

Service Awareness in Translation: A Case Study of English and Portuguese Translation of Mo Yan's *Fengru Feitun*

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Abstract—“Service awareness” refers to translators’ clear understanding of who they are serving, how they are supposed to serve, and what they are serving for during the translation process. This paper, based on first-hand examples, examines Goldblatt’s English translation and Martins’ Portuguese translation of Mo Yan’s masterpiece *Fengru feitun* [*Big Breasts and Wide Hips*] from the perspective of “service awareness in translation”. The present paper finds that both the English translator and the Portuguese translator have good “service awareness” in their translations. Their “service awareness” is mainly reflected in the abridgments and rewritings of the source text at the structural, cultural, and lexical levels. These modifications have improved the readability of the translations. In other words, the translators have offered good “services” to their readers. This study analyzes the reasons behind the abridgements and rewrites.

Index Terms—service awareness, translation, Mo Yan, *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, *Peito Grande*, *Ancas Largas*

I. INTRODUCTION

“Service awareness” refers to a translator’s awareness of service during his or her translation process; in other words, translators, when they offer their translations, are supposed to have a clear understanding of what their clients need, what their service modes are, and what purposes their services are to achieve, and so on. The clients include readers, sponsors, publishers, original author(s), etc.; The service is to provide translation products that should fully meet the needs of readers’ requirements including their reading habits, aesthetics, ethics, customs, etc.; The purpose of service is to satisfy the clients. “In general, a translator’s service awareness consists of three parts: a) service consciousness towards the original author, b) service consciousness towards the reader, and c) service consciousness towards the client” (Li, 2015).

Theoretically, service awareness in translation is closely related to Chesterman’s “ethics of service”, in which Chesterman says,

Ethics of service. A very different kind of approach is based on the concept of translation as a commercial service, performed for a client. This is the kind of ethics that underlies (usually implicitly) much of the thinking on functional models of translation, especially those of Holz-Mänttari (1984) and the *Skopos* theorists. (Chesterman, 2001)

It is worth pointing out that what Chesterman refers to as “client” still needs to be expanded to include potential clients in the minds or imaginations of employers and translators. Adhering to service ethics means that translators must follow the client’s requirements and achieve the goals set by the client. That is to say, translators should serve customers and be responsible to them. We need to find ways to achieve the practical function of the translation and satisfy the client. Translators who stick to service ethics usually take “customer’s satisfaction” as their highest criterion for translation.

Fengru feitun (*Big Breasts and Wide Hips*) is one of the most famous novels by Mo Yan, the Chinese winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2012. In his preface to *Fengru feitun*, Mo Yan says “You don’t need to read all my works, but if you want to get to know me, you should read my book *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*” (Mo, 2012). Mo’s winning of the Nobel Prize is mainly due to the creative English translations by Howard Goldblatt, the famous American sinologist and translator. “One of the striking characteristics of Goldblatt’s English translations is his deletion, abridgement and rewriting of Mo Yan’s works” (Jiang, 2016), which can be widely detected in his translation *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*. When talking about his deletion, abridgement and rewriting of Mo’s works, Goldblatt says, “some changes and

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rearrangements were effected during the translation and editing process, all with the approval of the author” (Goldblatt, 2004: xii).

In other words, the “changes and rearrangements” in *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* reflect Goldblatt’s good sense of service as well as that of the publisher. Goldblatt’s service awareness is mainly reflected in his reader-oriented translation strategy (Jiang, 2016).

In 2007, three years after *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* was published, João Martins published his Portuguese version of *Fengru feitun* (*Peito Grande, Ancas Largas*) in Lisbon. The Portuguese version in our hands is a reprint in 2012. Martins says that his Portuguese translation is based on the English translation (Martins, 2012, p. 5). Thus, except for a few differences, the translation service awareness of the two translations is basically the same.

What is unusual is that very limited existing materials about the translator João Martins can be detected. We searched online and even sought help from friends abroad, but ended up with the following scant information: “Em Portugal foi publicado em 2007 o livro “Peito grande, ancas largas”, traduzido por João Martins e editado pela Ulisseia mas atualmente esgotado” (In Portugal, the Portuguese version of *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* was published in 2007; it was translated by João Martins, edited and published by Ulisseia Press. All books are now sold out). Information from the 2012 reprint: “Já agora a tradução portuguesa é feita do inglês por João Martins” (The Portuguese version of *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* was translated by Martins from English).

Up to now, very few studies have been made on this Portuguese version (Cheng, 2020, pp. 74-75; Heilbronn, 2000, p. 14; Casanova, 2004, p. 20). Such being the case, João Martins’ translation is worth an examination in translation studies.

II. SERVICE AWARENESS AT TEXTUAL ASPECT

At the textual aspect, the Portuguese and English translations are basically the same, we can see many textual modifications, such as chapter adjustments, paragraph abridgments, and deletions, which reflect the translators’ translation service awareness.

A. Chapter Adjustment

The original *Fengru feitun* consists of eight chapters, i.e., seven chapters plus an “extra chapter”: Chapter I (Sections 1-9), Chapter II (Sections 10-18), Chapter III (Sections 19-27), Chapter IV (Sections 28-37), Chapter V (Sections 38-46), Chapter VI (Sections 47-54), and Chapter VII (Sections 55-63), and the “extra chapter” is made up of seven supplementary sections: Sections i-vii (*cf.* the Chinese version published by *Shanghai Literature & Art Publishing House* in 2012).

