# Decentering *Sinas* : Poststructuralism and Sinology

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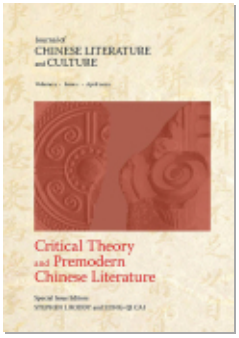


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# Decentering *Sinas*: Poststructuralism and Sinology

LUCAS KLEIN

**Abstract** In *Of Grammatology* Jacques Derrida describes the "necessary decentering" that took place in Western philosophy following "the becoming-legible of non-Western scripts," when the European intellectual tradition was forced to confront its civilizational others. Derrida positions himself as contributing to this decentering, displacing the value-laden binary opposition central to structuralism. But as Derrida explained, the "first decentering limits itself" by "recenter[ing] itself upon" what he calls "the '*Chinese*' prejudice: all the philosophical projects of a universal script and of a universal language [which] encouraged seeing in the recently discovered Chinese script a model of the philosophical language thus removed from history." How has the approach to Chinese language and literature of that decentering known as poststructuralism limited itself or recentered itself, and how has sinology responded to the influence of poststructuralism? Insofar as the Chinese term for the *Sinae* (China) at the root of *sinology* is itself "middle" or "central" (中), how susceptible to decentering can sinology be? This article begins with a survey of poststructuralist writings about China by renowned post-structuralists, alongside responses to their work by sinologists and comparatists, arguing that poststructuralist writings tend to recenter themselves on a binary opposition between China and the West. The author then addresses the influence of poststructuralism on Chinese literary studies, to argue that the most successful poststructural decentering occurs in sinology when sinologists disseminate their decentering through a dissipated poststructuralism.

**Keywords** poststructuralism, sinology, literary theory, French theory

"China does not have any philosophy," explained Jacques Derrida, visiting China in 2001, "only thought" (transcribed as 中國沒有哲學，只有思想).[1] What could such a statement reveal about the odd role of poststructuralism in sinology, or

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what I'm defining for the purposes of this article as the study of Chinese literature in the West?

The reactions to Derrida's proclamation have been negative. His audience, a group of Chinese philosophers, were "stunned" 在座的人不禁愕然.[2] Bryan W. van Norden has said that Derrida's comments "are as condescending as talk of 'noble savages,' who are untainted by the corrupting influences of the West, but are for that very reason barred from participation in higher culture," and Carine Defoort and Ge Zhaoguang 葛兆光 state that Derrida's delimiting of the possibility of Chinese philosophy must remind "Chinese people of the denigrating statements made by . . . many Westerners . . . on the nonexistence or nonvalue of ancient Chinese philosophy."[3] Of course, Derrida did not mean to be disparaging. For him, *philosophy* is the name of a particular intellectual tradition that started in ancient Greece and has been dominant in the West nearly ever since—until recently, when it has undergone critique by the likes of Derrida for being logocentric (for believing in the epistemological supremacy of the *logos* [λόγος], whose translations include *word*, *speech*, and *reason*—and its ability to represent truth). To say that China has no philosophy, only thought, is to try to name something other to philosophy (I think of Derrida's contemporary Michel Foucault being named not professor of philosophy but Professor of the History of Systems of Thought at the Collège de France) and to say that Chinese thought—whatever its problems may be—does not have the particular problems of logocentrism that plague philosophy in the West.

Derrida is not the only notable recent French thinker to try to delimit philosophy or trace its limitations along lines of cultural specificity. "There is nothing to be done," Emmanuel Levinas said; "philosophy speaks Greek." By this he meant to lament having to "translate this non-Hellenism . . . into Hellenic terms"—the only terms in which he though we could "touch upon ultimate questions, assuming that there be ultimate questions."[4] Perhaps most famous for delimiting European philosophy against a Chinese other has been François Jullien, who has built a career on the expectation that, as Henry Y. H. Zhao has put it, "Chinese philosophy would throw into question all the 'great universals' of European thinking."[5] Jullien has written: "Because Chinese lies outside the great Indo-European language groups and uses another form of writing (ideographic, not phonetic), and because Chinese civilization . . . developed without any borrowings or influences from the European West for a long time, China presents a case study through which to contemplate Western thought from the outside—and, in this way, to bring us [Westerners] out of our atavism."[6] But such an attempt at treating China as "outside" has itself brought on critique. As Jean-François Billeter writes in *Contre François Jullien*, Jullien's "work is founded entirely on the myth of Chinese alterity" (son oeuvre est fondée tout entière sur

le mythe de l'altérité de la Chine)—a myth whose "genesis" (la genèse du mythe) Billeter traces to the Jesuits.[7] And while Jullien almost always presents his othered Chinese thinkers "triumph[ing] through greater realism and economy," as Haun Saussy has pointed out, "there is no guarantee that the opposite conclusion will not be drawn, namely that Chinese culture is missing something important that the Europeans were lucky enough to find and develop."[8] Derrida's delimiting of philosophy against Chinese thought falls into the same trap.

Of all people, Derrida should have known better. The signature Derridean move is deconstruction, taking a concept and demonstrating that we understand it only in relation to what it is not, to its being in "binary opposition" to another concept, with one member of the binary opposition always valued or privileged over the other (light and dark, male and female, nature and culture, speech and writing, etc.). Deconstruction aims to decenter this division and destabilize its hierarchy, to show how the terms rely on each other and how the line between them on which their definitions rest is not as secure as we might think. To say that a certain culture has no philosophy, only thought, is to posit a textbook binary opposition, one term of which is clearly prioritized over the other. For Derrida that term may be *thought*, but for many of his interlocutors it is *philosophy*. Defoort and Ge, and van Norden are making the very Derridean move of deconstructing Derrida, decentering his postulation of the central difference between philosophy and thought, between China and the West. The hierarchy between philosophy and thought, and therefore the certainty and knowledge it underpins, is unstable.

This is not the first time that Derrida has made such a non-Derridean statement vis-à-vis China. In *Of Grammatology* (*De la grammatologie*, 1967), his most important book, at least as far as English-language literary theory is concerned, he writes that because China "remained structurally dominated by the ideogram," it provides "testimony of a powerful movement of civilization developing outside of all logocentrism."[9] How Derrida could write this in a book that begins by announcing his critique of "the *ethnocentrism* which, everywhere and always, had to control the concept of writing," and how China's developing outside all logocentrism squares with his statement elsewhere in the same book that there is no "outside the text" (il n'y a pas de hors-texte), is anyone's guess.[10] (I engage various sinologists' critiques of Derrida's statements about China and Chinese later in this article). This statement is all the more peculiar given that it comes at the end of his trenchant reading of how "Chinese writing," when it was first made known outside Asia, "functioned as a sort of European hallucination" of a "philosophical language . . . removed from history."[11] Was Derrida not hallucinating himself? Yet Derrida is not the only poststructuralist to have made perplexing remarks about China, even as poststructuralism has exerted real—

and, I think, good—influence on sinology. For that matter, many of the sinologists who have been most influenced by poststructuralism have themselves had perplexing attitudes about how to study Chinese literature and culture from and in relation to the West.

