

## On the Translatability of Mo Yan's Novels and the C-E Translation

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### ABSTRACT

Literature works of supranational or international significance must have considerable "translatability" internally. Mo Yan's works show obvious world characteristics in the theme and techniques of creation, which constitute the internal "translatability" of his works. This paper discusses the translatability of Mo Yan's novels from four aspects: the theme, the structure, the image and the language of the novels, and then analyzes the translatability of the theme reflected in the English translation. The paper finds that, the translatability in the theme of creation is embodied in its most basic and natural desires and emotions of human beings, and the universality beyond time and space, that the translatability of the novel structure is embodied in the strong story-telling feature and the obvious plot of the novel, that the translatability of the image is embodied in its clear and common reference of the images, and that the translatability of the language is embodied in the language characteristic of story-telling, and the less profound and obscure language expressions. This paper also takes the English versions of *Red Sorghum* and *Big Breasts & Wide Hips* translated by Howard Goldblatt as examples to analyze in detail the embodiment of translatability in the theme of the novel. It is found out that due to the translatability in the theme of the original novels, the English translation greatly represent the themes expressing humanity, free life and religion.

### INTRODUCTION

Regarding the translatability of literary works, Benjamin believes that every literary work has its own "translatability", and there are two implications as to whether the work is translatable or not: one is whether a suitable translator can be found in the readership, and the other is whether the nature of the work is suitable for translation (quoted from Wang: 2009). As to whether the nature of the work is suitable for translation, Benjamin believes that as each language should express or construct the experience and values of the ethnic community, what is conveyed by the construction of the translated language can only be the experience already existing in its own community, even though translation attempts to express the same experience as the original work. What translation shows is that human experiences are similar but not exactly equal, and that similarity can inspire empathy, and understand what is the unequal experience (Yang: 2009). From this point of view, whether the nature of a literary work is suitable for translation or "translatability" of a literary work can be understood as whether a work expresses similar but unequal characteristics of human experiences. If the similar but unequal features of human experience in a literary work can be translated and transmitted, it will help people to understand the cultures of different nationalities, thus helping people to understand the overall experience of human exist-

tence and helping people to sympathize with others. Then, such literary works have strong "translatability" and "call for translation" (Yang: 2009).

Xie Tianzhen (2014) also believes that the translatability of a literary work itself does not refer to the ease of translation, but refer to the transferability of its original style, creative features and unique "taste" of the original work in the process of translation and to that the work is translated into a foreign language version, whether the style, characteristics and "taste" of the original work can be basically preserved and understood and accepted by the target language readers. Therefore, "translatability of literary works" will involve two factors, one is the transferability of the original style, the other is the acceptability of translated work by the readers in foreign language and culture.

### THE TRANSLATABILITY FACTORS OF MO YAN'S NOVELS

Mo Yan's novels are distinctive of cosmopolitan characteristics in the theme and techniques of creation, while the images and writing language of his novels are of distinct personalized characteristics. His cosmopolitan characteristics are obviously conducive to the reading and understanding of western readers, thus enhancing the translatability of

his works. However, his personalized images and language characteristics are so distinctive that are often thought as obstacles for the flow of reading for western readers. Will these characteristics hinder the translatability of Mo Yan's novels? The following is a detailed discussion on the translatability of Mo Yan's novels from the four aspects: the theme, structure, image and language of his novels.

### Translatability of Theme in Mo Yan's Novels

World classic literary works such as the *Bible*, Homer's *Epic*, *Hamlet*, *Ulysses*, reflect the primary concern for all mankind by thinking about the most basic and important issues in life, such as life, death, love, etc. These works show the most basic and natural desires and emotions of mankind and can be read and appreciated by readers in different cultural contexts (Su: 2009). Therefore, works with the theme of human's most basic and natural desires and emotions are universal beyond time and space, and thus have higher degree of translatability and are understood by readers in different cultural contexts. The history of literary translation also shows that literary works that show primary concern are translated into more languages and are re-translated more times in different times, thus having a wider readership (Su: 2009) and being more able to continue the "afterlife life" of the original in the translated language.

