Bridging the Sino-American Divide
Bridging the Sino-American Divide
American Studies with Chinese Characteristics

Edited by
Priscilla Roberts

CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS PUBLISHING
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"Bridging the Sino-American Divide," the title of the third annual conference cosponsored by the US-China Education Trust (USCET) and one of the members of its American Studies Network, perfectly expresses the mission of USCET. When The University of Hong Kong first proposed the idea in 2005, therefore, we could not have been more pleased than to award USCET’s annual conference to the university.

The idea for the American Studies Network grew out of a series of conversations I had with Chinese American experts throughout the late 1990s and early this century, at a time when there was a resurgence of Chinese interest in learning more about the United States. And what better way than to use American Studies, with its wealth of courses, books, films, and exhibits, to teach about the United States? After all, American Studies in one form or another is really about understanding America. The US-China Education Trust was formally established in early 2004, and with it was born the American Studies Network, with twenty-two charter members. Since that time, membership has expanded to embrace twenty-eight Chinese universities and think tanks, and the Network continues to grow.

The Network is designed to provide a foundation for communication and collaboration within and beyond China in studying the United States, with the goal of strengthening the field in China. Ultimately, its foremost concern is, as the conference title suggests, with bridging the divisions between the United States and China. Throughout modern history, US-China relations have fluctuated wildly, a constant hostage to the differences between the two countries and the politics of the moment. The American Studies Network hopes to serve as a vehicle to break down barriers of misunderstanding and build mutual trust between the Chinese and American people.

As such, the conference itself created an opportunity for dialogue and discussion between presenters from more than twenty Chinese universities, respected US-China scholars, former and current US government representatives, and other conference attendees. As president
of the US-China Education Trust, I am particularly pleased that this publication will illustrate the growing scholarship of Chinese American Studies experts, including the members of the American Studies Network.

We hope the chapters in this volume will contribute to the mutual understanding that is critical to US-China relations and the future of both countries. We offer our thanks to Cambridge Scholars Publishing and to Dr. Priscilla Roberts at The University of Hong Kong, who made this publication a reality.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This volume is one end result of an international conference held at The University of Hong Kong in November 2006, cosponsored by that institution’s Centre of American Studies and the US-China Education Trust. Like all such gatherings, it would not have been possible without much support and a great deal of hard work on the part of many people and organizations.

The US-China Education Trust, the Vice-Chancellor and the Faculty of Arts of the University of Hong Kong, the Centre of American Studies of the University of Hong Kong, and the American Consulate General, Hong Kong, all provided generous financial support.

Special thanks are due to James B. Cunningham, American Consul General in Hong Kong, and his wife Leslie for generously hosting a reception in their spectacular home, and to other officials in the Consulate General for their assistance. Equally appreciated was the generous hospitality of Mr. Ronnie C. Chan of the Hang Lung Group, Hong Kong, and the work of his team of highly efficient assistants, headed by Ms. Li Ping Lo.

Within The University of Hong Kong, the conference received warm encouragement and assistance from Dr. Victor Fung, Chairman of the University Council; Vice-Chancellor Prof. Tsui Lap-Chee; Pro-Vice-Chancellor Prof. Paul Tam; Prof. Kam Louie, Dean of the Faculty of Arts; Dr. Steven Matthews, acting head of the School of Humanities; and Dr. Peter Cunich, head of the Department of History.

Numerous administrative departments of The University of Hong Kong were extremely helpful. Kitty Chan and Salina Kong of the Development and Alumni Affairs Office spent long hours ensuring that all arrangements went smoothly and without a hitch. The staff of the Estates Office, especially Ms. Tracy Lam, were as always outstanding in terms of arranging transportation at short notice, and ensuring that all the logistics of the conference venue were in place. Ms. Vicky Lam and Mr. Kenny Chan of the Finance and Enterprise Office painstaking handled all the complicated financial matters. Mrs. Iris Ng, Ms. Michelle Wong, and Ms. Karen Leung of the School of Humanities and Mr. Andy Leung of the Department of History were all immensely helpful with the myriad tasks and mundane details such an undertaking requires. George Tang of the
School of Humanities handled the audiovisual aspects with great efficiency. Mr. Frankie Ma, Manager of the Senior Common Room, Dr. Leo Hoye, its chairman, and its staff bent over backwards to make special arrangements over a weekend that ensured that all conferees could enjoy delicious food and plenty of it. The manager and staff of Robert Black College, a tranquil and scenic oasis from the pressures of urban Hong Kong, were, as so often before, immensely kind and efficient in hosting those many conferees who had come long distances to attend this meeting.

