The Future of Literary Theories: Exclusion, Complementarity, Pluralism
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Looking back on the development of literary theories over the past century, one tends to get a picture of mutual exclusion, with one school emerging for the purpose of supplanting an existing one, or with one kind of theoretical climate triumphing over another. Interestingly, theoretical exclusion takes various, though often overlapping, forms: ideological, philosophical, focal, or whatever. Through an examination of the major forms of exclusion, we may see that many theoretical schools are more or less complementary to each other, and that the coexistence of different theories is both necessary and desirable. I would argue that the future of literary theories will benefit from complementarity and pluralism rather than exclusion, from more openness or more tolerance towards the Other or Others.

It is understood that different theories or different specific contexts have multiple different consequences. The present paper, however, is not concerned with fine-grained analysis of each theory or context but rather with the big picture that emerges by attending to the macro-level. This macro-level discussion of both Western and Chinese literary theories may shed interesting light on certain issues that tend to be obscured in micro-level analysis of a specific theory or context.

I Three Major Forms of Exclusion

A. Ideological Exclusion

Ideological exclusion found an extreme form of itself in China during the Great Cultural Revolution (1966 to 1976). In that period, literary theory and criticism were treated only as political tools. In order to

reinforce the struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, there emerged, in terms of literary creation, the "Triple Prominence" theory: to make prominent the positive characters; among the positive characters, make prominent the proletarian heroes; among the proletarian heroes, make prominent the central hero. The characters thus created are usually "flat" and the central character is always a great revolutionary hero, meant to be a model for people to follow. Once established, such a theory acquires the status of the only politically correct principle for everyone to obey, leaving no room for different theoretical voices. Aesthetic studies were regarded as a form of reactionary bourgeois ideology and were completely purged from the scene. Literary theory and criticism, as sheer tools for political struggle, totally lost their freedom and academic status. With the emphasis placed on its fighting power, literary criticism was used by the ultra-"Leftists" as a tool to overthrow or criticize some state leaders. During that period not only were Western literary theories excluded, but also the study of Western literary works was completely at a standstill.

Nineteen seventy-seven saw the end of the Great Cultural Revolution and the eradication of the ultra-"Left" trend of thought. The dominating principle that literature should be at the service of politics was soon abandoned. In 1978, China adopted an economic reform policy, opening her door to the outside world. The 1980s saw the sudden rush into China of various schools of Western literary theory and criticism, such as new criticism, structuralism, deconstruction, psychoanalysis, feminism and cultural studies. Interestingly, all these schools, whether fashionable or out of fashion in the West, were invariably new and "contemporary" to Chinese scholars. Having been subjected to political criticism for decades, many Chinese scholars became particularly interested in text-oriented critical theory and criticism, since formal and aesthetic studies gave them a sense of liberation and freedom.

In the West, the trends of development seem to have gone in the opposite direction. When Chinese literary scholars were confined to political criticism, Western scholars were enjoying formal and aesthetic studies and the coexistence of various contending schools. But the scene seems

to have become increasingly political since the late 1970s, with 'political correctness' gradually figuring as an implicit norm of measurement. Aesthetics is treated by progressives as a component of bourgeois ideology to be purged from literary studies (see Burton; Eagleton; Elliott). Progressive theorists and critics, who are preoccupied with class, gender and ethnicity and who tend to treat literary studies as a political tool for reforming society and achieving equality, have deconstructed the canons and shifted attention to works by female, ethnic and popular writers. This reminds one of a similar, though much more severe, kind of exclusion during China's Great Cultural Revolution, when writers were only allowed to write about workers, peasants and soldiers. To Chinese scholars, the traditional canons are indeed prejudiced, but the marginalization or exclusion of white male authors also seems to be biased, apparently going to the other extreme. What was traditionally undervalued is now centralized, and what was traditionally centralized is now in its turn undervalued. In the name of achieving equality, a new form of inequality seems to have come into being.

