Since mainland Chinese writer Mo Yan won the Nobel Prize for Literature in October 2012, there have been many studies of his works in translation. American sinologist Howard Goldblatt, Mo Yan’s primary English-language translator, has been the topic of heated discussions in the Chinese media and in Chinese academic communities. Mo Yan’s early masterpiece Hong Gaoliang Jiazu (Red Sorghum), first published by Viking Penguin in 1993 in Goldblatt’s masterful translation, has sold more than 20,000 copies without going out of print, thanks in part to Zhang Yimou’s commercially successful film (1988) of the same title. In fact, Mo Yan’s winning of the Nobel Prize owes much to the novel’s successful translation and circulation. While the past decade has witnessed a "sociological turn" in Western translation studies with case studies of "translations in the making," we have not seen a sociological approach to the translation, circulation and reception of Red Sorghum; rather, we have gotten the usual analyses based on literary, corpus-assisted or descriptive translation studies. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu’s field theory and Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network Theory, this article looks at how various human and non-human actors--operating in a hypothesized American literary "field"--interacted with each other, through the transformation of various forms of capital, to create pre-translation and circulation networks leading to the successful production and circulation of Red Sorghum in the United States. The future implications for the translation and circulation of Chinese literary works in the West are discussed in the conclusion.

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