

QIAN ZHONGSHU: A GRANDMASTER IN A FORTRESS BESIEGED

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Qian Zhongshu was one of the greatest contemporary scholars, novelists and men of letters, and he also was one of the great literary comparativists of the world because of his burning wit and formidable erudition. Qian is distinguished among other writers and scholars for his broad understanding of both the Chinese classics and Western literary traditions. This essay discusses Qian Zhongshu's role as a grandmaster who interconnects Chinese and Western cultures. The first part introduces Qian's creative writing before the 1940's. The second part presents Qian's formidable interpretation of Chinese classical literary and artistic traditions in *On the Arts of Poetry* and *Limited Views* and the grand pattern of Qian's works. The third part discusses the influence of Qian's principle of "harmony without uniformity" in Sino-Western intercultural dialogue. All in all, Qian Zhongshu established the great example of comparative culture study of the East and the West.

Key words: Qian Zhongshu, literary interpretation, intercultural dialogue

Qian Zhongshu 钱锺书 (1910 – 1998), styling himself Mocun 字默存, Hao Huaiju 号槐聚, once adopted the pseudonym of Zhongshu Jun 中书君. During his decades-long literary career, Qian contributed a corpus of insightful scholarly works and creative works of literature. The vicissitudes of his life experience do not work against the stretching of his cultural life. On the contrary, he always advanced with sharp vision, and created a profound and unique discursive space with his oeuvre. In it vast phenomena and ideas across Chinese and Western cultural traditions form three-dimensional dialogues in an interactive way, which, in turn, highlight the poetic and literary mind shared by China and the West. Qian's discursive space has reached such profundity and scope in recognizing and elucidating the essence of human culture that he fully deserves the title of a grandmaster in academe and beyond.

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If putting aside his writing of old (traditional) poetry vis-à-vis new (modern) poetry, Qian's creative writing has been completed in the 1940's. His literary creation covers prose, fiction and old poetry, and all of these writings display Qian's self-assured creativity in his younger days. His prose and fiction are sharp-edged, subtle and outpouring, in which he moves with ease between lines to ridicule mercilessly social moods and the literati world, and to philosophize about life. These qualities of Qian's works fully demonstrate his artistry as a man of letters and work to establish his image as a writer. Extensive criticism exists regarding Qian's literary works. Yet I just want to call into focus the fact that, whether in *Writing from the Margins of Life* (写在人生边上), or *Men, Beasts and Ghosts* (人兽鬼), or *Fortress Besieged* (围城),¹ Qian has laid bare his insights into "existential condition" and "human nature" from the margins of life. Thus, cultural positioning and ideological inclinations as manifest in the preface to *Writing from the Margins of Life* constituted the basic spirit of Qian's creative writing all along.

This basic spirit is about his habitual self-positioning so much as an outsider, away from the mainstream, while annotating life at any time. Though *Writing from the Margins of Life*, *Men, Beasts and Ghosts* and *Fortress Besieged* vary in genre, they echo each other, thus achieving a high degree of internal coherence. For instance, the title of *Men, Beasts and Ghosts* is derived from four short stories — "God's Dream" (上帝的梦), "Cat" (猫), "Inspiration" (灵感), "Memorial" (纪念) which contain the images of man, beast, ghost and God. Nevertheless, in the final analysis, this book portrays man, and implies that humanity, barbarity and monstrosity are inter-linked. "God's Dream", written in the form of a fable, reveals the flaws of human nature; "Cat" displays human weakness; "Inspiration" debunks the deep-rooted bad habits of literati by illuminating the married life of Li Jianhou (李建侯) and his wife; "Memorial" illustrates self-teases in life through portraying Manqian's (曼倩) emotional entanglement. Qian probes deeper into human weakness in *Fortress Besieged*: marriage and life are both fortresses besieged. It is the state of siege that is reminiscent of universal human existence, which Qian treats with high intellect.

