

TAMKANG REVIEW. A Journal Mainly Devoted to Comparative Studies between Chinese and Foreign Literatures, vols I—VI (No 1—10). Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China, 1970—1975.

Comparative literature is a relatively new discipline in the literary studies. It began to receive significant attention only after the Second World War, mostly in European and American research centres and it was mainly confined to analyzing various links, borrowings, influences and receptions between the literatures sprouted out of the old Greco-Roman cultural soil. Only few works ventured to go so far as to reveal the close interrelations between some European literatures and those of the Near East, especially in the period of romanticism. As concerns the literatures of the Far Eastern countries, their relations with Western literature seemed hardly probable because of the large distances separating them one from another and the seemingly big differences making them as if incompatible one with the other.

This superficial and erroneous impression has been fully rectified by the scores of scholarly articles published in the ten hitherto issued numbers of the semiannual journal, the "Tamkang Review". This first and by now the only scholarly journal dealing with comparative literature of the Far East is published in English by the Western Literature Research Institute of the Tamkang College of Arts and Sciences in Taipei, which is considered to be the largest institution of higher education in Taiwan. Besides its own teaching and scientific staff the Institute has been attracting to cooperation quite a few eminent scholars from other Far Eastern (Japan, Philippines, Hongkong, Singapore) sinological centres. Also several European sinologues sent their papers for publication in this interesting journal, and it is expected that quite a number of new authors working on the literary relations between China and other countries would wish to publish the results of their research in the "Tamkang Review".

It would be hardly possible to give even a cursory survey of all the articles published in the journal during the five years since its foundation. Therefore only a general discussion

of the main thematic groups of articles will be undertaken.

The bulk of the articles in the six years set of the "Tamkang Review" deals with the exploration of the literary relations between China and other countries and the investigation of the similarities and dissimilarities between them. This group, comprising over forty articles, contains also papers demonstrating the influence of Chinese culture and thought on Western writers and vice versa, the European literatures imprinting their mark on Chinese literary works.

Among modern American poets, Ezra Pound is the one considered to be particularly sensitive to oriental influence. This opinion finds a reflection in four articles dealing with the elements of Chinese thought in his poems. Two authors (Shaw-shien Fu and Margaret Williams) found it interesting to demonstrate the elements of eastern thought in the poetry of T.S. Eliot. Comparisons of some Western writers and their works with the Chinese ones are sure to arouse the interest of the scholars doing research work in comparative literature. Such articles as: A. Owen Aldridge's *Voltaire and the Cult of China*; Josephine Huang Hung's *On some of the Characters in the "Palace of Eternal Youth" and King Lear*; M.A. Bernad's *Shakespeare and the Oriental Mind: A Comparative Approach to the Plays* or R.F. Fleissner's *Charles Dickens and His China: the Architecture of Bleak House* will constitute a sure help to a better understanding of the literary production of the outstanding writers of the Western culture.

The influence of Western literature on the Chinese one is discussed only by Yü Kuang-chung in *American Influence on Post-war Chinese Poetry in Taiwan* and by Chien Hou in *Irving Babbitt and the Literary Movements in Republican China*.

The disproportion between the number of articles dealing with the Chinese influence upon the Western writers and those discussing the influence of the Western culture on China is quite perceptible. One would conclude from it that there existed only one-way East—West influx of ideas. Such a conclusion might have been right concerning the relations of China with the West before the middle of the 19th century. But since that time the influence of English, French, German, Russian, and



later of the Soviet literature has been quite evident.

Another serious gap arose from almost complete neglect in the otherwise very varied thematically set of articles published in the "Tamkang Review" of the literature created in the People's Republic of China. We can only express our hope that this gap may be filled in the forthcoming issues of the journal. I hope it will not be considered improper if availing myself of this occasion I will mention at least two significant books on the relations between Russian and Soviet literatures and the Chinese literature in modern times. Readers interested in the influence of the Soviet literature on Chinese poetry are referred to L.E. Cherkasski's book *Mayakowski in China* (in Russian), published in Moscow in 1976. The problems of the influence of Soviet literature on Chinese literary production and criticism in the late fifties are discussed by D.W. Fokkema in his book *Literary Doctrine in China and Soviet Influence, 1956-1960*, published in 1965 by Mouton in The Hague. There are also innumerable articles on this subject to be found in Soviet oriental journals and sinological miscellanies.

