Chapter 2
The Establishment of the Discipline and Its Champions: Chen Yinke—Qian Zhongshu—Zhu Guangqian—Zong Baihua

Amidst the frequent contact between Chinese and foreign literature in the first 20 years of the twentieth century, the conditions for the emergence of comparative literature as a field of study were maturing day by day. At the time, Tsinghua University’s literature courses included such topics as “Comparative Literature,” “French Literature,” “Modern Literature,” “The Western Background to Modern Chinese Literature,” “Modern German Drama,” “Literature and Life,” and “The Tale of Genji.” There was research on Latin writers, Chaucer, Shakespeare, John Milton, Dante, Goethe, and the modern writers Heiberg, Woolf and Joyce among others. The language courses included “Advanced English Philology,” “English Instruction Methodology,” and “The Art of Translation.” 1 From 1929 to 1931, one of the leaders of the New Critic School, the President of the English Literature Department of the University of Cambridge, I.A. Richards., took up a post at Tsinghua where he established the two disciplines, “Comparative Literature” and “Literary Criticism.” Later, P.D. Jameson, a lecturer at Tsinghua, wrote Comparative Literature based on Richards’ ideas and lecture notes which undertook a comparative study of English, French, and German literature. This served as an excellent induction and impetus to the development of China’s comparative literature.

While the comparative literature courses in the universities at the time were heavily influenced by the practice of comparative literature in the West, nevertheless it also inherited some of the hallmarks of traditional Chinese scholarship. For example, Chen Yinke’s “A Comparative Study of the Buddhist Classics in Various Languages: A Comparison between the Chinese Translations and that of Sanskrit, Pali, Tibetan, Uighur and Central Asian Languages,” followed by the establishment of a range of comparative literature courses such as “A Study of Indian Narratives in Chinese Literature,” “A Bibliography of Western Works on Oriental Studies,” and “Selected Readings in Dunhuang Fiction,” “Yuan Zhen and Bai Juyi” and “Translations of Buddhist Literature.” The range of topics covered

1 See Qinghua daxue xiaoshi (Beijing: Tsinghua University Press), p. 167.
by the research students under his direction included “A Comparative Study of Ancient Steles and Their Relationship with Foreign Tribes” and more. In 1936 Chen Quan published his *A Study of Chinese and German Culture* in which he commented on the penetration and influence of Chinese fiction, drama, and lyric poetry in Germany. In 1941, at the Southwest United University, Wen Yiduo wrote a work entitled *Historical Trends in Literature* in which he highlighted the earliest Hebrew poetry in China’s “Songs of Zhou” and the “Da Ya” and India’s “Rig Veda” and the “Old Testament” and that they appeared around the same time as the Greek “Iliad” and “Odyssey.” Later the ripples of both cultures expanded, interacted, and became interwoven such that this new exotic genre, of necessity, began to make itself felt. He held that “Relations between cultures should not fear to ‘give,’ nor should they be afraid to ‘take.’ This alone is the direction of history.”

In the foreword to his *On Poetry*, Zhu Guangqian discussed how the leaders of Tsinghua and Peking universities, including Hu Shih, all argued that foreign literature professors should all take responsibility for part of the courses in their Chinese Literature faculties and *The Psychology of Art* and *On Poetry* comprised his lecture notes at the university. These theories all carried a strong Chinese flavor and in the interval between the 1930s and the 1950s, Chinese comparative literature had already established its own unique path in the Chinese tertiary education landscape.

### 2.1 Chen Yinke—Pioneer of the Study of Origin and Influence

Chen Yinke was high-born of a most illustrious family. In 1902, at the age of 13, he spent three years in Japan and in 1909, at the age of 20 he was admitted to Germany’s Berlin University. In 1912 he returned to China from Switzerland, and in the spring of 1913 he returned to France and entered the University of Paris, returning to China in the second half of 1914. In the winter of 1918, he again set out for America and entered Harvard where he studied Sanskrit and Greek. In 1921, he returned to Germany and entered the Research School of Berlin University where he studied Sanskrit and Oriental paleography, remaining in Europe for about four years. In 1926, he took up a post in the Institute of Chinese National Culture.

Chen Yinke was fluent in the language of a dozen or more countries, was exceedingly ambitious, and had a profound academic vision. The point of departure for his scholarship was, in the first instance, the rubric “Internally, my compatriots feel uninspired by their native culture while at the same time are buffeted by the waves of international thinking.” He was preoccupied with how to enable Chinese culture to free itself from its current dejected state and breathe into it new life. He

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said that he personally “did not dare to look at works from the Xia, Shang, Zhou or Han dynasties but I love to read the history of the national culture from the mid-antiquity period onwards.” This was because “the reason why the Li clan of the Tang Dynasty rose to prominence was because they drew new blood from the wild lands beyond the Great Wall and infused the decadent culture of the Chinese central plains with it, washing away the old and initiating the new, expanding and restoring until a new reality was created.” He believed that the history of the two Jins, the northern and southern dynasties and the Sui-Tang was a complex period of mutual ingestation, inspiration, melding and turbulence, and that the result of these processes was the 300 years of Tang “ascendancy.” The reason why he concentrated on the significance of this period of history was to “expel the contamination of the past” and remove everything old which did not accord with the requirements of the day and allow the vital foreign blood to transform the ancient carcass [of Chinese traditional culture], impart a new vigor to it and bring it back to life.

Chen Yinke established the primary foundation for research into the origin and influence of Chinese comparative literature. In the first instance, he saw the adoption of external culture and research into the influence of foreign culture as an important process in the revitalization of the native culture. The reason why he praised Feng Youlan and Wang Guowei so highly was because they were able to “Adopt concepts from abroad and cross-reference them with native materials” “such that the literary vogue was transformed for a moment and lit the way for others.” He argued: “When two cultures meet there are naturally certain elements that are incompatible and need to be abandoned, but there will also be elements that are lacking in the native culture and these are implanted from the foreign culture and produce new cultural phenomena.” Of the former, he took “How the Licentious Nun Lotus Became a Nun” as an example which illustrated how the Buddhist canon touched on “the significance of sexual intercourse [for Buddhist cultivation]” and how this, when translated into Chinese, was largely silenced. When “Lotus” relates how a mother and daughter were married to the same husband, and how this husband was also the son of the mother in question, this type of scenario was “anathema to China’s traditional ethical standards” and [it was concluded] that “it could only be banished from sight and never be allowed to see the light of day.”

This illustrates the difference between the two cultures and their mutual repulsion. Of the latter, he took Chinese fiction as his example, speaking often of the wooden structure of the Chinese novel and how it largely arose from the mythological tales of the Buddhist classics. “If we examine the structure of [Chinese fiction’s] content, invariably it is a blend of a myriad of interactions and biographies.”

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3The “two Jins” refers to the combined Jin period in Chinese history, lasting between the years 265 and 420 AD. There are two main divisions in the history of the dynasty, the first being Western Jin (西晋, 265–316) and the second Eastern Jin (东晋, 317–420).


Buddhist instruction regularly employed narrative, and whenever narrative is employed in a public discourse, that discourse must unavoidably be moulded by the speaker’s personal experience and circumstances. So you have an original story, then it is split into two, then you have two original stories and they are both conflated into one. If one is able to trace its source and analyze its component parts, then it is possible to discern the customs of the times. This process is in fact a summary of the four stages in the process of analyzing the influence of comparative literature, namely “Inspiration—Acknowledgment—Digestion—Change.”

Chen Yinke not only focused on the influence on research content, but also on its form and methodology. He studied the methodology of Buddhist textual annotation and felt that it differed greatly from traditional Chinese textual annotation. He argues that the language of indigenous Chinese sages is terse and profound and that they must employ historiographic textual research, or in other words, the method of confirming truth from facts and [thus] “the Indian method of explaining the sutras differs greatly from our own. For example, sutras that use analogy or that outline the precepts of the forefathers, although they draw widely on both the sacred and the mundane in order to illustrate the sayings of the Buddha, nevertheless content largely consists of mythological tales.” This is because “Buddhism spread widely throughout China during the Northern and Southern Dynasties and the scholar officials were deeply influenced by it,” and as a result “Pei Songzhi’s Records of the Three Kingdoms, Liu Xiaobiao’s Catalogue of New Books, Li Daoyuan’s Water Sutra, or Yang Xuanzhi’s The Monasteries of Luo Yang, and more were produced.”

These new methods of classical textual analysis not only established a new academic discourse but also fermented the development of Chinese fiction and had a definite influence on Chinese academic enquiry and criticism.

This beginning from fundamentals and progressing from analyzing the random influence to summing up the basic principles in the propagation of the influence of the literature undoubtedly made a theoretical contribution to research in the comparative literature. Apart from this, Chen Yinke suggested that work “must be imbued with a sense of historical development and system differentiation,” that we must “examine the structure of its content,” “delve into the spread of its methodology” and “discover its source and analyze its component parts in order to identify the prevailing customs of the day,” all of which established a foundation for the study of the origins and influence of China’s comparative literature.

Regarding the phenomenon of engagement and mutual interpretation between two cultures, Chen Yinke also offered innovative interpretations. He especially stressed that contact between two cultures was never a simple process of recognition or alignment. On the contrary, there would always be differences and there would always be intentional or unintentional misreadings or misinterpretation. And it was the tension that was generated by these differences and misreadings or misinterpretations that broke through the original mutually existing framework and

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gave rise to change, renovation, and reconstruction on both sides. Chen Yinke pointed out that China employed two different methods in interpreting the Buddhist classics: one was “Matching concepts”\(^7\) and the other was “Reconciling editions.” The so-called “Matching concepts” or “honestly choosing concepts from foreign works in order to explain the text of sacred canons” involved using Chinese concepts to explain the Buddhist tenets. “Reconciling editions,” meanwhile, involved “comparing different translated editions of sutras with one another.” Chen Yinke believed that the introduction of Buddhism into China was the first meeting between the Chinese people and another people with a completely different ideology. This was extremely significant, the result of which meant that Buddhism changed China’s Confucianism and Daoism whilst Chinese culture also changed the original Buddhism itself.

