

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AND GLOBALISM: A CHINESE CULTURAL AND LITERARY STRATEGY

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In recent years, intensive debate concerning globalization has become academic fashion among Chinese scholars of the humanities and social sciences, especially when globalization can be associated with comparative literature studies. It is true that ours could be defined as an age of globalization, which manifests itself not just in economy, but more apparently in some other aspects of our cultural life and literary works. It is not surprising that the issue of globalization or globality has been interesting not only to economists and politicians, but also to intellectuals and scholars of comparative literature and cultural studies. Obviously, the advent of globalization is regarded by many as merely a contemporary event, especially in the Chinese context, but if we trace its origin in the Western context from an economic and historical point of view, we could find that it is by no means a twentieth-century phenomenon: It is a long process that began at least several centuries ago. Globalization has already affected research in literature and culture, especially in the field of comparative literature that is undoubtedly a consequent result of such a process in the latter part of the nineteenth century, but which is now suffering from the strong forces of cultural and linguistic globalization. I will, in the present essay, first trace the origin of globalization before exploring its positive and negative effects on comparative literature studies as well as on contemporary Chinese cultural and intellectual life.

Traveling Globalization: from the West to China

In the current Chinese critical and theoretical circles, Edward Said has frequently been mentioned, largely for his famous “traveling theory.”¹ Ob-

viously, as so many Western critical concepts and cultural and theoretical trends have traveled far away from the West to China since the early 1920s, why not globalization as well? For many Chinese intellectuals, globalization is merely something imported from the West, which is undoubtedly a consequence of global capitalization and a function of transnational corporations. This affirmation is true insofar as China is still relatively poor compared with developed Western countries like the United States and Germany. This supports the assumption that globalization could not have naturally arisen on this poor soil, although the Chinese economy has been developing by leaps and bounds in recent years. So in this part of my essay, I will first define our present age as that of globalization, which manifests itself in various aspects far beyond economy and finance. Globalization is no doubt a traveling process from the West to the East, functioning both at the center as well as the periphery. Just as William J. Martin describes, the world we now live in is an “electronic global village where, through the mediation of information and communication technologies, new patterns of social and cultural organization are emerging.”² That is, in such an age of globalization, along with the fast floating of capital (both economic and cultural) and information, people’s communication becomes more and more direct and convenient. The terrorist attacks on New York and on Washington, D.C. on September 11th in 2001 immediately appeared live on TV screens before hundreds of millions of TV viewers all over the world without any technical difficulty. And such a high-tech transmission of video pictures and information even makes people hardly believe that this tragic event really happened in the open air. The compact state of time and space thus makes it possible for people at home to know everything that has happened in the world. It is indeed a fact that globalization, especially in the humanities, is stubbornly resisted by another strong force: localization and various types of ethnicism or regional nationalism. We must recognize that globalization is an objective phenomenon haunting our memory every now and then and influencing our cultural and intellectual life, as well as our way of thinking and our academic study. Under the impact of such ghost-like globalization, cultural and literary markets have been shrinking more and more. The humanities and social sciences are severely challenged by the over-inflation of knowledge and information. Transnational corporations have long transgressed the boundaries of nations, countries, and even continents, whose employees from different countries both work in the interests of their own countries as well as the countries of their parent corporations. In the age of globalization, artificial constructions of the cen-

ter have been deconstructed by the floating of capital, the traveling of information, and the new division of international labor. A new identity crisis has appeared in national cultures with the traveling of the (imperial) Western theory to the (peripheral) "Orient" and to Third-World countries. More and more literary works have come to deal with these questions: Who are we? Where are we from? And where are we going? How shall we seek a national and cultural identity in such an age of globalization when national cultures are becoming more and more homogenized? All these are topics that we comparatists are to deal with and questions that we are to answer. In such an age, the long repressed sub-discourses have all stepped out of the restricted domain, moving from the periphery in an attempt to deconstruct the monolithic center. Cultural studies, which was repressed for a long period of time in the domain of elite cultural and academic research, has now dominated the sphere of literary studies and even of scholars' academic imaginations. Comparatists, in the traditional sense, are very much worried about the future of comparative literature. They cannot but raise such a question: Is there a future for comparative literature studies now that we are confronted with various challenges from globalization? This is the first question I will address.

Since comparative literature as a discipline is regarded as a direct consequence of globalization, I will first look upon globalization as a process that began long before the latter part of the twentieth century. In this aspect, it is worth re-reading what Marx and Engels described more than one and a half centuries ago in their monumental *Communist Manifesto*:

The discovery of America, the rounding of the Cape, opened up fresh ground for the rising bourgeoisie. The East-Indian and Chinese markets, the colonization of America, trade with the colonies. [. . .]

The feudal system of industry, under which industrial production was monopolized by closed guilds, now no longer sufficed for the growing wants of the new markets. The manufacturing system took its place. [. . .] division of labor between the different corporate guilds vanished in the face of division of labor in each single workshop. [. . .]

