# "Literature" in the 19th-Century Sinological Works: The History of a Concept

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**Abstract:** In the 19th century, the English term "literature" and its Chinese equivalent "文学" (wenxue) had their respective connotations and pre-histories and did not belong to the same discursive genealogy, although the two concepts later mixed together and have since been inter-translated by scholars. This paper attempts to examine literature as an independent system of representation by analyzing historical materials of English sinology to identify their special meanings in the 19th-century English context. To ensure the wholeness of the examination, this paper divides the collected materials into three categories; annotations in English-Chinese dictionaries, denotations in works with the word "literature" in their titles, and explanations in articles and chapters (of works) with the word "literature" in their titles. Such an examination inevitably involves some key issues related to semantics, history of translation and cross-cultural studies. It is hoped that this study can help further a general understanding of the dissemination history of literature as a concept.

**Keywords:** wenxue, literature, 19th-century sinology, history of English sinology

A *History of Chinese Literature*, which was written by British sinologist Herbert A. Giles and published in 1901, is widely regarded as the first work on the history of Chinese literature in the English-speaking world. The book was published years earlier than the works (teaching materials) on the history of Chinese literature written by Dou Jingfan, Lin Chuanjia and Huang Ren (Zhou, 2003).① It serves as a benchmark both in the study of the history of

① A majority of scholars consider either the work on the history of Chinese literature (co-authored by Lin and Huang), or the *Literature of All Dynasties in Chinese History* (written by Dou Jingfan and published in the 32nd year under the reign of Emperor Guangxu of the Qing Dynasty (1906) to be the earliest work on the history of Chinese literature by a native Chinese.

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sinology and the study of literary research and has been frequently mentioned by later scholars in this regard. It has been noticed that the "literature" in *A History of Chinese Literature* is not entirely in line with its Chinese equivalent of "文学" (wenxue), for which the diction is under doubt. For example, in the essay "A Review of Giles' *A History of Chinese Literature*" published in the 1930s, Zheng Zhenduo doubted Giles' translation of "literature" into "文学" (wenxue) in Chinese, and more importantly, criticized Giles' form of writing from a different perspective. According to Zheng, there are many problems in the book, among which is an excessive and indiscriminate inclusion of works concerning laws and decrees, natural history, horticulture and folk Taoism (Zheng, 1934, 2009, pp. 31-34).① Such an excessive and indiscriminate inclusion goes far beyond the prescriptive scope of literature.

This issue also raises a variety of topics. So far, some scholars have examined the trajectory of the Chinese word "文学" (wenxue) as a modern concept from its emergence and evolution while others have also touched upon the transformation of the word "literature" along this trajectory, which is of course also a reasonable and worthwhile academic approach. Seen from a bigger picture, if the two concepts, "文学" (wenxue) and literature can somehow form a meaningful corresponding pair, the other trajectory can hold. That is to say, Giles' application of the term "literature" to the China-related studies also brought along the meanings of "literature" as an English term in an intermittent and delayed way, creating a unique chain of significance and influencing related sinological expressions in the 19th century. After all, the English word "literature" to some extent would also manipulate many objects which were later considered to be "文学" (wenxue), and form a history worth investigation and review. In terms of derivative significance, the exploration and confirmation of such a genealogy can cast light on the abovementioned "Zheng Zhenduo's puzzle" to further identify whether it is a matter of human nature (unique to Giles) or more of the effectiveness of a "collective representation" (i.e. being shared by all groups of sinology in the 19th century). The answer to this question can accordingly help us arrive at clearer conclusions of the historical rationality of the concept in Giles' book and the possibility of inter-translation between "文学" (wenxue) and "literature" in a given period.

A comprehensive review of the application of the term "literature" to the English sinology in the 19th century requires giving consideration to three types of works. The first type comprises various English Chinese dictionaries which tend to include "literature" as an entry and provide it with defining annotations. The second type comprises books with the word "literature" in their titles. The books are supposed to focus on the discussion of literature and concern the concept's definition and referential scope. The third type comprises articles and chapters (of works) with the word "literature" in their titles. Their appearance is by no means random but reflects some regular requirements of this conceptual genealogy. Only through a comprehensive and coordinated textual research and examination can scholars have a basic understanding of the term "literature" applied to English sinology in the 19th century.

① Zheng criticized the book's many aspects, most of which are beyond the discussion of this paper.

## Defining Literature: Translations and Annotations in English Chinese Dictionaries

Bilingual dictionaries which were compiled by sinologists generally fall into two categories; English-Chinese dictionaries and Chinese-English dictionaries. Among the dictionaries compiled in the 19th century, the most well-known and epoch-making ones are *A Dictionary of the Chinese Language, Part the Third* (English and Chinese) by Robert Morrison in 1822 (Morrison, 1822),[①] *English and Chinese Dictionary* by Walter Henry Medhurst in 1848 and *English and Chinese Dictionary* by W. Lobscheid in 1866-1869 (Yang, 2012).[②] These dictionaries had the entry of literature, which can help us explore how these foreign sinologists in China explained and defined this concept and how they viewed "literature". It is true that in English a word tends to form a homogeneous system with other words through change or extension of root meaning. Given that, it is necessary to further or supplement the understanding of a word from its "adjacent words" (other derivative words in a homogeneous system). Apart from the word "literature", the three dictionaries also included "literary" and "literati". The comprehensive examination of "literature" should therefore also be based on the annotations of "literary" and "literati" in the dictionaries. Take Morrison's *A Dictionary of the Chinese Language* as an example. Its annotations of the three words are as follows:

> LITERARY man, 有文墨的 (you wenmo de, meaning literary, erudite); 文人 (wenren, meaning a literary man)... Literary degrees are 秀才 (xiucai, lit. "distinguished talent", an entry-level licentiate who had passed the college exam); 举人 (juren, lit. "recommended man", a qualified graduate who passed the triennial provincial exam); 进士 (jinshi, lit. "advanced scholar", a graduate who passed the triennial court exam); 翰林 (hanlin, a member of the Imperial Academy); 学士 (xueshi, an imperial scholar).
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> LITERATI of China are called 儒 (ru, one who was well educated), as a philosophical sect, they are called 儒教 (rujiao, meaning Confucianism); vulgarly they are designated, 读书人 (dushu ren, lit. "book reader", meaning a scholar, an intellectual). All the literati from the Han to the Ming Dynasty, 自汉迄明诸儒 (All the literati/ scholars from the Han to the Ming dynasty).
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> LITERATURE 学文 (xuewen, meaning literature), fond of conquering (i.e. studying) ancient literature, 好攻古文 (haogong guwen, meaning "fond of studying ancient

① Morrison's dictionary contains three parts, with the Chinese word "Zidian" (字典, meaning dictionary) on the cover of Part I, the Chinese word "Wu Che Yun Fu" (五车韵府) on the cover of Part II, and no Chinese word on that of Part III. According to its English name (*A dictionary of the Chinese language, Part the third, English and Chinese*), Part III is now known as *Ying-Hua Zidian* in Chinese among many scholars. Its collector's edition can be found at Peking University Library.

