



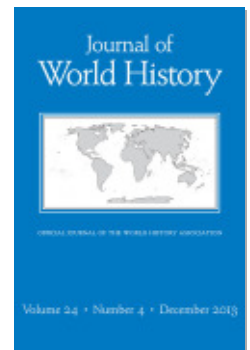
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Encountering the World: China and Its Other(s) in Historical Narratives, 1949–89

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In this article I attempt to critically examine historical discourses in modern China and their complex relations with the outside world, most notably the West. I intend to delineate three noticeable changes in twentieth-century China, but concentrate on the later two in the period covered here and analyze their causes and implications in a large social and political context. The Chinese experimentation of modern historiography, defined by and large by the experience of Euro-American historians of the late nineteenth century, was closely associated with their country's experience in encountering with the West from the mid-nineteenth century onward. The Qing Dynasty's (1644–1911) defeat in the Opium War (1838–42) by Britain, for example, first opened the eyes of some Chinese to see the rising Western world, whereas the Dynasty's subsequent defeat in the Sino-Japanese War (1895) turned their eyes also to Japan, which resulted in a wave of cultural exchanges that reoriented the direction of both Chinese history and historiography. Beginning in the early twentieth century, many

¹ The author wishes to thank the participants in the International Conference on Modern Chinese Historiography and Historical Thinking in Heidelberg, Germany on 24 May 2001, where an earlier version of this article was read, for their comments, and Professor Wen-hsin Yeh of University of California, Berkeley, for her critique. He is also indebted to the *Journal of World History* reviewer for his/her constructive suggestions and criticism and to Rowan University for research assistance.

Chinese had come to the realization that in order to understand this newly expanded world and broaden their worldview, there was a compelling need to incorporate the Western historical experience in their historical writing. Drawing on the ideas of nationalism and historicism, they pitted China against the West and distilled and essentialized China's past cultural tradition as well as modern Western culture. In their consideration, China and the West formed a dichotomy, much like the East-West dichotomy in Edward Said's analysis of Orientalism. Most advocates of this kind of thinking were nationalists, so while they pitted China against the West, they also hoped that China could emulate and extend the Western success in modernization.² As China's "returning" to its past glory and power was their ultimate goal, some of them also sought alternatives to reach it. The triumph of Bolshevism in Russia in 1917 seemed to have offered such a viable alternative to Western liberalism. From the early 1920s onward when Marxists gradually became a visible force in China's political and cultural arena, it changed the country's cultural relations with the outside world from the dichotomous one to a triangular one; while Marxism originated also from the West, it was regarded by many Chinese, regardless of their attitudes toward it, as a separate entity from the liberal West.

In order to better understand this triangular cultural relationship, perhaps it is useful to borrow the psychoanalytical theory of Jacques Lacan, particularly in the way as most postcolonial theorists read and interpret it. What is unique in Lacan's theory is that he not only notes the distinction between Self and Other, but also the distinction between the "Other" and the "other." The Other, with the capital "O" or *grande-autre* by Lacan, stands in direct opposition to Self, through its gaze the Self gains its identity. By comparison, the other is a mere reflection of the Self. What the other represents is something the Self desires to become, like a child standing in front of a mirror, seeing him/herself yet at the same time hoping to find his/her better image in it. Moreover, in Lacan's discussion of these three concepts, he stressed that their relationships are not fixed, nor are they represented only by

² For a general survey of the changes in historical writings in twentieth century China, see Q. Edward Wang, "Historical Writings in Twentieth-century China: Methodological Innovation and Ideological Influence," in *An Assessment of Twentieth-Century Historiography*, ed. Rolf Torstendahl (Stockholm: The Royal Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, 2000), pp. 43–69. For Chinese writing of national history and its Western nexus, see Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), and Q. Edward Wang *Inventing China through History: The May Fourth Approach to Historiography* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001).

one object; the Other for example can be either the child's mother or father.³

In light of the complex relationship China had formed with the outside world in modern times, especially considering its noticeable turns and changes, I think Lacan's theory is of help for our analysis. During the Republic period (1912–49) prior to the founding of the PRC, Chinese historians experimented with modern practices of historical writing exemplified, on theoretical level, by Hegelian view of historical change and, on methodological level, by Rankean historiography of the nineteenth century. The former emphasized the idea of progress, or evolution, in history and the latter stressed the application of source criticism to historical study. Though different in focus, they each helped define the practice of scientific history, which was then considered by many Chinese historians a model of modern historiography. By contrast, these historians, most notably Liang Qichao (1873–1929) in his early days, regarded the Chinese tradition in historiography as a dismal contrast. As Liang considered Western historiography the Other, contrary to the Chinese tradition, there soon emerged attempts (Liang later joined it himself) to bridge the gap, namely to seek the lowercase other, or a better self, in historical practices. In the May Fourth/New Culture Movement beginning in the late 1910s, Hu Shi (1891–1962) and his followers introduced the National Studies, in which they searched in the Chinese tradition for scientific and modern elements comparable to those of the West and attempted the writing of national history on scientific basis. As a result, these historians reinvented the Chinese tradition; in their consideration, Western historiographical experience was no longer the alien Other, but the other, which stood for something comparable to the forms of scientific learning (e.g., Qing evidential scholarship) in China's own cultural tradition. As students of Western liberalism, these intellectuals regarded Marxism as the Other, refuting its relevancy to China's search for modernity and hoping to build the Republic of China on the Western democratic model.⁴

³ Jacques Lacan, *The Language of the Self: The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis*, trans. and commented by Anthony Wilden (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968). For the postcolonial reading of Lacan's theory, see the "Other/other" entry in *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge 1998), pp. 169–71.

⁴ For Liang Qichao's ideas of history and his attitude toward Western historiography, see Xiaobing Tang, *Global Space and the Nationalist Discourse of Modernity: The Historical Thinking of Liang Qichao* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996). For Hu Shi and his

But the war and the revolution China experienced during the 1930s and the 1940s soon dashed the hopes of these liberal intellectuals: Not only did the nationalist government led by Chiang Kai-shek, with which these liberals tended to associate, become politically autocratic and culturally conservative, but the Chinese Communist Party also expanded in rapid pace with tremendous force and quickly became a viable alternative and a powerful challenger to Chiang's rule. After World War II, before the nationalist government was able to regain its sovereignty after Japan's defeat, it was soon lost to the Communists and had to retreat to Taiwan. In the field of historical study, there was also ample evidence to the quick growth of the Marxist influence, one of which was the well-known "Debate on Chinese Social History" or "Social History Controversy" of the late 1920s and the early 1930s, in which Marxist historians first demonstrated their power of persuasion and revolutionary enthusiasm.⁵ After the founding of the PRC in 1949, Marxism became the official ideology, which naturally led to the dominance of the Marxist school of historiography in China's historical circle. As Chinese Marxist historians occupied themselves with the task of applying Marxist theory to the study and interpretation of Chinese and world history, they also changed their perception of its relation with China: instead of the alien Other as portrayed by liberal historians, Marxism was now the lower-case other representing something with which the Self intended to be associated and identified. At the same time, Chinese historians began to antagonize other schools in Western historiography, turning them again into the Other. This shall begin our narrative.

OTHERING THE WEST

It is first necessary to see how Western historiography has been defined in the PRC. For most history students in China, the term "Western historiography" refers to historical practices in Western Europe and North America, excluding the works of former Soviet and Eastern European historians. In coming up with this definition, PRC historians have considered both geographical and political factors; the latter is

followers' project on national history and their appropriation of Western historiography, see Q. Edward Wang, *Inventing China through History*, especially its introduction, pp. 1–26.

⁵ Arif Dirlik, *Revolution and History: Origins of Marxist Historiography in China, 1919–37* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

weighed more than the former because this Western historiography excludes not only the works of Marxist historians in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe but also those written by Marxists in Western Europe. E. P. Thompson's work, for example, was not reviewed by the Chinese until well into the late 1980s.⁶ In the textbooks written by Chinese historians on the history of Western historiography, it was also customary to exclude the works of Western Marxists, although some texts have begun to cover them in the past decade.⁷ This expansion suggests some modification on the socialism-versus-capitalism dichotomy after the end of the Cold War, hence the lessening of weight of the political consideration.

In the formative years of the PRC, as Chinese historians were eager to establish Marxist school in historiography, they looked to the Soviet model for inspiration and emulation. History teaching in schools, for example, was carved into two blocks in curriculum: Chinese history and world history, which, by and large, remain the same today. The former was taught and researched according to the Marxist theory, with the aim of developing a new interpretation of China's past. The latter was introduced initially for the purpose of carrying out the Communist mission of the "world revolution," which has by now become irrelevant.⁸ As a result, this "world history" has focused on the history of the West, namely the capitalist countries of Western Europe and North

⁶ See Zhao Shiling's review of E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* titled "People, culture, and history" (*Ren, wenhua, lishi*) in *Shixue lilun* (History and theory) 4 (1987): 112–22. To my knowledge, this is the first Chinese writing on Thompson. Zhao at the time was pursuing her doctoral degree at Peking University. For the study of Western historical thinking and historiography in the PRC, see Yu Pei's "Woguo jinnian de xifang lish zhexue yanjiu" (Recent studies of Western philosophy of history in our country), *Lishi yanjiu* (Historical research) 3 (1993), and Qingjia Wang's "Western Historiography in the People's Republic of China, 1949 to the present," *Storia della Storiografia* 19 (1991): 23–46.