Chen Yinke went on to point out that the process of adopting a foreign culture and promoting renewal of the native culture is realized through a reinterpretation of one’s forebears by a later generation or in fact of one’s original culture itself. This reinterpretation invariably fails to accord with an author’s original intent—in fact at times it does not accord with historical fact—and thus the purveyors of the “National essence” scoffed at it. However, if this interpretation is a summing up or development of one’s understanding of one’s forebears according to one’s current consciousness, then it must be affirmed as a type of cultural renovation in its own right. He believed that Chinese culture developed through wise men over the ages adopting the fresh blood of foreign cultures, with which they came in contact from time to time and their reinterpretation and remaking of their original culture in that process. Naturally, this interpretation must be conducted on the basis of a thorough understanding of one’s forebears. But one must also note that “Our ancient philosophers lived many thousands of years ago and so it is extremely difficult to get a true picture of their era. The materials we have today that we can rely on are a smallest portion of the documents of the time,” “mere dregs” in fact. Hence, “all interpretations of [the real meaning of] the ancients are but modern speculation.” Chen Yinke argues, “If we add to that a linked and integrated collection process and a systematic arrangement and collation, then writers either intentionally or unintentionally, according to the realities of their own era, the environment which they inhabit and the theories with which they have been indoctrinated, speculatively interpret the true intent of the ancients. For this reason, those who today discuss ancient Chinese philosophy in fact are generally discussing their own current philosophy.”\(^8\)

Chen Yinke grasped this quite perceptively. He said, “In attempting to describe reality, there is invariably one type of scholarship which adopts a historical

\(^7\)Translator’s note: Apparently Chen Yinke mistakenly understood this expression *geyi* (格义) to mean “matching concepts,” whereas the original meaning was more like “categorizing concepts”.

linguistic theory and is obviously spurious, whilst to adopt a philosophical theoretical position will not necessarily lead to progress.” He used Wang Fusi and Cheng Yichuan’s commentary on the Book of Changes as an example and pointed out that their commentaries did not necessarily accord with the original meaning of the Book, “otherwise a book on philosophical theories might indeed supplant the legitimate traditional commentaries.”\(^9\) Thus it is in fact a kind of mistake to simply view culture as something immutable, or as some artifact that can be displayed in a museum. Chen Yinke believed that all of the “linked and integrated collections and systematic arrangements and collations [are written by] writers [who] either intentionally or unintentionally, according to the realities of their own era, the environment which they inhabit and the theories with which they have been indoctrinated, speculatively interpret the true intent of the ancients. For this reason, those who today discuss ancient Chinese philosophy in fact are generally discussing their own current philosophy.”\(^10\) The so-called “realities of their own era, the environment which they inhabit and the theories with which they have been indoctrinated,” are in fact an author’s “contemporary consciousness.”

On the other hand, Chen Yinke appears not to approve of comparisons of cultural phenomena that do not have a direct relevance. He sternly criticized such unscientific general observations as “Homer can be compared to Qu Yuan and Confucius can be compared to Goethe.” He describes how, in such works, “the ancient and the modern, Chinese and foreign, heaven or man, dragon or ghost, there is nothing that cannot be compared” and that they contain “forced interpretations, abnormalities by the score, more than can be dealt with.”\(^11\)

But he did not normally reject appropriately-based and creative parallel research. Especially in his extended work on The Karma of Reincarnation (Zaisheng yuan), completed in the early 1950s, he set out his full attitude to parallel research. First of all, he performed a thorough comparative analysis of The Karma of Reincarnation in both the Chinese literary context as well as the global literary context. While discussing the structure of The Karma of Reincarnation, he compared the structural differences between Chinese and Western fiction. He argued that Chinese fiction “was far less structurally refined than Western fiction.” The structure of such works as Water Margin (Shuihu zhuan), A Dream of Red Mansions (Shitou ji) and The Scholars (Rulin waishi) “can all be readily discussed.” From the same genre, “Jade Bracelet Karma (Yuchai yuan) is verbose and boring with no systematic structure. When compared to the refined structure and systemic clarity of The Karma of Reincarnation, they are worlds apart.” The Karma of Reincarnation runs to over 10 million characters, and it can be said that “its narrative has a definite focus and its structure is devoid of such defects as randomly inserted sub-plots. It can be said to

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be the acme of *tanci* ballad works.” As a matter of fact, whilst comparing it to the Western literature, he made special mention of the unique characteristics of *The Karma of Reincarnation*’s phraseology: “The language of *The Karma of Reincarnation* is straight-forward, but when it comes to the narrative, the passion in its language and its seven word lines combine to make a great work.” The text runs to over 10 million words and its beauty compares favorably with the famous epic historical poetry of Greece and India. He argued: “People around the world sing the praises of the Indian, Greek and Western epic poems, yet they do not know that China has her own … *The Karma of Reincarnation*, even though it is an outstanding poem in the epic 7 character line style. It can at the very least stand proudly beside the various epic historical poems from abroad.” He pointed out that, compared with all the literatures in the world, Chinese literature’s “greatest distinguishing feature is its ability to couple phrases and words, rhymes and tones so well.” However, because it is a dualistic language, “it is often rent asunder, with its central arterial thought incapable of convergence.” But the author of *The Karma of Reincarnation* “is ideologically agile and will not be bound by duality and cadence,” and thus Chen Yinke argues that “without freedom of thought there can be no elegant literature,” that “this is an obvious truth, and if people cannot see it then they are impossibly stupid.” It was actually through comparison that Chen Yinke discovered the unique “artistic value” of *The Karma of Reincarnation* and he wrested for this work, which had been deemed “incapable of entering the canon of great literature,” an artistic masterpiece which had been completely snubbed and its extremely talented author almost totally eclipsed, a rightful place in the history of Chinese and global literature.

In sum, Chen Yinke was a giant in the period of the 1930s to 1950s when comparative literature was developing. From beginning to end, he firmly believed: “If we are really able philosophically to craft a system and be creative, then on the one hand we must absorb and import foreign theories whilst on the other never forgetting the status of our own race. These two diametrically opposite yet complimentary attitudes can be seen in the true Daoism spirit and in the old ways of the New Confucians across the two thousand years of the history of contact between the thought of our people and that of the outside world.” 12 This is the type of person who does not merely adopt the work of one individual or one school of thought, but “reason which transcends both time and space” also pervades their work as a whole. As far as they are concerned, “Apart from China, there are nine more continents; apart from the present day, there is [also] the future.” 13 Chen Yinke was the first individual to introduce the theories of the fusion of two cultures into the fabric of a steadily developing world culture.

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2.2 Qian Zhongshu Probes the Differences and Similarities in Cross-Cultural Literature

After the progress of the 1920s, by the 1930s, all scholars who studied Chinese literature agreed that a thorough knowledge of both Chinese and Western literature was necessary in order to achieve innovation in literary research. As Fu Sinian put it: “If you are to research Chinese literature, yet never understand foreign literature, or if you are to document the history of Chinese literature yet have never read any of the history of foreign literature, you will never ever grasp the truth.”

A contemporary of Chen Yinke, Qian Zhongshu established a basis for Chinese comparative literature, approaching it from another angle.

Qian Zhongshu was born into a family of scholars of national history and he was thoroughly versed in Chinese traditional scholarship. As far as Western learning was concerned, he was schooled in two religious middle schools where all of the teaching materials were of foreign origin. His intense interest in Western literature was sparked by Lin Shu’s translations of over one hundred different foreign pieces of fiction. As he recounts: “Those two little trunks containing The Commercial Press’ A Collection of Fiction Translated by Lin Shu was a momentous discovery of mine at age 11 or 12. It introduced me to a completely new world, a world far removed from the world of The Water Margin, Journey to the West or Strange Tales from A Chinese Studio.”

After graduating from middle school, Qian Zhongshu won entry to Tsinghua University where he received four years of systematic nurturing in equal parts of Chinese and foreign literature in the Foreign Languages Department. At the time, Tsinghua’s Foreign Languages Department intentionally directed students to read foreign literature in order to “create China’s new literature,” also encouraging students to “Meld Eastern and Western consciousness and ideology and facilitate mutual exchange and dissemination.”

These nurturing guidelines determined the school’s balanced Sino-Western pedagogical model. In 1933, the 23-year-old Qian Zhongshu graduated from Tsinghua, and in the following two years whilst teaching at Shanghai’s Guanghua University he published a collection of traditional style poems, The Poems of Master Zhongshu, as well as a lengthy essay Tragedy in China’s Classical Drama Canon, which was published in the First Issue of the First Volume of the English monthly T’ien Hsia which had been recently established in Shanghai. Two years later, Qian Zhongshu won a Boxer Indemnity Scholarship and in 1935 made his way to the University of Oxford’s Exeter College to study English Literature. With his thesis, “China in the English Literature of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” he was awarded an Oxford Bachelor’s degree. Following that, he continued his studies at the University of Paris for one year, returning to China in 1938. During his sojourn in England and France, Qian Zhongshu

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14See Fu Sinian’s review of Song-Yuan xiqu shi, which is included as an appendice to Song Yuan xiqu shi, intro. by Ye Changhai (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1998).
personally experienced the quintessence of Western culture and thus enhanced his inside knowledge of that culture.

Having familiarized himself with both Chinese and Western cultures, Qian Zhongshu’s initial foray into scholarly enquiry took the direction of comparative literature. His first scholarly treatise, “Tragedy in China’s Classical Drama Canon” was published in 1935 in the English language Shanghai monthly T'ien Hsia. As has been noted above, by the beginning of the 1930s, comparative literature had already entered the higher education institutions as an academic discipline, however most institutes continued to employ European definitions of comparative literature and its content. It could not yet be seen as true cross-cultural literary research. It can be said that “Tragedy in China’s Classical Drama Canon” constituted the earliest example of real cross-cultural literary research. This treatise exhaustively analyzed the different understandings of the term “tragedy” in the Chinese and European contexts. He conducted a thorough comparison of Shakespeare’s Anthony and Cleopatra and Dryden’s All For Love with Bai Renfu’s Rain on the Paulownia Tree and Hong Sheng’s Immortal Palace and pointed out the considerable similarities between the two [types of tragedy], however such Western-style tragic elements as “sublime grief, a consciousness that ‘Two spirits inhabit my breast’ or how a unilateral virtuousness can lead to an awareness of a general evil” are very seldom mentioned. After the reader has read these works, having invested so much passion in the work, they are engulfed by an intense and helpless feeling of the pain of loss rather than Sinoza’s so-called calm following “a realization of eternal destiny.” In essence, it is a matter of the reader’s or audience’s “individualized ‘empathy’ which has not yet been raised to a higher level of experience.” And in fact “The distinctive features of the structure of these plays intensify the reader experience. Having revealed the principal tragic event, they do not omit to deal with the after-effects of the tragedy. Following the most passionate and deeply painful moment of tragedy, as the curtain slowly falls, so too does the passion and pain subside.” Obviously, it is true that when making a comparison with a completely different body of literature or when he views one type of literature in the light of another literature, Qian Zhongshu manages an analysis of Chinese drama that has never been attempted before and demonstrates how in terms of dramatic performance or poetic artistry, China’s classical opera genres all possess their own unique values. At the same time, Qian Zhongshu pointed out that at the time “There is currently an upsurge in popularity of ancient Chinese literature in the West, and the reaction to ancient Chinese drama is especially intense.” This is because “Readers in the West are fed up with tedious realism and plays about questions that bore people, while Chinese drama offers them a respite from the pressure of constant moral interrogation,” so it is obvious how absolutely vital complementarities and interaction between the literatures of different cultures really is.

