

The Question of Nation and Nationalism in Chinese Postcolonialism

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Abstract: This paper examines the impact of postcolonial theory in China on the question of the nation from historical and genealogical perspectives. China first encountered Jameson's third-world national allegory and Edward Said's Orientalism, which were quickly assimilated into the framework of the China/West dichotomy. Then Homi Bhabha's ideas of national identity and cultural hybridity were utilized in studying Chinese ethnic minorities and identity construction. From the earlier views of postcolonialism as cultural resistance to cultural production now, Chinese postcolonial studies have acquired new energy for growth.

Yuyu WU

The Question of Nation and Nationalism in Chinese Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism emerged in Western academic circles as a strong ideological trend within political and cultural criticism in the 1970s. It is mainly a discourse that reveals a world order long taken for granted: the East is a "mirror image" of the West, dominated, shaped and modified by the Western discourse hegemony. It has existed for so long that we have grown accustomed to it, for it colonizes ideologically rather than oppresses physically. Violent suppression inevitably leads to resistance, whereas cultural colonization subtly dominates us before we realize it has happened. As a self-claimed champion for the oppressed and disempowered, postcolonial theory capitalizes its legitimacy in both academic and political realms in terms of resistance as a sustainable resource. When postcolonialism entered China, however, its oppositional energy transmogrified into a diverse cohort of theoretical variants, subject to Chinese historical and cultural conditions. The following questions are therefore raised: How do theorists exploit the resistance potential of postcolonial theories? How theories shift when they come to China? How long will the shift last? This article addresses these questions in terms of the "nation" as a central cluster of problematics. The nation is arguably the center of gravity congregating all sorts of popular support or resistance. Such postcolonial theorists as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Fredric Jameson cannot avoid mentioning China when it comes to resistance against Western hegemony. When these theories appear in the Chinese context and become the theoretical tools of Chinese scholars, the nation turns into a domain of contestation, a force-field, or an interface between Western theories and Chinese academic discourse.

The ideological trend of postcolonialism first came to the attention of Chinese scholars in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Postcolonial theorists' influence on China was determined not by the age or significance of their theories, but by Chinese academic necessity and familiarity with western theories. Apparently the "political unconscious" then played an important role, even though Chinese academics seemed to have picked up various theories at will: the legacy of revolution lingered on, and the idea of the "nation" with its revolutionary reverberations then gripped everyone's eyeballs. The nationalist stance in postcolonialism and indigenous Chinese nationalist sentiment then intermingled, bearing a nationalist mode of criticism as their brain-child.

Jameson's Third World: Resistance against Capitalist Globalization

Fredric Jameson is the first postcolonial theorist who had a considerable impact on Chinese scholars. Zhao Xifang, who helped to introduce postcolonial theory to China, comments that:

Postcolonial Theory and Cultural Criticism, edited by Zhang Jingyuan, is the first collection of postcolonial theory published in China, the first article of which is Jameson's 'Modernism and Imperialism,' translated by Zhang herself and followed by some chapters from Said's *Orientalism*, and a selection of Spivak's articles. This arrangement shows not only the order of Chinese appearance of postcolonial theories, but also Jameson's extraordinary status in China (51).

In 1989, Jameson's article "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" was published in Chinese translation, and inaugurated Chinese postcolonialism in the 1990s. The term "third world" was first mentioned in China by none other than Mao Zedong himself. In 1974, when meeting with the President of Zambia, Mao Zedong claimed that "the first world includes the United States and the Soviet Union; the second world, or the centrists, includes Japan, Europe, Australia, and Canada; China belongs to the third world [...] Except for Japan, every country in Asia belongs to the third world, as well as the whole Africa and Latin America" (Jiang 40). In Mao's view, the United States and the Soviet Union competed for global hegemony, while Asia, Africa, and Latin America (but not Japan) fought against imperialism. In his perspective, the third-world nations can unite with the developed nations in the second world to participate in the anti-imperialist and anti-hegemonic cause. Obviously, Mao's classification of the three worlds was mainly based on a political strategy. The three worlds theory, which then had strong political implications, was adopted by Jameson and became the basic theoretical framework of his postcolonial literary criticism. Jameson's third world theory placed a considerable emphasis on hegemony and nation, two core concepts of Orientalism. Jameson contends that "The third-world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic—necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: *the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-*

world culture and society" (69). In other worlds, the literary works not only express personal feelings, but express concern for the country, nation and society.