② This is restricted to "general language," exclusive of practical mini-dictionaries of dialects. For more information on the compilation of this bilingual dictionary, please refer to Yang Huiling's *Traditions of Chinese-English Dictionary in the 19th Century* (Appendix 3). A large part of the dictionary, however, is likely to have been taken from elsewhere.

literature") (Morrison, 1822, p. 25).[①]

Morrison annotated the three words with explanations and translations. The Chinese equivalents he provided can be deemed corresponding translations, as well as explanations. This way of English Chinese dictionary compilation was a common practice in the 19th century. The annotation of "literature" as "学文" (xuewen, meaning study of classics) is quite short and simple. It is true that the word "学文" (xuewen) can be found in the following quote from the *Analects of Confucius*, "When all duties are done and there is time for other things, young people should use it for the study of the classics." Yet "学文" has never been a commonly used word. In particular, "学文" here is used to describe a way of act and no definite definition is given to its attribute as a noun. Thus, back then Morrison was not yet familiar with relevant Chinese literature and knowledge, for which he failed to find a proper Chinese equivalent to "literature". Morrison's annotations of "literary" and "literati" indicated that he associated "being fond of studying ancient literature" with corresponding identities, namely, literary men, Confucian scholars and all literati. Accordingly, Morrison's dictionary first saw "literature" as a signifier of identity, rather than a certain textual form. This can be exemplified by his mentioning of "ancient literature" in the abovementioned example sentence. The "ancient literature" as a textural form was also only a signifier of these identities. More strictly, there were differences among literary men, Confucian scholars (who were preparing for the Imperial Examination) and literati in ancient China, although interchange among them was allowed in specific contexts. Still, Morrison's misplaced list of different entries indicated quite a limited understanding of the relationships among these seemingly similar but essentially different identities. Aside from accuracy, overall Morrison's annotations of "literature" and related words exhibited quite definite orientations, mainly signifying general behaviors related to literary men, Confucian scholars and literati (and subsequently implying the textual forms they worked on). This way of dictionary compilation had a far-reaching impact on later generations in this industry.

Medhurst's annotations of the three words are as follows:

> LITERARY有学文的, 彧 (you xuewen de, meaning well educated, erudite); literary ranks, 科目 (kemu, meaning literary ranks, subjects); literary talent, 颖 (ying, meaning literary talent, intelligent); literary arena, 文场 (wenchang, meaning the literary arena/ field), 科场 (kechang, meaning the academic arena/ field), 文坛 (wentan, meaning the literary arena/circles); literary examination, 考试 (kaoshi, meaning examination), 功名 (gongming, meaning pursuit of scholarly honor); ... ; a literary character, 文墨之人 (wenmo zhi ren, meaning a literary man), 笔墨之人 (bimo zhi ren, meaning a man who lives on "pen and ink", i.e. literary output), 文人 (wenren, meaning a man of letters, a scholar); literary composition, 文章 (wenzhang, meaning literary writings), 文词 (wenci, meaning diction, writing)...

① All entries quoted from the three dictionaries in this paper are without phonetic annotation.

LITERATI 儒家 (rujia, meaning the Confucian school), 儒门 (rumen, meaning scholars following Confucian thought), 儒教 (rujiao, meaning Confucianism), 儒者(ruzhe, meaning a Confucian scholar), 读书人 (dushu ren, meaning a scholar, an intellectual); notices of eminent literati, 文范 (wenfan, meaning literary style); all the literati, 诸儒 (zhuru, meaning all the intellectuals, Confucian scholars).

LITERATURE 文字 (wenzi, meaning written words), 文墨 (wenmo, lit. "literary ink", writings), 字墨 (zimo, lit. "Chinese characters and ink", literary writings); polite do.文章 (wenzhang, meaning literary writings); ancient do.衮衮 (gungun, meaning words that continuously flow), 古文 (guwen, meaning ancient Chinese prose); learning, 学文 (xuewen, meaning learning, knowledge) (Medhurst, 1848, pp. 796–797).

Morrison's impact can be traced in the above three entries, all of which are associated with Confucian scholars, literati and literary men. It is just that Medhurst's entries are better organized and presented. Medhurst's annotation of "literary" features several new modifiable senses and an extended referential scope. It covers not just persons but also corresponding fields, capacities and texts. Basically, almost all of a word's sub-items can be translated into a Chinese compound comprising "文" (wen) (although not explicitly specified). One major difference between Morrison's version and Medhurst's lies in the entry of "literature". In Medhurst's version, "学文" (xuewen, meaning learning) is no longer a core reference and is just placed at the end of the entry as a case in point. The core reference, however, is returned to such nominal explanations as "文字、文墨、字墨" (written words, writings, scripts). Besides, the referential scope is further extended to general writing. Both "polite do" (polite literature) and "ancient do" (classical writings) are sub-explanations of literature. The word "polite" in "polite do" here refers to polite literature, which does not equal "belles lettres" of today, but an elegant literary style. Therefore, in terms of literary genre, "literature" here can cover Confucian classics, historical records, philosophical writings and miscellaneous works, and can be inter-translated with "ancient do" (classical writings). Superficially, "literature" in Medhurst's dictionary seems to cover all writings ("文字" "文墨"). Yet judging from all cases presented in this entry, there is a clear partiality for classical writings, or elegant quality essays. The last meaning of literature, i.e. learning (xuewen) can be deemed a basic procedure of literary attainment improvement.

W. Lobscheid's *English and Chinese Dictionary* was first published in Hong Kong during the period 1866-1869. The cover of this dictionary is printed with four Chinese characters: "英华字典" (meaning English-Chinese dictionary). Later this dictionary underwent several revisions and enlargements by Chinese and Japanese scholars and became a reference to the compilation of new dictionaries. One influential enlarged edition in Japan was *An English and Chinese Dictionary*, which was revised and enlarged by Inoue Tetsujirō and published by Fujimoto in the 16th-17th year of Meiji (1883). W. Lobscheid's version was of course complied by referring to the previous two dictionaries by Morrison, and more importantly, Medhurst, and making some adjustments. Below are the three entries of "literary", "literati" and "literature" in Lobscheid's version:

LITERARY, a. 学文的 (xuewen de, meaning literary, "about literature"), 有学文的 (you xuewen de, meaning "about literature", "full of literature"), 文 (wen, meaning literature), 读书的 (dushu de, meaning "about reading"); literary reputation, 文风 (wenfeng, meaning literary reputation/ fame); ... literary essays, 文章 (wenzhang, meaning literary writings); the literary class of China, 儒 (ru, meaning the literary class), 儒教 (rujiao, meaning Confucianism); the literary profession, 书家 (shujia, meaning the literary/ academic profession), 文家 (wenjia, meaning the literary/ artistic profession); the literary arena, 文场 (wenchang, meaning the literary arena/ field), 科场 (kechang, meaning the academic arena/ field), 文坛 (wentan, meaning the literary arena/ circles)); ... (followed by expressions beginning with "literary", such as literary examination, literary man, literary scholar and literary teaching).

LITERATI, n. pl. The learned, 儒教 (rujiao, meaning Confucianism), 儒家 (rujia, meaning the Confucian school), 儒门 (rumen, meaning scholars following Confucian thought), 儒者 (ruzhe, meaning a Confucian scholar), 读书人 (dushu ren, meaning a scholar, an intellectual).

LITERATURE, n. 文 (wen, meaning something about literature), 文学 (wenxue, meaning literature), 文字 (wenzi, meaning written words), 文墨 (wenmo, lit. "literary ink", writings), 文章 (wenzhang, meaning literary writings); ancient literature, 古文 (guwen, meaning "about Old Text Confucianism"); modern literature, 今文 (jinwen, meaning "about New Text Confucianism") (Inoue, 1883, p. 684).

