

A Glory to Come: John Donne Studies in China

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On 13 November 2005, a petrochemical plant in China's northeast Jilin Province had a series of explosions, releasing 100 tons of benzene, nitrobenzene, and other pollutants into the Songhua River, a tributary of the Amur. Twenty-five days later, six people from Peking University—three professors and three graduate students—brought a lawsuit to Helongjiang High Court, demanding the plant to pay 10 billion RMB, or about 1.25 billion US dollars, as a compensation to set up a foundation aiming to restore the badly damaged ecosystem. This lawsuit attracted the whole country because it was the nation's first commonwealth lawsuit whose plaintiffs were not people but three natural objects: a fish, a river, and an island. What interests me most, however, is neither the process nor the outcome but the legal document itself. It starts with the statement of its purpose, moves on to justify the plaintiffs, provides detailed evidence, and concludes with these words:

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

We therefore ask that Justice be dressed up in splendid green, that all creatures are entitled to the sunshine, and that

this petition be resolutely accepted and justly adjudicated upon.¹

The litigants' choice of this famous passage from Donne's *Devotions* reminds me of Helen Gardner's remark that "Donne was a more interesting and significant poet than Milton."² Interesting enough, her reference to what was happening in literary critical circles in England in the 1940s is exactly what is happening in China today. Although up until now Donne has not been considered as significant as Milton, he is attracting the interest of an increasing number of people from across the country. Indeed, since 1982, Chinese scholars have published about 100 papers and 3 books devoted solely to the study of his works. The number is small, but the trend is significant. Donne is beginning to sweep Chinese universities, his banner being flown by many readers, English majors and Non-English majors, undergraduates and professors, the young and the old. If one, for instance, types any of Donne's four popular Chinese names into an Internet search engine, instantly appear thousands of entries covering a wide range of subjects, especially concerned with his life, works, and criticisms.³ Donne is achieving a definite and growing popularity in China.

This popularity is largely due to the surge of translations of his works. Its initial impetus was the "New Culture Movement,"⁴ when western

¹See <<http://gongxue.cn/landunfalv/ShowArticle.asp?ArticleID=7351&Page=1-8>>.

²Introduction to *John Donne: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1961; repr., Engelwood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1986), p. 1.

³Because of language difference, Donne has several Chinese names when translated. Here are the different versions of his most popular family name with Internet entries found from Google and Baidu on 6 October 2006:

	Dan'en	Deng'en	Duo'en	Tang'en
from Baidu.com:	28,000	654,000	147,000	16,400
from Google.com:	26,500	182,000	151,000	8,220

This result does not include research papers in academic journals. Not all of these entries, of course, refer to John Donne the metaphysical poet, but most of them do—and we can safely say that thousands of these entries are about him.

"The "New Culture Movement" is commonly believed to have begun with the appearance of *La Jeunesse*, a monthly magazine founded and edited by Chen

literature was quickly becoming a model and T. S. Eliot a new star. It was precisely under such a circumstance that Donne became known in the 1930s first as a name then as a byproduct of the introduction of Eliot, due in no small part to the efforts of such people as Harold Acton, Robert Winters, and William Empson, who were teaching at Peking University in 1933, 1934, and 1937–1939.⁵ The most important influence was probably Empson, whose “Modern English Poetry” course helped to bring up a new generation of scholar-poets, who, by 1948, had not only accepted Eliot as their model but also translated some of Donne’s poems as part of their overall attempt to further their understanding of Eliot and to enhance the growth of the “New Culture Movement.”

Like most classic writers, Donne was fortunate to have as his first translators some of China’s most prestigious literary figures, such as Liang Shiqiu and Bian Zhilin. Liang was himself a poet, writer, translator, and lexicologist whose translation of “The Flea” and “The

Duxiu on 15 September 1915 in Shanghai. The two basic fronts of the movement were philosophy and literature, both initiated by Chen. In the opening issue of *La Jeunesse*, Chen published his “To the Youth,” in which the resounding slogan was Democracy and Science. “Mr. D.” and “Mr. S.” thus became the two symbols of this movement’s philosophical perspective. The literary perspective of this movement was set forth in Chen’s “On Literary Revolution,” published in *La Jeunesse* in 1917, a year after it was moved from Shanghai to Beijing, and in Hu Shih’s “On Literary Innovation,” also published in *La Jeunesse* in 1917. While Chen called for “the New Literature” to replace “the Old Literature,” Hu specified eight indicators of what exactly such a new literature should be.

⁵When Peking University welcomed Chen Duxiu into its magnificent gate, it became the headquarters of *La Jeunesse* and the center of the “New Culture Movement.” This was possible because of Professor Cai Yuanpei (1868–1940), educator, member of Hanlin Imperial Academy, Minister of Education, Chancellor of Peking University, president of the Academia Sinica. During Cai’s tenure at Peking University (1916–1927, 1929–1930), he implemented his “one hundred schools” policy, supported the “New Culture Movement,” invited exports from around the world, and helped to make Peking University the strongest of modern China’s institutions of higher learning. However, it was during Professor Jiang Mengling’s administration (1930–1945) that Lord Harold Acton (1904–1994), Robert Winters (1890–1990) and William Empson (1906–1984) were invited to teach English and American literature.

