

Identity Seeking and Constructing Chinese Critical Discourse in the Age of Globalization

At present, almost every scholar of the humanities and social sciences has noticed the fact that talking a lot about globalization has become an academic and intellectual fashion. Some do welcome the advent of globalization viewing it as a good opportunity to develop their career in a broader global context. Others are very afraid of this ghost, fearful that it might well engulf their research fields. It is true that for scholars and intellectuals from the Orient and Third World countries, what they are most anxious about is the (re)location of their culture in such an age of globalization, when cultures from different countries or nations are more and more homogenized and the identity of weak cultures more and more obscured. In the circles of Cultural Studies, this phenomenon, associated with the crisis of national identity and (re) construction of cultural identity, has also attracted the attention of both comparatists and cultural studies scholars. The present essay will first of all deal with the issue of globalization from a cultural and intellectual perspective: it will offer a retrospection on the state of the art of the study of globalization worldwide, and its positive and negative effect on current Chinese cultural and intellectual life as well as academic study. I should also point out that since cultural globalization, as a direct consequence of economic globalization, is beyond anyone's resistance, seeking a sort of Chinese national and cultural identity acquired vital significance to scholars of both comparative literature and cultural studies. To my mind, seeking such a Chinese national and cultural identity also has much to do with the construction or reconstruction of Chinese critical discourse, for in this respect globalization has certainly provided us with a rare opportunity to develop our national culture and literature.

Globalization: Traveling from the West to China

Apparently, we are in an age of globalization, as so many intellectuals have already realized. Just as William J. Martin describes, this is an "electronic global village where, through the mediation of information and communication technologies, new patterns of social and cultural organization are emerging"(11-12). Such an information society is characterized by people's communicating with each other more directly and more easily. The traditional sense of time and space has largely changed with the fast floating of cultural capital and information. Despite the fact that globalization, especially in the field of culture and the humanities, is stubbornly resisted by the other force: localization, we have to recognize that globalization is an objective phenomenon although it appears as a ghost-like specter haunting our memory every now and then and influencing our cultural and intellectual life as well as our academic study. Globalization is not anything created by scholars, but rather an existing phenomenon in our daily life. Under the impact of globalization, the cultural and literary market has been more and more shrinking. The humanities and social sciences are severely challenged by the over-inflation of knowledge and information. Transnational corporations have already transgressed the boundaries of nations, countries and even continents, their employees from different countries work both in the interests of their own countries as well as of their corporations. Since these corporations exploit their own countries as well as other countries, their employees' identity is obviously uncertain and even obscure. They do not know where their home is and what they are working for except for their high income. In the age of globalization, all the artificial constructions of the sense of center have been deconstructed by the floating of capital and division of international labor. A new identity crisis has appeared in national cultures with the traveling of the (imperial) Western theory to the (peripheral) Oriental and Third World countries.

Although the term globalization is a recently used one, the process of globalization, if it should be regarded as a process, in economy and capital is not at all a 20th century event. Marx and Engels themselves and the contemporary Western Marxists have made careful studies of this phenomenon and process, just as Marx and Engels pointed out long ago in the significant *Communist Manifesto* when world capitalism was rising as a very energetic force:

The discovery of America, the rounding of the Cape, opened up fresh ground for the rising bourgeoisie. The East-Indian and Chinese markets, the colonization of America, trade with the colonies....

The feudal system of industry, under which industrial production was monopolized by closed guilds, now no longer sufficed for the growing wants of the new markets. The manufacturing system took its place.... division of labor between the different corporate guilds vanished in the face of division of labor in each single workshop.

Meanwhile the markets kept ever growing, the demand ever rising. Even manufacture no longer sufficed. ...The place of manufacture was taken by the giant, Modern Industry, the place of the industrial middle class, by industrial millionaires, the leaders of whole industrial armies, the modern bourgeois.

Modern industry has established the world market, for which the discovery of America paved the way. This market has given an immense development to commerce, to navigation, to communication by land. This development has, in its turn, reacted on the extension of industry; and in proportion as industry, commerce, navigation, railways extended....

Each step in the development of the bourgeoisie was accompanied by a corresponding political advance of that class.... The executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.

The bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part.

