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THE VARIATION THEORY AND THE NEW PATTERN OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

*La teoría de la variación y el nuevo modelo del
desarrollo internacional de la Literatura comparada*

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ABSTRACT: As a prospective and global discipline, comparative literature is now confronted with a new round of crises. Cao Yina and Ma Zhijie discuss in this paper how to discover effective approaches to save current subject crises through analysing the issues themselves first. Proceeding from the current crises, Cao and Ma advocate effective ways to handle them and propose a new theory and pattern for the future development of this discipline.

Key words: Comparative Literature; Knowledge Paradigm; Regional Pattern; Variation Theory.

RESUMEN: Como una disciplina prospectiva y global, ahora la literatura comparada se enfrenta a una nueva ronda de crisis. Cao Yine y Ma Zhijie discuten en este artículo enfoques efectivos para superar las crisis actuales. A continuación, abordan los modos efectivos para manejar estas crisis y proponen una nueva teoría y modelo para el futuro desarrollo de esta disciplina.

Palabras clave: literatura comparada; paradigma del conocimiento; modelo regional; teoría de la variación.

In December 2015, some scholars of comparative literature participated in a symposium titled «Thirty Years of Chinese Comparative Literature Studies and the New Patterns of Global Comparative Literature» at Shenzhen University during the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Comparative Literature Association. Scholars reviewed new theories and patterns of the global development of comparative literature based on their summary of the evolutionary history of the field of Chinese comparative literature. In the future, comparative literature research will change the situation of the domination of Western academic discourse and move towards a new pattern in which equal dialogue of Western academic discourse and Eastern academic discourse will take place. Based on this, the international development of comparative literature will construct a relatively reasonable regional pattern: Europe, United States, China and other regions of the world form the multi-polar developing pattern, with the participation of the Chinese school of comparative literature. Concerning the formation of comparative literature theory, the Chinese school of comparative literature is becoming stronger, especially with the institution of the «Variation Theory of Comparative Literature». It will easily solve the current bewilderment of this field and promote international development of comparative literature to form a more scientific and reasonable new knowledge pattern. The combination of new regional and knowledge patterns will push forward the subject of comparative literature in an appropriate direction. This is a new way to turn this subject from «death» to «rebirth».

1. THE «DEATH» OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AND REASONS FOR IT

Comparative literature, as a new discipline, has been faced with various challenges since its inception. All challenges are accompanied with a

developing process, which includes outsiders' attacks and insiders' reflection and discovery. In fact, these challenges, attacks and questions serve well as important impulses for stimulating this discipline to become stronger and stronger. To date, comparative literature as a subject has already experienced three main crises. The first was Benedetto Croce's attack in the early stage of comparative literature, which brought about the comparative literature theories of the French school by scholars' reflection. The second was the work of American scholar René Wellek, who criticised theories of French school of comparative literature, coupled with the rise of the theories of the American school of comparative literature by Henry H. H. Remak and Ulrich Weisstein's reflection and research. The third crisis began with Susan Bassnett's 1993 book *Comparative Literature*. In her opinion, comparative literature as a discipline has declined and it will be replaced by interdisciplinary research (Bassnett 1993, 161).

Coincidentally, Gayatri Spivak's book *Death of a Discipline* put forward that comparative literature has already expired as a discipline. Like a tolling knell, these two scholars' suspicion caused the third crisis of comparative literature. Reviewing the developing history of global comparative literature, scholars can summarise that, although comparative literature experienced several rounds of crises, every crisis did not lead this subject to its real «death» but resulted in a new shift. Every staple transformation changed the previous pattern of comparative literature and helped to facilitate new disciplinary theories and paradigms. To achieve a scientific development of comparative literature and form a new disciplinary pattern, scholars should discover new ways based on the disciplinary history and questions themselves, not merely avoiding outsiders' challenges and insiders' angst.

