

Genre Theories from the Chinese-Western Perspective

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SUMMARY

This comparative study of classical Chinese and Western theories of literary genre notes that finally there are no fixed absolute generic rules or standards, and that literature changes and develops precisely by breaking through these conventions. Thus a key concept shared by Chinese and Western theory is that of a hierarchy or ranking of genres. But while some classical Chinese theories as well as Hegelianism, Darwinism and Formalism in the West argue for a kind of pre-determined "evolution" of generic forms, modern theorists like Bergson, Croce and Wellek have felt that literary genres change and develop in freer, more spontaneous ways.

KEY WORDS

genres
ch'ang-norm
hierarchy
decorum
p'en-t'i-generic

p'ien-transformation
determinism
evolution
wen-pattern
t'ung-pien-continuity/change



In order to compensate just a little bit for the pitiable lack of comparative studies of Chinese and Western genre theories,¹ we will make an attempt to offer a critical survey of Chinese genre theory in comparison with its Western counterpart with a focus on the theories of individual genres and general notions of genre.² In this survey, while acknowledging a number of major differences between the Western and Chinese traditions of genre theory, we will concentrate on several significant but often neglected similarities or resemblances between the two and try to offer some critical observations and comments on them.

Among the major discrepancies between Chinese and Western genre theories, the following points are found to be the most salient and thus the most significant. Historically, Western genre theory, the *fons et origo* of which was Aristotle's (384-322 B.C.) critical and rhetorical writings, emerged somewhat earlier than Chinese genre theory, which was adumbrated in Hsün Tzu's 荀子 (c. 313-238 B.C.) and Yang Hsiung's 揚雄 (53 B.C.-18 A.D.) critical pronouncements, and was considerably elaborated, developed, and refined in the Roman period. But, after the fourth century, Western genre theory gradually waned and sank into the Middle Ages, and was not revived, solidified, and greatly developed until the Renaissance. Contrary to the winding path trodden by Western genre theory, Chinese genre theory began to thrive and prosper in the dynasties parallel to those of the Roman period, and continued to be active and influential in Chinese literary

theory and criticism all the way to the last dynasty, the Ch'ing dynasty (1616-1911), with little hitches or interruptions.

Traditionally, Chinese genre theory was, as James Hightower points out, closely associated with anthology making (513), whose tradition was started by Chih Yü 摯虞 (?-311 A.D.), a very influential figure in the history of Chinese genre theory. But this tradition was hardly conspicuous in its Western counterpart.

Relatively speaking, the Chinese writers, critics, and theorists who followed Chih Yü's tradition of genre theory seemed to have a stronger historical sense than most of the Western ones, although many of their pronouncements on the origin and evolution of genres were unreliable, hasty, and even false.

Chinese genre theory was usually obsessed with the strict and minute differentiation between diverse genres, whereas its Western counterpart obstinately indulged in the discrimination between major genres (drama, lyric, and epic), especially after the Roman period.

Since in China *hsi-chü* 戲劇 (drama) and *hsiao-shuo* 小說 (fiction) were not treated as serious literature but as mere entertainment until the turn of this century, almost all the genres treated in Chinese genre theory and criticism pertained to the two main categories: *shih* 詩 (poetry) and *wen* 文 (prose) exclusively. In contrast, Western genre theory, which can be traced back to Aristotle, who made the first systematic study of a dramatic genre, i.e., tragedy, paid great attention to drama and poetry, and little or no attention to literary prose and fiction before the rise of the novel.

It is easy for those with discerning eyes to see that in Chinese genre theory, highly metaphorical and foggy epithets are often employed to describe or define the nature and characteristic features of genres, and that there are few formal and logical analyses of genres. This is not the case in Western genre theory, which is characterized by its strong inclination

to formalistic logical, and systematic analysis of genres. This common practice is also traceable to Aristotle, who was the first critic to analyze tragedy as a genre from the perspective of literary forms in a systematic fashion.

In spite of these major disparities between Chinese and Western genre theories, however, we have, in the meantime, detected a number of similarities between the two. In what follows, we will concentrate on four major resemblances that are often neglected but actually very significant.

The first one is that very much like literary theory which is closely linked and inseparably intertwined with rhetorical study, literary genre theory is, from its very beginning, closely interrelated with rhetoric or the art of composition, especially stylistics. This fact is not only true of Western generic tradition, but also true of its Chinese counterpart.

In the West, this phenomenon can be traced back partially to Plato (c.427-348 B.C.) and mainly to Aristotle. It is widely acknowledged that despite his notorious attack on poetry, Plato was the pioneer in the classification of poetry into forms or styles in terms of enunciation. His insightful pronouncements on the essence and function of tragedy and comedy were also very insightful and influential (Atkins 55-57). His valuable contribution to the study of rhetorical art cannot be ignored, either, for he not only offered a new direction to earlier theorizing, but also put forward several general principles which were to be fundamental to and characteristic of all later studies of rhetoric (Atkins 58).

Historically, we can say with little exaggeration that Aristotle's *Poetics* is not only the first systematic study of poetry, but also a full-length study of literary genres. It is, therefore, in the *Poetics* that Aristotle started the Western tradition of theory of individual genres. The Aristotelian tradition was so faithfully inherited by the subsequent generations that their genre theories, especially those in the Roman period and the Renaissance, were nothing but the

exegesis, elaboration, and variation of Aristotle's matrix theory (Frye 243, Dubrow 47, Huisman 123). A brief glance at the post-Aristotelian imitative "poetic" works will suffice to prove that this observation is quite correct and pertinent.³

Insightful and valuable remarks on genre are also found in abundance in the *Rhetoric*, in which its author laid down a less known criterion for the classification of literature, i.e., verse as the differentia of poetry. The discussion of style in Book III was both a significant part of his rhetorical doctrine and a major contribution to the theory of literary style in general. These pronouncements in the *Rhetoric* exerted a tremendous and enduring influence upon the later Greek and Roman theorists and rhetoricians such as Theophrastus (c.370-285 B.C.), Cicero (106-43 B.C.), and Quintilian (c.35-99 A.D.). The fact that the *Poetics* was lost from the Alexandrian times to the fifteenth century in which it was rediscovered made the *Rhetoric* more important and influential (Spingarn 11). Aristotle's influence was achieved mainly through Horace's (65-8 B.C.) *Ars Poetica*, which can serve as an excellent example of "the merging of poetic with rhetoric" (Baldwin ix). Another prevalent and influential work at that time was the *Rhetorica ad herennium* generally attributed to Cicero. This study of rhetoric was devoted largely to style, for "rhetoric was generally a lore of style" at that time (Baldwin ix).

As a matter of fact, in classical antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance, the study of rhetoric was so prevailing and powerful that it not only conditioned poetics, but also predominated it. Therefore, it was poetry that fell under the wing of rhetoric, and not the other way around. Accordingly, many literary genres were at the same time the rhetorical genres, and these two sorts of genres were inextricably intertwined and difficult to separate from one another. Both rhetoric and poetics were concerned with genres, verse forms, metrics, and other formal properties of both literary and rhetorical works. Prosody was, for instance,

widely considered as a common ground shared by both rhetoric and poetics, and stylistics was also one of the major mutual concerns of the two. The phenomenon that poetics and rhetoric are inseparably intertwined can be easily observed from the Neoclassicism to the present century. The practice of the New Criticism in the 1940's and 1950's affords a good example.

