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# Studying the Voice of Mo Yan and Howard Goldblatt: Zhang Kou in the Garlic Ballads

Yiran Yang

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STUDYING THE VOICE OF MO YAN AND HOWARD GOLDBLATT: ZHANG KOU IN  
*THE GARLIC BALLADS*

by

Yiran Yang

Bachelor of Arts  
Shandong University, 2014

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Jie Guo, Director of Thesis

Michael G. Hill, Reader

Cheryl L. Addy, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

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## DEDICATION

To my family.

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## ABSTRACT

In 2012, a Chinese, Mo Yan 莫言, became the laureate of the Nobel Prize in Literature. It was the first time in China's history; this is not because Mo Yan is better than other Chinese writers, or that he follows some Western writers like Gabriel García Márquez, but because he works with better translators, who make his stories captivating for Western readers, than whom his precursors work with. Even though Mo Yan sticks closely to dialect and culture in rural areas in northern China, his translators adjust his writings to an accessible form in another language. In order to understand why these translations make Mo Yan's works popular in the Western world, this thesis focuses on Mo Yan's English translator, Howard Goldblatt, and studies his translation techniques. This thesis aims at a minor character, Zhang Kou 张扣, in one of Mo Yan's understudied novels, *The Garlic Ballads Tiantang suantai zhi ge* 天堂蒜薹之歌. The novel received not as much scholarly attention as his *Red Sorghum Clan Hong gaoliang jiazu* 红高粱家族, so scholarship of Zhang Kou is limited. By analogizing the Chinese and English version of the standby of the garlic riot Zhang Kou, both the writing style of Mo Yan and the translating features of Goldblatt are part of this discussion. With the analyses of Zhang Kou's representation of the voice of both the author and the translator, Mo Yan's original depictions of Zhang Kou contrast with Goldblatt's rewriting of the counterparts; it reveals how the two voices, though articulated by the same character, are different. In this thesis, the introduction to Goldblatt's translating techniques focuses on how he

overcomes the barriers between the two languages and unites his own voice with that of Mo Yan. By concentrating on the transformation of Zhang Kou's voice, this thesis argues that Goldblatt adapts Mo Yan's voice to the English-speaking world rhetorically, culturally and ideologically, and that this is the reason why he makes Mo Yan's writing popular in the West.

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## INTRODUCTION

Novelists try to convey their voices through their narratives. Authors' voice is the core of their books. For readers, the purpose of reading a book is to find the voice of its creator. Translators, who are initially readers, seek the authors' voice and then express it in another language. By changing the language of the original, translators may remodel novelists' voices, making them more acceptable for readers speaking other languages. The more discrepancies are there between the original and the target languages, the more the translators may alter the author's voice. This probably can explain why those Chinese voices that are noticeable in the Western World are different from what they are in the original. This thesis focuses on *The Garlic Ballads* by Mo Yan because it is a work like this. Its English translation by Howard Goldblatt seems to be significantly different from the original text. Through comparing a minor character—the local minstrel Zhang Kou 张扣—in the Chinese and English versions of *The Garlic Ballads*, this thesis aims to analyze how Goldblatt modifies the voice of the author Mo Yan 莫言.

Chinese authors barely have a chance to have their voices heard on the stage of the Nobel Prize in Literature, one of the most well-known awards for writers. In its first 117 years of history, no one Chinese author has won this award<sup>1</sup>. Tracing the reasons why Chinese literature is not so popular outside China, it is not because Chinese writers are less talented or distinguished than those of other countries. During the thousands of

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<sup>1</sup> Gao Xingjian 高行健 (1940—) won the Nobel Prize for literature in 2000, but his nationality has become a French citizen since 1997.

years of their civilization, Chinese people have created a reservoir of literary works that is no less superior than any other culture. In 2012, when the Nobel Prize in Literature went to a “real” Chinese, the piece of news was thrilling for the whole country, because Chinese literature finally got recognition from the most authoritative international literary award. Undoubtedly, it imparted a great amount of confidence to both Chinese writers and Chinese readers.

Nonetheless, when it came to the awardee, comments on him were variant. Critics like Anna Sun and Perry Link asserted that it was Mo Yan’s translators who deserved the Nobel Prize. They also declared that the American translator Howard Goldblatt’s translations of Mo Yan’ novels made the greatest contribution to enhance the artistic and aesthetic achievements of the original writing. Despite this, there is an opposing league, which is full of admirers of Mo Yan. Interestingly, Goldblatt himself is a member of this league. He commented that Mo Yan was the most talented Chinese writer (Goldblatt, *The Speech at Taining*). The reasons for such divergent comments may be Mo Yan’s controversial writings style. In his books, there are many unique characteristics, such as his affectation for the inelegant and the grotesque in his narratives. Some find these features disturbing, while others believe that these features are exactly where Mo Yan’s talents rest.

One of the biggest factors that makes Mo Yan’s readers love or hate him is the vulgarity of his language. The vulgarity is like a mirror, reflecting Mo Yan’s life as Guan Moye 管谟业<sup>2</sup>. In 1955, Mo Yan was born to a poor family of Shandong Province in northern China. Poverty was not the only reason that made his childhood miserable.

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<sup>2</sup> Mo Yan’s real name.

When Mo Yan was eleven years old, the Cultural Revolution *wenhua da geming* 文化大革命<sup>3</sup> (1966—1976) started to swirl up across China, and people were likely to get punishments for their “inappropriate” words. Being an extravertive child, the eleven-year-old Mo Yan talked so much that his teacher expelled him out of school. Since then, he kept in his mind the lesson that talking too much was sinful. When Mo Yan started to create literary works, he gave himself the pen name Mo Yan, which in Chinese means “do not talk.”

According to Mo Yan himself, he fought to become a writer only because he heard from others when he was young that writers could eat dumplings for all the three meals in one day (Mo Yan, “Become a Novelist”). At that time, dumplings were a luxury. Families like Mo Yan’s could barely afford to have dumplings once a year. For young Mo Yan, a person who could eat dumplings three times a day is definitely living a happy life. Therefore, to be a writer became young Mo Yan’s dream. From then on, he fought to become a writer. After he joined the army, Mo Yan started his career as a writer (Mo Yan, Nobel Prize Banquet Speech). When he wrote, he wrote about starvation. Many characters in his novels are suffering from severe famine. This happens in *The Garlic Ballads* as well. Mo Yan said that this book was about a story of anger and hunger (Mo Yan and Lin 34).

Mo Yan has been writing for decades and published many books, yet he believes that all the inspirations for his writing solely come from his life experience in his hometown, which is the prototype of Northeast Township of Gaomi *Gaomi dongbei*

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<sup>3</sup> The Cultural Revolution was a political movement. It caused great damage to every walk of life in China.

*xiang* 高密东北乡<sup>4</sup> (Mo Yan, “Become a Novelist”). Indeed, a significant amount of his novels are based on life stories of his elder relatives and compatriots from Gaomi. In his books, Mo Yan tries to trace and reveal their stories, which, though happened decades ago, set ethical role models both for Mo Yan himself and for other people in China. Due to Mo Yan’s attachment to his hometown, scholars find similarities between his literary creations and those of Root-seeking Literature *xungen wenxue* 寻根文学, and thus classify him to be a Root-seeking writer.

One of the nostalgic connections between Mo Yan’s writings and his hometown is local customs, either good or bad. All of the customs in his novels introduce unique local culture, and thus bring readers to much more vivid life experiences in northern China countryside. Through these customs, Mo Yan blends tints of vitality and possibility in his miserable and magical stories, making his readers believe that the seemingly impossible stories could happen in real life. For example, in *The Garlic Ballads*, Jinju<sup>5</sup>’s 金菊 brothers sell her dead body to make her the “ghost wife” of a dead bachelor. Bearing in mind that things like this could happen in rural China, readers would feel that the story is realistic.

Through reading the stories from Mo Yan, readers are able to get a comprehensive picture of the place in which Mo Yan roots himself. Since his first publication in 1987, Mo Yan has created eleven long novels and two collections of short stories, which cover a wide range of topics, from the Anti-Japanese War<sup>6</sup> (the Second Sino-Japanese War, 1937—1945) *kang ri zhanzheng* 抗日战争 to the “One-Child

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<sup>4</sup> This is the name of the place where most of Mo Yan’s stories take place.

<sup>5</sup> Jinju is one of the major characters. She falls in love with Gao Ma, yet died pregnant.

<sup>6</sup> The Anti-Japanese War was from July 7, 1937 to September 2, 1945. It is a war that aims to fight against Japan’s invasion.

Policy”<sup>7</sup>, and from romantic stories to novels on political events. All of these works create a unique historical space, where Mo Yan can preserve local history and stories that belong to that place (Der-Wei Wang and Berry 488). More than this, Mo Yan regard himself as a writer who creates historical stories, so he writes for things greater than mere entertaining. These novels either call attention to the heroic spirit of Mo Yan’s ancestors, like *Red Sorghum*, or bring attention to current social issues, like *The Garlic Ballads*.

The literary trends that Mo Yan follows are the reasons for his distinct writing style. Following Gabriel García Márquez and William Faulkner, Mo Yan romanticizes his fictions by applying hallucinatory realism, which embraces imaginary elements like imaginations, magics, and illusions. Through blending fiction and facts, Mo Yan is able to express himself beyond the limitation of reality. As a result, it allows Mo Yan another instrument to stick to reality when it comes to sensitive topics like politics. The unrealistic characteristics of his books enable him to provide the readers with truths in an indirect and artistic way. By means of hallucination, it is much easier for Mo Yan to disguise truth with absurdity. In this way, Mo Yan’s stories would not sting the authorities. For this reason, in spite of the fact that his stories include criticisms towards the Chinese government, these books of Mo Yan are able to survive the censorship in China.

After Mo Yan won the Nobel Prize, there have been two major judgements on his literary achievements. One party, including scholars like Li Jianjun 李建军, Anna Sun, Perry Link, utter severe criticisms towards Mo Yan’s novels. They think he does not

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<sup>7</sup> A national policy which regulates that each family can only have one child. For ethnic minorities and farmers, exclusions exist. Since October 26, 2015, each family can have two children.

deserve to be the first Chinese Nobel Prize winner in Literature, because there are many other extraordinary Chinese authors, who are much better than he is. For example, these critics mentioned above speak highly of writers like Eileen Chang 张爱玲, Lu Xun 鲁迅, Lao She 老舍, Wang Zengqi 汪曾祺, Bei Dao 北岛, Shi Tiesheng 史铁生; all of these writers made critical contributions to contemporary or modern Chinese literature, but none of them got recognition from this award. Those who dislike Mo Yan, like Li Jianjun, insist that he is nothing like these writers. Li claims that not only is Mo's writings vulgar and absurd, but the themes of his works are skin-deep and worthless (J.Li 8). By denying the value of Mo Yan's novels, these critics even question the impartiality and authority of the Nobel Prize in Literature.

In the West, scholars do not unanimously accept Mo Yan's works as well. For example, Perry Link and Anna Sun have commented negatively on Mo Yan's work. Link described Mo Yan as a sycophant and snob when it came to Mo Yan's attitudes towards the Chinese government (Perry 5-7). Anna Sun holds that Mo Yan writes in "a diseased language" (Sun). Based on Mo Yan's vulgar and primitive topics and vocabulary, Sun believes that he rebels against the traditional Chinese aestheticism, which Chinese literature has long been pursuing. Additionally, Sun maintains that growing up during the Maoist era and the Cultural Revolution makes Mo Yan a socialistic writer, and this political inclination towards Chinese socialism is another reason why his language is "diseased" (Sun).

Those who dislike Mo Yan believe that he is lucky enough to work with many excellent translators, which contribute to improving his original works to a much higher level, and this leads to the result that he gets recognition from the Nobel Prize. They

believe that, without the translator's contribution, Mo Yan's novels could not have been so popular and successful (Sun). Nonetheless, there is another group of scholars and translators who insist that Mo Yan's works are valuable. Mo Yan's translators, like Anna Gustafsson Chen and Tomio Yoshida, are among these. Goldblatt, who has translated five of Mo Yan's long novels into English, is a huge fan of him. During a lecture at the Open University of Hong Kong, Goldblatt said that Mo Yan was his "favorite writer as a reader and translator" (The Speech at Taining). For Goldblatt, Mo Yan "has encyclopedic knowledge of China's culture and history," and Mo Yan's books "deserve to be read by everyone" (The Speech at Taining). As one of the people who are most familiar with Mo Yan's works, Goldblatt shows great respect to Mo Yan and his literary talent ("Wearing Me out" 29). Charles Laughlin, a professor at the University of Virginia, wrote articles to debate with Perry Link and Anna Sun on Mo Yan's literary achievements. He insists that they are consistently ignoring Mo Yan's achievement in literature but kept criticizing Mo Yan's cooperation with the Chinese government ("Detractors"). Another advocator of Mo Yan, David Der-Wei Wang, is a professor at the Harvard University. Long before Mo Yan won any significant domestic or international award, he wrote an article published in 1999 to show his admiration to Mo Yan. In that article, he suggests that Mo Yan "has been belittled" (Der-Wei Wang, "Literary Writing" 102). Der-Wei Wang speaks highly of Mo Yan's compassion, of his pursuit of freedom, and of his historical narratives (Der-Wei Wang, "Literary Writing" 102).

Six years after the nomination, there have been so many comments on Mo Yan so that both incisive critiques and unhesitating compliments have become clichés. During these years, hundreds of scholars have, in their papers or lectures, conveyed opinions on

Mo Yan's works. At this point, a simple conclusion is no longer necessary. What the scholarship needs more is close analyses of Mo Yan's work. This is exactly the goal of this thesis. By comparing the Chinese version of Zhang Kou with himself in the English translation, this thesis summarizes the means by which Mo Yan expresses his voice, and by which Goldblatt adjusts Mo Yan's voice in English.

