

Preface I

The first Chinese literary history was *An Outline of the History of Chinese Literature* written by the Russian sinologist V. P. Vasil'ev, published by Petersburg Press in 1880. In 1882, *A Brief History of Ancient Sino Literature* by the Japanese sinologist Suematsu Kentyo (末松谦澄) was published. The first Chinese literary history in the English speaking world was written by Herbert Allen Giles, published in 1901. According to the latest scholarship, the first Chinese literary history by Chinese scholars was *A Dynastic Literary History* written by Dou Shiyong (窦士镛) in 1897 and published in 1906. Giles proclaimed that his *History* was “the first attempt made in any language, including Chinese, to produce a history of Chinese literature.” It can be inferred that these scholars were unaware of others’ work in other countries and that their individual research was representative of their own national scholarships. For example, the research of Dou Shiyong followed the traditional categorization of *jīn, shī, zī, jì* and the format of Chinese poetic criticism, which is different from the work of others such as Giles. After the 1911 Revolution, the traditional mode of scholarship had ceased to be the convention and, instead, Western modes of literary history were gaining ground in the field of Chinese literary historiography. A negative consequence of this development is that it curtailed the Chinese tradition of doing literary history and so increased the obstacles to formulating an independent system. More positively, however, it diversified the perspectives and methodologies of literary historiography, promoting the scale, breadth, and depth of the study and research of Chinese literary history.

From the twentieth century onwards, Western academia in the Arts and Humanities has been characterized by its focus on theoretical issues, awareness of theoretical construction, and the occurrence of new paradigms. These characteristics applied in many subjects alike, so literary historiography was no exception. Consequently, Chinese literary historiography assumed a new mode within a few decades, these being influenced by the underlying historical forces driving transformations in the analytical frameworks used in many scholarly disciplines. On the one hand, Chinese scholars were trying to adjust to Western trends; on the other hand, they were embedded within the confines of Chinese thoughts of

Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism—"literature carrying Tao/morality" ("文以载道"), "poems expressing wills" ("诗言志"), "understanding the writers and their times" ("知人论世"), and "Without a word, as far as dissolute." ("不著一字, 尽得风流") They were struggling and becoming entwined with the new traditions of Western ideas, presenting a dynamic panorama.

Regarding the abundant collection of Chinese literary histories published in the past 100 years, I have assumed that it is worthwhile to do a comparative study from the perspective of the history of literary history. I have accumulated much relevant material from both China and abroad for such a project, but with too many responsibilities, could not spare enough time to proceed with this partial departure from my main area of expertise (that is to say Linguistics and Translation Studies).

Fortunately, among my Ph.D. candidates, I found a young scholar—Min Wang who has taken great interest in Chinese classical literature. Her expertise in this area and her excellent proficiency in English made her a most suitable researcher for this project. Even more fortunately, during her doctoral years, she went to Harvard University to pursue her research as a visiting scholar. With Stephen Owen as her sponsor at the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilization, she met many sinologists and collected abundant first-hand documents in the US. She also had access to the manuscript of *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, then in the process of being published, which brought a new light to her research.

In the process of reviewing and researching the literature, we found the project too vast to be covered in a single dissertation. As work proceeded, the topic was further refined, from what would have been a comparative literary history study, encyclopedic in scale, to a study of the influence of Western paradigms and perspectives on the study of Chinese literary studies crystalizing around the key issues that emerge from this examination of this diverse set of intellectual traditions.

Among these emergent concepts, Min Wang focused on two: the "Cultural Tang"; the notion of "Discursive Communities". These two concepts are central to the reflections of Owen in the field of classical Chinese literature, especially Tang poetry. They characterize his unique perspective. Min Wang applied these concepts to produce a fascinating analysis of two subgenres—"poems of meditations on the past" and "temple visiting poems", subgenres which are rare in Western poetry.

Through detailed theoretical and textual analysis, she argues the need for new understandings of the paradigms employed when "doing" literary historiography. She proposed a trio methodological mode which employs the stylistic, textual, and socio-cultural dimensions. The modes of literary historiography are classified into five aspects—scope, depth, format, scheme (or *figura*), and purpose (or intention). These are her new contributions to literary historiography. She also argued that "The single narrative, teleological history should be replaced by bottom-up non-teleological history." Her investigation of the *alter ego* perspectives of literary historiography identifies a number of theoretical, methodological, and empirical implications for Chinese literary history studies.

Min Wang was well-appraised for her dissertation defense and awarded her Ph.D. She received a grant from the National Humanities and Social Sciences Foundation for her research project in literary history in 2012. Now, the world famous Springer Press is going to publish her book, introducing her research to the Western world. I am writing this preface to express my congratulations.

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Preface II

Call for Writing a New Literary History of Literature in Chinese

Dr. Min Wang's monograph *The Alter Ego Perspectives of Literary Historiography: A Comparative Study of Literary Histories by Stephen Owen and Chinese Scholars* is a pioneering monograph in this field, at least to my knowledge, especially by a young scholar from mainland China. I make such a bold and generous evaluation for several reasons.

