

## *Original Paper*

# The Dissemination and Reception of the English Translation of *Wolf Totem* in the United States

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### ***Abstract***

*This study adopts quantitative and empirical methods, focusing on the English translation of Jiang Rong's novel *Wolf Totem* translated by Howard Goldblatt, to explore its dissemination and reception in the United States. By analyzing data from the World Cat, as well as reader ratings and reviews on Amazon and Goodreads, it reveals that *Wolf Totem* has achieved widespread circulation and favorable acceptance among American readers, with particular attention drawn to its ecological themes and the cultural symbolism of the wolf. These findings provide valuable reference for contemporary Chinese literary works to more effectively reach a global audience and further achieve the transition from merely “going out” to “reaching in”.*

### ***Keywords***

*English translation, *Wolf Totem*, dissemination and reception*

## **1. Introduction**

With China's economic rise and the advancement of its cultural “going global” strategy, the international influence of contemporary Chinese literature has been steadily growing. *Wolf Totem*, an ecologically themed work, has attracted widespread attention both domestically and internationally since its publication in 2004. The book has been translated into over 40 languages, reaching more than 110 countries and regions, with global sales exceeding 5 million copies. It has become a significant window through which overseas readers access Chinese ecological culture. Its success stems from deepening cultural globalization, the rise of consumer culture, and the growing international interest in China, reflecting the enhancement of China's cultural soft power.

In the context of globalization, national competition has expanded beyond economics and military power, with soft power emerging as a new focal point. Books, as vital vehicles for cultural exchange, function not only as commodities but also as key carriers of cultural transmission. However, China has long faced

a persistent deficit in copyright exports in its international book outreach, particularly within Western markets such as Europe and North America. Although the situation has improved in recent years, the overall position remains disadvantaged. The primary cause lies in communication barriers arising from differing cultural backgrounds. Therefore, how to reduce cultural discount and enhance dissemination effectiveness has become a critical challenge that must be addressed to advance the success of China's "going global" initiative for books.

In recent years, academic research on the English translation and dissemination of *Wolf Totem* has primarily focused on three areas: translation strategies and cultural representation, the interpretation and transmission of ecological ideas, and the breadth of dissemination and depth of reception. Regarding translation strategies and cultural representation, scholars have examined Howard Goldblatt's handling of culture-specific items. Wang (2009) argues that his flexible translation of kinship terms might blur the distinctiveness of Han and Mongolian cultures; Zhou (2017), from a rewriting theory perspective, points out that ideology, poetics, and patronage influence the degree of cultural preservation; Fu (2021) analyzes the translation of culturally loaded terms based on Skopos theory. Wang (2023) proposes a "metaphor kernel-centered" strategy to convey rhetorical similarity. Concerning the interpretation and transmission of ecological ideas, Fan (2021) affirms the novel's ecological holism from an ecocritical perspective. Li (2022) and Xie (2020) acknowledge the translation's efforts in conveying this philosophy. As for the breadth of dissemination and depth of reception, He (2013) uses OCLC data to reveal the widespread distribution of the translated edition in U.S. libraries. Wang (2023), through corpus analysis, finds that the omission of psychological descriptions might affect the expression of philosophical depth.

Overall, existing research still exhibits clear limitations: first, studies on "translation" and "ideological dissemination" are largely confined to textual analysis, lacking empirical support regarding actual reader reception; second, there is a significant gap in research connecting "breadth of dissemination" with "depth of reception," failing to establish effective linkages between dissemination data and authentic reader feedback. To address these gaps, this study adopts a combined quantitative and empirical research approach, focusing on the dissemination and reception of the English translation of *Wolf Totem* in the United States. By systematically analyzing global library holdings data, along with ratings and reviews from Amazon and social reading platforms, this research aims to comprehensively reveal both the breadth and depth of its reception. The findings offer more practically instructive pathways for the international outreach of Chinese ecological literature.

## 2. The Dissemination of the English Translation of *Wolf Totem* in the United States

The English translation of *Wolf Totem*, translated by renowned translator Howard Goldblatt and first published in 2008 by Penguin USA, quickly captured the attention of Western readers. As Jiang Rong's representative work, the novel achieved sales exceeding 15,000 copies in its first year, driven by its unique narrative of steppe ecology and its philosophical exploration of the "wolf spirit".

