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Titles of Mo Yan's books in translation into closer and farther languages: Is nature or culture the main cause of changes?

Abstract

Translating titles is one of the most complex problems that translation researchers (primarily those working in a literary field) may encounter. For many reasons, which I outline in the introduction to the present paper, the original meaning of a title often undergoes much greater modifications than in other places of the translated text. The object of my investigation are changes – some radical – that occurred in the translations of 12 titles of novels and short story collections by the Chinese author and Nobel Prize winner Mo Yan, which were rendered into languages both close to us geographically and culturally (European ones: Romanic and Germanic) and farther in this respect (Asian tongues: Japanese and Korean). Based on a combined analysis of the translated titles and interviews with some of their (co-)authors, an extensive taxonomy of various causes of these changes is proposed. A crucial question, which unfortunately cannot be answered fully in this paper, concerns the nature-culture dilemma: do the modifications result mainly from the translator's nature (personality or even simply temperament) or from the culture s/he lives in (i.e. the editorial/translational title-giving custom)?

Keywords: title translation, Chinese literature in translation, descriptive translation studies

与其诅咒黑暗，不如燃起蜡烛
Yǔqǐ zǔzhòu hēi'àn, bùrú ránqǐ làzhú
Instead of cursing the darkness,
it's better to light a candle.
(Chinese proverb)

1. Introduction

The translation of the titles of books, especially literary publications, is one of the most complex areas that a translation researcher may examine. After all, hardly

any part of a text is so ingeniously or 'refractively' (cf. Hermans, 1999) rendered as its title. Although titles are extremely short fragments of text in translation, they are very special. Undoubtedly, this results from their function which, above all, consists in offering a kind of a proper name for the text – a name whose role is to distinguish it – in combination with the author's name – from other texts. In addition, it is a meaningful name, since it informs (sometimes intentionally vaguely) about the content of the text. At the same time, that name is to be an attractive label, to bait the attention of a potential reader, which in the case of a translation is probably even more important than in that of the original, as the surname of a foreign author may not say much to the target reader.

Even these three qualities – or functions – of the title may result in a conflict that the translator has to face. Thus, it comes as no surprise that many translation researchers examined closely transcoded – and sometimes unrecognizable – titles (e.g. Nord, 1993 and Hejwowski, 2004b; before them, in a more general way, Genette, 1982), distinguishing various functions of the title, which in the ideal scenario should be preserved in translation. Before I briefly survey three major approaches to the topic, I will present a concise description of the research material, while revealing reasons for interest in it.

Translations of the titles of Mo Yan's books attracted my attention shortly after the author became the Nobel Prize winner in literature, at the end of 2012. When my students and I undertook translating a review of the German version of his famous novel with the local title *Die Schnapsstadt* (Bender, 2002), I was astonished by the extent of changes that translators of this and other novels by Mo made in their renderings into German and – as it shortly turned out – other popular languages, such as English, Spanish or French. After originally limiting myself to 9 titles and 9 languages, I eventually created a larger, symmetrical grid of 12 by 12, adding Russian, Japanese and Korean on the language axis. The two Far-Eastern languages certainly posed the most significant problems, and yet I decided to take them into consideration since they provided me with material that was more diverse and complete, as well as thought-provoking. As for the titles, I have chosen those which were fairly frequently translated (at least into four languages, with one exception), but also caused various translation problems. In three exceptions, I included titles of book parts (usually short stories) which in other languages were titles of whole books (collections of short stories). When choosing languages, I applied two criteria: the existence of an adequate number of translations (again at least four) and a rudimentary comprehension of the selected target languages, supported extensively by printed

and internet resources. In fact, the findings presented in this paper result mainly from research based on internet searches. If it had not been for information about books usually drawn from catalogues of various national libraries and completed with data from publishing house, bookshop, magazine and newspaper websites and occasionally blogs, I would not have been able to assemble my corpus. Even so, the collection is still incomplete due to the lack of some translations (until now, the fewest books by Mo appeared in Russian (4) and Norwegian (5), followed by Swedish, Italian and Polish (6 each)). Altogether, at present (June 2015), I have analysed 100 translation titles (including 3 retranslations). If the corpus were not perforated here and there by gaps, there would be 144 title renditions, i.e. nearly fifty percent more. However, even one hundred examples allow one to draw some conclusions – which, of necessity, often have the tentative status of suppositions. Indisputably, conclusions as to the supposed translational tradition in the area of book titles will be much weaker in the case of languages with very small corpora. Nevertheless, I decided to include these cases in order to get a broader view of the situation. A separate matter is relay translation, almost always via (American) English, which concerns as many as 16 (out of 100) title versions. This phenomenon, which may seem surprising in the times of a rapidly growing popularity of the Chinese language, will be discussed later on, also with regard to its negative consequences.

A decisive answer will not be given to what is admittedly a rather radical question in the title of the paper, even in the case of the 'strong' corpora. Although the scope of the study may seem broad, it is still quite narrow within the scope of each language. It is a pilot study that should merely highlight some tendencies that are somewhat representative (if the examined titles and their translations are typical). In trying to determine how individual the translators' presumed choices were, I also relied on information from (internet) interviews conducted with 12 of them (I was inspired by Kohlmayer (2002), who analysed recordings of interviews with six translators of literary works into German). While translators should generally be judged by the fruits of their work, they should also be given a chance to explain their way of working and thinking – because however detailed and sophisticated a method of observation can be, an observer cannot determine the main reason for some actions without simply asking their performers. Of course, they may not tell (or even know) the truth, or deeper reasons, but they may overtly state something a researcher could have looked for in vain, or for a long time. This information may then be useful for pedagogical purposes – or simply enrich the evaluation of translations.

Although in this shortened version of my paper I cannot extensively discuss my findings stemming from the interviews, I will use some of this information when presenting my conclusions.

The research presented here is, on the one hand, a continuation of my multilingual analyses of translations, carried out on Polish poetry (Zbigniew Herbert's poems: cf. Staszek, 2005; 2008), and on the other hand an extension of my attempts at establishing the impact of the translator's temperament on his or her performance (cf. Staszek, 2014). Of course, in the case of translators of Mo Yan's works I did not have at my disposal tests or questionnaires but merely the translators' statements. I could only rely on the analysis of these statements combined with an examination of the titles in order to speculate on the translators' way of thinking, i.e. their translational strategy or ideology – and, subsequently, their personality, which can be narrowed down to temperament. It is one's temperament that, in my opinion, is a factor which strongly influences behaviour and sometimes causes individuals to break norms (usually left unstated), also in the field of translation. This may complicate the quest for explanations, but can also be seen as a possibility to change the normative system (positively or not, depending partly on individual judgement).

