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Western Literary Theories in China: Reception, Influence and Resistance

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1

The recent history of comparative literature in China is closely linked with the appropriation of Western theory by Chinese scholars.[1] In the following we would like to relate some aspects of that history – which very much mirrors the fraught history of China's relationship with the West – and survey some of the related developments in literary theory and criticism, bearing in mind that one of the problems still facing the introduction of Western theory in China today is the perceived fundamental, or 'essential', difference of Eastern and Western thought, and hence of their cultures and literatures.

Modern and contemporary Western literary and cultural theories began entering China on a large scale around 1980. Prior to that, the field of literary studies in China had for decades seen political criticism guided and dominated by another vein of Western thought, namely Marxist theory, which reached its ultra-'Left' extreme during the Cultural Revolution that lasted from 1966 to 1976. During that period, literary theory and criticism were treated only as political tools for reinforcing the struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie.[2] After the end of the Cultural Revolution, China adopted a policy of economic reform, opening the country up to the outside world. Alongside the flow – if not torrent – of Western capital and commodities, various brands of Western literary theory and criticism entered China.[3] All these schools, whether fashionable (such as feminism, deconstruction, psychoanalysis) or out of fashion (such as New Criticism, phenomenology, structuralist narratology) in the West, were invariably new and contemporary to Chinese scholars. This large-scale introduction into China of Western theories from the 1980s on is primarily to be accounted for by the country's new-found post-'Cultural Revolution' interest in modernity and modernization. The beginnings of China's

interest in modernization dates back, of course, to the so-called enlightenment movement during the late Qing Dynasty and the New Cultural Movement in 1919, which introduced into Chinese intellectual currency such time-related concepts as 'progress' and 'development' as well as such reason-based social concepts as 'democracy' and 'science'. Chinese intellectuals at the time treated 'democracy,' 'rationality,' and 'progress' and so forth as universal truths without realizing that these concepts were suffused with an ideology and *Weltanschauung* very much peculiar to Western culture. With Western literary theory and criticism similarly being treated as universally applicable, they were 'objectively' transplanted into the Chinese context with little critical scrutiny.

This 'universalist' conception of Western theories was especially notable during the 1980s and early 1990s – the heyday of post-structuralism, feminism, reader response theories, and deconstruction in the West – when Chinese scholars started to focus on the introduction and application of Western theories. During that period, only few publications ever aimed at seriously scrutinizing the transferability of Western literary and cultural theories. Interestingly, this very lack of interest in critical reflection shows itself in the uneven trajectory of the translation and introduction of a work like Terry Eagleton's in China. While his *An Introduction to Literary Theory* (1983) currently exists in three different Chinese versions and has become one of the most popular textbooks in Chinese universities, his *The Function of Criticism: From* The Spectator *to Post-Structuralism* (1984)[4] hardly attracted any attention at all. Although Eagleton himself set store by the latter booklet, it has not (yet) been translated into Chinese and is rarely cited by Chinese scholars. Until quite recently, Western works like *The Function of Criticism*, which one might characterize as a reflection on the social and ideological factors determining literary theory and criticism today, presented little appeal to Chinese scholars who have traditionally been more interested in what they perceive as universally applicable methods.

2

With the end of the Cultural Revolution in the mid-1970s, Chinese scholars turned their attention again to the formerly suppressed formalist approaches to literature, foremost among them New Criticism and structuralist narratology. New Criticism (or Practical Criticism)

had first entered China through the mediation of I. A. Richards, who taught at Beijing's Tsinghua University from 1929 to 1931, and William Empson, who taught at Peking University in 1937 and again from 1947 to 1952 and at Southwest Associated University in 1939. If its influence was very limited at that time, it was very much or even altogether anathematized from the 1950s to the mid-1970s as Marxist-underpinned political and sociological criticism and the doctrine of Socialist Realism dominated the literary field. With China's opening to the outside world as of the late 1970s, New Criticism saw itself again revived, soon becoming a major approach in literary studies. René Wellek's and Austin Warren's *Theory of Literature* (1949), which had long gone out of fashion in the West, was translated into Chinese only in 1984. This translation had a profound impact and became an influential textbook on a par with Eagleton's *An Introduction to Literary Theory* (while the original English-language texts have become important textbooks in China's English departments). In *Theory of Literature*, many will recall, Wellek and Warren stressed the fundamental distinction between the intrinsic and the extrinsic approach to the study of literature. Their purpose was the exclusion of biographical, psychological and sociological approaches; instead, the intrinsically aesthetic properties of literary works were to receive more emphasis. New Criticism did not only impact on Chinese literary criticism through translations; Chinese scholars wrote their own studies and essays introducing and applying New Critical vocabulary. Indeed, Yiheng Zhao's *New Criticism* of 1986[5] became one of the most influential books in the field of Chinese literary studies around 1990. Still today, New Criticism remains a widely-adopted approach in teaching and interpreting literary works, although in recent years scholars once again tend to increasingly combine their close readings with more ideologically and sociohistorically oriented concerns

