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## A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY ON DIFFERENT LOVE VIEWS IN CHINESE AND WESTERN MOURNING CULTURES -Based on Li Shangyin and Milton's Poems

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### ABSTRACT

Mourning poetry is a particular type of love poetry that combines the two major themes of love and death. The Chinese poet Li Shangyin and the English poet Milton both made remarkable contributions to the different funerary cultures of China and the West. Li Shangyin (813--858) and Milton (1608--1674), though not in the same time and space, both shared similar experiences and both experienced the loss of their wives. However, due to the differences in culture, religion and history between China and the West, their works also fully reflect different ideas of mourning. Based on the theory of variation in the field of comparative literature, this paper tries to compare and contrast Li Shangyin's mourning poems and Milton's on His Deceased Wife to analyze the collision of their different views on love in different times and space, so as to explore further the differences between Chinese and Western ideas of mourning.

**KEYWORDS:** mourning poems; love views; Li Shangyin; Milton; comparative literature

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Mourning poems in China

The mourning poem is written by a husband in memory of his deceased wife. It is the only poem in the history of Chinese poetry that integrates love and death [1]. Mourning poems, one of the ancient Han poetic themes, are generally written by husbands in memory of their deceased wives, beginning with Pan Yue's Lament Poems (three volume (《悼亡诗》(三首))) in the Western Jin Dynasty. Nowadays, it also refers to poetry that expresses memorials and condolences to deceased relatives or friends in a broad sense, which is in line with the meaning of Western poetry for the dead.

The earliest Lament in China is explained in the hook of Songs·Fen·Green·Cloth (《诗经·邶风·绿衣》) and Ge Sheng (《葛生》) from the Songs·Guo Feng (《诗经·国风》). However, the consistent point of literary history is to regard Pan Yue's Lament Poems (three volumes) of Western Jin Dynasty as the source of the mourning poems of literati.

The Tang Dynasty was the heyday of poetic development, but the number of eulogies was still limited. The most famous one at that time was Yuan Zhen and Li Shangyin. Li Shangyin's poem of mourning for the deceased, word by word, seems to come from the bottom of his heart, making it unbearable to read. During the Song Dynasty, Su Shi's Jiangchengzi· The Dream on the 20th Day of the first month of the Yimao Year (《江城子·乙卯正月二十日记梦》) was a classic poem of mourning for the dead for thousands of years, which is also an unparalleled poem. This poem was written by Su Shi to mourn his late wife Wang Fu. Although she has been gone for ten years, their love remains indestructible. Nalan Zide of the Qing Dynasty is famous for his Yinshui Poetry (《饮水词》). He wrote many poems of mourning for the dead and was praised by Wang Guowei as "only one person since the Northern Song Dynasty".

### 1.2 Mourning poems in the West

A eulogy is usually a word spoken about the deceased, and its basic meaning, both in English and Greek, is one of "praise". Made up of the Greek roots eu- (good) and logos (speech), a eulogy is an encomium given for one who is either living or dead. If you praise your partner's unparalleled beauty or extol the noble virtues of the deceased at a funeral, you are delivering a eulogy. In the beginning, the elegy was only a form of poetry used by ancient Greek poets to describe any verse written in elegiac couplets. In those days, elegy was a broad term that did not necessarily refer to death. Western culture believes that there is a heavenly kingdom in the world and that after death, people will go to this heavenly kingdom which is much more beautiful than reality. Through the passage of time, the elegy was given a mournful emotion and gradually evolved into the meaning that people are now familiar with. According to the modern definition, an elegy is a poem written for the deceased. The majority of people today use elegies to express their grief and praise for the deceased.

The earliest eulogy poem in the West is believed to be the Iliad in which Andromache mourned for Hector. Also credited with opening the western mournful poem is Milton's untitled sonnet On His Deceased Wife in memory of his second wife Katelyn [2].