⁷ Of the first two textbooks on Western historiography, *Xifang shixueshi gaiyao* (An outline history of Western historiography) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1983), and *Ouzhou jindai shixueshi* (History of modern European historiography) (Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 1984), written by Guo Shengming and Sun Bingyin, respectively, there is no mention of Western Marxists. Afterward, many similar textbooks have appeared but it was not until the late 1990s that historians began to include Western Marxists in the category of Western historiography. See Zhang Guangzhi and Zhang Guangyong's *Xiandai xifang shixue* (Modern Western historiography) (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 1996); He Zhaowu and Chen Qineng's *Dangdai xifang shixue lilun* (Contemporary theories in Western historiography) (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1996), and most recently Zhang Guangzhi's *Xifang shixueshi* (History of Western historiography) (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2000).

⁸ For the Russian influence in Chinese Marxist historiography, see Q. Edward Wang, "Between Marxism and Nationalism: Chinese Historiography and the Soviet Influence, 1949–1963," *Journal of Contemporary China* 9, no. 23 (2000): 95–111.

America, whereas histories of Asia, Africa, and Latin America received only marginal attention.⁹ According to a recent report, nearly 40% of PRC historians today are still teaching and researching different geographical areas and periods of world history.¹⁰

This Western focus in world history study extended Eurocentrism in Marxist historiography. As is well known, Marx's interpretation of human history was based on his analysis of European history, which left a fundamental influence in the practice of Marxist historiography worldwide. The textbooks produced by Soviet historians on world history, which were translated and regarded as a model by the Chinese, reinforced the Western focus in world history teaching. The Chinese consequently extended this focus in their own writing, which was best shown in a four-volume college textbook entitled *Shijie Tongshi* (A general history of the world). Edited by Zhou Yiliang and Wu Yujin, two Harvard-educated historians, it devoted a large proportion of its last two volumes on the modern era to the history of the Western world.¹¹ Despite its wide acceptance, the Western focus in the teaching of world history received some criticism from both Marxists and non-Marxists. As Dorothea Martin notes, Li Shu, the chief editor of *Lishi yanjiu* (Historical research) in the late 1950s and the early 1960s, which is the main organ of historical publication in the PRC, criticized the Euro-

⁹ In his "World History in the People's Republic of China," Ralph Croizier has noted that Marx's teleological scheme of historical evolution caused Chinese historians to focus on the West in teaching world history: "Although the heroic struggle of non-western peoples could be praised, going back to such unlikely champions of national liberation as the Mahdi of the Sudan in the nineteenth century, modern world history—the most important and decisive transition from one stage to another—was largely a western story." See *Journal of World History* 1, no. 2 (1990): 158.

¹⁰ Qi Shirong, "Woguo shijieshi xueke de fazhan ji qianjing" (The development and future of the world history discipline in our country), *Lishi yanjiu* (Historical research) 1 (1994): 155–68. For a more general understanding of world history study in the PRC, see *Jianguo yilai shijieshi yanjiu gaishu* (An introduction to the studies of world history after the founding of the PRC) (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 1991), edited by Chen Qineng of the World History Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. It covers major areas in histories of the West as well as Asian, African, and Latin American histories. There are also chapters covering such topics as historical theories and historiography, the history of World War II, international relations, and Communist movement. Publications in English are Dorothea Martin's *The Making of a Sino-Marxist World View: Perceptions and Interpretations of World History in the People's Republic of China* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1990) and the above-cited Ralph Croizier's article, "World History in the People's Republic of China," in *Journal of World History* 1, no. 2 (1990): 151–69.

¹¹ Zhou and Wu are general editors of the book, which was published in Beijing by Renmin chubanshe in 1972. Their assistant editors, who are responsible for each individual volume, are Qi Sihe, Zhu Huan, and Zhang Zhilian; all were educated in the West, except Zhu, who was Soviet trained, and are prominent "world historians" in the PRC.

centric approach “that narrates world history from the imperialists’ point of view.” Li’s criticism was echoed by Zhou Gucheng, a senior historian who became prominent before the advent of the PRC and remained, at that time, an outsider to the party and government. In his article titled “A World History Wanting a World Characteristics,” Zhou charged that “all world history textbooks up to the present, regardless of whether or not they are progressive, have a European center and resemble European history.”¹² The “progressive” history referred to by Zhou was the work by Soviet historians. While their backgrounds were certainly different, both Li and Zhou criticized the Western focus in world history study. Despite the criticisms, however, this Western focus seemed unavoidable in the Chinese understanding of world history, for it also provided the basis of Marxist historiography. At issue is how to assess its role from the Marxist perspective.

Let us first take a look at how Western history was introduced to the PRC. In the early 1950s, an organized system was developed to translate works by foreign historians. The Commercial Press, a well-respected publisher in China, undertook the task of translating Western classics, many of them histories, into Chinese. Additionally, PRC historians launched journals that specialized in translation. These journals included *Lishi wenti yicong* (Translations for questions in history), *Shixue yicong* (Translations in history), and *Waiguo shixue yanjiu dongtai* (Developments of historical studies in foreign countries)—the latter changed its name to *Shijieshi yanjiu dongtai* (Developments in world history study) during the post-Mao period. These journals helped Chinese historians get acquainted with recent publications of foreign historians and supplied them updated information about new trends in worldwide historiography. To be sure, in those years, the bulk of the translations consisted of works of Russian historians. But there were also some notable exceptions, especially after China’s relations with the Soviet Union soured in the early 1960s, when works of American and/or European historians were translated. For instance, Georg Iggers’s seminal article on the different receptions of Leopold von Ranke in Europe and America, originally published in *History and Theory* in 1962, was translated into Chinese almost immediately and was published in *Lishi yicong* in its first issue in 1963.

The translation and study of Western history and historiography

¹² See D. Martin, *The Making of a Sino-Marxist World View*, p. 30. The Chinese title of Zhou Gucheng’s article is “Ping meiyou shijie xing de shijieshi,” published in *Guangming Ribao*, 7 February 1961.

were done mostly by students who had previously studied in the West. Their assigned task, however, was to antagonize Western history as well as their own educational experience in order to find a contrasting example to the Marxist practice of history. To do this, they needed to demonstrate a genuine interest in Marxism. At the same time, they also had to convince others that their knowledge of Western history would be useful in creating Marxist historiography, for the latter's true identity is gained through contrast to the Western Other. By the early 1960s, there appeared an opportunity. In the wake of the China-Soviet dispute and split up and the devastation of the misguided Great Leap Forward Movement, the government hoped to revive the economy by seeking cooperation from intellectuals. The intellectuals, who had endured a series of political campaigns including the disturbing Anti-Rightists Movement in 1957, regarded the Great Leap Forward as a period of "relaxation." Merle Goldman explains: "As the economy continued to worsen, party leaders, with a sense of urgency, sought to revive it by whatever means worked. . . . [T]he party initiated a period of relaxation in order to gain the cooperation of the intellectuals to help solve the economic difficulties and to replace the Soviet experts who had been withdrawn following the break with the Soviet Union in 1960."¹³

Interestingly, the means to revive the economy sought by the party also included familiarity with Western historical writing. In 1961 the Ministry of Education organized a meeting for composing a college textbook on the history of Western historiography. Attended mainly by historians who had had a Western education, this meeting marked the beginning of the study of Western historiography in the PRC. Although the project was introduced in the period of "relaxation," its participants were fully aware that this "relaxation" did not mean that the party had decided to change its adherence to Marxist theories in historical study. Rather, they understood that the party only expressed an interest in seeking a contrasting Other to the Marxist orthodoxy. Hence these historians' participation in the study, or in this "othering" process, was both ambiguous and ambivalent.¹⁴ On the one hand, given their interest and training, it is imaginable that these historians

¹³ M. Goldman, *China's Intellectuals, Advice and Dissent* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 19.

¹⁴ My use of the term "othering" here and after follows Gayatri Spivak's definition, which refers to a process in which a dominating discourse constructs the Other or others to confirm the Self. Cf. *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, pp. 171-73.

welcomed the opportunity that would allow them to use some of their education. On the other hand, they were also fully aware the extent to which their expert opinions were useful was to make the study a good “negative textbook example” (*fanmian jiaocai*), from which Marxist historiography could stand in triumphant relief. Following the Marxist doctrine on social development, which predicted the ultimate triumph of socialism and Communism over capitalism, these historians argued that the primary reasons to study Western historiography were to show the “superiority” of Marxism in historical writing, supply the specifics for such “superiority,” and explicate its teleology.