A team of mostly student helpers ensured that the conference itself ran smoothly. Special thanks are due to Alison Lo Hau Wai and Wayne H. Tang for organizing students of the History Society and the American Studies Program. Three History postgraduates, Paul Spooner, Dave Macri, and Kenneth Yung, were invaluable. Several senior assistants, including Wolfgang and Johanna Kadau, Bennett Stanley, and Zheng Linan, proved themselves towers of strength throughout the conference. Ms. Han Rui of Guangdong Foreign Studies University was also exceptionally helpful and resourceful in resolving one conference crisis.

As always, the Hong Kong Tourist Board was most generous in providing special materials for visitors from overseas.

The conference would not have taken place without the constant attention to detail of both Julia Chang Bloch and Kimberly A. Bennett of the US-China Education Trust. The latter, in particular, spent many hours in voluminous e-mail correspondence with Priscilla Roberts of The University of Hong Kong, not just from her base in Washington, DC, but also as she traveled around China for several weeks.

Academics from The University of Hong Kong and beyond, including Peter Cunich, James Tang, Marie Paule Ha, Glenn Shive, Jeffrey Lehman, Wang Xinyang, Gerard A. Postiglione, and David M. Pomfret, gave generously of their time and expertise in chairing conference sessions.

This book itself was put together while the editor was a visiting fellow at the Institute for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies of George Washington University, Washington, DC. As it has on previous visits, the Institute proved an ideal home for working on such a project. My thanks are due to its director, Hope M. Harrison, and its staff, especially Gregory Zalasky and Suzanne Stephenson, for making my stay not just academically fruitful and productive, but also enormously enjoyable and congenial. As before, Dimon Liu, my friend, landlady, and former colleague, not only provided me with a comfortable place to stay on Capitol Hill, but could be relied upon to demonstrate her superb culinary skills at regular intervals. The editor also received great moral sustenance
and encouragement from the devotion of her massive and ever amiable Albanian mountain dog.

Laura Lauer of the Rothermere American Institute at Oxford was more than kind in allowing me the use of an office and computer there to correct and index the proofs of the book while I was traveling.
INTRODUCTION