But how susceptible to decentering can sinology be, insofar as the Chinese term for the *Sinae* (China) at the root of *sinology* is itself "middle" or "central" (中)? To provide an overview of poststructuralist influence and its various intricacies and contradictions, this article proceeds in two parts: it begins with a brief survey of poststructuralist writings about China by some of the most renowned figures of poststructuralism or "French theory" (Michel Foucault, Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes, and J. Hillis Miller), alongside significant responses to their work by sinologists and comparatists (Andrea Bachner, Rey Chow, Hilary Chung, Eric Hayot, Haun Saussy, and Zhang Longxi) to argue that poststructuralist writings have a tendency to recenter themselves on a binary opposition between China and the West. It then addresses the direct influence poststructuralism has had on Chinese literary studies or sinology, first by detailing how some scholarship has nevertheless reified the China-West binary (in Pauline Yu, Stephen Owen, Wai-lim Yip, and, differently, Ming Dong Gu) and then by offering examples of scholarship that has more successfully decentered the centrality of China and its self-other structures in sinology (by Zong-qi Cai, Jacob Edmond, Martin Svensson Ekström, Eugene Eoyang, Lydia H. Liu, Nicholas Morrow Williams, and Yurou Zhong). It concludes by arguing that the most successful poststructural decentering occurs in sinology when sinologists themselves decenter French theory and instead disseminate their decentering through a more dissipated poststructuralism.

### *Des Tours de la Chine*

What follows is a quick tour through poststructuralist writings about or with mentions of China. Though sustained takes on Chinese literature by the luminaries of French theory are rare, the topic of China nevertheless comes up surprisingly often. Perhaps this is because China is already mentioned in the structuralism against which poststructuralism is defined.[12] In my definition of deconstruction above, the first part—that we understand a concept only in relation to what it is not—is structuralism: as Ferdinand de Saussure put it in his *Course in General Linguistics* (*Cours de linguistique générale*, 1916), "In language there are only differences" (it is the awareness that the terms such differences yield are hierarchized, and therefore centered on the kind of essentialism that structuralism purports to bypass, that defines the *post*structural outlook).[13] Relevantly, Saussure makes frequent mention of China to contrast it with the European languages more familiar to his students. He describes "only

two systems of writing," one phonetic (which may be syllabic, alphabetic, etc.) and the other "an ideographic system," wherein

> each word is represented by a single sign that is unrelated to the sounds of the word itself. Each written sign stands for a whole word and, consequently, for the idea expressed by the word. The classical example of an ideographic system of writing is Chinese. . . . To a Chinese, an ideogram and a spoken word are both symbols of an idea; to him writing is a second language, and if two words that have the same sound are used in conversation, he may resort to writing in order to express his thought. But in Chinese the mental substitution of the written word for the spoken word does not have the annoying consequences that it has in a phonetic system, for the substitution is absolute; the same graphic symbol can stand for words from different Chinese dialects.[14]

With such an introduction to Chinese, where writing is claimed to be independent of speech and both speech and writing are understood to be equally symbolic of ideas, it should not be surprising that Derrida believed China could have developed "outside of all logocentrism."[15]

Sinologists could debate for a long time the extent to which the "ideograph" is related or unrelated to the sound of the Chinese word—suffice it to say, Chinese characters are not as independent of pronunciation as Saussure presents. But the accuracy of China as represented does not always matter to the poststructuralists. Michel Foucault, for instance, begins his *Order of Things* (*Les mots et les choses*, 1966) with China as imagined—if not mocked—by Argentinian writers Jorge Luis Borges:

> This book first arose out of a passage in Borges, out of the laughter that shattered, as I read the passage, all the familiar landmarks of my thought—*our* thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography—breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the places with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things, and continuing long afterwards to disturb and threaten with collapse our age-old distinction between the Same and the Other. This passage quotes a "certain Chinese encyclopaedia" in which it is written that "animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) *et cetera*, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies." In the wonderment of this taxonomy, the thing we apprehend in one great leap, the thing that, by means of the fable, is demonstrated as the exotic charm of another system of thought, is the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *that*.[16]

With a "great leap" (a loaded term!), the encyclopedia's ridiculous arrangement jolted Foucault awake to the arbitrariness and constructedness of any culture's sense of order, but it had nothing to do with China as a real place with real people constituting its real culture. As Zhang Longxi has noted, "Foucault does not give so much as a hint to suggest that the hilarious passage from that 'Chinese encyclopedia' may have been made up to represent a Western fantasy of the Other, and that the illogical way of sorting out animals in that passage can be as alien to the Chinese mind as it is to the Western."[17] And Andrea Bachner: "The 'Chinese' text becomes, in so many respects, a pretext, its cultural marker never more than a fabrication in the service of a philosophical machine of difference."[18]

Perhaps it was strategic of Foucault not to mention one way or another whether the Chinese encyclopedia was a fiction. For many Western intellectuals, the realities of China and their belief in fictions of it have proven hard to disentangle. This is already true of Saussure's description of Chinese as ideographic, but it was especially the case among intellectuals in France after World War II, where the Parti communiste français (PCF), directed by the Comintern in Moscow, had emerged as a leading political party yet suffered a loss of popularity by the fifties, particularly among intellectuals, for its support for the Soviet Union's invasion of Hungary in November of 1956 to quell the pro-democracy uprising there.[19] By the late 1960s, particularly after the PCF supported the workers' strikes but denounced the students during the May 1968 protests, some intellectuals in France were turning to China and Maoism in search of a purer, more radical, and less ethically tainted communism.[20] That China under Mao Zedong 毛澤東 was neither more ethically amenable than the USSR at that time nor purer or more interested in global revolution, particularly after Richard Nixon's visit in 1972, is a testament to how the realities and fictions of China got entangled for so many. This is the context for the 1974 visit to Cultural Revolution China by a small group of writers associated with the journal *Tel Quel*.[21] They took as true what they wanted to be true about China, even when they would otherwise scrutinize such truth claims.

The *Tel Quel* trip to China included Philippe Sollers, the editor of the journal, and probably the group's most devout Maoist; art critic and poet Marcelin Pleynet; Éditions du Seuil editor François Wahl; and the semioticians (there may not be a better word for it) Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva, the latter married to Sollers. I look at Barthes's and Kristeva's takes on China, as they are the ones who have influenced literary criticism—including sinology—in English.[22] Barthes and Kristeva also present an interesting study in contrasts, as one liked China much more and wrote a lot about it, and the other was alienated by the visit and published very little.

