COMPARING CIVILIZATIONS: China and the West

西中文明比照

（第四版）

[美] John G. Blair [美] Jerusha Hull McCormack 编著



in earlier editions know as
Western Civilization with Chinese Comparisons

復旦大學出版社

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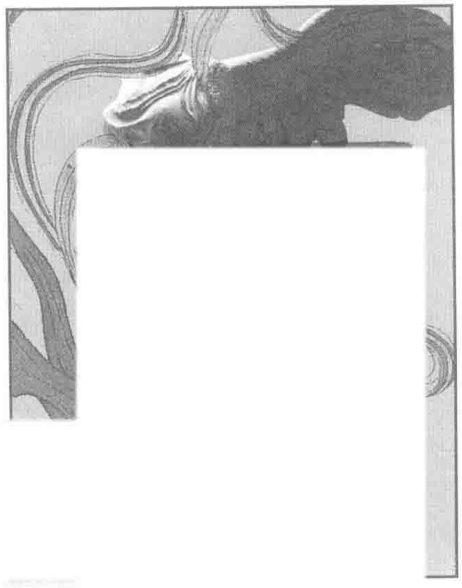

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Dedication to Professor DING Wangdao

(1924–2010)

distinguished teacher, scholar, translator and author at
Beijing Foreign Studies University

In the spirit of Zhuangzi: "A path is made by people walking."



The origins of *Comparing Civilizations: China and the West* trace back to the revered teacher who introduced me to Chinese Civilization. In 1988, during my first experience of China, Prof. Ding permitted me to sit in on his course in English on classical Chinese texts. That extraordinary course was designed to help Chinese undergraduates of that generation at Beijing Foreign Studies University to become better acquainted with their own heritage. To me as an ignorant outsider, these steps were the first on a path toward an appreciation of the deep-rooted Chinese tradition and the possibilities of mutual understanding between Western and Chinese minds.

John G. Blair

EPIGRAPHS

He who knows himself and others will also recognize that East and West cannot be separated.

—— Wolfgang Goethe (1749 – 1832)

Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,
till Earth and Sky stand presently, at God's great Judgment Seat.

—— Rudyard Kipling (1865 – 1936)

The Greek: What is the Truth?
The Chinese: Where is the Way?

—— Angus Graham (1919 – 1991)

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《西中文明比照》(第四版)序

John G. Blair 和 Jerusha Hull McCormack 合著的《西中文明比照》(第四版)(*Comparing Civilizations: China and the West*)是我迄今为止读到过的由欧美学者编著的非常有特色的中西文明比较教材。简而言之,该书特色有四:

第一,作者主要从西中文明两大体系的核心观念入手进行比照,这就摆脱了过分依赖堆积如山的编年史料的陷阱,使中国读者能够从理论性高度很快切入西中文明的核心领域。

第二,作者把重心放在对西方文明的阐释上,但处处将其与中华文明相比照,这就很便于对西方文明的本质了解得并不深透的中国学人能从比较的角度把握西方文明的真正价值。

第三,作者为了突出重点脉络,把最关键的概念用一个简括的框架编织起来,使教材线索集中,从而使读者能够在较短的时间内很快抓住西中文明的整体外貌、基本特征和关键区别。对于使用这本教材的教师来说,因为教材的框架清晰、概念典型、例证精到,所以也很便于在课堂上操作。

第四,这本著作处处透露出作者敏锐的学术洞察力与渊博的西中文明知识。对于当今的中国读书界,本书确实是很重要的比较文化文献。之所以如此,我想这不仅由于本书作者在西中文明比较方面有过深湛的研究,还因为作者曾在中国的大学(主要是北京外国语大学)里从事过多年的西中文明比较教学。不用说,两位作者自己的研究成果和他们与中国的教授、专家、研究生和本科大学生之间的长期互动与交流的心得体会已经水乳交融地凝结在这部著作中。所以,两位教授的许多观点与看法在一定的程度上也与若干中国学者的思考有某种奇妙的呼应,成为一种非常有趣的中西文化互动现象。