Chapter VII is a flashback narrating the Shangguan Lu family’s background and how the nine children of the family came from. In the English and Portuguese version, the original Chapter VII was adjusted to Chapter II, aiming to telling the readers in advance the main characters’ backgrounds to offer a better readability for them.

B. Paragraph Abridgment

The first part of the original Chapter VII, i.e. Section 55, starting from “大清朝 光 緒 二 十 六 年， 是 公 元 一 九 〇 〇 年” to “又 拍 打 了 半 天， 她 才 啞 啞 地 哭 出 了 聲”， has a total of 3642 Chinese characters (Mo, 2012, pp. 541-545), where the author narrates in detail how the “maternal grandfather” Lu Wuluan, a martial arts master, and his family members including “my mother” Lu Xuan’er (later Shangguan Lu) had a narrow escape from death during the German invasion of Shandong in 1897-1914, and the anti-German fights led by “maternal grandfather” and Du Xieyuan, the leader of the Red Guns.

In the English version, this part is abridged into three short paragraphs consisting of 228 words, which is only a synopsis of the original (Han & Jiang, 2021, p. 143).

The Portuguese translation is basically the same as the English, but the paragraph arrangement is a little different: the English version is a paragraph while the Portuguese is divided into four paragraphs (Martins, 2012, p. 69).

Compared with the original, the descriptions of the anti-German battles led by “maternal grandfather” and the leader of the Red Guns are omitted in the translations, which quickens the narrative speed and better suits the target readers.

C. Omissions

All those that are not very relevant to or very close to the development of the novel’s plots are omitted in the English version (Liu, 2014). For example, the original 38-page long “extra chapter” is not very close to the development of the novel’s plots. It is completely removed in the English and Portuguese translation. Another example, Section 39 in Chapter 5, which describes in detail the saga of Birdman Han, who was captured by Japanese invaders and then sent to Hokkaido in Japan, forced to do painful labor, and finally escaped into a deep, dense forest, where he lived hard for thirteen years, resembles an independent episode that has little to do with the development of the novel’s plots and is also completely omitted in the English and Portuguese translation.

These omissions make the narration of the novel more coherent and the development of the main plots faster, fostering better readability.

In addition to the above-mentioned omissions, there are many other small omissions in the English and Portuguese translation, for example:

(a).

Original text:

wǒ mén jiāo huàn le zhào piàn zài hēi bái zhào piàn shàng nà tā shā dèng zhe yǒu xiē chī jīng de dà yǎn jīng fān juǎn zhe mào mì de jié máo kàn zhe wǒ shàng
我们交换了照片。在黑白照片上，娜塔莎瞪着有些吃惊的大眼睛、翻卷着茂密的睫毛看着我。上
guān jīn tóng de xīn zàng yí zhèn jù liè de tiào dòng tā gǎn dào rè xuè chōng shàng le tóu lú ná zhe zhào piàn de shǒu bù yóu de wēi wēi chàn dòu nà tā shā
官金童的心脏一阵剧烈地跳动，他感到热血冲上了头颅，拿着照片的手不由地微微颤抖。娜塔莎
fēng mǎn de zuǐ chún wēi juē qǐ chún féng lǐ tòu lù chū yá chǐ de yín guāng wēn xīn de sǎn fā zhe lán huā yōu xiāng de qì xī zhí pū tā de yǎn jīng yí
丰满的嘴唇微噉起，唇缝里透露出牙齿的银光，温馨的、散发着兰花幽香的气息直扑他的眼睛，一
zhèn tián mì de gǎn jué shǐ tā de bí zǐ suān liū liū de (Mo, 2012, p. 358)
阵甜蜜的感觉使他的鼻子酸溜溜的。(Mo, 2012, p. 358)

English translation:

We exchanged photos. She gazed out at me with a slight look of surprise in her staring eyes, and lush, curling lashes. Shangguan Jintong felt his heart race and the blood rush to his head; the hand holding the photo trembled uncontrollably... (Goldblatt, 2004, p. 393)

Portuguese translation:

Trocámos fotografias. Ela olhou para mim com um ligeiro brilho de surpresa nos seus olhos muito abertos, semeados de exuberantes pestanas curvas. Shangguan Jintong sentiu o coração disparar e o sangue afluir-lhe à cabeça; a mão que segurava a fotografia tremia descontroladamente. (Martins, 2012, p. 448)

In this example, the first half of the original has already described how “her” fresh carnal eyes and lush curling lashes made Jintong feel “his heart race and the blood rush to his head; the hand holding the photo trembled uncontrollably”; in what follows, i.e., in the underlined parts, the author goes on describing how “her” sexy lips, teeth and even “her physical smell” gave Jintong some fatal attractions. The underlined parts seem to be more sentimental than necessary, and they are omitted in the English and Portuguese translation.

(b).

