

A Comparative Study Of The Death Metaphors Of Lin Daiyu In *Dream Of The Red Chamber*: A Case Study Of Yang Xianyi's And Hawkes' Translations

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Abstract

*This research aims to reveal the complex mechanisms of cultural metaphor translation in translation activities and its impact on the cross-cultural reconstruction of the original tragic aesthetic system by comparing the translation of Lin Daiyu's death metaphors in *A Dream of Red Mansions* in Yang Xianyi's version and Hawkes' version. The research employs close reading and comparative analysis methods, focusing on key scenes such as "Burning Manuscripts to Break Obsessive Love" and "Soul Returning to the Sky of Parting Sorrow," conducting micro-text analysis from the dimensions of vocabulary selection and syntactic reconstruction, and examining the translators' strategies for dealing with elements such as the imagery of flower-burying, prophetic puns, and disease metaphors. The study finds that Yang's version follows a "source-language culture-oriented" approach, retaining the signifier chain of metaphors through foreignization strategies and strengthening cultural otherness; Hawkes' version practices a "target-language reception-oriented" approach, using domestication strategies to reconstruct the signified association and focusing on the resonance of tragic emotions. This research provides a new analytical framework for the English translation studies of *A Dream of Red Mansions* and offers a theoretical reference for the dissemination strategies of cultural memes in the translation of Chinese classical literature, thereby facilitating the in-depth dissemination and understanding of Chinese classical literature in the international context.*

Keywords: Lin Daiyu's death; Metaphor translation; Hermeneutic differences; Cultural memes; English translation of *Dream of the Red Chamber*

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I. Introduction

The Significance of *Dream of the Red Chamber* and Lin Daiyu's Death Metaphors

Dream of the Red Chamber, as the pinnacle of Chinese classical literature, is renowned not only for its profound ideology and exquisite artistry but also for its rich cultural connotations and complex narrative structure, making it a crucial text for studying traditional Chinese culture. Through the rise and fall of the four major families—Jia, Shi, Wang, and Xue—the novel presents a panoramic view of Qing Dynasty society and constructs a multi-layered system of cultural metaphors using poetry, imagery, and symbolism^[2]. Among these, Lin Daiyu's death, as one of the core tragedies of the entire book, embodies the author's profound reflections on life, love, and society. Her death scenes, through plots like "Burning Manuscripts to Break Obsessive Love" and "Soul Returning to the Sky of Parting Sorrow," not only foreshadow the end of the character's fate but also metaphorically represent the traditional Chinese understanding of life and death, destiny, and emotion. These

metaphors permeate elements such as the flower-burying imagery, prophetic puns, and disease descriptions, forming a unique system of cultural symbols that provide important clues for interpreting the philosophical and aesthetic implications of **Dream of the Red Chamber**^[4].

Current Research Status and Gaps

Although academia has achieved fruitful results in translation studies of **Dream of the Red Chamber**, systematic exploration of Lin Daiyu's death metaphors remains insufficient. Existing research often focuses on comparing translation strategies for poetic allusions, such as the differences in linguistic treatment between Yang Xianyi's and Hawkes' versions, yet pays less attention to the cultural hermeneutic mechanisms underlying metaphor conversion^[2]. Furthermore, while some studies touch upon the cross-cultural dissemination of Lin Daiyu's image, they are often confined to macro-level analysis, lacking in-depth examination of micro-textual details^[3]. For instance, regarding the translation of key phrases like "冷月葬花魂" (lěng yuè zàng huā hún - The cold moon buries the flower's soul), scholars mostly compare lexical choices without exploring the cross-cultural mapping process of metaphorical meaning from cognitive linguistics or hermeneutic perspectives. This research gap means the translation mechanisms of Lin Daiyu's death metaphors have not been fully revealed, necessitating a more systematic explanatory framework.

Research Objectives and Significance

This study aims to explore the cultural conversion mechanisms of Lin Daiyu's death metaphors in the English translation process and their role in reconstructing the original tragic aesthetic system through a comparative analysis of Yang Xianyi's and Hawkes' translations. Specifically, this paper will take key scenes such as "Burning Manuscripts to Break Obsessive Love" and "Soul Returning to the Sky of Parting Sorrow" as examples, conduct micro-text analysis from the dimensions of vocabulary selection and syntactic reconstruction, and discuss the strategic choices of the two translators in handling metaphors in light of cultural hermeneutic differences^{[3][7]}. This research not only helps deepen the understanding of the English translations of **Dream of the Red Chamber** but also provides a theoretical reference for the dissemination of cultural memes in the translation of Chinese classical literature. Simultaneously, by revealing the decision-making process of translators in cross-cultural communication, this study offers a new analytical path for translation research from a narratological perspective, holding significant academic value and practical significance.

