Translation Style and Ideology: a Corpus-assisted Analysis of two English Translations of *Hongloumeng*

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Abstract

Hongloumeng by Xueqin Cao (Hsueh-ch'in Ts'ao) is generally considered one of the greatest classical Chinese novel. Of all nine published English translations known today, the one translated by Hawkes and Minford (*the Story of the Stone, Penguin,* 1973–86) and the other by Yang and Yang (*A Dream of Red Mansions*[1], Foreign Languages Press in Beijing, 1978–80) are the best known among translators and literary scholars. Over the years, both have been carefully scrutinized and much critiqued. Translators and translation scholars have been engaged in heated debates over salient features of the translations, strategies employed by the translators, the possible effects of the two translations and so on [cf. Liu and Gu (1997) On translation of cultural contents in Hong Lou Meng [in Chinese]. *Chinese Translators Journal,* **1**: 16–19; Wang (2001) *A Comparative Study of the English Translations of Poetry in Hong Lou Meng*. Xi'an: Shanxi Normal University Press; Feng (2006) *On the Translation of Hong Lou Meng* [in Chinese]. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press; Liu (2008), Translating tenor: With reference to the English versions of Hong Lou Meng. *Meta*, **53**(3): 528–48], with the eventual aim to determine which translation better captures the style of the original text or author. Like many debates of similar nature, no definitive conclusions have been reached despite such an intense interest. We believe a corpus-assisted examination [Baker, M. (2000). Towards a methodology for investigating the style of a literary translator. *Target,* **12**(2): 241–66; Baker, M. (1993). Corpus linguistics and translation studies: Implications and applications. In Gill, F., Baker, M., and Tognini-Bonelli, E. (eds), *Text and Technology: In Honour of John Sinclair*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, pp. 233–50] of the two translations will provide more convincing analysis and can better describe the differences in the translation style of the two famous translations. A particular effort is further made to interpret the reasons for the different strategies adopted by the two different pairs of translators in the social, political, and ideological context of the translations.

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1 Introduction

In general, *Hongloumeng* (≪红楼梦≫) is considered as one of the masterpieces of Chinese literature and one of the Four Great Chinese Classical Novels.[2] It is attributed to Xueqin Cao (Hsueh-ch'in Ts'ao) for the first 80 chapters and E. Gao for the remaining 40 chapters after the death of the former in the Qing Dynasty in China (1644–1911). The novel is believed to be semi-autobiographical, mirroring the fortunes and misfortunes of Cao's own family. It is known not only for its huge cast of characters, but also for its precise and detailed description of the life and social structures typical of the 18th-century China (cf. Hawkes, 1979a, pp. 15–46; Hu, 2006, pp. 1–41; Liu, 2006, pp. 30–104).

The novel has been translated to many languages of the world. According to Chen and Jiang (2003), there are to date nine complete or selective English translations of the book (Table 1). Two of them stood out: *The Story of the Stone* translated by a British Sinologist David Hawkes (the first 80 chapters) in collaboration with his son-in-law John Minford (the remaining 40 chapters); and *A Dream of Red Mansions* by a renowned Chinese translator Xianyi Yang in collaboration with his British wife Gladys Yang. Both translations were published over a period of a couple of years in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the former by Penguin outside China and the later by Foreign Languages Press in Beijing. Since their publication, the two translations have attracted tremendous attention from translators, sinologists, and even Redologists[3] both from inside and outside China. For instance, comparisons have been made regarding the translators' handling of cultural concepts, idioms, metaphors, and so on (Feng, 2006; Liu, 2008; Liu and Gu, 1997; Wang, 2001; Wong, 2002; Wu, 2008). Both translations have received praises as well as criticisms, and in many instances one was prized over the other in general terms of translation quality, depending on the critics' perspectives and approaches. But no definitive conclusions have been reached and such a deadlock of translation criticism does not seem to be ending in the foreseeable future. In the present study, however, rather than trying to judge the quality of one translation over the other, we would like to look into the translators' styles and particularly highlight some differences and examine reasons behind them. For that purpose, corpus-assisted approach to translation research spearheaded by Baker (1993, 2000) will be adopted as the research design for the project.