Original text:

wài xiāng rén zài shā liáng zǐ xià dā qǐ le jǐ shí gè wō péng zhēng de le lì zú zhī dì shí jǐ nián hòu zhè lǐ biàn chéng le yí gè cūn zhuāng yòu guò
外乡人在沙梁子下搭起了几十个窝棚，争得了立足之地。十几年后，这里便成了一个村庄。又过
le jǐ shí nián zhè lǐ biàn chéng le yí gè fán huá de dà zhèn fáng wū yǔ dà lán zhèn jī hū lián chéng yí piàn zhōng jiān zhǐ gé zhe yí gè dà chí táng
了几十年，这里变成了一个繁华的大镇，房屋与大栏镇几乎连成一片，中间只隔着一个大池塘，
yí tiáo xiǎo lù jiǔ shí nián dài dà lán zhèn chè zhèn shè shì shā liáng zǐ zhèn biàn chéng le dà lán shì de wān xī qū dào nà shí zhè lǐ huì yǒu yí gè yà
一条小路。九十年代，大栏镇撤镇设市，沙梁子镇变成了大栏市的湾西区。到那时这里会有一个亚
zhōu zuì dà de dōng fāng niǎo lèi zhōng xīn xǔ duō zài guó jiā dòng wù yuán lǐ dōu nán miǎn zōng yǐng de zhēn xī niǎo lèi kě yǐ zài zhè lǐ mǎi dào dāng rán
洲最大的东方鸟类中心，许多在国家动物园里都难觅踪影的珍稀鸟类，可以在这里买到。当然，
mǎi mài zhēn xī niǎo lèi de huó dòng shì bàn mì mì de jìn xíng de niǎo lèi zhōng xīn de chuàng shǐ rén jiù shì niǎo ér hán de ér zǐ yīng wú hán tā yī kào
买卖珍稀鸟类的活动是半秘密地进行的。鸟类中心的创始人，就是鸟儿韩的儿子鹦鹉韩，他依靠
sì yǎng fán zhí péi yù xīn pǐn zhòng yīng wú fā jiā zhì fù bìng zài tā lǎo pó gēng lián lián de bāng zhù xià dà chū fēng tóu rán hòu lǎng chēng rù yù
饲养、繁殖、培育新品种鹦鹉发家致富，并在他老婆耿莲莲的帮助下大出风头，然后银铛入狱。
niǎo ér hán zài shā liáng shàng mái zàng le mǔ qīn tí zhe dàn gōng cǎo zhe yì xiāng kǒu yīn zài dà jiē shàng mà le liǎng gè lái huí (Mo, 2012, pp.
鸟儿韩在沙梁上埋葬了母亲，提着弹弓，操着异乡口音，在大街上骂了两个来回。(Mo, 2012, pp.
113-114)

English translation:

The outsiders threw up dozens of tents on the sandy ridge, making it their own. Birdman Han buried his mother on the sandy ridge, then picked up his slingshots and walked up and down the street twice, cursing in his unfamiliar accent. (Goldblatt, 2004, p. 144)

Portuguese translation:

Os forasteiros armaram dezenas de tendas na Serra de Areia, fazendo-a sua. Han Passarinheiro enterrou aí a mãe, depois pegou nas físgas, subiu e desceu a rua duas vezes, praguejando com o seu estranho sotaque. (Martins, 2012, p. 173)

In the original, the underlined parts are in the middle of the text, which describes the historical changes in the village of Shaliangzi and the bond between Shaliangzi and Birdman Han’s son. They are not very helpful for the development of the plots of the story, and they are removed in the English and Portuguese translation. The removal results in a more compact translation with faster plot development.

III. SERVICE AWARENESS AT A CULTURAL ASPECT

The cultural differences between China and the West pose a challenge to translation. If the translator handles the cultural factors improperly, the translation will cause reading difficulties for readers and affect their reading interest; if they are handled properly, the translation can bring readers a sense of novelty from foreign cultures, stimulating their curiosity for further reading. Moreover, the translation may enrich the expressions of the target language. Handling cultural differences properly is a manifestation of good translation service awareness.

Fortunately, the English and the Portuguese translator of *Fengru feitun* did a good job in this regard. We will explore the service awareness at cultural aspect in the Portuguese and English translation from four dimensions: cultural simplification, cultural interpretation, cultural supplementation, and cultural substitution.

A. Cultural Simplification

If some cultural factors in the original text are difficult to understand through direct translation, or if the cultural loss is great for readers when the cultural factors are not translated, simplifying these cultural factors to a level that the target readers can understand is a good choice. For example:

(c).

Original text:

liú dé zhù yǒu nǐ zhè kē líng zhī cǎo wǒ hái yào dào nǎ lǐ qù ne
“留得住。有你这棵灵芝草，我还要到哪里去呢？” (Mo, 2012, p. 68)

English translation:

“Why would I go anywhere else, when you, my grass of miracles, are right here?” (Goldblatt, 2004, p. 93)

Portuguese translation:

– Chega – respondeu com emoção o pastor – Para que havia eu de ir para outro lado, quando tu, pastagem dos meus milagres, estás aqui mesmo? (Martins, 2012, p.117)

In the original, the Swedish Pastor Maloya compares Shangguan Lu to Lingzhi (*Ganoderma lucidum*), a long-cherished magic herb in traditional Chinese medicine, to show his love for her. Since ancient times, the Chinese have deified *Ganoderma lucidum* and regarded it as a herb of good luck and immortality. For example, Chinese classics such

as *The Commentary on the Water Classic* (水经注) and the *Records of the Xiangyang Elders* (襄阳耆旧记), record that Yaoji, daughter of Emperor Yandi, died before she could walk and was buried on Mount Wushan, where her spirit

was transformed into a *Ganoderma lucidum*; and *The Nine Songs: Mountain Ghosts* (九歌·山鬼), *Poetry of the Capital*

Xijing (西京赋) and *Poetry of Goddess Luoshen* (洛神赋) are among the many literary works that deify *Ganoderma*

lucidum. In some Chinese medical classics, such as *Shennong Classic of Materia Medica* (神农本草经) and

Compendium of Materia Medica (本草纲目), the living surroundings, ecological characteristics and medical functions of *Ganoderma lucidum* are recorded.