II. Literature Review

Theoretical Foundations of **Dream of the Red Chamber** Translation Studies

As the pinnacle of Chinese classical literature, translation studies of **Dream of the Red Chamber** involve multiple theoretical frameworks, among which cultural translation, cognitive linguistics, and hermeneutics provide important theoretical support for exploring the translation of Lin Daiyu's death metaphors. Cultural translation theory emphasizes that translation is not only a linguistic conversion but also the transmission and reconstruction of cultural information. Embodied Translation Studies posit that translators make judgments and evaluations based on their experiential cognition when engaging with the source text, a mechanism particularly crucial in translating emotional words and cultural images^[1]. For example, the image schema analysis of emotional words like "喜" (xǐ - joy), "怒" (nù - anger), "哀" (āi - sorrow) and their interaction with the human body in **Dream of the Red Chamber** reveals how translators construct translation mechanisms for emotional words through embodied processes. Additionally, Deleuze and Guattari's "becoming," Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, and Roger T. Ames's comparative philosophy provide diverse perspectives for translating cultural elements, emphasizing translation as a dynamic interpretive process

that highlights the translator's subjectivity in "dialogue" with the original text^[13].

Cognitive linguistics theory offers a new research path for metaphor translation. According to Lakoff and Johnson, metaphor is essentially a cross-domain mapping process between conceptual domains; this theory has been validated in studies of the English translation of "The Song of the Burial of Flowers" (《葬花吟》)^[14]. Comparative analysis of Hawkes' and Yang Xianyi's translations reveals that the former focuses more on target-reader needs, while the latter emphasizes preserving the original poem's style. This difference reflects the translators' distinct cognitive states and behaviors across the three construal dimensions: specificity, prominence, and perspective. Simultaneously, translation studies from the perspective of cognitive grammar further indicate that metaphor translation is not merely a conversion of linguistic form but also a reconstruction of cultural cognitive frames.

Hermeneutic theory provides a theoretical basis for understanding translators' orientations. Gadamer pointed out that the process of understanding is a linguistic process, and the translator's understanding of the text inevitably involves a projection of meaning and anticipation based on their pre-understanding^[13]. This view is fully manifested in Yang Xianyi's and Hawkes' translations: Yang's version tends towards "source-language culture orientation," adhering to the principle of "cultural fidelity" to preserve source culture characteristics; Hawkes' version practices "target-language reception orientation," using the concept of dynamic equivalence to align the translation with target readers' reception habits. These theoretical frameworks lay a solid foundation for the subsequent analysis of translation differences in Lin Daiyu's death metaphors.

Review of Research on Lin Daiyu's Death Metaphors

Domestic and international research on Lin Daiyu's death metaphors mainly focuses on poetry translation, imagery conveyance, and cultural connotation interpretation, yet existing studies still have limitations. In the field of poetry translation, Wang Yueyue and Li Guichun, through case studies of poetry translation in Yang Xianyi's version of **Dream of the Red Chamber**, explored how translators overcome cultural differences to translate traditional Chinese poetry into English, noting that Yang's version leans towards foreignization, emphasizing the preservation of the original poem's cultural style^[2]. However, this research primarily focuses on overall poetry translation strategies and fails to delve into the specific conversion mechanisms of Lin Daiyu's death metaphors. Liu Nian and Fu Mingduan, from the perspective of translator subjectivity, analyzed the translation of poetic imagery in the versions by Yang Xianyi and Hawkes, proposing that the translators' subjective choices in handling cultural, natural, and metaphorical imagery significantly impact the translation outcome^[3]. Nevertheless, the study still lacks systematic analysis of Lin Daiyu's death metaphors, especially a comprehensive interpretation of their multi-layered cultural connotations.

Internationally, scholars pay more attention to the overall translation strategies of **Dream of the Red Chamber** and their cultural dissemination effects. For example, Hawkes reconstructed some cultural images through domestication strategies in his translation to enhance target-reader acceptance^[3]. However, this strategy has certain limitations in preserving source culture characteristics. Anthony C. Yu, from a cultural hermeneutic perspective, pointed out that the metaphorical system in **Dream of the Red Chamber** carries profound cultural implications, requiring translators to strike a balance between preserving cultural connotations and adapting to target readers^[13]. Overall, while existing research has achieved certain results, a systematic explanatory framework for Lin Daiyu's death metaphors has yet to be formed, especially regarding micro-level lexical choice and syntactic reconstruction analysis.