The dissemination and reception of *Wolf Totem* in the United States exhibit significant and multifaceted

characteristics. As the inaugural winner of the Man Asian Literary Prize in 2007, the novel gained crucial recognition on the international literary stage. The publisher, Penguin Random House, has continuously expanded its audience reach and sustained the book's market vitality through a strategy of multiple edition releases, including a 10th-anniversary edition in 2015 and an e-book edition in 2022. The book's influence extends beyond publishing and sales, permeating academic, cultural, and media spheres. Academically, it has been incorporated into curricula on "ecological literature" and "contemporary China studies" at prestigious institutions such as Harvard University and Columbia University, affirming its pedagogical and scholarly value. At the institutional cultural level, the New York Public Library featured it in its 2024 "Reimagining the Canon" project, further solidifying its status as a cultural classic. In media outreach, National Public Radio (NPR) highlighted the novel as a representative work of Chinese literature in its 2023 special feature "Literature of the Century", significantly enhancing its visibility among mainstream audiences. This comprehensive dissemination network--built collaboratively by professional publishing houses, authoritative academic institutions, major cultural platforms, and mainstream media--demonstrates not only the dual success of *Wolf Totem* in commercial and cultural terms, but also its enduring vitality as a paradigm of cross-cultural communication for contemporary Chinese literature. It thus offers a valuable practical model for Chinese literature going global.

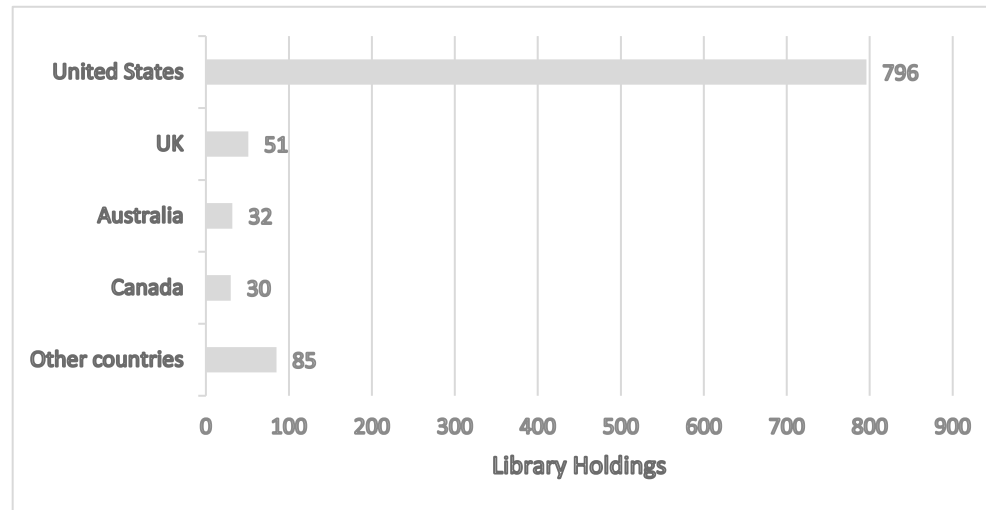
An important indicator for assessing the breadth of dissemination of Chinese literary works in the United States is the number of U.S. libraries that hold copies of the book. A higher number of library holdings indicates a wider dissemination across the country, whereas a lower number suggests more limited reach. The author of this study utilizes the U.S. library online catalog system to retrieve and collect information on English translations of contemporary and modern Chinese fiction published in the United States, conducting a comprehensive statistical analysis and ranking of the number of holdings for each work. The following presents the top 10 most widely held English translations of modern and contemporary Chinese novels, along with detailed library holdings data for *Wolf Totem* (see Table 1 and Table 2).

