

## CHAPTER 2

# “LITERATURE” IN ENGLISH AND CHINESE: CATEGORIES AND THEIR UNDERLYING CONCEPTS

## 2.1 The Ambiguity of “Literature” in English, and Its Modern Meaning

### 2.1.1 The History of “Literature”

Concise and dictionary-like though it is, Raymond Williams’s entry on “literature” in *Keywords* provides a basic model for considering the breadth and multilayered character of the word’s meaning, for following the course of its history through related and opposite terms, and for reflecting on the evolution of the concept. With all due respect to an honored predecessor, I will summarize what he wrote.<sup>1</sup>

“Literature” means wide reading, and in the seventeenth century it came to refer to the condition achieved by wide reading, that is to say, broad knowledge. This meaning, which corresponds roughly to that of “literacy” (the ability to read and write) in modern times, reflects the scope of education as it was then conceived, and has to do particularly with the ability to read and write Greek and Latin.

This general meaning of “higher learning,” closely associated as it is with the idea of printed books, gives rise to a distinction in this domain between higher-class and lower-class works. As printing developed, a market for books emerged, and professional writers appeared, there arose among persons of learning a tendency to favor especially “writers with an imaginative, polished style.” This shift occurred roughly in the mid-eighteenth century. However, at this time “literature” still meant the sum total of all written works. The idea was limited to no particular category of writing. This is clear from a statement attributed by Hazlitt to a certain Ayrton: “I suppose the first two persons you would choose to see would be the two greatest names in English literature, Sir Isaac Newton and Mr Locke.”

The expression “English literature,” as it occurs in this passage, is derived from the notion of *Nationalliteratur*; current in German from the 1770s on, and soon influential in France and Italy as well. This idea that each people has its own literature came to play a major role in society, in culture, and probably even in the political realm.

In addition, as the expressions “creative literature” and “imaginative literature” suggest, there

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<sup>1</sup> Having already presented in the Introduction his discussion of the declining value now attributed to literature, and in Chapter 1 his opening passage on the difficulty of “literature,” I will not repeat these passages here.

arose the tendency to accord certain classes of works special status as “literature.” In particular, English came to be taught in universities above all through poetry, fiction, and drama; while philosophy, essays, or history, however “well written,” were distinguished from “literature” as being too “general” or too “discursive.” “Literary criticism” devoted its attention to the way in which “creative” or “imaginative” works were written and relegated “ideas,” “history,” or “general subject-matter” in literature to a secondary position. At the same time, most poetry, fiction, and drama came to be seen as standing outside “literature.” Once looked down on from the standpoint of “higher learning,” they were relegated in the end to almost the same position as before. It was considered neither necessary nor important to call such works “literary.” Thus there emerged a category for “popular literature” or “sub-literature,” which, although fiction, is neither “creative” nor “imaginative,” lacks “beauty,” and consequently is not “artistic.”

Thus there arose the modern link between “literature” and the values of “art,” or that which is “aesthetic,” “creative,” or “imaginative”—hence a major restructuring of the concept, which itself constituted a distinct phenomenon in social and cultural history. The meaning of “literature,” which in medieval and renaissance times had referred solely to the ability to read and write, and to the character of a work, turned toward the particular direction of the “creative” and the “imaginative,” in accordance with the fundamental spirit of romanticism. The basis for this development was probably the tendency, which appeared in the mid-seventeenth century, to give special status, in contrast with the prose fiction, to poetry as the high skill of writing and speaking in the special context of high imagination. In France, too, the spread of the idea of “belles lettres” from the mid-seventeenth century on illustrates the same trend. This phenomenon was repeated for literature in the nineteenth century. In that case, however, speaking was excluded.<sup>2</sup>

This main section of Raymond Williams’s entry on “literature,” summarized above, is followed in the original by Williams’s discussion of the current situation, as presented already in the Introduction. Williams described how the linking of the ideas of “literature” and “art,” and the value-laden emphasis on the “creative” and the “imaginative,” led to the establishment of the modern concept of literature (literature in the narrow sense, that of linguistic art). Williams pointed out the role played in this process by the rise of romanticism, which valued human spiritual freedom, especially the free, imaginative expression of sincere emotions, as well as individuality, creativity, and a strong subjectivity unfettered by rules or conventions. He then quite rightly went on to show that this trend was accompanied by cultural nationalism, and that it simultaneously gave rise to discrimination against popular literature. In sum, the modern concept of literature that took root in nineteenth-century Europe amounts to a concept of linguistic art based on the standard of the “creative” and the “imaginative,” and is accompanied both by discrimination against, or rejection of, “lower” literature, and by cultural nationalism.

Below, I will make a number of further, essential points relative to the question of how the elements just discussed functioned when “literature” as a term and concept entered Japan; how they changed; and how they affected our own, contemporary idea of “bungaku.”

In the meantime, Raymond Williams also devoted a *Keywords* article to “art.” In it he explained the historical evolution of the term. In brief, “art” is derived from a Latin word meaning “craft”

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2 Williams 1985, pp. 184-87.

or “technique,” and it was used in English until the late seventeenth century in connection with mathematics, medicine, angling, and so on. Then, in association with the development of “culture” and “aesthetics,” there arose in the late eighteenth century a distinction between so-called “craftsmen” (technicians whose manual work lacked any “intellectual,” “creative,” or “imaginative” dimension) and “artists.” In the mid-nineteenth century the development of the concept of “science” led to “art” becoming further associated with “imaginative” or “creative” work. Under these circumstances, “art” came to refer particularly to the contemporary notion not of “liberal arts” but of “fine art.” Williams observed that this process of change was greatly influenced by changes in the value attributed to human labor and craft, and by the evolution of industrial society.

### 2.1.2 “Belles Lettres” and “Romanticism”

Quite apart from Raymond Williams’s entry on “literature,” there exists another concise treatment of the subject on a more or less Europe-wide scale. This is the article on “Literature and Its Cognates” in the *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*,<sup>3</sup> the closing section of which has already been introduced above in the Introduction. According to the author, René Wellek, the Latin word *litteratura*, which originally meant knowledge of reading and writing, reappeared in the late seventeenth century in the sense of “knowledge of literature” or “literary culture.” Then, in the 1730s, the term further acquired the meaning of a “body of writing.” In the mid-nineteenth century, major French writers objected to the vague and novel use of the word *littérature* in the sense of “imaginative, fictive prose,” which suggests that the modern meaning of “literature” did not gain easy acceptance.<sup>4</sup>

Let us examine a little more closely the process by which “literature” became established in the sense of “imaginative, fictive prose.” First of all, one may posit a stage at which there arose a tendency to use the word only in association with an aesthetic value. This trend presumably encouraged the emergence of the term “belles lettres.” It will therefore be worthwhile to examine the relationship between “literature” and “belles lettres.”

According to Wellek, the association between aesthetic values and “literature” first became established in eighteenth-century Italy. An early example appears in the introduction to Carlo Denina’s (1731-1813) *Discorso sopra le vicende della letteratura* (1760), in which Denina sets aside “the progress of the sciences and arts” and announces that he will confine his attention to “works of learning only when they belong to ‘good taste, to eloquence, that is to say, to literature.’”<sup>5</sup>

3 Wiener 1973-74, vol. 3, pp. 81-88. In this article René Wellek cited for the early nineteenth century and later a variety of examples of “literature” in the sense of all written materials, but his late eighteenth-century examples cover also knowledge of what is contained in books. Close in position to Wellek’s work are two others on the concept of comparative literature: Nichols and Vowles 1968; and Wellek and Warren 1949. For a bibliography of studies of the concept of literature in European languages, see the list accompanying “Literature and Its Cognates.” For a detailed study of the formation of the concept of *littérature* in France, see Reiss 1992. For the American debate over “literary history,” see Brown 1995.

4 Wellek 1973-74, p. 82.

5 TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: This passage combines Wellek’s words with (presumably) Wellek’s translation of Denina’s. The passage from Voltaire (below) is also given as it appears in Wellek’s article.

This usage seems to have spread rapidly in Italy itself, and Denina’s book was soon translated into English and French. In France, Voltaire (1694-1778) defined literature (in his unfinished article on the subject for his *Dictionnaire philosophique*, 1764-1772), as “a knowledge of the works of taste, a smattering of history, poetry, eloquence, and criticism.” In late eighteenth-century France, Voltaire’s follower Jean-François Marmontel (*Éléments de littérature*, 1787) opposed “littérature” to erudition and instead used the word to mean “knowledge of belles lettres.”<sup>6</sup>

The expression “belles lettres” first appeared in France in the post-Renaissance seventeenth century, in opposition to “saintes lettres” (scripture or study of scripture). It seems then to have had roughly the same meaning as “lettres humaines” (humane letters, i.e., humanities), as distinguished from theology: “grammar, eloquence, and poetry” (*Dictionnaire de Trévoux*, 1704).<sup>7</sup> Nowadays it is hardly used in either English or French, but its traces survive in those cases in which “literature” is employed in the old sense of “belles lettres” or “humanities.” This usage, although omitted from shorter dictionaries, cannot be overlooked in any examination of the concept of “literature” and its content, or of the question of “literary history.”

