

My Interdisciplinary Research Journey in Literature

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Abstract: My interdisciplinary research began with literature and cultural studies, examining the characteristics of Chinese and Western literature through a comparative reflection on their cultural similarities and differences, resulting in several monographs and a number of innovative perspectives. I subsequently developed a keen interest in the intersections of literature with religion and philosophy, publishing monographs that present unique perspectives in these areas and contribute distinctive insights to ongoing scholarly debates. I then extended my interdisciplinary research to explore literature's relationship with all other human expression domains, including various arts such as music, painting, theater, and film; humanities disciplines like philosophy, history, ethics, psychology, mythology, and anthropology; social sciences such as sociology, statistics, politics, economics, and law; and interdisciplinary studies involving literature and science, technology, ecology, the environment, geography, and religion. This research has yielded both monographs and interdisciplinary contributions to the Marxist Theory Research and Construction Project (commonly known as Ma Gongcheng) *Introduction to Comparative Literature*, as well as papers specifically addressing the Chinese resources of literary ethics.

Keywords: literature; interdisciplinary studies; academic innovation

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标题：我的文学跨学科研究之路

内容摘要：我的跨学科研究是从文学文化学入手，在比较反省中西文化异同的基础上看取中西文学的特征，并且出版了多部专著，得出很多新颖的观点。后来又对文学与宗教、文学与哲学产生了浓厚的兴趣，并且出版了专著，在学术争鸣中表现了关于文学与宗教、文学与哲学的独到见解。进而将跨学科研究的触角伸向文学与人类的其它一切表现领域，如文学与音乐、绘画、戏剧、影视等各类艺术，文学与哲学、历史、伦理学、心理学、神话学、人类学等人文学科，文学与社会学、统计学、政治、经济学、法学等社会科学学科以及文学与科学技术、生态环境、地理学、文学与宗教的跨学科研究。在这方面既有专著，又有“马工程”《比较文学概论》的跨学科研究，并且还

有专门研究文学伦理学的中国资源的论文。

关键词：文学；跨学科研究；学术创新

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My interdisciplinary research in literature nearly coincided with the start of my career in literary studies. In 1985, I submitted the paper “On Chinese-Western Comparative Literature” to the founding conference of the Chinese Association for Comparative Literature and its first academic symposium. There, I proposed a preliminary framework for interdisciplinary research on literature and culture, emphasizing the profound cultural differences between Chinese and Western contexts. Even analogous literary phenomena could assume distinct roles and significance within their respective cultural structures, which I illustrated with concrete examples. This paper was prominently featured in the May 1986 issue of *Critic* (Taiyuan) and reprinted in its entirety in *Selected Reviews* (Shijiazhuang). Subsequently, I published essays such as “On the Dialogue between Literature and Culture” in issue no. 2 of *Literary Critic* (Jinan) in 1988. Particularly, in “Proposals for Establishing Literary Cultural Criticism,” I sought to construct literary cultural studies as an independent theoretical methodology for literary criticism: “Literary cultural studies is a discipline that examines the relationship between literature and culture, revealing cultural underpinnings through literary phenomena or exploring them from a cultural perspective, or conducting comprehensive research on art in the image era, thus emerging as an interdisciplinary field between literary studies and cultural studies” (“Proposals for Establishing Literary Cultural Criticism” 4). The paper has three backgrounds for constructing literary cultural criticism: first, the Internet and visual media rendered traditional elite literary research strategies obsolete, prompting more scholars to join cultural studies, as exemplified by the Birmingham School; second, the introduction of heterogeneous cultures like those from the East spurred a shift in comparative literature toward comparative cultural studies; third, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the two major blocs of nation-states that had opposed each other and engaged in a Cold War on the basis of political ideology disappeared, and what replaced ideological confrontation was what Huntington called a “clash of civilizations.” The paper further asks: “What is the position and function of literature in human cultural structure? How has it evolved over time?” (“Proposals for Establishing Literary Cultural Criticism” 6) In the same year, I published with Hebei People’s Publishing House the monograph *Tree of Life and Tree of Knowledge: Thematic comparison*

