

Interdisciplinary Studies and Comparative Literature in China and the West

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Aaron Lee Moore,

"Interdisciplinary Studies and Comparative Literature in China and the West"
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Special Issue ***New Work about World Literatures.***
Ed. Graciela Boruszko and Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss6/>>

Abstract: In his article "Interdisciplinary Studies and Comparative Literature in China and the West" Aaron Lee Moore addresses the arguments on the part of Chinese and Western scholars against and for the full inclusion of interdisciplinary studies within the discipline of comparative literature. Interdisciplinary studies, in general, have been resisted in Chinese scholarship as it once was in the U.S. and other Western countries. Moore discusses the major Chinese arguments for and against interdisciplinary studies in general and interdisciplinary studies within comparative literature. Moore's main argument is that the study of literature by necessity must always cross disciplinary boundaries and the argument that interdisciplinary studies often leads to "amateurism" is indefensible. Further, Moore highlights the benefits of interdisciplinary studies within comparative literature in the West and the potential benefits of a wider range of interdisciplinary studies in Chinese scholarship.

Aaron Lee Moore

Interdisciplinary Studies and Comparative Literature in China and the West

In Chinese scholarship interdisciplinarity in comparative literature and interdisciplinarity as integrated into curricula is a subject of debate and has met with much resistance and criticism. Chinese scholars tend to be more traditional and reluctant to stray from the literary text and using approaches of analysis available in other disciplines. Traditional literary criticism such as New Criticism, Russian Formalism, hermeneutics, and semiotics have been widely translated and are still very much the appropriate critical lenses for the majority of Chinese scholars. Thus, the resistance to interdisciplinarity constitutes in part a resistance to contemporary literary theory and the role cultural studies and the social sciences can play in the study not only in comparative literature, but in the study of literature in general. As Xiaoyi Zhou and Q.S. Tong note,

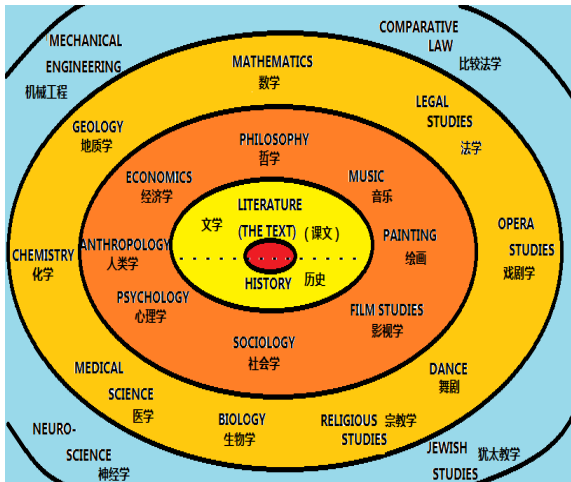
Chinese comparative literature, inspired by formulations of American New Criticism, found its own path of progress and process. The large number of Western critical works translated into Chinese during this period were either works by the New Critics or by those associated with them. The resurrection of New Criticism in Chinese comparative literature, both methodological and theoretical, and its notion of literariness have been appropriated into a critical dogma that refuses to consider literature as a social, historical, and political discourse. This approach in Chinese comparative literature in practice refuses the discipline to be incorporated into cultural studies. Thus, generally speaking, Chinese comparative literature ... has been exclusively interested in its own self-fashioning and showed a visible indifference to the rise of critical discourse with regard to postmodernism in the Euro-American world, a discourse and critical practice that challenges forms of essentialism including the essentialist notion of literariness. (<<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1092>>; on comparative literature in Chinese see also Chen and Sheng <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss6/14>>; Wang <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss6/17>>; Wang and Liu <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1882>>)

