

# Hybrids in Literary Translation: Binary Translation Strategies in Howard Goldblatt’s English Translation of Mo Yan’s *Frog*

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**Abstract:** Mo Yan’s *Frog* has been widely recognized and welcomed by readers since its publication. Apart from the Western readers’ love of Chinese culture, it also owes its popularity to the translator’s skillful handling of the translation. Specifically, this paper examines the translation strategies used in the English translation of *Frog*. The term hybrid translation is derived from Homi Bhabha’s hybrid theory, which advocates the mixing of different cultures in order to create a hybrid and fuzzy third space. This hybrid translation approach consists of mixing and integrating translation strategies, such as domestication and foreignization, literal translation and free translation, and finally forming a translation that reflects cultural hybridity. To demonstrate a cultural hybrid effect, translators must adopt a variety of approaches to the transformation of the text so that the target readers are able to fully understand its meaning and connotations.

Keywords: *Frog*; hybridity; translation strategies

## Introduction

*Frog* is a novel by Chinese writer Mo Yan, who won the 8th *Mao Dun Literature Award* in 2011. There is a significant difference between this novel and Mo Yan’s previous works. The novel combines letters, metafiction narration, and drama to form a hybrid text. In contrast to Mo Yan’s previous works, which emphasized historical fantasy, *Frog* is written closer to historical reality and focuses on the life of a rural doctor “GuGu” (aunt). It reflects the fluctuating rural fertility history of New China in the past 60 years by telling the life experiences of a rural female doctor who has been practicing obstetrics and gynecology for more than 50 years. As a result of rapid population growth and

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to implement a national family planning policy, the country has gone through a difficult and complex historical process.

As a realistic work, *Frog* reflects the difficulty of implementing the national policy of family planning in Northeast Township: Gaomi, Shandong Province. In addition to her rural doctorate, “GuGu” (Wan Xin) holds two conflicting identities: one is the “Songzi Niangniang” (Goddess of Fertility) who has delivered approximately ten thousand babies throughout her life; the other is a cadre of family planning officials responsible for implementing the national family planning policy resolutely and known as the “killer demon”. Her life is therefore characterized by extreme contradictions and painful experiences that cannot be escaped. It is inevitable that readers will feel cruel while reading *Frog*, both from the plot’s cruelty and from the fate of the characters, and also from Mo Yan’s objective and calm portrayal of the extreme pain in the depths of others’ souls.

GuGu’s father was a military doctor in the Eighth Route Army, and he was well known in the Jiaodong area. “GuGu” inherited the mantle of being an obstetrician and introduced a new method of midwifery in rural areas, soon replacing the status of the “old midwives” in the hearts of women, using the new method to deliver babies one by one. All over Northeast Township: Gaomi are babies delivered by “GuGu”, and Gaomi are unborn babies who may die. During her time as a physician, the aunt supervised the implementation of family planning policies by her apprentices. Two of the main tasks of “GuGu” were to compel the sterilization of men who already have a child and to perform an abortion on a pregnant woman who already has a child.

Family planning is the central theme of the novel *Frog*, but this is merely a surface level reference. Mo Yan’s reverence for life (reproduction, multiplication) is conveyed through this central word. There are many references to the word ‘life’ in *Frog*, from the characters’ names to the plot of the story, to the title of the book. All of these allegorical and symbolic writing techniques raise the novel to a higher level, namely, a sense of care for life, a sense of praise for life, and a sense of reverence for life.

Mo Yan, as a representative of Chinese local literature, has produced numerous writings. Howard Goldblatt’s translation of Mo Yan’s works is generally credited with their success. The study of Goldblatt’s translation has therefore been a recognized topic both in academia and in society. By reviewing reader reviews of Mo Yan’s English translation on Amazon websites, it is possible to intuitively evaluate Goldblatt’s translation’s quality.

