KEYWORDS IN WESTERN LITERARY CRITICISM AND CONTEMPORARY CHINA

VOLUME 1

Edited by

Hu Yamin

Translated by Fang Xingfu et al.

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Keywords in Western Literary Criticism and Contemporary China

Since the reform and opening up of China in 1978, Western literary criticism has begun to flourish and gain in popularity within the country's academic literature community. These two volumes meticulously select and examine nine of the most influential keywords from Western literary theory while identifying the intricate historical sources of these terms and analyzing their relevance to other disciplines and ideas. The result shows how these words function as heterogeneous cultural contexts in the complexity of experience but also how they function within the context of Chinese culture as well as Chinese literature and criticism.

In this volume, the editors focus on discourse, text, narrative, literariness and irony from the perspectives of etymology, documentation, meanings and other core factors.

Students of literature and languages, and especially Chinese literature, will benefit from this two-volume set.

Hu Yamin is professor and former dean of the School of Chinese Language and Literature at Central China Normal University, president of the journal *Foreign Literature Studies*, vice president of Writers Association of Hubei Province, a member on the Advisory Board for Chinese Literature and Language Teaching of the Ministry of Education of China and a member of Reviewing Expertise Group of the National Social Science Fund of China. She is the author of *Between China and the West: The Road of Literary Criticism*, *Narratology*, *Comparative Literature*.

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Contributors

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Introduction

Hu Yamin

Concepts lay the foundation for literary criticism, while core concepts or keywords mark the distinctive features and contributions of theories. As the prefix "key" in "keyword" indicates, keywords are both the keys to and the core or essence of esoteric theories. By investigating the production and derivation, in different times and spaces, of some keywords in Western literary criticism, this book will be conducive to the comprehension and application of these keywords in Western literary criticism for Chinese readers, to the integration of Chinese and Western literary criticism, and to the construction of contemporary Chinese literary criticism.

1

Since the 1850s, the construction and development of modern Chinese literary criticism has been intertwined with the spread and influence of Western literary criticism in China. With their introduction and application, some keywords from Western literary criticism have gradually been absorbed and adapted into Chinese literary criticism, becoming indispensable ingredients of its contemporary forms. Nevertheless, many problems in the translation, comprehension and application of terms from the West exist in Chinese academia due to linguistic discrepancy, vague interpretation and lack of scrutiny, which becomes even worse when they are used in different disciplines. "Those in the dark are in no position to light the way for others": As the Chinese saying implies, the above-mentioned problems frustrate the construction and development of contemporary Chinese literary criticism. To clarify and explore the origins of the keywords from Western literary criticism has long been on the agenda in Chinese academia.

Some Chinese and foreign scholars have already realized the existence of the problem. In the second half of the 20th century, discussions on the core concepts or keywords have become rather popular. The British scholar Raymond Williams pioneers such study with his book *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976). He traces the evolution of the meanings of the keywords but also reveals the implicit cultural and political reasons for the evolution. Henceforth, research of this type flourishes, both at home

and abroad, with successive publications of books about literary and cultural keywords, or book series detailing a new word with each entry. Taking into consideration the changing Western contexts, these works are the academic frontiers offering a detailed classification, introduction and review of keywords.

However, there remains much scope for more work on the issue. First, due to limitations of space, it is impossible for a book to cover many keywords with a detailed historical and systematic presentation of their development. It is difficult as well for a book about one single keyword to provide readers with its position in the genealogy of literary criticism or its relationship with other terms. Second, with different purposes and academic backgrounds, the editors mainly focus on the interpretation of keywords in Western literary criticism but fail to further examine their acceptance and variation in China. Third, studies on the relationship between keywords from the West and Chinese literary criticism are inadequate. For these reasons, we have compiled this book: *Keywords in Western Literary Criticism and Contemporary China* (hereafter *Keywords*).

Based on relevant studies at home and abroad, the book has the following three aims. First, with the exploration and discrimination of their historical origins and their relevance to other disciplines and thoughts, it seeks to fully present the complexity of the chosen keywords in Western literary criticism as a product of heterogeneous cultural contexts and experiences. Second, based on their original meanings and subsequent changes, we further investigate their interpretations in the Chinese cultural context and measure the appropriateness of their applications in Chinese literary criticism in order to further explore the sources of corresponding Chinese literary theories and to encourage a dialogue between Chinese and Western literary criticism. Third, with the investigation and elucidation of the chosen keywords, the book digs into some new materials and reinterprets some old ones in order to refine some valuable theoretical and critical views, and offer constructive references for contemporary Chinese literary criticism.

2

This book selects and elaborates on nine keywords – discourse, text, narrative, literariness, irony, metaphor, the other, ideology and body – which travel to China after 1978 from Western literary criticism. They are chosen first for their representativeness and their underestimated academic value in Western literary criticism in the 20th century, and second for their profound influence on Chinese literary criticism. That is to say, they not only are accepted and applied in China but also have exerted academic impacts on contemporary Chinese literary criticism. Careful selection ensures the quality and creativeness of the book.

Each chapter in the book consists of four main parts. The first part explores the origins of the term in the West from etymological and philological

perspectives. The second part analyzes its various meanings and core elements, including the extension of its connotations in different cultural contexts, and summarizes their distinctive features. The third part studies the acceptance, application and transformation of the word travelling to China to explores its variation, as brought out by Chinese culture and language. The fourth part discusses the relationship between the keyword and the reconstruction of Chinese literary criticism, probes into the relevance of the word from the West to traditional Chinese culture, and offers some theoretical reflections. Of course, not all the chapters follow this frame rigidly. The study of keywords has the following three targets. First, to be informative: The book provides as much relevant information as possible, especially on the important views of the representative figures who put forward and lead the study of a specific keyword. Second, to be scholarly: We have undertaken a detailed and in-depth analysis of the keywords and strive to discover and extract the meaningful theoretical viewpoints. As a result, this is not only a reference book but also a theoretical work. Third, to be concise: Although some keywords are rather esoteric, plain language is used for the elucidation of the words' travelling. Readers may read from the beginning or start with an individual chapter. In addition, the bibliography provides them with guidance and references for further reading and research.

Although each keyword has its own pedigree, they are not isolated, existing in the same system of literary theory as an "other". In fact, with their own features, the nine keywords – discourse, text, narrative, literary, irony, metaphor, the other, ideology and body – permeate and refer to one another. Some keywords have been used by various schools of theorists and critics, forming a field of criticism in which they both differ from and echo one another. On the one hand, they manifest the internal connection and development of Western literary criticism in the 20th century. On the other hand, different viewpoints help shed light on different sides of literature. With the polygon prism of keywords, we can enjoy the rich meanings and hidden brilliance of literary texts.

3

Keywords absorbs a historical and an overall view of contemporary Marxist literary criticism and moves forward on that basis. Breaking the linear historical view, we regard the keyword as a dynamic, multidimensional and even heterogeneous process, and strive to explore and interpret the diverse meanings in its historical course. At the same time, with open nationalism as the basic standpoint, we adopt a cross-cultural perspective to explore the variation of the keyword in different nations with different cultural contexts and to investigate and summarize their spread, change and reconstruction in Chinese literary criticism.

Every concept is generated in history, resulting in different meanings with specific historical backgrounds. The focus of the study is not to define the

keyword but to make a historical survey. On the one hand, we attempt to trace the origins, outline the changes and construct the genealogy historically. On the other hand, we examine the relationship between the keywords and the Western cultural tradition with the societies in which they survive in order to ascertain the philosophy and modes of thinking of the Western scholars who create and use them, to make clear the formulation of the scholars in the relevant disciplines, and to reveal the transformation of their meanings in different contexts. In that process, we try to take each keyword not as unified or homogeneous but as gradually constructed in order to highlight their diverse and heterogeneous features and fully comprehend their complex meanings from different perspectives. In the collection and examination of relevant historical documents, the theoretical sources of the critics and theorists who have been largely ignored in the previous studies are rediscovered to give readers a more comprehensive understanding of the multi-layered meanings of the keywords with implied semantic tension. Of course, while emphasizing the diversity and heterogeneity of the keywords, this book also pays much attention to the internal logic within their evolution. Although the meanings of each keyword are enriched in the historical context, core elements remain. In other words, each keyword is in a dynamic process, containing and breeding a variety of meanings but at the same time restricted by its basic rules to prevent random signification.

After historical clarification and examination of the keywords in the West, *Keywords* turns back to the Chinese counterpart to clarify and sum up, from the recipients' perspective, their translation, misunderstanding and integration into the Chinese context. To some extent, a historical interpretation of the keywords is provided for the purpose of a better application in contemporary China. We place the keywords into the overall contemporary Chinese cultural context and collect the materials in terms of their translation and spread in China so as to summarize the relevant theories and practices of contemporary Chinese literary criticism, and analyze their variations in terms of contextual transformation and cultural filtration. By so doing, we not only discriminate clearly the displacement and creative misunderstanding of the Chinese scholars in their acceptance and application (such as the different understandings of "ideology" in different periods of China) but also discover the discrepancy in cultures and academic traditions between Chinese and Western literary criticism. In addition, the keywords, as "others", are compared with similar theories in ancient Chinese literary criticism in order to activate ignored traditional sources (such as the correspondence between the notions of "being beyond the actual words" and "a positive statement appearing like the opposite" in ancient Chinese literary criticism and irony in the West) and achieve the goal of their smooth transformation in China and their two-way communication.

From a cross-cultural perspective, *Keywords* seeks to discover the relationship between the keywords in Western literary criticism and the reconstruction of Chinese literary criticism. It shows how those Western

keywords can inject heterogeneous vigour into Chinese contemporary literary criticism and how they can help inspire the practices and solve the problems of Chinese literary creation and criticism. The construction of contemporary Chinese literary criticism is inseparable from its integration into a heterogeneous culture. A systematic survey and a critical study are conducted to reveal how the keywords are absorbed by local critical theories and how they could be integrated into the practice of Chinese literary criticism. Moreover, the keywords are so reflective and exploratory that they enlighten Chinese literary criticism, mount a challenge to Chinese literary traditions and promote the openness of literary ideas and the diversity of research methods. The book has done some 'ground-laying' work for a dialogue between Chinese and Western literary criticism. We look forward to a literary criticism that can absorb different cultures and study and solve local issues with deep national consciousness and distinctive national characteristics. To study and reveal the significance and value of the keywords from the West for contemporary Chinese literary criticism is conducive to future research, which makes this book distinctive from others on keywords.

4

One of the theoretical contributions made by *Keywords* is the transplantation of and elaboration on what we call the "history field" (or *champ*, a concept put forward by Bourdieu), which mainly refers to the different but relatively independent spaces in our social life and the inner relationship among them. Bourdieu pointed out, "We may think of a field as a space … any object that traverses this space cannot be explained solely by the intrinsic properties of the object in the question" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:100). We borrow this concept, inject historical content into it, and transform it into the plural form "history fields" floating in various time-spaces, taking it as an important paradigm for the exploration of the evolution of keywords.

   Although all keyword emerge in a specific historical period, no concept or trend is created rootlessly or without its predecessor and successor. Concept and trend connote differently in different cultural and historical contexts. In the study of keywords, we expand "historical fields" into four interrelated stages: The initial field, the generation field, the extended field and the native field. The initial field is the place where they first appear, mainly referring to the Western cultural traditions since ancient Greece or even ancient Hebrew in which the study of "irony", "metaphor", "narrative" or "body" begins to delve into their primeval meanings. The generation field is the specific social and cultural environment in which the keywords become terminologies in literary criticism. Some keywords enjoyed a long history as common words, but they did not become terms of literary criticism until the 20th century. Therefore, in the generation field, their specific meanings as terms of literary criticism are explored. In the extended field, these meanings extend as time goes on. This type of field can be viewed from two points of

view: The development and evolution of meanings within the field of literary criticism based on the varying understandings of different literary critical schools, and their development and evolution after being introduced to other disciplines. Regarding the first, for example, with the appearance of the concept "ideology" in Marxist literary criticism, such Western Marxist critics as Lukács, Gramsci, Althusser and Jameson supplement its connotations. Regarding the second, the concept of "discourse" evolves and develops beyond literary criticism in the work of scholars such as Levi-Strauss, Althusser and Foucault. The fourth is the native field, or the recipient field, which mainly deals with the relationship between Western literary criticism and the contemporary Chinese counterpart. Compared to the previous three fields, the fourth changes with regard to space and subject. The emergence of the keywords is related to politics, culture, philosophy and literary trends in the Western society, which reflects their theoretical construction and practices to solve their own problems. When these keywords are introduced to China, tension may arise between the extraterritorial keywords and the Chinese reality. Therefore, attention should be paid to the differences when they are in the different fields of China and the West. At the same time, restrictions from the recipients' own "context" (such as the realistic needs of contemporary society and the subject's academic background) should be taken seriously. We must also consider issues such as the ambiguity that occurs in the processes of translation, interpretation and application in the native field.

As a paradigm, "history fields" is an exploration and integration of research methods. Based on language analysis and consideration of the external conditions, it has achieved the integration not only of history and space but also of the internal and the external. Morphologically, "history fields" provides *Keywords* with theoretical and practical values. It should be admitted that such an in-depth exploration of keywords from the West is a pioneer in the domestic study of keywords.

5

In the study of the keywords travelling to China, we not only experience various histories and cultures but also conduct a reflection on literary criticism, which is of revolutionary significance for the discipline.

First, the interdisciplinary perspective provides a novel understanding of the nature of literary criticism. In the travelling of concepts, free circulation among different disciplines and languages has been normalized. Some keywords that originally belonged to other disciplines were later borrowed by literary criticism, with the result that their heterogeneity constituted a challenge to traditional literary criticism. Some keywords from literary criticism circulated to other disciplines and thoughts. For example, the concept "narrative" has been adopted in various fields and shared by different disciplines. There are still some terms that are not restricted to a fixed field. They wander freely between philosophy, literary criticism, politics, psychology

and other disciplines. For instance, the term "other" locates itself in philosophy, psychoanalysis, gender studies, post-colonialism, postmodernism and so on. The concept "metaphor" breaks the boundary between humanities and science, and becomes an interdisciplinary concept, while "body" directly inhabits our daily life. The free migration of keywords into different disciplines promotes interactions among the disciplines, which leads to the expansion or elimination of the boundaries of literary criticism, philosophy and history. Perhaps literary criticism is never a completely independent discipline, and its boundary is so vague that it is destined to interrelate and overlap with many other disciplines.

Another reflection from *Keywords* is that to define is to probe only into the limited part of the nature, and the pursuit of a perfect definition may be a trap. The meaning of a keyword can never be fixed or static. Since a keyword can only be defined within a certain scope, the meaning, which is open to the changing time and space, will remain unfinished throughout time. In this sense, as Engels proposes:

> Our definition of life is naturally very inadequate…From a scientific standpoint all definitions are of little value. In order to gain an exhaustive knowledge of what life is, we should have to go through all the forms in which it appears, from the lowest to the highest.
>
> (Engels, 1947:51)

The definition of each keyword exists in its specific context (i.e. usage). Therefore, the research is just a dynamic "narrative" based on context, aiming not at the integrity of the system or the accuracy of the definition but at a historical understanding of the process of continuous practice in which the meaning is enriched and extended. What we can do is understand the past and the present of the keywords to foretell a clearer prospect.

Every keyword has its own destiny. Deleuze claims, "Obviously, every concept has a history" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994:17). The study of keywords endows us a deeper understanding of this statement. The history of any concept will live on in our reading. The internal and external conflicts will leave its meaning open to various possible interpretations.

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Hu Yamin
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1 Discourse

Written by Yuan Ying, translated by Yuan Ying

From the perspective of etymology, "discourse," in modern English, is derived gradually from "discursus" in Latin, "discours" in old French and "discours" in Middle English (also in the form of "discors"). The Latin word "discursus" is derived from its verb form "discurrere", which means "moving back and forth", "running around", or "going back and forth". This meaning has been embedded in the English word "discourse" as the language evolves. It can be said that the word "discourse" embraces all the connotations implied by its Indo-European root ("kers") and its Latin form ("dis-", meaning "in different directions"; "+currere", referring to "run"), including "ringlike form", "back and forth movement" and so on (White, 1987:106). According to the definition in the Oxford English Dictionary (2nd edition), "discourse" is often used to refer to "utterance", "speech", "talk" and "conversation". Later it is more frequently used to describe a formal speech or narrative, or an oral or written discussion of a topic of a certain length. Since the second half of the 20th century, "discourse" has become the object of study for linguists, and in "discourse analysis" it refers to "texts or utterances longer than one sentence" that constitute its analysis unit. As a linguistic term, "discourse" contains both the spoken language that is mainly denoted by "utterance" (translated into Chinese as "Yuduan") in the past and the written language that is denoted by "text" (translated into Chinese as "Yupian", "Pianzhang" or "Wenben") (Harris, 1992:66–67).

With the expansion of the research horizon of linguistics and the changes to the concept of theoretical construction of knowledge in a broader sense, discourse has increasingly been going beyond its original disciplinary boundaries, extending to literary criticism, anthropology, psychoanalysis and social psychology, sociology and politics, culture, gender and post-colonial studies. Up to now, the frequent appearance and prominent significance of this term in the field of humanities and social sciences has been the consensus of the academic circle. However, contrary to its increasingly important position, the meanings of "discourse" in various disciplinary contexts remains rather vague and unclear. It seems to have a broader semantic meaning than any other term in literary and cultural theory, but it is the least defined term in many theoretical texts, as if it is already a self-evident concept, a common sense. What matters is its function as a weapon of analysis

and criticism, and it is not necessary to trace its origin and past life. Then the questions come to us: Where does "discourse" come from? What are its functions and utility? In what directions does it move and travel? Is there any change or increase in its meanings during this travel, due to difference in time and space? It is the pursuit and exploration of these issues that constitutes the starting point of this chapter questioning a term that has been fully naturalized in its frequent use and re-defamiliarizing and problematizing a term which people are quite familiar with so as to bring it back to history.

Genealogy of "discourse" in Western literary theories

Since the 1960s, it is initially in France that

> certain shifts took place in the ways of considering how meanings are constructed. The resulting work on discourses and the questions posed by that work have radical implications not only for the disciplines of the humanities, literary studies and the human sciences, but for all knowledge.
>
> (Macdonell, 1986:1)

The theoretical construction of discourse originated from French structuralism and post-structuralism. The structuralist anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss and the linguist Emile Beveniste played an important role in the early theoretical planning of the turn from language to discourse.

The turn from language to discourse

Saussure's demarcation of langue and parole not only establishes the only real object of linguistic study—the forever "constituted" language structure—but also excludes all factors unrelated to linguistic organization and system. More importantly, it has provided a methodological orientation and scientific innovation for literary studies, anthropology and other fields of the humanities and social sciences in the 20th century, and the linguistic model has increasingly become a paradigm of scientific research. However, does langue always take precedence over any specific individual utterance? Is language really irrelevant to human subjects and their intentions? Can people really turn a blind eye to all the social and cultural factors that play an active role in actual discourse? The exploration of these questions makes it possible for us to question and transcend Saussure's structural view of language. Claude Lévi-Strauss found in the study of mythology that there exists a third level beyond the binary opposition of langue and parole, and analyzed the constituent units of mythology as discourse. Emile Benveniste turned from the abstract and systematic language world to the vivid and realistic discourse world, and devoted himself to discussion of the way of discourse realization, the meanings of discourse and the subject, which exerted an important influence on the school of French discourse analysis.

The third level beyond langue and parole: Claude Lévi-Strauss's study of mythology

Structural anthropologist Lévi-Strauss applies the method of structural linguistics to the study of anthropology and mythology. He discovers the third level of language beyond the binary opposition of langue and parole, and analyzes the constituent units of myth as discourse, thus developing much of the pioneering research on structural narrative analysis. However, his role "as precursor in the terminological transformation of the term 'discourse' into a term which contains within it a complete theoretical programme has been underestimated" (Frank, 1992:100).

In his essay *The Structural Study of Myth*, Lévi-Strauss focusses his attention on the relationship between myth and language. He points out that myth is language, and it must be narrated if it is to be known by people; myth is a part of human speech. However, due to the particularity of myth itself, myth and language are both similar to and different from each other. In order to explain this relationship between "similarity and difference", Lévi-Strauss uses Saussure's differentiation of langue and parole, structure and individual events in the temporal dimension, as a reference with which to investigate the unique temporal feature of myth. Saussure believes that language is reversible in time, while parole has an irreversible linear time. On this basis, Lévi-Strauss finds that myth has a third time dimension, that is, it combines the two temporal characteristics of language and parole. On the one hand, myth always points to events that happened in the past and are told by people, with the linear temporal characteristics of "parole". On the other hand, events that happened in the distant past are told in the present and will be repeated in the future, so they are simultaneously related to the past, the present and the future, moving back and forth in time, and can thus be taken as a "structure" with reversible temporality. Therefore, mythological time has special dual nature: both irreversible and reversible, diachronic and synchronic. This double structure, both historical and ahistorical, explains why myth,

> while pertaining to the realm of *parole* and calling for an explanation as such, as well as to that of *langue* in which it is expressed, can also be an absolute entity on a third level which, though it remains linguistic by nature, is nevertheless distinct form the other two.
>
> (Lévi-Strauss, 1963:210)

The third level of language involves the level of discourse, which transcends Saussure's dualism of langue and parole. Though myths can be regarded as "effectively linguistic forms (and are as such likely to be encompassed by the concept of language), they are still events at the level of parole: they arise out of discourse" (Frank, 1992:101).

Lévi-Strauss further clarifies that myth, as mode of discourse, is a speech act operating at a very high level which has special properties and more

complex characteristics. From the perspective of constituent units, the constituent units of mythology are different from phonemes, morphemes and semantemes in language structures because of their higher level of complexity. Lévi-Strauss called them "gross constituent units or mythemes", and identification and separation of these "mythemes" can only be carried out at the sentence level. In his analysis of myths, Lévi-Strauss broke them down into the shortest possible sentences, identified the same "mythemes" and ordered them with numbers (See Howarth, 2000:23–26). In this process, he found that "the true constituent units of a myth are not the isolated relations but *bundles of such relations*, and it is only as bundles that these relations can be put to use and combined so as to produce a meaning" (Lévi-Strauss, 1963:211). Thus myth always contains all its different narratives, and like the score of an orchestra, it always operates simultaneously on both diachronic and synchronic axes.

Lévi-Strauss's insights in the study of mythology, namely the third level of language beyond langue and parole, and the introduction of "mythemes" as mythological constituent units, make the structural analysis of "discourse" possible. Saussure's structural linguistics can thus be extended to discourse analysis at a broader symbolic level. In this sense, it can be said that Lévi-Strauss is the precursor to a clear concept of "discourse" in the field of humanities and social sciences (Howarth, 2000:32). Myth as discourse and its unique "gross constituent units" urge Roland Barthes to advocate establishing a new form of linguistics based on discourse studies: Namely "the linguistics of discourse". He points out that as the research object of this new form of linguistics, discourse has its own constituent units, "its rules, its 'grammar'; going beyond the sentence and yet composed uniquely of sentences" (Frank, 1992:103–104). It should be noted, however, that Lévi-Strauss failed to develop an in-depth theoretical exposition at the third level of language beyond langue and parole. In addition, the concept of "discourse" is limited to oral, written or spoken language, which fails to fully reveal the practical and contextual dimensions of discourse analysis (See Howarth, 2000:34).

Turn to discourse: Emile Benveniste's discourse theory

French structural linguist Emile Benveniste pointed out the limitations of structural linguistics and revealed the important category that Saussure neglected—discourse—thus launching the turn to discourse from language (See Zhou Xian, 2008:10; Eagleton, 1996:100). In his definition and theoretical interpretation of discourse, the core concepts of discourse, statement and subjectivity run through the whole process and constitute his pioneering ideological system of discourse.

Saussure divides language into basic units, such as phonemes, morphemes and words. Benveniste finds that the principles of structural linguistics only apply to these levels: Once they reach a level higher than words, namely,

the sentence level, they do not work, and the strictness and universality of scientific paradigms will be questioned. Benveniste explains that sentence is a dividing line which leads to a new field. "We leave Saussure's language system at the sentence level and enter the world of discourse" (Zhao Yifan, 2006:255). Different worlds of language and discourse produce two different kinds of linguistics in the face of the same reality. The former is the combination of formal symbols into structures and systems following strict procedures, and the latter is "the manifestation of language in fresh and vivid communication" (Benveniste, 2008:197). The unit of discourse is sentence, which is a complete unit with two attributes of meaning and reference. Only when referring to a specific situation can communication proceed smoothly.

Benveniste then makes a distinction between histoire and discours. According to Glyn Williams, it is this famous distinction that clearly illustrates his unique views of discourse (William, 1999:30–31). In his opinion, histoire is a third-person account of events that happened in the past, and the speaker does not intervene in this process; the meaning of discours, however, should be grasped in the broadest sense, and there is a presupposition of a speaker and a recipient, the former of whom intends to influence the latter in a certain way. Histoire is mostly limited to written language, while discours includes both oral discourse and written works imitating oral discourse.

Since discourse involves the subject of speech and writing, it highlights the subjectivity of language and discourse. Different from the definition of phenomenology and psychology, "subjectivity," as discussed by Benveniste, refers to "the embodiment of a basic feature of language on human body" (Benveniste, 2008:293). Only in language and by means of language can people establish their own subjective identity, and the use of language constitutes the basis of subjectivity. Benveniste employs "the 'self' of speech is the 'self' of existence" to sum up the essence of subjectivity, which contains two meanings: "the first is the speech itself, and the second is the commitment of such a speech act" (Wang Lunyue, 2008:358). The experience of subjectification is closely related to the experience of its language form. On the one hand, the subject can only live by and in speech activities; on the other hand, each speaker calls himself "I" while taking himself as the subject, and "I" presupposes the existence of another person: Namely "you". This polarite of person forms the basic condition of speech activities. Therefore, speech activities are made possible only when the speaker confirms himself as the subject. Benveniste further discusses the relationship between language, speech and subjectivity. "Language makes subjectivity possible because it always contains the language form suitable for the expression of subjectivity, while discourse triggers the emergence of subjectivity because it is composed of discrete time positions" (Benveniste, 2008:297). In discourse, the speaker defines himself as "I" and the person he is addressing as "you", thus forming the coordinates that define the subject. In such interactive communication between "you" and "I", the two are complementary, indispensable and interchangeable with each other, and "discourse" refers

to "the language undertaken by the speaker under the condition of inter-subjectivity, and only under such condition can linguistic communication become possible" (Benveniste, 2008:301).

Benveniste's descriptions of the discourse world, his distinction between histoire and discours, and his discussions on the subjectivity of discourse indicate that he changes his position from the abstract language structure and rules under Saussure's tradition to the language communication undertaken by the speaking subject. The turn to discourse means the establishment of new research objects and leads to the discussions of new theories and methods. Here, it is discourse, not language, that occupies the central position, so Benveniste is called the founder of "discourse linguistics". Paul Ricoeur points out that the transition from linguistic or symbolic linguistics to discourse linguistics has essential significance. "Whereas structural linguistics simply places speech and use in parentheses, the theory of discourse removes the parentheses and proclaims the existence of two linguistics resting upon different principles"(Ricoeur, 2016:95). In addition, the return of the absent subject and the attention to discourse indicate the departure from structuralism. In this sense, Benveniste's theoretical contribution to post-structuralism has so far not been widely recognized (William, 1999:175). In fact, the shift from structuralism to post-structuralism is, to some extent, the turn from language to discourse. "'Language' is speech or writing viewed 'objectively', as a chain of signs without a subject. 'Discourse' means language grasped as *utterance*, as involving speaking and writing subjects and therefore also, at least potentially, readers or listeners" (Eagleton, 1996:100). In structuralism, in order to describe and study language as an object with scientific accuracy, a critic can only keep his distance from the object he wants to analyze from the standpoint of an observer. Works are treated as a system of rules with their own independent lives, and the subject is dissolved and replaced by an autonomous and unified symbol system. For post-structuralist critics, language is no longer an impersonal structure but a system that is "always articulated with other systems and especially with subjective processes" (Selden, 2005:146). The participation of the "speaking subject" in discourse and the experience of language facts are of vital importance. The speaker establishes his own subject identity in language and forms a dialogue relationship in the interaction with the listener.

Discourse and ideology

In the rebellious movement of post-structuralism against structuralism, the prominence of the term "discourse" marks a break with traditional views on language and representation. The use of the concept of "discourse" has been increasingly extended to many fields of literature, cultural studies and the humanities. In this process, some Marxist critics have put forward the idea of "theorizing discourse in terms of ideological formations which allow more readily for the possibility of resistance and subversion of dominant

discourses" (Selden, 2005:147). Marxist theory of ideology has a profound and far-reaching influence on the formation and development of discourse theory, so it constitutes an indispensable dimension to examine discourse theory.

From ideology to discourse: Althusser's views on discourse

In the late 1960s, France was faced with a profound academic and political crisis in which universities and education became the main arena of struggle as well as the main target of criticism. The May events, as a kind of theoretical appeal, led some Marxist scholars to question the concept of knowledge neutrality, language norms and the way in which individuals were constructed as subjects. In this historical context, "structural linguistics degenerated into discourse studies, and discussions on ideology quickly turned into the stage of studies on ideological discourse" (Zhao Yifan, 1994:98–99). Louis Althusser's essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" proposed a new theory of ideology whose significance lay in revealing how ideologies and discourses were established, what their functions were and how their meanings existed historically and materially. Althusser's preliminary discussions on discourse theory were closely related to his theory of ideology. He wrote the essay "Three Notes on the Theory of Discourses", which embodied his attempts and efforts to construct "the general theory of discourse". Although his efforts ended up in a fragmented and incomplete form, his thoughts on discourse undoubtedly enlightened subsequent discourse studies.

Althusser believes that the core problem of discourse theory lies in clarifying the characteristics, structure and function of ideological discourse. First, in order to accurately understand and grasp the characteristics of ideological discourse, we must compare and contrast it with other types of discourse so as to distinguish the differences between and different natures of different discourses. According to the differences of the subject forms in terms of their nature and position, and the different functions of various types of discourses, Althusser investigates the classification schema of discourse, paying particular attention to the differences between ideological discourse, scientific discourse and artistic discourse. In regard to the nature and position of the subject forms, science has a transcending centralized structure, so the subject does not appear in it at all. Artistic discourse has an "interactive structure of two meanings" because it involves the "combination of plural symbol realization", and the subject appears or intervenes in the form of a plurality of persons. By contrast, in ideological discourse, the emergence of the subject is due to the "mirror-like centralized structure" of ideology. From the perspective of the different functions of various types of discourses, science implements the function of cognition, that is, descriptions of the actual objects must be completed by constructing their theoretical concepts. Art implements the function of re-cognition

and perception, which refers to the perception of beauty and ugliness. Like artistic discourse, ideology also has the function of re-cognition. In order to adapt to the specific situation of the subject, the actual object at hand appears again, so one assimilates to the object and rediscovers himself. Although this rediscovered self deviates from its original self, it still believes that "he is really himself", so ideology also has the function of misidentification (Imamura, 2001:229–231).

Second, Althusser puts forward the central argument that "ideology calls or interpellates the individual as the subject", and the process of transforming and constructing the individual into the subject is carried out on the stage of ideological discourse. Whether the social structure can exert its function and effect depends on the construction of the subject form which can bear its structural function. Ideological discourse provides the bearer for the structure, that is, it transforms the individual into the subject through the mechanism of calling or interpellation and bears the responsibility of the bearer of the structure. In this sense, ideological discourse provides reasons for the emergence of the subject as the bearer. This kind of discourse must be "combined into one" with the subject it calls or interpellates and must contain the subject as the "symbolic representation" of discourse. Therefore, "the subject all appears in numerous symbolic representations of ideological discourse". In order to be called or interpellated and thus constructed as the subject, the individual "must re-recognize himself as the subject in the ideological discourse" and manifest and confirm himself in this kind of discourse. Since ideology has a mirror-like centralized structure, the subject who can be called or interpellated can see himself in the discourse of calling or interpellation, re-recognize himself in himself and confirm his own identity (Imamura, 2001:232). In fact, in the "Three Notes on the Theory of Discourses", we can see many elements of Althusser's theory of ideology: the called or interpellated individual-subject, mirror structure, re-recognition and self-confirmation of the subject, and so on.

Although ideological discourse has always occupied a central position in Althusser's thoughts on discourse theory, he has not put his focus on language and meaning. When speaking of theoretical discourse, he clearly points out the dilemma that theoretical terms often face, thus discussing the relationship between language, discourse and construction of meaning. The theoretical connotation of a term is often different from its common meaning, but it is always hidden behind its common meaning, waiting to be recognized and discovered. The meanings of words are fixed not by their common usages but by the "relation between theoretical concepts within a conceptual system" (William, 1999:75), which gives words their unique theoretical connotations. The construction of word meanings depends on the discourse in which they are located. This view shares some similarities with the core concept of "discourse formation" in Michel Pêcheux's discourse theory, which is developed on the basis of combining with Althusser's theory of ideological state apparatuses. Strictly speaking, Althusser failed to

realize his original intention of constructing "a general theory of discourse", but his discussions on ideological discourse provide an important theoretical framework and thinking model for the development of discourse theory. It is on the basis of his theory of ideology that his student Pêcheux establishes a new theory of discourse and ideology.

Language, discourse and ideology: Pêcheux's discourse theory

French Marxist linguist Michel Pêcheux critically absorbs and draws on the results of Althusser's theory of ideology, structural linguistics and psychoanalysis, and tries to establish a new theory of discourse and ideology based on this "Triple Alliance" of theory. Althusser's paper "Freud and Lacan", published in 1964, drew Pêcheux's attention to the theory of psychoanalysis. Lacan believes that the unconscious is structured like language, and "language is the structural situation in which the unconscious exists" (Wang Yichuan, 1994:66). Pêcheux's interest in linguistic problems and linguistic philosophy also makes him realize that the analysis of ideology should focus on more than ideology itself and that ideological practice is closely related to language. Althusser juxtaposes "transparency of language" with "ideological consequences" in his discussions of the subject, while Pêcheux further studies the interrelationship between language, discourse and ideology, and the concept of "discourse" becomes the center and convergence point connecting language and ideology. In Pêcheux's opinions, discourse indicates "the effects of ideological struggle within the functioning of language, and, conversely, the existence of linguistic materiality within ideology" (Fairclough, 2003:30).

The enlightenment of Althusser's essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" to discourse studies lies in the fact that it urges people to pay attention to the generation and function of discourse and ideology. Pêcheux's representative work *Language, Semantics and Ideology* (1982) focusses mainly on the two central topics, the relationship between discourse and language, and the relationship between discourse and ideological practice, so as to reveal the essential characteristics of discourse.

Pêcheux first points out that all discourses are social and come from specific institutional facilities and social practices. Discourse differs greatly depending on social practices and the institutional facilities it is generated from as well as the positions of speakers and receivers. As a specific field of language use, discourse can be identified from three aspects: the institutions associated with it, the positions it takes and the positions it limits for the speaker. Yet such a position does not stand alone because "it may be understood as a standpoint taken up by the discourse through its relation to another, ultimately an opposing, discourse" (Macdonell, 1986:3). Pêcheux further emphasizes the conflicting nature of discourse, which is always in the dialogue and conflict relationship with other discourses. For him, "ideological struggle traverses the 'whole' of discourse" (Macdonell, 1986:46).

The meaning of discourse can only be established in the ultimate relationship of opposition. The meaning of discourse does not exist within itself but emerges from the standpoint of struggle. Through the experiment known as "the Mansholt report", Pêcheux shows that any text can be regarded as a place for unequal struggles between directly or indirectly conflicting discourses and positions.

Althusser proposes that ideology calls or interpellates the individual as the subject, while Pêcheux expounds the operation of ideological discourse and subjectivity in more detail. He summarizes three types of subject: "good subject", "bad subject" and "the subject who adopts the third modality". The "good subject" only talks about the obvious things, "spontaneously" accepting the self-image projected by certain words in the general action of "identification". The "bad subject" is a "trouble-maker" who adopts the mode of "counter-identification" and refuses to accept the identity provided by discourse. The subject adopting "the third modality" refers to the subject-form provided by transformation in the action of "disidentification" (Pêcheux, 1982:156–159). Among the three types of subject, Pêcheux particularly emphasizes the resistance of the third subject, which, unlike the positions of either identification or exclusion shown by the first two types of subject, exists in the form of opposition. Although it cannot completely escape the fate of identity and identification, it can transform and replace the identity and identification established in the dominant ideology (Macdonell, 1986:39–40).

Althusser and Pêcheux's theory of discourse and ideology have exerted profound influence on the French Discourse Analysis; however, the significance of their theoretical resources is somewhat underestimated. Sara Mills, a famous scholar in the field of contemporary discourse studies, reminds us to pay attention to Pêcheux's contribution to discourse theory and thinks that we can read his relevant works together with Foucault's discourse theory for mutual reference. For example, Pêcheux's "Mansholt report" experiment can be used to illustrate Foucault's argument that discursive structure and social practice influence people's interpretation of texts. The latter's theory of discursive construction is considered pessimistic and inappropriate, while, comparatively speaking, Pêcheux's discussions on the possibility of resisting ideological discourse have more positive significance.

Foucault's discourse theory

In the knowledge genealogy of discourse theory, Foucault's discourse theory has always enjoyed authoritative and classical status. In almost all approaches to discourse analysis, his influence is everywhere, and his relevant works are constantly quoted, discussed, commented on, revised and criticized (Jorgensen, Phillips, 2002:12). In his important writings of different periods, "discourse" appears repeatedly as a core theoretical term. In order to approach and understand it from Foucault's point of view, we must first locate it in his related illustrations.

Redefining "discourse"

Stuart Hall believes that the essential difference between Foucault and semioticians lies in the fact that he is concerned with "the production of knowledge and meaning, not through language but through discourse". Therefore, it is noteworthy that he shifts his attention from "language" to "discourse" (Hall, 1997:44). He states that the title *The Order of Things* is rather ironic because, for him, discourse is neither a mixture of things and words, nor "a slender surface of contact, or confrontation, between a reality and a language" (Foucault, 1972:48). Discourse loosens the tight combination between things and words, and what emerges in it are the rules as a whole specific to discursive practice, which neither refers to the silent existence of reality nor the formal usages of words. Although discourse is composed of signs, it does far more than refer to things by signs. "It is this more that renders them irreducible to the language (langue) and to speech. It is this 'more' that we must reveal and describe" (Foucault, 1972:49). When trying to define "discourse", Foucault does not want to transfer the concept of discourse in the field of linguistics to his own research but aims to reveal the possibility of describing "discourse" in another way.

Foucault admits that he expanded the meanings of "discourse" at three levels, "treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a certain number of statements" (Foucault, 1972:80). The meaning of discourse is the broadest at the first level, which is mostly employed by Foucault in his early works when he discusses the concept of "discourse" from the theoretical level. Among the three levels of meanings, discourse as a totality of all statements is a collective noun, and the latter two levels of meanings are related to discourse as a countable noun. As countable nouns, discourses make it possible for us to probe into discourse types in specific fields, while discourse in the plural is a group of statements with institutionalized effect which influences and restricts the individual's behaviour and way of thinking. Foucault's two ways of using the concept of "discourse" are closely related and complementary to each other. Only by combining the two can we grasp the changes and contradictions in his use of the concept of discourse in an overall and comprehensive way.

In the inaugural address at the Collège De France, "The Order of Discourse", Foucault puts forward that "the production of discourse is controlled, selected, organized and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose function is to eliminate the power and danger of discourse, deal with accidental events and avoid its heavy and horrible materiality" (Wang Min'an, 2008:127). In these procedures, exclusion procedures restrict what can be said and what can be accepted as knowledge. Exclusion procedures operate in three ways: prohibition or taboo, the exclusion of madness discourse from rational discourse and the exclusion of falsehood

from truth, all of which are implemented from outside of discourse by means of system and history.

In addition to exclusion procedures, the construction of discourse also has internal control principles, which function within the discourse and control which discourse is able to continue and circulate. One of the principles is commentary. Every social and cultural system has its main narrative texts, which are preserved as soon as they are spoken and commented on, derived from and continued indefinitely in the past, present and future. "Hierarchy of discourse" always exists, and basic, original discourse and commentary, interpretive discourse constitute hierarchical relations between the main text and the secondary text, supporting each other. Because of its rich and hidden multiple meanings, the main narrative text makes the continuous construction of new discourse possible, and the diverse commentary text is thus infinitely derived. By contrast, the commentary text endows the main text with rich, dense and eternal character, which must reveal what is silent in the main text. The second principle is the author. Foucault talks about the author in the functional sense, namely, what he calls "author-function", which is the principle of unifying texts that are not usually seen to share characteristics (Mills, 2004:65). Foucault does not deny the existence of creative writing individuals but emphasizes that it is "author-function" that defines the work, outline or draft of the creative individual. The author principle complements the commentary principle, which, like the commentary principle, aims to limit the contingency factors in discourse by taking the form of individualized restriction. The third principle is the discipline, which determines the definition of research objects, the selection of research methods and the forms of propositions and arguments, and constitutes the control system of discourse production, fixing its boundaries. The principle of discipline limitation is different from the principle of commentary and author. On the one hand, the discipline does not take rediscovering the meaning behind silence as its premise but tries to define the necessary conditions for constructing new statements. On the other hand, in contrast to the author principle, the discipline is a nameless system, and it is not necessary to delve into whether the credibility and validity of meaning are related to its inventor.

In addition, Foucault points out the principle of control over the speaking subject, namely "rarefaction" (Foucault, 1981:224), which includes discourse ceremony, discourse community, doctrine and educational system. According to the principles of external control, internal control and application condition control of discourse, Foucault divides his work of discourse analysis into two types: critical analysis and genealogical analysis. Critical analysis involves the distinction between madness and reason in the classical period that Foucault studied earlier in his career as well as how the choice of truth that he intends to explore later is formed, renewed and replaced. Genealogical analysis focusses on the regular formation of discourse within and outside the control boundaries, especially at both ends

of the boundaries. This kind of formation can include control procedures, such as how a discipline acquires the form and status of scientific discourse. On the other hand, the control mechanism can be formed within the formation of discourse, such as investigating how literary criticism can serve as discourse which constructs the author. These theoretical discussions and conceptions have important enlightenment and reference significance for us to utilize in examining and reflecting on the relevant issues in contemporary literary criticism and cultural theory, such as how the subject comes into being in social discourse and system, and how the "author" plays its part in the construction of critical discourse and the subject.

The network of discourse, power and knowledge

Some scholars tend to divide Foucault's discourse studies into archaeological stage and genealogical stage (or earlier and later period) and believe that Foucault has shifted his focus from discourse to the relationship between power and knowledge. However, the shift in focus does not mean that discourse fades out of Foucault's field of vision from then on. On the contrary, he points out that "it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together" (Foucault, 1978:100), and the discussions of the internal relationship between power and knowledge cannot exclude discourse, so the interrelationship between discourse, power and knowledge constitutes the central topic of his investigation and analysis. The emphasis on the relationship between discourse, power and knowledge "rescued representation from the clutches of a purely formal theory and gave it a historical, practical and 'worldly' context of operation" (Hall, 1997:47). Discourse, power and knowledge interweave and interact with one another to form a dynamic and complex network in which Foucault's rethinking and interpretation of discourse are highlighted.

Although power produces knowledge and discourse, discourse is not only the consequence and product of power but also the instrument of power, which functions as a means of power operation within the scope of power. Power produces discourse, which is employed by power as the instrument and, in turn, produces power. However, the interaction between the two is not once and for all but complex and unstable. First, power does not play its role in a unified way but has multiple forms of power technologies, which appear piecemeal according to local conditions and needs, and do not converge into a huge and rigorous whole. Moreover, they are not uniformly distributed since "power of different mechanisms operates in mutual entanglement and interweaving with their respective characteristics" (Foucault, 1997:162). The interaction of various power relations changes constantly in the operation process: Some are strengthened, while others are weakened, presenting diversified and changing patterns. Second, discourse is not only blindly supportive or obedient to power but also often serves as the opposite strategy to constitute the starting point of resistance. While strengthening

power, discourse also exposes, weakens and hinders it. The discourse on homosexuality that emerged in psychiatry and literature in the 19th century reinforced social control of this anomalous field. However, these discourses, which are used to belittle homosexuality, have become the starting point for homosexuals to fight for identity and thus are used as a kind of "compensation" discourse to require the society to recognize homosexuality's legitimacy. Therefore, Foucault believes that "there is not, on the one side, a discourse of power, and opposite it, another discourse that runs counter to it" (Foucault, 1978:101).

It is worth noting that in Foucault's elaboration on the relationship between discourse and power, the core term "knowledge" frequently appears, interweaving and entangling with discourse and power to form a subtle and complex network. It can be taken as Foucault's theoretical innovation to put forward the inner connection between knowledge and power. According to traditional views, knowledge and power are incompatible with each other. "Knowledge can exist only where power relations are suspended and that knowledge can develop only outside its (power's) injunctions, its demands and its interests" (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982:115). Therefore, one of the preconditions for acquiring knowledge is to abandon power. Foucault believes that the ideological root of the traditional views lies in the fact that intellectuals represented by philosophers try to establish and elevate their own identities. In their opinions, there is an insurmountable boundary between knowledge and power because power has nothing to do with knowledge, culture and other civilized things, and the field of knowledge holding the banner of truth and freedom should be separated from the field of power operation. However, Foucault found that the development of almost all kinds of knowledge in the humanities is closely related to the operation of power. Obviously, Foucault's ideas were not easily accepted by people at that time because they questioned the objective nature of the study of the humanities, including history, anthropology and sociology.

Gilles Deleuze believes that Foucault proposes a new concept of knowledge in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Du Xiaozhen, 1998:565) which is actually defined by its relationship with discourse: "There is no knowledge without a particular discursive practice; and any discursive practice may be defined by the knowledge that it forms" (Foucault, 1972:183). First, the subject can occupy a certain position in knowledge space and thus discusses some objects in his own discursive practice. Second, knowledge is the scope of the juxtaposition and subordination of statement, in which concepts are defined, used or transformed. Third, discourse provides various possibilities for the employment and appropriation of knowledge. Knowledge is an integral part of its connection with other discursive or non-discursive practices. Finally, knowledge is constituted by certain discursive practices according to their rules and whether or not they can gain the status of science. Therefore, knowledge becomes the "balance point" of Foucault's archaeological analysis, which is closely connected with discursive practice and science. And

on the axis of discursive practice–knowledge–science, knowledge lies in the middle and discursive practice and science stand at both ends of the axis. Discursive practice constitutes knowledge according to its rules, while science places itself in the knowledge formed by discursive practice and plays its role on the basis of it. Archaeological research is intended to describe not the special structure of science but a very different domain of knowledge. The particularity, function and network of its dependent relations of knowledge are all presented in the discursive practice that constitutes it. Therefore, the analysis of the formation and transformation of knowledge is bound to be closely related to the investigation of the discursive practice formed in it. Although Foucault named his archaeological project "the archaeology of knowledge", what runs through the archaeological research is actually the discourse closely related to knowledge. In this sense, the archaeology of knowledge can also be regarded as the archaeology of discourse. It is in the complex network of relations between discourse, power and knowledge that Foucault's rethinking and interpretation of "discourse" can be more clearly presented. First, power and knowledge are connected through discourse, so Foucault highlights the strategic function of discourse. He points out that discourse should be conceived as "a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable" (Foucault, 1978:100). Discourses are not always divided into mainstream discourses and subordinate discourses, accepted discourses and excluded discourses; they are sometimes "tactical elements" operating in the field of power relations, and they can play a role in different strategies. Different discourses, or even contradictory discourses, may exist within the same strategy, and "they can, on the contrary, circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy" (Foucault, 1978:101–102). Hence, Foucault reminds us that the strategic production and strategic integration of discourse are to be examined in detail. In addition, he not only connects power with knowledge but also tries to combine non-discursive practice with discursive practice, which is reflected in the introduction of the concept "apparatus".[1] Apparatus is related not only to the operation of power but also to the coordinates of knowledge, from which knowledge comes and which restrict it. Therefore, apparatus can be regarded as "strategies of relations of forces supporting, and supported by, types of knowledge" (Foucault, 1988:196). Furthermore, apparatus is a system of relationships built up by heterogeneous elements, including "discourse, institutions, architectural forms, normative decision-making, law, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophy, morality and philanthropy". Foucault combines these seemingly unrelated elements in order to find out the nature of the correlation between these elements of discourses or non-discourses, that is, "an interaction of location transfer or function change" (Foucault, 1997:181–182). Compared with the concepts "epistemes" in *The Order of Things* and the "discursive formations" in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, the concept "apparatus" has more diversified and heterogeneous connotations. Episteme is just apparatus of specific discourse, while apparatus includes the

elements of both discourse and non-discourse. Rather than transcend discourse through the concept "apparatus", Foucault places it in a broader social and historical framework, and emphasizes the idea that non-discursive practice and discursive practice are closely related to each other.

Foucault's discussions on discourse and ideology

David Howarth argues that Foucault's rethinking and interpretation of discourse marks his rejection of the concept of "ideology". (Howarth, 2000:79) In fact, in an interview entitled "power and sex", Foucault bluntly expressed his dissatisfaction with the use of "ideology" over the years. In Foucault's view, just like the concept "repression", "ideology" seems to have become the "master key" widely adopted in traditional forms of interpretation, but the problem in these two concepts lies in the fact that both of them are negative and mentalistic. He further puts forward that the concept "ideology" is difficult to use for three main reasons: First, whether you admit it or not, it is always in opposition to something that is taken as truth; second, ideology is necessarily related to the subject; third, ideology is secondary to the thing that plays a role as the economic basis or material or economic determinant of ideology (See Foucault, 1988:118).

From a critical point of view, Althusser discusses ideology, which is seen as an "illusion" or "imaginary distortion". His critical position is external to ideology. Foucault, on the other hand, realizes that as a subject, what he can think and say is bound to be limited and restricted by the discourse framework of the historical era he lives in. Therefore, the point is not to make a distinction between the categories of science and truth on the one hand and the categories of something other than science and truth on the other in discourse, but to historically examine how the truth effect is produced in discourse; whether the discourse is true or false does not matter (See Ji Guangmao, 2005:91). Foucault believes that the "will to truth" throughout the discourse is the key issue worthy of interrogation. The will to truth is a huge exclusion mechanism, "a historical, modifiable and institutional restriction system". Under the function of this exclusion system, the distinction between truth and falsehood within discourse is "historical construction". The will to truth has its own history of change, constantly updated by the way a society uses, evaluates, allocates, ascribes and defines knowledge. At the same time, it also relies on the support of education, the society's book publishing system, its academic community, its laboratory and its other institutions. By exerting pressure and constraining power on other discourses, the will to truth endows "authentic" discourses with absolute authority. For example, Western literature has been devoted to establishing itself "on the natural, the 'vraisemblable', on sincerity, on science as well" for centuries, and "true" discourses have always been its persistent goal (Foucault, 1981:55). On the one hand, the will to truth is growing stronger and deeper; on the other hand, it is rarely mentioned by people. Foucault attributes this

contradiction to the fact that truth subtly conceals the will to truth and its changes. The will to truth, which permeates the truth, is difficult to identify because of the necessity of the form of truth, but the will to truth, which utters "authentic" discourse, inevitably involves the desire and power.

The relationship between the production of truth and the effect of power is undoubtedly an issue that one of Foucault's focusses. Truth shares a circular link with the system of power that produces and sustains it, and "to effects of power which it induces and which extend it" (Foucault, 1988:133). Power governs the production of truth, but, at the same time, it is only through the production of truth that it can be implemented. Foucault believes that intellectuals should replace thinking about science and ideology with thinking about truth and power. He believes that they should not criticize the ideological content associated with science, nor ensure that their scientific practice is accompanied by correct ideology, but should instead explore the possibility of establishing a new "politics of truth". "Political issues are not fallacies, illusions, alienated consciousness or ideologies. They are the truth itself." The truth, for Foucault, is not something that is opposite to ideology, nor a real thing to be discovered and accepted, but "a set of regular procedures concerning the production, rule, distribution, circulation and function of discourse" (Du Xiaozhen, 1998:447).

As for the issue of the subject, Foucault holds a critical position on the traditional concept of an autonomous and stable subject. He believes that the subject is constructed in discourse, which cannot stay outside the discourse but must be "subject to discourse" and obey its rules. "Subjects may produce particular texts, but they are operating within the limits of the episteme, the discursive formation, the regime of truth, of a particular period and culture" (Hall, 1997:55). It is discourse that produces knowledge, rather than the subject. The subject can be the "carrier" of the knowledge produced by discourse, but it cannot stay outside the power/knowledge network as the source and author. Stuart Hall points out that in Foucault's opinion, discourse produces the subject through two different meanings or positions. In the first sense, production of the subject is realized by personalizing the specific forms of knowledge generated by discourse. More importantly, all discourses construct meaningful and effective subject-positions. It is only when individuals identify with these positions constructed by discourses and subject themselves to their rules that they can become the subject of discourses and the carriers of their power/knowledge. On the other hand, it is only through these subject-positions that the specific knowledge and meaning of discourse can be easily understood (Hall, 1997:56). In addition, Foucault insists on the "historicization of the subject" and thinks that it is necessary to get rid of the subject and analyze and interpret its construction within the historical framework (Hall, 1999:80).

According to Foucault, the third difference between ideology and discourse is closely related to the status of economic base. He points out that there are three problems in Marxist views of power: First, Marxism holds that the

main function of power relations is the reproduction of economic relations; second, Marxism tends to attribute all power relations to state relations; finally, Marxism "regards false consciousness as a tool of power relations", thus exaggerating the importance of ideology (Mo Weimin, 2005:226). In Foucault's opinion, there is no simple relationship of dominance between economic base, social structure and discourse but it is "complex interaction" (Mills, 2004:32). Economic foundation cannot determine what we can say or think, and economic relations are not primary but just one part of the network of interwoven power relations. It is basic power relations that constitute economic relations. Therefore, the distinction between discourse and ideology must relate to Foucault's original ideas on power. Althusser's state theory always emphasizes the supreme decisive position of the state in power relations, although it distinguishes between the coercive state apparatus and the ideological state apparatus. However, Foucault points out that power can go beyond state boundaries (Mills, 2004:34). The principle of power relations is not stable, homogeneous domination, and power does not always radiate in the same direction from top to bottom. Power relations exert influence in all areas of social life, and permeate in both the public political field and the private field. Second, for Foucault, power is not only repressive and negative but also productive and positive, which should be regarded as "a productive network which runs through the whole social body" (Foucault, 1988:119). In addition, the theory of ideology emphasizes the subversion of oppressive power relations, but it is difficult to conceive how the subject can resist oppression. While Foucault points out that resistance is actually inherent in the concept of power, and where there is power, there is resistance.

Among the two concepts of discourse and ideology, many theorists believe that compared with the concept of ideology, the concept of discourse enables people to analyze the decisive factors of thoughts and behaviours in a more complex and in-depth way (Mills, 2004:26). Although Foucault reveals the problems of ideology, it should be admitted that Marxism and the concept of ideology play an important role in the development of Foucault's discourse theory. As Foucault himself once said, it is impossible for him not to apply a series of concepts directly or indirectly related to Marx's thoughts and not to find himself in a circumstance once described and defined by Marx (Du Xiaozhen, 1998:281). To some extent, Foucault's concept of discourse and the Marxist concept of ideology form an "open discussion and dialogue". It is in the contrast, connection and competition with the concept of ideology that the meaning and boundary of discourse can be determined and described.

Foucault's discourse theory still needs to be further explored; as he puts it, what he provides for his readers are nothing more than fragments of theory, and it is up to them to decide how to make use of these. Since then, researchers have repeatedly rediscovered, appropriated or adapted terminology, analytical perspectives and thinking resources from his theoretical "toolbox". In these heterogeneous expositions, discourse theory repeatedly

reveals itself and unfolds multiple scenes of heterogeneous meanings in numerous material writing spaces, enriching the theoretical connotations of discourse and highlighting its theoretical openness. Critics who inherit Foucault's tradition "do not advocate the unrestrained abuse of the theory of discourse analysis, but insist that discourse analysis should be implemented and limited to specific disciplines" (Zhang Kuan, 1995:134). It is from such a research standpoint that feminist criticism and post-colonial studies have also appropriated and modified Foucault's discourse theory to various degrees on the basis of absorbing and drawing on it.

Discourse theory, feminist criticism and post-colonial studies

Foucault regards discourse as the basis of general cultural practice from which all forms and categories of cultural life and his own criticism of it are gathered (See White, 1987:105). The richness and openness of his discourse theory have provided a wide space of interpretation and expansion for subsequent literary and cultural theories. Both feminist criticism and post-colonial studies have drawn different ideological resources from his discourse theory. Due to their different problematic and theoretical context, they have both appropriated and transformed discourse theory, to different degrees. What they have in common is their distinct political appeal, so both of them try to explore the "political potential" of Foucault's discourse theory in their reference to and reflection on it. On the other hand, in the process of appropriating and modifying Foucault's discourse theory, feminist criticism and post-colonial studies, to some extent, pose a challenge to it and thus form the feminist and post-colonial approach to discourse studies, which not only provides new conceptual tools for literary studies but also fundamentally changes the methodology in the field of literature and cultural theory (Munif, 2011:163).

Discourse theory and feminist criticism

Feminism's employment of Foucault's discourse theory is always closely related to its unique female perspective and political appeal. Therefore, some feminist scholars inevitably transform the concept of "discourse" for their own purpose while also appropriating it. When analyzing female discourse, Dorothy E. Smith points out that the concept of discourse she uses comes from Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge*, which shifts focus from the author's text to the discourse itself as an "ongoing intertextual process". In order to analyze the various social relations involved in the complex social process, the concept cannot have features which can be attributed to individual practice or intention. Hence, in the context of Foucault's archaeology, the concept of discourse excludes the subject. However, Smith emphasizes the social context of discourse and reminds us to pay attention to the textual organization of social relations and practices, and the behaviour

of individual subjects in the discourse structure. Therefore, discourse no longer dominates us or puts us in a subordinate position, instead becoming a tool or means by which the subject can deal with all kinds of human relations, obeying some factors and actively resisting others (Mills, 2004:76). Therefore, feminism to a large extent modifies Foucault's concept of discourse, places discourse in its social context and devotes itself to discussing the possibility of negotiation with discourse structure.

While facing the questions and challenges raised by Foucault's discourse theory and actively appropriating and transforming it, feminism also realizes the limitations of his method of discourse analysis. Through the interpretation of his concept of discourse, Janet Ransom explores whether his discourse analysis contributes to the establishment of a feminist theory that can fully embrace the diversity of women's experiences. Ransom believes that it still remains to be an important issue in feminist debate as to how to effectively explain the commonalities and differences of women's experiences. Discourse analysis focusses on the neutral field of subject position and subject function of discourse. This method constitutes a theoretical and methodological rectification of the essentialist tendency in feminism, but at the same time Foucault's male perspective makes it impossible for him to distinguish the various power relations and diversity of differences that run through women's lives. For feminism, to focus on differences means to pay attention to the differences between the oppression of women and other forms of power relations, and the very influence of these other forms of power relations is reflected in the differences between women. Foucault abandons the speaking subject in terms of methodology, emphasizing what is said rather than the speaker, while feminism thinks it is necessary to "acknowledge the presence of the speaker in what is spoken. Feminism is premised on a particular sort of effort of attention to the experience of other women, which is why it does matter 'who is speaking'" (Ransom, 1993:144). The tension between drawing on Foucault's theory and criticism of him reveals the essence of the contradictory relationship between feminism and discourse theory; therefore, feminism needs to transcend Foucault's postmodern discourse.

Foucault's elaboration on power-knowledge constitutes another significant meeting point between discourse theory and feminist criticism. Feminist theorists' concern with the issue of power-knowledge is closely related to their current situation in their system of knowledge. Julia Kristeva points out that the "phallus center" discourse in Western culture almost deprives women of their right to speak, forcing them to speak only in a way prescribed and accepted by men. In the knowledge system under the control of patriarchal power, women are often marginalized in knowledge production, and their only choice is to

> keep silent or speak with male voice (or produce knowledge), both of which are the traditional modes of production of knowledge

feminists try to get rid of. Foucault's elimination of the ultimate truth enables feminists to question the so-called 'truth of knowledge' in patriarchy.

(Huang Hua, 2005:77)

Foucault's views on power-knowledge influence feminism in various ways. They encourage feminist scholars to break through the limitations of existing ideological categories and rethink the nature of the relationship between power and knowledge. Some feminist scholars make use of Foucault's discussions to clarify that disciplinary power is always sexualized, whether it produces a specific body configuration or divides knowledge into specific disciplines. Others reflect on the political practice of contemporary feminism from Foucault's perspective. In order to find the lost voice of women, Foucault's opinions about rebellious forces of "supressed knowledge" cannot be ignored. Local, decentralized power/knowledge struggles make it possible for oppressed women to compete productively with power in their own fields.

