AFTER THE
POST–COLD WAR

SINOTHEORY

A series edited by Carlos Rojas and Eileen Cheng-yin Chow

AFTER THE POST–COLD WAR

THE FUTURE OF CHINESE HISTORY

DAI JINHUA

Edited and with an
Introduction by Lisa Rofel

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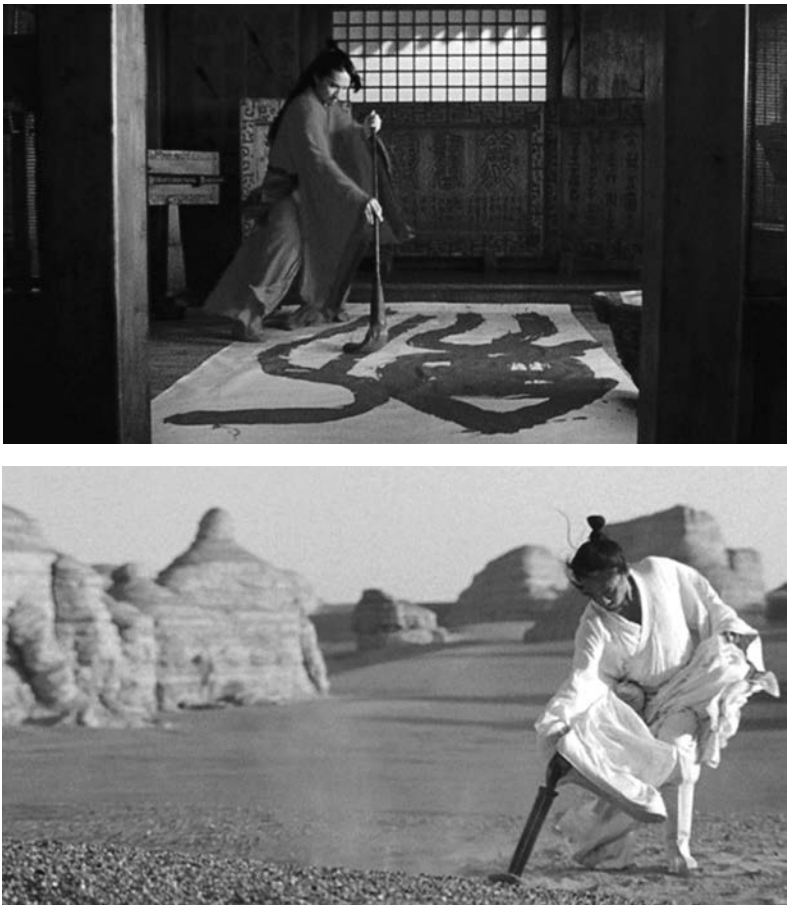
SERIES EDITOR'S PREFACE

CARLOS ROJAS

As Dai Jinhua notes in her discussion of Zhang Yimou's 2003 film *Hero* in this volume, the work contains two pivotal scenes in which the swordsman known as Broken Sword is seen writing Chinese characters. In the first, he uses a brush dipped in bright red ink to write an enormous version of the character 劍 (*jian*, "sword") on a sheet of paper or fabric, while in the second, he uses his sketch to write the two characters 天下 (*tianxia*, "all under heaven") in the desert sand (see accompanying images).

In the first instance, the visual image of Broken Sword's calligraphic rendering of jian comes to have an iconic significance in the film. Hung in the palace behind the king of Qin, the text comes to symbolize the military might that would permit the king to conquer the rival states in the region and establish a unified dynasty. By contrast, in the second instance all we observe is what Dai Jinhua describes as Broken Sword's "fluttering-sleeved, sword waving posture" (chapter 2, this volume) as he inscribes the two characters in the sand, and we never see the written characters themselves. Instead, we learn the content of his short inscription when the assassin Nameless (who observed Broken Sword writing the two characters in question) relays the contents of this short message to the king of Qin, who takes it as an affirmation of his political goals. Equally importantly, the same message also helps convince Nameless to abandon his own plans to assassinate the Qin king, precisely so that the king might then be able to realize his ambitions to establish a unified empire.

The notion of tianxia is, as Dai Jinhua observes, central to Zhang Yimou's reimagination of the events leading up to the founding of China's first unified dynasty, the Qin (221–206 BCE), which viewed itself as ruling over "all under heaven." Literally meaning "all land under heaven" (in the subtitles prepared for the U.S. version of Zhang's film, the term is rendered simply as "our land"), the concept of tianxia designates an ethnoculturally



Images from Zhang Yimou's *Hero* (2003).

grounded understanding of universality, and historically it has been used to articulate a vision of sociopolitical order within a specifically Chinese frame of reference.[1] Zhang's film was controversial when it was released in 2003, because it was seen by viewers as offering an apologia for China's history of imperial conquest, and as an indirect commentary on the political aspirations of the contemporary Chinese state. Part of that controversy resonates with a set of parallel discussions of attempts to reappropriate a traditional notion of tianxia in relation to the contemporary world.

At the same time, this concept of tianxia also metaphorically captures a central objective of the present volume as a whole, in that as a detailed

and theoretically informed critical engagement with the sociopolitical configuration of modern China, the volume constitutes an attempt to map a sociocultural space onto a conceptual order that is both intrinsically part of that space but at the same time ontologically outside of it (somewhat like the paradoxes that emerge from Borges's parable of the "map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it").[2] More specifically, this volume is concerned with an analysis of Chinese film, and in her discussion of the desert calligraphy scene, Dai notes that "cinema as a genre bases its true text on the image. That which is not visible, then, lacks signification" (chapter 2). In her own analysis throughout the volume, Dai similarly attends to the visual specificities of cinematic works, but at the same time is equally interested in the works' erasures and blind spots. Her goal, in other words, is to make legible the works' occluded sociopolitical and ideological implications in order to consider how the films' focus on history offers a commentary on a contemporary process of historical amnesia.

Although it is true that written characters for tianxia remain invisible in Zhang's film, we are nevertheless shown a thirty-second sequence of Broken Sword sketching the characters in the sand, in a series of elaborate dramatic arm motions that appear to correspond to several long, curved written strokes. In fact, the writing sequence is so elaborate that many viewers have speculated that Broken Sword may not have been sketching the relatively simple characters for tianxia, but rather something different altogether. Moreover, even if Broken Sword was indeed writing the characters for tianxia, as is subsequently reported by Nameless, it is nevertheless unclear which version of the Chinese script Broken Sword is presumed to have been using in the first place. Before the king of Qin founded the Qin dynasty in 221 BCE, many different versions of the Chinese writing system were in use in the region that is now China. One of the first things that the king did upon becoming emperor was to oversee the systematic standardization of the Chinese script. The Chinese writing system has been reformed many times since then, most recently in the 1950s under Mao Zedong, during which over two thousand different characters were simplified (though the previous traditional forms of the characters continue to be used in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and other overseas Chinese communities). When Broken Sword writes the character for *sword* in the film, accordingly, he uses not the version of the character in use today (劍), but

rather a version that closely resembles one preserved in the early dictionary *Shuowen jiezi* (Explanation of simple and compound graphs), in which the character is rendered as 𠂤. Similarly, although the contemporary version of the binome *tianxia* consists of a mere seven nearly straight strokes, 天下, the rendering of the same two characters in the *Shuowen jiezi*, 𡈼下, is significantly more curvy, and would appear to match more closely what we observe of Broken Sword's arm motions as he writes the two characters in the sand.

On the other hand, even if the characters preserved in the *Shuowen jiezi* are indeed presumed to be the model, in Zhang Yimou's film, for both Broken Sword's (visible) rendering of the character for *sword* and, possibly, his (invisible) rendering of the binome "all under heaven," this nevertheless underscores a fundamental ambiguity within the film itself—which is that the work is set during the period immediately preceding both the establishment of the Qin dynasty and the ensuing standardization of the Chinese writing system that was the basis for the compilation of the *Shuowen jiezi* three centuries later. The fact of the matter is, we have no real idea what precisely the Chinese characters written by a historical figure during this immediate pre-Qin period would have looked like, and by projecting a vision of the post-Qin script back onto the pre-Qin era, the film is in effect reproducing in miniature its more general attempt to take a post-Qin (and, indeed, contemporary) understanding of tianxia and the Chinese state, and project it back onto a pre-Qin moment.

The resulting temporal chiasmus, meanwhile, is the focus not only of Dai Jinhua's chapter on Zhang's *Hero*, but also of this volume as a whole. Through a series of incisive analyses of contemporary films dealing with periods ranging from the pre-Qin to the contemporary moment, Dai considers the ways in which these works view the past through the lens of the present, and in the process she argues that they comment ironically on how the post–Cold War present is constituted through a process of strategically eliding critical elements of its own past.