This thesis focuses on Mo Yan's second novel, *The Garlic Ballads*. The story, first published in 1988, is based on a piece of news about a riot, which took place in the same year, against the government of Cangshan County, Shandong Province 山东省苍山县. The name of the riot is "the garlic incident *suantai shijian* 蒜薹事件," because the major conflict that led the riot was garlic. At first, the government encouraged farmers to grow garlic instead of normal crops, as corn or wheat. In order to earn more money, all the farmers who wanted to improve their life grew garlic and hence expected more incomes. The harvest was 50 million kilograms of garlic in total (*Dazhong wang*). Then, selling the huge amount of garlic became a challenge. Because of the bureaucracy of the local authorities, not only were the farmers unable to sell their garlic, but they had to pay various fees to the government. Farmers could no longer bear it, so they broke into the county government's office building and made huge damage to it. Mo Yan accidentally noticed this incident in newspaper, and wrote this novel in only 35 days to speak for the garlic farmers.

In *The Garlic Ballads*, the story takes place in Paradise County *Tiantang xian* 天堂县, and includes four major storylines<sup>8</sup> (Wang and Shao 256). Zhang Kou is on behalf

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<sup>8</sup> Some scholars like Shanshan Liu 刘珊珊 ("Analyzing" 24) believes that there are three storylines in the story: Gao Yang, Gao Ma and Zhang Kou. This thesis prefers Wang and



of one of the storylines. All of the protagonists of these storylines take part in the riot against local authorities. Before the garlic incident, these four narratives are dependent upon each other, completing others' stories from different angles. These characters not only are neighbors and fellow townsmen to each other, but they represent different groups of farmers who might possibly participate in the riot. During the riot, the four storylines merge.

Gao Yang 高羊 is a timid young farmer who needs the money to support his poor family. He speaks on behalf of the obedient. Gao Yang's encounters bring the images of people who suffered from injustice from the 1950s to the 1970s. His story manifests the reasons why people like him, after remaining obedient for so long, would become rebellious and join the riots in the end. Being submissive would not save them from exploitations.

Gao Ma 高马 is a veteran and enjoys a little higher social status than many other characters. Thus, he represents a group of people who lead a better life than Gao Yang and have their own spiritual pursuits. Nonetheless, his dream of marrying the one he loves breaks because of the authorities' bureaucracy. After many other struggles, money is the one last thing that Gao Ma needs in order to marry his lover Jinju. Gao Ma could have earned enough money through selling his garlic. However, neither does the local government allow garlic farmers like Gao Ma to trade with people from other places nor does the local market have enough purchasing power to consume all the garlic harvested

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Shao's argument that there are four storylines, because the story of Jinju's family represent another aspect in rural life. In addition to this, Uncle Fang and Aunt Fang's story could well support Mo Yan's opinion that literary works, which truly concerns for the society, should concern about "the bad" as well ("Defending" 26). Through the Fang's story, Mo Yan present to the readers that, though the Fangs maltreat Jinju, the life of the Fangs' are miserable as well.

within the county. Finally, because he is not able to get enough money to pay her family, Gao Ma does not marry pregnant Jinju on time, and this leads to Jinju's death. Bearing anger and dissatisfaction towards the authorities, Gao Ma becomes a leader of the riot.

The narrative of the Fangs 方 is contradictory. On one hand, this family is abominable because, to some extent, they are to blame for Gao Ma and Jinju's tragic ending. On the other hand, they are also victims, who live with a tight budget and are unable to protect themselves against the authorities. Fourth Uncle *Fang si shu* 方四叔, hit and killed by an officer's car, is the reason why Fourth Aunt *Fang si shen* 方四婶 participates in the riot.

The last narrative is by Zhang Kou, a local minstrel. Although Zhang Kou is a minor character in the story, his ballads appear throughout the novel, both at the beginning of each chapter and in the main body of several chapters. In Chinese, Zhang Kou's given name means "button." Functioning like his name, Zhang Kou's ballads are like buttons of the whole story, connecting the other three narratives together, and complementing their stories. Added to this, Zhang Kou's neutral comments provide the readers with a comparatively objective perspective to analyze the riot. Zhang Kou, as an outsider, represents the author's opinions and speaks for local farmers. Strength, bravery, complaints, fury, and resistance shown in Zhang Kou's ballads belong to garlic farmers involved in the riot. This thesis examines the role that Zhang Kou plays to express the voices of the novel's creator, Mo Yan, and its "re-creator," Goldblatt. Particularly, the differences between Zhang Kou in the original version and that in the English version illustrate the "manipulation" in Goldblatt's translations.

The Committee of Nobel Prize in Literature once complimented Mo Yan's writing: "His narrative style bears the hallmarks of magical realism. Mo Yan's writing often uses older Chinese literature and popular oral traditions as a starting point, combining these with contemporary social issues" (2012 Nobel Museum). *The Garlic Ballads* is a novel of this kind. The four storylines, from four viewpoints, sketch the whole novel. Flashbacks inserted in the narratives, elaborating the causes of each tragedy, make the narrative more attractive and thrilling. With Zhang Kou's ballads and many other Chinese idioms, Mo Yan imbues the story with traditional Chinese culture and customs. Through the content and style of these ballads and idioms, readers would deeply immerse themselves into the circumstances of Northern Chinese villages. This well explains why Mo Yan's vulgar language enhances his literary styles—no one expects a peasant to speak like a literatus. Moreover, these features above are what makes *The Garlic Ballads* one of the chefs-d'œuvre of Mo Yan. "Nobel permanent secretary Peter Englund picked out *The Garlic Ballads*, first published in English in 1995, as Mo Yan's gateway book" (*The Guardian*). *The Garlic Ballads* is so representative of Mo Yan that readers, after reading this novel, can easily recognize his writing. For the same reason, to closely study Mo Yan's voice, this book is a good choice.

Choosing *The Garlic Ballads* as the subject of this thesis is not a random decision. In addition to the reasons mentioned above, there are two other factors. First, the original work, unlike Mo Yan's other books, has not drawn that much attention. It may be because the book is not a typical root-seeking story of Mo Yan. Even though the story takes place in the Northeastern Township of Gaomi, Mo Yan derives this story from a piece of social news on a local riot, rather than an ancestral legend. Because this book

includes sensitive issues and may trigger dissatisfaction towards the authorities, the Chinese government banned this book in mainland China for four years (Chen 38). The second reason for choosing this novel is its English translation by Goldblatt. Mo Yan has been working with many extraordinary translators from all around the world. These translators have rendered his books to more than 40 languages including Japanese, English, Spanish, French, German, and Swedish. As a translator of many of Mo Yan's novels, Goldblatt's translation of *The Garlic Ballads* is a quintessence of his translation style. In Goldblatt's translations, he always rewrites the original text, yet *The Garlic Ballads* is the only book where he, after communicating with Mo Yan, changes the main plot of the novel; he rewrites its original ending. The extent to which Goldblatt revises and changes *The Garlic Ballads* implies that Goldblatt is telling Mo Yan's story with the translator's own voice. Therefore, by comparing Zhang Kou in the original version with Zhang Kou in the English version, this thesis studies how Goldblatt combines his voice to that of Mo Yan, and the reason why he makes such changes.

In his speech at the Nobel Banquet, Mo Yan extended his appreciation for his translators. "I also would like to express my appreciation for the translators from various countries who have translated my works. Without their creative translation, literature would only be fettered within one language. It is their contributions that make world literature possible"<sup>9</sup> (Mo Yan, Speech at Nobel Banquet). His words echo with Susan Bassnett's opinion that translation is a literary creative activity, which should be more than merely shifting the original word from the original language to the target language

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<sup>9</sup> This translation is a quotation from the official Nobel Prize website. The original text is "我还要向翻译我作品的各国翻译家表示崇高的敬意，没有你们，世界文学这个概念就不能成立。你们的工作，是人类彼此了解、互相尊重的桥梁"。  
[https://www.nobelprize.org/uploads/2018/06/yan-speech\\_ch-2.pdf](https://www.nobelprize.org/uploads/2018/06/yan-speech_ch-2.pdf)

(Bassnett 173-183). In this speech, Mo Yan speaks highly of creative translation, which emphasizes the involvement of translators in delivering voices from original literary work. Mo Yan is very likely to be a supporter of the argument that translating is rewriting. More than this, Mo Yan advocates for the value of translation: bridging between different languages and cultures, and making translation accessible for the rest of the world. Through translation, people speaking different languages are able to communicate with and to know more about each other.

The bridge that connects Mo Yan and the English-speaking world is Goldblatt, the best American translator in modern Chinese literature (W. Li 57). If the traditional expectation of translators is to be faithful to the original work, Goldblatt has redefined faithfulness. What he does is not sticking to the exact Chinese words, but to the whole picture of the original work. In his translation, Goldblatt explains many Chinese concepts with in a comprehensible way for English speakers. Sometimes, he finds counterparts in English to replace the Chinese slang or idioms. Scholars like Li Jianjun despise Mo Yan's vulgar rhetoric. When translating some of these disputable parts, Goldblatt sometimes would rewrite the original. Through this, he ensures that his translated version would cater to the taste of his readers. In "A Dialogue: on a Translator's Interventions," Ros Schwartz and Nicholas de Lange, two distinguished translators, underline the roles of emotion and intention in translated works. They analogize translators with performing musicians. Being the same as audiences' need for musician's deciphering of musical scores, readers need the interpretations from translators to understand words of the original work (18). Performing musicians may need to add another musical instrument to the original score to fully express the emotions they have perceived. In the same way,

when it comes to readers with different ideologies or cultural backgrounds, translators will need to make adjustments and cater to the target culture so that their translation is more accessible for the readers.

The aim of this thesis is to analyze how Mo Yan expresses his voices through a witness, Zhang Kou, and how Goldblatt rewrites the voices of Mo Yan to add his own voice to Zhang Kou's. Zhang Kou, a balladeer from Gaotuan 高瞳<sup>10</sup>, is a witness of the garlic riot. In his ballads, he upholds justice and makes comments on the riots. There are evidences showing that Zhang Kou is an avatar of Mo Yan. Through the ballads of Zhang Kou, one is able to know the author's thoughts and stances. The next chapter of this thesis studies the similarities between Mo Yan and Zhang Kou.

Goldblatt, who tells the story of *The Garlic Ballads* in English, makes adaptations so that the story caters to the taste of the English-speaking world. According to theorists like Lawrence Venuti and Walter Benjamin, these adaptations in rewriting make the translator, who are usually off-stage and invisible, stand in the spotlight and make the contributions of these translators noticeable. Given that Goldblatt's rewriting of *The Garlic Ballads* is evident, he and his translation are the suitable subjects of study. In Chapter Two, this thesis examines how Goldblatt adjusts Mo Yan's original voice for the English readers' while translating. This explains the fact that, in Goldblatt's translations of Mo Yan's novels, he mixes his own voice to that of Mo Yan.

By referring to works of Mary Snell-Hornby, Susan Bassnett, André Lefevere, and many other scholars in translation theories, Chapter Three of this thesis provides Goldblatt's translations with theoretical supports by referring to translation theories from

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<sup>10</sup> Gaotuan is a county in Yantai, Shandong Province.

two aspects: the cultural turn and translation as rewriting. The cultural turn validates Goldblatt's translations, which pay great attention to the target readers. In their co-edited book *Constructing Cultures*, Bassnett and Lefevere discuss the reasons why translation studies need to cooperate with cultural studies. Cultural interaction, which is one of the aims of translating, becomes the prime task of Goldblatt's translations. In the meantime, Bassnett and Lefevere provide methodological support for the notion of translation as rewriting. By rewriting the source text, Goldblatt achieves his goal, which is to introduce Chinese literature in an accessible way. Last but not least, there are citations from the translator himself to elucidate his features in translating. Analyzing his understandings of translation studies might be the most direct way to grasp his preferences and thoughts on translation.

Goldblatt chooses rewriting as his translation method not only because of the linguistic and cultural barriers between Chinese and English, but also the writing styles of Mo Yan. Scholars like Anna Sun and Perry Link criticize Mo Yan's stories. They assert that his stories are not aesthetically Chinese because his writings are neither elegant nor graceful. To argue against these opinions, this thesis quotes articles from Goldblatt, Der-Wei Wang, and Thomas M. Inge to clarify the aesthetic value of Mo Yan's writing. Other than this, the attention Der-Wei Wang pays to the connections between Mo Yan's stories and historical narratives is also inspiring. This perspective helps to understand Mo Yan's artistic choices and the historical significance of Mo Yan's works. Then, this thesis examines scholars like Laughlin, Inge, Angelica Duran, Yuhua Huang, Shelley W. Chan,

and Goldblatt for their “western eyes.”<sup>11</sup> Additionally, this thesis cites interviews and essays from Mo Yan as well to help interpret his works.