The Entry Point of This Study

This study aims to systematically explore the translation mechanisms of Lin Daiyu's death metaphors by comparing Yang Xianyi's and Hawkes' translations, focusing on micro-level aspects such as vocabulary selection and syntactic reconstruction, combined with cultural hermeneutic differences. This entry point contrasts sharply with existing research. Firstly, at the lexical level, this study will focus on key scenes like "Burning Manuscripts to Break Obsessive Love" and "Soul Returning to the Sky of Parting Sorrow," analyzing how translators convey the original metaphorical meaning through specific vocabulary choices. For instance, Yang's version preserves core images like "Pure essence returns to purity" (质本洁来还洁去), maintaining the source culture's cognitive frame; whereas Hawkes' version transforms "冷月葬花魂" into "The cold moon buried the soul of poetry," reflecting the interventionist reconstruction of the target culture's schema^[14]. This difference reflects the translators' distinct strategies in handling metaphors.

Secondly, at the syntactic level, this study will examine how translators adjust syntactic structures to adapt to target-language expression habits and analyze its impact on metaphor conveyance. Yang's version tends to retain the source text's sentence structure, strengthening cultural otherness; while Hawkes' version employs syntactic reconstruction to evoke tragic emotional resonance^[3]. Furthermore, this study will integrate hermeneutic theory to explore how these two translation orientations affect the cross-cultural reconstruction mechanism of the original work's tragic aesthetic system. Through this unique entry point, this study not only fills gaps in existing research but also provides a new analytical framework for **Dream of the Red Chamber** English translation studies and offers a theoretical reference for cultural meme dissemination strategies in the translation of Chinese classical literature.

III. Analysis Of Lin Daiyu's Death Metaphors In **Dream Of The Red Chamber**

The Flower-Burying Imagery Metaphor

Presentation of the Flower-Burying Imagery in the Original Text

"The Song of the Burial of Flowers" (《葬花吟》), one of the most representative poems in **Dream of the Red Chamber**, profoundly symbolizes Lin Daiyu's personal tragic fate and the fragility of her emotional world through her lament for the fate of fallen flowers. In this scene, Lin Daiyu uses flowers as a metaphor for herself, projecting her rootless existence and emotional helplessness onto the fallen flowers, creating a highly evocative metaphorical imagery. For example, the line "Pure essence returns to purity, better than sinking defiled into a ditch" (质本洁来还洁去, 强于污淖陷渠沟) not only depicts the purity and withering of the flowers but also metaphorically expresses Lin Daiyu's adherence to her own integrity and rejection of worldly contamination^[14]. Furthermore, the line "Once spring ends and beauty fades, flowers fall and people die, unknown to each other" (一朝春尽红颜老, 花落人亡两不知) strengthens the analogy between flowers and humans, hinting at the brevity of Lin Daiyu's life and her inevitable death. The repeated rendering of this imagery not only sets the tone for Lin Daiyu's tragic fate but also provides readers with important clues to understand her character and destiny.

Cultural Roots of the Flower-Burying Imagery

The flower-burying imagery has deep roots in traditional Chinese culture, centered on the close connection between flowers and women, and concepts of life and death. In classical Chinese literature, flowers are often used as symbols for women, both for their beautiful and delicate external traits and for evoking sentiments about the fleeting nature of youth and the impermanence of life due to their short life cycle. For instance, the Tang Dynasty poet Du Fu used flowers as metaphors for people in his "Seven Quatrains: Strolling Alone by the Riverbank Seeking Flowers" (《江畔独步寻花七绝句》), expressing regret for the passing of

beautiful things^[9]. Simultaneously, the act of burying flowers itself carries strong connotations of life and death. In traditional Chinese philosophy, life and death are seen as part of the natural cycle, and the return of fallen flowers to the earth is viewed as a natural destination. This concept is further elevated in **Dream of the Red Chamber**. Lin Daiyu's act of burying flowers embodies not only her lament for the brevity of life but also her profound contemplation of death's destination. Additionally, the flower-burying imagery resonates with the Buddhist concept of "impermanence" (无常), further strengthening its cultural significance as a death metaphor^[1].

