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I dedicate this book to my father, who passed away before it came out. An American working-class hero of great adaptability, spirit and love, he taught me perhaps the most of all.

1 Sinological-orientalism now

“China” and the new era

In “Orientalism Now,” the concluding chapter of Edward Said’s 1978 book, we are left with the migration of orientalism from European empires and philology to the U.S. imperium and the dominance of social scientific discourse. This project begins where Said left off. It argues that there is a new, “Sinological” form of orientalism at work in the world, one that takes as its object an “Other” that has since the 1970s occupied an increasingly central place within the world system and Western intellectual–political culture: the People’s Republic of China. As with Said’s formulation rooted in the Middle East and South Asia, *Sinological-orientalism* and its production of a textual “China” helps constitute the identity or “Self” of the West (what Balibar aptly calls the “Western-Christian-Democratic-Universalist identity”) (“Difference” 30). The U.S.–West is what China is not, but which the latter will become. So, too, the new orientalism is part of a neo-colonial or imperialist project: not just the production of knowledge about an “area” but the would-be management and administration of the area for economic, political, and cultural–symbolic benefit. But whereas orientalism in Said turned upon a posited, essential *difference* between Orient and Occident (as in Kipling’s famous verse: “Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet”), the new form turns upon *sameness* or more specifically, upon China’s *becoming sameness*. China is seen as in a process of haltingly but inevitably becoming-the-same as “us”: open, liberal, modern, free. Put another way, “China” is understood as becoming *generally equivalent* to the West. What this reflects, in part, is the by now familiar resurgence of modernization rhetoric under the cover of “globalization” and the end-of-history thematic famously captured by Francis Fukuyama. But that, in turn, was triggered by the collapse of the former Soviet Union as well as by the fateful deployment of the market mechanism and the logic of capital within China. After a noble but brief interruption of the politics and discourse of modernization by Chinese Maoism and by the long decade of the 1960s and early 1970s, the former is back in charge not only of area studies but of global intellectual–political culture.

When one recalls the Marxist cultural analysis of capital as such, namely as an historical force of abstraction that makes unlike things alike on the basis of some third thing called the value-form (their “exchange value” or “general equivalent”), the relationship between this orientalism and global capitalism

appears in sharper relief. Sinological-orientalism is in an important sense a capital-logic, just as historical capitalism betrays an orientalist one. As Said himself made clear (in at least my reading of him), orientalism and colonial discourse may precede the rise of capitalism, but in the modern era they are hand in glove. So, too, for the present moment, whereby Western investment and "constraint" strategies are often rationalized on the basis of these being beneficial to the Chinese and their progression towards democracy and human rights (whatever these mean), as well as helping "balance" and protect the rest of Asia from China's rise. I further address the relationship between orientalist and capital logics in a final chapter. My argument is a totalizing, "functionalist" one about the integral relationship between capitalism and orientalism. But then, so is the thing. The historical conditions of possibility for a global Sinological-orientalism are the momentous if not counter-revolutionary changes within China itself – its Dengist "era of reform and opening up" dating from 1979 – and the West's economic, political, and discursive responses to this subsequent rise to global prominence. This paradoxical relationship is captured in the logic of *becoming-sameness*: China is still not "normal" (and has been tragically different), but is engaged in a "universal" process such that it will, and must, become the same as "us." Whether it wants to or not. That is the present-future offered to China within this discourse, and – as anyone who watched the 2008 Olympics opening ceremonies knows ("one world, one dream") – it is also one taken up within China itself.

I turn to the question of Occidentalism below, and at other times make reference to Westernized/liberal views within China. But I only partially address the internalization of orientalism within China and the current Party state. That is surely an important matter worthy of its own book. But my focus here reflects in part my conviction that it is the Western – now fully global – dimensions and roots of orientalism that are the main problem underlying the often dysfunctional, neo-colonial relationship between China and the West. My concern is the production of knowledge about the P.R.C. outside of China and the cultural, ideological, and other politics that subtend this. One could write a different project focused on the representation of China from *within* the mainland; this would have to include indigenous constructions and essentializations of China outside of, as well as prior to, foreign imperialism or orientalism. But the impact in China of *modern* imperialism and "contact" remains decisive for all of us, and once we reach this era we need necessarily engage the orientalist and post-colonial questions. There will be no "new" Sinology until this conversation at least begins.

As will quickly become clear, my analysis of Sinological-orientalism abounds with gestures and full-on references to what I take to be some of the complexities of Maoist and post-Mao China in political, ideological/cultural, and other terms. *Contra* Said's own practice in 1978, then, I do take it to be important to at least attempt to argue for some of those complexities and "brute realities of the Orient" (his words) that are occluded by the isolated details and *positional superiority* of orientalism. His decision not to do so has meant that his work

there is often reductively appropriated by cultural and postcolonial studies that reduce the problem of orientalism to some basic Freudian Othering process, the deployment of stereotypical images in film, a simple self/other identity dynamic, and so forth. While all of these are part of orientalism, to be sure, the larger problems and challenges of epistemology, political knowledge, and the constitution of discourse were too often obscured even within the postcolonial field. Positional superiority refers to that tactic or de facto strategy by which the object of study is kept in place, never allowed to challenge let alone displace the effectively a priori assumptions, conclusions, and discourse: it places "the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the upper hand" (*Orientalism* 7). It is not just a heuristic but the foundational rule of colonial discourse and orientalism.¹ For our purposes this means that the authority and a priori knowledge of the Sinologist-analyst-watcher reigns supreme and untroubled. For all its detailed knowledge, then, Sinological-orientalism works as a circular, self-enclosed system. It is also paradoxical in that what I am calling its emphasis on China's "becoming-sameness" is also at odds with this flexible superiority, which is also to say the ultimate inferiority of the native, Chinese reality. For all of these reasons, one must take the risk of trying to argue for and signify these complexities, counter-factuals, and counter-stories about the P.R.C. This is surprisingly difficult to do, in part because the language we have to describe such things fits not at all with the dominant, Western, liberal humanist paradigm of the humanities and human sciences. This is, I believe, also Wang Hui's problem in his brilliant and searching but difficult works on Chinese histories and Western theory.² My own emphases have been with the political, Maoist past as well as its traces today, even after its demonization at home and abroad. Others would certainly write all of this differently, and it is again something worthy of book-length treatment despite the professional risks involved (writing "positive" scholarship about the Mao era). Some already have. In addition to others cited in this study, Lin Chun's *The Transformations of Chinese Socialism* is another case in point (albeit focused on the reform era). But all of this work is of very recent vintage and remains marginal to the overall China field.

