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### Publication Date

2017

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,  
IRVINE

Modernity, Gender and Poetics:  
Chen Jitong (1852-1907) and the Cross-cultural  
Intellectual and Literary Writing Practices in Late Qing China

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in East Asian Languages and Literatures

by

Yuan Liu

Dissertation Committee:  
Professor Hu Ying, Chair  
Professor Martin W. Huang  
Professor Michael A. Fuller

2017



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express the deepest appreciation to my committee chair, Professor Hu Ying. Her profound knowledge, ingenious insight and careful guidance in regard to research and scholarship, and her enthusiasm in regard to teaching have always been the encouragement for my dissertation. Professor Hu is my role model in everything. Without her immense help and patient understanding, this dissertation would not have been possible.

I would like to thank my committee members, Professor Martin W. Huang and Professor Michael A. Fuller. I am so grateful for having had chances to be in their seminars. Their remarkable works, their diligence and thoughtfulness have helped me greatly in understanding complex issues of gender and society, as well as comparative perspectives of poetics.

In addition, a thank you to Professor Meng Yue, who introduced me to the new horizons of modernity and culture; Professor Judy Ho, who broadened my vision of the interdisciplinary understanding of art history and literature. I would also thank Professor Bert Scruggs and Professor Roberta Wue for taking the time from their busy schedule to attend my oral defense and kindly providing me valuable resources for the research.

I take this opportunity to thank the University of California, Irvine for its generous acknowledgement of my effort behind this project. The resources and environment on campus have contributed tremendously in this dissertation. Financial support was provided by the university in forms of Chancellor's fellowship year award, teaching assistantship and Humanities School's research grant. I also thank our graduate coordinator Stephanie Isnali, who has given me persistent concern and assistance in wrapping up the work. Finally,

my heartfelt gratitude to my parents and my husband, for their constant encouragement, understanding and tremendous support in every step in this endeavor.

I will stay forever grateful to all of you all.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

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## ABSTRACT

Modernity, Gender and Poetics:  
Chen Jitong (1852-1907) and the Cross-cultural  
Intellectual and Literary Writing Practices in Late Qing China

By

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Doctor of Philosophy in East Asian Languages and Literatures

University of California, Irvine, 2017

Professor Hu Ying, Chair

This dissertation approaches Chen Jitong (1852-1907), a late Qing diplomat's cross-cultural writing attempt in his major work to explore the cultural and literary representation of late Qing literati on the world stage. During his 16-year stay in Europe (1875-1891), Chen, a secretary and attaché in the Chinese legation, also acted as a cultural celebrity by writing several books to introduce China and actively participating in cultural activities. Through the perspectives of modernity, gender and poetics, we gain a rare glimpse of how literati of his generation imagined and presented a "Chinese culture" to the western world.

Chapter 1 provides a panoramic reading of Chen's representative work and some critics' dichotomized viewpoints, showing his critical engagement in a dialogue on modernity with the west. Chapter 2 explores Chen's aspirations for officialdom as a student of new learning, and his role in the Sino-French war. Through the angle of masculinity, we may understand his cultural representation in writing as an outlet for the frustration and



desire of his generation of literati. Chapter 3 discusses the importance of cultural matrix and public sphere in the cross-cultural writing. I demonstrate how the Parisian print media may influence on Chen's publication, and how Chen elicited public sympathy and public opinions in his work. Chapter 4 analyzes Chen's writing choices and styles in the book, showing that aesthetic features and individual penchant are indispensable and expressive elements in writings of this kind. Chapter 5 adopts a comparative approach to compare the differences of presenting culture and society in Chen Jitong and Gu Hongming (1857-1928)'s major works, which shed light on our comprehension of the varieties of transnational writing in this vein.

In general, Chen Jitong and his cultural representation on the world stage enrich our study of the intellectual map and zeitgeist of late Qing. His major work *The Chinese Painted by Themselves* (*Les Chinois peints par eux-mêmes*, 1884) as well as other works embodied his pioneering proposition of a mutual participation and dialogue in "world literature." The study of his writing also unravels the multifaceted aspects that contribute to the cross-cultural writing.

## Introduction

Chen Jitong 陳季同 (1852-1907) is a prominent cultural figure in the late Qing period, and played an important role in his cross-cultural practice on the international stage. After graduating from the Fuzhou Naval Academy 福州船政學堂 in 1875, he was dispatched by the Qing government to Paris, and stayed there most of the time for sixteen years (from 1875 to 1891). He studied in Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques (The Liberal School of Political Science), and received a degree in international law from Ecole de Droit (The School of Law).<sup>1</sup> He then served as secretary and attaché in the Qing Embassy in Europe, and most importantly, he became a cultural celebrity in Paris. He published several books on Chinese culture and customs in French, and also achieved popularity as a noted public speaker and lecturer on international occasions.<sup>2</sup> Chen was recalled back to China in 1891 due to an embezzlement scandal and remained in China since then. In the last 15 years of his life, Chen assumed different roles as a writer, newspaper publisher, translator, minery explorer and staff officer.

Among his contemporaries, there were more famous reformers and thinkers like Ma Jianzhong 馬建忠 (1845-1900) and Yan Fu 嚴復 (1854-1921) (his fellow students), as well as Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873-1929) (a generation younger). Nevertheless Chen's uniqueness may lie in his trailblazing insight into the modernization of Chinese literature

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<sup>1</sup> Tchong-Ki-Tong, *Les Chinois peints par eux-mêmes* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1884), 118. Henri Bryois, "Le Général Tchong-Ki-Tong," *Revue illustrée* 128 (April 1891): 289-92. Li Huachuan 李華川, *Wanqing yige waijiaoguan de wenhua licheng* 晚清一個外交官的文化歷程 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe 北京大學出版社, 2004.8), 164, 171.

<sup>2</sup> See also in Ren Ke, "Fin-de-Siècle Diplomat: Chen Jitong (1852-1907) and Cosmopolitan Possibilities in the Late Qing World" (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2014).

and culture. Chen was considered the first Chinese to promote the notion and participation of “world literature.”<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, well before his compatriots Liang Qichao and Yan Fu began to advocate and practice the translation of western dramas and novels into China after 1898, Chen already saw the necessity of a reciprocal cultural communication, especially the trajectory of “writing outbound,” as early as a decade before the Sino-Japanese War.<sup>4</sup> He himself was considered among the earliest Chinese to write in a foreign language to introduce Chinese culture to the west, which was a lively practice of his “world literature” claim.<sup>5</sup> The biggest sensation he created in the west might be that “he was at the time in the West the most famous living Chinese author.”<sup>6</sup> In general, Chen’s unique experiences as a returned student playing an unprecedented role on the world cultural stage offer us a valuable and indispensable object of study in exploring the elite culture, zeitgeist and transnational cultural practice in late Qing period.

Despite the importance of Chen in Chinese cultural history, he has long remained obscure in Chinese literary research and modern history. Zeng Pu 曾樸 (1872-1935), a noted late Qing fiction writer and disciple of Chen, in an advertisement soliciting Chen’s records of deeds and works 21 years after his death, lamented why such a well-known

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<sup>3</sup> Zeng Pu 曾樸, “Lun fanyi-yu Zeng Mengpu xiansheng shu; fu lu Zeng xiansheng da shu” 論翻譯—與曾孟朴先生書；附錄曾先生答書 (hereafter “a letter to Hu Shi”), in Hu Shi, *Hu Shi wen cun* 胡適文存, vol. 3 (Shanghai: Yadong tushuguan, 1931), 1125-42. Li Huachuan mentioned this Chen’s proposition as in year 1897 in *Wanqing yige waijiaoguan de wenhua licheng* 晚清一個外交官的文化歷程 (p. 140), while Jing Tsu in her *Sound and Script in Chinese Diaspora* had it as in the year 1898 (p.123).

<sup>4</sup> As Ren Ke also claims in the introduction in his “Fin-de-Siècle Diplomat: Chen Jitong (1852-1907) and Cosmopolitan Possibilities in the Late Qing World,” the recent cultural and literary scholarships, though reevaluated the dynamics and creativities of late Qing intellectuals and writers, “Yet for the most part their emphasis have remained on the period of deepened national crisis and intellectual transition (1895-1915),” and “on personalities *within* China or East Asia” (“introduction,” p. 10).

<sup>5</sup> Li Huachuan 李華川, *Wanqing yige waijiaoguan de wenhua licheng* 晚清一個外交官的文化歷程, 152.

<sup>6</sup> Catherine Yeh, “The Life-Style of Four Wenren in Late Qing Shanghai” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 57:2 (1997): 436.

Chinese writer in the west was not mentioned in modern Chinese literary history.<sup>7</sup> In the late Qing history canon *The Cambridge History of China: Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911*, Chen was neither mentioned as a foreign affairs expert nor a government sponsored overseas student par excellence. In fact, he was outstanding in both positions, although his compatriots Yan Fu, Luo Fenglu 羅豐祿 (1850-1903), Ma Jianzhong, Guo Songtao 郭嵩燾 (1818-1891), Zeng Jize 曾紀澤 (1839-1890) etc. were frequently mentioned.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, his fellow students Yan Fu and Ma Jianzhong have caught scholarly attention since as early as several decades ago.<sup>9</sup>

There are some early commentary pieces on Chen Jitong. Most are from his relatives and his friends from Chinese or European sides. They have bifurcated angles of either eulogizing him as a prodigy, a cultural and social elite on a stage that no Chinese before had ever achieved, or distrustfully mystifying him as a conceited and exotic erudite from the East,<sup>10</sup> which I will elaborate as one of the interesting phenomena in chapter one. While contemporary studies have begun to pay some attention to this hidden treasure in the literary field, most are short introductory briefings. The following five studies are

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<sup>7</sup> Zeng Pu 曾樸, "Zhengqiu Chen Jitong xiansheng shiji jiqi zuopin" 徵求陳季同先生事蹟及其作品, *Zhen mei shan* 真美善 6 (1928), flip of front page.

<sup>8</sup> John King Fairbank and Kwang-ching Liu, eds., *The Cambridge History of China* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), vol. 10: chap.10; vol 11: chap.3.

<sup>9</sup> For example, see Benjamin I. Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power: Yen Fu and the West* (Cambridge: Belknap press, 1964). Ruth Hayhoe and Lu Yongling, *Ma Xiangbo and the Mind of Modern China 1840-1939* (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1996).

<sup>10</sup> See examples in Xue Shaohui 薛紹徽, "Jingru xionggong wushi shouchen zhengshi qi" 敬如兄公五十壽辰征詩啟, *Daiyunlou yiji.wenji* 黛韻樓遺集文集 (1914), vol.2, 176-182. Shen Yuqing 沈瑜慶 and Chen Yan 陳衍, "Chen Jitong shilue" 陳季同事略, *Fujian tongzhi liezhuan* 福建通志列傳, ed. Fujian tongzhiju 福建通志局 (Fuzhou: Fujian tongzhi ju, 1922-28), in *Qing liezhuan* 8 清列傳八 (1938), Vol. 39: 70b-72b. Henry Bryois, "Le général Tchong-Ki-Tong" *Revue Illustrée* (April, 1891), 290-291. Anatole France, *On Life and Letters*, trans. D.B Stewart (Plymouth: The Mayflower Press, 1928), 76, 78. Romain Rolland, *Le cloître de la Rue d'Ulm, Journal de Romain Roland à l'Ecole Normale, 1886-1889* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1952), 276-277.

research on him that have some depth or scope, which either apply historical and cultural perspectives, or have archival encompassment.

Catherine Vance Yeh includes Chen Jitong in her essay “The life Style of Four Wenren in Late Qing Shanghai” in an early discussion of the late Qing culture.<sup>11</sup> The paper is under the framework of modernity and public sphere. Its main theme is to demonstrate that the late Qing Shanghai, especially its concessions, offered a protected and open public sphere for transitional *wenren* – intellectuals to carry out experimental activities and lead a double life. Besides elaborating on Shanghai’s role in Chen’s life after he was summoned back from France, Yeh gives a sketch of Chen’s life and a concise yet thorough discussion of his writings, primarily *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*. She found considerable connection between Chen’s writing and the French literary fashion of the day: the physiologies, namely, the physiological sketches of the society, as well as his occasional inclination toward essentialization and lack of in-depth self-examination. However, Yeh’s arguments sometimes implicitly espouse a linear teleology of the western modernity as the universal model for civilization. For instance, she claimed that Chen “tried to present a China fully compatible with Western social ideals.”<sup>12</sup> In fact, Chen anticipated the coexistence and conflux of both civilizations in his book, without viewing Chinese culture as obsolete “tradition” with a linear end toward western “modernization.”

Li Huachuan’s *Yige wanqing waijiaoguan de wenhua licheng* 一個晚清外交官的文化歷程 (2004) is a pathbreaking monograph of Chen’s life and cultural journey. As he noted, before his own work, there were only sporadic essays published on Chen in China

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<sup>11</sup> Catherine Yeh, “The Life-Style of Four Wenren in Late Qing Shanghai” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 57:2 (1997): 419-470.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 441.

and abroad, mostly on his student experience abroad as well as a brief introduction of his life.<sup>13</sup> Therefore Li is the first to provide a comprehensive and book-length introduction of this pivotal cultural figure. Li not only provided the summary of Chen's various books, mostly in French, and his later published newspapers in China, but also gave an investigation of some enigmas about his life, such as rumors of private debt and copyright entanglement. Li's archival work includes manuscripts, official letters, telegraphs, money orders, etc. Nevertheless, due to the comprehensive and all-encompassing feature, it is more a biographical study than an intensive cultural study work. For instance, the general analysis of Chen's cultural attitude occupies primarily only one chapter in the book and thus the complex formations and nuances of his opinions on culture are not fully elaborated and analyzed. As Meng Hua in the prologue of the book indicates, due to the structure and length of the book, Li did not fully examine the French cultural environment in the 19<sup>th</sup> century nor their reception of Chen's work, and these remains interesting and inevitable part for further research.<sup>14</sup> To me, the dynamics of Sino-French cultural relations of the day, its interaction with the writing and reception on Chen's work is an undeveloped intriguing direction and part of the motivation for my own study.

Jing Tsu dedicates a chapter to General Chen Jitong in her book on Chinese transnational cultural exchange in the last two centuries, *Sound and Script in Chinese Diaspora*.<sup>15</sup> Tsu focuses on Chen's espousal of world literature's relation with a failed earlier political experiment to adopt a western polity in the international intercourse. After the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895, Chen proposed the forming of the

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<sup>13</sup> Li, "introduction," 2.

<sup>14</sup> Meng Hua 孟華, "prologue" to Li Huachuan's *Wanqing yige waijiaoguan de wenhua licheng* 晚清一個外交官的文化歷程 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe 北京大學出版社, 2004.8), 6.

<sup>15</sup> Jing Tsu, *Sound and Script in Chinese Diaspora* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

Republic of Formosa as a strategy to solicit international intervention to prevent Japan's takeover. To Tsu, both notions of republicanism and world literature have more pragmatic value than their alleged idealism. They are mainly maneuvers to "reshape the global space to China's advantage."<sup>16</sup> Tsu is keen in her insight of the sociopolitical agenda behind the writing and the effect to create commonality and sensibilities through Chen's elicitation of "republicanism" and "world literature," but she seems to politicize Chen's writing too much as merely "literary governance," neglects its personal and cosmopolitan touch, and mistakes all the writing as tactics and devise for "Sinocentric allegiance."<sup>17</sup>

Ren Ke contributed the first monograph on Chen in English in the western scholarly world in 2014: *Fin-de-Siècle Diplomat: Chen Jitong (1852-1907) and Cosmopolitan Possibilities in the Late Qing World*. Through the mapping of Chen as a cultural mediator and active figure on sociopolitical stage both abroad and back to China, he argues that on the international stage in the late Qing period, diplomats like Chen were not only representations of government polity, but also the embodiment of Chinese civilization. Chen's activities also added a cosmopolitan stance to the encroachment-entangled period.<sup>18</sup> Similar to Li Huachuan, Ren resorted to a biographical approach primarily for delineating Chen's major social and cultural engagements. He brilliantly filled the gap that Li left in his previous project by elaborating the importance of the Fuzhou local scholarly environment and the Fuzhou Navy Yard for nurturing Chen's "sense of self as a Qing Confucian literatus,"<sup>19</sup> and the reception of both his works and person in France. As a history student, the remarkableness lies in Ren's large number of Chinese and French

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>18</sup> Ren Ke, 13.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 17, 19.

resources. Meanwhile it is also due to that background that Ren's angle is on treating Chen as the index or nexus for studying late Qing industrialization, political evolution as well as cultural communication, with its emphasis not particularly on Chen's literary activity. Sometimes Ren seems to locate Chen a bit closely to the nationalist discourse. For instance, he frequently labels Chen as from the "self-strengthening school," and claims that, "In representing China to his French audience, Chen Jitong adhered to his identity as a late Qing man of letters, holding up Neo-Confucian visions of state and society while taking advantage of his extensive familiarity with classical Chinese literature."<sup>20</sup> In fact, the multiplicity and dynamics of Chen's identity is open for discussion, and the nuances and complexity of Chen's representation of China may be more than a unified and ostensible nationalist gesture, which leaves room for further close reading.

Qian Nanxiu has contributed tremendously to the study of Chen. Her two main works on him are: *Xue Jia yin* 學賈吟, a compilation of Chen's poems which he composed on his minery-discovering tour back in China in 1896, and her recently published book *Politics, Poetics, and Gender in Late Qing China: Xue Shaohui and the Era of Reform*. In this book on a late-Qing learned gentry woman Xue Shaohui 薛紹徽 (1866-1911), Chen's sister-in-law (his younger brother's wife), Qian elaborates in several chapters on their mutual admiration and inspirations and recognizes Chen's influence and guidance on the new cultural and social experiences of late Qing women.<sup>21</sup> The main contributions of Qian to the study of Chen is that the angle of study has been extended from the sociopolitical macro studies of him to the inner world of his private life: his family, his up-bringing, his

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>21</sup> Qian Nanxiu, *Politics, Poetics, and Gender in Late Qing China: Xue Shaohui and the Era of Reform* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), eg. in p.84, p.230-234.



marriage as well as the spiritual traces he left in his poems. From his family genealogy to his association with the female members of the household and, furthermore, his efforts to initiate the new education of women in Shanghai, one may have a look at the gender relations and the transformation of women in late Qing. Nevertheless, due to the limitations of the length of her study, the discussion of Chen is restricted in the introduction of *Xue Jia yin*. In a book primarily on the writing woman Xue Shaohui, Chen has to serve no more as a backdrop and foil. Also, maybe due to the patronage of the local government and the consignment from Chen's offspring on the publication of Chen's collection of poems *Xue Jia yin*, the introduction of him focuses mainly on his life and work back in China, and inevitably has a slight trace of nationalism and eulogy, whereas his intercultural experience abroad is less fully elaborated.<sup>22</sup>

In general, the two major monographs on him are biographical studies delineating his life and major social, political and cultural engagements. The other essays above on him provide insightful comments respectively, meanwhile treat his cultural endeavor as primarily a background, a resource for their larger works. Given my training in literature, I intend to approach his major transnational writing as a nexus to explore the complexity and vitality of late Qing literati mind in the cross-cultural context. Specifically, I'm interested in Chen as one of the first Chinese writing in a foreign language to introduce Chinese culture to the west. By closely examining his tactics, stances and styles, we gain a rare glimpse of how literati of his generation imagined and presented a "Chinese culture" to the outside – something that earlier generations would not conceive of.

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<sup>22</sup> Qian Nanxiu 錢南秀, Chen Shuping 陳書萍 and Chen Shujing 陳書菁, "introduction" and "epilogue" to Chen Jitong's *Xue Jia yin* 學賈吟, edited by Qian Nanxiu (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe 上海古籍出版社, 2005), 29, 181.

In terms of methodology, I am primarily inspired by Paul Cohen and Prasenjit Duara in their perspectives in dealing with Chinese history and culture. In 1984, Cohen first proposes the “China-centered” approach, meaning to bring in the insider perspectives stressing “variations over time within one culture” as against “distortions” and “caricatures” generated by “excessive emphasis” on differences by the traditional Western-centered approach.<sup>23</sup> Twenty years later, in his *China Unbound: Evolving Perspectives on the Chinese Past*, he advocated the study of issues on China to be set in the comparative scheme or transnational processes. This is where my research on Chen well fits in. I find especially useful Cohen’s emphasis on “symmetric perspectives” and “reciprocal comparisons,” and on “mobility” and “global connections, networks, activities and consciousness” to complement or decenter the single “nation-based perspectives.”<sup>24</sup> In light of these paradigm shifts, I propose in the study of Chen, to find history not one-sidedly in either China or the West, but in the dynamic and resonated transnational context.

The works of Prasenjit Duara are also inspirational to me on two levels. On the broader level of how to write history, he believes that history is a series of multiple, often conflicting narratives produced simultaneously at national, local, and transnational levels. My approach on Chen on the transnational level remedies earlier historians' over-emphasis on the nationalist framework. On the level of cultural representation, which is more directly

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<sup>23</sup> Paul Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the recent Chinese Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984). The citations here are his reintroduction of it in his *China Unbound: Evolving Perspectives on the Chinese Past* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 13, 14.

<sup>24</sup> Cited in Cohen, *China Unbound*, 5, 12. “Symmetric perspectives” and “reciprocal comparisons” were first described by R. Bin Wong and Kenneth Pomeranz respectively in the former’s *China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), p.282, and the latter’s *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp.8-10. Cohen invoked and illustrated these methods in his book.

relevant to my field, Duara critiques how the nation-state discourse represses other stories by “overriding” or “encompassing” different identities, “such as religious, racial, linguistic, class, gender, or even historical ones,” “in a larger identity.”<sup>25</sup> Thus in my reading of Chen as a cultural mediator and critic, I have incorporated alternative discourses such as gender, public sphere and aesthetic preferences for a nuanced and more meaningful comprehension of his representation of China.

In detail, I focus my study on Chen Jitong’s pioneering cultural practice of writing *Les Chinois peints par eux-mêmes* (The Chinese Painted by Themselves), and its publication process in France as a comprehensive journey of interpretation. This work is the first book on China written by a Chinese in a foreign language. In five chapters, I explore the dynamics and interrelation between writing and politics, writing and gender, writing and public space, writing and individuality, as well as poetics.

The first chapter, beginning with some first impressions and panoramic reading of Chen’s book, as well as some dichotomized views of him, finds that Chen intended to engage in a dialogue with the western readers on an unprecedented platform. He seems to take a familiar *flâneur* attitude by being critical and keeping alert in the crowd. While as one straddling and knowing two societies and cultures, he challenged the universal validity of western capitalist modernity, and fictitious cosmopolitanism. Also, his pioneering choice of writing in a foreign language can be seen as a stance to regain autonomy in the linguistic realm of influence. Meanwhile, although his dialogical and critical agenda is constructive, he is still inevitably influenced by the war affair and his diplomatic obligation to adopt some nationalist perspectives. However, Chen was hardly the only one to be caught in the

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<sup>25</sup> Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 10.

latent writing site of the contention for power and influence. Therefore Chen and many of his critics proclaimed to pursue an “objective” or “rational” observation, yet the attempts are rarely fulfilled. However, it is the choices, divergences, transfigurations that they made in their work that are revealing and illuminating.

As a late nineteenth-century overseas-student-turned-diplomat, Chen underwent an inevitable identity crisis. Thus we may view the writing of this book partially as a product of his inner struggle. In the second chapter, I invoke some theories of gender and masculinity, and the interposition of the specific historical context. In specific, I examine how Chen’s activities during the war to facilitate a controversial peace talk, as well as his effort to get advancement in office may have contributed to his adopting a traditionalist tone. Furthermore, I will discuss how and why he particularly stresses the issue of women in *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*. This writing is therefore not an insulated cultural activity but a complex performance, arguably indicative of the frustration and desire of his generation of literati.

Previous scholars on Chen have not put much emphasis on the relation between his writing and the French cultural sphere of the day. For instance, how did he choose the French media and how might the urban cultural matrix in Paris influence on his writing as a form of cultural production. I will, in the third chapter, draw on the theories of public sphere and cultural production as an indispensable element of modernity to explore issues of media and culture, the reader-publisher-writer relationship. From the choice of print media, his access to various Parisian cultural institutions, his ability to arouse public sympathy and opinions, one will gain illuminations from a Chinese cross-cultural pioneer in his participation and construction in world’s cultural sphere.

In the fourth chapter, I give a close reading of Chen's writing techniques and choices in the book. Inspired by historian Prasenjit Duara's notion of "rescuing history from the nation,"<sup>26</sup> as we discussed before, we may cast off the traditional angle of viewing a person's writing as a simple imperative or service for the national purpose, or the colonial discourse, which previous critics and commentators were constrained by. In addition, we find Chen's preference for literature and art, and the rhetorical exuberance, structural discursiveness in his style as the tokens of his individual poetic inclination. His unruly and colorful style of writing and literary taste are rather a resonance with men of letters both in China and abroad, and a rebellion from the orthodox and popular *guwen* style of the time. Therefore, his observation and critic of western capitalism cannot be simply attributed to a political quest, but partially an expression of individual desire and subjectivity. The creativity and individuality in his writing reminds us the aesthetic features in transnational writings of this kind that should not be neglected.

The last chapter uses a comparative approach on Chen Jitong and Gu Hongming 辜鴻銘 (1857-1928), the two earliest Chinese writers introducing China to the west in a foreign language. Although they both defended China to certain extent, they differ in their thematic foci, their views of western and Chinese cultures as well as many heatedly-debated issues of their time. Their writing styles and rhetorics show significant differences too. This divergences may have much to do with the different audience each was trying to reach, as much as from their distinctive backgrounds and personal preferences. As today is a new age of western and eastern conflict and conflux, a close study of them together will shed light on the comprehension of the cross-cultural writing in the similar vein.

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<sup>26</sup> Duara.

In sum, I would like to demonstrate in this dissertation that Chen Jitong's pioneering writing endeavor marked an important page in intellectual and literary writing practices in late Qing. It opens a new door to enrich our study of the intellectual zeitgeist of the time by unraveling the anxieties, aspirations and creativity of the returned students straddling two cultures and performing on new stages. Through the kaleidoscope of Chen and his work, one may have a glimpse of the multifaceted identity of a late Qing literary figure: an overseas student, a diplomat, a poet, a scholar, a general, a dandy and a reformer. It also deepens our understanding of the transnational intellectual and literary writing practices. By challenging the reductionist readings in a discourse of either nationalism or orientalism, I propose to comprehend the cross-cultural writing as a complex process influenced by multiple parameters, such as politics, gender, public sphere, and aesthetic individuality.

**Initial Discoveries on Chen Jitong and *The Chinese Painted by  
Themselves: Western Modernity Decentered and the Alternative  
Unfulfilled***

Having graduated as an excellent student of French at the Fuzhou Naval Academy 福州船政學堂, Chen Jitong (1852-1907) went to Europe in 1875 with the first Qing government delegation. Besides his later official role as a diplomat in the Sino-French peace talks during the Sino-French War (1883-1885), Chen, as a writer, observer and habitant, actively participated in the experience of the city. In France, his first book, *Les Chinois Peints par Eux-Mêmes* (The Chinese Painted by Themselves), “was first serialized in the prestigious *Révue des Deux Mondes* (The Review of Two Worlds) in Paris, and published in book form in 1883. By 1884 it was in the third printing, and by 1886 in the tenth.”<sup>27</sup> His other works include *Le Théâtre des Chinois* (Chinese Drama, 1886), *Contes Chinois* (Chinese Tales, 1889), *Les Plaisirs En Chine* (The Pleasures in China, 1890), etc. Chen was one of the few Qing figures in *Chinese Biographical Dictionary* by Herbert A. Giles, and was the cover person in a French magazine in April, 1891.<sup>28</sup>

Being “at the time in the West the most famous living Chinese author,”<sup>29</sup> Chen and his work caught the attention of French critics and writers such as Romain Rolland

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<sup>27</sup> Catherine Yeh, “The Life-Style of Four Wenren in Late Qing Shanghai,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 57:2 (1997): 427.

<sup>28</sup> Yue Feng 嶽峰, “Dongxue xijian diyiren—bei yiwang de fanyijia Chen Jitong” 東學西漸第一人—被遺忘的翻譯家陳季同, *Zhongguo fanyi* 中國翻譯 22, No. 4 (July 2001): 54-57.

<sup>29</sup> Yeh, 436.

(1866-1944) and Anatole France (1844-1924). Romain Rolland, then still a university student, recorded in his diary with ardency his experience of listening to Chen's speech, which received fevered applause from the audience: "Un discours excellent, spirituel" (an excellent, spiritual speech), "d'un homme et d'une race supérieurs" (of a superior man and race). "L'homme est robuste, et la voix très forte, grave, lourde et claire" (The man is robust, and the voice very strong, grave, loud and clear). In a somewhat impressionist sketch, Romain Rolland lauded Chen's fluency in French, his eloquence and confidence. "En belle robe violette, noblement étendu sur sa chaise, il a la figure pleine, jeune et heureuse; un sourire d'actrice, qui montre bien les dents" (In a beautiful violet dress, nobly lying on his chair, he has a full, youthful and happy face; An actor's smile, which shows the teeth well). "Sous l'enveloppe des sourires et des compliments, une âme méprisante" (Under the surface of smiles and compliments, a contemptuous soul).<sup>30</sup> From his special attention to Chen's dressing and appearance, a glamorization and mystification of his tone and demeanor, there is a slight tint of exoticism.

France in his book *On Life and Letters*, though admitting that "I am little versed in Chinese literature," commented relentlessly on Chen's work, in particular, Chen's compilation of Chinese tales published in France in 1889: the *Contes chinois*.<sup>31</sup> This collection was composed of twenty-six short stories from the *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋志異 (Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio) and was claimed as "the first substantial

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<sup>30</sup> Romain Rolland, *Le cloître de la Rue d'Ulm, Journal de Romain Roland à l'Ecole Normale, 1886-1889* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1952), 276-277.

<sup>31</sup> Anatole France, *On Life and Letters*, trans. D.B Stewart (Plymouth: The Mayflower Press, 1928), 75-86.



translation of Pu Songling's tales produced in French.”<sup>32</sup> France criticized that, “The Chinese tales recently published by General Tcheng-ki-Tong appear to me to be much more artless than any previous translations of this nature...,” “The twenty-five tales collected and translated by General Tcheng-ki-Tong suffice to show that the Chinese have no hopes beyond this world, and have no conception of a divine ideal. Their moral ideals, like their paintings, are lacking in perspective and horizon.”<sup>33</sup> France's first comment regarding the artistic forms Chen adopted in his adaptation was somehow echoed by some modern critics on Chen's translation: “an informal manner” (Ren), “a ‘confused’ and ‘unsteady’ narrative and a ‘flat style’” (Li Jinjia).<sup>34</sup> The second comment by France in fact reflected his impression of reading the stories, which were popular stories “analogous to our stories of Old Mother Goose, full of dragons, vampires, little foxes, women like flowers, and porcelain gods.” In terms of the characters, themes and plots, France felt that those Chinese popular tales were “spoilt by superfluous lumber and improbabilities” (for instance, endings tend to “resuscitate the dead”), and filled with “grimacing atmosphere,” while characters often lack “a more humane disposition.”<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, whether it was praise or controversy, Chen did act as an influential contributor of introducing Chinese culture and literature to the West at the time.

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<sup>32</sup> Li Jinjia, *Le Liaozhai zhiyi en français (1880-2004): étude historique et critique des traductions* (Paris: Librairie You-Feng, 2009), 25-28. Cited in Ren Ke, “Fin-de-Siècle Diplomat: Chen Jitong (1852-1907) and Cosmopolitan Possibilities in the Late Qing World” (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2014), 148.

<sup>33</sup> France, 76, 78.

<sup>34</sup> Li Jinjia, 25-28. Ren, 148.

<sup>35</sup> France, 78-80.

While Chen was noticed as a notable cultural ambassador in Paris, in China, Chen's extraordinary success in the west remained obscure in his days except that Zeng Pu (1872-1935) "was the only person who tried to establish Chen's name on the Chinese literary stage."<sup>36</sup> To Zeng, who had taken Chen as his mentor for French and world literature, Chen Jitong was an admirable hero on both the political and literary stage. Chen was a patriot known for the poem mourning the cession of Taiwan in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895).<sup>37</sup> Also, according to Zeng Pu, who put an advertisement in 1928 intended to solicit materials on and by Chen, "to this very day (1928) there is no literary oeuvre of any Chinese writer holding a rank on the stage of world literature comparable to his (Chen Jitong's)."<sup>38</sup> In Zeng Pu's most famous work *Niehai hua* 孽海花 (Flower in the Sea of Evil), he modeled one character Chen Jidong 陳驥東 on Chen Jitong, in which an episode of a duel between Chen Jidong's French wife and his English mistress is amusing as well as thought-provoking. Besides Zeng, among the cohort of the very few early appreciators of Chen are his countryman and poet Chen Yan 陳衍 (1856-1937) and his sister-in-law Xue Shaohui 薛紹徽 (1866-1911).

Nevertheless, recent scholarship has paid more attention to this legendary figure: in the west, more than one researchers have published articles and work on Chen. Yet

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<sup>36</sup> Yeh, 436.

<sup>37</sup> Chen Jitong, "Diao Taiwan silü" no.2 "吊臺灣四律" 其二: "金錢卅兆買遼回, 一島如何付劫灰? 強謂彈丸等甌脫, 卻叫鎖綸委塵埃。傷心地竟和戎割, 太息門因揖盜開。聚鐵可憐真鑄錯, 天時人事兩難猜!" Cited in Shao Chun 邵純, "Gei Chen Jitong ying you de lishi diwei" 給陳季同以應有的歷史地位, *Shishi qiushi* 實事求是 (May 2002): 73-75.

<sup>38</sup> Bing Fu 病夫 (Zeng Pu), "Zhengqiu Chen Jitong xiansheng shiji jiqi zuopin" 徵求陳季同先生事蹟及其作品, *Zhen mei shan* 真美善 6 (1928): inside front page. Also see Yeh, 436.

most of the recent scholarship on him is in China: starting from the translation and publication of his first and most famous book *The Chinese Painted by Themselves* in China in 1998, translations and studies on him have been published in succession.<sup>39</sup> However, as one reads more, the image of Chen Jitong and the interpretations of his works become more complicated and questionable. On the one hand, recent Chinese scholarship shows an amazing consensus exalting Chen as the first Chinese to have published works in the west, and to have received considerable recognition: his project of promoting Chinese culture to the west is around 20 years earlier than Gu Hongmin, and half a century earlier than Lin Yutang 林語堂 (1895-1976).<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, detailed and critical interpretations of his works are missing in most Chinese studies (even Li Huachuan's monograph on Chen provides primarily a comprehensive introduction to his life and works). In this sense, the content and value of Chen's books are simplified as only a symbol marking the reception of Chinese culture in the western

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<sup>39</sup> Some examples are:

Li Huachuan 李華川, "Chen Jitong shengping shishi kao" 陳季同生平史事考, *Qingshi luncong* 清史論叢 (2002), accessed July 20, 2017, <http://www.xiangyata.net/data/articles/a01/298.html>. "Yige wanqing waijiaoguan zai ouzhou" 一個晚清外交官在歐洲, *Zhonghua dushu bao* 中華讀書報, August 16, 2001. *Wanqing yige waijiaoguan de wenhua licheng* 晚清一個外交官的文化歷程 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe 北京大學出版社, 2004). Shao Chun 邵純, "Gei Chen Jitong ying you de yishi diwei" 給陳季同以應有的歷史地位, *Shishi qiushi* 實事求是 (May 2002): 73-75.

Huang Xingtao 黃興濤, "Jindai zhongxi wenhua jiaoliu shi shang bu ying bei yiwang de renwu—Chen Jitong qiren qishu" 近代中西文化交流史上不應被遺忘的人物-陳季同其人其書, *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiu* 中國文化研究, Vol.28 (summer 2000): 39-45. Sang Bing 桑兵, "Chen Jitong sulun" 陳季同述論, *Jindai shi yanjiu* 近代史研究, Vol. 4 (1999): 109-122. Yue Feng 嶽峰, "Dongxue xijian diyi ren---bei yiwang de fanyijia Chen Jitong" 東學西漸第一人——被遺忘的翻譯家陳季同, *Zhongguo fanyi* 中國翻譯, Vol. 22, No. 4 (July 2001): 54-57. Zhou Chunyan 周春燕, "Chen Jitong: Jindai zhongxue xijian de xianqu" 陳季同：近代中學西漸的先驅, *Zhenjiang shizhuan xuebao* 鎮江師專學報, Vol. 3 (2003): 92-94. Leo Tak-hung Chan, *One into Many: Translation and the Dissemination of Chinese Classical Literature* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2003), 84, 85.

<sup>40</sup> Yue, 54-57.

world, and their own attributes as subjects of study are forgotten, whether intentionally or unwittingly. Moreover, the countable western scholarships on him, as I demonstrated in the introduction, are also more or less limited in various aspects.

Then what kind of person was Chen? What did Chen choose to depict about China and what was left out? What prompted him to write and write in his particular way? How should we read his writings then, bearing a collage of complicated images of him and conflicting interpretations of his works in mind? At the first glance of the available materials, I doubted the possibility of a fruitful study, since the firsthand materials by Chen are very limited. Besides the fact that his first two books might be collaboration, what we have now is his record of the 15-day diplomatic negotiations during the Sino-French War, most of which are records of daily activities rather than subjective opinions.<sup>41</sup> Actually, during his first trip to Europe with the Qing delegation from 1875-1876 as an observer, he wrote 4 volumes of diaries, which might be valuable resources but were lost.<sup>42</sup> So what one has are different versions of anecdotes, biographical records and bits and pieces from others' literary works and diaries. However, scholarship on similar projects provides me with a solution.<sup>43</sup> If one admits the fact that the resources from which one is able to retrieve material are "craft" and never a single set of descriptive or explanatory "facts," one may shift the goal from

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<sup>41</sup> Li, "Chen Jitong shengping shishi kao," <http://www.xiangyata.net/data/articles/a01/298.html>.

<sup>42</sup> Huang, "Jindai zhongxi wenhua jiaoliu shi shang bu ying bei yiwang de renwu—Chen Jitong qiren qishu."

<sup>43</sup> See, among others, Gail Hershatter, *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Shanghai* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1997). Hu Ying, "Naming the First New Woman," *Nan Nü* (Brill, Leiden, 2001): 197-231.

searching for “‘the past’ out there” to a new study on the crafting process itself instead. To be specific, we may look more into “how”, and “why” instead of the invisible “what.”<sup>44</sup> According to Gail Hershatter, this process can be likened to “the onion approach,” in which if one concentrates on the search for some “imagined essential core,” “she is apt to find herself with nothing left but compost and irritated eyes.”<sup>45</sup> Rather, if what interests the person doing the peeling is the shape and the texture of the onion, and “the way it is constituted by the layers and the spaces between them,” or the difference in smell and shape when the onion appears as a unified whole or breaks apart, the research may be productive.

Following this principle, I would suggest two initial perspectives in the study of Chen Jitong’s first cross-cultural writing expedition: first, in terms of the individual objects of study, such as Chen Jitong and his works, one had better approach with caution that there are no coherent, complete and true pictures of them. Yet these specific sources have their uses since the choice of materials and rhetorics demonstrate separate yet interrelated aspects of this interesting figure and his historical context. Second, if one studies the sources as a group, that is, the strategies of different authors, both of firsthand and secondhand scholarship together, one may note a common implication in the cross-cultural discourse. In detail, the strategies such as the appropriation, transfiguration and dramatization of sources, or the tendency to promote a selection

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<sup>44</sup> Hershatter, 13.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

between what can be understood and what must be forgotten,<sup>46</sup> both Chen himself and scholars on him deployed, seem to suggest the tensions and solutions persistent in the dialogues between the East and the West, whether past or present.

To be specific, my scope of study in this chapter will be: first, a panoramic look at Chen's writing practice, primarily his first and representative work *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*. Second, a brief survey of his contemporary critical perspectives of Chen, such as Zeng Pu's and Anatole France's, as well as some of the relevant present scholarship. The aim is not to find the exact "truth," which is perhaps nowhere to find, but revelations and divergence in the juxtaposition of many accounts.

