

## Comparative Literature in the 21st Century

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**ABSTRACT:** There are some new viewpoints about comparative literature in European and American academies in the age of the 21st century, and this paper analyzes the new changes from the perspectives of core issues of comparative literature in the new age, the new transcendence of time and space, and the transformation of comparative literature and post-modernism; it points out that comparative literature, in which cross-cultural dialogue is regarded as its own responsibility, will observe the global, understand the world, explore human beings, bridge cultures at home and abroad, and in the past and at the present, communicate human beings' soul, shape new cosmic and life outlooks, and take part in the construction of the common ethics available for human beings in the 21st century from the commanding height of time and space. Particularly, it is intended to narrow the gap between the elites and the masses, and the distance between theoretical research and attentive reading of works, actively explore to search for the breakthrough in the relationships between universality and particularity, purity and renewal, self and other, and local discourse and foreign discourse.

### 1. The new changes of comparative literature in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

In the age of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there are very different understandings about comparative literature in comparison with the past. Generally speaking, contemporary comparative literature is understood as cross-cultural and interdisciplinary literature studies. It is widely accepted by scholars at home and abroad. Recently, we are happy to see that English scholar Bassnett, who had declared that “comparative literature as a subject, a discipline, is defunct”, revised her proposition, proposed that “looking back at that proposition, it appears fundamentally flawed”, and acknowledged that it is due to the reason that “a failure to consider the political implications of intercultural transfer processes”. She pointed out that “In the West, to a sense of the subject being in decline, though elsewhere in the world comparative literature, albeit under other labels, was flourishing.”<sup>1</sup> Indian-American scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who had published a

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<sup>1</sup> Bassnett, Susan, *Reflections on Comparative Literature in the Twenty-First Century*, *Comparative Literature in China*, Huang

collection of essays entitled *Death of a Discipline*, emphasized that if comparative literature can move beyond its Eurocentric origins, and outside the global exchange flows determined by international business, there will be new development and new disciplines which will be formed.<sup>2</sup> In order to renew and develop comparative literature, many scholars propose their constructive opinions. For example, in the report, *On the State and Future Development of New Disciplines*, drafted by Haun Saussy for American Comparative Literature Association, he proposed that the future development strategy of comparative literature is to return to the research of literariness, recheck the concept of literariness, and return to literature research with new significance and opinions in new angles.<sup>3</sup> Brazilian writer and theorist Oswald de Andrade thought that the denial of univocality in comparative literature means assertion of the Brazilian polyphonic and multicultural space and, ultimately, liberation from mental colonialism.<sup>4</sup> Bassnett hoped that comparative literature scholars should abandon pointless debates about terminology and definition. She thought that the future of comparative literature should lie in jettisoning attempts to define the object of study in any prescriptive way in focusing instead on the idea of literature, understood in the broadest possible sense, and in recognizing the inevitable interconnectedness that comes from literary transfer, focusing more productively on the study of texts themselves, and mapping the history of the cross-cultural and cross-boundary writing and reading.<sup>5</sup>

These changes illustrate that some foreign scholars' understanding of the discipline of comparative literature is closer with Chinese scholars', and the characteristic of cross-cultural dialogue of comparative literature becomes more and more prominent. The first President of Chinese Comparative Literature Association, Vice President of International Comparative literature Association, Yang Zhouhan had argued that very early "The beginnings of Chinese comparative literature not only combined with the political, social and cultural realities, but also borrowed Western theories to interpret Chinese culture and literature."<sup>6</sup> It proves that Chinese comparative literature is rooted in the benefit of human beings' fundamental purposes, and it makes progress in cross-cultural dialogues with the Western from the very beginning. In the age of 21<sup>st</sup> century, global internet and mobile communication make it possible to keep people in close connection. Biological technologies including transgenic, stem cell, clone can replicate, modify and optimize life by artificial means. And nanotechnology can help human beings control micro world effectively. These revolutionary new knowledge and technologies influence every detail of human life, shape human beings' outlooks of space and time which are fundamentally different with those of the past, and lead to the unprecedented consumption and contest of the earth resources. The real situation that human beings face needs to be solved either through confrontation or through dialogue. The past experiences repeatedly prove that confrontation will inevitably lead to war and destruction, and only dialogue and negotiation can bring peace. On the other side, the two world wars in the 20<sup>th</sup> century impressed human beings with miserable

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Dexian trans., 2008(4), p6.