1.1. *Concepts of the Death of Comparative Literature as a Discipline and Decline of Comparative Literature as a Discipline*

More than ten years ago, American Indian scholar Gayatri Spivak suggested that traditional comparative literature would die. If it did not die, it would be «an inclusive comparative literature» (Spivak 1993, 4), that is, a kind of subject with no feature of comparative trait and disciplinary boundaries. Spivak explored the reasons for the «death of comparative literature» and proposed that comparative literature should cross borders, achieve collectivities, and then reach its planetarity stage. From the view of the whole book's structure, the three levels, «crossing borders», «collectivities» and «planetarity» reflect Spivak's ideas of the developing direction of comparative literature, which is breaking the geographical and

disciplinary boundaries, overcoming alterity and moving towards plan-
etarity. To a certain extent, her ideas reflect some new characteristics and
trends in current comparative literature study, but boundless dissemina-
tion and the subject knowledge form's decentralisation give rise to a new
crisis of comparative literature. Indeed, Spivak intended to open a new
door by using deconstruction theory to solve the disciplinary crisis, but
her method of solution is dissemination without disciplinary boundaries
and comparative methodology. Some of Spivak's ideas and proposals are
quite reasonable, but they lack disciplinary conventionality and scientific
knowledge structure. After all, comparative method is one of the main
characteristics of comparative literature. Therefore, her scholarly research
ideas (knowledge dissemination and regional dissemination) set the stage
for the next «death».

In the 1990s, an English comparative literature scholar, Susan Bassnett,
published a book titled *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction*.
The book begins by analysing the definition of comparative literature.
Bassnett pointed out the traits and researching defects of this discipline
and elaborated new central issues in international comparative literature's
study fields and disciplinary trends. Bassnett demonstrated comparative lit-
erature's knowledge structure and theoretical attributes, but the description
of her ending passage seems frustrating:

Comparative literature as a discipline has had its day. Cross-cultural
work in women's studies, in post-colonial theory, in cultural studies has
changed the face of literary studies generally. (Bassnett 1993, 161)

This is the concept of the decline of comparative literature. Actually,
women's studies, post-colonial theory and cultural studies are the typical
pan-culture and non-comparison. These phenomena are main elements of
the decline of Western comparative literature. It is more suitable to say that
the time of comparative literature has gone by, taking Western centralising
as its feature. It is thus unrealistic to say that the whole comparative litera-
ture has declined. It is worth mentioning Bassnett's opinion:

The growth of national consciousness and awareness of the need to move
beyond the colonial legacy has led significantly to the development of
comparative literature in many parts of the world, even as the subject
enters a period of crisis and decay in the West. The way in which com-
parative literature is used, in places such as China, Brazil, India or many
African nations, is constructive in that it is employed to explore both
indigenous traditions and imported (or imposed) traditions, throwing
open the whole vexed problem of the canon. (Bassnett 1993, 8)

Bassnett affirms non-European nations' comparative literature achievements, but she still holds a pessimistic attitude towards comparative literature because she could not pay attention to Chinese comparative literature achievements in the twenty-first century in that book. After all, Bassnett's concept of Western centrism is so inveterate that she did not completely realise the maladies of pan-culture and non-comparison. Simultaneously, she did not grasp the international new pattern of comparative literature.

1.2. *Reasons for the Current Crisis of Comparative Literature*

1.2.1. Cognitive Model of Common Ground-Seeking

Bassnett criticised problems of a half century's comparative literature study, especially Western comparative literature researching conditions. But she could not point out the real way to solve these problems. The primary issue is that her concept of comparative literature study lingers among some academic ideas of the American school of comparative literature. Furthermore, she could not jump out of the studying framework of Western-centrism and common ground-seeking.

The same shortcoming of both influence study and parallel study is that only they attach importance to common ground-seeking and ignore different civilisation systems' heterogeneity:

First, both influence study and parallel study are based on common ground seeking; they pursue the same element of different things: to find something similar of different countries and common factors of different subjects. The comparability of influence study is based on homology, while the comparability of parallel study is based on resemblance. This theoretical model of common ground seeking cannot fit within comparative literature's primary facts and objective laws because variation is more than similarity in French school's influence study which takes international literary relationship as its core. Even if the American school's parallel study and interdisciplinary study takes similarity as its common law, there exists much variation phenomena. (Cao 2008, 35)¹

The common ground-seeking method is a limit of influence study and parallel study, so after the methodology of these two studies is practiced for a short time, there must be a disciplinary crisis. The French school's influence study and American school's parallel study limit their research methods and achievements. Moreover, with the cognitive model of common