Modern industry has established the world market, for which the discovery of America paved the way. This market has given an immense development to commerce, to navigation, to communication by land. This development has, in its turn, reacted on the exten-

sion of industry; and in proportion as industry, commerce, navigation, railways extended. [. . .]

The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.

The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. [. . .] All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilized nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature.³

If we observe that the selections quoted here describe how capitalism has developed from the phase of primitive accumulation to free competition, from monopoly to global expansion, from imperialism to (transnational) globalism, etc., then the last sentence of these long passages clearly indicates that a sort of world literature, or should we say, the very early stage of comparative literature, comes out of such a process of economic and financial globalization, and thus has close relations with the latter. As comparative literature is characterized by exploring two or more literatures that cross boundaries: national, cultural, linguistic, religious and even disciplinary, the global characteristic of this discipline should not be neglected. On a global scale different literatures and even different cultures could be studied with comparative methods; and it was just in the early phase of the process of globalization that comparative literature came into being and gradually became an independent discipline.

The origin of comparative literature as a discipline in China in the 1930s and its renaissance and flourishing in China in the 1980s are undoubtedly consequences of China's opening to the outside world as well as

to globalization. Due to the fact that China isolated itself from the Western world after the founding of the PRC in 1949, comparative literature as a discipline was purged from the curricula in China's universities, largely because of the strong influence of the former Soviet literary doctrine. Its function and academic value were not "rediscovered" until after 1978, when China's open policy and economic reform were practiced. Comparative literature has undoubtedly become one of China's most open and international disciplines of the humanities, and Chinese comparatists more and more frequently have academic exchange with their Western and international counterparts.⁴ Thus, exploring the possible connections between comparative literature and globalism should become a theoretical topic for us comparatists both from the West and from China to undertake. If we want to go beyond the territorialized domain of pure national literature studies, the globalized field of comparative literature studies has certainly provided us with a precious opportunity and wide space to promote literary study in general. In this aspect, we should have no reason to be afraid of the challenge and impact of globalization on our discipline. To Chinese comparatists, as well as to all the overseas literary scholars, in order to highlight the function of literature and literary study in the current era, we should certainly adopt a comparative perspective and an international view through which we could further advance our research. If we have a clear idea from the above quotation of how globalization began in the West and then traveled eastward, then we could naturally regard it as a "traveling process," and thereby deal with its positive and negative effects on current literary and cultural studies beyond the Chinese context.

Reflections on Contemporary Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies

No one can deny that globalization is first of all an economic phenomenon, but as for its close connections with cultural production, people might be suspicious of it. If we recognize that globalization is a "traveling" process in China as well as in the contemporary world, we should also realize that comparative literature is such a similar "traveling discipline," imported from Western academia. As Fredric Jameson points out, "I believe that globalization is a communicational concept, which alternately masks and transmits cultural or economic meanings. We have a sense that these are both denser and more extensive communicational networks all over the world today, networks that are on the one hand the result of remarkable innova-

tions in communicational technologies of all kinds, and on the other have as their foundation the tendentially greater degree of modernization in all the countries of the world, or at least in their big cities, which includes the implantation of such knowledges.”⁵ If we think that the advent of globalization in the contemporary era has helped cultural studies flourish just as it had done for comparative literature in the past, then the direct consequence today is the continual shrinking of the domain of comparative literature as an elite field of literary study. This is not only true of many Western universities, but it has also affected quite a few Chinese universities, if not just in comparative literature studies only. Since I am a Chinese scholar doing both cultural studies and Chinese-Western comparative literature studies, I think it necessary to make some observations on the cultural and intellectual life of contemporary Chinese society.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, China has gradually been in the process of developing a market economy within the broader context of global capitalization, which could not but have affected our studies of literature and of other forms of elite culture. In the face of the strong impact of the market economy as a direct consequence of economic globalization, consumer culture has become one of the heatedly debated topics confronting scholars of cultural studies. When culture is characterized as manufactured, commercial, and consumptive, it undoubtedly destroys its elegance and sublime features. The attempt to re-define culture appears now and then in some scholarly books of humanistic spirit, but the attention given to consumer culture in China is strikingly different from that accorded to it in Western academic circles. Instead, popular culture or consumer culture has been severely criticized in current Chinese critical circles as something unhealthy and rebellious against the traditional humanistic spirit.⁶ Chinese scholars of literature and art are confronted with the following questions: How shall we face the severe challenge caused by the rise of popular culture? Will Chinese-Western comparative literature studies change its direction, methodology, and even research focus? How will the future of comparative literature studies be, since we are in the age of globalization when information is spreading very swiftly without boundaries, and traditional disciplines are being deterritorialized by various sub-disciplines and marginal discourses?

