Although I was the first to call for cross-civilization study in 2002, I did not invent it behind a closed door. It was rather the revelation of a worldwide academic trend and the reflection on thoughts of different schools. The contemporary research in various fields, such as political theory, cultural criticism, discipline theory of comparative literature, comparative poetics, as well as the current practice in Chinese comparative literature study, has all fully engaged cross-civilization examination, which has virtually made cross-civilization study a worldwide fashion. A failure in recognizing this trend is to miss the opportunity in positioning oneself in the true academic frontier.

The most striking wave of the current comes from political field. Samuel P. Huntington, renowned professor from Harvard University, suggested ‘the clash of civilizations’, drawing attentions of scholars
from West to East. A cobble into ocean, Huntington’s hypothesis stirred academia, evoked widespread international response, attracting both criticism and agreement. The debates on Huntington’s controversial theory continue for quite a long time. Especially after 9.11, Huntington’s Linking Publishing Company, 1997 sells well in the world. 9.11 seem to become a best footnote for Clash of Civilizations. In fact, Huntington’s Clash theory and 9.11 are pushing the world to reflect on some important issues, such as heterogeneity, clash and diversified co-existence...etc. Scholars of different field have begun to probe into the confrontations and co-existence of different civilizations, thus resulting in a global academic current: cross-civilization study.

In the worldwide academic trend, it happens coincidentally that studies like post-Colonialism, ecology, feminism, deconstructuralism as well as neo-Confucianism, all center on cross-civilization study. When Mr. Tu, Weiming, professor from Harvard University, came to Sichuan University in 2000, he showed great concern for cross-civilization dialogue. “The Clash theory presented by my colleague Huntington evoked widespread response. We had several debates. Now, Huntington changes his view a little bit to shake hands with Buddhism civilization. It is the possible danger of civilization confrontation that makes the dialogue necessary... Huntington is right in stressing on ‘cultural diversity’. ” In fact, the ‘cultural diversity’, ‘cultural dialogue’ mentioned by Professor Tu, Weiming have become the core issue in world academia with cross-civilization study as its spirit. Hunan University Publications published Tu, Weiming: Cultural Conflict and Dialogue in 2001, with a title touched main concern of neo-Confucian school—cross-civilization study. The opening chapter is a speech made in Yue Lu Shu Yuan, in which Tu
presented the following views: Conditions for new dialogue of civilizations are emerging. Some elite thinkers in the West have begun to reflect upon their enlightenment mentality. Speaking from ecology, scholars must go beyond the Western human centrism completely built upon the interests of human being. Seeing from diversified religion, how to achieve an open civilization after the enlightenment period? Western scholars are thinking about it seriously.” Tu, Weiming considers Confucian ethics as the source for such dialogue. That is to say, we should not only note the negative side, but also positive dialogue and communication when facing the great difference among civilizations—that is why we bring the problem on table.

Another striking wave of the current comes from post-colonialism trend represented by Edward. W. Said, with the relation between East and West as its major concern. Just as Said reviewed: First, Orientalism being a few overlapping areas refers to the ever-changing historical and cultural relations of 4,000 years history between Europe and Asia; Second, it refers to a branch of science originating from early 19th century in the West and used to study various oriental culture and tradition; lastly, it refers to all the hypothesis, image and imagination of ideology about the referred Oriental area which is of urgent political importance. “The core of Said’s concern, actually, is relations between the East and West, or in other words, cross-civilization. Said considers Orientalism to be a complicated concept grown out of Westerners’ pure ignorance and prejudice against the Oriental due to their narrowed view of the world. The Occidental constructed a so-called Orient, which speaks for ‘sluggish, blind’ while remains to be mysterious somewhat from their standpoint. Just as Said pointed out that, there are two major themes in the imaginary geological
world for Europeans: One is the West, powerful and clear, while the other is the East, remote, ambiguous and to be conquered. The two themes stand for how the West views the East. The key, however, lies in the fact that this Oriental imagination was based on objective demonstrations of numerous Western scholars. Said then referred Orientalism as an area waiting for much research.

