



MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

Characteristics of Mo Yan`s language reflected in
translations of *Wa*

verfasst von / submitted by

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angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of

Master of Arts (MA)

Wien, 2017 / Vienna 2017

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme code as it appears on
the student record sheet:

A 066 811

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme as it appears on
the student record sheet:

Masterstudium Sinologie

Betreut von / Supervisor:

Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik

Acknowledgement

I would first like to express my sincere gratitude to my thesis supervisor Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik for the continuous support, motivation, advice and immense knowledge that helped me in all the time of research and writing of this thesis.

I would also like to acknowledge my friends as the second readers of this thesis, and I am gratefully indebted to them for their valuable comments.

Finally, I must express my very profound gratitude to my family for providing me with unfailing support and continuous encouragement throughout my years of study and through the process of researching and writing this thesis. This accomplishment would not have been possible without them.

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1. Introduction

Based on a statement of Andrew Chesterman from the book *Memes of Translation* that ‘a translator must have a theory of translation: to translate without a theory is to translate blind’ (Williams 2013: 13), a translation practice requires not only a proficiency in the source and the target language, but also theoretical knowledge. Translation theories, introduced in the first section, allow us to juxtapose the translation theories and the translation practice based on an analysis of *Frog* (*Wa* 蛙) written by Mo Yan 莫言 and translated by Howard Goldblatt, Martina Hasse and Patrizia Liberati. Because there is only one translator of *Frog* for each Western language, it is not possible to analyse more translations of *Frog* in the same language, therefore the thesis examines the English, German and Italian translations. Taking into consideration three different translators, we are able to observe their translation methods in practice and to conclude whether they choose a coherent approach toward the translated text or whether each translator employs a different method. The analysis focuses on determining the features of Mo Yan’s language style reflected in *Frog* and its translation into English, German and Italian.

An opening section of the thesis includes the Western and Chinese point of view on the translation theories and methods followed by the section devoted to the role of culture in the translation practice. Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere explain a culture’s importance in the translation practice as follows:

„A writer does not just write in a vacuum: he or she is the product of a particular culture, of a particular moment in time...” (Bassnett and Lefevere 1998: 136)

Apart from the culture, there are other factors that need to be considered, such as a translator’s role as well as a writer’s position. Origins of the translation practice lie in an oral interpretation that used to play a crucial role for business transactions in the past. In this case one often mentions the Italian word play – *traduttore* (interpreter) and *tradittore* (traitor) emphasizing the indispensable role of the translator (in this case referring to an interpreter) (Bassnett and Lefevere 1998: 14-15). Similarly, as the interpreter has in his hands the result of a successful business operation, the translators are responsible for the perception of Mo Yan’s literary works in other countries. According to Bassnett and Lefevere, the writer’s position determines the employed translation strategy:

„Writers and their work are translated differently when they are considered ‘classics’, when their work is recognised as ‘cultural capital’, and when they are not.” (Bassnett and Lefevere 1998: 109).

The next chapter is devoted to general introduction of Mo Yan, one of the most well-known Chinese authors in the West. The position of Mo Yan and his perception in the world is depicted from a Chinese as well as a Western point of view. Especially after winning the Nobel Prize in 2012, Mo Yan finds himself in the centre of international attention and the academic circles elaborate upon the legitimacy of him receiving the Nobel Prize for several reasons that are discussed in detail in individual sections based on the target language of the translators. A brief introduction of the title *Frog* is followed by a chapter devoted to the above-mentioned translators to acquire a complex overview of their professional skills and relation to Mo Yan and his works. The following chapter introduces the characteristics of Mo Yan`s language style and focuses on the translation theory and the methods used individually by each of the translators reflected in concrete examples from the novel *Frog*.

The last section leads to a conclusion concerning what type of methods are used in order to depict the characteristics of Mo Yan`s language style in the target language and culture. An analysis of the examples shows whether the translators follow a concrete translation theory in practice, employ similar translation methods or if there are visible distinctive features brought to the translations of *Frog* due to the diversified approach of the translators.

2. Translation theories

This chapter presents the translation theories creating a basis for the research of *Frog`s* translations. An introduction to the translation theories serves as a first step for determining whether the translators put emphasis on the theoretical background in their practice and if it corresponds and confirms the crucial role of the culture in the translation practice.

The study of translation as a discipline has undergone extensive research and one of the most influential linguists of this field is Eugen Nida¹. Nida distinguishes two types of equivalence –formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. The formal equivalence focuses on the source text, its form and its content. On the other hand, the dynamic equivalence concentrates on finding a suitable expression in the target language and its literal translation stays in the background, therefore it represents the dynamic relationship between the text and its recipient (Dekanová 2007: 124). Nida and Taber acknowledge the importance of reproducing the text through the closest possible equivalent in a natural way, regarding the style and meaning of the original, but Nida also emphasizes a concept of fidelity to the original because of the *Bible`s* translation - the text`s sacred characteristics do not allow any significant diversions from the original (Nida and Taber 1982: 13). Taking into consideration the translations of literary works, the concept of the fidelity to the original is not as firm as in the case of the sacred texts. Nida in his work *Language, Culture, Translation* further develops the concept of the dynamic equivalence and concentrates on the role of the culture in the translation. He maintains that the role of a culture in the translation is as important as the role of a language, because the language represents a tool that enables a transfer of the source culture into the target culture (Bai 2000: 9).

Regarding the usage of the translation theories evolved in the West for the translations from the Chinese language, there are several Chinese linguists that underline the importance of developing a theory based on the special requirements of Chinese, because they maintain that aspects such as a different way of thinking, the historical and cultural background do not allow them to thoroughly employ the Western translation theories (Pellatt et al. 2014: 3). Apart from that, another obstacle is represented by an abstractness of the Western theories concentrating on the reader`s response. The Chinese theories are inclined to interpret the

¹ E. Nida employs his theory in the Bible translation, for further reading on translation theories by E. Nida and Ch. Taber: *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (1969), E. Nida: *Toward a Science of Translating* (1964)

author's idea without any interference of the original text composition and they put emphasis on the translation's fidelity to the original (Luo and Lei 2004: 25-27). On the other hand, there are Chinese scholars that highly appraise the translation theories from the West. Nida's *dynamic equivalence* theory comes to the foreground and it becomes one of the most quoted theories among the Chinese scholars and it is often juxtaposed to the Chinese theories. As a result, the former primary focus on the text of the original shifts to the translation's communicativeness which takes the readers into consideration. The popularity of Nida's translation theory also arises from its applicable methodological similarities with the Chinese theories. The Chinese scholars frequently compare it with the well-known theories developed by Yan Fu 严复² or Qian Zhongshu 钱钟书³ underlining the pragmatic and practical aspects that they have in common (Li 2010: 290-293).

Chinese as well as Western scholars admit the importance of other fields that play an important role in the translation process and as mentioned in the previous section, Nida already takes into consideration the culture's importance in the translation process. Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, experts on comparative studies and literature, introduce a theory in a publication *Constructing Cultures* that stresses the importance of culture and it is often regarded as a turning point in translatology. According to Bassnett and Lefevere, the focus shifts from universal standards of the translation to the target language and its culture, because they significantly influence the result of the translation.⁴

² Despite the fact that Yan Fu's translation theory appears in 1889, it maintains its influential position in the modern period as well. It is composed of three pillars – faithfulness (xin 信), expressiveness (da 达) and elegance (ya 雅). Dong Qiusi 董秋斯 in *On Construction of Translation Theory* (Lun fanyi lilun de jianshe 论翻译理论的建设) proposes in his theory that the translatology need to be enriched by other fields and there are several objective factors that come to play in the translation process. Following this proposal, the theories are enriched by including study fields such as linguistics or pragmatics (Luo and Lei 2004: 25-27).

³ In comparison to Nida, the dynamical aspect of the translation theory also introduces Qian Zhongshu in the *theory of sublimity* (*hua jing lilun* 化境理论). It is based on the form variation, but emphasizes the maintenance of writing style and work's content together with the smoothness in the target language. In this case is sublimity perceived as a dynamic term and refers to the wide scale of the translator's choices. The focus of the *theory of sublimity* lies on overcoming the boundaries between the languages and bringing the original idea to the readers (Yu 2006: 216-217).

⁴ Marinetti, Cristina. "Cultural approaches." Accessed on October 20, 2016, p. 26.
http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/currentstudents/pg/masters/modules/translationstud/marinetti_cultural_approach.pdf

The ‘cultural turn’ in the translation studies offers a significant direction for its further development, starting in the year 1990, when Bassnett and Lefevere publish the compilation of essays *Translation, History, and Culture*. They propose a change in the perception of the text and its understanding in the frame of literary and extra-literary factors originated in both cultures. According to Bassnett and Lefevere, the translation theory does not only focus on the text of the original, but it also studies an interaction between the cultures. Bassnett and Lefevere maintain that the translated texts are a valuable source for mapping the cultural interaction and they introduce three models for the research of translations – the Horatian, the Jerome and the Schleiermacher model that are helpful for undertaking a complex investigation of a translated text (Gentzler 1998: XI-XIII).

This shift in translation studies allows us to observe an actual role of the target culture and the range of its influence on the translation (Gentzler 1998: XVII). The Jerome model, named after Saint Jerome (331-420 AD), emphasizes the faithfulness to the original that is guaranteed by using equivalents found in dictionaries. The Jerome model focuses on sacred texts that need to be reproduced with a high level of fidelity to the original. Because of the fact that it is impossible to achieve a universal fidelity, the Jerome model limits the consideration of the equivalence to a linguistic level. It depicts the former rigid perception of equivalence based on a word for word translation practice. The notion of equivalence evolves simultaneously with the theories in the modern period of translation studies and the choice of a suitable equivalent becomes a translator’s free decision. The faithfulness is also measured differently taking into consideration the purpose of the text’s creation and the target readers. The Horace model, named after poet Horace (65-8 BC), prefers the faithfulness toward a privileged language, for instance in the past used during business negotiations (necessity to influence the result by editing the translated content in order to achieve an expected effect). Lefevere maintains that this model is applicable for the current dominant position of English in the translation studies, because it is comparable with the prevailing position of Latin at that time. The Horace model also reflects the variability of the translation strategies corresponding to the text’s requirements and its ‘textual grid’ (Bassnett and Lefevere 1998: 2-4). Lefevere explains a practical usage of the Horace model for the translation analysis as follows:

„...the Horace model helps us to ask the fundamental questions in the analysis of translations, questions that deal with the relative power and prestige of cultures, with matters of dominance, submission, and resistance.” (Bassnett and Lefevere 1998: 8)

The Schleiermacher model developed by Friedrich Schleiermacher emphasizes the importance of a foreignization in the translation. He argues that the readers ought to be able to recognize the source language according to the foreign features maintained in the text (Bassnett and Lefevere 1998: 7-8). A diversity of the three models allows us to employ them for various types of the translated texts, because they cover different translation methods and the translation objectives.

Apart from the above-mentioned models, Bassnett and Lefevere employ the term 'textual grids' for the first time implied by Pierre Bourdieu (Gentzler 1998: XIII). The 'textual grids' represent a pattern of literary forms that vary in different cultures and their better understanding increases the quality of the translation. The 'textual grids' are helpful for acquiring translation techniques as well as for a translation analysis, because the 'textual grids' also reflect the culture's development (Bassnett and Lefevere 1998: 5).

Lawrence Venuti further evolves the methodological shift in the translation theories proposed by Bassnett and Lefevere and in his work *The translator's invisibility: A History of Translation* (1995), he argues that the translator always has the choice regarding a diversity of translation methods. Two antipodes are represented by the text's domestication and foreignization. The result of a text domestication is an impression that the text we read is an original, not a translation. On the other hand, the opposite impression is evoked by a foreignization (Williams 2013: 97-98). The gradual development of the theories in the modern period of the translation studies indicates a transformation in the perception of a translated text that shifts from the original to the translation.

Venuti emphasizes a leading position of the translator and he maintains that the translator is eligible to transform the original by expressing a certain degree of creativity and to not only be an invisible figure as the title of Venuti's publication indicates (Bassnett and Lefevere 1998: 25). Ever since there have been translation theories, there has been a long-lasting dispute about the translation's fidelity to the original. The translation's faithfulness is generally perceived from two angles – either the translator respects the original as much as possible and introduces distinctive features of the source language and its culture, or makes the original understandable for the target audience by adopting it to the target language and its culture (Gutt 1998: 50).

The first section devoted to translation theories reflects a transformation of translation theories and the perception of translation. The theories serve as pillars for the translators

during the whole translation process. The former stage of perceiving word for word translation as an equivalent of the faithfulness changes in the modern translation practice when it is acceptable to employ creative techniques and the translation becomes a dynamic process connecting several fields. Thanks to the fact that the scholars admit the importance of the culture in the translation process and the study of the 'textual grids' enable us to reveal the important factors hidden in the translation.

2.1. Translation methods

Translation methods represent concrete options for a realization of the translation. The following section opens up with a classification of translation methods from the Western as well as the Chinese point of view. A type of the translated text represents a distinctive factor when selecting the most suitable translation method. Generally, the maintenance of the text's communicativeness and a transfer of the author's original idea are more welcomed in the literary texts, whereas the technical texts put emphasis on a correct translation of specific terms and their most accurate translation is a necessity. A simple description of a good translation by Gill Paul:

„...good translation sings, and displays a rhythm that not only reflects the original text's origin but also beats to a new drum.“ (Paul 2009: 1-2)

Taking into consideration the translators' different way of understanding the source text, it is impossible to create a universal translation method applicable for all difficulties that the translator has to face. Apart from that, each translator prefers different language nuances and metaphors for interpreting original expressions, therefore they are often rendered with non-identical connotations in the target language, but the globalisation era slightly simplifies the translation process, because the readers become more familiar with previously unknown aspects of various cultures (Paul 2009: 2-3). The degree of the text's assimilation or accommodation depends on various factors such as the personal preference of the translator, the capabilities of the translator to communicate the chosen work to the target audience or the strength of the connection to the culture of origin.

Translation in Practice is a handbook that briefly summarizes the major attributes of a translated text. A good translation preserves the artistic qualities of the original while at the

same time it also overcomes the cultural differences. A scope of the translation that shall be achieved by every translator is to evoke the same impression in the readers of both cultures (source and target language) while avoiding to create any unclear parts either on a linguistic or on a literary level (Paul 2009: 1).

The translation is a constant choice-making process trying to maintain the balance between the author's narrative style and searching for a suitable way as to how to transfer the original intention into the target language. Apart from that, the translation practice also enriches the original by employing creative techniques. The translator has to carefully reorganize the text or the substituted parts and at the same time the readers ought to be able to recognize a foreign flavour of the text, because the translator cannot thoroughly bleach the foreignizing features present in the original (Paul 2009: 57). In order to more easily draw conclusions on the used translation methods in the analysis part, this chapter introduces several classifications of the translation techniques that display different angles of the translated text.

Juraj Dolník maintains that the first step of the translation process is to find a balance between the two fundamental methods – the assimilation and accommodation of the translated text. The text's assimilation and accommodation develop simultaneously and they are characterized by a dual expression: a translational creation and a translational transposition. The former regulates the presence of the elements from the source text, whereas the latter is responsible for the enrichment of the target language. Their proportion is determined by the reception capabilities of the target audience that to a certain extent is able to accept the specific features of the original. The gradual transition from the accommodation to the assimilation determines the four basic types of the translation: a literal translation, a grammatical translation, a philological translation and a communicative translation. Dolník perceives the translational transposition as a primary action of the translation in order to transfer the expression to the new sphere of its usage. There is also a psychological correlation, because the translational transposition is a groundwork of the translator's mental activity. On the other hand, the translational creation is responsible for a neutralization of the text in order to ensure its communicativeness on behalf of the readers (Dolník 2007: 47-49).

Otto Kade also distinguishes four categories – total equivalence (an expression transferred completely in the same manner, possessing the same meaning, usually applied for technical or scientific terms), optional equivalence (the option to choose a term in the target language

depending on the context), approximate equivalence (if the term of the source language loses the part of its meaning in the target language, in the case of Chinese e.g. *tian* 天 related to the weather, day, sky or heaven and other based on the context and the combination of the characters) and zero equivalence (there aren't any acknowledged terms for the expressions in the source language) (Williams 2013: 34).

Based on the characteristics of the Chinese language, Bai Jingyu 白靖宇 summarizes the main translation methods as follows: a direct translation method (*zhi yi fa* 直译法) that concentrates on the original meaning of the source text without changing the construction of the expressions, if possible. A transfer method (*zhuanhuan fa* 转换法) is characterized by finding a suitable equivalent as a result of a non-identical historical and cultural background, customs and other distinctive aspects (e.g. *li da ru niu* 力大如牛 meaning – as strong as horse). The transfer method changes the original literal meaning of the character *niu* 牛 (an ox) to horse. The historical background makes sure that the English-speaking readers identify more easily with the comparison strong as horse. The saying using the ox in Chinese is related to the fact that an animal used for the hard labor in the past is the ox, whereas in England it used to be a horse. The third method – translation with annotation (*yi zhu fa* 译注法) is characterized by direct insertions in the text, a usage of the footnotes or a glossary at the end of the text. An advantage of this method lies in introducing new terms from the source language. The fourth method is based on translating the general meaning of the original (*yi yi fa* 意译法). It is suitable for overcoming the differences between the languages and cultures, in case that it is not possible to express an original meaning in a way that the target reader will understand it without any problems (Bai 2000: 12-21). As Ros Schwartz explains, the expressions without an equivalent in the target language and the incomprehensible direct translations require an additional glossary or footnotes. The glossary at the end of the text interferes less with it and allows the translator to use the original terms. The implementation of these terms not only increases the text's comprehensibility, but also enriches the target language. Taking into consideration the translation of literary works, either the explanations inserted in the text or the glossaries are preferred to the footnotes, because they do not interfere with a natural flow of the text (Paul 2009: 51). The last method is characterized by a translation based on phonetics (*yin yi fa* 音译法) that also enriches the target language and introduces new expressions, but compared to the previous method, it transfers their original forms, therefore it is necessary to include

an additional explanation (e.g. the usage of the expression Judas kiss – youda zhi wen 犹大之吻 requires the additional explanation in Chinese) (Bai 2000: 12-21).

The recent research in the translation studies has shifted its perception of the translated text and there are research methods that perceive it as a unit deeply rooted in the source culture, therefore the translation theory exceeds the boundaries of several disciplines and is not only an interdisciplinary, but also a multidisciplinary research – taking into consideration linguistics, literary disciplines and cultural aspects (Suwara 2009: 31). The translation process is an activity combining several aspects that are further developed in the following sections. Bassnet and Lefevere maintain that:

„The problems of decoding a text for a translator involve so much more than language, despite the fact that the basis of any written text *is* its language.” (Bassnett and Lefevere 1998: 137)

These typologies of the translation methods reflect the possible ways of approaching the original text. The selection of the translation method is influenced by several factors including the text type, the most suitable correspondence with the target culture and the personal preference of the translator. It is possible that the analysis of *Wa* and its translations displays diverse prevailing translation methods because of the individual approach of the translators toward the original combined with other factors that come into play as explained in the following chapters.

2.2. Role of translator and author

Apart from the translation theories and the translation methods, the translator`s approach and the position of the author also have an influence on the translation process and these factors need to be taken into consideration as well. The roles of the translator and the writer are characterized in the following section.

A translator is perceived as a mediator between the languages and the cultures. An optimisation of the translation is determined by the translator`s ability to understand the author`s individual mentality that partially reflects the mentality of a different culture and the knowledge of the culture's algorithms (Dekanová 2007: 125). The translator as a carrier of the source culture is responsible for introducing it to the target audience. In order to fulfil

this role, it is necessary to possess extensive knowledge of the various fields and to cross the boundaries between the languages, cultures and societies. The translation analysis is composed of a complex understanding of the translator`s diverse roles including professional ethics, therefore the translation`s quality cannot be evaluated solely according to the translator`s linguistic and literary techniques (Torop 2011: 22-23). As Peeter Torop expresses:

„One of the missions of translators is to increase the receptivity and dialogic capability of their culture, and through this, also the internal variety of that culture. As mediators between languages, translators are important creators of new metalanguages.” (Torop 2011: 22)

Regarding the source culture and the source language, the translator is responsible for the ‘culture reappearance’ maintaining distinctive features in the translation instead of replacing them with neutral or familiar expressions from the target language (Bai 2000: 9). Martin Riker also points out that strong linguistic expressions characteristic for the author are often unconsciously erased and substituted by neutral expressions in the translation. Colloquial expressions also represent an uneasy task for the translator, because they are a vivid part of the language and they usually do not have any acknowledged equivalent in the target language, therefore it is necessary to have a highly developed sense for correctly understanding the dialects and the colloquial expressions of the source language. Apart from the dialects, another difficulty is represented by grasping the author`s sense of humour and the jokes` translation. It is important to understand them perfectly in the first place and to enlighten them from the original in the second step in order to create their comprehensive version in the target language, because the direct translation methods do not fulfil this criterion (Paul 2009: 46-49).

The essential requirement for understanding the translator`s work, is to include the features that play an important role in the translation process represented by psychological as well as ideological aspects, because they are a result of the whole set of activities – cultural, linguistic, economic or ideological. Taking into consideration these aspects, the translator`s work becomes more transparent and comprehensible (Torop 2011: 25).

Apart from the translator`s influence, also other factors become more visible when comparing at least two versions of the same original. These factors are represented by the extralinguistic factors, the language norms together with the target audience (House 1998: 63). Because of the fact, that there are not two different translations of the same literary work

by Mo Yan available in the same target language, the analysis concentrates on the translations undertaken by the translators with a different nationality and mother tongue.

Apart from the translator's role, a perception of the author also influences the translation's result. Iona Popa argues that the author's interaction with another culture is carried out against an ideological and a political background. There are two main categorizations of the authors – there are either the official, authorized writers or the exiled and banned writers. These categories determine to some extent the translator's approach toward the text as well as the channel used for its popularization (Popa 2006: 206). Taking into consideration Mo Yan's position, he represents an officially authorized writer publishing the works with an approval of the Chinese government and he holds the position of vice-president of the Chinese Writers Association (Zhongguo Zuojia Xiehui 中国作家协会).⁵ In recent years, there are several occasions, including the announcement of the Nobel Prize in 2012, that have impact on the perception of Mo Yan in China as well as abroad. A closer description of the circumstances that influence Mo Yan's position is introduced in the chapter devoted to Mo Yan according to the country of origin of the translators of *Wa*.

The research question of the thesis concentrates on the usage of the translation theories and the methods by three different translators. The research hypothesis presupposes that due to the diversity of the translators' mother tongues, the target culture audience, the different translation practice, the translators' personalized preference and their relation to the author, the section analyzing the translation of *Wa* reveals three different translation approaches derived from the models introduced in the second chapter devoted to translation theories. Following the translation pattern of the Jerome model, the translator employs direct translation methods focusing on the transfer of the text's original meaning. The second Horace model puts emphasis on the dominant culture in the translation and favors a wide variety of translation methods from assimilation to accommodation adjusting the content of the original. The third Schleiermacher model is chosen by a translator willing to leave the marks indicating the source culture and supports the foreignization of the text. Thanks to these models, we are able to observe the cultural interaction in practice. The determination of the translation methods according to their classification simplifies the analysis and enables

⁵ Link, Perry. "Does This Writer Deserve the Prize?." In *The New York Review of Books*, last modified December 6, 2012, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2012/12/06/mo-yan-nobel-prize/>.

us to display the possible coherence or incoherence of the translation theories in the case of each translator.

3. Culture in translation

The translation process is directly linked to the language and the culture represents its inseparable part. The following chapter is devoted to the characterization of the culture and its significance within the translation process. Edward Burnett Tylor defines the term culture as follows:

„Culture, or civilisation taken in its broad, ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” (Liu 2012: 2357)

Taking into consideration the term culture, it is necessary to understand it from a broader point of view including the way of life, the ethics, the political regime as well as the description and country`s realia (Gullerová 2006: 219). Culture is composed of categories such as material culture (including the manufactured products), institutional culture (including the systems and their theories, e. g. social systems, religious systems or educational systems) and mental culture (summarizing the thought patterns, behavior, beliefs or values of the people). The language as an inseparable part of the culture coexists within all the three divisions of the culture and supports their development. The differences between two languages and cultures become more distinct when comparing these categories. A better understanding of these differences enables the translator to detect the problems caused by a cultural gap (Shi 2007: 93). The cultural gap is represented by diverse connotations of objects and their characteristics among the cultures and the languages. The level of the distinctiveness between them determines the level of the text`s (un)translatability (Cui 2012: 828).

„Culture operates largely through translational activity, since only by the inclusion of new texts can the culture undergo innovation as well as perceive its own specificity.” (Torop 2011: 25)

A cultural transfer (introduction of the foreign elements in the target culture) is an inseparable part of the intercultural communication in the translation and serves to overcome communication barriers. Because of the fact that the language does not evolve in a vacuum and that it reflects the political and historical development as well as the development of the society. A sensible choice of an equivalent supports the text`s comprehensibility and the main aim of the translation is to create a text that has the same connotation as the original (Trizuliak 2006: 331-332).

According to Ján Vilikovsky, the readers are exposed to material, language and culture-contextual characteristics of the source culture. The material characteristics are related to the names of the institutions, descriptions of the national colouring and the social habitus. The language characteristics represent the names, the form of addressing people, slang, colloquial expressions and dialects. The culture-contextual characteristics are represented by the literary tradition composed of stylistics and text construction together with the various allusions embedded in that particular culture (Horváthová 2007: 433). The translation's problem-solving proceeds on a contextual and linguistic level. The well-developed translation skills are a prerequisite for decoding problematic passages on the linguistic level, whereas the contextual and culture-based difficulties in translation require the translator's background knowledge. In the latter case, the translator has to keep in mind the extent of his influence on the translated text. A mistaken understanding of the original text in the first place leads to the false translation and consequently fails to communicate the readers the original author's idea. The author aims his work at an audience that possesses the necessary background knowledge and understands the specific features of the source culture. The crucial role of the translator lies in maintaining the same level of the communicativeness of the translation and the original (Gutt 1998: 50-52).

Translation is a cross-linguistic sociocultural practice, in which a text in one language is replaced by a functionally equivalent text in another. The fundamental characteristic of a translation is therefore that it is a text that is doubly bound: on the one hand to a text in the source language, the 'source text' or the original and, on the other hand, to the communicative-linguistic conditions holding in the culture to which the addressees belong. (House 1998: 63)

Based on the modern translation methods, translatoologists consider the text as closely related to culture and they underline the culture's key position for a correct interpretation of the original. Apart from other aspects, the language is one of the first signs of the cultural incoherence transmitting the information between the cultures. Not only the difference between the languages, but also the difference between the cultures influence the level of the translation's difficulty, therefore the translator has to carefully select the most suitable translation method in order to achieve the text's comprehensiveness.

