

# Domestic Appropriation of Chinese Literature in Europe

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In this article, it is argued that in the process of cultural transfer, literary translation and reception, the recipient will often transform the cultural rules and literary discourse in the original texts to make them fit the rules and discourse of the recipient reader/audience to target the taste of new readers. This phenomenon, which we call literary 'domestic appropriation', is a kind of transformation on a deeper level. Domestic appropriation is what can we get from literary variation, and it is the core part of variation studies. In cultural and literary exchange and dialogue between Chinese and European cultures, it occurs in both literary works and literary theory. History has witnessed how Chinese literary works are translated and introduced to Europe, in the process becoming an integral part of the canon of European literature. Chinese literary theory, when interpreted by European theorists, blends with local theory and furnishes new perspectives.

## 1. Literatures and Literary Studies across Cultures

Literature has always crossed cultural boundaries and fostered cultural dialogue. Today, exchange and dialogue between Chinese and European cultures are becoming more frequent, creating a productive awareness of their heterogeneity and mutual complementarity. In the past, because of geographical distances and the limit of transportation systems, the East and the West developed their own parochialisms. Governors in ancient China used to believe that China occupied the centre position of all nations. It was not until the great Western voyages of discovery and the arrival of Western missionaries to Beijing (such as the Italian scholar Matteo Ricci) that Chinese people began to realize that there was a prosperous civilized world far away on the other side of the Eurasian continent or across the ocean. In Europe, the reports of returning eastbound travellers triggered the same fascination with the Far Eastern empire. Later, with European colonial expansion, the industrial

revolution and the huge and radical changes in production, commerce and social structures, western countries embarked on a path of rapid development. Through advances in science and technology, and in economic and military power, Europe gained the upper hand, also culturally, on the global scene, and gradually shaped a generalized Eurocentric view. Thus, as Arnold Toynbee (1974, 52–53) pointed out, a great many westerners assumed that ‘there is only one river of civilization, our own, and that all others are either tributary to it or else lost in the desert sands’. Along with Eurocentrism came a desire to control discourse and project the West’s social and cultural structure on other cultures, China included. As Edward W. Said (1978, 92) argued when he coined the term ‘Orientalism’, the Orient is not the orient in reality, but ‘a scholar’s word, signifying what modern Europe had recently made of the still peculiar East’. In other words, ‘the Orient is thus *Orientalized*, a process that not only marks the Orient as the province of the Orientalist but also forces the un-initiated Western reader to accept Orientalist codifications . . . as the *true* Orient’ (Said 1978, 67, emphasis in original).

John M. Hobson (2012, 1) continues this line of thought and claims that:

international theory does not so much explain international politics in an objective, positivist and universalist manner but seeks, rather, to parochially celebrate and defend or promote the West as the proactive subject of, and as the highest or ideal normative referent in, world politics.

The prejudice of Eurocentrism is an obstacle in opening up an equal dialogue between China and Europe. Perhaps the most extreme example of Eurocentric prejudice with regard to non-European literatures is the comment by the British historian and politician Thomas Babington Macaulay in his 1835 *Minute on Indian Education* that:

I have never found one among them [Orientalists] who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. I have certainly never met with any Orientalist who ventured to maintain that the Arabic and Sanscrit poetry could be compared to that of the great European nations. (Quoted in Bassnett 1993, 17)

Uttered when British colonialism was still on the rise, Macaulay’s statement is a sign of not only past arrogance, but of an attitude that lasted well into the twentieth century in Europe and is still there, although fading over the last decades. Yet, it is still a common phenomenon that most high school students in China have read works by Shakespeare, Dickens, Balzac, and Tolstoy, but fewer students in Europe are familiar with Chinese writers such as Li Bai, Du Fu and Cao Xueqin.

