Introduction: Comparative Literature in East Asia
Author(s): Liu Kang
Source: *Comparative Literature Studies*, Vol. 54, No. 1, Special Issue: Comparative Literature in East Asia (2017), pp. 1-13
Published by: Penn State University Press
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/complitstudies.54.1.0001
Accessed: 19-06-2023 14:09 +00:00

INTRODUCTION: COMPARATIVE LITERATURE IN EAST ASIA

Liu Kang

After four years' interlude, we return to a special issue of *Comparative Literature Studies (CLS)*, with a larger claim on East Asian comparative literature than the first one, "Modern China and the World: Literary Constructions" (*CLS* vol. 49, no. 4, 2012), to which I penned an introduction. The present volume, however, is not the second special issue on China-related topics. The second special issue, "Global Maoism and Cultural Revolution in the Global Context" (*CLS* vol. 52, no. 1, 2015), to which I also contributed, underscores the broader political and ideological reverberations than literary and aesthetic ones in the cultural formations of the era of the 1960s and 1970s. Moreover, that issue broaches much wider geopolitical configurations than China or Asia, traversing continents and worlds from the "first and second worlds" of the United States, France, and Japan, to the "third world" of India, Nepal, the Andes, and so on. As I write the introduction again for the present volume now, I want to acknowledge and applaud the wisdom and generosity of the *CLS* editors to grant a series of special issues with a China focus, and, meanwhile, to alert our readers of not the obvious, that is, the growing worldwide attention to China as it rises to a leading world power, but rather, to the elasticity of the ideas and concepts associated with the subject of China, such as Asia, East Asia, global, international, Orientalist, the West, and so on, which the essays of this volume invoke, and the attendant indeterminacy and ambiguity of the meaning of these critical concepts. Moreover, the kinds of subjective, emotive, and affective reactions, such as exuberance, anxiety, and ambivalence when China is mentioned, ought to be examined as literary expressions or, vice versa, literary works as expressions of these emotion and feelings.

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE STUDIES, VOL. 54, NO. 1, 2017.

In the introduction to the first China special issue (*CLS* vol. 49, no. 4, 2012, pp. 497–504), I begin with a discussion of rituals of 2008 Beijing Olympics and raise the question of Chinese exceptionalism, compared to American exceptionalism, as the context for the essays dealing mostly with literary criticism and fictional works. Rituals are replete with imageries, symbols, and metaphors, eliciting largely emotional, affective responses, therefore quite appropriate for close readings of literary and cultural studies. I would like to begin with a brief account of political rituals this time again.

In September 2016, China hosted the G20 Summit (the government forum of the Group of 20 major economies in the world) in Hangzhou, a southeast tourist city. As usual, Western media are skeptical about its artificial spectacle and extravaganza ("Ghost Town: How China Emptied Hangzhou to Guarantee 'Perfect' G20," titled the report of the British newspaper, *The Guardian*).[1] It was credited, however, by Chinese state news agency Xinhua, as setting up "the world's center stage" where Xi Jinping, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leader and China's president, takes the lead: "the image of Chinese President Xi Jinping standing among leaders from emerging markets and developed countries sends a strong signal: that we are in the same boat, with China charting the course ahead this time. Hours earlier, Xi, the helmsman of the world's second largest economy, had referred to boats metaphorically to stress the need of joint efforts when addressing leaders of the world's leading economies who have gathered for their annual meeting."[2] While the metaphor of "the helmsman" of the world boat had long been reserved for the "Great Helmsman Chairman Mao" half a century earlier (as specifically explored in the *CLS* 2015 Special Issue on Maoism), what the image of Xi the new helmsman shows to the world is China's (or rather CCP's) self-imposed mission of global leadership.

