

Linking Ancient and Contemporary

Continuities and Discontinuities in Chinese Literature

edited by Tiziana Lippiello, Chen Yuehong 陈跃红 and Maddalena Barenghi

Introduction

Tiziana Lippiello, Chen Yuehong 陈跃红 and Maddalena Barenghi

The volume *Linking Ancient and Contemporary: Continuities and Discontinuities in Chinese Literature* reflects the desire and attempt to put side by side, compare and integrate different approaches to Chinese literature, ranging from classical to modern and contemporary literature. The volume is divided into four parts: 1. *Pre-modern and Modern Literature*; 2. *Contemporary Literature*; 3. *Poetry and Theatre*; 4. *Language and Political Discourse*.

The general topic of this collection of essays has been chosen moving from two premises. The first is that China, as most Chinese nowadays are proud to affirm, has a 'five thousand year history': that is, a strong link of continuity is perceived between China's ancient traditional heritage and the present, modernized China; the second is that, undoubtedly, no other cultural medium more than literature has ever been able to shape the Chinese cultural identity and to convey cultural continuity through the processes of historical change.

However, it goes without saying that, in its long history, and especially since its first encounter with 'modernity', China has undergone a great number of political, economic, social and cultural upheavals. In modern times, traditional Chinese cultural, intellectual and literary values have been repeatedly criticized and rejected, although they often resurfaced in many different ways, and have repeatedly been reinterpreted and reworked in order to stabilize the identity of a rapidly transforming China.

The volume aims at providing new perspectives and different viewpoints that show that elements of discontinuity recurred in many ways throughout China's long history, but never superseded the prevailing idea that Chinese history and culture was and still is characterized by a pervading thread of continuity.

The *Pre-modern and Modern Literature* section opens with some considerations on the 'Chinese golden rule' and on the interpretation of three traditional concepts which helped to define it: *zhong* 忠 (loyalty), *shu* 恕 (empathy, reciprocity) and *ren* 仁 (humanity). In fact, the so called 'golden rule', which in Chinese literature stems from the *Lunyu* 論語, was much debated through the centuries, especially by Confucian scholars. One endowed with *ren* is courageous and firm but at the same time one is mod-

est, reticent, respectful, tolerant, trustworthy, diligent and, above all, one loves and is capable of subduing one's self for the benefit of others. *Ren* is difficult to achieve, the selflessness of the Sage being a paradigm of humanity, and empathy a way to pursue it. **Tiziana Lippiello** (Ca' Foscari University of Venice) in «Measuring Human Relations: Continuities and Discontinuities in the Reading of the *Lunyu*» examines different comments and interpretations from Confucius and his disciples to Huang Kan 皇侃 (488-545), Xing Bing 邢昺 (931-1010) and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200), up to the recent interpretation of Herbert Fingarette (1979), who equates the Chinese golden rule to the Biblical golden rule.

Hans van Ess (Ludwig-Maximilians University, Munich) analyses a paper written by the historian Bai Shouyi 白壽彝 (1909-2000) shortly before the Cultural Revolution, dealing with the views of the Han historians Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145 or 135 BC-87? BC) and Ban Gu 班固 (32-92). Unlike Western historians, who coined the phrase '*historia vitae magistra*' but somehow tried to free themselves from this idea, Chinese scholars, as van Ess observes, have continuously made use of the past to serve the present (*guwei jinyong* 古為今用). Sima Qian said that one of his main aims was to penetrate the changes of the past and present (*tong gujin zhi bian* 通古今之變, *Hanshu* 1962, 62.2735). In his article, entitled «Sima Qian yu Ban Gu» 司馬遷與班固, which was first published in the *Journal of Peking Normal University* (Beijing shifan daxue, 1962), then in *Renmin ribao* (1964) and in 1982 as a preface to a book on the *Shiji*, Bai Shouyi discusses the differences between the *Shiji* and the *Hanshu*. For Bai Shouyi the most important point of the *Shiji* is that Sima Qian reveals the political circumstances of his time, and criticizes the political atmosphere of intimidation, the autocratism of Emperor Wu 武 (140-87 BC) of Han and the centralist economic measures that he adopted. Ban Gu, meanwhile, is depicted as orthodox (*zhengzongde* 正宗的) and is criticized for the feudalistic contents of his work, for his eclecticism and for having erased the contents of the *Shiji*. Van Ess suggests that Bai Shouyi probably intended to criticize Mao Zedong's Great Leap Forward by using the example of the past. But obviously the editors of the *Renmin ribao* were interested in what Bai Shouyi wrote on Sima Qian because they could take it as an example of how «to use the past in order to serve the present».

