

The Engagement of Translation in Remodeling “Root-Seeking” Literature into World Literature: *A Dictionary of Maqiao* as an Example

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received: August 05, 2022

Accepted: October 26, 2022

Published: October 31, 2022

Volume: 10 Issue: 4

Conflicts of interest: None

Funding: *The research is supported by Humanities and Social Sciences Fund of the Ministry of Education under Grant No. 20YJA752005*

Keywords:

Engagement of Translation,
“root-seeking” Literature,
World Literature,
A Dictionary of Maqiao

ABSTRACT

The study provides an innovative insight into the engagement of translation in remodeling Chinese “root-seeking” literature into world literature. By selecting Han Shaogong’s *A Dictionary of Maqiao* and its English translation completed by Julia Lovell as a case, we reconceptualize the reconciling engagement of translation within the framework of translation as “re-narration” at four levels: narrative reference, narrative perspective, characterization and narrative distance. Through a textual and contextual analysis, Lovell’s “faithful recreation” witnessed by the dual subjectivity of the writer and the translator contributes to building up a textual and cultural dialogue with the target readers. It examines how narratorial voices as focalizations reshape the translator’s “re-narration” and how Lovell deals with transgression rejoining this process, and investigates how Lovell continues Han’s retelling of historical culture through characterization. Also, it analyzes narrative distance peculiarly represented by modality and sound patterns captured by Lovell, outlining Han’s resistance of “root-seeking” after historical shock and transition. This paper hopes to provide some ideas for promoting the understanding of contemporary Chinese literary works and world literature by virtue of translation, thus refining cultural exchanges and transmission.

INTRODUCTION

The advent of “root-seeking” literature is endowed with strong connections with world literature and translation at its very beginning. As a dominant literary and cultural trend prevailing in mainland China since the 1980s, “root-seeking” literature envisages echoing entrance into world literature by virtue of avant-garde writings of rural and ethnic minority cultures. Han Shaogong, a novelist and one of the flagbearers in “root-seeking” movement, presented his article “The Roots of Literature” (文学的根) at the Hangzhou Symposium of December 14, 1984, regarded as the “Root-Seeking Manifesto”. Han’s article debates around the issue of recognizing indigenous cultures and renovating national vitality through “root-seeking” literature is closely connected with translation activities. *World Literature, Foreign Literature and Art*, and *Yilin*, as journals concerning translated literature, intentionally introduce Western novelists and philosophers, “root-seeking” writers’ unconscious receptions and interpretations of Modernism are inspired. Accordingly, shared visions from a worldly perspective have been nurtured, regardless of “root-seeking” writers’ seemingly tendential appeal for Chinese artistic tradition (like

Chuangtse’s Daoist philosophy), dividing themselves from “scar literature”, “reform literature” and “pseudomodernists”. Thereupon “the movement of New Era literary circles from modernism to root-seeking followed the process of some writer’s gradual deepening of their self-consciousness” (Li, 2000, p. 114).

Han Shaogong is a typical example, and the translation of his *A Dictionary of Maqiao* (1996) is a creation which contributes to remodeling “root-seeking” literature into world literature by means of engagement of translation (Note 1). Engagement of translation is concerned with its essence endowed with diversity and dynamism in interactions with translation environment (Liu & Xu, 2016, p. 97). In terms of Han’s *A Dictionary of Maqiao*, scholars have discussed elements and shadows of world literature assimilated or displayed in it (see Chen, 1997), but little attention is paid to the translingual dissemination of *Maqiao* by virtue of the engagement of translation, especially when Julia Lovell’s English version was published by Columbia University Press in 2003. Mona Baker (2014, p. 159) holds that translation can be “understood as a form of (re-)narration that *constructs* rather than *represents* the events and characters it re-narrates in another language.” Therefore, as for the canon-build-

ing of “root-seeking” literature, “it is a means of cultural transformation *through* language, enabling a new literature to emerge and helping construct a new transnationalism in China” (Wang, 2010, p. 12). Regarding so, it is worthwhile to probe into the “re-narration” progress in the remodeling of Chinese “root-seeking” literature into world literature in a translational and narratological framework. There are two questions to be answered in this study: (1) How is Maqiao re-narrated through Lovell’s engagement of translation? (2) What are the historical and cultural contexts in promoting Han Shaogong’s “root-seeking” dialogue with world literature? The exploration of “root-seeking” literature’s “re-narration” as world literature, taking *A Dictionary of Maqiao* as an example, brings more considerations for the progress from “literariness” to “interliterariness”, thus empowering overseas readership and transmission of contemporary Chinese literary works.