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Dai Jinhua and Lisa Rofel would like to thank first and foremost the translators of the essays in this volume. We appreciate that translation work is never simple; there is no straightforward correspondence between words in different languages, especially the kinds of theoretical terms prevalent in this book. Each term carries a whole cultural history with it. Dai Jinhua's dense, creative, and challenging prose makes the translation work all the more admirable. Thank you all. We would also like to thank the reviewers of this volume for the care they took in reading carefully through the essays. Angela Zito, as one of them, conceived a brilliant reordering of the chapters. Yizhou Guo did the selected bibliography; she and Caroline Kao helped with final copyediting questions. Karen Fisher carried out graceful editing. Finally, we would like to thank Ken Wissoker and Elizabeth Ault for their persistent care in getting this book to publication.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

LISA ROFEL

Dai Jinhua is the equivalent of a rock star in China. Students, intellectuals, and the general public flock to hear her searing, radical insights into the enormous transformations in contemporary life—and the injustices and ills they have wrought. For over two decades she has brought her feminist Marxism—framed through film theory, psychoanalysis, poststructuralism, and cultural studies—to bear as a prescient public intellectual of and for our times. Her works have become celebrated classics of the academic studies of Chinese cinema. While she locates herself in China—a deliberate, self-conscious choice—Dai is equally in dialogue with cultural theorists from Europe, the United States, Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Dai Jinhua and Meng Yue were the first to initiate post-Mao feminist literary criticism in China with their renowned *Emerging from the Horizon of History.* She also founded the first film theory specialization at the Beijing Film Academy and established the Institute for Film and Cultural Studies—the first in China—at the premier Beijing University. Finally, Dai has participated in numerous global activist organizations, including the Third World Forum, World Social Forum, and the initiative to nominate one thousand women for the Nobel Peace Prize, as well as rural women's organizations in China.

This collection of her recent essays focuses on questions of history, memory, and the historical revisionism of the new millennium. As a film theorist, Dai uses a specific film in each essay as a touchstone for a broader discussion of China as it exists today within global capitalism. As she has stated elsewhere, she departs from approaches that treat film as a text internal to itself, instead placing each film within a broader cultural discourse and sociopolitical context.[1] Far more than a film critic, Dai is penetrating and illuminating in addressing the forces, contexts, and incidents in the imbrication of national and transnational scenarios. This volume follows on

the previous English-language translation of Dai's essays, *Cinema and Desire*, edited by Jing Wang and Tani E. Barlow, published over a decade ago.

If, in that earlier collection, Dai analyzed the 1980s in China—what in retrospect we would call the beginning of the postsocialist era—as a moment when "history experienced reconstruction,"[2] then in this set of essays she diagnoses symptomatically the first decade of the new millennium, under the hegemony of neoliberal capitalism, as a moment when history experiences its own disappearance. Dai is both reading and writing allegories of our contemporary moment, as in her discussion in her introduction of a discarded, rusty advertising sign with Marxist political pop she found in the trash heap behind a newly built suburb for the international, cosmopolitan middle class of Beijing. As she asks in that essay, "Communism was once a specter from the future floating over the present. Today, is Marxism a phantom from the past that now and then emerges and takes shape in the present?"

In all of the films she addresses in this volume with the exception of two, socialist subjectivity has been hollowed out and forgotten in favor of global, depoliticized images. The war films and epic narratives, for all their historical sweep and invocations of memory, display the signs of the erasure of collective politics and social movements that constituted the alternative narrative of modern China. Dai finds instead the reduction of collective history into an individual story of trauma, as clearly delineated in films such as Lu Chuan's *The City of Life and Death* (*Nanjing! Nanjing!* 南京! 南京!), which celebrates the universal image of the human, and among filmmakers influenced by Bertolucci's *The Last Emperor* (discussed in the finale).

One of Dai's central arguments in this volume is that the erasure of the past simultaneously forecloses imagining the future. Dai's abiding concern is that this disappearance of history leaves us with no hope of moving beyond the degradations of the present into a future that might offer us a socially just world. With an equal dose of pessimism and passion, Dai serves up an incisive indictment of our times and calls for a return to utopian thinking. She urges us to do so by way of the past: to not forget the important socialist-inspired utopian thinking that tried to present us a true alternative to capitalism. Her goal is not a return to socialism—and certainly not an embrace of Maoism—so much as an excavation of the urge to find that alternative.

The title of this collection, *After the Post–Cold War*, points toward this erasure of history. Dai contends that with neoliberal globalization, we have moved beyond the post–Cold War era. This post-post–Cold War development refers to the forgetting of the previous ideological and political tensions between China's socialist path and Euro-American modernization. The end of the Cold War gave the impression that this conflict had been replaced by economic globalization, the end of modern history, and the closure of the political imagination of an alternative future. Yet the global scramble for supremacy means that a complex mixture of old and new ideological forces has created the new era of the post-post–Cold War. Dai is able to see and diagnose these contradictory forces in the textual detail of film.

This post-post–Cold War era begins, in her view, with the U.S. war on terror, which she argues provides new grounds for globalization. A key year is 2008, with the financial tsunami; the Sichuan earthquake, which enabled the visible emergence of China's new middle class (through its donations and volunteer efforts); the Olympic games held in China; and China's emergence as the United States' greatest creditor. Indeed, she contends that the Cold War has been readily forgotten in this era of global capitalism, as if it were part of a misty past, or an ancient "scary fairy tale" (see Dai's introduction). At the same time, she recalls the legacies of the Cold War. From the positionality of China, Dai reminds us that the Cold War was never just a binary. After 1960, China was neither in the camp of the Soviet Union nor in that of the U.S. Instead, it created an alternative third world position and set of alliances. From that neither-nor position, China offered an alternative development path for formerly colonized countries. Radical intellectuals and movement revolutionaries around the world were inspired by some forms of Maoist thought. But Dai, in her fearless quest for (at least contingent) truth, and her ability to think dialectically without totalities, goes on to deconstruct that very path, arguing that a dream of modernization is also part of the problem, not least because of the environmental nightmares it has wrought.

Dai is uncanny in her sense of how to craft a genealogy of the present. One could say, following Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, that her unique vision finds its inspiration in the undercommons.[3] While Dai positions herself from within a leftist perspective, she deconstructs the well-worn debates by and about the so-called New Left and the neoliberals in China. Dai

is not so easily pigeonholed. In her introduction, for example, she analyzes their shared nostalgic melancholia for a lost past (albeit different), which creates blurred thinking about the present. While some would accuse the left in China of giving the Chinese state a pass, Dai, as shown in these essays, clearly implicates the Chinese state in the conditions wrought by neoliberal capitalism. Throughout, she also deconstructs the relation of China to the West, reminding us of a history when these relations were otherwise—that is, China's alliances within the third world. Finally, she analyzes global anxieties about the so-called rise of China, as well as the manner in which China has entered into the fold (borrowing from Deleuze) of neoliberal capitalism.

Indeed, Dai Jinhua exemplifies the quintessential Deleuzian thinker—always in motion, restlessly seeking possibilities for impossible thinking. Her ability to self-consciously interpret the political unconscious of her generation of intellectuals is unparalleled. Dai has honed these intellectual tools since her undergraduate days. Dai was in the cohort of 1978—the first generation of students after the Cultural Revolution who entered college based on the revival of entrance exams, when a full decade of young people vied in the competition (see my interview with Dai in this volume).[4] The seeds of her feminist thinking began, however, in the previous decade during the Cultural Revolution. On the one hand, she truly felt that women and men were treated equally—she was a student cadre and leader of the group that went together to the countryside during that era. On the other, she had contradictory experiences for which there was no language.

One of Dai's first set of explicit conflicts was with the masculinist critique of Maoist socialism that started just as she entered Beijing University as an undergraduate student. The dominant voices were all from this masculinist perspective—how Maoist socialism had emasculated men and masculinized women.[5] These voices then ridiculed women with the admonishing prescription "marriage should be your only business," as many workplaces in the 1980s laid off urban women in the name of economic efficiency and growth.

"What is a woman?" became a guiding question Dai pursued in her studies of literature and later film. For Dai, women's rights (*nüquan zhuyi*) is not the main problem; the main problem is *nüxing zhuyi*, that is, women's consciousness or gender ideology. In China, women had a great deal of legal rights—at least until the revision of the constitution in the 1980s.

What was needed was a consciousness of the way women experience a patriarchal injunction as well as an understanding of the naturalization of gender discrimination that came with post-Mao reforms.

During this period (the 1990s), Dai became increasingly disturbed with both the growing difference between rich and poor and the way the rhetoric of gender was used to cover over these seismic social shifts by making these problems seem small (i.e., they were only about women). She began to write about this new kind of violence: the redistribution of wealth, which also sacrificed women's lives in the process. Dissatisfied with the way women's studies programs addressed women in the new middle class and used feminist theories for those who benefited from the reforms but not for those who were exploited, Dai turned to reanalyzing class. Thus, while Dai's feminism may seem oblique in this volume, she brings from feminism an understanding of how to analyze the naturalization of power, difference, and inequality.

As Dai explains in my interview with her (this volume), given the wholesale rejection of Maoist socialism, there was no way in the 1990s to talk about class, even as a great deal of violence was perpetrated through growing class inequalities. The language of class was rejected, although the theory of class subtending this language (i.e., Marxist-inspired theories) was exactly what was needed. However, as Dai states, those theories originally inspired by Marx also had their lacunae that needed to be addressed: the conflicts between the countryside and the city and between different regions of the country; the relations between middle-class women and the rural domestic servants they hire, displacing their own oppression onto these women; and the displacement of dispossession onto gender relations. Thus, one sees in the essays presented here Dai's inventive and capacious approach to class inequalities that takes into account how class is shaped in and through capital's originary and uneven accumulation strategies, which include gender relations, nationalism, and regional disparities.