Looking at the history of comparative literature in Chinese, it would seem that the discipline has been in a state of constant flux and constantly evolving similar to the discipline's history in the West. Perhaps we might say that the discipline in China is conceptually broad, but not yet so broad in scope as in the West. Even today, scholars seem set on clearly defining its boundaries and limiting the extent of interdisciplinary studies. The full integration of (comparative) cultural studies has not yet been achieved and it is this aspect of Chinese comparative literature that has met with resistance, a movement once described as cultural studies' "大潮冲击" ("tidal wave attack") (Cao, "Introduction" 13; see also Chen, Dun, "Cultural") and in this, namely the matter of cultural studies is similar to what is still happening in US-American comparative literature (see Tötösy de Zepetnek and Vasvári). The concern of some Chinese scholars is that the integration of cultural studies, parallel studies, influence studies, and interdisciplinary studies will broaden the discipline of comparative literature to the point of dissolution and many Chinese scholars still feel the field is too broad and requires more specific definition(s). It is because of said reluctance to adopt interdisciplinarity of Chinese comparative literature that in the article at hand I examine the debate on the role of interdisciplinary studies in comparative literature and make my case for moving forward by embracing interdisciplinarity to its fullest extent.

There was a time not so long ago when US-American scholars were up in arms over a new "crisis" facing the study of English-language literature in the so-called "canon wars" (see, e.g., Witt). Traditionalists, mainly Formalists and New Critics, claimed that the discipline was losing its essence and was moving in a direction that would make it indistinct from other disciplines in the humanities. These academic battles raged in the 1960s in 1970s — a time of great social upheaval and change in US-American scholarship in particular. The discipline was changing in dramatic ways: not only were new literary theories such as feminism and Marxism being advocated, but also a growing trend toward multiculturalism and the expansion of the Western canon was taking hold. Yet scholarship of English survived and thrives. Today, of course, the discipline is just as strong as it ever was and still receives plenty of funding and is in no danger of dissolution and literary theory and cultural studies served to enrich the discipline. Thus I posit that with interdisciplinarity a basic feature of Western comparative literature and by looking at the history of the study of English, Chinese comparatists should know that there is nothing to fear from interdisciplinarity.

In Chinese comparative literature the argument persists that interdisciplinary studies would dilute the "purity" of the discipline to the point of dissolution or that the crossing of disciplines leads to nebulous amateurism. Some Chinese comparatists take their clue from said feature of interdisciplinarity in Western comparative literature and argue, as Gu Zhengkun (辜正坤) comments, that "the US-American school's inappropriate exaggeration of the role of hybrid comparative literature extends the boundaries of comparative literature. It equals the objects of study in comparative literature with almost all cultural domains, which would ultimately dissolve the discipline itself. If comparative literature is everything, then it is nothing" (Gu qtd. in Cao, *The Variation* 31). Naturally, there is a language barrier that may prohibit many Chinese scholars from being exposed to newer critical methods, literary theories, and pedagogical dialogue in the West. Although English-language education is generally compulsory beginning in middle school in China, the level of linguistic proficiency required to comprehend topics in comparative literature and literary theory, even for a diligent scholar, is a tall order indeed, even following years of study. Some of the most translated and well-known Western scholars of the early period — 1960s to the 1980s — in China include René Wellek, Austin Warren, Henry H. Remak — and I would also add Ulrich Weisstein's work to the list whose 1973 *Comparative Literature and Literary Theory: Survey and Introduction* was translated and published to Chinese in 1987 — and the translation of Western comparative literature continued and continues, for example with Douwe Fokkema's and Elrud Ibsch's collected volume or Earl Roy Miner's and Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek's work (《文学研究的合法化》). At the same time, I note that with regard to the publication of a translation of a work to Chinese requires much time and diligence and thus there is always a lag of time that occurs in the reception of new Western theoretical work. But that is not to say that just because a theory or methodology arises in the West, Chinese scholars should be obliged to adopt it.