Ecstasy” are still considered the best of all translations of Donne’s works.⁶ Bian was also a poet, translator and literary critic. His translation of Donne’s “Song: Go and catch a falling star” and “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning” are as highly appreciated as his translation of Shakespeare.⁷ Both Liang and Bian were prominent professors with unprecedented mastery of the two languages and cultures, and exercised a tremendous influence on the Chinese intellectuals since the 1930s. Their translations of Donne were frequently quoted, and their introductory remarks highly influential. They laid a solid foundation for later scholars such as Fei Bai, Hu Jialuan, Qiu Xiaolong, Wu Di, and Wang Jianzhao, who—professors, writers, and poets themselves—helped to enhance Donne’s popularity by their own translations and introductions during the latter half of the twentieth century.

The year 1999 was monumental for Donne studies in China. It witnessed the publication of *John Donne: Amorous and Divine Poems*, translated by Professor Fu Hao.⁸ Before that year, the translations of Donne’s works had been largely scattered and confined to a dozen pieces among *Songs and Sonets*, especially translations of a single piece, “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning,” which alone had six Chinese translations.⁹ The existence of one poem in several versions not only indicated the lack of contact among translators, but also proved confusing, chaotic, and even disastrous to those who did not know

⁶Liang Shiqiu (1903–1987), best known for his translation of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* and his edition of *A Far East English-Chinese Dictionary*, not only translated some of Donne’s lyrics but also wrote introductions and appreciations to help Chinese readers understand Donne. Some of these writings appear in such publications as *A History of English Literature* and *English Literature Review*.

⁷Bian Zhilin (1910–2000), translator and scholar of Shakespeare. Most of Shakespearian performances in China are adapted from his translations, and most readings in Shakespeare are also from his translations.

⁸*John Donne: Amorous and Divine Poems*, trans. Fu Hao (Beijing: China Translation and Publishing Corporation, 1999).

⁹They are translated by Liang Shiqiu, Bian Zhilin, Qiu Xiaolong, Fei Bai, Hu Jialuan, and Fu Hao, the most widely circulated being the versions by Hu Jialuan and Fu Hao. Some other poems such as “The Flea,” “Song: Go and catch a falling star,” “The Canonization,” and “A Valediction: Of Weeping” also have several translated versions though not as many.

English. Indeed, the great majority of Donne's poems, even the lyrics, had not yet been translated. The need for an authentic book of Donne in Chinese, therefore, was crucial. It was precisely against this background that Fu's translation came out; it became an immediate success, a best seller, and, in 2001, a winner of the China Translation Award. The first book of Donne's works in Chinese, it contains the complete *Songs and Sonets*, the complete Elegies, and most of the "Divine Poems." It may not be perfect, but it did help reduce the inconsistencies in discussing Donne's poetic techniques and aesthetic values.

Not surprisingly, except for the third paragraph of his "Meditation XVII," Donne's prose is not yet translated. However, thanks to Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Donne's paragraph is so famous that it has several Chinese versions. The most interesting thing about it is that after Li Ao deliberately rendered it into a poem, many readers believed it was indeed part of a poem and even rearranged the original into lines!¹⁰ Nonetheless, such curious (and perhaps humorous) events are yet signs of Donne's popularity in China: any writing by Donne is taken for granted without the slightest doubt. And when the eminent professor Meng Erdong died in 2004, the editorial about his career and his death started by citing the same lines from Donne's meditation.¹¹ Indeed, Donne has become so popular in China and his lines and phrases are so widely quoted that it seems anyone can just apply Donne's writings to suit any situation. Here a young man is copying "The Canonization" as a gift of passionate fidelity to his girlfriend; there a movie fan is declaring his love for Emma Thompson because she successfully acted the role of a John Donne scholar in the 2001 movie *Wit*; elsewhere an ecologist is discussing the importance of protecting wildlife by setting up Donne as an example of "harmony in diversity." The hospitalized professor emeritus from Shanxi University who repeatedly phoned my roommate asking him to find him a copy of Donne's *Devotions Upon Emergent*

¹⁰See, for example, the following blog sites: <<http://lizhenzhi.spaces.live.com/blog>> and <<http://kikozw.blogbus.com/index.html>>.

¹¹*Beijing Review*, 29 April 2006. Meng Erdong (1957–2004) was professor of Chinese at Peking University. He volunteered to teach in Shihezi University in Xinjiang in March 2004 but died of cancer a month later. After his death, he was nominated a "Model Teacher" by Peking University, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Personnel.

Occasions—because he said he felt ashamed when everyone else was talking about it and he had no idea what it was about—is but another representative example of the growth of interest in Donne and his works. Donne “the by-product” has long ago given way to Donne the poet, ready to be critically accepted into China’s academic world.

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Although Donne was briefly introduced in the 1930s, his entrance into China’s academic world had to wait until the 1980s. The reasons were that he was originally introduced as a by-product and as such he had long lived under the shadow of Eliot; that his poetry did not quite fit the 1930s–1940s when the country was thrown into suffocating wars;¹² and that he was labeled a “Metaphysical poet” in a period when Metaphysics, after 1949, was regarded an enemy of Marxism.¹³ However, both his charm and his challenge were there, and once the Republic decided to implement its opening and reform policies, he was reintroduced and eventually became a subject of academic inquiry.

