at home, Farrer reveals indigenous hostility and suspicion to such external, academic depictions.

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