Regarding stumbling blocks, the main problem concerning the research on the translation of titles consists in the difficulty with establishing the authorship of these translations. Since the title exerts a big influence on the sale of a book and its publisher is vitally interested in high sales figures, s/he may try to convince the translator, sometimes via the editor, of the advantages of his/her vision. After all, there are market studies about how particular words or phrases increase the popularity of a book, not to mention an existing body of research on title-giving customs (likely the best examples of which are in findings by Nord (1993, cf. below). Whereas it is difficult to imagine that an editor or a publisher would not want to make a title more attractive, it is even more unimaginable that a translator firstly does not suggest his/her own title and does not defend his/her idea against a market-oriented editor-publisher duo. A primary problem in translation research — due to external factors, such as an editor's intervention, also concerns the rest of a translation (which i.a. Mo Yan's American translator Howard Goldblatt mentions, cf. Goldblatt & Efthimiadou, 2012; Levitt, 2013; also Abrahamsen, 2008, with a very insightful discussion that follows). Of course, in the case of the title, a foreign intervention is much more probable – since, at the first moment, the title is to encourage the reader to get acquainted with the book to a much higher degree than its content, which is

sometimes totally unknown to the reader. Under such circumstances, we should either consider the title as a common work of the translator and his/her 'advisors' (as Nord does) or assume it is the translator's idea by default, unless we find information to the contrary. In this paper, I search for evidence in a fairly large number of interviews with translators, mainly from the Internet – to clear the said dilemma, and speculate on the translators' motivations for departing from a literal rendering of the title (which in most cases is possible, even if such translations may be enigmatic). One technical remark in this context is necessary: due to the variety of languages involved I cite all translators' statements in my English translation, which at times is deliberately not very smooth.

We now consider the original author in question, and the context of the translations of his works. Writing under the pseudonym Mo Yan (莫言; pinyin: *Mò Yán*, literally 'don't talk') this Chinese writer was born on February 17, 1955 as Guan Moye (Simplified Chinese: 管谟业; Traditional Chinese: 管謨業; pinyin: *Guǎn Mòyè*)¹; in 2012, he won the Nobel Prize in literature. According to reviewers, Mo Yan is a very popular writer in his homeland, read by people of various background and education, "a writer whom everyone can gather around", as his Swedish translator put it (Gustafsson Chen, 2012d), who sees himself as a 'storyteller' (such was also the title of his Nobel lecture, cf. Mo, 2012a/b). Although he is regarded by some (notably Chinese dissidents living abroad, cf. Link, 2012 and Allen, 2012) as a regime writer (for some time he was the vice-president of the Chinese Writers' Association), such opinions seem to be fairly superficial: he does make some concessions to the authorities, in order to publish while living in China, nevertheless, he is critical of the sociopolitical situation in his country. One of his best-known novels, *Jiǔguó* (Engl. *The Republic of Wine*), a metaphorically sarcastic portrait of his homeland, had its premiere in Taiwan, and only then, in a censored version, appeared in mainland China. In turn, his latest novel, *Wā* (Engl. *Frog*), addresses the issue of large-scale abortions caused by the implementation of the single-child policy. Publishing since 1981, Mo has currently (end of June 2015) produced over 110 works, comprising 11 novels (usually quite long, even in their original versions), over 20 novellas and at least 80 short stories. He is a very prolific writer (his books are 'bricks', as his Norwegian translator, Brit Sæthre, sees them (cf. Sæthre & Lien, 2012)), and an oft-translated one; long before receiving the Nobel Prize. renditions of his books appeared (since 1989) in not fewer than 22 languages — mainly European ones,

¹ Information for non-Sinologists: *pinyin* is the official system of transcription of Chinese characters, introduced in the PRC in 1958; Simplified Chinese is used in mainland China, and Traditional – i.a. in Taiwan and Hongkong.

but with a strong East-Asian addition. Surprisingly, there are very few translations into Slavic languages; even with only six of Mo Yan's works, Polish is the leader in this group.

It is worth noting that nearly one fifth (16 out of 100) of the translations were not done from the original texts. The American (in 15 cases) or Japanese versions (one supposed case) were used, instead. This also applies to most Spanish (6 out of 10), Dutch (5 out of 9) and Norwegian (4 out of 5) versions. Whereas in both latter cases it is not surprising due to the relatively small language groups and book markets – it seems unexpected in the case of Spanish, a world language spanning parts of three continents. However, indirect translations from Chinese remain common in the Spanish book market (cf. the findings of Maialen Marín-Lacarta, 2012a; 2012b, not discussed in detail here).

2. Theoretical background

The issue of translating titles certainly could not escape the attention of researchers – after all, probably only wordplays and culture-bound terms are more prone to refractions than book titles. This is the subject of a standard work in functionalist translation studies: Christiane Nord's *Einführung in das funktionale Übersetzen: am Beispiel von Titeln und Überschriften* (1993). The German translation researcher, who analysed a very large, quadrilingual (German, English, Spanish, French) corpus of titles of both literary and non-literary works, comprising approximately 12,500 items (about 3,000 titles per each language), perceives titles in terms of the functions they fulfill (not differently from other researchers in the field, not all partisans?? of the functionalist approach). Nord distinguishes 6 functions, dividing them into three basic (Germ. *Grundfunktionen*) and three supplementary ones (*Zusatzfunktionen*). The former group is made up of the distinctive (*distinktive F.*), metatextual (*metatextuelle F.*) and phatic functions (*phatische F.*). The latter, in turn, comprises the presentative (*Darstellungsf.*), expressive (*Ausdrucksf.*) and appellative functions (*Appellf.*). This model is based on a relabelled division by Bühler (1934), referring to the functions of language signs (called *Organon-Modell* in German), extended to the phatic function, added by Jakobson (1971), and subsequently two functions concerning titles alone: the distinctive and metatextual. Thus, in her model, Nord did not include two other functions distinguished by Jakobson — poetic and metalingual, considering the former as a special case of the appellative function,

and seeing in the latter a variety of the presentative function. And although it is difficult to disagree with Nord globally, it is tempting to claim that some functions in her model could be included within others. While the researcher stresses that the phatic function, which consists in putting the reader in contact with the text (Germ. *Kontaktstiftung*) and retaining its title, differs from the (possible) appellative function — reducible to encouraging the reader to read the text, it seems that every title intends (at least through its content) to spur the reader to get familiar with the text labelled by it (after all, every text was created with an intention that someone will read it), and, on the other hand, not every title has a form that facilitates its retention. And such a form is probably the most concrete symptom of the phatic function, stressed by the researcher; she speaks here of the dilatory (Germ. *dilatorisch*) effect of the title. Similarly, the expressive function may be regarded as a subjectively marked part of the presentative function (the sender presents not only the text, but also his/her attitude towards it) and the latter could also include the metatextual function (one of the obligatory ones), which results from the fact that the title is a text about another text (co-text) and is to be recognizable as such. It is a kind of presentation of the text, even if we assume that at the moment of perceiving the metatextual function of the title (fulfilled by it automatically) we do not have to receive its content (at least fully). The above aggregations — being in essence a return to Bühler's division, enriched with the very desirable uniqueness of the title — would yield only three functions: *distinctive*, *presentative* and *appellative*, of which the first would enable the reader to distinguish a text from others, the second would inform to some extent about its content (and possibly the author's attitude towards it), and the third would encourage (to some degree) the recipient to read the text. Such an approach is more than a return to Bühler, and looks to Genette (1982, cf. below); it also has the advantage that all three functions are not fulfilled automatically.