One of the scholar-poets and the most influential critics of Donne in this major revival was Professor Yang Zhouhan.¹⁴ In 1983, the commercial press published an anthology which was intended to help undergraduates with “only the best” of English literature. For this

¹²Such as the Anti-Japanese War (1937–1945) and the Civil War (1945–1949).

¹³In December 1989, for example, one of my undergraduate professors, after learning of my decision to study Donne for my MA thesis, wrote me a nine-page letter in which he kindly suggested that I should reveal Donne as “a counter textbook.” Four years later, though, this professor published a translation introducing Donne’s achievements; see C. S. Lewis, “Donne and the Seventeenth-Century Love Poetry,” tran. Xie Jinxuan, *Journal of Zhaotong Teachers College*, no. 3 (1993): 10–15.

¹⁴Yang Zhouhan (1915–1989), professor, poet, writer, chairman of China Shakespeare Association, chairman of China Comparative Literature Association. For the five poems he annotated, see *An Anthology of English Literature Annotated in Chinese*, ed. Wang Zuoliang et al. (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1983), pp. 236–250; for his comment on Donne’s prose, see his *Seventeenth Century English Literature* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1985), pp. 106–126.

anthology, Yang annotated five poems of Donne: "Song: Go and catch a falling star," "The Canonization," "A Valediction: Of Weeping," "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," and "Holy Sonnet VII" ("At the round earth's imagined corners, blow"). They were so richly annotated that they remain canonical both of Donne and of Metaphysical Poetry. Yang was also the first in China to study Donne's prose. His brief introductions to Donne's *Devotions* and *Sermons* are among the most authentic and the most scholarly studies of seventeenth-century English literature.

In his insightful, original, and thorough academic study, Yang portrayed Donne as a unique poet who simultaneously challenged his predecessors but defied later imitations. He viewed Donne's poetry as a record of the inner sufferings of the poet constantly struggling to fit into the new faith; and above all, he read Donne's prose as what he called "diluted poetry." After Yang, different journals, magazines and monographs began to carry critical introductions to Donne's life, faith, and rediscovery as well as his poetic genres, style, and themes. A typical example was provided by Qiu Xiaolong, who started by translating and writing on Donne's love poetry but gradually became interested in Donne's influence on the modernist poets.¹⁵

Although most of the publications in the 1980s were introductory in nature, they were all instructive and authentic. Instructive because their target readers were students and their ultimate goal was Donne's literary position; authentic because they were written exclusively by English professors, supported by critical appraisals of Eliot, and confirmed by findings from close readings. Close reading has always been one of the most important features of Donne scholarship in China. When Chinese scholars began their study of Donne, they found themselves stuck in two traditions: modern Western theories and traditional Chinese training.

¹⁵ Qiu Xiaolong, professor, translator, writer, poet. His translation of Donne includes "The Canonization," "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," "The Sun Rising," "Break of Day," and "A Valediction: Of Weeping." His first paper on Donne was "On Donne's Love Poetry," *World Literature* 5 (1987): 194–222. His translation of Eliot's "The Metaphysical Poets" first appeared in *Foreign Literature Report* 4 (1988), and was later incorporated into *Essays of New Criticism*, ed. Zhao Yiheng (Beijing: 2001). His "John Donne and Modernist Poets" was incorporated into *The Modernist Muse*, ed. Zhao Yiheng (Shanghai: Shanghai Literature and Arts Press, 1989), pp. 52–90.

However, the two contrasting traditions proved no dilemma; instead, they were harmoniously unified in the close readings of New Criticism which actually became the foundation of China's Donne studies, mainly because close reading was essential to both academic traditions. There do exist huge differences, of course, and objective analysis is contrary to "intuitive" responses. However, thanks to the workings of the *Yin* and the *Yang*, the "objective" and the "subjective" will have to function side by side and in harmony.¹⁶ Therefore, when New Criticism was re-introduced to China in the 1980s,¹⁷ it eventually became one of the basic practices for literary studies in general and for Donne studies in particular.

Because of this development detailed evaluation of Donne became crucial in the critical acceptance of his works. If the seminal

¹⁶Originated in ancient Chinese philosophy, the *Yin* (dark) and the *Yang* (light) are the two primal opposing but complementary principles or cosmic forces. They are generalizations of the antithesis or mutual correlation that works to create the unity of opposites, they are descriptions of complementary opposites rather than absolutes, and they are in constant movement rather than held in absolute stasis. Since all forces are seen as having *Yin* and *Yang* states, excessive *Yin* or *Yang* state is considered unbalanced, undesirable and harmful. Unlike Hegelian dichotomies that are linked to progress through the achievement of a synthesis, the paradigmatic dichotomy of the *Yin* and the *Yang* does not generally give preference or moral superiority to either side of the dichotomy, and dichotomies are linked to cyclical processes rather than progress. This is because each contains an element or seed of the other, and they cannot exist without each other. There are many ways that Chinese schools of thought graphically represent this philosophy, one of the oldest and most influential being *The Book of Change* or *I Ching*.