AMERICAN STUDIES WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS

PRISCILLA ROBERTS

The supposedly tranquil groves of academe are by no means the remote retreat of popular imagination, a peaceful haven inhabited by unworldly and erudite scholars, largely detached from “real” life, pursuing an arcane search for disinterested truth and knowledge. At times, they might seem more of a political jungle, not just in terms of the often savage infighting among their assorted denizens immortalized in numerous academic novels, but also in the degree to which what is taught and studied in universities, and by whom, reflects political and other pressures in the wider society. Recent years have seen an outpouring of scholarship suggesting that it is impossible for academics to function simply as rational, objective observers, and that not only what they choose to study but the sources they employ and even the language they use inherently privilege or prioritize some perspectives and materials above others and reflect prevailing economic, social, and political norms, expectations, and power structures. On another level, despite stated commitments to intellectual freedom by university leaders and even, on occasion, by politicians, the very fact that many universities are heavily dependent on government funding of various kinds makes it almost impossible for them to insulate themselves from assorted outside demands and even outright dictates, as to what areas and subjects should be studied and sometimes how these should be taught. At times such pressures have encouraged academic institutions to concentrate on “practical” vocational subjects, such as engineering, medicine, science, law, and business management, that were considered socially valuable. They could also, however, have a major impact on the humanities and social sciences, areas often perceived as carrying major political and on occasion diplomatic implications.
The development of the field of American Studies, both in the United States and elsewhere, is preeminently a case in point. As recounted in Pan Weijuan’s chapter in this volume, in the United States, the emergence of the discipline of American Studies marked something of an intellectual declaration of independence from Europe, a statement by US scholars that their own country and its heritage were as deserving of study as those of Europe. The growth of US international power in the twentieth century, especially during and as a result of World War II, had a great deal to do with the spread of American Studies beyond the United States. In part, this was encouraged by the American government itself, through such mechanisms as the Fulbright program, that offered foreign academics and students opportunities for protracted teaching and research visits to American institutions, while funding stays by their US counterparts at overseas tertiary institutions, to teach, research, and, it was hoped, familiarize foreign academics and students with the United States, promoting further interest and exchanges. Ideally, Fulbright scholars were expected to have a multiplier effect, their influence radiating beyond their own activities to inspire others abroad to respect and admire the United States and wish to learn more about that country. Throughout the second half of the twentieth century and beyond, a variety of additional US governmental and private initiatives also funded assorted programs in American Studies, including seminars, institutes, and conferences designed to enhance foreign scholars’ and students’ understanding of the United States, knowledge that they would then be able to utilize in teaching and research at their own institutions.

Initially, such programs were perhaps most extensive in the two major countries occupied by the United States after World War II, namely, Japan and Germany. Each of these states became a leading US ally and keystone of American strategy, one in Europe, the other in Asia. American Studies were deliberately encouraged as part of the efforts to implement the democratization and reeducation in those countries, to prevent a resurgence of Nazism or fascism, and to convert them into loyal American allies, with a strong cohort of political, economic, and intellectual leaders who had personal links to the United States. In Germany, many former refugees returned to their native country to assist in the establishment of American Studies. As the Cold War intensified, the targets of US programs broadened, to include elites and present or future leaders from

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1 Wise, “‘Paradigm Dramas’ in American Studies,” 170-81.
countries around the world, whether these were allied with, friendly to, or even neutral toward the United States in the Cold War. These efforts were, moreover, only part of even broader overt and covert American efforts to enlist European and other intellectuals in anti-communist ventures during the Cold War. American philanthropic foundations, notably the Rockefeller, Ford, Mellon, Luce, Carnegie, and Asia Foundations, often provided substantial funding for such enterprises, effectively underpinning US Cold War foreign policies.

American pressure alone was not, however, the sole factor responsible for the international growth of American Studies. Once it became clear that the United States was a rising world power, foreign elites and eventually governments soon began to encourage the development of academic links between their own countries and the nascent superpower. The first such effort was the scholarships established and funded by Cecil Rhodes in 1902, to bring young men from the British Empire, Germany, and the United States to study for two years at Oxford University. Rhodes intended his new program to bind the world’s strongest powers together in a mutually profitable and cooperative alliance. World War I, which further demonstrated the potential might of the United States, generated additional such initiatives by British and North American elites. In 1922 the family of the Canadian-born press baron Lord Northcliffe, who had been a staunch advocate of Anglo-North American cooperation in international affairs, established the Harmsworth Professorship at Oxford University, commemorating one of his nephews who had been killed.


during the recent war. It was intended to bring a distinguished US historian to Oxford to teach.\(^7\) Between the world wars, in the late 1930s the Carnegie Endowment conducted a major survey of the state of American Studies in Britain, provided grants to several universities to purchase books on the United States, and funded efforts to promote teaching on the United States at both the university and secondary level.