Table 1 Nine English translations of *Hongloumeng*

Version	Year of publication	English titles	Translator	Translator's profession	Partial/complete translation
1	1830	Chinese Poetry	John Davis	Fellow of the Royal Society	Chapter 3
2	1846	Dream of Red Chamber	Robert Tom	British Consul to Ningbo	Chapter 6
3	1868–69	Dream of Red Chamber	E. C. Bowra	Commissioner of Customs	Chapters 1–8
4	1892–93	Dream of Red Chamber	Bencraft Joly	British Vice-Consul to Macao	Chapters 1–56
5	1927	Dream of the Red Chamber	Liangzhi Wang	Lector of Classical Chinese at New York University	Abridged translation (made into a love story)
6	1929–58	Dream of Red Chamber	Jizhen Wang	Professor of Chinese, Columbia University	Abridged translation (made into a love story)
7	1958	The Dream of Red Chamber	Florence Mchugh and Isabel Mchugh	Translators	Abridged translation
8	1973–86	The Story of the Stone	David Hawkes and John Minford	British sinologist and translators	Chapters 1–120
9	1978–80	A Dream of Red Mansions	Xianyi Yang and Gladys Yang	Chinese translators	Chapters 1–120

2 Translator's Style

According to Baker (2000), translation studies has traditionally inherited from both literary studies and linguistics, hence the close association of style with 'original' writing. There has been a lack of interest and thus lack of research on the style of a translator, or a group of translators, particularly the distinctive features of the language they produce. However, recent years have witnessed a growing interest in this area of research, especially with the assistance of corpus technology (e.g. Kenny, 1999, 2001; Baker, 2000; Winters, 2007). Baker (2000) compared translations by Peter Clark and Peter Bush, two literary translators and demonstrated the imprints left by the translators on the translated text in the creative process of translation, through statistical evidence such as type/token ratio (TTR) and average sentence length generated through the use of corpus techniques. Bosseaux (2004) studied 'the nature of the translator's discursive presence by exploring certain narratological aspects of the relation between originals and translations' (p. 107). She specifically looked at the translation of free indirect discourse in *To the Lighthouse* and its three French translations: *Promenade au Phare* translated by Maurice Lanoire, Vo*yage au Phare* by Magali Merle and *Vers le Phare* by Françoise Pellan. Similarly, Winters (2007) compared the translation styles of Renate Orth-Guttmann and Hans-Christian Oeser, focusing particularly on the use of speech-act report verbs in the two German translations produced by the two translators of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful and Damned*. While these studies usually focused on translations between European languages, the present study investigates the issue of translator's style in the context of Chinese–English translation.

So, what is a translator's style? Baker defines it as a kind of thumb-print expressed in a range of linguistic as well as non-linguistic features. She argues that:

> A study of a translator's style must focus on the manner of expression that is typical of a translator, rather than simply instances of open intervention. It must attempt to capture the translator's characteristic use of language, his or her individual profile of linguistic habits, compared to other translators. (Baker 2000, p. 245)

This study adopts her definition of style as a matter of patterning, 'which involves describing preferred or recurring patterns of linguistic behaviour, rather than individual or one-off instances of intervention' (Baker 2000, p. 245).

3 The E–C Parallel Corpus of *Hongloumeng*

As mentioned earlier, the primary goal of this study is to describe the translation styles of the two English translations of *Hongloumeng*, compare them to find out how they are different, and on this basis, explore the possible causes for such differences and reasons behind the choices and decisions made by the two groups of translators: David Hawkes and John Minford (Hawkes hereafter) and Xianyi Yang and Gladys Yang (Yang hereafter). In order to make use of corpus technology in the descriptive and comparative analysis, an English–Chinese Parallel Translation Corpus was built in 2006–07, which consisted of the original Chinese text of *Hongloumeng*, Hawkes' as well as Yang's English translations (Fig. 1).

The texts were either scanned from printed books and manually proofread, or downloaded from the Internet, in which case the noise was cleared before the texts were marked up and annotated. The alignment of sentences was performed manually and hence rather accurate. By the time the present article was written, the sentence alignment of the first fifteen chapters were completed and hence included in this report was the data based on the texts of the first 15 chapters. Wordsmith 4.0 (Scott 1999) and a

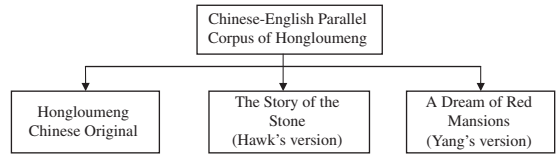

Fig. 1 English–Chinese Parallel Translation Corpus

piece of self-compiled software integrating ASP (Active Server Page) and Microsoft Access Database were used to analyze the texts. The self-developed software is mainly used to retrieve parallel texts (Chinese original texts with English translations) from the parallel corpus while Wordsmith is used to generate the statistical data on the two sets of translated texts.

4 TTR and Sentence Length in the English Translations

TTR and sentence length are two important factors that can reveal (often in part) translation styles in corpus-assisted studies (e.g. Baker 2000; Winters 2007). TTR is often used to measure the lexical complexity of a text. It refers to the relationship between the total number of running words in a corpus and the number of different words used (Olohan 2004, p. 80). A high TTR means that the writer or translator uses a wider range of vocabulary whereas a low ratio means that s/he draws on a more restricted set of vocabulary items. But when the sizes of two texts differ, it is difficult to compare the TTR of smaller against larger texts. Therefore, standard type-token ratio (STTR), which calculates TTR based on every 1,000 words, is generally considered to be a much more reliable indicator of lexical complexity of a text. A measure of the two English translations of *Hongloumeng* with Wordsmith revealed that Hawkes used more words than the Yangs[4], with a difference of approximately 21,715 running words (32.1%) for the same original Chinese text. But the STTR of Hawkes' version was lower than that of Yang's, with a difference of 1.44, as shown in Table 2.

