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Phantasmagoric Nationalism:
State power and the diasporic imagination

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MSc in Media & Communications

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State power and the diasporic imagination

Felicia Wong

ABSTRACT

If, as the saying goes, 'you are what you eat', is it then also true that 'we are what we eat?' To diaspora, food can be a poignant reminder of home. For a state which promotes food as part of national identity, food is a useful form of power;, visceral bait to coax the diasporic imagined community to manifest itself through a state-sponsored event promising a taste of the homeland.

Using the 'Singapore Day' diaspora engagement events as a case study, this dissertation adopts an interdisciplinary approach to state-diaspora relations and argues that Singapore Day is a spectacle demonstrating the extraterritorial projection of state power. Through visual semiotic analysis, various forms and practices of power are uncovered at this seemingly benign event. The anonymous 'empty space' of a foreign land is reterritorialized through *trompe l'œil* representations, hot and banal symbols of nationalism, while the gustatory and olfactory dimensions of food make palpable the nostalgia for homeland.

Building upon Benedict Anderson's imagined community, long-distance nationalism, and Anthony Giddens' time-space distanciation, the author proposes the new concept of ***phantasmagoric nationalism*** to articulate how nationalism and affinity for the homeland from afar is inherently phantasmic because diaspora is disembedded from the quotidian lived experience of homeland, and only sustained in the imaginary.

INTRODUCTION

> '… the immigrant's refrigerator is the very last place to look for signs of assimilation,'
> – *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Michael Pollan (2006): 295

Recently, I chanced upon a quaint food stall in London serving food from Singapore, the land of my birth. On that balmy English summer day, I was thrilled to find *ice kachang*, a Singaporean dessert of shaved ice atop sweet jellies, drizzled generously with syrups and

coconut milk. The ice was shorn with a hand-cranked machine, coconut milk freshly squeezed before my eyes, and the sticky palm sugar slow-cooked to molten perfection. The scene took me straight back to my childhood, waiting impatiently in the tropical humidity as the dessert was assembled with languid nonchalance. I snapped a picture of the scene and texted it to my godmother. She responded that hand-cranked machines are rare in Singapore nowadays, if existent at all, as most shops prefer the efficiency of electric ice machines, and pre-packaged syrups and coconut milk. 'I wish I were in London to have this authentic *ice kachang,*' came her next message. The irony overwhelmed me. What I had associated with the authenticity of homeland was revealed to be grossly inaccurate; the romanticism of nostalgia shattered in an instant.

Diasporic Singaporeans might reminisce about *char kway teow*, *chai tao kueh,* and *laksa,* all washed down with a glass of *Milo peng*. In the same way, fellow Finns craving *karjalanpiirakka*, *ruisleipä*, and *juustoleipä* need not explain the dishes to each other. Beyond mere sustenance, food and eating have long been part of community and collective identity. Food is 'a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behavior', transcending the individual to form collective imagination (Barthes, 1961: 21). However, although closely associated with social semiotics (Parasecoli, 2011), ritual, culture, and identity, food is not a common subject in media and communications (Cramer, Greene, & Walters, 2011: x-xi). There is a dearth of literature about food as a medium of state communication, much less specifically on communication towards diaspora. To further advance the discussion, adopting the Foucauldian concept of governmentality allows food to be addressed within dimensions of power.

Transnational migratory flows have increased in the new millennium: the global migrant stock grew twice as fast from 2000 to 2010 than during the previous decade (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division, 2013), embodying global 'ethnoscapes', the 'shifting landscape of people' ranging from tourists to refugees (Appadurai, 1996: 33). Since the late 1990s, governments started reclaiming its diaspora: from pressuring diaspora to return, states now court them in their host nations instead (Drzewiecka & Halualani, 2002: 343), leading to the rise of diasporic engagement. In light of this global trend where citizens not only reside within the physical territory of the nation-state, I adopt an interdisciplinary approach to examine how a state engages with its diaspora, in particular concerning the role of food as a seemingly non-threatening medium (Wilson, 2011: 2). Specifically, state power over its diaspora is examined through the case study of 'Singapore Day', a series of global diasporic engagement events hosted by the Singaporean government.

I take a 'from above' perspective and propose that Singapore Day is a tool of power over its diaspora, a means to maintain allegiance to the nation and state. Based on Benedict Anderson's concepts of imagined community and long distance nationalism, I situate Singapore Day as a disembedded spectacle in 'empty space', the stretching of the state-citizen relationship across time-space, demonstrating the state's extraterritorial projection of power. I draw on the concepts of soft power and gastro-diplomacy from international relations to explain how food is elevated to a tool of statecraft. Food at Singapore Day provides multi-sensory, olfactory, and gustatory stimulation to make the homeland tangible and evoke nostalgia. In addition, the diasporic imagined community is physically manifested when diasporic individuals attend the event in a place reterritorialized through hot and banal symbols of nationalism. I thus propose the new concept of ***phantasmagoric nationalism*** which articulates the quality that the long-distance nationalism felt by diaspora is intrinsically phantasmic, disembedded from the quotidian time-space of the physical homeland, sustained through imagination and the final vestiges of their last lived experience of homeland, therefore the sense of nationalism is subjective and commonly dissonant from reality.

Definitions

Overall, I adopt the social constructionist approach, that both concepts of nation and national identity are not essentially natural but are deliberate constructions for ideological gains (Kong & Yeoh, 1997: 214); 'malleable fictions' constantly negotiated between the state and citizenry through rhetoric (Bruner, 2002: 3). The 'State' refers to sets of institutions 'specifically concerned with the enforcement of order,' (Gellner, 1983: 4): which, in this context, is the ruling government of Singapore. The concept of nation is highly contested and many definitions exist. I adopt the broad characterization of it as a

> named and self-defined human community whose members cultivate shared myths, memories, values, symbols, and traditions, who reside in, and are attached to an historic territory or 'homeland', create and disseminate a distinctive public culture, and observe common laws and customs (A. D. Smith, 2010: 3).

However, I suggest that the nation in the diasporic context transcends residing physically in the homeland, and the emphasis should be on a continued sense of attachment. More broadly, nation is a sense of large-scale solidarity with a presupposed shared past and a common sense of the present made tangible in the form of 'a daily plebiscite' (Renan, 1882: 19), the quotidian affirmation of belonging. Nations will themselves to persist as communities of shared culture and polity (Gellner, 1983: 52-54), but the bonds within these

communities, and between people and place, are 'tenuous and require nurturing' (Kong & Yeoh, 1997: 214), which portends the constant need to imagine and re-imagine belonging. Nationalism is thus 'not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist,' (Gellner, 1964: 168).

Therefore, I propose that Singapore Day is meant to condition diasporic citizens to reimagine their belonging to the nation in foreign contexts where the homeland does not physically exist. As I will discuss in subsequent sections, the imagination of nation is vital to diaspora, which are spatially dispersed emigrant groups with emotional and social ties to the homeland, and maintain a 'distinctive identity vis-à-vis a host society' (Brubaker, 2005: 5-6). The term representation refers to the process of 're-presenting' in which 'members of a culture use systems of signs to produce meaning' (Orgad, 2012: 17), reflecting how the state uses symbolism and references at Singapore Day that citizens will be able to accurately 'read' due to their common Singaporean culture, which in essence is having 'shared meanings' (Hall, 1997: 1).

Context

Singapore is a small island in Southeast Asia, a city-state measuring just 247 square miles: half the land area of New York City. It is a former British colony and one of the 'Asian Tigers' that enjoyed dramatic economic growth since independence in 1965. Unlike its Muslim neighbours, Singapore is a secular state, and is unique in Asia for having English as its first language. Bolstered by high levels of literacy and development indicators, its GDP per capita ranks third globally, ahead of Norway, Switzerland, and the United States (International Monetary Fund, 2015).

Without natural resources and a miniscule domestic market, Singapore adopted an outward-looking economic strategy, including efforts in the 1990s to globalize the economy when citizens were encouraged to work overseas (Kong, 1999: 571). The ruling government, led by the People's Action Party since independence, has long run the country like an enterprise, leading to nicknames like 'Singapore Inc.' (Kraar, 1974). This analogy of capitalism remains accurate today where public sector bonuses are pegged to economic growth (Chen, 2014) and citizens receive monetary dividends from the state during periods of economic prosperity (Ministry of Finance, 2011). Through its two sovereign wealth funds Temasek Holdings and GIC Private Limited, in which the Prime Minister is chairman of the latter, Singapore invests its vast foreign reserves globally (GIC Private Limited, 2015), including taking stakes in global entities such as UBS and Citibank (Ismail, 2011). These behaviours exemplify the

neoliberal model of governance that emphasizes the 'opening up of commerce and finance to transnational networks, not bound to a territorialized conception of economic development' (Ragazzi, 2014: 86). Neoliberalism guides state policies, and ultimately its citizens, to venture beyond the physical confines of Singapore, causing the realm of citizenship to transcend geography and become 'embedded in the territoriality of global capitalism' (Ong, 2006: 7).

Out of its current resident population of 5.47 million, only 3.8 million are Singapore citizens (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2015a), the rest being permanent residents and transitory migrant workers. At the same time, an estimated 212,000 diasporic Singaporeans live abroad (National Population and Talent Division, 2014), up from 143,000 in 2006 ('From 'let them go' to 'bring them home',' 2008), a 48 percent increase in just eight years. The Overseas Singaporean Unit (henceforth 'OSU') was thus set up in 2006 with a mandate to keep the diaspora 'emotionally connected' to Singapore (Overseas Singaporean Unit, 2015). The formation of OSU marks a paradigm shift in diaspora policy compared to 2002 when the then-Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong in his National Day rally speech condemned those who left the country as fair-weather 'quitters' ('PM Goh - Are you a stayer or quitter?,' 2002). It was only in 2006 that Singaporeans residing overseas were allowed to vote in elections (*Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Bill*, 2008), suggesting how recently the diaspora was 'reclaimed' by the state. Structurally, OSU sits within the National Population and Talent Division, which in turn is under the purview of the Prime Minister's Office ('About NPTD,' 2014). In 2012, OSU had an annual budget of S$7 million[1] for diasporic engagement (*Programmes by Overseas Singaporean Unit: Effectiveness of Programmes*, 2012). Having a dedicated agency with its own budget and a direct link to executive power suggests that diasporic engagement is important to the Singaporean government.

