CONTEMPORARY CHINESE NOVELS IN TRANSLATION SINCE 1978

LITERARY VOICES FROM THE PERIPHERY

Yun Wu

Contemporary Chinese Novels in Translation since 1978

This book aims to complement the traditional focus of translation studies, which has primarily centered on translating English into other languages. It presents a comprehensive analysis of the reverse translation trajectory, exploring the movement of Chinese literature into the core English literary domain.

The book aims to explore the ideological and sociological dynamics that underlie the translation of contemporary Chinese novels. This is achieved through an examination of the translation selection process, translation paratexts, and the roles of translation agents. Case studies are employed to illustrate specific linguistic, literary, and cultural challenges within translation. It dissects the cultural and literary implications of translating genres such as women's writing, science fiction, and Internet literature. The argument presented is that the translation of peripheral literature is indispensable in shaping global literature. Beyond its literary implications, the book identifies the political significance inherent in such reverse translation endeavors. It suggests that the translation of Chinese literature holds notable political interest for the Chinese government, which aims to reshape China's image and bolster the nation's soft power through literary translation.

This work will be an essential read to students and scholars of translation studies, comparative literature, and Chinese studies.

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Contemporary Chinese Novels in Translation since 1978

Literary Voices from the Periphery

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1 Introduction

Introduction

The founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 informed the character of subsequent Chinese literature, leading to the birth of a contemporary literary landscape that reflected the new political, economic, and cultural system. From 1949 until the end of the Cultural Revolution (1976), literature buttressed the ideology of the socio-economic system and the power structure of China. This political intent narrowed the scope and subdued the creative spirit, inhibiting the development of Chinese literature during this period. After the Cultural Revolution, the veil concealing the ideological emancipation movement was lifted. Gradually, the drive for creation, interpretation, and criticism within literature gained full momentum. Once the policy that "literature serve politics" was discarded, literature was able to regain its autonomy from political doctrine. A new people-oriented literary system was progressively rebuilt, recovering the original aesthetic properties of literature. In this increasingly more relaxed and open atmosphere, literary writing became colorful and vibrant, literary creation expanded greatly, and a variety of literary methods were innovated, with personal rather than solely political value judgments gradually embraced.

The contemporary Chinese literature studied in this book dates from the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, with the beginning of the period of reform and opening up. The contemporary literary narrative examined here has inherited some literary writing traditions from the past, and combined them with separation and innovation, creating a diverse and broad literary picture and cultural vision. Novel genres, which range from scar literature, reform literature, literature of the educated youth, root-seeking literature, avant-garde literature, female literature, local literature, and popular literature to the Internet literature that has emerged in the new century, jointly contribute to a new literary and life experience.

This book begins by discussing the literary reality since the reform and opening up of China, in acknowledgment of the fact that the rapid changes within China have attracted global attention and interest. Contemporary Chinese novels, as a chief literary form rooted in current Chinese society, convey life, thoughts, and emotions in a way that can assist readers in other countries to understand China,

making them an important contributor to world literature. A well-known allegorical theory of third-world literature asserts:

> All third-world texts are necessarily, I want to argue, allegorical, and in a very specific way: They are to be read as what I will call national allegories, even when, or perhaps I should say, particularly when their forms develop out of predominantly Western machineries of representation, such as the novel.
>
> (Fredric 1997, 523)

The national allegories embedded in Chinese literature portray the unique emotional experiences and survivalist sentiment of the nation-state and its populace. Simultaneously, they reflect the unique values and locus of Chinese culture and image, diversifying world literature at political, aesthetic, and cultural levels, offering an indispensable imaginary contribution to the community of world literature.

However, on the world stage, Chinese literature is often denigrated and distorted, obscuring its unique features, qualities, and emotions. Against this backdrop, the role of translation in acculturating Chinese literature becomes evident, as it is the production, circulation, and reception of translated texts that shape the image and status of a nation's literature overseas. Certainly,

> The interests that bind the community through a translation are not simply focused on the source text, but reflected in the receiving values, beliefs, and representations that translator inscribes in it. … In the case of source texts that have achieved canonical status in an institution, a translation becomes the site of interpretive communities that may support or challenge current canons and interpretations, prevailing standards and ideologies.
>
> (Venuti 2000, 194)

Thus, translations of Chinese literature have become a key medium through which the world reads China, offering tangible insights with which to imagine its changing character.

Given the above, it is clearly time to pose some critical questions: What are the challenges encountered by contemporary Chinese novels serving as mirrors of China's cultural landscape and national image in regard to their translation and dissemination overseas? What attitude should be adopted to navigate the cognitive expectations of foreign readers? How should Chinese literature be effectively promoted as a unique and important facet of world literature? These questions underscore that translation is never simply an objective act of artistic recreation or the transfer of texts and techniques; rather, it is an attempt by one culture to influence, integrate with, and transform another. It constitutes an important component of any country's cultural diplomacy. Indeed, translation can play a significant positive role in constructing a nation's international image and enhancing its soft power.

Therefore, it is the aim of this book to review and critique the translation of contemporary Chinese novels in the English-speaking world during the 40 years of reform and opening up. At the beginning of the new era, self-driven propositional

translation made it difficult for Chinese literature to truly achieve overseas dissemination. Moreover, due to the abundance of cultural positions, mixed motives for translation, and the various influences of egotism and prejudice from outside the country, contemporary Chinese novels were typically shrouded in an anxiety of unacceptability, making it difficult to construct an accurate and complete literary image. However, China's multiple and continuous translation efforts, Mo Yan's winning of the Nobel Prize for Literature, and the acclamation of works such as *Wolf Totem* and *The Three-Body Problem* afforded Chinese literature a louder voice, leading to the rebirth of novels explicating China's unique local experiences and social realities in entirely different cultural contexts, which accelerated the integration of local cultural values and aesthetic orientations into world literature, accruing more recognition from the Western world.

This book studies, in chronological order, the English translations of contemporary Chinese novels and interprets their cultural purposes, and translation forms, as well as the cultural effects and influences of translation activities in different cultural spaces of the times. Translation is a complex and multidimensional act, not only influenced by political, economic, cultural, and academic factors but also subject to the axis of power, molding to align with changes in social space. The agents involved in translation activities are equally complex and diverse, including not only the translator, but also the original author, the target audience, and the multiple patrons who influence and even manipulate the translation (including state authorities and publishing houses). The translation of contemporary Chinese novels into English is attributable to source-initiated translation programs on the one hand, and to the target-initiated translation attempts by English-speaking countries on the other, each with its own clear cultural agenda. Therefore, this act is subject to the constraints and influences of many factors, including the social and cultural contexts and readers' expectations. Its concepts and practices not only reflect the perceived self-image of the source country but also influence the construction of that country's international image.

Besides elucidating the complexities surrounding translation from different angles and at different levels, this book also focuses on the internal operation mechanism, laws, and characteristics of translation per se. Moreover, judgments and criticisms of the translation process and the forms of the translated texts are also at the core of translation studies. The motives for selecting the original texts, the operation process of translation strategies, the mechanisms of text transfer and translation production, and the review of literary aesthetics, linguistic judgment, and sociocultural values of the translated text together comprise any examination of the essence of literary translation. In other words, to explore the complex and elevated proposition of literary translation, we must not only combine macro-cultural studies and micro-textual studies to develop an omni-dimensional insight. We must also attain a fuller understanding of the social context, to witness its growth, flourishment, decline, or obstacles in the light of history, as a way to discover how literary works adapt to different cultural soils, and to learn the role of the various elements involved, such as subject, content, channel, and effect. Therefore, the study of this proposition must consider the three dimensions of space, time, and practice. In the

spatial dimension, we study the contexts and status of English translations of contemporary Chinese novels in the world literary landscape, as well as their impact on and interaction with Chinese literature and the target literature and culture. In the time dimension, we explore the evolving path of this translation scheme over the past four decades and propose suggestions for its future development. Meanwhile, in the practice dimension, we take a closer look at the objectives, strategies, models, and effects of translation, to determine what can be taken from this study.

After over 40 years of remarkable growth, China has adopted a fresh outlook in all areas. The rest of the world has borne witness to the country's transitions and its changing image over time. The writing and translation of contemporary novels have become an important channel through which to disseminate China's cultural values and spirit to the world, to assert its identity, develop its image, and attain a stronger voice on the international stage.

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2 Chinese Novels in English Translation

A Diachronic Overview

Introduction

When examining Chinese literature in the years following the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, three specific periods are considered: Seventeen-Year Literature (1949–1966), Cultural Revolution Literature (1966–1976), and Reform and Opening-up Literature (1978–present). The works that date to these periods have been instrumental in both representing and supporting national evolution and social change, by offering differing points of view and unique ways of perceiving and writing about the world.

This book aims to diachronically investigate English translations of contemporary Chinese novels during the Reform and Opening-up period. Over the past 40+ years, innumerable Chinese novels have been written and published, ranging from avant-garde works that defy traditional literary norms, to realist and surrealist works that offer insights into deep humanistic concerns and profound reflections on society, and popular works intended principally for readers' pleasure. As a result of translation, these works have enriched the English-speaking literary world. Chinese novels from the past four decades are frequently categorized as "novels of the 1980s," "novels of the 1990s," "novels of the 21st century," and "novels of the new era." To achieve a comprehensive understanding of their translation, it is essential to construct a coherent narrative of these decades based on the distinct features of each period. Moreover, the "novels of the 1980s" and the "novels of the 1990s" should be further delineated with clearer timelines, taking into account the developmental stages and the evolving nature of literary translation.

This book adopts the major events in China's opening-up process as its timeline. First, it accepts 1978 as the logical starting point for the development of contemporary Chinese literature since the reform and opening up. The Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), held at the end of 1978, set the course for ideological emancipation. This led to a transformation of Chinese society echoed in the literature of the time. Literary and artistic creation was no longer subject to excessive political intervention, leading to a return to emphasis on the aesthetic nature of literature and art. This led to the emancipation and diversity of literary and artistic creation in the ensuing 1980s, resulting in historic developments in Chinese literature.

To further classify this period in line with historical events, the first stage of contemporary Chinese novels in English translation should be seen as from 1978, when the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CPC was held, to 1991 when China opened up more widely to the outside world and its literature and literary translation became more aesthetic and less constrained by ideology. The second stage, spanned from 1992 to 2000, and started with Deng Xiaoping's southern tour speech in 1992. This phase witnessed a progressively accelerated opening-up of China, with novels reflecting the course of China's modernization and its transformation of the societal landscape accordingly. The third stage, from 2001 to 2012, was marked by China's accession to the WTO. In this new period of comprehensive reform, China transitioned from experimenting in selected areas, to passively acquiescing to the international situation, to proactively participating in the international community as it deepened its reform and opening-up strategy. Corresponding to the times, novel writing and translation became more dynamic and innovative during this stage.

The current and fourth stage, from 2013 to the present, started with the convening of the 18th National Congress of the CPC. Held at the end of 2012, this meeting marked the beginning of a new era for China, and as this book will also show translation activities adapted accordingly. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) proposed in 2013 is an innovative concept where, through its actions, China is leading international discourse, gradually establishing a platform for Chinese culture to "go global." Since 2013, China has begun to fight for a larger corner of the Western-dominated world's literature, moving toward setting a stage from which it will be able to take the lead on more issues (Wang 2015, 19–22).

The diachronic division of China's opening-up strategy is a key component of China Studies. Thus, the above division into four stages takes into account major political meetings, strategic thinking, and the plans of state leaders, as well as key milestones in China's opening-up process. The English translations of Chinese novels during these four stages represent the different characteristics of these times and bear witness to the historical process of Chinese literature going global and becoming integrated into world literature.

The contemporary Chinese novels translated into English take two major forms: One is the independent book, which is a single novel published and distributed by a publisher to English-speaking countries; and the other is the anthology, comprising several stories selected by sinologists and included in a collection of modern and contemporary Chinese literature. These forms have been published under two types of translation initiatives, namely, source-initiated translation and target-initiated translation. The former refers to the promotion of Chinese works abroad through Chinese Literature and Panda Books, published by the Chinese Literature Press and the Foreign Languages Press under state patronage. The latter refers to the translation and publication of contemporary Chinese novels by publishers in the English-speaking world, which is a major channel for building the international influence of Chinese literature. This chapter provides a diachronic overview of Chinese novels published in both independent books and anthologies translated during the four stages since 1978.

SECTION 1: NOVELS SELECTED FOR TRANSLATION

According to the *Chinese Dictionary*, an independent book can be in any of the following formats:

> (1) a book printed and published separately, as distinct from a series of books or a book attached to other books to circulate; (2) a separate printed copy of a work that first appeared as part of a newspaper or magazine after collation and compilation; (3) a separate printed copy of a work extracted from a newspaper or from a set of books.
>
> (Luo 1989, 3826)

This book studies contemporary Chinese novels in English translation in all of the above three formats.

The literary value of a work is not the only criterion by which it is selected and translated. The power and will of the state, organization and manipulation by official institutions, and the status, literary attributes, and political messages of the original in the context of the source culture can all influence and potentially even determine the selection, translation, and publication of the source text during a given period.

Novels from 1978 to 1991 (the First Stage)

After the end of the Cultural Revolution, the domestic and international social environment in China underwent drastic changes. In 1978, China began to adopt a policy of reform and opening up, and the following year China and the United States established diplomatic relations to instigate the exchange of ideas and cultures between China and the West. In 1983, it was proposed in "Ten Basic Lessons for the Publication and Distribution of Foreign-language Books and Periodicals since the Founding of the People's Republic of China," a document published by the China International Communications Group (CICG), that

> We must clear away the grave consequences of the "leftist" guidelines aimed at "promoting a world revolution" and resolutely implement the guideline of "publicizing the New China honestly, colorfully, vividly and as timely as possible," but at the same time we must be cautious of the tendency to neglect political propaganda.
>
> (Wang 2014, 80)

This pragmatic resolution came to serve as both a call for action and guidance for the English translation of novels at this time.

Translations reflecting the war and revolutionary life, and conveying the revolutionary consciousness of the people's liberation, accounted for a large share of the publications during this period. Meanwhile, however, emphasis was also placed on translating works that introduced the Chinese social reality to the world,

disseminating the aesthetic values of Chinese literature, covering a number of representative writers and literary works discussing a variety of subjects. Meanwhile, overseas publishers took the initiative by translating and publishing Chinese novels and other works reflecting Chinese society and the national development of China, attracting attention from abroad.

During this period, more than 30 novels in translation were published by Chinese Literature Press and Foreign Languages Press. The themes raised mainly concerned China's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, the War of Liberation, and policies and people's lives in the early years of New China. Examples of these include a series of works by Sun Li (孙犁) depicting the fighting life of people in central Hebei Province during the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, *Sun Shines over the Sanggan River* (太阳照在桑干河上) (Foreign Languages Press, 1984) by Ding Ling (丁玲), reflecting conflicts among peasants during the land reform, and *The Broken Betrothal* (解约) (Chinese Literature Press, 1981) by Gao Xiaosheng (高晓声), a novel about modern marriage that popularized the new Marriage Law of China.

This period also witnessed the translation and publication of critical and reflective works from other literary genres, such as *Melody in Dreams* (弦上的梦) (Chinese Literature Press, 1983), a scar literature work by Zong Pu (宗璞) reflecting intellectual life in the historical context of the Cultural Revolution; *Butterfly and Other Stories* (蝴蝶) (Chinese Literature Press, 1983), a stream-of-consciousness masterpiece by Wang Meng (王蒙) about the fate of intellectuals in the current times; *A Small Town Called Hibiscus* (芙蓉镇) (Chinese Literature Press, 1990) by Gu Hua (古华), reflecting the lived experience of rural people amid social transformation; and *The Obsessed* (伏羲伏羲) by Liu Heng (刘恒), a narrative about love and humanity in a feudal patriarchal society, of which its film adaptation *Ju Dou* (菊豆) was nominated for the Best Foreign Language Film by the Academy in 1991, leading to the subsequent publication of the translated version *The Obsessed* (Chinese Literature Press, 1991). Breaking away from the simple paradigm of literary didacticism and the set pattern of revolutionary discourse, these works describe the real life of peasants, intellectuals, and ordinary people, and the social realities they have lived through in different periods since the War of Resistance, aiming to present a realistic, vivid, and incisive literary narrative of Chinese society and people at a given time. They contain both critiques of and reflections on the times. Although the number of works translated during this period is relatively limited, the use of translation to show the world China's many aspects was seen as a positive trend.

The majority of the translated novels produced and distributed by foreign publishers focused on the trauma of, and reflections about, the Cultural Revolution, such as *Stones of the Wall* (人啊, 人) (Joseph, 1985) by Dai Houying (戴厚英), self-reflection by intellectuals; as well as the reform literature of *Leaden Wings* (沉重的翅膀) (Virago Press, 1987), and the critical novel *As Long as Nothing Happens, Nothing Will* (无事发生就好) (Virago Press, 1988) by Zhang Jie (张洁).

At the beginning of the reform and opening-up era, despite cultural exchanges between China and the rest of the world gradually becoming more active,

manipulation by the state's political forces remained dominant. Translation activities were overseen by state institutions, and the majority of the translated works were partly intended as propaganda. However, works reflecting literary and social realities were also translated, chiefly as introspections about the Cultural Revolution exploring basic human aspirations and dilemmas.

Novels from 1992 to 2000 (the Second Stage)

Compared with the previous period, the number of novels translated into English increased significantly at this time, with state institutions no longer the dominant player, with a clear downward trend in its publication of translated works. There was, however, a significant increase in the number of translations published by overseas presses, which accounted for 60% of all publications, and was indicative of the growing international attention toward, and interest in, China.

Of the 60 or so translations published during this period, nearly half were published by the Chinese Literature Press and the Foreign Languages Press. The literary works, fiction and nonfiction, published by these three publishers encompasses a wide range of subjects, including educated youth, women, ethnic minorities, history, anticorruption, reform, and romance, reflecting China past and present. Among these are *Metropolis* (都市风流) (Chinese Literature Press, 1992) by Sun Li (孙力) and Yu Xiaohui (余小惠), characterizing the complexities of urban reform; *Oh! Blue Bird* (啊！青鸟) (Chinese Literature Press, 1993) by Lu Xing'er (陆星儿), describing the love and married life of educated youths after returning to the city; and *The Jade King: History of a Chinese Muslim Family* (穆斯林的葬礼) (Chinese Literature Press, 1997) by Huo Da (霍达), depicting the ups and downs of the Hui family. At the same time, a number of films adapted from Chinese novels won international attention and acclaim, leading to their publication in English. For example, the film *The Story of Qiu Ju* (秋菊打官司), adapted from the novel *The Wan Family's Lawsuit* (万家诉讼) by Chen Yuanbin (陈源斌), won several awards including the Most Popular Film Award at the Vancouver International Film Festival, resulting in the publication of *The Wan Family's Lawsuit* (Chinese Literature Press, 1992) and *The Story of Qiu Ju* (Chinese Literature Press, 1995), both of which were English translations of the original novel.

These translations paint a picture of translation as initiated by Chinese publishers. Subject matter differed from those previously selected, covering officialdom, reform, and romance. These realistic works reflected social development and change, and the lifestyles of people from all walks of life in the midst of the reform and opening-up process, revealing China's intention to show the West the reality of Chinese society through the medium of literature. The translations of the original novels, based on film adaptations, reflected the publishers' attention to the market and their willingness to grow with it, as the popularity of these films attracted a large number of potential readers with the result that the market for the publication of the original novels followed in hot pursuit.

When translating Chinese literature, overseas publishers focus on the literary value of the works on the one hand and aim to gratify the curiosity of their target

readers about China and Chinese culture on the other. That is, if overseas publishers take the initiative to translate Chinese literature, this may partly be due to a conscious intention to understand and study China. However, the international community's desire to understand and study China at this stage was often influenced by stereotypes and driven by curiosity, so the Chinese subjects of interest to readers were frequently distinctly topical, that is, politics and sex were their main areas of interest in Chinese literature, and such literary interests meant that translated works dealing with both subjects were favored by overseas publishers. Famous writers and works translated at this stage include Jia Pingwa's (贾平凹) *The Earthen Gate* (土门) (Valley Press, 1996), describing the urbanization of villages; and *The Castle* (古堡) (York Press, 1997), reflecting the impact of reform and opening up on grassroots cadres; Mo Yan's (莫言) *The Garlic Ballads* (天堂蒜薹之歌) (London: Hamish Hamilton/New York: Penguin Books, 1995), describing the farmers' resistance to the government; Su Tong's (苏童) *Rice* (米) (William Morrow, 1995; Scribner, 2000), portraying the tangled and seamy side of human nature during the Cultural Revolution; and Wang Shuo's (王朔) *Playing for the Thrills* (玩的就是心跳) (William Morrow, 1998), depicting the Cultural Revolution.

Other literary works focused on Chinese women, especially those dealing with "sex," which received special attention and were translated, including Feng Jicai's *The Three-Inch Golden Lotus* (三寸金莲) (University of Hawaii Press, 1994), focusing on the feudal custom of foot-binding; Su Tong's *Raise the Red Lantern* (妻妾成群) (William Morrow, 1993), depicting the miserable fate of women in a feudal context; Gu Hua's *Virgin Widow* (贞女) (University of Hawaii Press, 1996), showing the love life of women under the repression of a feudal patriarchy; and Zong Pu's *The Everlasting Rock* (三生石) (Three Continents Press, 1998), a novella about love in the midst of disaster and misery.

As mentioned above, overseas publishers also took the opportunities afforded by the award-winning films to produce translations of related novels. For example, Mo Yan's 红高粱家族, which expresses the vitality and national spirit of the rural people during the War of Resistance against Japan, was published as *Red Sorghum: A Novel of China* (Penguin Books, 1993), after the film *Red Sorghum* (红高粱) won the Golden Bear at the 1988 Berlin International Film Festival; Su Tong's 妻妾成群 was adapted as the film *Raise the Red Lantern* (大红灯笼高高挂), and this literal translation of the film title was used for the English version of the novel (William Morrow, 1993); and Liu Heng's 黑的雪, which presents a reflection on fate, was also translated into English and published under the title *Black Snow* (Atlantic Monthly Press, 1993), after the film *Black Snow* (本命年) won the Silver Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival.

The growing number of translations initiated by overseas publishers reflects the fact that Chinese literature was gradually attracting the attention of English-speaking readers. However, as can be seen from the books referred to above, most of the literary works produced by overseas publishers have a "Chinese flavor" as favored by Western readers, and the subjects tend to be political, sharing stories about the Cultural Revolution or the feudal era and portraying a stereotypical Chinese society to Western readers.

Novels from 2001 to 2012 (the Third Stage)

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the English-speaking world has become increasingly interested in the unique voices and themes represented in Chinese literature, and has brought the realization that contemporary Chinese works of fiction translated into English "aren't representative of the diversity of Chinese writing today" (Leese 2013). Eric Abrahamsen, the founder of Paper Republic, states that the original texts selected for translation "can be subject to the preferences of the publishing industry," but that publishers have become "keen to present a broad picture [of Chinese literature] rather than just picking individual writers as the direction of their efforts" (Cornell 2010). Compared with the 1980s and 1990s, the number of novels in English translation has risen significantly, and their diversity has also increased. The translation of Chinese literature not only continued the previous standard, but also broadened the boundaries of literary themes, which were no longer confined to scar literature, local literature, and revolutionary literature. Overseas publishers now account for a greater proportion of texts. In terms of writers and works translated; in addition to texts by Su Tong, Mo Yan, Wang Anyi (王安忆), Zhang Jie, and other mainstream writers who have long received attention overseas, works by domestic bestselling authors such as Wei Hui (卫慧), Mian (棉棉), Anne Baby (安妮宝贝), Chun Shu (春树), and Jiang Rong (姜戎) were also translated. Thus, the novels translated in this period were less ideologically charged and more aesthetically diversified, breaking free from the themes of politics and sex.

During this period, a number of works by well-known authors were translated. For example, six of Su Tong's works were translated and published, including *My Life as Emperor* (我的帝王生涯) (Hyperion Press, 2005), a novel about a deposed emperor; *Binu and the Great Wall: The Myth of Meng* (碧奴) (Canongate Books, 2007), a novel inspired by the ancient Chinese story of Meng Jiangnu (孟姜女) bringing down the Great Wall with her tears; and *The Boat to Redemption* (河岸) (Black Swan, 2011), which won the Man Asian Literary Prize.

Six of Mo Yan's works were translated, including *The Republic of Wine* (酒国) (Arcade Publishing, 2001), a satirical novel on Chinese officialdom; *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* (丰乳肥臀) (London: Methuen/New York: Arcade Publishing, 2004); *Life and Death are Wearing Me Out* (生死疲劳) (Arcade Publishing, 2008), which won the 2009 Newman Prize for Chinese Literature; *Change* (变) (Seagull Books, 2010); and *Sandalwood Death* (檀香刑) (University of Oklahoma Press, 2012).

Four of Yu Hua's works were translated, including *To Live: A Novel* (活着) (Anchor Books, 2003); *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant* (许三观卖血记) (Anchor Books, 2004); *Cries in the Drizzle: A Novel* (在细雨中呼喊) (Anchor Books, 2007); and *Brothers* (兄弟) (Pantheon, 2009). In addition, Yan Lianke's *Dream of Ding Village* (丁庄梦) (Grove Press, 2011) was also translated.

Chinese writers also began to make their mark in a number of international literary awards or competitions. For example, *A Dictionary of Maqiao* (马桥词典) (Columbia University Press, 2005) by Han Shaogong (韩少功), written in the form of dictionary entries, won the 2011 Newman Prize for Chinese Literature; *Wolf*

Totem (狼图腾) (New York: Penguin Books, 2008) by Jiang Rong, and *Three Sisters* (玉米) (Houghton Mifflin, 2010) by Bi Feiyu (毕飞宇), won the Man Asian Literary Prize successively, earning the authors a literary reputation in the English-speaking world.

During this period, a growing number of previously untranslated works came to the attention of readers in the English-speaking world. Some of these influential works include *Red Poppies* (尘埃落定) (Houghton Mifflin, 2002) by A Lai (阿来), a novel about Tibetan customs and culture; *Nanjing 1937: A Love Story* (1937 年的爱情) (Columbia University Press, 2003) by Ye Zhaoyan (叶兆言), a record of emotional entanglements during the war period; *Leave Me Alone, A Novel of Chengdu* (成都, 今夜请将我遗忘) (Make-Do Publishing/Allen & Unwin, 2009) by Murong Xuecun (慕容雪村), a work describing love and married life among those born in the 1970s; and *Trees Without Wind* (无风之树) (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012) by Li Rui (李锐), a novel about rural life during the Cultural Revolution.

In terms of novels by women writers, there was a steady flow of translations of works by established writers, such as *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow: A Novel of Shanghai* (长恨歌) (Columbia University Press, 2008) by Wang Anyi, which won the fifth Mao Dun Literary Prize (茅盾文学奖). Moreover, Can Xue (残雪) is another writer to have received sustained attention from the English-speaking world, and her works in English include *Blue Light in the Sky and Other Stories* (天空中的蓝光) (New Directions, 2006), *Five Spice Street* (五香街) (Yale University Press, 2009), and *Vertical Motion* (垂直运动) (Open Letter, 2011).

In addition to several female writers gaining literary fame abroad, such as Wang Anyi and Can Xue, other important female writers also came into the awareness of Western readers. For example, the works of Tie Ning (铁凝), the president of the China Writers Association, attracted interest from foreign readers, and her masterpiece *The Bathing Women* (大浴女) (Scribner, 2012) was introduced to some English-speaking countries. Moreover, a number of emerging women writers and their works received attention, including Wei Hui's *Shanghai Baby* (上海宝贝) (Simon & Schuster, 2001; Constable & Robinson, 2003), and *Marrying Buddha* (我的禅) (Constable & Robinson, 2005); Mian Mian's *Candy* (糖) (Back Bay Books, 2005), about adolescent restlessness and rebellion; Chun Sue's *Beijing Doll* (北京娃娃) (Abacu/Riverhead Books, 2004) depicting the confusion and bewilderment of post-1980s girls; *A Private Life* (私人生活) (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004) by Chen Ran (陈染), an avant-garde novel exploring the inner world of intellectual women; and *Northern Girls* (北妹) (Penguin China, 2012) by Sheng Keyi (盛可以), focusing on the lives of migrant workers in the city.

As a wider range of themes were translated, contemporary Chinese novels introduced to the West no longer included critical readings about politics or sociology with a "Chinese flavor." This trend served as evidence of Chinese literature gradually gaining attention within the Western literary system and also meant English-speaking readers could access a more realistic and broader picture of Chinese literature and Chinese society, leading to an increasingly comprehensive and expanded perception.

Novels from 2013 to the Present (the Fourth Stage)

Under the theme of peace and development, international relations were no longer merely centered on traditional hard power, but more on soft power derived from culture, political values, and foreign policy. The Belt and Road Initiative, proposed in 2013, is a strategic plan that served as an important manifestation of China's innovative concept and vision for moving into a new era. It serves as a way to practice China's new type of international relations and compete for a louder voice in the international community. It also became a platform for the country to enhance its soft power and widely disseminate its culture overseas. As an important component of culture, in addition to its aesthetic value, literature can also educate and enlighten readers. Being a form of soft power itself, literature can help to amplify a country's voice in the cultural field and build an international image of a country with an advanced culture. Consequently, the creation, translation, and dissemination of literature became an important boost when crossing cultural barriers, promoting cultural diplomacy, and implementing the Belt and Road strategy, thereby attracting unprecedented attention and support. Since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, under the coordination of the State Council Information Office, the General Administration of Press and Publication, the Publicity Department of the Central Committee of the CPC, the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Culture, and other ministries and commissions have highlighted that institutional support is provided for literary works "going global" through a number of projects, including the China Book International Project, the Classic China International Publishing Project and the Contemporary Chinese Works Translation Project, as well as the Silk Road Books Project, approved by the Publicity Department at the end of 2014. These projects have funded a number of collaborations between domestic publishers and foreign experts and publishers. Chairmen, senior publishers, and sinologists from international publishing groups were employed as consultants, and with the effective implementation of the Chinese literature "going global" strategy, the translation of local novels into English took on a brand new trend.

In the current context of increasingly frequent exchanges, Chinese literature is engaging ever more frequently in dialogue with the rest of the world. In 2012, Mo Yan was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, a landmark event in the international acceptance of Chinese literature. Since then, other works by Mo Yan have been translated, such as *POW!* (四十一炮) in 2012, *Sandalwood Death* (檀香刑) in 2012, *Frog* (蛙) in 2015, and *Radish* (透明的红萝卜) in 2016.

Other writers, who are now known internationally include Su Tong, Yu Hua, Jia Pingwa, Yan Lianke, Liu Zhenyun (刘震云) and Can Xue. Su Tong's works include *Another Life for Women* (另一种妇女生活) (Simon & Schuster, 2016), a collection of over 20 stories; *Three-Lamp Lantern* (三盏灯) (Simon & Schuster, 2016), a collection of stories and short stories; and *Petulia's Rouge Tin* (红粉) (Penguin Specials, 2018), a full-length novel. Yu Hua's works include *The Seventh Day* (第七天) (Vintage, 2015), which shows suffering throughout the seven days immediately following an ordinary person's death; and *The April 3rd Incident* (四月三日事件) (Pantheon, 2018), which focuses on the inner world and

growth of a teenager. Jia Pingwa's works not only convey a strong local flavor from the northwest of China but also often reflect grand historical changes as manifest in subtle social phenomena. In the new era, Jia's *Ruined City* (废都) (University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), *The Lantern Bearer* (带灯) (CN Times, 2017), *Happy Dreams* (高兴) (Amazon Crossing, 2017) and other important works been published overseas. Yan Lianke's works include *Lenin's Kisses* (受活) (Grove Press, 2013), *Four Books* (四书) (Grove Press, 2016), *The Explosion Chronicles* (炸裂志) (Grove Press, 2016), *The Years, Months, Days: Two Novellas* (年月日) (Grove Press, 2016), and *The Day the Sun Died* (日熄) (Grove Press, 2018), of which the English versions of *Lenin's Kisses*, *Four Books* and *The Explosion Chronicles* made Yan a three-time nominee for the Man Booker International Prize. With the international distribution of movies and cultural products, several of Liu Zhenyun's novels have also been translated overseas, including *Cell Phone* (手机) (Merwin Asia, 2011), *I Did Not Kill My Husband* (我不是潘金莲) (Arcade Publishing, 2014), *The Cook, the Crook, and the Real Estate Tycoon* (我叫刘跃进) (Arcade Publishing, 2015), and *Remembering 1942* (温故一九四二) (Arcade Publishing, 2016), among others. Can Xue's works include *The Last Lover* (最后的情人) (Yale University Press, 2014) (winner of the Best Translated Book Award of 2015) *Frontier* (边疆) (Open Letter, 2017), and *Love in the New Millennium* (新世纪爱情故事) (Yale University Press, 2018). Can Xue was nominated for the Neustadt International Prize for Literature in 2015 and was longlisted for The Independent Foreign Fiction Prize, making a significant contribution to respect for Chinese literature in the international literary domain.

In terms of content, historical, ethnic and realist narratives continued to be the mainstream, such as in *Under the Hawthorn Tree* (山楂树之恋) (Virago Press, 2013) by Ai Mi (艾米), which tells a love story about a pair of educated youths during the Cultural Revolution; A. Lai's Tibetan heroic epic *The Song of King Gesar* (格萨尔王) (Canongate Books, 2013); *The Last Quarter of the Moon* (额尔古纳河右岸) (Harvill Secker, 2014) by Chi Zijian (迟子建), which describes survival and centuries-old vicissitudes of the Evenki tribe, a minority group in northeastern China; and Bi Feiyu's *Massage* (推拿) (Penguin China, 2014), which depicts self-improvement, self-love, and self-esteem among the underprivileged.

In the process of translating Chinese literature into English, especially in the selection of texts, attention was also paid to displaying China in a multidimensional, multilevel, and multisubject manner. Popular literary genres, once considered non-mainstream literature, such as science fiction, suspense, detective, *xuanhuan* (fantasy), and *wuxia* (martial arts), began to attract the attention of foreign readers.

Science fiction is one of the most successful literary genres to venture abroad in the new era, with works by Liu Cixin (刘慈欣) being the most popular. Liu's *The Three-Body Problem* trilogy, including *The Three-Body Problem* (三体) (Tor Books, Macmillan, 2014), *The Dark Forest* (黑暗森林) (Tor Books, Macmillan, 2015), and *Death's End* (死神永生) (Tor Books, Macmillan, 2016), is widely regarded as a milestone in Chinese science fiction literature and has achieved great success in foreign book markets. The English translation of the first book, *The*

Three-Body Problem, won the 2015 Hugo Award for Best Novel, the first time that a translation has won this highly prestigious international sci-fi award. The book was also nominated for the 2014 Nebula Award, the 2015 Prometheus Award for Best Novel, the Locus Award for Science Fiction, and the John W. Campbell Memorial Award for Best Science Fiction. In addition, *Ball Lightning* (球状闪电) (Tor Books, Macmillan), another full-length science fiction novel by Liu, was published in America in 2017.

Other genres translated into foreign languages during this period include *Dark Prospects: Search for the Buried Bomber* (大漠苍狼) (Gabriel Ascher, 2013), an adventure novel by Xu Lei (徐磊, aka 南派三叔); *1988: I Want To Talk with the World* (1988：我想和这个世界谈谈) (Amazon Crossing, 2015), a road trip novel by Han Han (韩寒); *Decoded* (解密) (Allen Lane/Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2014; Picador, 2015) by Mai Jia (麦家), a blend of spy thriller, historical legend and mathematical mystery; and his *In the Dark* (暗算) (Penguin China, 2015). Of these, *Decoded* was the first novel by a modern Chinese author to be included as a Penguin Modern Classic. Other novels include *Beijing, Beijing* (北京, 北京) (Amazon Crossing, 2015), part of the *Beijing* trilogy by Feng Tang (冯唐); *Murder in Dragon City* (第十一根手指) (Amazon Crossing, 2016), a criminal suspense novel by Qin Ming (秦明); *The City of Sand* (鬼吹灯之精绝古城) (Delacorte Press, 2017), a grave-robbing novel by Tian Xia Ba Chang (天下霸唱); and *Legend of the Condor Heroes* (射雕英雄传) (MacLehose Press, 2018), a martial arts novel by Jin Yong (金庸). It is also noteworthy that although few translations of Chinese online literature, which emerged by virtue of new media, have been formally published, these works were also translated by a large number of Chinese and foreign translators in the cyberspace sphere. Examples of these include *Stellar Transformations* (星辰变), a cultivation novel serialized on the overseas English translation platform Wuxiaworld since 2014; *The King's Avatar* (全职高手), an e-sports novel serialized on the website Gravity Tales since 2015, and *Against the Gods* (逆天邪神), a *xuanhuan* novel serialized on the web novel platform Novel Updates since 2015.

Overall, we can see that a broad platform for spreading Chinese literature was effectively established during this period, in part due to new national strategies such as the Belt and Road Initiative. Whether through macro-policy orientation or project-based international cooperation, English translations of contemporary Chinese novels play a key role in setting agendas and facilitating multidimensional, diversified and multilevel expressions and interpretations of Chinese attitudes and Chinese wisdom. Simultaneously, the selection of texts reflects greater global awareness and contemporary relevance. The range of selected works has expanded from traditional narratives of pure literature to diverse literary genres. Increasingly, literary works that both capture interest in overseas readers and reflect the characteristics of the times are being introduced to the rest of the world.

Conclusion

This section has reviewed the practice of translating contemporary Chinese novels into English since the reform and opening-up period, affording readers a realistic panoramic view of the introduction of Chinese novels to the English-speaking

world. Through examining the diachronic evolution of genres and channels of novel translation, we revealed that state ideology, national policy, and national strength overall are among the key factors influencing translation. With the advancement of political, economic, and cultural exchanges between China and the West, the practice of English translation from the initial to the fourth stage has become increasingly mature and that profound changes have been taking place in text types, translation approaches, output channels, and communication fields. Meanwhile, it is clear that ever greater numbers of readers at home and abroad are recognizing the unique charm and value of contemporary Chinese novels, as contemporary Chinese literature has begun to connect with the world taking its place as an important facet of world literature.

From the first stage, which was charged by ideology, to the fourth stage, which focused on communication and dialogue, both those domestic organizations responsible for literary translation and overseas publishing houses expended considerable efforts to introduce contemporary Chinese novels to the English-speaking world. From the initial self-focus to the initiative to set the agenda and participate in the construction of world literature, the practice of translating Chinese novels into English generally reflects the process of contemporary Chinese literature entering the world. The above review also provides an important reference point from which to describe translation anthologies, another form in which contemporary Chinese literature was communicated.

SECTION 2: ANTHOLOGIES SELECTED FOR TRANSLATION[1]

In addition to novels, translation anthologies are an important format for the presentation of translated literature. The English word "anthology" is derived from the Greek word "anthologia," which literally means a "collection of flowers." In the modern sense, an anthology is typically a collection of works selected by the anthologist from a country's literary repertoire, following predetermined criteria and assembled according to a particular logic, usually to suit a target audience. An anthology of translation is a special type of anthology. Armin Paul Frank, a professor at the University of Göttingen, defines it as "a collection of translated texts, often of a literary nature, that are assembled together" (Frank 2004, 14). Indeed, an anthology of translation is not simply a corpus of individual translations, but "the most impressive and enlightening form of cultural communication," and its "'arrangement' or 'assembly' of texts produces far greater value and significance than the sum of those that individual texts can do" (ibid.).

The selection of texts for an ideal anthology should consider first how representative the original works are of the history of literary development. The anthologist should strive to overcome their personal preferences and "pre-understandings,"[2] and so select works of significance in the history of literature, to convey to readers an authentic literary image of the source country. In practice, however, this is an unattainable ideal, because the anthologist themselves is a reader or a recipient of ideas in the first place, and so will always select works based on their

own knowledge of the literature of the source country. The anthologist's choice of original works may be linked to the status quo of the source literature as well as being closely related to their motivation in producing the compilation, that is, their perception of and attitude toward that literature, and the historical and cultural context in which they live. This means completed anthologies often present the source literature as the anthologist thinks best; consequently, "It's the editor's own book despite that it is a collection of poems by the ancients" (Zhong 1992, 469).

In compiling a translation anthology, the anthologist's aesthetic preferences, literary concepts, and stance toward the source country may be expected to influence their choices and arrangements proposed by writers and their works, and rewriting in this sense is common. Lu Xun (鲁迅) once asserted: "What is revealed in an anthology is often not the characteristics of the author, but the taste of the anthologist" (Lu 2005, 138). The selection and interpretation of texts is thus first a manifestation of literary reception. In China, anthologies are gradually being considered by researchers, but only a few of those compiled by famous scholars have been studied so far. *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* (W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), edited by Stephen Owen, and *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Chinese Literature* (Columbia University Press, 1996), co-edited by Joseph S. M. Lau and Howard Goldblatt, have received notable attention (Chen 2010; Gu 2010; Li and Xie 2016), but a large number of other anthologies have been barely studied. Studies of famous anthologies are of significance in their own right; however, if we limit ourselves to these, we tend to be one-sided in our perceptions and draw unconvincing conclusions, which may prevent us from intuiting the reality of the reception of contemporary Chinese literature abroad.

In summary, a chain of reception from author to anthologist and on to reader, linked by anthology, is formed. First, the process of compiling an anthology involves the anthologist objectifying their knowledge of the source literature. The selection of literary works, and the interpretation and reading of these works all reflect how familiar the anthologist is with the source texts. Second, in such instances, readers' reception of the original is a "secondary reception"; that is, the texts they are presented with result from the anthologist's reception. It is therefore important and necessary to summarize translation anthologies, as many readers get to know foreign literature through such anthologies, as they are often used as textbooks, lending them a unique discursive authority that makes them highly impactful to impressionable readers. That is to say, examining the history of the reception of a particular literature in another culture from the perspective of translation anthologies can help reveal the complex process and multidimensional agents of literary reception and interpretation. This section thus aims to investigate translation anthologies in contemporary Chinese literature published in the English-speaking world since the reform and opening up, in four stages.

Anthologies from 1978 to 1991 (the First Stage)

With the continuous deepening of cultural exchange between China and the world since 1978, the pace of introduction of Chinese literature to the English-speaking

world has accelerated significantly, and the number of translation anthologies of contemporary Chinese literature published in Britain and the United States has expanded noticeably. Between 1978 and 1991, a total of seventeen anthologies were published, representing more than the combined number published previously.

A distinctive feature of the anthologies of contemporary Chinese novels published in the United States in the first decade of the new period is that editorial teams were composed mainly of scholars of Chinese history, society, and politics, rather than Chinese literature. Such scholars include Perry Link, who studied Chinese social history under John K. Fairbank; Helen Siu, a professor of anthropology at Yale University; Lee Yee, a political critic and journalist, and Geremie R. Barme, a historian and cultural critic. The composition of editors during this period was closely linked to the historical context of the time. Specifically, before the mid-1980s, contemporary Chinese literature studies in the West were not pure literature studies, as they shared some characteristics with regional studies of politics and culture (Zhang 2016, 52). Disciplines such as history, sociology, and political science dominated regional studies, and literary texts attracted the attention of regional studies scholars, mainly because they could be used as "historical raw materials" to "know your enemies" (Link 1983, 4).

Beyond literary fiction and imagination, scholars viewed literary texts as "an accurate reflection of China's social, political and economic realities" (Lee 1983, 8). When academics compiled anthologies of Chinese literature, their focus was obviously not on the literature itself, as their main motivation was to use literary texts to demonstrate the validity and accuracy of their research findings. They valued literary texts more for their instrumental use in conveying their own view of China, and not their view of Chinese literature. In other words, the selection of texts in such anthologies was merely intended as a form of evidential support. This is apparent from the following three aspects: First, the anthologist would use paratexts to establish a "genuine" correspondence between the literary world and the real world. For example, in the introduction to *The New Realism: Writings from China after the Cultural Revolution* (Hippocrene Books, 1983), *Li Shunda Builds a House* (李顺大造屋), *Factory Director Qiao's Road to Take Office* (乔厂长上任记) and *General, You Can't Do That* (将军, 你不能这样做) were taken respectively as a basis for analyzing the "reality" of China's countryside, factories and officialdom. This type of interpretation, in Jeffrey C. Kinkley's view, was intended to convey to Western readers the impression that "Chinese literature in the new period was more concerned with social criticism than with literary value" (Kinkley 2006, 70).

Second, during this period, nonliterary texts, such as government documents, news reports, private letters, and personal interviews were also included in some anthologies of "literature." For example, five personal letters by Bai Hua (白桦), a writer criticized for his work *Portrait of a Fanatic* (苦恋), were included in *The New Realism*. Practices such as this blurred the line between fiction and reality, affirming the intent to use literary works as a way to present Chinese social and political realities.

Third, "realism" was used as a generic term for contemporary Chinese literature by several anthologists, such as "neo-realism," as referred to by Lee Yee and Helen

Siu, and "critical realism" referred to by Michael S. Duke. In fact, with the influx of foreign literary trends, the Chinese literary scene of the 1980s was not dominated solely by realism, but by both realism and modernism. It is not difficult to understand why anthologists classified works of different styles as "realism": "Realist" works can reflect the "reality" of a country more directly and effectively than literary works of other styles. Thus, in the unique context of the 1980s, with the exception of a few comprehensive anthologies designed to introduce as much recent Chinese literature as possible, for example, *Literature of the People's Republic of China* (Indiana University Press, 1980), many anthologies aimed to communicate the "reality" of China by means of literature. Among the various facets of China's reality, political reality was of high concern to anthologists, as evidenced by the tendency to politicize everything in their compilation of anthologies at that time.

In terms of text selection, there were limited comprehensive anthologies published during this period and the majority focused on specific themes, including "women," for example, *Born of the Same Root: Stories of Modern Chinese Women* (Indiana University Press, 1983); "countryside," for example, *Furrows: Peasants, Intellectuals, and the State* (Stanford University Press, 1990); "Western region," for example, *The Chinese Western: Short Fiction from Today's China* (Ballantine, 1988); and "science fiction," for example, *Science Fiction from China* (Praeger, 1989).

Specifically, *Born of the Same Root* contains 20 masterpieces by famous modern writers, such as Lao She (老舍) and Wu Zuxiang (吴组湘), with the intention of presenting readers with a complete picture of the tenacity and spirituality of Chinese women from the 1920s to the 1980s. *Furrows* contains more than twenty works by famous writers, such as Mao Dun (茅盾), Xiao Hong (萧红), Yang Jiang (杨绛), and Jia Pingwa, illustrating how Chinese intellectuals participated in the construction of the New China and attained self-awareness in the 20th century, as well as how they viewed the urban-rural dichotomy. *The Chinese Western: An Anthology of Short Fiction from Today's China* contains a number of works that reflect social life in the western region of China in the midst of development and changes in the New China, while *Science Fiction from China* focuses on the literary genre of science fiction.

However, in the seeming upsurge of multiple compilations, one category of anthologies was particularly eye-catching; that is, the anthologies of controversial works. These were always politically charged, with a focus on dissident writers and controversial works; for example, *A Young Man Comes to the Organization Department* (组织部来了个年轻人) by Wang Meng, and *Li Shunda Builds a House* (李顺大造屋) by Gao Xiaosheng.

By selecting and arranging the exhibits, "[anthologies] project an interpretation of a given field, make relations and values visible" (Essmann and Frank 1991, 66). Reviewing the Chinese literature in English translations of this period, Michael S. Duke said the ideal situation for selecting which novels to translate would in theory be, such that readers with a good appreciation of the arts select works of high linguistic art and translation value. Unfortunately, this ideal has so far been an exception rather than a common practice. The reality is that the intensive appearance of

anthologies of controversial works over a short period of time has affected target readers' perceptions of contemporary Chinese literature; that is, in Western readers' views, "Chinese literature in the new period was more concerned with social criticism than with literary value" (Kinkley 2006, 70). "Politics overrides literature" became an important yardstick for editors when selecting and interpreting contemporary Chinese literature. Consequently, works lacking in artistic value were published, leading contemporary Chinese literature to be labeled by some critics as "crude and unrefined" (Hsu 1983, vii). Once this perception established itself, it spread and remained accepted for some time. In fact, as Michael S. Duke himself later realized, there have been many novels and "technically innovative" works in Chinese literary circles since the new period (Duke 1985, 5), but such works were rarely included in the anthologies of the period (nor were Duke's own compilations). Perry Link, for his part, made it clear that although there were "many more important writers" in China at the time, he sought "a special focus on those popular and controversial works" (Link 1983, 4).

Anthologies from 1992 to 2000 (the Second Stage)

In the second stage, translation anthologies of Chinese novels published in Britain and the United States underwent changes in several regards. In terms of the composition of editors, there was generally a marked decline in the proportion of regional studies scholars (Geremie R. Barme and Helen Siu were the only two editors with no literary studies background in this period), and editorial teams were mainly composed of modern Chinese literature researchers, such as David Der-wei Wang, Joseph S. M. Lau, and Howard Goldblatt. This change strongly reflected a paradigm shift in modern Chinese literature studies in North America.

