

Comparative Literature, Variation Theory, and a New Construction of World Literature(s)

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Abstract: In "Comparative Literature, Variation Theory, and a New Construction of World Literature(s)" Wang Chao discusses Shunqing Cao's "variation theory" as a framework in the discipline of comparative literature and its applicability for a new construction of world literature(s). Wang argues that Goethe's concept of world literature can be expanded and developed for a new construction of the idea of world literature(s). Wang's principal argument is that comparative literature in today's heterogeneity and cross-cultural variabilities can be revived with the notions of variation and its connecting aspect of world literature. Both variation theory and perspectives of the concept of "new world literature" are based in recent insights in comparative literature, on variations of literary exchange, on interpretation in cross-civilization literary circulation, translation, and production. Wang proposes that these views broaden and adjust the boundary of comparability, thus injecting much-needed vitality into comparative literature and world literature research.

Keywords: Variation Theory; World Literature(s); Comparative Literature

Goethe coined the term *Weltliteratur* (world literature) in 1827 and while the idea took hold in the discipline of comparative literature, it is since the 2000s that the idea started to gain attention again albeit mostly in English-language scholarship and in particular with David Damrosch's 2003 *What is World Literature?* Damrosch developed the notion further in several books including *World Literature in a Postcanonical, Hycanonical Age* (2006), *How to Read World Literature* (2008), and *World Literature in Theory* (2014). Other scholars published scholarship promoting the idea of world literature including Franco Moretti in *Conjectures on World Literature* (2000), Christopher Prendergast in *Debating World Literature* (2004), and Theo D'haen, César Domínguez, and Mads Rosendahl Thomsen (eds.) in *World Literature: A Reader* (2012), Zhang Longxi in *From Comparative Literature to World Literature* (2012), and Fang Weigui (ed.) in *Tensions in World Literature* (2018), etc. (for a multilingual list of past and current titles of books in comparative literature, world literature, and comparative cultural studies see Tötösy de Zepetnek). In Chinese-language scholarship since the early

2000s Cao Shunqing's "variation theory" raised much interest which was followed by a number of Cao's articles and books published in English translation thus establishing a new voice in international comparative literature scholarship (see, e.g., Cao, *The Variation*, "The Variation"; Cao and Han; Wang, Ning).

In the twentieth century practitioners of fields of study including hermeneutics, reception theory, and translation studies argued that translation is a creative process where the translated text is a variation of the original text and hence it is inappropriate to regard it as "foreign" literature. As Lawrence Venuti suggests, the source text appears as an untrustworthy fictional variation in the translated text. Thus I argue that translated literature is neither absolute domestication nor absolute foreignization: it has multiple variations. Goethe's view of world literature reflects the literary ideology of capitalism and colonialism, which is also an early stage of world literature: "in the same passage Goethe also speaks of literature as a 'common world-council' to which he too was called; and we may regard this word as a preliminary stage in the creation of the expression world literature" (Strich11). The biggest problem for Goethe's world literature is that it started from the standpoint of European Romanticism, emphasizing on the similarity and homogeneity between literatures and thus centralized, classicized, and universalized European literature. In this way, the heterogeneity of non-European literatures and the variations in literary exchanges and interpretations have been obscured and/or neglected. Damrosch redefined world literature in his book *What is World Literature?* as follows: "Amid all this variety, family resemblances can be found among the different forms of world literature circulating today, emergent patterns that lead me to propose a threefold definition focused on the world, the text, and the reader: 1) world literature is an elliptical refraction of national literature; 2) world literature is writing that gains in translation; 3) world literature is not a set cannon of texts but a mode of reading: a form of detached engagement with worlds beyond our own place and time" (281). In my view, compared to Goethe, Damrosch makes the following differentiation: he emphasizes a subject turn from "world literature" to "national literature." Goethe argued that national literature should eliminate individuality and integrate into a homogeneous discourse system of world literature and in 1940 Albert Léon Guérard pointed out that world literature is "the body of those works enjoyed in

common, ideally by all mankind, practically by our own Western group of civilization" (57). Thus, the essence of traditional world literature is Western literature, but in Damrosch's view world literature is not a utopia of European Romanticism. Identity cannot be used to eliminate heterogeneity, but let national literature show its variability and diversity in a world context: "understanding the term 'national' broadly, we can say that works continue to bear the marks of their national origin even after they circulate into world literature" (*What is* 283) and this means that only by ensuring national subjectivity can we talk about world literature. As Ji Xianlin argues, "As for the so-called world literature, its content is national literatures, its form is the world literature. It is always national first, then the world. As long as the nation state exists, there will never be a void concept of world literature that is beyond all the national literatures" (322).