Like New Criticism, structuralist narratology was also warmly received in China following the Cultural Revolution, its impact being even greater than New Criticism's especially in the past ten to fifteen years. As is well known, structuralist (or classical) narratology in the West emerged in France in the 1960s and soon gained momentum as one of the most influential approaches to narrative in the West. From the 1980s on, however, classical narratology became sidelined in the West by the joint forces of poststructuralist and political/sociohistorical approaches, following which various post-classical and more localized narratologies have come into being, such as feminist

narratology, rhetorical narratology, and cognitive narratology. This situation differed fundamentally from that in China. While structuralist narratology did not come into view here until around 1980, as a formalist approach it immediately had great appeal for Chinese scholars. From the late 1980s on (by which time some would claim classical narratology was 'dead' in the West) up to the present, formal narratology – with its particular emphasis on form and aesthetics, but without being overly formal*ist* in stance – has enjoyed growing popularity in Chinese academic circles. Many works of classical narratology published in the West in the 1970s or early 1980s were translated into Chinese in the 1990s, and numerous Chinese scholars have been engaged in researching narrative structures or applying formal narrative poetics to the study of the aesthetic effects of narratives.

Four main reasons can be adduced for this remarkable turn of fortune for formal or aesthetic studies in China, even going against the trend in the West. First, because the literary field in China had been subjected to political criticism for several decades, Chinese scholars felt particularly disposed to reinvigorating formalist approaches. Indeed, the reintroduction of something that was considered anathema during the Cultural Revolution gave Chinese scholars a veritable sense of liberation and freedom. In fact, as an overreaction, extrinsic criticism itself was temporarily anathematized around 1980. Second, formalist theories catered to Chinese scholars' interest in the notions of universality and absolute truth. The Chinese have traditionally been characterized by their pursuit of and belief in absolute truth. What originally attracted Chinese scholars to the Marxist aesthetic doctrine with its historical materialist emphasis on 'typical characters under typical circumstances',[6] a concept that was developed by Georg Lukács (and which came into China mediated by Soviet literary theory), was that it presented itself as an 'absolute truth'. During that period, Chinese scholars tended to treat Marxist literary doctrine as omnipotent, able to solve all problems in literary history, or even regarding it as the ultimate 'end' (in the double sense) of the development of literary theory.[7] But the end of the Cultural Revolution marked the end of this belief. The resulting disillusionment even led to a curious psychological paradox. If 'form' may be seen metaphorically with Lacan as an *objet petit a*, that is, a substitute for the absence of a unified self, formalist theories too, which are themselves underpinned by universal ideals, might be seen to have presented an ideal medium

for Chinese scholars to offset their withdrawal symptoms in that they provide sort of a substitute for the lost 'absolute truth' of Marxism. Third, on a more pragmatic and less psychoanalytical plane, formalist approaches can be feasibly and easily applied to the analysis of texts, hence catering to the expanding pragmatic needs and pedagogical requirements of teaching and research after the Cultural Revolution. Fourth, and finally, the shift from long-term political/sociological criticism to formal/aesthetic studies has enabled many a Chinese scholar to produce new and original literary interpretations, in turn enhancing formalism's and narratology's attractiveness for the next generation of students and scholars.

