

China's Literary Cosmopolitans

Qian Zhongshu, Yang Jiang, and the World of Letters

Edited by

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Introduction: All the World's a Book

Christopher Rea

But then, in a sense, all poetry is positional: to try to express one's position in regard to the universe embraced by consciousness, is an immemorial urge. The arms of consciousness reach out and grope, and the longer they are the better.

—VLADIMIR NABOKOV, *Speak, Memory*¹

“Chinese cosmopolitanism” may sound somewhat paradoxical. “Chinese” suggests a national, cultural, or ethnic exclusivism incompatible with the worldliness of a true cosmopolitan sensibility. This problem diminishes if we allow that cosmopolitanism, as an aspiration and behavior, may coexist with local affiliations, identities, and cultural expressions. Yet friction remains. Cosmopolitanism, like its various cognates, has long conjured up a hypothetical ideal of perfect global humanism. In the 1820s, the essayist William Hazlitt (1778–1830) wrote that:

Those who on pure cosmopolite principles, or on the ground of abstract humanity affect an extraordinary regard for the Turks and Tartars, have been accused of neglecting their duties to their friends and next-door neighbours. Well, then, what is the state of the question here? One human being is, no doubt, as much worth in himself, independently of the circumstances of time or place, as another; but he is not of so much value to us and our affections. Could our imagination take wing (with our speculative faculties) to the other side of the globe or to the ends of the universe, could our eyes behold whatever our reason teaches us to be possible, could our hands reach as far as our thoughts or wishes, we might then busy ourselves to advantage with the Hottentots, or hold intimate converse with the inhabitants of the Moon; but being as we are, our feelings evaporate in so large a space—we must draw the circle of our affections and duties somewhat closer—the heart hovers and fixes nearer home.²

¹ Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, 169.

² This essay about the utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) was anthologized in Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age, or: Contemporary Portraits* (1825).

“Cosmopolite principles,” as Hazlitt sees it, founder on the reality that we care most about those physically closest to us. Those who adopt cosmopolitanism as a worldview or guide to living fail to see that their politics defy innate human impulses. But even as Hazlitt rejects “pure” cosmopolitanism as wrong-headed and unworkable, he acknowledges that if we let “our imagination take wing . . . we might then busy ourselves to advantage” with those on the other side of the globe.

Moral and ethical concerns continue to dominate philosophical discussions of cosmopolitanism. Kwame Anthony Appiah identifies two strands of thought: “the idea that we have obligations to others” beyond family and tribe, and the idea that “we take seriously the value not just of human life but of particular human lives” and the belief systems that shape them.³ A decade before Appiah, Jacques Derrida assessed cosmopolitanism in terms of the ethics of granting asylum to people who have committed inhumane acts. Derrida was motivated to find moral justification and institutional mechanisms for helping societies overcome bloody trauma. Cosmopolitanism, to him, meant not just being at home in the world (a metaphor that Timothy Brennan has characterized as boosterish and self-indulgent) but being forgiving, hospitable and welcoming to others.⁴ Other critics have focused on cosmopolitan power relations, particularly in post-colonial societies.⁵

This book’s concerns are primarily literary. It focuses on two writers, Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書 (1910–1998) and Yang Jiang 楊絳 (b. 1911), husband and wife, whose careers as authors and literary scholars spanned most of the twentieth century. It offers a detailed look at their sustained engagement with the world of letters, focusing on matters of literary and critical style. Its main goal is to offer a comprehensive appraisal of their literary accomplishment (though not their scholarship, as I explain below). In this introduction, I argue that the cases of Qian and Yang, both individually and as a pair, also offer some answers to the question of why cosmopolitanism matters in the realm of modern Chinese letters. These two writers, well-versed in Euro-American literatures, wrote most of their works in China and in Chinese. This book thus introduces examples of literary cosmopolitanism that might be called Chinese-centric.

Literary cosmopolitanism, as I use the term here, refers to the activity of circulating rhetoric and ideas through literary texts across borders and among languages, as well as to the disposition motivating such activity. Rhetoric and

3 Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism*, xv.

