ABSTRACT

Inspiration has been a mysterious and controversial topic among various schools of thought in Chinese Literary Criticism. This study aims primarily at analysing various definitions and theories regarding Inspiration since the ancient times in China.

The objective of this analysis is to explore the myths of Inspiration, as discussed and used by the various schools of literary thoughts. This academic exercise attempts to categorize the schools in relation to the concept of Inspiration.

Structurally, this academic exercise is divided into seven chapters. Chapter One, an introductory chapter, covers briefly the approach and the range of the topic. Chapter Two concerns the abstract concept of Inspiration as it was first used and discussed in the West. Only in the early 20th century was the term 'Inspiration' ever used in China. However, the concept of Inspiration has long existed and used in Chinese Literary Criticism. Chapter Three is a review of various definitions brought up by literary men in China since Jin Dynasty. Concepts like 'Focus on Response' (应感; Ying Gan), 'Association of Ideas' (兴会; Xing Hui), 'Mysticism' (神思; Shen Si), 'Nature's Mystery' (天机; Tian Ji), 'Power of Realization' (悟入; Wu Ru), 'Train of Thought' (思; Si) and many other more recent concepts are identified for categorization and establishment of similarities. Chapter
Four goes one step further to discuss in detail the main characteristics of Inspiration in Chinese Literary Criticism, namely, 'Unconsciousness', 'Nature of Occasion' and 'Suddenness'. Chapter Five attempts to present the philosophical background and origins of Inspiration in Chinese Literary Criticism. Chapter Six emphasizes the contribution of the discussion on Inspiration for creative writing. The Final Chapter sums up the entire exercise by stressing the important features of Inspiration theories in Chinese Literary Criticism and their influence on the critical tradition of poetry in China.