Mo Yan's novels present an ancient and suffering Chinese countryside. In such an eternal land, time filters out the superficial features of history attached to rural life and restores the life on this land to the most basic forms: eating, drinking, bearing, sexual love, violence, death ... (Zhang: 1999). In *Red Sorghum*, the fiery red sorghum fields, the wild sexual affairs in the sorghum fields, the cruel skinning atrocities and death, the mother's repeated births, and the love between her several daughters and their lovers, the death caused by war and famine, the eternal theme of literature in Mo Yan's novels are reflected in this kind of human original desire, so it will be easily recognized and recognized by scholars and ordinary readers, thus making Mo Yan's novels highly translatable. As Yoshida Fufu (2012) said: "In Japan, many readers of Mo Yan's works may have grown up in cities, but Mo Yan's works pursue the inner things of people, reflecting the inner desires and pursuits of people that are often concealed, including good and bad, and the inner things of people are still common" (People Network: 2012). Mo Yan's novels have great transferability in theme and acceptability to readers of other cultures because their primary concern reflects the original desire of human beings.

### Translatability of the Structure of Mo Yan's Novels

The structure of the novel refers to the organization and connection between the content and form of the novel, i.e. the plot and the way the language shapes the characters' stories, mainly involving the composition and presentation of the stories. Novels are narrative works and are composed of basic narrative units, although Chinese and western novels tend to show different preferences in plot arrangement, for example, western postmodern novels often "de-plot" and "de-story",

the basic narrative units can still be traced back to the collective unconscious psychological structure of human beings, thus having cross-cultural commonality. It can be said that any complex narrative work is translatable in this sense, but there are different degrees of translatability of different works. There is always a basic structure behind the stories of novels from various countries. The plots and contents of the stories may change due to the differences of customs and ideology in different places during the process of translation and dissemination. However, the structure behind the stories will always remain unchanged because it reflects the common spiritual structure of mankind. For example, after Homer's epic *Odyssey* was translated into China, even though the characters and life scenes in the original work are quite different from the Chinese culture, the plot arrangement pattern of heroes encountering difficulties, struggling, winning or destroying can be found in most Chinese classical novels, therefore the Chinese readers of those Homer's *Odyssey* felt no sense of strangeness. Thus it can be said that no matter how tortuous the details of the novel work are, if the original work is a plot type work, its overall plot framework can be fully comprehensible to the target readers, and the plot structure of the novel story is highly translatable, and its story is easy to arouse emotional resonance in the target readers. (Su: 2009) Xu Zechen (2013) once talked about the problems of reader acceptance caused by the translatability of Chinese literary works. Xu believed that western readers could understand *Journey to the West* better in terms of *Journey to the West* and *A Dream of Red Mansions*, because "the story in *Journey to the West* is very appealing with the monkey and monsters fighting and killing in the fog", and that Cao Xueqin's works are too subtle and obscure in expressing the Chinese characters, emotions and the Chinese values, which makes *A Dream of Red Mansions* difficult to understand and cannot be well accepted by the western readers. This is the difference in translatability caused by the differences in narrative aspects of the works. Generally speaking, translation can convey some basic elements of literary interpretation, such as plot, characters, dialogue, person, narrative method, etc. In short, the structure of literature, that is, structure, is easy to convey (Jiang: 2013). Mo Yan's novels boast of twists and turns, and innovative stories, which are appealing to readers and easy to follow.

