They cannot represent themselves;
they must be represented.
— Karl Marx

The Marx quote above is one of two epigraphs that preface Edward Said’s seminal text *Orientalism,* in which he postulates the now widely accepted theory that the “Orient” exists as a region constructed culturally, politically, and intellectually by the hegemonically dominant “Occident” and as such is denied agency to represent itself. Closer examination of the plays selected for this study, particularly in regard to how both the Oriental and Occidental Other are constituted, shows that the “unrepresented” *can* represent themselves—and furthermore, that they do so through a seductive manipulation of Western Orientalism and its unexplored discursive Other, Occidentalism, which alternately exploits and circumvents the fallacious East-West binary that use of these discourses typically establishes.

Edward Said concludes his famous exposition and critique of Orientalism with the claim that, above all, he desires to convince his reader that “the answer to Orientalism is not Occidentalism.” Indeed, in his introduction, he lists several “tasks left embarrassingly incomplete in this study,” chief among them exploration of alternatives to Orientalism. And yet, with all the density and complexity of the aspects of Orientalist discourse Said illuminates in his text, what he chooses to leave us with in the end is the question: “But in conclusion, what of some alternative to Orientalism?” while at the same time admitting that his “project has been to describe a particular system of ideas, not by any means to displace the system with a new one.” Thus, though urging consideration of alternatives to the discourse he has so strenuously outlined, he offers no assistance in doing so, other than to warn against subscribing to what would seem the most natural or logical response—Orientalism’s inverse, Occidentalism.

It would appear from the body of work that constitutes the considerable
critical response to Said’s book that many have heeded his final warning, for
indeed the concept of Occidentalism arises infrequently and inconsistently.
When the idea first emerges, as I will show, it is not even identified as “Occi-
dentalism” per se. Those who attempt to trace some kind of linear develop-
ment of the idea do so superficially and without any real discussion of what
the term means and how it has been and/or should be used. Those endeav-
oring to conceptualize the term for critical uses neglect to examine earlier
emergences of either the term itself or similar concepts, resulting in a kind
of theoretical quicksand for the reader who wishes to gain an epistemic un-
derstanding of Occidentalism in order to apply it to studies of representa-
tions of the Other, as attempted here. Instead, the term “Occidentalism,”
even in its heretofore limited use, has taken on several incongruous meanings
and has barely begun to be investigated in the way its famous counterpart
has been. Ironically, this hiddenness and forbiddenness of Occidentalism
(which, if taken to be demanded by Said himself, can be creatively inter-
preted as a possible attempt to conceal biased representations of the West arti-
culated by “his” people in Middle Eastern Arab communities) reinforces
the Orientalist apparatus condemned by Said: it prohibits the rest of the
world from seeing gestures made by “Oriental” peoples to stereotype, speak
for, objectify, and otherwise represent (perhaps even dominate) their Occi-
dental “Others.”

The concept of “Occidentalism” does, however, arise, and in recent years
has been increasing in circulation; though it may still constitute merely a
blip on the vast field of postcolonial scholarship prompted by Said’s study, it
demands much broader, deeper critical attention than it has thus far been
afforded. Such attention must begin with an “etymology” of the concept
(particularly as it appears in Sinology), which until now has been conspicu-
ously absent.

Postmodern Emergence

Despite Said’s warning to the contrary, “Occidentalism’ has, inevitably, been
discovered and identified.”5 Precursors to the actual term “Occidentalism”
revolve around concepts of reversal of Orientalism, employing Said’s text as
their axis. The first response of this kind, contributed by an Arab scholar in
the journal Khamsin, came shortly after Orientalism was published. In “Ori-
entalism and Orientalism in Reverse,” Sadik Jalal al-‘Azm points out the cen-
tral dilemma of Said’s book: that his critical approach (which James Clifford
insightfully identifies as an exercise of intellectual history with humanist ten-
dencies that goes abrasively against the grain of the Foucauldian cultural
criticism it claims as its method of inquiry\(^6\) reinforces the very essentialist binary difference between East and West it purports to problematize, by attempting to trace Orientalism to antiquarian origins, therein inadvertently lending it the legitimacy it seeks. Al-\'Azm argues that Orientalism, like nationalism, is a *modern* phenomenon. Whatever their origins as actual discursive practices, identification of Orientalism and Occidentalism as discourses respectively are *postmodern* gestures, implying that Occidentalism can exist and develop only in relation to its preexisting coefficient, Orientalism, regardless of the chronology of its manifestations. Perceptions of the West in China of course far pre-date Said’s rendering of Orientalism as a discourse, and can even be argued to predate the images and apparatus constituting that discourse itself. Concepts of the non-Chinese barbarian, which would become an enduring standard for perceptions of Westerners, for example, are recorded in texts as early as the *Zuo zhuan* and *Shanhaijing* (both fourth century BC) and the Five (Confucian) Classics such as the *Liji* (third century BC); and the Chinese had discovered Europeans specifically by the sixteenth century.\(^7\) This paradox is one I shall return to momentarily.

In describing his models of Orientalism-in-reverse, al-\'Azm raises an important point: that Said himself acknowledges the impossibility of “true” representation without categorization, reduction, distortion—that all representation is in fact *mis*representation—and that therefore what the Occident is doing (that which Said devotes his efforts to exposing and denouncing) is merely “behaving perfectly naturally.”\(^8\) Confirming Said’s assertion that Orientalism reveals more about its subject than its object, al-\'Azm adds: “But nonetheless this image has left its profound imprint on the Orient’s modern and contemporary consciousness of itself.”\(^9\) This point raises very interesting questions regarding how to approach analysis of images of the Other in cultural representation. That representations of an objectified Other reveal as much, if not more, about the objectifying subject as the “othered” object is widely agreed upon, as is their enduring impression on constituencies who project such images. What is largely uninvestigated is the effect of such representations on the “othered” community. In exploring images of Americans presented on the Chinese spoken-drama stage, this issue might easily be glossed over due to the relatively few foreigners who attend Chinese plays; but this rationale—which I have found to be common among Chinese theatre workers—is misguided since access to Chinese spoken drama in the expatriate community is increasing, and many dramas in production never seen by foreigners are circulated overseas in translation textually. Furthermore, the entire question of whether audience reception alone determines the “imprint” of a Chinese theatrical representation on the consciousness of
its Occidental object—or whether indeed “imprints” are more indirect or circulate among more circuitous channels in society (both home and abroad) —is far from being analyzed or answered, and such a question has obvious applications to other forms of cultural representation (literary, cinematic, print- and visual-media-originated) as well.

Al-’Azm offers two examples of instances of Orientalism-in-reverse that allude to ways in which certain aspects of Orientalism can be redirected in order to reposition the Orient as privileged (rather than subjugated) object. These instances, however, fall short of being actual reversals because the Orient, though privileged, still remains the object of inquiry rather than truly turning the tables in order to look at the East looking at the West.

Al-’Azm’s first illustration regards trying to “capture the essence of the ‘Arab mind’” through linguistic analysis, leading to “the conclusion of Orientalism in Reverse that comparative philological and linguistic studies prove the ontological superiority of the Oriental mind . . . over the Occidental one.” This is a reversal only in the sense that the effect or result is reversed, not the process itself:

Reiteration occurs at both the ontological and epistemological levels, only reversed to favour Islam and the East in its implicit and explicit value judgments.