The religious, philosophical and ideological differences between China and Europe, with their long historical trajectory, also complicate instituting a cultural dialogue on equal terms. The origin of western thought is generally believed to go back to the myths and legends of ancient Greece and Rome and the biblical culture of the Middle East, founding the complex set of Western values, while in Chinese thought Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism coexist. Samuel Huntington classified European civilization as Western and labelled Chinese civilization as Confucian.

For him, civilization is the largest ‘us’; it ‘is the broadest cultural entity. Villages, regions, ethnic groups, nationalities, religious groups, all have distinct cultures at different levels of cultural heterogeneity’ (Huntington 1996, 43). Since both China and Europe have their distinctive values, norms, institutions, and modes of thinking, a dialogue will surely meet some obstacles. Even in comparative literature, there is a long history of focusing more on cultural and literary similarities, based on influence and on European cultural developments, than on cultural difference as a basis for literary comparison and cultural dialogue.

With the growing criticism of Eurocentrism and the Chinese drive to ‘go global’, politically and culturally, many comparatists, Eastern and Western, have been switching their focus to embrace non-European literatures and cultures that clamour ever more vividly to be heard in today’s globalized context. Cultural heterogeneity in the past had always been viewed as a communicative impediment. In the age of multiculturalism and globalization, cultural diversity is treasured as essential for a genuine dialogue between different cultures. The growing preoccupation, inside and outside the academy, with ‘world literature’ has transcended Western pride and prejudice and broadened the field of comparative literature to a much larger and more diversified but still interconnected panoply of literatures. We promote the study of variation patterns to reach the goal of crossing both different cultures and disciplines in a global perspective, that is: ‘to discover rules and features for different literatures and their dynamic interaction, and to promote a vision of any literature as part of world literature’ (Cao 2003, 72).

Dialogue between cultures may at the beginning be experienced as a collision; but whenever there is a collision of heterogeneous cultures, there will also appear interaction and integration of literatures, which eventually might generate a new kind of literature. We will label this complex interaction ‘variation’ occurring in the contact zone between cultures. It is characterized by the original/source text, when received into another culture, having some of its distinctive features transformed or diminished so as to adapt to the target context. This type of variation in literary exchange across cultural borders can be defined, in the words of Svend Erik Larsen (2018, 18), as ‘a mutual exchange within a multidimensional contact zone to be traced in literary texts producing harmonies in differences’. Thus, variation refers to changes in both form and content. Much literary variation remains visible; for instance, inter-lingual variation through translation, and distortion of imagery through textual adaptation, which is probably the result of the translator’s or adaptor’s unintentional misreading of the original, or of their intention to meet their readers’ expectations.

Some of the variation may not be visible in the target text, in the sense that the latter may remind us of the original text but it is not a faithful translation – it is more like a creation based on the creator’s deep understanding of the source text as well as on his own writing experience. Targeting the taste of the new readers, the translator/adaptor has transformed the cultural rules and literary discourse of the source text to fit the rules and discourse of the recipient culture. This phenomenon, which we designate as ‘domestic appropriation’, is a kind of variation on a deeper level. Domestic appropriation comes close to invisible variation in which the original text acts as a

stimulus to rewriting, adaptation, or the creation of a new text in another cultural context. While variation in literary circulation is bound to happen, literary domestic appropriation does not always occur. As mentioned above, it is variation at a deeper level which requires a transformation of the cultural rules and literary discourse. In the process of the reception of Chinese literature in Europe, Chinese discourse initiates a dialogue with European literature, and eventually these imports will be transformed and adjusted to reach European readers, or even spur some development in some European literature. In other words, by transforming and transplanting Chinese literary works and integrating them in domestic discourses and rules, Chinese literature will become a part of another national literature, or possibly give birth to a new literary movement.