In terms of space and time of his novels, Mo Yan broke through the space-time boundary between the present and the future, reality and illusion in his novel creation. He broke through the chronological narration in the time arrangement of the story and constantly changed the time entry point, making the past story linked with reality. The narrator's narration replaced linear development by overlapping, extending from recalling the past to describing the present and imagining the future scene. The past, present and future overlap in the narrative context of the same narrator at the same time, thus giving readers endless space for reverie and aesthetic possibilities. As a result, the narrative effect of the novel is enriched and appears three-dimensional, so the author can even add various comments, explanations, surmises and garrulous remarks without restraint. Mo Yan's novels, which break the order and boundaries of time and space in order to enhance

artistic expression, bearing the characteristics of postmodernism. Therefore, they are anti-traditional in text sense and often cause some obstacles in reading. In terms of time, the past, the present and the future overlap with each other, and a large number of flashbacks and flashforwards are used, thus the sequence of the works appears very disordered, and readers are easy to get lost and confused. In terms of space, as time goes by, the place where the incident took place also changes, and the reader's thoughts may jump forward with the novel. This kind of structure also causes challenge for translators. Although stream of consciousness and space-time jump are the main artistic features in western modernist or post-modernist works, for the translated texts, due to the estrangement between the source language culture and the target language culture, western readers may expect more from the direct understanding of the story or the culture of the source language than from the appreciation of the writing skills of the original novel. If the chaos of time and space hinders the understanding of the normal plot, readers may give up reading. From this aspect, Mo Yan's novels are relatively weak in structural translatability, so there may be some adjustments from the translator in his translation process.

#### Translatability of Images in Mo Yan's Novels

Imagery refers to objective images which incorporate subjective feelings or the subjective feelings which are expressed by means of objective things (Yuan: 1996). In Mo Yan's novels, a large number of sensory images are used to create a colorful sensory world. This colorful literary world is constructed by gorgeous colors and strange metaphors. The complicated images in the novel show bright and strong color, giving people strong sensory stimulation, such as the scorched sun, green moon, blue tears, red sorghum, etc. In addition to gorgeous colors, the images in Mo Yan's novels also embody the combination of natural images and cultural images. The natural images come from nature, including natural landscape, animals and plants, etc and the cultural images are centered on human beings, with the natural images deeply branded with the themes of human beings. In *Red Sorghum*, the natural image of red sorghum is directly related to the conception of the novel, and the meaning it represents is gradually enriched through continuous repetition. The red sorghum is endowed with historical color and humanistic flavor in the novel. It is a symbol of the endless life of Gaomi northeast villagers, representing the strength and indomitable spirit of life, and has deep cultural connotation, which is easy for readers to follow and understand.

Due to its clear meaning or commonality, a novel may have higher degree of translatability if the connotation and meaning of the work are expressed directly, without or with little intertextuality. There is less inter-textual references in Mo Yan's novels, and the characters' information is clear on their own without connotations in other literary works. In addition, since Mo Yan is good at telling stories and there are very good story plots in his novels, the novels appear more straightforward, and his literary images are often of universal values and easy to be understood and accepted by foreign readers. For example, it is quite easy for western

readers to understand and accept the image of a mother who symbolizes the fertility of the earth but suffers hardships in *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* and the image of a folk hero in *Red Sorghum* who is bold and unyielding and dare to love and hate. These images express kinship, love, courage, boldness, vitality, etc. These are languages that the world can understand and understand. In Mo Yan's imaginary world, the images he created deeply attract western readers.