These ventures were only preliminaries to endeavors by the British government, which began early in World War II, to promote a favorable public image of the United States, in place of the existing stereotype, drawn mainly from American movies, that highlighted gangsters, violence, and sex. British officials viewed the deliberate promotion of American Studies in schools and universities as a means of promoting Anglo-American friendship and cooperation, and of boosting the alliance between the two countries, and US Ambassador John G. Winant endorsed and encouraged this strategy. In July 1943 Cambridge University emulated Oxford in establishing a Visiting Professorship in American History, to be held by an eminent US academic, normally for a one-year term. These moves predated by several years major initiatives by the US government to advance American Studies in Britain, which only began in earnest in the early 1950s, when several summer conferences led to the establishment of the British Association of American Studies.\(^8\)

Pragmatic appreciation of the need to develop a cadre of knowledgeable experts on the United States, a major international power with which they would have to deal, was undoubtedly one reason why from the 1940s onward many governments favored the development of some form of American Studies in their own countries. As demonstrated above, the need to enhance public understanding of the United States, especially among young British people, was one major incentive why British officials promoted teaching on America in secondary schools and universities. Almost inevitably, moreover, especially given that academics from a particular country frequently found it easy geographically to consult their own country’s diplomatic and other archives, one major focus

\(^7\) Continuing the tradition, in the late 1990s the Harmsworth family endowed the Rothermere American Institute at Oxford University. Housed in a modern building next door to Rhodes House, home of the Rhodes Trust, it has attracted the enthusiastic patronage and involvement of former President William J. Clinton, himself a past Rhodes scholar at Oxford.

of scholarship and research that often emerged was relations between the other country and the United States, with many British scholars working on British-American relations, Germans on German-American dealings, Japanese producing studies of Japanese-American diplomacy, and so forth, a pattern that has continued to the present day.9 Some at least of these also functioned almost as cheerleaders for their own nation’s special relationship with the United States, though others were more sophisticated and nuanced in their approach.10

Within the United States, by contrast, American Studies followed a rather different trajectory. As the Cold War took hold, the US educational system was increasingly enrolled in efforts to enhance the country’s position in that conflict. McCarthyite pressures for intellectual conformity meant that, during the 1950s, teachers considered unduly radical or pro-communist were liable to lose their jobs.11 Disciplinary areas seen as having some kind of strategic value, both the hard sciences necessary to assure American technological predominance, and those subjects, whether developmental economics or Asian studies, viewed as having some bearing on US ability to understand, influence, and win over other cultures, received official encouragement and generous funding.12 American Studies, perceived as the academic field with greater potential than any other to interpret the United States to the outside world, was therefore of particular interest to US officials, a factor that undoubtedly facilitated its massive post-1945 growth.13 In the early Cold War period, scholars in American Studies generally subscribed to a view of the United States imbued with a sense of that nation’s exceptionalism, one that also fitted well into the prevailing “consensus” school then dominant in both history and politics, a perspective that—however nuanced many of its most perceptive practitioners were—generally emphasized why the United States was different from other nations, while highlighting what all or most Americans had in common rather than what divided them.14

10 See Pells, Not Like Us, 111-7.
11 Schrecker, No Ivory Tower; Caute, The Great Fear; Lewis, Cold War on Campus; and Diamond, Compromised Campus.
12 Cumings, “Boundary Displacement,” 261-80; and Diamond, Compromised Campus.
14 Wise, “‘Paradigm Dramas’ in American Studies,” 179-81.
Interestingly, foreign academics studying the United States, especially Europeans, fundamentally followed their American colleagues’ lead. As the British scholar Marcus Cunliffe wrote in 1975:

[O]n the whole European Americanists have not yet said startlingly fresh things about the United States. In practically every branch of American Studies the organizing ideas, the bold interpretations, the controversy have been introduced by Americans. European contributions have tended to function within the context of received ideas, often very competently and sometimes definitively. In retrospect and collectively they now appear rather derivative and—may one say so—dull?

Quoting from a reviewer of one of his own books, Cunliffe urged that foreign scholars had a “duty to ask questions about America of which Americans themselves are unaware.”

By the time that Cunliffe was writing, the intellectual earthquake that hit American academe during the 1960s and the 1970s, as the American social, political, and economic systems became the subject of wide-ranging and highly pejorative radical critiques from the New Left and others, had made a lasting impact upon American Studies. In the United States, issues of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality became extremely prominent in American Studies, while overall the subject moved in the direction of interdisciplinarity and multiculturalism, focusing upon the interpretation of literary and cultural texts and often seeming to exclude traditional history, politics, economics, and diplomacy. Some though not all Americanists in American Studies Departments and associations throughout much of Western Europe followed suit.