3.1. Translating Chinese

The translation practice related to the Chinese language is influenced by several specific characteristics caused by the difference between Chinese and Western languages together with the cultural aspects including the presence of various allusions on other literary works and expressions originating in mythology, religion or philosophy. Apart from that, from the etymological point of view, the Chinese language belongs to the Sino-Tibetan languages while English, German or Italian belong to the Indo-European language group (Cui 2012: 826).

One of the difficulties of the translation from Chinese is often rooted in the languages' phonological distinction – the usage of homophonic morphemes with a different meaning is a common phenomenon present in the Chinese literary practice, but it is difficult to find a similar phenomenon in western languages (Cui 2012: 826). Mo Yan also employs homophony in *Frog*. The homophony is represented by the following characters – the title of the book *Frog* 蛙 coincides with an onomatopoeia 哇 that is either used for babies' crying or croaking of the frogs. The homophonic similarity of these characters is important for perceiving the hidden meaning of the novel's title. It is embodied in a scene when the main character Gugu 姑姑 is being chased by the frogs, therefore a metaphorical title of the novel can be perceived as allusion to the cry of the unborn babies.⁶ There are two other characters with the homophonic reading *wa* that are used repeatedly in the novel, the first one means baby 娃, but is read in a different tone and the second one is 娲 used in the name of the goddess Nüwa 女娲. Mo Yan implies a relationship between the meaning of the character for the frog and the goddess Nüwa that creates mankind and draws the conclusion that there are visual similarities between human embryos and tadpoles (Ji 2014: 102). The metaphorical meaning of the book's title indicates the significant role of the author's decision-making process by its selection. The ambiguity of the Chinese characters allows Mo Yan to evoke diverse connotations of one expression at the same time. On the other hand, the homophony represents one of the biggest difficulties for the translators in order to interpret this ambiguity in the Western languages.

⁶ Bram, Barclay. "Literary Prowess Lost: On Mo Yan's 'Frog' and the Trouble with Translation." Last modified March 26, 2015. <http://www.themillions.com/2015/03/literary-prowess-lost-on-mo-yans-frog-and-the-trouble-with-translation.html>.

Apart from the homophony, the ideographic character of the Chinese language is another distinctive feature in comparison to the Western languages. Simple examples of the ideographic character of the morphemes in the Chinese language are ren 人 (person) resembling a walking person or san 伞 (umbrella) resembling an open umbrella. The translation process often limits the transfer of these vivid images into the target language and its principal focus lies on the word's semantic meaning. Many abstract expressions are also composed of these images, for instance shou mang jiao luan 手忙脚乱 describing *a person hastily doing something* (Shi 2007: 93-94). Despite the fact that the translation of the expression is correct, it partially weakens the imaginative meaning of the Chinese characters.

In some cases, the literal translation is able to transfer the expression's figurative meaning as well as its original image. It is also possible to translate only the figurative meaning of the original expression supplemented by a different image (e.g. yi pin ru xi 一贫如洗 translated as *as poor as a church mouse*). There are some idioms that might seem identical at first sight, but their meaning in the languages differs. Despite the fact that their literal translation is possible, it results in a complete change of their meaning, as in shi yan 食言 to *break one's promise*. On the other hand, the literal translation in English as *eating one's words* has a completely different meaning: to *admit one's mistake*, therefore it is important to be aware of this kind of differences, otherwise the original meaning of the text becomes incomprehensible (Liu 2012: 2359-2361). The allusions to traditional literature, well-known quotations and chengyu 成语 (expressions composed of four characters) represent an obstacle in the translation process, because they are deeply rooted in the source culture and usually require an additional explanation (Bai 2000: 38-42).

A specific feature of Chinese is also represented by numerous words addressing family members. As a consequence of the cultural habitus, they are divided into two groups distinguishing the family members from the man's and woman's side, because the family members from the men's side are considered to be the core family members, whereas the members from the woman's side are seen as the more distant ones. This distinction is foreign to the majority of Western cultures and there are basically no differences in naming family members (Bai 2000: 3-4). In this case, one of the possibilities to explicitly state the family relations is the usage of paternal or maternal side in order to maintain the same degree of the expressiveness.

An interesting aspect of the cultural differences is represented by the translation of colours with a different significance. The black colour has a similar meaning in the Western as well as the Chinese culture and indicates something negative or illegal, but a white or a red colour has a different meaning in comparison to Western cultures. The red colour stands for happiness or joy and the traditional bridal dress in ancient China used to be red as well (Bai 2000: 27-32). Apart from the general meaning of red, the literal translation of black tea in Chinese is rendered as hong cha 红茶 (red tea) just like brown sugar hong tang 红糖 (red sugar) (Cui 2012: 828). Take into consideration that the colour white has an opposite meaning – it indicates death and misfortune in China, whereas it holds a positive connotation in the West, referring to purity and innocence (Bai 2000: 27-32).

Mo Yan also employs colours to a great extent and he transforms their original connotation. The colours and their symbolism are rooted in the source culture and they are able to convey a hidden meaning. Apart from that, they also support descriptions of environment, appearance, characters and psychological aspects. For instance, Mo Yan depicts a sorrowful atmosphere with a red colour despite the fact that red has a positive connotation as mentioned in the previous section. He also changes the original connotation of the colour green prevalently symbolizing youth, vitality or wisdom and assigns it the opposite meaning such as disaster, death or other negative aspects (Qiu and Nan 2012: 65).

Not only the colours, but also the animals have different connotations and some of them are even completely foreign to a Western audience. For instance, the dragon and the fenix play a significant role in the Chinese culture (Bai 2000: 63-66). The Chinese perceive a dragon (long 龙) as a sign of fortune and power, while in the West a dragon represents cruelty and something evil. Because of that a correct understanding of the whole expression is necessary for the translation of terms such as wang zi cheng long 望子成龙 referring to *the success of one's child* (Cui 2012: 828-830). We also find several examples referring to the above-mentioned animals in Mo Yan's novel *Frog* possessing a positive connotation:

飞行员是人中龙凤 (Mo 2009: 37)

An airman is a dragon among men. (Mo 2014: 43)

Unsere Jetpiloten...sind die Drachen und Phönixe unter den Menschen, (Mo 2013a: 56)

I piloti sono i draghi e le fenici tra gli uomini. (Mo 2013b: 47)

Based on the example, we observe that all the translators used a direct translation method in order to transfer the original meaning of the expression depicting a comparison through an

image of the dragon and the phoenix, only the English translation unifies the comparison by translating only dragons and omitting the phoenix.

这那里是酒，就是龙涎凤血，也值不了这么多钱啊！ (Mo 2009: 40)

That`s not a liquor. Dragon slobber and phoenix blood aren`t worth that much. (Mo 2014: 46)

So viel darf doch Schnaps nicht kosten! Selbst das Blut von Phönix und Drache ist nie im Leben so viel Geld wert. (Mo 2013a: 60)

Non è un liquore! Nemmeno se fosse saliva di drago o sangue di fenice costerebbe così tanto! (Mo 2013b: 51)

In the next example Mo Yan also employs the dragon and the phoenix to emphasize rareness and expensiveness. The English and Italian translations use the direct method in order to express the whole sentence precisely. On the other hand, the German translation simplifies the comparison and omits the word referring to the saliva of the phoenix and limits it to the blood.

Thanks to the borrowing or transliteration, the target languages are also enriched by various new terms – there are already some Chinese terms in use that are well-known and do not require any additional explanation: taijiquan 太极拳 (system of physical exercises) or kang 炕 (heated brick bed) (Cui 2012: 828-830). The novel *Frog* also confirms this, when we take the following two examples into consideration:

初二日晚上在我家炕头上 (Mo 2009: 3)

On the night of the second, when we were talking as we sat on the kang at my house (Mo 2014: 3)

Il secondo giorno dell`anno lunare, quando seduti sul «kang» (Mo 2013b: 6)

None of the translators makes an additional reference toward the word *kang*, but the German translation leaves out the whole above-mentioned section. The translators are either convinced that the readers are aware of its meaning or they let the readers guess its meaning based on the context and find a reference in other sources through a contextual reading.

太极拳 (Mo 2009: 334)

Tai Chi (Mo 2014: 372)

Schattenboxen (Mo 2013a: 476)

Il taijiquan (Mo 2013b: 382)

Despite the fact that *taijiquan* is an established expression in the language registers of the Western languages, its phonetical transcription varies and because of that, the translators employ different methods for its interpretation. The Italian translation employs the pinyin in order to offer the reader the most accurate translation, whereas the English translation concentrates on the transcription with the closest pronunciation toward the original based on English and the German translation uses its translated descriptive name.

A calque – the semantic translation done by word for word translation, emphasizes the source language and similarly as transliteration, also enriches the target language (e.g. hot dog as *re gou* 热狗 or paper tiger as 纸老虎). Paraphrasing is another possibility to employ that is perceived as an extended version of a synonym implied for the whole expression, such as *yi long yi zhu* 一龙一猪 (lit. translated as one dragon, one pig). In case of the paraphrase, the translation might be *one is capable, while the other incompetent* (Cui 2012: 828-830).

The adaptation can also cause the neutralization of the expression in the target language. Bai translates *jiaozi* 饺子 as dumplings in English for example. The difficulty of the translation is caused by the fact that *jiaozi* loses the original meaning in English hidden in the expression that becomes neutral. *Jiaozi* are related to the traditional celebration of the Chinese New Year and their form is also different (Bai 2000: 5-6).

饺子 (Mo 2009: 194)

Dumplings (Mo 2014: 220)

Teigtäschchen (Mo 2013a: 275)

Jiaozi (Mo 2013b: 225)

As mentioned in the previous section, this example confirms the translation strategy applicable for English inclining to the term dumplings. Comparable to the previous example, the German translation uses the descriptive term in order to translate it and the Italian translation concentrates on the fidelity to the original by using the pinyin transcription.

蒸馒头炒菜煮面条 (Mo 2009: 86)

Steaming buns, stir frying vegetables, boiling noodles (Mo 2014: 99)

Dampfnudeln, Nudeln und alle mögliche Gerichte wurden zubereitet (Mo 2013a: 127)

Cuocevano mantou al vapore, si saltavano pietanze, si bollivano spaghetti (Mo 2013b: 105)

Another example introduces various types of meals that are translated through the descriptive method in English and partially also in German, but the description is less precise

in comparison to English. In Italian, we observe a combination of the descriptive and directly translated terms together with the domestifying translation of noodles as spaghetti.

Regarding the geographical names, there are generally three main strategies for translating them – the first one is based on the meaning of the expression and the phonetic maintenance (e.g. Beijing shi 北京市 as Beijing municipality), the second maintains the sound and translates the expression too (e.g. Chang jiang 长江 as Changjiang River) and the last one is based on the translation of the whole expression's meaning (e.g. Nanhai 南海 South China Sea) (Bai 2000: 162).

The presence of various abbreviations is also common in Chinese. They are related to political and cultural movements or social institutions and they often require the additional explanation when translating them into Western languages, otherwise they become incomprehensible because of the lack of information (e.g. san ge daibiao 三个代表 translated as *the three represents* is insufficient without an explanation; the term introduced by Jiang Zemin 江泽民 in 2002 referring to the economic production, advanced culture and the political consensus defending the interests of the Chinese people) (Harman 2006: 18-19).

In some cases, certain fixed expressions in Chinese have their equivalent in English, because both cultures are aware of this phenomenon (e.g. ru ri zhongtian 如日中天 literary translated as like the sun at high noon, used when referring to one's career achievements) and the additional explanation is not required. From the grammatical point of view, measuring words in Chinese implying the shape of the object are another specific feature unknown in the frame of the Western languages (e.g. yi zhang zhaopian 一张照片 for the photograph, yi pi ma 一匹马 for the horse, yi ben shu 一本书 for the book, yi zhi bi 一支笔 for the pen and others). There are mainly definite and indefinite articles available that are partially able to fulfil this role, but their usage depends on the context, because originally they do not exist in Chinese just like the plural of the substantives that is rarely used in Chinese. From the grammatical point of view, the structure of a Chinese sentence and its compounds is less distinct than in English or other Western languages as a result of the indistinctive categorization of the words in Chinese (Shi 2007: 94-95).

The summary of the general problems related to the translation from Chinese displays the difficulties based on the semantic meaning of the expressions and different grammar rules in comparison to the Western languages. Taking into consideration the translation of a

literary work, this type of translation also requires the translator`s creative skills in order to compose a text that is comprehensible and fulfils the aesthetic prerequisites as well.

4. Mo Yan 莫言

Guan Moye 管谟业, known as Mo Yan – *one who does not want to talk* – chose his pen name, because he used to love chatting too much as a child.⁷ Mo Yan further explains, there is another reason for choosing his pen name – because of the fact that he grew up during the Cultural Revolution, a period when people had to pay attention to their every word in order not to get into trouble.⁸ As Maria Rita Masci describes Mo Yan:

È una figura molto autorevole: paradossalmente, lo "scrittore che non parla", quando lo fa tutti stanno ad ascoltarlo.⁹

He is a very influential person: paradoxically, an 'author that does not speak', when he does everybody listens.

Mo Yan grew up in Shandong province 山东省, Gaomi 高密 and he also employs this region as a setting of his literary works. After the Cultural Revolution in 1976, he entered the People's Liberation Army (Zhongguo Renmin Jiefangjun 中国人民解放军), where he completed his education (Hladíková 2013: 111). This work position allowed him to extend his knowledge and study in the free time. Mo Yan considers it as a defining moment in his career, because it helped him to further develop his writing skills.¹⁰ In 1982, Mo Yan became a propaganda officer and he was responsible for lectures on Marxism-Leninism within the army. Later in 1984, he entered the literature department of the People's Liberation Army Academy of Arts and he completed the studies at Beijing's Lu Xun Academy of Literature (Duke 1993: 48). The army had a section devoted to the artists and despite the fact that he had to respect certain limitations in the writing and did not oppose

⁷ "Il Nobel a Mo Yan, «colui che non vuole parlare» [Mo Yan wins Nobel Prize: the one who does not want to talk]." *Corriere della Sera*. Last modified October 11, 2012.

http://www.corriere.it/cultura/12_ottobre_11/nobel-letteratura-mo-yang_1bac0098-1394-11e2-ad6a-6254024087b3.shtml.

⁸ Piccone, Marilia. "Nella mia Cina la tortura è una forma di spettacolo [In my China torture is a form of entertainment]." *Stilos*. Last accessed January 2, 2017. http://www.stilos.it/yan_mo_-_nella_mia_cina_la_tortura_e_una_forma_di_.html.

⁹ Spalletta, Alessandra. "Ho Vissuto un Anno con Mo Yan – Intervista a Rosa Lombardi." *AgiChina24*. Last modified November 12, 2012. <http://www.agichina.it/orso-egrave-stato-insignito-del-premio-nobel-per-la-letteratura.nbsp#>.

¹⁰ Lupano, Emma. "'Una Storiografia dal Basso' – Lo Scrittore di 'Sorgo Rosso': Intervista a Mo Yan." *AgiChina24*. Accessed September 24, 2016. <http://www.agichina.it/repository/canali/ritagli-di-emma-lupano/notizie/intervista-a-mo-yan>.

the government, he did not regret this decision that offered him an opportunity to attend university.¹¹ Later in 1997, he starts his full-time career as a writer.¹²

Mo Yan's works are characterized by his interest in folk traditions and apart from his home region, his main inspirations are folk legends and historical events. Despite the fact that Mo Yan disagrees, many literary experts consider his early literary works as a part of *search for roots literature* (Xungen Wenxue 寻根文学). Another characteristic feature of Mo Yan's works is a detailed description of brutal and violent scenes or usage of sexually motivated scenes, therefore his works are perceived as a combination of *magical realism* (huan jue xianshizhuyi 幻觉现实主义) characterized by a presence of legends and mythical elements and grotesque realism (elements connected to the sexually motivated scenes and everything physical). On the other hand, his literary works published after the year 1990 are regarded as a part of *new historicism* (xin lishi xiaoshuo 新历史小说) (Hladíková 2013: 111).

Regarding the historiographic character of Mo Yan's works, Wolfgang Kubin explains that Mo Yan's works display an indirect critique of the regime thanks to a technique of re-narration (chongxie 重写) when referring to the historical events typical for the avant-garde and the neorealism. It is characterized by the narration that goes against the established conventions of the revolutionary literature – Mo Yan displays the countryside and the life of the peasants as full of negative experiences and disasters. The literary critics are convinced that the numerous descriptions of the brutal scenes might be perceived as an allegory denoting the development of the country since the establishment of the PRC and a satire of the Chinese tradition (Kubin 2005: 383-384).

Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik explains in *Trauma and Memory: The case of the Great Famine in the People's Republic of China (1959-1961)* that Mo Yan's stories depict traumatic milestones in the Chinese history of the 20th century (e.g. the Great Famine), taking into consideration *Red Sorghum*, Mo Yan displays the society through descriptions of cruel and brutal scenes (2003: 58).

¹¹ Piccone, Marilia. "Nella mia Cina la tortura è una forma di spettacolo [In my China torture is a form of entertainment]." *Stilos*. Last accessed January 2, 2017. http://www.stilos.it/yan_mo_-_nella_mia_cina_la_tortura_e_una_forma_di_.html.

¹² Spalletta, Alessandra and Montrella Sonia. "Nobel Letteratura: Premio al Cinese Mo Yan." *AgiChina24*. Last accessed on October 12, 2012. <http://www.agichina.it/in-primo-piano/cultura/notizie/nobel-letteratura-premio-al-cinese-mo-yan>.

As Weigelin-Schwiedrzik describes:

„Mo Yan’s writes his novel as part of a counter-narrative to what party historiography tells its readers about the glorious revolution. His is the story of unending, meaningless violence... This way of telling the story means turning official party historiography upside down.” (2003: 60)

Regarding Mo Yan and his position toward the history, Perry Link introduces a term *daft hilarity* that serves for describing historical events that have destructing and catastrophic impact on people, such as the Cultural Revolution and Great Leap Forward which caused famines, but they are not described directly, but through a joke or other means, therefore the author does not explicitly mention the consequences of these events or he omits them completely.¹³

Regarding the perception of Mo Yan and his works by Perry Link and the term *daft hilarity*, Weigelin-Schwiedrzik is convinced that Link does not take into consideration an important matter of Mo Yan’s writings directly linked to famine and hunger. Based on Mo Yan’s speech at the University of Kyoto (2000), he attaches importance to topics such as hunger and famine and food plays an important role in his works, just like it has influenced his life, it has had an impact on his writing as well. Among numerous other works of Mo Yan, Weigelin-Schwiedrzik juxtaposes Link’s opinion concerning Mo Yan’s short story *Grain* (*Liangshi* 粮食) in order to underline this important aspect of Mo Yan’s writings. *Grain* (1984), which belongs to the author’s earlier works, already makes references related to the Great Famine and after some modification this work is later included in *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*. The Great Famine has only recently become an important issue which has appeared repeatedly in literary works. It’s because of a publicized reconsideration of the impact of Maoist rule on the country that this topic has become publicly accessible also thanks to Mo Yan’s literary works. Mo Yan breaks this taboo much earlier with the first appearance of *Grain* (Weigelin-Schwiedrzik 2013: 22-23). Weigelin-Schwiedrzik also offers an overview of Mo Yan’s autobiographical essays dealing with hunger from various perspectives varying from ‘a certain pride’, visible in *Unable to Forget Eating* (*Wang bu liao chi* 忘不了吃) up to ‘suffering and disgrace’ displayed in *Grain*. She stresses that Mo Yan does not avoid being criticized by the Party and in *Hunger and Loneliness Are the*

¹³ Link, Perry. “Why We Should Criticize Mo Yan.” In *The New York Review of Books*, last modified December 24, 2012, <http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2012/12/24/why-criticize-mo-yan/>.

Wealth of My Creativity (*Ji`e he gudu shi wo chuangzuo de caifu* 饥饿和孤独是我创作的财富) he even has the courage to write about an open rebellion, therefore it is necessary to modify the perception of Mo Yan`s works from Link`s point of view (Weigelin-Schwiedrzik 2013: 29-31).

As Mo Yan expresses, he considers himself *a story narrator* (*jiang gushi de ren* 讲故事的人) and this standpoint is also acknowledged by Wolfgang Kubin, one of the most well-known critics of his literary works. According to Chen Daozhun 陈道淳, to be perceived as a story narrator does not have to be necessarily a negative association, because it also represents one of the main features of Mo Yan`s writing. It is also important to distinguish between the two expressions to narrate a story (*jiang gushi*) and to write a novel (*xie xiaoshuo* 写小说), because they belong to different literary styles and Mo Yan combines them. Chen further expresses that Mo Yan pays special attention to the language style by using the typical expressions from Shandong province. Together with *chengyu* and other characteristic features of this writing style, he creates a vivid language combining the Yuan drama with a vernacular language or a mixture of modern and ancient words (Chen 2013a: 62-63).

Apart from a juxtaposition of myth and realism, Mo Yan`s works also possess certain characteristics of Chinese postmodernism. As Chinese literary critic Lü Tonglin 吕彤邻 explains, the combination of a traditional narrative style and the postmodern literature might be driven by the author`s motivation to break the usual literary conventions known from the previous literary practice of the Chinese writers (Davis-Undiano 2013: 23-24). The combination of reality and fantasy, folk stories and real historical events underlines miscellaneous visual descriptions enriched by various supernatural features. Mo Yan underlines that his literary works are embedded in his home region and all of them are influenced by the Chinese folk art and traditions, because he's been surrounded by those for a long time. Apart from the fact that Mo Yan expresses a genuine interest and concern for the Chinese society and the history through his works, thanks to a strong connection to matters depicting the Chinese countryside and the villagers` life, his literary works became popular worldwide as well (Wei 2012: 7-8). He depicts the common life of Chinese people and describes their experience that is diverse in comparison to other parts of the world. Mo Yan lets readers identify with characters from his works, depicting them with their sorrows and by letting them undergo difficult situations. Every novel exposes different aspects – in

case of *Frog*, he narrates a story about a female gynecologist and he displays a rotten attitude of officials during the period of the *family planning policy* (jihua shengyu zhengce 计划生育政策) (Jiang 2015: 124-127).

„Mo Yan is acting as a cultural conservationist and historian, preserving stories that are foundational to and also reflect experiences key to Chinese identity and that are, in some cases, hundreds of years old.“ (Davis-Undiano 2013: 23)

A well-balanced portion of the politics and the criticism of society is introduced in a way that it does not disturb the government. Mo Yan is not afraid to touch upon the topics that are generally considered important either from an angle of the Chinese history or society (Jiang 2015: 124-127). Kubin explains that Mo Yan is able to express a certain degree of criticism because of his membership of the party as well as his position in the army (Kubin 2005: 387).

Mo Yan gradually increases the understanding of China among Western readers who are interested in learning more about its political situation and his works represent a valuable source of information. He pays attention to political matters and intensifies the narration by depicting an overall situation in Mainland China transferred to the microcosm of Gaomi. He employs Gaomi as a model for introducing principles and habits of the Chinese society that reflect a constantly changing political situation from the past up to the modern period. His narrations also evoke an impression of legendary stories (chuanqi 传奇) known from imperial China because of the supernatural elements and legends together with realistic features referring to the contemporary period (Jiang 2015: 124-127).

The Swedish Academy explains their decision to award Mo Yan the Nobel Prize, based on the author`s ability to combine the fairy tales influenced by the magic realism, the history and the present.¹⁴ Peter Englund, the permanent secretary of the Swedish Academy, states:

„He has such a unique way of writing. If you read half a page of Mo Yan you immediately recognise it as him.“¹⁵

¹⁴ „Mo Yan nimmt Literaturnobelpreis entgegen [Mo Yan receives the Nobel Prize].“ *Frankfurter Rundschau*. Last modified December 10, 2012. <http://www.fr-online.de/panorama/mo-yan-nimmt-literaturnobelpreis-entgegen,27392196,21074696.html>.

¹⁵ BBC. „Chinese Author Mo Yan wins Nobel Prize for Literature.“ *BBC News*. Last modified October 11, 2012. <http://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-19907762>.

Lu Jiande 陆建德, the director of the Institute of Literature at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Wenxue Yanjiusuo 中国社会科学院文学研究所) also maintains that Mo Yan has an exquisite writing style that brings to life the words.¹⁶

A high number of published book reviews and articles about Mo Yan and his works in leading well-known newspapers abroad helps a lot the Chinese literature to open up to the “outside” world. Literary critics often compare Mo Yan to other writers such as Franz Kafka or Gabriel García Márquez (Wang 2014a: 97). In an interview conducted by Jim Leach on the occasion of the Second U.S.-China Cultural Forum at the University of California – Berkley, Mo Yan states there are some similarities between him and Faulkner and after reading his work *The Sound and the Fury*, Mo Yan realizes the importance of creating a personalized cosmos of the writer that characterizes him and his works. Apart from the narrations of Mo Yan`s parents, the grandparents and other people, *Dream of the Red Chamber* (Hongloumeng 红楼梦) and *Journey to the West* (Xiyouji 西游记) also has impact on his works (Leach 2010: 11-12). Kubin underlines the inspiration by the Western narration techniques of postmodernism visible in Mo Yan`s works (Kubin 2005: 388).

Despite the fact that Mo Yan does not express any particular affinity toward Faulkner or Márquez, Western scholars conclude that the comparison to the above-mentioned authors helps Western readers to identify more easily with the writing style of Mo Yan and through these similarities simplify the introduction of his works in other countries (Shao 2015: 54). The comparisons focus on the similarities between *Big breasts, wide hips* (*Feng Ru Fei Tun* 丰乳肥臀) by Mo Yan and *Hundred years of solitude* (*Cien años de soledad*) by Márquez (Yang Yiduo et al. 2014: 17-18). Mo Yan does not acknowledge a direct impact on his works and he admits that he also has not read many works from the above-mentioned writers. He considers himself as simply a writer narrating the stories of common people (Xiong 2014: 83).

Apart from the above-mentioned writers, Isabel Hilton draws the similarity between Mo Yan and Jaroslav Hašek based on the ‘comic fatalism’ that is present in the title *The Good Soldier*

¹⁶ Spalletta, Alessandra and Montrella Sonia. “Nobel Letteratura: Premio al Cinese Mo Yan.” *AgiChina24*. Last accessed on October 12, 2012. <http://www.agichina.it/in-primo-piano/cultura/notizie/nobel-letteratura-premio-al-cinese-mo-yan>.

Švejk (*Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za války*).¹⁷ One of Mo Yan's translators, Howard Goldblatt maintains that Mo Yan's writing style has some characteristics of Charles Dickens as well, because he is able to describe the scenes in a detail with flourishing language that enables the readers to precisely imagine the scene. Despite the fact that he often depicts brutal scenes, Goldblatt is convinced that there is a hidden beauty in them.¹⁸ Rosa Lombardi describes his style as follows:

Le sue frasi sono ricche, piene di metafore, riferimenti, immagini. Le sue opere sono caratterizzate da una ricchezza di aggettivi, onomatopoeie - espedienti che rendono viva l'immagine.