Broadly speaking, interdisciplinary studies in comparative literature refers to the study of literature in conjunction with other disciplines, generally in the humanities or social sciences such as philosophy, psychology, music, art, film, etc., and often drawing on the basic sciences (see, e.g., Estok; Finger; Juvan). It is necessary to first distinguish between the different methodologies incorporated within interdisciplinary studies to give us an idea of what exactly we mean when we speak of interdisciplinarity. Revising and adapting Julie Thompson Klein's taxonomy from her *Interdisciplinarity: History, Theory, and Practice*, Tötösy de Zepetnek distinguishes between intra-disciplinarity, multi-disciplinarity, and pluri-disciplinarity: "The Eighth General Principle of Comparative Literature is its attention and insistence on methodology in interdisciplinary study (an umbrella term), with three main types of methodological precision: intra-disciplinarity (analysis and research within the disciplines in the humanities), multi-disciplinarity (analysis and research by one scholar employing any other discipline), and pluri-disciplinarity (analysis and research by team-work with participants from several disciplines). In the latter case, an obstacle is the general reluctance of literary scholars to employ team-work for the study of literature" (*Comparative Literature* 17-18; see also Ceciu <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss6/7>>; Tötösy de Zepetnek, "The New"; on interdisciplinarity and the humanities see Latucca; Moran; Thompson Klein, *Crossing; Mapping*). We may say that traditional interdisciplinary literary research is usually confined to fields closely related to literature in the humanities (intra-disciplinarity). To demonstrate the general relation of other disciplines to literature here is a graph I present to visualize interdisciplinarity:



I include history as a discipline virtually inseparable from the discipline of literature obviously because you cannot analyze a work of literature without considering the historical context of literature. Linguistics, philology, etymology, etc., are included implicitly in the core of the study of literature. The inner ring of the graph features disciplines which are perhaps more often employed than ones in the outer rings in interdisciplinary analysis. Those disciplines outside of the humanities, in the natural sciences for instance, are representative of multi-disciplinarity rather than intra-disciplinarity. This graph is not intended to denote validity of applicability, but approximate frequency of applicability. It is only recently that the analysis of literature in conjunction with the natural sciences has become popular and fruitful, for example in ecocriticism (see, e.g., Estok). Disciplines on the outermost ring constitute just a few examples of more specialized disciplines. Some disciplines, such as Jewish studies are interdisciplinary by definition. Pluri-disciplinarity is not represented by the above graph, but I would add that pluri-disciplinarity could have a prominent place in the humanities in China, a space of collectivist culture. In fact, in this area the West has much to learn and where scholars in the humanities traditionally work solo. Often, in fact, in China translations are worked on in teams rather than by individuals and this approach could be carried over to scholarship.

The purpose of the above graph is to help visualize the concept of interdisciplinarity as it relates to literary studies, although in essence perhaps the solid black rings defining boundaries are misleading as crossing of disciplines on some level is inevitable in the study of any field. In reality disciplines do not cross, but blur into one another amorphously. Our seeking to define academic boundaries should not be too rigid to allow for new academic discoveries and interdisciplinarity allows for multi-faceted scholarship that may approach a single topic from several angles or approach many topics from a single angle. For example, a comparatist could start with the concept of existentialism (a sprawling concept) from a philosophical perspective then analyze this concept in relation to its manifestation not just in literature, but perhaps in art, music, theater, film, etc. Or as in China, a comparatist could do the same with Buddhism, Daoism, or Confucianism. Why would we ever want to restrict this vast potential for scholarship? To assume interdisciplinarity or engage in interdisciplinary research does not necessarily mean one rejects all of the tenets of approaches such as New Criticism. A comparatist may still focus on "literariness" and use close reading in their analysis in conjunction with different disciplinary knowledge.

Regarding interdisciplinary studies, Gu distinguishes between **元比较文学** ("primary comparative literature") and **泛比较文学** ("general comparative literature") which seems like a useful and important distinction to make and that hinges on the focus of the comparison as either on literature or on another discipline. Primary comparative literature focuses on literature while general comparative literature focuses on another discipline such as law, history, music, etc. (Gu 74). Further, Xianfeng Tu suggests that to study literature in interdisciplinarity constitutes a natural application in the study of literature. Concerning literary theory, some might say that "New Criticism" is now "The Oldest Criticism." It was, after all, the crossing into other disciplines that has

lead to modern literary critical theories such as Marxism, feminism, new historicism, cultural studies, etc. The fruits of interdisciplinary exploration are readily apparent (Tu 18). For example, in my "Faulkner's Closest to God in *The Sound and the Fury*" I use existential phenomenology to analyze the character Benjy Compson in William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* and I look closely at the simplicity of the diction and syntax of his narrative, a narrative much lacking in adverbs, advanced adjectives, and conditional verbs. Had I not brought in Sartrean existential philosophy — concepts appropriate for the time period in which Faulkner was writing — the article could only have gone so far and would not have offered a new perspective in which to view the classic novel.