From this starting point, Qian Zhongshu reaches an extremely important conclusion in his thesis, a conclusion that can be seen as mandating the future direction of comparative literature in China. He writes:
I have always believed that if the practitioners of comparative literature were able to introduce Chinese classical literature into their research horizon, they would discover many new research materials and this could lead to a major revision of the dogmata critica that Western critics have established. As to those who are engaged in the history of classical Chinese literary criticism, it is especially important to study specific works, because it is only thus that they will come to understand that the materials that classical Chinese critics were presented with are completely different to that which Western critics are dealing with, and also why Chinese critics have not yet adopted some of the prime principles of Western literary criticism, and vice versa. This is our consistent objective in many aspects of our research into Chinese classical literature. In order to augment certain of our esthetic experiences, we must approach foreign literature; and in order to augment others of our esthetic experiences, we need to return to ourselves. Of course, it is unacceptable for us in our literary research to undervalue our own literature, and to refuse to accept the achievements of foreign literature out of a feeling of ‘patriotism’ is even less acceptable.

All of Qian Zhongshu’s works of this period are constructed around these theories. Take for example three essays published in English in The China Critic: “On ‘Old Chinese Poetry’” (1933), “Myth, Nature and Individual” (1934) and “A critical study of Modern Aesthetics” (1934). His Oxford University thesis “China in the English Literature of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century” was also published in June and December 1941 in The China Critic.16 In addition, there are “A Characteristic Feature in Traditional Chinese Literary Criticism” (published in 1937 in Vol. 1, Issue 4 of Wenzue zazhi [Journal of Literature], “Chinese Poetry and Chinese Painting”17 (published in 1940 in the 6th issue of Guoshi yuekan [National Teachers’ Monthly]), “On Chinese poetry” (published on 10th and 14th of December, 1945 in Da Gong Bao, all written in Chinese, as well as “Matteo Ricci and Chinese Society 1551–1610”18 published in the latter part of the 1940s in the English language Philobiblon (June, 1946) and “The ‘Returning home’ metaphor” (March, 1947), etc.

Qian Zhongshu believed that all peoples were interconnected and that literature which reveals humanity is also interconnected, and what he sought was precisely this connecting wen xin or “literary mind.” In “On Chinese Poetry” he labors the fact that there can be “Western qualities” in Chinese poetry and that there can also be “Chinese elements” in Western poetry; perhaps in China, these elements might be “scattered” or “weak” while being “forthrightly and consummately” developed on the Western side—and the opposite can also be the case. Chinese poetry is first and foremost “poetry,” and this attribute is more important than the fact that it is “Chinese.” “Just like a human being, no matter whether Chinese, American, or English, one is always a human being.” And it is precisely for this reason that “when reading foreign poetry, every time you are fortunate enough to meet an old friend in that foreign clime, it will lead you back to [appreciating] the poetry of your

17For English translation see Duncan M. Campbell (trans.), Patchwork, pp. 29–78.
18This is a critical review of R. P. Henri Bernard’s work Le Père Matthieu Ricci et la Société Chinoise de son temps (1551–1610).
own native land.”¹⁹ Using this type of theoretical framework, Qian Zhongshu completed his *On the Art of Poetry* between 1939 and 1942.

The purpose of *On the Art of Poetry* was to “discuss art and assess literature” and it cited “more than one thousand” items from Chinese and foreign literature. In total it “drew from the works of over 500 masters of Western philosophy, aesthetics and literature, from Plato and Aristotle to Kant and Hegel right through to Goethe, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Ingarden.” It included from Western classical literary knowledge and theory right up to such contemporary literary theories as psycho-analysis, formalism, structuralism, new criticism, and included the newly established schools of surrealism, reception aesthetics, deconstructionism and more. The Chinese material included “130 examples” of poetry from various schools across history,²⁰ with all representative works in the history of Chinese poetry included, virtually “without exception.” The range of authors touched on in the work was extremely broad, including both the great and famous as well as a significant number of others who were unfamiliar even to the native reader, clearly demonstrating the “completely unpretentious” nature of Qian Zhongshu’s scholarship. The main theme of the work is as Qian Zhongshu says in the foreword to the first edition: “to extensively adopt books from the two “Wests” so inferences [about foreign culture] can be drawn.” His so-called “examination” includes “textual criticism” and “proof.” Indeed, as he wrote in “Chinese Poetry and Chinese Painting”, scholar research ought first of all to “determine facts,” and then “seek explanations” of which the former is equivalent to “examining” and the latter to “expounding.” The so-called er Xi [two Wests] refers to the Christian “West” and the Sakyamuni Buddhist “West,” or in other words Euro-American and classical Indian works. In this treatise on China’s *shi hua ti* or “remarks on poetry genre” which “probes China’s traditional poetics as its primary aim,” the author draws extensively on the phenomenon of “mutual reflection and inspiration” in the “works of the two Wests” as well as Chinese classical literature, and consequently demonstrates the existence of common literary rules or patterns and thus achieves the aim of “selecting one to refute the many.” In the same preface, Qian Zhongshu reemphasizes the fact that “East or West, psychologically they are the same although physically distant; North or South—there is no difference in their method of explaining the Dao [or Way].” His “North or South” analogy does not mean that we should establish a standard by which a work can be deemed to belong to a certain literary type and thus determine that it is “universally applicable” (because no cultural standard is able to completely divorce itself from the limitations of its own culture), but the challenge is to identify those elements that interconnect all cultures.

Qian Zhongshu believed that no culture was completely homogeneous, nor could it be. He had pointed out that those who were obsessed with discussing

“the distinguishing characteristics of Eastern and Western cultures” often argued that “a certain item represents authentic Eastern-ness, whilst a certain thing represents authentic Western-ness,” however “in fact that object, not only in name but also in reality, is both Eastern and Western.” By way of example, he writes: “For example, in China’s ancient literature there is a bi-xing style poem ‘Vanilla Belle’ which uses the love between a youth and a lass to symbolize the relationship between a prince and his ministers. Those dissolute worthies who are familiar with Western learning argue that this beauty-destroying view of literature and art is in the final analysis a unique product of China’s ancient culture, but in Western religious poetry we can surprisingly find a similar device, except that in that poetry the prince-minister relationship is replaced by the god-man relationship. Western literature from the Middle Ages is especially full of works in this bi-xing style, and Dante is one obvious example.” Qian Zhongshu went on to conclude that the so-called Guo cui or “national treasures” and the Yang huo or “Western goods” are invariably not “special symbols” of Chinese or Western cultures, but are rather like a “Pug-Pekingese cross,” “both Eastern and Western.”

Beginning from this fact of original interconnectedness, Qian Zhongshu argued that the most important method of literary research was to tease out this path of convergence, and especially the path of convergence of Chinese and foreign literature. In other words, we have to penetrate the reality and identify the most fundamental, the most resonant aspects of their shared nucleus. He argued: “As the object of Chinese and Western [literature] is not the same, therefore their theories are different,” but we should not rashly discount the possibility of there being any congruence between the two, “because two different theories can adhere to the one principle.” For example, “Chinese essays speak of ping-ze or level and oblique tones while Western works speak of light and heavy tones; the taboos in Western poetry do not equate to China’s four tones and Eight Tonal Defects, yet both adhere to the principle of tonal harmony, so while they are different, they can be considered equivalent.” In other words, “speaking of level and oblique tones” and “speaking of light and heavy tones,” these two “different theories” in Chinese and Western rhetoric still “conform to the same principle” or “differ in appearance but are one in substance” and therefore we should not conclude that the existence of these two theories demonstrates a “specificity” that shows that Chinese and Western literary criticism is incongruent, nor should they be viewed as anything “specific” or “unique” to Chinese or Western culture. And so in the study of the literature of different cultures, we must not only look for “similarities” but we should also identify their “congruities” or “interconnectedness.” What this kind of “interconnectedness” avoids most assiduously is one-sidedness and mutual isolation. Qian Zhongshu emphasizes the point that we should not be constrained by “temporality” or “spatiality,” but that we should link up the Chinese and foreign, the ancient and

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22 Ibid.
the contemporary. Sometimes we can know the taste of a water body from just one sip because all the water in that body is identical. But sometimes, even from the same river, the water in its headwaters and its lower reaches are different. Therefore, we will always observe in any given period of time the traces of a former era and in that juxtaposition, note the differences and thus find a way to make a link between the two. This is what we call “riding in tandem.” Thus, the so-called da-tong or “making connections” principle not only embodied a transcendence of the China/foreign dichotomy, but it also subsumed a shattering of boundaries between ancient and modern, refined and popular, or words and content. From the standpoint of cross-cultural literary research, “drawing deeply from both China and the West” refers to a “mutual affirmation” and “mutual recognition” of Chinese and Western literature. It takes a huge swathe of real examples from the literature of different cultures and demonstrates the existence of a type of common “literary mind.” As the renowned French scholar of comparative literature, R. Etieemble notes: “Not to have read Journey to the West is just like not having read Tolstoy or Dostoyevsky. And from that to then go on and talk about the theory of fiction is indeed a brave act.” By this Etieemble means that if we only restrict ourselves to the study of the works of fiction of one region (such as western Europe) and do not include the fiction of other regions of the world (including Chinese and Russian fiction) and thereby reach a rounded understanding, then one should not prate about “theory of fiction” because any so-called “theory of fiction” or “literary theory” which is distilled from a reading of just one region’s fiction or literature will always be one-sided and lack any “universal quality” and hence cannot be relied upon. This is also as Claudio Guillen, once director of the faculty of comparative literature at Harvard University, wrote: Debates in general literary theory can be settled only when the two systems of poetry (Chinese and Western) know each other and reflect on each other. “Only when the two great poetic realms (i.e., Chinese and Western poetry) recognize each other and consider each other will the usual grand controversies of literary theory begin to be comprehensively dealt with.”23 The practice of mutual observation or “mutual illumination” between Chinese and Western letters is also a process of “bi-directional elucidation.” On the one hand, it represents a more profound decoding of one culture by another, and at the same time it means a reflection on one’s own culture through the prism of an understanding of another, or deepening one’s understanding of oneself from a different angle. This kind of “bi-directional elucidation” was further developed in his later work entitled Guan zhu bian or Limited Views.