Lobscheid's pioneering concept of dictionary compilation deserves affirmation. For example, every entry is marked with its part of speech and is explained in a "superior-subordinate relationship" (first listing a word's general meaning and translation in the first row; then specifying its extended meanings), allowing readers to grasp an entry's original and extended meanings more conveniently and saving them from the trouble of word discrimination. From today's perspective, however, inexact interpretations do exist in the entries (Lobscheid, 1866-1869, p. 684).[①] The entry of "literati" in Lobscheid's version is almost identical with that in Medhurst's version. The only difference between the two lies in the sequence of annotations. The entry of "literary" in Lobscheid's version features detailed annotations, which, however, are still within the range of Medhurst's version (arguably an abridgment of Medhurst's). Lobscheid retained "学文" (xuewen) as a basic meaning of "literary" and at the same time added a single Chinese character "文" (wen), which cannot be found in either Morrison's or Medhurst's versions.[②] New meanings were added to the entry of "literature", in particular,

① The annotations of the three entries are not entirely accurate. Besides, there are other errors in the dictionary. Take the entry of "literal" as an example. Both Morrison and Medhurst interpreted it as "字面的意" (being the basic or usual meaning of a word), which is right. By contrast, Lobscheid interpreted it as "正面嘅，正面的" (being positive or frontal), which is wrong. Such an error was probably resulted from incorrect pronunciation.

② This applies to English-Chinese dictionaries. As for Chinese-English dictionaries, such a correspondence was in fact already demonstrated in Morrison's first two volumes of *A Dictionary of the Chinese Language*, i.e. *Part the First, Containing Chinese and English Arranged According to the Keys*, and *Part the Second, Chinese and English Arranged Alphabetically* which were probably the very sources of inspiration for Lobscheid's bilingual interpretation.

"文" (wen) and "文学" (wenxue) which for the first time appeared in the annotations of its core meaning. Placed in the first item, "文" (wen) can be understood as a summary of multiple other meanings (although the same is also true to the first two dictionaries), with dominance over the rest of the meanings. This is in line with the use of "文" (wen) in a traditional Chinese context.① The term "文学" (wenxue) also made its debut in an English-Chinese dictionary. Although later scholars added derivative meanings to the term and even regarded its debut as the beginning of modern literature, no interpretation of it was made by Lobscheid in his dictionary (Masini, 1997, p. 98, pp. 100-101).② The placement of "文学" (wenxue) here is not incongruous. After all, the term "文学" (wenxue) was commonly used in ancient China. Its reference might vary from context to context but in general, "文学" (wenxue) was similar to "文" (wen, meaning context) in meaning and could refer to all literary writings. Thus, Lobscheid is found to be the first one to translate and annotate literature as "文学" (wenxue). Nevertheless, the word "文学" (wenxue) used in his dictionary entry does not exactly mean the same as what it means in a contemporary sense. Rather, "文学" (wenxue) was used by Lobscheid as a synonym of "文字 (writing), 文墨 (rudiments of writing) and 文章 (essay/article)". The examples given by Lobscheid include "古文" (Old Text Confucianism) and "今文" (New Text Confucianism), which tended to refer to classical Chinese-style writing.③ The word "literature" in this English dictionary is still a general term characterized by writing. Its agents include traditional Chinese scholars, Confucians and literati, who were not necessarily poets or novelists.

A review of the compilations of the aforementioned three English Chinese dictionaries and corresponding entries indicate that English Chinese dictionary compilations differ a lot from traditional English dictionary compilations. The English Chinese dictionary compilation should retain the original meanings of English words, give consideration to the inherent meanings of chosen Chinese words, and also ensure correspondence between the English and Chinese words. To achieve this, these who participate in the compilation work must have a truly strong bilingual competence. Yet, corresponding Chinese words are Chinese culture loaded. Chinese expressions like "儒" (Confucian scholar), "文人" (literary man), "科场" (literary arena) and "笔墨" (Chinese brush & ink) feature rich connotations unique to China. Deeply rooted in

① Also, in Morrison's *A Dictionary of the Chinese Language, Part the Second, Chinese and English Arranged Alphabetically*, the Chinese entry "文" (wen) is used as a general reference and is explained as follows, "letters; literature; literary; literary men; civil officers." It is possible that Lobscheid consulted this version, too.

② Some scholars hold that the correspondence of literature in English with "文学" (wenxue) in Chinese was initiated by Lobscheid, then exported to Japan and later imported back to China. Such a view, however, cannot be justified. In fact, the translation of literature as "文学" (wenxue) can be found in an excerpt of Elijah Bridgman's *Brief Geographical History of the United States of America in the Records and Maps of the World (Hai Guo Tu Zhi)* by Wei Yuan in the 1840s. For a time, there was a view that modern loanwords in Chinese were borrowed from the Japanese language. This argument was denied by Federico Masini, according to whom, "Some scholars who study modern Chinese vocabulary tend to place excessive emphasis on modern Chinese language's borrowing of Chinese character-formed expressions from Japan. To them, all new expressions from Japan are essentially borrowed. The fact is, however, many of such expressions were initially exported from China to Japan and were imported back to China decades later" (Masini, 1997, p. 98). For example, multiple editions of the *Records and Maps of the World* were introduced to Japan since 1850. From 1854 to 1869, there were 25 excerpts of the book translated into Japanese and published in Japan. Another example is *Shanghae Serial*, a Chinese monthly started by Western missionaries, as mentioned in Masini's work. The monthly was reprinted in Japan in 1858 and was translated into Japanese in 1864. The Chinese term "文学" (wenxue) can be found in the Japanese version (Masini, 1997, pp. 100-101). According to relevant textual research, however, the "文学" which appeared in these publications does not equal the "literature" today.

③ Some scholars mistake "今文" (New Text Confucianism) for "当代文字" (contemporary writing). In fact, "今文," which is the short form of "今文经" (New Text Confucianism) is relative to "古文," which is the short form of "古文经" (Old Text Confucianism).

the Central Plains context and tied to idiomatic usage, such Chinese words could not be easily accepted as the literally translated or domesticated equivalents of English words. Given that, this "grafting" (translation) turned English-Chinese dictionary compilation into a tough tug-of-war between English and Chinese culture, leaving indelible traces in the completed entries. These traces signify the co-existence of word meaning incorporation and resistance. The resistance mainly resulted from the fact that the annotated side, i.e. foreign knowledge was in objective existence and therefore was silent.① It was precisely for this reason that absolute "equivalence" (Tsai, 2012, p. 282) could not be realized. What was achieved is nothing more than juxtaposition and hybridization, rather than transparency or "world currency"-style universal convertibility. Judging from the entry of "literature", English Chinese correspondence was partially realized in its annotations. The word "literature" in a traditional Western context is similar to "文" (wen) (and its synonyms) used in Chinese language prior to the 20th century. Both contain the meaning of "general text" and "pan-literature", making it possible for the inter-translation or inter-explanation between the two sides. Yet, strictly speaking, complete correspondence of two different linguistic code systems is hardly possible, for there are many notable cracks between them.②

These cracks exist both in cultural connotation and in literary genre confirmation. In terms of literary genre, "文" (wen) in Chinese is not exactly the same as "literature" in English. As a general concept, "文" (wen) in ancient China covered all literary genres in classical Chinese (poetry, prose, classics, historical records) except novels and drama. By contrast, literature in a traditional Western sense, although also referring to certain special literary genres and featuring partial emphasis, had a more extensive coverage of almost all writings (including novels and drama). Thus, we can see that neither China nor the Western world had a generic term which was designed for the literary scope of "poetry, prose, novels and drama" and was partial to imaginary and fictional texts. The literary partiality and generality are quite complicated and will be touched upon in the latter part of this paper.