NARRATIVE REFERENCE: ENGAGEMENT OF TRANSLATION AS A FAITHFUL RECREATION

In *A Dictionary of Maqiao*, the “narrating-I” both edits the dictionary and tells the story about the college of Maqiao. One of the most obvious narrative references with plentiful cultural implications is witnessed from the narrator’s editing on lists of dialects to expose his mindset (Sánchez, 1999; Määttä, 2004). Vocal characteristics can be profitably investigated by analyzing someone’s dialect, sociolect, idiolect, and genderlect (Jahn, 2021, p. 29). Similarly, vocal characteristics constitute placeness and ethnicity of “root-seeking” works. Then, how to understand and translate these regional dialects becomes the first necessity for the translator to enter the narrator-narratee position in order to manifest interactions of Taoism, Confucianism, and Western philosophy in the formation of cultural “roots”. “The voice that the reader hears in any translation made on the basis of *simpatico* is always recognized as the author’s, never as a translator, nor even as some hybrid of the two” (Venuti, 1995, p. 274), which illustrates the detrimental engagement of fidelity. However, through the quantitative analysis of lists of entries, the “re-narration” of Maqiao dialects through the translator’s voice is conversely revealed.

According to Javier Franco Aixelá’s classification, culture-specific items (CSI) is introduced to “enable us to define the strictly cultural competent as opposed to, say, the linguistic or pragmatic ones” (1996, p. 57). He divides the intercultural manipulation into two groups: conservation and substitution (Note 2). The translation of culture-specific items largely reveals the translator’s cognitive pertinence.

The translation strategies adopted by Lovell are demonstrated in Table 1.

Lists of entries represent a path to perceive authorial voices, which reflect attitudes and intentions of the implied author to respond to local customs and language patterns. In this way, overt voices with strong cultural implications suggest the implied author’s attitudes toward personal embodied experience. To deal with these lists with more flexibility, Lovell chooses a neutral equivalence in her translated version, in which repetition is at a large scale (76%) used to appeal to readers, covering lists like “Public Family” (公家), “Delivering Songs” (发歌), and “Streetsickness” (晕街) etc.

Among the phonetic lists which reflect the most obvious authorial voices, Lovell applies foreignization to reveal and complement its local characters. For example, orthographic adaptation is adopted in lists like “Vernacular/Empty talk (baihua)” (白话), “Qoqo Man, The” (觉觉佬), and “Ligelang” (哩咯啲) etc. Thus, phonetic transcription and transliteration are employed to integrate narrative references, mapping the geographical remoteness of Maqiao. Noticeably, Lovell’s engagement with the re-narrated texts keeps close and coordinative negotiations with Han Shaogong’s narration. Lovell once admitted in the translator’s note:

There are, however, five entries from the novel that I deemed to be so heavily dependent in the Chinese original on puns between dialect and Mandarin Chinese as to make extensive and distracting linguistic explanations necessary in English. I therefore decided, with the author’s permission, to omit from my translation the following entries... (Han, 2005, p. IX)

Generally speaking, Han agrees with her revision. For Lovell, the engagement with narrative references is based on the expected readership and the fluidity of re-narration, preventing further deterioration of the authorial voice. In this way, the translation strategy and visions largely reveal the translator’s agency. In an interview, Lovell attributes her translation strategy to “faithful recreation” (Zhang, 2019, p. 112). Lovell applies “dual fidelity” into her translating practices, of which both source language (SL) and target language (TL) are equally emphasized (Zhang, p. 112). During the translation process of *A Dictionary of Maqiao*, Lovell insists on negotiating with Han and avoids any subjective deletions or revisions of the source text, unless permitted by the author. Traces of engagement are also found in the “translator’s preface” and “a note about the translation” in paratexts, as an exemplification of the translator’s “visibility”, re-narrating “[a]s explored in Han Shaogong’s Dictionary, the dialect, life, and inhabitants of Maqiao are fully deserv-