In Poland, perhaps the most systematic approach to the translation of titles may be found in work by Krzysztof Hejwowski (2004b). Referring to an article by Monika Gagaczowska (2000), who in turn cites the classification by Gérard Genette (1982), the Warsaw-based researcher distinguishes “at least six” functions of titles of literary works: the *identifying* (as in both Genette and Gagaczowska), *presentative* (informative/descriptive in both Genette and Gagaczowska), *evocative* (the connotative aspect in Gagaczowska), *experiential*, *relative* and *commercial function* (the marketing function in Genette), while stressing that “it is the translator's duty to try to preserve as many of the

functions as possible and as much of each function as possible” (Hejwowski 2004b: 167). Perceiving a source of difficulties in a possible conflict of some of the functions, e.g. between identification – informativeness, he enumerates some other problems related to translating titles which may be caused by their status as clichés or well-known sayings, their ambiguity or the existence of polysemy in the original title, evoking undesirable associations by the most obvious equivalent as well as convergence of titles in translation (Hejwowski 2004b: 177-182). As for the functions, the names of three of them need probably some explanation: the *evocative* function refers to associations that a title evokes (also to literary genres, such as detective stories, young adult or women’s literature), the *experiential* one refers to the auctorial background of a title, which – being mostly a private matter – is often unknown to translators and causes translation errors (exemplified by the case of *Winnie-the-Pooh*), and finally the *relative* function, which may be called *allusive* because it consists in evoking associations to concrete titles of works of the source language literature or to citations from the latter. In essence, all these functions may be regarded simply as hidden (or at least less visible, and thus less certain) layers of the title’s meaning. The least accessible to the translator seems to be the experiential layer, since it requires knowledge about the background of the work, even the author’s biography (the description of the function and implies that unlike the other functions, the texts fulfil it, in relation to the author). Hejwowski does not give the hierarchy of the functions he enumerates, hence it may be assumed that he treats them as equally important, especially in the light of his general postulate cited above. Unfortunately, in translators’ (let alone publishers’) eyes, these functions are not equiponderant: we can presume that in translation the presentative function will often be strengthened (examples of explication are given by Hejwowski himself, who sees a general tendency in the technique), to the detriment of the identifying function (in the intercultural perspective). The commercial function, too, is likely to increase (it may be also boosted by the translator’s will to make the title more colourful – as some examples will show), the relative function may disappear (since hardly anyone will decipher an allusion, even if the translator saves it) and the same fate may be met by the experiential function if the translator does not enter deeply enough in the world of the work (the reason being a lack of time, interest or patience). Describing the experiential function, Hejwowski stresses the fact, not appreciated sufficiently by some translators and probably many publishers: “Titles are carefully selected by authors, they represent the author’s choice: giving your book a title is like choosing a name for your

child – the choice represents your preferences, your sentiments and your taste” (2004b: 173). And he concludes:

As books have their authors (despite the death-of-the-author myth), the translator owes loyalty to them. The title is part of the process of artistic creation, a result of the author's thinking process and as such deserves solicitous treatment by the translator. As books come from other cultures, the translator, being a bilingual and bicultural expert, should act as the ambassador of the foreign culture. It is only through respect for another culture that we can get to know and understand other people (Hejwowski, 2004b: 183).

Based on the research presented here, I would put forward the supposition that perhaps too many ‘refractions’ are attributed to cultural differences – whereas an equally important reason for modifications may be natural differences: the fact that many literary translators like to realise their creative ambitions through translation (maybe that is why they translate?), especially in such a high-profile fragment of the text as its title. This wish to show off one's ingenuity has been alluded to by Jerzy Jarniewicz; speaking of the translation of titles, he states:

It is difficult to find a better illustration of the autonomous character of the translator's work. The controversial concept of a transparent or invisible translator does not turn out to be useful, since translators take an active part in the process of translation. It is often in the title of the translated work that they mark their presence: and then the title, apart from various functions it happened to fulfill in the original, becomes a real signature of the translator (Jarniewicz, 2000: 483).

The translator's signature is meant to be a reflection, not a refraction of the author's. Another problem, mentioned above, is that for a translation researcher it is difficult to establish whether that signature was put by the translator, if someone advised/supervised it, or simply paid for the job.

3. Presentation of the corpus

What follows is a discussion of selected titles of Mo Yan's books. As stated at the beginning, I analysed the translations of 12 titles (listed in Table 1); however, I have limited the study to a detailed presentation of one fairly complex, representative case, abounding in translated versions. The remaining 11 titles will be presented in a reduced form directly below and examples of their renditions

(listed in the bibliography) will be used in the analyses that will follow: first arranged according to the applied modifying techniques and then to the language key, pointing to possible individual differences. Semantic similarities often result from relay translation, whereas similar alterations within a language – either come from the same target language (social custom) or the same translators (individual custom). In turn, similarities across languages may suggest a similar way of thinking of translators into different tongues. We must not forget, however, that both translators and publishers usually read – or at least consult – previous translations, mainly into English (and sometimes do not go beyond that). This may result in similar ideas for modifying the titles; translation teachers will know this phenomenon in the unilingual dimension.

Table 1 presents both word-for-word and literal translations of the 12 analysed titles of Mo's works. Colons, used in the word-by-word translation of the original Chinese titles, stand for the number of Chinese characters explained in scare quotes after them (in English). They correspond to entities that may be called words: although these usually are not separated graphically in Chinese, they appear as lexical items in dictionaries. As a rule, they comprise two to three characters although single-character words are possible.