### **Chen Jitong's Dialogue with Western Modernity**

Chen Jitong intends clearly in the prologue of his first book *The Chinese Painted by Themselves* that the guiding principle for his writing is to overcome "what he considered shallow and uninformed Western opinions about life in China,"<sup>47</sup> by proposing "to represent China as it is" (de représenter la Chine telle qu'elle est).<sup>48</sup> His project, an essay collection composed of segments into which he divides Chinese civilization, such as "Family Life" (Considerations sur la famille), "Religion and Philosophy" (Religions et philosophie), "Education" (L' éducation), "Classes" (Les classes laborieuses), and "Pleasures" (Les plaisir) seems to initiate a promising

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<sup>46</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988). Cited in Hu Ying, "Naming the First New Woman," 198.

<sup>47</sup> Yeh, 437.

<sup>48</sup> Chen Jitong, *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*, 5. Tchong-Ki-Tong, *Les Chinois peints par eux-mêmes*. Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1884, VII.

constructive dialogue with the west to a great extent, yet it still, in many aspects, failed to maintain consistency by relapsing into an apparently emotional nationalist stance.

First, theoretically speaking, Chen Jitong did carry out a dialogue with the Parisian cosmopolitanism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. After Georg Simmel notes that cities like Paris are “the seat of cosmopolitanism,”<sup>49</sup> Walter Benjamin celebrates and embodies this idea in *The Arcades Project*, his chronicle of the whole history of the nineteenth century Paris, where its multicultural receptivity is especially symbolized in its arcades.<sup>50</sup> To him, this cosmopolitanism reflects in the flourishing of commodities from around the world and a multi-culture reception. However, the “cosmopolitanism,” seemingly self-sufficient, has at least two deficiencies: first, since Paris’s arcades are worlds of commodities and exhibits, does the commodification of world culture really lead to the claim that “the whole realm of culture, wherever it originates, is open to me?”

<sup>51</sup> Also, in the *Arcades Project*, no matter to what extent critics and writers, such as Balzac, Hugo, Marx, Fourier and Benjamin’s most beloved one, Baudelaire, express engagement and detachment in relation to the contemporary Paris, they are still insiders looking out in the western world of modernity. And participants from outside of the arcades seem to be excluded. If indeed “cosmopolitanism,” no matter with different emphasis in different context, bears with it the connotation of an agent as a “cultural

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<sup>49</sup> Georg Simmel, *The Metropolis and Mental Life*, adapted by D. Weinstein from Kurt H. Wolff (Trans.) *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* (New York: Free Press, 1950), 409-424.

<sup>50</sup> Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, (written 1927- 40, published 1982), trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin Mclaughin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

<sup>51</sup> Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” adapted by D. Weinstein and cited in *The Social Thought of Georg Simmel*, Horst J. Helle (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2014), 98.

mediator” and the “interaction” between world culture, as Leo Lee suggests,<sup>52</sup> then one might ask what the roles are and where the interactions in and out of the Parisian arcades are. Chen, having been educated in both China and France, and having stayed in Europe for 16 years and mostly in Paris, can be viewed as practicing cosmopolitanism in a fashion that Goethe proposes. Goethe envisions his literary cosmopolitanism in the realm of “world literature”: which is “intellectual barter, a traffic in ideas between peoples, a literary market to which the nations bring their intellectual treasures for exchange.”<sup>53</sup> And the aim is “not that nations should think alike, but that they should become aware of each other, and that even where there is no mutual affection, there should be tolerance.”<sup>54</sup> Thus Goethe extended the field for practicing cosmopolitanism from pure market of commodities to the literary or spiritual world. More importantly, he stressed the multidirectional exchange and traffic, in both the process and result, rather than a one-dimensional decision and maneuver. In this regard, Chen’s practice with the emphasis on “intellectual interaction” functions as a response against the limitation and exclusiveness of Parisian cosmopolitanism. This is particularly manifested in answers to two questions: 1. What view he expresses in his work toward western cosmopolitanism and western notion of modernity 2. Why does he choose to write in French instead of his native language Chinese and let French people translate it?

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<sup>52</sup> Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China 1930-1945*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 315.

<sup>53</sup> Fritz Strich, *Goethe and World Literature*, trans. C. A. M. Sym (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1949), 5.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.



First, one has to admit that Chen's writing practice stems from his real interaction with Paris, which separates him not only from the nationalists in China, who haven't seeing the world with their own eyes, but also from some self-claimed reformists or cosmopolitans in China, who, bearing merely an imaginary west in mind, eagerly embrace western culture. Thus Zeng Pu's admiration of Chen's having the chance to stay in France and lamenting his own lack of the similar overseas experience, can be seen as endorsing Chen's spatial interaction with Paris as a particularly important element in cultural exchange. To be specific, Chen's encounter with Paris, to a certain extent, is like a *flâneur* in Baudelaire's mode. *Flâneur* was a familiar literary figure in the streets of Paris of the nineteenth century. He was an idle urban "explorer" and the "connoisseur" of the street. "It was Walter Benjamin who made him the object of scholarly interest in the twentieth. For Benjamin, in his critical explorations of Charles Baudelaire's Paris explorations that opened up on an analysis of modernity-the *flâneur* was a powerful symbol."<sup>55</sup> To Benjamin, *flâneur* draws aesthetic inspirations from the crowd and the streets, while keeps his own alienated gaze and individuality.<sup>56</sup> As Leo Lee paraphrased, this is a wanderer in the commodity world, though resistant, makes his existence possible by the engagement with the urban crowd, no matter the relationship is "aesthetic, paradoxical, or erotic."<sup>57</sup> The engagement is such an irresistible stimulant that many of Chen's critiques of the city in his work stem from it.

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<sup>55</sup> Gregory Shaya, "The Flâneur, the Badaud, and the Making of a Mass Public in France, circa 1860–1910," *American Historical Review* 109 (2004): 47.

<sup>56</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Verso, 1984), 54,170.

<sup>57</sup> Lee, *Shanghai Modern*, 36.

For instance, the chapter on “Pleasures” begins with Chen’s dialogue with a French Madame in a gathering, who curiously asks whether Chinese has gaieties. Chen confesses that this is the most frequently asked questions for him in Europe. The “Institution of ‘La Sainte Enfance’” (orphanage) chapter derives from his strolling experience in the street, where an old lady behind him saying: “There is a Chinaman; who knows if it is not my halfpence that have bought him” (Voilà un Chinois; qui sait si ce ne sont pas mes sous qui l'ont acheté?).<sup>58</sup> In the “European society” chapter, he makes description and comments on various social activities he attends, since he has already recorded them “in two portfolios, the first of which bears the title ‘Notes of interrogation,’ and the second, ‘Notes of exclamation’” (dans deux portefeuilles dont le premier a pour titre: *points d'interrogation* et le second *points d'exclamation*).<sup>59</sup> Since he saw the west with his own eyes and learned and used the language in depth, he shuffled off the polarized vision of either blind rejection or rosy beautification of Chinese elites. He then saw things about the western civilization beyond one’s imagination, which owned his “exclamation,” and witnessed unpredicted problems of the western culture which provoked his “interrogation.” Furthermore, Chen’s inhabiting of the western metropolitan space contributed to his unique understanding of the western notion of modernity different from that of many Parisians which developed inside its own modernity and which boasted a sense of self content and universality.

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<sup>58</sup> Chen, *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*, 124. Tcheng, 175.

<sup>59</sup> Chen, 155. Tcheng, 223.

Thus Chen's attitude in the book showing his view of the contemporary modern life of the west is ambivalent. Chen's role can be related to the notion of *flâneur* as proposed by Benjamin, or the "walker" in Certeau's "Walking in the City." By being a Chinese *flâneur* in a foreign land, Chen appears as a site of resistance toward the Parisian crowd and the western modernity: he lives within it but is never absorbed or dedicated to it. As a walker in the city, he practices what Certeau proposed for an individual in everyday metropolitan life: to challenge the oppressive modern municipal constructions, such as Paris, by his own concrete practice. That is, he walks, lives, meditates and writes with individuality and subjectivity despite the imposing orderliness and institutionalization of the modern city.<sup>60</sup> For instance, he criticizes relentlessly that, though they have tasted "the fine color and flavor" "of the fruit of the western tree" (fruit de l'arbre d'Occident savons très bien que ce fruit a de belles couleurs), "after all its satisfactions are only those appertaining to a life of pleasure, and end by wearying even the giddiest" (il n'y a en somme que les satisfactions appartenant à la vie de plaisirs, et elles finissent par lasser les plus distraits).<sup>61</sup> To be specific, he is sick of "the well-attended assemblies," which are full of "pedantic, multi-colored, borrowed, ticketed wit" (pédant, multicolore, emprunté, étiqueté) and "the impromptus were prepared beforehand" (préparait d'avance ses mots) since to him, "when wit takes the field it ought to go across country! Nature is its best guide" (l'esprit, pour faire

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<sup>60</sup> Walter Benjamin, "The flâneur," *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Verso, 1984), 35-66. Michel De Certeau, "Walking in the City," *The Certeau Reader*, ed. Graham Ward (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 101-118.

<sup>61</sup> Chen, 153. Tchong, 220.

campagne, doit battre la campagne! La nature est son meilleur guide!).<sup>62</sup> He also cannot stop recalling the experience during which the hostess of a party is amazed by the beauty of his colorful costume, while complaining their own society has become gatherings of black coats. To him, the regretting of “the disappearance of costumes,” is not merely induced by the appearance of “the richness of our silk and the imposing elegance of the dress” (la richesse de notre soie et l'imposante élégance du costume), but mostly by their doubt about the idea of destroying distinctions and individuality in the modern society.<sup>63</sup> Although Chen was often requested by the host ladies to come to the parties in his national costumes, he was not in the unwilling stance of “performing.” His view was in accordance with the French women on fashion: “Women would never have had the idea of adopting a society uniform. How have they been able to allow the men to do it” (Les femmes n'auraient jamais eu l'idée de s'imposer un uniforme de société; comment ont-elles pu laisser aux hommes la possibilité de l'adopter?).<sup>64</sup> In this sense, Chen’s awareness of the insatiability for physical pleasure and the loss of wit, spontaneity and distinctiveness in terms of both people and objects in Parisian gatherings and salons corresponds perhaps, with Benjamin’s understanding of arcades as manifestations of the expanding market economy, in which people participates in the “fetishism of the commodity” and lose their individual reactions and “productive energy.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 156-157. Tcheng, 225-226.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 160-161. Tcheng, 231.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 161. Tcheng, 232.

<sup>65</sup> Barbara Johnson, “Passage Work,” *Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, ed. Beatrice Hanssen (London: A&C Black, 2006), 66, 70-71.

Besides, Chen's particular role as one straddling different spaces and cultures makes his cosmopolitan vision broader than that of a French *flâneur* inside the Parisian society and that of those literati officials in China. For instance, although Benjamin and Baudelaire may be convinced that the Parisian arcades are a source of deceptive illusion, they still embrace it as a shelter, "a world in miniature," as if "in which customers will find everything they need."<sup>66</sup> In contrast, Chen sees this phenomenon as dilettantism, and is against the commodification of world culture under the cover of cosmopolitanism. To him, this commodification tears objects from its context and history. Instead, he advocates that:

But to depict the simple existence at the family hearth; to study a language in order to meditate upon its traditions; to live a people's daily life---Mandarin with the Mandarins, man of letters with the literary class, workman with the workmen---in a word, Chinese with the Chinese.

Mais montrer la vie simple qui s'écoule au foyer de la famille; étudier la langue pour méditer sur les traditions; vivre de la vie de chaque jour, en mandarin avec les mandarins ; en lettré avec les lettrés; en ouvrier avec les ouvriers ; en un mot, en Chinois avec les Chinois,<sup>67</sup>

As shown above as well as in his whole work, Chen proposes approaching culture in a deeper sense: that is, to learn the language, to write and to know customs, history, literature, and even aphorisms, which are behind the tangible objects and fleeting objects.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 31.

<sup>67</sup> Chen, 4. Tcheng, V.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-6.

Another facet showing Chen's unique critical attitude in his book lies in his query of the concept of modernity itself. As Leo Lee proposes, the western post-Enlightenment tradition of modernity is known as "positivistic and inherently 'monological' tendencies embedded in its faith in human reason and progress."<sup>69</sup> For instance, Baudelaire calls modernity "the transitory, the fugitive, and the contingent,"<sup>70</sup> and Berman proposes "the restless, dynamic and open-ended" as the essence of modern which have its main critics such as Marx, Baudelaire and Nietzsche etc.<sup>71</sup> However, Chen Jitong seems to repudiate the legitimacy of assuming a western linear and monopolistic conception of modernity as a universal and ideal model of progress. For instance, he explicitly suggests that "the splendors of luxury represent in our eyes only curiosities, and not real progress" (Les éblouissements du luxe ne représentent à nos yeux que des curiosités et non pas des progrès réels), and development doesn't necessarily lie in endless change, since sometimes a step further will leads to a reverse consequence. As an alternative to the linear progress logic, he suggests it is perhaps unnecessary to keep changing if things in its own realm already reach the optimal state.<sup>72</sup> Whether he is right or wrong is beside the point here. What is really important lies in his promoting an alternative mode (which resonates with current cultural critics) to the conventional notion of universal modernity: the cultures are unique in their own realms,

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<sup>69</sup> Leo Lee, *Shanghai Modern*, 44.

<sup>70</sup> Charles Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Seuil, n.d.), 553. English translation cited in Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), 48.

<sup>71</sup> Marshall Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into the Air* (New York: Penguin, 1983), 63.

<sup>72</sup> Chen, *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*, 154, 188.Tcheng, 222, 268-269.

and neither is newer and better than the other and thus a singular one to override or replace others is impossible.

### **The Choice of Writing in French**

As a precursor of cultural bridging, Chen not only engage in dialogue with the western audience on the notion of modernity through his critical observation, but also chooses to write in a second language himself. This preference for writing in French rather than Chinese, as a cultural maneuver, is worthy of attention. Although it is raised that Foucault de Mondion, who had worked with Chen in the Chinese consulate claimed that he had a hand in the writing of Chen's first two books including *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*, scholars have found solid materials defending Chen as a qualified author. For instance, besides Chen's own rebuff of Mondion's claims, which was published in *Le Temps* (The Time) in October 1889, Catherine Yeh had the chance to read the numerous letters by Chen, which Mondion quoted in his book *Quand J'étais Mandarin* (When I was a Mandarin) as proof of Chen's lacking command of French. Yeh wrote, "Except for some minor mistakes on rare words, however, these letters display a considerable mastery of the language and elegance in using it."<sup>73</sup> Li Huachuan, a Chinese scholar on Chen, who has been able to access materials on and by Chen in both Chinese and French libraries and institutes, also presents a conclusion similar to Yeh's judgment by a sinologist, Henri Cordier (1849-1925) at the time.<sup>74</sup> In

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<sup>73</sup> Yeh, 440n51.

<sup>74</sup> Li Huachuan, "Chen Jitong shengping shishi kao," <http://www.xiangyata.net/data/articles/a01/298.html>, n64.

another article on Chen in *Zhonghua dushu bao* 中華讀書報 (The Chinese Reading Newspaper), Li wrote that Chen's speech was given acclaim by Romain Rolland in his diary on February 18<sup>th</sup>, 1889.<sup>75</sup> More importantly, Chen had several other books published in France after Mondion's death, which had been found consistent in style and language with his early works.<sup>76</sup> Overall, having graduated as a student of French at the Fuzhou Arsenal, Chen Jitong, unlike other officials such as Xue Fucheng 薛福成 (1838-1894), was qualified to write in French himself.

More than that, we may conjecture that he might choose to do so purposefully as a way of gaining agency against the translation of his works as rewriting or appropriation. Many translation theories have echoed the notion that “to translate meant to conquer” (Nietzsche), “this appropriation is essentially imperialistic” (Friedrich Schleiermacher), “the translator single-handedly creates the text's use-value for the targeted readership (Andrew F. Jones), and “the translator or some other agent in the host language always initiates the linguistic transaction by inviting, selecting, combining, and reinventing words and texts from the guest language...” (Lydia Liu).<sup>77</sup> The ideal of “world literature,” first coined by Goethe in a utopian tone in 1827, in reality, “more often than not, has served as a site for the (almost invariably unequal) exchange, appropriation, and accumulation of (financial and cultural) capital between the West and its others. These complex transactions, in turn, hinge on the practice of

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<sup>75</sup> Li Huachuan. “Yige wanqing waijiaoguan zai ouzhou.”

<sup>76</sup> Li Huachuan, “Chen Jitong shengping shishi kao.”

<sup>77</sup> Andrew F. Jones, “Chinese Literature in the ‘world’ Literary Economy,” *Modern Chinese Literature*, Vol. 8 (1994):171-190. Quotes other than his own here are cited from this article by him.



translation.”<sup>78</sup> Therefore being aware of the possible host- guest, and exhibitor-gazer relationship in the cultural world in reality, Chen Jitong may take it strategically against the potential appropriation by writing in the target language. In Zeng Pu’s letter to Hu Shi, he recalls the conversation on translation between him and his mentor on French literature, Chen Jitong. Zeng reported that, according to Chen, Chinese literature and culture were disparaged in France even by some much acclaimed critics, partly because the problematic translation. He thinks bad translation at least leads to two consequences: estrangement and misunderstanding.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, his writing in French himself may be seen as in a way both to make himself linguistically accessible to French readers, and to make full use of his familiarity with Chinese culture in regard to content. Of course, in the cultural exchange, he could not take control of the whole literary market, and his works, during their publication and distribution in France, may have incurred inevitable appropriation, but if we triangulate the writer, work and reader relationship, we may think that at least from the writer-work perspective, Chen tried to exert his agency and subjectivity by avoiding the in-between role of the translator. He claimed in the prologue that his aim in the book is to eliminate western prejudice and misunderstanding of Chinese culture and Chinese people. In this sense, Chen again, participates as an active mediator, revoking the unequal guest-host, or exhibit-gazer

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., his own argument in the article focusing on the “unequal transactions” in the field of world literature, 173.

<sup>79</sup> Zeng Pu, “Lun fanyi-yu Zeng Mengpu xiansheng shu; fu lu Zeng xiansheng da shu” 論翻譯—與曾孟朴先生書，附錄曾先生答書 (hereafter “a letter to Hu Shi”), cited in Hu Shi, *Hu Shi wencun* 胡適文存, vol.3 (Shanghai: yadong tushuguan 上海亞東圖書館, 1931):1125-42.

relations covered behind the Parisian cosmopolitanism.

### **The Nationalist Tint**

However, although Chen's straddling stance makes him a contributory cultural mediator, and he did show deep insight into Eastern and Western cultures, he also, in many cases, undercuts the persuasiveness of his argument by frequently assuming the role of a nationalist in the work *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*. This phenomenon is manifest in the following aspects:

First, the then intense Sino-French confrontation may hinder Chen from adopting a rather disinterested mode of cross-cultural analysis that favors ultimate understanding, although he maintains it to be his best wish in the book. For instance, he defensively elevates concubinage and imperial examination system while he devalues certain values of western civilization. In the "Woman" chapter, he is in defense of Chinese concubinage just because the mistresses in China are not recognized and legitimate, like those in Europe.<sup>80</sup> And the superiority of Chinese educational system, as he claims in the "Education" chapter, lies in its aim, which is to "diffuse science among the masses, in order to bring forward true talent, and make it serviceable to the State" (de répandre la science dans la masse du peuple, afin d'en extraire le véritable talent et le faire servir au bien de l'État).<sup>81</sup>

According to Paul Willemens, there are three options available to Third World

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<sup>80</sup> Chen Jitong, 51.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 112-114. Tcheng, 157.

artists in any discourse of national–cultural identity.<sup>82</sup> First is to “identify with the dominant and dominating culture;” meaning to forfeit one’s own traditions and to adopt those of the “first world;” second, “to develop the antagonistic sense of national identity by seeking to reconnect with traditions that got lost or were displaced and distorted;” in this way, certain traditions are invoked, manipulated and transfigured as against the assault of western culture. Third, “particular aspects of some cultures are selected and elevated into essentialized symbols of the national identity: the local answer to imperialism’s stereotypes.” That is to say, a self-exoticism is employed to cater to the imperialist gaze. Here, Chen seems to have chosen the second option. This also corresponds to Levenson’s idea of members of the Chinese elite in the face of the western assault in the nineteenth century, “Part of their answer was to glorify Chinese cultural practices.”<sup>83</sup> Therefore, no matter if it is concubinage or the educational system, when deployed by nationalism, they are magnified or romanticized as tools of antagonism.

Second, the latent defensive attitude also manifests in the frequent absence of the “subaltern” group in his work. This notion, borrowed from historian Ranajit Guha, was defined “as connoting a person ‘of inferior rank,’ one who possesses “the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of

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<sup>82</sup> Paul Willemsen, “The Third Cinema Question: Notes and Reflections,” *Questions of Third Cinema*, eds. Jim Pines and Paul Willemsen (London: British Film Institute, 1989), 18. Cited in Zhang Yingjin, *Screening China, Critical Interventions, Cinematic Reconfigurations, and the Transnational Imaginary in Contemporary Chinese Cinema*, Michigan Monographs in Chinese Studies, vol.92 (The University of Michigan: Center for Chinese Studies, 2002), 221.

<sup>83</sup> Joseph Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972). Cited in Hershatler, 21.

class, caste, age, gender and office or in many other way.”<sup>84</sup> In Chen’s case, he, in several chapters, he either ignores the subaltern, or speaks for them with his own voices. Obvious cases are: in order to glorify the Chinese educational system, Chen claims that all Chinese receive a certain kind of education, which is obviously a distortion of the subaltern situation. When mentioning the marriage ceremonies, or the pleasures of Chinese, Chen seems to focus on a certain group of people: the upper class or the elite, since for these people, “a palanquin lined with embroidered red satin” (*une chaise à porteurs garnie de satin rouge brodé*) is a must for the husband to receive his wife, and “the sparkle of intellect plays the most important part in our pleasures” (*L'esprit joue dans nos plaisirs le plus grand rôle*).<sup>85</sup> Even in a particular chapter dedicated to “the below,” “the working class,” Chen optimistically claims, “It would be seen, for example, how cheap living is. With twopence daily a workman can live, and his wages are never less than tenpence” (*On y apprendrait, par exemple, quel est le bôn marché de la vie. Avec quatre sous par jour un ouvrier peut vivre, et son salaire n'est jamais inférieur à un franc*). “All the cultivators are generally well off, whether they own the land, or only farm it ...and it is customary for the farmer not to pay rent in bad seasons” (*Tous les cultivateurs sont généralement aisés, soit qu'ils possèdent la terre, soit qu'ils en soient seulement les fermiers... et il est de règle que le fermier ne doit pas le fermage dans les mauvaises années*).<sup>86</sup> Prasenjit Duara remarks that “nationalism is often considered to override other identities within a society—such as religious, racial, linguistic, class,

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<sup>84</sup> Cited in Gale Hershatter, 22 and note 66.

<sup>85</sup> Chen Jitong, 30, 141. Tcheng, 34, 203.

<sup>86</sup> Chen Jitong, 130-131. Tcheng, 186-187.

gender or even historical ones-to encompass these differences in a larger identity.”<sup>87</sup>

The loss of the subaltern or the appropriation of the subaltern voices sometimes in Chen’s work might be considered as one of his purposefully taken agenda.

Third, Chen’s depiction of Chinese women is worth attention too. In the “Woman” chapter, he claimed the superiority of the masculine gender over the feminine a law of Nature in China. There are noticeable phrases like, “woman has no need to perfect herself” (La femme n'a pas besoin de se perfectionner), “by marrying, a woman becomes a minor” (En se mariant, la femme devient une mineure), and (she) “is content to devote her existence to her family” (se contente de vivre pour les siens).<sup>88</sup> Is that his wholehearted thoughts that grace and sweetness are the only necessary traits of women, or does his emphasis reveal a certain kind of agenda? While we will elaborate further in another chapter, with the consideration of the nationalist concern here, one may argue that, to Chen, the submissive character of women desired or required by the traditional patriarchal system should be confirmed and glorified, since in this way, Chinese women can be seen as in perfect harmony with the male nationalists, and the latter easily get allies against the western assault.

### **Zeng Pu and Anatole France’s Critique**

Besides Chen’s own work, the contemporary comments on him is worth consideration if one treats Chen’s case as a cultural phenomenon. In China, being “the

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<sup>87</sup> Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation* (University of Chicago Press, 1995), 10.

<sup>88</sup> Chen, 47, 48, 49. Tchong, 60, 61, 62.

only person who tried to establish Chen's name on the Chinese literary stage,"<sup>89</sup> Zeng Pu credited his achievement in French to Chen, and solicited attention to Chen in advertisements as well as modeled one character Chen Jidong 陳驥東 in his novel *Niehai hua*. This may show how a semicolonial male elite projects his admiration, appreciation, imagination and expectation into another, a figure more anomalous in his own time, straddling two worlds and maintaining ties to both.

First, Zeng Pu had a great admiration for Chen as a cultural hero. In the letter to Hu Shi, he regrets that he did not have the chance to study abroad, while Chen has had long overseas experience, during which he has been well received in France.<sup>90</sup> In his advertisement soliciting attention to Chen, he even claims Chen's works hold the highest rank on the stage of world literature.<sup>91</sup> Why does he consider the overseas study experience that important? And why does he treat Chen's success in France or in Europe as equal to the greatest achievement in "world literature," while knowing the truth that Chen never has "been mentioned by anyone in the literary scene of modern Chinese letters"? In my view, his attitude reveals the strong sense of anxiety of contemporary Chinese intellectuals as they faced China's lagging behind the western world in many areas. This may lead to two subsequent mindsets: first, the superiority of western literature legitimizes itself as being an equivalent to world literature, and second, winning western recognition (diploma, publication as well as royalty on books)

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<sup>89</sup> Yeh, 436.

<sup>90</sup> Zeng Pu, 1125-42.

<sup>91</sup> Bing Fu 病夫 (Zeng Pu), "Zhengqiu Chen Jitong xiansheng shiji jiqi zuopin."

represents an admirable form of cultural capital.<sup>92</sup>

In the episode of a duel between Chen Jidong's French wife and his English mistress in *Niehai hua*, Zeng may project a kind of expectation onto Chen: the capability to reestablish agency in face of the foreign assault. The episode is based on Chen Jitong's real life, when in 1884 he married a French woman and brought her back to China after his Chinese wife's death. However, the episode in the book, condensed in chapter 31 and 32 has an added flavor. According to Zeng, it is due to Chen's literary sensation in Europe that another English girl fell in love with him like Zhuo Wenjun 卓文君 (fl. 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC) 's falling in love with Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (c.179 -117 BC). Regardless of the fact that he is married, the English girl followed him to Shanghai and happily served as his mistress. The story reaches its climax at the point that the French wife is about to initiate a duel, and finally, the English mistress, in concern of Chen's fame and future, leaves for England with regret and unwillingness. How should one read this seemingly amusing story? Liang Qichao, in his *Xindalu Youji* 新大陸遊記 (Notes on the Tour of a New Continent), mentions his meeting with the overseas Chinese students at Harvard, "everyone marries a foreign woman, which is another incompatible event with patriotism, sigh."<sup>93</sup> According to Liang, matrimonial union should not go against the stipulations of nationalism, which should override all other

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<sup>92</sup> Inspired by Carlos Prado-Fonts "Zeng Pu and the Critical Translation of Western Literature," with the brilliant connection with Pierre Bourdieu's theory in *Language and Symbolic Power*, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

<sup>93</sup> 在光緒二十九年(1903)的《新大陸遊記》中,梁啟超提及自己在哈佛大學會見當時中國初次出洋留美的學生時,說“人人皆有一西婦,此亦與愛國心不相容之一原因也,一歎。”Liang Qichao 梁啟超,“Xindalu youji jielu”新大陸遊記節錄, *Yinbingshi heji* 飲冰室合集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1989), vol.7, 47.

relations during that turbulent time. Here in this episode on Chen Jitong, it may be interpreted as an ingenious way to reclaim national pride: instead of being a Chinese male chasing a western wife, the story shows two European women's intoxication with Chen, women who are willing to sacrifice their own lives and their happiness to win his love. Zeng might reveal his expectation that the subaltern position assumed by Chinese male elite vis-à-vis those in the west in the discourse of national and cultural identity can be counteracted by their regaining the superior status in the discourse of gender by conquering western women.

Although Zeng Pu didn't scant his praise of Chen, he, in one letter to Hu Shi, also points out some different critique on Chen in France, such as Anatole France, the widely acclaimed French writer. As I mentioned earlier, in *Life and Letters* by France, there is a chapter on "Chinese Tales," in which he relentlessly criticizes Chinese literature, including the tales he has read from *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋志異 translated by Chen Jitong. France's critique, though pertinent in some way in his criticism of the themes and format of Chinese tales, to a great degree, fits what Said defines as Orientalism. For example, he repeatedly assumes an arrogant and dominating tone to judge Chinese literature, which reminds one of Said's remarks that "Orientalism is a Western style for dominating, reconstructing and having authority over the orient."<sup>94</sup> At the beginning of the chapter, though admitting that "I am little versed in Chinese literature," and "I was slightly acquainted with M. Guillaume Pauthier (a sinologist of his day) during his life time," he stated with certainty: "I never believed" Pauthier's

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<sup>94</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage books, 1979), 2.



argument that “Confucius was a greater philosopher than Plato.”<sup>95</sup> As Said’s theory suggests, “Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and the ‘occident’,” and the binary oppositions are, for instance, feminine and masculine; irrational and rational; depraved and virtuous, childlike and mature; different and normal, etc. It seems that the orient is often “the contrasting image, idea, experience” which is created to help to define Europe.<sup>96</sup> For France, this deep-rooted sense of “distinction” affects greatly his critique of Chinese culture and Chen’s translation of Chinese tales. To be specific, when mentioning Guillaume Pauthier, the sinologist, he indicates that “he had somehow acquired the small slanting eyes and the moustache of a Tartar,”<sup>97</sup> and “he knew Chinese better than French,” as if the acquaintance with anything from the east is a label of “anomaly.” When commenting on Chen Jitong’s translation of Chinese tales, he says, these stories “are sometimes charming, like our pious legends, sometimes full of marvels, like our fairy tales, and sometimes altogether horrible.” and it is this “grimacing atmosphere” that makes “nearly all Chinese literature unbearable.”<sup>98</sup> According to France, if they appear “charming” and “full of marvels,” they resemble French tales, but when they appear “horrible,” he avoids making any connection with French culture, as if Chinese tales are exactly deployed as “contrasting” images to accentuate the greatness of the European civilization.

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<sup>95</sup> France, “Chinese Tales,” *On Life and Letters*, 75-85.

<sup>96</sup> Said, 2-5.

<sup>97</sup> France, 75.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

### **Some Current Critical Analysis of Chen Jitong**

Some current critique on Chen is perhaps like the outer layers of this onion, which may help to show the shape as a whole, and also projects the developing tendency of Chen's case. Similarly, the dichotomizing concepts and contested situation seem still prevail in the current scholarship on Chen.

As for the Chinese side, among the critical articles on Chen, except for Li Huachuan's two articles, "Research of the historical facts about Chen Jitong's life" 陳季同生平史實考, and "A late Qing diplomat in Europe" 一個晚清外交官在歐洲, which show his mastery of materials from both inside and out of China, as well as a relatively comprehensive review of Chen's life including his delinquencies, all articles seem to show a consensus exalting Chen without mentioning any blemish in either his books and his life. This embodies perhaps the China-centered paradigm, as opposed to the Western-centered approach. For instance, the titles of four articles may be suggestive of the influence of the antagonistic attitude. Among the titles, "First person introducing Eastern learning to the West: Chen Jitong, the translator in oblivion" 東學西漸第一人---被遺忘的翻譯家陳季同, "The one who should not be forgotten in Modern history of cultural exchange between China and the West: Chen Jitong and his works" 近代中西文化交流史上不應被遺忘的人物-陳季同其人其書, "Chen Jitong: the pioneer to disseminate the Chinese learning to the west in modern time" 陳季同：近代中學西漸的先驅, "To give Chen Jitong his rightful place in history" 給陳季同以應有的歷史地位, one will find it interesting that the three mention the main

discourse in which Chen, and perhaps many other Chinese were involved during the nineteenth to twentieth century: the encounter between “China and the West” (中西), “East and the West” (東西). Two uses the word “forgotten” (被遺忘的), which perhaps suggests nostalgia for a lost cultural position: a long-gone past when the cultural flow is more from China to the West. Two titles’ emphasis on “disseminating Chinese (eastern) learning to the West” (中學西漸) may imply the strong sense of competition and the desire to regain superiority in this discourse. “first” (第一人), “pioneer” (先驅), “to regain sb. a rightful place” (給...應有的歷史地位) may imply the intent to seek a reversion of the power relation more explicitly.

As for the western side, some researchers seem also more or less caught in the dichotomizing and “orientalizing” pitfall. For instance, in Catherine Vance Yeh’s “The Life-Style of Four Wenren in Late Qing Shanghai,” she exaggerates the impact of the western literary tradition and the western life experience on Chen, and neglects the influence of Chinese tradition and environment on him. She claims that “Chen Jitong’s literary style was entirely Europeanized,” and Chen’s writing style is entirely influenced by the western literary tradition, among which the humanistic description of China may be inspired by the novel *The Last Mohican* (1826) of the “noble savage.”<sup>99</sup> In fact, Chen’s *The Chinese Painted by Themselves* is an exhibit composed of Chinese anecdotes, legends, poems and he writes the essays in a poetic way. One can see the influence of Chinese tradition of analogue and imagery. If we have a close look at Chen’s pioneering practice in the book, he seems to carry out the principle Paul Cohen

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<sup>99</sup> Yeh, 439, 440.

has contended almost a hundred years later: discovering history in China.<sup>100</sup> Chen's writing is of course neither a history nor the "truth," but a reflection through the lens of his own. In general, his writing does demonstrate the influence of both western and Chinese literary traditions as well as the transnational reality he was in. Thus as I will demonstrate in the following chapters, it is not merely a "response" to the western "impact" and influence. Meanwhile, Yeh's claim that "although he was probably the most Westernized Chinese of his time he soothed his conscience by taking a patriot's stance" implies a sense of superiority and arbitrariness, rather than taking Chen's critical stance as his serious meditation as well as a voluntary stance.<sup>101</sup>

Layer by layer, one will notice that there is perhaps no complete and true picture of Chen in different representations, just as there is no essential core inside the onion. However, he does appear in each layer and plays a crucial role in different narratives. Although critics and writers invoke his case to voice their own preoccupations with different strategies, such as appropriation, transfiguration and dramatization, and their styles are direct or indirect, light-hearted or serious; they together reveal the tensions and prejudice persistent and pervasive in the realm of the East and West contact. The magnetic field of contest for dominance is so powerful that both Chen Jitong and his critics are stranded in yet strive to struggle out.

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<sup>100</sup> Paul Cohen, *Discovering History in China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

<sup>101</sup> Yeh, 443.

## **Masculinity Imperiled, Masculinity Regained: Chen Jitong's Anxiety in *The Chinese Painted by Themselves***

One of the striking features in Chen's first book is his polemic stance in refuting the westerners' prejudice and his defensiveness of almost everything Chinese, while in his later works he seems more eclectic, praising more of the advanced traits of the western civilization and questioning problems of China with less restraint. For instance, in *The Paris Painted by Chinese*, which he, still a diplomat in Europe, wrote just six years later, he regrets that China does not have libraries, museums for open access and lags behind in modern education facilities and media, and even advocates for Chinese compatriots to open up to learn the western science and literature. He even claims that he is not bigoted and respects western customs and cannot tell which civilization is better among the two.<sup>102</sup>

Li Huachuan's explanation for Chen's conspicuous "anger-refutation" mode in his early books is that this is mainly out of his identity as a diplomat and may even be out of his true intent.<sup>103</sup> However, if the alleged obligation of a diplomat is to represent and guard one's country's interest in every possible way, why was Chen Jitong rather polemic and assertive in his book *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*, whereas in reality, he assumed a pivotal role in the making of a compromising and capitulatory agreement in the early stage of the Sino-France war. On the contrary, his boss and a senior "diplomat," the then ambassador to France, Zeng Jize 曾紀澤 (1839-1890), stuck to his unyielding stance in the war. If it is his true intent to stick to Chinese tradition

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<sup>102</sup> Tchong-Ki-Tong, *Les Parisiens Peints par un Chinois* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1891), 20.

<sup>103</sup> Li Huachuan 李華川, *Wanqing yige waijiaoguan de wenhua licheng* 晚清一個外交官的文化歷程 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe 北京大學出版社, 2004), 76.

and Confucian doctrines, why did he compliment aspects of western cultures in later books, and after he went back to China in 1891, he even avidly joined the reform movement by initiating new schools for women and publish enlightening newspapers.

Therefore the argument based on his being a “diplomat” itself might be a bit simple and reductive to interpret Chen’s overtly defensive tone in his first book. In fact, if we bring in the theories of masculinity into the study of Chen’s case here, one may regard him as a late nineteenth-century overseas-student-turned-diplomat, who underwent an identity crisis, and this book at the time of war was partially a product out of his inner frustration. In this chapter, I will examine Chen’s activities during the war to facilitate a controversial peace talk and his effort to get an advance in office, and how these factors may have attributed to his writing in a traditionalist tone. Further, I will examine how and why he particularly stresses the women issue in *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*.

### **Chen Jitong in the Sino-French War: Allegiance, Aspiration and Frustration**

In the 70s and 80s of the nineteenth century, France had coveted Vietnam for long and planned for a penetration for two reasons: one is to check the influence of British Empire, and the other is to open up trade route into southwestern China.<sup>104</sup> In December 1883, a French troop of 6000 launched an attack on northern Vietnam and so the showdown between the previous suzerainty of Vietnam and a new pursuer had begun.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Zhang Yansheng 張雁深, *Zhongfa waijiao guanxishi kao* 中法外交關係史考 (Changsha: Shizhe yanjiu she 史哲研究社, 1950), 143-148.

<sup>105</sup> Jinan 季南, *1880-1880 nian yingguo duihua waijiao* 1880-1885 年英國對華外交, trans. Xu Buzeng 許步曾 (Beijing: shangwu yinshu guan 商務印書館, 1984), 132.

The then ambassador to London and Paris, Zeng Jize, who played an important role preceding the Sino-French War, lamented that he was estranged from French dignitaries due to his confrontations and denunciations of French policy.<sup>106</sup> In fact, Li Hongzhang 李鴻章 (1823-1901), the viceroy of Zhili 直隸總督 and Minister of Beiyang 北洋大臣, who had grand power in making foreign policies, advocated an appeasement policy with France.<sup>107</sup> His opinion was not only different from Zeng Jize, his junior, but also from the influential war party led by Zhang Zhidong 張之洞 (1837-1909), head of the scholars of the Hanlin Academy 翰林院, and Zuo Zongtang 左宗棠 (1812-1885) and Peng Yulin 彭玉麟 (1816-1890), the famous military commanders.<sup>108</sup> Why did Li Hongzhang oppose war against France? One is that he overestimated French's resolution and power to win the potential war with China by stating that in no way would France be daunted by China to rebound after its humiliating defeat in the French-Prussian War.<sup>109</sup> Another reason is that he thought China lacked the military strength to resist the French army and he did not send his Beiyang Fleet 北洋艦隊 out to help the southern navy out of selfishness.<sup>110</sup>

The divergent opinions from Zeng Jize stimulated Li Hongzhang to resort to other channels to reach an agreement with the French side, and Chen Jitong, who was fluent in French and studied in France, was considered as a best go-between by Li. Chen

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<sup>106</sup> Zhang Zhenkun 張振鶴, ed., *Zhongfa zhanzheng* 中法戰爭 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1995-2006), vol.1, 612-613.

<sup>107</sup> The Compilation Committee of Journal of the Archives of Chinese Modern Economic History 中國近代經濟史資料叢刊編輯委員會 ed., *Zhongguo haiguan yu zhongfa zhanzheng* 中國海關與中法戰爭 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1983), 67.