between Chinese and Western Cultures and a co-authored volume, on which I am the first-listed author, *The Spirit of Confucian and the spirit of Christian: A Cross-Cultural Dialogue between China and the West*. As two of the five volumes in the Chinese-Western Comparative Culture Series edited by Professor Yue Daiyun, these works offer an in-depth comparative study of the similarities and differences between Chinese and Western cultures and their relationship to literature. These works were among the earliest comparative cultural publications after China's reform and opening-up, featuring commendations from Professor Ji Xianlin in the series' preface and Yue Daiyun's introduction. The series ultimately included seven volumes, three of which were authored by me. The renowned scholar Sun Jingyao highly praised *Tree of Life and Tree of Knowledge*, noting in a 1993 review in *China University Academic Abstracts* that the work "pointed out a new direction for the future of comparative literature." As it emphasizes both cultural conflicts and integration, predated Samuel Huntington's 1993 formulation of the "clash of civilizations" thesis and his subsequent focus on cultural differences, *Tree of Life and Tree of Knowledge* was reissued twenty years later, in 2010, by Peking University Press.

The series also included another of my monographs, *Cultural Giants and Cultural Conflicts: Lu Xun in the Vortex of Chinese-Western Cultures*, published by Hebei People's Publishing House in 1994. Approaching Lu Xun from the perspective of cultural conflicts and integration between China and the West, this book offers an in-depth analysis of the choices he made and the complexities underlying those choices as a towering figure of modern literature. The second chapter, "Lu Xun's Views on the Comparison between Chinese-Western Cultures," was originally a paper I presented at the 1986 "International Academic Symposium on Lu Xun and Chinese-Western Cultures" and received acclaim. The first chapter, "Modern China's Cultural Conflicts and Lu Xun," and the third chapter, "Lu Xun between Chinese and Western Cultures," meticulously analyzed the shaping of Lu Xun's thought and character by Western culture, the cultural motivations behind his literary choices, the traditional roots of his anti-traditional stance, and his intricate navigation between Chinese and Western literature and culture. After its publication, renowned scholars such as Sun Changxi, Zhu Defa, Long Quanming, Song Jianhua, Huang Jian, Yang Hongcheng, and Fang Chang'an wrote dedicated reviews in newspapers and journals like *People's Daily* (Beijing), *Literary Studies* (Beijing), *Modern Chinese Literature Studies* (Beijing), *Chinese Comparative Literature* (Shanghai), *Lu Xun Research Monthly* (Beijing), and *Chinese Book Review Monthly* (Beijing).

They noted that, from a cross-cultural perspective, the book "builds on

domestic and international Lu Xun scholarship to arrive at a series of fresh and original insights” (Sun 16), and that “Gao Xudong’s strong consciousness of innovation and acute academic vision manifested not only in his rigorous research on many old issues and long-established conclusions in an effort to arrive at fair and persuasive new interpretations, but also in his constant search for new angles and his willingness to tackle difficult problems to fill academic gaps” (Long 330). Naturally, other monographs from my interdisciplinary research in literature also received scholarly acclaim, but space constraints preclude detailed elaboration here. In 2001, the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles publishing House brought out my monograph *Lu Xun Toward the 21st Century*. After critiquing contemporary misinterpretations of Lu Xun by writers like Wang Shuo and Feng Jikai, I further analyzed Lu Xun from a cross-cultural perspective, arguing that he was not a “deity” as they claimed but rather a cultural “demon” marked by negativity. That is to say, once Lu Xun recognized that the operating mode of the Chinese cultural tradition—grounded in affirmation, continuity, and circularity—tended toward tranquility and stasis, he sought to introduce a Byronic and Nietzschean “demonic” force of negation and critique from the West, in order to set China in motion and enable it to enter the family of nations with a posture of “contending with Heaven and resisting vulgar convention.” These cross-cultural case studies of Lu Xun were later collected in Ge Tao’s “Selected Studies on Lu Xun” and published by Anhui University Press in 2013 under the title *Lu Xun in a Cross-Cultural Perspective*. The book is divided into four sections, with the first section “Lu Xun: in the Vortex of Chinese-Western Cultural Collisions” translated into Korean and published in South Korea, essentially a variant of *Cultural Giants and Cultural Conflicts*. Additionally, I conducted cross-cultural studies of other modern Chinese writers, resulting in the 2005 monograph *Liang Shiqiu: Between Classicism and Romanticism* for the “Case Studies in Cross-Cultural Communication” series edited by Professor Yue Daiyun for Beijing Wenchin Press. I argued that Liang Shiqiu bridged Confucianism with Aristotelian poetics and Daoism with Western Romanticism—the former constituting the classical, the latter the romantic—thereby constructing a distinctive framework for cross-cultural comparison.

