ABSTRACT
The Dust Settles, a masterpiece of the famous Tibetan author Alai, has won the influential Mao Dun Literature Award in China. This work of fiction has also attracted overseas scholars and in 2002 even the well-known translators Howard Goldblatt and his wife Sylvia Li-chun Lin translated this work into English with the title Red Poppies. Rewriting of the title indicated Goldblatt’s domestica- tion translation strategy with the purpose to entertain his readers and to follow American ideology. This translation strategy improved the popularity and circulation of the English version, leaving sufficient room for imagination for the readers. On the other hand, this translation strategy diminished the Tibetan historical narrative, changed ideological discourses such as relationships between Tibetan and Han nationalities and created a gulf between different Tibetan classes and abandoned some Han and Tibetan qualities of the fiction. This interpretation led some readers to overstate the identity anxiety of the Tibetan authors and the conflict between Tibetan and Han culture.

KEYWORDS
The Dust Settles; Red Poppies; Howard Goldblatt; Tibetan narrative

Abstract
The Dust Settles, a masterpiece of the famous Tibetan author Alai, has won the influential Mao Dun Literature Award in China. This work of fiction has also attracted overseas scholars and in 2002 even the well-known translators Howard Goldblatt and his wife Sylvia Li-chun Lin translated this work into English with the title Red Poppies. Rewriting of the title indicated Goldblatt’s domestication translation strategy with the purpose to entertain his readers and to follow American ideology. This translation strategy improved the popularity and circulation of the English version, leaving sufficient room for imagination for the readers. On the other hand, this translation strategy diminished the Tibetan historical narrative, changed ideological discourses such as relationships between Tibetan and Han nationalities and created a gulf between different Tibetan classes and abandoned some Han and Tibetan qualities of the fiction. This interpretation led some readers to overstate the identity anxiety of the Tibetan authors and the conflict between Tibetan and Han culture.

With its unique mystery and long history, Tibetan culture and literature have attracted scholars from all over the world. Alai is one of the most famous contemporary Tibetan authors, his masterpiece The Dust Settles (Chen’ai luoding 《尘埃落定》) won the fifth Mao Dun Literature Award in 2000 with the Tibetan theme as well as the historical narrative of Tibetan society. The TV serial of The Dust Settles in 2003 enlarged the popularity of the novel in China. Moreover, the novel attracted overseas scholars and readers as well. In 2002, Howard Goldblatt, who was regarded as the best translator of
Chinese contemporary literature, translated the fiction into English with his wife Sylvia Li-chun Lin. Publication of the English version of *Red Poppies* (《红罂粟》) brought Alai and his fiction international fame.

1. **Historical narrative and ideological issues in The Dust Settles**

Alai narrated the social changes that happened in the Markham Tibetan region of west Sichuan Province in the thirties and forties of the last century in his work of fiction, *The Dust Settles*. The title *The Dust Settles* is a Chinese idiom that means “the case has been settled” (Lefevere 159). In China, scholars such as Gazangcaidan (尕藏才旦), Xu Qichao (徐其超), and so on have pointed out that Alai’s *The Dust Settles* was the representation of the Tibetan history in Markham County, which narrated the collapse of the chieftain system in this Tibetan region, as well as the harmonious relationship of Tibetan and Han nationalities. The new socialist system has changed the Tibetan region, bringing equality and democracy to the Tibetan lower class. Although in his fiction, Alai borrowed many writing styles and skills of contemporary western fiction, he narrated the historical story of his own nationality.

Some foreign scholars have also agreed that Alai narrated the historical stories in the Tibetan region. In his article, Howard Y. F. Choy thought Alai went back to the history of his hometown to seek materials for his fiction:

> Red Poppies relates the end of the age of chieftains by focusing on the last Maichi Chieftain and his dramatic rivalry with the other three chieftains on the Tadu River, namely Wangpo, Lha Shopa, and Rongong. The years in quest of a lost, or more precisely imagined, identity of a “Tibetan” have led the author further into the backwoods of local history. (Hartley and Schiaffini 225–226)

In *The Dust Settles*, Alai also narrated the flourishing and dying-out of the corrupted chieftain system, the miserable lives of the Tibetan slaves, who had no freedom and individual identity at all. Additionally, the author expressed ideologies of different political groups, the gap between different classes. The conflict between different political forces was another issue of the novel. In research of *The Dust Settles*, some scholars pointed out that the earthquake narrated in the novel symbolized the political turbulence in the Tibetan region:

> When asked about the implications of the two earthquakes in the epic, the Chinese critic Bai Ye sees the second seism, starting with the maniacal movements of the adulterers and adulteresses, as a condemnation of morbid lust. Rather than incline to moral judgments, I perceive the tremors as presages of the political upheaval. (Hartley and Schiaffini 228)

Alai adopted the idiom “the dust settles” to indicate the social changes in the Tibetan region, and the inevitable reform of the mysterious land in the novel. For both the authors and readers, the title of a novel is so important that it will influence the acceptance and circulation of the book. Especially nowadays, publishers expect to have better interests from fiction sales, and the title of a novel is the first thing to attract readers to buy and read the book. The Chinese idiom “the dust settles” indicated the historical changes narrated in the novel, especially the dying-out of the chieftain system as well as the inevitable victory of the new socialist system.
In his novel *The Dust Settles*, Alai adopted a very impressive code of the poppy to narrate the historical story and the social changes in the Tibetan region. In the novel, the poppy functioned as a main clue of the story, the force pushing the story forward, omen of the decline of the corrupted social system in Khampa Tibetan region:

*Red Poppies* can thus be read as a historical novel of an apocalyptic order about opium and the creative-destructive forces it unleashed in a Tibetan borderland on the eve of the communist victory. (*Yue*)

Poppies came to Chieftain Maichi’s territory with weapons and force. It is Special Emissary Huang and his army who brought the seeds of poppies. The poppies brought wealth and power to the Maichi family as well as destruction. The poppies came to the Tibetan region with a war, and the winner occupied the land and the poppy seeds. Poppies brought desire to the Tibetan people. Men and women played rude tricks in the field while planting poppies. All the Tibetan people were curious about the poppy seeds. When the flowers bloomed, the men in Maichi family showed their sexual appetites:

During that first summer, when the poppies took root in our land and produced beautiful flowers, a strange phenomenon occurred – both my father’s and my brother’s sexual appetites grew stronger than ever. (*Alai, Red Poppies* 48)

The blooming poppies brought Maichi men desire, and their desire brought murder, crime and blood to the Tibetan land. In order to win the war of the poppies and guarantee the monopoly of poppy planting, Chieftain Maichi was willing to scarify his sons. The code of the poppy reminded the readers of the cruelty and corruption of the chieftain system. The poppy became an important image to represent the theme of the novel, which represents the social vicissitudes in turbulent times, inevitability resulting in the decline of the chieftain system and establishment of a new social system. At last, all the members of Chieftain Maichi’s family died with the disappearance of the chieftain system and a new society was set up for the Tibetan people. The Chinese idiom “the dust settles” suggests the social changes and the final harmony of the Tibetan region, expressing Alai’s dreams of equality among all Tibetan people, as well as peace and progress for his own nationality.

### 2. Diminishing of historical narrative in the title *Red Poppies*

As an influential Chinese fiction translator, Howard Goldblatt has always emphasized that he translated Chinese works of fiction into English literally. He insists that he wants his readers to read something originally in Chinese:

I approach a text with reverence, awe, and excitement, plus a healthy dose of apprehension. I leave it as if I’ve found a new friend. As a translator I am, first and foremost, a reader. And, like all readers, I interpret – translate? – as I go along. The question I ask myself is: Have I given my reader the opportunity to enjoy the work in much the same way as a reader of the original could enjoy it? Have I let the author speak to this new audience in ways that are not only accessible, but with a commensurate degree of pleasure or awe or outrage, or whatever? (*Ge* 100)
However, Glodblatt translated the title of Alai’s novel as Red Poppies instead of the word-to-word translation The Dust Settles. In the new English version published in 2003, the title became Red Poppies: A Novel of Tibet. This rewriting of the title represents Glodblatt’s domestication translation strategy. The four Chinese characters Chen’ai luoding is too abstract for American readers to get any implication or maintain some room for imagination from the title, as the literal translation of the Chinese idiom “the dust settles” has lost the denotation of the Chinese characters. An abstract title will puzzle the readers and make them lose their interest in reading the book. However, the English title Red Poppies brought lots of imaginative space for the readers. According to the English title, red poppies became the main issue of the story, which gave readers different horizons of expectation.

