

From World Literature to World Poetics: Wang Ning's Scholarship of Literature Studies

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Abstract: As one of the most important and productive humanities scholars in contemporary China, Wang Ning has been consistently engaged with and widely read by international academia. This paper attempts to examine Wang's scholarship with regard to three dimensions: Chinese literature as world literature, China-Western dialogue on and reconstruction of literary theory, and world poetics and cosmopolitanism. With reference to Isaiah Berlin's and Stephen Jay Gould's elaboration on the hedgehog and the fox, it argues that Wang not only works on a wide range of different fields including psychoanalysis, postmodernism, postcolonialism, globalization, translation, literary theory, world literature and comparative literature, but he is also deep in each of those cutting-edge issues. Just like his long-time pursuit of bridging China-Western literary studies and his challenges to Eurocentrism and American-centeredness, Wang, in a sense, goes beyond hedgehog-fox divide and is well-accomplished in all and each of the scholarly areas that attracts his interest.

Keywords: Wang Ning; world literature; post-theory; world poetics; cosmopolitanism

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标题: 从世界文学到世界诗学：王宁的文学研究之我见

内容摘要: 作为当下中国最重要、成果最丰富的人文学者之一，王宁始终致力于同国际学术界展开积极对话，并得到广泛认可。本文重点从如下三个方面管窥王宁的学术建树：作为世界文学的中国文学，中西理论对话与理论重构，世界诗学与世界主义。论文参照以赛亚·柏林、史蒂芬·杰伊·古尔德关于刺猬型学者与狐狸型学者的论述，指出王宁的研究兴趣不仅覆盖诸如精神分析批评、后现代主义、后殖民主义、全球化、翻译、文学理论、世界文学与比较文学等众多领域，同时他又在上述每个领域的前沿论题上提出独特深刻的洞见。正如其长期对欧洲中心主义、美国中心主义的挑战以寻求架构中西文学研究沟通与对话的桥梁一样，王宁本人在某种意义上也超越了通常

意义上狐狸-刺猬二元对立的学术身份，在其所有关注的领域均取得了卓越的成就。

关键词：王宁；世界文学；后理论；世界诗学；世界主义

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Wang Ning is a name that rings much familiarity to all of those working in the area of world literature. To borrow the words of Theo D'haen, Wang, as of the early 1990s, “has been one of the most prolific, and I would say almost ‘seismographic,’ interpreters of the relation of Chinese literary scholarship to Western theory and practice” (D'haen, *The Routledge Concise History of World Literature* 171). Wang's scholarly interests entail a wide range of fields. To name a few, psychoanalysis, postmodernism, postcolonialism, globalization, translation, literary theory, world literature and comparative literature. Among all these fields, it is world literature and comparative literature that attracts Wang most. This paper attempts to examine Wang's contribution to the studies of world literature with regard to three dimensions: Chinese literature as world literature, Chinese-Western dialogue on and reconstruction of literary theory, and world poetics and cosmopolitanism.

Chinese Literature as World Literature

Wang has invested much energy exploring world literature. In particular, he tries hard to promote Chinese literature in the arena of world literature with a sense of mission, arguing that “Any history of world literature, if not including the great achievements made by Chinese writers, would be regarded as incomplete and imperfect.” (Wang, “Chinese Literature as World Literature” 391). Wang's claim has been shared with Theo D'haen, who admits that “Undoubtedly, Chinese literature is a very important part of ‘world literature’ ” (D'haen, “Modern Chinese Literature and World Literature from a European Perspective” 157). In the first decade of the 21st century, literature as world literature has attracted increasing attention from comparatists. Edited by Thomas Oliver Beebee, Bloomsbury has launched a book series *Literatures as World Literature*, which includes such works as Thomas Oliver Beebee's *German Literature as World Literature* (2014), Mircea Martin, Christian Moraru, and Andrei Terian's *Romanian Literature as World Literature* (2017), Mads Rosendahl Thomsen, and Dan Ringgaard's *Danish Literature as World Literature* (2017), Eduardo F. Coutinho's *Brazilian Literature as World Literature* (2018),