From the mid-1980s onwards, modern Chinese literature studies in the English-speaking world developed in tandem with literature studies in North America in general, rather than as a component of regional studies (Zhang 2016, 39–60). As Liu Kang stated, "It is true that modern Chinese studies in the West have only very recently been recognized as an independent field, following decades of hard battle against the academic sinological hegemony dominated by classicists, historians, and sociologists" (Liu 1993, 13). One of the landmarks of this paradigm shift was the 1993 special issue on "Ideology and Theory in Modern Chinese Literature Studies" launched by the *Modern China* magazine. In this special issue, scholars highlighted the shortcomings of previous modern Chinese literature studies in North America (notably the tendency toward historical positivism and a politically charged model of regional studies), along with discussions on a new dynamic in the field; that is, the beginning of a significant application of Western literary theories to modern Chinese literature studies. While scholars differed in their attitudes toward the use of Western theories to interpret the Chinese literature experience, they all confirmed that "literature studies have returned to literature itself." This shift in the research paradigm and the resulting changes to editorial composition were also reflected in the compilation of anthologies. Editors began to select and interpret Chinese literature according to the standards of literature and art (e.g., anthologies

on drama, poetry, fiction, and mythology were compiled) and the tendency to politicize everything significantly reduced (*New Ghosts, Old Dreams* by Barme was the only politically charged anthology in the 1990s).

If we take a closer look, we can see that while some editors remained obsessed with controversial works (as in the above-mentioned anthologies by Geremie R. Barme and Howard Goldblatt), the vast majority began to take "literariness" as the dominant principle when selecting and interpreting works.

First, when selecting writers, some editors endeavored to "discover" those who had artistic merit but had been sidelined in the history of literature, hoping to correct the stereotypes about Chinese literature. Avant-garde literature dominated the anthologies of this period, and writers including Mo Yan, Can Xue, Yu Hua, Su Tong, Han Shaogong, and Ge Fei (格非) received the most attention from anthologists. Experimental works, such as *The Hut on the Hill* (山上的小屋) by Can Xue, *The Brothers Shu* (舒家兄弟) by Su Tong, and *Remembering Mr. Wu You* (追忆乌攸先生) by Ge Fei, were frequently chosen.

Wang Meng was the only writer who was often selected at both the first and second stages. Notably, his work in the second stage was no longer characterized by indictments of society, such as *A Young Man Comes to the Organization Department* (组织部来了个年轻人). Instead, his texts became full of linguistic experimentation, such as *In High Spirits* (来劲), and stream-of-consciousness novels such as *The Course of Choice* (选择的历程). None of the works by writers favored by the anthologists in the first stage was selected at this stage.

As anthologists turned their attention to avant-garde literature, a series of anthologies rich in literary value were published, including *Running Wild: New Chinese Writers* (Columbia University Press, 1994); *The Serenity of Whiteness: Stories by and about Women in Contemporary China* (Available Press, 1992), containing eleven works reflecting the changing status of women in contemporary China during the thirty years of reform and opening up; *Writing Women in Modern China: An Anthology of Women's Literature from the Early Twentieth Century* (Columbia University Press, 1998), a collection of nineteen works by women writers from the early 20th century; and *China's Avant-garde Fiction: An Anthology* (Duke University Press, 1998), a collection of avant-garde fiction by contemporary writers, such as Su Tong, Ge Fei, Bei Cun (北村), and Ma Yuan (马原).

Second, this period saw weakened ideological overtones of paratexts in anthologies and increasingly attention was drawn to the artistic characteristics of works. In terms of textual interpretation, editors mainly selected and interpreted works from the perspective of literature and art, placing greater emphasis on the aesthetic rather than cognitive value of Chinese literature. Examples include *Worlds of Modern Chinese Fiction* (M. E. Sharpe, 1991). Many editors argue that "as writers have more freedom to create and publish, artistic innovation increased as well. Writers become concerned with the art of language and structure, striving to create new modes of literary expression" and "began to experiment with unconventional narrative forms, such as plotless narrative, nonlinear narrative, multiple narrators, stream of consciousness, and metafiction." Some of them "have done a better job in exploring Chinese qualities and Chinese society than the best novels before," and

these works did not contain the "exoticism that Western readers are expecting from Chinese fiction" (Duke 1991, x–xii).

David Der-wei Wang, editor of *Running Wild: New Chinese Writers*, indicated that after periods of upheavals, the development of Chinese literature did not "come to an abrupt end," as pessimists had predicted. Instead, there was a "strong rebound" (Wang 1994, 239). Significantly:

> For those used to seeing modern Chinese fiction as a supplement to social history or as a predictable Jamesonian "national allegory" of sociopolitics, the fiction produced since the late eighties may tell a different story. … Modern Chinese writers are nurturing the imaginative, new and vivid beginnings of a turn-of-the-century China.
>
> (ibid., 242)

In *Lost Boat: Avant-garde Fiction from China*, Wellsweep (1993) writes,

> There have been many anthologies of Chinese literature, but most editors are interested in Chinese literature primarily because of its social and political content. The very titles of these anthologies (e.g., *Mao's Harvest: Voices from China's New Generation*; *Stubborn Weeds: Popular and Controversial Chinese Literature after the Cultural Revolution,* and *Seeds of Fire*) reveal the purpose of their compilation. …The political mode of reading seems particularly anachronistic at a time when a new generation of Chinese writers has begun to eschew overtly political and ideological modes in their own fictional discourse.
>
> (Zhao 1993, 17)

The editor's recommendation on the back cover reads, "Forget everything you know about contemporary Chinese fiction. … You will learn something new about life and literature, not just 'life and literature in China'" (ibid., back cover).

Certainly, recognition and acknowledgment of the artistic value of contemporary Chinese fiction was already evident in the anthologies of the late 1980s. The contents of *Spring Bamboo: A Collection of Contemporary Chinese Short Stories* (Random House, 1989), for example, show that the works collected were worth reading for their artistic value rather than their ideology.

Another noteworthy change was the appearance of minority literature anthologies for the first time, such as *Tales from within the Clouds: Nakhi Stories of China* (University of Hawaii Press, 1997), a collection of folktales based on the myths and fables of the Nakhi people in China's Yunnan Province; and *Song of the Snow Lion: New Writings from Tibet* (University of Hawaii Press, 2000), a book introducing Tibetan writers and works about Tibetan customs abroad.

To summarize, in the second stage, it became more common for editors to focus on and recognize the artistic value of contemporary Chinese literature, and "non-literary" elements gradually diminished as editors began to prioritize artistry. The translation anthologies of this period thus proffered a new image of Chinese

literature, not as political propaganda or moral persuasion, but as a literature with unique artistic appeal.

Anthologies from 2001 to 2012 (the Third Stage)

Between 2001 and 2012, thirteen translation anthologies including modern and contemporary Chinese literature were published in Britain and the United States, and the critical readings of politics continued. For example, the title of *Writing Women in Modern China: The Revolutionary Years: 1936–1976* (Columbia University Press, 2005) suggests the women's texts included in this book were written during the turbulent decades between the War of Resistance and the Cultural Revolution; *Red Is Not the Only Color: Contemporary Chinese Fiction on Love and Sex Between Women, Collected Stories* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), and *Dragonflies: Fiction by Chinese Women in the Twentieth Century* (Cornell East Asia Series, 2003), include selected women's fiction set in Hong Kong and Taiwan in particular periods (e.g., *I'm a Woman, She Is a Woman* by Bik-Wan Flora Wong is set in Hong Kong at the end of the 20th century). In other words, women's writing, as presented in the anthologies was only a means to the ultimate end of politics. It is evident that the influence of ideology on the reception of Chinese literature in the West since the Cold War continued into the 21st century.

However, as discussed in the first section of this chapter, the political voice of Chinese literature is only one voice among many in the 21st century, and the different facets of Chinese literature have been comprehensively presented. Some Chinese groups and organizations took an active role in introducing Chinese literature to the world by founding English-language journals such as *Pathlight*, and websites such as Paper Republic, a site dedicated to promoting Chinese literature abroad. These platforms all focus strongly on emerging writers currently on the periphery of the literary field. In this context, 21st-century editors have begun to diversify their interpretative frameworks and selections of works. While serious literature is being translated and compiled into one anthology after another, the works of writers who were once ignored are now entering the editors' fields of vision. With the expansion of Chinese novels in translation and the diverse styles in anthologies, a colorful image of Chinese literature is being presented from a variety of perspectives.

In the 21st century, popular literature at the periphery of the literary field, received the attention of editors for the first time, several anthologies were published, including *The Columbia Anthology of Chinese Folk and Popular Literature* (Columbia University Press, 2011) edited by Victor H. Mair, a collection of folktales, local legends and ethnic minority tales featuring distinctive vernacular language; and *Stories for Saturday: Twentieth-Century Chinese Popular Fiction* (University of Hawaii Press, 2003), edited by Timothy C. Wong. The texts in these anthologies are mostly pleasurable and entertaining, being less about grandiose and heavy historical narratives, and more about the pursuit of a "fun" life. For example, the fifteen stories in *Stories for Saturday* variously concern scandalous affairs, tender romances, complicated legal cases, manners, and slapstick. The

anthology includes works by writers of the Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies school (鸳鸯蝴蝶派), such as Xu Zhuodai (徐卓呆), Bao Tianxiao (包天笑), Feng Shu-luan (冯叔鸾) and Zhou Shoujuan (周瘦鹃). Other anthologies in various styles include *Fissures: Chinese Writing Today* (Zephyr Press, 2001), a selection of novels, essays and poems originally published in the magazine *Today* (今天); *The Mystified Boat and Other New Stories from China* (University of Hawaii Press, 2003), a collection of works by postmodernist writers such as Ge Fei, Yu Hua, Ma Yuan and Su Tong; *Loud Sparrows: Contemporary Chinese Short-Shorts* (Columbia University Press, 2006) edited by Howard Goldblatt et al., a collection of 91 short-shorts from the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan; and *The Pearl Jacket and Other Stories: Flash Fiction from Contemporary China* (Stone Bridge Press, 2008) edited by Qi Shouhua (祁寿华), a collection of 120 short-shorts by young Chinese writers. The importance of popular literature anthologies cannot be overlooked, despite their late arrival, because

> The permutations and combinations of these various strands of Chinese secular and sacred discourse are extraordinarily complicated, yet coming to grips with them is essential for an accurate and adequate understanding of Chinese literature. … [and] those who are minimally acquainted with the subject as a whole or who are familiar with one facet of it will gain a deeper understanding and a more comprehensive grasp.
>
> (Mair and Bender 2011, xiv)

Such anthologies effectively showcase the witty and relaxed side of Chinese literature, thereby enriching the target audience's understanding of Chinese literature.

Anthologies from 2013 to the Present (the Fourth Stage)

Since 2013, seven anthologies of Chinese literature in English have been published overseas to date. Although the publication scale for anthologies is far smaller than that for novels, it is noteworthy that all were published and distributed by overseas publishers, with most being selected and edited by overseas sinologists and translators. The fact that overseas publishers took the initiative when selecting novels from different periods, covering different themes by different authors, and compiling them in a limited space to portray the evolution and reality of Chinese literature to Western readers, was actually a manifestation of cultural identification, exchange and integration. This effort aligns with China's vision to "build closer people-to-people ties."

The editors also directed more attention toward the diversity of writers and their writing styles they included when selecting content. They sought to present works of different styles by different types of writers to readers, with special attention directed toward emerging Chinese literature. A number of new faces in the literary world have been favored by editors, and words such as "emerging" and "avant-garde" used to highlight the chief features of these anthologies. For example, *The Sound of Salt Forming: Short Stories by the Post-80s Generation in*

China (University of Hawaii Press, 2016), provides a stage for young writers who have entered the public eye through China's New Concept Writing Competition, allowing more foreign readers to understand the spirit of the upcoming generation of Chinese writers.

Short Stories in Chinese: New Penguin Parallel Text (Penguin Books, 2013) includes both stories about the honesty and simplicity of farmers (e.g., *The Plow Ox* [耕牛] by Li Rui), and works exposing the dark side of modern society (e.g., *Greasy Moon* [油月亮] by Jia Pingwa):

> These stories … are infused with both rural dialect and urban slang and fea-
> ture a wide range of styles and points of view … [and this anthology] offers
> students at all levels the opportunity to enjoy a wide range of contemporary
> literature from the world's most spoken language….
>
> (Balcolm 2013, viii–xiv)

Chutzpah! New Voices from China (University of Oklahoma Press, 2015) challenged the Western stereotype that "China has often seemed a monolith, speaking with one voice" (Ou and Woerner 2015, xiii). Its themes range from urban-rural relations (e.g., *A Brief History of Time* [时间简史] by Xu Zechen [徐则臣]), to love and marriage (e.g., *On the Balcony* [阳台上] by Ren Xiaowen [任晓雯]), suspense and criminal investigation (e.g., *A Curse in Yang Village* [杨村的一则诅咒] by A Yi [阿乙]), and ethnic customs (e.g., *Xinjiang Dictionary* [新疆词典] by Shen Wei [沈苇]). By discarding stereotypes: "… it introduces us to the imaginative power, boundless creativity, and kaleidoscopic diversity of a new generation of Chinese fiction" (ibid.).

The other two science fiction anthologies, *Invisible Planets: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation* (Tor Books, 2016) and *The Reincarnated Giant: An Anthology of Twenty-First-Century Chinese Science Fiction* (Columbia University Press, 2018), include a total of nearly thirty contemporary Chinese science fiction masterpieces. The editors hope to give Western readers a rare opportunity to listen to "the brilliant polyphony of Chinese fiction today, which is as rich and imaginative as today's Western literature" (ibid.).

However, it should be noted that ideological bias and critical readings of politics remain an imprint that cannot be removed from the translated anthologies of Chinese literature. In 2016, W. W. Norton & Company published *The Big Red Book of Modern Chinese Literature* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2016). The editor, Chinese-American scholar Yunte Huang (黄运特), considered the history of modern Chinese literature as "a story that carries the historical weight of a nation" (Huang 2016, xiv), and his selection of works and critiques of the literature of each period were not based on the literary value of the texts themselves or the literary trends of the time, but rather on important political events.

Conclusion

As evidenced by the anthologies of Chinese novels published in the English-speaking world, distinctive features characterize the selection of works over the

four stages since China's reform and opening up, revealing how contemporary Chinese literature has been gradually introduced to the English-speaking world, affording us with a unique perspective concerning the cross-cultural reception of literature.

In the initial stage (1978–1991), "politics" overrode "literature," governing the selection and publication of Chinese novels, with the result that contemporary Chinese literature was judged based on what were largely simple and unrefined readings on sociology. In the second stage (1992–2000), the literary and artistic value of Chinese literature was gradually recognized by the English-speaking world as text choice shifted, with the result that the stereotyped perceptions of Chinese literature began to be corrected. Since entering the new century, despite some overtly political interpretations of Chinese literature, which are difficult to challenge in the short term, a blossoming pattern of compilation and translation has developed, as "modern Chinese fiction … made a great leap towards the bookshelves of British readers" (Lovell 2005), with Chinese writers from different literary genres gaining attention. As a result, a more diverse landscape of Chinese literature was presented to the world.

In conclusion, foreign editors and translators selected novels from different times, integrating different themes by different authors into the limited space of anthologies, so as to portray the evolution and reality of Chinese literature to Western readers, reflecting the identification, exchange, and integration of Chinese and English literature and culture. These anthologies include not only distinctive and unique depictions of regional and ethnic cultures in China but also universal literary images that are both cosmopolitan and open in nature. They are based not only on the expression of the Chinese nation, state, and individual thoughts and situations, writing about China's unique humanistic feelings and cultural values, but also encompass the global concerns associated with the birth of a new era. Unquestionably, through the window of anthologies the broad, diverse and complex social landscape and cultural aspects of China were seen in the English-speaking world.

SECTION 3: PARATEXTS AS REFRAMING STRATEGIES

While the main text serves as the principal part of a translated book, the paratext also provides a full range of annotations for interpreting original works, translated texts, and the translator's strategies and approaches. Although peripheral, paratexts offer readers easier access to translated books. The main text and the paratext combine to constitute a complete translation.

The concept of a "paratext" was proposed by renowned French literary theorist Gérard Genette in the 1970s. In his book *The Architext: An Introduction*, Genette holds that paratext is the sum of peritext and epitext. A peritext consists of elements such as title (main title), subtitle, author biography, publisher information (publisher's name, edition, and date of publication), preface, postscript, acknowledgments,

and dedications. An epitext consists of elements such as interviews, publicity announcements, reviews by and addresses to critics, private letters, and other authorial and editorial discussions. What is discussed in this section is paratext in the narrow sense, that is, the peritext as defined by Genette, whereas the epitext is related more to the reception of a text.

Paratexts in Novels

The paratext consists of material that surrounds or is attached to and inserted in a main published text, which not only enriches the meaning and purpose of the text but also provides necessary guidance, assisting readers to dive into the text. The study of paratext is also key to analyzing the value of a work and its patronage from multiple dimensions, hence it has increasingly become useful as a tool with which to interpret and bestow an "after-life" on a source text. As implied by the title of Genette's French-language monograph *Seuils* (1987), meaning "threshold," the paratext provides a passage to the literary text itself, allowing the audience to perceive the inner world of the author and gain insight into what the author really wants to convey. Informative and artistic, the paratext is often a blend of images, inscriptions, and advertisements and is also a type of implicit message that captures the reader's eye and attracts potential readers.

For a translated work, the paratext has far-reaching applications and it theoretically significant as a tool for accessing and studying the text. In a sense, it is the key to unlocking the main text. It reduces the strangeness of the original work and enriches the delivery of the text's essence and ideas. According to Toury, "statements made by translators may be used to reconstruct translational norms" (Toury 1995, 65). Such extratextual data can often highlight an author's writing process, the translator's concepts, norms and strategies, and the publisher's sponsorship model. This strengthens the readers' perceptions of the original text and the translated text further revealing the author's train of thought and exposing the fictional characters. Hence, the study of paratext is an indispensable aspect of translation studies. Specifically, paratextual construction in translation is chiefly reflected in the three dimensions: explaining the translation motives and text selection criteria, highlighting the translation strategies, and enhancing the main text. Therefore, the study of English translations of contemporary Chinese fiction should extend from the main text to the informative paratext surrounding the main text. Moreover, researchers need to consider individual texts in the wider context of the times to determine the underlying rules and essential attributes of translation. The research on paratext serves also as an integral component of the study of the English translation of contemporary Chinese novels.

Paratexts in Novels from 1978 to 1991 (the First Stage)

The paratext providing English translations of contemporary Chinese novels that circulated in the English-speaking world, and gained a wide readership during this

period, has the following characteristics: First, the cover design is generally mono-chromatic; mainly featuring obvious Chinese elements, mostly paysage, *shanshui* painting or Chinese characters (*hanzi*), bearing little relation to the theme or setting of the book. Second, translators are often invisible, are rarely mentioned and are generally regarded as less important than the original author. Third, the paratext on the inside pages is rich in content and varied in form, including a foreword, af-terword, list of main characters, endnotes, postscripts, and so on. Fourth, the para-text includes the story's background, synopsis, theme, and an introduction to main characters, which can help Western readers attain a quick overview of the novel.

According to OCLC statistics, the top three most-collected contemporary Chi-nese novels in English translation in the world's major libraries during this period were: *Turbulence* by Jia Pingwa (491 copies), *Stones of the Wall* by Dai Houying (449 copies), and *Baotown* by Wang Anyi (372 copies).

Turbulence, which is the first installment in Jia Pingwa's Shangzhou Series, was awarded the Pegasus Prize for Literature in 1991. In Goldblatt's version, which came out with LSU Press in 1991, there is a Publisher's Note providing a synopsis, translator's profile, and identifying the members of the selection committee for the Pegasus Prize for Literature. Its foreword outlines, the atmosphere and social reality of the times at the beginning of China's reform and opening-up period, and mentions *Turbulence*'s selection by the China Writers Association as one of the premier Chinese novels of the past decade. In addition, the back cover con-tains an author biography and authoritative book reviews. A paragraph is included that is dedicated to introducing Jia Pingwa, commending him as a Chinese writer with many works and honors to his credit. *Kirkus Reviews* comments: *Turbulence*'s subtle, sinuous tale set in rural China in the 1980s is impressive; and according to *Publishers Weekly*, this novel depicts the struggles of Chinese peasants during the period when the People's Republic of China began shifting toward a market economy. This paratextual information unveils the novel's chief contents and rel-evant critiques, providing clues and bridges for English readers to gain a fuller understanding of the main text.

The English version of *Stones of the Wall* was published by Michael Joseph in 1985. In it, the Translator's Note and the list of main characters and their re-lationship, which precedes the main text as well as the Footnotes before the back cover, constitute the paratext providing the main gateway for readers to learn about the background of the story. The two-page Translator's Note introduces in detail the gist and social context of the novel. In addition, the three-page Translator's Postscript – explaining about important figures during the Cultural Revolution, and the meaning of important slogans, such as "accelerating the realization of the Four Modernizations" – also helps readers understand the social and political environ-ment of the time and the storyline.

The English version of *Baotown* was released in the United States in 1989. The storyline is briefly introduced here in the preface: The founder of Baotown is an imperial envoy, who has worked his entire life for water control and the pros-perity of the village. The translator also compares the protagonist with the saint

"Yu" in the legend of "King Yu Tamed the Flood," set within the Xia Dynasty in ancient China.

Paratexts in Novels from 1992 to 2000 (the Second Stage)

In the 1990s, over sixty contemporary Chinese novels, mostly by Mo Yan, Feng Jicai, Su Tong, Ma Bo, and Jia Pingwa were circulated in the West. During this period, nearly 700 copies of one item of Chinese fiction were collected in major libraries worldwide, representing a significant increase on the 491 copies of *Turbulence* that were amassed in the 1980s.

During this period, the original author's name appears on the front cover of the English version to show due respect. Although few books introduce the author in depth on the back cover; an exception is *Red Sorghum: A Novel of China*, which provides a short paragraph about Mo Yan accompanied by a profile photo. The translator's name is still not shown on the front cover, the only exception being *Blood Red Sunset* (血色黄昏). Chinese characters give way to images. Some also feature a movie still showing the protagonist on the front cover, such as *Red Sorghum* and *Raise the Red Lantern*, perhaps helping to convert movie-goers into readers of the book. Also, book reviews by well-known writers and reviewers appear on the front and back covers. In some cases, a detailed account of the author and the domestic sales of the original can be found on the back cover. For example, on the back cover of *Blood Red Sunset*, there is not only an introduction to the plot but also a statement that the Chinese edition sold over five million copies at home. This is one of the most prominent features included on the cover design at the time.

According to OCLC statistics, the most collected Chinese novel of this period as recorded in the world's major libraries was *Red Sorghum: A Novel of China* (1994) translated by Goldblatt, with a total of 698 copies sold. Second was *The Three-Inch Golden Lotus* (三寸金莲) released by the University of Hawai'i Press the same year, with a total of 550 copies. In third place was *Raise the Red Lantern* published by W. Morrow & Co in 1993, which sold a total of 540 copies.

The English hardcover edition of *Red Sorghum: A Novel of China* was published by Viking Press in 1993, and later followed by a paperback reprint released by Penguin Books in 1994. Differing from the hardcover edition designed in scarlet with two male figures on the front cover, the paperback featured a new cover with a still of the leading actress Gong Li from the opening scene of the movie, in which the bridal sedan chair is being lifted. At the time of publication, the movie adaptation won the Golden Bear for Best Picture at the 38th Berlin International Film Festival. The success of the film provided a strong stimulus, and a new cover design linked to the film was designed to pique the interest of potential readers. On the back cover, there is a headshot of the original author Mo Yan, with complimentary remarks about the work applauding it as "a legend in China" (Mo 1994, back cover), and book reviews and endorsements from the writer Amy Tan and *The New York Times Book Review*. On the interior flap, along with the publisher's information page is a short Translator's Note, in which

Goldblatt clarifies that his version is based on the Taiwan edition, rather than the abridged edition from the Chinese mainland.

In the paratext for *The Three-Inch Golden Lotus*, Goldblatt, as general editor of *Fiction from Modern China*, introduces the series as follows:

> This series is intended to showcase new and exciting works by China's finest contemporary novelists in fresh, authoritative translations. It will represent innovative recent fiction by some of the boldest new voices in China today as well as classic works of this century by internationally acclaimed novelists. … the series opens new doors to twentieth-century China.
>
> (Feng 1994, vii)

There is also a two-page Translator's Note and a seven-page Translator's Postscript inside *The Three-Inch Golden Lotus*. In the former, David Wakefield explains his personal philosophy of translation:

> I have decided to use the pinyin system of romanization, though with a few minor adjustments for readability, such as adding a hyphen to Chinese given names. I have chosen to leave the men's names in pinyin, and to translate the names of most of the women, because I believe this better captures the flavor of the novel.
>
> (ibid., 236)

Meanwhile, in the latter section, he provides a detailed introduction and analysis of the author Feng Jicai's family background, explicating the creative process and theme of the work. Wakefield also details the history of Chinese women's foot-binding, stating that the novel is a masterpiece of Chinese scar literature, adopting the topic of foot-binding to provoke readers to reflect on Chinese society during the 20th century.

In the two-page Translator's Note for *Raise the Red Lantern*, Michael Duke clearly states his position regarding translation principles and strategies: "My primary goal in this translation has been to preserve all of the images and figurative language, all of the linguistic artistry, contained in the original" (Su 1993, 9). He elaborates on his emphasis on the readability of a translation and his respect for the writing style of the original. For example, he weaves explanatory phrases into the main text to avoid footnotes and to deliver a smooth reading experience. And he continues, "…the reader should be aware that wherever the English seems strange it is because the Chinese was also purposefully so" (ibid.). He also explains his approach to the names: "The women's names are often thematically important, but the men's names are usually not" (ibid.). Duke also explains why his version is titled "Raise the Red Lantern," while Su Tong's original novella is titled "Wives and Concubines." The title *Raise the Red Lantern* (大红灯笼高高挂 in Chinese) is also used for the Chinese edition published in Hong Kong and the second Chinese edition published in Taiwan. The title was also used for Zhang Yimou's 1992 Oscar-nominated film, in which red lanterns were seen as an iconic

cultural symbol. After careful consideration, Duke adopted the title *Raise the Red Lantern*. The translator's statements in the paratext are illuminating for the reader and helpful when channeling Chinese writing and culture into the English-speaking world.

From the above analysis of paratext, it is evident that Chinese characters have gradually disappeared from book covers, giving way to English letters. The author bio not only concerns family and social backgrounds but also includes more personal comments from the translator. The translator also becomes more visible with an increase in translators' statements on translation strategies and approaches, as well as with explanations about the edition from which their version is translated. Moreover, the paratext begins to include such information as film adaptations and literature awards, with two typical examples of this being *Raise the Red Lantern* and *Red Sorghum*.

Paratexts in Novels from 2001 to 2012 (the Third Stage)

In the first 12 years of the 21st century, many contemporary Chinese writers including Jiang Rong, A. Lai (阿来), and Tie Ning were translated into English, representing a peak in the Chinese-English translation of contemporary fiction. OCLC statistics reveal the three most collected contemporary Chinese novels (English edition) in the world's major libraries during this period were Jiang Rong's *Wolf Totem* (Penguin Books, 2009) at 862 copies, Yu Hua's *Brothers* (Pantheon Books, 2009) at 742 copies, and *To Live* (Anchor Books, 2003) at 717 copies.

The paratext of *Wolf Totem* includes a three-page Translator's Note, a two-page Glossary, a one-page author biography, and a two-page map of China in produced in English. In the Translator's Note, Goldblatt introduces the author's motivation for writing the book and the reason for his selection of "wolf" as the central image in the third-person narrative, before briefly describing the author's life experience between 1969 and 1979. In the Glossary, Goldblatt explains some of the proper nouns with Chinese characteristics in the novel, such as the "four olds," "capitalist road" and "li." The map in English describes the geographical relationship between China and Mongolia. In addition, the author biography delivers a chronological overview of the author's life. These paratexts combine to further the reader's understanding of the novel.

Both *Brothers* and *To Live* are Yu Hua's literary tour de force. The cover of *Brothers* lists the book's honors, which are that it was listed as a Man Asian Literary Prize candidate and became a Prix Courrier International winner, as well as a prominently placed citation from the book review by Maureen Corrigan, book critic for NPR's Fresh Air: "In recognition of this terrific literary achievement, I think that, instead of the year of the Ox, this should be the Year of Yu Hua" (Yu 2005). Yu Hua's life experience and works are introduced, as is his honor of becoming the first Chinese winner of the James Joyce Foundation Award (in 2002). There is also a whole page of praise from major media outlets, including *The New Yorker* and *The Washington Post*. In the Translator's Preface, Eileen Cheng-yin Chow and Carlos Rojas offer a detailed account of the novel's creative background

and theme, making particular reference to their challenges with the editor and the many other parties involved in the translation process.

> A translation often incorporates the voices of both the author and the translator, as well as those of the editor. Each literary tradition has its own rules of writing and narrative techniques, and contemporary Chinese writing features extensive use of pronouns to express ideas, such as Yu Hua's heavy use of first-person pronouns in *Brothers*. But the English editor felt that this narrative technique seemed out of place in English and affected the readability of the work, so the editor strongly recommended that the first-person expression be removed from the translation.
>
> (Chow and Rojas 2005, ix–x)

Such statements in the paratext render the translator's role and position visible and the intent behind the translation explicit.

In summary, the paratexts in some of the most collected contemporary Chinese novels in this period shared the following characteristics. First, the book cover design had become increasingly rich and diverse and more related to the core idea of the book. Covers served as a musical overture, a guide, and above all, a bridge. They allow readers to learn about book's reviews and awards, and also intuit the theme and the plot through engaging cover imagery. Second, the paratext is more varied in form. In addition to a common foreword, table of contents and postscript, extratextual information, such as a map, glossary, character list, notes for place names and translator statements are provided to assist readers' understanding. Third, the translator is seen. In the 1980s–1990s and before, the translator was mostly invisible, as readers were typically given information about the translation but not the translator. Since the beginning of the 21st century, the translator's status has risen, and there is now a page dedicated to the translator in almost all translations with the name of the translator appearing prominently on the cover.

Paratexts in Novels from 2013 to the Present (the Fourth Stage)

According to OCLC statistics, the most collected novels in English translation in this period were *The Three-Body Problem* series, *Bronze and Sunflower* (青铜葵花), and *Frog*. The English version of *The Three-Body Problem* (2014), which was the first book in the series, saw 1,173 copies sold, with 870 copies for the second book *The Dark Forest* (2015), and 872 copies for the third book *Death's End* (2016). Although this series did not feature in overseas collections in the same way as other famous foreign works in China do, it represented a breakthrough for Chinese novels in the English-speaking world. It was followed only in popularity by Cao Wenxuan's *Bronze and Sunflower* (2017) at 864 copies and Mo Yan's *Frog* (2015) at 810 copies sold.

The cover of *The Three-Body Problem* uses imagery to depict the intersection of the universe with a pyramid, as well as authoritative reviews (comments from newspapers and writers), and awards and honors. The translator, Ken Liu,

introduces the work to English readers in various forms of peritext, including a title page, a two-page list of characters, author's postscript and translator's postscript. In the six-page Author's Postscript to the American Edition, Liu Cixin explains the creative background and motivation based on his own childhood experience, stating that science fiction is a form of literature that belongs to all humankind. In the three-page Translator's Postscript, Ken Liu explains his translation strategy, including the principle of faithfulness, the cultural barriers he was forced to navigate, and the specific historical context of China. These peritextual annotations contributed to the dissemination and circulation of the book in the English-speaking world.

The paratext of *Bronze and Sunflower* describes the creative inspiration and background of the novel, the author's literary experience and credited honors, and the translator's academic career and translation achievements. Particular reference is also made to the theme of the novel and the origin of the protagonists' names, Bronze and Sunflower. These extratextual materials elucidate both the motif and creative background of the novel for English readers.

The front cover of *Frog* highlights the name Mo Yan and his honor as winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, while the back cover is printed with endorsements from *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The Washington Post*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Newsday*, and *The Seattle Times*. The paratext includes a three-page list of characters, author and translator biographies, and three pages of positive comments about the book and the author from renowned print media and book review periodicals (including *The Wall Street Journal*, *Publishers Weekly*, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *The Washington Post*, *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*), as well as prestigious book review organizations (the Nobel Committee for Literature), and independent critics (including writer Amy Tan and sinologist Orville Schell).

With the increasingly frequent literary and cultural exchanges between China and other countries, the paratext in translated Chinese novels is becoming increasingly richer along, with the ever-diversifying genres of original texts. As shown by the paratext in some of the most collected works, genre fiction is gaining in popularity and attention. The top-ranked *The Three-Body Problem* trilogy has been seen as characteristic of Chinese science fiction in recent years, with its cover design featuring futuristic elements and such imageries as the earth, space, and starry skies, while the cover of *Bronze and Sunflower* lets readers know instantly that it is a book for children. Contemporary Chinese-English translations no longer feature old-school Chinese elements but include more universally acceptable elements, which is essential to ensure for the integration of Chinese writing into world literature.

Paratexts in Anthologies

Paratext is a vital component of a translation anthology. An important reason for discussing it separately here is that a translation anthology is usually composed of different translated texts. Therefore, unlike the paratext in a separate edition of a book that focuses on just one novel or one writer, the paratext in an anthology often

represents a wide range of Chinese literature. Thus, editors articulate their views on Chinese literature overall, rather than on a single novel. Editors also have the freedom to touch upon a variety of subject matters. Moreover, many anthologies are compiled for teaching purposes, rendering their potential influence broader and more far-reaching. It is also noteworthy that the editors of translation anthologies are often respected scholars in their own fields with interpretations of Chinese literature that can exert a significant impact. Thus, it is meaningful to investigate the paratext in translation anthologies. By examining the paratext of the anthologies over time, we can observe the characteristics involved in compiling these literary translation collections.

At the dawn of the reform and opening-up period, an open China quickly drew attention from other countries. After a long period of isolation resulting from the Cold War, the international community was eager to understand the reality of China, and literature was considered an important window through which modern China could be viewed. Against this backdrop, some countries accelerated their efforts to translate Chinese literature, which, naturally, included producing anthologies. Examining the paratext in anthologies from that period, it is evident that some editors had ulterior motives: They did not compile anthologies purely "for literature's sake," but rather to uncover the Chinese reality, particularly the political reality, embodied in the literary works. Consequently, the paratexts in many selected stories of the period are considered to be highly politically charged.

Anthologists frequently used metaphorical and politically suggestive words and phrases in their titles, such as "stubborn weeds," "seeds of fire," "Mao's harvest," "roses and thorns," and "Cultural Revolution." These terms are mostly non-literary, referring more to the history and politics of China during a given period, rather than offering a concise summary of the literary features of texts. This nomenclature presets a specific framework for interpretation before readers actually engage with the text, leading them to the "reality" behind the literature rather than the literature itself.

In addition, the prefaces to several anthologies do not offer literary interpretations of the "text," preferring a political analysis of the "context." In *Mao's Harvest: Voices from China's New Generation*, for example, much is written about China's political system, the progress of the Cultural Revolution, and the role of intellectuals in the post-Mao political movements; and in *Stubborn Weeds: Popular and Controversial Chinese Literature after the Cultural Revolution*, the 30-page preface mainly discusses literary censorship in China.

In the translation anthologies of the late 1980s, the artistic value of modern and contemporary Chinese fiction is increasingly recognized. For example, Leo Oufan Lee's introduction to *Spring Bamboo: A Collection of Contemporary Chinese Short Stories* he mentions, "… recognizes, by the very absence of ideology and politics, one of the most distinctive attributes of the group of younger writers who have come to prominence on that scene" (Tai 1989, xi).

Some editors criticize these earlier anthologies due to their disregard for the literary value of Chinese works and their propensity to interpret Chinese literature politically, directly refuting the one-sided, parochial perspective of treating

Chinese literature as historical documents. For example, considering the impact of the intensive translation of controversial works in the 1980s on the image of Chinese writing, editor Jing Wang of *China's Avant-Garde Fiction: An Anthology* argues: "Avant-garde writers have strongly demonstrated that Chinese writers can write something else other than socio-political consciousness," and thus the anthology is "a powerful statement that writers are constantly working to increase their sensitivity to literary form and trying to tell stories in interesting ways" (Wang 1998, 14).

In the late 1990s, scholars of Chinese literature, as opposed to Chinese Studies, comprised the bulk of Chinese literature editors. This led to a shift of focus toward Chinese literature itself. The paratext in anthologies has consequently been interpreted less from an ideological viewpoint, with the artistic characteristics of works being more valued. For example, editors of *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Chinese Literature* argue:

> If Snow were to edit [Chinese literature] today, he would not have to be apologetic,[3] because Chinese fiction and poetry since the 1980s have nothing to apologize for. The new generation of writers, though just as concerned with national salvation as their predecessors, have fully demonstrated their talent and long since severed their ties with critical realism … they have entered a new world of narrative possibilities, able to use a wealth of forms and techniques (such as allegory, mimesis, modernism, avant-garde and the recent magic realism) to interpret reality.
>
> (Lau and Goldblatt 1996, xv)

Since the beginning of the 21st century, marked by the implementation of the "going global" strategy for Chinese literature, there has been a change in the pattern of compilation of Chinese literature anthologies in the English-speaking world. More genres have been translated, and more local Chinese editors have begun to promote Chinese literature anthologies intending to enrich the image of Chinese literature abroad. Consequently, the paratext has mainly focused on the logic of "reversing the image of Chinese literature" and "enriching the Chinese literary landscape."

To influence previous perceptions of Chinese literature, many editors have encouraged Western readers to reexamine their accustomed way of interpreting Chinese works, forgetting their stereotypes about Chinese literature, and approaching Chinese literature from a realistic perspective. As reported by South African poet Breyten Breytenbach in the preface of *Fissures: Chinese Writing Today*,

> The un-initiated non-Chinese reader must be especially careful not to look at Chinese literature through the glasses of his or her own conditioned expectations. We have all been bamboozled by the clichés of exoticism and romanticism, reassured by the security of "distance" and charmed by the lures of "difference" … It is by no means the slightest merit of this collection to be thus wiping clean our glasses in order to give us a feel of the "ordinariness"

of modern existence. It constitutes a horizontal slice of the many expressions of literary creativeness in present-day China. What we see here are diverse portrayals of inner life, outer life, public life and history, without much moralizing or deliberate suggestion of distinction.

<div align="right">(Zhao 2001, 12–13)</div>

While diversifying their text selection, the editors also dew on the paratext to introduce the audience to Chinese writing with a rich variety of themes and genres, in an attempt to reconstruct the landscape of Chinese literature. Indeed Ken Liu, the editor of *Invisible Planets: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation*, agrees that Chinese writers no longer confine their vision to China itself:

> Like writers everywhere today, Chinese writers are concerned with humanism, with globalization, with technological advancement, with tradition and modernity, with family and love, … with the ultimate meaning of life. … Imagining that the political concerns of Chinese writers are the same as what the Western reader would like them to be is at best arrogant and at worst dangerous.

<div align="right">(Liu 2016, 16)</div>

Therefore, he proposes the Western reader should not view Chinese writing through a geopolitical prism, nor use "subversion in the pro-West sense" as an interpretive crutch (ibid., 15). In *New Penguin Parallel Text Short Stories in Chinese*, there are not only stories about honest and simple peasants but also works that expose the darker side of urban society. And *Chutzpah! New Voices from China* is a collection of stories from new Chinese writers such as Xu Zechen, Sheng Keyi, Ren Xiaowen, and others. Imaginative and creative, these new stories demonstrate the diversity and vitality of modern China, shattering the outmoded, stereotyped image of China.

Conclusion

As discussed in this chapter, a complete English translation of a novel not only comprises the main text but also the paratext that surrounds, embellishes and annotates the main text. The paratext takes various forms including front and back cover design, introduction, foreword, and afterword, the translator's preface and postscript. Peripheral though it is, the paratext provides important and intuitive materials for rendering the theme of the original, interpreting creative background and intention, conveying more information about the author and the translator, and introducing the translation strategy and approach. In essence, the paratext largely determines whether a reader will be attracted to and purchase the book. The study of paratext can provide a new research perspective on the reception of contemporary Chinese novels in the English-speaking world. It allows us to escape from the traditional paradigm of comparing the original with the translation and go a step

further to study the textual and extratextual elements that constitute a complete translation more broadly.

From a diachronic evolution of paratexts, it is easy to identify a series of changes on book covers: landscape paintings are replaced by images of people and contemporary elements; the theme and subject are manifested; national identity is downplayed; and endorsements from influential critics and organizations are added to facilitate promotion. Moreover, the ever-diverse forms of paratext and the recognition of the value of translating indicate translators are becoming increasingly visible and beginning to make their voices heard.

In the words of Goldblatt, speaking at the 2018 International Symposium on Translated Chinese Literature and Its Reception Outside China:

> We [Goldblatt and Sylvia Li-Chun Lin] are more willing to entrust American agents to publish our translations of contemporary Chinese novels than domestic presses in China, because they know the American book market and reader better. They are more experienced and forward-looking in the design of book covers, titles and all other aspects of the work in addition to the main text, which will ensure a better translation effect.
>
> (Goldblatt 2018)

Certainly, the design of book covers, titles selected, and all other aspects of the work in addition to the main text comprise the paratext in a Chinese-English translation, offering an important contribution to the translation process.

Notes

1 Parts of this section (by He Min and Wu Yun) are published in *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, 2019, 1 (He and Wu 2019).
2 "Pre-understanding" (German: Vorverständnis) is an important concept in hermeneutics. According to Heidegger, "Meaning is the 'upon-which' of a projection in terms of which something becomes intelligible as something; it gets its structure from a fore-having, a foresight, and a fore-conception." "Any mere pre-predicative seeing of the ready-to-hand is, in itself, something which already understands and interprets" (see Heidegger 1987, 184). Similarly, the anthologist's preconceptions about the source literature are key influencing factors that cannot be ignored in the selection and interpretation of works.
3 When editing *Living China*, Snow argues that "even if contemporary China has produced no great literature, there must be much of scientific and sociological interest, and for utilitarian purposes alone it ought to be made available to us." See Snow (1937, 13).

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3 Different Patronage in Source-Initiated and Target-Initiated Translation

Introduction

Translation is a complex activity because it involves more than simply the linguistic level of a text. Patronage at all levels, from ideology to poetics, guides, restricts, adjusts, and influences the formation and dissemination of a translated text. A variety of factors can construct either a positive or a negative image of the author, and even of their country, through the selection, interpretation, and dissemination of translated works. As noted by André Lefevere in *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (1992), translation is rewriting and is subject to the manipulation of the poetics, ideology, and patronage in the target system. The translator and the patronage therefore influence jointly, and even determine, the decisions made in the translation process.

Patronage can be defined thus:

> Something like the powers (persons, institutions) that can further or hinder the reading, writing, and rewriting of literature. … Patronage can be exerted by persons … and also by groups of persons, a religious body, a political party, a social class, a royal court, publishers and, last but not least, the media, both newspapers and magazines and larger television corporations. Patrons try to regulate the relationship between the literary system and the other systems, which, together, make up a society, a culture. As a rule they operate by means of institutions set up to regulate, if not the writing of literature, at least its distribution: academies, censorship bureaus, critical journals, and, by far the most important, the educational establishment.
>
> (Lefevere 1992, 17)

During different historical periods, the operation of different patronages has had the potential to manipulate the translator's selection of the source text and translation strategies, and thus to shape and transform the literary and cultural images received by the target culture.

To date, contemporary Chinese novels have primarily been introduced to the outside world via two channels. The first is source-initiated translation, manifested in an array of state-led translation projects, including *Chinese Literature*, founded

in 1951; Panda Books, founded in the 1980s; the Library of Chinese Classics, founded in the 1990s; and the China Book International (CBI) project and the Classic China International Publishing Project, inaugurated in the 21st century, all of which have made important contributions to promoting Chinese culture and literature abroad. The second main way in which Chinese novels have been introduced to the outside world is via target-initiated translation, in which Western publishers take the initiative to translate and introduce contemporary Chinese fiction overseas.

SECTION 1: NATIONAL TRANSLATION PLANNING
FOR SOURCE-INITIATED TRANSLATION

Literary translation is a key path through which a country can build its national image, although random, loose, and unorganized translating does not help to achieve that goal. It is believed that national planning with measurable goals via source-initiated translation is a feasible approach. In this instance, translation planning refers to the regulation and guidance of translation activities, and translation policy is often used to regulate and coordinate the occurrence and progress of the translation activities concerned. As James Holmes explained, the task of scholars in this field is:

> to render informed advice to others in defining the place and role of translators, translating and translations in society at large: such questions, for instance, as determining what works need to be translated in a given socio-cultural situation, what the social and economic position of the translator is and should be, or … what part translating should play in the teaching and learning of foreign languages.
>
> (Holmes 2004, 182)

Therefore, the formulation of translation planning and policy should be based on the current situation and the possible roles of translation in reality. Meanwhile, Gideon Toury defined translation policy as:

> those factors that govern the choice of text-types, or even of individual texts, to be imported through translation into a particular culture/language at a particular point in time. Such a policy will be said to exist inasmuch as the choice is found to be non-random.
>
> (Toury 1995, 58)

This definition directly establishes a relationship between translation policy and planning, and the critical issues of "why to translate" and "what to translate," as the driver and the driven.

In general, translation planning emphasizes the regulation of, and guidance for, translation activities and summarizes or improves translation policies by examining translation activities in reality. The formulation and improvement of translation

policies are of great significance because as a centralized embodiment of politics and ideology, such policies can "render informed advice to others in defining the place and role of translators, translating, and translations in society at large" (Holmes 2004, 190), and then consolidate further the authority and execution of state power. State-backed institutions are usually regarded as the translation policy-makers. The decisions made by the government and its subordinate bodies regarding translation and their regulation of translation activities can influence directly, and even determine, important issues such as "what to translate," "how to translate," and "how to publish." It is important to examine the policies formulated and implemented in practice by government bodies because they come with an inherent authority and considerable influence and affect, directly or indirectly, a series of ensuing translation activities. The state's vision can be either compiled into written texts, thus becoming explicit policies, or scattered in leaders' speeches, a foreword to a periodical, or an editor's note, or be present in forms such as a preface/postscript to published translation series. The state-sponsored translation activities, including what to translate, how to translate, and how to cultivate translators, are some of the direct results of the translation policies. Moreover, these activities evolve into a pattern over time and become a quasi-behavioral norm that is accepted and observed by individuals in the region or country, thereby constituting and consolidating the de facto translation planning.

As the name implies, "planning" is a purposeful act that is based on the present and oriented to the future, with the systematic design of a set of action plans. These features also apply to "translation planning," which can be defined as the forward-looking regulation and design of translation activities by agents within a certain group, and at a given time, in order to achieve specific purposes. China's translation planning refers to the translation activities planned and directed by government bodies in a given social, historical, and cultural context that aims to help the source country to gain a greater voice in the target literary system, as well as to enhance cultural soft power, promote cultural diplomacy, and finally to build or change the source country's national image. Integral to these aims is the fact that the planning of literary translation encompasses a long-term, overall plan that employs soft power, the goal of which is to reshape the source country's image in the world. This plan includes the assessment of national interests and the international environment, the utilization of domestic translation resources, the selection and practice of translation models, and the translation-effect evaluation and strategy adjustment. It requires forward-looking policies and practical deployment. As such, it is vital to coordinate and connect the state-led, top-down literary translation strategies and acts.

Nevertheless, such planning requires strategies and skills. Since the founding of the PRC, there have been many state-level translation plans and practices, although many of them have failed. In the case of *Chinese Literature* (中国文学) and Panda Books (熊猫丛书), for example, a major cause of their failure was the government's excessive intervention at the execution level. Therefore, the government should clarify its position, and shift its role from that of "dominator" to that of "guide," or even "tutor."

Translation activities play a prominent role for a country in promoting cultural exchanges, strengthening diplomacy, improving cultural competitiveness, and building a good national image. It is, therefore, important to formulate, implement, and improve practical translation programs, the concepts and practices of which not only reflect the source country's perception of its image but also propel the spread of its international image. In this sense, introducing Chinese literature abroad, in accordance with national translation planning, is an important part of China's international publicity agenda, and is crucial for national image construction and soft power enhancement.

Before the founding of New China in 1949, there were attempts to translate Chinese literature into foreign languages, most of which were individual translators' efforts that had little impact on the formation of China's image. After 1949, the government began to attach importance to international publicity work and established the International Press Bureau of the Press General Administration of the Central People's Government (now the Foreign Languages Press). Since then, China has adopted a state-led translation model to explore an approach to image construction through literary translation. In practice, there are usually two main translation paths: "imposition" and "requisition." The former "is normally deliberate; it is always driven by the source culture, often with little regard for the receptor culture, and therefore pays much attention to the intention or intentionality behind the original text manifestation," while the latter "springs from the target culture" (Dollerup 1997, 45–56). Key to the effectiveness of this kind of translation activity is whether the sender heeds the needs, aesthetics, and historical characteristics of the receptor culture. This section explores the meanings of translation as "imposition," and as "requisition," and analyzes the shift from the former to the latter in the translation of contemporary Chinese literature.