<sup>108</sup> Chinese Society for Historiography 中國史學會, ed., *Zhongfa zhanzheng* 中法戰爭 (Shanghai: Xinzhishi chubanshe 新知識出版社, 1955), vol.4, 264.

<sup>109</sup> Jian Bozan 翦伯贊 and Zheng Tianting 鄭天挺 eds., *Zhongguo tongshi cankao ziliao: jindai bufen* 中國通史參考資料·近代部分 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局 1980), vol.1, 391.

<sup>110</sup> Chinese Society for Historiography, 13. John King Fairbank and Kwang-ching Liu eds., *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 11 (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 252.

was then translator and secretary to Li Fengbao 李鳳苞 (1834-1887), the ambassador to Germany and roving ambassador to Austria, Italy and Holland. Chen was inevitably involved in the war from preceding the first phase from December 1883 to May 1884, and after the second phase from August 1884 to April, 1885. As Li Huachuan points out, Chen's active role in forging treaties with France during the war is accredited by Li Hongzhang.<sup>111</sup>

Not a provisional representative, Chen had been Li's protégé since his first mission back from Europe and his first visit to the viceroy of Zhili in 1876.<sup>112</sup> Before the first phase of the war, Chen asked for a leave for private affairs and went back to China in late 1882, and in the spring of 1883, he was summoned by Li Hongzhang to report the attitude of the French side. Since Chen "had made acquaintance with ministers, foreign ministers and councilmen for years in Paris," Li Hongzhang "secretly ordered him to stay briefly in Paris to pry into the local political news."<sup>113</sup> What did Chen do then? After his return to Europe, he dropped by Paris and had secret meetings with local politicians and gathered intelligence into a memo to send to Li for decisions. Although he showed a strong stance occasionally in his secret record sent to Li on dealing with French dignities on the war, for instance, in the meeting with former French viceroy to Saigon in Paris, he stated adamantly that China might not be defeated if the war would have to begin. And also after the Li-Fournier Agreement 李福協定 (1884.5) was signed by Li Hongzhang and the French representative after the first phase of the war in 1884, Chen, in Paris dealing with French politicians, sensed keenly that France was so self-confident in defeating China and would push for more indemnity

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<sup>111</sup> Li Huachuan, 21.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>113</sup> Li Hongzhang 李鴻章, "Cheng yueshi jiyao jianbao Chen Jitong" 呈越事機要兼保陳季同, *Liwenzhonggong quanji: yishu hangao* 李文忠公全集: 譯署函稿, ed. Wu Rulun 吳汝倫 (Nanjing: Jinling ju, 1905-1908), vol. 14.



due to China's ambiguous stance and suggested in his memo that China should fight back to appease its own people.<sup>114</sup> However, most of the time, he gave allegiance to Li Hongzhang's compromising attitude. For example, in the meeting with French Prime Minister Jules Ferry, he explained that although it was China's obligation to defend the interest of Vietnam, its protectorate, China did not want to be on bad terms with France.<sup>115</sup> When he was reminded by many French and German friends that France may attack Chinese ports which were not open for free trades and China should prepare for war, he still believed that France would not initiate war though just four months later French troops launched campaign on Chinese troops to start the war in 1883.<sup>116</sup> Also, in the second phase of the war, during early winter and spring of 1885, Chinese forces gradually gained momentum after months of stalemate with French troops. For instance, in a four-month siege from November 1884 to March 1885 of the French post of Tuyen Quang 宣光, Chinese armies finally utilized its own siege skills to launch successful attacks at the fort with a series of victories led by Liu Yongfu's 劉永福 (1837-1917) army and his allies; meanwhile on the Tonkin 北圻-Guangxi 廣西 border earlier French victories could not inflict further defeat on Chinese army and the rising Chinese troops fought back with major victories thereafter (e.g., by commander Feng Zicai 馮子材 (1818-1903) in the battle of Zhennan Pass 鎮南關.<sup>117</sup> However, Chen, with close communications with Li Hongzhang at Tianjin, held secret negotiations with French representatives on making a treaty to close the war in early 1885 when the military situation began to favor the Chinese side. Chen seemed perfectly sensible of Li's

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<sup>114</sup> Chen Jitong, *Bali banyue miji* 巴黎半月密記, cited in Li Huachuan, 176, 182.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>117</sup> Auguste Thomazi, *La conquête de l'Indochine* (Paris: Payot, 1934), 247–8; *Histoire Militaire De L'indochine Française Des Débuts À Nos Jours (juillet 1930)* (Hanoi-Haiphong: Imprimerie d'Extrême-orient, 1930), 107–8. Lung Chang 龍章, *Yueh-nan yu Chung-fa chan-cheng* 越南與中法戰爭, Vietnam and the Sino-French War (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1996), 334-336.

opinion by telling his French colleague at the Berlin bureau that Li would sign a treaty to end the war if he would have had the chance to talk directly with the French prime minister. When the French side raised the possibility of trade and economic items to replace the indemnity they required earlier from the Chinese government, Chen answered with consent.<sup>118</sup>

Another thing worth noticing about Chen alongside the development of the war is his personal ups and downs of career promotion. His allegiance to Li prompted an advance in embassy positions, which still did not live up to his expectation; and his rank in military service rose and halted too. Chen was admitted to the newly-opened Fuzhou Naval Academy in 1867.<sup>119</sup> The School was established in this year “with more than a hundred pupils under the age of fourteen *sui* recruited mostly from impoverished local gentry families. The students were promised future service either in the Green Standard waterforce or civil posts to be recommended (*pao-chü* 保舉)<sup>120</sup> on the basis of military merit.”<sup>121</sup> Not as a candidate directly for civil officials after the graduation from an “irregular” school rather than a traditional Confucian school, Chen purchased the status as a *jiansheng* 監生 (National University student) and was granted lower military post *shoubei* 守備 (assistant brigade commander) when graduated to work for the Fuzhou Arsenal 福州船政局.<sup>122</sup> During 1875 to 1881, when he started his diplomatic debut in Europe, his military titles ascended from *dusi* 都司 (brigade vice commander) to *youji* 遊擊 (brigade commander) to *canjiang* 參將 (assistant Regional

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<sup>118</sup> Foucault de mondion, *Journal d'un mandarin: lettres de Chine et documente diplomatiques inédits* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1887), 285-286.

<sup>119</sup> Henri Bryois, “Le général Tcheng-Ki-Tong,” *Revue Illustrée* (April, 1891): 290-291.

<sup>120</sup> All the official and military titles translated here are from Charles O Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford Calif: Stanford University Press, 1985). It also has basic introduction of regular paths of officialdom and military system in Qing, 90-96.

<sup>121</sup> Biggerstaff Knight, *The Earliest Modern Government Schools in China* (Virginia: Kennikat Press, 1972), 206.

<sup>122</sup> Li Huachuan, 161.

commander). Meanwhile he served as secretary of navy cadets to Britain and France and translator and secretary at the Embassy to Germany.<sup>123</sup> His promotion accelerated after he was summoned by Li Hongzhang to execute his secret orders in France before and after the war: after Chen's half-month consultancy in Paris in 1883, which generated a *miji* 密記 (secret record) to Li for reference, Li recommended him to the Central Foreign Office as an adept diplomat who can “act wisely and properly.”<sup>124</sup> In early 1884, Zeng Jize, the ambassador to France, was dismissed as a compromise with the French side for a treaty to end the war, and two days after, Li Fengbao was dispatched to France from Germany as the provisional roving ambassador, his attendant Chen Jitong being elevated to the position of attaché and granted the prestige title *zongbing xian* 總兵銜 (regional commander), which is an honorary degree higher than his actual title *fujian* 副將 (vice commander).<sup>125</sup> When the second phase of war ended by another treaty a year later, Chen was regarded as an “ardent pursuer” of the position, the special envoy to France (1885.2).<sup>126</sup> This might indicate that although Chen was assigned and promoted in the military track based on his educational background, he was a keen pursuer of the career in the more revered *wen* official path. In early 1886,

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<sup>123</sup> Li Hongzhang, “Chuyang yiye zaishi geyuan zoushang zhe” 出洋肄業在事各員奏賞折, *Liwenzhonggong quan ji. Zougao*, Vol. 40., ed. Wu Rulun 吳汝倫 (1908). Li Fengbao 李鳳苞, “Zou Chen Jitong shangdai hualin baoshu ziwen” 奏陳季同賞戴花翎報署諮文, *Zhude shiguan dangan chao-zhude shiguan rennei juanlue* 駐德使館檔案鈔·駐德使館任內卷略 (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju 臺灣學生書局, 1966), 177-179.

<sup>124</sup> Li Hongzhang 李鴻章, “Cheng yueshi jiyao jianbao Chen Jitong” 呈越事機要兼保陳季同, *Liwenzhonggong quanji, yishu hangao 14*, 李文忠公全集: 譯署函稿十四, ed. Wu Rulun 吳汝倫 (1908).

<sup>125</sup> Li Huachuan, 180.

<sup>126</sup> Wang Yanwei 王彥威 and Wang Liang 王亮, eds., “Shiying Zeng Jize yin zhongyuejiemu yu farenbapin mitan yulu” 使英曾紀澤因中越界務與法人巴品密談語錄, *Qingji waijiao shiliao*, vol. 61 清季外交史料, 卷六十一 (Ershisi nian waijiao shiliao bianzuanchu chuban 二十四年外交史料編組纂處出版, 1932), cited in Li Huachuan, 185.

Li Hongzhang again recommended Chen for an actual military title of *zongbing* 總兵, commending him as being “especially contributive and assiduous.”<sup>127</sup>

Despite showing allegiance to Li and being rewarded with his trust and recommendations for promotion, Chen’s fortune had not always been good. As a translation officer at the embassy of China in Germany, his mediation in France with French officials in 1883 before the war provoked the wrath of Zeng Jize, who was then the ambassador to France. He heckled Chen for his “unwarranted interference,” and even wrote to the Central Foreign Office to scold Chen severely.<sup>128</sup> Being in an embarrassing position, Chen was unable to reveal Li Hongzhang’s “secret order” to Zeng and unwilling to expose the divergence in Chinese government to the French media. The indecision and lack of resolution for resistance led to the vulnerability of Chinese troops and the subsequent treaty with France initiated by Li Hongzhang, which seemed to favor the French side more. Right after the Li-Fournier Agreement 李福協定 was signed declaring the renouncement of suzerainty over Vietnam and trade in Yunnan Province, “There were more than 47 memorials to impeach Li Hongzhang.”<sup>129</sup> The wartime customs commissioner recruited by Qing Government at the time from Harvard graduating class and historian of China, H.B. Morse, noted that “In the Fournier convention China had yielded to France on every essential point.” “To have as neighbor on the southern frontier a masterful European power instead of the invertebrate Annamese was distasteful; to surrender the suzerainty over Annam,

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<sup>127</sup> Li Hongzhang, “Giquel Chen Jitong qinjiang pian” 日意格陳季同請獎片, *Liwenzhonggong quanji, zougao* 56, 李文忠公全集: 奏稿 五十六, ed. Wu Rulun 吳汝倫 (1908).

<sup>128</sup> Zeng Jize 曾紀澤, “Zeng Jize wei Chen Jitong yu faxiang huitanshi zhizongshu han” 曾紀澤為陳季同與法相會談事致總署函, *Zhongfa zhanzheng* 中法戰爭, ed. Zhang Zhenkun 張振鷲 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1995-2006), vol.1, 612-615.

<sup>129</sup> Li Yangfan 李楊帆, “Xue Fucheng: zhongfa zhanzheng xuanwo zhong” 薛福成: 中法戰爭漩渦中, *Shijie zhishi* 17 世界知識 第 17 期 (2006): 63.

however shadowy it might be, was more distasteful; and most distasteful of all was to accept defeat, not after battle, but in realization of China's own powerlessness. This Li Hung-chang had done.”<sup>130</sup> As Li's confidential protege, Chen could not escape this distain either, as I will explain later. Meanwhile, his frustration also lies in the hardship and uncertainty in advancement to higher officialdom: after finishing the duty in the Sino-French war, his effort to get the ambassador position was in vain and an official Xu Jingcheng 許景澄 (1845-1900), a *Jinshi* 進士 (Metropolitan Graduate) was dispatched from the court for the post.<sup>131</sup> In 1886, a year after the war, his promotion from *fujian* 副將 to *zongbing* 總兵, which was recommended by Li, was denied by the War Ministry. It is said that since he hasn't committed the bribery requested by the Ministry, he sets a record of disqualification for the promotion to the rank of *zongbing* 總兵 other than military merit.<sup>132</sup>

When we take Chen's war experience into consideration, his writing the book *The Chinese Painted by Themselves* with a relatively conservative tone to defend his country and culture may also be seen as an outlet to get out of the frustration as an overseas-student-turned-diplomat then. First, he might have the inferiority complex felt commonly by diplomats in Late Qing who engaged directly with foreign affairs by negotiating interests for China. Accompanying the self-strengthening movement and reform, there was an influential and prolonged conservatism favoring antiforeignism and culturalism both in and out of court.<sup>133</sup> Engaging with “barbarians” would always incur complaints from the large political party called *Qingliu dang* 清流黨 (purists)

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<sup>130</sup> Hosea Ballou Morse, *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire: The Period of Submission, 1861-1893* (London and New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1918), 357.

<sup>131</sup> Zhang Zhenkun, *Zhongfa zhanzheng*, vol.2, 751.

<sup>132</sup> Shen Yuqing 沈瑜慶 and Chen Yan 陳衍, “Chen Jitong shilue” 陳季同事略, *Fujian tongzhi liezhuan* 福建通志列傳, ed. Fujian tongzhiju 福建通志局, vol. 39 in *Qing liezhuan* 8 清列傳八 (1938). In Li Huachuan, appendix to *Wanqing yige waijiaoguan de wenhua licheng*, 136-138.

<sup>133</sup> Fairbank and Liu, Chp.3, 172-199.

due to their aversion of Western imperialism and commitment to Chinese culture. The resentment of the wars of 1840, 1860 and 1884 had made the anti-foreign gentries think that those barbarians were their enemies.<sup>134</sup> So politically those diplomats having propensity to appeasement and compromise policies would be severely attacked as traitors. *Qing bai lei chao* 清稗類鈔 (The Compilation of Unofficial History of Qing Dynasty) has an anecdote epitomizing a mocking tone on Chen: One day, Bismarck, the then German prime minister tells Chen Jitong to wire to the Chinese government that they may hold on to the war and not to call an armistice immediately, since Germany can chafe France in the meantime to tire it out and do good for China. Chen nods and goes back. Nevertheless Chen waits for three days to inform Li Hongzhang, who is in charge of the foreign affairs then and discloses Bismarck's tactic to his wife first. His wife is "made in France" (*faguo chan* 法國產). The French wife informs the ministers of their own country immediately and France turns to the United States for mediation. When Chen's notice arrives, Chinese government has already consented to the State's intervention and signed the peace agreement.<sup>135</sup>

Though this story is an unofficial history, with much inaccuracy as to facts,<sup>136</sup> it to some extent reflects Chen's image in the eyes of his compatriots. Not merely a scapegoat for Li Hongzhang, he seems in this portrait a bigger traitor: Li's weak-kneed intention for a treaty might be explained by his being blinded by a lack of information, while Chen, who has the firsthand intelligence which will favor the Chinese side, delays intentionally and even leaks to his French partner. The mocking tone is also reflected in the portrayal of the imagined French wife of Chen in the anecdote: by reducing the

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>135</sup> Xu Ke 徐珂, ed., *Qing bailei chao* 清稗類鈔 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshu guan 商務印書館, 1917), vol.4, 24.

<sup>136</sup> Li Huachuan, 19.

French woman as an object as “made in France,” the humiliation of being feminized by signing the unfavorable treaty as Chinese, especially Chinese male is revenged in verbalism.

The “persistence of culturalism” among literati-officials in the 1860s to 1890s also adds to the torment of Chinese diplomats. The “ intellectual commitment to Chinese culture, especially orthodox Confucianism” make many Confucian scholar-officials think “China was not a state but the locus of civilized society *in toto*,” and those non-Chinese cultures are not civilizations but barbaric. Those barbarians don’t follow the “paths of humanity and righteous conduct and were cut off from the wisdom of the sages,” because they are “greedy, deceitful and unpredictable.”<sup>137</sup> Therefore many view the foreign relations then within the tribute system and regard the engagement in foreign affairs “beneath their dignity,” and not a good business for “men of rectitude.”<sup>138</sup> Reformers of high levels such as Prince Gong 恭親王 (1833-1898), Li Hongzhang, Ma Jianzhong 馬建忠 (1845-1900) and Li Fengbao all received attacks, and a junior diplomat like Chen Jitong would hardly be an exception. The connection with foreigners lead to the slander of them as *Xiaoren* 小人 (mean men). The most representative diplomat receiving fierce attack is Guo Songtao 郭嵩燾 (1818-1891). “In 1876, when he went to Britain as minister, the literati satirized him for leaving the land of the sages to serve the foreign devils. Ashamed of his conduct, his fellow townsmen tried to destroy his house.”<sup>139</sup> His plan to write a book on modern civilization and self-strengthening did not materialize due to the fear of further criticism. After returning, the recommendation for him to work in the Central Foreign Office did

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<sup>137</sup> Fairbank and Liu, vol 11, 181-182. Also see Joseph Richmond Levenson. *Confucian China and its Modern Fate: A Trilogy* (California: Univ. of California Press, 1968), 98-105 on the vision of *t'ien-hsia* 天下.

<sup>138</sup> Fairbank and Liu, vol. 11, 183.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

not materialize due to the opposition from the conservative officials. Li Hongzhang once said in a letter: “everyone aspires to officialdom, but no one desires to be a diplomat.”<sup>140</sup> One can see that then being a diplomat and engaging in foreign affairs closely was seen by many as not only unfavorable, but also distasteful for a successful career in officialdom.

Apart from the conservatives’ attacks, Chen’s role in the war as Li Hongzhang’s secret associate may also be partly associated to the influential factions in late Qing political arena. As a scholar Dai Dongyang points out, before the Sino-Japanese war, there is no professional and independent institution called Foreign Affairs Ministry, where diplomats can have normal official ranks for their diplomatic posts and can stick to their profession after returning, and their only way of appointment is through recommendations from princes and grand ministers. Therefore the recruitment, promotion of diplomats and their assistants and their career prospects after returning were largely in the hands of the most influential political parties.<sup>141</sup> Before the Sino-Japanese war, it is the juxtaposition of Li Hongzhang’s *hai xi* 淮系 (huai faction) and the Qingliu party, whereas Li is mostly influential in the appointments and arrangements of the diplomatic personnel.<sup>142</sup> Unlike Zeng Jize, who though recommended also by Li, can have his own strong opinions without consideration of a loss of official ranks since he inherited his father Zeng Guofan’s 曾國藩 (1811-1872) title of First Class Marquess, Chen, who was of humble birth and lower posts, may, to a large extent, attach himself to Li’s will for the security of his career path. As we can

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<sup>140</sup> Li Hongzhang, “Fu Shen Youdan jiangjun” 復沈幼丹將軍, *Liwenzhonggong quan ji, pengliao hangao* 李文忠公全集: 朋僚函稿, vol.16, 2.

<sup>141</sup> Dai Dongyang 戴東陽, “Wanqing zhuwai shichen yu zhengzhi paixi” 晚清駐外使臣與政治派系, *Shilin* 史林 6 (2004): 21-29.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.



see from earlier expositions, Chen's promotion in military ranks during the wartime is facilitated by Li due to his allegiance.

Another vexation for Chen might be his educational background as a graduate from the school for western learning and one of the early overseas students in late Qing. This path at that time was not so much an orthodox channel for officialdom and the ladder of social and governmental esteem. It was a tradition in pre-modern China that a promising young man's way to prove his worth was to start education early to prepare to be a future scholar and official. During the eighteenth century, learning was often seen as a pragmatic way to strive for career success, from which men could bring prosperity to their descendents and honor to their ancestors. "Doing so required first winning a civil service degree, then capturing an official post."<sup>143</sup> Passing the Imperial Examinations and receiving degrees like *Juren* 舉人 (Provincial graduates) *Jinshi* 進士 (Metropolitan graduates) were considered normal way for appointing and promoting to high-ranking dignitaries. However, in the late Qing, when Chen started his schooling as the first batch of students in schools for western learning, they were unprivileged to receive an equivalent degree in the competition for official positions. For this reason, as early as in 1864, "Li Hung-chang recommended to the Zongli yamen 總理衙門 that a new category be created in the civil service examinations which would give candidates specializing in technology a chance to compete for high degrees. The proposal came to nothing."<sup>144</sup> All new schools in China seemed to face the "problem of incentive for their students," and though some schools in Shanghai and Guangdong promised low-ranking degrees like *Shengyuan* 生員 (government student) or *Jiansheng*

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<sup>143</sup> Susan Mann, *Precious Records: Women in China's Long Eighteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 50.

<sup>144</sup> Fairbank and Liu, vol. 10, 527.

監生 (National University Student) after graduation, which means one was qualified to take the provincial examination, many students at the new schools were “found to be practicing the eight-legged essay in preparation for the regular provincial examinations.”<sup>145</sup> Chen Jitong’s school, the Fuzhou Naval School offered nothing better either. “The students were promised future service either in the Green Standard waterforce or civil posts to be recommended on the basis of military merit.”<sup>146</sup> As no exception, Chen Jitong was granted the lower military post *shoubei* 守備 of rank five when he graduated. What is interesting is that he purchased the status of *Jiansheng* 監生 at the same time. Though he advanced in military ranks in the Sino-French war as shown earlier, one will notice that he served primarily at civil posts like secretary, translator and attaché in the embassy, and was an “ardent pursuer” of the ambassador to France position.<sup>147</sup> Therefore in connection with his early purchase of the *Jiansheng* title and his future jobs and aspirations for a high level civil post, Chen might be considered a traditional and ardent young man longing for success in the civil officialdom.

Although in China “either *wen* 文 (cultural attainment) or *wu* 武 (martial valor) or both *wen* and *wu* were perceived to be essential for men of substance,” “after Confucianism took hold that *wen* became progressively more dominant for the upper classes.”<sup>148</sup> The hierarchy of talents granted certain prestige to those civil ministers as civilized scholar-officials while military ministers were sometimes linked to illiteracy and brutal strength.<sup>149</sup> However, Chen’s quest for success in civil officialdom was not fulfilled when he had borne hopes for the ambassador position. Though at that time,

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 527.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 532.

<sup>147</sup> Wang and Wang, eds., cited in Li Huachuan, 185.

<sup>148</sup> Kam Louie, *Theorizing Chinese Masculinity: Society and Gender in China* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2002), 11, 161.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 18.

ambassadors were provisional posts with no insurance for future promotions and appointments after their return, those recommended for the positions were still expected to have civil examination degrees. Li Fengbao, an erudite scholar in western learnings, once purchased the candidate for *Daotai* 道台 (circuit intendant) and was appointed by Li Hongzhang as ambassador to Germany. Yet later he was impeached by Qingliu party as not having passed the imperial examinations and thus not qualified for the post.<sup>150</sup> Though Chen worked hard and actively in the war negotiation, the ambassador to France after Zeng Jize was appointed to Xu Jingcheng, who had the prestige of a *Jinshi* title. As an overseas student, who was dispatched to study law and politics in Paris during his envoy, Chen still didn't get common recognition for this experience. There were overseas students like Luo Fenglu 羅豐祿 (1850-1903) and Wu Tingfang 伍廷芳 (1842-1922) who were appointed as ambassadors by Li Hongzhang after 1895. However, it is said that when the two accompanied Li Hongzhang to Japan for the treaty negotiation after the Sino-Japanese war, Li had a talk with the Itō Hirobumi, the Japanese Prime Minister and marveled that Hirobumi was already the superior dignitary, while his former classmates who had also studied in England, the talented and accomplished Luo and Wu, were still protégés and low-ranking officials. Then the two finally got the promotion to the ambassador positions after their return.<sup>151</sup> It was not until 1907 (Chen Jitong died in this year) that the provisions of the newly-established Foreign Affairs Ministry (1901) stipulated that ambassadors to foreign countries were actual officials of rank two 二品實官, and those qualified would be selected from attachés and those knowing a foreign language.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Dai, 26.

<sup>151</sup> Shi Zhaoji 施肇基, *Shizhaoji zaonian huiyilu* 施肇基早年回憶錄 (Taipei: Taibei zhuanjiwenxue chubanshe 臺北傳記文學出版社, 1967), 28.

<sup>152</sup> Dai, 27.

Not only was Chen frustrated in the civil official path, as a student adept in west learning and with overseas study experience, he may suffer a similar discontent that Yan Fu had for being seen as not erudite in Chinese classics. When he was in the shipyard school, Shen Baozhen 沈葆楨 (1820-1879), the then Minister of Naval Affairs in Fujian Province demanded that “they study only simple works such as *The Classic of filial piety* (*Xiao jing* 孝經) and the *Sacred edict* (*Sheng yu* 聖諭) of Kangxi Emperor 康熙皇帝, as well as practice plain expository composition,” and spent most time in French, mathematics and other science courses.<sup>153</sup> Their training in Confucian classics, on the surface, was not their forte in comparison to conventional Confucian schools. Yan Fu, known for his contribution in translating western classics on modernization into Chinese, after returning to China, became a student of Tongcheng school master Wu Rulun and used the style of *guwen* 古文 (classical Chinese) for translation. It is not only the standard of *ya* 雅 (elegance) he proclaimed to achieve through numerous days weighing on the wording and asking Wu to review and write him the prefaces, but a way to demonstrate his mastery of classical *guwen*, “the language that manifests the unbroken thread of tradition.”<sup>154</sup> Students either in new schools or overseas were not considered as *shi* 士 (scholar) by knowing foreign language and western knowledge. They were despised for not being adept in Chinese classics and Confucian canons and thus unorthodox and disqualified for the esteem and status of scholar-officials. Therefore one may see Chen’s defending Confucian ethics and Chinese customs in his first book as a way to testify himself still a disciple of Confucius. Another interesting

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<sup>153</sup> Qing Government ed., *Qingdai chouban yiwu shimo* (*Tongzhi period*) 清代籌辦夷務始末·同治朝 (Beiping: Palace Museum photolithograph, 1930), vol. 50, 22. Cited in Fairbank and Liu, vol. 10, 532.

<sup>154</sup> Hu Ying, *Tales of Translation: Composing the New Woman in China, 1899-1918* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2000), 210. Xiong Yuezhi 熊月之, *Xixue dongjian yu wanqing shehui* 西學東漸與晚清社會 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe 上海人民出版社, 1994), 729.

feature showing Chen's decisiveness and sometimes polemic tone in the *Chinese Painted by Themselves* may also be ascribed to Kam Louie's expatiation of Chinese masculinity in the *wen-wu* paradigm. Chinese masculinity, as he theorizes, in general comprises both *wen* (the mental or civil) and *wu* (the physical or martial) feature. And it is indisputable that "ideal masculinity can be either *wen* or *wu* but is at its height when both are present to a high degree."<sup>155</sup> Though Chen carried out his duties mostly as a civil official and showed his aspiration for the promotion in the civil posts, which is generally considered superior to the military positions, his actual advance is in the military ranks in the Sino-French war. However, the courageousness, decisiveness and prowess of strength and military power of an alleged military minister (he was a *fujian* and recommended for *zongbing* in the war) were contained when he mostly endeavored to follow and implement Li Hongzhang's conservative pacification policy. As we exhibited earlier in the chapter, when he was recommended by Li to promote to the position of *zongbing*, it was denied by the War Ministry. *Fujian tongzhi* 福建通志 (The Comprehensive Gazetteers of Fujian Province) said that he hadn't committed bribery, while the ministry denied the promotion by his lack of qualified military merit.<sup>156</sup> There might be an anxiety and dilemma for Chen in the war between his real duty and inner hopes. Thus we see in his preface in the book, he states that "Here and there will be found criticisms upon the manners and customs of the West. It must not be forgotten that I use a steel pen, and not a China-ink brush, and have learned to think and write in the European manner" (Çà et là on trouvera des critiques sur les moeurs de l'Occident. Il ne faut pas oublier que je tiens une plume et non un pinceau, et que j'ai appris la

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<sup>155</sup> Louie, 10, 16.

<sup>156</sup> Shen and Chen, 237.

manière de penser et d'écrire à l'europpéenne).<sup>157</sup> By emphasizing his will to criticize the other, as the other has done to them, he wants to present his courage and decisiveness as a warrior to fight back. By using “steel pen” and “brush” as metonymy, he may imply that he will employ the tougher weapon the “steel” than the softer one “brush” and will spare no mercy in the retaliation. And also by boasting he has learned the western way of writing he shows his confidence of winning the written polemics due to mastery of tactics of the opponent.

It is easier to understand Chen’s fairly defensive and sometimes polemic tone in his book from his role as a diplomat, which officially puts him in the frontline in face of foreign aggressors in the conflict, and when the indecision of the Qing court’s military plans and haste to nail down a treaty induces China to be feminized as a community. However, from the above discussion, one may note that his embattled masculinity as an overseas-student-turned-diplomat in the Late Qing environment may also leads to his writing stance. When facing his own compatriots, he has a strong sense of insecurity from his ambivalent social status. His standing as *wenren* 文人 (literatus) was not well recognized by classical literati-officials, and his promotion path in civil posts was frustrated and unorthodox; his engagement in foreign affairs and treaty making may yield the reputation as traitor and *xiaoren* 小人, a disqualified general in want of courage and decisiveness. The double negation in both *wen* and *wu* sections may spur Chen to use writing as a stage for profession of loyalty and legitimacy.

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<sup>157</sup> Chen Jitong, *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*, trans. James Millington (London: Field and Tuer, 1885), 6. Tcheng, “Avant-Propos,” *Les Chinois peints par eux-mêmes* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1884), IX.

## Masculinity Regained in the Writing

In the following we will take a brief look at how Chen strives restore his masculinity in the book. In general, he presents himself as a *junzi* 君子, a righteous Confucius gentleman who is not only loyal to his country but also to Confucius teachings as well. He also denounces the misunderstanding and misuse of *wu* power of the western aggressors. Last but not the least important, he addresses the woman issue frequently to reassert the traditional superiority of elite males in the hierarchical gender system.

First, it seems that he strives to show the moral character of his loyalty in his exuberant patriotism throughout the book. For instance, in the preface, he claims that one “will then form a better idea of our civilization, and find pleasure in the loftiness and justice pervading it” (se fera une autre idée de notre civilisation: il en aimera ce qu'elle a d'élevé et de juste). “If I am sometimes led away by the subject to the extent of declaring my affection for my native land, I ask pardon beforehand of all who love their own” (si par fois je me laisse entraîner par le sujet jusqu'à affirmer mon amour pour mon pays, j'en demande pardon, d'avance, à tous ceux qui aiment leur patrie). In the chapter “the Literary Class,” he concludes in the end, “The more I know of modern civilization, the more my love for our old institutions increases: for they alone realized what they promise----peace and equality” (Plus j'apprendrai la civilisation moderne, plus ma passion pour nos vieilles institutions augmentera: car elles seules réalisent ce qu'elles promettent: la paix et l'égalité).<sup>158</sup> With Confucius as a standard, as a virtuous man, not a *xiaoren*, “the *wenren* saw himself as the moral and spiritual guide to society.”

<sup>159</sup> Since Confucius taught four subjects, besides *wen* 文 (cultural refinement), he

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<sup>158</sup> Chen Jitong, *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*, 6, 71. Tchong, *Les Chinois peints par eux-mêmes* IX, X. 96.

<sup>159</sup> Louie, 45.

emphasizes *xing* 行 (moral behavior), *zhong* 忠 (loyalty) and *xin* 信 (faith).<sup>160</sup> The latter three are mainly ethical traits. By emphasizing his *zhong*, Chen may dismiss the charge against him as a traitor and *xiaoren*.

In many cases, he also shows his steadfast support for Confucian values and norms. For instance, when talking about the characteristics of western civilization, he puts it: “after all its satisfactions are only those appertaining to a life of pleasure, and end by wearying even the giddiest.” While since Chinese are more prudent and practical in esteeming “the medium (*zhongyong* 中庸) as being the index of the best,” people can thus avoid going to extremes as “being much amused or very much bored” (ou à s'amuser beaucoup ou à s'ennuyer beaucoup).<sup>161</sup> Though in reality Chen was a party and salon lover in Paris and later even became involved in a private debt scandal due to his extravagant spending,<sup>162</sup> he in the book still accentuates the superiority of Chinese respect for prudence and moderation over western preference for passion and pleasure. In the chapter on “Journalism and Public Opinion,” he advocates that foreigners like missionaries should identify with Chinese ideas and conceal their western traits in order to be welcomed or accepted by Chinese people. And they should above all respect Confucius, since this is the “rooted convictions” that the empire’s political system is built on.<sup>163</sup> Perhaps when writing this Chen may have felt that the system is so firm and powerful that not only the foreigners should learn carefully to deal with, but also the early students well-versed in foreign knowledge like himself feel formidable and inescapable to win approval from.

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<sup>160</sup> Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 trans. and ed., *Lunyu yizhu* 論語譯注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1958), 78.

<sup>161</sup> Chen Jitong, 153. Tchong, 221.

<sup>162</sup> Li Huachuan, 36-44.

<sup>163</sup> Chen Jitong, 87-88.



In the chapter on “Literary Class,” Chen gives a comprehensive introduction of the Chinese imperial examination system and how men of almost all strata of society can aspire to participate to move up to civil service system by this channel. He lauds ardently the democracy and fairness this system boasts by saying “in no part of the world is there a more democratic institution” (Il n'existe nulle part dans le monde un principe plus démocratique), “The Chinese hierarchy is not founded upon seniority, but upon merit. The degree fixes the position, and the higher the position, the higher must be the merit of its occupant” (La hiérarchie chinoise n'est pas fondée sur l'ancienneté, mais sur le mérite. Le grade fixe la position; et plus la position s'élève, plus il faut de mérite pour en être le titulaire). And “In every village the poorest can send their children to schools” (dans chaque village de la Chine les parents les moins fortunes peuvent envoyer leurs enfants dans les écoles).<sup>164</sup> He mentions more frequently privileges and honors passing these exams can bring. “Nothing can give an idea of the demonstrations of joy at news of a success in the examinations” (Rien ne peut faire une idée des démonstrations de joie qui accueillent la nouvelle d'un succès remporté dans les examens). At the age of twenty, when most European students, as he observed, had “put study aside” (laisser de côté l'étude), “we at that age begin to entertain a higher ambition---that is, to hope for a new grade, to which an increase of honor and fortune will correspond” (nous commençons à élever notre ambition, c'est-à-dire à espérer un nouveau grade auquel correspondra un accroissement d'honneur et de fortune). The honor is so uplifting that “they are reflected upon their family, and are agreeable to their ancestors” (ces honneurs rejaillissent sur la famille, qu'ils sont agréables aux ancêtres)

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 62, 66, 69. Tcheng, 83, 92-93, 89.

and “we may realize what a power the institution of competition exerts upon the nation” (on sentira quelle force peut avoir sur nos moeurs l'institution des concours).<sup>165</sup>

Interestingly, Chen didn't mention the content and formats of the Imperial exams which are targets of criticism by later people and also by the countless successful or struggling scholars under its influence for thousand of years.<sup>166</sup> He just mentioned lightly “they have to compose upon the subjects of literature, poetry, history, and philosophy” (Ils doivent faire leurs compositions sur des sujets de littérature et de poésie, d'histoire et de philosophie).<sup>167</sup> In fact, the core content of the exam was the Four Books and Five Classics by Confucius and his disciples and main content of the test was eight-legged essays. Rote learning of the canon and their designated commentaries, and studying and practicing the inflexible essay forms plagued many, including the late Qing students in new schools as mentioned earlier in this chapter. The exam did have its merits, but the aspect highly praised by Chen, its fairness, in fact perhaps doesn't fit his particular case the most. His privilege, the new learning of the west such as science and foreign language, were not included as a subject for the exam when he wrote this book. And he did encounter some frustrations in the aspiration for promotion and meritocracy partly due to his lack of a genuine title from taking the exam. The intent for the eliding and selecting of certain traits in the imperial examination is open for debate. It might be attributed to a rosy picture of the perfection of the system, since he had not had chances to suffer the infliction of going through the test process himself. And it might also be a kind of performativity on the part of Chen. Not only might it be his purposeful stance as a firm defender of the essence of the country in face

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 69, 71. Tcheng, 93, 92, 95.

<sup>166</sup> For the elaborated excerpts from scholars' criticism on the exam, refer to Wolfgang Franke, *The Reform and Abolition of Chinese Exam System* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968), Chapter Two, 16-28.

<sup>167</sup> Chen, 68. Tcheng, 91.

of foreign aggressors, but also, through the glorification of an institution both threatening and alluring to him, he may achieve a virtual sense of fulfillment through the identification of an unattainable thing.

In terms of the *wu* aspect of masculinity, Chen not only showed his excellent mastery of archery and charioteering when going hunting with foreign dignitaries and military officers when he was an embassy officer in Europe,<sup>168</sup> but also stressed his understanding of *wu* masculinity based on Chinese standard vis-à-vis the western paradigm. While the western stereotypes like to use terms of “toughness,” “courageousness,” “adventurous spirit,” “a proclivity to violence,” “a tendency towards physical” to describe their understanding of the “real man,”<sup>169</sup> Chen expresses his strong aversion to the encroaching prowess for the mere purpose of invasion: “The essential character of Western civilization is to be encroaching” (Le caractère essentiel de la civilisation occidentale est d'être envahissant). “The initial point of their idea of progress is violence. I have the presumption to think the method is not perfect” (La violence est le point de départ du progrès. Je me flatte de penser que la méthode n'est pas parfaite). “We hoped for the machinery of peace, they bring us the machinery of war, and as a specimen of modern civilizing institutions we inaugurate standing armies” (Nous espérions des engins de paix, on nous vend des machines de guerre, et en fait d'institutions modernes civilisatrices nous inaugurons le militarisme). “We shall never be persuaded to consider the military spirit an element of civilization: quite the reverse! We are convinced it is a return to barbarism” (Nous ne verrons jamais dans le militarisme un élément de civilisation: loin de là! nous sommes convaincus que c'est le

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<sup>168</sup> Shen and Chen, “Chen Jitong shilue” 陳季同事略 has it: “而擊射槍炮尤精穩, 兼能馳騁, 距馬丈許, 一躍而登其背, 以槍擊空中飛鳥無不中。在泰西十九年, 凡各國長大蒐時, 鹹往較閱。又時偕其將校會獵, 所獲較多。” In Li Huachuan, appendix, 238.

<sup>169</sup> Louie, 8.

retour à la barbarie).<sup>170</sup> Chen's indignant tone about the abuse of brute physical strength echoes the Confucian understanding of *wu* power and some other traditional Chinese ethics on it: "Thus *wu* is inferior to *wen* as representing the need to resort to force to achieve one's goals."<sup>171</sup> The idea revealed in Chen's remonstrance exhibits that Chinese *wu* philosophy seems more all-encompassing and complicated than the sole boasts of attributes of physical and military strength. Chinese *wu* has seven virtues: "suppressing violence, gathering in arms, protecting what was great, establishing merit, giving peace to the people, harmonizing the masses and propagating wealth" (禁暴, 戢兵, 保大, 定功, 安民, 和眾, 豐財). Thus the *wu* concept in China embodies not only "the power of military strength but also the wisdom to know when and when not to deploy it."<sup>172</sup> Therefore, to Chen, the *wu* should be employed properly but not abused randomly, in a way to suppress violence rather than to provoke violence, to protect and enrich the people rather than jeopardize them and loot them. In a word, through Chen's questioning western scheme and reliance on *wu*, he implies the Chinese belief that "*Wu* is therefore a concept which embodies the power of military strength but also the wisdom to know when and when not to deploy it."<sup>173</sup>

Interestingly, Chen's defense for his own masculinity in the book not only lies in his allegiance to the Chinese scheme of *wen* and *wu*, but also has implications in his view of the woman issue. In the "Women" chapter, there are such paragraphs:

We may admit as a law the superiority of the masculine gender over the feminine.

