

Indeterminacy and Concretization: Analysis of Howard Goldblatt's English Translation of *Wolf Totem*

ZHANG Pei, MA Si-qi

Southwest Jiaotong University, Chengdu, China

In the text of *Wolf Totem*, there are many spots of indeterminacy left purposely or involuntarily by the author in the depiction of characters, scenes, events and in the use of culture-related expressions, which are to be filled in by individual's interpretation through active reading of the work. Howard Goldblatt, as the translator of this work, adopts "creative rewriting" in the translation of *Wolf Totem* to actualize the indeterminacy and the factors guiding his concretization.

Keywords: *Wolf Totem*, Howard Goldblatt, indeterminacy and concretization, image

Introduction

Wolf Totem is a semi-autobiographical novel created by Jiang Rong based on his own personal experiences. Featuring complex and subtle connection of human, wolf and nature, this novel is commented as so far the only one masterpiece devoting to the depiction of Mongolian steppe wolf and the search of spiritual feast behind the wolf totem. After being published in 2004, it soon became the best-seller in China, and was then translated into 30 languages and distributed in 110 countries and regions worldwide. The success and worldwide acceptance of *Wolf Totem* provides constructive implication for the translation of Chinese literary works as how to meet the expectations of western readers and how to promote the export of Chinese literary works.

Indeterminacy: From the Perspective of Hermeneutics and Reception Theory

As both Roman Ingarden and Wolfgang Iser proposed, indeterminacy is an essential part of literary works. Without its existence and its calling for readers' concretization, the aesthetic value of literary works can never be truly realized. Ingarden defines indeterminacy as "an object, an activity, an event or a period of time which is not adequately formulated", while Iser refers it as "suspended connotation, an empty place which both provokes and guides the ideational activity". Correspondingly, concretization is the act of fulfilling the above-mentioned indeterminacy in the process of reading. In the case of literature appreciation, readers can directly perceive the indeterminate elements and concretize them consciously or unconsciously by their imagination and association. However, the situation with literary translation is more complicated. The indeterminacy existing in literary text is first supposed to be fulfilled by the translator's perception and interpretation established on the basis of the

original text, and then the translator's recreation to the needs of the text's new linguistic, historical and cultural environment or the horizons of aesthetic expectations of its target language readers before it actually comes to the readers' appreciation.

Indeterminacy is an essential part of literary works. Its existence stimulates readers to explore profound implication and aesthetic value hidden in literary works and thus tap into the mystic charms of literature. As the Chinese scholar Pan Zhibiao interprets, a literary work, which does not contain any blanks or the blanks within are insufficient to cause readers' impulse to fulfill, is a work of self-suffocation, with no vitality (PAN, 2006).

Indeterminacy in *Wolf Totem*

As a literary work, *Wolf Totem* inherently possesses a trait of openness, with numerous indeterminate spots left intentionally or unintentionally by the author Jiang Rong, inviting its readers to actively read and participate in the recreation of the text. Due to the uniqueness of every reader's experience, academic background, personality, aesthetic preference and reading habit, there will naturally be variations on their perceptions of the indeterminacy in the original text of *Wolf Totem*. As in the literary giant Shakespeare's words, "There are a thousand Hamlets in a thousand people's eyes". Thus, as Howard Goldblatt is likewise a reader of the original text of *Wolf Totem*, his perception, interpretation and recreation certainly carry a distinct mark of his style. Accordingly, the following chapters of this study will specifically focus on identifying Howard Goldblatt's perception of the indeterminacy hidden in the original text and analyzing his corresponding act of concretization, on the foundation of a comparative analysis of the original text and the translated text produced by Howard Goldblatt.

The author intends to present and discuss in the following study those representative spots of indeterminacy carefully selected from the text within these types of images: characters, scenes and events. In fact, what is missing or hidden in the descriptions of seemingly trivial scenes, characters or events happen to be what stimulates the translator to concretize the indeterminacy with projections during the translation process. As it is both impossible and unnecessary to fully flesh out the appearance, personality traits, emotional status of every character or every piece of detail of every scene appears in the text, the translator could always easily perceive plenty of indeterminate spots while reading. He is drawn into the characters, scenes, events and made to supply what is meant from what is not expressed. Because what is expressed only appears to take on significance as a reference to what is not expressed. As a matter of fact, it is actually the implications but not the statements that give shape and weight to the meaning of the text. As the unexpressed comes to life in the translator's imagination, the expressed expands to take on greater significance than might have been supposed. So even trivial characters, scenes or events in the text can seem surprisingly profound with numerous indeterminate spots remaining undisclosed, thus needs the careful handling of the translator.

