La grammaire universelle est alors la source de tous les universaux et elle nous donne la définition même de l’homme. Non seulement toutes les langues mais aussi tous les systèmes signifiants obéissent à la même grammaire. Elle est universelle non seulement parce qu’elle est répandue dans toutes les langues de l’univers, mais parce qu’elle coïncide avec la structure de l’univers lui-même.

Tzvetan Todorov,
Grammaire du Décaméron

Introduction

Ideas or theories develop in response to specific historical and social circumstance, but once they move away from their points of origin, whether periodically or geographically, they are domesticated and transformed by their new uses and new positions. In this Age of Globalization, the movement of theories and ideas within different languages and cultures accelerates. What happens to a theory when it travels from one place to another, from one language to another, and from one period to another, is *per se* a complicated but interesting topic worth an in-depth study.

The alternation of a theory adds to the complication when we look at the assimilation of western theories in a non-western country, for instance, China. It should be noted that the most important event in the last two decades in Chinese literary studies has been the transformation of the North American literary theory, a theory that is largely transformed from European theory. While the western theories or ideas are transplanted in China, most of them are, so to speak, “doubly” domesticated and transformed. Such a long journey with twists and turns leaves one to wonder whether a theory gains or loses energy during the process. Discussions made by Edward Said and J. Hillis Miller may provide some insights. In his important essay titled “Travelling Theory” (1982), Edward Said examined the limit of the “travel scope” of a theory in a very different historical and political setting, though he did not rule out the possibility of a reinvigoration by a new situation. He further developed his idea in another essay, “Travelling Theory Reconsidered” (1994) and considered that the de-historicized reading as well as the adaptation of Georg Lukács’s theory of subject-object dialectic and of reification
respectively by Theodor Adorno and Frantz Fanon, probably suggested “the possibility of actively different locales, sites, situations for theory, without facile universalism or over-general totalizing” (Said 2002: 452).\(^{(1)}\) Based on the Said’s idea, Miller elaborated the new “performatory function” of a theory in the domestic literary situation of an “imported” location. Taking the story of Ruth in the Old Testament as a parable of the transposition of theory, Miller pointed out that people of Judah “assimilated the alien [Ruth], making the different into the same, but at the same time changing that same, in order to ensure that vitality, just as works of travelling theory are transformed in the new country or in a new discipline” (Miller 1996: 219). The discussion of Said and Miller shows more or less a positive attitude towards the alternation of a theory but it does not take into account the ease with which a theory is “translated”.

To give a detailed account of the question about how a theory travels, the following study will focus on the transplantation of Structuralist Narratology on mainland China in the period 1985-2000.\(^{(2)}\) More than 15 years after the arrival of the theory, we have finally reached the transitional point where Chinese scholars are gradually shifting their approach of narrative studies from structuralist to deconstructuralist.\(^{(3)}\) It is, perhaps, the very moment for us to re-examine the transplantation of Narratology - the “science of narrative” - into the Chinese literary studies. The Structuralist Narratology that emerged from the modern linguistics founded by Ferdinand de Saussure in the early twentieth century, first gained ground in France in the 1960’s. It spread out quickly to the United States, Netherlands, Israel, and went on to become one of the most influential “imported” literary theories in China in the post-Mao era. Both the translations of theoretical works on Narratology and the studies related to the theory itself by Chinese scholars are numerous. Certain questions arise immediately: How is it possible to apply an analytical method derived from the European linguistic study and narrative traditions to the analysis of the Chinese literary works? What happened exactly when Narratology crossed the border from France to China? This paper looks at the difficulties and problems that arose when the narratological method was applied to Chinese literary studies on mainland China at the turn of the century, and attempts further to define both the opportunities and the limitations of western theories when they are used to study Chinese literature. In other words, we are investigating here the “translatability” (übersetzigkeit) of theories between different cultures.
Importation of Narratology in China in the 1980’s