#### Translatability of the Language in Mo Yan's Novels

Jiang Zhiqin (2013) believes that a writer's reputation abroad is obviously restricted by translation. In the process of translating literary works, something will be lost: the style and rhythm of the native language will be weakened, the connotation and extension of the language, rhetoric, habitual expression, special cultural symbol implication, etc. are all difficult to be transmitted through translation, and these are exactly the signs of the originality of a writer. The language of Mo Yan's novels has a very obvious mark of his originality, that is, the mixed language features of personalized metaphor, folk colloquial speech and written language. In addition, in terms of rhetoric, Mo Yan's novel language shows no effort in arrangement, and its language expresses the author's uncontrollable passion. Generally speaking, as far as language rhetoric is concerned, traditional Chinese literary theories always advocate proper control, believing that excessive embellishment will affect the expression effect, thus affecting the self-shaping of the writer's moral image, and place great emphasis on "refinement" and "deliberation". The traditional debate on "words" and "meaning" is based on the principle of language economy (Fu:2012). However, Mo Yan's "extravagance and waste" of language is a reversal and betrayal of traditional literary theory. (Zhang:1999) Mo Yan's use of this noisy language has broken the aesthetic habits of the contemporary literary world and released the aesthetic feeling and understanding of the contemporary people. The language of Mo Yan's novels has undergone several stages of changes. In the early days of his writing, the language of *Rainy Spring and Rainy Night* was abstemious and concise. Later, the language of *Red Sorghum* began to be more and more unrestrained. In the middle period, the language of *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* showed unrestrained and devastating lyricism. Considering the concise and direct language expression of English, a more restrained and convergent language would have higher degree of translatability. However, as Mo Yan's novels focus on narrative stories, voluminous as its language is, they do not have the words that are too profound and obscure to understand. Therefore, on the whole, the story-telling features of Mo Yan's novels make its language highly translatable.

Howard Goldblatt, the English translator of Mo Yan's novels, once expressed his own opinion on whether the language itself is difficult to translate. After comparing the languages of several Chinese writers he translated, he thought that although there are a lot of Shandong dialects used in Mo Yan's works, it is not too difficult to translate as there are no words with subtle implications. Howard Goldblatt commented: "I have translated six books of Mo Yan's novels,

and I find that although he uses many words of dialects in his novel, it is not too difficult to translate. Su Tong's is not difficult to translate. He writes delicately, but the translation is very different from the original. Wang Shuo's is not difficult to translate. His Beijing dialect is actually very easy to translate. Bi Feiyu's works are the most difficult to turn over. A thin book contains very subtle and cautious words. Jiang Rong is more like a philosophical scholar, and his works are relatively easy to translate." (Beijing News: 2008) And Xie Tianzhen (2014) once believed that Mo Yan's works were translatable because after being translated into foreign languages, "they are not only close to the literary standards of the western society, but also conform to the expectations of the western world for Chinese literature."

### THE TRANSLATABILITY OF MO YAN'S NOVELS REFLECTED IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Due to the high degree of translatability of Mo Yan's novels, the English translation version is fully expressive of the writing themes of Mo Yan's novel. With examples from Mo Yan's representative novels *Red Sorghum* and *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* and Howard Goldblatt's English versions, the following part of the paper is to discuss in detail how Howard Goldblatt's English version reflects the translatability of the original text on the theme of Mo Yan's novels.

#### Translation of Human Theme

Mo Yan's novels were concerned of human beings, reflecting the author's anxiety or worry about the future of human beings and depicting the complex process of human mind, human nature and the essence of life. In *Red Sorghum*, the theme of human concerning is the most representative.

Ex 1: 我曾对高密东北乡极端热爱, 曾经对高密东北乡极端仇恨, 长大后努力学习马克思主义, 我终于领悟到: 高密东北乡无疑是地球上最美丽最丑陋、最超脱最世俗、最圣洁最龌龊、最英雄好汉最王八蛋、最能喝酒最能爱的地方。(Mo Yan, 2012: 03)

*I had learned to love Northeast Gaomi Township, and to hate it with unbridled fury. I didn't realize until I'd grown up that Northeast Township is easily the most beautiful and most repulsive, most unusual and most common, most scared and most corrupt, most heroic and most bastardly, hardest-drinking and hardest-loving place in the world. (Mo Yan, 1993: 04)*

