

The Development of Contemporary Literary Theory and the New Development of Comparative Literature Theory

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Keywords: The development of contemporary literary theory; Literary discipline theory; New developments

Abstract: In recent years, the voice of reflection and criticism on the discipline of Comparative literature has been emerging at home and abroad, and the shadow of the theory of the demise of Comparative literature has plagued this discipline. From the perspective of its disciplinary origin, Comparative literature has a broad cosmopolitan mind and aims to explore common literary laws; However, when conducting specific research on Comparative literature, especially when the Chinese school proposes cross civilization research, researchers should pay full attention to the impact of the heterogeneity of different civilizations on Comparative literature research. This paper attempts to further analyze the development of contemporary literary theory and the new progress of the discipline theory of Comparative literature. The transformation and development of contemporary literary theory, whether in terms of paradigm shifts or theoretical reorientations, is not a simple linear progression and evolutionary logic but rather a complex spiral cyclic evolution. This is worth studying and discussing the new progress of the discipline theory of Comparative literature and conducting necessary theoretical reflection, to summarize historical experience and lessons in order to promote the innovative development of literary theory in the new era.

1. Introduction

The innovation and development of Chinese literature are becoming increasingly diversified, encompassing various literary forms such as realism, modernism, post-modernism, and emerging trends; utilitarian, aesthetic, gamification, and consumer literature; as well as literature presented in network, visual, multimedia, and traditional textual formats, among others [1]. The development of comparative literature today has a history of more than a hundred years, and it should have a stable discipline research paradigm from common sense. However, in recent years, the voices of reflection and criticism on the subject of comparative literature at home and abroad have emerged one after another, and the shadow of the theory of the extinction of comparative literature has been plaguing this subject. In terms of its subject origin, comparative literature has a broad world mind, and its subject is to explore common literary laws. However, when conducting specific comparative literature research, especially when China School put forward cross-civilization research, researchers should pay full attention to the influence of heterogeneity among different civilizations on comparative literature research [2]. Therefore, it is not limited to introducing all kinds of literary

theory knowledge, but more importantly, it is necessary to reveal some essential laws of literature, clarify the "academic theory" of literary theory itself, guide students to think theoretically, and gradually cultivate students' theoretical thinking ability by continuously strengthening this training [3]. Fundamentally, postmodernism and other "post-isms" are not literary theories, let alone systematic research methodologies within literary theory. Instead, they represent assumptions made by some Western avant-garde thinkers regarding the state of developed capitalist societies, reflecting concerns and confusion about the dominant discourse of scientific and technological rationality, conveying a sense of narrative helplessness, and highlighting the irony of cultural innovation experiencing "inflation" [4]. These concepts are amalgamations of marginalized philosophy, regional politics, gender studies, sociology, and disciplines that are challenging to define. The transformation and development of contemporary literary theory, whether viewed through the lens of paradigm shifts or theoretical transitions, do not follow a simple linear progression. Instead, they trace a complex trajectory characterized by circular evolution, deserving of exploration and discussion within the context of the new advancements in comparative literature theory. This exploration should include essential theoretical reflections to glean historical experiences and lessons that can promote innovative developments in literary theory within the new era [5].

2. The Transformation and Development of Contemporary Literary Theory in the Interaction of Breaking, Citing, and Building

In the context of the era of reform and opening up, and in the context of the conflict and integration of various theoretical resources between China and foreign countries, it has undergone transformation and development under the intertwined interaction of breaking, introducing, and building. The so-called "breaking" refers to breaking the concept and mode of Literary theory formed before, "introducing" refers to introducing various theoretical resources of foreign Literary theory and criticism, and "building" refers to rebuilding literary concepts and literary theory forms that meet the requirements of social and literary development [6]. At the same time, efforts are being made to return to disciplinary norms and theoretical positions, continuously strengthening the research and interpretation of the aesthetic characteristics and laws of literature, the formal factors of literature, and internal laws. In the early stages of reform and opening up, the first thing to bear the brunt was "breaking", which means breaking away from the rigid literary concepts and theoretical models that have long constrained the development of literature. The main "literary theory events" at this stage include discussions on the relationship between literature and politics, the restoration of realistic traditions, the "inward turn" of literature and the theory of image thinking, and the relationship between human nature and humanism[7]. Closely related to this is "Yinyin", which means vigorously introducing foreign literary theories, especially western modern literary theory resources, such as symbolic poetry, stream of consciousness novels, Theatre of the Absurd, avant-garde literature, formalism, psychoanalysis and myth archetypal criticism. Under the background of the turn of "cultural research", it has also strengthened the discussion of the cultural characteristics and laws of literature, striving to reconstruct the disciplinary system of contemporary literary theory from the characteristics and laws of literature itself. The "construction" of this stage is the result of the combined force of breaking and inducing. On the one hand, breaking through the constraints of past literary concepts is a common requirement, but in reality, it is impossible to completely abandon it. Of course, in this process, Chinese literature theory obviously borrowed a lot from foreign literary theory resources, not only introducing various concepts, models, methods and discourses into the research, but also directly copying some foreign literary theory knowledge to transform the existing theoretical form, which is not difficult to see from some influential