As we all know, exploring consumer culture in the West by no means began in the 1990s. Especially in the current context of global cultural communication, it is consumer culture that most easily earns quick market profits and is received by a broad range of audiences. In the circles of American

culture and literary theory, quite a few postmodern critics have already touched upon consumer culture in American society, which found particular embodiment in the very popular slogan put forward by Leslie Fiedler in his essay, "Cross the Border—Close the Gap," which was subsequently characterized as "Fiedlerian postmodernism." While discussing the gap between elite culture and popular culture, Fiedler sharply points out,

It is time, at any rate, to be through with pretense; for to Close the Gap means also to Cross the Border between the Marvelous and the Probable, the Real and the Mythical, the world of the boudoir and the counting house and the realm of what used to be called Faerie, but has for so long been designated mere madness. Certainly the basic images of Pop form like the Western, Science Fiction and Pornography suggest mythological as well as political or metapolitical meanings.⁷

It is correct of Fiedler to point to the other aspects of postmodernism that merge into contemporary popular culture and even consumer culture. To him, the difference between postmodernism and modernism lies in its crossing the artificial border between elite culture and popular culture and closing the natural gap between elite literature and popular literature. His strategy once helped Chinese scholars of postmodernism to realize its positive aspect, and it is still helping cultural studies scholars to cross the artificial "border" and to close the ever narrowing "gap."⁸ The reason why the modernist elite culture is severely challenged in the contemporary era is simply because it confines itself to the isolated ivory tower, incompatible with the broad masses of audience, and is hardly able to escape this unfavorable situation. Postmodernism, however, tries to bridge the gap between high culture and popular culture, thus making it possible for the two types of culture and literature to maintain communication and dialogue. For a long period of time, as scholars of an elite sub-discipline of literary and cultural studies in general, comparatists did not touch upon any topics concerning non-elite cultural and literary phenomena, although many of them did involve themselves enthusiastically in the international postmodernism debate. For instance, in exploring early postmodernism in the context of Western culture and literature, avant-garde literature was first discussed by literary scholars like Ihab Hassan and Matei Calinescu who observed it as one version of postmodernism or modernity.⁹ Fredric Jameson was one of the very few comparatists at the time to deal with the issue of postmodernism

from a non-elite point of view. Due to the fact that he frequently visited China and lectured at some of the most important Chinese universities, and that almost all of his important books have been translated into Chinese, he still remains most influential in the circles of postmodern studies in the Chinese context. At the beginning of the 1980s, Jameson analyzed postmodernism from the perspective of Marxist dialectics between base and superstructure. To him, the rise of consumer culture in post-industrial society severely challenges elite culture and canonical literature. In this age, those high cultural products and works of art are seen as consumer goods: unrestrained duplication, parody, multiplication, and even wholesale manufacture have replaced elaborate work of art production in the modernist age; plain characterization has replaced the profound analysis of characters' psychological description; fragmentary or even schizophrenic structure has replaced the modernist depth-structure, etc.¹⁰ The appearance of all the above has certainly attracted the attention of comparatists and of cultural and literary theorists with a strong sense of social responsibility, but their concern does not merely lie in their crying for saving the "humanistic spirit," but rather, with confronting this complicated phenomenon so as to analyze it from the perspective of cultural studies. Through these analyses and interpretations, they could probably offer some practical strategies. I think that it is a positive attitude, the result of which will not necessarily intensify the opposition between the two types of culture and literature, but make them co-exist and complement each other in a real multicultural atmosphere. The so-called multicultural context, to me, actually means a liberal atmosphere in which all the cultural forces and literary discourses, whether high or low, and whether Western or Eastern, could find their own sphere of function, and different opinions could thus encounter and carry on dialogues. This is perhaps one of the positive factors that postmodernism has brought to comparatists. Today, we are very delighted to see that, inspired by the postmodern doctrine, comparatists have come to realize the importance of rewriting a new literary history and constructing a new canon. We are also delighted to notice that in today's publications in comparative literature, the study of popular culture and literature also occupies a considerable space in China's academia. For example, in the journal *Wenhua yanjiu* (*Cultural Studies*), the majority of articles deal with popular cultural and literary phenomena.¹¹ The artificial demarcation between high culture and literature and low culture and literature has thereby been obscured and gradually deconstructed. It is true that all the above phenomena not only appear in the West, but also in China, although in a metamorphosed form.¹²

