

# The Dilemma of Postcolonial Criticism in Contemporary China

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## I. Background

Postcolonial criticism in the Chinese context has become too sensitive, almost irrational and sometimes even dangerous, particularly after the publication of *Zhongguo keyi shuo bu* [*China That Can Say No*] and *Yaomohua zhongguo de beihou* [*Behind the Demonization of China*], two provocative books that sophisticatedly blend political undertones and commercial features. Unrelated to and before the publication of these two books, in the mid-1990s, I was personally involved in the debate on so-called Orientalism versus Occidentalism in Mainland China. The task of this essay is to sketch the background of this debate, to try to explain why all of a sudden postcolonial criticism became such a heated topic on the Mainland. Then I will go on to discuss the challenges and problems that practitioners of postcolonial criticism are facing in Western academia today. The last part is to sketch a reconsideration of my previous work on this topic and a reply to various criticisms my colleagues and I have received while promoting postcolonialism in China.

It is generally agreed that since the last quarter of 1993, postcolonial criticism has constituted a new trend in Mainland China, to quote a passage from the editorial of *Wenhui dushu zhoubao* [*Wenhui Book Review Weekly*] based in Shanghai, dated May 21, 1994:

About half a year ago, most of the reading public in Mainland China had no idea about who Edward Said is. But ever since *Dushu* (*Reading*) magazine published Zhang Kuan's 'Oumeiren yanzhong de feiwozulei' [The Otherness in the Eyes of the Europeans and Americans] and other two related articles about Edward Said last September, a heated debate was ignited, which led to an intellectual shock. All of a sudden everyone is talking about Edward Said and postcolonialism. (my translation)

Or, to quote another passage from the Sydney-based *New Asia Pacific Review*:

With over a decade of deployment as an academic trope, Orientalism has enjoyed an extraordinary career and has achieved the dubious status of an international intellectual cliché. In the case of Mainland China, however, Orientalism along with the deconstructive strategies of which it is a part, has a far more recent history, one that dates in particular from the early 1990s and the era of renewed nationalist debate. [...] One of the most energetic participants in this debate is Zhang Kuan, a specialist in comparative literature focusing on German studies. A graduate scholar in the United States, in recent years Zhang has been a key promoter of Edward Said's writings on Orientalism in the Mainland. Zhang's concerns, however, have not merely been those of an independent deconstructionist. His promotion of Western theory has been part of an evolving political agenda. (Barmé "On Orientalism" 84)

Contrary to the claims in the foregoing passages, I was not the first one to introduce Edward Said to the Chinese reading public.<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, there were critical introductions and review essays on this very sensitive topic before September 1993 written in Chinese by well-known Chinese critics, to name a few, Chen Xiaoming, Wang Ning, Wang Yichuan, and Zhang Yiwu. Some of their works were written as early as in the late 1980s and also published in influential periodicals and academic journals such as *Wenxue pinglun* [*Literary Review*] and *Wenyi yanjiu* [*Literature and Art Studies*] in Beijing. But, as far as I know, no major responses or feedback are traceable. Aside from the works done by people in the Mainland China, there was abundant literature on or related to this topic written by overseas Chinese scholars, both in English and Chinese, for example, the debate on modern Chinese literature between Liu Kang and Zhang Longxi (English in *Modern China* and Chinese in *Ershiyi shiji* [*Twenty-first Century*]), Chen Xiaomei's work on Chinese Occidentalism (which was written at Stanford Humanities Centre where Edward Said completed his book *Orientalism*) and Lydia

Liu's study of the debate on Chinese national characteristics [*guomin xing*] during the May Fourth Period. In addition, non-Chinese China scholars in the West such as Arif Dirlik, Maurice Meissner and Masao Miyoshi had already contributed much to this field.