**Table 1. Global Library Holdings of English Translations of Modern and Contemporary Chinese Fiction**

Rank	Title (Chinese)	Title (English)	Author	Edition and Year	Total Holdings
1	《三体》	<i>The Three-Body Problem</i>	刘慈欣	2014 Tor Books	2337
2	《骆驼祥子》	<i>Rickshaw Boy: A Novel</i>	老舍	2010 Harper	2105
3	《红高粱家族》	<i>Red Sorghum: A Novel of China</i>	莫言	1993 Viking	1374
4	《天堂蒜薹之歌》	<i>The Garlic Ballads</i>	莫言	1995 Viking	1070
5	《狼图腾》	<i>Wolf Totem</i>	姜戎	2008 Penguin	994
6	《蛙》	<i>Frog</i>	莫言	2015 Viking	983
7	《兄弟》	<i>Brothers</i>	余华	2009 Pantheon	816

8	《活着》	<i>To Live</i>	余华	1993 Viking	761
9	《长恨歌》	<i>The Song of Everlasting Sorrow</i>	王安忆	2008 Columbia	676
10	《生死疲劳》	<i>Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out</i>	莫言	2008 Arcade	655

**Table 2. Detailed Global Library Holdings of *Wolf Totem***



A comprehensive analysis of the data in Tables 1 and 2 reveals that *Wolf Totem* ranks fifth among the top ten English-translated modern and contemporary Chinese novels in terms of global library holdings, with a total of 994 library holdings. It follows Liu Cixin's *The Three-Body Problem*, Lao She's *Rickshaw Boy: A Novel*, and Mo Yan's *Red Sorghum: A Novel of China* and *The Garlic Ballads*. As a significant representative of ecological literature, *Wolf Totem* ranks first among contemporary Chinese novels in library holdings, highlighting its unique literary value and thematic appeal, and underscoring its prominent position in international dissemination. In terms of geographical distribution, the United States accounts for nearly 80% of the global holdings, with 796 libraries--far surpassing the United Kingdom (51), Australia (32), and Canada (30). This indicates a high level of penetration within the U.S. academic and public library systems and reflects broad reader acceptance. Although ranks fifth globally, the novel has achieved exceptional success in the United States, demonstrating its strong appeal to American readers and scholars. This phenomenon is likely closely tied to its ecological themes, narrative style, and distinctive perspective on environmental issues, as well as the high-quality translation by Howard Goldblatt.

The dissemination of *Wolf Totem* extends beyond the novel and its translation, gaining broad influence through multiple media channels such as film adaptation, mainstream newspaper and magazine reviews, and online community discussions. These diverse platforms have facilitated the work's sustained circulation, expanded its readership, and enhanced its international visibility. Its international outreach has not relied primarily on external promotion, but rather on the work's inherent cultural depth and artistic

merit, achieving a natural transition from Chinese literature to world literature through mainstream international publishing channels. This inwardly driven, outwardly expanding dissemination pathway signifies a genuine increase in the global influence of contemporary Chinese literature.

### 3. The Reception of the English Translation of *Wolf Totem* in the United States

This study focuses on American readers' reception of *Wolf Totem*, drawing data from reader reviews and ratings on the U.S. Amazon Books website and its affiliated social reading platform. As the most influential book evaluation systems in the United States, these platforms provide feedback that is both objective and representative, offering a reliable reflection of readers' acceptance levels and recognition of the novel's literary value.

#### 3.1 Reader Ratings and Reviews on Amazon

On the Amazon Books website (www.amazon.com)<sup>1</sup>, readers rate each novel on a scale from one to five stars, indicating their level of acceptance of the book. The rating criteria are as follows: one star (lowest acceptance), two stars (low acceptance), three stars (moderate acceptance), four stars (high acceptance), and five stars (highest acceptance). As of April 30, 2025, the rating statistics for *Wolf Totem* on this website are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Readers' Reception of *Wolf Totem* on the Amazon**

Title (Chinese)	Title (English)	Author /Translator	Percentage of Ratings(%)					Number	Average Rating
			1	2	3	4	5		
《狼图腾》	<i>Wolf Totem: A Novel</i>	姜戎/葛浩文	3.6	6.2	15.0	15.0	60.2	113	4.12

Data from the U.S. Amazon website shows that *Wolf Totem* has an average rating of 4.12 out of 5 stars. Among individual ratings, 60.2% are 5-star reviews, 15.0% are 4-star, and 15% are 3-star, while negative reviews (1- and 2-star) combined account for only 9.8%. This indicates that the vast majority of American readers have a high level of acceptance toward the book, with over 60% assigning the highest rating, reflecting strong and widespread approval. Furthermore, readers who gave 3 stars or higher--representing a generally positive reception--account for 90.2%, demonstrating solid overall acceptance among American readers.