	Title {+Traditional Chinese} with transcription	Word-for-word and literal translation	Year
1	透明的红萝卜 {透明的紅蘿蔔} [Tòumíng de hóng luóbo]	::'transparent/diaphanous' : 'red' ::'radish[es]' ='Transparent red radish[es]'	1985
2	红高粱家族 {紅高粱家族} [Hóng gāoliáng jiāzú]	: 'red' :: 'kaoliang / Chinese sorghum' :: 'clan[s]/family/ies' ='The red kaoliang clan'	1987
3	天堂蒜薹之歌 [Tiāntáng suàntái zhī gē]	:: 'paradise/heaven' :: 'garlic shoot[s]' : 's' : 'song[s]' ='Song[s] of the paradisiac garlic shoot[s]'	1988
4	酒国 {酒國} [Jiǔguó]	: 'alcoholic drink/wine' : 'country/ies// nation[s]/state[s]' ='The alcohol country'	1992
5	怀抱鲜花的女人 [Huáibào xiānhuā de nǚrén]	:: 'hug/embrace (v)' :: 'fresh flowers' : 'attr. signal' :: 'woman/en' ='A woman embracing fresh flowers'	1993

6	丰乳肥臀 [Fēngrǔ fēitún]	'abundant/great' : 'breast[s]/milk' : 'fat/ fertile/large' : 'buttock[s]' ='Abundant breasts [and] fat buttocks'	1996
7	师傅越来越幽默 [Shīfu yuèlái yuè yōumò]	::'master' ::: 'more and more' :: 'humour/ humorous' ='The master [is] more and more humorous'	1999
8	檀香刑 [Tánxiāng xíng]	:: '[white] sandalwood' : 'punishment[s]' ='The sandalwood punishment'	2001
9	四十一炮 [Sìshíyī pào]	:: 'forty' : 'one' : 'cannons/guns/firecrackers' ='Forty one cannons'	2003
10	生死疲劳 {生死疲勞} [Shēngsǐ píláo]	:: 'life and death' :: 'tired/weary/fatigue' ='Tired/Fatigue of life and death'	2006
11	蛙 [Wā]	: 'frog[s]' ='Frog[s]'	2009
12	变 {變} [Biàn]	: 'change[s]' ='Change[s]'	2010

Table 1. Original titles (also in Traditional Chinese) with transcriptions, followed by their word-for-word and literal translations

4. Example of the analysis: *Songs, ballads, monotonous chant, fantasia or rebellion?*

Table 2, presenting the translations of one title, illustrates the type of analyses performed on the whole corpus of gathered material. The individual languages are marked with the symbol of the internet domain of the country associated with a given language (the non-existing *us* referring to the American version). Underlined words and expressions are places of semantic changes, X symbolises a 'word' that has been omitted, although it could be expressed verbally in a given language. The third column indicates relay translation from an American rendering; the fifth column lists the first edition of a given translation. In the last row of the table, symbols for languages with no translations of this title are listed.

Song[s] of the paradisiac garlic shoot[s]				
Lg.	Title	Source	Translator	Publ. year
cn	天堂蒜薹之歌 [<i>Tiāntáng suàntái zhī gē</i>] ::‘paradise/heaven’ ::‘garlic shoot’ :‘s’ :‘song[s]’ =‘Song[s] of the paradisiac garlic shoot[s]’			1988
jp	『天堂狂想歌』 [<i>XX Tendō kyōsōka.</i>]	cn	吉田富夫 Yoshida Tomio	2013
kr	《티엔탕 마을 마늘종 노래. 1-2》 . [<i>Ti-entang ma-eul maneuljong nolae. 1-2.</i>]	cn	박명애 Bag Myeong-ae	2007
us	<i>The X Garlic X Ballads.</i>	cn	Howard Goldblatt	1995
de	<i>Die X KnoblauchXrevolte : Roman.</i>	cn	Andreas Donath	1997
nl	<i>De X knoflookXliederen.</i>	us	Peter Abelsen	1995
se	<i>X VitlöksXballaderna.</i>	cn	Anna Gustafsson Chen	2001
no	<i>X HvitløksXballadene.</i>	us?	Brit Sæthre	2014
fr	<i>La mélopée de X l’ail paradisiaque : roman.</i>	cn	Chantal Chen-Andro	1990
es	Las <u>baladas</u> del X ajo X.	us	Carlos Ossés	2008
-:	it, ru, pl			

Table 2. Translations of *Tiāntáng suàntái zhī gē*

The third of the most frequently translated books by Mo Yan is a novel that appeared as his second prose book in almost half of the analysed languages (English, German, Dutch and Swedish). This is significant, as in the case of an author’s second work, publishers usually try not to disappoint a reader who may be familiar with the author’s first book; consequently, they avoid risk. The title of this novel, *Tiāntáng suàntái zhī gē*, ‘Song[s] of the paradisiac garlic shoot[s]’ was almost always simplified in some way (with the exception of the Korean version, cf. below). In most translations we have either ‘garlic ballads’ (us, se, no and es) or ‘garlic songs’ (nl). A surprise in this last set is the Swedish version of the title,

which, contrary to the rest, was certainly translated directly from the original. Typical of other languages – and probably resulting from taking the American translation as a model – is the narrowing of ‘songs’ to ‘ballads’, although the latter are more precisely 歌谣 *gēyáo* in Chinese, and not 歌 *gē* alone. In the recent Japanese translation, in turn, ‘fantasia’ appears (lit. ‘thought song’), with the addition of the attribute ‘crazy’ (however, probably in an influx of fantasy the translator deleted the ‘garlic shoots’). The French translator acted in a similar though atypical way, compared to others (which turns out to be typical of titles in her version and generally French titles). She used the word *mélopée* (originally ‘a ritual dancing song in antique Greek poetry’, today informally ‘monotonous chant’) as the equivalent of a very common word *gē* (simply ‘song’), and, in addition, she preserved *tiāntáng* ‘paradise/heaven’, here in the attributive function: ‘paradisiac/heavenly’. The German title is also atypical (though probably following the supra-individual trend in this language) – *Die Knoblauchrevolte* means ‘the garlic rebellion’, a formulation referring to the events depicted in the novel, but at the same time going in the opposite direction than the original: a straightforward message instead of euphemistic irony, which had an irresistible charm, saved perhaps to the greatest extent in the French title (where the word *mélopée* undoubtedly has an ironic overtone). All in all, the original title was preserved most by the Korean translator, who rendered it as ‘A song about garlic shoots from the town of Tiantang’. Although it may seem strange that a part of the original was taken over, in this case it is insofar justified as *Tiāntáng* is a common name and a toponym – moreover, a speaking one (which is not rare either in Mo Yan’s works or generally in Chinese). The plot of the novel – based on real events, a peasant rebellion in the writer’s homeland, Gaomi – is set in a county bearing the ironic name Paradise (or Heaven – Chinese equivalents of Christian terms are a separate issue). Similarly to some other Korean titles, the choice of the borrowing was possible due to the fact that Korean, like Japanese, is still under the influence of Chinese (in South Korea, some Chinese characters may be used even nowadays, though rarely), which results in at least partial comprehension of borrowings from that language. Paradise/Heaven is called in Korean *Cheongug* (from Chinese 天国 {天國} *Tiānguó*, lit. ‘the Sky/Heaven Country’). Based on the same model is, by the way, the standard name of Paradise/Heaven in Japanese: 天国 *tengoku*, which in the title of the novel was replaced with the less popular word *tendō*, written in the same way as the Chinese *Tiāntáng*: 天堂.

