

A Critical Exploration of Cultural and Aesthetic Representation of Shandong Dialect Translation in *Red Sorghum*

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Abstract—The translation of the Shandong dialect, specifically in the novel *Red Sorghum* authored by Mo Yan and translated by Howard Goldblatt, posed significant challenges to both translators and readers due to its local Chinese cultural richness. Previous researches mainly focused on its traditional translation strategies including foreignization and domestication. Exploration of the aesthetic value of dialect and its cultural representations in modern literature is a relatively new area of research yet to be developed. This paper revealed that translation operates in a complicated three-dimensional structure of translator (aesthetic subject), translated text (aesthetic object), and culture (social environment). In the process of translating dialect, the aesthetic experience and the Aesthetic Regulation Devices (ARD) adopted by the translator, as well as the beauty of characterization and symbolization come into play. Therefore, aesthetic values and cultural uniqueness are represented not only on the linguistic, but also on the spiritual level by contrasting the purity of the villagers in rural China and the brutality of the social turbulence that surrounds them. The paper demonstrated that dialect translation involves a multifaceted and dynamic equivalence between source and target language. The research findings indicated that translation techniques of domestication and foreignization are utilized significantly more often (82%) than the strategy of ARD (18%) during the translation process. This imbalance in strategy usage may result in a deficient representation of aesthetic and cultural values. The significance of this study lies mainly in its intention to reconstruct a more effective theoretical paradigm for dialectal translation procedures.

Index Terms—Aesthetic Regulation Devices (ARD), cultural and aesthetic representation, *Red Sorghum*, Shandong dialect translation

I. INTRODUCTION

Dialect plays a significant role both in daily life and in literary works. It is not only a means of communication, but also a representation of regional culture. Not only do local dialects in rural China preserve a diverse traditional culture, but they are also considered a cultural heritage worldwide. With the rapid urbanization and globalization of the world, some distinctive Chinese local dialects are dying out. As dialect is part of cultural heritage and embodies linguistic diversity, it is of significant importance to investigate dialect translation and transmission as a way of preserving the vitality of local dialect; indeed, the study of dialects in literature is regarded as a feasible way of doing so.

Red Sorghum is a magical realist novel written by Mo Yan, Nobel Prize winner in 2012, which was published in 1986. It is also Mo Yan's first novel and depicts local villagers in Gaomi, Shandong, a rural country during a period of war lasting from 1920 to 1970. Emerging from Mo Yan's narration, is a combination of the brutality of society and the patriotism of individual villages; use of regional dialects and contradictory images and colors are abundant in this novel. The beauty of the original local language and the authentic personifications are eye-catching and mind-boggling as it reveals the vivid and cruel realities of rural China in a time of war. The novel utilizes substantial culturally loaded dialects and pseudo-third-person viewpoints, which enhances the authenticity of the local people, the open-endedness of interpretation of the novel's aesthetics, as well as the diversification of its characters. But here is the problem: how is it possible to transmit the originality and spirit, as well as the sociocultural aesthetic values, of *Red Sorghum* and maintain the source language's local flavor? This question poses a great challenge for translators. The focus of this paper, therefore, is to extend literary translations of Chinese dialect alongside their historical and regional cultures by focusing on aesthetic elements that are being neglected among original text, translator, and the translated text in *Red Sorghum*.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Literature Review of Dialect Translation

The field of dialect translation gained a great deal of attention in the West in the second half of the 20th century (Ballbe, 1997; Baker, 1992), but did not receive much attention in China until the 1980s. In terms of previous studies of the presence of dialects in literature, it was found that most studies focused on ontology of language (Marjerison & Yang, 2022; Dowland et al., 2023), comparative studies between regional dialect and Mandarin, or between Shandong dialect and another regional dialect in China (Wang, 2020). According to Halliday (1964, p. 11), dialects are considered “mere representations of a user-relevant variant form of language that is independent of society and context”. This viewpoint was challenged by many researchers (Baker, 1992; Bassnett & Lefevere, 2001), who regard the study of cultural and social elements as essential procedure in the process of translation. The majority of studies (Vermeer, 2000; Han, 2002; Huang, 2012) that examine the translation of dialects focus on English as source language and thus on English versions of the dialects. Among these researchers, Han (2002) conducted a number of studies relating to dialects, including pronunciation and translation. He also conducted a study of foreign literary works placed on the translation of dialects. He concluded that dialects in different countries have different characteristics as a result of cultural differences, and he presented methods for achieving equality in translation by using translation strategy of foreignization. Comparatively fewer studies (Zuo et al., 2021) conducted research on the translation of Chinese dialects into English. Numerous studies of *Red Sorghum* (Wang, 2017; Deng, 2019; Li, 2022) concentrated mainly on cultural identity, word usage, and cultural representations in literary dialect, and much fewer researchers (Klein, 2016; Gibello & Lesch, 2017) have performed any sort of comprehensive case study of *Red Sorghum* in terms of its translation strategies and norms. In addition, most researchers within the latter group focused on the micro-levels, such as the lexical and syntactical aspects of translation, rather than on the more general aesthetic level. Although some previous research has focused on dialect translation procedures, no systematic theory has been presented by these researchers to guide or explain the translator’s representational model during translation.