To numerous other foreign scholars, however, by the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries the prevailing emphases of American Studies within the United States seemed regrettably parochial, even provincial, reflecting a somewhat introspective preoccupation with domestic political and social issues and a quest to redefine national identity by focusing on minority groups that, though in many ways an interesting phenomenon in terms of what it revealed about the United States, frequently had little resonance outside that country’s borders. Responding to the 2006 presidential address, Winfried Fluck expressed foreign scholars’ disquiet with perspectives that, in their view, “retreated” into a comfortable and

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15 Cunliffe, “American Studies in Europe,” 50-1; cf. Pells, Not Like Us, 117-8, 130-3.
16 Wise, “‘Paradigm Dramas’ in American Studies,” 185-210; and Marx, “Rethinking the American Studies Project,” 52-6.
psychologically soothing “saving utopia” by focusing on “diversity” and alienated or marginal groups within the United States, while ignoring “analysis of the center” that was setting the agenda for the exercise of American power outside its own boundaries. “Scholars from abroad,” she warned, “are exposed to the power effects of the political system as a whole.” They could not, in this situation, simply ignore the overarching international power of the United States and turn their eyes away from the country’s political mainstream:

The United States is a paradigmatic, agenda-setting modern society and no talk about the crisis of the nation-state can distract from the fact that there is enough nation-state left to affect us all decisively. Or, to put it differently: globalization does not mean that American power becomes porous or is going away. It means that it is reconfiguring itself and may emerge in even more effective, albeit more invisible, forms than ever before. American power is thus still a major issue for the rest of the world.  

Some even doubted whether American Studies had any real impact on public discourse within the United States itself. “Too many of our activities,” the German scholar Alfred Hornung told the American Studies Association in 2004, “are turning in our own circles, are self-referential, and address the cognoscenti only.” Non-Americans also often found unpersuasive and even smacking of cultural imperialism the insistence of US specialists in American Studies that the disciplinary approaches then prevailing in their own country represented the only “correct” methodology for pursuing American Studies. Attending a pan-Asian gathering of American Studies scholars in Taiwan in the mid-1980s, where the bulk of the attendees were working on aspects of US international relations, diplomacy, politics, economics, or history, one American woman was heard complaining that—apart from the guest of honor, the then president of the US American Studies Association—she herself was the only person at the meeting who understood “what American Studies really means.”

Much to their credit, numerous US academics in the broad field of American Studies and their professional organizations proved far more willing to listen to foreign perspectives and engage in discussion and debate over the past, present, and future of American Studies both at home

and abroad. The 1990s and the early years of the twenty-first century saw a remarkable drive, spearheaded by the American Studies Association and strongly reinforced by other academic bodies, notably the Organization of American Historians, to invite overseas academics to attend their meetings and put forward their own views there and in such major journals as *American Quarterly* and *American Studies International* on what, in intellectual and disciplinary terms, the very words “American Studies” implied. About the same time, members of the Society for the History of American Foreign Relations likewise discussed at great length whether the concept of American diplomatic history was even intellectually valid, in that one might argue that the term itself encapsulated the idea that US representatives working in isolation devised policies toward the rest of the world, which they then implemented. Such models, historians including the British Christopher Thorne and various Americans argued, were inadequate explanatory or interpretive tools, that failed to do justice to the complexity of the mutually influencing diplomatic interactions among and between not just states but also other non-state participants in international affairs.

Interestingly, the answers the internal debates among American Studies scholars put forward themselves represented exercises in diversity. American academics were coming to realize that, even within their own country, in practice the field of American Studies encompassed a wide diversity of objectives and approaches. In a collection of essays on “Post-Nationalist American Studies” published in 2000, John Carlos Rowe described how, even where different campuses of the same US state university system were concerned, each “had very different ideas about the future of American Studies as a formal program on that campus, and it was instructive to discover how important local institutional and political factors were in shaping these attitudes.” When the survey was broadened to embrace additional educational institutions, it became clear “that there can be no general model for the institutional future of American Studies in

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U.S. universities.” Instead, he anticipated “a new intellectual regionalism that must be taken into account as we discuss the multiple futures of American Studies.” In terms of American Studies beyond the United States, he argued: “The new American Studies requires a new internationalism that will take seriously the different social, political, and educational purposes American Studies serves in its different situations around the world.”