Self-imposed Translation

After the founding of the PRC, translation planning was included as part of the national agenda. Featuring a unitary field structure, it was mainly dominated by state institutions and political capital and was connected closely with the sphere of power. The actors in the field, such as the translators and editors, found it difficult to play an active role, and to have a significant impact on the field because they were constrained by the mechanisms and operations of the state institutions. In 1951, the inaugural issue of *Chinese Literature* was released. This was the only official journal of Chinese literature translated into foreign languages after 1949, and it had published a large number of classical and contemporary Chinese literary works in translation before the Cultural Revolution, providing a means for foreign readers to learn about China at that time. In 1981, Yang Xianyi (杨宪益) became the editor-in-chief of *Chinese Literature*. Under his leadership, a large number of ancient, modern, and contemporary Chinese works were published under Panda Books in English, French, Japanese, German, and other languages. In 1987, Chinese Literature Press was established, replacing *Chinese Literature* and Panda Books, and continuing the translation work. At that time, the translation involved

was planned by government institutions headed by the China International Communications Group (CICG), a department under the State Council in total charge of China's international publicity, and also the direct supervisor of major literary translation agencies in China. Therefore, *Chinese Literature* and Panda Books, launched by CICG, were planned, organized, and targeted official translation programs, representing a typical imposition model.

Chinese Literature and Panda Books

During this period, planned translations were mainly published by *Translation* (Yi Wen), *Chinese Literature*, and Panda Books. The magazine *Translation* was founded in 1953 and headed by Mao Dun, the then Minister of Culture. At the same time, Ye Junjian (叶君健), the then Head of the Compilation Division of the Bureau of Foreign Cultural Liaison Affairs, and a writer, proposed the creation of a publication dedicated to introducing Chinese literature to foreign readers. With the support of Hong Chen (洪琛), the then Deputy Director of the Bureau of Foreign Cultural Liaison Affairs, and Zhou Yang (周扬), the then Vice Minister of Culture, the English edition of *Chinese Literature* was founded (Zheng 2012, 26). Initially, Mao Dun, as Minister of Culture and Chairman of the China Writers Association, was appointed editor-in-chief of the magazine, while the founder Ye Junjian oversaw the editorial work. *Chinese Literature* was the only official foreign-language periodical in China at the time that translated and introduced the Chinese literature of the new period to Western readers in a systematic, timely, and planned manner. The purpose of the periodical was to portray the new life of the Chinese people and to translate works that depicted a different image of China and the Chinese from that perceived abroad. When the Cultural Revolution was over, China was faced with a completely different environment, both at home and abroad. At the end of 1978, the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh CPC Central Committee was held in Beijing. The meeting re-established the ideological line of emancipating the mind, and seeking truth from facts; it ended the obsession with class struggle, shifted the focus of the Party and the state to economic construction, and implemented the reform and opening up policy. Headed by Deng Xiaoping, it was proposed at the Fourth National Congress of the Literary & Art Workers that:

> The Party's leadership of literary and art work is not to issue orders or to require literary and art workers to perform temporary, specific and direct political tasks, but to enable them to continuously promote the prosperity of the literary and art cause, raise the level of literature and art, and create literary and artistic works and performing arts achievements that live up to the expectations of our great people and the great age.
>
> (Deng 1994, 170)

Similarly to literary and artistic creation, literary translation also gradually broke away from the overwhelming political control. The establishment of China-US diplomatic relations in 1979 instigated the cultural exchange between China

and the West after the Cultural Revolution. In 1983, CICG released "Ten Basic Lessons for the Publication and Distribution of Foreign-language Books and Periodicals Since the Founding of the People's Republic of China," stating:

> We must clear away the grave consequences of the "leftist" guidelines aimed at "promoting a world revolution" and resolutely implement the guideline of "publicizing the New China honestly, colorfully, vividly and as timely as possible," but at the same time we must be cautious of the tendency to neglect political propaganda.
>
> (Wang 2014, 80)

This policy guided the translation planning of that period and translation activities resumed in an orderly manner. The purpose of translation remained to serve the nation-building of the new period, and the translation agents were still managed largely by the Chinese government. Translation was generally deemed to be an official act.

After the 1980s, when ideological emancipation became a cultural label of the times, *Chinese Literature* also entered a new golden age. Some of the works it translated and published were selected for inclusion in the anthologies of Chinese literature published by foreign publishers, which became a major source where foreign audiences could read Chinese literature. Against this background, Yang Xianyi, inspired by the classic British brand Penguin Books, proposed to publish a series known as "Panda Books." The series was initiated and organized by *Chinese Literature*, which was part of CICG. In selecting works for the series, the initial publications were those already published in *Chinese Literature*, but not yet published in book form, followed by a number of new translations.

Text Selection by the Government

While Panda Books and *Chinese Literature* were focused on introducing the social reality of China to the outside world, and on disseminating the value of Chinese writing, they concurrently placed equal emphasis on the promotion of the ideologies and political thought of the Chinese government. On the one hand, their publications began to shift from the previous model, in which translations were mostly revolution-themed and solely for the purpose of political propaganda. Works with different themes and forms of literary expression by writers of different genres were translated, including critical and reflective texts. This demonstrated the government's intention to demonstrate a pluralistic China abroad. On the other hand, themes concerning the anti-Japanese war, the war of liberation, and China's policies and people's lives in New China continued to prevail in literary translation. These works enjoyed significant popularity among the readership for their vivid portrayals of everyday life. As Xu Shengui (徐慎贵) explained:

> It is because *Chinese Literature* has translated and published the true-life, colorful literary works of the new period in China that they have been

welcomed and received by foreign readers. There are probably one or two dozen novels, such as *Love Must Not Be Forgotten* (爱, 是不能忘记的) and *Sand Fox* (沙狐), that have been selected for publication in the *International Anthology of Short Stories* in the United States. There are also poems and fables that have been translated into Thai, Russian and other languages.

(Xu 2007, 49)

Thanks to their promotion by *Chinese Literature*, literary writings in the new period were well received by Western readers. In this context, and inspired by the world-renowned Penguin Books, Yang Xianyi proposed the publication of a Panda Books series in 1981. He hoped that the series would bring the literary voices of China to every corner of the world, just as the Penguin Books series had for English literature. Subsequently, Sidney Shapiro's translation of *The Memoirs of Xin Fengxia* (新凤霞回忆录) began the international journey of Panda Books. The book was received so favorably by overseas readers that it was reprinted the following year. In terms of the criteria for text selection, the Panda Books series was consistent with *Chinese Literature*'s aim of introducing outstanding Chinese literature to foreign readers. With the increasing scale of the series, China Literature Press was established in 1986 and claimed responsibility for the publication of *Chinese Literature* and the selection of original texts to be translated for Panda Books.

In the 1990s, with the intensifying of the reform and opening up period, China witnessed a rapid growth in the market economy and progressed to a new stage of ideological emancipation. Due to the poor economic benefits of external publication, and the diminishing national organization and planning, the number of translations published by government institutions declined significantly. Of the 58 novel translations published between 1992 and 2001, 23 were published by various publishers under CICG, and the number of Chinese novels translated by Western publishers increased significantly. A rich variety of realistic and fictional themes covering, for instance, educated youth, women, ethnic minorities, history, anticorruption, reform, and romance, were translated. These publications reflected the social change and development of China under the wave of the reform and opening up, as well as people's everyday lives, and Beijing's agenda of showcasing Chinese literature and contemporary society to the West. Western readers were therefore able to see a different form of Chinese literature from the "eulogistic" writing of the past and to encounter a refreshing new China after the reform and opening up.

As pioneers, *Chinese Literature* magazine and Panda Books opened an important window for foreign readers to understand Chinese culture through independent and large-scale literary translation activities, and laid a solid foundation for the subsequent translational journey of Chinese literature. Before its closure in 2000, 590 issues of *Chinese Literature* were published, with more than 3,200 pieces of writing translated, and over 2,000 writers and artists introduced; it was distributed to more than 150 countries and regions (Yang 2010, 7), making a significant contribution to the spread of Chinese literature, and the shaping of China's image. For

example, the anthologies published under Panda Books, such as *Selected Works of Contemporary Chinese Women Writers* (中国当代女作家作品选) and *Selected Poems of Contemporary Chinese Women Poets* (中国当代女诗人诗选), introduced representative women writers and poets, including Bing Xin (冰心), Ding Ling (丁玲), Xiao Hong (萧红), Wang Anyi (王安忆), Shu Ting (舒婷), Cheng Naishan (程乃珊), and Zhang Jie (张洁), among others. These collections reflected the development of the cultural and social realities of contemporary China and were committed to reconstructing the image and poetic value of Chinese women and to modifying Western perceptions of this group. In so doing, they gained popularity among foreign readers. Moreover, Chinese war novels, such as *Defending Yan'an* (保卫延安), *Tracks in the Snowy Forest* (林海雪原), and *Battle on Shangganling Mountain* (上甘岭), which depicted the righteous, brave, and resourceful image of Chinese soldiers, and reflected the revolutionary willpower of Chinese heroes, were also translated. The selection processes of the state agencies embodied good intentions: they aimed to provide Western readers with a panoramic view of Chinese literature in the new period, and this engendered a new international understanding of Chinese literature and society. Unfortunately, *Chinese Literature* and Panda Books all but suspended the production of new publications at the beginning of the 21st century, and eventually closed, which was "both saddening and thought-provoking" (Xie 2014, 2). Moreover, only a few translations of *Chinese Literature* and Panda Books were received well by Western readers (Geng 2010). This failure related directly to the government-led agenda and the translation norms and operation mechanisms behind it.

The Operation System of State-Sponsored Translation

Generally speaking, state-led translation is characterized by a well-controlled normative system, in terms of the operation environment, agents, and processes. The translation institutions under CICG boasted a contained organizational structure with a strict hierarchy. Guided by the political will of the state, they followed the established translation principles and language guidelines, and had in place clear management procedures for their translators, the translation products, and the entire translation process, from the selection and censorship of source texts to the decision-making of translation strategies, to the printing, distribution, and sales of the translated versions. Although this strict management ensured the smooth progress of translation activities, the final outputs failed to achieve the communication effects desired, due to an inadequate understanding of the essence of literary translation. Nor did these translations played a truly effective role in cultural diplomacy or national image building, because of the restrictive factors of the source culture. The translations published by the CICG were self-oriented, self-manufactured cultural goods. In other words, the norms governing source-oriented translation correlated to the self-image of the source culture (Chang 2015, 96–107).

In terms of translation agents, many key issues, such as what to translate, how to translate, and how to disseminate, were determined by the top management of CICG. The members of the editorial board selected and censored the source texts,

based on the literary, cultural, and political realities of China, but lacked knowledge of the intended recipients. Moreover, although there was a strong team of translators, including the Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang husband-and-wife duo, and certain foreigners with excellent Chinese language capabilities, such as W. J. F. Jenner and Don J. Cohn, they were situated at the bottom of the translation system and had little say. They were not included in the process as a whole, beginning with the text selection. Once a task was completed, the CICG censored the content from a source-oriented stance, considering whether China's image was constructed and interpreted correctly, and whether there was any negative content about China. Issues such as these were checked, and any politically incorrect content was censored. The CICG-led translations were therefore initiated by, and produced in, the source culture for its own consumption, with little attention ascribed to the target readers' needs or reception. Moreover, there was no clear analysis of the distribution of the translations, and it was therefore impossible to evaluate how they were received by the target audience.

In essence, the CICG-led text translations were unsatisfactory, not because the translators were incompetent, but because the translation philosophy and principles of the CICG did not provide an optimal foundation for translations. During that period, loyalty was the first and foremost principle, and literal translation prevailed. For example, culture-loaded words were usually rendered into Chinese *pinyin* with explanatory footnotes "bolted on." In particular, political terms and expressions could not be changed in the slightest, even though they were highlighted by foreign translators as unidiomatic (McDougall 2011, 79). Such translation strategies and management deprived the translations of the succinctness, barbed wit, and unpredictability that readers expect from literary works. The American sinologist, Jeffrey C. Kinkley, once said:

> Beijing's official translations were actually finalized by a committee that did not want to offend either foreign readers or the Party leadership. So in translation, they "removed" the remainder to get the least common denominator. For writers Gao Xiaosheng and Lu Wenfu, and even for the more traditional Deng Youmei and Wang Zengqi, their merits and sharp satire were suppressed and sharpened until they could barely be seen ….
>
> (Kinkley 2006, 73)

He added that "at the beginning of the 1990s, Panda Books wanted to 'follow the fashion' and included works of 'new' writers. But the translations were of poor quality and some even terrible" (Kinkley 2006, 73). Indeed, the British sinologist, Julia Lovell, employed derogatory terms, such as "threadbare," to describe certain Panda books (Lovell 2005).

Translation is an important driving force for promoting Chinese literature to the outside world, but it is constrained by the inappropriate selection of translation strategies. Because literal translation dominated for a long period with insufficient regard for the reading habits of a Western audience, *Chinese Literature* and Panda Books failed to deliver the beauty, taste, and wit expected from literature and therefore did not achieve their purpose.

In terms of publication and distribution, CICG's translated works are currently mainly sold in Chinese literature and specialist bookstores, but rarely in major bookshops in the West. Moreover, there are no special marketing tools or channels for promotion. The resulting small reading community is composed mainly of Chinese Studies scholars and students, and those who approve of the political ecology in China. In addition, the overseas reviews of the books are mostly written by those studying Chinese history and politics. In other words, most Chinese literary works in translation are used as a kind of bibliographical information on China, while their literary merit is largely overlooked.

Nevertheless, since their establishment *Chinese Literature* and Panda Books have undeniably played a very important role in promoting Chinese literature. A total of 195 works were translated and published under Panda Books, including 145 novels, 24 poems, 14 folk stories, eight essays, three fables, and one drama. These books were distributed in more than 150 countries and regions around the world. For a long time, the program has "been the only window for foreigners to learn about Chinese literature" (Hu 2018, 18). It is through these books, or their participation in the translation work of this program, that many Western sinologists, translators, and scholars, such as Howard Goldblatt, Geremie R. Barme, Sidney Shapiro, and Bonnie S. McDougall, encountered Chinese literature and found it fascinating. Although Panda Books ceased publication in the early 2000s for a variety of reasons, its overseas influence has not completely vanished. As Lin Xingzi (林杏子) (2009) noted, "Many foreign professionals and readers have appealed through various channels to see Panda Books again." Therefore, in 2009, CICG rebooted the Panda Books brand on the occasion of the Frankfurt Book Fair, publishing in the first collection 40 books (in English translation) by contemporary and modern Chinese writers. The rebirth of Panda Books has been welcomed by overseas booksellers (ibid.).

In summary, the Chinese-English literary translation and cultural communication of the 1980s and 1990s in effect served to build an image of China according to its own vision. Although some books and themes received a certain amount of attention abroad, the overall translation effect was far from ideal. As noted previously, what such source-initiated translation reflects is the self-image of the nation. Consequently, the colorful landscape of modern Chinese literature that Beijing wanted to present was eventually reduced to a monotone image. As a result, the texts translated are regarded by some in the West to be the threadbare material of political propaganda. They are unlikely to attract the target audience and gain their recognition, let alone to fulfill the mission of cultural diplomacy. As Chen Jiangong (陈建功), vice chairman of the China Writers Association, said, "Since the reform and opening up, Panda Books, the most famous Chinese-English collection of translations, has arrived in a number of foreign countries, but many of them are actually 'sleeping' in our overseas offices" (Wu 2009).

Toward a Requisition-Based Mechanism

In the new era, after 1978, China began to pivot from its previous translation concepts and practices. Initially, although cultural exchanges between China and other

countries became increasingly active, the manipulation of state power remained predominant. Translation activities were organized and conducted according to national policies and strategies. Later, as the reform and opening up deepened, such highly organized, self-imposed practices were gradually replaced by a more target-oriented approach, namely translation by requisition. Against the background of globalization, in which countries continued to blend in terms of culture, economy, and politics, the previous national planning pattern could no longer meet the needs involved in helping Chinese literature to "go global." Literary translation should both serve to build a national image and cater to the taste of the target readers. It was therefore necessary to exploit the practices used commonly in the international community, and to move toward a more open, independent, and diversified model of what has been described as *jie chuan chu hai*, "borrowing a boat to go out to the ocean."

From the start of the 21st century, China has continued to embrace globalization and free trade, with its reform and opening up achieving broad and in-depth progress that extends from the economic and social spheres into the cultural and ideological fields. The previous international communication model that was dominated by self-imposed translation appeared to be insufficient to meet a growing demand for cultural exchanges with the rest of the world. Concurrently, globalization brought a series of changes to China's external environment that then influenced the internal structures of the source-initiated translation field in China, and the target-initiated translation in the West. With the protagonists in the two fields working together increasingly closely, their subjective initiative had an impact on the operation of the whole Chinese-English literary translation engine. Currently, an increasingly frequent conversation between the social, cultural, economic, and symbolic capital within the field offers increasing numbers of options to the protagonists. In China, the connections between the field of outbound translation and the field of power are now not as tight as they were before the 21st century. Moreover, translation planning has shifted from state-manipulated to state-funded, serving national interests while promoting the emergence of diversified translation practices in the field.

Under the new historical context, the Chinese government has been fully aware of the importance of building national soft power. In order to create a favorable international environment during the "period of strategic opportunity," it began to adopt the export of Chinese culture as an important national strategy. The report to the 16th Party Congress of November 2002 clarified the importance of culture in international competition for the first time, stating:

> In the present-day world, culture is interactive with economic and political activities, and its status and functions are becoming more and more outstanding in the competition of overall national strength. The power of culture is deeply rooted in the vitality, creativity and cohesion of a nation.
>
> (Hu 2007)

A series of supportive policies and measures were issued in succession. Moreover, the policymakers had learned from previous experience and ceased to act manipulatively. Authorities, such as the Ministry of Commerce, the Publicity Department

of the Central Committee of the CPC, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the General Administration of Customs, the State Taxation Administration, the National Radio and Television Administration (NRTA), the General Administration of Press and Publication, and the State Council Information Office, made a concerted effort to hasten the changes in the outward translation field and to better meet the ever-changing requirements of the field. Multiple measures were taken to promote Chinese books in foreign markets. In 2006, the Ministry of Culture of the PRC released *The 11th Five-Year Plan for Cultural Construction* that proposed to actively promote five major development strategies in the next five to ten years, including the "going global" strategy for Chinese culture. These measures also demonstrated Beijing's determination to facilitate its "Chinese culture going global" agenda. By supporting and funding international cooperation programs, the Chinese government demonstrated its eagerness to interpret China to the world and to connect with the rest of the world via the dissemination of Chinese culture. Thanks to the implementation of the aforementioned translation programs, the works of Chinese writers of different periods are now read by a global audience that is able to enjoy fascinating Chinese literature, and to encounter a rich, vivid, and multifaceted image of China.

Diversified and Multilevel Interaction and Cooperation

At the start of the 21st century, the Chinese government began to broaden its vision for developing translation programs and shifting from the previous source-initiated model to a target-oriented one. Chinese literature thus embarked on a renewed translational journey. On the one hand, Panda Books resumed publication, and on the other hand, the state-sponsored Chinese-English translation model respected the requirements and characteristics of cultural communication, and contributed to the field through multichannel cooperation with various parties in English-speaking countries.

From the perspective of the translation agents, multiple roles such as translator and publisher were not simply combined into one. Instead, as globalization accelerated the movement of people from one country to another, increasing numbers of foreigners who were fluent in Chinese became interested in Chinese literature and began translating contemporary Chinese literature in cooperation with Chinese institutions, facilitating substantially the international dissemination of Chinese culture. The sinologists Howard Goldblatt, Julia Lovell, John Balcom, and Michael Berry were joined by nonscholarly translators, including Bruce Humes, Nicky Harman, and Eric Abrahamsen, thereby expanding the affiliations of the Chinese-English translation of contemporary fiction. Unlike the traditional scholarly translators who tended to select original works according to their own academic interests, or to the work's literary merits, while ignoring its entertainment function, the emerging translators not only had unique insights into contemporary literature but also opted to translate works with a wide range of themes, especially those with an idiosyncratic bent. This expanded greatly the translation boundaries in the 1980s and 1990s, when political readings prevailed. Moreover, in recent

years, the authorities have begun to cultivate professional translators. Under the collaboration between the General Administration of Press and Publication of the PRC and the Arts Council England and the British Centre for Literary Translation (BCLT), the Phoenix Publishing & Media Group (PPMG), and the Penguin Publishing Group co-organized a seminar on Chinese-English literary translation and invited renowned overseas translators, including Goldblatt, Lovell, and McDougall, along with famous Chinese writers, such as Yan Lianke and Bi Feiyu, to join discussions with many domestic Chinese-English translators.

Under the Sino-foreign cooperative efforts, China's translation agenda in the 21st century began to include some of the rising stars of the literary arena, seeking to build a pluralistic image of contemporary China that is based on the reading needs of a Western audience. Before the 21st century, classic and serious literature was largely the only choice of text for translation. A large number of high-profile works were translated and published abroad but failed to attract a large readership. However, as the field's hierarchical structure changed, serious literature was no longer dominant, and much popular literature was translated, thanks to the different preferences of the nonacademic translators. In order to contend with this structural change, the authorities also began to increase the proportion of popular literature in their translation planning. For instance, *Decoded* was one of the first books to be funded by the Contemporary Chinese Works Translation Project (Phase I) that was organized and implemented by the Publicity Department. Other works under this program included several children's books by Cao Wenxuan (曹文轩), and *Running through Zhongguancun* (跑步穿过中关村) by Xu Zechen (徐则臣), a fictional account of the life and fate of marginal people in Beijing. In addition to purely literary works, those of various genres, such as science fiction (sci-fi), mystery, detective, tomb raiding, fantasy, and urban were also valued for their narrative, entertainment, and contemporary features. Moreover, as well as historical narratives by male writers, realistic works about women's individual experiences received extra attention. As a consequence of the growing number of translations with a rich variety of themes, China offered a Western audience many more options than simply critical readings of politics, or readings of sociology with "a Chinese flavor," a shift that satisfied diversified reading needs.

In terms of their translation and publication, 99% of the 200 or so books translated in the 21st century were published by overseas presses, with only two published by domestic literary institutions. The Chinese authorities abandoned their previous "lone-wolf" approach and tend to adopt a "borrowed boats" approach by working with foreign publishers in multiple ways. For instance, according to the cooperation agreement between Penguin China and the Chinese authorities, the UK-based publisher is required to translate and publish five to eight books about China, per year. Penguin China's current managing director, Jo Lusby, was the 2014 winner of the China Book Award for Special Contribution from the General Administration of Press and Publication. She is familiar with Chinese culture and with the Western book market. When selecting Chinese books for a Western audience, Lusby therefore considers both the "going global" policy of China and the sales prospects in the overseas book market. Hence, her picks are usually those that can not only reflect events in China but can also find a suitable publisher and a readership in the

West. Penguin China's publications include *Wolf Totem* (狼图腾) by Jiang Rong (姜戎), *Northern Girls* (北妹) by Sheng Keyi (盛可以), *Blood Crime* (血罪) by He Jiahong (何家弘), *The Civil Servant's Notebooks* (公务员笔记) by Wang Xiaofang (王晓方), and *English* (英格力士) by Wang Gang (王刚). These books, translated from the Chinese, boast a variety of themes, and present a brand-new image of China to a Western audience.

Another example of the changes engendered at the advent of the 21st century is the cooperation between the People's Literature Publishing House and Harper Collins, an internationally renowned publishing house. From a list of around 50 titles provided by the relevant Chinese actors, Harper Collins quickly selected *The Ancient Ship* (古船) by Zhang Wei (张炜), *The Border Town* (边城) by Shen Congwen (沈从文), and *Rickshaw Boy* (骆驼祥子) by Lao She (老舍), and agreed to introduce all of the books on the list to the United States within five years. In addition, the Chinese government has actively built exchange platforms related to international book fairs, in order to facilitate direct contact and cooperation between the Chinese and foreign publishing industries. It also encourages domestic universities to engage with their overseas counterparts. For example, the Center for Language Education and Cooperation (CLEC or Hanban) approved the Project on the Global Communication of Chinese Literature declared by Beijing Normal University (BNU) in 2008. The project was inaugurated in 2010 by the BNU and the University of Oklahoma (OU) and was joined by many outstanding sinologists and translators around the world. Under this project, 13 issues of the English journal *Chinese Literature Today* (CLT) have been released, as of 2020. The journal provides English translations of contemporary Chinese novels, poetry, dramas, and other literary works that are distributed worldwide. To date, the works in English published under the joint patronage include Mo Yan's *Sandalwood Death* and Jia Pingwa's *Ruined City*, as well as collections of poetry and novellas. This collaboration can be regarded as a typical case of shaping a pluralistic image of China via the interaction between the source-initiated translation in China, and the target-initiated translation in the English-speaking world.

Conclusion

Employing *Chinese Literature* and the Panda Books project as examples, this section analyzed the meaning, text selection criteria, and operation system of the self-imposed translation approach, and discussed the Chinese government's increased support for translation through multiple measures under the new historical conditions of the 21st century, as well as the diversified, multifaceted interaction and cooperation among sinologists, Chinese and foreign translators, and publishers, that is consistent with the development of the times. The section elucidated the chronological shift of the state-led translation mechanism from imposition to requisition.

This shift is directly or indirectly related to the international environment, the improvement of comprehensive national strength, the construction of national image, and even the change in international rights of speech. It is a strategic adjustment that must be made at a certain stage of historical development. National planning plays a key role in the source-initiated translation of contemporary

Chinese literature, while the requisition-based translation takes more account of the reading needs and habits of audiences in the receiving country, and also heeds the value and meaning of literature itself, which is of great significance to the globalization of contemporary Chinese literature.

SECTION 2: THREE TYPES OF PUBLISHERS FOR TARGET-INITIATED TRANSLATION

The formulation of a translation is:

> […] an organic, orderly and inter-connected production chain that requires the close cooperation and appropriate operation of each link in the entire literary field, from translation to copyright agency, through to publication and marketing. Once completed, a translation often needs the help of social capital to advance to the dissemination step.
>
> (Wu 2016, 114–115)

As patrons, publishers play an important role in the translation system. They decide which types of works and which writers are to be published and provide the publishing channels for the translated works. They can therefore influence the readership, and construct the image of a work in the target culture. This section investigates overseas publishers' operations since 1978 and analyzes the characteristics and trends of this target-initiated form of translation. The section also discusses the influence of publishers as an important patronage power on the translation and dissemination of contemporary Chinese fiction in the English-speaking world.

Western publishers often operate in a very different way from Chinese institutions. First, in terms of marketing and publicity strategies, publishers in Europe and the United States normally launch the promotion of a new book three months before it goes on sale, during which time they send free copies to major media outlets and invite critics to write book reviews. Such reviews by *The New York Times*, *The Economist*, and other mainstream media are usually the main source from which mass readers can obtain information about a book, and they are therefore important for piquing readers' curiosity. For books they regard as important, European and United States publishers may even commence this marketing program six months in advance. Second, the literary agency system in the West is already mature and sound. Literary agents discover potential writers, help them to find suitable publishers and enter into publishing agreements, assist the promotion campaigns, and handle the overseas copyrights. In short, a literary agent is a bridge between the writer and the publisher; most overseas publishers do not contact the writer directly, rather they negotiate with them via their literary agents. This has implications for China's outbound translation initiative, since, in addition to literary agents, translators play a key role in the production process of a translation. Relatively independent as it is, translating is the most important factor in the successful publication of a book under the Western operating system. This is because Western

publishers base their appraisal and selection of Chinese works on the translated text, and only pay translation fees and conclude agreements when they receive a substantial number of high-quality translated texts. However, it is difficult to hire a good translator to begin a program without paying fees in advance, because the quality of the translation is a determining factor for securing a publishing contract.

Through comparison and analysis, it can be argued that Western publishers have certain advantages in terms of commercial operation and marketing. China's reform and opening up offers an opportunity for the English-speaking countries to witness an open and thriving China, accompanied by closer exchanges and interactions between Chinese and Western literature. In the meantime, overseas publishers have turned their attention to contemporary Chinese novels and have now published many titles. There are three main channels for the publication of contemporary Chinese fiction in translation abroad: academic university presses, mainstream commercial publishers, and publishers specializing in the translation of Chinese literary works.

Academic University Presses

Of the three current avenues for the publication of contemporary Chinese fiction in translation, academic university presses have always been an important means for Western readers to gain access to contemporary Chinese literature. In the United States, for example, over 40 publishers are active in the translation and publication of contemporary Chinese literary works, around a quarter of which are academic university presses with a record of publishing around 30 novels or collected stories since 1978. These include the University of Hawai'i Press (UH Press), Columbia University Press (CUP), the University of Oklahoma Press (OU Press), Duke University Press, University of California Press (Berkeley), Northwestern University Press, Louisiana State University Press (LSU Press), and the State University of New York Press (SUNY Press). Of these eight academic publishers, the UH Press is the most prolific with ten contemporary Chinese novels in translation in its portfolio. This is followed by CUP with five novels, and the OU Press with four books, including one novella collection, while the other five presses have released one book (separate edition), or one collection of short stories, each.

In terms of both quantity and timeliness, academic university presses can be regarded as a principal channel for the overseas translation and the publication of contemporary Chinese writing. The research conducted by He Mingxing regarding the world influence of Chinese fiction in English translation that was based on library collections found that academic presses were not only "the earliest to translate and publish contemporary Chinese literature," but also "the most influential" (He 2014, 16).

This is partly due to the establishment of academic institutions for China studies at these universities, such as the Center for Chinese Studies at the University of Hawai'i, and the Weatherhead East Asian Institute (WEAI) at Columbia University. These universities or academic institutions are home to a relatively large group of sinologists who are fascinated by Chinese literature, and who are engaged actively

in the study and translation of contemporary Chinese works. For instance, in 1979, Yang Xiangyi and Gladys Yang were invited by the British Sinology Society to attend its second annual conference at the University of Leeds, where Ms. Yang gave a lecture titled "Chinese Women Writers" that introduced in detail important women writers from China, such as Zhang Jie, Wang Anyi, and Dai Houying (戴厚英), to a British audience. As Fu Wenhui (付文慧) noted, "This lecture has also influenced the Anglophone world's selection of source text to a great extent. … These women writers and their works were gradually favored and translated by the West" (Fu 2015, 16).

More importantly, the sinologist community currently occupies a vantage point in its connection with the presses and its patronage power, and is hence assured of material rewards and publication that paves the way for contemporary Chinese fiction to attract the attention of these presses. For example, in 1982, Zhang Jie, Li Zhun (李凖), Jiang Zilong (蒋子龙), Feng Mu (冯牧), and other Chinese writers visited the United States and attended the Symposium for Chinese and American Writers held at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), along with American writers, including Arthur Miller and Allen Ginsberg. Such events have increased the Western interest in Chinese literature of the new period.

It is likely that academic university presses will continue to play an important role in guiding Western audiences to read and appreciate contemporary Chinese works. As a result of their influence in academic circles, it is believed that the global dissemination of Chinese writing will be taken to the next level.

Major Commercial Publishers

A large number of publishing companies have played an increasingly important role in the course of introducing contemporary Chinese fiction to the West with a growing momentum, especially in recent years. As a component of the patronage, these profit-driven organizations guide market trends and may have a direct impact on the text selection, translation agents, promotional models, and dissemination of contemporary Chinese fiction in the English-speaking world.

In this category are both large publishers, such as the Penguin Publishing Group, Amazon, and Arcade Publishing, and small and medium-sized publishers, such as Grove Press and Houghton Mifflin. Due to space constraints, we will consider the publication of contemporary Chinese novels by only the five most prolific commercial publishers in the United States and Britain, namely, the Penguin Publishing Group[1] (13 books), Amazon (nine books), Grove Press (seven books), Arcade Publishing (seven books), and Simon & Schuster (seven books).

A study of the translated works of these commercial publishers shows that their text selection is market-driven. In other words, they tend to select literary works that are likely to attract the target readers, including the following three genres:

- First are works by classical writers, largely due to the admiration and reverence for them. One of the Chinese writers who is translated most in this genre is Mo Yan, whose literary status and influence in China and beyond is unquestionable. Mo's selection as the 2012 laureate was not only a hallmark event of the successful translation of Chinese literature in recent years, but also an opportunity

to propel his works further into the sights of overseas publishers. Another is Liu Zhenyun, a representative of the "new realistic" writers in China, and the winner of numerous literary awards, both at home and abroad, including the Mao Dun Literature Award and the People's Literature Award. The winning by these authors of international awards has not only increased overseas readers' interests in contemporary Chinese writing but also indirectly helped to facilitate the reception of other Chinese writers by Penguin and other major publishers in Britain and America. For instance, Mai Jia's *Decoded* was included in the Penguin Modern Classics series in 2014, making him the first contemporary Chinese writer to be included in this series after his predecessors, Lu Xun, Qian Zhongshu, and Eileen Chang.

- Second are the works that depict today's China, especially the life and spiritual pursuit of the younger generation; as China's national power continues to rise, the revealing of different aspects of the real China through translated literature has gradually incentivized commercial publishers. Therefore, a large number of books with varied themes that address China's modern life are being translated and published, especially those by popular young writers. For example, the two major author selections of Amazon are Han Han and Feng Tang. Han is one of the most representative contemporary Chinese writers born in the 1980s, and was on the cover of the April 2010 issue of *Time* magazine.[2] His recently published *1988: I Want to Talk with the World* was his first "road novel"; it addressed the young Chinese generation's inner confusion and search for faith by mingling the present and the past on a road trip. Meanwhile, Feng is a representative post-1970s writer who is also a poet, doctor, and businessman. He was on the 2013 China Writers Rich List, and the keywords for his work are "youth" and "coming-of-age," as he writes stories about the younger generation in China, for example in the novel *Beijing Beijing*.

- Third is contemporary Chinese genre fiction that consists primarily of sci-fi and *xianxia* novels. Known for their vivid imagination and originality, these novels appeal to a large audience with their orchestrated storytelling, intriguing suspense, and dramatic plots, making such works popular with British and American commercial publishers. An example is Liu Cixin's *The Three-Body Problem* (2014) published by Tor Books, a division of Macmillan. In this novel, the 2015 Hugo Award winner laid a strong foundation for the global reach of Chinese sci-fi. Meanwhile, in terms of the *xianxia* genre, *To the Sky Kingdom*, the first novel by Tang Qi, is currently one of the most popular web novels in China. This romantic love story that is based on an ancient Chinese myth, was ranked 11th in Mopian Hurun's *Most Valuable Creative Works IP 2017* list (Hurun 2017), and was translated and published by Amazon.

Publishers Focused on Chinese Literature

In English-speaking countries, some publishing houses or periodical presses, such as Penguin China, China Books and Periodicals, and Merwin Asia, focus on translated Chinese literary works and are dedicated to exploring the artistic value and market potential of Chinese writing. They constitute the third translation channel.

The three above-mentioned publishers have a text selection strategy that differs from that of their academic and commercial peers. They are more purposeful and tend to select from a broader range of works and writers. For instance, after its purchase of the English-language copyright to *Wolf Totem*, Penguin China launched effective campaigns to promote the book. As Jo Lusby, Managing Director of Penguin Books China, explained in an interview, "When we promote *Wolf Totem* for the English-speaking market … we have created buzz among Penguin's targeted readership. Our core competitiveness abroad is the affinity with readers" (Jing 2012). Under the influence of this specialized marketing mechanism, *Wolf Totem* achieved great success in the English-speaking world, winning the inaugural 2007 Man Asian Literary Prize. The book is regarded as a model for the overseas publication of contemporary Chinese literature. However, both the number and the literary influence of this type of publisher worldwide are limited, and efforts are required to discover more of them.

Conclusion

Literature is one of the most intuitive and convenient ways to gain an understanding of China and is also an important cultural vehicle for building China's image as a major world power. In the cross-cultural journey of contemporary Chinese literature, the role of the publishing house as a "visible hand" has often interfered with and even manipulated the process of translation. This includes the selection of source texts and translation agents, as well as decisions about the translation and marketing strategies, which directly influence the reception of translated works among the target readership. The previous supremacy of academic presses is now being replaced by a competitive tripartite situation, comprising not only academic presses but also commercial presses and presses focused on Chinese literature. Together, they have made important contributions to introducing Chinese literature to the Anglophone reading community.

Notes

1 Penguin Publishing Group owns six brands: Penguin Books, Penguin UK, Penguin US, Penguin Australia, Penguin Canada, and Penguin China. Amongst these, Penguin China falls into the third category of publishing house for statistics, and the others are all attributable to the Penguin Publishing Group.
2 Han Han appears on the cover of *Time* magazine (Asia edition), joking he is "ambushed" in the interview. November 12, 2009. http://news.sohu.com/20091112/n268156949.shtml [last accessed November 11, 2020].

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4 Translation and Reception of Representative Chinese Writers

Introduction

In the process of translation, "who," "says what," "in which channel," "to whom," and "with what effect" comprise the five basic elements of verbal communication (Lasswell 1948, 117). "Effect" is the focus of the entire translation process and the other four elements ultimately serve this goal. It not only mirrors the function of translation but also reflects its effectiveness and impact on the audience's cognition and behavior, through the communication of subjects in a particular field via a specific channel, which will in turn affect the whole translation and communication process. The intention when exploring the elements that constitute the translation process is to examine the effect of translation.

Translation effect refers to understanding the reception by readers of a work and the aesthetic interests and value systems it represents through a series of behaviors such as reading and sharing during the circulation process. The focus is on exploring the commonalities and regularities of readers' reception in a cross-cultural context. The question of how contemporary Chinese novels in translation have been treated and received in the English-speaking world cannot be answered without examining the effect of reader-centered translation. This is therefore an important consideration when promoting the globalization of Chinese literature and culture.

Studies of translation effect are at the core of our understanding of Chinese literature "going abroad," and as such are indispensable as a means of improving the literary translation system and enhancing cultural soft power. However, such studies are scarce due to the diversity, ambiguity, and the dynamics of audiences, as well as the constraints of field, time, and space. Existing research approaches include (1) analyzing library collections and book reviews in influential newspapers; (2) quantifying awards, collections, professional audiences, media mentions, general audiences and sales volumes; and (3) classifying readers as general consumers, intellectuals, and professionals (such as sinologists), and organizing reader feedback at different times drawing on readers' letters, book reviews, and historical documents.

This chapter employs a reader-based approach to investigate three aspects; that is, library collections, Amazon book sales, and reader reviews to the maximum extent possible with existing technology, to learn about reading channels for

translations, audience size, feedback from readers, and reception by professional organizations. This will support a comprehensive evaluation of the translation effect of contemporary Chinese novels in the English-speaking world.

A reader-based investigation of translation effect necessarily begins by determining the size of the readership. Generally, the larger the readership, the more likely the influence of a work will be widespread. At present, if someone wishes to read a book, they can borrow it from a library or purchase it from a book retailer; therefore, library collections and book sales are two of the key indicators when investigating the effect of translation. Library collections determine the number of books available for borrowing, partly indicating level of accessibility to readers. They also reflect recognition of the literary value of a work disseminated via mainstream public reading channels and serve as an estimation of potential readership. Retail book sales are the most intuitive data set, reflecting the size of readership, and also being an important yardstick for book circulation and market response, giving a clear indication of the reading interests of individual readers.

Furthermore, the investigation of translation effect also involves measuring how well a work is received by its audience, that is, the validity of a work, its aesthetic appeal, and the value system it represents. Readership is a pluralistic and complex concept. Due to such uncontrollable factors as family and social backgrounds, personal education levels, and hobbies and interests, different readers may have different expectations and preferences, resulting in differing feedback on and reception of the same work. Therefore, this chapter aims to explore the differences in the attention given to and reception of contemporary Chinese novels by both professional and general readership. Professional readership refers to book reviewers specializing in writing and publishing reviews in print or online book review journals, websites, blogs, or other media, whereas general readership refers to those who provide ratings and post comments via online bookstore platforms or book clubs. While book reviewers are typically subjective when recommending and commenting, they are usually authoritative in their analysis of the themes and characters within works and focus on interpreting their aesthetic value, and their reviews are more professional, persuasive, and influential than those of general readers. Data regarding general readers' reviews include the number of readers engaging in rating, as well as the ratings and reviews by readers, which intuitively reflect how a work and its aesthetic interest and value system are being received by general readers. Their feedback, as provided through unrestrained speech and emotional expression in their reviews, produces a more realistic reflection of the reasons for their choices and the degree of their emotional and cognitive satisfaction, becoming an important means of judging the value of a work and how well it is received. The analysis of reviews by professional readers and by general readers using word frequency statistics, and intensive reading of the text reveals characteristics shared by the two groups in terms of attention, reading experience, and reception. Library collections, sales volumes, reviews, and ratings comprise some of the most significant data for determining the size of the general readership and breadth of the translation effect. Professional readers' reviews and general readers' ratings and reviews reflect the attention and reception

of works by professional readers, book review agencies, general readers, and the mainstream literary system of the target language and are also a good indication of the depth of the translation effect. Comparing similarities and differences between professional and general readers in terms of attention and reception can help us achieve a more detailed analysis of the translation effect as experienced by different groups of readers.

Since the reform and opening up, there have been an increasing number of contemporary Chinese novels as well as representative writers, whose works have been introduced to English-speaking countries through translation. This chapter analyzes the translation effect of representative works by Yu Hua, Jia Pingwa, and Mai Jia in the United States. Yu Hua has long been considered an icon of avant-garde writing in China and is one of the world's most influential modern Chinese writers. His novels, mostly depicting township life, combine serious literature and popular literature, and his representative work, *To Live: A Novel*, has been well received by readers both at home and abroad. Jia Pingwa is a renowned writer with strong local characteristics. His works are full of strong sentiments for hometown and local accents, and as such represent a great challenge to English language audiences, a case in point being *Turbulence*. Mai Jia is arguably the most successful spy novelist in China today. His works are mostly set during the historical era when the Communist Party of China (CPC) and Kuomintang (KMT) were jointly fighting against Japan. They contain elements of both suspense that Western readers love and the narrative style of Chinese allegorical revolutionary sagas. *Decoded*, Mai's debut work, set a new sales record for a Chinese literary work 24 hours after going on the market. The following sections will explore the translation effect of these three writers in the United States, a major English-speaking country and the world's largest book market, by examining library collections, sales volumes, and book reviews.

SECTION 1: YU HUA'S NOVELS[1]

Yu Hua is a representative novelist of modern China. To date, he has written five full-length novels, 12 collections of long short stories, and more than 20 collections of short stories. His novels *To Live: A Novel* and *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant* ranked in the top ten most influential works in China during the 1990s. He was awarded the Zhuang Chongwen Literature Award in 1992, the China Book Award for Special Contributions in 2005, and "Writer of the Year" at the Chinese Literature Media Awards in 2014.

From *The Past and the Punishments* published in English in 1996 to *The April 3rd Incident: Stories* published in English in 2018, Yu's novels have been translated into more than 30 languages and distributed widely in more than 40 countries and regions for over 20 years. Whether these works have truly reached their target audiences to effectively disseminate the spirit and values of Chinese literature and culture requires an examination of the translation effect.

Overview of Yu Hua's Works in English in the United States

To date, eight of Yu Hua's works have been translated and published in the English-speaking world, including five novels and three story collections. With the exception of *The Past and the Punishments* (translated by Andrew F. Jones) in 1996, which was produced by the University of Hawaii Press, the remainder were all published by Random House, including *To Live: A Novel* (translated by Michael Berry) and *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant* (translated by Andrew F. Jones) in 2003, *Cries in the Drizzle: A Novel* (translated by Allan H. Barr) in 2007, *Brothers: A Novel* (translated by Eileen Cheng-yin Chow and Carlos Rojas) in 2010, *Boy in the Twilight: Stories of the Hidden China* (translated by Allan H. Barr) in 2014, *The Seventh Day* (translated by Allan H. Barr) in 2015, and *The April 3rd Incident: Stories* (translated by Allan H. Barr) in 2018. Specific information is shown in Table 4.1.

From the first collection of short stories published in 1996, *The Past and the Punishments*, to the full-length novel *The Seventh Day* in 2016, and the audiobook of *To Live* in 2017, and *The April 3rd Incident: Stories* in 2018, Yu's novels have been translated steadily and continuously in the United States from the end of the 20th century to the present. This century, one of his novels has been launched onto the United States book market every five years on average. Moreover, the audiobook release of *To Live*, 14 years after its release in paperback, can be seen as evidence of its good reception in the commercialized American market. The English translations include all of Yu's full-length novels and some of his story collections, such as *The Past and the Punishments* from the early years, *To Live*, *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant* and *Brothers* from the middle years, and *The Seventh Day* in more recent years, as well as *The April 3rd Incident: Stories*, an early work that has been subject to retranslation. Such large-scale translation and broad coverage in terms of material selection allow Yu's American followers a more systematic and coherent reading experience, which is also conducive to attracting more new readers through the creation of a scaled effect.

Yu's translators have been from an academic background. Unlike Mo Yan's novels, which are translated exclusively by Howard Goldblatt, Yu's novels have five different translators, all of whom are university professors or scholars of Chinese literature. Andrew F. Jones from UC Berkeley focuses on Chinese local literature and popular cultural forms such as music; Allan H. Barr from Pomona College specializes in Ming and Qing novels as represented by Pu Songling; Michael Berry at UCLA is an expert on Chinese cinema; Eileen Cheng-yin Chow is a visiting professor at Duke University, and has long studied serial storytelling and popular culture; and Carlos Rojas, also from Duke University, studies gender and video art. These scholarly translators have a good understanding of Chinese culture and their aesthetic tastes and abilities in terms of value judgment lay the foundation for conveying the ideological core of the originals.

Moreover, the shift in publishing channels from academic university presses to commercial publishers has also broadened the potential audience. With the exception of *The Past and the Punishments*, an early work published by the University of

Table 4.1 Translation and Publication of Yu Hua's Works in the United States

Original title	English title	Format	Translator	Publisher	Publication date
《往事与刑罚》	*The Past and the Punishments*	Paperback Hardcover	Andrew F. Jones	University of Hawaii Press	May 1996
《活着》	*To Live: A Novel*	Paperback Audiobook	Michael Berry	Random House Anchor Books	Aug 2003
				Tantor Audio	Aug 2017
《许三观卖血记》	*Chronicle of a Blood Merchant*	Hardcover	Andrew F. Jones	Random House Pantheon Books	Oct 2003
		Paperback		Random House	Nov 2004
《在细雨中呼喊》	*Cries in the Drizzle: A Novel*	Paperback	Allan H. Barr	Random House	Oct 2007
《兄弟》	*Brothers: A Novel*	Audiobook	Eileen Cheng-yin Chow Carlos Rojas	Recorded Books LLC	Jan 2009
				Recorded Books LLC (reprint)	Mar 2011
		Paperback		Random House	Jan 2010
				Picador (reprint)	Feb 2010
		Hardcover		Random House Pantheon Books	Jan 2009
《黄昏里的男孩》（短篇小说集）	*Boy in the Twilight: Stories of the Hidden China* (collection of short stories)	Hardcover	Allan H. Barr	Random House Pantheon Books	Jan 2014
		Paperback		Random House	Oct 2014
《第七天》	*The Seventh Day*	Hardcover	Allan H. Barr	Random House Pantheon Books	Jan 2015
		Paperback		Random House	Jan 2016
《四月三日事件》（中篇小说集）	*The April 3rd Incident: Stories*	Hardcover	Allan H. Barr	Random House Pantheon Books	Nov 2018
		e-book			
		Audiobook		Random House Audio	

Hawaii Press, all seven subsequent novels (collections) were published by Random House. At present, Yu's audience has expanded from American sinologists, scholars, and students interested in contemporary Chinese literature to include a wide range of general readers.

In summary, the translation of Yu's novels in the United States spans a long period of time, encompassing a broad range of works. Publication of his work has transitioned from an academic activity to a commercial operation, laying a solid foundation for acculturating Yu in the United States. To determine how his works have been received in the United States and whether they have had an impact on readership, it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive survey of the following three dimensions.

Translation Effect

To measure the size of the readership and the reception of Yu's novels in the United States, this study selects eight of Yu's titles in English to examine their library collections and percentages on OCLC WorldCat[2] as well as their sales rankings on Amazon, the largest online bookstore in America. In addition, the study collects and analyzes book reviews and readers' ratings and reviews on Amazon and Goodreads[3] as comprehensively as possible.

Library Collections

A search of OCLC WorldCat reveals Yu Hua's works in English translation are collected by 3,295 American libraries. Among them, *The Past and the Punishments* is the most collected work, held at 978 libraries, representing 10.04% of all libraries. The other titles are *Brothers* at 553 libraries (5.68%), *To Live* at 473 libraries (4.86%), *The Seventh Day* at 400 libraries (4.11%), *Boy in the Twilight: Stories of the Hidden China* at 326 libraries (3.35%), *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant* at 270 libraries (2.77%), *Cries in the Drizzle* at 205 libraries (2.10%), and *The April 3rd Incident: Stories* at 90 libraries (0.92%).

The above figures suggest relatively narrow public readership access. With the exception of *The Past and the Punishments*, his other works are held in the collections of fewer than 600 libraries. The collections of his bestseller *To Live* are in fewer than half the collections of *Kafka on the Shore* by Haruki Murakami, with the latter being collected by 1,382 libraries (14.20%) during the same period.