Like Western genre theory, Chinese literary genre theory is also inseparably intertwined with *tso-fa* 作法 or the art of composition, especially the study of style. Hsün Tzu, probably the first writer keenly aware of the generic differences between *shih* 詩 (song) and other non-literary genres, made a distinction between the four categories (*feng* 風, *hsiao-ya* 小雅, *ta-ya* 大雅, and *sung* 頌) in *Shih* 詩 (Songs), which was to become the *Shih-ching* 詩經 (*Book of Songs*) (Chu Tung-jun 7-8). Yang Hsiung noticed some characteristics of *tz'u* 辭 (elegy) and *shih* poets: "Though it is appropriate for a *shih* poet to write *fu* 賦 (rhapsody) in an ornate fashion, it is excessive for a *tz'u* poet to compose *fu* in a flowery manner" 詩人之賦麗以則, 辭人之賦麗以淫. (qtd. in Chu Tung-jun 15). Wang Ch'ung 王充 (27-?100 A.D.) overtly attacked *fu* and *sung* 頌 (eulogy) for their ambiguity: "If abstruse and elegant style makes the sense hard to understand, you have nothing better than *fu* or *sung*" 深覆典雅, 指意難親, 唯賦頌耳.⁴ From the above observations it is easily discerned that all these three writers are equally concerned with the stylistic features of the genres in question and with their generic characteristics. It is from here that the close interrelationship between generic pronouncements and stylistics is revealed, which was to characterize Chinese genre theory from its very beginning and to exert an enormous and prolonged influence on the theories of genre to come.

In the Wei, Chin, Southern and Northern Dynasties 魏晉南北朝 (220-580 A.D.) in which Chinese literary theory and criticism began to thrive and flourish, a variety of monographs

and treatises on literature started to appear for the first time in the history of Chinese literary criticism, and that anthologies of literary works began to appear in abundance. All these monographs, treatises, and anthology prefaces offered general and in-depth discussions of literary genres. In Ts'ao P'i's 曹丕 (178-226) "Lun-Wen" 論文 ("Essay on Literature"), the earliest extant treatise on literature, he had this to say about genres:

All writings are essentially the same, but the specific forms are not alike. Therefore, *tsou* (memorial) and *i* (deliberation) should be elegant; *shu* (letter) and *lun* (essay) should be logical; *ming* (inscription) and *lei* (dirge) should be faithful to the facts; *shih* (song) and *fu* (rhapsody) should be flowery. These four divisions differ from one another, and thus people versed in all of them are rare; only a universal genius is at home in them all. (Li Shan 720)⁵

夫文，本同而未異，蓋奏議宜理，銘誄尚實，詩賦欲麗。此四科不同，故能之者偏也，唯通才能備其體。

In the wake of Ts'ao P'i's observation, Lu Chi 陸機 (261-303) made some furtherance of genre theory by expanding the list of genres and elaborating the stylistic features of the genres in the list. Like Ts'ao P'i, Lu Chi was mainly interested in prescribing the rules for the composition of literary works, and in making distinction between genres by highlighting dominant stylistic features of each genre. Another salient feature he inherited from Ts'ao P'i is that he was inclined to employ highly metaphorical epithets to describe the characteristics of genres. Together with Ts'ao P'i, Lu Chi established the long tradition of using highly ambiguous metaphors and profoundly abstruse epithets to depict the features of genres. This tradition is, as Chi Hsien-lin 季羨林 rightly points out, not only typical of Chinese genre theory,

but also of Chinese literary theory as a whole (qtd. in Lu K'ang-hua & Sun Ching-yao 185).

In Chih Yü's *Wen-chang liu-pieh chi* 文章流別集 (*Collection of Literary Writings Divided by Genres*), the first known anthology of diverse genres, he provided a brief-but-to-the-point observation on the stylistic characteristics, historical origins and development of each genre under investigation. Herein lies his greatest contribution to Chinese literary criticism: he started the long-cherished tradition of anthology making with emphasis on the segregation of individual genres and the historical aspect of genres. Although Chih Yü's anthology which contained a two-volume monograph on genres entitled *Wen-chang liu-pieh chih lun* 文章流別志論 (*Records of and Discourses on Literary Writings Divided by Genres*) was lost, its positive and sustained influence upon the ensuing genre theories can never be overemphasized.

Twenty-one of the total fifty chapters of Liu Hsieh's (c.466-532) well-known *Wen-hsin tiao-lung* 文心雕龍 (*The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragon*), the first comprehensive and systematic monograph on literature in the history of Chinese literary theory and criticism, were devoted to the examination of thirty-five genres and many more subgenres. They were not only concerned with the general generic problems (such as generic features, definitions, origins, and development, etc.), but more importantly, they also analyzed and summarized the writing experience and techniques established before the Chin dynasty (265-420). In the last chapter "Hsü-chih" 序志, Liu Hsieh gave a clear explanation about the purpose, arrangement, and methods of these twenty-one chapters:

In discussing *wen* (rhymed writings) and *pi* (unrhymed writings), I have made a distinction between separate genres, and traced each genre back to its fountainhead in order to explain its development; I have defined literary terms in order to clarify their meanings; and I

have also selected a number of works for treatment in each segment, and advanced arguments in order to maintain their unity. (*WHTL* 418-19)⁶

若乃論文敍筆，則函別區分；原始以表末，釋名以章義，選文以定篇，敷理以學統。

Chung Hung's (Chung Jung's) 鍾嶸 (?-c.518) *Shih-p'in* 詩品 (*Classes of Poetry*), the first extant critical monograph exclusively on one poetic genre, the five-word-line poem, divided one hundred and twenty-two poets under investigation into three main classes: high, medium, and low, and treated them mainly from the perspective of their *feng-ke* 風格 (styles). Like Aristotle's *Poetics*, which was followed by an endless list of epigonic poetics, Chung Hung's monograph was followed by a long list of *shih-hua* 詩話 (on *shih* poetry), all of which were critical treatises and monographs on one poetic genre only.⁷ In fact, *Shih-p'in*'s influence on literary criticism was so tremendous that it was partially, if not largely, responsible for the creation and establishment of the critical tradition that stresses the study of *shih* poetry as a genre. This tradition remained very prevalent and influential in literary criticism until the early Republican years. Other generic studies on specific genre, such as *fu* or *tz'u*, were also based on the principles of the tradition.⁸

Like the Western post-Aristotelian genre theories which are nothing but the exegesis, elaboration, and variation of Aristotle's theory, the Chinese genre theories after Chih Yü, Liu Hsieh, and Chung Hung can also be regarded as the mere explanation, exposition, and enlargement of these three critics' genre theories. Among the typical examples that represent these theories in the following dynasties are Ssu-k'ung T'u's 司空圖 *Erh-shih-ssu shih-p'in* 二十四詩品 (*Twenty-four Classes of Poetry*), Yao Hsüan's 姚鉉 *T'ang-wen ts'ui* 唐文粹 (*Essence of the T'ang Writings*), and Hsü Shih-tseng's 徐師曾 *Wen-t'i ming-pien* 文體明辯 (*Clear Differentiation of Genres*).