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His sentences are rich, full of metaphors, references, images. His works are characterized by a lot of adjectives, onomatopoeias – expedients that make the image alive.

Mo Yan received several awards during his career preceding the Nobel Prize from the year 2012 - in 1997 annual prize of the Chinese Writers Association²⁰, in 2001 the Laure-Bataillon Prize for the French translation of *Republic of Wine* (*Jiuguo* 酒国), in 2004 the Knight medal for French art and literature, in 2005 the Nonino prize for the Italian version of *Red Sorghum* (*Hong Gaoliang Jiazu* 红高粱家族), in 2006 the Japanese Fukuoka Asian Culture Award for *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* (*Shengsi pilao* 生死疲劳), in 2008 the Newman prize for Chinese literature (Shi 2015: 314-315). He also received the Hongloulou Prize (*Hong lou meng jiang* 红楼梦奖) in 2008 for *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* and the Mao Dun Literature Prize (*Mao Dun wenxue jiang* 茅盾文学奖) in 2011 for the *Frog* (Liu 2013: 137).

Red Sorghum, the first popular novel by Mo Yan composed of five books published in 1986, also becomes well-known in the Western countries thanks to a film by Zhang Yimou 张艺谋. He used *Red Sorghum* as a basis for his film that also wins the Golden Bear Award at

¹⁷ Hilton, Isabel. "Frog by Mo Yan review – the Chinese Nobel laureate's award-winning novel." Last modified December 18, 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/dec/18/frog-mo-yan-review-chinese-nobel-laureate>.

¹⁸ Moore, Steve. "Chinese fiction writer Mo Yan wins Nobel Prize in Literature." *Washington Post*. Last modified October 12, 2012. https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/chinese-fiction-writer-mo-yan-wins-nobel-prize-in-literature/2012/10/11/ca4795a2-13a0-11e2-ba83-a7a396e6b2a7_story.html.

¹⁹ Spalletta, Alessandra. "Ho Vissuto un Anno con Mo Yan – Intervista a Rosa Lombardi." *AgiChina24*. Last modified November 12, 2012. <http://www.agichina.it/orso-egrave-stato-insignito-del-premio-nobel-per-la-letteratura.nbsp#>.

²⁰ Malovic, Dorian. "Mo yan, premio Nobel: Cina, ripulisci il tuo passato." *Avvenire*. Last modified October 28, 2014. <http://mobile.avvenire.it/Cultura/Pagine/mo-yan-cina-ripulisci-il-tuo-passato.aspx>.

Berlin Film Festival in 1988 and the English translation by Howard Goldblatt is being published in the year 1993.²¹ A short story *White Dog Swing* (*Bai gou qiu qian jia* 白狗秋千架) also served as a basis for a film *Nuan* 暖 (2003) and wins Grand Prix at the 16th Tokyo International Film Festival. The national as well as the international awards received for his works represented a solid basis for the subsequent Nobel Prize that is perceived as an acknowledgement of the position of the Chinese literature in the frame of the world literatures (Yang 2013: 172-174).

„Mo Yan’s mash-up of traditional Chinese literature and avant-garde techniques is daring and provocative, and it’s satisfying to see the Nobel Prize go to a citizen of a country that was producing great novels long before Western novelists got in the game.”²²

Thanks to a quite high number of the translations, Mo Yan’s literary works also spread abroad and they become “accessible” for the Western readers. An overall perception of his works varies throughout the countries as a result of the cultural differences together with other aspects related to Mo Yan’s position in Western countries. Mo Yan is often regarded as one of the Chinese writers with the biggest amount of translations in Western languages including English, German, Portuguese, Spanish, French, Italian, Swedish and many others (Liu 2013: 136-138). Thanks to these numerous translations spread throughout various countries around the world, Mo Yan’s works are considered to become part of world literature and after the year 2012, research of Mo Yan’s works intensified. Not only readers, but also Western scholars perceive his literary works as a tool for exploring the Chinese culture, its historical development and politics (Xiong 2014: 78-79). The field of the research covers different aspects of Mo Yan’s literary works – the language style containing many allusions and colloquial expressions, analysing the narrative style, the main characters of the novels or the mixture of the reality and the fantasy (Yang Yiduo et al. 2014: 17-18). Mo Yan as one of the most active writers, combines criticism of society, unique narrative style with characteristic language style. Despite the fact that an original beauty of his language cannot be perfectly transferred in the translation and that it does undergo some changes, foreign readers are also able to appreciate Mo Yan’s language (Wang 2014a: 91-92).

²¹ Hampton, Wilborn. “Anarchy and Plain Bad Luck.” *The New York Times*. Last modified April 18, 1993. <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/04/18/books/anarchy-and-plain-bad-luck.html>.

²² Moore, Steve. “Chinese fiction writer Mo Yan wins Nobel Prize in Literature.” *Washington Post*. Last modified October 12, 2012. https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/chinese-fiction-writer-mo-yan-wins-nobel-prize-in-literature/2012/10/11/ca4795a2-13a0-11e2-ba83-a7a396e6b2a7_story.html.

There are positive as well as negative appraisals of Mo Yan and his works. One of the openly criticized matters is the decision of the committee to award Mo Yan the Nobel Prize, because of his position in the Chinese Writers Association that represents an official organization subordinated to the government, therefore its decision might be driven by political motives.²³ The announcement of the Nobel Prize is followed by a wave of criticism, Herta Müller considers it a ‘catastrophe’ and ‘extremely upsetting’, because she neither consider him to be a representative of democracy, nor human rights.²⁴ Rosa Lombardi defends Mo Yan’s position and underlines that the political system in China requires a membership of the Chinese writers in the association, therefore his works and activities cannot be automatically perceived as politically driven. Mo Yan’s position as one perceived as being too close to the government is also based on his previous position in the army and his membership in the Communist Party of China (Zhongguo Gongchandang 中国共产党).²⁵ Michel Hockx from School of Oriental and African Studies at London University also rejects the critique related to Mo Yan and he maintains that²⁶:

I don't like the idea that Chinese writers are only good if they challenge the government – a good writer is a good writer... Choosing a dissident is the safe choice [for the Nobel committee] – to choose an author with a strong literary reputation, because of the strength and power of his work, is a very brave choice.²⁷

Englund is of the opinion that China is too diverse to strictly divide writers into two groups of dissidents on the one hand and official writers on the other hand. Moreover, the quality of the literary works is what counts.²⁸

A detailed position of Mo Yan and the perception of his works is discussed separately in the following chapters. Mo Yan’s writing is shaped by his close relationship to his home region,

²³Spalletta, Alessandra. “Ho Vissuto un Anno con Mo Yan – Intervista a Rosa Lombardi.” *AgiChina*24. Last modified November 12, 2012. <http://www.agichina.it/orso-egrave-stato-insignito-del-premio-nobel-per-la-letteratura.nbsp#>.

²⁴ Flood, Alison. “Mo Yan’s Nobel nod a ‘catastrophe’, says fellow laureate Herta Müller.” *The Guardian*. Last modified November 26, 2012. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/nov/26/mo-yan-nobel-herta-muller>.

²⁵ Spalletta, Alessandra. “Ho Vissuto un Anno con Mo Yan – Intervista a Rosa Lombardi.” *AgiChina*24. Last modified November 12, 2012. <http://www.agichina.it/orso-egrave-stato-insignito-del-premio-nobel-per-la-letteratura.nbsp#>.

²⁶ Flood, Alison. “Mo Yan wins Nobel prize in literature 2012.” *The Guardian*. Last modified October 11, 2012. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/oct/11/mo-yan-nobel-prize-literature>.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ “Streit in Schweden um Nobelpreis am Mo Yan [Quarell in Sweden for the Nobel Prize for Mo Yan].” *Frankfurter Rundschau*. Last modified December 18, 2012. <http://www.fr-online.de/panorama/streit-in-schweden-um-nobelpreis-an-mo-yan-,27392196,20654220.html>.

the strong influence of folk culture and the traditional storytelling together with a critical consciousness underlining the core problems of the Chinese society mapped from the past up to the contemporary period. The concrete reasons behind his contradictory evaluations are discussed in the next chapter.

4.1. Perception of Mo Yan within China

Mo Yan represents a controversial personification of modern Chinese literature and the evaluation of his works is completely antipodal. These contradictions have several reasons that significantly influence his perception in China as well as in other Western countries.

Despite his disputed position, Mo Yan plays a significant role in Chinese literature and its popularisation. There have already been numerous long novels, short stories as well as prose collections since the beginning of his career as the writer. The first published work *Transparent Radish* (*Touming de Hongluobo* 透明的红萝卜) from 1985 became an inseparable part of the literature classes for the high school students and *Red Sorghum*, published two years after, represents his most well-known novel up to now (Liu 2013: 136-137). Chinese print media already devoted a lot of space and attention to Mo Yan's works before the Nobel Prize and in the year 2006, the magazine *Modern Writers Review* (Dangdai zuojia pinglun 当代作家评论) devoted almost the whole issue to Mo Yan. This is the first time that a magazine reserved so much space to only one writer (Liu 2013: 138).

Mo Yan is the first writer residing in Mainland China being awarded the Nobel Prize. Consequently, the demand for his works increased in the whole country and the books were almost sold out after the announcement of the Swedish Academy. Regarding the "Mo Yan fever", the work *Frog* as well as other titles were sold out very fast in the bookstores and via websites. Taobao website together with other big online book stores state that their sales increased in October 2012 when the majority of their stock was sold out within a few hours and the Chinese publishing houses decided to print a new edition of Mo Yan's book collections (Lin: 12-13). Regarding his work *Frog*, the amount of sold books rose 180 times and this trend continued for a few months after the announcement (Liu 2013: 136-137).

In 2012, the Chinese government turned the former house of Mo Yan into a museum and Chinese postal offices issued a special stamp edition inspired by his achievement. Mo Yan's former residence became a vigorously visited spot by tourists. Chinese scholars denoted this

phenomenon as *Mo Yan's culture* (Mo Yan wenhua 莫言文化). The Nobel Prize brings Mo Yan a new responsibility and it is not only his personal issue, but it is an affair of the nationwide literary circles. It is an affair of the whole country and he represents an inspiration for other Chinese writers. As a result, China believes that Mo Yan's success has a positive impact on Chinese-Western cooperation activities and it reawakens the interest of foreigners to study the Chinese language (Liu 2013: 136-137). As Yang Jianlong 杨剑龙 expresses:

2012 年的诺贝尔文学奖颁发给中国作家莫言，已经不是莫言个人的事情，而已经成为中国文坛的大事、中国国家的大事，鼓舞了中国文坛和中国人。(Yang 2013: 174)

Mo Yan winning the Nobel Prize in 2012 is not Mo Yan's personal issue anymore, but it already became an issue of the Chinese literary circles, an issue of the Chinese nation that encourages the Chinese literary circles and Chinese citizens.

Mo Yan's popularity has a hidden significance for China as a country. Because of the fact that generally all the attention related to China focuses on the economy and business, the cultural aspects used to be kept in the background and Mo Yan's works contribute to increase the general awareness of the Chinese culture abroad (Long and Cai 2015: 105). The Chinese government perceives the Nobel Prize as a sign of international acknowledgement and prestige.²⁹ Chinese writers such as Chen Zhongshi 陈忠实, Yan Geling 严歌苓 or Zhang Kangkang 张抗抗 evaluated Mo Yan's achievement in a positive way. They are of the opinion that Mo Yan deserved the prize and consider him an experienced writer depicting the history and former living conditions in an outstanding and realistic way (Liu 2013: 137-138). As mentioned in the previous sections, despite the fact that Mo Yan selects sensitive topics as a theme for his works and he employs rather unusual way of writing which is often criticized in literary circles, his works are being published to great extent not only within China, but also abroad (Weigelin-Schwiedrzik 2013: 21). Weigelin-Schwiedrzik points to the peculiar position of Mo Yan in underlining the following fact:

Now that he was awarded the Nobel Prize, the fact that many Chinese officials had criticized Mo Yan in the past and the fact that some of his books were not published in the PRC seem to have been forgotten, and Mo Yan is celebrated as a hero who finally helped Chinese literature to regain worldwide recognition. (Weigelin-Schwiedrzik 2013: 22)

²⁹ "Perry Link on Mo Yan." In *Harvard University Press Blog*, last modified on December 13, 2012, http://harvardpress.typepad.com/hup_publicity/2012/12/perry-link-on-mo-yan.html.

The Chinese government warmly welcomed the Nobel Prize for Mo Yan in 2012, but as Perry Link also underlines – there is a remarkable shift in the government's position towards the Nobel Prize winners when comparing two figures – Mo Yan and Liu Xiaobo 刘晓波, the former won the Nobel Prize for literature and the latter for peace. The Chinese government strongly opposed the previous decision of the Swedish academy in 2010 to award Liu Xiaobo the Nobel Prize.³⁰ Wang Xiaohong, a satirist, describes this contradiction from a humorous point of Alfred Nobel as follows:

„Two years ago my people gave a prize to a Chinese, and in doing so offended the Chinese government. Today they gave another prize to a Chinese, and in doing so offended the Chinese people... The whole of China offended in only two years.”³¹

If we look further to the past, Gao Xingjian 高行健 also received the Nobel Prize for literature in 2000, but he has been a French citizen since 1997, therefore at the time the government also expressed that the Academy upholds ‘extremely unhealthful attitudes toward the Chinese people’.³²

The controversial position of Mo Yan is caused by several facts that aroused a critical evaluation of him preceding the Nobel Prize. Mo Yan's participation on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary in the *Talks at the Yan`An Forum on Literature and Art* (Zai Yan`An Wenyi Zuotanhui shang de Jianghua 在延安文艺座谈会上的讲话) in June 2012 resulted in strong criticism, because Mo Yan accepted the invitation to hand-rewrite a chosen section of the speech held by Mao Zedong 毛泽东 in 1942 and he also admitted its positive impact from a historical point of view.³³ Another reason is his refusal to sign a petition supporting the cancelation of Liu Xiaobo's imprisonment that is being supported by more than one hundred Nobel Prize-winners³⁴, but when interviewed in October 2012 he expressed his hopes that Liu Xiaobo will soon get his freedom back. The announcement of the Nobel Prize winner naturally caused people to question Mo Yan's attitude toward Liu Xiaobo and

³⁰ “Perry Link on Mo Yan.” In *Harvard University Press Blog*, last modified on December 13, 2012, http://harvardpress.typepad.com/hup_publicity/2012/12/perry-link-on-mo-yan.html.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Link, Perry. “Does This Writer Deserve the Prize?.” In *The New York Review of Books*, last modified December 6, 2012, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2012/12/06/mo-yan-nobel-prize/>.

³⁴ “Mo Yan nimmt Literaturnobelpreis entgegen [Mo Yan receives the Nobel Prize].“ *Frankfurter Rundschau*. Last modified December 10, 2012. <http://www.fr-online.de/panorama/mo-yan-nimmt-literaturnobelpreis-entgegen,27392196,21074696.html>.

according to Perry Link, giving the media the most possible neutral answer is the only suitable solution in Mo Yan's position.³⁵

Another example of the negative evaluation of Mo Yan represents the title *Critique of Mo Yan* (*Mo Yan pipan* 莫言批判) that collects various papers explaining the reasons for the criticism of Mo Yan (Liu 2013: 137-138). He is criticized by the Chinese writers living in exile as well, because they do not acknowledge Mo Yan's success for his literary works, because he finds himself under the direct influence of the government. Writers such as Ha Jin 哈金, Liu Binyan 刘宾雁 or Liao Yiwu 廖亦武 follow a path of complete freedom in their writing and are ready to face the consequences such as being exiled. They are prepared to adopt a new citizenship or even to stop writing in Chinese, as in the case of Ha Jin.³⁶ Liao Yiwu, along with many other writers, considers Mo Yan's prize for literature to be the greatest mistake of the Swedish Academy in its more than one hundred years old history.³⁷ Despite the fact that he recognizes the quality of Mo Yan's writing, he does not acknowledge him as eligible to receive the Nobel Prize, because of his sympathy toward the regime and his attitude that does not support human rights.³⁸

Regarding the question of potential censorship and the impact of governmental bodies on Mo Yan's works and whether he experiences any limitations, Mo Yan expresses in an interview with Bernhard Bartsch for *Frankfurter Rundschau* that:

in der Zeit von Mao Zedong war die Literatur eine Waffe der Revolution und die Schriftsteller mussten die Gesellschaft so darstellen, wie sie dem sozialistischen Weltbild entsprach...heute schreiben wir, wie wir wollen: über die Politik und die Gesellschaft, das Leben und die Liebe, Gewalt und Sex.³⁹

³⁵ Link, Perry. "Does This Writer Deserve the Prize?." In *The New York Review of Books*, last modified December 6, 2012, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2012/12/06/mo-yan-nobel-prize/>.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Bartsch, Bernhard. "Mo Yan – im roten Minenfeld [Mo Yan – in red mine field]." *Frankfurter Rundschau*. Last modified December 7, 2012. <http://www.fr-online.de/literatur/nobelpreis-fuer-literatur-mo-yan---im-roten-minenfeld,1472266,21055910.html>.

³⁸ "Mo Yan hofft an Freiheit für Liu Xiaobo [Mo Yan hopes for freedom for Liu Xiaobo]." *Frankfurter Rundschau*. Last modified December 12, 2012. <http://www.fr-online.de/panorama/mo-yan-hofft-auf-freiheit-fuer-liu-xiaobo,27392196,20580632.html>.

³⁹ Bartsch, Bernhard. "China Wahrheit ist nicht elegant [China's reality is not elegant]." *Frankfurter Rundschau*. Last modified July 10, 2009. <http://www.fr-online.de/kultur/interview-mit-dem-chinesischen-autor-mo-yan--chinas-wahrheit-ist-nicht-elegant-,1472786,3211498.html>.

in the time of Mao Zedong, literature was a weapon of revolution and the writers had to represent society in correspondence with the socialist worldview...today we write as we like: about politics and society, life and love, violence and sex.

The Western media criticize Mo Yan for his opinion regarding the censorship of the media that he perceives as necessary and some censorship is also present in other parts of the world to a different degree. Mo Yan employs a polemical comparison of the country's censorship to the airport security controls which evokes a wave of criticism.⁴⁰ Li Yiyun 李翊云 explains that the position of the Western and the Chinese media is completely opposite because of the mistranslation of the original expression used by Mo Yan – jiancha 检查 (to check) taken for shencha 审查 (to censor), therefore the comparison with the airport controls becomes more clear and suits his original idea better. Together with another mistranslation of the term biyaode 必要的, ambiguity in English denoting either a must, a necessity or an inevitability, this evokes a different connotation. According to Li, the original misinterpreted idea of Mo Yan is to express an inevitability of the control in the media that is present in other countries as well and the term censorship is perceived as unsuitable (Klein 2016: 174).

Mo Yan's position as a writer 'inside the system' determines the angle of the critique in his literary works. In comparison to dissident writers, Mo Yan points at the rotten attitude of the officials at a local level, therefore he does not directly oppose the highest governmental body and together with his sense of humour this creates an acceptable version of his criticism.⁴¹ Partick Poon, the vice-president of the Independent Chinese PEN Center in Hong Kong, maintains that it is not acceptable to reward a writer that openly supports censorship, because the Nobel Prize for literature embodies not only the literary qualities of the writer, but also his attitude toward the freedom of speech. Ai Weiwei 艾未未, an artist and activist, also strongly opposes Mo Yan and his acceptance of censorship in China, because the open criticism of the government results in the imprisonment of several personalities - not only writers - and as a result Mo Yan indirectly supports this system. Ai Weiwei rejects the

⁴⁰ "Mo Yan nimmt Literaturnobelpreis entgegen [Mo Yan receives the Nobel Prize]." *Frankfurter Rundschau*. Last modified December 10, 2012. <http://www.fr-online.de/panorama/mo-yan-nimmt-literaturnobelpreis-entgegen,27392196,21074696.html>.

⁴¹ Link, Perry. "Does This Writer Deserve the Prize?." In *The New York Review of Books*, last modified December 6, 2012, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2012/12/06/mo-yan-nobel-prize/>.

explanation of censorship by Mo Yan that compares it to an airport control – something unpleasant, but necessary.⁴² Ai Weiwei reacts:

Er ist ein Wächter des diktatorischen Systems und zugleich sein Nutznießer.⁴³

He is a guardian of the dictatorial system and at the same time his beneficiary.

At a press conference after the Nobel Prize Mo Yan expresses the sentiment that the numerous critics of his works are also party members just like him and they benefit from this position. Despite the criticism based on his affinity toward the regime, Mo Yan`s works deal with controversial topics and he also takes some risks with this decision, because he balances between the borders of what is considered acceptable in the eyes of the regime.⁴⁴

4.2. Mo Yan in English-speaking countries

Howard Goldblatt is a leading figure responsible for introducing Mo Yan`s in the English-speaking countries. His popularity is composed of three main peaks: the first one dates back to the translation *Red Sorghum* and its filmed version by Zhang Yimou, followed by the second peak in 2000, when the book *The Republic of Wine* is translated and the *World Literature Today* publishes many articles introducing his works. The last peak dates back to 2009, when *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* is published and he receives the Newman Prize for Chinese Literature from the University of Oklahoma. Apart from that, *World Literature Today* devotes a special issue to Mo Yan (Xiong 2014: 78).

The significance of Mo Yan`s translations in the English-speaking countries is derived from the various literary reviews of his works in the newspapers and literary magazines including *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *The New Yorker* or *The New York Review of Books* (Zhang 2015: 166-167). *The New York Times* compares Mo Yan`s success in the U.S. to the influence of García Márquez (Jiang 2005: 68). Goldblatt explains that in the U.S., the most popular literary motives are related to the political matters, sexual topics or detective stories. The critical point of view increases the popularity of Mo Yan`s works because of the descriptions of the dark side of the historical and political issues that play an important role

⁴² “Empörung über Mo Yan: «Soll sich schämen » [Outrage over Mo Yan: ‘Shame’].” *Frankfurter Rundschau*. Last modified December 7, 2012. <http://www.fr-online.de/panorama/empoeerung-ueber-mo-yan--soll-sich-schaemen-,27392196,21052962.html>.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Lovell, Julia. “Mo Yan`s Creative Space.” *The New York Times*. Last modified on October 15, 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/16/opinion/mo-yans-creative-space.html>.

in the development of the society (Jiang 2015: 124-125). According to the book critic Richard Bernstein from *The New York Times*, Mo Yan`s realistic characters play an important role in his success together with the black humor that helps him introduce a picture of the daily life in the rural China villages (Zhang 2015: 169-170). Mo Yan is appreciated for his critical attitude towards certain political matters, because he displays the society “through his eyes” (Xiong 2014: 84).

Perry Link maintains that Chinese writers have to choose what type of literature they wish to produce. Mo Yan, repeatedly criticised for being too close to the state ideology, chooses to uphold the level of officially acceptable literary works, but at the same time he gradually stretches the borders drawn by the government. Mo Yan`s choice to uphold the government`s boundaries enables him to maintain the position he has achieved during his writing career. It is a personal choice of each writer that influences the future career development either within China or abroad. Despite the fact that Mo Yan expresses criticism, he prefers to perceive his works as standing aside from politics. Concerning the relationship between literary writing and politics Link explains that it is difficult to set apart the politics from the literature⁴⁵:

„The deeper question, though, is how and to what extent a writer`s immersion in, and adjustment to, an authoritarian political regime affects what he or she writes. The issue is both subtle and important, and Mo Yan provides a useful example of it.”⁴⁶

Western scholars who are not so fond of Mo Yan`s creative work express critical opinions regarding a lower quality of his works in comparison to traditional Chinese literature (Liu 2013: 139). Anna Sun maintains that:

„Politically, Mo Yan is clearly a writer with a strong social conscience, although he has not been a dissident; he is unafraid to satirize contemporary Chinese reality in his novels, and he is wryly conscious of the game of political negotiation he has to play with the state...”⁴⁷

On the other hand, Sun is of the opinion that an insufficient feature of Mo Yan`s works lies in the language. She describes it as predictable and it does not evoke a natural impression

⁴⁵ Link, Perry. “Does This Writer Deserve the Prize?.” In *The New York Review of Books*, last modified December 6, 2012, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2012/12/06/mo-yan-nobel-prize/>.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Sun, Anna. “The diseased language of Mo Yan.” In *Kenyon Review*, last accessed December 19, 2016, <http://www.kenyonreview.org/kr-online-issue/2012-fall/selections/anna-sun-656342/>.

when combining the rural vernacular, expressions with the socialist background and the lack of an aesthetic value. In Sun's opinion, the aesthetic consideration is one of the main differences between Mo Yan and the world literature writers such as Dickens or Faulkner and its absence causes confusion and chaos in his literary works. Sun is convinced that the English translation surpasses the quality of the original. Sun explains the language's insufficiency as a consequence of the Cultural Revolution that dismisses the connection between the Chinese writers and the literary tradition from the previous period, therefore Mo Yan does not achieve the qualities of the Chinese literature from the past displayed in the classical literary works such as poems by Li Bai 李白 or *Dream of the Red Chamber*, despite the fact that he mentions it as one of his inspirations. Sun maintains that the *diseased language of Mo Yan* is strongly influenced by the language style derived during the revolutionary era described as 'Mao-ti'. Apart from Mo Yan, there are also other writers whose writing is being marked by this period such as Yu Hua 余华 or Ma Jian 马健. Sun is convinced that the Maoist expressions penetrated the literary language and they represent a burden which originated in the past.⁴⁸

Mo Yan's position in the framework of English-speaking countries is significantly shaped by the research conducted by Perry Link and Anna Sun that deal with the questions related to Mo Yan's literary practice and together with a dominant position of Howard Goldblatt as his translator to English, we acquire a complex view of Mo Yan when we take the English-speaking countries into consideration.

4.3. Mo Yan in German-speaking countries

The introduction of Mo Yan in Germany is determined by three main occasions that have occurred since the year 1993. The first one is related to the film version of *Red Sorghum*, the second one dates back to the year 2009 and the Frankfurt Book Fair, the last one is related to the Nobel Prize in 2012 (Xiong 2014: 77). As a result, leading German media publish numerous interviews and book reviews of his works including the newspapers *Die Zeit*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Der Spiegel* whose articles contain positive as well as negative

⁴⁸ Sun, Anna. "The diseased language of Mo Yan." In *Kenyon Review*, last accessed December 19, 2016, <http://www.kenyonreview.org/kr-online-issue/2012-fall/selections/anna-sun-656342/>.

evaluations of Mo Yan regarding the artistic quality of his works as well as discussions on his eligibility for receiving the Nobel Prize (Jin 2015: 8-9).