Furthermore, there are very few e-book and audiobook collections, creating a disadvantage in the Internet era, as multimedia reading is increasing. Statistics show that in 2018 sales of "e-books of fiction have overtaken paper books of fiction (in American libraries) in terms of circulation increment." And "the share of funding for the purchase of multimedia resources (audiobooks, DVDs/Blu-rays and streaming media) in (American) libraries has reached 30%, up from 27% in 2017."[4] Thus, the e-book and audiobook collections of Yu's novels appear to be too small to meet the expectations of readers who prefer to read electronically.
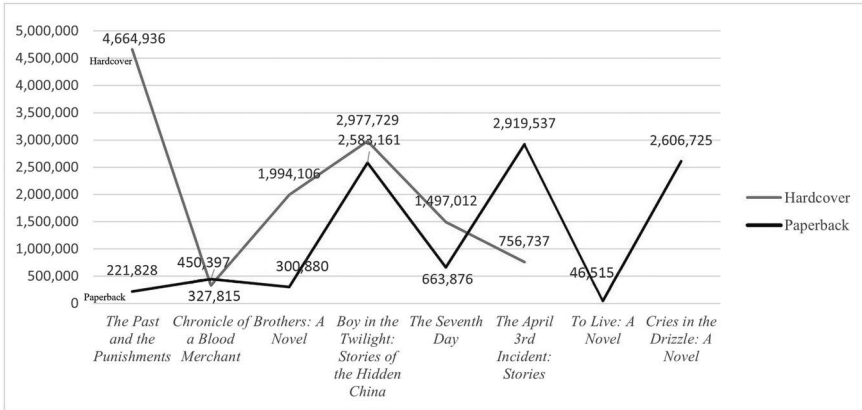
Figure 4.1 Sales Rankings for Yu Hua's Novels in English (Paper Edition) on Amazon US

Amazon Sales Rankings

The three bestselling novels in paperback are *To Live*, *The Past and the Punishments* and *Brothers*; the three bestselling e-books are *To Live, The Seventh Day* and *Brothers*; the two least well-selling novels are *The April 3rd Incident: Stories* and *Cries in the Drizzle*. When combined with audiobook rank, it is evident that sales of *To Live* are significantly ahead, whether in paperback, e-book or audiobook format. The sales rankings for Yu Hua's novels in the books category on Amazon US are shown in Figures 4.1 and 4.2.

As shown by the sales rankings for contemporary Chinese novels in English on Amazon US,[5] the e-book of *To Live* lags behind *Happy Dreams* by Jia Pingwa, and the audiobook is placed slightly behind *Red Sorghum: A Novel of China* by Mo Yan, although the paper edition is significantly ahead, indicating that the novel
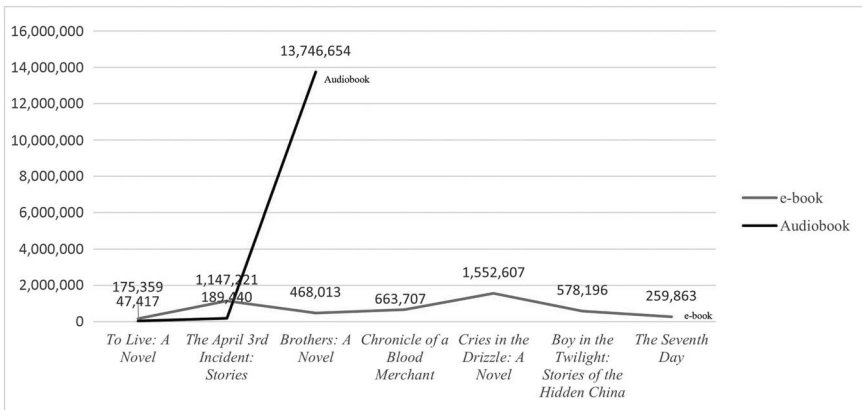
Figure 4.2 Sales Rankings for Yu Hua's Novels in English (Nonpaper Edition) on Amazon US

Table 4.2 Sales Rankings for Selected Contemporary Chinese Novels on Amazon US (Paper Edition)

Title and author	Paper edition	Kindle	Audiobook
To Live by Yu Hua	46,515	175,359	47,417
Dream of Ding Village by Yan Lianke	213,860	568,261	/
Red Sorghum by Mo Yan	298,783	494,081	36,928
Decoded by Mai Jia	419,034	802,615	222,143
Happy Dreams by Jia Pingwa	493,920	88,948	105,024
Raise the Red Lantern by Su Tong	600,120	/	/
The Song of Everlasting Sorrow: A Novel of Shanghai by Wang Anyi	903,026	832,415	/

enjoys relatively high popularity among American readers. However, the fact that even *To Live* ranks #47,417 reveals much about the marginal status of contemporary Chinese novels in the United States (Table 4.2).

Reader Reviews

The audience's reception and reaction are acknowledged to be an important link in the communication chain of a work, and audience's choice of and feedback on media outlets and communication content directly inform how the quality and effect of a work is evaluated. In 1941, Herta Herzog introduced "uses and gratifications" theory after interviewing people who listened to radio soap operas and determining that they sought three different types of gratification: emotional, wishful thinking, and learning, which since also become the three dimensions for measuring whether or not a work is well received. Reception and reaction to novels in English translation can be determined according to two sources: reviews by professional readers and reviews by general readers. Reviews by professional readers include book reviews published by professional journals or by the media such as radio, and such recommendations and critiques serve as an important reference point for some people's reading material selection. These reviews assist people in deciding whether reading a particular work will deliver emotional satisfaction broaden their horizons or enrich their lives. Reviews by general readers are typically written by ordinary consumers after they have read a book, and are mostly casual and fragmented, and located on various book review websites.

American book review journals include *Boston Review*, *Kirkus Reviews*, *Publishers Weekly*, *The New York Journal of Books*, *The New York Review of Books*, *Booklist*, *Bookmarks Magazine*, *Library Journal*, and *Amazon.com Review*. Serious newspapers and online magazines that publish book reviews include *The Boston Globe*, *The International Herald Tribune*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *National Public Radio (NPR)*, *United Press International (UPI)*, *The Star Tribune*, *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *Time*, *The Seattle Times*, and *The Cedar Rapids Gazette*. Popular magazines include *O, The Oprah Magazine*, and *Asia Pacific Arts*. To date, there have been a total of 63 book

reviews on Yu's novels by professional readers published in English in the United States. These novels are by descending order of the number of reviews: *Brothers* (13), *Boy in the Twilight: Stories of the Hidden China* (12), *The Seventh Day* (11), *To Live* (9), *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant* (7), *The April 3rd Incident: Stories* (6), *The Past and the Punishments* (3), and *Cries in the Drizzle* (2).

To Live has received the best reception from professional readers, followed by *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant*, *The Seventh Day*, *Boy in the Twilight: Stories of the Hidden China*, *The April 3rd Incident: Stories*, *The Past and the Punishments*, *Brothers*, and *Cries in the Drizzle*. A word frequency search of all the reviews by professional readers reveals readers generally focus on a novel's relevance to modern Chinese society ("China," "Chinese," and "modern"), storyline ("story" and "stories"), themes ("blood," "family," "death," "life," and "people") and characterization ("characters"). Words implying value judgment include (in descending order of frequency): "epic," "important," "simple, simplicity, simplistic, unadorned," "elegant," "tragic," "sentimental, sentimentalism, sentimentality," "unforgettable," "influential," "sorrow, sorrowful," "great," "mordant, sharp," "successful," "traditional," "graphic," "gripping," and "toneless." It is not difficult to see from this list the polarization of professional reviews on Yu's novels, although the majority of comments are positive.

The above reveals the universal values and spiritual core of Yu's novels have been well received by professional readers. In the case of the top-selling *To Live*, for example, *Time*'s review says Yu Hua's "sincere writing makes Fugui a hero, and the will to live becomes the only thing that cannot be taken away."[6] *The Washington Post* notes that *To Live*'s portrayal of "the struggle between desire and human nature makes it an epic."[7] Chinese-American author Lisa See writes:

> Yu Hua is the most profound voice coming out of China today. *To Live* reaches not only into the very essence of China and the Chinese people but into the blood and bones core of what it means to be a human being.[8]

Meanwhile, *The Seattle Times* describes *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant* as "A rare achievement in literature … [Xu Sanguan is] a character that reflects not just a generation but the soul of a people."[9]

In addition to detailing the themes and highlighting the spiritual core of the novels, professional readers tend to focus on Yu's writing style and on explaining how his works reflect social reality. In its Book Review of *The Past and the Punishments*, *The New York Times* describes Yu Hua as "one of those Chinese writers whose artistic attainments matured in the 1980s and 1990s. The eight stories in this book have left the socialist realistic literature far behind."[10] In its review of *Boy in the Twilight: Stories of the Hidden China*, the popular journal *O, The Oprah Magazine* quotes writer and editor Abbe Wright as saying Yu's "'popular realism' sketches a portrait of his country through fictional vignettes of everyday life."[11] According to the NPR book review, "Yu's new book The Seventh Day – by turns inventive and playful and dark and disturbing, with much to say about modern China – takes that idea and weaves it into a fabulist tale."[12] *Publishers Weekly*

comments on *Cries in the Drizzle*, saying: "Though the fractured structure has its disjointed moments, Barr's translation perfectly captures the ebb and flow of a community on the brink of change."[13] In her review of *The April 3rd Incident: Stories*, Jennifer Rothschild writes:

> While structurally this collection reveals how literature was opening up and changing in sync with the growing Chinese economy, the character-driven content comments more on human nature than politics … [This] collection shows that his literary prowess and mastery were present from the start.[14]

There are also negative reviews of Yu's works in English, examples including criticism of the narrative style of *Brothers* and the fractured structure of *Cries in the Drizzle*. In a review of *Brothers* published in *The New York Times*, American novelist Jess Row alludes to the Chinese classic, *The Book of Rites* to describe the novel as a work with "yiyin" (遗音) or "lingering sound." Identifying it as a work of apparent simplicity carries within it enormous resonances and reservoirs of feeling. He further notes that the differences between Chinese and Western languages and the ambiguity of the narrative style make it difficult and frustrating for any professional reader like himself.[15] *Kirkus Reviews* comments that the English version of *To Live* does not reflect why Yu Hua is an internationally celebrated author, directly attributing the book's popularity to the highly successful film, and saying "Berry's translation is marred by infelicitous phrasing (perhaps the author's), shapeless sentences, vacuous rhetorical questions and fragments of American-inflected slang."[16]

The perceptions of professional readers certainly vary. *The Boston Globe*, *The Washington Post* and *The New Yorker* all praise *Brothers* as "epic,"[17] while *The New York Times* finds the final "marathon sex scene tedious to the extreme."[18] Negative reviews by professional readers focus on the fractured structure and vague narrative style of the work. For instance, in its review of *Cries in the Drizzle*, *Publishers Weekly* says that "the fractured structure has its disjointed moments."[19] It is undeniable, however, that these professional readers' explorations of theme, language, and artistic style have enriched the pluralistic construction of a novel's meaning, maintaining the difficult yet active presence of texts under American ideological and poetic norms.

In summary, professional readership focuses on the social realities reflected in the English translations and the writer's personal style, believing these works display the values and humanist spirit of contemporary Chinese novels. The positive comments touch on the thematic significance and universal values of the novels as well as the artistic style of the author. The negative reviews mainly concentrated on disjointed narrative structure or unclear narrative style. Due to differences in reading habits and aesthetic interests, there are inevitably polarized reviews of the same work. However, reviews, whether positive or negative to some extent, elaborate on the presence of the writings in the ideological and poetic contexts of the country into which they were translated.

In terms of their reception by general readers, the stars and ratings for Yu's novels in English are shown in Table 4.3, reflecting the modest popularity of his works

Table 4.3 Ratings for Yu Hua's Novels in English on Amazon US and Goodreads[20]

Original title	English title	Stars/ Ratings on Amazon US	Stars/Ratings/ Reviews on Goodreads	"Want to read" clicks on Goodreads	Goodreads edition
《往事与刑罚》	*The Past and the Punishments*	5/1	3.90/94/8	470	Paperback
			3.33/3/0	3	Hardcover
《活着》	*To Live: A Novel*	4.4/95	4.25/3,912/396	9,982	Paperback
			4.28/205/13	495	e-book
《许三观卖血记》	*Chronicle of a Blood Merchant*	3.9/22	4.00/1,245/105	3,101	Paperback
			4.02/43/2	86	Hardcover
			4.33/33/2	66	e-book
《在细雨中呼喊》	*Cries in the Drizzle: A Novel*	3.10/9	3.70/200/18	479	Paperback
《兄弟》	*Brothers: A Novel*	3.9/36	3.84/76/20	171	Paperback
			3.95/1,349/162	3,857	Hardcover
			4.04/51/4	79	e-book
			3.00/1/0	2	Audiobook
《黄昏里的男孩》	*Boy in the Twilight: Stories of the Hidden China*	3.70/34	3.71/14/2	22	Paperback
			3.52/298/49	1,104	Hardcover
			4.29/17/1	24	e-book
《第七天》	*The Seventh Day*	4.20/39	3.93/15/7	30	Paperback
			3.84/775/101	3056	Hardcover
			4.02/60/4	94	e-book
《四月三日事件》	*The April 3rd Incident: Stories*	N/A	3.17/54/12	1044	Hardcover
			5.0/1/0	5	Paperback
			3.00/1/1	5	e-book
			5.00/1/0	2	Audiobook

among general readers. Both the ratings and "want to read" clicks of *To Live* are in the leading position, with star ratings on different websites and of different editions staying above 4.2 (out of 5). This shows that *To Live* is Yu's best-received work among general readers. *Cries in the Drizzle* and *The April 3rd Incident* by contrast have a smaller readership and lower ratings.

Other e-books on Goodreads (that is not *The April 3rd Incident*) receive higher ratings than printed books, but the number of readers is incommensurate with the sales rank, indicating e-books may bring a more convenient reading experience, but silent readers need to be "activated" to ensure the works become more socially influential.

A word-frequency search of all English reviews of Yu's novels in English on Amazon US and Goodreads reveals general readers are mainly interested in story-telling ("stories" and "story"), setting ("China," "Chinese," "Cultural Revolution," and "time"), universal themes ("people," "family," "blood," "death," "childhood," and "youth"), and characterization ("character" and "characters").

Compared to professional reviewers, general readers are also more interested in personal and emotional experiences. In their descriptions, positive and neutral words are used much more frequently than derogatory words. The most frequently used word is "interesting." Positive words include "great," "good," and "beautiful." Neutral words include "sad," "simple," "different," "complex," and "dark." Derogatory words include "depressing," "confused," and "annoyed." These findings partly reflect general readers' diverse experiences reading Yu's novels and their affirmative attitude overall.

Analysis of the Overall Translation Effect

Eight of Yu Hua's novels in English have achieved better results than other contemporary Chinese novels in terms of library collections, Amazon sales rankings, and readers' reviews. Aside from the appeal of the texts themselves, the positive translation effect of his novels in the United States can mainly be attributed to the active engagement of the original author, professional decisions by translators, promotion by such institutions as the publisher, and the boost given via such multimodal media as film.

Active Engagement of the Original Author

In the process of constructing and disseminating translations, the original author, Yu Hua actively participated in selecting translators and publishers, editing and revising translated texts, and promoting and distributing his works. These positive interactions between author and translator have produced high-quality translations. For example, *The Past and the Punishments* was translated by Yu's friend Andrew F. Jones, and *Boy in the Twilight: Stories of the Hidden China* was translated by Allan H. Barr, also a close friend of Yu. Yu discussed the translation of *To Live* in person with Michael Berry in New York, helping to deepen Berry's understanding of the original work. Eileen Cheng-yin Chow and Carlos Rojas, the translators of

Brothers, were chosen by Yu during a visit to Harvard University. After repeated rejections by publishers, the draft translation of *To Live* was finally accepted by Anchor Books, a division of Random House Inc., in 2003, as a consequence of Yu's unremitting efforts. The original author also played a key role in editing and revising the translation. Upon receiving the English translation of *Brothers* in 2008, the editor stated: "I had discussed with Yu Hua about making some abridgements, but eventually gave up because he did not agree" (Zeng 2017, 33). Thanks to the joint efforts of the author and translators, the book "retains Yu's playful and satiric tone to the maximum extent, making it a rare translation of a Chinese novel that has been widely disseminated and critically acclaimed by the literati of the English-speaking world."[21] Yu also participated in the International Writing Program (IWP) in Iowa City, USA, for three months between 2002 and 2003. The program's agenda included lectures, symposia and readings at the University of Iowa, as well as visits to various parts of the United States (Deng 2014, 52–55). At the same time, he joined a lecture tour to more than 20 prestigious American universities, including Yale, Harvard, and Duke to promote the English-version release of *To Live* and *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant*.[22] The original author's engagement, especially with potential readers, can evoke expectations and stimulate their interest in reading their works, which can help contribute to a better reception from audience members.

Professional Decisions by Translators

The five translators of Yu's novels are all sinologists at prestigious American universities, all with expertise in Chinese language and literary skills and an interest in contemporary Chinese literature and popular culture. They not only love and appreciate Yu's works, but are familiar with the needs of the target audience. For example, Allan H. Barr chose to translate *Boy in the Twilight: Stories of the Hidden China* partly because the social issues reflected in the novel, such as "emotional problems, marriage crisis and the generation gap,"[23] would resonate easily with Western readers. In 1997, Michael Berry wrote to Yu Hua during the summer holidays to offer to translate *To Live* and obtained Yu's consent. Berry completed the translation without the assistance of a patron or a guaranteed publisher out of sheer love of Yu's writing.[24]

In addition to selecting the original work to be translated and identifying the target audience, professional translators frequently need to mediate conflicts between author and editor. For example, Berry reported that he and the editor at Random House had a tug-of-war over the revision of the translation, ending in a stalemate (Wu 2014, 48–53). After communicating with Yu Hua, Eileen Cheng-yin Chow and Carlos Rojas wrote a long letter to convince the editor that the repetition in *Brothers* should be retained as it was an important feature of the novel.[25] By fighting for more decision-making power over the translation process, good translators can constrain the personal and style preferences and ideological influences of editors, thereby effectively reversing the inequalities caused by any language barrier on the part of the original author and the limited discourse power of the translator.

Furthermore, the various academic activities that translators participate in can help attract potential readers and expand the academic influence of the original author and his works. For example, on October 27, 2016, California State University, Northridge (CSUN) China Institute, and the College of Humanities sponsored a free lecture on "Translating Yu Hua" that was open to the public, in which Prof. Allan Barr spoke about his collaborations with Yu Hua, the challenges he had encountered when translating Yu's novels, and his role as an intermediary between author and editor. The stories behind the works are useful means of satisfying readers' curiosity and stimulating their interest.

Promotion by Institutions Such as the Publisher

Recognition of an English translation by the publisher is crucial as a means of determining whether the translation will eventually reach the target market. The small percentage of translated works in the American literature market sits at around 3% per year,[26] and the huge differences between Chinese literature and the target culture have made the process of recognition even more difficult. As noted previously, it took six years from completion of the first English draft of *To Live* in 1997 to its first publication in 2003, and it was because of the enthusiasm of LuAnn Walther, the chief editor of Anchor Books, that *To Live* was published in English, as she took the initiative to contact Berry in 2002.[27]

The publisher's promotion of Yu's works appears to be especially important, as they were published by Random House and the writer's influence in the United States spread from academia to reach a broader general audience. Publishers often invite influential book reviewers to write articles in major journals as a way to promote translations. Before Random House published *Brothers* in English, *The New York Times (Books)* published an article headlined, "A portrait of China running amok" on September 4, 2006, which was an interview with Yu Hua by David Barboza. The article considered Yu's major works such as *To Live* and *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant*, outlining the background and storyline of *Brothers*. It particularly underscored the influence of the Cultural Revolution and economic reforms on the author's creation and writing style, highlighting the significance of the novel realistically. It suggested that because the film *To Live* had won the Grand Jury Prize at the Cannes film festival, Yu Hua became a famous writer and the novel a bestseller in China. The article also focused specifically on Yu's writings about sex, drawing parallels with *Shanghai Baby: A Novel* and *Beijing Doll*.[28] Introductions such as this may stimulate the interest of potential readers and thereby attract a broader audience.

In addition to publishers, other institutions and organizations played an important role in promoting these works. For example, *To Live* was included in the 2006 NEA Big Read, an initiative jointly sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts, Arts Midwest, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, which seeks to promote interest in reading and build a reading society. On its dedicated website, in addition to a detailed introduction about the author, a brief introduction about the translator and an overview of the novel *To Live*, 14 questions pertaining to the

story and the theme were included and designed to encourage reader engagement, thereby enabling readers to attain a better understanding of the novel.

Promotion via Multimodal Media Such as Film

Film serves as a more popular and visually appealing medium than books. For example, it took about 40 years for *Gone with the Wind* to sell 20 million copies, whereas its film adaptation was viewed by over 50 million people in a single night (Dominick 2009, 139). Although films do not afford readers the same freedom of imagination and interpretation as books, they are a visual medium that can readily capture an audience's attention achieving a unique and significant communication effect. The film version of *To Live* undoubtedly had a positive impact on the dissemination and reception of the novel in America. The author of the book searched a total of 85 Amazon reviews and 3,434 Goodreads reviews for the keywords "film" and "movie," respectively, finding 40 reviews mentioning the film. Of these, 17 explicitly stated that they chose to read the book because they liked the film, 16 said they had both seen the film and read the book, and seven mentioned that they intended to see the movie after reading the book or drew an analogy between the book and other films covering similar topics. In an interview with Yu Hua, Professor Helen Finken at the University of Iowa mentioned that many American high schools and universities show the film *To Live* (*Huo Zhe*) to students of Asian Studies and World History (Finken 2003, 20–22). A podcast interview with the translator is also available in the *To Live* section on the above-mentioned website of the NEA Big Read initiative. The podcast includes both the introduction to the novel and an interview with the translator mentioning the film adaptation, and reflecting the role of popular culture, including film, in promoting novel translation.

The combined efforts of the author, translator, and publisher, as well as other organizations have ensured the translation quality of Yu Hua's novels. Drawing on the appeal of the text itself, combined with a diverse range of marketing campaigns and the promotion of popular culture elements such as film, positive interactions have developed alongside the readership, helping Yu gain a relatively wide readership and generally positive reviews with a far-reaching impact in the United States.

Conclusion

This section investigated the dissemination and reception of Yu's novels in the United States through an analysis of library collections, Amazon sales ranking, and readers' reviews. The data collected shows that Yu's novels in English have been well received in America as a result of the collaboration between author, translator, and publisher. Moreover, certain lessons have been drawn regarding the translation and introduction of contemporary Chinese literature to the world, including that it is important to engage the original author in the promotion of their works in the target country as a way to strengthen the communication between translator and target audience, to pay attention to the marketing and promotional activities organized

by the publisher and related institutions, and to expand the publicity channels for translation, including leveraging communication and marketing media as television series, films, and commercials to enhance exposure and the connection between translation and readership.

The translation of Yu's novels in the United States has been a successful one, as it has enabled positive interactions with readers influencing their understanding of contemporary Chinese literature. Since the implementation of the "going global" strategy in Chinese culture, there have been many translation practices, but very few successful experiences. As researchers in this field, we also need to consider how to learn from these successful experiences and make further improvements to inform future practices.

SECTION 2: JIA PINGWA'S NOVELS AFTER *TURBULENCE*

Jia Pingwa is a prominent figure in contemporary Chinese literature and an iconic vernacular author from the new period. His novels portray China's modernization process, reflecting the ideological dilemmas and struggles of human nature in the midst of social changes. As a prolific writer, Jia has written seventeen novels, from *Shangzhou* in 1987 to *Shanben* in 2016, receiving multiple literary awards at home and abroad. His works have also been recognized for both their market and literary value. For example, *Turbulence* received The Pegasus Prize for Literature in 1991; *Ruined City* won the Prix Femina étranger in 1997; *Shaanxi Opera* was the winner of the Dream of the Red Chamber Award: The World's Distinguished Novel in Chinese in 2006, and the Mao Dun Literary Prize in 2008; *Old Kiln* won the Shi Nai'an Literature Prize in 2011 and the Dream of the Red Chamber Award again in 2012; and *Broken Wings* won the Wang Mo-jen and Wang Chou An-yi World Chinese Literature Prize from Peking University in 2018, among others. In view of the above, and in the context of contemporary Chinese literature "going global," we ask here: How have Jia's novels in translation been received abroad? Have the translations achieved the desired effect? What lessons have been learned about the outbound translation of Chinese novels? The answers to these questions lie in a comprehensive analysis of Jia's novels in English translation. This section aims to provide a comprehensive picture of the spread of Jia's novels in the English-speaking world, affording an overview of the English translations of his novels, the effects of translation, and a summary of the lessons learned.

Overview of Jia Pingwa's Works in English in the United States

Jia Pingwa's novels in English translation have not received the fame or same positive reception overseas as they do in the original Chinese at home. Nicky Harman, the translator of *Happy Dreams*, says, Jia Pingwa is "… a great writer, up there with Nobel Prize-winner Mo Yan, but largely unknown in translation."[29] There are various reasons for this situation, and these relate not only to the works themselves,

Table 4.4 An Overview of Jia Pingwa's Novels in English

Original title	English title	Format	Translator(s)	Publisher	Publication year
《浮躁》	*Turbulence*	Hardcover	Howard Goldblatt	Louisiana State University Press	1991
		e-book			
		Paperback		Grove Press (Reprint)	2003
《废都》	*Ruined City: A Novel*	Paperback	Howard Goldblatt	University of Oklahoma Press	2016
		e-book			
《带灯》	*The Lantern Bearer*	Hardcover	Carlos Rojas	CN Times Books Inc.	2017
《高兴》	*Happy Dreams*	Paperback	Nicky Harman	Amazon Crossing	2017
		e-book			
		Audiobook		Brilliance Audio	2018
《土门》	*The Earthen Gate*	Paperback	Hu Zongfeng, Robin Gilbank, He Longping	Valley Press	2018
《极花》	*Broken Wings*	Paperback	Nicky Harman	ACA Publishing Limited	2019
		e-book			

but also to publicity, translation, publication, and other links in the communication chain. An overview of Jia's novels in English translation is shown in Table 4.4.

As shown in Table 4.4, Jia's first novel translated into English was *Turbulence* in 1991; however, there were no further translations for more than a decade. In 2016 and over the following three years, *The Lantern Bearer*, *Happy Dreams*, *The Earthen Gate*, and *Broken Wings* were each translated and published successively. However, although his works have been translated at a significantly faster pace in recent years, only about one-third of his novels have been translated. In particular, the absence of *Shaanxi Opera*, which is part of a trilogy, means the translated works lack a systematic and complete expression of narrative theme and spirit.

However, after more than a decade of hibernation, the translation of Jia's novels in the United States is gradually recovering, although such activities are carried out in a disorganized manner. Moving forward, it would be advisable to engage patrons, copyright agents, and domestic publishers able to select suitable translators and publishers to present Jia's works to American readers more effectively.

Translation Effect

Market response and reader reception are core indicators of the status of Chinese literature "going global," the former being principally measured by library collections and book sales, and the latter by readers' reviews and ratings. Overall, library collections and sales of Jia's novels are unsatisfactory, reflecting a broader trend observed with other Chinese literary works in translation available to the American book market.

Library Collections

A search of OCLC WorldCat reveals that *Turbulence* appears in the collections of 352 American libraries, *Ruined City* and *Happy Dreams* in 122 and 123 libraries, respectively, *The Lantern Bearer* in 28 libraries, and *The Earthen Gate* and *Broken Wings* in only two libraries each, revealing a downward trend.

Against the backdrop of a rise in e-book reading, the e-book of *Ruined City* has been collected by 27 libraries, *Turbulence* by only four libraries, and *The Lantern Bearer*, *Happy Dreams*, *The Earthen Gate*, and *Broken Wings* by none. Limited collections have hampered the reception of Jia in the United States. To address this, it is first necessary to broaden the channels of public reading. This requires closer cooperation among institutions and market operators on the part of overseas publishers, as well as enhanced cooperation with universities and public libraries to encourage them to enlarge and enrich their collections.

Amazon Sales Rankings

Book sales serve as a critical data link in the communication chain, directly reflecting reading interest and readership size. To date, with the exception of *The Earthen Gate*, for which no sales ranking data is available, *Happy Dreams* is ranked among the top 2 million, while *Turbulence*, *Ruined City*, *The Lantern Bearer* and *Broken Wings* all fall outside the top 2 million. At one point, *Happy Dreams* moved into the top 400,000, a hard-won achievement for translated literature marginalized in America. The only e-books available are *Happy Dreams* and *Ruined City*, and these are ranked within the top 120,000 and outside the top 1.3 million, respectively, in the Kindle Store. *Happy Dreams* reaches a broader audience thanks to the joint efforts of overseas publishers and sales websites. In August 2017, Amazon Crossing, an imprint of Amazon Publishing focused on world literature, simultaneously released the paperback and Kindle versions of *Happy Dreams* via 14 sites worldwide, the first time Amazon held a global launch for an English version of a Chinese author's work. Later, *Happy Dreams* was included in the Goodreads Giveaways, a campaign launched by Goodreads and acquired by Amazon to encourage the general public to read. That event greatly enhanced the popularity of *Happy Dreams* among English-speaking readers. The sales rankings of the above-mentioned four novels on Amazon US are shown in Figure 4.3.
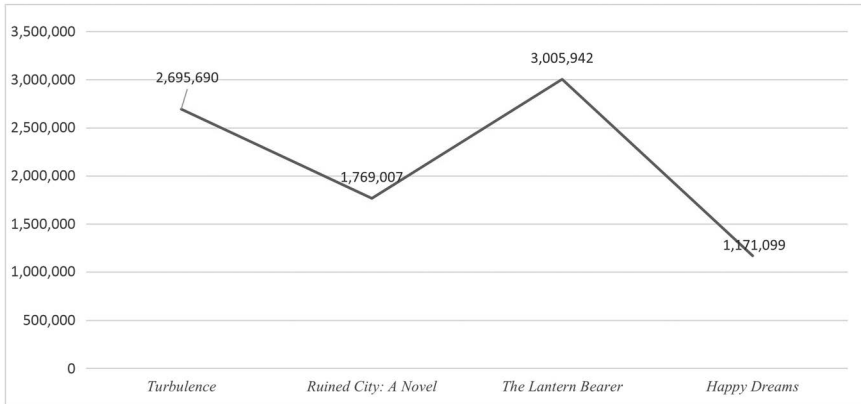
Figure 4.3 Sales Rankings for Jia Pingwa's Novels in English on Amazon US

Reader Reviews

To date, there have been 42 book reviews on the six novels by Jia in English trans-lation, including 23 on *Happy Dreams*, 10 on *Turbulence*, five on *Ruined City*, two each on *The Lantern Bearer* and *Broken Wings*, and none on *The Earthen Gate*. *Happy Dreams* has received the most attention from professional readers. These book reviews are mainly sourced from professional book review journals, aca-demic journals, and online book review sites. Based on a comparison of the subject terms in the book reviews by professional readers of the five novels and their word frequency through Wordsmith 4.0, together with intensive reading of the texts, it is not difficult to determine that professional readers generally express similar views regarding Jia's works. With the exception of *The Lantern Bearer*, for which there are no obvious positive or negative words, Jia's works are mainly positively re-ceived by professional readers. *Turbulence* is generally regarded as an "epic" mas-terpiece, which is written "adroitly, brilliantly" with "humor, humour," is slightly "earthy, dirty" and "uninspired." *Ruined City* is "remarkable," "graphic, vivid" and "classic," but some of the descriptions include the words "inconsequential, mundane" or "patter." *Happy Dreams* is described using words such as "humor, humour, interesting, hilarious" and "beautiful, beautifully," but also occasionally "boring, disappointing." The translation quality of *Broken Wings* is stated to be "excellent," although the language can sometimes be "turgid" and "tough."

   Professional readers tend to focus on exploring the social reality of China as it is reflected in the novels. Frequently used words include "Jia," "he," "Xi'an," and "political." These readers have a broader expectation horizon ("China"), typically focusing on the social context of the work ("he," "city," and "their") and the writer's upbringing and writing style ("Jia" and "Xi'an"). For example, in 1991 Harrison E. Salisbury wrote in a book review of *Turbulence* entitled "Eternal China" that "Mr. Jia presents the reality of the coarse, superstitious, ignorant, impoverished life of backcountry China, … For me, it was like a documentary of China: greedy but

timeless."[30] As one of the chief promoters of Jia's novels in America in the 1990s, Salisbury zooms in on the characters presented in *Turbulence* to portray China in a way that is inevitably rigid in terms of its ideological dichotomy. Jess Row writes in a 2016 *New York Times* book review:

> *Ruined City* has to be appreciated for its small pleasures as much as its larger themes: It's a grab bag of techniques and vantage points. …While the Cultural Revolution is referred to in places, it's clear that Jia wants his characters to seem neither traumatized by nor interested in politics.[31]

In a 2019 book review of *Broken Wings*, entitled "Jia Pingwa's controversial novel explores human trafficking and rural China," Dylan Levi King makes several references to the implied political context of the story, suggesting the author attributes this evil practice to the rapid urbanization of China over the past 40 years, which has limited the space for rural development negatively impacting on farmers' livelihoods.[32]

In terms of reviews by general readers, *Happy Dreams* received far more attention than any other works by Jia. The novel has 444 ratings (all editions) on Amazon US and 822 ratings (e-book) and 320 ratings (paperback) on Goodreads. The other novels, however, have fewer than 30 reviews in total, and *The Earthen Gate* and *The Lantern Bearer* have none. Moreover, in September 2017, *Happy Dreams* was voted by readers onto the Kindle First list on Goodreads,[33] affirming its popularity among general readers. *Turbulence* has the highest ratings on Amazon US (4.5 out of 5 stars), followed by *Ruined City* and *Happy Dreams* (3.6), and *Broken Wings* (2.5). *Ruined City* (e-book) receives the highest ratings on Goodreads (4.33 out of 5), followed by *Turbulence* (paperback) (3.57), *Happy Dreams* (e-book) (3.51), and *Broken Wings* (e-book) (3.21).

General readers are most receptive to *Happy Dreams*. Their reviews of *Ruined City* and *Broken Wings* are polarized, whereas *Turbulence* and *Happy Dreams* are well received by the majority, with *Happy Dreams* receiving the most praise. Some readers find the story in *Ruined City* "meticulous" and "impressive," while others think it "slow" and "weird." Some refer to having spent a "delightful" time reading *Broken Wings*, yet others find the language "unclear," "confusing," and "tough." Some readers of *Turbulence* praise the "interesting" story and "beautiful translation," with a few finding it "unreadable." *Happy Dreams* is well received by readers, as evidenced by their usage of more intensely positive words, such as "enjoy," "enjoyed," "enjoyable," "like," "funny," "humorous," and even "love." The novel is praised mainly due to the "interesting" and "entertaining" experience of the exotic story, the "touching" plot and the "humorous" language, although some find it "slow" and "depressing."

In addition to theme, story, and characters, general readers frequently focus on how the work reflects social reality, especially personal life, and the emotional experience of reading it. Words like "I," "me," and "interesting" frequently appear in reviews. General readers, with a relatively microscopic view, pay more attention to the details of plot and characters and are also more interested in exploring

the connection between the story and their own personal lives as a way to achieve a strong empathic experience ("I," "me," and "my") and show the psychological requirement to interact with other readers ("you").

In summary, several indicators of the reception of Jia Pingwa's novels in the United States show both library collections and book sales are less than satisfactory. Other than *Happy Dreams*, his novels have very few readers, a phenomenon that validates the bleak reality of the translated literature, including contemporary Chinese novels, in the American book market. Nevertheless, reviews by professional and general readers reflect a potential interest in these Chinese stories.

Analysis of the Overall Translation Effect

Between *Turbulence* in 1991 and *Broken Wings* in 2019, a total of six of Jia's translated novels have struggled to succeed in the American book market where such literature is marginalized. The meteoric rise of *Happy Dreams* is promising because it has taken a significant lead in terms of garnering reader attention and reception, also driving positive change in overall reader reception. Nevertheless, one fact that cannot be ignored is that contemporary Chinese novels remain far from center stage in terms of the reading practices of English-speaking readers. In the case of the translation of Jia's novels into English, his linguistic style poses a significant challenge to translators. The use of Shaanxi dialect and colloquialisms is a distinctive hallmark of Jia's series of works and reflects the unique cultural and aesthetic spirit of China. The language of his novels is pervaded by a strong local flavor, encompassing multiple aspects including local customs, characterization, and themes, portraying the worldly wisdom, national sentiments, and regional style unique to Shaanxi and reflecting Jia's compassion for the grassroots as a "root-seeking" writer. This linguistic style is also characterized by dialect and colloquialisms, which makes effective translation a daunting task (Wu 2013, 75).

Certainly, translating Jia is a much more challenging job than translating Mo Yan, whose narrative techniques are more familiar to Western readers. AS literary critic Li Xing explains:

> Jia Pingwa uses the traditional Chinese technique of "line drawing" (*bai miao*), along with many unique emotional tinges. And his language is more of folk slang and colloquialisms. So how to preserve the authentic flavor of his work is too difficult a thing for the translator![34]

Writing in dialect is obviously a major constraint on translation. Nick Stember, one of Jia's translators, says:

> There are certain difficulties in translating Jia's works, and the first is dialect. We have to resort to various ways so that we can understand it. Not being able to express it after understanding it is another bigger problem.[35]

As observed by Wu Wei, the director of the Office of China Book International:

Some of our regional writers write in dialect and it's not an easy thing for Mandarin speakers to understand. When these works are translated into foreign languages, expressiveness and understanding will be impaired.[36]

Moreover, Jia's works have six translators, each with very different styles producing translations of mixed quality, giving the English-speaking world a less than coherent impression of his novels. Eric Abrahamsen, the founder of Paper Republic and a translator, and Bruce Humes, an American sinologist, questioned how exactly three people collaborated to translate *The Earthen Gate*, and the effect of this on its final quality.[37] In another example, there are multiple mistranslations in the English version of *The Lantern Bearer*; for instance, "过事" (marry) is translated as "pass away," "囊哉" (comfortable) as "won't have a cent to her name" and "相好" (lovers) as "those who know me."

Despite the challenges mentioned above, since the beginning of the 21st century, Jia's novels in English have shown an upward curve in terms of both sales rankings and reader reviews. This is a consequence of the joint efforts of the author and translators, as well as patrons, publishers, and other institutions. In recent years, Jia has been participating in various academic exchanges at home and abroad, while continuing to maintain his role as a native literature writer. In November 2017, he was invited to the academic conference "Road to World Literature: Different Perspectives from East and West" held by the International Center for Writing at the Institute of Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences, Beijing Normal University. At this meeting, he discussed Chinese literature in the context of world literature with Kjell Espmark, a member of the Swedish Academy, Yu Hua, and other guests. He added that present-day Chinese writers need to adopt a global perspective and focus on national issues, while simultaneously building their own writing genealogy and getting to know themselves better from a Western perspective.[38]

Translators are usually defenders of the aesthetic value of original works and sometimes also act as publicists. For example, Nicky Harman regularly publishes a book list for Paper Republic's *Read Paper Republic*, including providing her own translation of Jia's short story *Backflow River* (倒流河). Nick Stember, as a translator and mediator of Jia's translation project, created the English website "Uglystone: Jia Pingwa in Translation" in honor of Jia's short story *Ugly Stone* (丑石). These efforts help English-speaking readers better understand Jia and his works.

Publishers and research institutions are important agents for the introduction of writers and their works. The Jia Pingwa Institute of Culture and Art, organized by the Shaanxi Provincial Department of Culture, is currently the only academic institution in China dedicated to studies of Jia's cultural and artistic achievements in fiction, essay writing, poetry, calligraphy and paintings, and collecting. The Institute also engages in a wide range of academic exchange activities at home and abroad. In 2017, it entered into a strategic cooperation agreement with Shaanxi

Xifuxiang Group, with the primary goal of translating and promoting Jia.[39] On September 15, 2018, it hosted the 2018 International Workshop for Young Sinologists, during which Jia joined nine sinologists from seven countries for in-depth exchanges and interactions pertaining to Chinese literature, Shaanxi culture and the translation of his works. A series of cultural activities has further deepened translators' understanding of Chinese culture and facilitated their translation work. Patrons not only organize and undertake foreign exchange activities but also serve as a bridge between author and translator. There was a 30-year hiatus after *Turbulence* was first translated into English, when thanks to Mu Nan (木南), the director of the Jia Pingwa Museum of Literature and Art, Jia and Goldblatt were reconnected,[40] contributing to the creation of the English version of *Ruined City*. In addition to activities organized by the Institute and the matchmaking efforts of the Museum, the People's Literature Publishing House has also committed to promoting the copyright export of Jia's works. For instance, Jia has accompanied the publisher to events at international book fairs and on visits to foreign universities and cultural institutions, creating opportunities to reach overseas readers directly. The publisher also invited foreign professionals with a strong interest in Chinese literature to serve as agents for overseas versions of his work. Furthermore, they insisted on engaging the best native-speaking translators to work with their most influential overseas counterparts.[41]

With the combined efforts of all parties, the translation of Jia's novels has witnessed a revival and an upward trajectory in the English-speaking world. In December 2017, Jia was named "the most influential Chinese writer overseas" by Amazon China.[42] This shows that advancing the translation of Chinese novels overseas effectively requires multiple agents including the translator, author, and publisher. In addition to the market-based model of translator scout, it is also possible to select and cultivate outstanding translators with the help of such institutions as the Jia Pingwa Institute of Culture and Art, as well as organizations and platforms including the People's Literature Publishing House, Amazon, and Paper Republic, which organize translation competitions or forums for writers, sinologists, and translators. Effective communication mechanisms need to be established between authors, translators, and editors, and differences in the language and culture as well as the reading habits of readers should be considered when balancing writing style and storytelling rhythm. This necessitates better communication between institutions and translators, as well as more effective collaboration between state and nonstate institutions, and enhanced information sharing and resources optimization between literary institutions, publishers, and corporate patrons. It is also important to pay attention to the international influence of overseas publishers, as well as the role of popular journals in guiding general readers when expanding cooperation with libraries, and organizing additional promotional activities.

Furthermore, it is important to identify the target country and readership, select subject matter and genres to be translated according to the target readership, and contact appropriate publishers, so as to make the translations more relevant. For example, professional readers prefer works with a distinctive literary style

that reflect the vicissitudes of China and inheritance and innovation in traditional Chinese poetics, while general readers prefer works in which they see people's daily life and gain emotional resonance.

Last but not least, it is necessary to allow publishers and patrons to act as powerful promoters, study the market-oriented operating mechanisms of the target country, optimize, and reorganize the resources of institutions, organizations, and firms, enhance information sharing, and improve the relevance and timeliness of coordination and cooperation. There is also a requirement to strengthen cooperation with universities and community libraries, while extending full participation and a leadership role for popular journals and general readers and initiating more interactive reading activities. It is believed that with the joint efforts of multiple parties, the regional features and cultural image of contemporary Chinese novels will become a launching pad rather than a stumbling block for Chinese culture to "go global."

Conclusion

This section has reviewed Jia Pingwa's novels in English translation since *Turbulence*, analyzing the translation effect in the United States in terms of library collections, Amazon sales rankings, and readers' reviews. The data clarifies that the current status of Jia's novels in the United States does not match his popularity in China. His voice was silent for many years following the publication of *Turbulence* in English, and he has only recently returned to the English-speaking stage. However, *Happy Dreams* achieved a relatively positive response in translation turning things around to some extent.

Jia's novels are strong, local, and complex. His writing blends Classical Chinese and dialect and modern Chinese, and his language is natural, plain, implicit, quirky, and ethereal. These features make it difficult to translate his works. In addition, the publisher's operation, Jia's self-promotion, and the translator's recommendations all influence the reception of these works in the target country. Of course, other modern Chinese writers have encountered similar problems. Overcoming such difficulties is a central component of the translational journey of contemporary Chinese novels.

SECTION 3: MAI JIA'S NOVELS[43]

Mai Jia's first novel, *Private Diary*, was published in *Kunlun*, a literature bimonthly, in 1986. Subsequently, he went on to release five novels, namely *Decoded*, *In the Dark*, *The Message*, *Wind Talk*, and *The Point of a Knife*, in addition to more than 30 stories. His works have an enduring charm, and focus on espionage, with bizarre plots that encompass themes such as history, family, and humanity. *Decoded* was nominated for the 6th China National Book Award and the 6th Mao Dun Literary Prize; *In the Dark* won the 7th Mao Dun Literary Prize; and *The Message* received the 12th Ba Jin Literature Award, all of which testify to the works' textual value and

social significance. Screen versions based on his novels have been well received by audiences, initiating a craze for viewing spy dramas and reading contemporary Chinese spy novels.

Not only is *Decoded* an iconic contemporary Chinese spy novel, popular at home, in English translation it has also been a success overseas. The English version, cotranslated by Olivia Milburn and Christopher Payne, was published by Allen Lane and Farrar, Straus, and Giroux (FSG) in hardcover, and made available in Kindle in 21 countries around the world in March 2014. It became "the bestselling novel in Chinese literature [in terms of sales volume] within 24 hours of its launch: 385th on Amazon UK, 960th on Amazon US, and 38th on the World Literature Book List."[44] Its reprint was released in paperback in 2015 by Penguin Classics and Picador, an imprint of Macmillan. Assessed based on OCLC library collections, *Decoded* topped the list of "Most Influential Translations of Modern Chinese Literature in 2014."[45] The novel also appeared on the list of *The Economist*'s "Best Books of 2014"[46] and received the 2014 CALA Best Book Award. It was selected as one of "The 20 Best Spy Novels of All Time" by *The Telegraph* in 2017.[47] *Decoded* was included in the 2015 Penguin Modern Classics library, the first time a contemporary Chinese author's work has been included in the collection. Penguin released *In the Dark*, which was cotranslated by Olivia Milburn and Christopher Payne in both paperback and e-book form in 2015. At the end of 2018, Mai was awarded the People's Literature Prize–Overseas Influence Award. These accolades provide evidence of the international influence of *Decoded* in English. This section examines the translational journey of Mai's novels, their performance in overseas book markets, and their reception and reviews by professional and general readers, to add to this investigation of the translation effect of contemporary Chinese fiction in the English-speaking world.

Overview of Mai Jia's Works in English in the United States

To date, two of Mai Jia's novels have been translated and published in English: *Decoded* and *In the Dark*. An overview of the publication of these two novels in English is shown in Table 4.5.

Unlike the novels of Yu Hua and Jia Pingwa, which were mainly published by university presses, the translations of *Decoded* and *In the Dark* were undertaken as commercial operations. Both books' publishers, Allen Lane and FSG, enjoy an international reputation, reflecting their optimistic forecast for sales. Allen Lane is a hardback imprint started by Penguin's founder under his own name, and is one of the world's leading publishers. FSG is an elite publishing house renowned for producing quality literary works, having published 21 works by Nobel Prize winners to date.

The publication of both novels has something in common: The translators, Olivia Milburn, and Christopher Payne first contacted Chinese copyright agents accessing editors at Penguin through a literary agent. Their success is a result of serendipity. Both are professors at the Department of Chinese Language and Literature of Seoul National University, sinologists and translators, and big fans of

Table 4.5 Publication of Mai Jia's Novels in English

Original title	English title	Format	Translator(s)	Publisher	Publication date
《解密》	*Decoded*	Hardcover	Olivia Milburn and Christopher Payne	Allen Lane	Mar 2014
				FSG	
		e-book		Allen Lane	
				FSG	
		Audiobook		Random House	Mar 2014
		Paperback		Allen Lane	Mar 2014
				Picador	May 2015
《暗算》	*In the Dark*	Paperback	Olivia Milburn and Christopher Payne	Allen Lane	Aug 2015
		e-book		Allen Lane	

Mai. Milburn chose to translate Mai's work because her grandfather was a code-breaker during World War II, so after stumbling upon *Decoded* and *In the Dark* in an airport bookstore, she wanted to share with her grandfather information about the code-breaking world in Chinese, and thus began translating them. Afterward, Milburn pitched herself to Gray Tan, Mai's literary agent based in Taipei, and contacted Penguin through a local agent in Britain. Penguin asked famous sinologist Julia Lovell, who happened to be a college classmate of Milburn at the time, to evaluate her work. Following Lovell's endorsement, Penguin signed a contract with Milburn for the translation of Mai's two novels.[48]

Translation Effect

This section explores the translation effect of Mai's two novels in the English-speaking world according to three dimensions: library collections, sales ranks on Amazon US, and reader reviews.