Singapore Day is a one-day event held annually, rotating among major cities such as London, New York, and Sydney where there are significant populations of diasporic Singaporeans. More than 40,000 Singaporeans reside in the United Kingdom (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2001), and Singapore Day 2009 in London was estimated to cost S$6 million ('S'pore Day heads to London on April 25,' 2009), culminating in parliamentary debates

[1] S$7 million is approximately £3.35 million. At 2nd January 2016, £1 = S$2.08.

Above: Promotional material posted on the official Singapore Day Facebook page. Singapore street food is touted as the main draw of the event.

about the cost justification for diaspora engagement. The event is ticketed but free for Singaporean citizens and their guests, requiring one's national registration number to request tickets. There are three main components of Singapore Day: about 20 food stalls serving Singaporean food, with food hawkers and ingredients flown in from Singapore; a concert by Singaporean entertainers; and an exhibition. According to OSU, event components are 'carefully curated in an effort to bring an authentic slice of home to the overseas Singaporean attendees' (personal communication, July 21, 2015), and are intended to evoke nostalgia and connection to Singapore ('S'pore Day heads to London on April 25,' 2009).

Singapore is a multi-ethnic nation with a Chinese majority (74%), followed by Malays (13%), Indians (9%), and other ethnicities (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2015b). Robust social engineering practices are in place, with constant rhetoric about 'racial harmony' and a state narrative on how meritocracy has brought the country 'from third world to first' (Paleit & Hughes, 2015). It is well documented that food and eating are promoted by the state and recognized by Singaporeans as national identity (Duffy & Yang, 2012; Tarulevicz, 2013), providing a convenient umbrella to encapsulate the ethnic diversity of Singapore society, since food is a 'marvellously plastic kind of collective representation' (Appadurai, 1981: 494). Singaporean food is a unique amalgamation of Chinese, Indian, and Malay influences. Despite proximity to its closest neighbour, distinct differences remain between Malaysian and Singaporean versions of similar dishes, such as Singapore's *laksa*, a spicy noodle dish with a rich coconut milk broth, compared to Malaysia's Penang *laksa* which is sour due to the

addition of tamarind. It is thus highly difficult for diasporic Singaporeans to get the exact version of homeland foods.

I therefore propose that Singapore Day is of academic interest because the event is a microcosm of policy, polity, power, and identity, and opportunities abound for the application of theory to practice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to adequately assess Singapore Day, the literature review seeks to uncover broad themes in state-diaspora engagement; state power over diaspora; and the role of food is examined in particular because it is the flagship component of the event. The complex interplay of factors which bookend this discussion does not sit within neat academic silos, and thus necessitates an interdisciplinary approach. The confines of this dissertation preclude the vast body of literature theorizing 'from below' diasporic identity formation and maintenance (see for example, Hall (2003), and Vertovec (2001). Instead, the focus is on how the state uses forms of power at an event to maintain ties with its diaspora. This section begins with an overview of state-diaspora engagement, then reviews existing literature on food and identity, forms of power, nostalgia, the spectacle, and flags the identified gaps.

Overview: Diasporic Engagement and Power

Diasporic studies are extensive, have a long history, and span multiple disciplines. However, much of the early literature on state-diaspora relations tend to focus on migrant-sending states in the developing world such as the Philippines and Mexico, where the state is primarily a legal protector of its overseas citizens' rights due to vested interests in safeguarding much-needed remittances from their diasporic workforce (Agunias, 2009; Sto. Tomas, 2009).

Singapore Day 2008 in Melbourne, Australia, was examined through the 'memory-nationhood framework' (Gomes, 2010: 46) of state-sponsored remembering, and identified the use of nostalgia to maintain long-distance nationalism. Gomes observed the linking of 'everyday Singaporean culture with symbols of nationhood such as commemorative landmarks' to invoke sentiments of nationalism and patriotism. As the later sections reveal, this *modus operandi* of the state has remained consistent, where references to or replicas of landmarks are used as 'unquestionably familiar signifiers of Singapore' (Gomes, 2010: 46). A

similar case study approach examined India's first diaspora engagement event in 2003 through themes of neoliberalism and nationalism. However, unlike Singapore Day, which takes place in diasporic host cities, India's 'Day of Indians Abroad' took place in New Delhi, beseeching non-resident Indians and persons of Indian origin to return to 'Mother India' (Mani & Varadarajan, 2005: 46). However, both these case studies do not explicitly address power in state-diaspora engagement.

Recent studies with a 'from above' perspective concerning the state in diasporic engagement originate largely from political geography (Délano & Gamlen, 2014; Ho, 2011; Ho, Hickey, & Yeoh, 2015; Tölölyan, 2012). Academics identified a 'diasporic turn' in governmental policy and practice (Ragazzi, 2014: 74), the discernible shift in tone from villainizing citizens who leave the homeland to lauding them as heroes. In 1980, fewer than 20 nations had state agencies dedicated to diaspora engagement, but by 2014, more than half of all United Nations member states have such organizations (Gamlen, 2014: S185), a five-fold increase. Broadly, diaspora engagement is defined as the effort to cultivate collectivities, foster a 'communal mentality' (Gamlen, 2006: 7), and create identification with 'imagined national communities' (Gamlen, 2008: 843). Diaspora engagement policies allow states to project their power extraterritorially, altering dynamics of place and power (Gamlen, 2014: S183) to render their diaspora governable across distance (Gamlen, 2006: 7) through cultivated consent (Gamlen, 2008: 853). Gamlen frames state power through Foucauldian governmentality, which refers to governments' rationality to use the institutions and procedures at its disposal to exercise power over its target population (Foucault, 1978: 102), although how this power is exercised is not specifically examined. Globalization, neoliberalism, and governmentality are common frameworks underscoring diaspora engagement (Larner, 2007), and comparative analyses of states' diaspora policies affirm the importance of transnational neoliberal governmentality, a mercantilist political-economical model not bound to territorialized economic growth (Ragazzi, 2014:86). This model is accurate to Singapore which aggressively pursues offshore investments, with a concerted 'internationalization strategy' encouraging its citizens to work overseas and expand Singapore's economy (Ho, 2006: 388). Compared to the Jewish, Greek, or Armenian diasporas born out of trying circumstances (Gal, Leoussi, & Smith, 2010), or migrants from developing countries compelled to leave in search of better economic opportunities, the origins of the Singaporean diaspora are relatively benign and voluntary.

Despite the recent upswing of diaspora engagement studies in political geography and the mention of power through Foucauldian governmentality, there remains a gap in the literature examining how state power is actually exercised or represented in diaspora engagement events.

Food: The medium is delicious

Food is positioned as the main draw for diaspora at Singapore Day, affirmed by publicity materials and media reports (Channel News Asia, 2015), and food has also been associated with Singapore's state-sanctioned national identity (Duffy & Yang, 2012: 59). As such, a significant portion of the literature review examines the various application of food, namely: food and identity, food and state power, and food and nostalgia.

Food & National Identity

Food and eating have long been part of community life and collective identity: in Abrahamic religions, food rituals were useful to make tangible the concept of an invisible deity (Feeley-Harnik, 1981: 166). Today, food remains an expression of intangible concepts through secular food rituals such as holiday meals, birthday cakes, and the assertion of identity and values by eating or abstaining from certain foods: as vegan, Muslim, or even the intersection of both.

Within the territorial bounds of the nation-state, the link between food and national identity has been discussed extensively. Specific to Singapore, Nicole Tarulevicz notes that food is ideological and part of Singapore's national narrative, where the table is a 'site of nation-making' (Tarulevicz, 2013: 7). Appadurai suggests that the act of communal feasting marks social solidarity (Appadurai, 1988: 11), and described food as gastro-politics, symbolizing complex values and is never morally neutral (Appadurai, 1988: 10). Food embodies collective representation with semiotic functions to define cultural groups (Appadurai, 1981: 494-496), marks inclusion and exclusion through 'culinary differentiation' (Belasco, 2002: 2), and constitutes the fundamental building blocks of every culture (Lupton, 1994: 666). National cuisine is regarded as the 'most distinctive expressions' of a nation (Ory, 1997: 443), and across spatial-temporal dimensions, 'the further away from the mother country, the more crystallized the culinary identity' (Belasco, 2002: 13) of diaspora. However, the bulk of studies concerning diaspora and food overwhelmingly take a 'from below' case study approach, typically on how diasporic communities use food to maintain their identities of origin, and implicitly, their emotional ties to the homeland (Mannur, 2009; Rowe, 2012; Thomas, 2004).

While existing literature affirms the premise that homeland foods help maintain diasporic identity and can mark inclusion and belonging, there remains a distinct absence of literature with a 'from above' perspective concerning the state's use of food in sustaining diasporic identity beyond the geographical bounds of the nation-state.

Food & State Power

> 'The study of power cannot be regarded as a second-order consideration in the social sciences. Power cannot be tacked on, as it were, after the more basic concepts of social science have been formulated. There is no more elemental concept than that of power.'
> – *The Constitution of Society,* Anthony Giddens (1984): 283

To foreground the discussion of food and power, I adopt Joseph Nye's definitions from international relations, where power is 'the ability to influence the behavior of others to get the outcomes one wants' (Nye, 2004: 1-2). Nye further differentiates between hard power – a coercive command power based on 'inducements or threats', versus soft power, which is an attractive, co-optive power (Nye, 2004: 5-7), epitomizing the power of seduction. This section examines the role of food and the two types of power, varying contextually whether the power is directed internally within the nation-state, or extraterritorially.

Hard Power - Internal

Literature concerning food and state power typically describe hard power, and is territorially bound within the nation-state. Exemplified by the vast 'American agro-military complex', 'food means power, power means food' (Belasco, 2002: 4). Within agrarian societies in developing countries such as Mexico and China, state policies about food represent hard power because it can literally be a matter of life and death, directly affecting the basic subsidence of the populace and political stability through rural politics (Brownell, 2005; Fox, 1993).