Beyond authoring monographs as well as advancing my scholarly ideas, I began editing the “New Perspectives in Comparative Literature and Culture Series” for Zhonghua Book Company in 2006, encouraging more scholars to engage in cross-cultural literary research. The renowned scholar Wang Ning contributed *Cultural Translation and Classic Interpretation* to this series. I have also sought to analyze Chinese and Western literatures from a cross-cultural perspective in order to

broaden the comparative methods of parallel studies and interpretive studies, culminating in the monograph *Intercultural Literary Dialogues: New Perspectives in Chinese-Western Comparative Literature and Poetics* within the series. In the “General Preface” of this series of books, I stated: “The *Book of Songs* and Du Fu’s poetry represent the orthodox lineage of Chinese lyrical tradition, fundamentally distinguishing Chinese literature from the Western epic tradition at its inception. Labeling them as ‘realistic works’ would deliberately obscure the characteristics of Chinese classical literature. Therefore, replacing such mechanical application with cross-cultural literary dialogue is an urgent matter” (2). Naturally, if Chinese-Western comparative literature is to function as a cross-cultural literary dialogue, it must begin by seeking a shared vocabulary between the two traditions. Yet as the dialogue deepens, what cross-cultural Chinese and Western literatures reveal are, increasingly, their differences—and even the untranslatability of certain literary and poetic concepts. Thus, integrating Chinese and Western literature and abstracting a genuine “general literature” remains a crucial challenge for cross-cultural Chinese-Western comparative literature. This book explores the commonalities between Chinese and Western literature through the intersection of “historical records” and “epic” concepts, compares “sun literature” and “moon literature” through the lens of national character, and examines the secular nature of Chinese literature versus the religious clarity of Western literature. It analyzes the core dimensions of Chinese and Western literature, including imagination, aesthetic rationality, and tragic spirit, from a cultural perspective. Finally, I approached the subject from two further perspectives—“Western tendencies in the development of Chinese literature” and “Chinese tendencies in the development of Western literature”—thereby bringing together traditional and modern approaches, parallel and influence studies, and envisioning a “higher-level integration” of Chinese and Western literatures. In 2012, Anhui University Press published my *Lectures on Chinese-Western Comparative Cultures*, a work derived from my talks for the “Distinguished Scholars’ Forum” of the Superstar Digital Library. For these lectures, I prepared only outlines rather than full scripts, and the entire book was produced by transcribing and editing the audio recordings of the lectures. Its content continued the comparative paradigm established in *Tree of Life and Tree of Knowledge*, systematically reflecting on the similarities and differences between Chinese and Western cultures and literatures from five dimensions: ethical versus religious, pan-aesthetic versus pan-scientific, the spirit of harmony versus the analytic spirit, cultural character versus cultural development models, yielding many novel and original perspectives. While *Tree of Life and Tree of Knowledge* and *The Spirit of Confucian and the spirit of Christian: A Cross-Cultural Dialogue between*

China and the West critically examined Chinese cultural traditions with Western culture as a reference, *Lectures on Chinese-Western Comparative Cultures*, by contrast, place greater emphasis on promoting the modern value of Chinese cultural traditions within the framework of Sino-Western cultural comparison.