In 1961 Geng Danru, a professor of history at Fudan University in Shanghai, published an article discussing the term “historiography.” Although Geng had been educated at Harvard, he denounced all the previous works written by Euro-American historians on the subject and chose to base his discussion mainly on the works of Soviet historians. He announced that with regard to the periodization question in the history of historiography, there were mainly two major periods: the pre-Marxist, pre-scientific period, and the Marxist, scientific period, for “in the development of historical science, a turning point occurred in the mid-nineteenth century, thanks for the birth of Marxism. Historical study has since become a real science, guided by historical materialism.” This periodization, according to Geng, also decided the purpose of the study of historiography: “We must emphasize particularly the process in which Marxist historiography triumphed over bourgeois pseudo-scientific history. . . . To criticize bourgeois schools in historiography is the most important work for us.” To this end, Geng championed the need of studying the works written by Western historians both before and after Marx.¹⁵ “In order to criticize,” Geng wrote, “we must first start by introducing [Western historiography] to the public.”¹⁶ He introduced the course History of Western Historiography (*Xifang shixueshi*) at Fudan University. Around the same time, he also embarked upon a translation of G. P. Gooch’s *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century*, which he failed to complete due to his untimely death in the Cultural Revolution.¹⁷ Other people agreed with Geng on the necessity of teaching and studying Western historiography. Wang

¹⁵ Geng Danru, “Shenme shi shixueshi?” (What is the history of history?), *Xueshu yuekan* (Academic monthly) 10 (1961).

¹⁶ Geng Danru, “Zichan jieji shixue liupai he pipan wenti” (How to criticize bourgeois schools in historiography), *Wenhui bao* (Wenhui daily), 11 February 1962.

¹⁷ With the help of others, the Commercial Press published the translation in its entirety in 1989.

Tingke, for example, addressed the importance of studying Western/foreign historiography and argued that knowledge of Western historiography could help students to compare and contrast the Marxist and non-Marxist practices of history and enhance their ability in critical thinking and analysis.¹⁸

It was not totally coincidental that the Ministry of Education chose to organize the meeting on Western historiography in Shanghai, the hub of Western cultural influence in China since the late nineteenth century.¹⁹ Among the participants in the meeting were Geng Danru's colleagues at Fudan University, as well as other historians with a similar educational background, such as those from East China Normal University, where the study of historiography was given focal attention. Before Geng published his article on historiography, he had presented it at the annual convention of the Shanghai Historical Association, where he exchanged his ideas with Li Pingxin, Wu Ze, Shu Shizheng, and Guo Shengming of East China Normal University.²⁰ Wu Ze and Guo Shengming, having survived the Cultural Revolution, later became well known for their works in historiography.

While these historians explained carefully the need to learn about the works of Western historians, they also hoped to revive the study of China's long historiographical tradition. After 1949, when Chinese historians became absorbed in the study of Marxist historiography, they showed contempt not only for Western historical works but also for their own heritage of historical writing. The call for the study of historiography provided an opportunity for Chinese historians to rekindle their interest in both traditions. Qi Sihe, a Peking University professor with a Ph.D. from Harvard in ancient Chinese history in the 1940s, gave a talk at Shandong University of his native province in 1962 in which he discussed the development of European historiography from a comparative perspective. Though trained mainly in Chinese history, Qi since 1949 had been assigned to teach world history because of his American education and language proficiency.

Qi's talk surveyed the history of European historiography up to

¹⁸ Wang Tingke, "Shilun xuexi waiguo shixueshi de yiyi" (On the importance of studying Western historiography), *Wen shi zhe* (Literature, history and philosophy) 3 (1961).

¹⁹ There has existed an impressive body of literature on the change of Shanghai in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, including Leo Ou-fan Lee's new book, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of A New Urban Culture in China, 1930-45* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

²⁰ See "Shanghai lishi xuehui 1961 nian nianhui taolun de jige wneti de zhongshu" (A summary of the questions discussed at the convention of Shanghai Historical Association in 1961), *Wenhui bao*, 11 February 1962.

modern times and compared it with the Chinese imperial heritage in historiography. His comparison concentrated on four areas: course of development, writing style, content, and the position of the historian. First of all, Qi said concerning the relatively unbroken tradition of dynastic historical writing in imperial China, historical writings in Europe experienced many significant, sometimes disruptive, changes, one of which occurred at the beginning of the Middle Ages as Christianity assumed its dominance in European society. As a result, the humanist tradition established in ancient Greece and Rome was broken down in Western Europe and was maintained only to some degree in Eastern Europe. This dramatic cultural transformation, Qi observed, changed European historical writing in the Middle Ages in both content and style. It was not until the Renaissance that the humanist tradition began to enter a period of revival. This periodization was best reflected in the change of writing style, with which Qi compared the tradition of Chinese historiography. In contrast to the Chinese preference for annals and biographies, Qi stated, Greek and Roman historians favored narrative. However, in the Middle Ages, annals, chronicles, and biographies were compiled, due to the Christian influence. The Renaissance revived classical Greek and Roman culture, which led to the restoration of the narrative form; the latter subsequently became a dominant style in modern Western historiography.

While different in periodization, Qi argued, Chinese and European historians shared their interest; they were both intrigued by political and military events. The only difference was in the development of this interest. Whereas political and military history received more and more attention in modern Europe, particularly in the nineteenth century, this kind of amplification was absent in Chinese history. In Imperial China, historians were mostly government officials. Their writing of official dynastic histories was a matter of course, commissioned and sanctioned by reigning emperors, which explained their unwavering interest in politics and military. By contrast, historians in Europe by and large maintained an amateur status and wrote histories for their own interest.²¹

A cursory comparison, Qi Sihe's talk responded to the initiatives taken by Shanghai historians in promoting the study of historiography. Insofar as its content was concerned, his superficial observation did little justice to the historiographical traditions in either China or

²¹ Qi Sihe, "Ouzhou lishixue de fazhan guocheng" (The process of development of European historiography), *Wen shi zhe*, no. 3 (1962).

the West. What is worth noting was that in publishing his talk, he refrained from making harsh criticisms of Western historiography. In fact, he even showed a covert envy for his Western counterparts. For instance, when he noted that Western historians often kept an amateur status in their pursuit of historical writing, he implied that political interference was not as frequent and blatant in the West as in China, where historical writing was often rendered into a government enterprise. To be sure, his observation referred mainly to the writing of dynastic histories in Imperial China, but he might also have hinted at what was happening to historians in the PRC. As mentioned earlier, although trained in ancient Chinese history, Qi was asked to teach world history after 1949. From 1949 to his death in the Cultural Revolution, Qi published very little either in Chinese history, his original field, or in European history, the area assigned to him by the government.²²

Qi Sihe's lethargy in scholarly publication, probably a deliberate action, was not uncommon among his peers. In the 1950s and the 1960s, Chinese historians participated, willy-nilly, in many political campaigns that were aimed to brainwash them into embracing Marxist doctrine. Little time was devoted to serious academic work. In addition, all publications, including scholarly ones, were subjects of political censorship and easy targets in those political campaigns. Since the purpose of studying Western historiography was to find a contrasting example, it was expected that historians adopt a comparative approach. The need for contrast was in higher demand in modern times than in earlier times. In comparing Chinese and Western historiography in the premodern period, or the pre-Marxist period, Qi Sihe for instance was able to point out both differences and similarities, whereas Geng Danru simply characterized non-Marxist works in the West as the antithesis of Marxist historiography.

Wu Yujin's work during this period offered another example of how Chinese historians contrasted Marxist and non-Marxist historiography. Like his fellow Harvard graduate Qi Sihe, Wu became a world historian in the PRC. In addition to his editorship of *Shijie tongshi*, he published a couple of essays in the area of Western historiography. In 1959, he wrote a long critique of Geoffrey Barraclough's then newly published *History in a Changing World*. Wu seemed interested in Barraclough's thesis that due to the rise of the socialist world and the increasingly vis-

²² Qi's main scholarly activity seems to be his editorship of the first volume of the *Shijie tongshi* textbook, which deals with ancient civilizations.

ible participation of Latin American, Asian, and African countries in world politics, world history was witnessing a fundamental structural change. He also agreed with Barraclough's observation that Eurocentrism, which was the foundation of modern European historiography as exemplified by Rankean historiography, was coming under serious challenge. Yet there is a clear difference in their interpretations. While both Barraclough and Wu noted the rise of the non-Western world, Wu emphasized that this change in world history showed the moribund fate of capitalism, extending Marx's teleological view of social evolution.

Wu Yujin's study of Rankean historiography applied the same deterministic interpretation. As Marx had anticipated the remapping of the world in the twentieth century in his theory, Wu argued, it should not surprise anyone to see the decline of Rankean historiography, because it had become anachronistic in the twentieth century, when the world was moving in the direction of socialism. Wu Yujin wrote, "The well-known questions such as why Western Europe was for a long time the center of world history and how capitalism suited best to the environment and so forth, all served the bourgeois interest in Western Europe. Ranke was popular in the nineteenth century only because he and his disciples offered explanations with historical evidence for these questions and they did that by clothing their history with the so-called scientific method."²³

To Wu Yujin, all historians are time bound and their works are reflections of their times. In another article, he discusses the "objectivity" question by using Thucydides and Ranke as examples. In Western scholarship on historiography, Wu notes, both Thucydides and Ranke were hailed as "objective historians" (*keguan shixuejia*), the former for his effort at verifying sources in writing history and the latter for his emphasis on using primary sources. However, unlike Ranke's critics in the West, such as Charles Beard and Carl Becker, whose works Wu ought to have been familiar with,²⁴ Wu's main interest in critiquing

²³ Wu Yujin, "Balakelao de shixue guandian yu ouzhou lishi de moshigan" (Barraclough's ideas of history and the fin-de-siècle phase of European historiography), *Wuhan daxue renwen kexue xuebao* (Journal of Wuhan University, Humanities Edition), No. 8 (1959).