Sinological-orientalism and its basic logic can be understood as a development within colonial discourse in the present, postcolonial era of intensive globalization. It is as if what Dipesh Chakrabarty memorably described as the "waiting room of history" – or the continual saying of "not yet" to the colonized who would be free – has subtly but importantly shifted.³ The time is at hand. The denouement has inched closer. The last real constraint remains the Party state which will depart from the historical stage with our help. This marks a shift from the essential difference between East and West to their – China's – general equivalence: *a sameness structured by a hierarchical difference*. The denigrating and condescending faith that they are, after all, becoming the same as us (or should be made so) has become stronger and is no longer simply the view of enlightened liberals like J. S. Mill. While a range of temporary – as opposed to essential – obstacles can be summoned up to explain why China is not yet free

and normal, the main and seemingly most fungible one remains the Chinese Communist Party (state). Were it not for this anachronistic, evil institution, the logic goes, China would and will be becoming-the-same and joining the normal world. A Sinified, mainland Chinese path is more or less impossible, be it in the Maoist attempt at alternative modernity (itself a Western/Marxist hybrid) or in the various, nascent post-Mao efforts to reform and develop a Chinese state and society adequate to the nation's various, complex challenges, and that might catch up to the heretofore largely unchecked, rapid, and dislocating deployment of capitalism.⁴

Periodizing Sinological-orientalism

There seems to be a consensus within studies of globalization and the world system that the 1970s loom large today. Something changed then, even if the triumph of neo-liberalism and the commodification of everything appeared only later. Even as Vietnam was winning its war of national liberation, historical communism turns out to have been in its final throes, succumbing to its internal contradictions – chiefly the inability to institutionalize egalitarian growth and mass participation – and to the pressures of capital accumulation on a world-scale. David Harvey famously posited the floating of the dollar at Bretton Woods in 1972, and so the financialization of the globe as a benchmark for the full-on emergence of the condition of postmodernity or the “sea-change in cultural as well as political-economic practices” that we know as contemporary capitalism (whereas modernity is rooted in industrial capital and postmodernity in financial capital) (*Condition* vii). Harvey's text remains a rich and rewarding one, not least because it connected the culture of postmodernity to a global history, albeit an abstract and somewhat Eurocentric one (and one he has since de-provincialized).⁵ In the event, postmodernism – as a contested term and field of study – turns out to have been something like the latest fashion he thought it to be, dissolving itself into “globalization” or “global studies.” Or put another way, postmodernism – as discourse and as material, social reality – has morphed into “globalization,” and it is this shift in history and academic focus that Harvey's book implicitly maps. I will return in a later chapter to theoretical takes on globalization and the place of “China” within them. But be it postmodernism or globalization, we are still working within the same sea-change of the 1970s. For all the attacks on Harvey's book and on Marxism by cultural studies avatars in the 1990s, it is his mode of analysis that is useful for understanding *global* problems like Sino-Western relations – not only in terms of political economy and finance capital, but in terms of politics, ideology, and space.

What Harvey identified as the central dynamics of capitalism – the forces of abstraction and reification generated, the compression of space and time as capital expands globally – are still with us, only more so. Who could have imagined, in 1972 – also the moment of the P.R.C.–U.S. rapprochement – that the products of Chinese labor, from McDonalds' “Happy Meal” toys to the a-historical epic films of Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou, would flood the Euro-American

markets and social imaginary? That China would host the international spectacle that was the 2008 Olympics? These same forces of abstraction and reification are not unknown in China, whose national economy by some estimates is now less state-owned than France's. The decades since Bretton Woods, then, have known a confluence of capital, China, and Sino-Western relations and flows; and it is this era to which Sinological-orientalism corresponds. In so far as it may obtain, this argument – the close, functional, *articulated* relationship between capital and this new orientalism – has consequences for both a postcolonial studies that sees only discontinuity between colonial discourse and capitalism, and for a Marxism that has yet to “de-Cold War” and de-provincialize, or to re-orient itself to the centrality of Asia and China, within historical and contemporary capitalism (and communism).⁶ At the same time, for all the problems and lacunae of Marxist theory, in an age of neo-liberalism and full-on globalization, it remains indispensable, and its value theoretic and the critique of “socially objective” forms of thought – which I will later argue include orientalism – know a renewed lease on life. It is no accident that the orientalist logic of sameness dovetails with capital's own logic of a homogenizing, abstract sameness; they are of whole cloth, as is their epistemological violence.

But the force of general equivalence within Sinological-orientalism is not only a capital-logic. It partakes of other histories, just as Sinology itself must be seen as part of the long history of imperialism, colonialism, and trade.⁷ Thus this knowledge formation must be understood as a part of historical colonialism and its *mission civilisatrice*. The logic of sameness also dovetails with missionary discourse and the older French universalist logic of the civilizing mission (all “natives” can become the same as “us”). For all its at times explicit racism about cruelty and backwardness, Chinese and missionary discourse in China also pre-supposed the belief that they were “equal,” that they could and must be saved, and made the Christian-same. This is akin to French imperialism's own mission of bringing civilization to the colonized – who could and would reach the next level in due course, with the right (colonial) governance and administration. As anti-colonial theory has instructed from Lenin to Fanon and beyond, this evolutionary, teleological discourse of sameness, of bringing History and civilization to the colonized, both rationalized colonial rule and literally reshaped colonial and metropolitan societies. This emphasis on sameness, particularly in the contemporary moment, also points to a gap in Said's analysis: that in some colonial and neo-colonial contexts it is not simply allowed but *mandated* that the “Other” become the “Same.” Standard developmental economics would be another case in point. The older, more racist logic of essential difference is here in abeyance.

The work of James Hevia among others has accomplished the reinsertion of modern Qing and early Republican China back into the history of colonialism, a history that had been denied not just by the British and other colonizers, but by nearly all postwar area studies.⁸ This is not to deny the honorable exception of the work of the former *Bulletin of Concerned Asia Scholars*.⁹ It is also true that for a brief moment in the mid-1970s, *Modern China* did on one or two occasions

publish debates on Maoism and imperialism that included leftist/alternative perspectives. But today one would be hard-pressed to find current work in the mainstream/flagship presses and journals – or even in cultural studies venues – that takes the Chinese revolution seriously (as a complex, deep, and “positive” event). This void includes as well the anti-colonial nature of that revolution. As Tani Barlow has noted, it is still the case that within the disciplines, “China materialized as an essentially *non*colonial national unit at the very moment academic scholarship on Asia turned to social science” [i.e. during the Cold War] (Barlow 374). This was also the very same postwar moment of modernization-discourse’s ascendancy and the height of the Cold War and Red Scare. China studies was defined by the problematic of modernization and anti-communism. As I have argued at more length elsewhere, the non-theoretical (or non-philosophically trained) character of this earlier, nascent and radical or alternative movement helped pre-empt it from responding more creatively or self-reflexively to the turn to the right *within* China *and* the U.S. Partly due to the “shock” of post-Mao revelations of Chinese poverty, violence, and persecution (narrated by the very same Chinese intellectuals who were victimized), and in part due to this lack of “theory,” the collective response to the great moving rightward show was to aspire to professionalization and objectivity. This meant, variously, de-emphasizing politics altogether, turning to anti-communism in a way reminiscent of an earlier generation’s trauma over the Soviet God-that-failed, or embracing the Fukuyamian zeitgeist about the triumph of liberal-capitalist-democracy. “Modernization” and anti-communism won, both in China and virtually everywhere else. Hence the “new” orientalism. China went from being semi-colonial (and revolutionary) to non-colonial (and haltingly, ideally becoming the same) even amongst otherwise heterodox scholars. Save for occasional flashes in the pages of *positions* or in leftist screeds, earlier, beginning debates or perceptions about imperialism and the “writing” of the P.R.C. effectively disappeared. The problematic of knowledge production subtending the China-West problematic never quite emerged.¹⁰