B. Literature Review of Translation of *Red Sorghum*

Howard Goldblatt (1993), a famous sinologist and high-ranking translator of modern Chinese literature, translated *Red Sorghum Clan* (1986) into English in 1993. Many researchers (Gibello & Lesch, 2017; Wang, 2017; Liu, 2021; Zuo et al., 2021) have conducted substantial studies of his work of translation; they have done so from different perspectives and using different approaches, which included studying translation norms, ecological translation, translation practice, translation thoughts and corpus-based studies. Among these researchers, Zuo et al. (2021) studied Howard Goldblatt thoroughly and revalidated his great contribution to the translation and transmission of modern Chinese literature. Following that, Gibello and Lesch (2017) undertook a thorough descriptive study of *Red Sorghum* by using substantial, concrete, and vivid examples directly selected from both the original work and Goldblatt’s translated text. Findings showed that translation strategies can be used interchangeably in order to produce satisfactory translation effects. However, the regional dialect in the novel posed a great challenge for the translator and linguistics in terms of transmitting accurately the original meaning and intentions of Mo Yan in constructing a certain social environment. Therefore, some researchers (Huang, 2017; Yang, 2022; Zhao & Li, 2023) began to investigate macro-levels, such as aesthetic value and cultural representations, that play a significant role in studying the translation of literature in order to appreciate the inner beauty of the world that is being depicted and preserve the intangible heritage and diversity of languages in the world. However, these studies only restricted on the theoretical comparison, aesthetic reception and children literature, thereby little discussion on the aesthetic translation strategy and representation in Shandong dialect.

III. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

A. The Aesthetic Process in Translation

The novel as a major form of art, is not an entity in nature, in a state of freedom of beauty, without any intervention, proposed by Kant (1790), but depends on interpretation by individual aesthetic subjects (writers, translators, and readers) with different experiences (social status, educational background, and environment) that determine various aesthetic attitudes. Therefore, aesthetic translation is a complex process, particularly in the translation from one language to another. Cultural consideration is essential when there are dialects involved in this complex aesthetic process, and therefore it is important to clarify the following concepts.

B. Aesthetic Judgment

Aesthetic judgment indicates a universal judgment or evaluation of the aesthetic properties of an aesthetic object. The definition was first proposed by Kant (1790), who states that aesthetic judgment is different from logical judgment, which varies from person to person, while aesthetic judgment is a universal concept. For Kant (1790), the aesthetic experience of beauty is a judgment of a common truth held by most people, and beauty is objective and universal. However, this idea was challenged by modern researchers (Bourdieu, 1984; Danto, 2003) who pointed out that beauty does not depend on its intrinsic attributes, but on cultural diversity and individual interpretations. Aesthetic judgments

depend heavily on social norms and traditions, and they can be affected not only by aesthetic subjects' aesthetic abilities, aesthetic preferences, and aesthetic values, but are also influenced by socio-cultural elements, such as ethnic conventions, regional customs, etc.

C. Aesthetic Experience

Beardsley (1958), whose book entitled *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* had a great impact on aesthetics worldwide, proposed that emotions play a significant role in aesthetic experience. More importantly, he argued that aesthetic values depend heavily on the interpretation and attitudes of the artist, on the feelings and responses of the recipient, as well as on the socio-cultural context. This expansion posed a great challenge to the mentioned previous studies from a philosophical point of view. Another literary critic, De Man (1979), also held that aesthetic experience goes through a process of aesthetic activities as a motivating force of aesthetic creation and functions as a key element in artistic appreciation and evaluation.

D. Aesthetic Subject and Aesthetic Object

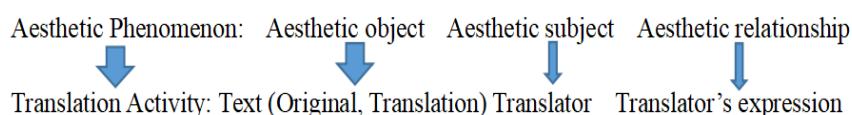


Figure 1. Relationship Between Aesthetic Phenomenon and Translation Activity

The relationship between aesthetic phenomenon and translation activity are shown in Figure 1. Aesthetic Subject refers to subjects undergoing the process of appreciating beauty. The aesthetic object, which coexists with the aesthetic subject, is the object appreciated by the aesthetic subject. According to Liu (2005), there are two aesthetic objects at work in the process of translation: one is the source text (ST), which carries aesthetic value, and the other is the target text (TT). The realization of the source language's aesthetic value depends on the translator's aesthetic experience and judgment of this value; the realization of the target language's aesthetic value lies in the translator's representation and interpretation (Liu & Zhang, 2011).