²⁴ Beard published two articles criticizing Ranke's ideas of history: "Written History as An Act of Faith" and "That Noble Dream," *American Historical Review* 39, no. 2 (January 1934) and 41, no. 1 (January 1935). Cushing Strout did a study of Beard's "rebellion" against Ranke: *The Pragmatic Revolt in American History: Carl Becker and Charles Beard* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1958). A more recent study is Peter Novick's *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

these two “objective” historians is not to address the specific flaws in their historiography, but to espouse Marx’s famous analysis of the correlation between the superstructure and its economic basis. The question at issue, Wu argues, was not merely about Ranke or Thucydides, but why modern historians revered them. Having embraced the Marxist theory of history, which emphasized the economic conditioning of historical writing, Wu considers it absurd for his Western counterparts to honor Ranke and Thucydides for their so-called “objectivity.”²⁵ It is however a bit ironic that while Wu stresses the temporality in the works of Ranke and Thucydides, he assumes perpetuity in Marxism. Given his interest in the change of historical time, he ought be well aware that Marxism is not immune to the question of anachronism either. Although this might not be his intention to reveal temporality in Marxism, his careful readers may benefit from his discussion and consequently question their blind faith in the perpetual value of Marxism.

Geng Danru’s works during this period may have the similar function. A pioneer of the study of historiography in the PRC who piloted the course on Western historiography, Geng showed very little respect for the works of Western historians. Geng simply declared that due to the lack of the Marxist guidance, historical scholarship in the West suffered from crisis and chaos. This observation of course is not true, for during the 1960s when Geng made those remarks, Marxism was actually exerting more and more influence among historians in Britain, France, West Germany, and the United States and becoming an important contributing factor in the rise of social or social science history in those countries.²⁶ However, Geng Danru said that Western historians not only ignored Marxism, they also launched “groundless attacks” on Marxism, which resulted in an “inevitable failure.” In contrast to the triumph of Marxist historiography in socialist countries including China, historical writings in the West faced insurmountable challenges and a dead end.²⁷ Despite his hostility, Geng embarked on the translation of G. P. Gooch’s book on nineteenth-century European historiography, which was justified by his own words, “in order to criticize, we must first introduce,” as we quoted earlier. His excoriation of Western

²⁵ Wu Yujin, “Lun xifang liangge ‘keguan’ shixuejia” (On two Western “objective” historians), *Jiangnan xuebao* (Jiangnan journal), no. 1 (1963). Also, “Shidai yu shijie lishi” (World history and the historical times), *Jiangnan xuebao*, no. 7 (1964).

²⁶ See Georg Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press, 1997).

²⁷ Geng Danru, “Zichan jieji shixue liupai he pipan wenti,” *Wenhui bao*, 11 February 1962.

historiography thus paved the way for his translation of one of its classical studies; the completion of this translation project eventually benefited those interested in the study.²⁸

Indeed, during the period that ended with the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, Chinese historians, for the sake of “criticism” as they put it, rendered many Western histories into Chinese, including Herodotus’ *Histories*, Thucydides’s *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Appian’s *History of Rome*, Montesquieu’s *Considerations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur decadence*, Oswald Spengler’s *The Decline of the West*, and Arnold Toynbee’s *A Study of History*; the last two in abbreviated versions. In order to provide reference materials for the course on Western historiography, Wu Yujin assumed the general editorship of a translation series, which abbreviated classic works in Western history. By the time the Cultural Revolution broke out, the series had already produced an impressive array of selections that included works of Herodotus, Thucydides, Livy, Plutarch, Tacitus, Machiavelli, Voltaire, Edward Gibbon, George Grote, and Leopold von Ranke. The format of the series reminds us of the paperbacks produced by Penguin and Vintage in the English-speaking world. At the same time, Russian historians’ works on the subject were also rendered into Chinese, such as Igor S. Kon’s *Philosophical Idealism and the Crisis of Bourgeois Historical Thought*. As reading materials were made available to students, Zhang Zhilian, Guo Shengming, and others joined Geng Danru to offer the course on Western historiography at their institutions.²⁹ All of this was interrupted by the Cultural Revolution in 1966. Nevertheless, they laid the foundation for the study of Western historiography in later years.

SEEKING A REVIVAL

During the Cultural Revolution, especially in its early years between 1966 and 1969, China’s entire educated class, including some college students who were not permitted to join the Red Guard for various reasons, suffered a great deal of physical and mental abuse. Many of the professors mentioned above were sent to the countryside to receive “reeducation” through manual labor. Even in the early 1970s when

²⁸ Before his untimely death in the Cultural Revolution, Geng was not able to publish his translation. It appeared in 1989, published by the Commercial Press.

²⁹ To my knowledge, Peking University, Fudan University, East China Normal University, and Northeast China Normal University all offered the course on Western historiography in the 1960s.

Mao Zedong allowed the universities to readmit students, there remained a tremendous risk for anyone to show any interest in academic research, let alone study works written by Western historians. Only after the death of Mao Zedong and the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 did historians begin to resume some of their academic work. For historians who chose or were assigned to teach world history, this presented a new opportunity to rekindle their interest in Western historiography.

This new opportunity also gave new meaning to the study itself. If in the pre-Cultural Revolution years Chinese historians searched for the demonized Other in order to contrast it to the accepted persona of Marxist historiography, their search gained new purpose in the post-Cultural Revolution years. In backlash to the extremely radical iconoclastic and xenophobic behaviors during the Revolution, a new attitude began to emerge in the “othering” process. The resumed study of Western historiography in the post-Revolution era acquired different characteristics and, during the mid-1980s, took a new path. For many historians of the younger generation, it was to become the lowercase other, or the nonofficial other, inspiring them to expand their academic horizons and experimenting with new theories and methods from the West. In so doing, they also engaged in critical reflections on their own cultural tradition as well as the Chinese practice of Marxism. In other words, in this period of revival, the new generation of historians realized that what they needed was not simply to return to the historical questions of the pre-Cultural Revolution period and to revive the five lonely “golden flowers” (*wuduo jinhua*) that had bloomed in the 1950s and the early 1960s.³⁰ Rather, they developed a fervent interest in cultivating new fields of history and finding new tools and approaches. In order to reinvent the Chinese practice of historical writing, they again turned to the West, hoping to catch the changes in Western historiography introduced by the French Annales School and Anglo-American social historians. In renewing their study of Western historiography and concentrating on the works of non-Marxist historians, these young historians found the nonofficial other and used it to challenge the official style—Marxist historiography—authorized by the government.

³⁰ The so-called “Five Golden Flowers” refer to the five main topics on which Chinese Marxist historians centered their works during the 1950s and the early 1960s. They were the formation of the Chinese nation, periodization of Chinese history, land ownership in feudal China, peasant rebellions, and the sprouts of capitalism in late Imperial China. Also see Q. Edward Wang, “Between Marxism and Nationalism.”

These changes of course did not occur overnight. In the late 1970s, when the Cultural Revolution was just over, historians appeared quite prudent in calling for the resumption of the study of Western historiography; their rhetoric sounded similar to the anti-Western rhetoric of the 1960s. In his article published in 1978, which made the first call for resuming the study, Guo Shengming offered an argument similar to Geng Danru's in 1961. He argued that the study of Western historiography could help history students gain better insights into the origin and development of Marxist historiography and therefore understand its triumph over many bourgeois historical schools. Yet Guo was more enthusiastic: "anything that is related to the study of history," he wrote, "can become the object of the study of historiography."³¹ This enthusiasm was evidenced in that over the ensuing years, Guo published several of his studies of Western historiography, covering topics in different historical periods. In 1983 he published China's first book-length study, titled *Xifang shixueshi gaiyao* (Outline of Western historiography), which gives a comprehensive overview of the history of Western historiography from ancient Greece to the early twentieth century.³² After its publication, it was soon adopted as a textbook for the course on Western historiography, which was also restored in many universities at that time.³³

Only a year later, another textbook appeared, which was Sun Bin-yin's *Ouzhou jindai shixueshi* (Modern European historiography).³⁴ Like Guo, Sun received education in the U.S. during the 1940s; additionally, he had taught world history since 1949. The scope of his book reminds us of G. P. Gooch's classical study of nineteenth-century Euro-

³¹ Guo Shengming, "Yingdang Zhongshi Shixueshi de Yanjiu" (More attention to the study of historiography), *Shanghai Shida Xuebao* (The Journal of Shanghai Normal University), no. 1, 1978.