Due to their different research objectives and theoretical appeals, there exists an inevitable tension between Foucault's discourse theory and feminism. It is in such a tension, generated by a collision of ideas, that there exists infinite potential and opportunity for development and innovation. Most of the criticism on Foucault's discourse theory centres on his views of power and resistance. David Howarth points out that some problems are still to be solved in Foucault's discourse theory, including inadequate expressions about the concept of power/resistance, lack of specific analysis of resistance and failure or refusal to examine the macro strategy and consequences of the power/resistance struggle (Howarth, 2000:84). Some feminist scholars are also critical of Foucault's views on power/resistance because they think that it will eliminate the original political goal of feminism and make it fall into the endless cycle of power and resistance. As a result, women are no longer regarded as oppressed groups under patriarchy, let alone is there an active constructing of a theory of women's liberation (Grimshaw, 1993:51). In fact, feminist scholars are often divided on their attitudes toward Foucault's views on power/resistance. Some question this concept from the perspective of female experiences and point out that Foucault's views on resistance have two sides. While emphasizing the control of power over the body, Foucault also endows the body with the power to resist such control. However, the regulation and infiltration of modern patriarchal power on the female body make it difficult for them to resist. Other feminist scholars fully affirm the positive influence of his views on feminism and believe that although he ignores the reality of women being oppressed or resisting oppression, he encourages them to think more deeply and critically about oppression and liberation. More importantly, under the enlightenment of his views, feminist scholars have made a meaningful exploration of effective resistance strategies and approaches.

Discourse theory and post-colonial studies

Like feminist criticism, post-colonial studies benefit greatly from Foucault's discourse theory. "Discourse" has become a key word in post-colonial studies. "This is a much-used word in contemporary theory and in post-colonial criticism is mostly employed in such terms as colonial discourse, which is specifically derived from Foucault's use of the concept" (Ashcroft et al., 1998:70). The author of *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* also believes that Foucault's concept of discourse is helpful to determine the rules that play a decisive role in post-coloniality. Discussing post-colonial discourse in the sense of Foucault means eliciting "certain ways of thinking about language, about truth, about power, and about the interrelationships between all three" (Ashcroft et al., 2002:164–165). Post-colonial studies' reference, assimilation and criticism of Foucault's discourse theory are fully embodied in the studies and reflections of two important post-colonial theorists: Edward Said and Robert Young.

As a pioneer of post-colonial studies, Said's employment of Foucault's discourse theory provides his study with new perspective and in-depth critical strength different from previous colonial criticism. Foucault's theory is the most important theoretical source of Said's study of Orientalism. Foucault's concept of discourse and discursive formation, discussions of the relationship between power and knowledge, and idea that statements are always influenced by the system of power all have a profound impact on Said's studies. Even Ziauddin Sardar, who was rather critical of Said, believes that although he did not raise new questions about Orientalism, he "repositioned orientalism by using Foucault's discourse theory and cultural criticism" (Zhao Xifang, 2009:9), which was the key to his success.

In *Orientalism*, Said first defined the term "Orientalism" based on three interrelated ideas: first, it is a discipline of academic research; second, it has a broader meaning, which refers to the way of thinking "based upon ontological and epistemological distinction" between East and West; and third, it denotes "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient". It is here that Said found the important significance of Foucault's view of discourse as an analytical strategy and method as he stated that "without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline" (Said, 1979:2–3). Said regards Orientalism as a discourse, which means that his focus is merely on the East, as constructed by the Western discourse of Orientalism. Whether the real East exists or not, and whether there is a corresponding relationship between the East and Orientalism, is not the object of study for him. In his opinion, the East is always an artificial construct, a kind of discourse construction, which exists in the discourse about the East. In addition, he makes use of Foucault's concept of discourse to explain the "textual attitude" in the Oriental tradition. Text often has more authority than the reality it describes, so people refuse to have direct contact with the

reality and resort to the authority of the text. "Such texts can create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe." This knowledge and reality will gradually accumulate into a tradition "or what Michel Foucault calls a discourse, whose material presence or weight, not the originality of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it" (Said, 1979:94). Texts describing the East create the "silent" East. Its inability to resist a given image or description is of course closely related to the strong cultural power of the West and its desire to dominate the East, but it also resulted from the fact that orientalist discourse endows the "writers" of the West with the power to make their writing about the East realistic. As a result, there is always one-way dialogue and communication between the East and the West, and orientalist discourse plays an important role in the "preposterous" (Said, 1979:96) transition from understanding and defining the East only from the text to putting all into practice in the East.

Although Said has repeatedly stated that he benefits from Foucault's discourse theory, there are also traces of contradictions, differences and deviation from the latter's views. In *Orientalism*, Said is obviously under the dual influence of Foucault's discourse theory and Gramsci's theory of hegemony. First, Said defines Orientalism as a kind of discourse from historical and material perspective, and believes that Foucault's concept of discourse helps to confirm the identity of Orientalism. Then he points out that Gramsci's concept of "cultural hegemony" is crucial to understanding the cultural life of the industrialized West. It is cultural hegemony that gives the Orientalism he discusses lasting endurance and strength. However, Said hesitates in determining which one to resort to because of the inherent contradictions and differences between discourse theory and theory of hegemony. First, the historical process is an undiscussed problem in Foucault's discourse theory, while the most important feature of hegemony theory is that "it always means the historical process". Under the challenge of external pressure, power relations will constantly change and update. Because Said ignores this important meaning of hegemony, "he turns a blind eye to all forms of anti-hegemony thoughts in western academic works and literary creation", and his Oriental studies is also criticized (Quoted in Luo Gang, Liu Xiangyu, 1999:46–47). Second, the fundamental difference between Foucault and Gramsci lies in their different views of power. Unlike Foucault's pessimistic opinions about resistance, Gramsci believes that even the strictest traditional ruling order could be overturned. Said is clearly aware of the differences between the two in his essay "Traveling Theory". Foucault's archaeological research does not mention revolution and anti-hegemony. However, no matter how strict the ruling system is, there are always places that might be overlooked. It is these places that make change possible, that limit the power Foucault discusses and that make the theory of power difficult to apply (Said, 2000:197–219).

Said's use of the concept of discourse is often criticized by critics as too simple or homogeneous. Robert Young thinks that this actually reflects the

differences between Said and Foucault's concept of discourse because the latter always emphasizes the heterogeneity and dynamics of discourse. The post-colonial critics represented by Said lack in-depth discussions at the theoretical level of discourse. Although "colonial discourse" has become a basic concept in post-colonial theory, few post-colonial critics beyond Homi Bhabha have reflected on it. Differing from the previous post-colonial criticism, which mostly centred on the criticism of Said, Robert Young proposed "returning to Foucault" as an alternative research approach because he thinks that if we begin with Foucault's discourse model, many questions and criticisms against Said's colonial discourse analysis can be answered. The key to the problem is that Foucault's "most sustained and searching analysis and formulation of the nature of a discourse, however, has never been seriously considered by postcolonial theorists" (Young, 2001:394). Instead of criticizing and revising Said's concepts or opinions, it is better to go back to Foucault's original interpretation of discourse concept and re-theorize "colonial discourse" on this basis.

Dissemination and reception of "discourse" in China

The introduction of the term "discourse" to China can be traced back to Li Zhenling's translation of the article "From Morpheme to Discourse" by American linguist Zellig S. Harris in *Contemporary Linguistics*, published in 1963. From the 1960s to the 1980s, the understanding and acceptance of the concept of "discourse" in Chinese academic circles were mainly concerned with studies in the field of linguistics, mostly in the form of translation and reviews. Chinese scholars' discussions of "discourse" focus on the new topics and trends in Western discourse linguistics and discourse analysis,[2] which are represented by the introduction of and comments on Malcolm Coulthard's discourse analysis,[3] and Teun A. Van Dijk's discourse theory.[4] During this period, it is generally assumed that the concept of "discourse" is only a linguistic term which refers to continuous speech fragments (especially spoken language) larger than sentences or a group of words that constitute any identifiable speech events, such as dialogues, talks, sermons and so on. It is worth noting that some scholars of foreign language studies have begun to pay close attention to the relationship between discourse and literature. Although the original intention of these studies was to provide reference and inspiration for foreign language teaching, scholars have already noticed the close connection between discourse studies and literary studies, and especially emphasized the interdisciplinary trend in both research fields.[5] In the late 1980s, a preliminary overview and analysis of Foucault's opinions on discourse power appeared in the field of literary theory, which was exemplified by *Structuralism and Post-structuralism* (Xu Chongwen, 1986) and *Textual Stategies* (Meng Yue et al., 1988). The esssay "Discourse-power-author: a Review of Foucault's Post-structuralist Theory" (Li Hang, 1987) argues that "discourse", in Foucault's opinion, is not in the

sense of linguistics but a process during which "the meaning of any cultural phenomennon is generated, develops and changes in a certain relationship and its movement", while power is the fundamental element that execreses influence and control over discourse movement (Li Hang, 1987:138–144). These early attempts at studies concerning Foucault's views on discourse failed to attract wide attention in Chinese academia at that time, which is somewhat related to enlightenment as the dominant trend of Chinese literary theory and criticism in the 1980s.

Since the 1990s, more and more works on discourse studies and discourse theory have been translated and introduced into China, and scholars have attached increasing importance to "discourse", which highlights its significance as a key concept in the theory of modern literary criticism. Research centring on the issue of "discourse" can be classified into three types: first, some trace the origin and history of the word "discourse" and probe into the problems and divided opinions arising from its translation after its travel to Chinese context; second, some try to clarify and reflect on the conceptual evolution and theoretical connotation of the term in light of its complicated meanings and wide application in Chinese academic circles; third, others adopt discourse analysis as an academic research paradigm in the field of Chinese literary studies and criticism so as to positively explore an effective way to construct China's own discourse of literary theory and criticism in the process of encounter and communication between Chinese and Western cultures.

The issue of term translation of "discourse" after recontextualization

At present, "Huayu" seems to have become the conventional translation of "discourse" that is widely accepted in Chinese academic circles. However, quite a few scholars question this translation, arguing that "Huayu" cannot accurately express the original meaning of "discourse" in Western literary theories. They consider such a translation to be only a temporary solution because it is really difficult to find a Chinese word that exactly corresponds to "discourse" in English (Wang Fengzhen, 1994:130). Some also point out that there is no clear and direct counterpart in modern Chinese culture which can faithfully convey the meaning of the concept of "discourse", and what we can find are only words with similar meanings, such as Hua, Jianghua or Shuohua, Yanshuo, Fayan, Wenzhang, Yanyu, Yanshuo, Yanlun, Guandian, Kanfa, Shuofa, etc. Huayu is "a new term and a new concept adopted in the field of foreign language studies in accordance with the principle of 'borrowing new words from foreign cultures'" (Shi Xu, 2008:134). There are different understandings of "Huayu" in Chinese academic circles. Ji Xianlin believes that such a new word has a lot of connotations, while it mainly refers to terminology in literary theory and studies (Ji Xianlin, 1996:6). Jin Kemu states that "discourse" emerged as one of the key terms in a new trend of thought that began in the 20th century which is closely

related to linguistics, psychology, literature and art, philosophy, etc. In his opinion, it is not equal to "language" or "parole" but is an extension of an ancient thought, that is, there exists a certain linguistic world which is not what ancient Greek and ancient Jews called "logos". The world of "discourse" is different from the real world, but they are somehow interrelated (Jin Kemu, 1996:243). Comparatively speaking, Jin Kemu's interpretation of the connotation of "Huayu" is closer to that of "discourse" in Western literary theory. Lévi-Strauss proposes that discourse is the third level beyond language and parole, and Michel Pêcheux believes that it is neither language nor parole, while Foucault further points out that discourse cannot be reduced to language or parole because it does more than what these symbols refer to, although it is composed of symbols.

Many scholars discussed the translation of the concept in terms of different understandings, divided opinions and confusion in use, among which some representative views are as follows: First, the word "discourse" refers to "language and ways of expression with inherent stable structural relations", which is contrary to the meaning of "discourse" in Foucault's opinion because he states that what "discourse" conveys is not stability and continuity but a process full of ruptures and gaps. In linguistics, discourse is taken as a larger unit of language analysis, so it can be translated as "Lunshu", while in literary and cultural theories, it is considered to be a "process of dialogue, communication and constant discussion and struggle", which emphasizes its political and dynamic aspects. Therefore, it can be translated as "Lunjie" since the Chinese character "Jie" carries the meaning of "dialogue and questioning" (See Xu Baoqiang, 2000:288). Second, Western scholars define the concept "diskurs" (the German word corresponding to English "discourse") in various ways, which can be summarized as "a socially prescribed mode of discourse with certain inevitability formed under specific historical conditions and universally recognized by the public". Foucault proposes that the essence of "diskurs" lies in the fact that in any society, its production is controlled and adjusted through a series of procedures. These procedures

> exclude the centrifugal force and danger of discourse in a certain way, control its arbitrary and unpredictable wildness, and discipline its original form, thus making it become the permitted discourse of the ruling order and the recognized repetition of the order.

Specifically, only "permitted", "rational" and "true" discourse can be recognized and exist in society. According to Foucault's theory, "Huayu" is quite different from the original meaning of "diskurs". In view of the fact that, up to now, Chinese academia haven't reached an agreement as to the translation of "discourse" which can exactly correspond to its original meaning, so Zhang Guofeng argues that it can be translated into "Huayu Dingshi" (See Zhang Guofeng, 1999:206–207). Both views use Foucault's discourse theory as a frame of reference: "Lunjie" highlights the instability, discontinuity and

dialogicality of "discourse", while "Huayu Dingshi" emphasizes the control and regulation that the procedure of exclusion exerts over "discourse". Both of the translations reflect translators' endeavours to faithfully convey and represent the profound theoretical connotations of "discourse" according to Foucault's opinion.

In recent years, some scholars try to explore the problems in translating "discourse" into "Huayu" in Chinese from the perspective of the French word "discours". First, "Huayu" in Chinese and "discours" in French are very different. In French the word that comes closest to "discours" is "langage", but these two words differ in their focus. The former is from the perspective of text and works, while the latter is from the perspective of language. Therefore, in order to show the difference between these two words, "langage" is often translated into "Yanyu", while "discours" can be translated as "Yanshuo". The word "discours" in French can be used in both written and spoken language, but it is more commonly written when used alone. It is a neutral word and implies collectivity, which is often translated into "Yanshuo" in Japanese and Korean. In fact, this translation is also frequently adopted in Hong Kong and Taiwan. In Chinese journals and academic works in Hong Kong, Taiwan and other places, "discourse" has also been translated into "Shushuo", "Xushu", "Shuofa", "Yanshuo" and so on. Scholars in Taiwan translated "discourse" into "Yanshuo" in the first English monograph on discourse studies to be introduced into China: *Theories of Discourse*. Second, the Chinese translation "Huayu" seems to have become a widespread and all-inclusive myth of "discourse" in Chinese academic circles, which is probably related to the Vernacular Movement in China's early 20th century. "There is also the distinction between 'Yan' and 'Hua' in Chinese language. 'Yan' is in the position of 'standard', while 'Hua' is the language of real life." Through the investigation of the development history of Chinese classical literary theory, Shi Zhongyi points out that it is difficult to distinguish "Shihua" originated from the Song Dynasty from "Shuohua", because it contains the meaning of Huayu at the very beginning. When scholars of the late Qing Dynasty spoke of "Cihua" in the Tang and Song Dynasties, and in the Song and Yuan Dynasties, "Hua" also meant to highlight the individuality of the object of study and the author's opinions (See Shi Zhongyi, 2008:268–270). Therefore, "Yanshuo" is a more appropriate translation of the French word "discours".

"Shuowen jiezi" (*Analytical Dictionary of Characters*), the first Chinese dictionary to make a systematic analysis of the font style and etymology of Chinese characters, explains the characters "Yan", "Yu", "Shuo", "Hua", respectively, as follows: "Yan means to speak frankly, while Yu refers to argue against the opponent's viewpoints." The difference between "Yan" and "Yu" lies in two aspects: for one thing, in a conversation, initiating dialogue is called "Yan", while responding to and arguing against one's partner is called "Yu"; for another, "Yan" means to tell one's own stories, while "Yu" refers to being spoken of by others. "'Yu' means argument." "Yu" can refer to a person

arguing what is right or wrong, or a person responding to and arguing against others, which is quite similar to "Lun" and "Yi" in meaning. "'Shuo' means explanation." "Shuo" carries the meaning of straightening someone out and easing his or her anxieties. "Hua" means being good at speaking (Duan Yucai, 1981:89, 93). Hence, "Hua Yu" in Chinese focusses on speaking, arguing and debating, while "Yan Shuo" emphasizes the elaboration and explanation of one's own views and the subjectivity of the speaker in particular. Both of the translations can justify themselves because they agree with the common usages of the word "discourse" in British and American authoritative dictionaries.

When discourse theory travels to the Chinese context, the first difficulty it encounters is the issue of language conversion, so translation of the key concept of "discourse" becomes especially important.

> Translation as a kind of action may not turn out to be perfect in another cultural context, and may be difficult to represent equivalently the original text, but it can play an important role of introduction, transplantation, borrowing and inspiration in cross-cultural communication.
>
> (Wang Xiaolu, 2003:294)

Although there are still controversies and doubts about the translation of "discourse", the very existence of its different translations witnesses the process in which a term originating in a Western context becomes increasingly sinicized in Chinese context. Chinese scholars endeavour to interpret the theoretical connotations of this term from different perspectives, frames of reference and discipline contexts, which stimulates the theoretical vitality of "discourse" and to some extent prolongs the life of discourse theory in China. Moreover, how the term "discourse" emerges and develops is a rather complicated historical process, and its meanings vary in different periods and according to different discourse theorists. Therefore, translating "discourse" into Chinese cannot be done once and for all, and it's impossible to find out the most exact or definite equivalent in Chinese. Rather, it has to be constantly adjusted with deepening understanding and studies of discourse theory in Chinese academia. In this sense, the translation of "discourse" as a term of modern literary criticism can be regarded as a continuing conversation between Chinese scholars and Western discourse theorists in which misreading, misinterpretation, cultural clash and conflict may be inevitable due to different theoretical contexts and the cultural realities of both sides of the conversation. However, as such conversation is deepened and widened, the profusion and openness of "discourse" will become increasingly apparent.

Clarification and reflection on "discourse" as a key concept

Since the 1990s, a series of "Key concepts" have come out in succession in Western academia, and reviews and comments on key terms or concepts in literary studies have become an important way for Western scholars to

critically re-examine and reinterpret literary theories. Terms or concepts are deeply rooted in texts shared by a certain civilization and contain a complicated history. The emergence and evolution of terms or concepts often reflects the development of modes of literary studies; thus misunderstanding and misreading of those terms or concepts will lead to the cognitive deviation of literary thoughts. In view of the fact that scholars are often confronted with the problem of different translations and vague explanations of terms or concepts while introducing and employing those terms in Western literary theory, the journal *Foreign Literature* set up the column "Lecture of Literary Theory: Concepts and Terms" in January 2002, with the aim of reviewing and analyzing the developing and evolving history of key terms and concepts in Western literary theory in a detailed and ingenious way (see Preface in Zhao Yifan, et al., 2006). Under such circumstance, scholars begin to examine and reflect on the concept evolution and theoretical connotations of "discourse" as one of the key concepts of modern critical theory.

A focussed examination and interpretation of "discourse" can be dated to Wang Fengzhen's "What is Discourse—A Term Which is Difficult to Define but should be Defined" (*Theory and Criticism of Literature and Art*, second issue, 1994) and Zhang Kuan's "Discourse" in Du Shu (fifth issue, 1995). The two essays are quite similar in their mode of analysis of the concept of "discourse". First, both of them point out the problem in the translation of "discourse". These translations in Chinese journals and academic works in mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and other places are not consistent, and the commonly adopted translation "Huayu" fails to accurately convey the original meaning of this concept in the English context. Second, both of the essays start with the use of the concept of "discourse" in New Criticism, then focus on Foucault's discourse theory, including genealogy of discourse, the relationship between discourse and power, and the relationship between discourse and subject. At the end of the two essays, the authors emphasize the idea that discourse theory can provide reference and inspiration for literary studies and literary criticism.

> Discourse theory has shifted the focus of literary criticism from paying much attention to meaning and methods to analyzing functions and effects. Today's critics tend to pose questions from the perspective of discourse, and ponder over and reflect on language, knowledge, disciplines, public institutions and so on.
>
> (See Wang Fengzhen, 1994:130–135;
> Zhang Kuan, 1995:132–134)

Both of the essays also remind us not to blindly follow discourse theory as a new authoritative theory but to accept it critically.

Since 2002, a number of theoretical dictionaries oriented towards studies of key concepts have come out: *Key Concepts in Western Literary Theory* (Zhao Yifan, et al., 2006), *Key Words in Literary and Critical Studies* (Liao Binghui, 2006) and *A Study of Key Concepts in Critical Criticism* (Wang Xiaolu, 2007) all contain the entry "Huayu" and clarify and elucidate the

origin, connotations and evolution of the term from different aspects and perspectives. By comparing discourse with text, utterance, register and ideology, Chen Yongguo demonstrates that "discourse" contains complicated and diverse meanings, and has a great variety of usages, and elaborates particularly on core concepts such as "statement", "discourse configuration", "power" and so on in Foucault's discourse theory. Liao Binghui points out that "discourse" is often mentioned along with "colonial discourse" and "discourse of power", which, to some extent, confirms that the concept of discourse power has exerted wide-ranging influence in academic circles. He briefly reviews the changes of meaning of "discourse" between the 16th century and the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and then focusses his discussion on Foucault's discourse theory. Wang Xiaolu's studies are based on the definitions and interpretations of "discourse" in Western academic writings on discourse studies and authoritative dictionaries on literary theory and critical terms for literary study, and probe into the relationship between discourse theory and literary study. He argues that discourse analysis in literary study is multi-tasked, which requires not only the analyses of the constitutive factors of literary texts but also the overall and process analyses of these literary texts. In particular, great importance should be attached to the analyses of "the discourse that constitutes a series of texts centering on people in society that reflect individual, group and psychological activities" (Wang Xiaolu, 2007:204). In addition, he states that when applying discourse analysis of literary texts, we should be fully aware of the rich theoretical connotations of "discourse" and its external constraints and internal rule. All the research above is conducive to our understanding of the theoretical connotations of "discourse" in a Western context, but they have similar oversight and defect to a varying degree. First, the emergence and evolution of terms or concepts is often rooted in a specific social, historical and cultural background; therefore an exploration of the evolution and development of the meanings of terms should be placed in its original historical context as much as possible. Second, as the editors of *Key Concepts in Western Literary Theory* said in the preface, the purpose of keyword research lies not only in clarifying the original meanings of concepts and terms but, more importantly, in revealing the acceptance, development and variation of Western literary theory in China. To some extent, all the research above has ignored this original intention.

  By contrast, the essay "What is Discourse" by Wen Guiliang makes up for the deficiencies of the above studies to some extent. It begins with a summary of the three fields in which the concept of "discourse" is applied in Chinese academic circles, that is, linguistics, narratology and the multidisciplinary fields dominated by philosophy and the history of thoughts. At the same time, he admits that his review mainly includes the most important points and is far from enough because, in his opinion, a more detailed discussion of "discourse" must be placed in the development history of Western thought in the 20th century. Moreover, he proposed the "theory

of discourse as existence" on the basis of Foucault's discourse theory, which consists of discourse at three levels: language/speech, statement and existence. Theory of discourse as existence is not only theoretical construction but also provides guidance in methodology. Different from the method of discourse analysis in linguistics, this methodology contains three steps: First, describe the formation of the discourse mode; second, describe the characteristics of the discourse mode; third, describe the living state of the subject or object of discourse (Wen Guiliang, 2008:51–58). Hence, he goes a step further than the previous research on key concept study because, for one thing, his "theory of discourse as existence" represents Chinese scholars' unique interpretation of the concept of "discourse" after travelling to China. For another, it is also an inspiring attempt to reconceptualize the term in a Chinese context.

The emphasis on studies of key concepts not only embodies a theoretical pursuit of standardization and specialization in the field of literary study and criticism but also highlights the academic consciousness of exploring the construction of contemporary Chinese literary theory and criticism from its theoretical origin and research basis. The latter approach is exemplified in Jin Yongbin's examination and discussion on "discourse" as one of the central categories of contemporary literary theory. In *An Introduction to Key Categories in Contemporary Literary Theory* (2011), he first reviews the historical evolution of the concept of "discourse" by delineating the two stages of development: "discourse" at the linguistic level and "discourse" at the supra-linguistic level. Then he focusses his discussions on various discourse theories pertaining to issues of "discourse" at the supra-linguistic level, aiming to stress the interdisciplinary nature and complex multiple connotations of discourse theories. Compared with previous studies on key concept "discourse", the author makes further attempts at exploring and reflecting on the significance and problems after the key concept "discourse" travels to China from the following three aspects: First, after tortuous and complex evolution, "discourse" has not only become a key concept in the contemporary academic field but also become increasingly popular and a part of daily life, which shows its inherent vitality on the one hand, while, on the other hand, in the process of its popularization, it is faced with the predicament of constant expansion and vulgarization. In addition, the interdisciplinary travel of discourse theory not only expands the theoretical horizon of research but also faces the issue of being incapable of going beyond itself. Discourse theorists after Foucault cannot surpass his research mode, and the analyses of specific texts from the perspective of discourse theory sometimes give too much priority to theory and have the tendency of over-interpretation; additionally, discourse theory is closely related to the current situation of contemporary culture and adheres to the fundamental position of dialogue and sense of social responsibility (Jin Yongbing, 2011:233). Studies on "discourse" in China go from reviewing it as a key concept to incorporating it into the system of important categories in contemporary literary theory, which not only

promotes and deepens the study and reinterpretation of discourse theory in China but also fully confirms the important influence and theoretical vitality of discourse theory on contemporary Chinese literary study and criticism.

Reception and reconstruction of "discourse" in Chinese literary study and criticism

Before continuing, it is worthwhile to mention that since "discourse" travels to China across time and space, it has gone through the channel of pressure arising from a variety of theoretical and practical texts. From its translation and introduction into Chinese academic circles to reviews of its origins and connotations, and its reinterpretation and reconceptualization in response to specific social reality, the process of its reception in the Chinese context inevitably bears the feature of variation and transformation because of context change and cultural filtering.

Selective acceptance of discourse theory in the context of Chinese cultural reality

Since the 1990s, Foucault's concept of "discourse power" has become the focus of attention in the field of Chinese literary theory and criticism. Scholars explore its significance as reference and inspiration for contemporary study of Chinese literary theory or adopt it as a new theoretical perspective from which to analyse the practice of literary criticism or employ it as an insightful analytical method for "rewriting literary history", which reveals its theoretical vitality in the history of contemporary Chinese literary criticism. This selective acceptance of Foucault's discourse theory is indeed a response to Chinese cultural reality and thus has its roots in a profound historical and cultural background and realistic context. However, it also reflects the relatively simple and limited perspective of reception. To some extent, the excessive emphasis on Foucault's theory of discourse power undoubtedly obscures the ideological resources of other discourse theorists who have also played an important role in the construction and development of discourse theory. In addition, Foucault's theory has been somehow simplified and mechanized after coming to the Chinese context. In fact, his concept of discourse power is only a constituent part of his discourse theory, which cannot cover the rich and multifaceted theoretical space opened by his concept of discourse.

In the history of discourse theory's reception in China, Foucault has been consistently in the spotlight. When scholars speak of "discourse" or "discourse theory", Foucault's views are the most frequently quoted source. Among them, his concept of "discourse power" has exerted a far-reaching influence on Chinese literary theory and criticism since the 1990s. As a kind of pioneering theoretical resource, it has become a key concept in the history of contemporary Chinese literary criticism and has occupied the central

position of "axis of attention" or "focus of dispute" (Nan Fan, 2003:1–2). Chen Xiaoming's *Traces of Deconstruction: History, Discourse and Subject* elaborates on the power nature of discourse and states that Foucault identifies power relations in the operation of discourse practice. "The internal adjustment of discourse endows internal things with order and meaning, which in nature gives them the power to generate meaning, and to gain access to a certain order" (Chen Xiaoming, 1994:62–87). Furthermore, the author points out the symbiosis between discourse and power in Foucault's views, that is, the mutual dependence and production between the two. On the one hand, power, as a structure and internal framework, combines different discourses; on the other, power must be generated in a specific discourse and under its control. On the basis of theoretical discussions, Chen Xiaoming also makes an in-depth analysis of realistic discourse, romantic and modernist discourse, and postmodernism and Chinese contemporary avant-garde discourse, with the aim of revealing the hidden historical motives behind people's accepted discourse and the way they identify with it. In *Structuralism and Post-structuralism in China* (2002), Chen Xiaoming and Yang Peng discuss Foucault's theory of discourse power, which can be taken as an important subject of his archaeology of knowledge, with knowledge configuration in a specific historical context as its object of study. The value of his concept of discourse power lies in its "penetrating force of history and critique of reality" (Chen Xiaoming and Yang Peng, 2002:155–162).

In addition to interpretation and analyses of Foucault's theory of discourse power, Nan Fan reviews and summarizes the influence and inspiration of the concept of discourse power on contemporary Chinese literary theory from four aspects: First, the concept of discourse power changes people's traditional understanding of literature. Literature should be redefined as a kind of discourse that conceals social, cultural and political power. Thus, literary creation becomes the production of power discourse, and writers should use their power of discourse with caution. Second, the meaning and function of literary criticism should be re-examined. Literary criticism is involved in the discourse reproduction of society, and under the influence of discourse power, it will re-engage in social practice and cultural criticism. Third, the analytical method of discourse power infiltrates into people's understanding and interpretation of literary history, in the vicissitude of which are embedded the complicated relations and operation of various social powers. Finally, the concept of discourse power begins to enter the field of literary theory, and literary theory, with the tendency towards "discourse analysis", "rediscovered the hidden connection between discourse and social history" (Nan Fan, 2003:277–279). Wang Yuechuan also believes that Foucault's analytical framework of discourse power provides reference and inspiration for contemporary literary and art theories. He argues that under the theoretical perspective of discourse power, contemporary literary and art theories should not be confined to pure theoretical speculation but

move towards a larger cultural discourse field and practice of literary and artistic activities (Wang Yuechuan, 1998:52–58).

At the same time, in the process of identifying with Foucault's theory of discourse power, scholars rationally analyze and criticize the overgeneralization of discourse power, which shows that they can make sensible judgement on Western theories introduced into Chinese academic circles. Two representative arguments of such analyses and criticism are as follows: First, Foucault relies so much on power analysis in his construction of discourse theory that he confines himself to the mode of "power analysis" based on the generalization of the concept of power. Power analysis has become the main perspective and theoretical weapon of critique of cultural practices at all levels, almost all of which are placed in the framework of power analysis, including sex, writing, political or literary criticism and so on. "This undoubtedly leads to his great success, while at the same time results in his internal theoretical crisis" (Wang Yuechuan, 1998:55). Second, some critics worry that while fully revealing the operating mechanism of knowledge power, Foucault is actually creating another kind. What he has revealed is such a shocking fact that the symbiotic relationship between discourse and power, i.e., interdependence and mutual production, as well as the operating forms and sophisticated technologies of discourse power are very likely to give rise to much more sophisticated and strategic power construction and operating modes. However, his revelation of this fact does not constitute an obstacle or resistance to the operation of power mechanism; instead it may make discourse power more prevalent (Chen Xiaoming, 1994:74). Chen Pingyuan also expresses his dissatisfaction with the generalization of the power of Foucault's discourse views. In his opinion, some scholars since the 1990s have identified with Foucault's discourse power to such a degree that they consistently investigate the motives under the surface when discussing problems. This analytical method is admittedly profound but may also turn out be partial and even mislead the literary research.

The selective acceptance of Foucault's discourse theory in Chinese academic circles is closely related to profound historical and cultural background and realistic context. As Said asks, what happens to a theory or idea when it arises as a result of specific historical circumstances or when it is re-used and accepted in different circumstances and for new reasons (Said, 2000:197–219)? The investigation of "different circumstances" and "new reasons" is helpful to reveal the reasons behind the evolution of discourse theory.

In Foucault's discourse theory, the reason the concept of "discourse power" had such a prominent influence on Chinese literary theory and criticism lay in the specific historical context in which it travelled to China. In fact, as early as the middle and late 1980s, scholars began to introduce Foucault's concept of discourse power into Chinese academia, as exemplified in *Structuralism and Post-Structuralism* (Xu Chongwen, 1986) and *Textual Strategies* (Meng Yue et al., 1988). The authors preliminarily reviewed Foucault's concept of discourse power, but their efforts did not

attract wide attention in Chinese academia at that time, which was some-
what associated with the enlightenment as the dominant trend of Chinese
literary theory and criticism. In the 1980s, "people's interest and attention
centered on Kant's subjectivity, Sartre's existentialism and Wellek's 'inter-
nal study'. Therefore, Foucault's criticism and reflection on enlightenment,
subjectivism and structuralism did not attract extensive attention in the
ideological circle." The widespread application of the concept of discourse
power was directly related to the ideological transformation in China's
academic circles in the 1990s. "People's attitudes towards enlightenment
turn from enthusiasm to scepticism, hence Foucault's views have aroused
great interest in the ideological circle" (Nan Fan, 2003:276–277). Another
reason Foucault's concept of discourse power attracted wide attention was
that since the 1990s, Chinese translations of Foucault's important works
have been coming out in succession, including *Madness and Civilization*,
The Archaeology of Knowledge, *Discipline and Punish*, *The Order of Things*
and *The History of Sexuality* as well as works on Foucault study, as ex-
emplified in *The Eyes of Power—Interviews with Foucault* and *Power and
Resistance*. These translated works provided abundant resources and con-
venient conditions for scholars to quote and absorb Foucault's concept of
discourse power. It was worth noting that in the process of fusion of ho-
rizons, Chinese scholars' acceptance of Foucault's discourse theory was
somehow limited and obscured from the very beginning when introduced
into Chinese academic circles. For example, Xu Chongwen's *Structuralism
and Post-Structuralism* defined Foucault as a "power analyst" and asserted
that power theory was at the center of his thoughts. To some extent, the
publication of *The Eyes of Power—Interviews with Foucault*, *Power and Re-
sistance* and other translated works, as well as monographs on Foucault's
ideas, guided and restricted academic acceptance of his discourse theory.
For example, Wang Zhihe focussed his discussions on Foucault's discourse
theory and power philosophy. These translations of Foucault's works and
researches on Foucault have been involved in the knowledge production
of discourse theory as they grow increasingly. As Foucault once warned,
discourse power often led to the production of power discourse, and it was
discourse that constructed the object of knowledge as well as the object of
speech. Although Foucault made it clear that he did not want people to
understand his thoughts by reading other peoples' works on him, he also
realized that this might be his inevitable fate in the future.

Admittedly, the selective acceptance of discourse theory can be regarded
as a response to the Chinese cultural reality, but it also reflects the relatively
simple and limited perspective of reception in Chinese academic circles.
Discourse theory originating from the Western context is characterized by
diversity and heterogeneity, so it is necessary to explore the dynamic history
of the development and change of the concept of "discourse" in order to
approach and fully grasp its rich theoretical connotations. Many scholars
besides Foucault also play an important role in constructing and developing

discourse theory, such as Benveniste, Althusser, Pêcheux and scholars who are dedicated to exploring Foucault's reference and inspiration for feminism and post-colonialism, but they fail to attract much attention in academic circles. Only a few scholars have commented on the relationship between Althusser and Pêcheux's ideological theory and discourse research (Zhao Yifan, 1994:92–101), but this has had little impact in academic circles. It is worthwhile to note that with the continuous advancement of discourse research, Chinese scholars have come to consciously track and introduce the development of Western discourse theories in recent years. For example, the journal *Cultural Studies*, in volumes 5 and 6, set up a column entitled "Discourse Analysis: Theory and China", aimed at an in-depth exploration of the research approach of post-Marxist discourse theory and discourse analysis, as represented by Laclau in contemporary Chinese ideological history at the theoretical and operational levels.

In addition, Foucault's discourse theory has been simplified and mechanized to a certain extent after coming to a Chinese context. In fact, his concept of discourse power is only a constituent part of his discourse theory, which cannot cover the rich theoretical space opened by his concept of discourse. According to Stuart Hall, the complete meaning of Foucault's discourse theory should be approached and understood from three points: First, discourse can be produced by many individuals in different institutional backgrounds. Any discourse constructs a certain position from the perspective of the meaning it endows. Therefore, anyone who uses discourse must orient himself as if he were the subject of discourse. Second, discourse is not a closed system, and it absorbs and employs the elements of other discourses and incorporates them into its own network of meaning. Third, statements in the same discursive formation are not necessarily identical to one another, but their relations and differences must be regular and systematic rather than random (Zhou Xian, 2007:133). Li Tuo also points out that Foucault's discourse theory opens up a large space for thought and knowledge, but people often ignore where his real contribution lies, that is, "putting forward the question what knowledge is once again under new historical conditions, and placing people's cognitive behavior in a new framework, and trying to understand and account for it in the history of discourse practice" (Li Tuo, 2010:43). Wu Meng's doctoral thesis *A Study of Foucault's Discourse Theory* (2004) is the first comprehensive and systematic analyses of Foucault's discourse theory in Chinese academia. He argues that the theoretical foundation of Foucault's discourse theory is the "function" of discourse, and on this basis he examines the development history of discourse theory from four modes, classified according to different manifestations of discourse function: the level of discourse/world, the level of discourse/discourse, the level of discourse/power and the level of discourse/self. In addition, he compares the concept of "discourse" with "function" as its core with other concepts, including sign, language, knowledge and truth. His study can be taken as a theoretical

reflection and rectification of the existing problem in previous research on Foucault's discourse theory, which has long been reduced and simplified as discourse power.

Behind the simplified and mechanized reading of Foucault's discourse theory lies the problem of how to look at theoretical reflection. If we probe into the reason behind such simplified and mechanized interpretation, we may find that Chinese scholars tend to

> adopt the reflection in western theories simply as a tool to find and solve problems, while ignoring a more important aspect of it, that is, as a discourse platform, it can gather together problems, methods and contradictions of the same sort.

Theoretical reflection is the "habit" of questioning and reflecting on the existing system of knowledge, which is not an abstract slogan or position but requires a practical and in-depth exploration of existing knowledge.

> To truly stimulate the vitality of discourse power theory, we must seek out the possibility of knowledge in the deepest part of the contradiction between history, power and value--not only to discover power after discourse, but also to re-understand power on the platform of discourse practice.
>
> (Tang Yonghua, 2009:83)

To a large extent, discourse theory is regarded mostly as a means of research in Chinese academic circles, which inevitably leads to the instrumentalization of discourse theory and greatly weakens the power of criticism and the reflection of Western discourse theory since Foucault.

Discourse analysis: a new perspective of Chinese literary theory and criticism

As the concept "discourse" has been extensively used in academic circles, more and more scholars have come to realize that discourse theory can provide methodological enlightenment for literary study and criticism.

> Nowadays, 'discourse' has become such a frequently used category in Chinese academia, that people no longer discuss 'discourse' from the perspective of New Criticism, nor from the perspective of Pragmatics, but from the perspective of reconstructing the paradigm of contemporary literary theory and criticism.
>
> (Yang Junlei, 2003:iii)

First, the introduction of the concept of "discourse" has updated the ideas of Chinese literary study and criticism, and provided a new theoretical

framework and research perspective for the overall reflection and development of Chinese literary theory and criticism. Since the 1990s, a number of textbooks on literary theory have incorporated the concept of "discourse" or that of discourse theory into the compiling system, aiming to redefine and reinterpret the nature of literature, as exemplified in *Literary Theory* (Tong Qingbing, 1992), *A New Course of Literary Theory* (Nan Fan, 2002), *The Basic Issues of Literary Theory* (Tao Dongfeng, 2004) and so on. In fact, introducing the concept of "discourse" into textbooks on literary theory leads them to go through a process of constant interpretation and renewal. On the one hand, redefining the nature of literature from the perspective of discourse means that discourse theory expands the horizon of Chinese literary theory and critical studies. On the other hand, constant reinterpretation of the concept of "discourse" as well as modification of the concept through the ideas of ideology also offers a detailed presentation of the history of evolution and a reconstruction of "discourse" in a Chinese context.

The textbook *Literary Theory*, edited by Tong Qingbing, has been revised many times, and during the process of revision we can find that the concept of "discourse" has been consistently updated. In the first edition of *Literary Theory* (1992), literature is defined as a kind of ideological discourse for the following two reasons: First, it refers to the communication activities between the speaker and the addressee through text in a specific context, including five constituent elements: the speaker, the addressee, text, communication and context. Therefore, compared with text, discourse has a broader meaning and is more suitable for expressing the overall characteristics of literature as an activity. Second, literature is not merely individual discourse behaviour but social discursive activity in which various relations or elements interact with one another. Hence, discourse can highlight the ideological nature of literature (Tong Qingbing, 1992:76–78). By contrast, the revised edition of 1998 attempts to give a more accurate interpretation of "discourse", which is no longer the abbreviation of "discourse activities and discourse products" described in the first edition but "specific language activities and products". In the attached notes, the author points out that "discourse" here is not identical to discourse in a linguistic sense but contains different meanings, as explained from the perspective of human activities. By comparing "discourse" with "language", "langue" and "parole", the author concludes that "discourse" has more rich and complex connotations than even the "sum" of langue and parole (Tong Qingbing, 1998:59–60). Compared with the revised second edition published in 2004, the fourth edition, revised in 2008, adds the following explanations when discussing the aesthetic ideological attributes of literature: It was a new attempt in the early 1990s to introduce "aesthetic ideology" into textbooks of literary theory as a core category for understanding the basic attributes of literature. The 2008 edition links this core category with the concept of "discourse" that had been prevailing in Western academic circles since the 1960s, and then combines "discourse" with the concept of "implication" in

Chinese classical literary theory to form a new concept of "discourse implication", hence redefining the attributes of literature as follows: "literature is a kind of language art, and aesthetic ideology in discourse implication" (Tong Qingbing, 2008:55, 72). Furthermore, the revised second edition does not explain the source of the author's interpretation of the concept of "discourse", while the fourth edition clearly points out that it is based on Foucault and other theorists' ideas on discourse that literature can be regarded as discourse or discursive practice, which aims at highlighting its specific social relevance as a "language art" and its close relationship with social power. In addition, what is also noteworthy in the fourth edition in 2008 is that it modifies Foucault's concept of "discourse," according to Marxist ideas of social practice and ideology. Ideology is closely related to "discourse" or "discursive practice" and is a complex field which connects discourse with real social life. Therefore, ideology can be described as "a concrete and complex way of connection between people's social discourse and the real social relations in which people are located", which contains two connotations as follows: "first, it is the discourse in oral or written form; Secondly, there is close connection between such discourse and real social life" (Tong Qingbing, 2008:66).

Based on Habermas's views of discourse communication, Tao Dongfeng's *The Basic Issues of Literary Theory* regards literary discourse as an intermediary agent of communication. It holds that discourse embodies the "intermediary" characteristic of literary activities, so literary activities can be considered part of the process of communication and interaction between the speaker and the addressee through text. Literary discourse is "hyperlinguistic" in nature, that is, literature is not only the art of language but also the art of discourse, while such hyperlinguistic nature can only be achieved through language. At the same time, given that in Foucault's opinion, discourse is the transcendence of langue/parole dichotomy, the hyperlinguistic nature of literary discourse ultimately points to "the realm of aesthetic freedom" because what literary discourse diligently strives for is also to "go beyond 'the signifier' and 'the signified'". In this sense, the realm of aesthetic freedom is a kind of "double transcendence" (Tao Dongfeng, 2007:132–134). Nan Fan's *A New Course of Literary Theory* clearly points out that discourse analysis is the focus of literary theory, which has drawn on various discourse theories, including post-structuralism. In this sense, literary theory and criticism as discourse analysis obviously have the function of cultural politics. "Discourse analysis is becoming another angle through which we can approach literary theory--the intersection of literature, language and social history" (Nan Fan, 2002:11). Like New Criticism, Russian Formalism and Structuralism, discourse analysis also takes language as its starting point, but it goes further to rediscover the hidden connection between discourse and social history instead of ending up with language. In the domain of literary theory, "discourse is no longer an isolated category, on the contrary, it has become the axis which gathers various problems together" (Nan Fan,

2002:10). Besides, the book defines literature as a certain type of discourse by borrowing Foucault's concept of "discourse" and explores the distinction between literary discourse and other types of discourse, which leads us to query the validity of the question of "what literature is". In this sense, the approach from ontology to epistemology and function represents an important turn in studies on literary theory. From emphasizing the "hyperlinguistic" nature of literary discourse to taking discourse analysis as the focus of literary theory, both textbooks of literary theory adopt anti-essentialism as their research standpoint. Under the guidance of discourse theory, literary theory has increasingly become an open, historicized and localized study.

In light of discourse theory, contemporary literary theory and criticism has experienced two transitions: One is the turn from the external study of literature to internal study, and the other is the turn from internal study back to external study. The linguistic turn in the field of literary theory and criticism urges scholars to pay close attention to the internal study of literature and emphasize its self-discipline, while discourse theory brings about the refocus on the external study of literature and reaffirms its heteronomy (See Sun Hui, 2002:59–64). Zhou Xian argues that in the overall development of literary theory, there have been two "linguistic turns" in different directions: the first is the construction of language paradigm, while the second is the construction of discourse paradigm. The turn from language to discourse brings about two changes to the paradigm of literary studies: First, the prominence of the subject in literary research has changed the traditional concept of literary study in academic circles. Scholars have come to realize that literature as discursive practice contains complex power and social relations, and literary activities are full of the struggles of oppression and resistance. Second, as a paradigm of literary research, discourse reintroduces the historical dimension into literary study. Literature distinctly reflects the unique operation mechanism and control procedure of discursive formation under specific social, historical and cultural backgrounds. The discourse paradigm enables the interdisciplinary expansion of literary theory, and at the same time, it defends differences as well as deconstruct boundaries. "A relative and local discourse analysis of differences has become the main concern of literary research" (Zhou Xian, 2008:5–15). In addition, Zhang Jie points out that contemporary literary criticism turns from literary linguistics criticism to literary discourse criticism, with scientific paradigm and artistic paradigm, respectively, acting as their philosophical basis. Huang Nianran further proposes construction of a new model of literary criticism: "discourse criticism" to meet the needs of the development of contemporary literary criticism. The advantages of the mode of "discourse criticism" lie in the fact that it is more targeted, strategic, critical and integrated (See Zhang Jie, 1998:21–24; Huang Nianran, 2004:332–335).

Moreover, as far as critical practice is concerned, discourse theory can provide scholars with reference and inspiration for critical methods. Representative works of critical discourse include Yan Feng's *Modern Discourse*

(1997) and Zhang Taozhou's *Poetic Space of Modern Chinese: a Discourse Study of New Poetry* (2005). In *Modern Discourse*, Yan Feng agrees with Foucault's concept of discourse, and then puts forward his own way of interpreting discourse, that is, discourse is not isolated but a kind of polyphonic or multi-level reverberation in which we can hear "desire, history, historical unconsciousness and many other heterogeneous elements" intermingle with one another. On this basis, he thoroughly and meticulously analyzes four discourse types of literature in the new era: symbolic discourse, spatio-temporal discourse, realistic discourse and ironic and absurd discourse, thus effectively practicing the specific "discourse practice" that Foucault emphasizes. Zhang Taozhou analyzes the discourse of new poetry from the perspective of the discourse theory of Bakhtin and Foucault, which in his opinion can be taken as the examination of context changes of Chinese language and Chinese poetry, highlighting the interaction and constraint relationship between language and historical context. In this sense, the introduction of the concept of "discourse" into the study of new poetry not only changes the research perspective but more importantly provides a new research paradigm to deal with the "predicament" that the current study of new poetry falls into. In fact, the application of the discourse analysis method is not limited to literary study and criticism. Therefore, it is of great significance to reflect on and draw lessons from research made from the perspective of discourse analysis in other fields of humanities such as the history of thoughts. Liu He's *The Clash of Empires* (2009) focusses on the history of discourse practice rather than that of thoughts deriving from thoughts and studies the international relations between China and foreign countries in modern times from the angle of "discourse politics". Within the framework of Foucault's discourse theory, she ponders the historical formation of knowledge in a new way and makes a unique interpretation as to how discourse practice participates in and creates history, and how to participate in the production of new knowledge. Together with her *Translingual Practice* (2008), these studies have once again confirmed the theoretical power of discourse analysis in terms of methodology.

The exploration of traditional literary discourse and the construction of Chinese discourse research paradigm

As mentioned above, the dissemination and acceptance of discourse theory in China has inevitably had some characteristics of domestication due to the influence of Chinese cultural reality and translation. In recent years, many scholars have been actively engaged in exploring and clarifying the discourse thoughts in traditional Chinese literary theory. From the perspective of Western discourse theory, these scholars try to explore and activate the discourse system of traditional Chinese literary theory by means of its unique way of meaning generation and discourse mode, so as to reconstruct the discourse of contemporary Chinese literary theory in the dialogue between China and the West.

Cao Shunqing defines "discourse" as the basic rule of constructing cultural meanings and points out two inherent discourse rules of traditional Chinese literary theory: one is the mode of meaning generation and the mode of discourse with "Tao (Way)"[6] as its core; the other is the Confucian mode of meaning construction "establishing righteousness according to the classics (Yijing liyi)" and the discourse mode of "interpreting classics (Jiejing)". From the angle of the speaker, the mode of meaning generation with "Tao (Way)" as its core means "what is/was said does not give the fullness of the concept in the mind (Yanbu jinyi)", and the inexpressibility of "Tao (Way)" is also inexpressibility of meaning. From the perspective of way of expression, the mode of meaning generation with "Tao (Way)" as its core can be interpreted as "creating something out of nothing (Wuzhogn shengyou)" and "establishing the Images to give the fullness of the concepts in the mind (Lixiang jinyi)". Image (Xiang) functions as the medium between language (Yan) and concept (Yi), thus creating elastic poetic space. From the point of view of the receiver, the mode of meaning generation with "Tao (Way)" as its core refers to "obtaining the significance and forgetting the words (Deyi wangyan)". When encountering the language, the receiver should go beyond the language and realize the essence of "Tao (Way)" hidden behind the language, under its guidance and hint. The discourse rules of "establishing righteousness according to the classics" are embodied in the mode of thinking of "its source in the way (Yuandao)"; "the Sage (Zhengsheng)"; "revering the Classics (Zongjing)"; the mode of discourse of "sublime words with profound meaning (Weyan dayi)"; the method of interpreting "using our understanding to trace it back to what was originally in the writer's mind (Yiyi nizhi)"; and the operational modes of annotation, commentary, notes, biography and so on. Here, "the so-called 'the Classics (Jing)' is the basis of discourse theory. The profound meaning of 'establishing righteousness according to the classics' is to establish the validity of one's discourse with the help of the transcendental legitimacy of the classics" (Cao Shunqing and Wang Qing, 2008:8–11). Chi Changhai's "Discourse Thoughts of *Zhouyi, The Book of Changes*" proposes that the generalization of Confucian discourse thoughts in *Zhouyi, The Book of Changes* is of great significance for enriching discourse theory with Chinese characteristics. Relevant discourse thoughts are mainly reflected in three aspects. In terms of the relationship between the discourse act and its effect, the author affirms the characteristics of "ci wen" and "zhi yuan" in *Zhouyi, The Book of Changes*, and at the same time fully realizes that the discourse act has the limitation of "not giving the fullness of the concept in the mind". In terms of the relationship between utterance behaviour and context, utterance behaviour is closely related to social background. At the same time, attention should be paid to the timing of utterance in order to achieve the desired effect. From the perspective of the relationship between discourse behaviour and Confucian morality, the essence of discourse behaviour is that words have substance, and words have faith, and the form of discourse is closely related to the inner quality of the subject of discourse (Chi Changhai, 2008:138–144).

In view of the fact that present discourse research is still a kind of academic monologue of the West, some Chinese scholars put forward the assumption of constructing the paradigm of Chinese discourse research and discuss the direction and path of the Sinicization of discourse research in order to realize the pluralistic dialogue of it. So far, many achievements have been made in the efforts to construct the Chinese discourse research system. For example, the academic institution "Center for Contemporary Chinese Discourse Studies of Zhejiang University" was established in 2007, and seminars on "contemporary Chinese discourse studies" and international academic conferences on "discourse and multiculturalism" have been held successively. In addition, this research center has also created the special issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Chinese Discourse Studies* to focus studies on discourse issues from the perspective of language and culture, "which intends to compare the discourse rules of the east and the west and further explore the discourse issues in the past academic dialogue between the east and the west" (See Yue Daiyun, 2008:2). Although the research concept advocates multidisciplinary cooperation among the humanities and social sciences, and its scope has gone far beyond the field of literary research and criticism, the theoretical thinking mode, the foothold of paradigm construction and the independent and equal discourse consciousness of the research subjects are all enlightening to the discourse research in contemporary Chinese literary theory and criticism.

First, critical discourse analysis, as one of the important components of mainstream discourse research, is regarded as a special discourse phenomenon and critically reflected on from the perspective of epistemology, theory and methodology. This critical reflection is intended to deconstruct the universal discourse presented in the study of "critical discourse analysis" and reveal the tendency of Western centralism in its research methods, problematic awareness and cultural perspective. On the one hand, this reflective mode of theoretical thinking requires the object of study to be "regarded as the complex subject to the mutual infiltration of objective and subjective factors, as the result of historical operation and the synthesized product of various current realistic forces"; on the other hand, it requires the researchers to "form an 'epistemological alertness' without interference from the illusion of spontaneous knowledge" (Wang Xiaojun, 2009:86).

Second, it tries to explore, sort out, reinterpret and apply the traditional academic resources that are of great significance to the localization of discourse research in China, including applying the world outlook and thinking mode of traditional Chinese culture to the construction of discourse theory, and proposing the principles that contemporary Chinese discourse research should follow: Discourse should be approached from the overall world view of "harmony between man and nature" and the mode of thinking of "dialectical unity", and combined with the unique characteristics of Chinese discourse, such as "observation (Ticha)", "epiphany (Dun wu)" and etc., which attach equal importance to rationality and experience in the research (See Shi Xu, 2010). Besides, it endeavours to explore and reinterpret

the pre-Qin language philosophy and Chinese traditional literary theory: For example, discussions on the ethical, social nature and social functions of language in pre-Qin language tend to put language in the social context and regard it as "discourse" rather than a mere system of signs (Liu Yameng, 2009:53). The exploration and reinterpretation of the discourse thoughts of traditional Chinese literary theories, especially the Confucian language views, can be approached from three aspects: The theory of the generation and understanding of discourse meaning, with its core idea about "what is/was said does not give the fullness of the concept in the mind"; discourse categories in traditional Chinese literary theories, classical poetics in particular, such as "artistic conception (Yijing)", "wind and bone (Fenggu)", "style of writing (Wenqi)", etc.; as well as the moral standards of the generation and understanding of discourse.

Furthermore, with equal cultural identity and independent discourse consciousness, the research subjects actively carry out dialogues with international academic circles in an effort to achieve cultural diversity and innovation in the academic field. For example, the center for contemporary Chinese discourse studies founded *The Journal of Multicultural Discourses* (published in Routledge in the UK) and the international academic series *Studying Multicultural Discourses* (published in Hong Kong University Press). Shi Xu published *A Cultural Approach to Discourse* in English in 2005 and edited *Discourse as Cultural Struggle* in 2007. Cao Shunqing's paper "The discourse of Chinese literary theory and the dialogue between Western and Chinese literary theories" was published in 2008 in *The Journal of Multicultural Discourses*. They stick to the principle of "discourse independence", pay attention to their own discourse position and highlight their subjectivity in the dialogue. Based on Chinese cultural reality, they endeavour to utter their own voice in international academic circles from their own cultural perspective, theory and method, and engage in equal academic dialogues from a multicultural standpoint. This kind of dialogue is not only conducive to the construction of new discourses and modes of discourse in contemporary China but also can promote complementation and communication between Chinese and Western discourse studies.

The investigation of the history of discourse theory does not mean that it is to be taken as a unified and homogeneous theoretical whole, but it should be regarded as the constructed object of knowledge, and great importance should be attached to the tracing and discussion of the dynamic history of the emergence and construction of diversified and heterogeneous discourse theories. The development history of Western discourse theory is the history of the diverse composition and effective scope of discourse theory. Discourse theorists continue to enrich and expand the connotations of discourse theory through their different knowledge backgrounds and theoretical appeals, which fully highlights the diversity and heterogeneity of such theory. However, in addition to the overall characteristics of diversity and heterogeneity, discourse theory also shows "continuity within discontinuity" in its

dynamic course of development and evolution. The core concepts, such as language, discourse, ideology, knowledge, power, subject, truth, etc., run through the whole process, and they constantly reappear and are closely interwoven with each other to outline the development process and overall trend of a variety of discourses of discourse theory.

The acceptance and development of discourse theory in a Chinese context fully reveals the inner vitality of such theory and opens up a new prospect for literary studies. The significance of discourse theory for literary studies lies in the fact that it provides a new way of thinking, prompting us to question and rethink many issues in literary studies. "Work on discourse has encouraged the self-criticism now being developed in literary studies: the investigation of the historical ways in which 'literature' has been constructed" (Macdonell, 1986:6). Literature, as the object of study, is not a fixed and unchanging object. The assertion that it is an independent object of knowledge with strictly defined boundaries is nothing more than an illusion. The so-called "literary canon" or "great traditions" of literature are all constructed through examination and selection in a specific historical and cultural context. From the perspective of discourse theory, literary texts are placed in a broader field of discursive practice, and the way they are perceived and defined will change accordingly. "They will be inevitably 'rewritten', recycled, put to different uses, inserted into different relations and practices" (Eagleton, 1996:185). The facts that literature is defined as discourse or discursive practice and that the "extralinguistic" nature of literary discourse is emphasized, and discourse analysis is regarded as the focus of literary theory are, to some extent, the "rewriting" or "afterlife" of literature by Chinese academia under the enlightenment of discourse theory.

If Terry Eagleton's book *After Theory* foretells the coming of a "post-theoretical era", it then becomes an unavoidable problem for us to discuss the current situation and future direction of criticism in the "post-theoretical era". Wolfgang Iser makes a distinction between discourse and theory, holding that the latter reveals the way to understand the object of study through the exploration of specific topics, while the former pays close attention to the real world of human beings. Therefore, discourse constitutes a beneficial complement to the theory, and discourse analysis is more suitable to clarify the situation of academic confusion in the field of post-colonial studies (Iser, 2006:12–13). Jonathan D. Culler also summarizes one of the characteristics of theory in the contemporary era as "interdisciplinary" discourse. These re-interpretations of theories may indicate the development potential and vitality of discourse theory in the current field of literature and cultural studies.

Notes

1 The French origin of the English word "apparatus" is "dispositif". Dreyfus and Rabinow point out that it is difficult to find the appropriate equivalent of "dispositif" in English. When translating Foucault's works from French into English, translators chose English words such as "apparatus", aiming to highlight the

practical focus of Foucault, that is, concepts should serve as tools for analysis. In Chinese versions of his works, "apparatus" is translated into "Jiqi". The author believes that it is worth further discussion whether the translation can faithfully convey the subtle connotations of the original French word "dispositif".

2 Relevant studies are as follows: (1) Hagen, Tom. (1978). Text linguistics and Second Language Teaching. Zhang Yunwen (Trans.). *Contemporary Linguistics*, (6): 29–31. 2) Будагов, Р.А. (1980). To what extent can "textlinguistics" be called linguistics? Cai Fuyou (Trans.). *Contemporary Linguistics*, (4): 19–22. (3) Wang, Fuxiang. (1982). On Text Linguistics and Russian Teaching, *Russian in China*, (1): 25–32. (4) He, Zhaoxiong. (1983). A Summary of Discourse Analysis. *Journal of Foreign Languages*, (4): 5–10. (5) Mo, Xuqiang. (1984). The Study of Language in Linguistics: An introduction to the Guillaume school's discussion on the relationship between language and discourse, *Modern Foreign Languages*, (1): 8–13. (6) Chen, Ping. (1987). Handbook of Discourse Analysis, Volume 2: A Review of Dimensions of Discourse, *Contemporary Linguistics*, (2): 70–78. (7) Chen, Ping. (1987). A Brief Introduction to Discourse Analysis. *Language Teaching and Linguistic Studies,* (3): 4–19. (8) Tang, Guangcai. (1988). Discourse Linguistics in China. *Journal of Inner Mongolia Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition*), (2):72.