Literary theory textbooks or works [8]. These can also be seen as a representation of contemporary Chinese literary theory's efforts to pursue scientificity, strive to align with international literary theory, and engage in dialogue.

3. The development of contemporary literary theory and the new progress of comparative literature theory

3.1. More ubiquitous.

In my opinion, the reasons for these problems and mistakes are the lack of awareness of scientific comparison and blind adoption of western theories as universal truths. Applying Western logical thinking exclusively to analyze the materials of ancient Chinese literary theory, such as categorizing Chinese literature solely within the realms of realism and romanticism, can hinder one's comprehension of Chinese culture, literature, and literary theory [9]. As Francois Julien, a famous French scholar, said, "We are in an era of standardization of western conceptual models. The study of literary essentialism and non-essentialism, and the study of literary ontology have produced some influential results. Most of these studies are carried out in discussion and contention, which has also formed academic hotspots. In addition, the discussion of "boundary" and "expansion" can also be regarded as a part of the literary theory debate. On the significance of comparison, the other is the study of foreign literature. In the aspect of parallel research, Mr. Shui Haimo has made a unique and wonderful discussion on the characters in *Don Quixote*, *The True Story of Ah Q* and *The Diary of a Madman* from the perspective of cross-civilization, and thinks that each of the three images has deep national characteristics, and at the same time there are common factors of human beings. As shown in Figure 1, it is a long anti-knight novel written by Spanish writer Cervantes, which was published in two parts in 1605 and 1615. The work tells the story of a crazy knight errant Don Quixote, who embarked on the road of knight errant because of his crazy love for knight novels. He traveled around with his attendant Sancho, experienced many setbacks and hardships, and did many ridiculous things.



Figure 1: "Don Quixote"

As shown in Figure 2, "The True Story of Ah Q" is a novella created by Lu Xun. It was first published in the Beijing Morning News Supplement in December 1921 and later included in the novel collection "Shout". The novel was created at the end of 1921 and consists of nine chapters. The novel is set in rural China before and after the Xinhai Revolution, and depicts the story of Ah Q, a wandering and hired farmer in Weizhuang. Although he can really do his job, he has nothing and

even his name is forgotten.



Figure 2: The True Story of Ah Q

As shown in Figure 3, "The Diary of a Madman" is Lu Xun's first short vernacular diary style novel and also China's first modern vernacular novel, written in April 1918. This article was first published on May 15, 1918, in the monthly issue of New Youth, No. 5, volume 4, and later included in the collection of "Shouts", which was compiled into the first volume of "Complete Works of Lu Xun". The novel reveals the "cannibalism" essence of feudal ethics through the image of the persecuted "madman" and the self-narrative description of the "madman", expressing the author's resistance to Chinese feudal culture with feudal ethics as its main connotation; It also demonstrates the author's profound sense of repentance.



Figure 3: "Madman's Diary"

Literature research cannot be separated from the perspective of comparison, because we study foreign literature in the Chinese context. When foreign literature is translated into Languages of China, comparison occurs immediately. During this period, more than 20 academic papers were published on the study of literary ontology. The debate surrounding the "practical ontology" aesthetics and literary studies since the beginning of 2009 is essentially a frontal confrontation about the ontology issues of philosophy, aesthetics, and literary studies. This debate is still going on, and it will play an obvious role in clarifying the confusion in understanding the ontology of Literary theory. For example, Zhu Shenghao, a famous Chinese translator, claimed that the purpose of his translation was to "maintain the charm of the original" and "faithfully convey the interest of the original" in the work of translating Shakespeare's complete works. However, in the process of translation, due to the influence of cultural traditions, Mr. Zhu Shenghao adopted the domestication method, which also had to distort the original meaning. This distortion is the variation of

Comparative literature [10].