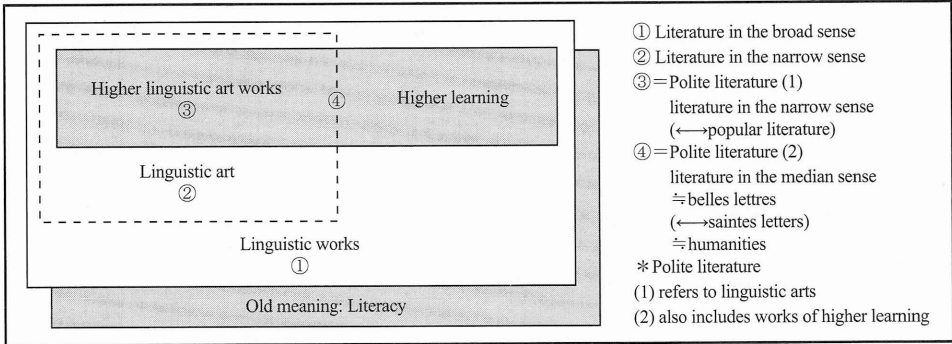


Figure 2 The Concept of Literature in English

According to Wellek, when the use of “literature” is accompanied by a value judgment, the criterion for that judgment may appeal to aesthetic values alone, or it may combine these with “general intellectual distinction and historical impact.”<sup>8</sup> In other words, the modern notion of literature presupposes several different categories. In its narrowest sense the word refers solely to higher linguistic art, but in its broader, median meaning it includes intellectual and historical considerations as well. (Kobori Keichirō defined its current usage in the latter, median sense.) Of course, there undoubtedly are also cases in which “literature” designates linguistic art in general, without reference to “high” or “low.”

This complicates the matter. Once criteria of intellectual distinction or historical impact enter into the picture, aesthetic value is no longer the sole issue to consider. Furthermore, whether the value in question be aesthetic, intellectual, or historical, judgments made on that basis will obviously change with the passage of time or from individual to individual. The standard for defining an important work or a major writer changes according to the point of view. “Literary history” is likely

6 Wellek 1973-74, p. 81.  
 7 Wellek 1973-74, p. 83.  
 8 Wellek 1973-74, p. 85.

to give greater weight to historical value. Moreover, the idea of “belles lettres” can be seen to have played a role in establishing the distinction between “polite literature” and “popular literature.” (See Figure 2.)

The second issue to consider is the romantic view that introduced the requirement for literature to be “creative” and “imaginative.” No doubt it springs from a spiritual tendency toward idealism—basically, an idealism that calls for mankind’s inner spirit and feelings to free themselves from the here and now and dream of infinite expansion. The urge toward ever-higher realms invests critical value in the elevation of the spirit towards lofty goals and the heightening of the passion of love. In the presence of social reality, so idealistic a viewpoint prompts sharp dissatisfaction with the way things are, and strenuous condemnation of it. When expressed with respect to the fetters of social and political reality, this attitude becomes revolutionary romanticism, which, once broken against the walls of reality, turns to melancholy or seeks escape into distant lands or distant eras of the past, or else inspires a deep longing to explore the world of the imagination and of dreams. A transcendental outlook of this kind may also inspire a longing for the infinite, from which arise a reaction against the established social, moral, and aesthetic order, and schemes of spiritual revolution.

Romanticism may split into these diverse tendencies, but at its base lies a valorization of “originality,” an idea linked to creativity. *The Oxford English Dictionary* (second edition, 1989) states that “originality” is derived from “originalité,” a word that came into use in France in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and that entered English in the second half of the eighteenth century. It is associated with the ideas of natural genius and of individuality that rejoices in going beyond established boundaries. Early romanticism lauded both these ideas and accorded them high value.

### 2.1.3 Nationalism and Literary History

The third task to pursue is to grasp in its main outline the connection between literature and nationalism. This can be done easily enough by reflecting on the social circumstances under which romanticism rose to prominence. In the background of this emphasis on man’s inner freedom there lies, needless to say, a bourgeois society that guarantees the freedom and equality of the individual. In such a society the ideals of liberty and equality, joining with utilitarianism, change into ideas of freedom of economic competition and equality of opportunity to take part in it. Guaranteeing this freedom and equality requires laws to limit violation of the rights of others, and in modern times it is the nation-state that establishes and preserves those laws. The freedom and equality of the individual are guaranteed under the law, and in the economic realm free competition is guaranteed by contract. In other words, these are rights that can exist only under a constitutional government. This principle remains true whether the government be a constitutional monarchy as in England or a republic as in France.

In Europe, moreover, under this principle social status and position, the various sects of Christianity, and so on were on the whole preserved hereditarily, while the capital economy and industrial society continued to develop. Disputes over the rights of the people (the governed classes), and struggles (class struggles) over workers’ wages and conditions are accomplished through organs established to balance class interests, especially parliaments. These struggles may

become contests for hegemony in parliament, they may aim to paralyze power or to seize it by force, but it is for that reason that they all have state power as their goal.

Unlike craftsmen's guilds in medieval times, modern enterprises, each according to its own work requirements, can found its maintenance and development on the continual fostering of labor equipped with a serviceable minimum of education. For this purpose a certain standard of education must be achieved by the whole population. Since the bourgeoisie has no culture of its own, the refined culture of the aristocracy, who hitherto have monopolized all cultural values, continues to be prized, and the class structure of society is maintained thanks to the selection effected by education. On the other hand, education brings about a rise in literacy, and there emerges a culture ("popular culture") centered on the pleasures sought by the people for recreation in their leisure time—the time during which they renew themselves as a labor force. Meanwhile, aristocratic culture becomes "higher culture," and contempt for "popular culture" becomes entrenched. However, once the people acquire political and social power, and popular culture itself comes to constitute an industry, then leaders appear also from among the intellectuals, and the demand for betterment leads to the production of high-quality works in that sphere as well. (Still, although there exists a degree of continuity between popular culture in nineteenth-century Europe and "mass culture" in the twentieth century "mass society," particularly that of the 1920s, it is no doubt necessary also to distinguish between the two.)<sup>9</sup>

There exists within the cultural domain of the modern nation-state a demand to define, preserve, and develop a national culture, in contradistinction to the cultures of other nations, of which the people can be proud. The superiority of that nation's cultural level over that of other nations and regions (in the extreme case, colonies) is then affirmed, and education and journalism continue to nurture the people's cultural identity. The coming together of all these elements, and the formation, preservation, and development of this union is the underlying principle of culture in the nation-state. However, the evolution of each domain, and the degree of conjunction between them, differs even in Europe according to the individual circumstances of each country.

In the German-speaking world in which the idea of national literature (*kokumin bungaku*) arose, this event was preceded by the conjunction, with its resulting movement, of romanticism and nationalism. In the background of this development there lay, in turn, the development leading to the collapse of a European culture that since the middle ages had been based on the common use of Latin: the progress of the so-called vernacular revolution, of linguistic nationalism that sought to replace Latin, as the written language of each country, with the vernacular actually spoken by the people. In sixteenth-century Germany, the diffusion of Martin Luther's (1483-1546) German Bible (translated into the language of southern Saxony) had a leveling effect; and the rise of romanticism in the later stages of the eighteenth-century enlightenment, and on into the early nineteenth century, encouraged the search for the origins of Germanic culture in ancient Greece. The poetry of Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843), the operas of Richard Wagner (1813-1883), and the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) make that trend clear enough. The tendency to affirm spiritual values through philosophy was especially strong, and it is on that basis that Johann Fichte (1762-1814) established the framework of the university system. Nonetheless, the

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9 See Suzuki Sadami 1994b, chapter 9, "Taishū bungaku to taishū bunka" 大衆文学と大衆文化.

unification of Germany, divided as it was into many small states, lagged behind. The German empire, centered on Prussia, was founded in 1871, while standard pronunciation was promulgated in 1889 and standard spelling in 1901.

On the other hand, it is the French Revolution (1789) that set the political standard for the nation-state in modern times. It brought about the dissolution of the feudal domains surviving in the surrounding regions and the reorganization of the people within those domains into an equivalent of the French nation-state. Napoleon's (1769-1821) ambition to extend his power across all of Europe then encouraged movements of national unity—political and cultural—in each country affected, for the purpose of resisting him. The vernacular revolution in France passed at the time of the French Revolution itself through a trial-and-error experiment with phonetic spelling, continued throughout the nineteenth century with unification of spelling and regularization of grammar, and thus created the norms for mastery of the national language. In particular, the selectivity of the education system with respect to linguistic mastery came to have the function of maintaining a class society in France.