## 2. Chinese Literature Travelling to Europe

Before any domestic appropriation can occur, the first step is translation and circulation of Chinese literary works in Europe. Through translation, the Europeans acquire a window onto Chinese culture, and without the translation of Chinese literature into German, for example, via indirect translations from English or French, Goethe (1749–1832) would have had no opportunity to know about the Chinese novel he refers to when discussing the possibility of world literature. As many European Sinologists in the past did not master the Chinese language well, indirect translation via languages they were familiar with was the only way forward. As translated texts are never completely equal to original texts in all aspects, the resulting gap, next to being a possible impediment, also may serve as a discursive space for making translation a creative enterprise. This is where variation happens and, hence, translation makes domestic appropriation possible.

In modern China there have been attempts to translate Chinese literary works into English, in particular through the Panda Books series from the Chinese Literature Publishing House as of 1981. Of the large number of Chinese translators, Yang Hsien-yi (1915–2009) and his wife Gladys Yang (1919–1999) have been most productive. They were the first to translate *Hong Lou Meng* (红楼梦/ *A Dream of Red Mansions*, 1791) and *Ru Lin Wai Shi* (儒林外史/ *The Scholars*, 1803) into English. Although they were skilled in English, and dedicated to presenting the original linguistic characteristics in translation as efficiently as possible, they to a certain extent failed to appeal to their intended readers. When John Minford (1946–) and David Hawkes (1923–2009) translated *Hong Lou Meng* (now called *The Story of the Stone*, or *The Dream of the Red Chamber*), they adopted the practice of domestic appropriation in view of an English-speaking readership, which proved to be more successful than Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang's approach. In a conversation with a Chinese journalist in 2015, Minford said that he had spent 16 years translating *The Story of the Stone*, and 12 years translating *Yi Jing* (易经/ *The Book of Changes*, around eleventh-century to eighth-century BCE), but the former only sold a few hundred copies in the English-speaking world. The latter was published in 2014 by Viking Press, and this

translation was shortlisted for the 2015 Faulkner Prize for Literature, a recognition of its importance. Arthur Waley (1889–1966) is also a well-known earlier English translator and Sinologist who first translated the complete poems of *Shi Jing* (诗经/ *The Book of Odes*, around eleventh-century to third-century BCE) into English. This translation was well received, and a number of the poems have been included in many university textbooks. He also translated the classic *Lun Yu* (论语/ *The Analects of Confucius*, around eighth-century to third-century BCE) and poetry anthology selections such as *One Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems* (1918), *The Poet Li Po* (1919), and *Selected Chinese Verses* (1934, with H. A. Giles [1845–1935]). Of course, there are many more well-known translators who have made important contributions to introducing Chinese literature across Europe. Their translations, mostly using the strategy of domestic appropriation, have been accepted and enjoyed by many European readers.

On the one hand, these translations expand the life of the translated works in a new context: ‘Just as the manifestations of life are intimately connected with the phenomenon of life without being of importance to it, a translation issues from the original – not so much from its life as from its afterlife’ (Benjamin 2000, 16). On the other hand, for those writers or scholars who do not know Chinese, they also serve as a basis to familiarize themselves with literature from East Asia. Some writers adapted Chinese literary works in their own way and turned their reworkings into classics in their local literature. Two successful cases deserve mention here: that of a Chinese ‘Za Ju’ (杂剧, an operatic art form that combines spoken parts, songs, and dance) from the Yuan Dynasty, *The Orphan of Zhao* (赵氏孤儿, around late thirteenth century to early fourteenth century), by Voltaire (1694–1778), and the twentieth-century adaptation of *The Chalk Circle* (灰阑记, around late thirteenth century to mid-fourteenth century, also a ‘Za Ju’ from the Yuan Dynasty) by the German playwright and poet Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956).