Regarding one of the two recent occasions, the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2009 evokes a negative response from the public not only in the German-speaking countries. Mo Yan has been criticized for his adjusted speech at the opening ceremony referring to the position of literature being superior to political matters, but when it comes to an encounter with Dai Qing 戴晴 and Bei Ling 贝岭, Mo Yan as a deputy of an official delegation leaves their speech accompanying the rest of the official representatives. Regarding the encounter at the book fair, Mo Yan admits he does not have a choice, but to leave with the other representatives of the delegation.⁴⁹ Bei Ling expresses regrets about the result of the symposium *China and the world – Perception and Reality* (*China und die Welt – Wahrnehmung und Wirklichkeit*), because he perceives the concept of the fair as a venue representing the freedom of speech.⁵⁰ As we observe from the problematic development of the situation at the fair, China's original goal to promote Chinese literature and to enhance the interest in Chinese culture in the Western part of the world, China's participation at the venue stirs a wave of criticism.

When comparing the opinions of the Chinese writers on Mo Yan receiving the Nobel Prize, Herta Müller, also being awarded the Nobel Prize for the literature, expresses a similar opinion as Chinese dissident writers opposing the decision of the Swedish Academy as mentioned in the previous section.⁵¹

There are also scholars that do not discuss Mo Yan's attitude toward politics and his position within the governmental system, but they concentrate on Mo Yan's works and his writing style in particular. Wolfgang Kubin, German sinologist as well as translator specializing in the Chinese literature and art, also expresses an open critique of Mo Yan. He emphasizes that since the establishment of the PRC, the Chinese writers are not also translators anymore as it used to be in the previous period, therefore they are not able to read any original versions of the works belonging to world literature such as Kafka or the authors from Latin America.

⁴⁹ Link, Perry. "Does This Writer Deserve the Prize?" In *The New York Review of Books*, last modified December 6, 2012, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2012/12/06/mo-yan-nobel-prize/>.

⁵⁰ "Frankfurter Buchmesse räumt Fehler ein [Frankfurt Book Fair confirms mistakes]." *Die Zeit Online*. Last modified September 11, 2009. <http://www.zeit.de/kultur/literatur/2009-09/buchmesse-kritik>.

⁵¹ "Mo Yan nimmt Literaturnobelpreis entgegen [Mo Yan receives the Nobel Prize]." *Frankfurter Rundschau*. Last modified December 10, 2012. <http://www.fr-online.de/panorama/mo-yan-nimmt-literaturnobelpreis-entgegen,27392196,21074696.html>.

In Kubin's opinion, the quality of modern Chinese literature decreases in comparison to the previous periods.⁵² He is of the opinion that all modern Chinese literature is poor in quality and emphasizes that Mo Yan won the Nobel Prize solely thanks to the English translations by Howard Goldblatt (Chen 2013b: 5). In an interview conducted by Ye Kai 叶开 discussing Chinese literature, Kubin expresses a critical view of Mo Yan's writing style as follows:

莫言是一个非常落后的小说家...他现在用这个章回小说那个传统的方法来写作。就是说他不是现代性的作家。现代性的作家,他能够集中到一个人,分析他的灵魂...但是莫言写小说的时候,他小说里头的人物是非常多的。另外呢,他还会讲一个故事。现代性的小说家,他不会再讲什么故事,所有的故事已经讲过。⁵³

Mo Yan is a very backward novelist...Now he uses this zhanghui, a traditional method of writing a novel. It just explains that he is not a modernist writer. A modernist writer is able to focus on a person, to analyse his soul...but when Mo Yan writes a novel, there are many characters. Apart from that, he narrates a story. A modernist novelist does not narrate a story, because all the stories have already been told.

In spite of the critical evaluation of Mo Yan's work, Kubin maintains that Mo Yan fulfils the requirements of the postmodern Chinese literature:

...从后现代主义来看,莫言也是一个进步的作家。他完全符合后现代主义的要求。我们怎么评价文学,文学作品,是一个很大的问题。也可能莫言也不懂什么是现代小说。但是莫言可以说,我是后现代主义,后现代主义允许我乱七八糟等等...如果我们从后现代主义来看莫言的话,他完全是对的,无论他怎么写都是对的,都是恶的东西、臭的东西。

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From the perspective of the postmodernism, Mo Yan is also a progressive writer. He absolutely complies with the requirements of the postmodernism. How we evaluate the literature and the literary works is still a very big problem. It is also possible that Mo Yan does not understand what is a modern novel, but Mo Yan can say, I am a postmodernist. Postmodernism allows me

⁵² Wolfgang Kubin Gubin 顾彬, Chen Pingyuan 陈平原, Xiao Ying 肖鹰 et al. “‘汉学视野下的 20 世纪中国文学圆桌会’现场速记 [Recording from 'Conference at Round Table on Chinese Literature of 20th Century from Point of Sinology'].” Last modified on April 24, 2007, http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4c1595e50101dt86.html.

⁵³ “顾彬叶开谈话录 [Talk between Gubin and Ye Kai].” In: Yangcheng wanbao 羊城晚报 [Evening paper of Yangcheng], last modified on November 8, 2008, http://www.ycwb.com/ePaper/ycwb/html/2008-11/08/content_351879.htm.

⁵⁴ “顾彬叶开谈话录 [Talk between Gubin and Ye Kai].” In: Yangcheng wanbao 羊城晚报 [Evening paper of Yangcheng], last modified on November 8, 2008, http://www.ycwb.com/ePaper/ycwb/html/2008-11/08/content_351879.htm.

to mess up, etc. If we look at Mo Yan from the point of the postmodernism, he is absolutely right, it does not matter how he writes, everything is correct, everything is ugly, everything is terrible.

The above-mentioned statement proves that despite the fact that Kubin does not like Mo Yan's works, he acknowledges Mo Yan's eligibility to call himself a postmodern writer. Kubin underlines that it is very difficult to set the rules for "measuring" literature and its categories. The impact of postmodernism on German literature and also other Western literatures is less evident, therefore the evaluation of writers such as Mo Yan is different as well as standards and expectations from the Western point of view are diverse in comparison to Chinese scholars evaluating Chinese literature. Kubin highly praises the works by Lu Xun 鲁迅 and he admits to maintain conservative standards for evaluating modern Chinese literature. Because of the fact that he sets the standards based on German novelists such as Thomas Mann, the quality of Mo Yan's novel is not that satisfying. Kubin also expresses that he is not certain whether Mo Yan's goal is to write novels corresponding to the standards of the modern Chinese novel. He is convinced that a writer needs more time to compose a long length novel and underlines the importance of the language, not only the story, but taking into consideration Chinese novelists, they usually do not pay so much attention to the language as to the plot of the story and he questions the relatively short time for composing a novel in the case of Mo Yan.⁵⁵ On the contrary, Andrea Riemenschnitter, specializing on modern Chinese literature and language, maintains:

Mo Yan ist ein genialer Schriftsteller, sein Werk ist enorm durchdacht. Er arbeitet zudem bis heute ständig an sich, gönnt sich keine Ruhe. Seine Literatur orientiert sich ganz direkt an der Gesellschaft und an den Dingen, die er erlebt. Er lebt und fühlt mit der Masse...Man kann ihn allein mit dem grossen Gründervater der literarischen Moderne Chinas, Lu Xun, vergleichen.⁵⁶

Mo Yan is a brilliant writer and his work is tremendously thought through. He constantly works on himself, does not let himself to rest. His literature directly focuses on society and things that he experiences. He lives and feels with the masses...He can only be compared to the great founder of the modern Chinese literature, Lu Xun.

As we observe, Kubin and Riemenschnitter have completely opposite opinions on Mo Yan and his position within Chinese literature. They agree on the fact that Lu Xun is a brilliant

⁵⁵ “顾彬叶开谈话录 [Talk between Gubin and Ye Kai].” In: Yangcheng wanbao 羊城晚报 [Evening paper of Yangcheng], last modified on November 8, 2008, http://www.ycwb.com/ePaper/ycwb/html/2008-11/08/content_351879.htm.

⁵⁶ Schöpfer, Linus. “Ein genialer Schriftsteller.” In: *Tages Anzeiger*, last modified October 11, 2012, <http://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/kultur/buecher/Ein-genialer-Schriftsteller/story/15752243>.

writer, but whereas Kubin questions Mo Yan's writing skills and is convinced that Mo Yan does not accomplish the qualities of Lu Xun, Riemenschneider, on the other hand, considers him as another significant figure in modern Chinese literature.

According to Riemenschneider, Mo Yan is an independent writer and she opposes the critique concerning his former military career and the possible political motive related to the support of the Communist Party of China, because Mo Yan depicts and points at historical events which need to be seen in a different light. As Riemenschneider underlines, Mo Yan maintains a different position than dissident Chinese writers who strongly oppose the government.⁵⁷ Apart from Riemenschneider, Martin Walser, a German writer, also highly values Mo Yan and his works. In his opinion, Mo Yan represents a rare kind of author that describes and informs extensively about history in his works and he does not perceive any motive limitations or political restrictions while reading Mo Yan's works.⁵⁸

4.4. Mo Yan in Italy

The long-lasting cultural exchange between Italy and China provides numerous translations of various Chinese writers including Mo Yan who also receives the Italian Nonino Prize for literature (Zhi 2015: 60-62). Antonella Nonino, an organizer of the prize established in 1975 and named after a famous brand of spirits, expresses for Xinhua 新华 that she is pleased by the fact that Mo Yan won the Nobel Prize. In 2005, he receives the Italian prize for 'his outstanding capacity to depict the rural tradition of his millenary country'. Nonino appreciates his works depicting Chinese culture and its values that help to introduce China in Italy. As a result, China becomes less foreign and she realizes that China and Italy have a lot of common features, such as the rural way of living. Nonino underlines that despite the China's constant urbanization and modernization, its historical circumstances are also noteworthy. Alessandra Lavagnino, a sinologist at the University of Milan, agrees with Nonino and implies that Mo Yan deserves the prize. Lavagnino underlines Mo Yan's ability to faithfully depict China thanks to the mixture of modern and historic characteristics.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Schöpfer, Linus. "Ein genialer Schriftsteller." In: *Tages Anzeiger*, last modified October 11, 2012, <http://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/kultur/buecher/Ein-genialer-Schriftsteller/story/15752243>.

⁵⁸ Hage, Volker. "A Controversial Choice for this Year's Literature Prize." *Spiegel Online*. Last modified October 15, 2012. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/authors-debate-merits-of-nobel-prize-for-chinese-writer-mo-yan-a-861381-2.html>.

⁵⁹ De Giuli, Marzia. "Feature: Italian experts applaud Mo Yan's winning of Nobel Prize in Literature." *Renmin wang 人民网*. Last modified October 12, 2012. <http://en.people.cn/90782/7974811.html>.

According to Federico Masini, the director of the Confucius Institute in Rome at the Sapienza University, Mo Yan describes Chinese life in the countryside and introduces political circumstances which open China to the world. Edoarda Masi, one of the most significant Italian sinologists, is convinced that Mo Yan brings a beauty of bitterness to Chinese literature. Despite the fact that he depicts very sorrowful moments in history, Masi appreciates his language style (Babala 2014: 29-31). Also Rosa Lombardi considers Mo Yan to be a great writer with an enormous creative talent (Gu 2014: 18). Luciano Minerva, a reporter of the RAI station and a writer, after meeting Mo Yan in person, describes him as a modest person closely linked to his rural roots and he praises Mo Yan's interest in the life and customs which have originated in the countryside.⁶⁰

Mo Yan pays several visits to Italy, one in 2002, when he attends the *Literature Festival (Festivaletteratura)* in Mantova followed by the above-mentioned Nonino prize in 2005 and later in 2007, he visits Turin on the occasion of the *Turin International Bookfair (Salone Internazionale del Libro)*, where Bruno Gambarotta, Italian writer and journalist, conducts an interview with Mo Yan together with Maria Rita Masci, the main consultant at the publishing house Einaudi releasing Mo Yan's works in Italy.⁶¹ Mo Yan also visits Sardinia in 2010, when he accepts an invitation from Marcello Fois, an Italian writer, to attend a literary festival *Island of the Stories from Gavoi (Festival Isola delle Storie di Gavoi)*. According to Fois Mo Yan embodies a synonym for an outstanding storyteller – he writes about topics that continually concern people, such as desire, envy, revenge as well as essential and simple topics like famine, thirst or coldness and his works unfold stories about love and family.⁶² Fois explains what is in his opinion so extraordinary about Mo Yan:

Proprio nel fatto che fa letteratura. Non finge, non mente: scrive. E lo fa come pochissimi. Iniziando da sé.⁶³

Exactly because of the fact that he makes literature. [He] does not pretend, [he] does not lie: [he] writes. And [he] does that like a few. Starting from himself.

⁶⁰ De Giuli, Marzia. "Feature: Italian experts applaud Mo Yan's winning of Nobel Prize in Literature." Renmin wang 人民网. Last modified October 12, 2012. <http://en.people.cn/90782/7974811.html>.

⁶¹ De Rosa, Luigi. "Premio Nobel 2012 per la Letteratura. Mo Yan: 'colui che non parla'." *Venilia Editrice*. Last modified October 28, 2012. <http://www.venilia.it/715/>.

⁶² Fois, Marcello. "Mo Yan, una narrazione immortale." *L'Huffington Post*. Last modified October 11, 2012. http://www.huffingtonpost.it/marcello-fois/mo-yan-una-narrazione-imm_b_1958346.html.

⁶³ Ibid.

In an interview conducted at the festival, Mo Yan expresses his admiration for Italo Calvino and his work *The Baron in the Trees* (*Il Barone Rampante*). According to him, it is an exquisite literary work.⁶⁴ In an interview for China Central Television (Zhongyang Dianshitai 中央电视台) Patrizia Liberati describes the impact of the Nobel Prize in Italy. It evokes a ‘Mo Yan craze’ and an increasing demand for his books causes all copies to be sold out. Liberati elaborates that Mo Yan as a storyteller is an inspiration for Italians who may learn a lot about the way of living in China and the nature of the Chinese` soul and to adopt some of their qualities such as patience, strength and resilience.⁶⁵ The impact of the Nobel Prize is reflected by the decision of the Italian publishing houses to publish another five works of Mo Yan in the following five years. She is convinced that not only the media, but also literature is able to reflect the real China and help us to acquire a complex image of the country.⁶⁶

Regarding the wave of negative responses that accompanied the announcement of the Nobel Prize in 2012, Liberati expresses a sincere disappointment, because these responses often do not focus on the literary quality, but take into consideration other aspects that are already stated in the previous chapters.⁶⁷

Mo Yan`s novel *Frog* translated in 2013 by Patrizia Liberati is introduced to Italian readers especially thanks to the magazine *The World and China*. There are various scientific magazines and newspapers who space to the introduction of Chinese literature in Italy (Zhi 2015: 60-62). Marco Del Corona spent several years as a reporter of *Corriere della Sera* in China and his book entitled *Tea with Mo Yan and other Chinese writers* (*Un tè con Mo Yan e altri scrittori cinesi*) is a compilation of several interviews with Chinese writers that talk about the situation of modern Chinese literature and the censorship in the country. According to Del Corona, based on the interview with Mo Yan, he does not have the impression that

⁶⁴ “Premio Nobel Letteratura 2012 Mo Yan elogia Italo Calvino.” Last modified October 11, 2012. <http://magazine.excite.it/premio-nobel-letteratura-2012-mo-yan-elogia-italo-calvino-V129006.html>.

⁶⁵ “Studio interview: How are Mo Yan`s works received in Italy?.” CCTV. 00:00:50-00:01:56. Last modified August 11, 2012. <http://english.cntv.cn/program/cultureexpress/20121108/107170.shtml>.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 00:02:51-00:03:20.

⁶⁷ “Mo Yan negli occhi di una traduttrice Italiana.” *China Radio International*. Last modified November 3, 2012. <http://italian.cri.cn/721/2012/11/03/321s167349.htm>.

Mo Yan`s membership of the Chinese Writers Association significantly influences his works and Mo Yan seems to enjoy a relative freedom in his writing.⁶⁸

Compared to the English-speaking countries where there is one leading translator of Mo Yan`s works – Howard Goldblatt, the situation in Italy is different. There are several significant translators of Mo Yan: Maria Rita Masci, Patrizia Liberati, Rosa Lombardi, Giorgio Trentin, Daniele Turc-Crisà or Lara Maconior. Similarly, as stated in the previous sections, *Red Sorghum* translated in 1994 introduces Mo Yan in Italy for the first time. The most significant translator among the above-mentioned is Maria Rita Masci who devoted two decades to the translations of Mo Yan`s literary works published in Italy (Babala 2014: 29-31). On translating Mo Yan, Masci expresses:

La traduzione è un'attività che pone il traduttore in un confronto diretto con la lingua: bisogna pensare continuamente, entrare in nel mondo dell'autore.⁶⁹

The translation is an activity that puts the translator to a direct confrontation with the language: you have to think constantly, to enter the author`s world.

Masci as the main editor responsible for Mo Yan`s translations in Italy (Gu 2014:18) evaluates Mo Yan as follows:

Mo Yan è una persona molto diretta,..., una persona semplice. Ha un'origine contadina, come penso ormai sia noto ai suoi lettori, e quindi è una persona molto concreta, legata alla terra, capace proprio per questa sua origine di analizzare i problemi in modo molto realistico ed empirico. È dotato di grande forza interiore e di notevole forza morale..., c'è uno spiccato senso dell'umorismo.⁷⁰

Mo Yan is a very direct person,..., a simple person. He comes from a farmer family, as I think his readers are aware of, therefore he is a very real person, tied to the ground, just because of his origin is able to analyse problems in a very realistic and empirical way. He has great inner strength and remarkable moral strength. ...with a strong sense of humour.

⁶⁸ Berneri, Francesca. "Un tè con Mo Yan e altri scrittori cinesi: intervista a Marco Del Corona." *China Files*. Last modified March 22, 2016. <http://china-files.com/it/link/47712/un-te-con-mo-yan-e-altri-scrittori-cinesi-intervista-a-marco-del-corona>.

⁶⁹ Spalletta, Alessandra. "Ho Vissuto un Anno con Mo Yan – Intervista a Rosa Lombardi." *AgiChina24*. Last modified November 12, 2012. <http://www.agichina.it/orso-egrave-stato-insignito-del-premio-nobel-per-la-letteratura.nbsp#>.

⁷⁰ Lupano, Emma. "Maria Rita Masci: 'Il Mio Incontro Con Mo Yan' [Maria Rita Masci: 'When I Met Mo Yan']." *AgiChina24*. Last modified December 7, 2012. <http://www.agichina.it/focus/notizie/maria-rita-masci-il-mioincontro-con-mo-yanbr-#>.

Based on the information summarized in this chapter, Mo Yan pays several visits to Italy and through them develops a cultural dialogue in order to introduce his works mainly thanks to various festivals and book fairs. In comparison to the English-speaking or German-speaking countries, Italy represents an exception when taking into consideration the bipolar acceptance of Mo Yan in other countries. The negative evaluations are received from the external Western media, but Italian academic circles welcome Mo Yan`s works and appreciate his literary qualities.

5. *Wa* 蛙

Frog depicts the situation during the implementation of the one-child policy launched in the second half of the twentieth century that influences the development of the Chinese society. The setting of the story typically remains Mo Yan's home county Gaomi. The story reflects the tragic consequences for society caused by the Great Leap Forward followed by a long period of famine.⁷¹ Mo Yan admits that *Frog* is also his personal confession to a certain extent. The one-child policy influences his personal life and in an interview for *Spiegel*, he admits that because of his position as an official and the future development of his career, he loses a second child as a result of the policy implementation and he admits his fault.⁷²

Mo Yan unfolds the story using a historical background of the one-child policy transformed into a philosophical issue. He juxtaposes an inner conflict between the proclaimed policy and human nature by reflecting the sorrowful consequences of the policy for the lives of the people. He maintains a critical view toward this policy and he is convinced that as a writer, it is natural to point out the shortcomings caused by the implemented policies when they are harmful for the public welfare and have a negative impact on society. In *Frog* Mo Yan narrates a story of a female doctor named Gugu Wanxin 姑姑万心 who before the birth control policy brings thousands of babies into the world, but the policy's implementation causes her to become their "executioner", because she is in charge of numerous abortions and also causes the death of pregnant women (Jiang 2015: 126-127). The main character Gugu, a daughter of a Communist doctor, starts to work as a leading obstetrician in the region after the establishment of the PRC in 1949 and changes the old-fashioned medical practice. A twist in her career comes when her fiancé flees to Taiwan and joins an army that embodies China's enemy at that time, therefore she has to put up with criticism and face punishment from the Communist party. Despite this punishment, she still wants to prove her devotion to the Party and starts to uncompromisingly carry out the necessary abortions.⁷³ Gugu who is perceived as a loving mother of thousands of children in the whole region and who is respected by people for her help, decides to fulfil her new task. People do not perceive her

⁷¹ Hilton, Isabel. "Frog by Mo Yan review – the Chinese Nobel laureate's award-winning novel." Last modified December 18, 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/dec/18/frog-mo-yan-review-chinese-nobel-laureate>.

⁷² Zand, Bernhard. "I Am Guilty." *Spiegel*. Last modified February 26, 2013. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/nobel-literature-prize-laureate-mo-yan-answers-his-critics-a-885630.html>.

⁷³ Lovell, Julia. "Mo Yan's Frog." *The New York Times*. Last modified February 6, 2015. <http://mobile.nytimes.com/2015/02/08/books/review/mo-yans-frog.html>.

as a kind-hearted figure anymore, she is transformed from *living Pusa* (*huo Pusa* 活菩萨) and *Niangniang delivering the babies* (*song zi Niangniang* 送子娘娘) to a baby slaughtering witch (*tu ying yaofu* 屠婴妖妇) that takes control over life and death. Despite the fact that she feels sorrow, her sincere belief in the party's righteous decisions do not let her stand up to the abortion policy (Ji 2014: 99-100). She fully realises her regret of the numerous abortions after her retirement.⁷⁴ Mo Yan creates numerous characters that help him to unfold the story and he cautiously chooses a name for each character in the novel, because it reveals the nature of the characters (Ji 2014: 99-100).

Frog, published in 2009, is translated into German and Italian in 2013 and its English version is published one year later.⁷⁵ Literary critics consider *Frog* an important work that helps Mo Yan to receive the Nobel Prize (Jin 2015: 8-9). Mo Yan also carefully chooses the novel's title. Isabel Hilton explains *Frog*'s title as follows:

„...connection Mo Yan makes between human sperm, early stage embryos, tadpoles and bullfrogs that is woven through a novel concerned primarily with the importance of love and life.”⁷⁶

Mo Yan uses the homophony and plays with the meaning of four characters with the reading of wa: 蛙, 娃, 娲 and 哇 which are explained in the previous section devoted to the question of the translation from Chinese. The mutual relation between the characters' meaning imply the theory about the common ancestors of mankind and the frogs because of the embryo's similarity to tadpoles. According to Ji Yanzhu 李衍柱, *wa* (as the title of the book) symbolizes life and expresses compassion and sympathy for the babies' life and its loss due to the one-child policy. In *Frog* Mo Yan employs a lot of metaphors and symbols describing the real day to day life, but he also exceeds the boundaries of reality (Li 2011: 6). One of the significant scenes representing the hallucination of Gugu when Mo Yan describes her being chased by frogs:

⁷⁴ Lovell, Julia. “Mo Yan's Frog.” *The New York Times*. Last modified February 6, 2015. <http://mobile.nytimes.com/2015/02/08/books/review/mo-yans-frog.html>.

⁷⁵ Hilton, Isabel. “Frog by Mo Yan review – the Chinese Nobel laureate's award-winning novel.” Last modified December 18, 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/dec/18/frog-mo-yan-review-chinese-nobel-laureate>.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

常言道蛙声如鼓，但姑姑说，那天晚上的蛙声如哭，仿佛是成千上万的初生婴儿在哭……那天晚上的蛙叫声里，有一种怨恨，一种委屈，仿佛是无数受了伤害的婴儿的精灵在发出控诉。(Mo 2009: 214)

The croaking of frogs is often described in terms of drumbeats. But that night it sounded to her like human cries, almost as if thousands of newborn infants were crying...the cries that night were infused with a sense of resentment and of grievance, as if the souls of countless murdered infants were hurling accusations. (Mo 2014: 250)

Frog's style is based on innovative creative methods and Mo Yan displays his exquisite writing skills in combining an epistolary style, a narration and a drama play writing in the final chapter of the book. He emphasizes strong points of each of the above-mentioned literary styles that are skilfully combined in the novel. The epistolary style underlines the creative conception of the novel and it strengthens the connection between the individual sections of the book (Li 2011: 8-9). The epistolary style is represented by Tadpole's letters addressed to his Japanese friend that open each chapter of the novel. Mo Yan uses a lot of metaphors, allusions, satirizing components and paradoxes that let the readers learn more about the story's background and the author's message becomes more comprehensible. Various language variations and its modification characterize Mo Yan's unique language style evoking many paradoxes refreshing the Chinese language (Zhang 2011: 62-63).

After publishing *Wa* in Germany, it is also discussed in the programme *Literature club* on SRF station. One of the participants in the discussion, Hildegard Keller, argues that *Wa* is an exquisite work combining autobiographical signs, humour and colourful descriptions.⁷⁷ Elke Heidenreich also shares a positive evaluation of the novel. She claims Mo Yan undoubtedly belongs to world literature. She maintains that the readers are immersed in a completely different and foreign world that let them become detached from reality and his work also introduces distinctive features of Chinese culture, such as the names corresponding to human organs and body parts.⁷⁸ Rüdiger Safranski maintains that despite the fact that the Swedish Academy explains Mo Yan's award with an argument of the hallucinatory realism (represented by the scene when Gugu is being chased by the frogs), for Safranski *Wa* is strongly influenced by socialist realism and the biggest difference is the way in which he depicts the story – neither from the angle of an official author strongly

⁷⁷ "Winterson, Ortheil, Pound, Haller und Mo Yan [Winterson, Ortheil, Pound and Mo Yan]." SRF Kultur, Literaturclub [Literature club], 00:21:10-00:21:54. March 5, 2013.

<http://www.srf.ch/sendungen/literaturclub/winterson-ortheil-pound-haller-und-mo-yan>.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 00:24:04-00:24:44.

supporting the Chinese government nor from the angle of Chinese dissidents writers, but he keeps back.⁷⁹ According to Safranski, the composition of the novel seems as if it were written for a Western audience, because the epistolary novel belongs to one of the favorite literary forms of modernism. Just like Heidenreich he finds the last chapter of the book – the drama play to be redundant.⁸⁰

A brief description of the discussed novel *Wa* is followed by a section devoted to Mo Yan`s translators and the characteristics of Mo Yan`s language discussed in detail together with concrete examples in order to determine the translation methods employed by Howard Goldblatt, Martina Hasse and Patrizia Liberati.

⁷⁹ “Winterson, Ortheil, Pound, Haller und Mo Yan [Winterson, Ortheil, Pound and Mo Yan].” SRF Kultur, Literaturclub [Literature club], 00:24:47-00:26:38. March 5, 2013.

<http://www.srf.ch/sendungen/literaturclub/winterson-ortheil-pound-haller-und-mo-yan>.