Theo D'haen's *Dutch and Flemish Literature as World Literature* (2019), Jeffrey R. Di Leo's *American Literature as World Literature* (2019), Christian Moraru, Nicole Simek, and Bertrand Westphal's *Francophone Literature as World Literature* (2020), Mihaela P. Harper, and Dimitar Kambourov's *Bulgarian Literature as World Literature* (2020), Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado's *Mexican Literature as World Literature* (2021), Mostafa Abedinifard, Omid Azadibougar, and Amirhossein Vafa's *Persian Literature as World Literature* (2021), Burcu Alkan, and Çimen Günay-Erkol's *Turkish Literature as World Literature* (2022), and Alexander Fyfe, and Madhu Krishnan's *African Literatures as World Literature* (2022). Regrettably, there has been no work on Chinese literature as world literature. Such a lacuna is well found Wang's works. It is to be noted that as early as the year 1993, Wang published a paper "Confronting Western Influence: Rethinking Chinese Literature of the New Period" in the internationally prestigious journal *New Literary History*, introducing and promoting Chinese literature to international academia. He optimistically claims that "as a consequence of the increasing cultural and academic exchange between Chinese and Western scholars and writers, such a gap as the Chinese influence on Western literature will be filled up in the near future" (Wang, "Confronting Western Influence: Rethinking Chinese Literature of the New Period" 922).

Ever since then, Wang has consistently devoted his energy to moving Chinese literature into the mainstream of world literature. In "Chinese Literature as World Literature" (2016), Wang argues that "When talking about Chinese literature as world literature we should first of all confront two issues: historically, Chinese literature was regarded as world literature due to Sino-centrism; nowadays, Chinese literature should be regarded as an integral part of world literature" (Wang, "Chinese Literature as World Literature" 380).

The basic assumption, in Wang's works, is that world literature is not a singular form, instead it is rather diversified and encompasses translations of literature of all countries, which reminds us of Wang's previous argument about the dynamic function of translation in world literature. In Wang's view, "translation has been vital not only in building up national and cultural identities but also in constructing a literature with the potential to cross the boundaries of languages and nations as well as those of literary and cultural traditions" (Wang, "World Literature and the Dynamic Function of Translation" 1). David Damrosch also places much weight on the role of translation in constructing world literature. In *What Is World Literature* (2003), Damrosch defines world literature as follows:

1. World literature is an elliptical refraction of national literatures.

2. World literature is writing that gains in translation.
3. World literature is not a set canon of texts but a mode of reading: a form of detached engagement with worlds beyond our own place and time. (Damrosch 281)

Wang makes a survey of how Lu Xun, Hu Shi and Guo Moruo in the May 4th movement emphasized on the role of translation and participated in translating foreign literatures to China. While in today's global context, China is getting increasingly powerful both economically and politically, it is more urgent than ever for Chinese literature to move from the marginalized and periphery to the center of world literature. In this process, translation plays an irreplaceable role. Thus, a shift from translating Western literature into Chinese to translating Chinese literature into other languages is much needed. Wang proposes translating Chinese literature on two levels: on the interlingual level but on the intercultural level. Wang explains that "for the latter plane will most sharply highlight Chinese literature and culture before the world, while the former, with its attentiveness to linguistic rendering, will enable Chinese literature to become better known to the non-Chinese-speaking world" (Wang, "World Literature and the Dynamic Function of Translation" 13).

However, the process is easier said than done. Wang keenly observes that:

Although many Chinese scholars are able to translate literary or theoretic works from foreign languages into Chinese, very few of them can translate Chinese works into foreign languages. Sometimes, even when they have translated great Chinese literary works into English or other major foreign languages, their versions are either not appreciated by native speakers because of their foreignizing elements, or are unable to be circulated in the target book market. Therefore, many translated Chinese literary works published by China's Foreign Language Press are chiefly circulated domestically rather than internationally. (Wang, "Chinese Literature as World Literature" 386)

It is indeed an embarrassing dilemma: on the one hand, everyone recognizes the importance of translating Chinese literature and culture into other languages, while on the other hand, those translated Chinese literary and cultural works have not been well received in Western countries. To approach such a problem, Wang suggests that Chinese translators should collaborate with Western sinologists and international publishers, claiming that "Through the joint efforts to be made by us in collaboration with our Western sinologists and publishers, we will most effectively

translate excellent Chinese literary works into English and promote them throughout the world” (Wang, “Chinese Literature as World Literature” 391)