The Korean translation of the title is exceptional because it is the only one that renders the meaning of *tái* ‘shoot’. This may be considered marginal – after all, garlic itself seems much more important. Although the covers of many translations of this novel show garlic bulbs, the shoots that appear in the title are there quite on purpose, being one of the basic ingredients of stir fry vegetable mixes, very popular in Chinese cuisine. Not without reason are the Chinese the world’s biggest producers of garlic.

Going back to the reductionist translations of the analysed title: they probably do not only result from the ambiguity of the word *Tiāntáng*, which to translators was comfortable to omit (although the problem returned in the text of the novel). An important reason for omitting both *Tiāntáng* and *tái* was presumably the desire to avoid lengthiness and detail of the title, in accordance with Western market expectations. Since Chinese is a very concise language, it may allow a bigger number of semantic elements in the title. If we wanted to express all the original meanings of this title e.g. in German, we would have to generate the phrase *Das Lied vom paradiesischen (or Paradieser) Knoblauchsprössling*, which to some readers could seem too lengthy. This lengthiness, which becomes apparent in the translation, is mentioned by the German Sinologist and translator Ulrich Kautz when referring to Jin Yong’s books, which are very popular in China: “In German, none of his books exist because his novels are almost untranslatable: each gesture, each jump from the roof is described very metaphorically there. It is possible in Chinese because Chinese characters have such a condensed informative content – four characters are enough to describe such a jump. In German, you get several lines out of that” (Kautz & Magenau, 2009).

Another factor is the fact that in Germany, contemporary Chinese literature has the opinion of being quite ‘diluted’, and thus requiring condensation in translation. The author of a later rendering into German, Karin Betz, asked about the main problems with translating Chinese prose, stated:

[The Chinese] narrative tradition is much more epic than the European one. [...] There are fewer suspenses and many redundancies. It is important to use beautiful characters [...] So, Mo Yan’s translator must [...] shorten, cut and – where necessary – interpret. ‘The reader, says Karin Betz, forgives minute *chinoiseries*. [...] In the confrontation with a one-to-one translation, perhaps every German reader would surrender’ (Teutsch, 2009).

Somewhat contradictory to Betz's statement are the opinions of other translators, who ascribe the weakness for long sentences not so much to entire Chinese literature as to Mo Yan himself (cf. Gustafsson Chen, 2012c; Marijnissen & Van Velzen, 2014; Goldblatt & Efthimiadou, 2012; Duzan, 2010; González, 2012). This may also influence the form of his titles, rendering them atypical.

5. Findings

After the presentation of an extract from the corpus, I would like to present my findings, based on all 12 cases. Of the three sets of original conclusions, I will discuss the first two, referring to the techniques and following the language key. The last and most speculative, concerning the people, must be left for another occasion.

The first, quite superficial conclusions refer to presumed causes (or aims/goals) of modifications, illustrated with examples from the corpus. As I signalled at the outset, these causes overlap, are few in number, and are uncertain here and there – therefore a more precise description of the matter is probably not possible. The list below is an attempt, based on the example of the translations of Mo Yan's book titles. It is not typical Chinese research material, but certainly spans a broad range of languages and relatively many cases within some of them.

Instead of assigning various semantic (including formal) changes to functions described in the section on the theoretical background, I will limit myself to my own classification of such changes, combined with their descriptions and examples from the corpus. At the same time, I assume that in the minimalist model of title functions that I adopted here (the trias of functions: identifying – informative – appellative), the creators of titles in the target language try to preserve all three of them, seemingly giving the priority to the informative function which is *de facto* the meaning of the title (which loses some components – cf. the relative and experiential function in Hejwowski (2004b)). The reasons enumerated below do relate to the classification of functions presented above – if I do not refer to them directly it is because of the more pragmatic, basically semantic character of my approach. In fact, most modifications of titles aim at making them more attractive (appellative function) and/or more comprehensible (informative function), the former feature being often attained by the latter (cf. Nord, 1993: 142-186).

If we adopt a literal translation into a given language as a point of reference, we can distinguish the following motivations governing translators' choices, referring often to the renderings of the same original titles into different languages (with changes partly resulting from the nature of these titles):

1. avoiding incomprehensibility (enigmaticity) – be it for natural or cultural reasons (in both cases it is to do with realities). On the one hand, almost all versions of *Hóng gāoliáng jiāzú* (cf. below), and, on the other hand, numerous versions of *Shēngsī píláo* (blurring the enigmaticity resulting from the allusion to the *Sutra of Eight Enlightenments*) may serve as examples. In addition to omissions (surely partly in order to avoid lengthiness, as in *Tiāntáng suàntái zhī gē*, where *tái* 'shoots' may also have been deleted due to their strangeness), more 'enlightening' (but rarely used) translation techniques may be included in this group: generalizations (hyperonyms) of potentially incomprehensible names, also as adds-on to exoticisms, and (equally rare) expansions of titles in the form of supplements, usually in the form of subtitles. An example of the former may be the exchange of 'red radish' for 'radish' or (mistakenly?) 'carrot' in some versions of *Tòumíng de hóng luóbo*, the generalisation of *kaoliang* to 'sorghum', 'millet' or even 'cereal' in many translations of *Hóng gāoliáng jiāzú* as well as adding the word *ma-eul* (declined form of 'town/city') to the toponym *Ti-entang* in the Korean rendition of *The Garlic Ballads*. Examples of the second type of explicitations are the Japanese version of *Jiǔguó*, in which a subtitle was added to the literally rendered title: 'the adventure[s] of the persecutor for special investigations Ding Gouèr'; the French translation of *Fēngrǔ fěitùn*, enriched with the subtitle 'children of the Shangguan family', and the German version of *Biàn*, where 'change[s]', already extended to 'how the situation changes', was explained as 'a story from my life'.
2. avoiding lengthiness and excessive detail: examples include almost all versions of *Tiāntáng suàntái zhī gē* (omitting 'paradise' and 'shoots' – the latter probably also for cultural reasons) and – far less radical – transformations of *Huáibào xiānhuā de nǚrén* (where 'with a bouquet of flowers' often replaced 'embracing fresh flowers').
3. avoiding vulgarity or bluntness, perceived as not adequate to the dignity of fine literature: an eloquent and practically the only example are most

versions of *Fēngrǔ fěitún* (conversions of 'fat buttocks' usually to 'wide hips' – perhaps partly due to formal reasons, cf. below).