⁸⁰ “Winterson, Ortheil, Pound, Haller und Mo Yan [Winterson, Ortheil, Pound and Mo Yan].” SRF Kultur, Literaturclub [Literature club], 00:33:11-00:35:28. March 5, 2013.

<http://www.srf.ch/sendungen/literaturclub/winterson-ortheil-pound-haller-und-mo-yan>.

6. Mo Yan`s translators

The translators of Mo Yan`s works are experienced scholars in the field of literary translation as well as respected sinologists. They have an outstanding ability to transfer the detailed descriptions of the habits and the way of living embedded in Shandong province to the target language in common. Thanks to them, Mo Yan`s works become well-known abroad as well and his translators contribute to the promotion of Chinese literature in the West which is an important part of the *going out* (zouchuqu 走出去) policy launched by the Chinese government in 2012 (Shao 2015: 47-54). The quality of the translations is directly linked to Mo Yan`s success and to his impact in the framework of world literature (Jiang 2006: 77). Mo Yan is aware of the fact that the translators play an indispensable role in the context of promoting his literary works in other parts of the world and that their work also contributes to him being awarded the Nobel Prize (Goldblatt 2013: 8). He expresses a gratitude toward the translators` work in the speech at the Frankfurt Book Fair and he admits that the translation process of a personalized writing style of the author is very exhausting, therefore the translation of `stylized Chinese into another language` is a difficult task and he emphasizes the outstanding work of the translators (Mo 2010: 23). The Nobel Prize banquet is another occasion during which he openly praises the work of the translators in his speech:

„I also want to express my respect for the translators from various countries who have translated my work. Without you, there would be no world literature. Your work is a bridge that helps people to understand and respect each other.”⁸¹

Mo Yan praises their work and he also tries to maintain amicable relations with the translators with whom he has the opportunity to meet personally, therefore Maria Rita Masci and Patrizia Liberati, the most significant translators of Mo Yan`s works in Italy, both receive an invitation to the Nobel Prize banquet. Mo Yan praises the help of the translators and wants to share his success, because they are an inseparable part of it.⁸² According to Masci, when a translator decides to translate Mo Yan`s works, one needs at least an entire year of uninterrupted concentration that replaces a regular full-time occupation, because a good quality translation requires a maximal focus (Zhi 2015: 60-62).

⁸¹ Mo, Yan 莫言. “Banquet Speech.” *Nobelprize.org*. Accessed December 3, 2015. http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2012/yan-speech_en.html.

⁸² Lupano, Emma. “Maria Rita Masci: `Il Mio Incontro Con Mo Yan` [Maria Rita Masci: `When I Met Mo Yan`].” *Agichina24*. Last modified December 7, 2012. <http://www.agichina.it/focus/notizie/maria-rita-masci-il-mioincontro-con-mo-yanbr-#>.

Regarding Howard Goldblatt, Shen Xian 沈娴 together with many others agrees that he is one of the best translators of Mo Yan`s works among the numerous Western languages. Anna Gustafsson Chen admits that she became interested in Mo Yan`s works after reading the translations by Goldblatt. Consequently, she decided to translate Mo Yan into Swedish as well. Gustafsson Chen underlines the uneasy task of the translators that have to overcome the cultural differences and introduce the circumstances in Chinese history that are unknown to the Western world (Shen 2012: 16-17). The translators play a crucial role in the decision making process, because they are responsible for the foreignization or naturalization of the translated text. They select the emphasized sections and which parts can be transformed to enhance the comprehensibility of the text, which influences the result of the translation and the impression the writer leaves in the different cultures (Jiang 2006: 77).

„As Goldblatt himself noted in an interview with *The LA Review of Books*, ‘What the reader has in her hands is a facsimile of the original work.’ We should therefore see multiple facsimiles, and then we can decide on Mo Yan’s true place within literature.“⁸³

Despite the fact that the primary motivation of the thesis is not to determine Mo Yan`s true place within world literature, but the three facsimiles represented by the translations of *Wa* serve for a better understanding of the translation methods` variety. The following section introduces the translators of *Frog* individually – Howard Goldblatt, Martina Hasse and Patrizia Liberati. All the above-mentioned translators know Mo Yan personally, which might have had a positive impact on their translations, because they were able to instantly consult him whenever any problems arose during the translation process.

6.1. Howard Goldblatt

Howard Goldblatt is one of the most renowned sinologists and translators in the field of Chinese literature. He has translated around 50 literary works so far from numerous Chinese writers (Shi 2015: 316-318). An ideal translator is not only a scholar, but to a certain extent a writer and an interpreter at the same time. Howard Goldblatt is one of the most significant translators of Mo Yan`s works and his first translation was *Red Sorghum*. Goldblatt carefully

⁸³ Bram, Barclay. “Literary Prowess Lost: On Mo Yan’s ‘Frog’ and the Trouble with Translation.” Last modified March 26, 2015. <http://www.themillions.com/2015/03/literary-prowess-lost-on-mo-yans-frog-and-the-trouble-with-translation.html>

selects the words and tries to achieve the highest possible level of comprehensibility of the translated text (Liu 2013: 140). He uses various translation methods in order to eliminate language barriers including annotations, a transformation of the sentence structure or rewriting and rearrangement of whole passages. All these methods have the same objective in common – a creation of a natural text in English with naturally flowing grammar and compatible with the way of thinking and the logic of the target readers (Lou 2015: 107). Because of that, it is also acceptable when he does not translate some expressions that he considers as redundant in English and leaves out some parts in case that it does not change the meaning of the original. Goldblatt is highly praised for his ability to convey one culture to another (Cao and Wang 2015: 126-127). A distinguishing feature of Goldblatt's translation practice is the representation of Chinese culture from a global point of view taking into consideration the characteristics of the source and the target culture (Meng 2015: 77).

He states that a frequent mistake made by translators is their decision to achieve maximal faithfulness to the original, but he does not consider rewriting as a tool for “concealing” author's characteristic literary style. Kubin appreciates Goldblatt's unique translation techniques, because despite the fact that he reorganizes the text, his translations transfer the author's original idea and evoke equivalent feelings as the Chinese original (Shen 2012: 16-17). Lucas Klein states that Goldblatt's translations are influenced by Faulkner and Márquez and also by the translators Gregory Rabassa⁸⁴ and Edith Grossman⁸⁵. Goldblatt combines the narrative style of Mo Yan with his own narrative figures. Apart from the rewriting and the reduction of the original text, some of his translations also have variable endings in comparison to the original, but these corrections are always approved by the author. Goldblatt skillfully combines the creative techniques (possibility to express himself) with the concept of fidelity to the original (becoming someone else) and works on the scale between them, because he prefers their dynamic connection. His translations are an example

⁸⁴ Gregory Rabassa is a translator of Latin American literature and a linguist. García Márquez even considers his translation of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* better than the original. Caistor, Nick. “Gregory Rabassa obituary.” *The Guardian*. Last modified June 22, 2016.

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/jun/22/gregory-rabassa-obituary>.

⁸⁵ Edith Grossman is a Spanish to English translator specializing on Latin American literature and a literary critic as well. She holds translation lectures at New York University and her book *The Antipoetry of Nicanor Parra* that focuses on the works by García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, or Antonio Machado. Salisbury, Maria Cecilia. “The Making of a Translator: An Interview with Edith Grossman.” Last accessed January 2, 2017.

http://translation.utdallas.edu/Interviews/EdithGrossmanTR_41.html.

of glocalization – the maintenance of the characteristic features of the original supplemented by the required text adaptation in keeping with the target language (Meng 2015: 78-82).

葛浩文的创造性以 glocal Chimerican 这一特质为支撑，其创造不仅体现在微观层面的词句，同时还体现在整体的风格重塑。(Meng 2015: 78)

Goldblatt's creativity is supported by the glocal Chimerican characteristic, his creativity does not only reflect in words and sentences on the microcosmic level, but also reflects in the overall style reconstruction.

Generally, he leans towards naturalization and a free translation. Goldblatt characterizes the translator's work as a combination of a comprehensive reading in the first step, an interpretation of the original and a final creation of the text. Goldblatt enhances the comprehensibility of his translations also with an enclosed name list of all the characters in the story which helps the readers to become more familiar with the plot (Meng 2015: 78-82). Mo Yan's works are well-known for the high number of characters in his works, therefore Goldblatt's name lists are perceived as a useful part of his translation practice.

Goldblatt, rather than relying too much on word for word translation, searches another suitable way in order to successfully interpret all the allusions used by the author (Cao and Wang 2015: 125). As Goldblatt expresses:

莫言是根，我是帮助莫言开花的人。(Cao and Wang 2015: 125)

Mo Yan is the root, I help Mo Yan to bloom.

Goldblatt's personalized style of translating and natural narrative style evoke an impression that the text is originally written in English, not Chinese (Jiang 2005: 67). Because of that, many people advise him to become a writer, but his response embodies a soul of the true translator – he enjoys the whole translation process and the text's creation, the thrill caused by uncertainty whether he selects the best equivalent in the target language and the procedure of looking for solutions (Zhang 2005: 76). Because of the fact that Howard Goldblatt is not only a translator that is interested in Mo Yan's works, but because they are close friends, his translations are enriched by this dimension (Goldblatt 2013: 8).

Mo Yan also openly appraises Goldblatt's work as follows:

如果没有他杰出的工作, 我的小说也可能由别人翻成英文在美国出版, 但绝对没有今天这样完美的译本。许多既精通英语又精通汉语的朋友对我说: 葛浩文教授的翻译与我的原著是一种旗鼓相当的搭配。但我更愿意相信, 他的译本为我的原著增添了光彩。⁸⁶

Without his outstanding work, my novel also might be translated into English by someone else and published in the United States, but there is absolutely no such a perfect translation. Many friends proficient in English and in Chinese told me: Professor's Goldblatt translation and my original work are a perfect match. But I would rather believe that his translation adds lustre to my original.

Taking into consideration the translation's nature, there are various internal and external factors that come into play. The internal factors are represented by the translator's personal beliefs, values, experience and educational background, whereas the external factor is for example the cultural difference. Regarding the Goldblatt's translations, sometimes he weakens the original expressions related to religion or superstition (mixin secail 迷信色彩) in order to increase the text's readability taking into consideration the requirements of the Western readers (Zhao and Zhang 2015: 43-44).

The English translation of *Frog* is published in October 2014 first in Australia followed by Great Britain in November 2014 and in January 2015 in the United States. The relatively late publication of the translation of *Frog* might be perceived as a strategic choice, because it is easier to promote it after the year 2012. Goldblatt upholds his habitual translation strategy that inclines to the domestifying methods and rewriting which suits the American readers. On the other hand, the translation of the names in *Frog* proves that he carefully selects the sections that preserve the original flavor of the novel (Shi 2015: 315-318). Due to the frequent phenomenon related to the translators of Chinese, they are sinologists with a high academic degree, therefore they have to be careful when translating a literary work written in a simple language of the common people and to avoid too sophisticated linguistic expressions.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Mo Yan, 莫言. "Wo zai Meiguo chuban de san ben shu 我在美国出版的三本书 [My three published books in America]." Last modified October 17, 2012. <http://blog.163.com/ybxldh@126/blog/static/69242731201291721032999/>.

⁸⁷ Bram, Barclay. "Literary Prowess Lost: On Mo Yan's 'Frog' and the Trouble with Translation." Last modified March 26, 2015. <http://www.themillions.com/2015/03/literary-prowess-lost-on-mo-yans-frog-and-the-trouble-with-translation.html>.

„It's a catch-22: To be proficient enough in the language to be an accurate translator requires a high level of education, but just such an education can cripple the ability of the translator to render the text accurately.”⁸⁸

Barclay Bram maintains that taking into consideration the Western languages with similar origins, it is impossible to verify the translated text by translating it back to the source language, but in the case of Chinese this verification is not possible because of the big differences between the languages. The special conditions also apply for the translations from Chinese, because there is usually only one translation of the literary work available, therefore it is not possible to compare two or more translations of the same original.⁸⁹

The extensive researches devoted to the translations by Howard Goldblatt are caused by his leading position of the translator from Chinese to English and because of the limited amount of the sources dealing with the translations by Martin Hasse and Patrizia Liberati, the following sections devoted to their introduction and translation practice are less detailed when compared to Howard Goldblatt.

6.2. Martina Hasse

Apart from the book *Frog*, Martina Hasse also translated *The Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*, *Sandalwood Death* and *Change* from Mo Yan. *Frog* is the first translation of Mo Yan published in Germany after receiving the Nobel Prize in 2012.

Martina Hasse shares a similar opinion as Andrea Riemenschneider and she considers Mo Yan as part of the world literature. Just like other translators, Hasse manages to get to know Mo Yan personally and regarding her task to translate Mo Yan into German, she says:⁹⁰

Mo Yan zu übersetzen, ist dem Literaturübersetzer eine wahre Freude, denn man kann während des Übersetzens mitfiebern, mitlachen, mitweinen.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Bram, Barclay. “Literary Prowess Lost: On Mo Yan’s ‘Frog’ and the Trouble with Translation.” Last modified March 26, 2015. <http://www.themillions.com/2015/03/literary-prowess-lost-on-mo-yans-frog-and-the-trouble-with-translation.html>.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Hasse, Martina. “Den literaturnobelpreisträger übersetzen [Translating Nobel Prize Winner].” Goethe-Institut, last modified December 2012, <https://www.goethe.de/ins/cn/de/m/kul/mag/20629596.html>.

⁹¹ Ibid.

Translating Mo Yan is a real pleasure for a translator of the literature, because during the translation, one shares the excitement [with him], laughs and cries [with him].

Hasse sketches the characteristics that she has in common with Mo Yan – they both come from the countryside, where people speak dialects and they both also leave the countryside and move to the city, Mo Yan devotes his works to Gaomi, but later he lives in Beijing and also Hasse moves to Hamburg, therefore she sympathizes not only with the author's literary works, but also with his life. In order to create a precise translation, Hasse employs various means and consults the meaning of the expressions with experts in order to understand them precisely. In her opinion, one of the most important steps in the translation process is to find the most suitable expressions and to become acquainted with the jargon from the period of the Cultural Revolution and other significant periods from the Chinese history in order to interpret them properly. For instance, while translating *Frog*, she also uses the sources supplied by the German Airforce in order to render correctly the terms related to military ranks and the technology used in the army or she also consults the problematic sections with other professionals depending on the topic of the literary work (e.g. farmers or scientists from Cloppenburg Museum Village) that provide her helpful information.⁹² Regarding the translation practice by Hasse:

...die Übersetzung von Martina Hasse (Füße sind weiß wie "Salangidae-Stinte") noch verstärkt wird, die manchmal wirkt, als sei sie auf halbem Weg zwischen China und Deutschland stehen geblieben.⁹³

...the translation of Martina Hasse (feet are white like "Salangidae smelts") is even more intensified, sometimes it seems as if it had stopped halfway between China and Germany.

Martina Hasse employs every accessible means in order to increase the translation's comprehensiveness and tries to avoid any misunderstandings while reading the original as well as during the translation process.

⁹² Hasse, Martina. "Den literaturnobelpreisträger übersetzen [Translating Nobel Prize Winner]." Goethe-Institut, last modified December 2012, <https://www.goethe.de/ins/cn/de/m/kul/mag/20629596.html>.

⁹³ Mangold, Ijoma. "Roman 'Frösche': Ein großes Bestiarium [Novel: 'Frog': One big bestiality]." In: *Zeit Online*, last modified April 25, 2013, <http://www.zeit.de/2013/18/mo-yan-froesche/seite-2>.

6.3. Patrizia Liberati

Patrizia Liberati has lived in China for three decades, where she works at the Italian Cultural Institute. Apart from the book *Frog* published in 2013 in Italy, she has translated two other titles by Mo Yan – *Sandalwood Death* and *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*. For the latter, she also received an Italian prize.⁹⁴ The process of the translation of Mo Yan`s work Liberati describes as follows:

Ho portato i miei appunti, e lui pazientemente mi ha risposto passo dopo passo... Una volta mi ha addirittura detto: `se ritieni che questa parte di romanzo sia troppo incomprensibile per un lettore occidentale, tagliala pure`. Io... tagliare il mitico!?'⁹⁵

I brought my notes, and he patiently answered me step by step ... Once he even said to me: 'If you are convinced that any part of the novel is too incomprehensible for a Western reader, purely cut it off'. I...cut off the legend!?

Liberati admits the necessity to undertake some research prior to every translation in order to become familiar with the topic of the novel in the first place, because the research is a prerequisite for the correct translation of the expressions in the original. It is not only about the work with several dictionaries in order to find the most suitable expression, but the translator has to keep in mind who are the people the author writes his works for, therefore the translator needs to decipher the author`s mind. That is one of the most fascinating aspects of the translator`s task.⁹⁶ Liberati pays attention to every detail in the translation process and she discusses any unclear parts directly with Mo Yan. She appreciates Mo Yan`s language style characterized by numerous idioms and its strong connection to the dialect, because they increase her excitement when looking for a suitable solution.⁹⁷ As mentioned in the previous chapters, Mo Yan acknowledges the importance of each translator and he evaluates the work of Masci and Liberati as follows:

questo onore appartiene anche a te e a Patrizia! Grazie ai vostri sforzi nel corso di tutti questi anni ho conquistato una reputazione nel mondo letterario in Italia e anche in molti altri paesi.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Zhang, Rui. "Chinese literature goes global." CCTV. Last modified September 11, 2012. <http://english.cntv.cn/program/cultureexpress/20121109/102429.shtml>.

⁹⁵ Ghezzi, Cecilia Attanasio. "La traduttrice e il Nobel." *China Files*. Last modified December 7, 2012. <http://www.china-files.com/it/link/24185/la-traduttrice-e-il-nobel>.

⁹⁶ "Mo Yan negli occhi di una traduttrice Italiana." *China Radio International*. Last modified November 3, 2012. <http://italian.cri.cn/721/2012/11/03/321s167349.htm>.

⁹⁷ Ghezzi, Cecilia Attanasio. "La traduttrice e il Nobel." *China Files*. Last modified December 7, 2012. <http://www.china-files.com/it/link/24185/la-traduttrice-e-il-nobel>.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

This honour also belongs to you and to Patrizia! Thanks to your efforts over all these years I have acquired a reputation in the literary world in Italy and in many other countries.

Liberati is convinced that Mo Yan`s works are international, despite the fact that they are embedded in China and closely related to Chinese culture and history. Mo Yan writes about universal topics that everybody can identify with. While reading his books, we enter an unknown world, but step by step we are immersed in it and we discover that in the end we are all identical. Liberati describes her translation process composed of three readings, an initial reading establishes her attitude toward the title, because it is essential to like the text that is going to be translated. The result of the second reading is a draft translation in a metalanguage that is not Italian yet, but it sums up the meaning of the text in Chinese. The next step is a second version of the draft that is followed by a reading of the text as if it were originally written in Italian.⁹⁹

Based on the statements by Liberati, she carefully approaches the translated text and employs various means in order to become aware of the foreign phenomenon and to interpret it correctly to the target language. In case of any unclear parts, she does not hesitate to consult them directly with the author and she keeps in mind her target audience.

⁹⁹ “Mo Yan negli occhi di una traduttrice Italiana.” *China Radio International*. Last modified November 3, 2012. <http://italian.cri.cn/721/2012/11/03/321s167349.htm>.

7. Mo Yan`s language

Mo Yan has a unique writing style that does not only contain expressions from the dialect that is typical for Shandong province, but he also creates his own rhetorical figures or transforms their original meaning. In order to better understand the translation process in the case of Mo Yan`s works, the study of Mo Yan`s language characteristics helps us to reveal the ways of overcoming the possible obstacles while translating the novel *Frog*. There are numerous studies regarding the language style of Mo Yan, as Wang Li 王丽 describes:

他使用的语言都是属于他自己的，面对固有的、常见的词汇系统，他别出心裁……
(Wang 2014b: 101)

He uses a language that belongs to him, it opposes an inherent, a common vocabulary system, he shows originality...

Mo Yan combines different techniques and he is not afraid to use unconventional expressions and exceeds the boundaries either from the grammatical or the aesthetical point of view by employing unexpected expressions and a lot of paradoxes. He is well-known for combining mystery and reality together with supernatural features. Supernatural creatures do not only bring magical flavour to the text, but also denote Mo Yan`s close relation towards folk culture and traditional narrations enriched by a religious phenomenon. Mo Yan repeatedly recreates his own version of Gaomi based on people`s memories, a subjective view of Mo Yan and the descriptions supported by colourful images that stimulate all our senses of reception. He often changes the angle in the narration and prefers to unfold the story through the first-person narrative (Wang 2015b: 88).

Mo Yan is good at transforming language conventions which reveals his creativity to great extent. A replacement of the expression in a new context or its transformation results in evoking a completely new meaning and a connotation in particular circumstances. Mo Yan neither uses rhetorical figures, nor writing methods in a traditional way, because he is convinced that a particular usage of the language is one of the most important characteristic features of a writer. Mo Yan is also well-known for his affinity for the dialects and the vernacular language which originated in the peasant region of Gaomi. Apart from the inspiration from the folk customs and the narration techniques, the colloquial language typical for Mo Yan assures the language`s authenticity, because it reflects the country flavour of Gaomi (Qiu and Nan 2012: 66-67).

Mo Yan frequently employs numerous words imitating sounds, but he exceeds the limits of their original usage. Apart from the sounds' imitation, Mo Yan uses them for expressing feelings and for intensifying the imaginative aspects of the narration. There are two types of words imitating the sounds – the first one is represented by an onomatopoeia (nisheng 拟声) expressing objective aspects of daily life. The second one consists of words imitating sounds expressing inner feelings (mosheng gan sheng 摹声感声), therefore they are closely related to the subjective aspects. These words play an important role in the perception of the text and thanks to a different way of their implementation, they are able to evoke a mysterious sensation that is more subjective and stimulate readers' sentiments by extending or shrinking their original meaning. Mo Yan often transforms these words by a hyperbole that enriches their meaning and expresses his subjective imagination or sentiments. The colourful and rich descriptions introduce the author's fantasy world. Mo Yan extends the onomatopoeias' original meaning by transforming its form and symbolism. A transformed usage of the onomatopoeia serves for creating an absurd or fantastical atmosphere and complicated subjective emotions (e.g. the onomatopoeia used for soft and tender noises depict very loud and almost deafening sounds without any change of their original meaning). Mo Yan also uses the onomatopoeia' symbolism for depicting the sounds of abstract objects by the sounds used for concrete objects together with more complicated and complex sounds created by more objects, therefore the author is able to transmit a wide range of sentiments through his works. Mo Yan uses the words imitating sounds for expressing feelings of the real objects that normally do not make any sounds, but he takes down these boundaries and mute objects or movements acquire new characteristics. Mo Yan brings to life the people's inner feelings combined with illusions, therefore the text surpasses the frontiers of the world full of fantasy and mystery. Mo Yan emphasizes the importance of creating a personalized writing style and is not afraid to overstep the set boundaries with vigour (Wang 2016: 137-139).

Reduplication (in the form of AB becoming AABB) of adjectives and onomatopoeia belongs to the linguistic modification that is generally used for strengthening the aesthetic impression. The semantic meaning of the words and the descriptions of the characters in the literary work become more vivid, therefore the language style is also more attractive for the readers. Mo Yan does not follow the reduplication rules precisely, but he reduplicates the words that are not used to be reduplicated. The creative character of the writing enables the author to break the grammar rules and to create new expressions that allow him to freely depict his thoughts (Zhou 2012: 153-154). The reduplication enhances the aesthetical perception of the text and

strengthens the semantic meaning of the reduplicated words as well (Sun and Guo 2014: 112).

The change of words' rational meaning (lixing yi 理性义) is another characteristic of Mo Yan's creative work. The words' rational meaning represents a fundamental meaning of a certain expression. Its change is characterized by a usage of the expression against established conventions in the language. It even evokes a funny connotation that is unexpected and refreshing. Despite the fact that this method is generally less frequent, Mo Yan uses it quite often (Zhao 2014: 101). He goes against the conventions of the words usage and grasps the root of the word that is translocated in the next step. As a result, the word is introduced from a new point of view, but displays its former meaning (Zhou 2012: 155).

There is a sentimental colouring that adds flavour and subjectivity to the expressions as well. It is possible to employ them in unusual parts of the text and find new collocations for them, therefore the author distorts fixed way of thinking about a concrete term and changes its aesthetic impression. The expressions bringing the sentimental colouring in the text represent its important part and their transformation is visible in the expressions of praise used in a derogative way that satirize and mock the original meaning or vice versa (Zhao 2014: 101-102). Mo Yan transforms the conventional perception of beauty and ugliness by a reversed language register. He does not only change the imagination of ugliness and beauty, but this reversed perception also affects the level of their understanding and acceptance. Mo Yan also frequently juxtaposes ugliness and beauty despite their contradictory meaning. Apart from stirring up the imagination of the readers, he introduces new multidimensional significance that changes with different points of view (Sun and Huang 2014: 50).

Mo Yan combines diverse language registers – the classical, modern, official and common language of people together with the vulgarisms. The inclusion of the vulgar words, especially at the beginning of his writing career, is considered as rare and going against literary conventions. These vulgar expressions include also those typical for the peasants. Apart from that, he uses a lot of folk proverbs together with the expressions reminiscent of Western expressions, so called 'fanyi yuan 翻译语言' (translational language) known from the twenties and thirties of the 20th century. On the other hand, it is Mo Yan's way of expressing himself freely and naturally and the text becomes more dynamic and stimulating. When observing Mo Yan's language style as it gradually developed throughout the years, he does not abandon the classical writing style, one of his main inspirations. Regarding the

novel *Frog*, his language style does not transform rapidly, it still depicts reality, hallucinations or sentiments combined with expressions' multifaceted meanings, but his language simplifies (Ning 2013: 170-171).

Mo Yan's language style is characterized by transforming the expressions' original form in order to acquire vivid, rich and colourful descriptions. Mo Yan's language style distorts the rules of morphology and the grammar and his descriptions stimulate the readers' imagination, therefore they are able to perceive the actual atmosphere of the novel (Sun and Guo 2014: 111-112). The general introduction to the Mo Yan's language style displays that he extends the boundaries of the language as a result of the numerous transformations in order to personalize the expressions and to create a distinctive language style that can be immediately identified as his while reading.

7.1. Language of *Wa* 蛙

According to Mo Yan, despite the fact that previously he used to employ more complicated and dense language, he tries to control it in order to maintain a simple language (Wang 2015a: 62).

他的前期作品中有较多语言变形的体现，到《蛙》中，手法渐趋成熟，其变形的艺术手法的运用已告别了简单的语言变形，进而向情节、场景、感觉等变形的迈进。(Wang 2015a: 62)

There are many linguistic transformations in his early works, up to the *Frog*, the technique gradually matures, and the use of transformative artistic techniques strides from the simple language transformations toward the transformations of plot, scene, sentiments, etc..