Now it becomes clear that both Chinese and Western genre theories are characterized by the crucial but often ignored fact that genre theory is, like literary theory, inseparably intertwined and closely interrelated with rhetoric or the art of composition from its very beginning. This fact strongly supports Alastair Fowler's idea that "generic repertoires," or the whole range of potential points of resemblance that a genre may exhibit, "may be either formal or substantive" (55). Concurring with Wellek's and Warren's opinion that grouping of genres should be based "upon both outer form (specific metre, or structure) and also upon inner form (attitude, tone, purpose—more crudely, subject and audience)" (231), Fowler holds that the whole of the generic repertoires should include such constituents as representational aspect, external structure, metrical structure, size, scale, subject, value, mood, style, the reader's task, generic name, and signal (54-129). If we want to offer an examination of the sonnet as a genre, for instance, we not only have to talk about its external aspects, i.e., its meters, its rhyme schemes, and its formal structures, closing couplets, the number of lines, and the like, but also have to analyze its internal aspects, the lyrical mode, the love theme, the longing or melancholy tone, and so on. It cannot be determined exclusively by one single nonessential constituent of the repertoires. Historically, a sonnet usually has fourteen lines, but an epigram may also have the same number of lines; besides, a sonnet may also contain sixteen lines, as the Elizabethan sonnet sometimes does. Therefore, the external form alone cannot be used as the only gauge for generic identification or determination. Here we should stress another important point that not all the elements of the repertoires have to be present in every instance of the genre, for they are only potential points of resemblance that a genre may exhibit (Fowler 55). For example, unlike the sonnet, the novel genres are normally short of metrical structures, and the epigram cannot be as

extended as the epic genre in terms of its size and scale.

The second major similarity shared by Western genre theory and its Chinese counterpart is that a great emphasis is laid on the question of generic fixity or flexibility and on the establishment of stringent or flexible rules for genres. As for the first case, it is especially true of the Roman and Neoclassicist writers, rhetoricians, and theorists in the West, and it is also true of many Chinese writers, critics, and theorists, especially of the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties.

In the West the warm advocates' attribution to Aristotle for his taking the initiative to establish rigid rules for genres is far from being correct. The following quotation from the *Poetics* cogently proves that Aristotle took a rather lenient attitude towards generic change and evolution:

Tragedy, as well as comedy, was from the beginning an improvisation. From its early form tragedy was developed little by little as the authors added what presented itself to them. After going through many alterations, tragedy ceased to change, having come to its full natural stature. (*Poetics* 49a, 11-15)

In actuality, it was not Aristotle but the Roman writers who were mainly responsible for the hardening of the rigid rules for genres. Among the typical Roman critics and rhetoricians were Cicero, Horace, and Quintilian. In his *De optimo genere oratorum*, Cicero placed a great emphasis on the strict segregation of genres. He was followed by Quintilian whose *Institutio oratoria* also stressed the importance of distinct differentiation of genres. Horace, who invented the notorious term "*lex operis*" (the law of genre), began his *Ars poetica* with the admonition that a mixed genre would surely do damage to the unity and coherence of a literary work:

Suppose a painter chose to couple a horse's neck with a

human head, and to lay feathers of every hue on limbs gathered here and there, so that a woman, lovely above, foully ended in an ugly fish below, would you restrain your laughter, my friend, if admitted to a private view? (lines 1-5).

Emphasizing the demand for generic purity and importance of separation between comedy and tragedy, Horace observed that "A theme that belongs to comedy will not be set forth in the verse of tragedy Each has its becoming place allotted: let them keep to it" (lines 89-92).

Another significant feature of Horace's genre criticism is his equally tremendous emphasis on the law of *decorum*, or propriety, which is essential in every poetic genre. According to Horace, each genre should be in conformity with the law of *decorum*, and be marked off from the others as having properties and rules of its own. This notion of *decorum*, derived from the Platonic and Aristotelian tradition (Dubrow 48, D'Alton 116, Wimsatt & Brooks 80), is deeply rooted in the works of Horace and the other Roman rhetoricians. As J. F. D'Alton points out, "Cicero bears witness to the universality of the law of *Decorum* both in literature and life, while Horace agrees with him in regarding the observation of the law as the foundation of all success in the art of letters" (423).

The principle of *decorum* exerted, mainly through Cicero and Horace, a tremendous impact on the later critics and theorists, especially those in the Renaissance and the Neoclassical period, because it was closely and inseparably linked with genre theory and criticism ever since the Ciceronian age. Some Renaissance writers strongly argued for and buttressed the idea of generic change and alteration by setting up new rules for the newly emerging genres peculiar to their national literatures, whereas such theorists like Antonio Minturno (c. 1500-1574), who were in favor of the immutability and the permanence of literary genres, attacked the legitimacy

of new genres like romance and tragicomedy by opposing the notion of generic alteration and change (Dubrow 56). But at the hands of the Neoclassicists like Pierre Corneille (1606-1684), John Dryden (1631-1700), and Alexander Pope (1688-1744), the generic rules formulated and established by the Roman writers were further hardened and petrified. As Wellek and Warren rightly point out, "Classical theory is regulative and prescriptive. . . . Classical theory not only believes that genre differs from genre, in nature and in glory, but also that they must be kept apart, not allowed to be mixed" (233-34).

While emphasizing the Roman and Neoclassical genre theorists' intense preoccupation with high respect for the generic rules, we do not intend to give the wrong impression that they absolutely and positively did not allow any infringement on and deviation from those generic laws and rules. In actuality, their obsession with and respect for generic precepts were often exaggerated and overemphasized. Even in the times when the Roman and Neoclassical credos about genres enjoyed their highest esteem and popularity, their advocates still permitted a certain amount of flexibility about the generic regulations.

Horace, who was often considered the typical representative of the Roman theorists obsessed with generic prescription, for instance, did allow some deviation from and flexibility in the generic regulations. Although he respected the primary distinctions between certain genres, he was not at all times disposed to regard the law of the genre as something unchangeable and everlasting. This is clear from the fact that he tried to establish the new "*lex operis*" for satire (D'Alton 420 & 422). Quintilian also held a very similar view in his *Institutiones Oratoriae* (Dubrow 52).

Neither were the important Neoclassicists like Corneille, Dryden, and Pope as inflexible and stringent about the generic regulations as they were often claimed to be. In his "Dedicatory Epistle" to *La Suivante*, Corneille wrote:

Not that I am a slave to these strict exactions; I love to follow the rules, but far from being their slave, I enlarge them or narrow them down according to the demand of my subjects, and I break without scruple even that which concerns the action, when its severity seems to me absolutely incompatible with the beauties of the events I am describing. . . . We should then, if possible, add the rules, so as not to displease the learned, but to get applause from everyone. (Rpt. in Gilbert 575)

Corneille's faithful English disciple, Dryden, also took issue with the French who servilely adhered to the generic laws and rules (Gilbert 628-29). Pope's famous lines (lines 142-49) in his *An Essay on Criticism* also echoed Corneille's and Dryden's leniency towards generic rules.