In Chapter One, the thesis focuses on how Zhang Kou, as a minor character, encompasses some of the writing features of Mo Yan. There are analyses of four major features of Mo Yan’s literary style in *The Garlic Ballads*: the grotesqueness of Mo Yan’s writing, the ugly images he presents, his anger towards local authorities, and his concerns for the garlic farmers. Then the thesis develops to the correlations between Zhang Kou and Mo Yan’s voice. This chapter provides detailed explanations on how Zhang Kou represents Mo Yan’s voice. Chapter Two of this thesis analyzes how Goldblatt, in his English translation of the book, interprets Zhang Kou’s four features included in Chapter One. Although these features are critical for Mo Yan’s writing, Goldblatt rewrites these four features in different extent to make them culturally and ideologically acceptable for Western readers. This chapter exhibits evidences of Goldblatt’s rewriting. Taking the taste of English-speaking readers into consideration, this thesis explores into the reasons why Goldblatt makes such changes. Additionally, this chapter analogizes the Chinese version and the English version, in order to emphasize the significance of Goldblatt’s changes. Then, this chapter discusses that, by rewriting the original text while translating, Goldblatt takes the role of Mo Yan and expresses his own interpretation of the story to readers. Chapter Three of this thesis introduces two major translation trends to support Goldblatt’s rewriting: the cultural turn and translation as rewriting. Encompassing works from scholars like Susan Bassnett, André Lefevere, Etmar Even-Zohar, Gideon Toury, this chapter examines why Goldblatt’s seemingly “unfaithful” translation is theoretically

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<sup>11</sup> All of their journals or books were composed and published in the American academia.



applicable. The last chapter is conclusion. It summarizes the content of previous chapters. Then, it analyzes the relationship between Goldblatt and Mo Yan. Furthermore, this chapter explains why Goldblatt's translation is beneficial to literary translation of Chinese literature and how his translation can inspire other translators.

## CHAPTER ONE

### ZHANG KOU EXPRESSES MO YAN'S VOICE

Authors express their voice through their writings. Mark Bauerlein illustrates that voice in literary works signifies the author's distinctive reactions and stylistic narrations (Bauerlein 132). Voice is a representation of the individuality of each person, so the voice of each author is unique. "[Voice] implies breath, spirit, presence, [and] what comes before words and gives them life" (Harris 33). It is voice that makes their writing alive and distinctive. Mo Yan utters his voice through writing as well. There are many features that enable the readers to distinguish Mo Yan's novels from those of another writer, such as his obsession with inelegant things, his vulgar esthetic choices, his incisive sensory depictions, his sympathies towards common people, and so on. Zhang Kou, as a minor character in the book, shares these features of Mo Yan. As a standby, Zhang Kou presents Mo Yan's style and stance. Zhang Kou's ballads, which include most of his narrations, are as vulgar and grotesque as the writing of Mo Yan. Meanwhile, as a witness, Zhang Kou shares his stance in the garlic riot with the author as well; both of them fight for garlic farmers against the local authorities.

Speaking of Mo Yan, one would first think of root-seeking *xun gen* 寻根. Root-seeking Literature *xun gen wenxue* 寻根文学 is a Chinese literary movement from 1985 to 1988. Authors of this movement emphasize their own cultural identity in their writings. People associate this literary trend with Native Soil Literature *xiangtu wenxue* 乡土文学, a literary movement that Shen Congwen 沈从文 (1902-1988) led (Leenhouts 534). Root-

seeking greatly bespeaks the topic and content of Mo Yan's works, and explains the settings of northern Chinese countryside in his stories. It also makes the creation of Zhang Kou possible. Balladeers like Zhang Kou who sing for a living are common in northern Chinese countryside. Singing ballads about local life in Mo Yan's hometown, the minstrel's appearance in the book is in accord with the literary trend that Mo Yan involves.

If nostalgia were the only thing that Mo Yan presents, he would be a mediocre author who writes in the shadow of Shen Congwen. Instead, Mo Yan adds political and historical dimensions to his stories. Born in 1955 and writing mostly about the first twenty years of his life, Mo Yan writes with language from the Maoist period (1949-1976). Unlike Shen Congwen's poetic depictions of the country life, Mo Yan's stories demonstrate his concerns for the fate of China by incorporating significant historical events such as the Anti-Japanese War (aka. the Second Sino-Japanese War), widespread famine in rural China, the Cultural Revolution, and so on. In *The Garlic Ballads*, the garlic riot is a major event. Both being passionate for the sufferings of local farmers, Mo Yan and Zhang Kou have concerns in common. They both show sympathy towards the victims of the garlic riot, and both of them unveil corruptions of local officials through their artistic creations and look forward to the authorities' improvements after such an incident. Moreover, Zhang Kou uses socialistic terms and recreates traditional Chinese ballads to adapt to the social backgrounds of that time.

Claiming himself to be a disciple of Gabriel García Márquez (Colombia writer, 1927—2014), Mo Yan applies hallucinatory realism. His writing contains a lot of dream-states, illusions, magic, exaggerations, imaginations, etc. The freedom of creation

bestowed by hallucinatory realism allows Mo Yan possibilities to practice his seemingly awkward narrating style. Zhang Kou echoes the awkwardness. In his ballads, Zhang Kou shares many features in common with Mo Yan. He applies exaggerations, unrelated objects, imaginations, unusual metaphors, vulgarity, myths, and so on.

Hallucinatory realism not only adds an exotic tinge to root-seeking narrations, but also makes Mo Yan an excellent storyteller. He provides readers with one puzzle piece at a time and induces them to build up the whole picture under irresistible reading compulsion. When telling stories, Mo Yan knits a grand net that connects various events, and lures his readers into his narrations. “Unlike most epic novels..., [*Red Sorghum*] is not told chronologically, but rather moves back and forth in time and requires the reader to make connections and put the events into a comprehensible order without ever knowing the actual truth of what happens” (Inge 502). *The Garlic Ballads* is a book of this kind. What is unique about this novel is Zhang Kou. His ballads provide another angle for readers to learn the whole picture. In addition to the author’s achronological narration, Zhang Kou’s ballads are another evidence of Mo Yan’s innovation in narrative structure; the ballads are intertextual with the main narration and contribute intentionally to leaking more details of the upcoming plot or previous event to the readers. Mo Yan attaches more importance to narrative structure than any other writing technique. According to him, the structure of a story is part of its content, is part of its artistic features, and is an evidence of the author’s talent (Mo Yan, “Dignifying” 28). Zhang Kou’s ballads, as a part of Mo Yan’s narration structure, exhibit his artistic features and talent in literature.

Considering Zhang Kou's function in Tiantang County's garlic riot and Mo Yan's role in Cangshan County's garlic riot, they have similarities regarding their identities. Being witnesses, both of them represent a comparatively objective point of view. They are strongly sympathetic towards the victims of the riot, so they try to advocate and speak for these garlic farmers by applying their artistic talent. Therefore, it is sensible to maintain that Zhang Kou helps to express Mo Yan's voice in the story.

In the following parts of this chapter, this thesis analyses the connections between Mo Yan's voice and that of Zhang Kou's from two aspects: style and stance. The two aspects contain four specific points. First, style includes two features of their language and narration: the grotesqueness of their literary style and the ugly things they include in their creations. Creating literary works that reflect lives of peasants, both of Mo Yan and Zhang Kou are imaginative in depicting sceneries. They offer the readers a vivid reading experience. Additionally, they are rebellious in word choice. Although they create literary works, novels and ballads, the tawdry words they use lack elegance yet are felicitous for lives in rural areas. The second aspect, stance, shows their solicitude for the garlic farmers and anger towards the local authorities. Mo Yan's anger and concern led to the creation of this book, while Zhang Kou's anger and concern result in his creation of the garlic ballads. Given the fact that their anger comes from their concerns for the victims, this thesis treats their anger as a manifestation of their concerns and puts these two features together in one part. These four features, shared by Zhang Kou and Mo Yan, present how Zhang Kou helps Mo Yan with expressing his voice in the story.

## The Grotesque

Realism usually indicates representations of reality. The grotesque of this novel does not seem to make the story close to realism. Imagination, exaggeration, and streams of consciousness are likely to restrain the narrator from being realistic. Nonetheless, according to Mo Yan, it is the grotesque of his works that helps him to reflect realities in a much easier way (“How did I”). He says that this writing technique is seemingly inconsistent with real life, but the fact is the opposite (“How did I”). In spite of including fantasies and unrestrained imaginations in his works, Mo Yan insists that he follows the rules of being realistic. Pu Songling 蒲松齡 (1640—1715), who Mo Yan often correlates to himself, is a Chinese writer during Qing Dynasty (1616-1912) that tells ghost stories. Mo Yan asserts that the monsters, fairies, and ghosts in Pu’s stories are incarnations of humans (“How Did I”). He compares himself to Pu Songling, and believes that he does the same thing (“How Did I”). The different types of grotesque features included in the book—transformations, exaggerations, and distortions—are like realities under microscopes or in close-up shots, which magnify and focus on truths, yet look different (Mo Yan, “How did I”). Mo Yan believes that the grotesque is a part of realism, and his choice of this writing style is profound and condensed (“How did I”). Zhang Kou, as the character who helps to express Mo Yan’s voice, shares this with Mo Yan. In his ballads, Zhang Kou keeps close to reality through being unrealistic.

*The Garlic Ballads*, as a typical Mo Yan’s story, is full of the grotesque in his writing. This thesis analyzes this feature from three viewpoints: abnormality, exaggeration, and the streams of consciousness. By adding abnormality into his works, Mo Yan underlines and highlights what he prioritizes. For example, before Jinju hangs

herself, she converses with her unborn child. This would never happen in real life.

Although the whole scene is based on the author's imagination, its functions in the whole story are critical—it well concludes Jinju's struggles and explains why she would kill herself and her child. In this sense, abnormality helps Mo Yan achieve many things that normality would hard to accomplish.

Another type of the grotesque in Mo Yan's novel comes from exaggeration. Mo Yan frequently depicts strong sensory perceptions, such as bright colors, strong scents, tactual senses, etc. When Gao Ma and Jinju escape their county, the first thing they see is a fiery red field of hot chili peppers. The contrasting colors of red chili peppers and green garlic imply the huge contrasts between their miserable past experience and a promising future.

Besides the two aspects above, the narrative style in this book is peculiar. Not only is the whole story non-linear<sup>12</sup>, but in each part, flashbacks and memory fragments interweave with each part, forming a colorful yet psychopathic picture of the stream of consciousness. By moving back and forth in the narrative, readers get significant background information that leads to the current situation or they get consequences provoked by the on-going event. Meanwhile, as Mo Yan applies non-linear narration to Zhang Kou's ballads, together with these ballads' intertextuality with the main body, these functions work for Zhang Kou's ballads in the same way. Goldblatt comments that these scenes, sometimes disturbing and ghoulish, are Mo Yan's most useful and best vehicle for his rich and imagistic language ("A Mutually" 26).

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<sup>12</sup> This means disorder in timeline.

Zhang Kou, the embodiment of Mo Yan's voice, shows the grotesque in his ballads. Relating his characters with animals is one aspect of the grotesque of Mo Yan's writing. In his book *Life and Death are Wearing Me out*, Mo Yan makes his protagonist live in other animals' bodies. In *The Garlic Ballads*, Mo Yan shows this characteristic as well. He names the protagonists with animal's names. For instance, Gao Ma in Chinese means a tall horse, and Gao Yang in Chinese means a tall goat. In his ballads, Zhang Kou displays the same features. When he sings about the *Red Crag hong yan* 红岩<sup>13</sup>, he describes an officer as “这小子斜斜着母狗眼”<sup>14</sup>(Mo Yan, *Ballads* 15), which literally means “this man slanted his eyes, which are like female dog's eyes<sup>15</sup>”. However, this translation does not express the original meaning of the Chinese text, because 母狗眼 *mugou yan* refers to eyes that are evil. Here, Zhang Kou puts the officer's eyes in parallel with female dog's eyes.

In addition to uncommon metaphors, another sign of grotesqueness is strong sensory depictions. Characterized as a chivalrous balladeer, Zhang Kou plays the role of witness in the whole story, and talks very little about himself. There is only once when Zhang Kou talks about himself. In the first section of Chapter Twenty, Zhang Kou describes how the police punished him with a baton. This scene includes detailed depictions of abnormally strong sensory perceptions: “我感到那强大的电流似千万根钢针，扎着牙髓、舌头和咽喉，千头万绪的巨大痛楚，猛冲上头颅，并飞快地流遍全

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<sup>13</sup> *Red Crag* is a long novel, published in 1961. It tells sufferings of communists in a KMT prison. Most of the stories take place between 1948 and 1949, before the KMT authorities retreat to Taiwan Province. This book is to show dedication and bravery of these communists.

<sup>14</sup> Goldblatt translates this sentence in the English version as “He hers through slanted eyes” (*Ballads* 12).

<sup>15</sup> The author of this thesis made this translation.



身。我发出了连我自己听了都感到毛骨悚然的号叫……”<sup>16</sup>(Mo Yan, *Ballads* 252).

The grotesque in this part lies in the weirdly strong sensory depictions. It includes the feeling of needle point and strident sound to enhance the vividness of Zhang Kou's experience. The author exaggerates the sensory depictions and makes it abnormal. It is not hard to find that Zhang Kou speaks like Mo Yan—they present the readers with what seems exaggerated and imaginary, yet speaks for the fact.

Another indication of the grotesque in this scene is the change of pronouns. As a book in third-person narration, the first-person pronouns seldom appear. Although the first sentence has a colon to show that the following sentences are descriptions of Zhang Kou's sufferings in the police station, the consecutive use of first-person pronouns like “I” and “my” demonstrates a change of standpoint from the third-person narrative to the first-person narrative. It feels abrupt to change from a bystander to a character in the story, because this is not logical and shows signs of streams of consciousness. In spite of this, depicting Zhang Kou's sufferings from his own standpoint is lively. This example is an evidence of enhancing the reading effect with seemingly illogical depictions. Therefore, the exaggerating sensory depictions using the first-person pronouns in the midst of a third-person narrative contributes to the grotesque of the author's writing and his stylistic narrative.

