

A Comparative Study Of Methods Employed By The Yangs And Hawkes For Translating Traditional Chinese Medicine Terms In Hong Lou Meng From The Perspective Of Reception Aesthetics

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Abstract

As the quintessence of our country, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is an essential part of traditional Chinese culture and contributes to the health of the Chinese nation. TCM gradually captures the attention of the world and delivers benefits to people from the world. Hong Lou Meng, one of China's four great masterpieces, is an encyclopedic novel that involves more than 290 pieces of medical knowledge. From the perspective of reception aesthetics, this paper studies translation strategies of TCM terms in the Yangs and Hawkes translations of Hong Lou Meng, in order to provide reference for the English translation of TCM terminology.

Keywords: *Hong Lou Meng, Yangs and Hawkes, TCM terms, Translation Methods, Reception Aesthetics*

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I. Introduction

With China's increasing influence in the world, traditional Chinese medicine (hereinafter referred to as TCM), as Chinese quintessence, has attracted the attention of people from the world. Set against the backdrop of the rise and fall of the four major families of Jia, Shi, Wang, and Xue, *Hong Lou Meng* vividly depicts all classes of society and unfolds a broad picture of social history, including descriptions of medicine, poetry, architecture, opera, etc. Cultural research on *Hong Lou Meng* is still in the ascendant in China, but there is very little research on the English translation of TCM terms. The author searched on CNKI and found only 5 English translations of TCM terms from *Hong Lou Meng*, among which 3 were master's theses and 2 were academic papers. *Hong Lou Meng* has been translated into many languages, with a wide range of dissemination and influence. *Hong Lou Meng* boasts over 290 medical and health knowledge, more than 50,000 words, 161 medical terms used, 114 pathologies described, 13 cases of TCM, 45 prescriptions, 125 traditional medicines, and 3 Western medicines (Hu Xiangguo, 2006:1)^[1]. In order to explore how to spread the local culture contained in TCM, the author attempts to analyze the translation methods of TCM terms in Yang Xianyi's translation and Hawkes' translation (hereinafter referred to as Yangs and Hawkes) from the perspective of reception aesthetics for providing some reference for the translation of TCM terms.

II. Theoretical Framework

In the late 1960s, a new aesthetic idea, reception aesthetics, emerged in Germany and this trend mainly focused on the reader's acceptance of the work, the reaction, the reading process, the reader's aesthetic experience and the function of the reception effect in society. This theory put forward by Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser of the University of Konstanz in Germany, and the proposal of reception aesthetics accelerated the shift from translator-centered to reader-centered, which is a typical reader-centered theory.

Based on text, Isser tries to study how the work is received and related to reality. Eventually, he concluded that the work is a schematic outline structure which full of undefined points and blanks, and the reader can realize the reality of the work by filling in the uncertain certainty and blanks in reading. He pointed out that the textual summoning structure is mainly composed of blankness and uncertainty. "The meaning of the text depends on the reader's creativity and imagination to fill in the so-called gaps in the text (Zhu Liyuan, 1999)."^[2] Jauss's reception aesthetics focuses on the change and reconstruction of the expectation horizon. Due to complex reasons such as personal and social perspectives, there often exists a pre-existing thinking orientation and conceptual structure in reading. The theory of reception aesthetics points out that the "expectation horizon" works as the premise for readers to understand and interpret the position, viewpoint, and method of the work. Without it, the reading of any work would be impossible (Issel, 1991).^[3]

In translating, the translator is first and foremost the reader of the original work. The translator's lack of understanding of the summoning structure of the original text and the uncertainty exerts a great influence on the translation. Ma Xiao pointed out that "the translator needs to exert his subjective initiative to constantly revise and supplement his or her expectation horizon in the process of reading, so as to adapt to the content of the original text, and ensure that the first integration of the expectation horizon is maximized in the process of communication and dialogue with the original text (Ma Xiao, 2000:4)."^[4] After reading the original text, the translator translates the original text based on his own understanding. But what kind of translation strategy, method or technique should adopt in translating will directly affect the reader's understanding of the original text. Therefore, translators should consider the social environment and culture of the readers, be reader-centered, and make bold predictions for achieving the reader's expectation horizon as much as possible.