*The Orphan of Zhao* is the first Chinese drama to have been introduced into Europe. It was first translated by Joseph Maria de Prémare (1666–1736) into French circa 1732–1733, and later, after 1749, translated into German, English and Russian. Inspired by this drama, Voltaire adapted it as *L’Orphelin de la Chine* (1753). He completely rewrote the drama by changing all the parts as well as the historical background, location and plot. This drama was performed successfully in Europe. Like *The Orphan of Zhao*, *The Chalk Circle* was first translated into French by Stanislas Julien (1797–1873) in 1832, and then, in 1876, A.E. Wollheim da Fonseca (1810–1884) translated it into German based on Julien’s version, with further adaptations by Alfred Forke (1867–1944) in 1927 and Johannes von Günther (1886–1973) in 1942. Compared with their adaptations, Brecht’s 1944 version, *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis*, is more of a literary recreation than an adaptation. Brecht borrowed the theme from the Chinese version but also made adjustments. For example, the two versions are similar in that a child is claimed by two women as their offspring. The judge draws a chalk circle on the ground, places the child in the circle, and announces that the woman who can pull it out will be declared its mother. This is a question about who is right and wrong in a complicated situation,

and Brecht's play supports the idea that the right to things belongs to those who will take care of them. Brecht actually rewrote the Chinese story while only keeping the overall theme and central situation. The difference in plot is that in Brecht's story the adoptive mother wins the child, while in the Chinese version it is the blood mother. Both Voltaire and Brecht, then, were inspired by stories from China, and created their own stories by referring to the plot, theme and characters in the Chinese texts. Their strategy of domestic appropriation is to use selectively the overall narrative framework of the foreign stories yet remould the originals to attune them with European ideas. From this kind of adaptation we can see the influential relationship between two national literatures, and it is the rewriting of one literature according to the paradigms of the other that constitutes a form of variation.

After Voltaire, Goethe also tried to adapt *The Orphan of Zhao* to a draft of his own *Elpenor*, but he did not finish it. Today, many readers are familiar with Goethe's *Chinesisch-deutsche Jahres-und Tageszeiten*, a collection of poems influenced by Chinese plays and novels. As for this collection, there are two divergent views: one holds that it is an imitation of Chinese classical poetry; another looks at it as a genuine creation entirely of Goethe's own making. Based on the poems in the collection, we can see that Goethe expressed his understanding of the Chinese cultural universe by the way he describes the change of seasons in the garden. He employed many Chinese images, such as rosaceae, daffodils, cuckoos, peacocks, etc., to construct a Chinese-style garden. These images symbolized an Eastern paradise that was represented in dynamic change to enhance the sense of its natural, harmonious and real qualities. In spite of all this, most scholars believe it is just a collection of lyric poems in the Chinese style. Although Goethe's knowledge of Chinese poetry is good, this collection is not an imitation at all, because 'Goethe did, according to his world outlook, recreate materials from China, and made it a work of art of his own' (Cao 2002, 359). More than an imitation, it appears a cultural metaphor encapsulating an imagined ancient China.

From the translations, adaptations and creations mentioned above, we can see that the writers concerned were touched by literary works from China and interwove elements from their own tradition as well as from Chinese literature and culture. Within their works, there actually take place intercultural collisions and dialogues, which constitutes a rebirth, as it were, of the original text in a new environment. Apart from the domestic appropriation by creative translations and adaptations that give literary works an afterlife as new literary works in other cultures, there is another kind of domestic appropriation of Chinese literary works in Europe, namely radical avant-garde movements inspired by Chinese literary works. Ezra Pound's work is a case in point. He formulated a theory of imagery after having translated and studied Chinese poetry. Although he is known as an American poet and translator, he translated and published Chinese poetry after he moved to London in 1908. In 1915 he published *Cathay*, a half-translated and half-created collection of Chinese poems. After the First World War, he translated three Confucian classics (*The Great Learning* (大学), *Unwobbling Pivot* (中庸), and *Analects* (论语), as well as *Mencius* (孟子), and edited and translated the *Book of Odes* (诗经). He took an interest in