Jameson further illustrated his viewpoints by quoting the short stories of the famous Chinese writer, Lu Xun:

One important distinction would seem to impose itself at the outset, namely that none of these cultures can be conceived as anthropologically independent or autonomous, rather, they are all in various distinct ways locked in a life-and-death struggle with first-world cultural imperialism—a cultural struggle that is itself a reflection of the economic situation of such areas in their penetration by various stages of capital, or as it is sometimes euphemistically termed, as modernization (68).

Compared to both Said and Bhabha who show little, if no interest in Marxism, Jameson chooses national allegory to resist the cultural hegemony of the West from a Marxist perspective.

Said's Orientalism: a Misunderstood Dichotomy between the "Orient" and the "Occident"

Said, generally regarded as the founder of postcolonialism, was widely accepted in China in addition to Jameson, but there still remain many misunderstandings. According to Said: "Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (3).

Orientalism came to be such a style because "European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period" (Said 4). Orientalism can further be described as "the whole network of interests inevitably brought to bear on (and therefore always involved) any occasion when that peculiar entity 'the Orient' is in question" (Said 4). Said came to the conclusion that "the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action" (4).

Orientalism pointed out that traditional Orientalism is not a study of the Orient but a discursive weapon by which the Occident controls and shapes the Orient: "the Orient is not an inert fact of nature" (Said 4); "as much as the West itself, the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary" (Said 5). However, as geographical, cultural, and historical entities, both the "Orient" and the "Occident" are artificially defined, modified and shaped in systems of discursive formations or knowledge regimes of the West, then accepted and appropriated by those in the Orient. The Orient and the Occident can only define themselves by reciprocity through comparison and contrast, under the rubrics of omnipresent power. Said draws primarily on Foucault's theory of discourse/power, zeroing in on the discourse of Orientalism as a concrete object of critique. However, Said was not content with this critique. His objective pointed to the real world:

But note that Foucault's history is ultimately textual, or rather textualized; its mode is one for which Borges would have an affinity. Gramsci, on the other hand, would find it uncongenial. He would certainly appreciate the fineness of Foucault's archaeologies, but would find it odd that they make not even a nominal allowance for emergent movements, and none for revolutions, counterhegemony, or historical blocks (131).

When Said criticizes Western hegemony in the cultural field, he adopts Foucault's strategy of textual interpretation, but when issues concerning Palestine, Israel, and the Middle East emerge, he vehemently assaults the domination by Western Europe and the United States. Such an ambiguity between discourse and political reality stems from Said's national identity and political stance toward Palestinian liberation. As a result, despite his opposition to nationalism, he was still labeled as a nationalist and his *Orientalism* has also been promoted as a banner of nationalism.

Bhabha's Cultural Hybridity: Replacing Identity with Nation

Thanks to the translation of a large number of texts, Chinese scholars began to have a comprehensive understanding of postcolonial theory over the past few decades. Meanwhile, as antagonism towards the West receded, Homi Bhabha began to receive increasing attention from Chinese academia. Bhabha touches on many issues concerning postcolonialism and globalization, such as cultural rootlessness, ethnic memory, identity recognition, and national narratives. As these concepts entered China, the Chinese brand of postcolonial theory gradually became a *mélange* of hybridity, multiplicity, and diversity.

In particular, Bhabha is wary of nationalism. In "Anxious Nations, Nervous States," he expresses that nationalism in the late 1990s and early 2000s did not have the historical significance of the

national independence and state building of the 1960s. Valorizing nationalism would lead to exclusion, racial conflict, and xenophobia, reducing it to a self-affirming, self-centered, and narrow-minded "national myth." Hence, Bhabha "condemns the state and nationalism imposed on the people in a completely inappropriate way" (Wallis and Berger, 82).