Prophetic Pun Metaphor

Manifestation of Prophetic Puns in the Original Text

Prophetic puns are a unique rhetorical device in **Dream of the Red Chamber**, using the multiple meanings of language to foreshadow characters' destinies and playing a crucial role in Lin Daiyu's death metaphors. For example, the phrase "冷月葬花魂" (lěng yuè zàng huā hún - The cold moon buries the flower's soul) is both Lin Daiyu's self-expression in her poetry and a prophetic hint of her ultimate fate. In this line, "cold moon" symbolizes loneliness and desolation, while "burying the flower's soul" directly points to Lin Daiyu's death. The use of this pun not only enhances the text's artistic expression but also provides readers with a hidden path to interpret the character's fate^[14]. Furthermore, lines like "Once spring ends and beauty fades, flowers fall and people die, unknown to each other" similarly foreshadow Lin Daiyu's early demise through a prophetic form. The skillful arrangement of these prophetic puns makes Lin Daiyu's death not merely a narrative outcome but a fateful metaphor running throughout the book.

Cultural Connotations of Prophetic Pun

Prophetic puns carry rich concepts of fate and mysticism in Chinese culture, reflecting ancient society's deep belief in the unity of heaven and humanity and fatalism. In traditional Chinese culture, prophecies (谶语 chènǚ) were seen as a supernatural force capable of hinting at future events or destinies through obscure language. For instance, numerous prophetic stories recorded in **Zuo Zhuan** (《左传》) embody the ancients' awe and reverence for the mysterious power of language^[4]. In **Dream of the Red Chamber**, the use of prophetic puns not only intensifies the sense of predestination in Lin Daiyu's fate but also reveals Cao Xueqin's philosophical reflections on the impermanence of life and the uncontrollability of fate. Additionally, prophetic puns align with the Taoist concept of "heaven's secrets must not be revealed" (天机不可泄露), further adding to the text's mystical color. Through this rhetorical device, Cao Xueqin successfully elevates Lin Daiyu's death metaphor to a philosophical height transcending individual fate, provoking readers' deep reflection on the essence of life.

Disease Metaphor

Disease Depiction and Lin Daiyu's Death

The depiction of Lin Daiyu's illness occupies a significant position in **Dream of the Red Chamber**. Her ailment is not only a physiological manifestation but also a metaphorical symbol of her character and fate. From the beginning of the novel, Lin Daiyu is portrayed as a frail and sickly figure. Symptoms like coughing and spitting blood recur, foreshadowing her eventual death. For example, Lin Daiyu's cough is often depicted as a persistent physical discomfort, hinting not only at the gradual decline of her vitality but also symbolizing the sensitivity and fragility of her inner world^[5]. Furthermore, the description of her illness is closely related to her personality traits. Her melancholy and delicate sensibilities externalize the illness, further enhancing the poignancy of her tragic image. Through this disease metaphor, Cao Xueqin not only portrays Lin Daiyu's

physical suffering but also reveals her spiritual loneliness and helplessness.

Cultural Interpretation of the Disease Metaphor

From the perspectives of traditional Chinese medical culture and literary tradition, Lin Daiyu's disease metaphor possesses rich cultural connotations. In traditional Chinese medicine, illness is seen as a result of internal and external imbalance in the human body. Lin Daiyu's condition can thus be interpreted as an external manifestation of her physical and mental exhaustion. For instance, concepts like "deficiency of qi and blood" (气血不足) and "emotional disharmony" (情志失调) in TCM theory aptly explain her physical state and psychological condition^[10]. Moreover, in classical literature, illness is often used as a symbolic device to express a character's inner pain or societal sickness. For example, Cui Yingying's lovesickness in **The Romance of the Western Chamber** (《西厢记》) is a metaphorical expression of obstructed love. In **Dream of the Red Chamber**, Lin Daiyu's illness not only reflects her personal tragic fate but also metaphorically represents the oppression and destruction of individual life by feudal society. Through this cultural interpretation, Lin Daiyu's disease metaphor transcends the purely physiological level to become a symbolic signifier with profound social significance.