Zhang Pei 张沛 (Peking University) in «Zhongguo zhi yi: Wen Zhongzhi de lishen yu cunxin» “中国”之义：文中子的立身与存心 (The Notion of 'Zhongguo': The Life and Thought of Wang Tong) analyses the notion of 'Zhongguo' 中國 in the work *Zhongshuo* 中說 (Doctrine of the Middle Way) by Wang Tong 王通 (584-618) and in particular the notion of 'Way of the Middle Kingdom' (*zhongguodao* 中國道), suggesting the dual implication of the expression: 'the land of Zhongguo' and 'the Way of Zhongguo'. The 'Way of Zhongguo' is the way of human culture (*renwen zhi dao* 人文之道). The land of the 'Barbarians' could also bear this name if they would

practise the 'Way of Zhongguo' in their land. Quoting from the Classics, Zhang Pei considers that the Way of human culture can also be called the Middle Way (*zhongdao* 中道): from the *Shangshu* it is evident that if the ruler exercises a government inspired to humanity (*renzheng* 仁政), he can be considered a man of virtue (*youde* 有德) and the people's favour will accord the whole world to him. Wang Tao tried to legitimize the emperorship of the Northern Wei, while cherishing the memory of the land of the South. The teachings of Wang Tong were appreciated in the scholars' milieu, and his works were included among the classics to study for state exams.

Fu Gang 傅刚 (Peking University), in «On the Literary Self-Consciousness of the Han, Wei, Jin, and Northern and Southern Dynasties», outlines the development of Chinese literature as an independent field of study, a process which started during the Later Han, with Wang Chong 王充 (27-100 A.D.), carried out by the Wei until terms like *wenxue* 文學 and *wenzhang* 文章 started to be used to refer to *belles lettres*. Liu Xie 劉勰 (465-520) in his *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons) stigmatized the difference between *wen* 文 (refined literature) and *bi* 筆 (functional writing) as follows: «*Wen* is rhymed, *bi* is unrhymed», whereby rhymed genres include poetry (*shi* 詩), rhapsodies (*fu* 賦), eulogies (*song* 頌), etc. During the Southern dynasties there was a tendency to overvalue *wen* and undervalue *bi*. It was Emperor Wen 文 (r. 424-453) of the Liu Song 劉宋 who established, in the year 438, the four Academies (*guan* 館): Confucian learning, *xuanxue* 玄學, Literature and History. Thus literature was established as an independent department in the bureaucracy. Cao Pi 曹丕 (187-226) in his *Dianlun* 典論 (Canonical Opinions) affirmed that «literature is the great work of managing the state, the worthy business that never fades».

Literature continued to flourish throughout the Six Dynasties period and later on, as attested in the dynastic histories. **Giulia Baccini** (Ca' Foscari University of Venice), in «Traditional Chinese Jestbooks and Ming Revival», presents an overview of the retrospectively defined 'genre' of jestbook in literary language (*wenyan xiaohua ji* 文言笑話集), as attested in the Bibliographical chapter of the *Suishu* 隋書 (Book of Sui), under the 'xiaoshuo' 小說 category (*Suishu*, 34.1011). Baccini analyses the bibliographical chapters of the official histories to see how the number of collections of *xiaohua ji* 笑話集 increased from the Song period onwards, and then focuses on the Ming period, during which this 'genre' flourished. She suggests that one of the reasons behind this flourishing can be ascribed to the republishing of the Song dynasty encyclopaedia *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Extensive records from the Taiping era) by the retired scholar Tan Kai 談愷 (1503-1568). The encyclopaedia collected passages and anecdotes from texts (including jestbooks) now mostly lost, and with a structure that divided the work by thematic heading, it attracted the interest of the literati, who used it as a thematic inspiration for writing or reshaping stories.

According to Baccini, the flourishing of the 'genre' in this period must also be connected to the publishers' need to put more popular typologies of texts on the market.

