

# FEATURES

## 'The Critic Eye 批眼'

**Christopher G. Rea**

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In 1928, the inaugural issue of *The China Critic* declared that it would be 'a representative publication independent alike of governmental control and popular prejudice'. Its voluntary collective of editor-contributors would deliver 'a fair presentation of all issues arising between China and the other Powers and whose sole purpose is to be just to all'.<sup>[1]</sup> In theory, then, the new publication would offer unbiased perspectives on issues of pressing importance to the Chinese nation and its people. In practice, the journal's contributors continually had to reconcile the institutional ideal of impartiality with other agendas, not least those of presenting their own views as 'Chinese' and as individuals. In how each managed this friction we often find the individual critical vision.



Fig.1 Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書 (Ch'ien Chung-shu) as a young man (Source: WikiCommons)

Seeing things—and allowing them to be seen—clearly and from a particular viewpoint is a commonplace critical imperative. This essay explores the metaphor of vision in the early theory, practice, and poetics of criticism of one of the most perceptive literary critics who first began publishing during the age of *The China Critic*: Qian Zhongshu (錢鍾書, 1910-1998).

*The China Critic* and its peers in China's English-language press had a significant influence on Qian, one of the most formidable polyglots to come of age in the Republican era (1912-1949). His contributions to English-language periodicals in that era, provide us with a unique perspective on the critical mandate of those institutions. Qian was over a ten years younger than most editors at *The China Critic*. The age difference can be detected both in the course of his career and in his critical values, not least in his contempt for modernist assumptions about progress and evolution that many of his elder peers held so dear.

Born on the eve of the Xinhai Revolution, Qian distinguished himself as a writer and literary critic despite having his writing career interrupted by several major political and military upheavals. By the time he had finished his formal education, China was at war with Japan. Looking back on his Oxford years (1935-1937), Qian remarked that he valued his B.Litt. thesis 'chiefly as a reminder of those years of peace... when the undertaking of such work was still

possible.[2] He nevertheless remained productive throughout the Sino-Japanese War, during which he wrote his first major works of fiction and criticism. These were published amidst a disruptive period of Civil War and hyperinflation in the late 1940s. He reached middle age just as the policies of the early People's Republic were eroding artistic, scholarly and critical autonomy. His response to the negation of cultural traditions during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) was to begin his most ambitious re-appraisal of China's literary heritage: a landmark work of literary criticism that pointedly written in a literary language that most of the young revolutionaries destroying 'the Four Olds' could not read.

The Republican period saw the beginning of major new cultural trends, but also the severe and repeated disruption of the same. (Qian once quipped that China's new literature was 'fecund in abortions'.[3]) Compared to writers who launched their careers in the 1910s or 1920s, however, Qian's own career as a creative writer particularly evanescent due to the 1949 Communist Revolution. The one essay collection, one short story collection, and one novel that appeared in the 1940s, combined with Qian's prodigious corpus of literary criticism, make one wonder about what he might have done had he been able to work in more favourable circumstances.

Qian's English writings, partially anthologized only recently, provide a new perspective on this complex writer. His literary biographers have appraised his early writing career based primarily on Chinese-language sources. These English writings both confirm and complicate their conclusions. Qian's English-language career, though brief, offers new insights about his development as a thinker and a stylist. It reveals one-time critical escapades as well as early articulations of major ideas. Yet these writings are not important to understanding the individual writer; they also reveal the roles of institutions and social networks in the intellectual field of pre-Mao China. Put another way, we can understand them not only biographically but also *institutionally*, as part of the history of the journals in which they were first published (including *The China Critic* and its peers) and *generationally*, as they indicate the difference a decade could make in the tenor of modern Chinese criticism.

Institutional and generational perspectives give the lie to the notion that Qian's critical expression was solely a product of his individual sensibility. Qian's contributions to *The China Critic* and *T'ien Hsia* in particular suggest that *The China Critic* did more than provide a platform for an ambitious young man to show off his talents; the journal also made a mark on Qian's literary and critical style by giving him opportunity to write according to the formal constraints of its columns and features. The sociology of the journal, which included among its contributors a number of cultural luminaries, also helped shape Qian's literary voice. We see these influences at work in Qian's writings about Lin Yutang (林語堂, 1895-1976), a leading contributor to *The China Critic* and one of the most influential prose stylists of the 1930s. Qian's perspective on the elder generation of *Critic* authors is a good starting point for exploring the poetics of his criticism, in particular his habit of discussing issues related to critical discernment using the metaphor of vision.

## **Ch'ien Chung-shu, 'The Little Critic'**

Younger people can probably be divided into two categories. In the first are those who are many years younger than us, whom we not only tolerate but even delight in and seek to protect. We can

flaunt our age at them and our relative seniority only adds to our dignity. In the second are those just slightly younger than us. These people invite only our loathing and envy. As they have already lost a sense of respect for their elders, our age fails to elicit their pity for the old and infirm. Not only can we not flaunt our age at them, but our advanced years actually work to our disadvantage and we strive to emulate their youth.... Any human relationship that touches on issues of age and generational seniority can validate this analysis.

Qian Zhongshu, 'Reading *Aesop's Fables*' 讀《伊索寓言》 (1941)[4]

Modern Chinese critics have long analysed cultural trends in terms of generational progression, measuring each new cohort of artists and critics against the one that preceded it. This influential paradigm, with its evolutionist overtones, spans literature, cinema, performing arts, and intellectual history.[5] In an article published in the 6 December 1928 issue of *The China Critic*, Lin Yutang introduced to 'Old China Hands' (who neglect to read the Chinese press) 'Lusin' (Lu Xun 魯迅, 1881-1936), whom he dubbed 'today China's profoundest critic and about the most popular writer with Young China.'[6] Lin was writing around a decade after the New Culture Movement, which saw Lu Xun's rise to national prominence. Lin remarks that Lu Xun has been an inspiration to literary-minded youth and, thanks to his leftist politics, come to be regarded as a 'leader of young rebels'. Lin's opinion of the young rebels, however, is less flattering. If they look up to Lu Xun it is in part because they their own generation lacks 'sufficient maturity and "character".' 'Lusin is somewhere near forty-five, while the average age of the budding generation is somewhere round twenty-five, very probably below that.'

Qian Zhongshu was eighteen when Lin (aged thirty-three) wrote these words. It would be five more years until Qian (aged twenty-three) would publish his first piece in *The China Critic*. Qian's earliest-known English works are one essay and two short 'book notes' that appeared in *Tsinghua Weekly* 清華週刊 in 1931 and 1932 when he was still an undergraduate in Beijing. After graduating from Tsinghua University in 1933 Qian moved to Shanghai where he taught English for two years at Kwang Hua University 光華大學. During his two years at Kwang Hua he contributed three reviews to Quentin Pan's (潘光旦, 1898-1967) book review column in *The China Critic*, and three essays on Chinese poetry, translation, and literary criticism.