3 In the 1980s, three domestic scholars wrote reviews or translated book reviews of Malcolm Coulthard's *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis*; hence we can see his influence upon Chinese academic circles at that time. Related essays are as follows: Huang, Hongxu. (1982). A Review of Coulthard's *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis. Contemporary Linguistics*, (4): 7–18. O 'brien, Tony. A Review of Coulthard's *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis.* Wang Jiaheng (Trans.). *Contemporary Linguistics*, (3):120–121. Wang, Zongyan. (1989). On Coulthard's *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis. Modern Foreign Languages*, (2):1–6.

4 Related studies are as follows: Dai, Minru. (1988). A Study of Van Dijk's Macrostructure of Discourse (part 1). *Contemporary Linguistics*, (2): 87–93. Dai, Minru. (1988). A Study of Van Dijk's Macrostructure of Discourse (part 2). *Contemporary Linguistics*, (3): 128–131. Shi, Xu. (1989). Van Dijk's Discourse Theory and its Latest Development. *Journal of Foreign Languages*, (6): 46–48.

5 See Qin, Xiubai. (1987). Discourse and Literature. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, (4): 75–78. This essay is a review of the collected essays *Discourse and Literature*, edited by Van Dijk, which consists of 12 essays, mainly focussing on the central topic of structural analysis of discourse and literary works.

6 As for the translation of terminology in traditional Chinese literary theory, the translator mainly consults for reference the translations and interpretations provided by Stephen Owen in the following two books: Stephen Owen. (2002). *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*. Wang Bohua and Tao Qingmei (Trans.). Shanghai: shànghǎi shèhuì kēxuéyuàn chūbǎnshè (Shanghai Academy of Social Science Press); Kang-I Sun and Stephen Owen. (Eds.). (2010). *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*. Cambridge University Press.

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2 Text

Written by Mei Qibo, translated by Yuan Ying

Text relates to people's understanding of the ontology of literature and art, and is one of the most discussed concepts in literary criticism today. However, the academic circle still needs to go further in terms of detailed and in-depth analyses, and interpretations of the text concept: On the one hand, text concepts of different disciplines are emerging constantly, which makes it rather difficult for scholars to differentiate and analyse them; on the other hand, literary text itself is a dynamically developing concept, and the richness and complexity of its connotations makes it hard for scholars to define. The generation of text theory and concept has its own specific historical and social context. The former has gone through a dynamic process from generation to appropriation, absorption, regulation, non-historicization and even new regional production. In this chapter, we will examine and investigate the change of the concept of text from the perspective of travelling theory and analyze how it is generated in its dissemination with different historical and cultural contexts, and how its core elements are gradually discovered and increasing. Based on the analysis of the transmission and variation process of text in China, we will further reflect and elaborate on how to combine the concept of Western text with traditional Chinese theory and contemporary cultural context, and how the concept of text can be effectively constructed under multiple dimensions.

Tracing the concept of "text"

Text, as one of the keywords of literary criticism in the 20th century, is a constantly developing and changing concept. From a historical perspective, the concept of "text" has been gradually discovered and constantly subverted and reconstructed, so it is necessary for us to make a detailed review and clarification of this historical process.

Discussions on the etymology of "text"

In a general sense, a text is a combination of words and sentences according to the rules of language. It can be a book, an article or even just a sentence.

From the perspective of etymology, its Indo-European root is "texere"; in later Latin, the word "textus" and its passive participle "texō" appear, which refers to the act of weaving or the thing that is woven. Words such as "textile" and "architect" are derived from this origin. From the 12th to 15th centuries, the middle-English word "texte" referred to a text from the Bible that was used in religious ceremonies and, at the same time, was used to indicate the structure and the body of the article. From the perspective of etymology, "Wen" in China has similar meanings to the concept of "text" in the West. Xu Shen's postface to his *Shuowen jiezi* (*Analytical Dictionary of Characters*) provides a statement about the origin of "Wen" in China: "When Cang Jie first created writing, he probably made images of forms according to their categories, thus [his simple characters] called 'patterns' [Wen]" (Kang-I Sun Chang and Stephen Owen, 2010:5).[1] This means that all the objects and images have their own textures and colours, and these textures and colours are called "pattern (Wen)". Zhouyi Xici writes about how FuXi "observed the patterns of the birds and beasts" (Kang-I Sun Chang and Stephen Owen, 2010:5), and here, the decorative pattern and colourful feathers of birds and beasts are called "Wen". "The first year of Duke Yin" in *The Zuo Tradition* stated that Zhongzi was born with special birthmark on his hand, and "Wen" was also used here to mean pattern or texture. *Mercius V. A. 4.ii* recorded that, "In explaining the poems of the *Book of Poetry*, one must not permit the literary patterning (Wen) to affect adversely [the understanding of] the statement (Ci) …" (Owen, 2002:23). Here, "Wen" refers to literary language or writing. It can be seen that both "pattern (Wen)" in Chinese and "text" in the West refer to interlacing and weaving, so in the original sense, a text is something fixed by the interlacing and weaving of symbols. In the process of travelling and spreading from the West to China, the word "text" has developed and extended its meanings, and it has been translated into different Chinese words, such as "Benwen", "Zhengwen", "Yupian", "Kewen" and so on.

In fact, text is not a concept that belongs exclusively to literature; it also appears in linguistics, aesthetics, semiotics, culturology, philosophy and other humanities and social sciences. To a linguist, a text is any utterance fixed by writing: a coherent sequence or system of sentences concatenated by a series of statements. To be specific, text is the actual use of language, which may be just a single sentence, such as a proverb, maxim, sign, etc., but it is generally composed of a series of sentences. The difference between a text and a paragraph lies in the fact that text constitutes a relatively closed and self-contained system.

On the whole, classical literary theory mainly discusses the significance of authors and works, and the "author", "works" and "theory of works" in traditional Western literary criticism appear under this background. Traditional studies of works mostly focus on the relationship between works and authors and society, often ignoring the independence of these works. As a result, Western literary criticism has long turned its eyes to the world

outside the works. Text, as an emerging literary concept, is the reflection of this method of literary studies, which pays more attention to the generation of the ways of existence and the meanings of the works.

Behind the rise of text theory and text concept is the profound change that Western philosophy underwent in the early 20th century, that is, the turn from traditional epistemology to linguistic theory. Accordingly, Western theory of literature and art has undergone a similar turn, and many schools of literary and art criticism have emerged which center on linguistic or symbolic characteristics of text, such as Russian formalism, the Prague school, Anglo-American new criticism, structuralism, deconstructionism, phenomenology, hermeneutics and so on. The text theories of these schools have detached language from complicated social and historical relations, and turned it into a symbol system in a certain structural relationship. In other words, language has been elevated from a tool to an ontological status, which has become an important turning point in contemporary Western literary theory. Based on this philosophy of language, textual criticism not only attaches importance to and returns to the elements of the text itself but also challenges the author-centred theory in traditional Western literary criticism, which makes it inevitable that the object of literary research will turn from works to texts.

Basic meanings of the concept of text

Although the concept of text has existed for a long time, the concept of literary text in the sense of literary criticism was only put forward by formal-structuralist literary theory. Formal-structuralist literary criticism establishes the foothold and basic significance of literary text, and our understanding of literary text also comes from their theoretical propositions.

The turn from the study of works to text criticism

At the beginning of the 20th century, Western literary criticism turned from the study of works to text criticism.[2] Russian formalism opposed the symbolic criticism and superficial impressionism criticism in the literary world at that time. As Boris Eikhenbaum says, the rise of formalism is caused by a series of historical events, and the most suitable soil for this mutation is poetry. Viktor Shklovsky, founder of the Society for the Study of Poetic Language in Petersburg, proposed the theory of "defamiliarization" in his book *Art as Technique*, published in 1917. Roman Jakobson of the Moscow Linguistic Circle (1914–1915) put forward that the object of literary study is "literariness", that is, what enables literature to become literature. Both of them are concerned with the form of the text, that is, the issue of language and technique. In the history of literary theory, although Russian formalism did not explicitly introduce or use the concept of "text", they took text

as their object of study in the process of research, which laid a theoretical foundation for the presentation and definition of the concept of text.

At the same time, the British imagist Thomas E. Hulme was publishing his essay "Romanticism and Classicism" (1915), which criticized traditional positivism and romanticism in England; then Ivor A. Richards and Thomas S. Eliot provided the theoretical basis for the new criticism in their criticism of romanticism. According to the available data, Ivor A. Richards's *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924) is one of the earliest works concerned with literary noumenal criticism, and in it, he proposed semantic analysis and close reading of texts. In *Practical Criticism* (1929), he pointed out that attention should be paid to the work itself through "close reading" of the text (Richards, 1978:195). In *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936), he further argued that the stability of text meaning is determined by the specific context of the text rather than the subjective intention of writers and readers (Richards, 1936:11). On the whole, these theories try to construct a scientific and objective literary criticism, emphasizing the idea that the object of criticism must be the work itself.

In the early 1930s, with the change of the political situation of the Soviet Union, formalism was criticized and gradually declined, and its development gradually shifted to Western Europe. J. M. Broekeman wrote a book entitled *Structuralism: Moscow-Prague-Paris*, which describes the road map of the travel of Russian formalism and the travel route of the concept of text. Jakobson came to Prague from Moscow and began to draw on linguistic theories and study poetry by making use of phonological analysis. According to Eagleton, Broekeman and Jakobson systematize formalism strictly within the framework of Saussurean linguistics (Eagleton, 1996:98). The formation of the Prague school represents the transition from formalism to modern structuralism.

The concept of "text" of Formalism-Structuralism

The basic meaning of the concept of "text" of Formalism-Structuralism is that text is an ordered unity of linguistic structure which is most deeply rooted in literature. The early 20th-century text concepts of new criticism, Russian formalism and structuralism are all based on this view. The text concept of Formalism-Structuralism has two basic characteristics: language and structure.

Language is the primary concern of Formalism-Structuralism. According to Russian formalism, text is a defamiliarized language object, and the essence of literary text is its literariness; new criticism, meanwhile, holds that text is the organic whole of language, and the essence of literary text is its texture. These two schools of literary theory do not define the concept of text directly, but their discussions on literary language and its form all involve the foothold of literary text. Russian formalism pays particular attention to the sound levels of language, which Jakobson called "functional

phonology". He believes that the first question in literature is what makes linguistic information turn into works of art. He emphasizes repeatedly that "poetics is primarily the inquiry into the sign structure, that is to say the semiotic and, in a narrower sense, the linguistic signs of the work of art" (Jakobson, 1985:72). Although Tomaszewski mentions the relationship between the concept of text and language expression, he does not make a clear distinction between text and works. He especially emphasizes that text is the fundamental expression system of language, which indicates that formalism attaches great importance to language. At the same time, he also points out that this expression system is not symmetric and closed but should be felt as a dynamic and integral form of language expression. He stresses the lexical material composition of the text, and in particular the unity of this combination of linguistic expressions (Tomaszewski, 1989:77). This holistic view of text is rather unique in Western theoretical circles, but it is often ignored by scholars. Shklovsky, the representative of Russian formalism also attaches great importance to the language of artistic texts, and in *The Resurrection of the Word* (1914), he speaks highly of the language of art works, emphasizing the central position of language (Shklovsky, 2016:63–72). At the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th, literary criticism emphasized the inevitable relationship between literature and life, and language structure was reduced to instrumental existence. However, Shklovsky believes that language is the inherent self-discipline of literary works, and "the resurrection of the word" is intended to restore the origin of literature. It is on this basis that he puts forward the representative theory of "defamiliarization".

Structure is another characteristic typical of the text concept of Formalism-Structuralism. From the perspective of Formalism-Structuralism, text is a system composed of language with a certain structure, and structure is the internal stable order of text and the relationship between its various parts and levels. It can be said that structure is just like the skeleton and framework of text, and the rules and logic of the former determine the characteristics of the latter. As for structure, from the perspective of Russian formalism, the factor of the linguistic form (or the structure) of a text is an ontological factor that highlights literariness.[3] New criticism puts forward the theory of organic structure, which holds that the text structure presents contradictory opposition and unity, and is an organism full of paradox and irony. For example, John Crowe Ransom proposes the theory of "structure-texture" and thinks that a poem consists of a logical structure and a texture[4] of its parts, among which "structure" means that poetry can convey logical content, such as theme, through prose, while the essence of poetry lies in the "texture" attached to the structure. According to the later criticism from his student Brooks, the structure proposed by Ransom is merely "falsework", which is not the true inner structure of poetry because it is external to the text. Obviously, the early new criticism was only an attempt to break down the "content-form" theory that had been practiced since the time of Aristotle, placing more emphasis on the intrinsic part of

form, but early new critics completely separated form from content, which was too absolute.

In the view of structuralism, structure is not only the framework of text but also constitutes text rules, order and logic itself. Structuralist linguist Jean Piaget believes that structure has three characteristics: integrity, transformability and self-adjustment. Integrity means that each part of the structure is composed according to a certain combination of rules; transformability emphasizes that each part of the structure can be replaced by another according to certain rules without changing the structure itself; self-adjustment refers to the self-sufficiency of the structure. Structuralists recognize that language structure is transformational and goes further to propose the closely related surface and deep structure of text. According to the Prague school, a text or a sentence can be divided into several levels in linguistics, including the phonetic level, phonological level, grammatical level and contextual level, but these levels cannot produce meaning independently.

> No unit pertaining to a certain level can be endowed with meaning unless it can be integrated into a superior level: a phoneme, although perfectly describable, means nothing by itself; it partakes in meaning only if it is integrated into a word …
>
> (Vachek, 1964:468)

Algirdas Julien Greimas puts forward the idea that the surface narrative structure is the horizontal combination of text, while the deep structure is the vertical structure. Deep structure does not have narrativity, but it affects the surface structure of the text, which is its functional structure. Roland Barthes divides the structure of narrative works into three levels in his essay "An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative" (1966): the level of "functions", the level of "actions" and the level of "narration". Barthes emphasizes that these three levels are "bonded together according to a mode of progressive integration" (Barthes, 1975:243), thus turning the text into a closed and self-contained deep language structure. He believes that the text is centred on the independent language structure rather than the author, which is the biggest difference between the text and the work. These theories of stratification analysis of textual language and narrative inspire further discussion of textual structure by a large group of theorists, including Roman Ingarden, Mikel Dufrenne, Geoffrey Hartman, Susanne K. Langer, Northrop Frye and René Wellek and Austin Warren.

On the whole, formal-structuralist literary theory limits the concept of literary text from the two levels of language and structure, and takes it as the foothold and foundation of literary criticism, which undoubtedly casts literary criticism as scientific research with a clear object of study. Since then, many text concepts have been related to this one of Formalism-Structuralism. Even if they rebel against it, it is in a sense an extension of this text concept.

Extension of the meanings of "text"

Since Formalism-Structuralism was put forward, the concept of text has gradually become the keyword of literary criticism in the 20th century, and a variety of text concepts have emerged. These text concepts have some differences due to different theoretical basis, but in the process of theoretical travel, they often criticize, learn from and absorb each other. The following section is going to clarify the relationship between the basic meaning of the text concept and its extended meanings as well as which core elements are added during the continuous extension of the text concept so as to reveal its richness.

As far as the text concept is concerned, the idea of the independence of literary text established by formal-structuralist literary theory is quickly broken. The concept of "text" is deconstructed and redefined, and constantly enriched and developing; hence more and more different text concepts begin to appear.

Text in the theory of "intertexuality"

In 1967, the publication of Jacques Derrida's three representative works *Voice and Phenomenon*, *Of Grammatology* and *Writing and Difference* marked the rise of deconstruct. In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida analyzes Rousseau's text and proposes that "there has never been anything but writing; there have never been anything but supplements, substitutive significations …" (Derrida, 1997:159). Derrida actually cancels the existence of objective representation completely with the concept "text". The symbols that constitute a text are used not to reproduce nature or the external world but merely to re-symbolize the existing symbols, and all meanings or ideas are presented through the text. Derrida's view that "there is nothing outside of the text" (Derrida, 1997:158) prompts people to pay more attention to it, and the concept of text is further developed. In deconstruct, there is no "real world" beyond a single text. The meaning of a text is determined by the difference between its internal meanings and the relationship between various "texts", which actually constitutes the "intertextuality" relationship of text symbols.

The concept of "intertextuality" can be traced back to Mikhail Bakhtin, who believes that a text is alive only in its correlation with other texts (contexts). Julia Kristeva coined the concept of "intertextuality" when she introduced Bakhtin's theory of dialogue in Barthes's seminar in 1966. She formally proposed the concept of "intertextuality" in her S*emiotics* in 1969, then made in-depth analyses of the concept in her later works. She pointed out that "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (Kristeva, 1986:37). She also put forward the distinction between the concepts of "phéno texte" and "géno text". The former refers to the surface structure phenomenon of grammar and semantics in text, while the latter is the place where meaning

is produced. She believes that "géno text" accumulates profound historical memory, so when the phenomenal text is connected with it, a network can be formed to accommodate history and culture. After Kristiva's concept of "intertextuality" is put forward, it is accepted and elucidated by many scholars, which greatly enriches its theoretical connotations.

It is Roland Barthes who makes a comprehensive definition of text from the perspective of intertextuality. In "The Death of the Author" (1968), *Image-Music-Text* (1968), *S/Z: An Essay* (1970), "From Work to Text" (1971) and *The Pleasure of Text* (1973), Barthes discusses the characteristics of texts and their differences from works from a broader perspective.[5] According to Roland Barthes, the differences between works and texts are reflected in the following aspects: (1) At the ontological level, a work is a visible and readable entity created by the author, while a text is writable and perceived in the personal experience of countless readers, which has nothing to do with the author's "passion" or "taste"; (2) at the level of literary genre, works are the products of ideology, while texts are not limited to literature but also include various artistic and cultural products; (3) at the symbolic level, traditional works are intended to be close to the final signified, while the signified of the text delays infinitely, and it finally points to the signifier, which is a pure game of the signifier and an experience of symbols; (4) at the reading level, works are a kind of cultural consumption, which brings readers a kind of enjoyment, while texts are a kind of game, labour and production, which brings readers a kind of bliss or pleasure. Roland Barthes points out in "From Work to Text" (1971) that "the text is approached and experienced in relation to the sign", and different from the work, "the text is held in language: it exists only when caught up in a discourse; the Text is not the decomposition of the work" (Barthes, 1989:57–58).

Centring on the concept of "intertextuality", Roland Barthes also puts forward a series of related concepts, among which "the activity of the text" is the most important. In "The Death of the Author", Barthes questions the metalinguistic status of criticism, arguing that critics seem to analyse, judge and decode the text through a safe external language, but the above text theory suggests that critical discourse about the text itself is nothing but an activity of the text. Barthes believes that the so-called meta-language does not exist, and the subject of writing and reading does not have to be related to the statement of the object (work) but must be related to the place (text, discourse). Therefore, any meta-language that interprets a work is merely a stage in the endless reproduction process of the text itself (Barthes, 1989:49–55). We can see that Barthes has replaced his earlier "structural analysis" with the method of "text analysis". He believes that later generations' interpretation of previous texts, in turn, constitutes and continuously constitutes part of those previous texts. He emphasizes the importance of listening to multiple voices in the text and the idea that text in intertextuality should be revealed through the multiplicity of the code, thus making the text infinitely connected with the language. Hence, the concept of text turns

from the stability of structure to a certain degree of deconstruction, and the meaning space of the text is undoubtedly greatly expanded.

The text concept of phenomenology, hermeneutics and reception aesthetics

In the 1960s and 1970s, in addition to deconstruct, scholars in the fields of phenomenology, hermeneutics and reception aesthetics in Germany, Poland and other countries put forward their own text views from the perspective of philosophy and aesthetics. These kinds of text views are generally based on Edmund G. A. Husserl's phenomenology, and his theoretical proposition of trying to "go back to things themselves" directly inspires his student Martin Heidegger as well as the text theories and concepts of Roman Ingarden, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Wolfgang Iser.

Roman Ingarden, who was among the first to apply Husserl's phenomenology to the interpretation of literary texts, holds that the text of literary works is the author's intentional object in his representative work *The Literary Work of Art* (1931). In his opinion, the structure of literary works consists of four heterogeneous but interdependent strata:

> the stratum of verbal sounds, or the phonetic stratum; the stratum of verbal and sentence meanings, or the semantic stratum; the stratum of objects projected by the states of affairs, the intentional correlates of sentences; and the stratum of aspects under which these objects appear in the work.
>
> (Ingarden, 1973:XV)

Ingarden argues that all four levels contain "places of indeterminacy" and "vacancy" that await the imagination of the reader to determine and fill in. Dufrenne divides the text into three levels: material, phenomenon and implication, among which phenomenon has a wide range of meanings. Dufrenne regards not only literary works but also authors as phenomena, and all phenomena have meanings, similar to "Yiyun (implication)" in traditional Chinese literary theory (Zheng Shusen, 1984:67).

Heidegger believes that the meaning of text depends not on the objective text but on "Dasein", that is, the historical era and real life of the readers. Gadamer proposes the theory of "fusion of horizons" and establishes systematic modern hermeneutics. Theorists of traditional hermeneutics such as Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher and Wilhelm Dilthey regard the author as the centre and interpretation as "the art of avoiding misunderstanding", while modern hermeneutics shifts its focus onto the text. The text views of modern hermeneutics are related to the presence and limitation of understanding, the historicity and openness of understanding, and the linguistic and speculative nature of understanding, which can be taken as the double sublation of structuralism and deconstruct. Gadamer believes that the

understanding of a text, or the production of a text, is the process of verifying, supplementing and modifying its presupposition, and it is also the process of the continuous production of presupposition.

On the basis of reflecting on modern hermeneutics, French scholar Paul Ricoeur puts forward his own "text-centered hermeneutics", which is based on a concise concept of text: "A text is any discourse fixed by writing" (Ricoeur, 2016:107). This concept contains two levels of meaning. First, the text belongs to discourse. It means that the text cannot simply be reduced to the interrelation of individual comprehensible sentences. It should be a metaphorical discourse with self-discipline. Ricoeur believes that discourse is composed of the distanciation and tension between the two poles of "event" and "meaning". It is the tension "which gives rise to the production of discourse as a work, the dialectic of speaking and writing, and all the other features of the text which enrich the notion of distanciation" (Ricoeur, 2016:96). As the realization of language, the discourse carries the tension of events and meanings, and is the basic unit of text theory. Second, the text is the discourse fixed by writing, and the immobilization of writing is the constituent factor of the text itself. "This suggests that a text is really a text only when it is not restricted to transcribing an anterior speech, when instead it is inscribed directly in written letters what the discourse means" (Ricoeur, 2016:108). Because the writing is fixed, the text is "distanciated", the context of the text may break the author's context and the text has nothing to do with the subjectivity of the author and that of the reader. According to Ricoeur, hermeneutics is intended not to reveal the intention behind the text but to show the world in front of the text and disclose the existence possibility of the text. Ricoeur's views of text suggest that its interpretation or characteristics lie in the revelation of the self-discipline and distanciation of the text. As John B. Thompson says in the introduction to *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, "[t]he theory of interpretation elaborated by Ricoeur is closely connected to the concept of the text. … It is no longer the symbol but the text, written discourse as such, which defines the object domain of hermeneutics" (Ricoeur, 2016:XXV). Therefore, the text concepts of phenomenology and hermeneutics not only insist on the independence of the text but also make the text open to readers, history and infinite meaning, thus enriching the concept of text.

Formal-structuralist literary theory leads people to ponder the structure and meaning of language, while Heidegger inspires people to reflect on text from the perspective of the genetics of language. The text theory of the "reception aesthetics" of the "Konstanz school", represented by Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauss, holds similar views. Iser distinguishes between general text and literary text: The former uses a kind of "declarative language", while the latter employs "descriptive language", which has no definite object but takes material from the living world to create its own object. In this way, the text of literary works can neither correspond to the reality of the "living world" nor be completely identified with the experience

of readers. These differences form multiple indeterminacies and blankness in meaning in literary texts, and constitute the text structure. In *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (1976), Iser further elaborates on this "response-inviting structure" of the text. Based on this theory, he makes a distinction between text and document. He believes that traditional research reduces literary works to the level of document, and the reason the text is different from a document lies in its communication with readers. Iser calls the texts that are not read by readers "the first text" and those that communicate aesthetically with readers "the second text" (Iser, 1978:20–26). It is worth noting that the important motive of hermeneutics and reception aesthetics is to restore the historicity of the text. For example, Jauss tries to build another historical channel, that is, interpreting the history of the effect of the text, which is a history established by the interpretation of literary text and the appreciation of literature by relying on literariness. If we take one step further, we may say that it becomes a postmodern proposition that literary texts can create history.

Jorge J. E. Gracia, an American contemporary hermeneutic, does not agree with the tendency to place too much emphasis on the reader and deny the author's position in the text. He thinks that, since the 20th century, the philosophy of language has generally held that text has a self-sufficient nature beyond the author, which is especially reinforced by Roland Barthes's "The Death of the Author". Gracia thinks that text is very complicated in an ontological sense, and it is always an integration of certain meanings. The author is not a single concept: Although the historical author is often held to be the paragon, one can still distinguish between various authors of a text and its corresponding multiple functions. At the same time, the reader is not a single concept or function, and a text cannot exist without the reader because the author contains the function of the reader. Like the author, the reader may be overthrown if they distort the meanings of the text. Based on the above relationship between the author, the text and the reader, Gracia defines texts as "groups of entities, used as signs, which are selected, arranged, and intended by an author in a certain context to convey some specific meaning to an audience" (Gracia, 1995:5). To sum up, phenomenology, hermeneutics and reception aesthetics have greatly enriched our understanding of the meanings of the text, either from the perspective of the text or from the perspective of the author and the reader of the text.

The text concept of cultural semiotics

The text concept of cultural semiotics extends the language of text to cultural symbols, which greatly expands the extension of text concept. Semiotic theorist Juri M. Lotman was one of the representative scholars in the 1960s. It is generally believed that Lotman belongs to structuralism, but in fact, he not only inherits the tradition of Saussure's structural linguistics but also actively absorbs Charles Sanders Pierce's theory of semiotics and,

to a certain extent, achieves the transcendence of these two traditions, thus putting forward his own unique text concept. In his representative work *Структура хубожественного текста*, Lotman points out that "to some extent, text is the symbol as a whole, and all the individual symbols in general language texts are the constituent elements below the text level" (Лотман Ю. М, 1998:34). Of course, what Lotman is discussing here is the art text. He proposes that both art texts and general language texts are composed of symbols, but the differences between them lie in the fact that art texts are integral and indivisible symbols, while general language texts are composed of discrete symbols. Borrowing from the biological theory, he also regards the art text, the crystallization of human creative spiritual work, as a living organism, which makes it an endless source of information. Lotman points out that "art text, as we have clarified, can be taken as a structural mechanism that integrates a lot of condensed information in a special way" (Лотман Ю. М, 1998:281). In this way, the text is defined as the carrier of complete meaning and function. While considering the art text as a special linguistic symbol composition, Lotman also introduces Jacobson's cultural communication theory and modern information theory into text theory so that text becomes a mechanism to preserve, transmit and produce information.

In *Семиосфера, Санкт–питерпург: Искуство* (1973), Lotman further pointed out that:

> The concept of text has special semiotic significance. On the one hand, text not only contains the information of natural language, but also is the carrier of the whole meaning--such is the case with rituals, plastic arts or musicals. On the other hand, from a cultural point of view, not all the information of natural language is text. From the aggregate of all natural language information, culture distinguishes and assumes that only those information that are specific and identified as a particular style of language belongs to text, such as 'prayer', 'law', 'fiction' and other messages, which have a general meaning and perform unified function.
>
> (Лотман Ю. М, 2001:508)

Thus it can be seen that in Lotman's theory of cultural semiotics, the connotations and scope of text become broader, and the text concept not only refers to poetry, music, painting and other art texts but also includes legal, religious and other cultural texts in a broad sense. In fact, he regards text as the basic unit and important constituent element of culture, and further puts forward the view that text constitutes the whole culture of human beings, from which it can be concluded that art text is included in cultural text.

Similarly, French semiotic theorist Jean-Claude Coquet states his views of text from the perspective of cultural semiotics. He co-founded the Paris school of semiotics with Greimas and others, and conducted research on literary semiotics, narrative structure analysis and other fields. Since the

1980s, he has begun to reflect on structuralism, criticized its tendency of objectification and formalization, and proposed the establishment of a kind of subject or discourse semiotics which integrates discourse, subject, reality and other factors. Based on this theory, Jean-Claude Coquet generalized the text to any form of expression that could be found in society. Thus, the text concept of cultural semiotics put forward by Jean-Claude Coquet, Lotman and others tends to regard text as a mode or carrier of the expression and transmission of social information. This type of text theory is also one of the driving forces that promotes the development of a modern Western theory of literature and art in cultural studies in the 1960s and 1970s.

Hypertext and pan-text

In the 1960s and 1970s, postmodernism and cultural studies with new historicism, post-colonialism and feminism as their core began to flourish in the West; the traditional concept of text was challenged; and the concept of text appeared to be more complicated.[6] The rise of postmodernism and cultural studies is closely related to the development of capitalism, especially in terms of modern information technology. From the perspective of text classification, the objects of cultural studies can be roughly divided into two categories: One is to analyze the issues of nationality, class, rights, gender, identity, etc. in pure literary texts; the other is to analyze network literature; film; television; or more broadly ideological issues in cultural phenomena, such as advertisement, fashion, home decoration and so on.

The rise of cultural studies can be traced to the criticism of the Western cultural industry by M. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno of the Frankfurt school in Germany in the 1940s. In the 1950s, the "new left" in Britain, which included Edward Palmer Thompson, Raymond Henry Williams, etc., began to study working-class culture and popular culture, while "The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies" in Birmingham, founded by Richard Hoggart in 1964, was regarded as the beginning of real cultural studies. In the 1980s, cultural studies flourished in the United States. Cultural studies are not a unified school of criticism, and their starting points and purposes may differ from one another, but they all pay particular attention to the discourse and ideology of text. Postmodernism is also concerned with discourse and ideology. For example, new historicism advocates that "big history" should be turned into "small history", and the connection between literature and ideology should be specifically restored by probing into the details of social and historical life ignored by experts on general history. In *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in 19th-century Europe* (1973), Hayden White proposes that historians should construct a programme of poetic language. Stephen Greenblatt also identifies history with text, and he believes that literary text, as a form of discourse, should be regarded as the operation of power relations.

Postmodern technology and consumer culture formed many comprehensive texts, including film and television, advertisement, network literature, pop songs, fashion, toys, etc. The emergence of these "texts" made a profound impact on the traditional concept of text. In the 1960s, Theodor Holm Nelson coined the term "hypertext", which was put forward as a method of intelligence management at that time. It referred to a way of thinking that combined words, images and other elements organically and freely defined the relationship among related information. In 1965, Nelson defined "hypertext" in *Literary Machines* as "nonsequential writing--text that branched and allowed choices to the reader, best read at an interactive screen. As popularly conceived, this is a series of text chunks connected by links which offer the reader different pathways" (Quoted in Landow, 1997:3). The core of hypertext is "links", and the WWW (world wide web) can best reflect the appearance of hypertext. Hypertext links are incomparable to the "text" in the past in terms of the degree of readers' free choice, the random productivity of the text, etc. Hypertext has three prominent features: First, its language includes not only literary language but also audio and visual symbols, such as sound, image, etc.; second, the hypertext structure is nonlinear or multi-linear, and not only do the links of multiple texts endow them with the characteristic of intertextuality, but more importantly, the interactive dialogue of hypertext is characterized by structural variability, resisting the single rhetorical authority and linear causal organization; and third, hypertext often involves history, economy, politics, culture and other fields.

The so-called "pan-text" is the product of the late capitalist consumer society, which is put forward by many scholars of cultural studies. Fredric Jameson believes that

> the whole world is a pile of works, texts, fashion, and clothing is also a text, and human body and human action is also a text … The new social sciences think of society as a text because it consists of a set of behaviors that look like some kind of language.
>
> (Jameson, 1997:204)

Jameson holds that acts and events themselves are similar to the signifiers of language, so he classifies history, politics and other ideologies as texts, thus leading to the generalization of the concept of text. To a certain extent, a pan-text can be taken as a constant textualization of reality. The pan-text emerges because a constantly changing cultural environment has made it virtually impossible for us to construct a complete and harmonious text, and nowadays, construction of the text is determined by its consumers rather than discourse producers. In short, a pan-text is a realistic text constructed by literary language and symbols and media (such as visual symbols and media, including pictures and works of plastic arts; auditory symbols and media, including sound signals and music; and a variety of audio-visual sensory integration, such as drama, film and television, network media, etc.),

which directly appeal to people's senses. In this way, the scope of the concept of text is obviously expanded, and the meaning of text involves social, political, economic, historical and other backgrounds, and even enters the field of culturology.[7] Therefore, there are some differences in the definition of hypertext and pan-text: the latter is defined from the perspective of the reality of text form, content and background, while the former is defined from the perspective of text links and media composition. In the 1960s, Mikhail Bakhtin regarded the texts with multiple symbolic links as a complex of linked symbols. He believes that the text is the primary entity and starting point of any subjects in the humanities, but at the same time, he emphasizes that the humanities should always be based on the text. He thinks that if we study people outside the text, without the text, then it is no longer the humanities. Actually, the text concepts of postmodernism and various forms of cultural criticism have been extended to the whole field of the humanities. The emergence of concepts such as pan-text and hypertext is actually a challenge to traditional "pure literature", which prompts the academic circle to rethink its method of defining the concept of literary text. On the one hand, the study of hypertext and pan-text in cultural studies further challenges the traditional concept of text, and on the other hand, it intensifies the cultural tendency of the study of literary text.

To sum up, since the 20th century, the concept of text has been generated and developing in its theoretical travel, and it has been spreading along the following route: Russia to Prague to Paris to Germany to the United States and finally towards globalization. At first, Russian formalism puts forward the text theory that "literature is the art of language". French structuralism and post-structuralism are committed to the construction and deconstruction of the structure of text. Phenomenology, hermeneutics and reception aesthetics undoubtedly enrich text theories and concepts. In the context of globalization, the emergence of postmodernism and cultural studies challenges traditional text theory. These theories seem to differ greatly from one another, but obviously there is a common factor, that is, the constant attention to and interpretation of the concept of text. In this process of evolution, the relationship between text and language, structure, readers, aesthetics, society, history and other ideologies has been gradually discovered, and our understanding of these core elements of text has become increasingly profound. When defining the concept of text, we must examine its historical development and fully consider its core elements in a comprehensive way.

"Text" in China

The concept of text has been constantly developing in its theoretical travel among Western countries. When it travels to China, how does this concept spread in Chinese academic circles? How do Chinese scholars accept the concept and apply it to the practice of criticism in China? What changes have taken place in the concept through this process of transmission?

Spread of the concept of text in China

In the 20th century, Western literary criticism gradually shifted its attention from criticism of writers and works to studies of text, resulting in the emergence of various schools of textual criticism. Since the 1980s, Chinese scholars began to introduce Western text theory. The following section will introduce the spread of Western text theory in China by means of case study and overall review, which can be divided into three stages.

In the 1980s, Chinese scholars generally had a preliminary understanding of the concept of text. Some important literary schools in the West in the 20th century attracted Chinese scholars' attention, and representative works of these Western literary schools were successively translated and introduced into China. Such translation and introduction covered a wide range of literary theories and theorists, from new criticism, Russian and Soviet formalism, structuralism and deconstruction to phenomenology and reception aesthetics; from Roland Barthes, Gadamer and Iser to Derrida. This translation and introduction of Western literary theories in the 20th century was conducive to its wide spread in China. However, scholars at this stage paid more attention to the uniqueness of various theoretical schools, and their understanding of textual theories and concepts was still in a spontaneous state. At that time, domestic scholars had divided opinions as to how to translate and express text in Chinese. "Text" was generally translated as "Benwen", referring to the existing form of the work itself, and some scholars preferred to translate it as "Wenben". Until the early 1990s, both "Benwen" and "Wenben" were still used simultaneously. With the translation and introduction of Roland Barthes's works into China, the concept of "Wenben" gradually gained wider acceptance. So far domestic scholars have reached a consensus on the translation and introduction of the word "text", and most of them choose to translate "text" into "Wenben" to distinguish it from the concept of "work (Zuopin in Chinese)".

At this stage, pure text criticism was rather rare in Chinese academia. In the fourth issue of *Dushu* in 1983, Yue Daiyun introduced to domestic readers the seminar on critical methods and modern Chinese novels held in Hawaii in 1982. In this seminar, a scholar analyzed the short story *The Lily* by Ru Zhijuan based on Roland Barthes's analyses of Balzac's short story, dividing the former into 14 different image series in an effort to find out the characteristics and mutual relations of each series and hereby illustrate its lyrical characteristics and source of rhythm sense (Yue Daiyun, 1983:123). This was probably an early attempt at text criticism made consciously by domestic scholars. In addition, Ji Hongzhen's paper "Systematic Methods and Structural Principles in Literary Criticism," published in the third issue of *Theoretical Studies in Literature and Art* in 1984, mentioned the concept of the "structure of the work" and analyzed Lu Xun's *Medicine* with the binary opposition between deep structure and surface structure in the theory of structuralism. Generally speaking, there were shorter introductions in

this kind of research and less textual criticism. The reasons for this were as follows: on the one hand, Barthes's *S/Z* and other representative works were not translated into Chinese for a long time, so domestic scholars were not as familiar with this mode of criticism; on the other hand, Chinese literary critics were so busy introducing different schools of Western theories that few had the patience required for such sophisticated textual analysis.

In the 1990s, while continuing to translate and introduce the theoretical works of various Western schools, Chinese scholars used "text" to connect the major Western literary schools in the 20th century so as to study the Western text theory as a whole. Wu Yuanmai systematically introduced the concepts and models of literary works of Russian formalism, Anglo-American new criticism, structuralism, existentialism, phenomenology, Bakhtin and Western Marxism in his book *The Mode of Existence of Literary Works*, published by Hainan Publishing House in 1993. Although he continued to use the concept of "Zuopin", his study showed Chinese scholars' attempt at summarizing the mode of existence of literary works at that time. Li Junyu's essay "A study of Text Theory in Contemporary Literary Theory," published in 1993, divided contemporary Western text theory into three types after a careful historical examination. First, it took the text as a pure form of research object, which was especially evident in the early stage of the development of text theory, such as Russian formalism, Anglo-American new criticism and French structuralism. Second, it regarded the text as an "intertext", as proposed by Julia Kristeva and widely adopted by deconstructionists. Third was the study of pan-text, which overcame not only the limitation of the pure external study of positivism in the 19th century but also the deficiency of the pure internal study of formalism. Moreover, Li Junyu summarized the basic content of text theory as follows: First, text was a self-contained system of meaning object and language structure; second, text was an open production process; third, text was a complex of "production-receptance" to be completed by readers; and fourth, text was an aesthetic carrier of social history and culture. In addition, he pointed out many limitations and deficiencies in Western text theory and thought that we could integrate the reasonable core of these theories with the Marxist views of literature and art so as to achieve the transformation of "sinicization" (Li Junyu, 1993:7–16). In the same year, Lai Daren's essay "Reflections on Literary Textual Theory" classified the history of Western literary theory into two kinds: traditional text theory emphasizing the unity of content and form, and the modern Western text theory of formalism. The latter was a basic textual concept that ran through Russian formalism, Anglo-American new criticism, structuralism and semiotics, that is, regarding literary works as an organic whole or hierarchical system. The author further pointed out the deficiency of these two text theories and argued that the noumenon of literary works should be divided into three major levels: narrative level, image system level and meaning level (Lai Daren, 1993:75–80). In a word, Chinese scholars tried to classify various Western text theories into different

types and elaborated on them based on their respective theoretical basis and summarized the basic connotations of text theory. At the same time, they began to reflect on the shortcomings of Western text theory and to transform and absorb its reasonable core.

If Chinese scholars in the 1990s were only analyzing and discriminating between Western text theories, after 2000 they began to reflect on the concept of text. Their reflections were carried out from two perspectives. First, from a synchronic perspective, Chinese scholars pondered how traditional text theory could respond to the challenge of postmodernism and cultural studies, and the Western theoretical circle simultaneously. Second, from a diachronic perspective, Chinese scholars tried to explore traditional Chinese text theory and integrated it with modern Western text theory in an attempt to solve the problems which current literary theory was faced with. Specifically, the reflections could be further classified into three levels.

First, Chinese scholars reflect and comment on the text theories of individual Western theorists. As one of the most important contributors of Western text theory, Roland Barthes's text theory attracts the attention of the Chinese theoretical circle because of its unique features. For example, Chen Ping's "Fragments of Roland Barthes' Discourse--A Review of Roland Barthes' Textual Thoughts" (*Foreign Literatures*, 1st issue, 2001) discusses Barthes's text theory from multiple viewpoints. Dong Xiwen's "Beyond Text: Jameson's theory and Criticism of Pan-Text" (*Academic Forum*, eight issue, 2005) makes an in-depth study of Jameson's pan-text theory. Kang Cheng's "Text--the Core Concept of Lotman's Cultural Semiotics" (*Contemporary Foreign Literature*, fourth issue, 2005) introduces the development and changes of the concept of text of Lotman's cultural semiotics. Zhou Qichao's "Extra-Textual Structure and the Construction of Literary Works" (*Nankai Journal*, fifth issue, 2011) argues that Lotman emphasizes the correlation and interaction between textual structure and extra-textual structure, which goes beyond structuralism in the era of structuralism and develops Jacobson's poetics in the process of inheriting his poetic theory, and can thus be regarded as a unique view of literary texts in "the post-Saussure era". Zhou Qichao's "On Bakhtin's 'text theory'" (*Jiangxi Social Sciences*, eighth issue, 2009) holds that Bakhtin's "discourse text" is a kind of vocal hyperlinguistic expression and an interactive event of exchanges between subjects. In addition, there are two hot issues in the new century: one is the study of Kristeva's "intertextuality"; the other is the flourishing of hypertext and pan-text studies mainly based on network literature. The emergence of these two hot issues has its historical background in the deconstruction and impact of many postmodernism schools on traditional literary texts since the new century. "Intertextuality" proves once again that the traditional closed literary text is an impossible "dream of structure", while the emergence of hypertext and pan-text concepts requires the expansion of the scope of literary theoretical research and the conceptual connotations of literary texts.

Second, on the basis of reviewing and studying Western text theories, Chinese scholars begin to explore ideas of text from traditional Chinese academic resources and make a comparative study of Chinese and Western text theories. Zhang Ruide's "A Comparative Study between Chinese and Western Poetic Text Theories" (*Journal of Zhengzhou University*, third issue, 1999) compares Chinese and Western poetic text theories from three aspects: structural hierarchy of text, text value and text significance. Both Huang Xiaowei's "An Analysis of Intertext and Intertextuality in '*Wenxin diaolong*: Spirit Thought'" (*Jiangxi Social Sciences*, eighth issue, 2007) and Jiao Yadong's "A Study of Leishu and Chinese Classical Poetry from the Perspective of Intertextuality" (*Literature and Art Studies*, first issue, 2007) re-examine the research approach to ancient Chinese literature under the guidance of Western text theories, thus providing a new perspective for traditional academic research. At this stage, only a few monographs are devoted to the study of traditional text theories. The last part of Fu Xiuyan's book *Textual Studies -- A Systematic Study of Textual Theory* (Peking University Press, 2004) deals with the "comparative and comprehensive analysis of Chinese and Western textual concepts". The author thinks that the achievements of Western textual theories are incomparable, which reveals the existing form and production mode of literary works more clearly. The categories established by Western literary critics are relatively objective, and the logical structure of the theoretical system is quite rigorous. However, it still has two disadvantages on the whole: first, Western literary critics hold rather extreme views, ignoring or even deliberately cutting off the connection between the text and the outside world, and second, they have a relatively narrow horizon and are somewhat ignorant of the textual tradition outside the West. Fu Xiuyan believes that rich text theories are hidden and contained in ancient Chinese poetics and novel criticism, including the eloquence of thematic exposition and the fragmented refinement of thoughts, which can be used for reference to construct modern textual studies. The third chapter of Zhang Fa's *Theory of Literature and Art in the Era of Globalization* (Anhui Education Press, 2005) focusses on the topic of "text: theoretical characterization of literary works in the era of globalization". He holds that text is a virtual and real structure that pursues certainty, and then classifies Western text theories into two types: One is the "modern type", which contains the text theory of new criticism, text theory of phenomenology and text theory of structuralism; the other is the "post-modern type", which consists of the text theory of deconstruct, text theory of reception aesthetics and text theory of reader response criticism. Among the two types of text theories, Zhang Fa especially advocates the literary text theory of Ingarden, a phenomenological literary theorist, and Fyre's literary text theory, which integrates structuralism and archetypal criticism in the latter. He makes a comparative study between the virtual and real structure of text proposed by two Western literary theorists with the artistic conception in classical Chinese literary theory. He points out that the artistic conception

divides the text into four levels: Language, image, concept in image and concept out of image. The four levels of Chinese artistic conception constitute a self-sufficient text, and the theory of artistic conception also suggests that the realization of the text depends on the participation of readers, which is similar to what Ingarden wrote. In Chinese literary theory, "concept outside the boundary" is similar to the metaphysical essence of Ingarden and the archetypal integral structure of Fyre. At the same time, he proposes that, unlike the Western text theory, which attaches great importance to the text composed of language, the Chinese theory of artistic conception focusses more on concept than on language. Generally speaking, since the new century, Chinese scholars have begun to explore text theories in traditional Chinese literary theory. Although few books have been written at this stage, it is a useful and enlightening attempt.

The third level of reflections centres on the overall study of text theory and the construction of Chinese text theory. At the beginning of the 21st century, several monographs on literary text theory were published which examined and studied the textual thoughts of various forms in the West. For example, Zhao Zhijun's *Theory of Literary Texts* (China Social Sciences Press, 2001) first defines the "theory of literary texts" and then analyzes the theories of literary texts, such as Russian formalism, the Bakhtin school, the Tartu school, etc. Facing the rising network literature and cultural studies, Huang Mingfen proposes the concept of "hypertext" (*Hypertext Poetics*, Xiamen University Press, 2002). Liu Shunli's doctoral dissertation "Text Studies" (2002) argues that a text can be presented in written form but also in other forms, such as speech, body language, film, television, etc. Dong Xiwen's *A Study on Literary Text Theory* (Social Sciences Academic Press, 2006) holds that literary text theory is a new literary theory emerging over the course of linguistic turn which emphasizes the self-discipline of text itself and the various possibilities of meaning interpretation. In his book *Text Revolution--A Vision of Contemporary Western Literary Theory* (Liaoning University Press, 2007), Dai Abao discusses the context of the appearance of text theory and the differences between text theory and the traditional theory of works.

On the basis of reviewing Western text theories and exploring textual thoughts in traditional Chinese literary theory, some Chinese scholars put forward the idea of constructing Chinese text criticism and textual studies. The academic circle also fully recognizes the influence of text theory on the current literature and art discipline, and hopes to integrate Chinese and Western text thoughts on the basis of summarizing previous academic achievements in order to clear obstacles for the construction of the new discipline of textual studies and text criticism. Liu Lili's essay "The Conception of Text Criticism from the Interdisciplinary Perspective" argues that the nature of textual criticism in her opinion is to liberate texts from the framework of literary history and analyze literary works directly. Its purpose is to reveal and describe the causes and mechanism of the formation of the

artistic value of literary works and to present the basis of the effectiveness of aesthetic experience acquired in literary appreciation. On the basis of hermeneutics, this kind of textual criticism synthesizes various methods and emphasizes the diversity and mutual compatibility of methods. In addition, the ontology of Western literary theory is transformed into methodology, emphasizing its significance (Liu Lili, 2004:8). This kind of textual criticism enables us to go back to literature itself and prevent literary theory from falling into the trap of being too empty. If Liu Lili's attempt can be taken as putting forward the idea of establishing the discipline of textual studies, Fu Xiuyan's book *Textual Studies -- A Systematic Study of Textual Theory* puts this idea into practice. The author proposes that current textual research is faced with three tasks: the first is to make an integrated study of Western textual theories and summarizes the achievements of textual studies; the second is to explore the tradition of Chinese textual studies and re-examine the ancient literary theory with modern concepts and categories so as to systematically summarize and elucidate textual ideas in traditional Chinese literary theory; the third is to construct a more comprehensive and inclusive text theory which can be characterized by "integration and innovation, and looking to the future" (Fu Xiuyan, 2004:26). In order to achieve this goal, the author not only analyzes the text theories of Anglo-American new criticism, Russian formalism and French structuralism as well as relevant classical narratology, post-structuralism, deconstructionism and post-classical narratology but, more importantly, devotes a large chunk of the book (Chapters 6 to 9) to reviewing and analyzing traditional Chinese concept of text in order to give consideration to both Chinese and Western culture, and achieve a sense of integration.

Reception and variation of text concept in Chinese literary criticism

From the above review, it can be clearly seen that the spread of the text concept in China is closely related to the development of Chinese literary theory and criticism over the past 30 years. Then the following questions are worth exploring: What was the reception of this concept in the practice of Chinese literary criticism, and what influence does it have on Chinese literary theory? Is the transmission of the text concept in China smooth, is there is any variation, and what are the reasons for this variation?

The text concept and renewal of Chinese literary ideas

Western text theory can be used for reference and inspiration in the development of Chinese literary theory itself; the teaching, research and construction of theory of literature and art as a discipline; etc. Many textbooks of literary theory began to introduce the concept of text, which greatly promoted the construction of Chinese literary theory. The introduction of the text concept into textbooks reflects a tendency in Chinese literary theory

towards returning to literature itself. Before the 1980s, textbooks on Chinese literary theory focussed on literary works, while Sun Ziwei's *Principles of Literature* (Central China Normal University Press, 1989) introduced the concept of text earlier and analyzed it at different levels. The second chapter of the textbook, "Literary Text", regarded literary works as the organic whole composed of language level, phenomenon level and implication level, under the guidance of historical materialism and at the same time critically absorbing structuralism, phenomenology and other methods. The analyses of the semantic generation of text, thematic level, polysemy of the topic and so on showed the characteristics of systematic analysis and gradual deepening. This method of dividing text into three levels provides inspiration for textbooks of Chinese literary theory, and many textbooks adopted this method later to define the concept of text. For example, *A Textbook of Literary Theory*, edited by Tong Qingbing and others (Higher Education Press, 1992), adopts this method of classification. The fourth part of the book, "literary works", divides the textual levels of the works into the level of literary discourse, the level of literary image and the level of literary implication. It states that "Benwen (text), in English, means the original text or the text proper, and here it refers to a single literary work written by an author and waiting to be read" (Tong Qingbing, 1992:177). Although the textbook still uses the word "Benwen (text)", it makes a certain distinction between literary text and literary works, which actually indicates the change from traditional works-oriented textbooks to new textbooks of text theory.

At the beginning of the 21st century, with the deepening understanding of the concept of text, a number of textbooks began to sort out and define this concept, prompting academic circles to rewrite new textbooks of literary theory. In addition, many domestic textbooks of literary theory are in constant revision, and different versions of textbooks have different definitions of text, from which we can find that the understanding of Chinese scholars on the concept of text is becoming increasingly profound and comprehensive. For example, Nan Fan's *A New Course of Literary Theory* (Zhejiang Literature and Art Publishing House, 2002) dedicates a chapter to "text", which reviews text theories that have developed since new criticism, the text theory of post-structuralism and the theories of Russian formalism and Ingarden. *Theory of Literature*, edited by Nan Fan and others (Peking University Press, 2008), divides the development of the text concept in the West into three stages: First, from works to text; second, intertextuality; and third, text as discourse, which is obviously more distinct and accurate than the 2002 textbook edition. The new edition of *A Textbook of Literary Theory*, edited by Tong Qingbing and others (Higher Education Press, 2004), has two highlights: First, it constructs a theoretical system by making use of the text concept and emphasizes the importance of form factors of works (or text) in the system. Special chapters are devoted to narrative and lyrical skills, stressing previously neglected formal factors. Second, it introduces the category of "text" into literary theory and builds a new theoretical

system with "text" as the theoretical fulcrum on the basis of analyzing its connotations and development. All these efforts show the penetration of text concept into literary theory. Dong Xuewen's *An Introduction to Literary Theory* (Peking University Press, 2004) distinguishes literary text from non-literary text from the perspective of literary language. He thinks that the language orientation of literary text is feelings and emotions, in which thoughts and ideas are not presented directly, while non-literary text expresses concepts, judgments, reasoning and ideas. In the second chapter in *Literary Theory* (Peking University Press, 2007), which discusses "literary structure," Yang Chunshi points out that

> previous studies on the nature of literature is somewhat essentialist, which holds that things only have a single, unchanging essence, while modern research methods have broken away from essentialism, which believes that the nature of things is multi-leveled and multifaceted.
>
> (Yang Chunshi, 2007:31)

Hence, he divides the text structure into three levels: the surface structure of literature—realistic level, the deep structure of literature—archetypal level and the transcendental structure of literature—aesthetic level. Thus it can be seen that the introduction of the concept of text not only leads to the re-recognition of literary ideas in Chinese academic circles but also promotes the reflections and constant rewritings of textbooks of Chinese literary theory.

In recent years, the construction of the text concept in some reprinted and newly compiled textbooks has displayed a new characteristic, that is, the tendency from Westernization to the comparison between China and the West, or a return to the tradition of classical literary theory. For example, Professor Tong Qingbing edited a number of textbooks, presenting the shift of focus from the introduction of the Western concept of "Benwen (text)" in the 1992 edition of *Theory of Literature* to the comparison between the Chinese and Western text theories in *A New Course of Literary Theory* (China Renmin University Press, 2011). In the sixth chapter of the textbook, "The Views on Works in Western Literary Theory", the author mainly discusses Ingarden's views on the structure of works, and the author's innovation lies in the comparative analyses between Chinese and Western text theories in the appendix of this chapter "Comparative Dialogue". Wang Yichuan's *Literary Theory* (Sichuan Renmin Press, 2003) devotes a chapter to analyzing the meanings and development of text, and detailed discussions of the various modes of classification and the research value of text. Wang Yichuan's *An Introduction to Literature* (revised edition, 2011) further reflects his efforts to construct textbooks on literary theories with Chinese characteristics. On the basis of summarizing the two paths of Chinese modern literary theory (one is "Westernization", and the other is returning to Chinese classics), he hopes to set out a unique and original

path of Chinese modern literary theory. Wang Yichuan analyzes two important literary concepts in ancient China, namely "perceptual theory" and "rhetoric theory", and finally extracts a new concept: "Ganxing rhetoric (a combination of individual experience and affective image)", namely "Xingci (rhetorical effect of affective image)". He puts forward a five-layer theory of literary texts: The first is the medium layer, the second is the Xingci layer, the third is the Xingxiang (affective image) layer, the fourth is the Yixing (concept and affective image) layer and the fifth is the Yuyan (reader's evaluation and association stirred by affective image) layer. This classification can be taken as the innovative integration of Chinese classical text theory and Western theory. On the whole, these textbooks may still be in the exploratory stage of the dialogue or integration of the concept of text between China and the West, but the gradual and in-depth discussions of the concept undoubtedly promotes the theoretical research and literary practice of Chinese literature.

In the 21st century, when some textbooks introduce the concept of text, they also pay special attention to text criticism. The fourth chapter in Dong Xuewen and Zhang Yonggang's *Principles of Literature* (Peking University Press, 2001), on "text and interpretation of literature", focusses on the analyses of composition, characteristics and interpretation of text. *An Introduction to Literary Criticism*, edited by Wang Xianpei and Hu Yamin (Higher Education Press, 2005), devotes a chapter to analyzing textual criticism, with particular emphasis on theoretical features, key concepts and the mode of operation of textual criticism. Professor Hu Yamin points out that

> here 'textual criticism' refers to a critical method based on the text to analyze and interpret the elements of literary text, so text becomes the starting point and destination of this type of criticism. It is an important premise of textual criticism to exclude the study of author and the 'external' research method. The basic meaning of the word 'text' in textual criticism refers to an autonomous system of meaning object and language structure. The reason why text criticism replaces works with text is to highlight the autonomy and objectivity of the object of criticism. The new ideas of criticism require new terminology, and employment of the concept 'text' aims to free literature from the author's control and at the same time enable readers to view literature as an object of language.
>
> (Wang Xianpei and Hu Yamin, 2005:168)

Chinese scholars often pay more attention to the introduction of text in Western text theories and the construction of macroscopic text theory but to some extent neglect the practice and specific methods of text criticism. The above-mentioned textbooks undoubtedly make up for such a deficiency because all of them pay particular attention to the practice of textual criticism. Therefore, their efforts have guiding significance for the combination of theory and critical practice.

The introduction of the textual concept and theories also provides effective and feasible critical methods for Chinese critics. Chinese critics have shifted their attention from society and history to the inherent language, structure and narrative of the text, and adopted a series of effective methods to analyze it. One of the important characteristics of Western literary theory in the 20th century is the criticization of theory, that is, combining difficult theoretical concepts with concrete critical practice. The method of interpreting theoretical viewpoints in specific text analysis has greatly inspired Chinese literary critics. For example, Empson, a theorist of new criticism, fully displays his theoretical views of "close reading" in his analyses of poems in *Seven Types of Ambiguity*; formalist Todorov puts forward the theory of "narrative grammar" when analyzing the text of Boccaccio's *Decameron*; the analyses of Balzac's novels in Barthes' *S/Z* and those of the Oedipus myth in Lévi-Strauss's *Structural Anthropology* also illustrate their theoretical views of structural criticism through specific textual criticism. Additionally, Jameson, a postmodernist theorist, proposes his theory in his textual criticism of film and television works and even allegories.

This method of combining textual theory with textual analysis has exerted profound influence upon the academic circle in China, among which narratology has developed well when combining theory with critical practice. Jameson's speech at Peking University, in particular, brought about the prosperity of the textual analysis of Chinese narratology. The period from 1986 to 1992 was the most active for the translation and introduction of narratology into Chinese academic circles, during which most of the representative works of Western narrative theory were translated and well received, including Gerard Genette's *Narrative Discourse New Narrative Discourse* (translated by Wang Wenrong, China Social Sciences Press, 1990), Wallace Martin's *Recent Theories of Narrative* (translated by Wu Xiaoming, Peking University Press, 1990), etc. At the same time, Chinese narrative research has achieved remarkable results, and narratology has become an effective method for narrative text analysis in Chinese literary circles. Furthermore, reception aesthetics and reader response criticism are popular in China. In previous studies in China, scholars tended to attach greater importance to meaning than to language, pay more attention to the author's original meaning rather than the reader's reading experience while analyzing literary works under the guidance of literary theories and neglect the creative role of the reader in the text construction. Different from traditional criticism, the text theories and research methods of Gadamer, Ingarden, Iser, Jauss and so on emphasize readers, thus providing Chinese literary critics with brand new means of criticism.

The introduction of the concept of text breaks the traditional concept of literature and provides us with a new understanding and critical method of literary criticism and research object. Chinese literary criticism has also shifted from traditional social, historical and moral criticism to textual criticism, and from external study to an internal study of literature. The

suggestions put forward by Li Jiefei in "Text and Author--A Problem in Narratology of Fiction" can still be used as guidelines for Chinese scholars when accepting the view of "the death of author" years later:

> I think the most desirable effect of Roland Barthes' statement 'the author is dead' in contemporary Chinese criticism is that critics have thus changed their consciousness of obeying and demonstrating the writer in the past, without building an invisible wall between themselves and the writer in accordance with some theoretical doctrine. It is precisely with the aid of such transcendence of 'the author' that we can in turn establish the study of the writer in its real sense, which does not serve to build up the authority of the writer, but to begin our attempt at phenomenon description and artistic analysis of literature.
>
> (Li Jiefei, 1989:45)

The subsequent text theories of deconstruct, post-colonialism and postmodernism have become increasingly popular in China for similar reasons, that is, they bring effective methods of textual analysis to Chinese contemporary literary criticism.