The interest in narrative theory among the Chinese intellectuals in the late 1980’s is closely related to both the literary and political situations of the time. In the post-Mao era, people tried to recuperate from the Cultural Revolution and were looking for a way to out of the rigid circumstances in every aspect of society. After Deng Xiaoping’s rise to power in the 1980’s as well as his commitment to a modernized economy, Chinese writers and critics, taking advantage of a less restricted literary policy, introduced into China a series of popular overseas literary trends from which they had initially been cut off. The western theories thus flourished once again in China since the May Fourth Period, including New Criticism, Formalism, Structuralism, Deconstruction, Post-modernism, Reception-theory, Hermeneutics, Psychoanalysis, Feminist Criticism, New Historicism, Colonialism, Post-colonialism and so on. (4)

By putting an emphasis on literary forms and introducing narratological method to Chinese literary studies, Chinese scholars intended to re-evaluate the dogmatic method of criticism, concluding that literature is principally a vehicle for voicing one’s social and political concerns. They explored the internal value of a literary text with an attempt to restore to literature its ontological status, a status that is no longer based on historical and social considerations. In other words, the fundamental concept of literature as an autonomic system suggested by literary trends like New Criticism, Formalism and Structuralism met the needs of the Chinese scholars of the time. Moreover, the systematic or even “operative” approach in analysing literary works offered by Narratology provided a “translinguistic” or even “transcultural” framework to examine different literatures. Though the “universality” of the narratological method leaves room for doubts, Chinese literature for the first time could be investigated like the literature of the Western world, on the same “scientific” platform.

To understand how Narratology was transplanted in China, and study its limits, its opportunities and inherent problems, one has to look at its travelling path. There is in fact a stage-by-stage pattern regarding the “receiving” process of any literary theory: (i) selection and translation of the foreign theoretical works, (ii) study of the theory and its application in the domestic literature, (iii) modification of the original theory, and (iv) reconstruction of the theory based on the literary tradition as well as the cultural logic of the new ground. As we can see, translation plays an irreplaceable role in the first stage of any movement of theory.

Based on these translations from different languages with different literary tradition, a great number of studies on Chinese narrative and on the theory itself were published in the following ten years. We cite here some of the examples:

2. Meng Fanhua, *Xushi de yishu* 敘事的藝術 (The Art of Narrative), 1989;
8. Chen Shunxing, *Zhongguo dangdai wenxue de xushi yu xingbie* 中國當代文學的敘事與性別 (Relations between Narrative and Sexuality in the Chinese Contemporary Literature), 1995;
11. Li Qingxin, *Kuashidai de chaoyue: Hongloumeng xushi yishu xinlun* 跨時代的超越——紅樓夢敘事藝術新論 (A Timeless Excellence: Narrative Art of the *Dream of the Red Chamber*), 1995;
12. Dong Xiaoying, *Xushi yishu luoji yinlun* 敘事藝術邏輯引論 (Introduction to the Logic of Narrative Art), 1997;
14. Shen Dan, *Xushuxue yu xiaoshuo wentixue yanjiu* 敘述學與小說文體學研究 (Study on Narratology and the Literary Style of Fiction), 1998;
15. Zhao Yiheng, *Dang shuozhe beishuo de shihou: bijiao xushuxue daolun* 當說者被說的時候：比較敘述學導論 (The Moment When the Narrator is Narrated: An Introduction to Comparative Narratology), 1998;
17. Zhang Shijun, *Hongloumeng de kongjian xushi* 紅樓夢的空間敘事 (Narrative Space in the *Dream of the Red Chamber*), 1999;
Regarding the process of representation of Narratology in a new environment, we would like to emphasize two crucial points. Our first point is that the academic field of China provides a neutral ground for a comprehensive survey of Structuralistic Narratology in the West. There are studies that emphasize on its historical relationship with Formalism (Luo 1994). While some compare the French and the Anglo-American approaches to narrative work (Wang 2002), others consider Narratology as a unique literary theory and the disciplines it designates fall historically into the tradition of Russian Formalism, French Structuralism and Anglo-American New Criticism. (Xu 1992; Hu 1994; Shen 1998; Yang 1997) Although we are used to seeing the development of Narratology as an international literary theory, the influence of Formalism on Structuralistic Narratology refers only to the structural analysing model of Russian magic folktales by Propp. (1928) Besides, New Criticism never really reached the Structuralists in France during the 1960’s, except for several discussions by Henry James and Wayne C. Booth on the question regarding the point-of-view of narration in fiction.