Bhabha refuses to acknowledge that nation is an immutable and innate concept, and believes it to be narrativized and subjected to changes all the time. More conflicts and clashes would ensue when nation is construed within the dichotomous framework of imperialism and nationalism. Therefore, Bhabha proposed a more open-ended cognitive approach, replacing nationality with identity, the latter of which is constructed, and must be constructed by taking into account the Other. In contrast to the essentializing notion of the nation, identity is hybrid and differentiated: "Identity is an intersubjective, performative act that refuses the division of public/private or psyche/society. It is not a 'self' given to consciousness, but a 'coming-to-consciousness' of the self through the realm of symbolic otherness—language, the social system, the unconscious" (Bhabha 206).

When Bhabha deconstructs the nation and substitutes it with identity, the power of the nation to resist colonialist cultural hegemony is also deconstructed. So what is the new force of resistance? Bhabha proposes the strategy of *cultural translation*. In the post-modern context, when the writing is full of differences rather than continuity and identity, he believes that the meaning is ambiguous, transitory, and "in-between." Since each instance of cultural transaction is different, the colonizers' hegemony over the colonized cannot be completed, thus turning into a process of "negotiation" between multiple cultures. Negotiation alters the discursive positionality of the subject, and undermines the colonialist's mode of thinking. In the end, it facilitates coexistence of multiple standpoints and different modes of living. Such a negotiation or collision occurs at every single moment, whereby meaning is constructed and generated. Therefore, meaning is always a result of *différance*, and expression is always being captured in fleeting moments.

Third-World Allegory: Resisting the West and Constructing "Chineseness"

Under the influence of Jameson's national allegory, the ideological trend of Chinese nationalism appeared, and Said's Orientalism was adopted by Chinese scholars under the dichotomous rubrics of the Orient and the Occident. Chinese postcolonial theory emerged as a unique tool to resist the discourse of Western modernity and construct Chinese nationality. Postcolonialism first found its way into Chinese academia through the concepts of colonialism and the third world. Zhao Xifang claims that postcolonial criticism may be misleading because Chinese "postmodernist champions" regard nationalism as sacred since they were deeply affected by Jameson's concept of the third world (Liu 20). A political ideology has been formed based on Jameson's new Marxism, the concept of the third world, and Chinese exceptionalism.

Under these circumstances, third-world theory criticizes the discourse hegemony of the first world and defends the uniqueness of third-world culture. Therefore, once the postcolonial theory entered China, it was soon translated into an essentialist and dichotomous mode of thinking, such as East versus West, the third world versus the first world, Chineseness versus modernity, authenticity versus colonial discourse, nativism versus cosmopolitanism, and so on and so forth. Jameson's third-world allegory turned out to be an invaluable theory for many Chinese scholars who later became advocates of nationalism and attempted to construct a sort of Chineseness. In 1990, Zhang Yiwu of Peking University published "Third-World Culture: A New Starting Point," which examines Chinese literature through the polarizing perspectives of the first and the third worlds. Zhang stressed the imbalance of cultural power between East and West, as well as the need for resistance in Chinese literature (30). In 1992, Liu He (aka Lydia Liu) argued that "it was necessary and urgent to criticize the Western cultural hegemony. But such a critique must transcend hatred in order to become mature" (310). Zhang Xudong insists that Chinese intellectuals ought to reinvigorate national identity by telling the stories of national history and heroes.