III. Reception Aesthetics And The English Translation Of TCM Terms In *Hong Lou Meng*

Cao Xueqin is not only a literary giant, but also well versed in the theory of TCM, and his "*Hong Lou Meng*" is rich in medical knowledge, which can be roughly divided into four categories: traditional Chinese herbs prescriptions, pathological diseases, and diagnosis and treatment. It is a completely new view to study the translation of TCM terms in *Hong Lou Meng* from the perspective of reception aesthetics. The author searched on CNKI and only to found that there was only one article related to this topic. As one of China's four great masterpieces, "*Hong Lou Meng*" has a large readership, including many foreign readers. Meanwhile, this book boasts rich knowledge about TCM. It deserves us thinking about how to translate the knowledge of TCM for the readers, so that it can be accepted by them.

Based on the theory of reception aesthetics, "since translation is a kind of creation, the translator has his 'intended readers' and 'potential readers', and in order to fully realize his translation value and make the translated work be recognized or play a specific role in the local cultural context, he must pay attention to the 'expectation horizon' of his potential readers in the selection of the original text and the translation process, so as to determine his corresponding translation strategy (Cha Mingjian, 2003)."^[5]

TCM is gradually going abroad, western readers have diverse cultural background of Chinese medicine. In the process of translation, the translator should leverage the subjectivity of the translator and adopt appropriate translation strategies to meet the expectations of readers with different cultural backgrounds. The translator should

struggle to achieve the integration of the vision of translators, authors and readers, so that readers can understand the characteristic culture of TCM and capture the eye of readers.

Translation of medical herbs

原文：一时茗烟果请来了王太医来，先诊了脉后，说的病症与前相仿，只是方上果没有枳实、麻黄等药，倒有当归、陈皮、白芍等，药之分量比先也少了些。（第五十一回）

Yangs: “Before very long Mingyan Brought Doctor Wang ,who first examined the patient then made a diagnosis very similar to the previous one .But instead of such ingredients as citrus trifoliata_and ephedra ,his prescription called for angelica , orange peel and white peony ;moreover the dosage was smaller.(Yang Xianyi, 1973:1468)^[7]”

Hawkes: “Tealeaf must have been quick, for Dr Wang arrived quite soon afterwards. The diagnosis he gave after taking Skybright’s pulses was similar to the other man’s, but there was no ephedra or thorny lime in his prescription: their place was taken by milder drugs such as angelica, bitter-peel and white peony root; and the quantities prescribed were smaller. (Hawkes ,1973:349)^[9]”

“White peony” in TCM usually refers to the root of the cultivar of the herbaceous plant peony, which is used raw or fried. And it is bitter and sour in nature, cure the liver meridian, and has the effect of softening the liver and relieving pain and calming the liver yang (Feng Qiyong, 1990:250).^[12] Internationally, it is translated into Latin as “Paeoniae Radix Alba”. While in my view, translating the TCM terms by this way can overestimate readers’ expected horizon. As we all known, Latin is a dead language and very few people can use it fluently. This example both the Yangs and Hawkes take into account the expected perspective of the target language readers. So, they both adopt a literal translation method, translating as “white Peony” and “white Peony root” respectively. Medicinal herbs are usually made of plants, animals, minerals etc., which are pure natural materials, and most of them can be translated literally. Even if there is no exact equivalent vocabulary, it can be replaced by a botanical name of the same genus or species, because the botanical name is composed of the genus or species name attached to its roots, stems, leaves, flowers, fruits, and other medicinal parts (Peng Aimin, 2008:33).^[14] Yangs and Hawkes both directly adopt botanical names, with the difference being that Hawkes adds implicit information.

From the perspective of reception aesthetics, adopting a literal translation method is in line with readers’ aesthetic and expected perspectives. However, the author more admires Hawkes’ “白芍” which accurately points out root used as medicine. Most Western readers have little understanding of traditional Chinese medicine culture. For example, the medicinal part of “白芍”is the root. If the translator simply translated as “white Peony”, regardless of enough room for readers to imagine, readers may misunderstand its medicinal part. For this translation, the author admires Hawkes’ more.