It was further found that Hawkes used nearly 250 more sentences than the Yangs, a difference of 5.3% for the same original Chinese text. However, the difference in sentence length was even more noticeable. An average sentence in Hawkes' translation had 18.50 words whereas Yang used an average of 14.74 words in one sentence in his translation, a difference of as many as 4.2 words for each one sentence (Table 3).

Table 2 Type/token ratios of the two English translations

Text	Hawkes	Yang	Discrepancy
Tokens	89,369	67,654	+21,715
Types	8,784	7,079	+1,705
TTR	9.83	10.50	−0.67
Standard TTR	44.04	45.48	−1.44

Table 3 Sentence length of the two English translations

Text	Hawkes	Yang	Discrepancy
Number of sentences	4,829	4,586	+243
Mean in words	18.50	14.74	+3.76
Standard deviation	15.29	11.09	+4.2

To briefly sum up, the differences between the two English versions are:

- Hawkes used many more words than Yang;
- Yang used a wider range of vocabulary than Hawkes; and
- Hawkes used longer sentences than Yang.

TTR and sentence length are far from a complete description of the translation styles of the two English translations. In the present study, we focus on these two factors because they are what the corpus tool can provide us at this moment. A more comprehensive description of the translation styles will entail a project combining corpus approach with other tools and methods of textual analysis.

5 Making Sense of the Statistical Data

The crux of corpus-assisted translation research, however, is the interpretation of the statistical data (Li, 2008). Without further interpretation of the numerical data, such descriptions of the translations will run the risk of being simplistic or become a case of 'much ado about nothing'. Tymoczko warned corpus-assisted translation researchers not to use computer electronic capabilities merely to prove something obvious or already known by common sense.

> Researchers using CTS tools and methods must avoid the temptation to remain safe,

Table 4 Background of the translators

Names	Hawkes	Yang
Mother tongue	English as L1	Chinese as L1 (Gladys: English as L1)
Second language	Chinese as L2	English as L2 (Gladys: Chinese as L2)
Lived/living	UK (Minford: UK, Hong Kong, Australia, etc.)	China: (studied in UK; lived, worked, went through political movements in China)
Positions held	Sinologist/Professor/Translator	Government or semi-government official/translator
Mode of translating HLM	Hawkes translated the first 80 chapters alone; Minford translated the last 40 chapters	Translated 120 chapters, with the assistance of Gladys Yang
Year of publication	1973–86	1978–80
Publisher	Penguin in UK	Foreign Languages Press in Beijing, China

> exploiting corpora and powerful electronic capabilities merely to prove the obvious or give confirming quantification where none is really needed, in short, to engage in the type of exercise that after much expense of time and money ascertains what common sense knew anyway. (Tymoczko 1998, p. 7)

Baker speaks more directly about corpus-assisted research of translators' style and argues that such study is worthwhile only when and only if it reveals something new about the cultural and ideological positioning of the translator in particular or in general.

> Identifying linguistic habits and stylistic patterns is not an end in itself: it is only worthwhile if it tells us something about the cultural and ideological positioning of the translator, or of translators in general, or about the cognitive processes and mechanisms that contribute to shaping our translational behaviour. We need then to think of the potential motivation for the stylistic patterns that might emerge from this type of study. (Baker 2000, p. 258)

In this connection, it should be stressed that corpus should be nothing more than a tool which enables us to examine texts in a way that was previously not available to translation researchers. The numerical data, such as TTR and sentence length, generated in the process should by no means preclude the sense-making of the data. Therefore, in the remainder of the article, we will try to make sense of the quantitative data by attempting to explore the reasons and causes for such stylistic differences in the two translations from socio-political, cultural, and ideological perspectives, and thus tap into the process of translating *Hongloumeng* for both groups of translators.

5.1 Two groups of translators

To put the discussion in context, a brief comparison of the two groups of translators is in order. As mentioned earlier, they were David Hawkes and John Minford as one pair and Xianyi Yang and Gladys Yang as the other. David Hawkes was a renowned British sinologist, being a Research Fellow of All Souls College from 1973 to 1983. He translated the first 80 chapters of *Hongloumeng* while the remaining 40 chapters were translated by John Minford, his son-in-law, another well-known translator of Chinese literature. Xianyi Yang was a distinguished Chinese translator, who held many official positions in the Chinese government before retirement. He worked closely together with Gladys Yang, his British wife, throughout the entire process of translating the book. Table 4 briefly summarizes some background information about them.