Dai has also turned for inspiration to third-world movements and the theories that subtend them, from Samir Amin's Third World Forum to Subcomandante Marcos's Zapatista Army of National Liberation, from global environmental movements (she served on the first board of Greenpeace in China) to China's new rural collective movements. Over the last fifteen years, then, Dai has brought an assemblage of theoretical tools to bear on questions about history and memory as they intersect with global

capitalism and nationalism, most importantly because of the manner in which China has become imbricated with the global capitalist world.

Dai's leftist cultural critique in these essays comes after the rapid privatization and profitization of China's economy were well under way and after the discourse about the rise of China became pervasive. Rather than drawing a division between domestic affairs and global ones, these essays delineate how China is in the global capitalist world and, equally, how that world is in China. If, in her earlier work, she was concerned with the orientalizing gaze of the West and the uncritical adoption of Western theories by Chinese intellectuals, in these essays she builds on those earlier insights, examining the impossibility of separating the local from the global while simultaneously insisting on the specificity of Chinese historical experience. She develops these insights by analyzing contemporary life and ideology in China while never losing sight of the mutual imbrication of China and global capitalism. In critiquing China's global capitalist developments, Dai repeatedly reminds us of the productive and heuristic potential of the earlier political imagination of China's twentieth-century history. In refusing to forget, she cautions against the alignment of the Chinese middle class with the global financial elites at the expense of the working people, whose liberation, mobilization, and newfound subjectivity constitute the essence of China's past revolutionary culture. If the middle class has its way, China's touted rise will amount to adding a new player in the global scramble for wealth, power, and supremacy.

In these essays, Dai brings to bear her mastery of film's visual techniques along with her theoretically innovative approach to the interpretation of contemporary cultural life. While she takes off from a particular film, she locates in filmic scenes, cinematography, and visual signifiers the political unconscious of contemporary Chinese life. She has a masterful command of film language and film technique to interpret contemporary ideas, sentiments, and contradictions. In each essay, she further demonstrates the underlying links and echoes among multiple texts, including video games and popular novels, that seem at first glance far removed from one another.

Dai thus reads and diagnoses the signs of our times—in film, but also in material objects and structures of feeling. This is a locational reading of China, but readers would be misinterpreting Dai's arguments if they concluded she is merely doing a study of her country. Rather, she is reading the contemporary global moment as it manifests in and through and

out of China. Dai thus analyzes the national/political/cultural struggles enmeshed in film both visually and in terms of content. In these essays, she emphasizes how these struggles shape the erasure of history. At the same time, she excavates history in the aporia of these erasures. She does so in order to task us with the reconstruction of memories otherwise from those we have been fed in the years after the post–Cold War. She gains insight from globally circulating theories while challenging their pretension to universality from no location. Her abiding questions are the following: In this age of "after theory," how do we define a new and effective social criticism? Do we need a new historical subject (*zhuti*)? How do we avoid a grand narrative? How do we avoid using the kind of historical subject such as the proletariat but then still think about capitalists? Do we need utopia?

In Part I, "Trauma, Evacuated Memories, and Inverted Histories," Dai offers cinematic analysis that lays out one of her most important arguments in the book: that China's current situation is the imbrication of unresolved contradictions: the world (i.e., the global capitalist world dominated by the West) is always already within China, even as China grapples with its own self-image in relation to that world. Chapter 1, "I Want to Be Human: A Story of China and the Human," discusses the film *City of Life and Death* (*Nanjing! Nanjing!*), directed by Lu Chuan, a tale of the Nanjing Massacre by the Japanese during World War II. Dai lays out the dense contextualization of the ambiguous status of the Nanjing Massacre (not Hiroshima, not the Holocaust, never recognized as a human catastrophe) and thereby helps us to grasp how "China's" (Dai deliberately uses quotation marks to signify its contingent narrative status) modern relationship to its own history is always already seen through a global gaze.[6] Dai views the massacre as the kind of suspended, shared, open trauma whose displaced memory causes the evacuated subjectivity of the post-post–Cold War that China suffers from today. This is the kind of terrible space in which Dai wishes to dwell in this book. The film is a recuperation of universal humanity through a portrayal of the Japanese soldier's Christian humanism purged of blood and death. The Chinese characters in the film, however, do not get placed in this universal humanity. But by casting the film in this light, Dai also slyly makes legible that Lu Chuan's heavily criticized choice to cast as his protagonist a sympathetic Japanese soldier was useful in the way it ventriloquized, through one of its perpetrators, a regret for the massacre that the Japanese government has, to this day, been reluctant to express. This

first essay also introduces the important contradiction of the rising middle class and its role in a concomitant rise of nationalist/culturalist sentiment.

This sets the stage for chapter 2, "*Hero* and the Invisible *Tianxia*." Dai argues that, like *City of Life and Death*, Zhang Yimou's *Hero* (英雄) mines history but similarly evacuates it of any meaning that could be used to envision a future for China. It does so by inverting the story of the assassins of the first emperor, Qin Shihuang, from how to assassinate the king to how not to assassinate him. The film relies heavily on the term tianxia, or "all under heaven," to make this historical inversion appear logical. Tracing the contemporary use of tianxia by bringing in popular culture sources beyond the film (video games and fantasy novels), Dai argues that tianxia, instead of being a space of all under heaven in today's China, is now associated with power, conquerors, and hegemony—the "private property of the victors." Dai delineates how this new meaning replaces its usage not just in the imperial past but also under Maoist socialism, thus opening a key theme in this collection of essays: that the visitations into pre-twentieth-century history are done in the service of outflanking and forgetting China's revolutionary history of the twentieth century. Tianxia in the film represents an aporia, or evacuation, of meaning. The social symptomaticity of this aporia is reflected in the way the film empties out the alternative possibilities (alternatives to modernity and capitalism) that had been contained in the term, turning it into merely an empty signifier of China. Yet along with this pessimistic assessment, Dai continually urges us to find resources for imagining a more just future. Thus, she ends this essay with the query: in what sense, from which angles, and to what extent can China serve as a method to sketch an alternative world imaginary?

Part II, "Class, Still Lives, and Masculinity," offers a close interpretation of the past, present, and possible future of class in China. There are two filmmakers, both of whom got their start in independent art cinema, whom Dai praises for their ability to break through what she calls the "delirium and aphasia" of ahistorical histories. They do so by consistently portraying the lives of China's subaltern classes experiencing capitalism's intensive exploitations and marginalizations. Jia Zhangke is one of them, and Zhang Meng is the other. Chapter 3, "Temporality, *Nature Morte*, and the Filmmaker: A Reconsideration of *Still Life*," discusses one of the most important films to come out of China in years. Jia Zhangke's *Still Life* (三峡好人) addresses the controversial Three Gorges dam project and the

precarious lives of China's internal migratory classes. The Three Gorges reservoir, the largest hydro-engineering project in Chinese history and the largest water conservation project in the world, led to a massive forced migration. Dai analyzes how Jia Zhangke moves aside the grand images at the heart of mainstream depictions that glorify modernization projects such as the Three Gorges dam to show us the so-called insignificant people behind the canvas. She reads the film as a contemporary Chinese parable about rebuilding or drowning, creation or destruction, remembering or repressing. She puts this film in conversation with documentaries and art installations about the Three Gorges project and, more generally, about exploitation and violence. Thus, it is temporality, or the development projects carried out in the name of progress, that, as Dai states, "sweeps away historical and natural spaces like a hurricane and rewrites them."

Chapter 4, "*The Piano in a Factory*: Class, in the Name of the Father," discusses the way the director Zhang Meng breaks through the amnesia about the socialist past. Here, in a more optimistic vein, Dai argues that this is almost the only feature film that counters the erasures of history to depict the tremendous upheavals in the lives of millions of people in China over the last thirty years. *The Piano in a Factory* (钢的琴) depicts the lives of factory workers laid off under the 1980s economic reforms that closed many bankrupt state-run enterprises. But rather than a melodrama, this film is full of black humor, including music and dance sequences, as one of the main characters rallies his former fellow workers—many of whom have been forced to turn to a variety of illegal activities—to build a piano for his daughter, as part of his fight to retain custody of her. Dai's in-depth analysis of the film's cinematography leads her to conclude that what she calls Zhang Meng's "anticinematic" idiom fits with the black humor approach to the heavy theme of the abandonment of workers in the postsocialist era. But the film's formal language also signifies the theme of dignity in labor and creation. In this sense, the film is a paean to socialist culture's efforts to create new human beings, even as it also highlights the lost masculinity—as "masters of the country"—of the former working class.

In Part III, "The Spy Genre," Dai takes up the spy as a pretext for a film genre that was popular during the Cold War and that has recently been revived. In its historical genre, Dai interprets the spy as a brilliant figure through which to apprehend the sufferings and failings in the struggles for personal and political identity under the pressures of the socialist

experiment and its bruising campaigns. In its more recent recasting, Dai sees a genuine anxiety over identity. In chapter 5, "The Spy-Film Legacy: A Preliminary Cultural Analysis of the Spy Film," Dai argues that, in true spy-film genre, the spy film itself is not what it seems. Dai first reviews the Cold War history of the spy film, finding that despite the mutual isolation of enemies from each other's cultures, the spy-film narrative subgenre is distinctive in being the only type of film, nearly without exception, to cross Cold War boundaries and antagonisms. Moreover, China made spy films as well, despite its lack of attachment to either side of the Cold War binary. Dai further argues that the spy film departs from other popular films in its treatment of gender. Chinese films from the 1950s to the 1970s made illegitimate the scopic desire of the male subject; not so the spy film, in which the treacherous female is in fact the activator of scopic dynamism. Dai then addresses the film's current popular revival, arguing that the current spy films, unlike Cold War–era spy films, exude hesitation and self-doubt about identity. In Dai's view, the spy films in the post–Cold War era address the abyss that has opened up between society and memory. They portray a world split with cracks and fissures, as they continue to address unresolved questions around the basic nature of the nation-state itself, and of personal and national identity. In this essay, rather than analyze one film in depth, Dai offers an overview of the breadth of spy films from the 1940s to the present, both nationally and internationally.