At first, scholars engaging in Oriental study were no more than linguists, Islamic researchers, Bible researchers, or the so-called Sinologist from a new branch of learning set by church. It was only a field of study then. What made this objective demonstration of study retreat into imagination and prejudice? One of the key factors lies in the great discrepancy of civilization. It seems that our knowledge about the Oriental comes from strict reasoning of scholars, and speaks for true spirit of the ‘Oriental’. But, deep down, what we can’t ignore is the civilization hegemony in the process of reasoning. Said went on to argue that the strategy of Orientalism relies on a flexible sense of superiority resulting from their positions, the West is put on a superior position to the East in all possible relations, that people look at the “other” through their own eyes, and tend to judge alien cultures by their own standards. It is the unquestionable Western-centrism that brings an “Oriental” world. That is to say, knowledge of the ‘Oriental’ grew out of Western-centrism. Then, how can we expect the “Orient” to fit into real image of the Oriental civilization in this “remodeling” process of westerners? It is true that there are many other theoretical arguments as to the post-colonialism theory, but “Orientalism” is more thought provoking to our cross-civilization study presented by Chinese scholars by revealing that cross-civilization study must break through the hegemonic Western-centralism, the single mode “Orientalism”, and learns about genuine Oriental feather based
on which further cross-civilization study could be carried out again.

Of course, cross-civilization is more than a social and cultural trend. It bud in comparative literature study long ago and marked a clear track in all its practice.

If the first stage of comparative literature refers to French School advocating the influence study to cross the wall between countries and connect the influenced relationships but ignoring the global and openness of comparative literature, In the second stage, American school represented by Rene Wellek, criticized it and advocated the parallel study to cross the wall between West-East disciplines connecting the non-influenced literary relationships. Wellek also held that the study, which stresses on the esthetic value of literary works, means to view a remote dreams in which literature history and literary criticism could be built from a global perspective. Another great scholar, head of the French comparative literature, Rene Etiemble, shares a similar view. Etiemble went beyond French School's fact connection only. He considered the search from history and reflection upon esthetics as a mutually combined method to comparative literature. The so-called search and reflection is a parallel approach through which human literature could be viewed as a whole. That's why literary phenomenon of different civilization could obtain equal identity as the object of comparative literature. Etiemble laid stress on the West-East literature comparison in particular. He even suggested that one can't talk about comparative literature without reading the Red Mansion Dreams, All Men Are Brothers: Blood of the Leopard, or some Indian, Arabic literature.

In 1993, at an annul conference of American Comparative Literature, Charles Berheimer pointed out that literature should break free from Euro-centralism and advocated comparative literature study
with multi-cultural perspective. It is a valuable reflection on the Euro-centralism. According to Bernheimer, the so-called internatio­nalism after Second World War is only superficial in that it still insists on strict Euro-centralism. It has been challenged greatly in various fields... Comparative literature today has branched out into following areas: comparison between different art works which used to belong to different subjects; comparison between various cultural products of those subjects; comparison between cultural tradition of the West and Non-west. To be sure, the most self-conscious approach in cross-civilization study of comparative literature comes from Chinese scholars' proposition of Chinese School. On the one hand, the rise of Chinese School is indispensable with cross-civilization experience of Chinese comparative literature, whose spontaneity is based on the clash of Western and Eastern culture. From Review on Red Mansion Dreams by Wang Guowei in 1904, to Criticism of Mora poet by Lu Xun in 1908, we can detect that the rise of early Chinese comparative literature results from clash and fusion of Chinese and Western culture, not under direct influence of Western comparative literature.

It is well known that the first thesis on comparative literature in France was written in 1895. The first course lecture was given in 1896. It is in 1919 when Paris University set a comparative literature course. Until 1931, Paul Van Tieghem published La Litterature Comparee, the first literary work giving a comprehensive view of French School. In fact, when Western study of comparative literature was just about to go, Review on Red Mansion Dream and On Wording of the World had been published, and Lu Xun had advocated and practiced spontaneous comparative study in literary criticism already. Their counterpart Wellek, the founder of American
comparative literature, was a 5-year-old toddler then, and Etiemble, the head of French comparative literature, was just born. That's why I argue that the rise of Chinese comparative literature relate to the fact that Chinese comparative literature is born into a world full of clash and merge between East and West, its development has been accompanied by numerous arguments and frictions of Chinese and Western culture as well as Chinese social and political reformation movements.

Therefore, faced with such clash and merge, unlike French school's cultural chauvinism, or American globalization, Chinese scholars have been anxious about how to relate to Western culture and find way out for Chinese culture, which, in the long run, evoked widespread debate on different civilizations. As a result, the debate has greatly strengthened cross-civilization sense of comparison between East and West.