This is to say that what we have to attend to is the *non*-debate between “the China field” – understood in its broadest sense as knowledge about China produced outside of China – and various forms of postcolonial studies that have foregrounded the question of “the writing of the Other” and shown the centrality of colonialism in modern world history. China, as the object of inquiry, has so far proven resistant to the impacts of “theory” and critique (except for critique of the P.R.C. of course!). There are a number of possible explanations for this, and none of them would be flattering to the social-scientific and objective pretensions of area studies. But to be fair, there are a number of stumbling blocks for those who wish to bring postcolonial and critical theory to the “case” of China and its representation. Arguably the primary one is simply that China was – as Lenin first put it, to be followed by Mao *et al.* – only *semi*-colonial. While the great chaos and disrepair of China as a whole from 1911–49 is beyond question, it retained its political sovereignty at all times. This is true in a formal, significant sense, and is obviously a different scenario than that endured by the (future) nations of South Asia, Africa, and Latin America (or Hong Kong). Given that our basic working

definitions of colonialism turn on this very distinction, there are logical grounds for seeing China’s “problematic” as being after all closer to modernization than colonialism per se. This is the dominant coding of China inside and abroad, where the notion of “colonial modernity” has yet to disrupt the dominant ways China is written.¹¹ This also seemingly undercuts even our received critical theories of colonialism and empire that flow out of chiefly British and French histories of empire and those experiences of colonial rule. The iconoclasts of the May 4th period as well as of the early Communist Party all embraced “Westernization” in a very conscious and deliberate, if also inevitably misinformed and utopian, way. (This is why the Maoist Sinification of Marxism was so difficult to achieve.) One would be hard-pressed to say that they were *forced* to think that way in the manner that the typical colonial subject was, or was supposed to be. Even here, however, is it not obvious that the very concept of ideology is lacking in such Sinological perspectives? Hence one can readily find histories of opium in China, of an age of openness before the so-called “take-over” in 1949, of Hong Kong developing more or less flawlessly prior to 1997, or of Shanghai’s singular “cosmopolitanism” that avoid the imperialist/capitalist problematic entirely. One can contrast this, for example, with the largely unknown historical work of the Chinese radical historian Hu Sheng (1918–2000). Readily available even in English but predictably dismissed as a “Party” voice, his work on the destructive effects of imperialism from the later Qing through the Republican periods is serious scholarship that is emblematic of a considered and considerable “mainland” perspective on key “China-West” questions.

In actuality, there is no good reason for defining colonialism as primarily an issue of political sovereignty and its loss or recapture. Sovereignty remains important, but twentieth-century colonial/imperial/geo-political conflicts and discourses are too complex and “messy” to be demarcated so clearly. For one thing, as Robert Young has noted, the historical and practical differences between the modern French and British empires (or between the projects of the civilizing mission and the white man’s burden) made little difference from the standpoint of the colonized subjects.¹² Young’s point is directed against efforts to disaggregate colonialism to the point of making it go away conceptually as a unified whole (or to outright defend it). It can apply as well to Hong Kong studies that valorize elite and comprador participation in so-called “collaborative colonialism”. But Young’s point also obtains for modern China, and even for current “nationalist” Chinese reactions to Western media discourse and globalization (the “infamous” anger of the “netizens” of China, the protests *against* the free-Tibet perspective, and so on). While China might appear to occupy an *exceptionalist* space *vis-à-vis* postcolonial theory (around sovereignty, cultural imperialism, colonial education, and so forth), it was nevertheless deeply affected by imperialist “contact” as well as the later, related Cold War – a war that was often hot, economically disastrous, and a cultural–ideological battle beyond mere propaganda broadsides. In an important sense, it is not the details of sovereignty and occupation that matter so much as the cultural–ideological conflicts and effects. Recall the seemingly inexplicable anger of Chinese people

over, for example, anti-Olympics/free-Tibet protests, the awarding of Nobel prizes to exiled dissidents, currency devaluation pressures from the U.S.-West, and so forth. What is at stake here is not the Truth but a certain paternalist, even colonial arrogance from abroad and – for non-Western identified, and non-diasporic Chinese – the lack of permission to narrate within the “global” sphere.

But the details do matter too. As Hevia has argued, and as with the case of colonial India, the production of an “imperial archive” of texts, translations, and knowledge about “China” was a concomitant part of the global colonial project of the foreign powers during the later Qing dynasty and Republican period (“Archive State” 236). Chief within this history are the missionary activities before and after the Boxer Movement and of a larger discourse that lives on today “in the pious moral tone of American foreign policy toward China” (Hevia, “Leaving a Brand” 325). Sinological-orientalism represents, in part, a redeployment of missionary and civilizing discourse, including its logic of sameness and equivalence. So, too, the academic and other texts examined in the following chapters should be seen as part of a neo-colonial, Cold-War-and-beyond archive formed in large measure in the U.S.-West but also globally.

So, too, we might recall the impact of an older, philological Sinology in changing Chinese perceptions and practices of their own language: no less a radical Chinese patriot than Lu Xun would claim that unless the Chinese language were radically altered and “Westernized,” it and the nation would die. All in all, then, the foreign powers and the “contact” with the West certainly left their mark on China – both materially and culturally – as did the later Cold War. The Cold War was in some sense the continuation of Western, chiefly American imperialism by other means – at the level of discourse, rhetoric, and knowledge as much as the more familiar *realpolitik* level. To sum up here: notwithstanding the empirical differences between “real” colonialism in South Asia and Africa versus the case of China,

the fact of multiple imperialist adventures in China [as opposed to a single conquest] ... should not distract attention away from the fact that already well established colonial knowledges informed the Great Powers’ experiments and contributed to ‘development’ in their ‘spheres of influence’.

(Barlow, “Eugenic” 377)

Rather than argue further in general terms here for the import of the colonial/imperial/orientalist problematic for China, I seek to make the case immanently through the pages that follow. My critique is aimed at the expanded China field (from specialist to popular writing) and takes the form of a colonial discourse analysis of what has been thought, said, and occluded about China since the Mao era up to the present (or early 2000s). If my argument seems repetitive it is because I am trying to make it tenaciously and to substantiate my generalized critique. But it is also because the thing itself, the orientalist discourse, is repetitive (despite or because of its minute and sometimes valuable detail).

As will quickly become evident, by “Sinology” and the “Sinological” I refer to more than the original China-centered field within the older orientalism (going back at least to the early 1700s), and more than the specialized area studies instituted across the U.S.-West after the revolution of 1949. Note, however, that there is no such thing as “China studies” within China. This is part of my point in seeing the production of knowledge about China, even today, as being awfully similar to the older, more obviously orientalist mode. While specialized work, particularly within the social sciences and politics, occupies much of my attention, I also use texts from film studies, literature, journalism, and current “theory.” In doing so I mean to follow Adorno: his oft-stated desire to write books that are *constellations* that make unlike things alike. But I also rely on Foucault’s idea that the things that make up a discourse are dispersed across the social field, yet combine to form a common unit that has regularized “statements” and effects of power. This combination is Foucault’s inescapable gesture to the totality or interdisciplinarity. The China field is in this sense an expanded and expansive one. In the texts I examine in this book there emerges a common statement: China *is* becoming-the-same as the liberal and modern West (howsoever haltingly), or it *must* and *should* and *will* do so; this is the chief statement of the new orientalism. This can, in turn, be seen as emerging from other, related discursive themes: that China is becoming democratic, normal, civil, creative-artistic (avant-garde), liberal, and so on; that it still lacks something (often the same items); that its Maoist, revolutionary past is something either *in* the dustbin of history or must still be overcome. But “statement” here should be understood in the Foucaultian sense: it is at times more or less explicit (as in a speech act), but more often implied or signified indirectly and even non-linguistically. We must emphasize the rhetorical, discursive function of the statement – less the exact words, more its *status* as authorized “knowledge.”¹³ These are things that can be signified as easily by the newscaster as by the specialist, and likewise for the more popular “China Watching” cultural producer and citizen. This last aspect speaks to more than just the fact that area specialists and journalists often overlap and write cross-over – or identical – texts. (The journalistic quality of much China studies can indeed be striking to observers of the discipline.) It speaks to the fact that, as one Chinese Marxist might have put it, correct and incorrect ideas come from multiple places; this is what makes them the ruling discourses and difficult to change. The idea and knowledges of China we have do not stem only from specialists and the rarefied realms of Truth. This is why the critique of Sinological discourse has to engage demography as much as film studies, creative texts as much as “scientific” ones.