## The Meanings of "Literature" in Several English Works

It is generally (but not absolutely) feasible to approach the Western concept of literature through defining expressions. Language application and writing is not always based on dictionary definitions but is more related to conventional use and understanding of words. Definitions can be acquired in conventional use which is usually based on more extensive knowledge and communication. To thoroughly examine the meanings of literature, relevant

① Detailed interpretation of this theory can be found in "From the History of Literary Theory to the History of Soul" ("从文论史到心灵史") published in *Journal of Tsinghua University* (Philosophy and Social Sciences) (Huang, 2009, pp. 28-32).

② This echoes Michel Foucault's doubt in *The Order of Things*, which mentioned a case about the compilation of one Chinese encyclopedia (Foucault, 2001, pp. 1-14).

scholars should broaden their view and pay attention to works with "literature" in their title. Literally, these works should be literature focused. Through a review of related works published in the 19th century, I discovered that not many English works on sinology featured "literature" in their title except the following: James Summers's *Lecture on the Chinese Language and Literature* (1853), Robert Kennaway Douglas' *The Language and Literature of China* (1875), Alexander Wylie's *Notes on Chinese Literature* (1867) and Rev. A. W. Loomis' *Confucius and the Chinese Classics: Or Readings in Chinese Literature* (1882). In addition, there are also articles and chapters (of works) with the word "literature" in their title. Due to genre differences, however, such articles and chapters are not included in this examination.①

James Summers was the second professor of sinology at King's College London and was the teacher of Edward Harper Parker. Summers' "Lecture on the Chinese Language and Literature" is probably a collection of his lecture drafts for King's College London. In 1837, Samuel Kidd, who had just returned to Britain from China due to illness, was appointed as Britain's first professor of the Chinese Language and Literature by University College, London. By convention, he was required to deliver a lecture on his research focus when he took office. Based on the lecture draft, Kidd published a work entitled "Lecture on the Nature and Structure of the Chinese Language", whose subtitle, "Delivered at University College" indicated its use for lecture.② Following Kidd's practice, Summers must have also prepared a draft for his inaugural lecture. Yet, Summers' lecture highlighted the word "literature" by placing it in his draft title, as opposed to Kidd's lecture, which focused solely on the Chinese language and barely touched upon literature.③ Nevertheless, as a whole, Summers gave a lengthy depiction of the Chinese language's formation rules and did not mention literature until approaching the last six pages. There is a clear tendency of avoiding the important and dwelling on the trivial (probably due to his unfamiliarity with the scope of literature). In general, the part on literature is based on the framework of the "Four Libraries" (also known as "Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature"), and is thereby divided into four classes in descending order, which respectively are classical writings, historical writings, professional writings and miscellanies. More specifically, the third class (professional writings) covers aspects such as military affairs, law, agriculture, medicine, anatomy, mathematics and art. Also in the third class, Summers

① This means only original works are covered, not selected writings (such as Morrison's Horae Sinicae: Translation form the Popular Literature of the China and Giles' *Gems of Chinese Literature*). Besides, according to the criteria of this paper, foreign scholars' original works with the Chinese term "文学" (wenxue) in the title such as *Wenxue Shu Guanhua* (《文学书官话》) (also known as Mandarin Grammar) are also excluded. Co-authored by T. P. Crawford and Zhang Ruzhen in Chinese language, *Wenxue Shu Guanhua* was first published in 1869 and was later included in the Japanese version of *Classics of the Qing Dynasty* (《大清文典》). The so-called "文学" (wenxue) here in fact corresponded to grammar, rather than the claimed literature. For this reason, *Wenxue Shu Guanhua* was translated into *Mandarin Grammar*. This shows the polysemy of "文学" in practice back then, although no trace of its contemporary implication could be found.

② More information can be found in Alexander Wylie's *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a List of Their Publications, and Obituary Notices of the Deceased* (Wylie, 1867b, p. 49). According to Wylie, Kidd's 37-page work was published in 1838, the year he took office as the Professor. Wylie also specified Kidd's position as "Professor of the Chinese Language and Literature". In addition, Kidd's deeds were also mentioned in T. H. Barret's Singular Listlessness (Barret, 1989, pp. 71-72).

③ However, Summers' academic rank was Professor of the Chinese and Language in that Institution, which was not entirely the same as Kidd's. More information about this can be found in James Summers' *Lecture on the Chinese Language and Literature* (Summers, 1853).

specifically mentioned "light literature", a new concept exemplified by "historical romances, fairy tales, folklores, as well as related myths and Buddhist works" (Summers, 1853, p. 34). The fourth class (miscellanies) mainly includes poetry and a variety of articles which can roughly be classified as polite literature (Summers, 1853, p. 34). In short, Summers' introduction to and analysis of literature is enabled through a "Four Libraries"-based multi-class framework.

Robert Douglas learned Chinese from Summers and later succeeded Summers as the third professor of sinology at King's College London. The subtitle of his *The Language and Literature of China* is *Two Lectures Delivered at the Royal Institution of Great Britain* (Douglas, 1875). As the subtitle suggests, the book is based on a draft originally prepared for the lectures at the Royal Institutions of Great Britain. Even so, it could also be a draft for his inaugural speech (specific information to be further investigated). This book is similar to that of Summers' in terms of organization and structure. As always, it expounds the urgency of Chinese learning and how Chinese learning concerned Britain's colonial interests, hoping to demonstrate the necessity of introducing such a teaching position.[①] Lecture one is entitled the "Language of China" and lecture two is the "Literature of China". Overall, Douglas attached much more importance to the literature of China than Summers, indicating that he had a better and more extensive command of Chinese literature-related knowledge than his predecessor Summers (this is also reflected by the fact that Douglas referred to and quoted arguments and comments made by sinologists of an earlier period). Yet, Douglas' interpretation of literature does not seem to be entirely consistent throughout the book. For example, in the beginning he mentioned that the Chinese language, being highly descriptive, could directly affect the expression and accomplishment of "literature", and consequently restrict its users' imagination and thinking. But he believed this challenge could be tackled (Douglas, 1875, p. 60). Evidently Douglas approached the gist from a perspective of narrowly sensed rhetoric, for which his argument can arguably fall into the category of literary criticism. Later Douglas was occupied with detailed introductions and comments on the "earliest specimens of literature" (Douglas, 1875, p. 79), namely, the Four Books (*The Great Learning*, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, *The Confucian Analects*, and *The Works of Mencius*), and the Five Classics (*The Book of Songs*, *The Book of History*, *The Book of Changes*, *The Book of Rites* and *The Spring and Autumn Annals*). In that part, however, he turned to focus on the analysis of thoughts concerning politics, philosophy, religion and ethics without returning to the perspective of rhetoric. The rest of the chapters of the book respectively center on a certain subject (a high-frequency word in the book) but are invariably book-related. Each subject is exemplified by representative types of books, instead of being divorced from books (although there may be some digressions in the comments). Books mentioned are placed in three categories. The first category refers to annals (including historical biography in

① This colonial mentality seems to have been acquired by other scholars who were later in the same position of teaching. Another representative expression of such a colonial mentality can be found in James Legge's inaugural lecture as Professor of Chinese at the University of Oxford (Legge, 1876).

various branches) and works on literature. The second category includes works on geography, encyclopedia, biography, science, education, law and religion. The third category includes poetry, drama and novels. Such an organization indicates that Douglas' book is generally based on the structure of the "Four Libraries", although there is no mention of the "Four Libraries" in the book. What makes the work distinctively different from the "Four Libraries" is the fact that the fourth part of the book concerns poetry without touching upon prose and features two new sub-items (drama and novels), which are nowhere to be seen in the "Division of Philosophical Writings" of the "Fourth Libraries". Douglas' organization is somehow close to the modern concept of "literature" in a narrow sense.