3.2. Three Stages of the Development of Comparative literature

Comparative literature has been studied from the influence of the French school, to the parallel and interdisciplinary studies of the American school, and then to the cross-civilization and variation studies of the China school. It has formed a "ripple" structure as you said, and the basic discipline theory of comparative literature is composed of old knowledge and new theory, overlapping, influence, parallelism, cross-civilization and variation research. Due to the language barrier and the single visual threshold of western centralism formed for a long time, it still needs efforts for China School to be recognized by the international community. China School should not rest on its laurels, but boldly export its culture through the intermediary of English. A true scholar of comparative literature should first be a national character, a researcher of domestic literature, and at the same time have a cosmopolitan mind and be recognized by international academic circles.

On the issue of guiding ideology, it is necessary to emphasize and reiterate the necessity of taking Marxism, especially the latest achievements of Marxism in China, as the guiding ideology. Research can be diversified, but the guiding ideology cannot be diversified. There are two situations worth noting here: one is to alienate or disdain to admit that Marxism is the guidance; First, on the surface, it is stated that it is guided by Marxism, while in the actual research process and achievements, Marxist viewpoints and methods are removed, and even become completely opposite. Calling the development of three stages of comparative literature a "ripple" structure actually reveals the dialectical relationship between the inheritance and innovation of the theory of comparative literature: the development of the theory of comparative literature is not to deny and replace the previous theory with a new theory, but to form a "ripple" inclusive development model in a cascading and progressive manner, and gradually accumulate and advance.

3.3. An attempt to construct chinese discourse in Comparative literature

Comparative literature, as a specialized and institutional discipline in China, was recognized by academic circles in 1980s. It is such a young discipline, but its huge academic team and potential for academic innovation cannot be underestimated. It is conceivable that China's comparative literature has experienced twists and turns in its rapid growth. Some problems have existed since the birth of China, and still exist today, which interferes with everyone's understanding of comparative literature as a discipline and affects the theoretical basis of its existence in China. The views and theories of some western thinkers have not only become the symbols of academic support and academic education of academic theorists, but also openly entered the text of "literary principles" in universities, becoming a hot topic in university lecture halls. Undeniably, these various foreign "doctrines" have broadened China's ideological horizon, enriched the theoretical connotation and greatly promoted the academic nature of literary theory research.

In the history of human development, there is indeed deep gender prejudice and discrimination, and it still exists to some extent. However, there is no natural confrontation, irreconcilable and absolute incompatibility between the two sexes. Especially in today's society, there is no sexual cold war context. Besides, gender consciousness is only a part of social ideology. Besides a clear discipline characteristic of comparative literature, the discipline construction of comparative literature also needs a clear discipline research field. To solve the crisis of comparative literature, we should start with defining the research field of comparative literature, and put forward the research field of "variation" of comparative literature for the first time. Only when our own discipline theory is strong and the national discourse of this discipline is enriched, can we have the confidence and strength to make our own voice in the international comparative literature, play its

due role, build an international humanities discipline shared by mankind, and promote the gradual formation of a more reasonable and just new international academic order.

4. Conclusions

In a word, the focus of this meeting is precisely aimed at the current theoretical dilemma of Comparative literature, so this will be a very practical theoretical response. The openness of contemporary literary theory research is mainly manifested in the multi-dimensional reference and development of research methods. In terms of basic theoretical concepts, we should still adhere to literature as the noumenon, otherwise we will lose the significance and value of Literary theory research. If today's Literary theory is faced with the reconstruction in the process of reflection, which should include the reflection and reconstruction of the humanistic spirit, then some of the problems mentioned above may be difficult to avoid, and we can seek to rethink and explore in the position of academic rationality. Literary theory can still develop independently. The important thing is that we should change with the changes of the times, find new methods, and not stick to those old concepts. New viewpoints and theories extracted from long-term research practice are often excluded. Translated literature, as an important part of Comparative literature, should be incorporated into the theoretical framework of the discipline, so as to provide more research resources for Comparative literature research. Researching the issues raised in the current development of literature, actively responding to social concerns about literature, and providing necessary theoretical support for literary practice through the construction of literary concepts. The influential Literary theory all have such characteristics and functions, from which we can get many beneficial inspirations.

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