



**Studies in Literature and Language**  
Vol. 15, No. 4, 2017, pp. 29-37  
DOI:10.3968/9999

ISSN 1923-1555[Print]  
ISSN 1923-1563[Online]  
www.cscanada.net  
www.cscanada.org

## A Study of Creative Treason in *Red Sorghum*: From the Perspective of Rewriting Theory

YU Yali<sup>[a],\*</sup>

<sup>[a]</sup>School of Foreign Languages, Shanxi Normal University, Linfen, China.

\*Corresponding author.

Received 17 July 2017; accepted 6 September 2017  
Published online 26 October 2017

### Abstract

In literary translation, the translated works always deviate from and distort the original texts to a certain extent because of the linguistic and cultural differences between nations. Therefore, Robert Escarpit, a French literature sociologist, puts forward the notion of “creative treason”. He claims that “translation is always a kind of creative treason”. Translated by Goldblatt, *Red Sorghum*, the English version of *Hong Gao Liang Jia Zu* which is written by Mo Yan and a representative of contemporary Chinese novels, is no exception. However, the traditional translation approach cannot give a full explanation to the “creative treason” in Goldblatt’s translation, let alone judge the translator and his translated work objectively and fairly. Since translation studies took the “cultural turn” in 1970s, some translation theorists have adopted a descriptive method to analyze translation from the socio-cultural perspective. During this process, Andre Lefevere, the leading figure of Manipulation School, deserves special attention. The Rewriting Theory proposed by him expanded the horizon of translation studies. Taking this theory as theoretical foundation, this paper aims to analyze the underlying causes for Goldblatt’s “creative treason” in *Red Sorghum* and explore a new route in research of Goldblatt and his translations. Meanwhile, the author hopes that this paper can bring some suggestions on the transmission of contemporary Chinese literature abroad.

**Key words:** Creative treason; Rewriting theory; *Red Sorghum*

Yu, Y. L. (2017). A Study of Creative Treason in *Red Sorghum*: From the Perspective of Rewriting Theory. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 15(4), 29-37. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/sll/article/view/9999>  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/9999>

### INTRODUCTION

Translation studies have experienced a long history both at home and abroad. For quite a long period of time, especially before the “cultural turn” in 1970s, “faithfulness” and “equivalence” were held by most translation theorists and translators as supreme criteria for evaluating translated works. Therefore, they were regarded as the ultimate goals that translated works should achieve. In view of this, translators should minimize their creativity as much as possible in translating process. But we know that translation, especially literary translation, is a very complex activity. It is

a cross-language, cross-cultural communication. Its aim is to promote the development of politics, economy, and culture of the native community. Its task is to entirely transfer the ideological content, logical images and artistic images of the real world contained in the original into the target from one language to another language. (Zhang, 1987, p.9)

In addition, in translating process, due to the translators’ individual aesthetic orientation and literary interest as well as other factors, they will deliberately and creatively make some adaptations to realize communicative aims. Therefore, it is impossible to achieve complete faithfulness in translation. However, translators’ creativity was neglected and even criticized by most critics.

With the development of translation studies, the notion of “creative treason” was initiated by the French literary sociologist Robert Escarpit in his masterpiece *The Sociology of Literature* in 1958. He claimed that

“translation is always a kind of creative treason” (Escarpit, 1987, pp.137-138). Then in 1992, Xie Tianzhen, an influential expert in comparative literature and translation studies, introduced the concept “creative treason” into China in his article *On Creative Treason in Literary Translation*, which caused a sensation in the translation field of China. Creative treason reflects the conflict and fusion between different cultures. More importantly, it reminds people to pay more attention to the creativity and subjectivity of translators in translating process. Therefore, it is a subject of great research value.

As for the case study in this paper, *Red Sorghum*, translated by Howard Goldblatt, also the English version of Mo Yan’s *Hong Gao Liang Jia Zu*, is chosen by the author. As one of the leading figures in the field of contemporary Chinese literature, Mo Yan won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2012. During the course of the transmission of Mo Yan’s works abroad, the person deserving special attention is Howard Goldblatt. Being the primary English translator of Mo Yan’s works, he has translated ten of Mo Yan’s novels so far. Among all these works, *Red Sorghum* is the first to be translated and introduced to the English readers and has gained great recognition and appreciation. After closely comparing the English version with the original, it is not difficult to find that sometimes, the two are not in coincidence with each other. Obviously, this was not caused by Goldblatt’s professional incompetence, for he is an acknowledged master of both Chinese language and culture. As Howard Goldblatt believes that “the nature of translation is rewriting.” (Goldblatt, 2002, p.10) this was obviously caused by him, which is called as “creative treason” and qualifies *Red Sorghum* as a perfect study object of “Creative Treason”.