From the jestbooks and their popularity during the Ming dynasty to the *Shuihuzhuan* 水浒传 and its contradictory interpretations in the same period: **Liu Yongqiang** 刘勇强 (Peking University), in «*Shuihu zhuan pinglun zhong duili siwei de sanci dijin*» 《水浒传》评论中对立思维的三次递进 (On the Three Stages of Contradictory Comments *The Water Margin*) describes different and apparently contradictory interpretations of *The Water Margin* into three periods, the Ming, the Qing and the period after the founding of the Republic. The author of *The Water Margin* exemplifies virtues as loyalty and righteousness in the character of Song Jiang 宋江, who is described as «honorable and magnanimous, a saviour of the poor», and while «he shoulders a deadly responsibility» by saving his fellow hero Chao Gai 晁盖, he continues to believe that he and his compatriots «are unforgivable in the eyes of the law». He was considered loyal and righteous and at the same time he was a rebel. *Zhongyi* 忠義 (loyal and righteous) and *huidao* 誨盜 (bandit) were apparently two contradictory notions, but in fact these were based on the same ideological system, in which keeping the existing social hierarchy was a fundamental principle. As a matter of fact, Li Kui 李逵, the fiercest rebel in *The Water Margin*, still aimed at establishing a new imperial regime.

Barbara Bisetto (University of Milano-Bicocca), in «Becoming a Couple: Conversations and Couple Narrative in the Novella *Jiao Hong ji*», examines the love story between two cousins in the long *chuanqi* 傳奇 narrative by Song Yuan 宋遠, dating to the Yuan dynasty (1269-1368). This story, based upon the narrative model of the Tang dynasty classical tale *Yingying zhuan* 鶯鶯傳 (The Story of Yingying) by Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779-831), acquired great popularity during the Ming dynasty, when it was adapted in several plays and reprinted in many narrative anthologies and popular encyclopaedias. Its popularity was due to its motifs of desire, marriage and the lovers' deaths, but also to the changes in the composition of the narrative, in particular the combination of prose and verse.

The analysis of the love story of two cousins is followed by «The Chapter Titles in *Xiyou ji* and *Honglou meng*: Continuity and Discontinuity», in which **Nicholas Koss** (Peking University), examines the chapter titles of *Xiyouji* 西遊記 (The Journey to the West) and *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢 (Dream of the Red Chamber), in the attempt to show the continuity and discontinuity of the chapter titles in the final version of *Xiyouji* (1592) with those in the first printed edition of *Honglou meng* (1791). Koss concludes by analysing Gérard Genette's theories in *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretations* (1987), according to which the function of titles is of two kinds: thematic and rhematic, meaning respectively 'what one talks about' and 'what one says about it'. One of the main functions of the titles is to tempt

one to read the work. Genette's theories apply to the *Hongloumeng* titles, except for one assumption, i.e. that the author of the main text also writes chapter titles.

The second part, *Contemporary Literature*, starts with «Comparative Literature and World Literature in an Age of Transcultural Dialogue» by **Chen Yuehong** 陈跃红 (Peking University), who suggests a new reading of the discipline 'Comparative Literature and World Literature' in China, wishing to overcome the so-called Euro-Centrism. He discusses the relationship between two disciplines which were separated in China until fifteen years ago, when the Ministry of Education unified them. What is the relationship between world literature and comparative literature? How can we interpret world literature in a country with such a long tradition as China? The author complains that in the academic circles of world literature, the dominating criteria are still those confirmed by Western theories and concludes that world literature in a multi-cultural environment is still an ideal; he remarks: «We feel especially frustrated to find that many disciplines in today's non-Western countries, with the discipline of Comparative Literature and World Literature in China as a case point, are basically constructed by means of integral transplant and employment of the frame of the Western disciplinary heritage. In a considerably long period of time and with much taste, we always took the West as our model, tried to imitate it, and wanted earnestly to know whether we were good students and faithful followers».

