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INTRODUCTION

AMERICAN STUDIES WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS

PRISCILLA ROBERTS

The supposedly tranquil groves of academe are by no means the remote retreat of popular imagination, a peaceful haven inhabited by unworldly and erudite scholars, largely detached from "real" life, pursuing an arcane search for disinterested truth and knowledge. At times, they might seem more of a political jungle, not just in terms of the often savage infighting among their assorted denizens immortalized in numerous academic novels, but also in the degree to which what is taught and studied in universities, and by whom, reflects political and other pressures in the wider society. Recent years have seen an outpouring of scholarship suggesting that it is impossible for academics to function simply as rational, objective observers, and that not only what they choose to study but the sources they employ and even the language they use inherently privilege or prioritize some perspectives and materials above others and reflect prevailing economic, social, and political norms, expectations, and power structures. On another level, despite stated commitments to intellectual freedom by university leaders and even, on occasion, by politicians, the very fact that many universities are heavily dependent on government funding of various kinds makes it almost impossible for them to insulate themselves from assorted outside demands and even dictates, as to what areas and subjects should be studied and on occasion how these should be taught. At times such pressures have encouraged academic institutions to concentrate on "practical" vocational subjects, such as engineering, medicine, science, law, and business

management, that were considered socially valuable. They could also, however, have a major impact on the humanities and social sciences, areas often perceived as carrying major political and on occasion diplomatic implications.

The development of the field of American Studies, both in the United States and elsewhere, is preeminently a case in point. As recounted in Pan Weijuan's chapter in this volume, in the United States, the emergence of the discipline of American Studies marked something of an intellectual declaration of independence from Europe, a statement by US scholars that their own country and its heritage were as deserving of study as those of Europe.[1] The growth of US international power in the twentieth century, especially during and as a result of World War II, had a great deal to do with the spread of American Studies beyond the United States. In part, this was encouraged by the American government itself, through such mechanisms as the Fulbright program, that offered foreign academics and students opportunities for protracted teaching and research visits to American institutions, while funding stays by their US counterparts at overseas tertiary institutions, to teach, research, and, it was hoped, familiarize foreign academics and students with the United States, promoting further interest and exchanges. Ideally, Fulbright scholars were expected to have a multiplier effect, their influence radiating beyond their own activities to inspire others abroad to respect and admire the United States and wish to learn more about that country. Throughout the second half of the twentieth century and beyond, a variety of additional US governmental and private initiatives also funded assorted programs in American Studies, including seminars, institutes, and conferences designed to enhance foreign scholars' and students' understanding of the United States, knowledge that they would then be able to utilize in teaching and research at their own institutions.[2]

Initially, such programs were perhaps most extensive in the two major countries occupied by the United States after World War II, namely, Japan and Germany. Each of these states became a leading US ally and keystone of American strategy, one in Europe, the other in Asia. American Studies were deliberately encouraged as part of the efforts to implement the democratization and reeducation in those countries, to prevent a resurgence of Nazism or fascism, and to convert them into loyal American allies, with a strong cohort of political, economic, and intellectual leaders who had personal links to the United States. In Germany, many former refugees returned to their native country to assist in the establishment of American Studies. As the Cold War intensified, the targets of US programs broadened, to include elites and present

[1] Wise, "'Paradigm Dramas' in American Studies," 170-81.

[2] Skard, *American Studies in Europe*; Horwitz, "The Politics of International American Studies," 379-80, 389-98; Arndt, "American Cultural Diplomacy," 15-34; and Pells, *Not Like Us*, 105-16.

or future leaders from countries around the world, whether these were allied with, friendly to, or even neutral toward the United States in the Cold War.[3] These efforts were, moreover, only part of even broader overt and covert American efforts to enlist European and other intellectuals in anti-communist ventures during the Cold War.[4] American philanthropic foundations, notably the Rockefeller, Ford, Mellon, Luce, Carnegie, and Asia Foundations, often provided substantial funding for such enterprises, effectively underpinning US Cold War foreign policies.[5]

American pressure alone was not, however, the sole factor responsible for the international growth of American Studies. Once it became clear that the United States was a rising world power, foreign elites and eventually governments soon began to encourage the development of academic links between their own countries and the nascent superpower. The first such effort was the scholarships established and funded by Cecil Rhodes in 1902, to bring young men from the British Empire, Germany, and the United States to study for two years at Oxford University. Rhodes intended his new program to bind the world's strongest powers together in a mutually profitable and cooperative alliance.[6] World War I, which further demonstrated the potential might of the United States, generated additional such initiatives by British and North American elites. In 1922 the family of the Canadian-born press baron Lord Northcliffe, who had been a staunch advocate of Anglo-North American cooperation in international affairs, established the Harmsworth Professorship at Oxford University, commemorating one of his nephews who had been killed during the recent war. It was intended to bring a distinguished US historian to

[3] Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture*; Scott-Smith, "Building a Community Round the Pax Americana," 83-99; Pells, *Not Like Us*, chs. 1-4; Skard, *American Studies in Europe*; Wagnleiter, "Propagating the American Dream," 305-43; Lacey, "Institutional Structures and American Studies at Universities in the Federal Republic of Germany," 239-61; Brumm, "'Fifty Years Ago,'" 1-5; and Doerries, "50 Years German Association for American Studies," 8-16.

[4] See Hixson, *Parting the Curtain*; Arndt, *The First Resort of Kings*; Elder, *The Information Machine*; Wilford, *The CIA, the British Left, and the Cold War*; Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*; Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy*; Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold War in Europe*; and Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals*, chs. 7-8.

[5] On the role of the foundations, see Berman, *The Ideology of Philanthropy*; Guzzardi, *The Henry Luce Foundation*; Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe*; and Cumings, "Boundary Displacement," 271-5.

[6] Elton, ed., *The First Fifty Years of the Rhodes Trust and the Rhodes Scholarships*; Kenny, ed., *The History of the Rhodes Trust 1902-1999*; Aydelotte, *The American Rhodes Scholarships*; Symonds, *Oxford and Empire*; and Schaeper and Schaeper, *Cowboys into Gentlemen*.

Oxford to teach.[7] Between the world wars, in the late 1930s the Carnegie Endowment conducted a major survey of the state of American Studies in Britain, provided grants to several universities to purchase books on the United States, and funded efforts to promote teaching on the United States at both the university and secondary level.

These ventures were only preliminaries to endeavors by the British government, which began early in World War II, to promote a favorable public image of the United States, in place of the existing stereotype, drawn mainly from American movies, that highlighted gangsters, violence, and sex. British officials viewed the deliberate promotion of American Studies in schools and universities as a means of promoting Anglo-American friendship and cooperation, and of boosting the alliance between the two countries, and US Ambassador John G. Winant endorsed and encouraged this strategy. In July 1943 Cambridge University emulated Oxford in established a Visiting Professorship in American History, to be held by an eminent US academic, normally for a one-year term. These moves predated by several years major initiatives by the US government to advance American Studies in Britain, which only began in earnest in the early 1950s, when several summer conferences led to the establishment of the British Association of American Studies.[8]

Pragmatic appreciation of the need to develop a cadre of knowledgeable experts on the United States, a major international power with which they would have to deal, was undoubtedly one reason why from the 1940s onward many governments favored the development of some form of American Studies in their own countries. As demonstrated above, the need to enhance public understanding of the United States, especially among young British people, was one major incentive why British officials promoted teaching on America in secondary schools and universities. Almost inevitably, moreover, especially given that academics from a particular country frequently found it easy geographically to consult their own country's diplomatic and other archives, one major focus of scholarship and research that often emerged was relations between the other country and the United States, with many British scholars working on British-American relations, Germans on German-American dealings, Japanese producing studies of Japanese-American diplomacy, and so

[7] Continuing the tradition, in the late 1990s the Harmsworth family endowed the Rothermere Institute of American Studies at Oxford University. Housed in a modern building next door to Rhodes House, home of the Rhodes Trust, it has attracted the enthusiastic patronage and involvement of former President William J. Clinton, himself a past Rhodes scholar at Oxford.