His second example claims that the Arab poet Adonis “in classical Orientalist fashion (reversed, however)” reinforces the binary of East and West in defining their essential differences; the poet assigns attributes of “technologism” and lack of originality to the West, along with inherent traits derived from features like system and symmetry, while he credits the East with originality and essence that can only be captured through prophecy, vision, magic, miracle, and so on. While Adonis’ intent may be to privilege the Orient, he appears to be merely enacting the kind of self-Orientalizing described by Said, with a result of mystifying, exoticizing, even fetishizing the Orient in his very gesture to privilege it. Said gives several examples in his book of positive Orientalizing and negative self-Orientalizing: al-’Azm’s second illustration of Orientalism-in-reverse seems to be a combination of these two activities rather than an actual reversal of either of them.

Regardless of whether al-’Azm’s seminal attempt to manipulate Orientalism’s constructs succeeds in radically inverting it as a process, his analysis did pave the way for others to make similar efforts, and thus helped Occidentalism inch toward the academic horizon. In 1985 J. Timothy Wixted delivered to the Western branch of the American Oriental Society the presidential address, titled “Reverse Orientalism,” in which he attempted to
“turn around” certain “prisms” fashioned by Said to examine the West’s construction of Oriental societies and apply them to the way those societies view the West.

The crux of Wixted’s article is an examination of “the set of attitudes that . . . nearly all ethnically Oriental scholars seem to bring to Western scholars of and Western language scholarship on their cultures,” retaining the East as the discursive object, though at the same time making it the inquiring subject. Wixted spends most of his energy criticizing Chinese and Japanese approaches to studies of their own language and literatures: their claim to authority by sheer birthright (and denial of intellectual authority to outsiders), their general distrust of Western scholarship on their societies (and in China’s case, blatant ignorance of Japanese scholarship on China), and the concomitant academic irresponsibility and inferiority of native scholarship. He claims that the Japanese have merely a purely narcissistic interest in what the West thinks of them, while the Chinese “quite simply do not give a damn.”

Wixted, as a white American Sinologist, objects strongly to concern with cultural identity of a given speaker overshadowing evaluation of what is being said; he believes that Said contradicts himself by, on one hand, speaking both specifically for the Middle East and more generally for all of Asia and, on the other hand, implying that his subject position as a Palestinian lends him “privileged validity”; Wixted concludes, “there is an element of having-your-cake-and-eating-it-too in his own praxis.”

Clearly Wixted’s agenda is to question the prevailing attitudes of Chinese and Japanese scholars toward Western academics who specialize in studies of their societies; in this respect, his paper offers little in the sense of a “reversal” of Orientalism, for the considerable scope of Orientalism does not include the academic West’s assessment of how the Orient studies the Occident. The initial section of his address, however, does offer some provocative food for thought regarding Said’s condemnation of the West as the overriding imperialist power of modern times:

The people in the twentieth century who most actively sought to occupy and control China, Korea, Southeast Asia, and Oceania—politically, economically, and militarily—and to teach and modernize these people, all on the basis of knowing (better than the Chinese or others themselves knew) what was good for them, were none other than the Japanese.

Wixted also invites—unfortunately only in passing—analysis of the vast and varied Japanese literature about America, posing the Saidian question,
“to what extent does such literature tell us more about the Japanese who write it than it does about its putative subject?”

Another five years passed before the “prisms” presented by Wixted were “turned” and assiduously applied specifically to studies of modern China and christened “Occidentalism.” Much of this effort was made by Xiaomei Chen, whose research has consistently focused on Chinese reception of Western literary and cultural forms, and who has been persistently disseminating the concept of “Occidentalism” among her colleagues. She co-organized a conference on “Orientalism and Occidentalism” at Stanford in 1991, and authored *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China* in 1995. Because her efforts are at the forefront of the circulation of the concept of Occidentalism, and due to the prominent position it plays in her book, Chen’s use of the term requires close attention. Before moving into such an analysis, however, let us examine a brief but important application of Occidentalism by one of Chen’s contemporaries, Frank Dikötter, in his study *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*. Dikötter’s book was completed about the same time as Chen’s investigations of Occidentalism but addresses an earlier period of modern Chinese history in a far more detached way than Chen’s case studies. Brief as his aside on Occidentalism is, his description raises some useful questions for conceptualizing it as a potential discourse.

In chapter 5 of *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, “Race as Species: 1915–1949,” Dikötter describes how discussions of race took on a cultural as well as a political dimension during the New Culture Movement, of which construction of national identity was a major component. As young Chinese intellectuals returned from abroad, Western thought began to play a prominent role in cultural reconstruction: “most intellectuals agreed that the West was the ultimate norm by which change should be measured . . . [W]hether as an idealized version of itself or as a polluted alien, the West became China’s alter ego.” Reformers like Chen Duxiu focused on the essential differences between China and the West, the “yellow” and “white” races.

Identifying its three salient features as *polarization* (emphasis on the fundamental dichotomy of East and West à la Chen Duxiu), *projection* (of native ideas onto Western origins) and *fragmentation* (of Western thought itself through distortion, decontextualization, and misquotation in order to simplify assimilation), Dikötter hinges his illustrations of Occidentalism on a problematic discrepancy between modern Chinese intellectual interpretation of Western ideas and the objective existence of “real” Western thought. His concept of Occidentalism is inherently negative: as a distorted representation of Western thinking, it is an obstacle to “pure” transmission of Western ideas to Chinese minds and society. Noting that the “phenomenon of Occi-


“dentalism” should not be “unduly” emphasized, Dikötter stresses that intellectuals responded to it in varying ways. Though never providing a clear definition of exactly what he means by “Occidentalism,” the section summarized above and reference to the book’s index indicate that it is synonymous with Western thought, or reception thereof.

Though her study spans many more pages, years, and materials than Dikötter’s, Xiaomei Chen’s construction of Occidentalism ultimately strikes a similar chord. For Chen, Occidentalism involves essentialization of the West and skewed adoption of Western models, is employed most effectively by the intelligentsia in order to adjust its relationship to dominant official ideology, and is slippery and difficult to define; unlike Dikötter’s version, however, Chen’s Occidentalism is (at least when employed by the educated elite) largely positive in intent and effect.

Chen isolates two discordant strains of Occidentalism (“two related yet separate discursive practices” or “two different appropriations of the same discourse for different political ends”). The first, “official Occidentalism,” is an essentializing of the West to support state nationalism and suppress the “people”; the second, “anti-official Occidentalism,” is in opposition to the first and occurs when the intelligentsia employs the West “as a metaphor for political liberation against ideological oppression within a totalitarian society.” Later, she identifies a “third kind of Occidentalism in which the anti-official Occidentalism overlapped with the official Occidentalism of the early post-Mao regime which manipulated the former into legitimizing the latter’s political agenda.”

Clearly, Chen’s concept of Occidentalism is almost purely political in the most concrete sense (versus the abstract sense in which any attempt at representation is inevitably “political”) and hinges primarily on domestic, rather than global, politics. In this sense, Chen’s concept of Occidentalism, like those previously discussed, has not sufficiently resisted the apparatus of Orientalism, particularly in its retention of the East as object of inquiry: Chen’s Occidentalism positions a Chinese subject employing Western metaphors that allow “the Orient to participate actively and with indigenous creativity in the process of self-appropriation, even after being appropriated and constructed by Western others.” While, again, it is widely agreed that representations of the Other are acts of self-definition, they are clearly not simply self-definition—or at least not merely domestic self-definition. The hegemonic nature of the Orientalist practice outlined by Said was fueled by Europe’s self-perceived need to assert its global authority; I would contend that Occidentalism as practiced in China is also largely motivated by China’s need to assert its global legitimacy and national identity. Sinologists

46 Chapter 2
widely confirm that in modern Chinese history the images of Americans often serve to assert national identity and claim legitimacy. Likewise, theatrical representations of American characters in spoken drama reflect perceptions of the United States and assertions of what it means to be “Chinese” in a shifting political and cultural field (both global and domestic), as well as aesthetic innovation and institutional changes in spoken drama itself. If Occidentalism is truly to be considered empirically as a counterpart to Orientalism, it must, even if it does not accrue the institutional power Said highlights, contain the ontological element of rendering a field of images of its Other, and not merely acknowledging Western influence (a practice actually contrary to Orientalist logic, which does not emphasize multiple biased perceptions of the Orient having the agency to transform their European subject).