Many Chinese scholars look at the Western scene with mixed feelings. On the one hand, they are aware that there are fundamental differences between the two situations. The politicization of literary studies in China during the Great Cultural Revolution was imposed from above and was implemented as an act of the state. By contrast, the politicization of literary criticism in the West came as a change of intellectual climate from within academia itself, as a politicized attempt of the non-canonic against the hegemonic canon. That is to say, the case of ideological exclusion of theory and criticism as encountered in the West points to the problem of theory and criticism derived from within, from an internal structural tendency or weakness, whereas the case of ideologically exclusive theory and criticism in China alerts us to a problem of theory and criticism derived from without, as a result of external imposition of the will of the state. Because of the fundamental differences, while China's Great Cultural Revolution left absolutely no room for individual freedom, in the West, the teachers and students, theorists and critics who do not accept the progressive program and

who want to teach, study or write about aesthetics or white male authors, are still free to do so. That is why we still have an outpouring of books and articles on Shakespeare, Richardson, Fielding, Melville, Hawthorne, Hardy, Joyce, Hemingway and Faulkner, among others. Nevertheless, many Chinese scholars, with the tragic experience of the Great Cultural Revolution which brought great catastrophes to literary studies, cannot but feel a sense of regret at the attempts made by Western progressives to politicize literary studies to such a degree as to exclude aesthetics and white male authors.

B. Philosophical Exclusion

By philosophical exclusion I mean exclusion arising from the existence of contending or opposing philosophical assumptions. A typical case of philosophical exclusion is Stanley Fish's "Affective Stylistics" in relation to existing stylistics. Fish's Affective Stylistics are based on the reader-oriented philosophical assumption of meaning as an event. He substitutes the question "What does this sentence mean?" with another question: "What does this sentence do?", from which point of view, "[The sentence] is no longer an object, a thing-in-itself, but an *event*, something that *happens* to, and with the participation of, the reader. And it is this event, this happening—all of it and not anything that could be said about it or any information one might take away from it—that is, I would argue, the *meaning* of the sentence" (Fish, "Literature" 125). Based on this philosophical assumption of meaning, Fish proposes his Affective Stylistics, which "*slow down* the reading experience so that 'events' one does not notice in normal time, but which do occur, are brought before our analytical attentions"("Literature" 128). In other words, the analyst should record "all the precise mental operations involved in reading, including the formation of complete thoughts, the performing (and regretting) of acts of judgement, the following and making of logical sequences" (Fish, "Literature" 140; cf. Phelan 15-66).

When Fish was trying to establish his Affective Stylistics, he made an attempt to purge existing stylistics from the scene ("What is Stylistics?";

Is There a Text?). Fish's view of existing stylistics—a discipline concerned with the effects of verbal patterns—is totally negative, but interestingly, when Fish's own analysis starts to operate at an abstract level, it begins to sound very much like a stylistician's production. For example: "there are two vocabularies in the sentence; one holds out the promise of a clarification—'place,' 'affirm,' 'place,' 'punctual,' 'overthrow'—while the other continually defaults on that promise—'Though,' 'doubtful,' 'yet,' 'impossible,' 'seems'; [...] The indeterminateness of this experience is compounded by a superfluity of pronouns" ("Literature" 125). First of all, we should be aware that Fish's concern with the reading experience here is a concern with the effects of the words on the analyst. Similarly, in stylistic analysis, stylisticians are typically concerned with the effects of the verbal patterns which are none other than the analysts' intuitive responses (to the data) elicited in their reading processes (see Shen, "Stylistics"; *Narratology* 139-43). Significantly, Fish's analysis at such moments deviates, to a certain extent, from his basic principles. First, the lexical choices, which are considered in relation to each other in terms of semantic similarity or contrast, are singled out with a certain degree of generality. Closely related to this is the deviation from the consideration of the temporal flow of the reading experience which forms the basis of the mode proposed by Fish who assumes that "the reader responds in terms of that flow and not to the whole utterance. That is, in an utterance of any length, there is a point at which the reader has taken in only the first word, and then the second, and then the third, and so on, and the report of what happens to the reader is always a report of what has happened *to that point*" ("Literature" 127). This obviously does not apply to Fish's analysis as quoted above where the temporal order is, as it were, broken and where the analyst (whom I suspect has gone through the whole utterance more than once) is apparently taking account of the whole utterance. As a result, one's precise responses to each individual word are obscured (the response to "place" is presumably different from that to "affirm") and the responses to the words in between overlooked. But this "loss" is accompanied by a perceptible "gain": the relevant aspect of the linguistic experience is sys-

tematized or organized in terms of similarity or contrast and is thereby refined as well as highlighted.