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We consider the depths of science a useless burden to women; not that we insult them by proposing they are inferior to us in ability to study

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<sup>170</sup> Chen, 81-83. Tchong, 111-113.

<sup>171</sup> Louie, 18.

<sup>172</sup> Zuo Qiuming 左丘明, "Xuangong shi'er nian" 宣公十二年, *Zuozhuan* 左傳, eds. and trans. Wang Shouqian 王守謙 et al. (Guizhou: Guizhou renmin chubanshe 貴州人民出版社, 1990), 553. Cited in Kam Louie, *Theorizing Chinese Masculinity*, 14.

<sup>173</sup> Louie, 14.

and science, but because it would be leading out of their true path. Woman has no need to perfect herself: she is born perfect; and science would teach her neither grace nor sweetness-those lords of the domestic hearth inspired by Nature.

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Family life is the education which forms the Chinese woman, and she only aspires to be learned in the art of governing her family. She superintends her children's education, and is content to devote her existence to her family. If fate gives her a good husband, she is certainly the happiest of women.

il est permis d'établir comme une loi la supériorité du masculin sur le féminin.

.....

Nous pensons que la science approfondie est un fardeau inutile pour la femme: non pas que nous lui fassions l'injure de supposer qu'elle nous est inférieure pour l'étude des lettres et des sciences, mais parce que ce serait la faire dévier de sa véritable voie. La femme n'a pas besoin de se perfectionner: elle naît parfaite; et la science ne lui apprendrait jamais ni la grâce ni la douceur, ces deux souveraines du foyer domestique qui s'inspirent de la nature.

.....

La vie de famille forme la femme chinoise et elle n'aspire qu'à être une savante dans l'art de gouverner la famille. C'est elle qui dirige l'éducation de ses enfants; elle se contente de vivre pour les siens, et si le ciel lui a donné un bon mari, elle est certainement la plus heureuse de femmes.

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At first Chen accentuated the traditional patriarchal gender system in imperial China by stating general rule of the superiority of the male gender over the female. With the assertive phrases like “is content to devote,” “She is certainly the happiest of women,” “Woman has no need to perfect herself,” he seems in accord with traditional male elites in prescribing codes of conduct for women and speaking on behalf of women. One possible interpretation may be that gender here is deployed as a site for the competition between the western intruders and Chinese nationalists. To Chen, the supple nature and submissive character of women desired or required by many Chinese men should be confirmed and glorified, since in this way, Chinese women can be seen as in perfect harmony with the male nationalists and the latter easily get

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<sup>174</sup> Chen Jitong, *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*, 47-49.

allies against the western assault. From another perspective, by emphasizing the conventional role of good wife and motherhood to all Chinese women, Chen finds a way to counteract his marginal position in the elite male group himself. The inferiority complex finally ascends to a sense of superiority in the making of the male the master of the family and women as ideal deferential subordinates. In this sense, Chen's view seems to be similar to Xia Xiaohong's observation of a popular male-centered gender view in late- nineteenth and early twentieth-century China of expecting and prescribing women to be *xianqi liangmu* 賢妻良母 (good mother and good wife) and *guomin zhi mu* 國民之母 (mother of nationals).<sup>175</sup>

Beside the neo-Confucian gender ethics toward women, Chen also eulogizes women for their sensual beauty, sensibility and spontaneity. In the "Pleasures" section, he wrote:

It is an agreeable way of passing the time when it is too slow. On the boats (flower boats) are found everything an epicure can desire: and in the cool of the evening, with a cup of deliciously perfumed tea, the woman's harmonious voice and the sound of musical instruments are not considered a nocturnal debauch.

...They exercise the profession of musicians or lady companions; the name does not signify, and they are paid for their services as one pays a doctor or lawyer. They are usually educated, and some are pretty. When they united beauty with talent, they are of course much sought after. The charm of their conversation becomes as much appreciated as that of their art, and is turned towards those numerous subjects one likes to hear a woman's judgment upon. Verses even are sent to those who can compose them, and there are some sufficiently instructed to answer the rhythmical gallantries of the literary.

... Then---a romance is begun, and matters go on in the East as they do in the West.

... The women love flowers passionately, render them a veritable worship, idealize them, and draw the inspiration of sentimental poetry even from their scattered petals.

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<sup>175</sup> Xia Xiaohong 夏曉虹, *Wanqing wenren funü guan* 晚清文人婦女觀 (Beijing: Zuoja chubanshe 作家出版社, 1995), 82-83, 150.

C'est une manière agréable de passer le temps quand il est trop lent. On trouve sur les bateaux tout ce qu'un gourmet peut désirer, et dans la fraîcheur du soir, auprès d'une tasse de thé délicieusement parfumé, la voix harmonieuse de la femme et le son mélodieux des instruments ne sont pas considérés comme des débauches nocturnes.

... Elles exercent la profession de musiciennes ou dames de compagnie, peu importe le nom -et on les paye pour le service qu'elles rendent, comme on paye un médecin ou un avocat. Elles sont généralement instruites et il y en a de jolies. Lorsqu'elles réunissent la beauté et le talent, elles sont évidemment très recherchées. -Le charme de leur conversation devient aussi apprécié que celui de leur art et on devise sur de nombreux sujets qu'il plaît de soumettre au jugement des femmes. On adresse même des vers à celles qui peuvent en composer et il en est qui sont assez instruites pour répondre aux galanteries rythmées des lettrés.

... On glisse dans le roman -et cela se passe en Orient comme en Occident.

... Les femmes aiment passionnément les fleurs, leur rendent un véritable culte, les idéalisent, et même leurs feuilles tombées leur inspirent des poésies sentimentales.<sup>176</sup>

The sensual beauty, talent and accomplishments of women, even courtesans, especially in the sense of poetic sensitivity and spontaneity, are invoked here by Chen as an alluring respite from the pressure and competition from official life. Although it is dangerous allure, but the “harmony,” “charm,” “companion,” “beauty” and mutual appreciation all add to the “pleasures” of men, bolstering their fantasy and self-confidence. Here Chen appears to be more like a desire-dominated imaginative elite writer, neglecting most moral ethics he insists on women in many parts of the book. In the “European Society,” when he practiced “border-crossing” and crossed the border of China and stepped onto Europe, he admires women more ardently and overtly:

I have frequented in Europe, and especially at Paris, conversational societies, and they have particularly charmed me. Formerly, I am told, it was fashionable to go into intellectual society, and the *salons* were more sought after than at present. I have seen in those still remaining charming women, strongly attached to intellectual pleasures, adopting

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<sup>176</sup> Chen, 148,149, 151,152. Tcheng, 213,214, 216-218.

them sometimes from taste, and sometimes purposely to avenge themselves on politics which absorb their husbands...

What a marvelous thing is a woman's wit! It is indefinable; it is at the same time light of touch and profound in depth; it is truly delightful; and when two lovely eyes sparkle amidst the laughter of this fairy that is never still, but seems to flit everywhere like a butterfly in the sunshine ...

My profession of faith is very easy to make: it has woman's wit for an ideal.

J'ai fréquenté en Europe et surtout à Paris les sociétés de conversation; elles m'ont particulièrement charmé. Autrefois, m'a-t-on dit, on aimait à se rencontrer dans le monde des élégants de l'esprit et les salons étaient plus recherchés qu'aujourd'hui. J'ai vu, dans ceux qui existent encore, des femmes charmantes très attachées aux choses de l'esprit, les adoptant quelquefois par goût, quelquefois par méthode pour se venger de la politique qui absorbe leurs maris ...

Quelle mer veilleuse chose que l'esprit de la femme! Cela est indéfinissable; c'est à la fois léger et profond ; c'est vraiment délicieux et lorsque deux jolis yeux scintillent au milieu des éclats de rire de ce lutin qui ne se pose nulle part et qui voltige partout semblable au papillon dans un rayon de soleil, ...

Ma profession de foi est bien facile à faire: elle a pour idéal l'esprit de la femme.<sup>177</sup>

On the one hand, Chen did seem to be more open in his praise and proposal of gender equality when referring to western women. By stating that French salon women can take revenge on their husband, and having the real wit of women is his model of profession, Chen appears to be oblivious of the assertion of male dominance and female subordination he made somewhere in the book. In fact, through a closer look, this gender equality he proposes is conditional. Since although Chen seems to refer to all women, he just singles out a particular group of women: the elite or the educated, be it *guixiu* 閨秀 (genteel ladies),<sup>178</sup> versatile courtesans or salon women in the west, who

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 155-156. Tcheng, 223-224.

<sup>178</sup> For the discussion of 閨秀, and its related terms 名媛, 閑媛, please refer to Grace S. Fong's "Alternative Modernities, or a Classical Woman of Modern China: The Challenging Trajectory of Lü Bicheng's (1883-1943) Life and Song Lyrics," 58, and Qian Nanxiu's "Borrowing Foreign Mirrors and Candles to Illuminate Chinese Civilization": Xue Shaohui's Moral Vision in the *Biographies of*



boast of sparkling beauty, remarkable talent and indescribable spontaneity. The reductive picture of women Chen chooses to represent as Chinese women is interesting in its own selectiveness. In the patriarchic imperial China, women usually “represent quintessential objects of a ‘male gaze’.”<sup>179</sup> His precedents in High Qing “Zhang Xuecheng dismissed women’s poetry as diversion from learned women’s true calling and Yuan Mei celebrated women’s poetry as a manifestation of their sensual beauty and emotional spontaneity.”<sup>180</sup> His later more radical compatriots, fraught with nationalist mode of writing in face of increasing alien challenges at the turn of the century, sacrifice women in their writing as “poster girls,” “victims,” or “alliances.”<sup>181</sup>

In a similar vein, it is no less a representation of himself than his object of representation in Chen’s case. When relegating women into recognizable and controllable domestic types as good mother, wife and daughter, Chen claims his male authority with assertion and comfort, and when he touts women as a unified group fervently with the much painted beauty, wit and spontaneity, it may be seen as a reflex of his aspiration for affirmation of his own remarkable talent through the reciprocal patronage of the ideal group of women, at odds with the stiff and arrogant official culture he faces.

To recapitulate briefly, as an overseas-student-turned-diplomat in the Late Qing in the tumultuous Sino-French war, Chen not only had to deal with foreign aggressors on the official stage, but also suffered severe and compelling identity crisis from the pressure from his home country. Political ambitions and moral burdens,

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*Foreign Women*,” 82. Both in Grace S. Fong, Harriet Thelma Zurndorfer, and Nanxiu Qian, eds, *Beyond Tradition & Modernity: Gender, Genre, and Cosmopolitanism in Late Qing China* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

<sup>179</sup> Susan Mann, 3.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>181</sup> F. Taga, “East Asian Masculinities,” *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities*, ed. Michael S. Kimmel et al. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2004), 129-140.

mastery of new knowledge and distrust from mainstream may both link to his using the writing of the book a vehicle to remonstrate misunderstanding and despise he suffers. While adopting the *wen* and *wu* scheme to demonstrate the belief in traditional Chinese masculinity, he seems to reclaim an elite status as a guardian of Confucian ethics; and in depicting women in both a didactic and fantasizing tone, he with a male gaze full of confidence and passion, regains certain sense of male superiority in the realm of gender discourse.

## **A Voice in the Print Media: Chen Jitong's Tactics of Engaging the Parisian Public in the Sino-French War**

Before 1883, Chen Jitong engaged in foreign affairs mostly in Germany, since he had served as Attaché to Li Fengbao 李鳳苞 (1834-1887), the Chinese Ambassador to Germany from 1878. While being taken by Li Hongzhang as a trusted follower, and a student who had studied in France before and fostered connections there, Chen played a pivotal role in the Sino-French Peace Talks from June 1883 to June 1884, when he frequently had official and unofficial meetings with important figures in Paris. After Zeng Jize 曾紀澤 (1839-1890) was officially replaced by Li Fengbao in April 1884, Chen's center stage moved to France.<sup>182</sup> One thing worth particular attention is that during the turbulent period of bilateral contact in the wartime, Chen had his eighteen articles, which later comprised *Les Chinois Peints par Eux-Mêmes* (The Chinese Painted by Themselves), serialized in three consecutive issues in the semimonthly French Journal *Révue des Deux Mondes* (The Review of Two Worlds) during May and June, 1884 in Paris, before they came out in book form.<sup>183</sup> The articles serialized in the journal had a great impact on the contemporary French public, especially the political and intellectual circles in that before the serialization ended, Chen had exalted in excitement of its success in a letter to Mondion, his then French friend and collaborator, "I receive invitations every day from one salon to another, and have never been disengaged until midnight." Meanwhile Chen was so immediately inspired by the

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<sup>182</sup> See Li Huachuan 李華川. *Wanqing yige waijiaoguan de wenhua licheng* 晚清一個外交官的文化歷程 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 2004), Chapter 2, and Zhongguo shixuehui 中國史學會 ed., *Zhongfa zhanzheng* 中法戰爭 (Shanghai: Xinzhishi chubanshe 新知識出版社, 1955), vol. 4.

<sup>183</sup> Li, 180.

tentative participation in the French media that he talked about further writings on China and even playscripts.<sup>184</sup>

While scholars on Chen Jitong join in the celebration of Chen's pioneering transnational cultural endeavor, the serialization of articles on the French Journal as an effective communicative tactic hasn't received much attention as object of inquiry. In an era of "golden age of the press" in the late nineteenth century Paris, journals and newspapers both flourished to reach a broad and diverse audiences.<sup>185</sup> Chen himself seemed more interested in the newspaper form personally in that in another of his work published later, *Les Parisiens peints par un Chinois* (*The Parisians Painted by a Chinese*), he states clearly, "I am incurably addicted to reading newspapers. When being asked for advice by my compatriots here, I always suggest them to read newspapers, which offer them more than professors and books do" (Je sais que je suis incurablement atteint; Je commence par lui recommander les journaux, qui lui en apprendront plus que professeurs et livres).<sup>186</sup> So why didn't he choose to publish in the newspapers? Why instead, did he choose to publish in a periodical? What kind of a journal is the *Révue des Deux Mondes*? Further, as journals are one site of the many organs of the "bourgeois public sphere" according to Habermas, a forum of "rational discussion and debate" for people to form public opinions to participate in and influence political practice,<sup>187</sup> why is Chen, in his subsequential book published as a collection of the articles published in the journal before, also sentimental and sensational, or to gladden people's hearts rather than developing a coherently rational and critical agenda, which the "public opinion" requires as preconditions?

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<sup>184</sup> Foucault de Mondion, *Quand j'étais mandarin* (Paris: Albert Savine, 1890), 31, 35.

<sup>185</sup> Vanessa R. Schwarz. *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 26, 27, 29.

<sup>186</sup> Tchong Ki-Tong, *Les parisiens peints par un Chinois* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1891), 18.

<sup>187</sup> Douglas Kellner, "Habermas, the Public Sphere, and Democracy: A Critical Intervention," *Perspectives on Habermas*, ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court Publishing, 2000), 264.

## **Chen Jitong: Understanding Public Sphere and Media Savant**

### *The Importance of Print Media*

It is noticeable that Chen was aware of the importance of print media from the very beginning of his residence in Paris. He claims in the book on Paris that “the first things catching his eye when wandering the boulevards are enormous newspapers” (Je vais les rues, sans buts determine: la première chose qui frappe mes regards. C’est une multitude de ces papiers imprimés).<sup>188</sup> In *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*, he dedicates a chapter under the title “Journalism and Public Opinion.” Chen states in the beginning of the chapter that “it is a noble calling to create an opinion and diffuse it almost instantaneously by thousands of copies in that great and everlasting new world we call the public” (c’est un noble métier que celui de créer une opinion et de la répandre presque instantanément à des milliers d’exemplaires dans ce grand monde toujours nouveau qu’on appelle le public).<sup>189</sup> By relating the periodical publication’s function as “to create an opinion” and to “diffuse it” to the “public,” Chen seems in a similar vein of the conceptualization by Jurgen Habermas, who elaborates on the development and decline of the bourgeois public sphere from the eighteenth and nineteenth century to the early twentieth century in major western capitalist countries in his *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. According to him, a new public sphere emerged during the Enlightenment and the American and French revolutions, with its formation in the following normative delineation:

The bourgeois public sphere, which began appearing around 1700 in Habermas's interpretation, was to mediate between the private concerns

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<sup>188</sup> Chen Jitong, *Les parisiens peints par un Chinois*, 16.

<sup>189</sup> Chen Jitong, *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*, 72. Tchong-Ki-Tong, *Les Chinois peints par eux-mêmes*, 97.

of individuals in their familial, economic, and social life contrasted to the demands and concerns of social and public life. This involved mediation of the contradiction between *bourgeois* and *citoyen*, to use terms developed by Hegel and the early Marx, overcoming private interests and opinions to discover common interests and to reach societal consensus. The public sphere consisted of organs of information and political debate such as newspapers and journals, as well as institutions of political discussion such as parliaments, political clubs, literary salons, public assemblies, pubs and coffee houses, meeting halls, and other public spaces where socio-political discussion took place. For the first time in history, individuals and groups could shape public opinion, giving direct expression to their needs and interests while influencing political practice. The bourgeois public sphere made it possible to form a realm of public opinion that opposed state power and the powerful interests that were coming to shape bourgeois society.<sup>190</sup>

Those institutions of political discussion, such as parliaments, political clubs, literary salons, coffee houses and assemblies were places which Chen, as a diplomat frequented already. In his secret meetings assigned by Li Hongzhang to gather political opinions and military intelligence from the French side, he recorded meetings with not only government prefects and ministers, but also naval officers, ambassadors, Marquis, wardens, out-parties, parliamentary members and businessmen etc.<sup>191</sup> However, both the urgency to call a truce and the conspicuous arrogance of the French representatives on the “public” negotiation table, where the international law representing reason and justice should have been followed add to Chen’s attention to the alternative site of opinion expression: the Parisian journals and newspapers. Not only did Chen himself marvel at their omnipresent impact on the French society, but also some antiwar French men of influences he had met suggested that the Chinese government subsidize Parisian newspaper offices to have a voice in the press.<sup>192</sup> If the public space is the site/place where rational, democratic and critical opinions are to be formulated as Habermas

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<sup>190</sup> Kellner, 260, 263.

<sup>191</sup> Li, 22.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 23.

advocates, what then does the role of subsidization in the press mean? I will elaborate on this issue in later discussion.

In any case, the French print media became Chen's ultimate resort: while other public spheres as illustrated above may have restrictions on the number of people to reach and range of information to disseminate, newspapers and journals have the ability to create "a sublime communion of souls across the distance," or an "imagined community" to bring in those otherwise "unconnected readers."<sup>193</sup> While the negotiation table is a restrictive place where the voice of the state is conveyed, one can now express his opinions in a much larger and influential public sphere. Also, besides the fact that Chen was in desperate need of the media support outside of the political circle, Paris at the time, as a world-class metropolis was claimed to be the right place to find public spirit. As the contemporary American intellectuals observe about the city in the late nineteenth century, "the key to French history and society was the 'social instinct'." Their visits to Paris bring forth immediate admiration and inspiration, making them skeptic about the "untrammelled individualism" celebrated in the United States. As they note, in France "individuals are of less import than the relations between them."<sup>194</sup> In Paris, people celebrate the experience of public participation and enjoy the constraints of the public on the individual. Besides the intense social inclination, as Brownell, a contemporary literary critic from the States observes, Paris in the late nineteenth century is "the apotheosis of intellect."<sup>195</sup> With the enlightenment and the French Revolution as "a great purge and renewer of the modern world," the whole nation boasts about its belief in reason and competence of mind and its impatience with

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<sup>193</sup> Schwartz, 26.

<sup>194</sup> Thomas Bender, "The Modern Literary Intellectual," *New York Intellect: A History of Intellectual Life in New York City, from 1750 to the Beginning of Our Own Time* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1987), 210.

<sup>195</sup> William Crary Brownell, *French Traits: An Essay in Comparative Criticism* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1908), 86.

“anomalities and absurdities.”<sup>196</sup> In other words, not only social participation is rooted in French nature, especially after the French revolution, but also intelligence and reason are widely worshiped in the then France. As Brownell notes, “that a thing should be admitted and not adopted is incomprehensible to the French mind; that it should not be admitted after having been proved, after all that maybe said against it has been answered...”<sup>197</sup> This universal confidence in intelligence and reason makes France so special that “there is, intellectually speaking, far more disinterestedness than elsewhere.” “People divide upon ideas, and not upon prejudices, or ever upon interests.”<sup>198</sup> This trait of France also corresponds to what Habermas demonstrated in his study of bourgeois public sphere in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when the bourgeoning of the early liberal free-market capitalism gave rise to the rational-critical debate of the public, whose opinions and attitudes subsequently formed become a real check on the domination of state power.<sup>199</sup> They could challenge or affirm decisions of the state agencies and thus legitimate the functioning of authority. Therefore, in this city well known for its public spirit of participation and reasoning, Chen’s bet on the print media to introduce China and his opinions on the west and east is an understandable choice to resort to the local answer from the public sphere, from which a public attention and participation may become an influence on the French statesmen’s decision making.

### *The Restraint of Newspapers*

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 86-87.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>199</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans., Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), Chap.I-IV.



French newspapers have undergone dramatic development during the nineteenth century. Before the mid-nineteenth century, newspapers had very small circulation and could be rented at limited public locations. “The newspapers remained outside the cultural world of the majority of even the bourgeoisie.”<sup>200</sup> With its usual cost of around eighty-franc, it rarely reached the broader lower class. However, because of lowering the subscription rate, first to forty-franc (the *La Presse* founded by Emile de Girardin in 1836), and then to even a sou, French newspapers broadened their audience dramatically. The most successful newspaper then, *Le Petit Journal*, which was sold for a sou, reached a circulation of one million in 1886. The newly literate were fond of the Parisian dailies since the cheap press could be bought everywhere: the kiosks, the street criers and even the railroad stations. Along with the French “freedom of the press law” in 1881, the titles of newspapers for one sou increased to around fifty-eight in 1899 from twenty-three in 1881.<sup>201</sup> The cheap newspapers’ contribution to the drive for literacy even moved Emile Zola to say that “it created a new class of readers.”

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With the newspapers’ power to reach the broadest audience, Chen Jitong himself was a loyal reader. He claimed himself as an “admirer” of this media to create a public opinion.<sup>203</sup> He could not live without newspapers in Paris and always recommended them to newly-arrived Chinese.<sup>204</sup> He also seems to be aware of the advantages of newspapers such as the timeliness and relevance to current affairs. For instance, he mentioned newspapers several times as an important source in knowing the debate details in the French parliament during his negotiations with key politicians

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<sup>200</sup> Schwartz, 28.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 28-29.

<sup>202</sup> Michael B. Palmer, *Des Petits journaux aux grandes agences: Naissance du journalisme moderne* (Paris, Aubier, 1983), 24. Cited in Schwartz, 29.

<sup>203</sup> Chen Jitong, *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*, 72.

<sup>204</sup> Chen, *Les parisiens peints par un Chinois*, 18.

in the Sino-French War. He often learned from newspapers the immediate reports from the Vietnam battlefield.<sup>205</sup> In the critical moment to defend his alleged embezzlement and issues of unpaid private debt from French banks in 1891, he was involved actively in the written-polemics with Xue Fucheng 薛福成 (the then ambassador to Britain and France) in several French newspapers even if he was expatriated and detained in the prison in China.<sup>206</sup> He definitely knew the influence of newspapers and their power to catch the instant public attention. Nevertheless why didn't he make use of such convenient resource to publish his articles? When we read his work, one can find that he is also skeptical about this epitome of the popular media. In his *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*, and *The Paris Painted by a Chinese*, he dedicated respectively one and two chapters to journalism and public opinion. Besides his praise of this mighty source as a means to diffuse information, his criticism shows his observation of the Parisian mass media not as creating real public opinion, but a manipulated media to generate distorted information.

First, on elucidating the freedom of the press, Chen writes:

In China no newspaper exists bearing any analogy to a European journal—I mean a journal published under the regime of complete freedom of the press. It is liberty which does not flourish in the Empire of the Centre, and I will add—not to appear to regret it – that there are great empires even in the West where that liberty is not absolute.

On chercherait vainement, en Chine, un journal ayant quelque analogie avec un journal européen, j'entends un journal publié sous le régime de la liberté absolue de la presse. C'est une liberté qui ne fleurit pas dans l'Empire du Milieu; et, j'ajouterai, pour ne pas paraître le regretter, qu'il existe de grands empires, même en Occident, où cette liberté n'est pas entière.<sup>207</sup>

While admitting the lack of liberty of the press in contemporary China, Chen's

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<sup>205</sup> Chen Jitong, *Bali banyue miji* 巴黎半月密記. Cited in Li Huachuan, *Wanqing yige waijiaoguan de wenhua licheng*, 178.

<sup>206</sup> Li, 40-44.

<sup>207</sup> Chen, *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*, 74. Tchong, 101.

emphasis here is discerning the “liberty” in the West media. To him, the liberty is not “absolute.” Not only that it is not absolute, but it is guised, deceitful and abused. According to Li Huachuan, Chen recorded his understanding of the tricks behind French newspapers in his diary: during his meetings with French political insiders, Chen was advised to subsidize Parisian newspapers so as to publish articles to persuade France out of war with China. Chen noticed and recorded that the then French men in power were concurrently contributors and subsidizers of newspaper press.<sup>208</sup> To Chen, this may indicate that sometimes it is money not opinion that talks in the newspapers, a media not aiming at disseminate real public opinion.

Secondly, on the content of newspapers, although Chen gives affirmation to the comprehensiveness of Parisian newspapers as maybe the most powerful source to acquire information, he is very skeptical about the quality of the information newspapers generate: the insincerity and shallowness make him claim that “the influence of newspapers upon opinion is not so great as might be apprehended” (*L'influence du journal sur l'esprit n'est pas aussi grande qu'on pourrait le craindre*).<sup>209</sup>

His view not only comes from his reading experience, but also comes from the invitation to visit the publishing house to gain the first-hand experience. In a chapter entitled “The Press,” Chen recorded his visit to the newspaper office accompanied by a French friend. The friend led him around the building and showed him what the reporters, workers and editors were doing to produce a daily newspaper. His friend pointed to a busy working lad and told Chen in person that that was a very capable young fellow, who had all sources of side-street news and could make up news when there wasn’t enough for the page. Then Chen suddenly remembered his reading of a

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<sup>208</sup> Li, 178.

<sup>209</sup> Chen, *Les Parisiens Peints par un Chinois*, 17; *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*, 72. Tcheng, 98.

report on a previous newspaper that since China had its *Official Gazette*, at least two hundred editors had been decapitated. He complained to his French friend on this falsification of news and his friend said it was just that they did not care about details and they might in the future make corrections of wrongly published information. He explained that the importance of the make-up stories was to create sensations, to be eye-catching and to have the stories wide-spread.<sup>210</sup> Chen's reaction to this tactic of newspaper publishing was shock if not overt fury. The Chinese Gazette rumor, as he noted, was published in a "very serious" and "big" French newspaper. He explained to the French friend that since the Gazette was by the Emperor's permission, the reports in print were what allowed to be printed and thus editors were exempted from liability to censure, let alone decapitation. Chen's reaction to the insider story of French newspaper circle shows his strong disappointment of the reliability of newspapers since big and serious papers are also deceitful. Also, among many real and unreal stories he has read in the French newspapers, his first criticism derives from a distorted report about China. This indicates the image of China is his primary concern and his hesitation in taking newspapers as a reliable source for information of China. Since if the newspapers' aim is mainly to draw more readers, then they would spare no effort to manipulate or make up any materials to reach the goal.

Another deficiency concerning the content of newspapers in Chen's mind is its lack of depth in reports. "The journal usually reports what happens; when it is very well informed it says nothing more" (*Le journal dit généralement ce qui se passe; lorsqu'il est très bien informé, il ne dit que cela*). "As to the serious articles, it seems they are never read. They are very well written, but possess no interest except for their authors" (*Quant aux articles sérieux il paraît qu'on ne les lit jamais. Ils sont cependant toujours*

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<sup>210</sup> Chen, Chapter "La Presse," *Les Parisiens Peints par un Chinois*, 171-178.

très bien faits; mais ils n'ont d'intérêt que pour leurs auteurs).<sup>211</sup> Although Chen claims in the same chapter that newspaper is “a very useful, very precious institution,” he is keen on its limitation in transmitting thought and ideas. To him, newspapers are good institution for bits and pieces, not contents of insightful explanations and analysis. “It helps one to pass the time agreeably” (Il aide à passer le temps agréablement) and “its very title is comforting to see” (son titre seul vous est agréable à apercevoir)<sup>212</sup> while serious articles in newspapers are seldom read as he observes. If Chen wants to publish lengthy and in depth articles on China to earn Parisians’ compassion and favor, newspapers seem not a good resort.

As discussed before, turning to public opinion and public sphere to introduce China is Chen’s goal off the battlefield of the official negotiating table. However, Chen found from his observation that the most popular media in Paris---- newspapers, could not be trusted to generate rational and critical opinions through the form of mass production, and drew critical, intelligent and liberal-minded audience, although Parisians boasted of their “public spirits.” After the second industrial revolution, the mass production of newspapers and heated competitions stirred up the traditional culture circle and created a gigantic culture industry. The newspapers are so easy and cheap to produce that “forty thousand copies of papers are poured into the street every hour” (déversent dans les rues, à quadrant mille par heure). What added to the frenzy are posters, advertisements and street-criers all over the place.<sup>213</sup> Under such stimulation some urban masses read daily newspapers “ten or twenty with the same stoical air” (dix, vingt - avec le même air),<sup>214</sup> and the potentially critical public becomes the consuming public, who were in endless pursuit of spontaneous, ephemeral

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<sup>211</sup> Chen, *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*, 73, 74. Tcheng, 98-99; 100.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 72. Tcheng, 97-98.

<sup>213</sup> Chen, *Les Parisiens Peints par un Chinois*, 16.

<sup>214</sup> Chen, *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*, 73. Tcheng, 99.

and sensational news. The readers were curious about the world, but what interested them were just spectacles rather than opinions and true details. Chen at the same time heaped scorn on the fickle nature of the Parisian masses who were just crazy about newspapers:

Although we can hardly say that journals preach in the desert, they preach to the public, which is rather of the nature of the desert, that moving world, now plain, now mountain, where nothing stands still and nothing lives...

In truth it is a slippery, capricious public. What pleases it to-day displeases it to-morrow; it is never satisfied. Notice these lunatics running after newspapers every hour of the day: they read ten or twenty with the same stoical air, and then you hear them groan there is nothing in the papers! They wait for the evening paper—nothing! To-morrow's paper---again nothing! At last some news comes-and everybody knows it before the papers.

On ne peut pas dire cependant des journaux qu'ils prêchent dans le désert, mais dans le public, ce qui est un peu de l'essence du désert, ce monde mouvant, tantôt plaine, tantôt montagne, où rien n'est stable et rien ne vit...

C'est en effet un monde insaisissable, capricieux. Ce qui lui plaît aujourd'hui lui déplaît de main; il n'est jamais satisfait. Regardez ces affolés se précipiter à toute heure du jour sur les journaux: ils en lisent dix, vingt - avec le même air impassible-et vous les entendez toujours gémir: il n'y a rien dans les journaux! On attend le soir, rien! le lendemain, rien encore ! Arrive enfin une nouvelle, tout le monde la sait avant le journal. <sup>215</sup>

Chen's articles on China, if published in newspapers, cannot reach his goal of rectification of Parisian public's prejudice on China due to the publishing forms and audience of newspapers. In order to expose China to the Parisian audience, most of whom haven't been to China before, and only had general impressions from the media, Chen depicted China in lengthy and detailed essays, while audiences were eager to learn things all around the world in four pages of the newspapers <sup>216</sup> and his long articles,

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 73-74. Tchong, 99-100.

<sup>216</sup> Chen, *Les Parisiens Peints par un Chinois*, 17.

usually ranging from ten to fifteen in book pages could not fit in the short templates on newspaper pages. And with the mass production system, hundreds of newspapers poured onto the street in millions copies daily and even hourly as Chen observes. Information was thus replaced instantly, which was ephemeral and in oblivion. How can Chen's articles stay in people's mind to form deep impressions amid such information waves? Above all, Chen shows in his above commentary his discomfort with the urban masses as suitable audience for his articles. His serious elaborations on Chinese customs and histories such as "Chinese Family Life," "The Written Language," "The Literary Class," "Education," "The Working Class" cannot cater to the insatiable desires of the average Parisian newspaper audience in the late Nineteenth century, who were looking for sensational and unpredictable spectacles. As Venessa Schwarz observes in her book, the fin-de-Siècle Paris had newspapers as "display windows, a fixture of and transmitter for boulevard culture," an emblem genre of the modern mass press.<sup>217</sup> The highly sensational and commercialized media had a great deal of advertisements and daily boulevard spectacles. "If fiction in installments drew public attention, the *faits divers* (brief news stories with sensational themes) improved creating sensation of the quotidian."<sup>218</sup> In other words, longer pieces like serial novellas told by famous storytellers like Balzac are essential to newspapers' content, and so are *faits divers*.<sup>219</sup>

The enthusiasm in the study of Parisian newspapers again derives from Chen's heightened anxiety in the encounter with the west. On the one hand, since Chen has seen and heard the western contempt of China as having little freedom and prestige in newspapers,<sup>220</sup> he is quite attentive to the Parisian press for the comparison. Therefore

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<sup>217</sup> Schwartz, 30.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 28, 32, 39.

<sup>220</sup> Chen, *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*, 81.

in his essay, he admits on the one hand that “In China no newspaper exists bearing any analogy to a European journal—I mean a journal published under the *régime* of complete freedom of the press” (On chercherait vainement, en Chine, un journal ayant quelque analogie avec un journal européen, j'entends un journal publié sous le régime de la liberté absolue de la presse). At the same time, he adds that “there are great empires even in the West where that liberty is not absolute” (il existe de grands empires, même en Occident, où cette liberté n'est pas entière).<sup>221</sup> By discerning the limitations of the emblem of Parisian mass culture, Chen seems to talk back with a superior and derisive intellectual tone against the inferior quality of the mass media.<sup>222</sup> Also, his weighing much in the study of “Journalism and Public Opinion” chapter may be partly attributed to his strong eagerness to debate on the boasted Parisian public media. Since France in the late nineteenth century claimed it was in the “golden age of the press” under mass production and the freedom law in 1881,<sup>223</sup> Chen was intended to find the stage for public opinion and critical and liberatory audiences as publics for understanding. Yet Chen finds from his real experiences that the commercial and subsidizing nature of Parisian newspapers have dampened the development of a critical and autonomous public. To him, although newspapers were the most widespread sources of information, most of them were mainly commercialized media. To use Habermas’s word, “The world fashioned by the mass media is a public sphere in appearance only. By the same token the integrity of the private sphere which they promise to their consumers is also an illusion.”<sup>224</sup> Therefore, both the forms and

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 74. Tcheng, 101.

<sup>222</sup> Many scholars have studied on the intellectual anxiety about the burgeoning of the urban masses in the time of mass media and the decline of liberalism and intellectual spirit during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. For example, Andreas Huyssen has *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), Lin Yutang, *A History of the Press and Public Opinion in China*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968).

<sup>223</sup> Schwarz, 27-29.

<sup>224</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), 171.



content of Parisian newspapers don't quite live up to Chen's standard to publish his essays.

### *The Choice of Journal and Revue des Deux Mondes*

Chen Jitong finally had his articles serialized in a prestigious review in Paris, *Revue des Deux Mondes*. From June 1883 to June 1884, Chen appeared as a pivotal role in the Sino-French Peace Talks, when he frequently had official and unofficial meetings with important figures in Paris. Meanwhile, his sixteen articles, were serialized in three consecutive issues in the semimonthly French Journal *Revue des Deux Mondes* (*The Review of Two Worlds*) during May and June, 1884 in Paris.<sup>225</sup> This publication on this review was an instant sensation in the political and intellectual circles as we stated before.<sup>226</sup> The articles came into its first book form in July 1884, just a month after the serialization in the review periodical, which was reprinted at least five times within the year and by May 1886, in the eleventh. It was also published in English and German.

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Based on Chen's experience and observation of Parisian public media, how would he decide on the media form to resort to? And what kind of journal is it? Why was it so effective in giving Chen's ideas such a wide hearing? *Revue des Deux Mondes* was initiated in 1829 and is still in circulation, which has a history of almost 200 years. Consisting of "signed articles by men of mark of all opinions on questions of the day,"

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<sup>225</sup> Li Huachuan has claimed in his book that there are eighteen articles by Chen published in three consecutive periodicals (180). While from the *Revue des Deux Mondes: Suite de la Table Générale, 1874-1886* (*The Continuation of the General Content of the Review of the Two Worlds*), edited by Bureau de Revue des Deux Mondes, Paris, 1886, I found that it should be sixteen articles published as the sequences shown in the book:

La Chine et les Chinois. — Colonel Tchong-Ki-Tong: I. Famille, religion et philosophie, le mariage, le divorce, la femme, 15 mai 1884. — II. La Langue, les classes, les lettres, le journal, époques préhistoriques, 1 juin 1884. — III. L'Éducation, le culte des ancêtres, l'œuvre de la Sainte-Enfance, les classes laborieuses, les plaisirs, la société européenne, 15 juin 1884.

<sup>226</sup> Foucault de Mondion, 31.

<sup>227</sup> Li, 56.

<sup>228</sup> the Review has “succeeded in overcoming all serious competition” and has become “the most distinguished and notable periodical” in France.<sup>229</sup> This periodical boasts both its influence in and outside of France and its incomparable credit in the literary, social, scientific and political society. Though a review mostly reachable to the “la grosse bourgeoisie parlementaire et voltairienne toute puissante” (the great number of parliamentary bourgeoisie and all powerful voltairians), it was the most influential publication among periodicals with 8000 subscribers.<sup>230</sup> It gained “worldwide reputation” that it had “been the type followed by so many continental periodicals.”<sup>231</sup> English periodicals like *The Fortnightly Review* (1865), *The Contemporary Review* (1866), the German *Deutsche Rundschau* (1874), and the Italian *Rivista Contemporanea* (1852) were all founded in emulation of the successful *Revue des Deux Mondes*.<sup>232</sup> Inside France, its director and owner is so powerful that he has had members of the academy its majority contributors and “had gathered at his evening receptions everybody who was anybody in Paris.”<sup>233</sup> Besides its largest circulation and influence in and outside of Paris, its prestige lies primarily in its credibility of quality and independence. It is noted that though its director is criticized for his stinting on contribution royalties, the authors “refused to write and they wrote, they displeased him for his avarice and trusted their best works to him rather than to others.” The director “was the living symbol of all the virtues, social, literary and political he had to be. He was editor and manager of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.”<sup>234</sup> During the periodicals

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<sup>228</sup> Hugh Chisholm, ed., *The Encyclopedia Britannica: a Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, Literature and General Information*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed., (New York: The Encyclopedia Britannica Co., 1911), vol.21, 152.

<sup>229</sup> Max Bach. “A Review of Second-Empire Reviews.” *The French Review*, Vol 35, No.3 (January 1962): 295-301.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, 296.

<sup>231</sup> Chisholm, 160.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 152, 159, 160.