Of Chen’s case studies of Occidentalism as a “counter-discourse,” only the chapter on the controversial television serial River Elegy (Heshang) examines actual images and perceptions of the West as constructed by China. Her chapters on Chinese modern drama, which she desires to “redeem . . . from its marginal position both in China and in the West,” merely recount productions of Western plays (of Shakespeare, Ibsen, and Brecht) produced in China for domestic political purposes. The only native play considered in detail in Chen’s study is Gao Xingjian’s Wild Man (Yeren) and she does not address it on the level of what it might say thematically about China’s relationship to the West, though she treats superficially its use of both Chinese and Western theatrical techniques and more rigorously its “origins” or “influences” in terms of genre. Despite the fact that the very title, Yeren, conjures up pejorative terms used to describe the non-Chinese “barbarian” outsider, Chen does not investigate the representations of the West and China that abound in Gao’s play—or in any other Chinese play. There is no consideration, for example, of dramas staged in China—both native and foreign—in which the West is representative of that which threatens national stability, social normalcy, Chinese culture, or humanity in such a way that the West becomes allegorical for the problem (the Party) rather than the solution (freedom, democracy, etc.). Her chapter “Occidentalist Theater” addresses Chinese productions of foreign plays only in terms of their thematic use for political purposes; though she fleetingly mentions the performative dimension of Chinese actors embodying foreigners, she does not pursue it (my discussion of China Dream in chapter 3 contains more detail on this aspect of Chen’s study), and she includes no play by a native playwright representing foreign Others. Her assessment of foreign productions considers them only insofar as they are staged to serve domestic goals of Chinese intel-
lectuals vis-à-vis the establishment, without investigating how these stagings also serve other purposes or actually represent the foreign Other itself in various ways. The chapter would be more aptly titled “Occidental Theater” rather than Occidentalist Theater, or perhaps simply “Western Theater in China.”

Clearly, Chen and I have different agendas: I am interested in excavating images of the foreign (specifically, American) Other that surface in Chinese plays (my analysis thus seeks to draw in consideration of phenomenology and performance elements such as costume, makeup, movement, and voice along with textual study to explore theatrical as well as literary representations), and I am exploring Occidentalism as a possible critical method through which to shape a discourse (or at least illuminate patterns and raise questions) about these images. In this light, my interpretation of the spectrum that a term such as “Occidentalist” would cover differs sharply from the territory to which Chen applies it. Her images of the West are limited to those that allegorize liberation of the intelligentsia from the CCP, without consideration of renderings of the West that support the establishment’s nationalist agenda, or of how such representations reflect perceptions of the foreign Other itself. I believe that adoption and articulation of an emergent term like “Occidentalist” demands probing more deeply into images of the Occidental Other and acknowledging that such images, while articulating national and/or cultural identity as previously mentioned, also do indeed speak for the Occidental Other in addition to the Oriental Self.

Eugene Eoyang, in his 1992 essay “Thinking Comparatively: Orienting the West and Occidenting the East,” attempts to sum up what he perceives as the confusing development of multiple counter-discourses to Orientalism. His essay is the only work in the “Occidentalist school” to cite other members, among them al-ʿAzm, Wixted, Chen, and, of course, Said. His articulation of the entire corpus is unfortunately all too brief. Most regrettable, he does not elaborate on, but merely cites, Chen’s essay on ʿHeshang, using it only to borrow her term “counter-discourse” to apply to Said’s study of Orientalism, thus making Wixted’s reverse Orientalism a “counter-counter-discourse” and so on.

Eoyang is a bit misguided here, of course. Said’s extrapolations of the paradigms of Orientalism do not constitute a discourse in and of themselves, but merely the unmasking, articulation, and critique of a discourse. Furthermore, Eoyang misappropriates Chen’s term “counter-discourse”: her meaning involves opposition to a ruling ideology in local domestic politics rather than to a global power superstructure like Orientalism (her use of the term also involves a kind of give-and-take akin to fluid models of hegemony like those
described by Lisa Lowe and others; Said’s “opposition” to Orientalism, even if it were a discourse, would be oppositional in quite a different sense). James Clifford explains the “oppositional” nature of Said’s project in his essay “On Orientalism”; he calls Said’s gesture a “writing back” against a West that had traditionally “spoken for” the rest of the world and indicates that Said’s intent is to perform discourse analysis. Said’s “opposing” does not in itself, then, constitute a discourse (as Eoyang would have it) but rather an identifying, isolating, articulating of an existent, but heretofore hidden, discourse.

Eoyang introduces Chinese “four-cornered” logic as an alternative to Western binary logic, suggesting helpful new models of subjectivity and “oppositional” discourse. In Eoyang’s formulation:

Western thought tends to be dominated by binary logic, which is monolithic. Something cannot be both A and non-A. Chinese logic is “four-cornered”: it entertains the following possibilities, that something is (1) A; that it is (2) non-A; that it is (3) both A and non-A; that it is (4) neither A nor non-A.

At the same time, he ironically upholds the binary we are all trying to dissolve by asserting that “phenomenological paradigms are lost when fundamental differences between Western and Chinese ways of thinking are glossed over.”

In visiting the locations of emergence of concepts of Occidentalism, our journey touches down on the “other” side of the binary—in China, with an article published in Dushu, a reputable scholarly journal. Its author, Zhang Kuan, laments the fact that Said mentions “Occidentalism (xifang zhuyi)” only in passing in Orientalism; Zhang furnishes his own definition of Occidentalism as the likely homologue to Orientalism, a concept under whose umbrella everything can be inspected, ranging from impetuous treatment to wishful distortion of Western culture, to sentimental rejection of the West, to the intelligentsia’s sense of loss of superiority of Chinese civilization, to ancient models of Chinese theories on the West, to the apogee of missionary activity. In this sense, Zhang captures the paradoxical aspect of Occidentalism that the aforementioned scholars in the United States seem to have neglected.

Zhang goes on to mention that during his studies in the United States, he encountered a professor who was passionately interested in Chinese images of the West. At the end of the article, he details one incident of note regarding an evening when the professor presented slides, one of which showed a bloody, gutted pig hanging on a cross. Explaining the artistic and linguistic symbolism, the professor interpreted the image as a priest being killed un-
der a Boxer’s butcher knife, conveying that the Chinese do not have the capacity to welcome the gospel but rather blaspheme God and kill his emissaries. Zhang objected, offering his knowledge of the ills the church had committed in order to win converts in the Chinese countryside, upon which the professor, displeased, reminded him to reflect on his “educational background.” Zhang concludes from his readings of Said and other (mostly literary) texts as well as his own experience that Orientalism and Occidentalism each has its own logic, and that he is probably still personally steeped in his own Occidentalist subjectivity. He hopes that “true dialogue” (zhengzheng de duihua) and “impartial narrative” (gongzheng de xushu) are possible but says if they are not, “then just let each say its own thing.” As a reminder to his colleagues to be mindful of their own cultural circumstances, he concludes: “scholars of China, be sure not to join the chorus of Orientalism like a hive of bees.”