<sup>2</sup> Gayatri Spivak Chakravorty, *Death of a disciplinary*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Saussy, Haun, ed., *Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006, p.20.

<sup>4</sup> Bassnett. Susan, *Reflections on Comparative Literature in the Twenty-First Century, Comparative Literature in China*, Huang Dexian trans., 2008(4), p6.

<sup>5</sup> Bassnett, Susan, *Reflections on Comparative Literature in the Twenty-First Century, Comparative Literature in China*, Huang Dexian trans., 2008(4), p4.

<sup>6</sup> Yang Zhouhan, *Jingzi Yu Qiqiaoban(Mirror and tangram)*, Beijing: Zhongguo shehuikexue chubanshe, 1990, p.7.

memories. Destructive materials and mental harms ask us to rethink the cruel experiences of that age, redefine human conditions, and rethink human beings' meaning of existence and way of life. The new definition should be conducted in the global dialogues of all nations. The sharp confrontation between "cultural hegemony" and cultural fundamentalism, which is originated from a closed cultural development, has already resulted in the turbulence and unrest of the world. In order to stop the conflict, dialogue should be opened instead of committing violence. At last, around the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the philosophical transfer changed people's way of thinking to a large extent. Phenomenology and process philosophy, the doctrines of North Whitehead and his followers, have reversed the trend of dualism, which is the split between subject and object, and improved the Western philosophy to a new stage of the interaction between subject and object. Traditional Chinese philosophy always emphasizes the unification of the objective world and the subject, but it lacks modern interpretation and practices. Today, Western philosophy and Chinese philosophy are mutually the other, so it is needed to reflect themselves to achieve further consensus, mutual confirmation, and mutual complement, and extend it to the global, in my opinion, it must be the new starting point for human beings' mutual understanding, harmonious society building, and construction of new world and life outlooks.

## **2. Core issues of comparative literature in a new stage**

Because of these changes, comparative literature will inevitably go to a new stage accordingly. The core issue of the new stage is to push forward cross-cultural dialogues, and build a future of non-bilateral dominance and multicultural coexistence together through literature. It is not easy to conduct dialogues, because it is not just for affection and interest, but for co-existence, common challenges and difficult problems solving. Such dialogues will generate new ideas and measures. Such kind of generative dialogues have to be connected with the following contradictions and difficulties.

### **(1) Relationship between universality and particularity**

In comparative literature studies, relationship between "identity" and "difference" is nearly the eternal theme. Difference is universal. There is a traditional Chinese saying, "It is the nature of the universe that everything is different". The world can not exist without differences. But, difference does not mean that things are irrelevant in the world, instead, it means different things coexist in the world based on something universal. For instance, biological crisis of the earth needs to be solved in teamwork with other nations, and in this process every region and people should solve it in their own special way. But since the collapse of colonial system at last century, people in some newly independent nations are eager to construct their identity consensus, and they emphasize differences among cultures in order to prevent some advantageous cultures' attempt to cover other nation cultures in the name of "universal values". It is absolutely necessary. Meanwhile, some other nation-states insist on refusing to communicate with outside world, and unilaterally stress absolute differences with other cultures, that is, the "incommensurability". There are no common points, and "incommensurable", so the possibility of dialogues and communications is denied; at last, it resulted in the closed and stagnant cultural fundamentalism. Then, do the universal value of culture and the universality of cultural communication, in other words, the factor of "sameness", exist? Or what role does it play?

Actually, universality can only exist in particular cases. For instance, there is no a thing, "fruit",

in universal and abstract sense, but there are particular and concrete apple, orange and pear. But, apple, orange and pear share the universal attributes of fruit; otherwise, they are not fruits any more. For the same reason, all human activities will lose their meanings if things' differences are the only concern, and the same attributes are ignored. No consensus, no possibility to reach mutual understanding and acceptance. In fact, a series of common crises, such as biological crisis, natural resources crisis, moral crisis and crisis of cultural confrontation, force us to face them collectively in a way of negotiation. Therefore, it make dialogues (including dialogues between cultures and literatures) pressingly needed and possible. Russian thinker Belinsky had made it clear in his article, *Vision of Literature*, "Human beings can achieve the same aims only by following different ways; and every nation can contribute a part to the common treasures only by living their own particular life." In fact, it is unnecessary to conduct dialogue without common aims (universal values). On the other side, there will be nothing to exchange without particular life, and the end is that there is nothing to exchange, and can not talk.