“陈皮”is made of oranges peel by drying in the open air. The “陈” means a process of transform . If translated it directly, cultural gaps can make the translation obscure and difficult to understand. In this example, both the Yangs and Hawkes adopted free translation, translated as “orange peel” and “bitter peel” respectively. “陈皮” serves as a unique vocabulary in TCM without any corresponding translation. Thus Yangs adopted a free translation on ‘陈皮’ from the perspective of raw materials, allowing readers to understand what the raw materials of

“陈皮”.However, it doesn’t represent the dry process of “陈皮”.As we all known, “陈皮” has a bitter taste, so Hawkes translated it as “bitter peel” based on its flavor. Readers may know that “陈皮” is very bitter, but they may still not understand what it is. Due to the lack of a corresponding word for “陈皮” in English, both translations create uncertainty in the text, leaving ample room for readers’ imagination to connect uncertainty and blanks, making the text more meaningful. The author tends to prefer the Yangs, which conveys more information in the absence of cultural background and better helps readers understand.

Translation of Prescriptions

There are as many as 45 descriptions of prescriptions in *Hong Lou Meng*, and most of the concepts and terms of prescriptions are unique to China. The method of translation has roughly gone from Latin to English and then to transliteration. The following is an analysis of the methods adopted by Yang and Hawkes in the translation of the prescription translation of *Hong Lou Meng*.

原文：话说王夫人见中秋已过，凤姐病已比先减了些，虽未大愈，可以出入行走得了，仍命大夫每日诊脉服药，又开了药丸子来配调经养荣丸。（第七十七回）

Yangs: After the moon festival, as Xifeng though well enough to leave her bed was not yet fully recovered, lady Wang continued to summon the doctor to attend her every day as before. The fortifying pills he prescribed, among other ingredients, two ounces of the best ginseng. (Yang Xianyi, 1978:2328) [8]

Hawkes: To Lady Wang it appeared that, with the passing of the Mid-Autumn festival, Xi-Feng's condition had improved considerably. True, she was still far from, but she could get about in the house now and even venture out of doors. The physician who, notwithstanding this improvement, had on Lady Wang's instructions been requested to continue his daily visits, was now recommending a course of pills designed to regularize her period and make some new blood to replace the quantities she had lost. (Hawkes, 1973:334) [10]

“调经养荣丸” is a pill designed on basis of Wang Xifeng's body condition, which is mainly used to regulate menstruation and nourish blood. Yangs adopted the free translation to translate it as “the fortifying pills”, and if it was back-translated, it would be translated as enhancement pills, in which the hidden functions such as blood nourishing and smoothing the qi was not expressed. While Hawkes adopted an paraphrase, clearly explained the role of the “调经养荣丸” to readers. However, as a prescription name, Hawkes' version is too long and not conducive to readers' memory as well does not meet the expectations of Western readers. According to international prescription translation principles, the translation of prescriptions should pursue the principle of simplicity. The author believes that a combination of literal translation and transliteration can be used to translate it as “Yang Rong Pills for Irregular Menstruation”. While preserving the characteristics of Chinese culture and expressing the efficacy of “调经养荣丸”, it also leaves room for readers' imagination.

原文：宝玉又道：“八珍益母丸？左归？右归？”（第二十八回）

Yangs: Eight-treasure-leonurus pills then? Left restorative? Right restorative? (Yang Xianyi, 1978:770) [6]

Hawkes: Eight Gem Motherwort Pills? said Bao-yu. 'Zhang's Dextrals? Zhang's sinistrals? (Hawkes, 1973:32) [9]

“八珍益母丸” is made of motherwort and eight kinds of precious medicinal materials (ginseng, atractylodes, poria, licorice, Rehman, angelica, peony, Chuanqiong) to treat women's qi and blood loss. Both Yangs and Hawkes, translations are literal from which we can see that they both understood “珍” to mean precious, while *Hong Lou meng* refers to eight precious medicinal materials. Neither Yangs nor Hawkes' has expressed its implicit meaning. In this case, the author believes that transliteration can be used to enhance readers' expectations and fill the gaps and uncertainties in traditional Chinese medicine culture in the original text according to their own expectations.