Nicoletta Pesaro (Ca' Foscari University of Venice), in «The Tradition of Telling and the Desire of Showing in Ge Fei's 'Fictional Minds'» examines Ge Fei's 格非 attempt to reconcile the inner world of his characters and the outward reality in his recent trilogy, *Renmian taohua* 人面桃花 (Peach Blossom-beauty, 2004), *Shanhe ru meng* 山河入梦 (Mountains and Rivers Fall Asleep, 2007) and *Chunjin jiangnan* 春尽江南 (End of Spring in Jiangnan, 2011). Ge Fei focusses on the individual search to negotiate between his/her own subjectivity and the objective world around them. Pesaro tries to show how the author, in depicting history and reality as perceived by these fictional centres of consciousness, tends to gradually move from an indirect approach to a direct one. Chen Zhongyi 陈众议 (2012) points out the inner contradiction in Ge Fei's style, which he defines as 'classical' (*gudian* 古典) and 'avant-garde' (*xianfeng* 先锋) at the same time; actually, as Pesaro points out, a sophisticated merging of both styles rather than a contradiction, «the sublimation of some modernist techniques within a more traditional, essentially Chinese, narrative frame». Ge Fei chooses to narrate the human mind in its complexity and in its constant interaction with the outer world by combining traditional subjectivity and implicitness with modern devices such as stream of consciousness, the descriptions of actions and objects, and the use of poetry to represent emotions and mental activities. Thus he creates a completely new and independent narrative style, achieving both continuity and discontinuity with Chinese tradition.

Chen Xiaoming 陈晓明 (Peking University), in «Wanyu shiqi de Zhongguo dangdai wenxue» ‘晚郁时期’的中国当代文学 (‘The Belated Mellow Period’ of Chinese Contemporary Literature)» refers to 20th century Chinese Literature which changed dramatically in what he defines as ‘the belated mellow period’ (*wanyu shiqi* 晚郁时期). What does it mean? The author explains that its vernacular has gone through a 100-year radical change (since the May Fourth Movement), absorbing influences of Western Literature and adapting it to the unique cultural characteristic of the Chinese language. On the other hand, Chinese literature today has reached a more mature, contemplative and deeper style, becoming more independent from Western literature, evolving from the young ‘revolution writing’ of the early 20th century to the ‘middle age writing’ of the late 20th century. According to the author, it can be considered similar to the ‘late style’ of Theodor W. Adorno, who appreciates the self experience of life in Beethoven’s late music, rather than perfection and harmony. He uses the expression *wanyu shiqi* to refer to the Chinese vernacular literature after 100 years of change, a phenomenon of the Nineties characterized by a return to a national writing no longer associated directly with a specific genre or writer of Western literature.

The new perspective and role of Chinese modern literature in the 20th century is also the main topic of «The Pragmatic Tradition of Chinese Literature and the Current ‘Spirit of the Times’», by **Marco Fumian** (G. D’Annunzio University, Chieti-Pescara), who explains that the didactic role traditionally performed by history, aiming at ‘encouraging good and deterring evil’ (*quanshan cheng’e* 劝善惩恶) by ‘praising and blaming’ (*baobian* 褒贬) the characters of the past for their actions, was taken over by fiction at the dawn of the modern era. While the Chinese Marxist literary critics began in the Thirties to define literature as a ‘tool’ (*gongju* 工具) and a ‘weapon’ (*wuqi* 武器) of the revolutionary struggle, the Maoist vision of literature continued to prescribe, in the following decades, the creation of exemplary models embodying the ideal social behaviour sanctioned by the Communist Party, until the Maoist prescriptions of literature were finally repudiated by the Chinese writers at the dawn of the Deng Xiaoping era. In the Eighties, the members of the Chinese literary field began to advocate the principle of ‘pure literature’ (*chunwenxue* 纯文学), first in order to free literary practice from the obligation to serve as political propaganda, and then, in the Nineties, to shield it from the ‘contaminations’ and the ‘turbidity’ of the market and commercial mass culture. However, as Fumian has pointed out, a literature characterized by instrumental and didactic aims continued nevertheless to exist all along: one case in point being the popular genre of the so-called ‘workplace novel’ (*zhichang xiaoshuo* 职场小说) targeted to teach the readers the values and norms most suitable to flourish in the recently established ‘socialist market’.