The variation of the text concept in China

In the process of its dissemination in China, the concept of text tends to be polysemous and ambiguous, and its definitions and explanations are somewhat fragmented and even contradictory. In the 1980s, the relationship between the concept of text and the concept of work appears to be rather vague, and various translations of "text" coexist, such as "Wenben", "Benwen", "Yupian", etc. After the 1990s, different theorists began to stand on the position of different theoretical schools and try to define text in different ways, according to their own understanding of the concept. For example, from the perspective of formalism and hermeneutics, Wang Yichuan explained that "a text, as its name implies, refers to an object in the 'original' sense, as if it has not been interpreted by anyone, whose meaning is always open to the reader to be interpreted" (Wang Yichuan, 2000:223). Feng Shounong thinks that, from the perspective of structuralism,

> 'text' is literature-based, as opposed to 'human-oriented' … In the 1960s, structural criticism declared that 'the author is dead', so literature is indeed no longer 'human-oriented', and it has really returned to its essence, its true nature--'literature-based', and literary criticism has also turned inward, that is to say, it turns to the text.
>
> (Feng Shounong, 2001:13)

From the perspective of media, Huang Mingfen proposes that text can be divided into three types if it focusses on information coding technology:

The first type is stylistic text, which is the text encoded by body language and manifested by body; the second is object text, which appeals to communication tools and manifests itself through certain objects; and the third is spoken text, which appeals to a second signal system peculiar to human beings and manifests itself through specialized linguistic symbols. "Literary text" is a language texture created by the medium of language (Huang Mingfen, 2002:24). Fu Xiuyan puts forward that "as the name implies, the text is the 'text' of literary works, which carries the information to be expressed by the author in the medium of language and other symbols" (Fu Xiuyan, 2004:1). This view regards the text as the composition of language and the carrier of information without distinguishing between text and works. From the perspective of cultural criticism, the author of the entry "text" in *A Study of Key Concepts in Cultural Criticism* believes that

> in everyday life in a consumer society, a large number of 'literary texts' spring up. It is this kind of separation between time and space that cuts off practical connection between readers and texts. In this way, the practicability and literariness of practical texts such as life events, implements and etc. can interact with each other.
>
> (Wang Xiaolu, 2007:215)

These scholars tend to define the concept of text from a certain theory or perspective which lacks historical investigation and overall analysis of the text concept.

The spread of the Western concept of text in China arouses scholars' enthusiasm to explore theories related to Western text in traditional Chinese literary theory, but there is also the danger of simplified comparison. When Chinese scholars accept the Western classification of text into several levels, they often try to find a similar method of classification in ancient Chinese literary theories. The more the traditional Chinese literary theory lacks such text stratification theory, the more domestic scholars are committed to finding corresponding theories in traditional Chinese literary theory, which can be taken as a problem that the Chinese academic circle needs to reflect on when defining the concept of text. Many scholars turn their attention to the relationship between language (Yan), concept (Yi) and image (Xiang) in *The Book of Changes* (*Zhouyi*), which says that "what is written does not give the fullness of what is/was said; what is/was said does not give the fullness of the concept in the mind", while "the Sages established the Images to give the fullness of the concepts in their minds" (Owen, 2002:30). This shows that ancient China attaches great importance to such factors as language, image, concept, etc. Some scholars also discuss the relationship between Zhuangzi's "the meaning being already known, one's words are therefore no more necessary" (*Zhuangzi*, External Things), and text stratification. In fact, ancient Chinese literary theory tends to discard the coarse and extract the essence. *Zhuangzi* puts more emphasis on meaning than on words, which

is somewhat different from the classification of text into several levels based on language analysis in Western text theory. From the perspective of language thinking, there are differences between ancient Chinese philosophy and Western philosophy, so we cannot make a simplified comparison between them. Of course, some thinkers in ancient China also paid attention to the unity of speech and thoughts, language and thinking. It was Wang Bi in the Three Kingdoms period who made the most profound and detailed distinction between "language (Yan), concept (Yi) and image (Xiang)". He explained the relationship between the three key concepts in traditional Chinese literary theory in *Examples of Zhouyi: Elucidation of the Image*:

> The image is what brings out concept; language is what clarifies the Image. Nothing can equal Image in giving the fullness of concept; nothing can equal language in giving the fullness of Image. Language was born of the Image, thus we seek in language in order to observe the Image. Image was born of concept, thus we seek in Image in order to observe the concept.
>
> (Owen, 2002:32–33)

Wang Bi believes that meaning should be expressed through language, image and concept, respectively. In this sense, we can roughly think that text is composed of language, image and meaning, which displays the image at the language level and then reveals the meaning at the image level. It can be seen that there are some similarities between Chinese and Western literary theories in some aspects, and these can be reflected in and interpreted through each other. It is worth noting that ancient Chinese discussions on "language, concept and image" are mostly carried out from a philosophical perspective. In ancient Chinese literary theory, there are not many theories dealing directly with text stratification, but those that exist include Zhong Rong and Liu Xie, literary critics in the Wei and Jin Dynasties. Zhong Rong's *Gradations of Poets* (Shipin) proposes three levels of text evaluation: "Thus there are three principles in the poems: 1) Affective image; 2) Comparison; 3) Exposition". He actually divides the poetry into three levels. First, at the level of expression or words, if the meaning is profound, then the expressions or words may turn out to be plain; if the meaning is superfluous, then the expressions or words may turn out to be loose. Second, at the level of skills, including affective image, comparison and exposition, if the poet only adopts comparison and affective image, then the meaning may appear to be profound; if the poet uses exposition, then the expressions or words may turn out to be loose. Third, at the level of poetic flavour, if the poet can make use of all three principles, then the meaning can be far-reaching and infinite. Zhong Rong is actually evaluating 120 poets in history from different levels of language, technique and meaning. Here, he puts forward a new interpretation of the "three principles in the poems" and proposes that the highest level of poetry should be "flavorful" works, while exposition,

comparison and affective image are merely techniques of expression, different employment of expressions and words. Of course, Zhong Rong's theory is not completely equivalent to the Western theory of text stratification because exposition, comparison and affective image in Chinese literary theory is more parallel than hierarchical. Liu Xie expresses rather insightful opinions about text in his masterpiece *The Literary Mind and the Carving of the Dragon* (Wenxin diaolong), and he believes that text criticism should pay attention to six aspects:

> Thus to observe the affections in literature, first set forth these six points to be considered: consider how the normative form is given; consider how the words are arranged; consider continuity and mutation; consider whether it is normal or unusual; consider the events and principles (contained in it); consider the musical qualities.
>
> (Owen, 2002:303)

Professor Huang Weiliang from the Chinese University of Hong Kong believes that Liu Xie's views of "six points to be considered" is very comprehensive, and it is by no means inferior to Western literary theories. He thinks that Liu Xie's views of "six points to be considered" can correspond to the six levels of modern text criticism: Considering how the normative form is given is to view the theme, genre, form, structure and overall style of works; considering the events and principles is to observe the subject matters of works, including the people and things written, etc.; considering how the words are arranged is to examine the rhetorical devices of works; considering the musical qualities is to observe the musicality of works, such as tone, rhyme and rhythm, etc.; considering whether it is normal or unusual is to compare the technique and style of this work with that of other contemporary works so as to see if it is orthodox or novel; considering continuity and mutation is to explore the representation of this work compared with previous works and how it can inherit and innovate (Huang Weiliang, 1996). This view of text stratification is similar to the theories of Ingarden, Wellek and others. Huang Weiliang's interpretation of *The Literary Mind and the Carving of the Dragon* (Wenxin diaolong) from the perspective of Western theories is enlightening to some extent, but his main purpose is to interpret the ancient Chinese literary theory under the guidance of Western theories. To sum up, we can see that traditional Chinese literary theory and modern Western text theory have some similarities. At the same time, it is worth noting that over the past thousand years, great changes have taken place in both traditional Chinese text theories and social life, and there are still great differences between traditional Chinese literary theory and modern Western text theories in terms of expression and theme. How to effectively transform the traditional literary theory into the modern one or how to promote the conversation and integration between traditional text theories and modern text theories is still a problem that we need to ponder carefully.

Another problem of the text concept in Chinese literary criticism is the lack of practice of text criticism. Since text theory mainly comes from the West, Chinese scholars have been devoted to the translation and introduction of Western theories, while the application of Western theories to critical practice is somehow neglected. In fact, as early as 1995, Professor Hu Yamin pointed out that the alienation of theory and the practice of contemporary Chinese literary criticism was a problem, and it was also an important factor that led to the weakness of contemporary literary criticism.

> Originally, literary criticism is a subject closely related to the practice of literary creation and literary phenomena, and the scientific nature and effectiveness of critical theory must be tested by critical practice. However, this problem, which is theoretically made clear, is often overlooked and forgotten. Thus, the relationship between theory and practice of literary criticism seems estranged, embarrassed and rigid.
>
> (Hu Yamin, 2012:132)

There are many reasons for the above problems in the dissemination of the text concept in China. For one thing, the concept of text itself is complex and constantly developing, but its dissemination in China only covers a relatively short period. For another, due to the differences between Chinese and Western traditional language thinking and philosophy, Chinese critics are somewhat alienated from the Western text concept and critical method.

Text is a historical and developing concept in Western literary theory, and it has undergone a process of gradual development and recognition, which can be said to run through the whole history of Western literary theory in the 20th century, from Russian formalism, which pays attention to the literariness and aesthetic features of the text, to structuralism, which recognizes the language and structure of the text; from deconstruct, which recognizes that text is not self-sufficient, to phenomenology and hermeneutics, which open up the historical background of the text, and to postmodernism and cultural criticism, which open a wider space of society and culture. The development of the text concept cannot be accomplished in one move; on the contrary, it is a historical concept closely related to the evolution of Western social history and philosophical trends. The concept of text has been spread in China for a relatively short time. It was introduced into China in the 1980s and gradually clarified in the 1990s, and then Chinese scholars began to reflect on the concept around 2000. This process was just over 30 years. The development of the text concept in China is more about the introduction and interpretation of Western text theories, which flooded into China over a relatively short period, and Chinese scholars were overwhelmed and did not have enough time to understand, grasp and reflect on it as a whole. The fact that the concept of text, after travelling to China, turned out to be rather ambiguous and unclear in definition actually resulted from this historical reality.

   Meanwhile, because of differences between Chinese and Western modes of thinking, China lacks the evolution of Western language philosophy, especially the modern criticism tradition based on the "linguistic turn" in the 20th century. It has more of an experiential aesthetic language, quite distinct from the abstract alphabetic language of the West. Ji Xianlin believes that "the differences between Eastern and Western theories of literature and art are not only caused by the differences in language and writing, but also fundamentally due to the differences in essential modes of thinking" (Ji Xianlin, 1996:7). The Western mode of thinking is more analytic, while the Chinese mode of thinking is more synthetic. This difference in language and thinking results in different characteristics: Western text theory is more oriented toward rational analysis, while Chinese text theory is more oriented toward poetic thinking. In addition, traditional Chinese philosophy, such as Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, has also led the Chinese people to form different attitudes towards texts. Confucianism adopts a critical attitude towards poetic texts from the perspective of ethics and morality, featuring utilitarianism and pragmatism. Taoism emphasizes that "The meaning being already known, one's words are therefore no more necessary" in text analysis. Buddhism and Zen advocate "independence of words" and adopt textual mode of thinking of "wonderful enlightenment (Miaowu)" and "elastic deliberation (Huocan)". The traditional Chinese textual criticism based on Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism is obviously different from the textual criticism since the linguistic turn in the West in the 20th century. Many scholars attempt to explore the factors related to the Western concept of text in the traditional Chinese literary theory or interpret Chinese literary theory from the perspective of Western text theories, which easily leads to a rather simplified comparison. When reviewing and defining the Western concept of text, we should re-understand the traditional Chinese text theory and face up to the differences between Chinese and Western literary theories.

Reflection and reconstruction of the concept of "text"

Since the 21st century, Chinese scholars have focussed their attention on discussions of how to define the text concept. The Chinese academic circle has gone through a tortuous process, from unconsciously accepting Western text theories to consciously reviewing and reflecting on Western text theories, and then starting to construct China's own text theories in the new century. In the reconstruction of the text concept, we should first of all pay attention to the characteristics of text. Western theoretical circles have always paid attention to these characteristics. For example, De Beaugrande and Dressler summarize seven principles of textuality from the perspective of text linguistics: cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, situationality, informativity and intertextuality (Wales, 1990:459). According to В. Е. Хализев, "the universal characteristics of text (any kind of text ranging

from the linguistic perspective, as well as from the semiotic and cultural perspective) are stability, immutability and self-equality" (Хализев, 2006:304). These discussions summarize some typical features of the text, which merit our reference. The Western text concept and Chinese traditional text theory need to be combined with the contemporary context and further transformed, which then can be effectively applied to the reconstruction of the text concept.

First, we should pay attention to text stratification. It is true that there are many theories of text stratification in the West, from Ransom's theory of "structure-texture" to Roland Barthes, Ingarden, Dufrenne, Hartmann, Kessel, Suzanne Langer, Frye and Wellek and Warren, all of whom put forward their own theories of text stratification. These stratification theories have been widely accepted and discussed in depth in Chinese academic circles. Some domestic scholars have proposed constructing Chinese text studies and have made enlightening studies on the examination of Western text theories and comparison of Chinese and Western text theories. However, in their attempt to define the text concept, they are still confined to the framework of text stratification theory that is dominant in the West. Stratification is undoubtedly one of the characteristics of text structure, but when Chinese scholars try to define the text concept from this point of view, their studies lack the detailed analysis of text stratification in Western text theories. When defining the concept of text, Chinese scholars generally divide the text into three levels, which is obviously in accordance with the tradition of Chinese literary theory in terms of the classification of language (Yan), image (Xiang) and concept (Yi). Although it shows that the domestic academic circle endeavours to integrate Chinese and Western theories of text stratification, their lack of detailed and in-depth analysis of Western tradition to some extent conceals the complexity of text stratification, which is not conducive to the understanding and interpretation of text. In fact, the text can be roughly divided into three levels, "language (Yan), image (Yi) and concept (Xiang)", and it can be further divided into smaller sub-levels. Taking the first level, "language (Yan)", as an example, we can further divide it into three sub-levels: language, symbol and discourse. The level of language refers to the language aesthetic system, composed of phonetic sound, font, word, sentence, text and other elements. Starting from the basic concepts of linguistics, it can be divided into at least three levels: phonetics, grammar and semantics. For example, Russian formalism analyzed the literariness from the perspective of phonetics, and "the musical qualities" put forward by Liu Xie also refer to the sound, rhyme and rhythm of language. Moreover, textual aesthetic problems, such as language, colour, form, qi, etc., can be explored on this basis. The level of symbol is a special system consisting of sound, image, colour and other symbols. The symbolic level of text is composed of generalized symbols, including visual, auditory and other systems of different levels. The level of discourse means that the language and symbol systems communicate in a certain way, that is, in the way

of discourse.[8] According to Jacobson's discourse theory and modern communication theory, the mode of this level is speaker—contextual information (contact code)—receiver, which is a communication process encoded by the speaker, contacted by context and information and finally decoded by the receiver. When analyzing text at this level, language and symbols are no longer mere symbolic codes but also carry contextual information that, together with codes, needs to be conveyed in a certain way. Although literary text is the product of language as a symbol system in terms of its form, its content of meaning transcends mere linguistic meaning and involves the meaning expressed by all discourse systems in human culture, such as myth, religion, politics, economy, etc. Therefore, the interpretation of literary texts is making use of linguistic codes not simply to assign values but also to correspond the formal factors of texts with multiple discourse systems in human culture, which inevitably enters the two levels of "image (Xiang)" and "concept (Yi)", that is, "language (Yan)" itself will form "image (Xiang)" and may also contain "concept (Yi)". When we analyze the text, it is necessary to carefully analyze the subtle elements within each level of the text and the relationship between each level. At the same time, we must also realize that each level is actually a closely connected whole itself.

Second, we should attach importance to the integrity of the text concept. Admittedly, we can re-interpret traditional Chinese text theory from the perspective of Western theories and find out the relevance or similarities between them, but a certain degree of misunderstanding may occur in any interpretation. More importantly, we do not have to probe into the similarities between Chinese literary theory and Western literary theory; we do not have to look for corresponding theories in traditional Chinese literary theory by taking Western theory as a frame of reference, which actually reflects a kind of cultural inferiority. We should admit that there are fundamental differences between traditional Chinese literary theory and modern Western text theories based on modern language philosophy. What we should do is to find out the differences between Chinese literary theory and Western literary theory, and what ancient Chinese literary theory can contribute to solving the problems that contemporary literary theory is confronted with, which is indeed the starting point of our thinking.

The main difference between Chinese and Western text theories lies in the fact that Chinese text theory is a theory of organic whole infused with vitality. Rather than text stratification, ancient Chinese literary theory pays more attention to the comprehensive analysis of various elements in the whole text. For example, although Liu Xie's views of "six points to be considered" also divide text into several specific levels, they focus more on the harmonious relationship between these levels. Liu Xie regards the relationship between them as a living whole, much like a living person: "He should take the affections and intent as the element of spiritual understanding; take events and truths as the bone and marrow; take language and coloration as the skin and flesh; take musical qualities as the voice and *qi*" (Owen,

2002:278). The elements of spiritual understanding, the bone and marrow, the skin and flesh, and the voice and qi are four indispensable elements of human beings. The text without affections, intent, events and truths is like a person without the element of spiritual understanding or bone and marrow. In the same way, the text which is full of affections, intent, events and truths but lacks language and coloration and musical qualities is like a lifeless ghost. Liu Xie directly compares the text to the human body, which endows his theory with humanistic implication and spirit. Bai Juyi, in the Tang Dynasty, divides poetry into three levels, the level of sound and rhythm, the level of image and the level of concept, which constitute the whole life of poetry. Hu Yinglin in the Ming Dynasty also vividly describes the organic integrity of the text and compares it to the double organism of tree and man, which emphasizes that the content of the text is as important as its language and coloration, and the two should be in harmony. The common feature of these elaborations lies in the fact that all of them believe that the elements of literary text should be stratified and integrated as an organic whole at the same time.

On the one hand, traditional Chinese poetics elaborate on the relationship between specific elements of text and text as a whole as well as the relationship between specific elements in a profound and dialectical way. On the other hand, Chinese poetics often compares the whole text to living organisms, such as human beings or animals and plants, and truly endows the text with flesh, blood and life. Of course, there are also expositions which regard the text as a whole in Western text theories. Eliot, for example, argues that every specific literary work is itself an organic whole, and the whole literature composed of specific texts is an organic whole as well. All immortal works in the past constitute a perfect system from which new works are born. Although there is holism of text theory in the West, such as the text theories of Tomaszewski, Shklovsky, Eliot, Lottman and the others mentioned above, they are only a minority and mostly lack life consciousness. In Aristotle's *Poetics*, beauty is a living entity, but it depends on two factors: size and order. Western text theory inherits Aristotle's views of hierarchy and order, so the holistic text theory in the West emphasizes the idea that the relationship between parts and whole, especially modern text theory in the 20th century, is more inclined to a microscopic and detailed analysis of stratification.[9] Although Chinese text theory pays attention to the stratification of text, it attaches greater importance to harmonious and unified relations or tends to stress chaos and integrity. Chinese literary theory emphasizes the unity of opposites between language (Yan) and meaning (Yi), between style (Wen) and character (Zhi), between form (Xing) and spirit (Shen), and between sentiment (Qing) and reason (Li). Behind this difference lie two different philosophies and cultural concepts: Chinese people tend to lay stress on "harmony between man and nature" and "harmony and unity", while Westerners put more emphasis on the contrast between subjectivity and objectivity as well as detailed analysis.

The enlightenment we can draw from ancient Chinese literary theory is that text is not only an analytical object and method but, more importantly, a holistic concept. The text is not only an independent and closed multi-level structure but also a harmonious whole composed of internal elements. There are distribution relations of unit at each level of the text and integration and penetration relations at different levels. All of these levels constitute a harmonious and unified text of interaction and dialogue.

Third, we should pay close attention to the dynamic nature of the concept of text. Text is not only a stable hierarchical structure but also a historical and dynamic concept. No single phenomenon can be isolated from its complex process of formation. Historical consciousness and aesthetic form are inseparable, so when we discuss the concept of text, we must put it into the historical context and make an in-depth investigation of how it is generated and closely related to other factors in such a historical context.

One of the manifestations of the dynamic nature of the text concept is its historical development. The development of the text concept in the 20th century is a dynamic and constantly changing process. At the beginning of the 20th century, under the background of the rise of Western language philosophy, many theoretical schools of the Western theory of literature and art came into being and began to focus their attention on the linguistic characteristics of texts, such as Russian formalism, the Prague school, the semantic school, Anglo-American new criticism, structuralism, etc. They regard text as a closed and self-disciplined structure. Christeva proposes intertextuality and breaks the independence of text. Phenomenology, hermeneutics and reception aesthetics hold that text is generated in the dialogue with readers. Postmodernism and cultural studies (post-colonialism, new historicism, feminism, Western Marxism, etc.) are flourishing in the West. The emergence of various concepts, such as pan-text and hypertext, challenges the traditional concept of text and further opens the door of text, external world and ideology. From the history of the dynamic development of the concept of text, we can see that its core elements, such as language, structure, aesthetics, readers, ideology and so on, continue to emerge, which constitutes a dynamic process of deepening our understanding of history. Therefore, when defining text concept, we must pay attention to the dynamic development of the text concept and consider its core elements fully and comprehensively.

The second dynamic representation of the concept of text is the dynamic dialogue between text, creators, receivers and the outside world. In the history of the dynamic development of text, it is an independent and closed unity of structure in Formalism-Structuralism, while deconstruct believes that it is a dynamic process of production, which refers not only to the dynamic weaving of language relations within the text but also the intertextuality and dynamic dialogue between the text and other texts. The theoretical propositions of phenomenology, hermeneutics, reception aesthetics and postmodernism show that there is a dynamic, two-way interactive process

between the text, the reader and the outside world. In fact, the current text study requires this kind of dynamic and open field of vision because literature itself is an open, dynamically developing concept. In particular, the emergence of pan-text and hypertext turns traditional text from a single text to plural, open texts. If there was a clear line between "reading" and "writing" in the past, nowadays, this linear mode of thinking has been confronted with a challenge in the information era. For example, on BBS (Bulletin Board System), a text is composed of not only the text of the poster but also the reply texts of many readers. Another typical example is the popular microblogging and WeChat, in the process of continuous posting and transmitting, the relationship between the author and the reader is constantly changing. In a word, all kinds of pan-text and hypertext are like a growing and lasting network. In this dynamic network, you are both the reader, the receiver and the author, and the creator as well.

In order to define the dynamically developing concept of text, we must first understand the current theoretical and cultural context: on the one hand, Western traditional text theory is impacted by postmodernism and cultural studies, and the traditional concept of text stratification cannot accommodate and solve this problem; on the other hand, after more than 30 years of accepting, reviewing and reflecting on the Western text concept, the Chinese academic circle has the requirements and realistic basis for dialogue with Western theories. Specifically, after years of development, China's economic and cultural progress has given the Chinese academic circle greater confidence, and it tries to integrate the dynamic elements in traditional Chinese literary theories with Western theories to solve the common problems facing China and the West today. To sum up, the value and meaning of a text are determined by various factors, so it is impossible to view a text from a single perspective, let alone determine the concept of a text based on a certain factor and feature. We must reconstruct the concept of text from multiple dimensions, including stratification, wholeness, dynamics, etc.

In short, the variation of the concept of text in China shows the differences between the Chinese cultural context and that of the West. When reconstructing the text, we should not only consider the increasing core elements of the text concept in the diachronic transmission but also bear in mind the structural features and differences of the Chinese and Western text concepts in synchrony, and pay attention to the changes of the current cultural context. From the perspective of the core elements of the text, language is the entity of text, structure is the bones and muscles of text, aesthetics is the romantic charm of text, and the ideology is the bearing of text. From the structural features of Chinese and Western texts, text is a combination of a multi-level and organic whole. From the perspective of a contemporary cultural context, text is a discourse system of dynamic communication with authors, readers and the world.

All in all, text is not only an object of analysis or a research method but also a fundamentally dynamic and developing concept. Text is not

mechanical, static schemata and objects such as triangles and circles but a kind of intentional, dialogue-filled generating process. The theoretical travel of text concept begins from the starting point of a particular culture and history, passes through various channels of pressure over a period of time and spreads through the special cultural context. The creation and maintenance of the concept of text depends on the coordination of various forces, which will somehow make its original form compromise and modify, and even eliminate, the opposition and limitation of previous theories. Therefore, it is necessary for us to examine and reconstruct the text concept in a dynamic and developmental way from multiple dimensions.

Notes

1 As for the translation of terminology and quoted texts in traditional Chinese literary theory, the translator mainly consults for reference the translations and interpretations provided by Stephen Owen in the following two books: Stephen Owen. (2002). *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*. Wang Bohua, Tao Qingmei (Trans.). Shanghai: shànghǎi shèhuì kēxuéyuàn chūbǎnshè (Shanghai Academy of Social Science Press); Kang-I Sun, Stephen Owen. (Eds.). (2010). *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2 In fact, the earliest text criticism is the textual collation criticism, which already existed in China and the West long ago, and which mainly focusses on the analysis and study of text version, and examines the factors of book making, arrangement, media, characters and pictures, which mainly belongs to the category of book science and editing science; meanwhile the literary text criticism in this chapter refers to the study of text symbols, structure, meaning and aesthetics in the 20th century based on the turn of linguistic philosophy in the West, which belongs to the category of literary criticism. Of course, text in textual collation and that in literary textual criticism are not completely separate, and different scholars have their own views on this issue. For example, Pierre, a French manuscript expert, thinks that a series of original manuscript materials by the author, including his writing plan, outline, draft, clarification draft and finalization can only be called "pre-text". See Pierre-Marc de Biasi. (2005). *Text Genetics*. Wang Xiuhua (Trans.). Tianjin: tiānjīn rénmín chūbǎn shè (Tianjin People's Publishing House): 29. Gerard Genette thinks that the title, introduction, preface and postscript of a work, including illustrations and cover binding, originally belong to the study of edition. Although they do not belong to the text, they can be regarded as the "paratext". See Gerard Genette. (2001). *The Collected Essays of Gerard Genette*. Shi Zhongyi (Trans.). Tianjin: bǎihuā wényì chūbǎn shè (Baihua Literature and Art Publishing House): 71. From the perspective of intertextuality, "pre-text", "paratext" and the text actually constitute intertext to some extent.

3 According to Russian formalism, structure belongs to form. Form refers to the synthesis of text language, structure and technique of expression, which is the substantive factor of text. Since Aristotle, traditional Western theories have emphasized the dichotomy that content determines form, which Russian formalism strongly opposes. Shklovsky thinks that it is not content that determines form but form that creates content for itself, or even content that is an aspect of form and form that is the sum of various methods of making language expression into a work of art. For example, he thinks that stories are just materials, while plots are forms of language, expression methods and techniques. Shklovsky replaces

the traditional dichotomy of content and form with the dichotomy of "material" and "form", greatly expanding the factor of form. See V. Shklovsky. (1994). *Theory of Prose*. Liu Zongzi (trans.). Nanchang: bǎihuāzhōu wényì chūbǎnshè (Baihuazhou Literature and Art Publishing House): 31. Or see Шкловский В.Б. (1983). *О теории прозы*. Москва.Изд: Советский писатель: 37.

The "form" (форма in Russian) used by Shklovsky in early poetics refers to the sum of various methods, and the word "structure" (структура in Russian) is often used in his later criticism. "структура" is a word of foreign origin in Russian, which refers to the structure of language, texture, etc. Shklovsky argues that structuralists deal with superficial problems instead of ontological ones. In his opinion, structuralists are interested in covers, and it is more accurate to say that structuralists study the packaging of a work rather than the work itself. See Шкловский В.Б. (1983). *Избранное в двух томах*. Томвторой. Москва: Художественная литература: 110.

Whereas Shklovsky insists on formal ontology, his critique of structuralism may be a bit extreme, which largely results from his debate with Jacobson.

4 "Texture" can be taken as a word closely connected with text, whose original meaning is "texture of fabric" or "tissue" of skin and muscle, that is, "the arrangement of the threads in a textile fabric" or "arrangement of the parts that make up something". See (1993). *Oxford Advanced Modern English-Chinese Dictionary*. Beijing: shāngwù yìnshūguǎn (The Commercial Press): 1196.

"Texture" in new criticism, which is represented by Ransom, refers mainly to those features of literary text that are not of abstract meaning or structure, especially the related effects of poetry, such as rhyme, harmony, alliteration and homophone, which often include rhetoric, images, rhythms and rhymes. See Baldick, Chris. (Ed.). (2000). *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Shanghai: shànghǎi wàiyǔ jiàoyù chūbǎnshè (Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press): 224.

5 It is worth noting that text is a developing concept that Barthes has been constantly concerned with. Academic circles generally believe that after 1968, Roland Barthes turned to post-structuralism, but there is no absolute distinction on some issues. For example, the distinction between text and work has long been the issue that Barthes focusses on. Especially in opposing the external study of works and emphasizing the linguistic and symbolic characteristics of texts, Barthes's later discussions are consistent with those of structuralism. Of course, he paid more attention to the uncertainty of text meaning in the period of post-structuralism, which can be regarded as his extension of the previous views and where the differences between structuralism and post-structuralism lie.

6 There are many different schools of postmodernism and cultural studies, and they sometimes overlap with each other. Here the juxtaposition of postmodernism and cultural studies does not mean to equate the two but to point out that there is a certain similarity between them in terms of the concept of text, that is, the text concepts in both of them have a tendency towards generalization and enlargement.

7 Some researchers translate "context" (translated into Chinese as Yujing) into pan-text because they believe that pan-text refers to all cultural products that can be analyzed symbolically in life. See Dong Xiwen. (2006). *On Theories of Literary Text*. Beijing: shèhuì kēxué wénxiàn chūbǎnshè (Social Sciences Academic Press): 306.

In terms of research objects, there are some overlaps between pan-text and text of cultural semiotics. The differences between the two are as follows: First, the two concepts are put forward by different schools of theory, one of which is postmodernism, the other of which is cultural semiotics; second, the pan-text emphasizes the realistic consumer culture of late capitalism, while the text of

cultural semiotics stresses the function of the information communication of human cultural symbols.

8 Text and discourse are originally a pair of keywords in Western text linguistics which have been discussed by many Western scholars. Michael Stubbs points out that text and discourse are synonymous to some extent, but the differences between the two concepts lie in the fact that text is usually written, while discourse may be spoken; text may be non-interactive, while discourse is conversational; text can be long or short, but discourse must have a certain length; and text must have external cohesion, while discourse must have deep consistency. Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short believe that the differences between the two lie in the fact that discourse is the verbal communication between the speaker and the receiver, the activity between people, and its form is determined by its social purpose, while text is a form of verbal communication (either spoken or written) but more of an auditory or visual medium that encodes information. See Hawthorn, Jeremy. (1992). *A Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory*. Oxford University Press: 256. Here discourse as an "information encoding" has been accepted and widely used by many theorists, such as Jacobson and so on. Discourse is spontaneous and exists in a certain situation. It will disappear in a certain situation, but if it can enter a higher level, it will remain as a text. For example, a prophecy, a medical advice, a slogan, a proverb and an advertisement can be fixed into a text and perpetuated if it can enter the level of sense group, image and phenomenon. In addition, some postmodern theorists also regard literary text as a form of discourse, such as Foucault's theory of power discourse, Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, Bakhtin's theory of text dialogue, Ricco's view of text and so on. Eagleton summarized these theories and believed that discourse and ideology, as class, nationality and gender, are a unity, which is written in the language, structure and form of the text. See Eagleton, Terry. (1999). *Politics, Philosophy and Desire in History*. Ma Hailiang (Trans.). Beijing: China Social Sciences Press: 114. In short, discourse is actually permeated in the three levels of text, that is, language, phenomenon and ideology

9 In the 20th century, some Western scholars reflected on this view. Shklovsky criticizes structuralism, and he thinks that "they divide the work into many levels and then study the first, second and third level respectively." See Шкловский В.Б. О теории прозы. Москва.Изд: Советский писатель. 1983. стр.125. Structuralists, he argues, are like workers in search of precision, simplifying the problem. The text is actually much more complex than that. "The work is not isolated and cannot be separated from order, system and system of systems." See Шкловский В.Б.О теориипрозы. Москва: Советский писатель. 1983, стр.325. In his later period, Wellek changed his thoughts and reflected on the structural stratification which he proposed in *Theory of Literature*. In his essay "The Crisis of Comparative Literature", he states that the only correct concept is undoubtedly the "holistic" concept, which regards the work of art as a diverse whole, a symbolic structure, but a symbolic structure that implies and requires meaning and value. See Wellek, Rene. (1963). The Crisis of Comparative Literature. In *Concepts of Criticism*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press: 282–295.

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3   Narrative

Written by Xie Longxin, translated by Li Minrui

Narrative is a mode of expression born along with human civilization. The concept of narrative in the West can be traced back to discussions by Plato and Aristotle in ancient Greece, and in China it dates back to *documents* on "narration" and "thing" in ancient Chinese literature. In the 1960s, as the structuralist literary criticism thrived, "narration" became the core concept of the emerging discipline, also known as "narratology". In post-classical narratology, narrative has become endowed with more abundant significance, and almost all disciplines attempt to define "narrative" from various perspectives. In the field of literary criticism, it has obviously mirrored the changing process of criticism in the 20th century. In light of this, clearing up the conceptual history of "narrative" will contribute to the comprehension of its rich significance and to a macroscopical grasp of the changing contour of its concept.

Hereby, this chapter endeavours to sort out the emergence, development and transformation of the narrative concept in the context of a comparison between China and the West, to conclude the specific connotation in various developmental stages and to explore its function and impact on the literary criticism. In a word, the journey and contour of the narrative conceptual changes will be delineated as much as possible.

Origin of the "narrative" concept in the West

It is of great importance to investigate a concept from the perspective of etymology. Therefore, the etymological meanings of "narrative", usage of "narrative" in some works by Plato and Aristotle and ultimately introduction to the concepts relevant to "narrative" into modern fiction theory will be taken into account in the following section.

Etymological investigation of "narrative"

"Narrative" has a genetic relation to the Latin words "narrativus" and "narrare". In Latin, "narrativus" means "telling a story", and "narrare" is to "relate" or "tell"; this is the etymology of "narrate" (Stevenson, 2010:1179).

The Greek avatar of "narrate" is "diēgēsis", and in English it is "diegesis". "Diegesis" is used in *The Republic* by Plato and in both *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* by Aristotle. After this, it nearly vanishes until Gerard Genette reintroduces it into literary studies. According to the explanation in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative* by David Herman (2007:276) and *A Companion to Narrative Theory* by James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz (2005:544), "diegesis" has two implications: First, it means "narrate": namely, an expression mode of discourse which is a mode of telling but not performing; second, it means "the story world": namely, the position the narrator occupies in the story world, with different positions presenting different stories. The second implication brings out a "term family": intradiegetic, extradiegetic, homodiegetic and heterodiegetic, etc. In addition, the two implications are profoundly correlated. The first implication takes up the predominant position, and it is the expression mode of discourse (not the mode of performance) that brings about the distinctions of intra-, extra-, homo- and hetero- in the story world.

In terms of "narrative" and "narration", there are distinctions and associations as well. According to the etymology, "narration" has a close relation to the position and posture of the narrator, which places more emphasis on the "discourse" of telling stories. However, "narrative" puts more emphasis on the told "story". The shared connotation of the two implications is "telling" stories, which is also the fundamental meaning of the Latin root "narrō-".

Classical "narrative": Plato and Aristotle

Plato and Aristotle are the founders of narrative studies in the West. However, before the structuralist narratology, no particular attention was paid to the discussion about "narrative" by Plato and Aristotle, but sufficient attention was paid to another keyword: "mimesis" or "imitation". Compared with mimesis or imitation, the original meaning of "narrative" is much easier to determine. Most discussion about "narrative" lies in Volume III of *The Republic* (Plato, 1992:69). In the book, Socrates discusses "what" the story tells and "how" to tell the story:

> Isn't everything said by poets and storytellers a narrative **[*diēgēsis*]** about past, present, or the future events?
>
> And aren't these narratives either narrative alone **[*haplē diēgēsis*]**, or narrative through imitation **[*diēgēsis dia mimēseōs*]**, or both **[*diēgēsis di'amphoterōn*]**?
>
> (392d)

Plato views "narrative" as the discourse "style" of telling stories. In his view, there are three modes of narrative: pure narrative or narrative without imitation, narrative through imitation, and pure narrative mixed with mimetic narrative. After the above citations, Plato explores three modes of

narrative, taking *Homeric Hymns* as example: Pure narrative means that the poet never hides himself (393d) and narrates using his own identity (394c), and the corresponding genre is "dithyramb"; mimetic narrative means that the poet speaks using another person's identity with his voice and appearance (393c), and the corresponding genre is tragedy or comedy; finally the mixed narrative combines both pure narrative and mimetic narrative, and the corresponding genre is epic (Plato, 1992:69–70).

Aristotle's conception of "narrative" can be found mainly in *Poetics*. The word "diēgēsis" appears only five times in the book. Based on where it appears and its meanings in the five positions, "narrative" is a mode of imitation. The following represents the most common quotations from *Poetics*:

> A third difference in these arts is the manner in which one may represent each of these objects. For in representing the same objects by the same means it is possible to proceed **either** partly by narrative and partly by assuming a character other than your own—this is Homer's method—<u>or</u> by remaining yourself without any such change, **or** else to represent the characters as carrying out the whole action themselves.
> (Aristotle, 1982 [1927]:1448a; Gaudreault, 2009:42)

Aristotle highlights the important role the narrator plays in the narrative, mentioning "narrative" only when discussing the mode of imitation. As stated above, Aristotle's "narrative" is just one of the three modes of imitation: The imitator "never changes and narrates in his own tongue". The distinctions between the "narrative" imitation and "the narrator imitates with action" are that the former imitator shows up as the narrator (*apangellonta*), while the latter appears as a character.

"Action" or "plot" and their arrangements are the important narrative elements. Aristotle indicates the principal role the plot plays in the narrative by probing into the epics and tragedies. Plot is the arrangement of events, and event is expressed through the actions. Aristotle highlights the idea that the art of narrative should be an "entirety" like a life entity. Beginning, middle and ending constitute the plot as a natural entirety.

Comparing Aristotle's "mimesis" with Plato's "narrative" will be beneficial to distinguishing their narrative thoughts. Aristotle's three modes of imitation correspond to Plato's three modes of narrative: (1) "Sometimes narration is used, and sometimes character is presented" corresponds to Plato's *diēgēsis di'amphoterōn*, both of which claim epics as examples. (2) The imitator "never alters and narrates in his own tongue" corresponds to Plato's *haplē diēgēsis*; in this case, the identity of the imitator is the narrator but not the character. (3) "Imitator imitates with actions" corresponds to Plato's *diēgēsis dia mimēseōs*; in this case, the imitator plays the part of the character.

As this comparison makes clear, Aristotle turns Plato's *diēgēsis* into "*mimēsis*". However, the internal distinction between concepts is almost the

same. In terms of "narrative", Plato offers a "family of genres" of narrative: Three modes of expression above are narrative, but, for Aristotle, it is only when poets act as narrators that we can claim the category *diegesis* to be present (Gaudreault, 2009:49). However, because there are "narrative" elements in drama, in terms of the art genre, drama falls into the category of narrative. Although Plato and Aristotle have different demarcations on "narrative" in terms of width and length, their understanding is almost the same in terms of genre. Their distinctions lie in their different perspectives: Plato serves the purpose of constructing "The Republic" by endowing "narrative" with ethical values from the perspective of form; meanwhile Aristotle, defines all arts as "mimesis", and in the poetic scope, he views "narrative" as a mode of "imitation" or "representation".

In short, classical "narrative" highlights the significance of the narration form and puts forward some core elements of "narrative", such as "narrator", "act", "plot" and "event arrangement", which have great influence on the subsequent narrative studies.

Relevant concepts in modern fiction theory

Henry James lays the foundation for modern fiction theory. Later on, *The Craft of Fiction* (1921) by Percy Lubbock, *Aspects of the Novel* (1927) by E. M. Foster and *The Structure of the Novel* (1928) by Edwin Muir all contribute to the development of this theory. More importantly, they contribute much to the concept of "narrative" from different perspectives.

Henry James expounds systematically on the idea of "the point of view", the perspective used when telling stories. He advocates "the consistency of a single point of view", suggesting that a fiction narrative is supposed to set its observation points on a certain or several characters and narration and description should start with a character's observation and cognition, which constitute "the central intelligence". Various ideas concentrate on those characters who have the central intelligence, which combines organically with different parts of the work. At this point, a "story" is done. The comprehension of both "dramatic" and "picture-like" narratives is the foundation of "the point of view". "James once demanded that the art of novel should be expressed through the character's languages and actions and the author's illustration ought to be limited to the minimum" (Hu Yamin, 2004:103). Since the authors "go behind", the task of narration can only be taken up by the character with the point of view. On the whole, whether it is the "point of view" or the "dramatic" narrative, James highlights the important role the character as the narrator plays in the narrative.

Lubbock further highlights the significance of "the point of view" in the narrative and makes an explicit definition of it. "Where the narrator stands" can by and large be divided to two aspects: The author as the narrator and the character in the story as the narrator. Therefore, "the point of view" is the important means through which to "govern" the story. In order to avoid

"author's telling the story in a simple and straightforward way", Lubbock highlights the latter: Namely, the significant role the dramatization of the character as the narrator plays in the narrative.

Lubbock extends the discussions on "the central intelligence" and "the singular point of view" proposed by Henry James, and further illustrates the transferring issue of point of view. Point of view can transfer from the authorial narrator to the character narrator (e.g. *Madame Bouvary*) but can also move between the multiple character-narrators (e.g. *The Wings of the Dove*), and what's more, it can transfer between the character narrator and the reader (e.g. *The Ambassadors*). Lubbock, as the adherent of Aristotle, highlights the idea that the narrator is the core element of the "narrative" and at the same time elaborates in detail the significance of the "perspective" in which the narrator stands to the story. Therefore, Lubbock further develops the narrative concepts of Plato and Aristotle, which offers multiple references and modes of enlightenment into contemporary narrative studies.

Foster puts forward the distinctions between the story and the plot in *Aspects of the Novel*. The story relates the life in time, for instance, lunch is after breakfast, Tuesday after Monday, and decay after death, etc., and the plot suspends the time sequence for the time being to take the cause and effect of events into account. The story is the foundation of fiction, but the plot is a higher level of systematic organization. The distinction between the story and the plot enlightens the studies of story structure in contemporary narratology. Muir is a proponent of this concept. He explores the "universal principle" in the story structure, divides the fiction into various categories, probes into the shared structural feature in various fictions and builds up the aesthetic foundation for the principles. His research method can be viewed as the first sign of structuralism.

The categories of "the point of view", "story" and "plot" in a modern theory of fiction are of guiding significance to contemporary narrative studies.

Classical "narrative" concepts

The concept of modern "narrative" is grounded on the premise of structuralist narratology. After a period of prosperity, narratology experienced a "postmodern turn" at the end of the 20th century. That is the reason for the so-called distinction of classical narratology and post-classical narratology. Classical narratology is closely related to Russian formalism and French structuralism.

Russian formalism and "techniques"

Russian formalism is one of the important sources of narrative theory, and it proposes that literary studies should undertake the purpose of serving literature itself, and the research targets should be the unique techniques and structural principles of literature. The methodology has a significant influence on narratology.

Victor Shklovsky puts forward a clear-cut catchphrase namely, "art as technique", which is one of the major principles of Russian formalism. This principle has a profound impact on Russian "narrative" concepts. Russian formalism does not intend to figure out what the story is but to concentrate on how it is organized or told. Thus, the discourse of narrative works is the research centre. For example, Russian formalism stresses, in particular, the importance of "arrangement", the purpose of which is to account for the significance of "techniques" or "narrating forms". The same story may have various "arrangements" which form different plots. For this reason narrating "techniques" or narrating "forms" are becoming the core of narrative studies.

The function theory by V. J. Propp

Actually, V. J. Propp doesn't belong to Russian formalism or structuralism, but the methodology he sets up has an important influence on structuralist narratology. *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928) is a fundamental work of structuralist narratology. Propp is devoted to exploring the form of "story" and figuring out structural law by analyzing its components.

Propp's "narrative" concept contains three basic elements: *Dramatis personae*, *functions of dramatis personae*, and *the sequence of functions*, which constitute the narration of the mysterious story. He distinguishes between the constant and the variable. The variable is the names of the *dramatis personae*, and the constant is their actions or functions.

> Both constants and variables are present in the preceding instances. The names of the *dramatis personae* change (as well as the attributes of each), but neither their actions nor functions change. From this we can draw the inference that a tale often attributes identical actions to various personages. This makes possible the study of the tale *according to the functions of its dramatis personae*.
>
> (Propp, 2009:20)

Propp extracts 31 functions from one hundred Russian folktales. Of course, not every story has all the functions, and lack of some functions doesn't affect the alternate sequences of other functions. Most functions are arranged in pairs: for instance, prohibition-violation, reconnaissance-delivery, struggle-victory, pursuit-deliverance and so on; some are arranged according to groups, such as villainy, dispatch, decision for counteraction and departure from home, which constitute the complication; and others are individual functions, like absentation, punishment, marriage and so on. The orderly arrangement of the functions constitutes the plot progress of stories. The narration of stories can only be chosen from the 31 functions which should be arranged in order, and the number of characters is also confined. The 31 functions distribute in seven spheres of action corresponding to seven roles: Villain, donor, helper, princess and her father, dispatcher,

hero, and false hero. In a certain folktale, a character may become involved in several spheres of action, and several characters may, in turn, become involved in the same sphere of action. This is the repetition of the role function. This explains the two-fold quality of a tale: Its amazing multiformity, picturesqueness and colourfulness, and it's no less striking uniformity and repetition (Propp, 2009:20–21). After examining all folktales, Propp believes that a basic story consists of "character" and "function" and every folktale is only its metamorphosis or representation.

Although Propp confines his studies on the narrative elements and narrative structure to a specific form—the folktale—he extracts the structural law from one hundred folktales, which is in itself an adoption of the method of structuralist narratology: Namely, the synchronic studies. Propp's major breakthrough lies in the idea that

> he establishes the extremely important basic element in the story—the function, which offers the possibilities to study the narrative according to the character functions and the relations of their connection. Therefore, Propp exploits a new road to analyze the narrative structure and narrative elements.
>
> (Hu Yamin, 1987:75)

Structuralist "narrative"

There are a host of remarkable theorists in the structuralist narratology, such as Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes in his earlier times, Tzvetan Todorov, A.J. Greimas and Gerald Genette. They have all defined the connotation of "narrative" concept from different perspectives.

The studies on myths by Claude Lévi-Strauss

Lévi-Strauss is a celebrated French anthropologist, and he is honoured as the "father of structuralism" because he is a forerunner who has used structuralist methods in anthropological studies. He discusses his understanding of "narrative" in his studies on myth. The narrative elements and structural features the myth possesses apply to other narrative genres to a great extent.

First, Lévi-Strauss thinks that myth is a set of discourses. It is language: To be known, it has to be told; it is a part of human speech. It is both the same thing as a language and something different from it. However, the language that myth uses has a specific property, and myth is in the language and beyond it. The specific property is the double structure, which is both historical and ahistorical. Lévi-Strauss believes that *langue* belongs to a reversible time, and *parole* is nonreversible. The discourse of myth can be illustrated with a time system: On the one hand, a myth always refers to events alleged to have taken place long ago; on the other hand, a myth is a long-term stable structure (Lévi-Strauss, 1963:209). The discourse of myth,

therefore, has two dimensions of analysis: The dimension of *parole* embodies the plot or event sequence constituted by a certain myth; the dimension of *langue* embodies the synchronic structure that the multi-metamorphoses transformed by the same myth, which reflects the deep implication of myth. The theory that says "the myth is a set of discourses" is the foundation of Lévi-Strauss' analysis of myth. Meanwhile, his theory directly enlightens the later narratologists to view "narrative" as the discourse.

Second, Lévi-Strauss argues that "the true constituent units of a myth are not the isolated relations but *bundles of such relations*, and it is only as bundles that these relations can be put to use and combined so as to produce a meaning" (Lévi-Strauss, 1963:211). Hereby, the "bundles of relations" indicate the syntagmatic or paradigmatic relations that multiple mythemes of the resemblant signification constitute. In the studies of myth metamorphosis, Lévi-Strauss notices the resemblant mythemes that repeatedly appear and thinks that the repetition has the function of highlighting the myth structure. Thus, the myth displays a synchronic-diachronic structure: The surface narration forms the diachronic event sequence, and under the story is the hidden, synchronic and deep structure. Lévi-Strauss' myth analysis enlightens the dual distinctions in the structuralist narratology, that is, the surface structure and the deep structure of the narrative works.

Third, Lévi-Strauss states that the myth or "narrative" has the function of "mediation". For example, the Oedipus myth provides a kind of logical tool which coordinates the original conflict—whether man was born from the earth or born from the intercourse of a man and a woman. The mode of coordination is to set up a third or intermediary agent between two opposite ends. If "agriculture" means "life", and "war" means "death", then "hunting" is the intermediation of "agriculture" and "war", which reconciles the opposition between the two. Lévi-Strauss's function theory of narrative has a profound influence on A. J. Greimas. Not only is Greimas's symbolic matrix related to this theory, but the theory motivates him to discover the concept of "the narrative as the coordinator".

On the whole, Lévi-Strauss explores the narrative issue based on the overall framework of structuralist linguistics, and his research on the myth offers many perspectives on "narrative". The concepts of "narrative as the discourse", "the surface and deep structures of narrative" and "the function of narrative" establish a fundamental direction for structuralist narrative studies.

On narrative by Roland Barthes in his earlier times

Roland Barthes is a distinguished contemporary literary theorist and semiologist, and the narrative study is merely a part of his multitudinous literary thoughts. His narrative studies can be divided into two periods. In the earlier period, he is an important structuralist narratologist, and the essay "An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative", published in *Communications*, is his magnum opus and the masterpiece of French structuralist

narratology. Here, the focus is exclusively placed on his earlier works on the concept of "narrative". In the later period, he moves to post-structuralism.

In the first place, Roland Barthes believes that "narrative" is everywhere. In the beginning of "An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative", he indicates that any material can be the media of "narrative", and "narrative" pervades nearly all types of art. The universality of "narrative" opens a capacious prospect for narrative studies, and its later development verifies his forward-looking "prediction".

In the second place, narrative is the "adventure of language". As a semiologist, Roland Barthes starts to place literary narrative under the framework of linguistics. What's more, he thinks that discourse studies have to begin with linguistics, and "what does happen is language per se, the adventure of language" (Barthes, 1975:271). To be specific, "the adventure of language" is mainly reflected in the following several aspects: (1) Both narrator and characters are essentially "paper beings". Barthes thinks that the real author can never be confused with the narrator in the narrative, "the one who speaks (in the narrative) is not the one who writes (in real life) and the one who writes is not the one who is" (Barthes, 1975:261). (2) The event of the "narrative" is not "real", and the function sequence conforms with a logic of its own. He advocates for elimination of the original "realistic" viewpoint: "The 'reality' of a sequence does not lie in the 'natural' order of actions that make it up, but in the logic that is unfolded, exposed, and finally confirmed, in the midst of the sequence". Therefore, "what goes on in a narrative is, from the referential (real) point of view, strictly *nothing*" (Barthes, 1975:271). (3) The narrative time is not the "real" time but the "semiotic time". In the narrative, "real" time is a "realistic" phantom. Narrator, character, event and narrative time are all core elements of "narrative", and in Barthes's domain of discourse, they are all incorporated into the scope of *langue*. So, narrative is the "adventure of language".

Third, narrative is the communicative speech act between "the giver" and "the receptor", and it serves as the communicative object between the narrator and the reader. Because "communication" has the quality of "action", Barthes "converts the narrative from the order of pure observation to the performative order" and believes narrative is a speech act. "Today, writing is not 'telling'; rather it signifies that one is telling, thereby making the whole referent ('what is being said') contingent upon this illocutionary act" (Barthes, 1975:263). As a consequence, the whole discourse is confused with the illocutionary act. In this sense, narrative is an illocutionary act, which makes the communication between "the giver" and "the receptor" accessible.

Barthes's narrative concepts are rich in deep-rooted linguistic feature. His identity as a semiologist is related to his narrative concepts on the one hand, and it shows the newly established mark of narrative theory on the other hand. What's more, the thought of "narrative being everywhere" makes possible the idea of "narrative" beyond literary studies; the viewpoint of narrative being the speech act between "the giver" and "the receptor"

pushes "narrative" towards "the performative category" based on pure observation, which sows the seeds of its turning to post-classical narratology.

Tzvetan Todorov and the narrative grammar

In the realm of narrative studies, Tzvetan Todorov makes his own distinct contributions to putting forward the narrative discourse, narrative grammar and narrative poetics. He, to a large extent, carries on the research approach that Barthes designed in "An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative", but Todorov brings new ideas to the specific research method and adds some new connotations to "narrative".

Narrative is a symbolic activity. At first Todorov supposes that there is a certain universal grammar which applies to other symbolic activities besides the natural language. Evidently, he devotes himself to discovering the narrative grammar based on the premise of viewing "narrative" as a symbolic activity. Here, the "symbol" is, in fact, the "language". Linguistic theory, therefore, is the foundation of Todorov's narrative thought. In "Structural Analysis of Narrative", he explicitly indicates that "the minimal schema of the plot can be shown naturally by a clause. Between the categories of language and those of narrative there is a profound analogy" (Todorov, 1969:74). The core category of "narrative" is converted to the term of describing language. A narrative can simply be described as "noun + verb" or "subject (noun) + predicate (verb) or predicative (adjective)". Todorov's narrative theory starts with narrative as a symbolic (linguistic) activity.

Narrative is viewed as discourse. Todorov believes that in narrative the essence of events is not of importance, and what matters is their connection. He divides the narrative discourse into semantic morphology, register, verb morphology and syntax morphology. The verb and syntax morphologies are the key points. The former completes the conversion from discourse to story.

Syntax morphology is the narrative grammar which is extracted from discourse and the shared abstract rule of narrative works. Todorov divides the syntax into proposition and sequence. Proposition is the basic element of syntax and the minimum unit of plot, which contains two indispensable elements: Actant and predicate. The combination of the two constitutes a basic proposition. The core of proposition is the predicate, which has two ways of formation: Verb (transitive or intransitive) or adjective. Verb refers to the action of a character, and adjective refers to the situation of an event or a character. Sequence is a plot which is made complete by the addition of propositions. A story contains at least one sequence, and usually multiple. The different combinations of sequences constitute different narratives. The narrative grammar is established on the narrative discourse and is the pursuit of Todorov's discovering the universal grammar of "symbolic activity". Of course, the narrative grammar also shows the narrative concept of "narrative being a type of symbolic activity".

In conclusion, Todorov views "narrative" as a semiotic activity and conducts the remarkable analysis of narrative time, narrative perspective and narrative grammar grounded on the discourse. Roland Barthes has a profound influence on Todorov. "Narrative is a semiotic activity" is almost the same as "narrative is the adventure of language". Though narrative grammar is the most important contribution Todorov makes, it is still not beyond the narrative "blueprint" that Barthes designed. In the meantime, some constructive concepts Todorov puts forward, for instance, "narrative as discourse", the relation between narrator and perspective and so on, have a far-reaching impact on narrative studies.

Narrative concepts by A.J. Greimas

Greimas inherits the tradition of structuralist linguistics by F. Saussure and the Copenhagen School, and explores the meaning of symbols by means of structuralist methodology. The "narrative" concept by Greimas focuses on a specific research target: The folktale or myth. In addition, Greimas expands the scope of axiology. The former can be viewed as the literary definition of "narrative", and the latter can be viewed as the philosophical definition.

First, narrative is the presentation of discourse. The continuous relations of various functions can display an internal model of transformation. The definition can be comprehended from the following two perspectives: Narrative is first transferred into narrative discourse by the action and situation of a character (subject, actant), then the narrative discourse as the surface structure manifests the internal deep structure (symbolic matrix). Narrative unfolds with both subjects (subject and anti-subject) coveting *objets de valeur.* The process can be expressed with a regular formula: "$S_1 \cup O \cap S_2$".[1] The formula shows that after an action, one of the subjects has to deviate from the *objets de valeur*, and the other subject combines with it. For example, the traitor snatches the king's daughter, the hero brings her back to the king and the king marries his daughter to the hero. Such a process of target transferring constitutes the surface narrating structure. Greimas argues that the narrative works consist of a combination of the overt surface structure and the covert deep structure. The narrative deep structure is analogous to syntax structure, the "actant" corresponds to the subject of syntax and the "act" corresponds to the predicate. Greimas establishes the "actantial model" and the "symbolic matrix," respectively, according to the "binary opposition" and the mutual relations.

Second, narrative is characterized by the "achronic" and "diachronic" features. The "achrony" is the explanation of the "paradigmatic" relation of narrative.

> This paradigmatic interpretation, the very condition of grasping the signification of the narrative as a whole, allows us to find again, this time independently of the syntagmatic sequential order, larger units of

signification, whose terms are the semic categories manifested in the functions taken individually.

<div style="text-align: right">(Greimas, 1966:236)</div>

The "diachrony" is the continuous sequence in the context of syntagmatic dimension, and "it appears as the only solitary functional sequence, asymmetrical, that is to say one which does not present itself at any time in the narrative under its negative form" (Greimas, 1966:237).

On this basis, Greimas offers two explanations of narrative in terms of axiology. The first is of achronic apprehension, which means that "the existence of contract (of the established order) corresponds to the absences of contract (of the order) as the alienation corresponds to the full enjoyment of the values". The second reading, taking into account the temporal disposition, means that "in a world without law, values are inverted, the restitution of the values makes the return to the reign of the law possible" (Greimas, 1966:240). So, the paradigmatic understanding of the narrative establishes, consequently, the existence of the correlation between the fate of the individual and that of society, the opposition between the establishment of the social contract and its rupture. As Greimas explains:

> The rupture of the contract takes another positive signification: the affirmation of the individual's freedom. Consequently, the alternative which the narrative presents is the choice between the individual's freedom (that is to say, the absence of the contract) and the accepted social contract.

<div style="text-align: right">(Greimas, 1966:243)</div>

Third, the narrative serves as mediation. The double interpretation stresses the great number of contradictions which a narrative can contain. "It is at the same time affirmation of permanence and the possibilities of the change, affirmation of the necessary order and of the freedom which breaks or reestablishes that order" (Greimas, 1966:246). From this perspective, narrative plays the role of mediation and "of multiple mediations: mediation between structure and behavior, between permanence and history, between society and individual". In this sense, Greimas groups the narratives into two large classes: "the narratives of the accepted present order, the narratives of the *denied* present order". In the first case, the point of departure of the narrative resides in the establishment of a certain existing order and in the need to justify and explain that order. "The mediation of the narrative consists in 'humanizing the world', in giving it an individual dimension. The world is justified by man; man is integrated in the world". And in the second case,

> The existing order is considered as imperfect, man is considered as alienated, the situation as intolerable. The schema of the narrative is projected then as an archetype of mediation, as a promise of salvation:

man, the individual, has to take upon himself the fate of the world, which he transforms by a succession of contests and tests.

<div align="right">(Greimas, 1966:246)</div>

Greimas is dedicated to the "semantic" studies and figures out the meaning structure behind the discourse. On the one hand, his narrative concept takes root in Propp and Lévi-Strauss; on the other hand, he makes an ingenious contribution to it. This contribution lies in his bringing the "narrative" to the scope of axiology by analyzing the narrative works, which makes possible the classical narrative beyond the narrow texts. In this sense, the narrative concept he proposes is widely applied to the anthropological, sociological and cultural studies, etc.

Three-dimensional narrative concept by Gérard Genette

The essay "Narrative Discourse" collected in *Figures III* (1972) has a great impact on narratological academia. Genette probes into the concept of "récit" positively at the beginning of his essay. He revised and further explained some concepts of "Narrative Discourse" in "Narrative Discourse Revisited", published in 1983.

Genette claims that "narrative" includes three relative concepts with different meanings from three different levels or dimensions. (1) The first meaning refers to the narrative statement, the oral or written discourse that strives to describe an event or series of events (Genette, 1980:25). In this case, narrative refers to "the signifier", discourse, narrating or narrating text. Genette suggests to refer to this connotation as "narrative", which is discussed in his "Narrative Discourse". (2) The second meaning refers to the succession of events, real or fictitious, that are the subjects of this discourse and to their several relations of linking, opposition, repetition, etc. (Genette, 1980:25). In this case, "narrative" refers to "the signified" or the narrated content. Genette suggests to refer to this meaning as "story". (3) The third meaning refers once more to an event—not, however, the event that is recounted but an event that consists of someone recounting something: The act of narrating taken in itself (Genette, 1980:26). In this case, "narrative" is "the producing narrative action and, by extension, the whole of the real or fictional situation in which that action takes place" (Genette, 1980:26). Genette suggests to refer to this producing process as "narrating".

Story, narrative (namely, discourse) and narrating behaviour are intimately indispensable and the essential elements of narrative. Genette divides "narrative" into three dimensions, which contributes to clarifying the connotation of the narrative concepts. However, he views the "discourse" of the narrative concept as "story", which gives rise to new confusion.