Because of the differences in “ecological culture” and “social culture” (Nida, 1993:91), Westerners don’t take *Ganoderma lucidum* as a magical herb. If it is translated directly, the target readers may feel confused; if it is omitted, the cultural factors are lost. Such being the case, cultural simplification is a good choice.

Goldblatt translates *Ganoderma lucidum* as “grass of miracles”, which retains to some extent the cultural image of the herb, however, without a footnote, the cultural factors underlying the original are significantly reduced. The Portuguese translation “*pastagem dos meus milagres*” (meaning “pasture of my miracles”) differs from the English. It also simplifies the original cultural factors.

(d).

Original text:

wū yā men yòu lái le tā men xiàng gāng gāng xǐ yù guò yí yàng yǔ máo xīn xiān shǎn shuò zhe wǎ lán de guāng máng
乌鸦们又来了。它们像刚刚洗浴过一样，羽毛新鲜，闪烁着瓦蓝的光芒。(Mo, 2012, p. 60)

English translation:

Then the crows returned. Their wings were bathed a shiny blue black. (Goldblatt, 2004, p. 85)

Portuguese translation:

Então voltaram os corvos. As suas asas tinham um lustro negro-azulado. (Martins, 2012, p. 108)

“瓦蓝” (literally: tile blue) is a China-specific term to describe a color similar to cerulean blue. For instance, in his famous essay “江南瓦” (Jiangnan Tiles), Chen Zhihong writes “The mossy Jiangnan tiles look like darkish jades. Looked from a distance, the tiles change from ink-green, deep green to blackish green. This kind of special green is similar to cerulean blue. Thus, a new colour was coined: tile blue”¹ (Chen, 2009). The term first appeared in the 1960s.

For example, in a short story “山鹰” (Mountain Eagle) by Jun Qing² in 1962, he writes “I looked at the sky through the window, the sky was tile blue”³. In Portuguese-speaking and English-speaking countries, Jiangnan tiles are rare to find, it is difficult for readers in these countries to understand what exactly “tile blue” is. Thus, Goldblatt simplifies it into

¹ Original text: “长苔的江南瓦，神似一块碧玉，墨绿，深绿，暗绿，远远地看上去，绿意摇曳，这种绿，透着深蓝。于是，人们创造出一个新词：瓦蓝” (Chen Zhihong, 2009).

² Jun Qing (峻青, 1922-2019), a well-known contemporary Chinese writer and painter.

³ Original text: “我抬头望了望窗外的天空，天空瓦蓝瓦蓝的” (Jun, 1981).

“blue black”, which is also similar to the original color; in the Portuguese translation, it is translated into “*negro-azulado*” (black-blue), which is close to the English, but emphasizes the blue nature of the color and is closer to the original meaning.

B. Cultural Interpretation

Cultural interpretation means to translate the original cultural elements through explanation. E.g.

(e).

Original text:

líng dì mǔ qīn shuō zán bù néng zài chī rén jiā de niǎo le sān jiě zhí zhe yǎn wèn wèi shén me tā dǎ zhǐ niǎo ér bǐ zhuō gè shī zǐ hái róng yì mǔ qīn shuō zài róng yì yě shì rén jiā zhuō de nǐ nán dào bù zhī dào chī rén jiā zuǐ ruǎn ná rén jiā shǒu duǎn de dào lǐ
“领弟，”母亲说，“咱不能再吃人家的鸟了。”三姐直着眼问：“为什么？他打只鸟儿比捉个虱子还容易。”母亲说：“再容易也是人家捉的。你难道不知道吃人家嘴软，拿人家手短的道理？” (Mo, 2012, p. 114)

English translation:

“Lingdi,” she said, “we can’t keep eating somebody else’s birds.” “Why not?” Lingdi asked. “For him, shooting down a bird is easier than catching a flea. “But they’re still his birds, no matter how easily he comes by them. Don’t you know that people expect favors to be returned?” (Goldblatt, 2004, p. 145)

Portuguese translation:

– Lingdi – disse –, não podemos continuar a comer aves que não são nossas.
– Porque não? – perguntou Lingdi. – Para ele, caçar uma ave é mais fácil que apanhar uma pulga.
– Mesmo assim, continuam a ser as aves dele, por muito pouco que lhe custe apanhá-las. Não sabes que as pessoas esperam sempre a paga dos favores que fazem? (Martins, 2012, p. 174)

Idioms, aphorisms, and proverbs belong to what Nida calls “linguistic culture” and “social culture” (Nida, 1993, p.

91). The proverb “吃人家嘴软，拿人家手短” (literally: After eating someone’s food, your mouth turns soft; after taking someone’s gift, your hands become shorter) figuratively means “you need to give the favor in return for what someone has given you”. Because of the great gap of “linguistic culture” and “social culture” between China and the West, the proverb should not be translated literally if the translator doesn’t want to confuse the readers. Goldblatt’s “people expect favors to be returned” is a good cultural interpretation of the original, and Martins’ “*as pessoas esperam sempre a paga dos favores que fazem*” (people always hope their efforts can be rewarded) is close to the English interpretation.

(f).