Our second point is that most of the studies on the narrative theory itself set up a framework with reference to the French theoretical writings including those by Barthes, Bremond, Greimas, Todorov and Genette, despite the fact that their concepts of “narrative” together with their method of analysis vary widely from one to another. Todorov separates in a narrative the “story” (histoire) from the “discourse” (discours), following the dialectic distinction between story (fabula) and plot (sjužet) defined by Boris Tomachevski, the Russian formalist (Todorov 1981: 131-153; Tomachevski 1925/2001: 272). Barthes proposes, however, a three-level system aiming at describing and classifying all the elements that compose a narrative work: levels of functions, actions and narrations (Barthes 1981: 12-28). Unlike Todorov and Barthes, Genette defines a ternary hierarchy of narrative in which, narrative is divided into three aspects: story (histoire), narrative (récit) and narrating (narration). The investigation of a narrative focuses therefore on the relationship among these three aspects (Genette 1972: 71-72). Neglecting those differences and incomparability between the basic concepts of narrative by theoreticians, Chinese scholars reconstructed a
generalized but practical framework of Narratology.

With regard to the application of the theory on Chinese literature, Chinese scholars attempted, on one hand, to re-examine both the Chinese classical and modern literature, covering a large period from the Tang Dynasty to the 1980’s. On the other hand, they did not simply consider the western narrative theory as an analysing tool but a point of reference for the re-establishment of a so-called “Chinese narratology”, with the two thousand years of literary and historical works as a basis.

The degradation of the theory

“Untranslatability” of literary concepts and redefinition of object of study

As Narratology is a methodological model mainly derived from the linguistic study of European languages and their narrative tradition, there is, to some extent, a central “impossibility” in employing such a theory in analysing Chinese literary works. One of the most complicated problems concerning the “translatability” of theories between different cultures is without any doubt the translation of conceptual terms. Two basic French terminologies in Narratology, “récit” (narrative) which designates enunciation, discourse or narrative text itself and “narration” (narrating) which designates the whole situation in which a narrative action takes place, are both translated as Xushi 敘事 or Xushu 敘述 (Genette 1990; Rimmon-Kenan 1991; Hu 1994). It appears that the distinction between these two terms in French is inevitably lost in the Chinese translation. However, when the notion of Xushi 敘事 is accepted as the translation of “récit” (narrative), we are implying that the conceptual scope of Xushi is basically the same as that of the Western concept of narrative. In our studies, this question becomes crucial since Narratology considers “récit” (narrative) as its object of study.

This brings us back to the fundamental question: What are the conceptual boundaries of “narrative” in the Chinese context? Does the transposition of the concept of “narrative”, as constituted in Western cultural history, provide a valid tool in defining the Chinese narrative corpus? The Chinese notion of Xushi 敘事, generally used as the equivalent of “narrative”, appeared for the first time in the pre-Qin text of the Zhouli 周禮 (The Rituals of Zhou) and its original meaning “narrating events” has been preserved until nowadays. Around the 13th century, Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 and Zhen Dexiu 真德秀 adopted the term, but in their writing,
"Xushi refers simply to a way or style of historical writing. In fact, the notion of Xushi has only been used to refer to a mode or class of literary material in contemporary writings and this adaptation of the term is essentially a neologism (Plaks 1977: 310). Therefore, to “legitimate” the application of the narratological method in Chinese literary works, one must demonstrate that Chinese narrative is “comparable” to western narrative.