Subsequently, postcolonialism ignited several heated discussions in China. An increasing number of scholars, who followed Said's logic that the East is shaped by Western discourse, joined the discussion. Since Zhang Yimou's *Red Sorghum* won the Golden Bear Award at the Berlin International Film Festival in 1987, Chinese films, such as *Raise the Red Lanterns* and *The Story of Qiu Ju*, have appeared on the international stage. Some Chinese scholars believe that the success of these films is largely due to the "imaginary spectacle" of an Orient that Westerners have never heard of, and these scenes have catered to and satisfied Westerners' imagination of a savage, primitive, and exotic Orient. Yang Naiqiao contends that the "barbarism and ugliness of the old Chinese nation has been carried all the way to Europe and the United States to ingratiate the Western middle class, which shares a postcolonial aesthetics" (37). These scholars challenged Western culture with the aid of

postcolonialism. Therefore, Feng Lin later comments that: "The third world is the banner of Chinese academia, with nationalism at its core [...] Postcolonialism's broader implications are neglected, obliterated, and forgotten in China [...] The Chinese can only deconstruct Eurocentrism within the confines of nationalism" (67). Tao Dongfeng also asserts that, whereas Chinese postcolonial criticism in the 1990s employed Western deconstruction theory to criticize Eurocentrism, it also maintained the essentialist concept of nation, and absolutized the native experience. Thus, narrow nationalist sentiment pushed the polarization of nationhood and modernity. In Tao's view, Said's *Orientalism* and postcolonialism were grossly misunderstood in China (192).

Chinese scholars reevaluate China's indigenous culture and history, and, in the meantime, attack capitalist globalization from the perspective of Chineseness. Many assume that the East and the West can engage in a dialogue on equal footing. However, there is a serious mismatch of power, and Homi Bhabha's cultural hybridity fails to mention this power imbalance with an illusion that all cultures are equal. The logic behind cultural hybridity is the free trade of a capitalist global market. However, such a logic contains two fallacies: first, cultural hybridity is shaped by the rules of the global free market, set up by the hegemonic powers of the West. The colonized nations cannot but obey these rules, with no probable way of having equal say. Second, globalization largely follows the logic of commodity transaction, but culture is not merely a commodity with no historical and local traces. Simply put, it is undesirable to reduce culture to a commodity in the global market. This is why some Chinese scholars are opposed to western cultural hegemony. This opposition, nevertheless is often premised on a dichotomizing mode of thinking, reaffirming the Self only by rejecting the Other.

Cultural Diversity and Critical Reflection on Dichotomies

When postcolonial theory was heatedly debated in China, many began to reflect on the dichotomizing mode of thinking of China versus the West in Chinese postcolonialism. Attempting to clear out the misreadings of postcolonialism, they tried to break the dichotomy and open up a multicultural space for negotiation drawing on Bhabha's notions of identity building and cultural translation. Some are more skeptical. Liu Kang, as a U.S.-based Chinese scholar, unveils postcolonial theory's ambivalence towards Chinese revolution. Liu contends that Chinese postcolonial criticism is trying to create a new discourse that tends to confine China's anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist revolution under the rubric of nation-state building and "imagined communities." The problem of such an approach, Liu argues, is that it glosses over Chinese revolution as an indigenous experience. Marxism, in particular, has been labeled by postcolonial critics as a Western ideology that has asserted its cultural hegemony over the non-Western world. Liu continues:

Postcolonialism has revealed another danger. In order to avoid replicating the western paradigm, developing countries reject anything good from the developed Western countries, and then essentialize their local experience. Postcolonial theory is conducive to such an essentialist tendency to absolutize nativity and indigenous experiences. One should therefore remain vigilant against these perilous potentials. Simply taking the learning from advanced countries as being oppressed by colonial discourse may lead to a xenophobic enclosure (Liu and Jin 149-159).

In general, Chinese reflection on postcolonial theory addresses two issues. First, it traces the historical formation of postcolonial theory. Postcolonialism first aimed to deconstruct essentialism and dichotomy, but after having entered China, it transmogrified into a nationalist discourse. Zhao Xifang argues: "Zhang Yiwu believes the first-world discourse has always controlled our speech and writing, and even oppressed our lives. Our task, now, is to reverse this dichotomous relationship [...] The standpoint of nationalism and essentialism is completely at odds with Western postcolonial theory" (51).