It is true that in the current Chinese cultural context and in intellectual circles, some humanities scholars and critics very much fear the impact of globalization and are even more worried about the prevalence of consumer culture and art in recent years, trying to be opposed to its challenge by “saving the crisis of the humanistic spirit.” For example, there was a heated debate on the issue of the crisis of the humanistic spirit in 1995–96 launched by a group of scholars in Shanghai round the journals of *Shanghai wenxue* (*Shanghai Literature*) and *Dushu* (*Reading*). Dissatisfied with the rise of popular culture and the prevalence of postmodern theory in academic circles, these scholars try to recover the old tradition of humanistic spirit, a sort of new humanism. But this debate came to an end without any concrete results, which is not hard to imagine. But consequently, this sort of elite-oriented debate might well intensify the existing opposition between high culture and popular culture, and between comparative literature studies and cultural studies in general. In a society where the market economy is gradually becoming dominant and where global capitalization has been playing an increasingly important role, such opposition will undoubtedly lead to the death of elite culture and literary study if it continues to stand apart from the general public. The fact is that consumer culture, in collaboration with various types of mass media, does occupy an important place in contemporary China, dominating cultural production and communication like a hidden God. Even some academic publishers or journals still publish books that could make quick profits or articles whose authors might offer some financial support. So if we realize the legitimacy of its existence and make a proper use of it, it could probably help produce high-cultural products and promote comparative literature studies in a wider cross-cultural context. If not, it would gradually swallow the already shrinking cultural and literary market.

Let me review the Chinese literary and cultural situation of the past decade. Since the beginning of the 1990s, China’s socialist plan economy has been shifting to a market economy, and the country has been in a transitional period of politics, economy, and culture. In Chinese cultural and intellectual circles, different forces and discourses co-exist and complement each other rather than opposing each other: some scholars are still exploring cultural theory proper and its value in the academic circles, toward a conscious construction of Chinese cultural theory. Some Chinese scholars, familiar with the advances made in Western academic and theoretical studies, have realized the importance of reconstructing Chinese culture in the age of globalization. In this respect, the Symposium on Globalization and

the Construction of Chinese Culture (Beijing, September 1999) gave a remarkable impetus, because it at least enabled Chinese comparatists to become aware that globalization has offered us a rare ground on which we can directly communicate with our Western and international colleagues on relevant topics, in the course of which we could promote Chinese culture world-wide. It is true that international cultural exchange has made it possible for Chinese-Western comparative literature studies to survive the contemporary commercialization and to dialogue on equal terms with Western and international scholarship; the production of lofty cultural products is operated in the form of literature and art under the condition of market economy, with the avant-garde sense increasingly fading; the rise of consumer culture, which is developing in a pluralistically oriented direction, challenges traditional elite culture and the humanities. But on the other hand, comparative literature studies in the traditional sense is now mixed up with various topics of cultural studies, such as postmodern and postcolonial studies, ethnic and diasporic studies, mass media studies, lesbian and queer studies, cultural identity studies and the study of globalization and culture. All the above issues are more or less represented in literary works, although they have nothing to do with studies of literary form and artistic devices. So quite a few comparatists are very much worried that someday our discipline will be replaced by the prevalent cultural studies with so much jargon inserted into the originally "pure" domain of literary studies, for at the moment, comparative literature studies, especially done by those scholars of the younger generation, are going farther and farther away from elite literary studies, inviting all the topics done by cultural studies scholars. In response to all these, what strategy should we adopt? This is what we comparatists and cultural studies scholars should confront at the threshold of the new century.

Localism, Globalism, or "Glocalism"?

Since we live in an age of globalization, we cannot but be involved in its processes of global economy and capitalization. According to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri,

It is certainly true that, in step with the processes of globalization, the sovereignty of nation-states, while still effective, has progressively declined. The primary factors of production and exchange—

money, technology, people, and goods—move with increasing ease across national boundaries; hence the nation-state has less and less power to regulate these flows and impose its authority over the economy. Even the most dominant nation-states should no longer be thought of as supreme and sovereign authorities, either outside or even within their own borders.¹³

Obviously, they have relevantly pointed out that in this globalizing process, everybody should be more or less restricted to the cruel “law of jungle.” For according to the “law” of this ruthless process, only 20% of the world population directly benefits from globalization, while the rest of the 80% just live in order to serve the interests of globalization. Since everybody wants to be among the top 20%, the competition among human beings is becoming ever more severe and even cruel. Let us look at today’s universities on China’s mainland and in Taiwan: on the one hand, a few elite academic stars hold several positions and earn significant salaries even after retiring; while on the other hand, numerous young scholars holding a doctoral degree are busy hunting for small jobs all around.