4 See Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*; Brennan, *At Home in the World*.

5 See, for example, the essays in Breckenbridge et al., *Cosmopolitanism*.

ideas, of course, are not are not subject to the same constraints as affection. Words may resonate on intellectual grounds, and distance might even amplify their resonance. The concerns of literary cosmopolitanism are not just ethical, moral or emotional, but also intellectual and stylistic. The focus here, then, is on a type of virtual sociability: converse between writers conducted through the medium of literary texts. A related goal is to keep theoretical discussions grounded—not just in texts and intertexts, but in historical circumstance. To begin with, in the Chinas that Qian and Yang lived in, to “hold intimate converse with the inhabitants of [far-off lands]” was not a farfetched ideal but a cultural imperative.

Chinese Cosmopolitanisms

Qian Zhongshu and Yang Jiang’s lives spanned multiple ages of Chinese cosmopolitanism. Here I mention a few, which historians may parse even more finely. Both were born at the turn of the 1911 Xinhai Revolution, when China’s last dynasty, the Qing (1644–1911), was overthrown and replaced with a republican government. This was the culmination of several decades of what might be called the internationalization of Chinese political thought. Reformist thinkers, inspired by both Chinese and foreign models, had put forward utopian models such as Kang Youwei’s 康有為 (1858–1927) Grand Unity (*datong* 大同), which sought to integrate China and its people with the races, nations, and civilizations of the world. Chinese emperors had long referred to their empires as All Under Heaven (*tianxia* 天下).⁶ Now, the Republic of China (est. 1912) was but one member of an international community of nation-states. The republican moment symbolized, for China, a new era of relational thinking.

The weakness of China’s membership in this community was exposed at the end of World War I, when the Western powers who negotiated the Treaty of Versailles granted to Japan, over the Chinese delegation’s objections, German concessions in Shandong province. The May Fourth Movement, named after protests that occurred in Beijing on May 4, 1919, hastened an internationalist turn in Chinese literary culture that had been going on for decades. At the turn of the century, translators like Lin Shu 林紓 and writers like Liang Qichao 梁啟超 and Wu Jianren 吳趸人 produced hundreds of fictional works inspired by Dickens, Dumas, Bellamy, Hugo, and Wells. In the 1910s and 1920s

6 Chinese cultural cosmopolitanism did not begin in the post-dynastic modern era. See, for example, Mark Edward Lewis’s study of the Tang dynasty (618–907), Lewis, *China’s Cosmopolitan Empire*. Kang Youwei first formulated his ideas about the Grand Unity in the 1880s.

Gogol, Ibsen, Wilde, Shaw, and a host of other foreign writers became new touchstones in a Chinese cultural quest for new ideas, a new morality, and a new language for China's future. The immense variety of international literary and intellectual influences on late Qing and early Republican literature needs no rehearsing here.

The Nanjing decade (1928–37) was the next important period of Chinese literary cosmopolitanism. The Nationalist government under the Kuomintang achieved a measure of stability and set about building national institutions, as well as expanding its international representation. Literary magazines, film companies, and other cultural institutions flourished, even under unremitting censorship. It was during this era that both Yang and Qian began their literary careers and travelled to Europe. This period of cultural experimentation and institution-building was brought to an abrupt halt by the War of Resistance against Japan, which broke out in 1937. Shortly thereafter, in 1940, Japan began promoting a politically-motivated ideology it dubbed the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere (*Dai-tō-a kyōeiken* 大東亞共榮圈).⁷ This cosmopolitanism proposed to unite China, Japan, the Japanese puppet-state of Manchukuo (est. 1932), and other Asian regions under a sphere of Japanese influence. The “co-prosperity” phrase denoted an imperialist vision of cosmopolitanism. Its pan-Asianism claimed to be an alternative to and a bulwark against western colonial hegemony, and promised an economic and cultural utopia. Though widely recognized as thin rhetorical cover for Japanese territorial ambitions, these aspirations had real-world consequences.