When situating *Fortress Besieged* in Qian's discursive space and interpreting it with related authorial treatises, we will find out that *Fortress Besieged* unfolds a condition of *Ausweglosigkeit* (impasse).² Hongjian (鸿渐), the name of the male

¹ Cf. HUNTERS, T. *Qian Zhongshu*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982; BENICKÁ, J. "Some Remarks On the Satirical in Qian Zhongshu's Novel *Fortress Besieged*." In *Autumn Floods: Essays in Honour of Marián Gálik*, edited by Raoul D. Findeisen and Robert D. Gassmann, pp. 351 – 61.

² Qian Zhongshu. *Limited Views: Essays On Ideas and Letters* [管锥编], p. 574.

protagonist, springs from *The Book of Changes* (易经), meaning a bird flying about everywhere, from sea to land, from ground to tree tops, and finally to the top of the hill, in the perpetual quest for a nest, a constant searching for home in a volatile situation. Fang Hongjian has achieved nothing abroad, and upon his return, he is no less than a failure in professional, emotional and married life, and ends up wondering alone after his marriage falls apart. Furthermore, he fails to find a solution or a destination, and gets stranded in the state of *Ausweglosigkeit*. Hongjian corresponding to the “fortresses besieged”, bespeaks a feeling of helplessness and compassion concerning life.

This existential predicament may also bring out another situation in life. Under societal and existential pressure, human beings are unable to find a way out, and can do nothing but drift with the wind. Even amongst an ocean of people, one feels solitary and forlorn. How plaintive this scenario is! Springing from there, it is easy for us to catch a glimpse of Qian’s conception of Existentialism and Modernity intricately embedded in *Fortress Besieged*. Qian moves away from the limited perspective of a certain group of “Fang Hongjian’s” into a domain where he unfolds existence of humankind as a whole and reflects on modern life in and beyond the Chinese context. Thus, the mundane roaming life of Fang Hongjian takes on a look of enormous generality and huge symbolic significance. In this way, the confessional strains of the ending make perfect sense.

For Qian, being a scholar and a writer at the same time is to bring into full play talent in different areas. Interrelated as they are, they are not equitable or one and the same, in the form of the so-called scholarly novel (学人小说). To put it differently, Qian probably attempts to bridge the deep rift between scholars and writers, and explores the possibilities of combining his dual identity as a scholar-writer by creative means. The text of *Fortress Besieged*, consciously or unconsciously, draws on Qian’s solid footing in Chinese and Western cultural traditions, but is devoid of pedantic poetry by scholars. Therefore, *Fortress Besieged* is more a typical knowledge-based text than a scholarly novel.

If *Fortress Besieged* is seen as the peak of Qian’s creative writing, then *Discourses on Art* (谈艺录) represents his highest achievement of research in the 1940’s, and the best illustration of how the qualities of “literati” and “scholars” can be mutually complementary and instrumental as in the case of Qian. *On the Arts of Poetry* has paved the way for *Limited Views: Essays on Ideas and Letters* (管锥编) in terms of both profundity and textuality.³ *Discourses on Art* inherits traditional poetry criticism, and making fine analysis reflects Qian’s objective in composing this book. Qian’s individual poetics not only exist within traditional

³ See the excellent treatments under the above title by Ronald Egan published in Cambridge (Mass.) and London by Harvard University Press 1998 and by MOTSCH, Monika. *Mit Bambusrohr und Ahle: Von Qian Zhongshus Guanzhuibian. Zu einer Neubetrachtung Du Fus*. Bern: Peter Lang, 1994.