Liu Kang also comments that "the misinterpretation and misplacement of Western theory in Chinese academic circles has led to a refusal to engage in dialogues over important theoretical issues" (195). Gu Mingdong, also a U.S.-based Chinese scholar like Liu Kang, proposes the term "Sinologism" to reexamine Chinese studies as a purely scholarly issue, or, to put it another way, to view objectively the China question from a non-ideological, non-political position. Gu claims that "a scholarly inquiry should pursue the production of knowledge and academic work rather than politics and ideology; such should be the ultimate goal" (47). Gu's proposal, of course, is not so much a plea for neutrality or objectivity as it is wishful thinking, under the current circumstances of the raging warfare on the very ideological and political nature of scholarly inquiries of the humanities. What is really needed, rather, is a relentless historicizing and meta-critical endeavor, as posited by Liu Kang, to unravel what is at stake in Chinese postcolonialism in terms of its responses to the political and ideological conditions under which the Chinese postcolonialism came into being (20).

Second, nation, nationalism, and populism are different concepts. A nation, to a certain extent, plays a positive role in the construction of cultural communities and the development of unique and featured national cultures, but nationalism and even populism are more emotional sentiments than rational deliberations, prone to extremist, xenophobic, and close-minded modes of thinking. Many scholars worry that it is easy to distort postcolonial theory's original intent of deconstructing Eurocentrism, particularly when Chinese postcolonialism is fixated on dichotomous thinking that pits Chinese problems against Western domination. As Tao Dongfeng puts it, "if nationalism breaks the boundary, it will no longer be effective or even be very dangerous (93). Adhering to nationalism risks externalizing one's own internal problems. The extreme nationalist is often deluded by his/her own faith, incapable of seeing different sides of him/herself, falling prey to the self-preordained theoretical trap. As Xu Ben comments: "These people use their common national identity to cover up the real political problems and social conflicts that exist in the oppressive system of their country. They dilute internal national conflicts by confronting cultural enemies and uniting different views within China and stimulating political energy by opposing the West."

In Hong Kong and Taiwan, although the cultural contexts are quite different from those of the mainland, nationalism and pluralism entangle in a complex web. With regard to nationalism, certain academics from Hong Kong and Taiwan prefer to situate their relationship with mainland China under the polarizing rubrics of the native versus the mainland. After martial law was rescinded in 1987, Taiwan's postcolonial research was nearly synchronous with that of the PRC. If in the PRC postcolonial criticism has a strong tendency toward nationhood or Chinese nationalism, then in Taiwan, the tendency shifts to the local Taiwan rather than the nation or the mainland. Postcolonialism was even used as a theoretical tool for advocating Taiwan's consciousness, laying justifications for Taiwan's independence. For example, Chen Fangming, the author of *History of Taiwan Literature*, views Taiwan's history as being successively colonized by the Japanese and the Kuomintang (KMT). Taiwan is now trying to rebuild its subjectivity in a postcolonial context and foreshadowing its independence. In 1992, Qiu Guifen's "Discovering Taiwan—Constructing Taiwan's Postcolonial Discourse" employed postcolonial theory in Taiwan and described the relationship between Taiwan and mainland China as that between the colonized and colonizers. She indicated: "I want to reflect upon culture, colonization, and other issues through Western postcolonial theories, cutting into disputes about the position of Taiwanese literature in Taiwan's literary circles at that time [just after martial law ended], and to make a little contribution for the theoretical support of the local literature in Taiwan" (Qiu 151).

She claimed that if the KMT's reign could also be viewed as a kind of colonization, then "Taiwan's colonized experience is not limited to the Japanese occupation, but also covers about a hundred years" (Qiu 154). In brief, postcolonial theory in many instances has been transformed by Taiwan-centered nationalists into a theoretical weapon for Taiwan's independence. The mainland opposes the West with nationalism; and Taiwan also opposes the mainland with nationalism. Both are self-imposed dichotomous constructions of the enemy and self, which, in the final analysis, is nothing more than an essentialist, close-minded mode of thinking.