Poppy is “a plant that has brightly coloured, usually red, flowers and small black seeds.” (Summers et al. 1269); “a plant having showy usually red flowers. An extract from the juice of the poppy, as opium” (Dalgish 571). Poppy is a plant with an extract like opium. As the raw material for drugs, red poppy reminds people of crime, violence, murder, corruption, and even sex. The title Red Poppies would conjure up the idea of reading a mysterious story caused by red poppies, especially a story about the mysterious Tibetan nationality. Expectation of mysterious violence stories caused by red poppies instead of the social changes in Tibetan region became the narrative focus in the imagination of the readers. Moreover, red poppies reminds people of the cruel wars in the Anglophone world. In 1915, John McCrae adopted red poppies in his poem to memorialize soldiers who died in the battlefield:

In Flanders Fields
In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place, and in the sky,
The larks, still bravely singing, fly,
Scarce heard amid the guns below. (1915)

With the popularity of the poem, red poppies became code to remember the military members who died while serving in the military for their country. In some European and North American countries, people wear red poppies on Memorial Day or Poppy Day to remember military service members who died in the line of duty. So when reading the code red poppies, readers would often think of war and blood.

The denotation of the code red poppy changed horizons of expectation of the readers from the historical story of the Tibetan society in turbulent times, from the dying out of the chieftain and slave system in Tibetan regions to a story concerning crime, murder, and rape of Tibetan people as well as wars for red poppies. In this way, the rewriting of the title diminishes the historical narrative in the Chinese version, and readers would expect a story to entertain themselves and to fulfill their own imagination about the mysterious, barbarous and backward Tibetan people. Especially the second English version Red Poppies: A Novel of Tibet. The word enhanced enjoyment of the novel as it was only a coined story with imaginary people and events. Goldblatt narrated the story of the Tibetan society in an American poetic standard with the English title Red Poppies. Just as André Lefevere pointed out, all the translations are rewriting and manipulation of one culture over another:
Translation is, of course, a rewriting of an original text. All rewriting, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as much manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way. Rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of power, and in its positive aspect can help in the evolution of a literature and a society. Rewriting can introduce new concepts, new genres, new devices and the history of translation is the history also of literary innovation, of the shaping power of one culture upon another. But rewriting can also repress innovation, distort and contain, and in an age of ever increasing manipulation of all kinds, the study of the manipulation processes of literature as exemplified by translation can help us towards a greater awareness of the world in which we live. (Lefevere vii)

The Chinese idiom “the dust settles” indicates the changing process in Tibetan society and some inevitable social trends in the Tibetan region. However, the object red poppy did not imply the changing courses and results. Red poppies brought desire, blood, murder, war, and death to the Tibetan region. Goldblatt once emphasized that American readers were willing to read fiction of blood, violence, and crime, which are the popular themes of popular American literary works. From the English title, the American readers would expect to entertain themselves with a bloody story, to fulfill their curiosity about Tibetan people and culture with red poppies:

The English title also makes the text more readable by highlighting the novel’s thematic focus and aesthetic traits, and, in so doing, eases the reader into otherwise unfamiliar territory. (Yue)

With the connotation and denotation of the red poppy, Goldblatt guided his readers to expect a new narrative focus from the English translation without changing much about the content of the novel. He narrated a mysterious Tibetan story in an American popular literary style.

3. Rewriting of ideology issues in the English version

To make the English translation more acceptable to American readers, Goldblatt changed some political elements of the novel with expressions weakening the gap between Tibetan nobles and the lower class people as narrated in Alai’s Chinese version. In Tibetan society prior to liberation, there were large gaps between different classes. The Tibetan nobles had set up many systems and articles to strengthen the gap and the lowliness of the slaves as well as the civilians. The castle of the chieftain was one of them. For the lower class Tibetan people, they had only small houses or tents in which to live. But the chieftains built up castles with stones to show their nobleness and highest position in Tibetan regions. Chieftain Maichi’s castle was a magnificent one, which was referred to as guanzai (官寨), and the slaves were forbidden to enter. In the translation, Goldblatt adopted different words to interpret guanzai of Chieftain Maichi.

a. 土司看到自己巨大的寨子还耸立在天空下面，就笑了。 (Alai, 尘埃落定 72)

Seeing that his house was still standing, the chieftain smiled. (Red Poppies 75)