This group includes also a few articles of a more general character, endeavoring to formulate the basic differences between the Eastern and Western cultures. At least two of them are worthy of being mentioned in this short review: Charles Witke's article *Comparative Literature and the Classics: East and West* and D.H. Fokkema's *Cultural Relativism and Comparative Literature*.

Some knowledge about the similarities and dissimilarities between the Chinese and the Western culture can be also obtained from the articles performing analyses of different translations of some Chinese poems into European languages. They show the untranslatabilities of some words and expressions being due to distinct characters of the two cultures. But on the whole there are many other features showing the unity of the human culture of the world.

A separate group contains the articles showing the relations between Chinese literature and the literatures of other countries of the Far East. Most of them deal with the influence of Chinese culture on Japanese writers and thinkers. Articles by Koki Sato, *The Role of Classical Chinese in the Introduction of Western*

*Civilization (1870-1890's)* or Ching-mao Cheng's *Chinese History in the Writings of Nakajima Atsushi* are typical of this group. But again, nobody wants to deny the influence of Chinese culture on the neighbouring countries, but it is also an incontestable fact, that at least on the turn of the 19th century it was China that extensively borrowed from the modern culture of Japan, and there has been published no article on this important subject in the "Tamkang Review" yet.

Besides these, there are also some articles on the literary relations between China and Korea, Philippines and Vietnam. Special interest arouses Hatakenaka Toshio's article *On Kim Van Kieu - China, Vietnam, Japan* showing the popularity of the Vietnamese national epic poem in other countries of the Far East and intimating its Chinese origin.

A separate group could be made up of a dozen or so articles dealing with individual Chinese writers and literary works. Articles like Huang-ching Hung's *Lu Yu As I See Him* or J.I. Crump's *Yüan Drama as Seen by Ming Critics*, although do not exactly belong to the discipline of comparative literature, are doubtless an important contribution to a better understanding of various aspects of Chinese literature and in consequence make its comparisons to other literatures easier.

Another group consists of about twenty articles on prosodic, stylistic and translational problems in Chinese literature. J.I. Crump's paper on *Spoken Verse in Yüan Drama* or Claudio Guillen's *Some Observations on Parallel Poetic Forms* as well as other articles pertaining to this group reveal the intrinsic features of Chinese literary forms and for those who are not very familiar with Chinese literature, and there are very few who really are, they represent a good itinerary in the maze of Chinese literary secret alleys. The articles on translational problems also constitute an important aid in the study of comparative literature. There are a few interesting articles in the "Tamkang Review" dealing with this problem, but special attention draw Frederic Will's *Translation and the Limits of Intercultural Understanding* and Chen Tsu-wen's *Problems in Translating Poetry*.

The last one out of the arbitrarily established by us groups of materials consists of English translations of a few Chinese literary



compositions, each of a different literary form. Thus, we can read in the "Tamkang Review" a sample of Chinese mediaeval, traditional story, *The Predestined Couple*, a modern short story by a well-known writer Ting Ling, *Sophia's Diary*, in which the Western literary influence is quite perceptible. Besides these, there are translations of traditional Chinese poetry in the *tz'u* and *ch'ü* forms and the complete translation of a Yüan-time theatrical play *Yellow Millet Dream*. It can be seen that all the three main literary forms: epic, lyric and dramatic, have been represented and may be used as a material for making comparisons with the respective forms in other literatures.

Summing up, the "Tamkang Review" is certainly an indispensable journal for every scientific center doing research work in the field of comparative literature. It succeeded in securing the cooperation of many outstanding

scholars from Taiwan and some other countries in the Far East as well as in America and Europe and so far it can be considered the only scholarly journal in English devoted to comparative studies between Chinese and foreign literatures. Would it publish in future more materials about the influence of other cultures on Chinese literature, to avoid the suspicion of sinocentrism and wouldn't it be timid to grant some place for the articles about the literatures in the communist countries of the Far East, the possession of the full set of the "Tamkang Review" would be the pride of every scholar doing research work on the cultures of the Far East and/or in the field of comparative literature.

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