The original Chinese text is the commencement words of the first chapter of *Red Sorghum*, which expresses the extreme feelings of the narrator "I" towards Northeast Gaomi Township. The repeated patterns of parallelism in the series point out the theme of human existence to be embodied in the work. The comparison of the adjectives "the most beautiful, the ugliest, the most detached, the most secular, the holiest and the dirtiest" is reminiscent of Dickens' "it was the best of times, it was the world of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair". English readers are easy to feel familiar with

and are willing to accept and continue reading. However, the sentence "长大后努力学习马克思主义 study Marxism hard when you grow up" in the original text is out of context, thus is omitted in the English translation. Howard Goldblatt embodies his keen aesthetic consciousness and accurately grasps the words that highlight the theme, so the English translation is very close to the original in the choice of the target language expressions, "the most beautiful and most common, most sacred and most corrupt, most heroic and most bastardly" and deleted the phrase "study Marxism hard when you grow up", which expressed a strong political ideology, weakened the political nature, but showed literariness.

Ex. 2: 他们杀人越货, 精忠报国, 他们演出过一幕幕英勇悲壮的舞剧, 使我们这些活着的不肖子孙相形见绌, 在进步的同时, 我真切感到种的退化。(莫言: 2012: 02)

*They killed, they looted, and they defended their country in a valiant, stirring ballet that makes us unfilial descendants who now occupy the land pale by comparison. Surrounded by progress, I feel a nagging sense of our species' regression. (Mo Yan, 1993: 06)*

This text points out the theme of human nature in *Red Sorghum*. On the one hand, it praises the savagery and tenacity of the folk heroes of "my grandfather" and "my father". On the other hand, it expresses concern about the "degeneration of species" of human beings. Howard Goldblatt followed the word order of the original text in his English translation, advancing "they killed, they looted, and they defend their country" step by step in meaning, and even retained the original sentence "make...pale by comparison" instead of directly using the word "dwarf" with a higher degree of lexicalization in English. The English translation shows the spirit and charm of the Chinese original.

Howard Goldblatt's understanding of the intention of human in Mo Yan's novels is shown in the preface of his English translation of *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*. Although he knows that the story of *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* is naturally fictional, he believes that the author, while selectively dealing with historical events, explores the broader aspects of exposing society and human nature, thus transcending and refuting those specific events or classical political interpretations of history (Howard Goldblatt, 2010: 193).

#### Translation of Free Life Theme

Mo Yan's novels are full of primitive breath of life, which takes life consciousness and life strength as its core. In Mo Yan's novels, the free and unrestrained state of life is gathered in various forms of reality, reality, illusion and absurdity and is presented with a feeling of unrestrained freedom.

Ex.3: 奶奶感到疲乏极了, 那个滑溜溜的现在的把柄、人生世界的把柄, 就要从她手里滑脱。这就是死吗? 我就要死了吗? 再也见不到这天, 这地, 这高粱, 这儿子, 这正在带兵打仗的情人? 枪声响得那么遥远, 一切都隔着一层厚重的烟雾。豆官! 豆官! 我的儿, 你来帮娘一把, 你拉住娘, 娘不想死, 天哪! 天.....天赐我情人, 天赐我儿子, 天赐我财富, 天赐我三十年红高粱般充实的生活。天, 你既然给了我, 就不要再收回, 你宽恕了我吧, 你放了我吧! 天, 你认为我有罪吗? 你

认为我跟一个麻风病人同枕交颈，生出一窝癞皮烂肉的魔鬼，使这个美丽的世界污秽不堪是对还是错？天，什么叫贞节？什么叫正道？什么是善良？什么是邪恶？你一直没有告诉过我，我只有按着我自己的想法去办，我爱幸福，我爱力量，我爱美，我的身体是我的，我为自己做主，我不怕罪，不怕罚，我不怕进你的十八层地狱。我该做的都做了，该干的都干了，我什么都不怕。但我不想死，我要活，我要多看几眼这个世界，我的天哪……（《红高粱家族》）