This paper tries to study the translator’s creative treason in *Red Sorghum* on the basis of Rewriting Theory proposed by Lefevere. The focus of this theory is that translation is a rewriting or manipulation of the original text under the influence of the mutual effect of three constraints in the literary system, namely poetics, ideology and patrons. From the perspective of Rewriting Theory, this paper aims to demonstrate the “creative treason” made by Howard Goldblatt and explore the underlying factors behind it. By revealing how these factors influence the translator in his translating process, this paper also intends to judge the translator and his translated work objectively and fairly. Meanwhile, it is hoped that this paper can help to give some enlightenment on the translation and “going-out” of other excellent contemporary Chinese works.

## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

For the sake of an adequate study of creative treason in the English translation *Red Sorghum*, it is an indispensable step to present the research status of *Red Sorghum* and “creative treason”.

### 1.1 Previous Studies on Creative Treason

#### 1.1.1 Studies on Creative Treason Abroad

The term “creative treason” was first put forward by the French literary sociologist Robert Escarpit in his masterpiece *Sciologie de la Litteature (The Sociology of Literature)* in 1958. In this book, Escarpit claimed that “translation is always a kind of creative treason.” (Escarpit, 1987, pp.137-138) He pointed out that translation is treason in that it puts the original works into a completely unexpected reference system (i.e. another language); translation is creative in that it endows the original works with new appearance, enabling the original to enjoy communication with more readers, prolongs the life of the original, or even endows them a second life. Studying from the perspective of linguistics, Escarpit only treated translation as a transformation between two semiotic systems of language but did not realize the role of cultural factors in literary translation, which is the limitation of his opinions on creative treason.

Actually before Escarpit, Paul Van Tieghem, a French scholar in comparative literature, holds that translation studies can be carried out from the following two perspectives: One is conducting a comparison between the source and target text so as to check whether the phenomenon of addition or omission has happened during the translating process; the other is conducting a comparison between the different versions of a literary work in different times so as to find out what the translation preference is in a certain time. Although he didn’t put forward “creative treason” definitely, these research directions made up the synchronic and diachronic viewpoints of creative treason.

Ulrich Weinstein, an American professor in comparative literature study, believes that creative treason is indispensable in literary translation, because much more social, cultural and historical factors will be involved in literary translation than any other types of translation. Therefore, the word-to-word translation method is not satisfying. Translators should always consider the acceptance of target readers, and try to satisfy their expectations. Only in this way, can translation find its foothold.

#### 1.1.2 Studies on Creative Treason at Home

In China, Professor Xie Tianzhen first introduced creative treason in 1999 in his book *Medio-Translatology*, which is considered as the basis of comparative literature study. In this book, Xie (1999, p.137) states “Creative treason reflects the phenomena of exchange and collision, misunderstanding and misinterpreting between different cultures during the process of literary translation.” He further explains, the “creativity” in literary translation shows the translator’s subjective efforts to approach and reproduce the source text by using his or her artistic creativity, and “treason” in literary translation demonstrates the translators’ objective betrayal to the source text while

fulfilling the subjective intention. He also points out that in literary translation practice, creativity and treason are interrelated and cannot be separated from each other.

He analyses the existence of creative treason from the following aspects: mediator, (i.e. translator), receptor and reception context. The breakthrough of his thoughts lies in that he highlights the translator's subjectivity and creativity during the course of interpreting source texts and reconstructing target texts. Professor Xie also divides creative treason into two types: conscious creative treason and unconscious creative treason. More specifically, he classifies creative treason into four kinds: individual translation; mistranslation and missing translation; abridged and edited translation; indirect translation and adaption (Xie, 2007, p.75).

Following him, several scholars in China have paid their attention to study on this field.

Sun Zhili, a famous translator and translation theorist, classifies a translator's treason into five types: namely unconscious treason, expedient treason, tactful treason, considerate treason and creative treason (Sun, 2001). After analyzing the causes of translator's treason, he proposes that

the treason which is caused by the limitation of the translator's ability or by the consideration of the readers' ideology and literature preference should be understood and accepted although it has violated the original to some extent. And also, this kind of treason can produce effective effect if it is properly handled. (Sun, 2001)

This statement is a source of inspiration for this thesis.

Professor Xu Jun, another influential figure in translation field puts forward that the essence and value of the creative treason theory lies in that the "treason" was defined by "creative". Therefore, admitting the value of "creative treason" is admitting the translators' creativity (Xu, 2006).

In the book *Translation: a Creative Treason*, Professor Dong Ming interprets creative treason from a descriptive perspective. Dong (2006) states

translation is a kind of creation, and the outcome of creation is treason. ... Translated version can be an objective deviation from the source text, as well as an objective deviation from the target language, which is reflected in the following aspects: language, culture, literariness, etc. (pp.3-5)

Dong also listed eleven forms of creative treason.