Beyond attempting to construct literary cultural criticism and comparing Chinese and Western literature from a cross-cultural perspective, other interdisciplinary research in literature that attracted my attention at an early stage were the relationships between literature and religion, and between literature and philosophy. My research on literature and religion began with *The Spirit of Confucian and the spirit of Christian*, co-authored with several young faculty members at Shandong University and published in the first issue of Shandong University Journal in 1987, which heralded the 1989 monograph *The Spirit of Confucian and the spirit of Christian: A Cross-Cultural Dialogue between China and the West* (Hebei People's Publishing House). It analyzes the parallels and divergences in the words and deeds of Confucius and Jesus, deploying this contrast to reveal the divergent cultural formations of China and the West. In doing so, I once again brought the keynote of comparative culture into the interdisciplinary study of literature and religion. Liu Xiaofeng's *Salvation and Deliverance* was first published in the late 1980s. I did not agree with the book's basic premises but remained passionate about interdisciplinary research in literature and religion. Thus, the subtitle of my 2004 monograph *Chinese-Western Literature and Philosophy/Religion* (Beijing University Press) was "A Critique of Liu Xiaofeng's Christianization of Chinese Spirit." If I were to write it today, I might adopt a more moderate academic tone to engage Liu Xiaofeng from a cross-disciplinary perspective. However, due to youthful impetuosity, my critique of the revised edition of *Salvation and Deliverance* was overly sharp in tone. The critique appears as Chapter 4 in the second part of my book, titled "A Dialogue with Liu Xiaofeng: Can the Cross Save the World?" and is organized into eight sections: "Liu Xiaofeng's Attempt to Christianize the Chinese Spirit," "The Misreading and Denigration of Qu Yuan and Confucianism in the Name of God," "Erasure Chinese Worldly Goodness with Divine Goodness," "Is Lu Xun a Cold-hearted, malicious Rascal?" "Are Nietzsche and Kafka creations of Dostoevsky?" "Dostoevsky's Greatness Cannot Save Liu Xiaofeng," "Direct and Indirect Practices of Christian Culture in Chinese History," "Integrating Christian Culture Rather than Being Assimilated by it." Before publication, some sections had already appeared in journals, and the entire text was uploaded to the "Cultural Studies" website, sparking heated online debates. Later, Professor Yue Daiyun told me, "There were

many criticisms of you online, and many criticisms of Liu Xiaofeng as well. But after this debate, Liu Xiaofeng's attitude of negating Chinese culture has noticeably moderated." This indicated that Yue Daiyun had also been following this intellectual controversy. Due to the significant academic impact, *Guangming Daily* interviewed me before the book's publication. In response to the reporter's questions, I explained my original intention for engaging Liu Xiaofeng: "When the revised edition of *Salvation and Deliverance* was published in 2001, it could be said that, wielding the God of Jesus as he understood it like a dagger, Liu Xiaofeng struck down everything in his path-Buddha when encountering Buddha, the ancestors when encountering the ancestors. Confucius, Zhuangzi, QuYuan, Tao Yuanming-figures embodying the ancient spirit of Chinese culture- and even Lu Xun, who represents its modern spirit, were all metaphorically executed. It was as if only Christianity could redeem the spirit of the Chinese people." This interview was reprinted in its entirety by *Xinhua Digest* and other publications. After the book's publication, *Journal of Peking University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*, *China Reading Weekly*, and other periodicals highly praised it, while *China Book Review* published three debate-oriented articles and noted in its "Editor's Introduction" and "Editor's Note" that: "Comparisons between Confucian 'pleasure-oriented culture' and Christian 'sin-consciousness culture' have sparked debates in the Chinese academia, with Mr.Liu Xiaofeng and Mr.Gao Xudong as the representative figures" ("Editor's note" 23). The book also attracted international scholarly attention; Fredrik Fallman of Stockholm University in Sweden cited its arguments at the earliest opportunity in his doctoral dissertation, "Redemption and Modernity," making it one of the first foreign works to engage with the book.¹ However, people often noticed only the differences between Liu Xiaofeng and me, without recognizing the points on which we actually agreed regarding Christianity's profound influence in shaping Western culture. My disagreement lay solely in his attempt to extend this role directly into the Chinese context. Moreover, the dialogue with Liu Xiaofeng overshadowed the book's interdisciplinary contributions to literature and religion. The book argues that Christianity's influence on Western literature is unparalleled; Even though Romantic poets such as Byron and Shelley and the philosopher-poet Nietzsche railed fiercely against Christianity, they remained products of a Christian cultural sphere. In contrast, religion plays a far less significant role in Chinese culture and literature. Chinese culture is primarily ethical and aesthetic at the elite level and ethical and religious at the popular level. Consequently, the mainstream traditions of Chinese