If around 1980 the backlash against political criticism even led to the temporary exclusion of extrinsic criticism in China, starting from the 1990s an increasing number of Chinese scholars have again begun to take account of historical contexts and the shifting roles of readers under the strong influence of Western contextual approaches. But formal or aesthetic studies have nevertheless retained their momentum, with formal narratology and the various brands of contextual narratologies currently enjoying a kind of peaceful co-existence in China. The countless books and nearly 10,000 essays in narrative studies published in Chinese journals in the ten years between January 1994 and August 2005 (as indexed in CNKI) fall mainly into two encompassing categories: (1) those concerned with narrative form or technique, focusing on aesthetic effect; and (2) those concerned with the relation between narrative structures and their ideological premises, such as gender politics, ethics, consumer society, postcolonialism and so forth. Both categories – the latter in particular – have started paying attention to the role of narratives in film, television programmes, cyberspace, advertising, news-reporting, daily communication, popular fiction, and ethnic or folk discourses, among others.

In applying Western narratology to the analysis of Chinese narratives, some Chinese scholars have tried to modify Western models to better account for specifically Chinese narrative phenomena. As some readers of *Comparative Critical Studies* will know, Chinese is a language without tense markers, hence grammatical time is not easily discernible; moreover, Chinese narratives frequently omit the grammatical subject and pronouns, and they also frequently suffer 'covert shifts of subject' among sentences. All these peculiarities of Chinese have given rise to the appearance of what Dan Shen calls various 'blend' modes in presenting characters' speech and thought, such as

'the Blend of Free Indirect Discourse and Free Direct Discourse' and 'the Blend of Indirect Discourse and Direct Discourse (without quotation marks)'.[8] In order to give Chinese speech presentation a fuller accounting, Shen has added these 'blends' to the modes already established in Western narratology. Some Chinese scholars, however, find such modifications unsatisfactory since the Western model is treated as the basic frame of reference, one that they believe is not sufficiently applicable to Chinese literary phenomena, which they see as being squeezed into the Procrustes bed of a mismatched Western framework. What they advocate is to establish a truly 'Chinese narratology', one rooted in Chinese culture and the Chinese literary tradition. In a pioneering essay entitled 'Chinese Narratology' (1994),[9] Yi Yang observes that Chinese narrative literature has its own distinct mechanisms, models and standards of evaluation, which, despite some overlap with its Western counterparts, constitute a system both separate from yet complementary to that developed in the West. According to Yang, Chinese narratives are based first and foremost on the Chinese people's deep-level ways of circular reasoning. The determining forces of the circular structure, how it functions, and how it weaves and unweaves a narrative, hark back to the time-honoured concepts of *Ying* and *Yang*, the two opposing principles in nature, one feminine, the other masculine. If to a Western observer this sounds overly speculative, one only need consider how the Chinese might view similar Western dualisms such as Freud's distinction of *Eros* and *Thanatos*, or Nietzsche's dualism of Apollonian and Dionysian. Yang's dualistically 'circular' model of classical Chinese narratives sheds much light on the factors underlying many a choice of plot structure and method of narration by the authors of classical Chinese narratives. That the examples chosen as the basis for this research are almost exclusively classical Chinese narratives is explained by the fact that modern and contemporary Chinese narratives are in many respects already 'Westernized' and no longer fit the mould. If Yang's publications have led to a recent upsurge of interest in constituting a specifically Chinese narrative poetics, one that both draws on yet remains independent from Western narrative poetics, other scholars are equally quick to recognize the need to creatively transform both contemporary Western and traditional Chinese narrative theories in order to better account for modern as well as classical Chinese narrative structures.[10]

Narratogical investigations in China currently fall into mainly five

specific categories: (1) the introduction and development of Western narrative theory, with increasing critical reflections and modifications, and with increasing attention paid to postclassical or contextual narratologies; (2) the establishment of a Chinese narrative poetics that focuses on China's 'hidden cultural codes' as factors underlying the creation and formation of Chinese narrative structures, especially classical ones; (3) comparative narratology, which compares Chinese and Western narrative poetics;[11] (4) the application of Western and Chinese narrative theory, whether classical or post-classical, to the analysis of Western and Chinese narratives; and (5) comparative studies between Chinese narratives and Western narratives. The inherent comparative nature of each of these categories should seem obvious. The thesis here is hence first that it is partly through narratology that literary scholarship in the East is most intensively engaging with the West, and second that this narratological realm constitutes an arena where comparative literature in China is most effectively coming into its own and defining its future parameters.