In addition, in the course of text reading, the author finds out that, as one characteristic of the literary work *Wolf Totem*, culture-related expressions are frequently used. Those expressions happen to be where the indeterminacy normally lies, as the deep meaning or cultural connotation hidden behind those expressions usually activates readers' diverse interpretation. Therefore, the author integrates an additional type "culture-related expressions" to form a more comprehensive analysis.

Indeterminacy in the Description of Characters

Characters in a literary work are usually revealed by how a character responds to conflict, by his or her dialogue, and through direct descriptions. The description of a character consists of two main parts: personality and appearance. Readers can receive clues about a character's personality through his or her words, actions, reactions, feelings, movements, thoughts and mannerisms; while a character's appearance can be unfolded to readers from the aspect of skin, complexion, body shape, clothing, combining with body gestures. When the author tries to throw lines of description for a character introduction, he will confine the details in a proper range so as not to bog down the fluent development of plots, leaving the rest elements to readers' imagination.

Here come the examples demonstrating how Howard Goldblatt, the translator, responds to the indeterminacy left in the description of characters in the original text of *Wolf Totem*:

Example [1]

嘎斯迈和全队的妇女都骂那个二流子新郎和新媳妇的公婆，这么大的蚊灾，哪能让刚过门的农家媳妇下夜呢..... (姜戎, 2004:285)

Gasmai and all the other brigade women tore into the stupid husband and his mother for letting a new bride from outside the area take the night watch during a mosquito plague. (Goldblatt, 2008, p. 415)

In this example, the image of the groom is depicted by the author as “二流子”. Those descriptive adjectives used in the description of characters are usually where the indeterminacy lies, causing diverse responses from different readers. While comprehending literally, the image of this figure can be filled in by a series of subjective activities of the readers. According to the literal meaning of the original text, the image of this figure can be reconstructed as a loafer, idler, or even by some readers as a lascivious man in their imagination. But in the translator's understanding, the groom is a stupid man, because his act lacks of thought and good judgment and thus causes severe consequence to the sheep the Mongols raise.

Example [2]

嘎斯迈说：本来阿爸是要带巴图去下夹子的，可他的脸还出不了门，就让你这个汉人儿子去吧。（姜戎, 2004:77)

“Papa was going to take with him to lay traps, but Buta can't go outside with his face like that, so Papa's taking his favorite Han Chinese with him.” (Goldblatt, 2008, pp. 122-123)

This is another example that illustrates the indeterminacy existing in the description of characters and how the translator touches it. “汉人儿子” is referred to Chen Zhen and his relationship with Papa in the eyes of Gasmai. Here combing the context, the readers are given space to mobilize their consciousness on understanding how close is the relationship between Chen and Papa or more specifically how Papa actually thinks of Chen. The author does not straightforwardly tell if Chen is Papa's favorite or not so favored by him. But, in the process of translation, the translator based on his conscious reading redefines Chen in a more explicit way as “Papa's favorite Han Chinese”. Here through digging up the deep emotional elements hidden in the text, the adjective “favorite” is added by the translator, which reveals his understanding of the relationship of the characters in this work.

Example [3]

杨克乐得挥着木棒，把牛打得直瞪眼。他对陈阵说：看来你迷了两年狼没白迷，往后，我也得好好跟狼学学打猎的兵法了。(姜戎, 2004:23)

Yang was so pleased he whipped the back of the ox until it glared angrily. "It looks like your two-year fascination with wolves is beginning to pay off," he said. I'll have to start studying their hunting techniques myself. (Goldblatt, 2008, p. 33)

Here, Yang Ke's emotion at that moment is explicitly depicted by the author as "乐", which is accurately understood by the translator as "pleased". For the ox's reaction, the author simply uses the word "直瞪眼", which means "open one's eyes wide or stare to describe it, without any reference to its emotional feeling". That is to say, the emotional feeling of the ox is one spot of indeterminacy left by the author, inviting the readers to fulfill by their individual perception. Reading between lines, the translator, actively mobilizes his imagination to rebuild the image of the ox in his mind. He taps into the undescribed aspect of the ox and captures a sense of anger from the ox as it is then being whipped by Yang. To his understanding, the anger of the ox fittingly echoes Yang's state of being pleased. So in his translated text, he concretizes this indeterminate spot by adding "angrily" to personalize the ox, thus creating a more vivid and expressive image.