Table 1. Percentages of translation strategies adopted by Julia Lovell

Translation Strategies	f	%	Translation Strategies	f	%
Repetition	83	76	Autonomous creation	3	3
Intratextual gloss	2	2	Linguistic translation	2	2
Orthographic adaptation	9	8	Deletion	1	1
Absolute universalization	6	5	Limited universalization	1	1
Synonymy	2	2	Total	109	100

ing of their place in world literature” (Han, 2005, p. XI). To approach this goal, Lovell is eager to enable overseas readers to understand the structure and characteristics of the original work, as she includes an alphabetically arranged glossary at the end of the book with a list of principal characters. Thus, the translator’s intention outlines the whole trajectory within the actor’s network, for whom the engagement of translation signifies a dynamic and adapted interaction with other actors, involving the author, the reader, and the translated text.

Lovell’s engagement settles the intrinsic heterogeneity of SL in response to challenges brought by narrative references. “Faithful recreation” aims to preserve its originally local and ethnic styles as well as conventionalized dialects without harming the readership, as “[t]he heterogenous discourse of minoritizing resists this assimilationist ethic by signifying the linguistic and cultural differences of the text – within the major language” (Venuti, 1998, p. 12). Good samples come from Lovell’s use of “absolute universalization” in dealing with Daoist dialects, including “Speaking the Dao” (打玄讲), “Daoist Ritual” (打醮), “Spirit” (神) etc. To handle dialects carrying certain Daoist cultural implications, reference ranges are extended to reduce readers’ redundant obscurity and disturbance. Contrast to Venuti’s claim that “[t]ranslation increases the heterogeneity because the translator’s verbal choices amount to interpretive moves that vary the source text” (Venuti, 2013, p. 195), Lovell’s engagement tries to respect TL readers’ reading habits and horizons of their expectations.

All in all, Lovell’s engagement with narrative references shortens the gap between “root-seeking” literature and world literature. On the one hand, though Lovell’s engagement cannot totally eliminate the heterogeneity constructed upon recipient contexts, source culture and ideologies, “faithful recreation” re-narrates Han’s local writing sticking to the principle of fidelity and dynamic adaptability. Accordingly, configuring cultural collisions instead of dividing them seems to re-narrate Maqiao story in a communicative way. On the other hand, Lovell shows her respect for differences in translating narrative references, as the engagement cannot wipe out the intrinsic heterogeneity itself, or more concretely, prevents the dialogue within the re-narration. David Damrosch affirms that “[w]orld literature is not a set canon of texts but a mode of reading: a form of detached engagement with worlds beyond our own place and time” (2003, p. 281), conforming to “faithful recreation” as engagement to handle narrative equivalence, cultural seclusion and intended readership.

NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE: NARRATORIAL VOICES AS FOCALIZATIONS IN TRANSLATION

Genette classifies the confusion over “narrative perspective” into questions of “who sees?” and “who speaks?” (1980, p. 186). He points out distinctions between the narrator’s voice and the characters’ focalization. As the narrator serves as the speaker or “voicer” of the translated discourse, the agent establishes communicative links with addressees. For instance, scholars have discussed the translator’s discursive presence and their “visibility” resulting from narratorial

voices (Hermans, 1996; Jiang, 2012; McLaughlin, 2008; O’Sullivan, 2003). Translation as “re-narration” endows readers a closer proximity to involve in authorial experiences and minds within translated texts, and how his or her manipulation of the original narrative perspective exerts influences on target-readers’ understandings, indirectly conveying the narrator’s intentions.

Obviously, the transgression of narrative perspectives reveals the shift of the implied author’s voices, confirming to “the view of translation as reproduction, in which the translation is meant to reproduce the original, the whole original and nothing but the original” (Hermans, 1996, p. 44). Han applies cavalier perspectives and paraphrasing to reveal the narrator’s switching positions, which resembles the format of a dictionary and diminishes chains of causation in the story of Maqiao, as if playing a polyphonic melody. As a differentiated means of narration and focalization, Han uses mainly two perspectives. On the one hand, the third-person point of view is adopted to depict Bandit Ma’s sufferings in face of history and tragic destiny, and the first-person point of view is from time to time inserted to imitate the narrator’s retrospection; two differing narrative perspectives reveal various emotional intensity, opinions and attitudes. On the other hand, narrator’s perceptions are confused with the character’s focalization, forming narrative tensions arising from the certain distance, as reflected in lists like “Dream-Woman” (梦婆), “1948” and “Uh” (嗯). Shifts of narrative perspectives reveal the consistency and deviations of focalizations through narratorial voices, as exemplified in the following sentences:

[Case 1]

ST: 我没法辨别这些解释的真假, 只得绕开它们, 仅仅交代一下结局本身。我甚至不一定能把结局本身说清楚, 只能尽力而为地把零散材料作一些拼接。(2017, p. 138)

TT: **I have no way of distinguishing the true from the false amongst these accounts, so I’ll have to sidestep them all and just tell briefly how the story ended.**

I can’t necessarily even give a proper account of how it ended, all I can do is try my best to piece together the fragmented sources available. (2005, p. 122)

[Case 2]

ST:……明明是有什么东西在他们肉体的那一边爆响同时又在他们肉体的这一边绽开一连串尘雾的花朵。他们也许开始明白, 金属是怎么回事, 速度是怎么回事, 金属的子弹穿过肉体是一个多么顺畅多么迅速以及多么难以察觉的瞬间。(2017, p. 143)

TT: ...it became very obvious that something had exploded through one side of their bodies before blossoming out into a whole chain of dust-cloud blooms on the other side. Maybe they were just beginning to understand what kind of a thing metal is, what kind of a thing speed is, **how freely and easily metal bullets passed through flesh and how hard this instant was to grasp.**

(2005, p. 127)

Since the narrator has no chance to observe the incidents of Bandit Ma’s experience, the narrative perspective shifts to the first-person heterodiegetic view in the former case. And

Lovell chooses the present tense to keep away from extra-textual voices. In comparison to accounts of historical story through external views, the narrator-focalizer’s mindset reveals his subjective comments on historical past, and Lovell is aware of tense shifts to divide the narrator’s comments from the past memory. In Case 2, Lovell finds that Han adopts narrative transgression to express his intensive and ironic regrets for the soldiers’ sacrifice. Apparently the “narrating-I” has no way to witness the whole scene and perceive soldiers’ moods like an “experiencing-I”. Then, Lovell chooses special interrogatives like “what” and “how” to express the narrator’s sympathy. The overlapping of narrative perspectives signifies the necessity of the translator’s engagement while expressing the narrator’s attitudes and voices.

Actually, Han’s absorption and use of narrative perspectives also benefit from his translating experience of Western modernist novelists, among whom Kundera and Pessoa are representatives. From the preface of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Han acquires form-content tensions within the philosophical novel, consisting of “the mixture of both the first and third point of view” (Kundera, 2002, p. 8). Influenced by Kundera’s experimental styles, Han applies “archi-roman” as stylistic innovations in *A Dictionary of Maqiao*, removing the boundary between fiction and literature, thus portraying a musical deep structure deconstructing the logocentrism beneath the words (Li, 2014, pp. 149-151). Furthermore, Han is influenced by Pessoa’s political writing, being endowed with greater courage to reconcile “varying positions of the author” (Pessoa, 1995, p. 2). His translanguaging practices prepare his contact with world literature. For Lovell, narratorial voices as focalizations hinders more hybrid deviations in narrative perspectives, resembling the narrator’s vocal and tonal discourses. That’s why Lovell’s engagement of translation does not bewilder the reader by remarking the narrator’s position, as Han’s work keeps strong similarities with Western narrative techniques. Therefore, Lovell’s engagement with narrative perspectives fosters its focalizations in allowing the reader to experience the narrative styles in the original novel better.

CHARACTERIZATION: ENGAGEMENT OF TRANSLATION AS HISTORICAL CULTURE RETELLING

Lefevere’s claim of “translation as rewriting” puts emphasis on ideological and poetological manipulations on account of the professionals and the patronage system within and outside the literary system (1992, p. 2). Translation as re-narration focuses on configuring cultural encounters “embedded in the narratives that circulate in the context in which they produce a translation and simultaneously contribute to the elaboration, mutation, transformation and dissemination of these narratives through their translation choices” (Baker, 2014, p. 159). Characterization constitutes aspects of the re-narration to impose personality traits and national characters on the implied readers. In Han’s local writing of Maqiao, characters fulfill Margolin’s classification of three levels: (1) character as a literary figure; (2) character as an individual within a possible world; (3) character as text-based

construct or mental image in the reader’s mind (Margolin, 2007, p. 66). In terms of Han’s characterizing, it provides a medium for the reader to probe into its historical and cultural background, including social identities, behaviors and social circumstances. Lovell’s engagement of translation to a large extent is related to the exposure of a broader context of history, politics and local culture. It can be illustrated as follows.