Table 1. The statistics of Mo Yan's works translated by Howard Goldblatt, based on the book sales of Amazon platform

Title	Author	Translator	Publication	Ranking (General list of Book Commodity sales)	Book Scoring	5-star Favorable Rate	Review
<i>Sandalwood Death</i>	Mo Yan	Goldblatt	2012	1,417,844	4.4/5	65%	28
<i>Big Breasts and Wide Hips:</i>	Mo Yan	Goldblatt	2004	1,149,666	3.7/5	40%	89
<i>Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out</i>	Mo Yan	Goldblatt	2008	905,173	3.9/5	46%	180
<i>Red Sorghum</i>	Mo Yan	Goldblatt	1993	529,057	4.0/5	51%	221
<i>The Garlic Ballads</i>	Mo Yan	Goldblatt	1995	3,392,791	3.7/5	36%	157
<i>The Republic of Wine</i>	Mo Yan	Goldblatt	2000	1,608,063	3.5/5	37%	45
<i>Shifu, You'll Do Anything for a Laugh</i>	Mo Yan	Goldblatt	2001	3,436,807	4.1/5	44%	94
<i>Frog</i>	Mo Yan	Goldblatt	2015	1,297,556	4.2/5	55%	71

From the table above, it can be seen that despite the novel *Frog* being translated and published later than other novels, it was still highly regarded by readers. Research on this novel is expected to increase gradually in the near future.

The term “hybrid” comes from the Latin word “hybrida”, which means “offspring of domesticated sows and wild boars, children of freemen and slaves”. The concept of hybridity was introduced by Homi K. Bhabha into the field of postcolonial cultural studies. In his book *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha states that “hybridity is the hypothesis of re-evaluating colonial identity by repeating discriminatory identity effects. Hybridity, he explains, is the product of colonial power’s ever-changing power and fixedness; it is a strategic reversal that denies the process of dominance. It shows the necessary deformation and displacement of all places of discrimination and power but re-embodies its identity in the strategy of subversion” (Bhabha 1994: 112). Moreover, “the

crossing of cultures in the colonial contact zone represents the embodiment of hybridity. Multiculturalism has a new cultural form, and all cultures are in the process of hybridization. Hybridization is a strategy used by the former colonial countries to resist the cultural oppression of the former colonists. Hybridity can appear in the form of politics, culture, or language, so that we can extricate ourselves from the binary opposition. The mark of the emergence of colonial rights is the emergence of hybridity” (Bhabha 1994: 112).

Hybridity has also been discussed by Theo Hermans. From his point of view, the translated text rarely adapts to the new environment and space as naturally as the original text, that is, the translated text does not convey its full meaning like the original text (Hermans 1995: 16). Mikhail Bakhtin defined hybridity as “the mixture of two social languages within the scope of a single sentence and within the scope of sentence and sentence, and the blending of different speech consciousness dispersed by the times, social differences and other reasons. Its meaning refers to (1) intralingual hybridity, that is, the hybridity of different tones, understandings, cognition and deep meanings in a discourse unit; (2) the hybridity outside the language, that is, the mixture of two languages and the collision of the consciousness of two different languages” (Bakhtin 1981: 358). Christina Schäffner and Beverly Adab introduced the term “hybrid text” to translation studies in conjunction with the concept of “hybridity”. “Hybrid text” refers to “the text produced by the translation process, which is characterized by ‘inappropriate’, ‘unfamiliar’ or ‘unusual’ compared with the target culture. These features are not due to the translator’s lack of translation ability, nor is it a typical text with ‘translationese’, but a choice made by the translator after careful consideration” (Schäffner, Adab 1997: 325).

Douglas Robinson’s interpretation of hybridity is broader: “hybridity refers to the process of mixing different nationalities, races, cultures and languages. Most post-colonial theorists welcome it and believe that it can make human society more colorful” (Robinson 1997: 118). According to Gina Wisker, in her book *Key Concepts of Post-colonial Literature*, hybridity involves Bakhtinian polyphony that incorporates multiple narrative forms and perspectives (Wisker 2007: 190). There is a general consensus among post-colonial theorists that hybridity is inevitable as long as languages and cultures continue to exchange. At the linguistic level, it can be further subdivided into lexical and syntactic levels. The hybrid texts are thought to represent cross-cultural communication and to exhibit the exotic characteristics of the source culture. In spite of this, the gap is not the result of a misunderstanding or incompetence on the part of the translator, but rather the result of the translator’s deliberate choice. All translated texts, in a sense, are hybrid.