[8] Reynolds, "Whitehall, Washington, and the Promotion of American Studies in Britain, 1941-1943," 179-98; see also Skard, *American Studies in Europe*, vol. 1, ch. 2; Pells, *Not Like Us*, 100-2; and Fisher, "Double Vision, Double Analysis," 141-56

forth, a pattern that has continued to the present day.[9] Some at least of these also functioned almost as cheerleaders for their own nation's special relationship with the United States, though others were more sophisticated and nuanced in their approach.[10]

Within the United States, by contrast, American Studies followed a rather different trajectory. As the Cold War took hold, the US educational system was increasingly enrolled in efforts to enhance the country's position in that conflict. McCarthyite pressures for intellectual conformity meant that, during the 1950s, teachers considered unduly radical or pro-communist were liable to lose their jobs.[11] Disciplinary areas seen as having some kind of strategic value, both the hard sciences necessary to assure American technological predominance, and those subjects, whether developmental economics or Asian studies, viewed as having some bearing on US ability to understand, influence, and win over other cultures, received official encouragement and generous funding.[12] American Studies, perceived as the academic field with greater potential than any other to interpret the United States to the outside world, was therefore of particular interest to US officials, a factor that undoubtedly facilitated its massive post-1945 growth.[13] In the early Cold War period, scholars in American Studies generally subscribed to a view of the United States imbued with a sense of that nation's exceptionalism, one that also fitted well into the prevailing "consensus" school then dominant in both history and politics, a perspective that—however nuanced many of its most perceptive practitioners were—generally emphasized why the United States was different from other nations, while highlighting what all or most Americans had in common rather than what divided them.[14] Interestingly, foreign academics studying the United States, especially Europeans, fundamentally followed their American colleagues' lead. As the British scholar Marcus Cunliffe wrote in 1975:

> [O]n the whole European Americanists have not yet said startlingly fresh things about the United States. In practically every branch of American Studies the organizing ideas, the bold interpretations, the controversy have been introduced by Americans. European contributions have tended to function within the context of received ideas, often very competently and sometimes definitively. In

[9] See Desmond and Dominguez, "Resituating American Studies," 483-4.
[10] See Pells, *Not Like Us*, 111-7.
[11] Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*; Caute, *The Great Fear*; Lewis, *Cold War on Campus*; and Diamond, *Compromised Campus*.
[12] Cumings, "Boundary Displacement," 261-80; and Diamond, *Compromised Campus*.
[13] Wise, "'Paradigm Dramas' in American Studies," 181-5; Thompson, *The Business of America*, 20-4; Horwitz, "The Politics of International American Studies," 379-80, 389-98; Arndt, "American Cultural Diplomacy," 15-34; and Pells, *Not Like Us*, ch. 4
[14] Wise, "'Paradigm Dramas' in American Studies," 179-81;

> retrospect and collectively they now appear rather derivative and—may one say so—dull?

Quoting from a reviewer of one of his own books, Cunliffe urged that foreign scholars had a "duty to ask questions about America of which Americans themselves are unaware."[15]

By the time that Cunliffe was writing, the intellectual earthquake that hit American academe during the 1960s and the 1970s, as the American social, political, and economic systems became the subject of wide-ranging and highly pejorative radical critiques from the New Left and others, had made a lasting impact upon American Studies. In the United States, issues of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality to American Studies, while overall the subject moved in the direction of interdisciplinarity and multiculturalism, focusing upon the interpretation of literary and cultural texts and often seeming to exclude traditional history, politics, economics, and diplomacy.[16] Some though not all Americanists in American Studies Departments and associations throughout much of Western Europe followed suit.

To numerous other foreign scholars, however, by the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries the prevailing emphases of American Studies within the United States seemed regrettably parochial, even provincial, reflecting a somewhat introspective preoccupation with domestic political and social issues and a quest to redefine national identity by focusing on minority groups that, though in many ways an interesting phenomenon in terms of what it revealed about the United States, frequently had little resonance outside that country's borders. Responding to the 2006 presidential address, Winfried Fluck expressed foreign scholars' disquiet with perspectives that, in their view, "retreated" into a comfortable and psychologically soothing "saving utopia" by focusing on "diversity" and alienated or marginal groups within the United States, while ignoring "analysis of the center" that was setting the agenda for the exercise of American power outside its own boundaries. "Scholars from abroad," she warned, "are exposed to the power effects of the political system as a whole." They could not, in this situation, simply ignore the overarching international power of the United States and turn their eyes away from the country's political mainstream:

> The United States is a paradigmatic, agenda-setting modern society and no talk about the crisis of the nation-state can distract from the fact that there is enough nation-state left to affect us all decisively. Or, to put it differently: globalization

[15] Cunliffe, "American Studies in Europe," 50-1; cf. Pells, *Not Like Us*, 117-8, 130-3.
[16] Wise, "'Paradigm Dramas' in American Studies," 185-210; and Marx, "Rethinking the American Studies Project," 52-6.

> does not mean that American power becomes porous or is going away. It means that it is reconfiguring itself and may emerge in even more effective, albeit more invisible, forms than ever before. American power is thus still a major issue for the rest of the world.[17]

Some even doubted whether American Studies had any real impact on public discourse within the United States itself. "Too many of our activities," the German scholar Alfred Hornung told the American Studies Association in 2004, "are turning in our own circles, are self-referential, and address the cognoscenti only."[18] Non-Americans also often found unpersuasive and even smacking of cultural imperialism the insistence of US specialists in American Studies that the disciplinary approaches then prevailing in their own country represented the only "correct" methodology for pursuing American Studies. Attending a pan-Asian gathering of American Studies scholars in Taiwan in the mid-1980s, where the bulk of the attendees were working on aspects of US international relations, diplomacy, politics, economics, or history, one American woman was heard complaining that—apart from the guest of honor, the then president of the US American Studies Association—she herself was the only person at the meeting who understood "what American Studies really means."

Much to their credit, numerous US academics in the broad field of American Studies and their professional organizations proved far more willing to listen to foreign perspectives and engage in discussion and debate over the past, present, and future of American Studies both at home and abroad. The 1990s and the early years of the twenty-first century saw a remarkable drive, spearheaded by the American Studies Association and strongly reinforced by other academic bodies, notably the Organization of American Historians, to invite overseas academics to attend their meetings and put forward their own views there and in such major journals as *American Quarterly* and *American Studies International* on what, in intellectual and disciplinary terms, the very words "American Studies" implied.[19] About the same time, members of the Society for the History of American Foreign Relations likewise discussed at great length whether the concept of American diplomatic history was even intellectually valid, in that one might argue that the term itself encapsulated the idea that US representatives working in isolation devised policies toward the rest of the world, which they then implemented. Such models, historians including the

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[17] Gluck, "Inside and Outside: What Kind of Knowledge Do We Need?," 23-31, esp. 28-9, first quotation 28, second 29.

[18] Hornung, "Transnational American Studies: Response to the Presidential Address," 69-70.

[19] Rowe, "Globalism and the New American Studies," 27; and Desmond and Dominguez, "Resituating American Studies," 475-90.

British Christopher Thorne and various Americans argued, were inadequate explanatory or interpretive tools, that failed to do justice to the complexity of the mutually influencing diplomatic interactions among and between not just states but also other non-state participants in international affairs.[20]

Interestingly, the answers the internal debates among American Studies scholars put forward themselves represented exercises in diversity. American academics were coming to realize that, even within their own country, in practice the field of American Studies encompassed a wide diversity of objectives and approaches. In a collection of essays on "Post-Nationalist American Studies" published in 2000, John Carlos Rowe described how, even where different campuses of the same US state university system were concerned, each "had very different ideas about the future of American Studies as a formal program on that campus, and it was instructive to discover how important local institutional and political factors were in shaping these attitudes." When the survey was broadened to embrace additional educational institutions, it became clear "that there can be no general model for the institutional future of American Studies in U.S. universities." Instead, he anticipated "a new intellectual regionalism that must be taken into account as we discuss the multiple futures of American Studies." In terms of American Studies beyond the United States, he argued: "The new American Studies requires a new internationalism that will take seriously the different social, political, and educational purposes American Studies serves in its different situations around the world."[21]

The quest for transnationalism was taken up and highlighted in many forums, among them the presidential addresses that Shelley Fishkin and Emory Elliott delivered to the American Studies Association in 2004 and 2006 respectively.[22] In 2004, Fishkin proclaimed: "There probably are as many definitions of American studies in this room as there are scholars; indeed, one of the reasons many of us were attracted to American studies was its

[20] McMahon, "Diplomatic History and Policy History," 95-109; McMahon, "Toward a Pluralist Vision: The Study of American Foreign Relations as International History and National History," 35-50; Maier, "Marking Time," 355-87; Marks, "The World According to Washington," 265-82; Thorne, "After the Europeans," 201-8; Hunt, "Internationalizing U.S. Diplomatic History," 1-11; Burk, "The Lineaments of Foreign Policy," 377-91; and the chapters by Michael J. Hogan, Melvyn P. Leffler, Bruce Cumings, and Michael H. Hunt in Hogan, ed., *America in the World*, 3-165.