Douglas' second lecture (part two of the book) is a lengthy piece with extended discussions. There is a frequent appearance of literature, whose references vary from context to context. Its outer framework of narration, at least in a broad sense, is most directly related to the meanings of writings and historical documents.

Alexander Wylie's *Notes on Chinese Literature* is another book (not based on lecture drafts) with the word "literature" in the title. Its subtitle clearly indicates that it contains "a list of translations from the Chinese into various European languages" (Wylie, 1912). The preface and the introduction respectively review the process of Chinese bibliography compilation in Europe and the history of producing Chinese books (bibliographies). Given that, it is better to translate the word "literature" in the book title as "文献" (wenxian, meaning historical documents) or even "典籍" (dianji, meaning classic works and historical records). The main body of the book is divided into four categories, i.e. Classics, History, Philosophers and Belles-lettres, which are similar to the "Four Libraries"-based categories in Summers' works. It is just that the last two categories (Philosophers and Belles-lettres) are farther from the "Four Libraries" concept. The fourth category is Belles Lettres, which is originally a French term meaning beautiful or fine writing. This category seems to be similar to the contemporary concept of literature, which places aesthetics at the core. Still, the Belles Lettres category covers books previously belonging to the "Division of Miscellaneous Works" of the "Four Libraries", which means it does not include any novels, whether they are vernacular novels or novels by "School of Minor-talks" (a literary genre previously belonging to the "Division of Philosophical Writings" of the "Four Libraries"). In this sense, the Belles Lettres category is not divorced from the traditional model of division and tends to be closer to "beautiful or fine writing" than its contemporary reference of "pure literature" (literary works that do not fall into the major categories such as fiction, poetry, or drama). Besides, what appears in the title of the fourth category is "lettres", not "literature". This diction is of course indicative. Also, one sub-item of the fourth category (an equivalent of the "Poetic and Prose Criticism" of the "Four Libraries") is given an English title of "Critiques on Poetry and Literature", which means "literature" here is used in a traditional sense to cover prose and exclude poetry. Thus, we can infer that there was not a fixed single way to apply "literature" back then. Or to say, the application of "literature" back then was

quite diverse but did not go beyond the scope of its references as a Western concept. It is worth mentioning that fiction is added in "Essayists", a sub-item of the Philosophers category. This "fiction" part covers books such as *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *Journey to the West*, *Water Margin*, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, *Complete Tales of Yue Fei (Shuo Yue Quan Zhuan)* and even *The Plum in the Golden Vase*. Douglas argued in this part that fiction was of great importance to Europeans although it was denied as part of literature by Chinese (Wylie, 1912, p. 201). This argument marked a breakthrough, which is beyond any doubt. Wylie's classification system did not yet place vernacular fiction into the same category as poetry and drama due to the constraint of the traditional classification framework. Nevertheless, what matters is the fact that Wylie paid special attention to vernacular fiction, which foreshadowed the inclusion of these literary genres into the genealogy of Chinese knowledge.

Apart from the above three British sinologists, American missionary A. W. Loomis also applied the word "literature" to his book *Confucius and the Chinese Classics: Or Readings in Chinese Literature* published in 1882.① Unlike the aforementioned copies which deem "literature" as a general concept, Loomis' work attaches "literature" to Confucianism, for which his discussion on literature is from a Confucian perspective.② The book consists of three parts, which respectively are "Part I. History and Biography", "Part II. The Four Books", and "Part III. Selections", which includes selected translations of Chinese literary pieces outside the "Four Books" (mainly Samuel Wells Williams' translations and other translations published in *Chinese Repository* and *Journal of the North-China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*). Given that the selected translations contribute a significant proportion, the book is not exactly an original work. Still, it can be inferred from this established structure that the so-called "literature" in this work corresponds roughly to "classic works" (historical documents) subordinate to "文" (wen). This meaning can also be confirmed through Loomis' discussion of "book" and "classic works" in the Preface (Loomis, 1882, p. vii-xiii).③

These works, although with "literature" in their titles, give no clear definition of literature, or specify its applicable scope. But an examination of these works unveils that the word "literature" in these works almost invariably refers to "articles", "rudiments of writing", and in particular, the already established concepts of "historical documents" and "classic works". In order to have an integral yet specific presentation, Summers, Douglas and Wylie all elaborated "literature" based on the "Four Libraries" structure. As such, the word "literature" can refer to the real "Four Libraries" or almost all relevant books and classic works in general,④ or "book knowledge" (different from other knowledge such as practical knowledge and ethnographic

① More information about the life of Rev. A. W. Loomis can be found in *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a List of Their Publications, and Obituary Notices of the Deceased* by Alexander Wylie (1867b, pp. 148-149).
② In strict terms, however, this is not necessarily true. For example, there were *Confucian and Taoist* quotes in Part III, "Selections" (Loomis, 1882, pp. 275-288).
③ As for the mentioning of literature in several parts of the Preface, there can be other interpretations.
④ There are similar expressions in traditional Chinese works. For example, "佛藏" (focang), meaning Buddhist collection, is used to refer to all Buddhist texts.

knowledge). Those who read and grasped such books and classic works would become knowledgeable. Admittedly, even when a generally accepted understanding is formed, the specific meaning of literature varies from context to context, or from occasion to occasion. The meanings of literature can both be subdivided and summarized. In terms of summarization, "literature" can sometimes be understood and translated as "文" (wen), a general term in a traditional sense, or in some specific cases understood as "culture," an even more abstract term.①

Even if the English word "literature" is corresponded to "文" (wen), a similar word with the most extensive scope of reference, there are still differences between the two words. Regarding this, Douglas and Wylie offered persuasive examples in their works. Both consciously included novels and drama in the narrative range of literature, thus going beyond the boundary of traditional Chinese philology or the referential scope of "文". The inclusion of the two popular literary genres was of course not against the then idiomatic usage in English. It must be pointed out that inclusiveness does not mean specialization. There is a distinction between the two. In the above works, the two fictional genres are still placed in the traditional classification pedigree in mixed yet distinct ways.

## Other Evidence and Debates over the General Term and Terms with Partial Emphasis

In addition to dictionaries and books, there are also articles and chapters (of works) with "literature" in their title. It is necessary to have an examination of such articles and chapters. To my surprise, on average, no more than two articles with "literature" in the their titles are found in each of the most influential China-based English publications (such as *Chinese Repository* and *Journal of the North-China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*) in the 19th century.② The only exception is *The China Review*, featuring five articles published with "literature" in their titles.③ These five articles are book reviews and bulletins of no substantial value. This suggests that "literature" as a general term was applied to a limited scope by foreigners in China, although there were quite a lot of essays on novels, drama and poetry. There is a need to shift the focus to relevant writing materials by renowned sinologists. Relevant writing materials here refer

① Corresponding expressions of "cult" and "culture" are not rare to be seen in English works (even English works by sinologists) of the 19th century. For brevity, these expressions are not elaborated here.

② The two articles with "literature" in their titles published in *Journal of the North-China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* were "Essay on Manchu Literature" (1889) by P. G. von Mollendorff and "Some Popular Religious Literature of the Chinese" (1899-1900) by E. T. Williams. The word "literature" in both titles roughly means classic works. Literature was also applied to some article titles (such as "On Wen-chang, the God of Literature" by W. F. Mayers, Vol. 6) to refer to non-text items. A quick search of *Chinese Repository* led to one result entitled "Periodical Literature" (Bridgman, 1836), which is an introduction to a variety of Chinese publications (such as *Peking Press*) launched during that period.