Based on some critical thoughts on creative treason and taking Hermeneutics of Gadamer as a theoretical framework, Liu (2006) holds that creative treason does not mean encouraging the translators' translated works to be unfaithful to the original but emphasizes the target readers' acceptance.

## 1.2 Previous Studies on *Red Sorghum*: The English Version of *Hong Gao Liang Jia Zu*

Since Mo Yan won the Nobel Prize in Literature, as the primary translator of Mo Yan's novels, Howard Goldblatt

has attracted more and more attention from China, and many academic studies are carried out to study his translated works from different aspects. *Red Sorghum* is one of his most famous and successful translated works and the studies on it are listed as follows:

Based on modern hermeneutics and reception theory, Hu (2008) studies the cultural misleading in *Red Sorghum* and points out the causes behind it as well as the influence brought about by it in his M.A. thesis *Cultural Misleading in Literary Translation—A Case Study of Red Sorghum*. From the perspective of Skopos Theory, Wang (2014) studies the translation strategies in Howard Goldblatt's translation of *Red Sorghum* in her thesis *On the Translation Strategies in Howard Goldblatt's Translation of Red Sorghum: A Perspective of Functionalist Skopostheorie*. Based on the analysis, she comes to the conclusion that the target text is a result of the interaction among three rules of "skopos", "coherence" and "fidelity". Taking the method provided by literary stylistics, Dai (2009) conducted a contrastive analysis between *Red Sorghum* and its original version at the level of lexis, syntax and narration respectively. The study finds that the translator's deliberate "revision" causes the style of *Red Sorghum* reached a "deceptive equivalence" to that of the original text. She (2012) analyzed *Red Sorghum* from the perspective of translator's subjectivity in *A Study of Translating Foregrounded Language in Hong Gao Liang Jia Zu*. Based on postcolonial translation theory and imagology in comparative literature, Zuo (2008) studies *Hong Gao Liang Jia Zu*'s receptions and variations in America. In Zhu's M.A. thesis (2013), he studies how a translator adapts a translated text to a specific pragmatic context with the aim of realizing the expected translation effect within the framework of Adaption Theory. Lü (2010) also made a comparison between *Red Sorghum* and the original version in terms of organization, theme and rhetoric in his PhD dissertation entitled *An Excellent Kite Flyer: Howard Goldblatt and His Translation of Modern Chinese Novels*.

From the above analysis, it is clear that studies on *Red Sorghum* have been done from different perspectives, but few studies analyze the hidden causes of the "unfaithful translation" in it. With the hope of shedding lights on the translation of other contemporary Chinese literary works, this paper is based on the previous research and takes Lefevere's Rewriting Theory as the basic theoretical foundation to explain the creative treason in the English translation *Red Sorghum*.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research will be carried out within the framework of Rewriting Theory. Therefore, in this part, Lefevere and his Rewriting Theory are introduced.

## 2.1 Lefevere and a Survey of Rewriting Theory

Andre Lefevere (1945-1996) was a Belgian-born scholar and worked in the Department of Germanic Languages and the Comparative Literature Program at The University of Texas at Austin. As a distinguished figure in translation studies and comparative literature, Lefevere was influenced by Even-Zohra's Polysystem Theory and developed the Rewriting Theory.

The notion of "rewriting" is first put forward by Lefevere in his essay titled *Why Waste Our Time on Rewrites? The Trouble of Interpretation and the Role of Rewriting in an Alternative Paradigm* in 1985. He also presents five constraints that influence translation in this essay:

All writing of literature takes place under the two constraints mentioned above, patronage and poetics, to which two more constraints must be added. One is what linguists often call "universe of discourse" these days.... The other is the natural language in which the work is composed. For rewriters, a fifth constraint must be added, namely that of the original work itself....

All rewriting of literature, be it interpretation, criticism, historiography, the putting together of anthologies, or translation, takes place under at least one of the constraints mentioned, and implies the other. (Lefevere, 2014, p.232)

Later in 1992, in *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, Lefevere fully develops his ideas:

Translation is, of course, a rewriting of an original text. All rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way. (Lefevere, 2004, p.XV)

Obviously, Lefevere holds the view that translation is the most important sort of rewriting. The readers, especially the non-professional readers who are actually the majority of the readers in the world, have no access to the original literary works, so the translators play the role of writers and project the image of the source culture to the target culture. By doing this, translators make the readers in target language culture have a chance to read the literary works from the source language culture. But a fact cannot be ignored, that is within the specific cultural backgrounds, translators will inevitably be affected by some factors in their translation.

## 2.2 Three Constraints in Rewriting Theory

Having influenced by Russian Formalism, Lefevere (2004, p.14) regards literature as "one of the systems that constitute the complex 'system of systems' known as a culture." He also insists that the literary system and other systems belonging to the same social system influence each other.