³² It was published by Shanghai renmin chubanshe in 1983. His other publications include "Gu Xila de Shixue Yichan" (Ancient Greek historical heritage), *Huadong Shifan Daxue Xuebao* (Journal of East China Normal University), Nos. 3 and 4 (1980), and "Xiou Wenyi Fuxin Shiqi de Shixue" (Renaissance historiography in Western Europe), *Lishi Yanjiu* (Historical research), no. 2 (1981).

³³ Guo's work helped complete the project initiated by the Ministry of Education in 1961 on composing a textbook on Western historiography, which was aborted due to the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution. The project was supposed to be a collective one, of which Guo was a member. After the Revolution, he was able to complete it alone.

³⁴ It was published by Hunan renmin chubanshe in Changsha in 1984. Sun also wrote an article on John Green and his *History of English People*. He praises Green for his interest in the English people and discusses Green's career in connection with the Oxford School in history. See "Niujin Xuepai he Yuehan Lichai Gelin" (Oxford School and John Green), *Shixueshi Yanjiu* (The Journal of historiography), no. 2 (1984).

pean historiography. It was, however, based on the second volume of William Thompson's *History of Historical Writings*. To many young students who were eager to absorb knowledge of the West at the time, Sun's book, which was virtually a translation, was a welcome addition to Guo's pioneering yet slightly sketchy work. The good reception that both Guo's and Sun's books received in the 1980s indicates that interest in Western historiography was on the rise.

It ought not be a surprise for us to understand why Chinese students were curious about the West at the time. Having been isolated from the outside world for over ten years, most young Chinese were dumbfounded by the "advances" of the Western world, at which they peered through the window opened by Deng Xiaoping's reform policy. Compared to the historians of the 1960s, who had been led naively to believe in the advancement of socialism, the new generation saw an entirely different picture: China's struggle along the path of socialism had not helped it raise its position in the world; rather, socialism had plagued China into a "backward" status in comparison with its Western counterparts. Many blamed socialism for the Cultural Revolution. In order to explain its occurrence, some historians looked back to the country's past and argued that relics of the past, such as feudalism, remained influential in modern times and were directly responsible for many extreme behaviors during the Cultural Revolution, especially the cult worship for Mao Zedong the country witnessed in the 1960s. In reflecting upon their own past, they made comparisons between the development and demise of feudalism in China and in Europe. Out of concern for the persistent influence of Chinese feudalism, they were appreciative of the Enlightenment project of liberating the Europeans from the yoke of feudalism. Far from viewing Western history as a dismal example of failure, it was now seen as an exemplar in economic development, hence a source of inspiration for Chinese interest in modernization.³⁵ This enthusiasm for the exemplary value of Western historical experience, however, was not endorsed by Wu Yujin, who cautioned his junior colleagues not to confuse historical study with social critique.³⁶

³⁵ Although the modernization project was introduced by Zhou Enlai at the end of the Cultural Revolution, it was not until the end of the 1970s, under Deng Xiaoping's leadership, that it began to gain its full speed. Defined by Zhou, the modernization included four aspects: industry, agriculture, military, and science and technology.

³⁶ Wu Yujin, "Jiben de Lishi Pipan yu Lixin Zhuyi Sichao" (Edward Gibbon's historical criticism and the tide of rationalism), *Shehui Kexue Zhanxian* (Social Science Front), no. 1 (1982).

Despite the enthusiasm demonstrated by young historians for Western works in history, most works published in the field were written by historians of the older generation, mostly those who had been educated abroad prior to 1949. Due to the isolation China experienced from the 1950s through the 1980s, Western book holdings in university libraries were not only very limited but also woefully outdated. This was reflected in the publications that appeared at the time. For instance, Frederick Turner's "Frontier Thesis," which appeared in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century, was introduced to the Chinese audience at that time by Yang Shengmao and Ding Zemin. Both had studied in the United States and returned to China during the late 1940s. Yang's study of Turner focused on a book of translations of Turner's own essays, memoirs of his students, and some commentaries made by other American historians.³⁷ While a source book, Yang in his introduction commented that Turner's thesis, which emphasized the role of the "frontier" in shaping the course of American history, ignored the existence of Native Americans. A diplomatic historian, Ding Zemin was interested in Turner's influence on U.S. foreign policy. In Ding's analysis, Turner's "frontier theory" gained currency at the turn of the twentieth century simply because the American government at the time was pursuing an expansionist foreign policy, aimed at extending the American "frontier" into Asia and Latin America.³⁸

In the study of English historiography, senior scholars also played a leadership role. Tan Yinghua, a professor at Sichuan University, was an example who studied two nineteenth-century English historians: George Macaulay and Henry Buckle.³⁹ A biased Whig historian, Tan noted, Macaulay served the interest of the English ruling class; the lat-

³⁷ Yang Shengmao, *Meiguo Lishi Xuejia Tena Jiqi Xuepai* (Beijing: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1983).

³⁸ Ding Zemin: "Meiguo de 'Ziyu Tudi' yu Tena 'Bianjiang Xueshuo'" (American "Free Land" and Turner's frontier theory), *Jilin Shidai Xuebao* (Journal of Jilin Normal University), no. 3 (1978); "Tena 'diyu' Lilun Pingjia" (An appraisal of Turner's "Section Theory"), *Jilin Shidai Xuebao* (Journal of Jilin Normal University), no. 3 (1979); "Bian Jiang Xueshuo' yu Meiguo Waijiao Zhengce" ("Frontier Theory" and American expansive foreign policy), *Shijie Lishi* (World history), nos. 3 and 4 (1980). There were two articles on the same topic prior to the Cultural Revolution: Jiang Xiangze "Tenaer de 'bianjianglun' Lishiguan Pipan" (A critique of Turner's "Frontier Theory"), *Zhongshan Daixue Xuebao* (Journal of Zhongshan University), no. 2 (1964), and Li Yining "Meiguo Bianjiang Xuepai 'Anquan Huosai' Lilun Pipan" (A critique of American frontier school's "Safety Piston" theory), *Beijing Daixue Xuebao* (Journal of Peking University), no. 3 (1964).

³⁹ Besides Tan Yinghua, Chen Mingjian also wrote an essay on Macaulay that appeared in *Shijie Lishi* (World history), no. 4 (1981). Chen had studied in England, but after 1949 he was unable to do much research because of poor health.

ter appreciated Macaulay's literary talent and made his works popular. In Tan's opinion, Macaulay paid too much attention to the literary effect of his work, which affected his pursuit of historical accuracy and the overall quality of his works.⁴⁰ By contrast, Tan was more interested in Henry Buckle's positivist approach to historiography. He considered it a new trend in late nineteenth-century European historiography that helped turn historical writing into a scientific study. However, due to the existence of the long and strong liberal tradition in Britain, as shown in the work of Macaulay, Tan noted, English historians in the nineteenth century remained largely indifferent to Buckle's attempt. As a result, while Buckle gained an international fame, he was not very popular among his compatriots.⁴¹

Having published the first Chinese book in the field of Western historiography, Guo Shengming in the 1980s renewed his interest in Arnold Toynbee, whom he had studied in the 1960s. Guo offers his criticism of Toynbee's theory of history, namely his analysis of the phasic cycles of civilizations, and compares it with Oswald Spengler's thesis in the *Decline of the West*. Toynbee's theory, Guo states, showed the concern of Western historians for the ill-fated development of capitalism in the West, which was inevitable according to Marx's prediction a century ago. But a careful reader will find that in rewriting his article on Toynbee, Guo has softened his critical tone and offered more content analysis. He discusses in detail Toynbee's central "challenge-and-response" thesis in explaining the survival and growth of a civilization. While Toynbee's primary concern was the future prospect of Western civilization, Guo notes, his worries could also be extended to humankind as a whole, for the competitions between the two superpowers at the time could have had a damaging effect on the entire world.⁴² In introducing Western theories in history, Yang Shengmao, Ding Zemin, and Guo Shengming all adopted a critical approach, reminding readers that these Western works only had a limited value. But through their introductions, young scholars gathered information

⁴⁰ Tan Yinghua, "Shilun Maikaolai de Shixue" (On Macaulay's historical writing), *Shijie Lishi* (World history), no. 1 (1983).

⁴¹ Tan Yinghua, "Shilun Bokeer de Shixue" (On H. Buckle's historiography), *Lishi Yanjiu* (Historical research), no. 6 (1980).

⁴² Guo Shengming's study of Arnold Toynbee was first published in an article written in 1962, entitled "Pipan Anode Tangyinbi de fandong shiguan" (Criticizing Arnold Toynbee's reactionary view of history), *Wenshizhe* (Literature, history, and philosophy), 1 (1962). In 1979, he rewrote it with a new title, "Tangyinbi de shixue lilun jiqi yingxiang" (Toynbee's history theory and its influence), *Shijie lishi* (World history), 3-4 (1979). The title change is a good indication of his attitude change toward Arnold Toynbee.

on Western theories of history, which, such as Arnold Toynbee's comparative study of civilizations including China, helped them to imagine an alternative other and form a counter discourse to the official version of the Marxist view of history.