③ The five articles are "The Language and Literature" (1876) by E. J. Eitel, "Native Literature on Chinese Porcelain" (1877) by C. P., "Bibliography of the Chinese Imperial Collections of Literature" (1878) by W. F. Mayers, "The History of Chinese Literature, Illustrated by Literal Translations from Chinese" (1886) by E. J. Eitel, and "Foreign Literature in China" (1890) by E. H. Parker. In particular, E. J. Eitel's "The History of Chinese Literature," as specified in the text, is a translation of one chapter from the *Book of Han* by Ban Gu. The article covers a variety of classic works without defining "literature".

to these with "literature" in their titles. The authors' influence makes their writing materials more representative and worthy of examination. These materials mainly include; "Observations on the Language and Literature of China" (a 50-page preface) in *Chinese Novels* (1822) by John Francis Davis, "The Rise and Progress of Chinese Literature in England" in *Chinese Miscellanies: A Collection of Essays and Notes* (1865) by John Francis Davis, E. C. Bridgman's argument about Chinese literature in the preface of *Chinese Chrestomathy in Canton Dialect* (1841), and a chapter on literature in *China Sketches* (1875) by Herbert Allen Giles. There were two more selected writings with "literature" in their titles. They are not covered above because they do not fall into the category of original criticism and review, but their significance to the identification of core ideas should not be overlooked. The two selected writings are *Horae Sinicae: Translations from the Popular Literature of the Chinese* (1812) by Morrison and *Gems of Chinese Literature* (1883) by Giles. These writings can presumably serve as supplementary materials to allow a comprehensive understanding of "literature" in the eyes of sinologists in the19th century. Also, these materials contain some interesting expressions of ideas, which can help further analyze multiple specific meanings under the general term of "literature" to take this study to a more in-depth level.

In the above order, I first approached Davis' argument. In "Observations on the Language and Literature of China", Davis mentioned literature, holding that "one of the most effectual means of gaining an intimate knowledge of China is by translations of its popular literature, consisting principally of drama and novels" (Davis, 1822, p. 9). From a perspective of translation and reception, novels seem to be the most appropriate genre. The collection of translations includes three fictions and one appendix of proverbs (imperial edicts), which in Davis' view shaped the scope of popular literature. "Observations on the Language and Literature of China" mainly focuses on the cross-cultural interpretation of Chinese novels from the perspective of ethics or humanism, which shall not be elaborated here. It is noteworthy that Davis borrowed "popular literature", a then general concept which can be understood as a term with partial emphasis. How about "literature" as a general term? An arguably definite answer to the question can be found in his later article "The Rise and Progress of Chinese Literature in England".

In fact, "The Rise and Progress of Chinese Literature in England" is one of the nine articles included in Davis' collection *Chinese Miscellanies: A Collection of Essays and Notes*. The exact year of publication remains uncertain as there is no indication on the work. Judging from the years of its citations and references, the collection was most likely published in the 1860s.[①] Its review and coverage should be extensive. Likewise, Davis considered it necessary to learn more about "popular literature of the Chinese, as contained in their drama, their novels and romances, and their poetry" in order to better understand China (Davis, 1865, p. 55). Davis also

① Based on the years of publications printed on books, Summers' *Handbook of the Chinese Language* (1862) was the latest copy.

mentioned philological works on Chinese studies in the "Address to the China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society" in the early years. He held that the compilation of grammar works like an English-Chinese dictionary could be included in the philological scope and accordingly gave a detailed introduction to the compilation of grammar works. The compatibility of philology and literature was further demonstrated in Davis' words, "Among works compiled in aid of Chinese literature was one printed by Dr. Morrison in 1817 and called a 'View of China for Philosophical Purposes'. This was a curious title for a quarto volume on geography, chronology, &c.,…" (Davis, 1865, p. 57; Morrison, 1817). Such a disciplinary categorization is not primarily based on content, but on the study of classic works, for which Morrison's work ("View of China for Philosophical Purposes") can be included by literature or philology. Davis also expressed his wish to define literature in several aspects according to the categories of translation. "Adverting next to the earlier translations from Chinese literature, we may class them roughly under two headings; I. Classical and historical, including their sacred books; II. Belles-lettres, or drama, poetry, romances and novels. Travels out of China are of course few, and the little science they possess has not attracted much notice. Their industrious arts, on the other hand, might probably be investigated with considerable profit, now that we have such free access to the interior" (Davis, 1865, p. 62). This approach to classification was already close to the much-talked-about division between "literature in a general sense" and "literature in a narrow sense" by native Chinese scholars in the early 20th century, although literary genres covered by "heading II" seemed quite mixed. Davis still adopted the term with partial emphasis to highlight the respective features of specific genres and at the same time also follow the original expressions in English. He also mentioned another term with partial emphasis, namely, lighter literature, which concerns romances and novels and corresponds to the concept of popular literature in the article (Davis, 1865, p. 91). Thus, a similar conscious orientation among foreign sinologists in China can be concluded as the inclusion of popular literary genres, which were ignored and marginalized by the genealogy of traditional Chinese knowledge, into literature's scope of meanings to enable the transformation of the established system. The so-called conscious orientation may remind scholars of an over-used term in translation studies, that is, domestication.

*A Chinese Chrestomathy in the Canton Dialect* is Elijah Bridgman's early-period work. Chapter VIII. Introduction is titled "Chinese Literature", according to which the Five Classics and Four Books, poetry and prose were combined to roughly cover "all Chinese books" (Bridgman, 1841, p. xvi). In Chapter IX. "Students' Library", the author gave a catalogue of classic works arranged in the "Four Libraries". The titles of these works are marked in Chinese, English and Cantonese. The orientation of literature in Bridgman's work should be considered clear.

*Chinese Sketches* is Giles' early-period work published in 1876. One of its chapters is on literature. This work is more of an argument based on Giles' impression of China than an

introduction. The author refuted some foreign sinologists' (particularly missionary-sinologists') derogatory interpretations and writings regarding Chinese literature and considered their understandings to be bizarre, superficial and dark. Regarding Chinese literature's scope of reference, Giles mentioned poetry, novels, and in particular, science and history, which may be out of his certain philosophical consideration (Giles, 1876, pp. 23-26). In 1883, another of Giles' works (selection of works) entitled *Gems of Chinese Literature* was published to disarm the then foreign sinologists' prejudices and misconceptions of Chinese knowledge. Judging from its framework, the work, although not a lengthy piece, contains an ambitious plan, i.e. trying to cover all the representative works from the Zhou Dynasty (1046 BC-256 BC) to the Qing Dynasty (1636 AD-1912 AD) in Chinese history to demonstrate his view of the "general literature of China" (Giles, 1922).① Nevertheless, a thorough examination of its intention reveals a key change in his analytical approach, i.e. attaching great importance to the style of selected texts and analyzing these texts under the guidance of such a philosophy.② This indicates that Giles cared about the ideas conveyed in these texts as much as their manifestations.