All in all, universality exists in differences. Because of difference, universality can make sense, and due to universality, difference can make dialogue and coexistence possible. If difference is exclusively emphasized, each difference will be isolated without any connection with others, then the common ground of dialogue, communication and mutual complement between differences will be removed, and it will results in the elimination of universality and difference. The ideal pattern of dialogue is the "generative dialogue", that is, a way of development which is featured with mutual understanding, interacting and inter-subjectivity, that is, development through dialogues between differences, intended to create a new understanding and knowledge in order to bring new development for each other, instead of "talking past each other", or a domination of one over the other. It is obviously unacceptable to artificially cause a deep split between difference and universality, and to unilaterally stress the "incommensurability" between differences. The split between particularity and universality influences harmony between various sides and makes it hard to conduct dialogue and develop society. The important step is to restart negotiation and bridge the gap, and return to normal relationship between universality and particularity in order to develop multiple cultures, protect cultural ecology, release cultural conflicts, and flourishingly develop comparative literature.

## **(2) The relationship between insistence on traditional culture and acceptance of outside impact**

In comparative literature studies, there will always be emerging conflict between insistence on traditional culture and acceptance of outside impact. In fact, culture is comprised of two levels, one is "traditional culture", that is, "things already formed" inherited from national culture, such as classics, various ancient artifacts, which can not be changed and only can be kept for ever; the other is "cultural tradition", which is the "things will be formed", and it is constituted and continuously changed through the reinterpretation and development of the "things already formed", such as different interpretations about the same one classical text in different ages. Such kind of interpretation is changed according to time and space, and it develops and forms a new genealogy.

Without the two levels, "purity" of culture will be stressed unilaterally and "conservatism" will be regarded as good partially. There is a popular saying in China for a long time, "the more national, the more international". In the sense of the first level, it is undoubtedly right; but in the

sense of the second level, the alleged “national” is far from closed, and it is not the unchangeable. It must interact with other cultures in order to develop; “national” and “international” is not isolated and irrelevant. Sometimes, the “national” will become the “international” and the “international” will become the “national”. And the “national” should consider other audiences’ expectation and acceptance in order to be accepted and favored by the “international” when it promotes its own characteristics. In a word, in the sense of the first level, “purity” of culture should be maintained, and in the sense of the second level, it is necessary to conduct dialogue and communication to change, develop and renew it.

Then, when different cultures unavoidably influence and absorb each other, whether it is against the intention to maintain the native cultural characteristics and differences or not. Does the result of the influence and absorption narrow the differences of world cultures, or even confuse, assimilate and even extinct the differences? In the viewpoint of historic development, one culture usually absorbs other cultures through its own cultural view and framework. In other word, the native culture always chooses available foreign cultures according to its own standard, instead of completely importing foreign cultures. For instance, the number of Buddhism classics “was ten to hundred times as much as Confucian classics” when Buddhism was introduced to China. But there are “some contents in Buddhism classics on male-female sexual intercourse”, so “these are prohibited from circulation and kept in confidential.”<sup>7</sup> It illustrates that the native culture initially has its own choice in encountering other cultures. Meanwhile, perhaps it is impossible to transplant other cultures remaining unchanged into the native culture. When one culture is imported, the original development route has always been changed, and combined with the local culture to produce a new or even a brilliant fruit. Indian Buddhism in China generates the school of Zen, the school of Hua Yan, and the Song (960-1279)-Ming (1368-1644) neo-Confucianism. Greece culture and Hebrew culture in Western Europe become its cultural foundation. It is the repeated phenomena that one culture develops outside of its native environment and generates new cultures in history. Therefore, interaction and mutual absorption of two cultures is not a process of “assimilating” and “intermingling”, instead, it is a process of transformation to something new in various environments. The result is not “assimilation”, instead, it is mutually developed, and each culture generates new nature and difference on new foundation. It is like that two circles intersect at some point, and then each develops their own route and constructs new circles.