The Communist victory in the civil war over the Nationalists ushered in a radically different form of cultural cosmopolitanism. Inspired by Soviet models, the Chinese Communist Party spent the 1950s suppressing private enterprise and consolidating all forms of cultural production and distribution—publishing, radio, cinema, performing arts—within the new bureaucracy. Party-state cultural policy promoted outreach to parts of the world that embraced the Communist ethos: the Soviet Union (patron of the People's Republic for much of the 1950s), members of the Eastern European bloc, and later Left-leaning countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Chinese cinemas screened North Korean films. Performing arts troupes visited from India and the Soviet Union. Magazines like *Translations* (*Yiwen* 譯文, 1953–58), later retitled *World Literature* (*Shijie wenxue* 世界文學, 1959–64), translated writers from around the world, including representatives not only of other socialist or developing

7 As Shuang Shen notes, Axis powers sponsored a variety of literary institutions and products to support this vision, such as the English-language Shanghai-based magazine, *XX Century*. See Shen, *Cosmopolitan Publics*, ch. 4.

nations, but also Leftist authors of first-world capitalist countries like England, France, and the United States.⁸ Few Chinese citizens were permitted to travel abroad, but their reading habits were supposed to reflect the international orientations of the socialist Party-state.

During the Mao years, Qian and Yang were employed as researchers at a government-sponsored research institution, the predecessor of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Yang Jiang spent much of those years translating European literary classics into Chinese. Qian Zhongshu, in addition to his research on Western literature traditional Chinese literature, was commissioned to help translate Mao's *Selected Works* into English. At the behest of state employers, both writers participated, in other words, in an era of prescriptive literary cosmopolitanism. This came at a terrible cost: in their late thirties, Qian and Yang, like their peers on the mainland, had suddenly lost the freedom to write as they pleased. Political campaigns, prescriptive cultural policies, and bureaucratic imperatives severely constrained their choices during prime work years. Qian's voluminous reading notes from that era, as well as Yang's memoirs, testify to some foregone projects; others will never be known.

Their published works reveal literary sensibilities at odds with the cultural climate of the Mao era. Most notable is *Guanzhui bian* 管錐編, also known as *Limited Views*, which Qian wrote in classical Chinese—the literary language once used to unite All Under Heaven, and an idiom far removed from much Maoist rhetoric. Yang's works of the post-1978 reform period, especially her memoir *Six Chapters of Life in a Cadre School* (*Ganxiao liu ji* 干校六記) and her novel *Taking a Bath* (*Xizao* 洗澡, translated as *Baptism*), depicted, in a retrospective mode, a culture clash between collectivist, revolutionary imperatives and individual literary lives. While Qian focused on revising *On the Art of Poetry* (*Tan yi lu* 談藝錄) and *Guanzhui bian* in the 1980s, Yang wrote new works, participating more actively in the newly open literary economy. Then Qian Zhongshu, and their daughter, Qian Yuan 錢瑗 (1937–1997), fell terminally ill. Yang's dramatic return to the literary scene as a nonagenarian, beginning with her retranslation of Plato's *Phaedo*, is one of the remarkable stories told in this book.

8 My thanks to Nicolai Volland for permission to draw on findings from his forthcoming monograph in this paragraph. See Volland, *Cold War Cosmopolitanism*, Introduction and ch. 6.

Literary and Lifestyle Cosmopolitanisms

Qian's and Yang's literary careers highlight differences and intersections between literary cosmopolitanism and what might be called lifestyle cosmopolitanism. Appiah deplors the smug self-superiority of the "Comme des Garçons-clad sophisticate with a platinum frequent-flyer card regarding, with kindly condescension, a ruddy-faced farmer in workman's overalls."⁹ The cosmopolitan lifestyle may also be mediated by print. *Cosmopolitan*, originally a magazine for families, was first published in the United States in 1886 and now boasts over sixty international editions in over thirty languages that are distributed in over a hundred countries. General interest periodicals and newspapers, from the New York *World* (est. 1860) to Paris's *Le Monde* (est. 1944), have also appealed to readers' desire for the global perspective, making cosmopolitan knowledge accessible to a wider population than ever before.

Some of China's literary cosmopolitans have been consumers as conspicuous as Appiah's hypothetical example. High-fliers of urban modernism during the Nanjing era, such as Liu Na'ou 劉呐歐, Mu Shiyi 穆時英, Shi Zhecun 施蛰存, and Dai Wangshu 戴望舒, for example, were among the Shanghai writers who built literary auras tied to their public personae as dandified men-about-town.