Interdisciplinary studies in the West may be traced back to the nineteenth century and in particular in the 1960s and 1970s there was much activity in this field. Originally the field applied more to the basic and natural sciences than to literature (see Tötösy de Zepetnek, *Comparative Literature* 79). The flourishing of interdisciplinary studies in the field of literary studies in the 1960s and 1970s seems to coincide with the integration of new literary theories (e.g., Marxism, feminism, psychoanalysis, new historicism), many incorporating methodologies from the social sciences, which initially took root in departments of English, and with the integration of cultural studies into university curricula in the humanities (I mean the U.S.). In the last three decades or so, interdisciplinary studies as a distinct field seems to be flourishing and degrees are offered both at the graduate and undergraduate levels. In the humanities interdisciplinary studies has become prominent, although pluri-disciplinarity appears to be lacking as Tötösy de Zepetnek wrote in the 1990s and this remains the case today:

In Canada, for example, in 1992 the federal granting agency providing funds for research in the humanities and social sciences — the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) — adopted this approach as one of its foci to further Canadian scholarship specifically in literary studies. In general, especially the North American and British debate about the field of cultural studies has concentrated on the parameters and construction of interdisciplinarity. At the same time, while fields such as women's studies or ethnic studies have always been intrinsically interdisciplinary, scholars working in national literatures have also begun to focus on this approach in scholarship. However, in one crucial area of interdisciplinary study literary studies has not succeeded. This area is team-work: in a field of scholarship where the individual and solitary scholar's work has been the preferred mode, the idea of team-work has rarely been accepted or implemented. (*Comparative Literature* 79)

There are many fields apart from comparative literature today which have been greatly enriched by interdisciplinary studies. For example, Andrew D. McCredie comments that

Interdisciplinary studies in musicology, especially in the disciplines of the aesthetics and sociology of music, have usually revealed a productive response to the appearance of new concepts, constructs and techniques in the philosophical behavioral and social scientism adding new spheres of enrichment and complexity to the discipline. Comparative investigation in the applicability of methods in problem solving from one discipline to another, while suggesting possible new models of resolution, and an expanded range of conceptual reference, also extends with each resolution to a specific problem the number and variety of problem areas. A similar range of challenges is now emerging for musicologists, seeking to investigate the applicability of interdisciplinary concepts and methods of comparative literature for their own discipline. The potential significance of such methods and concepts is proving as significant for the theory and practice of music historiography as for the more speculative and systematic areas as the aesthetics and sociology of music. (251-52)

The interdisciplinary aspect of comparative literature in the West remains a commonly accepted principle of the discipline. For example, in the 2009 *The Princeton Sourcebook of in Comparative Literature* interdisciplinarity is regarded matter-of-factly as an important aspect: "Comparative literature is a quixotic discipline. Its practitioners press against institutional constraints and limitations of human capacity as they try to grasp the infinite variety of the world's literary production. And why stop with literature? Comparatists venture into art history, musicology, and film studies, while interdisciplinary work draws insights from anthropology to history and from psychology to evolutionary biology" (Apter viii). However, in my view this does not necessarily mean Chinese scholars should accept this evolution of the discipline on faith or because it is the way of the West: it is also beneficial for scholars in the West to have a clear understanding of this evolution and the critical debate that took place. Thus, I dredge up some of

the primary arguments made both for and against the expansion of comparative literature over the years in the hope that Chinese scholars may take note.

In Wellek's 1959 "The Crisis of Comparative Literature" in which he argued for the expansion of comparative literary study from the narrow scope of influence studies championed by the French School and against nationalism, Wellek briefly mentions that comparative literary study should concentrate on issues of aesthetics rather than consider an author's life and sociological factors:

Literary scholarship today needs primarily a realization of the need to define its subject matter and focus. It must be distinguished from the study of the history of ideas, or religious and political concepts and sentiments which are often suggested as alternatives to literary studies. Many eminent men in literary scholarship and particularly in comparative literature are not really interested in literature at all but in the history of public opinion, the reports of travelers, the ideas about national character — in short, in general cultural history. The concept of literary study is broadened by them so radically that it becomes identical with the whole history of humanity. But literary scholarship will not make any progress, methodologically, unless it determines to study literature as a subject distinct from other activities and products of man. Hence, we must face the problem of "literariness," the central issue of aesthetics, the nature of art and literature. In such a conception of literary scholarship the literary work of art itself will be the necessary focus and we will recognize that we study different problems when we examine the relations of a work of art to the psychology of the author or to the sociology of his society. (169-70)