Lefevere (2004, p.15) further points out, "There appears to be a double control factor that sees to it that the literary system does not fall too far out of step with the other subsystems that society consists of." This control factor works from inside and outside of the system.

In concrete terms, the factor inside the literary system is represented by the "professionals", such as critics, rewriters, teachers and translators. They will occasionally repress certain literary works which are all too bluntly opposed to the dominant concept of what literature should be or is allowed to be—poetics, and the dominant concept of what society should be or is allowed to be—ideology (Lefevere, 2004, p.14). The other factor outside the literary system can be called "patronage", which refers to something like the powers (persons, institutions) that can further or hinder the reading, writing, and rewriting of literature (Ibid., p.15). Both these two factors influence the selection of the texts to be translated and the strategies to be adopted by translators. Therefore, translation is translators' manipulation of the source text under the influence of ideology, poetics and patronage.

### 2.2.1 Ideology

According to Lefevere, ideology is "the dominant concept of what society should (be allowed to) be," (Ibid., p.14) and in the field of translation studies, he describes ideology as "the conceptual grid that consists of opinions and attitudes deemed accepted in a certain society at certain time and through which readers and translators approach text." (Bassnett & Lefevere, 2001, p.48)

In Lefevere's opinions, ideology is a crucial factor which manipulates translation greatly. It is composed of individual ideology and the dominant social ideology. Both the two components of ideology will have an impact on translation activity. Therefore, both of them should be considered by translators. Besides, translators should be aware that the dominant social ideology always wins out if it conflicts with their own individual ideology.

### 2.2.2 Poetics

With regard to Lefevere, poetics is another important factor manipulating translation. According to Sherry Simon, a famous feminist critic, "the poetics of translation belongs to a realization of aesthetics of cultural pluralism." (Ibid., p.129) She thinks that in translation, poetics serves the aesthetics of translated works. Lefevere points out that a poetics consists of two components, "one is an inventory of literary devices, genres, motifs, prototypical characters, situation and symbols; the other is the concept of what the role of literature is, or should be, in the social system as a whole." (Lefevere, 2004, p.26) Of these two components, the first one is similar to the poetics proposed by Sherry Simon, which is to serve the aesthetics; while the second one is called the "functional component of" a poetics, because it is very influential in selecting the themes of literary works. Only if the selected themes are relevant to the whole system, can the literary works be accepted. Moreover, the functional component of a poetics is related to the ideological impact, and will be influenced by the ideology in the literary system. Lefevere also emphasizes, "Translators often try to recast the original in terms of the poetics of their own culture, simply to make it pleasing

to the new audience and, in doing so, to ensure that the translation will actually be read.” (Lefevere, 2004a, p.26)

### 2.2.3 Patronage

Since Ideology is abstract and interferes with translation activity invisibly, Lefevere introduces “patronage”, the representative of the dominant ideology in a certain society, to make the ideology be presented concretely, just as he says, “Patronage is usually more interested in the ideology of literature than its poetics, and it could be said that the patron ‘delegates authority’ to the professional where poetics is concerned.” (Lefevere, 2004, p.15)

In Lefevere’s opinions, “patronage” can be “the powers (persons, institutions) that can further or hinder the reading, writing and rewriting of literature.” (Ibid.) Specifically, “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, ...” (Ibid.) According to Lefevere, patronage consists of three components, namely “an ideological components”, which restricts the selection of the form and theme of a literary work; “an economic component” which refers to the pension or payment that the translators can get from the patrons; and “the status component” which means the acceptance of certain patronage by other support group (Ibid., p.16).

All in all, patronage, as an important role in the process of literary translation, has a final say on whether a translated work can be published or not. Considering their own fame and their economic income, the patrons pay more attention to the target readers’ expectation under the influence of dominant ideology and poetics. Translators, who want their translated works to be published smoothly, will certainly not betray the expectations of the patrons and comply with their requirements.

### 2.3 Summary

In conclusion, translation is a rewriting of the original text under the joint influence of these three factors, ideology, poetics and patronage. They together impose effect on the selection of the literary works to be translated, the decision on the strategies to be employed, and ultimately on the translated works.

## 3. ANALYSIS OF HOWARD GOLDBLATT’S CREATIVE TREASON IN RED SORGHUM: BASED ON REWRITING THEORY

As one of the most successful translations of contemporary Chinese novels, *Red Sorghum* is transferred into the English world faithfully and creatively by the translator. In this section, on the basis of Rewriting Theory, the translator’s creative treason will be illustrated. Of the three factors in Rewriting Theory, the ideological and poetological considerations work together to decide

the translator’s strategy as well as his solution to specific problems, therefore, the study is mainly carried out from the perspectives of ideology and poetics.

