

## Publications in Chinese on Chinese-Western Comparative Literature Studies

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Judging from the material which appears in a recent comprehensive bibliography,<sup>1</sup> the history of comparative literature in China (in the sense of the entire China complex which includes Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China Mainland) is a movement from unconscious engagement to conscious promotion, from scattered comparison of individual works to systematic investigation of theories and other broader frameworks, from the discussion of inter-Asian literature to international literature, and from loosely related studies to clearly defined goals.

To say the above, allowing for occasional exceptions, is not too far from the truth. From 1923 when one of the first essays, "Lun chung-te wen-hua shu" 論中德文化書 [On Books Related to the Cultures of China and Germany] appeared, to April, 1981, when the Fifth Annual Comparative Literature Conference was held in Taoyuan, Taiwan, the Republic of China, a total of almost sixty years has elapsed. The nature of the early works bears little resemblance to the most recent developments. Some would even dispute the justification for admitting certain pioneering works into the area of comparative literature.

The thirties produced a number of works that were somewhat comparative but only peripherally related to literature *per se*. There were studies of the history of communication, the history of ideas and essays examining a particular Chinese phenomenon in foreign books; these can be grouped as *mirage* studies in the broadest sense. One example would be Chen Shou-i's 陳受頤 "Lu-pin-sun te chung-kuo wen-hua kuan" 魯賓遜的中國文化觀 [The Concept of Chinese Culture in Robinson Crusoe]. Parallel studies and influence studies were not absent but they were often written without proper attention given to theoretical considerations, and sometimes were

forced and uncontrolled. Geographically, the focus of this period was on Asia. The civilizations and cultures of India, Korea, and Japan were studied more than other places, and their relationship with Chinese literature was also looked into. This is not to say East-West comparison was not practiced, but it only played a secondary role.

The forties and fifties saw the continuation of somewhat random parallel studies, very often in the form of reception studies. Essays published during these two decades often had titles with the name of an author or the title of a particular work plus "and/in China," or the other way round; that is, the reception of Chinese works in foreign countries. Aiming at broader applications, some critics wrote essays that were rather general or vague; for instance, Liang Hui's 梁禕 "Jih-pen ku-tai wen-hsüeh yü chung-kuo wen-hsüeh te kuan-hsi" 日本古代文學與中國文學的關係 . [The Relationship between Classical Japanese Literature and Chinese Literature]. A basically historical approach still enjoyed the attention of scholars, but its relationship with literature became more and more clearly pronounced.

The late forties and early fifties also witnessed a division of interest between the China Mainland and the Republic of China. The communist rise to power was responsible for the introduction and endorsement of the Marxist and, in general, the socio-cultural, approach to literature in China. To a great extent, this approach is still the chief direction taken by this particular school in the overall China complex. The brotherhood they claimed to feel with other exploited countries also increased their interest in third world literature. New impetus was given to the study of Bulgarian, Rumanian, and Latin American literature, to say nothing of Russian. Native writers of the thirties, such as Lu Hsün 魯迅, whom Taiwan scholars refrained from discussing, became the monopoly of modern Chinese literature students in the Mainland and abroad. On the other hand, the Mainland Chinese suffered considerable loss because they were cut off from the capitalist countries, especially European and North American countries, whose literary trends Taiwan was quick to follow. The methodology used by the New Critics, which developed into a full-fledged movement, blossomed during this period in the West, and the corresponding enthusiasm in Taiwan was impressive. Therefore, comparative literature (if it could be so called at that very early stage) focused almost exclusively on the adaptation of Anglo-American literary concepts and methodologies. As reflected in the bibliography in *New Orientations for Comparative Literature*, this continued well

into the sixties.

It was in 1967 that the term "comparative literature" began appearing in a more formal way in Taiwan publications. This developed into an increasingly more systematic study of the subject. While the China Mainland was passing through its difficult and literarily unproductive decade of the Cultural Revolution, in Taiwan, scholars succeeded in considerably freeing themselves from the practice of analyzing individual works to engage themselves in the contemplation of larger literary issues—theories, methodologies and critical criteria, etc. There were also many translations not only of works of literature, but also of western literary theories. This led to large-scale applications of western theories and methodologies to the study of Chinese works. The results were mixed.

For a certain period, there was a great profusion of questionable comparisons, which, fortunately, led to intense discussions about the concept of comparative literature and many other literary terms. Subsequently, there was a considerable refinement in the handling of certain literary techniques. The harvest was reaped in the seventies. Whereas in the former decades there was a smattering of essays scattered here and there which tried to claim a rightful place in the discipline, new books wholly devoted to comparative literature now began to be published. The field prospered even more with the introduction of a regular journal published in Chinese.<sup>2</sup> Bibliographies, the appearance of which might have been premature in the sixties, now came into existence and showed how extensive the ground covered. Articles became more sophisticated and technical with a greater assimilation of foreign approaches—psychological, mythic, structural, etc.—into the Chinese system.