Original text:

shàngguān lǚ shì shàngguān fú lù zhī qī shàngguānshòu xǐ zhī mǔ yīn fū sǐ zǐ wáng tòngduàncháng zǐ ér sǐ
“上官吕氏，上官福祿之妻，上官寿喜之母，因夫死子亡，痛断肠子而死。” (Mo, 2012, p. 56)

English translation:

“Shangguan nee Lv has died of broken heart”. (Goldblatt, 2004, p. 80)

Portuguese translation:

—Shangguan, nascida Lü, esposa de Shangguan Fulu, mãe de Shangguan Shouxi, morreu de desgosto pela morte do marido e do filho. (Martins, 2012, p. 103)

The original idiom “痛断肠子而死” (literally: to die from broken intestines) is also a metaphor meaning “to die from extreme grief”. If the idiom is translated literally, the target readers may not be able to connect “broken intestines” with “extreme grief”, and feel confused. Goldblatt explains “broken intestines” with an English idiom “broken heart”; Martins interprets it with “*morreu de desgosto*” (died of grief). In both translations the original cultural element is conveyed in an interpretative way.

C. Cultural Supplementation

“Cultural supplementation” refers to making a note or annotation of the original cultural factors in the translation. However, this annotation is not a footnote, not an endnote, but a supplementary explanation similar to an interlinear note. E.g.:

(g).

Original text:

guān jiā de qī gè nǚ ér lái dì zhāo dì líng dì xiǎng dì pàn dì niàn dì qiú dì
官家的七个女儿——来弟、招弟、领弟、想弟、盼弟、念弟、求弟…… (Mo, 2012, p. 19)

English translation:

The seven daughters of the Shangguan family – Laidi (Brother Coming), Zhaodi (Brother Hailed), Lingdi (Brother Ushered), Xiangdi (Brother Desired), Pandi (Brother Anticipated), Niandi (Brother Wanted), and Qiudi (Brother Sought) ... (Goldblatt, 2004, p. 17)

Portuguese translation:

As sete filhas da família Shangguan—Laidi (Irmão Vindouro), Zhaodi (Irmão Saudado), Lingdi (Irmão Anunciado), Xiangdi (Irmão Desejado), Pandi (Irmão Almejado), Niandi (Irmão Aguardado), e Qiu di (Irmão Procurado) ... (Martins, 2012, pp. 35-36)

Since ancient times, China has had a bad tradition of giving preference to sons over daughters, especially in rural areas. The same applies to the Shangguan family in the original of this example, and is reflected in the names of the seven daughters in the family. The seven names, if merely transliterated, are not able to reflect this bad tradition (which is part of the feudal culture), nor are they able to suggest that “I” (Shangguan Jintong, the only son in the family) enjoy a special status in the family, and that “I” will later be pampered by “my” mother. In other words, the seven names not only reflect a bad tradition, but also serve as a foreshadowing for the upcoming plot development. To effectively convey the cultural functions of these names, Goldblatt complements the transliterations with explanations of names. This processing provides convenience for readers’ further reading. Martins follows the suit of Goldblatt in the Portuguese translation.

(h).

Original text:

wǒ jiā xuán ér fēi jià gè zhuàngyuán bù kě de dà gū fu shuō
我家璇儿，非嫁个状元不可的！”大姑父说。(Mo, 2012, p. 548)

English translation:

Our Xuan’er will marry a zhuangyuan, top scholar at the Imperial Examination,” he announced. (Goldblatt, 2004, p. 49)

Portuguese translation:

– A nossa Xuan’er há-de casar com um zhuangyuan, um grande sábio do Exame Imperial – Proclamava ele. (Martins, 2012, p. 71)

The cultural term “状元” originally refers to a person who ranks first in the Imperial Examination in ancient China, later it is used to refer to the most skilled person in a certain field. This term not only suggests the over-1000-year long history of Imperial Examinations in China, but also reminds Chinese readers of many famous historical stories, legends, and literary works including poems. It is very rich in cultural connotations. As there is no equivalent in English or Portuguese for “状元”, the two translators respectively add a complementary explanation after the transliteration (see the underlined parts) to convey some basic the cultural elements.

D. Cultural Substitution

“Cultural substitution” is the replacement of the original cultural elements with those of the target language, which is what Nida refers to as “dynamic equivalence” (Nida, 1964, p. 159).

(i).

Original text:

yǒu qián néng shǐ guǐ tuī mó
“有钱能使鬼推磨” (Mo, 2012, p. 43)

English translation:

“money can make the devil turn a millstone” (Goldblatt, 2004, p. 40)

Portuguese translation:

Até no inferno o dinheiro faz do diabo um moleiro. (Martins, 2012, p. 61)

The original proverb “有钱能使鬼推磨” (literally: Money can make a ghost turn a millstone) is translated into “*Até no inferno o dinheiro faz do diabo um moleiro*” (meaning: Even in hell, money makes the devil a mill worker) in the Portuguese version, in which the Chinese “鬼” (ghost) is replaced by a Portuguese “diabo” (devil). The Western “diabo” or “devil” is somewhat different from the Chinese “ghost”, which is clearly explained in a long footnote in a well-known essay “魔鬼夜访钱钟书先生” (“The Devil Visits Mr. Qian at Night”) written by Qian Zhongshu (钱钟书, 1910-1998), a very famous Chinese scholar and writer. According to the note, Western devils are not only wise and knowledgeable, but also humanitarian. On the other hand, in terms of the arguments of Neo-Confucian philosophers in China’s Song Dynasty, a Chinese “ghost” is essentially a kind of “气 (air)” (Hu, 1983, pp. 608-611; Zhu, 2021), it is usually evil and scary.