### 3.1 Creative Treason in *Red Sorghum* Under the Influence of Ideology

As has been discussed above, ideology is a factor which can exert great influence on translation activity. Both the translator’s individual ideology and the ideology imposed on the translator by the cultural and social influence interfere with the translator’s decision on the translation strategies or techniques to be adopted in practice.

#### 3.1.1 Creative Treason in Translating the Politics-related Expressions

##### Example 1

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

—《红高粱家族》(莫言, 2008, p.2)

I had learned to love Northeast Gaomi Township with all my heart, and to hate it with unbridled fury. I didn’t realize until I’d grown up that Northeast Gaomi Township is easily the most beautiful and most repulsive, most unusual and most common, most sacred and most corrupt, most heroic and most bastardly, hardest-drinking and hardest-loving place in the world.

—*Red Sorghum* (Goldblatt, 1993, p.4)

The Chinese sentence is cited from Chapter One of *Hong Gao Liang Jia Zu*, which is one of the most splendid parts in this work and has won universal praise. In fact, the conclusion that Mo Yan made about Gaomi Northeast Township was not really from his study of Marxism. Sounding like a slogan, the expression “长大后努力学习马克思主义” often appeared in the literary works during the period of Chairman Mao when literature was used as a weapon for political struggle. Most of the Chinese readers can realize the artistic effect brought about by this expression. As a distinguished sinologist and translator, Howard Goldblatt has translated lots of modern and contemporary Chinese literary works, it is impossible for him not to know this kind of writing style. However, Howard Goldblatt is an American who knows that Marxism is just opposite to the doctrine of American society. In addition, if Goldblatt had directly translated this expression into English, the western readers would be confused about the relationship between “study of Marxism” and the conclusion that “I” got about Gaomi Northeast Township. Therefore, the translator omitted this expression in translation.

##### Example 2

“我们是共产党,饿死不低头,冻死不弯腰。”

—《红高粱家族》(莫言, 2008, p.337)

“We’re resistance fighters. We don’t bow our heads when we’re starving, and we don’t bent our knees when we’re freezing.”

—*Red Sorghum* (Goldblatt, 1993, p.348)

#### Example 3

“余司令，你不要辜负我党对你的殷切期望，也不要瞧不起八路军的力量。”

—《红高粱家族》(莫言, 2008, p.157)

“Commander Yu, please don’t disappoint us, and don’t underestimate our strength.”

—*Red Sorghum* (Goldblatt, 1993, p.198)

In Example 2, the translator didn’t translated “共产党” into “a member of Communist Party”, but translated it creatively into “resistance fighters”. In Example 3, he replaced “the Chinese Communist Party” (“我党”) and “The Eight Route Army” (“八路”) with “us” and “our” respectively. Obviously, in order to get the meaning across, Howard Goldblatt used less political words to substitute the politics-related expressions in the original, which makes the text more accessible to Western readers.

The fundamental reason behind this translation phenomenon is that at that time, there existed strong prejudice against China, the Communist party and socialist countries among Western readers as a result of the propaganda of Western media. Therefore, when the translator tried his best to convey the major information contained in the source text to the target language readers, he weakened the political complexion in it, because “the translated works can run easily into the market if only with no apparent evidence attacking the political power.” (Zha, 2003, p.232)

In most case, in order to publish their translated works smoothly, the translators’ individual ideology should maintain in accordance with the dominant ideology imposed on him by the patronage or society, just as what Howard Goldblatt mentioned in an interview, “if something was omitted in the translated texts, it was not my purpose, but the decision of the publishers and the editors.” (Zhang, 2008, p.22) Under this circumstance, creative treason emerges inevitably in translation, which promotes the readability and acceptance of the translated text.

### 3.1.2 Creative Treason in Translating the Euphemism Relating to Sex

#### Example 4

我奶奶虽然也怀上了我的功罪参半但毕竟是高密东北乡一代风流的父亲,但那时奶奶是单家明媒正娶的媳妇,爷爷与她总归是桑间濮上之合,带着相当程度的随意性偶然性不稳定性.

—《红高粱家族》(莫言, 2008, p.91)

She had conceived my father, whose life was a mixture of achievements and sin (in the final analysis, he gained distinction among his generation of citizens of Northeast Gaomi Township), she had nonetheless been legally married into the Shan family. So she and Granddad were

adulterers, their relationship marked by measures of spontaneity, chance and uncertainty.