In the Chinese version, the castle of Chieftain Maichi was described as “a large stockade village,” the magnificence and grandness of Chieftain Maichi’s castle were expressed with these words. Goldblatt translated the word as “his house,” the magnificence of the castle is
lost in the English word. The cultural connotation of the Chinese word guanzhai, the large gap between the chieftain and his people symbolized by guanzai disappeared.

b. 在这样剧烈的动荡面前，官寨哪里像是个坚固的堡垒，只不过是一堆木头、石块和粘土罢了。 (尘埃落定 72)

In the grip of such violent shaking, it was no longer indestructible and was now little more than a pile of wood, stone, and clay. (Red Poppies 75)

In this sentence, “guanzhai” was replaced by the pronoun “it,” and the readers are left with no impression of the luxury and majesty of the castle. Foreign readers could not imagine what kind of magnificent castle the chieftain family had. The class difference shown by different buildings of the chieftain and the ordinary Tibetan people fails to come across in the translation,

c. 快马加鞭，回到了官寨。 (尘埃落定 129)

We rushed back to the estate. (Red Poppies 139)

In this sentence, Goldblatt translated the word “Guanzhai” as “the estate.” We know even the lower class Tibetan people could have their own estate, a sharp comparison between the luxurious chieftain castle and the shabby shelter of lower class people fails to come across in the translation.

d. 死了人和倒了房子的人家得到了土司的救助。 (尘埃落定 73)

The chieftain came to the aid of those suffering the loss of family members and of their houses. (Red Poppies 76)

Goldblatt used the word “house” to express both the shelters of the chieftain family and the common people. In this sentence, the word fangzi, where the ordinary Tibetan people lived, was translated as house. In the English translation, both Chieftain Maichi’s family and his slaves lived in houses. But can we sense the great differences between the house of Chieftain Maichi and those of the lower class Tibetan people? From the English word house, the readers could not imagine the sharp contrast between the two houses, the magnificence of guanzhai occupied by the chieftain family and the shabby houses of the slaves. The large gap between the chieftain and his slaves symbolized by the code guanzhai is diminished, and the hatred between the two classes is diminished in the translation too. In this way, Goldblatt changed the political connotation expressed in the Chinese novel.

In the interpretation of the portrait of the Tibetan nobles such as Chieftain Maichi and his wife, Goldblatt also adopted some ways to diminish the class gap and conflicts between them and the slaves. In the English translation of sentence d, readers could even ascertain the harmony between the chieftain and his people, because we had read that both the chieftain family and the ordinary Tibetans lived in their own houses. When his people suffered, the chieftain came to the aid of those slaves and civilians suffering the loss of family members and of their houses. Chieftain Maichi became a leader with benevolence.

The interpretation of the image of Chieftain Maichi’s second wife in the translation was a little different from the Chinese version, as Goldblatt’s translation diminished the conflicts and class gap between her and her slaves:
e. 土司太太骂道：“天黑了，还不点灯！” (Alai, 尘埃落定 79)

The chieftain’s wife demanded of Dolma, “It’s getting dark. Why haven’t you lit the lamp?” (Red Poppies, 84)

In his fiction, Alai used the word “ma” (骂). As we know, the personal maids were slaves in the Tibetan region. Their hostesses could curse, beat, sell and even kill them whenever they wanted. Maids owned by the Tibetan nobles found no way to save or help themselves. What they could do was to endure their miserable lives. When Chinese readers read this part, with the Chinese word “ma,” we can understand the hardship Dolma suffered. Goldblatt translated the word “ma” as “demand,” meant to ask for something very firmly, especially because you thought you had a right to do this. The authority and privileges of the chieftain’s wife is lost. Her cruelty and indifference to Dolma is also diminished. With the English word “demand,” Goldblatt weakened the conflict between the chieftain’s wife and the slave Dolma.

f. 卓玛冷冷一笑。 (Alai, 尘埃落定 39)

Dolma simply snickered. (Red Poppies 43)

Alai used the Chinese phrase “lenglengyixiao” (冷冷一笑) in his novel. It meant laugh grimly or grin with dissatisfaction, helplessness, bitterness, etc. This phrase indicated Dolma’s dissatisfaction with her mistress, as well as her mockery of mistaken love and narcissism. Reading the Chinese words, readers can sense the conflict and disharmony between the chieftain’s wife and Dolma. But in the English version, Goldblatt translated “lenglengyixiao” as ”snicker,” which means to laugh in a covert or partly suppressed manner, or to laugh quietly and in a way that was not nice at something which was not supposed to be funny. With the word snicker, both the conflict between the mistress and Dolma and her dissatisfaction with the chieftain’s wife is diminished. In this way, Goldblatt weakened the gap between the noble and the lower class Tibetan people.