Soft Power - Internal

States can exert co-optive soft power over their populations for different purposes through the seeming banality of food, where power is subtle and used for ideological ends. A state-run campaign in Japan encouraged eating rice to 'reinforce national coherence' (Hiroko, 2008: 25) and exercise nationalistic resistance against American hegemony (Hiroko, 2008: 23). Also in Japan, the pressure for mothers to provide *obento* boxed lunches for their children is attributed to state manipulation through indoctrination, where power is 'subtle, disguised, and accepted as everyday social practice' (Allison, 2013: 297), setting cultural norms and expectations.

Soft Power - External

Recent literature documents the growing trend of gastro-diplomacy (Juyan Zhang, 2015: 569): 'the act of winning hearts and minds through stomachs' (Rockower, 2012: 235), where

states use their national cuisines to reach foreign publics, an exercise of attractive soft power. Gastro-diplomacy is often associated with nation-branding and public diplomacy strategies with an outward orientation towards foreign publics (Melissen, 2005: 13), and an exercise of power through communication (Van Ham, 2010: 115). Gastro-diplomacy differs from food diplomacy: instead of cuisine and gastronomy, the latter refers to subsistence, commonly in the form of relief donations and food for humanitarian aid (Chapple-Sokol, 2013: 162; Rockower, 2012: 237).

In reviewing the two forms of power and the different contextual orientations, I identified a gap in the literature where there is a lack of research addressing the exercise of state power over its diaspora through food.

Food & Nostalgia

> 'No sooner had the warm liquid, and the crumbs with it, touched my palate, a shudder ran through my whole body, and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary changes that were taking place… Whence could it have come to me, this all-powerful joy? I was conscious that it was connected with the taste of tea and cake, but that it infinitely transcended those savors, could not, indeed, be of the same nature as theirs. Whence did it come? What did it signify? How could I seize upon and define it?'
> – *Remembrance of Things Past*, Marcel Proust (1913): 48.

I argue that food is positioned as the main attraction of Singapore Day because it is appealing, seemingly neutral, and serves as a palpable, multi-sensory reminder of the homeland and national identity. While notions such as nationalism are conceptual, food is a powerful representation of homeland because nostalgia relies on 'sensual perceptions, smells, and sounds' (Boym, 2001: 258). Food provides contexts for remembering and forgetting (Holtzman, 2006: 364), and empirical studies have affirmed the link between food and the 'emotional dimensions of human experience' where memory is recalled via tastes and smell (Lupton, 2005: 320). Food can 'shift levels of identity when experienced in new contexts, becoming a symbol not just of home or place, but of countries or perhaps regions' (Sutton, 2001: 74). Specifically to Singapore, where 'vestiges of the past had been systematically destroyed' (H. S. Wong, 2007: 115) due to the unrelenting pace of neoliberal economic development, food becomes a 'safe and uncontested site of national memory' (Tarulevicz, 2013: 35). I suggest that food is used as a seemingly apolitical mnemonic cue at Singapore Day for diaspora to recall and reaffirm their Singaporean identity in a foreign setting, since food is not just cultural or symbolic, but a material dimension to 'evoke memories and arouse historical consciousness' (H. S. Wong, 2007: 116).

Contextualized within the spatial and temporal disembedding of diaspora, food and the act of eating can 'make concrete' the intangible relationship to homeland, becoming a landmark in space-time (De Certeau, 1998: 183). Along with the 'habitus of food', the set of cultural and social practices that is part of the national imagination, food and eating becomes performative symbolic discourse (Wilk, 2002: 70) of belonging and identity. As such, I propose that food is used to anchor the disembedded diasporic individual to the homeland, where the act of partaking in Singaporean food becomes an implicit acknowledgment, remembrance, and performance of identification with the homeland.

Spectacle: Concert and Exhibit

Besides food, the two other components of Singapore Day are a concert featuring Singaporean entertainers, and the 'experiential showcase', an elaborate exhibit with information about Singapore. I regard both components as spectacles, the theatrical 'conscious construction of pomp' with pageantry and fanfare (Kong & Yeoh, 1997: 215), intended to craft collective memory (Connerton, 1989: 48) and to develop national pride, national identity, and loyalty (Kong & Yeoh, 1997: 216). Understanding Singaporean cultural references and humour requires innate cultural capital, thus the concert and exhibit become symbolic markers of inclusion and exclusion, reinforcing a sense of identification and belonging. The concert also demonstrates 'hot' nationalism as a non-routine spectacle which brings a surge of nationalist emotion (Billig, 1995: 45) through singing of the national anthem and patriotic songs with other members of the imagined community. The concert echoes aspects of Singapore's annual National Day parades, a ritualized spectacle awash in national colours and orchestrated with visual and aural effects to legitimize state power by appealing to nationalism (Kong & Yeoh, 1997: 236).

Gaps identified

Therefore, I have identified gaps in the literature concerning the exercise of state power over its diaspora: how power is represented and exercised; and the role of food in state-diaspora engagement, particularly as a means of power.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND & CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Having contextualized Singapore, Singapore Day, and reviewed existing literature and its gaps, this section lays out the interdisciplinary conceptual framework and theoretical foundations to approach the case study. Notions of time, space, and the imagination are fundamental concepts that underscore the discussion of power in diaspora engagement.

Power and Governmentality

State power is the cornerstone of this dissertation. Besides Joseph Nye's concepts of hard and soft power, Singapore Day exemplifies Foucauldian governmentality, which is the state leveraging the ensemble of institutions, procedures, analyses, and tactics at its disposal to exercise power towards a targeted population (Foucault, 1978: 102). In this context, the state's rationality for the extraterritorial projection of power led to the creation of OSU to reach overseas Singaporeans and attempt to keep them emotionally tethered to the homeland. It demonstrates the extent of state power not only to use existing apparatuses of power, but the ability to *create* institutions to meet its objectives.

Time-Space Distanciation

The fundamental premise behind the growth of the Singaporean diaspora is globalization, the 'widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life, from the cultural to the criminal, the financial to the spiritual,' (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, & Perraton, 1999: 2). This interconnectedness includes the physical movements of people, described as dynamic ethnoscapes, the shifting landscapes of people that affect the politics of nations (Appadurai, 1990: 7). I premise the study of Singapore's state-diaspora engagement on Anthony Giddens' concept of disembedding: the 'lifting out' of interactions from local contexts (Giddens, 1990: 21), including the institutionalization of distanciated interactions (Tomlinson, 1994: 151). Singapore Day manifests time-space distanciation, 'the stretching of social-systems across time-space' (Giddens, 1984: 181), where the state-citizen dynamic is no longer confined within the physical boundaries of homeland. Time-space distanciation is also significant for the perpetuation of nostalgia across time, harnessing its emotive capacity and 'future relevance' when wielded as a political tool (Legg, 2004: 100).

Reterritorialization: Space & Place

'Place' is specific, has special qualities, is often nostalgic, and provides the setting for 'social rootedness', whereas 'space' is generic (Agnew, 2011: 2-8). The physical setting of Singapore Day involves elaborate constructed sets mimicking landmarks of the homeland, and is thus a form of reterritorialization: the deliberate creation of 'habitats of meaning' in a location, with symbolism and meaning drawn from distant places (Hudson, 2010: 443). Unlike large ethnic diasporas that have created reterritorialized places in various host cities in the form of Chinatown or Little India, a small state like Singapore does not have the critical mass of diaspora to achieve such an extent or permanence of reterritorialization. Instead, Singapore Day is ephemeral reterritorialization made possible by the power of the state, where the 'empty space' of a generic park in a foreign country is temporarily reterritorialized into meaningful 'place' through the use of cultural references and symbols of Singapore, such as buildings, food, and national colours. The constructed sets of Singapore Day rely heavily on *trompe l'œil* representations to forge an 'imaginative geography and history' where space is poetically endowed with imaginative value and identity is intensified by dramatizing the difference between what is proximate and distant (Said, 1979: 55). In other words, by recreating scenes of Singapore in a foreign land, reterritorialization emphasizes and exaggerates the diaspora's 'Singaporean-ness'. Significantly, 'the objectification of history in the landscape in the form of monuments… inevitably ossifies particular versions of collective memory and at the same time erases from present consciousness other versions of the past,' (Yeoh & Kong, 1997: 61), highlighting the power of the state to present its preferred narratives of nationhood, thereby conveying intangible concepts through reterritorialization. In light of the disembedding qualities of time-space distanciation, this ephemeral reterritorialization affirms that place becomes increasingly phantasmagoric, where the 'visible form of the locale conceals the distanciated relations which determine its nature' (Giddens, 1990: 19). In other words, for diaspora, place is 'less about the boundary, and more about imagination' (Georgiou, 2010: 21).

L'Imaginaire & Imagined Community

Appadurai suggests the troika of *image* (media images), the *imagined* (community), and *l'imaginaire* – the *imaginary,* which is a 'constructed landscape of collective aspirations', describing the imagination as social practice (Appadurai, 1990: 4-5). This dissertation is loosely premised upon these three tenets: methodologically examining *images* from the Singapore Day event for the *imagined* diasporic community, who in turn, actively sustain belonging to the nation through *imagination*. Diasporas have been regarded 'imagined

communities *par excellence,'* (Dayan, 2002: 110), referring to Benedict Anderson's concept that nations are imagined political communities where 'members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even heard of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion' (Anderson, 1983: 6). The imagination is vital to the diaspora that is physically removed from the homeland yet continues to imagine belonging to the nation. Diaspora can even be thought of as transcending imagined communities to inhabit 'imagined worlds' instead, multiple spaces in the imaginations of people moving across the globe (Appadurai, 1990: 7). This fluid dynamic provides impetus for the homeland state to compete for continued engagement, and attempt to maintain their claim to the imagination of their diasporic citizens across time-space.

Anderson describes the nation as a 'sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time', a 'solid community moving steadily down (or up) history' (Anderson, 1983: 26). The idea of the nation as a collectivity suspended in time, in the context of disembedding from physical geopolitical boundaries, is important in framing long-distance nationalism. However, instead of the linear 'up and down' notion of temporality that Anderson presupposes, I argue that the concept of time should be thought of as circuitous instead, especially because historical rhetoric of nationhood is typically iterated and reiterated by the state when 'flagging' nationalism.