Kristeva's *About Chinese Women* (*Des Chinoises*, 1974) is the only full-length study of China by any key poststructuralist. It is also one of the first books in any language to attempt a full women's history of China, from the Neolithic Banpo Village in Shaanxi, which she casts as matriarchal, through foot binding, to divorce laws in the People's Republic; she offers readings of *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢 (Dream of the Red Pavilion, 1791) and a poem by Li Qingzhao 李清照 (1084–1155). As Eric Hayot describes it, *About Chinese Women* attempts "to discover and describe an economy of gender and power wholly other to the Western psyche, one in which an original matriarchy and a feminine Taoism continue to produce people who cannot fit into the Western category of 'woman' or 'man.'"[23] For all its ambition, then, Kristeva's take falls back into the structuralism it is meant to surpass. As Rey Chow points out, by "othering and feminizing China," she is "repeating the metaphysics she wants to challenge."[24] Describing volleyball matches she happened to see in Beijing in 1974, for instance, Kristeva writes:

> A match between Chinese and Iranian women: the Chinese women, with lithe, slender, athletic bodies, looking rather like skinny boys, silent, placid, precise, passing the ball or sending it over the net as if they were playing chess, but without the pained concentration . . . —a bit careless, a bit dreamy. The Iranian women, clearly more corpulent, hair in the wind, passionate, highly excited, hugging and kissing each other after each success, piercing the air with their shrill cries, which at first worried, then amused the Sunday crowd on the eve of May Day. In short, the Cartesians versus the Bacchantes. Needless to say, the Cartesians ran away with the game. . . . Needless as well to say that the Chinese boys—more frail, more adolescent—were beaten by the Iranian boys, real "machos," territorial lords. Certainly I tend to exaggerate the symbolic importance of this encounter, which I just happened to see because I was there are the moment and because the Chinese had decided to participate in the Olympics. But I can't help seeing a symptom there: the world of phallic supremacy, our Indo-European, monotheistic world, is still obviously in the lead. But if we take men and women together, here and in China, the co-efficient of ability, shrewdness—and, let us say—intelligence will be higher on the side of the Chinese. And this, because of Chinese women; because, after all, of the little "difference/resemblance" (as ancient Chinese logicians would say) between the two sexes in China.[25]

With this match, Kristeva "stages the contrast of nondifference versus difference," writes Saussy, as for her "Chineseness is the antithesis of antithesis itself."[26] Kristeva's take on China stumbles just where Derrida does, in imagining China to be "outside" the problems of the West.

Would it be better to imagine China as "inside" the problems of the West? Certainly the problems China faced in the mid-1970s were different from those facing France at the same time. An analysis of gender in China should not be subsumed into an analysis of gender in western Europe or North America: the political, economic, and even metaphysical predicaments of any part of the West at any given moment should not be normalized or naturalized to such an extent that they can pretend to explain the problems of other cultures. But it is the imagination that China represents a deconstruction of the male/female binary that signals its mental postulation, from the outside, as a solution to the problems Kristeva was trying to work through elsewhere. And by pinning this solution on the biological determinism of "the little 'difference/resemblance' . . . between the two sexes in China," she forecloses on the possibility that "our" "Indo-European, monotheistic world" could in fact ever learn from China.

To me, the best critical engagement with *About Chinese Women* is by Hilary Chung. While she criticizes Kristeva for her "tenuous extrapolations and speculations . . . without recourse to archival evidence, textual analysis or primary research" and "no mention of the state appropriation of feminism as a tool for the control and redefinition of femininity," she is nevertheless able to apply a Kristevan analysis to Republican-era Chinese literature by women: "If we are to talk about a feminine mode of expression we should do so in an anti-essentialist Kristevan sense: a disruptive mode of discourse expressive of marginality, subversion and dissidence. Thus, one could argue that early May Fourth writing as a whole writes *in the feminine* against the dominant literary discourse of Confucian patriarchy." Chung is not blind to the irony: "The problem in any application of [Kristeva's] analysis to Chinese literature is self-evident: although it opens up avenues for a fruitful anti-essentialist analysis of early May Fourth writing, how can such a project be viable when it is rooted in a seriously flawed construction of China?"[27] In fact, this friction is a central question behind Chinese literary studies' engagement with poststructuralism in light of its takes on China. But more on that later.

While Kristeva published perhaps too eagerly on China, Barthes, on the other hand, seemed to know that whereof one cannot speak, one must pass over in silence—or, near silence, anyway. Barthes's trip yielded only one published article, "Alors, la Chine" (1975), translated alternately as "Well, and China?" (1986) and "So, How Was China?" (2015). Barthes could not relate to the China he visited, yet he was reluctant to simply say he didn't like it there. China was illegible to him: leaving France for China, he said, "we leave behind us the turbulence of symbols and enter upon a very big, very old, very new country, where meaning [*signifiance*] is discreet to the point of rarity," and so coming back, he had "come home with—*nothing*." Not only did he find "Signifiers (the things that

exceed meaning, cause it to overflow and to press on, towards desire) . . . rare," but "China presents very little to be read but its political Text," Maoist doctrine. Nor could he find any pleasure in that text: "To find Text . . . you have to go through an enormous swathe of repetitions." Practically the only thing he managed to read, in the semiotic sense, was "the current campaign against Confucius and Lin Piao," and describing it he sounds patronizing: "Its very name (in Chinese: *Pilin Pikong*) tinkles like a merry little bell, and the campaign divides into so many invented games." Only in his follow-up note, published the following year, does he say much of interest:

> On China, an immense object—and, for many, a hotly debated one—I tried to produce (this was where my truth lay) a discourse that was neither assertive, negative nor neutral. . . . By gently hallucinating China as an object located outside bright colours, strong flavours and stark meanings (all these things being not unconnected with the sempiternal parading of the phallus), I wanted to bind in a single movement the infinite feminine (maternal?) quality of the object itself. . . . This negative hallucination isn't gratuitous—it seeks to respond to the way many Westerners hallucinate the People's Republic of China in a dogmatic, violently affirmative/negative or falsely liberal way.[28]

He casts China as feminine, as Kristeva does, but without her pretentions of seeing China as genderless. Further, he is aware of his own masculinist cultural background and wants to find a way to transcend it. And though such transcendence is questionable, by acknowledging his own hallucination he both invokes and perhaps critiques Derrida's own discussion of Chinese in *Of Grammatology*. "Alors, la Chine" isn't very interesting, but his defense of it is.