Chinese criticism, but also in between poetic prose, old sayings, proverbs, and various folk art forms, and even more so in between Chinese and Western cultural traditions in which traditional Chinese criticism is linked up to Western literary theories. All this constitutes the hallmark and the greatest contribution of his scholarly work. *Discourses on Art: Preface* displays the idiosyncratic line of thinking, in the quest for the shared literary mind across Chinese and Western cultural traditions, which forms a necessary access to our understanding of *Discourses on Art* and the rest of Qian's oeuvre.⁴

Discourses on Art, written in the form of traditional reading notes, contains 91 transcripts and 24 additional annotations, and the enlarged version doubles its length. Its content covers a wide range: mostly of poetry alongside other literary genres; extends into other fields of social sciences, with special attention to literature; focuses on the Tang, Ming and Qing dynasties, yet also traces back to the pre-Qin era, in connection with ancient and modern Western culture. This book begins with the formulation of "Tang and Song poetry", and advances with the two parallel threads of "specific artistic appreciation and evaluation"⁵ and studies of Chinese and Western poetics. Qian puts forward ingenious readings of the poems written by Chen Shidao (陈师道, 1053 – 1102), Li He (李贺, 790 – 816), Lu You (陆游, 1125 – 1210), Wang Yuyang (王渔洋, 1634 – 1711), Zhao Oubei (赵瓯北, 1727 – 1814) and others. His comments on Li He have been acclaimed as "among the most incisive studies of Li He".⁶ His interpretation of Li Shangyin's (李商隐) "Jinse" (《锦瑟》) is considered as a poem reviewing another poem, with profound and subtle phraseology and purport. In the wake of systematic studies of such masterly traditional poetic criticism as *Cang Lang's Notes on Poets and Poetry* (沧浪诗话) and *Suiyuan Notes on Poetry* (随园诗话), Qian comes up with his insightful views through his poetic travels between Chinese and Western poetics. For instance, Yan Yu (严羽, fl. 1180 – 1235), well-known literary critic of the Southern Song, is an opinioned literary theorist, but his idea of explicating poetics with Zen (禅) Buddhism has been fiercely criticized. Qian, with his unparalleled command of Chinese and foreign literatures and cultures, reflects on *Cang Lang's Notes on Poets and Poetry* from the perspective of mysticism, and compares Yan Yu's poetics with French Impressionist poetics to point out their common ground, and then affirms the universal significance of Yan's poetics.

⁴ Qian Zhongshu. *Discourses on Art* [Tan yi lu], p. 1.

⁵ Qian Zhongshu. "Chinese Poems and Paintings" [Zhongguo shi yu Zhongguo hua]. In *Seven Patches* [Qi zhui ji], p. 7.

⁶ Jiang Yin. "The Enlightenment About *Discourses on Art*" [Tan yi lu de qishi]. *Literary Heritage* [Wenxue yi chan], No. 4, 1990.

Appreciation of specific poems and research go side by side in *Discourses on Art*, aiming to elaborate on the shared literary and theoretical mind in Chinese and Western theoretical contexts. Therefore, *Discourses on Art* at the same time inherited traditional poetics, introduced various doctrines from the Western cultural context, and integrated modern Western method and theories. Thus, with these efforts, Qian pushed the traditional poetry to its peak. We can say that this book represented the end of traditional Chinese poetry and provided a model for the modern transformation for the Chinese traditional poetry. It should be noted that the first edition of *Discourses on Art* just represented Qian's interim achievement. Only after the publication of *Limited Views* and the enlarged edition did *Discourses on Art* finally acquire its distinctive position, which, along with other works, fuses into Qian's dynamic discursive space.

