

## **In Others' Words: A Study of Italian Quotations in the Comparative Method of Qian Zhongshu**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Contemporary scholar and writer Qian Zhongshu (1910-1998) played a key role in Chinese comparative literature. His original comparative method defies categorisation and his extensive use of quotations in seven languages - the main characteristic of his style - creates a collage of literary motifs and genres that constitutes a fertile field for analysis to trace the general principles of world literature.

Chinese scholarship comprises a discipline specifically dedicated to Qian Zhongshu's work, the *Qian Xue* (Studies on Qian). Since the 1980s, research on Qian Zhongshu's achievements and methodology has played an important role in understanding the author's approach to writing and literature. Western research on the writer's complex and multi-faceted literary production is a step that needs to be further developed, since Western literature constitutes a great part of Qian's thematic choices. The number of languages involved in the analysis and the vast amount of cross references in Qian's work require a set of skills of which this study is a small yet necessary part.

This dissertation analyses the contribution of Italian quotations and the influence of Italian literature on the comparative method of Qian Zhongshu – a topic that has not been explored in mainland and overseas Qian Xue studies yet. This thesis outlines the threads that underpin Qian Zhongshu's choice of authors and quotations and constitute the core of his comparative method. As a case study that analyses all the Italian quotations that appear in Qian's literary essays, the present dissertation answers questions on the necessity of such a consistent use of quotations and on the role that Italian and foreign literatures play in the definition of a comparative method that seems to be all-inclusive and difficult to fathom.

A deductive approach is used to delineate Qian's comparative method and the general principles that guide the author through the study and analysis of single quotations. Mapping the principles that lead global literatures towards an enhancement of mutual comprehension between countries and peoples seems a desirable yet unrealistic goal. Nevertheless, Qian Zhongshu convincingly proved the attainability of this desire through his use of quotations to establish a dialogue between different historical epochs and distant spatial settings.

**KEYWORDS:** comparative literature, East-West studies, Qian Zhongshu, quotations.

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