But how could one separate religious and political concepts from a work of literature in which those concepts are present? How could one study certain aspects of Milton's verses without consulting Plato's political theories? How could one study Milton without studying Puritan theology? How could anyone study *Journey to the West* or *Dream of the Red Mansion* without consulting Buddhist theology? To draw such a line is to draw a line in water. To study literature is to study imitation of all aspects of reality and must by necessity draw on other areas of knowledge. As François Jost stated in his 1974 *Introduction to Comparative Literature*, although "literature itself elicits a contemplative response, its exegesis presupposes knowledge in the most diverse fields ranging from history to religion to the fine arts" (ix). Interdisciplinarity in its essence begins with the inception of the discipline of the study of literature and it is only until comparatively recently that we have begun referring to certain literary studies and academic programs as interdisciplinary.

This does beg the question why indeed are we using this term "interdisciplinary" to designate a natural phenomenon engrained in the study of literature? Actually this question may also apply to virtually all disciplines where crossing of disciplinary "boundaries" is inevitable and necessary. Thomas C. Benson makes this point in "Five Arguments against Interdisciplinary Studies": "The physicist is lost without the tools of mathematics; the political scientist borrows insights from sociology, history and economics; the literary studies scholar makes use of the methods of linguistics and analytic philosophy. There is nothing special about this import/export business across disciplinary lines; and it hasn't occurred to anyone to call the process integrative or interdisciplinary. Clearly, the proponents of integrative studies owes us a better account of the nature of the integration he contemplates, one that is, at once, coherent and non-trivial" (39). Benson made a good point in need of consideration. It seems to me that a certain degree of crossing must be necessary in order for a study to qualify as interdisciplinary. A mere nod toward analytic philosophy on the part of a literary studies scholar would not result as a study in interdisciplinarity. Then who can make such determinations? For example, one might apply for a degree in Interdisciplinary Studies and in the process of applying for the degree a student must submit a research proposal in which an argument is made for the study as interdisciplinary. A committee then decides if the disciplinary crossing is of such a degree as to qualify the study as interdisciplinary. In this fashion, we can see that interdisciplinarity is indeed regulated to prevent amateurism or shallow inquiry while crossing between disciplines.

In 1983 Henry H. Remak observed that "The single most prominent factor in the evolution of Comparative Literature in the last two decades has undoubtedly been the surge of interdisciplinary approaches" (23). In 1961 at the Utrecht Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association / Association Internationale de Littérature Comparée István Sőtér stated that "We are convinced that some essential phenomena of our literature can be grasped only with the aid of the comparatist method. The study of interrelations and the study of similar and divergent phenomena will lead us to a better understanding of literary phenomena and processes. In addition to

comparing individual literatures we must attempt to introduce the comparatist method by comparing the various arts, which will make it possible to study literature from more facets" (Sóter qtd. in Kovács 95). It is important to note that no mention is made of comparing literature with the sciences, but just "the various arts." To be precise, at this point in the evolution of the discipline we may say there is a move toward intra-disciplinarity, but not yet toward the multi-disciplinarity, that is, comparison between disciplines outside of the humanities. Yet still at this time some comparatists still voice their desire for new boundaries in the field: "Totality in literary scholarship is an ideal that will probably never be realized. The simultaneous study of all literary and artistic phenomena goes beyond any human effort. The method of complex confrontation offers a workable alternative to the present concept of interdisciplinarity, which aims at integrating all historical sciences into one general social science called cultural history. But totality can be approached through the independent, intensified development of the individual disciplines, which also includes the discovery of new boundaries for Comparative Literature" (Kovács 97). I believe József Kovács mischaracterized the goal of interdisciplinarity as "integrating all historical sciences into one general social science called cultural history" (97; although he is discussing scholarship in Hungarian, his perspective is applicable in a general way). A look at the history of the evolution of disciplines teaches us that disciplines split apart, like mitosis, and subdivide rather than merge together. Disciplines such as neuroscience, biochemistry, and biomedical engineering once merely interdisciplinary research areas, are today disciplines in themselves. Interdisciplinary research in the humanities perhaps still has the potential to bring about the birth of new inter-disciplines which co "对话" between literature and other disciplines can only serve to enrich disciplinary knowledge (174).