Concerning the nineteenth-century trend toward cultural nationalism, it will be necessary to touch not only on the formation of a cultural tradition in each country, but also on the changing concept of “national literature.” This concept turns literary works written in the national language and representative of the nation almost into objects of worship, as elements of “the canon.” At the same time, the process affirms that most of the now culturally elevated people love such works. In England, the novels of Charles Dickens (1812-1870) can be viewed this way. In parallel with the development of journalism, novels that evoke with sorrow and delight life at the bottom of society, as well as historical novels based on political incidents that excite the popular imagination, commanded great popularity, and the relative standing of the novel rose in consequence. Of course, the reason why that happened is also that works of sufficient quality to achieve this result were written and welcomed by the public.

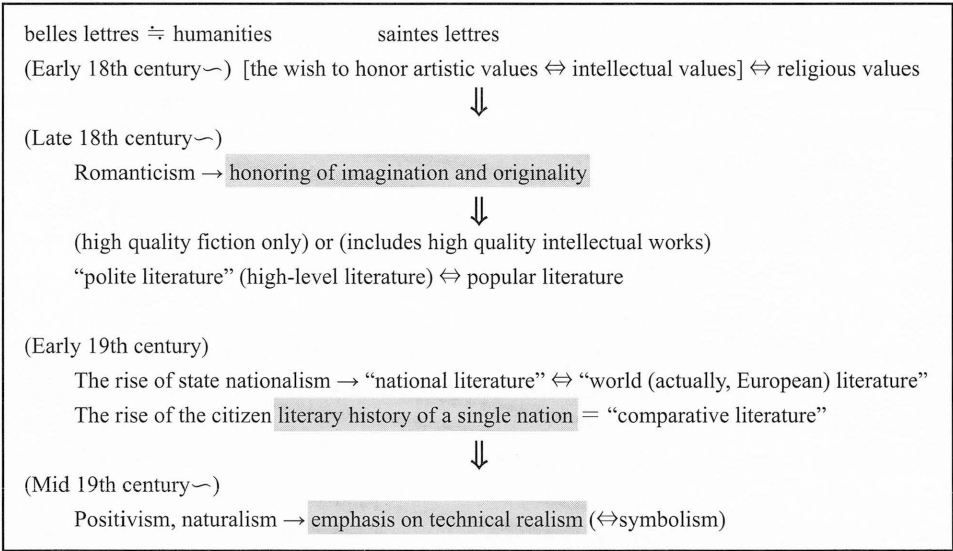
Without the novel's rise in standing, against the background of the vitality of nineteenth-century civil society, it might be impossible to discuss at all the origins of the concept of linguistic art. This rise, in the context of the triumph of romanticism and the growth of journalism, occurred not only in England but also, with inevitable variations due to local circumstances, in Germany and France as well.

In America, the best example of “national literature” in this sense is probably the poetry of Walt Whitman (1819-1892). Whitman's work contains many hymns of praise to free America, and to that extent it is permeated by nationalism. His *Leaves of Grass* (1855), which celebrates liberty and equality in simple but passionate language, is far removed from the idea of art upheld by the European aristocracy, and it suggests that the defining criterion for popular literature in America differed from that in Europe. However, Puritanism despised and rejected Whitman's poetry for a considerable time, because of the way it glorified sexual freedom. His poetry came to be treated as national literature only in the twentieth century, after the freedom of his sexual themes was accepted. Even so, however, the clash between Puritanism and this freedom of Whitman's continues to the present day, manifesting itself in varying ways in different regions and times.

In this connection, one must not forget that in contrast with nationalist claims to “literature,” there was also a movement to champion “comparative literature,” which aimed to study comparatively a

transnational “world literature” and the literatures of each country. The notion of “world literature” was first enunciated by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) in 1827, in connection with the French translation of his drama *Tasso* (1790). As Johann Eckermann (1792-1854) remembered it, Goethe had read a Chinese novel that year, and its surprising familiarity had inspired him to believe that “poetry is the common property of all humanity; hence his statement, “It is not enough now to speak of national literature. The age of world literature is almost upon us, and it is up to all of us to work toward it.” By “world literature” he presumably meant literature, too, as the common property of humanity.<sup>10</sup> This idea of “world literature,” in a sense that embraced above all the literary arts of Europe, was championed also by the German poet Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) and the Danish critic Georg Brandes (1842-1927).

The notion of “European literature” as a whole nourished the scholarly study of “comparative literature,” which pursues the relations of influence between literary works. “Comparative literature” too, however, rests largely upon the idea that there is a “literature” proper to each country, with the inevitable result that national “literatures” and “comparative literature” are mutually complementary. (See Figure 3.)



**Figure 3** The Values Attributed to “Literature” in Modern Europe: Concept Pairs and Sources of Influence

Meanwhile, the history of longing for the Orient (orientalism) in the nations of Western Europe, as well as that of colonial domination, inspired a wish to draw on foreign cultures in order to remedy the defects in one’s own (although the idea of the *bon sauvage* [the good savage] appears already in eighteenth-century French enlightenment thought). Elements from such cultures really were incorporated into the cultures of Western Europe, and the existence of these foreign cultures provided poets and writers with an arsenal of ideas with which to critique their own. It should not

<sup>10</sup> In “Literature and Its Cognates,” Wellek observed that Goethe in one of his drafts equated “European” with “world” literature; that in a poem entitled “Weltliteratur” he celebrated instead the delights of folk poetry; and that what he meant by “world literature” consequently remains uncertain.



be forgotten that as a result the literary arts took on a chiaroscuro complexity.<sup>11</sup>

#### 2.1.4 On Realism

Romanticism constituted the keynote of European spiritual culture from the second half of the eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth centuries, but realism developed significantly in the latter century as an artistic attitude and method. I should like to outline the relationship between these two fundamental concepts. It is common to employ the term “realism” without even being clear about whether it refers to a philosophical school or whether it means the attitude and method that go into producing an artistic work, and this causes a great deal of confusion.

In his entry on “realism” in *Keywords*, Raymond Williams distinguished three usages of this term, which gained prominence as a neologism in the nineteenth century.

- (1) As a term to describe new doctrines of the physical world as independent of mind or spirit, in this sense sometimes interchangeable with naturalism or materialism.
- (2) As a description of facing up to things as they really are, and not as we imagine or would like them to be.
- (3) As a term to describe a method or an attitude in art and literature—at first an exceptional accuracy of representation, later a commitment to describing real events and showing things as they actually exist.<sup>12</sup>

In the background of definition (1) lies the nineteenth-century effort to reach physical and chemical first principles (mechanical materialism)—an effort that, unlike the previous century’s conception of the human body as a mechanism analogous especially to a clock, sought to explain the laws that govern the material world. Amid a rising interest in the naturalist’s observations and in love of nature, Darwin’s (1809-1882) theory of biological evolution assumed great importance and promoted to a considerable degree the non-Christian idea that man, too, is a species of life or living thing influenced by environment and heredity. Emphasizing as it does natural selection and the survival of the fittest (an idea derived from the philosophy of Herbert Spencer, 1820-1903), Darwin’s theory supported the world view based on free economic competition and especially, against the background of Thomas Robert Malthus’s *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798), received early nourishment from, and later on lent weight to the development of capitalism.

Definition (2) refers to the idea that in order to engage actively with reality, one must not interpret it from the standpoint of ideals and fantasies, but must instead observe things in an empirical way. Intellectually speaking, this attitude is based on the positivist philosophy espoused by Auguste Comte (1798-1857) and his successors. However, this mode of thought can also give rise to emphasis on pragmatic conditions and to compromise with the status quo, as illustrated by such expressions as, “She’s a realist.”

<sup>11</sup> On this question, see Watt 1979, pp. 147-214. This study retains its value even after the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978).

<sup>12</sup> Williams 1985, pp. 258-59.

The prominence of realism as an attitude and as a technique in nineteenth-century art is simply the reflection in that domain of these two ways of thinking, or perhaps of a confused combination of both. The history of the literary arts in the nineteenth century can be described as a progression from a realism that often evokes citizens' daily lives to a naturalism that has directly assimilated the thinking of the natural sciences. The former takes as its themes the hopes and disillusionment that accompany the development of civil society, while the latter refers in part to the observation of social reality and the techniques for painting it. It is safe to say that among the realist techniques for evoking the daily lives of the citizenry, the naturalist method of adopting the approach of the natural sciences flourished particularly in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, realism in the sense just described, that is, in the sense of Williams's definition (3), cannot stand in opposition to romanticism. It is well known that Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) praised Balzac (1799-1850) for giving a true portrait of late eighteenth-century French society, but the "victory of realism" he mentioned means that the techniques of realism overrode the novelist's own pro-royalist, hence from a revolutionary standpoint reactionary ideas. Moreover, in *Madame Bovary* (1856), Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880) engineered cohabitation between romantic disgust with the bourgeois order and longing for the freedom of the wild, and the expressive method of reproducing psychology and sensibility in real terms.

