The thesis seeks to provide a reading of the two texts referred to in the broader context of a discussion of relations between Goethe’s conceptualisation of Weltliteratur and its subsequent developments, globalisation, and cross-cultural translation. A lengthy introduction provides the reader with an ambitious, precise and helpful discussion of the potential of interrelations between such conceptualisations and the particular perspective on such matters that she wishes to explore. The thesis then moves on to provide a more precise investigation of Goethe’s original, relatively Eurocentric, conception and ways in which contemporary scholars such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Edward Said have sought to develop a similar perspective in more recent times. Further chapters focus on the two novels themselves, considering how Maxine Hong Kingston probes aspects of cultural translation in her own works and then considering the work by Mo Yan, both in its own immediate cultural context and in terms of the issues raised by its translation into English. The conclusion attempts to bring these various strands together.

This was an enjoyable and stimulating piece of work which, despite the occasional failing in its use of English, generally provided a clear and sophisticated discussion of a wealth of issues but in a fashion which connected them very ably through a series of sub-discussions of the work of a number of significant literary and cultural theorists and critics in addition to the works of the novelists and, in the latter case, a translator. In some ways, given the number of related issues covered, I would have liked the conclusion to be almost as long as the introduction in bringing all of these perspectives together in slightly more detailed fashion but, given the intensity and range of discussion provided in the earlier parts of the thesis, I am ultimately of the view that enough had already been achieved to support the evaluation of the thesis as an excellent rather than just a very good piece of work.