During the Middle Ages, Mulidak Albanak, an Irish poet who wrote in Scottish Gaelic, was probably one of the earliest mourning poets in the West. Although he was the first English author of mourning poems, his long life and infamy prevent readers at home and abroad from knowing much about him. In the 17th century, John Donne, the famous English metaphysical poet, also wrote a mourning poem. In memory of his wife, he wrote the seventeenth Holy Sonnet after she died. With his On His Deceased Wife, which is widely regarded as being one of the most influential and well-known of all mourning poems ever written, Milton is widely considered to be one of the pioneers of western mourning poetry.

All of the above poems are single eulogies. Thomas Hardy (1840-1928), a poet whose influence spanned the centuries, is one of the classic representatives of English eulogy, and he is by far the

author who wrote hundreds of eulogies. However, most readers have the misconception that they know only Hardy's poems of 1912-1913 and know little about his mourning poems. There are several themes that run throughout Hardy's poetry, including grief, admiration, love, guilt, and immortality.

In addition to English poets, poets from other English-speaking countries have written eulogies, such as the United States and Australia. There are relatively few mourning poets in the United States, of which only Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) and Donald Hall are better known. Donald Hall is the only American poet who has written a collection of mourning poems so far.

### 1.3 Brief introduction and common background of Li Shangyin and Milton

Li Shangyin, courtesy name Yishan, was a famous poet in the late Tang Dynasty who lived a troubled and unambitious life. His poems are lush and lush in style, especially some love poems and untitled poems, which are so beautiful and touching that they are widely recited. In 851 A.D., Li Shangyin's wife, Wang, died of illness. The voice of his mourning broke through the air and the peak of it is The twelfth brother Wang and the member of the court of awe visited each other and offered their condolences when they asked for drinks Poetry (《王十二兄与畏之员外相访见招小饮时予以悼亡日近不去因寄》), which could hardly be surpassed by later generations. His grieving for his deceased wife became unbearable after this event, and he was driven into writing a great deal of poetry, such as Chonjeong House in the first month Poetry (《正月崇让宅》), Song in the room (《房中曲》) and Jinsei Poetry (《锦瑟》), etc. It is important to recognize that he has left a strong legacy in the history of mourning poetry and is an important figure in the field[3].

John Milton (1608-1674) was a famous English poet and statesman in the 17th century. On His Deceased Wife is one of John Milton's most well-known mourning poems, in addition to some of his best-known works, including Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained, and Samson Agonis. On His Deceased Wife as one of Milton's few love poems, it embodies the sincere emotion of the poet and the deep pain of his wife's death.

Li Shangyin and Milton share some similar background and that's why we choose these two poets.

First, although Li Shangyin came from a humble background, he had a passion for reading from his childhood. His uncle was a man of letters, and he gained much knowledge from his uncle's collection of books. Similarly, Milton was the son of a law-savvy clerk and the son of a well-educated literary writer.

Second, participation in political activities is positive among all of them. Li Shangyin, who was a scholar, had a difficult career, but in the end he was only a county lieutenant. However, he always had the country in mind and was concerned about national politics. Milton vigorously opposed the

Royalists and devoted all his energies to writing numerous political pamphlets, advocating people's freedom, which made great contributions to the political situations.

Third, they've all experienced the great pain of losing wives. Li Shangyin's wife died of disease and her early death was a severe blow to Li Shangyin. After Wang's death, Li Shangyin wrote many eulogies for her. Milton married three times in his life. His second wife, Catherine, was Milton's true love, and they had a wonderful time together, except that she died of puerperal fever after 15 months together. Milton wrote only one poem in memory of his dead wife, and it is acknowledged that it was written for his second wife, Catherine [4].

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Researches on comparative literature**

#### **2.1.1 Three developing steps of comparative literature**

Comparative literature is a literature study from the perspective of cross-nation, cross-language, cross-culture and cross-discipline. The term "comparative literature" first appeared in *The Course of Comparative Literature* (1816) compiled by French scholars Noel and Laplace, but this work did not involve research methods and theories. It was a famous French historian and literary criticist named Villemain who made this term popular in the academic circle. In 1829, Villemain published *The Survey of French Literature in the 18th Century*. In this book, he used the terms "comparative literature" and "comparative history" many times, which provided examples for comparative literature in theory and practice. Therefore, later generations regard him as "the father of comparative literature".