### **(3) Relationship between self and other**

In comparative literature, the relationship between other and self is very complicated. We habitually start from ourselves, image others the same as us, and always want to assimilate others. It will result in the sacrifice of other’s characters, and assimilate others. If both want to develop in their own directions and make generative dialogue based on their own conditions, Levinas’ stress becomes valuable, that is, the self should start from the other, pay attention to the other’s most obscure side, and even the side which is impossible for the other to understand. The reason is that “other” is “what I am not”, not just due to his character, appearance, and psychology, but due to his difference itself. Because of the difference, the relationship between self and other is not like the kind of “amalgamation” in common sense; instead, it is a face to

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<sup>7</sup> Chen Yinque, *Hanliutang Ji(Collections of Hanliutang)*, Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1980,p.155.

face relation.<sup>8</sup> The full embodiment of such kind of “face to face” difference is the condition for self to regard “other” as its reflecting frame of reference. However, difference itself only can lead to “talking past each other”, and it is hard to achieve the aim of understanding and communication; without difference, each of the two’s characteristics will be sacrificed, and the two are close to the same, and there will be no dialogue. The ideal situation is that both can be inspired by the other, and develop its new self. The dilemma of other and self is rooted in the most significant and difficult part of the “generative dialogue”.

The history of literature proves that any masterpiece of literature or art always reflect something common in human’s experience which strikes a responsive chord, meanwhile, it is the author’s personal experience, imagination and writing. When a masterpiece is created, it is always originated from the author’s native culture and unavoidably possesses characteristics of local culture no matter the author is willing to admit it or not; when the work is interpreted, the reader always has its own cultural preconceptions, meanwhile, people’s perception and understanding of the same experience break through the cultural gap and produce some new interpretations. It is the “mutual understanding”, “mutual complement” and “mutual conformation” of literature between different cultures. “Mutual understanding” means the mutual recognition and appreciation; “Mutual complement” means to learn from others’ strong points to make up for one’s own weaknesses and it means to interpret the text of one culture in another cultural frame of reference so as to obtain a new interpretation, understanding, and supplement of the original text. “Mutual conformation” means to find out common problems, and prove their common points or refute their differences in order to achieve further understanding and communication in mutual reference. Through the literacy mutual understanding, conformation and complement, and many two way dialogues, the common concerned problems can be responded quite satisfyingly in our era, and open a broader vision for discussion around these problems, and people’s thought and affection can be communicated and understood in this process.

#### **(4) Issue of discourse between different cultural dialogues**

“Discourse” is not the same as “language”. In case of language, it is a must to know their vocabulary, grammar, and use it in their habit and way completely; Discourse is different. People from two cultures can not understand each other although they speak the same language in cultural dialogues. Discourse is like a game rule. When we do dialogue, and understand each other, both of us should obey some rules, and reach a basic consensus, or it is impossible to communicate. It is the same reason that we can not play weiqi by rules of Chinese chess. The game can not be played because of different rules. Similarly, the dialogue has to be given up due to different rules.

One of the most difficult problems in the past comparative literature research is that it is an impractical solution to apply A’s cultural discourse to explain and discuss B’s culture, because it is inevitable to exclude the B’s special, maybe most valuable, original and difficult part when understood by A’s cultural discourse. It is also hard for A to understand and agree with B if B is insistent in its own discourse, and it is hard to reach the effect of communication. In cross-cultural dialogues, the most difficult issue is to construct a discourse which does not belong to any side and every side can understand and accept each other in such a framework. It is the

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<sup>8</sup> Levinas, *Time and the Other*, reference to Du Xiaozhen’s *Levinas*. Sanlian shudian(HK),1994.

prior condition for equal dialogues.

Now, the third word faces the widely accepted “cultural discourse” to some extent, which is constructed based on powerful political and economic strength of the developed world for many years, and it is their concepts and game rules. If we just apply the cultural discourse to explain local cultures, then a lot of the most characteristic and unique cultural phenomena will be excluded. If it is the case, dialogue is still a monologue of one discourse, and other cultures only add some materials. Then, is it possible to do dialogue completely by local discourse? Every culture is developed in the communication and interaction with other cultures, so the “complete local” is hard to exist. Even if there are some “complete local” discourses, it is also hard for other cultures to accept and understand it, and dialogue is hard to conduct too.