While Qian Zhongshu probed the idea of a common literary mind, he also noted the importance of the differences and distinguishing features of different cultures. His championing of China’s dianningshi shihua or traditional commentary-style remarks on poetry is a case in point. On the one hand, he criticized the Western scholastic tendency to emphasize system and structure and he pointed out the common failing of “theoretical systems” from a variety of angles. Meanwhile, on

23Taken from Ye Weilian, Bijiao wenxue congshu (Taipei: Dongda tushugongsi, 1983).
the other hand, he offered a ringing endorsement of the academic value of “fragmented ideology.” On the Art of Poetry is a modern poetic work completed in the modern academic context in the style of China’s traditional dianping or poetic “commentary.”

In his concluding remarks to “Longfellow’s ‘A Psalm of Life’—the First English Poem Translated into Chinese—and Several Other Related Matters,” Qian Zhongshu raised the issue of the common failing of “theoretical systems,” stating: “History contains many such examples of illogic—as does the present as well of course—or to put it more precisely, instances where historical reality does not accord with the ideals and theories of scholars... Over the course of history, the occurrence and development of things always creates difficulties for us, playing practical jokes on us and overturning all our most cast-iron judgments, besmirching our blueprints and tearing holes, both large and small, in all our most airtight, watertight densely argued theoretical systems.” These “theoretical systems” are invariably constructed by academics according to their own “ideals” and “theories,” but there is an unavoidable gap between “ideals” and reality. As Qian Zhongshu pointed out, “the blueprints that we etch out” are invariably “erased” by historical reality. Many great thinkers’ conceptions of the model of human social development invariably fail to gel with “the rise and development of objects” during the progress of history. There is always a discrepancy between what scholars deduce in “theory” and the actual situation; the incontrovertible rules that they set down are invariably “overthrown” by historical reality.

Unlike this grand scheme, however, shi-hua or “remarks on poetry” is a kind of “fragmented” form of literary criticism, employed by a procession of scholars ever since the Tang Dynasty. Unlike the recent ubiquitous Western research model which emphasized rules and logic, China’s remarks on poetry invariably consisted of several fragments of knowledge that were not directly related or which were not logically connected and are stitched together. Their structure is relatively relaxed and the content is relatively heterogeneous—and the writing style on the whole is relatively undisciplined. And it is for this reason that the myriad of esoteric musings of the writers, their tastes and their inclinations—even their aesthetic predilections and their life interests—could all be genuinely expressed and they approximated more closely people’s lived experience, mirrored more closely the works under review, and thus were more “literary” and more “readable.” Since the dawn of the twentieth century, the Western research model has progressively assumed a mainstream status, and the traditional Chinese literary criticism model has been relegated to the sidelines. In his “Chinese Poetry and Chinese Painting,” Qian Zhongshu argued that “remarks on poetry” was a special form in the world of Chinese letters and that its development not only offered unprecedented potential for the expansion of literary and artistic research, but it was also a rebuttal to the

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24For English translation see Duncan M. Campbell (trans.), Patchwork, pp. 211–246.
26Ibid., pp. 29–78.
“formalist” tendency in literary and artistic research. Concomitantly, “remarks on poetry” paid more attention to “concrete appreciation and appraisal,” or in other words, it placed more emphasis on concrete textual analysis and esthetic evaluation. Qian Zhongshu believed that “remarks on poetry” which “selected sentences for evaluation” and “[Chinese style] commentary” which “was made with direct reference to the text” could complement those critics who lacked a sense of the need for concrete analysis, who “only saw the forest” and “not the trees.”

In fact, Qian Zhongshu had long since noted this gap in the “grand system” of Western culture. As Engels put it: “With all philosophers it is precisely the ‘system’ which is perishable … If one does not loiter here needlessly, but presses on farther into the immense building, one finds innumerable treasures which today still possess undiminished value.” In making a contrast with the western da tixì or “grand system,” Qian Zhongshu amply demonstrated the superiority and distinctive nature of traditional Chinese poetry.

The renaissance of the comparative literature in China was heralded by the publication of Qian Zhongshu’s monumental Limited Views in 1979. Limited Views comprehensively, richly and consummately recognized comparative literature as a “most expansive, most unconstrained” “fringe academic discipline,” a discipline that “could not be completely subsumed by any scientific or literary research system.”

The four volume Limited Views was written during the ten tumultuous years of the Cultural Revolution. The author, in some 781 chapters which were developed around some ten classic works including Zhouyi Zhengyi [The True Meaning of the Book of Changes] and Maoshi Zhengyi [The True Meaning of the Book of Songs], utilizes more than one thousand different works by more than eight hundred foreign scholars and synthesizes more than three thousand Chinese and foreign writers to offer his own personal insights from a life of reading.

The basic premise of the whole work is the steadfast conviction that “the object of every branch of the humanities is interconnected, mutually pervading, not only across national boundaries, but across epochs and threaded through unrelated branches of science.” Qian Zhongshu never ever attempted to impose any man-made/artificial “system” on the objective world, nor would he allow himself to be shackled by any artificial “system.” He thought it futile to expend a huge amount of energy in order to establish some kind of meta-narrative. He believed that “invariably the only thing of value remaining of the whole theoretical system is a few disjointed ideas.” But this was not to deny the absence of discipline. On the contrary, he believed that “for art to be art, then it should be pervaded by logic, and for art to be effective, it must be totally unique” and that the real pleasure in

28“Shi keyi yuan” [Our Sweetest Songs], Wenxue pinglun, Issue 1, 1981.
29Jiuwen sipian, pp. 26–27.
scholarship was to discover those universal principles that “are hidden in the towering peaks and tiniest grains, and which when released, form an expansive landscape.”\textsuperscript{31} The greatest contribution of Limited Views was in its distillation of important common literary principles from the midst of these “peaks and grains” by surveying the ancient and modern and all corners of the globe. In other words, breaking through all manner of scholastic boundaries (be they time, region, science or language) and opening up the whole literary landscape in order to seek out a common “poetic heart” and “literary mind.” Qian Zhongshu believed that this common “poetic heart” and “literary mind” was an objective reality. As he put it, the so-called “similarity between minds is based on the nature of reason, and the nature of reason is based on the law of things, which corresponds to the inherent nature of things.”\textsuperscript{32} Whilst exploring these common principles, he always began with concrete examples of literary phenomena and never simply deduced things. He stressed that “what I am interested in is concrete appreciation and appraisal of literature and art.”\textsuperscript{33} Appreciation and appraisal is the exact opposite of the current dangerous tendency in the world’s comparative literature circles to “not make a judgment” but to simply make pure theoretical deductions. In the process of literary appreciation and appraisal, Qian Zhongshu believed that the most fundamental principle was to stick doggedly to the “actual text” of the piece of literature, and if you were to “Completely abandon what is contained within a poem and seek for things external to it, then it is like ignoring things nearby whilst hoping to obtain something by reaching up to heaven or down to the netherworld—it can be used in historiography or sermonizing but it should not be used in artistic appreciation.”\textsuperscript{34} To his mind, if you are going to “discuss art,” and then you must begin from the actual work itself. If you merely employ some kind of trendy terminology to deliberately mystify the piece, then it will benefit no one. He gave a few examples of a number of contemporary French and American literary critics who misused structuralism, criticizing the theories of such individuals as Julia Kristeva.\textsuperscript{35} But that is certainly not to say that Qian Zhongshu did not value theory. On the contrary, he always strove to cast aside any trivial, peripheral interference in order to grasp the general development trajectory of an object. He advocated that in order to “reduce a complicated scenario into two or three major matters” in order to facilitate “acute foresight,” there must be “an absence of any knots or tangles that could disturb the line of sight”\textsuperscript{36} and only then can the true essence of an object be discovered. For this reason, he argued that the fundamental flaw in Chinese-style commentary was in the fact that it regularly took “minor facets as the focus of their

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid., p. 296.
\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., p. 50.
\textsuperscript{33}\textit{Jiuwen sipian}, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{34}\textit{Guan zhui pian}, p. 110.
\textsuperscript{35}“Qian Zhongshu tan bijiao wenxue he ‘wenxue bijiao’”, \textit{Du Shu}, Issue 10, 1981.
\textsuperscript{36}\textit{Jiuwen sipian}, p. 3.
attention whilst ignoring the main issue of the source of artistic creation.”37 He personally and consistently devoted himself to exploring “the source of artistic creation,” and in addition paid close attention to the numerous new theories emerging abroad. Despite the 10 years of chaos [i.e., the Cultural Revolution 1966–1976] when the nation was in lock-down, whilst writing Limited Views he continued to utilize the latest modern foreign theories wherever possible, theories which ranged across all fields including semantics, semiotics, style, psychology, linguistics, cultural anthropology, the history of ideas, systems theory, physiology, and more.

Not only did Limited Views probe the shared “poetic heart” and “literary mind” of Chinese and Western literature, but it also made an original contribution to all aspects of comparative literature. Because of the limitations on its subject matter, Limited Views did not cover the theories of origin and influence extensively, but it nevertheless did offer some extremely important observations. For example, Qian Zhongshu pointed out: when undertaking research into the subjects of origin and influence, one must avoid “illegitimately claiming a familial connection” at all costs. Because circumstances are complex: “Theories often coincide without any evidence of influence—like the relationship between the theories of Laozi and Zhuang Zi and that of Buddhism.” Therefore one cannot arbitrarily claim that A borrows or learns from B just by their superficial similarities, otherwise one will, like some Qing scholars, claim that Western religion and science are all derived from Mozi and that political canons and national systems derive from the Zhou guan [Civil Service of the Zhou Dynasty].38 When undertaking this research into origins, Qian Zhongshu himself consistently “touched on a subject and left it there” and never forced his conclusions. For example, when discussing the so-called “how Chinese can glimpse a sliver and from this recognize an age” origins of Baudelaire’s prose poetry in “Fleurs du mal—Le Chat” and “Langhuan Ji”39; or how early Western fiction regularly mentioned “taking medicine that induces temporary death, leading to an inevitable reunion of lovers” or how The Tale of Wushuang relates that “the Daoist priest on Mao Mountain has a potion which brings instant death to anyone who takes it and after three days he will come back to life … Liu Wushuang took it.”40 Qian Zhongshu discussed research into influence more rarely, but this does not mean that he attached little importance to it. As he once emphasized: “Comparative literature is research which rises above the scope of the literature of a specific race, and therefore the mutual relations between the literatures of different countries is naturally the domain of comparative literature research … If we wish to develop our own comparative literature research, one of

37 Guan zhi pian, p. 1215.
38 Guan zhi pian, p. 440.
39 Guan zhi pian, p. 816.
40 Guan zhi pian, p. 836.
our important duties is to tidy up the mutual relationship between Chinese and foreign literature.”