Cao Shunqing, one of the founders of Chinese comparative literature, divided the development of comparative literature into three stages: Influence Study, Parallel Study and Cross-cultural Study, thus giving form to Rippling Theory Structure [5]. Generally speaking, the Influence Study established by the French school is considered the first stage of comparative literature discipline theory. But in fact, the early disciplinary theory of comparative literature was not only established by the French. German, British and Hungarian scholars took the lead in putting forward the influential discipline theory of comparative literature. Parallel Study, the second stage, primarily took place in America. Rene Wellek (1903—1995), a famous American literary theorist, historian of literary criticism, and the founder of American comparative literature, thought that we should recognize the legitimacy of the comparative literature of the East and the West by their similarity. Furthermore, he believed that the literature of different civilizations in the East and west could be compared because the literature of all humanity had something in common [6]. As a result of his "commonality" proposal, most American scholars conducted comparative literature research.

The Chinese school, on the other hand, can be described as having a cross-cultural study approach, whereas the French school has Influence Study and the American school has Parallel Study [7]. Cao Shunqing first put forward that researchers should focus on the differences between cultures, which

are different from the commonality in cultures that American schoolers have adhered to. Chinese schoolers try their best to cross “the great wall” between eastern and western cultures, thus forming a new stage of comparative literature----Cross-cultural Study. Such a study is Chinese schoolers’ basic theory and academic characteristics, which is different from French and American schools.

### 2.1.2 Literary Variation Study in China

The original western theory of comparative literature holds that similarity is the basis for the comparability of comparative literature. However, Chinese scholars pay more attention to cultural heterogeneity. Chinese scholars led by Cao Shunqing and Du Jigang put forward the Variation Theory, which is an essential breakthrough in the discipline theory of comparative literature.

In the field of comparative literature, many well-known scholars support the study of cultural commonalities, such as American scholar Wellek (1903—1995) and Chinese scholar Qian Zhongshu (1910—1998) . Nevertheless, it is not enough to point out the similarities between different civilizations. The discipline theory of seeking harmony has caused serious problems in the practice of Chinese comparative literature. Literature comparison between eastern and western civilizations has remained a mystery to domestic scholars for a long time because of the variation and heterogeneity of terminology. However, the concept of variation represents a significant development in the theory of comparative literature to resolve this issue.

Cao Shunqing (2013) believes that Variation Theory refers to the study of the variation in literary phenomena of different countries and civilizations during their influence and communication process, as well as the variety of literature of different countries and civilizations in the mutual analysis. The law of comparative literature variation is explored by studying the variation of literary phenomena in influencing communication and mutual elucidation. The research of variation focuses on the comparability of "difference", and the research scope includes transnational variation, cross-language variation, cross-culture variation, cross-civilization variation, and the study of literature in other countries.[8] Variation Study is based on Cross-cultural Study and has gradually formed four methodologies: the elucidatory approach, the approach of comparing similarities and differences, the cultural root-seeking approach, the dialogue approach, and the integration and construction approach.

Li Weifang (2021) advocates that "homology" "similarity" and "heterogeneity" mark the development of comparative literature research in the process of comparison to explore three crucial stages [9]. They not only lay the foundation for the comparability of comparative literature but also fully prove that the methodology of comparative literature should be based on comparability. In the absence of consciousness of comparability, it is difficult to form a methodology for comparative literature. Similarly, the Variation Study also needs comparability, even though this study is based on different cultures. Therefore, leaping possibility and comparability are two characteristics of the Variation Study.

## 2.2 Researches on Li Shangyin's mourning poems

The exploration and study of Li Shangyin's poetry has always been a hot topic in the literary circle. This article has searched on Chinese National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) with the keywords "Li Shangyin" and "mourning poetry", and a total of 3798 articles have been published respectively. Moreover, the last 75 articles were published in 2022, indicating that this topic is still popular.