Chapter 6, "In Vogue: Politics and the Nation-State in *Lust, Caution* and the *Lust, Caution* Phenomenon in China," interprets Ang Lee's film *Lust, Caution* (色·戒)—a hit throughout the Chinese-speaking world—as resolving the contradiction between the legitimacy of a communist regime dependent on socialist ideology and the reality of class division with China's full turn to capitalism. The film addresses patriotic resistance to Japanese military rule in the period leading up to World War II. The film avoids previous interpretations of this history, which highlighted the struggles between communists and nationalists, and their quite different forms of resistance. Instead, it addresses a group of elite students who infiltrate the Chinese government installed by the Japanese military regime. Dai argues that the film presents a depoliticized history of the twentieth century, framed within a patriotism that enables the evasion of history and politics. Dai further argues that *Lust, Caution*'s popular, and somewhat controver-

sial, reception delineates a genealogy of China's new middle class and its cosmopolitanism. Dai concludes that the film has constructed a floating stage detached from history in an age of globalization. In the two films presented in this part, Dai thus develops her uncompromising analysis of the formation of the subject and subjectivity in relation to global politics, history, and memory.

The "Finale," "History, Memory, and the Politics of Representation," takes off from Bertolucci's *The Last Emperor* and its influence on the fifth generation of Chinese filmmakers to reflect on the transformations in historical writing in the last half of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century. Dai argues that Bertolucci used the individual (in the person of the last emperor of the Qing dynasty [1644–1911], who became a puppet emperor under Japanese colonialism) to erase the history of modern China by using space and stereotypical historical background settings to de-historicize historical events. She argues that Chinese films have adopted his approach, similarly using space to erase time or the temporality of twentieth-century struggles for alternatives to capitalist modernity. Since the beginning of economic reforms, Dai contends, historical writing has deconstructed mass memory by using individual experience and memory so as to call into question any critique of the past. At the same time, paradoxically, there has been a deep self-awareness of the significance of history for politics and culture. Dai argues that China has seen what she calls the "reversal of the reversal," that is, a rejection of the socialist history of China's past and a restoration of the mainstream logic of the modern world. Dai diagnoses a current sociopolitical difficulty that China faces: the continuation of Communist Party rule along with an economic and political rupture with the past. This tension produces dilemmas for interpretations of the past: is there a continuation of past ideologies or the construction of new ones? The result has been what she calls ahistorical histories.

Finally, I have also included a brief interview I conducted with Dai in the summer of 2014 as well as a selected bibliography of her books.

These lucid, inspiring essays together offer a scathing indictment of the way global capitalism has eviscerated hopes of a better world. In a talk entitled "A Cultural Landscape without Coordinates" that Dai delivered at the University of California, Santa Cruz, she spoke of how cultural critics in China have lost the means to describe the realities of the present. She

diagnoses our current ills with uncompromising insight, while she goads us not to give up on dreams of a better world. True to her uncompromising commitment to refuse the cynicism of the current moment, Dai ended her talk by invoking a popular slogan from the May 1968 uprisings in Paris: "All Power to the Imagination."

INTRODUCTION

TRANSLATED BY JIE LI

Prologue

In 2009, I went to Beijing's satellite city, the new district of Wangjing, to visit a German curator who was living in an avant-garde artist's studio. The neighborhood of my destination did not have a Chinese name. Its English name was Class.

My taxi driver used to be a farmer in the Beijing suburbs and had only recently begun this not-so-easy livelihood of the taxi business. He got completely lost in this brand-new, nameless urban labyrinth.

On the streets of this new phantasmic district, we could see only the flying dust in the afternoon sunshine over the recently cleared grounds that had yet to be laid with grass. Apart from construction trucks and migrant workers, the streets were eerily silent and unlike Beijing—as if nobody lived there.

On the margins of this new neighborhood were crumbling old neighborhoods constructed in the 1970s and '80s that were still bustling with activity. But when passersby were asked about Class, they looked only bewildered by the English word.

The enormous new district looked not so much like the little town in *The Truman Show* as a deserted city in one of Michelangelo Antonioni's films. When we finally located the so-called Class neighborhood with the help of the taxi company's customer service, I realized that we had passed by this stretch of buildings many times. The huge letters of the word "Class" towered over the skyscrapers that formed part of the skyline.

The buildings exuded an aura of classy residence. Their automated doors were tightly shut; there were gentle hills and lawns, birds and flowers, children with different skin colors playing soccer—the scenery of an international middle class.

The nondescript bronze plaque next to the gate stated something to the effect of "private residence; no solicitations." There were two security guards in uniform—one was taking great pains to interrogate a visitor before me, and the other had stopped a delivery van and was confirming his comings and goings with his walkie-talkie. Neither had time to pay any attention to me.

Since I was early, I walked around the outer walls of the compound and found myself at the end of a back wall beyond the reach of the sun. Next to a pile of construction garbage, I found a cast iron structure or a piece of urban sculpture. I thought perhaps it was made by the architecture firm, with the signature of the designer. It looked quite grand. I went up for a closer look. Written in German and Chinese were the words: "Base determines superstructure.—Karl Marx."

Like all cast iron, it was rusty where rainwater had soaked it. It was as if the traces of rust told a tale of the etching and decay of time. I stood there amazed. I knew that it used to be quite a fad to use the rhetoric of political pop for Beijing's real estate commercials and that cast iron was an international architectural fashion. Yet this work still stunned me for a moment, as if I had walked into an anachronistic world and encountered an allegory of contemporary China.

It seemed as if I had found a boundary stone of history at the end of history, and the reality of class in a place at the city's edge literally named Class. In today's China, questions of class are no longer explicitly named as such in political science or sociology. Sometimes people euphemistically talk about social strata or obscurely about differences. The most direct expressions are about the rich and the poor (their polarization, the Gini coefficient, the nouveau riche versus the nouveau poor, the elite versus the subaltern, the entrepreneurs versus the weak). For me, this chance encounter revealed the landscape of contemporary urban China; it became a possible entry to reflect on and evaluate China, and perhaps the world and its contemporary culture.

The Cold War, this most important, endlessly long era of global twentieth-century history, seems to have vanished without a trace, as if it were a short-lived illusion far beyond reach, like a nightmare in an ancient, hard-to-recall, and somewhat scary fairy tale. Before my encounter with Class in Beijing, I was invited to visit Freie Universität Berlin. The open-air bookstalls and bookstores featured a magazine with a portrait of Marx on its

cover, which looked quite striking in the Berlin cityscape. My German friend told me it was a special issue on the financial tsunami, and that the title of the story read, "He Said It Long Ago."

Marx or Marxism: a totally discarded and forgotten history? A continuing present? Or a future still to be anticipated? Such a familiar signifier appeared in this sudden and bizarre way, intimating a new international order. In *The Communist Manifesto*, communism was once a specter from the future floating over the present. Today, is Marxism a phantom from the past that now and then emerges and takes shape in the present?

China: Cold War, Post–Cold War, Displaced Time

Needless to say, the most prominent transformation in twenty-first-century China is its emergence as a nation-state within the system of global capitalism. Beyond that, we could speak of the desires and anxieties in various international discourses attendant upon China as a potential new empire.

The Cold War order was once the basic parameter defining China's position: a forefront socialist nation that faced off against the Western world, as well as an oddity that rejected the Soviet bloc. Surrounded by strong enemies on the international front, China's tenacious survival as well as its political, economic, and cultural practices made it appear to be a special case. Yet what stands out even more is its distinctive status as a representative of the third world.

One could say that it was precisely the political and economic experiments of the 1960s and '70s in China that turned Mao Zedong Thought or Maoism into an intellectual resource for Europe and the United States, turning the Chinese revolutionary path into a topic of relevance for the world.

Yet if China of the Cold War era used third worldism to break through the isolation and embargo imposed on it (as if it were an extra chess piece in a binary order), then these efforts to crack the iciness not only shattered the pattern of the Cold War order, but also provided an alternative model for the transformation of the socialist path into a zigzagging route to modernization, affirming political sovereignty, encouraging industrialization, and standing tall within the world of nations. Thus temporal narratives and modernist apprehensions that filled China's twentieth-century era repeatedly surfaced and were repeatedly displaced.

One could say that the 1911 revolution began China's history as a modern nation. The Western calendar replaced the agricultural and dynastic calendars and signified that "China" had finally gained a sense of "time"—world history or so-called linear historical time.

Then the founding of the People's Republic of China seemed to proclaim once again that Time had begun, with 1949 as Year One, implying China's entrance into world history as an independent and sovereign nation. It also signified a form of red or political periodization, suggesting that the People's Republic had entered into Marxist-Leninist (people's) historical time that marched toward the future promise of a classless society.