Limited Views devotes many pages to so-called “elucidatory research” which used Western literary theories to explain Chinese literary phenomena. Not only did Qian Zhongshu advocate “bi-directional elucidation” (he contemporaneously used Chinese theory to elucidate Western literary works) but he regularly offered incisive criticisms of the mistakes of Western scholars who only superficially expounded Chinese theories. For example, he argued that the Japanese monk Kūkai’s Bunkyō hifuron “is in fact a child’s primer, sufficient for teachers to use to enlighten school pupils.” Or that Westerners often quoted Lu Ji’s (261–303 C.E.) Wenfu or Poetic Exposition on Literature because “the translators are ignorant and in the process, stretch a point ridiculously.”

On the subject of interdisciplinary research, Qian Zhongshu consistently emphasized the “interconnectedness” between the different disciplines and moreover very early pointed out that “we should rely more on the newly emerging branches of science—and especially on psychology and physiology.” In Limited Views he argued that all disciplines used many examples from literature. For example, on page 531 he uses Western psychology’s “association by contiguity” and physiology’s “conditioned reflex” to explain Zhao Family Orphan; or on page 589 he uses aesthetics, rhetoric and Indian Hetuvidyā logic to explain that “the cleverest poetic devices are those of xu (the void/unmentioned) and han (the hidden meaning),” etc.

Limited Views is also the sole work to touch on the question of translating research on media. Qian Zhongshu points out that “there are translations that are fluent but not faithful, but there is never a translation that is not fluent but faithful.” Thus, the highest aim of literary translation is hua (conversion/rendition). If it is possible, despite a difference in literary and linguistic habits, to avoid creating persistent and inappropriate vestiges and to completely preserve the original flavor whilst translating the product of one nation’s literature into that of another, then one could be seen to have entered the realm of hua. “A translation should be faithful to the original such that when it is read, it does not feel like a translation because in its original form, the work will certainly not read as if it had been translated.”

In sum, from any angle, Limited Views can be seen as having forged the path for Chinese comparative literature. In contrast to the “prejudiced and stilted theoretical” direction of current world comparative literature scholarship, this work intimately links concrete Chinese and Western artistic practice and ultimately realizes a common international “literary mind” and “poetic heart” and makes an outstanding and innovative contribution to the development of Sino-Western comparative

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41 Du Shu, op. cit.
42 Guan zhu bian, pp. 1449, 1177.
43 Haiwai chuban jie”, see Xin yue yuekan, Vol. 4, Issue 5.
44 Jiwen sipian, pp. 62–63.
45 Bijiao wenxue yanjiu yiwenji, pp. 198, 206.
literature. If it is true that the discipline of comparative literature demands that one must engage with others’ “capacity for extraordinary ability … and their potential to display even greater originality,” then Qian Zhongshu can be said to have ably displayed this kind of ability and character. If we are to accept that what comparative literature today calls for is more “illustrious exemplars and not abstract methodological formulae,” then Limited Views is just such an “exemplar.”

2.3 Zhu Guangqian—the New Pioneer of Expository Research

Zhu Guangqian was born in Tongcheng County in Anhui Province in 1897. He was a descendant of the great Southern Song philosopher Zhu Xi.

When he was 15 years old, Zhu Guangqian entered his local Western-style school which was implementing the new-style education—the Tongcheng Advanced Elementary School. He only attended for one semester before he moved to the renowned Tongcheng Middle School, a school established by Wu Rulun, grand master of the Tongcheng Faction. Wu Rulun’s aim was to nurture talents capable of bridging and melding the scholarships of China and the West.

In 1918 when he was 21 years old, Zhu Guangqian won a government funded scholarship to study in the Education Faculty of the University of Hong Kong. At HKU he studied English language and literature, pedagogy, biology, and psychology. This period of study of psychology had a tremendous influence on Zhu Guangqian’s academic research in the years that followed. He went on to offer outstanding contributions to the psychology of tragedy and of the literature and art in general, benefitting greatly from his study at this time. Whilst at HKU, Zhu Guangqian’s favorite subject was English literature. Reading Shakespeare’s Hamlet and King Lear, Milton’s Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained, Dickens’ David Copperfield and A Tale of Two Cities and more, he especially admired the English romantic literature as represented by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the pervasive individualist spirit and sense of melancholy and pathos expressed in their works resonating deeply with him. He also developed a deep fascination with philosophy. At the time, Aubrey, who taught him Ethics and who had himself graduated in the Classics from the University of Oxford and was especially fond of classical Greek philosophy, introduced Zhu Guangqian for the first time to Plato and Aristotle. In 1943, Zhu Guangqian wrote “My Memories of HKU after a Quarter of a Century” [Huiyi ershiwu nianqian de Xianggang daxue] in which he stressed the influence of Aubrey on himself, saying: “Thanks to your inspiration, I have often, over the intervening 20 years or more, drawn new inspiration to shore up my existence from Greek literature and art and philosophy.

46Ibid.
I have also learned, to the best of my own feeble abilities, how to try to treasure the value of the spirit.\footnote{Huiyi ershiwu nianqian de Xianggang daxue,\textsuperscript{*} in Zhu Guangqian quanji, Vol. 9, pp. 186–187.}

In 1925 Zhu Guangqian was awarded a government sponsored scholarship from Anhui Province to study abroad in England and entered the Arts Faculty at the University of Edinburgh. He first studied English literature, philosophy, psychology, ancient European history, and the history of art and literature. During his 8 years of study in Europe, he delved deeply into such individuals as Benedetto Croce, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer and Kant and was profoundly influenced by them. He notes: “My first contact with Western literature was via romantic ballads. The fundamental requirement of romanticism is the unfettered extension of the individual emotional imagination” and “In terms of basic world view, romanticism in literature and German idealist philosophy are one … Kant was the primogenitor of German idealist philosophy, and the same can be said of formalist aesthetics. He was also the first to articulate such slogans as transcending utility, passive observation and pure form. Benedetto Croce and his theories were close to Hegel in terms of aesthetics, and more to the point, even closer to Kant … Because of my study of literary and artistic criticism, I first came into contact with Croce, who at the time occupied a commanding position in the world of bourgeois aesthetics, and subsequently I viewed other figures such as Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Henri Bergson through his eyes."\footnote{Wode wenyi sixiang de fandongxing [The reactionary nature of my literary and artistic thought],\textsuperscript{*} in Zhu Guangqian quanji, Vol. 5, p. 15.}

Here Zhu Guangqian systematically traces the origins of the influence of Western thought on himself.

Zhu Guangqian stresses: “All values are developed through the process of comparison.”\footnote{Tan wenxue, wenxue de quwei,\textsuperscript{*} in Zhu Guangqian quanji, Vol. 4, p. 176.} In his work Tan quwei [On Preference], he argues: “Art and literature do not necessarily only has one path to follow. The landscape of the East can only be seen by those travelling East and the Western landscape can only be seen by those travelling West. When the Eastward travelers hear those travelling West praise the Western landscape, they feel they are exaggerating and simultaneously pity them for not having beheld the beauty of the Eastern landscape. And those travelling West treat those travelling East in the same manner. This is so often the case and we should not make a big deal out of it. The ideal traveler would turn West and have a look after they had explored the East and so taste the flavor of both East and West. Only such individuals are qualified to assess the relative merits of both East and West.”\footnote{Wo yu wenxue ji qita, tan quwei,\textsuperscript{*} in Zhu Guangqian quanji, Vol. 3, pp. 346–347.}

He emphasized the fact that the foundation of literary research was zhi [knowing], and that “ignorance of the fundamentals” was tantamount to “spiritual incapacity” and that those who are guilty of such errors lose most of the flavor of life; “Inaccurate knowledge” leads to “substandard delight” or to “spiritual poisoning” and it can also lead to a total corruption of the spirit; “incomplete knowledge”...
means that one’s “tastes are too narrow,” that one has a “lack of vigor.” It’s like “sitting in a well and observing the heavens and accusing the heavens of being too insignificant.” “If we are to cure ourselves of these three types of popular ailments, then the only prescription available is comparison, expanding one’s horizons and deepening one’s consciousness.” Comparison not only brings new knowledge, but it also leads to “mutual validation,” in other words when object B is comprehended then we are able to reassess the value of object A. This is the “bi-directional elucidation” that is frequently discussed today.

Regarding the principles of comparison, Zhu Guangqian stressed that first of all, the object being compared must be understood in all of its aspects. “All theories are just like taking photographs from a variety of angles: sometimes an insignificant part of the object is photographed. If we are obsessed with a certain theory, we will be subject to partiality. In order to understand an object in its entirety, we must compare all of the shots taken from a variety of angles.”

Second, the unique characteristics and everything to do with the object being compared must be respected. “All great poets have their precedents and followers, the so-called ‘line of succession.’ If we only read the works of a certain poet and do not understand his background or his mission, then there is no way we can really understand his contribution. The poetry of every nation has an unbroken lineal life history of its own. It interfuses the accomplishments of all ages and presents them to view. It is a whole, living organism and it possesses a pulse that can be discovered.” To his mind, every successful piece of work has its own unique individuality and even works in the same genre at times differ markedly. For example “A Dream of Red Mansions and Water Margin are both works of fiction, but they differ from normal Western fiction; The Story of the Western Wing and The Swallow’s Message are dramas, but they are different from normal Western drama. If you view Madame Bovary through the prism of A Dream of Red Mansions, or if you look at The Story of the Western Wing through the lens of Romeo and Juliet, you will invariably smother the reality and be unable to recognize the sun.”

Thus, when comparing works, one should not simply judge different works by the same yardstick. The object under comparison must be “thoroughly comprehended and broadly compared.” It must be “meticulously compared” such that the “dissimilar features” and “common literary mind” of the objects under study are identified. And again, Zhu Guangqian further emphasized the mutual corroboration of the literature between differing cultural systems. He took himself as an example, explaining: “I began to dote on Chinese poetry and appreciate its elegance [only] after I had read a few Western poems. From my research into Western poetry I came to understand the artistic quality and skill of poetry and I learned some of the methods some poets used to observe the human world and how they used language. Armed with this knowledge, I looked again at Chinese poetry and I discovered many

new nuances in the poems that I had previously known intimately. When I read some traditional Chinese poetry or treatises on poetry, I silently concurred with the opinion of my forebears and occasionally discovered something that had not yet been spoken of. Such is the lot of the dilettante: if one digs deeply then one is hugely rewarded. Therefore I believe that anyone studying Chinese poetry should begin by reading Western poetry in the original language (poetry cannot be translated). The more Western poetry you read, the more precise, perhaps, will be your understanding of Chinese poetry. Western poetry can act as a mirror in which Chinese poetry can be reflected and one’s self examined.\textsuperscript{54} In fact, Zhu Guangqian here in a relatively clear manner articulates the main principles of comparative literature, i.e., that of mutual recognition, mutual affirmation, and complementarities.