A month later, in October 2016, Chongqing, a major city in China's hinterland, hosted the "CPC [Chinese official English translation of the Communist Party of China] in Dialogue with the World" Conference, to which I was invited as an academic guest from the United States *and* a Chinese American. I took note of the ceremonial rituals of the Plenary Session, especially the unreported yet fascinating part (at least in terms of its literary merits). Right before the keynote speech by Liu Yunshan, CCP's propaganda chief, the ex-French prime minister Dominique de Villepin offered his supposedly congratulatory remarks, delivered surprisingly in impeccable English (everyone expected a French ex-leader to speak only in his mother tongue). It is even more amazing to hear him begin by saying "Ladies and Gentlemen, we now enter into an era of fear and anger all over the world" and then citing a list of causes for these bad feelings, however unseemly and

discordant for the occasion: Brexit, Syria, ISIS, anti-immigration protests, worldwide xenophobia, violence, economic and financial woes, and so on and so forth. In sharp contrast, Chinese keynote speaker began with an upbeat, almost euphoric, celebratory tone: "Ladies and Gentlemen, at this beautiful autumn season, we gather together to discuss the issue of global economic governance and the role of political parties. . . . A while ago China successfully convened the G20 Summit, where President Xi put forward the Chinese proposition for global economic governance . . . thus charting the new course of the world economy." And: "China has been always open to the world since antiquity . . . the stronger China is, the more open and welcoming she is, with a great deal of guests and friends, merchants, and travelers coming afar, from all four corners and eight directions of the world."[3] Such a poetic diction invoking past imperial glory immediately rang a bell in the ears of a veteran British sinologist sitting next to me, who whispered to me that "this awesome proclamation brings us back to the golden age of Chinese Imperial Tributary System." He was referring to the past two thousand years' practice of the Middle Kingdom when foreigners, barbaric or primitive, congregated to the center of humankind, that is, China, to pay tribute to the Son of Heaven, or the Chinese Emperor, and, in return, they were showered with plentiful, generous gifts from the monarch for their edification and delight.

My anecdotes, which can otherwise be seen as political antics, would be viewed not so much as digressions as literary manifestations with rich symbolic connotations and cultural, historical references, if we further interrogate what underlies these speeches and on-site comments in terms of subtexts or contexts of the contemporary Chinese and East Asian culture and literature, to which this volume is dedicated. Chinese exceptionalism is a concept that recently began to circulate in primarily academic circles of international relations and foreign policy studies. As is widely acknowledged, this Chinese exceptionalism has deep cultural roots and claims: "Most Chinese people . . . think of historical China as a shining civilization in the center of All-under-Heaven, radiating a splendid and peace-loving culture. Because Confucianism cherishes harmony and abhors war, this version portrays a China that has not behaved aggressively nor been an expansionist power throughout its 5,000 years of glorious history. Instead, a benevolent, humane Chinese world order is juxtaposed against the malevolent, ruthless power politics in the West."[4] It is arguable that literary, cultural, and ideological traditions, from antiquity to modernity, lay the foundation for Chinese exceptionalism. As China has inevitably risen to a leading world power, the claims on its uniqueness and particularity from the universal values (or

universalism) have been heatedly debated, now focusing on not so much how China can integrate itself into the existing world order, in the historical passage to modernity since the mid-nineteenth century to the present, but rather on what Chinese values can add to, modify, expand, and eventually reshape the values, worldviews, and ideologies that we have taken for granted for centuries. Understanding the genealogy of cultural and literary legacies underlying Chinese exceptionalism and its East Asian ramifications is a major theme in the papers of this volume.

Prior to introducing the papers, a brief summary of what I understand as cultural genealogy of Chinese exceptionalism is intended here. Historically, it can be delineated in several historical phases, and my narrative follows a Bakhtinian conceptual framework of the language as the verbal and semantic center of ideological world, somewhat analogous to a Foucauldian *épistème*. First of all, the genealogy begins with the origin, or the myth of the Chinese civilization. As American sinologist Lucian Pye famously writes, "China is a civilizational state, pretending to be a [nation-]state"[5]; the cultural or civilizational foundation has been seen as the ultimate raison d'être of the Middle Kingdom's longevity and unity. However, it should be noted from the outset that in its formative years Chinese culture was diverse and multi-dimensional. The Spring and Autumn and Warring States period (770–480 BC) is generally understood as the formative time of Chinese culture. It was the time when the Chinese Sages such as Confucius, Lao Tsu, Sun Tsu, and Mencius lived, and "Hundred Schools" of Confucianism, Taoism, Legalism, Moism, and a garden-variety of indigenous shamanism contended for political, intellectual, and ethical powers in an era of feudalist, diversified, and independent warring kingdoms.[6] It is known as the Axial Age (eighth to third century BC), coined by German philosopher Karl Jaspers, when ideas of religion and philosophy emerged in China, India, Persia, and the Greco-Roman world, paralleling each other without actual contact.[7] Whereas from the northern kingdoms of China ancestor worship evolved into Confucian ideas of *ren* (love of kinship, love of parents and ancestors) and *li* (rites, rituals as externalization of *ren* or love of ancestors), in southern China shamanism or *wu*, the worship of natural and supernatural deities, emerged almost simultaneously and later absorbed and adopted by Taoism and other indigenous religions and superstitions. Gradually, ancestor worship (*ren/li*) and worship of natural deities (*wu*) became two most important pillars in Chinese cosmology. The Qin and Han Dynasties (221 BC–AD 589) established the unified and highly centralized monarchy with absolute power, effectively ending feudalism in China for the next two millenniums. Meanwhile, the Qin and Han empires erected a unified, singular worldview