From the content of the reviews, American readers primarily praise the book's writing style, translation quality, and its unique cultural perspective. For instance, reader Dick G. Deditus<sup>2</sup> remarks: "This book is superbly written and compelling in subject matter--so engaging that I couldn't put it down. It even inspired me to add that distant region to my travel bucket list. What's remarkable is how faithfully a translated work can capture the spirit and brilliance of the original." Another reader, David Bentley<sup>3</sup>, comments on the linguistic style: "Although clearly a translation, the direct and clear language actually

heightens the urgency of the message being conveyed. English sometimes buries meaning under layers of rhetoric; here, the straightforwardness cuts straight to the core, which I deeply appreciate.” Reader Belinda J. Walker<sup>4</sup> focuses on the historical context: “The book has strong autobiographical elements, documenting the author’s experiences during a unique period in revolutionary China. Through it, we gain insight into the mindset and circumstances of Chinese youth at that time. Rarely have I read a book that convinces me it deserves rereading--each time offering new emotions and insights.”

These comments indicate that Amazon readers generally recognize the literary merit and intellectual depth of *Wolf Totem*, praising its elegant prose and compelling subject matter, while also appreciating its clear and direct stylistic approach. Many readers believe the translation successfully captures the spirit of the original work, enabling them to understand the social context and intellectual outlook of Chinese youth during a specific historical period. The novel’s ecological philosophy has also resonated widely with readers. Howard Goldblatt’s translation, by faithfully conveying the original meaning while employing fluent and natural English, has significantly facilitated the work’s reception and dissemination in the English-speaking countries.

### 3.2 Reader Ratings and Reviews on Goodreads

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the reception of *Wolf Totem*, this study also analyzes reader rating data from Goodreads (www.goodreads.com)<sup>5</sup>, a social reading platform owned by Amazon. The site uses the same 1-to-5-star rating system to reflect readers’ level of appreciation for a book. It should be noted that the raters on Goodreads include readers from countries beyond the United States; therefore, the results are used for reference and comparative analysis. As of April 30, 2025, the rating statistics for *Wolf Totem* on this platform are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4 Readers’ Reception of *Wolf Totem* on Goodreads**

Title (Chinese)	Title (English)	Author /Translator	Percentage of Ratings(%)					Number	Average Rating
			1	2	3	4	5		
《狼图腾》	<i>Wolf Totem: A Novel</i>	姜戎 /葛浩文	1.0	5.0	17.0	34.0	41.0	4888	4.08

Data from Goodreads shows that *Wolf Totem* has an average rating of 4.08, slightly lower than the 4.12 on the U.S. Amazon website. Among the ratings, 41.0% are 5-star reviews, 34.0% are 4-star, and 17.0% are 3-star, while negative ratings (1- and 2-star) combined account for only 6.0%. Readers who gave 4 stars or higher--indicating a positive reception--make up 75.0%, and those who rated it 3 stars or higher reach 94.0%, indicating that the book is also well received globally, with an even lower proportion of negative feedback.

A further comparison of ratings from U.S. readers and those from a broader international audience reveals average scores of 4.12 and 4.08 respectively--closely aligned and indicating a similar level of

appreciation. Among the international readers, 75.0% assigns 4 stars or higher, reflecting solid overall acceptance, while only 6.0% gives 1 or 2 stars, indicating minimal negative sentiment. When comparing the two main platforms, the proportion of readers giving 4 stars or higher is nearly identical--75.2% among U.S. readers and 75.0% among international readers--suggesting a high degree of overlap in positive reception. Although U.S. readers show a slightly higher proportion of low ratings, the difference is negligible. Notably, the percentage of 5-star ratings among U.S. readers is nearly 20 percentage points higher than that among international readers, revealing a stronger tendency toward high-level endorsement in the United States. If ratings of 3 stars and above are considered indicative of moderate to high acceptance, the acceptance rates are 90.8% for U.S. readers and 94.0% for international readers respectively. This indicates that the book is broadly welcomed across the globe, with slightly higher acceptance among readers outside the United States. These findings highlight both the wide-reaching influence of *Wolf Totem* in global circulation and subtle variations in reader reception across different cultural contexts.