E. Cultural Turn of Translation Theory

Translation studies as well have undergone a transformation from "linguistic studies" to "cultural studies," along with the "linguistic turn" in philosophy in the mid-20th century. It can be argued that there has been a "cultural turn" in translation studies with the emergence of translation studies. The original motivation for the rise of translation studies was not to achieve "equivalence" in the field of translation, but to understand how and why translations occur. Even-Zohar (1997) proposed in his Polysystem Theory that translation is a cultural system; in other words, it is culture that determines translation strategies and how the translation conducts the relationships between languages. Based on his theory, Bassnett and Lefevere (2001) proposed the concept of the "culture turn" and argued that linguistic equivalence between different cultures in translation is only a strategy adopted in translation and that the really significant aim is actually the transformation of culture. Therefore, cultural turn theory is centered on the equivalence and transformation of cultures and not on traditional, linguistic, equivalence; instead, it regards culture as the unit of translation.

F. Research Methodology

The theory of cultural translation developed by Liu (2005) and his concepts relating to translation are mainly reflected in his book *Outline of Cultural Translation*, which comprises a variety of culture-related categories, dimensions, and operational mechanisms characteristic of different disciplines; the principle of cultural adaptability as well as scientific and aesthetic principles play a role in his demonstrations. However, translation is a significantly complicated and systematic project, which cannot be examined only on the macro-level. This is shown in the Cultural Turn Theory of Bassnett and Lefevere (2001), in which they argued that culture can be refined and analyzed based only on small linguistic units. In addition, they claim that translation cannot be driven only by the micro-level, that is, on the level of morphemes, vocabulary, sentences, and stylistic characteristics. The best way to translate is to reconstruct the traditional strategies and find a relatively scientific framework for translation which can be understood by target readers.

A qualitative approach will be employed in the present analysis of the aesthetic interactions of cultural representations between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT) with the assistance of NVIVO12 software. This study adopts the Aesthetic Translation Theory of Liu (2005) and Cultural Turn Theory of Bassnett and Lefevere (2001) as theoretical framework. Therefore, the significance of this paper is to take the cultural turn in linguistics as its basis, to place Chinese and Western translation criticism and translation aesthetics into the context of interdisciplinary and cross-cultural research and analysis, to put forward constructive theoretical propositions, and to construct a more scientific and reasonable theoretical system for the work of cultural and aesthetic analysis.

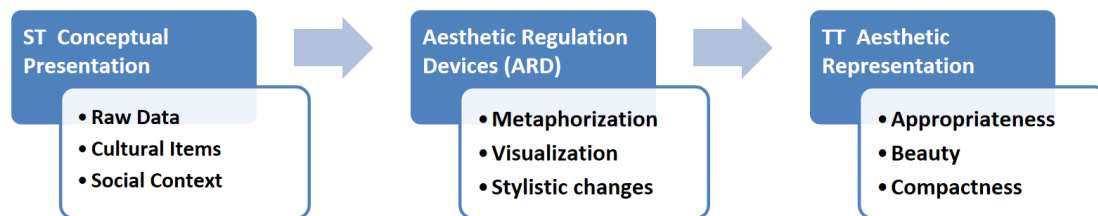


Figure 2. Adapted Schematic Diagram of Cultural Aesthetic Translation Process

As shown in Figure 2, compared with traditional translation strategies, cultural and aesthetic elements of ST can be represented by employing certain Aesthetic Regulation Devices (ARD), i.e. metaphorization, visualization and stylistic changes, etc. To conduct a comprehensive and meticulous data analysis of dialect usage in the novel, the procedure entails using NVIVO 12 Software, which is a qualitative research tool, together with a quantitative corpus tool. It is an effective and comprehensive way for collecting the Shandong dialect data used in Goldblatt's translated version, *Red Sorghum*, first published in 1993. With regards to the complexity and the large quantity of data to be analyzed, the most systematic way of doing so is to classify dialect usage into three categories: the phonetic, the lexical, and the syntactic categories.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In *Red Sorghum*, Shandong dialects are used by Mo Yan to represent authentic and original daily life and they constitute the sharp stylistic character traits of the novel. For example, “作饼” *kǎ bǐng* (fistcake), “挂彩” *guà cǎi* (wounded), “哭丧户” *kū sāng hù* (wailer), etc., which are all typical expressions of Shandong dialect and a real reflection of local people's cultural background and customs in a certain social environment in rural China, namely the so-called “高密东北乡” *gāo mì dōng běi xiāng* (Northeast Gaomi Township). It is mentioned more than 90 times in the novel to demonstrate homesickness of the author. According to Davis-Undiano (2012), Mo Yan's novel *Red Sorghum* is not just a portrayal of heroic civilians, but also a profound expression of his patriotism and quest for liberty. At the same time, different characteristics, social identities, and social status are also represented by different dialects and accents in Mo Yan's original novel and are represented in Howard Goldblatt's translated version.