Library Collections

A search of OCLC WorldCat shows the printed books of *Decoded* and *In the Dark* have been collected by 499 and ten American libraries, respectively, representing a dramatic discrepancy. Compared to those of other contemporary Chinese novels, such as Yu Hua's *The Past and the Punishments* (978) and *To Live* (473) and Mo Yan's *Red Sorghum* (638), the collections of *Decoded* are satisfactory, but those of *In the Dark* are small. Moreover, neither of the e-books are available at American libraries on OCLC WorldCat, which somewhat limits their accessibility.
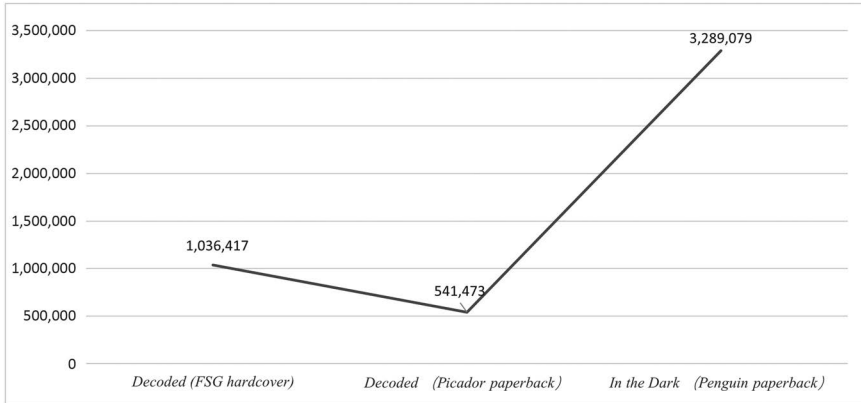
Figure 4.4 Sales Rankings for Mai Jia's Novels in English on Amazon US

Amazon Sales Rankings

The sales rankings for *Decoded* and *In the Dark* on Amazon US is shown in Figure 4.4.

Decoded made the list of top 1,000 bestsellers on Amazon when it as first released in 2014, breaking sales records for Chinese literature and becoming a phenomenal bestseller. Several years later, reflecting the marginalization of translated literature in the competitive American book market, the Amazon sales rank of Mai's novels in English became unsatisfactory, falling well behind the contemporaneous *To Live* (paperback) (#152,745).

Reader Reviews

As explained previously in the earlier sections of this chapter, reception of the same literary work may vary from one reader community to another. This section collates reviews by professional and general readers posted on Amazon and Goodreads as comprehensively as possible to summarize the reception of Mai's novels and analyze the similarities and differences between the two groups, providing a detailed analysis of the translation effect.

A total of 12 book reviews of *Decoded* by professional readers, and no book reviews of *In the Dark* were found after searching the American Press. This highlights the totally different attitude of professional readers toward the two novels. The twelve reviews of *Decoded* were in prestigious journals including *Publishers Weekly*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *Booklist*, *Bookmarks Magazine*, *BookPage*, *Library Journal*, and *The New Republic*.

The search reveals professional readers generally focus on (in descending order of word frequency) the story and theme, the characters, the social context of China reflected in the novel, the characters' family background and patriotism, and the

quality of the translation. It is generally accepted that the novel reflects the eternal theme of innermost feelings and human nature, and that its storytelling and characterization are successful. The majority of the reviews analyze the specific historical background and social context and consider the characters' family backgrounds and patriotic sentiments in this macro-environment. Moreover, the vast majority of professional readers praise the quality of the translation, with only one review analyzing possible mistranslations of the final sentence.

The Economist refers to *Decoded* "a Chinese novel everyone should read," and adds:

> … Yet almost none of the thousands of translated works has held its own as a novel that book-lovers with no special interest in China will relish. … *Decoded* breaks the mold. … It stands out among Chinese novels for its pace, liveliness, and the sheer novelty of the tale it tells. It grips from the first page.[49]

The New Yorker writes:

> This unusual spy thriller has neither page-turning plot twists nor a master villain. … Mai plays adroitly with literary genre and crafts a story of Borgesian[50] subtlety and complexity that also feels specific to the politics and pathologies of revolutionary-era China.[51]

The New Republic also draws an analogy between Mai and Borges:

> Again, like Borges – whose works often grappled with the concept and consequences of nationalism – Mai traces the relationship between the Rongs and their motherland. On the very first page, Mai heralds Rong's ancestor as "a great patriot," a title and notion – in the context of China's tumultuous political twists and turns – that at first rings glorious but is subsequently rendered absurd.[52]

The Financial Times writes,

> It's tempting to think of him as China's answer to John le Carré. Having worked professionally alongside spies and codebreakers in his country's secret services, Mai now channels those experiences into fiction that combines literary sophistication with commercial appeal. And like le Carré's *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, *Decoded* has also been adapted for television and film. There, however, the similarities would seem to end. Rong Jinzhen, the gifted cryptographer at the center of *Decoded*, could not be more different from le Carré's world-weary agent Smiley; and the only tinkering here is the author's own, as he mischievously alters and reshapes the narrative. For this is a rather unconventional spy novel, full of metafictional twists and postmodern turns.[53]

The New York Times refers to *Decoded*'s "…gripping plot, otherworldly aura and flamboyant detail,"[54] analyzing the links between Mai, Chinese literary tradition and other writers:

> Mai has largely inherited the narrative style of early Chinese storytelling, and scholars will enjoy the layers of this novel. The preference for psychological depiction in *Decoded* stems from the studies of Freud and other Western scholars by Chinese writers from the 1910s to 1930s, particularly during the May Fourth period. The depiction of Jinzhen's enormous skull and particular family background is very similar to the writing techniques by Su Tong and Yu Hua today. The writer's occasional use of metafiction echoes recent postmodern trends.[55]

The review also notes:

> *Decoded* addresses some profound questions about the human condition. … Readable and enjoyable as it is, *Decoded* cannot compare in moral profundity to the short fiction of Lu Xun, [or] the novellas of Eileen Chang….[56]

Professional readers also produced mixed reviews of the narrative pacing of *Decoded*. *Publishers Weekly* writes, "Mai's careful attention to pacing and the folklore-inspired narration make for a fascinating story, neatly interwoven with complex mathematical theory."[57] *The Chicago Tribune* acknowledges the richness of its sweeping historical narrative, but asserts:

> …its pacing and loose focus will baffle readers expecting something in the strain of Stieg Larsson or Daniel Silva. Almost the first half of the book is devoted to the history of Jinzhen's forebears and his childhood. Meandering through six generations and various intertwined characters, the narrative at this point recalls the richness of classical Chinese novels, such as "Dream of the Red Chamber."[58]

A high-frequency word search and close reading reveals that none of the reviews by professional readers comment negatively on the story and writing style of *Decoded*, reflecting a neutral and even positive reception. Words conveying value judgments include "unusual," "popular," "bestseller," "brilliantly," "intricate," "gripping," and "interesting." Almost no negative feedback is present in the reviews, although *The New Republic* comments, "Publisher promotions aside, Mai Jia's novel does not really match up to Dan Brown's,"[59] and continues, "*Decoded* quite blithely – and deliberately – defies the genre expectations."[60] Popular online magazine *Bustle* writes:

> It's a spy thriller the likes of which Americans have most likely never seen before … *Decoded* has none of the markers associated with Western spy thrillers … *Decoded* is an intricate and carefully presented story that will draw readers in and hold their attention right until the end.[61]

Table 4.6 Ratings on Amazon US and Goodreads

Original title	English title	Stars/Ratings on Amazon US	Stars/Ratings/Reviews on Goodreads	Goodreads edition
《解密》	*Decoded*	3.5/133	3.24/959/189	FSG hardcover
			3.49/87/14	Allen Lane hardcover
			3.38/37/8	Allen Lane paperback
			2.85/13/1	Picador paperback
			2.73/11/0	Penguin Modern Classics paperback
			2.33/3/0	Random House audiobook
			3.34/106/3	FSG e-book
			3.53/59/6	Allen Lane e-book
《暗算》	*In the Dark*	/	3.31/58/7	Allen Lane paperback
			3.67/3/0	Allen Lane e-book

In terms of reviews by general readers, customer reviews on Amazon US do not include specific ratings for each format/edition, although there are different formats and editions available, while Goodreads provides data on ratings by format/edition, among which the FSG hardcover of *Decoded* received the top 189 reviews. The ratings of the two novels on Amazon US and Goodreads are shown in Table 4.6.

The ratings for both novels are largely comparable. Both can be considered less popular among general readers, in contrast with the almost exclusively positive reviews from professional readers. The ratings are also lower than those for works by Dan Brown and *A Perfect Spy* by British spy novelist John le Carré on both sites (3.7/193 on Amazon US and 3.99/13,985 on Goodreads). Combined with sales figures, it is evident that *Decoded* is far more widely read than *In the Dark*, despite them both being from the same genre of espionage mystery, translated by the same people and released at a similar time.

By conducting a cross-search of all the reviews of the two novels, and performing a close reading of reviews it was found that general readers tend to focus on the stories and themes, the Chinese elements, the characters, the family background of the protagonist, the quality of translation and the author's writing style. Most general readers displayed a keen interest in Chinese stories, as well as the historical background and social changes taking place in China covered in *Decoded*.

In the reviews of *Decoded*, positive words include, "interesting," "fascinating," "enjoyed, liked," "love, loved," "brilliant," "best," "compelling, intriguing, captivating, engrossing, absorbing," "better," "good," "beautiful," "unique," "exciting," and "vivid." Neutral words include, "different," "complex," "strange," "unusual,

special," "mysterious, enigmatic, mysteriousness," "repetitive," and "elusive." And negative words include "slow," "boring, tedious, dry," "disappointed," "bad," "opaque," "confusing," and "difficult."

In the Dark received only seven reviews. Frequently used words were "strange," "better," "interesting," "enjoyable," and "bored." It is generally agreed that although *In the Dark* can be considered closer to John le Carré and Haruki Murakami in terms of theme and language, the novel clearly differs from its Western counterparts having a unique narrative style. Its plot and writing techniques, as well as its use of metaphors are unfamiliar to Western readers, and some of the strong cultural overtones such as Chinese proverbs are also perceived as obscure. Thus, the reviews of *Decoded* and *In the Dark* by general readers are polarized and mixed, with praise for the theme, characterization and unconventional narrative, and criticism for the slow plot movement and the protracted and repetitive language. Some reviews by readers also question the quality of translation but do not specify why.

In summary, we can see that both professional readers and general readers initially compare Mai Jia with Western writers, while also demonstrating a certain sensitivity to the differences between Chinese and Western novels. They also consistently focus on similar aspects of *Decoded*, including the novel's human-nature-oriented theme, story, characterization, the family backgrounds of the characters and the role of translators. The reception by the two readerships differs in terms of the following two aspects: (1) In terms of the reception of the story itself and the quality of translation, professional readers show an essentially positive attitude, while general readers' comments are mixed. Professional readers give high scores to the story, generally finding it highly readable and gripping, with no comments on language style. General readers are fond of the story and characterization, but do not like the slow narrative rhythm or the lengthy and repetitive language. (2) When expressing their feedback, professional readers display a more cautious attitude than general readers, which is mainly reflected by their careful wording and relatively fewer references to personalized emotional experiences. To maintain the impartiality and rationality of the critique, professional readers do not use such as words "best," "unique," "love," and "terrible," in contrast to general readers, nor do they mention their own emotional experiences.

Analysis of the Overall Translation Effect

The chief reason for the success of *Decoded* in the West is that it not only has the readability English-speaking readers expect from any good novel, but also pushes boundaries in terms of narrative content and techniques, combining Chinese elements with the spirit of Western literature, meeting or even going beyond the expectations of the English-speaking world in terms of Chinese literature, culture and reality. The narrative of *Decoded* fits well with the popular reading experience of Western readers. The theme of mystery/suspense has traditionally been a dominant genre in Western popular literary narratives, as testified to by the many popular writers including Agatha Christie, Dan Brown, and John le Carré. After World War II, this popular literary genre increasingly entered the field of pure literature, with the

focus shifting away from rational analysis of a mystery to deliver insights into human nature, psychology, and ethics. Many famous writers, including William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Cecil Day-Lewis, and Graham Greene channeled elements of deductive narrative into serious literature, making their works historically significant and culturally implicit. The success of *Decoded* lies in the fact that the novel is not just a spy novel but is also a powerful mix of spy thriller, historical saga, and mathematical puzzle. When Alexis Kirschbaum, the editorial director at Penguin Press, received the translation, she stated that she had never before seen a book in which these literary themes were blended so well. And it is precisely this originality that offers a singular and refreshing experience to Western readers.

What sets *Decoded* apart from traditional mystery/suspense novels is how it subverts the typical heroic portrayal of traditional narratives, interrogating the unity of opposites between the heroic figure and the noumenal self from within the complex and mysterious realm of history. The mathematical genius Rong Jinzhen creates astonishing miracles after becoming a telegraphic code-breaker for the intelligence agency 701. However, this heroic figure suffers a nervous breakdown due to the loss of a confidential notebook. As Mai himself states, "The trivialities of everyday life (the system) are so devastating that even a genius cannot escape this huge 'hidden trap.'"[62] The hero portrayed in the text is trapped in the minutiae of everyday life, where he is locked into a sad puzzle unable to locate his self-identity. The symbolic meaning of the code is also combined with the grand historical context, showing the writer's reflections on life and himself, as well as his empathy for and critique of human nature and society, through plot twists behind the metaphor of personal beliefs and behaviors, and identity and order in a wartime China.

Moreover, the nonthriller elements in *Decoded* appear more important when reading and receiving a work than the main elements in traditional mystery novels, such as how to master decoding skills. Mai has completed a profound exploration of characters and human nature in an intricate maze of details. For example, *The New York Times* writes, "Mai's novel doesn't show us much in the way of real cryptography or spy work. Its consuming interest – and it truly is a page turner – comes from its … gripping plot, otherworldly aura and flamboyant detail."[63] *The Times Literary Supplement* says:

> *Decoded* is a subtle and complex exploration of cryptography, politics, dreams and their significance. … There is much of interest in this book, from the strange, superstitious beginning to the gradual decline of the Rong family as the twentieth century progresses. … But, in the end, it is the complexity of the characters that is *Decoded*'s enduring pleasure.[64]

Decoded undoubtedly deviates from the basic principles, expectations and traditions of the genre as common in Western mystery novels. Its literary significance and value affords it entry to the field of pure literature. Thus, Mai and his works have become the focus of debate between "high" and "low" literature. After decades of writing, Mai's winning of the Mao Dun Literary Prize in 2008 for *In the Dark* assured his place in mainstream literary circles, marking the subtle balance

between bestseller and classic, between the popular and literary in his works and also validating the success of *Decoded* in the English-speaking world:

> It is widely agreed by domestic literary critics that Mai's works can be positioned as "main melody" pure literature. Moving from pure literature to commercial culture reflects a combination of propaganda and cultural consumption. Winning the Mao Dun Literary Prize and becoming a part of the Penguin Modern Classics library are the best illustrations of the literary classic attributes of his works.[65]

That *Decoded* narrates a Chinese story is another major reason for its popularity in the English-speaking world. While integrating the characteristics of Western suspense literature, Mai draws inspiration from the red classics, from the era between the founding of the PRC and the 1970s. He combines the secret world of cryptology and human psychology with that of 20th-century China, reshaping China's place in world history before 1949 into a powerful and tense narrative that subtly portrays a patriotic image of the Chinese state and nation. The mystery/suspense elements of the story are replete with quintessentially Chinese experiences and memories, allowing English-speaking readers to enjoy what is a fascinating, magical, and mysterious journey into China.

The majority of contemporary Chinese novels are grand historical and vernacular narratives set against the backdrop of war and secular degradation, and individual narratives dominated by body writing depicting the dark side of human nature and moral decay. Mai is dismissive of this, saying:

> Looking back at the works of the past two decades, we can find that everyone is writing about individuals, about darkness, about despair, about the dark side of life and about the infinite expansion of selfish desires. In other words, we are moving from one extreme to another. There was definitely something wrong with the way we wrote in the past, when there was only the will of the state and no image of the individuals. But when we cut all these things out and come to the other extreme, we are actually wrong again.[66]

This explains why in *Decoded*, the writing is about a hero and the fate of a state and nation, as well as the delineation of the spiritual power of literature and aesthetic ideals. This construction of the hero in *Decoded* contrasts with the overwhelming red narratives of the 1950s and 1960s under the control of ideology, by focusing on the poetic and romantic tragic narrative. The novel's disenchantment with the red heroes reveals a profound exploration of human nature, constituting the appeal of the novel's narrative. While exploring grand propositions of state, politics, and society, it reveals the writer's thoughts about ethics, life, and human nature.

Mai puts more emphasis on telling a good story than most of his peers in China. He says, "The literariness of a novel is actually in its story."[67] Balancing the aesthetic interests of a mass audience and professional reviewers and scholars is one of the main features of his writing and a key reason why *Decoded* is accepted

and admired in the English-speaking world. In terms of narrative style, on the one hand, the novel incorporates a variety of Western writing techniques, and its artistic expression is in line with the expectations and standards of world literature. From *The Wall Street Journal*: "The readability and literariness of *Decoded* are eclectic, evoking echoes of, for example, Chesterton, Borges, the Imagist poets, Hebrew and Christian scripture, Nabokov and Nietzsche."[68] Mai himself admits to being influenced by writers such as Kafka and Christie, as well as especially by Borges.[69] The narrative of *Decoded* uses many of Borges' fictional techniques, including in its theme, structure, plot and language, and a large number of elements of history, mathematics, literature, philosophy, legend and even *feng shui*, astronomy, and Buddhism. These are entwined with the political storms of World War II, the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, the Cold War, and the War to Resist United States Aggression and Aid Korea, forming a Borgesian literary labyrinth and narrative mechanism.

On the other hand, when narrating the Chinese story of *Decoded*, Mai borrows from and alters various techniques and resources from both classical and avant-garde Chinese novels. Numerous foreign media sources, including *The New York Times* point out that *Decoded* absorbs much of the earlier Chinese narrative style. But this strangeness does not alienate readers; on the contrary, the enormous cultural differences in artistic expression are a major reason for the popularity of *Decoded*, which is worth pondering. A reviewer in *The Telegraph* writes:

> It hints, rather, at the meandering, multi-stranded construction of classic Chinese novels, with their joyous celebration of stories and characters that seem entirely tangential to the plot at hand. Western readers may find this rather frustrating to begin with, but the dreamy, languorous deviations take the novel out of the realms of the hard-edged thriller into somewhere more surreal and unexpected.[70]

Mai's dissection, restructuring, and integration of the entire story allows Western readers to get to know the Chinese way of thinking today, and meet the reading expectations that arise due to one world peeping into another.

In addition to the appeal of the text itself, the engagement and collaboration of the publisher, author, translators, agent, and media in the translation system also contributed to the novel's success in America. As mentioned above, the efforts of Mai's agent Gray Tan, who began to promote *Decoded* in 2009, were central to its publication. The publisher and the media worked closely with each other, playing an active role in the publication, distribution, and circulation of *Decoded*, using such means as soliciting for subscription of sample books, publishing authoritative reviews, and conducting interviews with the author. Long before its official publication, Penguin Publishing Group and FSG released sample books to kick off an eight-month solicitation for subscription, officially releasing a promotional video on March 1, 2014, to begin a half-month pre-sale. At the end of 2013, *Booklist*, a top book review magazine in America published an asterisked book review, which described *Decoded* as a treasure of Chinese culture, and promoted it positively.

From March 18, 2014, when *Decoded* was officially launched worldwide, *The New York Times*, *The New Republic* and *The New Yorker* published reviews, and *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Wall Street Journal* and "Lunch Break," an influential mid-day news program, covered the launch. At the end of 2014, *The Wall Street Journal* conducted an exclusive interview with Mai.

However, admittedly, the reception of Mai's translated works has been mixed. *In the Dark* failed to replicate the success of its precedent *Decoded*, making almost no impact. Given that *Decoded* is now low on the sales rankings and is included in a limited number of library collections, it is necessary to strengthen cooperation with American libraries, especially public libraries.

Conclusion

Different unique characteristics inform the translations of Yu Hua's, Jia Pingwa's, and Mai Jia's novels. The translation of Yu's works has been the most systematic, with a wide coverage of his works, a reasonable publication cycle, a diverse composition of academic translators, stable cooperation with publishers, a relatively large readership, good ratings and reviews, and a relatively successful reception, especially for *To Live*, which is the most popular among readers. Translations of Mai's work were revitalized by the release of *Happy Dreams*, but inconsistent use of translators and publishers is not conducive to forming an aggregating effect. Mai's *Decoded* has been a commercial success thanks to the fixed translators and publishers, but this is only an individual success story as his subsequent works have not been well received by either the market or readers.

When investigating the translation effect of the three writers in the United States from the OCLC WorldCat library collections, sales rankings on Amazon US and reader reviews, we identified two common features as follows: First, these novels have a certain readership. Both professional and general readers have demonstrated an interest in reading contemporary Chinese novels, analyzing themes and interpreting characters from their own perspectives, and reporting differentiated, mixed evaluations and reading experiences, actively participating in constructing the textual meaning of novels. In this sense, a certain translation effect has been achieved, especially for *To Live*, which has the largest readership, sells the most copies, and receives the most positive feedback. Second, the overall translation effect has been far from ideal, mainly manifested in generally low collections and very limited access by a mass audience, poor sales rankings and limited readership, a small number of book reviews by professional readers, a mixed attitude in terms of reception, and a low degree of attention, with few ratings and reviews by general readers. With the exception of all editions of *To Live* (4+ out of 5), the ratings of other novels can be barely perceived as satisfactory. This may be explained by some general readers' difficulties in terms of reception caused by reading expectations, differences in literary traditions, and the author's personal style.

Variability in the translation effect mainly manifest in reader reception. In terms of library collections, the top three are *The Past and the Punishments* by Yu, *Decoded* by Mai and *To Live* by Yu, whereas Mai's novels are included in a

limited number of collections. In terms of the Amazon sales rankings, *Decoded* set a single-day sales record and *To Live* has the best cumulative sales. In terms of reader reviews, *Decoded* has been received best by professional readers, followed by *To Live* and *Happy Dreams*; *To Live* is the most read and best received by general readers. Overall, Yu is one of the most notable and successful modern Chinese novelists in the West, with *To Live* having been a huge translation success. With *Happy Dreams*, Mai has regained a relatively high degree of attention and reception following *Turbulence* and *Ruined City*. Mai's *Decoded* set a new sales record and is critically acclaimed among professional readers, leaving much to be desired in terms of its reception by general readers.

Recommendations to address the common problems that surfaced during this investigation of the translation effect are as follows: First, with regard to the availability and accessibility of contemporary Chinese novels in overseas libraries, publishers need to increase their cooperation with libraries, especially public libraries, so that libraries can collect those popular works to ensure a complete collection of all genres as represented by the sales data. Second, as to the uneven ratio of professional book reviews in serious journals and in popular journals, it is vital to pay due attention to the influence of popular journals and online platforms among general readers, expanding cooperation with different types of journals, including popular journals. Third, a more efficient translation system requires the implementation of national translation plans and strategies, enhanced exchanges between Chinese and foreign literary systems and institutions, and a certified bank of good translators. After all, a positive effect can only be achieved if the charm of the original text is rendered and the universal values and national identity of a work are delivered by the translator. Fourth, it is essential to develop sound relationships between the authors, translators, patrons, agents, and publishers, so as to enhance their cooperation and make it more efficacious when approaching the marketplace.

Notes

1 The parts of this section (by Fu Yue and Wu Yun) were published in the *Journal of Anhui University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 2021 (2).
2 WorldCat is the world's most comprehensive database of information about library collections, with access to bibliographic data from nearly 9,000 libraries in 112 countries.
3 Goodreads (www.goodreads.com) is the Chinese equivalent of Douban (www.douban.com), and it is the world's largest site for readers and book recommendations as well as home to millions of book lovers.
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5 The works involved are the bestselling by this writer. Paper edition includes hardcover and paperback, whichever is higher ranked. "/" means that this edition is currently not available on Amazon US.
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5 Translating Female Voices

Gender, Politics, and Poetics[1]

Introduction

Women's fiction plays an important role in contemporary Chinese literature. Since the new period, as identified in Chapter 2, under the influence of modernism, postmodernism, and other cultural thought, Chinese women's writing has presented a rich, diverse, and broad picture and has achieved unprecedented new heights, in terms of artistic achievement and output. By developing their own thoughts on life and values from a uniquely female perspective and experience, and by examining history and the world in a patriarchal society, women writers have become a cultural symbol of contemporary Chinese society, and a window through which the Anglophone world can learn more about Chinese national characteristics, cultural psychology, and social reality. Therefore, summarizing and analyzing the translation, dissemination, and reception of Chinese women's fiction in the Anglophone world in the new period allows us to see how Anglophone readers perceive and understand Chinese women's literature, and to discover the confrontation and fusion, as well as the underlying influencing factors, in the process of text construction. In this way, we can not only dissect the cultural elements with universal values in the two literary systems but can also understand how Chinese culture, and the local experience of Chinese women, interact with the world in a new cultural space.

The English-speaking world's attention on Chinese women's fiction is largely rooted in Western feminist thought. From the awakening of feminist consciousness in the 18th century to the feminist movement of the 20th century, female literature that addresses women's experience has become an important component of the current Western literary system, and a basic form of literary discourse. Therefore, when English literary circles turn to Chinese women's literature and seek works with which they can identify, the writings that address women's direct personal experiences from a clearly female standpoint can be included comfortably in their literary translation and criticism systems.

Although there was no dearth of female writers in China before the reform and opening up, their works often obscured women's identity and featured a certain ambiguity in the expression of women's real lives. This was due partly to the

exclusion of women from public life under traditional Confucianism, and partly to the unified ideological control after the founding of New China. Since the reform and opening up, female writers have been given a fairer and more open space and have begun to rebel against the male-centered discourse, writing about female self-awareness and identity construction. Their expression of women's living conditions and ideas has become the most common and important trait in contemporary women's fiction. The identity and gender position of female writers have become explicit signifiers, as well as the keywords for the overseas dissemination and reception of this category of novels.

The feminine writing, or the comprehensive construction of female subjectivity from image to spirit, is a hallmark of Chinese women's fiction translated into English. From the post-1950s writers, represented by Tie Ning and Wang Anyi, to authors such as Chen Ran, Wei Hui, and Mian Mian, who wrote about women's personal experience, through to the more recent writings of Sheng Keyi and Chun Sue, their work is translated and well-received in the Western reading community due to the commonality of female identity. Unlike the "big" political issues of war, revolution, and nation favored by male writers, women's fiction has opened up a refreshing and broad reading space for English readers. Female Chinese writers concentrate far more on emotions and inner lives and are more adept at capturing the psychology of fictional characters in a subtle and poignant manner. Since emotions are universal and resonant, these novels do not generate a significant sense of cultural alienation in their faraway English readers.

The portrait conveyed of Chinese society is another reason for the popularity of women's fiction abroad. In contrast to the historical narrative that is dominant in Chinese literature, women's writing demonstrates a keen and sympathetic observation of modern China. The narratives of female Chinese writers are often conveyed via everyday trivialities, on the streets and in the alleyways and on the fringes of neighborhoods. The grand narrative takes a back seat to the everyday and fragmented personal confessions in the stories of people and places, through which the Western readership can glimpse China's historical and social changes.

Most of the representative works of well-known contemporary female Chinese writers, such as Wang Anyi, Tie Ning, Xu Xiaobin, Zhang Jie, Chi Zijian, and Chen Ran, have been translated into foreign languages. For instance, Zhang Jie's *Leaden Wings* (沉重的翅膀), Wang Anyi's *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow: A Novel of Shanghai* (长恨歌), and Chi Zijian's *Last Quarter of the Moon* (额尔古纳河右岸) are all winners of the Mao Dun Literature Award, one of China's most prestigious literary prizes. The translation of these important Chinese works demonstrates the West's respect for mainstream Chinese literature. This chapter selects works by Wang Anyi, Can Xue, and Tie Ning to illustrate the translation, dissemination, and reception of Chinese women's fiction in the English-speaking world, with the aim of providing a reference for the cross-cultural journey of Chinese women's literature.

SECTION 1: *THE SONG OF EVERLASTING SORROW*: A STORY OF SHANGHAI IN TRANSLATION[2]

As one of the most influential writers in contemporary China, Wang Anyi has attracted much attention from Western audiences. Her works have been translated into multiple languages, extending their literary life into new and different reading spaces. In particular, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow: A Novel of Shanghai*, hailed as an "epic" by American cultural critic, Leo Ou-fan Lee, not only received rave reviews in China, but also gained extensive attention in Western literary circles.

In 2008, the English version of *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* was published by Columbia University Press. Upon its release, it was hailed as "a genuine classic" (Winterton 2008) of contemporary Chinese fiction and was enthusiastically reviewed by *The New York Times*, and other mainstream media. Wang Anyi was frequently called "one of the most critically acclaimed writers in the Chinese-speaking world" (Prose 2008). Through an analysis of the translation and reception of this literary classic about Shanghai, we will examine the reshaping power of translation on language and culture, English readers' understanding of Chinese literature, the similarities and differences in aesthetics and cultural awareness between the two languages, and the impact of Western perspectives and ideology on the reception of literature in a new culture. In this context, this novel is a valuable and typical illustration of contemporary Chinese literature and culture "going global."

The Presence of the Translator

The author Wang Anyi is known by English readers not only for *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*. Since the 1980s, some of her other important works have also been translated, including *Baotown* (小鲍庄) in 1985, *Lapse of Time* (流逝) in 1988, *Love in a Small Town* (小城之恋) in 1988, and *Love on a Barren Mountain* (荒山之恋) in 1991. However, it was *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* that firmly established her reputation in English.

The novel's main translator was Michael Berry, an American scholar who has recently emerged as a translator of modern and contemporary Chinese literature. He is also a literary and film critic, and a professor at the Department of Asian Languages & Cultures at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). As an accomplished scholar in the field of Chinese literature translation and studies, Berry has translated works by many famous Chinese writers, including Yu Hua, Ye Zhaoyan, Zhang Dachun, and Wang Anyi, and his translations have been well received in the English-speaking world. Moreover, he is the author of *Speaking in Images: Interviews with Contemporary Chinese Filmmakers*; *A History of Pain: Trauma in Modern Chinese Fiction and Film*; *Jia Zhangke's Hometown Trilogy;* and *Boiling the Sea: Hou Hsiao-hsien's Memories of Shadows and Light* (in Chinese), among other works. To date, his translations include Wang Anyi's *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* (2007); Yu Hua's *To Live: A Novel* (2004); Ye Zhaoyan's *Nanjing 1937:*

A Love Story (2003); and Zhang Dachun's *Wild Kids: Two Novels About Growing Up* (2002), containing "My Kid Sister" and "Wild Child." Berry has also served as judge of the Dream of the Red Chamber Award, and the Golden Horse Awards, and has published articles in many newspapers and periodicals (including *The Beijing News* 新京报), further evidencing his translation craft. The original works he has translated vary in terms of writing style. For example, Zhang Dachun is an imaginative writer, Yu Hua features realism, and Wang Anyi is best known for her sensitive female narrative. When discussing the differences between writers and their works, Berry stated that the translator should be invisible and let the original speak in the English environment. He also explained that given the idiosyncrasies of writers, the translator should not convey to readers a similarity among works in their translations, or associate different writers with one another through the translator's own style. Every time he works on a new project, Berry tries to translate it in the voice and style of the original (Wu 2014, 48–53).

In 2000, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* was selected among the most influential works of the 1990s in China,[3] and won the fifth Mao Dun Literature Award. The same year, Michael Berry and Susan Chan Egan began translating the novel. The English version faithfully presents the power and beauty of Wang's literary world and has been acclaimed "a genuine classic" (Winterton 2008). Shortly after it was released by Columbia University Press, in 2008, the book was named as a finalist in the Lois Roth Award for a Translation of a Literary Work by the Modern Language Association (MLA), one of the highest honors in the American translation field. This contributed directly to Wang's nomination for the 2011 Man Booker International Prize, the first time a Chinese writer has been shortlisted for this important global literary award. The English translation was mainly undertaken by Berry, assisted by Susan Chan Egan, a Filipino-American with a master's degree in comparative literature from the University of Washington, and an independent scholar engaged in the study of modern and contemporary Chinese history. The success of the book in the target culture is much credited to the duo's selection and practice of proper translation strategies. As sinologists familiar with Chinese literature and culture, they were able to balance the translator's obligations to both the author and the reader, mediate between the Self and the Other, and make sound judgments from a multicultural standpoint. While respecting the Other, they struck a subtle balance between fidelity and readability and coordinated the responsibilities of all of the parties involved in the source and target languages, thus contributing to a translation that both reflects the original literary style and retains its cultural Otherness.

These two sinologists from a Western cultural background spent eight years producing a translation that is faithful and readable. They respected the writer's idiosyncrasies and retained them in the translation, as well as overcoming linguistic and cultural barriers to accommodate the cognitive abilities and aesthetic habits of Western readers. The relationship between the author and the reader, between the original and the translation, between defamiliarization and readability, was handled in a pleasing manner by the translators, providing inspiration for the ongoing possibilities and ethics of the translation of contemporary Chinese literature.

As a full-length novel spanning an important historical period, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* depicts the tragic life of Wang Qiyao, who has civic ideals, and pursues material enjoyment. As Wang Anyi explained in an interview,

> The writing of *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* is a calm operation: the style is realistic; the characters and plot are rigorously reasoned out; and the texture is delicate, just like the "*cun*" (a term that is used in traditional Chinese painting to describe the results of different movement of the paint brushes) in traditional Chinese painting. It can be said that the creation of this novel has reached a certain extreme state in my writing career.
>
> (Xu 2000)

The differences between the Chinese and English language and culture, the author's unique style, and this "extreme" writing state bestow the original text with a strong heterogeneity. Consequently, any misplacement, misreading, and distortion by the Other may cause a loss of the true Self of the original, and even invite questioning of the validity of the translation.

According to Michel Hockx, "The translation by Berry and Egan does justice to the novel as much as is possible within the confines of publishing translations" (Hockx 2009). With a rigorous attitude, and an original-centric approach, they sought to understand Wang's writing intentions. In the Afterword of the English version, Berry and Egan recount Wang's writing career and note the literary value of *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* and the honors assigned to its credit, explaining that Wang has established herself as "one of the most prolific, dynamic, and imaginative fictional stylists on the Chinese literary scene" (Wang 2008, 431). The translators' admiration for the author, and their respect for the original, contributed directly to the production of a translation that retains the linguistic style, and the literary and cultural characteristics, of the original.

In fact, when initially discussing their cooperation, Berry and Wang did not determine the work to be commissioned. *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* was Berry's first choice, but he remained hesitant about it, because the book would be far harder to translate than the author's other works, since its language is "dense, informative and inclusive. At its extreme, it can form overlapping language barriers, but it can also create a textual wonder that cannot be missed" (Wang 1996, 37). Yet for Berry, "Translating *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* is a challenging but the most meaningful thing" (Berry 2008a). He, therefore, spent half a year experimenting with translations, and finally decided to translate this book. In order to become as familiar as possible with the *Haipai* (Shanghai-style) culture and to capture the essence of urban life in Shanghai, Berry traveled to the city several times to visit the places and scenes described in the novel and to absorb the urban atmosphere of the city's lanes and alleys. In addition, he devoted energy to tracking Wang Anyi's changing creative styles, from "scar literature" to tales of sexual liberation, and from avant-garde experiments to postmodern portraits of contemporary Shanghai, in order to convey the author's thoughts and language style. He also made in-depth

comparisons of various art adaptations, such as television series, movies, and stage plays. In his opinion,

> … the popular reinventions of Wang Qiyao in the decade since Wang Anyi brought her to life have … offered new alternatives for this character's fictional universe, … [but] one of the key pitfalls encountered by both the film and television adaptations of the novel stems from the need on the part of the producers to continually reintroduce characters – such as Mr. Cheng, Jiang Lili, and Director Li – for increased dramatic effect and continuity of story, even when those characters pass away in the novel.
>
> (Wang 2008, 433)

This also reflected the translator's reluctance to rewrite the original, and his attitude of staying faithful to it. This extensive preparatory research helped Berry to gain a multilayered understanding of Wang and her book and also manifested the translator's efforts to be ethically responsible to the author, which impacted both the translation process and the final product.

There are no specific plots or characters in the opening of *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, but over the 12,000 words, there is a continuous delineation of "*Longtang*" (弄堂), "Gossip" (流言), "The Young Lady's Bedchamber" (闺阁), and "Pigeons" (鸽子). These four typical images of Shanghai that run through the novel represent the everyday life of the metropolis, and the universal experiences amid the vicissitudes of life, and set the tone of rational exploration for the unfolding of the story. This seemingly prosaic writing is, in effect, a reflection of Wang Anyi's ingenuity and talent. However, such an opening is very strange to Western readers, and as a consequence, many American publishers disregarded the novel. Moreover, a *Chicago Tribune* review claimed that the novel "is alternately appealing and tedious. It has a plot but is not plot-driven. The hypnotic prose and melancholic story leave readers with the sense of walking slowly on a mesmerizing treadmill" (Thomas 2008).

Faced with the contradictions caused by the differences in aesthetics and writing techniques, Berry did not question the author, nor reshape the original work directly, but opted to respect, accept, and adapt to these differences. As he explained in an interview,

> Although this opening makes many readers uncomfortable, the author's writing is very beautiful. More importantly, these prose passages tell us that the novel tells not just the story of Wang Qiyao, but rather the story of Shanghai on the whole. As the story unfolds, Wang Anyi intertwines this beautiful prose with the plot, integrating it into an entirety.
>
> (Berry 2008a)

With an accurate assessment of the author's intentions, and a positive attitude toward embracing the unfamiliar literary techniques and very different ways of thinking, he sought to follow the original text closely, without deleting or rewriting,

and to transplant fully the style of the original to the translation, delivering an extraordinary reading experience to the Western audience.

In fact, this foreignization translation strategy is present throughout the English translation, for instance in the following examples:

ST   王琦瑶说了个"地"字, 康明逊指了右边的"也"说是个"他,"
　　 她则指了左边的"土"说, "岂不是入土了" (Wang 2003, 173)

TT   Wang Qiyao had picked the character for "earth," whereupon he pointed to
　　 the right half and said it could be construed as "he." Impulsively, she
　　 pointed to the left half, made up of the "dirt" radical, exclaiming, "This
　　 shows that 'he' is buried, doesn't it?" (Wang 2008, 205)

This extract involves the deconstruction of Chinese character glyphs. The Chinese character itself contains powerful indicative and ideographic functions. When translated into an abstract alphabetical language like English, the associative and extended meaning of the character pattern is generally lost, causing a considerable degree of untranslatability. In order to address this, the translators did not passively reduce or tamper with the original text, rather they faithfully translated each part of the Chinese characters directly, as "earth," "he," and "dirt," to boldly reproduce the meaning conversion in the process of disassembling and reorganizing the Chinese characters. They then concluded the word game with "'he' is buried," completing the shift from "他" (he) to "地" (earth) between the lines. The translators did not therefore obscure the differences, but instead reorganized the concrete and graphic Chinese characters in the abstract English language, fully revealing and highlighting the Otherness of the original. This was a manifestation of the translators' respect for the heterogeneous source culture and of their concern for readers' expectations of exoticism.

ST   这想象力是龙门能跳狗洞能钻的一无清规戒律 (Wang 2003, 10)

TT   With the imagination completely free from all fetters, gossip can leap through
　　 the dragon's gate and squeeze through the dog's den (Wang 2008, 12)

The use of metaphor can often show the cognitive and attitudinal differences that permeate different cultural systems. The above is a ready example of the great subtlety of the Chinese language. Here the author used "跳龙门" and "钻狗洞" to figuratively assimilate the gesture of a man who knows when to eat humble pie, and when to hold his head high. The translators did not fixate over the negative image of "dragon" in the Western context, and the related ideological constraints, instead preserving the traditional Chinese understanding of "*long*" or "dragon" as being noble to the greatest extent. In addition, the "dog" is trustworthy, loyal, and brave in the eyes of Westerners, but in traditional Chinese culture, the image of "dog" is mostly derogatory, just as "dog's den" is a synonym of lowliness and degradation. Again, instead of sweetening this cultural reference, the translators faithfully retained it in the translation.

In his critique, the British scholar Michel Hockx demonstrated his support for the translators' execution of the Other, noting,

> One might argue that this novel is "experimental" exactly because it tries to work against "readability,' or at least to make reading more of an effort … for the western reader, there are already enough factors working against "readability," such as references to names, places, and events…. I would venture that such questions make the translation interesting in its own right, and a fruitful prospect for scholars working in the growing field of Translation Studies.
>
> (Hockx 2009)

Moreover, the reading and experience of the Other in translation "can also exhibit the most singular power of [the] translating act: to reveal the foreign work's most original kernel, its most deeply buried, most self-same, but equally the most 'distant' from itself" (Berman 2000, 240). The Other, as illustrated in the above examples, was incorporated by the translators into the target language system through a potent translation stance, and numerous Chinese cultural references in the book, and Wang Anyi's idiosyncrasies, were also respected and recognized. The distant and exotic Other was integrated into the speech of the Self. As such, the validity of the translation was secured, and the conventional mold of English language and culture was dismantled to make room for a foreign and fresh cultural form.

Professor David Der-wei Wang played a crucial role in the introduction of *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* abroad. At the time of writing, he is an influential sinologist in North America, who is mainly engaged in the study of modern and contemporary Chinese novels. Since 2000, he has cooperated with Columbia University Press in the planning and publication of a Chinese literature translation series that includes *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*. As editor-in-chief, he is responsible for text selection and translation quality. When discussing this novel in an interview, he said,

> I would be very pleased if a reader finds Wang Anyi's *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* on the bookshelf 20 or 30 years later and knows that it is one of the classic Chinese works of the 1990s. There is no need to rush for quick success. It takes time to do something meaningful and I will keep doing it. What I value is a book's significance in the history of literature. It is not necessarily of importance in the market.
>
> (Ji 2008, 77)

This research perspective and literary identity of classics determines the strategic orientation of the entire translation process and also lays the foundation for the recognition of translated works in the West. Although contemporary Chinese literature remains marginal in Anglophone countries, especially in the United States, translations that are both in line with the mainstream poetics of the target culture,

and reflective of their own foreignness, have made possible the acceptance of Chinese literature in foreign lands.

The Narrative of a City

Although contemporary Chinese literature does not have a large readership in the United States, the publication of *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* in English has helped awareness of Wang Anyi's work to broaden from the small research group of sinologists to enable her to take her place among the American cultural elite. The book has caught the attention of the mainstream reading community as "a 20th century Chinese classic," and its urban theme has much to do with this.

In general, the translation of contemporary Chinese literature in the United States is driven by curiosity. The West is eager to learn about post-Cultural Revolution China, including its rapid development, urban changes, social reality, and personal life experiences. Literary works that are based in reality can easily pique the interests of translators and mainstream readers. This reading trend has made *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* one of the most popular Chinese works in recent years.

In his remarks on this novel, Leo Lee said,

> Wang Anyi's *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* not only describes a city, but [also] writes the city into a vision that is difficult to perceive in historical research or personal experience. Such a masterpiece is very rare in the current world of fiction.[4]

In the novel, Wang Anyi narrates the changes of a city through the description of a woman's life and presents Shanghai culture and societal changes under the wider historical narrative through her account of the daily and trivial stories of ordinary people. The novel provides the West with a unique perspective from which to understand Shanghai and the wider context of China itself, as well as the national characteristics, cultural psychology, and many social issues of the country. The narrative of a Chinese city and society has helped the novel to gain widespread attention and to exert its influence overseas.

The heroine of the novel, Wang Qiyao, arises from a Miss Shanghai beauty pageant, a product of commercial consumption in Shanghai at the time, and her checkered life is fabricated into an enduring cautionary tale. The novel begins in 1945 and ends in 1995. In the span of these 50 years, Shanghai is portrayed as a miracle of continuity that has undergone hardships and institutional changes. American writer Francine Prose wrote in her *New York Times* review that the most important themes of the novel are "those persistent elements" (Prose 2008). The rapidly changing trends of the times, and the stable lives of the citizens in the novel are intertwined, and these two historical experiences constitute a unique "Fable of Shanghai." One reads in the novel,

> …she entered. After her eyes had adjusted to the darkness, she saw that the little world inside had barely changed; it was as if the entire room had been

encased in a time capsule … Wang Qiyao failed to understand that it is precisely this myriad of unchanging little worlds that serves as a counterfoil to the tumultuous changes taking place in the outside world.

(Wang 2003, 244–245)

The novel spans several important periods in contemporary China, but many of the keywords in the historical narrative, namely civil war, liberation, the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, and the reform and opening up, are all invisible in the novel. Instead, Wang Anyi focuses on the lives in the neighborhood and presents lengthy individual statements against the backdrop of the historical construction of Shanghai, in order to reflect the historical changes and to view Shanghai at three different stages: the "Pearl of the Orient" on the eve of the PRC, the golden days of the 1960s, and a city in reform in the 1980s.

The book begins with a 20-page depiction of the unique and mysterious scenery of Shanghai culture. These persistent scenery elements as the background and extension of the story constitute the Shanghai cityscape and reflect the artistic style of the story. Countless elements of Shanghai life are collaged in Wang Anyi's exquisite writing. She records Shanghai through her own eyes, and the novel also becomes an important channel for Westerners to learn about this Eastern metropolis. Overlaid on these "unchanging" elements, the dramatic changes in history are also projected onto everyday life. These include the way that women on the streets of Shanghai went from wearing cheongsam dresses to Lenin-style jackets to blue blouses to high heels and silk stockings, with the fashion trends implying the political environment. It also mentions that Director Li has died in a plane crash, and Mr. Cheng has jumped to his death, historical events that cast a shadow on ordinary life, but in the novel the standard narrative of history surrenders to the account of everyday life. This sad song composed by Wang unfolds in the labyrinthine alleyways of Shanghai. In his review, Prose wrote,

As "The Song of Everlasting Sorrow" moves toward its violent, melodramatic and distressingly appropriate ending, readers may feel a Proustian nostalgia for the novel's lost time, a sadness that mirrors the melancholy that haunts Wang Qiyao and pervades the fascinating, mostly vanished *longtang* of Shanghai.

(Prose 2008)

Because Berry and Egan understood both the creative intention of Wang Anyi and Western readers' curiosity about contemporary China, they sought to render the original flavor of Shanghai. The translation of the book's title is one such manifestation of their efforts. At the time, the publisher proposed to translate the title as "Miss Shanghai," believing that with the earlier success of Wei Hui's *Shanghai Baby: A Novel* in English, "Miss Shanghai" would be an appropriate title for marketing purposes. However, Berry rejected the proposal to use this kitsch translation solely with sales purposes in mind. Instead, he translated the title literally as

"The Song of Everlasting Sorrow," adding the subtitle, "A Novel of Shanghai" to highlight the center stage of the novel, namely Shanghai. With the modern history of the city serving as the backbone, the simple story of the novel is enriched with the fragments and sorrows of life to constitute a work of 400-odd pages. Thus, the cultural identity of the residents is effectively annotated, and the main structure of the novel is highlighted, enabling English readers to gain a more direct understanding and perception of the text.

Moreover, the lengthy narration and descriptions employed before arriving at the central point of the narrative are also translated literally, without any abridgement. After finishing the translation, Berry contacted over 20 American mainstream publishers, seeking to publish the book, but was invariably met with refusal. As he explained, "Every publisher has read the synopsis and the first two chapters, but none of them has a clear intention to publish it" (Ji 2008, 77). Some of those he contacted claimed that the first chapter concerning Shanghai's *longtang* and pigeons made no sense, and some suggested that the first chapter be deleted entirely. However, even if such a literal translation of the original may dampen the American readers' enthusiasm for the novel, the translators believed it to be a crucial part of the book that depicts a vivid picture of Shanghai, and therefore sought to depict Shanghai and its residents in a very realistic way in their translation.

Ultimately, the reception of the English version of the novel in the West demonstrated that the preservation of foreignness in contemporary Chinese writing does not hamper Western readers from appreciating the fascinating original. The novel offers a glimpse of China and interprets the collision of desire, emotion, and everyday life, and the influence of time and history on individuals, introducing to Western readers a unique fable of Shanghai. Moreover, thanks to the success of the English translation, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* has become an exemplary work of Chinese "urban literature."

Western-Centric Reception

In June 2005, Julia Lovell reviewed the overseas dissemination of modern and contemporary Chinese literature in an article titled, "Great Leap Forward." Over a long period of time, Western readers have generally deemed "Chinese as dully propagandistic," and almost all novels from the Chinese mainland have been labeled "socialist realism" and regarded at best "as an educational source of information on China." Due to the cultural, historical, geographical, and societal differences, as well as an inadequate experience of reading modern Chinese literature, such negative impressions and judgments have endured. Despite the fact that a growing number of translated books from China have become available over the past two decades, the mainstream media and the general public in the West still believe that because "…it is little known, generally viewed as being of poor literary value and therefore unlikely to attract audiences … China's recent literature can be safely ignored" (Lovell 2005).

In her review, Lovell's description and analysis revealed both the embarrassing reality of modern and contemporary Chinese literature in the West and the

long-standing arrogance of Western cultural centrism. In this context, the West is the self-appointed censor and judge of cultural and aesthetic values, while Chinese literature is treated as only a data processor. Under this unequal center versus periphery relationship, Chinese literature is reduced to a textual source at the West's disposal and finally falls into the trap of ideology and power relations following arbitrary interpretation and distortion.

In recent years, the translation of an increasing number of works from China has helped to correct some Western prejudice and indifference toward contemporary Chinese literature. However, the Western-centric cultural hegemony continues to exert a strong influence. Despite this, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* has constructed a relatively successful image of an Eastern city, although careful readers can still detect traces of obliteration and alteration in its acculturation process, from the deliberate misinterpretation of context to the simplification of, and disregard for, an alien culture.