The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his "natural superiors," and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous "cash payment."...

The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honored and looked up to with reverent awe....

The bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation to a mere money relation.

The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form, was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes. Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones....

The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.

The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country—All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilized nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the productions of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature. (66-69)

Such a brief description has actually offered us a general picture of how globalization started from the field of economy and capital in the late 15th century, swiftly swept the production of culture, and finally helped form a sort of world literature in the 19th century, when comparative literature as a relatively independent discipline came into being. Obviously, capitalism has triumphed over feudalism as a progressive force at its rising time, but now, it has completed its last stage of globalization and entered the period of late capitalism. (Jameson 1992) Postmodernism is characterized by the various symptoms of late capitalism. Of course we could also trace the beginning of such a process of globalization to earlier times. Obviously, just as globalization acted at its very beginning, its law is very cruel and forceful. It has marginalized the majority of people with only 20% of the world population directly benefiting from the globalization process. Economic globalization has given rise to cultural globalization, in the process of which Western, or more specifically, American culture is imposing its value notions upon Third World culture. Therefore, some non-English-speaking intellectuals are very much worried about the possible "colonization" of their own cultures and languages. What they could do is to seek a new national and cultural "identity" in such a "homogenizing" atmosphere by highlighting their national cultural spirit.

In the face of this, we should first of all recognize that globalization gives rise to the interpenetrating processes of the universalization of particularism and the particularization of universalism (Robertson 1992,100). That is, the impact of globalization is embodied at two poles: its effect travels from the West to the East, and at the same time, from the East to the West.

Dialectically speaking, globalization has created linkages between different social and cultural phenomena, such as identities, social relationships and even institutions, and these linkages must be placed within a specific historical context (Jameson 1998). In the age of globalization, communication between different societies, cultures and nations is more and more frequent with the exchange of personnel and traveling of theory and other academic learning chiefly from the West to the East.

The ghost-like globalization has after all come to China, receiving both warm welcome as well as stubborn resistance on this soil. The advent of globalization, first in economy and finances, could be traced back in China to the late 1980s and early 1990s, when Hong Kong took the initiative of involving itself in the process of economic globalization, and then Taiwan. As a result, the swift flourishing of Hong Kong and other Asian "strong powers" largely benefited from the process of globalization, which has more or less proved the power of globalization forces. But in the late 1990s, all these precocious Asian powers suffered from the lash of the Asian financial crisis and were confronted with the threatening power of globalization. It was just at this time that scholars in Asia have come to realize that it is necessary to take into serious consideration both the negative and positive effects of globalization. The study of globalization in China's mainland intellectual circles was also an event in the early 1990s with American scholar Arif Dirlik's lecture tour in Beijing as its beginning.¹ But at that time, China's mainland was only at an unconscious stage of involvement in the process of globalization. Scholars of the humanities and social sciences seemed to pay more attention to the debate on the decline of modernity and the rise of postmodernity in the Chinese context. As a political and cultural construction, globalization has certainly taken the place of modernity and is more characteristic of postmodernity than modernity. So it was more visible to scholars in Hong Kong and Taiwan where they have organized several international conferences on globalization and its interactions with localization since 1996.² For in these

"postcolonial" areas, globalization at its beginning suffered from a resistance from localization. But no sooner had mainland scholars realized the importance of globalization before they started their comprehensive study of this hot topic. Since 1998, there have been at least seven international conferences on globalization held in Beijing, with five exclusively dealing with globalization and its relations to culture and literature.³ Now almost all Chinese scholars of the humanities and social sciences have realized that globalization is no longer a deliberately constructed cultural myth. But what they are worried about most is how to preserve the native tradition or search for a new national and cultural identity in face of the threatening challenge raised by globalization. This is also true of intellectuals of other Asian countries or regions.

Seeking an Identity in the Age of Globalization

As I have previously mentioned, in the age of globalization the intellectuals from the Orient and Third World are most concerned about the question where we, as literary scholars, are located in such a "global village" and how we shall find our own identity in international cultural communication and theoretic dialogue. Just as J. Hillis Miller correctly points out that there never has been time for literary study, "It was never the right time for it. Literary study always was, is now, and always will be untimely.... This means that 'literary study' is an oxymoron" (12-13). That is, on the one hand, people need something like literature to enrich their cultural life, but on the other hand, literary study, as a discipline, whose function is undoubtedly limited, should not be inadequately exaggerated, especially in such an age of globalization. In

and cultural studies. I was invited to speak at both conferences but could not go there due to some adverse circumstances.