My first essay in *Dushu* (originally written as a semester diary for a core-seminar related to the new intellectual trend in America I had taken in the Humanities Program at Stanford University<sup>2</sup>) is a short one. With less than 6000 Chinese characters it contains the following parts:<sup>3</sup>

1. A brief introduction to the French poststructuralist speculation on the relationship between representation and reality, discourse and power.
2. An explanation of Edward Said's application of the theory above in his attesting to the distortion of the Arabic world by Western Orientalists.
3. Following Said's model, the essay reviews the historical change of China's image over different time periods in major Western countries, arguing that no matter how positive or negative, up until today China's image is still misrepresented in the West because the Western "social energy" needs such a image.
4. The essay views the formation of the Chinese modernity discourse as a parallel transplantation of Western Enlightenment discourse, which contains colonial discourse, and holds that the mainstream of Chinese modernity discourse has always been enchanted by the magical spell of Western colonial discourse. The process of the formation of the Chinese modernity discourse, the essay argues, with its radical denial of the Chinese cultural heritage by native intellectuals since the May Fourth Movement through the late 1980s, is by and large nothing but a joining in the chorus of Western Orientalism. The essay further argues that, just as Western Orientalism has produced a distorted image of China in the West, Chinese Occidentalism also has always misrepresented the West, giving at times a too negative and unreal image of the latter. Much more frequently, however, Chinese Occidentalism has romanticized and idealized the West. The Western colonial discourse has been deeply internalized in the Chinese modernity discourse and

the “West” exists only in the imagination of pro-Western Chinese liberal intellectuals (“Otherness” 3–8).

Since this essay generated a heated debate in Mainland China,<sup>4</sup> I was asked to write a response. This second article in *Dushu*, entitled “Zaitan Saiyide” [“Edward Said Reconsidered”] replied to the criticism the first essay had generated and defended the above arguments (“Edward Said” 8–16).

I wrote several more essays on postcolonial criticism, among which one was even published, quite out of my own control, in the *Liaowang banyuekan* [*Watch-over Bimonthly*] affiliated with the Xinhua News Agency. The essay in *Liaowang*, based on a talk I gave at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, embedded strong political undertones; it was widely quoted, and accordingly, received considerable criticism.<sup>5</sup> Below is the closing message of that lecture, a conclusion I now consider problematic:

If we admit that modern Western humanities and social sciences have been replete with colonialist discourse, we also have to admit that this has a deep influence within China itself. This is evident in the way in which we constantly accept what the West touts as moral standards and principles. We follow the requirements and signals of Westerners in expounding on various aspects of specific Chinese problems. For some time, we have lacked the courage to challenge and check the Western hegemonic and colonial discourse. One of the reasons we seem so passive when carrying out concrete negotiations with Western countries over issues like human rights, or intellectual property rights in the market economy, is that we have not come up with a mode of exposition that completely casts off Western hegemonic discourse. Resistant literature, such as the works of Frantz Fanon, Chinua Achebe, or Aimé Césaire remain remote to us Chinese. None of their works, no matter how successful even in the West, has been translated into Chinese. Compared to the resistant discourse in other developing countries, be it in South America or India, Chinese resistant discourse seems

so weak these days. During the present age of Reform and the Open Door, a period in which the formation of a Chinese socialist market economy is enmeshing us within international practices, questions of how to preserve and uphold our own culturally constructed subjectivities, and how to reinforce identification with our own culture so as to enable victory in future international conflicts, rightly deserves serious consideration by all responsible Chinese intellectuals.<sup>6</sup> (“Said’s Orientalism” 36–37)

Any Western thought, I believe, in order to get accepted in China and become genuinely influential, requires both an optimal local and international climate. Edward Said published his influential books *Orientalism* in 1978 and *Culture and Imperialism* in 1993. My first review in Chinese was written in summer of that year and published in the fall. It was a year in which China felt deeply humiliated by Western hegemonic powers and especially by the United States in the international sphere: the Cargo-Carrier Milk-Way incident and the Western blockade of China’s campaign for hosting the Olympic Games in 2000. The boycott policy headed by the United States towards China in the early 1990s after the Tiananmen Square Incident already had created a significant backlash among once whole-heartedly pro-Western Chinese intellectuals. A new perspective from which to view the world was strongly desired and eagerly sought. The search for their own lost cultural identity and subjectivity became so high on the agenda for the Chinese intelligentsia at that moment, and an undercurrent of a renewed Chinese nationalism was developing. The time of transplanting postcolonial criticism was opportune (Fewsmith 115). The right topic, the right journal, the right chief-editor, the right reviewer and, most importantly, the right timing together made the emergence of postcolonial criticism in China a tremendous success.