of *tianxia* (under the heaven) cosmology and world order by canonizing Confucianism, closing off the debates of the contending "hundred schools."[8] To use Bakhtin's term, this historical period in China witnesses the long battle between polyglossia and heteroglossia, a locus where centripetal and centrifugal forces of utterances collided. Bakhtin writes that "polyglossia had always existed, it is more ancient than pure, canonical monoglossia" or the epic world.[9] However, Bakhtin continues, "unitary language," be they Aristotelian poetics, the poetics of Augustine, or "the one language of truth" of the medieval church, "at every moment of its linguistic life it is opposed to the realities of heteroglossia."[10] It would take over two thousand years for the suppression of heteroglossia in China by Confucian orthodoxy to come to an end.

The second phase occurred around the turn of the twentieth century, when the Qing Dynasty finally collapsed at the advent of Western-induced modernity, and the foundation of Chinese exceptionalism crumbled to the formidable maelstrom by which all that is solid melts into air. To recap this now familiar story of China's passage to modernity as "a struggle between a proud empire or ancient civilization and the external pressures call the maelstrom of modernity,"[11] Bakhtin's description of the European Renaissance, or the birth of modern novel as a metaphor of the Enlightenment, is apt here: "It [the novel] begins by presuming a verbal and semantic decentering of the ideological world, a certain linguistic homelessness of literary consciousness, which no longer possesses a sacrosanct and unitary linguistic medium for containing ideological thought, . . . [it is] the fundamental liberation of cultural-semantic and emotional intentions from the hegemony of a single and unitary language, and consequently the simultaneous loss of a feeling for language as myth, that is, as an absolute form of thought."[12] Indeed, hundreds of thousands novels, poems, and political and philosophical treatises from all over the world, and the modern West in particular, all rushed into China, culminating in the May Fourth (1919) Cultural Movement, which promised a brave new world for the ancient Middle Kingdom to come to terms with a Western-dominated modern world, and regain its lost sense of self-esteem. Nonetheless, this "Cultural Renaissance" for China was short lived. The emergence of Marxism–Leninism as a powerful political ideology for the CCP quickly helped change modern China's course in less than half a century, primarily by means of violent political revolution. In the meantime, a localized, indigenous version of Chinese Marxism, or Maoism, gradually evolved into a new revolutionary universalism of a Chinese brand. During the Mao era (1949–1979), Maoism was canonized not only as the ideological orthodoxy for the Chinese population, a single, unitary language

of truth, an absolute form of thought, but also intended as a new gospel for worldwide communist revolution (which is the topic of the second 2015 special issue of *CLS*).