Various kinds of the language transformation allow Mo Yan to freely express his perception of the world. Apart from that, the above-mentioned examples describe a transition from an objective perspective toward a strongly subjective perspective and by this means, he transforms the expressiveness of all included features (plot of the story, setting or sentiments). According to Wang Yanyin 王妍引, *Wa* reflects the transition of Mo Yan's creative work that moves from a simple way of changing the words toward a more artistic way of transforming the atmosphere and the novel's overall impression (2015a: 62). As Mo Yan describes his writing style and language:

...自己的方式，讲自己的故事。(Wang 2015a: 64)

...in own way, narrate own story.

The following section concentrates on the concrete examples in order to reveal whether the employed methods of each translator fulfil the requirements of one of the translational models introduced in the opening section of the thesis, whether they overlap or whether there is not any correspondence to translation theories.

7.2. *Frog* by Goldblatt

Many factors lead Goldblatt to opt to translate *Wa*. Thanks to successful books such as *Red Sorghum*, *Big Breasts, Wide Hips* or *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*, the Western readers are already familiar with Mo Yan's literary works. Apart from that, *Wa* touches on political issues which increases the interest of the western audience. Regarding the translation methods of Goldblatt in the case of this novel, he principally edges towards the text's naturalization and the foreignization serves as an additional translation method, because the naturalizing methods focus on the target culture and language and they enable the readers to identify more easily with the text minimalizing the cultural gap (Tang and Huang 2016: 95).

Starting out with the title of the book, we look closer at the ambiguity of the morphemes *wa* 蛙, 哇, 娃, 娲 and their translation. The metaphorical meaning of the book attaches importance to the morpheme *wa* 蛙 that reappears throughout the text combined with its homophonic variations.

听到这个消息后，哥哥姐姐像青蛙一样哇哇叫，我在地上翻筋斗。(Mo 2009: 29)

When they heard the news, my brothers and sisters croaked like an army of frogs, while I turned somersaults in the yard. (Mo 2014: 34)

Reduplication of an onomatopoeia *wa* 哇 strengthens the croaking sound in the text of the original. The translation of this onomatopoeia is conveyed by using the expression *like an army of frogs* added by Goldblatt what displays the variety of the expressiveness when comparing two different languages and their means of increasing the text's attractiveness. On the other hand, Goldblatt simplifies the translation of *gege* 哥哥 (elder brother) and *jiejie* 姐姐 (elder sister) to brothers and sisters.

蛙蛙蛙 —— 哇哇哇—— (Mo 2009: 197)

wa wa wa – frog croaks – *wah wah wah* – babies' cries... (Mo 2014: 231)

Goldblatt pays attention to the translation of the above-mentioned onomatopoeia and inserts an additional note in the text in order to state clearly the difference between the homophonic morphemes. Despite the fact that Mo Yan originally uses the morphemes denoting frog in the first case and the onomatopoeia for croaking or crying of babies in the latter case, Goldblatt decides to state clearly the difference of their meaning as well as the phonological ambiguity of both morphemes in order to indicate their metaphorical meaning.

为什么“蛙”与“娃”同音?为什么婴儿刚出母腹时哭声与蛙的叫声十分相似?为什么我们东北乡的泥娃娃塑像中,有许多怀抱着一只蛙?为什么人类的始祖叫女娲?“娲”与“蛙”同音,这说明人类的始祖是一只大母蛙,这说明人类就是由蛙进化而来的…… (Mo 2009: 223)

Why does the word for frogs – *wa* – sound exactly like the word for babies – *wa*?...Why is the first sound a newborn baby makes an almost exact replica of a frog's croak? How come so many of the clay dolls made in Northeast Gaomi Township are holding frogs in their arms? And why is the ancestor of humans called Nü wa? Like the '*wa*' for frog. Doesn't that prove that our earliest ancestor was a frog, and that we have evolved from her? (Mo 2014: 259-260)

This passage contains three different morphemes of *wa*, whose meaning is explained in the preceding chapter devoted to Chinese in translation. The frequent reappearance of the morpheme *wa* requires its precise translation. Goldblatt stays true to the Chinese original and uses a direct translation combined with a phonetical transcription of the morphemes that emphasizes their homophonic character.

姑姑: 是娃娃的“娃”, 还是青蛙的“蛙”?

蝌蚪: 暂名青蛙的“蛙”, 当然也可以改成娃娃的“娃”, 当然还可以改成女娲的“娲”。 (Mo 2009: 308)

Gugu: Is that '*wa*' as in '*wawa*' for babies or '*wa*' as in '*qingwa*' for frogs?

Tadpole: For now it's the '*wa*' in '*qingwa*', but I can change it later to the '*wa*' in '*wawa*' for babies, or in '*Nüwa*', the goddess who created mankind. (Mo 2014: 351)

The last example also displays the repetitive usage of *wa* combined with pinyin pronunciation followed by the direct translation, so they do not become mixed up and

Goldblatt inserts the additional explanation for the goddess Nüwa, because it is less probable that the Western audience is aware of this term.

In spite of the fact that based on the above-mentioned examples, Goldblatt manages to distinguish clearly the difference and the figurative meaning of the homophone morphemes *wa*. Bram expresses uncertainty about the sufficient interpretation of the morphemes' metaphorical as follows:

Without understanding the similarity between the Wa sounds that appear throughout the novel, the metaphor of frogs seems labored and bizarre. Without context, the constant recurrence of frogs is arbitrary. Rather, in the original, the metaphor of frogs is multifaceted and beautifully subtle. It's thus strange that the book only makes a passing reference to this, embedded within the text, glossed over in a single sentence in the latter third. There is no translator's note prefacing the work, which is limiting for readers unfamiliar with Chinese.¹⁰⁰

On the other hand, Bram acknowledges Goldblatt's decision based on aesthetical and stylistic reasons. Background information in a footnote intervenes and distorts the original layout of the text and the additional explanation inserted in the text seems inconvenient and violates the text's "smoothness".¹⁰¹

We encounter the cultural characteristics of Gaomi immediately in the first chapter of the novel, when Mo Yan introduces a traditional way of choosing names that are composed of the morphemes denoting body parts and organs. This particular habit is a part of the Chinese culture and it has a long tradition in the countryside, because it used to be common to choose a name according to the infant's appearance and its distinctive physical characteristics. The names of the characters play an important role in the *Frog*, because they do not only depict an external visage of the characters (whether emphasizing physical features, indicating a nickname or depicting nature), they also contain a hidden deeper meaning. Wan Xin 万心 (Gugu), the core character of the novel, represents an example of the name having a metaphorical meaning. The meaning of the character xin 心 implies the central position of Wan Xin based on the similarity between the expressions hexing 核型 or zhongxin 中心 denoting the core and the middle or the centre as well as referring to the people's centre of feelings and thoughts. Wan Zu 万足 and Wang Jiao 王脚 represent another example of a

¹⁰⁰ Bram, Barclay. "Literary Prowess Lost: On Mo Yan's 'Frog' and the Trouble with Translation." Last modified March 26, 2015. <http://www.themillions.com/2015/03/literary-prowess-lost-on-mo-yans-frog-and-the-trouble-with-translation.html>

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

hidden meaning of the character`s names. Despite the fact that the literal meaning of both words zu 足 and jiao 脚 is similar, foot, Mo Yan employs a derogative connotation of the character jiao 脚 and expresses a lower status of Wang Jiao on the professional as well as on the personal level. On the other hand, he pairs zu 足 with a positive connotation that is also possible to derive from the expressions containing zu such as manzu 满足, to satisfy and shizu 十足 referring to complete (Sui 2015: 102-105). Taking into consideration the translation of the names, it is complicated to interpret them in way that they evoke similar connotations as the author elaborates.

譬如陈鼻、赵眼、吴大肠、孙肩..... 譬如陈耳，譬如陈眉 (Mo 2009: 5)

Nose Chen, for instance, Eyes Zhao, Colon Wu, Shoulder Sun... We still have Chen Er (Ears) and Chen Mei (Brow) (Mo 2014: 5)

The names represent one of the first foreign elements that we come across in the novel. Goldblatt translates only the first name and he leaves the family name in pinyin. At first, he shifts the usual order of a name in Chinese, the family name preceding the first name which is different from Western standards, but in the following paragraph he upholds the original order. He either directly translates the first name or uses parenthesis. In the novel, he translates the name of each character by its first appearance in the plot and he maintains the names` transcription in the later sections.

肖下唇（后来改名为肖夏春）(Mo 2009: 29)

Xiao Xiachun (Lower Lip, the characters later changed to summer and spring) (Mo 2014: 34)

Mo Yan employs the homophony also in case of the names, whereas the name`s transformation is clear in Chinese, Goldblatt does not emphasize the homophonic similarity between the characters and directly translates the name stated in brackets.

陈额，字天庭 (Mo 2009: 10)

Chen E (Forehead), with the style name Tianting (Middle of the Forehead) (Mo 2014: 11)

Apart from the regular names of the characters, there is also the above-mentioned name that is enriched by the characters tianting 天庭 and Goldblatt uses pinyin together with the additional direct translation as Middle of the Forehead, referring to the character`s first name being Forehead.

小狮子 (Mo 2009: 15)

Little Lion (Mo 2014: 19)

The nickname Xiao Shizi also offers the possibility to translate it directly without transforming its fundamental meaning. However, in this case we lose access to the original pronunciation of the name.

学名万足，乳名小跑 (Mo 2009: 22)

In school I was known as Wan Zu (Foot), but I was Xiaopao – Jogger – as a toddler (Mo 2014: 26)

Wan Zu represents another character that has several versions of his name in the novel. Apart from the pseudonym Tadpole, he is also referred to as Xiaopao and Goldblatt introduces its translation similarly as in other cases only when mentioned for the first time in the novel.

尊敬的杉谷义人先生 (Mo 2009: 3)

Dear Sugitani Akihito sensei (Mo 2014: 3)

The last example is interesting from a perspective of the translator, because Goldblatt employs the Japanese reading of the characters not only for the name translation, but also for xiansheng 先生 (mister) used in Chinese for addressing people. Sensei in Japanese is also used for addressing people, but its meaning differs – sensei refers to a master or a teacher, therefore it slightly transforms the original connotation in English. On the other hand, Goldblatt uses his creativity beyond the translated text and refreshes English with a Japanese word.

The usage of fangyan 方言 (topolect) and tuhua 土话 (vernacular; slang) is one of the most distinctive features of Mo Yan`s language style used for depicting the nature of the characters in the novel and the background of the story or the characters` identity. Topolect and the vernacular underline the story`s atmosphere embedded in the environment closely related to the folk culture. The expressions originated in Shandong province, Gaomi and the author`s descriptions display Mo Yan`s knowledge of fangyan that is also used in the sections written in official language in order to add “freshness” to the text (Zhao 2013: 19-20). There are several examples available that display the diversity of the vernacular and the topolect.

我看你是瞎子点灯——白费蜡。(Mo 2009: 56)

To me you people are like a blind man lighting a candle, just wasting wax. (Mo 2014: 68)

Goldblatt directly transfers the image from the idiom to its whole extent instead of replacing it by familiar expression from English and it reflects Mo Yan`s language style.

我娘说姑姑一进门，她就像吃了一颗定心丸。(Mo 2009: 21)

Mother later said that seeing Gugu walk in the door put her mind at ease. (Mo 2014: 25)

Goldblatt grasps the meaning of the sentence and thanks to the fact that *chi le dingxinwan* 吃了定心丸 is a fixed expression, he is able to find an equivalent among the English idioms *to put one`s mind at ease*.

黄秋雅，资产阶级知识分子，搞点技术还可以，真到了刺刀见红的关口，骨头都吓酥了。(Mo 2009: 105)

The petty bourgeois intellectual, Huang Qiuya, was fine for a bit of technical help, but when push came to shove, she was so scared she nearly fell apart. (Mo 2014: 124)

Mo Yan uses a vivid image with *gutou dou xia su le* 骨头都吓酥了 (literally translated as bones cracking from fear), therefore it is important to find a suitable equivalent. In this case, Goldblatt concentrates on expressing the sentiment of fear without transferring the image of bones and neutralizes this expression.

别卖关子了。(Mo 2009: 99)

The suspense is killing me! (Mo 2014: 118)

The translation of the specific expressions closely linked to a certain region or belonging to the vivid part of the language requires their correct understanding in the first place, because the literal translation does not assure their comprehensibility, therefore the translator selects an equivalent from the colloquial language register with the corresponding meaning.

嫂子，你这些陈词滥调，就别给我啰嗦了。(Mo 2009: 56)

Don`t bother me with those platitudes, Sister-in-law. (Mo 2014: 67)

Another example of the colloquial language register that is also maintained in the translation without any interference or transformation of its original meaning.

The novel also contains a high number of *chengyu* and the author either employs them in a standardized way without changing their composition, or he switches the order of the

morphemes and inserts new morphemes in order to distort their original composition as well as to replace the original morphemes with new ones.

陈额的两个老婆起初住在一个院里，后来因为打架，闹得鸡犬不宁，经袁脸同意，将小婆安置在学校旁边的两间厢房里。(Mo 2009: 10)

The two Chen wives lived in the same house at first, but since they fought like cats and dogs, Chen received permission to put his junior wife up in two rooms next to the school. (Mo 2014: 11)

Goldblatt naturalizes *ji quan bu ning* 鸡犬不宁 with an English idiom expressing a similar meaning.

我奶奶是一个主张无为而治的“老娘婆”，她认为瓜熟自落，她认为一个好的“老娘婆”就是多给产妇鼓励，等孩子生下来，用剪刀剪断脐带，敷上生石灰，包扎起来即可。(Mo 2009: 11)

...my grandmother was one of those midwives, one who advocated a policy of interfering as little as possible into the process. Her approach could be characterised as ‘the melon will fall when it is ripe’. In her view, the best midwives simply offered encouragement as they waited for the foetus to emerge, then cut the umbilical cord, sprinkled on some lime, wrapped the child, and that was that. (Mo 2014: 12-13)

This example contains *chengyu* as well as a term *wuwei er zhi* 无为而治 implied by Laozi 老子 that explains a way of a reign by emphasizing the natural development of the situation without any additional interference on behalf of people. In the novel, Mo Yan denotes its primary meaning, *not to do anything and wait* without stating any further explanation regarding its origin, therefore he detaches its philosophical meaning (Wang 2015c: 4). Based on the translation, it is very difficult to recognize the term *wuwei* without any further indication revealing its philosophical origin in case of a lack of additional knowledge. Regarding the translation of *gua shu zi luo* 瓜熟自落, Goldblatt focuses on the Chinese original and uses the literal translation.

许司令说了，用八抬大轿抬不来，就用绳子给老子捆来，先兵后礼，老子摆大宴请他！(Mo 2009: 13)

Commander Xu said if an eight-man sedan chair won't do the trick, he'd hogtie him and take him under escort to a banquet in his honour. (Mo 2014: 14)

In some cases, Mo Yan reverses the order of the single morphemes in chengyu, therefore he is able to use them in a different context and they acquire new meaning. The former composition of chengyu is *xian li hou bin* 先礼后兵 (try peaceful means before forceful ones), but he switches the position of li 礼 and bin 兵. It reflects the close connection to the culture denoting the preference of a peaceful approach instead of force, force being the last option (Wang 2014b: 101). Goldblatt avoids using an excessive number of idioms in the text and he inclines to the neutralization. Because of this fact, there are some language nuances that are difficult to transfer in the target language, the naturalizing methods are acceptable in order to maintain the same level of comprehensibility.

Mo Yan does not only change the order of the characters in chengyu, but he inserts new morphemes in it as well, therefore he adopts these expressions in a different way (Wang 2014b: 101). Despite the fact that *yue yue yu shi* 跃跃欲试 (itch to have a try) is used without any insertion for the first time appearing in the sentence, but it repeats in the following sentence and Mo Yan splits the above-mentioned chengyu by juxtaposing the verb *yu* 欲 (desire) and *bu xiang* 不想 (do not want) as well as by inserting other morphemes in the sentence.

听听这词儿！跃跃欲试！我虽跃跃，但已经不想试了。(Mo 2009: 321)

What an interesting phrase, itching to do the same. I may be itching, but not to do the same.
(Mo 2014: 364-365)

Just like Mo Yan, Goldblatt also plays with vocabulary and focuses on the composition of the original sentence and finds a suitable way for unforced reappearance of the verb.

Another case is the replacement of chengyu's one morpheme by a different one. It is a common phenomenon of Mo Yan's creative writing and there are numerous examples in his works. As a result, he also broadens the frame of their usage and rejuvenates Chinese. Taking into consideration the novel *Frog*, an example of the above-mentioned method is present in the original expression *ren liu ru zhi* 人流如织, in which Mo Yan uses *yi* 蚁 (ant) instead of *zhi* 织 (to weave) (Wang 2014b: 101):

广场上人流如蚁，“麒麟送子”的节目正在上演。(Mo 2009: 249)

...when the square was crawling with people gathered to watch the performance of Unicorns Deliver the Babies. (Mo 2014: 287)

In this case, Goldblatt also inclines to the chengyu`s naturalization and chooses a neutral English expression that does not convey the image of the ants but it does not significantly weaken its meaning.

Apart from chengyu, Mo Yan also uses a lot of common sayings (yanyu 谚语) and proverbs (suhua 俗话) reflecting his close relation toward the folk culture and depicting the peasants` customs.

先出腿，讨债鬼。(Mo 2009: 21)

If a leg is foremost, then you owe a ghost. (Mo 2014: 24)

A positive aspect is the fact that the author explains the above-mentioned proverb further in the text, therefore the translators do not need to provide their own explanations. Regarding the proverb`s translation, Golblatt manages to maintain the rhyme as well as to adopt the literal translation method underlining the characteristics of Chinese.

人不可貌相，海水不可斗量，别看跑跑长的丑，长大了没准会有大出息呢！(Mo 2009: 28)

People cannot be judged by appearance alone any more than the ocean can be measured by bushels,...Don` t be swayed by how ugly our Xiaopao is. He could grow up to be someone special. (Mo 2014: 32)

In this case, Golblatt prefers the naturalization and uses a traditional unit for *dou* 斗 (used as a measure for grain) translated as bushel used for dry goods and liquids.

敲锣卖糖，各干一行。干什么吆喝什么。三句话不离本行。我今天要讲的就是计划生育……(Mo 2009: 55)

People do what they`re best at and peddle the goods they have. I`ll stay with mine, so today I want to talk to you about family planning... (Mo 2014: 66)

Goldblatt again neutralizes the proverb by describing its figurative meaning and he omits the comparison stated at the beginning of the sentence *qiaoluo mai tang* 敲锣卖糖 being replaced by neutral *people do what they`re best at*.

姑娘，我弄不明白，俗言道“精满自流”，可你们把输精管给我扎起来，我那些精液怎么办？(Mo 2009: 61)

Here`s what puzzles me. There`s a saying – ‘When the essence reaches fullness, it will flow on its own.’ But if you tie off my tube, where will my essence flow to? (Mo 2014: 73-74)

Goldblatt employs an elegant language style based on the morpheme *jing* 精 denoting the essence and precisely copies the composition of the proverb in the Chinese original thanks to the literal translation.

Mo Yan`s stories usually unfold against a historical background and they are often embedded in the period after the establishment of the PRC, related to the Cultural Revolution or the following period and *Frog* is not an exception. Apart from the vernacular language of the common people, the novel also reflects Mo Yan`s considerations about life and history. It sketches the historical epoch from the Maoist time, during the Cultural revolution up to the one-child policy, therefore there are numerous expressions that are closely related to this period (Wang 2014a: 100). As Anna Sun elaborates on Mo Yan and his language style, the following examples reflect the question of ‘Mao ti’ and the vocabulary related to the Maoist epoch.

‘地瓜小孩’ (Mo 2009: 50)

‘sweet potato kids’ (Mo 2014: 60)

One of the chapters in the novel introduces the term ‘sweet potato kids’ that is in use as a result of the baby-boom after the years of famine. The nature of the expression allows Goldblatt to directly translate the expression and introduce this term to the Western audience.

毛主席说：人多力量大，人多好办事，人是活宝，有人有世界！ (Mo 2009: 53)

Chairman Mao also said that more numbers means more manpower, and more manpower means more things can be achieved. People are living treasures! The world requires people. (Mo 2014: 67-68)

The novel contains several quotations from Mao Zedong that partially reflect the historical circumstances of this period. The translator follows the pattern of the quotation and as in the original repeated *ren duo* 人多 in the first two parts of the paragraph, he tends to repeat this as well without changing the composition of the quotation and expresses the quotation`s essential significance.

Chinese literary works frequently make references to other well-known literary works or employ allusion concerning religion and philosophy. The novel *Wa* contains several allusions as well, among those:

跑了和尚跑不了庙! (Mo 2009: 123)

She can run, but she can't hide. (Mo 2014: 145)

The above-mentioned saying is closely linked to Chinese culture and religion, it loses the original flavour in English, when Goldblatt inclines to its neutralization and expresses only the essential meaning the author intended.

孙悟空本事再大，也逃不出如来佛的掌心！(Mo 2009: 124)

Even the magical monkey Sun Wukong could not escape from the Buddha's palm. (Mo 2014: 146)

Another allusion is related to the well-known work *Journey to the West*, one of the classical novels by Wu Chen'en 吴承恩. Goldblatt translates the allusion directly, but he does not insert the additional explanation in the text. It is possible that the translator relies on the readers' additional knowledge or he leaves them the space for contextual reading, in case they need to find the missing information from other sources than the novel.

说文雅点，这叫情人眼里出西施；说粗俗点，这叫王八瞅绿豆，看对眼了。(Mo 2009: 98-99)

In elegant terms, it could be a case of a lover seeing in her the classical beauty of Xi Shi; less elegantly, it could be seeing a green bean through the eyes of a turtle – the size and colour make a perfect match. (Mo 2014: 117)

In this case, Goldblatt favours the Chinese original and maintains the classical beauty Xi Shi in the translation. Because of the fact that there are no footnotes in the text, the potential audience is required to look for the explanation of Xi Shi in other sources, if they are not aware of its hidden meaning.

There are several versed sections in the novel named kuaiban 快板 or shunkouliu 顺口溜 that are part of the oral literature which originated in the northern part of China and spread among working class and peasants. It is characterized by strict rhythmical rules and composed of nine lines, the first, second fourth and sixth line rhymes and the third, fifth, seventh and ninth does not rhyme. Mo Yan's kuaiban rhymes in the first, second, fourth, five, sixth line and the other group of rhymes is displayed in the third, eighth and ninth line, therefore it is very catchy and smooth to read (Yu and Liang: 2015: 94). Because of its

specific composition, it is interesting to look closer at the translations and the different solutions for its interpretation.

社员同志不要慌，社员同志不要忙。男扎手术很简单，绝对不是骗牛羊。小小刀口半寸长，十五分钟下病床。不出血，不流汗，当天就能把活干…… (Mo 2009:58)

*Commune comrades be not afraid,
Commune comrades be not delayed.
Vasectomies are the simplest things,
No gelding attempts will ever be made.
The tiniest cut, half an inch long,
Fifteen minutes, you can't go wrong.
No blood and no sweat,
Back to work that day, just as strong.* (Mo 2014: 70)

The first difference is visible from the graphic. Mo Yan does not separate it from the rest of the text, whereas Goldblatt uses italics and separates it in a paragraph. Regarding its translation, he changes the number of the original nine lines of kuaiban to eight, where the first, second and fourth line rhymes and the other rhyme is present in the fifth, sixth and eighth line. He slightly adjusts the meaning of some words in order to maintain the rhythmical character of kuaiban and to maintain the original idea.

The language used in the novel is quite rough and contains several vulgarisms that also have a satirizing role in the novel. As a result of using a lower language register of the uneducated together with other aspects forming Mo Yan's language style, the language of *Wa* is concise, verbose as well as rough and smooth at the same time. The language's diversity ensures a complex description of the characters, the novel's plot and its environment (Pang 2012: 30). He often uses the vulgarisms inserted in the sections with an elegant standardized language register (Zhao 2013: 20). There is a relatively high number of vulgarisms that are an inseparable part of the vernacular, there are several vulgarisms related to the political sphere reflecting the former situation in the country, for instance connected to the period of the Japanese occupation. Mo Yan uses various unrefined language expressions and vulgarisms that are related to several aspects of the Chinese culture, history, politics or vulgarisms which have originated in the countryside, as follows:

我知道这些就是待会要上台陪斗的本公社的牛鬼蛇神们。 (Mo 2009: 68)

I knew who they were: the commune`s evil ox-ghosts and snake-demons waiting to be hauled up on the stage to be hounded by the masses. (Mo 2014: 82)

Niu gui she shen 牛鬼蛇神 is easily translated in the target language and does not causes any difficulties in the frame of the comprehensibility toward the target audience, therefore it is possible to translate it directly.

我是被日本鬼子抓走的，是去受罪，不是去享福！ (Mo 2009: 23)

I was kidnapped by those Jap devils, taken there to suffer, no to enjoy myself. (Mo 2014: 27)

The above-stated quotation displays the historical background and close negative attitude towards the Japanese caused by the Japanese occupation. The morpheme *gui* 鬼 also reappears in this section and Goldblatt`s approach displays the direct translation underlying the original meaning from Chinese.

现在有人给姑姑起了个外号叫“活阎王”，姑姑感到很荣光！ (Mo 2009: 87)

People have begun calling me the ‘Living Queen of Hell’, and I couldn`t be prouder. (Mo 2014: 103)

This example in the original makes a reference to the Chinese mythology that disappears in English, because the translator chooses to focus on the primary meaning of the sentence instead of confusing the readers by using the name Yama, therefore the additional explanation is not necessary.

Another characteristic feature of Mo Yan`s language style is the usage of the terms that are typical for a concrete language register or writing style used in a certain field (such as scientific or artistic circles) in the fixed expressions, but he changes them in order to increase the comical flavour or evoke the freshness and imaginative factors and they fulfil a rhetorical task in the text. The modifications are achieved either by the rhetorical figures bringing into play irony, satire, metaphor and hyperbole or by changing the language register (Zhao 2014: 102-103). Mo Yan seeks a distinctive language style utilizing the language's flexibility to the maximum which enables him to exceed the regular boundaries of the words` expressiveness, because he does not follow the established grammar rules. As a result, the usual collocations and the expressions become defamiliarized (Zhou 2012: 154).

他让王胆冒着生命危险抢生二胎的根本目的，是要生一个为他们陈家传宗接代的男孩，所以当他看到费尽千辛万苦、冒着千难万险生出来的竟然又是个女婴时，他就捶打着脑袋痛哭：天绝我也! (Mo 2009: 186-187)

In basic terms, his goal in subjecting Wang Dan to the dangers of a second pregnancy had been to produce a boy to carry on the family line, and when all the suffering and hardships in reaching that goal ended with the birth of another girl, he pounded himself in the head. The heavens have abandoned me! he wept bitterly. (Mo 2014: 219)

The composition of the last sentence *tian jue wo ye* 天绝我也 does not follow the rules of the modern Chinese language, but it is based on the grammar of classical Chinese. This combination refreshes the impression of the used language register. Goldblatt does not radically change the words used by Mo Yan, but the diversity of the language register is lost in the translation.