Interestingly enough, the Western genre theorists' obsession with generic prescription and their high respect for the generic regulations find very similar parallels in Chinese genre theory. If we go back to the main font of Chinese genre theory, i.e., the critics and theorists of genre in the Wei and Chin dynasties (220-420), we can easily detect an apparent tendency towards strict differentiation of genres and generic prescription. Ts'ao P'i's statement we have quoted above can be taken as the first attempt in the history of Chinese genre theory to prescribe basic rules for the genres concerned with a focus on their stylistic features. The term "i" 宜, meaning "ought to," clearly conveys a strong sense of prescriptiveness. Lu Chi followed suit in his "Wen-fu" 文賦 ("Rhapsody on Literature"). He took one big step forward by expounding and elaborating Ts'ao's pronouncement about the generic features in terms of style.

Meanwhile, however, like Western genre theorists and critics, both Ts'ao and Lu also allowed a certain amount of flexibility about genres. Ts'ao's concept of *ch'i* 氣, literally

meaning "air," "vapor," or "breath," refers to individual genius or personal style, and thus implicitly suggests the variation of styles and the alterations and changes of genres.⁹ Lu Chi asserted that "As an object, literature presents many appearances; as a form, it undergoes constant changes" 體有萬殊，物無一量。(Li Shan 241).

In the Chin dynasty, Ts'ao's and Lu's prescriptive credo was faithfully inherited by Li Ch'ung 李充 (fl. 4th c.) and Chih Yü. Following Ts'ao's "On Literature," Li Ch'ung also employed the term *i* in his pronouncements about the genres discussed in his now lost *Han-lin lun* 翰林論 (*On Han-lin*) (Ch'un Pin-chieh 22). The key word of the title of Chih Yü's *Wen-chang liu-pieh chih lun* is "liu-pieh" 流別, which mainly has two meanings: "source and course (of a river)," and "genre." It is quite apparent that the word carries a strong implication of the origin and development of genres. More importantly, for the first time in the history of literary genre theory these two theorists who had a strong sense of history placed an unusual emphasis on tracing the origin of genres, their evolution and development, and their ramifications. Chih Yü attributed all the prevailing verse forms (three-, four-, five-, six-, seven-, and nine-word-line poems) of his times to their sole fountainhead, *Shih-ching* (Yen K'e-chün 77.8b). He held that the form of the four-word-line poem was the dominant one, which occasionally commingled with lines of different length, and that in later times these irregular non-four-line poems developed (*yen* 演) into the full-fledged and accepted poetic forms. Chih Yü also traced the origin and evolution of the other poetic forms like *sung* 頌, *fu* 賦, *chen* 箴, *ming* 銘, and *lei* 誄, etc. (Yen K'e-chün 77.8a).

In the Southern and Northern dynasties 南北朝 (420-589) in which Chinese genre theory began to flourish, such important genre theorists and critics as Liu Hsieh, Jen Fang 任昉 (460-508),¹⁰ and Hsiao T'ung 蕭統 (501-531), following the way paved by Ts'ao P'i, Lu Chi, Li Ch'ung, and Chih Yü, were

obsessed with generic separation, generic prescription, and generic *liu-pieh* or source and development of genres. Like their Western counterparts, they stressed the necessity of the establishment of strict rules for genres while allowing some alteration and flexibility. Liu Hsieh was of the opinion that "*shih* has fixed genres." 詩有恆裁. Like his predecessors, he also prescribed generic rules according to the stylistic features (*WHTL* II, 132).

Liu Hsieh criticized Pan Ku's 班固 and Fu I's 傅毅 *fu* writing for its abnormal length, which resembled *hsü* 序 (preface) and *yin* 引 (introduction) more than *fu*. He called it a *miu-t'i* 謬體 (false genre). In the same chapter, he also accused Ts'ao Chih 曹植 and Lu Chi of their mixture of genres by regarding their *fu* writing as an *e t'i* 訛體 (erroneous genre), and not an authentic *fu* genre. At the same time, however, Liu Hsieh was also supportive of the concepts of *p'ien-t'i* 變體 (generic change or altered genre), *ts'an-t'i* 參體 (commingling of genres), and most importantly, *t'ung-pien* 通變 (continuity and change). The concept of *t'ung-pien*, which serves as the title of chapter 29 of *Wen-hsin tiao-lung*, was derived from the *I Ching* 易經 (*Book of Changes*) (Tökei 136). Liu Hsieh spelled out the dialectic relationship between *ch'ang* 常 (norm or convention) and *t'ung-pien* in these words:

Genres of literary writing are definite, but the stylistic methods to change literary compositions are multifarious. . . . Due to the fact that the names of the genres correspond to their content, they must rely upon established credos; but, owing to the constant continuity and change, the stylistic methods must be based on new cadences and modes. (*WHTL* II, 119)

夫設文之體有常，變文之數無方 . . . 名理有常，體必資於故實；
通變無方，數必酌於新聲。

It is clear from the above remarks that Liu believed that

generic regulations were alterable and changeable, that in order to make progress in literary creation and criticism, one should make bold to invent new things and establish new laws for the newly formulated genres. He concluded the chapter with these lines:

Literature changes and thus endures; it maintains continuity and thus is not deficient. Follow the times and achieve definite results; use the opportunities, for there is nothing to fear. Look toward the present and create the unusual; consult the ancients to establish the laws. (WHTL II, 128)

變則其久，通則不乏。趨時必果，乘機無怯。望今製奇，參古定法。

The concept of *t'ung-pien*, which suggests a dialectical relationship between *pien* 變 (change) and *heng* 衡 (perseverance) is also the pith and marrow of Hsiao Tung, the principal compiler of *Wen-hsüan* 文選 (*Collection of Literature*), whose genre theory appeared a little after Lu Hsieh's monograph on literature. Like Liu Hsieh, Hsiao T'ung based his concept of *ch'ang* on *I Ching*. At the very outset of the preface to *Wen-hsüan*, Hsiao T'ung cited a well-known quotation from *I Ching*: "Observe the patterns in the sky to perceive the changes of seasons; observe the patterns of men to transform the whole world." 觀乎天文，以察時變；觀乎人文，以化成天下 (WHTL I, 1). Making an analogy between the natural changes and the alterations of literature, he concluded that "It changes with passing time, and it is hard to know it in full detail" (Ibid.) 隨時變改，難可詳悉。

