

Comparative literature, from Euro Centrism to Globalism

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Received: 28/08/2025 ; Accepted: 22/02/2026 ; Published: 08/06/ 2026

Abstract :

Comparative literature was officially founded by the Frenchman Abel Villemain in 1827, despite the existence of roots in comparison between the literatures of nations and peoples, such as the comparisons made by the Romans with the literatures of the Greeks and the Babylonians with the literatures of the Sumerians. In addition to the emergence of scientific research methods in the 19th century, which influenced comparative studies, moving from superficial studies to studies based on scientific methodology. The French school dominated the field of comparative literature for nearly a century, establishing standards and principles for comparative studies as the single dominant trend known as the French concept of comparative literature. But in 1958, the American critic René Wellek delivered a lecture entitled "The Crisis of Comparative Literature" during the Second Congress of Comparative Literature. His article, which was later published, met with considerable resonance, shaking all the foundations and principles of the French School, thus announcing the birth of a new trend with new principles and foundations, namely the American School, thus shifting from Euro centrism to globalism.

Keywords: Comparative Literature ; French School ; Euro centrism ; American School ; globalism.

Littérature comparée, de l'eurocentrisme à la mondialisation

Résumé :

La littérature comparée a été officiellement fondée par le Français Abel Villemain en 1827, bien que ses racines se soient déjà ancrées dans la comparaison des littératures des nations et des peuples, comme celles établies par les Romains avec les Grecs et les Babyloniens avec les Sumériens. L'émergence des méthodes de recherche scientifiques au XIXe siècle a influencé les études comparatives, les faisant passer d'études superficielles à des études fondées sur une méthodologie scientifique rigoureuse. L'école française a dominé le champ de la littérature comparée pendant près d'un siècle, établissant des normes et des principes qui ont donné naissance au courant dominant connu sous le nom de conception française de la littérature comparée. Cependant, en 1958, le critique américain René Wellek a donné une conférence intitulée « La crise de la littérature comparée » lors du deuxième Congrès de littérature comparée. Son article, publié ultérieurement, a rencontré un écho considérable, bouleversant les fondements et les principes de l'école française et annonçant la naissance d'un nouveau courant, l'école américaine, avec ses nouveaux principes et fondements, marquant ainsi un passage de l'eurocentrisme à la mondialisation.

Mots-clés : Littérature comparée ; École française ; Eurocentrisme ; École américaine ; Mondialisation.

I. Introduction:

The field of comparative literature has witnessed two main trends; the first was historically represented by the traditional **French school**, which focused on documented historical "influence and being influenced," represented by the efforts of Paul Van Tieghem and Jean-Marie Carré. The second trend is the one that moved comparative literature from **centrality** to broader **global** horizons, represented by the **American school** that adopted structural and critical approaches, Philosophy and anthropology, to transcend narrow linguistic boundaries towards the study of literature as an integrated whole, after the "Chapel Hill" conference held in 1958 when Ronnie Wilke offered a sharp critique of the French school, rejecting its adherence to the idea of influence and being influenced and historical connections without paying attention to the text itself. This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the roots of comparative literature?
2. What are the most important factors that contributed to its emergence?
3. What are the main principles of the French school and what are its shortcomings?
4. What are the main principles of the American school, and how did it shift comparative literature from a Eurocentric to a global perspective?

II. The roots of comparative literature:

The relationship between literatures has existed since ancient times. Although the Romans militarily defeated the Greeks in 146 AD, the latter triumphed over the Romans intellectually and culturally, especially in literature and philosophy, leading the victors to imitate the vanquished. Hence, the Romans considered Greek literature a model to be emulated, Horace (85-8 BC) explicitly called in his poetry for imitating the Greeks: "Follow the examples of the Greeks, and devote yourselves to studying them at night and during the day." This means that Horace saw imitating the Greeks in his literature as a worthwhile and fruitful endeavor (Tahan, 1972, p. 17).

We find the Roman critic (Cuntilian) taking great strides with the theory of imitation in explaining it, establishing its rules, and defining its elements, which he summarized as follows:

1. Roman writers could not do without imitating Greek writers.
2. Imitation requires special talents for a writer to develop their own work; it is not easy.
3. Imitation is not limited to phrases and words, but extends to the essence and methodology of literature.
4. The imitator of the Greeks must choose models that are easy for them to emulate and possess the discerning judgment to distinguish between good and bad examples.
- 5- The writer must not forget his own originality while imitating Greek literature(Hilal, n.d, pp7-8).

After Roman literature flourished, Roman historians attempted to compare the works of their writers and poets, a naive and simple attempt to begin comparative literature(Tahan, 1972, p. 17).After Christianity dominated most of medieval Europe and Latin was adopted in its science and literature, the latter became the language of the Church. This led to the permeation of literary production by the clergy, which became their exclusive domain. In addition, the spirit of chivalry unified most European literature and imbued it with its distinctive character, thus demonstrating the universality of literature(Tahan, 1972, pp 1718-).