Throughout these studies, most of them focus on three aspects. One is the study of Li Shangyin's poems, which are novel in conception and worthy in style, and he is especially good at love poems, which are written in a lingering manner and are widely recited. The poems, however, are difficult to comprehend because their meaning is so ambiguous. There is a beauty of mood in his poems, as well as ebullience and haziness. Cao Jingjing believes that Li Shangyin was at a critical turning point in the Tang dynasty from prosperity to decline, which greatly affected him. At the same time, he was deeply influenced by the traditional cultural thought of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, and developed a sincere, gentle and touching writing style. He associated "sexuality" with "peace, happiness and sorrow" and "the movement of the seven emotions", and mainly sang about his personal nature and emotions, focusing on expressing emotions rather than expressing his will [8]. The second theme of research is the study of Li Shangyin's political history. His poetry is an expression of the social landscape of the time and has special historical significance since it has to do with the national politics of the time and reflects the social climate of the time. He is a talented poet who also reveals his patriotic passion and compassion for people in his poems [9]. The last research direction is about Li Shangyin's love view, or mourning thoughts, which is the focus of our articles. However, the domestic research on this direction mainly focuses on the image of poetry, writing style, the causes of mourning thoughts and so on. Some scholars believe that in the poem Jinse (《锦瑟》), there is an undertone of broken strings, which means that the poem is a poem of mourning for his dead wife [10]. Li Shangyin's poems are rarely examined from a cross-cultural perspective and few comparisons are made between them and western poetry.

## 2.3 Researches on On His Deceased Wife

Compared with the study of Shangyin's poems, the research on Milton's works is very rare in China. Articles are searched on CNKI with the keyword "Milton's mourning poem", and only 51 related articles were found. Furthermore, among these findings, the vast majority revolve around Milton's famous work On His Deceased Wife. The researchers also compare Chinese poems, such as Jiangchengzi · The Dream on the 20th Day of the first month of the Yimao Year (《江城子·乙卯正月二十日记梦》) written by Su Shi.

Li Chao (2016) makes a comparative analysis of these two poems from three aspects: writing style, emotional style and image of the dead wife, and expounds on the mourning style of the two poets' similarities [11]. Although most of the current studies on Milton's On His Deceased Wife are based

on the comparative perspective of Chinese and Western cultures, few authors have launched research for Li Shangyin's mourning poems and Milton's *On His Deceased Wife*. However, they are of great research value. Although they belong to different cultures in the east and the West, they are comparable in theme, which provides space for our research.

#### **2.4 Research purpose and significance**

Mournful poetry is one of the important themes in Shangyin's poems and is widely praised and respected by later writers. The writing techniques, images, and lyric style used in his poems have always been the study direction of researchers. Although poems on the theme of mourning are rare in Milton's works, and *On His Deceased Wife* is not as famous as *Paradise Lost*, which is the most popular masterpieces of Milton, it is still beloved by writers for its sincere affection and literary skill.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the collision of their different views of love in the different eras by comparing their mourning works. From the perspective of literature, we will examine the similarities and differences between Chinese and Western poetry writing techniques, as well as explore the cultural roots of the differences between Chinese and Western mourning. At the same time, this paper applies the relevant theories of Variation Study in the field of comparative literature, emphasizes the legitimate comparability between eastern and Western cultures, and analyzes the different presentation ways of eastern and Western cultures for the same theme.

The research significance of this article lies in that it can integrate the domestic research on Li Shangyin's mourning poems, and make a comparison with similar western literature based on this, so as to make up the gap of cross-cultural comparison before. Moreover, it can also broaden the idea of using the theory of Variation Study. At the same time, it can also introduce Milton's mourning thoughts to China and attract the attention of domestic-related research fields.

### **3. Cross-cultural analysis of different love views of Li Shangyin and Milton**

#### **3.1 The differences in describing wife's appearances**

As a traditional ancient Chinese poet, Li Shangyin focused on the expression of his own emotions, and many of his poems contain a strong sense of love for his wife. Milton, by contrast, describes his wife at great length. It is the embodiment of two different cultures on the same subject. They belong to different cultures, but the comparability lies in the different presentation techniques.