A great many scholars are trying to seek mutual comparison, explanation, complementarity, communication, fusion and reconstruction of literary concept of Chinese and Western literature. The first problem they confront is how to break free from the single-mode homology and similarity and how to take heterogeneity into its consideration. On the other hand, cross-civilization perspective is also the basic trait of Chinese School. It is in agreement with tendency of comparative literature study that serves to push the theory going on. Based on and confronted by heterogeneity, it aims to carry on dialogue, communication, rather than discrepancy and conflict. Therefore, we may conclude that Chinese School marks a new phase, an inevitable trend, in cross-civilization study of comparative literature.

After we traced development of cross-civilization study in
comparative literature theory, it is necessary for us to further analyze its specific practice, especially in comparative poetics, for the latter is always closely bound with research of general poetics, which put it as media from comparative literature to common literature. If reflecting on the practice of comparative poetics, we may realize that the cross-civilization comparative literature study is likely to obtain greater achievement. It is the heterogeneity and discrepancy of different civilization that brings complementarity to avoid biased view of single civilization, and to provide broad basis for construction of general poetics.

As Earl Miner, a renowned Western scholar in this field, suggested in his book Comparative Poetics: An Intercultural essay on Theories of literature that literature and poetics should be studied in diverse ways. The more wide-ranged literature is investigated in the research, the more valid comparative poetics theory would be. He holds that although facing many difficulties, comparative literature could only construct on cross-cultural study. He is right in that study of comparative poetics must pay close attention to cultural discrepancy. Another famous scholar, Stephen Owen, shares similar view. A Sinologist, he always shows great concern for the study of Chinese literature. He attaches great importance to the discrepancy brought about by the heterogeneity when he engages in the study of Chinese and Western poetics. As a result of the concern, he reviewed on some key concepts of Chinese classical poetics by means of literary selections in one of his books, Chinese Literary Theory: English Translation With Criticism, in which each unique feather of Chinese and Western poetics was shining through the comparison and contrast. Some Chinese overseas scholars also carry on cross-civilization practice, with James J.Y. Liu as a representative. He expanded the
meaning of comparative poetics in The Art of Chinese Poetry by suggesting that greater gain would be achieved if comparison and contrast study of historically unrelated criticism traditions were made in terms of theory, not practice. In other words, greater achievement would be gained through comparative study of poetics from different systems of civilization. Liu reviewed that comparative study of literary theory could bring us better understanding of literature as a whole. Therefore, there exists the possibility of rise of a kind of general poetics, or common poetics.

Ye Weilian’s critical approaches bear similar feather. To find a solution for heterogeneity, Ye brings forward ‘cultural mold’, arguing that there is a fixed mold for each culture, while scholars should not stick to one mold in order to seek the commonness of all cultures. That is to say, we must break through the static one mold to have a clear view of two heterogeneous civilizations. Ye’s theory is an inspiration for cross-civilization study in comparative poetics. He revised Meyer Howard Abrams’ literary theory, put it into research of Chinese and Western comparative poetics with the aim to cross the wall of heterogeneity, both in different civilizations and literary traditions, and therefore, to gain the mutual literary principle of Chinese and Western culture on the basis of general poetics. In all, through the generalization of the cross-civilization practice of Western and Chinese overseas scholars, it is clear that if crossing the wall between heterogeneous civilizations, we can establish new theory for comparative poetics and find new approach for general poetics, or common poetics.

Having reviewed the worldwide cross-civilization trend and its exhibition, we still retreat to contemporary Chinese cultural and literary context to think about an issue: we are not putting forward
novel ideas to be different. We start the discussion because we concern about the problems in contemporary Chinese culture and literature. In fact, if considering the history of Chinese and Western cultural communication over past 100 years, while combining the global trend of cross-civilization study, we bring forward three issues of academic concern to investigate cross-civilization study in Chinese comparative literature: first, theory of send, that is to find out the Oriental and send out its culture; second, the commensuration and incommensuration of heterogeneous civilization in comparative poetics; third, aphasia of Chinese culture in cross-civilization perspective.

Mr. Ji Xianlin once mentioned the incommensuration in Chinese and Western cultural communication. He proposed that we should not only take, but also give. It is true that Western culture have poured into China in past 100 years. Naturally, take becomes the mainstream. But, this norm of cultural communication is abnormal indeed in that we should also send the valuable part of our national culture. Recently, Mr. Wang Yuechuan proposed a concept: to find the Oriental and send out its culture, which may be regarded as a new development of the send in a global sense. Indeed, the send is a good view. But what embarrasses us is that our tradition has been long lost, or, put in the shadow of Western culture, which makes the real sent impossible. Therefore, to refind the Oriental has become the starting point of our cultural communication. To be sure, what real matters in this process is to get rid of the shadow of Western centrism and cultural hegemony, so as to explore and find out the cultural feather of national civilization in dialogue of equal identity.

