

## Based on the Cognitive Research on the Creative Translation of Goldblatt's English Novels by Mo Yan

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**Abstract:** In 2012, Mo Yan won the Nobel Prize for literature for the first time as a Chinese writer. The reason why Mo Yan's novels have international fame is closely related to his unique writing style to show strong local flavor and reflect on human nature. Goldblatt's excellent translation has built a bridge for Mo Yan's novels to reach the world. Goldblatt, with his translation strategy of loyalty and creative treason, has successfully cleared away the reading obstacles in language and culture and brought Mo Yan's novels to the readers in the English-speaking world. To explore the strategies adopted by Goldblatt in the process of translation is of great significance for translation teaching.

### 1. Introduction

Goldblatt was born in California in 1939 and is a famous American translator. He studied Chinese while serving in Taiwan in the 1960s, and then studied Chinese at Taiwan Normal university after he left the army. After returning to the United States, he continued to study Chinese literature at San Francisco State University and obtained a master's degree. He has translated more than forty works by more than twenty Chinese writers, including Mo Yan, Xiao Hong, Zhang Jie, Yang Jiang, Feng Jikai and others. Currently the highest ranking translator of Chinese literature in the English-speaking world, he has made Chinese literature look like contemporary British and American literature. Goldblatt's high translation status is closely related to his rigorous and exquisite attitude towards translation. In the process of translation, he not only sticks to the original work, but also makes creative adaptations in the unequal translation between the two cultures. "I love the conflict between creativity and fidelity, and the inevitable compromises that come in the end," he says. Every now and then, I come across a book that is so exciting that I devote myself to translating it. In other words, I translate, therefore I am."

Mo Yan won the Nobel Prize for literature in 2012. In addition to the world factors in the creation of the novel, the success of the novel also integrates the expression techniques of traditional Chinese realism and foreign magic. The translator, especially the English translator Goldblatt, plays an important role in displaying the complex connotation of Chinese native culture, the integration of unique nationality and authenticity, and the unique charm of language. At present, the theoretical research on Mo Yan and his works focuses more on his narrative angle, aesthetic style, characteristics of folk language and rhetoric, and modern elements of Mo Yan's novels. English translation studies focus on the linguistic characteristics of Goldblatt's translated texts and the corpus-based translation style of Goldblatt's translated works. This paper will study the cognitive mechanism of creative translation in Goldblatt's English translation.

### 2. The connotation of creative translation

The reason why literary translation is more complicated and difficult lies in the particularity of the language of literary works. According to professor wang hongyin, "literary language has the characteristics of polysemy, variability and novelty, and shows distinct characteristics of individuation and nationalization". [1] Therefore, literary translation is "a creative activity that uses the polysemy of language and follows certain stylistic characteristics and personal style to convey images. It is based on creative activities and leads to the realization of the essence of translated

literature through re-creation or creative treason.[2] Professor Xu Yuanchong also clearly pointed out that “studying creative translation may be beneficial to opening up a new situation in literary translation.”[3] Professor Xie Tianchen proposed the concept of “personalized translation”,and believed that when translate literary works, different translators would naturally adopt different translation methods with different understandings and purposes, so as to present different styles of translation and reflect their own characteristics.[4]Professor Xu Jun also pointed out that for literary translation, “translation is difficult to create”, which not only fully illustrates the difficulty of translation, but also affirms that the significance of translation lies in its creativity. Translators can bring new dimensions and vitality to the original text with their own originality. Obviously,all the above arguments support and affirm the translator's creativity in literary translation.It is believed that creative translation is actually an internal demand of the translator and the translation, or even the original and the original author, which requires the translator to convey the artistic conception of the original work in another language on the basis of his own understanding. [6] in other words, translators tend to adopt more naturalized translation strategies in the process of translation, that is, they try their best to use the language expressions and cultural images that target language readers are accustomed to, so as to make their translation more acceptable to target language readers.

### **3. Strategy research based on goldblat’s creative translation**

In the traditional translation studies based on equivalence theory, translation emphasizes “faithfulness” and “equivalence”.In recent years, translation creative research has taken the following turns.Firstly, from text to textuality, text is no longer regarded as a closed territory, but an open world, and the right and freedom of translators to interpret works have been publicized. Secondly, from ideology to individual discourse, translation studies turn to focus on the subjectivity of translators and readers.The purpose of translation depends on the expectations and needs of the target reader.At the same time, it also pays attention to the translator's creative input in “writing” translation and the creativity printed on the product produced by this subjectivity.Thirdly, turning to the translator's mind and consciousness.Yu Guangzhong believes that the representation of experience needs to be created, and translation is always related to the creative thinking based on the translator's own style. It can be seen that there has been a theoretical consensus on translation creativity at a macro level.However, the microscopic manifestation of translation creativity still focuses on proving various translation methods with evidence, such as adding, deleting, reorganizing and annotating, focusing on the treatment of language surface structure.Translation is the use of language. We should not talk about translation without language, but we should not only focus on the formal representation of language.The translator’s creative behavior is a cognitive and communicative behavior and a process of language-based cognitive creation. The creativity of translation is the translator’s cognitive creativity.