In the summer of 1949, Qian and his family moved to Beijing from Shanghai. In the early 1950s, as Qian's academic thoughts and psychological state were in the process of accommodating the new social ideology, his main focus was on reading and he rarely engaged in writing. Between 1955 and 1957, backed up by Zheng Zhenduo (郑振铎, 1898 – 1958) and others, Qian compiled *An Annotated Anthology of Song Poems* (宋诗选注) by himself.⁷ While in 1958, Qian published a book review on Qian Zhonglian's (钱仲联) *Interpretation of Han Yu's Poetry Collection* (韩昌黎诗系年集释), in which he focused on issues of editorial work concerning poetry. His two works are obviously linked in a way. In other words, his critique of *Interpretation of Han Yu's Poetry Collection* probably constitutes a yardstick of his pursuit in the process of compiling his *Anthology of Song Poems*. Qian thinks highly of Qian Zhonglian's *Interpretation*, and, simultaneously, he points out deficiencies in four aspects as below. First, though ingeniously and elegantly formulated, some remarks fail to detect the literary mind of the ancient poets. Second, certain contextualization seems superfluous. Third, poems by other poets are quoted to make links and comparisons, but apparently far from enough, for more efforts are needed to establish linkage within Han Yu's *oeuvre* and between Han and other Tang poets. This may help us to single out the musical instrument played by Han Yu (韩愈, 768 – 824) in the symphony or chorus of Tang Poets, to identify his tone and idiosyncratic features. Fourth, Qian Zhonglian only quotes notes and criticism on poets and poetry by

⁷ Qian Zhongshu. *An Annotated Anthology of Song Poems* [Song shi xuan zhu]. Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House, 1958.

more recent critics, but fails to “mediate between them, compromise their differences, condense their wisdom, and refute their errors”.⁸

If these four aspects demonstrate Qian’s conception of annotating poems, then he set the standard of “six not’s” (Liubu, “六不”) in terms of choosing poems. This is his contribution to the choosing of classical prose and poetry, and represents his attitude towards works of poetry from the Song dynasty. Then, the standard of “six not’s” provides a new criterion for *An Annotated Anthology of Song Poems*, in which his selection of poets and poetry vary greatly from earlier critics, with systematic re-positioning of each poet through appreciating and interpreting his works. It should be noted that Qian often integrates choosing and annotating, the process of choosing is also the process of annotating, or that the reason of choosing one specific poem can be found in the annotations he makes. Qian always chooses and annotates a poem after his close and intertextual readings of the poem itself, often in relation to other similar poems. By doing so, he can justify the significance of a certain poet in the history of Song poems, or points out and testifies a general approach introduced in creative writing. For instance, his re-appraisal of Yang Wanli (杨万里, 1127 – 1206), one lesser-known poet among the “Four Great Song Poets”— — You Mao (尤袤, 1127 – 1202), Yang Wanli, Fan Chengda (范成大, 1126 – 1193), and Lu You (陆游, 1125 – 1210) since the Song dynasty, works to reshape the Song poetry canon.

The lengthy preface to *An Annotated Anthology of Song Poems* is a concluding paper after Qian’s years of study of Song poems. Apart from the standard of “six not’s,” from a historical and scientific point of view, Qian (re-)defines the position of Song poems in the history of classical Chinese poetry, and elucidates in-depth on some pertinent theoretical issues. For example, as regards the circumstances and abuses of Song poems, Qian touches upon the relationship between poetry and history, and points out that the idea of ‘poetic history’ is one-sided. In his view, “if poetry is a living thing, history is definitely its skeleton; but if one judges the value of poetry only by the standard of historical authenticity, this is like judging physical beauty modelled by painters and sculptors by X-ray”.⁹ The relationship between poetry and history remains a theoretical issue which Qian is concerned with. The enlarged edition of *Discourses on Art* clearly illustrates his points, and in *Limited Views: Essays on Ideas and Letters* Qian looks further into this issue.

An Annotated Anthology of Song Poems once became the target in the movement of “pulling out the white flag” (拔白旗) after its publication.

⁸ Qian Zhongshu. “Interpretation of Han Yu’s Poetry Collection” [Han Changli shi xi nian ji shi]. *Literary Studies* [Wenxue yanjiu], No. 2, 1958.