Barthes's notebooks from his travels are also more interesting than the publication they produced. Translated into English too late to be of much influence to Chinese literature scholarship so far, *Travels in China* (*Carnets du voyage en Chine*, 2009) nevertheless offers a fuller read of Barthes's inability to read China.[29] As Saussy summarizes, Barthes "is repelled by his travelling companion Philippe Sollers, who is always trying to show off and debate Marxist theory with their Chinese guides and interlocutors."[30] In the face of figures such as Sollers and others, making "an intent and constant effort to speak about China from the point of view of China; a gaze coming from the inside," as well as those from the West who insist on the universality of their perspective, seeing "China *from the point of view* of the West," Barthes writes: "These two gazes are, for me, wrong. The right gaze is a *sideways gaze*."[31] Barthes fails at offering such a gaze in "Alors, la Chine," but I think the "sideways gaze" is without question the right way for sinologists to try to view China. This is how to avoid presenting as

wholly outside the Western context or subsuming its analysis into those of western Europe or North America. The problem is, the sideways gaze is hard to achieve.

J. Hillis Miller, the next doyen of "French theory" under discussion, did not achieve the sideways gaze in his writings on China, for instance. Miller is a bit different from the others discussed here, as he was not French and did not write in French, yet as one of Yale's "Gang of Four" (with Harold Bloom, Paul de Man, and Geoffrey Hartman) responsible for popularizing or disseminating deconstruction and poststructuralism into the undergraduate English curriculum, his mentions of China deserve attention.[32] *An Innocent Abroad* (2015) collects fifteen lectures Miller gave in China in visits dating back to his first trip there in 1988. Where others went to China to fulfill an ideological need, Miller is clear-eyed about his utility: he was invited to lecture so often in China not because "Chinese academics want to become deconstructionists" but, rather, because

> I am seen as a person of some authority from the United States in language and literature study and in "theory" generally. This means that, in the view of Chinese academics, I can help them in their quite deliberate and self-conscious aim of creating up-to-date programs in the humanities and devising specifically Chinese forms of such disciplines as comparative literature or cultural studies or World Literature or even, paradoxically, Marxist aesthetics. They want to learn what we do, and then do it better and in a distinctively Chinese way.[33]

Can there be a "distinctively Chinese way" of studying literature? That is one of the themes of this article. Does such a proposal smack of positing China as "outside of all logocentrism," or does denying the idea rather demonstrate "the *ethnocentrism* which, everywhere and always, had to control the concept of writing"?[34] Miller addresses the question, implicitly, several times in his lectures. In "Effects of Globalization on Literary Study" (41–56), for example, he writes, "Literary study used to be organized chiefly as the separate study of national literatures. . . . Now such study is seen as a feature of imperialism. Each country . . . is seen as multicultural and multilingual, and therefore as falsified by the study of a single nation's literature."[35] Yet in "A Comparison of Literary Studies in the United States and China" (189–207), after a few pages addressing similarities, he announces differences gleaned from reading a feature on Chinese literature in the academic journal *MLQ*, such as, "Chinese scholars have relatively little overt interest in saying something new," engage in "a high level of abstraction in descriptive formulations about a given author or 'school,'" make "little stylistic or formal analysis," and seem to assume "that Chinese literature can be translated into English, and Western literature into Chinese, without

important losses."[36] My culling makes Miller come off as meaner toward Chinese scholarship than he sounds in the lecture as a whole; he emphasizes that his generalizations come from reading one issue of one journal, and he reiterates that, "like all of my contrasts, these are tendencies, not absolute differences."[37] Nevertheless, there is a plain hierarchy in his opposition of "Chinese" and "Western" habits of writing about literature. The highlighting of the apparent belief in translation without loss is particularly important, as it echoes Miller's most paradigmatically poststructuralist presentation of China. From "The (Language) Crisis of Comparative Literature" (107–26):

> It is not even certain that it is right to call it "Chinese literature" or "poetry," since anything like an exact equivalent of those words does not exist, so I am told, in Chinese. The protocols for writing Chinese "poetry," and its uses over the centuries within Chinese culture, are different, to a considerable degree, from poetry and its uses in Euro-American culture. Our poetry is allusive and full of echoes of earlier poetry, echoes that an adept reader needs to recognize . . . , but nothing in our traditions quite matches the subtlety of echo in Chinese so-called poetry, at least so I am told. . . . To understand Chinese so-called poetry, you must learn how to read Chinese—a lengthy task.[38]

Miller is clear that his conclusions here come from second-hand information ("so I am told," "so I am told," "so I am told"), and perhaps he is trying to be polite—the impression he gives is that Chinese literature and poetry are not "literature" or "poetry" because they are something superior, richer—yet this pushes us into deeper problems than "China does not have any philosophy, only thought": if Chinese poetry is not poetry, what is it? Yes, there are differences between literature in Chinese and literature in any other language, but are these differences enough to decategorize literature and Chinese from each other? Whether Chinese literature is "literature" has nothing to do with writing in Chinese *an sich*, only with the narrowness or breadth of our working definition of literature. The other term in Miller's binary opposition is not even named, only posited as a hypothetical ineffable, an ineffable he says it would be almost impossible to understand ("a lengthy task"). By emphasizing translational loss and making his definitions of *literature* and *poetry* impossibly narrow, he idealizes Chinese literature nearly beyond existence, and certainly beyond accessibility via translation.

And so we have yet another poststructuralist who falls back on structuralism's central displacement of China and Chinese, undermining his deconstruction of binaries.

**The First Decentering Limits Itself**

If the overwhelming habit of poststructuralists signifying China has been to revert to structuralist differences with the West, why would sinologists want to be influenced by poststructuralism? Wasn't sinology doing fine with philology, and couldn't the handful of scholars who wanted to engage in more theoretical pursuits make do with structuralism proper?[39] Of course, some did decry the throwing open of "the portals of Chinese poetry studies to the gremlin progeny of Derrida's febrile brain," but poststructuralism has indeed proven influential in Chinese literary scholarship.[40] Why?

One answer is that Chinese literature is indeed literature, and one of the duties of scholars of any language's literature is to respond to the dominant or most compelling takes on literature in the environment of study. Within this, another answer is that, despite perplexing comments by its best-known practitioners, poststructuralism did in fact make structural room for attention to China. Derrida's *Of Grammatology* spends considerable time engaging in early modern European philosophers' curiosity about the Chinese script; he makes attention to China matter to the intellectual history of the West. From there, it is not far to make the case that "'the Western image of China'" is not "a subject entirely different from the present-day researcher's good-faith effort to understand the Chinese themselves."[41] Sinologists can have faith in the importance of our task of understanding China to the Euro-American intellectual project and then scrutinize that task at the same time as we scrutinize China.