4. enhancing expressivity (making the title more dramatic or colourful) – probably common but here quite rare: *Tánxiāng xíng* and *Shīfū yuèlái yuè yōumò* in English ('death' instead of 'punishment/torture' and 'you would do anything for a laugh' instead of 'has a bigger and bigger sense of humour') and *Tiāntáng suàntái zhī gē* in German ('rebellion' in lieu of 'song'); also a couple of French examples: 'monotonous chant' instead of 'song'; 'crystal' and not 'transparent' radish; 'big mess/uproar' that renders the original 'change[s]' (adding an allusion to the title, cf. below); at least two examples from the Japanese set: 'crazy fantasia' as a fantastic equivalent of 'song' and 'sound of frogs' as a strengthened version of 'frogs.' In fact, modifications aimed at avoiding lengthiness and excessive detail could be included in this group, but I consider them as a separate reason.
5. avoiding an undesirable (accidental) allusion to some linguistic element (phrase or saying), also of artistic origin (especially a title of a literary work or another work of art) belonging to the target culture, including domesticated elements of foreign cultures (presumably *Wā* in Japanese – preventing an association with the target literature; and hypothetically *Biàn* 'change[s]' in French – excluding the allusion to the local version of *The Book of Changes* (French: *Le livre des changements*, but also ... *des transformations*, Chin. *Yījīng*)).
6. producing an allusion to a title or phrase from the native (target) language/culture – this time considered as a (controversial in my view) positive effect (again *Biàn* in French).
7. avoiding an undesirable formal effect (usually of phonetic nature, at least in European languages), such as rhyme, alliteration, repetition of word stems, combinations of phonemes causing pronunciation problems. I do not see examples of this technique in the analysed material (although I must admit that I did not check all possibilities); an unwanted rhyme could appear in a potential Swedish version of *Jiǔguó* if it were translated literally: *Spritens rike* (as the Swedish translator speaks about this novel (cf. Gustafsson Chen, 2012a));

8. adding a formal (mainly phonetic) effect, perhaps rare but conceivable above all in Germanic languages: *Jiǔguó* in German (*Die Schnapsstadt*) and possibly *Tiāntáng suàntái zhī gē* in English (*The Garlic Ballads*) – maybe also in order to render the alliteration present in the first word of the title (then it would be an example of the next motivation).

The last standard reason refers directly to formal effects (other than length) occurring in the original title:

9. reproducing (an important part of) the form of the title – be it for the sake of its sound alone (as in most translations of *Fēngrǔ fěitún*, apart from stylistic-ethical reasons, or in the American renderings of *Shīfu yuèlái yuè yōumò* and *Tánxiāng xíng* – in both cases along with a dramatization) or in order to preserve a supposed allusion produced by a given title (*Jiǔguó* in the American version [*The Republic of Wine*], also in this language *Sishiyī pào* [*Pow!*], here also to render the onomatopoeia in the last word).

Two following reasons are atypical since they stem from an inspiration with a work other than the real original:

10. referring directly to the title of the film based on a given literary work: the original version of the novel *Hóng gāoliáng jiāzú* (hence not rendering the word *jiāzú* ‘clan/family’) – in the case of almost all translations; the short story *Shīfu yuèlái yuè yōumò* – only in the case of its Japanese version.
11. reproducing the title of the translation from which the book was translated to the target language through relay translation (in substitution of the original) – in the case of most Dutch, Norwegian and Spanish versions.

In my opinion, these are the main reasons for conscious departure from literalness in the analysed title translations. Let us notice that they form a series of *contradictory* pairs – thus, it turns out that in some cases one technique is considered to produce a good solution, and in others – a bad one. However, since even experienced translators sometimes make unfavourable unconscious modifications, i.e. commit errors, this circumstance must be also mentioned as a cause of changes. The main example is the title of Mo Yan’s debut collection of short stories: *Tòumíng de hóng luóbo* – of course, if we are to believe the journalist

Hanna Sahlberg (cf. Sahlberg, 2013). The red radish appears to have been a stumbling block for two skilled translators-sinologists: the Japanese Fujii Shōzō and, in the first version, the Swede Göran Malmqvist (if rendering 'red radish' as 'carrot' was not a domestication of the somewhat exotic vegetable – cf. below).

After this global summary demonstrating what changes were made to the titles of Mo Yan's books (and probably happen to other – especially Chinese – titles) in translation into selected European and Asian languages, I will look more closely into the semantic transfer in two selected languages: Japanese and Korean (cf. Table 3). Discussing the results for the other languages, I will combine them in pairs or bigger groups, which will highlight sometimes unexpected similarities and differences. Although the material for each of the languages is not very extensive (12 titles at best), some tendencies, both in the case of easy and difficult titles, are thought-provoking and give some grounds for generalizations.

Among the 10 American translations, all by Howard Goldblatt, only two are a result of a literal translation (they are the relatively uncomplicated cases of *Wā* and *Biàn*). In contrast, the titles of three books – including the said novel *Wā* – were translated equally precisely into German, in which there are fewer, namely 8 renditions (the most striking gap concerns the novel *Fēngrú fěitún*), proposed by six different authors. The rest of the titles were translated into both languages by means of sometimes-radical modifications, which seem to go further in German (apart from the first case, which is a literal translation). Although there are fewer changes there (11 in the 8 German titles and 16 in the American ones), the titles in German were more often shortened or transformed and – as a rule – subject to both operations at once (which can be seen in three cases: *Das rote Kornfeld*, *Die Knoblauchrevolte*, *Der Überdruss*; only the title *Die Schnapsstadt* was altered without being shortened). These changes do not seem to depend on the translator, but are characteristic of translations into German. Modifications done by Goldblatt are admittedly more frequent, they are, however, on the one hand less radical (it suffices to compare the depth of changes in the pairs *The Garlic Ballads* and *Die Knoblauchrevolte* as well as *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* and *Der Überdruss*), and on the other hand – more justified (because aimed at either rendering the form itself or saving the allusion that the form evokes: as is the case in *The Republic of Wine*, *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, *Sandalwood Death* and *Pow!*). A common feature of the American and German translations is, nevertheless, an attempt to make the titles more colourful, stronger or even dramatic: cf. Germ. *Die Knoblauchrevolte* and *Der Überdruss* vs.

Engl. *Shifu*, *You'll Do Anything for a Laugh* and *Sandalwood Death*. On the whole, it seems that translated titles in both languages, or at least these particular examples, have to be concise and strong: at the same time unsentimental and laconic. What is intriguing in this context is only the considerable expansion of the title of the autobiography *Biàn: Wie sich das Blatt wendet : eine Erzählung aus meinem Leben* (which in English has its counterpart in the extension *a Novel of China* added to *Red Sorghum*). However, this inflated German title does share a strategic element with his naturalized 'compatriots': the degree of transformation – which in this case consists in lengthening the title rather than shortening it.