There can thus be little doubt that globalization has marginalized most people: politically; economically; and even culturally. It is especially true of those intellectuals of the humanities: the shrinking of the cultural market, the cutting of research funds and library budgets, and even the merging of departments in universities occur both in the West and in the East. It is not surprising that globalization is resisted by another strong and stubborn force: localization, which finds particular embodiment in the fields of social sciences and the humanities. In China as well as in other Asian countries or regions, the revival of Confucianism might well serve as an oppositional force against the challenge of globalization. In this context, some Asian intellectuals have been trying to search for an Asian national and cultural identity, which is undoubtedly an Asian version of postcolonialism.¹⁴ Paradoxically, China does not prevent economic globalization from entering the country, for it might well help stimulate the rapid development of the Chinese economy; but culturally, it does try to prevent its culture from being “globalized” or “homogenized” or even “colonized,” which finds particular embodiment in the high respect shown to Confucius, the symbol of its tradition, who was severely castigated during the May 4th period and later in the Cultural Revolution. This reverence could be easily seen in the grand commemoration of the 2550th anniversary of the birth of Confucius in Beijing and Shandong, his birthplace. At the moment, the issue of na-

tional and cultural identity haunts scholars of the humanities, especially those of cultural studies and comparative literature studies. Actually, as Avery Gordon and Christopher Newfield relevantly point out, "Identity questions and historical questions are essentially different, and the former are always ontological. *All* identity questions are about this because, logically, none are embedded in collective history [. . .] Cultural identity is ontological, the ontology refers to a prehistorical essence, and this essence is the idea of race."¹⁵ Since China is a large country containing multiple nationalities, its cultural identity should be multiple as well as constructible.

To many Chinese intellectuals, if it is almost impossible to be opposed to economic globalization, then at least cultural globalization will most probably be resisted or at least its speed be possibly slowed down. In some sense, cultural globalization, as a direct consequence of economic globalization, also results from the international postmodern cultural movement. Cultural producers have indeed already clearly realized and seriously considered the factors of "consumers" (readers and audiences) in the process of creating cultural products and works of art, which is obviously a great progress compared to the past when the government dominated the production of all cultural and literary works. A recent visible symbol of this progress is that the authoritative *Wenyibao* (*Literature and Art Gazette*), run by the Chinese Writers Association, has published some essays discussing the issue of cultural industry or cultural production in the context of globalization since March, 1998. But after all, cultural and literary production cannot be equally evaluated in comparison to the production of consumptions. The same is true of elite comparative literature studies, which cannot be compared with popular cultural studies. For the value of the former cannot be judged according to its reception in the marketplace and the quantity of its production. So in this way, we should revise our cultural theory which we formerly used for our analysis and perfect it as much as possible to explain the unique phenomenon of the "postmodern" in post-industrial society.

Nowadays, the majority of comparatists are perhaps interested in the phenomenon of postmodernism or postmodernity, especially its new faces in the age of globalization. No doubt postmodernism should be and actually has more or less been re-defined in regard to its critical and creative reception in some Oriental and Third World countries: originating on Western cultural soil, and then sweeping over Europe and other regions, it has finally become a global phenomenon, which has resulted in cultural globalization at present. Jameson, in discussing the reception of postmodernism in China, notes that apart from the Western influence and

Chinese scholars' conscious introduction and creative reception, the prevalence of postmodernism and the appearance of the various faces of postmodernity in China and other places also depend upon other three factors: the operation of transnational funds, global capitalization, and the advent of cybertime as a direct consequence of global communication.¹⁶ The aforementioned factors, along with the rapidly developing media industry, form a powerful force pushing cultural globalization forward, moving from center to periphery and functioning both at the center and periphery. This force has broken through our one-dimensional mode of thinking, making our reflections on the problem of the age more sophisticated and our pursuit of value standard beyond the either/or mode of thinking. Therefore, according to Jameson,

In the most interesting postmodernist works [. . .] one can detect a more positive conception of relationship, which restores its proper tension to the notion of difference itself. This new mode of relationship through difference may sometimes be an achieved new and original way of thinking and perceiving; more often it takes the form of an impossible imperative to achieve that new mutation in what can perhaps no longer be called consciousness.¹⁷

Now that the plurality-oriented mode of thinking could endow us with an endlessly exploring spirit, we should try to turn the unfavorable into the favorable under these new conditions. Only in this way can we do our work better. Since comparative literature in the contemporary era has provided us with a broader cross-cultural perspective, we may well make some new advances in literary study in a broad, cross-cultural context.

Now globalization is sweeping China's economy and finance, which is a historical trend beyond anyone's expectation. The strong mechanism of Chinese culture is more and more affected. As comparatists, we cannot and should not stop such a process, but we could make full use of this opportunity to "globalize" our discipline in an attempt to broaden its ever-shrinking domain and to make it a truly globalized research field.¹⁸ What we intellectuals are concerned about most is the progress of a sort of cultural globalization on which we are to focus our attention. Despite the fact that cultural globalization might easily blur the cultural identity of an individual national culture, it could still bring about something positive. As a matter of fact, globalization gives rise to the interpenetrating processes of the universalization of particularism and the particularization of universalism.¹⁹

So it has undoubtedly brought us both positive and negative effects, that is to say, both opportunity and challenge. If we face the challenge in a critical way and try to develop our national culture in a broader international context, we will most probably highlight the Chinese national and cultural identity and make it known to the international community. In this sense, stubbornly resisting the trend of globalism by taking a stubborn localist stand will only lead to another opposition between China and the West. Maybe a realistic and practical attitude should be like what Arif Dirlik has described for us: "The intrusion of global capitalism into local societies has been accompanied by a proliferation of local movements of resistance in recent years in which women's and ecological movements are particularly prominent. These movements already show a keen appreciation of the relationship of local to global struggles, as well as a sharp sensitivity to the complexities of movement building that is indicative of a contemporary consciousness."²⁰ Due to Dirlik's close link with Chinese literary and cultural scholarship, his publications on globalization are more easily accepted by Chinese scholars.