Milton, on the other hand, opens his works *On His Deceased Wife* with so many verses describing his wife's appearance and dress that the reader can image a clear picture in his mind. He wrote that: "Came vested all in white, pure as her mind. Her face was veil'd; yet to my fancied sight. Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shin'd, So clear, as in no face with more delight". In this sentence, Milton give us a direct image about his wife and lavished praise on his wife's character. It can be seen that Milton pays attention to the direct depiction of his wife's appearance, form and body, and

mostly adopts the way of plain narration and direct lyricism. Milton also uses Greek mythology to praise the purity of his wife's soul. In his poem, he said: "Methought I saw my late espoused saint. Brought to me like Alcestis, from the grave" In this sentence, he compares his wife to Alcestis, leading the reader to imagine her appearance in the image of a charming woman in Greek mythology [12].

### 3.2 The Differences in expressing love

Through analysis, we can find the differences in expressing love between Li Shangyin's poems and Milton's On His Deceased Wife. Li Shangyin often uses a technique of expressing emotions through scenes and combining reality and imagination to create a kind of hazy beauty, that is, describing or recalling the precious past between himself and his wife, and then achieve the purpose of mourning his dead wife. But Milton resorted to imagination, that is, imagining his wife's appearance, character and behaviors, in order to miss her.

#### 3.2.1 Lyrical writing style

In Li Shangyin's poems, the technique of expressing emotions through scenery can often be seen. In his poem Song in the Room (《房中曲》), he says, "The rose weeps and the cuckoo's ribbon is small (蔷薇泣幽素·翠带花钱小) The girl is as crazy as a cloud, holding the sun in the west curtain dawn. (娇郎痴若云·抱日西帘晓) The pillow is the stone of the Dragon Palace, cut the color of the autumn waves. (枕是龙宫石·割得秋波色) The jade woven grasses have lost their soft skin, but I can only see the mulberry. (玉簟失柔肤, 但见蒙罗碧) I remember the spring of the previous year, but I have not spoken a word of sorrow. (忆得前年春·未语含悲辛) When I return, I am no longer there. (归来已不见·锦瑟长于人) Today's pine at the bottom of the stream, tomorrow's Berberis at the top of the mountain. (今日涧底松·明日山头檠) I'm worried that I will not know each other when I look at Tianchi. (到天池翻, 相看不相识) These lines fully reflect the poet's inner despondency and his longing for his dead wife. In another poem titled Solo trip to Qujiang River in late autumn (《暮秋独游曲江》) also has similar descriptions, he said, "When lotus leaves are born, spring hatred is born; when lotus leaves are withered, autumn hatred becomes. Knowing that I am in love, I look forward to the sound of the river at the head of the river. (荷叶生时春恨生·荷叶枯时秋恨成。深知身在情长在·怅望江头江水声) The poem expresses Li Shangyin's feelings and his inner grief. The poem ends abruptly with three lines of deep mourning for the deceased, and one line of euphonious ending, but the remaining rhythm of the poem is still as continuous and endless as "the sound of the river at the head of the river" (江头江水声), as if the poet's spring hatred and autumn hatred and deep sorrow are incessant, touching the heart.



### 3.2.2 Imaginary writing style

Compared with Li Shangyin's lyrical approaches, Milton's mourning poems contain more imaginative elements [13]. In *On His Deceased Wife* Milton writes about his dream. Since it is a dream, it is inevitable to see the existence of imagination. He said in the opening part: "Me thought I saw my late espoused saint Brought to me like Alcestis, from the grave. Whom Jove's great son to her glad husbands gave. Rescued from death by force, though pale and faint" and "Mine, as whom wash'd from spot of child-bed taint. Purification in the old Law did save". In these sentences, Milton imagined his wife "pale and faint", and became Alcestis who was rescued by Heracles. These things are not happened in the real life, but are created by Milton.

In ancient China, people dressed in white always because they suffered some sorrow things, like the death of their relatives. So, they often wore white clothing when they attend someone's funeral. However, in western culture, white clothes always refer to "pure", "divine", and "simplicity". It is often associated with the holy goddess in Greek mythology. This description is actually Milton's imagination of his wife's extraordinary beauty and purity of heart. This reflects the cultural variability, that is, the different interpretations of the image of "white clothes" between eastern and western cultures. But in any case, regardless of whether it is written through scenery or imagination, this expresses their infinite longing for their deceased wives.