Interestingly but not surprisingly, in dealing with units larger than the sentence, Fish's analysis operates at an even higher level of abstraction. In his analysis of Plato's the *Phaedrus*, one is given, instead of "the basic data of the reading experience," general summaries or impressionistic conclusions, such as "The *Phaedrus* is a radical criticism of the idea of internal coherence from a moral point of view; by identifying the appeal of well-put-together artifacts with the sense of order in the perceiving (i.e. receiving) mind, it provides a strong argument for the banishing of the good poet who is potentially the good deceiver" ("Literature" 138). What I see in such conclusions is not an attempt to answer the question, "What does the work DO?" but an attempt to answer the traditional question, "What does the work MEAN?" In order to reach such general conclusions, the mind needs to operate at a considerably high level of abstraction.

While Fish's theory is highly exclusive, only allowing the critic to play the function of a slow-motion camera, his practice is quite inclusive, displaying three different approaches: first, to record "moment by moment" the interpretive process; secondly, to systematize or organize some moments of responses or "cues" of responses (i.e., formal patterns) in terms of similarity or contrast; and thirdly, to summarize or generalize the whole experience. The first approach is typical of Fish's Affective Stylistic; the second approach is characteristic of the existing stylistics that Fish wanted to purge from the scene; and the third approach is typically found in impressionistic literary criticism. Each approach has its own advantages and limitations. The first approach has the virtue of bringing to light "all the precise mental operations involved in reading" but it leaves no room for organizing or generalizing aspects of the reading experience. The second approach highlights the interaction between the relevant (cues of) responses but necessarily involves overlooking the intermediate ones. The third approach synthesizes the whole only at the expense of the "basic data" of reading.

If the three approaches are taken as three mental processes, they are, I think, actually parallel in the reading activity. While responding to the text "bit by bit, moment by moment," the mind is, perhaps unconsciously, responding to the interaction between the elements (normally not in succession) of a formal pattern; similarly, while interpreting one word, phrase etc. after another, the mind is trying to reach such general conclusions as the one quoted above. The point to notice is that as far as the critic is concerned, he or she is able to focus, at least at any given moment, only on one approach or process. Apparently, these approaches are very much complementary to each other.

In China, after the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, literary theory modelled itself quite exclusively on that of the former Soviet Union. For about three decades, Marxist materialism dominated the scene, to the exclusion of bourgeois idealism. This led to the establishment of socialist realism as the norm of literary creation and criticism, deviations from which were sooner or later purged from the scene. In 1954, Ling Lan and Xifan Li published an article in *Literature, History and Philosophy* and another similar in nature in *Guangming Daily* to criticize Pingbo Yu's studies of the most influential Chinese classic, *The Dream of the Red Chamber*. They hold it that Yu's studies are marked by concepts of bourgeois idealism and a tendency to go against realism. To Lan and Li, *The Dream of the Red Chamber* is a realistic novel with an unambivalent anti-feudalistic tendency, which Yu fails to notice because of his deviation from Marxist materialism and adherence to abstract artistic principles. Yu divides the content of the novel into three interlacing categories: the realistic, the idealistic and the critical, which are unified by two basic authorial concepts "love/lust" (*se*) and "emptiness" (*kong*). With these emphases, the characters in the novel, Lan and Li argue, become mere embodiments of these authorial concepts rather than colourful realistic beings or "typical characters in typical circumstances." As regards the two female protagonists Daiyu and Baochai, Lan and Li take it that one should approach them in terms of the rebellion against the feudal ethics and the feudal system. Since Daiyu rebels while Baochai does not, Lan and Li see a fundamental difference

between the two, the former being a positive character and the latter a negative one. Yu, however, viewing the characters in terms of formal and aesthetic principles, takes the two as being equal in the author's mind, forming a combined image embodying the author's conception of beauty.