## II. The Problems of Postcolonial Criticism in Western Academia

As is well known, most of the practitioners of postcolonial criticism in American academia are “masters” of poststructuralism. Since poststructuralism is normally anti-essentialist, it is understandable that

the major ideas of postcolonial studies cannot be easily summarized. Edward Said did not give a specific definition of his much overloaded term *Orientalism*; he gave several definitions instead. But for me, the following comments offer the most enlightening description of Orientalist scholarship:

Yet the Orientalist makes it his work to be always converting the Orient from something into something else: he does it for himself, for the sake of his culture, in some cases he believes for the sake of the Oriental. This process of conversion is a disciplined one: it is taught, it has its own societies, periodicals, traditions, vocabulary, rhetoric, all in basic ways connected to and supplied by the prevailing cultural norms of the West. (Said 68–69)

It will be hard to deny completely what Said points out here if we think of the various scholarly oriental associations and periodicals such as *Münchener Ostasiatische Studien* or *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* in the West, as well as the organizations and events around them. As I argued in my first *Dushu* essay, Western Oriental scholarship always distances itself from the Chinese academic tradition that is supposed to be the very target of its intellectual pursuit. The relationship between Chinese scholarship and China scholarship in the West seems to be a parallel, rather than an integrating one, and quite often perspectives in Western scholarship on China with regard to its target seem to be made from a position of presumed superiority rather than self-awareness and self-critique. By making these statements, however, I am not pretending to be the spokesman of Said for the Chinese audience. In my second *Dushu* essay, I also have made it clear that I did acknowledge the limits and the methodological dilemma involved in Said's works. Whereas Said's theory on Orientalism indeed could provide some new perspectives for Chinese intellectuals in viewing Western scholarship about Chinese culture, it certainly will become absurd if pushed even just one step further. For instance, Said blames the West for having misrepresented the East, but his own philosophical groundwork preaches that language neither goes along with nor represents reality, henceforth

any representation eventually leads to distortion, or, to put in German and make it rhyme, “*Darstellen ist immer Entstellen.*” If the semantic or linguistic fallacy is something that no one is able to escape from when thinking and elaborating, where is Said’s legitimacy to condemn any Western Orientalist wrongdoings? Based on his own logic, his criticism of Orientalism will end up as nothing but a new kind of misrepresentation of other already existing old misrepresentations, not even one step closer to reality (Clifford 255–76).

Facing the challenge with respect to whether he is able to present a real East, a true East, or whether a real and true East exists at all, Said’s answer is that this is not his task in the book and that it also goes beyond his interest and ability. Furthermore, as an anti-essentialist he is strongly against the dichotomy of East vs. West, believing that to define the nature of either East or West is equally meaningless. His postscript to the 1995 edition of *Orientalism* is entitled “East isn’t East” which, beside his repeated and enhanced reproach that Orientalism has provided a distorted image of the East, also implies that there is no such a thing as pure East or pure West (Wang Ning 58). Words and concepts he repeatedly uses are *hybridity* and *ambiguity*. For him, all cultures are “mixed-up.” He cautiously keeps a “critical distance” from the Islamic nationalism of the Arabic world, as well as from any institutionalized discourse, probably as a strategy for his own survival in the New York City. He claims that he counts on his critical consciousness and insists on always taking an “oppositional” position. Ironically, while advocating that a real intellectual should become a voice for the oppressed and for weaker social communities by deconstructing the norms and values of the mainstream, he refuses to identify himself with any social group.