A. Shandong Dialect Translation on the Phonetic Level

According to Yu (2001, p. 706), “Onomatopoeia is the creation of a term that imitates the actual sound produced by the thing or event being described”. There are many sentences involving dialect translated on the phonetic level. Given their typicality, three sentences are chosen with different phonetic dialects; it is hard to find their English counterparts.

(a). Onomatopoeia of Speech

ST: “鬼子说: ‘**呜哩哇啦啞啞哩呜!**’ 罗汉大爷看着在眼前乱晃的贼亮的刺刀, 一屁股坐在地上。” (Mo, 1987, p. 11)

TT: “‘**Minliwala, yalalimin!**’ he grunted. With the shiny bayonet glinting in front of his eyes, Uncle Arhat sat down.” (Goldblatt, 1993, p. 14)

In the first translated text, Uncle Arhat, as a Chinese villager without educational background, could not understand the Japanese. Thus, people lived in the village like Uncle Arhat couldn't understand even a word of Japanese language. Goldblatt successfully transferred Mo Yan's humorous personality by using visualization of ARD in his translation. Humor can be regarded as an aesthetic spirit represented not only in the source text, but also in the target reader's mind.

(b). Onomatopoeia of Movement

ST: “奶奶端起酒, **咕咚咕咚**喝了。余司令端起酒, 一仰脖灌了。” (Mo, 1987, p. 21)

TT: “She picked up her cup and drank the wine down **noisily**. Commander Yu held out his cup, threw back his head, and drained it.” (Goldblatt, 1993, p. 27)

In this instance, the onomatopoeic term “咕咚” (*gū dōng*) is not equivalent to “noisily”, which failed to represent its aesthetic values. Here “咕咚” refers to the sound Jiu'er makes when she drinks, which shows, from an aesthetic point of view, her bold and daring character as a woman. “Noisily”, however, cannot represent the aesthetic judgement of the source text. There are 15 references extracted by using NVIVO 12 to run text search query of the word “noisily,” in TT, and 0.01% coverage of this word in the entire text. Usage of the word can be illustrated in the following figure.

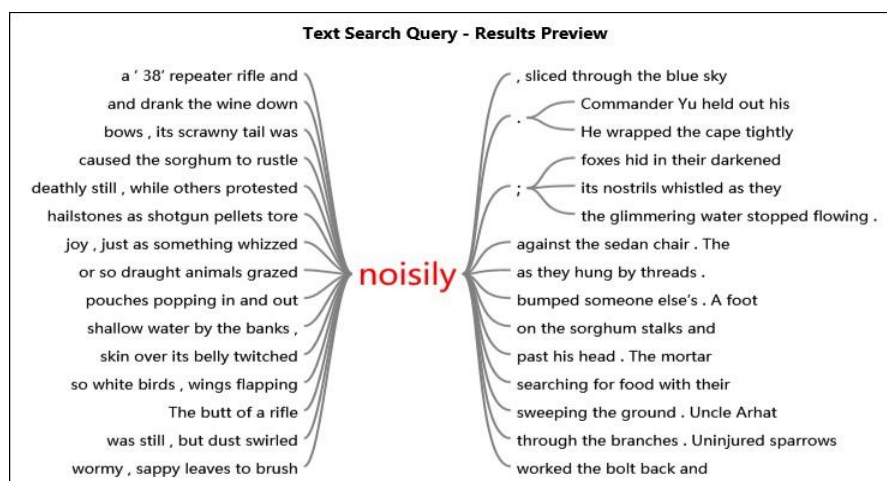


Figure 3. Text Search Query Result of “Noisily” in NVIVO 12

The result shows that “noisily” is usually used as a word to refer to a certain unpleasant sound, by which the aesthetic value of the character cannot be reproduced in the translated text for the target readers. According to DK Oxford English-Chinese Bilingual Dictionary (2005, p. 675), “noisily” means “clamorous, turbulent”, whereas it means “抖动” *dǒu dòng* (twitch) in Chinese Dialect Big Dictionary (Xu, 1999, p. 3346), which is a better substitute for representing the appropriateness and beauty of ST. Therefore, implementing stylistic changes in ARD, rather than domestication, can serve as a more effective means of conveying its cultural and artistic significance in TT.