During the period 1920-1930 Japanese literary theory dominated the

basic model and pattern of Chinese literature. **Jin Yongbing** 金永兵 (Peking University), in «Honma Hisao's model of Literary Theory and its Influence in China» analyses two works by Honma Hisao 本間久雄 (1886-1981) translated into Chinese, trying to demonstrate the European-American and Japanese parentage of Chinese literary textbooks and to explain how this model of textbook is closely associated with the emergence and development of modern Chinese literary theory. Honma Hisao graduated from Waseda University in 1909, studied in the UK in 1928 and later taught at Waseda University for several years. His two books, *Introduction to Literary Theory* and *New Introduction to Literary Theory*, have had an enormous impact on Chinese literature since they were translated by Zhang Xichen 章锡琛 (1889-1969) and they have contributed to the development of modern Chinese literary theory. Honma Hisao applied the research methods, widely citing modern Western philosophy, aesthetics and literary theory. Jin Yongbing argues that Honma Hisao established a clear and comprehensive model of literary theory. However this model is not the author's original creation, the basic framework was primarily *Winchester's Principles of Literary Criticism* (1925). The translation of Honma Hisao's work by Zhang Xichen reveals the growing interest in literature as a social phenomenon at that time. The author then describes the peculiarities of Tian Han's 田汉 *Wenxue gailun* 文学概论 (Introduction to Literature), published in 1927, which was influenced by Honma Hisao's theories and other later works on literature.

Linking ancient and contemporary: from Wang Dao's depiction of *Zhongguo* as the ideal land of culture and civilization we move to the tradition of rural utopia described in Chinese literature of the 20th and 21st century, and particularly in Fei Ming's *Qiao* 桥 and in Yan Lianke's 阎连科 *Shouhuo* 受活. According to **Wu Xiaodong** 吴晓东 (Peking University), *Shouhuo* reveals the disillusion with various forms of utopia: Chinese tradition, communism and consumerism. «The Disillusionment with the Rural Utopia in Chinese Literature» presents the historical crisis of Chinese rural society and the emptiness of contemporary cultural ideology, societal ideas and historical perspective. The story of the village Shouhuo recalls Zhuangzi's wise sayings, that only the disabled would be able to enjoy their allotted span.

The third part, *Poetry and Theatre*, opens with «Traditions and Transitions in 18th century Qu Poetry: The Case of Jiang Shiquan (1725-1785)». **Tian Yuan Tan** (SOAS, London) investigates the role of drama as a genre in the 18th century, in particular the decline of the *yabu* 雅部 (or *kunqu* 崑曲, elegant drama) and the rise of *huabu* 花部 (miscellaneous drama), with an increasing development of the performance aspects of theatre rather than using dramas as a form of literary composition. He explores the status of playwrights and playwriting in the High Qing (1723-1840), starting from one of the most interesting figures in the field of Qing dynasty drama and poetry, Jiang Shiquan 蒋士铨 (1725-1785), the last example of a literary

playwright whose works are worthy of mention in literary histories. His works reveal new trends and styles of writing, such as the tension and coexistence of elegant drama, a form of high art among literary circles and the miscellaneous group of local theatrical styles using local tunes and folk songs that were enjoyed by a wider audience, a competition which can be summarized as a form of tension between *ya* 雅 (the elegant and refined) and *su* 俗 (the vulgar and popular). Jiang Shiquan has long been considered one of the most erudite playwrights of his time; his plays are highly lyrical and literary. Moreover one of the features of Jiang's drama is 'visual drama', the creation of visual spectacles often characterized by the element of surprise. Jiang Shiquan was an elite playwright, who was also known for writing theatrical performance for imperial entertainment, able to combine textuality and visuality, elite and court theatre, popular and miscellaneous drama.

Zhang Hui 张辉 (Peking University) introduces the modern Chinese poet Feng Zhi 冯至 (1905-1993). Unlike his contemporaries, who preferred the young Goethe, Feng Zhi was deeply influenced by Goethe's later years. In «Feng Zhi and Goethe of Later Years» Zhang Hui analyses Feng Zhi's understanding of Goethe and the general perception of Goethe in the modern Chinese context and in relation to the cultural context of the controversy between the ancient and the modern, as for instance in the understanding of Zong Baihua 宗白华 (1897-1986) and Chen Yuan 陈铨 (1903-1969). Feng Zhi followed and admired the young Goethe until the early 1930s, at which time the spirit of the Romantic period could no longer provide relief and consolation to him; he preferred Goethe's books which «contain the profound vision of life». Feng Zhi's writings on Goethe were an attempt to present a 'complete' Goethe, with his achievements in art, literature, science and politics, a man who «dominates everything with his passion, a man who possesses something more precious than passion, a man with responsibility and self-restraint». Feng Zhi claimed that Goethe believed that 'overcoming the self' and 'doubting of everything' are the embodiment of the spirit of ceaseless striving. He admitted that Goethe influenced him in three ways: affirmative spirit, idea of metamorphosis and unity of knowledge and action.