I argue that the structure of "new" world literature shifts from a "unitary subject" to an "inter-subject." For example, Christopher Prendergast believes that the privilege of the West is limited, because "although Goethe's aspiration is towards a transcendence of the 'national' ('national literature has not much meaning nowadays'), the parties to the imagined conversation are essentially national literatures (world literature concerns 'the relationship of nation to nation'). Secondly, there are the limiting implications of the central, even privileged, place assigned by Goethe to Europe in his account" (2-3). Therefore, a "new" world literature does not set an objective model a priori. Further, the subject and the object, the essence and the phenomenon, the center and the edge, the signifier and the signified: all the binary opposition of this kind are falling apart in the deconstructionist trend of thought. Correspondingly, the "center" and "privilege" of Western literatures also vanishes in the context of a "new" world literature(s). From the original monolithic theory of Goethe and the French school to the binary symmetry of the US-American school and then to Damrosch's inter-subject theory, the spaces of world literature are constantly enriched. Multicultural and multi-national literatures do not determine and restrict each other in this space and thus world literature is constructed in a globally shared relationship.

Now I proceed with a discussion of the relationship of "new" world literature understood as a globally shared process and Cao's "variation theory." Damrosch wrote that "a leading characteristic of world literature today is variability: different readers will be obsessed by very different

constellations of texts" (*What is* 281) and Cao defines variation theory as "the study on variations of the literary phenomena of different countries within or without factual contact, as well as the comparative study on the heterogeneity and variability of different literary experiences in the same subject area so as to explore the patterns of intrinsic differences and variability" (*The Variation* xxxii). The study of variation, influence, and parallels in/of literature are not separated from each other, but related with different research horizons and foci. The innovative part of variation theory is that while in influence study focus is on homogeneities in literary exchanges, in the study of parallels focus is on the similarities between literary phenomena without factual associations all of which emphasize the "sameness" and "similarities" in the study of literature. While "variation theory is not only to pay attention to homogeneity and similarity, but also pay more attention to heterogeneity and variability" (Cao, "Introduction" 167). Different civilizations communicate and complement themselves, achieving creative transformations through the study of "heterogeneities." According to different media, variation theory can be divided into three basic patterns: empirical variation in literary exchanges, cross-civilization variation in literary interpretations, and domesticated variation in literary structures.

Variation theory has drawn attention in comparative literature scholarship since Cao first introduced it in 2005. For example, Douwe Fokkema wrote that "Variation Theory is an answer to the one-sided emphasis on influence studies by the former 'French school' as well as to the American focus on aesthetic interpretation, inspired by New Criticism, which regrettably ignored literature in non-European languages. Our Chinese colleagues are right in seeing the restrictions of former comparative studies and are fully entitled to amend these deficiencies" (v) and in *Introducing Comparative literature: New Trends and Application* (Domínguez, Saussy, Villanueva) variation theory is also introduced as an innovative methodology. Variation theory is not only recognized on the landscape of English-language comparative literature scholarship, but also forms a parallel with the theory of "new" world literature. The root cause is that, as Damrosch writes, variation theory provides an important research perspective for the construction of a "new" world literature. Variation theory takes cross-civilization heterogeneity as comparability, giving world literature a "new" structural map. Goethe regarded ancient

Greek literature as an essential model which subconsciously suppressed the equivalence of literatures outside Europe. In this case, Damrosch points out that "Goethe is no multiculturalist, however: Western Europe remains the privileged modern world of reference for him, and Greece and Rome provide the crucial antiquity to which he always returns" (*What is* 12). From the perspective of West centrism, Oriental literature is either integrated and incorporated into the historical structures of European literatures or rejected and excluded from European mainstream discourses or interpreted by Westernist poetics beyond recognition as described in James J.Y.Liu's *Chinese Theories of Literature* or even as Edward W. Said expresses in his *Orientalism*: "consider how the Orient, and in particular the Near Orient, became known in the West as its great complementary opposite since antiquity" (58).