<sup>233</sup> “Great Scandals in Paris: Editor Buloz Embezzles to Get Funds for Blackmailers—Now Hiding,” *New York Times*, July 15, 1893, 5.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*

early booming times, its allusions in some of its articles irritated the authorities, and the president of the Senate “felt the need to counterattack,” and convinced the emperor to have a voice of the government dominating a review to counteract the influence of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.<sup>235</sup> As the essay describes, they subsidized grandly a rival review, forcing governmental agencies to subscribe, suggesting the ban of the sales of *Revue des Deux Mondes* and above all, trying their best to win over the contributors from the above review, yet they tumbled out of the competition. Not only the established scholars, writers, best talents of the universities, the Academy and the similar bodies remained loyal to the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, but also the government employers kept contributing to this trusted review journal despite the government sponsored review’s invitation and intimidation. What is also ironic is that Calonne, the chief editor of the government subsidized rival journal *Revue Contemporaine*, wrote to the Minister in despair to complain that it is the independence from the government which sustains the popularity of the *Deux Mondes*, and he himself broke from the government control and gained full ownership of his review. The next substitute the government found, *Revue Européenne*, though striving to publish some articles by noted authors of the time, had only about six hundred subscribers, half of whom were governmental agencies. Both periodicals ceased to exist by 1870.<sup>236</sup> While the *Deux Mondes* not only “emerged as a key hub of the French and European intellectual life” then, but also still exists today and boasts its aim as to “embody its humanist spirit of its debut, away from ideological accessions.” It is interested in all areas of human activity, “faithful to its literary and philosophical origins: freedom of mind, intellectual independence, the critical attitude, the primacy of lucidity and all other realistic

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<sup>235</sup> Bach, 296.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

approaches are what constitute its charter today.”<sup>237</sup> Therefore, besides showing his skepticism of newspapers as an effective space in public sphere, Chen sets up a subversive tone against the menace of the French government by lining up with the defying liberal bourgeois stratum in the periodical press, which, according to Habermas, is to generate relatively rational-critical discourse against both the invading commercial interest of the advanced mass society and the manipulative press of governmental coercion.<sup>238</sup>

From the above elaboration of the periodical one can find that the journal is such a trusted outlet for public opinions among the Parisian bigwigs that the government has to set up a rival to counteract its influence. Also, the articles on the periodical are mostly long argumentative essays on various literary, political and social topics generating critical and debatable opinions rather than entertainment or relaxation-oriented topics. From the content table of articles on China from 1874-1886 in the journal, one can see that before 1880s, the titles are focusing on introductory expeditions and business opportunities in China, such as “The Business of China and Japan,” “The New ports opened by China.” The articles increase in depth on histories of China and Chinese with titles like “Journeys, Politics, and Business. - A Chinese Socialist in the Eleventh Century” and “The Chinese and the Russians in Kouldja” before Chen joins the discussion in 1884 with the series “China and Chinese.” After Chen’s contribution to the journal, French contributors join the debate with articles entitled “The Decline of the Chinese power,” and “China and Chinese.”<sup>239</sup> Therefore both the extent of access and influence and the degree of autonomy of the periodical live up to Chen’s standard.

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<sup>237</sup> Section “Historique” and “Et Maintenant,” accessed July 27, 2016, <http://www.revuedesdeuxmondes.fr/qui-sommes-nous/>.

<sup>238</sup> Habermas, Chap. six.

<sup>239</sup> Bureau de Revue des Deux Mondes, ed., *Revue des Deux Mondes: Suite de la Table Générale, 1874-1886 (The Continuation of the General Content of the Review of the Two Worlds)*, (Paris, 1886).

## **The Power of Public Sympathy**

### *The Added Flavor in the Subsequent Book*

The publishing of the essays in the journal was such a success for Chen that right after a month of publishing all the series of articles in the *Deux Mondes*, they were collected and printed in book form.<sup>240</sup> Yet one finds that in the “contents” of the later compiled book, Chen adds five more chapters. Besides two social-analytical chapters, “East and West,” “The Arsenal of Foo-Choo,” the other three concern Chinese literature: “Proverbs and Maxims,” “Historical Songs,” and “Classical Poetry.” Why does Chen intend to elaborate more on the literary aspects of China to French readers after debating and elaborating on several social and historical aspects of China in the periodical? Especially after having three chapters entitled “The Literary Class,” “The Written Language,” and “Pleasures” concerning cultural China already published in the periodical? My contention is that this might be another tactic, not polemical but affinitive, whereby Chen strives to win the sentiment-based sympathy of the French bourgeois or elite class who has the interest in Chinoiserie culture. It may demonstrate his awareness of elicitation of both public opinion and public sympathy of the French intellectuals and broad-minded readers.<sup>241</sup>

The origin of the cult for Chinoiserie in France is complex but traceable. Since Louis XIV first sent French China missions for religious expansion and exploration, all kinds of Westerners such as missionaries, traders, diplomats, soldiers, teachers landed on this nation and brought back shards of information, both spiritual and material, about

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<sup>240</sup> See note 224.

<sup>241</sup> The utilization and influence of “public opinion” and “public sympathy” was discussed in detail in Eugenia Lean, *Public Passions: The Trial of Shi Jianqiao and the Rise of Popular Sympathy in Republican China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

this land. Artwork, books, goods from China inspired works by the greatest talents in the eighteenth century such as Leibniz, Montesquieu and Voltaire and spurred the craze for Chinoiserie in Europe and especially in France.<sup>242</sup> “From this movement grew not only impulses for new artistic forms, but also the French decision to ground the formal study of Chinese language and history in the academy, leading to the West’s first great flowering of what came to be called sinology.”<sup>243</sup> However, this fad seems to die down somewhat in the early nineteenth century. According to the Chinese scholar Meng Hua, it is partly because that France was busy with its civil wars and partly because of the beginning of the opium war. Negative views on China came along with the revelation of soldiers’ memoirs on China showing its vulnerability and the poverty of its ordinary people.<sup>244</sup>

Nevertheless does the fad for China really disappear then? In France, at least for the upper class, the tradition is well inherited. Since the influence of Chinoiserie in the eighteenth century is so lasting that Sinology originated in France in the early nineteenth century, with its focus on teaching Chinese, translating Chinese literature and research on Chinese culture.<sup>245</sup> Famous short stories, dramas and Chinese classical poems have been translated and introduced to the French intellectual world since early nineteenth century. Sinology with its introduction of literature, has thus kept the passion for China among the French, especially the educated and wealthy class in spite of

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<sup>242</sup> Jonathan D. Spence, *The Chan’s Great Continent: China in Western Minds* (New York: W.W. and Norton Company, 1999), 145-146.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>244</sup> Meng Hua 孟華, “Shilun hanxue jiangou zhi gongneng--- yi shijiu shiji faguo wenxue zhong de ‘wenhua zhongguo’ weili” 試論漢學建構形象之功能---以 19 世紀法國文學中的‘文化中國’形象為例, *Beijing daxue xuebao: zheshe ban* 北京大學學報: 哲社版, Vol.44, No.4 (July 2007): 94-95. Later on, this paper was included in Meng’s book of collection of papers on Sino-French literary relations, *Zhongfa wenxue guanxi yanjiu* 中法文學關係研究 (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe 復旦大學出版社, 2011).

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, 96-97.

warfare against China.<sup>246</sup> The men of letters were infatuated with Chinese poems for instance. According to Meng, Judith Gautier, a later French poet and novelist, was guided by his father, a contemporary poet, to learn Chinese when she was a girl. She then rewrote Tang poems into an adaptation book called *Livre de Jade*. The book was so successful that famous talents like Hugo and France were loyal readers and it was reprinted several times. Symbolist Paul Verlaine praised it as unparalleled by others for the ingenuity, purity, sincerity and conciseness of the poems. Many poets even return to other translations of Chinese poems to imitate both their content and forms.<sup>247</sup> One may notice that the grace and delicacy of Chinese poems, with its unique imagery and tradition of allusion greatly inspired French writers, who were active in the literary movements like romanticism and symbolism in nineteenth-century France. If following Meng's proposition that the eighteenth-century chinoiserie cult is so pervasive in France that it becomes a collective unconsciousness as even a social identity, then Chen's resorting to Chinese classical poems can be partly seen as a tactic to evoke French readers' affective engagement. Chen himself says in a paragraph in the preface to the book that "We will while away our evenings in turning over poets, and he will feel his emotions stirred in listening to the harmony of our verses, joined to their depth of sentiments" (Nous charmerons nos soirées en feuilletant nos poètes, et il sentira l'émotion le gagner quand il entendra l'harmonie de nos vers unie à la profondeur des sentiments).<sup>248</sup> In this sense, the poem chapters he then added in, carrying colors and flavors, might help to waken French readers' imagination to see and feel an aesthetic China.

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<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 98-99.

<sup>248</sup> Chen, *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*, 6. Tcheng, VIII.

*Emotional Engagement with a China Untarnished*

Nevertheless, do the chapters concerning Chinese poetry and maxims merely evoke the French aesthetic resonance? As I observe, they carry more meaning by emphasizing the “imaginary China” on the literary stage to counteract exaggerated descriptions of China from writings by French writers in the late nineteenth century. In the late nineteenth century, since “people from virtually every Western land had been involved with China in one way or another: as traders, missionaries, diplomats, soldiers or sailors, physicians, teachers, technicians,”<sup>249</sup> reports, travels and essays from various French writers with different vocations flock in. These military officers, diplomats and physicians after having landed in China, wrote about not only Chinese objects of beauty and regard, but also scornfully of Chinese barbarism, weakness and poverty. Loti, an officer who served in the Sino-French war and the Eight-Nation Alliances invasion, as a conqueror as “Attila,” wrote of Chinese as “irritating, sickening and intolerable,” “burrow like rats” and “apelike and obscene,” though he was intoxicated with the beauty of treasures he found in Forbidden City.<sup>250</sup>

Chaudel, a diplomat to China, a lover of Chinese theater, found in Chinese streets and alleys the essence of the city of Shanghai: “An opium den, a market of prostitutes, these last fill the framework of my memory.” “When issuing out of the double gate in the hurly-burly of wheelbarrows and litters, in the midst of lepers and epileptics, I see the eclectic lights of the Concession shine.”<sup>251</sup> However, Chen argues that these notebooks of travels and essays are easily prejudice-laden since the traveler may just take “the first fool one meets,” or “an outcast’s discontent” as the whole picture

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<sup>249</sup> Spence, 145.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 155,156.



of the nation “whose customs are to be described.” He also relates the problem to the commercial aspect of book printing in France that “if the book is to sell, it must be spiced with the singular, the horrible, social evils, scandals, or disgusting details” (ce qui doit assurer le succès du livre, c'est l'étrange, l'horrible, les plaies hideuses, les scandales; ou bien les coutumes les plus dégoûtantes).<sup>252</sup> To him,

Manners represent the sum-total of past history—they are the slow work of all the ages that have come and gone in the district under observation; and to understand them you should be acquainted what their endless series of traditions, otherwise you go to work hap-hazard, like an organ-grinder, and your narrative is worthless.

Les mœurs représentent la résultante de tous les souvenirs du passé; c'est l'oeuvre lente de tous les siècles qui se sont écoulés là même où vous voulez porter votre attention; et, pour comprendre, il vous faut connaître cette longue suite de traditions, si non vous allez à l'aventure, comme un joueur d'orgue, et votre récit n'a aucune autorité.<sup>253</sup>

Thus in his understanding, his adding the chapter of “Proverbs and Maxims,” as the condensation of Chinese wisdom and outlook of life of all ages and of all times are more valuable than prejudice and first-impression-laden books of travels and casual essays by French writers. In order to achieve a similar goal, the two chapters on Chinese ancient poems may shed light on Chinese people’s life and thoughts historically and inwardly, as a refutation toward the novelty-seeking gaze. Therefore, Chen claims that “we will while away our evenings in turning over the poets, and he (a projected reader) will feel his emotions stirred in listening to the harmony of our verses, joined to their depths of sentiment. He will then form a better idea of our civilization, and find pleasure in the loftiness and justice pervading it” (Nous charmerons nos soirées en feuilletant nos poètes, et il sentira l'émotion le gagner quand il entendra l'harmonie de nos vers

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<sup>252</sup> Chen, 2-3. Tcheng, V.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., 3. Tcheng, IV-V.

unie à la profondeur des sentiments. Alors il se fera une autre idée de notre civilisation, il en aimera ce qu'elle a d'élevé et de juste).<sup>254</sup>

Besides stirring the aesthetic sentiment of Frenchmen, and counteracting the shallow impressionistic books written for profit, Chen may also notice another facade of the new cult of China in the late nineteenth-century France concerning their own sense of loss. As Spence puts it, the realm of melancholy, “as a land that stood for something forever lost-lost to the West through uncaring materialism...”<sup>255</sup> While the French travelers, who have traveled in China but know very little about Chinese language and its history and culture, are lavish with disdain of its destitution and weakness, they do show in the meantime in their work a kind of nostalgia and criticism of their own “modernization” and “materialism.” Loti’s work has “harsh precision of French brutality,” and calls the invasion and loot of China “modern methods of destruction.” Claudel, though having mixed descriptions of China, says that “life here has not been touched by the modern sickness.” Segalen, a physician in China and a learner of Chinese language and a scholar on Chinese steles, claims in his work that Europe has responsibilities to “hold on to the Chinese values that mattered.”<sup>256</sup> Even Mallarmé, a famous poet in his poem *Las de l’amer repos* expresses that he would abandon the brain-centered French poetic tradition, which has been “intellected to death,” and “Imiter le Chinois au coeur limpide et fin” (imitate the Chinese in the crystal clear and fine heart) in poetry composition and way of thinking.<sup>257</sup> Chinese poems, boasting themes of peace, harmony with nature and semantic features like everything taken as symbols rather than particulars, attract many French politicians and

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<sup>254</sup> Ibid., 6. Tcheng, VIII-IX.

<sup>255</sup> Spence, 146.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., 149, 152, 163.

<sup>257</sup> Jan Hokenson, *Japan, France, and East-West Aesthetics: French Literature, 1867-2000* (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004), 137-139.

intellectuals to rethink the destructive aspect of modernization, and somehow complement the reasoning-based intellect way of thinking. Therefore, Chen's utilizing the public cultural sphere, that is, the journal and book to present Chinese maxims and verses really echoes to French writers' awareness of the enacting of the new aesthetics and reflection on their literary tradition. In this public sphere, with Chen's voluntary presentation, French readers are prevented from adopting the superficial orientalist's stance: full of shock, disdain, arrogance or enchantment. From Chen's presentation and selection of Chinese literary pieces, the *chinoiserie* is "not decorative embellishment but essential thematics."<sup>258</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Immersing himself in the lives of Parisians gives Chen access to the golden age of media in the late nineteenth-century France. By utilizing its feature of large influence and dissemination, Chen makes Parisian media, or the new public cultural sphere, another stage beyond the negotiation table to promote public opinion and arouse public sympathy. By criticizing the limitations of the urban mass press in his articles, and joining the relatively rational-critical debate in an authoritative and accredited Parisian periodical, Chen Jitong not only gives his account of China as one strand of public opinions, but also accentuates his resistant stance to regain dignity in the realm of knowledge and judgment by identifying with the Parisian elites in their public sphere. While by adding poems and maxims to the subsequential book form, he partially intends to add his pervasive power by eliciting Parisian sympathy and affection of China. His resort to media is so successful that his articles published in the periodical

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 139.

are reprinted many times in book form, and it starts his journey of cultural communication and participation on the world stage.

## A Chinese Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism

In understanding Chen Jitong's culture enterprise, an interesting phenomenon is that most current research links his work with an overwhelmingly nationalist discourse. For instance, Catherine Vance Yeh claims that Chen had been fully westernized, and his defense of Chinese civilization was only to sooth his conscience.<sup>259</sup> Jing Tsu in a chapter devoted to Chen Jitong in her book, alleges Chen's earliest proposition of the notion of a "world literature" has a more pragmatic aim than achieving an allegedly idealistic literary advance. In her view, it is a long and elaborate strategy to restore China's dominance in the world after a failed political and legal attempt to keep Taiwan.<sup>260</sup> The Chinese expert on Chen, Li Huachuan, though mentioning Chen's literati disposition in other references, did not overtly associate it with his writing of *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*, but instead attributed Chen's reflections on western capitalist culture to a political imperative.<sup>261</sup> However, if we initiate the perspective of saving history from the nation, we will open up more venues to understand the complexity of a transitional cultural figure and his experimental cultural practice, a figure who may involve a distinctive set of circumstances. For example, among the group of men who have the privilege of overseas experiences, Guo Songtao 郭嵩燾 (1818-1891) has incisive political insights; Liu Xihong 劉錫鴻 (?-1891) writes more from a moralist perspective; Yan Fu 嚴復 (1854-1921) and Ma Jianzhong 馬建忠 (1845-1900) are most known as scholars. In contrast, a distinctive

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<sup>259</sup> Catherine Vance Yeh, "The Life Style of Four Wenren in Late Qing Shanghai," *Harvard journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 57, No 2 (December 1997): 419-470.

<sup>260</sup> Jing Tsu, *Sound and Script in Chinese Diaspora* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 113-114.

<sup>261</sup> Li Huachuan 李華川, *Wanqing yige waijiaoguan de wenhua licheng* 晚清一個外交官的文化歷程 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe 北京大學出版社, 2004), 129.

feature for Chen lies in his scarcely concealed literary concern in his writing. In the following elaborations, we will get a close look at how a poetic inclination and aesthetic pursuit have shaped his writing practice in introducing Chinese culture and customs, and how this has helped to make him a unique figure in the late Qing endeavor for literary modernity and indispensable if we are to understand the late Qing encounter with the West.

### Choices of Poems

In Chen's book on China that includes Chinese literature, he introduced no other genres like novels, prose and dramas but poetry. And in introducing Chinese poetry, he divided them into two chapters, "Historical Songs" and "Classical Poetry," which indicates his special attention to and interest in poetry. In terms of content, he seems not to abide by the orthodox criteria of poetry first associated with *Shi Jing* 詩經 (The book of songs), *wen rou dun hou* 溫柔敦厚 (geniality, mildness, honesty, generosity), but to focus on choosing lyric poems with obvious personal feelings and emotions. This selection makes him different from mainstream poetry criticism, such as the mid-Qing poet-critic Shen Deqian 沈德潛 (1673-1769) who advocated the moral and educational function of poetry, Weng Fanggang 翁方綱 (1733-1818) who proposed scholarly poetry and discursive Song poetry,<sup>262</sup> or the late Qing Tongguang School 同光派 leader Chen Yan 陳衍 (1856-1937) who led a revival of Song style in poetry writing. In the following I will elaborate on Chen's choice of poems in the two chapters of his

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<sup>262</sup> Zongqi Cai, ed., *How to read Chinese Poetry: a Guided Anthology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 359; Shang Wei, "the Literati Era and Its Demise (1723-1840)," *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, eds. Kang-i Sun Chang and Stephen Owen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Vol.2, 257.

book, which may demonstrate his preference for poems with natural inspiration and emotional sensitivity.

In the beginning of chapter on “Historical Songs,” Chen introduces the background, status and influence of *Shijing* 詩經. Then he lays out four songs, each with little analysis. What is noteworthy is his summary of the theme and style of *Shijing*.

In terms of the guiding principle of the book, he had it:

Love and its deceptions, sadness and its melancholy thoughts, the pangs of misfortune, are the subjects most often chosen by the poets for allegorical treatment. There are others who, on the contrary, describe the happiness of country life, the beauties of nature, and the pleasures of friendship. These are, as may be seen, the habits of the Muse, oftener sad than gay, the same in every clime.

L'amour et ses déceptions, la tristesse et ses mélancoliques pensées, les douleurs de la disgrâce, sont des sujets que les poètes se plaisent à traiter le plus souvent sous des formes allégoriques. Il en est d'autres qui décrivent, au contraire, le bonheur de la vie champêtre, les belles scènes de la nature, les douceurs de l'amitié. Ce sont, comme on le voit, les habitudes de la Muse, plus souvent triste que gaie, la même sous tous les cieux. <sup>263</sup>

As for its style, he said: “The style of these odes is characterized by great simplicity, and at the same time variety. They represent the archaic manners of China with all the natural simplicity of the earliest ages” (Le style de ces odes est d'une grande simplicité et en même temps varié. Elles représentent les moeurs antiques de la Chine avec toute la naïveté et tout le naturel des premiers âges). <sup>264</sup> And regarding content, he chose “Zhihu” 陟岵, a passage about a nostalgic soldier on a punitive expedition; “Chuqi dongmen” 出其東門, a poem “celebrating conjugal fidelity and connubial love” (célèbre la fidélité des époux et l'amour dans le mariage); <sup>265</sup> “Baizhou” 柏舟 (Sighs),

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<sup>263</sup> Chen, *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*, 134. Tcheng, *Les Chinois peints par eux-mêmes*, 192. For the sake of general layout of this chapter, a few quotations of poems use font 8, most use normal font 12.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, 135. 194.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, 138. 198.

a piece on personal melancholy and lamentation; “Jingnü” 靜女 (Love),<sup>266</sup> a poem about a love-sick young man sweetly recollecting the date with his lovely lover.

As we know, *The Book of Songs* covers a wide range of topics and is drawn from all levels of Chinese society. Its content is divided into four parts: *feng* 風 (folk songs), *daya* 大雅 (major odes), *xiaoya* 小雅 (minor odes), *song* 頌 (dynastic songs). *Feng* contains shorter lyrics in simple language that are generally ancient folk songs dated from West Zhou 西周 to Mid-Spring and Autumn period 春秋, which record the voice of the common people. They often speak of love and courtship, longing for an absent lover, soldiers on campaign, farming and housework, and political satire and protest. While songs in the two *ya* sections and the *song* section tend to be longer hymns of ritual or sacrificial songs, usually in the forms of courtly eulogies or aristocratic odes used in sacrificial rites or banquets, which, though a few are political satire and narrative of commoners' life, praise the founders of the Zhou dynasty.<sup>267</sup> Although its content ranges from patriotism, political satire and social criticism, customs and rituals, working scenes and love and marriage, Chen only selected in his book four poems concerning personal feelings, no matter they are kinship, love or personal sentiment, and all of them are from the *feng* section, which are folk songs.

The first poem Chen selected is called “Zhihu” 陟岵, in which a soldier on an expedition mounts a mountain imaging his family thinking of him afar. The three stanzas of the poem elaborate the soldier's imagination of the slightly varied but deeply genuine yearning of him from three family members: his father, mother and brother.

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<sup>266</sup> Hereafter the translations of the titles and poems selected by Chen from *The Book of Songs* are all from the English translator of Chen's book, James Millington.

<sup>267</sup> *Shijing* 詩經, ed. Zheng Jianwei 鄭建偉 (Xinjiang: Xinjiang renmin chubanshe, xinshiji chuban she 新疆人民出版社, 新世紀人民出版社, 2002), 2-3; Martin Kern. "Early Chinese Literature, Beginnings through Western Han," in Chang and Owen, *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, Vol. 1, 1-115, 20.



Each of them, as the soldier imagines, sighs atop a barren mountain, praying for his safe return:

'I climbed the barren mountain, And looked where dwells my father: I thought I heard him sigh: My son serves in the army, Day and night; But he is prudent, he may still Return, and not be detained.	陟彼岵兮， 瞻望父兮。 父曰：嗟！ 予子行役， 夙夜無已。 上慎旃哉， 猶來無止！	J'ai gravi la montagne sans verdure Pour fixer mes yeux vers mon père, Et j'ai cru l'entendre gémir: Mon fils est au service militaire, Jour et nuit, Mais il est prudent, il pourra encore Revenir, sans y être retenu.
'I climbed the verdant mountain, And looked where dwells my mother; I thought I heard her sigh: My young son serves in the army, And must sleep neither day nor night; But he is prudent, he may still Return, and not leave his bones there.	陟彼屺兮， 瞻望母兮。 母曰：嗟！ 予季行役， 夙夜無寐。 上慎旃哉， 猶來無棄！	J'ai gravi la montagne verdoyante Pour fixer mes yeux vers ma mère, Et j'ai cru l'entendre gémir: Mon fils cadet est au service militaire Sans pouvoir dormir ni le jour ni la nuit. Mais il est prudent, il pourra encore Revenir, sans y laisser ses os.
'I climbed the mountain to the top, And looked where dwells my brother: I thought I heard him sigh: My young brother serves in the army, Day and night with his comrades; But he is prudent, he may still Return, and not perish there.' <sup>268</sup>	陟彼岡兮， 瞻望兄兮。 兄曰：嗟！ 予弟行役， 夙夜必偕。 上慎旃哉， 猶來無死！	J'ai gravi la montagne jusqu'au sommet Pour fixer mes yeux vers mon frère aimé Et j'ai cru l'entendre gémir: Mon jeune frère est au service militaire Accompagné jour et nuit de ses camarades, Mais il est prudent, il pourra encore Revenir, sans y mourir.

A parental and sibling love is felt, with concise words, but deep and resonant feelings.

The orthodox function of poetry, as the Qing doyen of classical literature Shen Deqian advocates, is “to fix the temper, ractify ethics, move gods and ghosts, establish moral teachings in nations, and to deal with vassals, how important it is for the use (詩之為道，可以理性情，善伦物，感鬼神，设教邦国，应对诸侯，用如此其重也).”<sup>269</sup>

Shen's emphasis is on the moral connotation of poems and political utility for power sustainability. Therefore, he said this poem is about a “filial son's missing his family

<sup>268</sup> Chen, 135-136. Tcheng, 194-195. James Millington, the translator of Chen's *Les Chinois peints par eux-mêmes*, provided the English translation of the poems which Chen selected. And Millington's translation seemed to be based on Chen's own French version, which was rather a literal and sometimes simplified translation. That is a bit different from James Legge's translation of *The Book of Poetry* in 1871 (Hongkong: Lane, Crawford; London: Trübner & Co), which is more elegant, rhymed and transfigured.

<sup>269</sup> Shen Deqian 沈德潛, *Shuoshi zuiyu* 說詩碎語 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe 上海古籍出版社, 1965). Cited in Wu Zhongsheng 吳中勝, *Yuanshi siwei yu zhongguo wenlun de shixin zhihui* 原始思維與中國文論的詩性智慧 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe 中國社會科學出版社, 2008), 221.

(孝子之思親也).”<sup>270</sup> The one-way filial piety based on the Confucius ethic is Shen’s primary concern. However, Chen emphasizes primarily the naturalness of feelings from both sides, as well as the style of the poem. Chen interpreted that: “It is not ambitious; a young soldier is thinking of the beings dearest to him in the world: his father, his mother, his eldest brother” (Elle est sans ambition; un jeune soldat pense aux êtres qui lui sont le plus chers au monde: son père, sa mère, son frère aîné). “The father and mother are recognized by the nature of the feelings distinguishing man from woman. The poor mother is thinking that her son is unable to sleep: the father thinks not of that: his son is a soldier, and if he is prudent he may return” (Le père et la mère se reconnaissent déjà par la nature des sentiments qui distinguent l’homme de la femme. La pauvre mère pense que son fils ne peut pas dormir; le père n’y songe pas; pour lui son fils est soldat, et, s’il est prudent, il pourra revenir). “These are true and natural feelings, and what impresses the mind is that they will always be so” (Ce sont là des sentiments vrais, exacts, et ce qui frappe l’esprit c’est qu’ils seront toujours justes).<sup>271</sup> To Chen, filial piety seems not a prerequisite for missing home; instead, it is just the natural bond, “the dearest” natural blood relationship between the family members that works.

In terms of the style, critic Shen emphasizes the gentleness and moderation of expressing feeling, as if the heart-rending feeling will reveal a lack of restraint and cultivation.<sup>272</sup> In contrast, Chen gives priority to naturalness and simplicity of the writing style. He holds that *The Book of Songs* “is characterized by great simplicity” (est d’une grande simplicité). “They display no ornaments of style, artfully prepared

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<sup>270</sup> Shen Deqian 沈德潛, *Shuoshi zuiyu* 說詩碎語. Cited in Cheng Fuwang 成復旺, *Shen yu wuyou: lun zhongguo chuantong shenmei fangshi* 神與物遊：論中國傳統審美方式 (Beijing: Zhongguo Renmin daxue chubanshe 中國人民大學出版社, 1989), 128.

<sup>271</sup> Chen, 136-137. Tcheng, 195-196.

<sup>272</sup> James J. Y. Liu, *The Art of Chinese Poetry* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), 67.

to enrich the idea; art is not yet artistic, and is ignorant of the luxury of gorgeous draperies; it is uncut, but still a diamond” (On n’y remarque pas d’ornements de style préparés avec art pour enrichir la pensée; l’art n’est pas encore artiste et ne connaît pas le luxe des draperies éclatantes; ce n’est pas un diamant taillé, mais c’est un diamant).<sup>273</sup> And the poem “Zhihu” shows “its childlike simplicity” (la simplicité naïve).<sup>274</sup> The unornamented quality to him is as precious as a diamond, and the childlike simplicity to him is the most sincere and touching. Thus Chen’s appreciation of authenticity in feeling and naturalness in style may set him apart from the didactic critics who place greater emphasis on moral instruction of poetry.

Overall, Chen did not utterly neglect the social function of poetry as a means of national consolidation and emotional pacification. For instance, he also proclaimed that, “In all our odes breathes love of peace, and family union seems essentially connected with our manners” (L’amour de la paix respire dans toutes nos odes, et le culte de la famille y paraît comme essentiellement lié aux mœurs).<sup>275</sup> While these are the only few lines of observation after his comparison with warlike poems of Greece, which he noticed the angles of depiction are quite different, and are “sounding with the clang of armed conflict! Warlike ruses, party hatred, rage, vengeance, and the horrors of pillage” (retentit le bruit des armes au milieu des combats! Les ruses de guerre, la haine des partis, les colères de la vengeance, les horreurs du pillage).<sup>276</sup> Yet in most cases in his essay, he demonstrates an understanding of poetry as primarily a vehicle for the expression of personal emotion and admiration for nature.

Besides that, in the only four poems he chose from *Shijing*, he chose one called “Baizhou” 柏舟 as a representation of sorrow, to show that “in them” (the *Book of*

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<sup>273</sup> Chen, 135. Tchong, 194.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid., 136. 195.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid., 137. 196.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid., 137. 196.

*Songs*) “sentimental poetry begins to make its appearance” (où la poésie sentimentale commence à apparaître).<sup>277</sup> This poem stands alone is a woman’s uttering of bitterness in family entanglements. She is despondent since “My brothers, / although they support me not, / Are angry / if I speak of my sadness” (亦有兄弟, 不可以据。薄言往诉, 逢彼之怒。Et mes frères, / qui cependant ne sont pas mes soutiens, / Se fâchent contre moi / si je parle de ma tristesse). Meanwhile she is unalterable, “My heart is not like stone, / To be shaped and cut at will; / It is not like a blind, / To be drawn up and down: / It is full of truth and honesty; / I cannot direct it at will” (我心匪石, 不可转也。我心匪席, 不可卷也。威仪棣棣, 不可选也。Mon coeur ne ressemble pas à la pierre / Que l'on puisse encore tailler; / Il n'est pas tel qu'un store / Que l'on roule et déroule à volonté / Il est plein de droiture et d'honnêteté; / Moi-même ne puis le diriger).<sup>278</sup> In the last stanza, she wails with little restraint that neither sun nor the moon can brighten her heart and her grievance is so strong that it is like a useless dirty rag and she wish could be blown away in the sky.<sup>279</sup> In history most critics consider this poem the lament from a mistreated woman, and orthodox preface to *The Book of Songs* linked it to the neglect of a man with integrity.<sup>280</sup> As for Chen, without giving any comment on the real intent of the poem, he just cited it as an example of a song of sorrow. “These pieces are elegies rather than songs” (Ces pièces sont plutôt des élégies que des chansons).<sup>281</sup> To him, the emotion conveyed genuinely and passionately out of it speaks for themselves, be it a woman’s uttering from the inner chamber or a man’s more “legitimate” suffering in the court prescribed by the classical interpretation.

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<sup>277</sup> Ibid., 139. Tcheng, 199.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid., 139. Tcheng, 199-200.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid., 139-140. Tcheng, 200.

<sup>280</sup> Dong Guangzhu 董光柱, “Qiantan baifeng, baizhou” 淺談邶風·柏舟, *Xiandai yuwen* 現代語文 Vol 11 (2007): 8-9.

<sup>281</sup> Chen, 139. Tcheng, 199.

Alongside this poem, another one he selected to represent personal feeling as a closure of this essay is a love song called “Jingnü” 靜女. This one was considered a lascivious poem in the main stream poetics in ancient China. Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072) claimed it a poem representing the licentious custom in Wei area.<sup>282</sup> Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-120) also considered it one of the thirty lascivious songs in *The Book of Songs* and his disciple even wanted to delete these poems out of the book.<sup>283</sup> Love poems, though being part of the Chinese classical literature, were, in general, sidelined and encountered three attitudes: being castigated, being deleted and being defended with moral or political connotation.<sup>284</sup> By singling out the poem with overt description of illicit love in his showcase of Chinese poetry canon, Chen differentiated himself from those traditional scholars who either deleted or evaded such poems in anthologies. And Chen seems not to feel the uneasiness of Zhu Xi and Huang Peifang 黃培芳 (1778-1859), who claimed Confucius included such poems in *The Book of Songs* as a caution against lust.<sup>285</sup> He concluded this introductory chapter of verses from *Shijing* with this poem under the “elegies” category with “Baizhou,” without any moral or political connotations of it. He just claimed: “All these poems are imbued with a charmingly delicate sentiment. Why can I not translate the harmony of our lines” (Toutes ces poésies sont empreintes d'un sentiment délicat qui charme. Que ne puis-je y joindre l'harmonie de nos vers!)<sup>286</sup> To him, all these love poems are just “charming” and “delicate.” The nuance of intimacy is nothing illegitimate under moral scrutiny, and the

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<sup>282</sup> Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修, *Shi benyi* 詩本義 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan 臺灣商務印書館, 1986), 197.

<sup>283</sup> Mo Lifeng 莫勵峰, “Cong jinxue zouxiang wenxue: Zhu Xi yinshishuo de shizhi” 從經學走向文學 朱熹淫詩說的實質, *Wenxue pinglun* 文學評論, No.2 (2001), 79-88.

<sup>284</sup> Geng Chuanyou 耿傳友, “Yanshi gai ruhe duidai: you Yuan Mei Sheng Deqian zhizheng tan zhongguo yanshi de mingyun” 豔詩該如何對待：由袁枚沈德潛之爭 談中國豔史的命運, *Wenyi lilun yanjiu* 文藝理論研究, No.4 (2011), 67-73.

<sup>285</sup> Mo, 87, Geng, 69.

<sup>286</sup> Chen, 140. Tcheng, 201.

naturalness of the feeling and the poem itself which convey a “delicate” reading effect are just appealing enough.

Beside the poems of missing home, of personal vexation and of bitter-sweet love, the last one Chen chose is a famous love poem, which he regards as a typical poem of love, “Outside the City Gate to the East” (Chuqi dongmen 出其東門):

Outside the city gate to the East We see many handsome women, Graceful as clouds, But be they graceful as clouds, I think not of them: With her white robe and simple dress, I love my wife best!	出其東門， 有女如雲。 雖則如雲， 匪我思存。 綺衣綦巾， 聊樂我員。	En dehors de la porte de la ville, à l'Est, On voit des femmes belles et nombreuses Qui ressemblent à des nuages. Mais bien qu'elles ressemblent à des nuages Elles ne sont pas l'objet de ma pensée: Car avec sa robe blanche et sa toilette simple, J'aime mieux ma compagne!
Around the city walls We see lithe and graceful women, Looking like flowers of the fields, But be they like flowers of the fields,	出其闔闔， 有女如荼。 雖則如荼，	Autour des murs de la ville, On voit des femmes souples et gracieuses Qui ressemblent aux fleurs des champs. Mais bien qu'elles ressemblent aux fleurs des champs,
They attract not my love: With her white robe and rosy cheek, My wife is my only joy! <sup>287</sup>	匪我思且。 綺衣茹蘆， 聊可與娛。	Elles n'attirent pas mon amour pour elles : Car avec sa robe blanche et son teint rosé, Ma femme fait mon unique bonheur!

Chen's comment on this poem is also brief and expressive as were for those of the other poems. Unlike scholars Shen Deqian and Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠 (1738-1801), who claimed love poems are referral to Emperor-official relationship or friendship, <sup>288</sup> Chen just emphasized the poem's literary trait and apparent theme of love. “In these odes we find pieces celebrating conjugal fidelity and connubial love” ((Nous trouvons dans ces odes des pièces qui célèbrent la fidélité des époux et l'amour dans le mariage.) “The rhyme is not rich, and the style is old; but is it not a charming expression of pure and natural passion?” (La rime n'est pas riche, et le style en est vieux; mais n'est-ce pas l'expression charmante d'une passion pure et naturelle?) <sup>289</sup> If we look back at the four poems Chen chose, he seems to prefer folk songs which are simple and natural in diction and lyrical and emotional in theme.

<sup>287</sup> Chen, 138. Tchong, 198.

<sup>288</sup> Geng, 70.

<sup>289</sup> Chen, 138. Tchong, 198.

In another chapter “Classical Poetry,” Chen only showcases Tang Poems 唐詩, which he claims to represent the peak of Chinese classical poetry.<sup>290</sup> He chooses eighteen poems in various thematic styles. Thirteen of them are by four major poets Du Fu 杜甫 (712-770), Li Bai 李白 (701-762), Meng Haoran 孟浩然 (689-740) and Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846), and five by anonymous or unidentified authors. The format of this introductory chapter is rather loose: neither in a chronological order nor authorial, barely a scattered juxtaposition of poems under different themes. Each poem stands to showcase its appeal alone, with Chen’s occasional brief comment on its theme as guidance. The loose, casual and brief writing style in a way reveals Chen’s writing approach to introducing culture: he does not prefer a lengthy, comprehensive and erudite way of telling, but a self-expressive way of presenting.

In this chapter, Chen again showed certain inclination toward lyrical poems. Out of the eighteen poems he chose from the Tang Dynasty, nine belong to the lyrical poem category, which account for a half. The second largest category are four “fields and garden poems” (*tianyuan shi* 田園詩). As for religious poems and narrative poems, in each category he chose only one or two.

What he selected most are poems by Du Fu, the “poet sage” (*shisheng* 詩聖). Du Fu’s poems are known for their wide social, moral and historical concerns. As Zhang Jie 張戒 (n.d.), a twelfth-century critic wrote for Du Fu, “everything in this world is poetry.”<sup>291</sup> Besides traditional social, moral and patriotic themes, he also wrote on topics such as domestic life, calligraphy, paintings, animals, and other poems.<sup>292</sup> While in Chen’s selection, all five by Du are poems showing personal sentiment. For

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<sup>290</sup> Chen, 167.

<sup>291</sup> Eva Shan Chou, *Reconsidering Tu Fu: Literary Greatness and Cultural Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 67.

<sup>292</sup> Albert Richard Davis, *Tu Fu* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1971), 140.

instance, “Chengdu fu” 成都府, “Lüye shuhuai” 旅夜書懷 (On a Voyage), “Yuhua gong” 玉華宮 were cited by Chen to depict “sadness” of exile and vicissitude of life.<sup>293</sup>

“A woman radiant in beauty, / Scion of a noble race, / Has withdrawn to a mountain solitude, Where she lives abandoned, /amid the bushes, Her sole companions...” (絕代有佳人，幽居在空穀。自雲良家女，零落依草木。Une femme resplendissante de beauté, /Issue d'une noble origine, /S'est retirée dans la solitude d'une montagne Où elle vit, abandonnée, / au milieu des herbes, Ses seules compagnes). This is a poem “Jiaren” 佳人 (The Abandoned) by Du to show self-pity and neglect in officialdom.<sup>294</sup> “The morning and evening stars Never appear together: / Thus is it, they say, also with men./ What is then this evening/ Which reunites us two by the light of the lamps?/ How long has the time of youth lasted? /Our hair is already white...” (人生不相見，動如參與商。今夕復何夕，共此燈燭光。少壯能幾時，鬢髮各已蒼。Les étoiles du soir et du matin Ne se rencontrent pas. /Ainsi, dit-on, en est-il des hommes. / Quelle est donc cette soirée / Qui nous réunit tous les deux A la lumière des lampes? / Combien de temps a duré le temps de la jeunesse? / Nos cheveux ont déjà blanchi).<sup>295</sup> This famous “Zeng weiba chushi” 贈衛八處士 (Return and Farewell) is one depicting joy of friends’ reunion and lamenting *tempus fugit*. While later social and literary critic Liang Qichao

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<sup>293</sup> Chen, 169, 171, 173.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid., 172. As Chen stated in this chapter, he used the translation for a few poems of his choice (7 short pieces out of 18) by the Marquis d’Hervey de Saint Denys (1822-1892), a French sinologist and “member of the Institute” (168). D’Hervey (Chinese name 德里文) compiled the first translation of Tang Poems in France in *Poésies de l’époque des Thang* in 1862. According to Ren Ke’s “Fin-de-Siècle Diplomat: Chen Jitong (1852-1907) and Cosmopolitan Possibilities in the Late Qing World,” this book was composed of “ninety-seven poems selected from thirty-five Tang poets, among which works by Li Bo 李白 and Du Fu 杜甫 comprised the majority” (98). I found that in D’Hervey’s selection, there were 24 poems by Li Bai and 22 by Du Fu. His selections covered different themes and styles. Hereafter if I cite poems translated by D’Hervey, I will use an asterisk (\*), otherwise the French translations were by Chen himself. As Chen said, in contrast to D’Hervey’s “elegant translation,” his own was a “humble effort, which is but a word-for-word rendering without ornament” (168).