Contrary to the nationalistic tendency in the PRC, many from Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan pay more attention to nuanced issues of the colonial experience, with a long list: traumatic experience under colonial rule, cultural identity, identity crisis, ethnic diaspora, immigrant community and ethnic minorities, and other topics. Bhabha's theories regarding double identity and the margin were adopted to analyze the embarrassment and pain encountered by Chinese when integrating into Western society; with such an analysis Bhabha intended to help Chinese immigrants to merge their image of Chinese diaspora culture with the reality of that culture, and tried to construct a hybrid culture at the intersection, turning the confrontation into an opportunity for self-production. For example, Taiwanese scholar Kuan-hsing Chen focuses on ridding Taiwan of colonial culture after the 1945 Taiwan Retrocession. He believes that the ultimate goal of postcolonial research was to decolonize cultural colonialism or cultural imperialism. If the problem of decolonization has not been resolved, it is unrealistic to insist on localization. In the long colonial history of Taiwan, the Taiwanese performed many heroic deeds to resist colonial aggression, but "unfortunately, these activities of cultural decolonization were quickly swallowed up by the political movements for independence and nation-building" (Chen K. 34). Chen Ruxiu claims that: "Colonization is not just a foreign power that imposes domination on another people [...] it promoted changes in social structure [as well]. Western countries bring the concepts of art, Christian ethics, and capitalism to colonized countries" (163).

This, to a large extent, creates insurmountable obstacles to decolonizing cultural psychological colonialism. The colonists' traces interact intensely with the local culture of the colonized when the foreign colonial culture is integrated into the local one. The reintegration of colonial culture and native culture is a way for the once-colonized culture to re-allocate cultural resources. As Wang Yuechuan

wrote, "In the new cultural integration, a more diverse cultural spirit has emerged. In this sense, colonial discourse and colonial memory are not only historical scars, but the foundation of a new historically constructed cultural psychology" (54). Many theorists have begun to resist and revise cultures in the process of cultural negotiation and generate new cultural patterns through the integration of culture.

Seeking New Energy in Postcolonial Theories: From National Resistance to External Generation

Postcolonial theory is heterogeneous and filled with contradictions and paradoxes. On one hand, it derives from the dichotomous framework of the East versus the West as well as the colonized versus colonizers; on the other hand, it draws on Foucault's and Derrida's postmodern endeavors to dissolve binary oppositions and destabilize rigid positionalities. Therefore, postcolonial critics must, on one hand, derive its legitimacy from the opposition between colonizers and the colonized, and on the other hand, dilute the dichotomy through the theory of deconstruction. Consequently, this kind of theory wavers between opposition against the West and dissolution of oppositions. This quandary is fleshed out in Said's ambivalence over nation, in Bhabha's cancellation of nationhood, and in Jameson's insistence on national identity (allegory).

Not only western postcolonial theorists focused on the question of nation; postcolonial theories found their way into China through the question of nation as well. What kind of power is hidden behind the concept of the nation? In fact, the nation has two connotations: political and cultural. A nation is political because it has to do with geopolitical contests by the nation-states of the world today. It is also cultural because it is interpretable, constructible and modifiable conceptually and symbolically. In the case of Said, Bhabha, and Jameson, political resistance has been translated into a cultural strategy, which diminishes the practice of political struggle while retaining the persuasive power of literary and cultural criticism. In the United States, where a plethora of ethnic and racial groups coexist, advocacy of political struggle may lead to social confrontations and antagonism, as shown in today's polarization and tribalization of U.S. society. Cultural resistance, by contrast, may seem quite harmless and benign. It does not hinder cultural integration; nor does it leave out the marginalized and disempowered, inculcating a modicum of moral support to the underprivileged. Therefore, postcolonial theory looks like an effective strategy of cultural politics.