¹⁷New Criticism was first introduced to China in the late 1940s shortly after it became a vogue in the West. Yuan Kejia of Peking University published a series of papers advocating what he called "American New Criticism," but it was not widely accepted then because of the social crisis of the founding of the People's Republic, in which New Criticism was considered bookish and therefore no good and even reactionary for "class struggle"—much in the same way that Eliot was considered bourgeois and therefore reactionary. In the 1980s, the effort of introducing New Criticism again was seen in the translations of its classical texts as well as the publication of related monographs and essays. It must be noted, however, that New Criticism was not fully introduced and practiced before it was replaced by other theories.

contributions of Yang and Qiu were representatives of the 1980s, then examples in the 1990s would include a general review of Donne's poetry by Fu Hao,¹⁸ a brief survey of Donne's poetic skills by Xiong Yunfu,¹⁹ and an elaboration of Donne's metaphysical features by Huang Pu and Chen Yanglin.²⁰

After 2000, critical evaluations of Donne expanded to include not only studies of more of his poems but also relevant criticisms of his poems. Those on his works include the study of "Going to Bed" and "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" by Lu Hongling,²¹ of "The Good Morrow" and Donne's philosophy of life by Liu Hanyu and He Changyi,²² and of "The Flea" and Donne's conceits by Tian Ye.²³ And along with these studies came studies of Donne criticism itself—in both the West and in China, an example of the former being "Donne in the Eye of West Critics" by Luo Lang,²⁴ and of the latter "A Strange Poet Arriving Late" by Lin Yunfu.²⁵ Compared with earlier studies, these twentieth-century evaluations were more scholarly and more responsive to the schools and approaches of Donne studies in the West. Their acclamation of their theoretical camps made them part of the larger landscape of Donne studies in China, a landscape which consists primarily of comparative studies, textual analyses, thematic inquiries, and theoretical considerations.

¹⁸See "Donne and his Holy Sonnets," *Foreign Literature*, no. 4 (1994): 98–104; and "On Donne's Amorous and Divine Poetry," *Foreign Literature Review*, no. 2 (1995): 76–81.

¹⁹"On Donne's Poetic Art," *Wuling Journal*, no. 5 (1995): 36–39.

²⁰"A Comment of Dream: Donne's Works and the Metaphysical Poetry," *Journal of Shangrao Teachers' College*, no. 2 (1994): 70–74.

²¹"Pursuit of True Love: A Reading of Donne's Amorous Poetry," *Foreign Literature Studies*, no. 1 (2000): 77–80.

²²"Passion and Speculation: General Comments on John Donne the Metaphysical Poet," *Journal of Shandong Foreign Language Teaching*, no. 1 (2001): 43–45.

²³"Donne the Great Writer of Conceit," *Journal of Northeast China Institute of Electric Power Engineering*, no. 3 (2004): 42–44.

²⁴"Donne in the Eye of West Critics," *Journal of Tianjin Foreign Studies University*, no. 4 (2002): 48–51.

²⁵"A Strange Poet Arriving Late: A Review of Donne Studies in China," *Journal of Foreign Language and Literature*, no. 2 (2004): 61–66.

One of the results of Donne studies in the 1990s was an increase of the perspectives from which to investigate Donne's works. The most original was comparatist studies, which were to develop right into the new century. Insofar as Donne was concerned, the basic trends of such studies were to compare him with either a Chinese poet or an English poet. One example of juxtaposing Donne with another English poet was the stylistic analysis of Jiang Honghong, which concluded that Donne's "Holy Sonnet 10" was "a fanfare of a fearless soldier" while Shakespeare's sonnet 146 was "a call for a living spirit."²⁶ Similarly, Ning Zhiming and Zhao Lin compared Donne with Milton in terms of their contributions to the sonnet; building their study on the traditional binary division of content and form, they found Donne an explorer of themes and Milton an innovator of lyric style.²⁷ Also, Wang Yanwen and Zhou Zhongxin explored the social, historical, and personal implications of the love poems of Donne and Marvell.²⁸

The most original approaches, however, were those comparing Donne to a Chinese poet. This was no surprise, since China is culturally known as a nation of poetry, whose 3000 years of poetic history has witnessed the rise and fall of many schools.²⁹ One such school was the "Metaphysics of the Wei and Jin Dynasties."³⁰ Yet most scholars chose to compare Donne not with any of the Chinese "Metaphysicals" but with a Tang Dynasty poet, Li Shangyin.³¹ The most significant studies were by

²⁶ "A Comparative Analysis of Two Sonnets by Donne and Shakespeare," *Journal of Zhangzhou Teachers College*, no. 4 (1999): 91-95.

²⁷ "Contribution of Donne and Milton to Sonnets," *Journal of Adult Education of Hebei University*, no. 3 (2003): 84-85.

²⁸ "From 'The Flea' to 'To His Coy Mistress': On the Seduction Poems of Metaphysical Poets," *Journal of Yanshan University*, no. 4 (2005): 85-89.

²⁹ "China's first book of poetry was *Shijing*, also known as *Book of Songs*, *Book of Odes*, or *Classic of Poetry*. Of its 305 poems, some were believed to have been written in the West Zhou Dynasty (1064-771 BC).

³⁰ "Metaphysicals of Wei and Jin Dynasties" refers to a group of people who were known as such even in their life time. They were mostly philosophers, but wrote poems as well. The best known metaphysicals were Wang Bi (226-249), He Yan (195?-249), Ruan Ji (210-263), Dai Kang (223-263), Xiang Xiu (227?-275?) and Guo Xiang (252-312).