5.2 Why Hawkes used more words

It was found that Hawkes used a great deal more words than Yang. Among others, one major cause for the discrepancy might be their different approaches to the translation of the cultural concepts in the original work. *Hongloumeng* abounds in Chinese cultural concepts. Hawkes paraphrased most of them when translating them into English.

Rather than relying on footnotes or endnotes to explain the cultural meanings of these concepts, he went for explanatory translation. Such explanations in many instances led to amplifications as the translator attempted to convey the meanings and cultural connotations of the concepts to the English readers in plain and straightforward language since his primary goal of translating the piece was to provide a translation which was both interesting and enjoyable. He held the opinion that footnotes would hinder a fluent reading and prevent him from fulfilling his goal:

> . . . [T]he text abounds in passages containing references to books, plays, and poems which to the Western reader, lacking the literary background that Cao Xueqing was able to take for granted in his Chinese contemporaries, might often seem puzzling or incomprehensible. I make no apology for having occasionally amplified the text a little in order to make such passages intelligible. The alternative would have been to explain them in footnotes; and though footnotes are all very well in their place, reading a heavily annotated novel would seem to me rather like trying to play tennis in chains. (Hawkes 1979b, pp. 17–8)

Yang took a very different approach in handling the cultural terms and allusions. He opted for a rather literal and faithful translation but added notes to explain their cultural meanings. Compare the following two versions by Hawkes and Yang, respectively.

Example 1.

> **ST.** 尧、舜、禹、汤、 文、武、周、召、孔、孟、董、韩、周、程、张、朱，皆 应运而生者。(Chapter Two)
>
> **Hawkes:** Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, King Wen, King Wu, The duke of Zhou, The duke of Shao, Confucius, Mencius,Dong Zhong-shu, Han yu, Zhou Dun-yi, The Cheng brothers, Zhu xi and Zhang Zai—all instances of exceptional goodness—were born under the influence of benign forces, and all sought to promote the well-being of the societies in which they Lived. (59words)
>
> **Yang:** Examples of the first are Yao, Shun, Yu and Tang, King Wen and King Wu, Duke Chou and Duke Shao, Confucius and Mencius, Chang Chai and Chu Hsi. (28 words)
>
> **Yang's notes:** *Yao and Shun were legendary sage kings of ancient China; Yu, founder of the Hsia Dynasty (21st- 16th century B.C.); King Wen and King Wu founded the Western Chou Dynast (16th century to 771 B.C.); Duke Chou and Duke Shao were early Chou statesmen; Tung Chung-shu (179–104 B.C.) was a Confucian philosopher of the Han Dynasty; Han Yu (768–824) a Confucian writer of the Tang Dynasty; Chou Tun-yi, Cheng Hao, Cheng Yi and Chu Hai were neo-Confucianists of the Northern Sung Dynasty (960–1127); and Chang Chai (1020–77) was a Northern Sung philosopher with some materialist ideas.* (94 words)

The two groups of translators chose totally different strategies in translating the cultural terms and allusions. Such a choice was first of all translational. They held exactly opposite views regarding the use of notes in literary translation. Hawkes opposed its use because he believed notes would disrupt the reading and hence hinder readers's appreciation of the story. Yang found that the use of footnotes in a translated novel is not only acceptable but actually desirable, especially in translating such a Chinese masterpiece as *Hongloumeng*.

Such a seemingly translational choice was apparently an ideological decision also. Yang began to translate *Hongloumeng* in 1947 but was disrupted by a series of political movements that occurred in China afterwards, such as the Anti-Rightist Movement (in the 1950s and early 1960s) and the Cultural Revolution (1966–76), during which he and his British wife were accused of espionage and imprisoned for ~4 years. However, when he got back his job, he worked at the Foreign Languages Press in Beijing, China. This was no ordinary publishing house but a translation press fully funded by

the Chinese government and charged with the responsibility to translate and publish in foreign languages the works by Chinese Communist leaders and later important Chinese literary works. The following introduction about the Press was retrieved from its website in early 2007 although a recent update of the introduction changed quite a bit.

> The Press started to publish in foreign languages in November 1949 and was formally established in 1 July 1952. Administratively, it was a unit under the General Administration of Press and Publication of the People's Republic of China and the publication policies were decided by the leaders of the then Propaganda Department of the CCP Central Committee (presently Department of Publicity).
>
> The Press's task is to publicize books and journals of the CCP and the PRC. Over the last half century, the Press has published a large number of documents of the CCP and Central Government, works by Marks and Lenin, Chairman Mao, and other leaders of the CCP and the Country. At the same, the Press also published a good number of classical, modern, and contemporary Chinese literary works.
>
> Since 1978, the Press has shifted its policy to focus on publication of works on current state of affairs of the Country and the Policy of Reform and Opening up to the outside world.