In contrast, the naturalism that flourished from the mid-nineteenth century on is represented by Emile Zola (1840-1902), who in his treatment of men and women emphasized the influence of heredity and the environment. Naturalism in this sense often betrays the influence of Darwinism, which stresses the role of natural selection in biological evolution. The tendency to give weight to biological laws (hypothetically defined) is supported in Zola's case by the novelist's socialist views. Zola increasingly denounced the unfortunate reality into which society, which was to be saved, had fallen instead, and in his last years he even undertook to write four gospels (*Les Quatre Évangiles*, of which he completed three) to replace those of the New Testament. In that sense one can no doubt discern in his work a romanticism directed toward social reality and see him as a bridge between romanticism and socialist realism.

Seen in the broader perspective, the fact that the sharp social criticism of the German poet Heine, as well as the work of the noted naturalist writer Gerhart Hauptmann (1862-1946), inclined more and more toward a romantic outlook, suggests that realism as an attitude and a technique for the writing of poetry, fiction, and drama can, generally speaking, be situated in the process of the transformation of romanticism; and that recognition of its value does not conflict with the values of "imaginative, creative fiction."<sup>14</sup> Moreover, it is no wonder that, in Europe and elsewhere, mysticism and spiritualism should have accompanied detailed, realistic description. The identification of realism as a world-view with realism as an expressive technique confused the discussion.

The modern concept of "literature" that arose and gained acceptance against this background in

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13 Dickens was the first successfully to adapt journalistic reportage to literature, while Zola added the use of photography to reportage. Literary reportage became an established genre in the first half of the twentieth century.

14 I believe that the realism of modern European literature is one of the guises of romanticism and that Zola's naturalism is a variant of French *romantisme*. See Suzuki Sadami 1994b, chapter 6, subsection 25, "Why Was Objective Realism Abandoned?"

Europe, as well as its attendant ideas and methods, quite soon entered Japan, which already had its own concept of “bungaku”—one far older than this new arrival. Originally Chinese, it had brought with it its own historical evolution, which in Japan had been prolonged by still further changes. Therefore, in order to grasp the shifting history of “bungaku” in Japan, it will be necessary first to outline the history of the term in China. Doing so will help at the same time to relativize our own, contemporary, Western notion of “literature.”

## 2.2 The History of Wenxue (Bungaku) in China

### 2.2.1 The Origins of the Word “Wenxue”

Let us begin by consulting a contemporary dictionary of Chinese. The entry for “wenxue” in *Ciyuan* 辞源 (revised edition, Beijing, 1980), lists three meanings. Sources cited are given in parentheses.

- (1) Broad knowledge of written works (文章博学) (*Lunyu* 论语, “Xianjin” 先进; *Weishu* 魏书, “Zhengxizhuan” 郑羲传).
- (2) Documents and classics (文献经典) (*Hanshu* 汉书, “Wu Di ji” 武帝纪; (Ming) Yang Ji 明揚基, *Meianji* 眉菴集).
- (3) The name of an official post (*Jinshu zhiguanzhi* 晋书職官誌, etc.).

The *Hanyu dacidian* 漢語大詞典 (Shanghai, 1986-1994) goes into greater detail and gives nine definitions, which include the contemporary meaning.

- (1) Broad knowledge of written works (文章博学). One of the four divisions of Confucian teaching (孔門四科) (*Lunyu* 论语, “Xianjin” 先进; *Zhuxiji* 朱熹集, notes).
- (2) Confucian doctrine (*Hanfeizi* 韓非子, “Liufan” 六反; *Shiji* 史記, “Lisi liezhuan” 李斯列傳; *Lushi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, “Bobing” 薄兵).
- (3) Confucian scholars and other learned persons (*Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍, “Shixu” 時序; *Mingshi* 明史, “Yinyi zhuanxu” 隱逸傳序).
- (4) School, office to oversee Confucian teaching (Daoyuan of the Northern Wei 北魏鄴道元, *Shuijing* 水經).
- (5) Scholarly talent (文才), learning (才学) (*Beishi*, “Weishouzhuan” 北史·魏收傳; *Yuhuchun* 玉壺春).
- (6) Especially documents concerning a lawsuit (獄訟) (*Shiji* 史記, “Mengtian liezhuan” 蒙恬列傳).
- (7) One of the four divisions of learning established by the Southern Song, the Song, and others (*Songshu* 宋書, “Yinyi zhuan” 隱逸傳).
- (8) The name of an official post.
- (9) An art that consists of using words to make images that reflect reality (Lu Xun 魯迅, *Erxinji* 二心集, “Yingjing,” “Wenxue de jieixing” 硬經·文学的階級性).

All these definitions except (9) connect the term with Confucian learning. The oldest source referred to by both dictionaries, in (1), is the “Xianjin” section of *Lunyu* (the Analects) in which Confucius discusses the disciples who share his own ideals:

Those who worked by moral power were Yan Yuan, Min Ziqian, Ran Boniu and Zhong Gong. Those who spoke well were Zai Wo and Zi Kong. Those who surpassed in handling public business were Ran You and Jilu; in culture and learning [*wenxue* 文学], Zi Yu and Zi Xia.<sup>15</sup>

The word “wenxue” occurs nowhere else in *Lunyu*. Among the four areas mentioned (“working by moral power” [德行], “speaking well” [言語], “handling public business” [政治], and “culture and learning” [文学]), “speaking well” corresponds to public speaking. As for “broad knowledge of written works” 文章博学, its meaning appears in a commentary by the Song scholar Xing Bing 刑昺 (932-1010). In Song times *wenzhang* 文章 covered both poetry and prose, and referred to all written material. It therefore meant familiarity with written documents. Yoshikawa Kōjirō 吉川幸次郎 (1904-1980) defined it as meaning “learning (*gakumon*, especially learning with respect to written documents (*bunken* 文献)).”<sup>16</sup>

As it is well known, “one hundred schools” of philosophy flourished in the Warring States period (until the early third century BCE). One of these was the pacifist teaching of Mozi 墨子, who employed the word “wenxue” in the “Tianzhizhong” 天志中 section of the work known by his name. He wrote,

In the same way Mo Tzu [Mozi] uses the will of Heaven [*tian* 天] to measure the government of the rulers and ministers above, and the writings [*wenxue*] and words of the multitudes below.<sup>17</sup>

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15 Quoted from Waley 1938, p. 153. The names, originally given in Wade-Giles romanization, have been converted to Pin Yin. D. C. Lau (*Confucius: The Analects*, 1979, p. 97) translated this passage: “Virtuous conduct: Yen Yüan [Yan Yuan], Min Tzu-ch’ien [Min Ziqian], Jan Po-niu [Ran Boniu] and Ching-kung [Zhong Gong]; speech: Tsai Wo [Zai Wo] and Tzu-kung [Zikong]; government: Jan Yu [Ran You] and Chi-lu [Jilu]; culture and learning [*wenxue* 文学]: Tzu-yu [Ziyu] and Tzu-hsia [Zixia].”

16 Yoshikawa 1969, p. 330. Japanese dictionaries define “bungaku” as “learning” (*gakumon*) or “erudition” (*gakugeti*), citing various sources. Ōtsuki Fumihiko’s 大槻文彦 *Daigenkai* 大言海 (1932-37) gives as the first meaning of “bungaku,” “Erudition derived from reading and study, i.e., mastery of the classics, history, poetry, and prose (as distinguished from the martial arts).” As authorities it cites, for China, the *Analects*, the account of the First Emperor of Qin 秦始皇帝 in *Shiji* 史記, and the record of Wen Di 文帝 in *Sanguozhi* 三国志; and, for Japan, the noh play *Oimatsu* 老松. Morohashi Tetsuji’s 諸橋轍次 *Daikanwa jiten* 大漢和辭典 (revised edition, 1984-86) cites the *Analects*, Xing Bing’s commentary, the “Tianzhizhong” 天志中 section of *Mozi* 墨子, the “Wangzhi” 王制 section of *Xunzi* 荀子, “Pingjinhou zhufu zhuan” 平津侯主父伝 in the *Shiji*, “Dongzhongshu zhuan” 董仲舒伝 in the *Hanshu*, “Bianshao zhuan” 辺韶伝 in the *Houhanshu*, and “Li Kui zhuan” 李揆伝 in the *Tangshu* 唐書.

17 Quoted from Watson 1963b, p. 92.

Mozi states in this passage that one judges good and bad according to a standard termed “the will of Heaven” (*tianzi* 天志). Here, too, “wenxue” seems to stand in contrast to *yantan* 言談 (speech) and to refer to knowledge of written works.