Even though it is a hard and long process of Chinese literature moving towards the arena of world literature through translation, we still need to be aware of the fact that “translation will continue to function dynamically in deconstructing the West-centric mode of world literature and reconstructing new world literature” (Wang, “Translating Modernity and Reconstructing World Literature” 111). In addition to translation, Wang also offers two other suggestions for Chinese literature to get into the mainstream of world literature, namely the follow-up work done by critics and scholars, who are encouraged “to write their critical and introductory works directly in English and publish them either with the leading publishers or in the prestigious academic journals” (Wang, “Translating Modernity and Reconstructing World Literature” 111), and the anthology of Chinese literature, and thus Chinese scholars are expected “to join in anthologizing world literature in which Chinese literature will occupy a considerable part.” (Wang, “Translating Modernity and Reconstructing World Literature” 111).

It needs to be mentioned that with Wang’s effort a number of important contemporary Chinese writers are getting better known in the world. In 2016, Wang collaborated with Charles Ross in editing a special issue “Twentieth- and Twenty-First-Century Chinese Fiction” in the prestigious journal *Modern Fiction Studies*. In this special issue, a group of eminent contemporary Chinese novelists and their works are introduced and explored, including Mo Yan, Liu Zhenyun, Tie Ning, Li Rui, Su Tong, Wang Anyi, and Xu Xiaobin, Yan Lianke, Yu Hua, Jia Pingwa, Ge Fei. Another case in point is Wang’s edited special issue “Modern Chinese Literature in the Context of World Literature” in *Journal of Modern Literature* in 2021, in which Yu Hua, Jia Pingwa, Cao Yu, Ba Jin, Lu Xun are introduced and explored.

Wang’s pioneering work making Chinese literature as world work opens many avenues and possibilities for critics and scholars to follow. For instance, inspired by Wang, Theo D’haen thinks about how the other literatures from other parts of the world to become a part of world literature. To end this section, let me quote D’haen’s argument in full:

The same is true of other literatures, from other parts of the world, that hitherto have not received their dues within the context of world literature as practiced until recently. It is not just their literary works that deserve their place in world literature, for as long as the theories, concepts, approaches that form

an inherent part of these traditions do not gain their rightful place in literary studies, not just in their own traditions but also beyond, as equivalent elements in the “global” discussion, “world literature” will not be a level playing field (D’haen, “Modern Chinese Literature and World Literature from a European Perspective” 157).

Chinese-Western Dialogue and Reconstruction: Literary Studies in Post-Theoretical Era

In *After Theory* (2003), Terry Eagleton declares the end of theory, arguing that:

The golden age of cultural theory is long past. The pioneering works of Jacques Lacan, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Louis Althusser, Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault are several decades behind us. So are the path-breaking early writings of Raymond Williams, Luce Irigaray, Pierre Bourdieu, Julia Kristeva, Jacques Derrida, Hélène Cixous, Jurgen Habermas, Fredric Jameson and Edward Said. Not much that has been written since has matched the ambitiousness and originality of these founding mothers and fathers. Some of them have since been struck down. Fate pushed Roland Barthes under a Parisian laundry van, and afflicted Michel Foucault with Aids. It dispatched Lacan, Williams and Bourdieu, and banished Louis Althusser to a psychiatric hospital for the murder of his wife. It seemed that God was not a structuralist. (Eagleton 1)

Eagleton’s argument is mainly based upon his observation that those well-established literary theorists such as Jacques Lacan, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Louis Althusser, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Raymond Williams, Luce Irigaray, Pierre Bourdieu, Julia Kristeva, Jacques Derrida, Hélène Cixous, Jurgen Habermas, Fredric Jameson and Edward Said either have passed away or approach senior age. That said, literary theory seems to have lost its momentum and power, and thus it is no longer magnetic. Eagleton’s lament of theory has been followed and consolidated in Nicholas Birns’s *Theory after Theory* (2010), Jane Elliott and Derek Attridge’s *Theory after “Theory”* (2011), and D. N. Rodowick’s *Elegy for Theory* (2015). How is literary theory like? What’s fate of literary theory? To address these issues, the journal *Critical Inquiry* has organized two successive conferences “The Future of Criticism—A Critical Inquiry Symposium” (2003) and “The Ends of Theory: The Beijing Symposium on Critical Inquiry” (2004). As an editor of the journal, W. J. T. Mitchell first raises a number of questions concerning the future of literary

criticism:

What, in your view, would be the desirable future of critical inquiry in the coming century? If you were able to dictate the agenda for theory and criticism in research and educational institutions, and in the public sphere, what would you imagine as the ideal structure of feeling and thought to inform critical practice? And, above all, what steps do you think need to be taken in the present moment to move toward this desirable future? What, in short, is to be done? (Mitchell 330)

To address these questions, Mitchell offers five suggestions:

1. It has been suggested that the great era of theory is now behind us and that we have now entered a period of timidity, backfilling, and (at best) empirical accumulation. True?
2. It has been suggested that theory now has backed off from its earlier sociopolitical engagements and its sense of revolutionary possibility and has undergone a “therapeutic turn” to concerns with ethics, aesthetics, and care of the self, a turn of which Lacan is the major theoretical symptom. True?
3. It has been suggested that the major challenge for the humanities in the coming century will be to determine the fate of literature and to secure some space for the aesthetic in the face of the overwhelming forces of mass culture and commercial entertainment. True?
4. It has been suggested that the rapid transformations in contemporary media (high-speed computing and the internet; the revolution in bio- technology; the latest mutations of speculative and finance capital) are producing new horizons for theoretical investigations in politics, science, the arts, and religion that go well beyond the resources of structuralism, poststructuralism, and the “theory revolution” of the late twentieth century. True?
5. Following on number 4, it has been suggested that the criticism and theory to come may have to explore other media of dissemination besides those of the printed text, the scholarly article or monograph, or even language as such in its prosaic, discursive forms. What is likely to happen or ought to happen to the “arts of transmission” of knowledge in coming century? (Mitchell 330-331)

Coupling Mitchell’s questions with his follow-up suggestions, one cannot find it hard to grasp his proposal for exploring literary theory in its transformed forms and

its expansion to other relevant fields of work. That said, to talk about the death and survival of literary theory is to reconsider its past and investigate its transformations. The heated discussions about the future of literary criticism, to some degree, suggest its crisis in the beginning of the 21st century. At issue is what Chinese critics can engage with critical enterprise and make their due contributions?

As an editor of the journal *Frontiers of Literary Theory*, Wang has been one of the most important scholars promoting literary theory in China. Against the backdrop of waning tide of Western literary theory, Wang has taken it as a rare opportunity to reconstruct critical theories from a Chinese perspective in the first place and initiates China- Western dialogue on theory subsequently. As a rejoinder to Martin McQuillan et al.'s *Post-Theory: New Directions in Criticism* (1999) and Eagleton's *After Theory* (2003), Wang proposes that we are entering a post-theoretical era. In his view, "the concept of post-theory is aimed to prove that theory is not dead as it has permeated in the empirical studies of various literary and cultural phenomena. Its function does not only lie in critiquing other things but also in reflecting itself. The proposal of post-theory has activated the ever increasingly weakening literary and cultural theory enabling it to have new energies and new moments" (Wang, "Gender Studies in the Post-theoretical Era" 17). Using gender studies and Butler's theory as a particular example, Wang still finds the value of queer theory which is rather effective in illuminating contemporary Chinese gender culture. In doing so, Wang argues that in the post-theoretical era, "theory is no longer so powerful as usual but still effective if used to interpret literary and cultural phenomena only" (Wang, "Gender Studies in the Post-theoretical Era" 17).

Apart from his proposal for reconsidering the effectiveness of literary theory in the post-theoretical era, Wang is also actively engaged in China-Western Dialogue on literary theory by dialoging with Western scholars, organizing conferences, and editing special issues. For instance, at the Fifth Sino-American Symposium on Comparative Literature, held in Shanghai, August 2010, Wang talked to David Damrosch on world literature (Wang and Damrosch 171-190). In the summer of 2004, Wang and W. J. T. Mitchell collaborated and co-organized "The Ends of Theory: The Beijing Symposium on Critical Inquiry", in which Fredric Jameson, Hillis Miller, Louis Schwartz, Knut Brynhildsvoll, Mingdong Gu, Sheldon Lu, Wang Ning, Shen Dan, Liu Kang, Xie Shaobo, Yu Haiqing, Lu Jie, He Donghui and some others participated and exchanged views. In this symposium there was also workshop for editors of theory journals, including Elizabeth Helsinger, Richard Neer, and Jay Williams of *Critical Inquiry*, Luo Xuanmin of *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology*, Pamela McCallum and Xie Shaobo of