—*Red Sorghum* (Goldblatt, 1993, p.99)

“桑间濮上” refers to a mulberry field on the bank of the Pu River in China’s Hunan province. In the past, it was a place where young lovers had trysts. In this sentence, “桑间濮上” was adopted by the author to indicate that Grandma and Granddad made love in the sorghum field, which was not accepted by the social ethics and morals in China. And as we all know, being influenced by the Confucianism, Chinese usually employ connotative expressions when they talk about sex. Therefore, “桑间濮上” is an euphemism in this sentence. However, this allusion is completely alien to American readers. In addition, America is an open society which promotes sexual liberation. The American regard “sex” as a common topic in their daily life and they always talk about it frankly and directly. To some extent, the literary works or films involving sex are appreciated by Americans. In view of the cultural and ideological differences, the translator translated this connotative expression into “adulterers” and clarifies the connotative meaning of “桑间濮上”, which meets the expectation of the target readers and makes it easier for the American readers to understand the original work.

### 3.1.3 Creative Treason in Translating Culture-Loaded Expression

#### Example 5

他确实是饿了,顾不上细品滋味,吞了狗眼,吸了狗脑,嚼了狗舌,啃了狗腮,把一碗酒喝得罄尽.

—《红高粱家族》(莫言, 2008, p.96)

He was ravenously hungry, so he dug in, eating quickly until the head and the wine were gone.

—*Red Sorghum* (Goldblatt, 1993, p.102)

In the original text, through the underlined section, the author Mo Yan vividly described how Yu Zhan’ao ate the dog’s head in the tavern. Although eating dog meat is as common as eating pork or beef in some regions of China, here the author’s description makes the Chinese readers feel a sense of unease and uncomfortable because the scene described by the author was so horrible and cruel, let alone the feelings of the Western readers. Moreover, in Western culture, “dog” is an image which stands for loyalty, and dogs as animals are treated as human’s intimate friends. Therefore, it is very hard and impossible for the Western readers to accept such a horrible cruelty to dogs in the original. By contrasting the Chinese and English versions, we can find that taking the target readers’ psychological acceptance into consideration the translator creatively translated this detailed description into “eating quickly”, which weakens the artistic effect in the original text but avoided the potential barrier in cross-cultural communication.

### 3.2 Creative Treason in *Red Sorghum* Under the Influence of Poetics

Poetics is another important factor exerting great influence on translation activity. Under the influence of the dominant poetics in a social system, translators always form their own individual poetics. On the contrary, the translators' individual poetics reflects the dominant poetics in a society. As a distinguished translator, Howard Goldblatt has developed his own individual translation poetics in practice, namely, with the aim of realizing cross-cultural communication, translators should always give priority to the target readers' expectations and conduct flexible strategies on the basis of loyalty. His individual poetics reflects the dominant poetics in American culture.

#### 3.2.1 Creative Treason in Translating Rhetorical Devices

##### Example 6

爷爷抱着我父亲说,“豆官,叫干爹!”

“还‘干爹呀’,‘湿爹呀!’”奶奶说。

—《红高粱家族》(莫言,2008,p.267)

He turned to my father. “Douguan, say hello to your foster-dad.”

“Foster-dad?” That’s a ‘bloodless’ relationship. Yours is ‘blooded’,” Grandma chided him.

— *Red Sorghum* (Goldblatt, 1993, p.281)

This is a dialogue between “grandma” and “granddad” who are the leading characters in this novel. In the original text, by using “干爹” and “湿爹”, the author makes use of the characteristics of Chinese to achieve a rhetorical effect—the Pun, through which Grandma’s sense of humor is manifested. Here, the Chinese readers can understand this effect easily, they know the Chinese character “干” means “being dry” and is the antonym of “湿” which means “being wet”; besides, “干爹” refers to father with no blood relationship. However, in English there is no such a word to express the dual meanings. Then, Howard Goldblatt translated “干爹” into “foster-dad”, and by adding two words “bloodless” and “blooded” creatively, he tried to retain the artistic effect in the Original text. Under the influence of the translator’s individual poetics, the information contained in the original text was retained to the largest extent through his excellent translation.

##### Example 7

我们村里一个九十二岁的老太太对我说:“东北乡,人万千,阵势列在墨河边,余司令,阵前站,一举手炮声连环,东洋鬼子魂儿散,纷纷落在地平川,女中魁首戴凤莲,花容月貌巧机关,调来铁耙摆连环,挡住鬼子不能前……”

—《红高粱家族》(莫言,2008,p.267)

An old woman of ninety-two sang to me, to the accompaniment of bamboo clappers: “Northeast Gaomi Township, so many men; at Black Water River the battle

begin; commander Yu raised his hand, cannon fire to heaven; Jap souls scattered across the plain, ne’er to rise again; the beautiful champion of women, Dai Fenglian, ordered rakes for a barrier, the Jap attack broken...”

— *Red Sorghum* (Goldblatt, 1993, p.13)

In the original text, another narrator of the novel, a ninety-two years old woman, vividly tells the feat of granddad and grandma during the Anti-Japanese war. The story was told by making use of a folk art—bamboo clappers. The underlined words in the source text share the same end rhyme /an/, which makes the old woman’s words rhythmical and also manifests the author’s excellent language competence in literary practice.