From the review content, Goodreads readers place greater emphasis on the book's ecological themes and global significance. For instance, reader Wendy<sup>6</sup> comments: "What makes this book worth reading is that it reveals the underlying causes of events... While 'respect for nature' is a common theme in many books and films, few works demonstrate as brutally and clearly as *Wolf Totem*: 'This is exactly what will happen.' We first witness the harmonious functioning of the Mongolian steppe ecosystem, then experience firsthand its systematic destruction, culminating in desertification and ecological collapse. I can hardly recall another book or film that conveys this message with such power." Reader Lara<sup>7</sup> writes: "It's like a Chinese version of *Moby Dick*--a more serious book, with less homoerotic undertone. Its focus on 'harmony' tells an important story for our age of climate crisis. The translation work has been exceptionally well done." Reader Tara<sup>8</sup> remarked: "This book truly deserves all the acclaim it has received... I highly recommend it. Life on the Mongolian grasslands was harsh, and Jiang Rong does not shy away from vividly depicting these realities. Yet he opens up a vital historical perspective, allowing us to glimpse how our nomadic ancestors might have lived. Since reading it, my perception of wolves has never been the same."

In terms of rating distribution, the proportion of 5-star reviews from U.S. Amazon readers (60.2%) is significantly higher than that from Goodreads readers (41.0%), while the share of 4-star ratings on Goodreads (34.0%) exceeds that on U.S. Amazon (15.0%). This indicates that American readers exhibit a more concentrated level of high approval, whereas international readers display a relatively balanced rating distribution. Regarding negative feedback, Goodreads shows a lower proportion (6.0%) compared to U.S. Amazon (9.8%), suggesting slightly higher acceptance among the international audience. In terms of review focus, U.S. readers place greater emphasis on literary quality, translation fidelity, and historical context, while international readers highlight the book's ecological themes and global significance. This difference may reflect American readers' stronger reliance on the linguistic and stylistic experience of the translated version, whereas international readers tend to interpret the work more through cross-

cultural lens.

Thus, *Wolf Totem* has achieved broad recognition among English-speaking readers, yet differences in reception patterns across platforms are evident. American readers tend to give higher ratings, particularly valuing the work's literary quality, translation excellence, and historical narrative significance. In contrast, international readers exhibit a more balanced rating distribution, with fewer negative reviews, and place greater emphasis on the cross-cultural relevance of its ecological themes. This divergence reflects the multidimensional nature of the book's reception--U.S. readers focus more on linguistic and historical perspectives, while international readers are more attuned to its universal ecological messages. Overall, *Wolf Totem* has successfully transcended cultural boundaries, resonating with diverse reader groups and demonstrating its global impact as a work of both literary depth and cultural significance.

### 3.3 American Readers' Reception of the Ecological Narrative of *Wolf Totem*

*Wolf Totem* has captured the attention of American readers through its profound ecological narrative, immersing them in the cultural and natural ecosystems of the Mongolian grasslands. Through the symbiotic relationship among "wolf, human, and the steppe", the novel explores multilayered ecological themes such as nature worship, the struggle for survival, and humanistic reflection. The ecological worldview presented in the novel resonates with readers in the target culture, activating and aligning with their own shared values regarding environmental ethics and humanity's relationship with nature.

The ecological worldview presented in the novel resonates with the Western tradition of environmental literature, such as *A Sand County Almanac* and *Silent Spring*. Through its philosophical exploration of "big life" and "little life", the novel reveals the limitations of anthropocentrism and underscores the wholeness and interdependence of ecosystems. This perspective offers American readers a fresh conceptual framework, prompting them to connect the novel's ecological ideas with real-world environmental challenges. At the same time, the depictions of wolf pack intelligence, the laws of the steppe, and the ecological wisdom embedded in nomadic culture evoke deep reflection on the relationship between humans and nature, generating broad reader interest and fostering cultural resonance.