ARIEL, Knut Brynhildsvoll of *Ibsen Studies*, Thomas Beebee of *Comparative Literature Studies*, Milan Dimic of *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, Robin Tsai of *Tamkang Review*, Chen Jianlan of *Wenyi yanjiu (Literature and Art Studies)*, Chen Yongguo of *Wenxue lilun qianyan (Frontiers of Literary Theory)*, Tao Dongfeng of *Wenhua yanjiu (Cultural Studies)*, and Guo Jun of *Waiguo wenxue yanjiu (Foreign Literature Studies)*.

In addition to organizing symposiums and workshops for Chinese literary theorists to have a face-to-face dialogue with their Western colleagues, Wang has also edited numerous special issues on China-Western Dialogue on literary theory in international journals. For instance, he edited and promoted “Exchange of Letters About Literary Theory Between Zhang Jiang and J. Hillis Miller” in the 3rd issue of *Comparative Literature Studies* in 2016. About the significance of the dialogue, Wang comments that it helps “Western readers understand a bit about the current Chinese literary situation: when literature and literary theory are on the decline in the West, they still have a considerable number of readers and scholars in China, although they are no longer so popular among them as ten years ago” (Wang, “Introduction: Toward a Substantial Chinese–Western Theoretical Dialogue” 566).

What deserves our particular attention is Wang’s co-edited special issue “Chinese Encounters with Western Theories” with Marshall Brown in *Modern Language Quarterly* in 2018. In this special issue, three important Chinese literary theorists Wang Ning, Zhang Jiang, and Zhu Liyuan have talked about French theories in China and the Chinese theoretical (re)construction, imposed interpretation and Chinese construction of literary theory, and Hillis Miller’s view of the end of literature. Correspondingly, their arguments have been responded to and commented by three Western literary theorists, namely Theo D’haen, Liu Kang, and J. Hillis Miller. The aim and significance of this special issue, in Wang and Marshall’s view, is “to expand the dialogue between Chinese and Western theorists and literary scholars” (Wang and Marshall 246). I do think such a dialogue is timely and significant, which is largely set against the imbalanced communication between Chinese literary theorists and Western literary theorist. As is observed by Wang and Brown, “Almost all the important Western theorists have had their major works translated into Chinese, whereas few Chinese theorists and comparatists have published internationally or have been introduced to or translated for English-language academic circles” (Wang and Brown 246). It is due to Wang’s effort that Zhang Jiang’s work on imposed interpretation has been known by Western scholars and makes them rethink about the value and mechanism of literary theory.

Comparative Poetics, World Poetics and Cosmopolitanism

In most recent years, Wang has been increasingly interested in the issue of world poetics. In tradition, poetics is related to the study of poetry, and thus it is generally defined as “the theory of poetry, in particular emphasizing principles of composition and structure” (Cuddon 545). Aristotle’s *Poetics* has been generally seen as the earliest exploration of this issue, which has been followed by a number of well-known poets. To name a few, Horace’s *Ars Poetica* (18 bc); Longinus’s *On the Sublime* (1st / 3rd c.); Sir Philip Sidney’s *Defence of Poesie* (1595); Alexander Pope’s *An Essay on Criticism* (1711); and William Wordsworth’s ‘Preface’ to his *Lyrical Ballads* (1801, 1802). In the arena of contemporary literary theory, the term poetics to designate the general theory of literature. I agree with Peter Childs and Roger Fowler, who point out that “In modern usage poetics is not the study of, or the techniques of, poetry (verse), but the general theory of literature” (Childs and Fowler 179). Largely informed by structuralist linguistics, structuralists have invested utmost effort to work towards a type of poetics that tries to reveal governing patterns and mechanism that produce meanings and effects. In his *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature* (1975, 2002), Jonathan Culler puts poetics in opposition to hermeneutics. In Culler’s view, the goal of poetics is to arrive at “an understanding of the devices, conventions and strategies of literature, of the means by which literary works create their effects,” while the goal of hermeneutics is “to discover or determine the meaning of a text” (Culler vii). In favor of pursuing poetics, Culler proposes that “literary studies should seek to understand how works produce the effects they have for readers (effects such as meanings)” (Culler viii). Along somewhat similar lines, we can well find the significant works in doing studies of poetics. For instance, Vladimir Propp’s *Morphology of the Folk-Tale* (1928), T. Todorov’s *The Poetics of Prose* (1965), and Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan’s *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (1983). In the beginning of the 21st century, with reference to cognitive science and cognitive linguistics in particular, a number of critics have been striving towards a cognitive poetics. Noteworthy are such works as Reuven Tsur’s *Toward a Theory of Cognitive Poetics* (1997), Peter Stockwell’s *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction* (2002), and Joanna Gavins and Gerard Steen’s *Cognitive Poetics in Practice* (2003).