Genette's three-dimensional definition of "narrative" reflects the achievements that the classical narrative studies have made and the emergent problems the classical narrative studies face when evolving to a certain stage.

The achievements lie in the increasing development of narrative studies, and each meaning of "narrative" in one sense stands for a direction in which the narrative goes. And the problems lie in the confusion with "narrative" as a term and the uncertainty of its connotation as well.

Basic orientation of the definition of the classical "narrative" concept

The concept of classical "narrative" originates mainly from the structuralist narratology, and the basic theory of the latter stems from the structuralist linguistics which Saussure initiates. The close relation between the structuralist narratology and the structuralist linguistics offers a perspective from which to contemplate the concept of the classical "narrative". Classical narratologists by and large do not go beyond the category of structuralist linguistics or semiotics. It is in this sense that Roland Barthes and Todorov define the narrative as the "adventure" and a "symbolic activity" in general. As Marie-Laure Ryan points out:

> Most narratologists agree that narrative consists of material signs, the discourse, which convey a certain meaning (or content), the story, and fulfill a certain social function. This characterization outlines three potential domains for a definition: discourse, story, and use. These domains correspond, roughly, to the three components of semiotic theory: syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.
>
> (Ryan, 2007:24)

Therefore, the classical "narrative" mainly has the following three orientations of demarcation: (1) Focussing on "syntax" or "signifier" and highlighting "discourse", with Roland Barthes, Todorov and Genette acting as the representatives; (2) focussing on "syntax" or "signified" and highlighting "story", with Greimas and Lévi-Strauss acting as the representatives; (3) focussing on "pragmatics" or "signification act" and highlighting "narrating action" or "speech act", with Roland Barthes, Todorov and Genette acting as the representatives. The three orientations correspond to the three levels of connotations Genette puts forward. In terms of the "social function" the narrative carries out, Lévi-Strauss and Greimas act as the representatives. They highlight the idea that narrative functions as "mediation", the meaning of which makes it possible for the "narrative" to overflow the text.

Syntax, semantics and pragmatics summarize the three orientations of the narrative definition: Discourse, story and narrating act. This is a macroscopic or overall definition which reflects the basic orientation of the narrative connotation. However, in the specific studies, narratologists are more likely to pay attention to the core elements of the "narrative" connotation.

Narrator, narrating perspective and narrative time are the core parameters of "discourse". A narrator is the narrating subject of the narrative work,

whose importance is apparent. No narrator, no narrative. The narrative perspective is the corresponding position or situation in which the narrator or character lives in the event of the narrative works. In other words, the narrative perspective is the perspective from which the narrator or character observes the story. Different perspectives bring about different outlooks on the same event. The narration consists of the narrator and the perspective. The narrative work belongs to the art of time, so cancelling the time means abolishing the narrative works. The narrative time is the conversional system of dual time sequence: Story time and narrating time. "The feature of dual time sequence allows the narrative works to change or create another time according to a certain time" (Hu Yamin, 2004:63). Narrator, narrative perspective and narrating time are the premise of the narrative turning into "discourse", and the guarantee of the narrative works as itself.

Plot and narrative grammar are the core elements of "story". "Story" in narratology is defined as "the independent structure from the narrating information", therefore, and research on "story" focusses on "the feature of the story structure, the various components, and in particular the potential form framework of internal relations which highlight the abstract essence of story per se" (Hu Yamin, 2004:119). The plot and narrative grammar are the core components of the formal framework of the story. The plot refers to the organization and arrangement of the events, and is the main part of the story structure. Arranging the events according to different principles can form different types of plots. "The so-called narrative grammar indicates the symbols and procedures which systematically record and illustrate the story's universal rules" (Hu Yamin, 2004:168). The narrative grammar is the universal rules behind the plot structure, which in principle applies to all the narrative works. The narrative grammar can produce infinite narrative work. Therefore, the plot can be viewed as the surface structure of the story, and the narrative grammar can be viewed as the deep structure. Discovering the narrative grammar is one of the most important research goals for narratologists.

Narrator and narratee are the core elements of the "narrating behavior". The narrator and narratee, respectively, are at the two ends of the narrating process and are the two behavioural agents of the narrative. The narrator is unequal to the real author because the author does not appear in the text, and the narrator is the storyteller in the narrative work. Accordingly, the narratee is the object of the "narrating behavior" and is the "receiving behavioral agent" of the narrative. "The narratee is the one who the narrator has conversations with" (Hu Yamin, 2004:53). The narratee is not equal to the real reader because the reader is the real individual outside of the text, and the narratee is the fictive narrative participant in the narrative text. Hence, the narrator and the narratee are both symbolic subjects. In the classical narratology, the narrator has been amply studied, but research on the narratee is relatively devoid, "a newly exploited virgin land" (Hu Yamin, 2004:63). To this end, post-classical narratology takes full advantage of

this undeveloped domain, which fills the "narrative" with more abundant connotation.

In a word, the classical "narrative" concept originates from the definition of "narrative" based on the frameworks of linguistics and semiotics, which highlights the constituting function of all the narrative elements. The classical "narrative" concept is a systematic whole composed of various narrative elements. But as it is limited to the text itself and confined by the "language", it also shows some limitations. Thus, the post-classical narrative breaks through the limitation and endows the narrative with more connotations.

Post-classical "narrative" concepts

In the 1980s, as classical narratology transformed into post-classical narratology, the research methods, modes and core categories of narrative studies all altered. The transformation of the narrative connotation is in line with the diversion of narrative studies. Therefore, the research on narrative transformation is explored under the context of the narrative turn.

The reason for the narrative turn is not merely the limitation of the narrative theory per se; a more important reason is the postmodern turn in the academia of the late 20th century. Post-structuralism and postmodernism both contribute to the narrative turn. Mark Currie, a British contemporary narratologist, discusses three features of the narrative turn in *Postmodern Narrative Theory*:

> Diversification, deconstruction and politicization then are the three characteristics of the transition in contemporary narratology. It will already be apparent that the three terms are mutually implicated, forming a triangular ménage. The transition they describe is a transition in the general assumptions and procedures of post-structural narratology, and the importance of each term varies in specific works of narratology and narratological theory.
>
> (Currie, 1988:6)

What Mark Currie concludes about the post-classical narrative theory is not on the same plane and is actually a conclusion from outside to inside. "Diversification" not only indicates the expansion of the scope of the narrative object but also refers to the diversification of narrative theory, such as feminist narratology, rhetorical narratology and cognitive narratology. "Deconstruction" is the summarization of the internal cause of diversification, the destruction of the authority of structuralism and a reading approach to plural dimensions. "Politicization" reveals the ideology of post-classical narrative theory "because deconstruction has introduced new methods for the unmasking of ideology" (Currie, 1988:4). The summarization by Mark Currie offers an elucidative framework to clarify the post-classical narrative concepts.

Narrative and gender

The combination of both narrative and gender is the basic starting point of feminist narratology. Since the 1990s, and the fundamental work of Lanser and the impetus of Warhol, feminist narratology has been a prestigious branch of narrative studies in the USA. In the view of feminist narratology, narrative is a means or a tool with which to construct gender.

"Toward a Feminist Narratology" (1986) by Susan Sniader Lanser is the fundamental essay of feminist narratology. Lanser combines narrative and gender; emphasizes studies on woman writers, female readers and feminine characters in the narrative; and highlights the explanation of the gender-related event in the narrative work. "Toward a Feminist Narratology" not only reflects and reconstructs the narrative theory per se but also adds new connotations to the narrative concepts. *Fictions of Authority: Women Writers and Narrative Voice* (1992) is Lanser's representative work. In this monograph, she offers concrete analysis on "woman writers and narrative voice". She believes that narrative is not only a tool with which to tell stories but, more importantly, bears social relations and the mutual relations between the narrative voices and the narrated outside world. Lanser's research focus lies in how the woman writers construct their narrative voices by means of the concrete narrative strategy to confront the ideological, literary and social suppression of their voices. In Lanser's opinion, the mode of narrative is the setting of gender conflict or the tool with which the genders fight. Therefore, she pays significant attention to the relations between the mode of narrative and social power, and to the interaction between the narration and the plot. "This narrative contract in which plot curtails voice and voice gives plot the illusion of openness reconciles heterosexual patriarchy with democratic individualism by representing a woman's silencing as the product of her own desire" (Lanser, 2018:32). What's more, Lanser points out that narrative skill also contains the ideological factor in the society. Therefore,

> it becomes possible to see narrative technique not simply as a product of ideology but as ideology itself: narrative voice, situated at the juncture of 'social position and literary practice', embodies the social, economic, and literary conditions under which it has been produced.
>
> (Lanser, 2018:5)

In Lanser's view, it is not merely the narrative skill that is the product of the historical context but all feminist texts. Lanser consistently explores the societal, economic and literary conditions of the female narrative voice; discusses how the voice in the female narrative reflects various power relations and ideological tension; and probes into how women writers establish authorities through text and the suppression and adventure they encounter in the process as well as how they cope with these by putting the text into certain societal and historical contexts.

Robyn Warhol is another representative scholar of American feminist narratologists. Warhol pays no attention to the authority of narration, instead focussing on the role the narrative skill of women writers plays for the reader, viewing narrative as the means through which to intervene in terms of gender.

The narrative produces the gender. Warhol focusses on the influence narrative form has on the gender behaviour of the reader. In her opinion, gender is not the essential attribute of men and women but a whole set of posture, pose, position, distortion and emotion which the specific male and female cultural concepts associate with. Gender behaviour doesn't mean that gender is a pretending or fictive behaviour, and an individual gender indicates not who a person is but what he/she does. The repeated reading of gendered narrative texts has an effect on the reader's behaviours. For example, a character-focussed novel expects the reader to adopt a character-focussed method of reading; therefore, the reader often enters the narrative by focussing on the character while reading. In the meantime, narrative works of a certain genre always motivate the anticipated reaction in some moments of the plot according to the existing rules. Hence, when a reader is reading this type of narrative work, he/she experiences the possibility of amending his/her own gender, which leads to a review of his/her reading behaviour. In this way, gender affects the narrative, but reading the narrative work influences the reader's gender as well. If gender is a process and behaviour of gradual formation and emergence in the body, then the repeated reading or viewing of an intensely gendered narrative is simply a gender action. Through this process, reading the narrative work becomes behaviour to show the gender.

Narrative and rhetoric

The combination of narrative and rhetoric is another dimension of the postclassical narrative. The narrative rhetoric dimension tends to view the narrative as the communicative structure and means among the author, the narrator and the reader. Therefore, the narrative is not only the representation of the event but also the event per se. W.C. Booth lays a foundation of the rhetoric dimension of narrative in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961). He views fiction as a communicative activity between the author and the reader, and studies how the author's narrative skills make true his "unified" rhetoric intention to the reader, which can be regarded as the author-centred rhetoric of fiction. Seymour Chatman, James Phelan and Michael Kearns all enrich and expand the "narrative" connotations from different perspectives.

James Phelan treats the narrative as the rhetoric, and the rhetoric configuration consists of the teller, story, situation, audience and purpose. As Phelan points out,

> the phrase 'narrative as rhetoric' means something more than that narrative uses rhetoric or has a rhetorical dimension. It means instead that

> narrative is not just story but also action, the telling of a story by some-
> one to someone on some occasions for some purpose.
>
> (Phelan, 1996:7–8)

Therefore, the teller-story-situation-audience-purpose is a basic configura-
tion of narrative. Furthermore, it is at least doubled in most narratives: There
is the narrator's telling the story to his or her audience and then the author's
telling of the narrator's telling to the author's audience. Consequently, the
narrator's telling is part of the author's construction of the whole narrative,
and in that sense, what is a matter of telling at one level becomes a matter
of the told at the next. So, "narrative as rhetoric", in Phelan's eyes, means
a rhetorical relationship between author, text and reader, and refers to the
complex, multilayered processes of writing and reading, processes that call
upon our cognition, emotions, desires, hopes, values and beliefs.

The reader has an important position in Phelan's rhetoric narrative.
Phelan distinguishes four types of readers: Narrative audience, ideal nar-
rative audience, authorial audience and flesh-and-blood audience. The dis-
tinction of readers is to investigate how different readers in various positions
communicate with the narrative. In Phelan's opinion, the reader's mode is
the (real) reader's "experiences of reading": "an entry into a narrative audi-
ence, a recognition of a narrator's ideal audience and narratee, an effort to
step into the author's intended audience, a relation of those positions to our
actual beliefs" (Phelan, 1996:147). In effect, it indicates the procedure of the
rhetoric reading: First, enter the position of the "narrative audience", then
attempt to enter the position of the "authorial reader" and in the end evalu-
ate these positions with the belief of the "actual audience".

Kearns defines narrative as the speech act between the author and the
audience in a specific context in virtue of the speech-act theory and the
"strong-contextualist position". As he explains:

> I'm proposing a rhetorical narratology that is grounded in speech-act
> theory and thus considers narrative from the perspective of the socially
> constituted actions it performs: narrative as 'doing' as well as 'saying'.
> Speech-act theory provides the means for describing, and occasionally
> for explaining, how narratives and audiences interact.
>
> (Kearns, 1999:2)

It is only in a specific context that the narrative functions. Kearns explicitly
points out that "the right context can cause any text to be taken as a narra-
tive" (Kearns, 1999:2). He devotes himself to combining the narrative and
the rhetoric, to analyzing the relations between the text and the context via
the rhetoric tool, and to illustrating how the reader experiences the narrative.
"Audience is essential. Without an audience there could be no narrative"
(Kearns, 1999:47). Kearns insists that the literary narrative is enslaved to the
audience and the context in terms of the overall essence and the specific link.

Kearns believes that the audience's reading or understanding of the text is conducted under the contextual "convention". The speech-act theory highlights the fact that the speech act is the conventional act, and the narrative as a "speech act" always performs according to convention, no matter whether it is "telling" or "reading". Kearns says

> I intend rhetorical narratology to meet this need by consistently granting to context the determination of what will count as a narrative text and the basic expectations governing how an audience will process such a text, expectations I discuss as 'ur-conventions'.
>
> (Kearns, 1999:2)

Therefore, the narrative convention not only dominates the communication between the narrative text and its audience but also endows the assumed world, grounded on the text, with reasonable features.

Narrative and cognition

Cognitive narratology is an important branch of post-classical narratology. It sprouted between the 1970s and 1980s, and flourished in the later 1990s. Monika Fludernik and David Herman are its prominent representatives.

Monika Fludernik is an eminent narratologist, one of Franz Stanzel's disciples, whose main research area lies in literary theory, in particular, narrative theory. *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology* (1996) and *Natural Narratology and Cognitive Parameters* (2003) are Fludernik's representatives in cognitive narratology, among which *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology* is regarded as a fundamental work in the field of cognitive narratology and has obtained widespread attention in the West since its publication. It is because of this that Monika Fludernik is known as the forerunner of cognitive narratology.

Reader's cognitive process is the narrativization process. Fludernik's narrativization is grounded on Jonathan Culler's concept of naturalization. As she puts it, "according to Culler, readers, faced with initially inconsistent or incomprehensible texts, attempt to find a frame that can naturalize the inconsistencies or oddities in a meaningful way" (Fludernik, 1996:33). Naturalization processes are reading strategies which familiarize the unfamiliar, and they therefore reduce the unexpected to more manageable proportions, aligning it with the familiar. Whereas naturalization and narrativization are interpretative processes, natural parameters or frames are cognitive categories of a synchronic kind which correlate with real-world knowledge. Narrativization needs to be conceptualized as a cultural and literary process, one in which the concept of the natural plays a crucial structuring role without ever becoming part of the cultural product itself (Fludernik, 1996:34). The process of narratization by the audience is, in effect, to reintegrate those incoherent and unreadable events into familiar frameworks, which is therefore also the process of naturalization.

David Herman deems narrative the cognitive artifact. Cognitive artifacts contain not only material objects but also spiritual ones, from cognitive anthropology to man-machine interaction. The cognitive artifact as the representation tool contributes to comprehend and handle the complicated experiences. Therefore, the elements of the narrative structure can lead the audience to reconstruct the order of various situations, actions and events. The representation formed by events offers an important cognitive channel which can establish the connection of the storyteller and interpreter to the experienced world and the targets. The storyteller and the interpreter are endowed with the power to reason. The story world, in turn, is occupied by the participants' physical and mental behaviours.

Herman argues that the narrative is a tool for thinking and a problem-solving strategy in a multilingual context. It provides the social cognition with the best environment. The story offers an important tool of representation, which makes organizing knowledge in the multiple fields more convenient. These fields not only contain the field of standard social cognition but also include a variety of problem-solving activities. Therefore, the narrative offers a "domain-general" thinking tool. Herman advocates to expand the cognitive strategy of the narrative and to extend this to other fields. Thus, the narrative as the "domain-general" tool for thinking has become a fundamental and general thought resource.

Multiple dimensions of the post-classical "narrative"

The post-classical narrative goes towards multiple dimensions. The narrative turn not only employs other theory resources but also makes the concept of narrative travel to such discipline fields as psychology, pedagogy, health studies, law, politics, policy analysis, ideology and cognition. Compared with the classical narrative, the post-classical narrative is increasingly "impure". The "purity" of the classical narrative is the result of the methodological limitation and the need for research, while the "impurity" of the post-classical narrative is the result of breaking the structural limitation of the former and then moving towards openness. In general, there are three basic dimensions in the post-classical narrative concept.

"Narrative" as the existential way of mankind

M.H. Abrams points out that

> in recent years, some cognitive psychologists and literary and cultural theorists have proposed that narrative, or the telling of diverse "stories" about how one thing leads to another, is the basic means by which we make sense of the world, provide meaning to our experiences, and organize our lives.
>
> (Abrams, 1999:174)

Apparently, narrative here is understood as the existential way of the human be-
ing, and this is the most fundamental connotation of the post-classical narrative.

> The narrative becomes an existential way, and only through the narra-
> tive can people grasp the relation with the past; only through the narra-
> tive, can people offer the existential possibility for their own experiences
> and imagine the relation with the future.
>
> (Hu Yamin, 2012:72)

Similarly, "narrative is elevated to the epistemological status by Fredric
Jameson, which becomes the tool for people to know the world and the
self-locating coordinate system in the history and the relations with others"
(Hu Yamin, 2001:78).

   Viewing narrative as the existential way of mankind is to, in effect, regard
narrative as a metaphor or the life metaphor. This narrative concept begins to
take shape in Aristotle's theories. Aristotle stresses that narrative art should
be an "entirety", like a life. Aristotle's narrative concept is fully utilized by the
post-classical narratology. Barbara Hardy's thesis "Towards a Poetics of Fic-
tion: An Approach through Narrative" (1968) is an earlier paper in combining
narrative and life, and Hardy views the narrative as "a primary act of mind
transferred to art from life". She indicates that "What concern me here are the
qualities which fictional narrative shares with that inner and outer storytelling
that plays a major role in our sleeping and waking lives" (Barbara, 1968:5–14).
In 1981, Alasdair MacIntyre also indicated, in terms of metaphorical mean-
ing in *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, that "man is in his actions and
practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal. He is not
essentially, but becomes through his history, a teller of stories that aspire to
truth" (MacIntyre, 1981:216). After that, Bruner's thesis "Life as Narrative"
(1987), which explicitly views narrative as life, also had a great impact.

   "Narrative" as the metaphor of life is not only in the analyzed object
world but also in daily life. As Peter Brooks puts it,

> our lives are ceaselessly intertwined with narrative, with the stories that
> we tell, all of which are reworked in that story of our own lives that we
> narrate to ourselves, … We are immersed in narrative. We spent our
> lives immersed in narratives.
>
> (Brooks, 1984:3)

In this sense, man is in the narrative only if he lives.

   "Narrative" as the way of human's existence has an important impact not
merely on the literary field but also on the pedagogical, historical, sociolog-
ical and anthropological fields. On the whole, as Mark Currie puts it:

> Narrative is as inescapable as language in general, or as cause and ef-
> fect, as a mode of thinking and being. After seminal studies such as

Paul Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* (1984) it does not seem at all exaggerated to view humans as narrative animals, as *homo fabulans* — the tellers and interpreters of narrative.

(Currie, 1988:2)

"Narrative" as the reader's interpretation

Whether rhetorical narratology, feminist narratology or cognitive narratology, from the macro perspective, the weight of all three narrative studies passes on to readers, and the readers' interpretation is the important condition of narrative existence, or the interpretation per se is the narrative. As Mark Currie claims:

Post-structuralism tends in this direction, not towards the interpretation of things but towards the interpretation of interpretations or towards the interpretation of meta-narratives rather than narratives themselves. Post-structuralists often argue that this is the only game in town because we have no access to things in themselves except through their interpretations, because all narratives are themselves interpretations, or because all narratives are ultimately meta-narrative.

(Currie, 1988:12)

Therefore, the reader is the important dimension of the post-classical narrative, but this dimension hasn't obtained sufficient attention in classical narratology.

"Narrative" as the reader's interpretation can be comprehended in two dimensions. On the one hand, narrative lies in the interpretation, or, in other words, narrative per se is the interpretation, which embodies the mode of story-within-a-story, and the outside and inside stories together form the relation of interpretation. For instance, Balzac's *Sarrasine* (1830) and James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) are representatives of this type of narrative. The narrative is not only a set of event sequences but also a set of parallel interpretation sequences. On the other hand, the interpretation per se is the narrative too. Phelan views narrative as rhetoric: Namely, the rhetorical reading of a narrative. In his theory, the boundaries between the author, audience and text are fuzzy, and the rhetoric (narrative) serves as "the synergistic function among the textual form, authorial agency, and reader response" (Phelan, 1996:23). Here it means that the interpretation per se becomes a type of rhetoric or narrative. Phelan highlights the importance of interpretation, and he confesses that his interpretation on *Magic* is a kind of rhetorical act, namely, the narrative act, which is also the "performative" significance Miller has mentioned.

"Narrative" as the ideology

"Narrative" as the ideology means that narrative is a type of expression act which has an ideological function. This connotation of narrative is the natural extension of the first two connotations. First, since narrative is a form of human existence, and human behaviour is a kind of "intentional behavior", so narrative will point to a "purpose". Second, since narrative is an interpretation act and a rhetorical behaviour, it inevitably conveys the interpreter's intention.

Hence, the ideological connotation of narrative can be comprehended in two planes as well. On the one hand, the "narrative work" (the "story discourse" by Genette) per se possesses the ideological character. Jameson has discussed this in his book *The Political Unconscious* (1981), and he explicitly points out that "narrative is a socially symbolic act". In this sense, Mark Currie indicates that post-classical narratology, in the end, turns out to be politics. On the other hand, the interpretation act per se possesses ideological characteristics. The interpreter of the narrative is not the "disinterested neutral observer", and "the ideological narrative theory not only intends to discover and account for the form and content of a narrative text, but also to interpret how the form and content are concealed and distorted" (Hu Yamin, 2012:73). The ethical dimension of narrative is the mixture of the reader's interpretation and ideology, and the reader's interpretation is viewed as a type of ethical reading, which is an ethical reaction to the text per se.

The multiple dimensions of the post-classical narrative concept make its connotation form a multidimensionally radiative sector, which urges these schools of narratology, such as feminist narratology, rhetorical narratology and cognitive narratology, to take shape. All the schools of narratology have, to some extent, shared the connotation of narrative mentioned above.

Origin and evolution of the "narrative" concept in China

The "narrative" concept in contemporary Chinese literary criticism has been profoundly affected by Western narratology. However, narrative is not imported and can be found in ancient Chinese literature, literary theory and Chinese history. The investigation of the original meaning of narrative contributes to a better grasp of the changes of narrative connotations, especially in contemporary China.

Origins of "narrate", "thing" and "narrative"

In China, "叙事 (xushi)" initially is not a compound word. First, let's take a look at "叙 (xu)". According to the *Analytical Dictionary of Characters* (*Shuowen Jiezi*): 敍 (xu), the original form of 叙 (xu) means order or sequence, which can further expand to "arranging the sequence or doing

things in order" (Xu Shen, 1963:69). In *Rites of Zhou, "Heavenly" Officials, Official Document Writers* (*Zhouli, Tianguan, sishu*), Zheng Xuan says, "To know the income and expenses of the government, they record **in sequence** all the properties, receive the superfluous wealth and hand them into the department of finance." He then explains that "叙 (xu) here is just like order or sequence" (Yang Tianyu, 2004:101). 叙 (xu) also has the meaning of "description and narration". Case in point: *The Unofficial Spring and Autumn Annals, Annals of Jin III* (*Guoyu, Jinyu III*) says, "To record the words so as to narrate, and to express the intentions so as to guide". Wei Zhao explains that "叙 (xu) here means narration" (The Ancient Book Collation Group of Shanghai Normal University, 1978:317–318). The two extensions of 叙 (xu), which already had the connotation of arranging things in order, are closely related to the modern "narrative".

The word "事(shi)" means, in *Analytical Dictionary of Characters* (*Shuowen Jiezi*), "occupation" and extends later to refer to "matters or events" (Xu Shen, 1963:65). *Notes on* Analytical Dictionary of Characters (Shuowen Jiezi *Zhu*) considers the meaning of "事 (shi)" which comes from "史 (shi)", and explains "history" as "to record the matters or events" (Duan Yucai, 1988:116). Actually, the original meaning of "史 (history)" is an official post whose duty is to record the matters or events. "History" is defined as "事 (shi)" in the context of the philosophical time, which distinguishes the Chinese "事 (shi)" from the "events" in the West narrative. The events in the West narrative mean the possible things, however, the Chinese "事 (shi)" means "the events in the history", that is, something that has already happened. Therefore, the Chinese "事 (shi)" has almost the same meaning as "history".

The earliest use of "叙 (xu)" and "事 (shi)" together as "叙事 (xushi)" appears in the *Rites of Zhou* (*Zhou Li*), which puts it as "To recognize the various matters about the stars and to respond to their locations in the sky" ("辨其叙事，以会天位") (Yang Tianyu, 2004:378) and "to grasp the courses of the stars, accept the petition and help the king to rule" ("掌叙事之法，受讷访，以诏王听治") (Yang Tianyu, 2004:382). However, "叙事 (xushi)" here is not an important concept or a leading meaning in the later literary studies. "叙事 (xushi)" gains its more explicit meaning in Liu Zhiji's *Comments on Works of History* (*Shi Tong*) and is applied in the formal historical writings. In this book, there is a specific chapter called "Narrative" (叙事) which focusses on how to record the historical matters and events in the historical writings. Here, "叙 (xu)" means "to record or write down", and "事 (shi)" specifically means "historical matters and events". Though Liu Zhiji confines "叙事 (xushi)" to the historical writings, "叙事 (xushi)" here has already had the connotation of "narrating matters", which comes extremely close to the contemporary connotation of narration.

In the southern Song Dynasty, Zhen Dexiu compiled a book entitled *The Orthodox Prose and Essays* (*Wenzhang Zhengzong*). In the book, he divides essays into four categories: diplomatic speech, argumentative essay,

"叙事 (xushi)" and poetry and prose-poetry. This represents the first time "叙事 (xushi)" has been distinguished from other genres, such as argumentation, poetry and Prose-poetry, which expands greatly the connotation of "叙事 (xushi)". Since then, "叙事 (xushi)" has been recognized as a concept of genre. However, Zhen Dexiu also views "叙事 (xushi)" from the perspective of historical writing and notes that "叙事 (xushi)" originates from the officials who are in charge of recording history. "叙事 (xushi)" is divided into three categories by Zhen Dexiu: The history of dynasties, the process of historical events and the life story of individuals. It is quite obvious that Zhen's definition of "叙事 (xushi)" is very different from the contemporary connotation of narrative, which attaches more importance to the formal analysis.

After the Song Dynasty, the techniques of narrative gain more attention, mainly in Chen Kui's *The Guidelines for Essay Writing* (*Wen Ze*) in the Song Dynasty, Chen Yizeng's *"Fishing-Tool" for Essay Writing* (*Wen Quan*) in the Yuan Dynasty, Gui Youguang's *A Handbook for Prose and Essay Writing* (*Wenzhang Zhinan*) in the Ming Dynasty, Li Fu's *Qiushan Literary Criticism* (*Qiushan Lunwen*), Zhang Xuecheng's *The General Literature and History* (*Wenshi Tongyi*) and Liu Xizai's *A Systematic Survey of Arts* (*Yi Gai*) in the Qing Dynasty. In his book, Chen Yizeng sums up the form principles of narrative, including eleven items, such as positive narrative, general narrative, foreshadowing narrative and elliptical narrative, etc.; Liu Xizai divides narrative into nine groups with 18 types, each in groups of two, which involve various aspects of narrative form. All the discussions above greatly enlighten contemporary narrative studies in China.

Evolution of the traditional "narrative" in China

From "recording things" to "narrative"

According to "The Prologue of *The Spring and Autumn Annals*" (*Chunqiu Zuoshizhuan* Xu), recording things is recording events in chronological order. However, "narrative" means more than recording events chronologically; more importantly it refers to rearranging events with some purposes. Therefore, Pre-Qin Dynasty the majority of texts belong to "recording things", not "narrative". The typical distinction between *The Spring and Autumn Annals* (Chunqiu) and *The Zuo Tradition* (*Zuo Zhuan*) is that the former is "recording things", and the latter is "narrative".

"Narrative" is a processing act of art, while "recording things" refers purely to writing the things down. In light of this, Xiao Tong in Southern Liang excludes historical writings from literary texts (literature). The historical writings aim to "record the real things" and "adopt the good and devalue the bad", so he calls them the "history of recording things".

The evolution from "recording things" to "narrative" reflects the artistic process of the language expression of narrative.

From "true record" to "fiction"

According to the etymological examination of "narrative", for instance, those by Zhen Dexiu and Zhang Xuecheng, there is some connection between the "things" or "events" of "narrative" and "history". It has been viewed as almost a final verdict that the narrative concept in China originates from history, and the historical writings are grounded on the principle of "true record". Therefore, the narrative in earlier China mostly develops in the form of "history", and the mature narrative of fiction truly shows up in the Song and Yuan Dynasties.

> In order to improve the social status of fiction, the intellectuals in China have done their utmost to seek the homology between fictional narrative and historical narrative. …The purpose of doing so aims to highlight the common between fiction and official history, which is to endow fiction with a legitimate position.
>
> (Hu Yamin and Liu Zhimeng, 2013:204).

The relation between "narrative" and "history" has a profound influence on the presentation modes of ancient Chinese fiction:

> The ancient Chinese fiction in the structure sometimes takes the official history as the clue, and includes unofficial history and folk rumors as complementary monologues, historical romance and literary sketches; it sometimes imitates the style of historical writings, including the annals to history, biography to people and event record to things; Take the ghost novel *Journey to the West* (also *The Monkey King*) for example, it also takes the form of biography to record the life experience of Longevity Monk Tang Sanzang; Besides, the beginning and ending poems in the Zhanghui novel (also the novel with chapters), for instance *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* (Liaozhai Zhiyi) by Pu Songling, are obviously affected by the *Records of the Grand Historian* by Sima Qian.
>
> (Hu Yamin, Liu Zhimeng, 2013:204)

Of course, "true record" is merely the "principle", but the historical narrative in Pre-Qin history is not all "true record".

> In the relatively formal historical narrative, the *Classic of Documents: Metal-Bound Coffer* (*Shangshu Jinteng*) has already had an unreal feeling and there are many distortions to guard the political ambition in *The Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu*). However, speaking of fictitiousness there is much more of it in *The Zuo Tradition* (*Zuo Zhuan*) than in any other above historical narratives.
>
> (Fu Xiuyan, 1999:205)

Even so, the true record and fiction are still the essential characters through which to distinguish the historical narrative from the literary narrative.

The evolution from true record to fiction reflects the artistic process of narrative content.

Comparison of Chinese and Western "narrative" concepts

The Chinese and Western narrative concepts grow out of different cultural environments, which means that they contain their own cultural elements and various distinctions. The differences in the way of thinking, cultural tradition, literary trend, etc. determine the different qualities of the Chinese and Western narrative concepts.

"History" and "story"

Chinese and Western "narratives" both relate to "history". As Raymond Williams writes in his book *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1985):

> In early English use, **history** and *story* (the alternative English form derived ultimately from the same root) were both applied to an account either of imaginary events or of events supposed to be true. The use of **history** for imagined events has persisted, in a diminished form, especially in novels. But from C15 **history** moved towards an account of past real events, and *story* towards a range which includes less formal accounts of past events and accounts of imagined events.
>
> (Williams, 1985:146)

Here Williams describes the origins of history and story, and the process of their differentiation. Whether "history" or "story", they are both "narratives". The earlier narratives in China and the West contain such non-fictional texts as "history".

However, different understandings of the relations between "story" and "history" in China and the West reveal the enormous differences between the Chinese narrative concept and the Western narrative concept. The narrative in China has carried a heavy burden of morality and ethics from the very beginning. For instance, concepts like "writings for conveying truth" and "poetry edifying" have been affecting narrative expression in China. Additionally, it is universally acknowledged that the individual can make sense only under the collective ethical framework. In the West, though Plato advocates greatly for the edifying function of literature, this function hasn't been the mainstream in the Western narrative, and it only forms the tradition of the individual "story".

"Narrate" and "things"

Explicitly and literally, narrative has the connotation of "telling stories", and the etyma of narrative is "narrare", meaning "relate" or "tell". Therefore, the narrative concept in the West puts more emphasis on the meaning of the verb "narrate", highlights the position of the narrative way and has started to probe into the narrative form from the time of ancient Greece. In this sense, Genette believes that "narrating" is the oldest connotation of the narrative. The Chinese phrase "叙事 (xushi)" in the very beginning is composed of two words and doesn't directly carry the connotation of "telling stories". Because of the close relation of "thing" and "history", the Chinese narrative concept places more emphasis on "thing" (that is, "history") and forms the tradition of historical biography, which has been an important source of the Chinese narrative.

The distinction between "narrating" and "thing" is consistent with the different positions of "story" and "history" in the Chinese and Western narratives mentioned above. The origin of "story" and the derivation of "history" in the West have a lot to do with their stress on "narrating", while the supreme position of "history" and the derivation of "story" has a lot to do with the emphasis on "things" in Chinese culture.

The differences above have a profound influence on the developmental trends of Chinese and Western literature. Andrew H. Plaks points out Western literature has evolved into the main thread of the "Epic--Romance--Novel", while the main thread of Chinese literature is "the tradition of *Book of Poetry*--Sao Style--Prose-poetry--Yuefu Ballads--Ci and Qu Style--Novel. The former emphasizes the narrative, and the latter stresses the expression of emotion" (Plaks, 1996:10). The main trend of narrative in Western literature is obviously related to the cultural tradition of "narration" and "story". However, that trend is not in China because it highlights the cultural tradition of "thing" (namely, "history"). In this sense, Yang Yi also argues:

> All above helps to form the uniqueness of Chinese narrative literature. Unlike the West narrative literature, which inserts epic and romance between myths and novels, it inserts and coexists with a great historical narrative between the segmental and polysemous form of myths and legends and the long and tortuous development of the novel. In other words, although the Chinese narrative in the later novel exerts its formal techniques and narrative strategies to the full, the historical narrative has always been the skeleton.
>
> (Yang Yi, 1997:15)

"Reality-advocating" and "fictitiousness"

At the very beginning, the Chinese narrative concept tends to advocate the reality. As mentioned above, the Chinese narrative concept has the

connotations of "real record" and "record". Simultaneously, the original relation between "thing" and "history" also makes the narrative the main literary genre inseparable from history. More than this, the historical narrative has always been a major literary genre, even though the novel as a representative of narrative is also called "unofficial history". Albeit unofficial, it still has something to do with history. Yang Yi, in his book *The Chinese Narratology* (1997), argues that the studies of Chinese narratology, if only involving fiction and no history, have a difficulty revealing its cultural meaning and the formal features. It is because of the obsession with history that genres such as ghost story, unofficial history and biography, legendary script, notes and Zhanghui-style novel spare no effort in propagating the verisimilitude of their own accounts, and even unreal things like monsters, ghosts and fairy foxes are based on verifiable time, places and characters. The trend of advocating reality, even for the "examination of every single word", is the distinctive feature of Chinese narratology.

Compared with Chinese narrative, the Western narrative concept has been related to fiction from its very beginning. Aristotle's narrative mainly indicates the mode of narration, but when he discusses the narrated "things" he explicitly highlights the importance of fiction. He points out that "astonishment is what the tragedy needs and epic by contrast can contain irrational things". He further indicates that "a thing impossible but believable to happen is more preferable than a thing possible but unbelievable to occur; if an irrational, even ridiculous but reasonable thing can be adopted too" (Aristotle, 2002:75–77). Both the classical "narrative" and the post-classical "narrative" follow this ancient tradition and view fiction as the important object of "narrative". Throughout the developmental history of the Western narrative, from the myth and tale to the epic and tragedy, then from the medieval legend to the modern novel, "fiction" is the dominant aspect of the creative content.

Introduction and application of "narrative" concepts

Introduction of narratology

Narratology was introduced into China with structuralism. In 1979, Yuan Kejia published an essay in *World Literature* entitled "An Review on the Structuralist Literary Theory", which was the first essay to introduce structuralist literary theory in the new era. Since 1979 Li Youzheng has continuously published several essays on structuralism, and in 1980 he translated the book *Structuralism* by Jan M. Broekman and briefly introduced Roland Barthes's literary criticism and semiotic theory. As of 1980, Zhang Yuhe, Cheng Xiaolan, Wang Tailai and Chen Guangfu published, one after another, some essays on structuralist philosophy and literary and artistic criticism, which more or less involved structuralist narratology. In 1983, Zhang Longxi published many essays on Western literary theory in *Dushu*

(also *Reading*) under the comprehensive title of "A Brief Survey on the Western Literary Theory". Among them the essay "The Story below Stories--On the Structuralist Narratology" brought narratology, as an independent concept and structuralist "discipline" with a relatively independent research group, methodology and target, into the mainland of China (Nan Zhigang, 2006:65). Since then, as more scholars, like Hu Yamin and Zhang Yinde, have continued to publish on narratology, the Western narrative theory has been gradually introduced into China, and narrative study has become a hot domain in Chinese academia.

In addition to the overall introduction of structuralism and narratology, since the 1980s some singular narratologists have been introduced into China. For example, Wang Zuwang published an essay entitled "Lévi-Strauss and His Structuralist Anthropology" (*Social Sciences Abroad*, 12th issue, 1980), and there was also Shi Yongkan's "Structuralist Anthropology" (*Literature & Art Studies*, second issue, 1989) and Ye Shuxian's translated essay "The Definition and Method of *Morphology of the Folktale*" (*Studies of Ethnic Literature*, second issue, 1998). What's more, the introduction on Roland Barthes in China prompted a very popular line of study. For example, Ge Hua published his essay "Text Theory of Roland Barthes" (*Literary Review*, fifth issue, 1987), and there were also Geng Youzhuang's "Writing, what is it? A Review on the Writing Theory and Literary Concept of Roland Barthes" (*Foreign Literature Review*, third issue, 1988), Cheng Daixi's "The Structuralist Literary and Art Concept of Roland Barthes" (*Literary and Artistic Contention*, sixth issue, 1986) and Hu Yamin's "On the Structuralist Narratology" (*Foreign Literature Studies*, first issue, 1987), which, respectively, introduced and reviewed the structuralist narratologists' thoughts, and offered important theory resources for the earlier Chinese narrative study. In 1989 Zhang Yinde selected and edited *Narratological Studies*, which translated the representative works of most Western narratologists and played an important role in the development of Chinese narratological studies.

The introduction and application of Western narratology in China can be divided into the following aspects: (1) The translation of the thoughts of some narratologists: for instance, Roland Barthes, Gerald Genette, Greimas, Todorov and Mieke Bal and Rimmon Kenan, and the relative theories of semiotics, structuralism and post-structuralism. (2) The translation of the Western narratological works. In the past 40 years, the important Western narratological monographs and theories of fiction have been introduced and translated into China, which plays a positive role in Chinese narrative studies. (3) The narratological monographs by Chinese scholars, for instance, Wang Tailai's *The Narrative Aesthetics* (1987), Hu Yamin's *Narratology* (2004), Luo Gang's *An Introduction to Narratology* (1999), Xu Dai's *The Narratology in Fiction* (2010), Zhao Yiheng's *When the Teller is Told about* (1998) and Long Diyong's *Spatial Narrative Studies* (2015), which all introduce, clear up and make use of the Western narrative theories. Meanwhile, these works contain the authors' own thoughts on the theory per se

with local insight. (4) The literary criticism carried out by Chinese scholars with the application of the Western narrative theories: for instance, Ge Fei's *Studies on Stories in Fiction* (2002), Hu Quansheng's *Studies on the Narrative Structure in the British and American Postmodernist Fiction* (2002), Xu Dai's *The Peripheral Narrative: A Case Study on the Chinese Feminist Fiction in the 20th Century* (2002), Tan Junqiang's *The Power of Narration: the Narrative Studies in Lu Xun's Fiction* (2014), Zhang Kaiyan's *Culture and Narrative* (1994) and *The Mythological Narratology* (1994), and the like.

Construction of Chinese narratology

Since the 1980s, when the Western narratology was introduced into China, Chinese scholars have attempted to establish the "Chinese Narratology". Chinese narratology can be understood from both the narrow sense and the broad sense. In the narrow sense, Chinese narratology can be understood as "China's narratology", which is grounded on traditional Chinese narrative theory and practical criticism of Chinese literature with ethnic and regional features; in a broader sense, Chinese narratology refers to "narratologies in China", including studies on Western narratology by Chinese scholars and the various branches of narratology, the research direction of narratology, the new topics of narratology, the construction of the methodology of narratology and so on, including the study of traditional Chinese narrative theories. In this section, Chinese narratology in the narrow sense will be discussed in depth.

Chronologically, the 1980s is a period of initiation. During this period, only scholars like Dong Naibing, Yang Yi and Chen Pingyuan were engaged in research in this field. The 1990s was a period of development, and more scholars, such as Fu Xiuyan, Zhang Kaiyan, Hu Yamin, Zhang Shijun, Gao Xiaokang, Zhao Yanqiu, Zheng Tiesheng, Ye Shuxian and Sun Zhengguo, joined the study. The new era has been a flourishing period. Now, not only have the scholars mentioned above managed fruitful achievements, but many young scholars have joined in the research as well.

From the perspective of research approaches, there has formed a basic evolution of "study on the genre of narrative → study on the classics of theory → the plural constructions of Chinese Narratology". In the earlier period, Chinese scholars mainly focussed their studies on the Chinese narrative genre, such as myth, drama, historical biography and fiction in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, and attempted to seek the Chinese narrative tradition from the narrative genre. It was a very important research thread to excavate the Chinese narrative theory from the narrative thoughts of the ancient Chinese classics, such as *Carving a Dragon at the Core of Literature* (*Wenxin Diaolong*), *Comments on Works of History* (*Shi Tong*) and *The General Literature and History* (*Wenshi Tongyi*). Hu Yanmin also followed this thread to analyze Jin Shengtan's fiction theory. In the mid-1990s, Chinese scholars attempted to establish the "Chinese narratology". The following

monographs marked the maturity of the construction of Chinese narratology: Zhang Kaiyan's *The Mythological Narratology* (1994), Yang Yi's *The Chinese Narratology* (1997) and Andrew H. Plaks's academic lectures at Peking University in *The Chinese Narratology* (1996). In the new era, the constructive perspectives tended to be plural. The representative monographs were Yang Yi's *The Literary Map and Cultural Reduction: from Narratology, Poetics to the Various Schools of Ancient China* (2011), Fu Xiuyan's *The Chinese Narratology* (2016) and Zhang Kaiyan's *The World Forefather-like Myths: Studies on the Origin of the Genesis Myth and Narrative Genre* (2016).

Though Chinese narratology tends to be plural and diverse, there are two basic perspectives which almost run through the constructive road of Chinese narratology. One is the cultural perspective, which combines narrative and traditional Chinese culture, and constructs Chinese narratology based on the core of traditional Chinese culture; the other is the comparative perspective, which highlights the uniqueness of the Chinese narratology by comparing Chinese and Western narratives.

Generally speaking, the construction of "Chinese narratology" has the following main four paths.

The construction path of "discipline ontology"

The so-called "discipline ontology" construction sets up the theory framework of Chinese narratology with the aim of disciplinary construction. The road is of the macroscopic disciplinary view and has an integral grasp on the Chinese cultural tradition and literary individuality, which is of methodological significance for disciplinary construction.

The prominent theoretical achievements of this path are three scholars' published monographs with the same title: Namely *The Chinese Narratology*. These three monographs are obviously consistent in methodology, that is, they adopt the theoretical perspective of "looking back" and return to the matrix of Chinese culture to construct the category system of "Chinese narratology": Yang Yi advocates "restoring" "the Origin of Chinese History and Culture", Fu Xiuyan proposes that we "penetrate the mist of influence and retrospect the tradition of our own" and Andrew H. Plaks excavates Chinese narrative forms from the Chinese myth prototype. However, the starting point of the three works' "retrospecting" is different, and the category system of "Chinese narratology" constructed by each of them is also different. The three monographs have the same title and different styles and category systems, which shows that there are various possibilities for the construction of "Chinese narratology" in the matrix of Chinese culture.

The construction path of mythological narratology

Here, separately listing mythological narratology (including folk stories) as one of the construction paths of Chinese narratology is not for the purpose

of stylistic classification but for the sake of the "prototypes" and "motifs" it contains. These prototypes and motifs are not only the matrix of Chinese narratology but also its basic "cells". Therefore, mythological narratology is the organic part of Chinese narratology and is of the significance of the cultural "origin". This explains why all of the three monographs with the same title, respectively by Yang Yi, Fu Xiuyan and Andrew H. Plaks, involve, to a certain degree, mythological narratives. The following achievements deserve attention in terms of the construction of "the mythological narratology".

The prototypal analysis mode is one of the achievements. Ye Shuxian's *The Philosophy of the Chinese Myth* (2005) and his *Heroes and the Sun* (1991), are achievements worthy of much attention. The former reconstructs and analyzes many ancient Chinese myths from the perspective of the prototype theory, which reveals that the deeper structure of many Chinese myths is a prototypal space-time theory based on the time and rhythm of the sun trajectory, and all the mythological fragments are related in depth to some part of this archetypal space-time structure. The latter reveals the relationship between the archery master Hou Yi and the prototypal mode of the sun hero from birth to death. Xiao Bing's *The Elites of Chinese Culture: A Comparative Study on the Sun Hero Myth* (1989) divides the divine heroes in ancient Chinese myths into several types and analyzes in detail the characteristics and elements of each type, ultimately discovering that the deeper structure of all these heroic stories points at the prototypal mode of the sun's movement.

The analytical mode of story motif is a second achievement worthy of attention. Chen Jianxian, one of the earlier scholars to adopt the analytical method of motif in China, published two monographs, *Deity and Hero: The Motif of Ancient Chinese Myths* (1994) and *Reading Myths: The Analytical Method of Motif* (1997). The two books conduct some case studies on ancient Chinese myths by means of the analytical method of motif. Dr Wang Xianzhao's dissertation, "The Motif Catalogue of Ancient Chinese Myths" (2013), distinguishes more than 20,000 motifs on the basis of the study of over 10,000 myths of various ethnic groups in China. It is of great value for Chinese scholars to understand the rich composition of the motif of Chinese mythology, including the ethnic minorities' myth motifs.

The ontological study on the mythological narratology is another achievement. Zhang Kaiyan's *The Mythological Narratology* (1994), under the premise of the model of form-structure narratology, conducts a theoretical description and analysis on the elements of myths home and abroad from such perspectives as role creation, godhood composition, behavioural motivation system, role model, function-combination model and cultural choice. His new book *The World Ancestor Myth: Studies on the Ancient Chinese Myth of Creation and Narrative Type* (2016), by using archetypal theory, cultural anthropology, historical restoration and other methods, reconstructs and restores the ancient Chinese myth of creation, and clears up its

development and evolution process, and on this basis explores the features of the narrative types of the ancient Chinese creation myth.

Chinese myth has a profound influence on the trend of Chinese culture and the mode of Chinese narrative. The mythological narratology provides valid source evidence for the construction of Chinese narratology.

The construction path of literary sociology

Literary sociology studies the societal origin, function and relation between literary creation and social life by means of sociological theory, concept and method. The literary sociological construction of Chinese narratology puts the narrative into the societal history and analyzes its relation to the social culture and life. This path combines history with theory.

Led by Professor Zhao Yanqiu and co-authored by Dr Li Zuolin and Dr Xiong Jiangmei, the three-volume monograph *Studies on the Ancient Chinese Narrative Thoughts* (2010), based on the law of the development of Chinese narrative itself, combined with societal cultural changes, divides ancient Chinese narrative thoughts into three parts, the narrative thought of Pre-Qin, Western Han and Eastern Han dynasties; the narrative thought of dynasties from Weijin to Song and Yuan; and the narrative thought of the Ming and Qing dynasties, so as to show the development and evolution of ancient Chinese narrative thought in an omni-directional and three-dimensional way. This work is not only of great historical value, but also provides an important basis for the theoretical construction of Chinese narratology.

Studies on the Tradition of the Chinese Literary Narrative (2012), edited by Dong Naibing, re-examines and reiterates Chinese literary history, based on the clue of the symbiotic coexistence of Chinese narrative and lyric traditions. This book views the narrative tradition as a part of Chinese culture and the overall literary system, which to some extent fills the gap in Chinese literary history. In addition, this book not only analyzes the narrative origin and feature of various genres, such as the historical biography, drama and fiction, but also explores the relations between the narrative tradition, the ancient Chinese literary theories and the configuration of Chinese characters. In particular, this book explores the narrative features of poetry, *ci* and *qu*, and Prose-poetry, based on which it summarizes the relations of Chinese culture and Chinese narrative tradition.

On the whole, Zhao Yanqiu explains ancient Chinese narrative theory from the perspective of narrative history and Dong Naibing from the perspective of literary history. Both delineate a relatively complete historical clue of Chinese narrative theories, which is of great importance to the construction of Chinese narratology.

Gao Xiaokang is dedicated to studying the relation between the specific societal culture and the literary narrative. The book *Citizens, Intellectuals and Stories* (2001) conducts research on the relations between the fiction of the Ming and Qing dynasties, and the societal culture; *Man and Stories*

(2003) locates the story from the perspective of the definitive property of the human being: Man is a cultural animal, that is, man needs to tell and listen to stories, which fundamentally confirms the inner relations of human, culture and story. *The Ancient Chinese Narrative Concepts and Ideology* (2005), using a theoretical approach, studies the relationship between the ancient Chinese literary narrative and ideology. Through experience, analysis and study of the world picture constructed by the whole narrative activity, this book examines how the dominant way of life and values solidify and infiltrate the general spiritual life of the society and how they become the collective unconscious behind the narrative intention, thus revealing the relationship between the narrative schema and the ideological configuration of intellectual conflicts in the Ming and Qing dynasties. What's more, it points out that the contradictory state of the intellectuals' spiritual mindset is in general closely related to the internal contradiction of the societal cultural structure.

The construction path of Chinese fiction aesthetics

Fiction is the most important genre of narrative works. The study of fiction aesthetics is an important path of constructing "Chinese Narratology", which focusses mainly on the aesthetic feature, aesthetic category and cultural values of the fictional narrative.

The research results of this path are fruitful and complex, including a series of papers on the criticism of classical novels and monographs, such as *Studies on Grammars of Ancient Chinese Novels* (Yang Zhiping, 2013), *The Aesthetic History of Ancient Chinese Fiction* (Han Jinlian, 2004), *The Aesthetics of Chinese Fiction* (Ye Lang, 1982), *The Narrative Art of* The Three Kingdoms (Zheng Tiesheng, 2000) and *The Narrative Art of* The Dream in Red Mansions (Zheng Tiesheng, 2011).

Zhang Shijun's research in this field became unique and unorthodox with the discovery of the spatial aesthetic features in the narrative of Chinese fiction. *The Spatial Narrative of* The Dream of Red Mansions (1999) suggests that there are three spatial types in the narrative world, namely the tangible scenic space, virtualized fragrant space and virtual fantastic space, which establish a self-contained and brand new spatial narrative framework. *Studies on the Narrative Concepts in Ming and Qing Dynasties' Fiction Comments* (2007), another important work by this author, explores such concepts about narrative in fiction as the inter-frame, traditional Chinese opera and calligraphy and painting, and analyzes Chinese architectural structural awareness, the section awareness in traditional Chinese opera and the calligraphy awareness, etc., of the narrative concepts in Chinese fiction criticism. The spatiality of the Chinese fiction narrative can be traced back to the ancient Chinese myth narrative, which is an important embodiment of the feature of Chinese culture.

Wu Shiyu's research shows distinct characteristics in terms of the identity of Chinese fiction aesthetics and Chinese culture. *Chinese Culture and*

Fiction Thinking (2000) studies the aesthetic tradition of Chinese fiction; explores its evolution and development; puts the construction and formation of the thinking schema of Chinese fiction into the process of the historical accumulation of Chinese cultural construction; and analyzes the categories and structural forms of Chinese fiction thinking from the perspectives of ethnic cultural mentality, values, and the thinking mode of ethnic groups. *Essays on the Chinese Fiction Aesthetics* (2006) views the identity of the Chinese cultural thinking mode and the Chinese fiction narrative mode as the central force of constructing the discourse context and narrative mode of Chinese fiction. This book generally explores the relationship between traditional Chinese drama culture, Buddha culture, Zen culture, Confucian culture, harmonizing culture, garden culture and poetic culture, and the fiction narrative thinking and narrative mode. Wu Shiyu's achievements show the theoretical pursuit of constructing Chinese fiction aesthetics from the "original point" of Chinese culture.

Wang Ping's research highlights the symbiotic relation between Chinese culture and fiction aesthetics, and is characterized by constructing the theoretical framework of Chinese aesthetics of the fiction narrative. *Cultural Studies on the Ancient Chinese Fiction* (1998) systematically analyzes the cultural psychology, transformation and evolution of ancient Chinese fiction; the influence of cultural categories on ancient fiction; and the cultural features of ancient fiction theory, etc., and conducts a cultural analysis of the representative fiction in each era. Based on this, *The Narrative Studies on the Ancient Chinese Fiction* (2001) establishes the cubic framework of the ancient fiction narrative aesthetics from such narrative parameters as narrator, perspective, time, logic, role mode, narrative structure and narrative rhetoric.

It is worth illustrating that the four paths mentioned above are not completely separated; rather, they are interpenetrating, and the research of relevant theorists also overlaps. Fu Xiuyan's research, for instance, is embodied in all four paths.

Over the past 30 years, the construction of Chinese narratology has obtained a striking achievement, not only with various construction paths but also with distinctive methods and perspectives. The four paths above have preferences of their own and combine to help establish the plural system of Chinese narratology by means of methods and theories of diverse disciplines. "The ontological construction of Chinese narratology" not only sets up the theoretical framework of the Chinese narratology but also puts forward the constructive methods and structural system, which is of methodological significance. "The mythological narratology" is the inevitable choice of the constructive methodology of Chinese narratology because it focusses on the "prototype" and "motif" in the Chinese myths and the influence of the thinking way of myth and narrative mode. "The literary sociology" focusses on the relationship between the literary narrative and the social life and culture, and explores the relation between the change of societal culture

and the transformation of literary narrative by means of the study method of sociology. Therefore, it has the dual values of narrative and literary histories. Drawing on relevant theories and methods of aesthetic studies, "Chinese fiction aesthetics" focusses on the aesthetic features and categories of fiction narrative, and explores its cultural significance.

"Chinese narratology" is characterized by its distinctive methods and perspectives, and is evidently different from Western narratology. The construction methods of Chinese narratology are highly consistent with its perspectives. In other words, the construction methods determine the construction perspectives. In terms of methodology, Yang Yi's "returning to the origin of Chinese narratology" and Fu Xiuyan's "looking back at the tradition of its own" achieve almost the same effect using different methods. The return to Chinese cultural and narrative tradition is an important feature of the construction methodology of Chinese narratology and a symbol of distinguishing it from the Western narratology as well. Culturalism, reductionism and comparativism are the unique construction perspectives of Chinese narratology. As a discipline, Western narratology preceded Chinese narratology; therefore, the construction of the latter was inevitably influenced by the former, and this potentially includes the comparison of China and the West. However, the motto of "penetrating the Western mist, and looking back at China's own tradition" shows the theoretical confidence and ambition of Chinese scholars in constructing Chinese narratology, which, different from the Western "form-structure" narratology, adopts the perspectives of culturalism and reductionism. The establishment of the distinctive construction methods and perspectives is the greatest achievement in the construction of "Chinese narratology" in the past 30 years.

In the context of increasing globalization, the voice of China is particularly important. However, the construction of Chinese narratology is meant not to highlight the opposition between China and the West, nor to transform the West, let alone to Westernize the Chinese, but instead to seek common ground while reserving differences and obtaining enrichment and development in mutual exchanges.

The travel of narrative is a story of growing up, and the travel per se constitutes a narrative. The Chinese and Western narrative concepts have their own innate "genes" depending on their date of birth, and over the thousands of years of their respective developments, the heterogeneity of their genes has made them take on different "features". At the end of the 20th century, in the context of globalization, the Chinese and Western narrative concepts, after experiencing exchanges and conflicts with one another, are ultimately moving towards integration. "Stories" never end; "narrative" is still travelling in "time".

Zhao Yiheng believes that voice mainly refers to "the temporal directionality in the intention". According to this standard, the narrative can be divided into three types: Statement (the narration of the past), interrogative (the narration of the present) and imperative (the narration of the future)

(Zhao Yiheng, 2010:149–160). The implication of this judgment is that there may also be three temporal dimensions in the definition. A closed (completed) definition may contain the past or the present dimension as well because it always defines what exists, while an open definition is likely to contain the future dimensions as it is uncompleted and awaits the absent present. Obviously, the definition of narrative should adopt the future dimensions. Just as the open-ended fiction brings infinite possibilities to characters, the concept of narrative is constantly being generated.

Note

1 S_1 stands for "subject 1", $\cup$ stands for "deviate (disjunction)", O stands for "object", $\cap$ stands for "combination (conjunction)" and S_2 stands for "subject 2".

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4 Literariness

Written by Hu Tao, translated by Song Rong

In terms of word formation, *literariness* is, in most languages, a derivative. In Russian, it derives from the adjective *литературный*. In English, it originates from the adjective *literary*. The French word *littératurité* first originated from the noun *littérature*, which was later replaced by *littérarité*, from the adjective *littéraire*. In Chinese language, *literariness* can be regarded as the combination of the noun *literature* and the nominal *xing*[1] or as an abbreviation of *the quality* or *the nature of literature*. From the perspective of the development of the concept, the Russian word was borrowed from the vocabulary of other disciplines, the French word was newly coined when it was translated and introduced into literary theories, and the English and Chinese words were rebuilt from the original meaning by the reproduction of Russian formalism.

In contemporary Chinese literary theory, *wenxuexing*[2] (literariness) is a core concept whose status and value conceal and obscure the fact that it has multiple origins and usages. First, the concept of literariness in English and French literary theory that is born from the reproduction of Russian formalism has different interpretations because of different languages and specific texts. Second, because of the misunderstanding or mistakes in translation, the adjective *literary* as well as its cognates *the literary* and *literarity* are often translated as wenxuexing. Third, since 1930s, the word wenxuexing has been used in Chinese both as a term that is directed against *class* and as a common compound word.

The multiple origins and usages actually refer to different conceptions, research methods and theoretical construction models, and the evolving concepts, methods and models further promote the evolution of the concept. By returning to the text and reconstruction of the historical context, we may reconstruct the historical pedigree of *literariness* and discover its theoretical presupposition, research methods and thinking framework, then explore its significance and value in the construction of contemporary literary theory.

The origins of literariness

Concepts are the generalization and abstraction of existing phenomena, which are bound to be born on certain theoretical and linguistic fields.

They can be produced in three ways: Through the transformation of existing concepts, such as derivation, extension, reversion, revision, synthesis etc.; borrowings from other disciplinary concepts; or the combination of the former two. Meanwhile, the long history of literature also means that there is no absolutely new literary phenomenon. Therefore, the birth of the concept of literary theory always means the renewal of literary research, that is, the intervention of new concepts, methods and interpretation modes. To be a concept, literariness must have its own theories and methods, corresponding literary phenomena and specific theoretical texts.

Jakobson and литерату́рность

The word literariness can be traced back to the end of the 19th century. In English, literariness derives from *literary*,[3] which means *the quality of literature* or *the quality of documents*, not the denotation we are using today. As a concept of literary criticism, literariness is generally considered to have been proposed by Roman Jakobson, a Russian formalist, at the beginning of the 20th century.