[Case 3]

ST: 他的双脚虚实交替，**均匀地**踩在节拍上，决无拖泥带水的动作，决无时间和气力的丝毫浪费。他的动作不可以个而论，所有的动作**其实就是一个，不可分解，一气呵成，形随意至，舒展流畅**，简直是一曲无懈可击的舞蹈。(2017, pp. 350-351)

TT: His feet stamped in **perfect** rhythm, in an action that lacked any trace of sloppiness, that wasted not a moment of time nor ounce of energy. His actions couldn’t be analyzed separately, the one from the other: all his actions, in fact, **were indivisible, were as one, were realized as a unity in which form followed thought, followed a smooth and easy progression**, like a dance with no trips. (2005, p. 308)

[Case 4]

ST: **她哎哎呦呦地尖叫着**，身体扭出一些动人的线条，不经意之际，亮出领口里或袖口里**更多白花花暧昧不清**的各种可能，搅得有些人的眼光游移不定。男人们也就干得更加卖力。(2017, p. 251)

TT: Her **piercing cries**, the tragic convulsions of her body, the possibility that at careless moments **a wider expanse of dazzling white**... something would glint out of her neckline or cuffs got the men (and their roving eyes) buzzing around. (2005, p. 233)

Case 3 explains the narrator’s appreciation for Zhaoqing’s manual labor while joining the people’s commune (人民公社). Frequent use of four-character phrases outlines the proficiency and beauty of Zhaoqing’s labor, signifying the narrator’s inner respect and praise for the past memory of the intellectual youth. Though it is hard for Lovell to paraphrase four-character phrases, she adopts explication to compensate for the narrator’s defective descriptions (like “perfect”) and moods. Lovell applies parallelism and omission to imply the narrator’s satisfying emotions and unforgettable memory. Case 4 presents the narrator’s focus on sexual fantasies towards a rural female. Tiexiang’s case reminds readers of gender predicaments restricted by feudal conventions, a retrogression after the break-off of the Cultural Revolution. Lovell adopts “piecing” and ellipsis to highlight sexual impulses among Maqiao people, for whom paradoxical sentiments arising from syntactic revisions reconstructs the rhetoricity. By doing so, the juxtaposition of imagery noun phrases and clarification of referents correspond to Han’s implicit reflections on underprivileged exclusion and suppression of love, sex and female identity.

Lovell’s awareness of cultural and historical implications embedded in Han’s retelling of Maqiao characters are based on her understanding of Chinese history and culture. As a researcher concentrating on Maoism and Chinese nation-building, she seizes Han’s obscure and complex attitudes towards post-Maoist Maqiao and ordinary people’s

everyday life. Han spent his teenage in the Cultural Revolution, during which he is exiled to the rural countryside as an intellectual youth. The characterization in Maqiao is constructed under history and geo-cultural denotations, along with waves of rapid marketization and new concepts of the nonofficial (*minjian*) and “invisible writing” in the 1980s, which shapes Han’s reflections of historical reality and local placeness. Lovell once detected that “...Han is at one point instructed to write a revolutionary opera glorifying the lives of the laboring peasants” (“Translator’s Preface”). Han himself admits that life experiences as an intellectual youth is accidental, for whom the process of accepting this identity is not idealistic (Note 3). Instead of giving value-judgments on historical and social rules, Han tends to reexamine life story and discuss impacts of history on his writing attitudes. Furthermore, Han’s invention of rural Hunan has “made it into less of a regional than a national construct: a symbol of China, and even human nature” and “most ‘roots’ writers have been attacked on the same grounds as Shen Congwen: for valuing the past” (Kinkley, 1993, p. 99). Regarding “root-seeking” movement, Han and other writers inherit Daoism and idyllic rural pattern as Shen Congwen does.