The call to return to the heritage of the Greeks and then the Romans was fundamental to the literary renaissance in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; The Thuraya group organized the methods of this benefit with regard to literature, including the poet and critic Dora, who followed a purely scientific approach in teaching his students the meaning of the theory of imitation. He would

bring examples from Greek literature and compare them with their counterparts in Latin literature. Through these examples, he explains how the Roman Cicero was indebted in his oratory to the Greek orator Demosthenes, how Virgil was influenced by the Greek poets Theocritus and Homer, and how the Greek poet Pindarius inspired Horace in his Latin poems(Hilal, n.d, pp8-9).

It should be noted that the Arabs had a prominent role in nourishing the European mind, as the Arabic language absorbed the sciences and philosophy of the ancients and enriched them with original additions in the fields of medicine, pharmacy, chemistry, botany, zoology, mathematics, astronomy and philosophy, and continued to carry the banner of human knowledge for five centuries. It should be noted that the Arabs had a prominent role in nourishing the European mind, as the Arabic language absorbed the sciences and philosophy of the ancients and enriched them with original additions in the fields of medicine, pharmacy, chemistry, botany, zoology, mathematics, astronomy and philosophy, and continued to carry the banner of human knowledge for five centuries (Shujaa .2013 .p.23). Thus, by the eighteenth century, ties had been strengthened between the various European literatures, and the French tended to become acquainted with literatures they were previously ignorant of, such as the literatures of Northern Europe and English and German literature(Tahan, 1972, p19).

It can be said that "in the eighteenth century, radical changes occurred in the mentality of the French, who were somewhat familiar with English and German literature... France looked upon English literature and felt the realism of the neighboring people, and the thought of Locke, Newton, and a large number of English scholars nourished the spirit of the philosophers of the Enlightenment, namely Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Diderot." (Tahan, 1972, pp20-21) Based on this, it becomes clear that several factors contributed to the emergence of comparative literature, which can be summarized as follows:

1. The emergence of nationalism and identity awareness in France, where "comparative literature in France arose within the bosom of national literature and in service of national literature as a result of historical and cultural development and in response to an internal need for the national language." (Ibrahim, 1997, p. 16).
2. The philosophical basis of the idea of absolute beauty changed, as BOS called for the theory of relativity in beauty, which states that there is no single model of beauty, but rather there are multiple forms that are linked to multiple climates, multiple peoples, multiple beliefs, and multiple languages(Darwish, 2002, pp19-20).
3. Romanticism is one of the most important reasons that paved the way for comparative literature; as it was based on foundations that demolished the idea of absolute beauty and rigid classical rationality, and it encouraged the study of popular literature, folklore and similar myths among nations. Madame de Staël is considered the greatest advocate of the Romantic movement. Through her book "On Germany," she had extensive contact with French and German literature and called for basing criticism on philosophy, which is the intellectual current that paves the way for and accompanies literary renaissances(Ghunaimi n.d, pp. 44-45).
4. The emergence of the historical method and positivist philosophy: The historical method emerged in Europe from the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century with the rise of the natural sciences and their methods that dominated philosophical and literary research, which helped in the emergence of positivist philosophy with Auguste Comte, It also led to the emergence of what could be called the natural history of literature, as seen in the work of Sainte-Beuve, Taine, and Brunetière, who attempted to establish fixed laws for literature, as immutable as the laws of natural

science(Darwish, 2002, pp22-24).Furthermore, positivism expressed itself in comparative literature through the call of the "traditional French school" to adopt the experimental method in studies of influence and being influenced, and even to prove its existence with concrete evidence and documents that leave no room for doubt(Najm, 2008, p. 9). This convergence of historical and positivist tendencies formed the theoretical basis for what is known as the French school of comparative literature(Aboud, 1999, p. 27).

5. The Scientific Renaissance: The scientific renaissance played an important role in the emergence of comparative literature by encouraging systematic research and reliance on scientific analysis, which led to the emergence of new critical approaches such as theories of influence and being influenced in literature, and the call to study different literatures and compare them with each other. Scientific discoveries have also influenced literature and criticism, and contributed to expanding the readership base, creating a growing interest in comparative literary studies(El-Krouiti .<https://www.anfasse.org>).

6. Colonial expansion and discoveries: which established ties between peoples and reinforced the idea of influence and being influenced.