Chinese scholars, however, do not seem to be very concerned about the question of “comparability” between the Western concept of “narrative” and the Chinese concept of Xushi. Among their studies on Chinese narrative, only a few have even mentioned the issue. To compare it with the Western narrative tradition that begins with the epic, Chen Pingyuen 陈平原 has attempted to redefine the origin of the Chinese narrative tradition in both the historical prose represented by *Shi* 史 and *Zhuan* 傳, as well as in the poetic writing represented by *Shijing* 詩經 and *Lisao* 離騷 (Chen 2003/1988: 208-213). Largely based on the study of Chen, Xu Dai 徐岱 further reconstructs the continuous tradition of Chinese narrative from both historical prose and poetic writing to the late-Qing novel, in comparison with the linear development of the Western narrative from myth and epic to modern novel (Xu 1992: 9-11, 26-45). Nevertheless, the concept of “narrative” in the Chinese context has not been strictly defined and in most cases, scholars simply refer the term of “narrative” to a loose mode of writing related to any narration of events. In other words, in contrast with the West where the application of narratology is principally limited to modern novels of the 19th and 20th century, Chinese scholars have extensively enlarged the field of study to cover various modes of writing. While Tan Guogen 譚國根 introduces the narratological method to study the *Chuanqi* 傳奇 (tales of the marvellous) of the Tang dynasty, Li Qingxin 李慶信, Wang Bin 王彬, Zhang Shijun 張世君 and Zheng Tiesheng 鄭鐵生 try to explore new perspectives in the domain of *Baihua changpian xiaoshou* 白話長篇小說 (vernacular fiction) of the Ming-Qing dynasty. Based on the same theory, Chen Pingyuen 陈平原’s study focuses on *Duanpian xiaoshou* 短篇小說 (short story) of the May Fourth Period and Tan Junqian 譚君強’s concentrates on the short stories of Lu Xun 魯迅, the first Chinese writer of the 20th century who paid much attention to the techniques of narrative in his writings. For their part, Chen Shunxing 陈順馨 and Xu Zidong 許子東 analyse certain stereotypical narrative structures in Chinese fiction from 1949 to contemporary period. Surprisingly, Wang Yang 王
applies the narrative theory in the investigation of two modern poems, a literary genre excluded from the study field of Narratology in general, written respectively by Rainer Maria Rilke and Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin (Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 2-3; Wang 2002: 471-503).

By discussing the question that arises when the term “narrative” is used, our aim is not to challenge the accuracy of translation. Rather, we mean to point out the fact that translation not only imposes some difficulties on linguistics, it also involves cultural and ideological problems. As Paul Ricoeur puts it in his recent work, *Sur la traduction* (About Translation), a translation process never goes from word to phrase, to text and then to the whole culture, but functions the other way round. The final decision of choosing a particular word in the process of translation concerns the re-establishment of a “word-by-word glossary”. To define a word with one meaning in the glossary is in fact the step just before we admit that a word is untranslatable. (Ricoeur 2004: 53) Much the same thing can be said of “translating” a theory. To transport a theory from its original place, language and culture to a new place, language and culture, is to disfigure it and to deform it.

*A reduced grammatical analysing model*

Like many other literary theories, Narratology is strongly attached to the language and culture of its country of origin. To introduce such a theory to a completely different literary and cultural setting, Chinese scholars seem to have had no other way but to simplify the theory into a relatively abstract formulation with an easily operated theoretical framework. This intention has been clearly visible in the early stage of the transplantation of Narratology in China. Theoretical writings on Narratology have been carefully selected for translation. Even though the Chinese narratologists always go back to the origin of the French notion “Narratologie” (Narratology), which was introduced for the first time by Todorov in the *Grammaire du Décaméron* (Grammar of the Decameron) published in 1969, this fundamental study on narrative was never translated into Chinese. The reason for this lies probably on the difficulty of applying the theory Todorov proposed in this work. Attempting to describe the homogenous structure of all kinds of narratives - film, myth, folktale and short story - in the form of grammar, Todorov established a universal “Grammar of narrative” (*grammaire de la narration*) based on the hypothesis of the existence of a parallel structure between language, human thought and the Universe (Todorov 1969: 15). Under the grammatical form, Todorov analysed the stories recounted in the medieval writing of Boccaccio at the syntactic level (agent or predicate), the semantic level (proper name, first name, article, verb, adjective, adverb or substantive) and the
functional level (denomination or description), in order to determine the basic structure of characters’ actions and the different combinations of these actions.\(^{(10)}\) This kind of theoretical framework is in fact strongly linked to the European linguistic system and is not easily applied to the Chinese narrative text. Instead of translating this fundamental work, Chinese editors and translators have chosen Todorov’s two other essays: “The Narrative as Discourse”, an extract of the article “The Categories of the Literary Narrative” (1966) and “The analysis of literary text”, the second chapter of the writer’s Poétique (Poetics) (1968). In consequence, it was under the influence of the ideas proposed in these two articles, the dialectic relationship between “story of narrative” and “discourse of narrative”, as well as the relatively simple theoretical formulation with three main narrative aspects (narrative time, narrative voice and narrative mood), that the Chinese narrative study took their present shape.