In order to make the target readers have the chance to experience the artistic effect contained in the source text, the translator tried his best to retain the form and the figure of speech in the source text and created another end rhyme—/n/ in the translated work, which can be set up as a typical example of creative treason in translating this novel.

#### 3.2.2 Creative Treason in Handling of Narrative Structure in the Novel

##### Example 8

余占鳌倒退着走出酒店,心里说不出是恼是惧。他虽然具备了一个土匪所应具备的基本素质,但离真正的土匪还有相当的距离。他之所以迟迟未入绿林,原因很多。概而言之,大概有三:一,他受文化道德的制约,认为匪为寇,是违反天理。他对官府还有相当程度的迷信,对通过“正当”途径争取财富和女人还没有完全丧失信心。二,他暂时还没有遇到逼上梁山的压力,还可以挣扎着活,活得并不窝囊。三,他的人生观还处在青嫩的成长阶段,他对人生和社会的理解还没有达到大土匪那样超脱放达的程度。在六天前那场打死劫路抢人的候补小土匪的激烈战斗中,他虽然表现了相当的勇气和胆略,但那行动的根本动力是正义感和怜悯心,土匪精神的味道很淡。他在三天前抢我奶奶到高粱地深处,基本上体现了他对美好女性的一种比较高尚的恋爱,土匪的味道也不重。高密东北乡是土匪猖獗之地,土匪的组成部分相当复杂,我有为高密东北乡的土匪写一部大书的宏图大志,并进行过相当程度的努力……这也是先把大话说出来,能唬几个人就唬几个人。

余占鳌对土匪头子花脖子的做派有隐隐的敬佩感,同时又有憎恨感。

—《红高粱家族》(莫言,2008,p.95)

Yu Zhan’ao backed out of tavern, not sure whether he is angry or sacred. He had grudging respect for the way Spotted Neck carried himself, but not to the exclusion of loathing.

— *Red Sorghum* (Goldblatt, 1993, p.103)

After reading the original text in this example, it is not difficult to perceive that the underlined sentences are in fact the comments made by the author on the figure, Yu Zhan’ao. By inserting these comments, the author

intended to highlight the reasons why Yu didn't become a bandit at first and make the readers understand the character's personality and the development of plots. However, this sort of explaining tone does not conform to the expectations of American readers and is not appreciated by them. What the readers really want is the amusing and fascinating story; in other words, they focus more on the plot development of the novel. In the eyes of the target readers, these comments perhaps interrupt the continuity of the story and distract their attention from the story. Therefore, underlined part was totally omitted by the translator.

#### Example 9

山人醒过来时,二奶奶咽了最后一口气。尸体的腐臭气和变质的血腥气从窗户里汹涌地扑出来。

盛殓二奶奶时,所有的人嘴上都捂着用高粱酒浸湿了的羊肚子手巾。

—《红高粱家族》(莫言,2008,p.359)

When the Taoist came to, Second Grandma breathed her last. The stench of her decomposing body and rotted blood floated out through the open window. When her body was put in its coffin, all the mourners held goatskin chamois soaked in sorghum wine over their noses.

Some people say that when she was placed in the coffin she was still cursing and kicking the lid.

— *Red Sorghum* (Goldblatt, 1993, p.356)

This example is cited from the last chapter "Strange Death" of *Red Sorghum*. By contrasting the original and translated versions, it is not difficult to find that the underlined paragraph of the English version does not exist in the original but is added by the translator. Before analyzing this addition, it is necessary to present some previous plots. In this chapter, before the body of Second Grandma was put into the coffin, she was dead and shouted with other person's voice, "I want to eat a yellow-legged rooster." Arhat Liu believes that "She's already dead. She must be possessed" (*Red Sorghum*, 1993, p.354). Then in order to drive out the evil spirit inside Second Grandma, the villagers sent for the Taoist. This plot has made the death of Second Grandma full of weirdness. Then, in translation, in order to strengthen the weirdness of this event, the translator added this underlined sentence which has also echoed the title *Strange Death* of this chapter. Moreover, most of the Western readers are keen on the Chinese tradition and culture, because in their eyes, the Chinese culture is totally different from theirs and are ancient and full of mystery. By adding this sentence, the translator attracted more readers and satisfied the western reader's pursuing for exotic flavor.