Much of what I am saying here about how the China field cannot be delimited in the traditional, gate-keeping way has been better said by Aziz Al-Azmeh, whose critiques of orientalism should be much more widely known. Pointing to shared conceptions of Islam in specialized and popular texts alike, he states:

We are not talking of two separate types and domains of knowledge about Islam, one for the scholarly elect and another for the rude masses, but of the

coexistence within orientalism of two substantially concordant registers, one of which – the scholarly – has greater access to observation ... and which looks all the more abject for this.... Regardless of access to real or specious facts, facts are always constructed and their construction is invariably culture-specific. Orientalist scholarship is a cultural mood born of mythological classificatory lore, a visceral, savage division of the world, much like such partisanship as animates support for football clubs.

(*Islams* 127–8)

Certainly I do not quite mean to say “As for Islam so too for China and the P.R.C.,” since China’s relationship to imperialism has its own historical specificity, as does the largely American, Cold War-inflected modern China studies field. Some will argue that since China was never “really” colonized and is so much older and “intact,” orientalism is a non-starter. (More on this below.) Nonetheless, the preponderance of textual and political evidence is on the post- or anti-colonial side; at least the present study seeks to make this case. Moreover, it is *not* an exaggeration to say that China and Islam share a certain, discursive history in Western intellectual–political culture, as does virtually every national culture subjected to the forces and significations of imperialism and modern colonialism. If we cannot make connections – even at the level of theory – between the West’s China and the West’s Islam, then we cannot speak of a global history of colonialism and its aftermaths. And of course one cannot deny the import of modern colonialism within *Western* intellectual–political culture (the dominant knowledge producers). In this sense, then: for “Islam” read “China.”

From London to Lhasa: making China the same

I will return below to further characterizing and periodizing this new orientalism. But let us first illustrate this a bit by tracking a continuity to understandings of China and the P.R.C. Jack London’s 1910 story, “The Unparalleled Invasion” (set in China in 1976), and Martin Scorsese’s *Kundun* (on Tibet’s current Dalai Lama) serve as useful signposts. London’s story narrates the annihilation of the Chinese “race” through germ warfare, the dropping of infectious test tubes from Western planes and the colonization of China by nameless but clearly Western nations.¹⁴ In classic fashion the text turns upon the ontological *difference* between Chinese “Orientals” and the rest of humanity. The Japanese are “progressive” Orientals whereas the Chinese, due above all to their “Chinese mind” and great numbers, are doomed to incompatibility and unfit for survival with the West. This reflects not just American anti-Chinese politics and London’s California, but the “China difference” more broadly (London, pars. 9, 3). With the eclipse of the Ottoman Empire, it is China that gradually becomes the perceived geo-political threat, just as the U.S. becomes the leading imperial power. Virtually all the old orientalist tropes and topoi are here: the great wall of the impenetrable, “hieroglyphic” language, impenetrable to “Western ideas”; the different

“mental processes” and un-democratic political tradition; and the sheer numbers and massness of the Chinese (including their uncontrolled reproduction and emigration).¹⁵ Thus China poses a threat to the “United Powers” and is dangerously *different*. But even in this piece of “classic” orientalist fiction there is also a latent logic of sameness: the *Chinese* have to be exterminated, but “China” – that geographic, national space – must become the same as the West. Thus the other “nationalities” move in, and “mechanical, intellectual, and art output” flourishes there, “in China in 1982.”¹⁶ This is not completely removed from the celebrations of the “new” Chinese cinema in our own 1980s (the subject of an upcoming chapter) and the pre-Tiananmen love affair with Deng Xiaoping.

London’s story is remarkable for what it shares with a more enlightened, covert Sinological-orientalism today. A number of these same themes and statements about China and the Chinese – as later chapters will show – continue to circulate within the new Sinological-orientalism. Western work on the Great Leap Forward famine not only exaggerates the mortality (or so it reasonably seems), but shows a callousness towards real Chinese lives as well as an obsession with the sheer numbers of Chinese (living, dead, and purely imagined). As also in London’s story, the Chinese will themselves be accused of inhuman indifference to life. As John F. Kennedy wrote to De Gaulle in 1959 about the P.R.C. developing an atomic bomb: “the Chinese would be perfectly prepared, because of the lower value they attach to human life, to sacrifice hundreds of millions of their own lives.”¹⁷ So, too, the “China threat” still looms not simply in mainstream political thought, but in esoteric, postmodern fiction like DeLillo’s *Mao II* (the subject of Chapter 5 below). This Western anxiety about China is further indexed in the demonization of Maoism, as if it were some residual, looming specter that could at any moment re-assert itself within China and the world. And the failed incompatibility of “the Chinese mentality” – its inferior rationality, both in broadly cultural and political terms – lives on in academic work as much as in the media and popular culture. Here the failure lies in China’s failure to “democratize” and liberalize its polity as much as its booming economy, or to fully develop a civil society. This emerges most strongly in scholarship on the Tiananmen protests of 1989, including the documentary *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*, which argues that “the Chinese mind” continues to be deformed by Maoist totalitarianism and revolutionary rhetoric. (This is addressed in Chapters 2 and 6 of the present study.)

And yet there can be no mistake that the underlying logic and assumptions of Sinological-orientalism have shifted. Despite numerous analyses of what China *lacks* – and to posit lack is a crucial rule for China analysis – the P.R.C. is nonetheless becoming-the-same as the West, slowly following “normal” development. Thus even if Tiananmen did not result in the end of the CCP and the establishment of civil society, it nonetheless represents progress and will return again someday. The current regime may lack legitimacy in most Sinologists’ eyes, but it is much closer to normal. This is all a type of historicist or at least stagist thinking: China has not been modern, free, and “normal,” but is only now – *after* Mao and *with* the market – following the correct, same path as “us” and becoming-the-same.¹⁸

We can now jump ahead eight decades to a more respectable artist. Scorsese's 1997 bio-pic *Kundun* ("The Presence") received critical acclaim not only from the Dalai Lama's camp, but *Film Comment* and *The Christian Century*. But it has but little more to do with the historical Tibet and actual Sino-Tibetan politics than London's futuristic, homicidal fantasy. To some extent this a-historicism was intentional and typically Hollywood.¹⁹ Nonetheless, there is a political unconscious and an interpretation of Chinese history in the movie. I will not belabor the obvious: it is a partisan text that mirrors the Tibetan nationalist, government-in-exile's line on independence and alleged Chinese colonialism and "genocide."²⁰ The film was made in direct consultation with the Dalai Lama and is based on his autobiography.²¹ In a series of essays, Barry Sautman has corrected such charges against China, as well as the P.R.C.'s own propaganda about "China's Tibet." I will not rehearse these arguments here, and I hold that they are only controversial because of the fetishistic adulation of "His Holiness" among the Western-educated middle class.²² What is perhaps more interesting is the *difference* that Tibet and the Dalai Lama represent: an affirmative orientalism about Tibetans on the one hand, and on the other a portrayal of Mao and the Chinese as entirely deceitful, dirty, and murderous. The former is conveyed through the film's spectacle-value: the "exotic" rituals of Tibetan Buddhism, the Dalai's supernatural "visions," the motif of mandala paintings, and so on. The film's final four minutes suggest that this Dalai *is* the incarnation of Buddha. His flight to India uses a repeated point of view shot from his childhood that establishes him as the unity of time and space: childhood, adulthood, the future, Tibet, India, Asia. Contrast this, then, with the demonization of the Chinese. They simply lie, as if their claims about Tibet's suzerain status and extreme feudal exploitation were simply untrue. Mao is represented as a duplicitous, greasy spot promising autonomy at one moment and invading the next.²³