However, when postcolonialism came to China, things seem to take a completely different turn. Politically, China was relatively weak during late 1980s and early 1990s. The specter of the Cold War lingered. The political legacy was complicated: Mao's remnant revolutionary ideology entangled with Deng Xiaoping's crony capitalism and Chinese exceptionalism. The major dilemma is the transformation of traditional, rural China into an industrialized modern nation-state. Nationalism then came out handily to recalibrate the internal inconsistencies and ruptures, blaming China's problems on external, Western oppression. The question of nation in postcolonialism then is consistent with Chinese nationalistic sentiments. China's own tradition is premised largely on a kinship-based community ruled by a highly centralized empire. The corresponding concept to the Chinese empire is 天下 *tianxia* (all under heaven). It assumes the Middle Kingdom, or rather, the Emperor himself, sits at the center of the universe under heaven, which subsumes all ethnic groups and natives under unified imperial reign. Therefore, Chinese scholars often conflate the combination of myriad ethnicities and natives with the monolithic concept of 中华性 "Chineseness" when receiving postcolonialist ideas. When the concept of the nation was replaced by the state, especially during the Sino-Japanese Wars of 1894-1895 and 1931-1945 when China faced invasion and annihilation by the imperialist Japan, the West, which stood for imperialism, naturally became China's archnemesis. In this way, China's internal wrongdoings were absolved, and the culprit for all sufferings became Western cultural and economic intrusion and aggression. Subsequently, the Chinese obtained self-confidence through assaults and resistance against Western hegemony, and reinforced its internal cohesion and cultural uniqueness. Therefore, when postcolonial theory entered China, it strengthened the political inclination inherent in Chinese cultural criticism. In short, the concept of the nation in postcolonialism has pumped new fuel into a China charged with political and nationalistic anguish, and, at the same time, much magnified the postcolonial dichotomous mode of thinking. As a result, Chinese postcolonialism is conducive to the return of an essentialist and exclusionist political and ideological foreclosure.

Opening up to "the Other": Seeking Opportunities to Regenerate

If dichotomous thinking is not a viable option, how could postcolonialism possibly maintain its theoretical power? Or, how could we imagine a way to reinvent a theoretical discourse in China, appropriating some critical insights from postcolonial theory? Such an reinvention calls forth a generative capability that is made possible by way of transgression. Foucault's idea of the heterotopia, Deleuze's lines of flight, Derrida's *différance*, Bhabha's idea of beyond, and Giorgio Agamben's potentialities all boast an open mind, that is, opening from the inside to crack down, allowing the outside to get inside, breaking up the rigid patterns, and crossing the boundaries to allow for breeding new life. Foucault claimed that "transgression carries the limit right to the limit of its being; transgression forces the limit to face the fact of its imminent disappearance, to find itself in what it excludes (perhaps, to be more exact, to recognize itself for the first time), to experience its positive truth in its downward fall" (34). In this way, it is crucial to break down the limit and include the other within the self. The entry of the other opens a gap and allows the multiple forces embodied in the self to communicate and reproduce.

The way to reinvent a theoretical discourse with postcolonial insights is first to break down the self-imposed ideological foreclosure of Chinese postcolonialism under the banner of Chineseness. The context of resistance has changed, and it is time for us to open our minds to the outside and incorporate diverse cultural heritages and traditions. In this regard, postcolonial theory opens up to the outside, and unlocks the unthinkable or *l'impensé*, especially that which is concealed inside China, the discrete, and heterogeneous ways of life, mores, customs, and languages, subsumed under the rubrics of the unified and singular Chineseness. Moreover, voices of subordinate and marginalized groups such as ethnic minorities, women, and disempowered populations are muffled by the single, unitary speech of Chineseness or *tianxia*. On the other hand, insisting on the position of the nation and nationalist ideology on behalf of the disempowered will not bring equality, as such an ideological position, though justifiable in its own terms, is hardly productive for the common good of humanity. Confrontation is not productive; resistance is not generative, either. What the epochal legacy of Chinese reform and opening up of the last four decades has shown is that only opening up to the world is productive. China's reform has opened up a space to the world, a space based on indigenous memories and national cultures, but fully integrated into world cultures. Such a space should neither return to primitive essentialism, nor flatten out diversity and heterogeneity of cultures. In order to sustain and expand such space, a translational cosmopolitanism, rather than a concentric one, is needed. When the Other comes in, boundaries will be expanded and transgressed. A regenerative and reproductive "vernacular cosmopolitanism" is not only desirable but also possible.

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