Translation of TCM Principles

As a part of traditional Chinese culture, Chinese medicine is deeply influenced by Chinese Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. Li Zhaoguo (Li Zhaoguo, 2008) pointed out that “classical Chinese philosophy is the theoretical foundation of traditional Chinese medicine, and the relevant concepts and terms are mainly embodied in the theory of yin and yang and the theory of the five elements.” [15]

原文：湘云听了，由不得一笑，说道：“……天地间都赋阴阳二气所生，或正或邪，或奇或怪，千变万化……”（第三十一回）

Yangs: Hsiang-yun had to smile at this. ... she scolded, “...All things between heaven and earth are born from

the dual principles yin and yang. So whether the good or bad, weird or wonderful ... (Yang Xianyi, 1978:879)^[7]

Hawkes: Xiang-yun was unable to avoid laughing at the girl's simplicity. "...Let's see: Everything in the world is moulded by the forces of Yin and Yang. That means that, besides the normal, the abnormal, the peculiar, the freakish—in fact all the thousands and thousands of different variations we find in things... (Hawkes, 1973:138)^[9]

In Yangs and Hawkes, the words “阴阳” with Chinese characteristics are transliterated into yin and yang. “阴阳” has no equivalent in Western languages, but this transliteration has been recognized by Western readers. However, the two translators have different views on the understanding of “气”. Yang translates “气” as “principles” and Hawkes translates it as force. In traditional Chinese medicine, “气” refers to an extremely subtle substance that is constantly running, which is one of the basic substances that constitute the human body and maintain the life activities of the human body. “气” runs endlessly, promoting and regulating the metabolism in the human body and maintaining the life process of the human body. “气” is a unique meaning in China, there is no equivalent in the West, and it is more appropriate for the meaning of qi to be transliterated extensively, so the author believes that “阴阳二气” can be translated as yin qi and yang qi to retain the cultural characteristics of Chinese medicine to the greatest extent.

For foreign readers, the concept of yin and yang is common. With the help of readers' understanding of the yin and yang concept, translating “阴气” and “阳气” directly as yin qi and yang qi. Regardless of readers lack relevant knowledge of the “气”, the concept of yin and yang provides readers with a context that can fill in the text gaps and help readers make associations, making the translation more acceptable to readers.

原文：脾土被肝木克制者，必然不思饮食，精神倦怠，四肢酸软。（第十回）

Yangs: And the predominance of the wood element in the liver over the earth element in the spleen causes loss of appetite, general lassitude and soreness of the limbs. (Yang Xianyi, 1978:283)^[6]

Hawkes: And if the earth of the spleen is being subdued by the wood of the liver, she would undoubtedly experience loss of appetite, lassitude, and general enfeeblement of the whole body. (Hawkes, 1973:137) ^[9]

The five elements refer to the five substances of wood, fire, earth, metal, and water, and their movements. Traditional Chinese medicine, on the other hand, uses the Five Elements Theory to explain the connection between the part and the part, the part and the whole, the body surface and the internal organs, and the unity of the human body and the external environment (Sun Guangren, 2002: 48).^[17] The Yangs adopted a literal translation and additional translation, translating it as “wood element”, while the Hawkes just adopted a literal translation to translate it as “wood”. From the perspective of reception aesthetics, the added “element” in Yangs can help readers better understand the meaning of “土” in traditional Chinese medicine, while greatly avoid cultural loss.

The author believes that literal translation can effectively preserve the language form and style of the original language, but we also need to consider readers who lack cultural background. In order to enable readers to have a better understanding of traditional Chinese medicine culture and predict their expected horizons, it is necessary to add cultural background annotations to these highly linguistic and cultural words.