Indeterminacy in the Description of Scenes & Events

Event is known as the foundation of a novel around which the characters and scenes are built. It gives the story character development, suspense, energy, emotional release and creates a desire for the reader to go on reading by absorbing them in the middle of the story, wanting to know what happens next. While scenes are inter-connected with other parts of the novel. They are like the background setting for the presentation of plots. The author shares the most crucial details of the scenes through his words and then leaves to the readers to bring them to life.

Example [4]

每当狼处在生死关头的时候，它总能依靠草原来逃脱；每当狼遭遇危难的时候，草原会像老母鸡一样地张开翅膀，将狼呵护在它的羽翼下.....(姜戎, 2004:145)

When it's a matter of life and death, the grassland provides an avenue of escape; when they're in peril, the grassland supplies wings for them to fly away like birds. It keeps them under its wing. (Goldblatt, 2008, p. 228)

The underlined sentence depicts how the grassland would protect the wolves when they are in peril. In the original text, the author compares the grassland to an old hen who would always protect her chicks under her wings, to help readers better visualize and perceive such inextricable link between the grassland and wolves. Here the image of the hen is one indeterminate spot hidden in the description of this scene. To readers' understanding, the image of the old hen may be a representation of a mother's great love and her instincts to protect her children. However, on the other hand, as hen is a kind of domesticated poultry incapable of attacking, her image may also be regarded as a symbol of weakness. As the readers may have different interpretations of the image of the hen, the resulting reconstructions of this scene in their mind will naturally be various. To the translator, the wolves are powerful and unruly wild animals which can not be tamed, so as he imagines, instead of hiding under the wings of the grassland, the wolves are supposed to fly freely like birds with the help of the grassland. So, the translator

exercises his freedom of aesthetic choice in rebuilding the image of this scene in his mind, and then uses his recreation to add another aesthetic flavor for the target language readers' activity of reading and appreciation, as he reconstructs and then presents an image of "grassland supplying wings for wolves to fly away like birds" in the translated text.

Example [5]

陈阵就对牧民说，他们知青包的狗都是猎狗快狗，年龄也小，正缺这样大个头的恶狗看家护圈，不如暂时先把它留下以观后效，如果它再咬死羊，由他来赔。(姜戎, 2004:69)

"The dogs belonging to the students", he said to the herdsmen, "are hunters, fast but young, and they lack the ferocity of a big dog like this, with experience guarding a livestock pen. I think I'll keep him around and see how he does. If he kills another sheep, he'll pay with his life." (Goldblatt, 2008, p. 110)

In this selected part, the author narrates that if the dog kills another sheep, Chen Zhen would volunteer to be responsible for the loss. However, as how he would take this responsibility and how he would pay for any possible loss caused by the dog, the author does not give any further supplementary description. This is usually the point where readers employ their subjective initiative to fulfill the unexpressed aspects of the text. Here the translator projects himself in the text and actively participates in the communication with the text to concretize this indeterminacy left by the author. As he interprets and then expresses in the translated text, Chen Zhen would pay by killing the dog if the dog dares to kill another sheep.

Indeterminacy in the Use of Culture-related Expressions

Culture-related expressions signify the articulation or representation of beliefs, practices or attitudes pertaining to a particular culture. The culture-related expressions used in *Wolf Totem* reflect China's cultural, social background and consist of characteristic elements of China's heritage.

Example [6]

养狼本属大逆不道，如今又“出口伤人”，小狼真是命在旦夕。(姜戎, 2004:273)

Raising a wolf was already "violating the laws of nature", and now its survival was threatened. (Goldblatt, 2008, p. 404)

In the original text, the author employs a Chinese idiom "大逆不道" to describe the main character Chen Zhen's act of raising a wolf. Idiom is the bearing of Chinese culture for thousands of years, which naturally contains rich connotations. Indeterminacy usually comes into being when those idioms are applied in different scenarios, leaving the deep meanings for readers to reflect on. This Chinese idiom is a derogatory term generally used to condemn someone who has conducted some wicked deeds that go against the heavenly laws of morality and filial love. The translator engages with the text in a thoughtful way, and then detects the real meaning of this idiom applied in this specific context. In his understanding, as the wolves are born to be wild animals on the grassland, they would never surrender to the rule of the mankind. So domesticating the wolves should surely be regarded as an action disrupting the law of the nature. As different from the general farming society, what dominates the grassland is not the social ethics but rather the highly-respected law of the nature.