两位教授之所以邀请我为他们的大作作序,可能因为我是这个领域的同行,起步比较早一些。我自己是从 1995 年就开始在北京大学开设"中西文化比较"这门课程了。算起来,已经在北大连续讲授了 21 年。北大选修这门课程的同学比较多,通常在 300-500 人之间。巧的是 John G. Blair 教授若干年后在北京外国语大学也开设了类似的课程"西中文明比照"。据 John G. Blair 教授说,选课人数也有好几百人。这个现象折射出当代中国大学素质教育的整体趋势。比较文化,尤其是中西文化(文明)比较,已经由于时代和社会的需要,势所必然地被推向教育和学术研究的前台。可是,需要顺便指出的是,我和两位欧美教授的课程虽然名目很相近,但是在具体倾向和框架处理上,其实是有颇大区别的。我的"中西文化比较"是用西方文化做参照系统,侧重的是中国传统文化,重点在于论证了中国文化中的文化自信所依据的大量事实和理论;而两位欧美教授的"西中文明比照"则是用中国文明做参照系统,侧重的虽然是西方文明成果,但是也印证了我 30 多年前预言中国文化必然崛起的论断。在本教程的初版中,教程还全文引用了我《中西文化演进七大律》。我的《中西文化比较》主要以学科分类的方式进行;两位欧美教授的《西中文明比照》则主要是以重大的文明概念的比照进行。在一定的意义上,他们两位教授的课程和我的课程恰好是互补的。而从一定的文

化逻辑看,这两类课程的互补特点恰好是两类课程主讲者本身的文化积淀及思维模式的必然产物。

在中国学术界,同行相嫉的说法很流行,但是我更情愿同行相慕的说法也同样流行。至少,我和两位教授尤其是 John G. Blair 教授之间从未有过相嫉的现象。记得 7 年前的一天,我接到 John G. Blair 教授的邀请,希望进行中西文化比较教学方面的交流。于是我们相识了,并进行了坦诚的交谈。Blair 教授是乐观、豁达、知识渊博、见解犀利的学者。他的夫人 Jerusha 教授也非常健谈、睿智、思维敏捷。Blair 教授曾邀请美国夏威夷大学安乐哲(Prof. Roger T. Ames)教授、香港城市大学的张隆溪教授和我一起聆听了他在北外的一次实际教学。他的教学给我们留下了深刻的印象。在短短的两个课时内,他居然把那么多的西中文明的核心概念讲述得如此井井有条、生动风趣。这给我留下了深刻的印象。他授课用的英语是我听到过的最清晰、流畅、准确而又动听的英语。也难怪北外会连续多年聘请他做客座教授了。

这样的教授,正是中国的大学所需要的教授;这样的教授编著的教材,也正是中国的读书界,尤其是中国的大学生们所需要的教材。这部教材曾使用过多次,学生反应热烈,应该说是经过了实践检验的。复旦大学出版社慧眼识荆,毅然出版了这部作品,并多次重版,可谓适得其时、适得其宜。所以当 John G. Blair 和 Jerusha Hull McCormack 教授邀请我为本书作序时,我感到十分高兴,因为我非常乐意向我国读书界,尤其是中国英语界推荐这部优秀的教材。

是为序。

辜正坤

2017 年 12 月修订于北京大学

Authors' Preface

There is a story behind the origins of *CCCW*. In the autumn of 2001, when John G. Blair was serving as a Foreign Expert at Beijing Foreign Studies University, he saw that the materials being used to teach *Western Civilization* were those adapted from an American textbook of some years before. He remarked to the Professor in charge that these materials did not take into account the fact that the students studying them were not Americans but Chinese. The retort was: "Why don't you make us a course that will do just that?" The result, several years and four revisions later, is the present *Comparing Civilizations: China and the West* [*CCCW*].

There were some revealng steps along the way. Initially a course was proposed to senior professors of English at BFSU as an American-style Western civilization course: a chronological sequence moving from the Greeks to the Romans to the Europe of the Middle Ages and so on. The professors were unanimous in rejecting this model. They insisted that they wanted a "genuinely comparative course," though at the time no one could point to a model of what that meant, either in China or elsewhere. The obvious alternative structure was *topical*, with comparisons between the two civilizations taking place within a series of categories representing important cultural domains. *CCCW* today is an evolved version of that "genuinely comparative" format.

Readers of *CCCW* have often expressed a legitimate curiosity about the authors: their backgrounds and what led them to invest so much time and energy in this massive and unprecedented project. Here are some partial answers.

Both authors came to this project with similar experiences, two of which proved crucial. The first was an American-style liberal arts college education: Brown University (1956) for Dr. John Blair and for Dr. Jerusha McCormack Wellesley College (1964), where in an earlier generation Soong Meiling, better known in the West as Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, was educated.