⁹ Qian Zhongshu. “Preface.” In *Anthology of Song Poems* [Song shi xuan zhu], p. 4

Newspapers and magazines such as *Literary Studies*, *Du Shu* (读书 Readings), *Guangming ribao* (光明日报 *Guangming Daily*) published a number of articles criticizing this book. Only Xia Chengtao (夏承焘) with his article entitled “How to Evaluate *An Annotated Anthology of Song Poems*” (如何评价《宋诗选注》) fully recognized it as “a rarely fine book”.¹⁰ In fact, even though it was “a rarely fine book”, the *Anthology of Song Poems* inevitably bore the imprint of its age, and mirrored Qian’s academic mentality at the moment. Therefore, 30 years later, Qian regards *An Annotated Anthology of Song Poems* as a “dim and fuzzy bronze mirror of ancient times”.¹¹

During the period of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, Qian’s academic mentality transformed from that of accommodating the ideologies of his time to that of deeper thinking on his own. With remarkable courage and expertise, he began working on his grand project – *Limited Views*. In March 1972, upon his return to Beijing from the cadre school, Qian began to put to pen *Limited Views*, in dire difficulty, from within and without. This book epitomizes Qian’s thought in his final years. And with it, Qian’s discursive space finally takes shape, and rises to a new level. If all of Qian’s previous works is largely confined to discussions of arts and theory, and to the quest for shared poetics across Chinese and Western literatures, then *Limited Views* has already dabbled into cross-cultural studies on the level of cultural ideology, and has launched an overall critique of human culture. In *Limited Views* Qian evaluates ten classics and covers almost every aspect of Chinese culture, while integrating Confucian classics, history, philosophy and literature into one book.

The book *Limited Views* is deep-rooted in Chinese culture and extends far and wide into Western cultures and histories. It is imbued with cross-cultural awareness, which enables the author to explore the shared essence of human culture and dynamic cultural development. The book involves such Western languages as English, Latin, French, German, Italian, Spanish, and embraces the humanities such as literature, historiography, psychology, philosophy and cultural anthropology. Along the line of the “Qian School” (钱学), this book exhibits a great number of innovative ideas contributing to both scholarship and intellectual history. It has no such systematic construction in the manner of Western logical deduction, and instead it dismantles disciplinary barriers between China and the West. All this constitutes the very warp and woof of the “Qian

¹⁰ Xia Chengtao. “How to Evaluate Anthology of Song Poems” [Ruhe pingjia Song shi xuan zhu]. *Guangming Daily* [Guangming ribao], August 2, 1959.

¹¹ Qian Zhongshu. “A Hazy Bronze Mirror” [Mohu de tong jing]. *People’s Daily* [Renmin ribao], March 24, 1988. Cf. Xie Zhixi [解志熙]. “Big Pen and Small Gold Needle” [Da shou bi yu xiao jin zhen]. *The Study of Chinese Language and Literature* [Han yu yan wenxue yanjiu], No. 3, 2010, pp. 94 – 97.

School”. With such an all-encompassing great work, Qian merits the title of the wisest man from the twentieth century in China.

We can sort out the grand pattern of Qian’s works. The first feature lies in his thorough understanding of Chinese classics, culture and thinking. There was an interval of 10 to 20 years between the creation of *Discourses on Art*, *An Annotated Anthology of Song Poems* and that of *Limited Views*, but the first five books of *Limited Views* extend from pre-Qin days to the Tang dynasty, *Discourses on Art* covers the period from the Tang dynasty to the end of the Qing dynasty, and *An Annotated Anthology of Song Poems* links the former two, which develops general understanding of Chinese culture and literature. The second is his broad and deep vision of Western culture and thinking. This is manifested in the short English essays written in his early days, “China in the 17th and 18th century English Literature” (十七十八世纪英国文学中的中国), unpublished “Sensations & Ideas & Thoughts” (感觉·观念·思想), and plentiful paraphrases and citations of Western cultural concepts and poetics in *Limited Views* and *Discourses on Art*. The third is the artistic realm achieved in the fiction, essays and classical poems “written from the margins of life”.