1 See Fredrik Fällman, *Salvation and Modernity: Intellectuals and Faith in Contemporary China*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2008, 114, footnote 16.

poetry and prose were shaped primarily by Confucianism and Daoism, while religion exerted a somewhat greater influence on the folk literature of the lower classes. The storytelling novels originating from entertainment venues (勾栏瓦舍) are often infused with religious elements. In *Journey to the West*, neither the Jade Emperor (representing Confucian authority) nor the Supreme Lord Lao (representing Daoism) is able to subdue Sun Wukong, yet Sun Wukong cannot escape from the palm of Buddha Tathāgata—an episode that illustrates Buddhism’s boundless power. In the end, Sun Wukong follows the Monk Tripitaka to the Western Heaven in search of the Buddhist scriptures. Similarly, in *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, the sinner lost in the sea of carnal desire ultimately seeks salvation through Buddhism, exemplified by the Chan master Pu Jing guiding Xiao Ge (Ximen Qing’s son) into monastic life to atone for Ximen Qing’s indulgence. *Dream of the Red Chamber* situates Baoyu in an environment of luxury and comfort, yet he remains profoundly tormented and eventually becomes a monk. The novel’s alternate title, *The Record of a Passionate Monk*, further underscores the extent to which Buddhist thought shapes its underlying ideology.

In fact, *Chinese-Western Literature, Philosophy, and Religion* constitutes not only an interdisciplinary examination of literature and religion but also of literature and philosophy. My earliest engagement with literature-philosophy interdisciplinary research dates back to a graduate course assignment on “Modern Intellectual History,” which was later published as an article titled “The Influence of Yan Fu’s Philosophical Epistemology on Lu Xun” in the *Journal of Liaocheng Teachers College*, no.1(1986). When the Chinese Association for Comparative Literature Teaching Research was established in 1995 with Chen Dun as president, he collaborated with vice presidents Sun Jingyao and Xie Tianzhen to edit the *Comparative Literature* textbook, assembling a team of leading scholars including Professor Yue Daiyun. I was commissioned to write the chapter on “Literature and Philosophy” for the textbook. Upon publication, several chapters—including the one I authored—received high praise from Professor Jia Zhifang, a senior scholar at Fudan University. For many years thereafter, this textbook remained among the most widely adopted in China. I subsequently leveraged this accomplishment to apply for and was awarded a Ministry of Education project on new perspectives on literature and philosophy. The second part of *Chinese-Western Literature, Philosophy, and Religion* focuses on literature and religion, while the first part, “Interdisciplinary and Cross-Cultural Studies of Literature and Philosophy: New Perspectives in Comparative Literature,” represents the culmination of this project initiated in the 1990s. Chapter 1 offers an overview of comparative literature-