Fan Ying-ping's 範應賓 keen observation is a good example to illustrate the dialectic relationship between generic law and generic change: "Breaching a law is illegal, and obeying it is also illegal; appropriating its essence, neither breaching nor obeying it seems to disinherit it, but in actuality does not discontinue it at all" (qtd. in *Kuan chui*

p'ien 889). 離法非法，合法亦非法；若離若合，政其妙處不傳，而實未嘗不傳。 Another example is found in *Nan-ch'i shu: Chang Jung-chuan* 南齊書：張融傳 (*Chang Jung's Biography, Book of the Southern Ch'i Dynasty*): "How can literature have invariable genres? But that it has genres is common, and that it often has genres is appropriate" 夫文豈有常體，但以有體爲常，政當使常有其體 (qtd. in *Kuan chui p'ien* 889). Wang Jo-hsü's 王若虛 (1174-1243) pertinent remark in his *Wen-pien* 文辯 (*Differentiation of Literature*) is also redolent of Fan Ying-ping's observation (qtd. in *Kuan chui p'ien* 889). In the T'ang dynasty in which poetry and its criticism enjoyed their prosperity, we have found that some poets also expressed their opinions in their poems in favor of the dialectic concept of genre.¹¹

The critical review and analysis in this segment has forcefully led us to the conclusion that since there are no hard and fast rules for genres, one should both respect them and be bold in breaking them when making innovations. This is similar to Jacques Derrida's "a law of the law of genre" (57). The development, improvement, and perfection of literature lie, in fact, in the proper balancing of these two extreme poles: the respect and disrespect for the generic law. Literature is convention, and so are its genres (Levin 16). Since conventions are not invariable and frozen, but alterable and mutable, they will alter with times in order to meet the needs of the new age, and will change with loci or places in order to adapt themselves in the new environment. As a matter of fact, it is from the proper alterations and changes that literature acquires its rigor and vitality. Without them, literature would soon become sluggish, stagnant, and lifeless.

In literary writing, generic regulations are of course indispensable, but they are not established to fetter one's hands and feet. Instead, a genre "offers a challenge by provoking a free spirit to transcend the limitations of previous examples" (Fowler 31). What is more, "Prescriptive genres encourage the writer to break new ground. He has a choice.

He may go beyond the domain of established genres or he may prefer variations within a familiar genre" (Fowler 29). A genre has, therefore, a powerful function, both passive and active, for it both regulates and encourages the development and creation of individual works. If a writer keeps himself or herself completely within the pale of a given genre and has nothing generically new to add to it, he or she can be called an invertebrate writer, who slavishly stays in a rut trodden by the foregoing writers. If the writer vacillates between or slightly crosses the generic boundary and adds something new to it, he or she can be called an unconventional writer, who is impatient with the old rut; and if the writer goes far beyond the generic borderline, consciously or otherwise, and produces something totally new, he or she can be called an original writer, who is bold enough to blaze new trails.

Here there are three different cases. In the first one where there is no generic change whatsoever, the generic function is mainly passive and regulative; in the second where there is a little bit but not much change, the generic function is both positive and negative; and in the last case where there is a radical or complete change, the generic function is highly positive denominator elements has undergone a fundamental change, which has in turn given rise to a radical change in the quality of them--this is the very site whereon the change from one genre to another takes place. In the second case, the slight alteration is not significant and large enough to cause a fundamental quantitative and thus qualitative change. But it is the accumulative and constant insignificant alterations and variations that eventually generate the fundamental generic transformation in the last case. This strongly supports Mikhail M. Bakhtin's notion of "parody" (141-42). According to the theory of Bakhtin, it is in the very process of defamiliarization and parody that the writer both negates and confirms, both breaks away from and develops the tradition that he or she tries to parody.

The third major similarity between Western and Chinese genre theory is that hierarchical systems of genres play a highly significant role in both traditions. Normally, a hierarchy of genres is formed on the basis of either forms or subject matters, and most often of styles or *feng-ke*, which in turn rest on the value and importance of subject matters.

In the West, the first hierarchical system of genres can be traced back, once again, to the *Poetics*, in which Aristotle put forward three criteria for distinguishing various poetic kinds: the medium, the object, and the manner of imitation. About the second distinction he observed that because the objects of imitation were men in action, we must represent men either as worse than, or better than, or as they were in actual life. Accordingly, the distinction between tragedy and comedy lay in the fact that the former aimed at representing men as better than, and the latter as worse than in real life. As for the distinction between tragedy and epic, Aristotle asserted that although both were imitations of serious matters, tragedy was superior to epic. Thus the first hierarchical system of genres was implicitly formed: tragedy was the superior form, epic was lower than tragedy but higher than comedy, which was placed at the bottom.

Closely related to the hierarchy of genres is the notion of decorum, which is "the notion that certain subjects require appropriate forms and styles" (Dubrow 48). For instance, since comedy represents men worse than they are in actual life, its subject matter must be low and not serious, and consequently its style must be low as well. If a comedy imitated men of higher type, which requires high style and grand subject matter, this would mean a serious breach of decorum. Aristotle's initiative pronouncements on the ranks of tragedy, epic, and comedy were to generate and excite ceaseless heated debates among the subsequent theorists and critics of how literary genres were properly ranked. Although the later theorists and critics all turned to Aristotle for succor, few of

them stuck by his hierarchical system. Instead, they all, more or less, modified, altered, and changed it in conformity with different demands, temperaments, vogues of their ages.

By the time of the Roman ages, Aristotle's hierarchical system began to undergo significant alterations and changes. Cicero's list of main genres was extended from Aristotle's list of three genres to that of five genres: tragedy, comedy, epic, lyric, and dithyramb (Atkins Vol. II, 37-38). Herein lie some obvious alterations and modifications. First, although tragedy still retained the dominant place, and yet comedy was placed before epic in the sequence. Secondly, lyric which had not been found in *Poetics* was included into the list, and dithyramb, only very briefly mentioned by Aristotle, also entered into the list. By the Horatian age, epic had already replaced tragedy which had lost its absolute superior position in the hierarchical system of genres at that time, and the other formerly minor genres, such as elegy, iambic, pastoral, and satire were elevated and placed in the list of main genres (Fowler 219-21).

These hierarchical systems established by the Roman writers, together with Aristotle's, were to become the main sources of the hierarchical schemes of the latter generations, especially those in the Renaissance and the Neoclassic period. The Renaissance critics such as Julius Caesar Scaliger (1484-1558), Antonio Minturno, Joachim Du Bellay (1522-1560), Pierre de Ronsard (1524?-1585), Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586), John Harington (1561-1612), although following the hierarchical tradition of Greek and Roman writers, oftentimes deviated, more and less, from "Aristotle's own ranking of literary forms" (Dubrow 57). Many of them asserted that it was epic that deserved the title of the highest genre. The categorization and arrangement of genres were often made in terms of styles in which they should be composed and of the social class that they concerned (Dubrow 57). This kind of practice confirms, once more, the point we have made before

that genre theory is closely intertwined with and inseparable from rhetoric.

Moreover, the hierarchical systems of genres had a great deal to do with the notion of decorum, which not only buttressed the hierarchy of society at that time but also served as a tool of great critical usefulness (Hall 63). Scaliger divided styles into three categories: the high (*altiloqua*), the low (*infima*), and the middle (*media*); Minturno also had a similar triad of styles: the grand (*grande*), the humble (*humile*), and the middle (*mezzana*); closely following suit, Torquato Tasso (1544-1595) also distinguished among styles the magnificent (*magnifica*), the humble (*humile*), and the mediocre (*mediocre*).