The tone of the reviews was more confident and brash than his earlier *Tsinghua* book notes. Of an Oxford professor's unadventurous *Great European Novels and Novelists* he wrote: 'With an infallible sense of hitting the nail on its head, Prof. Pollard always emphasises the right persons and says the right things about them in the right words. Indeed, he is annoyingly orthodox and sound in his judgments: one almost wishes that he would be a little more idiosyncratic and wayward for the reviewer's benefit.' On The Earl of Listowel, PhD's perfunctory *A Critical Study of Modern Aesthetics* he observed: 'This book is one of those doctorate theses which their authors think worthy of publication.' Of Frank Baker's opinions in *Myth, Nature and Individual* he offered: 'almost all of them are provokingly dogmatic nonetheless for being expressed in a vague and drowsy language.'[7] In lines such as these Lin Yutang may well have discovered a 'young rebel' of a literary, rather than proletarian bent.

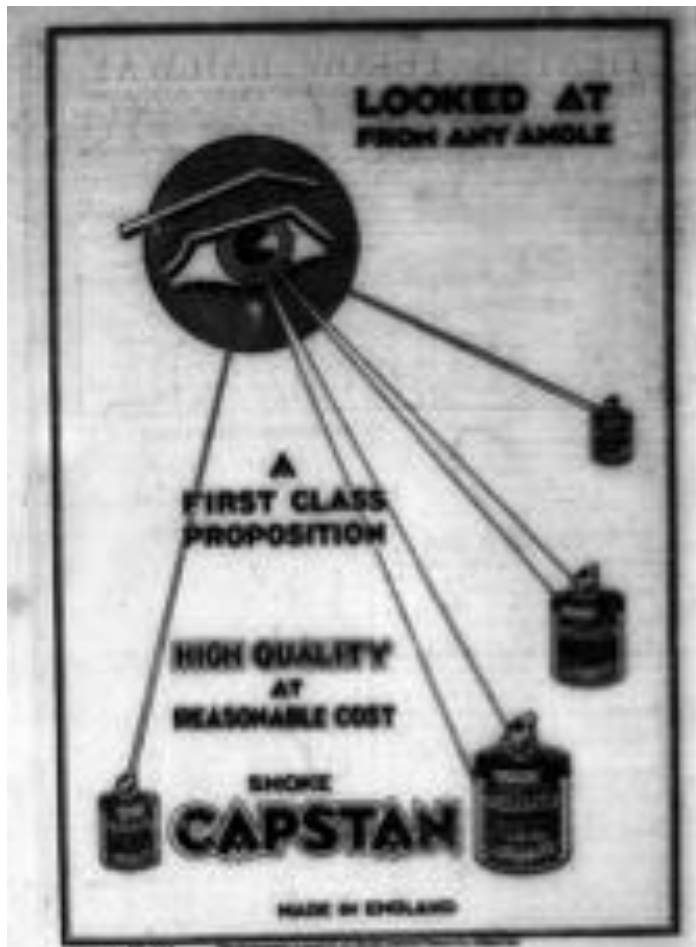


Fig.2 The discriminating consumer. Cigarette advertisement in *The China Critic* I.24 (8 Nov. 1928), 483

Qian's first feature essay for *The China Critic*, 'On "Old Chinese Poetry" ', is an original and insightful, if somewhat apologetic, analysis of two things 'we do *not* find in "Old" Chinese poetry': love-poetry and meditative or philosophical verse. Chinese poetry puts a high value on restraint and discipline, meaning that raw emotions must be 'lulled to a windless calm and diluted to a milky mildness before they are thought fit for expression.' A temperament of enjoyment rather than contemplation drives Chinese poets to emphasize 'sight over insight' in their treatment of Nature. While closing with an affirmation that Chinese poetry has virtues that make up for these 'deficiencies', this rather negative piece gives the reader little hint of just how much energy its author would later devote to enumerating the very virtues that he found so wanting here. The essay clearly made a good impression on the journal's editors, however, as it was one of four pieces advertised on the cover page of the 14 December 1933 (VI.50) issue. Three weeks later, in the 4 January 1934 issue, 'Chien Chung-shu (錢鍾書)' was credited as a 'Contributing Editor', a designation that would remain on *The Critic's* editorial page for two and a half years (until the 16 July 1936 issue). In that period Qian was one of ['the Critic gentlemen'](#).

In 1935, Qian also contributed one essay, 'On Old Chinese Drama', to the English-language magazine *T'ien Hsia Monthly* 天下月刊 (1935-1941) and wrote the introduction to a collection

of the Song-dynasty scholar-official Su Dongpo's 蘇東坡 prose-poems by a translator whose work he had earlier reviewed for *Tsinghua Weekly*. That same year he and Yang Jiang (楊絳, b.1911) married and moved to England. Shortly before Qian's graduation from Oxford in 1937, *T'ien Hsia* commissioned him to write a review of a poetry collection by one of his former teachers, about which I will have more to say below. Between 1930 and 1937 he also published Chinese-language book reviews, essays and poems in some eight different periodicals.[8]

Qian's thesis on 'China in the English Literature of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries' was published, following extensive revision, in two parts by the *Quarterly Bulletin of Chinese Bibliography* 圖書學刊 in 1940 and 1941; his next new writing in English was a short survey essay on 'Chinese Literature' for *The Chinese Year Book, 1944-1945* (1946), a government publication for which he served as a 'Consulting Editor'.[9] Between 1946 and 1948, he wrote critical notices for *Philobiblon* 書林季刊, a short-lived quarterly English-language [publication](#) that he edited for the National Library in Nanjing. While some of his English-language speeches were later published in anthologies and his works have been translated into multiple languages, from 1949 until his death in 1998 Qian appears not to have written for publication in English.



Fig.3 Lin Yutang 林語堂 with his pipe

One of Qian's fellow Contributing Editors at the *Critic* during the mid-1930s was Lin Yutang, a prolific bilingual writer who features frequently in this issue of *China Heritage Quarterly*, and a man whose outspoken views on a wide range of cultural and political issues brought him controversy as well as celebrity. Lin was willing to take daring stands on various issues at the risk of antagonizing his Chinese and English readers alike. While in China, his criticism of warlords, government policy, and the Japanese on several occasions resulted in not just censure but threats to his personal safety. In the United States during the war, his embittered criticisms of the West in *Between Tears and Laughter* (1943) alienated American readers unprepared for what amounted to a polemical turn away from the relaxed and philosophical tone of his earlier bestsellers *My Country and My People* (1935) and *The Importance of Living* (1937).

In 1934, Lin was near the peak of his fame in China, thanks not least to the popularity of his humour magazine, *The Analects Fortnightly* 論語半月刊 (1932-37, 1945-49). Through *The Analects* Lin built on the substantial popularity he already enjoyed as *The China Critic's* the witty and entertaining columnist 'The Little Critic'. His spirited promotion of *youmo* 幽默 (humor) as a humanistic ethos in *The Analects* and other periodicals sparked a complex and wide-ranging intellectual debate about culture, civilization, and authenticity that lasted through the thirties. His popularity in China was severely compromised, however, when he moved to the United States shortly before the outbreak of formal hostilities between China and Japan in 1937. As Edward Gunn notes, 'Lin Yutang was repeatedly ridiculed by critics left and right for departing for America and having nothing to say to his fellow countrymen in their time of crisis: proof of the emptiness of his assertions.' [10]



Fig.4 An illustration in the third edition of Qian Zhongshu's novel *Fortress Besieged*, published in March 1949

Qian Zhongshu was one of Lin's most persistent, if glancing, critics. In his writings from the mid-1930s through the 1940s he mentions or alludes to Lin frequently in negative terms, and just what Qian found so offensive about Lin is as interesting as the manner in which he expressed his disapproval. Although Qian's references to Lin appear mostly in works published after Lin left China, his first, which appeared in 1934, should set to rest any speculation that he was too timid to criticize the famous writer to his face.