IV. SERVICE AWARENESS AT LINGUISTIC ASPECT

The language of *Fengru Feitun* is typical of Mo Yan’s literary language; it is characterized by carnivalesque narrations, which are manifested in his exaggerated or dramatized narrations. Some Chinese readers like this style, some don’t. In a questionnaire survey among 24 undergraduate students in my comparative literature course, I selected 20 relatively typical passages from *Fengru Feitun*, asking students to pay special attention to the linguistic style of carnivalesque narrations and then make a choice among “like it”, “dislike it”, and “cannot decide”. The results show that 34% of the informants “like it”, 64% “dislike it”, and 2% “cannot decide”. From the English and Portuguese translation, we can see that Goldblatt and Martins put their target readers in the category of “dislike it” and, consequently, abridged or modified the original texts.

A. Weakening of Exaggerated or Dramatized Narrations

Literary language is sometimes supposed to be exaggerated or dramatized. But how much of it is appropriate for readers to feel happy or comfortable? Or how much can readers accept? Generally speaking, every head has its own judgement. Goldblatt feels that Mo Yan's language in *Fengru Feitun* is over-exaggerated or over-dramatized and weakens it in his translation by abridgment, and Martins follows suit. E.g.:

(j).

Original text:

tā de shēnhòu gēn suí zhè yí gè bǐ lǚ shèng lì hái yào gāo dà de hùn xuè zhōng nǚ rén shēnshēn de yǎn wō xuè pén dà de zuǐ nà nǚ zǐ bái dé
.....他的身后，跟随者一个比鲁胜利还要高大的混血种女人。深深的眼窝血盆大的嘴，那奶子白得
rú xuě liáng dé rú shuāng huá dé rú chóu yì bù sān duō suǒ nǎi tóu què xiǎoqiǎo líng lóng xiàng liǎng zhī jiǎn jiǎn de xiū xiū de chuǎn xī zhe de cì
如雪，凉得如霜，滑得如绸，一步三哆嗦，奶头却小巧玲珑，像两只尖尖的、咻咻地喘息着的刺
wèi xiǎo jiǎn zuǐ
猬小尖嘴儿。

liǎng liàng tè bié cháng dà de jiào chē cóng xīn xiū de mò shuǐ hé dà qiáo nà biān yǎo zhe wěi bā kāi guò lái yì liàng hóng de yì liàng bái de jiǎn zhí xiàng yì
两辆特别长大的轿车从新修的墨水河大桥那边咬着尾巴开过来，一辆红的，一辆白的，简直像一
gōng yì mǔ qì chē jiāo pèi shēng chū yì liàng xiǎo qì chē shì shén me yán sè ne
公一母。汽车交配，生出一辆小汽车，是什么颜色呢？

lǚ shèng lì bù shí dì duì tā zhuǎn guò yǎn qù tā nà yí guān dì bà qì shí zú de liǎn shàng jìng shí lù chū mèi xiào
鲁胜利不时地对他转过眼去，她那一贯地霸气十足的脸上竟时露出媚笑。(Mo, 2012, p. 495)

English translation:

...Right behind him came a woman of mixed blood who was both taller and bigger than Lu Shengli. She had deep-set eyes and blood-red lips. Lu Shengli kept glancing at the man, a bewitching smile creasing her customary stern expression. (Goldblatt, 2004, p. 509)

Portuguese translation:

Logo atrás do indivíduo da gravata larga, desceu uma mulher mestiça, mais alta e incorporada que Lu Shengli. Lu Shengli não parava de lançar olhadelas ao homem, com um sorriso encantador a quebrar a austeridade costumeira da sua expressão. (Martins, 2012, p. 577)

The underlined part of the original carnally describes the body shape of the tall mixed-blood woman: first, the author presents an exaggerated portrayal of her eye sockets, mouth, breasts, and nipples; then, by describing two cars on the bridge, a red one and a white one, he imagines what color will it be if the two cars get married and have a baby car. These exaggerated and dramatized descriptions reflect the uniqueness of this mixed-blood woman. These descriptions, though very literary, appear over-exaggerated or over-dramatized to Goldblatt, who removes them in his translation, thus making the English version much easier to read and the narration pace much quicker. The Portuguese translation is very close to the English, but the latter retains the description of her eye sockets and mouth while the former does not. Therefore, the Portuguese version is even more diluted in exaggeration and dramatization.

(k).