3

Narratology in China, and alongside it comparative narratology, is flourishing more than ever. The belated first National Narratology Conference was held in Fujian in December 2004, and November 2005 will see the second National Narratology Conference held in Wuhan with plans to establish the Narratology Association of China. In the West, too, the beginning of the new century has witnessed the continued expansion of narratological theory,[12] culminating in the recent publication of the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*[13] and Blackwell's *A Companion to Narrative Theory*.[14] The seemingly parallel upswing of narratology both in China and in the West testifies to the validity of Brian Richardson's conclusion, made at the turn of the century, that 'narrative theory is reaching a higher level of sophistication and comprehensiveness and that it is very likely to become increasingly central to literary studies now that the dominant critical paradigm [poststructuralism] has begun to fade and a new (or at least another) critical model is struggling to emerge'.[15]

One of the reasons for narratology's success in both West and East is apparently its emphasis on the formal and technical aspects of literature. It is indicative in this respect that, in their seminal essay 'Against Theory' published in 1982, Steven Knapp and Walter Benn

Michaels felt compelled to exempt 'narratology, stylistics, and prosody' from their opposition to theory, since 'these subjects seem[ed] to [them] essentially empirical'.[16] Similarly, Terry Eagleton, one of the leading figures in the recent discussion surrounding the purported end of theory in the West, on his home page lists narratology as a form of 'pure' literary theory, alongside formalism, semiotics, hermeneutics, psychoanalysis, reception theory and phenomenology, all of which according to Eagleton 'have taken something of a back seat these days to a more narrowly conceived theoretical agenda'; hence even he argues, 'it would be agreeable to see a resurgence of interest in these regions.'[17] However, narratology, stylistics, and even 'close-reading'[18] have long evolved from the 'pure' formalist approaches that they once were to become sophisticated methodologies that combine formal analysis with various brands of ideological and sociohistorical concern. As we indicated earlier, narratology and stylistics have also started to turn their attention to non-literary types of discourse, the media, film and other forms of popular culture. It seems that precisely this 'unpure' quality of the subject matter and methodology has enabled both narratology and stylistics to maintain their momentum in the West as well as to thrive in China in the new century.

Although Chinese scholars have increasingly paid attention to sociohistorical contexts since the 1990s, and although Western anti-formalist and political theorists like Michel Foucault and Fredric Jameson have become quite influential in China, this has not resulted in the rejection of formalist/aesthetic studies; quite the opposite. Indeed, Chinese scholars' recent interest in new brands of extrinsic criticism, be they political, sociological or psychological, is in general attributable more to an interest in new developments in the West and a desire to be original and comprehensive in their literary research than to a political reaction against formalist/aesthetic studies. To a great extent this may be accounted for by the fact that, after decades of overtly political criticism, few Chinese scholars are willing today to turn the clock back and to treat literary criticism as the political tool that it was used as before and during the Cultural Revolution. That is to say, the validity and legitimacy of a particular theoretical approach to literature has as much, if not more, to do with the particular historical, political, and cultural constellation of a given nation as with any influence from outside, however vocally endorsed.

4

While Western intellectuals are faced by and large with only one history of culture evolving from a combination of Judeo-Christian and ancient Greek culture up to the present, contemporary Chinese scholars are faced with two markedly different sources of cultural and intellectual development: the first being traditional Chinese culture, the other Western culture, an 'Other' that has been exerting various degrees of influence on China since 1840. As is known from the history of many cultures and especially those in contact with the West, even the co-existence with, but especially the hegemony of the foreign over what is indigenous easily leads to an identity crisis; this phenomenon first became noticeable in China during the New Cultural Movement at the beginning of the last century, but has reached a climax of sorts since the mid-1990s when China started on its unprecedented course of Westernization and modernization.