In variation theory Cao suggests that it is precisely because the heterogeneity of Chinese literature can provide a new source of discourse for a "reconstruction" of world literature(s) from a cross-civilization perspective: "issues on discourse, dialogue, and the principle of dialogue, problems of exploration and comparison, and the mutual interpretation of literature and literary theory between different civilizations are all based on the emphasis on heterogeneity. This is the essential feature of the third stage of comparative literature, which is distinctly different from Western comparative literature studies" (Cao, "Chinese School" 134). Cao's assertion is also a general consensus in today's comparative literature scholarship. For example, Moretti believes that the traditional concept of world literature is a kind of "close reading" which focuses on the "small canon" of Western literature: "the Unites States is the country of close reading, so I don't expect this idea to be particularly popular. But the trouble with close reading (in all of its incarnations, from the new criticism to deconstruction) is that it necessarily depends on extremely small canon" (*Distant* 48) and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak also attributes close reading to the typical characteristics of traditional comparative literature and that "it is also a protection from losing the best of the old Comparative Literature: the skill of reading closely in the original" (6). How to make world literature jump out of the close reading pattern and become an open and inclusive "big canon"? Moretti put forward the theory of distant reading "where distance, let me repeat it, is a condition of knowledge: it allows you to focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than

the texts: devices, themes, tropes—or genres and systems. And if, between the very small and the very large, the texts itself disappears, well, it is one of those cases when one can justifiably say, less is more" (48-49). Distant reading has broken the homogeneous framework and has opened to the foreign cultural space, disseminating variations between far and near, big and small, more and less, and allows the text to communicate with and interpret each other in a vision and practice of cross-culturality. In sum, variation theory takes heterogeneity as comparability and breaks the structural map of traditional world literature.

So how is the structural layout of a "new" world literature presented from the perspective of variation theory? In English there are three main series of traditional world literature texts: *The Harvard Classics* edited by T.S. Eliot in 1910, first edition of *The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces* in 1956, and *The HarperCollins World Reader* edited by Mary Ann Caws and Christopher Prendergast in 1994. The common feature of the three series is that in addition to literary texts, they also include certain historical and philosophical texts and all reflect the authoritative standards of Western literature. Take the Norton masterpieces as an example: it is divided into stages in the order of ancient Greece, Rome, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, Classicism, Enlightenment, Romanticism, and Modernism. This selection of texts deemed world literature is nominally in a worldwide view, but essentially a selection from Western literatures including almost no text of "other" literatures. Damrosch argues that "new" world literature has exploded in scope during the past decade" ("World Literature" 43). For example, the *The Longman Anthology of World Literature* includes a large amount of "non-Western" literary texts, There are nine selections of Chinese literature, e.g. Wang Wei's Poetry (11 poems), Li Bai's poetry (11 poems), Du Fu's poetry (6 poems), and so on. Chinese literature ranks the first in proportion in this anthology among Eastern literatures and Chinese ancient literature has the largest amount. Even for Shakespeare, the anthology only includes 10 sonnets and excerpts of *The Tempest*. In this case, Wang Wei and Li Bai have equal shares with Shakespeare. In addition to including a larger amount of Chinese literary works, Damrosch and David L. Pike compiled *Instructor's Manual to Accompany* The Longman Anthology of World Literature in 2009 in which they introduce a large number of Chinese works, including pre-Qin classics and works by Li Bai, Du Fu, Wang Shifu, Wang Changling, and

Sikong Tu, etc. Taking Hanshan (Cold Mountain) as an example, the handbook specifically analyzes the key reasons for the unpopularity of Hanshan poetry in China's Tang Dynasty, but Hanshan's poems later are listed as world literature classics in the United States: "the difficulty of establishing that link, along with the highly colloquial and often irreverent nature of their language, probably led to the general lack of attention on the part of Chinese literary historians to these Cold Mountain poems until the twentieth century, when an interest in developing a new vernacular revived a focus on premodern antecedents" (Damrosch and Pike 142).