The quest for transnationalism was taken up and highlighted in many forums, among them the presidential addresses that Shelley Fishkin and Emory Elliott delivered to the American Studies Association in 2004 and 2006 respectively. In 2004, Fishkin proclaimed: “There probably are as many definitions of American studies in this room as there are scholars; indeed, one of the reasons many of us were attracted to American studies was its capaciousness, its eschewal of methodological or ideological dogma, and its openness to fresh syntheses and connections.” The emphasis on diversity and the manner in which, when exported abroad, American Studies is transformed by those involved into something often very different from its prevalent incarnations in its country of origin accords with much current scholarship on colonialism, globalization, and crosscultural interactions, work that emphasizes the degree to which all parties to such encounters emerge from the experience significantly changed. The theme that crosscultural fertilization is rarely if ever a one-way street also runs through numerous chapters in the present volume, not just those discussing American Studies in China, but also those focusing upon missionaries, the spread of McDonald’s outlets in China, the experiences of women, the learning trajectory of Chinese teaching assistants in the United States, and, of course, Sino-American relations. Many also implicitly suggest that broad generalizations are frequently intellectually dangerous, and that scholars—whatever the precise subject they are studying—need to bear in mind the peculiar circumstances and specific local features of the particular phenomena they seek to understand.

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22 Fishkin, “Crossroads of Culture,” 17-57; and Elliott, “Diversity in the United States and Abroad,” 1-22. For fuller bibliographic references to the extensive and still growing literature on American Studies and Transnationalism, see Fishkin, “Crossroads of Cultures,” n.13.
As Wang Jianping’s chapter on the globalization and localization of American Studies ably describes, even within Asia, varying impulses were responsible for the development of American Studies in different countries, meaning that there is no single international model. Instead, one must address the specific context in which teaching and research in American Studies has arisen and the needs it fulfills in any particular nation. In the same region, even, these varied from country to country according to their individual circumstances and experiences. In South Korea, for example, American Studies won official and corporate support and credibility at university level as a means of producing graduates who were fluent in English and whose familiarity with US culture and society would fit them for positions handling international diplomatic or business affairs.25 It is perhaps worth noting that, while the quest for transnational American Studies is sometimes perceived as a way of escaping the confines of the nation-state and, in an age of ever greater globalization, demonstrating the porosity of such boundaries, in practice the hard economic fact that around the world studies of the United States are usually conducted within universities, research institutes, or official bureaucracies that are in one way or another heavily financially dependent upon government funding, means that American Studies is usually perceived by politicians and others as addressing specific national needs. One further major distinctive factor uniting foreign Americanists outside the United States, an interest that separated them from their American counterparts, was, as a New Zealand scholar stated, that:

Our perspectives on United States society and culture are inevitably different. We have an acute sense of the United States as a world power, of the global impact of its policies and private enterprise, of the relationship between the American domestic context and international events.26

Such preoccupations are clearly in evidence in this volume, which represents one effort to scrutinize the past history and development and current state of American Studies within China. It includes a broad range of chapters, drawn from a variety of disciplines, demonstrating what one might term “American Studies with Chinese characteristics,” in that they illustrate and illuminate the prevailing interests of Chinese scholars working on the United States. The great majority were first delivered at an

international conference held at The University of Hong Kong in November 2006, cosponsored by that university and the US-China Education Trust. While the book is leavened by the reflections of two eminent US diplomats and a sprinkling of contributions from American, Canadian, and German academics, almost all of whom had extensive teaching experience in China or Hong Kong, over three-quarters of its chapters and commentaries were written by scholars from China. The conference represented the third annual meeting of the American Studies Network, an association of (at present) twenty-eight Chinese academic institutions teaching some form of American Studies established in 2004 by the Washington-based US-China Education Trust. That organization was itself founded in 1998 by the Chinese-born Julia Chang Bloch, the first Asian American to become a US ambassador, with the objective of promoting ties among Chinese universities engaged in studying the United States and helping those scholars and students involved to forge links with American academics and institutions, familiarize themselves with the United States, and upgrade their skills and enhance their resources for doing so.