In the search of the essential characteristics of “Chinese narrative”

The domesticated theory of Narratology in China is, to a large degree, reduced to a grammatical analysing model, first proposed by Todorov and later modified by Genette for the study of discourse (Genette 1972: 74-75). While studying these theoretical writings, we realise at once their strong attachment to traditional European linguistic studies (Todorov 1969: 16). Although Todorov declares that Narratology investigates the universal grammatical structure of narrative, and Genette declares that it aims at exploring “the field of what is possible or even impossible” in narrative discourse (Genette 1982: 109), the grammatical model of narratology is fundamentally derived from a European linguistic system, which is least related to the Chinese linguistic system. The categories of different narrative aspects classified by both Todorov and Genette as: “narrative time”, “narrative mode” and “narrative voice”, are not totally “applicable” to Chinese grammatical or Chinese narrative studies. Narratology, like other literary theories, is tied to the language and the culture of its country of origin. In reality, the attempt to analyse Chinese literary works by the narratological method is, in the end, the application of metaphor.
narrative theory in Chinese literary studies. For example, Chen Pingyuan 陳平原 says in the 
Introduction of the Zhongguo xiaoshuo xushi moshi de zhuanbian 中國小說敘事模式的轉變 
(The Change of the Narrative Style of Chinese Fiction) in 1988:

In narratological studies, there are many different kinds of theoretical models. 
Gérard Genette, in “Discours du récit”, sets out five main categories for 
narrative analyse: order, duration, frequency, mood and voice; Tzvetan 
Todorov, on the other hand, in “Le récit comme discours”, separates the 
discourse into three parts: narrative time, narrative voice and narrative mood. 
While constructing the theoretical frame for this study, I am inspired by these 
two theoreticians of the novel; as an historian of literature, however, I have no 
way but to put emphasis on the Chinese novel’s own development, rather than 
the abstract and the wholeness of the theory itself. I thus concentrate on three 
aspects of the change of Chinese novel’s narrative model: narrative time, 
narrative perspective and narrative structure (Chen 2003: 3-4).

Chen has realized since the very beginning that the use of the theoretical frame of 
Narratology in analyzing Chinese literary works is practically impossible if one neglects the 
literary differences between two cultures. Besides, a pure application of narratological method 
in Chinese literature will only serve to turn certain Chinese works into examples so as to 
prove the “universal applicability” of the theory. It is important to note that either Narratology 
or any other literary theory refers basically to a certain approach of reading, which arises from 
a certain way of “approaching” literary texts in empirical situations. Thus, there is no theory 
without examples, which, in return, “tie the theory not just to specific language and culture, 
but to particular works within that culture” (Miller 1996: 212). If we look at Genette’s 
research, it is not difficult to tell that his theory is closely attached to Marcel Proust’s A la 
recherche du temps perdu (In Search of Lost Time). The most exhaustive discussion about 
narrative time in Genette’s theory is, as we can see, totally inspired by the highly complicated 
time-setting of Proust’s novel. Even though Rimmon-Kenan has introduced over 80 novels as 
examples in Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics, in order to demonstrate that 
Narratology is as impersonal and universal as any scientific “technique”, most of her 
examples are limited to European as well as Anglo-American literary works between 1850 
and 1970 (Kwong 1998: 295-301). No theory can be universalized easily and modification 
within a transplanted theory is then inevitable. To transform the narratological method for
domestic use, one must redefine the essential characteristics of “Chinese narrative”.