Goldblatt was born in California, USA. English is his mother tongue, and he is proficient in English expression.At the same time, he is a famous sinologist in the United States. He can write freely in Chinese without any obstacles.He not only translated a large number of Chinese literature works into English, but also co-edited a number of Chinese literature books.Therefore, he has advantages that the local Chinese translator does not have. Based on the comparison of some contents in the Chinese and English versions of *the Red Sorghum Clan*, this paper discusses the creative translation strategies of Goldblatt’s English translation of Mo Yan’s novels.

#### **3.1. Name translation strategy**

For the translation of the names of the *Red Sorghum Clan*, Goldblatt adopted standard transliteration, transliteration plus free translation, complete free translation and other translation methods. For example,in the novel, the names of my grandfather “Yu Zhanao”, my grandmother “Dai Fenglian”, the narrator of the novel “Dou guan”, the guerrilla whose three sons were killed by the devil “Wang Wenyi”, and the trumpeting drummer “Liu Sishan” are all translated in the standard Chinese phonetic transliteration. “Liu Arhat”, “Fang Six”, “Fang Seven”, “Fang Six”, “Fang Seven”, and “Sun Five”, the pig-slaying master of “Luo han”, and other names are translated in Pinyin and

free translation. The leader of Iron Gang, as stupid as the pig without courage, Black Eye; one beautiful young woman is full of wisdom and clear mouth “Five Troubles”; The gangster leader “Spotted Neck”, who died in Yu's hands, and the guerrilla “Consumptive Four” and other characters' names are named after their nicknames in the novel, while Goldblatt adopts the method of full free translation. As can be seen from the translation of the above names, the translator uses the same name of “Four” in different ways. “Liu Sishan” uses the Chinese pinyin Si, while “Consumptive Four” is expressed by the number “Four”. As a fourth child, he had consumption when he was young. And the famous Gaomi county magistrate “Cao mengjiu” is translated into Nine Dreams Cao, the last name is in Pinyin, the first name is translated into Nine Dreams, so that readers can see from the name of the county magistrate is not ordinary.

### **3.2. Translation strategies for words with Chinese characteristics**

Some words with Chinese characteristics in the novel have no corresponding words in English, and the translator uses transliteration to express them. For example, whether my grandmother loved him or whether he went on my grandmother's kang has nothing to do with ethics. Whether my grandma ever loved him or whether he ever lay down beside her on the kang has nothing to do with fragrant. Another example, the father remembers the grandmother fell to her knees to the wine and knock three heads. The translation: Father recalls how she had fallen to her knees and kowtowed three times to the vat. Here “kowtow” in the form of transliteration kowtowed reflected, while the English can be used knock one's head expression “kowtow”, however, the words of “kowtow” exceptional “knock one's head”. Grandma's “kowtow” and drinking wine soaked in uncle arhat's blood to remember the hatred, and there is a solemn sense of ceremony, containing the unyielding spirit of uncle arhat's admiration. In addition, kowtow is also an ancient custom of the Chinese nation. The word “kowtow” adopted by the translator here perfectly expresses the intention of the original author, faithfully reproduces the cultural connotation of the original text, and enables readers to taste the profound meaning of the original text from the loanword “kowtow”. And “Hanyang buqiang” is translated as “Hanyang rifle”. The rifle was manufactured in China from 1895 until 1944, with a history of nearly 50 years. Because the main production plant is located in Hanyang, Hubei province, the rifles produced by Hanyang Arsenal are commonly referred to as “made in Hanyang”. This rifle has witnessed almost all the battles in China in the early republic of China and occupies a place in the history of Chinese weapons. The translator reserved the well-known noun in China in the form of transliteration, and added rifle after it, which not only made the target language readers understand the unique firearms in Chinese history, but also eliminated the readers' reading obstacles. Goldblatt's combination of foreignization and domestication reflects his flexible translation strategy.

### **3.3. Translation strategies of figurative rhetoric**

Goldblatt's skillful language skills make his translation full of flexibility and diversity. He does not stick to a certain word used by the original author, but gives full play to his imagination and makes the translation more vivid without deviating from the meaning expressed in the original work. For example, Yu zhanhao and his friends ran like rabbits and still unable to escape the pre-noon thunderstorm. The bearers ran like scared jackrabbits, but couldn't escape the pre-noon deluge. Here he uses scared jackrabbits to describe their running speed. He follow the word “rabbit” in the original text. Compare this sentence: My father got on the dirt road and ran like a wild rabbit without the shackles of sorghum. The translation: Once he was on the road and didn't have to worry about getting tangled up in the sorghum plants, he ran like the wind. But the word “the wind” is used in the translation as a metaphor, which is miraculous. Another example: father opened his hands, like a flying bird, rushed to grandma. The translation: He ran like the wind, his arm thrust out in front like wings, as He ran towards Grandma. The translation: Like a huge bird flapping its wings, she sailed slowly through the air and landed on the floor next to the kang. The above two sentences also use the metaphor of “bird”. The translator uses two different words wind and bird to achieve the same reading effect. As Goldblatt says, “as long as the words are translated correctly, I want to faithfully reproduce in my writing what the writer is trying to say -- that is, what he is trying

to say -- without having to reproduce formally how he wrote it.”