Dissolution of Aesthetic Form

The translator's choice of translation strategy often represents not only their personal interpretation but also the target culture's attitude toward the source culture. When translating *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, Berry and Egan sought to understand the original work to ensure maximum respect and fidelity. However, if the source culture is in fierce collision with the target culture, it is necessary that the marginalized culture succumbs to the dominant one, engendering stylistic and textual variances from the original. The approach to the literary aesthetic form in *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* is a clear example. In the "Translators' Notes and Acknowledgments," Berry and Egan specifically mentioned the fact that "… there are a series of stylistic variances from the original" (Berry 2008b).

There are many long paragraphs in the original work, in which sentences meander like flowing water. Moreover, the dialogue is inserted in the long paragraphs of narration, without quotation marks. This special writing technique is a purposeful arrangement by Wang Anyi. Her writing is known for the so-called Four No's: "No special environments or characters. No excessive materials. No fixed language style. No uniqueness." In order to avoid being obsessed with nonessentials, confined to a standard design, and to let readers focus on the themes of great sorrow and joy, Wang did not want to "overemphasize partial or characteristic things or the propensity to be amusing" in her writing (Wang 2005, 30–31). The dialogue and sentence patterns in *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* are a deliberate manifestation of this idea. The author consciously and purposefully sought to write in an entirely descriptive language, replacing the real time and space in which the story unfolds with a psychological time and space, in order to convey the social environment and storyline. This particular writing technique is a hallmark of the novel.

The translators added quotation marks and paragraph breaks in sections where the direct dialogue appears, indicated in the original by the use of first-person pronouns. The other dialogue sections that use third-person pronouns are left in their original form, embedded within longer paragraphs. In addition, italics, which are not commonly used in Chinese text, are also added as a stylistic device to indicate

internal thought. In the "Translators' Notes and Acknowledgments," Berry and Egan explained that this was done for the purpose of achieving "readability in English." Punctuation marks are required for dialogue sections in Western narratives. In order to cater for the reading habits of the Western audience, the translators were required to rearrange the Chinese text to make the translation more accessible. In an exclusive interview regarding the translation of *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, Berry discussed this rewriting, explaining, "We tried to respect this special narrative technique, but after all, we added quotation marks and paragraph breaks for the purpose of readability in English" (Berry 2008a).

In fact, this special narrative technique applied by Wang Anyi is unconventional even in Chinese writing. As Chen Sihe, a professor of Chinese Literature at Fudan University, commented,

> Wang Anyi's pursuit of the new poetics of fiction seems to go against the general laws governing novel art, which is bound to take a great risk: not only is it contrary to the prevailing narrative style of Chinese fiction in the 1980s, it is also different from the marginalized personal narrative discourse in the 1990s.
>
> (Chen 1998, 51)

This shows that even in the local context, Wang's writing is norm-breaking, which may result in a similar "strangeness/defamiliarization" once it is translated into English. The sentence patterns and paragraph breaks in English are not much different from those in Chinese. This means there is a possibility of transplanting the aesthetic form of *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* into the English text. However, the translators opted to omit this, even though they were aware of the importance of this special form.

Undoubtedly, this approach may remove the reading obstacles, and present a much more readable and engaging story. However, Berry's repeated mention of the rewriting undertaken clearly demonstrates that there was a struggle between fidelity and readability. This dissolution of aesthetic form proves the manipulation of Western cultural centralism. Under the norms of Western culture, it is necessary that the Other is transformed to accommodate the inherent thinking pattern of the dominant culture. Although the translators recognized the canonical status of *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, they therefore had to sacrifice its unorthodox literary style and Wang Anyi's idiosyncrasies in their translation. In fact, this kind of "sacrifice" is made to satisfy the aesthetics and the reading needs of the Anglophone audience, and to ensure that the translated work is better accepted by the mainstream society in the West, even though their aesthetic tastes and knowledge are partial. This also demonstrates that the value of translation has moved beyond the language and the text itself to include a cultural function, and the interpretation of cultural power.

Reader's Reception

According to the current mainstream aesthetic standards of the West, literary works must reflect pure literary purposes and humanistic aesthetics. A work that includes

moral judgments and utilitarian values is not therefore, by its nature, literature. After the founding of the PRC, Chinese literature, especially the Seventeen-Year Literature (1949–1966) and the Cultural Revolution Literature (1966–1976), was denounced for its strong political utility and instrumental nature. Only since the arrival of the new period has literature for literature's sake returned and Chinese writing has shown more personality and subjectivity and has become increasingly aligned with Western aesthetic values.

The Song of Everlasting Sorrow describes the everyday life of people living in Shanghai and beyond in China, in a detailed, accurate, and sober manner. The style, characterized by attention to detail, is a major reason why this novel is attractive to Western readers. Furthermore, the English version departs from being a grand historical narrative and is instead filled with personalized independent expressions that are consistent with Western aesthetics. As a result, the work has received considerable attention from American mainstream media, including *The New York Times*, *World Literature Today*, *Publishers Weekly*, and *The Chicago Tribune*. Their reviews were generous, with critical acclaim of Wang's writing craft, and her shift of focus from big historical events to such themes as nostalgia, Shanghai, women's experiences, and everyday life.

Despite Wang's deliberate omission of historical and political events in the novel, some Western reviewers still abided by ideological literary criticism, purposefully highlighting political interpretation in their articles. For example, Gregory McCormick opened his *The Quarterly Conversation* review by stating that "The translation into English of Wang Anyi's 1996 novel, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, marks an important development in the way most literary Westerners, particularly Americans, view China."[5] The article featured a politically charged perspective and stance. In McCormick's eyes, Wang's abandoning of the historical narrative is a veiled act of political criticism that runs through the book. As he argued, the "gossip" as a characteristic of Shanghai is "a kind of depoliticized control over the women's world" and it "shows a very different power from what's represented by Director Li, … which is often reflected in all kinds of revolution and political movement in the contemporary Chinese history." At the end of his review, he even noted that Wang's writing is meant to "engage a big readership in political criticism."[6] In another review, Hockx compared Wang Qiyao's death to the demise of the imperial consort, Yang Guifei, in "Song of Everlasting Sorrow," a long narrative poem by renowned Chinese poet, Bai Juyi. He argued that "her death signals the end of rebellion and the return to order" and that this analogy is perhaps the strongest political message the author has allowed herself to deliver.

These political interpretations are far-fetched and opinionated. The reception of contemporary Chinese literature in the West has inevitably been driven by political ideology. There are many Chinese works that have much to offer, from exquisite psychological descriptions and a heightened awareness of the times to the universal beauty of literature and philosophical thoughts on human nature. Once they are introduced abroad, however, they often invite political interpretations and judgments. Some Western media are inclined to explain the original works according to their own mainstream social values and ideology. Such condescending and

deliberate interpretations of the Other often involve an overemphasis on the ideological orientation of the original and may cause a biased and distorted perception of Chinese literature.

In addition to speculative political interpretations, these reviews often display a special fondness for the first part of *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*. This part features a colonized Shanghai in the 1940s, which is undoubtedly "the best Shanghai" from a Western-centric "elite" perspective. Such a sense of "colonial" superiority permeates a *World Literature Today* review, which stated,

> As Qiyao ages through relationships with five men, becoming a symbol of the "old Shanghai," the city likewise declines from its colonial splendor of the 1940s to the crumbling *longtang* and polluted rivers of the industrial 1980s. Qiyao's violent death while guarding a gift of gold from her first lover seems to prophesy an end to any vestige of what once made Shanghai the "Paris of the East."
>
> (Chiang and Rollins 2009, 64)

The general readership's responses are similarly filled with Western-centric value judgments. The reviews on Amazon and Goodreads show that ordinary readers also repeatedly mention the "glamorous" colony of Shanghai before 1949, and the nostalgia symbolized by Wang Qiyao.

Wang Anyi herself was unhappy with these misinterpretations, saying that her description of the old Shanghai in the 1940s has invited much misunderstanding and trouble, noting,

> This part is the worst I have ever written since I know little about that era. But it turns out to be the most popular part, as there is an illusionary Shanghai that perfectly meets the expectation of many readers at home and abroad.[7]

In the overseas reception of *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, while the exotic elements attractive to English readers are valued and hailed, the handling of the Other, the ideological interpretation, and the overemphasis on the first part have all demonstrated a narrow and politicized understanding of the novel in the West. Such interpretations do not occur at a transcendent level but are based on a stereotypical perception of Chinese politics and culture, and Western egocentrism. These perceptions demonstrate that Chinese literature is deemed to be marginal and inconsequential by the dominant Western system, even though English readers have a certain interest in it.

Conclusion

Chinese literature is constantly imagined, examined, and read in the West through the lens of Orientalism. Chinese works have attracted Western attention for their exoticism, cultural taste, and political characteristics. An important reason why *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* is accepted in the West is that the novel is about

Shanghai, through which Western readers can glimpse China's cities and society. However, it is undeniable that the communication between Chinese and Western literatures has long been, and will continue to be, in an unequal power relationship, with the West at the center. This inequality is particularly evident in the United States. In a situation in which Western centralism prevails, it is difficult for literary works like *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* to become bestsellers in the Western market, due to the differences in ideology and aesthetics between China and the West. Instead, they are usually placed in university libraries for their significance to the history of literature and serve as a window into contemporary China. In this context, no matter how respectful to the original, and how skilled the translation, the translator as a communication medium cannot ignore the issues of the readability and acceptability of the translation completely, but has to succumb to some form of cultural hegemony, unable to realize the unconditional acceptance of the Self by the Other.

As Berry once said,

> The powerful storylines and skillful writing techniques of contemporary Chinese fiction ultimately lead to human nature, to the hopes, dreams, desires, fears, sorrows and nightmares that all human beings share. These themes are universally applicable. While Wang Anyi, Yu Hua, Mo Yan and Su Tong have far fewer readers in foreign countries than in China, I hope in the future, more and more overseas readers can discover the fascinating world of fiction created by these writers.
>
> (Berry 2008a)

As an indispensable part of world literature, contemporary Chinese fiction conveys its thoughts on humanity, society, and the wider world with its own unique literary discourse. This unique discourse also has the characteristics and significance of "great harmony under heaven," as evidenced by the fact that an increasing number of Chinese works have become international award winners. In order to attract a larger readership abroad for Chinese works that are of significance in the history of literature, measures are needed to promote mutual understanding and respect between different literatures and cultures, to remove the ethnocentric stereotypes and bias, and to retain the heterogeneity of the original.

SECTION 2: CAN XUE'S NOVELS: FROM PERIPHERY TO "WORLD-CLASS ART"[8]

Can Xue, which is the pen name of Deng Xiaohua, is on the fringe of the Chinese literary arena, due to her alternative and unique writing style. Her innovative art form is difficult for ordinary readers to embrace. In the 1980s and 1990s, Chinese mainstream literary circles were either collectively silent on, or highly critical of, her works, to the extent that many domestic publishers did not dare to publish them. In the decade from 1987 to 1997, a total of 20 works of Can Xue were

published, of which 15 were published by overseas publishers, and only five by domestic ones (Zhuo 2008, 140). As the Can Xue herself said, "I am on the edge [of the Chinese literary world]. Now I have drawn a clear line with the majority and I find that some critics have not the guts to mention my name" (Can 2008). Zhuo Jin, a scholar studying Can Xue, noted in addition that, as a leading avant-garde writer in China, Can Xue is the most alienated and marginalized writer from the perspective of politics and mainstream ideology. Her writing style challenges the existing respected cultural standards, and disrupts the established order, which surprises the general reader (Zhuo 2008, 94–97).

Nevertheless, she has earned a greater reputation in the English-speaking world than her fellow Chinese writers. As Dai Jinhua (戴锦华) said, "In a sense, Can Xue is the only contemporary Chinese writer who has been sincerely and completely accepted by the West" (Dai 2000, 16). Since 1987, her novels have been published in literary journals, such as *Formations* and *Conjunctions*, and included in anthologies published abroad. Among her works that have been translated into English are *Dialogues in Paradise* (天堂里的对话) (1989); *Old Floating Cloud: Two Novellas* (苍老的浮云) (1991); *The Embroidered Shoes* (绣花鞋) (1997); *Blue Light in the Sky and Other Stories* (天空里的蓝光) (2006); *Five Spice Street* (五香街) (2009); *Vertical Motion* (垂直运动) (2011); *The Last Lover* (最后的情人) (2014); *Frontier* (边疆) (2017); and *Love in the New Millennium* (新世纪爱情故事) (2018). These publications have given English readers an overview of Can Xue's style.

The above list demonstrates that Can Xue is one of the most translated Chinese writers. Indeed, in a study regarding the influence of modern and contemporary Chinese female writers in the West, based on the volume of their works collected in European and American libraries, Can Xue is ranked third, only after Eileen Chang and Zhang Jie (He 2014). Her works have been selected for the literature textbooks of many American universities, including Harvard, Cornell, and Columbia. Her short story "Meteorite Mountain" (陨石山) was recited by famous actors in the theater of Symphony Space, a cultural attraction in New York, and broadcast throughout the United States. She is also very popular among American writers. For instance, Susan Sontag said, "If China has one possibility of a Nobel laureate it is Can Xue."[9] Meanwhile, the postmodernist novelist Robert Coover believed that "…there's a new world master among us and her name is Can Xue,"[10] and literary critic, Charlotte Innes, remarked that "Can Xue is a revolution for Chinese literature. She is one of the most interesting and original Chinese writers to appear before a Western audience in years" (Innes 1991, 3). Moreover, American novelist, Bradford Morrow, believed that Can Xue had influenced his writing.

The number of translated books, the accolades they have received in the elite discourse, and their positive reception by a mass audience all indicate that Can Xue's novels have been canonized after a long and complex process involving the production, consumption, and reception of the translations, and the accumulated experience and value assigned to translated Chinese literature. This Chinese writer, who is often neglected at home, has gained recognition in English literary circles, and in recent decades her novels have received critical acclaim. The unique literary value of the text itself aside, another important reason for her success is that

in the process of the textual reconstruction in the foreign literary field, every agent involved in the translation makes full use of their own cultural capital, and ensures that the translation has aesthetic value and conforms to the expectation norms and literary imagination of foreign readers. Specifically, this is primarily manifested in four ways: the original works are rendered into beautiful English by translators; the English translations are managed by major American publishers, and selected for influential anthologies; the books in English gain their literary status with the help of American sinologists and literary critics; and their achievements and influence are advertised by famous American writers. These four aspects encompass the communication of a translation in the foreign literary field and involve the synergy of five key factors, namely "who" (author), "says what" (work), "in which channel" (translation), "to whom" (audience), and "with what effect" (effect).[11] The translator as an agent ensures that the translation is of aesthetic value and meets the expectation norms of readers in the reproduction process. The original author, another agent, also closely heeds the translation, publication, and reception of their novels and plays a dynamic role in the whole process. Meanwhile, the patrons provide the appropriate channels to reproduce the literary value of the works, and the major mainstream media, as well as literary critics, sinologists, and scholars, who are mainly responsible for the symbolic literary production, leverage their own cultural capital to evaluate the literary value of the works, and to write articles to recommend the novels to the audience, and to discuss their unique art form and writing style. Through this process, Can Xue's works have gained recognition in the world of English literature and have achieved remarkable results in their literary translation.

   This section analyzes the characteristics of Can Xue's work at every stage of its translational journey in the West, in order to illustrate how her work has ascended from obscurity to world-class art.

Original Text: A Borderless "New Experimental" Novel

The success of Can Xue abroad is inseparable from the cosmopolitanism and openness of her writing. Can Xue defines her novels as "new experimental" literature that aims to explore the deep nature of mankind, to undertake self-dissection and self-understanding as the essence of novel writing, and to pursue a pure art and pure literature experience (Can 2007, 20). This kind of introverted literature often deviates from such concepts as "nation" and "country" and instead encourages readers to explore the spiritual and artistic homeland shared by mankind.

   On the narrative level, Can Xue's fiction is mainly composed of bizarre and surreal image fragments, without a specific storyline, coherent narrative, or grand historical and social background. Her characters, with their weird personalities and absurd behaviors, always seem to be wandering alone in a dark labyrinth. In her stories, there are all kinds of strange characters, including a woman in search of embroidered shoes at her neighbor's house at midnight, a man with a belly full of needles, a cat that haunts the protagonist like a ghost, and Ms. X who locks herself in a room and gazes into a mirror all year round. Moreover, her narrative is awash

with decay, anxiety, paranoia, and depravity. The nightmarish world she builds is repulsive to ordinary readers. In China, most readers raised under the influence of traditional Chinese literature have become accustomed to the narrative mode of Chinese fiction and are unable to discard the shackles of conventional aesthetics, which prevents them from embracing and appreciating Can Xue's novels.

Meanwhile, on the level of literary heritage, Chinese cultural references are barely seen in Can Xue's work, while there is much intertextuality with Western literature. She does not support the viewpoint held by many Chinese writers and sinologists that ethnic and local literature can truly "go global"; nor does she believe that the more culture-specific it is, the more popular it will be abroad. In her opinion, works that depend solely on regional tales and exotic customs will not be read for long, and it is only the universality of works that makes literature valuable (Can 2007, 5). She reads Western classics in English, and constantly draws nourishment from Western literature and philosophy. Indeed, she once said in an interview that among the literary works she has read and benefited from, Chinese works account for 10% and foreign works for 90%, especially Western classics and Russian literature (Can 2008). In order to understand her work, the reader must have sufficient experience in reading Western classics and modernist novels, otherwise they may not be able to embrace her special story structure and plot. Can Xue explained that her "thoughts and feelings are like a plant grown from Western tradition. I dig it out and transplant it in the soil of Chinese culture. This transplanted plant is my work" (Can and Deng 2010, 28). This narrative language style is highly commensurable and transferable and can be well preserved at the translation level, making it far easier for her work to be understood and embraced by the target readers.

On the language level, Can Xue uses abstract and vague wordings and escapes the conventions of language expression and the process of speech encoding. Particular though it is, her means of expression is no barrier to translation, because there are basically no unique Chinese elements, in other words, no untranslatable heterogeneity, in her work. As Can Xue explained, "What I write is better expressed in foreign languages, because it is something common to all mankind. It's basically about universal, flowing sentiments with almost no regionalism" (Can 2007, 73).

In the field of Western literary criticism, the name "Can Xue" is often mentioned alongside Franz Kafka, Bruno Schulz, Italo Calvino, and Jorge Luis Borges. Regarding her success abroad, Can Xue once explained,

> I think there are not many examples of successful hybridization like mine in China, so I am more conspicuous abroad. To foreigners, my work is a mixture of Eastern and Western styles. I combine the beauty of color in Eastern culture with the sense of layers in Western literature to inspire meditation and also bring the pleasure of formal logic thinking.
>
> (Shu 2007)

This strong Western consciousness, and the literary origins at a deeper level, have made her famous in the English-speaking world.

Translation Agents: Synergy of Translators, Authors, and Patrons

The translation of Can Xue's work is indebted to the cooperation between Chinese and American translators. Of her nine books that are available in English, the first three were translated by American sinologist Ronald Janssen and Jian Zhang (张健), a faculty member at Suffolk County Community College of the State University of New York (SUNY), while the later four were translated by Karen Gernant, a retired professor at Southern Oregon University, and Chen Zeping (陈泽平), a professor at Fujian Normal University. The fact that this translator structure featured Chinese-American cooperation meant that the participating translators were able to engage fully with the advantages of two languages and two cultures; to make effective decisions in their translation process; and to consider the reading habits of Western audiences, while also ensuring the quality of the translation, so that the content entering the communication channels met the expectations of the target readers. As John Balcom explained,

> It is a complex process to bring Chinese literature to life in the English-speaking world. It requires the translator to understand the Chinese language and culture like a scholar and, at the same time, he needs to have a deep understanding of English and the talent to create in English.[12]

Cooperation between a Chinese translator familiar with the Chinese language and culture, and an American translator capable of creating in English, can therefore be described as an ideal paradigm in the translation of Chinese literature.

The translator Gernant is passionate about, and experienced in, translating Chinese literary works. In tandem with Chen Zeping, she has cotranslated over 50 books, most of them Chinese. This collaborative approach plays fully to their bilingual strength. Both groups of translators involved in translating Can Xue's work to date followed the original text and the author's intentions closely, retaining the unsettling gothic content of the original in the translation. With a respectful attitude, they rendered the original work faithfully to the target readers, providing ample room for interpretation. According to Gernant, Can Xue approved of their translation so much that every time American editors want to publish her stories, she entrusts their translation to these pairings.[13]

It is also worth mentioning that to date, Can Xue herself has played a dynamic role in the translation process. In addition to the aforementioned two translator teams she trusts and respects, she has actively sought new, younger collaborators. Indeed, she noted her discovery of two excellent emerging translators who successfully conveyed the implications of her work, one of whom is an editor at Yale University Press, who is proficient in both Chinese and English, and the other has a deep theoretical knowledge, and the ability to understand her literary criticism thoroughly, and so is currently entrusted with the translation of her theoretical works (Zhuo 2013, 11–23). Can Xue's emphasis on the quality of translation, and her careful selection of translators, reflect her concern for the long-term

introduction of her work abroad. This kind of good communication and mutual trust between author and translator is an extremely important part of the translation process that not only ensures the high quality of the translation but also makes possible the perception, understanding, and interpretation of the textual essence of her work.

The smooth translation of her novels is also attributable to her harmonious interactions with their publishers. Over the years, Can Xue has had a relatively fixed readership in the United States, including with certain editors from periodical presses and publishing houses. The paratext of several translated works notes that many editors have offered to revise and polish the translation. For instance, Jonathan Brent, a former editor-in-chief at Yale University Press, has published three books for Can Xue, and provided assistance in the publication of her latest work of fiction, *The Last Lover*, and her critical collection, *Book-length Commentary on Franz Kafka*. Indeed, Brent enjoys Can Xue's works so much that he not only helped to revise and polish the translation but also offered editorial opinions. Apart from Brent, certain editors at New Directions Publishing have provided suggestions for revision, and American literary magazines, such as *Manoa*, *Conjunctions*, and *Turnrow*, which have published Can Xue's short stories, have followed, actively recommending her novels in translation.

In addition, Can Xue is involved directly in the revision of the translations of her work, the negotiations with publishers, and the active communication with the target readers. Since she is clearly aware that her novels are difficult to embrace, she takes the initiative to approach readers in multiple ways. When the Massachusetts Institute of Technology proposed building a reader-oriented website for her, she offered to feed the site information about her writing; the website (http://web.mit.edu/ccw/can-xue/) is now fully fledged, with an almost complete archive of her work. She also accepts interviews conducted by international literary journals, and joins readings hosted by well-known universities, in order to answer readers' questions and to facilitate the understanding of her novels.[14] In order that her style is understood and embraced by a wider American readership, Can Xue also works to have her collections of literary criticism translated and published in English. Her strong desire to "go out," and her active participation in these overseas activities, have expanded her visibility and influence among foreign readers and boosted the translation of her novels in America.

Translation Content: Translator's Strategy under Multiple Factors

Can Xue's work is rich in poetic language. Every line reads easily, but has a narrative depth, and all her stories are filled with a force that provokes readers. This unique narrative style has become a signature of Can Xue's fiction and is also the greatest challenge for translations. The two translator pairings discussed in the previous section placed the author in a dominant position and stressed the reproduction of the overall artistic temperament of the original, fulfilling their moral and operational responsibility to both the original and the author. The translators did

not interpret the story intentionally, rather they conveyed its superficial logic, in order to avoid spoiling its unique narrative style. As Gernant explained,

> … we translate what we see on the page, allowing readers to interpret these words as they choose. We think that readers must enter into Can Xue's stories in order to understand them. But we do not think it's our job as translators to lead readers toward that understanding.
>
> (Post 2011)

The translators' respect for the original therefore makes possible the faithful recreation of the original style, providing readers with much room for interpretation.

The translators' strategy is also reflected in their consideration of the target readers. Can Xue's language and section breaks are antitraditional. The subconscious narration, and the natural style of language, drive an illogical and irrational means of expression. Faced with obscure texts, and a Western audience that rejects translated literature, it is particularly important for the translators to strike a balance between the readability of the translated text, and fidelity to the original style. With an English native-speaker on the team, Can Xue's current translators are well positioned to handle the complex relationship between authors, translators, and readers. They select appropriate translation strategies to deliver fluent, readable, and intriguing translations, after the fine tuning and embellishment of the original from the perspective of the target culture.

Can Xue's novella, *Dialogues in Paradise*, has two English versions, one of which was cotranslated by Ronald Janssen and Jian Zhang, and the other by Gladys Yang, which was included in the collection, *Contemporary Chinese Women Writers (II)* (1991), under Panda Books, published by the Chinese Literature Press. When comparing the two versions, significant differences in the translation content under the different translation strategies are clear. Gladys Yang's version is a faithful reproduction of the overall structure and content of the original, while the cotranslated version features conscious adjustment in the textual structure, as well as the rewriting and correction of some of the content. The original story is composed of eight paragraphs. Because Can Xue's experimental writing originates from her subconscious, the novella is obscure and difficult, with a loose structure, and some lengthy paragraphs stuffed with several layers of irrelevant meaning. While Gladys Yang chose to follow the original and translated it into eight corresponding long paragraphs, Janssen and Zhang consciously changed the structure, dismantling the story into 18 short, neat paragraphs, making it clearer, better structured, and easier to read. In terms of textual language, unlike Gladys Yang's word-for-word translation, the cotranslated version features the revision, and even rewriting, of some illogical lines. While Can Xue's fiction is idiosyncratic by nature, too-awkward sentences make a story extremely difficult to read and understand. In their translation, Janssen and Zhang had a strong audience awareness, and therefore conducted rewriting, where appropriate, to improve the readability.

The significant differences between the two versions do not necessarily reflect the ability of the translators. Indeed, Gladys Yang, a British translator, and her

husband, Yang Xianyi, have been translating Chinese classics for years and are the most well-known couple in the translation field in China. Rather, the main reason for the disparity is that under the constraints and influence of multiple factors, including the patronage, it was necessary for the translators to adjust the translation content according to their standards. For instance, Gladys Yang's version of *Dialogues in Paradise*, produced for Panda Books, took the original text as the standard. The state-led translation of Panda Books, as part of China's cultural agenda, sought to showcase Chinese literature to the outside world. Under this translation mode, the Chinese editor has greater authority, and the translator has no right to rewrite. Therefore, the translation is handled with the utmost respect and fidelity to the original, often without much consideration of its reception in the target market. In contrast, the cotranslated version published by Northwestern University Press prioritizes the audience's reading experience when selecting translation strategies. This approach demonstrates that the translators have a strong subject awareness and are empowered to make choices, directly impacting the final translation's outcome.

Dissemination Channel: Collaborative Efforts at Multiple Levels

Can Xue's works are translated and published by both domestic and overseas presses in English-speaking countries such as the United States, Britain, and Australia. Her two short stories, *Dialogue in Paradise* and *Hut on the Mountain*, have also been included in compilations in the Panda Books series. However, the source-initiated translations are only circulated within the limited academic system, mainly in university libraries, and have little impact on the overseas mass market. Subsequently, most of them have not attracted widespread attention from mainstream Western society.

Of Can Xue's nine novels, two are published by Northwestern University Press, three by Yale University Press, two by Open Letter Books, one by Henry Holt, and one by New Directions Publishing (a press specializing in literary translation). The first two are university presses, and Open Letter Books is a literary translation press owned by the University of Rochester. The books produced by these three publishers mainly enter libraries and academic circles. Since they are not competitive in the commercial market, their publication is generally of significance and value to the history of literature. Henry Holt is one of the oldest publishing houses in America and has published works by Hermann Hesse, Norman Mailer, Robert Louis Stevenson, and many other famous writers. New Directions Publishing, which was begun on Ezra Pound's advice, is committed to publishing pioneering and experimental works; it is home to many domestic and international literary-award-winning writers and has huge influence in the mainstream publishing field in Britain and America. Thus, in addition to academic presses, Can Xue's novels are mainly acquired by publishers dedicated to promoting translated literature, and who subsequently focus more on the literary value of the works than on their potential economic benefits.

In addition to novel publication, inclusion in anthologies or university textbooks is another important means of disseminating translated works overseas. Can Xue's

novellas have been included in many literary anthologies, including *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Chinese Literature* (2007), edited by Howard Goldblatt; *Worlds of Modern Chinese Fiction* (1990), edited by Michael Duke; *China's Avant-garde Fiction: An Anthology* (1998), edited by Jing Wang (王静); *The Art of the Story: An International Anthology of Contemporary Short Stories* (1999), edited by Daniel Halpern; and the *New World Writing* (1994), edited by Bradford Morrow. Can Xue was the only Chinese writer selected for the last two collections.

In terms of the distribution channel, the copyright export of Can Xue's works is not managed by any brokers or copyright agencies. Initially, the translators helped Can Xue to find a publisher, then she began to contact overseas publishers herself. Can Xue has the advantage of understanding English, and her works are well-known abroad, so people are familiar with her. Can Xue's early translators, Janssen and Jian Zhang, worked hard to introduce her work abroad. Now, if the name "Jian Zhang" is Googled, there will be many entries showing the *pinyin* of "Can Xue" (Zhuo 2008, 94–97, 107, 137, 140). There are also many foreign scholars and writers who admire Can Xue's novels, and who actively recommend them, including Robert Coover, Bradford Morrow, and Jon Solomon. In addition, in the publishing field, Can Xue's friend, Jonathan Brent, has helped her greatly with the publication of four novels and one collection. As a successful writer himself, Brent is a knowledgeable and valuable ally.

Primarily published by academic and literary presses, Can Xue's works are considered academic and niche, and therefore do not sell well, relying mainly on sponsorship instead. As Can Xue explained in an interview,

> They printed 4,500 copies of *Five Spice Street* but only a few were sold. Luckily, I have a sponsor and I met him. He is a Greek of my age. He funded me with money earned from other profitable projects. His family is a shipbuilding tycoon, making a lot of money. They have donated tens of millions to the publishers in support of translated literature. They are a nice couple. They think that countries like the United States should take in more things like mine.
>
> (Zhuo 2013, 21)

This shows that without patronage for literary translation, there are barriers to the publication of translated literature, especially works of little commercial value, such as those of Can Xue.

Due to the diversification of channels for literature communication, there are not only traditional forms of media but also overseas websites and magazines that promote Can Xue and her work. In 2011, *Red Leaves* (红叶) was posted on Belletrista, a website committed to introducing outstanding female writers to the world. In 2007, *The Bane of My Existence* (索债者) was published in *Words Without Borders*, an international digital literary magazine. In addition, Three Percent, the website for literary translation under the University of Rochester, has also been following Can Xue, and recently published an interview with her at the Reykjavik International Literary Festival. Consequently, online media has made Can Xue's novels accessible to a wider readership in the United States.

Translation Effect: Authoritative Reviewers versus Mass Audience

In terms of the translation of Chinese literature, only when Western audiences embrace a work can the purpose of its overseas dissemination be achieved. Can Xue's Chinese-to-English translations meet the different requirements of various factors, including agent, content, channel, and audience, so her work has achieved a good translation effect.

Can Xue once said that her writing relies more on readers than any other type of writing. Each of her works is a puzzle that tempts close friends to solve it. If readers do not exercise their brains, it is impossible to enter into her stories (Can 2007, 116). Can Xue's novels contradict the traditional aesthetic taste and reading habits of Chinese readers, so many domestic readers hold an attitude of rejection, unease, doubt, and antipathy toward them. The Chinese writer, Wang Meng, once remarked that although Can Xue's novels left a deep impression on him, he did not have the patience to finish reading them (Wang 1988). Can Xue's writing style, which is gradually being accepted by domestic readers, was initially criticized by critics. For instance, Zhuo Jin (卓今) wrote, "Can Xue's 'modernism' is nothing but a stack of images …. We cannot help but suspect that the author's deliberate construction and listing of too many images is to cover up the work's shallowness," adding, "Why did the author write so many nightmarish, nasty images? What is the point of a patchwork like this? Nobody knows for sure" (Zhuo 2008, 121–122). Indeed, Deng Shanjie (邓善洁) even suggested that some of Can Xue's works were only following trends, deliberately bluffing, and even deliberately seeking fame and credit (Deng 1990, 49). Thus, it is clear that readers must use their imaginations to understand her writing, or Can Xue's works will not be favored and appreciated.

However, Can Xue's experimental writing, neglected in China, happens to conform to the mainstream poetic norms of the target culture, and the universality of her works appeals to Western audiences. Most professional and ordinary readers find her novels "elusive"[15] and "repulsive" (Post 2009), and the reading an "arduous journey" (Hughes 2009). But it is precisely this tension between the text and the reader that makes the novel peculiarly attractive to Western readers, who do not give up simply because Can Xue's works are very difficult to read.

The reading tastes and aesthetic tendencies of English readers enable them to better appreciate the literary value of Can Xue's novels. They "enjoy the fun of playing with words and the feeling of seeing life as a journey and like to read novels that help discover the world and themselves" (Jenner 1990). As the American scholar Jon Solomon observed,

> Yet precisely because Can Xue's work is so utterly innovative, it is relatively difficult for her work to acquire recognition within the constricting boundaries and expectations placed upon literature emanating from China. Ultimately, the interest her work deserves can probably only come about by acquiring recognition from an audience cultivated upon the premise of innovation.
>
> (Solomon 2018)

In the eyes of Western audiences, her "new experimental" novels that cross national borders have indeed reached a certain artistic height, and align with Western readers' taste, which facilitates her reception abroad. Many readers have found in her works something likeable or familiar, as in the Western literary tradition, discovering the intertextuality between Western and Chinese literature. Elements in her novels remind readers of many Western writers, philosophers, and artists of different eras, nationalities, and styles, such as Edgar Allan Poe, Thomas Clayton Wolfe, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Lydia Davis, Michel Leiris, and Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky. *The New York Times* commented that "the stories recall Eliot's fables, Kafka's delusions, and Matisse's nightmarish paintings" (Innes 1989), while a *Booklist* review observed, "The thirteen stories of *Dialogues in Paradise* are eloquent in a way that the West associates with both the modern and the ancient – the dark oracles of Aeschylus and Sophocles, the paranoid mystery of Kafka, the moving stream of Woolf" (Mesic 1989, 1866). Meanwhile, a review of *Vertical Motion* in *Harvard Crimson* wrote,

> Xue's creativity with descriptive language is as innovative as that of the American writers Ray Bradbury and John Steinbeck … the sophisticated concepts of her stories… Xue's take on magical realism is irrefutably unique; her style is reminiscent of Gabriel García Márquez.
>
> (Cheng 2011)

In addition, *The Baltimore Sun* commented, "Can Xue's stories unfold with an eerie, dreamlike intensity. The ingenuity of her uncanny vision calls to mind a mix of Jorge Luis Borges and George Mac Donald" (Oppenheimer 2011), and *The Literary Review* wrote, "Even reading the English translation, readers are pleasantly surprised to find the story's perfect transition from innocent curiosity about things to the initial human desire, and this transition reminds European and American readers of Fyodor Dostoevsky or Flannery O'Connor" (Calvert 2011, 207).

This praise from authoritative media and periodicals forums demonstrates that Can Xue's innovative writing provides a unique literary experience for Western readers and concurrently serves as a key to opening the door to the Western world. In fact, she is so popular in the West that her novels have been selected for inclusion as literature textbooks at Harvard, Cornell, Columbia, and many other universities, since her absurd and unique narrative logic is useful subject matter for college students to study.

In addition to this active reading, there are also Western readers who reject the author's original intention and attach political associations to her novels. However, Can Xue has repeatedly emphasized that her creations have nothing to do with politics and that there are no specific plots or social backgrounds in her novels; the darkness, suspicion, jealousy, doubts, and anxiety in her writing coincide with Western readers' conjectures about China's political and social environments, so they involuntarily impose their own political interpretations on her work. This is particularly prominent in the reviews of her early works. In a review of *Dialogues in Paradise*, *The New York Times* claimed, "The author also has feminist

and political purposes" ([Domini 1991]),while an article in *Asian Folklore Studies* linked the metaphors in her work with political innuendo, arguing that it satirizes contemporary Chinese society. Moreover, *Publishers Weekly* wrote,

> Partly to avoid condemnation by the Chinese government and partly in reaction to the social realism of Mao Zedong's regime, Can Xue (*Dialogues in Paradise*) has fashioned two stubbornly obscure novellas about contemporary China that veil political and social commentary in symbolic, psychotic grotesquerie.[16]

Such comments that associate Can Xue's creations with Chinese society and politics are a clear betrayal of the author's original intention, since this understanding in the reception of her work runs counter to the purpose of the author's writing, which is a kind of creative rebellion. Nevertheless, an article titled "Is Can Xue the Bruno Schultz of modern China?" published in *The Village Voice*, observed that as an old Chinese fable, "Spear and Shield," suggests, the more vigorously Can Xue protests that her fiction is not political commentary, the firmer the consensus grows among Western critics that it is a massive indictment of her homeland ([Epstein-Deutsch 2009]). This intentional political interpretation by respected critics and academics serves to illustrate the influence of national ideology. The interpretation and reception of a literature cannot exist independently of politics and society. The consistency of elite discourse, popular discourse, and national discourse has made possible the canonization of Can Xue in the West. For translated literature, this is a remarkable achievement.

Conclusion

Can Xue seems to be an outlier who is independent of the contemporary Chinese literary system. While failing to strike a chord with Chinese readers, a large audience loves her writing abroad, and she has become a classical novelist in the West, thereby reducing the West's prejudice against contemporary Chinese literature. When her novels are translated abroad, various factors, such as agent, content, channel, audience, and effect have been evaluated and manipulated effectively to enable her novels in translation to meet the requirements of poetics, ideology, literary aesthetics, reading habits, and other restraints on the reception of the text in the West. Consequently, she has established a relatively prominent literary status in the English-speaking world.

Can Xue's open and positive attitude also aids the spread and reception of her work. Although her novels are interpreted politically, reflecting the strong self-centered cultural psychology of the West, and are limited to a small audience, her craft as a novelist is recognized by increasing numbers of Western readers. This recognition is due to the efforts and cooperation of all of the parties involved in the process of the translation of her work. At present, few Chinese literary works have been translated successfully into foreign countries. As the Chinese government vigorously promotes Chinese culture to "go out," Can Xue's success provides a useful

reference for the realization of this important initiative. A practical and significant solution is to build a feasible and effective translation model by incorporating the key elements of the original text, the translation agent, and the content, channel, audience, and effect.

SECTION 3: TRANSLATION OF *THE BATHING WOMEN*:
BETWEEN GENDER, CULTURE, AND POLITICS[17]

As one of the most influential female writers in contemporary China, Tie Ning is known for the distinct female consciousness contained in her works, in which she poetically and sensually describes the moral and emotional world of Chinese women. Many of her novels show a humanistic regard for women's living conditions and fortunes. As such, *The Bathing Women* is a representative work. As the coming-of-age story of the heroine, Yin Xiaotiao, the book charts the journey of a woman's self-construction and acquisition of her status as a social being. Through the experiences and feelings of the heroine, the novel illustrates a woman's struggles, desires, and self-redemption in the torrents of love through a detailed narrative of daily life, revealing the contradictions and conflicts between women and men, and between women and the society at the time the novel is set, as well as reexamining the eternal and all-encompassing topics of family, love, and friendship. In 2000, *The Bathing Women* shone in the literature book market. Included in the famous Cloth Tiger Series, it achieved success with a brilliant performance of 200,000 copies ordered at the national book ordering fair (spring) of the literature and art book groups.[18] This figure demonstrated that the book was highly anticipated by domestic readers.

Beloved and renowned in China, Tie Ning's works are less well known in the English-speaking world than those of her fellow female writers, Wang Anyi, Chi Li, and Can Xue. *The Bathing Women* (Chinese version) was published in 2006 by the People's Literature Publishing House, but it was not until 2012 that Scribner published the English version, cotranslated by Hongling Zhang (张洪凌) and Jason Sommer. On the back cover of the translation, the publisher says,

> In 2006, at the age of forty-nine, she was elected president of the China Writers Association, becoming the youngest writer and first woman to be honored in this way. Her works have been translated into Russian, German, French, Japanese, Korean and other languages. *The Bathing Women* is her first work to be translated into English.[19]

Although some of her novellas were translated and published under Panda Books, and in *People's Literature*, her masterworks were overlooked by mainstream Western publishers for a long time. By analyzing the text selection by overseas publishers, the translation model of *The Bathing Women*, the translation strategies, and its reception in the English-speaking world, we can gain a glimpse of the cross-cultural journey of contemporary Chinese women's literature.

Text Selection: Female Introspection and Care

Chinese literature is disseminated to the world through translation, which involves more than a simple bilingual conversion of text or literature. From the selection of the source text and the construction of the translation process to the communication channels of the translation and its reception and influence in the recipient country, all these factors constitute the complete landscape and research focus of the translation of Chinese literature.

As far as text selection is concerned, the reading of contemporary Chinese literature in the West is generally driven by curiosity. After the Cultural Revolution, China's economic take-off, urban changes, and differences in daily life have all brought a new cultural experience to the West. Therefore, among others, the realistic literary works developed from a female perspective are particularly appealing to Western readers, with their direct account of women's personal experiences, the distinct urban culture, and the spirit of the times, as well as for their inclusion of erotic and political elements.

For example, in her review of *The Bathing Women*, Julia Lovell wrote,

…some of China's more thoughtful, accomplished women novelists (of whom Tie Ning, born in 1957, is one) offer reading pleasures – careful characterization, attentive observation of dialogue – absent from the rough, Rabelaisian narratives of writers such as Mo Yan and Yu Hua. *The Bathing Women* possesses a gentle humanity that makes a refreshing change from the raucousness of recent work by Tie's male peers.

(Lovell 2013)

Meanwhile, *Publishers Weekly* observed that "set amidst shifting cultural values, this is a psychologically astute portrait of four women struggling to satisfy their appetites for food, camaraderie, family, community, sex, and love" (Hunter 2012), and a *Library Journal* review noted,

Tie Ning's writing fluidly captures the human desire to excel in life regardless of one's circumstances… it will most definitely be appreciated by readers who enjoy literature (particularly Asian literature) that unabashedly explores the complexities of human relations in times of adversity.

(Hunter 2012)

This reading trend encouraged the success of the translation of *The Bathing Women*. In an interview, the translator Hongling Zhang explained why she chose to translate this novel:

I have basically followed the feminist writing tradition in the history of literature and what I want to express particularly is the growth of women in inner strength at a given historical period in modern China and how their self-awareness is enriched and perfected in a broader context. Translation has

always been a process of learning and deep reading for me. I choose works from which I can learn a lot. … In fact, before settling to translate Tie Ning, I also considered Liu Zhenyun and Han Shaogong and translated the first four chapters of Liu Zhenyun's *The Cook, the Crook and the Real Estate Tycoon*. But my literary agent told me that the book market in the United States is mainly dominated by female readers and we'd better choose works that are of interest to this reader group if we want to seek a commercial publisher.

(Zhang et al. 2017, 11)

The Bathing Women has vivid and appropriate descriptions of self-criticism of the Cultural Revolution, immigration to the United States, and a depiction of prosperous urban life in modern China, but the most brilliant aspect, namely, Tie Ning's portrayal of her characters, does not stop there. The main characters' emotional and inner struggles depict the suffering, conflict, and enchanting beauty that women experience as they grow up, rather than emphasizing the historical and social context. The writer narrates the changing world era in which the novel is set via the description of the growth, life, and fate of the siblings in the Yin family. The stark examination of, and humanistic regard for, women, as well as the unique and distinctive descriptions of Chinese cities and society, are the main reasons for the success of *The Bathing Women* in the West.

In addition to the translators, the publisher is another decisive factor in the reception of the translated text. After learning about *The Bathing Women*, Zhang's literary agent believed it was a work that could be introduced to the West, so they signed a publishing agreement with Scribner. Founded in 1846, Scribner is an authoritative "patron" in the publishing system. It has published many famous American writers, such as Ernest Miller Hemingway, Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald, Thomas Clayton Wolfe, and Stephen Edwin King. Thus, an effective distribution channel for *The Bathing Women* in English was accessed.

Translation Model: Chinese-foreign Collaboration

As Wang Ning (王宁) observed,

An excellent translation can facilitate the canonization of a literary work in different languages and cultures, and conversely, a poor translation may tarnish an excellent work and even rule it out of the canon list in another language and culture.

(Wang 2009, 51)

The cooperation between Zhang and Sommer ensured the fidelity and accuracy, as well as the readability and literariness, of the translation of *The Bathing Women*.

Hongling Zhang graduated in 2000, majoring in English fiction writing in the Department of English, University of Washington, and now teaches fiction writing at Fontbonne University in Louisiana. Meanwhile, Jason Sommer, an English

professor and poet, has published several collections of poetry, including *The Laughter of Adam and Eve*, *Other People's Troubles*, and *The Man Who Lives in My Office*. Previously, the pair cotranslated Wang Xiaobo's three representative novellas, *2015*; *The Golden Age* (黄金时代), and *East Palace, West Palace* (东宫西宫), and compiled them into one collection, *Wang in Love and Bondage*, which was published in 2007 by the SUNY Press.

In an exclusive interview on the 16th anniversary of Wang Xiaobo's death, Zhang described their cooperation model when translating Wang as follows: She provided the first draft because Sommer does not understand Chinese, and then they worked together with Sommer to revise and polish it.[20] The translation of *The Bathing Women* was essentially executed in the same way. This mode of collaboration differs significantly from the usual process of co-translation, in which the original text is divided between the participating translators, the parts of which can be translated separately, yet synchronously, ensuring the efficiency of the project, but making it difficult to form a unified translation style, since different translators have their own characteristics. In the case of Zhang and Sommer, however, the former, a native-Chinese speaker, provided the first draft, while the latter, a native English speaker, did the fine-tuning embellishment. In this way, they could constantly revise the translation, deleting the alien parts, and integrating all of the parts into one piece that was fluent and reader-friendly.

The cooperation model of Zhang and Sommer had two advantages: first, the division of labor and responsibilities between Chinese and American translators ensured the quality of the translation, since the translator is always in the midst of the tension and interaction between two cultures and two languages. On the one hand, the translator should be responsible for the original work and try to retain the original linguistic and artistic features of the source culture. On the other hand, the translator should also account for the receptive ability of the target readers, allowing them to appreciate the artistic charm of the original in the target language. Like most English readers, Sommer does not understand Chinese. As the first reader of the translation of *The Bathing Women*, he was not only a translator but also an ordinary reader. If the translation perplexed him, it would likely be difficult for other Western readers. When discussing the translation process, Zhang explained,

> After I gave him my first draft, we would meet regularly to discuss. As a poet, he is very sensitive to words. Our discussions were prolonged and even painful, because sometimes what confused him is so subtle that I can't figure it out immediately. We have to talk and discuss many times to get it through.
>
> (Zhang et al. 2017, 12)

Under such a cooperation model, the translator ensures the accuracy of the overall meaning, and the political, social, and cultural messages of the original text, while the reviser eliminates the "translationese" of the draft and enhances its literariness and readability to ensure the translation is accepted by the target readers. The constant communication between the two translators ensures the delivery of a

quality translation that remains faithful to the original and accommodates the target audience's reading habits.

The second advantage of the cooperation model of Zhang and Sommer was that the authorship of the two translators endowed the translation with literary beauty and insight. In the opinion of some Western sinologists, the lack of world-class writers in contemporary China is largely because most Chinese writers do not understand foreign languages (Kubin 2019, 70). However, the translators of *The Bathing Women* are not only scholars, but also writers. Zhang specializes in English fiction writing, and has published short stories in English journals, and written a full-length novel in English. Aside from being a professor of literature in an English Department, Sommer is also an accomplished poet, who won the 2001 Whiting Writer's Award for poetry. Their authorship set their translations apart from others. A writer's keen insight and linguistic expressiveness give them a natural advantage in understanding the original author's intentions and writing strategies. Their choice of wording in the translation better suits the reading interests of the target audience, and the readership they envision is not only a small group of scholars, but also a far wider mass audience. Their collaboration therefore ensures the fluency and literary essence of the translated text and allows a wider English readership to appreciate the beauty of the original.

Translation Strategy: Hybridity of Two Cultures

There is inevitably a high degree of cultural hybridity in the translation process, due to the vast differences between the Chinese and English languages and cultures. In rendering *The Bathing Women*, the translators sought to convey the heterogeneity of the source language and culture, and concurrently to make the translated text idiomatic acceptable for English readers. On the basis of their respect for the original, the translators adopted a strategy that combined foreignization and domestication. In other words, they ultimately delivered a translation with a mixed linguistic style, after handling the tension between the source and target languages. The cultural identity of Zhang as Chinese had a significant impact on the final product. Sommer explained his translation philosophy in an interview,

> My role asks me to be faithful to the original. However, there is always a tension between being faithful to the original and translating into fluent English (including free use of idioms). Anyway, we are doing our best to recreate the artistic effect of the original.
>
> (Zhang et al. 2017, 13)

Faced with these two requirements at opposite ends of the spectrum, namely, fidelity to the original and fluency in the English translation, the translators constantly made compromises to strike an ideal balance.