For a long time, Chinese scholars in the field of Chinese-Western comparative literature studies have tried to discover how Chinese literature, especially in the modern period, was influenced by foreign cultural trends and literary doctrines. We seldom found the sources to do research on how Chinese literature was translated and introduced abroad and how it was received by Western sinologists and general readers. In this respect, globalization has provided us with equal opportunities to communicate with not only with Western sinological circles but also with international scholarship. At the moment, cultural globalization has already given rise to the enlargement of our research field, about which David Harvey describes as a sort of phase of reduction of time and space.²¹ This shift of time and space is also a direct consequence of cultural globalization. Undoubtedly, as Third-World intellectuals, we have to various degrees perceived the impact of this current on our national culture, which has left some of us puzzled. For instance, a conspicuous oppositional strategy is to put forward in the concepts of "Third-World culture" and "localism," a metamorphosed version of postcolonialism, which is not only prevailing in the mainland of China, but in Hong Kong, Taiwan and other overseas Chinese communities. Apart from Jameson's influence, those Chinese critics advocating Third World culture and localism are Zhang Yiwu, Wang Yichuan, Zhang Fa, and Wang Gan. Their essays have been published in *Wenyi zhengming* (*Debate on Literature and Art*) in Changchun and *Zhongshan* (*Purple Mountains*) in Nanjing

over the past few years.²² It raises a question that we must address: is it really necessary to set up such a binary opposition between globalization and localization? I myself, as well as quite a few other comparatists, do not want to see such an artificial opposition, but how shall we transcend such binary opposition so as to be able to carry on a balanced dialogue between Chinese and international scholarship?

Obviously, there are two kinds of postcoloniality in China. Although it was never a totally colonized country in the past, China's successful resumption of control of its own former regions colonized by Europe—Hong Kong on 1 July 1997 and Macao in December 1999—has certainly proved that China has made great advances even in the process of postmodernization and global decolonization. Thus, postmodernity and postcoloniality are relevant to each other as a direct consequence of cultural globalization. It is true that many of the contemporary Western postmodern and postcolonial scholars are interested in Asian and Third-World cultures. In recognizing the unique value of non-Western culture, they try to derive from it some revelations that might well help them get out of the “crisis of representation.” Jameson once tried to prove through his reading of Lu Xun's “The True Story of Ah Q” (“*Ah Q zheng zhuan*”) that all the Third World literary texts could be read as certain national allegories.²³ Edward Said, who has some background in Oriental culture, also admits, “I am very interested in Third World literature. In many of the gestures made by writers, but not all certainly, there's a quite conscious effort to re-do and re-absorb the canon in some way.”²⁴ Writing from the very center of the imperial empire, they strive to undermine and even deconstruct its cultural and linguistic hegemony, struggling to allow First-World intellectuals to know the Third World better. Similarly, in some Asian and Third-World countries, some intellectuals also emphasize localism as the opposite to an inadequate extreme. Undoubtedly, such a binary opposition will cause even more cultural conflicts between the East and West. Although many intellectuals both in the East and West did not agree with Samuel Huntington's prediction of the “clash of civilizations,” the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington on September 11, 2001 have more or less confirmed his prophecy.²⁵ We are delighted to see that on the one hand, China's openness to the outside world and its economic reforms in the past decades have made its economy rise rapidly and that it has already joined the WTO and totally involved itself in the process of economic globalization, but on the other hand, as China is vast in space and great in population, it always develops in an uneven way, with different elements of the “primitive,” “premodern,” “mod-

ern,” and “postmodern” mixed up in the same country. In such a large country, anything contingent could happen beyond one’s expectations. Undoubtedly, the consequence of postmodernity in China has also helped re-periodize Chinese culture and literature after 1976: the New Period (*Xin shiqi*); and the Post-New Period (*Hou xin shiqi*). The former is characterized by a political event, and the latter by a sort of cultural politics known as cultural transformation, which to some extent results from the international postmodernist movement and cultural globalization.²⁶ Thus, Chinese postmodernity manifests itself in ways ever more closely related to the global postcolonial movement, which finds particular embodiment in the following two aspects. On the one hand, it is not only effective in undermining the domestic power of the master narrative or mainstream ideology, but also in deconstructing the dominance of the official discourse, which is marked with the rise of popular and even consumer culture and literature. On the other hand, the practice of or the debate on Chinese postmodernity in the Post-New Period (1990-) has indeed helped its deterritorializing or decentralizing attempt to move from periphery to center, thus creating a pluralistic center rather than a monolithic one.²⁷ In this way, I should say optimistically that neither globalism nor localism would benefit the development of Chinese culture and of Chinese-Western comparative literature studies. What we need at the moment is a sort of “glocalism” or “glocalization” that includes both elements of globalization and localization, because the future development of world culture as well as our discipline of comparative literature will be juxtaposed with the two elements co-existing and complementing each other.