(c). *Onomatopoeia of Sound*

ST: “温暖的熏风吹拂着狭窄的土路两侧翠绿的高粱。高粱地里传来鸽子咕咕咕咕的叫声。” (Mo, 1987, p. 31)

TT: “A warm wind rustled the emerald-green stalks of sorghum lining the narrow dirt path. Doves *cooed* in the fields.” (Goldblatt, 1993, p. 40)

The third example shows a translation strategy frequently used by Goldblatt, i.e. domesticating strategy in translation, which means catering to target readers’ aesthetic feelings and attempting to render source cultures acceptable. Therefore, Goldblatt translated “咕咕咕咕” (*gū gū gū gū*) with “cooed”, which is a familiar sound uttered by birds in target readers’ cultures; Goldblatt here also uses an aesthetic regulation device called “style change” in order to represent the natural beauty of birds’ sound in TT.

B. *Shandong Dialect Translation on the Lexical Level*

Different translation strategies are used by Goldblatt to achieve the same effect for target readers that the original novel produces for its readers. Davis-Undiano (2012) regards Goldblatt’s translation of *Red Sorghum* as such an outstanding work that it provides Western readers with a valuable opportunity to delve into Chinese history and culture without imposing Western viewpoints or beliefs. In order to fully demonstrate the Chinese local culture and aesthetic spirits in the original novel, Goldblatt expended great effort to study and investigate Chinese culture as a Sinologist and communicate many times with the author Mo Yan during the process of translation.

Cultural Dialect Words are used to describe individual cultural values and aesthetic standards in different eras. The novel employs distinguished and abundant local dialects in this direction. They include festival dialects, appearance dialects, dialects for injury, names of characters, names of place, names of food, vulgar language, words for measurement, length, money, time, and geography. For the cultural complexity of the original data, Goldblatt adopted both traditional translation strategies i.e. domestication and foreignization as well as ARD. Within those, in turn, he adopted different translation methods, such as transliteration, free translation, imitation, paraphrasing, and literal translation. Findings regarding the translation strategies and methods used in his translation are shown in the following Table by using corpus as a research tool to assist the data analysis.

TABLE 1
TRANSLATION STRATEGIES IN *RED SORGHUM*

Sample size (n=236)	Cultural references	Translation strategies		
		Aesthetic regulation devices (ARD) (n=43)	Foreignization (n=129)	Domestication (n=64)
16	Appearance dialect	9	5	2
2	Distance dialect	1	0	1
24	Festival dialect	4	12	8
60	Custom dialect	15	25	20
68	Name and place dialect	1	60	7
12	Geography dialect	3	9	0
5	Injury dialect	1	0	4
3	Money dialect	1	2	0
21	Food dialect	8	10	3
25	Vulgar dialect	0	6	19

Table 1 demonstrates that out of the whole annotated sample size (n=236), there were 129 instances of foreignization. This translation approach was shown to be the most prevalent in handling cultural references in the target text (TT). Nevertheless, the use of ARD (n=43) is not the primary translation approach in TT, leading to a failure in adequately representing the cultural and aesthetic qualities inherent in ST. Furthermore, the occurrence of ARD is only observed in three specific categories of cultural references, namely appearance dialect, custom dialect, and food dialect. Other categories have an exceedingly low occurrence rate, with either no instances (n=0) or only one instance (n=1). The research findings indicate that ARD occurs in just 18% of the overall sample data, while traditional translation strategies such as foreignization and domestication account for 82%, thereby maintaining their dominant position in the field of translation. This section critically examines the cultural and aesthetic depiction in *Red Sorghum* by utilizing various translation strategies. It focuses on specific examples taken from Shandong cultural references.

(a). *Appearance Dialect*

ST: “当时，多少人家都渴望着和单家攀亲，尽管风传着单扁郎早就染上了麻风病。单廷秀是个干干巴巴的**小老头**，脑后翘着一支枯干的小辫子。” (Mo, 1987, p. 30)

TT: “Many local families had dreamed of marrying into the Shan family, despite rumours that Shan Bianlang had leprosy. His father was a *wizened little man* who sported a scrawny queue on the back of his head.” (Goldblatt, 1993, p. 38)

The first appearance dialect “小老头” (*xiǎo lǎo tóu*) means “little old man.” However, “old” as a characteristic of the man should also be translated into the target language for western readers. Another cultural fact in China is that in ancient times girls were forced to bind their feet to keep them small and wear braids to cater to men’s aesthetic standards. However, it is abnormal to go against human nature. It can be concluded that aesthetic judgement is performed dynamically in different people’s minds in different social contexts.