Liberal-Arts Education

The ideas behind liberal-arts education were spelled out by John Henry Cardinal Newman in the mid-19th century [link: Newman, 96]. Newman conceived of college-level study as giving its students an *education* as opposed to *training* [link: *education/training*, 55]. To him, the most important goals of a university were not vocational. Education in his sense aspires to broaden the mind. For example, it presumes that all forms of knowledge are related to each other. Hence, it strives to relate all academic disciplines to each other, at least on some level. Although students studying under such a conception do choose a *major* (principal subject) on which to concentrate, they are free to range widely among courses classified as *electives*. In fact, during the first year or two of most American colleges, students are typically required to spread attention over a variety of disciplines in the humanities or arts, as well as the social sciences and physical sciences. These are commonly designated as *distribution requirements*.

To satisfy such requirements, John Blair studied at an introductory level: Chemistry, Mathematics, and Biology; Economics, Psychology, and Sociology; Philosophy, History, and English Literature. His foreign language was French. When he was obliged to select a major, he chose Literature, English and American, as the least limiting field he had yet encountered. The liberal-arts emphasis taught him *how to learn* so later he could access Anthropology, Political

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Science, and Art History at need.

Similarly, *distribution requirements* ensured that Jerusha Hull McCormack left Wellesley College with a good grounding in Biology and Botany, as well as a working knowledge of Sociology, European History, English and Latin Literature. She studied these before she concentrated on her joint major of Fine Arts and Philosophy.

This breadth of educational background has made it possible for both authors to access the diversity of disciplines represented in *CCCW*. From there both went on to graduate study in English and American Literature. That led each to a Ph.D. (respectively at Brown University in 1962 and Brandeis University in 1973). This stage of their studies constituted, in Western terms, *professional training* as opposed to their earlier *liberal education* [link: *education* vs. *training*, 55]. Their liberal arts *education* contributed more to *CCCW* than the research skills they learned as part of their professional *training*.

Immigrant Experience in Europe

The second major factor in both their backgrounds involves immigrant experience. As young professionals in the academic world, these two left their home culture in the USA to move to Western Europe, thereby exposing themselves to unprecedented experiences. The civilization was basically the same but the cultures quite different from that of the USA. John Blair went to French-speaking Switzerland, Jerusha McCormack to Ireland. Adapting to another culture as immigrants transformed their views of their home culture and, indeed, their perspective on human experience itself.

Leaving one's home culture means leaving a world that in which one has a place, a family, a status, and a sense of belonging. In the immigrant's new world, even if one has a desirable job, one cannot feel fully at home. One encounters a multitude of invisible rules that are easy to violate unknowingly. One learns to become attentive to cultural practices as a matter of urgent necessity. Detecting a culture's values and procedures — even if natives are not conscious of them — is a survival skill. In this situation, one instinctively compares cultures because the first things one notices as an immigrant are the practices that differ from what one left behind.

Such acute cultural awareness offers a fresh perspective on every experience, even the most painful. Whatever happens can be assessed as an instance of a culture at work. Prof. Isabel Crook, who taught English at Beijing Foreign Studies University and its predecessor organizations from 1949 till her retirement in the 1980s, put it well when she said of her experiences under arrest during the late 1960s: "It helps to have been trained as an anthropologist." That is, like other forms of enhanced cultural awareness, anthropology gives an individual a disengaged perspective on personal experience that is not limited to formal study.

With this crucial experience behind them, Blair and McCormack were then relatively well prepared in coming to China to grapple with its startlingly different way of life and worldview. They could examine current events and encounters less as personal experiences than as instances of culture. They then wanted to understand where underlying presumptions and attitudes came from. Hence, to account for their new experience, it seemed important to study, even without adequate mastery of the language, the Chinese tradition in as much depth as their limitations would allow. These background factors may help to explain why this sourcebook is unlike others produced by outsiders who have sought to understand China.

More about *CCCW* and its co-authors appears on their website: http://comparativeculture-studies.org.