It is not difficult to see that the most important selection criteria for "new" world literature is "cross-civilization" and "variability." Moretti illustrates that "the point is that there is no other justification for the study of world literature (and for the existence of departments of comparative literature), but this: to be a thorn in the side, a permanent intellectual challenge to national literature -- especially the local literature. If comparative literature is not this, it's nothing" ("Conjectures" 68). Oriental literature is like a thorn bringing discomfort to Western literature. However, it is the discomfort in the collision of heterogeneous civilization literature that causes a two-way confrontation, reflection, shock, and reconstruction. Therefore, the path of cross-civilization transforms the small world of Western civilization into the world of East and West civilization, transforms the "small canon" of Western literature into the "big canon" including Eastern and Western literature, and turns the close reading pattern focusing on the center into a multi-distributed distant reading pattern. In variation theory variability in literary exchange and interpretation suggest comparability, thus opening world literature a possibility of renewal. In terms of spatial form, it is necessary to cross civilizations to achieve a truly "global" view and for renewal we must shift from the emphasis on sameness and similarity to difference and variability. Cao stresses that "there would be a lot of difficulties in cross-cultural research under the 'seeking sameness and similarity' thinking pattern, but variability is the research focus that should be emphasized in today's comparative literature studies" ("The Variation" 40). It is the variations in cross-civilization literary circulation and interpretation that promote the generation of "new" world literature canons. For this reason, Damrosch sees variability as the most important structural feature of world literature: "the variability of a work of world literature is one of its constitutive

features -- one of its greatest strengths when the work is well presented and read well, and its greatest vulnerability when it is mishandled or misappropriated by its newfound foreign friends" (*What is* 5). With regard to the renewal of world literature, Damrosch proposes three important paths: circulation, translation, and production.

What is circulation? Why do literary works circulate? Will there be any variations in circulation? How does variation occur? Obviously, going through inter-linguistic circulation is the main difference between national literatures and world literatures. Damrosch argues that a work enters into world literature by a double process: "first, by being read as literature; second, by circulating out into a world beyond its linguistic and cultural point of origin" (*What is* 6). In traditional world literature emphasis is on one-way "communication" and there is a neglect of two-way "exchange." Only the West influences the East, but the East rarely influences the West. For example, Stephen Owen believes that "Chinese literary thoughts cannot influence Western literary theory. Only some fashion-pursuer scholars will seriously deal with Ye Xie and *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*" (*Tradition and Modernity of Chinese Literary Theory* 5). Variation theory and "new" world literature not only connect and facilitate communication between Eastern and Western literature, but also explore the reasons of variations in circulation: 1) circulation is not equivalent to transmission, but an exchange with variations. The circulation of literature is different from the circulation of currency. The latter is equivalent circulation according to the fixed exchange rate. The circulation of literary classics often traverses time and space, showing its variations in a new context. Said pointed out in "Traveling Theory" that "the now full (or partly) accommodated (or incorporated) idea is to some extent transformed by its new uses, its new position in a new time and place" (227). Different time and space contexts lead to variations of text meaning. For example, Hanshan poetry's circulation is a typical version of variation in the United States; 2) circulation is not an accurate reflection, but a variation of refraction. Literature circulates in the form of reflections. The incident ray and reflected ray lie on both sides of the normal. The basic feature is that the three lines are coplanar, the two corners are equal, and they are reversible. In this light, Doxologie, Crenology, and Mesology of influence study have a scientific research basis. However, in influence study focus is on the reflection of light through the first medium, while

ignoring the refraction through the second medium. In fact, the basic characteristics of refraction are crossing and variation: it goes through different media and then non-equivalent variation occurs, which resembles the processes of generation of world literature. National literature grows into world literature by going through the medium of language, culture, time and space, and circulation into the field of the other. After cultural filtering and misreading, variations of the meanings of the text occur, the source text not only transcends into a new text, but the new text also reconstructs the source text. As a result, the discourse system of variation with mutual divergence, mutual construction, and mutual subjectivity is the core idea of variation theory and "new" world literature.

Translation and variation. How does a national literature enter into the space of world literature? Clearly, this occurs first by translation: "all works cease to be the exclusive products of their original culture once they are translated; all become works that only 'began' in their original language" (Damrosch, *What is*22). Initially, Susan Bassnett proposed to save the "dying" discipline of comparative literature by translation studies, because translation looks more like a discipline (*Comparative Literature*). But soon she made a correction to this point: "today, looking back at that Proposition, it appears fundamentally flawed: translation studies has not developed very far at all over three decades and comparison remains at the heart of much translation studies scholarship" ("Reflection" 7). But why does Bassnett think that translation studies is difficult to develop? Because for modern translation theory, the standards of "Faithfulness, Expressiveness, and Elegance" are not validated anymore. She writes in her *Translation Studies* that "once the principle is accepted that sameness cannot exist between two languages, it becomes possible to approach the question of loss and gain in the translation process" (38). Her so-called "question of loss and gain" is essentially the problem of variation in translation. Bassnett uses Pound's *Cathay* as an example to illustrate the ineffectiveness of traditional translation theory, and admits the fact that variation happens in translation: "*Cathay* is interesting because it highlights the way in which the translation can serve as a force for literary renewal and innovation" ("Reflection" 9). Instead taking *Cathay* as Pound's translation, we would rather think that it is rewriting in a new context. Therefore, Damrosch said that world literature benefits from translation,