---

## CONCLUSION

According to the above analysis of creative treason in *Red Sorghum*, conclusion can be made as follows:

Firstly, creativity is unavoidable and necessary in literary translation. Literary work is a kind of art, which employs an artistic language to reflect the reality. Being artistic and aesthetic are two distinguished features of literary works, so the essential mission of literary translation is not only to convey the original meaning, but also to reproduce the aesthetic effect of the original works. However, there are great differences between languages and cultures. Taking this into consideration, creative treason happens inevitably in literary translation. Although there are some limitations in *Red Sorghum*, we have to say that Goldblatt is an excellent translator, and it is his wise decision on the choice of translation strategies and extraordinary translation that prolong the artistic fascination as well as the life of *Hong Gao Liang Jia Zu*. Therefore, creative treason is not opposite to faithfulness, but helps faithfulness to be realized to some extent.

Secondly, ideology and poetics really exert great influence on translator's translation. Thorough the analysis in this paper, it is not difficult to see that within the framework of Lefevere's Rewriting Theory, the translator's creative treason in the translated work obtains a full exploitation. It is no exaggeration to say that Rewriting Theory makes some "unconventional" translation phenomena be explicable and acceptable and broadens the range of translation studies.

Thirdly, since the English translation *Red Sorghum* has been accepted and welcomed by the American readers, Goldblatt as an excellent translator and the primary translator of Mo Yan's novels, his opinions on translation, especially his individual translation poetics, namely, with the aim of realizing cross-cultural communication, translators should always give priority to the target readers' expectations and conduct flexible strategies on the basis of loyalty, can shed light on the translation and "going-out" of other excellent contemporary Chinese literary works.

---

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to take this opportunity to deliver my sincere thanks to those who have supported me in the process of composing this paper. They include my dear colleagues who give me great encouragement and useful suggestions on contribution of my paper. Moreover, I am greatly indebted to my family members. Their understanding and support during the composing gave me impetus to continue the energy-consuming research when I was faced with a variety of difficulties.

---

## REFERENCES

- Baker, M. (2004). *Routledge encyclopedia of translation studies*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.



- Bassnett, S., & Lefevere, A. (2001). *Constructing cultures: Essays on literary translation*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Dai, X. (2009). *A study on the stylistic reproduction of hong gao liang jia zu—With reference to its english version, red sorghum* (Thesis for master's degree). Xiangtan University.
- Dong, M. (2006). *Creative treason*. Beijing: Central Edition and Translation Publishing House
- Escarpit, R. (1987). *The sociology of literature* (M. H. Wang & P. Yu, Trans.). Hefei, China: Anhui Literature and Art Publishing House.
- Gentzler, E. (2004). *Contemporary translation theories*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Goldblatt, H. (1993). *Red sorghum: A novel of China*. New York: Viking Penguin.
- Goldblatt, H. (2002). The writing life. *Washington Post*, pp.10-12
- Hermans, T. (2014). *The manipulation of literature: Studies in literature translation*. London and New York: Routledge, 215-243.
- Hu, Y. (2008). *Cultural misleading in literary translation—A case study of red sorghum* (Thesis for master's degree). Central China Normal University.
- Lefevere, A. (2004). *Translation, rewriting and the manipulation of literary fame*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Lefevere, A. (2004a). *Translation/history/culture: A sourcebook*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Liu, X. G. (2006). *Creative treason—Concept, theory and historical description* (Thesis for doctoral degree). Fudan University.
- Liu, X. L. (2005). *The creative treason of literary translation—From the translator's subjectivity* (Thesis for master's degree). Wuhan University of Technology.
- Lü, M. H. (2010) *An excellent Kite Flyer: Howard Goldblatt and his translation of modern Chinese novels* (Thesis for doctoral degree). Nankai University.
- Mo, Y. (2008). *Hong gao liang jia zu*. Shanghai: Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House.
- Sun, Z. L. (2001). Translation and treason. *Chinese Translators Journal*, (04), 18-22.
- Van Tieghem, P. (2010). *Comparative literature* (W. S. Dai, Trans.). Changchun: Jilin Publishing Co.Ltd.
- Wang, X. L. (2014). *On the translation strategies in Howard Goldblatt's translation of red sorghum: A perspective of functionalists skopostheorie* (Thesis for master's degree). Yunnan Normal University.
- Weilsstein, U. (1973) *Comparative literature and literary theory: Survey and introduction*. Bloomington UP.
- Xie, T. Z. (1992). Creative treason in literary translation. *Journal of Foreign Languages*, (01), 30-37.
- Xie, T. Z. (1999). *Medio-translatology*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Xie, T. Z. (2007). *Introduction to medio-translatology*. Beijing: Peking University Press.
- Xu, J. (2006). *Translation theory*. Wuhan, China: Hubei Education Press.
- Zha, M. J. (2003). *Ideology, poetics and selection norms for literary translation*. Lingnan University.
- Zhang, J. (1987). *Principles of literary translation*. Zhengzhou, China: Henan University Press.
- Zuo, M. M. (2008). *On the translated hong gao liang jia zu by Mo Yan in America: Receptions and variations* (Thesis for master's degree). Guizhou University.