Example [7]

老人轻轻叹道：这可是腾格里赐给额仑草原人畜的救命草场。从前，牧民年年都要到对面山顶上祭拜腾格里和山神，这两年一闹运动没人敢拜了，可大伙儿心里还在拜。(姜戎, 2004:12)

The old man sighed. "This spot is a gift to the Olonbulag people and animals from Tengger, our sustenance. In the past, herdsmen made an annual trek to the top of that mountain to worship Tengger and the Mountain God. But with the political situation, no one has dared go up for a couple of years. But we still worship in our hearts." (Goldblatt, 2008, p. 15)

“闹运动” is a broad term which may cause some confusion in the readers' mind as what is the so called “activity” and what exactly forces the herdsmen to stop their worship ceremony to Tengger and the Mountain God. Here this indeterminacy is where the subjective consciousness of the readers would be brought into play, and where readers would be stimulated to explore the implication hidden within. The translator first comprehends the information encoded in the original text and then further combines it with background information of the Chinese society in that period, and finally comes to his concretization of this indeterminacy as “the political situation”.

Indeterminacy in the original text of *Wolf Totem* in its external form activates the readers' aesthetic enthusiasm, thus giving rise to a high degree of freedom in readers' aesthetic choice. Because readers possess the kind of ability to experience, perceive and comprehend the information encoded in the text, they naturally become the aesthetic subject in the face of literary works. Before reading, readers have established certain aesthetic expectations and presuppositions for the text. While in reading, readers constantly adjust and modify their expectations and presuppositions, by way of casting their attention to where they can gain the most pleasant experience. That is exactly how readers realize their freedom of aesthetic choice. In other words, the existence of indeterminacy in the original text of *Wolf Totem* provides a wider space for readers to choose freely in the process of aesthetic appreciation, at the same time arouses their enthusiasm to actively mobilize their aesthetic consciousness to appreciate this literary work. Readers can always find some space for recreation and reconstruction.

Translator's Concretization

In the text of *Wolf Totem*, there are many spots of indeterminacy left purposely or unpurposely by the author in the depiction of characters, scenes and events, which are to be filled in by individual's interpretation through reading of the work. Based on Howard Goldblatt's own perception, understanding, evaluation of the work and the resulting association and imagination, he comprehensively and vividly conveys the original meaning of the text and the culture it embodies, and at the same time reduce confusion and misunderstanding that may be caused by those inadequately-defined or unfamiliar words, expressions or cultural elements for the target language readers, thus achieving his act of concretization.

Concretization in the Translation of Characters

Example [1]

小狼的身子骨催起来了。它总是吃得肚皮溜溜圆，像个眉开眼笑的小弥勒。（姜戎, 2004:166）

The cub was filling out, its belly tight as a drum after each meal, like the fat, squinty-eyed laughing Buddha. (Goldblatt, 2008, p. 260)

The master Chen Zhen is carefully and lovingly tending his wolf cub, providing its every meal with meat and milk. He grounds up calcium tablets and soft bones and mixes into the meat to feed the cub. He even adds

butter and salt to make it more tasty. Under his care, the cub enjoys a good appetite and is growing fast like spring mushroom. The author compares the cub to the image of “弥勒” to manifest how satisfied the cub is about his meal and how comfortable the cub is feeling about its life with Chen. As we know, Buddhism is an important element in Chinese culture, it is broad and profound with a long history. And here “弥勒”, known as Maitreya, is a widely-believed bodhisattva. The image of Maitreya is traditionally portrayed as a person with a full figure, a benign countenance and a smiling face. So Maitreya is also regarded by Chinese as “the Laughing Buddha”. The fat body with a big belly is another feature of this Buddha. As Chinese usually associate a plump body with affluence and abundance, rubbing the belly of a laughing buddha statue has become a custom to bring prosperity and happiness. Back in the original text, the facial expression of this Buddha is fully portrayed as “眉开眼笑” while the posture of the Buddha is left indeterminate, which can be recomposed in the readers’ imagination differently. By adding another adjective “fat” to complete the body shape of this Buddha, the translator achieves his concretization of this indeterminate spot. On the one hand, the further enriched image of “弥勒” is in line with the cub’s state of utter satiety, and on the other hand it displays the Chinese cultural element in front of the readers’ eyes in vivid detail.