It is evident that the primary goal of the Foreign Languages Press is to promote China to the outside world. It is therefore reasonable to believe that working and translating at such a press, Yang had to adopt the policy of the Press—to introduce and promote the Chinese culture to the English-speaking peoples. *Hongloumeng* is not just any piece, but perhaps *the* piece of Chinese literature, which even attracted the attention of the late Chairman Mao, leader of the Chinese Communist Party for several decades. He was reported to have had the book on his shelf at all times, repeatedly read it and made detailed comments on the pages. He once said that *Hongloumeng* was the fifth greatest inventions of China (Dong, 2009). Therefore, when confronted with the task of translating such an exceedingly important Chinese novel, Yang decided to literally translate the cultural terms in the body of the text but add footnotes to explain their cultural meanings to English readers, regardless of the fact that the notes might make the translation appear clumsy.

In fact, Gladys Yang lamented when discussing their translation of *Hongloumeng* that they had little room to maneuver among various translation strategies available to them and hence their translation was rather pedantic (as cited in Wei, 2004, p. 119). She further pointed out that they opted for literal translation in the project as she wrote in one of her articles: 'We were so much affected by the then situation that we had strived for literal translation and as a result the English translation was rather dull'. (Henderson *et al.*, 1980, p. 34)

Gladys Yang did not specify what 'the then situation' was. Was she referring to the political situation back then? Or was she referring to the general translation principles and norms reining the Chinese translation community at that time. We would like to believe she was referring to both. The Yangs were translating the most important novel in Chinese literature for a government-funded publisher during and right after the Cultural Revolution. It was therefore imaginable that the couple had to maneuver carefully and cautiously in the then particularly sensitive and precarious political atmosphere. However, this necessarily does mean that they were working under pressure involuntarily all the time, as Yang was part of the government machine himself. After the Cultural Revolution was over, he held several high-profile positions in government and semi-government sector. As he described in his autobiography: 'I was elected executive committee member or advisor to many academic and political societies, such as the Chinese Writers' Union, the Chinese Pen Club, the Society for the Study of a Dream of Red Mansions . . . ' (Yang, 2002, p. 266).

These associations or unions were government or semi-governmental bodies in the Chinese political system. In 1979 Yang was even made associate chief

editor and a year later chief editor of the magazine *Chinese Literature*. Judging from the fact that when he decided to give up the position near his 70, he handed it over to Meng Wang, the then Minister of Culture of the Chinese Government, we could tell the importance of this post. Interestingly, he actually had faith in the Chinese Communist Party. He wrote in his autobiography: 'I must also admit that the Chinese Communist Party, despite all the faults committed in those years of rule, had also done many good things for the Chinese people, especially for the poor and the uneducated masses' (Yang, 2002, p. 268).

He first made an application to join the Chinese Communist Party even before the Liberation in 1949. His application was finally granted in 1984 and he was elected to the People's Political Consultative Conference (PPCC) in 1985. So it can not be too far from the truth to say that his choice of translation strategies, particularly his approach to deal with the cultural terms and allusions, was affected by both the precarious situation back then and his love for the country and faith in the Chinese Communist Party.

In addition, the over-riding translation principles adopted by many translators in the country back then and even today must also have had some effect on Yang's choice of translation methods. It is beyond the scope of this article to delineate the prevalent translation principles and norms of translation in China. But we would like to point out that faithfulness has always been the most important yardstick for translation quality assessment among translation practitioners in the Chinese Mainland. This is true today even for non-literary translation. For instance, some MA students that one of the researchers taught at the Chinese University of Hong Kong carried out a research project comparing the different methods and rationales in translating movie titles in the Chinese Mainland and Hong Kong. The result was that with only a small number of exceptions, movie titles were translated differently in the two areas. The Mainland versions were generally literal translations and many in fact did not present well the themes of the movies as they should. Hong Kong translations, however, were much freer, more comprehensible and more informative about the themes of the movies. One example students liked to cite was the translations of the Hollywood blockbuster *The Day After Tomorrow*. The Mainland's translation '后天' was a faithful dictionary translation of 'the day after tomorrow', referring to nothing more than a date while missing out completely the metaphorical meaning of the original title. The Hong Kong translation '明日之后', however, brought out the true meaning of the title, that is the possible catastrophes of the future. Therefore, it would not be hard for us to imagine that the Yangs, living and working in the Chinese mainland, might have adopted the general translation principle prevailing in the Chinese translation community or even felt pressure from peer translators to hold faithfulness as the number one principle of translation when they translated *Hongloumeng*.