but translated literature is not equivalent to world literature: "translations can be located along a spectrum running from strict literalism to free adaptation" (*How to Read* 67).

"Faithfulness, Expressiveness, and Elegance" as much as possible both in structure and content, while the latter display a creative treason and cultural variation. For example, for the two 是 in the source text, the former translates it into "is" which is more faithful while the latter translates it with two different verbs "carry" and "bear." Although not faithful to the original, the latter is more vivid and expressive with a taste of English-language poetry: "McDougall's translation clearly tries to convey an underlying word play in the original, but the result is stilted and unpoetic English; Finkel's translation is freer but also more readable, without the constraint of making the end of the opening lines echo the beginning" (Damrosch, *What is* 23). In Damrosch's view, the former is a translation of "seeking the sameness" and the original meaning of the poem is conveyed as accurately as possible, thus the English translation is dull rather than poetic. The latter is a translation of "variation" that is not restricted by the form of the source text. It is freer and is more readable. So what is the relation between variations in translation and the formation of world literature? We know that in translation studies it is the pursuit of the greatest degree of translatability that is the objective, but in Emily Apter's view, the untranslatability of literature will disappoint such attempts: "the 'world' in world literatures, I have tried to show, is on a similar flight path; increasingly identified not just with the expansion of canons or with translation technologies that extend the reach of translatability, but with something abstract and Untranslatable; which is to say, with thanotropic projections of how a planet dies" (190-91). Untranslatability is the fundamental reason why Apter opposes the notion of world literature. In other words, Bassnett's pursuing of translatability in translation studies cannot effectively generate world literature nor is the untranslatability. But variation theory provides a unique perspective to solve this paradox: "world literature is literature that has undergone variation in translation. Without the variation of translation, there is no formation of world literature" (Cao, "Variation in Translation" 126). The reason why Bassnett and Apter are entangled in this issue is that there is no fundamental detachment from one or the other. For this problem, we can use Chinese philosophy the "three meanings of the change" (易之三

名) from *Zhou Yi (The Book of Changes)* to explain: translatability is "change" which refers to commensurability in the inter-lingual level and untranslatability is "no change" referring to the potential cultural heterogeneity of language. In fact, between the two paradoxical meanings, there is a third vital meaning of change, that is, 简易 (variability). It refers to the dynamic transformation of basic elements such as 阴 (yin) and 阳 (yang) in arriving the general trend of Tai Chi Neutral. For translation, it is neither a global communication nor a detachment, but between the "change" and the "no change" the source text has adaptability and variability in the new context in the form of "variation." For example, Nabokov used Pushkin's poetry as an example to point out the importance of variation in translation: "without introducing various changes, there is no possibility whatsoever to make of Pushkin's four lines an alternately-rhymed tetrametric quatrain in English, even if only masculine rhymes be used" (82). Without adopting various adaptive strategies of variation theory, it is impossible to translate Pushkin's four-line poetry into "tetrametric quatrain" English poems in alternate rhymes. This is the variation law in translation, so does the variation in translation of Beidao's poetry illustrated by Damrosch.