*Grandma is exhausted: the handle of the present, the handle of the world of men, is slipping from her grasp. Is this death? Will I never again see this sky, this earth, this sorghum, this son, the lover who has led his troops into battle? The gunfire is so far away beyond a thick curtain of mist. Douguan! Douguan! Come help your mom. Pull your mom back. Your mom doesn't want to die. My heaven ... you gave me a lover, you gave me a son, you gave me riches, you gave me thirty years of life as robust as red sorghum. Heaven, since you gave me all that, don't take it back now. Forgive me, let me go! Have I sinned? Would it have been right to share my pillow with a leper and produce a misshapen, putrid monster to contaminate this beautiful world? What is chastity then? What is the correct path? What is goodness? What is evil? You never told me, so I had to decide on my own. I loved happiness, I loved strength, I loved beauty; it was my body, and I used it as I thought fitting. Sin doesn't frighten me, nor does punishment. I'm not afraid of your eighteen levels of hell. I did what I had to do, I managed as I thought proper. I fear nothing. But I don't want to die, I want to live. I want to see more of this world...*

This monologue shows that “My Grandma” in *Red Sorghum* had hallucinations after being hit by Japanese soldiers. His heart began to torture God and his own soul. The original text used a series of questions to question God's injustice, showing “My Grandma”'s strong desire to “live”. The love of “My Grandma” is not in accordance with etiquette in ordinary people's eyes, but “My grandma” is eager to pursue freedom, and a life full of vitality and fullness like the red sorghum is exactly what the author wants to praise. therefore, although this inner monologue is not originally the tone of a rural peasant woman, it seems to be the voice of the Youth in May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement advocating free love, and it is the direct expression of the narrator “I” or the implied author's forced intervention due to a lot of regrets. The narrator interweaves the curse of “My grandmother” on heaven with her reflection and defense of her personal life, showing her struggle against traditional morality and ethics as a “pioneer of personality liberation” and her nostalgia for this world when suddenly facing death. “My grandma” took the initiative in her life even when she died. In the English translation, although the Shakespeare's characters speech-like language is somewhat abrupt in the whole novel, Howard Goldblatt did not make any deletion or rewriting in dealing with this paragraph as it magnifies the theme and embodies the core spirit of freedom and life,

Ex. 4: 大姐愣住了，说：“娘，你变了。”

母亲说：“我变了，也没变。这十几年里，上官家的人，像韭菜一样，一茬茬的死，一茬茬的发，有生就

有死，死容易，活难，越难越要活。越不怕死越要挣扎着活。我要看到我的后代子孙浮上水来那一天，你们都要给我争气！”（Mo, 2012: 342）

*First Sister was stunned. “Mother,” she said, “You've changed.”*

*“Yes, I've changed,” Mother said, “and yet I'm still the same. Over the years, members of the Shangguan family have died off like stalks of chives, and others have been born to take their place. Where there's life, death is inevitable. Dying's easy; it's living that's hard. The harder it gets, the stronger the will to live. And the greater the fear of death, the greater the struggle to keep on living.” -- Big Breasts and Wide Hips (Mo Yan, 2012: 342)*

The dialogue between the elder sister and the “Mother” in this passage was singled out and placed on the title page of Howard Goldblatt's English translation of *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*. The first page of the title page, corresponding to the salutation of the original text, “谨以此书献给母亲在天之灵 To dedicate this book to the spirit of mother in heaven”. Howard Goldblatt translated it as “To the spirit of my mother” and “spirit” with a double meaning, meaning both soul and spirit, highlighting the spirit of the mother to live tenaciously and continuously and to nurture the life of future generations. The above dialogue appears in the middle of the second page of the salutation, with “--from *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*” at the end. This kind of outline highlights the theme of the novel that the translator often wants to convey to the readers, and has a pre-emptive guiding effect on the readers' reading. Thus, Howard Goldblatt hopes to convey a tough sense of life in this English translation. However, this dialogue is not given special attention in the original Chinese text, and the title page does not highlight any subject sentence except the salutation “dedicate this book to mother's spirit in heaven”. This shows the translator Howard Goldblatt's precise grasp of the essence and theme of the whole book. He thinks that the answer of “Mother” reflects the core theme of the book, the courage and perseverance of the mother to survive tenaciously, the strong sense of life, and the characteristics of the book's family history. Howard Goldblatt's English translation does not use the parallel structure of “Dying is easy, while living is hard”, but “dying is easy; It's living that is hard.” The second half of the sentence “it's living that's hard” uses the emphasis sentence pattern to vividly translate the painful and firm meaning of mother's “difficulty in living” in the original text.