Kundun thus represents a certain "progress" within American orientalism about Asian "Others." Here the mystical, benign Other of Tibet should naturally become a politically independent, concretely bounded and modern nation-state led by a freedom fighter. But this "progressive" message comes at the expense of China's valid claim to Tibet according to international law,²⁴ and to the P.R.C.'s representation as a "human" and sovereign space of its own. It is a case of the negative China difference and what it lacks. But there are also logics of equivalence at work here. Through purely visual signs, *Kundun* implicitly expresses a desire for becoming-sameness in regard to China: it should obey Western ideology about Tibet. Renounce despotism and follow the path of normalcy: recognize the natural independence of Tibet and the nationalism of the Dalai's exiled group; allow them to form a modern nation-state with clear, strict boundaries. By no means does it suggest that Tibet become "Westernized": this would ruin the fantasy of Shangri La, if not the divine status of the Dalai Lama himself and his "transcendent" presence. The film follows American foreign policy as expressed in the *Tibetan Policy Act of 2002* that pronounces U.S. leadership in protecting Tibet and negotiating a settlement.²⁵ In this, then, *Kundun* follows a logic of sameness for China: that the P.R.C. must be stopped and, as in London's

fable, made over in the image of the West (our political forms and our appreciation of the Dalai Lama). China may not yet be in the process of becoming-the-same, but it *should* be, and we can help.

It is here, too, that we can see how the film's "statement" about China reveals the wide circulation of "Sinological" knowledge: the proffered history of Sino-Tibetan relations (e.g. that the Chinese *invaded* in 1950 and slaughtered untold numbers of Tibetans in 1959) reflects the influence of area studies and the close relationship this has with the U.S. state. What is more, we need to recall with Tom Grunfeld that it is precisely U.S. policy and Sinological knowledge that works against a negotiated solution to the Sino-Tibetan conflict. By explicitly taking up the Dalai Lama's cause, by treating the P.R.C. as a threat to the U.S. and "human rights," and by creating credible fears that the U.S. wants to break up China (indeed the CIA backed the Tibetans' 1959 rebellion and funded the Dalai Lama until 1971), Sinological knowledge and U.S. foreign policy do more harm than good.²⁶

Post-colonial critique and the China field: a brief history of a non-debate

These two different texts, then, help illustrate the dynamic content of Sinological-orientalism as well as its dispersion. The critique of orientalism has, however, met with great resistance within the China field, and almost invariably takes the form of either flat-out dismissal or an uncomprehending caricature of Said's project that renders it an "exaggerated" critique of ethnocentric bias. An essay by historian Philip C. C. Huang will serve to illustrate the non-debate and the history of the logic of sameness within China studies. He notes that traditional thought invariably positioned China as the "Other," in that it was entirely *different* from the West.²⁷ In response to this, Huang and some others in his generation – those in the wake of the 1949 revolution and the Cold War – took it as their task to prove that China was just like the West after all:

[Our] well-intentioned efforts were perhaps motivated above all by the desire to assert China's equivalence to the West... [The] only way to counter the denigration of China as "the other" seemed to be to maintain that it was just like the West.²⁸

("Theory" par. 24)

Thus Huang evinces a tacit desire and theme in past scholarship: for equivalence or sameness. He implies this dynamic is no longer dominant in China studies, but it is the argument of the present study that it is so. Yet this sameness has shifted in political terms. Whereas for this earlier period the point (now seen by Huang as an "emotional dictate") was to counter a denigrating essential difference imputed to China, in the current phase it reflects an often explicitly neo-liberal and pro-Western politics (par. 27). Here the worst thing that could happen would be for China to "turn back" and away from capitalism. No one mentions that this might mean cutting off one's access to the field.

Huang perceptively notes that this old approach remained as "Western-centric" as its alternative (China as a copy of the West). But he follows this up with a call for "social history" and a return to the facts; these will show us what theories are valid. The status of the lying-in-wait "facts" is not addressed, and Said's challenges to conventional historicism and epistemology are ignored. Huang accuses Said of denying that "facts" exist prior to or beyond representations. But *Orientalism's* project was to present the constructed but real discourse on its own terms, and to show that it indexes the West more than any "Islam" or "Orient." And representations and knowledges, orientalist or otherwise, are not fake but are social facts themselves.

My retorts here will seem familiar to scholars in cultural and literary studies, and this in itself is instructive. As Ravi Palat aptly summarizes the situation: "'Crisis' in Asian Studies denotes shortages of funds rather than an epistemological questioning of the field" (Palat 110). Palat diagnoses the basic dichotomy (extreme specialization/extreme generalization) and the cult of expertise underpinning Asian studies (110). This last is based in "field time" and native language-proficiency.²⁹ These in turn provide "perfect-transparent knowledge as the only condition for gaining access to the real" (Harootunian, *History* 40). For China especially, language fluency is the sacred skeleton key, though to be fair this is itself part of nativist Chinese thinking. One could pile on here. There are the attacks on engaged, political scholarship from Simon Leys to Geremie Barme and Steven Mosher.³⁰ One tactic is to decide that orientalism is just self-delusional bias, and then to turn this back onto un-named scholars who "supported" – whatever that means – Chinese communism. Such were blind to the true reality of China's complete repression and totalitarianism.³¹ To be "in the true" of China studies and reportage, one has to be critical of the past and current regime because it has not yet broken free. Philosophical acumen, comparative and textual/interpretive skills, or self-reflexivity are not needed. Language training and field-time stand in for (adequate, rigorous) disciplinary and theoretical grounding.

In a presidential address to the American Association of Asian Studies in 1980, Benjamin Schwartz responded to Said's book. He defended the "objective validity" of knowledge that can be used for "understanding in the Weberian sense."³² More to the point here is his defensiveness about area studies and the "anti-Western" nature of Said's argument. He notes that the human and natural sciences are just as capable of being politically manipulated as orientalism and area studies. That is correct, but misses the point that Said would agree, and was moreover talking specifically about colonial forms of power and intellectual culture. Note, too, that Schwarz concedes Said's argument that the field of orientalism (and area studies) are "defined canonically, imperially and geographically" and not "disciplines defined intellectually" (*Orientalism* 326).³³ Schwarz, however, thinks this enables the area specialist, through comparative analysis, to see through and steer beyond a "spurious universality . . . derived from the West" and the trap of an "ahistorical culturalism" (or relativism).³⁴ But surely this a false choice: comparative historicism or ahistorical relativism. And the former

would need anyway to deal with the argument that comparativism smuggles in universal/Western norms and standards of comparison.³⁵ In the end, Schwarz recommends minor house cleaning. We should "rid ourselves of stale categories" and seek new "nomenclatures, some of them perhaps derived from the cultures we are studying."³⁶ *Perhaps* we can use some of their terms, but let us not go too far in a subjective direction. The basic Saidian question is elided: Who gets to write the Other, and how? The response to Said and postcolonialism was from the very beginning one of incomprehension.

But there was Paul Cohen's appeal for a "China-centered" method. He not only criticizes the Eurocentrism of past approaches (where poor China was always responding to the West), but also claims that Said's basic insight applies to China studies:

One need hardly agree with all of Said's strictures to accept the more general insight that all intellectual inquiry partakes of a kind of 'imperialism' and that the dangers of misrepresentation are greatest, the imperialism especially virulent, when the inquirer – or more precisely the cultural, social, or political world of which he or she is a member – has also had some part, historically, in shaping the object of inquiry.