## Research on translation strategies

Domestication and foreignization are two alternative approaches to translation. In 1813 Friedrich Schleiermacher, a German biblical scholar and translation theorist, described two methods for translating a foreign author: “One is to make the author live in peace as much as possible, and guide the readers to approach the author, and the other is to make the readers live in peace as much as possible, and guide the author to approach the reader” (quoted by Sun Zhili 2002). Lawrence Venuti, an American translation theorist, called the first method “foreignization” and the second method “domestication” (Venuti 1995: 20). The British translation theorist Peter Newmark summarizes 13 different translation methods in Chapter 5 of his *Textbook of Translation*, defining word-for-word translation, literal translation, faithful translation, and semantic translation as one translation method (Newmark 2001[1988]: 45). Literal translation is widely used for translating proverbs, idioms, and slang. It is possible to retain the cultural characteristics, that is, the “exotic flavor”, of the original language through literal translation. An alternative to literal translation is free translation, which interprets the original text based on the general idea, rather than word-by-word.

## Research on *Frog*

Wu Yiqin (2010) comments on the novel’s language, writing techniques, narrative techniques, and text features. In his analysis of the novel, Li Songrui (2011: 87) examines the protagonists’ participation in the destruction of the lives of others under two completely different political forms, as reflected in Foucault’s theory of life politics. According to Xu Zidong (2013: 96), *Frog* does not reflect the historical complexity of the Cultural Revolution story, nor does it analyze the social transformation following the Cultural Revolution in detail. Instead, it dramatizes the “Cultural Revolution story” through a bloody and tragic conflict between the different factions. A discussion of human nature in Zhang Mo’s (2013: 8) interpretation of *Frog* suggests that family planning is so difficult to push forward at that time due to people’s obsession with a boy and the idea of passing on the family line.

Riemenschnitter (2014: 5) points out that *Frog* addresses fertility based on overabundant reproductive output, which indicates the relevance of family planning. Focusing on the family planning policy in the novel, Shriver (2015: 541) argues that Mo Yan portrays contemporary China that has lost its way

because of individualism and materialism, just as has the West, which has resulted in a decline in fertility.

A study by Zhou Weizhong and Song Lijuan (2016: 49) examines *Frog* in light of Bakhtin's poetics, and indicates that it embodies the unique narrative style associated with polyphonic novels. Fang Wen (2017: 49) interprets *Frog* as a reflection of Foucault's discourse of power theory. She argues that *Frog* illustrates the dominance of national policy over human destiny. A further objective of the author is to inspire readers to care about the well-being of others. Furthermore, numerous scholars have analyzed the novel from the perspective of narrative, rhetorical devices, character analysis, and image analysis.

Zhang Xuejun (2017: 145) discusses *Frog's* text structure from the perspective of repetitive narration. Chen Baohong (2018: 27) states that the treatment of dialect in Goldblatt's English version of *Frog* is a combination of literal translation and free translation, domestication and foreignization, so as to make the translation serve the reader and literature.

## Analysis

Based on three perspectives: of linguistics, culture, and literature, I will focus on the hybridity of *Frog* in its English version. By comparing the source and target texts, this analysis examines how the translator handles cultural works with Chinese characteristics, namely why the translator chose domestication and foreignization strategies for *Frog*.

## Hybridity of language

To address the problem of names, Howard Goldblatt chose to use their Pinyin forms, that is, the pronunciation of Chinese characters according to the phonetic system. The literal translation of Chinese names can provide a clear insight into the culture behind them. Target readers are able to gain a better understanding of how Chinese people obtain their names. An individual's name is both an external symbol and a reflection of their internal performance and culture due to its status as a special character mark. Western countries and Chinese countries have different naming systems. In Western countries, people usually put their given name first followed by their family name. In Chinese culture, the family name comes first, followed by the given name. Additionally, Chinese people consider a child's date of birth and eight symbols from their

horoscope, as well as five elements when naming them. There has been a great deal of influences on people's ideology, culture, and many aspects of social life in China over thousands of years resulting from the consideration of the five elements and eight trigrams. The eight symbols or physical characteristics of a child are commonly used by parents to determine the character of their offspring (Lou Guangqing 1985: 16). Below is an example.