From the examples above, it is easy to conclude that the grotesque of Mo Yan's writing helps both the narrators, Mo Yan and Zhang Kou, and the readers. Exaggeration,

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<sup>16</sup> The literal translation of this sentence is “The strong electric current felt like tens of thousands of needles stabbing into my teeth, my tongue, and my throat. The scattered sharp pain crashed my head, and then rapidly surges from head to toe. I screamed and made everyone scared, including myself.” The author of this thesis provides this translation.

imagination, and streams of consciousness enable them to create with much more freedom and vividness. As for the readers, because of the vivid language, they are able to immerse themselves in the story. Goldblatt once commented that Mo Yan “is a novelist for whom narrative power easily accommodates the grotesque and the fantastic” (“A Mutually” 27).

### **The Ugly**

Mo Yan has long been receiving criticisms for his vulgar language. Critics, like Anna Sun, claim that Mo Yan is a taint to Chinese literature, which, from ancient times, has been admiring deliberate literary works (Sun). If traditional Chinese literary works are Baroque, Mo Yan’s books are Fauvism. Strokes are clumsy, colors are crude, themes are primitive—his writing “betrays” Chinese literary conventions and, at the same time, touches the essence of realism. Being similar to the two painting styles, both of these literary styles are valuable. It is exactly the candor and the ugly in Mo Yan’s language that has connections to real life in rural China.

Born in the countryside of northeastern Shandong Province, Mo Yan knows peasant life well. Particularly, he knows the life in long-run famines. People at that time led the most miserable life in modern Chinese history, but the literary works of that period of time portrayed a world that was opposite in almost every aspect. Chinese literature at that time was a political tool, and pursued extreme sublimity (Der-Wei Wang and Berry 490). Protagonists in most of the works are faithful to socialistic careers, and these socialists will be happy as long as they contribute to the country. For example, Zhang Kou’s ballads about Jiang Xueqin 江雪琴 is originally from *Red Crag*. In this novel, protagonists are under arrest because they are communists. Although they suffer

from severe tortures from the Kuo Min Tang 国民党 (henceforth KMT), no one regrets dedicating to communism. Scholars name works of this kind during the Maoist period “the grand narrative” (Der-Wei Wang and Berry 490). Evidently, this kind of literary works is not “realistic.” Mo Yan’s works are on the opposite side of “the grand narrative”. David Der-Wei Wang maintains that Mo Yan’s literary style is so unbridled and unique that it makes his works historically powerful (Der-Wei Wang and Berry 490). “If Maoist historical narrative takes the sublime as its benchmark icon, then what Mo Yan takes as his trademark is a grotesque esthetic and historical view” (Der-Wei Wang and Berry 490). Mo Yan includes in his works many ugly objects which other literary works would prefer to replace with euphemisms. In his books, Mo Yan talks so much about these inelegant things that it seems his fictional world consists of too many ugly things. Mo Yan deforms his literary world not for his personal preferences, but for highlighting historical truths. This kind of esthetical grotesqueness is in this way a source of historical power in his stories (Der-Wei Wang and Berry 490).

According to Anna Sun, Mo Yan’s language is diseased in two ways. One is being vulgar, and the other is being socialistic (Sun). Mo Yan’s stories include sufferings of peasants in his hometown. These sufferings include heavy labor, starvation, poverty, material deprivation, oppression from the local government, persecution during the Anti-Rightist Movement<sup>17</sup>, and so on. Particularly, the lives depicted under such circumstances are those of garlic farmers. Expecting grace and delicacy from this kind of work seems to

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<sup>17</sup> The Anti-Rightist Movement, which is also known as the anti-rightist campaign, happened around 1957 to 1959. It is held against landlords and intellectuals who appealed to capitalism. This movement has long been regarded as a political persecution within China and abroad.

be unrealistic and distracted. Therefore, the ugly in Mo Yan's depicting of the peasant's life is reasonable.

Growing up in the Maoist period, Mo Yan is familiar with socialist movements, slogans, and events. Mo Yan decorates his story with strong socialistic features which lead to harsh criticisms. "Open any page, and one is treated to a jumble of words that juxtaposes rural vernacular, clichéd socialist rhetoric, and literary affectation" (Sun). It may be reasonable to criticize that all of the literary works in the Maoist period are clichéd with socialist rhetoric, because in most cases it is right. These works only focus on the bright side of the country, yet do not mention any sufferings of its citizens. Despite this, it does not happen in Mo Yan's case. In his writing, these despised socialist slogans are not calling for ideological passions, but sketching social environment and satirizing socialist officials. Therefore, it is farfetched to make the comment that Mo Yan's language is "clichéd socialist rhetoric" (Sun). Perhaps, only through close analyses and shared memories would a reader acquire the illumination in "the chaotic reality of Mo Yan's hallucinatory world" (Sun).

Truly, "[i]t is important to be aware of the ways language carries moral implications" (Sun). For Mo Yan, the ugly things in his writings are his way to spread moral implications. Failing to appreciate the moral implications of Mo Yan's works just because of his or her own bias against Mo Yan's writing style is a consequence of self-esteem and a proof of lacking living experience in rural China. Although scenes in Mo Yan's stories are not pleasant, they reflect the fact in that specific time and place. Mo Yan presents these unpleasant truths to readers not to spoil their reading experiences, but to arouse their sympathies towards the sufferings of the victims in the garlic riot.

Moreover, criticizing that “Mo Yan’s language is disconnected from the long history of China’s literary past” (Sun) is nothing but wrong. Take *The Garlic Ballads* as an example. The novel borrows its structure from traditional Chinese long novels “chapter novel” *zhanghui ti xiaoshuo* 章回体小说, which means that the long story is divided by chapters. In traditional chapter novels, before the main body of each chapter, there is a “chapter head,” consisting of parallel sentences and leading the whole chapter. In *The Garlic Ballads*, all the chapter heads are Zhang Kou’s ballads. These ballads, borrowing their formats from traditional chapter heads, are another evidence of the close connection between Mo Yan’s writing and traditional Chinese literary style. Consequently, it is inaccurate to say that Mo Yan’s novels are irrelevant to Chinese literary tradition.

The vulgarity in Mo Yan’s language basically lies in two aspects: the coarse objects and tawdry scenes he depicts. It is not unusual to come across waste in Mo Yan’s stories. In the whole book, Mo Yan mentions “shit *shi/fen* 屎/粪” 48 times, “urine *niao* 尿” 99 times, and “stinky *chou* 臭” 38 times. It is absurd to expect aesthetics in the most common sense with such frequency of using these words, let alone being elegant in circumstances where characters are made to drink urine and to eat urine-soaked steamed buns. These narrations represent not only filth and evil of human beings, but also sympathies and leniencies towards the characters. Mo Yan holds the opinion that it is hypocritical to show sympathy and leniency towards others while consciously ignoring human’s evil and filth (Mo Yan, “Dignifying” 26). He insists that being brave enough to accept the dark side of human beings and of the world would be helpful for a person to become sympathetic and lenient. Therefore, it is unreasonable if one only focuses on the

disturbing aspect in Mo Yan's writing and ignores what really matters beyond these words. What really makes a difference is not the disturbing things, but the writer's bravery to accept evil and filth of the real world, and being sympathetic towards others. For this reason, ugliness in Mo Yan's language unveils the reasons why he is a great author—his bravery and sense of justice.

In *The Garlic Ballads*, Zhang Kou, as the embodiment of Mo Yan, speaks in a vulgar manner as well. He includes coarse words and idioms in his ballads. In Chapter Two, Zhang Kou sings a ballads on Jiang Xueqin<sup>18</sup>, a Chinese communist who fights against the KMT. In his ballads, Zhang Kou describes the eyes of the police officer who blocks Jiang's way as "bitch's eyes." In Chinese, "bitch's eyes *mugouyan* 母狗眼" is a crude expression for triangular eyes, and indicates that the person is a villain. Another example is at the beginning of Chapter Four. In Zhang Kou's ballad, he sings "黑蒜薹烂 蒜薹沤粪不壮" (Mo Yan, *Ballads* 47), which literally means that "black garlic and rotten garlic cannot compost good manure heap." Ballads seldomly include words that are related to wastes like urine, feces, dung. Notwithstanding, as a minstrel singing for peasants, combining daily farm work with ballads proves that the book is realistic. Even though these words are rare in a literary work, by adding idioms and terms like this, lives of the garlic farmers are much closer to the readers than ever before.

Those who criticize the esthetic choice of Mo Yan may not realize that sometimes truth will not be that aesthetically acceptable. "...[T]he unbridled, almost deranged legend created by Mo Yan, with his unique literary style, is itself a new kind of historical

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<sup>18</sup> Her real name is Jiang Zhujun 江竹筠 (1920—1949). Chinese usually call her Sister Jiang *jiangjie* 江姐. Jiang Xueqin is an invented name of hers in literary works.

power” (Der-Wei David and Berry 490). By depicting the vulgar and the ugly, Mo Yan shocks his readers with this historical power. He proves to his readers that characters of the story like Zhang Kou are with flesh and blood, are in real life, and are still out there struggling to survive. If one is patient enough, it is easy to find the beauty of authenticity beyond the ugly.

### **Mo Yan’s Concerns and Anger**

Mo Yan has long been criticized for his political stances. Regarding Mo Yan’s artistic creation as “a product of the aesthetic ideologies of Socialist China,” Anna Sun holds the opinion that Mo Yan’s writing is diseased (Sun). Link Perry asserts that Mo Yan is too sleek and sophisticated that he propitiates each side, either the authorities or his readers, to survive in between (Perry 6-8). No one would deny the close relationship between Mo Yan and the Chinese government, because Mo Yan used to be a member of People's Liberation Army (PLA), and the honorary head of an governmental organization, China Writers Association *zhongguo zuojia xiehui* 中国作家协会. In spite of this, Mo Yan is not afraid of speaking against the government. At least in *The Garlic Ballads*, he writes for his compatriots, not politics. Indeed, there are distinguished Chinese writers such as Lu Xun 鲁迅 and Wen Yiduo 闻一多, who fought bravely against the tyranny and corruptions of the authorities<sup>19</sup>. Both of the heroes wrote to save their country and fellows. Because of this, the KMT government even assassinated the latter. Mo Yan also creates works that are against the authorities. In spite of this, it irritates some of the critics because he is not aggressive enough for the Chinese government to ban all of his works for publication. When Mo Yan writes to criticize the local authorities of his hometown,

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<sup>19</sup> The KMT governed China at that time.

people say that he does this in the way of balancing between the pressure from the central government and his own awareness as a writer. It is invalid to criticize everyone who works well with the government. After all, writers are not political tools. They do not have to choose side in ideological confrontations. On the other hand, Mo Yan spares no effort when he feels the need to criticize the authorities. This is especially evident in *The Garlic Ballads*. In the last chapter of the original work, Mo Yan satires and criticizes *Mass Daily dazhong ribao* 大众日报, an official newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party, as *Masses Daily qunzhong ribao* 群众日报 (Chen 38). *The Garlic Ballads* is an eloquent proof that the well-being of his fellowmen is the priority of Mo Yan's writing.

On the front page of *The Garlic Ballads*, Mo Yan forges a quote from Joseph Stalin, which says '[n]ovelists are forever trying to distance themselves from politics, but the novel itself closes in on politics. Novelists are so concerned with "man's fate" that they tend to lose sight of their own fate. Therein lies their tragedy (Goldblatt, *Ballads* 1).' In an interview between Mo Yan and Yang Yang 杨扬, Mo Yan claims that he tries to prevent himself from being emotional and meanwhile keeps a low profile, which would enable him to keep close to real life (48-49). Yet, it is clear that *The Garlic Ballads* results from Mo Yan's wrath towards government officials who oppressed and exploited the local garlic farmers (Mo Yan, *Ballads* 1). In 1987, Mo Yan read a piece of news about the garlic riot that took place in Cangshan County 苍山县, Shandong Province. Based on the news, Mo Yan created this long novel within only thirty-three days (Mo Yan, *Ballads* 1). It is easy to conclude that this novel is a work of passion and wrath. It is very likely that the fake quote pictures Mo Yan himself as a novelist and, though he tries not to mention politics in his novel, he will never achieve the goal of keeping himself



from discussing politics as long as he aims to write for the people in the country. As a writer, Mo Yan's concern is never protecting himself from provoking the government, but speaking for his fellows and his hometown.

In his lecture, "Why I Became a Novelist," Mo Yan mentioned the dualism in discourse systems: daily speech *richang huayu* 日常话语 and formal language *guanfang huayu* 官方话语. The daily speech system is more casual. People use this system at home and in private. The official system is more discreet, and is for speaking in public. In *The Garlic Ballads*, the dualism of language exists as well. The narration of the story is casual and unofficial. The representation of the official speech is in the last chapter. It is a piece of news on newspaper that reports the garlic riots. Mo Yan borrows the official speech system in the last chapter not to show that this kind of speech system is sublime or authoritative, but to reveal its hypocrisy, bureaucracy, and absurdity. The news report in the last chapter coordinate with narrations in the previous chapters. It includes both a simple introduction to the garlic riot and penalties to each party of the riot. Reasonably, the official report of the riot will reflect the process of the event and the punishments for those irresponsible civil servants. What really happens is unexpected. In the news, the local officials are unaffected and walk away with another government position, while the victims, the garlic farmers who lose their income, get punishment for fighting against the local authorities. Given that the garlic farmers' only source of income of the whole year is cut by local authorities without paying any price, why are the officials victims instead of culprits? Therefore, the two systems of speech in this novel show the irresponsibility and corruptions of the authorities.