Long Distance Nationalism

While Anderson's concept is a useful starting point, I argue that his negative characterization of long-distance nationalism as a 'menacing portent for the future' (Anderson, 1998: 74) unrealistically assumes that identification with and affinity for the homeland is synonymous with political activism from afar, dramatized by examples of diaspora sending firearms and funding separatist movements. Instead, I adopt the broader definition that long-distance nationalism is a 'set of identity claims and practices that connect people living in various geographical locations to a specific territory that they see as their ancestral home' (Glick Schiller, 2004: 570). I contend that long-distance nationalism should not be assumed to be synonymous with reactionary political activism, but that nationalism can be a neutral 'sense of being part of a broader, unifying political community' (Giddens, 2001: 447).

Banal Nationalism

Nationalism exists in many forms, and I draw on Michael Billig's differentiation between 'hot' nationalism, the non-routine surge of patriotism commonly involving flags, anthems,

parades, and other overt displays of nationhood (Billig, 1995: 44-45), versus banal nationalism, the endemic sense of belonging to the nation that is cultivated through the routines of everyday life (Billig, 1995: 6). Banal nationalism is 'flagged' in various forms through the quotidian, including unconscious linguistic cues such as 'our' or 'us' (Billig, 1995: 93), through food, landscape (Palmer, 1998: 175), and even street signs (Jones & Merriman, 2009). In other words: the 'scraps, patches, and rags of daily life must be repeatedly turned into the signs of a national culture,' (Bhabha, 1990: 297), and banal nationalism is vital to understanding the mundane, everyday homeland references at Singapore Day.

Nostalgia

Closely related to time, space, and imagination is nostalgia, the 'longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed' (Boym, 2007: 7). This definition is especially poignant in Singapore's context: due to rapid development, demolition, and construction, even if residents stay put, the landscape of the physical country changes so quickly that 'Singaporeans find themselves eventually in a new place, clinging only to ghosts' (George, 2000: 193). The sense of loss is exacerbated by 'spatial and temporal displacement' (Boym, 2001: 38), endemic to diaspora who are physically disembedded, their time in the homeland truncated. Singaporean diasporic nostalgia can therefore be conceptualized as the longing for a homeland which, when so rapidly transformed, inevitably becomes a non-existent one.

Lieux de Mémoire

Lieux de mémoire, 'places of memory', is a concept by French historian Pierre Nora, and the places, sites, and/or causes which can be material, symbolic, and/or functional (Nora, 1996: 14). *Lieux de mémoire* are subjective, where remembering is intentional and value-laden, unlike *lieux d'histoire,* which are purely historical (Nora, 1996: 15). Although the concept is imprecise by its breadth of definition, it remains a useful lens to assess what is physically constructed and represented by the state at Singapore Day, since Nora suggests that the fundamental purpose of *lieux de mémoire* is to stop time, prevent forgetting, and materialize the immaterial to capture 'maximum meaning with the fewest possible signs' (Nora, 1996: 15). The notion of signs segues into visual semiotics, which will be addressed in the methodology chapter that follows.

OBJECTIVE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In view of the gaps identified in literature across the interdisciplinary space, the primary objective of this dissertation is to critically examine how state power is exercised in diasporic engagement through the case study of Singapore Day.

RQ: To what extent, if any, is the Singapore Day event a representation of state power over its diaspora?

Sub questions:

- How is 'empty space' reterritorialized by the state to create 'place'?
- How does food represent soft power?
- What is the role of nostalgia, if any, at a diaspora engagement event?

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Methodology

Prior to deciding on the methodology of choice, I sought to gain as much contextual information about Singapore Day as possible, having never personally attended one. Through news articles, online photo galleries, videos, official social media channels of the OSU, and social media posts of diasporic Singaporeans who attended Singapore Day, I gained a multi-faceted understanding of the event. In order to fulfill the objective of this dissertation and address the research questions, the selected methodology has to allow for analysis of Singapore Day through examining representations of power, if any. Quantitative methods were generally deemed unsuitable in light of the need for context and subtlety instead of empirical precision. Several qualitative methods were then considered: ethnography, elite interviews, content analysis, and visual semiotic analysis.

The ideal methodology would be on-site ethnography, defined as the study of people in naturally occurring settings, to capture their social meanings and ordinary activities (Brewer, 2000: 10) and yield 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973: 6) by allowing the researcher to make direct, detailed, and comprehensive on-site observations. However, Singapore Day 2015 took place in Shanghai, China, thus logistical and financial constraints precluded ethnography. The envisioned methodology during initial planning of this dissertation was to conduct elite interviews with government officials from OSU and the High Commission of Singapore to

London in order to get a 'from above' perspective from the state about diaspora engagement and communication. They had just organized the 2014 Singapore Day event in London, and would have recent experience to speak of. However, after initial correspondence with officials via email and phone, I subsequently faced bureaucratic stonewalling.

There is extensive media coverage and state-produced content about Singapore Day since the inaugural event in 2007, providing ample descriptive information. However, content analysis was ruled out because merely quantifying the number of times certain words occur in descriptions of the event would strip any contextual nuance in attempting to understand the exercise of state power, and would not be adequate to answer the research questions. One could quantify the number of times certain Singaporean foods are mentioned, for example, but it would not be meaningful in understanding how food, and the event at large, are used as tools of power. Representations of concepts such as nationalism, power, and nostalgia also cannot be observed nor analyzed through text-based analysis, because visual elements would either not be mentioned, or insufficiently described for meaningful analysis. Instead, news articles were used as background information to understand and contextualize the event.

Cognizant of the need to retain rich contextual cues for analysis, a visual-based method was deemed most appropriate in lieu of on-site ethnographic observation. Singapore Day events were generally well documented, providing an adequate sampling corpus through publicly accessible photographs. Some videos were available, but were generally short trailers meant for publicity and would not constitute sufficient material for analysis. A pilot study was conducted where three images from Singapore Day 2014 were analyzed using visual semiotic[2] analysis: the study of signs and how images are part of broader contexts of meaning (Rose, 2012: 105). Although limited in scope, the pilot demonstrated that the methodology was adequate for the objectives of this dissertation.

Sampling

Visual semiotic analysis does not require a large number of images that are statistically representative of the data set, such as in visual content analysis. Instead, selected images are analyzed in detail for 'exemplifying analytical points': therefore resultant analyses are not meant to be applied widely, but appropriate as a case study (Rose, 2001: 73). For this dissertation, the sampling corpus comprised of three sources: OSU online Flickr photo

[2] Debates exist in academia about the difference between Saussure's *semiology* and Peirce's *semiotics*, with varying extents of differentiation in textbooks. This dissertation abides by the definitions according to Gillian Rose (2012, p. 105) and regards both terms synonymous.

albums, the official OSU Facebook page (organization), and the official Singapore Day Facebook page (event-specific). All three channels allowed images to be downloaded. While some press photos are available online, they were excluded from the sampling corpus because there were usually just one or two accompanying images per news story, which is insufficient for a sample. For the benefit of consistency, only images uploaded by OSU were used. A critical assessment of the state-provided images did not indicate any inaccurate representations of the actual event, and no evident biases were detected compared to images created by the press or members of the public. When selecting images from Facebook albums, only those created and uploaded by the state were used: content added by members of the public were excluded from consideration. Twenty images were selected for analysis, benchmarking against past year MSc dissertations of this department that utilized visual analysis as methodology.

Several practical considerations directed the selection of images: the first criterion is that the images had to be large enough for all elements in the picture to be clearly seen. In general, images measuring less than 900 pixels wide were not used. Images were downloaded in the largest resolution available to enable zooming in if necessary for accurate denotation, and captions were documented when available. Secondly, selected images had to be technically sound: they must be in focus and properly exposed. Thirdly, images had to be relevant to the research questions. Photos that primarily depicted event attendees smiling for the camera were eliminated, since they are casual snapshots that do not qualify as relevant content for analysis.

I adopt the Barthesian approach to semiotic analysis, which studies the 'layering of meaning' in images: the first layer is denotation which refers to the literal content of what or whom is depicted; and the second layer of connotation examines secondary values and ideas associated with what is represented, and how it is represented (Van Leeuwen, 2001: 94). Barthes described connotations as 'myths', a broad range of concepts represented by a single entity (Van Leeuwen, 2001: 97) where 'the meaning is already complete, it postulates a kind of knowledge, a past, a memory, a comparative order of facts, ideas, decisions' (Barthes, 1993: 117). Reading myths therefore requires innate cultural capital, which is the embodied, internalized cultural competencies that make up the disposition of a person, part of one's *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1986: 82-84). The depth of the case study approach to visual semiotic analysis demands that the researcher has extensive knowledge of the images to be analyzed (Rose, 2001: 73). Having lived in Singapore for 25 years, I was able to identify the denotation of images from Singapore Day without issue and interpreted the connotations through *studium*, a 'culturally informed reading of the image' (Rose, 2001: 83).

Visual semiotics is composed of fundamental units called signs, which represent something else. Signs consist of the *signifier*, the 'sensory form' of the sign, such as photographs in this case; while the *signified* refers to its concepts or meanings (Spencer, 2011: 145). Signs can be regarded as metonymic and/or synecdochal (Rose, 2001: 82). Metonymic signs represent associated ideas, such as a flag representing nationalism (Billig, 1995: 8). In synecdochal signs, a single representation stands in for a whole broader concept; a plate of Singaporean hawker food could represent Singapore as homeland. Visual semiotic analysis of the 20 images was then conducted based on these guidelines (Rose, 2001: 91-92):

1. Decide what the signs are – *Denotation*
2. Decide what they signify – *Connotation*
3. Consider how they relate to other signs within the image and to other images.
4. Explore their connections to wider systems of meaning.
5. Return to the signs to explore their ideology and mythology.