In the 1 November 1934 issue of *The China Critic*, Ch'ien Chung-shu (as he then signed himself)

wrote as 'The Little Critic'. Lin Yutang had originally created this column for himself in 1930, and although other editor-contributors like T.K. Chuan (全增嘏, 1903-1984) occasionally filled in for him, by 1934 'The Little Critic' was already a famous part of the Lin Yutang persona.[11] In his one and only turn as 'The Little Critic' in an essay titled 'Apropos of "The Shanghai Man"', Qian emulated Lin Yutang's genial facetiousness while adding his own rhetorical flourishes. In invoking the muse of Shanghai—a [favourite](#) of *Critic* writers—Qian pokes fun at the city's reputation for modernity:

Just as the 'Peking Man' (that paleontological reconstruction) is the Chinaman of the past, so the 'Shanghai Man' is the Chinaman of the present, and—who knows?—might be that of the future too.[12]

That evolutionary vision immediately turns devolutionary as Qian plays on the longstanding stereotype that Shanghai's vulgarity rubs off on all sojourners in the city. He proceeds to hone in on a specific target:

It is no sheer accident that the campaign for Humor inaugurated by the *Analects Semi-monthly* should have started among Shanghai intellectuals. In an article in the *China Critic* several years ago, Dr. Y.T. Lin made a superfine analysis of the varieties of Chinese Humor. But this New Humor (of which Dr. Lin is himself the sponsor) is the Old Humor writ small: there is no Rabelaisian heartiness or Shakespearean broadness in it. It is full of subtle *arrière-pensées*, refined petulance, and above all a kind of nostalgia as evinced in the loving memory of the academic life in Europe, the rehabilitation of the culture of the Ming dynasty, etc. This shows that our New Humorists are really out of humor with their surroundings, and laugh probably because they are too civilised to weep.

Here, Qian chides Lin for being petty and trivial, a charge that Lin anticipated and winkingly incorporated into his self-belittling persona as a 'little' critic who writes 'essays about nothing'. Later, Qian would take Lin to task not just for being a failed humorist but for *promoting* humour, a vocation that he saw as being incompatible with the essential disinterestedness of humour. In 'On Laughter' 說笑, a Chinese-language essay first published 1939, for instance, he alleges that humour is impoverished by popularization, advertisement, and self-interest:

Instead of generating humorists, the promotion of humor has multiplied only the number of clowns playing with brush and ink. The clown's social status, of course, rises dramatically as he muddles his way from the theatrical stage to the literary stage under the banner of humor. Nevertheless, humor's quality deteriorates when the clown turns it into a bogus brand.... The clown makes us laugh not because he possesses a sense of humor, but because we ourselves do.[13]

By setting himself up as a humorist, Lin was claiming for his own persona a sensibility that, Qian alleged, could reside only in the audience. While Qian does not explain why he believes humour to be affective rather than expressive, the distinction removes the possibility that the 'clown' can offer any genuine feeling; he can only engender it in his audience. The humour-promoter, furthermore, is even more distanced from his product than is the clown, his forced



laugh symbolizing his very lack of humour:

Promoting humor as a slogan or a standard is a gesture bereft of humor. This is not humor but its earnest avocation, laughter pried from a solemn countenance. Again, we are reminded of the horse's whinny! It may indeed sound like laughter, but the horse's face is still without the trace of a smile, and is as long as that of a surviving friend at a memorial gathering, or of a master of the advanced sort at the lecture podium.

'Master of the advanced sort', or *dashi* 大師, alludes to the reputation Lin had built in *The Analects Fortnightly* as a 'Master of Humor' (*yomo dashi* 幽默大師). Qian's satire chains Lin to his lofty perch, the better to snipe at him. Several years later, in his short story, 'Cat' 貓 (1946), Qian broadens his critique to encompass Lin's self-positioning as a two-way interpreter of cultures East and West. The story is set in the home of a rich socialite in pre-war Beiping who convenes a salon of intellectuals, many of whom are strikingly reminiscent of cultural celebrities of the 1930s. In one extended portrait Qian combines his earlier theme of pettiness, or misapplied critical energy, with an elaboration of the theme of inauthenticity:

The man leaning back on the sofa with his legs crossed, smoking, was Yuan Youchun. As a child he had been taken abroad by foreign missionaries, and following those pedantic Westerners had infected him with the most vulgar airs of Westernization: that of churches and the YMCA. After returning to China he condescended to take an interest in the culture of his homeland and began making efforts in that direction. He believed that China's old civilization was best represented by playthings, petty clevernesses, and hack entertainment writers. In this sense, his enterprise was much like the Boxers' cause of 'Supporting the Qing and Eliminating the Western': he shelved high-minded Western religious theory and began to promote the style of intellectual hangers-on such as Chen Meigong and Wang Baigu. Reading his writing always felt like eating a substitute—margarine on bread or MSG in soup. It was even closer to the 'chop suey' served in overseas Chinese restaurants: only those who had never sampled authentic Chinese cuisine could be tricked into thinking it was a real taste of China. He hoodwinked Chinese know-nothings and hoodwinked foreigners—those who were merely know-nothings in Western suits. He had recently published several articles discussing the Chinese national psyche, in which he proposed that traits common to mankind were unique to the Chinese people.[14] His pipe was famous. He mentioned it frequently in his articles, saying that his inspiration derived entirely from smoking, the same way Li Bai's poems were all the product of his drinking. Some suggested that he must be smoking not pipe tobacco but opium, since reading his articles made one yawn, as with the onset of a habitual craving, or want to sleep, as if one had taken an anesthetic. It was suggested that his works be sold not in bookstores but in drugstores as sleeping pills, since they were more effective than Luminal and Ortol but had no side effects. All this, of course, was said by people who envied him, so naturally none of it could be taken seriously.[15]

The pipe confirms beyond a doubt that Yuan Youchun is a stand-in for Lin Yutang, who was photographed with this accessory and who wrote humorous essays about his love of smoking.[16] Another self-important public intellectual in this fictional pantheon is the political analyst Ma Yongzhong, who writes editorials for the pompously-titled newspaper *Correct Argument* 正論. If Yuan represents condescension and self-indulgence, Ma represents smug punditry: 'No matter what political change may have occurred, abroad or at home, he always

managed to demonstrate post-factum that it was precisely as he had expected or hinted.[17]

Qian's antipathy toward the elder generation of critics was thus based less on politics than on the style or aesthetics of their public self-presentation. Lin was not a man who 'struck connections' 打通 between Chinese and non-Chinese cultures (to borrow one of Qian's favourite critical expressions) but merely a cross-cultural impresario, what one Sinologist later called a 'professional Chinaman.' [18] Lin's celebrity compromised his critical acuity, and his readers suffered the consequences.