### 3.4. Translation strategies that cannot be matched between Chinese and English

There are great differences between the two cultures expressed in Chinese and English. In the process of translating *red sorghum clan*, Goldblatt adopted different translation methods such as substitution, conversion, rewriting, interpretation and deletion to creatively build a bridge that could be crossed between such differences and offer to readers acceptable reading materials. For example: Wrap up ten feet of silk and send up twenty big ocean. The translation: We have wrapped you in a yard of silk, and have left twenty silver dollars. In this case, we use “yard” instead of “zhang” and “silver dollars” to mean “ocean”. This kind of translation seems to violate the original text. In the case that there are no equivalent words in Chinese and English, and it is a literary language that does not require accurate numbers. The translator uses English approximate words instead of Chinese non-equivalent words, which can express the meaning of the original text and make readers understand. Another example: Grandma was 160 centimeters tall and weighed 60 kilograms. The translation: In That year Grandma was five feet four inches tall and weighed about 130 pounds. The translator convert “m” to feet inches, “kg” into pounds and use units of measurement familiar to the reader of the target language for ease of reading. Next example: the low plain, seventy miles long and sixty miles wide... The translation: The marshy plain, which measured sixty by seventy-odd li or about twenty by twenty-five miles... In this sentence, the translator first transliterates “li” into “li”, and then translated into “mile” to explain the preceding, Goldblatt uses the translation method of paraphrase here. For the special Chinese cultural allusions and the contents related to politics, translators adopt the methods of rewriting and deleting.

Forth example: We hope commander Yu will join the eighth route army and fight bravely under the leadership of the communist party. The translation: We want you to join the Jiao-gao regiment. Goldblatt translated the “eighth route army” and “communist party” into “jiao-gao regiment”. Fifth example: China still needs an emperor! I have been watching the “The Three Kingdoms” and “Water Margin” since I was young, trying to figure out a truth: Toss and toss, divide long will close, long will divide. The translation: What China needs is an emperor! I’ve got it all figured out: struggle come and go, long periods of division precede unity and long periods of unity precede division. It can be seen from the translation that the translator omitted the names of “The Three Kingdoms” and “Water Margin”, two ancient stories known to all in China but not necessarily known to foreigners. Another example: my grandmother's life “To be discreet, to be courteous”, “heart is as thin as paper”, “dare to resist, dare to struggle, the original is a consistent”. There is no doubt that the development of human character requires objective conditions, but it is useless without any internal objective conditions. As chairman Mao Zedong said: the temperature can make the egg into the chicken, but not the stone into the chicken. Confucius said, “you can't make rotten wood, and you can't make walls of dung.” I think it's all the same. This paragraph is rich in information of Chinese characteristic culture, including ancient Chinese sayings, idioms, names of famous people, etc. Goldblatt may want to create a relaxed reading atmosphere for readers based on readers' preferences and feelings, and delete the whole paragraph without affecting the plot and content of the story. This method of deleting the whole paragraph of the original text is also a translation strategy adopted by Goldblatt.

## 4. Conclusion

Mo yan's *red sorghum clan* gained international fame, and Goldblatt's excellent translation played a certain role. Goldblatt adopted flexible and diversified translation methods, always stay true to the original rather than sticking to it. And from the perspective of literary appreciation of target readers, he turned the local works with rich Chinese characteristics into a feast suitable for western readers. As Mo Yan commented on Goldblatt's translation: “professor Goldblatt, the translator of my novels, if it had not been for his outstanding work, my novels would have been translated into English and published in the United States, but there would never have been such a perfect translation. Many friends who are proficient in both English and Chinese have told me that

professor Goldblatt's translation is a perfect match for my original. But I prefer to believe that his translation adds luster to my original."

Under the background of economic globalization and cultural diversification, translation plays an important role in the development of Chinese literature in the world, and the quality of translation is the key. Therefore, it is of great significance for the overall improvement of translation quality to criticize the translation, especially to absorb the good translation ideas and methods. It can be said that the quality of translation largely depends on the translator's quality and ability, more specifically, translator's creative ability in the process of translation. Only when a translator gives full play to his own subjective initiative and flexibly applies various translation methods, such as interpretation, set translation, addition, subtraction, partial translation, co-translation and transliteration, can the literary and artistic quality of the original work be reproduced to the maximum extent. But we must also realize that creativity is not the translator can "absolute freedom" to arbitrary interpretation and translation of the original, but on the premise of respecting the original and the original author, actively for the re-creation of art, and "To give the original work a new look, so that it can be a new literary exchange with a wider audience".[8] we also hope that through such a study of specific translation examples, translators can be more profoundly aware of their own responsibilities and obligations, and take the initiative to use their own "creativity" to protect and extend the value of the original text in the process of translation, so as to realize their own value.

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