Significantly, like progress, modernization is a concept peculiar to the West; traditionally it has never been associated with any branch of Chinese thought and culture. The modern concepts of science, democracy, progress, reason and the like are all outgrowths of Western culture. Moreover, in the economic field, capital, efficiency, profit, benefit and the related modes of production and consumption are constituents of modernized Western societies. Not surprisingly, both Max Weber's discussion of modernity from a cultural perspective and Karl Marx's description of capitalist modernization in terms of modes of production are based on analyses of Western societies.[19] In this light, identifying with Western modernization means accepting a similar conception of history: history is in progress, and it is Western countries, of course, that take the lead in that process.[20] And adopting such a progress-oriented conception of history is to acknowledge a series of Euro-centric binary oppositions, such as progress vs. backwardness, modern vs. traditional, civilization vs. barbarism, reason vs. unreason, industrial large-scale production vs. agricultural irrigative production and so on. Within such a cognitive framework, China is placed in a deplorable historical position: her society is characterized by backwardness and her culture is by nature in need of innovation and reform. Ironically, the slogan coined already in the 1950s that China 'must catch up with Britain and surpass America' epitomised the assimilation of such a Westernized cognitive framework of modernization. The selfsame goal of catching up with the 'more

advanced' Western world is still a guiding principle of present-day China, especially but not exclusively in terms of its economic development. Since the identification of Chinese intellectuals with Western modernity implies the acknowledgement of China's lack of history or its backwardness (as the oppressed in the binaries cited above), it has not surprisingly led to a persistent identity crisis among many Chinese intellectuals, ever more so since the mid 1990s. The translation and hence introduction of works by such literary and historical theorists as Edward Said, Arif Dirlik, Fernand Braudel or Immanuel Wallerstein have promoted considerable critical reflection on the status of modernity and the power relations that obtain between East and West. The specific challenge, and dilemma, facing Chinese scholars is how to retain native subjectivity while drawing on and identifying with Western modernity.

In 'Strategies of China's Cultural Development and the Rebuilding of China's Discourse of Literary Theory in the 21st Century', the Chinese scholar Shunqing Cao, borrowing a term from Roman Jakobson, argues that Chinese literary theory since the New Cultural Movement has been increasingly marked by 'aphasia'. The New Cultural Movement, Cao observes, identified with Western modernity so intensely that it began to negate and neglect Chinese literary tradition. The situation today, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, has hardly improved. As quickly as Western literary theories have come to dominate China's literary and academic scene, the traditional 'voices' of Chinese scholars themselves have become ever more muted.[21] Cao's analysis may well be right, but there are some notable exceptions, for instance *Guanzhuibian*[22] and *Qizhuiji*[23] by Zhongshu Qian, works that can be characterized as exemplary of a more traditional Chinese literary theory. Nevertheless, the mainstream of academic research and teaching in China today is unquestionably marked by the dominance of Western methods and concepts – or should we use the more pejorative term hegemony? Let us say, rather, it has become *fashionable* in China to apply Western theories to the interpretation both of Chinese and foreign literary works. Which begs the question: to what extent does 'aphasia' feature in the field of literature and theory in contemporary China?

Well, maybe not as much as we might be led to believe. Modernization and Westernization have not brought about a complete sell-out of Chinese scholarly values and traditions. In a way, Westernization itself has inspired yet another form of backlash, one where

Chinese scholars have started more intensely to reflect on their indigenous traditions – precisely because they now have a sophisticated counter-model by which to better measure their innate forms of subjectivity. More than ever, how to reconstitute the specific subjectivity of Chinese theoretical discourse has become a primary objective of scholarship within the field of comparative literature. Early in the 1970s, the comparatist John Deeney in Taiwan (which was already under strong Western influence) proposed the establishment of a 'Chinese School', a proposal aimed at reinforcing and developing China's own characteristic literature and literary theory.[24] Other Taiwanese comparatists, among them Pengxiang Chen and Tianhong Gu, chimed in and proposed concrete measures to achieve this goal.[25] The idea of establishing a 'Chinese School' was enthusiastically welcomed by comparatists on the mainland of China, especially since the mid-1990s. Some of them even suggested turning the tables on their 'opponent', advocating, as a way to counteract the domination of Western discourse, the interpretation of Western literature by means of Chinese literary theory (an idea that is shared by some Indian scholars who find themselves in a similar quandary).[26] But this is of course inconsistent, if not self-contradictory. If they object to Chinese literature being interpreted through 'foreign' means, it would be equally invasive to subject Western literature to Chinese theory. Either way, only few theoretical works that might genuinely qualify as specifically Chinese have ever been produced, not to mention the fact that – one useful lesson learnt from Western theory – the whole concept of 'genuine' or 'authentic' is 'always already' problematical. This in itself indicates that the founding of a 'Chinese School' of literary criticism and theory may be nothing more than an inverted form of 'aphasia'. While striving to overcome the emptiness of one's subject(ivity) as a result of 'aphasia', it merely works to constitute yet another manifestation or metaphor of 'aphasia'.