[21] Rowe, "Globalism and the New American Studies," 26-31, quotations from 30 and 27-8.

[22] Fishkin, "Crossroads of Culture," 17-57; and Elliott, "Diversity in the United States and Abroad," 1-22. For fuller bibliographic references to the extensive and still growing literature on American Studies and Transnationalism, see Fishkin, "Crossroads of Cultures," n.13.

capaciousness, its eschewal of methodological or ideological dogma, and its openness to fresh syntheses and connections."[23] The emphasis on diversity and the manner in which, when exported abroad, American Studies is transformed by those involved into something often very different from its prevalent incarnations in its country of origin accords with much current scholarship on colonialism, globalization, and crosscultural interactions, work that emphasizes the degree to which all parties to such encounters emerge from the experience significantly changed.[24] The theme that crosscultural fertilization is rarely if ever a one-way street also runs through numerous chapters in the present volume, not just those discussing American Studies in China, but also those focusing upon missionaries, the spread of McDonald's outlets in China, the experiences of women, the learning trajectory of Chinese teaching assistants in the United States, and, of course, Sino-American relations. Many also implicitly suggest that broad generalizations are frequently intellectually dangerous, and that scholars—whatever the precise subject they are studying—need to bear in mind the peculiar circumstances and specific local features of the particular phenomena they seek to understand.

As Wang Jianping's chapter on the globalization and localization of American Studies ably describes, even within Asia, varying impulses were responsible for the development of American Studies in different countries, meaning that there is no single international model. Instead, one must address the specific context in which teaching and research in American Studies has arisen and the needs it fulfills in any particular nation. In the same region, even, these varied from country to country according to their individual circumstances and experiences. In South Korea, for example, American Studies won official and corporate support and credibility at university level as a means of producing graduates who were fluent in English and whose familiarity with US culture and society would fit them for positions handling international diplomatic or business affairs.[25] It is perhaps worth noting that, while the quest for transnational American Studies is sometimes perceived as a way of escaping the confines of the nation-state and, in an age of ever greater globalization, demonstrating the porosity of such boundaries, in practice the hard economic fact that around the world studies of the United States are usually conducted within universities, research institutes, or official bureaucracies that are in one way or another heavily financially dependent upon government funding, means that American Studies is usually perceived by politicians and others as addressing specific national needs. One further major distinctive factor uniting

[23] Fishkin, "Crossroads of Cultures," 19.
[24] See, e.g., Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*; and the chapters in Louis et al., eds., *Oxford History of the British Empire*.
[25] Kim, "Language, the University, and American Studies in Korea," 439-62.

foreign Americanists outside the United States, an interest that separated them from their American counterparts, was, as a New Zealand scholar stated, that:

> Our perspectives on United States society and culture are inevitably different. We have an acute sense of the United States as a world power, of the global impact of its policies and private enterprise, of the relationship between the American domestic context and international events.[26]

Such preoccupations are clearly in evidence in this volume, which represents one effort to scrutinize the past history and development and current state of American Studies within China. It includes a broad range of chapters, drawn from a variety of disciplines, demonstrating what one might term "American Studies with Chinese characteristics," in that they illustrate and illuminate the prevailing interests of Chinese scholars working on the United States. The great majority were first delivered at an international conference held at The University of Hong Kong in November 2006, cosponsored by that university and the US-China Education Trust. While the book is leavened by the reflections of two eminent US diplomats and a sprinkling of contributions from American, Canadian, and German academics, almost all of whom had extensive teaching experience in China or Hong Kong, over three-quarters of its chapters and commentaries were written by scholars from China. The conference represented the third annual meeting of the American Studies Network, an association of (at present) twenty-eight Chinese academic institutions teaching some form of American Studies established in 2004 by the Washington-based US-China Education Trust. That organization was itself founded in 1998 by the Chinese-born Julia Chang Bloch, the first Asian American to become a US ambassador, with the objective of promoting ties among Chinese universities engaged in studying the United States and helping those scholars and students involved to forge links with American academics and institutions, familiarize themselves with the United States, and upgrade their skills and enhance their resources for doing so.

The goals of the US-China Education Trust neatly complemented those of the Centre of American Studies at The University of Hong Kong, the host of the conference. Like other locales whose status was ambiguous, Hong Kong, a territory where for many decades Western and Chinese power, values, interests, and personnel encountered each other and coexisted in sometimes uneasy proximity, played a variety of mediatory roles in terms of communication and exchanges on several levels. Its indeterminate status and mixed allegiances meant that in practice Hong Kong, like Switzerland in both world wars or

[26] Montgomery, "Introduction: The Construction of an International American Studies Community," 6; see also Pultar, "The Imagined Community of American Studies," 11.

Rick's Bar in the movie *Casablanca*, served as neutral ground where representatives of nominally or officially opposed ideologies, states, and other interests could meet.[27] Elsewhere in this volume, Ambassador Nicholas Platt highlights the special functions that Hong Kong performed for much of the Cold War, in terms of providing a base for Western observers—diplomats, journalists, academics, and others—who wished to know what was happening in Communist China but had little or no direct access to that country. The Chinese scholars Mei Renyi and Chen Juebin likewise describe the impressive services Hong Kong performed during the 1970s in terms of handling and facilitating the steadily growing trade between the United States and China.

Yet another way in which Hong Kong has served as an interface between China and the West is the key interstitial role it has played in recent years in encouraging the growth of American Studies within China, and the development of a cohort of well-qualified scholars and students familiar with current research sources and techniques. For twenty years, from the early 1950s, serious study of the United States in China fell victim to political antagonisms and, when it occurred at all, usually did so within the confines of a rigid ideological straitjacket. In an ironical form of reverse McCarthyism, those few Chinese academics who—often out of personal interest—continued to study subjects with an American angle were often targeted for attack during the Cultural Revolution of the later 1960s, if not before. Academic libraries often lacked even the most basic American texts, and for decades Chinese universities rarely purchased foreign books.[28]

Due to its particular location in what was until 1997 a British-run territory, The University of Hong Kong, by contrast, possessed substantial library resources of both secondary and primary materials relating to the United States, and from the mid-1980s onward these were deliberately expanded, making these holdings the best of any institution in Asia, so that it became possible to conduct serious research in American Studies, up to international standards, in Hong Kong. Besides having great value for Hong Kong's own academics and students working at the undergraduate level or on advanced postgraduate degrees, these resources have also enabled the university to serve as a magnet facility that can support research and scholarship around the regional, particularly in mainland China. A conference held at The University of Hong Kong in January 1990, attended by more than a dozen mainland academics, can perhaps be regarded as

[27] On Hong Kong's role in the Cold War, see Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong*; Welsh, *A History of Hong Kong*; Share, *Where Empires Collided*; and Law, "Delayed Accommodation."

[28] See Zhu, "In Search of Ways of Doing American Studies in China," 292-9; and Yin, "Progress and Problems," 49-53.

marking the beginning of efforts to make this vision a reality.[29] As described in Zheng Hua's chapter in this volume, in the ten years from 1996 to 2006, generous funding from the Starr Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia supported over one hundred mainland scholars and students in American Studies, drawn from over twenty institutions around China, on research visits of two months to one year at The University of Hong Kong. For young doctoral students in particular, such visits often made a great difference, giving them access to resources which meant they could produce a superior, well-researched graduate thesis that would launch them on a productive academic career. To cite the words of one such visiting student: "The library of HKU is just like a paradise with endless new discoveries and excitements." This conference served as something of a reunion gathering for such visitors. Six of the contributors to this volume had spent lengthy periods in Hong Kong, and several more have since been awarded fellowships to support research in Hong Kong.