The translators tried to stay as close as possible to the Chinese cultural traits in the source text. When reading foreign literature in translation, readers have a responsibility to tolerate exotic cultures; a certain strangeness or foreignness can

remind readers to broaden their horizon and accept things that are unknown to them, as in the following example:

ST　他们来到老马家卤肉店, 60年代中期以后, 这家卤肉店已改名叫"革新". 唐菲花六分钱在"革新"买了两只酱兔头, 递给尹小跳一个 (Tie 2006, 80)

TT　They went to Old Ma's Spiced Meat Shop. In the mid-1960s, the shop had changed its name to Innovations. Fei spent six cents on two marinated rabbit heads and handed Tiao one of them (Tie 2012, 87)

In *The Bathing Women*, there are plentiful descriptions of food and recipes that represented a significant challenge for the translators, because food culture is a field where the differences and conflicts between Chinese and Western values are reflected collectively. The most well-known example is whether or not "dog meat" can be eaten as a food. Eating dog meat is not taboo for the Chinese, but in the West, people regard dogs as companions, and believe that eating dog meat is anathema; some even use the expression "dog eaters" to insult Chinese people. Similarly, whether the term "酱兔头" should be translated, or how to translate it, has become a thorny issue. Zhang and Sommer reportedly held a marathon discussion of this question, namely, whether they should break the principle of faithfulness to get close to the reader or respect the original work at the risk of offending the reader. They were ultimately unable to decide and solicited the opinions of the author. After a thorough exchange, a consensus was finally reached that the term should be translated faithfully as "marinated rabbit head." Since it is not only a cultural image but also a clue that threads through the whole life of Tang Fei, a major character in the novel, the translators decided to retain the image of the original and to integrate the Other into the English speech to reproduce a highly regional cuisine culture in China.

The degree of hybridity of an excellent translation is restricted not only by the source text but also by the verbal communication effect. Too many exotic elements will deprive the target readers of the pleasure of reading. Therefore, the translated text must have a strong social communication function, and the translators must fully consider the reading habits of the target audience, as in the following example:

ST　一个坏男孩站在门口, 拿着一只形状酷似元宵的猪胰子*对尹小帆说你舔舔, 你舔舔这是元宵, 甜着那 （脚注*: 猪胰子: 元宵形状的肥皂, 主要成分是碱） (Tie 2006, 118)

TT　Once, a boy, at the entrance to the building, held out a piece of soap that looked like a rice ball, and he said to Fan, "Lick it. Lick it. It's a rice ball and tastes very sweet" (Tie 2012, 125)

While the use of footnotes can make the meaning of the text more precise and clearer, their inclusion interrupts the reading behavior and spoils the reading experience to a certain extent, because they are independent of the main text. Tie Ning added footnotes in several places in *The Bathing Women*, of which the above is an

example, noting for the term "猪胰子" that it is a soap with strong detergency that is made from processed pig pancreas, soy flour, and spice. It was used to wash the hands and body in the old days of China but was gradually phased out. Since, for Chinese readers living in the 21st century, it is an unfamiliar object, the author must sacrifice a certain readability to explain its shape and usage, in order to retain the historical sense of the word. In the translated text, the translators chose to incorporate the footnotes directly into the main text, and to translate the term as "a piece of soap that looked like a rice ball." A word-for-word translation is unable to convey the Chinese cultural references, so it is not necessary to keep them. The translators' handling in this instance not only reflected the author's intention, and informed readers of the shape and usage of this object, but also facilitated the fluency of the text, and an uninterrupted reading. The following is another example:

ST   他们两人就这么混着, 直到白鞋队长高中毕业去了乡下插队,
     唐菲又认识了福安市歌舞团的一个舞蹈演员 (Tie 2006, 103)

TT   Fei and Captain Sneakers continued this way until he graduated from high
     school and was sent down to the countryside for peasants' reeducation. Then
     Fei met a dancer from the Fuan Song and Dance Troupe (Tie 2012, 112)

The Bathing Women mainly depicts China from the post-Cultural Revolution period to the beginning of the 21st century. Therefore, history-specific terms, such as "插队," are inevitably used. The term originally meant "queue jumping," but situated in that special period, it refers to the phenomenon of the Chinese-educated urban youth "being sent to live and work in a rural production team." If it is translated literally as "cut in line," it will not only leave the reader perplexed but will also deviate from the author's actual reference. In this example, the translators rendered it as "for peasants' reeducation," which directly explains the purpose of the special initiative under the specific historical background, making the translation easier for overseas readers to understand and embrace. Because the translators regarded acceptability as their highest priority, they circumspectly reduced the reading difficulties caused by the strangeness of the source text.

During the process of Chinese-to-English conversion, the translators constantly demonstrated a clear cultural standpoint that was determined largely by their cultural identity. They were not able to be completely objective and neutral, nor could they translate the text with nothing unchanged. This affected their choice of translation strategy greatly. In some cases, translators may rewrite deliberately; with this approach of cultural hybridity, it is possible to maintain their cultural identity, as well as the image and dignity of the source nation, as in the following example:

ST   尹小跳早就发现很多从美国回来的中国人脸色都不好看.
     在白种人成堆的地方, 他们的黄脸仿佛变得更黄 (Tie 2006, 202)

TT   Tiao had noted long ago that many Chinese from America did not look
     very healthy; their faces seemed to have turned browner among the hordes
     of white people (Tie 2012, 219)

In the later stage of the Enlightenment, with the rise of Western influence in China, the "prosperous, wealthy, and highly civilized" image of China depicted in *The Travels of Marco Polo* and *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* was fading. The total denial of China reached its climax in the early 19th century when the West suddenly saw an awakened China in the form of the rebellious Boxers, who were depicted with large swords in hand and red cloth wrapped around their head. The Westerners subsequently became concerned, realizing that China was a potentially huge threat, hence the term "Yellow Peril" emerged during this period. The "Fu Manchu" novel series by the British author, Sax Rohmer, is a typical example of the "Yellow Peril" concept. As an anthropomorphic image of the "Yellow Peril," the fictional character of Fu Manchu is depicted as rigid and ugly, and regarded as synonymous with the treacherous and tricky Chinese. He is also seen as a stereotypical Eastern villain, in line with this anti-Chinese attitude. Moreover, the word "yellow" also implies "timid and cowardly" in English. Therefore, to avoid the negative references of "yellow," Zhang rewrote it deliberately as "brown"; her cultural identity and stance is clearly evident in such revisions, in which she abandoned her position as a faithful interpreter after a rational and overall consideration of the receiving environment of the translated text, thereby preventing another negative perception of China by Western readers.

Western Reception: A Mixture of Political and Cultural Interpretations

The Bathing Women was widely acclaimed in China after its publication and has been translated into many languages, including Russian, German, French, and Japanese. The English version was released in 2012. Unlike the unanimous praise it received at home, however, the overseas reception of this novel featured a mixture of political and cultural interpretations.

The Bathing Women describes the entanglement of love and human nature under the social changes in China, using emotional and poetic language, and from a unique perspective of women's writing. While it is different from other Chinese literary works with which Westerners are familiar, it was well received in certain circles following its introduction to the Western world. The Nobel laureate, Kenzaburo Oe, hailed the novel, commenting, "If I were to pick the ten best literary works in the world of the past ten years, I would definitely rank *The Bathing Women* among them" (Tie 2012, cover). Meanwhile, Lovell believed that *The Bathing Women*, as a typical female work with an exquisite writing style that includes a detailed portrayal of characters and abundant psychological depiction, poses a stark contrast to works by Chinese male writers, such as Mo Yan and Yu Hua, and helps to fill the gap of female Chinese voices in the English-speaking world. Lovell praised Tie Ning, observing, "She is an acute, sympathetic observer of Chinese society, skilled at capturing the discomforts, hypocrisies and uncouthness of everyday life, and the way that guilt and grievance corrode relationships" (Lovell 2013). Meanwhile, *Booklist* wrote, "Ning masterfully pins down the kaleidoscope of emotions aroused by her characters' actions, and moments of pain and

conflict are colored with heartrending beauty" ([Hunter 2012](#)). In 2012, the novel was shortlisted for the Man Asian Literary Prize, demonstrating the positive reception of the work in the West.

However, along with the praise it received, some articles highlighted the political interpretation of the novel, while downplaying the humanistic concern and thought it contains. For example, *The New Yorker* underlined the influence of the Cultural Revolution, stating that

> …three women come of age in the early sixties, at a time when even sofas, as a foreign import, were suspected of exerting "a bad influence on the spirit and body of the people." … Her [Tiao's] sense of propriety is shaped by the Cultural Revolution, during which, amid ignorance and repression, there is a pervasive sense of the threat of unconformity.[21]

Moreover, *The Toronto Star* reported:

> It is also the story of "the cruelty of time" … A Chinese novel that narrates the lives of its characters from the Cultural Revolution to the go-go 1990s cannot help but read as an allegory of China's rise to modernity.
>
> ([Beermen 2012](#))

In fact, the Cultural Revolution period is only one aspect of the historical background of *The Bathing Women*, as the novel stretches to the 1990s, when China's economy took off. The essence of the novel is the portrayal of the image of a new generation of women in contemporary China; the focus on the Cultural Revolution and the one-sided, ideological interpretation in the above book reviews shows English readers' continued tendency to politicize excessively their interpretation of the novel, based on Western values.

Although *The Bathing Women* has attracted English readers with its keen observation and narration of Chinese women, and gained Western attention and praise for its exotic Chinese elements, many critiques and interpretations continue to be based on the long-standing Western stereotypes of China, and its politics and culture. Such reading patterns and experiences also demonstrate that, despite a strong cultural and literary interest in Chinese literature, English readers remain dominated by traditional thinking. They tend to focus on the grand historical narratives that are often politicized, especially the writings of the Cultural Revolution, which shape their perception of the taste and value of the novel.

Conclusion

In *The Bathing Women*, Tie Ning based herself in female consciousness, and narrated a gripping story, in order to conduct an introspection and inquiry into the meaning of women's life, and then to examine the external world. The novel reflects her criticism of, and reflections on, human nature, destiny, and patriarchal society. The English version of the novel, a typical female Chinese writer's work,

adds a different luster to the translation market of Chinese literature that is dominated by male writers and also enables Western readers to understand, from a female perspective, Chinese society in a particular historical period.

The two translators concerned opted to retain the literary and cultural flavor of the original and to present a translation that is faithful to the source text and the unique literary discourse of the original. Moreover, they considered the reading tastes of the target audience and translated the text using fluent and literary language. Despite the significant linguistic differences between the source and the target readership, such human elements as the pursuit of desires, the compassion for suffering, and the joys and sorrows of the mundane world are of universal significance. This is why literature can promote mutual understanding between cultures and help mankind to respect and accommodate each other's differences. There remains a significant distance to travel for Chinese literature, as a particular form of Oriental culture, to be known and embraced by the West and beyond; it is one that requires the joint efforts of authors, translators, and the many other agents involved in the process of the translation and of the dissemination of the resulting work.

Notes

1 The beginning part of this chapter (by Wu Yun) is published in *Chinese Translators Journal,* 2015 (4).
2 Main parts of this section (by Wu Yun) are published in *Journal of Social Sciences*, 2012 (5) and *Chinese Translators Journal*, 2012 (3).
3 One hundred critics recommend "the most influential Chinese works of the 1990s." *Publishing Reference*, 2000, 19: 8.
4 Wang Anyi won the Hua Zong (Floral Trail) World Chinese Novel Prize and the title of "Most Outstanding Chinese Writer" in the sixth Hua Zong (Floral Trail) Literature Award ceremony hosted by *Sin Chew Daily* in 2001. This comment is from Leo Ou-fan Lee's remarks on the novel on behalf of the 18 judges. In China Writers Association Theoretical Criticism Committee (ed.). *Selected Works of Criticism on Chinese Literary Theory (2006–2007) (Volume I)*. Beijing: Writers Publishing House, 2008: 357.
5 Quoted from *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* in the *Quarterly Conversation*, December 05, 2008. https://www.cupblog.org/2008/12/05/the-song-of-everlasting-sorrow-in-the-quarterly-conversation/ [last accessed November 11, 2020].
6 See Note 5.
7 Surprising comments from Wang Anyi: *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* has been misread for years. *Peninsula City News*, March 26, 2008: 07.
8 Main parts of this section (by Wu Yun and Jiang Mengying) are published in *Foreign Language Education*, 2015 (6).
9 Homepage of Can Xue at The Contemporary Chinese Writers Website. http://web.mit.edu/ccw/can-xue/appreciations-quotes.shtml.
10 See Note 9.
11 In 1948, in his essay "The Structure and Function of Communication in Society," American sociologist Harold D. Lasswell proposed the structure, process and factors of social communication: "who," "says what," "in which channel," "to whom" and "with what effect." This model then becomes the foundational theoretical basis for analyzing the process of communication.
12 Quoted from Balcom (2006, 119).
13 See Note 12.

14 For example, Can Xue read an excerpt from her *Five Spice Street* at a reading party and joined a panel discussion with scholars about her work during her visit to Yale University in 2009; and in 2013, she received an interview by Asymptote, a literary magazine dedicated to translations of world literature, and had a discussion about her writing with the editor-in-chief of Open Letter Books at the Reykjavik literary festival.

15 Review of Can Xue's *The Embroidered Shoes*. *Publishers Weekly*, July 07, 1997 https://www.publishersweekly.com/978-0-8050-5413-2 [last accessed November 11, 2020].

16 Review of *Old Floating Cloud: Two Novellas*. *Publishers Weekly*, September 20, 1991: 01.

17 Main parts of this section (by Wu Yun) are published in *Novel Review*, 2017 (6).

18 See *New Books*, April 28, 2000: 01.

19 This statement is not accurate. According to the author's research on MCLC, before the English translation of *The Bathing Women* came out, Tie Ning's *Heystacks* (麦秸垛), *How Long Is Forever* (永远有多远), *Pregnant Woman with Cow* (孕妇和牛) and *The Butterfly Laughs* (蝴蝶发笑) were translated into English and published under the Panda Books series by Foreign Languages Press and on the journal of *People's Literature*. This also proves from the side that the United States (even the West at large) dislikes the Chinese government-initiated translations.

20 An interview with the Chinese-to-English translators at the 16th anniversary of Wang Xiaobo's death. April 12, 2013. http://edu.sina.com.cn/en/2013-04-12/131273489.shtml [last accessed November 11, 2020].

21 *The Bathing Women*. *The New Yorker*, December 17, 2012. http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/12/17/the-bathing-women [last accessed November 11, 2020].

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6 Crowdsourcing Translation

A New Paradigm for Chinese Internet Literature[1]

Introduction

Since the beginning of the 21st century, an increasing number of Chinese novels, ranging from pure to popular literature, and covering various styles, genres, and themes, have been translated and introduced to the world, shaping a brand-new landscape of Chinese literature "going global." The spirit, identity, and value of Chinese literature are gradually being recognized, interpreted, and accepted. It is noteworthy that Chinese Internet literature, which is also known as "online literature," "net literature," or "web literature," in translation has become a "dark horse" in recent years and is especially popular among English readers. It provides a new perspective from which to study the relationship between Chinese and foreign literature.

Thanks to the emerging technologies of the "Internet+" era, the production and translation of literature has changed dramatically from the traditional practices employed in the era of printed media. The interactivity and decentralization concerned are distinctive in various forms, from creation and translation to reception and criticism. This new literary reality created by cutting-edge information technology and digital media has made an impact both at home and abroad. According to the *Report on the Development of Chinese Network Literature 2019*, published on the official website of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) in February 2020, China's network literature industry is developing steadily, with a clear development path, and an increasingly prosperous content ecosystem.[2] The rapid growth of online literature is a new force that has driven Chinese literature to come to the awareness of, and be embraced by, the rest of the world. In fact, Chinese Internet literature has transformed the social and personal identity and value of literature itself, and also serves as a successful example of Chinese literature "going global."

Currently, domestic studies of Chinese online literature and its translation are on the rise. The following are some elements of the research findings, according to the data currently available:

1 The translation and reception of Chinese online literature: Wu Yun and Gu Yiqing presented a portrait of Chinese Internet literature in the English-speaking world, in terms of its themes, channels, and impact (Wu and Gu 2019, 66–79);

Zhang Xiaomeng analyzed a diachronic evolution of the output channels of Chinese network literature against the backdrop of Chinese culture "going global," including international authorization, strategic cooperation, and overseas investment (Zhang 2019, 70–74); Zheng Jianwei quantitatively analyzed the reception of Chinese online literature in the English-speaking world from the perspectives of translation, readership, and original English creations inspired by this literature and expounded on the online translation model and the possible difficulties and problems involved in international communication (Zheng 2018, 119–125); Gao Chunjuan reviewed the current situation of Chinese Internet literature abroad, and highlighted several problems, including those regarding the assurance of translation quality, the selection of works for translation, and the legitimacy of channels for the dissemination of the translated work (Gao 2017, 56–58);

2 The criticism system for Chinese online literature: Constructing a criticism system for Chinese online literature is crucial for ensuring the quality of original texts and for selecting texts to be translated. Certain scholars have conducted a series of studies in this regard, including Zhuang Yong and An Xiaoliang, who believed that at present, "the criticism system for Chinese online literature is seriously inadequate, so it is time to systematically sort out and study the data, facts, phenomena and experience of the overseas dissemination of Chinese online literature in the past 20 years" (Zhuang and An 2017, 98); in addition, Ouyang Youquan argued that "The absence of evaluation criteria has been impeding the sustainable development of Chinese internet literature" (Ouyang 2019, 172). Along with exploring the increasing popularity of Chinese online literature abroad, it is recommended that there should be further study of how this genre of literature is criticized;

3 Chinese Internet literature "going global" and the construction of Chinese cultural image: Literary works include the image of a country between their lines, and quietly influence the target readers' perception of the image of the source culture through story-based, liberalized, youthful, and cathartic expression. Undeniably, the spread of Internet literature has become a new highlight in the "go-global" initiative of modern and contemporary Chinese literature, "provid[ing] a discourse system based on exotic affinity, a digitally-enabled non-governmental communication program and an approach to youth culture identity under cultural confidence for the construction of a Chinese cultural image" (Deng 2019, 8). Regarding studies in this area, domestic scholars, including Wang Qing, Ouyang Youquan, He Yufei, Xi Zhiwu, and Fu Ziqiang, explored the relationship between the export of online literature and the construction of the Chinese cultural image from different perspectives.[3] The concept of Internet literature, the construction of database resources, and the choice of academic direction are also important fields of study in the home context.

A comprehensive survey of the existing domestic studies shows that the study of Chinese Internet literature has become a new feature in the study of the outbound translation of Chinese writing and that the translation practices of Internet

literature differ from others, in terms of their meaning, themes, and characteristics. This chapter analyzes the new paradigm of Chinese Internet literature in translation under three distinct sections.

SECTION 1: DEFINITION AND CATEGORIES OF CHINESE INTERNET LITERATURE

Since the 1990s, when mankind entered the Internet era, online literature has prospered in China, and web-based works have emerged in rapid succession. These often-lengthy works, sometimes contain many millions of Chinese characters and describe vivid fantasy worlds. Internet literature has already gained a larger readership than that of traditional literature.

According to the *45th Statistical Report on Internet Development in China*, released by the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) on April 28, 2020, as of March 2020, China had 904 million so-called netizens, and its Internet penetration had reached 64.5% of the population. These many netizens constitute China's booming consumer market. According to the report, the user size for online literature was 455 million, or 50.4% of the total netizen population, up 23.37 million as of the end of 2018; meanwhile, the number of mobile readers of online literature had reached 453 million, up 42.38 million by the end of 2018, accounting for 50.5% of mobile Internet users.[4] The increasing number of netizens, and the popularity of the Internet in China, have laid a solid foundation for the development of online literature.

With the rapid development of the online literature industry, its value and role in modern and contemporary Chinese literature has increasingly drawn attention. As a result of the rise of online literature, the landscape of traditional literature is currently undergoing a profound adjustment, necessitating a reinvention of the definition, categories, and value of online literature. Such propositions as the construction of verbal texts, the reading and dissemination of texts, and the existence and enlightenment of hypertexts, are crucial for understanding this new form of creative writing. This section explores the definition, categories, and value of Chinese online literature, in order to lay the foundation for the original analysis of its translation and reception.

Definition of Internet Literature

As a product of China's opening-up policy in the Internet era, web literature has progressed in leaps and bounds, and has emerged as a prominent literary force. The prosperity of web literature has inspired multifaceted studies of its concept and definition by Chinese scholars.

For instance, Xi Zhiwu and Fu Ziqiang defined Internet literature as "literary works created by using such information technologies as networked multimedia and interactive web and by using the Internet as a medium of communication" (Xi and Fu 2018, 79). According to Deng Zhen, Internet literature is "a kind of cathartic

teen literature, coming from the free creation of netizens 'wearing a mask'" (Deng 2019, 8). Meanwhile, Huang Yeping and Qi Yongguang explained:

> In a broad sense, Internet literature includes novels, comics, quasi-literary texts and web-based artworks containing certain literary elements that are spread and published through Internet channels; in a narrow sense, Internet literature refers to the debut original works presented by means of hypertext links and multimedia, using the Internet as the publishing platform and communication medium.
>
> (Huang and Qi 2019, 134)

Meanwhile, Ma Ji noted that "Internet literature covers different categories of creative writings in different fields" (Ma 2019, 111). Shao Yanjun called the first stage of Internet literature "traditional web-based writing" from the perspective of media attributes, and defined it as "serialized, 'feel-good writing' (*shuangwen*) based on the Qidian model, taking the 'quasi-grand narrative' as the keynote and structure and drawing inspiration from traditional literature" (Shao 2019, 6). In addition, Liu Xiao and Dong Ziming noted that "Internet literature refers to the literary creations and related intellectual properties published and disseminated on online platforms with the help of the Internet" (Liu and Dong 2017, 78).

While, as the above demonstrates, different researchers have defined Internet literature from different perspectives, in a nutshell, it is a form of literature, such as novels, poems, and essays, that is published and communicated via the Internet. As it subverts the traditional text production pattern and content structure, Internet literature has been given multiple labels, such as "genres" (the themes of Internet literature are mostly *xianxia*, urban, history, games, sci-fi, and mystery, for instance); "fan-fic" (which blurs the boundaries between the author and the reader, involves creation in sync with reading, social co-reading, fan communities, and fan creations); "collaboration" (in which works are developed via different media, and novel texts operate in tandem with films and television series to allow the audience to read the original work while watching its film or television adaptations; the development of intellectual properties (IPs) emphasizes collaborative effort); and "reaching a wider audience" (which involves the dismantling of the existing stable reading pattern and readership. For example, female readers also like to read narrative texts with a male protagonist as different types of readers are attracted to different aspects of the content).

Categories of Internet Literature

Most Internet literature continues the linear narrative style of the print era. That is to say, web-based writing is essentially part of genre fiction, which means that a collection of works follows a relatively stable set of themes, procedures, and styles, with some common features. For example, *xianxia* and detective novels have the recurring narrative modes expected of the "xianxia" and "detective" genres. "Precisely because genres exist as an institution, they function as a 'horizon' for readers

and as a 'writing paradigm' for authors" (Todorov 2001, 28). Because this type of literature has a similar aesthetic style, it has a relatively fixed readership.

Chinese web-based writing is inseparable from the needs and status quo of national, political, economic, and cultural development. It also integrates personal life experience and noumenal desire, primarily manifested in such genres as *xuanhuan*, *wuxia*, mystery, adventure, romance, and history. Such creative writing constantly enriches Internet literature. This section illustrates its content and features via the exploration of particular representative genres.

Xuanhuan novels, which are mainly set in the Oriental world, are fantasies that describe the protagonist's adventure through cultivation and tribulation on the road to becoming an immortal. Examples of work in this genre are *Chen Yuan* (尘缘) by Yan Yu Jiang Nan (烟雨江南), which tells the story of how a magical blue stone becomes an immortal through cultivation, but is finally teased by fate; *The Journey of Flower* (花千骨) by Fresh Guoguo (Fresh果果), which relates a story of love, responsibility, growth, and choices between a young girl, Hua Qiangu, and an immortal, Bai Zihua; *The Legend of Jade Sword* (莽荒纪) by I Eat Tomato (我吃西红柿) combines Eastern mythology with Western fantasy to construct a captivating legend; *Jade Dynasty* (诛仙) by Xiao Ding (萧鼎) tells the story of a mortal teenager, Zhang Xiaofan, who becomes involved in a hidden struggle between good and evil, while he cultivates immortality; *To the Sky Kingdom* (三生三世十里桃花) by Tang Qi (唐七) is a story of love, revenge, and entanglement between Bai Qian, an ancient goddess, and Ye Hua, the heir to the Sky Throne, across worlds and time; and *Ze Tian Ji* (择天记) by Mao Ni (猫腻) is a fantasy and cultivation novel about how the protagonist, Chen Changsheng, changes his destiny against the odds, and becomes stronger in a world of mortals, monsters, and demons. Many excellent fantasy and cultivation works, such as *The Journey of Flower*, are popular among young readers, and some have subsequently been adapted into television series, movies, and games.

Meanwhile, romance novels are mainly characterized by themes such as "healing", "growth", "inspiration", and "youth". *Flyin' Dance* (第一次亲密接触) by Chih-heng Tsai (蔡智恒) is considered to be the first bestselling web novel in China's Internet era. It tells the story of how the protagonist, Choi, and the girl, "Flyin' Dance," become close friends via the Internet. In *There They Were* (此间的少年), the author Jiang Nan (江南) moves the martial arts characters originally written by Jin Yong into the setting of Bianjing University to relate a campus story about Qiao Feng, Guo Jing, Linghu Chong, and other heroes. *Silent Separation* (何以笙箫默) by Gu Man (顾漫) tells the story of the eternal love between He Yichen and Zhao Mosheng, who fell in love as teenagers on campus. *Love Is Not Blind* (失恋三十三天) by Bao Jingjing (鲍鲸鲸) is about wedding planner, Huang Xiaoxian, recovering from a painful breakup in 33 days, during which she witnesses the coming of age of a city girl. In 2014, the DVD of the film adapted from the novel was given to Argentine officials as part of a national gift; in 2018, the film was named in the Top 10 Best Romance Movies of China on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the reform and opening up. *So Young* (致我们终将逝去的青春) by Xin Yiwu (辛夷坞) tells a coming-of-age story

about freshman, Zheng Wei, in the process of the protagonist paying the price for love. In 2017, *So Young* was included in the Mopian Hurun Most Valuable Creative Works IP 2017 list; in 2019, the novel was selected to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and named an excellent original work in the category of online literature in 2019. Meanwhile, *For You, I'm Willing to Love the World* (为了你,我愿意热爱全世界) by Tang Jia San Shao (唐家三少), *Kissing My Mr. Fei* (吻安, 我的费先生) by Yuan Yu (袁语), and *A Slight Smile is Very Charming* (微微一笑很倾城) by Gu Man have also been well received and sought by readers.

Historical novels that are rich in imagination may inspire readers' interest in historical events. *Those Ming Dynasty Stuff* (明朝那些事儿) by Dang Nian Ming Yue (当年明月) tells the story of the early years of the Ming Dynasty, from the origin of Zhu Yuanzhang to the Jingnan Campaign, when Emperor Yongle seized the throne. Set in the Liang Dynasty, during the Wei, Jin, Southern, and Northern Dynasties, *Nirvana in Fire* (琅琊榜) by Hai Yan (海晏), with its themes of brotherhood and revenge, tells the story of resourceful Lin Shu rooting out courtiers and dying on the battlefield to protect the homeland. Meanwhile, *Legend of Miyue* (芈月传) by Jiang Shengnan (蒋胜男) relates the stories of women's development and tactics during the Warring States Period. Additionally, excellent web novels, including *The Great River Flows Eastward* (大江东去) by Ane (阿耐), *The Mighty* (浩荡) by He Changzai (何常在), *Great Power Heavy Industry* (大国重工) by Qi Cheng (齐橙), *The Blood in Taihang Mountain* (太行血) by Piao Qi (骠骑), and *The Legend of Empress* (燕云台) by Jiang Shengnan, were selected to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the People's Republic of China and were named excellent original works in the category of online literature in 2019.

In addition to the above genres, sci-fi, mystery, adventure, tomb robbing, and games also have a large fan base. For example, *The Era of the Earth* (地球纪元) by Caihong Zhi Men (彩虹之门) narrates the feat of mankind overcoming their own shortcomings, and the limitations of natural and technological development, to spread Earth's civilization to the universe; *The Grave Robbers' Chronicles* (盗墓笔记) by Xu Lei (徐磊/南派三叔) tells the tomb raiding stories of Wu Xie, Zhang Qiling, and Wu Sanxing; *Ghost Blows Out the Light* (鬼吹灯) by Tian Xia Ba Chang (天下霸唱) concerns tomb raiding and treasure hunting, and the novel ranked 12th in the Mopian Hurun Most Valuable Creative Works IP 2017 list; *The King's Avatar* (全职高手) by Butterfly Blue (蝴蝶蓝) tells the story of Ye Xiu reaching the top of the online game world; and *Meritorious Wenzhou Craftsmen* (传国功匠) by Chen Niang (陈酿) describes craftsmanship and spiritual inheritance in the Ou River region of China; *Grain War* (粮战) by Luo Mingyue (洛明月) portrays a dedicated breeder through stories about the rice breeding industry. Moreover, *General Practitioners* (全科医生) by Xiao Yaoyue (肖尧月), *Guanyin Clay* (观音泥) by Ma Mei (马玫), and *Blossoms* (繁花) by Jin Yucheng (金宇澄) were included in the 25 online literature works jointly promoted by the National Press and Publication Administration and the China Writers Association, to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, and were named excellent original works in the category of online literature in 2019, due to their particular literary and social influence.

Value of Internet Literature

As an important component of modern and contemporary Chinese literature, online literature has become a significant force in promoting Chinese culture to the world, and in shaping China's national image. So, what is the value of online literature? What are the implications of its translation, dissemination, and reception? This section explores the value of online literature creation and translation, in order to provide a reference for related research.

First, online literature has pushed the boundaries of contemporary literary writing. Differing from other types of literature, online literature has formed two-way literary activities, by means of networking in the process of text production, dissemination, and reception. Traditional literature is created by a small group of intellectuals, and its dissemination and reading are unidirectional, linear, top-down, and centered on the source text. In the Internet space, however, the creative group has expanded to the general public, because writing has become a way to entertain and express oneself, to find an outlet, and to realize self-worth.

Web literature is usually more readable than pure literature. As Cheng Yongxin (程永新), the executive editor-in-chief of literary magazine, *Harvest*, explained:

> After several decades, we need to find a way out for contemporary Chinese literature. The rapid development of genre fiction in the past decade has at least provided a possibility to tell good stories, which are worthy of study by pure literature writers.[5]

Plentiful themes, twisting plots, and their broad imaginary space are the main reasons why web novels are so appealing. The reality of online novel translation in the English-speaking world indicates that the genres of the novels produced in this space are mostly *xuanhuan*, *xianxia*, and *wuxia*, and that their keywords often include "growth," "adventure," and "conquest." The following are some such fantasy novels that are currently popular in the United States:

Linley, the protagonist of *Coiling Dragon* (盘龙), accidentally picks up a magical ring and embarks on a magical journey. From the Yulan continent, one of the material planes, to the Infernal Realm, one of the four highest planes, to the Planar Battlefield, and to the entire universe of Hongmeng Grandmist, Linley grows in different living spaces while facing challenges along the way, with his magical aptitude continuing to improve en route. *Battle Through the Heavens* (斗破苍穹) tells the story of the boy genius, Xiao Yan, who suddenly loses everything after creating an unprecedented success in cultivation in his family, and all kinds of setbacks follow. Just when he is about to despair, a soul's ray emerges from the ring in his hand, and a brand new door opens before him. After painstaking practice, he finally achieves a notable success. In *Against the God* (逆天邪神), the young Yun Che inherits the blood of the Evil God and embarks on a journey against the God. *Nine Star Hegemon Body Art* (九星霸体诀) tells the story of Long Chen, a youth whose Spirit Root, Spirit Blood, and Spirit Bone are all stolen, and who must rely on his memories of the divine pill refining arts, and a mysterious cultivation technique, the Nine Star Hegemon Body Art, in order to part the layers of misleading

fog and solve a heaven-shaking riddle. *Immortal Devil Transformation* (仙魔变) follows the journey of the youngster, Lin Xi, growing up alongside a group of hot-blooded teenagers on the road to immortality and chivalry for the sake of empire and glory. In the vast cultivation world created by *Stellar Transformations* (星辰变), the protagonist, Qin Yu, a child with an innate disability, grows progressively stronger through technique cultivation, and ultimately becomes the supreme being in the universe. *I Shall Seal the Heavens* (我欲封天) concerns a failed young scholar who becomes an immortal cultivator and eventually seals the heavens. *A Record of a Mortal's Journey to Immortality* (凡人修仙传) narrates the story of a poor boy in a mountain village with mediocre aptitudes, who ultimately becomes an immortal through his own efforts. *Invincible* (无敌天下) tells the tale of Huang Xiaolong, a disciple of the Shaolin Temple, who travels to the world of martial spirit and becomes a strong man. *Talisman Emperor* (符皇) follows the journey of the protagonist mastering the secret art of making talismans, after many hardships, and proceeding to kill the demons that threaten the world. All of these novels originated from a similar baseline: in the virtual world created by the author, the heroic journey of the characters in the text becomes a way for readers to escape from their daily life, and the compensatory pleasure and satisfaction obtained in the reading process help them to release the stress and frustrations of their real life.

In addition to *xuanhuan*, *wuxia* and history are two other popular genres in the sphere of online literature. *I Am Supreme* (我是至尊) employs the hot-blooded style of its author, Fengling Tianxia (风凌天下), in a story that begins with a war, and then depicts life in the post-war empire. *Horizon, Bright Moon, Sabre* (天涯明月刀), an equally fascinating novel, tells the story of Fu Hongxue, the fastest saber-man in the world, defeating Yan Nanfei and becoming the number one figure in the martial arts world. The two are then hunted by hit men and work together to uncover the truth. In the process of saving himself and others, the protagonist completes his self-sublimation. *Nirvana in Fire* (琅琊榜) interprets the moral principles of the Chinese nation, such as benevolence, righteousness, manners, wisdom, and trustworthiness. *Jade Dynasty* (诛仙) conveys the philosophical theories of Taoism and depicts the growing experience of Zhang Xiaofan, an ordinary teenager living under Qingyun Mountain, with the theme of "Heaven and Earth are ruthless; to them the Ten Thousand Things are but as straw dogs."

As shown in the above examples, rather than succumbing to their tragic fates and predicaments, the protagonists confront different challenges and hardships, overcome their own shortcomings, and eventually become powerful people who influence, or even change and make, history. By constructing an unprecedented imaginary space, the novels successfully create a virtual space that differs from reality, not only giving readers great pleasure, but also providing them with a fantasyland in which to escape from their problems of their everyday reality. Even if these texts are not rational, their fantasies are so meaningful that they can affect the quality of life and lifestyle of their readers.

The second key value of online literature creation and translation is that online literature constructs a utopian fantasy environment via the art of literature. Genre fiction often has limited appeal to the refined tastes in China and is marginalized by

pure literature. China's literary critics do not think highly of it, often considering it to be indulgent entertainment that is shallow in content, with a limited artistic aesthetic, and lacking social realism. "What it will get is not respect in artistic terms, but the absence of literary aesthetic noumenon and the suspension of historical rationality" (Ouyang 2005, 98). However, Chinese online literature has been accepted widely overseas, prompting a rethink of its literary meaning and value, and an exploration of the conditions and capital for its reception in the Western field.

Most contemporary Chinese novels in translation are grand historical and local narratives set against the backdrop of war and secular degradation, or individual narratives dominated by body writing, primarily depicting the dark side of human nature and moral decay, as evidenced by the works of Mo Yan, Su Tong, Yu Hua, and other famous writers. As Mai Jia observed, "Looking back at the works in the past two decades, we can find that everyone is writing about individuals, about darkness, about despair, about the dark side of life and about the infinite expansion of selfish desires" (Mai and Ji 2012). Due to the high similarity in theme, the presentation of the protagonist's tragic life has become a common feature of contemporary Chinese novels. Although such literary writing has a strong realistic critical significance, and reflects the writer's insights into social status, cultural context, and individuals, the cross-cultural journey of such works has not been easy. These works, with similar themes, reflect the living conditions of today's China, and this very specific, contemporary, and contextualized writing often implies huge cultural and social differences. The unique experience of living in China does not necessarily evoke universal and cross-cultural echoes, thereby reducing the reception of these works overseas.

In fact, although online literature is not rich in cultural heritage, it has shown a strong literary vitality, and its unique features access the abundant experience of Chinese literature by crossing the rigid boundaries of traditional literature and expanding the genealogy of contemporary literature, thereby playing an exemplary role in the development of contemporary literature. The massive readership of Chinese online literature at home and abroad reflects both the popularity and the epochal character of the works. At the same time, its implicit literary identity has become an ideological "invisible hand" that subtly affects the everyday life of readers, and their perception of the world and of life, thereby strongly endorsing the value of online literature.

Behind the readability is a virtual world that differs from reality and is created by the imaginative author. Such a departure from reality often implies profound cultural metaphors, such as those that reflect the helplessness and limitations of the real world, or which construct and name a utopian space and lifestyle. The author's unbridled imagination does not refer to, or reflect, reality, rather it forms a fictional discourse that is based on self-reference. According to the intertextuality theory, this is the "self-imitation" of literature:

> The main category of reference for literature is literature, within which texts interact as much as they do between a wider range of arts. Beyond the fact that literary discourse is independent of reality, literature sees literature as the object of its own imitation beyond its self-reference.
>
> (Samoyault 2003, 65)

Such self-imitation allows the author's literary imagination to develop unfettered. After this imaginative self-imitation is translated, it is freed from the constraints of the language itself, so that Western readers are not constrained by a specific political and cultural context, and they are also freed from the spatial constraints of the times, and inspired to identify with, and to expect the text to be in the imaginary space of contemporary literature. They consequently find it easier to understand and embrace the text.

Western readers are attracted to Chinese web novels, not only due to their consumption and entertainment needs but also due to the values reflected in the works and the aesthetic form desired by today's public. If one examines Chinese literature produced after the 20th century, it will be found to be very ideological, with enlightenment, salvation, and serving the country the prevailing ideologies. Literary works of the period are often dominated by the state's will, weaving and narrating the phenomena in a macro-social view. In contrast, literary writing, including online literature, is often independent of politics and constructs its own system of endogenous logic: "Art should be a power of denial, and its fundamental task is not to praise and maintain the existing society, but to smash the repressive rule of man's mind and body by given language and thought" (Wang 1991, 3). Online literature also embodies the most universal values and ideals of the Chinese nation. Readers who suffer, and have unfulfilled wishes, in real life are comforted and satisfied by reading about a fantasy world that brings them pure aesthetic pleasure, since "our actual enjoyment of an imaginative work proceeds from a liberation of tensions in our minds" (Freud 1983, 142). In the virtual world built by web novels, there is a universal value, namely an ordinary mortal grows up, changes his own destiny, rebuilds the world order, and changes the course of history. This can satisfy perfectly the reader's wish to be a hero. As Freud said, "the motive forces of phantasies are unsatisfied wishes, and every single phantasy is the fulfillment of a wish, a correction of unsatisfying reality" (Freud 1983, 142).

This fantasy-driven literature does not record the current life of people, reflect real social issues, or integrate political ideology into its works. It does, however, nurture the ultimate destiny of mankind in the form of adult fairytales and creates a utopia that is independent of and detached from daily life. Thus, it is its aesthetic meaning and reading value that crosses borders and attracts worldwide attention.

SECTION 2: FROM FAN TRANSLATION TO CROWDSOURCING TRANSLATION

With the acceleration of Chinese literary translation and the increasing number of global cultural exchanges and dialogues between civilizations, Chinese online literature has become a new literary form that is popular among foreign readers. Its cross-cultural journey began in 2010 with, for example, the publication of the first volume of *The Grave Robbers' Chronicles* series by the web writer Xu Lei (aka Nanpai Sanshu), translated by Kathy Mok, by ThingsAsian Press in March 2011, and another six volumes were published in rapid succession in 2014.

Translation Platforms: Wuxiaworld versus Webnovel

Compared with the traditional mode of printing and publishing, emerging media such as the Internet and social networks have given literary translation a brand-new look, reflecting the spirit of the times, and have become the main platforms for the translation of Chinese online literature overseas in recent years. There are currently hundreds of high-profile translation websites and platforms, such as Wuxiaworld, Gravity Tales, and NovelUpdates, founded by overseas individuals or civil society organizations. As the overseas arm of Qidian, the China-based original web literature giant Webnovel (www.webnovel.com) also plays a key role in introducing Chinese web literature to the world.

Founded in December 2014 by the Chinese-American Jingping Lai (aka RWX), Wuxiaworld (www.wuxiaworld.com) is currently one of the most influential Chinese-to-English web novel translation platforms in the world. It operates on the basis of web advertising, fan rewards, and donations. To date, the website has translated and published an array of popular Chinese web novels, such as *Coiling Dragon* (盘龙)*; Horizon, Bright Moon, Sabre* (天涯明月刀)*; I Shall Seal the Heavens* (我欲封天); *A Will Eternal* (一念永恒); *Renegade Immortal* (仙逆); *Sovereign of the Three Realms* (三界独尊); *Desolate Era*; *City of Sin* (罪恶之城); *The Godsfall Chronicles* (陨神记); *Wu Dong Qian Kun* (武动乾坤); *Soul Land 2: The Unrivaled Tang Sect* (斗罗大陆II); *Ancient Strengthening Technique* (上古强身术); *Heavenly Jewel Change* (天珠变); *Heroes Shed No Tears* (英雄无泪); *7 Killers* (七杀手); *Spirit Realm* (灵域); *Demon Hunter* (狩魔); *Martial World* (武极天下); *Stellar Transformations* (星辰变)*; Battle Through the Heavens* (斗破苍穹)*; Warlock of the Magus World* (巫界术士); *Destroyer of Ice and Fire* (冰火破坏神); *Upgrade Specialist in Another World* (异界之装备强化专家); *The Charm of Soul Pets* (宠魅); *Immortal Devil Transformation* (仙魔变); and *Dragon Prince Yuan* (元尊), with dozens more currently being translated and updated. Concurrently, it has translated and published a number of Korean novels, including *Overgeared* (템빨) and *The Second Coming of Gluttony* (탐식의재림).

In addition, Gravity Tales (www.gravitytales.com), a major platform of the same kind, was launched in January 2015, and to date has translated, or is in the process of translating, 45 Chinese works. In addition to martial arts, *xianxia*, *xuhuan*, and sci-fi works, there are also emerging e-sports novels, such as *The King's Avatar*, as well as nine original web novels written in English, and several works in Japanese and Korean translation.

Meanwhile, NovelUpdates (www.novelupdates.com) is a navigation platform and forum that provides an index of English translations of Asian literature. According to its statistics, there are more than 3,500 works with a "Chinese" tag in terms of source language, most of which are English translations from Chinese web novels. Among them, the most read is the *xuanhuan* novel *Against the Gods* by web writer Mars Gravity (火星引力), which has been included in more than 20,000 reading lists. This shows that Chinese online literature is widely translated and read in the English-speaking world.

Qidian (www.qidian.com), a subsidiary of China Literature, has successfully cooperated with two English translation websites, Wuxiaworld and Gravity Tales, in content production, translation and editing, and copyright channels. In May 2017, its international website, Qiandian International (www.webnovel.com), was launched to promote the authorized English translation of Chinese web novels in the overseas market. The English versions of more than 30 web novels were subsequently published, and Qiandian International was launched. Moreover, in November 2017, the Android and iOS versions of the app were officially launched, marking the initial formation of a comprehensive production system for the new literary operation and marketing model.

In 2018, major changes occurred in the translation landscape of Chinese online literature, which meant that it was no longer dominated by Wuxiaworld and Gravity Tales. Backed by China Literature, the largest online literature group in China in terms of content reserves, technical operation, and capital accumulation, Webnovel acquired Gravity Tales, an influential website driven by fan translation, and Wuxiaworld acquired Volare Novel. Thus, Webnovel and Wuxiaworld become the two main players in the translation of Chinese online literature.

Since 2017, through cooperation with 200 translators and translation teams in North America, Southeast Asia, and other parts of the world, Webnovel has published the English translations of more than 600 Chinese web novels in the genres of *xuanhuan*, fantasy, *xianxia*, urban, and others, including *The King's Avatar* (全职高手), which tells the story of young people's hard work; *Gourmet of Another World* (异世界的美食家) that promotes traditional Chinese cuisine; *The Magus Era* (巫神纪); *Library of Heaven's Path* (天道图书馆); *Release that Witch* (放开那个女巫); *Bringing the Nation's Husband Home* (国民老公带回家); *I Am Supreme*; *Seeking the Flying Sword Path* (飞剑问道); and more. According to Webnovel's statistics, China Literature has authorized more than 700 works overseas, and 40,000-plus comments are currently posted on its online community, per day. Since Webnovel launched its original overseas segment, Inkstone, in 2018, the platform has audited and released nearly 90,000 works by over 52,000 authors.[6] In addition, according to the *Evaluation Report on Intellectual Properties*[7] *from 2018–2019*, online literature IPs occupy ten places in the Top 20 Best Chinese IPs Overseas from 2018 to 2019, of which 70% are owned by China Literature.[8]

In her review of the history of translation, British scholar Karin Littau (2011) noted that media technology and context can play a role in shaping the forms and practices of translation. Throughout history, the media contexts of translation have shifted between oral, scribal, printing, and screen cultures, and the nature of translation activities has also evolved from performative, artistic, and industrial to electronic. In this rapidly changing digital era, the emerging digital media represented by the Internet has revolutionized the way in which information is transmitted and has profoundly affected translation that is deemed to be a cross-cultural communication behavior. The translation and introduction of Chinese online literature relies on the Internet platform, presenting unprecedented features in translator identity, translation mode, and translation form.

Translators: Fans and Professionals

Although both locals and foreigners are involved in the translation of Chinese literature, the principal identity of translators is often official or professional. They are either professionals who are assigned translation tasks by state agencies, such as translator teams for Panda Books, Library of Chinese Classics, and the journal *Chinese Literature*; experts and scholars working in the Department of East Asian Studies or the Department of Comparative Literature in foreign universities or academic institutions; or those who regard the translation of Chinese literature as an integral part of their academic research, such as Howard Goldblatt, Julia Lovell, Michael Berry, Bonnie S. McDougall, and other sinologists. However, "if the promotion of contemporary Chinese literature is only done by the academic circles, it is unable to advance with the times" (Wu and Gu 2012, 92).

The English translation of online literature is unique in this regard. The translators are all ordinary people, so they are less restricted by ideology and are largely driven by a pure interest in, and love for, the works. For example, Jingping Lai, the founder of Wuxiaworld, is a former Chinese-American diplomat and a hardcore fan of *wuxia*. He admits that he was obsessed with the martial arts novels of Jin Yong as a boy, and in order to improve his Chinese reading and writing skills, he now devotes himself to the translation of web novels. To date, he has spent his spare time translating more than 3 million Chinese characters and quit his job as a diplomat to devote himself to a career translating Chinese online literature. His translation of *Coiling Dragon* was the first translation to arouse foreign readers' interest in Chinese web novels.

Similarly, to Jingping Lai, Wuxiaworld's team of translators are all lovers of martial arts novels and Kung Fu movies from all over the world. Some were born in Hong Kong, while others were born in Chinese-speaking literary regions, such as Singapore and Malaysia, and some are Americans who love Asian culture. These individuals met in cyberspace and became a team, because of their common reading interests and literary preferences. Thanks to them, several large-scale organizations of translators of Chinese online literature, such as Radiant Translations (www.radianttranslations.com), were born. An example is the translator "Deathblade," a native-born American. According to his personal profile on the website, his first contact with martial arts, or *wuxia*, was the famous movie *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, in 2000. Since then, he has been captivated by Chinese culture. He has not only read many Chinese web novels in English but has also frequently visited spcnet.tv, the largest Asian drama review database on the Internet. Moreover, in 2009, he began to learn Chinese and moved to China.[9]

Unlike the translators of traditional literature whose true identities are highlighted, most of the translators of online literature employ a nickname or pseudonym. For example, Jingping Lai calls himself "RWX" on Wuxiaworld. According to him, this is taken from the character "Ren Wo Xing" in Jin Yong's martial arts novel, *The Legendary Swordsman* (笑傲江湖). As members of the younger generation of netizens, the translators of Chinese online literature are familiar with the latest pop culture and discourse narrative styles in cyberspace, which means they

feel free to write under a pseudonym. They often say that it is fun and fulfilling for them to translate Chinese web novels.

As a forum to promote Chinese literature, Webnovel has made substantial progress in aspects such as translation mode, payment mechanism, and originality system. It also has certain advantages in reader engagement and writer development that have prompted Wuxiaworld to perfect its payment mechanism and to develop a professional translator system to some extent. As far as the translator team is concerned, Webnovel built its overseas business on the basis of fan translation in the initial stages, when translation practices were conducted by bilingual web-novel lovers. However, due to the randomness and uncontrollability of fan translators, it was difficult to guarantee the quality of translation, causing Webnovel to take steps to develop a professional, efficient, and structured translator team. The first step was to invest heavily in recruiting senior translators and translator teams. The platform now has a team consisting of more than 200 Chinese and foreign translators and editors from around the world. The second step was to advance the Translator Incubation Project, which sought to recruit the best translators worldwide to enlarge the team and to help them grow rapidly, in order to enable standardized and large-scale operations. The third step was to build a professional translator system in line with the professional writer system at home, to ensure the remuneration and benefits of translators, in order to position the translation work appropriately and to ensure the stability of the team they had recruited. For instance, in 2018, Webnovel changed the income model for translators from the original "pay per chapter" model to a revenue-sharing model (Ji 2019, 107) (the website-author-translator ratio is 3:3:4), in order to maximize the income of its translators.