philosophy studies, critically examining perspectives from both Chinese and Western scholars. Chapter 2, titled “Literature and Philosophy,” comprises three sections: the relationship between the birth and development of comparative literature and philosophy; thematics and philosophy; and comparative poetics and philosophy. Chapter 3, titled “The Interpenetration of Literature and Philosophy,” also contains three sections: the influx of philosophy into literature; the literary expression of philosophical ideas; and the points of convergence between literature and philosophy. Chapter 4 investigates the relationship between literature and philosophy in Chinese and Western cultures, including the transformations of literature and philosophy within Western culture, and the relationship between literature and philosophy within Chinese culture. This work constitutes the first comprehensive and systematic reflection on literature and philosophy within the Chinese academic context, presenting numerous novel and distinctive arguments. Previous studies on literature-philosophy relations primarily emphasized literature’s representation of philosophy and philosophy’s influence on literature. However, this monograph also analyzes literature’s impact on philosophy—such as the formative impact of poetry and music on Confucius, as well as Nietzsche’s intense intellectual engagement with Byron. Even within the global academic landscape, this work demonstrates remarkable innovation: Although Western scholars began examining literature-philosophy relationships relatively early, their research almost exclusively focused on these dynamics within Western culture, without extending beyond its boundaries. In contrast, this study situates literature-philosophy research within the context of Chinese and Western cultures, systematically integrating interdisciplinary research into cross-cultural frameworks.

Since then, I have developed an inextricable connection with interdisciplinary research. In 2009, I was appointed Chief Expert for the Ministry of Education’s *Marxist Theory Research and Construction Project* (commonly known as “Ma Gongcheng” 马工程) volume on *Introduction to Comparative Literature*. Although I was concurrently planning and editing *A Practical Guide to Comparative Literature* (published in 2011 by Peking University Press), the compilation team for *Introduction to Comparative Literature* brought together the most eminent comparative literature specialists. I was again responsible for the chapter on “Interdisciplinary Research.” After the publication of *Ma Gongcheng Introduction to Comparative Literature* by Higher Education Press (Beijing) in 2015, I began editing the series “Basic Categories and Classical Texts in Comparative Literature” for Peking University Press in 2017. This series covers fundamental comparative literature categories including influence studies, parallel studies, interdisciplinary research, comparative poetics, and world

literature. The “classical texts” portion of each volume compiles all available Chinese and English reference materials for each category. Among the initial publications in this series were my monograph *Interdisciplinary Research* and my co-authored work *Parallel Studies and World Literature*.

Interdisciplinary Research comprehensively compares literature with virtually all other domains of human expression. The introduction surveys the historical development, current status, and future prospects of interdisciplinary studies in comparative literature. Chapter 1, “Literature and Art,” contains four sections addressing literature and music, literature and painting, literature and theater, and literature and film/television. Chapter 2, “Literature and the Humanities,” comprises five sections: literature and philosophy, literature and history, literature and ethics, literature and psychology, and literature with mythology and anthropology. Chapter 3, “Literature and Social Sciences,” includes sections on literary sociology/statistics, literature and politics, literature and economics, and literature and law. Chapter 4 examines literature and science/technology; Chapter 5 explores literature and the ecological environment; and Chapter 6 focuses on literature and religion. This classification system presents inherent challenges; for instance, placing literature and philosophy under the “Literature and Humanities” umbrella may provoke questions: Does the philosophy of science belong to the humanities? Strictly speaking, the philosophy of science should be categorized under sciences rather than humanities, yet it has traditionally remained disconnected from literature. Ludwig Wittgenstein, for instance, excluded aesthetics and ethics from the domain of scientific language analysis. From this perspective, situating it under “Literature and Humanities” remains methodologically justifiable. While ecological literature and ecocriticism belong to humanities disciplines, ecological environment studies in universities are classified under science and engineering rather than liberal arts. Regarding literature and religion, their positions vary dramatically across different cultural contexts. In cultures where religion forms the foundational framework, religion often essentially embodies cultural expression—T.S. Eliot famously asserted that “Christianity is culture.” However, in China—where culture is grounded not in religion but in ethics and aesthetics—such a claim could never win acceptance; religion in the Chinese context even emerged later than literature itself, which in part explains why it merits an independent chapter.