In different ways, the chapters by Zi Zhongyun, Wang Jianping, and Sun Zhe all seek to evaluate the state of American Studies within mainland China, drawing attention to both its strengths and weaknesses. All make it clear just how great an impact the policies of the Chinese government and educational bureaucracy have had upon the field's very development. As has been the case since the inception of American Studies, in numerous foreign countries much emphasis is placed upon the role the subject can play in providing expertise, in terms of both information and a cadre of personnel, on the United States, especially in terms of US relations with the particular nation involved. This has certainly been the case in China, where demands for competent and reliable policy advisers on all aspects of Sino-American relations were crucial in propelling early initiatives to establish and expand American Studies, especially at the research institute level.[30] Inevitably, these objectives have had a major impact on just what the discipline of American Studies is considered to embrace in China.

Madam Zi Zhongyun, the doyenne of Chinese Americanists, gives a frank assessment of many of the weaknesses of Chinese scholarship, especially the heavy concentration upon policy-related areas, foremost among them Sino-American relations, the status of Taiwan, congressional policies, economic issues, and security and disarmament, to the exclusion of many potentially fruitful subjects of broader interest. Much of what is published by Chinese academics she also characterizes, as does the chapter by Sun Zhe, another

[29] The papers of this conference were later published. See Roberts, ed., *Sino-American Relations Since 1900*.

[30] These impulses are discussed in Shambaugh, *Beautiful Imperialist*; and Saunders, "China's America-Watchers."

leading Chinese Americanist, as relatively trivial and repetitive, and focused upon issues of fleeting current rather than long-term interest. Like other contributors to the debate on transnationalism, however, she also chides US academics for ignoring the contributions of foreign scholars to American Studies, especially when these are not written in English, and highlights the obstacles often encountered in translating such works. Happily, her own distinguished book on Sino-American relations, *No Exit*, is an exception to this rule. One must also hope that the current volume will itself play some role in introducing Chinese work on the United States to a wider overseas audience.[31]

The chapters by Wang Jianping, a specialist in literary and cultural scholarship, and Sun Zhe, a leading Chinese expert in international affairs, likewise discuss the special features of American Studies in China. Both point to the impact of the Cold War, in terms of the short history of Chinese American Studies, which only began to develop with the reopening of Sino-US diplomatic relations in the early 1970s, and remained vestigial and almost entirely policy-oriented until after Deng Xiaoping won control in the late 1970s.[32] Writing in the early 1990s, Zhu Yongtao, a Chinese academic at Beijing Foreign Studies University, described the rapid expansion of American Studies during the 1980s, with about 1,100 Chinese scholars in several dozen institutions doing work related to the United States by 1988, and the production of numerous Chinese articles and MA theses in American Studies—585 and seventy-seven respectively in 1988—and even some PhD dissertations. Beijing bookstores carried more than twice as many books on the United States than on the Soviet Union, Britain, France, Germany, or Japan, a practical demonstration that Chinese demonstrated "greater and broader" interest in the United States than in "any other foreign country." Chinese wished, moreover, to learn more about "almost everything in the United States, from culture and education to daily life: geography, history, politics, economy, science and technology, literature, arts, customs, domestic policies, and foreign affairs." In Zhu's opinion, however, in the early 1990s the Chinese "search for understanding [of] what America really is and what Americans are" still had far to go, since:

> This Chinese search has always centered on two closely related questions: (1) what is the United States, and (2) how should we learn from America? If we should, what and how should we learn? The result has been a mixture of

[31] Zi, *No Exit*. For American scholars' condemnation of their field's heavy reliance on US scholarship, see Fishkin, "Crossroads of Cultures," 36-9; Elliott, "Diversity in the United States and Abroad," 7-9, 18-9; and Desmond and Dominguez, "Resituating American Studies," 478-9, 482-3.

[32] For a wideranging account of China's community of "America-watchers" in the years up to 1990, see Shambaugh, *Beautiful Imperialist.*

> frustration, confusion, failure, and success. Until today no definite answers have been found. In fact, the United States is still a puzzle to us, puzzling ordinary people as well as elite classes, intellectuals, officials, and business people. So the search itself has become a puzzle, a mystery, which is full of meanings.[33]

The "search" to elucidate the "puzzle" of the United States would continue. Interrupted only by a surprisingly brief hiccup following June 1989, throughout the 1990s and the early twenty-first century American Studies in China continued to grow very rapidly and has become extremely popular. Sun suggests, however, that much of this expansion is broad rather than deep. One weakness is the heavy concentration of American Studies institutions, especially those involved in policy-related work, in the two great political and economic metropoles, Beijing and Shanghai. It is also true that, in many institutions, American Studies teaching is heavily dependent upon the energy and enthusiasm of a small number of professors, sometimes, indeed, only one or two, and that if such individuals leave or retire, the programs they built up may vanish with them. Echoing complaints by academics in many other countries, Wang additionally points to the institutional constraints imposed by the existing structure of China's educational system, with American Studies rarely if ever functioning as an independent discipline, but usually housed either in other departments or schools, most often English, foreign languages, or history.

Although this is not explicitly mentioned, it is also true that, outside Beijing, Shanghai, and Nanjing, American Studies in China demonstrates a far greater emphasis on culture and literature as opposed to politics and history. Almost certainly, this is a legacy of the many decades when—especially given rapidly shifting political conditions—the latter subjects were often considered too sensitive and even dangerous for safety or prudence, whereas works of literature could be studied with somewhat greater impunity. The Sino-American antagonism that lasted from 1949 until the 1970s meant that, in Mao's China, American literature in particular was normally considered valuable only insofar as it could be interpreted as exposing and critiquing the evils, weaknesses, and shortcomings of a capitalist society. For a quarter-century, therefore, such Chinese studies of American literary works as were produced dealt with the relatively few "critical realist" authors, Theodore Dreiser and Jack London, for instance, whose writings lent themselves to such purposes, while many other writers whose books, stories, and poems were viewed as less "progressive" or politically correct were largely neglected.[34] Once the rigid ideological constraints of this period were removed, Chinese academic interest, teaching,

[33] Zhu, "In Search of Ways of Doing American Studies in China," 287-90, quotations from 289, 287, and 288.
[34] Yin, "Progress and Problems," 50-3.

research, and writing on American literature burgeoned from the early 1980s onward, and by the end of the decade Chinese universities were teaching more than eighty courses in American literature at the undergraduate and graduate level, while scholars produced numerous books and articles on a wide range of authors and topics. It was even suggested that the dislocations and sufferings Chinese had experienced during the Cultural Revolution and other ideological upheavals of the period since 1949 gave them greater ability to understand the complexities of modern American society portrayed and reflected in many well-known American literary works, such as Arthur Miller's play *Death of a Salesman*. Despite fears publicly expressed by one Chinese scholar after June 1989, that renewed ideological constraints would put an end to these developments, in practice any check was brief and temporary.[35]

A round half-dozen papers discuss the teaching and in some cases research programs on the United States at Fudan University in Shanghai, Sichuan University in Chengdu, and Zhongshan University in Guangzhou (Canton). Three give overviews of the programs at those universities, while the other three focus on specific courses and how they address the challenges of teaching Chinese students about the United States, a country that most if not all of them have never visited and one whose political, social, and economic systems are in many ways very unlike those of China. Fudan University houses one of the most impressive American Studies centers in China, which has received extensive funding from the Ford Foundation and other American donors, and hosted public addresses by former President George H. W. Bush and other leading American visitors. The establishment of this center, in which the late Madam Xie Xide, an eminent physicist who helped to pioneer semiconductor research and eventually served as president of Fudan University, played a crucial part as its founding director, is perhaps emblematic of the various factors that helped to promote American Studies in post-Mao China. As a young woman, Madam Xie won US degrees from both Smith College and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, before returning to teach at Fudan University. In her later years she facilitated the efforts of hundreds of young Chinese physicists to study and train abroad. In 1985 Madam Xie also took the lead in establishing the American Studies Center at Fudan University, as part of broader efforts to improve Chinese understanding and knowledge of the United States. As Sun Zhe's chapter indicates, that center's staff focus heavily upon teaching and research in areas with implications for China's official relations with the United States. Sichuan University, by contrast, emphasizes literature and culture, while Zhongshan University is developing a new program that seeks to provide insights into the contemporary United States by melding a wide variety of

[35] Ibid., 52-63.

disciplines, including history, film and media, literature, sociology, and anthropology.