*Horae Sinicae: Translations from the Popular Literature of the Chinese* is a translation selection featuring "popular literature" in its subtitle to define the selected texts. It was Morrison's first work about China and also the first academic publication in English sinology to have "literature" in the title. The book includes seven translated texts, which respectively are *San–Tsi–King (The Three Character Classic: On the Utility and Honour of Learning)*, *Ta–Hio (The Great Science)*, *Account of Foe (The Deified Founder of a Chinese Sect)*, *Extract from the Ho–Kiang*, *Account of the Sect Tao–Tzu*, *Dissuasive from Feeding on Beef*, and *Specimens of Chinese Epistolary Correspondence*. According to the Advertisement of this publication, this book was compiled to allow British readers to learn more about "elements of morals and liberal knowledge" of China (Morrison, 1812, iii). It is true that *San–Tsi–King* and *Ta–Hio* were quite popular among then ordinary Chinese people. Yet, the source texts of the other five translated works were less known in China, making it hard to identify the grounds for Morrison's selections. One possible reason could be that these texts were selected for translation because they were readily available.③ I attach more importance to popular literature's scope of reference, which, judging from the above translated texts, basically still covers some folk materials for enlightenment and education purposes. Given that this translation selection was completed by Morrison much earlier than similar works, its perception of popular literature was relatively obsolete.

The above analysis gives a complete and comprehensive review of major works on literature in the 19th century. Through the analysis, a panoramic view is expected to be acquired. The

① Extract from Preface to the First Edition of *Gems of Chinese Literature* (Revised and Enlarged) (1922) by Herbert A. Giles.

② There is a frequent use of the word "style" in the Notes to *Gems of Chinese Literature* (Giles, 1922, p. iii, p. iv, p. v, p. vi).

③ According to some scholars' textual research and corrections, both "*Account of Foe, the Deified Founder of a Chinese Sect*" and "*Account of the Sect Tao−Szu*" originate from *Huitu Sanjiao Yuanliu Sou Shen Daquan (Complete Work of the Three Religions and Nine Schools of Thoughts and Gods).* "*Dissuasive from Feeding on Beef*" originates from "*Jie Shi Niurou Baoying An Shisi Tiao*" ("*Fourteen Cases of Retribution Dissuasive from Feeding on Beef*") in Selections from the *Three Teachings* edited by Lu Fengtai in the Qing Dynasty (Li, 2015, p. 251). Morrison (1998, p. 223) also used to possess these copies.

word "literature" as a general term back then had its own emphasis. Although it referred to writings in a general sense, or written texts, documents and books in different contexts, or even general knowledge, the then "literature" is irrelevant to the "literature" of today. Should corresponding translations be based on specific contexts? By contrast, the word "literature" as a term with partial emphasis expresses its connotation through a qualifier and emphasizes one aspect or one category of literature in a general sense. Overall, "literature" as a term with partial emphasis is mainly reflected by the following expressions:

Popular literature: this usually refers to popular readings although its definition differs from scholar to scholar. According to Morrison, popular literature roughly refers to a variety of readings popular among the general public and covers materials for enlightenment and educational purposes. Davis' definition of popular literature, however, attaches more importance to some fictional texts such as drama, novels and romances.

Polite literature: this term generally refers to an elegant literary style in classical Chinese. In terms of literary genre, polite literature can cover Confucian classics, historical records, philosophical writings and miscellaneous works, and can be considered in contrast with popular literature. In addition to the above cited examples, there is another work worth mentioning, i.e. *The Middle Kingdom* (1882) by S. Wells Williams. The work has two chapters respectively focusing on "classical literature" and "polite literature" (Williams, 1882, 1913, pp. 626-723).[①] Williams made it clear that "classical literature" referred to Confucian classics and that "polite literature" referred to historical records, philosophical writings and miscellaneous works. The purpose of such a division was perhaps to highlight the importance of Confucian classics. Nevertheless, Williams' approach to polite literature is generally similar to these of other sinologists of that period. The only difference lies in the next chapter, which also features drama and vernacular novels such as *Dream of the Red Chamber* and *The Spectacles in Ancient and Modern Times (Jin Gu Qi Guan)* not previously accepted by philosophical writings and miscellaneous works. Such practice is against the traditional understanding of polite literature (or to say the established criteria of classical Chinese writings), has something to do with William's desire to justify popular Chinese literature, and exhibits the general tendency among the Sinologists of that time. It is just that other Sinologists did not place these literary genres under the category of polite literature because they preferred to distinguish polite literature from popular literature.[②]

Light literature: refers to a literary style for recreational, relaxing and entertaining purposes. Works falling into this category are basically novels, romances and stories. Light literature shares some meanings with popular literature but is not entirely the same as popular literature. For example, readings for enlightenment and educational purposes can hardly be placed into this category.

① Although the subtitle of William's work features "literature", the whole work is an overview of then China, for which it is not identified as a "specialized work" in this paper.

② Such an exception can also be found in Williams' same work, in which drama, poetry and novels are collectively called belles lettres (Williams, 1913, p. 675).

Belles lettres: it is originally a French term meaning beautiful or fine writing. This literary style emphasizes wording, phrasing and rhetoric. Strictly speaking, belles lettres is not within the scope of discussion as the term does not contain the word "literature". Nevertheless, it shares the same root (littra) with literature.① Also, as a two-word term, belles lettres can exchange a certain meaning with literature. Consequently, it can be included for extended examination. Alexander Wylie used "belles lettres" to refer to poetry in "miscellaneous works", for which "belles lettres" in his words is not equal to "belles lettres" of today. According to Wylie, any classical work, as long as it reads beautifully and elegantly (whether in practice or in imagination), can be labeled as "belles lettres", which is basically in line with the then habitual usage in English and French contexts. Davis only touched upon this term and gave it no explanation, so it is unknown whether there was any definite reference of literary genres in his definition.②

The above list and analysis of terms, even with partial emphasis, can help explore all possible polysemy of "literature" by going beyond the discussion of literature as a general term. The existence of terms with partial emphasis is based on flexible linguistic references and conventions. Or rather, it is enabled by different cultural references. In fact, these terms with partial emphasis can more or less be found in local expressions in China but are not necessarily in symmetry. A contrastive study of these Chinese terms with partial emphasis and their catalogued English counterparts can reveal substantial differences. From a perspective of structural semantics, knowledge and disciplinary categorization is often triggered by an approach to arrangement and sequencing as different cultures have different approaches to knowledge arrangements and sequencing, which are reflected by some distinct headings. A contrastive study of these approaches in a cross-cultural system can have their differences and similarities exposed. The application of "literature" to the Chinese field provides strong evidence in this regard. On the one hand, Western scholars who came to China in the 19th century had a keen interest in popular Chinese readings, particularly novels and drama, and included them in their systems of literature in various ways, hoping that their efforts could impact the shaping of a new concept of literature. On the other hand, no term with partial emphasis could yet replace "literature" as a general term. After all, in the then register, "literature" as a general term was still of definite and prescriptive significance.

## Conclusion: Giles' Destination

In the end, I return to Giles, a prominent figure at the turn of the 20th century. There is so much to talk about on his book *A History of Chinese Literature*. Thus, this paper can only focus

① This same explanation can also be found in *Literature* by Peter Widdowson (2006, p. 31).
② This first English-Chinese dictionary compiled by a Chinese in the 19th century is *English and Chinese Lexicon*, which also contained the entry of "belle-lettres". The entry enriched its meanings by giving a four-character explanation, "六艺，技艺" (the Six Skills, artistry) (Kwong, 1868, p. 26).

on analyzing the aspects most relevant to this study, hoping to provoke more in-depth thought.