In data collection, all images that met the selection criteria were downloaded and labelled according to year and location. A secondary curation process then took place where 20 images were shortlisted, having been deemed most relevant to address the research questions and dissertation objectives. There is a degree of subjectivity in this process, consistent with the norm that semiologists select images 'on the basis of how conceptually interesting they are,' (Rose, 2001: 73) for the specific case study. Each image was examined, contextualized, and its denotation described. Connotations were analyzed, and annotated with themes applicable to the research questions. In the next section, interpretations are discussed through the themes of reterritorialization, power, food, nostalgia, and symbols of nationalism, with selected images as examples when necessary.

RESULTS & INTERPRETATION[3]

Reterritorialization

> 'If the hill will not come to Mahomet, Mahomet will go to the hill,'
> – *Essays: Of Boldnesse, XII*. Francis Bacon (1625): 48.

[3] Please see Appendix for for detailed denotation and connotation of individual images.

During analysis, a noteworthy observation is the difficulty of identifying in which city the Singapore Day event was being staged, unless secondary information was provided in the form of album name or image captions. This demonstrates how the state has successfully reterritorialized anonymous 'empty space' of a park in a foreign country into meaningful 'place' reminiscent of Singapore.

At the most recent Singapore Day in April 2015, the *piece de resistance* of the 'experiential showcase' was the elaborate display of *trompe l'œil* structures mimicking monuments found along the Singapore River, the site of the nation's founding. These grand monuments from Singapore's colonial past embody the preferred narrative of the nation and symbolize nationhood. One such depicted monument is City Hall where Singapore's independence was twice declared: first in 1963 from the British Empire, and again in 1965 from the Federation of Malaya. Monuments and buildings turn generic space into centers of meaning (Tuan, 1977: 415), therefore these representations are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of state-sponsored remembering. The state flags nationalism to the diaspora through its valiant attempt to bring *lieux de mémoire* to them in the form of lavish *trompe l'œil* representations to evoke the homeland and the narrative of nationhood.

The uniqueness of home, in this case, the diasporic homeland, can only be wholly revealed when viewed externally (Tuan, 1977: 411), affirming the notion that these constructed artifacts gain salience in the 'empty space' of a foreign land. Places are also locations of long memories, transcending the individual and reaching back 'to the common lores of bygone generations' (Tuan, 1977: 421) suggesting that representations of *lieux de mémoire* flag collective belonging through the state's narrative of national history, since most people attending Singapore Day would not have been present during the British surrender to the Japanese empire in 1942 on the steps of City Hall, for example.

Banal nationalism describes sustaining nationalism through the daily 'flagging' of the nation to those who unconsciously pass the national flag on buildings, and gaze upon symbols and monuments that represent the rhetoric of nation. To counteract the loss of banal nationalism in quotidian life because diaspora are disembedded from the homeland, the state uses the apparatuses of power at its disposal to bring *lieux de mémoire* to the diaspora through elaborate *trompe l'œil* structures and representations of banal features of homeland such as street signs and bus stops (see Figures 5 and 13).

Visual semiotic analysis thus reveals the extensive use of *trompe l'œil* as a technique of reterritorialization, using representations of *lieux de mémoire* as an attempt to bring the

physical experience of homeland to the diaspora. However, more than tricking the eye, I argue that this is *trompe l'esprit*: tricking the mind. The entire experience is meant to mimic the homeland, to the extent that captions provided by the organizers refer to the *trompe l'œil* representations of *lieux de mémoire* as though they were the actual sites in Singapore (see Figures 2 and 3). Most importantly, the state's ability to re-create scenes of the homeland is starkly contrasted to the fact that "ordinary' people do not have the power to 'define' places in the same way that the state does,' (Yeoh & Kong, 1997: 61), and therefore the elaborate sets of Singapore Day are a visual display of state power.

Hard Power: Veiled

Power through policy

Analysis reveals that representations of banal Singaporean life mask insidious undertones of power. Government-built Housing and Development Board ('HDB') flats, which house 80 percent of residents in Singapore (Housing and Development Board, 2015), were repeatedly represented at Singapore Day (see figures 9 and 11), and connote the state's power through policy. Firstly, the state exerts power through social engineering by dictating the ethnic mix in every block of flats as part of its efforts to foster social cohesion (Zakaria, 2015). Secondly, in order to purchase these flats, one must be married to a member of the opposite gender, or, to qualify as the sole owner, be over 35 years of age. The first requirement exemplifies the state's hetero-normative and conservative stance where marriage and childbearing are societal benchmarks which affirm the state's definition of an acceptable family nucleus. Such housing policies advance state objectives for the literal biological reproduction of nation (Gopinath, 2003: 263), contextualized by the fact that Singapore has one of the lowest birth rates in the world (CIA World Factbook, 2014).

These state-mandated requirements to purchase a home demonstrate the exclusion of certain citizens, such as homosexuals. Sexual acts between men remain criminalized under section 377A of Singapore's penal code, a relic of British colonial laws (J.F., 2014), and same-sex unions are not permitted. These exclusions amount to 'hegemonic constructions' of the nation as inherently heterosexual (Gopinath, 2003: 263). In addition, being able to purchase a flat alone only after the age of 35 implies that being single by that age is considered anomalous by the state.

Big Brother is watching

> 'Inspection functions ceaselessly. The gaze is alert everywhere… guards at the gate, at the town hall and in every quarter to ensure the prompt obedience of the people.'
> – *Panopticism,* in *Discipline & Punish* by Michel Foucault (1975): 195.

Appendix: Figure 9.

This *trompe l'œil* depiction of elevators at typical HDB flats, presumably constructed to evoke the banal nationalism of homeland, inadvertently becomes an insidious representation of state's hard power. Figure 9 shows multiple references to police cameras, yet this is not a high-security location such as a bank or airport which typically requires close surveillance, but a banal block of residential flats. It calls to mind the Panopticon, a prison design described by Jeremy Bentham in 1791 where prisoners can be constantly monitored but they are unable to see if or when guards are actually present and thus have to be self-disciplining (Foucault, 1977: 200-201). In this case, residents are under the threat of constant surveillance whenever they leave or return to their homes, a supposedly private space. Yet, like the Panopticon, they do not know if these police cameras are actually functioning, whether they are constantly monitored, or how footage from the cameras is used. The citizen is thus 'seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication' (Foucault, 1977: 200). Therefore, though seemingly mundane, the

representations of the elevators of government-built flats reveal the hard power that the state wields over the populace through determining who is allowed to purchase a flat, who lives in a certain block of flats, and the ability to keep the populace under constant surveillance.

Military Mandate

> 'It is far better to be feared than loved if you cannot be both… For love is secured by a bond of gratitude, which men, wretched creatures that they are, break when it is to their advantage to do so; but fear is strengthened by a dread of punishment which is always effective.'
> – *The Prince,* Niccolò Machiavelli (1531)*:* 71.

Appendix: Figure 18

Singapore places a strong emphasis on the military and is the world's fifth largest arms importer (Ranasinghe, 2014) despite its miniscule size and population. It requires two years of compulsory military service for male citizens and second-generation permanent residents, with a strict set of rules including a Banker's Guarantee of at least S$75,000 should men of draftable age reside overseas for an extended duration (Ministry of Defence, 2014). The state's ability to mandate military service is Foucauldian biopolitics where the state wields power over the physical bodies of the populace for its own gain (Foucault, 1976: 252-254).

There is a military exhibit at Singapore Day each year dubbed the 'defense showcase' (Pao, 2011). In addition to providing information, children can dress up in military uniforms, try camouflage face painting, and take pictures with military-themed photo props and

backdrops. Unlike National Day parades in Singapore where military equipment is flaunted, overt displays of hard power are not possible on foreign soil. Yet, I argue that these seemingly innocuous displays mask the harsh discipline and punishment meted out by the state if one does not comply. Military might is evidence of state hard power, but is typically directed at external transgressors in the form of another nation-state in war, or towards non-state-actors such as terrorists. In this context, the state's ability to enforce military service is an exercise of hard power directed internally at its own citizens. The penalty for evading conscription is a jail term of up to three years, a fine of up to S$10,000, or both ('Enlistment Act: Chapter 93,' 1970). The hard power of the state is particularly evident in this circumstance because the law dictates that the obligation to serve remains even if the offender renounces his Singaporean citizenship (Ministry of Defence, 2006). This statute amplifies the magnitude of state hard power versus the individual's abject lack of agency to extricate him or herself from the contract of citizenship. Thus, I argue that the military exhibit at Singapore Day connotes the fearsome, absolute hard power of the state, insidiously veiled in its seemingly benign appearance by being represented through children's play.

Food: Space, Place, Power

Hawker food is significant at Singapore Day because unlike examples of other diasporas where cooking foods of the homeland within the private sphere of the home sustains national identity (Appadurai, 1988; German, 2011; Karaosmanoglu, 2011; Mannur, 2009), bona fide Singapore cuisine is street food. This means that Singaporean food, besides affirming shared identity as a nation of foodies, is closely associated with physical place: hawker food comes from the hawker centres in Singapore. As such, for the state to provide these dishes to diasporic Singaporeans is to implicitly flag the mental association of food and place.

When reviewing the sampling corpus, every year the same scene is repeated: thousands of Singaporeans queuing, literally waiting for hours to get a small sample-sized portion of food. The dogged determination of the diaspora for a taste of home suggests that the state has succeeded in its use of food as soft power: the prospect of getting elusive Singaporean food in a foreign land entices large numbers of the diasporic community to attend. Media coverage and insights from an OSU official (personal communication, June 25, 2015) confirm that food is the primary motivation for the diaspora to attend. Since its inception, Singapore Day events have consistently exceeded capacity due to overwhelming response. The favourable turnout from the diaspora can be construed that food is an effective medium for engagement, visceral bait to coax the imagined community to manifest itself.

Appendix: Figure 15, Singaporeans queuing for food.

Hawker food is unremarkable in Singapore because it is cheap and common. However, when disembedded from the physical homeland and in a foreign setting, it gains salience and becomes a part of the state's reterritorialization efforts. I argue that Singaporean hawker food, which is banal in-situ, is appropriated by the state as a tool of statecraft and elevated to an instrument of soft power. However, unlike the orientation towards external foreign publics in gastrodiplomacy, food is used by the state as a medium to project its soft power across time-space to reach an externally located domestic audience: its diaspora. As with the ability to reterritorialize empty space through elaborate *trompe l'œil* displays, the state's ability to fly in hawkers from well-known food stalls in Singapore and rebuild entire kitchens in an empty park to provide an authentic taste of the homeland is in itself an overt display of state power: an 'ordinary' diasporic individual cannot summon 20 of Singapore's most famous hawkers to a foreign country, but the state can.