Particularly enlightening, too, are the accounts these chapters give of the responses—favorable and unfavorable—by Chinese students to what they learn about the United States. The chapters on Zhongshan University's program also illustrate another facet of Hong Kong's role as an interface between China and the United States, since they describe an academic joint venture, funded by the Lingnan Foundation, in which several teachers from The University of Hong Kong drew upon their experience in that institution's American Studies Program to work with their counterparts at Zhongshan University in establishing an American Studies undergraduate program at Zhongshan that would be tailored toward the special expertise and interests of both teachers and students there.[36] Their experiences with particular courses also made it clear that, despite far greater levels of economic, intellectual, and academic freedoms than in the past, political constraints on what is taught and learnt at university level have by no means disappeared in China.

One important aspect of the transnational approach to American Studies is the significance it places on comparative work, juxtaposing phenomena or events in the United States with counterparts elsewhere, or viewing the same event, a war, for example, from different perspectives.[37] Implicit and often explicit in almost all the chapters in this volume is the comparative juxtaposition of the United States and China. Numerous contributors focused upon past and current Sino-American relations, almost certainly the single greatest area of concentration in China's American Studies. Indeed, one former president of a US foundation active in China once recounted how, some years after Chinese scholars began to visit the United States in large numbers, he and his trustees felt compelled to insist that Sino-American relations was not a discipline in itself and that their fellowship recipients must study a wider range of subjects.

Sino-US relations have a long history, dating back to the late eighteenth century. Chinese scholars are following their Western counterparts in recognizing that non-governmental actors were often as important as officials and diplomats in shaping the relationship. Less than eight years after the Declaration of Independence was signed, the first American trading vessel arrived in Macao. An extremely well-researched account by He Sibing, an independent Chinese scholar with a doctorate from Miami University, demonstrates the impact of pressures from businessmen involved in the China trade in persuading the US government to negotiate the 1844 Treaty of Wangxia with China, an agreement that accorded them the same commercial privileges

[36] For more extensive reflections on this process, see also Slethaug, *Teaching Abroad*.
[37] Fishkin, "Crossroads of Cultures," 23-5.

granted to their European competitors, together with the benefit of legal extraterritoriality. American missionaries did not begin to operate in China until the 1830s, and only in the early 1880s did they penetrate as far into the southwest as Chongqing in Sichuan province. Zhang Tao, himself a Sichuan resident, gives a perceptive account of the cultural interactions between American missionaries in Chongqing and the local residents, emphasizing how, despite their obviously deeply entrenched convictions of Western superiority, mission personnel in many ways accommodated themselves to local conditions, adopting Chinese dress and customs. His account suggests, though, that Americans found it easier to modify their external behavior than their internal assumptions regarding non-Western peoples.

Moving forward into the twentieth century, Kenneth Kai-chung Yung and Xu Chongning each focus upon particular individuals who helped to influence Sino-American relations. Yung suggests that Walter H. Judd, a former medical missionary in China who as a US congressman became a leading figure in the "China lobby" of the 1940s and 1950s, felt far greater empathy toward the Chinese among whom he worked, than did his counterparts in nineteenth-century Chongqing. His overall attitudes toward Asians, not just Chinese but also Japanese, were undoubtedly far less racist than those a great many Americans of his time displayed, leading him to advocate and work for the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act during World War II. Judd's experiences in China and his sympathy for that country when it came under Japanese attack were also major reasons why he supported US assistance to China, though Yung suggests that concern for US national security interests was also important in Judd's thinking. Xu foregrounds characteristics of General Joseph W. Stilwell, the top US military official in China for most of World War II, that make him an attractive figure to many Chinese today: his modesty, low-key style, respect for all individuals, including most of the Chinese he encountered, and fierce opposition to corruption. Implicit in this chapter is the suggestion that, had the US government in Washington followed Stilwell's advice and withdrawn its support for Nationalist leader Chiang Kaishek, post-1945 Sino-American relations would have followed a smoother course. More broadly still, Xu's treatment of Stilwell tacitly highlights the need for Americans to show sensitivity and an understanding of cultures other than their own when dealing with foreign countries, a theme taken up by Wang Shijing elsewhere in this volume and also implicit in several chapters dealing with current Sino-American relations.

Stimulating and well-researched though all these four historical papers are, one rather regrets that most made little serious use of Chinese sources, especially those archival materials that are increasingly becoming available within China. Especially in the fields of diplomatic and crosscultural relations, it

is to be hoped that one great advantage Chinese scholars will soon have over most Westerners will be their ability to deploy original Chinese-language materials to provide new insights into the Chinese side of crossnational transactions. One major omission from this volume is any work associated with the Cold War International History Project's efforts to encourage the opening of Chinese—and many other—archives on the Cold War, so that the history of that era is no longer based largely on Western documentary sources, but utilizes materials from former Communist bloc countries and also from neutral states.[38] In the past fifteen years, Chinese scholars, some working at mainland institutions, others based in American universities but maintaining close links with colleagues still in China, have done much to encourage their own government to make more documentary materials on the Cold War available. Chinese centers for Cold War Studies have recently been established at East China Normal University in Shanghai and Peking University. Chinese academics have also shown considerable ingenuity in tracking down archival materials in somewhat unusual and obscure repositories, using a wide variety of provincial, municipal, and local archives and even investigating such resources as the files of the Chinese Railway Administration.[39]

In 1996 and 2000, the Cold War International History Project held two major conferences at The University of Hong Kong, each attended by leading Chinese experts in the field, and several such gatherings have also been held in China itself.[40] Harvard University and the CCP Party School have also mounted a major collaborative initiative to explore several decades of Sino-US relations during the Cold War, one that has resulted in various book-length volumes, published in both English and Chinese, presenting Chinese, American, Russian, British, and other perspectives on big power relations with China during the

[38] Further information on the Cold War International History Project is to be found on its website,
http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=topics.home&topic_id=1409,
accessed June 15, 2007.

[39] Three leading recent works that utilize Chinese sources to elucidate China's role in Cold War diplomacy, all by mainland Chinese scholars now working at US academic institutions, are Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*; Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars*; and Zhang, *Economic Cold War*. See also the collections, Yuan and Harding, eds., *Sino-American Relations, 1945-1955*; and Hunt and Niu, eds., *Toward a History of Chinese Communist Foreign Relations*.

[40] The conferences held in Hong Kong resulted in two substantial edited collections of essays, many of them by Chinese scholars. See Westad, ed., *Brothers in Arms*; and Roberts, ed., *Behind the Bamboo Curtain*.

Cold War years.[41] The chapters in this book are therefore less than fully representative of some of today's more exciting scholarship placing China's Cold War diplomacy in a broader international perspective.

This collection does, however, do ample justice to the perennial preoccupation of Chinese academics, especially those who serve as formal or informal advisers to one or another agency of the Chinese government, with the state of Sino-American relations. It was significant that the first major international conference in American Studies hosted by Chinese academics in the aftermath of the events of June 1989 was a gathering in Beijing in May 1991 that focused upon the position of the United States in East Asia.[42] Chapters by Zhang Liping, Zhuang Jianzhong, Qiu Meirong, Zhao Baomin, Ye Jiang, and James A. Kelly, US assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs from 2001 to 2005, all in one way or another discuss whether China's rising economic and strategic might, especially in the Asia-Pacific region, will ultimately lead to outright conflict between China and the United States. Ever since the mid-1990s, the topic of China's growing power and its probable future impact upon international affairs has attracted enormous interest from the foreign policy communities of both countries, with conferences and books on the subject proliferating dramatically.[43] In the late 1990s and early 2000s, several somewhat sensational books by American journalists argued that China already posed a major military and economic threat to the United States, one that would become even more ominous over time.[44] Others, however, notably the academics Andrew Nathan and Robert Ross, contended that militarily China remained largely a paper tiger, with defense capabilities that were still modest and in no sense a match for those of the United States.[45]

Within China, the issue of how best to manage China's rise to power and the strains to which this will subject the current world order has become a matter for almost obsessive debate among Chinese intellectuals and policy-makers, with academics associated with the Chinese Foreign Ministry generally arguing that,

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[41] See Ross and Jiang, eds., *Re-examining the Cold War*; and Kirby, Ross, and Li, eds., *Normalization of U.S.-China Relations*. These volumes have also been published in Chinese.