The use of a certain style rested upon the subject matter, and thus decorum was the appropriation of style to subject matter. The grand style was employed to describe great persons (such as gods, heroes, kings, generals, etc.) and great deeds; the low style was used to portray inferior figures (sailors, merchants, servants, and hostlers, etc.) and trivial things; and the middle style was used to describe the everyday people and everyday events. Many English and French Renaissance critics, rhetoricians, and theorists, following the Italian precursors, echoed in their genre theory and criticism.

Even though an entire picture of all the major hierarchical systems of genres in each given historical moment cannot be provided, one thing is at least assured that in these systems alterations and mutations, sometimes less and sometimes more, did take place along with passing time in order to meet the needs and demands of the changed conditions and environments. As we have briefly stated above, thanks to its length and comprehensiveness needed by the era at that time, epic "usurped" the highest position of tragedy which no longer retained its superiority in the generic hierarchy in and after the Horatian age. And as an inclusive and comprehensive genre, epic retained its superior place in the Renaissance and even the Neoclassic period. What is more significant is that

for a vast variety of reasons a few formerly insignificant and obscure genres gained a rapid ascendancy over some of those major genres that had enjoyed their superiority in the past. Fowler illustrates the changes in the generic hierarchy by tracing the changed status, i.e., the ascendancy and fluctuation of several genres: pastoral, epigram, satire, and georgic, etc. He argues that "heights of style and of value are very closely associated" (225), and that it is the value of a genre that determines the status of the genre in the hierarchy. Limited by space, here we will rehearse just one striking example--that of epigram which we think will be sufficient to evince our point. In classical antiquity, epigram never made an appearance in any list of major genres. By the time of the Renaissance, for the first time it was included into a list of major genres by John Harington. But he placed it in the low place in the list. Francis Meres (1565-1647) and Edward Phillips (1630-1696?) also ranked it in the lowest place in their lists. But the early Neoclassicists like Dryden and Nicholas Boileau (1636-1696?) also ranked it in the lowest place in their lists. But the early Neoclassicists like Dryden and Nicholas Boileau (1636-1711) elevated it into a much higher position, which was just lower than epic, tragedy, and satire, and higher than lyric (ode), elegy, and pastoral (Fowler 222). There are two reasons for the rapid ascendancy of epigram: historically, the Greek Anthology appeared in the nick of time in the early 17th century; socially, the brevity and freedom of epigram were ideally fitted into a period of drastic change and transformation (Fowler 222-23).

As may be seen from the observation above, the hierarchical systems of genres are, far from being immutable and fixed, subject to undergoing alterations and mutations in accordance with the changes of passing time. They may remain stable for some time, but eventually they have to alter and change in order to meet the needs and the demands of the changed circumstances. Therefore, the stability of the generic

hierarchy is relative, and its mutation or transformation absolute.

A very similar phenomenon is also found in Chinese genre theory. Chih Yü was probably the first Chinese critic to stress the distinction between *cheng* 正 (orthodox) and *pu-cheng* 不正 (unorthodox). He observed that "As to the elegant verses, the four-word-line poem is the orthodox; and the rest, though its variants, are unorthodox." 然則雅音之韻，四言爲正，其餘雖備曲折之體，而非音之正也 (Yen K'e-chün 77.8). He was also of the opinion that the genres like *t'u-ch'en* 圖讖 (prediction) did not pertain to the category of main genres. He attributed the generic changes in the hierarchy to the changed dictions and speeches of the genres (Ibid. 77.9).

Following suit, Liu Hsieh also held the same view: "The four-word-line poem is the orthodox genre, and is characterized by its elegance and grace; whereas the five-word-line poem is a derived form, and is characterized by its purity and floridity" 若夫四言正體，則雅潤爲本；五言流調，則清麗居宗。 (WHTL II, 69). He also described genres like *tui-wen* 對問 (dialogue), *ch'i* 七 (seven), and *lien-chu* 連珠 (string of beads) as "small branches of literature, inferior genres written in times of leisure" 文章之枝派，暇豫之未造也 (WHTL I, 186). Chung Hung's convincing apology for the five-word-line poem in his *Shi-p'in* enabled it to gain a very high position in the list of major poetic genres, for ever since the end of the Han dynasty the genre in question had already gained its popularity and reputation with the ascendancy of its generic value and importance.

In Chinese genre theory, as in Western genre theory, the hierarchy of genres is formed usually on the basis of *feng-ke* or styles. The reason why Chih Yü regarded the four-word-line poem as the orthodox form of poetry was that it had the *ya* 雅 style, or the highly elegant and graceful style. For the same reason, Liu Hsieh also thought that the four-word-line poem was the orthodox form. He treated the *hsieh* 諧

genre as *pu-ya* 不雅 (not elegant). The tradition established by Chih Yü and Liu Hsieh found quite a few faithful followers and slavish epigones. The very title of the Sung critic Chen Te-hsiu's 眞德秀 anthology *Wen-chang cheng-tsung* 文章正宗 (*The Orthodox Forms of Literature*) is highly reminiscent of the viewpoint held by Chih and Liu.

In the wake of Chen, Wu Na 吳訥, a Ming critic, expressed a similar opinion in his anthology entitled *Wen-chang pien-t'i* 文章變體 (*The Differentiations of Literature*). In it he placed an enormous emphasis on the distinction between *ya* 雅 (elegant) and *su* 俗 (vulgar) styles. His contemporary Hsü Shih-tseng took a big step forward by distinguishing literary genres into *cheng* 正 (orthodox) and *pien* 變 (changed or variant), and *ku* 古 (ancient or classic) and *su* styles in his *Wen-ti ming-pien*.

The changing historical circumstances that have effected the generic hierarchy are multifarious and complicated, for they may be generated by the political and socio-economic reasons as well as the cultural and religious factors. To illustrate this point, we can take a brief look at the genre of *p'ien-wen* 駢文 (parallel prose with rhythms), a semi-poetic genre. The genre in question originated in the Wei-Chin period, which is what Lu Hsün calls "the self-conscious epoch of literature" 文學的自覺時代 (382) where Chinese literary writings began to be ornately and floridly oriented. It is mainly because of this reason that *p'ien-wen* became widely accepted and prevailing in the Southern and Northern Dynasties in which the ornate and florid literature was greatly encouraged and widely favored, and as a result, it finally replaced *san* 散 (prose) as the dominant genre. In the T'ang dynasty quite a few great writers, especially Han Yü 韓愈 (768-824) and Liu Tsung-yüan 柳宗元 (773-819), turned to *ku-wen* 古文 or classical prose writings, and thus forced *p'ien-wen* to abandon its superior place. However, *p'ien-wen* as a genre continued to be written without a stop, even though it was no longer a major genre favored by most of the ensuing writers. It gradually

declined in the Ming dynasty, but in the Ch'ing dynasty, thanks to the efforts of some formalistic writers, it was revived and became quite prevalent for some time, and was in opposition to the *ku-wen* writing sponsored by the writers of T'ung-ch'en School 桐城派. With the advent of modern times in which the novel began to rise as a major genre, *p'ien-wen* was out of favor once again.