A different picture is presented by the Far Eastern languages (see Table 3), as well as French, which is close to German, at least geographically. Translations into this language, done by seven translators, and sometimes in pairs, are characterised by titles much more frequently rendered literally: out of the 12 analysed, 4 have been translated with maximum literalness, and 6 others more freely, but with greater precision of semantic transfer within modified parts of the titles, as compared to those in other languages. Thus, in *Le radis de cristal* the elsewhere (involuntarily?) modified radish was preserved (however, becoming a 'crystal' one, not simply 'transparent'); in *Le clan du sorgho* the 'clan' was saved, which outside France happened only in the Far East (at the same time, the colour of the cereal disappeared – as was also the fate of the radish a while ago); in *La mélopée de l'ail paradisiaque* exceptionally the 'paradise' was not cut out; in *Beaux seins, belles fesses: les enfants de la famille Shangguan* the 'buttocks' survived, which elsewhere can be seen only in the Japanese, Spanish and Russian translations (in exchange, the adjectives were aestheticised and a subtitle was added); and finally, in *Quarante et un coups de canon* – the 'cannons' have been carried over, strengthened with 'shoots'. Solely in the title *La femme au bouquet de fleurs* the French renditions do not depart from the modificational norm, set here by the Far Eastern translations. Ultimately, significant changes occurred only in two titles: *La dure loi du karma* and *Le Grand Chambard* ('big mess/uproar' instead of 'change'). Both cases are translations done by Chantal Chen-Andro (who, so far, rendered eight books by Mo Yan into French). Meanwhile, in those four title renditions for which the couple Noël and Liliane Dutrait are responsible, we always encounter at least a considerable equivalence: twice a maximum one, and twice partly an above average one (from the set presented here). Generally, even if some titles are translated into French equally freely as into German or English, the French solutions are – in the Dutraits' part – more faithful, more untypical and, as it seems, more individual. We can

assume that the Dutraits would have proposed less free versions of the titles than Chen-Andro did if they had translated 'her' books.

Generally, it seems that the Italians translate titles of Mo Yan's writings with a similar precision as the French – especially the main translator of his work into the language of the *Belpaese*, Patrizia Liberati. Unfortunately, the Italian research material is scarce: it comprises either titles so simple that they were almost always translated literally (as the above mentioned *Wā* and *Biàn*) or so complicated that they were nearly automatically strongly modified in translation (e.g. *Shēngsī píláo* – probably the most complicated case from the whole set). I will return to these translations later when discussing 'weakly-corpused' languages. Now, however, let us move entirely to the Far East.

16 Japanese :12		8 Korean :12		
1	<i>Tōmei-na <u>ninjin</u>.</i>	Fujii Shōzō	2 <i>Tomyeonghan <u>X salm</u>.</i>	I Gyeong-deon
	<i>Aka-i kōryan.</i>	Inokuchi Akira	<i>Beulg-eun susubat.</i> <i>Beulg-eun susubat.</i> <i>Hongkka-olyang gajog.</i>	Hong Hui Sim Hye-yeong Bag Myeong-ae
3	<i><u>XX Tendō kyōsōka</u>.</i>	Yoshida Tomio	1 <i>Ti-entang <u>ma-eul maneul-jong nolae</u>.</i>	Bag Myeong-ae
1	<i><u>Shukoku : tokusō kenji Jakku-no bōken</u>.</i>	Fujii Shōzō	<i>Sul-ui nala.</i>	Bag Myeong-ae
1	<i><u>Hanataba-o daku onna</u>.</i>	Fujii Shōzō	1 <i><u>Kkochdabal-eul an-eun yeoja</u>.</i>	I Gyeong-deon
	<i>Hōnyū hiden.</i>	Yoshida Tomio	2 <i><u>Pung-yubidun</u>.</i>	Bag Myeong-ae
5	<i><u>Shifuku-no toki</u>.</i>	Yoshida Tomio	<i>Sabunim-eun galsulog yumeoleo seuhaejinda.</i>	Im Hong-bin
	<i>Byakudan-no kei.</i>	Yoshida Tomio	<i>Tansyangsing.</i>	Bag Myeong-ae
	<i>Shijūippō.</i>	Yoshida Tomio	<i>Sasib-il po.</i>	Bag Myeong-ae
3	<i><u>Tensei muge</u>n.</i>	Yoshida Tomio	1 <i><u>Insaeng-eun X godalpa</u>.</i>	I Yeon-ug

<i>I</i>	<u><i>Amei.</i></u>	Yoshida Tomio	<i>Gaeguli.</i>	Sim Gyu-ho, Yu So-yeong
	<i>Hen.</i>	Nagahori Jūzō	<i>I</i> <u><i>Modu byeonhwahanda.</i></u>	Mun Hyeon-seon

Table 3. Comparison of the Japanese and Korean title versions

Table 3 presents a detailed analysis of the title translations in two Far Eastern languages: Japanese and Korean. The numbers in the left columns refer to ‘refractions’, i.e. disequivalencies, counted on the basis of semantic units in the original. The ‘refractions’ are underlined in the cited titles, also in the bibliography – so as to give the reader an idea of the extent of changes. These translations, almost as numerous as the French (all cases included), are often more precisely (or faithfully) rendered than in almost all other languages, apart from the Italian as well as Polish and Russian renditions. It may result above all from cultural and even linguistic proximity between Japanese or Korean and Chinese. Although both languages do not belong to the family that Mo Yan’s native tongue (Mandarin Chinese) belongs to, they remained for centuries under the influence of their mighty neighbour, which is more visible in Japanese due to the adoption of many Chinese characters (Jap. *kanji*), whereas in Korean it is manifested by the existence of many borrowings and the possibility of using selected characters (usually complementarily to the native writing). Proof of the former in the analysed titles is the fact that in as many as four of them, borrowings from Chinese appear: *Hongkka-olyang gajog* (Chin. *Hóng gāoliáng jiāzú*), *Pung-yubidun* (Chin. *Fēngrǔ féitún*) and *Tansyangsing* (Chin. *Tánxiāng xíng*), partly also *Ti-entang ma-eul maneuljong nolae* (Chin. *Tiāntáng suàntái zhī gē*). Not only because of these adoptions are the Korean translations of the titles of Mo Yan’s works more precise than the Japanese ones, as far as the ‘normal’ meaning is concerned. And although the number of the modified titles is only slightly lower (6 in kr vs. 7 in jp), the changes themselves are half as numerous and far less radical (or fancy) in Korean than in Japanese. Apart from a big change in *Tomyeonghan salm* (‘life’ instead of ‘red radish’) and a fairly substantial one in *Insaeng-eun godalpa* (again ‘life’, but this time for ‘life and death’), we encounter only minor alterations: *Pung-yubidun* (being a borrowing with a slightly different meaning) and *Modu byeonhwahanda* (‘everything changes’, and not ‘change[s]’), to which some still smaller interventions must be added – in *Kkochdabal-eul an-eun yeoja* and *Ti-entang ma-eul maneuljong nolae*. At the same time in the Japanese titles (which also contain some borrowings from Chinese)