Example [2]

小狼的意识里绝对没有被人豢养的感觉，它不会像狗一样一见到主人端来食盆，就摇头摆尾感激涕零。（姜戎, 2004:169）

The wolf showed no gratitude, for he did not consider himself as being raised by a human and was incapable of reacting slavishly just because he saw his master coming with his food. (Goldblatt, 2008, p. 264)

In this example, “摇头摆尾”, which literally can be understood as “shake the head and wag”, is a common dog behavior to please the master, expressing its thanks or happiness. The translator first takes on his role as a receiver of the source text. Through active reading, he unearths the implied characteristic of the wolf cub: what the wolf cub is really incapable of is not expressing thanks to his master but instead giving up its dignity and independence. Unlike dogs that can be easily domesticated, wolves possess a kind of natural instinct to fight for food and for its own life. This determines that it is impossible for them to surrender their dignity to be raised as pets. Then to fulfill his role as the creator of the target text, the translator actively concretizes the indeterminacy hidden in the description of the image of the wolf cub by rewriting the expression based on his comprehension. By bringing light to the essential quality of wolves as “incapable to be enslaved”, he contributes to the consistency of the text and at the same time smooths the target readers’ reading experience.

Concretization in the Translation of Scenes & Events

When dealing with the indeterminacy coming with scenes and events, the translator usually digs out the real intention of the author behind describing the scenes and events, and then unfolds well-established internal correlations to the readers, further arousing their emotionally engagement.

Example [3]

狼群对几只跑得撑破肚皮，不咬自伤的倒地黄羊，连看也不看，而是直接冲向 扎堆的黄羊群。大狼扑倒几只大羊，咬断咽喉，几股红色焰火状的血液喷泉，射向空中，洒向草地。（姜戎, 2004:19）

Ignoring those fallen gazelles who had eaten so much they could not run, the wolves went straight for the standing clusters of animals. The Larger wolves quickly brought down victims and bit through their throats, sending crimson streams gushing into the air and staining the snow. (Goldblatt, 2008, p. 28)

In the source text, the author is trying to depict the bloodthirsty and ferocious side of the wild wolves in the time of prey. As following the author's depiction, a vivid image of this scene is gradually constructed in the mind of the translator, which he shows in the target text as "sending crimson streams gushing into the air and staining the snow". Here in the source text, it is only explicitly depicted by the author that the crimson streams gush into the air and then spread on the grassland. However, processed by the translator's imagination, his target text offers a new image with sharp contrast between the pure, white snow and the fresh, red blood, which heightens the sense of bloodiness and cruelty of the scene. Such concretization completes the picture with a very strong visual sense and helps the target language readers better perceive the fierce and tense preying and killing of wolves, ultimately reaching the desired effect of enhancing their reading experience.

Example [4]

陈阵空手而归，一路思绪烦乱。他抬起头仰望腾格里，长生天似苍庐，笼盖四方。天苍苍，野茫茫，风吹草低不见狼。（姜戎，2004:265）

He returned empty-handed, his head a jumble of thought. Gazing up at Tengger, he thought of lines of poetry: "The sky covers the earth like a terrestrial roof," and "The sky is dark, the wilderness vast / The grass bends when the wind blows / No wolf can be seen." (Goldblatt, 2008, p. 392)

Poetry is a special literary genre. Due to the restriction of its unique syntax, rhyme and rhythm, the poets usually have to express their thoughts and feelings within limited words. Therefore, every word they choose contains rich connotations for the readers to appreciate. These lines of poetry are in fact an adaption made from a Chinese folk song "Song of the Chile". This song dates back to the Northern and Southern Dynasties in China, and was written by people in Chile to describe their living environment and to praise the beautiful and picturesque scenery of the grassland. Some scholars translated the scene "天苍苍，野茫茫" in the original folk song as "Boundless, the sky is so blue; The wilderness seems boundless, too". Apparently, with the Chile people's great affection and attachment to the grassland, the color of the sky should be imagined as blue, a symbol of freedom and brightness. However, in terms of "天苍苍" here in the adapted version, the translator comprehends the underlying subtle emotional elements hidden between lines. According to the story, Chen Zhen is obsessed with the little wolf cub he raises, but the cub has caused much trouble. On the one hand, he is fully aware of that his behavior disrupts the natural law of the grassland; on the other hand, he could not control his curiosity and desire, and nor could he give up his beloved cub. The translator first actively engages himself in the reading of the text and grasps Chen's entangled and gloomy mood at that moment. Then, he puts on the "coat" of a translator, concretizes the color of the sky as "black" in the target text, which serves as a perfect projection of Chen's depressed feeling. Such artful concretization displays the translator's subjective initiative, his faithfulness to the original text, and also his consideration for the target readers as well, making this scene a true clear expression of the character's inner feeling.