Lan and Li observe that Yu goes even further along the lines of bourgeois idealism when it comes to the discussion of the literary tradition of the novel. To Yu, the novel has inherited and developed the tradition of many Chinese classics, with its basic ideas of "love/lust" (*se*) and "emptiness" (*kong*) coming most directly from the classic novel *Jin Ping Mei* in the Ming Dynasty. Viewed in this way, according to Lan and Li, the novel would no longer be a realistic representation of real life, but an atemporal embodiment of certain abstract ideas. With Marxist materialism as the guiding principle, Lan and Li treat literary tradition as a matter of the inheritance and development of realistic creation, of the methods to expose the evils of the ruling class, of the affinity to the people, and of national style, with the relation between art and reality constituting the most essential relation. Lan and Li's criticism of Yu's studies attracted a lot of attention, and the academic issue soon became a political one, which led to a nationwide campaign against bourgeois idealism, purging it from the scene.

Even before the Great Cultural Revolution, Western literary theories were regarded as reflecting or representing bourgeois idealism and were barred from entry into China, a country exclusively committed to Marxist materialism. Not surprisingly, Marxist literary theorists in the West were also excluded and only those from socialist countries were admitted—most notably Georg Lukàcs. At that time, many Chinese literary scholars had blind faith in Marxist materialist literary theory, treating it as omnipotent, able to solve all problems in literary studies, or even regarding it as the ultimate destination of the development of literary theory (see Qian, *Literary Theory*).

C. Focal Exclusion

In discussing ideological and philosophical exclusion, I have already touched on focal exclusion, which is commonly seen in the domain of literary theories. In the West, while text-oriented theories, such as Russian Formalism, New Criticism and Structuralism or Deconstruction, consider it more or less sufficient just to look at the text itself, many people today believe that it would be sufficient to focus instead on the socio-historical context of a literary work. Both kinds of focal exclusion have serious consequences. In *Reading Narrative*, Hillis Miller observes, "today's focus on historical or ideological configuration has the danger of overemphasizing context at the expense of reading the work itself. The work may become a kind of hollow or vacancy overwhelmed by its context, just as my procedure has the danger of underemphasizing context through a fascination with verbal intricacies in the works read. Both, however, have the virtues of their defects" (85).

In contrast with Miller, many people hold that the focus of their own theory or approach is the only right focus, which is, moreover, in itself sufficient. In the field of Western literary theories, the past century has witnessed the shift in focus from author to text to reader or socio-historical context. What is more, different theories focus on different kinds of significance of the text. For example, traditional theory and criticism concentrate on morality, New Criticism focuses on aesthetic effects, and feminist studies direct attention to power relations between the sexes or gender politics. It is indeed quite natural or necessary for each theory or approach, as a certain interpretive framework, to have a given focus, either concerning the object of investigation or the aim of interpretation. But very often, the fact that the different foci are complementary is overlooked.

Now, there exists another kind of focal exclusion, which does not seem to be natural or necessary. In his forward to *Language and Literature*, Halliday says that we should leave open the question of "whether the property of 'being literature' is an attribute of the text itself, or of some aspect of its environment—the context of the situation, perhaps, or the mental set of a particular listener or reader" (vii). But being literature is,

generally speaking, not just an attribute of the text itself, nor just some aspect of its environment, nor just the mental set of the reader, for all three aspects have a role to play and need to be considered in relation to each other. If one only focuses on a given aspect, the argument is bound and unconvincing. As many theorists have pointed out, to argue that literature is fictitious can in no way distinguish literature from some advertisements and various kinds of fictive speech acts in daily conversation such as hyperbole, teasing, hypotheses, plans and dreams (see, for instance, Pratt 91). And to argue that literature contains certain language features can get nowhere, since, as numerous theorists have pointed out, those features can also be found in daily conversation, advertisements, newspaper reports, and the like. But if we consider the fictiveness and language features in connection with aesthetic function, non-practicality, the purpose and conventions of reading and writing, as well as social environment, we will be on pretty firm ground to discuss what literature is. In theoretical discussions on the identity of literature, however, theorists usually just focus on one aspect, to the exclusion of others—a practice that leads to incessant debates.

