Song Geng (ed), *Quanqiu hua yu “Zhongguo xing” – Dangdai wenhua de houzhimin jiedu (Globalization and “Chineseness”: Postcolonial readings of contemporary culture)*

Yinde Zhang

Édition électronique

URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/chinaperspectives/2413>

DOI : 10.4000/chinaperspectives.2413

ISSN : 1996-4617

Éditeur

Centre d'étude français sur la Chine contemporaine

Édition imprimée

Date de publication : 15 septembre 2007

ISSN : 2070-3449

Référence électronique

Yinde Zhang, « Song Geng (ed), *Quanqiu hua yu “Zhongguo xing” – Dangdai wenhua de houzhimin jiedu (Globalization and “Chineseness”: Postcolonial readings of contemporary culture)* », *China Perspectives* [En ligne], 2007/3 | 2007, mis en ligne le 09 avril 2008, consulté le 24 septembre 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/chinaperspectives/2413> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/chinaperspectives.2413>

Ce document a été généré automatiquement le 24 septembre 2020.

© All rights reserved

Song Geng (ed), *Quanqiuhua yu "Zhongguoxing" – Dangdai wenhua de houzhimin jiedu* (Globalization and "Chineseness": Postcolonial readings of contemporary culture)

Yinde Zhang

- 1 This collaborative work gathers fourteen articles written by Chinese academics and/or young researchers spread throughout China, the United States, Hong Kong, Macao, England and Australia. As the fruit of a "global" collaboration, it projects an image of the subject at hand. These cultural studies cover areas as varied as cinema, tourism, literary criticism, media, advertising, and the internet. A diversity of themes complements this interdisciplinary approach, involving politics, economy, international relations, sexual identity, mass culture... This hybridism, favoured by postcolonial criticism, represents a benchmark in discussions. While the work of the previous decade turned postcolonial theory against Western hegemony and focused on the revalorisation of Chinese culture, this work readapts this appropriation by incorporating fields of inquiry at once larger, more nuanced and reflective. This evolution can be observed in a shift in terminology—*Zhonghuaxing* is substituted for *Zhongguoxing*: cultural approaches, as distinct from "culturalisms," are presented with the hope that they will prove suitable tools for scanning the multiple facets of a China confronted with globalisation. This collection, indeed, appears to make little attempt at harmonisation, giving preference to the expression of differentiated voices. Some past debates are pursued in a set of studies that adopt a more denouncing, relativistic or protesting angle. The anti-orientalist posture guides Mao Sihui's article, which points a finger at the degrading image of Chinese given in James Bond films. Yenna Wu, in connection with feminist critiques, and Song Geng, on the subject of the reconstruction of "virility," underline the necessity of returning to Chinese political and cultural anthropology due to the inadequacy of Western templates. In the same

cinematographic field, Wang Ning defends the fifth generation, which, though faced with accusations of complaisance towards the West, had the merit, according to the author, of inaugurating the international career of Chinese cinema: the sixth generation reaps the benefits of this even as it pursues renewed themes. Wang Ning underlines the fifth generation's inspirational role in the worldwide exportation of Chinese culture. Fan Hong also takes up this position and sounds the alarm against the threats of mass culture. This sort of cultural relativism is pursued further in the search for an alternative to the Western model. Zhou Xiaoyi and Tong Qingsheng, in their discussion of modern Chinese literature, go so far as to discern—though not without taking up certain neo-Marxist, Western formulations—the characteristics of an “alternative modernity” in Mao's 1942 intervention at Yan'an, invalidating the essentially “imported” heritage of the May Fourth 1919 movement. Gao Mobo strips away the clichés of cultural desertification, destructive acts and murderous violence that surround the memory of the Cultural Revolution, digging up unexpected positive sides in the fields of education, culture and medical care. His patient and solid argument holds up in spite of a subjectivity that is clearly hostile to the concept of cataclysm, which he sees as a product of the West's own discursive power. These studies seemingly all obey the same underlying dichotomy, which explains both the victimised or self-legitimising positioning and the inclination towards the construction of a cultural “Chinese-ness” to match China's economic ascension. However a number of these studies attempt to transcend this simplistic dualism and more fully investigate the relations between the global and the local, the new points of tension, and the new power struggles hidden in the in-between spaces of “glocalisation.” Ye Yunshan's article takes this sort of approach to the Mao fever of the 1990s, presenting it as the exemplification of a new alliance between power and money, far removed from the often-described case of spontaneous popular nostalgia. The orchestration of leisure and tourist activities also betrays a complicity between public authorities and investors, according to Jing Wang's analysis, which goes on to reveal how a post-Socialist state is capable of creating illusions of freedom through the mirage of a “consumer democracy.” Xiao Hui, in her turn, aims her denunciations at the “entrepreneurisation” of the individual, taking as an example Super Voice Girl (Chaoji nüsheng), the Chinese, women's-only version of Star Academy, as well as the phenomenon of Big Sister Water Lily (Furong jiejie) whose exhibitionist website attracted, as did other similar sites, the fanatical devotion of millions of young people. This carnivalesque type of activity ultimately works to the advantage of the authorities, who are able to successfully maintain their control over economic stakes, media competition and social instability. Hong Kong is the subject of reflections more specifically centred on issues of identity. Lim Song Hwee offers an allegorical re-reading of Wong Kar Wai's *Happy Together* (Chunguang zha xie), in which the homosexual couple's antipodean exile is perceived as an impossible escape on the eve of the territory's fated retrocession. Laikwan Pang expresses more of a preoccupation with the destiny of Hong Kong, formerly the object of orientalist speculation, and now exposed to the risk of seeing its identity disfigured by tourism and the schizophrenic necessity of both establishing state control and promoting internationalisation. Xu Ben's article, finally, is distinguished by its political approach to “Chineseness.” He redefines globalisation as a favourable factor in defying political borders, sovereign powers and the relations between states, and consequently favouring civic politics and the emergence of civil society within a post-totalitarian nation-state such as China. From this point of view, liberal nationalism, as it is

emerging in China, and as distinct from populism, proves itself to be a positive or legitimate nationalism, insofar as it promotes the process of democratisation over and above the ideology of the nation-state and the obsolete antagonism between the China and the West. In this way, it will allow for participation in global governance and the adherence to redefined universal virtues, such as the respect of life, liberty, justice, equality and the environment. While this sort of a civil state based on the morality of global citizenship mainly reflects the pious wishes of the author; on the other hand, Xu Ben refuses—not without reason—to merge “Chineseness” with the consensual discrediting of globalisation, which is accused of promoting the infamous discourses of free-trade, westernisation and universalism. Chinese identity, as shown by the varied and sometimes contradictory visions in this study, is at its base a historic plurality, a sort of imaginary construction, as reliant on a sense of otherness as on the perception of self. These analyses, often pertinent and original, might have carried greater argumentative force had they not suffered from a certain sociological deficiency due to the primarily literary background of the authors, as Liu Kang mentions in the preface. Also regrettable is the setting aside of Taiwan, whose absence from the field of Post-Colonial studies of Chinese identity can in no way be justified by the semantic limitation (precisely the subject of controversy) of the term *Zhongguoxing*. Translated by Jonathan Hull