Lovell’s engagement with characterization seemingly fails to reveal the originality and vividness in Han’s depictions, but her compensative techniques of parallel short sentences and punctuation marks facilitate oversea readers to understand ordinary characters’ mental conditions and ethnic rules. She continues Han’s retelling of historical culture to uncover the underlying critical discourses and tones which mark “root-seeking” writers’ opposition against authority and legitimacy excluding dialects, thus restoring continuity and cultural bonds of local and ethnic ingredients. While analyzing “root-seeking” writers’ “Occidental Orientalism”, Lovell points out that their facets and entanglement are both “national” and “global”, which leads to “an evitable feeling of awkwardness resulted as politics shifted from Maoist peasant mobilization to urban-oriented modernization” (Lovell, 2011, p. 130). Thus, the engagement of the translator reframes the characterization shaped by certain historical and cultural background, proceeding Han’s retelling in its receptions.

NARRATIVE DISTANCE: MODALITY AND SOUND PATTERNS IN TRANSLATION

Genette discusses the relationship between “narrative moods” and “distance”, and he holds that “the narrative can furnish the reader with more or fewer details, and in a more or less direct way, and thus seem ...to keep at a greater or lesser distance from what it tells” (1980, p. 162). Narrative distance becomes a mediated medium influenced not only by the narrator but also by the translator, formulating “two chief modalities of that *regulation of narrative information*” along with narrative perspective (1980, p. 162). The translator’s re-narration is concerned with distances between the narrator and the implied reader, the narrator and re-narrated characters, as well as that of the narrator and common readers (Hu, 2015, p. 49). More referents, including narrative time and space, personal pronouns and defamiliarized tensions, can

also be influenced. If there appear the translator’s misjudgments towards Han’s writing styles, the “re-narration” of Maqiao is in disjunction with its themes and stylistics. The following are good illustrations:

[Case 5]

ST: “我喊你做菩萨，喊你做爷老子，快点让我去讨饭。你看这双脚要烂完了哇.....”

看守冷笑：“你不要到我面前来耍计。”

..... “不搬也要搬，这叫劳动改造。你还想讨饭？还想不劳而获好逸恶劳？新社会了，就是要整直你这号人的骨头。” (2017, p. 118)

TT: “I’m begging for mercy, begging you to be kind masters, please, quickly, let me go and beg. See how my two feet are rotting away...”

The guard gave an icy smile: “Don’t go playing your tricks on me.”

... “Doesn’t matter if you can’t, you’ve still got to: it’s what we call labor reform. You still want to beg? Still want to live off the fat of the land, not lift a finger? **This is the New Society— we’re going to give your sort some backbone!**” (2005, p. 105)

[Case 6]

ST: 他们除了磨柴刀菜刀镰刀铡刀，每家必有的—杆腰刀，也磨得雪亮，寒光在刃口波动着跳荡着爆发着，激动着人们的某种凶念。(2017, p. 10)

TT: As well as axes, sickles, and hay cutters, each family also had to have a dagger which they polished until it shone snowy white, the icy gleam of the knife edge rippling, pulsating, scintillating, arousing a certain savagery in people. (2005, p. 9)

Dialogues between narrated characters reflect the narrator’s gesture of gazing and attitudes that propel dramatization in line with plotting. In case 5, the conversation between the beggar— Dai Shiqing (“Nine Pockets”) and the guard denotes the ironic class struggle symbolizing opposite parties during the “Land Reform” (土改). As the reformed “Rich Peasant Beggar” (富农乞丐), Dai’s experience reveals his helplessness. In translation, Lovell intentionally adopts imperative sentences to highlight the guard’s severity, along with an exclamation “!” to enhance the tone. Besides, Lovell’s amplification of “you” and “we” unconsciously visualizes the class antagonism. As the translator re-narrates the scene from the viewpoint of an outsider, a more detailed and precise imitation directly shortens the distance between the character and reader, imposing a sense of fright and unrest in such a political phenomenon. Meanwhile, expressions of sound patterns constitute another peculiarity adjusting the narrative distance. As case 6 reveals, rhyming phrases like “axes” and “sickles” manifests auditory momentum when Maqiao celebrates the “Third of the Third”, a new-year ritual to salute farming products. Lovell’s use of consistent “/z/” and “-ing” pattern imitates local customs that indicate the physical movement and spatial visions, with bouncing verbs highly signifying people’s psyche by virtue of Lovell’s engagement.