³ The five international conferences on globalization and culture and literature held in Beijing since 1998 are: The International Conference on Globalization and the Future of the Humanities in August 1998; The International Conference on the Future of Literary Theory: China and the World in August 2000; The International Conference on Economic Globalization and the Orientation of Chinese Culture in November 2000; The International Conference on Literature, Culture and Humanity in the Context of Globalization in August 2001; and the Third Sino-American Symposium on Comparative Literature: Globalizing Comparative Literature in August 2001. I was very pleased to function as the general organizer of the first two conferences and the last one.

1 In spring 1990, Professor Arif Dirlik of Duke University was invited by China's Central Compilation and Translation Bureau to give a lecture on globalization and contemporary capitalism, which was very new to the audience but did not attract broad attention from academic circles.

2 Just in the year 1996, there were in Hong Kong and Taiwan two conferences sponsored by scholars of comparative literature and cultural studies on globalization

this way, we will have a balanced view in the face of various challenges against literature and other elite cultural forms. Even in the most unfavorable situation, "Literary study's time is always up. It will survive as it has always survived, as a ghostly revenant, as a somewhat embarrassing or alarming spectral visitant at the feast of reason. Literature is potholes in the Information Superhighway, black holes in the Internet Galaxy"(1 3). Under the impact of globalization, a country's national and cultural identity is more or less affected and thus becomes obscure. This is naturally represented in literary works and discussed by literary scholars. To deal with the issue of identity has attracted today more and more scholars of both comparative literature and cultural studies. But we should first of all have a clear idea of what identity means, and then, why it appears so important in the age of globalization. Obviously, the question of identity is a question of culture and politics, which is not only of theoretical relevance but also of more everyday significance. It is not a fixed thing, but rather an indeterminate thing that needs interpreting and reconstructing in different conditions. In the postmodern society, along with the attempt of (postmodern) decentralization and (postcolonial) demarginalization, a sort of identity politics has emerged before our horizon. Each nation or its national culture has its identity, and each nation tries to highlight its identity among a variety of cultures, and each national culture will therefore try to construct or reconstruct its identity in the face of the challenge raised by cultural globalization and the possible "colonization" of its own culture.

It is true that challenged by cultural globalization, a strong culture is imposing its value standard on weak cultures and their peoples. Scholars of literary and cultural studies in the Orient and Third World are very much worried about the increasing obscuring of their national and cultural identity. Thus seeking a new identity in their cultural studies is their most prominent concern in the age of globalization. Cultural identity as a critical term has recently frequently appeared in some Chinese academic journals. It is translated into Chinese as "wenhua shenfen" or "wenhua rentong," which, in the domain of literature and culture, appeals to the national character and cultural identity with its unique national character and spirit.⁴ Especially when

it is discussed in comparative literature circles, scholars might well compare the essential difference between two literatures with two cultural backgrounds, in the process of which they find some common points that could identify these common characteristics. But this kind of identification is chiefly an aesthetic identity. Cultural identity study also deals with two literatures that have direct communications in a cross-cultural context: how a man of a certain national cultural tradition tries to maintain his own cultural identity in another cultural context in such a "global village" with the boundary between nations and cultures being more and more obscured. Along with the transnational corporations' settling everywhere, employees there usually have uncertain or obscure "identities," which is undoubtedly represented in literary works. So scholars of comparative literature and cultural studies cannot avoid observing this unique phenomenon in the age of globalization from the perspective of identity politics.