In comparison, David Hawkes, as a university professor and later a freelance translator teaching and living in the UK, did not have to translate under such constraints. He translated *Hongloumeng* because of his passion for Chinese literature and particularly his love for the novel itself.

> I think all Hongloumeng's translators must first have come under the novel's spell and later embarked on their translations of it from a desire to communicate some of their enchantment to other people. They may have done so in different ways and with varying degrees of success, but all of them have shared the same generous impulse. (Hawkes 2004, p. 7)

He also made clear about his purpose of translation in the preface: he wanted to share with his readers the joy of reading this great novel.

> My one abiding principle has been to translate everything-even puns. For although this is, in the sense I have already indicated, an 'unfinished' novel, it was written (and rewritten) by a great artist with his very life blood. I have therefore assumed that whatever I find in it is there for a purpose and must be dealt with somehow or other, I cannot pretend always to have done so successfully, but if I can convey to the reader even a fraction of

> the pleasure this Chinese novel given me, I shall not have lived in vain. (Hawkes 1979a, 46)

Therefore in making decisions on translation strategies and methods, Hawkes believed that too many notes would hinder the readers from reading the novel. Instead, when he translated the cultural terms and allusions in the novel, he used paraphrase and explanation and even, to use his own words: 'having occasionally amplified the text a little in order to make such passages intelligible' (Hawkes 1979b, p. 17).

He did not feel the constraint and pressure that the Yangs felt though the two groups of translators were translating the novel during roughly the same period of time without knowledge that the others were doing the same. In fact he accorded himself sufficient freedom in translation and even in making changes about the original text.

> I do so only because once or twice, in the interests of clarity and consistency, I have felt obliged to take some trifling liberties with the text . . . and hold myself honor bound not only to say what I have done-which I have tried to do in the Appendices – but also to explain, if I can, the circumstances in which I have felt obliged to do it (Hawkes 1981, p. 19).

When he was invited to a conference devoted to the translation of *Hongloumeng* at Chinese Nankai University a few years ago in 2004, he declined the invitation. In his reply letter, he said,

> As I am one of their number, I feel inhibited by a sense of fellowship from commenting on the relative merits of their different translations. The saying that 'comparisons are odious' may not be a good recipe for good criticism, but it holds true, I think, for the translators themselves. (Hawkes 2004, p. 7).

In the same letter, he once again alluded to his freedom in translating *Hongloumeng*.

> My favourite English translation, Rabelais' Gargantua and Pantagruel by the 17th-century Scottish knight Sir Thomas Urquhart, was, I am sure, animated by the same spirit of joyfulness and liberation. I could not hope to equal his achievement – but then I have never been a prisoner, as Urquhart was . . . (Hawkes 2004, p. 8)

Hawkes defended his freedom as well as such changes he made in the name of his concern for his English-speaking readers. He believed that as the translator, he should try to smooth out the translation for his readers who lack the necessary cultural background knowledge for proper comprehension of the novel.

> If making these emendations of this kind is felt to be outside the proper scope of a mere translator, I can only plead for my concern for the Western reader who is surely sufficiently burdened already with the task of trying to remember the novel's hundreds of impossible-sounding names, without being subjected to these vagaries of an unfinished and imperfectly edited text (Hawkes 1979b, p. 20).

While Hawkes was able to figure out an English-speaking readership for his translation, the Yangs did not have a clear idea about their readers, or at least not as specific. As Gladys said: 'we seemed to be translating for people without distinct faces . . . we are not only translating for Americans or Australians but for all English-speaking Asians and Africans as well. So I am not sure who our readers are'. (As cited in Wei 2004, p. 117–8)

5.3 Why the Yangs used a wider range of vocabulary

The fact that the Yangs used a wider range of words in their translation than Hawkes was most likely a result of their different translation philosophies. As discussed in the previous section, Yang went for more faithful and literal translation with the primary goal to introduce the Chinese literature and culture to the English-speaking world (Chang and Wong 2000). They translated all the cultural terms and allusions literally, which required a wide range of words to express these concepts, many of which were new and unfamiliar in English.

Hawkes went for free and fluent translation. Consequently, he circumvented some cultural concepts by leaving them out completely or by glossing over them (Wei 2004). His choice could find justification in his concern for his readers, as he repeatedly referred to it in his discussion or defense of his translation and translation strategies:

> . . . [T]he text abounds in passages containing references to books, plays, and poems which to the Western reader, lacking the literary background that Cao Xueqing was able to take for granted in his Chinese contemporaries, might often seem puzzling or incomprehensible. (Hawkes 1979b, p. 17)

> If I can convey to the reader even a fraction of the pleasure this Chinese novel [has] given me, I shall not have lived in vain. (Hawkes 1979a, p. 46)

> I can only plead for my concern for the Western reader, who is surely sufficiently burdened already with the task of trying to remember the novel's hundreds of impossible-sounding names . . . (Hawkes, 1979b, p. 20)

Since he used the paraphrase technique to translate the Chinese cultural terms and allusions, it was not as demanding for him to use as many different words in his translations as it was for the Yangs. Compare the following examples:

Example 2.