The Nanjing decade, when Qian and Yang published their first literary works, saw an unprecedented degree of institutional support for the publications and social organizations that supported these lifestyles. T.K. Chuan 全增嘏, Quentin Pan 潘光旦, Lin Yutang 林語堂, Wen Yuanning 溫源寧, and dozens of others wrote for Anglophone journals like *The China Critic* (*Zhongguo pinglun zhoubao* 中國評論週報, 1928–40, 1945) and *T'ien Hsia Monthly* (*Tianxia yuekan* 天下月刊, 1935–41), as well as Chinese-language sister publications like *The Analects Fortnightly* (*Lunyu banyuekan* 論語半月刊, 1932–37, 1946–49), with which they shared content and contributors. While advocating Chinese interests, they promoted individualism over blind nationalism. In 1930, the *Critic's* editors even proposed a Liberal Cosmopolitan club to seek "intellectual warmth" amidst a "frigid intellectual atmosphere."¹⁰

9 Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism*, xiii.

10 Their 1930 editorial said the Club would bring together "internationally minded people" who are "more interested in the examination of ideas than in national glorification, more in the common problems of modern life than in any patriotic propaganda." The Club was indeed established and served as something of a public extension of its founders' private social networks. See: "Proposal for a Liberal Cosmopolitan Club in Shanghai,"

These writers—mostly male—saw themselves as citizens of the world and promoted their own vision of literary and cultural egalitarianism.¹¹ Most had lived and studied abroad. Liu Na'ou was born and raised in colonial Taiwan, studied in Shanghai, and translated Japanese literature. Poet Dai Wangshu studied in Paris. T.K. Chuan and Quentin Pan both studied in the United States, as did Lin Yutang, who took an M.A. at Harvard and a doctorate at the University of Leipzig. Wen Yuanning, who edited *T'ien Hsia*, was born in Indonesia and studied in Singapore and London before taking a degree at Cambridge, and then moving to Peking to teach English literature at various universities. The poet and playboy Sinmay Zau (Shao Xunmei 邵洵美), another Cambridge graduate, hosted a cultural salon of writers, cartoonists, politicians, and cultural figures both Chinese and foreign. Among its few female members was the American Emily Hahn, who wrote for *The China Critic* and *T'ien Hsia*, and used Zau, her lover, as the basis for a series of “Mr. Pan” stories for *The New Yorker*.

Many of these writers shared what literary historian Shuang Shen calls “common characteristics that can be roughly described as cosmopolitan: the experience of exile, the practice of translation, the use of a foreign language, and the borrowing of foreign cultures.”¹² Shanghai also offered an international experience to those who never went abroad. Shi Zhecun wrote of taking foreign women to the cinema, and Mu Shiyong of the black and Filipino jazz musicians and white Russian dancers he encountered in nightclubs. They and their fellow modernists’ stylistic innovations were influenced by Japanese *Shinkankakuha* 新感覺派 (new sensationalist) writers like Yokomitsu Riichi 橫光利一 (1898–1947). But their staging and characterization were to a large degree projections of their own experiences of city street and nightclub. Flâneurs, flappers, alcohol, foreign women, and the vertiginous pace of urban life dominate their imagery. Their literary worlds tantalized with the suggestion of autobiographical detail, and they signalled their cosmopolitanism through conspicuous foreign symbolism.

Yet cosmopolitan literary works, as Rebecca Walkowitz points out, are not merely “international in their themes and traditions and origins;”¹³ they make comparisons without depicting the objects of comparison as immutable.

The China Critic III.46 (Nov. 13, 1930): 1085–86. See also Qian, *Liberal Cosmopolitan*, 1–2, 93.

11 Yang Jiang’s early accomplishments are all the more extraordinary for the general sexism of the Republican literary sphere. *The China Critic*’s envisioned cosmopolitan club, for instance, was to be a “club of men.”

12 Shen, *Cosmopolitan Publics*, 158.

13 Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style*, 7.

Qian Zhongshu famously took exception to what he saw as the facile comparison of East and West so popular among Republican era intellectuals, some of whom he had encountered at Tsinghua or in the 1930s when he wrote for *The China Critic* and *T'ien Hsia*.¹⁴ His literary sensibilities, and Yang's, were influenced by Republican China's cosmopolitan set, as well as their three years studying abroad in England and France.¹⁵ Yet they spent less time abroad than they could have.¹⁶ Their globe-trotting was primarily literary.