However, when approaching and elaborating their principles of poetics, Western scholars are somehow constrained by their hemisphere blindness and ignore those periphery literatures and Eastern literatures accordingly. Inspired by Earl Miner’s *Comparative Poetics: An Intercultural Essay on Theories of*

Literature (1990), Wang attempts to work towards a world poetics. Wang argues that “If we have re-read Miner’s book, we might well be inspired by his pioneering but incomplete work to construct a sort of world poetics or world literary theory: which he himself was doing implicitly in any case” (420). In doing so, Wang aims at “constructing a sort of cosmopolitan literary theory of common aesthetic principles and universal standards.” (Wang, “Earl Miner: Comparative Poetics and the Construction of World Poetics,” 421) At issue is how such a poetics be like? In Wang’s view, a world poetics is to be constructed with reference to the following six preliminary terms:

1. It should be expressed both in the singular as well as plural forms, as is the case with world literature(s);
2. It must be characterized by crossing the boundary of languages and cultures;
3. It must be applicable to the interpretation of all literary phenomena, be it western or eastern, ancient or modern;
4. It must be constructed by taking into consideration both universalism and relativism;
5. It should be open to dialogues with other fields of the humanities and means of representation, since literature itself has changed a great deal in the past hundred years;
6. It must be subject to translation, so that it can travel to other countries or language environments. (Wang, “Earl Miner: Comparative Poetics and the Construction of World Poetics” 419-24)

A close look at the above six parameters would reveal that Wang’s proposal is largely concerned with the universality of literatures in different languages and countries. If a world poetics is to be constructed in the way proposed by Wang, all literatures will enjoy an equal treatment. As a return, world poetics will also contribute to the development of world literature and cosmopolitanism, both of which have been intensively elaborated by Wang.

Wang’s elaboration of world poetics is first of all related to the diversified forms of world literature. In “ ‘Weltliteratur’: From a Utopian Imagination to Diversified Forms of World Literatures”(2011), Wang continues to think along the line of universality-relativity duality of world literature emphasized by Douwe Fokkema (Fokkema 1290–1291). By modifying universality-relativity to canonicity-readability, Wang proposes a number of criteria to evaluate whether a literary work should be regarded as world literature: grasping the *Zeitgeist* of

a given historical period with its high aesthetic quality; crossing the boundary of national languages and cultures; included in an authoritative anthology edited by major literary scholars; taught in universities and imitated by writers of different countries in different languages; and inviting critical studies in other cultural and literary contexts. (Wang, "Weltliteratur" 299) Wang uses Chinese literature as a particular example, elaborating how Chinese literature could well go to the arena of world literature to make it diversified.

Secondly, Wang's conception of world poetics is related to the issue of cosmopolitanism. As we know, the last two decades witnessed an explosive interest in the issue of cosmopolitanism. As is observed by Gerard Delanty,

Over the past two decades there has been very wide interest in cosmopolitanism across the human and social sciences. Where earlier it had been largely a term associated with moral and political philosophy, cosmopolitanism has now become a widely used term in the social sciences. In many ways cosmopolitanism constitutes an interdisciplinary area for the human and social sciences. (Delanty 1)