Example [5]

众人又吃又喝又唱，骠悍地狂呼乱叫，既享受酒肉，又惊狼吓狼。一年多来张继原酒量大长，酒后晕晕唱“酒歌”，他发现自己的歌声中也颇有些狼嗥的悠长意味了。（姜戎，2004:289）

They sang and shouted as they feasted on the food and spirits, scaring away any wolves in the area. Zhang's capacity for liquor grown noticeably over the preceding year; now drunk, he entertained the others with a rendition of "The Wine Song" at the top of his lungs, his voice, it seemed, had taken on the quality of a wolf's drawn-out howls. (Goldblatt, 2008, p. 421)

In this example, the translator tactfully handles two spots of indeterminacy that appears in the underlined original text both by the strategy of adding translation. Firstly, the author uses “酒后晕晕唱‘酒歌’” to simply describe that Zhang was singing after getting drunk. However, the translator senses a more joyful image through the author's description of this event. To his understanding, Zhang sings not only because he is drunk, but more importantly, he would like to bring pleasure to others. Thus the translator rebuilds his image of this event as: “he entertained the others with a rendition of ‘The Wine Song’”, which further reflects Zhang's close and harmonious relationship with Mongols. Secondly, “at the top of his lungs”, which is not mentioned by the author, is inserted as another complement of this scene, demonstrating how Zhang is indulged in that pleasant moment. Together, those two additions allude to a state of well-being and contentment of this young guy from Beijing as he has gradually transformed and integrated into the new life in grassland. It can be clearly seen that the translator actively interacts with the source text and processes those explicit depictions and implicit hints in his mind. He draws inspiration from his imagination, exposes those hidden elements and concretizes them in a way consistent with the original text both in content and in structure.

Concretization in the Translation of Culture-related Expressions

In dealing with the indeterminate spots in culture-related expressions, the translator, first as a reader, not only needs to throw himself into the text, but also into the Chinese culture, for the sake of fully comprehending these cultural elements. Then in the process of translation, the translator is mostly expected to realize his concretization with due consideration for readers' ability to accept and understand the unfamiliar cultural elements. Consequently, he can achieve his concretization in a way that avoids the possible cultural conflict and misunderstanding caused by the indeterminacy in cultural elements, and thus make it easier for readers to appreciate both the text and the culture it embodies.

Example [6]

高建中说：狼咬了人，你还想放了它，你真比东郭还东郭，没那么便宜的事！（姜戎，2004:273）

“You're talking about setting free a wolf that's already bitten someone? How dense can you be? It won't work, not now.” (Goldblatt, 2008:404)

In this example, Gao Jianzhong compares Chen Zhen's unreasonable behavior to that of Tung-kuo, a figure in a well-known Chinese story Master Tung-kuo and the Wolf. The story has long been on the recommended reading list for pupils, so basically every Chinese is familiar with it. In brief, it happens between a very kind-hearted man Tung-kuo and a heartless, ungrateful wolf: Tung-kuo mistakenly showed his undistinguished pity on the wolf and helped it hide from hunters. However, as soon as it got away from the hunters, it jumped at

Tung-kuo right away to eat him. Finally, Tung-kuo is lucky enough to be saved by a hunter who killed the wolf with his mighty swing of hoe. Now, in the Chinese culture, “Master Tung-kuo” generally refers to people who do not distinguish between right and wrong and indiscriminately show compassion to anyone. Although widely accepted within Chinese culture, such story is in total unfamiliarity to the Westerners. Put “Master Tung-kuo” in the Google search column, none entries are shown to be related to this figure or this story. Apart from the unfamiliarity, western readers may interpret this story from a completely different perspective as cultivated in their culture. Accordingly they are at high risk of deviating from the author’s original intention. Therefore, it is understandable that the translator deliberately omits this figure after comprehending the implied meaning of this story. He then brings his interpretation of this figure as “dense” in front of the target readers by creatively rewriting the original expression. Here his flexible handling in translation maintains the original emotional taste and in the meantime clears the little obstruction that may disrupt reader’s fluent reading process, thus keeping readers as undisturbed in the enjoyment of this literary work.