In retrospect, preliminary research about Singapore Day led to an emphasis on the role of food in the literature review because most of the information available through media coverage or OSU publicity materials was food-centric. The analysis reveals that the role of food at Singapore Day can be understood quite clearly: it exemplifies the seductive allure of soft power and is but the initial 'hook' in diasporic engagement.

Nostalgia

> *'He who controls the past controls the future. He who controls the present controls the past.'* – *1984,* George Orwell (1949): 38.

Appendix: Figure 11

Singapore Day relies heavily on nostalgic appeal through representations of nostalgic artifacts or practices that no longer exist. Figure 11 depicts blocks of HDB flats in the background of a *trompe l'œil* banner. These buildings are nostalgic instead of realistic because such short residential blocks have almost been completely demolished in recent decades to cater for greater population density, often replaced with new 50-storey constructions, the world's tallest public housing (Møller, 2014). The 'mosaic series' playgrounds in the foreground have also largely been demolished (Justin Zhang, 2012). As shown in the appendix (see figures 7, 11, 12, and 17), the state exploits nostalgia extensively, taking liberty with representations that may be familiar and appealing to diaspora, but incongruent with current reality. The observations made through visual semiotic analysis thus affirm other studies that nostalgia is a common tactic used by the state at Singapore Day.

Hot and Banal Nationalism

Appendix: Figure 3

The analysis revealed the extensive use of both symbols of hot and banal nationalism at Singapore Day. Figure 3 depicts the elaborate *trompe l'œil* reconstruction of Singapore's City Hall, with national flags on the structure as well as those waved by the diaspora. These flags exemplify hot nationalism, asserting the nation through overt symbols, national colours, anthems, and songs. However, symbols of banal nationalism also abound at the event. Typical Singaporean buses and subway signs are quotidian, but such representations of commuting which are unremarkable in the homeland become salient in foreign space. I argue that these representations serve to remind diaspora of daily life in Singapore, encouraging nostalgic reminiscence of the *habitus* of homeland. Representations of both hot and banal nationalism are used in tandem to evoke belonging and nostalgia.

Thus, despite the event being publicized in a lighthearted appealing manner to share in food, entertainment, nostalgia and camaraderie with 'fellow Singaporeans', visual semiotic analysis of the event reveals ominous undertones of harsh state power that persist in the form of state policy, surveillance, and the ability to discipline and punish.

NEW CONCEPT: PHANTASMAGORIC NATIONALISM

> 'The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.'
> – *The Go-Between*, L.P. Hartley (1953): 1.

Interpretation and analysis have affirmed the importance of the imagination in sustaining nationalism across time-space, and how the state leverages nostalgia and the physical disembedding of diaspora from the homeland to its advantage. Although 'long-distance nationalism' conveys the temporal and spatial dimensions of diasporic belonging to the homeland, I argue that it does not adequately describe the *nature* of such sentiments. Therefore, building upon Anthony Giddens' concepts of disembedding, time-space distanciation, and Benedict Anderson's long distance nationalism, I propose the new concept of ***phantasmagoric nationalism.*** It refers to affinity for the homeland sustained by the subjective imagination of diasporic individuals, divorced from quotidian time-space. The concept articulates several qualities, namely the obstinance of nostalgia, the subjectivity and imprecision of memory, and what I consider 'phenomenological estrangement'.

Phenomenological Phantasms

> 'We do not know what is happening at the moment farther away in the universe: the light that we see from distant galaxies left them millions of years ago… Thus, when we look at the universe, we are seeing it as it was in the past.'
> – *A Brief History of Time,* Stephen Hawking (1988): 31.

I postulate that the diaspora's final vestiges of lived experience of the homeland is ossified in the imagination, untouched by the ravages of quotidian time. For the diaspora, homeland is already intrinsically phantasmagoric because it cannot be experienced on a day-to-day basis, but sustained primarily in the imaginary, premised on past experience and memory. Physically, there are no *lieux de mémoire* to look upon, and banal nationalism is not flagged daily. Any changes to the homeland, whether in landscape or policy, are not realized with any immediacy of experience: diaspora 'could never keep pace with the changes in his homeland as if he still lived there' (Shavit, 2009: 33). The insurmountable lag between knowledge and experience dictates that, at any given point in time, any change in the homeland results in dissonance between diaspora memory and reality, and relies on imagination from the past: phantasmagoric nationalism is thus inevitable. As Sartre explains,

> 'the type of existence of the imaged object in so far as it is imaged differs in nature from the type of existence of the object grasped as real… This fundamental absence, this essential

> nothingness of the imaged object, suffices to differentiate it from the objects of perception' (Sartre, 1940: 180).

Imprecise Subjectivity

> 'Your image will have the number of columns you believe the Pantheon to have, and may even have an indeterminate number of columns… You can form images on the basis of false beliefs. Your image can still be of the Pantheon even if it does not show eighteen columns supporting the pediment.'
> – Introduction, in *The Psychology of Imagination,* Jonathan Webber (2004): xxi.

Memory is imprecise, part of the fluid constructions of imagination instead of 'factual reproductions of a fixed past' (Stock, 2010: 24). There is no precise, objective memory in the diasporic consciousness: I argue that every memory of the homeland is value-laden and imbued with significance because whatever is recalled and re-imagined is salient implicitly by the fact of its recollection. 'Space that has been seized upon by the imagination cannot remain indifferent space… It has been lived in, not in its positivity, but with all the partiality of the imagination.' (Bachelard, 1958: xxxvi). Through the subjectivity of memory and imagination, past homes, or in this case, homeland, 'retain the treasures of former days', allowing one to live 'fixations of happiness' (Bachelard, 1958: 6). The essence of phantasmagoric nationalism is such that the disembedding from quotidian life in the homeland allows diaspora to indulge in subjective fixations of one's own choosing.

In spite of the advances in digital media and communications technologies where diaspora may receive information about developments in the homeland, there remains a distinct gulf between knowing and being, an unbridgeable chasm dividing information and lived experience. This dissonance is exacerbated by the 'sieve effect' where diaspora knowingly choose to 'amplify certain aspects of the homeland reality and to minimize or discard the significance of others' (Skrbiš, 1999: 84). One could receive news about the demolition of a certain landmark in the homeland and the proposed new development in its stead. However, without lived experience, I argue that diaspora's nostalgic memory remain bound to the 'material debris of past life' (Boym, 2001: 258). Unlike fondly recalling a familiar place in the homeland, diaspora cannot meaningfully imagine something they have no lived experience of. On the contrary, observing stark changes to the homeland from afar clarifies to the diaspora that 'the precious home they had so clung to and kept alive in their imaginations no longer exists' (Karanfil, 2009: 893). As such, global media and digital connectivity does not negate phantasmagoric nationalism, but instead affirms that the diasporic imagination of homeland is inexorably phantasmic.

Through the lens of phantasmagoric nationalism, Singapore Day can be thought of as the state's attempt to prevent memory atrophy in the diasporic imagination, an opportunity to 'recharge' nostalgia through food, shrewd reterritorialization, selective representations of *lieux de mémoire*, and other means of flagging the nation discussed in the preceding sections. Nostalgia takes precedence over reality, demonstrated by the repeated representations of artifacts that may be evocative of the homeland, but in reality are no longer in current practice or even in existence. From the perspective of phenomenology, the direct, conscious experience of phenomena (Biemel, 2015), I regard phantasmagoric nationalism a form of phenomenological estrangement in which the diaspora is distanced from the sensory qualities of life-worlds (D. W. Smith, 2013): the physical homeland.

One can thus recall and re-imagine a place in the homeland without any factual precision, but doggedly retain affinity and a false sense of familiarity. This imperfection works to the state's advantage, seizing upon imagination and nostalgia to perpetuate its power and legitimacy across time-space. By exploiting the diaspora's phenomenological estrangement from quotidian lived reality, the state abets phantasmagoric nationalism through Singapore Day, exercising power in its ability to present its version of the homeland by reterritorializing 'empty space' in a foreign land into nostalgic, value-laden 'place'. Musing upon Plato's allegory of the cave (Plato, 380 B.C.: 222-223), Singapore Day is the wall upon which the state projects its preferred narrative of the homeland through its arsenal of hard and soft power, while the diaspora as shackled prisoners watch what they believe to be reality. In truth, the disembedded diaspora remain in the dark, clinging to shapeless shadows of nationalism, the phantasms of nostalgia.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER STUDY

Singapore Day has demonstrated how a diasporic engagement event is both a tool and demonstration of state power. However, as a case study, the analyses cannot be applied more widely without qualification. A critical assessment of multiple countries' diasporic engagement events and strategies would be beneficial as comparative analysis to identify whether similar and/or additional tools of power are utilized by other states. In addition, complementary methodologies can yield additional insights, such as elite interviews with high-level policymakers who can comment on the intentions of the state, augmented with on-site ethnography for a firsthand look at Singapore Day.

The confines of an MSc-level dissertation curtail the breadth and depth of analysis: the literature reviewed and analytical points raised are certainly non-exhaustive, and only the 'from above' state perspective in diaspora engagement has been discussed here. A more comprehensive understanding of the state-diaspora dynamic would include a 'from below' approach of the diaspora perspective, closing the communication loop, and ascribe attention to agency of the diaspora. In addition, the crux of phantasmagoric nationalism is the subjectivity of individual diasporic imagination and memory. Thus, studies of this new concept can be advanced through the methodology of mediagraphies, which examine globalization through the lives of inter-generational individuals (Rantanen, 2005), and diasporic families would be an ideal sample. I propose that 'memoryscapes' of the homeland could be added as a category in mediagraphy to compare the extent of phantasmagoric nationalism between generations of diaspora, if any.