But Derrida's narration of how China, or the understanding of Chinese, matters to European intellectual history is convoluted: describing a historical trajectory toward deconstruction, toward "the science of writing—*grammatology*—[which] shows signs of liberation all over the world," he centers on a moment in European intellectual history when something "shook up first and caused vacillation . . . in the transcendental authority and dominant category of the *epistémè*: being." That something was the "becoming-legible of non-Western scripts." Yet for all the epistemological wobbling it created, Derrida does not describe this moment as entirely positive: "The first decentering limits itself. It recenters itself upon . . . the '*Chinese*' prejudice: all the philosophical projects of a universal script and of a universal language . . . invoked by Descartes, outlined by Father Kircher, Wilkins, Leibniz, etc., encouraged seeing in the recently discovered Chinese script a model of the philosophical language [*langue*] thus removed from history." Derrida also calls this "'*Chinese*' prejudice" a "sort of European hallucination." The dream of a universal written language, a philosophical language that could transcend history, is just that—a dream. It is not something we should believe in—to say nothing of fantasizing that the Chinese written language could get us there—but it may have helped, says Derrida, make

a crack in the authority of the reign of logocentric "being." And at the end of this, he said Chinese remains "a powerful movement of civilization developing outside of all logocentrism" because it is "structurally dominated by the ideogram."[42] The shaking and vacillation seem to have been intrinsic not only to Derrida's argument but also to his argumentation.

Shaking and vacillation are also evident in the reaction from theoretically minded sinologists. That is, they have been quite critical of Derrida here but mixed in how forgiving they want to be in the context of what else he is saying. Most recently, Andrea Bachner has argued that Derrida's "'Chinese' example is a symptom of a profound turn in thought: the reworking of signification under the sign of death."[43] Earlier, Rey Chow had argued that *Of Grammatology*, a "work that is radical, liberatory, antitraditional—an epochal intellectual intervention in every respect—is founded not only on a lack of information about and indifference to the workings of a language that provides the pivot of its critical turn but also on a continual stigmatization of that language, through the mechanical reproduction of it as mere graphicity, as 'ideographic' writing," so that the "inscrutable Chinese ideogram has led to a new scrutability, a new insight that remains Western and that becomes, thereafter, global."[44] John Cayley noted: "Derrida himself is hallucinating here. My own reading is that he is aware that he is doing so and regards it as a beneficial necessity."[45] To my knowledge, the first sinologist to critique Derrida for his claim that Chinese was "outside of all logocentrism" was Zhang Longxi, who wrote,

> The question that may be put to the contemporary effort to deconstruct the metaphysics of phonetic writing is whether such an effort has safely guarded itself against the same prejudice or hallucination. . . . A more fundamental question that necessarily follows is whether or not logocentrism is symptomatic only of Western metaphysics, that is, whether the metaphysics of Western thinking is really different from that of Eastern thinking and is not simply the way thinking is constituted and works. . . . In other words, if logocentrism is found present in the East as well as in the West, in nonphonetic as well as in phonetic writing, how is it possible for us to break away from, or through, its enclosure?[46]

Zhang sees himself to be pointing out the futility of any deconstruction, but for others his point would simply mean that Chinese literature can be deconstructed as well. Either way, whether the scholars in question were writing for Derrida or against him, the portals of Chinese literary studies had already been thrown open to the progeny of his brain.

The influence of poststructuralism on sinology more broadly could also be called a "first decentering" that limits itself by recentering on a kind of "'*Chinese*'

prejudice." In response to both poststructuralism's critique of Western dualism and related comments by poststructuralist critics such as Paul de Man that literature "is the only form of language free from the fallacy of unmediated expression. . . . All literatures . . . have always designated themselves as existing in the mode of fiction," some sinologists asked, *All literatures?*[47] Stephen Owen wrote that, whereas for "the reader of Wordsworth, all is metaphor and fiction. . . . For Tu Fu's reader the poem is not a fiction: it is a unique, factual account of an experience in historical time, a human consciousness encountering, interpreting, and responding to the world."[48] Pauline Yu drew out the Western metaphysical reasons behind the idea that literature would be all metaphor and fiction, arguing that "mimesis is . . . predicated on a fundamental ontological dualism—the assumption that there is a truer reality transcendent to the concrete, historical realm in which we live, and that the relationship between the two is replicated in the creative act and the artifact," whereas "indigenous Chinese philosophical traditions agree on a fundamentally monistic view of the universe"; thus, "the Chinese poem was assumed to invoke a network of preexisting correspondences—between poet and world and among clusters of images."[49] They did not necessarily cite Derrida and others, but their generally poststructuralist approach made itself evident nonetheless.

At the time, Owen and Yu were considered the most poststructuralist of sinologists, whether that was a good thing or bad: Jonathan Chaves lambasts them for theorizing, while James J. Y. Liu said of Owen that "one has feelings of déjà vu, since many of the ideas appear to have been derived from such contemporary Western literary theorists and critics as Hans-Georg Gadamer, Wolfgang Iser, Stanley Fish, Harold Bloom, and Jacques Derrida, none of whom is mentioned by name."[50] Indeed, the idea that Chinese poetry is fundamentally nonfictional reads like a response to Derrida: whereas Derrida described the dream that Chinese was "a model of the philosophical language thus removed from history," Owen and Yu posited that Chinese could never be removed from history, according to the conceptualization of Chinese writing by the Chinese. Or, they frame the contrast between Chinese and Western poetries as "the contrast of nondifference versus difference," as Saussy wrote about Kristeva. This is also to say, then, that Owen and Yu are unresolved in their deconstructions (consider how similar they are in argument to works that position themselves against Derrida and poststructuralism)—or, rather, they simultaneously adhere to and dissent from poststructuralism, nodding to its critique of Western dualism and its shaping of literature while also carving a space outside of that dualism where literature could be something other than rhetoric and figuration.[51] The arguments also attempt to mediate between the Modern Language Association and the Association for Asian Studies or position the study of

Chinese literature between that of area studies and that of literature (also known as English).[52]

Other examples in line with Yu's and Owen's comparisons have followed. Wai-lim Yip's *Diffusion of Distances* (1993) comes to mind, critiquing the West's "epistemological world view developed from Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysics" while claiming that Chinese poets (and perhaps all speakers) "view things as things view themselves."[53] Though Owen and Yu have both been critical of Yip in print, the three are alike in critiquing poetry from the West for its cultural ideology while associating Chinese poetry with nature.[54] Poststructuralism has long been on the lookout for verbalizations of ideology, but if de Man was right that "what we call ideology is precisely the confusion of linguistic with natural reality," then Yip's statement about Chinese enabling the viewing of things as things view themselves is supremely ideological. Just when he thinks he is outside of ideology, we find him back in it.[55]