Closer examination of “wenxue” in *Lunyu* suggests that the learning associated with it is centered above all on the “Six Classics” defined by Confucius. These are *Yijing* 易經 (Book of Changes, divination), *Shujing* 書經 (Book of History, government), *Shijing* 詩經 (Book of Songs, folk songs), *Chunqiu* 春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals, a chronological history), *Li* 禮 (Rites, ceremony, and protocol), and the [now lost] *Yue* 樂 (Music). Zixia 子夏, especially, is believed to have played a major role in organizing and commenting on these works. According to Yoshikawa Kōjirō, “Zixia was often revered as their founder by the branches of Confucianism devoted to diligent reading of the classics (the foundation of practice), as distinguished from those devoted above all to practice itself.”<sup>18</sup>

In *Chūgoku no bungaku riron* 中国の文学理論, Kōzen Hiroshi 興膳宏 stated that examples of “wenxue” after *Lunyu* “refer almost unanimously to learning, and especially to study of the classics.”<sup>19</sup> There is no doubt that as Confucianism flourished, “wenxue” came more and more often to mean study of the Six Classics. A Confucian scholar of the Warring States period, some two centuries after Confucius, wrote in the “Wangzhi” 王制 section of *Xunzi*, the work that bears his name,

Although a man may be the descendant of commoners, if he has acquired learning, is upright in conduct, and can adhere to ritual principles, he should be promoted to the post of prime minister or high court official.<sup>20</sup>

This passage, which upholds ability, suggests that learning, especially study of the classics, is the path of the gentleman and the official.

In the “Qinshihuang Di ji” 秦始皇帝紀 section his *Shiji* 史記, Sima Qian 司馬遷 had the First Emperor use the word as follows:

I confiscated all the books from the empire and got rid of all those that were of no use. I also summoned a great many learned scholars and practitioners of various magic arts, hoping to initiate an era of great peace.<sup>21</sup>

The First Emperor of Qin (259-210 BCE) employed many scholars, but as everyone knows, he proscribed *Shijing*, *Shujing*, and the teachings of the “hundred schools” as deleterious to the order of realm. On this subject Ban Gu 班固 (32-92) remarked in *Hanshu* 漢書 (“Dongzhongshu zhuan” 董仲舒傳), “He placed a massive prohibition on wenxue, and it was impossible to introduce a single book.”

It is Emperor Han Wu Di 漢武帝 (159-87 BCE) who once more gathered together the books that had been scattered as a result of the First Emperor’s book-burning policy, and who again

<sup>18</sup> Yoshikawa 1969, pp. 330-31.

<sup>19</sup> Kōzen 1988, p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted from Watson 1963a, p. 33.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted from Watson 1993, p. 38.

encouraged scholarly accomplishment (*gakugei*). *Hanshu* records his doing so, as well as the names of the scholars whom he assembled for the purpose; and for the works in question it lists the broad categories of *gushi* 古事 (“ancient usages”), *jianglun* 講論 (“treatises”), and *liuyi* 六芸 (the “six arts”: propriety, music, archery, charioteering, calligraphy, and mathematics). These headings cover the totality of learning as it was understood at the time. Moreover, Wu Di made Confucianism the official philosophy of his state and emphasized the “six arts.” Consequently, during the Han dynasty, too, “wenxue” appears to have referred above all to study of the classics. “Wise and good wenxue” (賢良文学), an area of study for Han bureaucrats, meant roughly the same thing.

Liu Xiang 劉向 (77-6 BCE), who served Han Wu Di as an advisor on the occasion mentioned, directed the editing of many works and compiled a catalog, entitled *Bielu* 別錄, in which he included a summary of each one. His son Liu Xin 劉歆 (ca. 53 BCE-ca. 23 CE) was the first to classify old books with the aim of showing the sources of learning, especially Confucian learning, and on this basis wrote *Qilüe* 七略 (6 BCE), which he completed under the reign of Cheng Di 成帝. *Bielu* and *Qilüe* have both been lost, but it is still possible today to consult an account of *Qilüe* in the “Yiwenzhi” 藝文誌 section of *Hanshu*. The work apparently consisted of a general introduction followed by the main text under six separate headings: the “six arts” (六芸), the philosophies of the “hundred schools,” poetry, military tactics, calculation (astronomy, mathematics), and medicine. Each of these divisions corresponds to a field of learning. The term “wenxue” appears in the work as the official title of the tutor (also called *jiaoshou* 教授) in the classics to the sovereign or to high government functionaries. Both titles are listed for the Han dynasty in the Qing compilation *Lidai zhiguan biao* 歷代職官表 (1780). This work cites the expression “those who do wenxue” from *Hanshu* and appends a note by the Tang scholar Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581-645), which explains that it refers to “those who study the classics.”<sup>22</sup>

In early China, “wenxue” meant study of ancient texts. Setting aside the associated emphasis on the classics defined by the Confucian tradition, it therefore seems not to have differed greatly in meaning from the Latin *litteratura* (the acquisition of knowledge by means of reading).

## 2.2.2 The Philological Significance of *Shi* 詩 (“Poetry”)

Let us consider now the category of “poetry” (*shifu* 詩賦) as it is treated in *Qilüe*. Its origins go back to *Shijing*, which is said to be a collection of North Chinese folk songs inspired by historical events. As one of the “six classics,” the *Shijing* comes in *Qilüe* under the heading of “the classics” (*jingbu* 經部), while in the category of “poetry” *Qilüe* discusses the pre-Qin, southern work *Chuci* 楚辭 and post-Qin lyrical poetry. *Shi* 詩 means songs sung to a string accompaniment, while *fu* 賦 or *song* 誦 designates compositions declaimed in some way, but without such accompaniment. It has been suggested that *Qilüe* gives *Shijing* such separate treatment because of its great length.<sup>23</sup>

What, then is *shi*? The preface to the *Shijing* says:

The affections (*qing*) are stirred within and take on form (*xing*) in words (*yan*). If

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22 *Lidai zhiguan biao*, pp. 435-36.

23 Shimizu 1988, p. 8

words alone are inadequate, we speak them out in sighs. If sighing is inadequate, we sing them. If singing is inadequate, unconsciously our hands dance them and our feet tap them. The affections (*qing*) emerge in sounds; when those sounds have patterning (*wen*), they are called “tones.” The tones of a well-managed age are at rest and happy; its government is balanced. The tones of an age of turmoil are bitter and full of anger; its government is perverse. The tones of a ruined state are filled with lament and brooding; its people are in difficulty. Thus to correct (*qing*) [the presentation of] achievements (*de*) and failures, to move Heaven and Earth, to stir the gods and spirits, there is nothing more apposite than poetry. By it the former kings managed the relations between husbands and wives, perfected the respect due to parents and superiors, gave depth to human relations, beautifully taught and transformed the people, and changed local customs.<sup>24</sup>

Parts of this passage are included also in *Li*. As a whole, it is fundamental to all later Chinese discussions of poetry.

*Shujing* (Yaodian 堯典, section 11) tells how Shun 舜 gave someone music and ordered him to teach it to the young. “Poetry gives expression to feeling,” he said; “song prolongs the words; the voice takes up those prolonged sounds; the twelve modes regulate the pitch of the voice; the eight instruments harmonize with it; and unless the pitch goes false, gods and men become thereby attuned to each other.”

*Li* and *Yue* also say:

*Shi* gives expression to the movements of the heart. The term designates sung words that, in harmony with musical instruments, unifies gods and men by means of music and dance, the flower of human virtue. According to the *Yue*, music modulates the human voice. Together with rites, which guide the heart; punishments, which deter error; and government, which brings all actions together, it is one of the means adopted by the ancient sage kings to bring peace to the world. Music reveals the principle of harmony between heaven and earth. Therefore, correct music preserves the normal functioning of the human body, calms the heart, and ensures the stability of beautiful customs.<sup>25</sup>

*Lunyu* says of *shi*: “The Master said, ‘The *Odes* are three hundred in number. They can be summed up in one phrase: Swerving not from the right path.’”<sup>26</sup> “Songs” (*shi*) thus give true expression to human feelings; or such, at least, has been the dominant interpretation of the words 無思邪 (“Swerving not from the right path”) in Japan.<sup>27</sup>

24 Owen 1992, pp. 41-45.

25 TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: This passage is a translation of the Japanese rendering in the original text.

26 Lau 1979, p. 11.

27 This interpretation is due above all to the critique directed by Itō Jinsai 伊藤仁齋 and Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠 at the “promote good and chastise evil” interpretation of Zhu Xi 朱熹. See Hino 1983, p. 46, n. 2; p. 84, n. 1; p. 404, n. 1.

“The Master said, ‘Be stimulated by the *Odes*, take your stand on the rites and be perfected by music.’”<sup>28</sup> In this *Lunyu* passage, *xing* 興 (“be incited”) means the movement of the heart, the incitement or arousal of interest and moral awareness.