The scholarly innovations of *Interdisciplinary Research* are particularly noteworthy. In Section 2 of Chapter 1, “Literature and Painting,” the Western dichotomy framing poetry as temporal art and painting as spatial art is upended when viewed through a Chinese aesthetic lens when examined through the lens of the

Chinese context, where poetry manifests spatial characteristics. This phenomenon is of course related to the divergence between the long-epic tradition inaugurated by the *Homeric epics* and the concise lyrical tradition inaugurated by the *Book of Songs*, but it is even more fundamentally the result of a conscious aesthetic pursuit on the part of Chinese poets themselves. In Section 4 of Chapter 2, “Literature and Psychology,” a paradox emerges, behaviorism and other scientifically-oriented psychological approaches primarily investigate peripheral aspects of human psychology—sensations, perceptions, conditioned reflexes—that fundamentally cannot penetrate the mysterious depths of the rich and complex human psyche. Meanwhile, psychological schools like psychoanalysis, which delve into the hidden abysses of human psychology, are deemed unscientific and instead fall under the purview of aesthetics. Although Freud claimed to study the unconscious scientifically, behaviorist psychology considered even the “introspection method” of experimental psychology to be an unscientific fabrication, let alone Freud’s “talking cure.” Nevertheless, psychoanalysis has profoundly influenced literary movements such as stream of consciousness and surrealism. Furthermore, the analysis identifies internal contradictions in Freudian literary criticism: the paradigm proposed in *Creative Writers and Daydreaming* can only adequately interpret popular bestsellers but fails to illuminate masterpieces like *Hamlet*. Without confronting this contradiction, Freud nevertheless applied the Oedipus complex to explain works like *Hamlet*, resulting in dualistic critical standards. In Section 3 of Chapter 3, “Literature and Economics” observes that Marx, who emphasized material conditions and economic foundations, argued in both *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* and *Capital* that ancient Greek society with its low material production could create unsurpassable artistic models, whereas scientific development caused such great art to disappear (e.g., the invention of lightning rods eliminated myths of thunder gods). Conversely, capitalist societies that experienced rapid productivity growth became antagonistic toward poetry and art. Comparing Marx’s perspective on art and economics with the Chinese poetic theory that “poetry emerges from adversity” reveals striking similarities despite their underlying differences. Chapter 5 “Literature and the Ecological Environment” posits that ecocriticism will subvert established literary critical standards, leading to a much higher evaluation of Chinese literature. In my view, Western culture is fundamentally rooted in religion and science, while Chinese culture is built on ethics and aesthetics. Why is it, then, that Chinese literary criticism, despite this aesthetic foundation, tends to value Chinese literature less highly than Western literature? The crux lies in traditional critical standards prioritizing ideological depth over aesthetic excellence. Chinese poetry surpasses

Western literature in aesthetic refinement but falls considerably short in philosophical substance when compared to works like the *Divine Comedy* or *Faust*. In terms of artistic style, the subversive potential of ecocriticism is equally significant. Joseph W. Meeker's *The Comedy of Survival: Literary Ecology and a Play Ethic* challenges the Western tradition of venerating tragedy while disparaging comedy. Meeker contends that tragedy depicts insurmountable conflicts, which contradicts the ethos of ecological conservation. Comedy, in contrast, highlights the harmonious integration of all elements, swiftly resolving any disruptions to restore wholeness, in accordance with an ecological principle of universal equality. This reorientation would elevate the status of Chinese literature, since the exaltation of tragedy has always characterized the Western tradition. Chinese literature is notably deficient in tragic spirit; Zhu Guangqian observed in *The Psychology of Tragedy*: "Drama in China is almost synonymous with comedy; over five hundred Yuan dramas contain not a single true tragedy" (*The Psychology of Tragedy*, 218). If I were to detail the innovative aspects of every section, it would require considerable length. I have therefore selected one section from each chapter to illustrate the novelty of this work.