CONCLUSION

Despite the proliferation of literature in recent years about the supposed death-knell of the nation-state, Singapore Day suggests that the Singaporean government still wields extraterritorial power over its diaspora in a globalized world. Through visual semiotic analysis, representations of power, nationalism, and nostalgia were identified, analyzed, and related to theoretical concepts across disciplines. Singapore Day is a spectacle of state power across multiple dimensions: starting with food as an appealing 'hook' of soft power, closer examination revealed that insidious forms of hard power persist, masked through seemingly benign representations. Reterritorialization and nostalgia are foundational tactics of the state, while intangible concepts of the nation and identity are made palpable through the primeval, multisensory appeal of food, which successfully lures the imagined community of diaspora to manifest itself.

The new concept of phantasmagoric nationalism seeks to articulate the *nature* of diasporic affinity and identification with the homeland across time-space. The state exploits the imprecision of diasporic memory, abetting the subjectivity of imagination to foster this phantasmagoric nationalism, suspended from quotidian phenomenological reality. The dynamics of memory, nostalgia, power, and identity in state-diaspora relations are intrinsically unstable, phantasmic, and are constantly negotiated and reimagined. Nostalgic homeland is but reified in the realm of the imaginary, and the excruciating fissure of truth and imagination lurks in the most unexpected of places: realizing that the last authentic taste of Singaporean *ice kachang* languishes off a quiet street in south London.

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APPENDIX

Figure 1 – Singapore Day 2014, London
No caption provided

Denotation	**Connotation**	**Themes**
A banner with images of food replacing the vowels 'I', 'O' and 'A' in 'Singaporeans' 'I' is replaced by *satay*, a skewer of meat. Singaporean-style *satay* is distinct from the well-known Thai satay, with a different marinade and sauce. 'O' is replaced by the durian, a pungent tropical fruit that is widely popular in Singapore. 'A' is replaced by *ice kachang,* a shaved ice dessert drizzled with brightly coloured syrup, atop a base of sweet beans and jelly.	Local Singaporean food as part of the Singaporean identity. In this case, food is presented literally as part of the word 'Singaporean' This is State-organized event, and implies that being 'foodies' is a State-approved form of national identity.	Food Identity
The text: 'A Reunion of Singaporeans'	Presupposes national identification as Singaporean, and reunion suggests a coming together once again, a return to the status quo.	Identity Nationalism

Figure 2 – Singapore Day 2015, Shanghai

Caption: Is that The Fullerton Hotel behind Sebastian, Rahimah and Hossan? While you savor delicious food from home, don't forget to visit the various exhibits like The Fullerton Hotel and take part in their exciting activities. See you tomorrow!

Denotation	**Connotation**	**Themes**
A trompe l'œil façade of The Fullerton Hotel, a luxury hotel in Singapore. It is a landmark along the Singapore River. Three Singaporean comedians are posing in front of it	The building is a legacy of British colonial rule, where Robert Fullerton was the first Governor of the Straits Settlement. It was built in 1919 as part of British centennial celebrations (Singapore Tourism Board, 2013), depicted here not without irony to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Singapore's independence. It was also the headquarters of the Japanese Military Administration during World War II (Cornelius-Takahama, 2001). I argue that this is reterritorialization, the trompe l'œil façade attempting to recreate the experience of homeland.	Reterritorialization Nationalism

Figure 3 – Singapore Day 2015, Shanghai

Caption: Our Concert@Padang boasts an impressive facade of City Hall – at Century Park Shanghai.

Denotation	**Connotation**	**Themes**
A trompe l'œil reconstruction of Singapore's City Hall used as the main stage for entertainment. It was referred to as the Municipal Building until King George VI declared Singapore a city in 1951 (Tan, 2004) 'Padang' in the caption means 'field' in Malay, referring to the site of the first National Day parade. The caption 'Our Concert@Padang' suggests that reterritorialization is deliberate, and diaspora are supposed to imagine that, being seated in front of 'City Hall', the field they are in would be the Padang in Singapore.	This building is also a legacy of British colonial rule, and is the site of significant events such as the British surrender to the Japanese during World War II, and where Singapore declared independence from the British in 1963, and again from Malaya in 1965 (Singapore Tourism Board, 2013). This is another example of using trompe l'œil to bring *lieux de mémoire* to reterritorialize empty space into 'place', to evoke the homeland, and evoke nationalism.	Reterritorialization Nationalism
8 pennants in national colours adorn the faux façade of City Hall	The pennants mimic actual National Day decorations, alluding to celebration of the nation.	Nationalism

Figure 4 – Singapore Day 2015, Shanghai
No caption provided

Denotation	**Connotation**	**Themes**
A woman with two small children in front of a reconstruction of Empress Place Building, named in honor of Queen Victoria (Omar, 2005), which now houses the Asian Civilizations Museum.	Another example of colonial architecture being elaborately reconstructed as *lieux de mémoire* to reterritorialize this park in Shanghai to mimic landmarks in Singapore.	Reterritorialization Nostalgia

Figure 5 – Singapore Day 2013, Sydney
No caption provided.

Denotation	**Connotation**	**Themes**
Directional signs at the event in green and white that mimic actual street signs in Singapore. Hawker Centre refers to the open-air food markets selling local Singaporean street food, the cheapest, most rudimentary public eatery. Kopitiam is the Hokkien dialect for 'coffee shop', referring to smaller food establishments, commonly found in every neighbourhood. A typical kopitiam has a drinks stall, and five to ten other food stalls, each specializing in a certain dish or cuisine.	I argue that these street signs are a way to evoke banal nationalism (Jones & Merriman, 2009). The green and white street signs are banal in-situ, but when in a foreign city like Sydney, they appear distinctly Singaporean. In addition, the fact that there are two signs alluding to food also highlights the importance of food & eating at this event, and arguably, to Singaporeans. The use of dialect and 'Singlish' colloquialism reinforces a sense of national identity through linguistic identification.	Food Reterritorialization Banal Nationalism Nostalgia National Identity

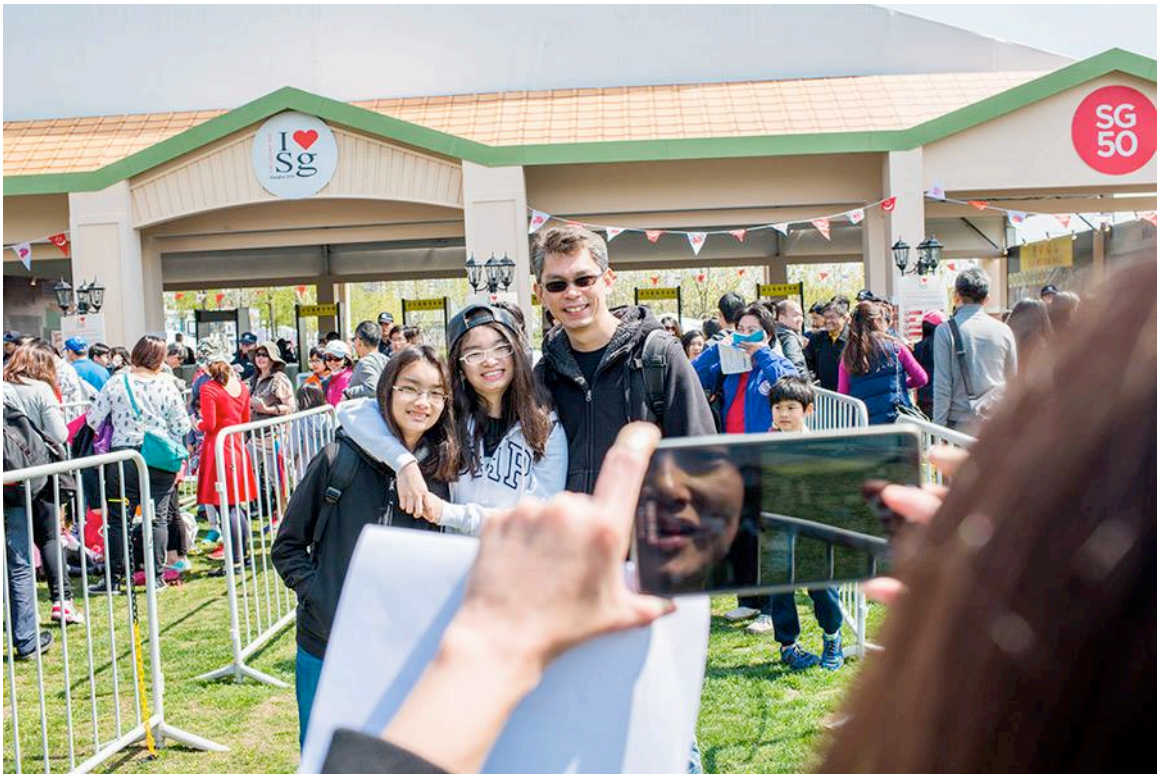

Figure 6 – Singapore Day 2015, Shanghai
No caption provided

Denotation	**Connotation**	**Themes**
The roofline of the building is typical of a local Singaporean hawker centre.	The diaspora will not just taste the food of the homeland, but also experience nostalgia through the re-created setting. The State recreates a sense of 'place' through reterritorialization, where food is presented as part of the entire the 'homeland' experience.	Reterritorialization Nostalgia Banal Nationalism
The 'I heart SG' sign is a form of intertextuality, alluding to the original 'I heart NY' sign developed for New York City in the 1970s (New York State Library, 2013)	Connotes that those attending the event should love Singapore. Alluding to New York City could be an unintentional but subtle parallel: both are dense urban cities that are financial powerhouses.	Nationalism
'SG50' refers to Singapore's 50th year of independence. Red and white national colours are repeated in the signs and decorative bunting.	A reminder of state sovereignty that echoes Singapore's state narrative and rhetoric of survival against the odds.	Nationalism.