Reader Birdman<sup>9</sup> remarked: "Jiang Rong reveals, in this beautifully written and superbly translated novel, the profound life wisdom held by the Mongolian people." He notes that through Elder Bilige, the novel illustrates how wolves taught humans to forage, fight, survive, and heal--uncovering an often-overlooked evolutionary dimension: that humans once learned from wolves and shaped their way of life accordingly. He argues that the graphic depictions in the novel are not merely artistic choices, but serve as ecological warnings, reminding readers of the cascading consequences of exploiting nature. Another reader, John Avery<sup>10</sup>, praised the novel's powerful portrayal of both ecological dynamics and cultural representation: "*Wolf Totem* is a compelling novel that intricately weaves together the role of wolves in maintaining ecological balance in Inner Mongolia with the impact of Han Chinese migration on nomadic society." He particularly highlights the chapter on "Swan Lake" as profoundly moving, stating that any reader concerned with environmental and cultural issues would be deeply affected by the dual loss--the erosion of both culture and nature depicted in the book.



Second, while scenes depicting violence--such as wolf hunting and the killing of wolf cubs--have sparked ethical debates among some readers, the majority demonstrate an understanding of their underlying ecological authenticity and cultural logic. For instance, the killing of wolf cubs is interpreted not as mere brutality, but as a sacrificial act within the framework of “Tengrism”, reflecting the harsh yet rational survival code of the steppe. Howard Goldblatt’s translation carefully preserves both linguistic nuance and cultural context, enabling Western readers to achieve both emotional and cognitive empathy with the narrative.

Moreover, *Wolf Totem* employs a dual narrative structure that interweaves the perspective of an educated youth with Mongolian steppe legends, creating a narrative framework that bridges Eastern and Western worldviews. The protagonist, Chen Zhen, as an “outsider”, offers American readers a strong sense of identification--similar to the observer role in *Never Cry Wolf*. According to Li (2022), the core ecological philosophy conveyed in the novel is that Eternal Heaven (Tengri) and the grasslands are fundamental to human survival, and that all living beings coexist in harmony through mutual restraint. Howard Goldblatt’s English translation faithfully conveys this worldview, successfully transmitting China’s distinctive ecological values to the English-speaking countries and enhancing global readers’ understanding of the relationship between humanity and nature. Consider the following passage:

Source Text: 蒙古人最可怜最心疼的就是草和草原。要说杀生，黄羊杀起草来，比打草机还厉害。黄羊群没命地啃草场就不是“杀生”？就不是杀草原的大命？把草原的大命杀死了，草原上的小命全都没命！（姜戎，2004: 29）

Target Text: For us Mongols, there’s nothing more deserving of pity than the grass. If you want to talk about killing, then the gazelles kill more grass than any mowing machine could. When they graze the land, isn’t that killing? Isn’t that taking the big life of the grassland? When you kill off the big life of the grassland, all the little lives are doomed. (Goldblatt, 2008:57-58)

Building on the previous example, Howard Goldblatt’s translation skillfully renders the philosophical distinction between “big life” (da ming) and “little lives” (xiao ming) into idiomatic English, preserving the original meaning while ensuring clarity for Western readers. The use of “big life” and “little lives” not only retains the symbolic structure of the Chinese terms but also aligns with Western conceptual frameworks of ecological holism, where ecosystems are understood as interconnected hierarchies. Furthermore, the phrasing “nothing more deserving of pity than the grass” intensifies the emotional resonance, helping readers empathize with the pastoralists’ deep reverence for and dependence on the steppe. As evidenced by reader feedback, this translation strategy has proven highly effective. American reader Birdman praised the novel as “beautifully written and superbly translated”, noting that it successfully conveys the ecological wisdom of the grasslands. Many readers have expressed that through the translation, they can grasp the interdependent life--linking wolf, human, and the steppe--a crucial foundation for the widespread acceptance of the novel’s ecological message.

The ecological narrative of *Wolf Totem* has evoked a threefold resonance among American readers: its portrayal of symbiotic relationships engages in dialogue with the Western ecological tradition; culturally

specific concepts such as “big life” and “little lives” are rendered intelligible through creative translation; and the dual narrative structure offers both immersive identification and space for critical reflection. This suggests that the international dissemination of Chinese ecological literature must balance thematic universality with cultural specificity, establishing cross-cultural connection points through narrative innovation and strategic translation. This case demonstrates that preserving the distinctive qualities of indigenous ecological wisdom while creating avenues for cultural dialogue is key to achieving global recognition.