1. Unless indicated otherwise, all translations are by Cao and Ma.

ground-seeking it is all too easy to push comparative literature into the quagmire of non-boundary theory. The reason is that both influence study and parallel studies are lacking in variation study's theoretical recognition, theoretical summary and methodology. Therefore, variation theory offers quite a feasible way of comparative literature's development: it can not only guarantee the scientificity and legitimacy of comparative literature's disciplinary boundaries, but also expand this subject's study methods and study viewpoints; it can not only break through the shortcomings of the common ground seeking cognitive model, but also curb the boundless argument of comparative literature; it may not only highlight the methodology traits of Chinese school's disciplinary research, but also implant new vitality and expand new space for global comparative literature research.

1.2.2. The Glut of Common Ground-Seeking and Non-comparison

In order to solve the problems of the French school, the American school put forward theories of parallel study (analogy study). An American scholar, Remak, pointed out in his paper, «Comparative Literature: Its Definition and Function», that:

Comparative literature is the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country, and the study of the relationships between literature on the one hand and other areas of knowledge and belief, such as the arts (e.g., painting, sculpture, architecture, music), philosophy, history, the social sciences (e.g., politics, economics, sociology), the sciences, religion, etc., on the other. In brief, it is the comparison of one literature with another or others, and the comparison of literature with other spheres of human expression. (Remak 1961, 3)

Parallel study breaks through the limitation of influence study's ignorance of literariness and makes comparative study come back to literature itself and other related fields but causes this discipline to fall into the quagmire of boundless discussion. This discussion is a main cause of the new crisis of comparative literature. René Wellek (1970, 20) stated: «Comparative Literature can and will flourish only if it shakes off artificial limitations and becomes simply the study of literature». It is so meaningful to literary study that Wellek proposed comparative research should break down the boundaries between literature and other disciplines and realise integration through crossing the disciplinary borders. However, crossing borders does not mean there is no border, and integration does not mean there is no center of this discipline. So the haze of this discipline covered comparative literature study for a long time following Wellek's discussion. After Wellek another scholar,

Haskell M. Block, posed the boundless idea of comparative literature clear, including no normative contents, no specific definition, and no disciplinary theoretical system. He could not tolerate the establishment of comparative literature theories by American comparative literature researchers. He sharply criticised the mistake of Ulrich Weisstein's comparative literature book, *An Introduction to Comparative Literature*, pointing out that Weisstein wanted to build a theoretical system for comparative literature (Block 1985, 1). In addition, Block stated, «the shortcoming of Weisstein's *Introduction of Comparative Literature* is he wants to build a disciplinary system for comparative literature». Furthermore, he considered that comparative literature should not exist as a discipline (Block 1985, 192). This is the abolishment idea of comparative literature. This notion is an expansion of Wellek's boundless idea of comparative literature. Besides, it seriously deviates from the orientation of solving the crisis of this discipline and pushes it into another crisis.

Another main cause of the disciplinary crisis lies in pan-culture study. The immoderate interdisciplinary study of literature and other subjects induces it to deviate from the center (literature) further and further. The consequence is that comparative literature study separates itself from comparative method and literature. Thereby, pan-culture study makes the boundaries of comparative literature increasingly obscure and even obsolete. Furthermore, the common ground-seeking tendency of parallel study brings about many weaknesses in comparative literature research and seeks solutions from the boundless interdisciplinary study. It is noteworthy that even Spivak did not jump out of the pan-culture study model. Although her «inclusive comparative literature» is in line with her researching concepts of deconstruction and post-colonialism, it deconstructs the basic trait of comparative literature-comparability. It has prodigious negative impact on the scientific development of comparative literature.

In order to effectively overcome the disciplinary crisis caused by the boundless concept of comparative literature, Cao Shuqing published an article titled «Chong Xin Gui Fan Bi Jiao Wen Xue Xue Ke Ling Yu» (Re-Regulating Boundaries of Comparative Literature as a Discipline) and compiled a textbook titled *Bijiao Wenxue Xue* (Studies of Comparative Literature). The aim of this book is to rebuild a new research paradigm of comparative literature, solve the rhetorical and methodology crises and highlight the variation theory, a new research emphasis.