Relative research focuses mainly on two aspects of Chinese narrative, narrator and diegetic level, which demonstrate the differences of narrative traditions between two cultures. According to the two principles of classification defined by Genette, a narrator can be categorized by the extent of his participation in the story that he narrates (heterodiegetic or homodiegetic narrator) and the narrative level to which he belongs (extradiegetic or intradiegetic narrator). This, at the end, leads to a typology of four types of narrators: (i) extra-heterodiegetic narrator, (ii) extra-homodiegetic narrator, (iii) intra-heterodiegetic narrator and (iv) intra-homodiegetic narrator (Genette 1972: 255-256). Each category represents a particular narrative voice in the text and the change of point of view (“focalization”) always implies a change of narrator. As Genette himself writes, “I know of no example of pure transfocalization, where ‘the same story’ is told successively from several points of view but by the same heterodiegetic narrator” (Genette 1983: 44-45). However unfamiliar it might be to Genette, the pure transfocalization from one narrator happens frequently in Chinese novel. Hu Yamin 胡亞敏 in her study on the mid-14th Century novel, *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 (Water Margin) and on the interlinear notes by Jin Shengtan 金聖歎 (1608-1661), highlights the multiple identities of the narrator as “editor-storyteller-commentator” as well as the oscillation between the narrator’s omniscient and partially limited perspective in the novel. This particular type of narrator, uncommon to the western narrative, is in fact derived from an ancient Chinese storytelling tradition, known as *Shoshu* 說書, in which a storyteller is free to narrate, to comment and even to judge the plot as well as the actions of characters in the story (Hu 1994: 251). In addition, discourse that juxtaposes objective description and personal criticism can be traced back to the narrative tradition of the ancient historical writings like *Zhuozhuan* 左傳 and *Shiji* 史記. Comparing Chinese literature to Chinese art, we can further demonstrate the close relationship between the ever-changing point of view of the narrator and the multiple perspectives employed in Chinese ancient painting (Hu 1994: 248). As some foreign Sinologists point out, the narrator poses the main problem in the rhetoric of Chinese narrative, while the narrator’s narrative tone is the core of the main problem (Plaks 1996: 14-16). We can still find the traces of such a kind of narrator in Chinese modern literature, for example in the *Honggaoliang jiazu* 紅高粱家族 (Family of Red Sorghum) by Mo Yan 莫言.

The complicated design of diegetic level in Chinese narrative is another aspect, which is
also considered to be unfamiliar to western narrative. (11) There are two models that Chinese scholars tend to put emphasis on. The first one, slightly different from a “Chinese-box” structure, designates the structure of a narrative within a narrative, which appears as an analogy, verging on identity and making the first-degree diegetic level a mirror and reduplication of the second-degree diegetic level. It can be metaphorically described “as the equivalent in narrative fiction of something like Matisse’s famous painting of a room in which a miniature version of the same painting hangs on one of the walls” (Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 93). The main difference is that there is always a character in the story (second-degree diegetic level) who happens to write or to read the story that we are reading (first-degree diegetic level). In other words, an empirical impossibility is made possible in verbal narrative. Zhao Yiheng 趙毅衡 studies this particular problem in Chinese novels extensively. As he points out, Li Ruzhen 李汝珍 shows an original design of diegetic level in the Jinghua yuan 鏡花緣 (Flowers in the Mirror) published in the early 19th century, in which the main character of the story recounts another story, which is nearly the same as the one of the Flowers in the Mirror itself (Chapter 23). The story is thus set in a paradox: the character narrates a story out of which he comes. A similar structure is also used in the novels such as Guanchang xianxing ji 官場現形記 (Officialdom Unmasked) and the Hongtianlei 轟天雷 (Lightening) in the late Qing dynasty (Zhao 1994: 106-110). The second model relates to the transition between diegetic levels in a narrative. Since each diegetic level is considered as an independent world, any transition from one diegetic level to another is a transgression. As Zhao believes, one of the Four Classics, Hongloumeng 紅樓夢 (Dream of the Red Chamber) demonstrates the most complicated structure with transgression of diegetic levels that exists in the world literary history of the 19th century. There are at least four main diegetic levels in the narrative and transitions happening everywhere. For instance, the Taoist priest who has transcribed the story of Hongloumeng from the precious stone, personally meets the characters recounted in the story. At the end of the story, he tries to look for Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹 who declares himself to be the editor of the Hongloumeng in the story but refers to the real writer of the novel, by posing questions to one of the characters (Hu 1994: 106-110). Both of the diegetic-level models mentioned above are not widely accoutered in the western narrative until the 1960’s. The modern self-conscious fiction or metafiction, Letters and Sabbatical by John Barth for example, often plays with diegetic levels in order to manifest how an illogical
or even paradoxical world can be created by language and narrative conventions on one hand, and to question the borderline between the reality and the fiction on the other. This kind of design of diegetic level has actually existed for a long time in Chinese narrative but for a different purpose. Bounded by the tradition of historical writing, authors tend to provide the source of origin where the story comes from, even though the attempt to prove a historical fact has lost its value.

