

Review on the Dissemination and Acceptance of Roman Ingarden in China

Yixiang Chen

ORCID: 0009-0000-5469-8641

The Polish philosopher, aesthetician and theorist of art Roman Ingarden (1893-1970) is well-known within Chinese academic circles. Renowned for his achievements in the field of phenomenology, Ingarden has had an impact on contemporary Chinese literary and artistic theory. In particular, his illuminating stratification of literary work has been widely accepted across China. Before that, Chinese theorists tended to analyze literary works in terms of two facets: structure and content. According to CNKI, China's biggest academic database, works on Ingarden by Chinese scholars, include 72 journal articles, 23 master theses, and five dissertations; nonetheless, only two articles among these works review the dissemination and acceptance of Ingarden in China – and these two articles were published roughly 15 years ago, one in 2010 and the other in 2011. This paper shows how the transmission and acceptance of Ingarden have occurred in China, with the important goal of helping Polish and other academics learn more about this renowned thinker from a different perspective, addresses a long-standing need.

This article is focused on the following three questions: First, under what circumstances was Ingarden introduced to China? Second, how were his concepts studied and received by China's research community? And last, what is his influence on Chinese students and scholars today? Hopefully, this article will be helpful in promoting cultural exchange and mutual understanding between these two countries.

Generally speaking, Western achievements in the sciences and humanities reached China in two waves. The first began after the Opium War in 1840, and the second kicked off with China's reform efforts and opening-up in 1978. Before the Opium War, China had built an impressive civilization and had played a leading role around the world. Ancient Chinese people considered their land to be the center of the world, and the rest as savage and barbarian. This resulted in an attitude marked by arrogance and ignorance towards the budding modern civilization of the West. The situation became particularly grave under the reign of the Qing Dynasty, which ruled China from 1644 to 1911, the authorities of which decided to stop trading and maintaining contacts with foreign countries. The regime's arrogance and resulting seclusion led to China's growing backwardness and its lagging behind the West in modern times. China's failures in the Opium War and other wars motivated its rulers and intellectuals to identify the reasons for these failures and seek out solutions to them; this led them to embark on a process of learning from the West. The slogan "Learn advanced technologies from the foreigner in order to cope with them" was coined under such circumstances. Since then, well-educated Chinese have been keen on introducing, translating and studying Western accomplishments in the natural sciences, technologies and humanities. These Westernization practices reached their peak in 1919 when the May 4th Movement was initiated by professors and students at Peking University and fueled by the masses across China. In this campaign, scholars appealed for a new culture (Western culture) to replace the old one (traditional Chinese culture). Some even advocated for the complete Westernization of Chinese culture, an idea which sparked intense debate and discussion. Many of them argued for sticking to the principle of "Chinese culture as the foundation, Western knowledge for practical application." In consequence, China was forced to become part of modern political, economic and cultural systems dominated by the West.

Nevertheless, the Chinese people actively sought to learn from the West during the second wave of Western influence. Reform and opening-up became part of China's four basic national policies, all rooted in its historical experience and past lessons. As China's President Xi Jinping said at the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference in 2018, human history shows that openness leads to progress while seclusion leaves one behind. Due to its self-seclusion, China was constantly invaded and plundered by Western powers during the latter half of the 19th century: its territory was ceded, indemnity claimed, precious antiques looted, and its royal palace burned down. These acts were traumatic for the Chinese people. In order to keep up with international society and to better develop China's economy, its central government made the decision to reform and open up to the outer world in 1978. Since that time, people from all walks of life have competed to build connections with the world, especially the West. Foreign languages, English in particular, became a major subject in school classrooms, enabling Chinese students and scholars to communicate

effectively within the international community. This broader context led to many Western works, particularly those written in English, being translated into Chinese, and then being widely read, studied and discussed among Chinese academics. New concepts, terms and theories gained acceptance and were adopted by Chinese scholars. During this second wave, Ingarden was introduced to the Chinese research community. The Polish scholar's work was subsequently widely disseminated and well received in China.