### 3.3 The differences in choosing poetry images

Different poetry images can reflect the sorrow and mourning thoughts of poets. Therefore, the choices on poetry images also embody poet's loving view. For example, a poet who prefer to choose living images that he always contacts in his daily life can show that in his eyes, the love between a couple is simple but impressive.

#### 3.3.1 Adopt natural images and life scenes

In Li Shangyin's mourning poems, the poetry images can be divided into two parts---natural images and living images. The natural images refer to the natural objects around life, such as "lotus", "river", "rose", etc., which always carry some specially pessimistic and memorial emotions of poets. In the poem *Untitled* (《无题》), he said: "It's hard to see each other when it's hard to say goodbye, the east wind has no power and a hundred flowers are left." (相见时难别亦难·东风无力百花残), the "east wind" and "flowers" are the special poetry images carrying poet's sadness. Similarly, in the poem *Night Rain Sent North* (《夜雨寄北》), he used "Night Rain" and "Candles" show his deep missing. The living images always refer to the things that his late wife had used, like the "Pillow" in the poem *Song in the Room*.

### 3.3.2 Adopt imaginary or mythic images

Milton tends to use the poetry images containing imaginations, such as “heaven”, and some allusions related to Greek mythology. He wrote in his poem: “Me thought I saw my late espoused saint. Brought to me like Alcestis, from the grave” and “Full sight of her in Heaven without restraint”. The poet draws on the image of Alcestis in Greek mythology, saying that his wife had been rescued by Heracles just as she had been, and imagines that he will meet his wife in heaven, who has not died at all. Although this beautiful imagination is not confined to reality, it still reflects the poet's yearning for his wife.

### 3.4 Reasons behind the poems

#### 3.4.1 Different social backgrounds

China has been a feudal society since ancient times. Since emperor Wudi of the Han Dynasty "rejected all other schools of thought and respected Confucianism only", Confucianism has become the dominant culture in the feudal society, so "virtue" and "courtesy" have become the criteria for judging women. In the Qing Dynasty, people's ideas had been influenced by the theory of Neo Confucianism in Song and Ming Dynasties, and paid more attention to women's virtues. Therefore, in many works depicting his dead wife, Li Shangyin rarely writes about the appearance of his wife.

In contrast, capitalism in western countries started early, and feudal ethics gradually disappeared in the society. Although both in the 17th century, the status of women in England, where Milton lived, gradually improved, and the society no longer oppressed and criticized women as before, but more admired and appreciated them. So, Milton can write about his wife's appearance and qualities because it's socially acceptable.

#### 3.4.2 Different cultural traditions

Traditional Chinese culture has always believed that "Between the sexes there should be a prudent reserve". Similarly, under the influence of Zhu Xi of the Ming Dynasty, "keeping the principle of heaven and destroying the desire of yourself", the appearance of the love between men and women is also despised in the mourning poems. The ancients ignored, even avoided and rejected the beauty of women and the pleasure of men and women. Therefore, although Chinese mourning poems are the expression of his wife's feelings, they rarely write about his love for his wife. Even the men with the same love can only bury their feelings for their lover in the bottom of their heart and dare not express them in words under such an atmosphere. And Li Shangyin is not an exception.

But since the Renaissance, the West has emphasized the value of human beings, advocated individual liberation, carried forward the spirit of humanism, opposed to asceticism, and pursued happiness and enjoyment of human beings in real life. By the baptism of this thought, many later humanists are directly or indirectly. Through the pursuit of noble women to realize their own value. Therefore, in the creation of poetry, Westerners boldly and frankly express their love for their lovers, singing about their beautiful faces and describing the joy of boudoir.

### 3.4.3 Different poetry thoughts

The most significant function of ancient Chinese poetry is its political and educational function. The poet's thoughts, aspirations should conform to the ideological and moral constraints of the ruling class. In the Tang and Song dynasties, the political and religious functions of poetry were praised by politicians, pointing out that poetry should serve for political struggles. Under the influence of this atmosphere, Chinese mourning poems focus on the reality, describe realistic images in daily life, and praise the goodness and virtue of the wife in caring for her husband and raising children by recalling the details of the deceased's life [14]. They are abstract and general, and few poems directly describe and express emotions.