### Translation of Religious Themes

Mo Yan's novels reflect explicit or implicit religious plots. The oil painting of the virgin and the son in the opening paragraph of *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* indicates that the “Mother” in the novel is eager to be pregnant and have children. The “Mother” was deeply moved when she entered the church to see the portrait of the Virgin and Son, believing that her wish could finally be understood, so she chose to follow Pastor Maloia and believe in God. Throughout the book, there is a comparison between the dignified and holy look of “Mother” and that of Notre Dame. There is also a description of pastor Maloia's explanation of the *Bible* to encour-

age family members to live when their mother is suffering. In the process of Howard Goldblatt's English translation, all of them were translated one by one, restoring the religious connotation in the original.

Ex. 5: 马洛亚牧师静静地躺在炕上, 看到一道红光照耀在圣母玛利亚粉红色的乳房和她怀抱着的圣子肉嘟嘟的脸上。去年夏季房屋漏雨, 在这张油画上留下了一团团焦黄的水渍; 圣母和圣子的脸上, 都呈现出一种木呆的表情。

*From where he lay quietly on the brick-and-tamped-earth sleeping platform, his kang, Pastor Malory saw a bright red beam of light shining down on the Virgin Mary's pink breast and on the pudgy face of the bare-bottomed Blessed Infant in her arms. Water from last summer's rains had left yellow stains on the oil tableau, investing the Virgin Mary and Blessed Infant with a vacant look.*

This paragraph was originally the beginning of the first paragraph of the first chapter of volume 1 in the Chinese version of *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, which was deleted when Shanghai literature and art publishing house published the revised edition in 2012. The 2012 Chinese version begins directly with “马洛亚牧师提着一只黑色的瓦罐上了教堂后边的大街....Pastor Maloia went onto the street behind the church, carrying a black crock ...” The original text which Howard Goldblatt translated from is Mo Yan's computer-printed manuscript with revision and deletion made on the 2003 edition by Workers' Publishing House. Thus the English translation still retains the first paragraph with western religious and cultural characteristics. The description of the original text presents a static indoor picture, in which “Reverend Maloia”, “Virgin Mary” and “Son” are familiar names related to Christian religion for western readers. In the English translation, except for “brick-and-tamped-earth sleeping platform, his Kang” which reveal the local Chinese culture, the rest of the text bears no difference from the original English works. In the eyes of western readers, “Pastor Malory” and “Virgin Mary” and “Holy Infant” are cultural symbols they are all too familiar with, and these terms put the western readers in a familiar reading context at the beginning. When western readers read the novels in their own familiar language in the context of western literature, they would their own acceptance tradition and expectation, and use familiar habits and tools to understand foreign literary works. However, Mo Yan's works, due to their worldwide characteristics in theme and writing techniques, are in great agreement with western readers' reading experience and expectation after being translated into English.

Ex. 6: 老天爷爷, 主上帝, 圣母玛丽亚, 南海观世音菩萨, 保佑我的念弟吧, 保佑我的孩子们吧, 把天上地下所有的灾难和病痛都降临到我的头上吧, 只要我的孩子们平安无事.....