My achievements in interdisciplinary research have, in turn, contributed to the academic development of the *Ma Gongcheng Introduction to Comparative Literature*. With the recently published third edition, this textbook not only incorporates all the categories analyzed in *Interdisciplinary Research* but also adds literature and geography. Moreover, it expands the "Literature and Science Technology" section to include relationships between literature, literary studies and big data, information technology, virtual technology, the internet, blockchain, genetic engineering, and artificial intelligence, making it the most comprehensive comparative literature textbook on interdisciplinary studies I have encountered globally.

I have also attempted to conduct in-depth academic analyses of specific interdisciplinary domains. My collaborative article with Chen Ruiqi, "From Classical to Modern: Chinese Resources in Literary Ethics," published in the *Journal of Central China Normal University* (Wuhan, 2022, Issue 4), was quickly abstracted by *China University Academic Abstracts* and reprinted by the Renmin University Copying Materials *Literary Theory*. The article poses a thought-provoking question: traditional Chinese culture is characterized by the ethical orientation of Confucianism, why was literary ethics not proposed by scholars of classical Chinese literature but rather by scholars focusing on foreign literature? The authors suggest that scholars engaged with foreign literature interact more frequently with overseas academics, tend to be more intellectually active, and recognize that adopting new critical methods—akin to foreign scholars—is hardly an impossible task. The article

fully affirms the outstanding contribution of the proposer Nie Zhenzhao¹: “Ethical literary criticism, an academic framework developed over decades by Chinese scholars led by Nie Zhenzhao serves as a significant bridge for bringing Chinese literary criticism onto the global stage, and constitutes a vital resource for achieving cultural confidence and advancing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” (116). Building upon this foundation, the article proposes that current constructions of ethical literary criticism systems should particularly emphasize Chinese resources ranging from Confucian ethical literary criticism to Liang Shiqiu’s modern ethical criticism, providing substantial evidence illustrating the complex relationship between classical Chinese literature and ethical morality. It further argues:

In terms of breadth, ethical literary criticism should not remain confined to analyzing foreign writers and literary works but should expand into multiple domains including classical Chinese literature and modern Chinese literature. As noted above, most classical Chinese literary works reflect the Confucian ethical tradition in both their themes and connotations; most existing criticism and research are also fundamentally rooted in ethical perspectives. In terms of depth, literary ethics should not merely function as ‘moral indoctrination’ or ‘ethical enlightenment,’ but should probe deeper ethical motivations and moral conscience embedded within literary works. (116)

In conclusion, my interdisciplinary research began with literary cultural studies, examining the characteristics of Chinese and Western literature through comparative reflection on cultural similarities and differences. I later developed keen interest in the intersections of literature with religion and philosophy, presenting distinctive perspectives in academic debates. Subsequently, I extended the reach of interdisciplinary research to embrace all domains of human expression intersecting with literature—including various arts (music, painting, theater, film/television), humanities disciplines (philosophy, history, ethics, psychology, mythology, anthropology), social sciences (sociology, statistics, politics, economics, law), and cross-disciplinary studies involving literature and science/technology, the ecological environment, and geography. I aspire to devote my remaining years to the dedicated and diligent pursuit of interdisciplinary literary research.

1 For more information on ethical literary criticism, please refer to the following articles: Nie Zhenzhao, “Ethical Literary Criticism: A Basic Theory,” *Forum for World Literature Studies* 2 (2021): 189-207; Nie Zhenzhao, “Ethical Literary Criticism: Sphinx Factor and Ethical Selection,” *Forum for World Literature Studies* 3 (2021): 383-398.

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