Generally speaking, cultural identity is characterized by both a culture's original character and its theoretical construction, the two of which coincide with each other rather than are contradictory to each other. People usually view cultural identity as a series of characteristics a certain culture originally has or a certain nation is born to have. On the other hand, cultural identity is also characteristic of structuralism, in which a certain culture is viewed as a series of characteristics related to one another, but at the same time, there also exist some people independent of that culture. Thus seeing "identity" as a series of alternatives with specific structural characteristics is actually regarding the concept of identity as a sort of "contraction."⁵ Undoubtedly, identity is not a fixed thing, but rather a mobile thing which needs to be constructed and reconstructed or reinterpreted. Thus the study of the issue of cultural identity cannot avoid touching upon diasporic writing, as it has been long repressed as a minority and marginal discourse and its identity is always most uncertain at all times.

that time, this issue did not attract the broad attention of Chinese intellectuals or literary and cultural critics.

4 The first international conference on the issue of cultural identity in China is the one held in Nanjing, which was also sponsored by the Research Committee on Literary and Cultural Identity of the International Comparative Literature Association. But at

5 Cf. Rien Segers' plenary speech at the International Conference on Cultural Identity Studies in September 1998 in Nanjing, "The Construction of Literary and Cultural Identity in the Age of Globalization", the Chinese translation of which appeared in *Kuaivenhua duihua (Cross-cultural Dialogue)*, No. 2, 1999, 91.

Although the term cultural identity has been borrowed now from Western literary and cultural studies, it was dealt with in the Chinese context long ago. In modern Chinese literature, for example, Lu Xun is perhaps best known for exposing the very nature or identity of Chinese culture and its people. The typical example in this aspect is his "Ah Q Zhenghuan" ("The True Story of Ah Q"), in which he reveals a contradictory attitude toward this character: hating his very weak character, marked as a sort of national and cultural Chinese identity in an ordinary peasant, and on the other hand, expressing his deep sympathy toward him whose character is twisted by the feudal society and its traditional culture, which to him is characterized by a sort of "cannibalism":

This civilization not only makes foreigners intoxicated, but also has long made all people in China intoxicated and even smiling. Because people have been separated from one another as a result of the many differences that were handed down from antiquity and are still in existence, they can no longer feel other people's pain. And because each of them has the hope of enslaving or eating other people, they forget that they themselves share the future of being enslaved and eaten. So numerous banquets of human flesh, large or small, have been prepared from the beginning of civilization until today. (Lu Xun 1974, 200)⁶

Obviously, through his deep analysis of this evil society and sharp critique of the heavy-burdened cultural tradition, Lu Xun is totally pessimistic. So he wants to seek and even construct a new identity in the Chinese nation through his critique of this poor peasant. The reason why Ah Q as a fictional character has been largely discussed among those famous characters in world literature is simply because in him is embodied the striking national and cultural identity of the old Chinese nation. Whenever we read about this character, we feel as if he were living among us. Since it needs more critical elaboration, I will deal with this issue elsewhere.

Although Chinese culture and literature have a long and splendid tradition, it is said that they have been "colonized" since the late 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century when Lin Shu and Liang Qichao took the initiative of largely translating Western literature and academic learnings, which had considerable influence on the formation of modern Chinese

literature. For today's scholars of modern Chinese literature and translation study, translated literature actually serves as an integral part of modern Chinese literature without which modern Chinese literature could not be so close to the mainstream of world literature. In this respect, the May 4th Movement indeed forcefully helped form a new sort of Chinese culture and literature, or a new Chinese national and cultural identity. This identity is characterized by not identifying itself with its cultural tradition but with Western modernity. Even Lu Xun, in describing how he started writing fiction, once says:

But when I began to write novels, I did not realize that I have the talent of writing fiction. For at the time, I stayed in the guest house in Beijing, where I could not write research papers as I did not have references, nor could I do translation as I did not even have the original texts at hand. In this way, what I could do is to write something like fiction. Hence *The Diary of the Mad Man* came out. When I wrote this piece, I only depended upon some hundred foreign literary works I had read and some knowledge of medicine I had obtained. As for other preparations, just no more (Lu Xun 1989, 512).