This pattern is highly reminiscent of Qian’s academic goals and pursuit: to interconnect first and foremost the Chinese and Western literature and culture. Qian goes all out to incorporate the strengths of Western literature, theories and culture, in the hope of finding a shared Chinese and Western literary and theoretical mind, as well as generalities of human culture. If we read Qian’s works in relation to hermeneutics, deconstructionism, formalist criticism, comparative literature, psychology, and neo-historicism, we will clearly note lines of influence and parallels of spirit, which demonstrates the modernity and foresight of Qian’s works. And by means of various stances and approaches, he synthesizes Chinese and Western literature and culture, dismantles disciplinary barriers, and carves out his unique discursive space. Second, his research is meant to interconnect various disciplines. According to Qian, the humanities are intermingled and inseparable, and he tries to take all of human history and cultural tradition as his objects for interpretation. Third, there is an aspiration to interconnect creative writing and research.

The discursive space created by means of interconnection is a striking contribution Qian makes to the art of writing and theoretical construction. It is self-evident, self-disciplined, and open-ended, generating enormous possibilities for interpretation. Within the confines of the space, all of his works are interconnected, interwoven, and inseparable. Every single part of Qian’s works can generate new meanings only when it is brought into the whole discursive space, and vice versa. In short, the discursive space thus named refers to Qian’s logical narration across disciplines, theories, culture, and traditions. And

obviously, the mainstay of this discursive space still resides with such scholarly works as *Limited Views*, *On the Art of Poetry* and *Seven Patches*.

From my point of view, the epistemological paradigm of Qian's discursive space is characteristic of a transition from the logical paradigm to the phenomenological paradigm. This is the significance of Qian's discursive space in an epistemological sense. During the second half of the 20th century, human beings have been experiencing a major transformation in epistemology and methodology, from logic to phenomenology. Professor Yue Daiyun (乐黛云, 1931 –) has dealt with this issue on different occasions. She has pointed out that logical paradigm is to abstract specific phenomena into the simplest general forms and finally comes down to the metaphysical logos or the absolute spirit of Georg W. F. Hegel. Herein, every concept can be reduced to a pure ideal form without concrete content, substance and time; every narration can be compressed into an enclosed space, and all processes manifest themselves as a fundamental structure in this fixed space.¹² However, the phenomenological paradigm, above all, treats of specific persons, experiences and phenomena, with special attention to direct research on and narration of the phenomena immediately experienced by the subjects. If logic be the paradigm of formalism, then the phenomenological paradigm is a discursive one.

Though Qian states clearly that “what always interests me is so-called ‘phenomenology’”,¹³ what he means by phenomenology is not that abstruse. The primary meaning of Qian's phenomenology is to break through the abstract and bracketed logical structure and so-called theoretical system, to return to the thing itself or the phenomenon, and to grasp the essence of things. The marked feature of Qian's phenomenological paradigm or discursive paradigm is his broad coverage of cultural phenomena. In Qian's opinion, there is a chain of development behind the multitude of phenomena, or, there are intrinsic links between discursive phenomena. When phenomena are disconnected and dispersed, human beings cannot discover their links. Things reveal itself through analogies and mutual reference. Only by interconnecting isolated discursive phenomena can we develop a chain of notions. The same applies, in particular, to the tracing of literary phenomena. By means of connecting loose ends and separate phenomena, a broader context for understanding and interpreting literary texts is created. Obviously, Qian's phenomenological discursive space is

¹² Yue Daiyun. “Cultural Transformation and the New Development of Comparative Literature” [Wenhua zhuanxing yu bijiao wenxue de xin fazhan]. In *The New Principles of Comparative Literature* [Bijiao wenxue yuanli xinbian], ed. by Yue Daiyun and others. Beijing: Peking University Press, 1998.

¹³ Hu Fanzhu 胡范铸. *Qian Zhongshu's Academic Thoughts* [钱钟书学术思想研究], p. 21.

not meant to simply list phenomena, but to reconstruct them to seek general regularities imbedded in Chinese and Western cultural phenomena.