(*Discovering* 150)

This admirably concise distillation of Said's argument is followed by a conventional alternative: "China-centered analysis" seems a plain historicism that simply seeks to be less chauvinist and more sensitive to the Chinese context. A decent and humane suggestion, but how? Harootunian argues that Cohen's model "rejects theory out of hand for the 'facts' and thus the authority of native knowledge and experience" ("Postcoloniality" 138). The discipline is still not defined intellectually, but linguistically and geographically. However much we might center ourselves in China, this nonetheless begs a lot of questions (and endless "facts") about *which* China. And then there are the irreversibly global and cross-cultural dimensions of both "China" and "the West."

Orientalism and the postcolonial turn, then, have made little impact on the production of knowledge within the China field. That field thus stands in sharp contrast not only to, say, anthropology or literature, but also South Asian, African, and Latin American studies. But it is instructive to further see *how* this turn has been avoided. In a series of essays, Zhang Longxi argued that "Western theory" – he often singles out the *Palestinian* Said's work in particular – has had a pernicious effect within Chinese intellectual culture. Said himself noted that his work had at times – in the Middle East – been taken up by some in narrowly nationalist and nativist terms.³⁷ Zhang's complaint is the same, seeing the uses of Said and 'postmodern' theory as anti-Western, politically conservative and supportive of the dreaded Communist regime. Zhang thus equates nationalist and fundamentalist uses of *Orientalism* in Arabic countries to leftist or 'anti-Western' critical intellectuals in China. But it is hard to say what *in principle* is nationalist, 'nativist', or otherwise dangerous to such appropriations of Said. He

singles out Rey Chow – as *anti-communist* a critic as they come – for criticizing the representation and whiteness of the Tiananmen event as broadcast to the world from CNN. Chow's use of Western theory is "misapplied" and unaware of the proper Chinese "context" in which criticisms of democracy are by definition conservative and beyond the pale (Zhang, 1992, 121). This appeal to the "Chinese context" and to "Chinese reality" surfaces in other essays by Zhang Longxi, including his criticisms of Zhang Kuan's influential essays on orientalism and Western hegemony in China studies and in the mainland 1980s.³⁸ The critique is again based on how Chinese reality – defined entirely by gestures to a repressive state – is by definition different than the Western one: such critical theory may be radical in the latter case, but not in China. Yet the question of *which* China – that of the middle class, the variegated intelligentsia, the urban workers, the migrant laborers, the peasants, the national minorities, and so on – cannot be asked. "China" is represented by a sheer dichotomy between anti-imperialists who turn out to be conservatives, and pro-capitalist/Western liberals who turn out to be the true, cosmopolitan voice of the people.

What we have, then, are clear battle grounds underlying the use of theory and orientalism, especially amongst the diaspora or Western-based writers (i.e. the majority). "Pomo" theory is either misplaced or, if it is to be used, must be directed *against* the Party-state and not in the name of anti-imperialism, nationalism, or some other form of "pro-China" politics. (From *within* China this often plays out in the opposite direction.) Zhang Longxi's work introduced the issue of cross-cultural analysis into Chinese literary studies, but it also is clearly overdetermined by a political agenda, even more than by its empiricism. That is, a strident anti-communist liberalism, a project shared by many others.³⁹ "Leftism" does not fit Chinese reality. Critiques of Western hegemony on the part of mainland Chinese intellectuals must be dismissed as nativist, nationalist, and so on. Thus it is the anti-anti-orientalists who seem far too confident about what the local, mainland context means and what it does to theory.

For such intellectuals committed in the first instance to a largely imaginary battle with the Chinese state, it is at best premature to inveigh against Western imperialism and colonial discourse when what China needs *first* is good old (capitalist) democracy as found in the West. This type of reason reaches its apex in the Charter 08 group composed of mainland liberal and neo-liberal intellectuals, and their Euro-American scholarly cohort. The chief architect of the Charter is Liu Xiaobo, a currently imprisoned intellectual who won the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize. His stakes are far different. There is something inspiring, or at least seductive, about the classical liberal, universalist language of the Charter (calls for freedom of speech, protest, and so forth in the context of the current Party-state) and in Liu's great personal courage. But what is most striking for my purposes is Liu's unrepentant stance on China needing "three hundred years of foreign colonization" so that it may politically, intellectually, and culturally catch up. Moreover, there is the Charter's insistence on privatizing the remaining public dimensions of the economy and instituting a complete system of private property.⁴⁰ Its substantive economic views are neo-liberal. Colonialism

and more capitalism will bring forth "individual freedom" and human rights in China. At the risk of criticizing an unfairly imprisoned "dissident" this is an Occidentalism, an internalized orientalism writ large. It also follows the logic of becoming-sameness outlined here. It is no accident that Liu is close to several experts in the China field.

When we recall the colonial roots of liberal thinking, from Locke to Liu, it is unsurprising that Zhang Longxi wants to ground cross-cultural analysis on humanistic and explicitly depoliticized grounds ("the variety of our world and the totality of what we may proudly call the heritage of human culture") ("Myth" 131). One sees this same gesture in a recent *boundary2* paper extolling individualism and generic humanism as the way forward for China and the U.S.⁴¹ Later, I map a similar, de-politicizing logic within "Sinography" – a far more "theoretical" venture – and its disavowal of orientalism and postcolonialism. What these diverse figures share, then, is not simply an anti-regime stance, but a politicized valorization of depoliticization.

Occidentalism, or internalized orientalism

In Chen Xiaomei's celebrated work, the problematic of orientalism is met by an affirmation of "Occidentalism," in direct response to Said's charge that to imagine a corresponding Occidentalism is absurd. Said's point – ignored by Chen and others – is not that the Eastern "others" are incapable of "othering" or imagining their colonizers. (This was clear even to the old colonists themselves.) But there simply is no institutionalized discourse and global, organized power/knowledge formation called Occidentalism. We are not likely to see S.O.A.S. morph into S.O.O.A.S. – the School of Oriental *and* Occidental and African Studies. Nor will we see Qinghua offering courses in Occidental Studies. Said argued that there is an unequal distribution of power – in terms of knowledge as much as capital and *realpolitik* – between the Occident and the Orient, or the core and its peripheries. He sought, in short, to produce a recognition that colonialism (the historical world system) also has to do with unequal knowledge-production and distribution. Or as Timothy Brennan has put it, the "actual conditions of knowledge" in the world are "nothing like [a] perfect see saw."⁴² This point is lost, however, in many critiques – *inversions* – of orientalism. Thus Edward Graham, writing some years before Chen *et al.*, would claim that orientalism only partly applies to studies of China, because Said's approach "can as logically be taken to Chinese views of the non-Chinese world" (41).

Chen expertly analyzes post-Mao poetry and drama and the various imaginings of the "Occident" that Chinese writers and artists, full of cultural capital, deploy against the state. And as Chen aptly notes, the Dengist (and later) state can be seen to have its own, "official" occidentalist complex (now sitting awkwardly beside a neo-Confucian one). We can add that the catch-up mentality – which presupposes material *and* cultural backwardness – stems not only from the May 4 era but also from the 1980s up to the present; it continues its second life after dying a first death in the confident, radical, and embargoed Maoist

years. But it is difficult to see how contemporary Chinese Occidentalism stands as a disproof of Said's argument about the material and worldly phenomenon of orientalism. Do they not *confirm* the power of orientalism and the history of Western colonialism by showing the fetishistic but real existence of orientalism's indispensable flip-side? Occidentalism is not the equivalent of orientalism, for the reasons of power and institutionalization. It is only notions of "level playing fields" and the "free marketplace of ideas" that can make it seem so. As Said insisted, orientalism is not merely an idea. The *production* of knowledge is itself a material, institutional, and global affair that is bound up with not only educational institutions, but capitalism and, thus, colonialism and empire. Orientalism and Occidentalism are two halves of a whole that do not add up.