Now the following narrative of the recent four decades, known as *gaige kaifang* (reform and opening-up, 1979–present), may sound more like a Sino-centric view of history as eternal cycles or *déjà vu*, rather than a Hegelian–Marxian metanarrative of history as dialectical progress. Put it simply: when China "reopened its door" to the world at the beginning of the period of 1979–1989, a general feeling of euphoria permeated China's cultural scene. After the Maoist dominance, Pandora's box was ripped open, and a plethora of novels, poems, films, and theories, from Sartre to Hayek, from Derrida to Bakhtin (indeed it was the point of entry for the Russia–Soviet thinker), were devoured by Chinese intellectuals and young students in a festive and fervent mode of emancipation and creativity. It is known as the decade of Culture Fever or Culture Reflection, rethinking and debunking the age-old tradition from Confucianism to Maoism. The massive translation of foreign literature, art, and theories, and indeed, the incredible enthusiasm for the newly emerged field of comparative literature, all seemed to signal the arrival of a new era of China's opening up and integration into the world of globalization, a genuine state of heteroglossia, which "wash over a culture's awareness of itself and its language, penetrate to its core, relativize the primary language system underlying its ideology and literature and deprive it of its naïve absence of conflict."[13]

The reality is, however, that the conflicts can be readily eradicated by not so naïve means, and heteroglossia can be as fragile as fallen leaves blown by an autumn storm. The political storms of the 1989 Tiananmen did not entirely reverse the course of economic reform and opening up, and CCP's pragmatic policies in the following decades actually paved way for the economic miracle amidst the global economic slowdown. China's intellectual scene, however, inevitably lost its vibrancy in the following decades, and became quickly drowned in the formidable waves of commercialization and political cooptation and oppression. For the last four or five years, new efforts have been stepped up for "revitalizing the great Chinese civilization" or Chinese Dream, and consequently, various versions of Chinese exceptionalism have reemerged, redeeming the specters, indigenous deities of the bygone past, the imperial glories and rituals (as shown in the anecdotes in earlier pages of this introduction). New neo-Confucianism, Chinese Buddhism and Taoism, and finally neo- or post-Maoism are now vying fiercely for the ideological orthodoxy. The resurgence of indigenous rituals and thoughts have been accompanied by the increasingly bellicose nationalism and intellectual

xenophobia, sanctioned by the state to prevent "malignant infiltration" of foreign conspirators under the guise of "universalism" and "historical nihilism." A Bakhtin alive today would probably be abhorred and disappointed by the cyclical movement, the defeat of heteroglossia by monoglossia, and, in a nutshell, the return of the language of myth and absolute truth as new pillars for Chinese exceptionalism.

Maybe not. In Bakhtin's view, there is no such rigid dichotomy between heteroglossia and monoglossia, and by extension, the collision of forces of recentering, decentering, centripetal and centrifugal, universal and exceptional, would remain constant and fluid, and there is always the open-ended question of integration and localization or "glocalization," to switch to the neologism with contemporary currency. Embedded in Chinese exceptionalism of its Marxist phase is Mao's acute sensitivity to the need of localization or "making Marxism Chinese." For Mao this is precisely a question of language, an aesthetic as well as ideological issue of *form*—transformation and re-formation of a universal, albeit foreign, language into an indigenous and national one. As early as in the Yanan years of the 1940s in the throes of Sino-Japanese War, Mao realized that the magic word for making Marxism Chinese was "national form": "Being Marxists, communists are internationalists, but Marxism can only be realized through a national form. There is no abstract Marxism, there is only concrete Marxism. . . . For communists who are part of the great Chinese nation, tied to this nation by flesh and blood, to talk about Marxism apart from China's characteristics is merely abstract, vacuous Marxism. Therefore, the most urgent issue that the whole party must understand and resolve is the sinification of Marxism that will endow every manifestation of Marxism with a Chinese character, that is to say, applying it according to China's characteristics. . . . They [foreign and abstract ideas] must be replaced by the refreshing, lively Chinese styles and airs that are palatable to the tastes and ears of the common folks of China."[14]

It can be argued that "national form" as a mediation or translation of Marxist–Leninist theories into Chinese through political, ideological writings as well as arts and literature is the core of "Marxism with a Chinese character" or Maoism. From the beginning of the People's Republic of China (1949) till now, mediation through "national form" and translation of anything foreign (abstract and universal theories) into Chinese (concrete practice) has always been the foremost preoccupation, or obsession, of Chinese cultural establishment, or the Ideological State Apparatuses, in an Althusserian parlance. *Gaige kaifang* (reform and opening up) of the last forty years has not renounced, but rather continued this mode of thinking, even though Maoist ideological domination has been irrevocably eroded over the years.