III. French school:

The French school is considered the first trend to emerge in comparative literature, and this was in the early nineteenth century. It continued to dominate as the sole trend in comparative literature until the middle of the twentieth century, that is, for almost a century(Ghunaimi n.d, pp. 93). It is also called the historical school because it is based on the historical method, and therefore François Guillard calls it: "History of International Literary Relations" (Guillard,1988, p. 15). The direction of the French school became clear with the emergence of the first chair of comparative studies and the first journal of comparative literature, and the first article on "The Word and the Thing" (Le mot et la chose), which is considered the first theoretical and historical work of the French school, published in the Journal of Comparative Literature in 1921 by Ferdinand Baldensberger. In addition to Van Tieghem's book, which is no less famous than Baldensberger's article(Alloush, 1987, p. 56). Her study is based on investigating the phenomena of influence and interaction between different national literatures, identifying the points of convergence between them, and the surrounding external historical, political, social, economic, and intellectual circumstances.

The first inklings of the emergence of comparative literature as an independent science in its modern sense date back to 1827 AD at the hands of the French researcher Abel Villemin, who is considered the spiritual father of comparative studies in France, and he was the first to use the term comparative literature in the French language. He laid the initial foundations through his lectures delivered in 1829 at the Sorbonne University, entitled "An Investigation into the Influence of Eighteenth-Century French Writers on Other Literatures and on the European Mentality," concerning the relationship between French literature and European literatures, addressing the mutual influences between French and English literature, and The influence of French literature on Italian literature in the 18th century ,Paul van Tieghem also wrote his book "Comparative Literature," in which he explained the progress of the field of comparative studies. Joseph Texte, for his part, published his treatise on Jean-Jacques Rousseau and on the sources of world literature in 1890. He later occupied the chair of comparative studies at the University of Lyon.

As for Louis-Paul Bets, he made systematic efforts in the field of comparative studies, represented by his thesis which dealt with the reception of the German poet Heinrich Heine in France in 1895. And a huge book entitled "Bibliography of Comparative Literature" in 1900, which

he republished with Baldenspringer in 1904. Nor can we forget the efforts of Gustave Lanson, who had a great influence on many theses in comparative literature, not to mention his responsibility for publishing the journal "Comparative Literature" and the "Library of the Journal of Comparative Literature" with Paul Hazard, as well as Guyard and René Etemble (Al-Sheikh and Bakkar, 2008, pp. 12-14).

This school has set strict conditions for comparative study. For any study to fall under the field of comparative literature, the following conditions must be met:

1. The existence of a relationship of influence and being influenced, as Paul van Tieghem confirms that: "Reporting the similarities and differences between two books, two scenes, two subjects, or two pages, from two or more languages, is the necessary starting point that allows us to discover influence, borrowing, or other." (van Tieghem, 1946, p. 20). Therefore, the study must be between two or more national literatures, and it must be in the field of literature. The study cannot be included in the field of comparative literature unless it compares literary works only, so it must be between two or more literary works, provided that the nationalities of these literatures are different.
2. Language difference: This is the criterion of nationalism according to this school, "considering language to be the linguistic vessel in which literature appears." (Ghunaimi n.d, p.98) Because "the field of comparative literature is an international field that connects two or more different literatures" (Juma'a, 1980, p. 17) "The first condition is that the comparative study be between works written in different languages. If this condition is not met, the study falls outside the scope of comparative literature" (Taha, 1991, pp.20-23). It is not permissible to compare two literary works written in the same language, regardless of ethnic, geographical, or any other differences, because this school considers them to be of the same nationality, and the comparison between them is a matter of balancing, and its field is: literary criticism, not comparative literature. According to this school, it is not permissible to compare a literary work by the French writers Gustave Flaubert and Hugues de Maupassant with a literary work written in French by Mohammed Dib, Kateb Yacine, Malek Haddad, Assia Djebar, or other Algerian writers who write in French, because they are of the same nationality (French).
3. The historical links between the two literary works are provided, meaning that the comparison process within the framework of comparative literature is only between two or more literary works that have been historically proven to have been influenced by one another, since "anything that makes comparisons between books from different literatures that have not had historical links, so that one of them influences the other in some way, or is influenced by it, is not considered comparative literature." (Hilal, n d, pp. 18-19) That is, "the subjects being compared have historical connections that have resulted in a kind of influence and being influenced." (Juma'a, 1980, p. 19) Therefore, the French school made the principle of influence and being influenced a necessary condition for comparative study and excluded from the scope of comparative literature comparisons between literatures that have no historical connection (Hilal, n d, p. 20). Literary works cannot be compared, even if they belong to different nationalities, are written in different languages, and are similar, unless there are historical links between them.
4. The influential literary work should be positive and the influenced literary work negative. "It is undeniable that influence research gives the influenced side a negative role, as it places it in the position of the passive rather than the active, thus obscuring its positive and creative role. In contrast, it gives the influential literary side the role of the positive agent." (Aboud, 1999, p.12) The

traditional French school divided the literature and cultures of the world into two parts: a positive part and a negative part, and linked the process of influence and being influenced to the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. The colonizer is the strongest and his literature is the positive because he is the one who influences, while the colonized is the weakest, so he is the negative because he is the one who is influenced. Hence, European cultures and literatures are considered positive because they are the strong and influential ones, while other world cultures and literatures, such as Arabic, are considered negative because they are weak and influenced. It can be said that the school thus reinforces the idea of Eurocentrism. "It is an expansionist, supremacist tendency that formed an important component of the European colonial mentality, and continues to serve the efforts of European cultural hegemony to this day." (Aboud, 1999, pp. 30-31)