1.2.3. Western-Centrism

Western-oriented cultural values are an unavoidable reason that the two former trends existed for a long time. Moreover, Western centrism plays an

important role in those two problems themselves. Through the analysis of the «common ground-seeking» and the prevailing of «discipline boundless» and «no comparison», it is not difficult to see that Western-centrism does have an impact on the defect of Western comparative literature theories. In other words, Western-centrism should be responsible for the defects of the «common ground-seeking» and «discipline boundless» movements.

Regardless of influence study and parallel study, Western comparative literary scholars always concentrate their attention on the same civilisation system (the West) and ignore other areas of the world. This is the geographical feature of Western centrism. The consequence of researching comparative literature by standing on this academic center and regional center (the West) is that scholars' academic vision is confined to similar civilisation systems such as Europe, North America and Australia. When this happens, the real cross-civilisation comparative literary study cannot be realised. In the meantime, it is impossible to discover the variation laws of cross-civilisation dialogue. Therefore, the international crisis of comparative literature can exist for a long time. It will be so difficult to find effective ways to solve these problems if comparative literary researchers do not break the limit of Western centrism and accept variation theory as a new idea for directing comparative literature.

2. THE «REVIVAL» OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AND ITS ACADEMIC BASIS

2.1. *Symbol of «Revival»: Chinese School of Comparative Literature and Its Methodology System's Construction*

There exist two different erroneous notions of comparative literature's composition and development. The first is that comparative literature's disciplinary theoretical building is so satisfactory because influence study and parallel study can solve everything related to comparative literature; the second shows that it is advisable to advocate pan-culture and non-comparison in comparative literary study, and feminist study, post-colonial theory, and cultural study can take the place of comparative literature. The consequence of these propositions is that the crisis of comparative literature cannot be effectively solved and can even bring about the death of the discipline. There are two fundamental reasons behind those incorrect tendencies. One is many Chinese comparative literary scholars are advocates of Western-centrism; thus, they cannot envisage functions and strength of Chinese school's theories. The other is the decline of pure literary study and lasting development of the deconstruction trend, leading scholars to rethink whether comparative

literature should maintain as a discipline or not. The negative answer always became the final outcome because Western scholars could not come up with effective projects to avoid the problems. On the other hand, the blind optimism of influence study and parallel study also likely deepens the disciplinary crisis. If researchers will not get rid of the old thinking patterns of comparative literature, they cannot arrive at practical problem solving methods to resolve this crisis.

Based on the analysis of the disciplinary crisis of comparative literature and the achievements of Chinese comparative literary scholars, Cao published a paper in 1995 titled «Bi Jiao Wen Xue Zhong Guo Xue Pai Ji Ben Li Lun Te Zheng Ji Qi Fang Fa Lun Ti Xi Chu Tan» (Probe on the Basic Theories and Methodologies of the Chinese School of Comparative Literature), in which he pointed out that the Chinese school adopted «intercultural studies» as its basic research method and used five study methods, which include textual explication, comparative studies of differences and similarities, in search of cultural models, communicative studies and construction studies. In order to avoid conceptual ambiguity, Cao changed «intercultural studies» to «cross-civilisation studies». For a lack of space, this paper will not discuss specifically these five methods. Twenty years later, the methodology system of the Chinese school received further innovation perfection. For instance, some new fields such as medio-translatology, literary anthropology and variation theory have made gratifying achievements. These breakthroughs are important in solving the comparative literary crisis and transform traditional patterns of comparative literature.

2.2. *New Comparability as a Foundation for «Revival»: Theoretical Innovation of Variation Theory*

In order to solve the disciplinary crisis caused by common ground-seeking, boundless inclination, non-comparison and western-centrism by the French and American schools, Cao proposed variation theory based on the heterogeneous civilisation's comparison that contains his long-term thinking. The reason Cao put forward this theory is that these justifications are based on heterogeneous civilisation's comparison.