> **ST.** 如世之好淫者,不过悦容貌,喜歌舞,调笑无厌,云雨无时,恨不能尽天下之美女供我片时之趣兴,此皆皮肤淫滥之蠢物耳。(Chapter Five)

> **Hawkes:** For example, the typically lustful man in the common sense of the word is a man who Likes a pretty face, who is fond of singing and dancing, who is inordinately given to flirtation; one who makes love in season and out of season, and who, if he could, would Like to have every pretty girl in the world at his disposal, to gratify his desires whenever he felt Like it. Such a person is a mere brute. His is a shallow, promiscuous kind of lust. (86 words)

> **Yang:** For instance, there are profligates in the world who delight only in physical beauty, singing, dancing, endless merriment and constant rain-and-cloud games. They would like to possess all the beauties in the world to gratify their momentary desires. These are coarse creatures steeped in fleshly lust. (46 words)

The Chinese expression '云雨' (literally, meaning 'cloud and rain') is an euphemistic expression referring to 'sexual intercourse'. Hawkes dropped this image and simply translated it into 'makes love' whereas the Yangs coined a new phrase 'rain-and-cloud games' to retain the Chinese image.

The different approaches taken by the translators constituted one major reason for the disparity of TTR in the two texts. Besides, Yang's inclination to use 'big' words might also be accountable for the difference, in part. For instance, '好淫者' was translated into 'typically lustful man' by Hawkes and 'profligates' by Yang.

Example 3.

> **ST.** 平儿知道凤姐与秦氏厚密,虽是小后生家,亦不可太俭,遂自作主意,拿了一匹尺头,两个状元及第' 的小金锞子,交付与来人送过去。

> **Hawkes:** Patience had, at her own discretion, selected a suitable length of material and two Little 'Top of the List' solid gold medallions to give the messengers. These gifts now arrived for Xi-feng (who thought them somewhat on the meager side) to give to Qin Zhong.

> **Yang:** And Ping-erh, knowing how intimate her mistress was with Chin Ko-ching, decide that she would want to give the boy something handsome. So she handed them a length of silk and two small gold medallions inscribed with the wish that the owner would win first place in the Palace Examination.

In the above example, the Chinese phrase '状元及第' (literal meaning: 'the first winner in the Palace Examination') is a common cultural term in the Chinese language. '状元' refers to the 'No.1 contestant in the imperial examinations in feudal China'. Today, this term is still used to refer to those who come out on top in the Chinese National University Entrance Examinations. Hawkes dropped the cultural image but simply paraphrased it as 'Top of the List'. Yang rendered it into 'inscribed with the wish that the owner would win first place in the Palace Examination', retaining the cultural image of the term.

5.4 Why Hawkes used longer sentences

Hawkes used nearly 250 more sentences than Yang. But the difference in sentence length is even more noticeable. Much longer sentences were used in Hawkes' translation than in Yang's. This was very likely caused by the differences in the usual sentence construction methods in English and Chinese, mother tongues from Hawkes and Yang, respectively. English is generally considered as a hypotactic language, in which sentences are strung together with relative pronouns, adverbial, and conjunctions, which often resulted in quite long and complicated sentences. On the other hand, Chinese is known to be a language with paratactic features. It has no inflections and does not need connectives for sentence construction. The meanings inherent in different parts help indicate the relationship within a sentence (Chao 1968; Wang 1984; Yu 1993; Hartman 2010). Sentences tend to be much shorter compared with a hypotactic language such as English.

We believe Yang's use of shorter sentences may be due to interference of his mother tongue Chinese. According to Ru (1995, p. 133), when the couple was translating *Hongloumeng*, he was the one who read the original Chinese and draft-translated it into English while Gladys typed and polished the English together with him. In an interview[5] conducted with the Yang family in 2003, Chi Yang, their daughter, described her parents' collaboration in similar terms.

> They translated faster when they worked together. Generally speaking, my father was a fast translator. When he was translating at his top speed, he didn't write, but simply rendered orally while my mother would type the translation on a typewriter. While she was typing the text, she also polished or edited it. So the translation was ready when all this was done.

It was very likely that Yang, despite his excellent command over English, was still affected by his native language Chinese in the translation. In the same interview mentioned above, he alluded to the fact that his English was probably still not as good as that of a native English speaker.