Compared with the function theory of Chinese poetry, western poetry advocates the function of enlightenment, but attaches more importance to the function of aesthetics. Especially in Britain, functional poetics emphasizes the aesthetic requirements of poetry, with the characteristics of poetic expression and more romantic feelings. This is why Milton uses imagination and describes the beauty of his wife, which is a kind of romanticism.

### 3.4.4 Different personal experiences

Most of Li Shangyin's poems on mourning for his wife are about thinking of her and remembering their past, he could rely on his memory to write about their past together. But Milton's *On His Deceased Wife* was written for his second wife, and during that time he was already blind, so he never saw her face. That's why Milton had to rely on imagination to write poetry.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Mourning poems combine the two eternal themes of love and death and are favored by many poets throughout the ages. As one of the best poets of mourning poems in Tang Dynasty, Li Shangyin left many excellent poems. *On His Deceased Wife* by John Milton, an English poet of the same era, is also a rare masterpiece. From the perspective of the development of Chinese and Western mourning poetry, both of them have made remarkable contributions. Aside from that, it also had a significant impact on and developed later literature and was responsible for its development.

But they differ in their views of love. Li Shangyin was fond of using natural scenes to express his thoughts about his wife. Milton, on the other hand, likes to depict his wife's appearance and form, and is skilled in imaginative techniques, often using mythological imagery. These differences can be attributed to their different social backgrounds, cultural traditions, poetic concepts and personal experiences. Despite the fact that they come from different times and cultures, love knows no borders. They speak about how much they love their wives, how they yearn for a fulfilling marriage, and how much they mourn them.

The study of Li Shangyin's and Milton's poems using the theory of variation in the field of comparative literature analyzes certain cross-cultural differences between China and the West. These

differences and attributions can make up for the shortcomings of previous cross-cultural studies and further develop the cross-cultural study, which also provides some ideas for future research.

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## 6. APPENDIX

### 6.1 Song in the Room (《房中曲》)

#### 《房中曲》

蔷薇泣幽素，翠带花钱小。

娇郎痴若云，抱日西帘晓。

枕是龙宫石，割得秋波色。

玉簫失柔肤，但见蒙罗碧。

忆得前年春，未语含悲辛。

归来已不见，锦瑟长于人。

今日涧底松，明日山头檝。

愁到天池翻，相看不相识。

### 6.2 On His Deceased Wife

On His Deceased Wife

Me thought I saw my late espoused saint

Brought to me like Alcestis, from the grave,

Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband's gave,

Rescued from death by force, though pale and faint

Mine, as whom wash'd from spot of child-bed taint  
Purification in the old Law did save,  
And such, as yet once more I trust to have  
Full sight of her in Heaven without restraint,  
Came vested all in white, pure as her mind  
Her face was veil'd; yet to my fancied sight  
Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shin'd  
So clear, as in no face with more delight  
But O, as to embrace me she inclin'd,  
I wak'd ; she fled; and day brought back my night

《梦亡妻》

我仿佛看见我最近死去的爱妻 ·  
被送回人间 · 像赫克里斯当初  
从死亡手里抢救的亚尔塞斯蒂 ·  
苍白无力 · 又还给她的丈夫 ·  
她好像古时洗身礼拯救的妇女 ·  
已洗涤干净原来产褥的血污 ;  
她穿着她心地那样纯净的白衣 ·  
正如我相信我会无拘无束 :

有一天在天堂里面遇见她那样。

她虽然蒙着面纱，我好像看见

她全身透出亲热，淑善，和温纯，

比任何人脸上显露的都叫人喜欢。

但她正俯身要和我拥抱时，我醒了，

人空了，白天带来了黑夜漫漫。

6.3 Solo trip to Qujiang River in late autumn (《暮秋独游曲江》)

《暮秋独游曲江》

荷叶生时春恨生，荷叶枯时秋恨成。

深知身在情长在，怅望江头江水声。

6.4 Night Rain Sent North (《夜雨寄北》)

《夜雨寄北》

君问归期未有期，巴山夜雨涨秋池。

何当共剪西窗烛，却话巴山夜雨时。