Although Chinese genre theory is short of something like the Western notion of decorum, yet it stresses the importance and necessity of segregating and separating genres according to the refinement of their *feng-ke* or style. Like its Western counterpart, Chinese genre theory highly respects the relative stability of the hierarchical systems of genres, while accepting the modifications and mutations of these systems and encouraging the establishment of new systems along with passing time and with changed conditions and circumstances. On the part of Chinese genre theory, the concept of *p'ien* or *t'ung-pien* was, as we have pointed out before, derived from *I Ching*, which greatly influenced many later Chinese genre theorists and critics.

The concept of *t'ung-pien* is closely associated with the fourth major similarity between Chinese genre theory and its Western counterpart; that is, a great emphasis is placed on the analogy of the biological species to literary genres, which is closely linked with the notion of evolution of literature. It is believed by a large number of theorists and critics of genre, both Western and Chinese ones, that like a plant or an animal a literary genre has an organic or quasi-biological life, which starts with birth, grows, matures, decays, and ends with death. In the West, Aristotle is found to be the first critic to compare literary genres to the life cycle of a living organism (Wimsatt & Brooks 28, Wellek 37-38). He asserted that "tragedy reached maturity, natural stature; beyond which it could not grow, as man cannot grow after he has reached the age of twenty-one" (qtd. in Wellek 38). In classical antiquity, Aristotle's notion

found a multitude of strong supporters and faithful followers like Quintilian. In the Renaissance, too, Aristotle's idea was widely repeated and rephrased in the critical writings of many theorists, rhetoricians, and critics, such as Francis Bacon (1561-1626), Jean Bodin (1530-1596), Dominique Bouhours (1628-1702), and Owen Feltham (1602?-1668). Neoclassical criticism and Romantic criticism were also obsessed with this age-old notion. In fact, the obsession with it was so intense that some critics even attempted to apply it to the history of literature since the middle of the 18th century.

According to Wellek, in the West there are three different but closely related conceptions of evolution: the organological idea derived from Aristotle, the Hegelian notion of evolution, and the Darwinian and Spencerian *motifs*. The first one, which is elaborated by such writers like John Brown and Friedrich Schlegel, is described in terms of growth, proliferation, blossoming, maturing, hardening, and finally dissolution, and it is thought of as necessary and fated" (40). As to Hegel's concept of evolution, the principle of continuity is replaced by dialectics. "Sudden revolutionary changes, reversals into opposites, annulments and, simultaneously, preservations constitute the dynamics of history. The 'objective spirit' (of which poetry is only a phase) differs profoundly from nature. The biological analogy is dropped" (40). The third one is a new one that is based on the Darwinian mechanistic explanation of the process--e.g., the ideas like "survival of the fittest, natural selection," and "transformation of species." Spencer himself also held that "the development of literature could be conceived in terms of a law of progressions from the simple to the complex" (41). Similar ideas can be found in the writings of many critics in different Western countries."

In the 19th century many critics enthusiastically pursued parallels between genres and biological species. Strongly dogmatic in his beliefs, Brunetière in his *Évolution des genres* (1890-1894) mechanically applied the principles of Darwinian

evolution to the development of literary genres. He was of the opinion that the reality of genres resembled that of biological species. Very often he compared the history of genres to the history of human beings. For instance, he asserted that French tragedy was born with Jodelle, matured with Corneille, aged with Voltaire, and died before Hugo. The followers and epigones of Bruetièrè pushed their mentor's doctrine so hard that they went into a *cul-de-sac* from which they were never able to get out.

Like its Western counterpart, Chinese genre theory is also obsessed with the notion of evolution of literature and the analogy of literary genres to biological species. The earliest adumbration can be found in Liu Hsieh's *Wen-hsin tiao-lung*, in which he observed that "As time has passed and as dynasties have risen and fallen, literature has developed from the simple to the more ornate in form as well as in content" 時運交移，質文代變 (*WHTL* II, 311), and that "Songs and rhymes and their writing principles change with passing time" 歌謠文理，與世推移。 (*WHTL* II, 311). But at the same time, Liu also held that the development and evolution of literature was generated by the alterations and changes of the social reality. This explains why he concluded that "literary development is deeply influenced by the course or worldly events, and the rise and fall of political powers bear directly on the trends of literature" 文變染乎世情，興廢係乎時序。 (*WHTL* II, 331).

By the time of 12th century, Liu's notion of evolution has been profoundly elaborated and greatly modified by such critics and writers of the Chin, Ming, and Ch'ing dynasties as Liu Ch'i 劉祁, Ts'ao An-lan 曹安綢, Hu Yüan-jui 胡元瑞, Li K'ung-t'ung 李空同, Ch'en Shih-yeh 陳士業, and Chiao Li-t'ang 焦理堂. For instance, Hu Yüan-jui remarked that "When *tz'u* poetry by Sung poets had the sway, *shih* poetry died; when *ch'ü* poetry by Yüan poets ruled the roost, *tz'u* poetry died" 宋人詞勝而詩亡矣，元人曲勝而詞亦亡矣， and that "*Sao* poetry prospered in the Ch'u period, decayed in the Han dynasty, and died in

the Wei dynasty. *Fu* (rhapsody) prospered in the Han dynasty, decayed in the Wei dynasty, and died in the T'ang dynasty." 騷盛於楚，衰於漢，而亡於魏。賦盛於漢，衰於魏，而亡於唐。(qtd. in *T'an i lu* 34-35).

However, as Ch'ien Chung-shu 錢鍾書 rightly points out, the viewpoint held by Li K'ung-t'ung and others has been scathingly refuted by the other Ming critics represented by Wang Wen-lu 王文祿. In his *Wen-mai* 文脈 (*Literary Tradition*), Wang had this to say: "The evolution of literary genres is not necessarily like the process of metabolism of living matter, which is characterized by its supersession of the old by the new" 夫文體逆變，非必如物體之有新陳代謝，後繼則須前仆。(qtd. in *T'an i lu* 34-35). Then he cited *p'ien-wen* to support his argument. As we have demonstrated earlier, the vicissitude of the genre proves that after its glorious time in the Southern and Northern Dynasties, it still continued to be written by the subsequent writers of each dynasty, even though it was driven out of the dominant place ever since the victory of the *Ku-wen* Movement 古文運動 over it in the T'ang dynasty. The ups and downs of *shih*, to be sure, also amounted to the same thing. In the Sung dynasty where *tz'u* held the sway, good poets of *shih* were not rare at all. For instance, the Sung poet Chiang K'ui's 姜夔 (c.1155-1221) *shih* poems generically and strikingly resemble the *shih* poetry of the T'ang dynasty. Even in the Yuan dynasty where *ch'ü* was the dominant genre and in the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties where the novel began to rise as a major genre, a multitude of good *shih* poems continued to be composed by many first-rate poets.