Confucianism and adopted the use of ideograms in both his translations and his own writing. However, he also demonstrates a kind of productive or creative misreading of the Chinese characters. In Chinese pictographic writing many composite words are made up of two or more images, thus integrating two characters in one. Pound often dissolved a composite character into its components. For example, in *The Analects of Confucius*, there is a line, ‘學而時習之,不亦樂乎’, which means ‘to learn with practical application on a regular basis, is it not pleasant?’ Pound (1975, 437) originally translated it as, ‘to study with the white wings of time passing. Is not that our delight.’ Obviously, he divided the word ‘習’ into two words ‘羽’ (wing) and ‘白’ (white). We encounter this type of creative treason now and then in his translations of Chinese classics. He appreciated the method of imagery overlap, where vivid images often blend with the writer’s affections. Sometimes his misreading of Chinese poetry to some degree has become his own genuine creation with innovative aesthetic effects. Pound was the leader of the ‘Imagist movement’ which had great repercussions on modern poetry in England and the USA.

Goethe’s ideas about *Weltliteratur* bear a close relationship to Chinese literary works as well. In his conversation with Johann Peter Eckermann on 31 January 1827, Goethe mentioned a Chinese novel which to Eckermann sounded strange, but which made a lifelong impression on Goethe. Goethe *et al.* (1850, 349) said, ‘the Chinamen think, act, and feel almost exactly like us; and we soon find that we are perfectly like them, excepting that all they do is clearer, purer, and more decorous than with us.’ Obviously, he had idealized China to be a highly civilized place, at least equalling his own continent, but at the same time he had a sharp eye for the differences. The study of a different literature such as the Chinese helped him to formulate the concept of world literature. As he put it:

the Chinese have thousands of [Romances], and had already when our forefathers were still living in the woods. I am more and more convinced that poetry is the universal possession of mankind [...] the epoch of world literature is at hand, and everyone must strive to hasten its approach. (Goethe *et al.* 1850, 350–351)

It seems, then, that *Weltliteratur* is a vision of cross-cultural dialogue. Goethe’s greatness lies in that he not only framed a concept to be applied within his own European circle, but that he envisioned a comprehensive notion for all literature and art.

### 3. Chinese Literary Theory in Europe

Domestic appropriation of Chinese literary theory in Europe comes along with the translation and study of Chinese ancient literary theory. Here we emphasize Chinese ancient literary theory instead of Chinese literary theory, in that many scholars in China have realized that there is no innovative literary theory of their own in contemporary China. In 1996, Shunqing Cao (1996, 51) argued that ‘the Chinese are suffering serious aphasia in demonstrating their own literary theory because they simply do not have a cohesive set of literary theoretical discourse, and lack a set

of academic rules of expression, communication and interpretation.' Since the last century, Chinese modern literary theory has been deeply transformed by Western influences, and many Chinese scholars have become used to looking for concepts and terms from Western literary theories to analyse Chinese literary works. Hence, all Chinese literary theory introduced and studied in the West these days is ancient theory. Classical Chinese literary theory is scattered over a great many books or essays, which are mostly the result of the authors' feelings and experiences. Because of this discursive heterogeneity, Western scholars face many difficulties in understanding and elucidating Chinese literary theory. After translating and reflecting on Chinese literary theory, the US sinologist Stephen Owen (1992, 4) found that the main differences between Chinese and Western literary thought are 'in the kinds of assertions made, in the genres, and in the basic structure of literary thought' and argued that in Western literary thought it 'has been one of the deepest and most enduring projects' to seek definitions, while this is virtually absent in Chinese literary thought. Furthermore, it is pretty hard to establish correspondences between terms used in the two types of thinking. Given the fact that 'in many ways a tradition of literary thought is constituted by a set of words, of "terms" which have their own long histories, complex resonances, and force' (Owen 1992, 4), Chinese terms would often 'sound vague to Western ears' (Owen 1992, 5). Structures of argumentation employed by classical Chinese discourse are often perplexing for a Western reader. All these factors leave Chinese theory complicated and confusing after translation. It was only after the 1950s that the Western world began to pay close attention to Chinese literary theory (and this development occurred mostly in the US). Scholars such as the already mentioned Stephen Owen, and James J.Y. Liu, John Timothy Wixted, Pauline Yu and others are all well-known American sinologists who have contributed substantially in translating and studying Chinese literary theory. Although Europe may lag behind somewhat, there are still impressive achievements.