In the area of French historiography, the situation was not much different: senior scholars who survived the Cultural Revolution took the lead in reviving the study. Wang Yangchang, for instance, who received his doctoral degree in Paris in the 1930s, became very active in this period, despite his advanced age. In 1979, he published a long review article offering a comprehensive study of the Western historiography on Napoleon.⁴³ He later extended his interest in Napoleon to the 1789 revolution and explored the historical connections between the two eras.⁴⁴ It was to his credit that East China Normal University became a center of the study of modern French history in the PRC and received funding for training scholars and students in the field. Some French scholars, such as Albert Soboul and Michel Vovelle, were invited to visit the university during the 1980s.

If Wang Yangchong is a leading French historian in Shanghai, Zhang Zhilian of Peking University is an acclaimed French historian in Beijing. In 1985, the French government awarded him the insignia of the Légion d'Honneur for his outstanding role in promoting the study of French history and culture. Yet in the PRC, Zhang, a long-time president of the Chinese Association for the Study of French History, is not only considered a recognized authority in the field of French history, he is also known for his broad interest in the study of Western historiography and modern European history. In the pre-Cultural Revolution years, Zhang had already assisted Wu Yujin and Zhou Yiliang in editing the *Shijie tongshi* textbook, taking responsibility for the volumes on modern times. Educated in both the United States and France in the late 1940s, Zhang is fluent in both English and French, which sustains his interest in world history. After the Cultural Revolution, he made several trips abroad, giving lectures and exchanging ideas with historians in both Europe and the United States.⁴⁵ Compared to his

⁴³ Wang Yangchong, "Napolun Yanjiu de Yanjin" (The evolution of the study of Napoleon), *Shijie Lishi* (World history), nos. 1–3 (1979).

⁴⁴ Wang Yangchong, "Faguo Dageming Shixue Zhongde Jinbu Chuantong" (A progressive tradition in the historiography of the French revolution), *Lishi Yanjiu* (Historical research), no. 6 (1982).

⁴⁵ Zhang Zhilian recently put together a volume of the speeches and essays he gave in English and French that offers valuable information on the exchange between Chinese and Western historians after the Cultural Revolution. See his *Renewed Encounter: Selected Speeches and Essays, 1979–99* (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2000).

peers who lacked his many opportunities of travel abroad and to his junior colleagues who lacked his language proficiency, Zhang demonstrates a grasp of the development of Western historiography and a current knowledge of the changes that occurred in the European and American historical circles in the postwar period. In his first article after the Cultural Revolution, published in 1979, which compares the use of the term "historicism" by Chinese Marxists and European historians in both the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, Zhang offers an informative and comparative study, in which he points out that "historicism," or its Chinese translation "*lish zhuyi*," had its origin in German post-Enlightenment culture, which was not considered an antithesis to the class viewpoint (*jieji guandian*) as understood by most Chinese Marxists.⁴⁶

A major contribution Zhang Zhilian made to the Chinese knowledge of new developments in Western historiography was his introduction of the Annales School. His study began with a few talks he gave at different campuses and a few essays he wrote for journals and newsletters.⁴⁷ In his many trips to France, Zhang Zhilian obtained opportunities to interview personally the scholars of the Annales School, such as Fernand Braudel and his colleagues. It was also mostly owing to his efforts that many French historians, such as Georges Duby, Jacques Le Goff, François Furet, Albert Soboul, and Michel Vovelle, visited and lectured in China. Zhang arranged trips for other foreign historians to go to China as well; the list included Jürgen Kuschynsky, Werner Conze, Georg Iggers, Lynn Hunt, Immanuel Wallerstein, Charles and Louise Tilly, William Bouwsma, Michael Kammen, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., Akire Iriye, Philip Foner, Eric Hobsbawm, E. P. Thompson, and Peter Burke, a very interesting cross section.⁴⁸ Zhang's success in arranging these visits suggests his personal charm and ability. But it is also a barometer of the receptivity of Chinese historians to Western influences in historiography from the 1980s on. Imagine the impact of the visits of these foreign historians on the Chinese audience.

⁴⁶ Zhang Zhilian, "Zichan Jieji Lishi Zhuyi de Xingcheng Jiqi Tezheng" (The origins of bourgeois historicism and its features," *Shijie Lishi* (World history), no. 1 (1979). As for the Chinese understanding of "historicism" and "class viewpoint," see Arif Dirlik's "The Problem of Class Viewpoint versus Historicism in Chinese Historiography," *Modern China* 3, no. 4 (1977): 465–88.

⁴⁷ "Mantan Dangdai Faguo Shixue yu Lishi Xuejia" (Some comments on modern French historiography and historians), *Neimenggu Shehui Kexue* (Social science in Inner Mongolia), no. 1 (1981).

⁴⁸ In Zhang's *Cong tongjian dao renquan yanjiu* (From the *Comprehensive Mirror of Aid for Government* to the study of human rights: my intellectual autobiography) (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1995), he recalls how he arranged these visits. See p. 139, footnote 1.

During this period, Zhang Zhilian's own interest was focused on the works of Fernand Braudel, which resulted in a long article published in the *Lishi yanjiu*. He examined Braudel's three major masterpieces, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme XVe–XVII siècle*, and *L'Identité de la France*; the last book had not been published when Zhang wrote his article; he commented on it based on his interview with Braudel. He observed that in contrast to traditional historiography in Europe represented by the Rankean school and Longlois and Seignbos's book in France, Braudel and his predecessors of the Annales School stood as a breakthrough in French historiography. Their intent to write "*histoire totale*" integrates, in Zhang's opinion, two important practices in historical study, namely the consideration of historical fact as unique and irretrievable and the idea that there is a common law that governs the overall historical movement. Braudel's use of the three "*durée(s)*" in describing the dynamics in history combined these two positions.

But in analyzing these three "*durée(s)*," Zhang seems unwilling to accept them in their entirety. Braudel's emphasis on the factors that play their role in the "*longue durée*," Zhang argues, amounts to an attempt to discount the role human beings play in history. By stressing the importance of geography, demography, economic life, cultural mode, and so on in shaping human history, Braudel deliberately downplayed the human-made events such as policy change and diplomatic maneuvering. While an original approach, Braudel's position reflects, in Zhang's words, a "pessimistic view" of the fate of humankind. Zhang implies that Braudel's perspective was influenced by his tragic personal experience in World War II while he was writing his masterpiece, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*.⁴⁹

RECONSTRUCTING THE OTHER

During the late 1970s and the early 1980s, historians of the older generation, with their Western training and language proficiency, revived the study of Western historiography. With the sole exception of Zhang Zhilian, most of them were not well informed about new developments; many chose to work on topics to which they had been exposed and on which they had gathered information before 1966, the Cultural Revolution, or before 1949, the Communist Revolution. Having expe-

⁴⁹ Zhang Zhilian, "Fei'nan Buluodaier de Shixue Fangfai" (Fernand Braudel's historical method), *Lishi Yanjiu* (Historical research), no. 2 (1987).

rienced many political campaigns orchestrated against intellectuals, especially the Cultural Revolution—from which all of them suffered a great deal—these historians were very cautious in the treatment of their subjects and often studied the works of their Western counterparts in the guise of jaded political critiques. Yet despite their caution born of memories of a painful past, these historians produced groundbreaking work that paved the way for the explosion of the study of Western historiography during the mid-1980s in the “culture fever” (*wenhua re*) movement. From the early 1980s on, many of these scholars, such as Zhang Zhilian, Guo Shengming, Wu Yujin, and Tan Yinghua, supervised the work of graduate students on various aspects of Western historiography. The publications and translations of these younger historians, along with the works of Zhang Guangzhi, who began his graduate study with Geng Danru in 1964 but was interrupted by the Cultural Revolution, helped to broaden the field and galvanize great interest from history students and the general public in the works of Western historians and historical thinkers.⁵⁰

Young scholars studying Western historiography demonstrated more interest and enthusiasm and appeared less fearful of political risks than their teachers. They published their studies at the graduate level, extending and complementing the works of their teachers. They also showed great interest in new developments in Western historiography. In journals such as *Shijieshi yanjiu tongxun* (Developments in the study of world history), *Shijie lishi* (World history) and *Shixue lilun* (History and theory), all of which were edited by the staff in the World History Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, there appeared numerous essays and book reviews introducing new theories and methods in Western historiography. The topics covered ranged from psychohistory, quantitative history, and comparative history to new political,

⁵⁰ For example, Zhang Zhilian's students Gao Yi published *Falanxi fengge: da geming de zhengzhi wenhua* (The French style: the political culture in the Revolution) (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 1991), and Zhao Shiling published “Qiaozhi Lefeifuer Shixue Qianlun” (On George Lefebvre's historiography), *Lishi Yanjiu* (Historical research), no. 4 (1987). Wang Qingjia, a student of Guo Shengming, published “Jianlun Langke he Langke Shixue” (On Ranke and Rankean historiography), *Lishi Yanjiu*, no. 3 (1986); “Chaersi Bierde jingji shiguan de xingcheng” (On Charles Beard's economic interpretation of history), *Shixueshi yanjiu*, no. 1 (1985); and “Jindai deguo de lishi sixiang he shijian” (Historical theories and practices in modern Germany), *Shijie lishi* (World history) 6 (1990). Xu Jieming, who worked with Guo briefly, wrote “Lun Langke de Keguan Zhuyi Shixue” (On Ranke's objective approach to history), *Shixueshi Yanjiu*, no. 2 (1986). Qin Ying, another student of Guo's, published “Yagebu Bukehate de shixue sixiang” (Jacob Burckhardt's ideas of history), *Shixueshi yanjiu* (Journal of historiography) 3 (1990).