In the process of defining the essential characteristics of “Chinese narrative”, the Western narrative tradition is always considered as a counterpart for comparison. In other words, “what is Chinese is often imagined and argued as completely distinct from its counterparts in the West, even as such counterparts are accepted in an a priori manner as models or criteria for comparison” (Chow 2000: 10). Not only foreign Sinologists, but also Chinese scholars themselves try to establish an identity for Chinese narrative by setting it off against the Western.

**Conclusion**

Given a certain portion of reformulation, does the theoretical frame, the “Chinese Narratology” formulated by Chinese scholars, appear no more than a mere duplication of the western theory? The “narrative grammar” and the concepts of narrator, point-of-view and narrative level remain the valid tools to explain the formal details of a Chinese literary text. Using western narratology as a referential system, one can also clarify as well as systematize the numerous and abundant ideas on Chinese narrative arising in traditional discussions (Hu 1994: 124). By supplementing Narratology with the notion of “Chinese”, scholars intend to reconstruct a narrative theory corresponding to the specificities of the Chinese narrative text, thereby hoping to preserve the way of storytelling in its own tradition and its own cultural logic. In his study entitled *The Chinese Narratology* (*Zhongguo xushixue 中國敘事學*), Yang Yi emphasizes that in an effort to create a “Chinese” literary theory, the western counterpart can only serve as a point of reference (Yang 1997: 1-2). Only were the Chinese narratology put on the same ground as that of the Western narratology could a dialogue between the narrative traditions of these two cultures become possible.
Notes:

(1) In his essay entitled “Travelling Theory” (1982), Said takes Georg Lukács’s *History and Class Consciousness* (1923) as example, to investigate how Lucien Goldmann domesticates Lukács’s theory in his study of Pascal and Racine (*Le Dieu caché*, 1955) with a totally different historical setting. Twelve years later, Said wrote “Travelling Theory Reconsidered” (1994) in which he revised the possibility of the transplantation of theories. Taking again Lukács’s *History and Class Consciousness* as example, Said examines on one hand how Adorno adapts and further develops Lukács’s idea in order to understand Schoenberg’s twelve-tone theory and on the other hand, how Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* takes its shape with writer’s dehistoricized reading of Lukács. (Said 1983 : 226-247; 2002 : 439-452)

(2) Regarding to the geographical scope of this study, one crucial point is to be clarified. This paper focuses on narrative studies published in mainland China, excluding those published in Hong Kong and Taiwan as these two places, due to historical reason, have a very different relationship to the West in whether political, social, philosophical and institutional context. The interactions of Hong Kong’s and Taiwan’s literature to the western literary trends vary one to another and, in this study, it would be better not to simplify them into a same category as that of mainland China.