³¹ Li Shangyin (813?-858), the most significant poet of Late Tang Dynasty. His 594 poems preserved today cover a wide range of themes including politics,

Professor Zhang Xuechun who, from 1995 to 1998, conducted a series of studies based on the idea of poetic "tension."³² Originally a term of New Criticism that refers to the simultaneous existence of different, even opposing, meanings, Zhang took it to mean the juxtaposition of multiple contradictions—textual, psychological, historical, and philosophical. To him, tension was common to all poets, but what was particular about Donne and Li was that their tensions had simultaneous inward and outward manifestations. He saw conceit and irony as the embodiments of their "outward tensions" and characterization or character development as that of their "inner tensions," the latter serving to reveal the essential relationship between self and man, or history and philosophy. He applied this notion of tension to Donne and Li, focusing, as far as Donne is concerned, on such works as "The Relique," "Death Be Not Proud," "Canonization," "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," "A Valediction: Of Weeping," "An Anatomy of the World," "Good Friday," "A Hymn to God the Father," "Holy Sonnet 2: Oh my black soul," and "Holy Sonnet 3: This is my plays last scene." Structuralist in nature, Zhang's study appeared theoretical and profound, opening up a new field in China's academic study of Donne.

Unlike Zhang, who focused attention on one concept presumably capable of shedding light on all problems, some scholars preferred the traditional approach. Sun Jing of Changshu College, for example, turned

history, love, vocation, and others. He was also a gifted writer of the so-called "four-six character style prose." A kind of baroque verse, it may and may not have rhymes. He himself edited 20 volumes (832 pieces) of his prose which were to be highly praised by later scholars. To Mr. Fan Wenlan (1893–1969), as long as Li's prose was there, we would not feel sorry if all other such writings of the entire Tang Dynasty had simply disappeared. Li's literary position, however, was secured not by his prose, but by his poetry.

³²Zhang's papers, chronologically, are "Tension Structure of Conceit: A Comparative Study of the Styles of Donne and Li Shangyin," *Journal of Sichuan International Studies University*, no. 3 (1995): 32–40; "Inner Tension: Li Shangyin and John Donne as Historical Existence," *Journal of Sichuan International Studies University*, no. 2 (1996): 38–42; "Irony and Ironic Tension: A Further Comparative Study of the Styles of Donne and Li Shangyin," *Journal of Sichuan International Studies University*, no. 1 (1997): 19–25; and "Inner Tension: Li Shangyin and John Donne as Philosophical Existence," *Journal of Sichuan International Studies University*, no. 3 (1998): 7–12.

to the social milieu for themes, to the poets' personal lives for their "inner struggles," and to their innovations for the power of artistic strength.³³ Compared with Zhang, she was less profound, but her analysis was just as convincing. Also, it was natural that scholars chose to compare Donne with Li Shangyin, for Li was much like Donne: a great wit, a great poet, and a great prose writer. Like Donne, his promising future was drastically checked by his marriage, and like Donne's widespread popularity in the seventeenth century, Li's 832 pieces of prose remain a precious part of the best baroque writings ever in China, and his 594 poems cover a similar range of themes including politics, history, love, commemoration, friendship, and others. For centuries, critics had attempted to understand his biographical, political, and philosophical implications, his sensuous, dense and allusive images, as well as his satirical, masculine, humorous and sentimental styles. The comparisons to Donne aided that understanding.

Comparative study, however, does not mean finding similarities exclusively. Professor Wang Gaidi, for instance, urged how different Donne is from Qin Jia, an East Han Dynasty poet who had three valedictions left for today. Selecting Qin's first valediction—in which the poet compared his life to a morning dew, imagined his miserable existence without his beloved, and lamented on his cold, empty bed-mattress—Wang read this poem against Donne's "Forbidding Mourning" and found Qin's mattress a symbol of repeated sufferings while Donne's compass that of a happy reunification.³⁴ In the same vein, Professor Ou Rong read Donne as a sharp contrast to Liu Yong, a Northern Song Dynasty poet, especially in terms of their life experiences, cultural values, and writing techniques, her examples being Donne's "A

^{33a}"On Comparativeness between Li Shangyin and John Donne," *Journal of Haihe University*, no. 3 (2003): 68–71.

^{34a}"Same Genre, Different Style: John Donne's 'Forbidding Mourning' and Qin Jia's 'Valediction to his Beloved (1),' " *Journal of Jiaozuo Institute of Technology*, no. 2 (2003): 132–137. As to Qin Jia, little is known, not even the years of his birth and death. But there is no doubt that he was appointed governor of Luoyang during the reign of Emperor Xiaohuan (146–67). Therefore, critics generally agree that it was at his departure to his position in Luoyang that he wrote his wife three valedictions.

Valediction: Forbidding Mourning” and Liu’s “Yue Lin Ling.”³⁵ And Mr. Meng Zhiming compared Donne and Du Fu, China’s Poet-saint; he focused attention on Donne’s “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning” and Du’s “Farewell to His Newly Wedded,” and found that the two poems, though similar in subject matter, were actually very different in their speakers, addressees, rhetoric, and attitude—a study that led to a deeper appreciation of both poets.³⁶

Each of these studies is unique with significant observations, but at the same time they are all conscious of cultural differences in their attempts to understand and explain Donne’s themes, poetic features, and aesthetic values. Their deliberate attempts to understand Donne in the context of Chinese culture help to make China’s Donne scholarship a significant contribution to Donne studies worldwide.