<sup>295</sup> Ibid., 173. Tchong, 248.



called Du Fu the “The God of Qing” (*qingsheng* 情聖) in one of his essays “Qingsheng Dufu” 情聖杜甫, and claimed Du showed deep compassion for all people around him with his strong empathy,<sup>296</sup> Chen argued that Du’s poems are “usually imbued with melancholy ideas” (Elles sont généralement empreintes de pensées mélancoliques),<sup>297</sup> and contends that Du is one “who breathes out his grief in charming verses” (a exhalé ses souffrances dans poésies d’un grand charme).<sup>298</sup> Chen’s choices and comments on Du’s poems might be seen as a resonance between Du’s personal melancholy and nostalgia and grief with Chen’s overseas experience in the wartime. Therefore Chen seems to agree with Liang on Du’s deep passion, and his emphasis is on the deep personal emotion of Du’s poems rather than the widely-recognized social compassion shown by Du.

Next to Du Fu, what Chen selected most are four poems by Li Bai. Similarly, these poems are all about Li Bai’s dealing with individual feelings, which ranges from “Beige xing” 悲歌行 and “Xingxing you qie lie pian” 行行遊且獵篇; to “Xia Zhongnan shan guo Husi shanren su zhijiu” 下終南山過斛斯山人宿置酒 (A Night at a Friends) and “Chun si” 春思 (Spring-Time).<sup>299</sup> The themes encompasses lamenting life and time, martial dreams of literati, seeking natural inspiration and comfort in the field and garden feast, and using Chen’s own words, “the thoughts of a woman whose husband is absent” (Les pensées d'une femme dont le mari est absent).<sup>300</sup> From these themes, one may note that Chen’s choice exhibits a tint of lyricism in his re-presentation under Li’s poems: all the feelings of self-indulgence, self-pity as well as joy with friends

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<sup>296</sup> Liang Qichao 梁啟超, *LiangQichao quanji* 梁啟超全集, Vol. 7, eds. Zhang Pinxing 張品興, Yang Gang 楊綱 and Wang Xianyi 王相宜 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe 北京出版社, 1999), 3978.

<sup>297</sup> Chen, 169. Tcheng, 243.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid., 171. Tcheng, 246.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid., 169, 179.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid., 170, 179. Tcheng, 256.

in a countryside gathering may well fit Chen's personal longings in wartime abroad. Chen's doubts and dilemma as an official, as we have discussed in other chapters, and his nostalgia from the long period of life overseas, as well as an artistic inclination toward nature and freedom all contribute to his preference for lyrical poems concerning individual emotion. Chen did not comment much on Li's literary style, with only a word "pieces of simple nature" (pieces d'un caractère simple),<sup>301</sup> but focuses on highlighting the personal sentiment *qing* 情 in Li's poems. He claimed that Li "consoles himself for the miseries of life" (il se console des misères de la vie), in comparison with Du Fu; "indulges in melancholy reflections, and then, doubtless in resignation, sings of wine and flowers" (fait des réflexions désolantes, puis célèbre le vin et les fleurs, par résignation, sans doute).<sup>302</sup> If Du Fu's heartfelt sadness impresses Chen the most, then Li's lyricism fraught with indulgence, consolation and candor seems a favorite to Chen as well.

In addition, Chen also translated a few poems by Meng Haoran 孟浩然 and some unidentified writers. There are two religious poems showing a seemingly impersonal intuitionist epiphany to represent the religious overtones in Tang Dynasty, other poems still fit in the field of individual lyricism: landscape reclusion, lamenting the lapse of time, a farewell poem with friends, and life with wine and women.<sup>303</sup> The only two poems he selected from Bai Juyi are the two famous narrative poems "Changhen ge" 長恨歌 (Love), and "Pipa xing" 琵琶行 (Guitar).<sup>304</sup> Originally, he claimed that these two long poems were to show that in China there were not only "little pieces" with a certain form of "simplicity" but these two poems showed stylistical

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<sup>301</sup> Ibid., 178, 255.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid., 169, 170. Tcheng, 244, 245.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid., 169-171.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid., 174, 180.

brilliance in which “dramatic interest is conjoined with brilliance of style and richness of colouring” (l'intérêt de l'action s'unit à l'éclat du style et à la richesse des couleurs).

<sup>305</sup> However, he did not elaborate more on the dramatic structure nor the rhetoric coloring in these long poems as he claimed, but still focused on extracting the thematic essence of the two poems: the expression of love and the universality of melancholy.

Thus he commented on “Changhen ge” that:

This poem is one of our most beautiful. The literary will be able to extract the legend the delicate and the profound sentiment which inspires it. They will recognize in this feeling the same passion pulsating in the heart of every heroine of love. The Emperor and his favourite loved as Romeo and Juliet, or Faust and Marguerite loved, and are worthy to enter Dante's Paradise in the dazzling light of immortality.

Cette poésie est une de nos plus belles.  
Les lettrés sauront dégager de la légende le sentiment délicat et profond qui l'inspire. Ils reconnaîtront dans cet amour la même passion qui a fait battre le coeur de toutes les héroïnes de l'amour. L'empereur et sa favorite ont aimé, comme s'aimèrent Roméo et Juliette, Faust et Marguerite, et méritent d'entrer dans le Paradis de Dante, dans la grande lumière de l'immortalité. <sup>306</sup>

As we see earlier in this chapter, some scholars think love poems are not treated favorably by some Confucian critics. <sup>307</sup> Chen, however, considers that “this poem is one of our most beautiful” (Cette poésie est une de nos plus belles). <sup>308</sup> He lauds the poem's description of affection for it epitomizes the “delicate” and “profound” sentiment. Due to the lovers' dedication to *qing*, they are sublimated to a spiritual unity and a transcendental world of immortality. Moreover Chen emphasized the universality of the cult of *qing*, viewing it as a celebrated ideal in all human beings. As for “Pipa xing,” Chen also included the whole piece in the essay, he added that:

This piece expresses an idea much in vogue in China: it will doubtless have been remarked:

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<sup>305</sup> Ibid., 174. 249.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid., 178. Tcheng, 254.

<sup>307</sup> See note 25-27.

<sup>308</sup> Chen, 178. Tcheng, 254.

'We all are the vagrants of the universe:  
De we need to know each other  
Before meeting?'

A profoundly melancholy reflection proclaiming the principle of man's universal equality in sorrow. But what energy in the expression of that thought!

Cette pièce renferme une pensée qui a en Chine une grande renommée:  
on l'aura sans doute remarquée:

Nous sommes tous les déclassés de l'univers.  
Avons-nous besoin de nous connaître,  
Avant de nous rencontrer!

Réflexion d'une profonde mélancolie, où est proclamé le principe universel de l'égalité des hommes devant la douleur. Mais quelle énergie dans l'expression de cette pensée!<sup>309</sup>

To Chen, the poem stands out in its excellent rendering of a universal mood: the “melancholy reflection” or “sorrow” of constant vagrancy and vicissitudes of life. If the *qing* felt by lovers are sublime, then this individual melancholy might be equally touching. By stating “what energy in the expression of that thought,” Chen contends that the beauty in this poem lies not only in the expression of a universal *qing*, but also in the intensity of the feeling conveyed in the poetry.

To summarize, from the fact that Chen chose all Tang poems-not Song poems -to represent “classical poetry,” Chen seems to prefer the lyrical poems in the Tang Dynasty rather than Song poems featuring scholarly verses which weigh more in erudition and reason. Also, in many Tang poems, varying in different themes such as poems on Buddhism, objects, landscape, palace style, recalling the past, Chen selected mostly lyrical poems, especially those on delicate personal feelings. From his preferences and comments for those poems and poets, one may sense an air of a romantic *bel-esprit* in his book. Based on a nineteenth century critic Zhang Jiliang, who categorized Chinese poets after Han Dynasty into three types: poems by men of talent

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<sup>309</sup> Chen, 183. Tcheng, 260-261.

(*caizi zhi shi* 才子之詩); poems by men of knowledge (*xuezhe zhi shi* 學者之詩); poems by men of lofty ideals (*zhishi zhi shi* 志士之詩),<sup>310</sup> Chen at the time seems to prefer the poems by men of talent, which are sentimental, delicate and profound in genuine feelings. While “the author of the ‘Great Preface’ has developed the ‘Shi yan zhi’ statement into a full-fledged didactic concept of literature,” according to some critics,<sup>311</sup> Chen’s principle of selection seems to follow Lu Ji’s dictum that “the poem (*shi*) follows from the affections and is sensuously intricate” (*shi yuanqing er qimi* 詩緣情而綺靡).<sup>312</sup>

Interestingly, Chen has been claimed as an “affectionate person.”<sup>313</sup> His sister-in-law, Xue Shaohui 薛紹徽 (1866-1911), a late Qing woman poet and scholar, also compared him to a Song romantic poet Zhang Xian 張先 (990-1078), who enjoyed wine and women all his life and had a young concubine at old age.<sup>314</sup> During the time when Chen had his essays on China published in French journal in 1884, he had just had a trip to China in late 1882 to early 1883, the first family visit after his leaving China for Europe in 1877. Thus he might have just undergone family reunion and separation. Also, during his mediation and negotiation in France in 1883 to 1884, he not only made advances in French political circles, but also became so popular in French society that he even married a French wife and possibly fathered two children

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<sup>310</sup> Zhang Jiliang 張際亮, “Da Panyanfu shu” 答潘彥輔書. Cited in Wang yingzhi 王英志, “Yuan Mei xinlinpai zai jindai de yingxiang” 袁枚性靈派在近代的影響, *Wenshizhe* 文史哲, Vol 4 (1998): 82.

<sup>311</sup> Cai Zongqi, *A Chinese Literary Mind: Culture, Creativity and Rhetoric in Wenxin diaolong* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 46.

<sup>312</sup> Lu Ji 陸機, “Wen fu” 文賦, *Wenfu yizhu* 文賦譯注, annotated and edited by Zhang Huaijin 張懷瑾 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe 北京出版社, 1984), 9. Cited in and trans. Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 1992), 130.

<sup>313</sup> Qian Nanxiu 錢南秀, introduction to *Xue Jia yin* 學賈吟, written by Chen Jitong and edited by Qian Nanxiu (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe 上海古籍出版社 2005), 12.

<sup>314</sup> Xue Shaohui 薛紹徽, “Huishi qi” 徽詩啟, *Daiyunlou yiji.wenji* 黛韻樓遺集文集 (1914), vol.2, 176-182. Cited in Qian Nanxiu, introduction to *Xue jia yin*, 14.

during that time.<sup>315</sup> These vagrant and adventurous life experiences, unique to his transnational background, might be, to some extent, correlated with his romantic representation of China.

### **Essayistic Style in the Book**

The lyrical poetic inclination is not only exhibited in Chen's introduction of Chinese poems, but also in his writing style in the essay book abundant with enthusiasm and liveliness. Meanwhile the structure of his essays shows certain randomness, discursiveness, and sometimes lacks coherent sequence and harmony. He has keen observations and authentic feelings, but knits them together in a rather casual and loose way.

For instance, in the chapter "Education," the ending passages go like the following:

Our language is full of proverbial expressions alluding to the excellence of education: "Bend the mulberry-tree while it is young;" "If education is not diffused in families, how will men capable of governing be produced?" It is with a sentiment of legitimate pride I testify to the enormous number of men in our vast empire capable of reading and writing: nearly all the inhabitants of China are instructed!

And yet they live in concord. Ah, that is one of our claims to glory! As we have not made use of gunpowder to blow up the world, neither have we abused the printing press by corrupting minds, and exciting useless desires. Education of this nature would not be comprehended in China. The books that are classical- that is, obligatory, the study and knowledge of which lead to honor and fortune---speak only of the direction of the mind, the duties of each of us in various situations; in a word, education teaches us first of all to live rationally, to put ourselves in the right path; to remember what we are, and what we shall be if we maintain ourselves in respect.

To express all my thought, I will say that our children are what these same children would be in the Christian world, if education consisted in learning, under the direction of responsible parents, the Gospel, the sacred books, history, the works of the great writers of old, and poetry.

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<sup>315</sup> Li, 175-180; Qian, 13, 15.

That is a comparison proving---from the fact that our community is prosperous--- that in education everything depends upon example, in the same manner as in making a good draughtsman, all depends upon the model. In education the model is example, and is not a model a perfect thing?

You must then necessarily have an invariable, absolute logic, otherwise the system has no centre of gravity, and you run the chances of instability. Human nature is an organism of such sensitiveness---we call it in China a little world---that it must be well understood before it is subjected to treatment. Now certainly it is better---a million times better--- that human nature should be rough-hewn and ignorant than badly taught, I should say badly educated.

If there are any who think differently I regret it: and as for socialism, since there must necessarily be a socialism of some sort, I infinitely prefer the State socialism which regulates everything under the protection of public opinion, than the socialism of irregular caprices leading only to anarchy.

As one of our proverbs has it: "It is better to be a dog and live in peace, than a man and live in anarchy."

Notre langue est remplie d'expressions proverbiales qui font allusion à l'excellence de l'éducation: « Pliez le mûrier, lorsqu'il est jeune encore. -Si l'éducation ne se répand pas dans les familles, comment obtiendra-t-on des hommes capables de gouverner? » Aussi est-ce avec un sentiment de légitime orgueil que je constate le nombre innombrable d'hommes sachant lire et écrire, dans notre immense empire; presque tous les habitants de la Chine sont instruits!

Et cependant ils vivent en paix. Ah! c'est là un de nos titres de gloire ! De même que nous n'avons pas employé la poudre pour faire sauter le monde, nous n'avons pas abusé de l'imprimerie pour corrompre les esprits et exciter les passions inutiles. L'éducation ne se comprendrait pas dans ce sens. Les livres qui sont classiques, c'est-à-dire obligatoires, dont l'étude et la connaissance conduisent aux honneurs et à la fortune, ne parlent que de la direction de l'esprit, des devoirs de chacun d'entre nous dans nos diverses situations; en un mot, l'éducation nous apprend d'abord à vivre raisonnablement; à nous mettre dans le droit chemin; à nous appeler ce que nous sommes, et ce que nous serons si nous nous maintenons par le respect.

Pour exprimer toute ma pensée, je dirai que nos enfants sont ce que seraient ces mêmes enfants dans le monde chrétien si l'éducation consistait à apprendre, sous la direction de parents responsables, l'Évangile, les livres saints, l'histoire, les écrits des grands écrivains (les anciens) et la poésie. C'est là une comparaison qui prouve, puisque notre société est heureuse, que, dans l'éducation, tout dépend de l'exemple, de

même que, pour faire un bon dessinateur, tout dépend du modèle. En éducation, le modèle c'est l'exemple, et un modèle n'est-ce pas une chose parfaite?

Il faut donc nécessairement une logique invariable, absolue, sinon le système n'a plus de centre de gravité et vous courez les aventures de l'instabilité. La nature humaine est un organisme d'une telle sensibilité- nous l'appelons, en Chine, un petit monde - qu'il faut bien la connaître avant de la soumettre à un traitement. Or, certes, il vaut mieux, un million de fois mieux, qu'elle soit brute, ignorante, que mal instruite, je veux dire mal élevée.

Je plaindrai ceux qui ne penseront pas comme moi: et, en fait de socialisme, puisqu'il en faut nécessairement un, ou l'un ou l'autre, j'aime mieux le socialisme d'État qui règle tout, sous la protection de l'opinion publique, que le socialisme des caprices irréguliers qui ne conduit qu'aux anarchies.

Comme le dit un de nos proverbes: il vaut mieux être chien et vivre en paix que d'être home et vivre dans l'anarchie. <sup>316</sup>

In this part, Chen shows several discursive writing tendencies which are common in the book. “It is with a sentiment of legitimate pride I testify to the enormous number of men in our vast empire capable of reading and writing: nearly all the inhabitants of China are instructed” (est-ce avec un sentiment de légitime orgueil que je constate le nombre innombrable d'hommes sachant lire et écrire, dans notre immense empire; presque tous les habitants de la Chine sont instruits!) <sup>317</sup> With a sense of assumed confidence and “pride” as he claims, his declaration of the enormous literacy in contemporary China is ungrounded. The fourth paragraph, in which he explains why Chinese education weighs much on the soul and morality, is logically more firmly connected to the second paragraph rather than the third. Since in the second paragraph, he elaborates on Chinese classics’ emphasis on rationality and responsibility, and the fourth paragraph, which accentuates the importance of human heart, is a direct explanation of the advocate of the second paragraph, while the third is relatively just

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<sup>316</sup> Chen, 116-118. Tcheng, 163-166.

<sup>317</sup> Chen, 116. Tcheng, 164.



an extension of foreign analogies. Therefore logically the fourth paragraph might be better moved up. The lack of sequencing in Chen's writing also shows in his insertion of a passage of "socialism" in the second to the last paragraph. This may express his familiarity with popular notions in the western world in his time, but he did not mention anything of socialism in the previous whole essay on "education." And he did not explain the potential relations with his topic of education. Thus for readers, the writing is capricious to some extent.

In addition, Chen's essays in the book sometimes lack accuracy and evidential learning, though his introduction of China is in a comprehensive manner. For instance, in the chapter "East and West," on the topic of intercourse between China and foreign nations during antiquity, he notes in a passage: "It seems conclusively proved that the Romans had no intercourse with our empire. Our history only mentions a Chinese embassy which was sent, under the Han dynasty, 94 B.C., with the object of opening up intercourse with the Western world" (Il paraît démontré que les Romains n'ont eu aucun rapport avec les peuples de notre empire. Notre histoire mentionne seulement une ambassade chinoise qui fut envoyée sous la dynastie de Han, l'an 94 de l'ère chrétienne, dans le but de chercher à nouer quelques relations avec le monde occidental). "I believe this is the only allusion our history makes to intercourse between China and foreign nations" (C'est là, je crois, la seule allusion que fasse notre histoire aux relations de la Chine avec les peuples étrangers).<sup>318</sup> In fact, the ambassador sent to open up intercourse with the western world was Gan Ying 甘英, who was dispatched by his protector Ban Chao 班超 (32-102 CE) to the Roman Empire in 97 CE, not 94 B.C.<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> Chen, 191. Tcheng, 272-273.

<sup>319</sup> This incident was first recorded in *Hou hanshu* 後漢書, "xiyu zhuan· anxi zhuan" 西域傳· 安息傳. Cited in Fan Ye and John E. Hill, *Through the Jade Gate to Rome: A Study of the Silk Routes during the Later Han Dynasty, 1st to 2nd Centuries CE* (Charleston: BookSurge, 2009), 23.

Rather than “only one allusion” in our history, other pioneering trips to foreign nations by earlier or later travelers are also recorded in Chinese historical books. For example, Zhang Qian’s 張騫 (164 BCE-114 BCE) explorations to nations of Central Asia was recorded in *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Grand Historian) and Zheng He’s 鄭和 (1371-1433) voyage to the South Sea was recorded in books like *Mingshi* 明史 (History of Ming) and *Sanbao taijian xiyang ji* 三寶太監西洋記 (Journey of the Eunuch Sanbao to the Western Oceans).

Chen’s writing style, lacking in strict reasoning and evidential accuracy shown above, to some extent deviated from the popular archaic prose writing standard in Qing Dynasty. Its representatives, the Tongcheng 桐城 scholars, “promulgated a tripartite methodology of ‘moral reasoning, evidential learning, and literary style’” (*yili* 義理, *kaozheng* 考證, *cizhang* 辭章).<sup>320</sup> “By the outbreak of the First Opium war, the Tongcheng tenets of ‘purport’ and ‘method’ had become both intellectual guideline and stylistic manual for contemporary scholars.”<sup>321</sup> The school rejuvenated after Zeng Guofan’s 曾國藩 (1811-1872) advocacy and had flocks of followers, among whom were many with extensive overseas experience such as Xue Fucheng, Yan Fu and Guo Songtao.<sup>322</sup> Though in terms of purport, Chen in his book also defended Confucian ethics overtly, he did not follow the method strictly. Tongcheng’s early leader Fang Bao 方苞 (1668-1749) asserted that, the ancient style prose should be “substantial and not disorderly.”<sup>323</sup> Chen’s writing, though emotionally powerful, seems not to live up

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<sup>320</sup> David Der-wei Wang, “Chinese Literature from 1841 to 1937,” in Chang and Owen, *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, Vol. 2, 423.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, 424

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, 426.

<sup>323</sup> Fang Bao 方苞, “言有物”“言有序”說, “Youshu huozhizhuan hou” 又書貨殖傳後, *Wangxi wenji*, Vol 2 望溪文集, 卷二. Cited in Lin Geng 林庚, *Zhongguo wenxue jianshi* 中國文學簡史 (Taipei: Wunan tushu chuban youxian gongsi 五南圖書出版公司, 2002), 659.

to Qing learning's principles of strict evidence and orderly construction. From this angle, Chen is unique in the late Qing literary practices. Eloquent but sometimes short of logical arrangement and preciseness, he seems more like a lyricist than a scholarly prose writer.

Stylistically, Chen's rhetorical engagement takes his writing further away from orthodoxy archaic prose. First, he writes with eloquence and passion, with less concern for restraint and rationality. In the chapter "Journalism and Public Opinion," on criticizing western world bringing China "the machinery of war," not the "machinery of peace" through commercial ports, he wrote:

Well, at the risk of exasperating all who think differently, let me say, we hate with all our strength everything which directly or indirectly threatens peace, and excites the combative spirit in the already sufficiently imperfect human disposition. What need have we of these wars hateful to mothers? And to what ideal can the prospect of one day arming our four hundred millions bring us? Is it an idea of progress to turn aside public wealth from the natural path pointed out by the spirit of reason, to make it contribute to the organization of every anguish resulting from the employment and abuse of force? It seems to me this is going backwards and to the bad. We shall never be persuaded to consider the military spirit an element of civilization: quite the reverse! We are convinced it is a return to barbarism.

Eh bien! dussé-je indigner ceux qui ne pensent pas comme moi, nous haïssons de toutes nos forces tout ce qui de près ou de loin menace la paix, et excite l'esprit de combat dans l'âme humaine suffisamment imparfaite. Qu'avons-nous besoin de ces guerres, détestées des mères, et vers quel idéal peut nous conduire l'espoir d'armer un jour de fusils nos quatre cents millions de sujets? Est-ce là une pensée de progrès? détourner la richesse publique de la voie qui lui est naturellement en seignée par l'esprit de raison pour la faire contribuer ensuite à organiser toutes les angoisses qui naissent et de l'emploi et de l'abus de la force, c'est, il me semble, s'amoindrir et se corrompre. Nous ne verrons jamais dans le militarisme un élément de civilisation : loin de là ! Nous sommes convaincus que c'est le retour à la barbarie.<sup>324</sup>

Chen's hatred of the import of firearms by the west is "with all our strength" He then uses three sequential rhetorical questions to question the function of employment of

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<sup>324</sup> Chen, 83. Tcheng, 112-113.

force. First eliciting the aversion from personal feelings such as mothers' sorrow, then a stronger interrogation for the public interest, and finally to pin to the point whether the introduction of firearms is a demonstration of progress as the west proclaimed. In the end, he bursts out his firm answer "quite the reverse" with an exclamatory mark. Whether his opinion is right or wrong is beside the point, but his writing style is somehow similar to that of the western prose writer Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson's style, as a critic said, "achieves weight and point, which are both oratorical qualities." Their strength lies "not in thought but in eloquence."<sup>325</sup>

Chen's writing in the book also abounds with imagistic expressions, which may engage readers with their evident rhetoric power. For example, in "Proverbs and Maxims," in order to elaborate on his idea of studying the proverbs and maxims as a way to gain "an insight into the genius and morality of the race" (m'insinuais de cette manière dans le fond même des choses, et je faisais la connaissance des moeurs),<sup>326</sup> he wrote the following:

It is good sense which gives the stamp to a proverb. It does not appear far fetched; it is a real truth. French proverbs seem to me to be good portly citizens, and not dandies. They speak in a correct concise language, without flowers of speech, and generally in a familiar, good-humored tone. They are grandmother's sayings, and more usually cheerful than sad.

In China, on the contrary, we sometimes give our proverbs embroidered robes, and they approach nearer to those philosophical truths which disquiet human nature. In that we are Orientals, and the Orient has always been the land of parables, seeking its text where it finds it, namely, in the book of Nature, which perhaps is not the worst.

C'est le bon sens qui donne à un proverbe son estampille. Cela ne paraît pas cherché: c'est une vérité vraie. Les proverbes français m'ont paru être de bons gros bourgeois, et non des élégants. Ils parlent dans une langue correcte, concise, sans apprêts, et le plus souvent sur un ton familier et de bonhomie: ce sont des pensées de grand'mères. Ils sont plus souvent de bonne humeur que tristes.

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<sup>325</sup> George Edward Woodberry, *Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: Macmillan, 1907), 186-87.

<sup>326</sup> Chen, 102. Tcheng, 142.

Chez nous, au contraire, nous donnons quelquefois à nos proverbes des robes brodées, et ils se rapprochent davantage des vérités philosophiques qui inquiètent l'esprit humain. Nous sommes en cela des Orientaux, et l'Orient a toujours vu fleurir la comparaison, cherchant son bien là où il le trouve, c'est-à-dire dans la nature, un livre qui en vaut un autre.<sup>327</sup>

To him, proverbs are not silent language, but lively human beings. Instead of merely labeling French proverbs with abstract qualities, he utilizes personification, contrast, and metaphors to visualize and emphasize their traits. By personifying French proverbs as “good portly citizens,” readers might gain the impression of a gentlemen-like manner quality; by contrasting them with “dandies,” readers know there are no flowery expressions; by referring to “grandmother’s sayings,” one may understand why they are “more usually cheerful than sad” easily. As for Chinese proverbs, Chen also embodies it in humanized form. Wearing “embroidered robes” means Chinese proverbs are colorful and flowery. By using metaphors of “the land of parables” and “the book of nature,” one may perceive the close bond between abstract notion and concrete embodiment in Chen’s eyes. To him, parables are not only words lying in books, but come out of the magic “land” full of human life. Nature is never an indifferent environment, but its inspirations always ascend to ingenious thoughts for Chinese proverbs recorded in books.

By personifying “proverbs,” Chen tends to deconceptualize abstract notions with poetic vision and imagery. Similar instances are frequent in Chen’s essays when he deals with notions, concepts and opinions. Another example is when he displays the impression of European society in the book, he said:

My compatriots and I, who have tasted of the fruit of the western tree, know very well this fruit is of fine colour and flavour, and that Europe is an admirable portion of the globe to visit. But after all its satisfactions are only those appertaining to a life of pleasure, and end by wearying even the giddiest.

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<sup>327</sup> Chen, 102-103. Tcheng, 142-143.

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This great civilization affords us nothing but surprises, instead of a uniform condition. It is not the smooth brilliant surface of an ingot of gold on leaving the crucible; it is an ore in which may be distinguished veins of pure gold, alloys, and dross that must be analyzed to find the gold-dust it contains. The splendors of luxury represent in our eyes only curiosities, and not real progress.

Mes compatriotes et moi qui avons goûté du fruit de l'arbre d'Occident savons très bien que ce fruit a de belles couleurs, qu'il est savoureux et que l'Europe est une admirable partie du monde à visiter. Mais il n'y a en somme que les satisfactions appartenant à la vie de plaisirs, et elles finissent par lasser les plus distraits.

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La grande civilisation ne nous étale que des surprises et non un état régulier. Ce n'est pas la surface unie et brillante du lingot d'or qui sort du creuset; c'est un minerai où se distinguent tantôt des filons d'or pur, tantôt des alliages, tantôt des calcaires qu'il faut soumettre à l'analyse pour y trouver les poussières d'or qu'il contient. Les éblouissements du luxe ne représentent à nos yeux que des curiosités et non pas des progrès réels.<sup>328</sup>

He uses metonymy of “the fruit of the western tree” to represent the essence of European civilization, praising its “fine color and flavor,” and criticizing its wearying effect. The “fruit” on the “tree” brings an immediate color, shape and smell, which the abstract and comprehensive word “civilization” may not imply. Then in further explanation of his opinion, he doesn’t use pure analytical diction and reasoning either, but employs another metaphor---- an ore. To him, European civilization is not “an ingot of gold” but an ore composed of gold, alloys and dross. Thus its outside splendor should be analyzed, but not taken for granted. In his essay writing, his reasoning and opinions are gilded with a rhetorical power, imbued with creativity and flavor. His thinking is a dual process: philosophically inside and poetically outside.

In terms of language Chen’s writing in this book is also a bit “heretical” vis-à-vis the strict Tongcheng school *guwen* in the sense that he commingles many “impure”

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<sup>328</sup> Chen, 153, 154. Tchong, 220, 221-222.

elements in his work, such as foreign names, folksayings, proverbs, verses etc. For example, in “Proverbs and Maxims,” he wrote, “We have also the flock of Panurge-not that this Panurge himself is known to me, but his sheep resemble ours, and we have plenty of people who follow each other like sheep” (Nous avons aussi le troupeau de Panurge; non pas que ce Panurge me soit connu; mais ses moutons ressemblent aux nôtres, et nous avons bon nombre de gens qui marchent à la suite, comme les moutons). “We have also our ‘maxims,’ although the world has never heard tell of our Pascals or Rochefoucaulds. Far be it from me to defame those great thinkers; we have a great respect in China for those who make the world think their thoughts” (nous avons aussi nos maximes, quoi que l'univers n'ait jamais entendu parler de nos Pascal ni de nos La Rochefoucauld. Loin de moi l'intention de dénigrer ces grands penseurs: car nous avons en Chine un grand respect pour ceux qui font penser leur pensée).<sup>329</sup> Panurge is one principle character in Rabelais’s *Pantagruel*; Pascal was a famous French scientist and writer, and Rochefoucaulds was a known author of maxims and memoirs in the seventeenth century. These names are familiar to French people and when Chen uses them in the writing, a sense of identification, familiarization and accessibility is created to the readers. There are also ample folk sayings and colloquiums. For example, “Ancestors in France are called *les vieux*, and a meaning not in the dictionary is given to the word” (Les ancêtres s'appellent les vieux, et il faut ajouter à ce mot un sens qui n'est pas dans la grammaire).<sup>330</sup> There are other passages like the following:

it is a custom to say that England is a rich country because there are great fortunes in it. To my mind that is bad logic. You can only say it is a country rich in rich people... We need not therefore be surprised that there are so many fixed ideas upon the subject of China, when at only a few hours’ distance the most self-evident propositions are distorted. It is the application of the formula: *ab uno disce omnes*-a formula which will

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<sup>329</sup> Chen, 104, 107. Tcheng, 144-145; 149-150.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid. 120. 169.

always be in use, because time is lacking to discern the truth. The almost, the *à peu-près* is amply sufficient; ...

on s'est habitué à dire que l'Angleterre est un pays riche parce qu'il y a de grandes fortunes. C'est une mauvaise raison, à mon sens. On peut seulement dire que c'est un pays riche en riches. C'est donc un point de vue exceptionnel. Cependant, parlez des Anglais en France, on dira toujours qu'ils sont riches: c'est une idée fixe. Il ne faut donc plus s'étonner qu'il y en ait tant au sujet de nos moeurs, puisqu'à quelques heures de distance on contrefait même les choses les plus claires. C'est l'application de la formule: *ab uno disce omnes*, formule qui sera toujours appliquée parce que le temps manque pour discerner le vrai des choses. Les *à peu près* suffisent amplement; ...<sup>331</sup>

The emphasis on the French expressions *les vieux* (the old), *à peu-près* (just close) shows Chen's proficiency in the target language; "*ab uno disce omnes*" (a Latin phrase meaning "from one, learn all"), "a country rich in rich people" demonstrate his mastery of popular western sayings. The employment of these short, emphatical and self-evident expressions makes his writing concise yet expressive, and even with pleasant rhythms when being read aloud.

As a culture critic, Chen's writing shows a juxtaposition of registers, from colloquial to verses and sometimes academic writings. Most of his commentaries are colloquial and direct, and occasionally he inserted a few lines of verses which sounded literary. For instance, in the chapter "Pleasures," when discussing the pleasure of engagement with courtesans or musicians, he notes:

The human heart is everywhere the same: it is only the way of controlling it that varies. Doubtless many a chance romance commences with an invitation. At first it is only a wish to hear the music; but this music is so treacherous! Confucius also has placed it among the dangerous things: The sound of the voice remains in the memory; the invitations are renewed; and he who invites may in his turn become not altogether an indifferent object. Then----

"...l'herbe tendre, et je pense  
Quelque diable aussi le poussant;"

a romance is begun, and matters go on in the East as they do in the West.

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<sup>331</sup> Ibid., 154. Tcheng, 222.



It is very costly, but, however, will never be sufficiently so; for it is only pleasures that ruin that are truly agreeable.

Le coeur humain est partout le même: il n'y a que les moyens de ne pas le diriger qui varient. Sans doute, bien des romans d'aventures s'esquisent dans une invitation: ce n'était d'abord qu'un désir d'entendre de la musique, mais cette musique est si perfide! Confucius l'a aussi désignée parmi les choses dangereuses; - le son de la voix pénètre dans le souvenir, on renouvelle les invitations - et celui qui invite peut bien à son tour n'être pas tout à fait indifférent. Donc:

“...l'herbe tendre et je pense  
Quelque diable aussi le poussant;”

On glisse dans le roman - et cela se passe en Orient comme en Occident: c'est extrêmement coûteux. Ce ne le sera du reste jamais assez: car il n'ya que les plaisirs qui ruinent qui soient vraiment agréables. <sup>332</sup>

The two verses Chen cited here are from La Fontaine's fables, “The plague-driven animals,” which means “the fresh grass and, I think, some devil, too, all egging me on.”

<sup>333</sup> The two lines from the animal fable fit well here to allude to the increasing danger of an inevitable romance induced by a gathering of scholars accompanied by talented woman musicians. The two lines set up a backdrop and arouse an association, but with its poetic terseness they haven't told the whole story, leaving readers room for imagination. This insertion of verses reminds one of the heterogeneous qualities of Chinese fictions in terms of plot and language. The fact that poems were frequently introduced into storytelling, as scholar Bishop proposes, is for the function of musical, verification, commentary, delaying a climax or merely as an embellishment. <sup>334</sup> The sensual and fictitious verses inserted by Chen seem to counter to the authoritative, scholarly and restrained comparatist role he has to assume in the book yet concurrently trying to cast off.

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<sup>332</sup> Chen, 150-151. Tcheng, 216-217.

<sup>333</sup> Jean de la Fontaine, *Selected Fables: A Dual Language Book*, ed. and trans. by Stanley Appelbaum (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1997), 84-85.

<sup>334</sup> John L. Bishop, “Some Limitations of Chinese Fiction” in *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 2. (February 1956): 240-241.

Stylistically Chen's occasional disorder/randomness and lack of strict evidential learning in his essays seem opposed to the *Tongcheng* school's promulgation of strict *guwen* style, which bears with it a sense of moral and intellectual superiority. The prevalence of emotion and rhetorical exuberance in his writing resemble to some degree of a later reformer-cum-thinker Liang Qichao's advocate of New Style 新文體. Liang's style is to "interlard colloquialism, verses and foreign expressions fairly frequently, letting [the] pen flow freely and without constraint." His model is "on a rejection of the classical styles"<sup>335</sup> and thus conservatives "slandered it as heretical."<sup>336</sup> The mingling of fictional language, marketplace speech, verse and neologisms are criticized as "impure" by *guwen* gurus like Fang Bao.<sup>337</sup> However, though Liang has some nontraditional practices like the insertion of non-Chinese elements, colloquial vocabulary, and rhetorical enrichment, he has not gone too far to abandon the basic *fa* 法 (method) of *guwen* like writing in logical order and thematic coherence in most of his essays. For example, his famous affecting essay "Shaonian zhongguo shuo" 少年中國說 (On the young China) boasts powerful reasoning and careful sequence. Liang's New Style proposition may tend to attract a larger reading populace, but it does not mean he would totally neglect the eminence of orthodox *fa* in the upper level reading class. Thus his following to some basic *fa* of *guwen* may indicate some deference to the revered principles of the elite class.

In contrast, Chen Jitong seems to embody a freer spirit in his rambling and heterogeneous writing. In fact, his essays were first published in an elite journal *Revue*

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<sup>335</sup> Hu Ying, "The Translator Transfigured: Lin Shu and the Cultural Logic of Writing in the Late Qing," *Positions* 3:1 (Spring 1995): 76.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*, 95n10. "時雜以俚語、韻語及外國語法，縱筆所至不檢束，學者競效之，號 '新文體'。老輩則痛恨。" Originally in Liang Qichao 梁啟超, *Qingdai xueshu gailun* 清代學術概論 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan 商務印書館, 1921), 142. Translated by Immanuel C. Y. Hsu, *Intellectual Trends in the Ch'ing Period* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959).

<sup>337</sup> Hu, 84-85.

*des Deux mondes*, as I illustrated in other chapter, with little intention to attract common French citizens. Therefore his casual and literary style may be seen as partly out of the identification with the journal's major readers, the cultured elite who had strong interest in contemporary literature and arts, and partly out of his own poetic and aesthetic spirit. As he claimed in one chapter in the book, "The Arsenal of Foo-choo," "I have already mentioned that in China, well-bred people never in conversation discuss political questions, and this book has no pretension to be aught but gossip in reply to questions which have been so often asked me" (J'ai déjà dit que, dans leurs conversations, les gens bien élevés ne discutaient pas des questions politiques, et ce livre n'a pas d'autre prétention que d'être une causerie en réponse aux questions qui m'ont été si souvent adressées).<sup>338</sup> Though the political intent is inevitable due to the sensitive war period and his appointment as an official, Chen still considers his writing a "gossip" in response to westerners' perplexity and prejudice toward Chinese customs. The word "Gossip," which has a connotation of casual, private, trivial and sensational talk or writing, has nothing to conform to the standard of *ya* 雅 (elegance) and *zheng* 正 (orthodoxy) in the *guwen* tradition.

### **Chen's Aesthetic Thought in the Book**

Ultimately, Chen overtly expressed his profound aesthetic inclination in his writing:

The only society completely to my taste is the art world, and I comprise under that name that privileged society where there are neither nobles, burgesses, magistrates, barristers, notaries, lawyers, placemen, merchants, bureaucrats, nor fundholders, but all are artists and satisfied with the title. To be an artist! It is the only thing for which one could desire to belong to European society.

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<sup>338</sup> Chen, 197. Tcheng, 281.

My admiration for the artist class is without reserve, for they are the only men who have a lofty end in view; they live to think, to show man his greatness and spiritual nature. By turns they melt or kindle his heart, and awake his torpid faculties by creating for him works resplendent with an idea. Art ennobles all, elevates all. What matters the price paid for the work? Is it the number of bank-notes that excites the artist's passion, as it inflames the lawyer's zeal? No. The only thing that escapes the fascination of gold is art. Whatever the artist may be, he is essentially free, and therefore is alone worthy of esteem and honour.

The artist world comprises a great number of artists of different classes, and the same social distinctions are there seen as in other societies. There are the favorites of inspiration. Art possesses, even in France---that fatherland of artists---its king, if by that title we may designate the greatest thinker. His poetic genius has greatly influenced his century, of which among so many other glorious names he will be the pride.