Thus, “root-seeking” writers’ perception and sensibility of sounds penetrate their local writing, constituting a unique bond with world literature. In “Dropped off the Map: Han

Shaogong’s Maqiao”, Lovell traces Han’s “vital cosmopolitan traditions of twentieth-century Chinese letters” to Lu Xun’s discovery of “non-Chinese stylistics” (2011, p. 26). Similarly, apart from the dictionary-structure form performing a polyphony style, Han’s attention to vernacular musicality of Chinese characters has constructed another echo since the 1980s, along with writers like Mo Yan, Jia Pingwa, A Cheng, and Wang Anyi. Taking Mo Yan as an example, his fascination of sounds is not so much influenced by writers like William Faulkner and Garcia Marquez as the correspondence to world chorus consisting of polyphony narrations. To a large extent, Han’s exploration of sound elements signifies echo towards Lu Xun’s vibrations of “yelling” (呐喊) and “malevolent voices” (恶声) since the May Fourth tradition (Yan, 2013, p. 7). In this sense, Han and other “root-seeking” writers’ focus on sound patterns both positively adapts to sensory transformations from world literature and recreates expressive methods such as the emphasis on ways of “listening”. This trend goes back to Han’s initial for “root-seeking”, formulating “a strong statement of rebellion against ... normalization of literary language and form, a turning point in the development of post-Mao literary aesthetics” (Lovell, 2006, p. 131).

Generally speaking, the pattern of modalities and sounds as expressions marks an inseparable part of Han’s narration of Maqiao, where language and tonal potentials reveal a rejoined tension arising from both Chinese culture and literature in concord with Western literature. Lovell’s engagement with narrative distance not only recovers the dialogue through compensative techniques, but also promotes sound patterns to get in contact with literariness and readership. Behind Lovell’s “re-narration” of Maqiao sounds, there lies Han’s open and inclusive appropriation to communicate with world literature. Various sounds from Maqiao customs, characters and vernacular patterns perform like dimensional while harmonious ensemble. Lovell’s engagement of re-narration does not decompose the author’s subjectivity, and along with the eventalization of Maqiao story, a lyrical and symbolic mapping of local countryside after the mid-1980s bearing modern consciousness are completed in and out of world literature. Han and Lovell cooperate so pleasantly that they fulfill the aesthetic imagination and the readership’s receptions through the “re-narration” of Maqiao in translation.

CONCLUSION

Lovell succeeds in reestablishing the translator’s subjectivity through her engagement with the “re-narration” of *A Dictionary of Maqiao*, reproducing and supplementing the original text. The “re-narration” of Maqiao serves not for constructing a kind of invisible resistancy between the translated text and the foreign text but for fostering equal and fluent communications between different actors in the author-readership network. Analyzing the four levels of re-narration, we find that Lovell’s flexible handling of conflicts between fidelity and transgression has exerted positive effects on revealing the peculiar position of *A Dictionary of Maqiao* in world literature. Engaging in the historical and

cultural contexts of “root-seeking” literature, Lovell is aware of paradoxical tensions between rural countryside and urban modernity, and the ancient Daoist philosophy and Western narrative techniques, as is proved by Han’s close interactions with world literature and translation events. It is by valuing differences and individuality of Chinese history and culture that Han presents “the paradoxical and alienating effect of traditional style combined with modern content” represented by “root-seeking” (Leenhouts, 2016, p. 301). Undoubtedly, the translation of *A Dictionary of Maqiao* rebuilds the dialogue between Han’s works with world literature and thus facilitates more communications between Chinese “root-seeking” literature and world literature.

NOTES

1. The term “engagement” originates from Jean-Paul Sartre’s “littérature engagée” (also called “literature of commitment”), highlighting the artist’s subjective responsibility to the society. The English translation of “engagée” hopes to keep its French implications of attitudes and actions (Song, 2018, p. 2).
2. The group of conservation includes repetition, orthographic adaptation, linguistic or non-cultural translation, extratextual gloss and intratextual gloss. And the group of substitution is composed of synonymy, limited universalization, absolute universalization, naturalization, deletion, autonomous creation, compensation, dislocation and attenuation (Aixelá, 1996, pp. 61-65).
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