The term "literature" in the book covers a wide variety of literary genres, including Confucian classics, historical records, philosophical writings and miscellaneous works (the Four Books and Five Classics, Hundred Schools of Thought, historical records by Sima Qian and Ban Gu, Neo-Confucian works in the Song Dynasty, dictionaries and encyclopedias, pharmacopeias, legal works, agricultural works and other science-themed works). Some works such as *Compendium of Materia Medica (Bencao Gangmu)* and *A Complete Treatise on Agriculture (Nong Zheng Quan Shu)* were specifically included due to Giles' preference but were still placed within the framework of the "Four Libraries" according to the established approach to sinology. All of its four parts' titles begin with the word "book" (*Book the First*, *Book the Second*, *Book the Third*, *Book the Fourth*), the purpose of which was of course to associate "literature" in the book title with such concepts as books, writings and classic works. Seen from the entire discursive genealogy, the origin of problems pointed out by Zheng Zhenduo can be discovered. Just like his senior Sinologists, Giles was not restricted by the criteria of the "Four Libraries" and included genres outside the "Four Libraries" (novels, drama, "popular wall literature" from the late Qing Dynasty, newspaper articles, humorous stories) into his work *A History of Chinese Literature*. In particular, he intentionally increased the proportion of poetry, novels and drama in his book, overpowering the combined proportion of the other genres (Confucian classics, historical records, philosophical writings), which, as is known, had been regarded and recommended as more important in earlier Sinological works on literature. Thus, literature's boundary and emphasis in this book was different from that of his senior Sinologists. This change "extended the previous track one kilometer farther".

Such a change also took place in his perspective of and approach to the description and analysis of various texts, for which it should be specifically mentioned and emphasized. Take Giles' interpretation of the most typical non-literary texts, i.e. the Five Classics as an example. Right in the beginning, Giles specified his principle of analysis and criticized native Chinese scholars for their conventional annotations which attached great importance to textual research and the perspectives of ethics and political implications. According to Giles, such a tradition tended to prevent them from feeling life's vigor and beauty in classics such as *Book of Odes* (*Shih Ching*). They (early commentators) were of course "incapable of seeing the simple natural beauties of the poems" (Giles, 1924, p. 13). Giles quoted several poems translated from the *Book of Odes* to prove that it could lead readers to a fascinating world. As for *Tso's Commentary* (*Tso Chuan*), Giles held that there was no need to give distorted explanations of it from a Confucian perspective. "Of the writer himself, who has been canonized as the Father of Prose, and to whose pen has also been attributed the *Kuo Yü* or Episodes of the States, next to nothing is known, except that he was a disciple of Confucius; but his glowing narrative remains, and is likely to continue to remain, one of the most precious heirlooms of the Chinese people. What Tso did was this. He took the dry bones of these annals and clothed them with life and reality

by adding a more or less complete setting to each of the events recorded" (Giles, 1924, p. 26). There seems no need to add more quotes, as a new analytical approach adopted in the book can already be found. The approach concerns the analyses of life's vigor, aesthetics, emotions, forms, and style (a definition frequently mentioned in the book). Prior to Giles, such analyses had been absent, or at least rare in the works and articles by earlier sinologists.① Thus, changes in Giles' perspective of literature are once again proved to be true.

As a general term, the word "literature" was used in the title of Giles' work. Also, there are several special terms with partial emphasis (general literature, miscellaneous literature, etc.) in the text. Considering that such terms are eye-catching, they need to be properly differentiated and clarified.

General literature in Giles' earlier work *Gems of Chinese Literature* refers to a "total history" as opposed to fragmented and categorized writings which are neither timeless, nor fully covered. This definition is restated in the preface of the second edition. However, in the titles of the two most highlighted chapters, "general" is juxtaposed to "classical" to form the term of "classical and general literature". In this sense, literature falls into two categories, namely, classical literature and general literature. Classical literature here should not directly be translated to "古典文学" (gudian wenxue), which is for sure. After all, according to its introduction, classical literature mainly includes Confucian classics and historical records. Such a definition is similar to but different from Williams' definition, which is equal to the genre widely known as prose. Giles' definition is reflected in his specific introduction. Authors in the same camp (Liu Zongyuan, Han Yu, Li Hua) are collectively called "writers of general prose literature" (Giles, 1924, p. 191). The placement of the two literary genres in juxtaposition is probably because both belonged to an ancient-style of prose, or rather Pre-Qin-style prose, as opposed to general literature, which was more frequently referred to as "ordinary prose". Nevertheless, regardless of the writer's intention, general literature as a concept could in fact be replaced by prose.

The analysis of miscellaneous literature as a term with partial emphasis requires an understanding of the applications and meanings of "miscellaneous" in the 19th century context. Morrison, who was among the earliest Western scholars coming to China, already applied this term to the titles of his works such as *Chinese Miscellany* (1826). Following that, the term appeared in many more early-period works, among which were *Miscellaneous Pieces* (1844) and *The Chinese Miscellany* (1849) by W. H. Medhurst, *The Periodical Miscellany and Juvenile Instructor* (1836) by John Evans, and Davis' essay collection *Chinese Miscellanies: A Collection of Essays and Notes* (translated as "杂著" in Chinese) (1865). Based on its original meaning of essays or collection of essays, more derivative meanings came into being. For example,

① There are some works, such as Davis' *The Poetry of the Chinese*, containing such analytical elements. Nevertheless, works with "literature" in their title (not to be confused with works just on novels, poetry and drama) were then quite rare.

Summers used the term to refer to the "miscellaneous works" (jibu) of the "Four Libraries". As shown in the contents of Giles' work *A History of Chinese Literature*, the term "miscellaneous literature" is seen in several chapter titles to cover writings and works of a particular period, philosophical writings, prose and poetry (yet there are other chapters themed on poetry and prose), and even a variety of agricultural and medical works, resulting in confusion in definition. Perhaps out of text structure's consideration, Giles put the pieces difficult to categorize together under the name of "miscellaneous literature".

The above cases enable a further understanding of the more extensive applications of literature-related terms with partial emphasis. It must be pointed out that some excessively distinctive applications (like the above two examples) seem to go beyond the scope of normal classification, or become a novel duplication of normal classification. These applications cannot expect to go popular or achieve much significance. Worse still, they may unsettle the identifiable classification system.

After a targeted analysis of such a prominent sinologist as Giles in the 19th century, a review of that century in retrospect may help generate a comprehensive conclusion or judgment of "literature". On the one hand, in a subtle or relatively more obvious way, this progressive genealogy still witnessed a gradual change, which should perhaps be attributed to the special use and highlighting of multiple terms with partial emphasis, or to the improvement of observation perspective and analytical approach. Such a gradual change was exhibited to varying degrees by Davis in the 1860s, Douglas in the 1870s, Williams in the 1880s, and later Giles at the turn of the 20th century. The change of course had a lot to do with the then understanding of literature in the English world and the progress in literary criticism. On the other hand, "literature" as a general term was in a certain state of "disorganization", or was leaning towards some other concept with partial emphasis. Even so, its overall semantic framework did not subsequently fall apart, nor did an independent and rebellious concept of "literature" in a contemporary sense come out of it. This perhaps to some extent lagged certain advanced development of British literary criticism, but probably represented then conventional daily wisdom. Thus "literature" as a general term should come as no surprise.[①] Accordingly, the then native intellectual circles of China were still baffled by outdated concepts. And it would be some years before a so-called "revolutionary" cataclysm occurred although Chinese intellectuals were approaching it.

① This issue was also clarified by Fang Weigui in his essay Western Concept of "Literature": A Textual Research and Correction. Fang considered it wrong to pre-confirm the word "literature" based on some theoretical works written by later generations without paying attention to its meanings when the word was in extensive use in the 19th century. Besides, "literature" in a contemporary sense was far from dominant back then (Fang, 2014).

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