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Engagement with China

When John Blair first came to teach at BFSU, in the first semester of 1988－1989, it transformed his European career. In 1970, he had been named to the chair of American Literature and Civilization at the University of Geneva (in French-speaking Switzerland). His research and teaching had gradually broadened from American Literature as such to focus on literary texts in their broad cultural context. His publications privileged trans-Atlantic comparisons, culminating in the book entitled *Modular America: Cross-cultural Perspectives on the Emergence of an American Way*, 1988 (winner of the Ralph Henry Gabriel Prize of the American Studies Association for interdisciplinary contributions to the field). But that very same year he experienced China for the first time. Looking at the Western world from what he could grasp of a Chinese perspective was startlingly different and challenging.

In the fall of 1988 Professor Ding Wangdao initiated John Blair's Chinese education by allowing him to sit in on a course for senior undergraduate English majors: *Classic Chinese Texts in English*. Since the course was offered in English, this was a first opportunity to encounter Kongzi and the other venerable figures so influential in the Chinese tradition. This course was offered partly because BFSU had such a distinguished translator and author available on the staff. But also the leadership was aware of how little the Chinese students of that generation knew of their own cultural heritage. *CCCW* follows in that spirit, dedicating the present volume to the memory of Ding Wangdao. In addition Prof. Ding had a decisive influence on *CCCW* by insisting that Chinese students should not be put in the position of reading texts from Chinese origins in a foreign language. *CCCW* is happy to respect that principle, even knowing that giving the original classical Chinese may pose another kind of problem for those unfamiliar with that prestigious stage of the language.

After John Blair's initial exposure to China, his European courses in American Studies evolved away from literature in cultural context to interdisciplinary culture studies as such. These worked to highlight the thought patterns that were important backgrounds to cultural understanding. These courses were also comparative, involving European, Asian and American perspectives. The intellectual techniques necessary for *CCCW* were in the process of development. His knowledge of China was helped along by teaching assignments as Foreign Expert at BFSU in 2001, 2003－2004, 2005－2006, 2007, short courses in 2012 and lectures in 2014. The videos of his lectures available from *Chaoxing.com* date from spring 2012: [http://video.mti100.com/serie_402012250.shtml?is2b=0]. The title of the course at that time was *Western Civilization with Chinese Comparisons.*

Dr. Jerusha McCormack joined this project in 2004 as its first version was in urgent need of revision. She came to this project after thirty years of teaching American, British and Anglo-Irish literature in University College, Dublin. In addition, during the five years she ran an Irish Studies program for American students coming to Dublin. The intercultural skills learned in these contexts and in her previous four books were indispensable to her role as co-author and chief editor, responsible for critiques and improvements at all stages of the preparation process. Equally important, Jerusha McCormack has also now become the chief source of leading ideas. Her own teaching at BFSU as a Foreign Expert in 2004, 2005－2006, 2007, followed by later short courses in Irish Studies, has given her a good sense of how today's Chinese students work and how best to frame Western ideas and practices to make them as comprehensible as possible.