All those minds which strive to obtain a glimpse of light in the domain of the ideal belong to that society of independent men called artists. Their society is exclusive: it admits no sham brethren, and none can assume the title of artist without actually being one. It is a nobility that cannot be bought. I will further add, that all the artists of all countries extend their brotherly hands beyond the frontiers, and laugh at politicians who pretend to separate them. The human mind trained to the flights of inspiration is controlled neither by distances nor passports; the higher the soul soars the greater humanity grows, and the nearer its transfiguration into fraternity.

Le seul monde où on se plaît complètement c'est le monde des artistes, et je comprends sous ce nom cette société privilégiée où chacun n'est ni noble, ni bourgeois, ni magistrat, ni avocat, ni notaire, ni avoué, ni fonctionnaire, ni négociant, ni bureaucrate, ni rentier, mais n'est rien qu'artiste et s'en contente. Être artiste! c'est la seule ambition qui ferait désirer d'appartenir à la société européenne.

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Mon admiration pour la classe des artistes est sans réserve; car ce sont les seuls hommes qui se soient proposé un but élevé; ils vivent pour penser, pour montrer à l'homme sa grandeur et son immatérialité. Tour à tour ils l'émeuvent et l'enthousiasment et réveillent ses facultés endormies en créant pour lui des oeuvres où resplendira une idée. L'art anoblit tout, élève tout. Qu'importe le prix dont on paiera l'oeuvre? Est-ce le nombre des billets de banque qui excitera la passion de l'artiste, comme il enflamme le zèle d'un avocat? Non. La seule chose qui échappe à la fascination de l'or, c'est l'art, quel que puisse être l'artiste; il est essentiellement libre, et c'est pourquoi il est seul digne d'être estimé et honoré.

Le monde artistique comprend un grand nombre d'artistes de diverses classes et on y voit les mêmes distinctions sociales que dans les autres sociétés. Il y a les favoris de l'inspiration. L'art possède même en France,

cette patrie des artistes, son roi, si par ce titre on veut proclamer le plus grand par la pensée. Son génie poétique a profondément remué son siècle et il en sera l'orgueil parmi tant d'autres renommées glorieuses.

Tous les esprits qui cherchent à entrevoir une clarté dans le domaine de l'idéal appartiennent à cette société d'hommes indépendants qu'on nomme les artistes. Leur société est exclusive: elle n'admet pas de faux frères, et nul ne peut prendre le titre d'artiste sans l'être. C'est une noblesse qui ne s'achète pas. J'ajouterai encore pour faire connaître toute ma pensée que tous les artistes de tous les pays se tendent la main par-dessus les frontières et font fi des politiques qui prétendent les séparer. L'esprit humain qui s'est exercé aux audaces de l'inspiration ne contrôle plus ni distances ni passeports: plus l'âme s'élève, plus l'humanité grandit pour achever de se transfigurer dans la fraternité.<sup>339</sup>

In the above passages, Chen expressed his unrestrained admiration for the “artist class” above all other professions. To him, artists are superior in two aspects: first, from a macro point of view, they profess emotional involvement since they “melt or kindle his heart, and awake his torpid faculties,” and thus may resist the impersonality of the bourgeois professions based on reason and materiality. Meanwhile since arts and the mind of artists soar high above realistic burden of distance and nationality, they can help to form brotherhood across boundaries; second, from the micro point of view, the artists, in Chen’s eyes, may be the only group who work with creativity and enjoy superior autonomy. He sees artists work as “a glimpse of light in the domain of ideal,” the best ones are “favorites of inspiration” and have influential “poetic genius.” In addition to their freer inner spiritual activity in comparison with other professionals, in reality, they as individuals, may be relatively free from the interference of money and politics. In the first facet Chen seems to resonate with western poets, essayists, and critics Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin, who advocate artists as heroes against the alienation of consumer capitalism.<sup>340</sup> The second

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<sup>339</sup> Chen, 164-166. Tcheng, 237-239.

<sup>340</sup> Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. Jonathan Mayne (New York: Da Capo Press, 1964), orig. published in *Le Figaro* in 1863; Walter

thought of artists emphasizing their individuality and creativity by Chen seems to accentuate his innate aesthetic inclination as an outlet against both the burden of officialdom. In this regard, Chen is in part similar to some literati in ancient China, especially the Ming and Qing Dynasties, who praised and boasted of painting and art connoisseurship at their leisure time.

While the majority of literati-officials' resort to art at leisure time as a stance to exhibit their gentry cultivation and moral superiority (their assumed disdain of professional painters was a way against monotony, impersonality and utilitarianism),<sup>341</sup> Chen is somehow different from them in that his genuine aesthetic inclination somehow overweigh the moral intention. In the cited writing of him above about the artists group, he not only elevates them above bourgeois professionals like lawyers, notaries and fund holders, but also placed them higher than bureaucrats, nobles and magistrates, and moreover he claims art world "the only society" completely to his taste in the world. In this way, his re-presentation of himself in the book might place him more in the vein of literati-poet Yuan Mei 袁枚 (1716-1797) and literati-painters Shi Tao 石濤 (1642-1708) and Zheng Banqiao 鄭板橋 (1693-1765), who abandoned officialdom in order to pursue freer artistic life.

In fact, in just a few pages earlier in this essay "European Society," Chen proclaimed his desired career, which indicated his particular favor for art. "My profession of faith is very easy to make: it has woman's wit for an ideal. Ask me not which----there is no type to determine; I have sometimes met with it, and the effect was like a dazzling light" (Ma profession de foi est bien facile à faire: elle a pour idéal

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Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Verso, 1983).

<sup>341</sup> Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian China and its modern Fate: A Trilogy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), Vol.1, Chap. Two, 15-48.

l'esprit de la femme. Ne me demandez pas lequel? Il n'y a pas de type à fixer; je l'ai quelquefois rencontré et ce fut un éclair d'éblouissement).<sup>342</sup> Chen finds it hard to define or determine the precise profession, which demonstrates his obvious lack of conceptualization in his book. He uses his preferred way of writing: vivid description full of analogy and rhetoric. He likened it to women's wit, though out of his reductive generalization of women, and then described it "like a dazzling light," which may hint at a whimsical and uncatchable inspiration. Later, he elaborated more on this preferred career with women's wit: "wit is only at ease when natural and unlooked for" ((L'esprit n'a de bonheur que dans le naturel, l'inattendu), "it is like an excursion without a fixed object----whither you please: you are certain to see something you have not seen before---you are an explorer" (C'est comme une promenade on ne sait où, où il vous plaira : on est certain d'avance de ne pas avoir vu ce qu'on va voir, on découvre !). "Nature is its best guide" (La nature est son meilleur guide!).<sup>343</sup> While the famous phrase, *nüzi wucai bianshi de* 女子無才便是德 (having no talent is women's virtue) is still popular in premodern society, Chen boldly linked the poetic creation and romanticism with women and eulogized them highly, which may show his critical view of western capitalism is not out of hardheaded Confucius morality, or just out of a reductive nationalistic concern, but to some extent out of his distinctively intense artistic fascination.

To conclude, Chen's aesthetic and poetic interest contributes to his unique perspective in the cross-cultural criticism in his book. In the introduction of literature, he particularly introduces Chinese poetry. In the selection of poems, he prefers those in the description of *qing* 情 and pastoral life without mentioning the pieces with a moral

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<sup>342</sup> Chen, 156. Tcheng, 224.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid, 157. Tcheng, 226.

or academic undertone. In terms of the style of the chosen poems, he prefers those written with purity and simplicity. Also, his writing style in the book is imbued with enthusiasm, liveliness and discursiveness, which is rather heretical from the traditional *Tongcheng School*, but close to the new prose style Liang Qichao has advocated in later time. The vividness in rhetoric, freedom in structure and the frequent epiphany reminds current readers of the modern writer-thinker Walter Benjamin, who is more like a culture observer than a rigorous scholar. Last but not the least important, his eulogy of the artist world and women's wisdom reveal his deep-rooted and scarcely concealed romantic heart, which may offer us alternative angles in interpretation of his criticism of capitalist culture. In other word, his writing should not be simply ascribed to the routinely used nationalistic framework, but a poetic inclination against the mechanism, commercialization and pragmatism. Finally, his writing imbued with rhetoric power and preference for lyricism may bring to our attention the individual and aesthetic appeal in the practice of transnational writing.



## **Two Painters of China: a Comparative Study of Chen Jitong and Gu Hongming**

Chen Jitong was one of the earliest Chinese writers to introduce Chinese culture to the west, but was not the most famous today. During the same decade when he was born (1852), a Chinese immigrant, Gu Hongming 辜鴻銘 (1857-1928) was born in Malaysia, whose origin was also from Fujian province in China. Both received education abroad and stayed in Europe for quite a long time. Chen studied law and political science, and meanwhile worked as a Qing envoy to Europe since he was 24 years old (1875-1891); Gu graduated from the University of Edinburgh in 1877 with an MA in Arts (actually equivalent to a BA at that time), and lived primarily in Scotland, and then studied briefly in Leipzig (1870-1879).<sup>344</sup> Both returned to China and had not so successful official careers. Chen worked as an aide to Li Hongzhang 李鴻章 (1823-1901), while Gu worked as a secretary for Viceroy Zhang Zhidong 張之洞 (1837-1909) for over two decades. Both have earned foreign acclaims for their cultural works. Like Chen, Gu had many writings published in Western languages and was celebrated as a “Chinese sage” or “Chinese Tagore” by western readers and admirers.<sup>345</sup> Many foreign dignitaries acquainted with him were impressed by his learning and works that later “won him the reputation of knowing ‘all languages and all literatures’” and “‘a man of real genius.’”<sup>346</sup> So in regard to their goal of writing and writing styles, are there any similarities and differences? As returnees who had studied abroad, what are the

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<sup>344</sup> Lo Huimin, “Ku Hung Ming: Schooling,” *Papers on Far Eastern History* 38 (September 1988): 50, 58-61.

<sup>345</sup> For example, see Francis Borrey, *Un Sage Chinois: Kou Hong Ming* (Paris: Marcel, Rivière, 1930); Herbertz Richard, “Philosopher or Mystic,” *The Living Age*, No. 4019 (16 July 1921).

<sup>346</sup> Lo, 57, 59.

influences on their writings, and what are their views of the West-East cultural relations at the turn of the turbulent 20<sup>th</sup> century? Should they be viewed as conservatives for their similar passion of promoting Chinese culture? From a closer study of them together, we may gain a better perspective for current need of increasing cross-cultural communication of developing countries like China in international affairs. Also, currently the monographs and articles on these two cross-cultural gurus hardly ever touch upon the comparison of the two, but focus mainly on their own feats. Therefore, this comparative approach is a worthy new trail. I am going to focus on two of their representative works with similar themes: one is the *Chinese Painted by Themselves* by Chen, and the other is *The Spirit of the Chinese People* (1915) by Gu Hongming. I will first embark upon a brief comparison of the two writers from different perspectives in their works: aims of writing, on religion, on women, on East and West, their ways of writing. Then I will try to trace from their different life backgrounds for reasons behind.

### **Aims of Writing**

For Chen, the aim of his writing practice is “to make the character of Chinese civilization known in its primitive state, and to establish its originality” (de faire connaître les caractères de la civilisation chinoise dans son état primitif, et d'en établir l'originalité).<sup>347</sup> The reason that he decides to describe the authentic China lies in that “it is the fashion to describe China as the stronghold of barbarism” (c'est de mode de faire de la Chine l'asile de la barbarie).<sup>348</sup> Therefore Chen aims to eliminate the prejudice and misrepresentations and help readers “form a better idea of our civilization” (il se fera une autre idée de notre civilisation).<sup>349</sup> It seems that Chen cares more for a

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<sup>347</sup> Chen Jitong, *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*, 111. Tcheng, 156.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid., 44. Tcheng, 55.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid., 6. Tcheng, “preface,” IX.

diplomatic and illuminating clarification than a serious comparative examination. Another aim is to disclose the real “manners.” To him, manners are much more detailed and historical than shallow impressionistic descriptions of travelers; manners are a “sum-total” of history and “endless series of traditions” (*longue suite de tradition*).<sup>350</sup> Then elaboration of concrete history and cultural tradition is also his goal. With no interest in political debate and questions, he claims a chatting tone of the book, saying it “has no pretension to be aught but gossip” (*n’a pas d’autre prétention que d’être une causerie en réponse*).<sup>351</sup> Of course his book intends something more rather than “gossip” of no significance, but his emphasizing the use of a chatting tone may imply his consideration of using no force. In general, the book tends to be a clarification of prejudice, and focuses more on specification and description of authentic Chinese manners, with judgments and explanations as auxiliary concomitants; meanwhile, Chen demonstrates his diplomatic sensibility, preparing a text with geniality to seek a better impression and recognition by readers.

In contrast, Gu Hongming claimed in his book that the aim of the writing is to disclose the spirit of Chinese civilization, with his focus on revealing the inner essence of it.<sup>352</sup> Different from Chen, Gu proclaims to uncover the internal quality of Chinese culture rather than the ostensible details. His second purpose is to help the western countries get out of the war and conflict with the aid of Chinese civilization. “I have included as an appendix an essay on practical politics---- an essay on ‘The War and the way out.’” “I want to show how the study of the Chinese civilization can help to solve the problem facing the world today, -- the problem of saving the civilization of Europe

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<sup>350</sup> Ibid.,3. Tcheng, V.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid.,197. Tcheng, 281.

<sup>352</sup> Hung-Ming Ku, *The Spirit of the Chinese People* (Beijing: The Peking Daily News 北京每日新聞社, 1915), 1.

from bankruptcy.”<sup>353</sup> The goal of Gu’s book clearly has to do with the time of its writing, in the year 1915– when the WWI had just begun, and the modern western civilization as a whole was facing its greatest crisis. Comparing the two authors, it is notable that one is more on “painting” the picture; the other is aiming more at revealing the internal essence. One is seeking favorable understanding and opinion in a war conflict involving oneself, while the other is presenting an illumination and apocalypse as a spectator of others’ trial and tribulation. The former seems to present a more egalitarian stance in a cross-cultural communication, while the latter may show more assertiveness in his air, with a sense of cultural superiority and a condescending tone.

### **On Religion**

In terms of the introduction of Confucianism and religion, both authors elaborate on their understanding of categories of religions in China and the connotation of Confucianism, and each has a different attitude toward the status and fate of Confucianism.

As for Chen, he considers Confucianism as the religion of the literary class in China, which has the highest cultural status. Yet he also emphasizes that “Religious unity does not exist in China” (*L'unité religieuse n'existe pas en Chine*).<sup>354</sup> There are Buddhism and Daoism, which have admirable values, as well as atheism.<sup>355</sup> His general opinion of religion is all-embracing and liberal. “I have no pretension to give religious lessons, still less to convert, inasmuch as Confucius leaves everyone free to worship God as he pleases” (*Je n'ai pas la prétention de faire un cours de religion, encore moins de convertir, d'autant que Confucius laisse chacun libre d'adorer Dieu*

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<sup>353</sup> Ibid., “preface,” 4-5.

<sup>354</sup> Chen, 19, 25. Tchong, 27.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid., 25, 26.

comme il l'entend). He even emphasizes with an air of exaggeration that "Religious hatred, however, has no place among our national customs; to me it is a source of amazement" (je n'ai pas à constater dans nos moeurs la haine religieuse; c'est pour moi une chose stupéfiante).<sup>356</sup> When introducing the content of Confucianism, he stresses practical Confucian maxims and teachings for personal cultivation and self-strengthening, and leaves out its dominant influence on social political issues. Regarding the fate of Confucianism, although he recognizes the wisdom and major creeds of Confucianism, he confesses frankly that reality is different from ideal. Moral doctrines cannot make everyone act morally. And Confucianism, like other systems of morality, is "like the dead languages..." (semblable aux langues mortes)<sup>357</sup> His tolerant attitude towards other religions, his admission of the narrowing of Confucianism's influence in the private realm, as well as his overt claim of Confucianism as one kind among many moral doctrines rather than an absolute Law of practice, all imply to a certain degree that he is not a die-hard loyal disciple of Confucius. His lamenting of the waning fate of Confucianism comes not out of the unwilling confession of a threat from the outside, like the western assault, as many Chinese compatriots and foreign scholars believed, but out of his criticism of its innate quality, a moral teaching which cannot ensure unconditional compliance or conformity. The reason behind his opinions may include that he himself is rather liberal-minded, a romantic poet in his heart, rather than a rigorous and didactic Confucian scholar, as we discuss in other chapters; also, his real-world role in war-time mediation may remind him clearly of the impotence of moral teachings in the real world; one may also add that his comprehensive training in both modern western science and law opens up his vision of diverse and alternative

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<sup>356</sup> Ibid., 22, 26. Tcheng, 23, 28.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid., 23. Tcheng, 24.

ruling principles in the social political realm, which I will elaborate when tracing back their life backgrounds in detail later in the chapter.

As for Gu Hongming, in terms of the categories of religions in China, he accentuates Confucianism as the only national religion, and degrades Daoism as an entertainment rather than a spiritual cultivation. In terms of the content, he focuses primarily on loyalty and filial piety among the Confucius doctrines, as well as the social political significance of Confucianism. “Thus the whole system of teaching of Confucius which I have called the State religion in China consists really only of two things, loyalty to the Emperor and filial piety to parents-in Chinese *Chung Hsiao* (忠孝).”<sup>358</sup> Regarding the status of Confucianism, he praises it as the priceless treasure and the savior of world civilization, which among all religions, is unparalleled. For instance, he proclaims, “This Religion of righteousness with good taste, which I have called the Religion of good citizenship (the Religion in China), is the new religion I believe, which the people of Europe, especially the people of the countries now at war, want at this moment not only to put an end to the war, but to save the civilization of Europe, to save the civilization of the world.”<sup>359</sup> As for the reasons behind it, Chinese scholar Huang Xingtao attributes it to Gu’s dilettantism in Chinese classics. Since he was considered merely a mediocre literati official, and though he might be familiar with the Confucian canons, he knew too little of Daoism and Buddhism to form insightful opinions.<sup>360</sup> As I understand, degrading and curtailing the value of Daoism and Buddhism by Gu may not represent his real negation of their status, but a strategy to fulfill the need of elevating Confucianism to the only valuable symbol of Chinese

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<sup>358</sup> Ku, 44.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid., “preface,” 17.

<sup>360</sup> Huang Xingtao 黃興濤, *Wenhua guaijie Gu Hongming* 文化怪傑辜鴻銘 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1995), 38.

civilization. He wants to emphasize the comprehensiveness and influence of Confucianism to an extent that no other religion seems necessary in China. Also, to emphasize the political status of Confucianism might also imply the eagerness of Gu's declaring his own political identity and status as a pious disciple of Confucius.

### **On Women**

The issue of women has always been a contested ground for writers on culture. In addition to the inherent complexity of changing views of women in the late Qing, the late Qing scholars' view on women also reflect their unique living experiences and the influence.

As for Chen, he seems to defend the Confucius "good mother good wife" (*xianqi liangmu* 賢妻良母) doctrine, yet he sometimes also leans towards the critical end. He even overtly compliments western women for their confidence and freedom. To illustrate, his general view on Chinese women is still set in the traditional Confucian gender scheme. He claims that "we may admit as a law the superiority of masculine gender over the feminine. In China this law has the force of a law of Nature, and gives birth to certain consequences which have founded customs and created duties" (il est permis d'établir comme une loi la supériorité du masculin sur le féminin. En Chine cette loi a la force d'une loi naturelle et elle a donné naissance à certaines conséquences qui ont fondé des coutumes et créé des devoirs).<sup>361</sup> However, what is worth noticing is that his understanding of it as a "law" lies in its real existence and influence rather than its rationality. Obvious traces of self-examination have been shown in his elaboration. He said, "These principles are essential to Chinese manners, and what distinguishes them is that they are applied literally, like a necessity" (Ces principes sont essentiels dans les

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<sup>361</sup> Chen, 47. Tcheng, 59.

moeurs chinoises, et ce qui les distingue, c'est qu'ils sont appliqués à la lettre, comme une nécessité).<sup>362</sup> Unlike many hardheaded conservatives, what he acknowledges is its actuality rather than its necessity. In fact the overwhelming power of Confucian gender doctrines are already questionable to Chen, a witness of its western counterpart. On the institution of concubinage, he did not defend it wholeheartedly, but admitted its “brutality” with an analogy to the ill effect of western illicit affairs. He confessed, “What excuses the system is, it is tolerated by the legitimate wife” (Ce qui excuse le concubinage, c'est qu'il est toléré par la femme légitime), and again, “I perceive that I am trying to excuse this custom rather than defend it” (Je cherche à excuser cette coutume, plutôt qu'à la représenter). “These are the drawbacks of the institution. Although therefore the custom exists, and is not considered immoral, it is not rare to find families into which a concubine will never be allowed to enter under any circumstances” (Ce sont les inconvénients de l'institution. Aussi quoique l'usage existe et qu'il soit dans les moeurs, il n'est pas rare de trouver des familles où la concubine n'entrera jamais, quelles que soient les circonstances).<sup>363</sup> Therefore even if Chen admits the existence of the institution, he already senses its drawbacks. Whereas with a diplomatic responsibility, he has to drag in the drawbacks of western customs to symbolically save the face of his own country. Also, when he mentioned the “arranged marriage” (*baoban hunyin* 包辦婚姻) in China, he acknowledged that “it is a consequence of the family institution itself, and of the ancestral cultus” (Elles sont une conséquence de l'institution même de la famille et du culte des ancêtres). He added that “marriage is a lottery, and the couple only know each other after they are married” (le mariage est une chance et les époux ne se connaissent que lorsqu'ils sont mariés).<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> Ibid., 47-48. Tcheng, 60.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid., 51-52. Tcheng, 64-66.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid., 27, 28. Tcheng, 30, 31.



By using the metaphor of “lottery,” he gives a hint that the system may be risky like a gambling to the individual’s happiness without blaming it directly. Later, when he commented on Parisians’ marital attitude, which discredited the happiness and sustainability of marriage and credited extramarital affairs as romance, he claimed that “one must confess, however that their manners are at least as curious as ours” (mais il faut avouer que ces moeurs-là sont bien aussi curieuses que les nôtres!).<sup>365</sup>

He acutely discerns the drawbacks of two systems instead of favoring one over another. To him, the Chinese traditional marriage system may put too much emphasis on its social responsibility, and may neglect the true feelings of the two involved parties, while the Parisian attitude of marriage may value passion and free will too much and lacks restraints. “As curious as ours” implies the innate contradiction between Chen’s emotion and rationality on defending China. Emotionally, he strives to defend his motherland, while rationally he detects some drawbacks of the traditional marriage system and makes the implicit criticism. While his tactful analogy to the western ones when making the criticism also demonstrates his dilemma. As a transitional figure in the Late Qing period, vacillating between conservatives and reformers, Chen exhibits a hesitation, tolerance and sliding back and forth in comparing two cultures.

Beside the implicit suspicion of marriage issue in China, Chen also frankly criticizes the lack of social and entertainment freedom of Chinese women, which, in his eyes, lags far behind the western counterparts. He wrote, “Woman has not the same liberty of amusement as in Europe. She makes visits to her friends, and receives theirs in turn; but these reunions are not open to men” (La femme n'a pas en Chine le pouvoir d'amusement qu'on lui reconnaît en Europe. Elle fait des visites à ses amies: elle reçoit les leurs à son tour. Mais ces réunions sont interdites aux hommes). The inner-chamber

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<sup>365</sup> Ibid., 28. Tcheng, 32.

pleasures for women mandated by men boasting of tranquility, virtue and stability are not praised by Chen, since he felt “The best part of the amusement-is suppressed in the organization of Chinese society” (la meilleure part des amusements, est supprimée dans l'organisation de la société chinoise).<sup>366</sup> The ritual propriety strictly ordained for the gender relationship in Chinese tradition seems to be a hindrance for the happiness in life. From this perspective, Chen differentiated himself from the traditional Chinese elites. In fact, he adores western women openly. He confessed that those intellectual societies and salons led by lovely and witty Parisian women charmed him deeply. He considered women’s wit “a marvelous thing” and “indefinable,” and even “a perfection which leaves far away in oblivion the black coats and their affectations” (une perfection qui laisse bien loin dans l'oubli les habits noirs et leurs prétentions).<sup>367</sup> Here the “black coats and their affectations” refer to the dominant Parisian males and their pretense in social circumstances. What is worth noting is that he does not regard western women’s wit and freedom as merely an enshrinement or comfort for men; instead, he shows the idea of gender equity. He said, “my profession (avowal) of faith is very easy to make: it has woman’s wit for an ideal” (Ma profession de foi est bien facile à faire: elle a pour idéal l'esprit de la femme).<sup>368</sup> Chinese men’s profession (avowal) is a traditionally serious domain which is considered *wai* 外 (outer) with an exclusion of women, while Chen’s assertive advocate of the replacement of it with women’s virtue and wit, which traditionally belongs to the inferior *nei* 內 (inner) realm, may show his plain idea of gender equality. Women’s advantages, to him, are not only supplementary, but even a better substitute. He even advocates the already relatively open western society to increase women’s rights by giving them the right to vote. “To have the women’s vote!

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<sup>366</sup> Chen, 144. Tcheng, 207.

<sup>367</sup> Chen, 156. Tcheng, 224.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid., 156. Tcheng, 224.

What an honor to belong to so illustrious a society” (Avoir la voix des femmes! quelle n'eût pas été la gloire d'appartenir à l'illustre compagnie)!<sup>369</sup> In general, Chen’s attitude on women shows an unwilling defense and euphemistic criticism of Confucian gender relationship, and a willing laud of gender equality, which is much more open than his countryman Gu Hongming.

There are many reasons behind this attitude. One obvious reason is that his defense of the existing Chinese gender system partly comes out of his diplomatic obligation as well as patriotism, which he stated in the prologue. Second, his critique of both systems without placing one absolutely over the other may be ascribed to his dialectic way of thinking. With a constant comparative mindset, he usually hesitates to give one institution absolute credit, but points out its merits and drawbacks at the same time. For instance, he agrees that the strict Confucius gender division in content and practice may constrain certain pleasure and entertainment, but at the same time it also curtails the disadvantages of the opener gender relations of the west, such as “having the idea of personality too highly developed” (ayant l'esprit de personnalité trop développé), “scandal,” or “intrigue.”<sup>370</sup> Third, his hearty praise of some traits of western women may be traced to his close affiliation with Parisian women. His family descendants proclaimed that he brought back two western women when he was recalled back to China.<sup>371</sup> According to Qian, Chen had already met his legal wife Marie Talabot and may have married her no later than 1884. He and she had two children during 1884 to 1885.<sup>372</sup> As one can see, in the form of marriage, he was most closely involved with French women during his beginning writing career in France around

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<sup>369</sup> Ibid., 157. Tcheng, 225.

<sup>370</sup> Chen, 42. Tcheng, 52.

<sup>371</sup> Qian Nanxiu 錢南秀, introduction to *Xue Jia yin* 學賈吟, written by Chen Jitong and edited by Qian Nanxiu (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe 上海古籍出版社 2005), 13.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid., 11, 13.

1884, when his chapters in the later *The Chinese Painted by Themselves* began to appear in a Parisian elite journal.<sup>373</sup> His intimacy with French women in such a degree may demonstrate his true appreciation of their beauty, wit and candid communications not often experienced in China. Also, the salon ladies in France reciprocated his favor by showing their admiration for him, which may spur his gratification and gratitude to them. For instance, he was consulted on issues related to China by inquisitive French women in many gatherings; he was often invited to salons and praised for his traditional costumes etc.<sup>374</sup>

Then how did Gu Hongming depict women? In general, he tends to defend firmly the Confucius gender criteria for women. In his depiction, they should be the “good mother good wife” and totally sacrifice themselves for the husband and family in terms of the social role: “the chief end of a woman in China is to live as a good daughter a good wife and a good mother,” “a true Chinese woman has no *self*.”<sup>375</sup> They should be docile, gentle, chaste and graceful in their manner. “The meekness, the submissiveness of the woman in China is like that of Milton’s Eve in the ‘Paradise Lost.’” Furthermore, he concludes that Chinese women have “modesty and bashfulness” (*youxian* 幽閒) or “retired,” “secluded” as the essential feminine traits that distinguishes them from women of anywhere else in the world. Bearing this in mind, he is strongly against modern western women’s public exposure, ungraceful dressing and showing off talent.<sup>376</sup> Besides, he especially emphasized one quality that fits his ideal of women: the *debonair*, which particularly refers to the special taste, grace and charm of women, and which he thought the “Confucian Puritanism of the Sung Dynasty” had “narrowed”

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<sup>373</sup> Li Huachuan 李華川, *Wanqing yige waijiaoguan de wenhua licheng* 晚清一個外交官的文化歷程 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe 北京大學出版社, 2004), 180-182.

<sup>374</sup> Chen, “Pleasures” and “European Society” in *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*, 141-166.

<sup>375</sup> Ku, 79.

<sup>376</sup> Ku, 94, 98, 77.

and “petrified.”<sup>377</sup> This tasteful and graceful group of women may include largely the high-class literate women in the imperial time. This kind of *cainü* 才女 or *guixiu* 閨秀, was dismissed by late Qing reformers like Liang Qichao as “the privileged minority born into literati-gentry families,” whose talent is useless and “tied to traditional high culture.”<sup>378</sup> In the discourse of tradition and modernity, late Qing scholars never neglect the gender issue. Instead, it appears frequently as a useful metonym. While Liang tends to use the reductive image of traditional Chinese women as “ignorant, apathetic, sequestered” to reinforce the necessity of an overhaul reform of China;<sup>379</sup> Gu picks “chaste,” “sequestered,” and “*debonair*” as an ideal feminine traits representing “real Chinese women” to consolidate his belief in the Confucian cultural tradition. Chen Jitong does not show such radical response in the discourse of nationalism, and seems to stand in between them with less sublimation and dismissal of female ideals both in China and France. He seems to subvert the overriding nationalist discourse by giving a close examination of each gender system in their respective context, and finding merits and weakness for the improvement of both.

The reasons why Gu Hongming laments the loss of traditional feminine traits in Late Qing China owes heavily to his hardheaded loyalty to the Confucian patriarchic tradition. To him, “the womanhood in a nation is the flower of the civilization, of the state of civilization in that nation.”<sup>380</sup> Reiterating the traditional “perfect” image of women shows his anxiety of the wane of it, and more importantly, the wane of the Confucian cultural tradition. Exalting the ideal traditional feminine traits, to him, becomes a concrete stand-in for the eulogy of the merits of Confucian culture. At the

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<sup>377</sup> Ibid., 95-97.

<sup>378</sup> Hu Ying, “Naming the First New Woman,” *Nan Nü* 3. 2 (Brill, Leiden, 2001): 201, 202.

<sup>379</sup> Liang Qichao 梁啟超, “Lun nūxue” 論女學, *Yinbing shi heji: wenji* 飲冰室合集：文集, vol.1 (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1936), 37-44. Cited in Hu, 201.

<sup>380</sup> Ku, 77.

same time the emotional excess between the lines of Gu's proclamation is evidence of the desperation and impotence he feels in face of the changing gender fashion in China. For example, he accused that "When on the contrary a woman loses this quality expressed by the Chinese word *you* 幽 (sequestered), loses this bashfulness, this *pudeur*, she then loses altogether her womanliness, her femininity, and with that, her perfume, her fragrance and becomes a mere piece of human meat or flesh."<sup>381</sup>

Another facet for his all-out defense of the traditional gender system may derive from his personal marriage experience. He had two wives whom he loved dearly and had a happy life together. The chapter "Chinese Women" is said to be modeling on his legal wife of Chinese origin, who he boasts of as having all the good qualities of an ideal Chinese woman: obedient, tolerant and graceful. His concubine is also a beautiful, elegant and docile Japanese woman who serves him and his wife as best as she can.<sup>382</sup> Both create a small haven for him and might help spur his belief in the Confucian doctrines of women's behavior.

### **On East and West**

On the general attitudes toward East and West civilization, Chen Jitong also differs from Gu Hongming. He holds Confucian doctrine and Confucius in reverence and is confident that one will "find pleasure in the loftiness and justice pervading it" (*en aimera ce qu'elle a d'élevé et de juste*). However, he concedes that "nothing is perfect in this world and that we must always hope for future improvement" (*il se rappellera que rien n'est parfait dans le monde et qu'il faut toujours espérer en un avenir*

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<sup>381</sup> Ibid., 98-99.

<sup>382</sup> Li Yugang 李玉剛, *Kuangshi guaijie: Gu Hongming biezhuàn* 狂士怪傑：辜鴻銘別傳 (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe 人民文學出版社, 2002), 384-386.

meilleur).<sup>383</sup> Here “Loftiness and justice” indicates that the pervading Confucian culture still has authority, sacredness as well as effectiveness in Chen’s eyes, while he never insists on its perfection and everlasting applicability with a comparative perspective in mind. In the meantime, he revealed some positive views on western technologies as well as political systems, which he thinks may benefit the development of China. For instance, he considers newspapers and journals in the west a very useful and precious institution, and admits that China, though has its own forms of public opinion, has “neither freedom of the press nor journalism” (n'ayons ni liberté de la presse, ni journalisme).<sup>384</sup> He praises foreigners who use knowledge and practical skills to benefit the industrial development of China, such as the building of arsenals, telegraphic lines, rail roads and the translation of science books.<sup>385</sup>

Chen seems to lean towards the self-strengthening school who anticipates the establishment of industrial enterprise as the outlet for the salvation of China. However, he actually goes a step further advocating the learning of western social-political systems. He does not oppose the possibility of China adopting the popular modes of election system among western nations, if with some restrictions.<sup>386</sup> And when mentioning socialism, he says “I infinitely prefer the State socialism which regulates everything under the protection of public opinion” (j'aime mieux le socialisme d'État qui règle tout, sous la protection de l'opinion publique), rather than “the socialism of irregular caprices leading only to anarchy” (le socialisme des caprices irréguliers qui ne conduit qu'aux anarchies).<sup>387</sup> This means Chen allows, if not advocates the possibility of political change in China, though he indicates a hesitation and check with the

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<sup>383</sup> Chen, 6-7. Tcheng, IX.

<sup>384</sup> Chen, 74. Tcheng, 101.

<sup>385</sup> Chen, 197-198.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid., 118. Tcheng, 166.

protection of public opinion rather than a rash and capricious overhaul. Chen admits that our civilization, although founded in the earliest ages, “has not altered for more than a thousand years. Such is the historical fact” (et n'ayant plus varié depuis plus de mille ans. Tel est le fait historique). Yet he is confident that with China’s ability to create the eminent inventions in the past, “we may also have applied the same practical spirit to our laws and institutions” (nous pouvons aussi avoir apporté dans nos institutions et nos lois le même esprit pratique).<sup>388</sup>

A change in law and institutions is not a taboo for him. In this sense Chen is in the same vein with those reformers like Liang Qichao and Yan Fu, who advocated sociopolitical reforms rather than mere development in science and technology, only that he is not that determined or imperative in that change. After all, the need for change did not seem that great in 1880s, but much more so after 1895. Overall, Chen’s attitude toward East and West civilizations epitomizes the mindset of some scholar-officials who have studied or worked overseas and witnessed the effectiveness of the western civilization. These “scholar-officials,” including one of his bosses, Guo Songtao 郭嵩燾 (1818-1891), and fellow student Yan Fu, are not those literati-officials who only stayed in China and were cultivated mainly by the Confucian canon. With their transnational experiences, they, like Chen, encountered and even embraced certain elements of western civilizations; and then exhibited overtly or implicitly the inclination to change, and ambiguity in change. They still defended Chinese inventions, the advantages and eminence of Chinese culture in different degrees, but they are more reasonable in reality: they see the necessity of a change in industrial production and even the judicial and political systems. Chinese culture is not necessarily higher or better than western culture, as the self-strengthening school thinks, who wishes to

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<sup>388</sup> Ibid., 190, 191. Tcheng, 271, 272.



utilize only western technology to strengthen the long-lasting system.<sup>389</sup> Chen is perhaps a nascent reformist in the disguise of a conservative. Here Confucianism and four great inventions, the selected symbols of Chinese culture are essentialized as indispensable elements of his nationalist discourse, which is the ostensible layer of a book by a patriot. If we read between the lines, the frequent mentioning of possibilities of various changes and reforms are like inconspicuous gemstones scattered randomly on the seabed.

In contrast, Gu Hongming finds consolation in Confucian teachings and the roots for its constant existence, and vehemently criticizes western culture. Gu regards Chinese civilization as based on Confucian teachings for social political guidelines. People abide by the *good citizens* (*hao gongmin* 好公民) religion and the principles of loyalty, filial piety, benevolence and sacrifice. And the monarchy system is ideal for China. Meanwhile, in regard to the spiritual essence of the Chinese people, he considers Chinese a nation living an emotional and spiritual life, with good qualities like generosity, purity, profundity and elegance, which western nations cannot compare with: “for the three characteristics of the Chinese character and the Chinese civilization are depth, broadness and simplicity,” and “I must have here add one more, and that the chief characteristic, namely delicacy.”<sup>390</sup> While the western civilizations, according to him have two characteristics. One is the fading romantic tradition, which Goethe and Carlyle advocated against utilitarian materialism, tracing back from the old Hellenism. The other is the modern civilization originated from Great Britain: the cult of materialism, commercialism, the *worship of the mob*.

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<sup>389</sup> Joseph R. Levenson. *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate: Volume One: The Problem of Intellectual Continuity* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 59.

<sup>390</sup> Ku, “preface,” 3-4.

Gu does not entirely deny the western civilizations and admits that the modern western civilization is unparalleled in conquering nature. However, since he epitomizes Chinese civilization to the spiritual realm, he considers Chinese civilization to be better than both ancient and modern western civilizations generalized by him: comparing with the ancient civilizations, he claims that the Bible culture and Hellenism disseminate rightness and rituals respectively, while Confucianism teaches both. In comparison with modern European culture, he notes that the mob worship, the “spirit of Commercialism,” the disorder and war it incurs cannot compete with the orderliness and peace that Confucian teachings ordain. Therefore, according to him, the West should learn from the East.<sup>391</sup>

Gu’s attitude toward the West and East cultures might first be attributed to his culturalist belief. Chinese culture is reduced by him to the cultural and moral realm, and from the moralistic point of view, he finds certain supremacy to prioritize the Chinese cultural values metonymized in Confucian teachings. Some cherished qualities of modern western civilization such as freedom, equality and constitutionalism are out of his sight. While in the meantime, some external reasons may also contribute to his opinion. His *The Spirit of the Chinese People* was written during the First World War, which inflicted heavy losses emotionally and physically on its people. As Gu claims, the war now drew the attention of the whole world. People don’t concern themselves with other things. He thinks that sensible people should be concerned about the issue of civilization from this war. In fact, he attributes the main cause of the war to the weakness of modern western civilizations, which are mob worship and materialistic, to his understanding.<sup>392</sup> The religion of good citizenship from China is in his eyes the new

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<sup>391</sup> Ku, “Introduction,” I, “preface,” 16, 19, 20.

<sup>392</sup> Ibid., “Introduction.”

religion for the salvation of European civilization and ending of the war. Thirdly, Gu was working and living in China during the time of his writing, and experienced the death of Zhang Zhidong (1909), and the fall of the Qing regime and the founding of the Republic (1912). He was anxious about his fellowmen's enthusiasm to learn from the west in the incipient Republic era. He claims that, "In fact, young people from China and Japan both view western civilization through telescope, so that everything becomes grander and better than that in reality. However, when they reverse the telescope to observe themselves, of course everything would look small."<sup>393</sup> Due to the fear of his fellowmen's glorification of the west and concurrent inclination toward self-denigration, Gu seems to render his cultural comparison in a manner of hypercorrection.

In a word, in comparison, Chen's view of the East and West is relatively open and dialectical. Under the surface of defending China, he exudes a sense of criticism and realism, and the intent on learning from the west. Gu Hongming, a romantic and steadfast champion of Confucianism, tends to cling to its moralistic and humanistic value as the ultimate savior of the world.