Figure 7 – Singapore Day 2014, London
No caption provided

Denotation	**Connotation**	**Themes**
This is the picnic mat provided by the OSU at the event. It depicts a nostalgic calendar format commonly referred to as the 'horse racing calendar', as it records race dates. It used to be common in Singaporean households, but is now fast disappearing (Chai, 2015) The woman in the foreground is also holding the official 'goodie bag' with the 'I love SG' logo, which alludes to iced coffee served in a plastic bag. It is a practice that is increasingly rare in Singapore as most beverage sellers switch to plastic cups.	This is an attempt to evoke nostalgia among the diaspora, ironically, using artifacts or practices that hardly even exist in Singapore anymore. However, since the diaspora is physically removed from the homeland, it does not matter to them whether or not the calendars are still used, or if coffee is served in plastic bags, because they cannot experience them, either way.	Nostalgia

Figure 8 – Singapore Day 2012, New York

Caption: Characteristically Singaporean, right to the end.

Denotation	**Connotation**	**Themes**
A sign for *satay*, Singaporean barbecued meat skewers, with an update plastered over it which says 'Finished Liao!' In Singlish, the creolized English spoken in Singapore, it means sold out.	The use of Singlish is a means of evoking linguistic identification as Singaporeans. The peculiar local parlance becomes a filter of inclusion/exclusion (T. Wong, 2015).	Identity (Linguistic)

Figure 9 – Singapore Day 2015, Shanghai

Caption: Michelle and Enlai are pointing at a familiar sight which Singaporeans are familiar with. Do you know what it is? Register for Singapore Day 2015 at www.singaporeday.sg and check out other familiar sights and sounds at Our Singapore Story. We will also be paying tribute to our late founding Prime Minister Mr. Lee Kuan Yew through a dedicated Concert programme; a specially set up marquee, where you can pen your messages; and a minute of silence observed around 2pm by everyone on event ground. See you this Saturday, 11 April 2015.

Denotation	**Connotation**	**Themes**
A trompe l'œil façade of typical elevators at government built ('HDB') flats. Two Singaporean comedians are posing in front of it. Multiple signs indicate 'Police Camera in Operation': there are two symbols of cameras, the text, and although the composition of the image omits part of the text on the left, the bold red text appears to again refer to the police cameras.	This is part of a display about public housing in Singapore, however, the repeated depiction of police cameras seem insidious and allude to State surveillance and State power. However, the State presents this as a safety feature of public housing, echoing Singapore having one of the lowest crime rates in the world (Schoer, 2013).	Power

Figure 10 – Singapore Day 2014, London

No caption provided

Denotation	**Connotation**	**Themes**
A crowd of people leaves the event through faux subway turnstiles. The sign above says 'Homebound Line: to Home via Singapore Day', and 'Good bye and we're glad you've enjoyed your slice of home!' which mimic the style of the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) stations in Singapore.	The text suggests that the organizers have attempted to recreate and evoke the feeling of being 'at home', which in this case, is Singapore. This affirms a deliberate attempt at reterritorialization, to evoke nostalgia of the homeland.	Reterritorialization Nostalgia

Figure 11 – Singapore Day 2014, London
No caption provided.

Denotation	**Connotation**	**Themes**
A child plays *chapteh*, a traditional Asian game of keeping a feathered shuttlecock in the air with one foot. It used to be a popular childhood game in Singapore, but has fallen out of favor in recent decades. *Note: Other images in the set depict various people playing the game, which suggest that the organizers provided the shuttlecocks, as part of the event.	Evoking nostalgia through a childhood game that is no longer common in Singapore, and is more nostalgic than contemporary.	Nostalgia
The trompe l'œil banner depicts short HDB buildings which have mostly been demolished and replaced with new blocks up to 50-storeys tall. There is significant green space and sky around the short buildings: recent housing developments are much more densely constructed.	An attempt to evoke nostalgia of architecture and a landscape of Singapore that no longer exists. The depiction of banal architecture like common flats instead of national landmarks or *lieux de mémoire* suggests a flagging of banal	Nostalgia Banal Nationalism State Power Bio Politics

	nationalism. These government-built flats, with strict requirements for ownership, also symbolize State power in social engineering, heteronormativity, and biopolitics.	
On the right of the image, the banner depicts mosaic style playgrounds that used to be ubiquitous in neighbourhoods, but have since been replaced (Justin Zhang, 2012).	An attempt to evoke nostalgia of childhood, even though these playgrounds largely no longer exist.	Nostalgia

Figure 12 – Singapore Day 2012, New York
Caption: 'Message in a bottle: Memories of Singapore.'

Denotation	**Connotation**	**Themes**
The Chinese characters say 'sugar cane juice', a traditional drink. The style of the text and the adjacent shelf mimics the look of old hawker centres which have since been demolished. Some black and white prints of these old hawker centres can be seen on the left of the Figure 13, along with partially obscured text that seems to read 'Do you remember'.	Evoking nostalgia of a past era, through a display of old bottles and an old style sign, both of which are no longer found in contemporary Singapore.	Nostalgia

Glass bottles line the wooden shelf, both of which do not exist as drinks are now served in plastic cups, plastic bottles, or aluminum cans. Hawker centres in Singapore also have industrial metal surfaces instead of wood.		

Figure 13 – Singapore Day 2012, New York
Caption: I think I could take one of these 'buses' to get to Punggol.

Denotation	**Connotation**	**Themes**
Depicts a typical bus stop in Singapore, evident from the signpost, complete with bus numbers. A man is pretending to flag down a non-existent bus, indicating that he has correctly 'read' the meaning of the set-up.	Banal nationalism: This event took place in New York City, and a Singaporean bus stop, which is functional and banal in the daily commute in Singapore becomes salient and evocative of 'homeland'.	Banal Nationalism
The man in the foreground and the woman behind him are wearing shirts that say 'got meh?'.	'Got meh?' is a Singlish phrase that approximates to mean 'Really?'. It is also an intertextual reference to the 'got milk?' campaign (Peters, 2009).	Identity (linguistic)

Figure 14 – Singapore Day 2014, London
No caption provided.

Denotation	Connotation	Themes
A few people are seated in front of a poster of a typical double-decker bus in Singapore. Red and white are also colours of the national flag.	Banal Nationalism: Such buses are common in Singapore, but in a foreign land, become rare and symbolic of the homeland.	Banal Nationalism
The man in the brown jacket with 'I heart SG' on the sleeve is a volunteer.	The phrase 'to wear your heart on your sleeve' comes to mind, and the professing of love for Singapore on the official volunteer's outfit is the State's suggestion of how Singaporeans, diasporic or local, should feel about the nation.	Nationalism

Figure 15 – Singapore Day 2012, New York

Caption: 'Well-loved hawker food with their deserving queues'

Denotation	**Connotation**	**Themes**
Large numbers of people queuing for food. The stall signs indicate they are local Singaporean street food.	The imagined community is manifested physically, as diaspora Singaporeans come forth to partake in this social feast.	Imagined Community
	Provided free by the State, Singaporean food is used as bait to coax the imagined community to manifest itself.	Soft Power

Figure 16 – Singapore Day 2012, New York

Caption: 'The many reasons to love Singapore.'

Denotation	**Connotation**	**Themes**
Handwritten notes by attendees, on a template that says 'I love Singapore because:'	Providing such a sentiment on pre-printed template suggests that love for Singapore is expected by the State.	Nationalism
The biggest note indicates that the writer loves Singapore for its physical environment, food, and because it is their land of birth.	The environment and land of birth both refer to the physical homeland; and Singaporean food is tangible, hard to find outside the country, and closely linked to public food centres (physical location). This suggests that the physical experience of homeland remains vital to diaspora.	Phantasmagoric Nationalism.
The Singapore flag is on the right of the image.	The flag is a symbol of the nation, spurring feelings of nationalism.	Nationalism

Figure 17 – Singapore Day 2014, London
No caption provided.

Denotation	Connotation	Themes
A child is standing under a replica of a toll gantry, marked 'ERP' (Electronic Road Pricing). Singapore was the first country in the world to implement such road pricing for traffic management. She is also holding a large replica of a parking 'coupon' used to pay for parking in Singapore. However, with electronic gantries, this form of paper payment is increasingly uncommon.	Both of these are banal artifacts that are common on quotidian life, part of the daily commute. However for diasporic Singaporeans, these mundane, arguably unpleasant things (paying to drive on the road, paying for parking) can be a nostalgic reminder of the homeland when in a foreign land and removed from the realities.	Banal Nationalism

Figure 18 – Singapore Day 2015, Shanghai
No caption provided.

Denotation	**Connotation**	**Themes**
Children are shown dressed up in military uniforms. The boy in the centre of the photo holds a sign that says 'I'm a Soldier!' while another on the right is holding a toy gun.	The sign stating 'I'm a Soldier!' affirms the fact that Singapore requires 2 years of mandatory military service from all male citizens and second-generation permanent residents. Evading enlistment carries a jail term and fine. Such a requirement exemplifies the hard power of the State, through its ability to enforce mandatory enlistment, and mete out punitive measures for non-compliance. In essence, the boy *has to* be a soldier. The sign does not say 'I want to be a soldier', but is an obligation.	Hard Power Biopolitics

Figure 19 – Singapore Day 2012, New York City

Caption: Enjoying the concert in the company of fellow Singaporeans

Denotation	**Connotation**	**Themes**
A large crowd of predominantly Asian people is gathered in a field, watching something beyond the image. In the background are various food stalls, as shown with the colourful signs.	The image above exemplifies the manifestation of the imagined community. The food stalls in the background have served their role as visceral bait, luring diasporic individuals to come forth, and here they are, 'enjoying the concert in the company of fellow Singaporeans', as the caption suggests, after having their fill of Singaporean food.	Imagined Community
The trees and grass indicate that they are in a park, but there are no distinct identifying features of the location.	This affirms the fact that the Singaporean government uses food and representations of the homeland to reterritorialize 'empty space' of a park in a foreign country, into	Reterritorialization

Figure 20 – Singapore Day 2012, New York City.
Caption: Getting ready before the gates open.

Denotation	**Connotation**	**Themes**
A man is lifting a chicken out of a large pot. The red patch on his shirt indicates the 'brand' of the food stall. In the background, a green weighing scale is typical of those used in markets and food stalls in Singapore.	This is a hawker from the 'Wee Nam Kee' food stall, one of the most well known Hainanese chicken rice stalls in Singapore. The tight composition of the photo means that there are no visual cues as to where it was taken. The apparatus in the kitchen scene is also reminiscent of a hawker food stall in Singapore.	Reterritorialization Food

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