Interestingly, concerning the identity of literature, there is, on the one hand, a remarkable consensus on its existence, and, on the other, drastic disagreement on the distinction between literary and non-literary discourse. This contradiction is, again, to be attributed to focal exclusion. Literature, as a kind of social discourse, has many similarities with other kinds of social discourse, such as newspaper reports, sermons, political speeches, diaries, letters, travel brochures, advertisements and the like. But literature, as *one* kind of social discourse, has its own distinctiveness. Those theorists, especially formalists, who insist on the distinction between literary and non-literary discourse, tend to focus on the distinctive features of literature while overlooking the shared similarities. Similarly, those aiming at deconstructing the distinction between literary and non-literary discourse tend to focus on the similarities while overlooking the differentiating characteristics. Clearly, the two perspectives are both one-sided, and are very much

complementary to each other. By combining them, we may get a much more balanced picture.

In China, focal exclusion, as in the case of philosophical exclusion, was for a long time closely connected with ideological exclusion. In the 1950s and 60s, China closely followed the model of literary studies in the former Soviet Union. With class-struggle as the basic concern and Marxism as the guiding thought, literature was used as an ideological tool for political education, and attention was focussed on progressive Chinese writers, as well as Western ones such as Charles Dickens, Theodore Dreiser, and Mark Twain. Following the Soviet distinction between positive romanticism and negative romanticism first proposed by Maxim Gorky, Chinese literary scholars very much excluded those poets classified in the latter category—including William Wordsworth and the other Lake Poets. With literary works more or less treated as "tool[s] for political struggle" or "diagram[s] of political documents," theorists and critics concentrated their attention quite exclusively on the ideological content, on the relations between the work and the author's political inclination, the social background, the economy or the class struggle. As regards the Chinese classic novel, *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, traditionally, the work was read as a love story, but during this period, critics' attention became focused, as indicated above, exclusively on how the work revealed the decline of feudalistic forces and the struggle against feudalism. As in other cases, the traditional concern with the aesthetic function of the work or source studies were regarded as irrelevant, counter-realistic or counter-revolutionary.

As things tend to go from one extreme to another, after China opened her door to the world in the late 1970s, intrinsic or aesthetic criticism soon became the norm and extrinsic or sociological criticism was marginalized or even temporarily excluded on different scales. But fortunately, people gradually became more tolerant and the domain of literary theories in China is now more free of ideologically-related focal exclusion.

II Complementarity

Although the picture of literary theories in the past century is in general marked by various forms of exclusion, there have appeared some promising signs of complementarity. Basically, we have the following three forms of complementary relation.

A. Mutually Complementary

Realizing the complementarity between one's own theory or approach and another, some theorists and critics have consciously tried to make their own studies fulfill a complementary role. Hillis Miller, for instance, regards his deconstructive textual theory and criticism as an attempt "to give the other half of the truth," that is, the half overlooked by contextual or social/historical literary studies (85).

In China, this kind of complementary relation is realized on a larger scale between Chinese literary theory and Western literary theory. As mentioned earlier, the 1980s saw the sudden rush into China of various schools of Western literary theory.[1] At the same time, there came a revival of classical Chinese literary theories and a development of contemporary Chinese critical theories along with the development of various new trends of literary creation. Having been isolated for decades, many Chinese scholars took a keen interest in the Western other, treating the other and self as mutually complementary. Not only scholars in foreign literatures but also scholars in Chinese literature are interested in various Western approaches, the latter with the help of numerous translations and introductory books on Western literary theory. Comparative study of Western and Chinese literary theories soon became a fashion, greatly promoting the complementary relation between the two.

The past five years or so have, however, witnessed a change in Chinese scholars' attitude towards Western literary theory. For about one and a half decades after China opened its door to the outside world, Chinese scholars in general warmly welcomed the introduction of Western literary theory, while, of course, some Chinese scholars, especially aged ones, still resisted Western theory, believing only in Chinese theory or only in literary criticism itself. During this period, critics' atten-

tion was very much focused on ways of applying Western theory to the analysis of Chinese texts, as well as on various forms of misreading involved in the introduction, translation and application of Western theory (see, for instance, Shen, "Misreading"). In the past five years or so, however, with the development of globalization and the heated discussion of globalization, an increasing number of Chinese scholars have become concerned with the following questions: "How can national characteristics be preserved when faced with the strong influence of Western literary theory?" and "How can an equal dialogue be carried out with the West?" They are worried that Chinese literary theory has been too much influenced by Western theory—especially in terms of new schools, ways of reasoning, terminology and norms of writing. In the extreme case, some Chinese scholars treat Western literary theory not as a frame of reference, but as theory proper. Those scholars take vernacular theory as the frame of reference for the purpose of more effectively or conveniently using Western theory. In this sense, Chinese theory has lost its status as Subject and has become a kind of 'Other' in her native land (see Yao).