To speak in the two-speech system, people have to learn to be cautious and use the private speech system when they want to express their opinions. Nonetheless, when the garlic riot happens, there is too much anger in the heart of those who care for their hometown and fellow townsmen, so they cannot help but to express their thoughts publicly. Mo Yan is one of these angry people. So is Zhang Kou. Singing his ballads, Zhang Kou helps to express Mo Yan's sympathies towards the garlic farmers. As mentioned earlier, the inspiration of this novel comes from the author's anger, so Mo Yan calls this book a book of anger (Mo Yan and Lin 34). In this novel, the most important anger is the anger of the garlic farmers towards the local government. It is exactly this anger that leads to the riot. Then, it is Zhang Kou's anger towards the miserable sufferings of the farmers, which echoes with the anger of another standby of the riot, Mo Yan. For this reason, Zhang Kou not only represents the farmers, but also the author. Therefore, Zhang Kou sings the garlic ballads of anger. He is so angry and eager to fight for the garlic farmers that he puts his own safety aside. In the end, because Zhang Kou sings ballads against the government and ignores warnings from the local authorities, local police officers kill him.

*The Garlic Ballads* is a story of concerns, of anger, and of compromise. The concerns of Zhang Kou and Mo Yan lead to their wrath towards the irresponsible local authorities. Thus, Zhang Kou's ballads and *The Garlic Ballads* come into being. Given the political and social environment in China, people have to compromise and lose their voice, like the death of Zhang Kou and debut of his apprentice, who sings conciliatory ballads. *The Garlic Ballads* is not the only book that shows Mo Yan's fight against the authorities, but it is the only book which is directly from his wrath towards the local

government. Mo Yan writes this book for the right of his townsmen. The story that he narrates and the miserable characters that he creates show that his main concern is the misery of his people, not the relationship between himself and the government. If he were a sycophant, he would absolutely avoid a topic like this. If he aims to maintain a good relationship with the government, why would he criticize government officials and satires government mouthpiece? As a writer who carries social responsibilities, Mo Yan creates the heroic character Zhang Kou, who both creates literary works that are close to Mo Yan's style and speaks from Mo Yan's point of view.

## CHAPTER TWO

### GOLDBLATT REWRITES ZHANG KOU

The previous chapter analyzes the importance of Zhang Kou to Mo Yan's voice from four features. This chapter examines these four features in the English version of *The Garlic Ballads* and focuses on Howard Goldblatt's English representation of Zhang Kou. Goldblatt is famous for his extraordinary "rewritings" of the original text in English. The aim of this chapter is to analyze how Goldblatt interferes with the voice of Mo Yan through changing the characteristics of Zhang Kou. By comparing Zhang Kou in the original text with him in the English version, it is easy to tell how Goldblatt mixes his own voice to the mouthpiece of Mo Yan. The structure of this chapter is the same as that of the previous chapter. There are still two main aspects. One is writing style, and the other is stance in the garlic riot. Writing style is mainly about the characteristics of language. Being consistent to the writing style of Mo Yan, Zhang Kou is grotesque and vulgar in his language. Stance represents the role that Zhang Kou and Mo Yan play in the garlic riot. Clearly, both of them are witnesses to the garlic riot. Furthermore, they both stand out and speak for garlic farmers through their literary creations. This chapter is mainly about Goldblatt's rewritings of these four aspects. Goldblatt's rewriting of the grotesque and the ugly belongs to style. These two parts examine how Goldblatt adjusts the style of Mo Yan and Zhang Kou's language style for the readers' aesthetical and cultural inclinations. Then, Goldblatt's rewriting of Mo Yan and Zhang Kou's stance in the garlic riot include two topics: their attitudes towards local authorities, and concerns

for garlic farmers and the country. Similar to last chapter, because anger of Zhang Kou and Mo Yan is from their concerns towards the garlic farmers, this chapter puts anger and concern together in one part, and examines how Goldblatt caters to the cultural and ideological preferences of the English readers. While translating, he rewrites the distinctive Chinese original text and makes it a more acceptable version for readers in the English world.

Some scholars and critics, like Anna Sun, do not like Mo Yan's writing, but they appreciate the English translations of Mo Yan's books by Goldblatt. "The English translations of Mo Yan's novels, especially by the excellent Howard Goldblatt, are in fact superior to the original in their aesthetic unity and sureness" (Sun). It is unreasonable to make the judgement that one kind of literary style is superior to the other, but at least this comment shows the English-speaking world's appreciation for Goldblatt's translations. In recent decades, more and more Chinese literary works have English translations. Among the translators who dedicate themselves to translating Chinese literature, Goldblatt is one of the best and the most accepted (Li 57). So far, he is one of the most influential translators of Chinese contemporary literature (Li 57). Goldblatt has translated novels by over thirty Chinese writers, including Mo Yan and Xiao Hong 萧红.

In his article, "A Mutually Rewarding yet Uneasy and Sometimes Fragile Relationship between Author and Translator," Goldblatt emphasizes the role that translators play in a writers' achievement. He asserts that translators are like avatars of the writers, bringing the original work to broader audiences by bridging the gap between different languages ("A Mutually" 34). With assistance from translators, readers are able to enjoy outstanding literary works that are originally in other languages. In the

meantime, Goldblatt holds the opinion that translators do not work for the writers of the original work, but for the target readers (“A Mutually” 34). He declares that his task is to make the original text explicit for his readers (“A Mutually” 34).

This probably explains why Goldblatt ignores Mo Yan’s word choices, and reconstructs the meaning of these words in a more accessible way for English speakers. As a writer who applies hallucinatory realism, Mo Yan includes in his writing many grotesque depictions, vulgar words, imaginations, and non-linear narrations. All of these make his original intention obscure to English-speaking readers. When it comes to cases like this, Goldblatt would rewrite the original text, and cater to the taste of English speakers. Many scholars, including Perry Link, Anna Sun, and Jianjun Li, believe that his pellucid translation is one of the most significant reasons why Mo Yan’s books are popular in the Western world.

Speaking of Goldblatt’s rewriting, it is hard to blame him for being “unfaithful” to the original word choices. Goldblatt claims that his translations “faithfully reproduce what the author meant—to be precise, my interpretation of what the author meant—and not necessarily what he wrote. A fine point, perhaps, but an important distinction” (“A Mutually” 34). He prefers to explicitly express the author’s original intention rather than sticking to the specific word choice. As Chinese and English have huge discrepancies, literal translations between these two languages would be misleading for its readers. In Goldblatt’s translation, there are many places where the English version, though different from the original text, properly delivers the original implication. For example, there is one sentence in Zhang Kou’s ballads, “高大义挺胸膛双目如电” (Mo Yan, *Ballads* 4). The literal meaning of this sentence is that Gao Dayi throws his chest out, and his eyes

glow like lightening. This literal translation is accurate, but it is too long for a sentence in ballad. More importantly, the expression in the original text is unique to Chinese. In China's revolution movies and novels, it is almost stereotypical for imprisoned revolutionists to behave like this, especially before their execution, to show their courage. It is also a sign of disdain and sarcasm towards their enemies. Although the implications of this gesture are plain to Chinese, English speakers are not likely to get the meaning beyond the words and would wonder why Gao Dayi poses like this. Therefore, in his translation, Goldblatt replaces the original word with an illustrative and explicit expression: "[h]e went to death proudly, defiantly" (Goldblatt, *Ballads* 3). By directly showing the author's implications, Goldblatt saves the readers a lot of effort to find out what this posture means, and makes the book easy to read. Claiming that translators are the closest reader of a book, Goldblatt is authoritative to rewrite the original text with his own words in his translation ("Wearing Me out" 29). He does not limit his translation's faithfulness towards the original text to consistency of words. Rather, Goldblatt prioritizes the author's intention and the translation's accessibility over being faithful to the original words. Catering to the reading taste of the Western readers, Goldblatt makes adjustments not only in word choice, but also in replacing vulgar words, in hiding the original author's good words for socialism, and so on.

Zhang Kou, as the mouthpiece of Mo Yan, is different in the English version compared with his original figure. As presented in the previous chapter, Mo Yan expresses his voice through Zhang Kou, who embodies the four features of Mo Yan's writing: the grotesque in his language, his obsession of ugly things, his anger towards the authorities, and his concerns for garlic farmers and the country. This chapter focuses on

Goldblatt's rewriting of these features in order to show how he changes Mo Yan's voice and expresses his own voice through Mo Yan's mouthpiece, Zhang Kou. The following parts compare Zhang Kou in the original work with him in the English version to see how Goldblatt adjusts these four features.

### **Mediating the Grotesque in Mo Yan's Writing**

Criticisms of the grotesque in Mo Yan's writing are numerous. People who do not like his writing may assert that it is banal, broken, appalling, and unnatural. Despite this, scholars like David Der-Wei Wang and Goldblatt agree to the opinion that the valuable power of Mo Yan's writing lies in the grotesqueness of his narration. "The novel is often magical, disturbing in the story told yet magnetic in the means of telling" (Goldblatt, "A Mutually" 27). Mo Yan disassembles the stories and rebuilds them in a disordered, colorful, and powerful way. Mo Yan's works are a deconstruction of reality; Goldblatt's translations are a deconstruction of Mo Yan's works. Mo Yan abandons the least important elements in a story, for instance, chronological orders. *The Garlic Ballads* does not follow time order. Each section is very likely to be independent from the part before or after it. Even the ballads at the beginning of each chapter are not chronological. What remains in Mo Yan's narration is the core of the story. Similarly, Goldblatt deconstructs Mo Yan's writing in his translation. What he changes and abandons in Mo Yan's original writing is the least important things for English readers. For example, Mo Yan might think his concerns for the local garlic farmers, his concerns for the country, and his anger against local authorities are the most critical thing in this book, but the English readers, after taking huge effort to understand Mo Yan's intentions, may find it not that inspiring for them compared to the vivid descriptions of the miserable Chinese country life. Given



the discrepancies between the reading preferences in China and those of the English-speaking world, if Goldblatt translated the original text in the most “faithful” way, such as being faithful on word choice, it would be less possible that the English readers would understand some of Mo Yan’s grotesque writing. For example, as mentioned in the previous chapter, in his ballad on *Red Crag*, Zhang Kou sings, “这小子斜斜着母狗眼” (Mo Yan, *Ballads* 15), which literally means “this man slanted his eyes, which are like female dog’s eyes”<sup>20</sup>. In this sentence, 母狗眼 is a grotesque metaphor which is unique to Chinese. If Goldblatt translated it word-to-word, Western readers would be barely able to understand the original meaning. Therefore, he translates it as “[h]e hers through slanted eyes” (Goldblatt, *Ballads* 14) and ignores the grotesque metaphor. As a translator who puts his readers in the first place, Goldblatt transforms the original expression to a more understandable way.

Mo Yan is good at depicting strong sensory perceptions, which are salutary for a better reading experience. In Chapter Twenty, when the police officers arrest Zhang Kou, they physically abuse him with an electric truncheon.

唱到此处，他感到自己的瞎眼窝里有热辣辣的感觉，仿佛有热泪涌了出来。在县拘留所里受过的苦难，一桩桩一件件涌上心头。他想到警察将高压电警棍捅到自己嘴里的情景：那个声音比蒜薹还要毒辣的警察骂着：臭瞎子，闭住你的嘴！然后便把哗哗作响的电警棍捅到我的嘴里。我感到那强大的电流似千万根钢针，扎着牙髓、舌头和咽喉，千头万绪的巨大痛楚，猛冲上头颅，并飞快地流遍全身。我发出了连我自己听了都感到毛骨悚然的号叫，两股腥

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<sup>20</sup> The author of this thesis made this translation.

血，从我干涸多年的眼窝里流出来。随即我便昏死过去……(Mo Yan, Ballads 252)

When singing about this, Zhang Kou feels that his blind eyes are sting. It seems like he is shedding tears. He remembered what he had suffered in the county lockup. An electric truncheon was prodded into his mouth: the police cursed at me with his acrid voice, which was much more pungent than garlic, “shut your mouth, you blind motherfucker”, and then thrust a crackling truncheon into my mouth. The strong electric current felt like thousands of needles stabbing into my teeth, my tongue, and my throat. The scattered sharp pain crashed to my head, and then rapidly surges from head to toe. I screamed and made everyone scared, including myself...<sup>21</sup>

This Chinese version presents Zhang Kou’s sufferings in a vivid and appalling way. Through applying multiple kinds of sensory depictions, such as sound and tactus, Mo Yan offers a lively and impressive scene. The sufferings of Zhang Kou in the police station imply that these police officers are cruel and ruthless. Then, it would be reasonable for the police to kill Zhang Kou for singing the banned garlic ballads later. The grotesque of this scene in the Chinese version does not only lie in its depictions of strong sensory perception, but also in the change of pronouns, which may confuse the readers. Goldblatt rewrites this scene:

At this point in his song something hot stung his blind eyes, as if tears had materialized from somewhere, and he remembered all he had suffered in the county lockup.

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<sup>21</sup> The author of this thesis made this translation.

~ ~ [separators]

The policeman held the hot electric prod up to his mouth until he could hear it crackle. “Shut your trap, you blind fuck!” the policeman spat out venomously. Then the sparking prod touched his lips, and lightning hit him like a thousand needles. His teeth, his gums, his tongue, and his throat—bursts of pain shot to the top of his head and down to the rest of his body. A scream tore from his throat, sending chills up his spine. Blood gushed from his withered eye sockets. “You can make me eat shit,” he said, “but I couldn’t keep my mouth shut if I wanted to. There are things inside me that must be said. I, Zhang Kou, am linked forever to the townspeople....” (Goldblatt, *Ballads* 204)

In the original version, this scene features Zhang Kou’s memory of the police station. In the English translation, Goldblatt separates this scene from the previous sentence, which shows that Zhang Kou recalls his sufferings in the county lockup. Moving the depictions of Zhang Kou’s pain to the beginning of the next part, Goldblatt makes this scene an introductory part of Zhang Kou’s later rebellious and passionate performance.