Mo Yan also combines the expressions from the foreign languages adapted in Chinese based on their pronunciation – we find several expressions coming from Russian in the novel, but he also directly inserts the words from other languages as stated in one of the examples below.

陈鼻说他妈妈在哈尔滨时见过苏联的飞行员……吃列巴香肠,…… (Mo 2009: 29)

Chen Bi said his mother had seen a Soviet pilot when she lived in Harbin...ate black bread and sausage,... (Mo 2014: 34)

Goldblatt neutralizes this passage and he translates the meaning of the overtaken expression *lieba* 列巴 from Russian linked to the region around Harbin and from the syntactical point of view, he perceives *jieba xiangchang* 列巴香肠 as two separated expressions denoting bread and sausage.

哈拉少，哈拉少…… (Mo 2009: 96)

Harasho – very good (Mo 2014: 113)

One of the examples containing the Russian vocabulary stated in the novel based on the phonological transcription is maintained in English as well and just like in the case of the name's translation, Goldblatt adjusts the phonetical pronunciation followed by the expression's translation.

小虫们，对不起了，实在对不起，I am sorry! (Mo 2009: 260)

Little insects, I'm sorry, I am so sorry. (Mo 2014: 299)

The last example in this section displays the combination of Chinese and English in the original. Mo Yan directly inserts English in one section of the novel, therefore it is difficult to underline its usage especially in the case of Goldblatt, but he tries to emphasize it by repeating the expression twice, despite the fact that the original text repeats *I'm sorry* all together three times.

As explained in the previous section devoted to the Chinese language and its translation, Mo Yan tends to change the original connotations of the colours and uses them for expressing different sentiments in comparison to their general understanding. The following example contains the green related to evil and negative aspects. The colours help Mo Yan to develop the inner world of the characters and the colourful imaginations bring multiple meanings to the novel. He is like a painter depicting a colourful picture – his descriptions reveal the inner world and the emotions of the characters and create a special atmosphere (Ji 2016: 81).

那些“老娘婆”似乎都留着长长的指甲，眼睛里闪烁着鬼火般的绿光，嘴巴里喷着臭气。(Mo 2009: 11)

...they grew long fingernails, their eyes emitted green will-o'-the-wisp-like glimmers, and their breath stank. (Mo 2014: 12)

Goldblatt translates the green colour enriched by the figurative description *will-o'-the-wisp-like* in order to support the image of the glimmers. The negative connotation in the original is expressed through the morpheme *gui* 鬼 explained in the previous examples.

A characteristic feature of Goldblatt's translation is the usage of a too sophisticated language register that does not correspond with the colloquial language of the common peasants from the Chinese countryside. According to Bram, there are some sections in *Frog* with an extensively formal register as in the case of *fuyun* 浮云¹⁰²:

.....功名利禄对我如同浮云。(Mo 2009: 207)

...wealth and position are like floating clouds to me. (Mo 2014: 242)

¹⁰² Bram, Barclay. "Literary Prowess Lost: On Mo Yan's 'Frog' and the Trouble with Translation." Last modified March 26, 2015. <http://www.themillions.com/2015/03/literary-prowess-lost-on-mo-yans-frog-and-the-trouble-with-translation.html>.

Bram proposes a more suitable translation, for instance ‘Don’t worry about money; it comes and goes.’, because it fits the atmosphere and character’s position in the novel better. The difference between the languages results in the language register's diversity. Chinese literary works often employ various chengyu reflecting the tradition, but the literal or direct translation of all chengyu in the text might cause a high density of the clichés in English, which decreases the text’s attractiveness, therefore the translator’s decision to neutralize them or to use a different language register is completely acceptable.¹⁰³

The extensive amount of research analysing Goldblatt’s translations offers solid background information in order to gain an overview of his translation techniques. Goldblatt translates the novel keeping in mind his target audience during the whole translation process and sensitively selects the equivalents in the target language. At the same time, he also tries to emphasize the peculiarity of the Chinese language and culture in order not to conceal it completely. He creates a name list of all the characters in the novel which enables the reader to understand the plot more easily, because there are dozens of characters possessing foreign names which can be confusing to a Western audience and the attached name list prevents misunderstandings. Goldblatt often leans towards a refined language register that does not reflect the nature of the original. We might observe the similarities between the Goldblatt’s translation techniques and the Horace model, because of the target culture dominance. The characteristics of the Horace model comply with the replacements of the parts strongly embedded in the Chinese environment or reflecting its culture or the possibility to adjust the content.

Research on Mo Yan’s language style and its translation in English is the most extensive one among the discussed languages included in the thesis. Because of Goldblatt’s leading position in the field of translation studies concentrating on the literary works by Mo Yan, Goldblatt’s translations represent a valuable source when studying Mo Yan’s language style reflected in translation. Taking into consideration the characteristic style of Mo Yan, he also employs his own style in the process of translation and focuses on the creation of the natural text that is comprehensible to the target audience as well as he maintains the characteristic features of Mo Yan’s language, such as the direct translation of proverbs, idioms or diversity of the language register.

¹⁰³ Bram, Barclay. “Literary Prowess Lost: On Mo Yan’s ‘Frog’ and the Trouble with Translation.” Last modified March 26, 2015. <http://www.themillions.com/2015/03/literary-prowess-lost-on-mo-yans-frog-and-the-trouble-with-translation.html>.

7.3. *Frösche* by Hasse

The examples stated in the following chapters are identical to the former section in order to be able to come to a conclusion regarding the translation techniques of the translators.

听到这个消息后，哥哥姐姐像青蛙一样哇哇叫，我在地上翻筋斗。(Mo 2009: 29)

Als wir Kinder das hörten, quakten wir wie die Frösche, und ich schlug am Boden Purzelbäume. (Mo 2013a: 45)

The German translation shows an equal degree of expressiveness as the original text without inserting any other words in order to support the croaking sound, but Hasse transforms the beginning of the sentence and shifts the angle of the narrator – she replaces elder brother and sister with *us children*, but she maintains the similar level of expressiveness.

蛙蛙蛙 —— 哇哇哇 —— (Mo 2009: 197)

Quak! Quak Quak! Quak Quak Quak! (Mo 2013a: 290)

The translator conceals the difference between the morphemes in comparison to the original and limits the translation to the indistinctive sound onomatopoeia, therefore its metaphorical meaning is lost in German.

为什么“蛙”与“娃”同音?为什么婴儿刚出母腹时哭声与蛙的叫声十分相似?为什么我们东北乡的泥娃娃塑像中，有许多怀抱着一只蛙?为什么人类的始祖叫女娲?“娲”与“蛙”同音，这说明人类的始祖是一只大母蛙，这说明人类就是由蛙进化而来的…… (Mo 2009: 223)

Warum werden die Schriftzeichen für Frosch und für Baby gleichlautend Wa ausgesprochen? Warum ist der erste Schrei des Neugeborenen, wenn es gerade aus dem Leib der Mutter gekommen ist, dem Quaken der Frösche so ähnlich? Warum haben die Niwawa-Tonkinder bei uns in Nordost-Gaomi so oft einen Frosch im Arm? Warum heißt die große Muttergöttin, die Urahnin der Menschheit, Nü Wa? Wa wie Frosch und Wa wie in Niwawa und Wa wie Baby? Das Wa aus Nü Wa, der großen Urahnin des Menschengeschlechts, und das Wa aus Qing Wa, dem Frosch, ist doch Beweis genug, dass der Weg der menschlichen Evolution über den Frosch...führt. (Mo 2013a: 328)

Hasse approaches the whole section with a strong emphasis on the morpheme *wa* in order to clearly state the homophonic characteristic of the expressions. Pinyin pronunciation is combined with the direct translation of the words as we observe in case of Niwawa.

Regarding the additional explanation of Nü Wa as *die große Muttergöttin, die Urahnin der Menschheit*, Hasse multiplies the explanation. This section displays the variability of the homophonic words and Hasse manages to translate it with the highest possible level of fidelity to the original.

姑姑：是娃娃的“娃”，还是青蛙的“蛙”？

蝌蚪：暂名青蛙的“蛙”，当然也可以改成娃娃的“娃”，当然还可以改成女娲的“娲”。(Mo 2009: 308)

Gugu: Ist es das 娃 »Wa« von Baby wie im Wort Niwawa oder das 蛙 »Wa« von Frosch wie im Wort Qingwa?

Kaulquappe: Vorläufig ist es noch das Wa der Frösche, aber natürlich können wir es auch in das Wa von Baby wie im Wort Niwawa oder in das Wa von Nüwa, der Urahnin der Menschheit, ändern. (Mo 2013a: 449-450)

The last example displays not only the phonetical transcription of the morphemes together with their meaning, but Hasse also inserts the Chinese characters directly in the text. Regarding the novel *Wa*, the insertion of the Chinese characters represents her characteristic feature when compared to Goldblatt or Liberati. Apart from the graphical illustration underlining the difference of the Chinese characters, their insertion simplifies their distinction if one observes them properly despite the lack of the knowledge of Chinese.

譬如陈鼻、赵眼、吴大肠、孙肩…… 譬如陈耳，譬如陈眉 (Mo 2009: 5)

Zum Beispiel Chen Nase, Wu Dickdarm, Sun Schulter...Chen Ohr und Chen Augenbraue zum Beispiel (Mo 2013a: 11)

Hasse translates the first name and directly maintains the family name in pinyin. Thanks to this translation technique, she indicates the different order of the first name and the family name.

肖下唇（后来改名为肖夏春）(Mo 2009: 29)

[Name reference completely omitted] (Mo 2013a: 46)

The German translation omits the first appearance of the name in the text and the translator later refers either to Xiao Xiachun or Hasse combines the last name in the original and the first name translated, e.g. Xiao Unterlippe (Mo 2013a: 100), therefore the change of the characters does not reappear in her translation, but Hasse favours to use one variation of the

character`s name as Unterlippe in order not to confuse the readers, despite the fact that the various sections of the novel use both forms.

陈额，字天庭 (Mo 2009: 10)

Chen Stirn (Mo 2013a: 18)

Hasse maintains the same translation method, but she omits the additional name completely, which weakens the expressiveness in comparison to the Chinese original.

小狮子 (Mo 2009: 15)

Xiao Shizi... »Kleiner Löwe« (Mo 2013a: 27)

Hasse employs both versions throughout the novel– the direct translation as well as its pinyin transcription, therefore one has to pay attention while reading in order not to confuse the character`s name.

学名万足，乳名小跑 (Mo 2009: 22)

Als Schuljunge wurde ich Wan Fuß gerufen, mein Kosenamen aus Kindergarten war Kleiner Renner (Mo 2013a: 37)

Wan Zu possesses several names in the novel and in the case of Hasse`s translation, she tends to use his nickname instead of Xiaopao.

尊敬的杉谷义人先生 (Mo 2009: 3)

Verehrter Yoshito Sugitani san (Mo 2013a: 7)

Hasse uses the Japanese pronunciation for the name, as in the case of English, but she approaches the term *xiansheng* 先生 differently and replaces it with the honorific suffix -san (さん) used for addressing people.

我看你是瞎子点灯——白费蜡。(Mo 2009: 56)

Für mich seid ihr wie Blinde, die sich eine Kerze anzünden, pure Verschwendung! (Mo 2013: 85)

In this case Hasse translates the meaning of the saying directly and uses the image of the candle, but she replaces the second half of the sentence with a translation expressing the original meaning, but she does not develop the comparison to the candle and the wax any further, as we observe in English.

我娘说姑姑一进门，她就像吃了一颗定心丸。(Mo 2009: 21)

Meine Mutter sagte, als sie ihre Cousine in der Tür erblickt habe, sei sofort eine fast heilige Ruhe über sie gekommen, als wäre sie mit Tabletten ruhiggestellt worden. (Mo 2013a: 35)

Hasse displays her creativity by changing small details in the sentence – she changes the point of the perception of the family ties and specifies the relation between Gugu and the narrator's mother. She puts emphasis on the feeling of calmness that is doubled in the translation through *heilige Ruhe* and *mit Tabletten ruhiggestellt werden* that is translated directly from Chinese not focusing on the figurative meaning of the expression *chi le yi ke dingxinwan* 吃了一颗定心丸 as one entity (to tranquilize).

黄秋雅，资产阶级知识分子，搞点技术还可以，真到了刺刀见红的关口，骨头都吓酥了。(Mo 2009: 105)

Die bourgeoise Intellektuelle Huang Qiuya habe sich wie immer, wenn alles auf Messers Schneide stand, rausgehalten. (Mo 2013a: 159)

Mo Yan uses a vivid image explained in the previous section, but Hasse neutralizes the expressions and adopts another figurative meaning in order to express the sentiment of fear.

别卖关子了。(Mo 2009: 99)

Hör auf, mich auf die Folter zu spannen! (Mo 2013a: 151)

The translation of the colloquial expressions requires a technique that suitably conveys its meaning in order not to radically change the language register when compared to the original.

嫂子，你这些陈词滥调，就别给我啰嗦了。(Mo 2009: 56)

Schwägerin, hör auf, mich mit diesen abgedroschenen Binsenwahrheiten vollzuquatschen, (Mo 2013a: 85)

There are several examples of the vernacular language, where the author as well as the translator use the colloquial expressions in order not to transform the level of expressiveness in the translation.

陈额的两个老婆起初住在一个院里，后来因为打架，闹得鸡犬不宁，经袁脸同意，将小婆安置在学校旁边的两间厢房里。(Mo 2009: 10)

Anfangs wohnten alle unter einem Dach, aber weil es zu Streit und Handgreiflichkeiten kam, keiner mehr ob des dauernden Lärms eine Auge zutun konnte, willigte Yuan Gesicht ein, dass die Zweitfrau in das kleine Seitenhaus neben der Schule zog. (Mo 2013a: 19)

The idioms might be a difficult task for the translator in case there is not an established equivalent in the target, but at the same time, it allows the translator to employ personalized expressions and creativity. Hasse finds a solution thanks to the colloquial expression in German and abandons *chengyu* based on the animals' image.

我奶奶是一个主张无为而治的“老娘婆”，她认为瓜熟自落，她认为一个好的“老娘婆”就是多给产妇鼓励，等孩子生下来，用剪刀剪断脐带，敷上生石灰，包扎起来即可。(Mo 2009: 11)

Meine Großmutter war schließlich auch eine Wehmutter, sie handelte nach dem Prinzip: möglichst wenig, besser gar nicht in naturgegebene Vorgänge eingreifen. Sie liebte das Sprichwort: *Der reife Apfel fällt allein vom Baum* und vertrat die Meinung, eine gute Wehmutter spricht der Gebärenden zuerst einmal Mut zu, sie unterstützt sie, und wenn das Kind dann draußen ist, durchtrennt sie mit der Schere die Nabelschnur, pudert sie mit Ätzkalk, verbindet sie und fertig. (Mo 2013a: 20)

Another example of the domestifying translation method regarding the translation of the Chinese idioms is the above-stated *chengyu* that Hasse replaces with a saying that is already established in German and does not seem foreign. Apart from that, the expression *wuwei er zhi* is translated directly without additional information for the readers.

许司令说了，用八抬大轿抬不来，就用绳子给老子捆来，先兵后礼，老子摆大宴请他! (Mo 2009: 13)

Kommandant Xu hat uns aufgetragen, wenn wir Euch mit einer von acht Mann getragenen Sänfte nicht bewegen, sollen wir Euch gefesselt zu ihm bringen, dann gilt eben: erst mal Waffengewalt und danach die Ehrungen. Der Kommandant wird ein Bankett zu Euren Ehren geben! (Mo 2013a: 22)

Hasse, compared to the other examples, now also uses the possible closest translation, but as mentioned before, it is impossible to find an expression that is able to indicate the reversed composition of *chengyu* in the original, therefore she rather concentrates on a precise translation of the whole section.

听听这词儿！跃跃欲试！我虽跃跃，但已经不想试了。(Mo 2009: 321)

Hör zu! Ob ich begierig bin, es auch zu versuchen? Ich bin zwar begierig und es gefällt mir, aber ich möchte nicht noch einen Sohn. (Mo 2013a: 466)

Hasse translates the sentence based on the context of the novel and she concentrates less on the composition of chengyu and shifts her focus to the overall meaning of the author's idea, despite the fact that the son is not directly mentioned in the original sentence's composition.

广场上人流如蚁, “麒麟送子” 的节目正在上演。(Mo 2009: 249)

Wie die Ameisen liefen die Leute über den Tempelvorplatz, das Spiel *Das mythische Tier Qilin bringt Kinder* wurde wieder aufgeführt. (Mo 2013a: 366)

On the other hand, the original chengyu inspires Hasse and she decides to transfer the figurative meaning of the ant in her translation as well in order to stir the imagination of the readers.

先出腿, 讨债鬼。(Mo 2009: 21)

Streckt's den Fuß zuerst raus, zieht's dich bis aufs Hemd aus. (Mo 2013a: 34)

Regarding the common saying, Hasse manages to compose the translation based on the rhyme transferred from the original, but she transforms the second half of the saying by changing the employed figure of speech by the author.

人不可貌相, 海水不可斗量, 别看跑跑长的丑, 长大了没准会有大出息呢! (Mo 2009: 28)

Jeder weiß, dass man über einen Menschen nie nach seinen Äußerungen urteilen soll. Stille Wasser sind tief! Denkt nicht, aus dem Kleiner Renner wird nichts, nur weil er hässlich ist. Vielleicht steht ihm eine große Zukunft bevor. (Mo 2013a: 44)

Hasse's approach displays not only the literal translation method regarding the proverb at the beginning of the sentence, but she also decides to naturalize the section with *dou* by a German saying *still waters run deep* (stille Wasser sind tief) instead of introducing the Chinese unit.

敲锣卖糖, 各干一行。干什么吆喝什么。三句话不离本行。我今天要讲的就是计划生育…… (Mo 2009: 55)

Ich sage nur: Schuster bleib bei deinen Leisten! Man soll nur von dem Handwerk reden, dessen Meister man auch ist. Jeder redet doch immer nur über den eigenen Beruf. Und ich spreche heute über die Geburtenplanung. (Mo 2013a: 83)

This paragraph represents another example where Hasse employs a well-known German proverb in order to maintain the communicativeness of the expression, which is also proven

by the rest of the paragraph, because she concentrates on the correct interpretation of the author's idea. Hasse pays attention not only to the content of the translated text, but also to the aesthetical aspects and she often separates the paragraphs and uses italics.

姑娘，我弄不明白，俗言道“精满自流”，可你们把输精管给我扎起来，我那些精液怎么办？ (Mo 2009: 61)

Kleine, ich versteh nicht, was passiert den eigentlich mit meinem Sperma? Wo man doch sagt: *Ist der Kanal mit Sperma erst mal voll, läuft's auch von selber raus.* (Mo 2013a: 93)

Hasse reverses the order of the sentences in order to achieve the language's smoothness and the text's natural fluidity and she emphasizes the proverb by using italics and interprets it by concentrating on the expression's primary meaning and does not concentrate on the philosophical notion of the essence jing 精.

‘地瓜小孩’ (Mo 2009: 50)

Süßkartoffelbabys (Mo 2013a: 76)

As in the English translation, the vocabulary reflecting the epoch are in some cases easily interpreted by the literal translation and it also enriches the target language.

毛主席说：人多力量大，人多好办事，人是活宝，有人有世界！ (Mo 2009: 53)

Der Vorsitzende Mao sagt auch: *Wenn es viele Menschen sind, ist die Kraft groß; wenn es viele sind, wird man besser mit aller Unbill fertig, denn der Mensch ist ein lebender Schatz. Erst durch den Menschen erschaffen wir die Welt.* (Mo 2013a: 85)

Hasse tries to follow the pattern of the quotation as in the original by repeating *viele* (many) referring to *ren duo* 人多 in the first two parts of the paragraph and does not interfere with the composition of the quotation.

跑了和尚跑不了庙! (Mo 2009: 123)

Ein weglaufender Mönch kommt früher oder später wieder zum Tempel zurück (Mo 2013a: 184)

Hasse inclines in many cases to the literal translation of the whole expression, if it conveys the original meaning from the Chinese original. Her careful considerations are also displayed in this sentence, because she adds the aspect of returning back sooner or later.

孙悟空本事再大，也逃不出如来佛的掌心！ (Mo 2009: 124)

Da kann der Affe Sun Wukong noch so hoch springen, er bleibt in der Hand Buddhas. (Mo 2013a: 186)

Another example of the literal translation, when Hasse either expects that the readers are aware of this motive, or she encourages them to find the additional information in order to extend their knowledge, because she does not make any reference to Sun Wukong in the glossary at the end of the novel.

说文雅点，这叫情人眼里出西施；说粗俗点，这叫王八瞅绿豆，看对眼了。(Mo 2009: 98-99)

Es gibt einen Ausdruck, der es genau trifft: *Vor Liebe blind*. (Mo 2013a: 150)

On the other hand, in the case of a less frequent allusion, Hasse considers naturalization and she simplifies the whole expression by employing a German saying *vor Liebe blind* (blind by love).

社员同志不要慌，社员同志不要忙。男扎手术很简单，绝对不是骗牛羊。小小刀口半寸长，十五分钟下病床。不出血，不流汗，当天就能把活干…… (Mo 2009:58)

Genossen, macht euch keinen Kopf, in der Kommune fangt damit an!

Was wir jetzt mit euch vorhaben, ist einfach, kommt auch nicht dem Sauschneider gleich!

Ein kleiner Schnitt, nur fünfzehn Millimeter lang, nach einer Viertelstund schon wieder fit vom Bett er sprang.

Er schwitzte und er blutete nicht, und fing am selben Tag noch zu arbeiten an. (Mo 2013a: 89)

In comparison to the original versed section in Chinese, Hasse transforms the number of the lines to eight and she maintains the rhyme only in the fifth and the sixth line, but she separates it from the text and stresses its composition through italics.

我知道这些就是待会要上台陪斗的本公社的牛鬼蛇神们。(Mo 2009: 68)

Ich wusste, dass es die Rinden- und Schlangenteufel aus der Kommune waren, die gleich der Massenkritik unterzogen würden. (Mo 2013a: 104)

In this case, the translator takes into consideration the general meaning of the expression and she does not distinguish the morphemes *gui* 鬼 (ghost, devil) and *shen* 神 (spirit, supernatural being) and generalizes the connotation of the whole expression.

我是被日本鬼子抓走的，是去受罪，不是去享福！(Mo 2009: 23)

...dahin haben mich die Japsen verschleppt! Ich hab's mir dort nicht gut gehen lassen! (Mo 2013a: 38)

Another uncomplicated example suitable for a literal translation is embodied by the expression *Riben guizi* 日本鬼子. Despite the fact that Hasse omits the notion of the ghost, it neither weakens the term's expressivity, nor influences its primary meaning.

现在有人给姑姑起了个外号叫“活阎王”，姑姑感到很荣光！(Mo 2009: 87)

Es gab Leute, die verpassten meiner Tante nun den Spitznamen Lebender Höllenfürst Yama. Aber sie empfand es als Ehrung. (Mo 2013a: 133)

The above-mentioned expression displays an example directly linked to the Chinese mythology and the translator maintains Yanwang 阎王 without interfering with the original, but she does not explain it further.

他让王胆冒着生命危险抢生二胎的根本目的，是要生一个为他们陈家传宗接代的男孩，所以当他看到费尽千辛万苦、冒着千难万险生出来的竟然又是个女婴时，他就捶打着脑袋痛哭：天绝我也！(Mo 2009: 186-187)

...hatte er doch Galle, als er sie schwängerte, dem für sie lebensbedrohlichen Risiko zum zweiten Mal ausgesetzt, um seiner Familie vielleicht doch noch einen männlichen Nachkommen zu beschere. Als er gesehen hatte, dass alle Mühen umsonst gewesen waren, dass sein zweites Kind, das seine Frau unter diesen wahnsinnigen Umständen zur Welt gebracht hatte, wieder nur ein Mädchen war, hatte er unter Schluchzen wie toll mit beiden Händen auf seinen Gehirnkasten eingetrommelt: »Mit mir ist es aus! Jetzt sterben wir Chens aus!« (Mo 2013a: 237)

There are numerous examples in the German translation displaying the literal or direct translation methods in order to uphold the original. Regarding the nature of the translation of the last sentence, it reveals that Hasse decides to grasp the general idea from the whole paragraph and she creates a rhymed closing clause whose meaning differs in comparison to the original.

陈鼻说他妈妈在哈尔滨时见过苏联的飞行员.....吃列巴香肠,..... (Mo 2009: 29)

Chen Nase erzählte, seine Mutter habe in Harbin sowjetische Jetpiloten gesehen, ...äßen turkmenische Würste aus Lebap... (Mo 2013a: 46)

The uncertain characterization of the words in Chinese often causes a diverse understanding of the expressions composed of several morphemes. Hasse perceives *lieba xiangchang* 列巴

香肠 as one entity and she inserts an additional explanation in the text in order to avoid possible misunderstanding.

哈拉少, 哈拉少..... (Mo 2009: 96)

Xopomo! Xopomo! Gut!Gut!, (Mo 2013a: 146)

Hasse maintains the foreignizing elements in the translation whenever possible and in this case, she exceeds the foreignization present in the original and uses the Russian alphabet for expressing the word in the original writing followed by its translation in German, despite the fact that Mo Yan only uses its phonetical transcription.

小虫们, 对不起了, 实在对不起, I am sorry! (Mo 2009: 260)

Ihr Käfer und Fliegen und Motten, es tut mir sehr leid, wirklich leid. I am sorry! (Mo 2013a: 384)

In German it is easier to emphasize the presence of the sentence in English. Apart from that, Hasse enriches the original by multiplying the translation of the term xiao chongmen 小虫们 as beetles, flies and moths despite the fact that its original meaning is insect.

那些“老娘婆”似乎都留着长长的指甲, 眼睛里闪烁着鬼火般的绿光, 嘴巴里喷着臭气。(Mo 2009: 11)

...von üblen Mundgeruch verbreitenden Wehmüttern mit langen Fingernägeln und teuflisch grün blitzenden Augen. (Mo 2013a: 20)

The negative connotation of the colour green is supported by the literal translation of the expression by associating it with the devil (gui).

The characteristics of the *Frog`s* translation by Hasse include the insertion of the Chinese traditional characters directly in the text presumably fulfilling an aesthetic function, because the target readers are not expected to understand them. There are also other foreign expressions in the novel that are introduced in her translation using the original writing (e.g. Russian vocabulary), inspite of the fact that Mo Yan uses their phonetical transcription. Apart from that, she provides the readers with an additional glossary at the end of the novel with selected expressions and their explanations in order to increase the novel`s comprehensibility and she manages to clearly depict Mo Yan`s phonological play with *wa* words and their meaning. Hasse also pays the most attention to the graphical distribution of the text – she often creates new paragraphs and uses italics in order to emphasize or

distinguish certain parts of the text. Her precise consideration for selecting the suitable equivalents and refreshing foreignizing methods result in correspondence with the Schleiermacher model, because of the emphasis on the source culture.