1)

ST: “姑姑(万心)、金修、小狮子、万口、万六府、万足(小跑、小蝌蚪)...”

TT: “GUGU, or WAN XIN, midwife

JIN XIU, cousin of Xiaopao, business partner of Xiao Xiachun

LITTLE LION, Gugu's medical intern

WAN DAKOU, or WAN KOU, aka Eldest Brother, brother of Xiaopao, father of Wan Xiangqun

WAN LIUFU, father of Gugu, soldier and doctor, founder of the Xihai Underground Hospital

WAN MAN, sister of Xiaopao

WAN XIANGQUN, air force pilot, nephew of Xiaopao, son of Wan Dakou

WAN ZU, or XIAOPAO or TADPOLE, nephew of Gugu

WUGUAN, cousin of Xiaopao

YANYAN, daughter of Xiaopao”

(Goldblatt 2014: 8–11)

When dealing with the names of characters Goldblatt used either Pinyin or literal translation in order to adhere to the local or folk characteristics of Chinese local literature. While dealing with the name of “小狮子 (xiǎo shī zǐ)” Goldblatt translated it as “little lion” literally. However, he transliterated names using Pinyin, when it comes to names like “姑姑 (gū gū)” and “王口 (wáng kǒu)”. Transliteration can directly convey to the target audience the Chinese culture of naming. Consequently, target readers will be able to gain an understanding of how Chinese local culture addresses people. After reading the novel, they understand why it would be more appropriate to use GuGu or Wan Xin rather than “aunt”. Thus, Goldblatt does not simply use one translation method to deal with the names in the novel, but instead uses a hybrid of translation methods that combine Pinyin and literal translation.

2)

ST: “姑姑说，嫂子，幸亏你不识字，要是识上两箩筐字，和平村里如何能盛得下你！” (Mo Yan 2009: 25)

TT: “It’s a good thing you can’t read, Auntie, Gugu said. If you knew how to read a couple of handfuls of characters, our village would be too small to hold you.” (Goldblatt 2014: 59)

“认得几箩筐字 (rèn dé jǐ luó kung zè, recognize a few baskets of characters)” is used to describe one who has limited knowledge and is able to read some Chinese. Goldblatt translated it as “a couple of handfuls of characters”. The translation is accurate and provides the target readers with a good understanding of the woman’s literacy level. Although the translation is not literal, there was no need to make many changes to the measurement units in the source text.

3)

ST: “村里的车把式王脚，赶着马车，把煤从县城运回。王脚方头、粗颈、口吃，讲话时，目放精光，脸憋得通红” (Mo Yan 2009: 6)

TT: “Wang Jiao (Foot), the owner of a horse cart, transported the coal over from the county seat. Wang, a man with a square head, a thick neck and a bad stammer, had a bright look in his eyes when he spoke, his face flushed from the effort.” (Goldblatt 2014: 18)

4)

ST: “我们都很敬畏王脚。他身高一米九，双肩宽阔，力大如牛，二百斤重的石碌碡，双手抓起，胳膊一挺，便举过头顶” (Mo Yan 2009: 7)

TT: “We were in awe of Wang Jiao, who stood over six-two, with broad shoulders, and the strength of an ox. He could lift a stoneroller weighing two hundred jin over his head.” (Goldblatt 2014: 20)

Chinese is a parataxis language, so there is no need to use connectives to maintain the coherence of the text. In English, connectives must be used to maintain coherence. In the examples above, the translator was influenced by the Chinese mode of thinking and used a limited number of connectives. Three coordinated phrases are used: “a square head”, “a thick neck”, and “a bad stammer”. At the same time, the translator adjusts the word order of the sentence and uses more coordinated structures to convey the structure and meaning of the entire sentence clearly to the reader.

Example 4 presents a description of “Wang Jiao”, in which the translator preserves the sentence structures of the original text, without using sequential or adversarial conjunctions to indicate the interrelationships between the minor sentences.