Shen points out that "different groups of people in the same locality can have very different ideas about cosmopolitanism."¹⁷ These ideas can differ even within one household, as we will see in following discussions of how Qian and Yang expressed cosmopolitanism stylistically. Walkowitz describes cosmopolitan literary style as marked by an interest in "representing patterns or fictions of affiliation, in rejecting fixed conceptions of the local, or in comparing the uses and histories of global thinking."¹⁸ Qian and Yang's writings evince all of these patterns. Cosmopolitanism was also, I would argue, part of what Michel Hockx calls their "personality in style," a literary quality whereby the text embodies the personality and moral qualities of the author.¹⁹

One sustained literary interest, for example, is the moral virtue of mastering languages and texts. The heroine of *Taking a Bath* is a young librarian who understands world literary classics better than boorish faculty members of

14 See, for example, Qian's sarcastic discussion of East-West comparisons in the stories "Cat" and "Inspiration," which appear in the collection, Qian, *Humans, Beasts, and Ghosts*.

15 Qian Zhongshu, for example, had a missionary education in Jiangsu province and studied English literature under Wen Yuanning at Tsinghua University. It was likely on Wen's introduction that Qian contributed English essays to *The China Critic* in the mid-1930s and later to *T'ien Hsia*. Qian's early writings, and Yang's later memoirs, attest to their familiarity with the Tsinghua circle (including Wang Wenxian 王文顯, Ye Gongchao 葉公超, Cao Yu 曹禺, and many others), the *China Critic* crowd, as well as Francophiles such as the playwright Li Jianwu 李健吾 and translator Fu Lei 傅雷. A full account of the couple's involvement in these social circles has yet to be written.

16 On the eve of the Communist victory in the Civil War, Qian reportedly had multiple academic job offers in Europe and Asia, but he turned them down to remain in China. After the end of the Mao era, he travelled twice to Italy and made a brief tour of American universities; Yang travelled to Spain to receive an award for her translation of *Don Quixote* and to visit their daughter studying in England. Qian received fellowship offers from Princeton and other universities, but he declined them and chose to stay in China.

17 Shen, *Cosmopolitan Publics*, 159.

18 Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style*, 7.

19 See chapter six of Hockx's study, *Questions of Style*, in which he analyzes modern examples of a long-standing idea in Chinese literary thought, namely "that reading literature is not just reading texts, but getting to know the author of those texts" (186).

the Literary Research Institute, like Nina Shi, who have actually been abroad. Conscientious reading, in Yang's novel, is not just a means to an end; it is an index to a person's quality of character. Self-refinement through reading reemerged as a central focus of Yang's writings following the deaths of her daughter and her husband. Forced to confront anew who she was as an individual, she sought answers by revisiting a variety of classical philosophical sources, from Plato to Confucius.

Qian's preface to his first book, *Written in the Margins of Life* (*Xie zai rensheng bian Shang* 寫在人生邊上, 1941), was prescient about what was to become his lifelong project of interpreting life through books, and of comparing written ideas. As the expression of an open-ended attitude toward reading and criticism, it is worth quoting in full:

Life, it's been said, is one big book.

Should life indeed be so, most of us writers can only claim to be book critics. Possessing the book critic's skill, we need not read more than a few pages to churn out a pile of commentary and wrap up a book review in no time.

Yet, another type of person exists in this world. These people believe that the purpose of reading a book is not actually to write a criticism or an introduction. Possessing the casualness and nonchalance of spare-time diversion seekers, they browse at their own leisurely pace. When an opinion strikes them, they jot down a few notes or write a question mark or exclamation mark in the blank margins of the book, akin to "eyebrow comments" in the top margins of old Chinese books or marginalia in foreign books. These piecemeal, spontaneous impressions do not constitute their verdict on the entire book, and having been written in passing they may contradict one another or go overboard. But the authors don't bother about this. After all, for them it's a diversion, unlike the book critic, who shoulders the weighty tasks of guiding the reader and chiding the author. Who has the ability and patience for such things?