Sean V. Golden (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona) analyzes Ernest Fenollosa's theory on the role of the graphic elements of Chinese writing, starting from a recent edition of the complete Fenollosa manuscripts (by Haun Saussy, Jonathan Stalling and Lucas Klein, *The Chinese Written Characters as a Medium for Poetry: A Critical Edition*, 2008) and working outside the Ezra Pound tradition. He argues that, notwithstanding the debate and criticism raised by sinologists on Pound's emphasis on the graphic elements of Chinese writing, in fact we find an early account in chapter 39 of *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 by Liu Xie 劉勰 (ca. 466-520), who refers to a literary tradition and uses «just such chirographic punning that

plays the components of the written character off against the semantic content of the world it represents, on the visual, not the phonetic plane» (Golden 1996, 1997). Golden explains that Liu Xie exploits polysemy to link the patterns of language/writing/culture and consequently the patterns of the cosmos. For Liu Xie and subsequently for Fenollosa, who was much influenced by Zen Buddhism, *wen* was intrinsic to correlative cosmology. Fenollosa, who initiated Ezra Pound to East Asia Art and played a crucial role together with F. Hirth in creating the East Asian Studies programme at Columbia University that would link D.T. Suzuki to John Cage and other artists of the avant-garde, provided an important contribution to the understanding of Chinese thought, as for instance when he affirmed that an instantaneous photo of the sea in motion is only a momentary form of a wave, just like other things are only vibrations of living substances. Or when he wrote that synthetic thinking demands a pregnant language: rich, juicy, significant, full words, charged with intense meaning at the center, like a nucleus, and then radiating out toward infinity, like a great nebula.

Taking as a starting point David Der-wei Wang's theory on lyricism, in his essay «What's the Link Between the Lyrical and Modernity in China?» **Li Yang** 李杨 (Peking University) questions the possibility of applying the term 'lyrical' to fields other than literary criticism, as «an approach to interpreting socio-political reality». As such, the subjective expression of the self in lyricism appears to be a secondary aspect and Li underlines a somehow transcendent nature of the 'lyrical' in Chinese tradition. On the basis of the idea that the lyrical tradition, predominant in Chinese literary tradition as opposed to the strong Western epic and narrative tradition, developed from a form of literature to «a cultural perspective, a value system and even a political ideology» (Wang 2010, p. 13), Li brings into discussion the notion of 'lyricism' as underpinning Chinese modernity.

Yang Zhu 楊铸 (Peking University), in «Poetic Taste and Tasting Poetry» examines the role of 'taste' (*wei* 味) in Chinese poetry, as a basic component of artistic enjoyment, as a criterion for the appreciation of poetry during the Six dynasties and up until the late Qing dynasty, a concept which acquired a rich and deep significance throughout the ages. Taste has its origins in people's diet; in fact, food was considered humankind's most essential material need, as we infer from the Chinese saying *Min yi shi wei tian* 民以食為天 (People regard food as Heaven, *Hanshu* 1962, p. 2108). Thus, from pre-imperial times, a particular concern for taste was felt and expressed in literature and, later on, in poetry. The aesthetic perception was, in its early stage, connected to taste. During the Late Tang dynasty, the poet Sikong Tu 司空圖 (837-908) affirmed: «In my opinion distinguishing one's tastes is a precondition to any discussion on poetry». According to Sikong Tu the most brilliant works of poetry should have that 'mellow taste' (*chunmei* 醇美) which stands beyond concrete tastes such as salty, acidic, etc. thus suggesting the Taoist notion of tasteless (*wuwei* 無味), the taste beyond

taste. Yang Zhu concludes by saying that the concept of taste in ancient Chinese poetic theory cannot be considered as a scientific notion; however, the simple word 'taste' reflects the unique features of traditional Chinese culture and well represents the essence of ancient Chinese poetic theory.