[42] The papers were published in Shi, Mei, et al., eds., *The United States and the Asia-Pacific Region in the Twentieth Century*.

[43] See, e.g., Ross, ed., *East Asia in Transition*; Johnston and Ross, eds., *Engaging China*; Johnston and Ross, *New Directions in the Study of China's Foreign Policy*; Paau and Yee, eds., *Return of the Dragon*; Foot and Buzan, eds., *Does China Matter?*; and Tsang, ed., *If China Attacks Taiwan*.

[44] Bernstein and Munro, *The Coming Conflict with China*; Gertz, *The China Threat*; and Mosher, *Hegemon*.

[45] Nathan and Ross, *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress*.

though the relationship will undoubtedly go through periods of tension and even crisis, requiring careful handling on both sides, today's international system contains sufficient safety mechanisms to permit China and the United States, with goodwill on both sides, to surmount periods of difficulty.[46] Zhang, Zhuang, Qiu, and Ye incline to this perspective, as does Kelly. Ensuring that China's growing power does not provoke excessive international antagonism is indeed a major preoccupation of many of the country's leaders. With official encouragement, in October 2006 Peking University hosted the Beijing Forum, a gathering of academics and some mid-level government functionaries from around the world, that focused upon globalization, with many prominent speakers taking the perspective that this would promote international peace, development, and harmonious cooperation. Effectively, the burden of the meeting was that, rather than the future clash of civilizations anticipated by Harvard academic Samuel P. Huntington, China's expanding influence could be expected—at least where China and the West were concerned, and perhaps in other areas—to have a benign impact on world affairs. All appearances suggest the 2007 Beijing Forum meeting, organized around the broad theme "The Harmony of Civilizations and Prosperity for All: Diversity in the Development of Human Civilization," will once more seek to convey this message.[47]

It may well be that the post-September 11, 2001 US preoccupation with international terrorism and the Middle East has left American officials with little attention and only limited military forces to spare for Asia and the Pacific, transforming the Bush administration's early tough stance toward China and rhetorical support for more assertive policies on Taiwan's part into efforts to damp down tensions in Asia and win Chinese assistance in American anti-terrorist efforts and in dealing with North Korea's drive for nuclear weapons. The chapter by Zhao Baomin, however, a young scholar now teaching at Xi'an Jiaotong University, is a salutary reminder that by no means all Chinese officials or academics, especially younger intellectuals, are pro-American. Zhao called for a Sino-Japanese alliance against the United States, one that would enable China to take Taiwan and enhance its own military and strategic position in Asia. When they were originally made in a conference session, Zhao's recommendations provoked more controversy and discussion than did any other paper delivered during the entire two-day meeting. It is worth remembering that a good number of nationalist military men and bellicose academics in China undoubtedly share Zhao's perspective.

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[46] See, e.g., Wang, "China's Search for Stability with America," 39-48.

[47] On the Beijing Forum, see the Beijing Forum website, http://www.beijingforum.org/en/Index.asp, accessed June 15, 2007; on Huntington's thesis, see Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*; also Rashid, ed., *The Clash of Civilizations: Asian Responses.*

The careers of US Generals Douglas MacArthur and Curtis LeMay offer salutary reminders that it is by no means unprecedented for generals in countries other than China to find themselves greatly though usually ineffectively out of sympathy with their own governments' conciliatory policies. Zhao's perspective is also symptomatic of the growth of nationalism in China since the 1990s, especially though not exclusively among young people, a nationalism with the potential to flare up unexpectedly during international disputes, as it has done in various crises with the United States and also over such issues as how Japanese high school textbooks portray Japan's treatment of China during the 1937-45 Pacific War. In the late 1980s, of forty elite university students taking an American Studies course, 85 percent described the United States in positive terms.[48] Eighteen years have passed, however, since young Chinese students in Tiananmen Square deliberately appealed to American values and television viewers in the United States; today's university entrants were only in their cradles then. Studying Chinese perceptions of the United States in the early 1990s, Jianwei Wang demonstrated that many elite Chinese intellectuals, diplomats, and businessmen resented what they viewed as the arrogance and incomprehension of China that their US counterparts displayed, and also what they perceived as the hegemonic and hypocritical behavior of the United States, together with its teacher mentality, excessive freedom, individualism, and lack of discipline. Many were also cynical as to official American professions of idealism, and considered that nation a threat to China.[49] When Francis Fukuyama, then a youthful American diplomat, proclaimed in the early 1990s that, with the Cold War over and the Soviet Union dissolved, the world had reached "the end of history," and all other nations would find themselves inexorably embracing a liberal capitalist democratic future along American lines, numerous Chinese found these predictions arrogant, insensitive, and hegemonic.[50] By the 1990s, numerous nationalist Chinese felt very real resentment toward the United States, a country both officials and the general public increasingly perceived as a bullying, hectoring superpower that was determined to deny China its rightful position within Asia, to prevent the unification of Taiwan, and to keep China militarily and economically weak.[51] The current Bush administration's emphasis on unilateral and preemptive action against nations the United States believes might pose a potential threat to its own interests has done little to reassure such critics.

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[48] Zhu, "In Search of Ways of Doing American Studies in China," 297.
[49] Wang, *Limited Adversaries*, 80-1, 150, 169-73, 178, 183-4.
[50] Fukuyama, *The End of History*.
[51] Lampton, *Same Bed, Different Dreams*, 78-80; and Tucker and Cohen, "America in Asian Eyes," para. 70.

In all probability, many US officials fail to realize the intensity with which every word on China that they may speak or write is scrutinized by that country's officials and students to discern every possible nuance that the often rather casual or hasty author might, or quite possibly might not, have had in mind. Rising economic prosperity and broader opportunities in the 1990s and early twenty-first century meant that many young people were far less discontented than their counterparts of the late 1980s. Yet, even though they might still wear American jeans, patronize McDonald's, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and Starbucks, enjoy American movies and music, and seek to study in the United States, what they perceived as American arrogance toward China infuriated them.[52] This was particularly the case during the 1995-96 Taiwan Straits crisis, the accidental US bombing in 1999 of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, and the forced landing of a US spy plane on Hainan Island in spring 2001.[53] All these episodes provoked large student demonstrations against the United States, efforts that, however much the Chinese government may have encouraged and facilitated them, nonetheless indicated the staunchly anti-US outlook of many Chinese, especially the young. It was no coincidence that in the mid- to late 1990s a short book, *China Can Say No*—written by several young Beijing intellectuals, none of whom had ever visited the United States—and its sequel, *China Can Still Say No*, became bestsellers, though the Chinese government eventually sought to suppress the latter publication as unduly provocative.[54] Such works revealed a deep vein of anti-American sentiment among Chinese young people and a nationalism in some ways reminiscent of the early twentieth-century hostility toward the foreign countries that had humiliated China internationally. Symptomatically, in September 2001, even though their leaders swiftly offered sympathy and support to the United States, many Chinese students cheered when watching television footage of the collapse of the Twin Towers. Indeed, in the later 1990s rising Chinese nationalism inhibited at least some professional Chinese "America-watchers," scholarly experts on the United States based in the leading Beijing and Shanghai research institutes, from publicly expressing views that might be perceived as overtly pro-United States or from publicly criticizing anti-US perspectives.[55] While most of the chapters on contemporary Sino-American relations included here reveal that such self-censorship has now dissipated, one ought to remember that a deep reservoir of anti-American nationalist feeling still exists in China, ready and waiting to bubble up should a major new Sino-American row erupt.