Mentioning ideology proper brings us to the curious case of Ming Dong Gu, particularly his book *Sinologism: An Alternative to Orientalism and Postcolonialism* (2013). He had earlier written "Mimetic Theory in Chinese Literary Thought," arguing against the Yu-Owen hypothesis and deconstructing the "dichotomous view" of a "Chinese emphasis on expression and the Western emphasis on imitation, the Chinese view of literature as spontaneous growth and the Western view of literature as conscious representation," which he says "is largely responsible for the nonmimetic view of Chinese literature and needs serious revision."[56] *Sinologism*, too, comes with a foreword by J. Hillis Miller, implying a poststructuralist approach from the arguments of the book as a whole. And yet another of his books is titled *Chinese Theories of Fiction: A Non-Western Narrative System*, implying a vision of Chinese theoretics as, again, not only outside Western ethnocentrism but outside a Western mindset *in toto*. As for *Sinologism*, its title names "the inner logic of the problems in China-West studies, which," he says, "is an ideological unconscious in China-West knowledge production." Gu spends the book critiquing the sinologistic expression of this ideological unconscious. But see the alternative he imagines in the conclusion:

> Once freed from the unconscious logic of Sinologism, cross-cultural studies will no longer rely on Western theories as universal paradigms, but use them as reference frameworks to study the historical conditions of non-Western cultures and societies, and there will appear truly scientific and objective approaches to non-Western materials, resulting in bias-free knowledge about non-Western cultures. In the field of China-West studies, so long as we become fully conscious of the logic of Sinologism and guard against its appearance in knowledge and scholarship, we will eventually be able to usher in a "golden age" when knowledge about China and other cultures is

> pursued for its own sake, free from the interference of the political ideologies of colonialism, Western-centrism, ethno-centrism, and other political and ideological agendas.[57]

A scientific and objective approach to humanistic studies sounds terminally boring to me, but I suppose Gu's positing of bias-free knowledge on the other side of ideology is preferable to segregating Chinese and Western writing because of an assumed epistemological difference. Yet I note a utopianism in Gu reminiscent of Miller's postulation of a Chinese literature that transcends common definitions of literature, or of anyone's "effort to speak about China from the point of view of China," as Barthes described it. And poststructuralism, in my understanding, should be most suspicious of claims of transcendence, of objectivity and being free of bias—also known as subjectivity. With Gu's earlier search for finding a "nonwestern narrative system" in mind, his hopes here sound no less ideological, and no more poststructural, than Yip's dream of Chinese poets viewing things as things view themselves.

So, what can we say about sinological poststructuralism thus far? The first decentering limits itself, recentering on a "Chinese" prejudice: these critical projects of a Chinese correlative cosmology, invoked by Gu, outlined by Owen, Yu, Yip, etc., encouraged seeing in the recently discovered Chinese poem a model of the poetic language thus removed from rhetoric and ideology. For all that these scholars' arguments draw on poststructuralist analyses of the ideologies of Western rhetoric, their "intent and constant effort to speak about China from the point of view of China," in Barthes's words, is in fact no different from Derrida's positioning of Chinese as "outside of all logocentrism"—in which case, the pretense to offer the "gaze coming from the inside" is the same as looking at "China *from the point of view* of the West."[58] These scholars are not, in fact, demonstrating the strength of the sideways gaze.

**A Dissipated Poststructuralism**

Fortunately, other sinologists have adopted the sideways gaze of poststructuralist promise more successfully. The shaking and vacillating did yield, in some circles, a decentering of Chinese as outside in comparative sinology, or cross-cultural poetics. To the extent that there was a rupture (a dubious proposition, if a useful one), it was constituted with the work of Rey Chow and Haun Saussy. They have both exemplified the possibilities of poststructuralist sinology even as they have engaged in internal critique of the enterprise. In "Introduction: On Chineseness as a Theoretical Problem," Chow argued that, for scholars like Owen and Yu, "the practitioners of Chinese writing—or the Chinese practitioners of writing—are, in effect, read as ethnics, or natives, who are endowed

with a certain *primitive logic*."[59] Saussy, meanwhile, focusing on the premodern where Chow focuses on the contemporary and modernity, deconstructed in his *Problem of a Chinese Aesthetic* (1993) the Chinese/West binary implicit in the Yu-Owen hypothesis first by tracing the question of Chinese rhetoric and metaphysics to the earliest European attempts to categorize Chinese language and culture (the Jesuit rites controversy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries over whether missionaries could make Christian converts in Chinese), and then by questioning assertions about the lack of Chinese allegory via readings of Xunzi's 荀子 (c. 310–c. 235 BCE) problematizations of "nature" (*xing* 性). Later, Saussy would write, in the context of reading poststructuralist presentations of China quoted above, that "deconstruction cannot be a list of authors, a belief system or a set of themes. It may articulate themes and present pictures of reality . . . but for the work of deconstruction to go forward these representations must be dispensable . . . it is entirely likely that the next things worth questioning with the methods of Derrida and de Man will prove have nothing in common with those on which junior deconstructors cut their teeth."[60] Saussy's forecasting about deconstruction was prescient (even as deconstruction lost its dominance among critical approaches to literary studies soon after those words were published). Other sinologists who strike me as particularly post-structuralist may not be citing Derrida or de Man as often as is the caricature of the deconstructive appeal to authority in many literature departments, but they have refused to see *Sinae* (China)—or the China/West distinction—as "central" (*zhong* 中), even as they engage in sinology.

In addition to Bachner, Chung, Hayot, and Zhang, already cited above (though Zhang would likely disavow poststructuralist influence, even as he has not been sinocentric in his comparative studies or sinology), some of the most influential sinologists who are to my mind most indebted to poststructuralism and devoted to getting past binaries are Zong-qi Cai, Eugene Eoyang, Xiaofan Amy Li, Lydia H. Liu, Yurou Zhong, Jacob Edmond, Nicholas Morrow Williams, and Martin Svensson Ekström. I briefly discuss them in pairings of scholars focusing on comparative poetics, on modern Chinese literature, and on classical philology—the last of which is often conceived of in opposition to theory. Much more could be said on all these works and others, but I offer these remarks so as not to leave the impression either that I only know how to be critical or that poststructuralism is no longer making an impact in the study of Chinese literature.

After Yu and Owen, Chinese and Western comparative poetics became one of the most available venues for deconstructive scholarship. Zong-qi Cai's *Configurations of Comparative Poetics* (2002) details Chinese and Western poetics as emerging from separate starting points but nevertheless involving many intersections and parallels, in large part due to the pluralities that define

both traditions. Cai ends the book with an appeal to a transcultural perspective—which I see as roughly equivalent to the sideways gaze—which he says enables him "to discuss similarities as meaningful convergences between two equal traditions, rather than in terms of the conformity of a 'lesser' tradition to a 'superior' one."[61] In a manner not dissimilar, though less systematic, Eoyang's *Transparent Eye* (1993) makes the case that history "is not anal-retentive, but rather chaotic, disheveled, entropic, scatological if not eschatological" to argue against "authenticity" as a viable category either in translation or in cross-cultural poetics.[62] Xiaofan Amy Li's *Comparative Encounters between Artaud, Michaux, and the Zhuangzi* (2015) argues that the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 and writings by Antonin Artaud and Henri Michaux can be taken together to "point towards a nonnormative, relational and embodied ethics that values spontaneous action without subjective agency."[63] These books by Cai, Eoyang, and Li help destabilize the neat binary that defined Chinese/Western poetics in an earlier era.