First, variability is a kind of comparison of comparative literature. From the view on the literary history of human society, new literary elements always have been produced in the process of communication and collision among different civilisation's literary systems. The new element pushed forward the transformation of local literary tradition. This kind of literary variation constitutes a complex dynamic process. For instance, since the

introduction of Buddhism to China, new cultural factors emerged from original Chinese literature. As a result of a giant shift of traditional Chinese literature, Zen literature finally became an important part of ancient Chinese literature. Similar situations appeared in other countries as well. Thence, studying literary variation phenomena and its theories of different civilisation systems' collision should become an important aspect of the cross-civilisation study of comparative literature.

Second, literary variation also exists in literary phenomena, which does not have actual influential connections. An aim of the American school's parallel study is to discover common features of different nations and different cultural systems beginning from «literariness». The variation phenomena also come to pass in the mutual interpretation between literary phenomena and literary theories that contain no factual connection. The variation theory redefines comparative literary variation beginning with discrepancy and transformation.

Third, from the view of the aesthetic nature of literature, comparative literature must inevitably include empirical study of literary history and critical study of literary appreciation. Thus the aesthetic and psychological elements certainly exist in the travelling process of different countries. Therefore, variation theory can fully discover literary variation phenomena from two dimensions: empirical research and non-empirical research. Based on this, variation theory can investigate aesthetic transformational laws on the view of non-empirical research.

Based on this, Cao's 2013 book, *The Variation Theory of Comparative Literature*, offers the following definition of «variation theory»:

On the basis of crossing and literariness, the Variation Theory of Comparative Literature is the study on variations of the literary phenomena of different countries with or without factual contact as well as the comparative study on the heterogeneity and variability of different literary expressions in the same subject area so as to achieve the goal of exploring the patterns of intrinsic differences and variability. (Cao 2013, 32)

The study basis of variation theory hinges on heterogeneous comparability, its research fields include transitional variation research, cross-language variation study, cross-cultural variation research, cross-civilization variation study and domestic appropriation of literature. (Cao 2013, 33-35)

These five aspects construct the theoretical system of the variation theory. Variation theory is not a discovery of a single scholar, but comes from a line of previous relative illustrations. Some prominent scholars such as Ulrich Weisstein, Edward Said and François Jullien discussed literary heterogeneity and cultural heterogeneity. Many Chinese intellectuals such as

Ye Weilian, Yan Shaodang, Yue Daiyun, Xie Tianzhen, Wang Xiangyuan, Hu Yamin and so on considered heterogeneous issues. Their relevant thesis laid the foundation for variation theory. The promotion and practice of variation theory have the potential ability to solve the disciplinary crisis: they can expand the research contents and perspectives and govern the overflow of a boundless comparative literature. Meanwhile, variation theory is beneficial in constructing comparative literature in a multi-cultural community of the current world and encouraging this discipline to move in a more appropriate direction.

First, in the contemporary academic context, both deconstructivism and cross-civilisation study emphasise diversity. The differences, communication, collision, confliction, mixture and interaction became a new hot spot. As a rising formidable developing nation with abundant history and culture, China seizes more communication opportunities with other countries. Based on this, current comparative literary research should pay close attention to the dialogue among heterogeneous civilisations. Concerning the aim of variation theory, its promotion is helpful in constructing a global civilisation system with the value of «harmony in diversity». In addition, this theory can strengthen the communication among different civilisations more effectively and build this discipline in the contemporary multicultural community of the world.

Second, variation theory provides the theoretical basis and methodology of comparison of heterogeneous civilisations. The problem of heterogeneity should not be ignored in world literature research. If researchers avoid heterogeneity when they study comparative literature, they will meet many knotty problems which cannot be solved. From the viewpoint of disciplinary development, the discussion and emphasis of different civilisations' heterogeneity are calling such a systemic discipline that technically discovers cross-civilisation variation phenomena among various cultures and different literature trends. Therefore, the birth of variation theory corresponds with the factual necessity of international development of this subject and is a considerable breakthrough and significant contribution to comparative literature.