At the turn of the century, a number of Chinese scholars published essays to argue for an equal dialogue between Chinese theory and Western theory. In an article published in *Literature Review*, Shaozhen Sun claims that Chinese literary theory contains certain important concepts based on Chinese literary creation not found in Western literary theory. He stresses the importance of reading Chinese classical works, which have certain characteristics lying beyond the scope of applicability of Western theory. If Chinese literary theorists base their research on the reading experiences, Sun says, they may discover both certain inapplicability of Western theory and certain conflicts between Chinese and Western linguistic, cultural and literary traditions. On this basis, one can go on to supplement, develop, transform or even partially subvert Western literary theory. Only in this way, Sun argues, can an equal dialogue between Chinese theory and Western theory possibly be established.

In April 2001, a conference was held in Yangzhou to discuss the research and teaching of literary theory in the context of globalization. Divergent views were expressed at the conference (see Nai and Chen). One participant put forward the idea that, faced with the new challenge of globalization, Chinese theorists should try to engage in original research of Chinese vernacular theory, get rid of various transplanted concepts and judgements, and reevaluate Chinese literary works with key terminology and concepts that really fit the Chinese reality. The assumption underlying the proposal is that Chinese scholars have borrowed too much from Western literary theory, which results in the suppression of the originality and creativity of contemporary Chinese theory itself. By contrast, some participants believed that Chinese scholars on the whole have not simply transplanted Western literary theory but have drawn on useful elements, which have helped transform, innovate, or expand literary theory in China. To those scholars, the most important thing is the essence of the research. The complaint that "what we use is all Western discourse" is, they argue, a false claim, since the introduced Western discourse or concepts that have won widespread acceptance by Chinese scholars have already undergone a process of selection or filtering, and have become part of Chinese theory. Some Chinese scholars see the relation between Western literary theory and Chinese literary theory as unreciprocated: Chinese theory has borrowed a lot from the Western counterpart, while Western theory seems hardly influenced by the other. They are eager to find ways to make Chinese theory more influential so as to establish a more reciprocal relation. By contrast, some participants argued that, although Chinese scholars have been much influenced by Western literary theory, they are still under the influence of Chinese vernacular theory in the Chinese context. The combination of the two theories helps promote the development of Chinese literary research. It is not necessary to try to influence other cultures simply because one's own culture has been influenced by the other. One participant took a very positive view of globalization, advocating a stance in which one goes beyond nationalism and adopts a universal perspective, which may help promote dialogue and

understanding, rather than isolation or conflict, between two different cultures. Despite the divergence in opinion, there remains the common view that Chinese scholars should be against both the tendency to exclude Western literary theory and the tendency to believe blindly in Western literary theory.

Moreover, it may be of interest to note that, as postmodernism has become influential in China, some Chinese scholars in recent years have argued that because of the social and cultural differences between China and the West, China cannot blindly borrow Western postmodern theory. China is a country where pre-modern, modern and post-modern elements co-exist. What is primarily needed in China, as a developing country that has undergone the destruction of the Great Cultural Revolution, is constructive modernism rather than deconstructive postmodernism (see, for instance, Qian, "The Context").

It seems to me that Chinese scholars have in general become more mature and more self-conscious in learning from the West, which may help to establish a more meaningful complementary relation between Chinese and Western literary theories.

B. Creating a new synthesis from existing approaches

In the past twenty years or so, and especially in the past decade, an increasing number of Western theorists and critics have tried to combine two or more approaches to broaden the scope of analysis and to make up for certain insufficiencies of the individual approaches. Feminist narratology is a prominent example. By combining a formal concern with a political concern, it has, in Hoesterey's words, "destabilized the formalism/antiformalism opposition that has so long been a staple of twentieth-century literary criticism" (11). The marriage between narratology and feminism makes it possible to gain a firmer analytical footing and to get free of problematic formal constraints. The same goes for feminist stylistics or political stylistics. By now, there has emerged a host of synthetic approaches. In the field of narratology alone, many narrative theorists have drawn on other theories and perspectives, including reader-response theory, psychoanalysis, analytical philosophy, com-

puter science, cognitive science, new historicism and poststructuralism (see Richardson). Not surprisingly, the singular term "narratology" was changed into the plural "narratologies" as the title of a book published by Ohio State University Press in 1999 (Herman). Similarly, some stylisticians have tried to draw upon Fish's model to add a new dimension to their analysis, with attention directed, for instance, to the effects generated by the temporal progression of words in prose fiction (see, for instance, Macleod).