(b). *Distance Dialect*

ST: “爷爷骑骡奔跑在从我们村通往威水口子的土路上，十五**里**路变得那样漫长。” (Mo, 1987, p. 279)

TT: “Granddad rode his mule from the village to Saltwater Gap, a distance of only fifteen *li*, although it seemed like miles.” (Goldblatt, 1993, p. 328)

In ancient China, “里” (*li*) was used as the unit of length measurement, and since there was no measuring tool, “footsteps” were used as the standard of measurement, and one mile was equal to 300 steps. From the aesthetic point of view, the ancients were good at finding solutions to problems in their daily lives by using their own bodies. Therefore, the foreignization approach of literal translation was employed in order to accurately convey the distinct cultural and aesthetic qualities.

(c). *Festival Dialect*

ST: “那天是**清明节**，桃红柳绿，细雨霏霏...” (Mo, 1987, p. 30)

TT: “It was *Qingming, the day set aside to attend ancestral graves*; peach trees were in full red bloom, willows were green, a fine rain was falling...” (Goldblatt, 1993, p. 38)

Qingming Festival is a traditional Chinese festival, which can be explained in some detail when first mentioned. This cultural term illustrates the customs and activities of this special festival. Therefore, Goldblatt employed a foreignization translation strategy and an annotation translation method to reproduce the custom of this festival; at the same time, the subsequent parts of the translation fully describe the beautiful scenery as well as the freedom and happiness of young girls within their hearts, which can be regarded as the feeling of aesthetics.

(d). *Custom Dialect*

ST: “**民国元年**，曲阜县孔夫子家的‘**哭丧户**’专程前来学习过哭腔。大喜的日子里碰上女人哭亡夫，奶奶感到这是不祥之兆...” (Mo, 1987, p. 33)

TT: “*During 1912, the first year of the Republic*, professional mourners known as ‘*wailers*’ came from Qufu, the home of Confucius, to study local weeping techniques. Meeting up with a woman lamenting the death of her husband seemed to Grandma to be a stroke of bad luck on her wedding day...” (Goldblatt, 1993, p. 42)

The first year of the Republic of China was 1912, a special period of Chinese history, so it should be explained in the translation by using ARD translation strategy together with cultural annotation method to fully transfer the special era in Chinese history as one of cultural uniqueness to target readers. In addition, 哭丧户 *kū sāng hù* (wailers) are professional mourners in rural China, whose duty is to weep in other villagers’ funerals for money. The usage of this dialect originates in the author’s own experience, and this unique custom is re-localized by the translator’s profound cultural sensitivity toward local China.

(e). *Name and Place Dialect*

ST: “老子是土匪余占鳌!” (Mo, 1987, p. 144)

TT: “I’m Yu Zhan’ao the *bandit!*” (Goldblatt, 1993, p. 180)

In the novel, Yu Zhan’ao is sometimes referred to as a bandit. From an aesthetic point of view, this term reflects the character’s brash and big-hearted personality. There are also other local dialects of characters’ names, for example, 冷麻子 *lěng má zi*, 余大牙 *yú dà yá*, 王虎 *wáng hǔ*, 刘大号 *liú dà hào*, 哑巴 *yǎ ba* (Pocky Leng, Big Tooth Yu, Tiger Wang, Bugler Liu, and Mute). In addition, dialect for a special place, like “蛤蟆坑” *há má kēng* (Toad Hollow) is used in the novel to show the unique features of a certain place in a natural environment, which leaves a terrific impression concerning natural beauty and force. These dialect nicknames reflect the simple and honest qualities of the villagers from an aesthetic point of view. The local dialect reflects the aesthetic characteristics and simplicity of villagers who are good at relating things in nature to their own lives. Therefore, the aesthetic experiences of the author and aesthetic evaluation of the translator can be achieved through the foreignization translation strategy and metaphoric method in ARD in order to reproduce the inner beauty of nature as well as the honorable quality of people.

(f). *Geography Dialect*

ST: “我曾对高密东北乡极端热爱，曾经对高密东北乡极端仇恨。” (Mo, 1987, p. 1)

TT: “I had learned to love *Northeast Gaomi Township* with all my heart, and to hate it with unbridled fury.” (Goldblatt, 1993, p. 1)

The “高密东北乡” (*Gāomì dōngběi xiāng*) is roughly the northeast township of Gaomi, Shandong Province. It is an imaginary region, based on Mo Yan’s hometown, which reflects his deep love for this land from an aesthetic perspective. A domestication translation strategy is used here to clarify the location in target readers’ minds. The dialectal expression, “Northeast Gaomi Township” appeared 82 times in the novel to show Mo Yan’s aesthetic feelings about his hometown by entrusting his love to the fictional world of literature. “It is not only a geographical background for Mo Yan’s work, but also a symbol of a narrative style, emotional experience and aesthetic view” (He, 2014, p. 77). Goldblatt creatively applies a variety of aesthetic regulation devices to transfer the author’s aesthetic feelings to target readers.