5)

ST: “母亲生前多次对我们说：你姑姑的手跟别人不一样。常人手有时凉，有时热，有时发僵，有时流汗，但你姑姑的手五冬六夏都一样，是软的，凉的，不是那种松垮的软，是那种... 怎么说呢... 有文化的哥哥说：是不是像绵里藏针、柔中带刚？” (Mo Yan 2009: 18)

TT: “My mother said to me more than once: Your aunt’s hands are different than other people’s. Most people’s hands are cold some of the time, hot at other times, sometimes stiff, and sometimes sweaty. But your aunt’s hands were always the same, whether in the cold of winter or the heat of summer: soft and cool, not spongy soft, more like... How can I describe them? My educated elder brother said: Like a needle tucked into cotton, supple yet firm?” (Goldblatt 2014: 44)

There are four “有时 (yǒu shí, sometimes)” in this example in the source text that are employed for emphasizing. By retaining this special form, the translator can accomplish the same effect in the translated text without avoiding repetition, which is tedious for English readers. Additionally, the original text only uses one sentence to describe the aunt’s hand, whereas the translation uses five sentences. However, the translator renders well both Chinese thinking and language habits.

Based on the above analysis, it is apparent that the translator used two different translation strategies at the linguistic level, namely free translation and literal translation. When Goldblatt intends to demonstrate the Chinese way of using words, expressions, and constructing sentences, he tends to use literal translation so that the elements of the original text are retained and the readers can grasp the differences between the two languages. Through literal translation, the translator can familiarize English readers with the Chinese style of writing and use of language. In the case of lexical and syntactic elements that were difficult or even impossible to render literally, Goldblatt turned to free translation. By predominantly using literal translation and occasionally adopting free translation, Goldblatt produced a text with a high degree of hybridity.

## Hybridity of culture

Chinese idioms are unique not just because of their form, but also because of their connotations, which are typical of Chinese culture. It is common for people to use idioms in daily life. These idioms are closely associated with their observations of life, historical events, philosophical thinking, nature, literature, arts, and religious beliefs. Most idioms are condensed, and their connotative meaning always transcends literal meaning. An account of the life experiences

of a rural female physician is presented in *Frog*, and New China's 60-year history of rural childbirth is reflected in it. There are many uneducated characters in the novel, so colloquial vocabulary and idioms are present in the original text. The translator must therefore adopt different translation strategies when dealing with these idioms to help the target audience understand the rich cultural connotation of Chinese local culture.

6)

ST: “许司令说了，用八人大轿抬不来，就用绳子给老子捆来，先兵后礼，老子摆大宴请他！就这样，大爷爷留在了胶东，成了八路军西海地下医院的创始人。” (Mo Yan 2009: 13)

TT: “Commander Xu said if an eight-man sedan chair won't do the trick, he'd hogtie him and take him under escort to a banquet in his honour. That is how Great-Uncle wound up staying home in Shandong, where he founded the Xihai Underground Hospital.” (Goldblatt 2014: 43)

The Chinese idiom “先兵后礼 (xiān bīng hòu lǐ)” comes from the idiom “先礼后兵 (xiān lǐ hòu bīng)” which means to negotiate with the other party politely, and then use tough means when it doesn't work, whereas “先兵后礼 (xiān bīng hòu lǐ)” refers to using force to suppress firstly and then negotiating under the suppression of power rather than following normal etiquette. The translation of this phrase utilizes the domestication strategy: it is translated as “to take him under escort to a banquet in his honor”. There are numerous ways of expressing the strong emotion found in the Chinese idiom “先兵后礼 (xiān bīng hòu lǐ)”. In English, “escort” means to accompany someone for the purpose of protecting or guarding them or for guiding them, which implies compulsion, whereas “banquet” means to invite or entertain someone, which implies respect. Although the translation was modified slightly, but the main words of this idiom, “兵 (bīng)” and “礼 (lǐ)”, remained unchanged. The translation of these two words is an excellent example of hybridity, as it allows the target readers to gain a better understanding of how Chinese literature uses words to express certain attitudes and emotions.