The analogy of literary genres to biological species is also severely attacked and caustically confuted by modern and contemporary critics and theorists in China. Ch'ien Chung-shu's assault on that notion in his *T'an i lu* 談藝錄 (*On Literature*) affords an excellent example. He consents to Wang Wen-lu's opinion that literary genres are not at all like living things which follow the general law that the new supersedes

the old by virtue of metabolism. He cites Wang Ching-an's 王靜安 remark to the effect that the Han dynasty had *fu*, the T'ang dynasty *shih*, the Sung dynasty *tz'u*, the Yüan dynasty *ch'ü*. Then he observes that it would be justifiable to interpret this remark to mean that a certain genre starts to have the sway and prosper in a certain dynasty. However, if we interpret this to mean that a certain genre is strictly confined to a certain dynasty only, it would be very unreasonable and absurd. It may be true that *shih* in the Yüan dynasty is inferior to *ch'ü*, *shih* in the T'ang dynasty is better than prose, and *tz'u* in the Sung dynasty is superior to *shih*, but this does not mean that genres cannot co-exist at the same time. In actuality, many poets or writers of each dynasty are very versatile and versed at several genres at one and the same time. For example, such famous poets as Chia I 賈誼 (200-168 B.C.), Yang Hsiung, Li Pai, Han Yü, Liu Tsung-yüan, and Su Shih 蘇軾 (1037-1101) quickly come to our mind.

From the analytical observation above, it is not very difficult for us to see that the dominance or the prosperity of a new genre does not eliminate the existence of the other old genres that have formerly ruled the roost: this is a question more of generic hierarchy than of the absolute exclusion of other genres. This confirms, once again, the point we have made before that hierarchical systems for genres are subject to alterations and mutations with passing time and with changed conditions.

Since the turn of the century, quite a few Western critics and theorists have also been trying to take issue with the evolutionists like Brunetière. Evolutionism has been widely criticized and rejected partially in the name of genius and impressionistic appreciation. Philosophers and critics like Henri Bergson (1859-1941) and Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) launched a severe onslaught on the concept of evolutionism and even the concept of genre itself. They were followed by a multitude of critics and theorists, who strongly supported the

anti-historical point of view in criticism throughout the entire West, with the exception of the Russian critics (Wellek 45-46). But the most severe critic who adamantly disapproves and convincingly refutes evolutionism is Wellek himself. In claiming one falsehood of the three kinds of evolutionary theories, he observes that Darwinian evolutionism is false when applied to literature, for unlike biological species, there is no inevitable growth and decay in literary genres, no transformation of one genre into another, no actual struggle for life among genres; that the Hegelian version of it is wrong in its rigid determinism and its schematism of triads; and that the Formalist evolutionism is wrong in its attempt to arrive at a value-proof way (51). To get out of this dilemma, Wellek offers a solution, which is, we think, very sound and appropriate: "What is needed [. . .] is a modern concept of time, modeled not on the metric chronology of calendar and physical science, but on an interpenetration of the causal order in experience and memory" (51).

To sum up what we have discussed and analyzed above, we have, from the historical and comparative perspective, surveyed Chinese and Western genre theories with a focus on the theories of individual genres and general notions of genre. The survey has succinctly covered the span of time from classical antiquity to the present century with an emphasis on the interrelation between genre theory and rhetoric, and on such key notions as the nature, function, fixity, flexibility, hierarchy, evolution, and development of genres. Having examined these theories, we have detected four significant but often neglected similarities between Chinese and Western genre theories despite the seemingly obvious fact that there exists a multitude of differences between the two. While taking a close look at these four major resemblances, we have also offered some contemplative observations and critical comments on the theories of genre and general generic notions under investigation, for the purpose of shedding some light on them.

Finally, it is our sincere hope that through this brief comparative study we will arouse more interest in the potentially very fruitful comparative study of genre from the East-West perspective, which is, we think, long overdue.

Notes

¹ Although the recent decades have witnessed quite a few comparative genre studies in the West (such as the studies of Guillen, Todorov, Dubrow, Fowler, Thomas Kent, Adena Rosmarin, William Race, etc.), all of them have focused their attention on Western literature exclusively. Recently, in China where genology, the study of literary genres, has barely been started (Lu K'ang-hua 盧康華 & Sun Ching-yao 孫景堯 170-71, Ch'u Pin-chieh 褚斌傑 441), there have been very few substantial genre studies, not to mention those done from a Chinese-Western comparative perspective.

² Due to its complexity, the problem of the genre theories with a focus on the broad classification of the whole of literature and its major kinds will be treated in a separate paper.

³ For instance, Horace's *Ars Poetica*, Minturno's *L'Arte poetica*, Scaliger's *Poetices*, Laudun's *L'Art poétique françois*, Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry*, Puttenham's *The Art of English Poesie*, and Harington's *Apologie of Poetrie*.

⁴ *Lun heng* 論衡 (Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an ed. 四部叢刊) 30.6a; the translation is James Hightower's, p. 513.

⁵ Unless noted, all the English translations from the Chinese texts are mine, whether in the main body of the paper or in the notes.

⁶ All the Chinese quotations of *Wen-hsin tiao-lung* 文心雕龍 (abbreviated as *WHTL*) are taken from the edition of Mou Shih-chin 牟世金 and Lu K'an-ju 陸侃如.

⁷ For instance Chiao Jan's 皎然 *Shih-shih* 詩式, Ou-yang Hsiu's 歐陽修 *Liu-i shih-hua* 六一詩話, Yen Yu's 嚴羽 *Ch'ang-lang shih-hua* 滄浪詩話, Hsieh Chen's 謝榛 *Ssu-min shih-hua* 四溟詩話, and Wang Shih-chen's 王士禎 *Yü-yang shih-hua* 漁洋詩話.

⁸ For example, Li T'iao-yüan's 李調元 *Fu-hua* 賦話, and Wang

Kuo-wei's 王國維 *Jen-chien tz'u-hua* 人間詞話.

⁹ For the concept of "ch'i," see James Liu's English translation in his *Chinese Theories of Literature*, p.12.

¹⁰ *Wen-chang yüan-ch'i* 文章緣起 (*Origins of Literary Forms*) is debatably attributed to Jen Fang 任昉. The extant version is annotated by a Ming writer, Ch'en Mao-hen 陳懋仁, who wrote a sequel to it, which is entitled *Hsü wen-chang yüan-ch'i* 續文章緣起 (*The Sequel of the Origins of Literary Forms*).

¹¹ For instance, Li Ch'i 李頎 (690-751) wrote that "Hsiao Wang broke the generic rules to perfect literature" 小王破體問文策; Li Shang-yin 李商隱 (c.813-858) said that "The completion of a literary piece on the paper results from breaking the generic rules" 文成破體書在紙; and Han Wo 韓偓 (844-c.914) held that "Communication of emotions requires new genres that break away from the old ones" 情通破體新 (qtd. in *Kuan chui p'ien*).

¹² For instance, John A. Symonds and Richard G. Moulton (England), M. Lazarus and Wilhelm Dilthey (Germany), F. Gummere and A. S. Mackenzie (U.S.A.), and Hippolyte Taine and Ferdinand Brunetière (France).

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