Original text:

dú jiǎo shòu rǔ zhào dà shì jiè shēng yì xīng lóng chéng shì zài kuài sù péng zhàng yòu yì zuò dà qiáo fēi jià zài jiǎo lóng hé shàng zhǐ yǒu bǎ rǔ fáng cì
“独角兽乳罩大世界”生意兴隆。城市在快速膨胀，又一座大桥飞架在蛟龙河上.....只有把乳房伺
hòu shū fu le rén lèi cái huì shū fu xiǎo xiǎo rǔ zhào yòng chù dà nán rén nǚ rén dōu lí bu kāi tā yào rǎng rǔ zhào mǎn tiān fēi bǎ dà lán shì
候舒服了，人类才会舒服.....小小乳罩用处大，男人女人都离不开它。要让乳罩满天飞。把大栏市
jiàn chéng ài rǔ shì měi rǔ shì fēng rǔ shì bǎ liù yuè biàn chéng ài rǔ yuè bǎ nóng lì qī yuè qī biàn chéng rǔ fáng jié zài dà lán shì rén mín
建成爱乳市、美乳市、丰乳市。把六月变成爱乳月，把农历七月七变成乳房节.....在大栏市人民
gōng yuán jìn xíng fēng rǔ dà sài rǔ zhào dà zhǎn xiāo fēng rǔ dà sài fēn děng jí fēn nián líng duàn rǔ fáng dǎ tái jīng jì chàng xì shén me
公园进行丰乳大赛，乳罩大展销。丰乳大赛分等级，分年龄段.....乳房搭台，经济唱戏.....什么
guó jì xié zǐ jié guó jì mà zhà jié guó jì dòu fǔ jié guó jì pí jiǔ jié dōu bǐ bú shàng wǒ men de guó jì rǔ fáng jié yě kě yǐ jiào guó jì
国际蝎子节、国际蚂蚱节、国际豆腐节、国际啤酒节.....都比不上我们的国际乳房节，也可以叫国际
nǎi tóu jié
奶头节..... (Mo, 2012, p. 508)

English translation:

Business was booming at Unicorn: The World in Bras. The city was expanding rapidly... the area was now a celebrated textile district. (Goldblatt, 2004, p. 516)

Portuguese translation:

Os negócios floresciam na «Unicórnio: o mundo dos sutiãs». A cidade expandiu-se rapidamente ... Dalan era agora uma conhecida região têxtil. (Martins, 2012, p. 584)

The underlined part in the original describes breasts and bras in a carnivalesque style. According to my above-mentioned survey, 64% of the informants “dislike it” because they feel the descriptions are over-exaggerated or over-dramatized. And, from the English translation, we can infer that Goldblatt also feels the same way because he omitted the underlined part, i.e., the original exaggerated or dramatized narrations are weakened, and the narrative pace is quickened. The Portuguese translation is basically the same as the English.

B. Reduction of Excessive Psychological Descriptions

Mo Yan's literary language style was influenced by two Nobel Prize-winners for literature: American writer William Faulkner (1897-1962) and Colombian writer Gabriel José de la Concordia García Márquez (1927-2014) (Zhu, 2006, pp.

10-11). “In all of Mo Yan’s novels, we can see Faulknerian-style ‘internal monologues’, ‘hallucinations’, and Marquesian-style literary symbols and metaphors” (Chen, 1988). Both “internal monologues” and “hallucinations” belong to psychological activity description. In this regard, Mo is more influenced by Faulkner.

However, Mo’s style of psychological description differs greatly from Faulkner’s. The differences are mainly manifested in Mo’s carnivalesque style, which, though very popular among certain readers, may pose two reading difficulties for average readers: firstly, they may feel that this style slows down the development of the storyline, and secondly, it makes the language wordy or verbose. To speed up the pace of the story and improve readability, Goldblatt and Martins significantly reduced the original psychological descriptions. For example:

(1).

Original text:

shàngguān jīn tóngzhàn le qǐ lái guōpíng ēn zhǐ huī zhe hóngwèibīng gùn bàng duì hé luó gǔ duì yā jiè zhe niú guǐ shé shén zài jí shì shàngzhōngyòu kāi
上官金童站了起来。郭平恩指挥着“红卫兵”棍棒队和锣鼓队，押解着牛鬼蛇神，在集市上重又开
shǐ yóu xíng shàngguān jīn tóng huàn xiǎng zhe zài yí gè huī huáng de rì zǐ lǐ tā shǒu chí zhe chuán shuō zhōng de lóng quán bǎo jiàn bǎ guō píng ēn
始游行……上官金童幻想着：在一个辉煌的日子里，他手持着传说中的龙泉宝剑，把郭平恩、
zhāng píng tuán fāng hào zi liú gǒu zi wū yún yǔ wèi yáng jiǎo guō qiū shēng tǒng tǒng de yā dào nà ge gāo gāo de tǔ tái zǐ shàng ràng tā
张平团、方耗子、刘狗子、巫云雨、魏羊角、郭秋生……统统地押到那个高高的土台子上，让他
men yī pái pái de guì xià rán hòu tā shǒu tí zhe shǎn shuò zhe lán sè guāng máng de jiàn yòng jiàn jiǎn dī zhe shàngguān dà xiá nín lǎo rén jiā dà
们一排排地跪下，然后，他手提着闪烁着蓝色光芒的剑，用剑尖抵着……上官大侠，您老人家大
rén bù jì xiǎo rén de guò zǎi xiàng dù zǐ lǐ pǎo lún chuán bù shì yī bān de chuán shì wàn dùn jù lún chéng cháng fēng pò jù liú zhí shí tài píng
人不记小人的过，宰相肚子里跑轮船，不是一般的船是万吨巨轮，乘长风，破巨流，直驶太平
yáng nín de xiōng huái bǐ tài píng yáng hái kuāng uǎng rú cǐ qiǎo zuǐ huá shé shí zài kě wù zhì jí shàngguān qiú dì zhū lèi qūn qūn de shuō hào xiōng
洋，您的胸怀，比太平洋还宽广。如此巧嘴滑舌实在可恶至极……上官求弟珠泪滚滚地说：好兄
di nǐ gēn běn bù dǒng nǚ rén de xīn
弟，你根本不懂女人的心……

“回去！”一个“红卫兵”小将对着上官金童的肚子捅了一拳，骂道，“混蛋，你想逃跑？！” (Mo, 2012, pp. 429-430)

English translation:

Meanwhile, Jintong stood there caught up in a fantasy: A sunlit day. Armed with the legendary Dragon Spring sword, he has Guo Pinggen, Zhang Pingtuan, Mouse Fang, Dog Liu, Wu Yunyu, Wei Yangjiao, and Guo Qiusheng dragged up onto the stage, where he forces them to kneel and face the glinting tip of his sword...