In addition to Occidentalism's resurgence there is another development that seemingly calls into question the relevance of orientalism now. This is that it is often ethnically and even mainland-born Chinese intellectuals who are the purveyors of what I have been calling Sinological-orientalism. Examples of work from the former group would have to include Hong Kong scholar Rey Chow's corpus in cultural studies, widely influential in the U.S. But it must be said that her work on mainland China has often been conventionally tendentious vis-à-vis the P.R.C. (demonizing "Maoists" in China and in American English departments, reproducing Cold War accounts of totalitarianism, and so forth).⁴³ Examples of the more recent group of "representative Chinese" are numerous, but one can certainly index a scholar like Pei Minxin who, like many of the Western experts I examine in Chapter 2, consistently argues along universalist lines for the necessity of a bourgeois civil society for the forward-development of China.⁴⁴ At any rate, this demographic development marks the passage of time – and progress – from an older, more unambiguously colonial era of globalization and Sinology. But does it call into question the "model" of Said's book? For an overly historicist reading it may appear so. Orientalism is a white man's burden and the dominated do not have permission to narrate. We seem to have moved from this situation where "they must be represented" to one in which they, the Other, are doing it themselves. But this begs a number of questions as to *what* is being represented, i.e. the actual knowledge that is being produced as well as where it hails from (its *genesis*, as opposed to origin). There is also the Marxist question about such knowledge production: in whose interest is it conducted? This suggests continuities within Sinological-orientalism: the discourse of lack and China's tortuous path to normalcy, the Cold-War-meets-oriental-despotism dynamic, and so on. Moreover, given the American provenance/dominance of postwar China studies as well as cultural globalization since the early 1980s, Sinological-orientalism represents the triumph of one "Occidental" educational system as much as anything else. Sinification at the level of skin color only takes one so far.

It must also be said that Chen's *Occidentalism* is overdetermined by the same anti-communist and anti-state agenda as Zhang's. Chinese fetishizations of the Occident are to be valued precisely because they are somehow used against the Party-state, a symbolic subversion of authoritarianism. The logic here is a direct legacy of the Cold War: if a text or figure "dissents" from the regime at hand, it

is therefore "good," of aesthetic value, and certainly worth writing about. Anti-official Occidentalism is subversive and resistant simply because it is anti-Party-state, and the latter is monolithically bad and illegitimate. This is, in short, characteristic area studies discourse and also of a piece with standard 1980s Chinese liberalism. What such occidentalist intellectuals are dissenting from, and in the name of what, are questions that go begging. No justification of this "obviousness" is necessary. The fact that a stridently elitist, liberal text like the documentary series *He Shang* – Chen's key example of "counter-discursive" Occidentalism – can be filled with the most dubious valorizations of Western colonialism and racist notions about the Chinese peasant mentality, is insignificant. Thus passages like the following from Zhang Gang and Su Xiaokang's script pass unmarked by Chen:

In the vast, backwards rural areas, there are common problems in the peasant makeup [*suzhi* or "quality"] such as a weak spirit of enterprise, a very low ability to accept risk, a deep psychology of dependency and a strong sense of passive acceptance of fate.

(Su 169)

While such learned statements seek to diagnose the "feudal" mentality of the peasants and the "Chinese national character," they are nothing but the type of sanctioned discourse that the revolution had to overcome and that has known a new lease on life ever since the great reversal. Outside of the a priori belief that the Communist government is an unmitigated evil whose dissolution is to be desired by all right-thinking liberal democrats, it is hard to understand why this type of anti-peasant Occidental cosmopolitanism is to be valued. But it *does* make the case for understanding Occidentalism not as a "counter-discourse" but as an *internalized orientalism*. Or call it both if you like, but hold on to the basic contradiction that the "counter" aspects may be anti-Party but are also thoroughly reactionary. Elite occidentalist liberals may have permission to narrate, but questions about the class and political content of their discourse go begging. So, too, does Occidentalism's *genesis and location* within the global, uneven production of knowledge.⁴⁵

The limits of Chen's approach are further revealed on the final page:

If Chinese producers of culture choose Occidental discourse for their own utopian ends, it ill behooves those who watch from afar to tell them condescendingly they do not know what they are doing. I can only hope that the account given here ... might aid Orientalists and Occidentalists alike in understanding this fundamental axiom of any form of cultural studies that is faithful to its own founding notion of culture.

(176)

There are a number of things to mine in this passage, starting with the very *un-British* cultural studies notion of culture (initially at least, an antagonistic,

Gramscian one). What is more striking is that the occidentalists are to be respected because it is their choice to hold forth dubious propositions about the West and peasants. Contrast this, then, with Said's goal: to eliminate "the 'Orient' and the 'Occident' altogether," and to advance "a little in the process of what Raymond Williams has called the 'unlearning' of 'the inherent dominative mode'" (*Orientalism* 28).⁴⁶ While this speaks to Said's avowed humanism, it is clearly of a different, politicized type as compared to the ones examined here. Said's humanism was in the end a rigorously textualist-secular attitude on the one hand, and on the other an anti-imperialist, *anti-humanist* humanism in the manner of Fanon or Aime Cesaire. Given what Gayatri Spivak has referred to as "the demand for humanism, with a nod towards Asia,"⁴⁷ it is worth recalling Said's argument that "liberal humanism, of which Orientalism has historically been one department, retards the process of enlarged and enlarging meaning through which true understanding can be attained" (254). The systemic nature of Said's style of thought means that his real problematic – once last time – is not "bias" or even "Othering", *but the uneven and combined, global production of knowledge*. This is the real lesson of Occidentalism.

This has immediate consequences for the China field. Questions about its actual practice, and the historical conditions of possibility for that practice, as well as its "right" to legislate and interpret China will remain – regardless of whether or not it chooses to take up the postcolonial turn or the critique of representation. Beyond the comparatively simple question of China's political sovereignty (past or present) lies the question of knowledge as a political and worldly entity. China can be wealthy, regionally powerful (even exploitative), and yet orientalized.

Cold War, hot colonial theory: totalitarianism as orientalism

As my analyses above should already suggest, one of my themes in this study is that we can no longer separate the twin, inter-twined histories of the Cold War and postcolonialism, or in Brennan's felicitous phrase, the "East/West of North/South" (decolonization was caught up in the Cold War; the Cold War was caught up within colonialism) (39). As is obvious yet unexplored within postcolonial studies, these two great events of the last century – the battle between historical communism and capitalism, and the epoch of decolonization – were coterminous, overlapping territories. And of course many of the national liberation movements and reconstruction projects of the global "South" were socialist, Marxist, or communist in nature, just as other "emerging" societies and American-backed regimes were fully anti-communist. That global capitalism "won" and even captured the de-colonial movements is no reason to cede the writing of history to the victors. We also do not need to cede the writing of China to those who – in the P.R.C., Hong Kong, or elsewhere – take symbolic or financial benefit from the collapse of actually existing socialism in the mainland. The present study does not reconstruct this global history or fully theorize the filiations between communism and postcolonialism. But it does show a part of it: the imbrication of colonial discourse with anti-communism in the representation of

China in scholarship and other forms of writing. It argues that the discourse of anti-communism, and the lynchpin concept of totalitarianism, are part and parcel of Sinological-orientalism. "Oriental despotism" became "totalitarianism." Passive and irrational Chinese minds were easily "brainwashed." Orwellian oppression reigned, save for a few brave and inspiring stories of the human spirit (represented solely by film and literature of the 1980s and early 1990s). But this is being sloughed off, willy-nilly. Edward Said and those in his immediate wake may not have registered this adequately, but it should no longer be possible to speak of orientalism and China without also speaking of capitalism and the enduring presence of the Cold War, the specter of the East. For all the evident and iniquitous collaboration between classes and capital flows between China and the rest of the world, there is still a conflict here and a historical legacy of geo-political competition and struggle.