Regarding research of Mo Yan`s language style reflected in the German translation of *Wa*, the sources are relatively limited. Reviews devoted to the novel mainly discuss the plot of the novel and the aspects related to the story, but they do not pay much attention to the translator`s work. On the other hand, if there is a reference to Hasse`s translation skills, they are viewed positively as mentioned in the respective chapter, but there is still space to extend the knowledge in this field and enrich the perspective on suitable translation methods when referring to the peculiarities of Mo Yan`s language. Hasse`s translation serves as an example that despite a relatively high level of the foreignness, her translation is still comprehensible and attracts reader`s attention thanks to the mentioned aesthetic features as well.

7.4. *Le Rane* by Liberati

The last chapter discusses the translation methods of Patrizia Liberati and her approach concerning the Italian language.

听到这个消息后，哥哥姐姐像青蛙一样哇哇叫，我在地上翻筋斗。(Mo 2009: 29)

Quando ci giunse la notizia, i miei fratelli e mia sorella si misero al starnazzare e io a fare le capriole. (Mo 2013b: 38)

Taking into consideration Liberati`s translation of the onomatopoeia in the first example, she decides to replace the croaking sound and focuses on transferring the text`s primary meaning. She also does not distinguish the difference between the elder brother and sister and uses a general reference.

蛙蛙蛙 —— 哇哇哇 —— (Mo 2009: 197)

«cra,cra,cra», «wa, wa, wa » (Mo 2013b: 236)

The second example shows the transformation of wa 蛙 meaning frog into an onomatopoeia in the translation. Liberati differentiates the morphemes by using a diversified transcription for the morphemes, but she does not add their translation which partially weakens their metaphorical meaning.

为什么“蛙”与“娃”同音?为什么婴儿刚出母腹时哭声与蛙的叫声十分相似?为什么我们东北乡的泥娃娃塑像中,有许多怀抱着一只蛙?为什么人类的始祖叫女娲?“娲”与“蛙”同音,这说明人类的始祖是一只大母蛙,这说明人类就是由蛙进化而来的…… (Mo 2009: 223)

Perché rana e neonato hanno lo stesso suono, «wa»? Perché il vagito di un bambino appena uscito dalla pancia della madre assomiglia moltissimo al gradicare di una rana? Perché molte figurine dei bambini di creta tengono una rana in braccio? Perché la progenitrice dell'umanità si chiama Nüwa? Hanno lo stesso suono, ciò significa che la nostra antenata era una rana, che gli uomini discendono dalle rane... (Mo 2013b: 267)

Liberati upholds the original text and she does not tend to extend it, but she uses parenthesis for the phonological transcription of the onomatopoeia *wa* and she directly translates the individual expressions composed of these homophonic morphemes.

姑姑: 是娃娃的“娃”, 还是青蛙的“蛙”?

蝌蚪: 暂名青蛙的“蛙”, 当然也可以改成娃娃的“娃”, 当然还可以改成女娲的“娲”。 (Mo 2009: 308)

Zia «Wa» come bambino o «wa» come rana?

Girino Per il momento come «rana», ma possiamo sostituirlo con il carattere che significa «bambino». Oppure con quello del nome di Nüwa. (Mo 2013b: 362)

In this case, Liberati selects a simple and clear way for the paragraph's translation, because she is faithful to the original and solves the problem with the repetition of *wa* in replacing it by its direct translation between the quotation marks, therefore the meaning of each expression remains clear.

譬如陈鼻、赵眼、吴大肠、孙肩…… 譬如陈耳, 譬如陈眉 (Mo 2009: 5)

Ad esempio Chen Bi, Chen Il Naso, Zhao Yan, Zhao l'Occhio, Wu Dachang, Wu le Budella, Sun Jian, Sun la Spalla,... Come Chen Er, Chen l'Orecchio, e Chen Mei, Chen il Sopracciglio (Mo 2013b: 9)

Liberati uses the most foreignized method by using the transcription followed by its direct translation, when it is mentioned for the first time in the novel. Pinyin transcription together with the name's actual translation clearly state what is the first name and the family name of the characters in the story.

肖下唇（后来改名为肖夏春）(Mo 2009: 29)

Xiao Xiachun, Xiao il Labbro inferiore (che poi cambiò il suo nome in Xiao Primavera estate, tanto si pronunciano allo stesso modo) (Mo 2013b: 39)

The first appearance of the name in Italian introduces the translation of both name's variations and underlines their homophonic nature with an explanation in the parenthesis.

陈额，字天庭 (Mo 2009: 10)

Chen E, Chen la Fronte, nome di cortesia Tianting, Sala celeste (Mo 2013b: 15)

Liberati translates the complete name, but as we observe, her understanding of the characters *tianting* 天庭 (translated as imperial court) displays significant differences in comparison to the English translation which might be caused by diverse comprehensibility of the original.

小狮子 (Mo 2009: 15)

Leoncina (Mo 2013b: 23)

The translation of a nickname present in the novel does not cause significant problems, because there is a suitable equivalent in Italian that fits perfectly the meaning of *Xiao Shizi* (lit. Little Lion) represented by *Leoncina*, meaning a little lioness.

学名万足，乳名小跑 (Mo 2009: 22)

Per l'anagrafe Wan Zu, Wan il Piede, e Xiaopao, cioè Corsetta, come nomignolo da bambino (Mo 2013b: 31)

Liberati translates each name directly, but in the case of Xiaopao, she limits the use of the literal translation to the first appearance of this name in the novel and she later refers to it using pinyin transcription.

尊敬的杉谷义人先生 (Mo 2009: 3)

Stimato signor Yoshihito Sugitani (Mo 2013b: 5)

This example displays the most neutral translation among all of them, because Liberati translates the term *xiansheng* directly, based on the meaning from Chinese and she uses the Japanese reading of the Chinese characters only for interpreting the name of Yoshihito Sugitani.

我看你是瞎子点灯——白费蜡。(Mo 2009: 56)

Mi sembra la storia del cieco che accende la candela: un inutile spreco di cera. (Mo 2013: 72)

Liberati approaches this sentence through the direct translation method that allows her to precisely depict the original image used by Mo Yan and reflects the vernacular.

我娘说姑姑一进门，她就像吃了一颗定心丸。(Mo 2009: 21)

Mia madre raccontò che, quando la vide entrare, fu come se le avessero dato un calmante. (Mo 2013b: 30)

Liberati focuses on the general meaning of the sentence and concretizes the figurative meaning of the expression *chi le yi ke dingxinwan* by employing its literal meaning.

黄秋雅，资产阶级知识分子，搞点技术还可以，真到了刺刀见红的关口，骨头都吓酥了。(Mo 2009: 105)

Huang Qiuya era un`intellettuale Borghese che, quando si trattava di tecnica, poteva anche andare, ma se si arrivava alla violenza, la vista del sangue le avrebbe mandato in pappa le ossa. (Mo 2013b: 131)

In this case, the translator concentrates on the original and in order to create a similar expression as we observe in Chinese, she distorts the usual expression *mandare in pappa il cervello* by replacing the brain (il cervello) with the bones (le ossa) which reflects the sentiment of fear.

别卖关子了。(Mo 2009: 99)

Vai al sodo. (Mo 2013b: 124)

嫂子，你这些陈词滥调，就别给我啰嗦了。(Mo 2009: 56)

Smettila di riempirti la bocca di luoghi comuni, - le rispose mia zia. (Mo 2013b: 71)

Liberati finds suitable colloquial expressions in Italian for both in the above-mentioned examples that allows her to maintain the same language register as the one used by the author.

陈额的两个老婆起初住在一个院里，后来因为打架，闹得鸡犬不宁，经袁脸同意，将小婆安置在学校旁边的两间厢房里。(Mo 2009: 10)

All'inizio, le due donne avevano vissuto nello stesso cortile, ma il loro battibecchi innervosivano persino i cani e i polli di casa, perciò, con l'autorizzazione di Yuan Lian, la

seconda moglie si era trasferita a vivere nelle due stanze laterali del cortile della scuola. (Mo 2013b: 16)

Liberati pays attention to the fidelity to the original as much as possible and she decides to maintain the original image represented by *chengyu ji quan bu ning* 鸡犬不宁, the dogs and the chickens in the text.

我奶奶是一个主张无为而治的“老娘婆”，她认为瓜熟自落，她认为一个好的“老娘婆”就是多给产妇鼓励，等孩子生下来，用剪刀剪断脐带，敷上生石灰，包扎起来即可. (Mo 2009: 11)

Mia nonna era stata una mammana. Lei credeva nel principio del non agire e nella cura senza interferenze, la zucca matura si stacca da sola, il compito di una brava levatrice è di incoraggiare la partoriente e, quando il bambino è nato, di tagliare con le forbici il cordone ombelicale, applicare la calce viva per farlo cicatrizzare, legarlo e via. (Mo 2013b: 17)

Liberati, unlike the others translators, does not make a specific reference to the term *wuwei* and uses its neutral translation as *non agire* (do not act). Regarding *gua shu zi luo* 瓜熟自落, Liberati focuses on the Chinese original and brings her translation closer to the original by using *la zucca* (the pumpkin).

许司令说了，用八抬大轿抬不来，就用绳子给老子捆来，先兵后礼，老子摆大宴请他! (Mo 2009: 13)

Il comandante Xu ci ha detto: ‘Se non è disposto a venire trasportato da una portantina sollevata da otto uomini, allora conducetemelo legato! Prima useremo la forza e poi le maniere dolci, allestirò anche un banchetto per dargli il benvenuto!’ (Mo 2013b: 19)

In this case, the translator takes into consideration the figurative meaning of the expression and interprets it directly based on the shifted composition of the term *xian bin hou li* 先兵后礼.

听听这词儿！跃跃欲试！我虽跃跃，但已经不想试了。 (Mo 2009: 321)

Tentare il colpo! Sentite che espressione! La voglia di tentare colpi mi è passata da tempo. (Mo 2013b: 374)

Liberati shifts the order of the first and the second exclamatory sentence in order to emphasize the repeating expression *yue yue yu shi* 跃跃欲试 (to have an itch to do something)

in the second and the third sentence of the original quotation and translates it based on the original meaning by using a colloquial expression *tentare il colpo* (to have a go).

广场上人流如蚁，“麒麟送子”的节目正在上演。(Mo 2009: 249)

La piazza formicolava di gente per la rappresentazione dell'*Unicorno della fertilità*. (Mo 2013b: 297)

Liberati is able to maintain the figurative meaning of the transformed chengyu containing the morpheme *yi* 蚁 for an ant in the translation and finds a suitable expression in Italian based on the verb *formicolare*, whose root word contains the ant (la formica) as well.

先出腿，讨债鬼。(Mo 2009: 21)

«Se sbuca una gamba, arriva l'esattore». (Mo 2013b: 29)

Regarding the proverb's translation, Liberati does not uphold the original versed composition and directly translates the first half of the sentence based on the original, whereas she replaces *gui* 鬼 by *esattore* (collector).

人不可貌相，海水不可斗量，别看跑跑长的丑，长大了没准会有大出息呢！(Mo 2009: 28)

Non si può giudicare una persona dalle apparenze, come non si può misurare il mare con uno staio. Anche se è brutto, magari da grande avrà uno splendido avvenire! (Mo 2013b: 37)

In this case, Liberati concentrates on the target culture when using the traditional unit *staio* (measure used for dry goods and liquids) for the translation of *dou* 斗, therefore she maintains the equivalent language register and naturalizes the text.

敲锣卖糖，各干一行。干什么吆喝什么。三句话不离本行。我今天要讲的就是计划生育…… (Mo 2009: 55)

Picchia sul gong il pasticcere, a ciascuno il suo mestiere. Non impota la professione, devi farla con convinzione. Non dire mai tre frasi senza parlare del tuo lavoro. E io oggi vi parlerò del controllo delle nascite... (Mo 2013b: 70)

Another example of a rhymed proverb in the original remains rhymed in the Italian translation as well and Liberati even manages to maintain the original meaning without any replacements of the vocabulary.

姑娘，我弄不明白，俗言道“精满自流”，可你们把输精管给我扎起来，我那些精液怎么办？ (Mo 2009: 61)

Ragazza mia, io continuo a non capire, di solito si dice “quando lo sperma è troppo esce da solo”, ma se mi legate i condotti il mio dove va? (Mo 2013b: 78)

Liberati translates the saying directly without refined language style, as we observe in case of Goldblatt, but she manages to translate the author's original meaning and maintains the same level of comprehensibility.

‘地瓜小孩’ (Mo 2009: 50)

«i figli delle patate dolci» (Mo 2013b: 64)

Just like the other translators, Liberati copies the term directly in Italian as well and she extends the knowledge of the target readers.

毛主席说：人多力量大，人多好办事，人是活宝，有人有世界！ (Mo 2009: 53)

Il presidente Mao ha anche detto: «Più siamo numerosi, più siamo forti, più siamo e meglio si lavora, il popolo è prezioso, il mondo esiste perché ci sono gli uomini!»! (Mo 2013b: 71-72)

Liberati also uphold the pattern of the quotation and as for the repeated *ren duo* 人多, she uses *più siamo* stressing the significance.

跑了和尚跑不了庙! (Mo 2009: 123)

Fugge il monaco ma non il tempio! (Mo 2013b: 152)

Liberati prefers the literal translation of the whole expression in order to introduce the peculiarities of the Chinese language in the target language and at the same time, it does not limit the comprehensibility of the expression.

孙悟空本事再大，也逃不出如来佛的掌心！ (Mo 2009: 124)

Con tutti i suoi poteri, Sun Wukong lo Scimmiotto non riuscì a fuggire dal palmo di Buddha (Mo 2013b: 153)

Liberati is not an exception and inclines to the literal translation also in the case of this allusion and she does not insert the explanation in the text in order to evoke the interest of the readers to discover more facts about the Chinese culture.

说文雅点，这叫情人眼里出西施；说粗俗点，这叫王八瞅绿豆，看对眼了。(Mo 2009: 98-99)

Detto in modo elegante: «Agli occhi dell'amante ogni donna è bella come Venere», o più rozzamente: «La tartaruga che ammicca al fagiolo verde, tra simili ci si intende». (Mo 2013b: 123)

This above-mentioned example shows Liberati's naturalizing approach, because she conceals the notion of Xishi and uses Venere (Venus – a Roman goddess that embodies love and beauty) instead, which allows the Western audience to easily understand the text and she translates the second part of the paragraph directly.

社员同志不要慌，社员同志不要忙。男扎手术很简单，绝对不是骗牛羊。小小刀口半寸长，十五分钟下病床。不出血，不流汗，当天就能把活干…… (Mo 2009:58)

Compagni membri della comune, non vi impressionate, compagni membri della comune, non vi agitate. La vasectomia è un'operazione semplice, non ha niente a che vedere con la castrazione degli animali. Un taglietto di qualche centimetro, un quarto d'ora ed è tutto finito. Senza sangue né sudore e il giorno stesso tornare a lavorare... (Mo 2013b: 74-75)

Liberati reduces the number of lines in kuaiban and creates eight lines that rhyme in the first and the second line. Apart from that, she upholds the original text's composition by not dividing it with extra space from the rest of the paragraph and she maintains the direct translation method that does not omit any original expressions used by Mo Yan.

我知道这些就是待会要上台陪斗的本公社的牛鬼蛇神们。(Mo 2009: 68)

Erano i demoni mucca e gli spiriti serpente della nostra comune in attesa di salire sul palco per essere criticati. (Mo 2013b: 87)

As we observe in several above-mentioned examples, Liberati favours the literal or direct translation if it does not influence the comprehensibility of the text, therefore in case of *niu gui she shenmen* 牛鬼蛇神们 she is able to translate it directly.

我是被日本鬼子抓走的，是去受罪，不是去享福！(Mo 2009: 23)

Sono stata rapita dai diavoli giapponesi, sono andata a soffrire, mica divertirmi! (Mo 2013b: 32)

Liberati employs the literal translation and she enriches the expression by using the colloquial term in Italian represented by *mica* (at all).

现在有人给姑姑起了个外号叫“活阎王”，姑姑感到很荣光！(Mo 2009: 87)

Alcuni mi chiamano «il diavolo incarnato», un epiteto che mi riempie di orgoglio! (Mo 2013b: 110)

Despite the fact that the translator once again uses the direct translation method and separates the expression by the parenthesis, Liberati avoids the use of the devil's name Yama.

他让王胆冒着生命危险抢生二胎的根本目的，是要生一个为他们陈家传宗接代的男孩，所以当他看到费尽千辛万苦、冒着千难万险生出来的竟然又是个女婴时，他就捶打着脑袋痛哭：天绝我也！(Mo 2009: 186-187)

Aveva messo a repentaglio la vita di Wang Dan mettendola incinta per la seconda volta perché voleva un maschio per continuare la discendenza della famiglia Chen e quando, tra mille amarezze e sofferenze, a costo di mille difficoltà e pericoli, era nata una femmina, lui, prendendosi a pugni in testa, aveva pianto disperato: - Il cielo mi ha lasciato senza eredi! (Mo 2013b: 224)

The Italian version displays the translation that is most closely based on the original, when comparing it to the other translations in the previous sections.

陈鼻说他妈妈在哈尔滨时见过苏联的飞行员……吃列巴香肠,…… (Mo 2009: 29)

Chen Bi dichiarò che a Harbin sua madre aveva visto i piloti sovietici, ...mangiavano *khleb* e salsicce (Mo 2013b: 39)

Liberati perceives the expression *lieba xiangchang* 列巴香肠 as a term composed of two separate words and she emphasizes the term *khleb* by maintaining the phonetic pronunciation from Russian.

哈拉少，哈拉少…… (Mo 2009: 96)

Chorošo, chorošo, bene, molto bene, (Mo 2013b: 119)

Liberati displays the phonetical transcription of the original expression supplemented by its direct translation. This solution ensures that her translation does not contain any incomprehensible parts and explains the presence of the foreign vocabulary in the original precisely.

小虫们，对不起了，实在对不起，I am sorry! (Mo 2009: 260)

Mi dispiace, insetti miei, vi chiedo scusa, *I am sorry*! (Mo 2013b: 310)

The insertion of the foreign words directly in the text does not only refresh the original, but also the translation. In the case of Italian, it is possible to translate the part in Chinese directly and to copy the English part of the sentence without any change.

那些“老娘婆”似乎都留着长长的指甲，眼睛里闪烁着鬼火般的绿光，嘴巴里喷着臭气。(Mo 2009: 11)

...avevano tutte unghie lunghissime, occhi che mandavano una luce verde tipo quella dei fuochi fatui e bocche che soffiavano un alito mefitico. (Mo 2013b: 16-17)

The negative connotation represented by the usage of the green colour is conveyed by Liberati thanks to the expression *fuoco fatuo* (will-o'-the-wisp) which also possesses an allegorical meaning as *guihuo* 鬼火 in the original.

Taking into consideration Liberati's approach toward the translation of Mo Yan, she pays attention to every detail and carefully selects the suitable equivalents. She is often inclined to employ the direct translation method that allows her to convey the meaning of the original text through the literal translation. As a result of the prevailing direct translations, Liberati clearly favours the source culture and tries to introduce its peculiarities in the target culture. Her intentions to illustrate the source culture to a great extent corresponds with her opinion regarding Mo Yan and his works. The relatively high level of the fidelity to the original might have originated in Liberati's admiration and respect for the author. From the point of faithfulness, her translation techniques to a great extent correspond with the Jerome model, because of her respectful approach toward the original (almost as if it were sacred). At the same time, the amount of the foreignizing elements allows us to consider it as a translation deeply rooted in the source culture adjusting only certain parts of the text that the translator maintains as incomprehensible in the case of the direct translation, therefore she is inclined to replace them as we observe in the case of the section mentioning *Xishi*.

Liberati and her translations are highly valued in Italy what also confirms the prize for one of her translations, but comparably to Hasse, there are few sources devoted to the study of Mo Yan's works translated by Liberati taking into account his language style and its reflection in Italian, therefore the study of *Wa*'s translation into different languages offers new perspectives on Mo Yan's language style and the translator's approach.

8. Conclusion

The translation theory and the translation practice are closely linked and they are an inseparable part of the translation process. The analysis of the chosen literary work confirms the translation theory evolved by Bassnett and Lefevere and it corresponds with the fact that modern translation theories stress the important role of culture in the translation process. They also reflect the shift from the text of the original to the text of the translation, therefore the focus shifts from the source culture to the target culture as well. Despite the fact that the Western translatoologists principally do not evolve these theories based on the characteristics of the Chinese language, the theory by Eugene Nida becomes one of the most quoted among the Chinese linguists what serves as an example that the Western theories are also applicable for Chinese. Thanks to the three different models – the Jerome, Horatian and Schleiermacher model – used for the translation`s analysis introduced by Bassnett and Lefevere, they enable us to perceive the wide scale of the translation practice employed by Goldblatt, Hasse and Liberati. These models explain different translation methods and display the variety of the translator`s attitude toward the original.

The translation theories acknowledge the crucial role of the translator and the analysis of the novel *Frog* and its three different translations reveal the extent of the translator`s impact. Apart from that, the different translation methods display the possible solutions when overcoming the difficulties such as personalized language style of the author, the combination of the incoherent language registers or dialects. The determination of Mo Yan`s language style and its characteristics represent a prerequisite for the translations` analysis displayed in the previous chapter. As a result of the varying translation practice of each translator, their translations correspond with different translation models.

Howard Goldblatt uses his creativity and he keeps in mind the target language and its culture. He moves the translation to an artistic level and as mentioned in the section devoted to his introduction, it is common that regarding Mo Yan`s works, Goldblatt`s translations are highly valued and often considered as superior to the original. In case of *Frog*, Goldblatt pays attention to the comprehensibility of his translation what is represented by the name list of the characters and limited amount of the direct translations in the text in order not to cumulate an excessive number of clichés. He neither uses the glossary at the end of the book nor the footnotes. The unclear expressions are either explained directly in the text or left without any additional explanation. Goldblatt manages to combine different language

registers as we observe in the original, but he sometimes uses sophisticated language expressions that do not match with the language of the common people. We find only two Chinese characters in the translation by Goldblatt in the sixth act of the drama play of the novel accompanied by their direct translation in the parenthesis, therefore their aesthetical function is not as strong as in the German translation. The translation methods employed by Goldblatt meet the requirements of the Horatian model because of the prevailing position of English and the emphasis on the target audience.

On the other hand, the German translation by Martina Hasse displays the translator's preference to maintain the foreignizing features in the text represented by a high number of Chinese characters inserted in the translation followed by their translation that fulfil the aesthetic role. Hasse even stresses the foreignization of Mo Yan's novel by using Russian words in the Russian alphabet that is not present in the original. Despite the fact that Hasse uses in many cases German idioms or proverbs, she also pays attention to the authenticity of Mo Yan's work and she tries to maintain the author's language style characteristics. In many cases, she uses direct translations and displays the diversity of the used language register by Mo Yan. Hasse also creates a glossary in order to explain the unclear sections and there is an epilogue written by Mo Yan explaining the title of the book and the circumstances of creating the novel. The glossary with the epilogue allow us to better understand the novel. Hasse's translation shows a distinctive foreignizing translation methods that are the characteristic features of the Schleiermacher model.

Patrizia Liberati also favours direct translation methods and her translation displays a high level of fidelity toward the original. While observing her translation methods, they comply with her appreciation and respect for Mo Yan as visible from her statements when discussing Mo Yan's literary works. Liberati often inserts explanations directly into the text in order to limit possible misunderstandings. Her translation practice is characterized as a fusion of the Jerome model and the Schleiermacher model. On one hand, the translator is willing to achieve the highest possible level of fidelity and her respect to the text of the original resembles the translators' attitude toward the sacred texts in the past. On the other hand, she also pays attention to the foreignizing elements reflecting the characteristics of Chinese culture and the peculiarity of Mo Yan's language style corresponding to the Schleiermacher model.

The translation practice of Goldblatt, Hasse and Liberati displays the wide range of the translators' choice and shows us which nuances they prefer to emphasize in order to introduce the author and his work to the target culture, therefore "the translation ideal" might have various facets. As Roberto Calasso states:

"The mark of a good translation is not its fluency but rather all those unusual and original formulations that the translator has been bold enough to preserve and defend." ¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Bram, Barclay. "Literary Prowess Lost: On Mo Yan's 'Frog' and the Trouble with Translation." Last modified March 26, 2015. <http://www.themillions.com/2015/03/literary-prowess-lost-on-mo-yans-frog-and-the-trouble-with-translation.html>.

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Abstract

Mo Yan and his works capture the attention of the Chinese as well as the Western literary circles and critics, especially after Mo Yan won the Nobel Prize in the year 2012. This event marked a significant increase in the research concerning Mo Yan`s works. Mo Yan`s unique language represents one of the characteristic features of his literary works. The thesis focuses on three translations of the novel *Frog* (蛙) into three different target languages, one by Howard Goldblatt (English), one by Martina Hasse (German) and one by Patrizia Liberati (Italian). The story of the novel *Frog* deals with a specific historical period in Chinese history. The plot unfolds against the background of the implementation of the one-child policy throughout the whole country. The objective of the research is a thorough analysis of the translations with a focus on Mo Yan`s style and use of language. The study of translation theories and translation methods provide the basis for the analysis, this allows us to better understand the process of translation and the factors that play a crucial role in its creation. The analysis is further supported by determining the characteristics of Mo Yan`s language style and its translation in the above-mentioned Western languages.

Key words: translation methods, culture, Mo Yan`s language, *Frog*

Zusammenfassung

Mo Yan und seine Werke ziehen die Aufmerksamkeit der chinesischen wie auch der westlichen Literaturkreise und Kritiker auf sich, vor allem nach dem Erhalt des Nobelpreises im Jahr 2012, als die Werke von Mo Yan noch intensiver erforscht wurden. Mo Yans einzigartiger Sprachstil repräsentiert eines der charakteristischen Merkmale seiner literarischen Werke. Die Masterarbeit konzentriert sich auf drei Übersetzungen des Werkes *Frösche* (蛙). Auf Englisch von Howard Goldblatt, auf Deutsch von Martina Hasse und auf Italienisch von Patrizia Liberati. Die Erzählung des Werkes Frosch handelt von der historischen Periode der Umsetzung der Ein-Kind-Politik im ganzen Land. Das Ziel der Forschung ist eine Analyse der Übersetzungen mit Schwerpunkt auf Mo Yans Sprachstil. Die Übersetzungstheorien und Übersetzungsmethoden dienen als Grundlage für die Analyse, die es uns ermöglicht den Übersetzungsprozess besser zu verstehen und Faktoren, die eine entscheidende Rolle bei dem Übersetzungsprozess spielen zu berücksichtigen. Die Analyse fokussiert sich auf die charakteristischen Merkmale von Mo Yans Sprachstil und die Übersetzungen seiner Arbeiten in den oben genannten westlichen Sprachen.

Schlüsselwörter: Übersetzungsmethoden, Kultur, Mo Yans Sprache, *Frösche*

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