As Liu Miqing pointed out, “As a translator of literature, one should consider the effect of the translation and the readers' expected perspective ensure readers to resonate emotionally with the original author (Liu Miqing, 1999)^[18]

Translation on pathological conditions

Hong Lou Meng depicts pathological conditions in many places, promoting the development of the storyline, all of which reflect the breadth and profundity of Chinese medicine.

原文：一月之后，复添了下红之症。（第五十五回）

Yangs: A month after it she was still losing blood. (Yang Xianyi, 1978:1678)^[7]

Hawkes: A month later it was followed by the beginning of a chronic small discharge of blood from the womb.

(Hawkes , 1973:420)^[10]

“下红之症” is a gynecological disease in which a woman does not have menstrual periods, but continues to bleed in the vagina or bleeds profusely. Yangs and Hawkes both adopted the paraphrase method. They translated it as “losing blood” and “a chronic small discharge of blood from the womb” respectively. “Losing blood” only describes the symptoms, without explaining the cause, and Western readers may misinterpret it as blood loss and cannot associate it with gynecological diseases. In comparison, Hawkes translates it as “a chronic small discharge of blood from the womb”. Hawkes’ blood supplement comes from “womb”, which expresses the implicit meaning. However, from the perspective of reception aesthetics, Hawkes excessively predicts readers’ expected horizon, leaving little room for readers. The author believes that it can try to translated it as ‘prolonged Menstruation caused losing blood’.

原文：邢夫人又正害火眼（第五十三回）

Yangs: Lady Xing, who was suffering from an inflammation of the eyes.

(Yang Xianyi , 1978:1073)^[7]

Hawkes: Lady Xing was suffering from an inflammation of the eyes. (Hawkes ,1973:556).^[10]

According to TCM theory, “火眼” is infected with qi and the eyes usually are red and swollen. The patient attacked by the pain and itch and annoyed by the heat as well hard to open eyes (Feng Qiyong, 2006:268).^[12] “Both Yangs and Hawkes used the substitution method to translate it as “an inflammation of the eyes”. Though replacing culturally rich Chinese medicine terms with words with similar symptoms in Western medicine serves as a good way help Western readers understand it in the early days. However, the use of substitution method caused the lost of ‘wind’ and ‘fire’ in “火眼”.But readers may cannot understand the characteristics of traditional Chinese medicine. As the China advocates going global, we should maintain the language characteristics of traditional Chinese medicine, and should not blindly abandon our own language characteristics.

The author believes that a literal translation with annotations can be used to translate it as “wind- fire eyes”, which not only preserves the connotation of traditional Chinese medicine culture, but also meets the readers’ expectations.

IV. Conclusion

This paper analyzes the translations of Chinese medicine, prescriptions, principles of Chinese medicine, and pathological conditions in the translations of Yang Xianyi and Dai Naidie, and the translations of Hawkes and Minford. The author found that there are similarities and differences in the translation methods adopted by them. The similarity lies in the fact that Western counterparts are literally translated, while concepts that are unique to China but have been accepted by Western readers, such as “阴阳”, are transliterated by Yang and Hawkes. For those who are not familiar with yin and yang, this translation method can also help them unleash their imagination, connect the blanks in the text, and make the text meaningful.

Based on reception aesthetics, the difference lies in the different perspectives of Yang Xianyi and Hawkes. Yang Xianyi often adopts literal translation, eager to convey Chinese culture to foreign readers. Meanwhile, readers with different cultural backgrounds have different understandings of “*Hong Lou Meng*”. A number of literal translations leave readers with more imaginative space for recreation.

As the saying goes, if there are a thousand readers, there are a thousand Hamlets. The text summons readers to accept and create the text, making it ultimately meaningful; Hawkes often adopts the methods of free translation and substitution, focusing more on reader acceptance and putting readers at the center, which reduces the difficulty of reading for readers.

However, extensive substitution and free translation may lead to the loss of textual information and readers’ inability to understand the characteristics of Chinese traditional Chinese medicine culture. The author believes

that by combining multiple translation methods, such as “调经养荣丸”, translators can use transliteration to explain without losing the characteristics of traditional Chinese medicine, while leaving readers with certain room for imagination and meeting their expectations.

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