The ambiguity within the very term “postcolonial” needs also to be addressed. The suffix “post” indicates “after” if referred to time, but it also implies “opposing” if referred to approaches. Having the first definition in mind, we will assume that both the colonial era and the time of colonial discourse had been long in existence, and now are or must be “over.” But according to Arif Dirlik and Masao Miyoshi, it is far more accurate to define the contemporary era as the era of new colonialism rather than to define it as the era of postcolonialism, if one takes into consideration the

international capital flows which are constantly undermining the integrity of a nation-state that was once considered autonomous. Furthermore, the ambiguity of postcolonial theory, with its gestures against dichotomies and its insistence on the *hybridity* of any culture, produces a potential necessity conducive to current international capital flow. It is true that after World War II many formerly colonized nations won political independence and established their own independent states, but the legacy colonialism left behind is too strong to be completely eliminated. The whole infrastructure of the ex-master country has been oftentimes inherited or transplanted into the new institutional design because there is hardly any epistemological alternative under the domination of the grand narrative of Western Enlightenment discourse, especially in the post-cold war era of the 1990s when some over-confident scholars in the West were triumphantly announcing the very end of history. The political-cultural identities, lost during the colonial period, have not necessarily been re-established with the creation of independent nation-states after World War II for many developing countries (Miyoshi 740).

Most of the postcolonial scholars in the United States came from the developing countries and prefer to label themselves with the term "Third-World critics." The use of the term "Third-World critics" instead of "postcolonial critics" is even more, or at least as plausible, as the use of the term "postcolonial criticism" (Dirlik 52–83). While it is true that many postcolonial scholars fall into the category of an ethnic minority in the United States, their ties with minority communities are frequently very loose, not to mention their plausible connections to the genuinely developing countries. Being mostly trained at Western colleges, the so-called "Third World" critics lack the authentic knowledge of the developing countries, and remain aloof from the cultural tradition their ancestors once lived in. Due to their educational background, the intellectual source of developing countries is scarcely accessible to them. Postcolonial criticism badly needs more voices from intellectuals living and teaching in institutions in developing countries. Postcolonial thinkers living and working in the West should be encouraged more willingly to return to and embrace their cultural roots in order to find more intellectual resources. It is encouraging to note that eminent



postcolonial scholars such as Spivak and Bhabha have tried successfully to develop and nurture closer contacts with their Indian colleagues, especially in recent years.

Biological factors, however, do not guarantee the status of a postcolonial scholar in the area of cultural studies. Neither does one need to be a white-Europeanmale in order to be an Orientalist in the sense of Said's work. The developing countries do not constitute an entirety and cannot be easily represented in the Western world by certain ethnic minority scholars whose writings are mainly in the major European languages, languages which have exerted discursive power over other non-European languages in terms of the building-up of specific ideas. In the circumstances that ethnic minority scholars are accepted as the representatives of the developing countries in the West, the voice of the scholars living and teaching in their native countries is falling to the wayside. Another troublesome question one may ask further is whether even scholars living and teaching primarily in their native countries represent authentic voice of their culture since they are likely to come from privileged backgrounds. The most favourable position postcolonial critics might obtain from domestic "Third World" scholars cannot be more than just an interlocutor between the two worlds (Gates 452–71 and Bhabha 40–66).

Said's own lack of knowledge about the developing world is rather evident. Paradoxically, whereas Said's methodological approach heavily relies on poststructuralism, his moral justification for rejecting colonial discourse is grounded mainly in Western Humanism. If Said is a good student of his mentor Michel Foucault, Humanism should be the very target he invokes an archeology of knowledge to deconstruct, as Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* critically engaged this idea. Said may have ignored the fact that the belief in the universal principle of humanity, of common human nature, was also the justification for many colonialists. One of the many complications of the concept of Humanism lies in the fact that Social Darwinism and Humanism once have been integrated and have set up the moral ground for the Western expansion in its colonial history (Clifford 255–76). Resistant writers such as Aimé Césaire and Frantz

Fanon both pointed out that within the very concept of the European Humanism there is anti-humanistic element, and the atrocities that Nazi Germany committed were just the practices of an anti-humanism that moved back from colonies and performed in Europe, whose roots were grounded in Enlightenment thought (Wilder 2005). This becomes evident in the confession monologue by a colonialist in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* that Said himself keeps quoting:

The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretense but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea—something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to . . . (Conrad 10)

The idea emphasized here comes out of European Humanism, which has been used to underpin ideologies of “helping uncivilized people to become civilized.” The political practice that took place in Nazi Germany during the 1930s and 1940s, as some scholars have convincingly argued, is caught up in a logical development of Western Enlightenment thought (Wolin 20). In this passage and in the ensuing discussions on it in his *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography*, Said makes evident the complex interconnections of colonial practices and the ideal of Humanism, but fails to further analyze and challenge this concept from a broader point of view, which suggests that if postmodernist and postcolonial scholars completely cast off Enlightenment thoughts, they will end up undermining their own intellectual resources.

### III. The Predicament of Postcolonial Criticism in China

The primary interrogation addressed to Mainland Chinese postcolonialists (if any) is their relationship with Chinese institutional discourse. Zhao Yiheng and Xu Ben in their reviews on the Mainland “post-scholarship” (*houxue*) in the Hong Kong-based magazine *Ershiyi shiji* (*Twenty-first Century*) concluded that, unlike its Western source which is usually considered a liberal intellectual grouping, Chinese postcolonial

criticism proves to be both politically and culturally a rather conservative force. It also appears to be a one-edged sword, aiming mainly at an international target, but having no internal or national agenda, and therefore it is able to co-exist with the institutional discourse (Zhao and Xu 4–15). They are concerned that Chinese postcolonialism could be easily utilized by the right wing of the government, and see in it the danger of stimulating and encouraging a radical nationalism, which stands in the way of the nation's effort to adapt itself to international norms. They condemn its “reactionary political function” (Xu 132–37). This position seems to be only the voice from a pro-Western liberal wing. The young Marxists, on the other hand, insist that the era of the nation-state is over, nationalism in developing nations has little chance in confronting international capitalism, which is so powerful and overwhelming, and cannot be fought against effectively unless all developing countries are united internationally. They argue that postcolonial criticism, by stirring up conservative nationalism, leads a righteous resistance onto a hopeless track (Chen 6–7). The ultra-nationalists welcome the theory, but expect postcolonial critics to push it further, namely, to use it in critically scrutinizing the historical Orientalism shared by Friedrich Hegel and Karl Marx. The radical Chinese nationalists situate the worst legacy of Orientalism in Communism. Furthermore, they are concerned that this kind of thinking could be helpful to the secessionist movement of the Chinese ethnic minorities, or peripheral communities such as Taiwan and Hong Kong.<sup>7</sup>

Another interesting observation my Chinese liberal friends have made is that postcolonial thinking is of great significance, but only in a Western context. The location where the debate occurs is their primary concern. They argue that if Chinese scholars want to participate in the debate, they should write in major Western languages, and publish only in the Western world. A positive example they gave is the first generation liberal master Hu Shi who, according to them, always defended or even saluted Chinese cultural traditions when writing or lecturing in English overseas, but served as a commander in the battle against his own cultural tradition and domestic institutionalized discourse while in his homeland (Lei 16–20). They encourage Chinese “post-masters”

to follow their Western mentors in critically examining the tradition in which they grew up, in pursuing archeological studies on their own construction of knowledge.

The question lies for me herein could be formulated as such: What is this so-called Chinese institutional discourse? As a matter of fact, the contemporary Chinese institutional discourse consists of various elements that can be divided into mainstream and non-mainstream. My understanding is that the mainstream of the Mainland Chinese institutional discourse is manifested in the new key words such as “adaptation to international norms,” “market economy,” “open door” and “reform” and so on, which are completely in accordance with the mainstream of the Western world and which I do not feel any urge to challenge.<sup>8</sup> The destiny of postcolonial criticism, whether in the West or in China, remains forever an oppositional voice.