(4) In the last decade of the 20th century, western literary criticism is introduced to mainland China systematically, according to the literary and political needs of the country. The translation project of theoretical works from different languages such as
Russian, English, French, German and Italian, plays an important role in the early stage of importation of foreign ideas. Collections appeared in this period include: the *Ershi shiji oumei wenlun congshu* (Collection of Essays in European and American Literary Criticism of the 20th Century) published by the Foreign Literature Research Centre, Social Science Research Centre of China; the *Wenyi meixue congshu* (Collection of Essays in Literature and Aesthetics) published by the Peking University Press; the *Waiguo wenxue yanjiu ziliao congshu* (Collection of Research Materials of Foreign Literature) published by the Shanghai Literature and Aesthetics Press etc.

(5) The translation of the theoretical work on Narratology carries on in 1990’s. The study of Mieke Bal, *De Theorie van vertellen en verhalen*, was translated into Chinese in 1995 from the English translation *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Besides, a collection of academic essays by Ding Naitong 丁乃通 were translated and published, under the title of *Zhongxi xushi wenxue bijiao yanjiu* 中西敘事文學比較研究 (Comparative Study on the Chinese and Western Narrative Literature).

(6) “*Histoire*” (story), “*récit*” (narrative) and “*narration*” (narrating) are in fact the three basic aspects of “narrative reality” defined by Genette (Genette 1972: 72-73). Attempting to distinguish “*récit*” from “*narration*”, Shen Dan 申丹 translates these two terms into Chinese as *Xushi Huayu* 敘事話語 and *Xushi Xingwei* 敘事行為 (Shen 1998: 14). However, the translation of *Xushi Huayu* 敘事話語 confused immediately with the one of “narrative discourse”.

(7) In the text of *Zhouli* 周禮 (The Rituals of Zhou), the notion of *Xushi* 敘事 has appeared twice: (i)《周禮．春官．宗伯》：「冯相氏掌十有二歲……（辨）[辯]其敘事，以會天位。冬夏致日，春秋致月，以（辨）[辯] 四時之敘。」(ii)《周禮．春官．內史》：「內史……掌敘事之法，受訟訟以詔王聽治。」The text compiled is based on the *Chongkan Songben Zhouli zhushu* 重刊宋本周禮注疏 (Song Edition of the Commentaries and Subcommentaries to the *Zhouli*) re-cut by Ruan Yuan 阮元 in 1816.

(8) In contrast to the Chinese scholars, some of the western scholars pay a lot of attention to the problem concerning the “comparability” of the concept of “narrative” in the Western and the Chinese cultures. For example, according to the similar social-cultural
background, which gives rise to the novel in the West in the 18th century and to the extended vernacular prose fiction (the Qishu wenti 奇書文體) in the Ming and Qing period, Andrew Plaks considers that these two literary genres are “comparable” to each other. He further reconstructs a continuous tradition of Chinese narrative from myth to historical text and extended vernacular prose fiction, in order to compare to the Western tradition of narrative, which also falls into a linear development from epic to romance and novel (Plaks 1996: 25-33).

(9) We consider the Grammaire du Décaméron as a fundamental work of Narratology not only because Todorov has mentioned in this book for the first time the term “Narratology”, but also because he has suggested in it several important directions of the development of the studies of narrative which have been carried out respectively by Seymour Chatman and by Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan in their later studies (Chatman 1978; Rimmon-Kenan 1983).

(10) Following the analyzing method of Morphology of the Folktale by Vladimir Propp, Todorov divides his Grammaire du Décaméron into two parts: First, the study of “proposition” which refers to the elementary actions of characters; Second, the study of “sequence” which refers to the combination structure of “propositions”. The later part is considered to be the core of the study (Propp 1928/1970; Todorov 1969).

(11) In Narratology, the theory of “diegetic level” systematizes in fact the traditional notion of “embedding”, referring to the structure in which a narration is embedded within another narration. While a character whose actions are the object of narration, engages himself in narrating another story, the second-degree narration is achieved. This strategy can multiply worlds in a “recursive structure” and often suggests an endless succession of internal duplications (Genette 1972: 214). It is the Russian formalist, Viktor Shklovksii, who has firstly studied such form of narrative within narrative, known as “Chinese-box” structure, and one of the most famous examples is the Arabic classic Thousand and One Nights (Todorov 2001: 170-196).

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