(g). *Injury Dialect*

ST: “‘大叔，’父亲说，‘大叔，你挂彩了。’” (Mo, 1987, p. 7)

TT: “‘Uncle,’ Father said, ‘you’re *wounded.*’” (Goldblatt, 1993, p. 8)

In terms of euphemisms and aesthetic standards, in ancient China, 挂彩 *guà cǎi* (wounded) was a dialectal expression used to refer to bleeding from a wound, because the color of blood is red. This word conveys to readers the aesthetic feeling in the original novel, even though it is a disaster, or at least unpleasant, for the sufferers; therefore, in order to represent aesthetic feelings of this particular dialect, stylistic changes in ARD translation technique together with aesthetic annotation can effectively convey the unique aspects of Chinese culture to the target readers.

(h). *Money Dialect*

ST: “事后，奶奶赏给每个伙计三块现大洋。” (Mo, 1987, p. 101)

TT: “When their work was finished, she gave them each three *silver dollars.*” (Goldblatt, 1993, p. 129)

The “大洋” (*dà yáng*) was a special currency issued during the Republic of China with the head of *Yuan Shih-k’ai* on it and made of silver, which is approximately equivalent to 400 RMB now, and is not equivalent to the “silver dollar”; instead, it introduces the cultural connotation of a specific period. Hence, the translation “silver dollar” does not accurately correspond to the cultural reference “大洋” (*dà yáng*). Consequently, in order to provide target readers with a clear understanding of the specific monetary term, translation strategies such as ARD and sociocultural annotation techniques might be employed.

(i). *Food Dialect*

ST: “她掀起轿帘，看着那个吃**炸饼**的人。” (Mo, 1987, p. 36)

TT: “She raised the curtain to get a glimpse of the man who ate *fistcakes.*” (Goldblatt, 1993, p. 46)

“Fistcake” can wholly illustrate the characteristics of this food by visualization in ARD. “抻饼” *kǎ bǐng* (fistcake), is a crisp pancake pinched with the hands when eating. The dialectal expression of a particular kind of food with local characteristics of Shandong: tough, moderately thick and thin, are, from the aesthetic point of view, the character traits of the straightforward and open-minded generosity of the Shandong people. Foreignization translation strategy is better than domestication to show the local Shandong food customs.

(j). *Vulgar Dialect*

ST: “你怕了吗? 畜生! 你的威风呢?” (Mo, 1987, p. 17)

TT: “Scared? You **damned beast!** Where’s your arrogance now?” (Goldblatt, 1993, p. 21)

The vulgarity used in the local dialect indicates that the local villagers, out of their indignation at having done something wrong, are associated with the local livestock, indicating that humans should be more polite and responsible, a moral distinction made between animals and humans from a spiritual aesthetic standpoint. Undoubtedly, the technique of domestication tends to diminish the distinctive local characteristics of Shandong customs. Consequently, ARD emerges as a superior option for showcasing the cultural and aesthetic attributes.

B. *Shandong Dialect Translation on the Syntactic Level*

Besides onomatopoeia and cultural terms in Shandong dialect translation, idiomatic and metaphoric translation also has significant aesthetic values in Shandong dialect, e.g. “鸡走鸡道, 狗走狗道” *jī zǒu jī dào, gǒu zǒu gǒu dào* (Chickens can go their own way, dogs can go theirs), “心急喝不得热粘粥” *xīn jí hē bù dé rè nián zhōu* (Greedy eaters never get the hot gruel), 高粱红成洗洋的血海 *gāo liang hóng chéng guāng yáng de xuè hǎi* (Sorghum that forms a glittering sea of blood), etc., which represent unique cultural and aesthetic elements reflected from rural residents’ aesthetic experience and judgement and accumulated from daily social life and natural environment.

(a). *Idiom*

ST: “鸡走鸡道, 狗走狗道, 井水不犯河水。” (Mo, 1987, p. 29)

TT: “**Chickens can go their own way; dogs can go theirs.** Well water and river water don’t mix.” (Goldblatt, 1993, p. 29)

This is a typical idiomatic expression in rural China, and here what we see is an aesthetic perceptiveness of the colloquial language of villagers, who are naturally sensitive to the natural world around them. “Chickens” and “dogs” were commonly seen in that time of rural China; accordingly, lively idiomatic expressions were created by villagers in their simple and pure daily life, which can be a very easy and direct way for target readers to appreciate the humor and intelligence of those lovely villagers. Therefore, the utilization of metaphorization in ARD can more effectively depict the cultural idioms of Shandong.