“The Master said, ‘Why is it none of you, my young friends, study the *Odes*? An apt quotation from the *Odes* may serve to stimulate the imagination, to show one’s breeding, to smooth over difficulties in a group and to give expression to one’s complaints.’”<sup>29</sup> Thus in *Lunyu*, *shi* (“songs”) articulate the content of the heart, and together with rites and music serve to put the heart at peace.

Unlike the Latin *litteratura*, which designates written letters as opposed to the sound of the voice, the poetry contained in *Shijing* and in the *shifu* section of *Qilüe*, which itself is placed under the heading of “classics” (*jingbu*), belongs with voice and instrumental music. Thus in ancient China “wenxue” was not limited to written materials.

In early times, the word *xiaoshuo* 小說 (Jp. *shōsetsu*), as distinguished from poetry in this sense, appears in the Warring States period *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (the “Waiwu” 外物 section). Here, however, it pertains merely to statements that are worthless from the Taoist point of view, and it therefore has a meaning quite unlike the modern one. An occurrence of the term in *Hanshu* is similarly remote from its modern usage.

### 2.2.3 The Study of “Wenzhang” 文章 (Letters)

In Han times “wenxue” meant learning centered on the classics, but that meaning changed in the medieval, and especially the Six Dynasties period. The following examples occur in the “Weizhi” 魏志 section of *Sanguozhi* 三国志, compiled by Chen Shou 陳壽 (233-297) of the Western Jin 西晉.

- (1) “The emperor first of all loved wenxue, occupied himself with books, and personally carved [the blocks for] some one hundred of them” (*Wen Di ji* 文帝紀).
- (2) “When the emperor first came to command the palace guards, he pursued his taste for wenxue together with Zhi, the Lord of Pingyuan, and the others” (“Wang Can zhuan” 王粲傳).

The latter entry then records that in the Jian’an 建安 period of the Earlier Han, many poets gathered around Wen Di.<sup>30</sup> This use of “wenxue” therefore appears to include poetry. The meaning of the

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28 Lau 1979, p. 71.

29 Lau 1979, p. 175. Waley (*The Analects of Confucius*, p. 212), translated: “For the *Songs* will help you to incite people’s emotions, to observe their feelings, to keep company, to express your grievances.”

30 Suzuki Shuji 1986, p. 340. *Daikanwa jiten* and *Nihon kokugo daijiten* treat “wenxue” in this passage as meaning linguistic art (*gengo geijutsu*), but the most recent research suggests that this is an error. Definition (2) of wenxue in *Daikanwa jiten* says, “Poetry, fiction, drama, and the academic study of these”; as authority it cites also the *Songshu* 宋書 (“Yinyi,” “Lei Cisong zhuan” 隱逸, 雷次宋傳) and Zhang Binglin 章炳麟, *Wenxue zonglun* 文学総論. I discuss the *Songshu* example below. *Kanshi daijiten* 漢詞大辞典 devotes an entry to the subject and treats it as one of the “four studies” of Southern Song and Song times. As for Zhang Binglin, he wrote in *Wenxue zonglun*, “The man of



term had changed since earlier times.

The first change has to do with learning. In the medieval period, Taoist studies and Buddhism flourished together with Confucianism. Confucian and Taoist thought merged, and it became common to explain the principles of the universe in terms of *Yijing*. *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語, compiled in the fifth century under the Liusong 劉宋, gathers together the opinions of great scholars under the four headings given in the “Xianjin” 先進 section of *Lunyu*; virtuous conduct (德行), language (言語), government affairs (政治), *wenxue* (文学). The first half of the section devoted to the fourth of these, *wenxue*, is a collection of anecdotes concerning not only Confucian but also Taoist and Buddhist thought and learning. “*Wenxue*” in this case seems to refer to learning of all sorts and not to be limited to Confucianism.<sup>31</sup>

It is time now to look at the classification of books, that is to say of learning, in China’s medieval period. The quadripartite division of learning that begins with *Suishu jingji zhi* 隋書經籍志 becomes the norm. After “classics” (經部) comes “history” (史部), then a “masters” (子部) section synthesized from several earlier categories, and, finally, “collections” (集部), which includes poetry (詩賦) and songs (詞曲). This schema represents a relative elevation of the standing of history and probably signifies the independence of history as a field of study.<sup>32</sup>

That is not all, however. Judging from the series of episodes on the theme of composition and criticism of poetry given in chapter four of *Shishuo xinyu*, there existed an awareness that learning and letters (*wenzhang*) stand side by side. In other words, it was recognized that something called “letters” had independent value outside the content of learning.<sup>33</sup> This is the second way in which the meaning of “*wenxue*” changed in the medieval period.

The Six Dynasties period produced many gossip collections in the manner of *Shishuo xinyu*, and likewise many legends of monsters and prodigies of the kind known as *zhiguai* 志怪. However, such writings did not count as “*wenzhang*” or “*wenxue*.” The standing of historical works had risen relatively high, but neither *zhiguai* tales nor critical anecdotes about people were considered respectable.

It appears that as a concept covering ability at *wenzhang*, “*wenxue*” could be used in the sense both of *wen* 文 and of *xue* 学, and also in that of the *xue* (study) of *wen*. *Liangshu* 梁書 (“*Xuqin zhuan*” 徐欽伝) records that Wu Di 武帝 (464-549) of Liang sought someone expert in both *wen* and *xue*, and also skilled in action.<sup>34</sup> In this case the two elements of the term are clearly separate words.

*Songshu* 宋書 (“*Yinyi*” 隱逸, “*Lei Cisong zhuan*” 雷次宗伝) recounts how Wen Di 文帝 (541-604) of Sui 隋 charged Cisong with opening at Jilongshan 鷄籠山 a school that amounted to China’s first national university. The chief subject on the curriculum was Confucian studies, but this was before the rise of Neo-Confucianism, and the emperor was also interested in *yishu*

*wenxue* writes characters on bamboo and cloth, calls these *wen*, and discourses on how he achieves what he achieves. This is termed ‘*wenxue*.’” However, his is a twentieth-century work, and his definition probably betrays the influence of the modern European definition of “literature.”

31 Suzuki Shūji 1986, p. 339. The entry for “*wenxue*” in *Daikanwa jiten* treats *Shishuo xinyu*’s conception of it separately under definition (7).

32 Inami Ryōichi 1989, under “Shibu bunrui ni tsuite” 四部分類について.

33 Suzuki Shūji 1986, p. 339.

34 Kōzen 1988, pp. 7-8.

芸術 (the so-called “six arts” [*liuyi* 六芸] plus *fangshu* 方術, a body of techniques that included magic. He therefore established, alongside Confucian studies, the study of Taoism, of history, and of *wenzhuan*, which in this case means the study (*xue*) of *wenzhang*. Skill at writing was therefore valued sufficiently to be recognized as a field of learning.<sup>35</sup> While under the Han, according to Kōzen Hiroshi, the then-dominant poetic forms (the *ci* 辭 and the *fu* 賦) were regarded as a mere pastime, and the position occupied by literary-minded people at court was by no means high. However, from the Six Dynasties on space was given to the biographies of such figures in the official histories, and *wenzhang* was accorded an enhanced social standing in consonance with its social function.<sup>36</sup>

What, then, is “*wenzhang*”? During the period under consideration it normally embraced both poetry and prose. As it is well known, in Three Dynasties times Cao Pi 曹丕 (187-226) stated in *Dianlun lunwen* 典論論文 that “*Wenzhang* is a great task for the governing of the realm, and a deathless enterprise.” Thus he acknowledged not only the political significance of *wenzhang*, but also its transcendence of history and its independence from power. *Wenzhang* in this sense designates the totality of all written work. Moreover, Cao Pi divided *wenzhang* into eight types, for each of which he defined an ideal quality. The first four of these covered prose, and the second four poetry. By poetry, Cao Pi meant rhymed verse in the set, rhythmic forms and ornate language favored in his time.

In that period *shi* 詩 (poetry) and ornate language (*meiwen* 美文) were together called *wen* 文, while prose was known as *bi* 筆. Liu Xie 劉勰 (466?-538) stated in the preface to his *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍, “In our current written language there is *wen* and there is *bi*. The unrhymed is *bi*, while the rhymed is *wen*.” However, he stressed that *wen* was originally a single concept that included the poetry of *Shijing* and the prose of *Shujing*. Moreover, his *Wenxin diaolong* (the “Yuandao” 原道 chapter) describes the origins of “*wenzhuan*” as follows: “When mind arises, words are established, and when words are established civilization shines brightly: this is the natural way.” Human beings, he wrote, are formed from the breath of heaven and earth, and the *wen* they make should likewise manifest the patterns (*wen*) of heaven, earth, and all things. Here, “*wenzhuan*” means the *wenzhang* of the sages who manifest the fundamental principles of the cosmos. Near the end of the “Yuandao” chapter he borrowed a passage from *Yijing* to state, “The *wenzhang* of the sages can move all under heaven because it proceeds from the truth of heaven and earth.” Liu criticized the ornamented artificiality into which Six Dynasties *wenzhang* had fallen, declared that *wenzhang* manifesting the principles of the cosmos was capable of moving heaven, earth, and all things, and advocated a return to the spirit of the Six Classics. Although independent from learning and embracing all genres, *wenzhang* belongs forever to the sage and the gentleman; its root is to be sought in the classics; and it makes manifest government, that is to say, decorum and virtue (*de* 德). Such are the ideas to which Liu appealed. In this schema, poetry, (*shifu* 詩賦), especially its five-character line form (五言詩) occupies an overwhelmingly privileged position.