Qian defines Lin Yutang by his fictional readers again in his novel, *Fortress Besieged* 圍城 (serialized 1946-1947). Fang Hongjian is visiting the household of a Shanghai comprador, Mr. Zhang, to be evaluated as a prospective son-in-law, despite his utter lack of interest in the young lady in question. After dinner, Hongjian takes Miss Zhang's measure by what she reads:

He noticed a little bookcase next to the sofa and supposed it contained Miss Zhang's reading material. Besides a big stack of *West Wind* and *Reader's Digest* in the original, there was an unannotated, small-type edition of *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* in the original, the Bible, *Interior Decorating*, a reprint of *The Biography of Madame Curie*, *Teach Yourself Photography*, *My Country and My People*, and other immortal classics, as well as an anthology of a dozen screen plays, one of which, needless to say, was *Gone with the Wind*. [19]

Like the reliably soporific Yuan Youchun, Lin Yutang's *My Country and My People* is predictable for the wrong reasons—for appearing in the library of a vacuous but modish young woman. Through Hongjian's bemused eyes, we see the novel as an emblem of vulgar bourgeois taste, an 'instant classic' to use a contemporary expression, one wedged between high-culture ornament and mundane domesticity.

Why was Qian so intent on satirizing Lin? Was he jealous of Lin's popularity and stature, even if he disdained to say so directly? Are his jibes just sour grapes over Lin's commercial success as a writer in both Chinese and English? It is abundantly clear from the above comments that Qian genuinely considered Lin to be a facile writer who pandered to popular tastes and prejudices. This conclusion seems to be corroborated by the differences in their prose style. Whereas Lin's is personable and accessible, Qian's is aloof and often intentionally challenging, filled with archaisms and allusions. It is also true that Lin enjoyed a more stable market for his writings in the 1930s than Qian did in the 1940s, and this timing might have well been a cause for resentment, should Qian have felt himself to have been a man of talent who was 'born at the wrong time' 不得其時. (Qian would not gain fame and fortune until his novel *Fortress Besieged* was republished in the 1980s.)

In any event, the rivalry between Qian Zhongshu and Lin Yutang was apparently one-sided. The other editors of *The China Critic* certainly did not mind Qian's digs at Lin as 'The Little Critic' in November 1934 since they featured Qian's article on Yan Fu on the cover of the following issue.[20] Nor, to my knowledge, did Lin himself ever respond directly to Qian Zhongshu. Lin might well have not seen Qian's Chinese writings at the time, as he was already residing in the United States. 'The Little Critic' essay of 1934, however, is unlikely to have escaped his notice, a fact that makes remarks that appear only two weeks later in his own 'Little Critic' column on the

topic of 'Age in China' all the more intriguing:

If you refer to a youth of twenty-two as 'that young man' in his hearing, you have mortally wounded his pride. You should realize that 'young man' most probably has been writing essays in the literary supplement of the *Shun Pao*, advising what young men should not read. In other words, he has been giving grandfatherly advice to the world for the last three years, and now you have the audacity to refer to him by that contemptuous epithet of a 'young man.' [21]

Qian, then twenty-four, may have been just another voice in a chorus of humour-naysayers (which included much more prominent figures, such as Lu Xun), and Lin may simply have been broad-minded enough to humour this young man. Equally important, Qian's satire was of a piece with the *Critic's* institutional culture of good-natured jesting, one in which John C.H. Wu (吳經熊, Wu Ching-hsiung, 1899-1986) might be lampooned in 'Unedited Biographies' one week ('From feelings of vanity he is indeed not free.') only to show up a couple months later wielding the jocular pen of 'The Little Critic'. [22] For several years in the late 1930s Qian was a participant in this culture, and 'Apropos of "The Shanghai Man"' is an early—but not the last—indication that Qian's writing was influenced by *The China Critic* style.

## 'No lasciveté parfumée 香艷'

Lin was by no means the first writer Qian mocked; nor was he the object of Qian's most sustained and high-handed sarcasm. This latter, dubious, honour goes to Wu Mi (吳宓, 1894-1978), whom Qian eviscerated in a 1936 English-language review he wrote for *T'ien Hsia* while studying at Oxford. Ostensibly a defence of Wu Mi's *Collected Poems* 吳宓詩集 (1935) against the negative publicity it had received in the Chinese press, the piece is actually gleefully derisive of both the poetry and its author.

Wu Mi was a towering figure in the worlds of neo-classical Chinese poetry and comparative literature. Qian had studied under him in the early thirties while pursuing his undergraduate studies at Tsinghua University. Wu was of the same generation as many of the editors of *The China Critic* and had been classmates with some of them at Tsinghua Preparatory School before going abroad to study Western literature at the University of Virginia and comparative literature at Harvard under Irving Babbitt (1865-1933). During Qian's student days in Beijing he had exchanged poems with Wu and the latter had helped him place several essays in the literary supplement that he edited for the leading newspaper *L'Impartial* 大公報. Wu also achieved a measure of public notoriety for an extramarital affair that ended with his wife divorcing him and his lover, Mao Yanwen (毛彥文, 1898-1999), marrying someone else.

Qian alludes to Wu's intellectual pedigree early in his review-letter. He portrays Wu as 'really the only impenitent Chinese romantic in word (witness his poems) and in deed (witness the love affairs recorded in those poems)' fighting 'a doughty battle against the non-existent thing—Chinese romanticism' in an attempt to 'quell that blatant beast in himself' (425). [23] While making asides about China's 'self-conscious moderns who would have been among the first to lick the shoes of the Sage of Harvard' [Babbitt] if they had known how much he was respected across the literary-ideological spectrum, Qian highlights an ironical fact about Wu's writing

style:

Curiously enough, Mr. Wu Mi who pays such pious tributes to Babbitt's memory is the sort of character whom Babbitt would have been the first to denounce as a pernicious writer and renounce as a reprobate pupil. Mr. Wu Mi's pageant of a bleeding heart, his inclination to wash occasionally his dirty linen in public, his sense of being a *grand incompris*, his incessant self-flagellation, all these to which his book bears ample evidence, are simply so much grist to the mill of *Rousseau and Romanticism* [Babbitt's famous 1919 study]. (p.425)

Qian then takes Wu Mi to task for an egregious failure to practise in his poetry what he preaches in his criticism and scholarship, something that for Qian is symptomatic of an acute lack of self-awareness. 'No one talks more about synthesis or hierarchy of interests and values, and no one shows it less in actual life.' (p.425):

His [Wu's] soul stuff is still too much in the primordial lumpish state to form any moral distinctions, a clammy mud-cake not yet parched by the dry intellectual light, fissureless and rather featureless. (p.425)

One consequence of Wu's inability to make moral distinctions, Qian avers, is that 'every distinction is made into an opposition' (p.75), a logical fallacy produced by his heroic sense of self. A few kind words for the poet's style leaven a long litany of uncharitable remarks. Qian refers to Wu as a 'grand' 'scholar-gentleman' to whom members of the younger generation owe 'a great debt' and who 'alone of all critics of a decade and half ago seems to have a synoptical knowledge of European literary history'. He nevertheless subjects Wu to backhanded compliments, like these prefatory remarks to an appraisal of lines of verse that Qian considers to be Wu's best:

I will not dwell on his slipshod versification, his costive diction, his rugged and harsh texture and, a general shortwindedness of his poetic breath... but wish to call attention to those gnomic lines scattered throughout the book which, weighted with personality and bare of rhetoric, positively achieve the grand style of Tu Fu. (p.426)

In an expanded version of this critique, written shortly after the letter but apparently not published during Qian's lifetime,[24] Qian also ridicules some of Wu's contemporaries. Xu Zhimo (徐志摩, 1897-1931), the celebrated romantic poet educated at Columbia and Cambridge who died in a plane crash at the height of his fame was a writer whom Qian judged to be 'for all his aestheticism and artiness

still a baby who can enjoy innocently the pleasures of life; his fits of unhappiness are those of a spoiled child who wails either because he has not got enough of [*sic*] sweets to eat or because he has eaten more than is good for his stomach.[25]

Wu benefits little from the comparison with Xu, however, as his own 'sophistication' serves mostly to make him an object of camp fascination and imbue his poetry with 'an enthralling interest quite independent of its literary merit'. Qian claims to be less interested in censuring Wu Mi for moral misconduct, as might other critics who harbour old-fashioned notions of sexual

propriety, than in putting him on the couch to probe the psychology of his poetic self-image. This focus necessarily colours Qian's literary appraisal that Wu Mi has been an innovator of Chinese verse in his sounding a note of 'high seriousness' ('no flippant banter, no lecherous rakishness, in a word, no *lasciveté parfumée*', or 香艷) and, at times, 'triumphed over the limitations of his medium' to transform the 'pretty-pretty' into the 'sublime'. (p.426)

The most stunning revelation in this case of outlandish disrespect for a former teacher is that Qian reportedly mailed the manuscript to Wu Mi and gave him the option either to mail it back, or to deliver it to Wen Yüan-ning (溫源寧, 1899-1984), the editor-in-chief of *T'ien Hsia*, 'without one word changed'. [26]

Wen, who features prominently in this issue of *China Heritage Quarterly*, was a prominent figure in Chinese academia, having been a professor and administrator at several leading universities, including having served as dean of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at Peking National University. He was also one of Qian's former teachers at Tsinghua and later his colleague at Kwang Hua University, where both started teaching in 1933. Wen was a contributing editor of *The China Critic* during the 1930s; in 1935 he became editor of *T'ien Hsia*, which came to supplant *The China Critic* as the main English-language periodical on Chinese literature and culture in 1938, when the latter closed many of its culture columns to devote instead much of its content to developments related to the war with Japanese. For its part, *T'ien Hsia* [explicitly excluded](#) 'current political controversies' from its pages, but certainly not cultural controversies.



Fig.5 Wu Mi 吳宓, a poet, literary critic, and Qian Zhongshu's professor at Tsinghua University in the 1930s

In his diary entry for 30 March 1937, Wu Mi records his anguished reaction to receiving Qian's letter and manuscript. Referring to himself in the third person (as he does throughout this diary written in literary Chinese), he notes that Wen Yüan-ning had earlier made similar pejorative comments about his romanticism in *The China Critic*. He affirms that his encounter with Babbitt was 'the most fortuitous of my life' 吾生最幸之遭遇, and laments his misfortune at having been so grievously misunderstood. With his romantic self-image unshaken by Qian's words, Wu likens the mockery to which he has been subjected to that which Jesus anticipated would test the resolve of his disciples.

'Super-annuated coquette' (helpfully glossed by Wu Xuezhao as 徐娘半老), the one turn of phrase Wu cites as an example of Qian's satire, encapsulates the idea that Wu has let himself be led astray by an unworthy and romantically disingenuous woman (Mao Yanwen was in her late thirties when Wu Mi was pursuing her). Wu Mi recognizes that he is being jeered at and despised for being a 'man of letters in dissolute middle age' 中年無行之文士. Of the disingenuousness of his former student, he says: 'Mi is particularly pained and infuriated that he [Qian] claims to praise Mi's good points' 自稱讚揚宓之優點，使宓尤深痛憤. Far from being chided by Qian's critique, Wu registers his disappointment with the same grandiose self-pity that Qian had mocked:

Alas! For loving Yan [Mao Yanwen], Mi gave his whole heart and suffered so much, only to suffer damage to both his reputation and his person. He has enjoyed nothing, and now he has to endure such ridicule. Who in this world can understand me but God?

嗚呼，宓為愛彥，費盡心力，受盡痛苦，結果名實兩傷，不但毫無享受，而至今猶為人譏詆若此。除上帝外，世人孰能知我？



Fig.6 Mao Yanwen 毛彥文, Wu Mi's unrequited love

Wu Mi's response confirms that Qian's indictment of his 'sense of being a *grand incompris*' was right on the mark. It also testifies to the resilience of Wu's character when confronted with such withering criticism—even if his character remains unabashedly confessional and romantic. The charge of self-indulgence has since been levelled at Qian himself for the pedantry of his allusions and the intolerant tenor of his satire. Both Wu and Qian, then, are writers who have been upbraided not for hypocrisy but for being true to their own literary tastes.

Not surprisingly, Qian's 1936 review led to a prolonged rift between the Wu and Qian families that would only partially be healed after Wu Mi's death in 1978.[27] Yet Qian's critique was far from unique. Wen Yüan-ning's earlier profile of Wu Mi, which Wu alludes to in his response to Qian's letter, had appeared in a series of Unedited Biographies (later retitled Intimate Portraits) of famous contemporary Chinese figures published in *The China Critic* in 1934. This column, which Wen edited, has been almost completely neglected by historians, but it should be regarded, along with *The Little Critic*, as constituting one of the most significant series of humorous English-language essays to appear in Republican China. The generally irreverent tone of Unedited Biographies is evident from the concluding paragraph of Wen's portrait of S.G. Cheng (程錫庚, 1893-1939), the Special Commissioner for Foreign Affairs in North China:

For a Chinese, Mr. Cheng is rather tall. He is inclined to be fat. He walks slowly, but jerkily, with his nose up in the air. His face tends to be on the heavy side. The eyes are clever eyes: they have as much sharpness in them as depth. There is a touch of grey in the hair. And in the suave manner and suave voice, there is more than a suspicion of condescension and well-bred contempt towards the rest of Adam's progeny. The upward direction of the indentures where the lips meet

is expressive of a habit of caustic speech and derision. Perhaps, the most comprehensive formula to describe the sort of man Mr. Cheng is would be to say that he is a Chinese *Prussian* gentleman![28]

The parallels between Wen's 1934 'unedited biography' of Wu Mi, reprinted [here](#), and Qian's 1937 essay are striking. Wen characterizes Wu as being a man 'invariably misunderstood by both friends and foes', 'over-sensitive as regards to the outside world's opinions' about him, painfully earnest, 'Draconically severe on himself', old beyond his years, and suffering from a 'complete misunderstanding from himself', which leads him to betray the tenets of Babbittian humanism in his emotive verse.[29] Qian's review revisits all of these points, and even echoes another of Wen's 'unedited biographies' that dubs Xu Zhimo 'a child'.[30] Wen's profile of Wu Mi was one of seventeen sketches collected in *Imperfect Understanding* (1935), a book that Qian reviewed approvingly for Lin Yutang's magazine *This Human World* 人間世[31] and which he mentions by name in his *T'ien Hsia* review.