The translation strategy of Goldblatt showed his compromise with his American poetics and ideology. At the founding of the country, American people emphasized the freedom and equality of individuals. In the Declaration of Independence, they claimed that “All men are created equal.” Therefore, American readers are more likely to accept this kind of rewriting of political elements. However, without the knowledge of realistic living conditions, suffering and misery of the Tibetan slaves, it would be difficult for foreign readers to understand the wars between Tibetan nobles, the White Han Chinese and the Red Han Chinese, the entering of the Red Han Chinese into the Tibetan region. Alai used hongsehanren (红色汉人) to refer to the army of the Communist Party and baisehanren (白色汉人) to refer to the army of the Kuomintang. Moreover, Goldblatt adopted the Red Army, the Red Chinese and the Red Han Chinese to translate hongsehanren; the Central Army, the White Chinese and the White Han Chinese to translate baisehanren. The three different English translations of the same Chinese word hongsehanren and baisehanren brought more confusion for readers to distinguish different political groups, to know the political reality of the Tibetan region in that age. The story and history concerned Tibetan nobles, Tibetan slaves, the White Han Chinese and the Red Han Chinese, which would become a puzzle for the readers.
4. Translation of Chinese-ness and Tibetan-ness in culture-loaded diction

Alai used many culture-loaded terms in *The Dust Settles* to present Chinese cultural tradition, in which the mysterious Tibetan culture is an important part. Culture-loaded terminology of Chinese literature has become a kind of cultural codes with special cultural implications. These words have expressed the wisdom of Chinese people as well as Chinese history and culture, giving readers allowance for imagination. The translation of culture-loaded words is always a challenge for translators. Goldblatt was more willing to adopt the domestication method or pinyin to deal with the culture-loaded words in *The Dust Settles*. Moreover, in order to simplify the translation, there were no notes giving detailed explanations of these words. This translation method enhanced the enjoyment in reading activities, as the readers needed not to consult references to understand the cultural connotation of these words. However, the colorful Chinese traditional culture and history in these culture-loaded words disappeared in the English translation. The implied meaning of these words vanished too. In the following cases, we can read the vanishing of the connotation of these culture-loaded words:

**g.** 既然有那么多银子了，就不要再河里淘金破坏风水了。（Alai, 尘埃落定 97）

We should stopping panning gold by the river in order to preserve our feng shui. (*Red Poppies* 103)

Fengshui (风水) is one of the Five Arts of Chinese Metaphysics, something special in Chinese culture. It is a kind of mysterious and important Chinese traditional culture. In ancient times, fengshui influenced people in their house construction and tomb site choice. Goldblatt used pinyin to translate the term, which is the best word to interpret fengshui because we could not find an equivalent in English. However, Goldblatt afforded no notes to explain the pinyin fengshui. Without an explanatory note, it would be too difficult for the foreign readers to understand the term fengshui, or even to imagine what the term fengshui meant. As a result, they cannot understand why fengshui was so important for even the powerful Chieftain Maichi that he must reserve fengshui for his family. The Chinese culture connotation of this culture-loaded word fengshui has disappeared.

The following is a case concerning a Buddhist connotation in the Tibetan region,

**h.** 一般认为，路上不乞讨，不四处寻求施舍，那样的朝佛就等于没朝。（尘埃落定 114）

She spoke the truth, for it was our belief that the trip would be made in vain if a pilgrim didn’t beg or seek alms on the road. (*Red Poppies* 123)

In this sentence, the Chinese word “shishe” (施舍) has something to do with a Buddhist pilgrimage. The monks and Buddhists will beg for their food from some families believing in Buddhism or kindness. Goldblatt translated the word as “seek alms,” the hardship of Buddhist pilgrimage and their loyalty and worship to Buddha is diminished in the translation. However, we all know Tibet is a nation influenced a lot by Buddhism. If you did not know something about Tibetan Buddhism, you cannot understand Tibetan culture as well as Tibetan people. The whole nation has shown their devotion to Tibetan Buddhism. Many Tibetan people not only conduct their pilgrimages to Lhasa, but also are willing to scarify their property to Buddha. So in their pilgrimages,
the Buddhists just beg for their food to show their loyalty and devotion to Buddha. The word “shishe” has a Buddhist connotation. With the translation “seek alms,” the Tibetan custom and Buddhist devotion of Tibetan people has disappeared.