How to get out of the trouble situation? The most important is to search for an interesting “agency” for both sides, that is, a common problem, which is discussed from different cultural positions and perspectives. In order to do this, the first request is to maintain equal minds in dialogues. Many Westerners do not understand and are not willing to understand other nations’ civilization, and they stubbornly, maybe not maliciously, believe that their own culture is superior to other cultures, so they ought to change and lead cultures of other nations. It is not easy to change that mind in a short time. An Italian scholar, who studies the phenomenon of cross-cultural literature, Professor Armando Gnisci of Sapienza University of Rome pointed out that it is necessary to experience a process of what he called “penance” (askesis) in order to change the notion of “Western Centrism”. He said: “We must indeed consider ourselves belonging to a ‘post-colonial world’. In this world, the former colonizers should learn to live and co-exist with the former colonized. It relates to self-criticism as well as to themselves and others’ education and reform. It is a kind of penance (askesis).”<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, a lot of oppressed nations in the past refuse all dialogues because of their sensitivity in defense of their own inherent culture; some of them are even conservative and closed-minded, which is resulted in the stagnation and failure of their own culture. It is a “penance” process to eliminate this kind of mentality too. Only on this basis, new discourse can be formed through a long-term discussion on some specific problems and dialogue can achieve intended purposes accordingly.

Equal minds help human beings find out many common problems and feelings. For instance, human’s birth, death, love, desire etc. are the common human problems in the past and at the present. Death is human beings’ doomed fate. In the mind of a Chinese poet Tao Yuanming (365-427), “There is no joy or fear in the great cosmos evolution, and there are no more worried concerns when it is time to pass away.” He is very generous; American Writer Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) considers that people’s life is like a lively and frolic stream in the beginning, which flows down from the hills, constantly breaks waves, kisses a variety of stones, flowers, and then into magnificent river, finally, slowly, calmly and naturally disappears in the sea, and flows into eternity. On the same problem, Hemingway and Tao Yuanming’s understandings constitute a dialogue between different cultures, and the latter generations can find common discourse, and can be inspired through this kind of literature’s dialogue (even though languages are different and translations are requested). In literature, there are a lot of things in common, both in the ancient and at the present, in China and foreign states. There are a

<sup>9</sup> Armando Gnisci, *Comparative Literature as a Discipline*, translated by Luo Tian, *Journal of Chinese Comparative Literature*, 1996(1), p.5.

lot of common topics in dialogues, and there are a lot of connected feelings at the exchange. In fact, every great works makes their own response to the common problems in accordance with their different lifestyle, and way of thinking. These answers ring echoes of a long historical tradition of a nation; meanwhile, they are interpreted by people belonging to different time, and different groups of the people. Through such kind of reading, people of different cultures can communicate with each other, achieve mutual understanding and consensus, and gradually develop a common discourse in this process.

### 3. New transcendence of time and space

If the previous studies in comparative literature are focused on transcending different boundaries of spaces, then there will be greater breakthroughs in the boundaries of time and space in the 21st century because of the changes of the concepts of space and time. Not only that there will be more transcendences through ancient and modern in the same culture, there will be also complex and interlacing communication through ancient and modern between different cultures, more importantly, it will carry out a combination of the two. For example, *A Short History of Myth* published in 2005 divides the history of mankind into six stages from 20000 years BC to 2000 AD, and its discussion covers Sumer, Babylon, Egypt, ancient China and today's world; from angles of anthropology, psychology, archeology, etymology etc., it focuses on "the stories of gods or the heroes' stories, in which they fell underworld, went through the maze, and battled demons, to reveal the secret of human psychological functioning, and to demonstrate how to deal with their own sense of crisis." *A Short History of Myth* is not an academic masterpiece, but it undoubtedly shows us unlimited possibilities beyond time and space, across cultures and disciplines, and the combination of them.

Chinese comparative literature has always been to try to build on the intersection of the ancient and the present, China and abroad since its beginning. In 1987, Professor Yang Zhouhan, the first President of Chinese Comparative Literature Association, Vice President of International Comparative Literature Association, pointed out that one of the origins of Chinese comparative is "explaining Chinese culture and literature by imported Western theories", "In Chinese culture and Chinese scholars' mind, historical sense is rather strong, and everything needs to be traced to their origin. In such cultural context, when people find out that Chinese literature has been influenced by foreign literatures, or there are Chinese factors in foreign literatures, they will naturally try to figure it out. "<sup>10</sup> In his mind, Chinese comparative literature is a home-grown product of Chinese soil. Its advent is the demand of the development of Chinese literature, and the inevitable result of Chinese economical, political, social and cultural development, and the Sino-Western cultural interaction. Chinese comparative culture is originated in the promotion of foreign cultures, and it reflects itself in the context of foreign literatures to try to develop a new development way, while it roots in Chinese society and long-time tradition of Chinese literature. It should be said that Chinese comparative culture is grown in the communication of the past and the present, and the Chinese and foreign cultures since its beginning.