Along with comparative literature scholar Xiaomei Chen, anthropologist James Carrier has been a prominent proponent of the term “Occidentalism.” After initial exploration of the term in a 1992 essay, he edited a volume bearing that title, which was published the same year as Chen’s book of the same name, prompting David Arkush to begin his joint review of the two books with the following comment:

The simultaneous appearance of two books entitled Occidentalism immediately suggests the question of exactly what is meant by the word. Clearly some sort of converse to Edward Said’s “orientalism,” but what could the converse be . . . ? The evidence from these two rather dissimilar books is that “occidentalism” is used for several different things and probably adds little to Said’s influential theory of orientalism.

In my critique of both Chen and Carrier, I am in agreement with Arkush that the term “Occidentalism” requires careful and consistent definition in order to be a productive participant in post-Orientalist discourse. Furthermore, I propose a definition that differs significantly from those of Chen and Carrier, whose uses of the term have been the most recognized among the emerging body of scholars employing the concept.

Fellow anthropologist Louisa Schein credits Carrier with pointing out that the totalizing division of the world into a dominant West and “othered” East forecloses the possibility of the West as a “potential object of essentialist representation,” rendering the East “incapable of othering.” Refuting this notion is one of the central points of my study and aligns my concerns with those of Schein and others who indicate Orientalism’s tendency to “obfusc-
cate and neutralize the histories and legacies of non-Western imperialisms and associated ‘othering’ practices.”

Both in his earlier article and subsequent book, Carrier invokes the term “Occidentalist” to describe the bias of anthropologists in their studies of non-Western cultures. Occidentalist in this sense is a Western construction of the West that becomes the “silent partner” influencing their examinations of indigenous communities, the image of a dominant West they carry into the field and through which they process their observations, despite their attempts to be objective and shift focus away from the West. Carrier emphasizes that Occidentalist “begins to call into question some of the ways that Westerners represent the West to themselves,” reducing the East to a mere backdrop for such xenophobic exercises. When he does consider non-Western production of images, it is not of Others, but of Selves: “ways that people outside the West imagine themselves,” though he allows that “their self-image often develops in contrast to their stylized image of the West.” This discursive practice—different from Said’s self-Orientalizing and somewhat related to Chen’s evaluation of China’s uses of the West in strategies that she sees as responses to Western Orientalist constructions of itself—is not the practice I wish to highlight in my own study.

My object of inquiry, rather, is the latter component of Carrier’s articulation of this secondary Occidentalist (his primary concept apparently being the effects of the West’s stylized images of itself), namely “their stylized image of the West.” It is true, as Carrier says, that self-perception in the plays examined here develops in contrast to a construction of the West; assertion of Chinese self-identity emerges as a primary by-product of representations of Americans in the plays chosen for this study. My focus, however, is equally on these representations of the Western Other themselves, a phenomenon that in Carrier’s introduction seems to be a mere afterthought:

Sadly, however, I must point to an important gap in the collection. That gap is the way that scholars in non-Western societies, less likely to share common Western academic occidentalisms, can reveal the ways that those occidentalisms have shaped Western interpretations of non-Western societies . . . And, of course, those non-Western scholars themselves are likely to have their own occidentalisms that would be interesting to analyse.

It is precisely such analysis that I hope to initiate. In Carrier’s parlance, Occidentalist is “the essentialistic rendering of the West by Westerners,” while the “othering” of the West by non-Westerners—what I consider to constitute the practice of Occidentalist—he labels “ethno-Ocidentalism.” His
logic in misnaming Occidentalism “ethno-Occidentalism” is that it consists of “the Aliens’ conception of the impinging Western society.” The problem here, of course, is that Carrier presumes a dominant Western subjectivity in deployment of (indeed, even naming of) these discourses. If Orientalism is the construction of the “Orient” by its oppositional Other, how, then, can Occidentalism not be fundamentally its reverse: the construction of the “Occident” by its oppositional Other?

Here I wish to clarify that my intention is not to reduce Occidentalism to an oversimplified inverse of Orientalism; likewise I do not suggest an adherence to rigid oppositional binaries. Occidentalism, like Orientalism, is a complex system of associations, assumptions, and their applications; furthermore, my own concept of Occidentalism is not merely a reversal of Orientalism precisely because it does not assume a conventional binaristic hierarchy of hegemony. This chapter articulates these complexities and attempts to position Occidentalism as an intricate, fluid, uneven process quite different from Orientalism. What I do wish to emphasize here, however, is its correlation to Orientalism in terms of its “speaking subject” and “othered object”: I take issue with Carrier’s notion that the West must be privileged as the “possessor” of any given colonial or postcolonial discourse by virtue of its assumed pervasive political and cultural power, thereby reducing non-Western subjects to “Alien” and qualifying their discourses with the prefix “ethno.”

Carrier’s own rhetoric in attempting to dismantle Western Occidentalism is unfortunately and ironically (and certainly unconsciously) Orientalist. He locates societies studied by anthropologists as “outside” and “beyond” the West (“the Alien”), centering the West and placing other societies at its periphery, a gesture that reinforces positioning the West as subject and the non-West as object lacking its own agency. Even what he confesses to be an “important gap” in his study upholds this construct: he laments the absence of analysis of the way that “Western academic occidentalisms . . . have shaped Western interpretations of non-Western societies,” with non-Western depictions of the West considered only as an “interesting” aside. Like the post-Saidian scholars discussed earlier, Carrier maintains the West as his subject and the East as object, acknowledging the East as subject only in terms of articulation of itself as object, and then only in response to its construction by the West.

The only essay in Carrier’s edited volume that reflects the paradigm I envision as having the potential to formulate an effective concept of Occidentalism (the same paradigm I employ in this present study) is Millie Creighton’s chapter, “Imaging the Other in Japanese Advertising Campaigns,” in which she outlines the uses of white Western (primarily American) Others as symbolic
images that both contest and reinforce Japanese social mores and traditional conceptions of outsiders. Creighton’s essay is considered the strongest chapter in the collection by most reviewers, with one explaining that “Creighton’s contribution is so good partly because it sharply focuses on the single topic of non-Westerners’ occidentalism.” She traces the evolution of a complex image of the white Western Other, beginning in the Meiji era (1868–1912), when the role of Japan’s primary outsider shifted from China to the West (leaving China in a liminal marginality neither inside nor outside as a result). This period, which corresponds to China’s own significant confrontation with and opening to the West (as outlined in the preceding chapter of this study) brought forth a paradoxical image of the Western Other as both signifier of innovation and palpable threat:

The imaging of white foreigners in Japanese advertisements reflects the dichotomized role of gaijin in Japan. They tend to be either objects of glorified attention or conversely a standard of negative traits. In either case they are often stripped of individual identity and their own personalities, encountered and experienced as representative gaijin rather than real individuals.

Creighton’s articulation of the duality of such representation is uncannily similar to the images of Americans that emerge on the Chinese stage during the 1980s and 1990s; it also captures the uniquely dialectical nature of Occidentalism as a discourse that distinguishes it from its Saidian predecessor.