If life is a big book, then the essays that follow can only be regarded as having been written in the margins of life. What a big book! It's hard to read all at once, and even if the margins have been written on, there's still plenty of blank space left.²⁰

20 Translation from Qian, *Humans, Beasts, and Ghosts*. For more on Qian's idea of life as a book, in relation to the notion of literary cosmopolitanism, see my introduction to that volume. Zhang Longxi notes that in a 1962 essay Qian reaffirmed his strong belief "that critical insights and brilliant ideas contained in short phrases and fragmented

Qian's reading notes from the 1930s through the 1990s, just now being published in facsimile (see epilogue), reveal that this image of the literary critic as a jotter in the margins was no mere pose. Entries in multiple languages jostle for space all over the page, new entries and emendations nudging in on the margins. This was how Qian spent much of his life.

It might thus be more accurate to say that Qian and Yang did not eschew lifestyle cosmopolitanism for literary cosmopolitanism, but rather that, for them, the latter subsumed the former. They lived for, and through, the languages and ideas to be found in the world of letters. We need not romanticize their reading and writing careers to see that books were central to their own lifestyle choices.

Wen 文, a Chinese term often used to signify literature, more broadly denotes patterns (*wen* 紋) of scripts, writing, ideas, cultures, even civilizations. Qian's career helps us to see the trope as signifying the fabric of broad reading, writing, and thinking. The criss-crossing languages, genres, and ideas in Qian's notebooks represent a fundamental belief in the comparability of ideas irrespective of origin. In this sense, *wen* supplies an alternative metaphor to literary cosmopolitanism, one not limited to literature-proper. Qian's focus on specific utterances and discrete ideas and images, emphasizing "a gram of worth" over "a ton of verbiage,"²¹ as he put it, is a reminder that theories about "cosmopolitanism" must prove their value through evidence.

Re-introducing Qian Zhongshu and Yang Jiang

This book's primary goal is to bring English-language scholarship on Qian Zhongshu and Yang Jiang's literary accomplishment up to date. (It deals only partially with their scholarship, for reasons discussed in the epilogue.) It is the first book in English to discuss Yang Jiang's literary oeuvre in its entirety, from her earliest published story to her most recent book, published at the age of 103, *After the Bath* (*Xizao zhi hou* 洗澡之後, 2014). It draws on Wu Xuezhao's 2008 oral history-cum-biography of Yang; Jesse Field's ground-breaking 2012 doctoral dissertation about Yang Jiang's prose writings and reception in contemporary China; shorter studies by overseas scholars such as Duncan Campbell,

expressions, undeveloped systematically as they are, may just be as valuable as tomes of systematic theoretical articulation." See Zhang Longxi, "Introduction," in Qian, *Patchwork*, 3.

21 Qian, *Patchwork*, 80.

Michael Friedrich, Margo Gewurtz, Liu Meizhu, Monika Motsch, and Zhang Longxi; and the opinions of a variety of contemporary Chinese readers.

Here one will find a complete overview of Yang's fiction (by Judith Amory), as well as the first dedicated studies in English of Qian Zhongshu's poetry (by Yugen Wang) and Yang Jiang's translations (by Carlos Rojas). Chapters by Amy Dooling and Ronald Egan re-interpret literary milestones of both writers in light of their context of authorship: namely, the comic stage plays Yang wrote during the Japanese occupation of Shanghai and *Guanzhui bian*, which Qian wrote during the Cultural Revolution. Jesse Field's chapter reveals how Yang Jiang's recent essays and memoirs have connected with new generations of Chinese readers since the deaths of her daughter and husband, bringing them into a "new intimate public." These chapters make important parts of Yang's and Qian's oeuvres newly accessible. (Alternating chapters on each author are arranged roughly chronologically.) They examine, for example, Yang's daring stylistic choices in translating *Don Quixote*; her experimentation with a variety of fictional genres, including romance, thrillers, and ghost stories; and the poetics that influenced much of Qian's career as a literary critic.