Actually, it is the case. In 1897, Yan Fu (1854-1921) and Yan Zengyou (1863-1924) founded *Guowenbao* (国闻报, a newspaper aimed at broadcasting news of the ruling class and the common people, in China and around the world, and introduce new Western knowledge) in

<sup>10</sup> Yang Zhouhan, *Jingzi Yu Qiqiaoban*(*Mirror and tangram*), Beijing: Zhongguo shehuikexue chubanshe, 1990,p.7.



Tianjin and in the introduction of the newspaper, *Guo Wen Bao*, they emphasized the perspective of the world, and discussed China as a part of the world. For instance, “No matter in Asia, Europe, America, and Africa, in the time of stone sword, copper sword and iron sword, or of Chinese race, Mongolian race, Indian race, there is a universal *xing qing* (性情basic human nature) in the sense of origin. The universal *xing qing* is originated from *tian* (天heaven, nature, sky), and develop into various wisdoms. Therefore, Confucianism, Moism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam come into play, and monarchy, democracy, rule by emperor and people are established accordingly. So politics and religion are originated from universal *xing qing*, which is not produced by politics and religion. What is the public *xing qing*? One is hero, and the other is male and female.”<sup>11</sup> Huang Ren (1869-1913), an early author of *History of Chinese Literature*, pointed out that “The heart is the same, and the reason is the same no matter in the north sea or the south sea.” He believed that “There are some common grounds although the customs are different in the Eastern states and the Western states. The presumption is the same in Creek mythology, Arabic Night Tales and Chinese mythology-stories. It is due to the same level of evolution.”<sup>12</sup> “The equal degree of evolution” means a similar level of evolution, so the literature of different cultures should have the common ground, and it is of great significance that Huang Ren pointed it out at that time.

Chen Yinke (1890-1969) had concluded: “In order to make a breakthrough in ideological system it is a must to import and absorb the alien doctrine on the one hand, and do not forget the status of the native nation on the other hand. This two kinds of opposite and complementary attitudes are the true spirit of Taoism and the old ways of Neo-Confucianism, and it is the inspiration in our 2000-year history of exposure to other nations’ thoughts.”<sup>13</sup> In the past century, Chinese literature develops in the intense cultural collision between the ancient and the present, and China and abroad, in this process, literature studies have accumulated rich experience. On this base, today's literature studies will return to the original point and depart in reference of the current context of world culture. As Levi Strauss said that a pure and overall knowledge should not learn from the specific political reality and situation of the era, but only by tracing back to its source, return to the “nature which is not yet damaged, and has not yet been corrupted.” The same is true of Chinese literature studies, as Gefei, a well-known Chinese writer, summarized from his own practice of creation, “The whole of modern Chinese literature can be seen as the course of foreign study, meanwhile, as a more secretive retrospective process, in other words, the re-confirmation process of the entire tradition.”<sup>14</sup> On the one hand it is the spatial coordinate, that is, under the overlapping extrusion of the two civilizations, as Mr. Fei Xiaotong said, “machinery of civilization” and “information civilization”, Chinese literature reluctantly contacts with the world; on the other hand, it is the time coordinate, that is, as Gefei said that the more hidden process of returning to the tradition. One hundred years of the development history of Chinese Literature is badly needed to draw a conclusion at the longitudinal and transverse coordinates for opening new roads.

<sup>11</sup> Yan Fu, *Guowenbaoguan fujishuobu yuanqi* (Introduction of the publication of Guowen Newspaper), *Zhongguo jindai wenlun xuan* (Selections of Chinese modern literacy theories), Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe., p.188.

<sup>12</sup> Xiaoshuo Xiaohua (a Brief Introduction of Chinese Fictions), *Xiaoshuo Lin* (Journal of fictions in 1907-1908), Huang Ren ed., 1908(9).

<sup>13</sup> Chen Yinke, *Review on the Second volume of Feng Youlan's History of Chinese Philosophy, Jinmingguan Conggao Erbian* (the Second Collections of Manuscripts of Jinmingguan. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1980, p.252.