Beyond its biographical interest,[32] Qian's critique of Wu Mi raises broader questions of critical and literary style. For which generations of Chinese writers was impertinence as much (or more) a critical virtue as a social vice? The earlier literary revolutionaries of the May Fourth era had defined their various positions largely in terms of hostility to China's slavish deference to the cultural icons of the past. Lin Yutang, who belonged to a later generation, set himself up as an underdog ready to take on exalted cultural icons like Confucius (a play about whom once got him sued by the Sage's descendants).[33] It is also clear that *The China Critic* cultivated a risible ethos that ranged far beyond bourgeois gentility. The humour of 'Intimate Portraits', like that of 'The Little Critic' and the jokes about current affairs that regularly graced the front editorial page, could offend. Qian was clearly influenced by this milieu, but he nevertheless gravitated towards distinct motifs in elaborating his critical vision.

## Eying the Critics

All seems infected that the infected spy,  
As all looks yellow to the jaundiced eye.

— Alexander Pope, *Essay on Criticism* (1709)

Vision is a recurring motif in Qian Zhongshu's criticism on criticism. It occurs in writings from throughout his career—from the English essays he wrote in his twenties to his magnum opus of literary criticism, *Limited Views* 管錐編 (1979-1980), which he completed in his late sixties, as well as in speeches he made thereafter. This critical theme first became pronounced in his Chinese-language essays and short fiction from the 1930s and 1940s, which I focus on here.

One example is the description of Fu Juqing, a rival of Yuan Youchun (the stand-in for Lin Yutang) in the Beiping literary salon of Qian's story 'Cat'. Fu is a critic whose views are so lofty that 'they could only be appreciated by those who didn't mind getting a stiff neck from looking up', as if at Michelangelo's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel. This style, we are told, originated in a literary discovery he made at Oxford that chimed with his ocular defects:



After reading a passage about 'the critic eye' [批眼] in college, Fu Juqing 'saw to it that everything he did was consistent with the [slant-eyed] appearance of his eyes. Even the tone of his articles seemed to sneer between the lines.'[34]

Vision, in this physiognomic satire, determines critical style. In his typically allusive fashion, Qian presumably expects his readers to think of these lines from *The Dunciad*:

The *critic Eye*, that microscope of Wit,  
Sees hairs and pores, examines bit by bit:  
How parts relate to parts, or they to whole,  
The body's harmony, the beaming soul,  
Are things which Kuster, Burman, Wasse shall see,  
When Man's whole frame is obvious to a *Flea*.

Qian's readers would immediately recognize that his allusion to 'the critic Eye' is not merely an homage to a canonical Western wit but also a pun that renders 'the critic Eye' even more playfully derisive, as it suggests that the orifice through which Fu Juqing sees the world is not the critic eye (*pīyǎn* 批眼) but the anus (*piyǎn* 屁眼).

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Fig.7 The contents page of Wen Yüan-ning's 溫源寧 book *Imperfect Understanding* (1935), which contains satiric portraits of prominent Chinese of the day

The critic-as-insect, meanwhile, makes an appearance in Qian's 1939 essay 'Explaining Literary Blindness' 釋文盲. There he likens the linguist to a fly 'flying from one pinch of garbage to another', [35] content with a myopic view of literature concerned with philology and etymology at the expense of a more comprehensive understanding. If Pope's insect-critic is a parasite on the living literary corpus, Qian's fly-critic feasts instead on the 'meaty bones' of the dead. He treats the shortcomings of airborne criticism differently in a brief speech on classical literary scholarship in modern China made in the 1980s: 'To overview is necessarily to overlook; the manifold delightful sights that greet a traveller on foot are invisible to the remote air-borne eye.' [36]

Elsewhere, Qian writes of the jaundiced eye as being intrinsic to the human condition. In the essay 'A Prejudice' 一個偏見, he advances a proposition (in characteristically tongue-in-cheek fashion) that the honest critic makes no pretense of objectivity wearing instead his prejudice on

his sleeve. The wise critic understands that:

The world is too vast. We face it squarely with our eyes wide open, but our field of vision is still pitifully narrow. When a dog has its eyes fixed on a meaty bone, does it ever notice the other dog at its side? What we commonly refer to as prejudice is best likened to using one eye to take aim at a target. (62)

Habit and practice only exacerbate the fundamental disjunction between the unlimited nature of the universe and the limited nature of human life and perception. It is a theme as old as the *Zhuangzi* 莊子:

吾生也有涯，而知也無涯，以有涯隨無涯，殆已。

Human life has limits, but knowledge has none.

To chase what is limitless with that which is limited is perilous.[37]

Further on in 'A Prejudice', Qian pursues his theme of the impossibility of objective criticism by employing an acoustic metaphor. He characterizes the critic as an individual who tries in vain to tune out the world's clamour so as to think clearly. Rather than reaffirm Zhuangzi's dispiriting truism in new terms, however, Qian argues elsewhere that partiality, or perspective, can be an asset to the critic. Detachment is even hinted at in the title of Qian Zhongshu's 1939 series of 'cold room jottings' 冷屋隨筆 in which both 'Explaining Literary Blindness' and 'A Prejudice' first appeared. The four-part series was carried in *Criticism Today* 今日評論 while Qian was teaching at the wartime campus of Tsinghua in Kunming. Qian explained that 'cold room' referred to his frigid provincial accommodation, but it also suggests the perspective of 'the cold-eyed spectator' 冷眼旁觀.[38]

Two years later, these two essays were collected in his *Written on the Margins of Life* 寫在人生邊上 (1941). In the preface to this book, Qian says his critical vantage point is not the *ya* 涯, or limits, of life (*sheng* 生), but rather its *bian* 邊, or margins. Indeed, marginality is one of the most conspicuous motifs in Qian's literary and critical corpus, as I have noted elsewhere;[39] it is also a key to understanding one of the tactics used by modern Chinese writers to survive in an era of war and revolution. Self-marginalization echoes the age-old trope of the literatus of conscience who absents himself from the court of a tyrannical or usurping sovereign. But unlike the legendary Boyi 伯夷 and Shuqi 叔齊, who banished themselves to the wilds, or Qian's contemporary Wang Meng 王蒙 (b. 1934), who escaped some of the worst effects of the Cultural Revolution as he was in Xinjiang from 1963, any autonomy that Qian managed to enjoy, following his return from the provinces in 1941, was more psychological than physical. For the duration of the war he resided in occupied Shanghai, where his wife, Yang Jiang, did much to support the family financially while he wrote books. For most of the Mao period he lived in the capital of Beijing, the epicentre of every national political campaign, where he was recruited into an elite group of intellectuals working on editing and translating Mao's works. Qian both suffered and benefitted from the socialist cultural bureaucracy of Mao's China, and it would be misleading to conclude that his professed critical ideals reflect the reality of his own

circumstances.