Or we could say that the Sino-U.S. Joint Communiqué in 1972 was another turning point, with Deng Xiaoping's reform and opening beginning a post–Cold War era within the socialist camp even before the end of the Cold War. Time itself was foreshortened, displaced from communist utopian processes into global capitalist time. This time-space enunciated the idea that China was (once again) marching toward the world. Within an imaginary of stagnation, China was forever chasing after the West.

World revolution became a distant memory. By the 1970s, China's vision of itself as a world revolutionary leader began to fade. By the 1980s, this landscape became inverted and critically judged.

An interesting fact is that China's prosperous New Era was not accidentally synchronous with the rise of global neoliberalism. By the end of the 1970s, as the entire Chinese society settled accounts with itself, if it wasn't merely reciting the neoliberal canons that originated in the West, then it was at least adding an effective footnote. China's transformation also contributed to the reorientation of continental and especially French political thought that was settling accounts with European leftist intellectuals.

Without a doubt, the turning point and event in China with international implications was the 1989 Tiananmen movement. Threatening the regime for the first time since 1949 and tragically crushed with brutal military force, this citizens' resistance movement nevertheless helped the collapse or implosion of the socialist camp. One can see it as the first domino in a global domino effect. Yet ironically, as these changes led to the end of the Cold War and a redrawing of the world geopolitical map, China became the last infallible socialist giant, falling into a post–Cold War cold war.

Hence China Time became disjointed from world historical time once

again. And it was misrecognized from both sides. On the one side, the party line insisted on Chinese characteristics to strategically emphasize China's historical time. The other side saw China as a socialist totalitarian nation.[1] Neither view took into account the degree to which China was implicated in globalization.

Even more strangely, in the last ten years of the twentieth century, the world that had witnessed Tiananmen (and had previously not had a shared enemy) united against the Chinese government as humanity's common enemy.

Meanwhile, the violent conclusion of the Tiananmen protests totally destroyed and purged socialism's spiritual legacy and mobilization potential that had once hindered the path of Chinese capitalism. The Chinese regime began pushing for capitalism with unprecedented energy.

Before ridding itself of its international crisis, China had already emerged at the forefront of global capitalism.

In the last ten years of the twentieth century, the post–Cold War era, the self-recognized victors redrew the map of the world. First, the U.S. empire came to be seen as the sole, unshakeable leader of the world. Neoliberalism or the Washington Consensus became the belief that there is no alternative and even ended history.

The flood of capital passed over the barriers dividing the two sides of the Cold War and rushed into the wide region of what was previously the Eastern camp. Large numbers of legal and illegal immigrants crossed former Cold War boundaries and embarked on the reverse journey of third-world immigrants toward the heart of darkness.

The second, and perhaps an even more important, new international reality was the emergence of the European Union. As one of the victors of the Cold War, Western Europe took as its booty Eastern Europe's huge, precapitalist real economy, its latent consumer market, and its army of cheap labor. This helped to alleviate the political, economic, and military conflicts of interest between various Western European countries that had lasted for several hundred years.

At the same time, as a dynamic zone within the global capitalist map, China remains caught in rather bizarre cultural-political circumstances. In the last decade of the twentieth century, Chinese society and culture were consistently mired within the delirium and aphasia of multiple ideological discourses.

The post–Cold War cold war atmosphere enveloped China and the globe. In order to give legitimacy to its rule in the midst of crisis (after Tiananmen), the Chinese government continued to use the name of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the ideological discourse of socialism. Even if they have become vacuous soliloquies, their endless repetition obscures the meaning of these enormous contemporary transformations.

Even more peculiar, this ideology that has exposed itself as a lie shares the ideological cynicism of the postrevolutionary, globalized world. Yet, in the vast territory of China, socialism/communism remains the core conviction of certain people, including grassroots officials. Some regions have even maintained features of socialism in their social organization.

While ironically highlighting China's process of pursuing capitalism, such meaningless chatter can still return like a specter to which one has made sacrifices. Its vocabulary can still be used to interrogate and oppose the government.

But in reality, an important component of the post–Cold War cold war situation is the pervasive dissemination of a cold war ideology that inverts the subject while blocking the delirium and aphasia that conceal and contain a double legitimation crisis.

On one side is the remnant authority and political repression remaining from the Tiananmen massacre. The government was in a position to smash quickly the resistance of the entire society in order to complete its violent destruction of collective ownership. Large-scale wealth redistribution has meant the exploitation of both urban and rural laborers and the small number of haves quickly plundering and hoarding what used to be collective wealth.

On the other side, the polarization of classes, social suffering, and despair produced by the pursuit of capitalism are again displaced onto world historical time and misdirected into anger and outrage toward the Communist Party (though not the so-called communist political regime of the present) and socialism (though not the so-called socialist system of the present). Such displacement and misrecognition have made resisters give up the legal, intellectual, and discursive resources still at their disposal. Hence they do not recognize the restoration of capitalism or the peaceful evolution toward capitalism that surrounds them.

As a result, these resisters resort to riots or uprisings (that are the condition of this aphasia), or they might helplessly and uselessly appeal to the

law to protect their rights, or they are forced to share in the government's so-called hardships.

This subject-inverting Cold War logic renewed the imaginary of institutional fetishism. A direct transformation occurred from the notion that only socialism can save China to a belief in the capitalist system as represented by the omnipotence of the free market. This further enabled the progress of Chinese capitalist development.

Hence in the second half of the 1990s, the consensus over classical liberalism in the Chinese intellectual world split into a conflict between the liberals and the New Left. Their core differences focus on their different understandings of the nature of Chinese society. Is everything happening in China the inevitable result of the tyranny of the Communist Party and socialism? Are the multiparty system, representative democracy, total privatization, and opening up the market to the Western world the ultimate solutions to China's problems? Or is a new round of social conflict and suffering the very result of accelerated capitalism? The exchange of power and money between the regime and multinational and domestic capital is violently polarizing the rich and poor classes in China.

Hence exposing and investigating the social suffering of China's lower classes clearly shows by contrast the social justice of a distributive system. Discussion of public wealth and the property rights of workers, accounting for the historical legacies and debts of socialism, and implementing democracy on the basis of socialism (not necessarily the past of actually existing socialism)—these became the concerns of the New Left.

Yet because the debate on the nature of Chinese society or its most important problems directly points to the core issue and dilemma of the ruling regime, so-called liberals and the New Left never engaged in a real intellectual dialogue but instead got entangled in the contestation for the imaginary moral high ground of opposing the regime. The latent deep differences between the two could not surface but instead became another labyrinth and quagmire of this strange and displaced Cold War style of thinking.

If the sorrow of the leftists and the nostalgia of the rightists are cultural political expressions, then the despair of China's neoliberals about the tyranny of the CCP and the indignation of the New Left over the sufferings of the subaltern share something extraordinary, namely a politics of melancholia. The neoliberals express imagined loss for the days before the rev-

olution, focusing on 1930s Shanghai, whereas the New Left yearns for and defends the yonder days of the Maoist era from the 1950s to the '70s. They present a precise enunciation of mutually antagonistic nostalgia.

An interesting symptom: "nostalgia" is translated in mainland China as longing for the past. In Taiwan and Hong Kong, however, it is translated as a yearning for origins or one's hometown or native place. This seems to indicate that within mainland China's twentieth-century cultural logic, a utopian imaginary placed in the future has negated the notion of hometown or native place.

An imaginary space, an origin of where we come from, a site of the heart's belonging. Nostalgia is only a way of looking back in time. But at the turn of the twenty-first century, the diametrically shared nostalgia of the Chinese liberals and the New Left further exposed the symptoms of social and cultural crisis.

The heterogeneous historical narratives that arose from the binary cultural logic of the Cold War thus fought for the ownership and narrative of history and time. Whether they lament or celebrate the end of the Cold War, whether they regard the socialist experiment as a huge loss or the end of history, these discourses have closed off visions of the future. They pronounce the promise of future justice to be a mere illusion, erasing the depth and breadth of history. They use the eternal and locked present to seal off any space for imagining the future.

Hence, in the post–Cold War, the continuation and stabilization of the CCP's power created a deep sense of sorrow among Chinese liberals, a sorrow that usually belongs to the left. Meanwhile the obstruction of any future vision has led China's New Left to feel a lingering melancholy.

After the Post–Cold War: The Beginning of Time?

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the waves of globalization and the turbulent tides of antiglobalization, as Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt sketched out, namely, the hegemony of the American Empire (X + America) and the multitude resisting this hegemony, constitute the primary landscape of the world.[2] Yet this landscape is also gradually being displaced as it emerges.

Without a doubt, the September 11 attack on U.S. American territory has accelerated the renewed militarization of American imperial hegemony. As

a result, terrorism and antiterrorism not only became the United States' new political strategy, but also quickly became the guiding ideology of globalization.

If the binary opposition between democracy and authoritarianism began to replace the binary of capitalism versus communism and is gradually rewriting the ideological imaginary of the Cold War, the antiterrorist campaigns led by the U.S. unexpectedly began a new era after the post–Cold War. Continuous international military interventions—Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya—have time and again negated the twentieth century, such as the miracle of the Cuban Revolution, and keep on flaunting the unassailable logical connection between political-military hegemony and domination over the financial empire.

If that is the case, then continued military interventions (especially the swamp of American involvement in Iraq for over a decade) seem to be proving American imperial hegemony while consuming its overall strength. Just as Samir Amin once said, global capitalism seems to have turned into a three-headed monster led by the U.S., the EU, and Japan.[3]

Yet unexpectedly in 2008, Wall Street, the heart of the financial empire, became the tipping point. Suddenly all was panic and paranoia. The crisis then spread into other developed countries, especially dragging the European Union into the quagmire of disaster.