In addition, I would like to stress that the relationship between institutional discourse and various intellectual currents in contemporary Mainland China is much more sophisticated than one could imagine overseas. Not only does Chinese institutional discourse such as represented by *Liaowang* try to utilize some of postcolonial thinking, but also the general reading public shows great interest in this “new perspective.” The once liberal *Dushu*, the nationalist *Zhanlüe yu guanli* (*Strategy and Management*), the semi-dissident *Dongfang* (*Orient*), the unorthodox *Tianya* (*End of the World*) and the popular *Zhongshan* (*Purple Mountains*)—all these magazines have participated extensively in the Orientalism vs. Occidentalism debate which greatly promoted the new nationalist sentiment in the mid-1990s when the nationalist wave rose so high that the government had to downplay it and keep it within its own control, or at least avoid being hurt by its intense vigour. At the same time, one must admit that postcolonial criticism in Mainland China (or elsewhere), unfortunately, cannot be completely apolitical, since it is not a form of traditional humanistic scholarship as defined by the European scholars in the early second half of the twentieth century.

A logical and appropriate question to raise here is why the so-called Chinese “post-masters” do not follow their western mentors in critically examining the tradition in which they grew up, in pursuing archeo-

logical studies on their own knowledge genealogy (Wang Yichuan 148). Here my counter-argument is that since the May Fourth Movement in the early twentieth century, discourses about modernity have become a dominating tradition in the Chinese context. Fundamental concepts such as reason, development, progress, freedom, science and democracy have become so popular and deeply rooted in the hearts of the modern Chinese intellectuals that any analyses of them, in the slightest postmodernist sense, will surely end up either as impossible or even dangerous. To re-evaluate critically the heritage of the May Fourth Movement, for me at least, means exactly to re-examine our own cultural traditions—strong, alive and powerful traditions. Just as the European Reformation eventually altered and developed religion in the West, Chinese Enlightenment discourse can only be consolidated through a postmodernist subversion and deconstruction.

Chinese postcolonial criticism has been charged with being “Anti-West.” Depicting the rising identity consciousness in the Mainland, the cover story of *Zhongguo shibao zhoukan* [*China Times Weekly*] based in Hong Kong for its first issue of 1994 was entitled “Fan xifangzhuyi huichao” [“The Backlash of the Anti-Western Tide”]. This position is extremely misleading because a self-assertive China does not equal an aggressive China or, to quote Geremie Barmé, it is not a China that is “becoming increasingly irate about their (perceived) inferior position in the New World Order and the attitude of the United States,” and henceforth has a “desire for revenge for all the real and perceived slights of the past century” (Barmé 185). To challenge Western colonial discourse and to rethink a modern Chinese genealogy of humanistic knowledge is not to reject Western civilization as an entity. The best thing Chinese postcolonial criticism may contribute is to help provide an alternative perspective for China in its negotiation with the West, intellectually as well as politically. The crucial difference between liberal groups and the postmodernist groups among the Chinese intellectuals, it seems to me, lies in their ideas about contemporary China. Liberals view contemporary China as still caught in a pre-modern age and argue that China now needs Western Enlightenment thought, while postmodernists view China as already immersed in an international capitalist era. Both the

liberal school and the postmodernist school are Westernized; probably the latter is more Westernized, and by no means should they be labeled as “Anti-Western.”