In part because the earliest European attempts at categorizing Chinese language and culture, mentioned above, took place in early modernity, and the technologies that pushed modernity not only expanded such systematizing logic but also interpellated the whole world—not least of all China—into its systematizations, the confluence of China and modernity has proven a fertile field for poststructuralist scholarship.[64] Lydia H. Liu's *Translingual Practice* (1995) reads Chinese literature "since its early exposure to English, modern Japanese, and other foreign languages" to see "whether one can still talk about change and transaction between East and West in twentieth-century China without privileging the West, modernity, progress, or other post-Enlightenment notions on the one hand and without holding on to a reified idea of indigenous China on the other."[65] Her *Clash of Empires* (2004) looks at the "hetero-cultural legacy of sovereign thinking [between China and Great Britain] in the nineteenth century," its most controversial argument also its most poststructuralist in terms of its discussion of the power of the word: she argues that "the translation of the written Chinese character *yi* [夷] at the time of the Opium War led to the invention of the super-sign *yi/barbarian* by the British, who believed that the use of the character was intended to insult the foreigner and thus sought to ban the word."[66] Yurou Zhong has also turned sinological poststructuralism into a positive science in her *Chinese Grammatology* (2019), looking at the "phonocentric turn of modern Chinese writing."[67] In treating contemporary poetry, meanwhile, Jacob Edmond has so thoroughly decentralized the China/West distinction that in analyzing poetry written in Chinese, Russian, and English he barely needs to address any binary. At any rate, the stakes have changed. *A Common Strangeness* (2012), which Eric Hayot on the back cover describes as "a

long essay on the relation between the general and the particular after deconstruction," argues that "poets from China, Russia, and the United States . . . have shaped conceptions of the global," and Edmond's *Make It the Same* (2019) talks about what Liu calls "change and transaction between East and West . . . without privileging the West, modernity, progress, or other post-Enlightenment notions" by making the case that "copying and mimetic desire are not signs of non-Western derivativeness but qualities shared equally by non-Western and Western modernism."[68] These three scholars demonstrate that, in dealing with comparative studies of Chinese literature in modernity, a structural binary between Chinese and Western literature is no longer viable.

Classical philology has been the subfield of Chinese literary studies most resistant to literary theory—and not always for ideological reasons, but simply for the time it takes. Immediately after Paul W. Kroll states, for instance, that his "impossible ideal" for the scholar of Tang literature "is to be as conversant with all areas of Tang life and culture as an educated Tang scholar would have been," he adds, "Let me make clear that in saying this I am not directing a flank attack at 'theory.'"[69] Yet some philological scholars strike me as being particularly influenced by poststructuralism, against the odds. In *Imitations of the Self: Jiang Yan and Chinese Poetics* (2015), Nicholas Morrow Williams writes that "imitation poems" (*nishi* 擬詩)

> were the most self-conscious writing about intertextuality in the Six Dynasties [220–589 CE], since they were explicitly defined in terms of relations among preexisting literary works. . . . Roland Barthes has written that "the citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable, and yet *already read*: they are quotations without inverted commas."[70] Yet imitation poems make a virtue of necessity—finding poetic resonance in the double voice of poetry itself, as well as the gap between the fictional speaker and implied author.[71]

The passage resonates with many debates at the nexus of poststructuralism and Chinese literary studies, not just intertextuality but the relationships between author and speaker, fiction and textuality, and rhetoric and reality. Later, in "Sublimating Sorrow" (2019) Williams reads the "real ambiguity embedded in the text" of Qu Yuan's 屈原 (c. 340–278 BCE) long poem the "Li sao" 離騷 (Sublimating Sorrow), wherein "the character *li* 離 has at least two diametrically opposite significations: 'to depart' or 'to encounter.'" As "none of the tensions or contradictions is resolved in the 'Li sao' or in its reception history," he argues, the best tactic is to emphasize deconstructive undecidability: "In translating the poem the best option is to engage and to represent the contradictions themselves."[72] Similarly, Martin Svensson Ekström has written a series

of articles that, not unlike Gu's deconstructions, question the denial of metaphor in Chinese poetry.[73] But his clearest statement of poststructuralist allegiance, to my knowledge, is in a passage touting the benefits of philological reading—which also happens to engage with the sinological debates I have traced out in this article. The sinologist, he writes, "is always and everywhere in danger of being misled or charmed by superficial similarities between Chinese and Western terms, concepts, and discourses. Conversely, he or she is to a similar degree in danger of exaggerating the division between Chinese cosmology and Western metaphysics, of experiencing the so-called cosmological gulf in every Platonic dialogue or in every saying attributed to Confucius." For instance, "If we translate *shi* 詩 as 'poetry,' we must take into consideration the differences that obtain between Graeco-Roman and Chinese conceptions of rhymed or metrically bound or ritualized language—what we instinctively would call 'poetry'—and compare what the ancient sources say about the origin, function, and formal qualities of *shi* and *poiēsis*, respectively." If comparative literature approaches these terms as ideas, he says, they will seem to have "geared the particular culture in specific directions. Thus *poiēsis* is often conceived of as abstract, contrived, metaphysical, metaphorical, in contrast to Chinese *shi* 詩, which is seen as concrete, spontaneous, cosmological." In contrast,

> a "philological" reading, as indicated, would not merely reverse the top-down model or insist that a more correct understanding of the linguistic, textual, or cultural unit in question lies in etymological or graphological analyses. (Indeed, such analyses have in the past been part and parcel of an incorrect dichotomization of China and the West.) It would insist, rather, on a constant awareness and revision of what we consider the "great ideas" that underpin, respectively, the Chinese and Western traditions to be in the light of readings that contextualize the "unit" in a far more rigorous manner than is usually seen, as well as taking etymology and graphology into account.[74]

Praising philology, Ekström winds up with deconstruction, with awareness and revision of the "great ideas" that underpin the Chinese and Western traditions in light of rigorously contextualizing readings. If Ekström shows that the opposition between philology and deconstruction is not as stable as we might otherwise think, then perhaps deconstruction has been with us in sinology from the beginning, and this whole article should be rethought!

Be that as it may, these sinologists and comparatists demonstrate to me the place and pace of poststructuralism in sinology now. The aforementioned scholars are not part of a unified group—at times they have even gotten into debates with each other—but they are united in not centralizing their production of knowledge on a binary opposition of China and the West. They may not

necessarily think of themselves as poststructuralists, but in this they represent a more dissipated poststructuralism, having absorbed its influences and seen around many of its blind spots. They show that poststructuralism does not have to be defined by statements about China being "outside" philosophy but, rather, can yield very successful sinology from its sideways gaze.