### *3.4 American Readers' Interpretation of National Character of Wolf Totem*

An analysis of numerous reader reviews reveals that the novel's exploration of “wolf” versus “sheep” as metaphors for national character has resonated deeply with American readers in a cross-cultural context. They not only grasp the “wolf spirit”—the qualities of resilience, independence, and ferocity—idealized by the steppe people, but also reflect critically on issues of individual will and collective behavior within their own society. This interpretive engagement stems not only from the novel's intellectual depth but also from Howard Goldblatt's precise translation of cultural symbols, which enables Western readers to access and understand these complex ideological constructs.

To American readers, the “wolf” is not merely a predator in the steppe ecosystem, but a revered totem of the Mongolian people, symbolizing freedom, strength, and survival wisdom. In contrast, the “sheep” represents conformity, timidity, and a lack of independent consciousness. These two figures form a stark metaphor for contrasting national character traits. Such a dichotomy is uncommon in traditional Chinese cultural discourse, and its effective transmission in the English translation has become a key factor in capturing the attention and interest of American readers.

Rather than translating literally, Howard Goldblatt leverages the existing cultural connotations of “wolf” and “sheep” in English to enable Western readers to intuitively grasp the symbolic meanings of these contrasting character types. For instance, he translates Elder Bilige's criticism of Chen Zhen—“跟羊一样” and “从骨子里怕狼”—as: “You're like a sheep. A fear of wolves is in your Chinese bones.” This rendering preserves the original's ironic tone, while the phrase “in your bones” effectively conveys the idea of something deeply ingrained, thereby helping readers immediately recognize the negative connotations associated with “sheep”.

Reader feedback confirms the success of the translation. American reader Alice Poon<sup>11</sup> remarked: “This book made me reconsider the concept of ‘wolf nature’. Wolves are not merely fierce predators; they also demonstrate remarkable intelligence and teamwork—qualities that many people today sorely lack.” She further connects “sheep” to the passive onlookers depicted in Lu Xun's writings, arguing that the novel's portrayal of blind conformity and emotional detachment holds broad relevance for contemporary society. This indicates that readers have not only accepted the novel's dichotomy of “wolf” versus “sheep” as a framework for understanding national character, but have also extended this interpretation to reflect on pressing social issues in their own contexts.

Another reader, Doyle Graham<sup>12</sup> affirms the book's value on both ecological and cultural dimensions

from a cross-cultural perspective. He states: “This book offers a unique lens that deepens our understanding of the role of predators and how humans might coexist with them--insights particularly relevant to ongoing debates in the American West over whether wolf populations should be culled.” His comment not only reflects the effectiveness of the translation in conveying ecological ideas but also demonstrates that the symbol of the “wolf” holds real-world interpretive power in a global context.

Overall, American readers’ interpretation of national character in *Wolf Totem* is largely grounded in the translation’s accurate rendering of cultural symbols. Through skillful linguistic and cultural adaptation, Howard Goldblatt enables the binary framework of “wolf” and “sheep” to emerge naturally within the English-language context. In the process of reading, audiences not only come to understand the survival philosophy of Chinese nomadic culture, but also engage in reflective comparison with their own societal values. This form of culturally mediated dialogue--made possible by a nuanced and effective translation--constitutes a key foundation for the novel’s success in cross-cultural communication.

The novel’s exploration of “wolf” and “sheep” as metaphors for national character has resonated deeply with American readers. Through the cultural translation of “wolf” and “sheep”, Howard Goldblatt successfully conveys this symbolic dichotomy. American readers not only grasp the “wolf spirit” celebrated by the nomadic steppe cultures, but also relate it to contemporary social issues, reflecting on the relationship between individual will and collective behavior. This cross-cultural interpretation stems both from the intellectual depth of the original text and from the translator’s precise handling of cultural symbolism, enabling the novel’s examination of national character to attain universal significance beyond its regional origins.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study, through empirical analysis, reveals that the dissemination and reception of the English translation of *Wolf Totem* in the United States exhibits distinctive cross-cultural characteristics. The novel successfully transcends cultural boundaries through its profound ecological allegory and unique exploration of national character, resonating with a global audience. Its success in the U.S. market can be attributed to three key factors: first, the ecological narrative centered on the “wolf, human, and steppe” triad engages in meaningful dialogue with Western ecocritical theory; second, the metaphor of “wolf versus sheep” is effectively rendered across cultures through Howard Goldblatt’s translation; and third, the work skillfully integrates the wisdom of steppe civilization with critical reflections on modernity.