> Generally speaking, when we translated classical Chinese literary works, I would first do a draft translation. As English was her [Gladys'] mother tongue, her English was still better than mine. So she was often the one who did the refining and editing of my rough translations. (English translation by the authors)

On the other hand, Yang was a native Chinese speaker and his Chinese must have still interfered with his English writing style. For example, he might have consciously or unconsciously opted for shorter sentences in his English translation of Hongloumeng. Such a claim can be confirmed or disapproved with an extension of the present research to examine the stylistic patterns of his writings (e.g. his autobiography *White Tiger*) and his other English translations of Chinese classical novels (e.g. *The Scholars, Notes Taken in an Outing*).

Another more important reason, however, relates to Yang's mode of translation. He used the method of oral rendition when he was translating at top speed while Gladys, sitting at the typewriter, recorded and polished the translations. Such oral translation must have also affected the length of the sentences in his translation, as shorter sentences are usually an important feature of oral texts as compared with written texts.

Hawkes as a well-educated British scholar was more accustomed to longer complicated sentences than Yang and of course such longer constructions got easily into his translation of *Hongloumeng* without knowing. It was therefore not unexpected that

his sentences were on average longer than Yang's. For example:

Example 4.

> **ST.** 後因曹雪芹於悼紅軒中,披閱十載,增刪五次,纂成目錄,分出章回,則題曰≪金陵十二釵≫,並題一絕云:
> (Chapter One)
>
> **Hawkes:** #1 Cao Xueqin in his Nostalgia Studio worked on it for ten years, in the course of which he rewrote it no less than five times, dividing it into chapters, composing chapter headings, renaming it The Twelve Beauties of Jinling, and adding an introductory quatrain.
>
> **Yang:** #1 Later Cao Xueqin in his Mourning-the-Red Studio pored over the book for ten years and rewrote it five times. #2 He divided it into chapters, furnished headings for each, and renamed it *The Twelve Beauties of Jinling*. #3 He also inscribed on it this verse . . .

In the translation, Hawkes used one sentence consisting of one subordinate clause and three participle phrases. Yang's version, on the other hand, is made up of three separate shorter sentences.

However, one seeming contradiction in the findings warrants our attention. As pointed out above, the Yangs apparently translated orally, thus resulting in shorter sentences compared with Hawkes. But the Yang translation also has a higher TTR, as shown in Table 2 above, and this is usually claimed to be a property of written rather than spoken language. What caused the contradiction relates again to the Yangs' priorities in translating Hongloumeng. As explained in Section 5.3, their priorities as government-funded translators were to disseminate Chinese culture and literature through the translation. And Hongloumeng abounds in Chinese cultural terms and concepts such that it is often referred to as the encyclopedia of Chinese folk art and culture. To translate such an encyclopedic novel, particularly the cultural elements contained in it, as fully and faithfully as possible, the Yangs simply had to use a large number of different words in the translation, hence the higher TTR despite that the translation was mostly done orally in the first draft.

6 Summary and Conclusion

This study made use of corpora technology to examine the stylistic patterns of two well-known English translations of the acclaimed Chinese classical novel *Hongloumeng*. It was found that Hawkes used many more words than the Yangs, but the latter used a wider range of words in their translation and on average, used sentences much shorter than the former. It was believed that the stylistic differences in the two versions were caused by the translators' choice of different translation strategies and methods, which in turn was affected by the social, political and ideological milieu in which they lived and worked. Besides, their primary purpose of translation, their consciousness of a clear target readership and their concern for them, as well as their mother tongue may all have had a bearing on their writing and translating styles.

Methodologically, this investigation confirms that the methodology proposed by Baker (2000) and Olohan (2004) to investigate translator's style can also apply in Chinese–English translation. Also, corpus-assisted translation research can go beyond proving the obvious or the already known as long as meta- or para- texts are available for the analysis. The extent and depth of such analysis of course depends on the amount of information available in the form of meta- or other texts.

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Notes

1 Hongloumeng was first known as Shitouji石头记 (hence translated into *The Story of the Stone* by Hawkes) though more known as ≪红楼梦≫(hence translated by many including Xianyi Yang as *A Dream of Red Mansions*).

2 The four great classical novels, also known as the four major classical novels of Chinese literature, are the four novels commonly counted by scholars to be the greatest and most influential in classical Chinese fiction. The other three are *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (三国演义, Sanguo Yanyi), *Outlaws of the Marsh Water Margin* (水浒传, Shuihu Zhuan), and *Journey to the West* (西游记, Xiyou Ji).

3 Redologist came from the word Redology, study of the Chinese classical novel *Hongloumeng* (*A Dream of Red Mansions*), which is generally known as 红学 (*Hong Xue*) in China.

4 The notes in the translations were not included in the word counts as the explanations sometimes go too far to be considered translations of the ST.

5 This interview recording is available as a video clip from the library of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (campus access only at: http://esrc.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/tvprog/rafx20031208.ram). It consists of a number of interviews with Xianyi Yang, Gladys Yang, Chi Yang (their daughter) and many of their friends.