we come across bigger alterations, introduced above all by the main translator, Yoshida Tomio. The major ones appear in *Tensei mugen* and *Amei*, a significant modification is also the extension of *Shukoku* with *tokusō kenji Jakku-no bōken* (which was another translator's initiative), a reduction combined with an addition in *Tendō kyō sōka* as well as sweeping changes (unnecessary and maybe even unfavourable) in *Shifuku-no toki*, for which the translators of the film are responsible. To this a minor change in *Hanataba-o daku onna* must be added (analogous with that in the Japanese rendition) and the seemingly small modification in *Tōmei-na ninjin*, resulting probably from the misunderstanding of the original, strange as it may seem. Arguably, the translator was deeply convinced it was a carrot that appeared in the title: the translation was reprinted 21 years later with the same title (it is because of the polysemy of the word meaning mainly 'carrot' that 'ginseng' appeared in the Korean title).

There is much less material (4 to 6 titles) in the case of direct renditions from other languages, which makes conclusions concerning the translators' strategies in the area of title translation less solid – especially when they are to be drawn on the basis of unproblematic cases. A separate issue is, moreover, the evaluation of titles based on the American translations, which in turn may be quite well-represented (up to 10 titles). We will leave these for the end, in order to look first at those less numerous translations, in search of similarities and differences.

Among the six Italian titles, invented by three translators, but mainly by Patrizia Liberati, very literal translations dominate, although they reflect cases that were not generally subject to modifications in other languages. The only refractions occur in the titles *Grande seno*, *fianchi larghi* and *Le sei reincarnazioni di Ximen Nao*, the former containing a typical attenuation, and the latter (which no doubt served as a model for the Swedish translator) being one big change in a title that was always altered in translation. On the whole, after reading an interview with said translator (cf. Liberati, 2012) it appears that even more problematic titles would be only exceptionally modified by her when rendering them in Italian.

Among the six Swedish translations, all but the last two (the simple *Wā* and *Biàn*) contain distinct changes, including the title of the novel based on the film – here with the radical removal of not only kaoliang but cereal. Then we have a modification likely modelled on the American *Vitlöksballaderna* (although the translation was done from the original), and subsequently a transformation

presumably based on the Italian invention: *Ximen Nao och hans sju liv*, followed by – employed by another translator – omission of the colour in *Den genomskinliga rättikan* (after correcting ‘carrot’ to ‘radish’). It does not seem accidental that each title contains modifications, as they stem from problematic cases. Basing on the interviews with the main Swedish translator, Anna Gustafsson Chen (cf. Gustafsson Chen 2012a-d), I am inclined to think that she would change every title as long as the result sounded good in Swedish.

A next group of titles translated directly from the original are the Polish ones – also six to date. The situation is similar to that of Italian: little material, titles which do not pose serious problems to the translator and their renditions are not unnecessarily made bizarre. The only refractions appear in three cases: *Kraina wódki* and *Obfite piersi, pełne biodra*, both translated by Katarzyna Kulpa, and *Bum!*, rendered by Agnieszka Walulik (Religa et al., 2014). It should be counted as a merit of the former translator that she broadly preserved ‘alcohol’ (rendering it as ‘whiskey’) and only slightly – but noticeably – shifted the neutral ‘land’ to the poetically marked *kraina* ‘realm, fairyland’ as well, she saved the adjective ‘abundant’ in the first half of the ‘anatomical’ title, despite the standard change of ‘fat buttocks’ into ‘full hips’. Here she used Goldblatt’s idea, creating a catchy and highly dynamic title. I think that the strategy of the first Polish translator does not differ considerably from that adopted by the main Italian translator – one could assume that other titles would be rendered by her without extravagance (though a bit atypically, as in both given cases).

The least numerous cases always translated from the original are the Russian editions – here, similarly as in Polish, the titles are rendered without extravagant refractions, though with a moving preservation of the word meaning ‘butt’ in the usually ‘culturalized’ title *Fēngrǔ fēitún* (modified for ethical-phraseological-phonetic reasons). In this respect the Russian translators seem similar to the Polish, Italian and certain French ones. It is worth noticing that all the translators into these languages are sinologists, which no doubt results in some sort of old-fashioned conservatism – and respect for the author’s vision, ultimately.²

² What should follow as a logical continuation – a discussion of results for relay translations – cannot appear in this article because of space limits. An inquisitive reader may compare the results in the bibliography.

6. Final remarks

What influences stronger the way of translating: nature or culture? What constitutes the frame, and what fills it? It could seem that it is culture that marks out the superordinate range, onto which the translator has to map his/her own range so that the fruits of his/her work be regarded as aligned with cultural norms. However, since those norms are not very restrictive (in practice reducible to obeying the rules of phraseological and stylistic correctness in the target language), the spectrum of the translator's activity is mainly determined by his/her nature: personality, psychophysical constitution or (in a narrower approach) temperament. Thus, what probably makes the biggest difference is innate or natural, though formed by culture. But since translation is, at least to some extent, a creative activity, it creates circumstances in which one's personality can be demonstrated – and perceived, if the act of interpersonal communication succeeds. Still, the translator should remember that his/her creative 'added value' should not overshadow the creative intention of the author, and the recipient should be able – at least in some cases – to compare the translation with the original or other translations. Apart from presenting a fascinating task for the translator, the title gives the most insight into an author's inner world.

Unfortunately – or simply naturally – the material presented above does not allow one to draw definite conclusions as to the cause (and authorship) of changes that have been introduced in existing Chinese titles. However, in spite of many riddles, some regularities are apparent. The largest and simultaneously first-hand collections, namely those in English, German, French, Japanese and Korean, as well as – albeit to a lesser extent – the Italian, Swedish and Polish corpora, offer certain insights. Most of them suggest the existence of a domestic 'modification norm' consenting to fairly substantial interferences in the titles (as is the case of English, German, Japanese and Swedish translations) or only small changes, as in Korean, Italian and Polish. However, the somewhat peculiar French corpus undermines the victory of culture (as represented by the norm) and stresses the importance of either preserving the author's vision of the title (as generally shown by the Dutraits team) or imposing the translator's vision, leaving an imprint on the title (as displayed by Chantal Chen-Andro). It is, therefore, *l'exception française* that perhaps does not confirm the rule but suggests that the individual (i.e. predominantly natural) factor in translation can strongly oppose the social (thus mainly cultural) one. Such 'extravagance' of the translator may often be the only way to defend the author's work.

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³ The underlined words are 'refractions' (i.e. semantic alterations) in the titles, so as to give the reader an idea of the extent of changes made by translators/editors.

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