Finally, I would like to end this article by sharing an anecdote. Several years ago after I finished presenting a paper on postcolonial criticism at a conference sponsored by the Volkswagen Stiftung in Trier University, Dr. Wolfgang Kubin, one of the leading China scholars in Germany, who was my mentor during my formative years, stopped me in the hallway during the break and said he strongly disagreed with me and could not accept that I brought the German sinological tradition into the Orientalist scope. He argued that the German sinological tradition was different from the French and English, for it has nothing, or very little, to do with the Western imperialist expansion project in Asia. However, I was able to come up with more supporting facts to back my position: for example, that the first German professorship for China studies was endowed in the Colonial Institute in Hamburg, and the complications of the “scientific exploration” of China by the worldwide leading German geologist at the time, the President of Berlin University, Ferdinand Paul Wilhelm Freiherr von Richthofen, was linked to the German occupation over Qingdao during the last two decades before the World War I.<sup>9</sup> My mentor confronted me with the following counter-argument: German China scholars devoted their lives to traditional Chinese wisdom. From Richard Wilhelm through Wolfgang Franke to Wolfgang Bauer and Guenther Debon, they all considered themselves loyal students of great Chinese philosophers, and they truly were. In a certain sense they are the carriers of Chinese cultural tradition and represent Chinese culture in the modern world. As for my case, if one may utilize Foucault’s theory of knowledge genealogy studies: I am a student of German literature and Western humanities, a practitioner of the Western postmodernist theories, soaked in the thoughts of German and European romanticists, Marx, Nietzsche, Foucault and others, representing exactly the Western imperialist tradition. How dare I start talking about German sinology in a slightest negative way? I believe this is not just my dilemma, but it is also indicative of the predicament of the Chinese postcolonial criticism in general.

## Notes

- 1 I myself became conversant in postcolonial thought in the late 1980s when I came to the United States to study at the graduate level. Before going “abroad” I had the chance to work a couple of years in a program called “Sinology in the West” [xifang hanxue yanjiushi] at the Institute of Literature, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, thus I was familiar with the history of China studies in the West.
- 2 I would like to use the opportunity to express my thanks to Professor Paul Robinson and Marjorie Perloff for their excellent co-instruction in the Humanities Program at Stanford in the academic year 1993–1994 which greatly enlarged my scholarly scope.
- 3 Before receiving my essay, the chief-editor Shen Changwen already had two articles about Said edited and ready to publish for the November 1993 issue. He added my article to that issue, and in addition, wrote a provocative editorial entitled “Are They Civilized?” [“Tamen wenmingma?”].
- 4 In the 1980s, the West has been greatly idealized in China. Modernization equals Westernization was the typical way of thinking in that time period, as was represented by the TV series *Heshang* [*The River Elegy*]. My first *Dushu* essay helped to shift the Mainland intellectual trend. An internal source revealed that the debate the essay sparked, among other things, had helped the magazine’s circulation copies to increase from 30,000 for the year 1993 to 80,000 for 1994. The number for the year 1996 reached 120,000. An interesting new “tongue-twister” reads: “You don’t need to read books but you really need to read the *Reading*” [“Shu shi keyi budude, ‘Dushu’ shi bukeyi budude”].
- 5 That small essay became again and again the target of the fury of my Chinese liberal friends. For them, it stands as an example of my moral defect or as evidence of complicity with institutional discourse. They called me, for instance in *China News Digest*, “Zhang Kuanqiao” instead of “Zhang Kuan,” referring to Zhang Chunqiao, the notorious Communist party ideologue during the Cultural Revolution. My *Liaowang* essay was “re-published” in the Americanbased online Chinese magazine *Huaxia wenzhai* [*China News Digest*, 1996.01.C], and caused controversy among overseas Chinese students.
- 6 The English translation is adapted and modified from Geremie R. Barmé’s article “Orientalism” in the *New Asia Pacific Review*. I found out, very much to my surprise, however, that Barmé has changed (deliberately?) the meaning of my essay at several places in his translation which only enhanced my belief that Orientalism is still at work.
- 7 There is no denial of the fact that my essay was published in *Liaowang* (an equivalent of the American *Weekly Standard*), but it is also a fact that the column in which my essay was published in *Liaowang* is called “Zhenzhutan” [“Pearl Beach”], a name suggesting marginal value and entertainment, decorative at best but by no means representing the mainstream. Before its publication, the essay

had been put on hold for quite a long time because the editor was not quite sure whether it was in accordance with “institutional discourse.”

8 This view is represented by Chen Ming, chief-editor of the influential journal *Yuandao* [*Returning to Logos*] and the circle around him.

9 See Richthofen, whose Chinese expeditions were funded by Kaiser Wilhelm II, and who also presented to the latter a special report about the strategic location of the Chinese coastal city Qingdao from a geologist’s perspectives.

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