The findings suggest that *Wolf Totem* exemplifies a dissemination model based on shared concerns, cultural specificity, and translational strategy. By anchoring its narrative in globally relevant issues--such as ecological crisis--while deeply exploring the uniqueness of nomadic culture and employing effective cultural translation, the novel achieves both broad reach and significant depth of reception. This case demonstrates that the international dissemination of Chinese literature must balance cultural subjectivity with dialogic engagement: it should assert the distinctive values of Chinese civilization while simultaneously forging profound, cross-cultural meaning. This paradigm not only enhances the global

impact of literary works but also opens new pathways for dialogue among diversified civilizations.

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## Notes

1 Amazon.com is the official website of Amazon.com, Inc., and is currently the largest online bookstore in the United States. Amazon.com, Inc. is the largest e-commerce company in the U.S. and globally, with its headquarters based in Seattle. The company was founded in 1994, and the Amazon.com website was launched in 1995, initially focusing on online book sales before diversifying its business.

2 [https://www.amazon.com/gp/profile/amzn1.account.AGDGMG7C2LRKN3REYM2EZBMNTNJA/ref=cm\\_cr\\_getr\\_d\\_gw\\_btm?ie=UTF8](https://www.amazon.com/gp/profile/amzn1.account.AGDGMG7C2LRKN3REYM2EZBMNTNJA/ref=cm_cr_getr_d_gw_btm?ie=UTF8)

3 [https://www.amazon.com/gp/profile/amzn1.account.AH2AMGDPTWKKCRIVQB554YDHR5YQ/ref=cm\\_cr\\_ar\\_p\\_d\\_gw\\_btm?ie=UTF8](https://www.amazon.com/gp/profile/amzn1.account.AH2AMGDPTWKKCRIVQB554YDHR5YQ/ref=cm_cr_ar_p_d_gw_btm?ie=UTF8)

4 [https://www.amazon.com/gp/profile/amzn1.account.AHDGXWI3KRJG3SCTO24WSPPUY2KQ/ref=cm\\_cr\\_ar\\_p\\_d\\_gw\\_btm?ie=UTF8](https://www.amazon.com/gp/profile/amzn1.account.AHDGXWI3KRJG3SCTO24WSPPUY2KQ/ref=cm_cr_ar_p_d_gw_btm?ie=UTF8)

5. Goodreads (www.goodreads.com) is a book-focused social networking site for reviews, recommendations, ratings, and sharing, headquartered in San Francisco, USA. Readers can review, recommend, and rate various books on the platform. Registered users can add new book listings, create recommendation lists, and form book discussion groups.

6 <https://www.goodreads.com/user/show/6505203-wendy>.

7 <https://www.goodreads.com/user/show/309689-lara>.

8 <https://www.goodreads.com/user/show/1663300-tara>.

9 [https://www.amazon.com/gp/profile/amzn1.account.AG7EDCLE2WL5ZSDP6UQFRCBAD5EA/ref=cm\\_cr\\_getr\\_d\\_gw\\_btm?ie=UTF8](https://www.amazon.com/gp/profile/amzn1.account.AG7EDCLE2WL5ZSDP6UQFRCBAD5EA/ref=cm_cr_getr_d_gw_btm?ie=UTF8)

10[https://www.amazon.com/gp/profile/amzn1.account.AFG6XTNZPWEGXF3QLM376MBVCOEQ/ref=cm\\_cr\\_getr\\_d\\_gw\\_btm?ie=UTF8](https://www.amazon.com/gp/profile/amzn1.account.AFG6XTNZPWEGXF3QLM376MBVCOEQ/ref=cm_cr_getr_d_gw_btm?ie=UTF8)

11<https://www.goodreads.com/user/show/28700577-alice-poon>

12[https://www.amazon.com/gp/profile/amzn1.account.AEVOEYPDXSYXB4VWK2KBWKLBIU5Q/ref=cm\\_cr\\_ar\\_p\\_d\\_gw\\_btm?ie=UTF8](https://www.amazon.com/gp/profile/amzn1.account.AEVOEYPDXSYXB4VWK2KBWKLBIU5Q/ref=cm_cr_ar_p_d_gw_btm?ie=UTF8)