Let me attempt to further clarify the connection I am drawing between the postcolonial/colonial and the communist/anti-communist. In an essay published in 1984 – early enough in the development of postcolonial studies to be entirely neglected – William Pietz brilliantly unpacked the racist, orientalist thinking of George Kennan, Arthur Koestler, Hannah Arendt, and George Orwell. These were the founders of Cold War discourse and 'totalitarianism' their chief concept; it remains the lynchpin to the entire Cold War discursive edifice. Arendt's 1951 *Origins of Totalitarianism* endowed the concept and the entire project with an academic respectability that it still enjoys today. Pietz's argument, backed up through a rigorous explication of key texts, is that Cold War discourse displaced colonial discourse in the aftermath of World War II (when not least thanks to China, decolonization was the order of the day). It *substituted* itself for "the language of colonialism" (55). By drawing on colonial discourse, albeit in a less immediately racist, modified disguise, Cold War, totalitarianist discourse became not just intelligible but persuasive and popular. Note that it is not that colonial discourse disappeared, but that it was *articulated* to the Cold War. As the postcolonial critique of "totalitarianism" is at the center of this book, it is worth pausing on Pietz's essay. As Kennan, Koestler, and arguably Orwell are of little scholarly value today, we will focus on Arendt. But the achievement of the first three was to map onto Russia classic orientalist stereotypes about despotism, inscrutability, deceit, detachment from the real world, disbelief in objective truth, and so on. For Kennan *et al.*, totalitarianism was "traditional Oriental despotism plus modern technology" (Pietz 58). Here is Kennan writing in *Foreign Affairs* in 1947:

[Russian] fanaticism, unmodified by any of the Anglo-Saxon traditions of compromise, was too fierce and too jealous to envisage any permanent sharing of power. From the Russian-Asiatic world out of which they had emerged they had carried with them a skepticism as to the possibilities of permanent or peaceful coexistence of rival forces. . . . Here caution, circumspection, flexibility, and deception are the valuable qualities; and their value finds natural appreciation in the Russian or the oriental mind.

(Pietz 59)

Simply put: totalitarianism lies in the oriental mind (race). This raises a number of interesting questions about why the concept endures, and none of the answers would be flattering to the allegedly liberal, tolerant, and democratic nature of Western intellectual-political culture.

But it is Arendt to whom we must attend. Here Pietz's critique, quoting Arendt at length, is especially strong in showing the centrality of an essentially racist understanding of Africa and "tribalism" to her theory of totalitarianism. Both racism – which Arendt clearly wishes to oppose – and totalitarianism have their origins in colonialism and in European (the Boers) contact with Africa and Africans. That is, "we" learned these things from "them." In short, Arendt offers a narrative about the African/Other's contamination of the white, decivilized European mob:

When the Boers, in their fright and misery, decided to use these savages as though they were just another form of animal life they embarked upon a process which could only end with their own degeneration into a white race living beside and together with black races from whom in the end they would differ only in the color of their skin. . . . They had transformed themselves into a tribe and had lost the European's feeling for a territory, a *patria* of his own. They behaved exactly like the black tribes who had roamed the Dark Continent for centuries.

(cited in Pietz 68)⁴⁸

My point is not the awful, Conradian diction or even the stark conceptual separation between the European and the African. It is the effect upon the Boers and thence – so the retrograde diffusionist argument goes – upon Europe. We "degenerate" into a race-based, primitive and nomadic, rootless "tribe" (or "race organization") no better than them. Thanks to this contact with the primitive, not only do we come to think in terms of race (i.e. in a racist way), but this mode of thinking later morphs into a tribal nationalism that, in turn, becomes modern anti-Semitism and totalitarianism ("a whole outlook on life and the world").⁴⁹ This last phenomenon "lies in the nature of tribalism rather than in political facts and circumstances" (Arendt, cited in Pietz, 69).

Thus anti-Semitism and totalitarianism in general originally lie outside Europe (Pietz 69). This certainly helps "save" the West and helps constitute its identity as the better half of the Orient/Occident, North/South divides. This is all to say that, even in the relatively sophisticated hands of Arendt, totalitarianism is not only a concept with rather shaky logical foundations (turning upon a simplistic logic of contamination and diffusion), but one with a distinctly racist and colonial genealogy. We should therefore be far more circumspect in deploying the concept, if at all. It would be excellent philosophical hygiene to simply abandon the concept altogether, and give it a properly Christian burial. Understanding the colonialist roots of the concept perhaps makes it easier to see the types of work it does vis-à-vis China. Not only is totalitarianism simply a stand-in for an older notion of oriental despotism, it also necessarily assumes a striking

lack of human agency on the part of hundreds of millions of "brainwashed" Chinese "under" Mao. As if *all* Chinese said and did whatever they were told to do; as if there were a massive uniformity of experience across so much diverse, complex social space; as if there were such an oriental surfeit of power that this was even possible. Even if one chooses to believe the absolute worst about Mao *et al.* – and most people in China still see him otherwise – this should still be an untenable notion on intellectual as well as ethical grounds. It is also pre-Nietzschean in its notion of power as a solely top-down, repressive affair. In a later discussion in Chapter 3, I attempt to circumvent this coding of China via the notion of Maoist discourse.

In the years following World War II, colonial discourse did not disappear. How could it have, after so many decades, indeed centuries of development across the globe? Though it became more difficult to voice in the age of decolonization, it was instead articulated to the Cold War. The two combined, making colonial discourse "vanish" in a relative sense but living on as a constituent, mediating part of the Cold War. Cold War discourse became a substitute for outright colonial discourse, and endowed the neo-colonial aspects – and U.S.-Western hegemony – of the then New World Order with a desperately needed intellectual legitimacy. This was the chief function of the concept of totalitarianism, itself a colonial and racist notion. The end product helped usher in a new phase of U.S.-Western hegemony over the global East and South. These are, additionally, the years of the birth and triumph of Maoism, of the P.R.C., and – correspondingly – of China studies as we know it. In the U.S. that revolution then led from the quintessentially imperial debate over "Who lost China?" to, by the time of J. F. Kennedy and the Vietnam War, "Red China" becoming the "main enemy."⁵⁰ My argument is thus that "China" increasingly became the new object of this Cold War colonial discourse; with the further accumulation of knowledge in largely social-scientific and modernizationist form, there comes a "new" orientalism. Further on, with the defeat (and removal) of Maoism and the left in China, plus the open access of scholars, journalists, and others to their field, China itself sets the stage for the crystallization of Sinological-orientalism and its capital-logic of the P.R.C. becoming-the-same. This also presumes the Sino-U.S. rapprochement gradually making Red China seem less an enemy and more a friend (or future friend). The logic of China becoming normal like "us" – a step away, if the C.C.P. will fall – came to seem like common sense. This sameness has its limits, and again I wish to emphasize the *becoming* logic as opposed to the belief that China has fully arrived where we are. One can still detect signs of an older, more openly racist logic of essential difference at times. Totalitarianism-as-oriental-despotism, with all that says about native passivity or flat-out stupidity, certainly veers towards the latter. In any case, the standard of measure and positional superiority remain the same. My attempt is to show all of this in the following pages.