Several chapters address the theme of cosmopolitanism explicitly. Wendy Larson argues that two of Yang Jiang's most important creative works, *Six Chapters of Life in a Cadre School* and *Taking a Bath* "present the ideal of a detached, cosmopolitan, and universal creative intellectual who imagines himself or herself not so much part of political society as floating in . . . the 'autonomy of the aesthetic sphere.'" Cosmopolitanism, in this vision, is a strategy for resisting co-optation by Maoism (and, by implication, the consumerist culture that was emerging when Yang was writing in the 1980s) by remaining disengaged and focusing on the pleasures of solo intellectual work. Yet, as Larson points out, Yang's aloof mode accommodates rather than resists contemporary culture, and refuses to engage with its intellectual possibilities.

I argue in chapter seven that Qian and Yang shared an interest in exploring how intellectual agendas fare under the institutional demands of marriage and the academy. In those spheres, individuals are judged by criteria of authenticity, independence, and devotion. Intellectuals of cosmopolitan ambition (or pretension) find themselves challenged by institutional pressures of entrapment, occupation, and ideological constraint. Those who fail these tests end up losing their will, their love, or their sense of self and becoming a negative archetype of the domesticated intellectual. Fang Hongjian and Zhu Qianli are two novelistic examples. Yet we also find—notably in Yang's

autobiographical works—a positive archetype of the broad-minded person (or couple) who finds a degree of security, support, and intellectual freedom in the institutional fold.

Theodore Hutters' chapter uses Qian's novel *Fortress Besieged* as an entry point into questions of aesthetic value and intellectual orientation that continue to plague modern Chinese thinkers. Hutters focuses in particular on what he calls "the cosmopolitan imperative"—the ongoing search for "a genuinely 'Chinese voice' that represents the particulars of the Chinese situation, with all its internal tensions and complexities, while attaining universal aesthetic validity." He argues for the cultural significance of *Fortress Besieged* and points out that many of its conflicts center on matters of taste. Ultimately, the various aesthetic choices that Fang Hongjian, Tang Xiaofu, and other protagonists face prove unattractive to them, and they end up isolated. This isolation, Hutters argues, resonates with the novel's own status as a singular work of art. He calls *Fortress Besieged* a "self-consuming artifact" (Stanley Fish's term)—an aesthetically-oriented novel that undermines its own assumptions by refusing to define, once and for all, its grounds for judging value.

Qian's attitude toward his own literary cosmopolitanism, in that sense, was somewhat evasive.²² Yet as a literary critic his style was precise and textually-grounded. In one essay, for instance, his five-page discussion of whether writers make good critics includes verbatim quotes from Cao Pi, Cao Zhi, *Xunzi*, Zhang Jiucheng, Huang Kan, *The Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment*, *The Madhyamika Sutra*, Lu Zhaolin, Wang Shizhen, Tu Long, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Goethe, Grillparzer, H.C. Robinson, Sainte-Beuve, Alexander Pope, and Horace.²³ Nabokov likened the poet to the nucleus of "an instantaneous and transparent organism of events" and poetry to a type of writing that attains "cosmic synchronization."²⁴ Qian's work of "striking connections" (*datong* 打通) between Chinese and foreign letters and ideas was, if anything, even more ambitious, spanning not just one moment in time across space, but a literary cosmos that spans the ages.

The title of this book is not *China's Only Literary Cosmopolitans*. Qian Zhongshu and Yang Jiang are not the only Chinese writers who deserve to be

22 See my comments on the evasiveness of the Menippean satirist and Walkowitz's interpretation of evasion as a type of cosmopolitan literary style. Christopher G. Rea, "Introduction," in Qian, *Humans, Beasts, and Ghosts*, 1–19; Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style*, ch. 3: "Woolf's Evasion."

23 Qian, *Limited Views*, 61–66.

24 Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, 169. Nabokov credits the term to the philosopher Vivian Bloodmark.

recognized as cosmopolitan. Nor is “cosmopolitan,” here, a label of sunny (and trendy) approbation. Qian and Yang have not always been as open-minded toward immediate peers as they have toward the ideas of distant writers. If the couple drew “the circle of [their] affections and duties” close, their turn toward the world of letters may well have been partly in response to their distaste for their immediate environment. The studies here reappraise their literary accomplishments, the historical circumstances that shaped them, and current developments in scholarship on Qian and Yang that may yet pry further open the book of their literary careers.