**Discursive Strategies**

In moving from concepts of reversals of Orientalism (like al-‘Azm’s and Wixted’s) to Occidentalism proper in the sense that I wish to employ it, something is gained and something is lost. Gained is an orientation toward the West as discursive object; lost is the assurance of an inescapable direct link to Orientalism: whereas the term “Occidentalism” certainly implies a connection to Said’s theory, phrases like “reverse Orientalism” guarantee it. The advantage of keeping in mind—and in frame of reference—Said’s discourse is that one cannot slip into a false perception that Occidentalism is somehow independent of it: as Chen and others have pointed out, constructions of the West implicitly contain Orientalist precursors by virtue of the fact that Occidentalism is being revealed, theoretically shaped, and ultimately transformed in the present postcolonial, postmodern moment. This is true even if certain Occidentalist images “came first” chronologically. The game of “who perceived whom first?” is one to be avoided, although, as indi-
cated earlier, it is worth keeping in mind that non-Western peoples have been representing and stereotyping Others for at least as long as the reverse has been true, and for presumably similar reasons. Unduly concentrated attention on this aspect of cross-cultural perception runs the risk of reinscribing Said’s overly totalizing genealogical tactics, though acknowledgement of a dialectic or tension between the actual moment of a given image’s emergence vis-à-vis the moment of its discursive theorization situates Occidentalism squarely in postmodernism and illuminates its temporality—or that of any discourse for that matter—in the manner that Foucault suggests when he says, “A discursive formation, then, does not play the role of a figure that arrests time and freezes it for decades or centuries; it determines a regularity proper to temporal processes . . . it is not an atemporal form.”45 The very activity of rescuing Occidentalist discourse from its Orientalized obscurity occurs amidst the crowded and uneven terrain of postcolonial theories (of color, of gender, of nationhood) that Said’s text helped to inspire. In this sense, the business of articulating Occidentalism is anything but innocent. In evaluating its potential efficacy, consideration of personal subjectivity and interrogation of the concept of discourse are mandatory.

If we are to embrace Occidentalism as a discursive practice, we can only do so in a sense truer to Foucault’s propositions than Said’s discourse of Orientalism. Attempts at a tightly woven, all-encompassing, controlled formulation will lead to both the unwieldiness and the ultimate limitations of Said’s admirable, yet flawed, effort. Standing in the post-Saidian moment, we have the gift of hindsight—and foresight—that allows us to avoid the discursive pitfalls of Orientalism. I propose that an operative discursive concept of Occidentalism that can be fruitfully applied to readings of cultural representations can only be determined if it is considered to be (1) paradoxical (or contradictory/dialectical) in character and function; (2) existing in both paradoxical relation to and continuous dialogue with Orientalism (and other discourses); and (3) open-ended, changing, active, and self-consciously temporal. These discursive traits—particularly an embracing of paradox—open up Occidentalism wide enough to encompass the conflicting representations, contradictory approaches, and “four-cornered” subjectivities46 that are otherwise impossible to “unify” in theorizing Oriental perceptions of the Occident (here, China’s view of the United States).

Our concept of paradox must be spacious enough to contain both binary and nonbinarist elements; our sense of contradiction must be vast enough to allow for the entirely possible range of positive and negative representations of the Occidental Other; and our idea of the “Occident” must expand to the point where it transcends the category of mere “West.” These
are all difficult assignments, for difference is not hierarchical in the traditional binarist sense, but layered in the sense of an intricate—and sometimes hopelessly entangled—web of instances: that which Foucault refers to as a “discursive constellation.”

Another reminder from Foucault will further clarify this point:

Let there be no misunderstanding: it is not the objects that remain constant, nor the domain that they form; it is not even their point of emergence or their mode of characterization; but the relation between the surfaces on which they appear, on which they can be delimited, on which they can be analyzed and specified.47

In examining, and attempting to discursively interpret, representations in theatrical performance, this elucidation is particularly user-friendly; the stage and the dramatic text are inevitably shifting surfaces in the sense that a play can never be fixed, is always open to interpretation and transformation by the mere fact that the dramatic text awaits and suggests performance and no performance can ever duplicate another—thus, no dramatic representation is ever static. Michael Hays contrasts the novel to the play in terms of the bound and unbound:

It would seem that what secures the physical as well as the discursive form of the novel here is that it is bound. The play, on the other hand, as performance, is unbound, open to the dangers of revision and role playing, alternative orders and practices.48

In the chapters that follow, my attention to particularities of production contexts, changes of participants and venues, and multiple interventions at various stages of production acknowledge these shifting surfaces that lead to diverse discursive formations open to multiple interpretations.

Mahmoud Sadri, in his review of Carrier’s book, supports such a vision when he points out that, in contrast to Orientalism’s clear-cut politics, “the complexities of the motives and interests of various ethnic groups, classes, and nations in a globalized, postmodern, and postcolonial world preclude such simple associations for Occidentalism.”49 Creighton, in her assessment of shifting trends in Japanese advertising, notices the same rapid internationalization in Japan that is also prevalent in contemporary China, including increased overseas travel of ordinary citizens, more frequent interracial marriages, and easier access to a rising number of local foreign residents. These interactions are the beginning of a very real process of internationalization in which the host country (be it Japan or China) walks a careful tightrope between embracing the benefits of such globalization and inter-
mittently reasserting native traditions and expectations so as not to relinquish self-identity. Such interplay of simultaneous disintegration and reinforcement of East/West and other binaries (insider/outsider, Self/Other) is precisely the paradoxical tension the discourse of Occidentalism must include. Feminist cultural critic Angharad Valdivia, in her discussion of multiculturalism, suggests an alternative to binary logic, which she envisions as “spectrums” or “continuums,” that can more effectively contain contradictions.\(^{50}\) Such models might be employed to complement the image of difference as “layers” suggested above.

In the articles and books cited that “answer” Orientalism, as well as in numerous works on racial and cultural perceptions and political relations between China and the United States, theoretical positions regarding the traditional East/West binary vary. While many, most prominently Lisa Lowe and Xiaomei Chen, consider deconstruction of essentialist binaries a crucial discursive priority, most (including Lowe and, especially, Chen) at times inevitably reinscribe them even as they seek to erase or at least displace them. This constant tension (classic in Said’s \textit{Orientalism}) of explicating a construct in a precarious attempt to deconstruct it, as well as the dilemma of discarding an “us/them” way of looking at the world when there is as yet no steadfast alternative, can be the undoing of an idea like Occidentalism unless the discourse radically decides to implement it, strategically, to its advantage. In this way, Occidentalism should look very different from a mere mirror image of Orientalism as it develops, though precisely how is difficult to determine. It is, primarily, as we apply what we determine to be the useful components of Occidentalism to cultural texts and consider these gestures in relation to other discursive surfaces and adjacent practices that Occidentalism will begin to take shape. And each time it is applied, it will be transformed—this is in keeping with the third group of properties (mortality, activity, temporality, open-endedness) Occidentalism must maintain in order to be an effective frame of reference. Foucault describes this process in his conclusion to \textit{Archaeology of Knowledge} as: “an attempt to reveal discursive practices in their complexity and density; to show that to speak is to do something; . . . to show that to add a statement to a pre-existing series of statements is to perform a complicated and costly gesture, which involves conditions, and rules; to show that a change in the order of discourse presupposes transformations in a practice, perhaps also in neighboring practices, and in their common articulation.”\(^{51}\)

For some, the East/West binary is not only inevitable but also beneficial in assisting mutual ontological understanding of alien cultures. Eoyang subscribes to this principle (“I have chosen the broad concepts of the ‘Orient’
and the ‘Occident’ not only because they are inescapable, but because the mindset to which they allude, and the attitudes which they represent, are generally familiar”), as do several scholars who have devoted their careers to the comparative study of Chinese and American systems of politics and philosophy. David Shambaugh’s detailed study of China’s professional “America Watchers” supports the findings of earlier scholars that there are “fundamental differences” between Chinese and American worldviews, especially regarding the concept of the individual. Wei-ming Tu, the leading American scholar of Confucianism, stresses points of contrast and difference between the United States and China throughout his essay “Chinese Perceptions of America,” in which dichotomies of yin and yang are invoked, along with divisions along lines of the individual and collective, private and public spheres, political stability versus rupture: “even a superficial comparison . . . reveals irreconcilable and contradictory conceptual as well as experiential differences between the two.”