For the most part, Ingarden gained his reputation in China through translation. Since 1978, Chinese scholars have endeavored to translate Ingarden's works into Chinese. However, most of these translations were not based on German or Polish texts, but on English-language versions. Thus far, only one book has been translated directly from Polish. Initially, only a small part of his papers and chapters from his books were translated into Chinese. For instance, Zhu Liyuan, a well-known Chinese expert in literary and artistic theory, translated "Artistic and Aesthetic Values" from the version published in the *British Journal of Aesthetics* (July 1964 issue), and the translated text was published in 1985. Wang Fengzhen rendered "Phenomenological Aesthetics: An Attempt to Define its Range" into Chinese in 1991. In 2004, Zhang Xushu completed his translation of "The Cinematographic Drama [the Film]"; this was an excerpt from *The Literary Work of Art*. All of these translations were based on English versions. None of Ingarden's works was rendered from Polish until Zhang Zhenhui published a Chinese version of *On Literary Works* in 2008.¹ Although the achievements of these scholars in promoting Ingarden's concept were significant, the language barrier led to misunderstandings and misrepresentations. Both China and Poland need more scholars with a good command of both Polish and Chinese languages and cultures in order to facilitate the exchange of ideas.

Aside from translations, Chinese scholars also read Western studies on Ingarden. Some of these research achievements have been translated into Chinese; these translations have played an important role in China's reception of Ingarden. To name a few, the Chinese translation of Rene Wellek and Austin Warren's *Theory of Literature*, in which the authors made use of Ingarden's concepts to discuss existential forms of literary works, debuted in 1977. In 1983, Lin Xianghua translated Wellek's *Four Critics: Croce, Valery, Lukacs, and Ingarden*, which ranked Ingarden as one of the four great critics in the West. In 1986, Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory: An Introduction* was translated by Wu Xiaoming. Robert Magliola's *Phenomenology and Literature: An Introduction*, which discusses Wellek's incorporation of Ingarden's concepts, was translated by Zhou Ning in 1988 and then re-translated by Wang Yuechuan and Lan Fei in 1992. There are also two Chinese versions of Wolfgang Iser's *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, in which Iser discusses Ingarden's initiative of "Indeterminacy." The first was co-translated by Jin Yuanpu and Zhou Ning in 1991; the other by Jin Huimin in 1991. Mikel Dufrenne's *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* was translated from French by Han Shuzhan in 1992. Herbert Spiegelberg's *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction*, which elaborated on Ingarden's philosophical and aesthetic concepts, was co-translated by Wang Binwen and Zhang Jinyan

¹ Please be noted that *The Literary Work of Art* was first published in German in 1931, and later in the 1950s it was translated into Polish with the title *On Literary Works*.

in 1995. Iser's *How to Do Theory*, in which Iser surveyed Ingarden's stratification of artistic works, was translated by Zhu Gang et al. in 2008.

It is a pity that the majority of translations of Ingarden's works were made from English editions, and not from German or Polish, the languages in which he most often wrote. This language barrier has resulted in difficulties in reception and even misinterpretations of Ingarden as well as other Polish brilliant writers, thinkers and even scientists. It is therefore urgent for China and Poland to strengthen cultural and people-to-people exchanges. The Chinese government has appealed for better communication and the exchange of ideas among different civilizations. In the keynote speech at the opening ceremony of The Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations on 15 May 2019, President Xi stated that "we need to stay open and inclusive and draw on each other's strengths." In this speech he also proposed that "we need to advance with the times and explore new ground in development." How can we attain these objectives? The first ground to break is the language barrier, as language is the vehicle of thoughts. Fortunately, a group of young Chinese scholars who know Polish very well are working on translating Ingarden and other writers. It can be expected that an increasing number of esteemed Poles will become widely known to Chinese students and scholars as communication grows between these two nations. It is therefore necessary for both countries to promote student exchanges for the purpose of learning each other's language and culture.

However, long before the translations discussed above were produced, Ingarden's philosophical, artistic and aesthetic theories were already being studied in China. Li Youzheng, a prominent researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, was the first known Chinese scholar to study Ingarden. In 1980, he published an article on Ingarden in *Aesthetics*, one of China's well-known journals (Zhang, "The Reception" 124). The article, entitled "The Phenomenological Aesthetics of Roman Ingarden," laid a solid foundation and had a great impact on later studies of Ingarden in China. The article focused on three questions: first, what is Husserl's Intentional Theory and how did it influence Ingarden's concepts regarding literature and the arts; second, what were Ingarden's most important ground-breaking arguments in his two well-known books: *The Literary Work of Art* (first published in 1931, in German) and *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art* (1936, in Polish); and lastly, what were Ingarden's views on artistic value and aesthetic value in two other works: *Ontology of the Work of Art* (1962, in German) and *Experience, Artwork and Value* (1969, in German). By answering these three questions Li delineated Ingarden's key concepts, such as the strata of literary works, to Chinese theorists. The other contribution of this paper was its breaking down of Ingarden's works into two periods, reminding readers that Ingarden's later period writings, i.e., *Ontology of the Work of Art* and *Experience, Artwork and Value*, deserved the same attention as his earlier ones. Shortcomings and deficiencies existed in the article, e.g., there were occasional misinterpretations and an overreliance on references to English sources without any Polish or German ones. Nonetheless, its impact and influence were tremendous, and no other paper has exceeded it within the past two decades (Zhang, "The Reception" 124).