Whatever the case, and whatever one's stance, both the fields of Chinese literature and comparative literature have recently witnessed a surge in studies that critically reflect on the relation between East and West. Numerous Chinese scholars of Western literature hold the view that the uncritical introduction of Western literature in China has reinforced the 'Western gaze', which involves among other things China's submission to the hegemony of the West over the East.[27] In the field of modern and contemporary Chinese literature, Yuhai Han's study of Shanghai's city culture has shed light on the relation between

the new Chinese brands of sensation literature and material reification.[28] Hui Wang has investigated the influence of Western scientific concepts on Chinese thinking as a way to expose the control of Western modernity over the Chinese people.[29] Similarly, the overseas Chinese scholar Lydia H. Liu has produced a trenchant examination of 'Chinese characteristics' in which she reveals how Western cultural concepts are suffused by and permeated with power relations when they are spread to the East.[30] The study of another overseas Chinese scholar, Kang Liu, focuses on the rise in China of a different kind of Western modernity, namely Marxist aesthetics.[31] Some of the theorists and critics working in this vein have been referred to as 'New Leftists', implying that they believe in neither universality, nor any abstract and ahistorical concept, and that their emphasis is on the non-essentialist stances and perspectives, as well as the structure and flow of power relations among different cultures. What this shows is that, within today's context of globalization, the critique of modernity often coincides with the questioning of universality. Put differently, the anxiety about or opposition to modernity might turn out to be an integral component itself of the very modernity that they seek to oppose. As we know, Western critical theories since the 1940s have seriously challenged the notion of progress and modernity (one need only think of Adorno's and Horkheimer's seminal 1947 *Dialectic of Enlightenment*), yet have not elicited much response from society at large. It goes beyond the power of academic theoreticians to transform the capitalist system, and derision or mockery has long been directed at academic Marxists and leftist critical theorists like Fredric Jameson, Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida. While those liberal-minded theorists have time and again criticized modernity, especially in the form of capitalism and consumerism, and exposed bourgeois ideology and cultural hegemony, their influence remains very much confined to the ivory tower itself. As Terry Eagleton pointed out, there came a point when 'they no longer believed that it could be realized in practice'.[32] Not surprisingly, and equally fatefully, China's New Leftists' emphasis on the re-construction of Chinese subjectivity and on the resistance to globalized modernity has remained on the same ineffectual level of discourse.

5

At the other extreme, many Chinese scholars treat Western literary theory not as a frame of reference, to be used where appropriate, and to be modified when necessary, but as the last word on theory. Those scholars regard Western theory as theory proper and use Chinese theory merely as a secondary or subsidiary frame of reference for the purpose of more effectively or conveniently bringing Western theory into play.[33] In this sense, Chinese theory has lost its status of being as subject and has indeed become a kind of 'Other' in its native land. But inasmuch as such blind and servile reception of Western theories is surely problematic and must be redressed, the equally single-minded and blind exclusion of Western influences can also lead to deplorable consequences. In effect, literary works of China and the West do share many structures and properties that can accommodate the application of the (appropriately modified) theories from either end of the globe. As for those features that are culture-specific, indigenous theories are called for. But even in the latter case, the introduction of foreign theories may provide a helpful frame of reference for the development of a theory that is sensitive to local and regional requirements and peculiarities. It is undeniable that the introduction of Western literatures and theories has markedly transformed the fields of literary studies and theory in China. It is a positive step, however, to see Chinese scholars in recent years becoming more self-conscious and more selective in drawing on Western theories in transforming contemporary literary theory in China. While Chinese literary scholars should try to preserve their native subjectivity and national characteristics in the continuous process of communicating with and learning from the outside world, they also need enhanced tools to do so. And these tools can only be sharpened with the help of theories from abroad. The development of Chinese narratology as inspired and promoted by Western narratology is an illuminating case in point, as we saw above. The introduction of various modes of 'focalization', for instance, greatly enriched those 'native' theoretical discussions of narrative perspective that were based on the characteristics of traditional Chinese texts.[34] Nevertheless, there are those who would prefer to shut the door to Western narrative theory. This will undoubtedly hinder and limit the development of Chinese narrative theory. Fortunately, such extreme literary theoretical 'nationalists' in the critical field are few in number; most Chinese scholars by contrast