With regard to epistemology, Qian's discursive space demonstrates a modern transformation from logical paradigm to phenomenological paradigm, which goes beyond disciplinary and cultural borders, constitutes truly interdisciplinary and intercultural approaches, explores the universal literary and theoretical mind as well as cultural rules, and displays marked inclusiveness and integration. This phenomenological line of thinking and its corresponding methodologies constitutes the modern quality of Qian's discursive space, something strikingly new and eye-opening for Chinese Academe.

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Qian keeps claiming to be a “retired person”,¹⁴ but his works always have much to do with the times, society and life. On the one hand, these relationships are reflected in the historical background. On the other hand, they register Qian's reflections on society, history and life. While scrutinizing discursive phenomena all the time across Chinese and Western cultural traditions, Qian never abandons his readings of society and life. He goes beyond his personal stakes and always shows a deep concern for the entire society and life, making his voice heard in a unique way. His works are blended with the reality, Chinese culture and Chinese history, and cannot be separated even for a moment. *Limited Views* in particular, which captures the quintessence of Chinese culture, and simultaneously annotates numerous manifestations of society, history, life and reality. This book is more an intellectual masterpiece than a scholarly work; Qian is more a thinker in the true sense of the word than a scholar; and the space Qian creates is more a thinking space than a discursive space.

Annotating society, history and life in his own way, Qian makes his incisive vision and deep thoughts perceptible, and his discursive space a thinking space in its own right. His thoughts concern not only insights into human affairs and ties, but also probings into the abstract philosophical theories, as well as sharp-edged criticism of the social reality. Qian always abhors the scholars and men of letters who hoodwink and fish for fame. He points out that artistic quality and virtue are both indispensable for one to become a truly successful scholar or writer. Qian also articulates his critical attitude towards the lust for power of the authority.

Certainly, what is immensely striking is Qian's fearless and superb annotating of reality in *Limited Views*. With reason and conscience, Qian sets up a beacon for the people lost in the dark. In a morally corrupt time devoid of conscience, Qian

¹⁴ Shui jing. “Meet Twice with Qian Zhongshu” [Shi qian pao shu za ji liang wu qian shu xian sheng]. In *Study of Qian Zhongshu* [钱钟书研究], p. 325.

remains sensible and critical. Imbued with worldly wisdom, Qian sees the world differently, and holds up the mirror against ancient and modern times. Therefore, his discourse is accessible on such phenomena as “no kindred feelings in politics” and “executing the subjects who have rendered outstanding services in peace and secure ages”, on the phenomenon that “ancient people were shamed of the friendship based on power and influence, and considered inflicting one’s friends as the most mischievous deeds”, and on the phenomena of subjecting one to severe torture or of confessing to false charges under torture documented in “Li Si liezhuan” (李斯列传, A Biography of Lisi).¹⁵ With unusual conscience and courage, Qian stands out as a true scholar, an outstanding representative of the modern intelligentsia.

The dialogic principle of “harmony in diversity” (和而不同) as manifest in Qian’s phenomenological discursive space is highly inspiring for us to consider cross-cultural communication in the age of cultural relativism. The so-called cultural relativism is to weigh up things and ideas in one’s own cultural context, to refuse to pass value judgements by pitting one’s own cultural system against another cultural system, and finally to recognize the reason and value of every culture in its own right. The distinctive feature of Qian’s phenomenological discursive space is to subject cultural and historical phenomena to interpretative activities, which weaves different languages (i.e. Chinese, English, Latin, German, Italian, and Spanish) and disciplines (i.e. literary studies, historiography, psychology, philosophy, and cultural studies) into a coherent whole. Phenomenological ideas and cultural discourses in different contexts and from different cultures occupy their own positions within the discursive space, articulate from their own stances and perspectives, complement and paraphrase each other, thus revealing the common essence of human culture and manifesting the endless development of human culture. Qian’s discursive space is, to a large extent, a cultural one, which accommodates equal exchanges and dialogues between different cultures. In it, various cultures reveal themselves and highlight their own values amidst countless cultural phenomena, typifying the spirit of cultural relativism and the principle of “harmony in diversity”.