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Besides comparative study, other integral contributions to Donne studies in China include thematic, textual, and theoretical inquiries. Thematic study has always been the mainstream of literary criticism until quite recently. In the field of Donne studies, most Chinese scholars choose to be part of that mainstream, though they differ in the ways they conduct their research. Some of them focus on individual ideas, some on a given genre, and some on a chosen poem. While papers of the first two perspectives read more like general introductions, those of the third contain more complex and thorough findings. Dr. Nan Fang, for example, by concentrating on “A Nocturnal upon S. Lucy’s Day,” has successfully justified Eliot’s praise of Donne’s treatment of the theme of nothingness, the complexity of poetic narration, and the wit of his

³⁵“Similar Valedictory Poems with Different Tones: on Donne’s ‘A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning’ and Liu Yong’s ‘Yue Lin Ling,’” *Journal of Zhejiang Wanli University*, no. 1 (2005): 80–85. Liu Yong (980?–1053) was famous for “ci,” a kind of poem with rigid rhyme and feet. “Yue Lin Ling” was one of the many musical patterns established for poets to set their words to. Liu Yong’s “Yue Lin Ling” contains 103 Chinese words arranged in two stanzas, the first depicting the poet’s bidding farewell to his friend, and the second an imagination of his lonely life after their departure.

³⁶“A Comparative Study of Donne and Du Fu,” *Journal of Yunnan Nationalities University*, no. 3 (2004): 126–128.

ambiguous and abrupt images.³⁷ Another example is the cultural reading by Professor Hu Jialuan (Peking University) of Donne's "Hymn to God," which has convinced him that most lines of this hymn point to "both Adams met in me," and that when Donne made that declaration, he was actually seeing himself as "the third Adam." Hu is equally convinced that the final three lines of this poem make up a "condensed sermon" that Donne preached to himself.³⁸ After Yang's "diluted poetry," Hu's "third Adam" and "condensed sermon" are not only scholarly and profound, but also inspiring, particularly to later scholars. Hu's greatest contribution, however, lies in his cosmic studies. To him, Renaissance poets were all cosmographers; therefore, he urges, only by cosmic significance can we fully appreciate their poetic images. This perspective on Donne he has espoused in seven essays that read Donne through an attempt to "return to the Renaissance world." Hu expanded this investigation of Donne and his world in *The Starry Sky*, an influential book in which Donne is a major figure.³⁹

The most interesting, though not necessarily the most inspiring, criticism is the effort to approach Donne in the terms of contemporary literary theory. Professor Xiong Yi of Xingtai University, for instance, employs semiotics in her study of Donne's conceits in "A Nocturnal upon S. Lucy's Day," "The Apparition," "Hymn to God my God, in my Sickness," and other poems, offering diagrams to show how semiotics

³⁷"Modernity in John Donne's Poetry Seen from 'A Nocturnal upon S. Lucy's Day,'" *Journal of Sichuan International Studies University*, no. 2 (2005): 30-34.

³⁸"The Third Adam: On Donne's 'Hymn to God, my God, in my Sickness,'" *Appreciation of Famous Literary Works*, no. 6 (1994): 9-12.

³⁹Hu's seven essays on cosmic studies concerning Donne and the Renaissance writers were published in three different journals: one in *Appreciation of Famous Literary Works*, no. 1 (1999): 90-92; another in *Journal of Sichuan International Studies University*, no. 4 (2001): 1-5; and the remaining five in *Foreign Literatures Quarterly*, no. 3 (1997): 31-39; no. 1 (1999): 29-37; no. 2 (2000): 27-35; no. 4 (2000): 63-70; and no. 4 (2002): 46-54. For his investigation into Donne in his book, see *The Starry Sky* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2001), pp. 71-90.

can help illustrate the dynamic flow of thought in Donne's works.⁴⁰ Pan Yuwen of Fuzhou Teachers College combines Searle's theory of metaphor with Young's theory of prototype in order to reveal what she calls "Donne's prototypal love." Her analysis of "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," "The Flea," "A Valediction: Of Weeping," and "The Ecstasy" led her to conclude that Donne's prototypal love is rooted in the mythology of ancient Greece.⁴¹ Professor Zhang Deming of Zhejiang University approaches the Metaphysical Poets by focusing on Donne's "Going to Bed," which he believes is typical of both male chauvinism and the post-colonialist discourses in the cultural construction of "the other."⁴² But the most important theoretical study so far is Professor Li Zhengshuan's investigation of Donne through the lens of Shklovsky's theory of defamiliarisation: *Defamiliarisation: The Poetic Art of John Donne*.⁴³ Li concludes that although living in an age of drama, Donne somehow managed to stay away from Renaissance poetic conventions by defamiliarising himself in his modes of thought, his use of images, and his application of poetic forms. Li's theoretical analysis of all Donne's poetic works, according to Professor Liu Yiqing of Peking University, is "a rare achievement" in China's Donne studies.⁴⁴

In his 1999 assessment of the state of Donne studies, John R. Roberts worried that they were becoming too abstract, too theoretical, and too argumentative.⁴⁵ Fortunately, this has never happened in China, partly because of the New Criticism, mostly because of the traditional Chinese academic emphasis on close reading. All the achievements discussed

⁴⁰"Game and Unification: Dynamic Metaphors in the Construction of Life—On the Thematic Tension of Donne's Poetry," *Journal of Xinjiang Normal University*, no. 4 (2005): 209–211.