In 1933 Zhu Guangqian completed his first draft of \textit{Shi lun} [On Poetry] in Strasbourg, completing at the same time his graduating thesis “The Psychology of Tragedy,” for which he was awarded his Doctor of Letters. In July of that same year he returned to China, taking up the position of Professor of Western Languages at Peking University. In 1934 and 1935, Zhu Guangqian published such seminal articles on Sino-Western comparative poetics as \textit{Zhong-Xi shi zai qingqushang de bijiao} [A Comparison of the Delights of Chinese and Western Poetry], \textit{Tan quwei} [On Taste], \textit{Changpian shi zai Zhongguo heyi bu fada} [Why Epic Poetry Has Not Developed in China], and \textit{Cong “julishuo” bianhu Zhongguo yishu} [Defending Chinese Art from the Perspective of ‘Distance Theory’].

In “On Poetry—Preface to the Resistance War Edition,” which he completed in 1942, Zhu Guangqian again stressed that: “All values are developed through the process of comparison. If there is no comparison then there is no basis for judging a work’s merits or otherwise. Currently Western poetry and poetic theory has begun to infiltrate China and our materials for comparison are much richer than previously so we should grasp this opportunity and investigate precisely where the good and bad in our poetic composition and theory actually lie and whether the contribution of Westerners can in fact be borrowed.” Under the illumination of Western poetics, \textit{On Poetry} attempts a thorough analysis of these types of comparative social, political and ethico-moral causes. \textit{On Poetry} takes Chinese literature as its focus and comprehensively discusses all aspects such as the origins of poetry, its relationship with allegory, the appeal, and imagery of poetry, the relationship between thoughts and feelings on the one hand and language and text on the other, poetry and prose, poetry and music, or poetry and painting. In sum, Zhu Guangqian’s comparative research on Sino-Western poetics can be said to have the following salient characteristics:

Point 1: It is a highly generalized study which utilizes a multitude of practical examples to minutely examine the similarities and differences between Chinese and Western literary phenomena, very rarely using isolated examples to prove a point. For example, when comparing Chinese and Western romantic poetry, Zhu Guangqian points out: “Most Western poetry which discusses human relationships

\textsuperscript{54} Yanjiu shige de fangfa,” Ibid. Vol. 9, p. 209.
focuses on romantic love. Naturally, many Chinese poems also speak of love, but it does not permit love to eclipse all other human relationships. The affection between friends and the grace and friendship between prince and minster is not a major theme in Western verse, but in Chinese poetry this occupies a comparable status to that of love. If we were to remove the loyalty to their prince and their patriotism and love of their fellow countrymen from Qu Yuan, Du Fu or Lu You, then the quintessence of their poetry would be largely diminished.” Zhu Guangqian argues that romantic love was certainly not as important in China in the past as modern day Chinese people might think and that in Chinese poetry, speaking of friendship was far, far more important than speaking of love. He continues: “In the collections of many poets, works such as dedications, replies, ripostes, or odes invariably occupy the greater part. The friendship between Su Wu and Li Ling, The Seven Jian’an Worthies, Li Bai and Du Fu, Han Yu and Meng Jiao, Su Dongpo and Huang Tingjian, or Nalan Chengde and Gu Zhenguan have from ancient times to the present day been recounted as respected anecdotes whilst among the Western poets, although Goethe and Schiller, Wordsworth and Coleridge, Keats and Shelly or Verlaine and Rimbaud also wrote works declaiming their friendship, nevertheless their collections contain very little beyond poems about the joy of their friendship.”

He also goes on to say: “Most Western love poetry describes the period before marriage and therefore praise of beauty and declarations of love concern the great majority. Chinese love poetry, meanwhile, describe a couple after marriage and hence the best works describe a reluctance to part or lamenting a death. Western love poetry is best at “admiration.” Shakespeare’s sonnets, and Shelly and Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s short poems are the pinnacle of “admiration.” Chinese love poetry, on the other hand, specialize in yuan or angst, including Juan’er [The Cocklebur], Baizhou [The Cypress Boat], Tiaotiao Tianniuxing [The Distant Cowherd Star], or Cao Pi’s Yange xing [Ode to Those Serving in Yan], Liang Xuandi’s Dangfu qiusi fu [Autumn Thoughts on a Floozy] and Li Bai’s Changxiang si [Thinking of my Love], Yuanqing [Resentment] and Chunsi [Spring Thoughts] are all triumphs in “angst.” He concludes that: “Western poets attempt to realize life through love, while Chinese poets invariably only seek to while away life through love. Chinese poets are sober, believing love is simply love. Westerners, on the other hand, are able to rise above it, finding some philosophy of life and religious sentiments in love.” From an artistic perspective, “Western poetry excels in its frankness while Chinese poetry triumphs in its use of euphemism; Western poetry is victorious in its profundity and Chinese poetry in its subtlety; Western poetry is consummate in its detailed narration, while Chinese poetry is adept in its unembellished moment.”

57. Ibid.
multifaceted comparison between the two sides he achieves a mutual recognition whilst at the same time deepening one’s own sense of self-realization.

Point 2: After enumerating different poetic phenomena, Zhu Guangqian does not stop with the phenomenon itself, but goes further and delves deeply into the social, historical, and ethico-moral origins of these differences, and more. For example, on the reasons for the difference between Chinese and Western romantic poetry, Zhu Guangqian made an analysis and pointed out that there are three principal causes: “First of all, whilst Western society superficially acknowledges the state as the foundation, in its essence it emphasizes individualism, and love as the central preoccupation of an individual’s life, hence its comprehensive development such that it eclipses all other human relationships. Chinese society, meanwhile, also superficially acknowledges the family as its foundation, but at its core it stresses virtue and the literati invariably spend the greater part of their lives either in official service or in travel. ‘Late marriage and assignment to distant places’ is common. Their daily contact is not with women, but with colleagues and fellow literati. In reality, the West has been influenced by the chivalry of the medieval knight and the position of women is quite elevated. Their education is also more rounded and in terms of scholarship and inclination they are much more able to get along with men. In China satisfaction is gained through the delight of friends whilst in the West, that same satisfaction is derived from wives and women in general. China has been influenced by Confucian thought and the position of women is comparatively low. The conjugal love between man and wife often arises from ethical considerations and in reality; pleasure derived through like-mindedness is not easily attained. If we add to this the fact that China’s social ideal privileges activities relating to achieving fame, then the practice of ‘hanging off the skirt-tails of the fourth madam’ is a matter of shame in the eyes of a Confucian. So in fact, attitudes toward romantic love differ greatly between East and West. Westerners emphasize romantic love and they boast an adage of ‘love is king.’ Chinese people, meanwhile, stress marriage and play down romantic love and real romantic love is invariably viewed as ‘liaisons in the shrubbery.’ Disappointed and bored, only pessimistic and demoralized individuals are willing to publicly declare their emotion and denounce the world like Sui Yangdi and Li Houzhu.”

Point 3: Whilst comparing Chinese and Western poetry, Zhu Guangqian strenuously avoided bias and the absolute, but it is extremely difficult to sum up succinctly the distinguishing features of a culture or of a certain type of poetry. For example, he pointed out: “Western poetry tends towards determination whilst Chinese poetry tends towards compliance. Western poets naturally love the ocean, raging storms, towering crags and desolate valleys—all daytime prospects. Meanwhile, Chinese poets prefer verdant vistas and sweeping willows, gentle breezes and benign showers, shimmering lakes and radiant mountains—all moonlit scenes.”

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60 Ibid., p. 77.
the whole. Nor could Zhu Guangqian avoid pointing out the limitations of this type of generalized comparison. He wrote: “The West has never lacked poems of tender beauty, and China has never wanted for poems of strident beauty, but tenderness in the West and stridence in China were never their exclusive distinguishing feature.” More importantly, this kind of generalized comparison invariably reveals the subjective attitudes and preconceived ideas of the person making the comparison, and when later scholars revisit the comparison, these attitudes and ideas should be one of the objects of their comparative analysis. For example, Zhu Guangqian reached the following conclusion: “Western poetry is deeper and more sweeping than Chinese poetry because its roots are nurtured by a relatively deeper and more sweeping philosophical and religious tradition. If there were no Plato or Spinoza, there would be no idealism and pantheism as represented by Goethe, Wordsworth or Shelley. If it weren’t for religion, there would be no Greek tragedy, Dante’s Divine Comedy or Milton’s Paradise Lost. Surprisingly, from a barren and desolate soil, China has produced marvels of extraordinary splendor. And although this may be an achievement that is to be lauded, nevertheless, when compared to Western poetry, inadequacy invariably remains. I love Chinese poetry and in terms of charm and subtlety, style and elegance, Western poetry could never compare, but when it comes to depth and grandeur, I have never been able to deny it.” This unavoidably reveals the subjective view and preferences of the comparer, especially how he does not shy away from appraising Chinese literature by taking Western literature as his main subject. Perhaps many are unable to endorse such a conclusion, but whilst attempting a new comparison of Chinese and Western poetry, this assessment itself also becomes an object of research and can still be considered a very valuable point of reference.

Soon after On Poetry appeared, the renowned scholar Zhang Shilu pointed out: “Every article referred to in this work of Zhu’s, every question in the discussion of verse, all employ Western literary and artistic theories in order to cross-reference and make a comparison with China’s traditional theories and to use real Chinese poetic examples for examination and verification purposes. This is already sufficient to demonstrate that this is a necessary method of studying Chinese literature. From another angle, we should not blindly follow all Western theories. We are always able to blend a multitude of theories, adopt the good and reject the bad and from the mix select one of the most relevant theories and use this as an arbiter. Moreover, sometimes in view of the Chinese reality or relying on a traditional Chinese theory we can turn and correct some of the shortcomings in Western theories. This is what we mean by accepting scholarship from abroad and it can be said to be approaching a situation of digestion [of the foreign scholarship].” Recalling Zhu Guangqian’s course on “Literary psychology” at Tsinghua University at the time, Ji Xianlin remarks: “This course was extraordinary. It was my most satisfying course. It was incomparably better than all of those courses convened by professors from England.

61Ibid.
the US, France and Germany… He introduced the literary and artistic theories of all of the foreign countries, at times mentioning several old Chinese poems as examples, in a most natural manner, and we were able to comprehend him immediately. As far as those weird theories are concerned, he certainly was able to make sense of them and I was enthralled by what he said.”

Speaking of Zhu Guangqian’s academic research achievements, Luo Dagang also specifically compliments him saying, “He used a few examples from Chinese literature (mainly poetry) and art (mainly sketching) in order to elucidate the basic concepts of Western aesthetics.” It is obvious, then, that the practice of using new Western literary theories to interpret Chinese literary phenomena was widely accepted at the time. Its function was on the one hand to offer a completely new explanation for preexisting Chinese literary phenomena whilst on the other, making those otherwise “weird” Western theories more easily accepted and understood.