Third, the initiation and construction of variation theory is helpful for ruling the comparable research fields of comparative literature and perfecting the constitution and methodology of comparative literature. Either Wellek's unlimited disciplinary border-crossing proposal or Block's denial of comparative literature as a discipline caused the serious disciplinary crisis. In the wake of deconstructivism from the 1970s, this crisis has not been eliminated and even perhaps enters into a more dangerous situation. The reason why variation theory can regulate the disciplinary boundaries is that

it is one of the four parts (Crossing Study of Literature, Study of Literary Relation, Variation Theory of Literature and General Literary Study) of comparative literature. It epitomises the methodology of the Chinese school of comparative literature, so it should be a representative of Chinese comparative literary theories. Since it re-regulates theories of comparative literature from the view of the Chinese school, comparative literature will develop more scientifically and appropriately in the long term.

3. THE NEW PATTERNS OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

3.1. *Form of the New Regional Pattern*

The new regional pattern of current and future global comparative literature can be outlined as Europe, United States, China and other regions of the world forming the multi-polar developmental pattern, with the participation of the Chinese school of comparative literature. This new regional pattern of comparative literature, which evolved from the 1990s, is related to the facts of three aspects. First and foremost, the disciplinary theories of the Chinese school have the potential to solve the current crisis of comparative literature and facilitate this disciplinary development in the long term. Secondly, the Chinese school has abundant high-quality research achievements with its own characteristics of methodology. Thirdly, the recent international pattern (economic globalisation, multi-polarisation in politics, cultural pluralism and cultural integration) is developing towards the profound complexion under the circumstance of speeding comprehensive national power of China. As a global prospective discipline, comparative literature cannot avoid the influence of a new age and has been driven to transform its traditional pattern. US scholars of comparative literature have already put forward positive suggestions. For example, Jonathan D. Culler (1995, 117-121 and 2006, 237-48) holds that comparative literature should come back to itself; David Damrosch in *What is World Literature?* (2003) thinks that world literature is made up of different civilisations; Haun Saussy (2006, 3-42) suggests that scholars should pay attention to comparative literature which displays the global traits. Similar examples are numerous.

Facing this crisis of current comparative literature, the Chinese school's methodology (cross-civilisation and variation research) can solve the disciplinary weakness caused by boundless boundaries, common ground-seeking method and disappearance of comparability and correct highlighting of Western-centrism. A new effective theoretical foundation can be built

through the global progress of comparative literature. Some preceding parts of this text have elaborated the reasons why variation theory can resolve this disciplinary crisis.

The Chinese school's disciplinary achievements offer strong factual basis for the transformation of the traditional pattern of global comparative literature. Wang Ning (1993, 17) stated:

In a manner of speaking, China has a comparative literary study team with the largest population in the current world. Its great potential and broad prospect has been found by foreign counterparts. Therefore, many Western scholars have tried to excavate some inspiration which supplies something to reflect their own culture from ancient Chinese culture and Eastern culture.

Chinese comparative literature began in the 1920s and 1930s. In 1924, Wu Mi began to establish the course of «The Comparison of Chinese Poetry and Western Poetry». During the 1930s and 1940s, Chinese comparative literary theoretical research and practice made greater progress. Afterwards, Hong Kong and Taiwan made great leaps in comparative literature. In the beginning of the 1980s, comparative literature was cultivated in the Chinese mainland as a discipline, with great achievements seen in a short amount of time. In 1985, along with the foundation of the Chinese Comparative Literature Association, many academic activities were organised continuously. Afterwards, Sichuan University and Capital Normal University established departments of comparative literature. During this era, comparative literature textbooks, periodicals and works were constantly emerging. Chinese comparative literary study entered into its golden era. The Chinese school of comparative literature formed gradually.

Chinese comparative literary works have been plentiful since the 1970s, e.g. Qian Zhongshu's 管锥编 (Limites Views: Essays on Ideas and Letters), Ji Xianlin's 中印文化关系史 (The Cultural Relations Between China and India), Qin Kemu's 比较文化论集 (Essays of Comparative Culture), Yang Zhouhan's 镜子与七巧板: 比较文学论丛 (Mirror and Tangram: Symposium of Comparative Literature), Wang Yuanhua's «文心雕龙» 创作论 (Writing Theory of *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*), Huang Yaomian's and Qingbing Tong's (editors-in-chief) 中西比较诗学体系 (Comparative Poetic System: East and West), Yue Daiyun's 比较文学与中国现代文学 (Comparative Literature and Contemporary Chinese Literature), Yan Shaodang's 中日古代文学关系史稿 (Ancient Literary Historical Relation of China and Japan), Cao Shunqing's 中西比较诗学 (Comparative Poetics between China and West), Daiyun Yue's and Wang Ning's (editors-in-chief) 超学科的比较文学研究 (Interdisciplinary

