Literature and Anthropology: Literary Studies in the Age of Knowledge Globalization

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Dissertation Abstract: Within the international comparative literature study and the whole area of social science and humanities, cross-cultural study is the most significant realm, which achieve the great impetuous development in 20th century. With the prospective of the correlation and interaction between literature and anthropology, this paper is the first systematically monograph both in domestic and abroad dedicated to discuss the relationship between literature and anthropology. Because of the huge range of study it involved and great amount of material it concerned, there are many difficulties and innovative significant in selecting the topic. And the questions being raised and the completion it achieved would effect the resolution on the “subject crisis”, and the problem that how can we innovate in our own intellectual development to accommodate ourselves to the knowledge globalization. And also it formed a connecting link between the preceding and the following to the Chinese anthropological study of literature that is in the ascendant right now.

Grasping the relationship between anthropology and globalization, post-modern epistemology and with a view to the new prospective of the interaction of anthropology and literature, this paper intent to exploit the evolvement of 20th century’s literature production and the innovation of the canon of literary study so as to search the impetus to the intellectual thought. And as to the literary creation aspect, this paper illustrated the discovery of the “cultural others” stimulating the “anthropological imagina-
through the whole 20th century’s literature development, from surrealism to magic realism. This paper also analyzed the five main genres in the western anthropological literature theory and how the concept of “culture” reintegrated the humanities and social science. And there is also a general analysis to the representative figure in this field—Northrop Frye. Furthermore the paper also demonstrated comprehensively on the study of mythology that combined the anthropological perspective and the literary study. With a view on the process of the importation of mythology to China, the author discussed the practice of the maintaining the indigenous characteristic in anthropological literature study, which inspires the further possible expansive space.

The main academic value of this paper could be summed as follows: 1 Literary anthropology has been developed in China for almost twenty years, which obviously played a positive role in changing the concept of literary study and the innovation of the new genre. Some authoritative scholars even believe it will represent a new orientation in Chinese school of comparative literature. But until now, there has been no general systematic theory in this field of study. I believe this paper will fill up this vacancy because it combined the historical materials with theory, integrated the western theory into Chinese thought and comprehended the relationship between literature and anthropology. Therefore it provided an innovative theoretical project as well as an operative strategy on the development of cross-cultural study (including the case analysis). It will make contribution on teaching and researching in this field of study. 2 This paper initiated the reevaluation on the anthropology of Literature study with the purpose to integrate the literature experience into anthropology and to cultivate ourselves as universal citizens. The intention to break the boundaries between literary study and other field of study and integrate literary study into cultural study is an evident important trend in the later 20th century. This paper will explicitly interpret this issue based on the general globalization background: cultural study is an inevitable consequence since it accommodated this age of intellectu-
al re-integration. So it can give an answer to all kinds of theories of "literature crisis" and the crisis of comparative literature. The material used in this paper is the outcome of my collecting work and preparation for over ten years. To have a general grasp in the development of literary anthropology, the author had been to England, America, Canada and Australia to find a great amount of original new materials. Most of the articles or publications I quoted in the paper have no Chinese translation yet and many of them are for the first time being introduced by the author, which will for certain enhance the academic idea communication between China and the west and join our literary anthropology study with the international intellectual trend to promote the level of our academic research and expand our intellectual view.

Generally speaking, this paper will provide the full and accurate theoretical reference both in teaching as well as research. In a narrow sense, the paper will lead the way to concrete grasp and imply the genre and method of literary anthropology study.

The first chapter of this book has been published and quoted by many journals and papers such as Guangming Daily, Wenhui and Wenyi and the same article was honored with the Most Preeminent Dissertation in Literary Review in the year 2002. And the second chapter, the second section of the sixth chapter, the third section of the eighth chapter are re-published respectively by Chinese Social Science Reading (中国社会科学文摘) (2002, 2-4-6) Many attentions have been arisen on some of the intellectual innovative ideas involved in this book which is a good indication of social benefit.

About the author:
Ye Shuxian, research fellow, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Interest covers mainly literary anthropology.