social, and economic history.⁵¹ In *Dushu* (reading), a well-respected journal based in Beijing whose reputation had a broad appeal to educated society from academic scholars to college students, there were also essays reviewing the works of such historical thinkers as Oswald Spengler, Arnold Toynbee, R. G. Collingwood, and Benedetto Croce.⁵²

During the “culture fever” period, interest in Western history in general, and Western historical theories and methods in particular, was pursued not only by students specializing in Western historiography, but also by the historical community as a whole. Having witnessed the ravages of the Cultural Revolution, the entire country was agonizing over the suddenness with which it took hold and the devastating consequences left in its wake. While some students turned their eyes to the past, calling for a critical reevaluation of China’s cultural tradition, many turned to the West for an alternative to the Marxist interpretation of history. Jin Guantao and Liu Qingfeng, two science scholars, pioneered the ideas of systematism and cybernetics to analyze Chinese history. They argued that there was an ultra-stable system that had sustained the longevity of Chinese feudal society and that modern Chinese society still remained in its grip to some extent. Although not many from the historical circle seemed willing to completely accept Jin and Liu’s hypothesis, they were as enthusiastic as Jin and Liu about experimenting with new theories in studying history in order to supplement, if not supplant, the Marxist approach.⁵³

⁵¹ These publications include Yu Zhisen and Wang Qingjia, “Luelun Dangdai Meiguo Shixue zhi Yanbian” (On the evolution of modern American historiography), *Shijieshi Yanjiu Dongtai* (The status quo of world history study), nos. 1 and 2 (1986); Huang Songkang “Meiguo Nulizhi Shixue de Fazhan” (The development of the historiography of American slavery), *Shijie Lishi* (World history), no. 2 (1980); Zhang Youlun “Guanyu Duli Zhanzheng de Meiguo Shixue” (American historiography on Independence War), *Nankai Daixue Xuebao* (Journal of Nankai University), no. 4 (1981); Yan Zhongkui “Meiguo Nanbei Zhanzheng Shiqi Fan Nulizhi de Jinbu Shixue” (The progressive historiography against slavery in American Civil War), *Shijie Lishi* (World history), no. 2 (1983); Zhang Youlun and Ni Ting “Shilun Meiguo Xijin Yundong Shixue” (On American historiography of westward migration), *Shijie Lishi* (World history), nos. 6 and 7 (1985); and Zhang Guangzhi “Meiguo ‘Xinshixue’ Shuping” (An appraisal of American “New History”), *Shijie Lishi* (World history), no. 2 (1984). Yang Shengmao “Shilun Weilian Weiliansi de Meiguo Waijiao Shixue” (On William Williams’s historical works on American foreign policy), *Shijie Lishi* (World history), nos. 1 and 2 (1980).

⁵² These essays were written mainly by Gu Xin, Wang Qingjia, and Xie Xialing during the 1980s.

⁵³ In his “Historical Writings in Twentieth Century China: Methodological Innovation and Ideological Influence,” Q. Edward Wang has discussed in a bit more detail the impact of Jin and Liu’s theory on Chinese historians. But a more detailed study is found in Wang Jing’s *High Culture Fever: Politics, Aesthetics, and Ideology in Deng’s China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 37–117.

As researchers of the “culture fever” movement have noted, although a good deal of attention was paid to examining China’s past tradition, it was the enthusiasm of young scholars for Western learning that characterized the movement.⁵⁴ This is because what motivated scholars to participate in the cultural discussion was their high concern for the prospect of China’s modernization, a project underscored by a century-long anxiety for their country’s weakness in confronting and competing with the West. In search of new knowledge from the outside world, many young and middle-aged scholars launched book series across the country, which became both the venues and products of the ongoing cultural discourse on modernity. To a great extent, it was this “book series fever” (*congshu re*) that underlay the “culture fever” movement of the 1980s. These book series shared two common characteristics: the young age of their editors and authors (most were in their early thirties) and their emphasis on translation.

Of the hundreds of book series, two gained national prominence. One was *Towards the Future* (*zouxiang weilai*) and the other was *Culture: China and the World* (*Wenhua: Zhongguo yu shijie*); the former was edited mainly by Jin Guantao and Liu Qingfeng, and the latter by Gan Yang, then a junior research fellow in the Research Institute of Western Philosophy at Peking University. In both series we find many translations or translation-based books in which history was an important component. This emphasis on translation became intensified during the culture fever movement. Comparing the *Towards the Future* series, which was launched in 1984 and whose success inspired others to follow its example, with the *Culture: China and the World* series that appeared three years later, we can easily see this tendency: the series title, *Culture: China and the World*, suggests an interest in cultural exchange, and the series additionally has had a translation sub-series called *Modern Western Classics*. By contrast, in the history section, the *Towards the Future* series published only two translated works: Joseph Levenson’s *Liang Ch’i-ch’ao and the Mind of Modern China* and I. D. Kovalchenko’s *Quantitative Methods in Historical Studies*. Although most works were not direct translations, many were based on foreign sources because they dealt with topics in Western culture. If we use the *Towards the Future* series as the example, we find that in its history section, half of the books dealt with topics in Western history,

⁵⁴ Besides Wang Jing, whose book is quoted above, Zhang Xudong’s *Chinese Modernism in the Era of Reforms: Cultural Fever, Avant-Garde Fiction, and the New Chinese Cinema* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996) and Chen Xiaomei’s *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) both have extensive discussions on the “culture fever” movement and its zest for knowing the West.

including Liu Chang's *Histories in Human Minds: A Critique of Modern Western Historical Theories* (*Ren xingzhong de lish: dangdai xifang lishi lilun shuping*).⁵⁵

Indeed, during the 1980s, Chinese historians demonstrated unbounded enthusiasm for Western knowledge. Among the works translated at the time, we find Benedetto Croce's *Theories and Practice of History*, Karl Popper's *The Poverty of Historicism*, Robin G. Collingwood's *The Idea of History*, G. P. Gooch's *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century*, Georg Iggers's *New Directions in European Historiography* and *International Handbook for Historical Study*, Jacques Le Goff's *La Nouvelle Histoire*, and Geoffrey Barraclough's *Main Trends in History*. Some of them were rendered into Chinese and included in the series mentioned above. Some were translated into anthologies similar to Fritz Stern's *The Varieties of History*, with an emphasis on new developments in Western theories and practice of history in the twentieth century.⁵⁶ At the same time, the Commercial Press renewed its commitment to the translation of Western classics. As a result, more works in Western history became available to Chinese readers, such as those written by Herodotus, Thucydides, Livy, Tacitus, Machiavelli, Guicciardini, Edward Gibbon, François A. Mignet, François Guizot, and Leopold von Ranke.⁵⁷ It is worth noting that many book series launched in the 1980s still remain committed to this translation project, except for the *Towards the Future* and the *Culture: China and the World* series. The former ceased its publication and the latter became less active after 1989 when their editors left the country because of their associations with the pro-democracy movement.

With the exception of the books rendered by certain publishing houses that have a tradition in managing translation and a corps of experienced editors, such as the Commercial Press, few of the translations included in those book series demonstrate high academic quality. This is not at all surprising because during the Cultural Revolution, China's ability to provide higher education suffered enormously.

⁵⁵ A detailed study of the culture fever movement as well as the book series fever has been done by Edward X. Gu (Gu Xin) in his article "Cultural Intellectuals and the Politics of Cultural Public Space in Communist China (1979–89): A Case Study of Three Intellectual Groups," *Journal of Asian Studies* 58, no. 2 (May 1999): 389–431.

⁵⁶ Two examples are *Xiandai xifang shixue liupai wenxuan* (Selected readings of modern Western historical schools), eds. Tian Rukang and Jin Zhongyuan (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1982) and *Xiandai xifang lishi zhixue yiwenti* (Anthology of translations in modern Western philosophy of history), eds. Zhang Wenjie and He Zhaowu (Shanghai: Shanghai yiwenti chubanshe, 1984).

⁵⁷ A similar book of the kind was *Xifang zhuming shixuejia pingzhuan* (Critical biographies of famous historians in the West), eds. Guo Shengming and Wang Qingjia (Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 1988).

Although most of the translators and authors entered college and/or graduate programs after passing the entrance examination resumed in 1977, there simply was not enough time for these young scholars to gain the language proficiency they needed to embark on translation. In publishing the book series, therefore, scholars of the older generation who had earned graduate degrees in the West before 1949 were often asked to serve on the advisory board, or to become advisors for discussion groups. This explains why, in reintroducing the study of Western historiography in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Guo Shengming, Zhang Zhilian, and their cohorts played such a prominent role. In Western philosophy, Xiong Wei, a student of Martin Heidegger and a professor at Peking University, also showed his influence on the *Culture: China and the World* series, whose editorial board consisted mainly of his students and junior colleagues.⁵⁸ As a matter of fact, Xiong also served as the president of the Chinese Association for the Study of German History during the 1980s, despite his apparent indifference and minimal contribution to the study of history.