The goals of the US-China Education Trust neatly complemented those of the Centre of American Studies at The University of Hong Kong, the host of the conference. Like other locales whose status was ambiguous, Hong Kong, a territory where for many decades Western and Chinese power, values, interests, and personnel encountered each other and coexisted in sometimes uneasy proximity, played a variety of mediatory roles in terms of communication and exchanges on several levels. Its indeterminate status and mixed allegiances meant that in practice Hong Kong, like Switzerland in both world wars or Rick’s Bar in the movie Casablanca, served as neutral ground where representatives of nominally or officially opposed ideologies, states, and other interests could meet.27 Elsewhere in this volume, Ambassador Nicholas Platt highlights the special functions that Hong Kong performed for much of the Cold War, in terms of providing a base for Western observers—diplomats, journalists, academics, and others—who wished to know what was happening in Communist China but had little or no direct access to that country. The Chinese scholars Mei Renyi and Chen Juebin likewise describe the impressive services Hong Kong performed during the 1970s in terms of handling and facilitating the steadily growing trade between the United States and China.

27 On Hong Kong’s role in the Cold War, see Tsang, A Modern History of Hong Kong; Welsh, A History of Hong Kong; Share, Where Empires Collided; and Law, “Delayed Accommodation.”
Yet another way in which Hong Kong has served as an interface between China and the West is the key interstitial role it has played in recent years in encouraging the growth of American Studies within China, and the development of a cohort of well-qualified scholars and students familiar with current research sources and techniques. For twenty years, from the early 1950s, serious study of the United States in China fell victim to political antagonisms and, when it occurred at all, usually did so within the confines of a rigid ideological straitjacket. In an ironical form of reverse McCarthyism, those few Chinese academics who—often out of personal interest—continued to study subjects with an American angle were often targeted for attack during the Cultural Revolution of the later 1960s, if not before. Academic libraries often lacked even the most basic American texts, and for decades Chinese universities rarely purchased foreign books.28

Due to its particular location in what was until 1997 a British-run territory, The University of Hong Kong, by contrast, possessed substantial library resources of both secondary and primary materials relating to the United States, and from the mid-1980s onward these were deliberately expanded, making these holdings the best of any institution in Asia, so that it became possible to conduct serious research in American Studies, up to international standards, in Hong Kong. Besides having great value for Hong Kong’s own academics and students working at the undergraduate level or on advanced postgraduate degrees, these resources have also enabled the university to serve as a magnet facility that can support research and scholarship around the region, particularly in mainland China. A conference held at The University of Hong Kong in January 1990, attended by more than a dozen mainland academics, can perhaps be regarded as marking the beginning of efforts to make this vision a reality.29 As described in Zheng Hua’s chapter in this volume, in the ten years from 1996 to 2006, generous funding from the Starr Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia supported over one hundred mainland scholars and students in American Studies, drawn from over twenty institutions around China, on research visits of two months to one year at The University of Hong Kong. For young doctoral students in particular, such visits often made a great difference, giving them access to resources which meant they could produce a superior, well-researched graduate thesis that would launch

29 The papers of this conference were later published. See Roberts, ed., Sino-American Relations Since 1900.
them on a productive academic career. To cite the words of one such visiting student: “The library of HKU is just like a paradise with endless new discoveries and excitements.” This conference served as something of a reunion gathering for such visitors. Six of the contributors to this volume had spent lengthy periods in Hong Kong, and several more have since been awarded fellowships to support research in Hong Kong.