*Wen Xin Diao Long* (文心雕龙/ *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, around 501 or 502) is a representative work of Chinese literary theory, but it has not attracted due attention. Other important writings such as *Wen Fu* (文赋/ *Rhymeprose on Literature*, around 302 or 303) and *Er Shi Si Shi Pin* (二十四诗品/ *Twenty-four Poetry Styles*) have been picked up by only a few scholars. Even if some of them have been translated into European languages, their influence is insignificant. *Canglang Shi Hua* (沧浪诗话/ *Canglang's Discourse on Poetry*, around the first half of the thirteenth-century) is a rare exception; it was translated and studied by the German sinologist Günther Debon in 1962 as *TS'ang-Lang's Gespräche über Die Dichtung: Ein Beitrag zur chinesischen Poetik*. Still, some philosophical and literary texts have attracted interest for a long time in Europe. *Laozi* (老子/ *Laozi*, or *Tao Te Ching*, around 485 BC) is a Taoist classic which contains a great many literary theories. Consisting of only about 5000 words, it is the most concise text on this great Chinese line of thought and the most commonly translated and interpreted Chinese classic in France, Germany and the UK. The Tao-discourse, one of the main discourses in Chinese theory, contains some typical Chinese literary concepts, such as



*yan bu jin yi* (言不尽意/ the word cannot fully convey the mind); *wu zhong sheng you* (无中生有/ 'to have or having' arises from 'not to have or nothing'); or *de yi wang yan* (得意忘言/ to gain the mind by forgetting the word). Two examples are of particular interest, Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) and Kristofer Schipper (1934–).

Heidegger realized that there are huge differences between European and Chinese discourse; a well-known saying of his is that 'language is the house of Being.' As language is ineradicably social, it is at the core of the essential structure of human existence: 'If man by virtue of his language dwells within the claim and call of Being, then we Europeans presumably dwell in an entirely different house than East-Asian man [...] And so, a dialogue from house to house remains nearly impossible' (Heidegger 1971, 5). In spite of his scepticism about the possibility of such a dialogue, he believed that 'questioning is the piety of thinking'; he had already set a good example of creating a dialogue between the East and the West through questioning and studying Tao. Although he never admitted to a personal relationship with Laozi, his books and speeches show his interest in Laozi's thought. His preoccupation with Laozi's Tao enriched his thoughts on being and language. The proximity of these two great minds lies in their contemplation of common topics within heterogeneous philosophical traditions, especially their thinking about ultimate questions such as 'das Nichts', 'thinking and poetry' and language. Heidegger showed his depth of thinking by linking Tao from Asian thought and his own thought on Being.

A Dutch-French sinologist as well as a Taoist priest, Kristofer Schipper occupies a special position. In order to discover the core of the Taoist approach to the body, he came and lived in Taiwan for seven years and became an ordained Taoist priest and one of the world's leading authorities on Taoism. Later in life, after his retirement from Leiden University and from the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in Paris, he settled with his Chinese wife in Fuzhou, in the People's Republic of China. Schipper published extensively on the subject in French, English, Chinese and Japanese. He noticed that, contrary to the notion of the separation of matter and spirit, body and soul, in the Western tradition, Taoism refuses this dualism and considers the body's survival as essential as that of the soul. His book *The Taoist Body* represents the cumulative digest of his more than 20 years of experience with, and reflection on, the Taoist vision of life. Instead of completely taking over the Taoist discourse in China, he transformed it with actual practice and sociological significance. Norman Girardot (1993, xv) commented in the foreword to the 1993 English version of *The Taoist Body*, a translation of the earlier French version, *Le corps taoïste. Corps physique, corps social* (1982), that,

even more significant is that, while becoming a Taoist priest, Schipper never renounced his Western scholarly heritage. Although the esoteric side of the tradition would seem to contradict the demands of open scholarly inquiry, it needs to be understood that Schipper's ordination was not a matter of converting to some concealed set of dogmatic beliefs or of swearing an oath of total secrecy