Production and variation. Is world literature generated through variation in translation is unchangeable canon? World literature is not a closed and fixed text system, but a multivariate and open model of reading. Difference between the two is that classics' characteristic is invariability, just as Liu Xie pointed out: "classics are the long-lasting Dao even without publication" (21) while the characteristic of the reading modes variability. Different reading modes are based on different cultural filtering mechanisms and produce different variations of text meaning. Therefore, classics have limited possibilities whereas reading modes provide unlimited variabilities. Thus, Damrosch believes that "new" world literature is a variation system of meaning composed of the world, the text, and the reader. In 1971 in his *The Mirror and the Lamp* M.H. Abrams proposed that there are four essential elements of literature, namely the world, the reader, the text, and the author: "on this framework of artist, work, universe, and audience I wish to spread out various theories for comparison" (6). Why did Damrosch remove the author from his "new" world literature and its processes of production? In fact, based on Saussure's linguistic theory of signifier and signified, Roland Barthes

dispelled the author's authority in setting meaning for the text and advocated zero writing and intransitive writing. Transitive writing generates readable texts, the main feature of it is identification, pursuing circulation of the equal meaning, such as news, non-fiction, and so on, while intransitive writing generates writable texts, and the main feature of the text is variability. Only a series of signifier chain can play freely, which eliminates the centrism of the text, the author, and the reader. Therefore, the "absence" of the author means that the world classics are changed from the author's historical determinism to the "fusion of horizons" of past and present: "everywhere the claim of hermeneutics seems capable of being met only in the infinity of knowledge, in the thoughtful fusion of the whole of tradition with the present"(Gadamer 337). The fusion here refers to the two-way variation process of the source text's meaning from different interpretation perspectives at the present. Specifically, previous world classics are divided into "major authors" and "minor authors" according to the author's standard while "new" world literature(s) fall into three categories according to reading modes and variation patterns of the text: "in place of this older, two-tiered model, our new system has three levels: a hypercanon, a countercanon, and a shadow canon" (Damrosch, "World Literature" 45). The classification of hypercanon, countercanon, and shadow canon deconstructs the writer's canonical status with the variation of interpretation on the text. In a nutshell, world literature is not "borrowing" from somewhere like international trade, but "variations" in the shifting of reading patterns of cross-civilization circulation: "the shape of the new canon can be illustrated in various ways, both within national literatures and across them"(Damrosch, "World Literature" 46). Therefore, Barthes's "writable text," Derrida's *différance*, Damrosch's "production," and Cao's "variation" are basically consistent in thought and philosophy and they all pay more attention to readers and their creative production of meanings. We can even say that the so-called reading mode of Damrosch's world literature is essentially a variation mode of national literatures in the cross-civilization mode of literary circulation.

The hesitation of cross-civilization, the obscuration of heterogeneity, and the neglect of variability not only lead to the "death" of comparative literature, but also result in the invalidation of Goethe's concept of world literature. Cao's variation theory echoes the new ideas of "A New Construction of World Literature History" in current international

community of comparative studies and hopefully in general by which I mean scholars of single-language literatures. Both focus on key issues such as cross-cultural comparison, heterogeneity, and variability in contemporary comparative literature studies. Practitioners of traditional world literature promote the "world" by sacrificing national literatures, while the "new" world literature emphasizes national literatures' heterogeneity and variability with a global perspective. Damrosch stresses that the core value of "new" world literature is variability. In addition to similarities, there are of course differences between "new" world literature and variation theory. Damrosch focuses on variations in the circulation, translation, and production of national literatures. François Jullien explored another model where he focuses on the substantive circulation and translation between texts, but delved into the irrelevant "divergence" between Chinese and Western literature. By looking into the structural difference between Chinese and Western literature, his research presents a heterogeneous collision and tremor and this is the variation of interpretation in cross-cultural comparative studies. The former has the empirical influence on the level of literary exchanges and the latter is the non-positive level of text interpretations: they belong to the two basic types of variation, that is, empirical variation in literary exchange and cross-civilization variation in literary interpretation. In addition, in variation theory there is a third deeper variation, a domesticated variation in literary structure: "the fundamental characteristic of domesticated structural variation is that it not only produces new theoretical qualities in the process of displaced interpretation, these new qualities also have been integrated into and changed the knowledge genealogy and ideological structure of national literature and culture" (Wang and Chao 43). Therefore, variation theory is not only a critical inheritance of influence study and parallel study practiced in comparative literature, but also an echo with the construction of "new" world literature, and also creative in proposing domesticated structural variation based on Chinese philosophy. Hence, variation theory has established a relatively complete terminology and discourse system of comparative literature studies. Naturally, variation theory still has areas to be further explored. For example, not all "treason" in translation is creative treason, not all variation is validated variation. And what is the domesticated variation in literary structure in circulation

and influence? For this question, further research is needed, because not all influences will form domesticated variation (see Cao and Xu).

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