During his literary career Qian spoke about the notion of critical vision in a variety of ways. In his later years he once even translated the English word 'perspective' as *yanli* 眼力, literally 'optical power', implying thereby that penetrating vision derives precisely from a lack of neutrality. In the speech in which he used this expression, one to Japanese scholars of Chinese literature, he remarked that their perspective would produce insights because: 'Those watching from the sidelines see clearly; those in the game are muddled' 旁觀著清，當局者迷, an expression originating in the game of chess that, he noted, resonates with the English saying, 'A spectator sees more of the game.'<sup>[40]</sup>

To observe clearly from the sidelines is thus a slightly different enterprise from striving to report and opine fairly, a claim often made in the editorials of *The China Critic*. Personal idiosyncrasy and bias had its place, but that place was to some extent compartmentalized in the column, set off from the featured reports and editorials that sought to influence public opinion and policy decisions. Qian's visual motif, in this sense, bears some resemblance to the critical space that Lin Yutang established for himself with 'The Little Critic'. As Qian Suoqiao notes in his [article](#) for this issue of *China Heritage Quarterly*: 'it is precisely through the personal I/eye that "The Little Critic" presented his panoramic view of Chinese life in transition to modernity.'

The competition and conflict between personal, institutional, and national agendas among writers for *The China Critic* persisted until the magazine's demise. Woo Kyatang (吳嘉棠, 1913-1983), writing during the journal's brief revival in 1945, called for a renewal of the Chinese media by affirming that: 'We must have in the news columns accurate and unbiased reporting, and in the editorial columns fair and wise leadership.'<sup>[41]</sup> Inveighing against unscrupulous 'so-called newspapermen' who go into the profession 'with the same motive and outlook as going into the peanut-vending business—with profit and materials gains as the only objective' Woo allows that 'as much as I dislike to see newspapers which are tied to government apron strings, I would rather have that in China than irresponsible and unscrupulous men in editorial chairs who would stir up hatred and dissent in the guise of freedom of speech.' Conditions had clearly deteriorated from the heady days of 1928.

Woo expresses, in so many words, the perpetual tug between the professional ideal of individual critical autonomy, the imperative of national progress, and the compromises demanded by a disheartening reality. To the historian, *The China Critic* represents a treasure trove of information about the issues that concerned Anglophone Chinese intellectuals during the Nanjing decade, many of which are alive in today's China. Yet even for its dated topics and long-passed personal rivalries, *The Critic* frequently offers something else that still makes it readable—literary panache. To again borrow words from an essay that Qian Zhongshu wrote for *The Critic*, one on the translator Yan Fu 嚴復 (1854-1921): 'As a thinker, he is rapidly becoming the shadow of a shade. But to a connoisseur of style, his [writings] remain a source of delight and interest.'<sup>[42]</sup>

## Notes:

[1] [Anonymous], 'Foreword,' *The China Critic* I.1 (31 May 1928), 1. I am grateful to William Sima for providing the copies of *The China Critic* that made this research possible, and to Geremie Barmé for his comments on this essay.

[2] C.C.S. 'Prefatory Note', *China in the English Literature of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, in Qian Zhongshu, *A Collection of Qian Zhongshu's English Essays*, Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2005, p.82, hereafter cited as '*English Essays*'.

Throughout this anthology, the Chinese title of *The China Critic* is erroneously given as 中國評論家, and, on page 12, the English title as *The Chinese Critic*. On the anthology's other editorial shortcomings, see Fan Xulun 範旭倫, 'Editorial Mistakes in *A Collection of Qian Zhongshu's English Essays*' 《錢鍾書英文文集》的編輯錯誤, online at: [http://www.gmw.cn/02blqs/2006-01/07/content\\_391422.htm](http://www.gmw.cn/02blqs/2006-01/07/content_391422.htm) (accessed 26 May 2012).

[3] Ch'ien Chung-shu 錢鍾書, 'Chapter 7: Chinese Literature', *The Chinese Year Book (1944-1945)*, Tsao Wen-yan 曹文彥, general editor, Shanghai: Chinese Year Book Publishing Company, 1946, p.127.

[4] Christopher G. Rea, translated in Qian Zhongshu, *Humans, Beasts, and Ghosts: Stories and Essays*, Christopher G. Rea, ed., New York: Columbia University Press, 2011, p.54.

[5] On evolutionist thought in modern China, see Andrew F. Jones, *Developmental Fairy Tales: Evolutionary Thinking and Modern Chinese Culture*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011.

[6] In this article Lin uses an earlier *nom de plume*. Lin Yutang 林玉堂, 'Lusin', *The China Critic* I.28 (6 December 1928): 547-548.

[7] These reviews appear in *The China Critic* VI.20 (18 May 1933): 505; VII.14 (5 April 1934): 329-330; and, 1934 VII.6 (8 February 1934): 138.

[8] These total over forty contributions (some including multiple poems), published in 清華週刊, 大公報, 新月月刊, 光華大學半月刊, 國風半月刊 (later 國風月刊), 學文月刊, 人間世, 文學雜誌. Most of these are listed in 《錢鍾書研究》, 北京: 文化藝術出版社, 第一輯 (1989), pp.306-307; and, 第二輯 (1990), pp.347-348.

[9] Four other editors appear below Qian's name. Qian's profession is listed as 'Professor of English Language and Literature in the National Tsinghua University, Editor in the National Central Library'. See Tsao, *The Chinese Year Book*, copyright page, 115.

[10] Edward M. Gunn, *Rewriting Chinese: Style and Innovation in Twentieth-Century Chinese Prose*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991, p.119.

[11] Two volumes of Lin's 'The Little Critic' essays were published in Shanghai the following

year. Lin Yutang, *The Little Critic: Essays, Satires and Sketches on China: First Series: 1930-1932; Second Series: 1932-1935* (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1935). An advertisement in the index to *The China Critic* VII (1 January-31 December 1934) describes 'The Little Critic' as offering 'criticism on various interesting topics in the lighter vein, that will make the reader both smile and think.' The number of contributing columnists to 'The Little Critic' expanded significantly in 1936 after Lin Yutang moved to the United States to include: Emily Hahn, Lim Sian-tek, Yao Hsin-nung, Lin Hoching, Edward Y.K. Kwong, Tao-tswen Wu, Sung I-chung (signed 'I.C.S.') and the pseudonymous The Little Camel and Little Loshat.

[12] Ch'ien Chung-shu, 'The Little Critic: Apropos of "The Shanghai Man"', *The China Critic* VII.44 (1 November 1934), 1076-1077. 'Peking Man' reappears in Qian's story 'Cat' 貓, discussed below.

[13] This and the following passage are quoted from: Qian Zhongshu, 'On Laughter', Christopher G. Rea, translated in Qian, *Humans, Beasts, and Ghosts*, pp.48-49.