The idea that underpins **Qin Liyan's** 秦立彦 (Peking University) «Voices of the Dead» is to explore the theme of death in the writings of two poets who lived in different historical and geographical contexts: Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (365-427) and Emily Dickinson (1830-1886). Although their ideas about the after-death world differ significantly, the two poets show a deep familiarity with the idea of death and, in both Tao and Dickinson, the boundaries between life and death are not so clear-cut. By comparing how the two poets narrate their own deaths, Qin Liyan unveils the many similarities between them.

The fourth and final part, *Language and Political Discourse*, includes three essays, dealing respectively with the role of Confucianism in shaping Chinese modernity, with the metaphorical language used in political discourse, and with the evolution of the role of the Chinese character *de* 的 from the classical *zhe* 者.

Yang Xiaobin 楊小賓 (Academia Sinica, Taipei) in «Modernity and Subjectivity from the Past to the Present», reevaluates the role of Confucianism in shaping Chinese modernity. Moving from a statement by Umberto Eco, which is that every age has its own postmodern, just as every age has its own form of modern, he argues that the concept of modern should not be limited to the modern age, since the idea to 'make it new' is pervasive and stems from the classical sentence *riri xin* 日日新, «to become new day by day» (*Daxue* 大學, ch. 2). Yang Xiaobin, quoting Nietzsche's idea of progress – «making people small and governable is hailed as 'progress'» – and his reference to Confucius among the greatest artists of government, remarks that even the enlightenment thinkers of the 20th century China who promoted the slogan 'Down with the Confucius shop!' ultimately adopted Confucian concepts in order to promote Chinese modernity as, for instance, the idea of great unity (*datong* 大同) advocated by Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858-1927), which paved the way for the May Fourth Movement. Also, he points out the contradiction between rejecting Confucianism and inheriting Western enlightenment while using Chinese terms such as *geming* 革命, a term from the Commentary on the *Yijing*, but imported through the Japanese translation of the word 'revolution'.

Yang argues that Chinese tradition was already modernity and that the adoption of Western Enlightenment was an implicit return to Confucianism which was appreciated, for instance, by Voltaire. In his words: «To borrow the language of Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, we might say that the issue of Chinese modernity lies in the fact that tradition is already modernity and modernity returns to tradition».

Paolo Magagnin (Ca' Foscari University of Venice), in «The Evolution

of Metaphorical Language in Contemporary Chinese Political Discourse. Preliminary Evidence from the 12th and 18th CPC Congresses» analyses modern and contemporary political language in China, focussing on the evolution of post-Mao political discourse and rhetoric. The texts he selected for this preliminary study are the two reports delivered at the 12th and at the 18th National Congresses of the CPC respectively, as they appear on the Xinhua News website, the first delivered by the then-General Secretary of the CPC Hu Yaobang 胡耀邦 on 1 September 1982 and the second by the then-General Secretary and President of the PRC Hu Jintao 胡锦涛 on 8 November 2012, a choice of texts Magagnin makes on the basis of a homogeneity principle. The analysis, which aims at providing a tentative outline of the evolution of figurative language in post-Mao political communication, is characterized by three steps: identification of keywords, interpretation of metaphors and explanation of their discursive function. The author explains that the two texts chosen reveal the intent of favouring cohesion, building consensus and national unity, emphasizing the results achieved and the future goals in a context in which metaphorical language conveys emotional experience, intimacy and implicitly exhorts to action.

To conclude this survey, in his «Lun di lai yuan yu zhe» 论“底”来源于“者” (On the Derivation of ‘di’ 底 (‘de’的) from ‘zhe’ 者), **Yang Rongxiang** 杨荣祥 (Peking University) explores the diachronic evolution of the auxiliary particle *zhe* 者. By means of a thorough examination of the grammatical and phonetic similarities between *zhe* and *di* 底 (‘de’的), Yang aims at proving the evolution of the auxiliary particle ‘di’ (*de*) from the ancient form *zhe*.

In spite of the pervading stream of continuity, the idea of innovation is very ancient, as we understand from the passage *riri xin* 日日新, «to become new day by day» of the *Daxue*. Thus, apparently modernity does not necessarily mean rupture with the past or rejection of traditional models, either Chinese or Western or Japanese.

We hope that this collection of essays will provide evidence that throughout China’s history, within a framework of continuity, traditional Chinese cultural and intellectual values were subject to change within tradition itself.