are following closely, yet more critically than maybe a decade ago, the newest developments in Western theory, drawing in a more selective and filtered way on those Western concepts and methods that they perceive as useful and horizon-broadening, without forcing them onto their subject matter. Indeed, whether Western theory is on the wane or not, the (already fruitful) exchange between West and East in comparative literature in China is in many respects just at a beginning – and who knows, maybe some day the currently rather unilateral direction of transfer may yet become, if not reversed, then at least more balanced in the economies of academic exchange.

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NOTES

1 The beginnings of comparative literature in China date back to the 1920s when Shi Hu, Qichao Liang, Dishan Xu, Yinge Chen, Xianlin Ji, among others, published excellent works on the relation between Chinese literature and Indian literature. As a discipline, comparative literature found its way into Chinese universities around 1930. I. A. Richards, Mi Wu and Yinge Chen at that time offered a series of courses in comparative literature with systematic teaching methods at Tsinghua University. During the 1940s and 1950s, Guangqian Zhu and Cunzhong Fan, who had studied in England and America, took the lead and published seminal works in the field. But not until the 1980s did comparative literature in China see a period of further expansion. In the 1980s, comparative literature gained the status of a basic course in Chinese universities, and in 1985 the Chinese Comparative Literature Association was established in Shenzhen. After 20 years of rapid growth, comparative literature has become one of the most popular disciplines/subjects in the humanities in present-day China. Many Chinese universities have teaching or research units in comparative literature. Shichuang University and Capital Normal University have a department of comparative literature. Peking University and Shichuang University have state-sponsored centres of 'Comparative Literature and World Literature'. The Chinese Comparative Literature Association now has nearly 1,000 members who are engaged either in the comparative study of Chinese literature and one or more of the following literatures: English, American, French, German, Russian, Japanese, Indian, Korean, Vietnamese, and Persian, or the comparative study of Chinese minority literatures and foreign literatures. The Comparative Literature

Institutes in more than ten Chinese universities can confer Ph.D. degrees, and many more can confer M.A. degrees. Besides the four journals in comparative Literature: *Chinese Comparative Literature*, *Comparative Literature: East and West*, *Comparative Literature Studies* and *Chinese Comparative Literature Bulletin*, other journals concerned with literary theory and criticism also publish a large number of essays in comparative literary studies; for detailed accounts see Yangshang Xu, *Origins and Developments of Comparative Literature in China* (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou Classics Press, 1998); Xianbiao Liu et al., *A Chronological History of Chinese Comparative Literature (1978–2004)* (Beijing: Chinese Archive Press, 2005); and Xiaoyi Zhou and Q. S. Tong, 'Comparative Literature in China', in *Comparative Literature and Comparative Cultural Studies*, edited by Totosy de Zepetnek (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2003), pp. 268–283.

2 For a detailed discussion, see Dan Shen 'The Future of Literary Theories: Exclusion, Complementarity, Pluralism', *ARIEL* 33 (2002), 159–169.

3 See *Contemporary Western Literary Criticism in China*, edited by Houcheng Chen and Ning Wang (Tianjin: Baihua Literary Press, 2000).

4 Published by London's Verso.

5 Published by Beijing's China Social Sciences Press.

6 Friedrich Engels, 'Letter to Margaret Harkness, April, 1888', in *The Theory of Criticism from Plato to the Present: A Reader*, edited by Raman Selden (London: Longman, 1988), p. 458.

7 See Zhongwen Qian, *Literary Theory: Towards an Era of Exchange and Dialogue* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1999).

8 See Dan Shen, *Narratology and the Stylistics of Fiction*, third edition (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2004), pp. 318–330; also Dan Shen, 'On the Transference of Modes of Speech (or Thought) from Chinese Narrative Fiction into English', *Comparative Literature Studies* 28:4 (1991), 395–415.

9 See Yi Yang, 'Chinese Narratology: Logical Point of Departure and Operative Formulas', *Chinese Social Sciences* 1 (1994), 169–182; see also Yi Yang, *Chinese Narratology* (Beijing: People's Press, 1997).