[14] The 1946 edition has an additional sentence here: 'Thanks to clever advertising, these essays were said to be like the eight-legged essays Kuang Chaoren wrote in *The Scholars*: everyone was reading them in the Western world.' In chapter 19 of *The Scholars* 儒林外史, Kuang Chaoren 匡超人 takes a civil service examination on behalf of an imbecile candidate, so Qian seems to be suggesting that Yuan Youchun/Lin Yutang was pulling a similar sleight of hand as a cultural interpreter.

[15] Qian Zhongshu, 'Cat', Yiran Mao, translated in Qian, *Humans, Beasts, and Ghosts*, pp.121, 210.

[16] On smoking in Lin Yutang's writing, see Charles A. Laughlin, *The Literature of Leisure and Chinese Modernity*, Honolulu: The University of Hawai'i Press, 2008, chapter 4.

[17] Qian, *Humans, Beasts, and Ghosts*, 119.

[18] An expression attributed to W.J.F. Jenner. See Geremie R. Barmé, *An Artistic Exile: A Life of Feng Zikai (1898-1975)*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002, p.2, 376n2.

[19] Ch'ien Chung-shu, *Fortress Besieged*, translated by Jeanne Kelly and Nathan K. Mao, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979, pp.45-46.

[20] Ch'ien Chung-shu, 'A Chapter in the History of Chinese Translation', *The China Critic* VII.45 (8 November 1934), cover and pp.1095-1097.

[21] Lin Yutang, 'The Little Critic: Age in China', *The China Critic* VII.46 (15 November 1934): 1122.

[22] Ch'ien Chung-shu, 'To the Editor-in-Chief of *T'ien Hsia*', *T'ien Hsia Monthly* 4.4 (April 1937): 424-427. In-text pagination is from this edition.

[23] See [Anonymous], 'Unedited Biographies: John C.H. Wu (吳經熊)', *The China Critic* VII.7 (15 February 1934); John C.H. Wu, 'The Little Critic: Titbits of Experience', *The China Critic* VII.16 (19 April 1934): 375.

[24] See note by Yang Jiang on the first page of Qian Zhongshu, 'A Note on Mr. Wu Mi and His Poetry' (1937), in Qian, *English Essays*, pp.72-81.

[25] Qian, *English Essays*, p.76.

[26] Quotations here and below are based on: Wu Mi 吳宓, *Diary of Wu Mi* 吳宓日記, vol.6: 1936-1938m edited by Wu Xuezhao 吳學昭, Beijing: Sanlian Shudian, 1998, pp.96-98. Note that this edition of Wu Mi's diary is a newly type-set version that has been 'cleaned up' 整理 by his daughter, rather than a facsimile of the original manuscript, so the text has been subject to editorial alteration. In another letter dated 11 April 1937, Wu Mi notes that he has received word of the letter's publication in *T'ien Hsia* from Wen Yuan-ning, along with the rejection of Qian's expanded version of the review, which Wu mailed back to Qian in England. See Wu, *Wu Mi riji*, p.107.

[27] Wu's daughter, Wu Xuezhao 吳學昭, later became close to Yang Jiang, serving as her de facto literary agent and the author of Yang's authorized biography, *Listening to Yang Jiang Speak About the Past* 聽楊絳談往事, Beijing: Sanlian Chubanshe, 2008.

[28] Wen Yüan-ning, 'Intimate Portraits: Mr. S.G. Cheng (程錫庚)', *The China Critic* VII.52 (27 December 1934): 1263-1264.

[29] Wen Yüan-ning, 'Unedited Biographies: Mr. Wu Mi (吳宓), A Scholar And A Gentleman', *The China Critic* VII.4 (25 January 1934): 86.

[30] [Wen Yüan-ning], 'Unedited Biographies: Hsu Tse-mo (徐志摩), A Child', *The China Critic* VII.11 (15 March 1934): 256.

[31] Yüan-ning Wen, *Imperfect Understanding*, Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1935. The book has been translated into Chinese twice under the titles 《一知半解及其他》([杜]南星譯；岳麓書社，1988) and 《不夠知己》(江楓譯；岳麓書社，2004). The former includes translations of additional essays from the Unedited Biographies and Intimate Portraits columns that were not collected in *Imperfect Understanding*. Qian Zhongshu's review of the original English book appears as 錢鍾書《不夠知己》，《人間世》第29期（1935年6月5日）；republished in 錢鍾書《寫在人生邊上，人生邊上的邊上，石語》（系列：錢鍾書集），北京：三聯書店，2004, pp.335-337. Qian also acknowledges Wen Yüan-ning's influence on his criticism in a note accompanying his 1935 *T'ien Hsia* essay, 'Tragedy in Old Chinese Drama'. See Qian, *English Essays*, p.65.

[32] Notably, Qian was offered a full professorship at Tsinghua University upon his return from England in 1938—a special appointment that skipped over the usual academic hierarchy to put

him on par with Wu Mi. See Yang Jiang, 'On Qian Zhongshu and *Fortress Besieged*', Jesse Field, trans., *Renditions* 76 (Autumn 2011): 70.

[33] On the 'uproar' surrounding the staging of Lin's play *Confucius Saw Nancy* 子見南子 in Confucius' hometown, Qufu, see Diran John Sohigian, 'Confucius and the Lady in Question: Power Politics, Cultural Production and the Performance of *Confucius Saw Nancy* in China in 1929', *Twentieth-Century China* 36.1 (January 2011): 23-43. Lin's modified translation of his own play appears in Lin Yutang, *Confucius Saw Nancy and Essays About Nothing*, Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1937, pp.1-46.

[34] Yiran Mao, translated in Qian, *Humans, Beasts, and Ghosts*, p.125.

[35] Christopher G. Rea, translated in *ibid.*, p.67.

[36] Qian Zhongshu, 'Classical Literary Scholarship in Modern China' (ca.1980s), in Qian, *English Essays*, p.398.

[37] Thanks to Wang Yugen for bringing this passage to my attention.

[38] The latter interpretation is Zhang Wenjiang's 張文江, cited in Christopher G. Rea, 'Introduction', in Qian, *Humans, Beasts, and Ghosts*, pp.7 & 18n15.

[39] See my introduction to Qian, *Humans, Beasts, and Ghosts*, esp. pp.7-8. The trope of margins also echoes the call for 'literary autonomy' 文學的'自主論' that Qian made in his review of a book by Zhou Zuoren in 1932. See Theodore Hutters, *Qian Zhongshu*, Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1983, p.13.

[40] Qian reverses the typical order of the common Chinese saying 當局者迷，旁觀者清， which itself is adapted from the Song-dynasty work, *Old History of the Tang Dynasty* 《舊唐書•元行沖傳》：當局稱迷，傍觀見審. See Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書《粉碎'四人幫'以後中國的文學情況》(The State of Literature in China after the Smashing of the 'Gang of Four'), in 《寫在人生邊上，人生邊上的邊上，石語》，p.190. Qian notes in this précis of a lecture he delivered in Japan in January 1980 that the title was not of his choosing.

[41] This and the following quotations from Woo Kyatang 吳嘉棠, 'A New Era for the Press in China', *The China Critic* XXXII.3 (6 September 1945): 19.

[42] Ch'ien Chung-shu, 'A Chapter in the History of Chinese Translation', *The China Critic* VII.45 (8 November 1934): 1095.

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