Compared with their teachers, who boasted a better education in Western learning, young scholars of the 1980s were undaunted by their lack of solid knowledge in pursuing an understanding of Western culture. This is because what motivated them to participate in cultural discussion was not the pursuit of knowledge per se, but rather the delivery of a cultural critique of the Chinese practice of socialism during the previous few decades. Although these young scholars did not suffer as much as their parents' generation did in the Cultural Revolution, they did pay a huge price during the fierce decade: they were deprived of the opportunity to receive higher education and were sent either to farms or factories to receive "reeducation" in their later teens and early twenties. After the Cultural Revolution, they were at least as disillusioned as their teachers about the efficacy of socialism in China. To many of them, the party's acceptance and exercise of Marxism in China's modernization process had proved to be a failure. They were now seeking an alternative other, the nonofficial other, in order to explain how and why modern Chinese accepted socialism and endured, in its name, all the sufferings inflicted upon them by it. Since direct criticism of the Communist movement in twentieth-century China remained forbid-

⁵⁸ Edward Gu notes that in the *Modern Western Classics* subseries of the *Culture: China and the World* series, priority was given to works on continental philosophy and German sociology. "Cultural Intellectuals and the Politics of Cultural Public Space in Communist China," p. 421.

den, young scholars turned to China's past and readily made connections between the autocratic reigns of Chinese emperors and the totalitarian rule of the Communist government. In order to make a contrast to the Chinese historical experience in both the past and the present, they formed an Occidental discourse through translation and appropriation, in which the West was perceived and presented as an exemplar of historical development.

This approach was clearly shown in the television miniseries *River Elegy (Heshang)*, which was aired in 1988 to wide public acclaim. Although it was not an academic work, as its authors acknowledged when facing the critics in China and abroad, it nonetheless became a barometer of the intellectual climate during the culture fever movement. Concentrating on the Yellow River, a conventional cultural symbol of China, and its influence, the series producers traced and analyzed the origin, growth, and modern stagnation of Chinese civilization, an approach that bore clear imprints of Arnold Toynbee's analysis of world civilizations. In explaining the alleged longevity of Chinese feudal society, the authors also adopted the television series advisor Jin Guantao's ultrastability hypothesis. The message of this television series was clear: ancient Chinese civilization faced an enormous and unprecedented challenge in modern times, and all its past successes and glories were merely obstacles in its way to modernization. Here, Toynbee's analysis of the fate of civilizations serves as a warning to the modern Chinese; of all the world's civilizations, only Western civilization survived and succeeded. In order for Chinese civilization to survive, there is no other way than to emulate the West:

Oh, you heirs of the dragon, what the Yellow River could give us has already been given to our ancestors. The Yellow River cannot bring forth again the civilization that our ancestors once created. What we need to create is a brand-new civilization. It cannot emerge from the Yellow River again. The dregs of the old civilization are like the sand and mud accumulated in the Yellow River; they have built up in the blood vessels of our people. We need a great tidal wave to flush them away.

This great tidal wave has already arrived. It is industrial civilization. It is summoning us!⁵⁹

⁵⁹ See Su Xiaokang and Wang Luxiang, *Deathsong of the River: A Reader's Guide to the Chinese TV Series Heshang*, trans., intro., and annotation by Richard W. Bodman and Pin P. Wan (Ithaca, N.Y.: East Asia Program, Cornell University, 1991), p. 116. For the study of *Heshang*, see Xiaomei Chen, *Occidentalism*, pp. 27–48, and Jing Wang, *High Culture Fever*, pp. 118–136.

This enthusiasm for the exemplary success of industrialization in the modern West permeates the entire six-part series. Episode one, "Searching for a Dream," and episode five, "Sorrows and Crises," document the failed attempts made by modern Chinese to modernize their country and their frustrations and despair in the failure. Episode three, "The Glimmering Light," describes various opportunities China might have had in the course of its race toward modernization. But it is overshadowed by episode two, "Destiny," which basically sets a pessimistic tone in assessing all the achievements in Chinese civilization. In fact, episode two argues that due to China's natural environment, namely the ecology of the Yellow River region, it is not at all surprising for the Chinese to lose all these opportunities. Episodes four and six are titled "The New Epoch" and "Azure," respectively. The former records the success of industrial revolution in the West and the latter urges the Chinese to grab their last chance, as the script writers put it, to embrace the blue ocean, namely to join Western industrial civilization.

What is interesting is that although the structure of *River Elegy* shows the clear influence of modern Western historiography, especially the idea of historicism in interpreting history from a teleological perspective, the writers avoided quoting many Western authors. As mentioned above, there are clear traces of Toynbee's influence throughout the series. But in the entire script, his name is only mentioned once. The other Western authors mentioned are Adam Smith, Hegel, and G. Wells, as well as Marx and Engels. Given the emphasis the screenwriters put on the ecological importance of the Yellow River region in shaping both the characteristics of Chinese civilization and the Chinese mind-set, they might also have been inspired by the works of the Annales School, especially Braudel's "longue durée" concept in his *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*. During the late 1980s when *River Elegy* was produced, Chinese historians were publishing many works on the Annales School.⁶⁰

Since *River Elegy* was a television miniseries intended for the gen-

⁶⁰ There are some other articles also focusing on the evolution of the Annales School in the period. See Li Youzheng, "Faguo Dangdai de Lishi Sixiang" (Modern French historical thought), *Shijie Lishi* (World history), no. 5 (1980); Wang Qingjia "Lishi de Zongti Yanjiu—Nianjian Xuepa dui Women de Qidi" (Total history, an impact of Annales School on the historical study) *Huadong Shifan Daixue Xuebao* (Journal of East China Normal University), no. 3, 1987; Chen Yan "Faguo de Xin Shixue Xianxiang" (New history in France) *Shixue Lilun* (History and theory) No. 2, 1988; and Sun Xian "Faguo Xiandai Shixue zhongde Zongti Lishiguan" (Total history in modern French historiography), *Shixue Lilun* (History and theory), no. 3 (1988).

eral public rather than academia, it was not necessary for the screenwriters to identify their sources. As a matter of fact, it might well have been their strategy to conceal them for political reasons. On the other hand, the enthusiastic responses the television series initially received from the public suggest that by 1988, when it was aired, the theories of these Western authors were no longer foreign but actually quite familiar to many educated Chinese. It seems that the success of the translation-based book series at the time had attracted and generated a large readership for Western works of all kinds, including some academic books published originally only for academic scholars in the West. Gan Yang, the main editor of the *Culture: China and the World* series, for instance, first made his name widely known for translating Ernst Cassirer's *An Essay of Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture*. Published by the Shanghai Translations Press in 1985, it was reprinted five times and sold nearly 200,000 copies in three years.⁶¹ Geoffrey Barraclough's *Main Trends in History*, also published by the Shanghai Translations Press, sold nearly 100,000 copies after being translated by Yang Yu in 1986.⁶²

All of this suggests that *River Elegy*'s successful appeal to both the public and to academia in China of the late 1980s had a social and cultural basis. The culture fever movement, of course, should take most of the credit. As many would agree, the making of *River Elegy* marked a high point of the culture fever, for it aroused a broad public interest in cultural discussion and touched and moved millions of Chinese from all walks of life. But at the academic level there is ample reason for us to credit the contribution of historians specializing in Western history and historiography. In their study of Western historiography, especially its post-World War II developments, these historians were able to offer not only alternatives to Marxist theory, with which most Chinese history students had already become disillusioned, but also a strong sense of urgency that spurred the Chinese people, particularly the newly emerged educated society, to muse on the past several decades of the Communist rule. This kind of self-reflection was critical to the making of Occidentalism as a counterdiscourse, for historians considered not only Marxism in Chinese history, but also China's experiment

⁶¹ See Edward X. Gu, "Cultural Intellectuals and the Politics of the Cultural Public Space in Communist China," p. 421.

⁶² The book was in a series sponsored by the Shanghai Translations Press at the time and I served on its editorial board at the time. Yang Yu, the translator, who teaches at Nanjing University, is now a noted scholar on Western historiography in the PRC.

with Communism as a whole. In the disastrous wake of the Cultural Revolution, Chinese historians were harshly critical of both.⁶³ The West and Western historiography were evoked as the lowercase other, or a better self, to aid their criticism of the authoritarian government at home and, more importantly, of the cultural legacy that sustained authoritarianism in China's long past. This stood in stark contrast to the image of the decadent West Chinese historians had painted in the 1950s and the early 1960s. In the making of the Occidental discourse in Chinese historiography, therefore, the image of the West was evoked twice and assigned a different role each time. This phenomenon helps us to see the historical specificity of modern Chinese intellectual history and the complex process of appropriation and absorption of the Occidental discourse by Chinese intellectuals of different eras.

⁶³ In her *Occidentalism*, Chen Xiaomei has articulated very well that the Chinese appropriation of elements in modern Western culture, or the Occidental discourse, in the 1980s can be viewed as a counterdiscourse to the Marxist ideology; see her introduction, pp. 3–26.