The year of the financial tsunami turned out coincidentally (and not by theatrical design) to be China's year of the Olympics. In fact, the 2011 HBO film *Too Big to Fail*, based on a *New York Times* best-selling book, included a scene that used as its background the fireworks of the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony. In this scene, the American secretary of the treasury reluctantly held onto a Chinese flag while he spoke to a nameless Chinese official about the financial crisis. Even though Wall Street had not yet reached the depth of its crisis, the domino effect was already beginning to show through.

Ironically, the huge disaster of the Sichuan earthquake at the beginning of 2008 became the stage for the debut of China's new middle class: the donation of money and goods, blood donors lining up in the rain in big cities, and various volunteer rescue groups descending into the disaster zone.

All of these became an opportunity for the new Chinese middle class to self-consciously display their sizeable presence, even if they did not constitute a large percentage of China's enormous population. Rather suddenly,

what emerged on the landscape of the disaster was an effective collective imagination led by the new middle class, a national identification autonomously summoned by the once powerless mass media.

Within international discourse, however, the Wall Street financial tsunami and the global stock market disaster unexpectedly gave rise to the fact or myth of China's rise. Although the statistics that are batted about supporting China's rise do not constitute news, the continued growth of the GDP has quickly raised China to the second largest economy in the world. Yet the financial tsunami fully displayed or perhaps we should say reversed the meaning of this phenomenon.

Previously, what helped the Chinese economy take off were the rows upon rows of giant processing plants and sweatshops along the southeastern coast, constituting the typical third-world landscape in the age of globalization.

Yet China has followed the example of other developed northeastern Asian countries by building a number of megacities adjacent to the processing plants, featuring leviathan, brand-new postmodern architecture designed by star international architects and hosting luxury consumer goods—China's young middle class has been born here. They also arose from a transition in property ownership from state-run to state-owned—from collective ownership to state ownership. On the basis of the large-scale industrialization of a nationally planned economy, the state-owned enterprises reorganized and expanded to create a central regime with solid financial strength.

Government projects since the new century began (such as developing the Great Northwest, renewing the northeastern industrial zones, and infrastructure construction in the countryside) have opened up giant reservoirs of capital, leading capital from the coast inland. When the financial tsunami hit and led to the decline of the coastal processing plants, the inland areas became a bulwark alongside national monetary sovereignty.

Paradoxically, this economic order under the state's leadership and monopoly has given China great vitality in the midst of the global crisis.

Most ironically, Chinese-style primitive capital accumulation and industrial development from the 1950s to the 1970s (through the replacement of capital by labor) was usurped through the transfer of ownership in the 1990s, such that the real economy was quickly monetized and capitalized into enormous state wealth by the turn of the century.

This economy had no choice but to be converted into dollars and U.S. Treasury bonds. Yet following the financial tsunami, the gold and silver earned through the real economy had to be donated to the U.S. financial market to fill in the enormous gaps resulting from the dollar's financial bubble. They led to the conversion of China's status into America's greatest creditor. This contribution was even seen as China's financial atomic bomb.

The amount of American Treasury bonds held by the Chinese government shows the extent to which the U.S. is interior to China. (This is deeply imbricated with Chinese mainstream culture's stubborn love and imagination of America, though this imbrication is not recognized.) While it conversely also demonstrates the extent to which China is interior to America as well as the depth of globalization, it simultaneously reflects the visibility of China's emergence on the world economic and cultural map, even if this image is full of the mirages of Cold War ideology.

Yet when the financial tsunami persisted and expanded into a European debt crisis, China's creditor status doubtless raised its negotiating power in international affairs. Hence in 2010, in the Hollywood disaster film called *2012*, China was merely a giant empty space. The world's sweatshops were not visible in scenes where the fate of humankind was decided. Yet *Too Big to Fail*, the American nonfiction drama about U.S. power, prominently featured China. Even though China in the film appears as somewhat of a caricature, it's not quite the classic Cold War scenario.

In fact, accompanying the high-speed growth of the Chinese economy was China's growing need for energy and resources. Hence China became active again in the Asian, African, and Latin American third world, but this time playing a very different role. On the one hand are the open and hidden international wrestling matches between China and the U.S. and China and Europe, which are altogether different from before.

On the other hand, on the map of the global capitalist political economy, China became an important parameter, or perhaps we should say variable. Is China then replacing Japan as a head in the three-headed monster? Has it rewritten Negri and Hardt's formula? Has the world political economy become X + America (Europe) + China? This author cannot make such an optimistic confirmation.

We can confirm that after 9/11, after the financial tsunami and China's associated rise, the post–Cold War era ended. We are now living in an era

after the post–Cold War. Or, rather than characterize it as the end of the Cold War or prophesy unilateral control by the American empire, perhaps Subcomandante Marcos of the Zapatista National Liberation Army in Mexico put it best: "The Fourth World War has begun."[4]

Of course, different from the incitement of its literal meaning—just as he defined the Cold War as the third world war—the fourth world war refers to another round of competition for domination between empires, a war for resources and energy, or a battle for the crown of financial hegemony. Perhaps we could borrow the titles of the popular twenty-first-century Russian science fiction trilogy *Twilight Watch* to say we are now living in "Nobody's Time, Nobody's Space, and Nobody's Power." In other words, the lack of a dominant power only indicates the current instability of identity and the global scramble for supremacy.

Returning to China, if in 2008, the reality of the post-post–Cold War within world discourse seemed to emerge precipitously in China, perhaps it was merely the result of a sociopolitical process that had begun much earlier.

The year 2003 was undoubtedly an important turning point for China. That year, the CCP proclaimed its transition from a revolutionary party to a ruling party. Before that, they had already called their principles of governance the Three Representatives—that is, promising less than even the Social Democratic Party.[5] Meanwhile, they also encouraged entrepreneurs to join the CCP. The revision of the constitution added the protection of private property.[6] The significance of this revision lies in the fact that the Chinese regime finally struggled free of its embarrassing ideological dilemma. Moreover, it is trying to free itself of its double legitimation crisis. At a constitutional and legal level, this completes the transfer of ownership from state-run to state-owned, from public to private.

If the discussion of the nature of Chinese society was the latent focal point of intellectual debates in the 1990s, then today the nature of Chinese society has become a self-evident fact, despite labels inherited from its past. A small episode provides a footnote to this enormous transition: in 2003, the government declared the official merging of the Chinese History Museum and the Chinese Revolutionary Museum on the politically symbolic Tiananmen Square. It was renamed the China National Museum, and Jiang Zemin, then the top leader of the country, inscribed its dedication.

This is another allegory: the history of the Chinese revolution and the socialist alternative to global capitalism have disappeared inside the memory hole that is called history. Not only did it bid farewell to revolution, but it has also wiped out all traces of revolutionary history. In the last twenty years of the twentieth century, under the reference framework of China as a nation-state, Chinese history, torn apart by heterogeneous narratives and logics, finally closed up and healed. The era from the 1950s to the 1970s—an era edited out through historical as well as ideological montage—was again recycled into the historical logic of China's zigzagging path toward modernization. This era no longer floats above the current moment like a homeless specter nor brings out the threat of subversion.

So once again, Time begins. China is no longer a piece that cannot be fitted into the jigsaw puzzle of the world. It is no longer out of joint with Time. Conversely, it has finally entered into the time corridor of world history or Euro-American Western history. As an indication of this successful transition, since 2000 contemporary Chinese history, once a political minefield, has not only become an academic hotspot but, more strikingly, it has become a consumer fad in popular culture.

In the post–Cold War era, the popular culture industries tried, not entirely successfully, to fill in the blanks of China's ideological vacuum. They attempted to construct a new cultural hegemony, furthering the consumerist carnival from an unconstrained position. This time, rather than mass culture joining to construct hegemony, one might say that mass culture only exposes or confirms the new sociocultural hegemony. Just as with popular imagination and writing in the 1990s about 1930s Shanghai, depoliticized and romanticized legends of the 1950s to the 1970s became the material of popular novels, TV soap operas, and films. They became the shared gossip of elite and commoners alike.

Previously, using personal memory to counter official history was the double-edged sword of elite writing. Today, the flood of historical writings in the name of memory has successfully blocked off and covered up memory, that is, the memory of the spiritual legacies of socialist history. Needless to say, an analogous narrative logic (i.e., modernization and capitalism) once again achieved the continuity and coherence of Chinese twentieth-century history. It became the basis for the regime's legitimacy. This depoliticized narrative strangely and successfully fulfilled its political intentions.

In the story of the harmonious reconciliation between the various Cold War opponents, the party, the class, and the subject of the People's Republic of China erased itself and realized the displacement or inversion of the subject. The strangest logic in the historical narrative: the "successful losers" (of the Sino-Japanese War, the 1947–49 Chinese civil war, and the Cold War) are reacknowledging China's rank in global capitalism, eliminating the logic used by socialist China during the Cold War. If this is true, this logic can continue to triumph after China's rise. Hence the humility and self-effacement of its historical narrative became a powerful defense of Chinese capitalist development and fulfilled the imagination of China as savior or leader of the capitalist world.