Comparative literature studies in China showcases this obsession with nationalization or localization of world literature and theories, as addressed by the papers in this volume.

Ning Wang's paper brings up the issue of localization of Western theory into sharp focus: "Western theory could function effectively in China only when it is contextualized. That is, it should be relocated in the Chinese context. This has been particularly proved by the popularity of gender theory, especially that of Judith Butler's, and gender studies in present day China. For some Chinese social and cultural phenomena in the present era can only be interpreted by this theoretical doctrine although it should be somewhat moderated" (14). Ning Wang, however, adds a cautionary note in his conclusion. In what he calls the "post-theoretical era," Ning Wang writes, "theory is no longer so powerful as usual *but still effective if used to interpret literary and cultural phenomena only*. [my italics] Gender studies as well as its major theorist Judith Butler are still popular and increasingly influential not only in the West but more in China since many literary and cultural phenomena can be interpreted with this theory or from this theoretical perspective." Wang raises a theoretically crucial question with a double bind: on the one hand, Western theories seem to run out their steam, because their ambition on universal validity in almost every field of humanities and even social sciences costs them dearly in the neglect of literary texts as their basic subject of studies. On the other hand, theories are still needed regardless of cultural and historical differences, as shown in gender theory's popularity in China. The localization or contextualization of Western theory would thus require not only a "reterritorialization" in a cultural–geographical sense, that is, from the West (in Butler's case, the United States) to China, but also a return to the studies of literalness or literature as sui generis literary criticism. Contemporary theory's claim on deterritorialization and transgression would have to turn back on itself, retrieving its somewhat lost, precious object of aesthetic works of art and literature, while distancing, if not entirely renouncing larger political and ideological interventions than literary texts.

In Xiaohong Zhang's paper on contemporary Chinese and American confessional poetry, the object (or subject) of poetry is the focus of analysis. However, these intensely personal and private confessional poems, Zhang tells us, contain compelling political messages, as "showcase[s] of politicized self-expression at odds with established powers." The central argument of the paper is spelt out most clearly in the title: "the personal is political." Zhang's approach is largely close-reading of poetic texts, with little references to Western gender theories, which would be quite applicable since the poems Zhang analyzes are mostly written by female poets, and femininity,

womanhood, imageries and metaphors of sexuality, and so on, abound in their poems. If Western gender theory seems unnecessary, Zhang's specific, local contexts is clearly historical, referring to the tumultuous years of the 1980s Cultural Fever, in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution: "In particular, contemporary Chinese women poets' expression in the form of self-portrayal can be interpreted as a disruptive, self-empowering gesture against political shackles and male-dominated discursive power. . . . This personal politics fits in well with of a shared confessional poetics that gained momentum in the mid-1980s."

Contextualizing, or rewriting Western theory of narratology is imperative to Biwu Shang's paper on "comparative narratology" with a Chinese perspective. Shang states that "A comparative narratology is expected to decolonize and to subvert the hegemony of European and Anglo-American narrative theory, and thus both paves the way for the rise of those marginalized narrative theories and draws attention to those neglected and peripheral narratives." The plea to "decolonize and subvert the hegemony" of the West in order to give voices to the "marginalized" is certainly all too familiar to today's academic community of humanities in the United States, where identity politics, gender theories, or Critical Theory in general are still the order of the day. Shang's paper, however, turns out to be not so much an aggressive rebuttal of Western theory's hegemony as a critical account of Chinese scholars' efforts in the recent years to explore critical approaches to fictional narratives that Western narratology or narrative theories hardly acknowledge. There is a rich reservoir of traditional Chinese tales of the supernatural, the uncanny or "unnatural," as Shang prefers, and Shang's paper offers a glimpse into this fertile ground with a great deal of detailed analyses. In his conclusion, Shang apparently waters down his subversive assertion by noting that what he does is "to enrich and to supplement them by importing a new narrative corpus as well as by updating or revising the narratological toolkits."