Comparative Literary Study), Yang Zhouhan's and Yue Daiyun's (editors-in-chief) *中国比较文学年鉴* (Yearbook of Chinese Comparative Literature), Liu Xiaofeng's *拯救与逍遥* (Rescue and Leisure), Wang Xiaoping's *中日近代文学关系史稿* (Modern Literary Historical Relations Between China and Japan), Gu Tianhong Gu's and Chen Huihua's *比较文学的垦拓在台湾* (Comparative Literary Reclamation in Taiwan), Ye Weilian's *比较诗学* (Comparative Poetics), Li Dasan's *比较文学研究之新方向* (New Directions of Comparative Literature Studies), Zheng Shusen's *文学理论与比较文学* (Literary Theory and Comparative Literature), Zhang Hanliang's *比较文学理论与实践* (Comparative Literature: Theory and Practice), Zhou Yingxiong's *结构主义与中国文学* (Structuralism and Chinese Literature), Huang Weiliang's *中国诗学纵横论* (Symposium of Chinese Poetics), and so on. These books deeply discovered basic comparative literary theories and methodology and paved the way for disciplinary theoretical construction of Chinese comparative literature research (Cao 2015, 48). Abundant research achievements and cross-civilisation comparative methodological features laid the foundation for the formation of the Chinese school and a new global comparative literary paradigm.

However, Chinese literary research achievements rarely receive attention by Western scholars. Chinese comparative literary theoretical ideas and disciplinary methodology were given the cold shoulder by them. Even the Chinese school of comparative literature was not fully recognised by them for a long time. With no doubt, it is closely related to Chinese comprehensive national strength. Only when comprehensive national strength has become sufficiently strong can others hear our voices; only when bringing our own theories to bear can we communicate with Western scholars. Along with the discovery of the variation theory of comparative literature, Western comparative literary scholars put more emphasis on the Chinese school and its theoretical research than they earlier had. Based on this, some scholars take Eastern comparative literary study as a sally port for advancement in comparative literature. In view of the development of Chinese comprehensive national strength and the question (including reevaluation) of many scholars (especially the Eastern world and developing countries), comparative literature must develop in the multicultural community. In the meantime, Chinese comparative literature will take place in the global sphere of comparative literature:

The spreading and research of literature is closely related to national power. The cross-national comparative literary research constitutes not only pure academic research. In order to discover deep-seated disciplinary momentum and its developing features, researchers need to regard comparative literary history from the viewpoint of international relationship and international soft power's contest. (Cao 2010, 3)

To probe the pattern of comparative literature in the world, scholars have to review the global political development process from the end of World War II. After World War II, the international political paradigm changed from the Versailles-Washington system to the Yalta system characterised in the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the setup of the world circuitously transformed from «one superpower and many powers» to «multi-polarisation». «Multi-polarisation» is the inevitable trend of progress of the political world pattern. The reason why this pattern developed so circuitously is that there exists complex competition among different nations and groups of countries. In addition, some major countries' power balance is another factor of «multi-polarisation». The cultural reflection of the global political pattern constitutes cultural multiple coexistence, cross-cultural communication and common prosperity. Of course cultural conflicts also exist, but harmony is an essential aspect. In view of constantly changing international configurations and the new situation of evolving multi-polarisation of the world, the international pattern of comparative literature has been gradually varying as well: from domination by the United States and European countries to America, Europe and the Soviet Union forming three pillars, and growing into such a structure that Europe, United States, China and other regions of the world form the multi-polar developing pattern (with the participation of Chinese school of comparative literature). This is the new regional pattern of comparative literature that is currently being formed.