There might be two reasons for this. First, Goldblatt wants to make his translation smooth. In the Chinese version, there is a sentence to divide the beating scene from the next part:“随即我便昏死过去”(After that, I passed out<sup>22</sup>) (Mo Yan, *Ballads* 252). With this sentence, it is clear that this scene is separate from the next. However, in the English version, Goldblatt omitted this sentence. What he does is to pause after “唱到此处，他感到自己的瞎眼窝里有热辣辣的感觉，仿佛有热泪涌了出来。在县拘留所里受过的苦难，一桩桩一件件涌上心头 At this point in his song something hot stung his blind

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<sup>22</sup> The author of this thesis made this translation.

eyes, as if tears had materialized from somewhere, and he remembered all he had suffered in the county lockup” (Mo Yan, *Ballads* 252; Goldblatt, *Ballads* 206). In this way, he combines the detailed depictions of Zhang Kou’s sufferings from truncheon with the next ballad. This rewriting could avoid the repetition of Zhang Kou’s experience at the police station<sup>23</sup>. Second, by correlating the pain with Zhang Kou’s later determination of ignoring warning from the police and singing the forbidden garlic ballads, Goldblatt’s translation is more logical compared with the Chinese version. Despite this, the English version loses some advantages of the original text. For example, when Goldblatt deleting Zhang Kou’s passing out at the end of the scene, he abandons the implications that all these sensory depictions are from Zhang Kou’s memories. This leads to the impression that the police officers torture Zhang Kou during his performance in public. Doubtlessly, the torture that takes place in lockup would cause much severe terror to Zhang Kou compared with the torture that takes place in public. For this reason, it greatly weakens the effect of Zhang Kou’s sufferings. In summary, by relocating this scene, Goldblatt portrays a more logical scene and makes the reading process smooth but loses some effect of the grotesque in Mo Yan’s writing.

Another example of Goldblatt’s rewriting of this scene is the change of pronouns.

A third-person narrative would not use the first-person pronouns outside of quotation

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<sup>23</sup> The last sentence of the first ballad is a description of Zhang Kou’s experience at the police station: “老百姓满腹冤恨不敢说话，一开口就给咱戳上电棍 For the moment they open their mouths, electric prods close them fast” (Mo Yan, *Ballads* 252; Goldblatt, *Ballads* 206). The next part of the paragraph is another explanation of Zhang Kou’s sufferings: “他想到警察将高压电警棍捅到自己嘴里的情景……随即我便昏死过去 The policeman held the hot electric prod up to his mouth until he could hear it crackle... Blood gushed from his withered eye sockets” (Mo Yan, *Ballads* 252; Goldblatt, *Ballads* 206). Therefore, separating this sentence with the later detailed description could avoid repetition.

marks, because changing the third-person pronouns to the first-person pronouns means a change of standpoint. When reading the Chinese version of this part, the sudden alteration from third-person pronouns to first-person pronouns is unnatural. It is easy for the readers to feel confused and lost during their reading progress. This might be the reason why Goldblatt changes the first-person pronouns in the original text to third-person pronouns so that the English version would be more explicit for the readers. In spite of this, the illustrations from the third-person point of view weaken the sensory depictions, and keep readers from empathizing with Zhang Kou. In his translation of this part, Goldblatt still chooses logic and reading experience over the effect of the grotesque in the original writing.

When translating *The Garlic Ballads*, Goldblatt takes a huge amount of efforts to provide the readers with core implications of Mo Yan's writing. Instead of devoting himself to the fidelity on the word level, he pays more attention to deliver abstract content in the original text, such as ideas and concepts. When it comes to occasions that might be hard to comprehend for the English speakers, Goldblatt would revise the original text by either expressing them in a more logical way, or deleting them if doing so does not significantly affect the whole picture. Even though this may lead to a weakened reading experience, it is much easier for readers in the Western world to accept the story as a whole. Through balancing between keeping Mo Yan's grotesque style and adjusting the grotesque to an acceptable extent for English readers, Goldblatt spreads Mo Yan's work in the English-speaking world.

## Reshaping the Ugly in Mo Yan's Writing

One who has read Mo Yan would agree to the comment that Mo Yan's language is vulgar. Nevertheless, Mo Yan's writing is reasonably and harmoniously vulgar. Because the stories that he tells are those of farmers in the rural areas, the objects that he writes about give rise to his crude writing style. It is irrational to expect that the lives of farmers are as exquisite as the lives of urban elites. Things in Mo Yan's writing may be unexpected for the English readers, like his obsession with the smell of sweat, the process of urinating, human waste, etc. Although these things are rare in a published literary work, they are the most usual things in a farmer's life. Therefore, it is not Mo Yan's fault to show his readers what the real life of a Chinese farmer is like. There is another reason that may lead to the criticism to his vulgar language—his writing is too dialectical. In Mo Yan's opinion, to include dialects in novels, it is not enough to just make characters speak the specific dialect. Mo Yan insists that writers need to apply dialects to their writing, instead of merely limiting them to the conversations between characters. According to him, this is the only way that can bring a dying dialect back to life (Mo Yan, "How Did I"). Mo Yan uses dialects in his writing not only for the purpose of preserving, but also for adding a tinge of vividness to his narratives. Given the two reasons above, the vulgarity of Mo Yan's language is natural and reasonable.

As mentioned earlier in the thesis, there were two systems of speech in China at the time of Mo Yan's stories. One is for official public speech, and the other is for private occasions. The public speech system is formal so that it is comparatively discreet, while the private speech system is more casual. People apply the private speech system in everyday situations. *The Garlic Ballads* encompasses both systems. Because of the

depictions of scenes in the book are mostly daily occasions, the author applies private speech for most of the book. Zhang Kou, the balladeer of the county, frequently performs in public in artistic forms. He sings ballads that stands for the freedom of speech for common people. Although his ballads are literary creations, these ballads are colloquial, and belong to dialectic private speech. Catering to the reading taste of the English-speaking world, Goldblatt erases some of the ugly in the original version that marks Zhang Kou's ballads in the original.

The previous chapter examines one example that shows the ugly in Mo Yan's writing. It is a sentence in Zhang Kou's ballad: “黑蒜薹烂蒜薹沤粪不壮” (Mo, *Ballads* 47), which literally means “black garlic and rotten garlic cannot compost good manure heap.” The word 沤粪 *oufen* (compost manure heap) is ugly because it contains feces, which are rude to mention in literary works. Maybe for this reason, Goldblatt translates this sentence as “Black garlic and rotteti garlic to make a compost heap....”(38). Here, he interprets 沤粪 as “compost heap,” a euphemistic substitute for “compost manure heap.” Compost heap implies that it is green and contains food waste and plants. Additionally, compost heaps are accessible in cities for gardening, and would be familiar to readers. By replacing “compost manure heap” with “compost heap,” Goldblatt not only reshapes the ugly of the original writing by hiding the inelegant, but also replaces it with a similar yet acceptable substitute for the book's English-speaking readers.

Although Zhang Kou is an artist, he sings ballads that resonate with the affectation for ugly things in Mo Yan's writing. Performing in such an artistic form, Zhang Kou speaks crude dialectic language and sings about lives of the garlic farmers. All of these seems to be vulgar, but they are in fact the most beautiful and valuable things

in this book, because they are on the behalf of real life in rural China. Mo Yan said that those who cannot face the ugly of reality are cowardly and hypocritical (“Dignifying” 26). Those who find reality distasteful would not concern about others or the world. The preference for the ugly in Mo Yan’s writing stands for the beauty of reality, which is as precious as elegance and grace. Despite this, Goldblatt does a great job in reshaping the ugly in the original text so that the readers of the English version would enjoy reading this book and get rid of any difficulty that could prevent them from understanding the whole picture.

### **Modifying Mo Yan and Zhang Kou’s Anger and Concern**

*The Garlic Ballads* is a product of the author’s anger and concerns. Mo Yan was furious after reading a piece of news report on Cangshan County’s garlic riot in Shandong Province and decided to write about this riot. His anger comes from his concerns for the garlic farmers and the country. The garlic farmers, feeling furious and disappointed towards the local authorities, rushed into the government office building and made huge damage to it. As this book is by an angry author and about a group of enraged garlic farmers, concern and anger are the key of the novel. The Chinese edition published in 1993 was even named as *The Garlic of Wrath fennu de suantai* 愤怒的蒜薹 (Chen 38). Based on this, one is able to tell the important role that concern and anger play in this book.

Although Mo Yan does not believe that literary works are likely to change dark sides of the society, he stands up and speaks for the injustice by his book (Goldblatt, “A Mutually” 27). Especially in this novel, Mo Yan reveals his concerns for the country and for the common people. Some critics like Link blame Mo Yan for his political stance.



They hold that Mo Yan is a sycophant of the authorities. There was a debate between Laughlin and Link. One of their major discrepancies lies in Mo Yan's political stance. Link asserts that Mo Yan distorts history—does not mention the severe famine during the Maoist period—and claims that he is a sycophant to the Chinese government (“Deserves the Prize”; “Defenders”). Laughlin, on the other hand, believes that, by applying the Maoist language, Mo Yan satires social problems (“Defectors”). In addition to this, Laughlin holds that it is irrational to measure a writer's contribution by his political stance (“Defend”).

Truly, Mo Yan works well with Chinese government and partly writes in Maoist language, yet these facts are not enough to blame Mo Yan for being a sycophant.

Different from both Laughlin and Link, this thesis holds the opinion that Mo Yan uses Maoist period not always for flattering or satirizing the CCP—Mo Yan sometimes uses the Maoist language to be satirist, but sometimes his socialist writing just reflects facts. His socialist language helps to revitalize the social environment in that specific time and place. Without those socialist “clichés,” the descriptions of Mo Yan's Gaomi Township would not be so vivid. After all, Maoist language used to prevail the whole country.

Therefore, it is unreasonable to judge that Mo Yan use his works to flatter the Chinese government.

Besides, *The Garlic Ballads* is a solid proof which shows that Mo Yan is a writer who does not take pleasing the government as his priority. He cares more about the happiness of his fellowmen and about the fate of the country. Chinese government banned this novel, which speaks against the government and unveils injustice of the society, for four years in mainland China from 1989 to 1993 (Chen 38). It is not hard to

tell that Mo Yan is a fighter who, through his literary works, carries a strong sense of responsibility on his shoulder, and tries to challenge the unjust society.

“[Mo Yan] does believe in the humanistic power of art” (Goldblatt, “A Mutually” 27). Not only does Mo Yan deliver his faith through his books like *The Garlic Ballads*, but also expresses his ideas through the characters in the books. Zhang Kou, the balladeer in *The Garlic Ballads*, serves as Mo Yan’s mouthpiece. Zhang Kou is both a witness of the whole event and an outsider who fights for the garlic farmers. Mo Yan and Zhang Kou undertake similar responsibilities, which include presenting what really happens in the riot and calling for justice. Therefore, in this book, Zhang Kou is the spokesman of Mo Yan. Both of them feel sympathetic to the garlic farmers. They put their personal gain aside and assist the victims in the riot in their literary creations. Zhang Kou sings ballads for the garlic farmers, while Mo Yan writes the novel for them. Additionally, through Zhang Kou’s ballads, one is able to notice Mo Yan’s concerns and fury towards the government.

When translating and rewriting *The Garlic Ballads*, Goldblatt recreates Mo Yan’s voice by changing the image of Zhang Kou. According to Thomas Chen, the image of Zhang Kou in the first Chinese edition published in 1988, is quite different from that of the later editions (47). In the first edition, Zhang Kou is not dead in the end, but he surrenders to the local authorities and stops telling the truth through singing ballads (Chen 47). Goldblatt contacted Mo Yan, asking him to change the ending of the English version (W. Li 59). Days later, Mo Yan came up with a new ending, which included the death of Zhang Kou. In this new version, Zhang Kou insists on singing the banned garlic ballads despite warnings from the police. As a result, the authorities kill him. After Zhang

Kou's death, his student sings at the beginning of the last chapter that he would not make the same mistake as his teacher did, and implies that he would not publicly mention the garlic riot or fight against the authorities. In fact, Zhang Kou's student secretly spread news on the garlic riot. Both Zhang Kou in the first edition and his student in the newest version compromise, but they contribute to the garlic riot.

The discrepancy of the old version and the new version lies in the treatment of Zhang Kou's anger and concern. In the first edition, though Zhang Kou secretly spreads news about the garlic riot after he stops singing the garlic ballads, his initial anger and concern have changed. The new ending expands Zhang Kou's loyalty to the farmers so that he fights regardless of his safety till the end. There are two reasons for this change. The first is to make Zhang Kou's bravery and sense of justice consistent. In the first edition, by making Zhang Kou inconsistent, Mo Yan intends to satirize the authorities for violently depriving the freedom of speech and to show how it has changed common people. Zhang Kou, speaking in the private system, should have enjoyed freedom of speech and spoken what he wants to, but, as he offends the local government, he gets severe punishments. For Chinese readers, the sarcasm is hard to miss when Zhang Kou changes his manner of behaving because they are familiar with the government's censorship. They would understand the overwhelming pressure with which Zhang Kou faces. It is not the same for the English-speaking world. Without detailed explanation, the Western readers, who are not familiar with China's strict speech control, would not easily understand the context. They may not be aware of the consequence of ignoring police officers' warnings—they may not take these warnings as life threats. On the contrary, if Zhang Kou changes, they would probably misunderstand the situation and think that it is

the cowardice that lead to Zhang Kou's compromise. Instead of noticing that the reason is on the government's side, they would possibly misinterpret it as Zhang Kou's weakness. With more and more freedom of speech in China, the sarcasm in the original version would not function that well. Therefore, the original text makes changes to Zhang Kou according to its English version. The second reason lies in the taste of the readers. Goldblatt preferred another ending compared to its original, so he contacted Mo Yan and asked him to make a change to Zhang Kou's surrender. Added to this, the English version even does not include the compromise that Zhang Kou's student makes; Goldblatt deletes the last chapter completely.