Following in Li Youzheng's steps, many academics and students were engaged in the study of Ingarden and his theories. A total of 72 articles relevant to Ingarden were found in

a search using his name in CNKI.² In Chen Deng's survey of Ingarden's art ontology, art cognitivism and aesthetic value theory, he suggested that Ingarden's conceptions have been useful in the analysis and appreciation of literature and art. Chen's article presented a comprehensive introduction to Ingarden's aesthetic theory to China's academic community, and contributed to the transmission of Ingarden's ideas in China. In another article, Jiang Jiyong explored Ingarden's influence on Reader-Response Theory and Reception Aesthetics, arguing that Ingarden's thinking on the readers' role in constructing the meaning of literary works was the origin of Reader-Response Theory and Reception Aesthetics. Jiang provided concrete and detailed proof and examples, strengthening his argument.

Zhang Yongqing, a well-known professor of aesthetics and artistic theory from Renmin University of China, summarized Chinese studies on Ingarden from 1980 to 2010 in an article in which he pointed out three problems in these and proposed two pieces of advice. Zhang argued that Chinese scholars did not sufficiently explore the immanent correlation between Ingarden's philosophical thought and his literary theory, that interpretations of his ontology of a literary work were 'Wellekized', and that interpretations of Ingarden's actualization were 'Iserized'. Here Zhang Yongqing meant that Chinese scholars' understanding of Ingarden had been overly influenced by Wellek and Iser. Most Chinese researchers learned about Ingarden through English sources, they are prone to be affected by Western scholars. Based on these problems, he presented two suggestions: (1) to render more of Ingarden's works from German and Polish in order to strengthen the studies of Ingarden in China; (2) to explore new questions in the process of studying his works (Zhang, "Problems" 40).

Chinese scholars have also delved into the concept of "metaphysical quality" in a number of articles. Li Xiaolin, for instance, contends that "metaphysical quality" is the aesthetic quality of the stratum of represented objects. It is only through the manifestation of the metaphysical quality that a literary or artistic work reaches its peak. Although metaphysical quality is introduced in Ingarden's ontology of literature, it awaits elucidation in the parts of his theoretical writings dealing with aesthetic experience and aesthetic value. Metaphysical quality is not merely an aesthetic style and category but also has values akin to those of religion and metaphysics. Likewise, Ingarden's concept is not only intrinsically connected to phenomenological aesthetics, but also resonates with the tradition of metaphysical aesthetics.

Aside from research articles, a number of master theses and Ph.D. dissertations have also made contributions to the study of Ingarden in China. A total of 23 master theses and 11 doctoral dissertations were found in CNKI; these can be classified into three categories. The first type is studies of Ingarden's theories, the second one consists of applications of his key concepts to analyses of literary and artistic works, and the last one is works where Ingarden's thought is integrated into the study of the phenomenology of aesthetics. For instance, Wu Keqin examined Ingarden's literary ontology thoughts, contending that Ingarden focused

² The commonest Chinese translation of Ingarden's surname is "英加登" and "英伽登," therefore both names were searched by subject and abstract in CNKI on October 31, 2024.

on intention analyses of literary works of art, proposing a solution to the argument of “Idealism-Realism,” and unifying ontology and epistemology in the study on the existence of literary works. This dissertation attempts to reveal Ingarden’s literary ontology thoughts from four perspectives: how literary works “constitute” a realm, a literary work’s “regional” existence, a literary work’s aesthetic experience phenomenon, and a literary work’s aesthetic value systems. Another Ph.D. candidate, Xiong Haiyang, studied Ingarden’s art ontology. In order to solve the famous controversy of “Idealism-Realism” in the history of philosophy, he devoted himself to the study of the ontology of art, and examined the existence and essential structure of works of literature, music, painting, and architecture successively. On this basis, he pointed out that works of art are unique purely intentional objects which differ from real objects and ideal objects, and also have a schematic, multi-strata and qualitative structure. In this way, inspired by phenomenological methods, Ingarden provided a set of phenomenological solutions for general theory in art. Ph.D. candidate Zhu Shu applied Ingarden’s theory about the stratification of literary works, image-thinking in drama, and poetic literary language to drama translation, suggesting that the dramatic situation is composed of three strata: the stratum of language, that of image, and that of essence, which are all key to an understanding of the structure and significance of the play under translation.