In China, after the liberation from the cultural dictatorship during the Great Cultural Revolution, scholars were eager to absorb new models and to create a new synthesis from two or more existing models. In April 1982, the new journal, *Contemporary Trends of Thought in Literature*, came into being with one of its major aims being to promote synthetic and multi-dimensional approaches in literary research. Interestingly, one synthetic approach that emerged in the 1980s is "literary aesthetics" formed by combining aesthetics with literary theory, the former belonging to the field of philosophy in China. This approach functions to put into practice abstract principles of aesthetics (which helps aesthetics to gain more relevance and usefulness) and enables literary theory to gain depth, thus promoting their mutual development. Another synthetic approach takes the form of combining contemporary literary theory with classic poetics, the latter being neglected, criticized, or held suspect for decades before the end of the Great Cultural Revolution. A more comprehensive synthesis was recently proposed by the Chinese theorist Yao Wenfang, who classifies the resources of contemporary Chinese literary theory into five categories: 1) ancient Chinese literary theory; 2) Chinese literary theory since the New Cultural Movement in 1919; 3) Marxist and Leninist literary theory; 4) literary theory of the former Soviet Union; 5) Western literary theory. According to Yao, one should not exclude any of the above resources, but should draw on all of them. The purpose, however, is not to produce a disordered mixture, but "an organic and ordered discourse system." More specifically, one should take as the basis literary theory derived from China's contemporary reality and experiences, then pro-

ceed to draw synthetically on all the resources mentioned above, so as to develop and reconstruct contemporary Chinese literary theory. (106-12).

Interestingly, when various Western theories travel into China, they tend to lose their exclusive forces, because they are often treated as research methods or objects of research by Chinese scholars who comment on their respective advantages and limitations and draw on their useful elements. A critic tends to choose one approach as a basis, while drawing on another or a number of other approaches. But of course, once a scholar becomes totally committed to one specific approach, s/he is likely to be committed to its exclusiveness as well. Many Chinese scholars have adopted an eclectic attitude, drawing on useful concepts and methods from Western and Chinese, traditional and modern literary, aesthetic, and cultural theories (see Huang 33-35; Qian, *Literary Theory* 187).

C. Reconstructing and incorporating the Other

Instead of just drawing on another theory or approach, some theorists have tried to transform the Other's framework before incorporating it into their own approach. A good case in point is Emory Elliot, who, realizing the danger of a single-minded pursuit of cultural studies to the exclusion of aesthetic and literary concerns, has, in his "Introduction" to *Aesthetics in a Multicultural Age*, called for a meaningful combination of cultural studies and aesthetics on the basis that a new system of aesthetics is constructed in accordance with current theories and cultural conditions.

What I find admirable in the positions of the above theorists or critics is that they adopt an open-minded stance instead of a self-centered exclusive perspective. Significantly, in order to promote the development of literary theories in the future, we need to argue not only for complementarity, but also for pluralism.

III Pluralism

We need to argue for pluralism for the following three reasons: 1) Because of philosophical opposition among other things, some critical theories are virtually incompatible; 2) In order to gain a fuller and more balanced view of the text, it would be beneficial to have readings from different perspectives (see Booth); 3) The coexistence of these divergent or opposing approaches can be very productive, generating stimuli and impetus for future development.

A typical case of incompatibility is structuralist criticism in relation to deconstructive criticism. As we all know, while structuralism posits a world of coherence and stability, deconstruction posits a world of incoherence and instability. Deconstructive criticism rose as a reaction against, and an attempt to supersede, structuralist criticism. But the object of study, the text, seems to be open to both approaches, as reflected in the following observation made by Hillis Miller after offering his deconstructive reading:

> In a similar way, Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* is simultaneously open to the reading I have proposed and to a logo-centric one that encompasses Troilus's speech as an aberration that the play, in the end, monologically surrounds, as a host might finally consume its irritating parasite. The strange logic or alogic of parasite and host in their interrelation, however, is another version of that interference of the dialogical or polylogical in the monological that weaves and reweaves Arachne's broken woof (145).