<sup>14</sup> Gefei, *Two traditions in Chinese Writing*, *Wenhuibao*, December 3, 2005.

In fact, whether it is literature research or literature creation, modern people grow in the soil of traditional culture, meanwhile, we live a modern life, receive modern educations, so we are affected by outside influences both in the sense of material and the sense of spirit to a greater or lesser extent. In the past century, Chinese culture contact variously with foreign cultures all the time. It is very complicated in case of the interaction of the past and the present, and home and abroad in Chinese culture. Now under the new situation, it is time for more systematic and in-depth interpretation according to new needs. All of these have provided new ideas and conditions for the development of the current literature. At the current world of big changes, literature is a very important aspect in the formation of global patterns of cultural diversity. At the same time, this process will provide new opportunities for the development and updating of literature studies, and thereby fundamentally change the pattern of the current literature study. The current situation and tasks facing Chinese comparative literature and cross-cultural literature research are to readjust literature research in the coordinates of the past and the present, China and abroad, and carry through the fundamental spirit of cross-cultural literature studies in all fields of literature research.

#### **4. Comparative literature and the transformation of post-modern thought**

Further study of comparative literature in today's context helps us find out that we are in the transitional period of post-modernism. The movement of post-modern deconstruction emerged in 1960's destroyed the dominant "grand narrative" of the past, and cast a shadow over all authority and the mandatory unified way of thinking, meanwhile, it made everything fragmented, shattered, superficial, and finally just left the debris of modernism, as well as a noisy and fragmented world. The movement of postmodernism razed the barriers of modernism, but it did not leave a blueprint for people's future, and no constructive ideas and no plan for a new era.

At the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, postmodernism can not help but face a new transition for its development. Some scholars have put forward that the experience of the first French Enlightenment and postmodernism should be combined together to create a constructive postmodernism, and call it "the second Enlightenment." The aim is to get out of the traps of modernity on the one hand, and overcome the weaknesses of postmodern thought on the other hand. They probably have the following claims. (1) Beyond anthropocentrism, and increase ecological awareness. In their minds, human being is just one kind of the large number of species, and he will not have his own value when he is not helpful for the entire ecosystem. If we say that the base of Western Enlightenment science is to "remodel" nature and humanize it, now it is needed to abandon the idea that nature can be manipulated by human, instead, human should adjust themselves according to environmental conditions. (2) Emphasis on awareness of cultural complementation. If the slogan of the first Enlightenment is "self-liberation", and then the slogan of the second Enlightenment is to respect the other. They think that there are two widely accepted spiritual trends in today's world: one is the desire to look for a higher individual mission in an increasingly materialistic world; the other is the need to look for some kind of common consensuses in an increasingly alienated and indifferent society. In order to co-exist in an increasingly closely connected and mutual dependent world, human beings need to continue to develop new ideas, and find more and more profound common ground through differences. (3) Refuse abstract form of freedom and develop toward a deeper freedom with responsibility. They introduce the concept of responsibility and

obligation into the concept of freedom, reveal the inner connection between freedom and responsibility, and call for the amendment of the Charter of Human Responsibilities besides the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (4) Beyond instrumental reason and call for an aesthetic wisdom. They think that instrumental reason makes it difficult to shake off motives of utilitarian purposes. The aesthetic wisdom based on the conception of organic interrelatedness is an integrative thinking, which aims at harmonizing of truth, good, and beauty. In aesthetic wisdom, scientific thinking, rational thinking, emotional thinking, religious thinking, artistic thinking can complement each other and enrich each other. In the past, modern reason based on binary thinking rejects and oppresses sensitivity, feelings, values and beauty. But aesthetic wisdom promotes the harmonizing of the seemingly opposites.