(b). *Metaphor*

ST: “八月深秋, 天高气爽, 遍野高粱红成洗洋的血海。” (Mo, 1987, p. 305)

TT: “In the deep autumn of the eighth month, under a high, magnificently clear sky, the land is covered by **sorghum that forms a glittering sea of blood.**” (Goldblatt, 1993, p. 359)

Sorghum, as the central concept in the novel, appears about 463 times in the translated text. Mo Yan’s depiction of red sorghum is so all-encompassing that readers may fail to recognize the intimate correlation between sorghum and the characters in the narrative (Davis-Undiano, 2012). However, red sorghum is not only a local term for wheat in the rural area; it is also regarded as a symbol and metaphor, which witnessed the love, loss, wine making, change, death, blood, and vitality of villagers during a brutal time of war, and it became a symbol for the struggles of a harsh life. Mo Yan employed all his sensory organs to feel the beauty of his hometown and his loving fellow villagers, who demonstrate an indomitable spirit of struggle and patriotism, even in a harsh social environment. This is a world that is represented in Goldblatt’s translated works. He employed visualization in ARD in order to retain the original aesthetic attitudes in the novel.

V. FINDINGS

The major finding in this study is that aesthetic representations of dialects go beyond linguistics and demonstrate that every single aesthetic feature in the landscape of Northeast Township of Gaomi, the contradictory beauty of humor and optimism in a turbulent social context, the purity and honorable spirit of the area, the hardworking and honest personalities of the rural villagers, and the indomitable spirit of patriotism, all of these connotations are conveyed by the original novel and the translated text by Goldblatt, whose translation is defined as “creative translation” by many researchers. Goldblatt argued that translation is incapable of fully representing the connotation and artistic value of source material just through proficiency in both languages and cultures, and creativity is also a crucial element in the translation process (Cohorst, 2012). He also points out that the distinctive linguistic difference between English and Chinese requires the translator to be more creative and adopt domesticating strategies. This can be seen in many parts of the novel: dialect translations adopt translation strategies, such as “zero translation”, which is believed to be an inflexible convention in previous translation studies (Toury, 1991), which is also regarded as a mistake, or non-

equivalent translation, on the linguistic level. Nevertheless, Goldblatt endorses aesthetic values that correspond with those of the author Mo Yan and fully reproduces the spiritual aesthetic values of Shandong dialects in this novel.

Secondly, Goldblatt's translation is focused on producing a translated text for English target readers and not for native readers. Thus, his translation is not that close to the linguistic expressions of the source text, because it is his intention to transform as much cultural information as possible, thus catering to English target readers. Therefore, from this point of view, foreignization and domestication translation strategies are a dominant way of approaching the process of translation. However, the main aim is to represent cultural and aesthetic values of the source text, translation strategies of domestication and foreignization (82%) are used far more frequently than ARD (18%), i.e. metaphorization, visualization, and stylistic changes, which may result in aesthetic loss to a certain degree.

Third, fidelity of translation is the core concept in Goldblatt's translation. There are many examples of this, such as in the measurement, custom, name and place dialects he transmits, demonstrating his great efforts to retain the originality, cultural uniqueness, and aesthetic values of the source text by employing various aesthetic regulation devices, such as metaphorization, visualization, and stylistic changes, which can be defined as instances of "creative translation." Davis-Undiano (2012) reaffirmed Goldblatt's great contribution of transmitting Chinese culture to the world, and argued that Goldblatt offered a unique opportunity for readers in the Western world to involve in and gain a deep appreciation for Chinese culture through Mo Yan's perspective. However, creative and free translation should also address precise and comprehensive translations at linguistic levels, which are the basic units of translation. As Zhu and Qin (2014, p. 112) put it, "Goldblatt was influenced by the concept of 'fidelity' in translation, he wanted to retain the visual impact of the geographic space of the source text and convey the linguistic information and aesthetic elements to the American readers faithfully". Thus, an integrative translation framework of linguistic translation strategies, aesthetic regulation devices, and cultural analysis work together as whole to decisively confirm the quality, originality, and acceptability of the novel.

VI. CONCLUSION

Goldblatt's translation uses every means, including different translation strategies, to cater to the understanding and acceptance of Chinese local cultures for target readers by taking their life experiences and aesthetic feelings into consideration. "Translators should employ cultural compensation procedures to effectively recover and reconstruct the original meaning of the source text in different contexts, ensuring a comprehensive and accurate representation of the source text in its new setting" (Wang, 2014, p. 75). The translation process is not static, but rather a dynamic and difficult process, especially when it operates between two different cultures. The translator plays a significant role in stimulating aesthetic empathy and representing aesthetic values of source culture to target readers; translation strategies should vary from one source text to another. At the same time, both the aesthetic subjects (translator and target readers) and the aesthetic objects (ST & TT) interact with one another throughout the process. Aesthetic subjects vary from culture to culture, and their aesthetic experiences and feelings differ, because "literariness is culturally and historically mutable" and "translation is a re-formulation that targets equivalence, rather than identity, of message and of effect" (Lahiani, 2022, p. 2). In conclusion, the framework of integrating cultural consideration and aesthetic regulation devices is a better solution than traditional translation strategies and a new orientation to the translation of dialect.

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