In 2002 Remak took a critical position towards the US-American school of comparative literature and interdisciplinary studies in his "Origins and Evolution of Comparative Literature and Its Interdisciplinary Studies." Remak has a variety of concerns, but perhaps his key point is that comparatists in the U.S. who conduct interdisciplinary studies all too often are restricted to amateur scholarship:

In the United States the literary core of comparative literature has become secondary if not dropped altogether. On the *pro* side, truly interdisciplinary studies, especially in historiography, philosophy, anthropology, the hard sciences and technology, along with the consanguine inter-arts constellation, have enriched comparative literature scholarship. On the *con* side, the interdisciplinary drive, with its pitfalls of amateurism, has pushed back the inter-national/inter-linguistic core of comparative literature which demands a slow-to-acquire, reasonably comprehensive knowledge of language, literature, and history of at least one non-English culture. Most interdisciplinary studies currently carried on in the United States are distressingly monolingual and monocultural. Of the two principal aims of interdisciplinary scholarship envisaged 40–50 years ago, the affinity-and-interaction-oriented goal of interdisciplinary studies in comparative literature has proved, if anything, too successful, but the co-equal goal of refining and redefining distinctions has been submerged in the tide of culture theory and criticism. (245)

Remak ended his article lamenting the situation of "interdisciplinary studies without disciplines" (250). For Remak, interdisciplinary studies represented a double-edged sword and argued that interdisciplinary studies has in fact enriched the discipline by allowing us to investigate new areas, but that this came at the cost of amateurism. In some ways I think Remak had a point in criticizing US-American interdisciplinary studies as all too often "monolingual" and "monocultural" because many comparatists in the United States resort to interdisciplinary studies as a sort of cop out to avoid the perils of an in-depth study of a foreign language thus being able to read non-English language theoretical works in the original, not to speak of the many texts which are not translated to English. But this argument for amateurism is not defensible in my opinion. The simple fact is that amateurism can exist across all disciplines and throughout academia and amateurism does not arise just by virtue of interdisciplinary study. A comparatist can still just as easily be classified as an amateur when comparing two works of literature without any crossing of disciplines. Is a student who has two majors in college by definition generally an amateur? No, we generally think a double major student works twice as hard. True interdisciplinary studies certainly are not for everyone and require in-depth knowledge of two disciplines and ideally in comparative literature knowledge of several languages. Some majors are interdisciplinary by nature, for example

biochemistry and astrophysics. No one even in the sciences thinks automatically the majority of biochemistry or astrophysics majors are amateurs. Why would we make this claim of comparative literature? In spite of Remak's fears and admonitions, it would seem that comparative literature is not in crisis owing to the growth of the discipline throughout the years and this despite the contention that the discipline is "dead" (Bassnett 3): while there may be some truth to this on the institutional level with regard to the discipline's presence, intellectually and in scholarship this is certainly not the case (see, e.g., Saussy) and it is certainly not the case outside the West (see, e.g., Tötösy de Zepetnek and Vasvári).

With regard to the contemporary situation of interdisciplinary studies in Western comparative literature, Ali Behdad's and Dominic Thomas's introduction to their collected volume *A Companion to Comparative Literature* opens as follows

In "The Crisis of Comparative Literature," the distinguished scholar of Comparative Literature René Wellek wrote, "The most serious sign of the precarious state of our study is the fact that it has not been able to establish a distinct subject matter and a specific methodology" (Wellek, 1963 p. 282). That nearly over fifty years later, the same can be said of the state of a discipline that has grown to over fifty departments and programs worldwide (see <<http://www.swan.ac.uk/german/bcla/clusa.htm>> [inactive]) underscores not only the timeliness of this volume, but also the precarious and plural nature of the discipline itself, a discipline which defines itself as an *inter-disciplinary*, *cross-cultural*, and *trans-national* endeavor. Comparative Literature occupies a distinct and unique position in the humanities. Despite the small size of most departments and programs, the discipline typically plays a central role as a clearing-house of ideas not simply for other literary departments on university campuses but across the humanities and humanistic social sciences. Indeed, with student interest in the traditional national literatures rapidly declining as evidenced by a shrinking number of majors, the field of Comparative Literature is quickly emerging as the natural site around which to organize modern language and literary studies. (1; emphases in the original)