Translation Process: Crowdsourcing

In contrast to the way in which mainstream pure literature is translated, online literature translation is not constrained by the business processes of the printing age, such as selecting the original text, selecting the translator, editing, proofreading, and printing by the publisher, and sales promotion by the bookseller. In the decentralized and borderless digital field constructed by the Internet, translating online literature has become a new way for modern Chinese literature to reach overseas readers.

As of March 2020, China had more than 900 million netizens, and its Internet penetration had reached 64.5%, laying a solid user base for the development of the digital economy. Concurrently, the decentralized attributes of the Internet ecology have become increasingly obvious: translator, reader, and author have an equal opportunity to participate in the integration, sharing, and dissemination of information. The translation industry and market have changed accordingly. These changes are now blurring the boundaries between author, translator, and reader, since anyone can translate, publish, and evaluate a translation. This is a phenomenon called "crowdsourcing translation."

Crowdsourcing translation is a new form of translation practice that relies on Internet technology, with typical examples of the platform involved including

Wikipedia, YouTube, and Facebook. In practice, crowdsourcing translation is mainly based on an online platform or organization that recruits a large number of volunteer translators via the Internet to produce translations through teamwork. Translation tasks, originally completed by professional translators, are now outsourced to the general population in a free and voluntary manner. It is characterized by an open platform, participants with diversified identities, skilled application of technology, creative content generation, minimum production costs, and efficient production processes. Webnovel is a typical example of crowdsourcing translation, primarily of Chinese online literature. Meanwhile, yeeyan.org, the largest translator website in China, is engaged in the English-to-Chinese crowdsourcing translation of books and press releases. In addition, crowdsourcing translation practices on wuxiaworld.com, guokr.com, songshuhui.net, hupu.com, and dongxi.net are widely recognized by netizens, making these platforms an important window for Sino-foreign culture and information communication.

Thanks to the increasingly mature Internet technology of the big data era, Chinese online literature has flourished and become highly popular among readers both at home and abroad. In order to attract readers to consume their products, and to retain these readers' interest, web novels are usually extremely long, with millions of Chinese characters per work. As such, crowdsourcing translation, featuring teamwork, is a preferred choice in the outbound translation of Chinese online literature. For example, before Gravity Tales was acquired by Webnovel, it regularly published information and notices about works to be translated and volunteer recruitment on its website. The roles concerned were volunteer cover translator, author, self-recommendation translator, editor, and proofreader, demonstrating the clear division of labor. In these roles, Chinese translators are expected to have good Chinese skills and English competence, [and] be able to translate at least one complete chapter of a novel; editors are expected to correct grammatical errors and polish the translation to ensure a smooth and enjoyable reading experience, and in particular, not to modify the subtext and tone of the original text. Self-recommendation translators are those who have voluntarily translated works listed on the website, or who wish to recommend other works translated by them to be published on the website. They are expected to "have completed the translation of at least thirty chapters of the novel, and be able to ensure weekly updates of three translated chapters."[10]

In the face of large-scale tasks, the translator, editor, and proofreader, as well as the post-translation editor, terminology manager, expert, and other roles, perform their own duties to complete the timely translation, editing, proofreading, and terminology management of the original text, thus ensuring the normal operation of the translation platform. Due to the differences in knowledge background, education level, and industry form, the translators recruited are often scattered all over the world and are adept at translating a certain genre, such as e-sports, *xianxia*, or sci-fi. These translators, with different preferences, and from different places in the world, form a unique team or task force to complete translation tasks online. They strive to render the quintessence of the original as much as possible and to deliver high-quality Chinese original content to the world. Influenced by Daoism

in China, many foreign translators call each other "Daoist," instead of "buddy" or "man" (Ma and Gu 2016). Endless Fantasy Translation and Henyee Translations, two full-time translator teams under Webnovel and representatives in crowdsourcing translation are both composed of senior Chinese editors and English editors. On June 1, 2017, China Literature released a new novel, *I Am Supreme* (我是至尊), simultaneously on its domestic and international websites. Henyee Translations undertook the translation task for the first time allowing overseas fans to read a novel (in English) at the same time as their Chinese counterparts.

In addition to crowdsourcing translation, web novel translation websites often collaborate in pretranslation preparation, content reading, background sorting, and terminology management, which differs from the reality of most literary translators working in isolation in the traditional printing era. Web novels often involve traditional cultural elements, such as metaphysics, Taoism, *fengshui*, yin and yang, and heaven and earth, as well as many fictional magic powers. Although these features can present a new and unique image of China to readers in the English-speaking world, they also pose a significant challenge to junior translators. Therefore, some websites prepare and provide auxiliary reading materials, and hire experts to help their translators to deliver high-quality translations. For example, Wuxiaworld published the *Basic Dao Primer*, *Chinese Idiom Glossary*, *Glossary of Terms in Wuxia*, *Xianxia & Xuanhuan Novels*, *Wuxia-Xianxia Terms of Address*, and many other Chinese-English bilingual resources, as convenient references for translators, in order to unify the translation style, and to provide readers with important background knowledge for understanding Chinese web novels. Another example is the article "'Cores' in Chinese Cultivation Novels," a reference for translators that provides a detailed introduction to the image of "Cores" in web novels and explains clearly the differences between the "Magical Cores" of Magic Beasts and the "Gold Cores" of Cultivators. In addition, Wuxiaworld provides a "Translator Thoughts Series" section on its platform where translation experiences and thoughts can be shared, in order to help the translator group improve their translation skills through cooperation and exchanges.

Translation Form: From Text to Hypertext

In terms of print media, literary works are mainly disseminated via printed books or journals, and readers and authors can communicate by textual means. This communication mode is unidirectional and delayed to a certain extent. Moreover, the literary production and reading mode, with a shift from text to the public, makes it difficult for readers and authors from different regions and ethnic groups to appreciate the original text and to provide timely feedback regarding their reading experience. In this age of rapid development, no matter how the narrative time, space, and scene of traditional literature changes, and how the narrative concept is reconstructed, the final text is still presented in a unidirectional, linear rather than open, interactive structure.

With the advent of the big data era, the Internet has altered the space and paradigm of human lives, prompting changes in reading habits, writing conventions,

types of literary creation and production, and existent forms. The traditional production pattern of writing at a desk and storage on paper can no longer meet people's need for daily learning, communication, and entertainment. As a multidirectional narrative structure and networked text form, hypertext has been embraced by many social groups, becoming an important vehicle for reading, and contributing to the emergence of hypertext literature. A good understanding of what constitutes hypertext literature can help us to better capture the development trend of the translation of contemporary Chinese literature in the Internet age.

The concept of "hypertext" was first proposed by the American scholar, Ted Nelson, around 1969. The issues related to this concept have been studied by scholars both at home and abroad. For instance, Yang Dan et al. argued that hypertext is essentially a multidimensional interactive text that "enable[es] readers who are represented or even ignored and suppressed in the traditional print media to be seen and heard, to participate in discussion and in the translation process" (Yang et al. 2017, 75). Meanwhile, Deng Yinjin explained that "hypertext is a system for storing textual information pages, in which each page contains embedded links to other pages, which together form a giant text network that can refer to each other" (Deng 2009, 127). In addition, according to Zhou Ahong and Yan Zhen, "hypertext literature is a literary work processed from various raw materials such as text, voice, image and video by the people who master hypertext link technology" (Zhou and Yan 2018, 54), while Xu Wenwu highlighted the fact that "hypertext literature is a new category of literature with the network as the carrier and hypertext technology as the support" (Xu 2001, 60). Similar definitions can be found in a range of other published papers. It is not difficult to understand what hypertext and hypertext literature are, and what their relationship is with online literature. In the process of translating and promoting Chinese online literature, the hypertext features of translated texts become more obvious. As Han Moyong noted:

> In terms of structural form, online literature is mostly moving toward a kind of non-linear, multi-directional and fragmented spatial structure, i.e., hypertext and database structure; in terms of presentation media, visual images have become the symbolic form of literary expression, and even for pure texts, the temporality of their textual representation is weakened and the intuitiveness is enhanced; in terms of literary realm, spiritual realm and scene have replaced traditional artistic conception to deliver a much more immersive and intuitive reading experience.
>
> (Han 2018, 127)

Indeed, as a technical feature of web links, hypertext has become a typical form of online literature works. It is no exaggeration to say that today's online literary writing has been submerged in a huge database.

As the above definitions suggest, unlike the traditional practice of "text selection, translation, translation reception," in the context of online literature the translation presented is no longer a text in the conventional sense, but a hypertext that includes various interrelated digital formats, such as text, image, audio, video,

animation, and even special effects. With the application of information technology (IT), the originally static and closed text objects are now transformed into nonlinear symbolic networks. Translators can add notes and supplementary information, and optimize typesetting by using Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) and Extensible Markup Language (XML) elements, such as navigation, icon, link, tag, code, and plug-in, to form a multimodal paratext, in order to realize more complex semantic generation, transformation, and reception, and to provide readers with a broader and more diverse space of interpretation when they are taken into the literary world of the original via the translated version. Every time readers from all over the world click at will, they may jump to a different path, or even jump out of the text itself, making reading the translated versions of online literature a highly personalized process of discovery. For example, above the main body of the English version of *I Shall Seal the Heavens* are multiple external links, including the official comic illustration ISSTH Art Gallery, a promotional video of the namesake online game, a video of an interview with the original author, Er Gen (耳根), and an online store for purchasing *xianxia*-inspired T-shirts, offering the audience an extreme experience that combines an audio-visual feast with textual echoes.

Moreover, due to the dynamic nature of hypertext, online literature translation is more flexible. Translators do not always have to complete the task in one go, in order to send it to the press for publication, rather they can post updates regularly via blogs. Sometimes, even the original of the web novel itself is unfinished, similarly to the live-shoot system of some American television series. This approach can not only maintain the interest of overseas readers in following the story but can also help to translators to adjust their translation strategy, and the chapters to be translated, according to the feedback they receive. On the Translated Tales pages of Gravity Tales, for example, in addition to subject and genre, author profile, synopsis, and other promotional information, the translation status and release plan are specifically provided to inform readers of what will be updated and when. On the homepage of *Immortal and Martial Dual Cultivation* (仙武同修), it is stated, "Translating regular chapters on weekdays, at least two paid chapters on weekends."[11] The term "paid chapters" refers to certain chapters in a work that will be translated with priority, according to readers' online donations, or to the additional workload after the completion of the given chapters. This unique "translate-donate–share" model (Ji 2016, 113) continues to attract new readers and to accumulate donations by continuously enriching the text content, thereby contributing to a positive cycle of rapid development. Therefore, readers clearly play a leading role in the translation of Chinese online literature, and they also inject inexhaustible vitality into the translation activities involved.

SECTION 3: BLURRING BOUNDARIES BETWEEN AUTHOR, TRANSLATOR, AND READER IN RECEPTION

China's national policy incentives are an important guarantee for the translational journey of Chinese online literature. In 2015, the State Administration of Press,

Publication, Radio, Film, and Television of the People's Republic of China indicated in the *Guiding Opinions on Promoting the Healthy Development of Online Literature* that it is necessary to step up policy support, in order to give full support to the creation of premium content, and to the research and development of high-quality projects, and to encourage online literature works to expand into the international market. In 2017, the Department of Cultural Industry of the Ministry of Culture issued the *Guiding Opinions of the Ministry of Culture on Promoting the Innovative Development of the Digital Culture Industry*, demanding the provision of a China model for the global development of the digital culture industry. Moreover, in 2018, the National Press and Publication Administration and the National Office against Pornographic and Illegal Publications jointly launched a special campaign to address three major problems with online literature works: unacceptable values and vulgar content, the dissemination of obscene and pornographic information, and copyright infringement and piracy. All of these measures have provided a satisfactory policy environment for the local creation, and the overseas expansion, of online literature that helps to tell China's stories well and to present an image of China to the world.

Chinese online literature was initially received widely in Southeast Asian countries. According to Vietnam's *Tuoi Tre Newspaper*, "From 2009 to 2013, Vietnam has translated and published 841 books, of which 617 are online literature translated from Chinese, and almost all Chinese web novels translated into Vietnamese are published in the form of physical book" (Guo 2015). The book *Jiang Ye* (将夜) by Mao Ni (猫腻) topped the annual chart of Naiin Bookstore (2016), highlighting its popularity among Thai readers. Later, Chinese web novels, such as *Nirvana in Fire* (琅琊榜), *Scarlet Heart* (步步惊心), *Jade Dynasty* (诛仙), and *Ghost Blows Out the Light* (鬼吹灯), caused a sensation in Northeast Asian countries, such as South Korea and Japan. In recent years, the popularity of Chinese net literature has spread from Asia to North America and has become a literary storm sweeping across the globe and attracting millions of English-speaking readers, truly a unique spectacle in world literature.

According to the August 2021 Alexa web ranking list, Wuxiaworld was ranked around #3,340, in terms of page views; its users reportedly stay online for 14 minutes on average; and 22.5% of its visitors were from the United States. The domain name also appeared in the rankings of the Philippines and Brazil, by country, while the regions of high attention included Germany, Venezuela, and Australia.[12] Meanwhile, Webnovel was ranked around #11,600, with an average user stay of 18.32 minutes. In addition to the United States, Argentina, and India were its main sources of traffic.[13] In fact, Chinese net literature has become one of the most popular genres among Western readers and is a typical case of Chinese literature "going global" successfully.

The Internet has made the translation and reception of literature in a highly autonomous, open, and democratized field a reality, which means that all of the links involved from production to consumption no longer require the centralized control and regulation of influential publishers. Consequently, the boundaries between authors, translators, and readers are blurring significantly. Mass readers have

truly been included in the production and dissemination of translations, and respect for readers' opinions has become an important motivator for translation practices, echoing the "infinite différance" concept introduced by Jacques Derrida.

Literature dissemination and reception is aimed at a mass audience. In the European and American book markets, the promotion of a literary work is dominated by a publisher, who is part of the literary access mechanism and hierarchy. The publisher produces and sends sample books to mainstream media, and then invites well-known book reviewers to write reviews for marketing purposes. In addition to providing mass readers with the basic information about the book, the book reviews of mainstream media can affect directly a reader's decision to read the book, or not. In this sense, these book reviews play a vital role in stimulating the reading interest of the masses in the English-speaking world. Because modern Chinese writers have limited literary and cultural capital in the world, book reviews of this kind in the traditional literary hierarchy appear to be a key link in reaching the general reader. However, with the advancement of IT, the English translation of *Coiling Dragon*, and other Chinese works, has introduced a different, unconventional path, creating a show of literary democracy, and changing the elite-dominated sociological ecology of literature.

"Mass audience" is a core concept for the investigation of how Chinese online literature is disseminated and received abroad. In the field of contemporary literature, "mass" is often the opposite of "elite," but as the main component of the literary reception market, the mass audience has become an important carrier of the value of works and also contributes to the literary criticism system. This is even more the case for Chinese online literature. Web hypertext technology has deconstructed and shattered the traditional symbolic power base (Nan 2001, 262). In the opening-up process of discourse power, authors and translators are no longer the deciding factors in the formation of a translation; now, readers can use their own initiative to engage in, and promote, the production of translation in cyberspace, and to increase the popularity of a translation by leaving diverse comments.

It is through this interaction of multiple roles that Chinese online literature can be spread. On the message boards of many translation platforms, we often see threads where readers urge translators to update as soon as possible. Readers and translators are able to talk to each other in a real-time manner. Moreover, readers are free to express their opinions, triggering further communication, and contributing to a community of translation criticism in cyberspace. For example, in the comments section on Webnovel, in addition to readers' messages, there is also a Weekly Power Status[14] where readers can use the Power Stones received according to their user level to vote for their favorite book and to increase its "power status." Readers can also rate a book (out of five stars) by Translation Quality, Updating Stability, Story Development, Character Design, and World Background. These intuitive, dynamic evaluation methods may influence subsequent reader choices and reviews.

Readers' critical discourse expands the interpretative space of translation. In the context of digitally-enabled translation and reading, the way in which mass readers think and criticize has changed accordingly. The application of Internet

technologies has affected the translation effect directly and changed the way that readers perceive and criticize translated works. In the virtual world created by the Internet, reader comments are generated, read, and spread instantly, promoting a new consumption pattern of literary translation. This enables readers to share information and to communicate their opinions to translators directly. Thanks to the real-time interaction, and the constant role-switching between translator and reader, it is possible for Chinese web novels to be translated and read continuously, and for translated works to be interpreted constantly by collective wisdom, both at home and abroad. In this way, Chinese Internet literature makes a difference in the English-speaking world.

The intrinsic attributes of the reception of online literature are reflected in the equal dialogue between author, translator, and reader, which reflects what Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin called "carnivalesque," a characteristic that expresses fully the aesthetic inclination of the mass audience. In the decentralized utopian reading and reception process, a mass audience is not simply groups of people, but reading groups that have gathered spontaneously and tend to lie outside the existing top-down economic and social management system.

Unlike traditional book reviews, online reader criticism and reception is characterized by fragmented discourse, superficial meaning, and the direct expression of emotion, and sometimes contain a large number of non-verbal symbols, such as emojis or memes. Although it seems too casual, lacks rational thinking, and does not have the depth and circumspection of pure literature, it is nevertheless reasonable, inevitable, and creative. In cyberspace, readers can hide their true social identity behind a nickname; they can avoid many of the constraints of the real world and utilitarian inducement, be almost unconstrained in their communication and emotional expression, and even challenge the authoritative discourse. This kind of communication breaks various real-world norms, invents a new critical language and evaluation system, rebuilds unique principles and standards, and forms an intersubjectivity that enables equality between the Self and the Other. Therefore, translated literature is able to create new aesthetic trends and social values in the postmodernist cultural context in which media technology is highly developed, and the critical discourse power of translated literature is able to expand from a select elite to the masses, thus forming an independent and open cyber-cultural field beyond the control of the elite power discourse.

In this new interpretative space, the relationship between translators and readers is changing subtly. On the one hand, translators serve the mass readers, strive to meet their needs, and ultimately seek validation from them. Their reading habits, aesthetic preferences, evaluation standards, and even challenges, may influence greatly the translation strategy and process. On the other hand, from the genealogy of reception aesthetics, "the reader is quite as vital as the author" (Eagleton 1996, 64). A great many web novels are being translated while reader reviews are accumulating in real time, with both presented simultaneously in the same interface. Thus, translation continues to have a new interpretative effect on the original in reading practice.

Reader engagement and fan fiction drive literary production. The translational journey of Chinese online literature creates a textual and visual carnival in which everyone can participate and interact. As noted previously, the boundaries between authors, translators, and readers are increasingly blurred. In addition to simply leaving a comment after reading, Western readers have developed a creation and translation motive in the cross-cultural experience, enabling them to be involved in literary production. The alternative space facilitated by Chinese web literature has become a "carnival square" shared by contemporary world culture, constantly inspiring the imagination and writing desire of English readers, and creating a subversive narrative paradigm outside the mainstream of English literature. Accordingly, Chinese web literature truly reflects the spirit of world literature.

For example, on Gravity Tales (note: on June 1, 2020, Gravity Tales merged officially with Webnovel, and the domain name was redirected to Webnovel), in addition to the regular publication of translated works of Chinese web novels, there is a separate section titled "Original Tales" that specifically publishes works created by fans, based on the Chinese blueprint. To date, it has published nine original tales, including *A Dragon's Curiosity; Aethernea; Dragon's Soul; Earth's Core; Hardcore: Qi Worlds; How to Avoid Death on a Daily Basis; Martial Void King; The Good Student;* and *The New World*. "Readers can more or less see Chinese web novels in these works. Some works are deeply influenced by Chinese web novels in content, and even imitate the writing of Chinese web novels and set the background in China" (Qiao 2017).

Similarly, Wuxiaworld has also established an "Original" entry on the navigation bar, where many original novels written by fans in foreign languages are published. In addition to English works, such as *Blue Phoenix*, *Condemning the Heavens,* and *The Divine Elements*, there are Spanish works, such as *Legends of Ogre Gate*, a martial arts novel that has been translated into English. In particular, *Blue Phoenix* is one of the earliest original English-language web novels, and there is a website (bluephoenixnovel.com) dedicated to promoting it. A distinctive narrative feature of the story is "time travel," in which the protagonist is reincarnated from modern China into ancient China, and its background, setting, and characterization are clearly influenced by Chinese web novels. The author, Tinalynge, an online writer from Denmark, said in a media interview that she cannot speak Chinese and that almost all of her writing inspiration "comes from the Chinese web novels she has read" (Qiao 2017). The creation of this array of original fantasy and martial arts works in foreign languages has helped to boost the "cyber celebrity" status of these popular genres from China in the English-speaking world, testifying to the broad influence of Chinese online literature overseas.

Also worth mentioning is Webnovel's Inkstone segment. In April 2018, the website introduced this platform for global users with dreams of writing. During the one-month test period, more than 1,000 overseas authors registered, and a total of more than 620 original English works were reviewed and launched. Data shows that many of the popular works in Webnovel's Original section are influenced deeply by Chinese web literature. Chinese cultural elements can be seen in many works, including *Last Wish System,* by a Spanish writer; *Number One Dungeon*

Supplier, by a Singaporean; *My Beautiful Commander*, by an Indian writer; and *Reborn: Evolving From Nothing*, by an American, as well as work such as *Chronicles of the Weakest Wind Mage* in Western fantasy, and *Legend of the Perfect Emperor* in Eastern *xianxia*. Equipped with a professional English-speaking editorial team, Webnovel continues to discover potential works from these original works and to sign contracts with talented authors.

Interestingly, some of the most read Chinese web literature in translation is currently moving from online to offline, returning to the commercial marketing process, and making a comeback in the publishing industry. In addition to e-books, many popular web novels are now packaged as physical books for publication and distribution. For example, according to the US Amazon Best Sellers: Best Chinese Literature list of February 2018, the top ten works, with the exception of the Hugo Award-winner, *The Three-Body Problem* series by Liu Cixin, were all Chinese web novels, translated into English, and published by Gravity Tales. Of them, the e-sports novel, *Reincarnation of the Strongest Sword God* (重生之最强剑神) topped the list, followed by the cultivation novel, *Demon's Diary* (魔天记), and the *xuanhuan* novel, *King of Gods* (主宰之王). This shows that Chinese web literature has attracted considerable attention from the English reading community.

SECTION 4: CONCLUSION

Relying on Internet technology, Chinese web literature currently presents a unique, thriving spectacle. It has crossed the traditional boundaries and expanded the genealogy of contemporary literature. Web-based writings are often criticized by literary purists as vulgar and superficial; however, some works are essentially elite, even though most are folk and popular genres. The utopian world built in these works allows readers to unlock their rich imaginations, and to escape from the stresses of real life. Although the narrative does not reflect reality, this kind of unreal literary creation stimulates the identification with, and expectation of, the basic appeals of human nature. This makes reading an enjoyable activity that is accessible to the masses and nourishes their enthusiasm for literary reading. It might even be claimed that the surreal construction of spiritual aesthetics in Chinese online literature constitutes the rebirth and development of humanistic values and ideas in the modern era and that Chinese online literature is a new form of art that allows people to explore the meaning and value of human existence. In this sense, not only does it shine in China, it is also illuminated under the global spotlight.

A comprehensive survey of the translation of Chinese online literature in the West shows that the translation of fantasy writings that are rich in Chinese elements is unique in the information-based and interactive communication carriers represented by websites. This not only subverts the elitist attribute of translator identity, and promotes fan translators that work as a team, but also enables the translated works to be displayed as hypertext. Moreover, the virtual worlds of these works are enriched and regenerated in the real-time interpretation, and updates by their mass

readers constantly inspire the imagination of foreign readers, and create a new narrative paradigm for world literature.

Nevertheless, while Chinese web novels have gained much popularity overseas, and attracted millions of English-speaking readers, most are in such literary genres as *wuxia*, *xuanhuan*, and games, which do not reflect fully the style and values of Chinese culture. It is necessary, for example, to promote further the translation and dissemination of online historical novels that are rich in cultural knowledge. Therefore, how to employ fully the technical advantages of Internet hypertext translation to better promote Chinese culture, while ensuring their popularity, readability, and aesthetics, is one of the challenges for the next stage of the translation of Chinese online literature.

Notes

1 Parts of this section (by Wu Yun and Gu Yiqing) are published in Comparative Literature in China, 2019 (3).
2 Report on the Development of Chinese Network Literature 2019, February 20, 2020. http://www.chinawriter.com.cn/n1/2020/0220/c404027-31595926.html [last accessed November 11, 2020].
3 Wang (2019), Ouyang and He (2019), and Xi and Fu (2018).
4 The 45th China Statistical Report on Internet Development released by the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), April 28, 2020. http://www.cnnic.net.cn/gywm/xwzx/rdxw/20172017_7057/202004/t20200427_70973.htm [last accessed November 11, 2020].
5 Quoted in Li (2012).
6 Source: Report on the Development of Chinese Network Literature 2019, February 20, 2020. http://www.chinawriter.com.cn/n1/2020/0220/c404027-31595926.html [last accessed November 11, 2020].
7 IP means intellectual property. With the rise of new media, IP has become a link between cultural products, a highly differentiated cultural symbol with huge followings, strong monetization abilities and a long monetization cycle.
8 Source: On Chinese Culture "Going Global:" Evaluation Report on Intellectual Properties from 2018–2019, June 7, 2019. https://www.sohu.com/a/319137230_680597 [last accessed November 11, 2020].
9 More information about translators on Wuxiaworld is available at http://www.wuxiaworld.com/about-wuxiaworld/
10 More information is available at: http://gravitytales.com/recruitment
11 Homepage of Immortal and Martial Dual Cultivation at Gravity Tales. http://gravitytales.com/novel/immortal-and-martial-dual-cultivation
12 https://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/wuxiaworld.com [last accessed August 11, 2021].
13 https://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/webnovel.com [last accessed August 11, 2021].
14 More information about the operating model and user's guide of Webnovel is available at: https://www.webnovel.com/book/8057964805003305/Book-of-Answers

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7 Conclusion

Introduction

The world is becoming a global village as a result of economic and trade exchanges. Despite existing geographical boundaries, barriers of time and space no longer exist. We are in the midst of a period of economic and technological innovation, which is introducing new conflicts and contradictions, changes to international movement and communication patterns, vicissitudes within countries and societies, and altered dynamics of cultural exchanges between countries. While different nations have different cultural frames built on their unique national character, regional and global integration have rendered cross-cultural communication frequent and vigorous, facilitating people-to-people communication and state-to-state exchanges. Literature is a significant component of this cultural framework and has played a role in the collision and fusion of the Chinese national culture with that of the remainder of the world in a transnational journey.

In the early years of the PRC, Chinese literature was in a state of relative isolation and self-development, with outbound translation mainly carried out by *Chinese Literature*. After the reform and opening up in 1978, China began to integrate into the world, keeping pace with global developments and changes. Chinese literature also took steps to go global. Today, as China's understanding of the world deepens, it continues to draw lessons from past experience to adjust strategies, methods, and paths, optimizing the process of literature translation and forming a multilevel, multipath, and comprehensive system.

From the viewpoint of the English-speaking world, Western studies of contemporary Chinese literature before the reform and opening up period were still a component of regional studies, rather than pure literary studies (Zhang 2016, 39–60), with a clear tendency toward historical positivism and a strong political dimension. Since the 1990s, with the gradual rise of China as a major power, the Western tradition of ethnocentrism with its intention to construct a particular impression of Chinese political reality through presenting certain literary works was falling apart. Certainly, at this time there was greater opportunity for literary studies to return to the domain of literature itself, and the Western center began to "rethink China and the subjectivity of human beings" (Wang 2003, 360), seeking to get to know the new China in all areas, not only its politics. Consequently, a wealth of Chinese

literature, encompassing a broad range of themes, entered the West and the world literature system through the medium of translation.

This book has reviewed and analyzed the Chinese mainland's efforts to promote contemporary Chinese novels in the English-speaking world over the past 40 years. Whether Chinese literature can portray a vivid and realistic image of the nation and contribute to the genealogy of world literature by achieving consistent readership and a large, widespread audience relies first on China's literary output, as creative ideas, content, and narrative techniques are the cornerstones of literary success. However, the ultimate influence of Chinese literature is subject to the processes that inform the selection, translation, and dissemination of literary works. Translation principles, comparisons of translation strategies, and dissemination paths are vital to the reconstruction of China's literary and national image. This is unsurprisingly a bumpy journey, but Chinese literature is finally approaching its destination.

SECTION 1: CHINESE LITERATURE, TRANSLATION, AND WORLD LITERATURE

When considering the dissemination of Chinese novels globally writing is only the first in a series of actions that include translation, dissemination, and reception. The form of the novel, as determined by the author, constitutes the ontology and basis of any subsequent English translation and is at the heart of the reception of English versions. Among the Chinese writers studied in this book, including Yu Hua, Jia Pingwa, Mai Jia, Can Xue, Wang Anyi, and Tie Ning, there are both established authors and nonmainstream writers.

The poor reception of the majority of contemporary Chinese novels in the West is largely attributable to the marginal position of Chinese literature in world literature in general. In the context of globalization, the spread of literature is accelerating, leading to a stronger influence of central literature on peripheral literature. However, peripheral literature is unlikely to move to center stage to challenge the existing order of world literature. Western-centered literary concepts and judgments are held to be "universal values," with the result that the hierarchy of world literature is increasingly entrenched. Over time, Western society has developed a condescending cultural consciousness, meaning that it measures, interprets, and judges non-Western literary works, including Chinese literature, according to its own standards. This results in the stereotyping of, and prejudice against, contemporary Chinese literature; that is, it applies a simplistic and fixed model to the selection and reception of works. When discussing the reception of Chinese literature in the United States, John Updike stated, "Well, that's a tough old heart, and I'm not sure the Chinese are ready to crack it yet" (Updike 2005, 37). Many Western scholars, based solely on their limited knowledge of Chinese literature, have judged modern and contemporary Chinese literature as lacking in artistry, reflecting politics mainly in the form of national allegories (Eoyang 2003, 72). Their acceptance of contemporary Chinese novels largely derives from perceptions regarding their political and social merits, rather than their artistic merits (Kinkley 2006, 71). In

other words, Western interpretations of contemporary Chinese literature are too closely tied to politics and sociology, whereas their literariness has long been ignored and obscured. Su Tong says:

> From the Western perspective, Chinese literature is not only in the East, but also in China. Unlike the Chinese economy, Chinese literature is a literature of too many ideologies, a literature of another color and face, and a literature of another breath. It is born and destined to be peripheral.
>
> (Gao and Su 2013, 47)

Undeniably, erroneous perceptions and readings of Chinese literature in world literature arise from historical and political influences, as well as the stereotypes and prejudices of the English-speaking world.

Moreover, the unsatisfactory translation effect is inextricably linked to the writing techniques and themes presented in Chinese novels. Chinese literature has flourished in the modern era, but for a long time, it was "several trends behind" (Hu 2017, 19). Western literature, which had already entered the postmodernist boom. Julia Lovell argues that for the most part, the themes in globally released contemporary Chinese literature are too local and narrow, and lack understanding of the expectations of Western audiences (Guo 2012, A01). Eric Abrahamsen, an editor at *Pathlight*, a new English-language literary magazine produced by Paper Republic and *People's Literature*, believes Chinese writers must realize foreign publishers are weary of Chinese literature about the countryside and the Cultural Revolution, and grand historical narratives that span decades. Foreign editors are also deterred by the sheer length of works such as *White Deer Plain* (白鹿原) (Zhao 2012, 24). As Western readers have little knowledge of Chinese history, their interest in Chinese literature is often sapped by lengthy grand narratives, and their reading requirements are further quashed by long novels with similar themes. Additionally, literary works that resort to the traditional narrative techniques of Chinese fiction with a myriad of characters may not be well received, because their artistic style is so different from what is commonplace in the English-speaking world. Once translated, the unique regional style and emotional expression of the original text becomes more difficult for target readers to perceive, and the beauty of the original is thereby also greatly reduced. However, simply copying or following so-called world consciousness and literary ideals runs the risk of reducing the work to a reproduction of Western literature in its various forms, such that the English translation conveys none of the original's unique vitality and expressiveness.

At present, as China is becoming stronger in all aspects, the Western interest in and demand for reading about China is growing. As Jo Lusby, managing director of Penguin Books China, says: "In the past, people tended to see China as speaking with one voice, having one experience. But what [global] readers are beginning to glimpse now is the great diversity of voices and opinions within China" (Larson 2012, 11). This has provided an unprecedented opportunity for Chinese literature to gain acceptance in the world. The recognition of the writers mentioned in this book in the English-speaking world relates closely to the literary qualities

and content presented in their novel writing. For example, Can Xue's novels are similar to the surrealist works produced in Europe and the United States, allowing Western audiences to experience a very similar literary genesis. Mai Jia's novels, heavily influenced by Western classics, contain a variety of foreign elements. The narrative techniques, the blurring of characters' identities, and the enthusiasm for depicting the ugly all originate in modernist novels. Mo Yan's novels blend reality and imagination, the past and the present, reflecting radical changes in Chinese rural society in mythology, folklore, and superstitious fantasy. They are a Chinese transplant of magic realism. The works of these writers, set in unique Chinese historical and social contexts, are full of Chinese concepts of "nation" and "state" on the one hand, and universal images on the other. In this sense, they are also part of world literature.

In summary, to occupy a position in world literature, Chinese literary writing should, based on the soil of its own nation, learn from the advanced expression and writing techniques of world literature, while demonstrating unique features. Such literary texts also have a unique regional and national cultural imprint and an Otherness that resides with the value and power of national literature. Moreover, due to their universal elements, outstanding works explore the common literary themes and artistic expressions of mankind, and then form humanistic sentiments and ideals beyond historical contexts and geographical boundaries, thereby gaining recognition and acceptance from foreign readers.

SECTION 2: TRANSLATION AND CHINESE LITERATURE "GOING GLOBAL"

In the complex contemporary context, translation is essentially a cross-cultural communication activity, variously embodying the rejection or acceptance of the Other. The overseas reception of Chinese novels largely depends on whether translation agents can realize the differences in ideologies, cultural positions, and poetic characteristics of a target audience, and whether they can, on the premise of fully understanding the reading interests, reading needs, and literary appeal of the Other, make effective decisions throughout the process, from "who to translate" and "what to translate" to "how to translate" and "how to disseminate."

In terms of "who to translate," the translator and the patron, including the original author and the publisher, play a key role in translation and dissemination. Their actions are a decisive factor effecting the success or failure of a translation. Based on a review and analysis of the English translations of contemporary Chinese novels in this book, it is evident that many are not produced by Chinese translators, but rather by foreign translators who are also native English speakers. In the early 20th century, German scholar Rudolf Pannwitz wrote: "Our translators have a far greater reverence for the usage of their own language than for the spirit of foreign works" (Benjamin 1992, 81). Since the heterogeneity of translation itself has had an unavoidable impact on and has been a threat to, the target culture, audiences are more likely to accept homogeneous values, ideologies, and literary habits. Therefore,

when facing alien Otherness, native English-speaking translators tend to resist or adapt originals by imposing the linguistic style and cultural form of their mother tongue to a certain extent, making it easier for target readers to accept the translation. The examples in this book also show that a good English-speaking translator knows the necessity of integrating standards of literary appeal and the cultural identity of the Other while retaining the foreignness and national character of Chinese culture, as well as the cultural genres and aesthetics behind it, allowing target readers to see the original as its original author intended.

Moreover, the analysis in this book has clarified that the active participation of the original author in the translation process is also helpful. The writer's own views and positions on translation are crucial to the production of a translation, and a writer with a broad vision for international collaboration can often provide a great catalyst for the promotion of a work abroad. Most Chinese writers have poor English communication skills and are always reactive in the translation and dissemination of their works. As the British translator Nicky Harman says:

> Some publishers say they want a personable, articulate author, preferably one who can speak English. There are only a few writers who provide that winning combination and there are many who write great stuff but are not young, glamorous or English-speaking.
>
> (Harman 2008)

Writers such as Can Xue and Mo Yan have a strong sense of the implications of going global, but Jia Pingwa and Chen Zhongshi do not, at least not in their early years, which has been a barrier to the reception of their works. Therefore, to optimize the effectiveness of translation agents, it is critical to raise the international awareness of Chinese writers or let them assist translators and support their patronage to expand overseas resources and mobilize actors to create synergy.

In terms of "how to translate," translation is subject to a variety of textual and extratextual factors, with ideology, poetics, and patronage at the core. Prior to choosing the appropriate translation strategy and approach, the first question to answer concerns "what to translate"; that is, the screening and selection of texts to be translated. Such factors work together to build up a set of selection criteria and translation tendencies of their own. It is not difficult to see from the reviews in this book that Chinese publishers' text selection is very different from that of their overseas counterparts. Trauma narratives, oriental exoticism, and controversial banned books are the inheritance of Western stereotypes of China, leading the West to pay attention to and translate Chinese works. With the growing interaction between Chinese and Western cultures; however, text selection appears to be more diverse and inclusive.

In addition to classical works, nonmainstream works, such as detective fiction, suspense, sci-fi, and web novels have been selected for the purpose of translation, adding more color to the translation canvas of contemporary Chinese literature. Text selection is also followed by translation strategy selection and application, which is relevant to the final form of the translation, as well as to the interplay of

social, cultural, political, and many other external and internal factors, including ideology, poetics, and the patronage system. The general expectation is that a good translation should be readable and acceptable, maintaining full respect for, and fidelity to, the original. Taking Howard Goldblatt, Julia Lovell, Michael Berry, and other famous translators of modern Chinese novels as examples, this book has argued that translators need to continue to make choices and consider readers' expectations while remaining faithful to the aesthetic value of the original, making appropriate additions, deletions, and adjustments to the semantic content and writing style of the original, to balance the "adequacy" and "acceptability" of the translation, through a constant process of selection and decision-making. On the one hand, a good translation will seek to retain the Otherness present in the writing and cultural views of the original, demonstrating the greatest possible respect and fidelity to the original so as to avoid any misunderstanding and ideological mistranslation and acculturate to English literature and culture after traversing linguistic and cultural barriers. Meanwhile, to avoid any misunderstanding and harm, it will eliminate unnecessary Otherness and aim to enable reasonable dialogue and effective echoes between both cultures in a symbiotic context. The successful cases presented illustrate that in the struggle between the Other and the Self, translators cannot mechanically transplant Otherness wholesale, but must judge and classify it. They can either maintain the quality of the original, or dissolve and assimilate it to reduce, reproduce, adapt, or transform the Otherness as appropriate. In this way, the irreconcilable obstacles caused by too much Otherness can be avoided, such that effective semantic communication and ethical values at a functional level can be achieved. Such translations not only respect the literary identity of the original and highlight the author's literary style but also cater to the tastes of the target audience, thereby successfully building a mature and unique literary image in the target country that demonstrates foreignness, while being accepted by the mainstream poetics.

In terms of "how to disseminate," publication is the last step following translation, and how to expand and activate this pathway is acknowledged as a priority for the spread of Chinese culture. The past four decades have witnessed two main pathways of dissemination for Chinese novels in English: "source-initiated translation" and "target-initiated translation." This book provides a panoramic perspective summarizing these aspects. "Source-initiated translation" refers to the promotion of Chinese works abroad through *Chinese Literature* and Panda Books published by the Chinese Literature Press and the Foreign Languages Press under the planning and organization of CICG. After the founding of the PRC, this government-led initiative opened a window to allow overseas readers to learn about Chinese literature, playing a significant role in promoting Chinese culture abroad over a long period. "Target-initiated translation" refers to the translation and publication of contemporary Chinese novels by publishers in the English-speaking world, which is a major channel for developing the international influence of Chinese literature. In addition, the advancement of information technology after 2000 expanded the dissemination channel from traditional publishing houses to the Internet. Through online modes, literature is being translated and disseminated in a decentralized and

borderless digital world, giving rise to a new narrative paradigm that is simultaneously interactive and disruptive.

In summary, the success of novel translation requires understanding the international book market and making optimal plans and decisions regarding text selection, translation, editing, printing and publishing, promotion, and other links. It is also important to work closely with foreign book sales agencies and distribution networks to bring together authors, translators, editors, publishers, and other players to form an effective and efficient production chain.

SECTION 3: TRANSLATION AND CHINA'S CULTURAL SOFT POWER

The first two sections of this chapter summarized the forms, cultural functions, and dissemination pathways for the translation of Chinese literature. We must also explain here, that as part of the opening-up process, the complex activity of translation extends far beyond simply being a literary behavior. Rather, it has actually become an important strategy guiding China's cultural diplomacy. In addition to its literary and aesthetic value, national literature is also a key manifestation of ideology, since it "can give readers education and enlightenment in an entertaining way, and thus it is part of cultural soft power in nature" (Hu 2017, 20). Exchanges and interactions with foreign literature can assist Chinese literature to develop a greater voice in the Western-dominated world literature system, thereby enhancing China's cultural soft power. Part of the social mission and historical responsibility of a good writer is to "appear as a public intellectual in the public space, [and to] use the ideological function of literary works" (ibid.) to enhance national discourse power in the cultural field, and participate in the construction of a national image depicting "a country with an advanced culture." To achieve this, effective translation activities are essential in bridging the cultural divide.

Under this guiding thought, this book revisits the Chinese-to-English translation practices of contemporary Chinese novels from 1978 to the present. It describes the translation norms of state institutions, mainly the Foreign Languages Press, analyzes the limitations imposed on their translation activities and considers lessons learned from this translational journey. Meanwhile, it discusses how China has shifted from an organized, state-led translation, and production model to an open, independent, and pluralistic "borrowing boats" approach to outbound translation in the 21st century. In constructing its national image, China has transitioned from an imaginary and preset vision to develop an inclusive vision in which the Other is accommodated.

As explained in this book, the Chinese government first began to promote its literature to the world in an organized manner in 1949. After the end of the Cultural Revolution, the country adopted a reform and opening-up policy, and the translation and dissemination of Chinese literature became an important driver in the construction of China's cultural image. Initially, during the early years of the new period, translation activities were manipulated by state powers. But with the increasing cultural, economic, and political exchanges with the rest of the world,

state-led channels proved too limited to meet the demands of Chinese culture going global, leading to a gradual easing of ideological constraints. The domination of literary translation needed to adapt from a single political discourse to a combination of market forces and political discourse. Thus, organized and planned translation activities under the will of the state gave way to a new translation model: proactively considering the needs of the receiving country, satisfying the reading interests of the target audience, and borrowing and adopting internationally accepted translation and dissemination methods.

The translational journey of contemporary Chinese novels reveals the English translation of Chinese literature comprises two subfields: source-initiated translation and target-initiated translation. Prior to the 21st century, these two subfields were largely independent of each other. The subfield of source-initiated translation in China is closely related to the field of power and is mainly manifested in state-led translation activities. Whereas the subfield of target-initiated translation in the Anglophone world maintains a symbiotic relationship with the field of sinology and the political field, with sinologists being textual mediators. With the rapid economic, political, and cultural development combined with the penetration of new media such as the Internet, there have been new demands from the new generation of readers, many of which are being met by new production modes. These have also given rise to new ways of reading, and a series of social changes have sparked transformations in this field. New translation concepts and production modes brought about by new actors have disrupted China's ideology-driven translation philosophy. The Chinese government is also fully aware of the importance of building national soft power and promoting cultural diplomacy and so has added cultural exports to its development agenda to create a favorable international environment during what is a period of strategic opportunity. Translation activities are moving away from the manipulation of state power, such that serious literature is no longer the only option. Structural changes are also taking place in this field, with a growing number of interactions between the two subfields. Translation activities have undergone a shift from "imposition" to "requisition," breaking the fixed idea of "quantity over influence" in cultural diplomacy. Such outbound country-led translation practices provide a good opportunity to study how literary translation operates in the context of cultural diplomacy.

The studies in this book reveal that translation is essentially an act of discourse construction used to display and shape an image. It is closely connected to the image of the original in a translation, as well as to the image of the source culture in other cultures, and the image of a country in the world. In the process of interlingual construction, the images of China in terms of culture, values, institutions, and other dimensions are fully interpreted with the assistance of translation, epitomizing the national image. It is noteworthy that translation plays a changing constructive role over time, but always in the interest of national strategies. Translation practices over time have also performed a powerful ideological function, in that they present China's core values and beliefs to readers with different mother tongues, introducing Chinese thought and wisdom to the world through narratives, comments, lyrics, and imagination.

Following on from this, once discourse power is constructed, effective communication becomes vital for ensuring the national image reaches the target audience. As the language, cultures, and thought systems of target audiences diverge significantly from those in China, it is necessary to use translation to communicate China's image, stories, and voice in a way that audiences can readily understand and accept. An important role of translation is to effectively translate China, amplify China's voice in the world, and cultural field, and participate in the construction of a national image to create "a country with an advanced culture," to enhance China's cultural soft power.

Therefore, translation has an obvious and lasting value for the self-construction and communication of a country's national image. It pushes a nation to understand and accept the thoughts, values, traditions, and beliefs of others by communicating via a variety of media. It is reasonable to state that translation, as a tool for interstate activities, is critical to achieving cultural diplomacy. As Joseph Nye argues: "If its culture and ideology are attractive, others will more willingly follow" (Nye 1990, 167). It is the expansive nature of translation that makes it an essential means for a government to export its appealing culture and ideology to other countries. When reviewing the historical process of China going global, especially since the reform and opening up, it is apparent that translation has always been an important channel through which foreigners can come to know China. Be it source-initiated or target-initiated, translation has contributed to disenchantment with, and reconstruction and communication of China's national image in different ways. However, due to differences in historical contexts, strategic designs, and communication channels, there is still considerable scope for improvement in translation planning and practices.

The studies in this book lead us to realize that if the source country does not consider the aesthetics, history, and social needs of the target country, the audience will view it as a dumping ground for cultural imperialism and ignore and potentially even resent it. In other words, the effectiveness of cultural diplomacy depends largely on whether the target country has an interest in and a demand for the source culture. In a process where effective dialogue between the Self and the Other is based on respect for and understanding of other cultures, translation allows for in-depth and extensive communication with other countries through sharing appealing texts. As such it has become a vital tool that China can use to tap into its cultural soft power to influence and smooth its international relations. Collaboration between the government, cultural institutions, and translators from the source country is vital to garner support and acceptance in the target country through the export of cultural appeal, so as to ultimately achieve the goal of enhancing China's soft power.

Moreover, cultural soft power is an important vehicle for national image, and translation, which serves as a bridge connecting subject and object, playing a vital role in coordinating the construction and communication of China's national image. The cognition and construction of a national image involves an open process of interaction between subject and object, which may change with the development of the subject itself and the cognitive changes that affect the object. Translation

activities need to be adjusted to address a number of the constraints and difficulties in the process of communicating China's national image (for instance, limitations in source-initiated communication and imbalances in target-initiated communication, lack of conversations and interactions between governments and civil societies, unbalanced coordination between minority discourse and mass media, and limited capacity of cultural exchange and international communication [Fang and Wu 2011; Men and Zhou 2012; Qiao 2010]). It is important to realize that the communication of a national image is not only an internal behavior engaged in by the source country, but also involves interactions with other countries. Thus, China should transform the outdated official approach to image construction, foster the people-to-people exchange of popular culture, continue to expand media channels and communication mechanisms for collaborative translation between sender and recipient, and move from "imposition" to "requisition" to balance the image of China in the eyes of the Self and the Other. Traditionally the sender tended to export serious or high culture to build and maintain its international image; however, it has since transpired that popular culture can also gain a high level of international influence through the medium of marketing and communication. Given that state intervention cannot overcome the influence of market forces, the sender should export various literary and cultural genres and permit the market to tell stories by different means, displaying a multifaceted image on the international stage.

Moreover, given the emergence of many unofficial translation agencies and unconventional translation and publication networks, China should take these changes in policy into consideration, while placing emphasis on collaborating in the field and establishing international networks for translation and publication to exert influence in the international market and serve as a bridgehead for Chinese culture to go global. In a nutshell, in its translational journey, China should export diversified content on the basis of considering recipients' needs and promoting people-to-people exchange through cultural appeal, as emphasized by China's cultural diplomacy and changes to the existing stereotypes and cultural prejudices, creating a good international image, and enhancing its cultural soft power.

According to an old Chinese saying: "Creating material and spiritual wealth is called a great enterprise, and making innovation day by day a great virtue." Over the past four decades, China has experienced a not-so-long but rewarding translational journey, during which it has weathered multiple storms to keep pace with the changing global environment. Now, its cross-cultural communication program is gaining renewed momentum and embracing a brighter future. As von Goethe concludes in his essay "Translations": "The circle, within which the approximation of the foreign and the familiar, the known and the unknown constantly move, is finally complete" (von Goethe 1992, 63). Literary writing itself reflects human nature and the human heart, and the joys and sorrows, separations and reunions of mankind, regardless of race, color, and language. In translation, the nativism and uniqueness of Chinese culture will perhaps shock English-speaking readers, but the universality of human nature themes will ensure acceptance of the exotic, evocative stories. This is how China can continue to mold its national image, as literature flows across borders.

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