⁴¹"The Metaphor of Love and Prototype of Love in the Poems of John Donne," *Journal of Fuzhou Teachers College* 23.5 (2001): 43–46.

⁴²"Male Chauvinism and Colonialism of Metaphysical Poets," *Journal of Zhejiang University*, no. 5 (2001): 37–42.

⁴³*Defamiliarisation: The Poetic Art of John Donne* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2001).

⁴⁴"A New Path in the Garden of Poetry" <<http://www.xinghui.com/chinese/new/shiyuan1.htm>>.

⁴⁵"John Donne's Poetry: An Assessment of Modern Criticism," in *John Donne: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. Andrew Mousley (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), pp. 353–361.

above, for example, are text-supported. My own studies of Donne, in fact, have endorsed this approach to Donne. My first monograph (which happened to be the first book on Donne in China) primarily focuses attention on the virtues of close textual readings of Donne.⁴⁶ It relies on detailed analysis of Donne's love poems, divine poems, and prose works in order to show that Donne's works are all knitted together by an interactive net. This net, simultaneously working into six categories, confirms his significance even in our times. In the same vein, as explained in my second book, *A Song of Life: On Donne's Trilogy of the Soul*, it is most important to recognize—as seen in “The Progress of the Soul,” “An Anatomy of the World,” and “The Second Anniversary”—that Donne's lengthy “trilogy” on the death of Elizabeth Drury is most profitably read as an organic whole.⁴⁷

* * * *

So—in China there has been a recent but growing interest in the works of Donne. Indeed, though only a recent interest, Donne studies in China has quickly developed to be one of China's top academic priorities in the field of English literature. A most significant aspect of this interest is evinced in the change of textbooks. None of Donne's works appear in the 1981 *Selected Readings*,⁴⁸ the first national textbook for English Literature after China restored its higher education in 1978. He and Jonson each had one poem in the 1982 anthology: Jonson's “Song to Celia” and Donne's “Death Be Not Proud.”⁴⁹ By 1988, Jonson had disappeared, while Donne had three poems: “Go and Catch a Falling Star,” “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning,” and “Death Be Not Proud.”⁵⁰ In textbooks since then, Donne is constantly given more space

⁴⁶ *A Systematic Venture into John Donne* (Chengdu: Sichuan University Press, 2001).

⁴⁷ *A Song of Life: On Donne's Trilogy of the Soul* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2005).

⁴⁸ Yang Qisheng and Sun Zhu, eds., *Selected Readings in English* (Shanghai: Shanghai Translation Press, 1981).

⁴⁹ Cheng Jia, ed., *An Anthology of English Literature* (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1982).

⁵⁰ Wu Weiren, ed., *History and Anthology of English Literature* (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 1988).

than any other English writers. Consequently, his literary significance is greatly accelerated due to the unique education system that directly leads to reader accessibility, author popularity, and academic researches.

Another development is the growth of academic projects on Donne. In 1997 when my own "Donne Study" was approved by Yunnan Education College, it became the first proposal for Donne scholarship in China. That 1,000-*yuan* project sent forth a clear message that Donne and Metaphysical Poetry were valuable additions to our academic canon of literary study. Ever since then, both the financial support and the approving organizations have been on the increase, from 5,000 *yuan* in 1998 to 80,000 *yuan* in 2006.⁵¹ On China's hierarchical assessment system, the topmost is the National Planning Office of Philosophy and Social Science (NPOPSS) which, supposedly, enlists only the most important projects for the topmost priority in terms of monetary support, academic position, and scholarly significance. By this unanimously acclaimed NPOPSS, Donne is chronologically the fifth English writer ever on that list, after only Chaucer, Shakespeare, Hardy, and Keats.⁵²

Still another development is in the area of academic awards. Even before he became, academically, one of the big five in English literature, Donne was already enlisted by many institutions into their graduate programs. One of the earliest was conducted in Yunnan University in

⁵¹Here is a list of some of the Donne projects in China:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Project Name</u>	<u>Proposed by</u>	<u>Approved by</u>	<u>Funds Received</u>
1987	Donne Studies	Yan Kui	Yunnan Education College	¥ 1,000 or \$125
1988	Donne Studies	Yan Kui	Yunnan Education Commission	¥ 5,000 or \$625
2003	Donne's Love Poetry	Xiong Yi	Hunan Education Commission	¥ 20,000 or \$2,500
2005	Donne's Poetics	Yan Kui	Southwest University	¥ 40,000 or \$5,000
2006	Donne and the Metaphysicals	Wu Di	NPOPSS	¥ 80,000 or \$10,000

The funds here listed are the "approved money" from the approving organization; the actual amount will double due to the encouragement system, if the project is approved by an approver above the university level.

⁵²See <<http://www.npopss-cn.gov.cn>>. The NPOPSS list started in 1983. Insofar as English writers are concerned, they are Chaucer in 2004, Shakespeare and Hardy in 2005, and Keats and Donne in 2006.