The binary logic that reinforces such essentialist cultural dichotomies can be easily recognized in cross-cultural perceptions between the two peoples, which tends to be marked by a regenerative “love-hate” contrast that periodically folds into ambivalence. This fluctuation between—and often simultaneous coexistence of—both positive and negative images is another paradox (besides the competing reinforcement and dissolution of essentializing binaries) that must be accommodated by an Occidentalist discourse. Such a discourse is inherently paradoxical, not only in relation to Orientalism and its practices, but also in relation to the object of its inquiry. Due to the both contradictory and ambivalent character of images of Americans produced by Chinese (which thus both compete with and compliment one another), Occidentalism itself becomes a “four cornered” discourse, which is neither purely negative in its embodiment of the United States nor purely positive, and yet both negative and positive.

Contemporary Chinese plays like China Dream (Zhongguo meng, 1987), The Great Going Abroad (Da liuyang, 1991), Bird Men (Niaoren, 1993), Student Wife (Peidu furen, 1995), Dignity (Zunyan, 1997), Che Guevara (Qie Gewala, 2000), and Swing (Qiuqian qingren, 2002) are clear examples of this multifaceted Occidentalism. And yet, it would be overly simplistic—and erroneous—to say that Occidentalism is thus a neutral discourse, for these representations of Americans through the characters presented onstage are inherently political, infused with layers of blatant stereotype and supposed objective knowledge, and are functioning with agency both within the discursive system of the play/performance and within the wider circuit of audience reception (where Occidentalism necessarily splinters exponen-
tially due to the inability to scientifically determine the phenomenological, psychological, and other types of codes it enacts on individual viewers depending on their own cultural circumstances and personal subjectivities).

To complicate things even further, Eoyang raises an intriguing issue that brings together the dialectic of East/West binary logic in Sino-American relations and the issue of contradiction within discursive practice, namely, the very concept of contradiction itself. According to Eoyang, the notion of contradiction is fundamentally different in English, where it indicates diametrically opposed entities, than in Chinese, where contradiction (maodun) implies paradoxical contrast and the “potential coexistence of opposites.”

To further illustrate that such dialectical thinking is linguistically rooted and inherently Chinese, Eoyang reminds us that abstractions in Chinese language are often formed from concrete compounds, such as “size” (daxiao) combining the words for “big” and “small.” Whether or not this syncretic approach to contradiction can be proven to be present in “Chinese” thinking or absent from Western (“English”) thought, it is a useful paradigm in the construction and application of an Occidentalist discourse.

Equally important is investigating and reshaping our concept of the Occident itself, acknowledging that the binaristic dichotomy between East and West that persists in much of our cross-cultural thinking is a seductive illusion despite its apparent legitimacy and practical utilitarian value in politics, academics, and other forms of intercultural contact. As Lisa Lowe points out, the very logic of an essential and autonomous Orient and Occident is Orientalist and implicitly reinforces hegemonic structures of domination and subordination. Lowe, in her reading of Foucault and others, proposes a model of discourse that is “diverse, uneven, complicated . . . multivalent, overlapping, dynamic”, she is committed to refiguring Orientalist discourse through this radically altered lens. In attempting to conceptualize Occidentalism in the ways I have indicated here, I find Lowe’s ideas particularly promising.

Like Lowe, Wixted questions wholesale East/West distinctions, based on their hybrid homogeneity as individual entities:

The whole issue of West/non-West, East/West, and Western world/East Asia dichotomies almost invariably skirts the following important questions: What groups synchronically make up the West, now and in the past? How homogeneous is such an entity, compared with the cultural groups it is being set against? And, how has the West changed diachronically over time?

Wixted maintains that in order to draw ultimate distinctions between the West and non-West, “one would have to be both anthropologist and cultural
historian for the entire world” and that, to his knowledge, no scholar even comes close to having such a background. Said himself, in his ruminations since *Orientalism* (1979), has continued to address the dialectic of this East/West binary, which simultaneously requires and resists disassembly. In “Orientalism Reconsidered” (1986), Said contends that East and West as essential categories exist as “facts produced by human beings” and thus belong as constructed to the realm of the social world in which their essentialism is reinforced by our subject/object approach to empirical inquiry. By the time Said writes *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), such categories have become “gigantic caricatural essentializations” and the notion of what constitutes a “Western” nation or culture is at the center of his interrogation.

Wixted points out the difficulties of articulating a coherent concept of “Asia” or even “East Asia” because of the marked, but often overlooked, contrasts between the cultures traditionally assigned to that geographic region. He includes an insightful discussion of Japan’s self-perception of its identity as distinct from and superior to its Asian neighbors. I would add that any binaristic approach to East and West in the contemporary world runs head-on into the dilemma of modern Japan (is it Eastern or Western?) and a growing number of other countries as well (including Australia, which “has an economic investment in defining itself as Asian,” according to Leigh Dale and Helen Gilbert). James Clifford, in “On Orientalism,” explores the shifting notion of the West:

> When we speak today of the West, we are usually referring to a force—technological, economic, political—no longer radiating in any simple way from a discrete geographical or cultural center. This force, if it may be spoken of in the singular, is disseminated in a diversity of forms from multiple centers—now including Japan, Australia, the Soviet Union, and China—and is articulated in a variety of “microsociological” contexts... It is too early to say whether these processes of change will result in global cultural homogenization or in a new order or diversity. The new may always look monolithic to the old. For the moment, in any event, all dichotomizing concepts should probably be held in suspicion.

Since placing regions and peoples on either side of the binary has become such a problematic mission, displacement of the binary seems unavoidable—and yet, as Clifford points out, the notion of “West,” at least, is still in wide circulation with potent results. It seems, then, that if we desire to salvage a discourse of Occidentalism as a counterpart to Orientalism, divorcing the concept of the “Occident” from the “West” might be a useful strategy.
Granted, associations inscribed in our notion of the Occident require revision in such an effort (as does the dismantling of existing articulations of Occidentalism such as I recommend here), but it seems to me there is a degree to which “Occident” is not as yet purely synonymous to “West,” both because it does not receive the casual usage of the latter term to which Clifford alludes, and because it connotes a constructedness in much the same way that the “Orient” has never been synonymous with “Asia.” Thus, before dismissing the possibility of constructing a discourse called “Occidentalism” because it necessarily implies either a binaristic vision of the West or an attempt to mirror the structures, claims, praxis, and pitfalls of Orientalism, let us consider the possibility that the “Occident” may be a discursive terrain that is still open to excavation and articulation, and also acknowledge that any formulation and use of an idea of Occidentalism inevitably and actively transforms Orientalism—itself a temporal, unfixed discourse—in the process, in a Foucauldian act of “dispersion.”