Due to Lu Xun's prominent position in the history of 20th century Chinese literature, his words represent the true mentality of quite a few modern Chinese writers. As a result, today's men of letters and literary scholars would rather admit their being influenced by Western theory and culture than by their own culture. They even think that translated literature in modern China should also be regarded as an autonomous entity, or an independent part of modern Chinese literature, which largely helped form a sort of Chinese modernity, or a new Chinese cultural identity. Without this translated literature, Chinese cultural modernity would not have come into being. This is true to a large extent. Although quite a few traditional literary and cultural scholars have called over the last decades for a unique Chinese national and cultural identity independent of any Western influence, the advent of globalization has strengthened such an "identity crisis" and cut short their long-standing effort. To my mind, cultural identity, like many other theoretical constructions such as postmodernism and orientalism, is by no means a fixed concept. It is also a cultural and theoretical construct. Since globalization has broken through the boundary between countries, nations and even cultures, there is no such thing as a "pure" regional or national cultural identity. People can always seek their "identity," but they cannot say that they have one day found their "identity." This is perhaps one of the reasons why today's

⁶ The English translation of this quotation is done by Wu Yenna. Cf. Wu's essay published in *Tamkang Review*, Vol. XXX, No. 3 (Spring 2000), 68.

intellectuals always like to say that we are confronted with a sort of "identity" crisis. But how shall we regain the lost "identity" in our literary and cultural studies? I will deal with this issue in the last part of my essay.

(Re) constructing Chinese Critical Discourse in the Age of Globalization

In view of my above analyses, I think that the so-called "seeking a pure Asian or Chinese identity" is nothing but a myth in such an age of globalization. A dynamic cultural theory functions not only at the center but also at the periphery. So globalization has also brought about possibilities for Third World scholars to "globalize" their culture and reconstruct their cultural identity as well as critical discourse. In this part I will first deal with the current debate on the "absence of Chinese critical discourse" and then put forward a positive strategy of globalizing Oriental and Chinese culture in an attempt to construct or reconstruct the Chinese critical discourse in the process of cultural globalization.

Since I myself chiefly deal with literary theory, although in recent years I have spent much time writing about cultural studies, I will certainly focus on the construction of Chinese critical discourse in the context of global cultural studies. In the field of literary theory and criticism, we usually call the 20th century an age of criticism, which obviously suits the Western situation in which various critical schools appear one after another and contend with each other. But in such a "noisy" situation of different voices and utterances, the voice uttered by Chinese critics is indeed rather weak. So it is not surprising that some critics complain that something is wrong with Chinese literary criticism, for they are not only "absent" in international theoretical debates but even do not utter their own "voice" in international critical circles.⁷ Thus Chinese critics have got "aphasia," namely, a sort of "illness of uttering no voice," which is a clear exaggeration to my mind. According to Cao Shunqing, who has called for the regaining of the "lost" Chinese critical discourse on

several occasions during the past few years, "Since the black people can reconstruct their own critical discourse from their own cultural tradition, shouldn't we or couldn't we Chinese people who have a 5000-year-long cultural tradition and profound theoretic attainment reconstruct our own critical discourse?"⁸ It should be pointed out that this desire for regaining our national and cultural identity is understandable, but he seems to have forgotten that "all identities are irreducibly hybrid, inevitably instituted by the representation of performance as statement" (Spivak 1999, 155). Even for black people, they still realize that they are "marginalized" in a multicultural society like the United States. What they could do is first of all, identify themselves with the mainstream culture in the imperial language, and in the process of which, utter their own voice in an attempt to construct their cultural identity. What the overseas Chinese scholars do in the West is also like the action of the black people: first of all, trying to obtain a degree by studying as hard as possible and mastering the English language, and then in the process of functioning in the mainstream culture, to discuss Chinese issues in the Western language and with the "hybridized" Western critical discourse. Actually, we are very pleased to see that through hard work and negotiating with both the sinological circles as well as the mainstream academia, these Chinese scholars have occupied quite a considerable place in the Western sinological circles inserting some new knowledge in this old and for a long time "marginalized" discipline. Is this not an objective and encouraging fact? Is it that they are functioning in the international theoretical and critical debate by starting from the Chinese experience? If the answer is yes, then we should not be pessimistic.

It is true that almost all the critical theories we are now discussing come from the West, almost all the critical terms we are using are borrowed from Western critical theories, almost all the theorists we are studying at the moment are Western theorists. However, critics of this phenomenon have forgotten another fact that through cultural translation and Chinese critics'

7 One encouraging token is embodied in the Third Sino-American Symposium on Comparative Literature held in Beijing on August 11-14, 2003 during which all Chinese and American participants delivered their speeches and discussed issues of common interest in English. It shows that Chinese scholars are able to carry on an equal theoretical dialogue with the Western and international scholarship.