1988 that resulted in the 1991 "Excellent Thesis Award" issued respectively by Yunnan University and Yunnan Education Commission. This award, issued for my MA thesis entitled "Unity of Body and Soul," turned out to be the first academic award in China in the field of Donne scholarship. Since then, more and more scholars have been recognized professionally for their translation and research of Donne. An example of award in translation is granted to Professor Fu Hao as was discussed earlier in this paper; and an example of award in research is Peking University that four times issued me awards for my studies of Donne: the "All-bright Scholarship" award and the "Challenge Cup" first prize award in 2002, and the "May Fourth Scholarship" award and the "Challenge Cup" first prize award in 2003.

The fourth development that confirms the growth of Donne studies in China is serial studies that basically grow in two directions, one being the same subject studied by different scholars, the other different subjects by the same scholar. After Professor Zhang Xuechun, many scholars came to investigate Donne's "tension," making it the dominant subject in the first direction. One example is the work of Wang Dongyan, which distinguishes what she calls "language tension" and "image tension," taking "Loves Usury" as an indication of the former and "The Apparition" as that of the latter; her study shows that both language tension and image tensions are reflective of the overflow of Donne's inner anxiety.⁵³ Another example is Qin Yuhong's scholarship on what she calls "the beauty of emotional tension," which she believes is best depicted in such works as "The Anniversarie," "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," and "A Valediction: Of Weeping."⁵⁴ Even more striking are the serial studies conducted by individual scholars: Professor Hu Jialuan's seven papers, Professor Zhang Xuechun's four publications, Doctor Xiong Yi's seven articles,⁵⁵ as well as my two books and fifteen

⁵³"Tension in John Donne's Erotic Poems," *Journal of Qibihar University*, no. 3 (2006): 82-84.

⁵⁴"An Analysis of Tension in Emotion in Donne's Love Poetry," *Journal of Hubei Institute of Education*, no. 6 (2006): 9-10.

⁵⁵Besides the one in note 40, the other six are: "Harmony in Variation—Deconstruction of Petrarchan Sonnet by Donne's Poetry," *Journal of Huaihua University*, no. 4 (2006): 117-118; "On Intermediacy of John Donne and his Poetry," *Journal of Northwest University*, no. 6 (2006): 38-42; "On Donne's Metaphysical Tension," *Researches*, no. 7 (2005): 167-199; "The Construction of

essays.⁵⁶ These publications show how very determined scholars in China have become about a further and fuller understanding of Donne's works. Serial studies show that the depth and width of Donne studies promises there is more Donne scholarship to come from China.

There are problems, of course, such as the lack of a translation of Donne's complete works into Chinese, the absence of conversation among China's many Donne scholars, and the difficulties of getting access to recent publications from outside China. However, since Donne studies in China has already shown a promising future, these problems will eventually yield to the daring explorations of a new generation of scholars. These scholars will certainly add to the existing achievements

Tension of John Donne's Poetry," *Foreign Language Teaching and Translation*, no. 3 (2003): 12-14; "Pursuit for Invariableness—On Inner Tension of John Donne," *Journal of Social Science of Jiamusi University*, no. 5 (2005): 60-62; and "Conformity of Diverse Aesthetic Feelings—A construction of tension in emotion of John Donne," *Xingtai University Journal of Philosophy and Social Science*, no. 2 (2003): 119-122.

⁵⁶ These essays are: "Unity of Body and Soul," *Journal of Yunnan University Graduates*, no. 1 (1991): 31-45; "On Donne's Love Poetry," *Journal of Zhaotong Teacher's College*, no. 3 (1991): 77-87; "Donne's Poetic Features," *Journal of Zhaotong Teacher's College*, no. 4 (1992): 50-66; "A Funeral Lament on Society: Seventeenth Century England in Donne's Poetry," *Journal of Zhaotong Teacher's College*, no. 3 (1993): 2-9; "Donne's Ideas of Poetic Composition," *Journal of Zhaotong Teacher's College*, no. 4 (1994): 50-56; "An Individual Microcosm against Total Corruption," *Journal of Zhaotong Teacher's College*, no. 2 (1994): 74-78; "The Two Worlds of Donne," *Journal of Yunnan Education College*, no. S1 (1995): 77-87; "The Image of Death in Donne's Love Poetry," *Journal of Zhaotong Teacher's College*, no. 4 (1995): 94-100; "Searching for Truth," *Journal of Yunnan Normal University*, no. 5 (1996): 40-44; "Donne and the Tradition of English Poetry," in *Essays in Language and Literature*, ed. Yuan Yichuan (Chengdu: Sichuan University Press, 1999), pp. 35-42; "Donne's 'A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning,'" *Journal of Yunnan Normal University*, no. S1 (2000): 234-239; "On Donne's Cosmological Awareness," *Journal of Yunnan Normal University*, no. 3 (2001): 26-30; "Interaction: the Spell of Donne," *Journal of Peking University*, no. S1 (2001): 140-145; "Trilogy of the Soul," in *Religion and Literature*, ed. Ren Guangxuan (Beijing: People's Literature Press, 2002), pp. 98-126; "The Emblem of Love: On the Round Images in 'Forbidding Mourning,'" *Journal of Zhaotong Teacher's College*, no. 1 (2003): 39-45.

and bring home the predicted glory that is to come—to Donne and to Donne studies in China!

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