After this transition in 2007–8, a new social hegemonic discourse was established in China. Most prominent within this discourse are developmentalism, consumerism, the market, and fetishism-filled capitalism. Important evidence of its establishment is how the new hegemonic discourse successfully absorbed and reconciled Chinese liberals and the New Left. From the 1990s to the present, clashes between China's important liberals and New Leftists did not produce any winners or losers. Rather, both lost. The only winner is big capitalism, that is, bureaucratic monopoly and entrepreneurial interest groups.

The new hegemonic discourse is further supported by a piece of superficial evidence: the prominent emergence of the young middle class in Chinese cities. While much hope both within and beyond China (among those who referenced the East Asian model) had been placed in the Chinese middle class as the force to push forward Chinese democracy, the debut of this class was in fact the identification with the nation-state and with the regime.

Even though national identity is very unstable even as it permeates the fetishistic imaginary of capitalist systems (adoration of the U.S. and hatred for Japan are frequent symptoms), the worship of abstract power or the deep respect toward the victors remains a basic parameter for the establishment of national identification.

From another perspective, when the financial tsunami broke out and expanded into the EU debt crisis, China became the last bulwark to shore up the value of financial capital. It immediately turned into a magnet for international hot money. A huge amount of international capital has flooded into China through both legal and underground means. The Chinese gov-

ernment used an old trick to protect the safety of its currency: its corresponding distribution of RMB created inflation that burdened the livelihoods of those at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Meanwhile, it also created an unprecedented scene of flowing money. In 2009, a sarcastic popular phrase in China was, "I don't lack money." Hence, like other modernizing countries whose economies took off belatedly, the RMB was forced to appreciate, making it possible for a small percentage of Chinese (though large in absolute numbers) to engage in the fashion of international travel.

Travel abroad may well be the typical activity in the era of globalization, but let us momentarily put aside its ideological implications. If the nouveaux riches born out of the commerce between power and money have raised China's status to number one in international luxury travel and in the consumption of international luxury goods (the most luxurious consumer brands have all established flagship stores in Shanghai), then throughout the world, especially in brand-name shops in Euro-American Western cities, omnipresent Chinese tourists seem like a minor but prominent detail that validates China's rise.

For this author, the so-called rise of China is the most important sign that the world has entered an era after the post–Cold War. One no longer need beat around the bush and evade the open secret of China's total entrance into capitalism and its role as the most active and lively player in a global capitalism in crisis. It also signifies that the curtains have finally dropped on the Cold War (as well as on the cold war situation after the Cold War, or the persistence of cold war after the Cold War). Compared to the previous socialist camp, capitalism has become the ultimate victor.

China Time or a Future Imaginary?

When China finally joined world time and world history, when the reestablished hegemonic discourse once again displayed the depth of China's long and winding historical minefield, it simultaneously also experienced the foggy barriers or even the disappearance of time and future. This is another displacement of time: when China finally entered the grand road of capitalism, with its seemingly brilliant prospects, the entire capitalist world sank into a systemic crisis.

Even if this crisis passes, the crisis of resources and environment has already stopped the unlimited expansion promised by developmentalism.

Any solution proposed within the current logic will only further or deepen the crisis. For example, the biofuel proposed by the European Union to replace petroleum as a renewable clean energy is already reducing or compromising the safety of African food. Or we could just call it famine. In 2011, after the March 11 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami, the crisis of the Fukushima nuclear power plant continued to evolve and deepen the global ecological disaster.

For a century, the history and self-image of China as a nation-state subject kept on postponing utopia to the other end of time—promising the future to posterity, endlessly trying to surpass the West and to make the new into the beautiful and the good. Today, China seems to have realized its dream of ranking among the advanced nations of the world, enriching the state and strengthening its military. But what of the future?

At this point, we might pause to consider the following events. In 2009, when General Motors filed for bankruptcy protection from the U.S. federal government, General Motors China broke its annual profit record. A private company in Sichuan bought Hummer from GM, making headlines throughout China. Meanwhile, the Hollywood blockbuster *Transformers 2*, which serves as a commercial for GM, broke summer box office records; China's box office was second only to North America's. Shortly after, in 2011, when the 3D movie *Transformers 3* again swept the globe, its product placement advertisements were all Chinese brands, even though this latent fact outside of the film's diegesis provoked very complex feelings among both North American and Chinese audiences. The ongoing logic of surpassing or continuing is recognizable. Ironically, this logic's model of emulation is a failed player in the quagmire of capitalism.

When China is no longer an oddity in the capitalist world but a regular member, when China's rise means the sinking of Cold War echoes and their epilogue, then it not only means the failure and disappearance of socialism as an alternative to global capitalism, but it also means the fading or evaporation of China's path—which refers to China's revolutionary path, China as a third-world country that freed itself from the global capitalist system, and China as an independent, sovereign, and self-sufficient nation.

Once, the real or imaginary Chinese path inspired and encouraged critical thinkers in the West and opened up other future imaginations in the third world. Today, is the meaning of China simply what the British foreign

minister said in jest ("In 1989, capitalism saved China; today, China will save capitalism")? If capitalism saved China, then we must ask: Which China? Whose China? If China should save capitalism, then how? And with what?

Will China use its foreign currency reserves (the largest in the world), created and earned with its real economy (i.e., the labor of state-owned factories and sweatshops), to fill the deep gullies of the financial empire after its bubble burst, so as to begin a new round of games—just like those online and electronic games that won't let you quit until you lose? Or should we follow the proposals of some of China's political scientists and economists and begin China's Marshall Plan to save the EU and thereby lay the foundations of China's imperial position?

Two further significant illustrations: the late American leftist critic Giovanni Arrighi sketched out a vision of China guiding the global economy in his book *Adam Smith in Beijing*; Francis Fukuyama, who had proclaimed the end of the Cold War and hence the end of history, is now praising the Chinese century and Chinese model. Similar to the distorted and fantastical reflections in the global reactions to Tiananmen (even though the departure point and focus are quite different), but with regard to the present and the foreseeable future, leftist and rightist thinkers have again reached an amazing consensus over China's place in the world.

If such optimistic or terrifying imaginings (according to which subjectivized positions are distinguished) have realistic possibilities, then what is the true meaning of the Chinese model? How is the world led by China different from where it is heading anyway? Using the fact of China's rise (in terms of GDP, foreign currency reserves, ranking in the world economy) to inversely deduce China's special characteristics (the Chinese model) will only achieve a new version of the same old story of winner takes all, except that in the new story, the powerful central government is no longer the source of all evil as in the orientalist authoritarian story, but instead becomes the model for low systemic costs and high management efficiency.

China's own historical schema, the premodern Chinese empire that gave birth to a modern China within its borders; the Chinese revolutions of the twentieth century (which included almost every kind of revolution); the primitive accumulation and industrialization in the socialist era; China's identification with the third world and its resistance against the historical destiny of third world nations—all this has vanished without a trace.

As a previous historical legacy, twentieth-century Chinese and world

history might still hold some resources and significance for the Chinese path today. In fact, much discussion about China's rise and the Chinese model has to do with Chinese cultural or historical tradition. Within China, what accompanies the heated debates about China's rise is China's cultural self-awareness. Even if we temporarily set aside the soft power or core values of the government-led culture, similar discussions among intellectuals have rarely dealt with some basic premises.

First, for Fei Xiaotong, who proposed the concept of cultural self-awareness, the premise and context for the discussion of cultural self-awareness was the nativist China or the Chinese countryside.[7] Today's China still has a vast countryside, with 900 million farmers according to household registration. But even if we don't mention how a hundred years of modernization and revolution destroyed traditional rural society, the current cultural self-awareness that accompanies the theory of China's rise focuses not on the countryside but on modern urban societies.

Second, the cultural traditions of the Chinese countryside belong to a totally different episteme than modern capitalism. Even though tradition versus modernity remains the basic ideological binary of the twentieth century, the modernization of traditional culture keeps emerging as the most pressing conventional issue of Chinese society. Yet there is rarely progress—not to mention resolution—on this issue. Apart from social and historical factors, epistemic difference and geographical segmentation might be the foremost intrinsic explanation. Hence in the context of contemporary capitalist political economy, it is only wishful thinking, albeit well intended, to use traditional Chinese culture as the subject or basis to create a new cultural self-awareness, to make China into an alternative to Western global capitalism. Again, what remains most prominent for me is the present-day revival of discussions about cultural self-awareness and its promotion. This doesn't mean the beginning of a Chinese cultural renaissance. In fact, this only clearly reflects the hollowness and paucity of Chinese cultural identity and subjectivity.

I have pointed out elsewhere that the beginning of modern Chinese culture—the May Fourth Movement with its twinned themes of antifeudalism and anti-imperialism—created a subjectivity with a hollow interiority that takes an enemy, namely imperialist powers, as the structure of its own Lacanian mirror image.[8] If this is precisely the general social cultural fact of the third world and late-developing world, then China's difference

is that from the very start, Chinese intellectuals already realized that no matter how sincerely they wished it, China could not possibly repeat the Western path of modernization. The modernizing efforts of twentieth-century China thus often sought other paths, went elsewhere, and looked for other kinds of people.

Yet a hundred years have passed. At the turn of the century, a China that has completed its own inversion in the post–Cold War order needs to erase alternative social memories of subjectivity and social practice from its mainstream account. Hence Chinese cultural subjectivity experienced another hollowing out from within, multiplying and deepening the historical ruptures of the May Fourth Movement.