Example [7]

这种中庸比汉族的“中庸”更具有战斗性，也更接近真理。（姜戎，2004:252）

This sort of “middle way” is more combative and more real than the Han Chinese “middle ground”. (Goldblatt, 2008, p. 376)

In this example, the classic Chinese doctrine “中庸” appears twice in the sentence, apparently with contrasting connotations. The first refers to the characteristic of wolves while the second refers to the quality of Han Chinese. The rich connotations hidden behind these two characters are where indeterminacy lies, appealing readers to concretize with their own interpretation and knowledge. The translator associates the first “中庸” with the concept of the “Golden Mean” in ancient Greek philosophy, which advocates the desirable middle way between two extremes, one of excess and the other of deficiency. According to the principle of the Golden Mean, one must seek courage, the mean between cowardice and foolhardiness in order to gain honor, which is exactly the valuable quality wolves exhibit. Such concretization shows translator’s careful consideration for the target readers, by transforming the expression into one close to the general perception of readers from another culture. In contrast, the second “中庸” here is interpreted as the one Han Chinese generally worship: Doctrine of the Mean, a core idea of Confucianism. In practice, this doctrine contains broad virtues, including moderation, rectitude, sincerity, honesty, truthfulness, propriety, equilibrium and lack of prejudice. But notably, the Doctrine of Mean highly promotes a maintaining of balance and harmony by directing the mind to a state of constant equilibrium. It says that in all activities and thoughts one has to adhere to moderation. This will result in harmony in action, and eventually in a harmonious society. On the grounds of this Chinese traditional doctrine, the translator skillfully and neatly expresses his comprehension of “中庸” as compromising to reach the “middle ground”. From here we can see that the translator actively exploits the deep meaning in this culture-related expression, concretizes it through the process of his appreciation and knowledge with absolute adherence to the author’s initial intention, thus achieving the effects of retaining the consistency of the text while making it easier for readers to understand.

Example [8]

它脸上原来有两个像狗眼大小的圆形黄色眉毛，可是一个眉毛像是被狼抓咬掉了，现在只剩下一个，跟两只眼睛一配，像脸上长了三只眼。虽然第三只眼没有长在眉心，但毕竟是三只眼，因此，开始的时候陈阵杨克就管它叫二郎神。（姜戎，2004:69）

At one time there'd been a pair of yellow eyebrows above his eyes, but one of them was missing, lost perhaps to a wolf. Now it almost looked as if the dog had three eyes, and Chen called him Demon Erlang, after frictional character in classic literature. (Goldblatt, 2008, p. 110)

In this example, “二郎神” is chosen by the author as the name for Chen Zhen's newly-adopted husky Mongol dog. As familiar to most Chinese, “Erlang Shen” is a noble and powerful Warrior God with a third truth-seeing eye in the middle of his forehead, which possesses destructive power to utterly destroy and vaporize anything it hits. He is mostly portrayed in ancient legends to have vast, superhuman strength and slay demons and monsters in the mortal realm. The author of the original text actually does not give any additional description on this legend figure or on how he and the dog may share some resemblance in character. Instead, he leaves the specific image to reader's individual interpretation. The translator, through his actively reading, constructs the image of this dog in his mind as an evil spirit, and deliberately defines it as “Demon Erlang”. By doing so, he strengthens the powerful, ferocious, and fearsome side of this dog, which exactly match its identity as a guard dog. Additionally, if here “二郎神” is plainly interpreted as “God Erlang”, confusion may rise in the target readers' mind as how and in what way a divine deity is related to this dog. Thus, by adding a noun, the translator highlights the object's character, retains the fluency of the plot and mitigates the cultural shock which may result in unnecessary interruption of reading for readers of another culture.