In 1914, Jakobson founded the Moscow Linguistic Circle and worked closely with the Organization of Poetic Language (OPYAZ), founded by Shklovsky in Petersburg. The purpose of the former was to "promote the study of linguistics and poetry" (Jakobson, 1989:1), while the latter focussed more on literary theory. The two groups and theorists had similar theoretical tendencies in the same period and so jointly formed a school of literary criticism which was named *formalism* later. Their common goal was to make literary research an independent science. Hence, they extensively drew on the theoretical resources of Saussure's linguistics, Husserl's phenomenology, symbolism, futurism and other trends of thoughts, and put forward many new concepts and propositions from the cooperation with poets and writers, and the debates with other theorists.

> The word of literariness first appeared in Jakobson's Russian essay "Modern Russian Poetry" in 1921, which was published under the full title of "Modern Russian Poetry, First Draft of Outline: Approaching V. khlebnikov", and later collected in the fifth volume of Jakobson's Selected Writings.

In the first section of "Modern Russian Poetry", Jakobson puts forward a theory of *poetic dialectology*. He believes that in order to explore a kind of poetic language, we must grasp its relationship with three elements: The existing poetry tradition, the current daily language and the developing trend of poetry. Jakobson borrows the method of dialectology in linguistics and takes Pushkin's study on poetry as an example to illustrate that a poet's poetic language is only part of a larger linguistic system, and we must first give up value judgment when we study *dialects* of different times and regions.

Here, Jakobson not only regards synchronic poetic languages but also treats diachronic developing trends of poetry as dialects. So, the overall poetics or literary theory becomes a dialectology of poetry. Thus, Jakobson solves the problem of how to make literary research a science independent from the methodological level and then sets up a science from the specific level of poetry or literary phenomena, that is, the object of literary research.

In order to propose and accurately define the object of literary research, Jakobson compares the similarities and differences of poetic languages and emotional, as well as daily languages. He fixes the uniqueness of poetic languages on *function* and then compares literature with other artistic styles, such as sculpture, music, dance, etc., to put forward the idea that the object of literary research is literariness.

> The plastic arts involve the shaping of self-sufficient visual impressions, music the shaping of self-sufficient sound material, dance the organization of the self-sufficient gesture; and poetry is the formulation of the self-sufficient, "self-centered", word, as Khlebnikov puts it.
>
> Poetry is language in its aesthetic function.
>
> Thus the subject of literary scholarship is not literature but literariness (literaturnost), that is, that which makes of a given work a work of literature. And yet literary scholars up to now have often behaved like policemen who, in the course of arresting a particular person, would pick up, just in case, everybody and anybody who happened to be in the apartment, as well as people who happened to be passing on the street.
>
> Similarly, the literary historian used anything that came to hand: biographical evidence, psychology, politics, philosophy. Instead of a literary science they created a conglomeration of homegrown disciplines. They seemed to forget that their articles deviated in the direction of those other disciplines--the history of philosophy, the history of culture, psychology, and so forth, and that while the latter may of course make use of literary works, these are for their purposes only defective, second-rate documents. If literary history wishes to become a science, it must recognize "device" as its sole concern. Then the fundamental problem will concern the uses and justification of device.
>
> (Jakobson, 1973:62–63)

Jakobson does not clearly explain the connotation and denotation of literariness in his essay, but it can be inferred from the above quotation and the full text of "Modern Russian Poetry" that literariness is not meant to convey a logically vague concept but is an accurate signifier. After putting forward this argument, Jakobson uses the following eight sections to specifically analyze certain literary phenomena, including but not limited to futuristic poetry. Jakobson's analysis of these specific *procedures* and their effects and reasons indirectly illustrates the connotation of literariness: The inherent law of literature.

In 1973, Jakobson's collection of literary essays *Questions de Poetique* was published in Paris. The postscript he wrote was issued in English in 1980 with the title "A Postscript to the Discussion on Grammar of Poetry". In this article, Jakobson uses *literariness* for the second time. However, the purpose of this essay is not to explain the concept of literariness but to illustrate the significance and value of linguists' study on poetry.

> "Literariness", in other words, the transformation of a verbal act into a poetic work and the system of devices that bring about such a transformation, is the theme that the linguist develops in his analysis of poem. Contrary to the accusation leveled by literary criticism, such a method leads us toward a specification of the "literary acts" examined and hence opens the way toward generalizations which suggest themselves.
>
> (Jakobson, 1980:23)

Here, Jakobson uses the English word literariness as well as its French counterpart due to the fact that the translation of literariness between these languages has been fixed. On the other hand, he may have made this choice because Erlich's writings had made it a widely accepted concept. But there are some subtle differences between *literariness* and *литературность*. The former is a concept that has been widely spread in the English world, while the latter is the origin that was traced by the late-comers, and which can be regarded as the original use to some degree. The latter in *Modern Russian Poetry* refers to the object of literary research: Namely literary law. Otherwise, the former has developed. That is, the "procedural system" can be understood to include three aspects: The procedure as a system element, the internal law as a system relationship and the literary quality as a whole.

Apart from the concept of literariness, many of the concepts and literary ideas put forward by Jakobson are often regarded as another expression of literariness, such as poeticity (Jakobson, 1987:368–378), dominant (Jakobson, 1987:41–46), differentia specifica (Jakobson, 1987:62–69), poetic function (Jakobson, 1987:62–69), poeticalness (Jakobson, 1987:62–69) and so on.

As far as литературность is concerned, few Russian formalists have mentioned it. Germansky wrote a commentary on "Modern Russian Poetry" in 1921 but did not mention литературность, let alone regarding it as a concept. Almost at the same period, Bakhtin mentioned the above two articles of Jakobson and Eichenbaum in his writings on Russian formalism, but he said nothing about литературность.

In the existing literature, Eichenbaum is the only one of the Russian formalists to explicitly quote Jakobson's writings and use the term литературность. He quotes Jakobson's writings about literariness in his essay "The Theory of the 'Formal Method'" and employs this word in another essay, "Literature & Literary Life". "The Theory of the Formal Method" is one of the early writings on Russian formalism that was translated and

introduced to the Western countries. Through this article and Erlich's writings, Jakobson's "Modern Russian Poetry" became known. Eichenbaum writes before the quotation:

> The establishment of a specific and factual literary science was basic to the organization of the formal method. All of our efforts were directed toward disposing of the earlier position which, according to Alexander Veselovsky, made of literature an abandoned thing. This is why the position of the Formalists could not be reconciled with other approaches and was so unacceptable to the eclectics. In rejecting these other approaches, the Formalists actually rejected and still reject not the methods, but rather the irresponsible mixing of various disciplines and their problems. The basis of our position was and is that the object of literary science, as such, must be the study of those specifics which distinguish it from any other material. (The secondary, incidental features of such material, however, may reasonably and rightly be used in a subordinate way by other scientific disciplines.) Roman Jakobson formulated this view with perfect clarity.
>
> (Eichenbaum, 2004:870)

Jakobson and Eichenbaum share the same views in the following respects.

First, the object of literary research used to be inaccurate, and the main innovative task of Russian formalists is to find and define it. This is the situation faced by literature which "wants to be science" (Jakobson, 1973:63), as Jakobson said. Second, the reason literary research is not a *specialized* science lies in its *way* of research, that is, to use the method of other disciplines to study literature. Third, to explore the features of literary material, just as Eichenbaum said, should be to treat the object as literature, not as an auxiliary material of other disciplines. In other words, the study of literary facts by Russian formalism relies on the established premise that there is a distinction between literary and other materials. To regard literary works as objects of literary research is to use *specialized* literary methods to carry out fact-based research, which is the real literary research, that is, the premise of literature being a science.

In addition, Eichenbaum used литературность in another essay entitled "Literary Environment". In order to gain enough space for the development of formalism, he published the article in 1927, trying to prove the legitimacy of formalist literary theory by discussing the relationship between literature and literary life. "Literary-historical fact is a complex construct in which the fundamental role belongs to literariness--an element of specificity that its study can be productive only in immanent-evolutionary terms" (Eichenbaum, 1971).

The use of литературность in this essay is similar to Jakobson's in "Modern Russian Poetry". That is, literature has its own unique and intrinsic laws or rules.

Erlich and the spread of literariness

Victor Erlich, a Russian-American scholar, is essential in the history of literariness. The primary reason for this is that he published the landmark work *Russian Formalism: History and Theory* under the condition of the scarcity of materials about Russian formalism, which contributes a lot to the organization, translation and reconstruction of this field. It is also because Erlich has made literariness a dynamic concept with multiple interpretations.

In *Russian Formalism: History and Theory*, Erlich clearly points out that it is Jakobson who puts forward the concept of literariness. To him, literariness is a constantly changing concept. Before the emergence of this concept, Russian formalists had faced serious defeats in their research, that is, "the tendency to equate literature with 'literariness'" (Erlich, 1980:159): "[t]he concern with the idiosyncratic, the purely literary, gave the tendency to equate literature with literariness, to reduce art to its distinguishing feature" (Erlich, 1980:198). This is to say, it is impossible to establish an independent science without establishing the object of literary research, and it is impossible to set up the systematic research without a definite concept of literariness. Therefore, the concept of literariness put forward by Jakobson has set the right direction for the research of Russian formalism. What's more, Erlich associates *procedure*, an important concept of Russian formalism, with literariness:

> It ought to be obvious by now the "device" was the watchword of Russian Formalism. "Art as a Device", "the device of 'making it strange'" (priëm ostranenija), "a device laid bare' (ovnazenie priëma), "the literary work is the sum-total of devices employed in it"--in all crucial formulations "priëm" appears as a key term--the basic unit of poetic form, the agency of "literariness".
>
> (Erlich, 1980:190)

Erlich also indicates that, after the ebb of Russian formalism, literariness, as re-defined by Jakobson, prevails in Czechoslovakia and Poland, and points out a new direction for the Prague School It not only contributes to the change of the direction and mode of literary research but also brings about changes in its own connotation and denotation.

The historical description and the dynamic generalization of *literariness* by Erlich provided a foundation for multi-dimensional interpretations of the concept later.

The characteristics of literariness

Although the concept of literariness is dynamic and develops historically, its connotations are relatively specific to each theorist and in every theoretical text.

Rene Wellek focusses on the property and methodology of literariness. The earliest application of this word was in 1946 in his essay "The Revolt against Positivism in Recent European Literary Scholarship", which combed the resistance and new development of positivism in the literary research in France, Italy, Russia and four other countries (Wellek, 1963:267). To Wellek, in Russians' literary research, "the work of art and its specific 'literariness' is resolutely put into the center of literary studies, and all its biographical and social relationships are minimized or even considered as purely external" (Wellek, 1963:267). It seems to be a precursor to the distinction between *internal research* and *external research* which appears later in *Literary Theory*, and literariness obviously belongs to the center (or interior) of literary research. Otherwise, Wellek neither defined literariness nor clarified its origins, but marked it as a special word with quotation marks. In1958, he used literariness again in his essay "The Crisis of Comparative Literature". He deemed that "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" (Wellek, 1963:293).

Unlike English scholars who are influenced by the original meaning of literariness—the quality or the nature of literature, the newly-made word *littératurité* in French is mainly embodied in discourse structures and aesthetic features. Littératurité was derived from the noun littérature, but gradually evolves into littérarité originating from the adjective littéraire. Its interpretation is influenced by Todorov's structuralism. the translator and introducer of littératurité.

Todorov regarded literariness as a concept and discussed it specifically in his book *Poetique* in 1968. He defined literariness as "the abstract features that make a piece of literary work be literature" (Todorov, 1989:310). To him, Jakobson's concept of literariness refers to certain literary phenomenon, which is put forward to gain the autonomy of literature. However, in structuralist poetics, literariness means "the reason that regards some work as 'literature'" under specific social and historical conditions in order to obtain "the autonomy of poetics" that hovers on the autonomy of literature (Todorov, 1989:310). In another word, it is the *structure* abstracted from the whole literature. In addition, Todorov has ever mentioned literariness in his monographs, such as *Symbolism Theory* and *Criticism of Criticism*, when he discusses Jakobson's and Russian formalist theories.

Gerard Genette used literariness in his book *Fiction and Diction*. He borrowed Jakobson's question about *literature*, "[w] hat makes a verbal message a work of art" (Jakobson, 1987:63), to put forward the theory of genre. Genette defined literariness as an "aesthetic aspect of literary practice" (Genette, 1993:2). In fact, his literariness in *Fiction and Diction* is sometimes another term of literature or *aesthetic aspect of literature*, sometimes referring to *becoming literature*. It is not only the condition under which a

work becomes (or belongs to) literature but also the nature presented by literary texts.

Apart from Todorov and Genette, there are Antoine Companion and Pierre Macheley, both of whom have talked about literariness in the French world. Their opinions are basically consistent with Genette's work and refers to the aesthetic characteristics of literature or the classification criteria of literary genres. The English scholar Tony Bennett studies Russian literary theories with materials translated from French, so his interpretation of literariness is in the French style. He points out that literariness is the most concerned concept of Russian formalism and the power to *defamiliarize* literary texts.

> The object of the formalists' researches was thus not the concrete object of literary texts themselves but the abstract object of the differential relation between literary texts and non-literary texts, a problematic (in the sense defined above) that was entirely the product of their own theoretical procedures.
>
> (Bennett, 2003:39)

As discussed above, Literariness refers to the relationship between texts or distinctive features, but it implies the meaning of *intertextuality* to some degree.

Literariness and theory & practice of Western literary criticism

Peter Widdowson tells us that

> No one by now--not even the most dyed-in-the-wool traditionalliterary critic--can easily accept either a notion of aunitary 'Literature' or that there can be a meaningful essentialist definition of the concept: that there is an innate, self-identifying 'essence' of literature.
>
> (Widdowson, 1999:10)

Since the mid-20th century, literary research has questioned the definition of essence in order to re-examine existing literary concepts. As literary concepts have gained more and more attention and been continuously revised and developed, literariness as a concept has obtained new interpretations and applications.

Derrida's institution and literariness

Hillis Miller once pointed out in an interview that deconstructionism could not be defined for two reasons: One was that deconstructionism was against to be systematized; the other was that deconstructionism referred to the

works of different scholars, which cannot be simplified as a system (Miller, 1995:9–12). Therefore, there is no so-called deconstructionism but literariness of Derrida or Derman or in some text. Here, we do not focus on deconstruction or deconstructionism, finding, instead, the usage of literariness in Derrida's literary research in order to obtain the connotations and functions of this concept in different contexts.

Derrida used literariness in several interviews when talking about literature: One with Jean-Louis Udbin and Guy Scarpeta in 1971, another with Derek Atriz in 1989. The former was collected in *Multiple Positions*, and the latter appeared in the collection *Literary Action* under the title "Interview: The Strange Construction of Literature". In 1989, by telling his own literary experiences, Derrida expressed his conception of literature: "It is an institution which tends to overflow the institution" (Derrida, 1992:36). Through his description of literary conception, we may find out the connotation and the use of his *literariness.*

The so-called *institution*, first, means that the signified of literature is the product under certain social and historical conditions, which is not naturally inherent in the text, and there is not even an equivalent to literature in some cultures.. Literature, as a kind of institution, is closely related to modern Western social systems. The mechanism of literary production and the social and political space it occupies are both quite new. Moreover, these systems not only affect the production and consumption process of literature but also affect the internal structure of literary texts. This influence is the second characteristic of Derrida's institutions: "… that literature seemed to me, in a confused way, to be the institution which allows one to say everything, in every way" (Derrida, 1992:36). "What we call literature (not belles-lettres or poetry) implies that license is given to the writer to say everything he wants to or everything he can, while remaining shielded, safe from all censorship, be it religious or political" (Derrida, 1992:37). The third characteristic of the institutions is "an institution which tends to overflow the institution" (Derrida, 1992:36). Literary space is not only institutional fiction but also a fictional institution. Literature has its interior regulations, which are generalized as *law* or rule. But the rule is not unchangeable in essence because literature always tries to manifest its essence in actions in order to invert the existing rule. Derrida believes that *institution* means that "it allows people to think about the essence of law" (Derrida, 1992:36). Hence, whether from the emergence of social history or the relationship between literary creation and historical system, literature is "an institution which tends to overflow the institution".

Based on the literary conception of institution, Derrida questions and disassembles the concept of literature, which also affects his use of literariness. In the materials we can find at present, literariness has appeared four times, and all four instances are in his interviews, not in his formal writings. Derrida highly appraises the significance of Russian formalism in his French interview "Multiple Positions", believing that a clear interpretation

of "the issue of literariness" is "a key progress in this half century" (Derrida, 2004:78). "The issue of literariness", according to Derrida, refers to "a certain transformation of literary practice itself" and "a kind of particularity of isolated literature" which arises to "protect this particularity" (Derrida, 2004:78). "Literature should have its own suitable essence and doctrine that are not associated with the theoretical or practical fields" (Derrida, 2004:78).

In an interview in1989, Derrida mentioned "literariness" three times, but the words and their denotations varied. The first use is in "Literarity is not a natural essence, an intrinsic property of the text" (Derrida, 1992:43). To Derrida, literature does not have pure originality, nor does any text belong to it essentially. The essence of literature is "produced as a set of objective rules in an original history of the 'acts' of inscription and reading" (Derrida, 1992:45). The rules are the continuingly inverted "law" mentioned above. Literariness is a kind of "literary functioning and a literary intentionality" (Derrida, 1992:45), which is the consciousness of literature's *law*. Derrida refers to it in terms of "literary character" in the following words.

The second use is when he describes the *trouble* of literature, that is, the question of "separating out historical narrative, literary fiction, and philosophical reflection" (Derrida, 1992:35). Derrida uses this word in the sense of Russian formalism, which is called "essentialist form" (Derrida, 1992:48).

In response to the expression of "there is ever so little literature" (Derrida, 1992:72), Derrida mentioned "literariness" for a third time, the only one in which the actual word was used. "No *internal* criterion can guarantee the essential 'literariness' of a text. There is no assured essence or existence of literature" (Derrida, 1992:73). If going into the text and analyzing each element, what can be got is not the literature itself, but some features shared or borrowed from other places. "And even the convention which allows a community to come to an agreement about the literary status of this or that phenomenon remains precarious, unstable and always subject to revision" (Derrida, 1992:73). It is in the sense of this convention that Derrida said the sentence "there is ever so little literature".

From the few usages mentioned above, it is clear that Derrida uses the concept of literariness in two senses. One is to use "literary" to refer to the characteristics of literature, which is related to Russian formalism. The other is to apply literariness for literature, the abstract and fictitious institutions, depending on the society and history.

De Man & aberrations of aesthetic ideological

At the beginning of *The Resistance to Theory* Paul De Man emphasizes his interest in literary theory due to "the impossibility of its definition" (De Man, 1986:3). He re-emphasizes this impossibility in the following: As far as the expression of general literary theory is concerned, only "the delimitation of the corpus and the *état présent* of the question" is "bound to end in

confusion" because "it is impossible to fix its borderlines" (De Man, 1986:5). When this was written, the development of literary theories in North America relied mostly on the systematic power of philosophy, religion or ideology, which ultimately decides the transcendental conception of *what literary is*. Faced with the situation of literary theory since the 1960s, De Man argued that its creation depends on the theory itself, which became a question that people think about consciously. Here is a list of pioneers on this road: Saussure, Jakobson, Bart, Greimas and Althusser. The list implies the general outlook of the literary theory suggested by De Man: Modern linguistics, linguistic poetics, semiotics, structure and meaning, and ideology. Of course, it is not a simple blending. Based on the above theoretical premises and reality, De Man attempts to reveal in this article the reflective relationship of contemporary theories, and literariness can be treated as a *by-product* rather than a deliberately constructed concept in the journey of thinking.

De Man holds that the birth of literary theory depends on two conditions: One is the linguistic approach instead of the historical and aesthetic approach that deals with texts; the other is the introduction of linguistic terms into the meta-language of literature. When linguistic methods and linguistic academic terms are integrated into the meta-language of literary theory, literariness comes into being, or the object of literary theory emerges:

> The linguistics of semiology and of literature apparently have something in common that only their shared perspective can detect and that pertains distinctively to them. The definition of this something, often referred to as literariness, has become the object of literary theory.
>
> (De Man, 1986:9)

Literariness can be found only when we examine literary texts from the mutual perspectives of linguistics and literature. Regarding its specific connotation, De Man gives descriptions from several aspects rather than a definition. First, literariness is not an aesthetic response or an aesthetic attribute.

> It is a rhetorical rather than an aesthetic function of language, an identifiable trope (paronomasias) that operates at the level of the signifier and contains no responsible pronouncement on the nature of the world-- despite its powerful potential to create the opposite illusion.
>
> (De Man, 1986:10)

In other words, aesthetics is a philosophical view of literature or views from other fields with a phenomenological understanding. De Man believes that literature should be understood from the rhetorical perspective of languages. The difference between them is that the former focusses on the relationship between language and the world, while the latter focusses on the attributes of the language itself.

Second, De Man holds that "more than any other mode of inquiry, including economics, the linguistics of literariness is a powerful and indispensable tool in the unmasking of ideological aberrations, as well as a determining factor in accounting for their occurrence" (De Man, 1986:11). Linguistics is the basic perspective of De Man's literary research. Only through this perspective can people question and reveal the "ideological aberrations" because linguistics emphasizes "reference as a function of language" rather than a kind of intuitive phenomena. At the same time, this linguistic approach can distinguish the "materiality of the signifier" from the "materiality of what it signifies". In this way, through the criticism of rhetorical reading, De Man hopes to reveal the so-called "aberrations" of aesthetic ideology. He metaphorically describes this kind of revealing by freeing "the discourse on literature from naive oppositions between fiction and reality", "considering language as a system of signs and of signification, …liberates the corpus from the secular weight of textual canonization"(De Man, 1986:8–11).

So far, we know what is not De Man's literariness, but we need further studies to understand what it is. In *Blindness and Insight*, he expresses a similar conception of *literature* to Derrida. "With respect to its own specificity (that is, as an existing entity susceptible to historical description), literature exists at the same time in the modes of error and truth; it both betrays and obeys its own mode of being" (De Man, 1983:163–164). That is to say, literature is not a synchronic concept but a diachronic one. Russian formalism and its imitator, structuralism, called this characteristic the *literariness of literature* and regarded it as a stable characteristic in order to establish a *science of literary forms*, which is a mistake in De Man's view. Because of "the profound labor of literature which seeks to affirm itself in its essence by running distinctions and limits" (Blanchot, 1989:220), there is no stable and unchangeable literary characteristic. Therefore, De Man uses literarity to translate the French word "*littératurité*", which means "literary characteristics". However, he uses literariness in *The Resistance to Theory* to deliver different connotations.

De Man also says, "Whenever this autonomous potential of language can be revealed by analysis, we are dealing with literariness, and, in fact, with literature as the place where this negative knowledge about the reliability of linguistic utterance is made available" (De Man, 1986:10). "Self-discipline" here means the literary language that gets rid of the restriction of reference according to Saussure's arbitrariness. Therefore, literariness is not the nature of literature but some kind of potential of language. From the perspective of the classification of ancient linguistic disciplines, De Man also points out that

> this is the point at which literariness, the use of language that foregrounds the rhetorical over the grammatical and the logical function, intervenes as a decisive but unsettling element which, in a variety of modes and aspects, disrupts the inner balance of the model and, consequently, its outward extension to the nonverbal world as well.
>
> (De Man, 1986:14)

Therefore, to De Man, literariness is actually the use of a language. The literariness he describes in many ways is not a definition but its usage: Sometimes it is a kind of *free* language full of connotations, and other times it is a language dominated by rhetoric functions. Either way, it is a language that cancels aesthetic effects and referential objects, but it is not a stable characteristic of literature. To capture or interpret *this* literariness requires a linguistics of literariness or rhetoric reading.

Culler and literariness

Through the analysis of literariness in his article "Literariness", Culler presents the need and predicament to define it. He points out that the question of "what is literature" can be understood in two ways: One is the general nature of literature; the other is the difference between literature and other activities. The former explores not the definition but the characteristics of literature. The latter poses the issue of literariness, that is, "the criteria of being literary works" (Culler, 2000:27). Then, Culler denies that there is an external way in which to define literariness and argues that degrading literature to a historical investigation object is not the way to obtain answers to literariness (Culler, 2000:27–29).

Culler holds that Mrs. Starr's "On Literature from the Relation between Literature and Social System" marks the establishment of the significance of modern literature, but "until the perspective of literary critic and professional literary researches rises, the problem of literature's specialty and literariness has been raised up" (Culler, 2000:30). Culler quotes Jakobson's words of literariness and Eichenbaum's writings in *Theory of Formalist Methods* to reach the conclusion that "the purpose of the science of literature should study on the special and distinct features of literary works"(Culler, 2000:30). Such an expression emphasizes the features different from other works, rather than regarding literariness as a factual premise of literary research. As a result, Culler relates literariness to and equates it with literary characteristics, literary quality and the differences between literary texts and other texts, which constitutes his basic understanding of *literariness*.

Since literariness is formed historically, its existence is bound to be conditional. Culler identified that literariness in Russian formalism mainly has three aspects:

> The first is the way of expression of language itself. The second is the reliance of texts on customs and the relationship between literary texts and others of literary traditions. The third is the prospect of materials employed by texts in the whole structure.
>
> (Culler, 2000:31)

However, he frankly points out that none of the above three aspects could determine literariness if only belonging to literature because "all of these factors or techniques might appear in other places or non-literary texts"

(Culler, 2000:33). Even *poetic function*, *foregrounding* and *device*, as proposed by Jakobson later, are "not a sufficient criteria of literariness" (Culler, 2000:36). Therefore, Culler asserts that the issue of literariness must "establish a unified functional interdependence according to the norms of tradition and literary background" in order to examine the "marks of literary characteristics" (Culler, 2000:36).

Culler wrote paradoxically that,

> … the discussion of literariness in this chapter falls between the determination of texts' characteristics (the determination of textual structures) and the definition of habits and conditions for interpreting literary texts in general. … The nature of linguistic and cultural phenomena seems to require alternate use of two perspectives: a series of symbols or vocal segments have their own characteristics only in relation to a set of conventions and at this or that level. However, the alternation of perspectives may lead to difficulties in defining literature. On one hand, it is obvious that literariness is a function of the difference between literary language and other languages rather than an inherent quality.
> …
> On the other hand, whenever we identify a literary form, we find that such a structure also exists in other linguistic forms, even if we do not treat these linguistic forms as literary languages.
>
> (Culler, 2000:39–40)

At the end of the article, when he arrives at the subjects of fiction and literariness, Culler indicates that "the conception that literature is fiction is inaccurate, because literary works also bring historical truth and psychological truth to the stage"(Culler, 2000:42)."Literature is not a fictional imitation of 'serious' non-fictional linguistic behavior, but a special linguistic behavior, for example, the linguistic behavior of narrating stories" (Culler, 2000:43).

"The conditions of narration in literary language, which are different from those of other linguistic acts, are related to some special conditions"(Culler, 2000:43), which in fact indicates a common sense, that is, the distinction between literary languages and other languages depends on external factors rather than internal structures. In other words, the criteria and the results of the distinction interact as both the cause and the result, which irreversibly falls into the abyss of *uncertainty*.

Culler puts forward a principle of *super-protection* at the end of the essay:

> We must affirm in advance the pertinence and the value of difficult passages, or fallacies, or off-topic chapters. If literary narratives fail to follow the rules of effective communication, it is to adopt a different indirect way of communication. In short, if *Death of Venice* is different from the death of his uncle as described by a friend, the difference is that, in particular, we have good reason to conclude that the former is

> richer and more complex, and is worthy listening to or reading, and has complete structure and other literary characteristics discussed above.
>
> (Culler, 2000:44)

Culler cannot tell this *sufficient* reason, either. Hence, His conclusion is pessimistic.

> Therefore, the discussion of fiction and literary language behaviors leads us to first determine the existence of literariness, and then to seek and discover the complex and compact language structures in the works. In this way, we have not solved the problem of literariness, and have not found the criteria for identifying it. This situation only means that all the research troops trying to separate the determinants and the habits of literary production have the same destiny and put forward some important ways for literary researches.
>
> (Culler, 2000:44)

In other words, Culler's analysis puts literariness back into the context in which it was proposed, which is to define the existence of literariness. He agrees that literariness is the criterion for distinguishing literature from other texts, but the result of his analysis is that, to obtain such criteria, from the perspective of linguistic structures or the social and historical system, the premise is that the distinction between literature and other texts has already existed. This is still a dead cycle of mutual preconditions. Culler's *super-protection* and *literary ability* are actually literary traditions or literary conceptions as well as their responses to specific literary events. What Culler's research tells us is that the research on literariness is actually a cycle of interpretation—literariness is both the premise of itself and the result of this premise, regardless of the differences in its connotations.

Translation of literariness in China

To Chinese literary theory, the concept of literariness is not only an introduction but also the understanding and application of the Chinese language. The word wenxuexing in Chinese is established on the modern conception of literature, which is also a complicated process of integration between China and the West.

A brief description of wenxuexing in Chinese

Even before the translation of Russian formalism, the Chinese language was already using 'wenxuexing. Its connotation and opposite concepts varies in the different historical periods, and the evolution of this concept is much simpler than that of the West.

In the classical Chinese system, *wen*, *xue* and *xing* are all nouns.[4] Until now, the word or phrase formed by the above three characters have not been found in traditional Chinese. *Xing* has four connotations in *Ci Yuan*[5]: Human nature, the essence or characteristics of things, life and temperament or temper. In any conditions, *xing* is not used as a function word. Wang Yinzhi's *Jingzhuan Shi Ci*, Wu Changying's *Jingci Yan Shi* and Lv Shuxiang's *Function words in Classical Chinese* do not collect the word *xing*. Hence, it seems that the use of *xing* as a function word after a noun to indicate the nature of something would not appear until modern times, when inflectional words are translated into Chinese in large quantities.

In 1932, Su Wen proposed a rebuttal to the criticisms of the left-wing theorists Feng Xuefeng, Zhou Yang and Qv Qiubai in his article "The Way Out for People of the Third Kind". The questions raised in this article still focus on the function and class issues of literature as well as the status and the writing of writers who do not belong to the proletarian camp. The questions and reflections from people of *the third kind* who do not have any political background are still worth pondering nowadays (Su, 1979:161– 177). However, in the era of *one or the other*, this kind of meticulous and dialectical thinking seemed to be out of place. The use of wenxuexing is not deliberate but a targeted word-making behaviour:

> …again, if the literary form is low-level to a certain degree, it must reduce literariness. European culture is in any case more advanced than the comic books. The popularization can be a tactical retreat or a temporary transition, but at the same time to consider it does not harm the artistic value is indeed sophistry and arbitrary.
>
> (Su, 1979:169)

Here, wenxuexing was put forward to oppose the way in which the literary form should be adapted to the practice of the working people, which was required by the proletariat. To simplify the literary form to a certain extent, the literary techniques and expressions that cannot be accepted by people of lower education have to be eliminated, which means lowering the value and quality of literature. This method of word-formation, affixing the word *xing* to nouns, was quite common at that time, such as in *jiejixing* (*class* and *xing*), *dangxing* (*party* and *xing*), *renxing* (*human* and *xing*), *zhenshixing* (*truth* and *xing*) and so on. Because of arguments on the literary conception of this period, "the period that 'people's literature' proposed by the literary revolution transferred to revolutionary literature and proletarian literature" (Qian, et al, 2005:64), the proposal of wenxuexing did not receive any response, even from critics. Therefore, the use of wenxuexing seems to be an isolated case.

In the 1950s and 1960s, as economic construction and education gradually got onto the right track, articles on the study and popularization of literature appeared in various publications, and many literary terms, such as

wenxuexing, *fiction*, *authenticity* and *image* emerged. Although they seemed to be new terms, they actually just referred to the literary terms without the suffix *xing*. At that period, it was quite common to affix the word of *xing* to describe the nature and characteristics for the purpose of the popularization of education. . Even in the 1980s, the concept of wenxuexing was used in the same way: "Literary linguistics not only studies the literary nature of the language, but also focuses on the study of the linguistic nature of literature. Therefore, do not go beyond the language for clues that have already been in the language" (Huang, 1985:84–88).

In the new era, when people reflected on the consequences of the excessive intervention of *politics* on *literature*, they have spurred the appeal of the independence of literature and literary research. The already existing word wenxuexing has been applied to fight against politics. It can be said that all disputes involving wenxuexing (conceptions or words) since the new period have been more or less related to *politics*, such as *literary subjectivity*, *pure literature*, *crisis theory*, *final conclusion* and so on. However, the understanding of wenxuexing is still quite simple, which is the nature of literature or the uniqueness of literature. After the introduction of various literary theories from the West, the situation has changed slightly.

In the 21st century, with the development of economy, science and technology, and culture, the aestheticism of literary studies has continued to retreat. However, its pursuit of its own meaning and value has not stopped. With the boom of various *theories*, two theoretical paths have appeared: One is to stick, and the other is to spread. wenxuexing has been promoted to the *core* of literary research and theories because of its natural relationship with *literature*. Therefore, it also possesses various connotations and applications, such as *value*, *uniqueness* and *quality*.

Introduction of wenxuexing

There are three main kinds of translated materials about wenxuexing. One is the research of wenxuexing that was initiated by Erlich's study on Russian formalism. This type of materials is rare, and the most important example is Erlich's *Russian Formalism: History and Theory*, which has not been translated into Chinese yet. The three published collections of Russian formalism and several articles in various "Selections of Western Literary Theory" or "Selected Essays of Western Aesthetics" can basically present the general features of Russian formalism.

In 1971, Li Youzheng translated the English version of *Structuralism* and mentioned the term "literaturnost" (wenxuexing). He clearly pointed out that its meaning was "to make literature be literature". This might be the earliest use of wenxuexing which is regarded as a concept of Russian formalism. It was not until the relevant articles on the use of literariness by Wellek were translated and disseminated in China that wenxuexing began to attract the attention of the academic community. In 1981, Huang Yuanshen translated

Wellek's "Crisis of Comparative Literature" and began to translate literari-
ness as wenxuexing, a step which Shen Yu followed in 1982. In 1983, Zhang
Longxi issued the first introductory article on Russian formalism and the
Prague School on *Reading*, saying that wenxuexing is "particularity of litera-
ture", "'wenxuexing' lies only in the form of literature" and "Schrovsky's con-
ception of 'defamiliarization' has made 'wenxuexing' more specific" (Zhang,
1983:84–93). All of these claims were apparently derived from Erlich's writ-
ings. Since then, translations about Russian formalism and wenxuexing have
been quite similar to those of Zhang Longxi. So were the discussions on the
history of Soviet or Russian literature . For example, when discussing Rus-
sian formalism in his *The History of the Soviet Literature*, Ye Shuifu quoted
Jakobson's statement of wenxuexing to illustrate the characteristics of Rus-
sian formalism's research, which was to seek the law of literary development
within literature. As for Jakobson's conception of literariness or how other
literary theorists used literariness, the later generations generally followed
what was said in the academic world due to the lack of original literature.

The second is the research on Jakobson's conception of wenxuexing,
which is based on Erlich's research. Since the most critical text *Modern Rus-
sian Poetry* has not yet been translated into Chinese, essays about Jakobson's
literariness in China have two main research models: One uses Jakobson's
other literary concepts or ideas; the other translates Erlich's statements.

The third is the research about wenxuexing. This type of translation is
in large quantity, but mentioned occasionally of literariness, except for the
translation of Culler's *Literariness.*. Among them, writings frequently cited
by the academic circle are Culler's *Literariness*, De Man's *The Resistance to
Theory*, Derrida's "'The strange Institution Called Literature': An Interview
with Jacques Derrida" and Genette's *Fiction and Diction*. In addition, some
translated textbooks and teaching references of Western literary theories men-
tioned the concept of literariness when discussing Russian formalism, includ-
ing Ann Jefferson and Robey's *Modern Literary Theory: A Comparative Study*,
Fokkema and Kunne-Ibsch's *Theories of Literature in the Twenty Century*, Ea-
gleton's *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, Wellek's *Theory of Literature* and
Selden and others' *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*. Some
of these have multiple translated versions. However, the discussions on *literar-
iness* in these writings are either vague or unproven by the original materials.

For example, when Jefferson talks about Russian formalism, his citation
comes from an English version of the fourth volume of *Russian Poetics in
Translation*, *Formalist Theory*. This is a compilation of materials that sum-
marize the books of the main theorists of Russian formalism and excerpt
some representative views and discourses. In this book, "*solo hero*" appears
in the excerpts from *Modern Russian Poetry*, which may be the source of the
translation of "*weiyi zhujiao*" in China. Fokkema puts forward the idea that
"literature is the skill or construction principle of text being art" (Fokkema,
and Kunne-Ibsch, 1992:15), which in fact is the combination of wenxuexing
and the title of an article by Shklovsky. Literariness in Eagleton's works has

not attracted much attention, while Welleck's Chinese version of *Literary Theory* has endowed *literary essence* with wenxuexing. In short, because of the absence of the original texts, the understanding of Russian *literariness* in the West is mostly based on a sentence without considering its context, and some paradoxical inferences are made according to the western native linguistics and poetics. Subsequently, the introduction of these inferences to China has given birth to a new round of misunderstanding and inferences.

Other translations of wenxuexing

Translation brings about wenxuexing in two ways: One is the mistranslation of *literariness*, and the other is the deliberation to translate some word into wenxuexing. An example of the former is the mistranslation of Wellek's *literariness* into *literary essence*. The latter is the mistranslation of the so-called *literary specificity* of the new criticism. On the one hand, these phenomena illustrate the desires of the academic and translation circles for the theoretical construction of wenxuexing and literary research; on the other hand, they also reveal certain blindness and incitement.

The two Chinese versions of Wellek's "Crisis of Comparative Literature" include the translated expression "so we must face the problem of 'wenxuexing'", and both translate "the nature of art and literature" into "the essence of art and literature" (Wellek, 1963:293; Zhang, 1982:30). In 1984, Liu Xiangyu translated the title of the second chapter of *Theory of Literature*, "The nature of literature", to "The essence of literature", but in the same chapter, Pollock's monograph of the same title was translated as "The Nature of Literature". Actually, the English word *nature* is not equivalent to *essence*. As mentioned above, Wellek uses *nature* rather than essence in "The Nature of Literature". If the choice of essence in these two translations is only the translator's habits, the fact that the word *literary* in the second line on page 16 of the third English edition of *Theory of Literature* is also translated into wenxuexing is obviously a mistake. Perhaps this is the initial version that associates Wellek with the point of view thatwenxuexing is the essence of literature.

So far, we have not found any literary theorists of the new criticism who have used the word *literariness*, but we do find the clue in the translation and introduction in China to associate the new criticism with *literariness*, which is *the differentia of literature*. "The central topic of the Russian formalism is *literariness*, which is *the differentia of literature* discussed by the British and American new criticism" (Zhao, 2004:26) was another expression of Zhao Yiheng's statement in *Literary Semiotics* many years ago. The original statement was that "the British and American new criticism has made great efforts to discuss the differentia of literature, while the central topic of the Russian formalism is 'literariness' (литературность)" (Zhao, 1990:103); this was quoted from Erlich's *Russian Formalism*. Subsequently, Zhao Yiheng cited various examples of studies on *the differentia of literature* in the history of literary theory, such

as the distinction between scientific language and literary language in Richard's *Principles of Literary Criticism*; the theory of imaginative thinking in the 19th century and Russian formalism. To him, the studies focussed on the characteristics of literature or the differences between literature and other arts. In his monograph on the new criticism, Zhao Yiheng said that "Russian formalism has made *the differentia of literature* (литературность) the center of the theory, and even the whole of the theory" (Zhao, 2004:26). Unlike David Robbie, who used ordinary words like *distinctive properties of literature* when describing the new criticism, Zhao Yiheng associated *the differentia of literature* with the *differentia specifica* of Jakobson's 1958 article "Linguistics and Poetics", which is also translated as "specificity" (Zhao, 1990:101). Jakobson writes this strange phrase in italics to indicate that the subject of poetic research is the difference between the art of poetic language and that of other verbal behavior. The phrase is generally translated as "differential attributes" or "distinctions" (Jakobson, 1987:63). However, no matter how to cite, there is no much difference between *the differentia of literature* and *distinctive characteristics* or *differential attributes*, and there is also less relations between them and the *literariness* of Russian formalism or Erlich.

Zhao Yiheng's approach is the same as those of the many current academic interpretations of wenxuexing. They first define it as the nature or essence of literature and then use this as a starting point to find certain literary characteristics that Jakobson has paid attention to, such as *poetic* or *self-referential symbols*, which will later be regarded as evidences of wenxuexing being a concept and its connotations. Finally, they claim that the interpretation is Jakobson's conception of *literariness*. This way, similar to the cycle of interpretation, is simply to use *the nature of literature* or *the essence of literature* (contemporaneously including the so-called *differentia of literature*) as an intermediary in order to equate their own wenxuexing with Jakobson's and put their definition under his name.

Peter Widdowson's *Literature* tries to put aside the relationship with Russian formalism and emphasizes that his use of *the literary* is

> also to avoid using the noun 'literariness', both in its conventional sense: 'the quality of being literary', often now suggesting in a mannered or precious way, and to distance my position from the more purely formalistic associations of the word as used by the Russian Formalists earlier this century.
>
> (Widdowson, 1999:94–95)

But its Chinese version is the birthplace of the new conception, in which wenxuexing takes the place of *literature*. The reason for this is that, besides the translator's preference for choice of words, there is a certain requirement of Chinese literary theory.

The word "literariness" appears six times in the English version of *literature*. In its Chinese version, three of these uses are translated into

wenxuexing. Page 95 is the beginning of Chapter Four, in which Widdowson also mentions of the concept of *literariness* of Russian formalism in order to describe his new concept of *the literary* but claims that there is a difference between the two concepts. However, in the Chinese version his *the literary* is translated into wenxuexing, whereas the Russian word *literariness* is translated into *wenyixing*, which means the nature of literature and arts.

The translation of "the literary" in *Literature* is not consistent in the Chinese version. When Chapter One introduces the main content of the following chapters, "the literary" is translated as *you wenxuexing de*, which means *having literariness* in Chinese, but the following uses are all translated into wenxuexing. Interestingly, the preface by Zhou Qichao also translates it into "*you wenxuexing de*" instead of wenxuexing. Similarly, "literary" on page 14 is also translated into "*you wenxuexing de*". Afterward, "literary" and "the literary" in the rest part of the book are not distinguished from each other as both of them are translated as wenxuexing.

Regardless of what Widdowson's *the literary* is, we are doomed to be unable to grasp the author's meaning because of the confusing in the translation of terms. In fact, Windowson uses *the literary* instead of *literariness, which* actually is to use the new word to replace the word that carries the abandoned conception That is, what Widdowson wants to say is the idea of the updating of conception, not the changing of names. This approach is similar to Miller's proposal that *literarity* should replace *literature*. Unfortunately, their fates are the same when the words are translated into Chinese.

The translations in China actually bring about two sources of wenxuexing: One is the translation of foreign writings about *literariness*; the other is the tendency to translate foreign writings about literature into wenxuexing. The problems caused by such phenomena may need to be considered in the sinicization of the concept of *literariness*.

wenxuexing and Chinese literary theory & criticism

The sinicization of *literariness* still follows the law of *theoretic travel*, that is, it depends on the needs rather than the theory itself. Like some scholars' summaries of the 60-year development of literary theory in China, "The introduction of Western literary theories is often not because of their powerful *enlightenment* or the value of the theories themselves, but rather the function or effect needed in that situation at the time" (Tao and He, 2011:579–580).

Interpretation and extension of wenxuexing

The sinicization of *literariness* does not follow the route of translation-research-application-development, but assimilate various literary arguments of literariness from time to time to form its conception on its own developing track. In other words, wenxuexing is a local concept that constantly embraces Western interpretations but has its own original literary

conception and thinking framework. The conception mainly includes: Practicability, value orientation and essence appeals. Therefore, the interpretation and extension of wenxuexing in academic circles mainly develop from the following dimensions: Defining the essence, describing the quality, judging the value and application in the ideological history.

The definition of a concept is a necessary premise for it to enter the literary system or critical practice, but the definition of wenxuexing ignores a premise, whether the wenxuexing we define is native or Jakobson's. Is it presupposed or integrated? For now, both the five definitions of Shi Zhongyi and the three aspects of Zhou Xiaoyi tend to regard wenxuexing as a purely Western concept.

Shi Zhongyi holds that wenxuexing in the West can be defined from five aspects: Formalism, utilitarianism, structuralism, literary ontology and the cultural environment in literary narration. He finally puts forward a comprehensive definition of literariness (Shi, 2000:127). When we look specifically at the contents of these five definitions, we see that what he defines is not wenxuexing but literature. For example, the first category is described as "literature is novelty" (Shi, 2000:123). The second says that literature is a technique. The third is expressed as "building a unified and functional interdependence according to the norms of tradition and literary background seems more to be a symbol of literary characteristics" (Shi, 2000:124). The fourth says that "the reference of literary language is not the truth of history, but the people and things in fantasy" (Shi, 2000:125). The fifth category argues that "literary texts are 'specially protected' by the selective mechanism represented by publication, literary criticism and education" (Shi, 2000:126). In each category, only their names are said to be about wenxuexing, but the discussions that follow are all about *literature*. The so-called definition of wenxuexing is actually the arguments regarding literary nature by the theorists of different schools. In fact, the definition of wenxuexing by Shi Zhongyi is still essentially based on his idea of how to define wenxuexing.

Zhou Xiaoyi's "Wenxuexing" is a frequently cited article when the Chinese academics talk about the concept of *wenxuexing*. This article was originally written for the "Lecture of Literary Theory: Concepts and Terminology" column in the magazine *Foreign Literature*, which was later collected by the theoretical dictionary *Keywords of the Western Literary Theory*, edited by Zhao Yifan and others. The content of the article collected in the book remains unchanged, but its structure has been adjusted into three parts: "Brief Introduction", "Review" and "Conclusion". In the "Brief Introduction", which is similar to an abstract, the author points out that, by tracing various concepts related to wenxuexing in the history, the main content of wenxuexing includes three aspects: The objective essential attributes and characteristics of literature, a way of human's existence and the practice and subject construction of ideology. He goes on to emphasize that:

> there is no abstract, eternal, objective "wenxuexing", only specific and historical "wenxuexing" and "wenxuexing" in practice. In China, the

concept of "wenxuexing" is a concentrated expression of the relations among specific society, history and culture, the floating signifier of life practice, and the 'metaphor' of the relations and structures between the Eastern and the Western cultures.

(Zhou, 2000:592).

In "Review", Zhou Xiaoyi traces the literary conceptions of different theoretical schools and theorists in the West as well as their arguments about the concept of wenxuexing. To Russian formalism, wenxuexing is the uniqueness that exists at the level of language which distinguishes literature from other texts. From the aspect of the concept of literature, wenxuexing is its essential attribute. As for the formation of (Western) modern literary conception, wenxuexing is a kind of mysterious nature that makes literature unique. According to the relations between literature and the system, wenxuexing is a kind of social construction. If literature is regarded as a special form of discourse, then wenxuexing is the characteristics of the form. Based on the dilemma of the internal and external divisions of literary research, wenxuexing can obtain new interpretations only when the external world is included in literature itself. Through the mapping of ideology, wenxuexing must be contextualized, and "from the context of Psychoanalysis, various characteristics of 'wenxuexing' are only rhetorical means of detecting the structure of social relations" (Zhou, 2000:606). In his "Conclusion", Zhou Xiaoyi once again emphasizes "how literary issues become a concentrated expression of certain social relationships" (Zhou, 2000:607). In summary, his article actually talks about two issues: One is the expression of wenxuexing; the other is the problem of wenxuexing. Although the former takes up most of the space, the understanding that wenxuexing is the nature of literature basically remains unchanged. The latter, how to treat and deal with wenxuexing, is the key to the problem, that is, how to examine the concept which originates from the contradictions of the Western internal culture from the perspective of national literary concepts and intellectual identity.

By contrast, some other scholars in China point out more directly that wenxuexing is the nature of literature when they use this word (Yao, 2006:157–166). At the same time, another common way of understanding and interpreting in China is treating wenxuexing as literary quality. Chen Xiaoming delivers this idea in several articles, including "Literary as A Ghost on the Edge of Everything": "Literariness can be synthetically summarized as an artistic quality generated by the unity of novels' narrative rhetoric, ideology, historical consciousness and language style" (Chen, 2007:111). However, the article concludes that "it is the ghost on the edge of everything" (Chen, 2007:112). It is an incredible miracle how these elements constitute wenxuexing. . In another article, Chen Xiaoming examines wenxuexing in contemporary literature: "Here, literariness is first of all a quality, … all of which become a more authentic literary quality in the literary writing of the post-historical era" (Chen Xiaoming, 2005:3). Quality,

which is constituted and presented by various literary elements, is a strategy with which to interpret literature and a strategy with traditional metaphysical colours. As Chen Xiaoming says emotionally, "it is the core of the text, but it is empty" (Chen, 2005:112). Using this strategy, you can say anything or nothing because even if you say much, it is actually *nothing*. Nevertheless, some people have still described this strategy in a *scientific* way, saying that "literature has three layers of nature and three circles of structures" (Yang, 2010:107).

The expression of nature or quality mentioned above is actually regarded *nature* as *essence*. The logic behind this is actually the traditional literary conception of *humanistic pragmatism* and *writing for conveying truth*, that is, literature has certain values. Applying this kind of thinking to literary research brings the understanding of wenxuexing from the dimension of value, which includes *literary value*, *aesthetics*, *literature and politics*, *literature and ideology*, and others.

Dong Xin discusses wenxuexing and ideology in several articles. In "Explore on Literariness and Construction of Literary Theory", her description of wenxuexing notes that "'wenxuexing' has not only penetrated into ideology and constituted the essential elements to maintain the post-modern status, but also promoted the transformation of the paradigm of literary theory" (Dong, 2004:144). Dong Xin believes that wenxuexing is no longer the unique attribute of literature but the commonality of various theories. This statement is puzzling: What is the relationship between whether wenxuexing is the attribute of literature and the attribute of other theories. However, in the author's view, wenxuexing is still the attribute of literature, but this attribute also exists in other fields of culture, society and ideology. It is because of the complexity of *ideology that* it is of little significance to interpret ideology and wenxuexing mutually, and the idea that both of them are ubiquitous has no substantive significance for literary studies, either.

There are also theorists who associate wenxuexing with some metaphysical issues in contemporary Chinese literary theory, such as *modernity* and *historicity*. Zhang Hua puts forward the idea that "modernity and 'wenxuexing' should be the two basic criteria of modern Chinese literary research" and tries to incorporate Chinese modern literary research into the orbit and reference system of the world modernity process (Zhang, 2006:75). Yao Wenfang believes that the issue of wenxuexing in Russian formalism has made literary theory scientific and establishes a modern vane for the modernity of literature for centuries (Yao, 2007:207–212). Yang Chunshi believes that literariness has multiple meanings: On the one hand, it has the implication of transcendence and negation in the sense of aesthetics; on the other hand it is realistic and affirmative in reality (Yang, 2001:110–115).

Wenxuexing means the nature of literature from the traditional aspect on the one hand, and on the other hand there is an attempt to incorporate this nature into the discourse of Western *modernity*, which reminds of some expressions:

> Chinese traditionalculture has never been used to support moderniza-
> tion, but to maintain a relatively stable cycle of history. But this is not
> a flaw of Chinese culture. The struggle for practical use provoked by
> Zhang Zhidong and the search of China's inherent modernity initiated
> by Joseph Needham, are looking for trouble.
>
> (Zhao, 2007:4)

In addition, in many articles, wenxuexing has an omnipotent usage, that is,
it is equal to literature, and it possesses all the connotations and denotations
of literature without being as abstract and troublesome as *literature*. It can
be a spokesperson for the following terms but isnot limited to them or any
combination of them: Literature, literary value, literary features, literary
functions, literary elements, words, expressions, stories, fiction, images, im-
agination, techniques and style, … and literary essence and literary quality
should not be neglected either.

As mentioned above, regardless of whether the researcher claims the ori-
gin of his research is from Jakobson or not, the understanding of wenxuex-
ing is based on the Chinese words *literature* plus *xing*, that is, the research
is based on how his conception summarizes the discourse types in his view
or how he questions his own literary conception in a much broader cultural
context.

Debate and construction of wenxuexing

Although the understanding of wenxuexing is basically localized, for
contemporary Chinese literary theory, it is still a concept with a Western
background, and it has participated in the construction of contemporary
Chinese literary theory in many literary events.

The primary significance and most common application of the concept
of wenxuexing are to further develop and revise our literary ideas, which
mainly manifests in the following three aspects: The transformation of tra-
ditional literary theory, the description of Western literary theory and the
exploration of the origins of contemporary literary theory.

In view of traditional literary theory, Chen Bohai explores the origin
of wenxuexing in the tradition of traditional Chinese literature by sorting
out the concepts of *mixed literature*, *pure literature* and *large literature*. The
mixed literature in the ancient traditions actually confuses the boundaries
between literature and non-literature. The key point of pure literature is to
separate the connection between literature and related phenomena, which
limits the vision of literary historians and brings about an incomplete histor-
ical view of literature. Therefore, the article puts forward a concept of large
literature to seek a reasonable compromise between and combination of the
dilemmas of wenxuexing in the former two. As the elements of wenxuexing,
contemplation and expressions and *sentiment and semiotics* constitute two
aspects of expression skills and inner aesthetics, respectively (Chen, 2004).

This kind of research method applies modern Western literary terminology to the discussion of traditional Chinese literary theory in order to determine its modern significance. Whether it is beneficial research or an unprincipled concession, is a matter of opinions. Wenxuexing here is used to refer to a *literary nature* that is composed of many traditional *elements.*

He Guimei tries to explore how the common sense of current literature is constructed on the starting point of wenxuexing. By describing and reflecting on the system of *pure literature* which has been formed since the 1980s, the article analyzes the specific knowledge pedigree of *pure literature* in the three fields of *poeticized philosophy*, *rewriting of literary history* and *linguistic turn of literary theory.* The article argues that since the 1990s historical changes have exposed the underlying cognitive frameworks of so-called non-political expressions and thus provides a historical condition for self-criticism throughout the whole 1980s, including that of pure literature. The article does not give the source of wenxuexing but treats it as a starting point for the issue of "the discussion on 'wenxuexing' since 1990" (He, 2007:29).

Another use of wenxuexing involves thinking about where literary research should go when facing the prosperity of cultural studies, which is mainly manifested by the debate on the so-called *spread of wenxuexing.* The controversy stems from an article by Yu Hong, which points out that "the situation of post-modern literature as a whole is duality: coexistence of the end of literature and the rule of 'wenxuexing', and the concealing of the latter by the former" (Yu, 2002:15–24). In addition, the article describes the rule of wenxuexing and its performance under conditions of postmodernism in the fields of academia, consuming society, media information and public performance. However, the article also claims that the wenxuexing of Russian formalism is only a concept of formal aesthetics and proposes the multi-dimensional wenxuexing as the object of postmodern literary research. In the following year, the first issue of *Question* carried a special column entitled "the Rule of Post-modern Literature".

The English counterparts of wenxuexing in Yu Hong's article are actually *the literary*, *literary* and *literary issue.* In the translation of Keller's and Simpson's writings, *the literary* was sometimes translated into wenxuexing and sometimes translated into "wenxuexing chengfen",[6] which seems to be somewhat confusing in the translation and use of terms. Therefore, from the aspect of etymology, Yu Hong's wenxuexing is not the same as *literariness which was proposed by and Jakobson and* developed by Erlich, and in some cases, its connotation can be understood as *having literary characteristics*, *similar to literature*, *literary skills* or *literary meaning*, and in other cases it is just a way to emphasize *literature* itself. On the one hand, Yu Hong uses these three Chinese characters at the usual or phrasal level. On the other hand, his article indicates that wenxuexing is a kind of ubiquitous attribute, quality or function, and even induces the conclusion of *the rule of literariness.* Similarly, in another article "White Literature and Literariness," Yu

Hong defines wenxuexing in a broad sense as "the discourse mechanism that permeates all aspects of social life and fundamentally controls the operation of postmodern social life" (Yu, 2003:2). wenxuexing is a kind of attribute or quality that exists in literary and non-literary discourses and varies according to different theorists, such as fiction, rhetoric, storytelling, etc. Furthermore, the postmodern situation of ubiquitous wenxuexing leads to the conclusion of *ruling*.

The realistic premise of Yu Hong's idea is the postmodern literary research and cultural studies, and there are at least two theoretical premises: One is Simpson's postmodern academic thoughts and Culller's reflections; the other is deconstructionism, especially Derrida's *White Mythology*. The so-called literary status of postmodernism refers to the influence of science and technology on the literary ecology, on the one hand, and the *escape* or *turn* of literary researchers, on the other hand. Simpson's analysis of the *academic post-modern* is also easy to understand, but there are two aspects that need to be noted. First, there are many kinds of academic postmodernism, and Simpson admits that what he discusses is only one of them. Second, in terms of the special phenomena in academic postmodernism that he has discussed, that is, the migration of literature and literary criticism to other fields, Simpson frankly admits that it is not at all clear whether this is the only kind of migration. That is to say, his so-called academic postmodernism and literature's colonization of other fields are implied under the premise of incompleteness and uncertainty. When Jonathan Culler quotes Simpson in *Theory in Literature*, he points out that "…in the academy literature rules, even though that rule is disguised as something else" (Culler, 2007:40). But when discussing these points, Culler uses *literary* or *the literary* instead of *literariness*, that is, he does not use the concept of *literariness*. Hence there is no place for *the ruling of literature*. Derrida's deconstructive analysis of the confrontation between philosophy and literature dismantles their boundary and gives birth to Yu Hong's ideas of *overall literature* and *literary components* in everything.

Through the uncertain and incomplete premises, Yu Hong proposes a postmodern concept of wenxuexing, which is naturally easy to argue. The demonstration is also unconvincing in reaching the conclusion that the research object is wenxuexing by analyzing non-literary phenomena with theories and methods of literary research. The article quickly causes controversy after publication. One side of the controversy, represented by Yu Hong and Chen Xiaoming, insists that there is wenxuexing everywhere; the other side, represented by Wang Yuechuan, Wu Zilin, Lai Daren, etc., clearly questions this idea by distinguishing between literature and culture. Some others, like Cai Zhicheng and Feng Liming, try to bridge the boundaries between literature and texts. Yu Hong believes that wenxuexing will eventually replace *literature*, and literary research must shift from the latter to the former. This is what literary research is in the context of postmodernism in Yu Hong's opinion. Chen Xiaoming also believes that *literature*

is disappearing as an art category or discipline, and the soul of literature has shifted to in other cultural types (Chen, 2003:95–102). Wang Yuechuan analyzes the semantic shifting of *literature* and *literariness* in the context of postmodernism and points out that the so-called "rule of literature" is an illusion (Wang, 2004:11–19). Lai Daren defines wenxuexing from the perspective of the nature of literature and confines it to the style and linguistic form of literature; therefore *literary spirit* should be stuck to (Lai, 2005:154–157). Wu Zilin also believes that these concepts should have basic limitations, no matter how open they are (Wu, 2005:75–79). Feng Liming believes that wenxuexing is not only a rhetorical game in the literature but also a historical significance diffusing on the earth. As for the relationship between texts and history, the 20th century embodies a dialogue between historicism and nihilism (Feng, 2006:28–34).

The third usage of wenxuexing is to construct a new literary theory under the shadow of *the end of literature.*

The end of literature is related to Miller's four speeches in China. In 1997, Miller pointed out that the influence of globalization on literary research was mainly manifested in four aspects: Some function of literature was replaced, the new technology changed the way of research, English studies replaced the original research on national literature and cultural studies changed the understanding of literature. At the same time, he also emphasized that in this context, literary studies still had the value of culture, linguistics and *otherness*. The worries about literature and literary studies were clearly stated in the article in 2001. After citation from Derrida's "Postcards", the article puts forward a seemingly contradictory viewpoint that the loss of distance led to the disappearance of literature because the era of telecom had come. Miller believes that "the era of literary research has passed", but emphasizes at the same time that "it will continue to exist" (Miller, 1997:78). The actual meaning here is that literary research that studies literature for the purpose of literature itself has become history, but a new literary research or cultural studies will replace it.

Chinese academia summarizes Miller's remarks regarding *the end of literature* and launches a sustained but clear-cut discussion. Scholars of the older generation, such as Qian Zhongwen, Tong Qingbing and Li Yanzhu, believe that literature does not end, while some young and middle-aged scholars agree with Miller's views, such as Chen Xiaoming, Jin Huimin, Lai Daren and so on. As for the conception of literature, the opponents hold a concept of long-lasting literature, while the supporters believe that there is a change in the concept of literature. Therefore, like many other debates, this one is inconsistent not in arguments but in the definition of the concept. To the opponents, literature means an artistic style with unique aesthetic value, and its unique aesthetic characteristics and relations with human beings cannot be replaced. The supporters attempt to explain Miller's idea and his concept of *new* literature.