One may argue that a literary text contains, on the one hand, various forms and structures which interact to produce meanings, and, on the other, various subversive rhetorical movements or disquieting perturbations. This could be seen as an opposition between the centered, logical and canny, and the a-centric, irrational and uncanny—two contending forces that are interactively at work in the text. While structuralist criticism tends to focus on the former, deconstruction tends to concentrate

on the latter. To gain a more balanced view of the text, it would be beneficial to have the readings from both perspectives.

Indeed, the same elements in a text may look coherent or determinable from one perspective, and incoherent or indeterminable from another. For instance, structuralist critics assume that generally speaking, a story has a beginning, a middle and an end. When coming to a narrative work, structuralist critics may comfortably discuss whether the text begins from the beginning or *in media res*, or whether the ending is open or closed. By contrast, deconstructive critics would take it that "no narrative can show either its beginning or its ending. It always begins and ends still '*in medias res*,' presupposing as a future anterior some part of itself outside itself" (Miller 53). Apparently these two approaches can in no way be reconciled. They form two different critical worlds and offer us a choice: to have one and deny the presence of the Other (monism); to have both because each has something valuable to offer (pluralism). I would argue for pluralism. Very often we find both structuralist and deconstructive interpretations insightful and penetrating. Surely, many early structuralist models are stagnating and limiting, not concerned with the effects of literary works. But structuralist-inspired criticism is often vigorous, shedding new light on the text concerned. As for deconstructive criticism, by offering a totally new way of looking at the text and focussing on its different aspects, it functions to enlarge and enrich the reader's mind.

To come back to the beginning and ending of a story, deconstructive criticism tends to look across the boundary of a text. Once the textual boundary is opened up and the work considered in relation to other related works, especially those by the same author, the beginning of a story may be found a succeeding step to earlier developments and the end an intermediary step in a larger process. In my view, both structuralist and deconstructive perspectives are one-sided. The former acknowledges textual boundary, but tends to neglect or fail to see the artificiality, conventionality or arbitrariness of this boundary. The latter encompasses a wider universe, but in stressing that "no narrative can show either its beginning or its ending. It always begins and ends

still '*in medias res*'," it theoretically leaves no room for considering the boundary of single narratives and various relevant distinctions, such as that between a closed ending and an open ending. As we know, a writer's artistry often lies to a great extent in how to begin and end a narrative, in whether or how to start a narrative from the beginning or *in medias res*, or whether to give a narrative a closed ending or an open ending. A fuller picture would emerge by taking account of both the boundary of a given work and the fact that the boundary may not exist any longer once the work is considered in relation to others. To claim that only one approach is valid or necessary is to overlook the complex nature of the text (see Shen, "Broadening").

Indeed, we should always "let a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend." The coexistence of multiple theories and the meaningful exploitation of the complementary relations are very important for the development of literary studies. What I find regrettable is that many theorists in the past century tended to treat their own approach as the only positive, enlightened and well-grounded one and tended to stigmatize others as totally negative. One factor underlying such exclusiveness may be the desire for power and domination, to establish oneself on the basis of excluding the Other. But wouldn't the literary world be a dull place if we only had one theory or one approach? Wouldn't the picture be one-sided if a literary work were only interpreted by critics belonging to a single persuasion? Indeed, it may be necessary for a critic to have a strong methodological commitment of his or her own in order to do the work whole-heartedly. But it is also necessary to realize that different approaches bring out something different in (or associated with) a text that is often a valid insight not obtainable in any other way. The present paper is a plea for more openness and tolerance. It is hoped that in the new century, in the new millennium, there will emerge in the domain of literary theories a picture of less exclusion, more tolerance and more complementation.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 This is the second large-scale introduction into China of Western literary theory. The first occurred during the period of the New Cultural Movement (around the time of the May 4th Movement in 1919, approximately 1919-1925). But the second case is marked by more systematic and larger-scale introduction.

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