To sum up, the author carries out a comprehensive analysis of the translator's act of concretization manifested in three aspects of the text. We can infer from the above that indeterminacy unavoidably arises in the description of characters, scenes, events, and in the use of culture-related expressions. On one respect, the translator as a reader expands the meaning of the work beyond its inner intentionality through active reading; while on the other respect as a translator creatively concretizes his individual aesthetic experience with different translation strategies. As a result, his act of concretization benefits the readers basically in several ways: first, by revealing the deep meaning and connotation of the original text, he transforms the indeterminate elements into more meaningful and neat ones that can be more easily comprehended by target language readers, thus smoothing their reading experiences. Secondly, through concretization, he removes possible obstructions that may disrupt readers' fluent reading process and keep them undisturbed in the enjoyment of this literary work. Thirdly, the Chinese cultural elements are presented in front of western readers' eyes in a way that meets their expectation and vision, thus catering to their aesthetic pleasure and promoting their willingness to accept. Last but not the least, he contributes his part to realizing the aesthetic value of this literary work by properly interlinking different levels of this literary work and bringing the aesthetically valid qualities to the fore.

Conclusion

In conclusion, indeterminacy is a universal phenomenon that lies in every literary work, especially those of the contemporary kind like *Wolf Totem*. The existence of indeterminacy in the original text of *Wolf Totem* stimulates readers to explore profound implication and aesthetic value hidden in this literary work. First of all,

indeterminacy in *Wolf Totem* can activate the readers' aesthetic enthusiasm, thus giving rise to a high degree of freedom in readers' aesthetic choice. Secondly, readers can always find some space for recreation and reconstruction from where the indeterminacy lies in the text. Such space invites readers to fulfill with a series of subjective activities, thus completing their reading experience. Thirdly, through readers' active reading and participation in the recreation of the text, they can finally achieve the satisfaction of their emotional appeals and the goals of their pursuits.

In terms of the effects of Howard Goldblatt's act of concretization, it can be summarized as following: First, by revealing the deep meaning of the original text, he offers target language readers a more smooth reading experience. And he also clears the way for readers and keeps them undisturbed in the enjoyment of this literary work. Secondly, his concretization meets western readers' expectation and vision, thus enhancing their aesthetic pleasures. Most significantly, he contributes his part to realizing the aesthetic value of this literary work. His words continue to generate a vibrant and graphic presentation of images that appeal to the target language readers and help them more easily visualize the images represented in a language they are familiar with only selected a finite number of representative examples according to the image classification and the characteristic of this literary work to analyze. Such arrangement may potentially compromise the comprehensiveness and accuracy of this translation study. Thirdly, this thesis primarily puts its focus on the positive effects of Howard Goldblatt's concretization, less attention is paid to analyzing the possible negative effects it may carry. The author thinks further study could be conducted on this aspect, to investigate what kind of concretization would unfortunately cause adverse effects on readers' appreciation and how should a translator regulate his behavior to avoid such consequence. Finally, the author believes that the concept of indeterminacy and concretization can be applied in more diversified translation studies of literature, like poems and dramas, to analyze how the indeterminacy in these types of literary works is concretized by the translators. Hopefully, it may contribute to the broadening of thinking in the translation studies.

References

- Bassnett, S., & Lefevere, A. (2001). *Constructing cultures: Essays on literary translation*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Bassnett, S., & Lefevere, A. (2004). *Translation studies*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Eagleton, T. (1996). *Literary theory: An introduction*. The University of Minnesota Press.
- Goldblatt, H. (2008). *Wolf totem*. New York: The Penguin Press.
- Goldblatt, H. (2002). The writing life. Washington Post.
(<http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wpdyn?pagename=article&node=&contentId=A51294-2002Apr25¬Found=true>)
- Goldblatt, H. (2011). A Mi Manera: Howard Goldblatt at home, a self-interview. *Chinese Literature Today*.
- Holub, R. C. (1984). *Reception theory: A critical introduction*. London and New York: Methuen.
- Ingarden, R. (1973). *The cognition of the literary work of art*. Translated by Ruth Ann Crowley and Kenneth R. Olson. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.
- Ingarden, R. (1973). *The literary work of art*. Translated by George G. Grabowicz. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.
- Iser, W. (1972). The reading process: A phenomenological approach. *New Literary History*.
- Iser, W. (1987). *The act of reading: Theory of aesthetic response*. London: The John's Hopkins University Press.
- Iser, W. (1974). The implied reader. Baltimore. Jun, L. (2008), Faithful to the original. *China Daily*.
(http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2008-03/12/content_6527699.htm)

- Lefevere, A. (2006). *Translation literature: Practice and theory in a comparative literature context*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- Levy, J. (1977). *The translation of verbal art*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Lupke, C. (2011). Hanking after sovereign images: Modern Chinese fiction and the voices of Howard Goldblatt. *Chinese Literature Today*.
- 姜戎. (2004). *狼图腾* [M]. 长江文艺出版社.