A number of monographs on Ingarden have appeared over the past two decades. These monographs can be divided into two groups, the first one of which is dedicated solely to the study of Ingarden. For instance, Guo Yongjian wrote a book on Ingarden entitled *A Study of Roman Ingarden’s On Literary Works from the Perspective of Literature Phenomenology*, published by Academia Press, Shanghai, in 2011. In this book, Guo elaborates on Ingarden’s theories in terms of the existential mode of literary works, pure intentional objects, and literary stratification: the stratum of word sounds, the stratum of meaning units, the stratum of represented objectivities, and the stratum of manifold schematized aspects; concretization and polyphonic harmony. He also discussed Ingarden’s impact on contemporary China’s aesthetics. The second group merges Ingarden into the stream of Phenomenology studies, treating him as a representative of Phenomenology. For example, Zhang Yunpeng and Hu Yishan coauthored *Phenomenology Method and Aesthetics: from Husserl to Dufrenne*, released by Zhejiang University Press, Hangzhou, in 2007. In this treatise, Zhang and Hu chronicled phenomenologists from Husserl to Dufrenne. Ingarden was placed in Chapter 3 between Moritz Geiger and Michel Dufrenne.

Recently, building on previous research achievements, more Chinese scholars have begun to reflect upon Ingarden’s theories. Liu Yanshun, for example, criticizes Ingarden’s phenomenological reduction. In his article, he suggested that Ingarden embodies the idea and operation of phenomenological reduction in *The Literary Work of Art*, arguing that consciousness in intentional activity can not only be retained as a residue, but also that the essential genes of this intentional activity carried by consciousness can be preserved and restored through recollection and reflection. This leads to a confusion of knowledge and aesthetic pleasure, thereby delaying the reduction of aesthetic temporality. First, the significance or timeliness of aesthetic life is trespassed by cognitive reduction. Timeless knowledge, as a residue, can be preserved through recollection and reflection, but aesthetic life, as sensory pleasure, can only

be primary. The manifestation of its aesthetic timeliness is absolutely occasioned; there is no absolute residue, only a relative one, and only a relative aesthetic reduction can be performed. Second, Ingarden disassembles the absolute simultaneity or absolute intentionality of aesthetic life and replaces it with the relative intentionality or relative simultaneity of scientific life. He then regards the literary work as an absolutely autonomous entity, as a cognitive object solely for recollection and reflection, which inevitably leads to the disappearance of other aesthetic temporalities. Third, Ingarden ignores the unidirectional nature of attention in the continuous form of aesthetic temporal consciousness and the fluidity of its aesthetic temporal body. He mistakenly assumes that a detached observer's attitude can coexist and be juxtaposed with sensory pleasure, and uses this to bridge and transition to the phenomenological reduction of the essence of the literary work.

To sum up, Ingarden's artistic, aesthetic and philosophical theories were disseminated and accepted around China during two waves when Chinese people were rushing to learn from the West. Translations helped him embark on his journey to China, which was accomplished mainly through English versions rather than Polish or German sources, resulting in occasional misunderstandings. Among his writings, *The Literary Work of Art* and *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art* have gained the most popularity in China. Chinese scholars have conducted research on Ingarden for more than four decades. Works exploring his key concepts, such as the ontology of the arts, metaphysical quality, and the stratification of literary works have been constantly translated, studied and applied by Chinese students and scholars, some of which have even been included in university textbooks for literature majors. Ingarden has become an indispensable figure in China's process of absorbing and integrating foreign theories.