There are two culture-loaded words in the following sentence referencing a unique Chinese culture tradition,

i. 我要给每个孩子五两银子，叫他的父亲一人打一个长命锁。(Alai, 尘埃落定 144)

I’d give each of them five ounces of silver for their father to make into longevity chains. (Red Poppies 155)

The Chinese character “liang” (両) is a unit of Chinese weight, equal to about 38 grams. From ancient times, Chinese people adopted “liang” to calculate silver as well as gold. Chinese readers are very familiar with this weight unit. In the translation, Goldblatt used the western weight unit ounce. One ounce equals about 29 grams. When ounce, the western unit of weight is adopted, the Chinese cultural connotation of silver disappears. The domestication in the translation made the fiction lose some of its Chinese cultural essence. Moreover, in this sentence, there is another image: changmingsuo (长命锁). Almost all Chinese people know this article. Also from ancient times, in order to pray for the health for babies, parents always hang a golden or silver lock on the neck of babies. People thought changmingsuo had the magic power to prevent the babies from experiencing disasters, misfortune and illness. Therefore, this article changmingsuo expresses Chinese people’s wish and prayer for the health and luck of babies. Goldblatt translated “changmingsuo” as “longevity chain,” and there was no image of a lock in the translation. Goldblatt just changed the lock image into a chain image, bringing the disappearance of the connotation of the image changmingsuo.

With the domestication translation strategy, the sentences are easier for readers to understand, and they can accept the novel better. However, the Chinese culture, especially the Tibetan customs narrated in the novel have vanished with the adoption of the English culture-loaded words. Readers can be totally relaxed and just enjoy the mysterious stories of an unfamiliar nationality narrated in the novel, but they would miss so much attractive Chinese cultural essence.

5. Misreading arising from rewriting

Goldblatt emphasizes many times that he has been trying to translate Chinese works of fiction literally, as he wanted his American readers to appreciate the essence of original Chinese fiction. However, the indication of the translator was so influential in the translations that the readers would interpret the fiction according to the intention of the translator. With the rewriting of the title from The Dust Settles to Red Poppies, Goldblatt attracted his readers with new horizons of expectation on themes and focal points of the fiction. With the connotation of the code red poppy, Goldblatt mastered the narrative focus and political elements of the translation under the guide of American culture. As Lefevere points out, translations are the manipulation field between two cultures, and translators’ strategies in translation activities were determined by the ideology and poetics of their own societies. Goldblatt has known so exactly about Chinese contemporary literature as well as his American readers that he interpreted a novel like The
Dust Settles with the guide of his American psychology and poetics. The English title Red Poppies, especially the second English version Red Poppies: A Novel of Tibet strengthened the entertainment quality of the novel. With this English title, his American readers would expect a fictional work narrating an amusing and entertaining story of Tibetan people. The horizons of expectation on the theme of the novel shifted from the historical narrative and ideology conflict in Tibetan society to war, blood, violence and rape centering around the red poppies.

Nowadays, the publishers would cover the cost of the publication of all the translations, and the patronage from the publishers would require the translations to earn enough interests for their books. Interest instead of canonization of the translations has become the translation purpose of Chinese contemporary fiction. Although Goldblatt emphasizes he has translated the way he does out of reverence for the Chinese cultural prestige, he must follow the interest principle of his American society. Goldblatt chooses his translation strategy under the influence of the expectation of his American readers: literature is for delight. Goldblatt is capable in finding simple words and beautiful sentences to translate the novel Red Poppies, which improves the attractiveness and popularity of the English version. In order to strengthen this translation purpose, Goldblatt diminished some Chinese-ness and Tibetan-ness in the work. The English translation became an interesting and attractive story.