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[52] Lampton, *Same Bed, Different Dreams*, 255-7.
[53] Ibid., 59-61; and Cohen and Tucker, "Asia in American Eyes," 68-9.
[54] Song et al, *China Can Say No*, and *China Can Still Say No*; and Saunders, "China's America Watchers," 58-9.
[55] Ibid., 45, 49.

When Sino-American difficulties arise, a good number of China's American experts almost certainly find themselves torn two ways emotionally, even as they seek to resolve these. In the early Cold War years, many British and other European specialists in American Studies, often those from relatively non-elite backgrounds who had found visiting and living in the United States personally liberating, offering them opportunities they might not have enjoyed at home, nonetheless still frequently had real reservations over US official policies of the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1970s and 1980s European Americanists became ever more critical of the United States, in this respect following the prevailing trends in American Studies within its home country, and many eventually turned to efforts to resist what they perceived as American hegemony.[56] Like many foreigners around the world today and earlier, including—as Warren I. Cohen and Nancy Bernkopf Tucker recently pointed out—many in Asia throughout the past century, while admiring proclaimed US ideals of democracy, equality, liberty, and personal freedom, together with its stated commitment to the self-determination of nations, they deplored American failures to live up to these principles.[57] It is quite possible to be deeply attracted by many aspects of the United States, including that country's perennial and pervasive vitality, energy, informality, and sense of near limitless possibilities, and still have profound misgivings over or even totally disapprove of the internally and externally repressive policies embraced by many of its leaders.

Elsewhere in this volume, former Assistant of Secretary of State James A. Kelly remarks on the dramatic improvement over the past fifteen years in the caliber of Chinese diplomats and officials dealing with the United States, a change that owes much to the fact that most of them have spent lengthy periods studying there, and have gained a far deeper understanding of the country than earlier Chinese representatives possessed. Like other Chinese America-watchers who are personally familiar with the United States, most find much to admire there, but also a good deal to criticize. Chinese academics and intellectuals, especially those who seek to explain or defend their country's policies in non-Chinese forums, are also sometimes angered by what appear to be foreigners' demands that they personally dissociate themselves from many of the Chinese government's policies, especially on such emotive issues as human rights, population control, religious freedom, democracy, and Tibet. Americans have often shown themselves hesitant to criticize their own country to outsiders, as Bill Clinton demonstrated while studying at Oxford, when he refused to

[56] Pells, *Not Like Us*, 111-33.

[57] Cohen and Tucker, "America in Asian Eyes," paras. 2, 4, 12, 19, 24, 28, 32, 60, 80; on such ambivalences, see also Grandin, "Your Americanism and Mine," paras. 3-7, 12, 44; Gienow-Hecht, "Always Blame the Americans," paras. 8-11, 42-3, 49; and Huntington, "American Ideals versus American Institutions," 1-37.

condemn American policies in Vietnam while he was abroad, even though he disagreed with these. When presenting China's case, many Chinese would argue that, however imperfect its record when measured against ideal standards, for most ordinary Chinese the past two decades have been the best in China's history both economically and in terms of personal freedom and opportunities. Defending their country, Chinese academics and intellectuals would also contend that many of those Western nations that are demanding modifications in China's domestic policies, not least the United States, display comparable flaws and shortcomings which cast doubt upon their own professed national values. Whatever reservations they may harbor over aspects of the Chinese government's behavior, most Chinese scholars, including those who specialize in American Studies and have spent long periods in the United States and find much to applaud and perhaps emulate there, feel very real loyalty to and pride in their own country. Few if any would wish to be forced to choose between China and America as an either/or proposition. When acting as professional intermediaries between the two countries, whether on an official or informal level, some undoubtedly on occasion have very mixed emotions and find their situation a cause of some personal conflict and difficulty.[58]

Even outside America's borders, however, American Studies has other goals besides producing informed experts who can interpret between their own country and the United States, and embraces much beyond international diplomacy and bilateral US relations with other nations. The chapters in this volume reveal something of the wide range of contexts in which US-related subjects can provoke interest and study by Chinese scholars. As Chinese education recovers from the ravages of the Cultural Revolution, a younger generation of academics, some of whom lost up to a decade of schooling during that period but subsequently made up lost time, others somewhat younger, are increasingly prominent in junior and mid-level positions within China's universities. Most have had opportunities to study overseas, where many have earned MAs or PhDs. Many of them are taking Chinese perspectives toward the United States, drawing analogies and comparisons which reveal a stimulatingly high level of crossfertilization between different cultures. On occasion, they turn their attention to analyzing the Chinese academic world itself. Feng Yi, for instance, who obtained her MA from Leiden University, suggests that the reason why William Faulkner's novels have become extremely popular subjects of study among Chinese academics is not primarily their modernist character, but is because they deal with a society that is, like present-day China, undergoing the wrenching transition from an agrarian to an industrial basis. Pan Weijuan

[58] On the mixed feelings of Chinese intellectuals toward the United States, see also Shambaugh, *Beautiful Imperialist*; Wang, *Limited Adversaries*; and Zhu, "In Search of Ways of Doing American Studies in China," 293, 295.

draws analogies between the development of American Studies in the United States and the recent emergence of Chinese Nation Studies in China, highlighting not just the similarities but also the differences.

One of the relatively few chapters by a non-Chinese, that of Paul Levine on "soft power," takes up the theme popularized by the Harvard academic Joseph S. Nye, Jr., that much of the diplomatic influence of the United States has in the past rested on its mastery of soft power, the ability to persuade rather than coerce other nations and their populations into emulating the United States, at least on the cultural level, because they admire it, rather than using brute force to impose its will.[59] In the early twenty-first century, American international policies, especially the emphasis on unilateralism and the exercise of military power demonstrated by the current Bush administration, have caused popular anti-Americanism to soar around the world. Even in countries such as Britain and Australia, that have allied themselves with the United States in support of interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, general public attitudes toward American actions overseas are largely unfavorable. In Britain, for example, young people at universities are turning away from American Studies to indicate their alienation from current US (and British) foreign policies.[60] Nothing, however, seems to affect the magnetic attractions American movies, rock music, and fast food exert on youthful non-Americans, in Europe, Asia, and elsewhere, one indication that, at the cultural if not the diplomatic level, the United States can still deploy significant reserves in terms of soft power.

The chapter by Wang Shijing, who teaches in Shanghai, a city that has functioned for well over a century as one of the most important nodes for contacts between China and the West, argues that crosscultural interactions require sensitivity and diplomacy on both sides. In many ways, he is reinforcing the earlier arguments of Wang Jianping, that globalization and localization must go hand in hand, whether this be at the academic or the business level, and that whatever is exported, ideas, businesses, academic practices, or anything else, they will either be adapted to suit local conditions or perish by the way. Two chapters on McDonald's, one of the emblematic American cultural icons, present what are in many ways opposing views of that undoubtedly global phenomenon, a corporate icon and symbol of the international reach of the United States whose operations in Asia have already attracted extensive scholarly attention.[61] Wang Qingjiang, a Kunming-based scholar, argues that the expansion of McDonald's within China has owed much to that franchise's sensitivity to local conditions, and that through its very presence and operating norms, McDonald's effectively promulgates democratic ideas within China.

[59] See Nye, *Bound to Lead*; *The Paradox of American Power*; and *Soft Power*.
[60] Toynbee, "A Degree in Bullying and Self-Interest? No Thanks."
[61] See the essays in Watson, ed., *Golden Arches East*.