There are a lot of things in common between constructive post-modernism, that is, the claims of the second Enlightenment, and the traditional values of Chinese culture, such as “Different species can produce something new, while the same can not.”, “If you want to realize yourself, you should help others realize themselves”, “Dao starts from *qing* (情 feelings, emotions, desires), and *qing* originated from *xing* (性 nature)”, and “the oneness of heaven and man”. These provide a theoretical foundation and a broad space for the communication between China and abroad, and the ancient and the present in cross-cultural literature research. Looking back at the history of Chinese comparative literature, it began seeding in the early 20th century, and began breeding as a subject in the late 1920s. After the 1980's, as one of the most open and modern disciplines it has been developing rapidly. Around the 90's, the world enters the era of deeper globalization, at the same time, the weaknesses of one-dimensional, and the poor and biased global ideology then is exposed completely, and the demand of another kind of globalization based on multi-cultures has been strongly put forward, and the construction of post-modernism, or the second Enlightenment is the core idea of the demand. Such demands contribute greatly to the development of comparative literature, and make it beyond the first development stage, in which the French comparative literature is the mainstream, and the second development stage, in which the American comparative literature is the mainstream, and enter into the third development stage, in which the "mutual understanding", "mutual confirmation" and "mutual complementation" of multi-cultural systems is the main wave.

Scholars of Chinese comparative literature are the active advocates of the third stage of comparative literature. Firstly, as a developing country, China opposes imperial cultural hegemony, and consistently promotes the development of cultural pluralism with all strength; secondly, China has a long cultural history, and it is the inexhaustible source for literature study of different cultures. China has profound cultural exchanges with India, Japan, Persia, and European countries since a long time ago; thirdly, in the past one hundred years, Chinese study hard on foreign languages and cultures, and continually accumulate knowledge, in recent years, China has sent out a large number of overseas students and visiting scholars, so generally speaking, Chinese knows much more about foreign countries than foreigners knows about China. So, it is possible that Chinese comparative literature can play a leading role in cross-cultural researches. 4. Chinese comparative literature regards “harmony without sameness” as the essence of modern comparative literature, and absorbs various schools of foreign comparative literature and their research fruits. In the early 1930's, soon after their publications of Paul Van Tieghen's *La Littérature comparée* and Frederic Loliee *A History of Comparative Literature*, they were

translated into Chinese by Chinese masters. To the end of the 20th century, there are dozens of works and collections of foreign literature, which are translated and published in China (including those of Europe and the United States, Russia, Japan, India, South Korea, Brazil), hundreds of articles about evaluation and analysis of foreign comparative literature, and the special chapter of the review of foreign comparative literature in vast majority of Chinese comparative literature textbooks. It can be said that there are no scholars of any other country as Chinese scholars, who are so eager to attach importance to the introduction and reference of foreign comparative literature. Finally, it should be mentioned that there is always no distinction between literature, history and philosophy, and no isolation between guqin (古琴 a traditional Chinese musical instrument), Chinese chess, calligraphy, painting, dance, and drama in traditional Chinese culture, and it provides a full range of all possibilities for the third phase of this interdisciplinary study of literature.

In fact, the causes of the stagnancy of comparative literature as a discipline in Europe and America at the end of last century are due to that many scholars could not break through euro centrism, and know little about other cultures except that of Europe and America, so it is hard for them to step in the third stage of comparative literature, in which cross-cultural research is the mainstream. Chinese comparative literature has deep historical foundation, and it is obviously universal and advanced. It accepts empirical study, which is promoted and shaped by French school, and is also influenced by parallel study and interdisciplinary study of American school; it summarizes predecessors' experience and breaks through the narrow-mindedness of Western-centrism in French and American comparative literature; and quite a number of scholars make a fruitful contribution to the studies of Indian, Arabian, Japanese, Latin-American literatures for a long time, and devote to the communication between Western and Eastern literatures and academic cultures attentively by comparative literature, and push forward the third stage of comparative literature in various fields of comparative literature from various perspectives.

In conclusion, human beings unavoidably face the pressing necessity of global cross-cultural dialogue. It is every contemporary person's responsibility to advocate dialogue and avoid confrontation. Comparative literature, in which cross-cultural dialogue is regarded as its own duty, is in the front line. In the upcoming second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we should open our arms, broaden our heart, get rid of the limitation of schools and regions, take the commanding height of time and space, observe the global, understand the world, explore human beings, bridge cultures at home and abroad, in the past and at the present, communicate human beings' soul, shape new cosmic and life outlooks, and take part in the construction of the common ethics available for human beings in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Particularly, we should actively explore to search for breakthrough in the relationships between universality and particularity, purity and renewal, self and other, and local discourse and foreign discourse. Let's narrow the gap between the elites and the masses, the distance between theoretical research and close reading of texts, work cooperatively to move towards the new platform of the second decade of 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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