First of all, as we all know, in the current age of globalization, serious literature, especially classical literature, is suffering from severe neglect as pop culture and other means of writing such as Internet writing become popular. Today's young people would rather spend more time reading online than sit in the library reading scholarly books or learned journals. Min Wang, though, when she was faced with writing her dissertation, finally made up her mind to focus on a topic in classical literature which would be both time-consuming and written for a small audience. This monograph is an expanded and revised version of her doctoral dissertation.

Second, Min Wang's schooling was transferred from English language and literature to translation of Chinese classics to English during her undergraduate studies and graduate studies, and she, herself, has been teaching English as a foreign language at Shanghai Jiao Tong University for years. However, she chose a very difficult topic for her doctoral dissertation: literary historiography and, more specifically, Stephen Owen's view of literary historiography. That is, she had to have a good grasp of literary historiography not only in the English speaking world, but also in Chinese, the latter of which is especially difficult for an English major in China. Nevertheless, she overcame all these difficulties and finally succeeded in fulfilling her Ph.D. studies and in writing this book.

In view of the above two aspects, I cannot resist writing this short preface to her monograph, as I have seen the entire process of writing this monograph from its very beginning. Also, since literary historiography in comparative and world literature studies is a research interest that I share with Dr. Wang, I would also like to

take the opportunity of writing this preface to express some of my own ideas about this cutting edge topic.

As we know, the writing of literary history, or literary historiography, has become an old topic since the reception theorists and then the New Historicist theorists started to challenge the legitimacy of literary history and to discuss it. In today's era of globalization, however, it may appear that talking about new literary historiography seems to be out of fashion as literary study in the context of globalization appears less and less attractive to literary scholars, but it is still of distinct significance. However, the recent rise of world literature has more or less helped comparative literature and literary study in general to step out of this crisis. In speaking of the globalization of literature and culture, we cannot but reflect on what has happened or is still happening to the current tendency of the English language proper. English as a lingua franca in the present era has been undergoing a sort of splitting or metamorphosis: from one (standard) English into many (indigenous) english(es) as English has become a major world language by means of which different national cultures could produce their own literatures in English or "english." So writing an English literary history today means two things: writing about the historical development of the imperial (British) English literature, and about the historical development of the (international) English literature which is colored with various colonial and postcolonial elements. Through the joint efforts made by scholars in the above fields, international English literature has become a sub-discipline in literary studies.

It is true that almost all the scholars of the humanities are now aware that globalization is not just a contemporary event, but rather a historical process started several centuries ago. In speaking of the globalization in culture, we can say that the process started even earlier. If we cannot deny the fact that writing a literary history in English has long crossed the boundary of nations and countries, then what is the situation of writing a literary history in Chinese? This is what the present book spent much space dealing with in a comparative way. Although there have been numerous books published on Chinese literary history in China, there have so far been few written in English; especially from a comparative perspective. Among all the sinologists, Stephen Owen is one of the most prominent, largely because he both has a profound attainment of classical Chinese literature and a wide perspective on world literature. Through Min Wang's comparative studies of different views on literary historiography, we can see more clearly why Owen stands out in his literary perspectives, especially in his writing of Chinese literary history. Actually, his practice of literary history has rewritten an entire literary culture from a comparative perspective.

In my opinion, as Chinese scholars of literary studies, we should also think of writing a new literary history in the Chinese language. For of all the published books on Chinese literary history, none of them has really touched upon this topic although this is greatly needed in the present era. Since Chinese is also, like English, more and more splitting, from one standard Chinese into many Chinese(s) of indigenous accents and even grammatical rules, it is moving toward a real major world language to be used not only by domestic Chinese people but also by all the

overseas Chinese as well as those non-Chinese speaking people who either take Chinese as their research area or teach it as a foreign language. Similarly, since the end of the 1970s, along with the large-scale Chinese migrations overseas, more and more Chinese people have been writing literary works in this language. If we add to this its frequent use in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Chinese communities in North America, Australia, and Europe, we can find for certain that there will appear excellent literary works deserving of study and inclusion in a new literary history in Chinese. In this way, we can, for the time being, define Chinese literature in two senses: one is the literature produced in China's mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan in Chinese, which is a people's national language, and the other is in the literatures produced overseas in Chinese by writers for whom it is also the mother tongue. In this respect, the study of Chinese literature should surely now include all the literatures written in the Chinese language.

Although what I have said above has not been discussed in this book as it focuses on the classical periods, I still think that this monograph has made itself one of the pioneering books in this field, especially by a domestic Chinese scholar who has conscientiously taken a global view and comparative approach in dealing with the writing of literary history. I sincerely hope that future scholars will build on this so that the writing of a new literary history in Chinese can be realized in the not too distant future.

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A Comparative Study of Literary Histories by Stephen
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