Even with these good intentions in mind, however, the questions of who Occidentalism claims as its subject and whom it identifies as its object remain unanswered. Xiaomei Chen’s Occidentalism, as already noted, does not focus on its Occidental Other as object of representation but merely makes use of the West and things Western in objectifying political circumstances as a response to the ruling totalitarian establishment; an important success of Chen’s use of the term, however, lies in her constitution of Occidentalism’s speaking subject. Said’s Orientalism specified the Middle East (more generally East Asia and the Indian subcontinent) as its object and Europe—and later, America—as its speaking subject, but was ultimately articulated in such a way that he came to imply that the entire Western world invariably engages in the Orientalizing of the entire Eastern world, neglecting to point out that there might be exceptions. One of the dangers of a discourse of Occidentalism is that it could reinscribe such conflations and fail to specify its agents and its acted-upon (both of whom are far too complex to be reduced to “oppressors” and “victims”). Aware of this danger, Chen consistently refers to her discourse as “Chinese Occidentalism” and attempts to locate two or three varying strains within it. Thus, Chen’s claims are open to criticism only in a Chinese context and do not pretend to be (or risk misinterpretation as being) applicable to other global (even “Oriental”) contexts. If a discourse of Occidentalism is to be employed in examining representations of Americans in Chinese spoken drama, as suggested here, adoption of Chen’s localized specification “Chinese Occidentalism” may be appropriate. Other writers employing the term “Occidentalism” also precede it with an adjective that reveals its discursive subject: Creighton consistently uses the term “Japa-
nese occidentalism” and Carrier “Western occidentalism” to describe the discursive strategies they respectively examine.

Likewise, identification of Occidentalism’s object would seem to be called for in such a study. Obviously, specification of the American as discursive object is logical—but how is this to be articulated? Disposing of the term “Occidentalism” in favor of something like “Americanism” would preclude widespread application of the discourse (to images of other foreigners in Chinese theatre and other cultural forms) and would imply that such representations spring solely from contact with and ideas about Americans, neglecting the origins of images of Americans that derive from other sources, experiences, histories. Dubbing our concept “Chinese-American Occidentalism” would seem an ideal gesture were it not for the fact that it is sure to be misinterpreted as an examination of attitudes either by or about Chinese Americans. Thus, in the absence of a satisfying alternative, my use of the term “Occidentalism” for the purposes of this present study should be understood as referring specifically to a practice through which China represents the American “Other.”

In examining the representation of “Others” in Chinese theatre (and possibly literature, media, film, etc., as well), it must be acknowledged that, after the American (who is by far the most prominent Other figured on the Chinese stage), the most significant “othered” personage is the Japanese. If we aim to apply strategies of Occidentalism to such images, are we to consider Japan part of the “Occident” or part of the “Orient”? Chinese scholar Wang Ning indicates the ambiguity of Japan’s position along the Orient/Occident axis when he suggests the dual nature of Japan’s own practice of Occidentalism:

[In] Japan, which apparently belongs among the developed group in its economic sense, Occidentalism has its own unique manifestation: on the one hand, Japan always views Europe and America as its economic rivals; therefore the West actually refers to the geographically Western countries. On the other hand, Japan has gradually realized its double cultural coloniality, namely, it was influenced by China before the nineteenth century and penetrated and influenced by the West after the latter part of the nineteenth century.64

Clearly, examples like Japan indicate the inadequacy of terms such as “Ori- ent” and “Occident,” but the call to move beyond them is somewhat premature, since Occidentalism itself has clearly emerged as a recent discursive formation with a long history. That we are only now conducting deep investigations of its cultural formations does not mean they have not been previously present (the Orientalism Said identified had been rampant, yet
unidentified, for centuries). As Wang Ning reflects, “Occidentalism, like a ghost, has already been haunting such Oriental countries as the Arab countries, India, and China, which all have long cultural traditions, spreading its seeds.”

In his essay “To Screw Foreigners is Patriotic,” Australian scholar Geremie Barmé discusses the proliferation of the concept of Orientalism in Chinese intellectual circles beginning in 1993, linking it to a wider agenda of reformulating national identity and advocating patriotism amid a climate of increased anti-Westernism and redress of cultural self-loathing through consumerism and expression of national pride in popular culture. In other words, though Barmé does not call it Occidentalism, he identifies a discourse whose proliferation opens an intellectual space for recognition of its precursor: the fact that (a practice we would describe as) Occidentalism is identifiable by the mid-1990s as a clear strain of Chinese neo-nationalism opens a space for discussion of its discursive corollary, Orientalism. Theoretically speaking, Occidentalism is evident in the contemporary reappearance of the American Other on the Chinese stage in 1987, even though it is very different from the hostile anti-American form it took in the mid to late-1990s (which is in turn reminiscent of the negative portrayal of American characters in Chinese plays of earlier anti-American periods, such as the Korean War). Furthermore, though most scholars begin their discussions of Occidentalism as a recent discursive response to Orientalist discourse and/or as a cultural response to subjection to national shame at the hands of Western imperial powers during the Qing dynasty, clearly China’s discursive and cultural identification of a Western Other precedes these points of departure, as indicated in chapter 1.

As the latest significant contributor to the “etymology” of Occidentalism constructed in this chapter, Peter Hays Gries has recently published several compelling articles describing “China’s new Occidentalism” as a characteristic of contemporary Chinese cultural nationalism and anti-Americanism. Citing local Chinese texts (such as the Say No book series discussed here in chapter 7), Web-site discussions, and other sources, Gries offers a convincing portrait of Sino-American mutual misunderstanding, sensationalism, and disdain in the wake of events such as the 1999 Belgrade embassy bombing and the 2001 Hainan Island spy plane incident. Echoing the thrust of my present study, Gries maintains that “just as the ‘West’ uses an Oriental Other to define itself, the ‘East’ deploys an Occidental Other to the same ends.” In his assessment, China often does this by asserting (in a rather essentialist fashion) its own historical and cultural longevity and superiority, very much in the vein of our discussion in chapter 1. For Gries, the core of contem-
porary Occidentalism is the pitting of perceived “Chinese” values against “American” or “Western” values:

Chinese Occidentalism inverts Orientalism by privileging Mainland Chinese forms of knowledge as “experiential” or “intuitive.” Such Occidentalism thus simply replaces Eurocentrism with Sinocentrism. The hierarchy of power implicit within Chinese cultural nationalists’ “Cultural China” framework thus mutes the voices of “Whites” (laowai) and even émigré Chinese scholars. A widespread Chinese Occidentalist practice juxtaposes Western “self-interest” against Chinese “benevolence” and “kindheartedness.” Occidentalist visions of the West depict a world of cut-throat competition between selfish individuals that reflect[ing] the dominant normative values of the ingroup: the West prizing individual reason and the Chinese cherishing a social sensibility.69

Distilling Occidentalist gestures as “replication and inversion” of Orientalism (whereas I would argue that Occidentalism is far more complex than simply a “response” to Orientalism), Gries contends that the recent discursive currency of Occidentalism in Eastern nations illustrates that Said’s warning at the end of his book has “fallen on deaf ears.”70

In the end, if that warning—that “the answer to Orientalism is not Occidentalism”—is correct, I do not believe it is for the reason Said states, namely that “no former ‘Oriental’ will be comforted by the thought that having been an Oriental himself he is likely to study new ‘Orientals’—or ‘Occidentals’—of his own making.”71 Said is misguided on two points here: first, his statement implies that “Orientals” haven’t already been “Occidentalizing” others for quite some time, and second, that it is not a useful strategy for responding to Orientalism. Ironically, Said unwittingly enacts his own criticism in Culture and Imperialism:

To ignore or otherwise discount the overlapping experience of Westerners and Orientals, the interdependence of cultural terrains in which colonizer and colonized co-existed and battled each other through projections as well as rival geographies, narratives, and histories, is to miss what is essential about the world in the past century.72

As Homi Bhabha points out, Said, in Orientalism, suggests “that colonial power and discourse is possessed entirely by the coloniser, which is a historical and theoretical simplification.”73 Lowe indicates (and the citation above shows) that Said has modified his rhetoric to increasingly account for resistance by the colonized. Clifford reminds us that the binaristic “we-they” dis-
chotomy condemned by Said is useful in strategies of resistance to imperialism and political oppression, and scholars like Chen exemplify this in their articulations of Occidentalism. Furthermore, the most recent scholarship coming from both the United States and China (such as that of Peter Gries and Wang Ning) acknowledges that Chinese Occidentalism is indeed alive and well, while the “War on Terror” since the al-Qaeda attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001, has produced a body of scholarship on Islamic Occidentalism (with definitions of it ranging from “the widespread hatred of the West” to “lust for ... counterfeit affinity with, and superficial knowledge of the West”).

Wang Ning gives the following forecast on Occidentalism in China, confirming its existence but also fearing its consequences:

Occidentalism has indeed been in the minds of many people although it has not yet become a theoretical topic. It every now and then manipulates our research on East-West cultural relations, sometimes playing a role of intensifying the East-West opposition rather than establishing communication and dialogue. Undoubtedly, in some sense it lends support to our struggle against Western cultural hegemony. It could sometimes even help to give full play to a certain national spirit and national pride to more or less contain Western hegemony. But meanwhile, we must confront the fact that ... no one culture can replace another even if it were extremely powerful ... any overemphasis on the superiority of a national or regional culture might well lead to new cultural oppositions or clashes. Thus, in my view, advocating Occidentalism and looking upon it as a counterpart to Orientalism is undesirable at present.

Here, Wang is clearly responding to the uses of Occidentalism in Chinese nationalism described by Gries, including diatribes such as the Say No book series. In chapter 7 I examine two plays recently staged in China that echo this same hostility and cultural xenophobia, but even such Occidentalism onstage is complex and in motion, conversant with theatrical representations that preceded it and literally setting the stage for those to follow. Adapted to an art form that has been dominated by Western tradition and that risks losing its audiences to competing forms of entertainment, Occidentalism in Chinese spoken drama has been utilized in complex and extraordinary ways for social, artistic, and commercial purposes, lending texture to analysis of Occidentalism as a discourse that is not addressed by scholars like Wang and Gries.
Thus, when Clifford, echoing Said, asks, “How is an oppositional critique of Orientalism to avoid falling into ‘Occidentalism’?”78 I am tempted to inquire rhetorically, “Why should it?” While acknowledging that the categorizing, stereotyping, and otherwise misrepresenting of foreigners in Chinese dramas deeply offends me at times, I am also invited to be intrigued by them, to look behind and within them to discover their oppositional strategies, empirical and cultural bases, and to look beyond them and wonder at their societal and artistic impact. Occidentalism is employed as an oppositional strategy to “answer” Orientalism in contemporary Chinese theatre productions (it is also employed on other levels for other reasons), as it has been throughout this century. It may adopt many of the deplorable tactics exposed by Said in his critique of Orientalism, but it also, like its counterpart, can tell us a great deal about the subject that employs it. And though I, as its object of representation, cannot help but resist the distorted essentialization and objectification it inevitably visits upon me, I also must acknowledge its self-defining and oppositional power as a cultural discourse in China that is as yet unmatched by possible alternative strategies. In short, as an Occidentalized Other, I can resist Occidentalism, but I cannot condemn or dismiss it.

Eoyang, borrowing from Dava Krishna, urges the importance of looking at issues “from both sides, to see how each looks when seen from the point of view of the other” and thus proposes a unique project of “orienting the West” and “occidenting the East.”79 For Said to place a detour sign before Occidentalism’s construction site is to seal off competing images of the Occident fashioned by the “Orient” and prevent us from looking at things from both sides. It is to privilege Western representations and modes of discourse, flawed or unflawed, and erase and silence counter-representations and discourses. It is to perpetuate the agenda that African American scholar bell hooks reveals when she notes that postcolonial critics say a great deal about how blacks are perceived by white minds, but very little about the representation of whiteness in the black imagination. Hooks exposes racism in her students who are naïvely amazed to hear that blacks watch whites “with a critical ‘ethnographic’ gaze.”80 This same kind of prejudice marks those who are surprised to hear that foreigners are represented on the Chinese stage, or who think that expatriates in China are perceived by natives only as they wish to be perceived. Looking at things from “both sides”—unearthing the discourse of Occidentalism and letting it stand alongside Orientalism in all its similarity and crucial difference—is a potentially useful way of addressing the imbalance articulated by hooks. She proposes a radical act of “reposi-
tioning” that has the power to deconstruct racist practice, and describes it using Gayatri Spivak’s words:

What we are asking for is that the hegemonic discourses, the holders of the hegemonic discourse should de-hegemonize their position and themselves learn how to occupy the subject-position of the “other.”81

Western scholarly inquiry into the components and operations of Occidentalist discourse is one method of beginning to perform the practice Spivak proposes. Examination of the way we are represented by them, contrary to the dangers Said anticipates, can do much to balance the scales. Such an examination applied to a representative selection of Chinese plays can offer valuable insight about how the American is perceptually figured (and what this might indicate about Chinese self-identity), and how we might construct Occidentalism as a discursive practice.

A thorough reading of these plays through the “prism” of Occidentalism—embracing the paradoxical interplay of images of China and America, interpreting the statements that point to construction of national identity vis-à-vis the West in the years preceding and directly following Deng Xiaoping’s acceleration of capitalist reform, and critically representing hegemonic Orientalist practices in order to respond with Occidentalist counter-practices—has the potential to offer illuminating insight and raise provocative questions.

The conversation between Orientalism and Occidentalism that Said has warned us against is potently present in these plays, and we miss much if we close our ears to it. While, admittedly, Occidentalism is not a viable “alternative” to Orientalism in the sense that Said hopes to unearth—it cannot claim immunity from reinscribing practices we now so readily recognize in Orientalism, and it does not promise to rescue us from Orientalist approaches to cross-cultural investigations and representations—it is an “answer” in the sense that it exists as a discourse (albeit as yet unarticulated) that stands as both interlocutor and competitor to Orientalism in all its forms. That we have failed to explore it, shed light on its operative strategies, and recognize its manifestations does not mean it has not been there all along, engaged in both armed struggle and quiet conversation with Orientalism—from some angles seeming its mirror image, from others an utterly different animal, but waiting patiently for us to discover it, consider it, and by our very consideration endlessly transform it. Occidentalism must be brought into the light, considered, and understood before alternatives to Orientalism can be suggested, because such alternatives—options that depart from the negative attributes and tendencies of Orientalism—are not truly alternative
unless they offer an alternative to Occidentalism as well. Bypassing Occidentalism entirely in search of these adumbrative alternatives to Orientalism amounts to skipping a crucial step in the discursive process, and unwittingly further advances the Orientalist agenda by silencing Other voices that have much to say—to Said, and to all of us.