IV. The shortcomings of the French school:

1. The traditional French school divided world literatures and cultures into positive and negative categories, considering them all either derived from or subsumed within European literature.
2. The traditional French school did not precisely define the subject matter and methodologies of comparative literature.
3. It prioritized national elements over the literary work itself in comparative studies.
4. It exaggerated the role of influence and interaction (Alloush, 1987, p. 100).

V. American School:

The United States became interested in comparative literature in the last third of the nineteenth century, and it can be said that the American school was founded as a clear response to the French school and the criticisms and shortcomings observed in it. This occurred when the American critic René Wellek presented a historical overview in his lectures, "The Crisis of Comparative Literature," at the Second International Conference of the Comparative Literature Association held at the University of Chapel Hill in the United States. Through this presentation, he directed a clear critique at the French school of comparative literature, revisiting what he had previously presented in his book, *Theory of Literature*, in 1949 (Alloush, 1987, p. 97).

Henry Remak is considered one of the most important critics who played a key role in attempting to reconcile the principles of the French and American schools, as he tried to establish the principles and foundations upon which the American school was based. This was achieved by giving him a new concept of comparative literature that differed significantly from the traditional French concept, through his discussion of laws and standards, functional aspects, theoretical units, human creativity, and organic communication terms that are new to comparative studies as we have come to expect from the French school (Alloush, 1987, pp. 96-97).

Based on the above, the American school of comparative literature rejected everything that the traditional French school had brought, establishing a new concept for comparative literature and new foundations governing comparative study, which can be summarized as follows:

- a- Expanding the scope of comparative literature to include any form of human expression (art, music, cinema) and any intersection between different cultures, not just between national literatures.
- b- Moving away from confining literature to narrow geographical or linguistic boundaries.
- c- Criticism of the French approach, which focused on influence and being influenced and confined comparative literature to the historical aspect.
- d- Rejection of the separation between history and criticism, arguing that the comparatist must be both a critic and an interpreter of literature.

- e- Reinstating the critical aspect of comparative literature and focusing on the interpretation and evaluation of literary works.
- f- Focusing on the creative process in literary texts and their artistic and aesthetic characteristics.
- g- Viewing literature from a unified, global perspective, while acknowledging the unity of human and literary experiences; this is an open-minded ethical stance that reflects the modernity of American civilization and its capacity to appreciate other cultures.
- h- Integrating comparative literature with psychology, anthropology, linguistics, and cultural studies to explore deeper aspects of textual understanding (Alloush, 1987, pp. 100-108).

Critics of the American school realized that the foundations laid by the traditional French school, and the methodology it adopted in comparative studies, inherently excluded the United States from the field of comparative literature. The historical approach adopted by the French school of comparative literature is not compatible with the nature of the United States of America due to the modernity of its history, and thus its literary history is weak compared to the rest of the European literatures. Furthermore, the language requirement set by the French school as a mandatory condition for study, in comparison, is in fact a condition that does not align with the nature of the United States of America, which does not have an official language, because it is a mixture of several nationalities and races, and any literature written in it is not considered American literature, even if it is written in English.

VI. Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that comparative literature was the product of the convergence of a set of theories and opinions built upon the consolidation of one principle and the undermining of another. Particularly involved in this was the French school, which emerged in the nineteenth century with Abel Villemain, adopting a rigorous historical approach focused on "influence and being influenced," studying national literature in its historical relationship with other literatures, and emphasizing the necessity of historical documents and evidence proving the transmission of literary material from one literature to another. But in doing so, it confined itself to studying direct relationships, which made it described as narrow or dryly historical. Secondly: the American school, which emerged as a reaction to the French school in the middle of the twentieth century, sees comparative literature as the study of literature that crosses linguistic and geographical boundaries, with a focus on aesthetic value and literary criticism, and not just historical facts. It expanded to include parallel studies - the study of two literatures that do not have a direct influence - and literature and other arts such as painting, music and cinema.

Nor should we overlook the significant role of Slavic, Italian, and other schools of thought that contributed greatly to developing and establishing the foundations of comparative studies. Comparative literature has evolved over time, moving beyond the binary of French/American literature to a more global perspective. It has come to be concerned with "world literature" as a whole, studying literary styles and shared human phenomena regardless of the author's nationality or language. This approach highlights literature as a human experience where cultures intersect, rather than simply comparing texts.

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