In view of the above observations, I hold that, culturally and theoretically, to observe and analyze the phenomenon of globalization will help us objectively evaluate the “forces of globalization” from the perspective of “traveling theory.”²⁸ Since critical theory could travel to a remote country, what about globalization? Since comparative literature as an independent discipline has been developing more and more on a global scale, its relations with globalization should not necessarily be negative. In my view, we have full reason to use this term in an oppositional way, that is, we could globalize Oriental and Chinese culture in the world in such an age of globalization. And as comparatists, we ought to intensify the communications and dialogues between different nations and cultures rather than maintain a binary opposition between East and West. Preserving some characteristics of national identity is certainly necessary, but any attempt at over-emphasizing localization at the expense of excluding foreign influence will

easily give rise to an inadequate nationalistic sentiment and result in unfavorable conditions for Chinese cultural and intellectual life as well as Chinese-Western comparative literature studies. In this way, I should say that the dominant tendency of Chinese-Western comparative literature studies is neither globalism nor localism, but a sort of “glocalism.” In this way, comparative literature might well get out of the new (language) crisis.

J. Hillis Miller, in a recent lecture given at Tsinghua University on the language crisis of comparative literature, pointed out that comparative literature in the age of globalization has been suffering from another “crisis,” that is the crisis of “language.” He uses the term “glocalization” in his comparative study between Chinese and Western literature. What most impressed the audience was his closing statement, “If I were to start from the very beginning to read Chinese literary works, I would rather study the Chinese language.”²⁹ Since Professor Miller is too old to learn the Chinese language, one of the most difficult languages in the world, this tough task can only be left to younger scholars of comparative literature, but his statement has at least indicated that to master the spirit of Chinese literature, one must first have a good grasp of its language, for many subtle nuances of culture and aesthetics cannot be translated.

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Notes

1. Here I just mention the translation of some of Said’s major works in Chinese: *Dongfang xue (Orientalism)*, trans. Wang Yugen, (Beijing: Sanlian Press 1999); *Zhishifenzi lun (Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures)*, trans. Shan Te-hsing, (Beijing: Sanlian Press 2002); *Saiyide zixuan ji (Selected Essays by Edward Said)*, ed. & trans. Shaobo Xie et al., (Beijing: China Social Sciences Publishing House, 1999). But before these translated works were published, some other Chinese scholars, apart from my extensive discussion of postcolonialism and Said since 1994, for example, Zhang Jingyuan, Zhang Kuan and Lydia Liu, had already quoted and discussed Said and his concept of “traveling theory.” Cf. Zhang Jingyuan, “Bi yu ci” (“The Other and Us”), *Wenxue pinglun (Literary Review)* 1 (1990); Lydia Liu, “Heise de yadian” (“Black Athens”), *Dushu (Reading)*, 10 (1992); Zhang Kuan, “Oumei ren yan zhong de ‘feiwo zulei’” (“The Aliens’ in the Eye of Euroamericans”), *Dushu* 9 (1993).

2. William J. Martin, *The Global Information Society* (Hampshire: Aslib Gower, 1995) 11-12.

3. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. John E. Toews. (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1999) 66-69.

4. For more details about the historical development of comparative literature in China, cf. Xu Zhixiao, *Zhongguo bijiaowenxue jianshi (A Short History of Comparative Literature in China)*, (Wuhan: Hubei Educational Press, 1996).

5. Fredric Jameson, “Notes on Globalization as a Philosophical Issue,” in Jameson and Masao Miyoshi eds., *The Cultures of Globalization*. (Durham, NC: Duke U P, 1998) 55.

6. *Wenbua yanjiu* (*Cultural Studies*), a journal that had been published twice a year by Tianjin Social Sciences Publishing House from the summer of 2000 to 2003 and is now being published by the Central Compilation and Translation Press since late 2003, not only introduces to the Chinese scholars the most recent advances made in Western cultural studies, but makes theoretical analyses of contemporary Chinese cultural phenomena, especially concerned with social community and media's effect on people's life and cultural market.

7. Leslie Fiedler, *Cross the Border—Close the Gap* (New York: Stein and Day, 1972) 80.

8. As for how this strategy inspires Chinese scholars of cultural studies, cf. Wang Ning, "Cultural Studies in China: Towards Closing the Gap between Elite Culture and Popular Culture," *European Review* 11.2 (May 2003): 183-191.