Thus treatises on genre (*wenti lun* 文体論) began to appear in considerable numbers after the Six Dynasties period. The term *wenti* 文体 designated what one might call genre, and *wenti lun*

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35 Suzuki Shūji 1986, pp. 340-41.

36 Kōzen 1988, pp. 7-8.

divided *wenzhang* into categories. In the context of this trend, Zhaoming Taizi Xiao Tong 照明太子蕭統 edited the anthology known as *Wenxuan* 文選 (ca. 530), which emphasizes beauty of style and covers the classics and the Warring States philosophers, records of masterful oratory, and historical treatises. This work was long prized by succeeding generations and revered as a model of what *wenzhang* should be.

On a somewhat different subject, “wenxue” was preserved as an official title by the provincial school administrations of the Three Kingdoms and the Six Dynasties periods. In Three Kingdoms Wei, the chief Confucian scholar of each provincial capital 府 held the title of *wenxue jijiu* 文学祭酒, while that of each state 州 was called *wenxue congshi* 文学從事. The Six Dynasties nomenclature was the same, with the addition at the capital level of a *rulin jijiu* 儒林祭酒 and at the state level of a *quanxue congshi* 勸学從事. The title *jijiu* 祭酒 designated the head of the education system. In Tang times this terminology was codified, and the title “wenxue” came to be used exclusively for such scholars at the capital, state, and province level.<sup>37</sup>

Emperor Taizong 太宗 (598-649) of Tang reestablished Confucianism as the official state teaching and laid the foundations for three hundred years of Tang rule. He founded the Hanlin yuan 翰林院, which was responsible at court for all documents and learning; edited the Five Classics; commissioned commentaries that were gathered together under the title *Wujing zhengyi* 五經正義; and had this work adopted as the academy’s textbook. However, this does not mean that Tang poetry was consistently Confucian in tone. The power of *wenzhang* rose ever higher in repute, and poetry was placed on the curriculum for the official examinations. It was in the Tang dynasty, too, that poets like Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846) upheld the unity of the three teachings (Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism) and sang the praises of the triple chiliocosm 三千世界. Poetry reached a peak of richness and diversity, until the glittering prosperity of peace led at last to decline.

In “Xiangshansi Baishi luozhong jiji” 香山寺白氏洛中集記 (included in fascicle 70 of *Baishi wenji* 白氏文集, the poet’s *Collected Works*), Bai Juyi described his own poetry as “the work of profane writing” and called it “the error of wild words and fancy language” (*kuangyan qiyu*, Jp. *kyōgen kigo* 狂言綺語).<sup>38</sup> Properly speaking, the expression “wild words and fancy language” conveys disdain for profane sporting with words, as distinguished from the true and sacred teachings of Buddhism. In this text, however, Bai Juyi justifies *kuangyan qiyu* by affirming that it provides access to the way of the Buddha. In Japan the expression was used almost entirely in this sense<sup>39</sup> and served to justify the composition of poetry in Chinese. Particularly in the late Heian period, Fujiwara no Shunzei and his circle, in the same spirit, likened practice of poetry to practice of the Buddha’s way and similarly justified the writing of tales (monogatari). If one were to search

37 *Lidai zhiguan biao*, p. 26.

38 Daben Yuanshi 大本原式, *Sibu congkan zhengbian* 四部叢刊正編 (*Baishi changqingji* 白氏長慶集), Taiwan Shangwu Yinshuguan 台灣商務印書館, p. 859.

39 The Japanese reception of Bai Juyi’s linking of poetry and Buddhism can be traced back to the inception in 964 of the Kangaku-e 勸学会, thanks to collaboration between students of the court academy (Kangaku-in) and monks of Mt. Hiei. Bai Juyi’s lines were later included in *Wakan rōei shū* 和漢朗詠集 (ca. 1012), and they became widely known. (See Mori Masato 1986, p. 333.) In the Tokugawa period, Keichū 契沖, for example, wrote in *Seigo okudan* 勢語臆斷 that Ariwara no Narihira’s “death verse” would under other circumstances have involved *kyōgen kigo*, but that considering its nature it did not. (See *Keichū zenshū*, vol. 9, p. 215.)

in China and Japan for a counterpart to the modern Western concept of linguistic art, Bai Juyi's *kuangyan qiyou* would be the only possibility.

Together with the evolution of poetry in Tang times, there arose a vogue for the fiction genre known as *zhuangqi* 传奇 (wonder tales). As time passed, more and more literary-minded intellectuals tried their hand at writing *zhuangqi* as a pastime, and the standing of the genre rose. However, it never attained a degree of recognition comparable with that accorded poetry.

Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881-1936) considered Tang *zhuangqi* the first true *xiaoshuo* 小说 written in China, citing their intentionally fictional character, their sophisticated literary technique, and their realistic depiction of human nature.<sup>40</sup> Of course, his judgment was based on the modern Western conception of the novel. Conversely, one may say that in China the modern, Western-style novel begins with the Tang dynasty *zhuangqi*.

In Tang times there arose a tendency to discard the ornate, parallel prose style (*pianliti* 駢儷体) preferred earlier, in favor of a more practical kind of prose. Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824) and Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773-819), in particular, held that the mission of *wen* 文 is to express truth (*li* 理) and clarify the way (*tao* 道), and they advocated a return to the “old style” in order to restore morality. Concerning this issue Suzuki Shūji cited as a peculiarly Chinese trait that “In China the overtones of *wenxue*, even as a modern term, always include the notion of striving toward what *wenxue* should really be.”<sup>41</sup>

#### 2.2.4 The Later Reformulation

Under the following dynasty, the Song (960-1279), Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) codified earlier Confucian teaching around the *Sishu* 四書 (Four Books) and the *Wujing* 五經 (Five Classics) and, under the influence of the Buddhist thought so prevalent in medieval China, elaborated a great system of metaphysical and ethical philosophy, the culmination of so-called *Songxue* 宋学 (Song scholarship). *Songxue* condemned infatuation with poetry and neglect of learning as *wanwu sangzhi* 玩物喪志, “toying with things and missing what matters.” In this way the gap between learning and *wenzhang* widened, as it had done before also in Tang times, in a cyclical process of distancing and rapprochement. During the Song dynasty, the title of “*wenxue*” seems not to have existed for any education official, in either the capital or the provinces.

Song dynasty poetry adopted the Tang rhymes, and poetry therefore became almost a separate world, divorced from the spoken language. The practice of calling rhymed verse *shi* 詩 and prose *wen* 文 is considered to have begun in the Tang, and it became general in the Song. Tang Geng's 唐庚 *Tangzi xiwenlu* 唐子西文錄 commends Sima Qian as a model to those who would write *wen* and Tu Zimei 杜子美 to those who would write *shi*.<sup>42</sup>

Under these circumstances, the word “*wenxue*” no doubt tended to drift further and further away from referring to study of the classics. In the Ming period a poem by a Japanese visitor to China, a Zen monk, received the following praise: “Not one of our own countrymen well-versed in *wenxue* could do better!” “*Wenxue*” appears in this example as the category within which to

40 Lu Xun 1997, p. 183; and Nakajima Osafumi's 中島長文 note, p. 198.

41 Suzuki Shūji 1986, pp. 344-45.

42 Ōsone 1992, p. 432.

evaluate the quality of a poem. The poet in question was Shōken Dōnin 蕉堅道人 (Shaku Zekkai 釈絶海), who in 1568 studied with Quanshi 全室 at Zhongzhusi 中竺寺 in Hangzhou 杭州, and his poem received this praise from a friend of Quanshi. After returning to Japan he became known as the best of the Gozan 五山 poets.<sup>43</sup>

The Song dynasty reformulation of learning excluded legends of gods and supernatural beings from history and classified them instead under *xiaoshuo* 小說. Ouyang Xiu’s 歐陽修 *Yiwenzhi* 藝文志, included in *Xintangshu* 新唐書 (1060), edited by Zeng Gongliang 曾公亮, does just that.<sup>44</sup> In short, the category *xiaoshuo* is most easily explained as a container for anything defined as not belonging to learning.