*Old Man in heaven, Dear Lord, Blessed Virgin Mary, Guanyin Bodhisattva of the Southern Sea\_ Please protect our Niandi and all the children. Place all the heavenly and worldly miseries, pains, and illnesses on my head. So long as my children are well and safe.*

In *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, some plots have been deleted, and the more complicated language in the original text has been simplified and clarified. Howard Goldblatt has

faithfully translated the appellations in the prayer, “Grandpa God, Lord God, Virgin Mary, Guanyin Bodhisattva of South China Sea” and so on in the most detailed way.

Religious consciousness runs through the works of “Breasts and Buttocks”. There are descriptions of church service and baptism in many places in the book. Material descriptions with religious color in the church are also quite detailed. This passage belongs to the seventh chapter after the end of the novel in the original Chinese text, which is used to supplement the explanation. Chinese readers have a sense of epiphany after reading it and are deeply sympathetic to what happened to “Mother”. According to the arrangement of chapters in the English version, the chapter in the original text explaining the origin of the “Mother” children is adjusted to chapter 2 in the English version. Therefore, at the beginning of the development of the English version of the story, the author has already explained the experience of “mother” having sex with many people and giving birth to a daughter. This paragraph mainly tells the story of the mother who suffered her husband Shangguan Shouxi to burn her lower body with a soldering iron and came to the church in the village when she was extremely sad and desperate. At the same time, Pastor Maloia was telling the story of the Holy Spirit's pregnancy of the Virgin Mary in the Bible, which greatly touched the heart of “Mother”. Believing that ones wish to “borrow seed to have children” can find common feelings in this Christian scripture, the “Mother” borrowing seed to have children, which violates traditional Chinese women's morality, has been “legalized” here, just like Maria's having children. Howard Goldblatt advanced the content of the seventh chapter of the original text so that western readers would know the background information of the “Mother” and her eight children from the very beginning. For western readers with Christian background, it is easier to accept and have more sense of identity due to the conversion of the “mother” to Christianity. In the English translation, Howard Goldblatt directly adopted the English version of the Bible, keeping the quaint features of the words used in the English Bible language, such as “sister”, “befold”, “fear not to take till they are Mary thy wife”, “thou shall call his name Jesus”, the original English Bible expressions are embedded in the Howard Goldblatt's English translation of *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, leaving the western readers in a western culture context as if they are reading the English original. When translating the religious features of the original text into English, Howard Goldblatt often chooses the method of back-translation, that is, directly replacing the existing words in English, which not only reflects the influence of western religious culture on the Chinese countryside in the original text, but also perfectly restores the original features of western religious culture and language.

## CONCLUSION

Mo Yan's novels show a combination of western writing techniques and Chinese regional characteristics, with the writing form being obvious western modernist techniques and the writing contents reflecting the Chinese national spirit, life and temperament of Chinese local characters.

In this sense, Mo Yan's works are national internally and cosmopolitan externally, with the story contents being Chinese and the form being global. Therefore, when Mo Yan's novels are translated into English, it is easy to conform with the creative techniques of western local literature in form, which enables Mo Yan's original novels to be highly translatable. Mo Yan's novels have achieved a delicate balance between the world and nationality, universality and heterogeneity, western values and local culture. The universality of the theme of his novels and the world of his writing methods make the original text itself more translatable, thus reducing the reading obstacles of western readers. The nationality and heterogeneity of the local culture of the theme and content attract readers to read because of its charming exotic amorous feelings. The clear and common references of the images in Mo Yan's novels, and story-telling language style with less profound and obscure language expressions are combined to make the novels easily understood and accepted. In this sense, Mo Yan's novels, with their unique national and cosmopolitan factors, are highly "translatable". From the discussions on the examples of *Red Sorghum* and *Big Breasts & Wide Hips* translated by Howard Goldblatt, it can be seen that the original style, creative features and unique "taste" of the original works are highly transmitted in the translation process and understood and accepted by the target readers.

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