In a similar vein, Bruce Robbins claims that "Cosmopolitanism has never been so popular. Across a variety of academic disciplines and in the more respectable regions of the press the concept is repeatedly evoked whenever attention is paid to the movement of peoples and cultures and the creative mixtures that emerge as they interact" (Robbins 2). Etymologically speaking, the word derives from the Greek κοσμοπολίτης, or kosmopolitês, formed from "κόσμος", kosmos, i.e. "world", "universe", or "cosmos", and πολίτης, "politês", i.e. "citizen" or "[one] of a city". Contemporary usage defines the term as "citizen of the world." Despite the popularity of the term, cosmopolitanism seems to be very elusive, and thus there emerge a number of related concepts, such as vernacular cosmopolitanism, rooted cosmopolitanism, critical cosmopolitanism, comparative cosmopolitanism, national cosmopolitanism, discrepant cosmopolitanism, situated cosmopolitanism, cosmopolitan patriotism, cosmopolitan nationalism, cosmopolitan democracy, and cosmopolitan postcolonialism. What are the features of cosmopolitanism? In *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism—Theory, Context, and Practice* (2002), S. Vertovec and R. Cohen list a typology for six characterizations of cosmopolitanism:

1. cosmopolitanism as a socio-cultural condition;
2. a kind of philosophy or worldview;

3. a political project towards building transnational institutions;
4. a political project for recognizing multiple identities;
5. an attitudinal or dispositional orientation; and
6. a mode of practice or competence. (Vertovec and Cohen 9)

In his active engagement of the issue cosmopolitanism, Wang tries to revisit and define it from “a literary and critical perspective in general and a Chinese perspective in particular” (Wang, “Ibsen and Cosmopolitanism” 124) Wang argues that cosmopolitanism can be defined within the following ten

1. as something that transcends nationalist sentiment;
2. as a pursuit of moral justice;
3. as a global and universal human concern;
4. as a diasporic and even homeless state;
5. as something decentralizing, which pursues a pluralistic cultural identity;
6. as in the service of human happiness and unity;
7. as a political and religious belief;
8. as the realization of global governance;
9. as an artistic and aesthetic pursuit; and
10. as a critical perspective from which to evaluate literary and cultural products. (Wang, “Cosmopolitanism and the Internationalization of Chinese Literature” 172)

Noteworthy is Wang’s elaboration of cosmopolitanism in relation to Chinese literature and culture. In “Cosmopolitanism and the Internationalization of Chinese Literature” (2014), Wang points out that “in China’s recent past to talk about cosmopolitanism from a literary point of view was mostly to identify Chinese literature with Western literature.” (Wang, “Cosmopolitanism and the Internationalization of Chinese Literature” 167). In Wang’s view, literary cosmopolitanism enables scholars to go “beyond a particular national cultural and literary tradition but to engage with excellent works in world literature” (Wang, “Cosmopolitanism and the Internationalization of Chinese Literature” 173). Mo Yan, the 2012 Nobel Prize in Literature, is a successful example. Influenced by William Faulkner and García Márquez, Mo Yan also writes about those fundamental issues and experiences shared by all humans, and thus he writes as a local novelist with common human concerns and moves into the mainstream of world literature enabled by cosmopolitanism and translation.

Conclusion

In "The Hedgehog and the Fox" (1953), Isaiah Berlin revisits the remark of the Greek poet Archilochus that the fox knows many things, while the hedgehog knows one big thing. Half a century later, Stephen Jay Gould picked up this issue again in *The Hedgehog, the Fox and the Magister's Pox* (2004). In both Berlin and Gould's musings and elaborations, one can easily discern an interesting phenomenon that the fox-type scholars work on a wide range of different issues and achieve a broad mastery over the whole area, while the hedgehog-type scholars are content to plough a deep furrow, and pursue a single issue. Wang Ning works a number of different fields including psychoanalysis, postmodernism, postcolonialism, globalization, translation, literary theory, world literature and comparative literature, but he is also deep in each of those cutting-edge issues. Just like his long-time pursuit of bridging China-Western literary studies and his challenges to Eurocentrism and American-centeredness, Wang also goes beyond hedgehog-fox divide and is well-accomplished in all and each of the scholarly areas that attracts his interest. As Wang's colleague in the same university, I always find it satisfying and rewarding working with him. Re-reading and commenting on Wang's scholarly works, I would now like to make this point again, with renewed emphasis.

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