Through this example, it is reasonable to summarize that Goldblatt adds his own opinions to the original work and influences the representation of Mo Yan's concerns and anger. Given his rewriting of Zhang Kou's ending, the conclusion is clear that while Zhang Kou represents Mo Yan's voice in the Chinese original, he also serves as Goldblatt's mouthpiece in the English translation.

Although Goldblatt enhances Mo Yan's concern for the garlic farmers in his rewriting, he weakens Mo Yan's concern for the socialist China. As a novel depicting China in its 1980s, *The Garlic Ballads* displays a socialist society. From depictions in the book, it is easy to tell that people at that time believed that government and socialism were what they should rely upon to make a living. These farmers, who passionately devote themselves to growing garlic, took it for granted that the authorities would take care of their harvests. Added to this, socialism and socialist slogans were still everywhere in the 1980s. As a result, the story includes many socialist terms. Anna Sun and some other scholars denigrate these socialist features in Mo Yan's writing. Besides reshaping

the anger of Zhang Kou to make him easier to accept in the Western world, Goldblatt also changes political ideologies of the original text to prevent the novel from being too “socialist” so that the book would be much more reader-friendly to the English-speaking world. This is another aspect of Goldblatt’s interfering with Mo Yan’s voice by changing Zhang Kou.

Writing with socialist language, Mo Yan, albeit sarcastically, usually portrays the Chinese Communist Party (henceforth CCP) in a positive light, while the KMT negative. Things are different in the English-speaking world. Most English speakers would not intuitively connect communism or socialism with positive descriptions, so Goldblatt changes the original word choice with more explicit expressions. For example, at the beginning of Chapter Ten, Zhang Kou sings a ballad which involves comments on the CCP and the KMT.<sup>24</sup> Goldblatt revises the original text so that the translation would not lead to any contradictions against Western readers’ general knowledge. The original ballad goes like this: “仲县长你手按心窝仔细想，/你到底入的是什么党？/你要是国民党就高枕安睡/你要是共产党就鸣鼓出堂” (Mo Yan, *Ballads* 129). This ballad’s literal translation is: “County executive Zhong, please put your hand on your heart and think discreetly,/ which party did you join?/ If you are a member of the KMT, then you are free to sleep at ease/ If you are a member of the CCP, you should hold court<sup>25</sup>”. For Chinese people at that time, the CCP stands for a positive image of an authority, while the KMT is the opposite. Nevertheless, it is not the same for the English-speaking world. If one were to simply use the CCP and the KMT to imply the positive or negative, the

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<sup>24</sup> The author of this thesis find similar argument while reading Yanqiu Cui and Huaqing Hong’s article about Goldblatt’s rewriting of the CCP and the KMT after writing this part.

<sup>25</sup> The author of this thesis made this translation.

English readers would be confused. In Goldblatt's translation, he weakens the ideological signification, and replaces the judgments on the two parties with descriptions of two kinds of officials. For this reason, Goldblatt translates this ballad like this: "County Boss Zhong, put your hand over your heart and think:/As government protector, where is the kindness in your soul?/ If you are a benighted official, go home and stay in bed;/ If you are an upright steward, take charge and do some good" (*Ballads* 99). Saving efforts for the English readers, Goldblatt avoids implications on the two parties. Instead, he revises this ballad and makes it more elucidate for readers in the English-speaking world (Cui and Hong 68).

Changing the last chapter is another example of expunging divergencies in political ideologies. In the Chinese version, the last chapter is an abstract from a news report on the garlic incident. Aiming to satirize the authorities for their irresponsibility, Mo Yan mimics the writing style of Chinese official media and presents the garlic riot in the official language system. Although writing about the same garlic event, compared with the narrations in the previous chapters of the book, the news report from the state-owned newspaper tells a totally different story. The sarcasm lies here. In the English version, Goldblatt deletes the report, not because he does not fully understand the sarcasm in this chapter. Goldblatt may delete this chapter for two reasons. The first assumption is that he thinks Western readers, who are not familiar with socialist language, may not be that patient to read the endless socialist clichés to find out what is peculiar in this chapter. The other assumption is that, even if they might be patient enough to read the whole report, they probably would not get the intended humor and sarcasm in this chapter. Deleting the last chapter of the Chinese version not only makes

the translation reader-friendly, but also enhances the story's heartbroken ending. Given that *The Garlic Ballads* is a tragic story, the ending of the English version, Gao Ma's death scene, suits the atmosphere of the whole story better. Without the socialist report, the writing style of the story would be coherent. Moreover, deleting the last chapter is consistent with Goldblatt's style of reducing the story's socialist elements. He also deletes socialist slogans when it comes to some other compliments to CCP.

By rewriting the context that prefers the CCP over the KMT, making Zhang Kou's anger towards the authorities consistent, and reducing the story's concerns towards the government, Goldblatt adds his own voice to the voice of the author. He makes these adjustments not simply to add his own style to the translation, but to make the English version more comprehensible for his target readers. Given the appreciation of Mo Yan's works in the English-speaking world, it is reasonable to conclude that Goldblatt's translating methods succeed.

## CHAPTER THREE

### WHAT LIES BEHIND REWRITING ZHANG KOU

Although translation has been a subject of study for no more than half a century, the phenomenon of translating between different languages has existed for thousands of years. The subject of translation studies is on a basis of relatively mature and fixed tradition—the consistent pursuit of fidelity to the original text. Traditionally, the expectation for a translator is faithfulness, which means to stick to the original text. Before the establishment of translation studies, people assumed that the task of translators was to elucidate the meaning of the source text in another language. Despite its short history as an academic subject, translation studies have made great breakthroughs. Among the most significant achievements in this area, Goldblatt's translating methods echo the cultural turn and the notion of translation as rewriting. These two accomplishments are the theoretical supports that this thesis applies to analyzing Goldblatt's translations. This chapter explains how and why Goldblatt mixes his own voice to that of Mo Yan.

Provided with the concept of polysystem from literary theories, translators and translation theorists, like Gideon Toury and Hendrik van Gorp, realized that the priority of translation should not be faithfulness to the text, but the possibility that the readers could appreciate it (Snell-Hornby 48). In traditional translation, people try to emphasize the absolute word-for-word approach. They gradually find it unrealistic; the pursuit of unconditional fidelity on the word level does not lead to a good translation. Sometimes, it



even has countereffects. While transferring the source language to the target language, there are words, or phrases, or contexts that are either untranslatable, or would not make much sense to target readers. Verbatim translations of the untranslatable and the incomprehensible would distract the readers if there are many detailed illustrative notes. Thus, these overwhelming explanations of the original text would tarnish the joy of reading. Therefore, translators and theorists started to rethink the role that culture and literary traditions may play on translation. They take these factors, besides fidelity, into consideration. Hence, the cultural turn of the translation studies appeared. Supporters of this trend would sacrifice a limited extent of fidelity and rewrote the original text. They put their translation against the cultural and literary background of the target language to improve the quality and adequacy of translated works.

Translation theorists, like Etmar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury, believe that the combination of linguistics and translation studies limits translation theories to the text level, yet the translation studies should pursue something beyond language (Wei 8). Theo Hermans emphasizes the reciprocity between literary systems and translation (Hermans 11). Gideon Toury also claims:

Translating as a teleological activity *par excellence* is to a large extent conditioned by the goals it is designed to serve, and these goals are set in, and by, the prospective receptor system(s). Consequently, translators operate first and foremost in the interest of the culture *into* which they are translating, and not in the interest of the source text, let alone the source culture. (18–19)

“Culture” in this quotation includes every aspect of the social context, such as ideology, literary traditions, religious beliefs, and so on (Snell-Hornby 49). Contributors of the

cultural turn realize that translation is the result of such cultural influences. These influences, different from what people used to think, come from the target culture, instead of the source text or source culture. As mentioned above, Toury has pointed out that translation should serve the reader (18-19). Its acceptability in the target culture should be what gauges translation. This trend both examined translation in the literary system of the target language, and led translation studies to a new era. From then on, translators and theorists no longer regarded the faithfulness to the original text as the sole criterion for translation. They began to bring other realms of studies, like literary studies and cultural studies, to this field.

The cultural turn supports Goldblatt's understandings of the translation's function; they both emphasize the importance of the target culture to translation. Translators, like Boethius (AD 480—AD 524)<sup>26</sup> and Charles Batteux (1713—1780)<sup>27</sup>, insist on the supremacy of the role that the source text plays in translation. In their opinion, translators should serve the original text, not the target readers. "The differences between a foreign literary work and the literary traditions in another language may be so great as to delay or altogether prevent translation" (Venuti 803). The unquestioning pursuit of faithfulness would make the translated version incomprehensible to the readers. As a result, the elusive translation would become less influential. To avoid this, translators need to take the target language and target culture into consideration. The cultural turn is a translation movement, which stresses the significant role that target language and target culture play in translation. Goldblatt's translations conform to this idea. He states that his translations do not serve the author or the original text, but his

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<sup>26</sup> A Roman Philosopher.

<sup>27</sup> A French philosopher and writer.

readers (Sparks). Goldblatt comments, “[o]ne question I’m often asked is for whom I translate—the author or the reader. While the choice is more nuanced than that, my answer never varies. The author wrote for his readers, and that is for whom I translate” (Sparks). Prioritizing his target readers may be the reason why his translations of Chinese literary works successfully survive the huge cultural and linguistic discrepancies, and become popular in the English-speaking world.

The cultural turn provides Goldblatt’s translations with a solid theoretical ground, while what supports him methodologically is the notion that translating is rewriting. André Lefevere, an established translator and theorist, holds that translation is a form of rewriting. In his book, *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, André Lefevere closely examines the relationship between translation and rewriting. “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, *Manipulation* vii). In this quote, Lefevere implies that translation would function in target culture if it could cater to the target culture. Then, he further explains why these adjustments to the target language enable the translation to survive and popularize as the original. He asserts that translators, as rewriters of the original work, are decisive when readers picture the original work, communicate with its author, or take a glimpse on the source culture (Lefevere, *Manipulation* 5). “These images existed side by side with the realities they competed with, but the images always tended to reach more people than the corresponding realities did, and they most certainly do so now” (Lefevere, *Manipulation* 5). According to Lefevere, translators are not the subsidiaries of the original authors, but their vis-à-vis.

For the readers of the translation, they create the images of the original works and the culture behind it. The recreation of the original text in the translation indicates changes and manipulations. This thesis studies what the translators' manipulations are like, and the impact of such manipulations.

Translating from Chinese to English, Goldblatt works arduously to bridge the gap between these two different languages and cultures. He regards translation as a process in which he would "[absorb] a phrase or a sentence or more to determine its intent and then recreating it in our own language, staying close to the original wherever possible, striving to capture images, mirroring language register and the like, but usually in a new structure, often with different words" (Sparks). As there are huge discrepancies between Chinese culture and the culture in the English-speaking world, it is not easy for readers who speak English to contextualize Chinese literary works. English-speakers need more assistance from the Chinese-English translators than from those who interpret other European languages in English.

Goldblatt's aim in translation is not to translate verbatim. He pays more attention to what the author initially meant, rather than sticking to literal translation. He digs into the content, and directly shows the readers what is underneath. It seems like Goldblatt damages and rebuilds the base unit of the original text: words and sentences. Goldblatt's translation, as a whole, enables his readers to picture the original work. Through Goldblatt's translations, his readers of the English-speaking world are close to the essence of the original work. He is translating the book not as if he is doing a favor for writers, but he is treating translation as creating his own works for readers. This approach to translation allows him freedom to reshape the original text. The inspiration of

translating like writing his book comes from Mo Yan. Goldblatt mentions more than once in his speeches and articles that, when he contacted Mo Yan regarding making changes to the original text, Mo Yan always told him to do whatever he would like to (“A Mutually” 24; W. Li 59). Mo Yan even told him that he should take the English translation of the original work as his own book (“A Mutually” 24). Considering the frequency Goldblatt quotes Mo Yan’s opinions on translating, it appears that he strongly agrees with and appreciates these opinions.

Goldblatt himself is not a scholar of translation theories. Nonetheless, his translation techniques and inclinations resonate with two translation trends: the cultural turn and the notion of translation as rewriting. As a practitioner of modern translation theories, Goldblatt believes that fidelity is not the priority of his translation. Traditional translation expects translators to preserve the original content as much as possible. Unexpectedly, the truth is that the translation which tries to meet this standard would hardly become popular among readers, because explanatory notes for the source text would take up too much of the reader’s energy. They are likely to distract readers from the text. Ming Dong Du names this kind of translation as readerly translation (93). The readerly translation presents an overwhelmingly amount of information to readers who do not belong to the source culture. Thus, the arduous reading experience would stop the translation from being popular. Traditional translation faithfully transfers most of the original text to the target language, but, due to its inclination to explain every detail of the source text, it is hard for the readers to get a full picture of the original work. Even if some people are able to absorb all of the information, the reading process would be painful. Take the translation of classic Chinese literature as an example. There are great

English translations of classic Chinese novels such as *Dream of the Red Chamber* *honglou meng* 红楼梦. David Hawkes, Gladys Yang, and some other translators have translated it into several English versions. Many Chinese scholars do not like Hawkes's translation because it is not as faithful to the original as Yang's, and the translation techniques he applies are not as ingenious. Despite this, people prefer Hawkes's translation over Yang's in the US (Xie 48).