As mentioned previously, Chinese scholars are still somewhat divided on the issue of inclusion of interdisciplinary studies (跨学科) within comparative literature, although some contemporary comparative literature (text)books in Chinese include interdisciplinary studies (e.g., Cao, *Introduction to Comparative Literature*; Chen, Dun, Liu). In fact, the traditionalist approach to comparative literature has its roots in Western scholarship translated to Chinese. For example, the above referred to *Comparative Literature and Literary Theory* by Weisstein in its Chinese translation *比较文学与文学理论* remains an often-quoted source in Chinese comparative scholarship supporting the position against interdisciplinary studies. Weisstein advocated defined boundaries in comparative literature against interdisciplinarity. Although as said, all contemporary Chinese comparative literature textbooks include sections on interdisciplinary studies, perhaps the present issue concerns the boundaries of comparative literature (see, e.g., Chen and Liu). In recent studies, for example Zhongxiang Wang argues that we should place interdisciplinary studies in comparative literature in China, which arose out of parallel studies at the (边缘) ("borderline") of the discipline (17). Wang goes on to ask the question of whether or not interdisciplinary studies in general is not already "omnipresent" (无所不在) in comparative literature. In fact, Wang points out that numerous comparative literature specialists have already investigated comparative literature's interdisciplinarity. Perhaps the strongest example of such a specialist is Lin Yutang, author of the *Moment in Peking* trilogy (道家女儿, 庭院悲剧, 秋季歌声) who was influenced by the US-American school of comparative literature and influence and parallel studies (see, e.g., Chen and Wang 56). Lin — linguist, translator, and inventor of a typewriter to use Chinese characters — was an early advocate of interdisciplinary methodology in Chinese scholarship.

However, different from Wang's locating interdisciplinary studies at the borderline of the comparative literature, Lin considered it a fundamental root of the discipline and inseparable from it (see Chen and Wang 56). Lin was known for investigating Chinese and Western literature in conjunction with philosophy, religion, the other arts (painting, calligraphy, etc.), and even the natural sciences (Chen and Wang 58-63). This seemingly natural gravitation of Lin towards interdisciplinary studies is, in part related to the Eastern formulations of philosophy and art as opposed to that of the West's. Ancient Chinese philosophy, particularly that of Confucius and Mencius, like ancient Chinese literature, was extremely pragmatic and bereft of the type of metaphysical and ontological contemplations of reality found in ancient Greek and other Western philosophies. The focus of Chinese Confucian philosophy was on politics and ethics and thus

Chinese philosophy and to some extent politics and history cannot be studied separately from literature (see Huang 147). Further, in relation to the other arts, Chinese literature is especially collaborative and complementary. Chinese classical painting, for example, often incorporates Chinese calligraphy and Chinese poetry and Chinese classical opera is a simultaneous work of literature and music. An investigation into these art forms certainly requires an interdisciplinary approach, and why would Chinese scholars undertake these studies in comparative literature as long as literature is the primary focus? Additionally, Weifang Li points out the many benefits interdisciplinary studies can have to influence studies in comparative literature which may serve to advance the methodology of influence studies (59). If one studies a single author, for example, and the influences on that author's writing, why would not a scholar also study not only artistic influences, but influences from other fields of knowledge? Why should influence studies restrict itself only to literary influences? And in modern scholarship, especially, it would be limiting not to consider cinematic influences or other artistic influences on an author's work.

In conclusion, in the West comparative literature is considered interdisciplinary by nature and by definition. As China becomes a more powerful voice in the world today, I think it would be important for Chinese scholarship to accept this definition not only to place China on the same page with Western scholarship and the global community, so to speak, but also for the full enrichment of Chinese comparative literature without boundaries.

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