It is from Song times on that poetry was printed and became available to the people at large. Nor is poetry all that the people then made their own. The scripts for popular, orally delivered tales were worked up into such vernacular fiction (*baihua xiaoshuo* 白話小說) as Luo Guanzhong’s 羅貫中 *Sanguozhi yanyi* 三國志演義, or *Shuihuzhuan* 水滸傳. However, these were set aside as vulgar, miscellaneous works and were never treated seriously.

Under the Yuan 元, the Mongols brought a dramatic form known as *yuanqu* 元曲 from the north. Examples, composed of music and text, survive. In the Qing 清 dynasty, in the reign of Qianlong Di 乾隆帝 (1711-1799), Ji Yun 紀昀 (1724-1805) edited the *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要, in which *xiaoshuo* appears as a category in which to include miscellaneous writings and tales of the supernatural (*zhiguai* 志怪). The tendency to throw together under this heading anything not historically credible was more and more obvious. In the end, neither the *zhuanqi* 傳奇 of Tang times nor the Yuan dramas were classified as *wenxue* or *wenzhang*. *Zhiguai*, *zhuanqi*, dramas, and vernacular novels were not included in the “collections” section of such works until the late nineteenth century,<sup>45</sup> no doubt under the influence of modern Western ideas. At present, the idea of “*wenxue*” in that sense is understood to have entered China from Meiji Japan.

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Ancient times       | Wenxue = learning in general (→esp. Confucian learning)  |
| Medieval period     | Wenxue = learning in general (Confucian, Buddhist, Taoist)<br>+ <i>wenzhang</i> (history and poetry)<br>anecdote collections, supernatural tales (傳奇→志怪)                         |
| 17th-18th centuries | Wenxue = learning in general (Confucian, Buddhist, Taoist)<br>+ <i>wenzhang</i> (history and poetry)<br>vernacular novels, Yuan drama  |
| Mid-19th century    | Wenxue = beginning of translation of “polite literature”   |
| Late 19th century   | Introduction of the concept of “linguistic art” →<br>Inclusion of poetry, <i>xiaoshuo</i> , drama in “collections” section (集部)<br>Appearance of “history of Chinese literature” |
| Early 20th century  | Spread of the modern meaning of <i>wenxue</i>  |

Figure 4 The Evolution of “Wenxue” in China

43 Inokuchi 1972, p. 24 and notes to “Ugo tōrō” 雨後登樓, p. 96.

44 Lu 1997, pp. 25-26, and the note by Nakajima Osafumi, p. 35.

45 Personal communication from Inami Ryōichi 井波陵一.

The first scholar to write a “history of Chinese literature” was Japanese. Kojō Teikichi’s 古城貞吉 *Shina bungaku shi* 支那文学史 appeared in 1897, followed by Sasakawa Taneo’s (Rinpū) 笹川種郎(臨風) work of the same title in 1898 and Kubo Tokuji’s 久保得二, again with the same title, in 1903. Sasakawa also published a *Shina shōsetsu gikyoku shōshi* 支那小説戯曲小史 (1897) that became the first history of Chinese fiction.<sup>46</sup> Then, in 1904, Kōbundō in Tokyo published *Chūgoku bungaku shi* 中国文学史, edited by Rin Denkō 林伝甲 (Ch. Lin Chuanjia), a professor at Jingshi Taxuetang 京師大学堂 and inspired by Sasakawa’s *Shina bungaku shi*. This work is said to be the first history of Chinese literature by a Chinese scholar.<sup>47</sup>

In China, it is generally said that “wenxue” first came into serious use in the sense of linguistic art thanks to *Wenxue geming* 文学革命, a journal founded in 1917 by Hu Shi 胡適 (1891-1961), Chen Duxiu 陳独秀 (1879-1942), and Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881-1936). Lu Xun stated that the word “wenxue” was not taken from the *Lunyu* passage in which it occurs, but was instead imported from Japan, where it was in use as a translation for the English word “literature.”<sup>48</sup>

Of course, Qing China had previously come into contact with Western civilization, the influence of which spread slowly, especially in the area of science. The pace of assimilation picked up only after China’s defeat in the Opium War (1839-1842), when the Chinese cooperated with foreign missionaries by undertaking to translate many scientific and technical works. This trend also produced English-Chinese and Chinese-English dictionaries.

In the *Chinese and English Dictionary* (1842-43) compiled by Walter Henry Medhurst (1796-1857), “wenxue” is translated “polite literature.” No doubt it was felt that “literature” alone, being too broad in meaning, was inappropriate to translate the Chinese word and required the adjective. In contrast, the *English and Chinese Dictionary* (1866-69) compiled by W. Lobscheid translates “literature” as *wen* 文, *wenxue* 文学, *wenzi* 文字, and *zimo* 字墨. Here, *wen* probably corresponds to the traditional term “wenzhang,” while “wenxue” refers both to *wenzhang* and to learning in general, particularly Confucian studies centered on the Classics, above all the Song Confucianism of Zhu Xi.

It appears that “literature” can be found as an equivalent for “wenxue” in the English translations done by mid to late-eighteenth century missionaries,<sup>49</sup> and in early twentieth-century China, before

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46 Kojō Teikichi’s *Shina bungaku shi* excludes drama, *xiaoshuo*, and other such vernacular literature.

See Lu 1997, note on p. 16.

47 Suzuki Shūji 1986, p. 336.

48 Suzuki Shūji 1986, p. 328.

49 In “Chūgoku, Nihon no kindai ni okeru ‘bungaku’ to iu hon’yakugo no seiritsu: Shinmatsu Shanhai taizai no Igrirusujin senkyōshi Edokinsu ni yoru ‘Kirōi seikoku bungaku no so’ no shippitsu o megutte” 中国・日本の近代における「文学」という翻訳語の成立—清末上海滞在のイギリス人宣教師エドキンスによる「希臘為西国文学之祖」の執筆をめぐって (*Hikaku bungaku* 比較文学, no. 40, 1998), Li Zheng 李征 (Jp. Ri Sei) introduced a work published in 1857 by a British missionary, in Chinese, in a Shanghai journal. The work gives a history of Greek and Latin poetry, and includes comparisons with Chinese poetry. Li called it “the dawn of comparative study of Eastern and Western literature,” and he argued on the basis of concrete examples that “wenxue” as a translation term “had already been devised ca. 1857.” The topic of Greek and Latin poetry corresponds perfectly to the “traditional” usage of the word “literature” and also seems nicely to match the use of “wenxue” to refer to Chinese poetry. As this example shows, Japanese and Chinese scholars are now actively studying the translation terms devised by missionaries in China, and it is likely that their work will

Lu Xun, intellectuals such as Wang Guowei 王国維 (1877-1927) similarly used “wenxue” as a direct translation term.<sup>50</sup> However, despite the occurrence of such examples, “wenxue” as a translation term does not seem to have spread widely or to have exerted any great social influence.<sup>51</sup> (See Figure 4.)

Why, then, did the modern term *wenxue* (*bungaku*), whether in the broad sense of the humanities or the narrow one of linguistic art, receive wide acceptance sooner in Japan than in China? It is easy to explain the discrepancy by referring to a difference in attitude toward Western civilization, but that is not sufficient to explain the way the traditional meaning of the term was reconceived. One must seek the intrinsic reasons for the development of the liberal arts (*gakugei*) in Japan, and for the position of *bungaku* within them, as well as for the value attributed to it. On that basis I will consider how the traditional “four-part classification of learning” (四部分類) into Classics 經, History 史, Philosophers 子, and Collections 集 (of poetry)—a classification system that changed with time but remained continuous nonetheless—was restructured in Japan.

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require some revision of established theories concerning the rise of “wenxue” as a translation term.

50 Wang Guowei used the term in a modern sense in his *Wenxue xiaoyan* 文学小言 (1906) and elsewhere. See Inami Ryōichi 1989 under the heading “Ōkokui [Wang Guowei] ‘bungaku’.” Wang Guowei studied Japanese and agricultural science at the Tōbungakusha (Ch. Dongwenxueshe) 東文学社 in Shanghai with Fujita Toyohachi 藤田豊八 and Taoka Sayoji 田岡佐代治 (Reiun 嶺雲) and was inspired by the philosophy of Kant and Schopenhauer. In 1911, the Xinhai Revolution 辛亥革命 led him to take refuge in Japan. He left such works as *Songyuan xiqu kao* 宋元戲曲考 (translated into Japanese and annotated by Inami Ryōichi, Heibonsha [Tōyō Bunko 626], 1997) and became known in time as the leading authority in the field of Chinese archaeology.

51 Jiang Lin 江林 has kindly showed me examples of the use of “wenxue” from *Wanguo gongbao* 万国公報, a Chinese newspaper founded in 1871. As far as I can tell, five of these refer to learning or the humanities in general (including linguistic art). This suggests that even if “wenxue” was used earlier to refer to linguistic art in general, its broader meaning prevented it from attaining wide currency in that sense. It is to be hoped that later studies will reveal in more detail how it was adopted by Chinese intellectuals.