7)

ST: “姑姑看到了炕上的情景就感到怒不可遏，用她自己的话说叫做火冒三丈” (Mo Yan 2009: 17)

TT: “So Gugu witnessed the scene the moment she walked in, and was livid with anger; in her own words, the flames were thirty feet high.” (Goldblatt 2014: 43)

“火冒三丈 (huǒ mào sān zhàng)” is a Chinese idiom, which means anger to the extreme. Furthermore, the “丈 (zhàng)” in Chinese refers to a special measurement of approximately 10 feet. In order to maintain the elements that are specifically associated with Chinese culture: hyperbole, the translator chooses to opt for a strategy of foreignization, namely translating “火冒三丈 (huǒ mào sān zhàng)” literally as “the flames were thirty feet high”. However, experiencing “anger with the flames were thirty feet high” might be quite new to English readers. This idiom is left in its literal form and only the measurement unit *zhang* is changed to the more familiar *foot*. In order to create an effect of strangeness, the translator uses foreignizing strategy to introduce Chinese culture and enrich the English language, producing a hybridity of languages and cultures.

8)

ST: “你可别出去胡啰啰啊，八字还没一撇呢！...，否则我剥了你们的皮。”  
(Mo Yan 2009: 29)

TT: “Now don’t you go around saying things, Gugu said, giving us all a stern look. We haven’t even exchanged the horoscope for our birth dates. I’ll tan your hides if you do.” (Goldblatt 2014: 67)

“八字还没一撇 (bā zì hái méi yī piě)” is used to describe the marriage of men and women, “八字 (bā zì)” refers to the time of birth of men and women. There used to be a common term “发八字 (fā bā zì)”, which meant a formal engagement. As a first step, parents would ask a fortune teller to match the birth time of their children. It was common practice in the past for men to exchange their birth times with their partners on an auspicious day, commonly referred to as “发八字 (fā bā zì)”. Historically, it was expected that men and women’s birth times would be well-matched (that is, they would not conflict), so that they might marry. Currently, this idiom is used to describe things that are unknown. Since people don’t know what “八字 (bā zì)” is, constellations are of greater importance to them. In order to assist the target readers in understanding the cultural connotations behind the phrase, the translator translated it as “horoscope”.

Goldblatt left the majority of the idioms in the original text unchanged in a belief that readers are capable of understanding the meaning themselves and are willing to learn about Chinese idiomatic culture. However, sometimes the translator is more inclined to domesticate translation of idioms with Chinese cultural characteristics. In the following examples, the translation incorporates Chinese cultural characteristics, but adopts them for a better comprehensibility to the target audience.

9)

ST: “你们可以批血统论，...即使生出来放在庙里，长大了也是个花和尚” (Mo Yan 2009: 219)

TT: “You can criticise hereditary laws all you want,... You could place a son of that evil Melon Huang in a Buddhist temple, and he'd grow up to be a lascivious monk.” (Goldblatt 2014: 419)

10)

ST: “这是个尖嘴缩腮的老女人，当时已经六十多岁，现在早已化为泥土，阿弥陀佛” (Mo Yan 2009: 17)

TT: “The old woman, with her pointed mouth and sunken cheeks, was in her sixties; by now, thankfully, this torchbearer for the obstructionists is feeding worms.” (Goldblatt 2014: 42)

11)

ST: “记不清有多少次了，姑姑双眼发亮，心驰神往地说：那时候，我是活菩萨，...” (Mo Yan, 2009, p. 023)

TT: “I don't know how many times I saw her eyes light up as she said longingly: I was a living Buddha back then,...” (Goldblatt 2014: 54)

12)

ST: “接着是我岳母哭着叫骂：万心，你这个黑了心肝、...你不得好死...你死后要上刀山，下油锅，剥皮挖眼点天灯...” (Mo Yan 2009: 131)

TT: “My mother-in-law's voice was next: Wan Xin, you black-hearted, inhuman monster... a bad death awaits you... after you die, you'll have to climb a mountain of knives and boil in hot oil, your skin will be peeled, your eyes will be gouged out, and you'll burn from head to toe.” (Goldblatt 2014: 264)

In its original meaning, “花和尚 (huā hé shàn)” refers to those who violate the rules and regulations, that is to say, those who indulge in forbidden activities while drinking, eating meat, and desiring beauty. As the target readers are not familiar with Chinese culture, they are not able to understand the various cultural connotations of the Chinese phrase “花和尚 (huā hé shàn)”. To ensure that the target readers understand the full text and the characters, the translator chooses the domestication strategy directly explaining its original meaning.

