

Unexpected Affinities

Public Lecture and Book Launch



Book Launch: Reception and Book signing

Venue: Outside CityU Multimedia Conference Room
Date & Time: 6 Feb 07 (Tue), 3:00pm - 3:30pm
Guest speech: Professor Leo Oufan Lee, Professor of Chinese Emeritus, Harvard University;
Professor of Humanities, Chinese University of Hong Kong

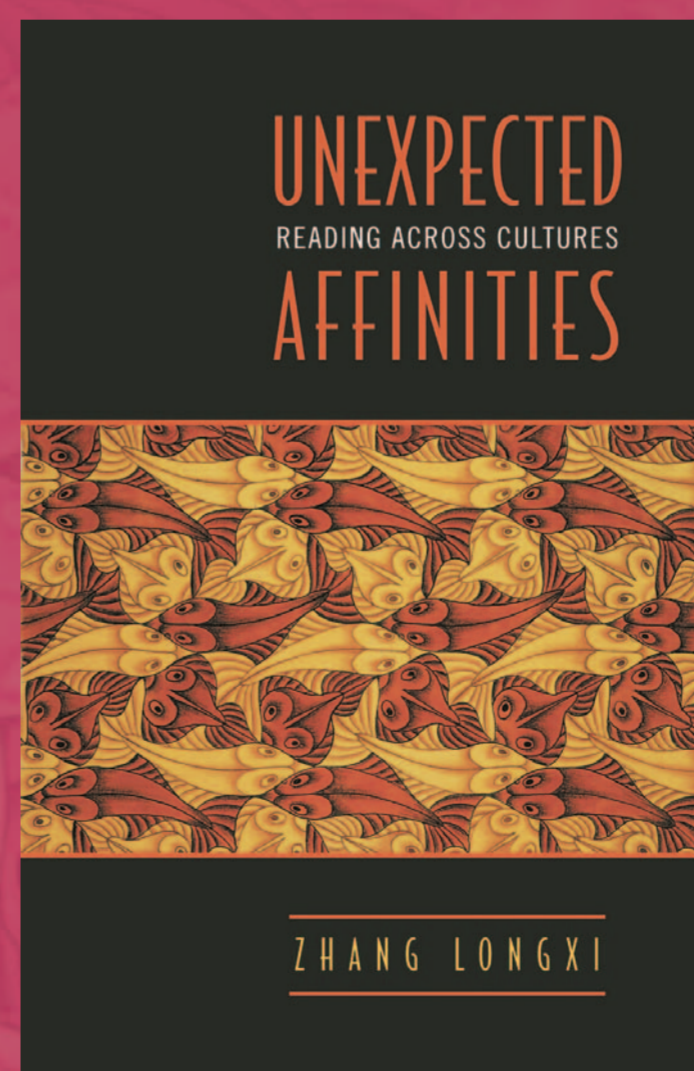
"Unexpected Affinities" lecture series

1. Topic: The Fallacy of Cultural Incommensurability
Venue: CityU Multimedia Conference Room
Date & Time: 6 Feb 07 (Tue), 3:30pm - 5:00pm
Abstract: Cultural incommensurability is the idea that nothing in common exists across the boundaries of the East and the West. By showing that this very idea exists in both China and the West, the first lecture in the series reveals the internal difficulties of the incommensurability argument and thereby lays the ground for the comparative study of literatures and cultures East and West.
2. Topic: "Faire une perle d'une larme": Reading across Cultures
Venue: B7603, CTL Multi-purpose Room
Date & Time: 09 Feb 2007 (Fri), 4:00pm-5:30pm
Abstract: This lecture looks at some conceptual metaphors in Chinese and Western texts, particularly the image of pearl and its symbolic meaning, and argues that certain critical insights are possible only from a cross-cultural perspective beyond the limited vision of one single culture or tradition.
3. Topic: "Within the infant rind of this weak flower": The Ambivalence of Poison and Medicine
Venue: B7603, CTL Multi-purpose Room
Date & Time: 12 Feb 2007 (Mon), 4:00pm-5:30pm
Abstract: From Shen Kuo's *Mengxi bitan* and several other Chinese texts to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, this lecture examines the themes of the conceptualization of the human body and the medical treatment of the body, the dialectic of medicine and poison, understood figuratively or allegorically. By exploring this theme in different literary traditions, the lecture shows the unexpected affinities of texts and ideas across cultures East and West.
4. Topic: "A paradise within thee, happier far": The Dialectic of Return and Reversal
Venue: G7619, FHS Conference Room
Date & Time: 14 Feb 2007 (Wed), 4:00pm-5:30pm
Abstract: The fourth and the last lecture in this series explores the thematic affinities between Chinese and Western formulations of the idea of dialectic movement, expressed with the image of a circle or sphere, as a return or reversal, in literary, religious and philosophical texts. The various examples will show that it is common in both China and the West to use the circle and sphere as images of development and perfection, of spiritual quest and internal knowledge, of the process of mystical meditation and philosophical contemplation.

Zhang Longxi's Bio-sketch

Professor Zhang Longxi holds an MA from Peking University and a Ph. D. from Harvard University. He has taught in Peking, Harvard, the University of California, Riverside, and is currently Chair Professor of Comparative Literature and Translation at the City University of Hong Kong. Professor Zhang has a wide range of interests in the comparative study of literatures and cultures East and West, and has published numerous articles in both Chinese and English on related subjects. His major book publications include:

1. 《二十世紀西方文論述評》 [*A Critical Introduction to Twentieth-Century Theories of Literature*]. Beijing: Joint Publishing Co., 1986.
2. *The Tao and the Logos: Literary Hermeneutics, East and West*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1992.
Korean translation, 1997; Chinese translation, 1998; 2006.
3. *Mighty Opposites: From Dichotomies to Differences in the Comparative Study of China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.
4. 《走出文化的封閉圈》 [*Out of the Cultural Ghetto*]. Hong Kong: The Commercial Press (Hong Kong) Ltd., 2000;
2nd expanded edition, Beijing: Joint Publishing Co., 2004.
5. *Allegoresis: Reading Canonical Literature East and West*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005.
6. 《中西文化研究十論》 [*Ten Essays in Chinese-Western Cross-Cultural Studies*]. Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2005.
7. *Unexpected Affinities: Reading across Cultures*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007.



The book has just been published by the University of Toronto Press, based on Professor Zhang's Alexander Lectures delivered in early 2005, and is included in the Alexander Lectures book series. "The Alexander lectureship was founded in honour of Professor W. J. Alexander, who held the Chair of English at University College, University of Toronto, from 1889 to 1926. The Lectureship brings to the university a distinguished scholar or critic to give a course of lectures on a subject related to English Literature." The Alexander Lectures have been given annually since 1928, and is one of the most prestigious lectureships in literary studies in North America. Almost all the lectures have been published as books, and past Alexander lecturers include such famous scholars as Irving Babbit (1930, Harvard), Nichol Smith (1936, Oxford), E. M. W. Tillyard (1948, Cambridge), Harry Levin (1957, Harvard), M. H. Abrams (1963, Cornell), Northrop Frye (1965, Toronto), Frank Kermode (1967, Bristol), W. J. Bate (1968, Harvard), and more recently, Julia Kristeva (1999, Paris), Toni Morrison (2002, Princeton), and Terry Eagleton (2004, Manchester). Since 1928, Professor Zhang is the first scholar outside Europe and North America to have been invited to give the Alexander Lectures.