Shoutong Zhu's paper on travel literature in Chinese tradition is another attempt to bring a local and indigenous context into the general genre of travel literature. Youngmin Kim, however, calls the attention to the issue of cultural translation and world literature in a Korean context, thus extending the discussion of Chinese and Western cultural interactions to Korea, an East Asian country with traditionally close cultural ties to China, in addition to its specific historical conditions of colonial experience and modernization. Kim's paper offers an optimistic prospect for comparative literature: "world literature beyond comparative literature studies in Korea has already hailed 'the birth of a new Comparative Literature' beyond Korean literature as

national literature, and has crossed over the convergent 'trans' area. In fact, the comparative literature studies in Korea has enhanced the literary ecological environment for reexamining our inherited Korean literature as national literature in the context of cultural translation and world literature." Ning Wang's call for contextualization and reterritorialization of theory or comparative literature studies is henceforth echoed by Kim's sincere yearning for the integration of the national and international, local or global for the common good of humanities, rather than narrowly defined geopolitical and cultural boundaries.

Another powerful testimony to heteroglossia or global/local integration can be seen in Guoqiang Qiao's paper on literary works depicting Jewish refugees in Shanghai during the World War II, as a surprising rediscovery of a fascinating, yet missing piece of the Holocaust Literature. Anfeng Sheng discusses modern Chinese writer Lao She's cosmopolitanism that stemmed from his experience of living in London, the United States and other countries, especially during the era of the World War II. Lao She's works apparently share some temporal coordinates with what Qiao depicts as the Jewish refugee literature in Shanghai. While Qiao and Sheng explore the intersections of literary imagination and lived experiences from primarily historical perspectives, Chengzhou He's paper attempts to raise a theoretical question again, concerning the particular and general, universal and specific, in what he calls the "world literature as event," through his readings of Ibsen's implication in modern Chinese literature, fiction in particular. He proposes to take world literature as a dynamic, fluid, and malleable process or "event," drawing on various Western theories from Franco Moretti to Jacques Derrida, Judith Butler, Ilai Rowner, and so on, in his efforts to advance a new theoretical approach beyond the dichotomies of West and East, global and local. He argues that "World literature as event challenges the rigid conception of which is the source literature and which is the target literature, which usually places the West as the center and the non-West as the periphery. Instead, world literature gains its momentum in the process when it is localized," and that "combining both distant reading and close reading, world literature as event becomes a dynamic and open system. . . . World literature is turned into an on-going event, where different literary traditions diverge and converge."

What Chengzhou He's much expected eventful world literature would amount to a congregation of literature and philosophy, across not only cultural, spatial but also temporary boundaries, as amply shown in the remaining four papers that address these possibilities. Tianhu Hao compares the idea of kingship in the poetry of the seventeenth century English poet

John Milton to that of Confucius of the sixth century BC. In spite of the religious and other differences, Hao argues that Milton and Confucius share a similar longing for the virtuous and humane world in their respective countries' cultural past, "out of dissatisfaction with the present." Qinglong Peng's studies of the two contemporary novelists, the Chinese Nobel Laureate Mo Yan and Australian writer Peter Cary zero in on their respective historical novels of outlaws or bandits during the war times. Their narratives of memories and reappropriation of histories can be understood as literary events themselves in the context of world literature and the contemporary world at large. Yuming Piao's analysis of the literary representation of females in American and Korean novels produced during the Korean War is an attempt to resuscitate an unforgettable and, indeed, unforgivable episode in the "forgotten war," the Korean War that occurred only some sixty years ago, through investigation of Korean female images as prostitutes, bargirls, refugees, and victims of sexual violence. Her readings underscore the eventfulness of literary representation as historically real as it is relevant today, as a powerful reminder that barbarism and oppression are reenacted and reinforced through Orientalist and self-Orientalizing representations by American as well as Korean authors. Massimo Verdicchio's reading of poems of the eighth-century Chinese "Poetic Sage" Du Fu reminds us that literary criticism and cultural interpretations through "the critical eyes," be they Western or East Asian, are always already foregrounded. Verdicchio explores an "irreconcilable" discrepancy between Chinese and comparative approaches, and argues for a "theoretical freedom to close reading" and a rejection of "the temptation to combine forces with Area Studies." The "theoretical freedom" proposed by Vedicchio amounts to no less than an acknowledgement of universal validity of aesthetic principles of "all lyric, or all literature, is allegorical," and any efforts to bridge the "distinctiveness" or the exceptional, the particular with that of the general are viewed as obstacles to aesthetic universalism of allegory and metaphor.