In this debate, the translation of literature is a misunderstanding. In his 2004 interview, Miller mentioned his idea to replace *literarity* with *literature*, which was translated to refer to replacing literature with wenxuexing. These two words actually represent Miller's two kinds of conception of literature, which are fully explained in his book *On Literature* in 2002 (Miller, 2002). In his view, literarity is not literariness but *new literature* that contains literature and has new stylistic types, which can be translated as *text* in Chinese.

Although the translation of literarity is controversial in this debate, the involvement of wenxuexing is not without reason. The saying "the end of literature" is actually a strong rebound and outbreak under the situation of the marginalization of literature since the new era. The marginalization of literature and literary research confirms Miller's use of two terms to some extent. From the external perspective, the marginalization of literature is its elimination of its advantages in political, economic and media status. From the perspective of literature itself, it is caused by the situation that the writing techniques have developed but been far away from social life, which is also the manifestation of marginalization. The countermeasures of literary creation, is the attempt to *adapt* to the market, and that of literary theory is *crisis theory*, that is, the crisis that literary theory has difficulty dealing with current literary experiences (Ma, 2004:4–9). However, it is interesting that two types of attitudes toward *crisis* are related to wenxuexing. One is that literary research should focus on wenxuexing to return to literature, while the other says that wenxuexing is ubiquitous, and literary research should be replaced by cultural studies whose object is wenxuexing. The meaning of wenxuexing, as used by the two groups, adhering to the independence of literature and expanding the boundaries of literary research, is not the same. Wenxuexing, as used by the former, is synonymous with literature or literature itself, while the latter usage is synonymous with *literary*. Faced with this practice of using the same concept in different senses, some people have proposed the question of how to face wenxuexing in the study of literature in the new century (Zhou, 2007:4–7).

As can be seen from the above description, wenxuexing has such a widespread usage not because of its rich connotations but because of the ease to use and its uncertainty, which is an embarrassment for the conception of wenxuexing and the literary research itself. Only by clarifying its usage can we construct one or more appropriate literary theories for elucidating.

Comparison and reflections based on wenxuexing

Since literariness is a concept of constant development and change, the Chinese and Western academic communities face the same situation when they try to understand the conception without the original context of *Modern Russian Poetry*. The absence of the original text, or the fact that the classic texts is not read by the latecomers, makes the understanding of the concept of literariness influenced by the languages and cultures of the theorists.

This is the most important similarity between the Chinese and Western conceptions of literariness, whether it is derived from the adjective in the West, or its word formation in Chinese is a noun plus the function word *xing*.

After entering the 21st century, the literary theories and research in China and the West are facing the same situation, and the context of literariness is also converging accordingly. First, the unified literary conception has been replaced by diverse and national ones. Second, the literary field is constantly changing as new literary fields are constantly emerging. Moreover, new phenomena have also brought about the transformation of research methods and changes in the framework of the entire literary theory as well as new challenges to interdisciplinary research and the independence of the discipline. Along with the trend of diversification and globalization, the rise of new media and technological means, and the daily life which is full of information explosion and knowledge-deficient, literary researchers and literature shuffle along hand in hand in crisis and persistence. As an important concept in the construction of literary theory, literariness plays an important role in reflecting history and reconstructing theories in both China and the West.

However, due to the differences between their respective social and national traditions, China and the West also have obvious differences in dealing with the concept of *literariness*. First, although the interpretations of literariness in China and the West are of a certain nature or quality, Chinese literary theorists focus more on returning to tradition and guarding the inheritance of literature, while Western counterparts often try to construct new methods. Second, in terms of ideas and starting points, Chinese literary theorists emphasize the value judgment of literary works and the political confrontation in literary conceptions, while Western literary theorists tend towards metaphysical thinking, with more doubts and explorations. Finally, in the way of thinking and logic, Chinese literary theorists use wenxuexing to oppose politics while still keeping a political and ethical logic, and Western literary theorists focus on linguistic methods and ideology. Of course, these differences are relative. To some literary theorists, since literariness itself does not depend on institutions, interpretations by different people are not exactly the same.

The diverse literariness in history and the various interpretations of literariness mainly relate to the following three factors.

First, the concept of literariness is largely influenced by the conception of *literature*, which is a concept with multiple meanings. We can distinguish at least three levels of this meaning. The first layer is the literary conception, that is, how to treat literature. The style of problems is various in different social and historical environments. Before the 1950s, the mode of questioning was mainly *what is literature*. In the late 20th century, the questions gradually transitioned to *under what conditions literature exists* or *what makes a work be literature*. The second layer is a literary type or a discourse type. Different ethnic groups and cultures do vary in terms of literary types,

especially in the early stages of human society. The birth of the literary conception in various ethnic cultures is supported by a major genre, such as the Western tradition of narration and the Chinese counterpart of lyric poetry. In the development and evolution of literature, some genres enter and leave the literary field, and it is impossible to exhaust all literary types, no matter how the genres are classified. The third layer is the specific literary texts, which often have some inherent connection to the classics. These three layers are interrelated. The specific text is always subject to certain literary conceptions and genres, but it always tries to become a new standard or a future classic by breaking away from the restriction. The literary genre always relies on certain classical texts and constantly shapes and maintains the authority of classical texts in order to form corresponding literary conceptions. Literary conceptions depend on literary genres but should make corresponding choices when facing new literary texts, either to absorb them to promote themselves or to reject them to maintain traditions.

When literary theorists become involved in literary research from different levels of literature, their conception of literariness becomes correspondingly different. The study of literary ideas inevitably regards literariness as an abstract nature or questions this nature. Theorists who start with literary genres tend to interpret literariness as a certain quality or aesthetic standard. Those who focus on the criticism of literary texts describe literariness as a certain characteristic of literature, especially in terms of characteristics that are significantly different from those of other texts.

Second, the pattern of literary research also affects the understanding and applications of literariness. According to the theoretical perspective of the researchers, and the modes and models of constructing theories, we divide the related research on literariness into three categories: Literary criticism, theoretical research and cultural studies. Literary criticism, such as Russian formalism and Anglo-American new criticism, attaches attention to specific literary texts, genres and literary phenomena in history, and tries to find the general law of literature, so its literariness or similar concepts are related to the nature or quality of literature. Criticism after structuralism changes the relationship between theories and texts, which do not interpret and explain literary texts but construct theories themselves. These critical theories are often constructed with the help of theories in other fields and are not limited to use in the literary field. Hence, their use of literariness is always associated with an abstract pattern, and they provide an abstract definition to the pattern (model) or question the pattern. The literariness, bred by Simpson's postmodern academic research, is a typical model of cultural studies. The starting point is neither texts nor theories but theoretical forms. Because of the *toolbox* model of cultural studies itself, its research is no longer limited to a certain discipline or field, and its main field is not literature either. Its purpose is always to find the ideology and power discourse hidden behind the texts. Therefore, when using literariness, the researchers of cultural studies generally do not care what it is or what it was but give it

meanings at any time from the perspective of the research's intentions and purposes. Most of the time, it means just *literary*, though it is occasionally used as *literary quality.*

Third, the differences between Chinese and Western languages also affect the use of literariness. The main Western languages are inflectional, while Chinese is non-inflectional. Therefore, when translating the Western concept of literariness, it is customary to use *xing* as a nominal suffix. Therefore, people still understand literariness from the perspective of *xing*, which means *nature*. This preconception has influenced people's understanding of the etymology and literary history of Western keywords. The difference between Chinese and Western languages also lies in the difference between phonology and ideogram. Chinese is hieroglyphic, and the symbols of its characters are always in relation to their meanings. Even the *borrowing* in the six methods of word-building has its historical relevance or similar factors, so Saussure's arbitrariness of signifier and signified in linguistics is not so applicable in Chinese. Western literary theories in the 20th century are mostly influenced by Saussure's linguistics, and there is no such linguistic basis in Chinese, so most of the acceptances of literary theories are superficial. The embodiment of cultural heritage delivered by literary conception has much greater differences , although at present it is generally believed that the conception of modern Chinese literature is based on that of the West. This is actually based on the concept of *literature.* But when returning to the specific genre, text and literary conception, the conception of literature in China is still rooted in the Chinese tradition of *the function of literature conveying the Tao* and *poetry expressing the intent*. That is why, after the introduction of literariness, its significant use is to counter the *politics*. In other words, the purpose that we seek through the independence of literary research is the obtainment of the political and ethical status of the propagator. What is literariness or what is the origin of literariness is far less important than the value judgment of what literariness means.

Miller once said that "[l]iterary research has never been the right time" (Miller, 2001:138), but he also said that "I have a sense of security for the future of literature" (Miller and Zhou, 2004). Zhang Longxi once said that "[l]iterature has never been very important" but emphasized that "[l]iterature has an eternal charm beyond the times" (Zhang, 2010:1). Are they both referring to the same *literature*? Is it *literature* in history or in mind? Perhaps, as Perry Anderson said, "[a]rt has neither a unified nature nor a gradually unfolding logic. In various societies and times in the human's history, art not only presents a variety of forms, but also plays a very different role" (Anderson, 2008:102).

No matter what literature was, what it is or what it will be, literariness will be its vane. It does not reveal the non-existent nature of literature, but describes its direction and reveals the theoretical logic and thinking track of the researchers that influence the direction of the wind.

Notes

1 Xing, a function word in Chinese, which means "with a specific characteristic, feature, quality or nature".
2 "Wenxuexing" is the Chinese counterpart of literariness, though with some differences between the two. Hereafter, "wenxuexing" roughly means literariness when referring to that in Chinese literary theory.
3 In the 1989 edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, literariness means "the quality of being literary".
4 In "wenxuexing", "wen" is the Pinyin of the Chinese character "文", which means character, writing, or culture. "Xue", the Pinyin of the Chinese character "学", which means to learn, to imitate or learning. "Xing", the Pinyin of the Chinese character "性", which means nature, property or suffix designating a specified quality, property, etc.
5 *Ci Yuan* and the following two books, *Jingzhuan Shi Ci* and *Jingci Yan Shi*, are all earlier dictionaries which traced the history of Chinese characters. *Function words in Classical Chinese* is a dictionary written in the 20th Century.
6 "wenxuexing chengfen" means the components of literary quality.

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5   Irony

Translated by Chen Anhui

The word "irony" originates from "Eiron", the name of a clown in an ancient Greek comedy. Eiron always looks funny and idiotic, and likes to say stupid things in front of his opponent, Alazon, who considers himself wise. But in the end, those stupid words from Eiron prove to be the truth, and Alazon makes a fool of himself. Later, Plato uses the term "eironeia" in *The Republic* to refer to Socrates' pretending to be ignorant. According to Plato's idea, Aristotle interprets "eironeia" as "self-depreciative dissimulation" and the antonym "alazoneia" as boastful dissimulation, and of the two, he rates "eironeia" higher than "alazoneia" (Muecke, 1986:16). After that, "eironeia" evolves into "ironia" in Latin; it appears as "irony" in the English language in 1502 and has come into general literary use since the early 18th century (Muecke, 1986:16). At the beginning of the 20th century, the word "irony" was introduced into China, but there wasn't a clear and fixed Chinese concept to equate to it. The German word for "irony" is "ironie", and Wang Taiqing translates "ironie" as "讽刺 (feng ci, close to 'satire')" when translating Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, while Zhu Guangqian uses "滑稽 (hua ji, close to 'funny')" as the Chinese name of "ironie" when translating Hegel's *Aesthetics*. Harpham Abrams explains in his *A Glossary of Literary Terms*:

> In most of the modern critical uses of the term 'irony', there remains the root sense of dissembling, or of hiding what is actually the case; not however, in order to deceive, but to achieve special rhetorical or artistic effects.

> (Abrams, 2010:165)

Due to the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, it was difficult to find an existing Chinese word corresponding to "irony" when it first came to China. Nowadays, it is usually translated as "反讽 (fan feng)" as "反 (fan)" implies the tendency to make words mean the opposite or leading events in the opposite direction, and "讽 (feng)" refers to indicating or persuading in euphemism, which points out the hidden attempt of "irony".

Nearly all classic literary works are more or less ironic, and in Western culture, irony even represents a kind of philosophy or attitude on life. Since it was introduced into China, irony has become a focus of many Chinese scholars. However, as an inevitable result of the theories' travel, irony in Chinese cultural traditions and social contexts performs somewhat differently than it does in the West. Though it is mentioned often in Chinese literary criticism, its meaning and usage is still not very clear. Therefore, it is necessary to sort out its form, connotation and evolution in the West, and it is worth making an investigation and analysis of its dissemination, absorption and variation in China.

Irony in Western literary theories

Since the day of its origin, the concept of irony has experienced continuous evolvement: While inheriting the views of its predecessors, it has always been given new meanings with the passage of time. So far, it is still a dynamic term, enriching literary theories both in China and in the West.

Irony in ancient Greece

Irony has quite a long history in the West, dating back to the period of ancient Greek civilization, and at the time of its origin, it established its position both in rhetoric and in philosophy.

Irony in ancient Greek rhetoric

When we talk about irony, we usually first consider it as a figure in rhetoric, so rhetoric can be the first field in which we trace its origin. Western rhetoric emerged in ancient Greece around the 5th century B.C. as an art for speech. The core content of Western rhetoric is the theory of figures. Among various figures, irony, metaphor, synecdoche and metonymy are listed as the four major ones.

Aristotle's *On Rhetoric* is the earliest great book of classical rhetorical theory. Rhetoric at that time was mainly about argument and speech. Aristotle offers a definition for rhetoric: "let rhetoric be [defined as] an ability, in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion" (Aristotle, 2007:37). This definition establishes the traditional frame for rhetoric—rhetoric is the skilful use of language for the purpose of persuasion. The reason figures are so important in rhetoric is that they are the techniques of using language. In *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle lists the definitions, methods and effects of a number of figures. Regarding "irony", he says:

> Compare what have both said on the same subject: 'But he says this about that, while I say this and for these reasons.' Or use mockery: 'He says this, I that. And what would he have done if he had shown this but not that?'.
> (Aristotle, 2007:250)

Here the word "mockery" is the translator's choice; it is actually "irony" because, in the same English version of the book, there is another comparison: "Mockery [*eirōneia*] is more gentlemanly than buffoonery [*bōmolokhia*]; for the mocker makes a joke for his own amusement, the buffoon for the amusement of others" (Aristotle, 2007:248). From the original word "*eirōneia*" we can see that Aristotle is talking about the modern word "irony", and in his opinion it means that the speaker tries to say something, but he pretends not to want to say it or uses a statement that is contrary to a fact to describe that fact. Taking some speeches as examples, he points out that the pretexts of not wanting to talk about something actually serve to remind the audience to pay attention to it; the statement that contradicts the fact serves to promptly remind the audience of it. So Aristotle has set the keynote for irony—the inconsistency between words and meaning—and the keynote has been passed down in traditional rhetoric. For example, the famous Renaissance rhetorician Ramus Petrus, who focusses his rhetorical research on style, explains that irony is a semantic rather than a formal deviation. In other words, it is the opposite transformation between the literal meaning of a word and its actual meaning. Ramus's explanation is obviously in line with Aristotle's definition.

Socratic irony

Although irony is originally a self-depreciative behaviour in drama, and later evolves into a language skill, its significance is not great enough to make it a key term in Western culture. It is the famous thinker Socrates in ancient Greece who gives irony a role in the field of philosophy, and it is as a result of Socrates that irony starts to become a philosophical term.

Socrates likes to have conversations with people. His conversations always begin with a claim that he knows nothing, and then he asks the wise for a definition of a quality such as "justice", "bravery" or "love". The wise person usually gives a quick answer, but Socrates goes on asking a series of questions, which eventually makes the wise person feel that the definition he gave was unreliable. In the end, Socrates cannot give clear definitions of these qualities either. His ironic conversations ultimately seem to prove that the wise man is as ignorant as he is.

Is the purpose of Socratic irony merely to expose the ignorance of these wise men? Of course not. In his conversation, Socrates assures his opponent, "My only object, I said, in continuing the discussion, has been the desire to ascertain the nature and relations of virtue" (Plato, 2013). His ironic questions actually come from his own philosophical beliefs. The philosophers before Socrates cared about the origin of the universe and asked questions such as "Where does everything come from?" and "What constitutes everything?" Socrates, however, discovers that nature is in constant change, and the chain of cause and effect is inexhaustible. Therefore, the origin of the universe should not be searched in nature; instead, it should be searched

in the "self". It is the "self" that makes nature perceivable, and the "self" should be the core of knowledge. So, Socrates takes "knowing thyself" as the purpose of philosophy. He claims that he is a "gadfly" attached to the state by God. He is, all day long and in all places, arousing people, persuading people to turn their attention from the objective nature to the subjective minds and urging people to find the highest rationality in the "self".

Why would Socrates try to prove in an ironic way that people are ignorant rather than imparting knowledge directly? First, Socrates believes that those things which can be directly taught by authorities or conventions are not true knowledge. He claims "I don't know", which is actually a rejection of artificially defined knowledge. He feels that he can learn nothing but some bubbles of false knowledge from interlocutors. He makes a hobby of piercing those bubbles, and his weapon for this is irony. Therefore, the obvious intention of Socratic irony is to question and challenge traditional knowledge. Socrates does not believe in the existing knowledge and says: "goodness of that sort may be a kind of illusory facade, and fit for slaves indeed, and may have nothing healthy or true about it" (Plato, 2002:14). Second, Socrates believes that only purified soul can obtain the truth: "through separation from the body's folly, we shall probably be in like company, and shall know through our own selves all that is unsullied--and that, I dare say, is what the truth is" (Plato, 2002:12). To impart knowledge in language is the wise men's business; Socrates uses irony to inspire people to think with their souls so that knowledge might appear in their minds themselves, and that is why he does not write philosophy in words. His different views on knowledge have made him different from the wise. He is not a wise man. He is a passionate knowledge lover, a hard-working knowledge seeker, and the tool with which he seeks knowledge is irony.

Socrates' dialogues end with an ironic conclusion that everyone is ignorant; the conclusion is not the end of exploration but the beginning of philosophical work. "It was clear that philosophy for Socrates was concerned less with knowing the right answers than with the strenuous attempt to discover those answers. Philosophy was a process, a discipline, a lifelong quest" (Tarnas, 2010:34).

Irony appears for the first time as a kind of spirit in the history of Western thought as Socrates questions existing knowledge in an ironic way. Socratic irony rejects the ideas that are seemingly unquestionable but cannot actually stand up to serious examination, and it lays the foundation for the Western tradition of exploring knowledge.

Romantic irony

After Socrates, irony was used as a figure of speech until the late 18th century when Romanticism made it once again a philosophical concern.

Romanticism was born out of the rebellion against the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment in the early 18th century necessitated the establishment

of a society based on "rationality". The intellectuals of the Age of Enlightenment believed that "rationality" meant eternal truth, eternal system and eternal value that could apply to all ages and the whole universe. The early romanticists in Germany were deeply sceptical of this "rational kingdom", arguing that the science touted by the Enlightenment could only deal with knowledge in a limited field and could not be fully applied to human society: for example it could not solve the problem of pursuing transcendental values. So, they turned to the feelings and emotions of human beings, valued the diverse human nature and denied that there is a pattern in the world that all human beings have to adapt to.

Friedrich Schlegel is one of the most important romanticists, and the initiator of romantic irony. He clearly declares, "Philosophy is the real homeland of irony, which one would like to define as logical beauty" (Schlegel, 1971:148). Schlegel's logical thinking on irony is rooted in how to solve two contradictions in philosophy: The limitation and infinity of the self, and the need to grasp the absolute truth and the inability to grasp it.

The thought of the contradiction between the limitation and infinity of the self comes from Johann Gottlieb Fichte's philosophy of "the I". In his view, "one cannot grasp the concept [of the I] which comes into being by means of the determinate activity without determining this concept by means of an opposed Not-I" (Fichte, 1992:67). The Not-I in the empirical world is limited, while the I outside the empirical world is a priori, which is infinite, and can set anything, create anything, with unlimited subjective initiative. The I and the Not-I constitute the split self of human beings. How to make the split self return to unity has become a problem. Schlegel's solution is to enter the infinity through the limitation. He believes that since the empirical self delimits the pure self, which is contrary to the infinite nature of the self, the empirical self would have to transcend this limitation by refining itself; by repeatedly refining and surpassing, the limited self is constantly approaching the infinite self. This is precisely the "state of becoming" that Schlegel emphasizes: The infinite that in the state of becoming, as long as it has not reached its highest perfection, is still limited; just as the limitation in the state of becoming must contain infinity, so the limitation surely contains intrinsic completeness and diversity as long as the activities, such as eternal mobility, movement, self-change and transformation, are still effective. This "state of becoming" has resulted in a "continuously fluctuating between self-creation and self-destruction" (Schlegel, 1971:167), allowing the limitation and infinity to coexist and interact with each other, and Schlegel uses the word "irony" to refer to this contradictory "state of becoming" . Other members of early German Romanticism also agree that the self is a process of becoming that is constantly destructed and created.

With regard to the absolute truth, Schlegel favours Novalis's view: Only the whole is real—only what will not be part of it is absolutely true. The romanticists scoff at all the partial views about the absolute truth; they try to grasp this whole from different angles. The multiple perspectives offer a

number of interpretations of the truth, and these interpretations may conflict with each other, but no interpretation is better or worse than the others. In this way, Schlegel believes that all truths are relative and that error does not exist at all. So, for the Romanticists, to completely know the absolute truth is impossible. However, to know the absolute truth is a necessity. Schlegel also solves this contradiction with irony. Irony helps the opposing presentations to coexist, and then they negate each other. In doing so, the presentation of reality is self-destructed, thus intrinsically revealing the absolute idea. This is the same as the idea of resolving self-contradictions—a process of destruction and creation. In fact, the romanticists want to make clear that it is the diversity, variability and contradiction of the world that together constitute a complete absolute. They believe that there is no eternal central point in the world full of infinite change, so the absolute truth cannot be revealed directly by a fixed concept, and it can only be implied indirectly through the contradictions, negations and creations presented by irony.

At the same time, Schlegel believes that philosophy could only interpret irony in a logical way, and to resolve the contradictions, it is necessary to attach irony to art. "Where philosophy stops, poetry has to begin" (Schlegel, 1971:245). Therefore the Romanticism members follow Schlegel's thinking of irony and integrate philosophy with art. They see irony as an "extraordinary spirit" (Ludwig Tieck), "the essential core of art" (K. Solger), with which poets could create without restriction so that the works would be filled with passion and always be in the state of becoming. They abandon the rules of the Enlightenment for the form of literary works and create for the first time the possibility of a non-dogmatic or free form, which is the very controversial romantic style in the history of literature and criticism.

Romantic irony is clearly a successor of Socratic irony. Both desire to seek truth in the soul of the self and to manifest the truth with the help of the contradiction and negation of irony. However, Socrates focusses more on using irony to question existing knowledge and to draw forth the truth; the romanticists go further, using irony to suggest or even create absolute truth. The romanticists' boldness gives their opponents a reason to criticize them.

Hegel is the first to criticize romantic irony. He points out that there is no substantive content in it. Romantic irony, in his view, is only a mental hunger and thirst; when it emphasizes the infinity of the subjective spirit, it not only destroys the phenomenon but also destroys the absolute. Therefore, Hegel criticizes it for making jokes about everything. Kierkegaard also accuses romantic irony: "It confused the eternal *I* with the temporal *I*. But the eternal *I* has no past, and as a result the temporal *I* does not have one, either" (Kierkegaard, 1989:277). Thus, romantic irony lives completely in an unreal world. "In a twinkling, all history was turned into myth-poetry-legend-fairy tale" (Kierkegaard, 1989:277).

The scholars are mainly dissatisfied with romantic irony due to its extreme subjectivity, which really is its key defect; however we cannot erase its value because of this defect alone. First, the era of Romanticism is an era in

which natural science vigorously flourishes and in which the capitalist machine civilization begins to emerge; industrialization brings about human alienation, and human nature is lost in the material world. Romanticism, headed by Schlegel, tries to attach importance to human spirit by means of irony; the romanticists desire the return of humanity and poetic survival in the machine world. Therefore, in an era of poetic loss, romantic irony is like the homeland of human spirit. Second, subjectivity is not the only characteristic of romantic irony. The romanticists' logical thinking of irony is full of dialectics and critical spirit. It is well known that Karl Marx in his youth was highly influenced by Romanticism and wrote a group of romantic poems. In his work, Marx notices that romantic irony is, based on the contradiction between human's internal infinity and external finiteness, an urgent requirement to eliminate and transcend existing things, the purpose of which is to restore the existing order to chaos since chaos is the premise of re-creation. Therefore, the original motivation of romantic irony is quite destructive and critical. Benjamin has also claimed that for Schlegel it is more likely that the concept of irony gains its central significance because it is just an intentional attitude which does not focus on a certain matter but is always prepared as an expression against the ideas of the dominant. This attitude has undoubtedly provided ideological resources for postmodern scholars and inspired them to reject the universal truth.

New critical irony

Thanks to Romanticism, irony was a controversial topic in the Western theoretical circle until the emergence of the New Criticism. This originated in the United Kingdom in the 1920s. In the 1940s and 1950s, it occupied a dominant position in the American literary world. After the 1970s, its momentum gradually faded, giving way to other literary theories. According to the basic principles of the New Criticism, it is classified as one type of formalism. "The new critics greatly valued the term 'irony', and saw it as the central feature of literary texts" (Litz et al., 2000:205–206). William K. Wimsatt even insists on changing the name "New Criticism" to "Ironic Poetics".

The new critics emphasize that both the production and the consumption of literary texts are determined by the medium of language, so they try to concentrate on the formal features of language, especially that of poetry. They not only see irony as a language skill, as it is in the traditional rhetoric, but regard it as the principle of poetic structure with ontological significance.

It is Cleanth Brooks who makes the most detailed exposition of irony in the New Criticism. In *The Language of Paradox* published in 1942, he refers to irony as one of the forms of the paradoxical language. At the beginning of the article he says with certainty:

> Yet there is a sense in which paradox is the language appropriate and inevitable to poetry. It is the scientist whose truth requires a language

purged of every trace of paradox; apparently the truth which the poet utters can be approached only in terms of paradox.

(Brooks, 1960:3)

He believes that poets can use paradoxical language to achieve the effect of compression and precision because the connotations and denotations of the paradoxical language play equally important roles in poetry, and so the poetry structured by brief paradoxical language can contain more content. He analyzes some famous poems of the different schools of English literature by means of close reading and proves that paradoxical language is the essence of poetry, and irony and wonder are the twin concomitants of paradox (Brooks, 1960:16). Later, in his series of poetic criticism practice, Brooks sometimes regards paradox and irony as two equally important figures, and sometimes considers paradox as a means of achieving irony. In the year 1949 Brooks made it clear in his article "Irony as a Principle of Structure" that irony "has been almost the only term available by which to point to a general and important aspect of poetry" (Brooks, 1971), and he declares that irony, as a bearer of the pressure of the context, exists in poetry at any time, even in simple lyrics. We can see that Brooks gradually revises his opinions and shows a preference for irony. After all, paradox requires that the text language itself shows contradictions, but we know that not all poetry has to literally constitute contradictions. Irony, on the other hand, is a contradiction between the literal meaning and its actual meaning, and this kind of contradiction is the very characteristic of the superior poetry.[1]

In "Irony as a Principle of Structure", Brooks argues that "Now the *obvious* warping of a statement by the context we characterize as 'ironical'" and that "the tone of irony can be effected by the skillful disposition of the context" (Brooks, 1971). He believes that scientific terms are abstract symbols that will not change their meanings under any contextual pressure; poetry language, on the contrary, is always disrupted and recreated by poets so that it can suggest new meanings in different contexts. "Context" is a concept that is repeatedly emphasized by I.A. Richards, who tries to deal with the difficulties raised by the influence of language upon thought. He writes that:

A context is a set of entities (things or events) related in a certain way; these entities have each a character such that other sets of entities occur having the same characters and related by the same relation; and these occur 'nearly uniformly'.

(Ogden and Richards, 1946:58)

Richards's purpose of emphasizing context is to point out that "when a context has affected us in the past the recurrence of merely a part of the context will cause us to react in the way in which we reacted before" (Ogden and Richards, 1946:53) so that "meaning" becomes open to experimental methods and can always be traced back to the past rather than staying at a certain

point of the moment. Words can take on several roles in such a context, and not all of these roles have to be present. When the word indicates those parts that are absent in the context, the meaning of the word has a function of alternation, and we can perceive the meaning beyond the word itself. In this way, Richards overthrows the "superstition" that a language symbol or sign has only one specific meaning, reminding people to have full preparation to the greatest extent to encounter the phenomenon of ambiguity. In Brooks's view, this ambiguity caused by context is the inconsistency between the literal meaning of a word and its implied meaning, which is irony.

In the practice of criticism, Brooks uses the method of close reading to look carefully for ambiguity in the lines of poems. It is quite clear that he treats irony as a language skill which belongs to the category of traditional rhetoric. However, his irony is not exactly the same as the traditional figure of speech which emphasizes the antithesis between the implicit meaning and the literal meaning. Brooks lays stress on the multiple meanings of the word which may be opposite to each other and may not be, such as "homely" in "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard". So, Brooks's irony shows greater flexibility and more selectivity in words' meanings.

In the theories of the New Criticism, the new critical irony is very different from the irony in rhetoric. The major difference is that the new critics not only treat irony as a language skill but also regard it as a structural principle which generates the meaning of poetry. The new critics agree that the meaning of poetry is complex and impure, and those "pure poems" whose meaning is clear at a glance are not good poems. How could we produce a good work with a complex meaning? Brooks suggests that "the common goodness which the poems share will have to be stated, not in terms of 'content' or 'subject matter' in the usual sense in which we use these terms, but rather in terms of structure" (Brooks, 1960:177). The structure he is talking about is not the "form" in the conventional sense but "a structure of meanings, evaluations, and interpretations; and the principle of unity which informs it seems to be one of balancing and harmonizing connotations, attitudes, and meanings" (Brooks, 1960:178). The principle

> unites the like with the unlike. It does not unite them, however, by the simple process of allowing one connotation to cancel out another nor does it reduce the contradictory attitudes to harmony by a process of subtraction. … It is a positive unity, not a negative; it represents not a residue but an achieved harmony.
>
> (Brooks, 1960:179)

Brooks uses the term "irony" to explain this principle of structure, although he feels that the term "irony" may make it seem that poetry is associated with satire or social or intellectual poetries.

Yet the necessity for some such term ought to be apparent, and irony is the most general term we have for the kind of qualification which the various

elements in a context receive from the context. This kind of qualification, as we have seen, is of tremendous importance in any poem. Moreover, irony is our most general term for indicating that recognition of incongruities— which, again, pervades all poetry to a degree far beyond what our conventional criticism has been heretofore willing to allow (Brooks, 1960:191–192).

He believes that the famous literary works, such as Tennyson's "Tears, Idle Tears", Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn", Donne's "Canonization" and Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood", are outstanding because of this ironical structure.

Other members of the New Criticism have similar views on the structure and meaning of poetry, and though the terms they use are different, including T. S. Elliot's "wit", Allen Tate's "tension" and Richards's "poetry of synthesis", they are essentially not very different from the "irony" used by Brooks. The different terms have a common core idea, that is, the superior poetry does not pursue the precise clarity of meaning or does not simply express a certain emotion or attitude; rather, it is an organism in which all kinds of different and even opposing factors can be included, and these factors eventually coordinate to form an ironical structure. In this way, the new critics elevate irony from a language skill to a structural principle with ontological status.

While the traditional literary criticism pursues the clear meaning of a text, the New Criticism uses the term "irony" to analyze the complex meaning of poetry, which is a great progress in literary criticism. But the New Criticism has its own problems. It shuts the works off from the outside world, and the poetry is only discussed as poetry, in which irony or other terms are limited to the text itself. This text-centred attitude eventually makes the New Criticism belong to formalism. Furthermore, the new critics have been questioned and criticized since they spare no effort in hunting for irony in poetry. Many scholars think that irony covers too wide a range in terms of the definition, "the obvious warping of a statement by the context we characterize as 'ironical'". As we know, the language in any literary text is not as transparent as the scientific language, and it must bear the pressure of the context. So, according to the definition of Brooks, irony is everywhere in literary texts. In addition, many other figures of speech can be semantic distortions caused by contextual pressures, such as metaphor, exaggeration, repetition, etc., in which case, Brooks's definition is inaccurate. Moreover, since the new critics emphasize that irony is a harmonious balance of opposing meanings, they have been accused by Linda Hutcheon of "neutralizing" irony, "that is, through its removing of the moral implications from the usage of the word by distancing it from precisely this satiric functioning" (Hutcheon, 2005:50).

Since the end of the 1950s, the New Criticism has been increasingly criticized for limiting the literary criticism into the texts, and the school has begun to decline. But as some scholars point out, it has become a theoretical unconsciousness in the various literary theories of later generations.

The new critical irony also has subtle influence on the later literary theories: For example, its contradictory coexistence mechanism gives some enlightenment to postmodern thoughts, and Gerald Graff even claims that the new Deconstruction is nothing more than the expansion of old ambiguity and irony. The new critical irony also directly inspires Kenneth Burk, the leading theorist of the New Rhetoric. In addition, though the new critical irony seems to stay only at the rhetorical level, its application of semantics and its introduction of contextual theory have lifted the study of irony to a new level, showing the linguistic turn in modern philosophy.

Irony in contemporary rhetoric

Western rhetoric was on the wane during the Middle Ages and the Enlightenment, and the depression lasted until the 20th century, when it began to revive and gradually prospered. As one of the most important figures in rhetoric, irony has again become the focus of attention. Since the mid-20th century it has been discussed in two ways: One interprets irony in the traditional rhetorical concept, and the other analyzes it in the new rhetoric concept with the background of postmodern thoughts.

Irony in the traditional rhetorical concept

The traditional rhetoric concerns itself with the art of using language. According to this concept, irony has long been defined as a trope, and it refers to the contradiction between the word and its meaning. In the 20th century, the use of irony began to expand. The Group μ from Belgium published *A General Rhetoric* in 1970, and in this book metaboles (figures of speech) are divided into four categories: Metaplasms, metataxes, metasememes and metalogisms. Their nature and relationship are as follows:

(Table of Metaboles)[2]

	(Expression [form])	*(Content [meaning])*
(Words [and <])	(Metaplasms)	(Metasememes)
(Sentences [and >])	(Metataxes)	(Metalogisms)

(Cong and Xu 2007:123)

Irony falls under the category of metalogisms and is a trope used at the sentence or higher level to make the content change; it performs as a logical negation of the literal meaning.

Northrop Frey goes further and discusses irony directly at the level of text in his book *Anatomy of Criticism*. He classifies fictional works into five modes according to the hero's power of action: Myth, legend, tragedy, comedy and irony. "If inferior in power or intelligence to ourselves, so that we have the sense of looking down on a scene of bondage, frustration, or

absurdity, the hero belongs to the ironic mode" (Frey, 2000:34). This kind of fiction can be the low mimetic of the traditional drama or a parody of the standards of social values, but in fact, the values of conventions themselves have become the objects of ridicule.

It is quite clear that in the development of Western rhetoric, the application of irony has been extended from words to sentences and then to texts. The extension not only shows the energy that irony itself owns but also reflects the increasing awareness of tropes among scholars. But no matter how its application extends, irony in the traditional rhetorical concept is still a kind of language skill. "Irony, the dictionaries tell us, is saying one thing and meaning the opposite" (Booth, 1974:34).

There are various ways of using irony in literary works, so scholars have made detailed classifications for irony, among which the classifications by Wayne C. Booth and D. C. Muecke have the greatest influence.

Booth divides irony into stable irony and unstable irony, according to the clarity of ironic meaning. The former is "interpretable, with some stopping point in the act of interpretation", while the latter is "with the hermeneutical act inherently, deliberately endless" (Booth, 1983:724). Booth believes that most of the ironies are stable ironies that can be correctly explained, and if the reader misunderstands them, it is the result of their carelessness and ignorance. Booth's division is simple and clear. However his argument is somehow too absolute. He puts undue emphasis on the author's leading role while ignoring the reader's dynamics and the communication between the author and the reader.

Compared with Booth's classification, the scholars prefer Muecke's model. In *Irony and the Ironic*, Muecke mainly analyzes two types of irony: Verbal irony and situational irony. The former occurs at the level of words or sentences, just like some witty remarks said by the ironist, and the meaning of the remarks is different from or even contrary to the ironist's real intent. The latter occurs at a level higher than sentences. It usually requires cooperation between the author and the reader: The author makes the reader see the victim of irony behaving in confident unawareness of the real state of affairs, or the author reverses the reader's expectations of the event development. The emotions caused by situational irony are complex: It can be the reader's laughing at the ignorance of the victim, for example, when one of Penelope's suitors was complacent about the idea that Odysseus could never come home again, and Odysseus was sitting disguised as a beggar in his own palace, or it can be the reader's pity for the victim when he is tortured by fate, as when Oedipus left the city to avoid the realization of the curse but what he did was just a crucial step in achieving the fated arrangement.

In many cases, the author uses both language and events to create irony, so verbal irony and situational irony often intermingle with each other. Traditional rhetoric holds that good literary works should have the function of educating people, but at the same time it should be interesting since irony is one of the ideal means of achieving the goal of educating through

entertainment. Irony can always be funny. Ironists like to say stupid words, as in Jonathan Swift's proposal: "A young healthy child well nursed, at a year old, a most delicious nourishing and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled." This kind of stupid remark is naturally treated as a funny joke because it violates common sense. Ironic authors also like to let their heroes do stupid things, like Soapy in O. Henry's *The Cop and the Anthem*, whose efforts and unexpected ending make it so that readers can't help laughing. However, though irony seems to be used to produce comedy, it actually insinuates criticism. Swift can't really propose to eat babies; O. Henry doesn't simply employ Soapy to amuse readers. While teasing the readers, the authors' real intention is to secretly reveal a truth that is not suitable for direct revelation. Many literary theorists agree that literature is a space for questioning serious things through irony, ridicule, parody or other means. They declare that Swift's "A Modest Proposal" demonstrates that irony, as a comedic dimension of literary works, has huge and even scary power in many aspects. Irony is like a hidden knife, criticizing in laughter, and its power is far greater than direct criticism, so this rhetorical skill has so far been favoured by nearly all literary artists.

Irony in the new rhetorical concept

The new rhetoric arose in the middle of the 20th century. It is the supplement and revision of the traditional rhetoric, and it promotes the prosperity of Western rhetoric. The main purpose of traditional rhetoric is "persuasion", and "persuasion" means that the addresser imposes his will upon the addressee. The new rhetoric, on the contrary, values communication and is obviously not satisfied with study merely about rhetorical skill and effect in literary works. The focus of the new rhetoric is the mutual communication between senders and recipients of information, the satisfying solution to parties who hold different opinions and the search for inferential methods for solving social problems.

Kenneth Burke, one of the most important theorists of the new rhetoric, does not deny "persuasion" in the traditional rhetoric. He admits that if there is persuasion, there is rhetoric, and if there is "meaning", there is "persuasion". However, he sees "identification" as the core term of the new rhetoric. "Identification" is the development of the traditional "persuasion", and it displays the harmonious cooperation achieved through communication rather than indoctrination. Burke values the four master tropes: Metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony. Irony, in his opinion, is equal to "dialectic" and "drama".

Irony arises when one tries, through the interaction of terms upon one another, to produce a *development* which uses all terms. Hence, from the standpoint of this total form (this "perspective of perspectives"), none of the participating "sub-perspectives" can be treated as either precisely right or precisely wrong. They are all voices, personalities or positions, integrally

affecting one another. When the dialectic is properly formed, they are the number of characters needed to produce the total development (Burke, 1969:512).

Since irony is the coexistence of multiple perspectives, Burke specifically points out a temptation in irony—relativism. He notes that "if you isolate any one agent in a drama, or any one advocate in a dialogue, and see the whole in terms of his position alone, you have the purely relativistic. And in relativism there is no irony" (Burke, 1969:512). The second temptation of irony mentioned by Burke is "Pharisaic". Burke believes that true irony should justify the attitude of "humility" and not feel superior to the enemy. For example, it is wrong to think that the quality of wisdom is superior to folly because if there is no folly, there is no wisdom. "True irony, humble irony, is based upon a sense of fundamental kinship with the enemy, as one *needs* him, is *indebted* to him, is not merely outside him as an observer but contains him *within*, being consubstantial with him" (Burke, 1969:514). The third temptation of irony is its tendency towards the simplification of literalness. Burke analyzes that in a dramatic or dialectic development, though all the characters are necessary, there is one character who enjoys the role of protagonist and is not merely an equal participant to others but represents the *end* or *logic* of the development as a whole. This protagonist has a dual function: Adjectival and substantial.

The character is "adjectival", embodying one of the qualifications necessary to the total definition, but is also "substantial", embodying the conclusions of the development as a whole. Irony is sacrificed to "the simplification of literalness" when this duality of role is neglected (as it may be neglected by either the reader, the writer or both) (Burke, 1969:516).

In Burke's new rhetoric, irony manifests itself as rejecting a single perspective, rejecting the differences between superiority and inferiority and rejecting the simple way of thinking. With such irony, we can truly understand various viewpoints, thoughts, conflicts, etc. that appear in the communication and achieve identification through mutual understanding and tolerance.

Wayne Booth agrees with this idea in "The Empire of Irony". He believes that people's lives are full of persuasion and communication. Irony is a cohesive force that leads to successful communication. "Whenever a piece of intended irony works, when a clever ironist manages to hook us, we come closer than at any other time to a full *identification of two minds*" (Booth, 1983:729).

Both Burke and Booth emphasize the fact that irony can create identification in communication, which makes their irony theory a good reflection of the gist of the new rhetoric: "the key point of the new rhetoric is not to persuade, but to solve or reduce problems, and it is achieved not by one party's victory, but by a solution that satisfies both parties in the conflict" (Hu Shuzhong, 2009:120).

In the 1960s, an academic school named Deconstruction rose quietly in Western ideological circles. Paul De Man, the leader of Deconstruction in

the United States, develops his own deconstructive rhetoric theory by exploring the nature of language. De Man claims "that the first language had to be figural language" (De Man, 2014:187) due to his discovery that the object was originally named not by the object itself but by the relationship between the object and people. For example, in Rousseau's allegory of naming, the primitive man referred to the first other men he encountered as "giants"; the word "giants" here is a metaphor which expresses the inner fear, and the statement "I see a giant" is a metaphor for the literal statement "I am frightened". However, the original feeling and the metaphor about the relationship between the word and the object were ignored, and the illusion was passed down as reality, which is how the figure was born prior to the proper word (De Man, 2014:95, 187–188). De Man thus argues that the entire system of knowledge is just a "tropological system, a system of tropological transformations and substitutions" (Warminski, 2013:11).

Irony in De Man's rhetoric theory is one of the key tropes. He elicits irony through the concept of "getting outside oneself", taking inspiration from Baudelaire's "Of the Essence of Laughter". Baudelaire believes that:

> The comic, the power of laughter, is in the laugher, not at all in the object of laughter. It is not the man who falls down that laughs at his own fall, unless he is a philosopher, a man who has acquired, by force of habit, the power of getting outside himself quickly and watching, as a disinterested spectator, the phenomenon of his ego.
>
> (Baudelaire, 2006:148)

De Man points out that the process of getting outside oneself is a process of irony, and that ironic language divides the subject into two selves: The self that exists only in the state of inauthenticity, and the self that exists only in the form of language and claims to know this inauthenticity. With language as a tool, this division transfers the self from the world of experience (the empirical self) to the world of language (the symbolic self). The symbolic self can laugh at the fall of the empirical self, reflecting the progress in self-awareness. But De Man has already pointed out the figural nature of language and that the knowledge system constructed by language is only a metaphorical system, so the "progress in self-awareness" is highly questionable. Thus he adds that the process of irony does not make language authentic because knowing inauthenticity and becoming an authentic language are not the same thing. Irony is similar to madness when thinking that self has made progress in self-awareness since there are few people mentally ill with humility: "all the inmates of our asylums harbour the idea of their own superiority developed to an inordinate degree" (Baudelaire, 2006:146). However Baudelaire's irony is defined by De Man as "sober madness"; when Baudelaire's symbolic self laughs at his own fall, Baudelaire implies that language is superior to experience and believes that, by virtue of language, irony reaches madness, and, in turn, language can heal madness, so Baudelaire's

irony cannot be called complete madness. De Man points out that the relationship between the symbolic self and the empirical self is, in Baudelaire's opinion, the relationship between the subjects rather than the relationship between the different levels within the subject, and one subject is superior, while the other is inferior. When one party laughs at the other, this demonstrates the will to power, as if one party teaches or improves the other. This will to power is far from irony and may even be the betrayal of irony. To De Man, it is exactly at the moment when irony is regarded as a means to organize and heal the knowledge of the world that its source dries up.

De Man then turns to Schlegel's irony. In a note in 1797, Schlegel defined irony as a "permanent parabasis",[3] an interruption in a discourse to prevent readers from confusing fictions with facts. The parabasis is designed to make the compromise between the real world and the fictional world impossible and so is the compromise between the empirical self and the symbolic self. De Man does not fully agree with Schlegel for the latter's affirmation of active self-creation is still close to Baudelaire's sober madness. De Man, on the other hand, always emphasizes the inauthenticity of language and appeals to readers not to expect the symbolical self divided by irony to offer a promising future: "Irony divides the flow of temporal existence into a past that is pure mystification and a future that remains harassed for ever by a relapse within the inauthentic. It can know this inauthenticity but it can never overcome it" (De Man, 1983:222). In "The Concept of Irony", he completes Schlegel's irony and defines it as "the permanent parabasis of the allegory of tropes". "The allegory of tropes has its own narrative coherence, its own systematicity, and it is that coherence, that systematicity, which irony interrupts, disrupts" (De Man, 1997:179). Jacques Derrida sums up De Man's view as "one pretends to tell a story, that is a diachronical allegory; the other pretends to forget, that is a synchronical irony" (Derrida, 1999:92).[4] The diachronicity of allegory and the synchronicity of irony are "two faces of the same fundamental experience of time" (De Man, 1969:207), so irony and allegory can be successfully combined, but the means of combination is that irony keeps jumping out and destroying the allegorical narrative.

In addition to allegory and irony, De Man has also explored many other tropes in order to disclose that rhetoric is not a special use of language but its nature. The rhetorical nature of language determines that language does not lead to a single definite meaning, so the reading and interpretation of the discourse should not have a so-called authoritative, correct understanding. Reading should be open to the possibility of various interpretations. In this way, Deconstruction is not, as many critics accuse, a nihilism that deconstructs the discourse and makes it meaningless. On the contrary, it is a kind of deeper reading and interpretation; when the discourse is constructed, it is always cautious about the inherent contradictions in the discourse, and when the discourse is publicizing a certain value or assumption, it is always watching out for the opposing values or assumptions that are hidden and

suppressed. In brief, Deconstruction warns readers not to be deceived by the surface of the discourse.

Deconstructive rhetoric belongs to contemporary new rhetoric. The rise of the new rhetoric is related to postmodern thoughts. What Burke and De Man have in common is that they are talking about rhetoric not just from the perspective of language skills but also from the perspective of human social life and the knowledge system; thus the new rhetoric goes beyond the traditional rhetoric and is inevitably entangled with philosophy. The difference between Burke and De Man is also obvious. When Burke is committed to expanding the scope of rhetoric, advocating that it should focus on all human communicative behaviour, deconstructive rhetoric scholars are immersed in interpreting tropes and deconstructing meanings in the discourses by means of close reading, so Deconstruction is often accused of being one type of formalism, a language game, and not paying attention to the real world outside the language. However, De Man has claimed that political considerations have never been out of his mind. J. Hillis Miller, another master of the Deconstruction, also writes to defend the deconstructive criticism. He claims that literary study should focus on the reading of the discourse and the rhetorical analysis of the multiple meanings of the discourse, and that the facts and power outside the discourse are the best opportunities for literary study to prove the nature of language. In the "Coda" of his book *Reading Narrative*, Miller says:

> It would be best, however, to abandon the false lure of that nostalgia and to find ways to live within the ironic openness our tradition's stories engender. That task is one feature of the call to help create the democracy to come. Such a democracy would do without the hierarchies affirmed by what I have called the phallogocentric way of thinking and storytelling.
>
> (Miller, 1998:230)

This statement clarifies that when the deconstructionists use irony to deconstruct the narrative and subvert the binary oppositional hierarchy in logocentrism, their goal is a more open society and a more democratic system. At this point, the deconstructive irony is in agreement with the irony in Burke's new rhetoric theory.

Irony in the postmodernism

Postmodernism is a broad movement which emerged after the Western social economy entered the post-industrial stage. It involves the cultural philosophy and cultural orientation of all of Western society. Postmodern scholars try to use language as a breakthrough point with which to expose the artificiality of the truth because "where there are no sentences there is no truth, that sentences are elements of human languages, and that human

languages are human creations" (Rorty, 1993:5). Therefore, in the description of the world, there is no longer a "judgment" that transcends presentation or history; everything is just a language game, and irony is certainly the best at language games.

Ihab Habib Hassan regards postmodern irony as an "entropy of meaning"; in other words, irony in postmodern literature and art generates confusion and indeterminacy of meaning. The entropy of meaning leads to self-consumption and self-negation in postmodern literature, and then creates the metaphorical literature of silence. Hassan further points out that the entropy of meaning in literature is a response of artists to the entropy of postmodern society, a world that "appears as organized chaos to the absurdist sensibility, a kind of institutionalized madness" (Hassan, 1976:82), which expresses the sentiment of cultural crisis. In the schematics comparing postmodernism with modernism, Hassan regards postmodernist irony as the opposite of modernist metaphysics (Hassan, 1982:268) instead of treating it as a literary writing technique. In his view, irony is a common sense in a postmodern society, and it represents the rejection of the modernist philosophy of pursuing essence, law and rationality. So, for Hassan, irony is not only one of the manifestations of the postmodern literature of silence but also one of the basic characteristics of postmodern culture. When trying to provide a framework of postmodernism, Hassan lists five deconstructive features and six reconstructive features; irony is among the reconstructive ones. He says that "[i]n absence of a cardinal principle or paradigm, we turn to play, interplay, dialogue, polylogue, allegory, self-reflection—in short, to irony" (Hassan, 1986:506). Since irony is a new orientation in a society absent of a cultural paradigm, it reflects the reconstruction of the soul in the pursuit of the truth. Hence Hassan does not agree that irony is negative nihilism; instead, he believes that the entropy of meaning brought about by irony not only creates confusion but also introduces a new pluralistic paradigm in chaos, in this regard, irony is play as well as self-reflection and an adaptation to disorder as well as a desire for reconstruction.

Linda Hutcheon believes that irony plays a leading role in postmodernism. She suggests that the relationship between postmodernism and its challenging objectives (for instance, modernism) is to "incorporate and challenge" (Hutcheon, 1988:11, 51–52) and should be defined by a "both/and" (Hutcheon, 2005:56) model rather than the "either/or" model. Irony is the very embodiment of the postmodern contradiction of the coexistence of incorporation and challenge because "ironic meaning possesses three major semantic characteristics: it is relational, inclusive and differential" (Hutcheon, 2005:56). Irony is relational because ironic meaning comes into being as the consequence of a relationship not only between meanings (said, unsaid) but also between people (ironists, interpreters, targets). However, this is not a relation of equals as the power of the unsaid usually challenges that of the said. The inclusivity of irony means that the ironic meaning is constituted not necessarily only by an either/or substitution of opposites but by both

the said and the unsaid working together to create the third meaning—the "ironic" meaning. The differential aspect of irony suggests that ironic meaning forms when the unsaid is different from the said, but the two are not necessarily opposite (Hutcheon, 2005:56–64). These three characteristics of irony indicate that both the said and the unsaid are valid, and at the same time, in the incorporation of the two, the potential judgmental attitude is revealed by their differences and disharmony. The second reason that irony can reflect postmodern features is that irony has a unique political function. Hutcheon disapproves of scholars who consider irony only as a language game; she believes that postmodern irony is serious and has an evaluative edge. "The many-voiced play of said and unsaid can be used to ironize the single-voicing of authoritative discourse--no matter what the politics of that discourse" (Hutcheon, 2005:194). Therefore, between the ironist and the interpreter, Hutcheon pays more attention to the interpreter because, regardless of the political views of the discourse writer, the meaning and the evaluative edge are summed up by the inference, and the inference comes from the intentional act of the interpreter. In this way, different interpreters may lead to transideological politics of irony and tactically serve a wide range of political positions.

Postmodern theorists explain irony from different angles; they may not agree with each other, but in the context of the postmodern hubbub, each of their doctrines is recognized as having its own unique value, which is a reflection of the postmodern inclusiveness of multiculturalism. At the same time, although the views of irony are different, the common points still exist, and the theorists all use irony to dissolve the monistic discourse authority, question the traditional philosophy and challenge the Western rationalism.

When irony, indifferently and even banteringly, mocks the truth, rejects the essence and eliminates the center, what is left behind? That is the danger of postmodern irony: There seems to be nothing left behind it. But at the same time, postmodern irony shows its own positive face. While irony is ridiculing the traditional metaphysics as a fictional myth, it undoubtedly offers us a broader perspective. How can such a diverse world be attributed to one essence? How can so many complicated problems be solved with one mode of thinking? How can such a heterogeneous human life have one fixed center? Irony is self-examination on the problems and limitations of the traditional Western philosophy; it liberates our thoughts through its negation and subversion, and it is beneficial to the development of human ideology and culture.

Core elements of irony

Irony exists in such different and even opposing ideas, and no matter how contradictory the ideas it serves are, we still call it "irony", so there must be some invariable features that have been preserved since its origin. These features, as core elements, have allowed irony to maintain its own uniqueness

in over 2000 years' development of thought and have contributed to its continuous existence. Because literature is the most convenient art through which to embody irony, it will be the basis of the generalization here to sum up some of the core elements of irony.

Saying the opposite of what is meant

Saying the opposite of what is meant is the most basic and primary element of irony. Kierkegaard says that "[a]lready here we have a quality that permeates all irony--namely, that the phenomenon is not the essence but the opposite of the essence" (Kierkegaard, 1989:247). Margaret Rose neatly explains that irony "conveys two messages through one code" (Martin, 1991:179). The first is the appearance with a mask, the camouflage of the message sender, and the second is the potential true meaning. From this point of view, irony is no different from lying, and in fact, since Socrates, irony has always represented a deliberate deception. However, irony is essentially not the same as lying: The purpose of lying is to conceal the truth, while the purpose of irony is to reveal the truth. Fielding calls Jonathan Wild a "great man"; Swift solemnly proposes to solve the problem of poverty and hunger in Ireland by eating infants. Their intention is obviously not to hide the problem but to expose it.

Mild resistance

Many techniques in literature can produce the effect of saying one thing but meaning another, including metaphor, symbol, fable, pun, etc., but they have poorer resisting capacity than irony. The purpose of irony is to deny or even resist what is being said. Moreover, this resistance is different from the direct and strong resistance of satire; it is mild and like an ugly and distorted mask that causes laughter instead of pain. A satirist always hates more than he loves, while an ironist always has some affection for the object he laughs at: As Frye says, "[s]uch tragic irony differs from satire in that there is no attempt to make fun of the character, but only to bring out clearly the 'all too human,' as distinct from the heroic, aspects of the tragedy" (Frye, 2000:237). The ironists do not disdain people's defects with harsh eyes but treat their defects in a humorous way; they sympathize with their so-called mocked objects instead of accusing them. We can discern such feelings in the ironists from O. Henry's attitude towards Soapy, Joseph Heller's towards Yossarian, Nabokov's towards Humbert and many other ironic writers' attitude towards their protagonists.

For the form of literary works, some unconventional writing techniques resist literary routines and can be regarded as irony to literary conventions. A great deal of description of the inner world and ignoring of the external world in the works of Romanticism are the irony to the principle of "imitation" in Realism; postmodern parody is the irony to the classics imitated;

meta-fiction, collage, anti-hero, etc. are all the irony to the traditional narrative mode. Irony, while resisting the existing literary norms, creates new forms and becomes one of the driving forces in promoting the evolution and development of literature. However, irony has never been vocal in doing so; rather, it proves with its own existence that traditions are anachronism, or there is a possibility of other forms.

For the content of literary works, the ignorant individuals who seem to be ridiculed are actually just a primer, and the ironic confrontation finally settles on the stubborn and powerful system behind the individuals. In other words, the true purpose of irony is not to mock the individuals but to secretly resist the world. The greatness of Jonathan Wild is a resistance of false values, and Swift's modest proposal resists a problematic social system. However, the readers are sometimes confused, not sure how to understand the author or the work. As Frye says, "whenever a reader is not sure what the author's attitude is or what his own is supposed to be, we have irony with relatively little satire" (Frye, 2000:223). The readers' confusion indicates that the clear moral judgment standards recognized in society are blurred or even eliminated in those ironic works.

The ironists know how to grasp the contradiction and at the same time avoid head-to-head confrontation. They defeat their opponents with relaxing language and secretly change the tradition and the system without making their opponents losing faces. The mildness of ironic resistance makes it possible for the ironists to protect themselves well, but it also makes resistance more difficult because if the resistance is expected to be effective, it has to be identified first.

Cooperation between author, reader and context

Irony certainly comes from the author's intentional design. It is generally believed that in an ironic work, the author should maintain an objective and neutral attitude, letting the readers explore the hidden meaning between the lines by themselves. But in fact, the absolutely objective attitude is something hard to achieve; some secret value judgment must be implied by the author by various means. Ironic authors usually carefully design signals, such as title, subtitle, preface, postscript, etc., in the texts to attract the readers' attention. Alternatively, they use ingenious narrative techniques to alert the readers: For example, they may employ abnormal perspectives to make the narrator unreliable, tell the same story from different perspectives to arouse conflicts, place opposite phenomena together, let an event develop unexpectedly or even use meta-narrative to explore the narrating story. In short, all sorts of ingenious hints in the text must come from the author, and the author's arrangements are by no means just for fun.

The author's intentional arrangements are as deceptive as Socrates' pretentious ignorance, and if readers can't identify the deception, irony will

die because for those who can't recognize irony, irony does not exist at all. Therefore,

> to write ironically with success a writer needs to be alert to two audiences: those who will recognize the ironic intention and enjoy the joke, and those who are the object of the satire and are deceived by it. This implies that the ironist has ranged himself with those of his readers who share his superior values, intelligence and literary sensibility; together they look down on the benighted mob.
>
> (Booth, 1974:105)

From Booth's argument, we can conclude that irony has a tendency towards elitism because it is the perfect readers for whom the author carefully designs the text. Booth lists four steps through which a perfect reader recognizes irony: 1. The reader is required to reject the literal meaning; 2. alternative interpretations or explanations are tried out, and the alternatives are all, to some degree, incongruous with what the literal statement seems to say—perhaps even contrary to it; 3. a decision must be made about the author's knowledge or belief, and the reader must somehow determine whether what he rejects is also rejected by the author and whether the author has reason to expect his concurrence; and 4. the reader can finally choose a new meaning or cluster of meanings with which he or she can rest secure, and unlike the original proposition, the reconstructed meanings will necessarily be in harmony with the unspoken beliefs (Booth, 1974:10–12). These four steps are completed in an instant in the process of reading: the reader's perception of the ironic signal and the reconstruction of the ironic meaning are almost synchronous, which requires the reader to be intelligent enough to decipher irony.

However, even with the author's design and the reader's efforts, irony will not necessarily be successful because there is another important condition for making it effective—context. Contexts include linguistic contexts and non-linguistic contexts, ranging from the texts to cultural and natural environments outside the texts. The New Criticism scholars spare no effort in arguing that it is the semantics distortion caused by the context that has prompted irony. It is undeniable that out of context it is impossible to know the specific meaning of any isolated discourse. The sentence "What a wonderful day!" becomes irony when it is raining cats and dogs outside the window; Donald Barthelme's sexy and dissolute Snow White is recognized as irony when compared with Grimm's Snow White. Only when the author and the reader share the same context can irony happen smoothly. Hutcheon calls this shared context "community"—"the concept of an extended community with shared customs and habits that form and are formed by cultural discourses" (Hutcheon, 2005:87). The formation of the community depends on particularities not only of space and time but also of class, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual choice, nationality, religion, age, profession and

all the other micropolitical groupings in which we place ourselves or are placed by our society. Hutcheon stresses that everyone is in different communities at the same time, and it is the overlap with the community of others that makes irony possible. If someone cannot understand an irony, it is not a matter of the interpreter's "competence" but because the reader and the ironist are in different communities. Of course, this is also Hutcheon's rebuttal to the remarks on irony's elitism.

