THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION AT THE MARGINS

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CHINESE SOCIALISM IN CRISIS

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*This book is dedicated to my parents,
Wu Feng and Xu Guoguang*

A total description draws all phenomena around a single centre—
a principle, a meaning, a spirit, a world-view, and overall shape;
a general history, on the contrary, would deploy the space
of dispersion.

—MICHEL FOUCAULT, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*

The history of subaltern groups is necessarily fragmented and
episodic. There undoubtedly does exist a tendency to (at least
provisional stages of) unification in the historical activity of these
groups, but this tendency is continually interrupted by the activity
of the ruling groups; it therefore can only be demonstrated when
a historical cycle is completed and this cycle culminates in a success.
Subaltern groups are always subject to the activity of ruling groups,
even when they rebel and rise up: only “permanent” victory breaks
their subordination, and that not even immediately.

—ANTONIO GRAMSCI, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*