When translating, Goldblatt chooses to modify part of the original, and to adapt his translation to his readers' cultural backgrounds. He does not hesitate to rewrite the original text, because he realizes that literal translation would hinder readers from understanding the whole picture. His rewriting makes the reading process as easy and smooth as reading a book written in English. Goldblatt applies these strategies to his translation of Mo Yan's novels as well. The previous two chapters of this thesis analyze how Mo Yan expresses his voice through the delineations of Zhang Kou, and how Goldblatt mixes his voice to that of Mo Yan's by rewriting Zhang Kou. If Zhang Kou in the original text serves as Mo Yan's mouthpiece, the rewritten Zhang Kou in the English version is the mouthpiece of both Mo Yan and Goldblatt.

Goldblatt rewrites Mo Yan's depictions of Zhang Kou from three aspects: the grotesque in his ballads, his vulgar language, and his concern and anger in the garlic riot. It is justifiable to say that Goldblatt makes these adjustments for his readers. All his changes to the original text serve the purpose of facilitating the target readers' reading experience. This exactly echoes Lefevere's words that translations "reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way" (Lefevere, *Manipulation* vii). Goldblatt's rewriting of the original work takes

into consideration the target readers' ideologies, culture, literary preferences, aesthetics, and so on. Even though his translation is not likely to have the exact same influence on his readers compared with what the original exerts on its readers, Goldblatt tries to deliver similar influences. It is justifiable to say that he bestows Mo Yan's work an afterlife in the English-speaking world.

Goldblatt not only has to take the differences between Chinese and English into consideration, but also has to overcome other difficulties when translating Mo Yan. In his article, "A Westerner's Reflection on Mo Yan," Robert Con Davis-Undiano summarizes Mo Yan's four features that keep English speakers from understanding his writing. First, because very few Westerners learn Chinese language or culture, they are not likely to be familiar with the novel's historical and cultural context. As mentioned in previous chapter, the ballad about Gao Dayi's story is an example like this. For this reason, Goldblatt replaces some Chinese expressions that may cause misunderstanding or may make little sense to his readers. Second, the literary forms that Mo Yan uses are unfamiliar to English speakers. For instance, Chinese readers is familiar with the news report in the last chapter of the Chinese version. They would notice the sarcasm through reading the endless clichés. However, English-speaking readers probably would not understand the author's original intention. Third, English-speaking readers would probably have difficulty recognizing the tactics of the author. As analyzed in Chapter Three of this thesis, when a policeman punishes Zhang Kou with a truncheon, Mo Yan changes the third-person narrative to the first-person narrative to highlight Zhang Kou's sensory experience and to emphasize his terror and pain. In spite of this, readers in the English-speaking world, who attach great importance to logic and literary forms, would

probably not appreciate the author's tactic (W. Li 59), because Mo Yan does not use proper punctuation to make the logic transitions smoother. Therefore, Goldblatt adapts and retains third-person pronouns throughout. Last but not least, some specific intentions of the author are inaccessible for the English-speaking world. Take the last chapter of the original text as an example. It would be hard for readers of the English-speaking world to understand that the tedious news report is a satire of both the authorities and the hypocrisy of the language system that the government represents. Given the huge divergences between the two cultures, making the work accessible to readers seems to be an impossible mission. Nonetheless, in his rewriting, Goldblatt reconstructs *The Garlic Ballads* and makes it reader-friendly.

If Mo Yan owes much to the translators for his fame and success, Goldblatt, as a translator, also should appreciate Mo Yan for providing him with huge freedom to translate. Without the freedom that Mo Yan allows him, Goldblatt would not be able to recreate the original novel into a work of his own style, let alone to express his voice in his translation. When Goldblatt asked Mo Yan about rewriting parts of the book, Mo Yan always agreed to his ideas. He even told Goldblatt to treat the translation as his own book and do whatever he wanted (Goldblatt, "A Mutually" 24). The symbiotic relationship is beneficial for both of them.

Mo Yan is extraordinary not only in creating literary works, but also in his understanding of literatures. Some writers insist on their authority for the interpretation of their works, yet Mo Yan has a different view. He declares that there should not be only one interpretation for a literary work (Mo Yan, "Good Literature"). He believes that distinguished literary works are complex and obscure so that every reader can learn about



themselves through reading these books (Mo Yan, “Good Literature”). He holds that the obscurity and complexity of literary works bestow each reader a unique reading experience (Mo Yan, “Good Literature”). Consequently, Mo Yan is not against the idea of adjusting his works to foreign culture.

With the freedom that Mo Yan bestows, Goldblatt is able to rewrite Mo Yan’s novels and preserves the truth in his works. Mo Yan demonstrates that an author who writes historical novels has to stick to truth (Mo Yan, “My Experience” 101). “Whatever truth resides in the narrative is the truth of the human heart, not human events” (Inge 502). In his rewriting, though rebellious to word choice of the original text, Goldblatt’s translations are faithful to the original works in their spirit and overall context. Although he changes some of the plot in the garlic riots, Goldblatt presents the author’s intention as much as he can in the English version.

Some scholars, like Anna Sun and Perry Link, criticize Mo Yan for being a sycophant towards the socialist Chinese government. To argue for himself, Mo Yan illustrates that he never hides himself from sensitive issues (Mo Yan, “My Experience” 107). For example, *The Garlic Ballads* focuses on complex and sensitive social events. “[T]his book is about hunger and it is a book about rage” (Mo Yan and Lin 34). Goldblatt, claiming himself to be the reader who read Mo Yan’s works in the most devoted way, shows deep understanding for Mo Yan’s sense of justice and patriotism. “...*The Garlic Ballads* is unambiguous evidence that while Mo Yan may not be one who believes that a work of fiction can by itself bring about public or personal improvement, he does believe in the humanistic power of art” (Goldblatt, “A Mutually” 27). This statement reveals Goldblatt’s grasp of Mo Yan’s love for his hometown and fellow

people. When many scholars and critics may not understand the sense of justice and heroism in Mo Yan's works, Goldblatt knows where his spirit lies. Even though Goldblatt rewrites many events in Mo Yan's novels, like Zhang Kou's death, he preserves core traits of the story.

## CONCLUSION

Rewriting a minor character Zhang Kou in *The Garlic Ballads* indicates the wrestling between the author's voice and the translator's voice. In the original version, as a witness and narrator, he represents Mo Yan's voice. In the English version, where Goldblatt rewrites the original depictions of him for the readers of the English-speaking world, Zhang Kou speaks on behalf of both the author and the translator. By analyzing Goldblatt's rewriting of Zhang Kou, this thesis hopes to shed some light on why Goldblatt's translations are popular.

In the English version, through rewriting Zhang Kou, Goldblatt expresses Mo Yan's voice in his way and helps Western readers to picture the original work with English. Goldblatt's rewriting makes it easier for them to comprehend the whole story. Without Goldblatt's rewriting, it would be painstaking for them to understand the meaning and significance of the novel. This thesis studies the power that lies in such manipulation. "Needless to say, this state of affairs invests a non-negotiable power in the rewriters... Their power should, therefore, be analyzed, as well as the various ways in which they tend to exercise it" (Lefevere and Bassnett 10).

As mentioned in Chapter Two of the thesis, Goldblatt rewrites *The Garlic Ballads* through four features of Zhang Kou. These four features also serve as solid proofs for Zhang Kou's representation of Mo Yan's voice. Goldblatt's manipulation in these four perspectives would help to understand the literature and culture of the Western world. Given Goldblatt's moderation of the grotesque of Mo Yan's writing, the thesis comes to

the conclusion that a book that is not as vulgar as the original text of *The Garlic Ballads* may have a better chance at reception in the Western market. Second, through Goldblatt's rewriting of the ugly in Mo Yan's stories, it is clear that the translator caters to the readers' preferences. As most of Goldblatt's readers are literate urban dwellers, who have limited knowledge of the life in Chinese rural areas, it is reasonable that Goldblatt rewrites some of the ugly in his works. By doing this, Goldblatt guarantees that readers would not be exhausted or overwhelmed, so that they would not give up the opportunity to understand the core value of the book. Last but not least, Goldblatt's rewritings of Mo Yan's anger and concerns display how translation could be the afterlife of the original work. It not only adapts the source text to a different culture, but is able to improve the original work. Take the rewriting of Zhang Kou's death as an example. Goldblatt's rewriting exerts an influence on the Chinese version. After Goldblatt revised Zhang Kou's ending "in conjunction with Mo Yan", the Chinese version of Zhang Kou's ending changes accordingly (Goldblatt, *Ballads* 214).

In Chapter Three of this thesis, the quotations from translation theorists and from the author himself validate Goldblatt's translation techniques. Although successful, Goldblatt's rewriting seems to be controversial. When translating Mo Yan, he makes so much changes to the original text that his translation may be unfaithful to the original text. Mo Yan, who allows him to give full scope to his translation, makes Goldblatt free to creatively translate and rewrite the source text. If the agreement between Mo Yan and Goldblatt does not count for an official verification for Goldblatt's adventurous translating method, supports from theorists like Lefevere and Bassnett are what make Goldblatt's translations stand firm in translation theories. As both of them articulate that

translation is rewriting, they authenticate that Goldblatt's rewriting, though not in the traditional way, is loyal to the original text. Additionally, the cultural turn reveals that Goldblatt's choice to serve his readers is rational. His rewriting, catering to the target culture, is more accessible than faithful translation in the traditional sense. By rewriting the original work and providing his readers with a smooth and easy reading experience, Goldblatt succeeds in introducing Chinese literature to readers in the English-speaking world.

Studying Goldblatt's rewriting is important, not only for the improvement of translation techniques, but also for the development of translation theories. "[T]he study of the manipulative processes of literature as exemplified by translation can help us towards a greater awareness of the world in which we live" (Lefevere, "Genealogy" 27). This awareness through studying literary manipulation assists translators in their future translation works. In the meantime, through studying translated books, translators and scholars can make contributions to the development of translation studies. While scholars come up with more practical translation theories, translators, through referring to these improved theories, are able to make more appealing and popular translations for their readers. By making them a consistently improving cycle, studying the power that lies in the manipulation of rewriting makes translation practice and translation studies mutually beneficial to each other.

Among readers of the English-speaking world, Chinese literature is not popular. However, Chinese literature, as an enormous and valuable cultural heritage, needs more quality translations, which are able to bring Chinese literature to the world stage. In the meantime, the world is more and more curious about Chinese culture and literature.

Robert Con Davis-Undiano holds the opinion that “the Western active appreciation of Mo Yan signals a Western openness to Chinese literature and a deepening engagement with Chinese culture” (21). Given the willingness of both parties to communicate, the translation of Chinese literature is necessary. Lucas Klein, an assistant professor at the Hong Kong University, holds the opinion that “an important aspect to the representation of Chinese literature is the representation of translation” (172). Unfortunately, because of the huge discrepancies between Chinese and the languages in the Western World, readers’ reception of translation in this area is inadequate. Trying to make every detail explicit for the readers, the translated Chinese books used to be overwhelming, so that they were not likely to get recognition from the Western readers.

Goldblatt’s translations set a model for translating Chinese literary works. One has to admit that preserving Chinese features of the original work is important, but what is more important is to make the story understandable for Western readers. Compared with dedicating to details and then giving up the whole book, understanding the whole picture is more efficient and meaningful. Goldblatt, through his translation, offers his readers both access to Chinese literary books and effective approach to read foreign books.

Considering the difficulties of translating Chinese literature to Western languages and the need for more translation of Chinese literary works, studying Goldblatt’s success in translating Chinese novels is meaningful. Analyzing Goldblatt’s manipulation and rewriting is inspiring for popularizing Chinese literature in the world stage. Thus, following Goldblatt’s translating methods, other translators also can produce more easily acceptable English translations of Chinese literary works. In this way, the practice of

translating Chinese literature and the translation theories of Chinese literary works would step in the cycle mentioned above.

With all of the statements and analyses, this thesis expects to make some contributions to the study of both Mo Yan's literary creations and Goldblatt's translations. Zhang Kou, as a button that connects the author and the translator, is critical for the goal of this thesis. For the reason that he is not a protagonist in the novel, people always ignore his functions for studying the author and the translator. For Mo Yan, Zhang Kou is a good view point to know that what kind of person he is. As the first Chinese winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, Mo Yan draws attentions to him, yet most studies are on his major works, like *Red Sorghum*. Through studying Mo Yan's typical root-seeking novels of "Red Sorghum Family *honggaoliang jiazu* 红高粱家族," one is easy to learn about Mo Yan's hometown and his peculiar literary characteristics. Nonetheless, there are few scholars who aims at studying Mo Yan himself through his literary works. *The Garlic Ballads* is not a typical work of Mo Yan as it is not a part of his "Red Sorghum Family", but it is a book of his passion. Through writing this book, Mo Yan utters his voice by inventing the character Zhang Kou. From this supporting character, it is easy to tell that Mo Yan is as brave, as talented, as kind, as heroic, and as genuine as Zhang Kou. Studying the writer through his literary works is no less important than studying his literary achievements. Meanwhile, Zhang Kou is critical for studying Goldblatt's translation, because, through the changes of Zhang Kou in different version, one is able to see how Goldblatt tells a Chinese story in English. Goldblatt provides translators in this area with a good model to follow. By analyzing Zhang Kou, this thesis explores the reasons that Goldblatt's translations are popular. Based on the fact that

Zhang Kou is an embodiment of Mo Yan's voice, Goldblatt's rewriting of Zhang Kou represents his recreating of the author's voice. Given the acceptability of Goldblatt's translations in the English-speaking world, it is easy to notice the significance of adjusting the original work for target readers. This thesis believes that his success will initiate the fast development of communication between Chinese literature and other languages. Although this paper focuses only on Zhang Kou, and though there are many things to analyze on Goldblatt's rewriting and Mo Yan's writing styles, this thesis is for attracting more attention to this meaningful field of study.



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