A film provides an illustration. Zhang Yimou's *Hero* did very well at the international box office. Throughout the film, one can see the blood-red word "sword" that symbolizes absolute power and violent struggle. It becomes a prominent background for the film. Yet the keyword of premodern Chinese culture and of the film's plot, tianxia or all under heaven, was never visible in the film.

Even more interesting is the domestic picture *Assembly* (2007), which is almost a direct piece of evidence for the post-post–Cold War. This film is about communist soldiers in the Chinese Civil War between the communists and nationalists. It was a blockbuster throughout East Asia and won the Golden Horse Award in Taiwan. But the symptomatic significance of the film lies in the scenario created by the director Feng Xiaogang and screenwriter (and well-known author) Liu Hengji: as soon as the CCP members changed into the Nationalist Party's German-style uniform and took up their American equipment, the film's characters took on the figures of international soldiers. The film re-created the spectacle and editing rhythm of Hollywood films, thereby successfully displacing or covering up the historical meanings of this special war: land reform, political mobilization, the politicization of the army, and the popular support of the people through the fact that the weak overcame the strong—that is to say, the outcome of the war manifested the people's choice of China's destiny and path.

If mainstream scholars have cut short the extension of twentieth-century Chinese history, then we obviously cannot inversely deduce a Chinese model from China's rise. Rather, this model can only become the latest case or footnote of global capitalism. It cannot draw from or transform the cultural and social debts, legacies, and resources of twentieth-century

Chinese history. It also cannot begin to imagine or implement a different and hopeful new world on account of China's intervention. To the contrary, if China's rise only means a new player in the global scramble for supremacy, then it could only signify the approach of an even greater global disaster.

Of course, China has not yet committed the same crimes or created the same disasters as the originators of capitalism, whether it is in terms of social injustice, exploitation, internal and external colonization, the crisis in energy resources, or ecological disasters. Yet if China cannot choose and demonstrate a different path, then its intervention will only replay and aggravate these existing disasters. Hence, so-called Chinese cultural self-awareness cannot originate from traditional cultural resources. To the contrary, it must be an awareness of the hollowness of its subjectivity on multiple levels. Moreover, traditional culture as a different episteme can only be revived in an alternative imagination of the future than that of modern capitalist logic and practice.

Yet in the aftermath of the post–Cold War, the international communist movement's alternative vision to counter the capitalist world has totally failed. The most important resulting change (and global phenomenon) is the disappearance or sealing off of a future vision. In the twentieth century, the utopian vision of Marxism was to end capitalism, obliterate class differences, and achieve the liberation of humankind. Its implementation and promotion, however, evolved into totalitarianism and bloody violence, finally causing a self-generated implosion. It lost without a fight.

The trial of global communism did not end without the arrogance of the victor's justice. It became a total negation of an alternative future other than capitalism. Hence the question became how to deal with the crisis of capitalism instead of how to deal with capitalism in crisis.

If a Chinese model exists, then it seems to be inevitably a capitalist model and not an alternative to capitalism. American AMC movie theaters imported and distributed the CCP propaganda film commemorating the ninetieth anniversary of the CCP's founding, titled *Beginning of the Great Revival*, and screened it in five American cities simultaneously. Despite the poor box office, it still demonstrates that the Cold War is far away in the past and communism is no longer any kind of meaningful threat.

Even in China, Marx or Marxism lies in a corner where the sun never shines—a piece of dispensable political pop. Of course, Marxism is not all about communism's utopian ideals. That's not even the most important

aspect at times. But the significance of Marxism for social practice is that it promises a form of future justice. Only the imagination and promise of an alternative future allow historical and present suffering to emerge and speak. Only this can give meaning to past and present victims. For me, this includes the victims and sacrifices of twentieth-century communist movements. And only a nonteleological future vision can free history and time from the custody of power and violence.

At the turn of the century, the deep nostalgia that surrounds both left-wing and right-wing Chinese intellectuals not only reflects their powerlessness but also unexpectedly enacts Freudian mourning. Pay homage to and then forget the sufferings and the dead of capitalism and socialism, because there is no future that can give us back justice. There are only nation-states or empires, economic winners and losers. There is no choice for the sheep, only for lions with the ability and motivation to protect their own food sources. This might be why the late Jacques Derrida kept on reiterating memory and rejecting mourning. Thus he chose to salute the specter of Marx that has lost its flesh and blood.

Indeed, it doesn't have to be Marxism or communism, but it has to be the imagination and promise of an alternative future—a promise that will be kept, a promise along with an assumption of responsibility, a promise along with the performance of that promise. To act on one's promise seems to be the most ordinary yet most religious manifestation of premodern Chinese culture. Perhaps we can say that after the post–Cold War both the tidal movements of antiglobalization and the work of critical intellectuals, both directly and indirectly, contain the elements to reinvigorate a new utopian imagination and demand something of the future: the motto of the World Social Forum, Another World Is Possible; or the dream of Subcomandante Marcos, a world that can contain many other worlds; or Alan Badiou's *Communist Hypothesis*, as well as the return to communist theory among many scholars. Perhaps only in multiple future visions can we define and interrogate the meanings of nation, politics, revolution, democracy, and freedom. Only then can we debate the new historical subject and the possibility for its renaming. Only then can we draw on the resources of diverse histories rather than merely summoning ghosts.

Under the mask of a film character, V (in *V for Vendetta*, 2005), Occupy Wall Street unexpectedly broke out in New York and spread to the whole world. Just as eye-catching as the V mask was a self-referential slogan: We

are the 99 percent. Yet in China, we see the opposite: class conflicts frequently explode in clashes between different ethnicities and regions. In other words, the crisis of capitalism is already awakening or creating other futures and possibilities. The imagination of an alternative future is already under way. For China, this topic is especially urgent, because China must be a China of the future, or there will be no future.

NOTES

Series Editor's Preface

1 For a detailed examination of historical and contemporary understandings of the term *tianxia*, see Wang, *Chinese Visions of World Order*.
2 Borges, "On Exactitude in Science," 325.

Editor's Introduction

1 See Zhou, "Rethinking the Cultural History of Chinese Film," 235–63; and Wan, "The Island of the Day Before," 16–17.
2 The phrase "history experienced reconstruction" is Zhou Yaqin's. See Zhou, "Rethinking the Cultural History of Chinese Film," 239.
3 Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*.
4 For a brief biography of Dai in English, see Jing Wang and Tani E. Barlow, "Introduction."
5 See Zhong, *Masculinity Besieged?*
6 Dai uses quotation marks around the geopolitical entity of "China" to emphasize the competing and historically shifting narratives about how to define this entity. Is it a sick victim of colonialism or an anticolonial fighter? Is it a leader of the third world? Is it a powerful new entity that has left the socialist past far behind, or does the socialist past continue to haunt this place called China? Is it a homogeneous culture or one riven by various conflictual differences?

Introduction

1 [By "the other side," Dai refers to the West.—Ed.]
2 Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*.
3 Amin, *Eurocentrism*, 8.
4 Marcos, "The Fourth World Has Begun."
5 The three principles are that the party must always represent the requirements for developing China's advanced productive forces, the orientation of

China's advanced culture, and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people.

6 Perhaps I should mention a 2003 episode that seems insignificant at first glance: rural land policy abolished the regulation of distributing land on the basis of minimal per capita entitlement to a certain amount of land. This means that, in an urban-rural dual system, the urban-born children of peasants working in cities, or second-generation migrant workers, will become China's potentially landless peasants.

7 Fei, *Xiangtu Zhongguo*.

8 [The May Fourth Movement is viewed as a founding moment of Chinese nationalism and modernization. Begun on May 4, 1919, to protest the Treaty of Versailles that allowed Japanese takeover of Chinese territory, the movement sparked an anticolonial, nationalist movement that also attacked Chinese tradition. Chinese urban intellectuals articulated their criticism of traditional cultural values, especially those from Confucianism, and called for radical Westernization of Chinese culture in order to modernize the country. One of the key components of the movement was the vernacularization of written Chinese, what the author is calling classical Chinese.—Ed.]

Chapter 1. I Want to Be Human

1 After the Japanese army seized the Chinese capital, Nanjing, it carried out murder, torture, rape, and looting on a massive scale. The horror of this massacre was exacerbated by the fact that many murders were committed in a most primitive manner, using daggers or knives as weapons or burying and burning the victims alive. This incident also involved gang rapes and tortures of men and women as well as the dissection of the bodies of the dead, many cases of which were carried out in Chinese homes in the presence of the elderly and children.

2 For descriptions of how the director sought approval from the central government, see Wang, "Lu Chuan." [Lu Chuan's earlier works include *Missing Gun* (2002) and *Mountain Patrol: Kekexili* (2004). *Missing Gun* is a black comedy about a small-town policeman searching for his gun. *Mountain Patrol* tells the story of the heroic efforts of a small group of mountain patrollers to stop the illegal poaching of Tibetan antelopes in Kekexili, a region near Tibet. The film presents a realistic depiction of an existing social issue in a suspenseful and melodramatic style.—Trans.] The phrase "Chinese style of resistance" comes from an interview with the director by Liu Wei, Wang Nannan, and Wang Xuguang. The director also states in this interview, "One reason that made me want to make this movie is that in all existing historical representations of the Nanjing Massacre, the Chinese have been portrayed as passive and nonexistent. It is not that they truly did not exist, but their existence as individual and collectivity has been neglected and erased. I have