“Get back there, you little bastard!” one of the little Red Guard generals growled as he drove his fist into Jintong’s belly. “Don’t you dare think of running away!” (Goldblatt, 2004, p. 452)

Portuguese translation:

Entretanto, Jintong sonhava acordado: num dia de sol, armado com a lendária espada das Nascentes do Dragão, mandava arrastar para uma plataforma de terra batida Guo Pinggen, Zhang Pingtuan, Fang Rzinho, Liu Gao, Wu Yunyu, Wei Yangjiao e Guo Qiusheng; obrigava-os então a ajoelharem-se e a verem de perto a ponta cintilante da sua espada...

– Volta já para o teu lugar, canalha! – rosnou um dos guardas vermelhos enterrando o punho na barriga de Jintong. – Nem penses em fuga! (Martins, 2012, pp. 513-514)

The underlined part in the original is a carnivalesque description of Shangguan Jintong’s dream-like psychological activity, which is typical of exaggerated or dramatized narration. The translators regard it as over-exaggeration or over-dramatization or more than necessary, they significantly reduced the psychological descriptions in the English and Portuguese translation, which results in a higher readability, quicker narrative pace and, consequently, a faster development of the storyline.

C. Refinement of Vulgarism

A vulgarism is a vulgar or inelegant word or term. In literary works, vulgarisms are sometimes used to portray the characteristics or personality of a character. Translators, however, are generally cautious about the need to convey vulgarisms in translations because they worry that direct translations of vulgarisms may affect the reader’s perception or cause language pollution. For example, in Shakespeare’s play *Romeo and Juliet* there are some vulgarisms, and Zhu Shenghao, a very famous Chinese translator, refined all of them in his translation, making them sound elegant. Later, another famous translator Liang Shiqiu refined most of them in his translation of the same play (Yao, 2018). Similar examples are not rare in English translations, e.g., in *Lysistrata*, a famous play written by ancient Greek playwright Aristophanes, when the female protagonist asked the “peace” messenger, played by a naked beauty, to bring up the male Spartan peace messenger, she said a famous line “En me dido ten cheira, tes sathes age” (meaning: if he doesn’t give you his hand, lead him by the penis), which is also a typical vulgarism. Its English translations are all refined: a) If he doesn’t give you his hand, lead him by the nose; b) If they don’t give a hand, a leg will do; c) If hands are reused, conduct them by the handle; d) But if they don’t give you their hands, take them and show them politely, by their... life lines; e) Take them by the hand, or by anything else if they seem unwilling (Lefevere, 1992, pp. 41-42; Han & Jiang, 2021, p. 159). In Mo Yan’s *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* there are also some vulgarisms. Goldblatt and Martins also refined them in their translations. For example:

(m).

Original text:

mǎ luò yà shuō tā yào bú shì nǐ gū fu wǒ bá le tā de jī bā
 马洛亚说：“他要不是你姐夫，我拔了他的鸡巴！”(Mo, 2012, p. 67)

English translation:

“If he weren’t your uncle,” Pastor Malory said, “I’d relieve him of his manhood.” (Goldblatt, 2004, p. 93)

Portuguese translation:

– Se não fosse teu tio – tornou o pastor –, aliviava-o da virgindade. (Martins, 2012, p. 117)

The underlined original is a typical vulgarism, and a direct translation would be unpleasant for readers. Therefore, both the English and Portuguese translation are refined. And we find the English translation “relieve him of his manhood” is a more natural and fluent expression than the Portuguese “*aliviava-o da virgindade*” (relieved him of his virginity). The two refinements echo with and reinforce the argument that translators are generally cautious about the need to convey vulgarisms in translations.

V. CONCLUSION

The above analyses show that both Goldblatt and Martins have demonstrated their clear awareness of translation service, and that their good sense of translation service enabled them to have removed many reading barriers for TT readers, bringing them reading convenience, which is a good protection of their reading interest. The translator’s awareness of translation service mainly comes from three sources: a) the translator’s self-cultivation or self-consciousness, b) pressure from market or social needs, and c) explicit requirements from the publisher or sponsor. It should be noted that, in today’s world, European and American literature is the predominant literature, and that “Chinese literature only holds a ‘marginal’ or ‘minor’ position in the sea of world literature” (Fu & Zhang, 2008). To help Chinese literature attract more readers outside China, translators should overcome not only the linguistic, narrative, aesthetic, and cultural barriers, but also the huge differences in reading habits (Jiang, 2016). To achieve these goals, translator’s good service awareness is indispensable. Moreover, in Europe and America, “the operation mode in which literary works are taken as a kind of commercial product undoubtedly affect publishers and readers” (Lü, 2011, p. 235). Translated literary works are also commercial products, and, in the same vein, are also greatly influenced.

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