As Zhu Guangqian argued: “In the past, China has only had shihua [remarks on poetry] and not shixue [poetics]. Although Liu Yan and Wenxin diaolong [The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons] is meticulous in its arrangement; still, it does not restrict itself to poetry. Poetry is mostly jottings about random emotions, casually grasped in passing, snippets of words that are pertinent, succinct and cordial. These are its strong points. Its shortcomings, meanwhile, include disorder and frivolity, a lack of structure, at times tending to subjectivism. At times there is an excessive belief in tradition and a lack of scientific spirit and methodology.”

He held that literary criticism was an extremely weak link in the development of Chinese literature. In his work, Zhongguo wenxue zhi weikaipi de lingtu [Unexplored Frontiers in Chinese Literature] written shortly after his arrival in England to study, he pointedly notes: “After being baptized by Western literature, the most important direction for change in our own literature is that of literary criticism. In this regard, we can make use of the more concrete and more thought-provoking elements that it offers.” The aim of establishing a theoretical system for contemporary Chinese literature remained all along an important academic goal for Zhu Guangqian. And of course, such a theoretical system could not be built out of nothing, without any model whatsoever, and hence Western literary theories were an obvious point of reference. Zhu Guangqian chose Benedetto Croce’s “image intuitionism,” not only because it was tremendously popular in Europe at the time, but that it was in agreement with such Chinese theories as “the realm where ‘both the object and the self are abandoned’” or “Calmly observe the world and be at peace, everything is beautiful and at peace with your fellow man.” This type of bidirectional interpretation which introduced Croce’s new theories whilst at the same time deepening and renewing the old understanding of the theory

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of “the object and the self,” did to a certain degree demonstrate the common “poetic heart” and “literary mind” of Chinese and Western literature, and through the process new theories were born.

In order to further elucidate the “object-self” relationship, Zhu Guangqian went on to introduce Ernst Bloch’s “distance theory” and Theodor Lipps’ “Empathy.” Zhu Guangqian points out that distance causes the relationship between the self and an object to change from one of application to one of appreciation. Lipps’ empathetic function transposes the emotion of the subject itself onto an external object, as if the external object experienced/possessed a similar emotion. Zhu Guangqian goes on to argue that “Not only is this empathetic function transposed from the self to the object, but at the same time the transposition occurs from the object to the self. Not only is the individual’s disposition transferred onto the object, but the attitude of the object is absorbed by the self. The act of so-called aesthetic perception is in fact nothing more than the girding of one’s senses, a bi-directional flow of appeal between the object and the self.”

For example, the admiration of an ancient pine … the image of an ancient pine conjures up mental associations of purity and brightness… [and] I unconsciously transposes this spirit of purity and brightness onto the body of the ancient pine, as if the pine originally possessed this characteristic. At the same time, I in turn am unconsciously influenced by this quality of the ancient pine and am uplifted, leading me to imitate its venerable and vigorous habit. So just as the ancient pine morphs into a human being, so too does a human morph into an ancient pine. All genuine experiences of aesthetic perception are like this. They all achieve a unity between the self and an object and in this realm of self-object unity this empathetic function is most readily activated. Obviously on the basis of Lipps’ theory of unidirectional empathy, Zhu Guangqian suggests a two-way exchange between the self and external objects and theories a mutual emotional interaction between the self and an external object. He accepts and elucidates Western literary theory from the intellectual foundation of the traditional Chinese concept of “the self-object unity” (Tianren heyi or Heaven and man are one). Whilst accepting and elucidating this concept, he still queries and revises the Western literary theories that he introduces.

2.4 Stand Firmly on One’s Native Soil and Be Cognizant of the West—Zong Baihua

Zong Baihua was born in 1897 in Anqing in Anhui Province. His father was a progressive hydrologist while his mother had been born into the prominent Fang clan of Tongcheng. Zong Baihua grew up in a household where the new learning and traditional cultural sentiments intertwined and interacted. In 1914 Zong Baihua
studied in the Tongji Medical Workers’ Academy in Shanghai which was run by a German national, studying German and medicine. Disinterested in studying medicine, Zong Baihua began to pay attention to the politics of the day, to questions of ethnicity and the state and to ponder various psychological phenomena. He spent most of his time delving into the philosophy of Zhuang Zi, Kant and Schopenhauer which provided for him an excellent foundation for his later contemplation of aesthetics and literary creation. He once recalled: “Zhuang Zi, Kant, Schopenhauer, Goethe, they all successively appeared on my spiritual horizon, and each of them left an indelible impression on my psychological personality. ‘Look at the world through Schopenhauer’s eyes, live in conformity with the spirit of Goethe’ were my maxims at the time.”68 In 1917, he published his maiden work *Xiaopenghao zhexue dayi* [An Outline of Schopenhauer’s Philosophy] in the Shanghai journal *Bingchen* [The Sun Dragon] in which he discussed Schopenhauer’s philosophical theory of “The Will to Live,” comparing it to the Buddhist “Pure Nirvana,” Laozi’s “Tranquility and non-action” and Jesus’ concept of dedicating oneself to saving the world, concluding that “unbounded sympathy and compassion for all living things is the zenith of morality.”69

In 1920, harboring an ardent desire to “visit Europe and do some research on European culture,” the 23-year-old Zong Baihua embarked on a 5 year adventure as an international student. These 5 years coincided with a period when Germany was experiencing economic depression and cultural reassessment following World War I. Zong Baihua had already in a letter discussed this reassessment and the attendant rise in Sinitic studies. He writes: “After the war, Germany’s academic community experienced a momentous reformation. Although books were expensive, an unending stream of new titles appeared and most prolific among them was a thorough elaboration and debate on the theory of relativity. Next to this was ‘cultural’ criticism. Two famous works were the rage at the time: one was titled *The Decline of the West* and the other, *Travel Diary of a Philosopher*. Both works boldly discussed the collapse of Western civilization and heaped praise on the perceived elegance of Eastern civilization. Currently China is experiencing a kind of movement that is tilted towards Western culture. ‘East and West’ are indeed ‘flowing into one another.’ In this month alone Germany published 45 works introducing Chinese culture. One work discusses Chinese art, another introduces famous Chinese paintings, another translates Chinese fiction (short stories), and yet another translates the poetry of famous Chinese authors (a selection of authors from the ancient airs to the Tang and Song period). Apart from this, Zhuang Zi and Lie Zi have both been translated and there are already five or six editions of Lao Zi in translation (and within the month another new edition will be published). The German people’s interest in Chinese culture is genuinely quite deep.”70

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70 “Zi De jian qi shu,” in Ibid., Vol 1, p. 335.
German people looked to the East in their defeat and began to rise from adversity. This had a huge influence on Zong Baihua.

In 1925, after returning home, Zong Baihua successively taught at Southeast University, Central University and Nanjing University, after which he entered the Philosophy Department of Peking University, where he ran such courses as “Aesthetics”, “Art,” “Metaphysics,” “The Philosophy of Shopenhauer,” “The Philosophy of Nietzsche”, “O. Spengler’s ‘The Decline of the West’”, “The Philosophy of Kant”, “Goethe” and “The Art of the Renaissance.” Zong Baihua universally imbued these courses with the concepts of Sino-Western cultural comparison and promoted the spirit of Sino-Western cultural comparison. For example, in his “Metaphysics” course at Peking University, he discussed the comparison of Chinese and Western philosophy, including such topics as “Some Differences along the Path of Chinese and Western Philosophy,” “Some Differences between Chinese and Western Law” and “The West’s Conceptual World and China’s Symbolic World.”

In the 1930s, Zong Baihua and Zhu Guangqian were both highly successful estheticians and later scholars often put them together or compared them. For example, Li Zehou, in his preface to Aesthetic Ramblings [Meixue sanbu] writes: “Mr Zhu (Guangqian)’s prose and thinking style is inductive/reasoned, whilst Mr Zong (Baihua)’s is emotive; Mr. Zhu leans toward literature while Mr. Zong prefers art; Mr. Zhu is contemporary, Western and scientific whilst Mr. Zong is more classical, Chinese, artistic. Mr. Zhu is a scholar and Mr. Zong is a poet.” This assessment is probably not far off the mark, but even more important is the fact that, as Zhu Guangqian immersed himself in the theories of Western philosophy, he linked it up with a considerable number of phenomena in Chinese literature, and these phenomena amply and consummately corroborated and explained the Western theories that he had espoused and which went on to form his own personal aesthetic view. Meanwhile, Zong Baihua embarked on a quest to develop a new Chinese cultural spirit and to seek a new path from an analysis of Western culture, philosophy and art, formulating in the process a new interpretation of Chinese culture and art. As the renowned poet from Taiwan notes: “Zong Baihua bases himself in a rich retrospective look at the classical oeuvre, on a penetrating exploration of the essence of European literature, accompanied by a reflective pursuit of the quintessence of Chinese culture, enabling him to, in crisply radiant reasoning, boldly hold an illuminating torch to [China’s] traditional literature …”

The fundamental principle in all of Zong Baihua’s academic research was to revitalize China’s spiritual culture. He notes: “Our current duty towards China’s spiritual culture is on the one hand to preserve those mighty, majestic and indelible elements of China’s ancient culture, develop and re-embellish them, whilst on the other, absorb the cream of the West’s new culture, meld and fuse the two, and on

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72 Li Zehou, “Meixue sanbu xu”, in Meixue sanbu (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1981).
the foundation of this East-West cultural congress, build an even more noble, more brilliant spiritual culture that constitutes an example to world culture of the future that avoids the current shortcomings and biases of Eastern and Western cultures.” Zong Baihua’s fundamental starting point was a new modern interpretation of China’s exemplary traditional culture and enables it to form a vital and integral part of a new international cultural construct. This type of interpretation must be undertaken in conjunction with a fusion with the West.

Zong Baihua did not attempt to rebuild a new Chinese cultural spirit from the aspect of a comprehensive social system or an ideology, but from a rejuvenation of a culture, seeking to resolve the spiritual problems of a generation. He began with China’s traditional culture, and especially its art and literature, and probed the unique characteristics of China’s cultural spirit. He also looked at China’s ancient national cultural spirit through the prism of a Western, modern cultural perspective, recognizing its distinctive features, casting aside its failings, and presenting it anew. In 1944, Zong Baihua specifically highlighted the necessity for a modern interpretation of China’s traditional culture and art. He argued: “In history, every step forward has invariably been accompanied by a thorough reevaluation of the past. The genius of Li [Bo] and Du [Fu] derives from their learning from the past. Greece was idolized by the 16th century Renaissance movement while the 19th century romanticists hankered for the middle ages. The new factions of the 20th century in turn seek their inspiration from the simple chaos and naiveté of primitive art. China now stands at a turning point in history. New vistas will certainly unfold and a sympathetic re-appraisal of our old culture is even more imperative.”