### **The Way of Writing**

Chen and Gu also differ greatly in their manner of writing. Chen in general assumes a neither humble nor pushy attitude. As a diplomat, he consciously adopted this professional attitude in the routine foreign affairs.<sup>394</sup> In his writing, he also exhibits this communicative tactic. When referring to western modernization, he said, "If this is the desired progress, it is complete, and I admire it without envy" (Si c'est là le progrès

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<sup>393</sup> Gu Hongming 辜鴻銘, *Gu Hongming wenji* 辜鴻銘文集, trans. Huang Xingtao 黃興濤 et al. (Haikou: hainan chubanshe 海南出版社, 1996), vol. 2, 312.

<sup>394</sup> Lu Meisong and Fu Jian Chronology Compilation Committee, eds. 盧美松, 福建地方誌編纂委員會, *Fujian shengzhi : renwu zhi*, vol.1 福建省志: 人物志, 第1卷 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe 中國社會科學出版社, 2003), 362.

désiré, il est complet, et j'admire sans envie).<sup>395</sup> While never reserving his admiration for western advancement, he doesn't show other-aggrandizement or self-abasement. When presenting his own observation of his home country, he clearly presents, "There are fallacies of such a nature that it is useless to be offended at them; merely to mention the truth is sufficient to explode them" (Il y a des excentricités d'une telle nature qu'il est inutile de s'en alarmer; il suffit de rétablir la vérité).<sup>396</sup> It is as if to him, the proper and effective way of communication is not emotional grumble and explosion, but just elaborating the matter.

Meanwhile Chen also exhibits a consciousness of reader acceptance. The principle of his concern of readership is friendly dialogue and that "to put down nothing that might lay me open to a suspicion of disrespect for liberty of thought" (à ne rien dire qui pût laisser supposer que je ne sais pas respecter la liberté de penser).<sup>397</sup> Therefore his manner of writing leans toward engaging rather than imposing, communicative rather than imperative. For example, in the introduction, he expatiates, "if I am sometimes led away by the subject to the extent of declaring my affection for my native land, I ask pardon beforehand of all who love their own" (si par fois je me laisse entraîner par le sujet jusqu'à affirmer mon amour pour mon pays, j'en demande pardon, d'avance, à tous ceux qui aiment leur patrie).<sup>398</sup> "But I am pleading the cause of divorce, for which I ask pardon, because the respective situations of Western society and ours are absolutely different" (Mais je m'aperçois que je plaide pour le divorce, ce dont je m'excuse, parce que les situations respectives de la société occidentale et de la nôtre sont absolument différentes).<sup>399</sup> Therefore when conveying different or

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<sup>395</sup> Chen, 34. Tchong, 41.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid., 2. Tchong, III.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid., 87. Tchong, 118.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid., 7. Tchong, X.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid., 39. Tchong, 48.

disturbing opinions, Chen resorts to empathy and pardoning to counteract the potential aversion they may arouse. In terms of tone, although his major audience is the European, he refers to those who depict Chinese merely from impression and imagination as “they would like to put us in the magic lantern” (On nous mettrait volontiers dans la lanterne magique).<sup>400</sup> “Perhaps I have said enough to obtain some respite in the opinion of those who hurl the name of ‘barbarian’ at our heads” (Je crois avoir assez dit pour espérer pouvoir obtenir quelque sursis dans l’opinion de ceux qui nous jettent à la tête le nom de barbares).<sup>401</sup> By using “they” and “those” instead of “you,” he seems to assume the role of an objective observer, trying not to equate general readers with those he disputes with. According to social psychologist Jonathan Haidt, based on psychologists’ findings in experiments, “reasoning requires the passions” and “the head can’t even do head stuff without the heart.”<sup>402</sup> By consciously avoiding the “pushy” or “polemic” way of writing, Chen may try to boost a favorable emotion in readers in their opinion making. Thus it is understandable that he seems to establish a writing mode of accommodativeness and appropriateness in “promoting” his opinions more accessible and acceptable to readers.

Whereas for Gu, he tends to write in an unbendable scholastic manner rather than an easygoing prosaic. His preferred way of writing seems to be abstraction, conceptualization and induction. For instance, he likes to discuss concepts and reasons. In the first chapter of the *Spirit of the Chinese People*, like a scholar, he expatiates on the difference between “spirits” and “characters,” and the reason why he chose to focus on the former: since the first one is more of the essence. Secondly, Gu preferred to quote Confucius and his works in his writing. His main text of the *Spirit of the Chinese*

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<sup>400</sup> Ibid., 1. Tcheng, II.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid., 90. Tcheng, 122.

<sup>402</sup> Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Vintage Books, 2013), 40-41.

*People* can be seen in a large sense an introduction of the prevailing Confucian doctrines in China. His references to Confucius total 155 times from the introduction part to the main body of the monograph. Besides the Confucian canons he mentions, the western work he references the most is *The Bible*, including its teachings and its various expatiations. The constant reference to canons may add the air of solemnness and authority to Gu's work. Thirdly, in comparison to Chen's relatively discrete writing style, Gu pays more attention to rigorous structure in terms of composition. For instance, in "A Great Sinologue," he criticizes H. Giles' lack of a critical and philosophical insight in his profuse writings. Gu argues that no matter it is in his essays, compiled dictionaries or reference books, Giles shows little scholastic quality of judgment and discernment, leaving his works a patchwork rather than works of order, choice and organization.<sup>403</sup> Gu himself in "Chinese Scholarship, Part II," a chapter discussing Chinese studies in the west, refutes the pervasive idea that Chinese do not like to employ systematic and scientific methods in their scholarship, and demonstrated instead his blueprint of an ideal study on China in a rigorous, scholastic manner: "first," "secondly," and "thirdly;" from individual, to the family and then the government etc.

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As for the writer-reader relationship, unlike Chen, Gu seems to adopt a dominating stance by writing in a judgmental, warning and revelatory tone. For instance, he judges firmly: "Last of all I wish to point out to you here the most important quality of all,..." "but this quality, I want to say here, developed in the Chinese feminine ideal to such a degree of perfection as you will find it nowhere else in the world."<sup>405</sup> He even takes a stronger tone toward the targeted audience, "the people of Europe and

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<sup>403</sup> Ku, 119-121.

<sup>404</sup> Ku, 138.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid., 98.

American”: “Indeed I would like here to warn the people of Europe and American not to destroy this invaluable asset of civilization...”<sup>406</sup> One may note that unlike Chen Jitong, who differentiates his readers from those with biased view of China, Gu addresses all his readers as “you,” as if they all have certain degree of misunderstanding of China. In more than one place a sense of surety and blame can be felt from Gu: “But if tables of statistics and the pure abstract sciences fill the Chinese with aversion, the physical sciences as they are now pursued in Europe, which require you to cut up and mutilate the body of a living animal in order to verify a scientific theory, would inspire the Chinese with repugnance and horror.”<sup>407</sup> Furthermore, Gu frequently shows a didactic tone: “In short what I want to call the attention of the people ....” “Let me first of all tell you that there is, ... ”<sup>408</sup> Writing with such a condescending air of certainty and revelation, Gu seems to show that his words are “truth,” since they are told from someone with weight and erudition. According to George P. Landow, who characterizes a Victorian Sage writing genre, represented by writers Thomas Carlyle, Matthew Arnold and John Ruskin, whom Gu adored as his models in his book, as usually implementing four strategies in their writings: one “interprets” or instructs contemporary social issues, and offers an “attack upon the audience (or those in authority), warning and visionary promise.”<sup>409</sup> Gu obviously performs as disciples of these Victorian “prophetic” writers. By warning and admonishing the readers, he displays certain sense of social crisis and nationalistic defense. Meanwhile, the strong didactic tone in his book seems to help restore a sense of authority. By taking on a “prophetic” air of being the savior of western culture in the wartime, he seems to realize

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<sup>406</sup> Ibid., “Introduction,” VIII.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>408</sup> Ibid., “Introduction,” VIII, 14.

<sup>409</sup> George P. Landow, “Elegant Jeremiahs: The Genre of the Victorian Sage,” *Victorian Perspectives: Six Essays*, ed. John Clubbe and Jerome Meckier (London: Macmillan, 1989), 22-24.

his dream of restoring the superiority of the overturned Chinese imperial empire in the realm of narrative discourse.

One last facet pertaining to Chen and Gu's means of writing lies in their choice of references. Chen shows versatility in his choice of references. Not only did he elaborate on Chinese poets, his mentioning of western writers in the book extends from Homer, Renaissance giants Rabelais, Shakespeare and Dante to great figures in French classicism, Molière, La Fontaine, Boileau, Pascal and Rochefoucauld. He also quoted from later literary giants Goethe, Voltaire, Musset, Alexandre Dumas, the younger and so on. He sometimes drew forth a famous quotation from the above writers, or mentioned the characters in their novels or plays. For instance, he elicited Harpagon, Celimenes and Arsinoes, the characters from Molière's famous plays *The Miser* and *The Misanthrope* to address the dowry and women's entertainment issue in his book.

<sup>410</sup> Beside literary figures and works, he also added French sociopolitical records and sinological works such as *Annuaire Exercice 1875-6* and Herbert A. Giles (1845-1935)'s *Chinese Sketches* to illustrate the less distorted description of China in his view.

<sup>411</sup> As for all the references he drew from the western writers, Chen demonstrates a broadminded appreciation as well as critical attitude. His most beloved writer is Molière. He once praised explicitly in the prologue to his another book *Le Théâtre des Chinois, Etude de Moeurs Comparées* that the playwright was the bravest paragon in criticizing feudalism, pedantry and hypocrisy, and reached an unparalleled place that money and power could not buy. Chen claimed that he was the disciple and defender of Molière.<sup>412</sup> He not only had unconcealed admiration for Molière's brave satire against decaying feudalism and the weakness of human nature, but also likened Chinese love stories to

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<sup>410</sup> Chen, 39, 151.

<sup>411</sup> Chen, 87, 129.

<sup>412</sup> Chen Jitong, "prologue" to *Zhongguoren de xiju* 中國人的戲劇, trans. Li Huachuan and Ling Min 李華川, 凌敏 (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe 廣西師範大學出版社, 2006), 1-2.



Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Dante's *Paradise* and Goethe's *Faust* and *Marguerite*.<sup>413</sup> Since all these playwrights he referred to are western literary giants of the Renaissance and Enlightenment, this analogy may imply Chen's incipient liberalism and the aversion to the repression of human feelings to some extent. Meanwhile, he also questions the verity of some western writers' words. For instance, though he politely admitted that he was "no competitor" to Alexandre Dumas *films*, he could not agree with the latter's invention of unchaste women's being crushed under the elephant's feet in China, as well as his proposition of treating extra-marital affairs as a common pleasure.<sup>414</sup> Not only is Chen against the imagination of all the youth in China being "bound down by tyrannical customs" (*enchaîné par des coutumes tyranniques*) of various kinds of pleasure, he also expressed disagreement of the then French fashion of unbound liberty in love and marriage as entirely a progress.<sup>415</sup> In general, in his references, Chen exhibits an affinity and avid admiration for western literature and culture, while he retains his own discreet judgment. He may embrace, question or challenge them according to their viability.

Gu Hongming, similar to his own sage-like writing style, prefers references from sage writers as well as literary figures of "sage thoughts." Unlike Chen, Gu does not cite frequently from literary figures in his book. Though Goethe was Gu's most cited writer in the book, whose words totaled 26 times, Gu treated Goethe as the "western Confucius" rather than a literary giant: "...the great Goethe whom the people of Europe will one day recognize as the most perfect type of humanity, the *real European* which the civilization of Europe has produced, as the Chinese have acknowledged Confucius to be the most perfect type of humanity, the *real Chinaman*,

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<sup>413</sup> Chen, 178.

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*, 35, 44, 145.

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*, 146, 148. Tchong, 212.

which the Chinese civilization has produced.”<sup>416</sup> The only time that he cited Goethe’s sentences from *Faust*, the poetic play, is “Life not the Heaven its dome above? Doth not the firm-set Earth beneath us lie?”<sup>417</sup> Gu uses this to refer to the western religious tradition and the association to his core advocacy, the Chinese religion, “law of the gentleman.” On other occasions, Goethe’s sociopolitical comments are elicited. For instance, “Goethe says: ‘There are two peaceful powers in this world: Right and Tact.’” (There are two peaceful powers: law and decency) and Gu further indicates that these two are “essence of the Religion of good citizenship which Confucius gave to us Chinese here in China.”<sup>418</sup> “Goethe is the only German literary figure whose range and international standing equal those of Germany’s supreme philosophers” and whose works have been considered “classical” and “dominant” in the German speaking world.<sup>419</sup> Therefore to Gu Hongming, first of all Goethe’s literary position is so supreme and dominant in Germany that it may parallel that of Confucius in traditional Chinese ethics. Furthermore, Gu considered Goethe the best western counterpart of his own model Confucius, whose works carry paramount moral and ethical values, and his frequent reference to Goethe’s words tends to set up a familiar and fulfilled paradigm for western readers to learn from.

Second to Goethe, Gu cited the most are Matthew Arnold and Thomas Carlyle, the first being mentioned 22 times and the latter 14 times. If Confucius and Goethe are classical sages for Gu to worship, then Arnold and Carlyle are close paradigms for him to learn from. Their scholarly way of discussion and distaste for liberalism, philistinism

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<sup>416</sup> Ku, 65.

<sup>417</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Goethe’s Works: pt.2. Egmont. The Natural Daughter. The Sorrows of Young Werther*, trans. Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen (Philadelphia: G.Barrie, 1885), 61. Cited in Ku, *The Spirit of the Chinese People*, 55.

<sup>418</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Maxims and Reflections*, trans. Elisabeth Stopp and ed. Peter Hutchinson (London, New York: Penguin Books, 1998), item 543. Cited in Ku, “Preface,” 16.

<sup>419</sup> J. E. Luebering, ed., *The 100 most Influential Writers of All Time* (New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, 2010), 119.

and modernism serve as ideal proponents for Gu to follow and expatiate.<sup>420</sup> When discussing solemn issues like religion and moral law, the importance of studying Chinese literature as a whole and modern European spirits, Gu cites Arnold frequently. In the book he often uses them as inspirations for his further discussion. As for Carlyle, Gu also advocates most of his opinions. Gu once notes, “The Scotch Carlyle, for instance, believed in and worshipped might. Why? Because Carlyle with the German moral fibre in him intensely hated unrighteousness.”<sup>421</sup> Carlyle is recognized as one of the founders of the sage writing tradition criticizing western modernization progress and industrialization, and is known for his criticism of democracy and advocacy of charisma in leadership.<sup>422</sup> Gu believes that the mob, who are cowardly, selfish and unrighteous, are the ultimate cause of the first World War, who finally trigger the Germans to resort to might.<sup>423</sup> By citing Arnold and Carlyle’s words, Gu indeed asserts his own belief in the Chinese law of the gentleman. Only the sages like Goethe, philosophers Carlyle and Arnold are educated, independent and rational gentlemen, whose deeds and words fit his promotion of the real Chinese spirit. Unlike Chen Jitong, whose vast references from various western cultural sources and writers may signal an advocacy of cultural liberalism and ideological democracy, citing from these cultural critics may endow Gu with both a scholarly (intellectual) and moral weight (being righteous, brave and independent vis-à-vis the “panic,” “selfishness,” and “cowardice” of the mob) he assumes in his writing.<sup>424</sup>

### **Backgrounds of the Writers**

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<sup>420</sup> John Holloway, *The Victorian Sage: Studies in Argument* (London: Macmillan, 1953).

<sup>421</sup> Ku, “Preface,” 6.

<sup>422</sup> Mark Cumming, *The Carlyle Encyclopedia* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004), 200-223.

<sup>423</sup> Ku, “Preface,” 18.

<sup>424</sup> *Ibid.*, 153-154.

Though both Chen Jitong and Gu Hongming can be categorized into “spokesmen of the East’ of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,” “highlighting their ideas’ hybrid natures and global implications” (in Du Chunmei’s word),<sup>425</sup> the two late Qing cross-cultural writers in fact depict China from different angles and in different fashion as aforementioned. These can be partially ascribed to their different life background.

Regarding Chen Jitong, one will notice that he emphasizes presenting the beauty of China, its literature, maxims, and uses descriptive language mostly in introducing various facets of China. Meanwhile he does not grudge his appreciation for western literature, salons and women’s wit etc. These artistic inclinations may be partly attributed to his romantic and poetic inclination. If most Chinese officials of imperial China are of the literati-turned-official type, Chen seems to be more of *bel esprit* than an official by nature, which we have discussed in another chapter in details. Secondly, besides defending Chinese civilization and systems, in comparison to Gu, Chen displays a more open attitude toward western sociopolitical institutions such as governing systems, newspapers and technology. Occasionally he strides even further than those self-strengthening elites in China by mentioning the possibilities of adopting western law and political system. This may be attributed to his educational background to some extent. When he was sixteen years old, he was admitted as one of the only twelve students to a western-fashioned school in Fuzhou called Fuzhou Naval Academy 福州船政學堂, which aimed to be the institute for the study of western languages and technology. He had been taught French courses as well as science and engineering courses (such as calculus, physics, analytic geometry, mechanics, trigonometry etc.)

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<sup>425</sup> Du Chunmei, “Gu Hongming as a Cultural Amphibian: A Confucian Universalist Critique of Modern Western Civilization,” *Journal of World History* 22, No. 4 (2011): 719.

aiming at mastering the naval construction for eight consecutive years. Textbooks were all in French and courses were taught in French by mostly French instructors. The students were asked to carry out engineering practices every day during the last two years of their study.<sup>426</sup> The early extensive immersion in French, science and technology helped Chen to cultivate a newer perspective of thinking by broadening his vision beyond traditional Chinese culture. Later when he was dispatched to Europe to be a diplomat, he studied in Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques (The Free School of Political Science) and Ecole de Droit (The School of Law), and finally received a degree in law in 1878.<sup>427</sup> The professional training in political science and international law gave him firsthand knowledge of the modern western social systems. Thus while he defended the value of Chinese civilization and hesitated over the necessity to change, he still admitted that the western modern civilization was also “agreeable” and even showed his consent to a modern political system “the State socialism.”<sup>428</sup> Thirdly, Chen was deeply and actively engaged in transnational political and social activities, such as negotiating in the war, being an attaché in the consulate and a favorite of Viceroy Li Hongzhang, attending meetings with German and French politicians, even striking up friendships with emperors, artists and aristocrats in Europe.<sup>429</sup> This actual, authentic involvement in both official and unofficial transnational affairs may have helped him assume a more peaceful, rational and reader-friendly attitude.

For Gu Hongming, his schooling and work experience may help define his distinctive writing style too. Unlike Chen, who majored in navy, politics and law, Gu majored in the “Arts” during his years at university. It is said that “the only university course open to him was ‘Arts,’ which in his time more than now catered for most

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<sup>426</sup> Li Huachuan, 158-161.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid, 164, 171. Also in Tchong-Ki-Tong, *Les Chinois peints par eux-mêmes*, 118.

<sup>428</sup> Chen Jitong, *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*, 118, 188.

<sup>429</sup> Li Huachuan, 171-182.

professions except careers in Law, Medicine and Divinity, and together with these faculties, constituted all the University of Edinburgh, and most other universities in Britain at the time, had to offer.”<sup>430</sup> Besides the general structures of the higher education then, courses like “Greek, Humanity, Rhetoric and English Literature, and metaphysics dominated” the “Arts Faculty.”<sup>431</sup> As one can see, since these courses are related to classics and humanistic inquiry, and most are of philosophical and theoretical nature and with few practical implications, these may be seen as early contributions to his didactic and philosophical tendency in his writing. This degree in Arts “was the only degree Ku ever obtained.”<sup>432</sup> Here in the university, he was said to excel in “Latin, or ‘Humanity,’” and “was drawn towards that of Rome, with its order and discipline.” His intellectual leanings was also inspired by his revered professor there, John Stuart Blackie (1809-1895). Gu admired this “versatile scholar and prolific writer” for his “‘unconventional enthusiasm’ for classical studies” and for being “a fearless and independent man.” Gu’s cult of Goethe may be influenced by his professor, the “author of *The Wisdom of Goethe* and an early English translator of *Faust*.”<sup>433</sup> Meanwhile he was said to have been influenced greatly by the romanticists during his study. He read extensively on masters of romanticism like Carlyle, Arnold, John Ruskin both in and out of the class in Edinburgh, and even after he went back to China.<sup>434</sup> Not only was

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<sup>430</sup> Lo, “Ku Hung Ming: Schooling,” 59, 60.

<sup>431</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>432</sup> Ibid., 58. After graduating from the University of Edinburgh, Gu spent two years in Leipzig in Germany to study civil engineering. It is said that he obtained a diploma of some kind, but “the institution where he studied remains unknown” (61). One reason for his being “side-tracked” into this study is, by conjecture, his “awareness of his Chinese identity” and the new trend of utilizing Western learning to strengthen the home country with the buzz of the news of the first Chinese envoy to the West, Kuo Sung-t’ao. Other than that, maybe more importantly, his cousin from Penang visited him and motivated him to “study something useful,” since his guardian, Forbes Scott Brown, who brought him to Europe, died during his second year at university (60-61).

<sup>433</sup> Ibid., 56-57.

<sup>434</sup> Huang Xingtao 黃興濤, *Xianhua Gu Hongming: yige wenhua guairen de xinling shijie* 閒話辜鴻銘：一個文化怪人的心靈世界 (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe 廣西師範大學出版社, 2001), 16-18.

he influenced by the writing style of these scholarly writers, but also his opinions were deeply affected by them. For instance, Gu cited extensively from Arnold, who bolstered elitism and spiritualism, and was ravished by ancient Greek and Roman culture.<sup>435</sup> It is also said that beside textual influence, Gu had been guided directly under Carlyle and his daughter, and had remained close to the family during his stay in Edinburgh.<sup>436</sup>

Besides the immersion in the education of liberal education and romanticism, Gu's working experience may have contributed to his all-around conservatism too. It is claimed that Gu published prolifically during his post as a secretary and advisor to Viceroy Zhang Zhidong, from 1885 to 1909 (the year of the latter's death).<sup>437</sup> Zhang, one of the "four famous officials of the Late Qing," was an influential leader of the purist party. Though he effectively commanded reforms in certain areas, such as military and education, he differed from radical reformers in that he insisted on moderate reforms and the adherence to basic Chinese learning as the fundamentals and Western learning for practical uses (*zhongxue weiti, xixue weiyong* 中學為體, 西學為用).<sup>438</sup> While under the protection of Zhang for more than 20 years, Gu seemed to adopt Zhang's conservative stance and went even further. When we trace his emotional liaison with Zhang, we may note that Gu was grateful to him, nevertheless with certain dissatisfaction and reservation in the latter's steadiness in his belief.

First of all, Gu held Zhang in great reverence. As a newcomer, it is the latter who gave him a sense of safety and recognition. Gu claimed that "though I dare not say I was treated like a state advisor, respectful receptions were always given with no

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<sup>435</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>436</sup> Zhao Wenjun 兆文鈞, "Gu Hongming xiansheng duiwo jiangshude wangshi" 辜鴻銘先生對我講述的往事, *Kuangshi guaijie: mingren bixiade Gu Hongming* 曠世怪傑: 名人筆下的辜鴻銘, ed. Huang Xingtao (Shanghai: Dongfang chuban zhongxin 東方出版中心, 1998), 136-148.

<sup>437</sup> Du Chunmei, 721-722.

<sup>438</sup> Peter Zarrow, *After Empire: The Conceptual Transformation of the Chinese State, 1885-1924* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 119.

exceptions.”<sup>439</sup> In *The Story of a Chinese Oxford Movement* (1910), a book by Gu on the Chinese “Oxford movement” against westernization movement led by Zhang, Gu wrote, “ I wish to record publicly here my gratitude to the late Imperial Chancellor Chang-Chih-tung for the twenty years of shelter and protection he gave me from want and the necessity of debasing myself to earn a precarious livelihood in a world in China of hard and selfish men,” and “Besides I had the honor of learning as a raw recruit under him to fight for the cause of Chinese civilization.”<sup>440</sup> As a translator, consultant, expert dealing with Western affairs,<sup>441</sup> Gu was under Zhang for over 20 years. If he had not been close with Zhang, he may not have stayed so securely and assured for so many years in an environment of “hard and selfish men.” Of course, Gu does not revere Zhang merely for providing him a livelihood. Rather than that, Gu finds recognition and value by stating that he “had the honor” of being picked; finds direction and mentor as he “learned as a new recruit under him.” His conviction in Zhang’s advocating to defend “Chinese civilization” is so deep that he claimed, “I had hoped to be able to fight again directly under his command.”<sup>442</sup>

Nevertheless Gu was, as he said, not treated like a real “state advisor.” He was summoned only occasionally to confidential meetings on political situation by Zhang, and was not truly and fully trusted on China issues. When Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858-1927) began to enact reform decrees in Beijing, Zhang Zhidong called on a meeting to foil Kang’s actions, and Gu said, “I remember the occasion very well, because it was the first time that the Viceroy had admitted me into the inner Council of his intimate

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<sup>439</sup> Gu Hongming 辜鴻銘, *Gu Hongming wenji* 辜鴻銘文集, trans, Huang Xintao 黃興濤 et al. (Haikou: hainan chubanshe 海南出版社, 1996), vol.1, 411.

<sup>440</sup> Gu Hongming, *The Story of a Chinese Oxford Movement* (Shanghai: Shanghai Mercury Limited, 1912), 104.

<sup>441</sup> Du, 721-722.

<sup>442</sup> Gu, *The Story of a Chinese Oxford Movement*, 104.



and confidential followers.”<sup>443</sup> As we noted before, Gu went into Zhang’s Yamen in 1885, and it was not until 1898 that he was admitted into such an “intimate and confidential” meeting. Though Gu was widely known for his knowledge of the West, he was not fully convincing on serious and thorny issues of China, at least from Zhang’s point of view. Gu then said, he once before told Zhang about the “baseness” of Kang’s character, and translated as well as he could to the Viceroy the sayings of Dr. Johnson, “‘Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel.’ The Viceroy, however, would not listen and told me that I did not understand Chinese politics.”<sup>444</sup> Though he quoted a distinguished English man of letters, Samuel Johnson, the remark may arouse Zhang’s displeasure. First of all, the “Jacobins,” as Gu labeled radical reformists like Kang Youwei, were “either pupils or special *protégés* of Chang-Chih-tung.”<sup>445</sup> If Gu likens them to scoundrels, then their mentor and protector, Zhang, who once sympathized with their opinions and helped Kang Youwei to convert the Emperor Guangxu 光緒皇帝, as Gu himself stated, is alluded to as a scoundrel too. Second, though the late Qing scholars and officials differed in their belief in reform and the measures of reforms, their nationalism and patriotism were a ubiquitous zeitgeist during the turbulent period in Chinese history. Benjamin Schwartz also pointed out that one character of the conservatism in modern China was “the unquestioned priority of nationalism over conservatism.”<sup>446</sup> Therefore Gu’s seemingly poignant foreign quote may be untimely for Zhang and the status quo. In general, Gu’s role and knowledge might be unique in Zhang’s government, but Gu acted as a peripheral and dispensable advisor, whose understanding of China was not fully recognized and whose loyalty not fully trusted.

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<sup>443</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>445</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>446</sup> Benjamin Schwartz, “Notes on Conservatism in General and in China in Particular,” *The Limits of Change: Essays on Conservative Alternatives in Republican China*, ed. Charlotte Furth (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), 17.

Therefore his ardent expression of the conviction in and preach of Confucianism in his book might also be ascribed to the lack of fulfilment in his work.

Thirdly, besides gratitude and minor grievance, Gu was not entirely convinced by Zhang and his advocate. Since although Zhang led the Chinese “Oxford movement” against the westernization movement, he finally gave up, and Gu considered himself the only hero sticking to the initial conviction. “When I last saw him two years ago in Peking he was in utter despair and was only thinking how to mollify the terms of capitulation.” “I am perhaps the only one among our men who still absolutely believe in the final victory of our cause.”<sup>447</sup> Furthermore, what vexed Gu is that Zhang could not be counted as a real scholar, who should have depth and hold one’s ground. Gu wrote, “In short, like Gladstone, Chang Chih-tung was not a thinker, but a great rhetorician, not a scholar in a true sense, but a literati.” Zhang was “a scholar of superficial, not deep scholarship,” since people like Zhang in Gu’s eyes did not dare to test and ask the truth of the given principles “by the eternal nature of things.” He concluded that the Oxford movements in both countries were “a superficial and sham intellectual illumination” since the scholars “have not the vivifying ideas, the soul convictions of true thinkers.”<sup>448</sup> Gladstone was a British Tory prime minister and leader of the Oxford movement in the nineteenth century, who was likened by Gu to Viceroy Zhang Zhidong. Both men in his eyes were well-bred politicians lacking in deep, independent and steadfast scholarship. Therefore he considered Zhang as literati, a well-educated Confucius disciple from the aristocratic and prestigious Hanlin Academy 翰林院, and Zhang’s belief is by authority and tradition, but not by essence

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<sup>447</sup> Gu, *The Story of a Chinese Oxford Movement*, 3.

<sup>448</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-22.

or deep meditation. Gu then stated that that was the reason they changed their ideas again and again.

In short, Gu regarded himself a well-versed scholar in both Chinese and western learning, who had depth and moral conviction, rather than a changeful and utilitarian politician. In reality, he witnessed the bureaucratic slyness and snobbishness; thus in the book he may take on an air of a scholarly depth and moral rootedness to accentuate his uniqueness. Under the banner of this, by frequent referring to Chinese and Western thinkers and adopting scholarly writing style, he may manifest his self-assumed sense of righteousness and value of knowledge capital.

## **Conclusion**

In general, both Chen Jitong and Gu Hongming are successful and influential pioneers introducing Chinese culture to the west. Chen's books lean more towards narration and lyricism, comprising essays, proses, travelogues, novel and even drama, which can be found from the titles: *Le théâtre des Chinois* (The Chinese Theatre, 1886), *Les contes Chinois* (The Chinese Tales, 1889), *Les plaisirs en Chine* (The Pleasures in China, 1890), *Le roman de l'homme jaune* (The novel of the Man in Yellow, 1890), *Les Parisiens peints par un Chinois* (The Parisians Painted by a Chinese, 1891) and *L'amour héroïque* (The Heroic Love, 1904). Gu, in contrast, tends to write primarily on scholarly and political issues in forms of criticism and debate. For instance, his *Papers from a Viceroy's Yamen* (1901), "with its outspoken criticisms and accusations, created quite a stir among European readers."<sup>449</sup> In 1906, he published *ET nunc, reges, intelligite! The Moral Cause of the Russia-Japanese War* (And Now, You Kings! The Moral Cause of the Russia-Japanese War). *The Story of a Chinese Oxford Movement*

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<sup>449</sup> David Arkush, "Ku Hung-ming (1857-1928)," *Papers on China* 19 (Dec. 1965): 207.

(1910), with the discussion of Zhang Zhidong and his leadership of the Purification School 清流黨, he asserted his resolve to fight against the invasion of western materialistic civilization.<sup>450</sup>

Chen Jitong's most representative work *The Chinese Painted by Themselves* was published in 1884, which was about 30 years earlier than Gu's *The Spirit of the Chinese People* (1915).<sup>451</sup> Both of them defended Chinese cultures. Chen elaborated more on various facets of culture and manners, and Gu stressed more on the comparison of the essence of civilizations. In the two representative books with similar topics, regarding specific aspects of religion, women and East and West, Chen not only vindicated the uniqueness of Chinese culture, but also expressed the intent and possibility to learn from the west. His observation of the west was also hybrid. In contrast, Gu insisted on the superiority of Confucian civilization, not from a culture relativistic perspective, but as a bridgeable value system viable for the western wartime statue quo. In respect of their writing style, Chen is more gentle and placid, caring more about the reader's acceptance with a diplomatic deftness. Whereas Gu stands in the shoes of a self-assumed scholar, preferring abstract discussion and didacticism. These all related to their educational, professional and social backgrounds. Chen's representative work was written during the Sino-French War. On the one hand, he intended to introduce China to the west, and to make a good impression on western readers; on the other hand, China was not in entire jeopardy when he wrote the book.

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<sup>450</sup> Ibid., 214.

<sup>451</sup> According to Huang Xintao 黃興濤's "Gu Hongming nianbiao ji zhushu" 辜鴻銘年表及著述, *Xiamen Literature*, No.10 (2004): 23-25, the book was a collection of papers, which were originally published in an English journal *China Review* in China in 1914. It was then published in Beijing in the form of a book by an English-language publishing house in 1915. There was a chapter "Chinese Scholarship" in the book, which Gu himself noted at the end of the chapter that it was first published in the newspaper *North China Daily News* in 1884 (146). In fact, this article was serialized in the most influential foreign newspaper in China in 1883, *The North China Herald and Supreme Court & Consular Gazette* (Oct. 31, 1883): 496-497 and (Nov. 7, 1883): 524-525.

Thus his book displays an individual taste and pleasant appreciation of arts and literature. While Gu's most famous book was published in 1915, during a time the Qing regime was overturned and the west was also in the abyss of world war. He expressed more of a sense of crisis and an air of a prophet. Interestingly, both returnees who studied abroad were influenced deeply by their involvement with the officialdom of the time. While they experienced personal up and downs as newcomers of unique transnational backgrounds, their relations with the political cliques also influenced their writings.

Similarly both writers are distinctive transnational scholars at the turn of the twentieth-century China, who demonstrated notable traits of experimental modernity. Chen Jitong, when serving the office primarily in the 80s and early 90s, figured prominently as an incipient comprehensive reformist, which might be seen as a bit different from most of his contemporaries, who were mainly interested in western technologies at the time. Meanwhile Gu Hongming, a luminary figure before the May Fourth movement, when westernization became a prevalent fad, was distinctive in his bravery and insistence on tradition. Their values not merely lie in their opinions and observations, but more importantly, in their exhibition of the feature of the time: heterogeneity, openness and polyphony. Also striking are their pioneering transnational writing experiences, which created dialogues with both intellectuals and general educated readers in the west. They become timeless as they and their work stand as precedents, references and inspirations for modern transnational writers to construct new dialogues in contemporary East and West communication.

## Epilogue

Since the late Qing, more and more Chinese writers have been conferred opportunities to study, live and work abroad. Or, if they stayed physically in China, they were able to be involved in a large sense in a global discourse in their writing experience. After Chen's pioneering cross-cultural writing attempts, there were similar writers serving the role as cultural mediators to introduce China to the western world. For instance, Gu Hongming 辜鴻銘 (1857-1928) published his English book *The Spirit of the Chinese People* in China in 1915. Lin Yutang 林語堂 (1895-1976) had *My Country and My People* published in the United States in the 1930s, and Ling Shuhua 凌叔華 (1900-1990), a woman writer, wrote *Ancient Melodies* in English in China under the encouragement of Virginia Woolf.<sup>452</sup> They all expressed their understanding of China from profound and distinctive perspectives. While the earliest Chen Jitong showed a rather self-contained mode of Chinese culture in juxtaposition with the western mode of modernity, Gu Hongming manifested himself in a more aggressive nationalist tone; and the later Lin Yutang, sharing the similar writing style with Chen, appeared to be more transcendent to propose a multicultural absorption. Ling Shuhua, on the other hand, exhibited a feminine and more personal perspective. All these writers including Chen himself presented a China by themselves, rescuing it from the monopolistic painting from the West. Though their paintings are still a subjective presentation, more or less gendered, politicized, exaggerated, calculated or personalized, they thrive to decenter the gazing perspective from the western side by "looking back" or engaging in dialogues. They not only provided new angles to

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<sup>452</sup> Lin Yutang, *My Country and My People* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1936). Ling Shuhua, *Ancient Melodies* (London: Hogarth, 1953).

discover China, but also broadened the understanding of modernity in a global sense. To them, there are different versions of modernity coexisting there, celebrating polyphony and readiness for dialogism.

Interestingly, the later writers mentioned above have received more attention and applause no matter from the readers' or critics' perspective. Whereas as the first Chinese writing in a foreign language to introduce China in book form, and who made great success in the West, Chen Jitong's previous long obscurity in Chinese cultural history is noticeable. I agree with Chinese scholar Li Huachuan's argument that Chen's work may not have the profundity and seriousness as his contemporaries Yan Fu 嚴復 (1854-1921) and Ma Jianzhong 馬建忠 (1845-1900) have, and the then Chinese political system restricted the impact these returning overseas students might have had for reforms.<sup>453</sup> Moreover, I would add that that neglect may be connected with some other circumstances: in comparison with Yan Fu, Lin Shu 林紓 (1852-1924) and Ling Yutang, who became recognized earlier and were recognized as having made greater contributions, Chen is not that professional. His writing is prolific, considering that he had many books published in the West and he was a newspaper publisher after returning to China, yet in all his versatile professions, his writing job was amateur. His primary role was to serve the pragmatic roles as a diplomat, a business negotiator or a director general for a translation bureau. Thus he could not focus on thinking, translating and writing as Yan Fu, Lin Shu and Ling Yutang respectively did. Secondly, he was a little bit ahead of the time. In the west, though his writing aroused great attention and was a success, his view of equalizing the east with the west could not create profound stir while western capitalism was at its peak. The 1880s to 1890s were a period at the

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<sup>453</sup> Li Huachuan 李華川, *Wanqing yige waijiaoguan de wenhua licheng*, 151.

beginning of an era referred to in French history as *La Belle Époque*: “a period that lasted from the end of the Franco-Prussian War in 1871 to the start of World War I in 1914.” The era was characterized by a relative “peace,” “stabilized economic climate,” new fashions in “art and literature.” And most importantly, the then France is “combined with a growing sense of confidence, optimism and prosperity.”<sup>454</sup> The later Gu Hongming made greater and instant hit, since then the first-world-war-stricken countries were in great need of inspirations and examination from the outside. Meanwhile in China, Chen’s proposition of culture promotion and communication was largely scorned and neglected, due to the fact that his publications in the west were mostly during the 1880s to early 1890s, while then the Chinese elites were only attracted to western technologies, and overlooked the impact of culture and necessity of two-directional translation of literature.<sup>455</sup> Therefore Chen may had few supporters at his time and only began to receive much more attention a hundred years later.

To recapitulate, Chen Jitong and his first cultural experience in the writing of *The Chinese Painted by Themselves*, has made pathbreaking history in the China’s journey of cross-cultural communication. His time, the transnational political and cultural sphere, as well as his individual concerns and preferences all participated in the construction of an experimental transnational writing. Through the kaleidoscope of him and his work, one has a glimpse of a diplomat, an overseas student, a General, a reformer, a poet, a literati, a patriot, a liberal and a dandy of the late Qing. His book, a unique cross-cultural endeavor, literally and figuratively provided an understanding of

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<sup>454</sup> Paula J. Martin, *Suzanne Noël: Cosmetic Surgery, Feminism and Beauty in Early Twentieth-Century France* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 7.

<sup>455</sup> Zeng Pu 曾樸, “Lun fanyi-yu Zeng Mengpu xiansheng shu; fu lu Zeng xiansheng da shu” 論翻譯—與曾孟朴先生書; 附錄曾先生答書 (hereafter “a letter to Hu Shi”), in Hu Shi, *Hu Shi wen cun* 胡適文存, vol. 3 (Shanghai: Tongxi tushuguan, 1931), 1131, 1132. Xiong Yuezhi 熊月之, *Xixue dongjian yu wanqing shehui* 西學東漸與晚清社會 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe 上海人民出版社, 1994), 433.



the relation between transnational writing and factors like politics, gender, modernity and individuality. His role is both quintessential and distinctive. As a diplomat of Qing Dynasty, he is steadfast in his love for his country; meanwhile as a cross-cultural bilingual critic and mediator, he is also fluid in his cultural attitude. The fluidity and pluralism in his profession and personality have perhaps best epitomized the fin-de-siècle splendor of late Qing, when the opening-up was incipient and every possibility was not repressed by nationalism or westernization.<sup>456</sup> In today's world, when China's development is fast-paced and its cultural participation on the world stage relatively lags behind, a revisit and reevaluation of the Chinese cultural pioneer will provide inspiration and experience for contemporary writers of the kind.

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<sup>456</sup> This observation inspired by David Der-wei Wang's discovery in the fictions of late Qing in *Fin-de-Siècle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1849-1911* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

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