8 Cao Shunqing is representative of this position. He advocates on several occasions to establish a "Chinese School" of comparative literature, and at the same time calls for constructing a sort of Chinese critical discourse. Cf. Cao, "Ershiyishiji zhongguo wenhua fazhan zhanlue yu chongjian zhongguo wenlun huayu" (*TAe Developing Strategy in 21st Century Chinese Culture and Reconstructing Chinese Critical Discourse*), *Dongfang congkan (Oriental study of Culture)*, No. 3, 1995, 218. But his effort has not attracted great attention from domestic scholars in comparative literature and literary theory.

dynamic reception and creative construction, all these theories and critical terms are largely "metamorphosed" and have produced some new significance which will in turn question the original Western theories and deconstruct their hegemonic authenticity and sense of center. Also, if we still maintain that these theories are from the West, I would then ask, didn't Marxism come from the West? Didn't socialism come from the West? Hasn't globalization come from the West? But now, their practice in China is already marked with typical "Chinese characteristics" after their being naturalized into the Chinese terminology. Even postmodernism is metamorphosed in the Chinese context with different postmodern versions coming into being in the 1990s. Thus the reception of Marxism in China has, on the one hand, enriched Marxist theoretic doctrine, and on the other hand, has carried on a dialogue with Marxism itself and developed the latter. The other important fact I should mention here is the following: almost all the important Western theorists, who are now most actively involved in theoretic debate are those with an Oriental and Third World background, such as Jacques Derrida, with a Jewish tradition and Algerian background, Edward Said, with a Palestinian and Arabic background, Gayatri Spivak, with an Indian cultural background and Homi Bhabha, with more than one national and cultural background whose national and cultural identity is undoubtedly uncertain. But their active engagement in international cultural studies and theoretical debate has certainly "hybridized" the originally "pure" Eurocentric or West-centric international scholarship. Thus their search for a new cultural identity is not at all contradictory to maintaining their own cultural tradition, for tradition should also be reconstructed and reinterpreted by different generations of scholars. An objective description of the current position of Chinese literary theory and criticism in international literary scholarship should be: the voice of Chinese critics is still weak, but is increasingly strong and forceful. Just as Spivak has relevantly pointed out, "There is often a certain loss of style in the descent or shift from the high culture of nationalism within territorial imperialism to that search for 'national identity' that confuses religion, culture, and ideology in the newly independent nation"(64). Although China is not a newly independent country, Chinese critical discourse now is rather "hybridized" after the impact of the comprehensive introduction of Western academic learning and various critical theories. Since we are now able to carry on the dialogue directly in English with the international scholarship, we will utter stronger and stronger.

voices on various international occasions.⁹ In this way, any pessimistic view about the future of Chinese culture and literature will be totally thrown away with the lapse of time.

As I have previously quoted, Marx and Engels have long anticipated the appearance of globalization and a sort of world literature as its consequence, starting from which, we can reach a tentative conclusion: economic globalization has undoubtedly traveled from the (stronger) West to the (weak) East, but cultural globalization has not necessarily followed this line. Excellent cultural products do not necessarily grow on the materially rich soil, whereas they might well grow on the comparatively poor soil where there is usually a long and splendid cultural heritage and rich literary practice. If we say that economic globalization started with the discovery of America, then cultural globalization would have come much earlier. One possible interpretation is that the westward cultural globalization started in China's construction of the Silk Road.¹⁰ In this sense, we are confident to make full use of the process of globalization in an attempt to "globalize" Chinese culture and literature in this age.

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- 9 In this aspect, I should mention an exciting fact that the International Conference on the Future of Literary Theory: China and the World was held on August 29-31, 2000 in Beijing, during which the International Association for Literary and Criticism (IALTC) was established. The Chinese scholars have played a very important role in this significant event.
- 10 For instance, Dennis O. Flynn, Professor of Economics at the University of the Pacific discussed with me during my visit in spring 1999 the possibility that China's construction of the Silk Road might well start another type of globalization: from the East to the West.

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