He believed that Chinese art was “the centerpiece of the history of Chinese culture and the aspect which has made the greatest international contribution.” He virtually used his whole life’s energy to develop a new interpretation of Chinese art, but remained clear-eyed about his quest at all times. As early as 1919, he noted in his work “China’s Scholars—Engaging—Mediating” [Zhongguo de xuewenjia—goutong—tiaohé] that some negative phenomena could appear in the process of this cultural exposé, one of which was “On encountering a Western theory they invariably first seek a statement amongst China’s ancient scholarship which is able to encapsulate it. And once it is subsumed, it is assumed that the concept is already understood, already conceived of, and that there is no necessity to investigate it further. And if it were to be examined, it would only serve to elucidate the ancient scholarship and to confirm the ancient meaning and thus add still further to our admiration and amazement at the ancients and increase our reverence and our faith in them.” A second negative phenomenon he warned was that we could not assume that “Where great scholars from all different eras and in all different places use similar expressions then they necessarily represent similar concepts,” that each term has its own peculiar meaning and that just because “language or texts incidentally correspond” we cannot “say that the ancients had ‘already foreseen this.’” And third, “there is a huge disparity between the environment and experiences of the ancients

and that which obtains today and academic methodologies differ even more” and that “the ancients’ script has survived and their texts have been handed down through the generations, but their thinking and ideas have not.” We cannot use our current understanding to replace “the concept that the ancients actually had in mind.” In a word, “We must seek truth for truth’s sake and we must not just study Eastern and Western theories with a view to establishing connections and reconciliation.” 75 This quite pointedly warns of the possibility of losing one’s way in the process of exposition and research.

In researching Chinese culture, Zong Baihua spoke most about the integration of poetry, painting and music, and their significance to life. This cannot be separated from the influence of Goethe and romance literature, and especially Henri-Louis Bergsen’s Lebens Philosophie or Philosophy of Life. In his youth he declared: “Bergsen’s creation theory contains a powerful spirit of engagement with the world, a will to create, to evolve. It is eminently suitable to serve as the world view of our young Chinese students.” In Zong Baihua’s eyes, the crux of Bergsen’s creation theory was intuition, which he argued “incorporates the rational elements of intelligence and at the same time transcends the limits of intelligence [to facilitate] spiritual pursuits.” Intuition was a uniquely human characteristic, the ability to “empathize” which takes “life as a whole as its object.” Philosophical knowledge was to “intuitively transform native ability into intelligent concepts,” and not only were the genius creations of poets, but also scientists, largely indebted to this. The thought and inventions of genius mostly stems from this, “perhaps borrowing theories or essays, sketches or artistic works, revealing the truth about the universe to the masses and promoting the evolution of the intelligence and morality of humankind.” Zong Baihua points out that Bergsen focuses on intuition in order to teach people to be aware of our personally experienced feelings. These feelings which are being ‘continually generated’ are the very foundation of his philosophy. 76 When he first introduced Bergsen, Zong Baihua had already elevated the position of intuition in China’s traditional culture from Zhuangzi’s zhigan [intuition] to images of pictures that are often used in Buddhist books.

He believed that Chinese poetry, painting, and music all forged this type of “rhythm of life that is void yet pregnant with potential” by means of the artist’s intuition. For example ‘Du Fu praised his own poetry, saying: ‘At the conclusion, I am able to rise to a state of euphoric obscurity.’ Zhuangzi also noted approvingly that ‘the ancients are abstruse’; the late Ming thinker Fang Mizhi (i.e., Fang Yizhi) gave himself the epithet wudaoren [man devoid of morals], his landscape paintings were steeped in a light mist and he frequently used a blunt brush and avoided direct representation. He often publicly declared to his audience: ‘What do you think this is? This is in fact the ‘void’ of a man devoid of morals!’ 77 This “euphoric obscurity,” this “void” is indeed the most profound hidden reality of Chinese art.

76 “Tan Bogesen ‘Chuanghua lun’ zagan,” Ibid., p. 78.
Zong Baihua writes: “The art of the Greek period introduced such important questions as ‘form,’ ‘harmony,’ ‘the imitation of nature’ and ‘unity in diversity’ into Western aesthetics, ideas that have endured to the present. Since the Renaissance, modern art has further posed such questions as ‘lifelike expression’ and ‘emotive expression.’ Meanwhile, the heart of Chinese art, sketching, has given Chinese aesthetics ‘vivid style,’ ‘pen and ink,’ ‘truth and falsehood/void and substance’ and ‘Yin-Yang, light and dark.’” 

To Zong Baihua’s mind, if we are to say that Greek art is “a defined and tranquil” space, and that modern European art is “a vast and unfathomable space,” then Chinese art alone displays a “profound and silent melding and unity with unbounded nature and the infinite heavens.” What is more, in Chinese sketching, kongbai [blank space] is not the same as kongxu [emptiness] but is rather filled with life and activity, or in Zong Baihua’s words, it is a fact that “humans and space-time dissolve into one, a scene of inexhaustibly vivid style.”

The ancient Chinese theories and views discussed above were imbued with new contemporary meaning precisely through the analogy and contrast afforded by Western theories whereby the distinguishing features of those ancient theories and views were highlighted.

Furthermore, beginning from the Chinese theory of art, Zong Baihua quotes the words of the great painter Shi Tao in saying: “Mountains and rivers ask me to speak on their behalf … the mountains and streams encounter the muse and leave their traces.” This was originally the traditional Chinese argument, but Zong Baihua linked it to the artistic domain debated within Western aesthetics and pointed out that the Western “realm of utility is concerned with profit, the ethical realm is concerned with love, the scholarly realm is concerned with truth and the religious realm is concerned with God” and that the “artistic realm” which was “focused on beauty” was situated between the academic and religious realms and that it takes as its object concrete cosmic life and appreciates and toys with its hue, its order, its rhythm and its harmony in order to peek into the innermost reflections of one’s soul, presenting reality as if it were a void, and creating images as if they were symbols, rendering physical and corporeal mankind’s loftiest spirit. This is what is referred to as the “artistic realm,”” as the Swiss thinker Anuel put it: “a natural landscape is a soul’s domain.”

In other words, mankind’s loftiest spirit must be made physical and corporeal and fashioned into a natural landscape. This is vastly different from China’s “unity of the object and the self” or even its “abandonment of the object and the self.” Shi Wei 诗纬 states: “The poet’s heart encompasses both heaven and earth” while Dong Qichang states: “Poetry inhabits the mountains and streams and the mountains and streams epitomize poetry” and Shi Tao says: “The mountains and streams encounter the muse and leave their traces.” Zong Baihua considers the Western aesthetic “concretization and corpo-realization” of the spirit, and

78 Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 43.
79 Ibid., pp. 44, 45.
reinterpreted China’s theory of painting, pointing out that all artists “use their spirit to illuminate all things and speak on behalf of the mountains and streams. All that he displays is a confluence of subjective life sentiments and objective natural phenomena, creating a lively, vivacious and exquisite, deep and profound site for the soul; this soul realm is precisely the ‘creative concept’ which makes art what it is.” If it were not for his reflection on Western art, Zong Baihua could hardly have discussed this “concept” through the medium of the Western concept of “intuition.” This then bestowed on traditional thought a kind of contemporary significance. Thus what Zong Baihua discussed was no longer an extension of China’s classical aesthetics, but it constituted an historical transformation of China’s classic aesthetics into a modern aesthetics and resulted in the introduction of modern meaning into the classical aesthetics. In other words, it was a kind of modern interpretation.

In this constant comparison of the similarities and differences with Western culture, Zong Baihua offered a new explanation for the spirit of China’s culture in years gone by and he raised this cultural spirit to new heights. For example, he saw in Goethe Western culture’s spirit of unremitting struggle for advancement and he confirmed that Goethe’s art brought to the West a kind of new life sentiment which “affirmed the value of life itself” and demonstrated its vivaciousness; and because this life was one of endless searching and unremitting struggle, careering into fantasy, it led to the tragedy of the restless spirit. In analyzing the “beauty of the common man,” whilst expounding the principle that “The so-called ‘life sentiments’ and ‘cosmic consciousness’ of modern philosophy begins to sprout in the transcendent breast of the common man”81, in the spirit of Goethe, the charm, reach, simplicity and profundity of the everyman that Zong Baihua stressed offered people a new level of understanding of Goethe’s “tragedy of the restless spirit.” Zong Baihua also adopted Nietzsche’s “theory of the two realms of life.” These two realms were symbolized by the two figures of Dionysus (or Bacchus), the god of wine, and Apollo, the sun god. The Dionysian realm involved infatuation and symbolized the exuberance of life while the Apollonian realm involved serenity and symbolized the moderation/ordering of life. The beauty of the everyman incorporated the dual propositions of fulfillment and vacuousness. “Fulfillment” signified life grasping the vigor and grandeur of the universe, while vacuousness hinted at a void waiting to be filled, an emptiness encompassing a plethora of spheres. This is also a fusion of Nietzsche’s “state of intoxication” and “dream state.” “Fulfillment” or “vacuity,” dreams and intoxication—not only was the cadence of the alternate appearance of the two states of being clearly revealed in the beauty of the common man, but it was also demonstrated in the creative concepts of other Chinese artists. The great Yuan painter Huang Zijiu loved to “observe the breaking waves of the raging torrent as it enters the sea,” and whilst the tempest rages, the water is strangely sad and surprisingly unmoved. The Song painter Mi Youren was fascinated by “a monk tip-toeing through a silent room, oblivious of any worries, flowing with the empty void.” Zong Baihua declared: “Huang Zijiu made the

81 Ibid., p. 276.
passion of Dionysius deeply penetrate the motion of the universe and Mi Youren imbued the grandeur of the world with Apollonian serenity to represent the two loftiest spiritual forms of artistic life.”82 Obviously, if it were not for Nietzsche’s “theory of the two realms of life,” then it would be impossible to make such a modern transformation of the subject of the “fulfillment” and “vacuity” subsumed in both the concept of the common man and in Chinese aesthetics. Similarly, as Nietzsche’s “theory of the two realms of life” found expression in the exposition of Chinese art, it was also afforded the opportunity of an enriched interpretation and in the end the thought of modern Western individuals penetrated the heart of Chinese culture whilst at the same time the spirit of Chinese culture became oriented in a new modern context and this multilayered and multifaceted encounter between the ancient and modern, between China and the West achieved a bidirectional exposition.

82 Zhongguo yijing zhi dansheng,” Ibid., p. 364.
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