In Chinese culture, people who believe in Buddhism often use the term “阿弥陀佛 (ā mí tuó fó)” to designate prayer, blessing, or praise. Due to the fact

that Western culture has always been influenced by Christianity, the words used to describe prayer and blessing are mostly meant to express thanksgiving to God. Here the translator uses a domestication strategy to translate “阿弥陀佛 (ā mí tuó fó)” as “thankfully”.

“活菩萨 (huó pú sà)” means a warmhearted individual who is capable of rescuing others when they are in need. There is no equivalent word in English for this concept originating from Buddhism. In this case, to convey the religious characteristics of Chinese culture, the translator chose the foreignization strategy and translated the phrase as “a living Buddha”, which preserves the cultural connotation.

“刀山,下油锅 (shàng dāo shān, xià yóu guō, Up to the knife mountain, down to the oil pan)” is a Buddhist aphorism. It is believed that Buddhism has “十界 (Ten Realms)”, that is, there are ten realms in the world, of which hell is the most unfortunate. There are more than 18 layers in hell, and people shudder at the thought. A person’s suffering increases as they go down. Hell contains various types of torture, such as knife mountain, oil pan, grinding plate, sawing, stone mill, and so on. Therefore, the phrase “刀山,下油锅 (shàng dāo shān, xià yóu guō)” refers to a great crime, suffering greatly, or being in a dangerous situation. Buddhist texts refer to “刀山 (dāo shān)” and “油锅 (yóu guō)” as descriptions of the torture in hell. As a result of choosing a foreignization strategy, the translator preserves the unique cultural characteristics of the Chinese religion.

We can see from the above that translation strategies for Buddhist words are not easy to develop due to cultural differences. Whenever a translator uses foreignization, it is for the purpose of preserving the Chinese cultural flavor. Using a domestication strategy, the translator pays greater attention to the cultural background of the readers of the target language as well as the comprehensibility of the novel.

Analyzing the translation’s cultural hybridity from three perspectives, religious culture, idioms, and tradition, we can see that the translator takes into account the differences between Chinese and Western cultures. As far as Chinese traditional culture is concerned, the translator employs a foreignization strategy to ensure that the Chinese culture is multifacetedly presented to Western readers and better understood; at the same time, to make the translation more comprehensible to Western readers, the translator adopts a domestication strategy to respect their cultural background and language habits.

Therefore, a primary objective of the translator regardless of the translation strategy he adopted was to retain as much as possible the heterogeneous elements of the two cultures, enrich Chinese and Western cultures, promote the integration and mutual absorption of Chinese and Western cultures, and further promote the cultural hybridization process.

## Hybridity of literariness

Literature is a kind of art that is expressed through the delicate treatment of words, which are used to reflect the objective world or inner feelings. As far as poetry is concerned, most Chinese poetic forms are concise, comprehensive, and rich in meaning. Often the internal meaning of poetry cannot be simply captured from the surface meaning of words. Western poems are usually much longer than Chinese poems. Therefore, a translator of poetry should not only be proficient in two languages, but also two cultures.

13)

ST: “拴个娃娃带回家，全家高兴笑哈哈。

今年拴回明年养，后年开口叫爹娘。

我的娃娃质量高，工艺大师亲手造。

我的娃娃长相美，粉面桃腮樱桃嘴。

我的娃娃最灵验，远销一百单八县。

拴一个，生龙胎；拴两个，龙凤胎。

拴三个，三星照；拴四个，四天官。

拴五个，五魁首；拴六个，我不给，怕你媳妇嘸小嘴。...”