9. Cf. Ihab Hassan, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature* (New York: Oxford UP, 1971), especially the first two chapters; and Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1987), especially the part dealing with the avant-garde.

10. Cf. Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle, WA: The Bay Press, 1983) 124-125.

11. For cultural studies in China, also cf. Wang Ning, "Cultural Studies in China: Towards Closing the Gap between Elite Culture and Popular Culture."

12. For postmodernism in China, cf. Arif Dirlik and Xudong Zhang, eds. *Postmodernism and China*, a special issue in *boundary 2* 3.24 (Fall, 1997), especially those articles by Chinese scholars, including myself.

13. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Preface to *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2000) "Preface," xi.

14. Cf. Arif Dirlik, "Culture Against History? The 'West' in the Search for an East Asian Identity," a keynote speech delivered at the Symposium on Globalization and the Construction of Chinese Culture held on September 25, 1999 at Beijing Language and Culture University.

15. Avery Gordon and Christopher Newfield, "While Philosophy," in *Identities*, eds. Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995) 386.

16. Jameson offered this insightful idea in his remarks on my lecture on Chinese postmodernity at Duke University on October 18, 1996, which has certainly furthered my thinking.

17. Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke UP, 1991) 31.

18. In his keynote speech entitled "Let Commerce between Us" delivered at the Third Sino-American Bilateral Symposium on Comparative Literature (Beijing, August 2001), Richard Brodhead adequately addressed the relations between globalization and the birth and development of comparative literature as a discipline at Yale University.

19. Cf. Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1992) 100.

20. Arif Dirlik, "The Global in the Local," in *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*, eds. Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake (Durham and London: Duke UP, 1996) 35.

21. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1989) 84.

22. Although *Wenyi zhengming* is run by Jilin Provincial Writers Association and *Zhongshan* is run by Jiangsu Provincial Writers Association, they were very "avant-garde," standing on the forefront of China's literary theory and contemporary criticism in the 1990s.

23. This frequently quoted and discussed article by Fredric Jameson in the Chinese context is "Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text*, 15 (Fall 1986): 65-88. Its Chinese translation was done by Zhang Jingyuan and included in her edited volume *Xinlishizhuyi yu wenxue piping* (*New Historicism and Literary Criticism*), (Beijing: Peking UP, 1993) 230-253. Also, in a recent interview with Zhang Xudong, Jameson, in discussing such important issues as the historicity of the theory, Marxism and late capitalism,

dialectical thinking and Cultural Studies and locality, he refers to the Chinese intellectual situation several times. See Xudong Zhang, "Marxism and the Historicity of Theory: An Interview with Fredric Jameson," *New Literary History* 29.3 (1998): 353-383.

24. Michael Sprinker, ed., *Edward Said: A Critical Reader* (London: Blackwell, 1992) 255.

25. It is true that when Huntington first published his controversial essay, "The Clash of Civilizations?" in *Foreign Affairs* (Spring 1993) and then the Chinese version appeared immediately, it aroused severe debate among both domestic and overseas Chinese communities as well as elsewhere. But after the 9.11 incident happened, all those who had sharply criticized Huntington kept silent, as his prediction that the future conflict between nations will be largely in culture was more or less proved true.

26. In October 1976, Jiang Qing, Mao's wife, and three other top Chinese leaders, were arrested, and Hua Guofeng became the top leader, who announced that China had entered a "New Period." Chinese literature since then has been called New Period literature. As for the change of literary and cultural dominance from that of the New Period to that of the Post-New Period in current China, cf. Wang Ning, "From Psychoanalysis to Schizoanalysis: Reflections on Current Chinese Literary Cultures," *Social Semiotics* 7.3 (1997): 323-334.

27. The Chinese literature of the New Period (Xinshiqi) is divided, according to my periodization, into three phases: Pre-New Period started from 1976 to 1978, when Chinese literature was still influenced by the literary doctrine of the "Cultural Revolution"; High-New Period started from 1979 to 1989, when Chinese literature developed in a most open modernist atmosphere at which all the Western literary currents and critical theories were introduced into China; and the Post-New Period started from 1990 till now, when literary creation and theory and criticism have been developing in a more and more pluralistic, postmodernist orientation. As for details about this periodization, cf. Wang Ning, "Post-New Period: A Metamorphosed Version of Chinese Postmodernity," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 27.3(2000): 480-497.

28. Cf. Gabrielle Schwab, "Travelling Theory and the Forces of Globalization," a keynote speech at the Symposium on Globalization and the Construction of Chinese Culture (Beijing, September 25, 1999).

29. Cf. J. Hillis Miller, "The (Language) Crisis of Comparative Literature," a keynote speech delivered at the Forum on Globalization and Literary Studies, at Tsinghua University in Beijing on September 4, 2003.