References

- Chen, Deng. „On Ingarden’s Aesthetics of Phenomenology”. *Journal of Sichuan International Studies University* 4 (2001): 8–11. [陈登：《论罗曼·英伽登的现象学美学》，载《四川外语学院学报》2001年7月第17卷第4期，第8-11页。]
- Guo, Yongjian. *A Study of Roman Ingarden’s On Literary Works from the Perspective of Literature Phenomenology*. Shanghai: Academia Press, 2011. [郭勇健：《文学现象学：英加登<论文学作品>研究》，上海：学林出版社，2011年。]
- Jiang, Jiyong. „Roman Ingarden’s Influence on Reader Reception Theory”. *Foreign Literature Studies* 1 (2001): 7–11. [蒋济永：《罗曼·英伽登对读者接受理论的影响》，载《外国文学研究》2001年第1期，第7-11页。]
- Li, Xiaolin. „An Analysis of Ingarden’s Metaphysical Quality”. *Journal of Fuzhou University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)* 3 (2013): 83–87. [李晓林：《英加登“形而上学质”辨析》，载《福州大学学报（哲学社会科学版）》2013年第3期，第83-87页。]
- Liu, Yanshun. „Phenomenology Reduction as Cognitive Reduction Trespasses Aesthetic Reduction: On the Delay of Aesthetic Temporality in Ingarden’s «The Literary Work of Art»”. *Journal of Northeast Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)* 2 (2024): 12–21. [刘彦顺：《现象学还原作为认识还原对审美还原的僭越——罗曼·英伽登<论文学作品>对审美时间性的耽搁》，载《东北师范大学学报（哲学社会科学版）》2024年第2期，第12-21页。]
- Luo, Fuwen. „On the Occurrence and its Immanent Logic of Picture Consciousness”. *Jiangsu Social Sciences* 2 (2013): 46–51. [罗缙文：《试论图像意识的发生与内在逻辑》，载《江苏社会科学》2013年第2期，第46-51页。]
- Su, Hongbin. „A Study of the Three Dimensions of Ingarden’s Literary Language Phenomenology: Linguistic Sound, Meaning and Object”. *Social Science Front* 9 (2019): 165–173. [苏宏斌：《语音·意义·现象：英加登文学语言现象学的三个维度》，载《社会科学战线》2019年第9期，第165-173。]
- Su, Hongbin. *An Introduction to Phenomenological Aesthetics*. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2005. [苏宏斌：《现象学美学导论》，北京：商务印书馆，2005。]
- Wang, Yichuan. „Interpretation of the Strata of Literary Text and other Strata”. *Theoretical Studies in Literature and Art* 1 (2011): 2–6. [王一川：《理解文学文本层面及其余衍层》，载《文艺理论研究》2011年第1期，第2-6页]
- Wu, Keqin. „On Ingarden’s Literary Ontology Thoughts”. A dissertation submitted to Suzhou University for Ph.D., September 2010. [武克勤：《英伽登文学本体论思想研究》，苏州大学博士学位论文，2010年9月。]
- Xiong, Haiyang. „A Research on Roman Ingarden’s Art Theory”. A dissertation submitted to Nanjing University for Ph.D., May 2019. [熊海洋：《罗曼·英伽登的艺术理论研究》，南京大学博士学位论文，2019年5月。]
- Zhang, Xushu. *A Study of Ingarden’s Phenomenological Aesthetics*. Hefei: Huangshan Publishing House, 2004. [张旭曙：《英伽登现象学美学初论》，合肥：黄山书社，2004。]
- Zhang, Yongqing. „Problems and Thinking: Studies of Ingarden’s Literary Theory for Three Decades”. *Literature & Art Studies* 2 (2011): 40–46. [张永清：《问题与思考：英伽登文论研究三十年》，载《文艺研究》2011年第2期，第40-46页。]
- . „The Reception of Literary Theory of Roman Ingarden in Contemporary China”. *Yuejiang Academic Journal* 6 (2010): 118–126. [张永清：《罗曼·英伽登文论在当代中国的接受》，载《阅江学刊》2010年12月第6期，第118-126页。]
- Zhang, Yunpeng, Hu Yishan. *Phenomenology Method and Aesthetics: from Husserl to Dufrenne*. Hangzhou: Zhejiang University Press, 2007. [张云鹏、胡艺珊：《现象学方法与美学：从胡塞尔到杜夫海纳》，杭州：浙江大学出版社，2007年。]
- Zhu, Shu. „Situation Translation and Translational Situation: A Study of the Meta-Problem of Drama Translation”. A dissertation submitted to East China Normal University, May 2014. [朱姝：《情境翻译与翻译情境——戏剧翻译元问题研究》，华东师范大学博士学位论文，2014年5月。]

KEYWORDS

Dissemination and Acceptance

ABSTRACT:

Roman Ingarden was a prominent Polish philosopher, aesthetician and theorist whose achievements in the field of phenomenology have exerted a significant influence on contemporary Chinese students and scholars. Although papers and monographs on Ingarden have been produced within the Chinese academic community, none has been written in English to review his dissemination and reception in China. This paper focuses on the following three questions: First, under what circumstances was Ingarden introduced to China? Second, how was his work disseminated within and received by China's research community? And last, what influence does he have on Chinese students and scholars today? Addressing these questions will help promote cultural exchange and mutual understanding between China and Poland.

China

ROMAN INGARDEN

NOTE ON THE AUTHOR:

Yixiang Chen – Ph.D in literature, lecturer of School of Foreign Languages, Shaoyang University, Hunan Province China. His research interests include British literature, American literature, literary theory and aesthetics. He has published several articles of literary criticism on English novels and is now working on the American philosopher and literary critic Stanley Cavell. His email address: 343953744@qq.com. |