Heidegger and Schipper have in common that they established an understanding of Chinese Tao-discourse and still followed Western discursive practice to rephrase

and elucidate Chinese theory. They created a genuine dialogue between Tao and Logos.

Various Western theoretical and critical approaches such as Formalism, New Criticism, Archetypal Criticism, Narratology, Feminism or cultural studies have been employed by European sinologists – whether known for their familiarity with the material or for specific research methods – to read Chinese literary works and elucidate Chinese theory. There is one exception, though: François Jullien takes Greece and the West as his object but looks at it through the lens of Chinese theoretical thinking. In many of his articles and books he admits that Chinese ancient thought is radically different from European thinking, yet nevertheless he claims that a Chinese approach will offer a more globally comprehensive investigation of Europe itself. This would mean

a *shift* in two senses of the term [efficacy]: a shift away from our normal thinking habits, a move from one framework to another—from Europe to China and back again—which will undermine our representations and get our thoughts moving; and also a shift in the sense of shifting the impediment that is preventing us from perceiving what we have always blocked out of our thinking and, for that very reason, have been unable to think about. (Jullien 2004, viii, emphasis in original)

If Westerners want to enter the door of Chinese thought, they have to depart from the Greek tradition, because ‘enter implies move (*se déplacer*), ie. leave (*quitter*) so as to penetrate (*pénétrer*)’ (Jullien 2014, 4). This motivation has determined his position in Chinese studies. He is not a conventional sinologist zooming in only on Chinese knowledge and thought; rather, he is more a European philosopher than a sinologist. He is aware of the heterogeneity between China and the West, is trained in and influenced by Western theoretical systems, yet does not use Western theory into which to fit Chinese thought; on the contrary, he uses the latter to examine the former.

### **Conclusion**

To proceed with cultural and literary exchange and dialogue between China and Europe, we have to cross the huge wall standing between them. The intercultural communication we are talking about today is a dialogue on an equal footing. China and Europe are not adjacent geographically, and they may appear to each other as an unfamiliar ‘other’. Throughout history, they have in many respects gradually enhanced their mutual understanding, a process in which literature plays an important role. Recognizing differences reveals a change in thinking and promotes the understanding of ‘self’ as a reflection from the perspective of ‘the other’. Just as a word’s specific meaning results from what distinguishes it from other words, the most precise characteristic of a culture is to be what the others are not. Comparison through heterogeneity provides a support for achieving mutual understanding through awareness of differences.

In *What is World Literature?*, David Damrosch (2003, 11–12, emphasis in original) states that

any full response to a foreign text is largely to operate along all three of these dimensions: a sharp *difference* we enjoy for its sheer novelty; a gratifying *similarity* that we find in the text or project onto it; and a middle range of what is *like-but-unlike*—the sort of relation most likely to make a productive change in our own perceptions and practices.

When Chinese literature is presented to European readers without a filter, they will probably just register the unfamiliarity of it. If Chinese literature is translated, adapted, transformed, and remoulded creatively in the Western discourse, then the target readers will, in all likelihood, accept it, and they may even end up regarding it as a part of their own literature. In short, domestic appropriation is what we can get from literary variation, and it is the core of variation studies. From the perspective of domestic appropriation, translated literary works could be a part of local literary classics. In addition, foreign theory, if properly blended with local theory, could also offer new perspectives. Cultural innovations are more often than not informed and inspired by what stands out as foreign. Beneficial elements carried by foreign literature and theory will definitely open new venues for any culture.

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