The papers in this volume address a wide-ranging issues of comparative literature studies in Chinese and East Asian contexts. The diverse and divergent theoretical approaches and theoretical questions raised, particularly by Ning Wang, Chengzhou He, and Massimo Verdicchio, concerning the different presumptions underlying exceptionalism and universalism, testify to the lively and unending debates about the issues that the humankind faces today, which from a Bakhtinian perspective can be understood as an urgent call for rethinking humanities and human relationships, a call for heteroglossia or dialogism. As Bakhtin writes: "The contexts of dialogue are without limit. They extend into the deepest past and most distant future.

Even meanings born in dialogues of the remotest past will never be finally grasped once and for all, for they will always be renewed in later dialogue. At any present moment of the dialogue there are great masses of forgotten meanings, but these will be recalled again at a given moment in the dialogue's later course when it will be given a new life. For nothing is absolutely dead: every meaning will someday have its homecoming festival."[15] Cultural exceptionalism thus understood within the contexts of dialogue will never end heteroglossia.

LIU KANG is Zhiyuan Chair Professor at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China, and also a professor and director of the Program of Research on China, Duke University, USA. In 2015, he was elected as a member of Academia Europaea. He is the author of twelve books, including *Aesthetics and Marxism* (Duke University Press, 2000), *Globalization and Cultural Trend in China* (University of Hawaii Press, 2003), *Culture/Media/Globalization* (Nanjing University Press, 2006), and *Images of China as a Major Power* (Shanghai People's Press, 2014). In addition, Liu Kang published widely in both English and Chinese on issues ranging from contemporary Chinese media and culture, globalization, to Marxism and aesthetics. His current projects include global public opinion surveys of China's image, Chinese soft power and public diplomacy, and political and ideological changes in China.

Notes

1. Tom Phillips, "Ghost Town: How China Emptied Hangzhou to Guarantee 'Perfect' G20," *The Guardian*, Sept. 6, 2016, 2.

2. Xinhua Newswire, "China Headlines: Xi Takes World's Center Stage at G20 Summit," Sept. 4, 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com.

3. My personal notes based on on-site cellphone recordings. While de Villepin's remarks went unreported in Chinese media, the full text of the keynote speech appeared in Chinese with some modifications. See "Liu Yunshan zai 2016 zhongguo gongchandang yu shijie duihuahui de zhuzhi jianghua" (Keynote speech at 2016 CPC in Dialogue with the World conference), People.com.cn, Oct. 14, 2016, http://politics.people.com.cn

4. Steven Walt, "The Myth of Chinese Exceptionalism," *Foreign Policy*, Mar. 6, 2016, http://foreignpolicy.com.

5. Lucian Pye, *The Spirit of Chinese Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 235.

6. For an excellent critical account of the period, see Cho-yun Hsu, "The Spring and Autumn Period," in *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: from the Origins of Civilization to 221 BC*, ed. Michael Loewe et al. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 545–86.

7. Karl Jaspers, *Origin and Goal of History* (New York: Routledge Revivals, 2011).

8. For general discussions of Chinese cultural tradition, see John King Fairbank, *The United States and China*, 4th ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983); also see Paul Ropp, ed., *Heritage of China: Contemporary Perspectives on Chinese Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). For studies of Confucianism in English, see, for example,

Wm Theodore de Bary and Tu Weiming, eds., *Confucianism and Human Rights* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

9. Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 12.

10. Ibid., 270.

11. Liu Kang, "Introduction," Special Issue, Modern China and the World: Literary Constructions, *Comparative Literature Studies*, vol. 49, no. 4 (2012): 499.

12. Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 367.

13. Ibid., 368.

14. Mao Zedong, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, vol. 2 (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1967), 209–10. For a discussion of the centrality of national form in Maoism, see Liu Kang, *Aesthetics and Marxism: Chinese Aesthetic Marxists and Their Western Contemporaries*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), especially Chapter 3, "Hegemony and Counter-hegemony: National Form and Subjective Fighting Spirit," pp. 72–111.

15. Bakhtin's words are quoted from Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 349–50.