3.2. *Composition of the New Knowledge Paradigm*

Influenced by multi-polarisation of the world and the regional pattern of comparative literature, this discipline will gradually form the new knowledge paradigm. This paradigm will break out of the traditional situation that has been dominated by theories of the French and American schools and move towards a more scientific new multi-knowledgeable paradigm. In short, literature will become the research core of comparative literature, characterised by international, interdisciplinary and cross-civilisation comparability, take influence study, parallel study and variation study as three research methods, and use multi-cultural community as its carrier. The four main sections of the disciplinary study are Crossing Study of Literature, Study of Literary Relation, Variation Theory of Literature and General Literary Study.

The last part, «multiculture», mainly refers to the regional aspect, while the same phrase in this part will primarily concern comparative literary

multi-elements of research fields, methodology and perspective. «Multi-element» refers to reflection of richness but not the indistinct condition or boundless status. It has explicit core and a certain methodological basis. The core represents literature (content) and comparison (method). Comparative literature will get lost and be homeless without the steering of «literature» and «comparison» of these two bases. The new methodology should play a supporting role in construction of the Chinese school and the new pattern of international comparative literature. Cross-civilisation dialogue and the variation theory put forward by Chinese scholars are an appropriate choice. The new knowledge pattern of comparative literature is closely related to international disciplinary history, its knowledge constitution and new trend of methodology system. From the view of knowledge construction of international comparative literature and its rippling theory structure, world comparative literature today can be summarised to a system as follows.

The first part is a crossing study of literature. Based on crossing-fertilisation, a most basic core of comparative literature, and the disciplinary theoretical explosion constructed by the French, American and Chinese schools, crossing study of literature should become the basic element of comparative literature. Crossing study of literature includes three parts: international literary study, interdisciplinary study of literature and other subjects and cross-civilisation comparative literary study.

The next part is study of literary relation. Based on the French school's influence study, the crossing study of literature transforms something of influence study under self-examination. In the wake of multi-field integration of economics, science and culture, the global civilisation community is gradually forming. Therefore, traditional influence study is being challenged: «In the context of globalization, international communication is so frequent that simple empirical study cannot satisfy this situation» (Cao 2006b, 25). Thus, many discussions about influence study are spreading in academic circles. However, in view of influence study already becoming a basis of comparative literature, it is not very scientific to deny influence study unilaterally. Comparative literary scholars should redefine it through introspection. As a result of reflection and integration, influence studies can be redefined entirely as relationship studies of literature, which include two modes: one is to develop common ground seeking practical literary relationship study, the other is to stress literary historical study. Specifically, it can be divided into two parts: the study of literary development status and the study of driving force of literary development (doxology, crenology and mesology).

The third part is the variation theory of literature. Due to the foundation of this theory as discussed above, this passage only emphasises the

four parts of literary variation theory: language variation, national images variation, literary texts variation, cultural variation and study of domestic appropriation. The specific research fields include medio-translatology, imagology, reception theory, thematology and genology.

The last part is general literary study and world literary study. Comparative literature's crossing character, global trait and related research practice certainly lead comparative literary research to general literary research and world literary research. General literary research is closely related to comparative literature, «general literature is the natural elongation and spread of comparative literature in specific disciplinary research. It is so difficult to separate them because they always combine together, but it's not equal to say general literature does not exist» (Cao 2006b, 33). Otherwise, current globalisation and multi-culture trend also supply new opportunity for general literature and world literature. Scholars cannot avoid these two problems: one is how to comprehend and balance the relationship between literature itself and world literature; the other is to what kind of poetic issue should various practice of comparative literature studies ascend, and how to construct a new world poetic discourse. In addition, how to construct the theoretical discourse of world poetics is also a curial problem. Confronted with these concerns, it is imperative to establish general literature and world literature. There are three research sections of general literature (world literature): 1. Studies from comparative poetics to general poetics; 2. Research of literary anthropology and literature in general; and 3. Disciplinary theories of world literature.

The research fields of comparative literature comprise the four parts above. The variation theory of comparative literature offers an opportunity for this discipline to achieve a breakthrough. The four academic fields of comparative literature cannot be isolated, and their mutual influence and development enhance the shape of the new paradigm of this discipline. Regional patterns and knowledge patterns of comparative literature have two sides, which will absolutely push this discipline forward. The dynamic and young forward-looking discipline will enjoy a bright future.

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