10 See, for instance, Ding Shi, 'A Critical Survey of China's Narratological Research over the Past Twenty Years', *Academic Research* 8 (2003), 129–132.

11 Some Western scholars are increasingly interested in such comparative studies as well. A case in point is the newly-established research project 'Narratologies of the East and West' organized by Henrik Schärfe (see *http://www.hum.aau.dk/~scharfe/NEW*).

12 For a good recent survey of the development of narratology in the West, see Monika Fludernik, 'Histories of Narrative Theory (II): From Structuralism to the Present,' in *A Companion to Narrative Theory*, edited by James Phelan and Peter Rabinowitz (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 36–59.

13 Edited by David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan (London: Routledge, 2005).

14 Edited by James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).

15 Brian Richardson, 'Recent Concepts of Narrative and the Narratives of Narrative Theory', *Style* 34:2 (2000), 174.

16 Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels, 'Against Theory', *Critical Inquiry* 8 (1982), 723

17 See *http://www.arts.manchester.ac.uk/subjectareas/englishamericanstudies/academicstaff/terryeagleton/*, August 1, 2005.

18 On May 15, 2003, the America-based *NARRATIVE-error@ctrvax.Vanderbilt.edu* posted a call for proposals entitled 'Henry James and new formalisms' which contained the following statement: 'Long discredited as a conservative, parochial, and even 'oppressive' critical practice, 'close reading' is showing signs of return. Yet this return is marked by considerable anxiety… In what sense are New Formalisms new? In what ways might they return to the New Criticism yet discern its limitations?'.

19 See, for instance, Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958); Karl Marx, 'Trade or Opium?', *New York Daily Tribune*, September 20, 1858.

20 As described by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (New York: International Publishers, 1995), Western modernization with irresistible force breaks through the barriers of traditional societies, tearing down their walls of self-defense. Indeed, China was seen as 'vegetating in the teeth of time' in contrast with the 'overwhelming modern society' (Karl Marx, 'Trade or Opium?', originally published in *New York Daily Tribune*, September 20, 1858, in *Marx on China 1853–1860,* edited and introduced by Dona Torr (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1951), p. 55.

21 Shunqing Cao, 'Strategies of China's Cultural Development and the Rebuilding of China's Discourse of Literary Theory in the 21st Century', *Oriental Collection* (Dongfang congkan) 3 (1995), 215–216.

22 4 vols, published by Beijing's China Bookstore, 1979.

23 Published by Shanghai Classics Press, 1985.

24 John J. Deeney, 'The Chinese School in Comparative Literature', in *Constructing the Theory of Chinese Comparative Literature*, edited by Waileung Wong and Shunqing Cao (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1998), pp. 139–143.

25 See Tianhong Gu 'The Chinese School and the Future of Comparative Literature in Taiwan', in *Constructing the Theory of Chinese Comparative Literature*, pp. 163–177.

26 Xinan Yi, 'Why Should India Have Tragedy?', *Comparative Literature Newspaper*, June 15, 2005.

27 See Dan Yi, 'Transcending the Cultural Predicament of Colonial Literature', *Foreign Literature Review* 2 (1994), 111–116; Labao Wang, 'The Reading Perspective, the Formation of Classics and Decolonization', *Foreign Literature Studies* 4 (2000), 15–23; Ning Sheng, 'Fin-de-Siecle, "Globalization", Cultural Integrity', *Foreign Literature Review* 1 (2000), 5–15.

28 Yuhai Han, *From 'Red Rose' to 'Red Flag'* (Shanghai, Shanghai yuandong chubanshe, 1998), pp. 64–83.

29 Hui Wang, *Self-selected Works of Hui Wang* (Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 1997), pp. 208–269.

30 Lydia H. Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity – China, 1900–1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 1995.

31 Liu Kang, Aesthetics *and Marxism: Chinese Aesthetic Marxists and Their Western Contemporaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), pp. 1–14.

32 Terry Eagleton, *After Theory* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), p. 51.

33 See Wenfang Yao, 'On the Issue of Discourse Power of Literary Theories', *Literary Review* 5 (2001), 106–112.

34 See for instance Yi Yang, *Chinese Narratology* (Beijing: People's Press, 1997), pp. 191–266.