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**Notes**

1. Du and Zhang, *Delida zai Zhongguo jiangyanlu*, 139.
2. Ibid.
3. Van Norden, *Taking Back Philosophy*, 25; Defoort and Ge, "Editors' Introduction," 3.
4. Levinas, *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, 85.
5. Zhao, "Contesting Confucius."
6. Jullien, *Detour and Access*, 9.
7. Billeter, *Contre François Jullien*, 9, 13. For context, see Zhao, "Contesting Confucius"; Botz-Bornstein, "Heated French Debate"; and Weber, "What about the Billeter-Jullien Debate?" On the history of European othering of China, see Hung, "Orientalist Knowledge and Social Theories."
8. Saussy, review of *La propension des choses*, 987.
9. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 98.
10. Ibid., 3, 177.
11. Ibid., 86, 82.
12. I mark here the caveat that the structuralism/poststructuralism split is largely an American categorization of postwar French thought. See Cusset, *French Theory*.
13. Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 120.
14. Ibid., 25–26.
15. Another of Derrida's sources for his knowledge of Chinese was Marcel Granet, on whom see Saussy, *Ethnography of Rhythm*, 27–33.
16. Foucault, *Order of Things*, xvi. See Borges, "John Wilkins' Analytical Language," 231.
17. Zhang, "Myth of the Other," 110. But does Borges suggest that the Chinese encyclopedia is a joke? "In Borges's essay," Zhang notes, "The absurdities of the 'Chinese encyclopedia' are not recalled to represent an incomprehensibly alien mode of thinking," and Borges cites an actual German translator of Chinese fiction, Franz Kuhn (1884–1961)—though no one has ever found evidence of Kuhn having written up such a categorization, and as Zhang notes, "It is not at all uncommon for Borges in his writings to mix erudition with imagination, blending real names and titles with imaginary ones" (111).
18. Bachner, *Beyond Sinology*, 29.
19. The PCF had gained 47 seats in the National Assembly in the 1956 election, reaching 150 elected representatives, but it lost 140 seats in the elections of 1958. PCF opposition both to de-Stalinization and to Charles de Gaulle's foundation of the Fifth Republic likely contributed to these losses, as well.

20. Nikita Khrushchev's and Leonid Brezhnev's interests in détente with the United States also contributed to some intellectuals' loss of faith in the USSR as the spearhead for international revolution.
21. The *Tel Quel* group were not the only French intellectuals to travel to Maoist China. See Hughes, *France/China*, 33–66.
22. That said, for further readings of the trip and of China, esp. per Sollers, see Saussy, "Outside the Parenthesis"; Hayot, *Chinese Dreams*, 103–75; and Bachner, *Beyond Sinology*, 148–51.
23. Hayot, *Chinese Dreams*, 106.
24. Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity*, 7.
25. Kristeva, *About Chinese Women*, 195.
26. Saussy, "Outside the Parenthesis," 860–61. For criticisms from beyond the sinology realm, see Spivak, "French Feminism"; and Lowe, *Critical Terrains*, 136–89.
27. Chung, "Kristevan (Mis)Understandings," 74, 87, 88.
28. Barthes, "So, How Was China?," 98, 97, 99, 100, 101, 103–4.
29. For one engagement with Barthes's *Travels in China*, see Klein, "Dissonance of Discourses."
30. Saussy, review of *Travels in China*, 3.
31. Barthes, *Travels in China*, 177.
32. The name *Gang of Four* also implies a relationship to China, referencing the group that exerted control over much of the Chinese Communist Party during the last years of the Cultural Revolution.
33. Miller, *Innocent Abroad*, xxix.
34. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 3.
35. Miller, *Innocent Abroad*, 50.
36. Ibid., 195, 198, 199, 201.
37. Ibid., 195.
38. Ibid., 121.
39. I have in mind Mei and Kao, "Tu Fu's 'Autumn Meditations'"; Kao and Mei, "Syntax, Diction, and Imagery"; and Kao and Mei, "Meaning, Metaphor, and Allusion"; as well as Cheng, *Chinese Poetic Writing*. See Lian's and Varsano's contributions to this special issue.
40. Chaves, "Forum," 80.
41. Saussy, *Problem of a Chinese Aesthetic*, 3.
42. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 4, 100, 82, 82, 86, 98.
43. Bachner, *Beyond Sinology*, 26.
44. Chow, "How (the) Inscrutable Chinese Led to Globalized Theory," 70, 72.
45. Cayley and Yang, "Hallucination and Coherence," 775.
46. Zhang, "'Tao' and the 'Logos,'" 388–89.
47. De Man, "Crisis of Contemporary Criticism," 54.
48. Owen, *Traditional Chinese Poetry and Poetics*, 15.
49. Yu, *Reading of Imagery*, 5, 32, 36.
50. J. J. Y. Liu, review, 579. See Chaves, "Forum," 80.
51. For a representative work that positions itself against Derrida and poststructuralism with an argument similar to that that of Owen and Yu, see Sun, *Poetics of Repetition*.
52. Again, see Varsano's article on mediating between area studies and literature, or sinology and the disciplines, in her contribution to this special issue.

53. Yip, *Diffusion of Distances*, 48, 71.
54. See Owen, review; and Yu, "Hidden in Plain Sight?," 180–81.
55. De Man, "Resistance to Theory," 11.
56. Gu, "Mimetic Theory in Chinese Literary Thought," 421–22. See Gu, "Is Mimetic Theory in Literature and Art Universal?"
57. Gu, *Sinologism*, 5, 224–25.
58. Barthes, *Travels in China*, 177; Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 98; Barthes, *Travels in China*, 177.
59. Chow, "Introduction," 15–16; see also Bowman, "Editor's Introduction."
60. Saussy, "Outside the Parenthesis," 856.
61. Cai, *Configurations of Comparative Poetics*, 254.
62. Eoyang, *Transparent Eye*, 22.
63. Li, *Comparative Encounters*, 4.
64. See Hayot, "Vanishing Horizons," 91–97.
65. L. H. Liu, *Translingual Practice*, xvi, 30.
66. L. H. Liu, *Clash of Empires*, 2.
67. Zhong, *Chinese Grammatology*, 3.
68. Edmond, *Common Strangeness*, 2–3; Edmond, *Make It the Same*, 11.
69. Kroll, "On the Study of Tang Literature," 6.
70. See Barthes, "From Work to Text," 160.
71. Williams, *Imitations of the Self*, 4.
72. Williams, "Sublimating Sorrow," 183.
73. See Ekström, "Illusion, Lie, and Metaphor"; Ekström, "One Lucky Bastard"; and Ekström, "Does the Metaphor Translate."
74. Ekström, "Sino-Methodologies, a Draft," 61–62.

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