Jiang Ningkang scrutinizes and compares the practices of McDonald's and KFC within one medium-sized Chinese city, Nanjing, to suggest that in terms of expansion and popularity McDonald's is currently falling behind KFC in China, and that the major reason for this is McDonald's failure to adjust its operations in accordance with local practices and preferences. Studies of the chain's operations in Hong Kong and Taipei also suggest that, in those cities, McDonald's "is not perceived as an alien or exotic institution," but has become assimilated, at least by young people, as a "routine" feature of local culture. The acceptance of McDonald's as part of the scenery in leading Asian urban centers undoubtedly raises the question of just how a particular culture absorbs, adapts, and appropriates originally "foreign" institutions, and what such processes imply in terms of transcultural relations.[62]

Identity—whether McDonald's should become more "Chinese" or stick to American operational procedures—is key to such debates, and is also an implicit factor in the positioning of those Chinese American Studies specialists who seek to serve as intermediaries and interpreters between China and the United States. Identity is also an issue that Chinese in the United States find themselves compelled to negotiate. Two chapters approach this subject from entirely different perspectives. Two young women based in Xi'an, Meng Yaru and Li Huajun, provide a very detailed analysis of the experiences of a dozen Chinese teaching assistants working in American universities, and how these young and often internationally inexperienced students handled and in most, indeed apparently all, cases overcame their initial difficulties and made the best of an undoubtedly personally challenging encounter. It seems—findings that will perhaps prove surprising to none but men and scientists!—that women and those in fields other than the hard sciences not only made the greatest efforts to improve their skills, but also felt they ultimately learned the most themselves by undertaking and fulfilling such responsibilities. Another chapter scrutinizes the novel *Typical American*, a study of a Chinese-American family that suggests that, rather than carrying specifically Chinese markers, the experiences of its protagonists embody and encapsulate what are often considered quintessentially American epiphanies.

Questions of gender and ethnicity, as well as race, are much to the fore in American Studies as practiced in the United States. They are by no means absent from Chinese scholarship, though not always in quite the contexts and settings one might anticipate. For decades, Chinese scholars have shown themselves adept in using literary and other cultural texts, including artworks, to

[62] See the chapters by Watson and David Y. H. Wu in Watson, ed., *Golden Arches East*, quotation taken from Watson, 107. On Asian assimilation, modification, and adaptation of American ideas, institutions, and culture, see also Cohen, *The Asian American Century*, ch. 2.

explore issues of topical interest to themselves, a practice that became virtually an art form during the Cultural Revolution, if not before. The entangled semiotics of Chinese politico-literary criticism can make those of US academe appear amateurish![63] I certainly have strong memories of presiding over a session at an American Studies conference in Guangzhou, where it was quite clear that women in particular, but also others, were using British and American literary classics to explore issues of deep concern to themselves, including not just the position of women in Chinese society, but also current social policies in terms of poverty and economic development. When I brought up this point, several of them—one self-describing herself as currently "in recovery" from having internalized patriarchal norms—readily admitted to employing such a strategy. The specific messages that Chinese scholars will find in American literary texts are not necessarily those readily discernible by academics in the United States, but may be equally valid readings.[64]

In this collection, no less than four chapters deal in one form or another with the position of women. For many in China, this is a subject with broad implications. Since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, women have supposedly "held up half the sky." In practice, however, their status has generally lagged behind that of men, though China's one-child population policies mean that the proud middle-class parents of high-achieving only daughters often value a girl just as much as they would a boy. Even so, in rural areas sons have been preferred to daughters, and the use of sex-specific abortion as a means of birth control has caused an imbalance in the sex ratio, with considerably more male than female children born since the 1970s. Whether this will ultimately boost the status of women remains to be seen. In recent years, with the most desirable jobs sometimes in short supply, women university students have found themselves facing pressure from their male colleagues/competitors to "go back to the kitchen," as a resolution passed in 2002 by the young men in a Guangzhou university student union recommended. A conference held in Shanghai in 2003, cosponsored by Fudan University and the University of Hong Kong, brought together women and men from China, Hong Kong, the United States, and Britain, to consider the role of women in

[63] See, for example, Laing, *The Winking Owl*; also the chapter by Nicholas Platt in this volume; and Blair, "Intellectual Trade Imbalances," 266-9. Other useful examples would be the anti-Confucianist campaign of 1973-74, in which that scholar initially became a symbol for Premier Zhou Enlai; and the retaliatory attacks the premier launched against his enemy Jiang Qing (Madame Mao Zedong), for attending and showing obvious enjoyment when Eugene Ormandy and the visiting Philadelphia Orchestra performed works by Beethoven and other Western composers. Accounts of the latter events may be found in Roberts, ed., *Window on the Forbidden City*.

[64] Many of these papers were collected in Zhong and Han, eds., *Re-reading America*.

international relations, a topic that at least some of the Chinese men attending as scholars and students clearly found somewhat disturbing. The papers delivered at that gathering, which have recently been published, highlighted how women from different countries, continents, and cultures have nonetheless faced very similar disadvantages and disabilities as both academics and would-be participants in the field of international relations, a dialogue that most involved apparently found fruitful.[65]

The chapters on women included in this volume seek to make comparable connections. Two American feminists, one of whom has more than a decade of teaching experience in Hong Kong and China, seek to compare Chinese and American feminism, effectively using China as a lens and prism through which to view their own country. Both suggest that women in the United States might have as much to learn from Chinese women as they have to teach, and one even discusses a movie in which the supposedly oppressed mainland Chinese woman helps to liberate her apparently more sophisticated Hong Kong rival. It is certainly arguable that, as one of the Chinese-born women highlighted in Staci Ford's chapter seemingly contends, in terms of being exposed to the forces of consumerism and pressures to present themselves as sexually desirable, American women have suffered disadvantages from which Chinese women under communism were until recently exempt. Perhaps what is most clear is that, when crosscultural exchanges occur, no one remains the same at the end as they were in the beginning. Even so, in many cases, whether in China or the United States, women have found themselves hoeing a harder row than men. Yu Tingming of Maoming College argues that the strictures of the US Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 fell even more heavily on Chinese women than on men, not merely preventing wives from joining their husbands, but dictating that all Chinese women emigrants to the United States were liable to be treated by American officials as potential prostitutes. Moving almost to the mythical plane, Qin Sujue, another scholar from Sichuan, highlights the healing properties that contemporary American Indian (ethnic or native American) literature ascribes to women in particular, the ability to reconcile contradictions and restore a sense of wholeness and purpose to alienated, marginal, and dysfunctional men.

African American literature is absent from this collection, though—as the list of theses given in Cheng Xilin's chapter reveals—it is certainly a topic of very real interest to many of today's Chinese Americanists. Moving beyond literature, at least one Chinese scholar, from Guizhou University, seeks to derive potential models for Chinese policies toward picturesque but undeveloped minorities, especially the Miao people of Guizhou province, by scrutinizing US efforts to promote traditional ethnic American culture in New Mexico, measures

[65] See Roberts and He, eds., *Bonds Across Borders*.

that, while promoting upscale tourism, also enable native Americans to remain in their original communities. Similar initiatives would, she argues, discourage young Miaos from abandoning their existing hometowns for the big cities, while perpetuating native cultures.

At least one chapter in this volume, a study of Edgar Allan Poe's poetry that celebrates his mastery of language and imagery, seems to carry neither explicit nor implicit messages in terms of comparisons between China and the United States. (Though Li Jian, the author, does at one point use a traditional Chinese saying to characterize Poe's use of language.) But we perhaps need to remember that not all scholarship is comparative, and—whatever the currently fashionable intellectual currents—academics from one culture who study another do not always feel it necessary to situate themselves in a specifically transnational context. Political or careerist or economic motivations may have some explanatory value, in terms of why academics choose to study what they study. In the end, however, such decisions, not to mention the still broader question, why in the first place become an academic—why not a lawyer, an engineer, a businessman, an architect?—sometimes come down to personal choice and idiosyncratic interest. When we have analyzed and highlighted all the political factors, the bureaucratic impulses, and institutional pressures that persuade this or that person to study the United States, rather than, let us say, becoming a molecular biologist or an entrepreneur, one is left with the individual, human, and unaccountable. Sometimes, scholars study what they do just because they like it and, for whatever reason, it interests them. The strength of American Studies in any country must ultimately rest not merely or even primarily on official or institutional encouragement, but on the energy, enthusiasm, and commitment of those individuals who choose to devote themselves to that field. So let us, at the end, celebrate the fact that we do not have to function or see ourselves as elegantly preprogrammed units whose choices can all be neatly explained by citing prevailing political or economic or intellectual forces. There is nothing wrong with doing something you want to because it appeals to you and doing it just seems to be more fun than anything else. On the institutional plane, American Studies currently seeks to celebrate diversity. Let us, too, feel free to applaud the diversity of impulses driving individuals around the world to choose to embark on something that they think of as American Studies.

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