In brief, for irony, the three parties—author, reader and context—are indispensable. Once an irony achieves its validity, that is, the reader understands the author's intention, the author and the reader have achieved effective communication, and irony exerts its function of cohesion. At this time, the overlapping community between the author and the reader has been confirmed and strengthened.

Detached manner

Irony is different from despicable lying or aggressive satire; it is noble, and the nobleness comes from the detached manner of the ironist who watches the world as if he or she were an outsider. When Swift suggests eating young children, he sounds so relaxed and even smug that we cannot find any sense of guilt from him at all; Nabokov, the author of *Lolita*, allows the paedophile in his book to sink into the quicksand of sin under the guidance of perverted desires while he himself remains indifferent, with no ethical judgment at all. These masters of irony are neither surprised nor angry at the existential predicament or the moral dilemma—mortal life seems unreal to them.

With a detached manner, the manner that comes from their position of observing and their calm mind, ironists can look down upon all living beings; as Wallace Martin says, "irony can be dispassionately distant, an Olympian calm that notes and may sympathize with human weakness" (Martin, 1991:180), or as Kierkegaard says:

> The ironic figure of speech has still another property that characterizes all irony, a certain superiority deriving from its not wanting to be understood immediately, even though it wants to be understood, with the result that this figure looks down, as it were, on plain and simple talk that everyone can promptly understand; it travels around, so to speak, in an exclusive incognito and looks down pitying from this high position on ordinary, prosaic talk.
>
> (Kierkegaard, 1989: 248)

The ironists are unconstrained by the reality, and their sharp eyes can see through the fallacy and vanity of the world as well as the stubbornness and conservatism of social customs. Given the strong power of the tradition, their strategies are to see through but not to destroy them. In fact, they cater to and even strengthen the fallacy and vanity in a game-playing attitude, making the

crazy world crazier, the ridiculous existence more ridiculous, and then they enjoy the happiness brought by the abetting. Booth clarifies that "[o]ur lives are full of failed intentions with stable ironies, and some of our best ironists know how to exploit these failures" (Booth, 1983:725). The ironists can reach such detachment because, as Kierkegaard says, irony is pointing not to a single phenomenon but to the whole existence, and the ironists observe the overall existence from the perspective of irony, then "irony also denotes the subjective pleasure as the subject frees himself by means of irony from the re-straint in which the continuity of life's conditions holds him--thus the ironist can literally be said to kick over the traces" (Kierkegaard, 1989:255–256).

Effect of humour

Though the New Criticism regards irony as a principle of poetry structure and so seldom mentions humour, most theories agree that irony can produce humorous effects. Frye believes that wit and humour are indispensable for irony, and Muecke also says that "looking down from on high upon the do-ings of men induces laughter or at least a smile" (Muecke, 1986:48). Irony, detaching itself from the whole existence, always maintains a relaxed and pleasant manner, and dares to joke about anything.

Contrasted with norms, when something is abnormal, it will produce hu-mour. Irony can create opposite meaning between the said and the unsaid, design bizarre plots, put the disharmonious factors together and deviate from social conventions, all of which are against norms and then give birth to hu-mour. Humour is certain to make people laugh, but ironic humour is more than laughter; it is of profound significance. Don Quixote is ridiculous: When we follow his absurd adventures and laugh at him, there is no hostility in our laugh-ter; instead, we see him as a friend. Yossarian comes up with various ludicrous ideas to escape the mission, and when we laugh at him, our hearts are full of sympathy and resonance rather than disdain. Verbal irony and situational irony can arouse our aesthetic sense of humour, which is often mixed with friendship and sympathy. This kind of humour is just the psychological recognition of the so-called comical things. It is not the pride of mocking fools, nor the pleasure of satirizing absurdity; rather, it is the calm mentality we feel when facing absurd-ity or unreasonableness—in other words, the humour of tolerance.

In fact, the unruffled attitude towards absurdity in ironic humour makes us wonder about the definition of norm and absurdity. What makes a norm a norm? Is it necessarily absurd to be contrary to the norm? Are the justice and ideals revealed by Don Quixote wrong? Is it sinful of Yossarian to treas-ure his life? None of us can give a definite answer to these questions.

Introduction and spread of "irony" in China

"Irony" was introduced to China in the early 20th century. In less than one hundred years, it has become a keyword in Chinese literary criticism. Its rapid spread is both the result of its own charm and the inevitable result of

catering to the needs of Chinese literary criticism. Therefore, it is necessary to do a thorough investigation on how this Western concept has been accepted and how it has been developing in China.

Cultural background for "irony"

The Chinese nation boasts a long literary history and rich literary resources. In its large number of ancient literary works and critical articles we can find many literary techniques or theories similar to Western irony. These similarities constitute the foundation for accepting and disseminating irony in China; otherwise, it would be difficult for this Western concept to take root and grow in an Eastern context with its own long tradition.

Argument on the relationship between language and meaning in ancient Chinese theories

The relationship between "language (yan 言)" and "meaning (yi 意)" has been one of the key problems in the study of philosophy and literature in China since ancient Chinese times. The important schools of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism have all had animated discussions about it. The notions of " being beyond the actual words (yan wai zhi yi 言外之意)" and "a positive statement appearing like the opposite, or, a positive statement expressed in the way of saying the opposite (zheng yan ruo fan 正言若反)" in Chinese ancient poetics are somewhat similar to the Western irony theory.

   At the very beginning of *Tao Te Ching*, Laozi[5] says, "The Way that can be told of is not an Unvarying Way; the names that can be named are not unvarying names" (Lao Tzu, 1997:1). Zhuangzi[6] succeeds Laozi and points out more clearly that "The Way cannot be described; described, it is not the Way" (Zhuangzi, 2013:184). He then explains that "we can use words to talk about the coarseness of things, and we can use our minds to visualize the fineness of things" (Zhuangzi, 2013:129). In a chapter entitled "The Way of Heaven", he further says, "Words have value; what is of value in words is meaning. Meaning has something it is pursuing, but the thing that it is pursuing cannot be put into words and handed down" (Zhuangzi, 2013:106). All the remarks prove that both Laozi and Zhuangzi have thoroughly understood the contradiction between words and meaning: Words cannot accurately convey complex meaning.

   Lu Ji, a scholar in the Western Jin Dynasty, introduces the idea that "language cannot express all one intends to say (yan bu jin yi 言不尽意)" into early literary theory. In his "Poetic Exposition on Literature (Wen Fu 文赋)" he writes

> I constantly fear failure in my conceptions' (yi) not being equal to the
> things of the world (wu), and in my writing's (wen) not being equal to my

conceptions. I suppose it is not the understanding that is difficult, but rather the difficulty lies in being able to do it well.

(Owen, 1992:80)[7]

This is the generalization of the relationship between "things", "meaning" and "language" in literary writing. It is difficult to match the writer's thoughts and feelings with the things of the world, and it is difficult to accurately convey inner thoughts and feelings in language. The two difficulties can be summarized as one problem: "language cannot express all one intends to say". Later, famous literary theorists, such as Liu Xie, Zhong Rong and Yan Yü. all put forward in their essays the troubles caused by the contradiction between language and meaning.

If language cannot represent a concept, what should we do when we need to define this concept? Zhuangzi has one idea. He knows the limitations of language very well, but he does not deny its role. He realizes that though "the Way" (the Tao or Dao, 道) is inexpressible, he has to rely on language to talk about it. His solution is to "get the meaning and forget the words":

> The fish trap exists because of the fish; once you've gotten the fish, you can forget the trap. The rabbit snare exists because of the rabbit; once you've gotten the rabbit, you can forget the snare. Words exist because of meaning; once you've gotten the meaning, you can forget the words.
>
> (Zhuangzi, 2013:233)

In his opinion, words are the tool with which to apperceive the Way, and after learning the Way, words can be forgotten. Hence it is believed that excellent literary works should be able to express meaning beyond words, so many scholars begin to put forward the idea in different expressions. Zhong Rong advocates that "the text has been completed while its meaning is endless (wen yi jin er yi you yu 文已尽而意有余)"; Sikong Tu admires the article that has implicit and unspoken purpose; Yan Yü ,in his "Ts'ang-lang's Remarks on Poetry (Cang Lang Shi Hua 沧浪诗话)", says:

> What is called "not touching the path of reason (li) nor falling into the trammel of words" is the best. Poetry is what sings of one's emotion and nature … Therefore, the ingenuity of their poetry lies in its transparent luminosity, which cannot be pieced together; it is like sound in the air, color in appearances, the moon in water, or an image in the mirror; it has limited words but unlimited meaning.
>
> (Liu Ruoyu, 2006:58–59)

The series of statements has formed the tradition of the ancient Chinese poets' pursuit of "meaning beyond words", and that is just one of the basic elements of irony.

However, it is certain that the ancient Chinese poets' pursuit is quite different from the Western irony. The theory which says "get the meaning and forget the words" comes from the Taoist doctrine, so, when the ancient Chinese poets pursue the meaning beyond words, they often do so with the purpose of "enlightening the Tao", making the external word and the inner experience as well as man and nature united harmoniously in poetry, and in their doing so, the poetry becomes endowed with the charm of subtlety. What the Western irony emphasizes, however, is the opposition between facts and representations. Western irony highlights contradictions and seeks the self-examination and the questions caused by conflicts. In simple words, "meaning beyond words", as pursued by the ancient Chinese poets, is mainly the meaning hidden in the reveries and drawn forth by words; on the other hand, in the Western theories, irony mainly refers to the meaning different from or even opposite to the words.

In addition to the arguments on words and meaning, some dialectical views in Taoism are more consistent with the philosophy of Western irony. Laozi points out that everything has its own opposite, and opposing things tend to be interdependent.

> For truly "Being and Not-being grow out of one another;
> Difficult and easy complete one another.
> Long and short test one another;
> High and low determine one another.
> Pitch and mode give harmony to one another.
> Front and back give sequence to one another"
>
> (Lao Tzu, 1997:2)

With this dialectical thinking, the wise sage puts forward the proposition that "straight words seem crooked":

> Nothing under heaven is softer or more yielding than water; but when it attacks things hard and resistant there is not one of them that can prevail. For they can find no way of altering it. That the yielding conquers the resistant and the soft conquers the hard is a fact known by all men, yet utilized by none. Yet it is in reference to this that the Sage said '[o]nly he who has accepted the dirt of the country can be lord of its soil-shrines; only he who takes upon himself the evils of the country can become a king among those that dwell under heaven.' Straight words seem crooked.
>
> (Lao Tzu, 1997:82)

Though it is true that water can prevail in anything, and the soft can conquer the hard, it sounds absurd, and putting forward the truth in crooked words is the very essence of irony.

Laozi's philosophical spirit of the idea that "straight words seem crooked" has also been appreciated in later poetic theories. Su Shi suggests that "poetry takes unusual wit as purpose, takes abnormal but reasonable way as interest".[8] The so-called "abnormal but reasonable way" is the way that seems abnormal but in fact makes sense; without the former the poetry is boring, and without the latter the poetry becomes a rumour, so it must be the combination of the two that makes the poetry achieve its aesthetic charm and at the same time express the truth profoundly. "Abnormal way" is a challenge to common sense, and "reasonable way" is the recognition of the challenge. Just like the Western irony that guides people to jump out of the routine and the dominant culture to recognize the reasonableness of the so-called absurd ideas, the "abnormal but reasonable way" can also play this role if used well.

Among ancient Chinese poems there are some interesting ones that read like unreasonable silly words. For instance, "A Southern Song", written by Li Yi, a poet in the Tang Dynasty:

> Since I became a merchant's wife,
> I've in his absence passed my life.
> A sailor's faithful as the tide,
> Would I have been a sailor's bride![9]

Lyrics from Zhang Xian in the Song Dynasty are another example:

> How deeply I envy peach and apricot trees
> Newly wed to and oft caressed by vernal breeze![10]

A Qing Dynasty scholar, He Shang comments that both the poems are "unreasonable but intriguing"; they seem to violate the common sense and logic but express more deeply and truthfully their inner feelings. Since irony in the West originally meant to say stupid words which are finally proved to be the truth, we can say that these poems have some similarities to "irony".

Though the word "irony" was not used yet, the above ancient literary theories already possess some core elements of irony. The concepts of "straight words seem crooked", "abnormal but reasonable way" and "unreasonable but intriguing" all indicate the contradiction between words and meaning; they all contain a euphemistic negation of "norm" and "reason", and they all certainly require the reader's identification with the help of the context. At the same time, because of the violation of the common sense, the "abnormal" and "unreasonable" often produce a humorous effect. In order to see the interdependence and transformation of the contradictions, both writers and readers should have a detached manner to see through the surface of the phenomena.

However, the ancient Chinese scholars have done their thinking only at the perceptual and impressionistic levels. They like to use only a few words

to record what they feel, resulting in scattered viewpoints, and so they fail to systematize their theories with rational thinking in the way that Western philosophers do with irony.

Spring and Autumn-style writing in ancient Chinese literature

In the narratives of the pre-Qin period in China there are also rhetorical techniques similar to Western irony. Confucius, the great teacher and philosopher of the Spring and Autumn period, does not comment directly on the events or characters in his book *The Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chun Qiu* 春秋), but his writing style, reflected in the description of details and the choice of vocabulary, can subtly convey the attitude of praise or censure. Later the writing style used by Confucius is referred to as "Spring and Autumn style writing (chunqiu bifa 春秋笔法)" or "small words with great profundity (weiyan dayi 微言大义)". Confucius intends to write the history book in this style, knowing that readers will have a different understanding of it. "On this account Confucius said, 'Yes! It is the Spring and Autumn which will make men know me, and it is the Spring and Autumn which will make men condemn me'" (Legge, 2010:281–282). Just like Western irony, the Spring and Autumn writing style leads to the blurring of standpoints due to inconsistency between words and meaning.

Later, Sima Qian carries forward this writing method in *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shi Ji* 史记), his main purpose subtle and his language euphemistic; as a result it is hard to know the author's attitude from his words. In the Southern Song Dynasty, the method received a new name, "pili yangqiu (皮里阳秋)", in the book *A New Account of Tales of the World* (*Shishuo Xinyü*世说新语). "Yangqiu" (sun and autumn) is actually "chunqiu" (spring and autumn), which is Confucius's "Spring and Autumn style writing", but in order to avoid the name of the mother of the Emperor of Jianwen in the Jin Dynasty, the author uses "yangqiu" to replace "chunqiu". The performance of this writing technique is still that the writer hides the judgment in the mind, and the reader has to sense the judgment beyond the words. Liu Zhiji of the Tang Dynasty calls the method of not writing history in plain and direct language "qu bi (曲笔 subtle writing)" in his book *Shi Tong* (史通 *Comments on Works of History*). "Spring and Autumn style writing", "pili yangqiu" and "qu bi" all have implicitness as their basic tone without obvious conflicts, and the words and the attitude behind the words form a certain degree of tension, just as irony does in Western literature.

Besides the techniques used in history books, the ancient Chinese ministers often use the method of "feng (风)" to give kings or emperors advice for they do not dare to speak their expostulations directly. In "The Preface of Mao Poetry (Mao Shi Xu 毛诗序)", the author says:

> The one above uses feng (airs/moral influence) to transform those below, and those below use feng (airs/admonition) to criticize the one above;

when the main intent is set to music and the admonition is indirect, then the one who speaks does not commit any offense, while it is enough for the one who listens to take warning. Therefore, it is called feng (airs/moral influence/admonition).

(Liu Ruoyu, 2006:169)

The "feng (风)" and "feng (讽, the second character in '反讽 irony')" here are interchangeable, referring to a kind of euphemistic criticism, or, in other words, beating around the bush when trying to influence or persuade others. There are a series of such examples in "The Jesters (Hua Ji Lie Zhuan 滑稽列传)"[11] in *Records of the Historian*. Here is one of them:

When the first emperor of Qin wanted to extend his imperial park to the Hangu Pass in the east and to Yong and Chencang in the west, Zhan commented, "A good idea! And fill it with animals. If invaders come from the east, the stags can gore them." Thereupon the emperor abandoned his plan.

(Sima Qian, 2007:1187)

Zhan, a jester, greatly appreciates the idea of the first emperor of Qin, and even points out the wonderful benefit of extending the imperial park. However, it is this wonderful benefit that makes the Emperor realize the absurdity of his idea. In this way, Zhan eliminates the Emperor's unreasonable thoughts. So, here the basic function of "feng" is very similar to that of irony. In addition, using the method of "feng" to advise is also in accordance with the original function of Western rhetoric—rhetoric is originally the art of persuasion.

Sima Qian describes Zhan in this way: "Zhan was a dwarf, who made jokes which contained profound truths" (Sima Qian, 2007:1187). Sima Qian also lists similar events under the name "Hua Ji Lie Zhuan (The Jesters)". Sima Zhen of the Tang Dynasty explains in his book *Notes for Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shi Ji Suo Yin*《史记》索隐):

hua refers to mess, and ji refers to agreement, then hua ji means when the man with a ready tongue says something positive, he may really want to express something negative, and vice versa, so his words can mess up agreements and disagreements.

(Wang Xianpei, 2008:8)

So, "hua ji" is also quite similar to Western irony as both praise in the form of blame and blame in the form of praise.

In the feudal society ruled by emperors, the history writers or advisers choose to use the above techniques to protect themselves. The overly straightforward arguments in the history books might irritate the monarch, resulting in the writer's death; outspoken advice is also likely to cause the

emperor's dissatisfaction, putting the adviser in danger of being killed. As a result, the scholars or ministers at that time have to hide their judgment in accordance with the technique of "pili yangqiu", or reveal the unreasonableness with a pretended catering attitude, which is one of the reasons Booth sums up for why people use irony: "One standard answer is that we do it in self-protection. Whenever we use irony we are disguising a truth, usually a hostile or embarrassing truth, one that we don't dare speak right out" (Booth, 1983:727).

In the Ming and Qing dynasties, fictions begin to bloom; many authors take advantage of the techniques of "Spring and Autumn style writing", "pili yangqiu", "qu bi" and "hua ji". The techniques are used a lot, especially in "The Four Great Masterpieces of Ming Dynasty".[12] As these are not history books any more, compared with *The Spring and Autumn Annals* and *Records of the Grand Historian*, the praise and blame in these fictions, though still hidden behind words, are more obvious. Many literary theorists at the time, such as Jin Shengtan, Zhang Zhupo and Zhi Yanzhai, appreciate the delicate effect of these techniques when commenting on the fictions. These scholars' efforts to construct a fiction commentary system pave the way for future introduction to and research of the theory of irony.

Introduction of "irony" from the May 4th Movement to the middle of the 20th century

Chinese people began to take Western knowledge seriously after the Westernization Movement (1860s–1890s). During the period of the May 4th New Literature Movement in the early 20th century the translation and compilation of foreign-language books had reached a crescendo. In Chinese history, the period from the Westernization Movement to the May 4th New Literature Movement is referred to as a period of "Western learning spreading to the East". With this background, in the 1920s and 1930s, Chinese scholars noticed the concept of Western irony and its related criticism and began to translate, discuss, and disseminate it in China.

"Irony" and the establishment of modern Chinese rhetoric

One of the great achievements of the May 4th Movement is the establishment of a relatively complete system of rhetoric in China.

Tang Yue first proposed the concept of "rhetoric" based on the Western theories. In the book *Rhetoric*, published in 1923, he explained that there were many ways to classify the tropes, and "now according to the classification of *Nesfield's Senior Course of English Composition*, and at our discretion, we have a preliminary system as follows" (Zhou Zhenfu, 2004:589–590). His attempt became the prelude to the systematic classification of Chinese tropes. In his system, one trope called "fan yan (反言)" under the category of "based on comparison" is quite similar to Western irony.

Chen Wangdao studied in Japan from 1915 to 1919, a period of time when a large number of Western rhetoric theories were being introduced into Japan. As a result, his book *An Introduction to Rhetoric*, published in 1932, was clearly influenced by Western rhetoric. In the book he summed up 38 tropes; the sixth one, named "dao fan (倒反)" in the category of "tropes of artistic conception", was somewhat equivalent to irony in the Western rhetoric. Chen Wangdao defined it in this way: "What the speaker says is completely opposite to what he/she thinks, and this is the trope of dao fan" (Chen Wangdao, 1976:132). "Dao fan" can be divided into two types: One is that in which the addresser is too tender-hearted to speak directly, so he employs the words with the opposite meaning (there is no mockery or insult in this type); the other is that in which the addresser is too scared to speak directly, so he employs the words with the opposite meaning (there is mockery or insult in this type). The latter is also called "fan yu (反语)": "fan yu is a more important type in the trope of dao fan, it is used more in both articles and speeches, and is much more meaningful" (Chen Wangdao, 1976:135). After the definition, Chen Wangdao offers fragments from some famous literary works as examples, which include *The West Chamber*, *A Dream of Red Mansions*, *Water Margin* and *Records of the Historian • The Jesters*. Although "dao fan" is not exactly equal to irony in the West, it has the core elements of "saying the opposite of what is meant" and "mild resistance".

"Irony" and Chinese modern literary criticism

In the 1930s and 1940s, the New Criticism was introduced in China systematically, thanks to the two masters of the New Criticism who came to teach there. Richards was working as a visiting professor at Tsinghua University from 1929 to 1930; William Empson was a professor at Yenching University and The National Southwest Associated University from 1937 to 1939, and in 1947 he returned to work at Yenching University and did not leave until 1952. These two masters instructed Chinese students in the use of the method of close reading to analyze poetry and inevitably brought into Chinese universities the fashion of exploring for irony in poems. In addition to the overseas teachers, Bian Zilin, a Chinese poet, was teaching in the National Southwest Associated University at the same period as Empson. Bian Zilin graduated from the English Department of Peking University and did research work for two years at Oxford University in England; he was deeply influenced by Western modern poetry, and his own poems often flashed the light of irony.

Under the guidance of these foreign and Chinese professors, who have made great achievements in poetic theories and poetry writing, the young poets on Chinese university campuses were able to learn the theory of irony first-hand. Xin Di, Yuan Kejia, Hang Yuehe, Chen Jingrong, Tang Qi, Tang Shi and others published translated works and introductions that contained Western irony theory in journals and newspapers, including *Creation of*

Poetry, *Chinese New Poetry*, *Literature Magazine*, *Ta Kung Pao • Weekly Art* and *Yi Shi Newspaper • Literary Weekly*. Among these young poets Yuan Kejia contributed most. He wrote in "Talking about Drama Doctrine—on Modernization of New Poetry Ⅳ", published in Tianjin *Ta Kung Pao • Weekly Art* on June 8, 1948:

> Sense of irony--it is the most difficult to translate into Chinese, and also the most difficult to explain. Roughly speaking, it refers to the desire of an author who would like to use other complementary attitudes to make his own true attitude clear. It is different from wit: wit only negatively admits the existence of dissidents, while irony positively tries to win over dissidents, making itself clearer when set off by the contrast. The so-called 'dissidents' are the factors different from the dominant emotions in poetry.
>
> (Yuan Kejia, 1988:38–39)

In the same newspaper, on October 30th of the same year, Yuan Kejia published another article, *"Poetry and Democracy--on Modernization of New Poetry Ⅴ"*, in which he advocated that modern poetry should possess the qualities of democratic culture: "Modern poetry is dialectical (proceeding in curves), containable (containing various experiences that may join into a poem), dramatic (from contradiction to harmony), complex (and therefore sometimes ambiguous), creative ('poetry is an act of symbolizing'), organic, and modern" (Yuan Kejia, 1988:43). These elaborations from Yuan Kejia were all consistent with the essential points of irony in the New Criticism.

The introduction of irony also began to show up in Chinese novel theories, and Lu Xun's contribution was the most significant. Lu Xun read a lot of Kierkegaard's works during his stay in Japan. The latter's opinions on Socratic and Romantic irony influenced Lu Xun deeply. Regarding "satire", he observed that:

> although the author of the satire is mostly hated by those satirized, he is often full of good intentions, and the purpose of his satire is to help those satirized to improve themselves, instead of pressing them into the water.
>
> (Lu Xun, 2009:391)

Of all the satirical novels of the Qing Dynasty, Lu Xun appreciated *The Scholars* only, saying that:

> Wu Ching-tau's *The Scholars* is the first novel in which a writer criticizes social abuses without any personal malice, directing his attack mainly on the literati. The style is warm and humorous, gentle and ironical. This must rank as China's first novel of social satire
>
> (Lu Hsun, 1976:273).[13]

When teaching the evolution of Chinese novels in Xi'an in 1924, he concluded in his sixth lecture:

> Innuendo and subtlety are essential in satirical writing. If the author exaggerates or puts the case too bluntly, his work loses its literary value. But later novelists did not pay enough attention to this, with the result that after *The Scholars* we can say there was no real satire.
>
> (Lu Hsun, 1976:413)

In Lu Xun's view, the writing skills in *Exposure of the Official World* and *Strange Events of the Last Twenty Years* are much worse because both are just outright abuse. Lu Xun does not use the term "fan feng (irony)" because "irony" was translated as "feng ci (satire)" at the time, but from his description of the purpose and artistic features of "feng ci (satire)", we can see that what he advocates is not aggressive "satire" but mild "irony" with sympathy and gentle criticizing towards the ridiculed. In addition, Lu Xun's extensive use of irony in his writing has also contributed a lot to the dissemination of irony in China. His writing style influenced many young writers at that time, and a large number of outstanding literary works with a sense of irony were produced during and after the period of the May 4th Movement.

From the May 4th Movement to the middle of the 20th century, the introduction of irony mainly focussed on three fields: Irony in Western traditional rhetoric, irony in the New Criticism and irony in novel writing and criticism. The introduction greatly enriched Chinese literature and criticism at that time, bringing it in line with the world literature and criticism. However, when the scholars devoted themselves to applying irony to poetry, novels and comments, they failed to relate irony to profounder philosophies.

Introduction of "irony" since 1978

In the middle of the 20th century, the study of irony was quite stagnant. The occasional exception was *Selected Works of Modern American and British Bourgeois Literary Theories*, a book published by the Institute of Literature Study of the Chinese Academy of Sciences in 1962. The book embodied the articles "On Ambiguity" and "Irony as a Principle of Structure". The original purpose of this book was to use it as a target for the Chinese academics to criticize the bourgeois culture; ironically, the two articles in the book actually provided them with the materials for studying the new critical irony.

In the last two decades of the 20th century, Chinese intellectuals launched a new round of the "Western learning spreading to the East" movement with greater enthusiasm. Since the late 1970s a great number of Western works on different subjects have been translated and published, with these books entering the Western ideologies and culture. Since "irony" has been mentioned from the perspectives of rhetoric, philosophy and literary criticism

as a keyword in many of these books, Chinese scholars have intentionally made very careful introductions to the concept.

Introduction of monographs on "irony"

Since the 1980s, Chinese scholars have successively translated and published monographs with the theme of "irony", enabling us to understand this Western concept from different angles.

Muecke's *Irony and the Ironic* (translated by Zhou Faxiang) mainly interprets irony in the field of literary criticism. He clarifies the evolution of the concept of irony from ancient Greece to the first half of the 20th century and lists its five basic features—contrast between a reality and an appearance, pretence and confident unawareness, comic pleasure, detachment and aesthetic quality—and also classifies irony into a variety of types. The detailed research and analysis of the diachronic evolution and synchronic comparison makes the book a must for learning Western irony.

Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates* (translated by Tang Chenxi) depicts irony from the perspective of existentialism by interpreting Socratic irony and criticizing romantic irony. As Kierkegaard upgrades irony from the level of rhetoric to the level of philosophy, the book becomes a turning point in the history of irony research in China.

Hutcheon elaborates on the characteristics of irony's meaning in her book *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony* (translated by Xu Xiaowen); in this, she emphasizes the unique political function of irony and thus warns that irony has certain risks.

Richard Rorty, in his book *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (translated by Xu Wenrui), explores the contingency of language first, from which he infers the contingency of selfhood and then pictures an ideal ironic liberal utopia that recognizes the contingency and that will be the hope of the society's future. The ideal members in this liberal utopia are the liberal-ironists who can promote public solidarity with a sense of "us"; at the same time they are sceptics, denying the existence of absolute force or capitalized truth, and they are serious about the contingency of selfhood and eager to maximize private creation. While other theorists worry that the postmodern culture may disintegrate metaphysics and bring about faith collapse and social solidarity loss, Rorty envisions an ironic liberal culture as the future for postmodernism and the prospect for Western philosophy.

These monographs expound irony from the fields of literature, philosophy, society, politics and so on, enlightening Chinese scholars on how amazing irony is in order to develop its concept in different fields. As a direct theoretical resource, these works have laid a theoretical foundation for Chinese scholars to carry out further research and discussion on irony.

Introduction of works related to "irony"

During the new movement of "Western learning spreading to the East", the Chinese rhetoric circle makes greater efforts to translate Western traditional and modern rhetoric books. From the ancient Greek Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (translated by Luo Niansheng) to the contemporary deconstructive rhetoric works, most have already had Chinese versions. Even though some important rhetorical works, such as *The Rhetoric for Herennius*, *On Invention*, *A General Rhetoric* by the Group μ and Campbell's *Rhetorical Philosophy*, have no Chinese versions yet, their main contents have been introduced in books written by Chinese scholars. In addition, the development of science and technology makes it possible for Chinese scholars to access a lot of original foreign-language books on the Internet: for example, Brook's *Understanding Poetry*, Booth's *A Rhetoric of Irony* and Burke's *A Rhetoric of Motives* are all available. Thanks to the efforts of Chinese scholars and the convenience of science and technology, Western rhetoric has been introduced comprehensively in China, which helps Chinese people better understand irony's different concerns in different periods of Western rhetoric history.

In philosophy, since the 1980s, a number of ancient Greek philosophical works have been translated and published in China, including *The Complete Works of Plato* (translated by Wang Xiaochao), Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (translated by Wu Yongquan) and Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (translated by Wu Shoupeng). From these books, Chinese people can learn about Socrates and his irony directly. At the same time, the study of Socrates by foreign scholars has also been translated a lot, such as in A. E. Taylor's *Socrates* (translated by Zhao Jiquan and Li Zhen) and Allan Bloom's *The Republic of Plato* (translated by Liu Chenguang). In all these works irony has been employed as an important concept to use in understanding Socrates' thoughts. The other major philosophical books that contain "irony" and that have been introduced in China include Hegel's *Aesthetics* (translated by Zhu Guangqian), Р.М. Габитова's *German Romantic Philosophy* (translated by Wang Nianning) and *The Complete Works of Marx and Engels (Vol. 40)*, and irony is explained from different social and ideological backgrounds in these books.

Irony also appears in a great number of books on literary criticism. The works that carefully elaborate and analyze irony as a key word include Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp* (translated by Li Zhiniu et al.), Schlegel's *Romantic Style—Schlegel's Critical Collection* (translated by Li Bojie), Manfred Frank's *Introduction to Aesthetics in Early German Romanticism* (translated by Nie Jun et al.), Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* (translated by Chen Hui et al.), Ransom's *The New Criticism* (translated by Wang Labao and Zhang Zhe), *The Collected Works of the New Criticism* (edited by Zhao Yiheng), Miller's *Reading Narrative* (translated by Shen Dan) and Ihab Hassan's "Toward a Concept of Postmodernism" (translated by Wang Yuechuan—it is in this article that Hassan lists irony as one of the important features of postmodernism. The list is really long. Though these works

analyze the forms and meanings of irony from the perspective of literature, it is difficult to separate irony from philosophical thinking in the analysis. These literary criticism works and articles provide a rich theoretical basis and reference for understanding, researching and applying irony in Chinese literary criticism.

Introduction of Western concept "irony" by Chinese scholars

In addition to translating, Chinese scholars have also written articles to introduce the Western concept of "irony".

Since different Western schools in different times highlight different aspects of "irony", many Chinese scholars choose to introduce irony in the theory of a certain school or a certain person. Wang Fusheng focusses on studying Socratic irony, and in his article "Socratic Dialectics and Its Critique" he explains that Socratic irony is more than a manner of speech; it has substantive significance, showing the confrontation between the subjective thinking and the existing ideology (Wang Fusheng, 2005:77–78). Zhang Yuneng, a scholar interested in German Romanticism, points out in the article "The Esthetical Principles of the Early Romanticism in Germany" that irony is the most important esthetical principle and esthetical category in Romantic aesthetics, and it is the concentrated expression of the spiritual creativity of artists, poets and even all human beings (Zhang Yuneng, 2004:85–91). In "An Exploration on F. Schlegel's 'Romantic Irony'" Li Bojie offers a detailed analysis of romantic irony in three respects: Way of thinking, art creation and humanity-value theory (Li Bojie, 1993:18–26). Zhao Yiheng, specializing in the New Criticism, wrote a book entitled *New Criticism—A Unique Formalist Literary Theory*, in which he introduces and comprehensively analyzes the basic theories of the New Criticism and devotes one chapter to irony (Zhao Yiheng, 1986). Deng Zhiyong's monograph *Rhetoric Theory and Rhetoric Philosophy: A Study of the Leading Rhetorician Kenneth Burke* includes a detailed interpretation of the dialectical thoughts of Burke's new rhetoric (Deng Zhiyong, 2011). In Chen Yue's doctoral thesis *Deconstruction and "Error"—Studies on Paul de Man's Literary Criticism*, there is a section entitled "Irony: Instant Rhetoric in the Dimension of Time" in which he introduces De Man's observation that irony is a rhetorical process and instantaneous in temporality (Chen Yue, 2008). Chen Houliang's monograph *Reality, Test and Representation: A Study of Linda Hutcheon's Poetics of Postmodernism* (Chen Houliang, 2011) and Luo Qian's article "Democracy Prior to Philosophy: On Political Philosophy of Rorty's Irony" (Luo Qian, 2011:55–60) not only help Chinese readers understand how postmodern theorists view the relationship between irony and social politics but also give them a better understanding of postmodernism.

Some scholars also introduce and discuss irony from the perspective of its historical development. Liu Cong proves in his article "From Ironic Rhetoric to Ironic Practice--Analysis of the Metaphysical Significance of Irony" that

following the ancient Greek drama, irony may simply have been regarded as a way of speaking, but in fact, from Socrates to the early German Romanticism, then to Kierkegaard, irony has always been full of philosophical interest. Liu Cong continues to elaborate, arguing that Kierkegaard first takes irony as a practical activity in human existence, and the contemporary American scholar Wessell, when expounding Marx's Class Theory, considers irony the embodiment of the proletariat in the real world; the evolution prompts irony to improve itself intrinsically from the rhetoric to the theory then to the practice (Liu Cong, 2013:13–18). In the article "On Irony--An Investigation into an Important Category in the History of Western Aesthetics", Wang Zhenglong mainly researches irony in the first half of the 20th century—the New Critical Irony—and irony in the second half of the 20th century, when it was studied by Western scholars from the perspectives of semiotics and narratology, especially Roland Barthes's and Jonathan Culler's views on it. Wang Zhenglong also puts forward several theoretical thoughts about irony: It is an unreliable narrative and is related to the subjective spirit, so creation and appreciation of irony is not just for the satirical or paradoxical effect of language but should have the Socratic spirit of negation and questioning (Wang Zhenglong, 2007:112–116). Through the retrospective of the evolution of irony, these articles prove that it is active in multiple fields, warning the readers not only to be interested in its linguistic form but to dig deeper into its connotation and pay more attention to its dynamic role in the field of practice.

Overall, during this round of the "Western learning spreading to the East" movement, the translation and introduction of irony by Chinese scholars offer important reference material for Chinese people to use in understanding its forms, functions and philosophical connotation; at the same time, the reference material has prompted Chinese scholars to make a more exhaustive study of irony. Irony, in this way, has become a popular word in Chinese academia.

"Irony" in Chinese contemporary literary criticism

Irony, a Western concept, is not just translated and introduced in China; it is also used in Chinese literature and cultural reflection, and in the practice of literary criticism in China, irony has formed its own Chinese characteristics.

Application of "irony" in Chinese literary criticism

After studying the Western irony from various perspectives, Chinese scholars begin to try to apply irony in the practice of literary criticism, expecting it to contribute to the study of Chinese contemporary literature.

In Chinese literary criticism irony is most widely used to appreciate literary works or writers. Almost all the important works and writers at home and abroad can be appreciated from the perspective of irony. Literary critics may appreciate a single work or a single writer, such as "The Art of Irony

in Joseph Heller's Catch-22" (Duan Congli, 2008) and "On Ironical Skill of Wang Shuo's Fiction" (Yang Jianlong, 2002:62–66). They may also discuss irony's different features in Chinese works and Western works, or compare the ironic style of Chinese writers with that of Western writers, such as "Irony in *Gulliver's Travels* and *Flowers in the Mirror*" (Jiang Shuhua, 2004) and "Ironic Arts of Lu Xun and Kafka" (Zhang Tianyou, 2004:58–64). They may even make an inductive analysis of the overall characteristics of irony in a particular literary period or in a particular genre of literature: For example, "The Ironic Narration of Chinese Fictions in Ming and Qing Dynasty" (Wu Jing, 2003) and "Modern Avant-garde Verse and Western Ironic Poetics" (Gong Minlü, 2008:97–102). These articles of appreciative criticism explore irony from the literary works' language, plots, narrative perspectives, themes, etc., pointing out irony's forms, effect and significance. Applying theories to literary criticism is highly operational, so this kind of articles accounts for the largest proportion of all articles on irony. The large number of such papers proves that Chinese literary critics are not satisfied with just learning irony theories; they are already confident enough to use these theories.

While sticking to its own national characteristics, Chinese literature constantly seeks breakthroughs in order to keep pace with the world. Inspired by Western literature, Chinese writers expect irony to play a role in Chinese contemporary literature. The formal rebellion of the avant-garde in the 1980s was a bold attempt, but after this vigorous form experiment, the avant-garde quickly went silent. Chinese critics are keenly aware that, besides borrowing Western literary forms and theories, the innovation of contemporary Chinese literature must be grounded on China's own literary tradition and its current cultural environment. Chen Xiaoming points out that the "Late Generation" writers, who were active after the avant-garde, were committed to reflecting the suffering life of the grassroots people, so their writing returned to the style of realism, which marks the return of literature to the paradigms of modernity and aesthetics. However, the "Late Generation" is not willing to be bound by the principle of realism, which seems like a kind of regression in art, as modern aesthetics has shown exhaustion after it overdraws its power. Therefore, the "Late Generation" strives to display their uniqueness in thoughts and art. They make use of diverse artistic techniques, such as sudden variations or sudden turns, in order to break the extreme wholeness and linearity of modern aesthetics. Perhaps this process "reflects faithfully how Chinese novel narrating seeks internally the postmodern methods" (Chen Xiaoming, 2005:120). After analyzing the evolution of Chinese contemporary literature, Chen Xiaoming raises a question: The realism of the "Late Generation" is finally a victory of formalism, and the modern aesthetics they exhibit is only a transition,

> but the reality of China now is of factuality, how can we truly enter the present, and come out in a literary way--are there more powerful postmodern writing strategies, for example, more profound

criticizing or more rhetorical irony? Then such strategies will show the self-consciousness and transcendence of this generation.

(Chen Xiaoming, 2005:120)

The elaboration and question from the scholar indicate that Chinese critics hope that contemporary literature can be established in the current aesthetic system and at the same time transcend the times; they expect a more critical and rhetorical irony to promote the innovation of Chinese literature.

Some of the scholars propose constructing Chinese contemporary culture based on the theory of Western irony. Zhao Yiheng, with his knowledge of formalistic theories and his understanding of rhetorical irony, advocates that "contemporary culture should become an ironic culture" (Zhao Yiheng, 2011:14). This culture allows the coexistence of different opinions; the purpose of the debate is not to achieve consensus but to achieve harmony in the conflict. Taking China's online community as an example, he comes to the conclusion that China is now facing an undeniable era of irony, in which the ironic culture will eventually lead to a harmonious society. This is the very correspondence between the new critical irony and the traditional Chinese humanistic spirit. The Chinese tradition has always highlighted "harmony": Laozi says "heaven and earth unite together (tian di xiang he 天地相和)", Confucius argues "it is harmony that is prized (he wei gui 和为贵)" and Mencius proposes "the union arising from the accord of Men (ren he 人和)". These famous quotations all belong to the idea of "harmony but not uniformity (he er bu tong 和而不同)". The contradictory balance principle of the new critical irony obviously also signifies that the contradictory parties are in harmony but not in uniformity. Therefore, when Zhao Yiheng directs the study of the new critical irony from the text to the culture, he conceives of a harmonious society in which multiple values are compatible. Zhao Yiheng and scholars with some similar opinions are all expecting and showing appreciation of the new cultural phenomenon in China that was triggered by irony.

Undoubtedly, in the analysis and application of "irony", there are misunderstandings and misuses in the Chinese literary circle. In some commentary articles the theory of irony is mechanically set into them, making the commentary blunt and far-fetched; some of the studies on irony do not pay enough attention to the historical and philosophical dimensions, etc. The misunderstandings and misuses remind us that the study of irony should not be confined to one aspect as we cannot hold a part as the whole; since irony is a developing concept, only by understanding its characteristics and varieties in different periods, and its performance and connotation at different levels, can we have a clear and comprehensive knowledge of it.

Characteristics of "irony" in Chinese literary criticism

Although irony has been highly valued in Chinese literature and criticism, it is not a native concept. With the differences between China and the West in

cultural traditions, thinking patterns and realistic contexts, irony in China has inevitably showed a certain degree of distortion and displayed some Chinese characteristics.

Hybridism

The first characteristic of irony in Chinese literary criticism is hybridism. The Western literary theories, which have been diachronically developing for hundreds of years, have crowed into China synchronically, that is, Chinese scholars have to learn the theories of different periods nearly at the same time, leading to the hybridism of theoretical absorption in China, and irony is no exception. As a result, in literature and criticism, irony of different styles or in different ideologies is mixed up and jointly used. For example, Li Jun argues that in Han Shaogong's novel *Baogao Zhengfu* (*Report to the Government*), though the prisoners' pet phrases are full of mainstream political vocabularies, the solemn imitation actually sounds ludicrous, "so with the parody, the text meaning appears ambiguous, paradoxical and ironic … constituting a kind of disrespect, dispelling and even subversion of the legitimacy and authority of dominant discourses" (Li Jun, 2009:97). The irony analyzed by Li Jun here should belong to a postmodern language skill. He continues to say that the defence of Wei Xiaoxian, a character in the novel who was once an official and later imprisoned for going whoring, is

> a true voice of the people expressed in the form of banter, the complaint against official corruption expressed in the form of ironic fable, and the inner resentment revealed in a manner of orgiastic false madness, thus avoiding a direct conflict with the dominant ideology. And in this way, irony here has become a narrative strategy.
>
> (Li Jun, 2009:98)

The irony here, characterized by its obvious contradiction between words and meaning, and with the purpose of criticizing by using complimentary remarks, should be a narrative strategy in the category of traditional rhetoric. After that, Li Jun adds that the novel contrasts the life in jail with the life outside the prison, then forms an ironic structure between the chapters. The ironic structure here is clearly the balanced structure emphasized by the New Criticism. In this single critical article at least three kinds of Western irony theories are employed to interpret the irony in one text. The article first illustrates the strong vitality of irony itself: The concept of irony has developed for more than 2,000 years, yet its concept in any period of time can always radiate vitality. Second it exhibits the complexity of China's current cultural context. After the reform and opening up policy, various cultures, ideologies, schools, etc., flood from the West into China, and nearly all of them hold their own places in China's theoretical circles so that modernism and postmodernism do not constitute a temporal continuity like they do in

the West, but rather "the ideas of pre-modern, modern and postmodern are intertwined and then form a complex cultural context" (Song Wei, 2012:233). In such a cultural context, Chinese critics cannot simply use the irony of one Western school; instead they inevitably draw on the essence of irony from all Western schools, and consciously adapt, combine and synthesize them according to their own needs, thus making up the unique irony they need.

In addition, the hybrid use of the concept of irony in China is also caused by Chinese cultural traditions as well as its cultural reality. Chinese cultural traditions are very different from those of the West. Under the enlightenment of the long-standing and well-developed metaphysical philosophy, Western critics like to think about the eternal problems that transcend phenomena, such as the essence of the world, the rational spirit and the existence. Chinese criticism, on the contrary, has been closely related to political ideals since ancient times. The idea that "[l]iterature is that by which one carries the Wa." is China's deep-rooted literary tradition, and even with the impact of Western literary thoughts this tradition has not been fundamentally weakened. Therefore, although Chinese contemporary literature and criticism presents diversified styles and rich content, and the ironic techniques in Chinese literature are very similar to that in the Western modern or postmodern literature, most of these are still closely related to politics. Chinese writers and scholars think more about how to use literature to guide people to pay more attention to reality, so they mainly employ irony to play the function of exhortations under the mask of ridicule. Still, take Li Jun's closing reading of *Report to the Government* as an example. The critic clarifies that although the novel is full of Western ironic forms, such as linguistic irony, rhetorical irony and structural irony, it eventually offers an end to enlightenment and edification. "The author unconsciously retreats back from the 'internationalization' route in the first half to the 'nationalization' taste, and the narrative in the second half accords very well with the Chinese aesthetic convention" (Li Jun, 2009:100). Chinese civilization stays in the feudal system for too long a period of time, and China urgently needs to throw off these shackles to establish a modern culture. Chinese modern and contemporary literature and criticism have clearly demonstrated this demand. However, since the 1990s, Chinese intellectuals' task of offering modern enlightenment has not been fully fulfilled, with postmodern theories rapidly pouring in. Various postmodern art forms are so novel and fascinating that Chinese writers are eager to try. Therefore, irony in Chinese literature shows a characteristic of hybridism as its form belongs to postmodern art technique while its inner spirit is a part of enlightening appeals, or it borrows postmodern irony techniques but insists on the modern spirit. In the same way, in literary criticism irony has a unique feature of combining the interpretation of Western irony skills with the promotion of Chinese literary spirit.

Due to the differences between Chinese and Western literary traditions, cultural contexts and cultural demands, it is certainly not feasible to simply

utilize Western theories in China in a doctrinaire manner. Irony that grows up in the Western context can only be stabilized in China by adjusting to the realistic needs of its country. Therefore, whether it is a hybridization of Chinese and Western styles or of different literary schools, once the distortion of irony is for the purpose of adapting to the local culture, it should be considered a positive distortion.

Worldliness

Irony in Chinese literary criticism usually directs at the matters in the real world especially since the 1990s it has expanded its critical power to all aspects: Doubting the traditional value system, examining history and culture, deconstructing grand narratives, etc. With the expansion of its power, Chinese scholars' concern has also been with advancing to new fields. However, in the final analysis, irony in Chinese literature still mainly stays at the phenomenal level, or it is still a worldly irony targeting worldly affairs, so the critics can always sense from the ironic texts the realistic problems of a certain period of China. For example, works like "Kong Yiji", *The True Story of Ah Q*, *Sinking*, *Bu Li* ("Bolshevistic Salute"), *The Movable Parts* and so on can all be called social fiction; although there is no typical confrontation between virtue and vice in these works, there is hidden irony towards a particular irrational society or system. On the contrary, Western ironic works are more likely to transcend practical experience with the eternal human dilemma as the theme, such as Kafka's *Metamorphosis* and *The Castle*. In short, unlike the transcendental irony in the West, irony in Chinese literature and criticism is worldly for it seldom explores the spiritual predicament that all human beings have to face throughout the whole of human history. The root of the different performance of irony lies in the differences between China and the West in terms of their realistic environment and pursuits. Western scholars and writers can think about the world from a higher perspective of human existence and would like to explore the inner world of the soul because pursuing purification and sublimation has always been the tradition of the Western literature. In addition, "that is the result of self-evolution after the westerners solved their basic material problems and reduced their external pressure" (Li Yi, 2006:56). China, however, has set its new goal as developing its economy, achieving national prosperity after its reform and opening up, so its contemporary literature and literary criticism should, of course, mainly reflect the desire to improve the society. Chinese intellectuals have to consider more about people's livelihood issues, including demanding social and political progress, pursuing a modern life, etc., which is why they rarely use irony from outsiders' perspectives or with transcendental attitudes to think metaphysically about human existence. The great concern over worldly matters in Chinese literature and criticism inevitably makes irony worldly too. But since this worldly pursuit is consistent with China's social and cultural conditions, the worldly irony

is a reasonable, impressive and profound irony when it is used to identify wrongdoings in society, pursue life value and personal happiness, and try to reconstruct an ideal worldly culture.

Reflection on "irony" in Chinese literary theory

Although communication between different cultures will surely bring about the misreading of theories, some of this misreading involves the re-creation that occurs in the process of adapting to the new culture and can give the exotic theories vitality to survive, so this kind of misreading is worthy of advocating. Meanwhile, some misreading is the real misunderstanding or misinterpretation, which should be avoided and corrected as much as possible. Irony in China does have such misunderstandings in theoretical research and critical practice.

The first misunderstanding is to confuse irony with satire. Since the word "irony" was introduced into China, it has often been identified with satire; in its early translations, "feng ci (satire)" was used most. Irony is more or less satiric, but the two are not the same. The ironist is more sympathetic than accusatory towards the ironized, while the satirist abhors the satirized. Lu Xun's feelings towards Ah Q are contradictory: Sympathetic with his sufferings and infuriated at his indifference. The more stories about Ah Q that Lu Xun tells, the more the sympathy from the author becomes obvious. This writing technique should be referred to as irony rather than satire. However, there are critical articles that interpret *The True Story of Ah Q* as a satire on Ah Q's ugly soul. On the contrary, Qian Zhongshu, in *Fortress Besieged*, clearly does not sympathize with but despises the so-called intellectuals in Sanlv University. Qian's description of their ridiculous behaviour is intended to condemn them. Therefore, although the tone of the whole work is ironic, the description of these people is satiric. But some scholars lump the irony and satire in *Fortress Besieged* together, either interpreting all the techniques as irony or all of them as satire. There are many such examples in Chinese literary criticism. In fact, the entire criticism circle has never clearly defined the differences between irony and satire, resulting in a lot of confusion in critical practice. To correct this misunderstanding or misusing, there is still much work for Chinese critics to do.

The second misunderstanding is the playfulness of irony. Hassan points out that irony in modernism is play, complexity and formalism, and irony in postmodernism becomes the root of language and the entropy of meaning. The current cultural background in China is just the juxtaposition of modernity and postmodernity. Excellent ironic texts in Chinese contemporary literature take the form of game-play while embodying the entropy of meaning; examples of this are Wang Meng's *The Stubborn Porridge*, *To Bathe, Or Not To Bathe*, etc. The game-play form of these Chinese novels cannot cover their inner spirit: The ironic humour in the texts makes the meaning uncertain and then secretly rebels against the cultural or language order; in

other words, the irony in the texts shows a serious confrontation in a relaxed and humorous tone. However, since the turn of the century, influenced by the commodity culture, the characteristic of the playfulness of irony has been infinitely exaggerated in the booming popularity of literature and on-line literature, and has even evolved into a trend of "big talk" and "hoax parody". "Big talk" and "hoax parody" seem to be similar to ironic parody, but they actually have become the pure play of the texts as their essence is not humour but entertainment, in which the value and the position become vague or are simply missing, unable to achieve the ironic role of resistance. Hutcheon observes that when talking about postmodernist art, "[to] include irony and play is *never* necessarily to exclude seriousness and purpose in postmodernist art" (Hutcheon, 1988:27). The playfulness of irony in China, however, just emphasizes play and ignores seriousness and purpose. The authors escape the value judgment when playing with the texts and the language, and give up irony's edge of criticizing. In this way, the texts are reduced to what Lu Xun calls the works of "laugh for the purpose of laugh". Nan Fan declares:

> Many writers' irony is only a temporary expression game, a kind of sub-tle subversion that is just limited to the level of sentences … Their sharp words are more like regional surgical operations that cannot shake the whole structure. Bantering, scathing, some sentences are like a sting from a hornet, perhaps producing a small lump, but nothing more.
>
> (Nan Fan, 2009:183–184)

It is literary criticism's duty to correct this misusing of irony. Facing game-style irony, critics should warn against the hidden crisis of value nihilism, encouraging the writers to care about the spiritual value, the most essential value, of literature, rather than economic interests, and urging them to create more significant irony. At the same time, critics should also take responsibility for guiding readers to understand the differences between serious irony and playful irony, and gradually improve their ability to appreciate literature.

From ancient Greece to postmodern society, from the West to China, the theory of irony has been constantly evolving. Through the history of irony, we can even see the history of human thought. Thinking deeply about the world, speaking out tenderly in humorous words, the charm of irony attracts scholars through the ages. In the present era, which is full of open mind and strong critical spirit, irony has a bigger space in which to play its role. If we observe carefully, we can find irony everywhere, not only in literary works but in many other art forms, such as architecture, painting, music, etc., and even in our daily life. It has been integrated into the spirit of modern people. It is a dose of decompression drug for modern people in the face of powerful reality: It uses humour to relieve pain, exploits banter to resolve conflicts and employs laughter to confront predicaments.

At the end of this chapter, I can't help but ask the question: In today's era of irony, what should modern people do after mocking and negating the existing norms with irony? From the evolution of irony, we can see that in both the West and China, contemporary irony faces two directions for its future development. One is to question the traditional dominant paradigm while suggesting the possibility of a new paradigm, thereby introducing a new cultural concept in which multiple values can coexist harmoniously; the other is to question and even dispel the traditional paradigm, without an intention to introduce a new one, exposing the current culture to the danger of nihilism. According to the similarities shared by the two directions, we are now being enthusiastic about questioning and dispelling, and then we have to consider what new era we will enter after we step out of the era of irony? Many Western theorists have realized the dangers brought about by irony. Hutcheon, for example, worries that the dilemma of postmodern irony is that it cannot transform questioning into reforming practice. At the same time, theorists like Hassan and Rorty have analyzed the constructiveness of irony, while De Man and Miller have laid stress on the infinite openness of the meaning of the text. They all intend to call for attention to the positive side of construction rather than the Deconstruction of irony. The heated discussion on irony in China is mostly focussed on appreciating the positive changes it brings about: For example, it makes Chinese literary forms more artistic and intellectuals more critical, but the danger of irony has not been paid enough attention to. I believe that as long as we are in the era of irony, both Western and Chinese theorists and critics need to make more efforts to guide irony to avoid the valuing of nihilism and play a more positive role in construction.

Notes

1 Hu Yamin points out that the new critics sometimes confused irony with paradox in their theoretical exposition; in fact, the two terms are not the same as "irony emphasizes the contradiction between literal meaning and implied meaning, while in paradox the conflicting meanings can generally be seen in words." See Wang Xianpei, Hu Yamin: *Principles of Literary Criticism*, Huazhong Normal University Press, 2000, p150, Note ①.

2 The English version for Group μ's *A General Rhetoric* is not available in China; the Table of Metaboles is quoted from two Chinese scholars' book *Western Rhetoric.*

3 Parabasis is the main song of the chorus inserted into the story in ancient Greek drama, which is used to point out the plot, indicate the author's attitude and so on.

4 The quotation comes from Jacques Derrida's *Mémoires pour Paul de Man*. The book is written in French, and there is no English version available in China, so the quotation was translated by the author of this chapter from the Chinese version: Derrida, J. (1999). *duō yì de jìyì—wèi bǎoluó· dé màn ér zuò* ('Mémoires pour Paul de Man'). (Jiang Zihua, Trans.). Beijing: zhōngyāng biānyì chūbǎnshè ('Central Compilation & Translation Press').

5 Laozi, also known as Lao Tzu, was an ancient Chinese philosopher and writer, the founder of philosophical Taoism. "The Way", also translated as "Tao" or "the truth" in other English versions.

6　Zhuangzi, also known as Chuang Tzu, was an influential Chinese philosopher. He is credited with writing a work known by his name, *Zhuangzi*, which is one of the foundational texts of Taoism.

7　The original Chinese sentence is "恒患意不称物，文不逮意。盖非知之难，能之难也。"

8　The original Chinese sentence is "诗以奇趣为宗，反常合道为趣。"

9　The original poem is《江南曲》"嫁得瞿塘贾，朝朝误妾期，早知潮有信，嫁与弄潮儿。" Translated by Xu Yuanchong.

10　The original lyrics: "沉恨细思，不如桃杏，犹解嫁东风" Translated by Xu Yuanchong.

11　"Hua Ji Lie Zhuan (滑稽列传)": The literal translation should be "Funny Biography", while Yang Xianyi and Dian Naidie translated it as "The Jesters" for it is a series of stories about the jesters in different dynasties.

12　The Four Great Masterpieces of Ming Dynasty: *Water Margin*, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms, Journey to the West,* and *The Plum in the Golden Vase.*

13　Lu Hsun and Lu Xun are the same person in different translated English versions and was one of the greatest Chinese writers of the 20th century.

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Afterword

Hu Yamin

From planning to completion, the book on keywords took years of effort. In 2005, I conceived the idea of studying the keywords in Western literary criticism when I worked on "30 Years of Chinese Literary Criticism (1978–2009)" which was one of the sub-projects of "Sinicization of Western Literary Theory and Construction of Chinese Literary Theory" (The Ministry of Education's major research project on philosophy and social sciences). In 2007, my project "Keywords in the Western Literary Theory and Contemporary Chinese Literary Criticism" was subsidized by the NSSFC (National Social Science Fund of China) which launched the study of keywords.

Soon, I realized that it was never going to be an easy task. First, there was a sea of materials for us to read and select from. Sometimes we had to do translation work from several different languages. Second, each keyword, with its own history, was understood, explained and defined by different schools in varying ways, and most keywords went beyond their original boundary. Third, the dissemination and variation of the keywords in contemporary China had to be taken into our consideration. Therefore, studying and writing on several or even dozens of keywords was really a tremendous challenge to our brains. In the interim, "keywords" seemed to be a part of our life. We discussed it not only in class, in emails, but also on various occasions, including in conferences, during trips and even at table. One of us once mentioned in an academic conference that apart from work, he had dedicated himself to the keyword "metaphor" for eight years. As the chief editor, I have no doubt about it.

With careful reading and note-taking, the team members almost reached the extreme of our diligence and patience. When new materials or ideas which might rectify or subvert the existing entry were obtained, although greatly delighted, we would patiently scrutinize, reconsider and revise our manuscripts. Facing my rigorous and even hypercritical suggestions (which I regretted afterwards), all the team members would revise the manuscripts repeatedly, for we had a shared wish to advance contemporary Chinese literary criticism by restoring the historical features of these keywords. In this hard but fulfilling journey, we enjoyed the exploration of Chinese and Western civilizations and Chinese literature.

Two of the remarkable qualities of *Keywords* are critical thinking and the abundance of academic information. Unlike most dictionaries that only list and introduce terms, this book is more critical. Through the exploration of the past and the future of the key words and the interpretation of different critical theories, the book is quite theoretical and reflective. In addition, the study of keywords builds a dialogue between Chinese and Western critical theories, which reflects the team members' deep insights and theoretical creativity. The readers may obtain some pleasure from the historical and logical analysis of the keywords such as "discourse", "literariness" and "ideology". Another contribution of this book lies in the detailed and reliable theoretical documents, including the interpretations of important theoretical viewpoints, the discoveries and supplements of new materials, and data about the dissemination in China of the keywords from Western literary theory. All the materials in this book are carefully selected and refined. Most of them are classical ones or those that possess great theoretical value. In view of these two qualities, it may be said that "such a deep exploration of a word takes the initiative in China" (a comment from the National Social Science Fund of China).

In the study of the keywords, I was responsible for the overall planning, item selection, and the outline. I also guided, reviewed and unified the manuscripts. To make the structure of the chapters consistent with each other, I repeatedly negotiated with the team members making adjustments, and finalized an acknowledged structural design. Since then, I reviewed the manuscripts submitted by the team members and proposed amendments. In recent years, I revised the manuscripts three times before the completion of the project, applying for the "National Achievements Library" and publication. During this process, I was both excited and in pain, and sometimes even exhausted. Even now, there are still many regrets. The collection and selection of the materials and the interpretation and elucidation of the keywords still need to be scrutinized and polished. The elaboration on and evaluation of the views of some representative figures also ask for reconsideration. In particular, the integration of the keywords in Western literary theory and contemporary Chinese literary criticism needs to be deepened. Like some other Chinese scholars, we still lack calm discrimination and close observation of the increasingly frequent academic communications between China and other countries.

Finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all the friends who have cared for and contributed to our research of the keywords. Their support and kindness will be kept in our mind for a long time. I also would like to thank particularly my colleagues and students for their significant contributions. One of the team members said that he learned much in this team and so did I. Working together for the past few years, we shared the joys and pains, and gained not only the academic achievements, but also the trust and friendship. A team with a great enthusiasm for theories has gathered. What a happy thing!

During this academic journey, we have enjoyed wonderful scenery, and the publication of the book is not the end of it. We will be on the new road, and the study of keywords will always be on the road with us!

HU Yamin
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