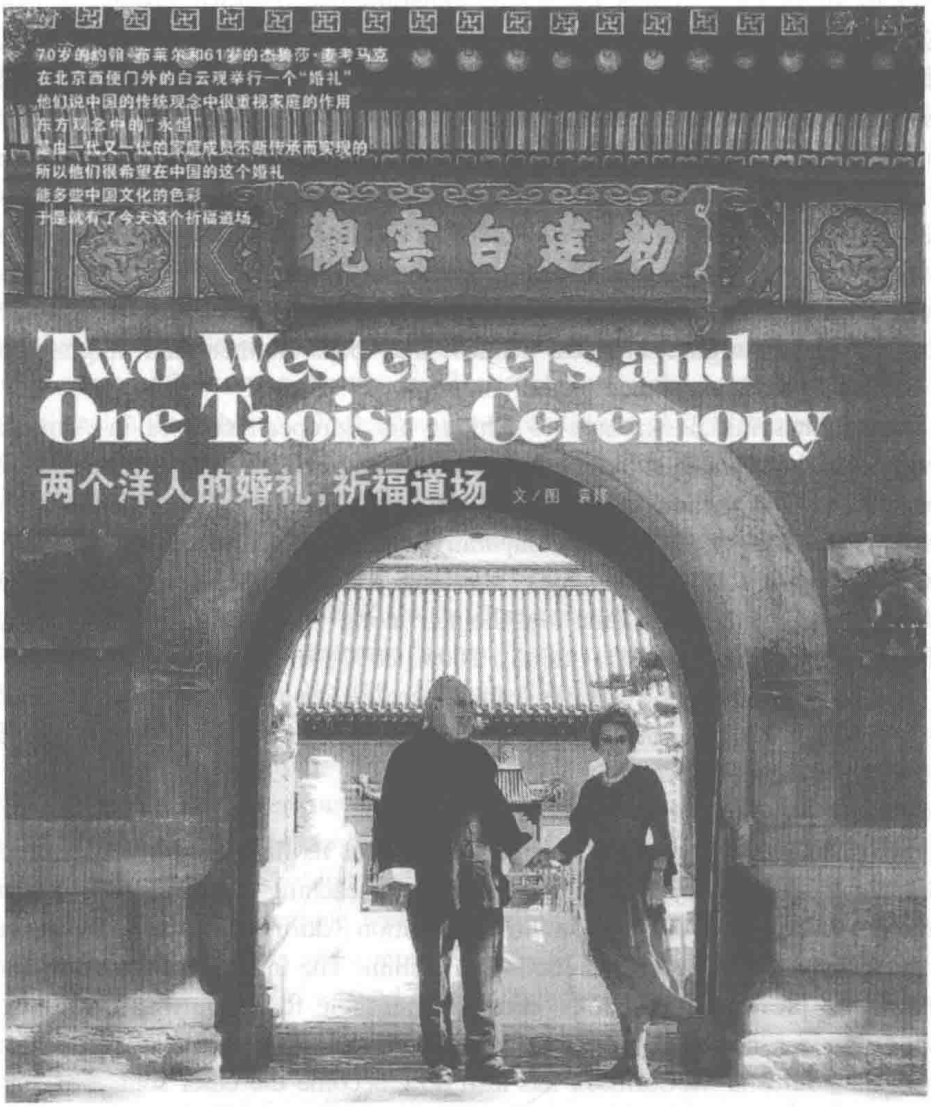
Acknowledgements

A compendious book of this kind relies on the counsel and wisdom of a vast and varied group of helpful individuals, both in China and in the West.

The final acknowledgement goes to our Chinese students, the M.A. candidates in English at the School of English and International Studies of BFSU. Since 2003, they have followed our course attentively and — at appropriate times — critically. Their input has measurably enriched these materials by supplying inside perspectives on Chinese culture.

The Connection between the Co-Authors

Perhaps the best way to sum up the connection between these two collaborators is to report that on May 30, 2004, their fortunes were united in a *Ceremony of Blessing* held at *Baiyunguan* (白云观), the leading Daoist temple in Beijing.



This ritual symbolizes their long-term commitment to an intellectual life together that has resulted in this, their first significant collaborative work.

In the spirit of this on-going enterprise, the authors themselves see this current version as the best they can do for now. But they expect to improve it as time goes on. They invite readers

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to contribute to the process. Please email them at ccconsultants@comparativeculturestudies.org in order to:

1. signal errors that need correction;
2. recommend ways this text could be made more usable;
3. suggest other authors or texts that merit inclusion (suggesting compensating cuts);
4. contest interpretations that seem wrong-headed (based on supporting evidence).

John G Blair & Jerusha Hull McCormack
Winter, 2017

OVERALL INTRODUCTION

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Introduction

CCCW belongs to the 21st century. Never before this century have so many human beings found themselves in contact with ways of life that differ from what is familiar to them. More and more people move around the world, some voluntarily, others driven by necessity. Even the stay-at-homes may find their circumstances changed. Their work, their leisure, even their food, may change on the basis of decisions made far away, sometimes for reasons that may seem incomprehensible to them. There is something one can do to help cope with this radically changed and changing world. One can study the differences so as to understand better how to make use of these new conditions — instead of merely suffering their consequences.

Anyone who has attended to the world news or traveled to a distant country understands the difficulties of communicating across cultures. These difficulties are not merely a matter of language but of understanding what is going on in the other person's mind. We need to grasp that other person's worldview, especially the unthinking patterns of thought which are central to *culture*.

Intercultural understanding and communication tends to be fragile, when it exists at all. What is the best course to take under the circumstances? Its proper name is *education*, a process requiring time and hard work. *Education* promises to help us appreciate where others are *coming from*, in the fullest sense of that expression. When people from both sides begin to understand how the world looks to the other person, there are almost always means to clarify differences in such a way that they do not constitute threats. The best word in English for such sympathetic perceptions is *empathy*. With mutual understanding comes enhanced possibilities for cooperation, or, better yet, *cohabitation* on the planet earth, a matter of urgency in the 21st century [link:

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