As an influential work of fiction, Alai’s The Dust Settles told his readers about the historical story in the Tibetan region of Sichuan. Chinese readers know more about the history of the Tibetan region, the chieftain system, as well as the miserable living conditions of lower class Tibetan people from this novel. A comparison between the past and present made people cherish the present peace and harmony in the Tibetan region. Not all the foreigners have the chance to go to Tibetan regions and have a look at the lives of the Tibetan people. So English translations of contemporary Tibetan literary works become a popular medium through which to know the history, culture, and customs of the Tibetan people. The English translations of Tibetan literary works have opened a window for the western readers, so the translation of Tibetan literature has become a significant topic for both overseas scholars and Tibetan authors. With too much room for interpretation and entertainment purpose in the translation, some misreadings arose among western scholars about present Tibet, which would influence readers’ impressions about Tibetan people and Tibetan culture. In the research of Alai and contemporary Tibetan literature, some western scholars have been emphasizing the difficulties the Tibetan authors face in this age. These scholars enlarged the anxiety of Alai and the other Tibetan authors in their identity seeking:

Disoriented in the identity crisis between Chineseness and Tibetanness, the self of such a Chinese Tibetan as the writer Alai (Tib. A legs) is so confused that he can only present fictionally and fictitiously his identity in idiocy. (Hartley and Schiaffini 225)

As for the magical realism adopted by Tibetan authors like Alai in the fictional work, western scholars emphasized that the writing skill was only a way to protect themselves from trouble:

Magical realism has been a protective womb in which he has been able to hide, a womb that has nurtured his creativity and allowed him to escape the harsh reality of modern Tibet. If not to be reborn in another time, at least magical realism has allowed him the rare
opportunity of transcending the boundaries of Tibet and China. (Hartley and Schiaffini 218–219)

Some other scholars considered magical realism as a kind of escapement:

Just as Latin American author Gabriel Garcia Marquez wrote in the style of magical realism to react against social realism, perhaps Alai and Zhaxi Dawa are, in effect, reacting against a very dichotomous portrayal of Old Tibet either as a peaceful, pure society or as a backward and violent one in the Chinese state-sponsored media, Hollywood, and Chinese government propaganda. (Draggeim 82)

Tibetology is a sensitive topic in the western world. In the literary works of Tibetan authors, some foreign scholars tend to fabricate the political upheavals of contemporary Tibetan society and misery the Tibetan people are suffering. With the rewriting of the title, Goldblatt diminished the historical narrative and changed the political ideology indicated in the Chinese title The Dust Settles. The translator had the intention to narrate a mysterious and amazing Tibetan story to entertain his readers. His delight function translation strategy made the translation more readable and attractive for American readers, improving the popularity and influence of the novel. However, the enhancement of the entertainment function of the translation reduces the canonical literary quality of the translation. The room for imagination in interpretation for readers brought more misunderstanding among readers.

6. Conclusion

In the discussion on translation of Tibetan literature or even Chinese contemporary ethnic literature, we always focus on the problem of “fidelity” or “freedom.” However, as Lefevere pointed out,

two factors basically determine the image of a work of literature as projected by a translation. These two factors are, in order of importance, the translator’s ideology (whether he/she willingly embraces it, or whether it is imposed on him/her as a constraint by some form of patronage) and the poetics dominant in the receiving literature at the time the translation is made. (Lefevere 31)

Notes added in the translations of Chinese ancient literary works helped readers to understand Chinese culture traditions better. The “universe of discourse” in Chinese literary works could be expressed to some degree in the translations. With the context, foreign readers could have a better understanding of Chinese culture and literary works, which brought the flame of Chinese traditional literature in western cultures. However, in the process of propagating contemporary ethnic minority literature, Chinese scholars have not done enough research on the proper translation purpose and strategy, and have not established a standard for propagation. That was why some misunderstanding and incorrect interpretation of contemporary minority culture and even the living situations of the minority people arise among western scholars and readers.

Nowadays the spread of Chinese culture has been strengthening as a national strategy of China. Even the Chinese government has established many policies to stimulate this trend. The Chinese minority authors are eager to have their works translated into the Anglophone world to enlarge their global influence. They also
have the dream of making their works accepted as canons in the Anglophone world. Then how do we maintain the essence of the works in the English translations while we are emphasizing its popularity? Cooperation between Chinese and western translators can help us establish a more acceptable standard for the English translation of Chinese contemporary ethnic minority literature.

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Notes on contributor

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