The expression “harmony in diversity” is derived from the dialogue between Duke Jing of Qi (齐景公) and Yanzi (晏子), as recorded in *The Twentieth Year of Duke Zhao* from *The Commentary of Mr. Zuo* (Zuo zhuan • Zhao Gong ershi nian, 左传 • 昭公二十年), which constitutes one of the core ideas of traditional Chinese culture. As in the *Discourse on the State of Zheng* from the *Discourse on the States* (Guo yu • Zheng yu, 国语 • 郑语): “Harmony generates things and sameness stifles vitality,” or in *Zilu* from *The Analects of Confucius* (Lun

¹⁵ Qian Zhongshu. *Limited Views: Essays on Ideas and Letters* [Guan zhui bian], p. 350, p. 339, pp. 333 – 334.

yu • Zilu , 论语 • 子路): “As for gentlemen, they are harmonious but unlike; as for little men, they are alike but inharmonious.” In a similar vein, according to Qian Zhongshu, the way of the prince and minister (*junchen zhi dao*, 君臣之道), as formulated in *Cosmological Harmony* from *Guanzi* (*Guanzi • Zhou he*, 管子 • 宙合), is akin to “five notes that sound differently but harmonize, and five tastes that differ in matter but accommodate”. By Qian Zhongshu’s account, “harmony in diversity” is actually a form of cultural relativism, which is a way of examining things and ideas in their own specific cultural contexts, without passing on value judgement of one cultural system on the basis of another, and of acknowledging that each culture exists in its own right and has its own value, with due respect for difference and individuality.

In reality, the principle of “harmony in diversity” is what Qian constantly pursues and believes. Along with his extensive treatises, his discursive space itself also illustrates this principle. For interlocutors from different cultural contexts, ideas of “harmony” and “diversity”, all have their own reason and play a role in establishing this principle. In a similar vein, dialogues between and mutual testimony of different cultural discourses in Qian’s discursive space are neither meant to abolish differences for uniformity, nor to annex one discourse with another, but endeavour to establish equal relationships between them. Qian insists all along that Chinese and Western cultures, various disciplines of the humanities, and high and low genres, all maintain their own value in the dynamic process of dialogues, mutual paraphrases and testimony, while widening the space for negotiation and tolerance, and seeking the most fundamental consensus favourable for their co-existence. With the advent of the age of globalization and post-colonial times, the basic elements of national and cultural identity have been mixed up with those of the other. Only in this context and under this condition can we construct our own identity. The discursive space constructed by Qian in the 1970s already embodies the spirit of cultural relativism and the principle of “diversity”.

In the context of his *oeuvre* Qian Zhongshu crosses boundaries of all types: temporal, spatial, cultural, disciplinary and linguistic, thus constituting a vast and erudite discursive space in phenomenological fashion. In it, phenomenological discourses are disseminated, alongside the quest for the shared literary and theoretical mind across Chinese and Western cultural traditions; there is profound and dialectical wisdom, along with illuminating and piercing critiques, and the theoretical stance of “harmony in diversity”. The ultimate goal of this space is to inquire and interconnect all human cultural discourses. Moreover, whenever integrating different human cultural discourses and ideological phenomena, Qian always articulates Chineseness with modern awareness, and places Chinese culture in the context of the cultural dialogues of the contemporary world, thus letting it speak with “its own” voice and discover “its own” value. Certainly, this

is already a new self in the light of the global cultural context. With his *oeuvre*, Qian interprets cultural discourses and ideological phenomena from China and the whole world in modern terms, and contributes greatly to the development of Chinese culture in the multicultural age as well. With his successful cross-cultural discursive practice, Qian's works constitute a unique and significant link in 20th century Chinese academic history, which work to lift 20th century Chinese academic culture onto a new level and to open up great possibilities for it. Qian is thus worthy of the title as a grandmaster who interconnects Chinese and Western cultures.

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