In different ways, the chapters by Zi Zhongyun, Wang Jianping, and Sun Zhe all seek to evaluate the state of American Studies within mainland China, drawing attention to both its strengths and weaknesses. All make it clear just how great an impact the policies of the Chinese government and educational bureaucracy have had upon the field’s very development. As has been the case since the inception of American Studies, in numerous foreign countries much emphasis is placed upon the role the subject can play in providing expertise, in terms of both information and a cadre of personnel, on the United States, especially in terms of US relations with the particular nation involved. This has certainly been the case in China, where demands for competent and reliable policy advisers on all aspects of Sino-American relations were crucial in propelling early initiatives to establish and expand American Studies, especially at the research institute level. Inevitably, these objectives have had a major impact on just what the discipline of American Studies is considered to embrace in China.

Madam Zi Zhongyun, the doyenne of Chinese Americanists, gives a frank assessment of many of the weaknesses of Chinese scholarship, especially the heavy concentration upon policy-related areas, foremost among them Sino-American relations, the status of Taiwan, congressional policies, economic issues, and security and disarmament, to the exclusion of many potentially fruitful subjects of broader interest. Much of what is published by Chinese academics she also characterizes, as does the chapter by Sun Zhe, another leading Chinese Americanist, as relatively trivial and repetitive, and focused upon issues of fleeting current rather than long-term interest. Like other contributors to the debate on transnationalism, however, she also chides US academics for ignoring the contributions of foreign scholars to American Studies, especially when these are not written in English, and highlights the obstacles often encountered in translating such works. Happily, her own distinguished book on Sino-American relations, No Exit, is an exception to this rule. One must also

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30 These impulses are discussed in Shambaugh, Beautiful Imperialist; and Saunders, “China’s America-Watchers.”
hope that the current volume will itself play some role in introducing Chinese work on the United States to a wider overseas audience.\textsuperscript{31}

The chapters by Wang Jianping, a specialist in literary and cultural scholarship, and Sun Zhe, a leading Chinese expert in international affairs, likewise discuss the special features of American Studies in China. Both point to the impact of the Cold War, in terms of the short history of Chinese American Studies, which only began to develop with the reopening of Sino-US diplomatic relations in the early 1970s, and remained vestigial and almost entirely policy-oriented until after Deng Xiaoping won control in the late 1970s.\textsuperscript{32} Writing in the early 1990s, Zhu Yongtao, a Chinese academic at Beijing Foreign Studies University, described the rapid expansion of American Studies during the 1980s, with about 1,100 Chinese scholars in several dozen institutions doing work related to the United States by 1988, and the production of numerous Chinese articles and MA theses in American Studies—585 and seventy-seven respectively in 1988—and even some PhD dissertations. Beijing bookstores carried more than twice as many books on the United States than on the Soviet Union, Britain, France, Germany, or Japan, a practical demonstration that Chinese demonstrated “greater and broader” interest in the United States than in “any other foreign country.” Chinese wished, moreover, to learn more about “almost everything in the United States, from culture and education to daily life: geography, history, politics, economy, science and technology, literature, arts, customs, domestic policies, and foreign affairs.” In Zhu’s opinion, however, in the early 1990s the Chinese “search for understanding [of] what America really is and what Americans are” still had far to go, since:

This Chinese search has always centered on two closely related questions: (1) what is the United States, and (2) how should we learn from America? If we should, what and how should we learn? The result has been a mixture of frustration, confusion, failure, and success. Until today no definite answers have been found. In fact, the United States is still a puzzle to us, puzzling ordinary people as well as elite classes, intellectuals,

\textsuperscript{31} Zi, \textit{No Exit}. For American scholars’ condemnation of their field’s heavy reliance on US scholarship, see Fishkin, “Crossroads of Cultures,” 36-9; Elliott, “Diversity in the United States and Abroad,” 7-9, 18-9; and Desmond and Dominguez, “Resituating American Studies,” 478-9, 482-3.

\textsuperscript{32} For a wideranging account of China’s community of “America-watchers” in the years up to 1990, see Shambaugh, \textit{Beautiful Imperialist}. 