(Mo Yan 2009: 189)

TT: “Buy a doll and take it home, a happy family you will soon be.

Take one this year, raise one the next, soon Mum and Dad, you will see.

No finer dolls you'll ever find, all crafted from the finest clay.

Lovely faces have all my dolls, eyes, noses, mouths of beauty.

My dolls are most potent, sold to villages in eight counties.

Buy one, you'll have a dragon; buy two, a dragon and a phoenix.

Buy three for happiness, wealth, and a long life; buy four for two pairs of officials.

Buy five for five distinguished scholars; buy six, no, I can't give you six or the wife will surely pout.” (Goldblatt 2014: 361)

Chinese ballads are a type of verse form found in Chinese culture. Several factors contribute to its popularity in folk culture, including its cheerful rhythm, vivid language, and rich themes. It is always challenging for the translator to reproduce the original features. This is the time for the translator to be faithful to the original text while also allowing his creativity to flourish. He retains the original image of the original text and conveys all of the characteristics of Chinese poetry easily understood by the target audience in order to achieve the same effect as the original. The translator adopts a domestication strategy

here and follows the prosodic rules of the target language. As can be seen from the translation, the poem is concise, rhythmic, and easy to understand. Throughout the entire poem, the “aabbcccd” rhyme scheme is utilized. In addition to preserving the characteristics of Chinese literature, the translation also fully embodies the characteristics of Western literature.

14)

ST: “施主，请给您的孩子配一把长命锁!

    施主，请给您的娃娃披一件彩霞衣!

    施主，请给您的娃娃蹬一双青云履!

...” (Mo Yan 2009: 200)

TT: “Benefactress, don’t forget a longevity lock for your child!

Benefactress, don’t forget to buy a rainbow shawl for your doll!

Benefactress, don’t forget to buy cloud slippers for your doll!”

(Goldblatt 2014: 382)

It is typical for a Chinese poet to repeat the words several times in order to emphasize their significance. Nevertheless, it is not easy to convey such information in a written text. In the example above, the translator used the same grammatical structures as the original text. The translation is neat, well-structured, and easy to read since the translator takes into account the language style and language habits of the target readers. As for the target audience, the domestication strategy aims to make them more familiar with Chinese culture while the foreignization strategy aims to preserve the unique flavor of Chinese culture and promote Chinese culture more effectively. To put it simply, whatever translation strategy the translator employs, its objective is to make Chinese and Western cultures better able to absorb and integrate each other, to promote the hybridity between the two cultures, and to enrich the world culture as a whole.

### Factors contributing to the hybridity in *Frog*

A number of scholars have discussed hybridity as being universal and inevitable in translation, as well as examined the factors that contribute to hybridity in literary translation. The process of translation is influenced by a wide range of factors, and it is impossible to translate everything objectively from the source text to the target text. It is not only the translator’s subjective opinion that

determines whether to add anything to or remove something from the original text, but also the way in which he chooses to selectively use the target language. Translation is the result of a combination of various factors. According to Han Ziman (2005: 183), the most direct determinant of translation hybridity is the translator's subjective initiative. It is usually the translator who decides whether or not hybrid elements can be retained in the translated text. In Jiří Levý's opinion, translation is a translator's "decision-making process" (1967). The translator's aesthetic taste, translation concepts, and tendencies, as well as the translation objectives, have a decisive influence on the translation process.

The source text also has a direct impact on the hybridity of the translated text. Han Ziman points out that "the degree of the hybridity of the translation depends on the different status and influence of the original text in the original language and culture" (Han Ziman 2005: 105). A translator of a classical literary work will tend to retain more foreign elements in the translation. In contrast, the translator will show less respect for the authenticity of the original text if the original is not a classic and will instead focus on the readability of the translation, sometimes modifying its form and content to eliminate these hybrid elements. *Frog* is different from other novels in that it is not confined to a single literary genre: it consists of four long letters and nine acts. The style varies in different parts of the novel and requires different degrees of hybridization in translation. Therefore, it is necessary for the translator to choose the most appropriate translation strategies according to the appropriate context and cultural background, in order to help readers grasp the Chinese culture expressed in this contemporary classic.

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