The China Mainland rejoined comparative literature circles in the late seventies. There was a return to favour of older specialists in classical Chinese literature as well as of specialists who commanded a wide range of languages and literatures in addition to English. These scholars represented an exciting new force in the study of comparative literature. Moreover, their enthusiasm was quite radically demonstrated in the revision of their attitude towards the democratic West and its literary works. The inaugural publication of "Pei-ching ta-hsüeh pi-chiao wen-hsüeh yen-chiu hwei tung-hsün 北京大學比較文學研究會通訊 [Newsletter of Peking University Comparative Literature Association] marked the beginning of a new epoch in the promotion of comparative literature studies in China Mainland. The first issue contains

four comparative literary bibliographies which, despite their incompleteness, are nevertheless efforts to document the available sources in China and therefore helpful to comparatists both inside and outside of China. The second issue shifted its emphasis from the notion of a newsletter as a bibliography and directory to something more closely approaching an academic journal, featuring three essays on comparative literature.

Publications have become better organized and systematic in Hong Kong under the cooperation of the two universities there, the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the University of Hong Kong. Individually and collectively, the faculty members of these two institutions have produced impressive studies of comparative literature. From the very beginning, comparatists in Hong Kong have placed a considerable amount of attention on underlying principles and theories. For instance, *Chung-hsi pi-chiao wen-hsüeh lun-chi* 中西比較文學論集 [A Collection of Essays on Chinese-Western Comparative Literature Studies] deserves special mention. Considering the fact that this was the first publication of its kind in Hong Kong, it is an exemplary pioneering work.<sup>3</sup>

Very little of what might take place in the future can be discerned with certainty except, perhaps, that the comparative net may be cast beyond the study of prominent writers to include minor or less established ones. This seems to be particularly true in the case of Chinese literature. The tendency was already evident in the early seventies, where writers of dubious reputation at that time were re-studied and re-evaluated later because of their close resemblance to some better-known western authors, or because of their particular susceptibility to analyses based on western methodology. Studies of poets, for example, are now no longer confined to classic writers like Li Po 李白 or Tu Fu 杜甫, but include the *Chan* 禪 (Zen) poets and even Han Shan 寒山. In addition, works of fiction such as *Hung-lou-meng* 紅樓夢 (*The Story of the Stone* in Hawkes' translation) and *Shui Hu Chuan* 水滸傳 (*The Water Margin* in J. Jackson's translation), *San-pao-tai-chien hsi-yang-chi t'ung-su yen-i* 三寶大監西洋記通俗演義 [An Explication of the Western Travels of Eunuch San Pao] and the *Yang-lin* stories 楊林故事 are also represented in respectable studies which often employ a comparative methodology.<sup>4</sup> The Brechtian borrowing of Chinese drama techniques has encouraged even Chinese scholars to re-examine some of the characteristics of this traditional genre.

Finally, it should be noted that there is a conspicuous lack of inter-

disciplinary studies in China. But, except in recent years, that is almost universally the case in comparative literature circles throughout the world. In addition to knowing two or more literatures, such an approach requires knowledge of other fields on the part of a scholar, and consequently, this is one of the most difficult comparative subjects to handle. On more traditional fronts, however, real progress is being made. The eighties might well see the full flowering of comparative literature studies in China.

## Notes

1. John J. Deeney, ed., *Pi-chiao wen-hsüeh yen-chiu chih hsin fang-hsiang* 比較文學研究之新方向 (*New Orientations for Comparative Literature*) (Taipei: Lien Ching, 1982), pp. 273-369. For English materials, please see John J. Deeney's "Comparative Literature and China: A Bibliographical Review of Materials in English" in *New Asia Academic Bulletin*, ed. William Tay et al., (Hong Kong: New Asia College, Hong Kong, 1978) and "Chinese-English Comparative Literature Bibliography: A Pedagogical Arrangement of Sources in English," in *Essays in Commemoration of the Golden Jubilee of the Fung Ping-shan Library*, ed. Ping-leung Chan and Tak-wai Wong et al. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1982)
2. *Chung-wai Literary Monthly* 中外文學 began its publication in June, 1972. The regularity of its issues and the growing sophistication of its articles distinguish it as the most authoritative Chinese journal in the study of comparative literature. The English counterpart to *Chung-wai Literary Monthly* is *Tamkang Review*, which started even earlier. The first issue appeared in April, 1970, published by the Western Literature Research Institute, Tamkang College of Arts and Sciences, Taiwan. Originally conceived as a half-yearly, it changed to a quarterly from Vol. IX, No. 1 (Fall, 1978) onwards.
3. Except for the inclusion of a Chinese bibliography supplied by William Tay, the Chinese title is a translation of *China and the West: Chinese University Press, 1980*, which in turn was originally published as the special issue on East-West Comparative Literature in the *New Asia Academic Bulletin*, (Hong Kong: New Asia College, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1978.)
4. See Hou Chien's 侯健 "San-pao-tai-chien hsi-yang-chi t'ung-su yen-i" 三寶太監西洋記通俗演義 [An Explication of the Western Travels of Eunuch San Pao] and Chang Han-liang's 張漢良 "'Yang-lin' ku-shih hsi-lieh te yuan-hsing chieh-kou" 楊林故事系列的原型結構 [The Archetypal Structure of *Yang-lin* Stories] which appeared in the *Chung-wai Literary Monthly* respectively in Vol. 2, No. 10 (March, 1974) and Vol. 3, No. 11 (April, 1975). Both articles are also included

in *Pi-chiao wen-hsüeh te hen-t'ò tsai tai-wan* 比較文學的墾拓在台灣 [The  
Frontiering of Comparative Literature in Taiwan], ed. Ku T'ien-hung 古添洪 and  
Chen Wei-hua 陳慧樺 (Taiwan: Tung-ta Books 東大圖書公司, 1976).