Furthermore, we may learn from the cross-civilization study that different civilizations, in a sense, are incommensurate due to their
heterogeneity. However, there still exist some common points. The heterogeneity doesn't influence mutual dialogue and merge between civilizations. Human history, in a sense, is dialogue and merge. Therefore, the ideal of comparative poetic study is to realize mutual poetics owing to this commensuration of heterogeneity. It is for certain that we have to pay close attention to the heterogeneity of poetics from different civilizations in the practical comparative study. Just as I once referred, Chinese and Western literary theory were both similar and different, thus resulting in a possibility of communication while remaining uniqueness of each party. The more common points they share, the more obvious the difference is, and the more valuable mutual complementarity would be.

In conclusion, cross-civilization study of comparative literature shall bring us a better understanding of aphasia in Chinese culture and offer a positive strategy to solve the problem. Since I suggested aphasia in 1996, I brought forward reconstruction of discourse and heterogeneity of Chinese literary theory, all expanding the discussion of cross-civilization study in a line. My assertion of aphasia is based on a fact that contemporary Chinese literature theory borrowed most of its discourse from the West, whereas our own tradition has fallen into oblivion. Under influence of the West, we've lost our own voice. We have no literary discourse of our own. We have no academic principle from our tradition to communicate, express, and interpret. We can't even talk without Western literary theory. Faced with such dilemma, we must reconstruct our own literary discourse, our own culture. To achieve the goal, we must take cross-civilization approach into comparative literature study in which heterogeneity study is the core, for the latter is a necessary and must for Chinese contemporary literary theory shadowed by the West. Only if we carry on this
heterogeneous study can we learn our own individual feather. Then, a real dialogue between East and West is possible, thus to lay a solid foundation for reconstruction of Chinese literary discourse. It is in this sense that cross-civilization study is a theoretical improvement as well as a good perspective to solve the problem of aphasia.

According to above generalization and presentation, we can draw a clear picture of cross-civilization study at last. First of all, it is a study with the stress on heterogeneity of different civilizations. As mentioned in this article, homology and similarity are the first consideration of French School and American School due to their single-mode civilization, in which there may exist different cultural feathers though, still, the hidden cultural mentality are the same. However, what confronts Chinese School is a heterogeneous rip between different civilizations. This heterogeneity is of vital importance to comparative literature between East and West. As discussed above, aphasia shadows the special feather of Eastern culture. Now, we take study of aphasia into consideration and propose to refind the Oriental and send out its culture to seek the unique feather of our civilization again, which, naturally, is the most special field of study in Chinese comparative literature.

Besides, the ultimate purpose of cross-civilization study is not to simply find and study heterogeneity, but to pursue the mutual complementarity. We may learn from history that it is the heterogeneity that causes mutual complementarity between different civilizations and, in a sense, makes room for communication and dialogue, just like Chinese traditional concept: Harmonious But Different, an ideal for communication between Chinese and Western civilization. However, we must bear in mind that this concept consists of two elements: different at first, and harmonious, with the first
stresses on heterogeneity, whereas the latter explains the importance of complementarity, both arguing for a fact that heterogeneity brings fusion rather than conflict.

In the end, it should be noted that cross-civilization trend is different from globalization. Whether you are for, or against it, globalization being a trend that seems to have something in common with cross-civilization study, looks overwhelming indeed. However, they are very different. In the process of globalization, prevailing economic, social and cultural trend has become models and been copied everywhere. Whereas instead of harmonious but different, it is a monoculture, a homology without harmony, or, a monotony behind the seemingly cultural prosperity. Cross-civilization, however, goes beyond such monotony by pursuing difference. It aims to harmony among heterogeneous cultures, or, an ideal of achieving harmony while remaining culturally independent. Only such prosperity can be genuine diversified. Only such prosperity can lead comparative literature march into a new era.

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**About the author:**

Cao Shunqing, professor of School of Literature and Journalism, Sichuan University, of comparative literature and world literature, tutor of doctoral students, researching literary theories, mainly comparative poetics, Chinese culture and Chinese literary theories.