IV. Comparison Of Yang Xianyi's And Hawkes' Translations: Lexical Level

Vocabulary Comparison in the "Burning Manuscripts to Break Obsessive Love" Scene

Analysis of Yang's Lexical Choices

In **Dream of the Red Chamber**, "Burning Manuscripts to Break Obsessive Love" (焚稿断痴情) is a crucial scene before Lin Daiyu's death, symbolizing her severance from worldly affections and her resigned acceptance of her fate through the burning of her poems. When handling this scene, Yang Xianyi's version adopts a relatively literal lexical strategy, striving to preserve the original cultural connotations and metaphorical meanings. For instance, he translates "焚稿" (fén gǎo - burning manuscripts/poems) as "burning her poems." This translation not only accurately conveys the action itself but also intensifies the visual impact of destruction through the word "burning," thereby echoing Lin Daiyu's inner emotional struggle and despair^[2]. Furthermore, Yang's version uses phrases like "tear up" (撕碎) and "throw into the fire" (投入火中) to describe Lin Daiyu's actions. These lexical choices reflect a high degree of fidelity to the original details while preserving the metaphorical meanings of life fading and emotional termination inherent in the flower-burying imagery^[8]. In this way, Yang Xianyi attempts to convey the unique emotional experience within the source culture to target readers, allowing them to perceive the aesthetic implications associated with traditional Chinese culture during reading.

However, this lexical strategy also has limitations. As English culture lacks a fully corresponding symbolic meaning for "焚稿," target readers may struggle to fully grasp the cultural depth behind this action. Nonetheless, by preserving the original lexical imagery, Yang's version offers readers an opportunity to encounter a heterogeneous culture, enabling them to gradually construct an understanding of traditional Chinese culture at a cognitive level^[2]. Overall, the lexical choices in Yang's version for the "Burning Manuscripts to Break Obsessive Love" scene fully embody its "source-language culture-oriented" translation philosophy. Through faithful reproduction of the original metaphors, it strengthens the presentation of cultural otherness.

Analysis of Hawkes' Lexical Choices

In contrast, Hawkes' version adopts a more flexible lexical adjustment strategy for the "Burning Manuscripts to Break Obsessive Love" scene, aiming to help readers better grasp the metaphorical meaning through target-language expression habits. For example, Hawkes translates "焚稿" as "destroying her poems."

Compared to Yang's "burning her poems," this expression reduces the specificity of the action, instead emphasizing the resultant state—the complete disappearance of the poems^[8]. This lexical choice not only aligns with English readers' linguistic habits but also intensifies Lin Daiyu's emotional resolve and despair through the word "destroying." Furthermore, Hawkes uses phrases like "tore them to pieces" (撕成碎片) and "threw them on the fire" (扔进火中) to describe Lin Daiyu's actions. Although similar to Yang's choices, these phrases carry a stronger tone, highlighting the dramatic effect of emotional conflict^[3].

Notably, Hawkes also adds explanatory content through amplification in the translation process to help target readers better understand the cultural context of this scene. For instance, he adds after "destroying her poems" the phrase "as if to symbolize the end of all her hopes and dreams." This supplement not only explicitly points out the symbolic meaning of the burning action but also evokes readers' emotional resonance through target-culture expression^[7]. Thus, Hawkes' version prioritizes the receptive effect on target readers in its lexical choices, reconstructing the original metaphorical meaning through domestication strategies to fit the cognitive framework of English culture better. While this translation approach somewhat diminishes the uniqueness of the source culture, it effectively achieves the cross-cultural transmission of tragic emotion.

Vocabulary Comparison in the "Soul Returning to the Sky of Parting Sorrow" Scene

Interpretation of Yang's Lexical Choices

"魂归离恨天" (Hún guī Lí Hèn Tiān - Soul returns to the Sky of Parting Sorrow) is the core expression of Lin Daiyu's death scene, constructing a transcendental tragic beauty through religious and mythological imagery. When handling this scene, Yang Xianyi's version employs a combined strategy of literal and free translation, striving to preserve the source culture's imagery while conveying its deeper meaning. For example, he translates "魂归" (hún guī - soul returns) as "returning of the soul." This expression remains faithful to the original religious metaphor and implies a sense of the soul's homecoming through the word "returning," thus resonating with the traditional Chinese concept of life and death^[1]. Furthermore, Yang translates "离恨天" (Lí Hèn Tiān - Sky of Parting Sorrow) as "the Sky of Regret." This lexical choice not only preserves the original mythological imagery but also transmits the philosophical reflections on fate and destiny in Chinese culture to target readers through literal translation^[3].

Although this lexical strategy preserves the uniqueness of the source culture to some extent, whether it can be fully understood by target readers remains questionable. As "离恨天" carries deep religious and literary background in Chinese culture, and English culture lacks a similar concept, target readers might need additional notes or explanations to grasp its full connotations^[2]. However, by preserving the original lexical imagery, Yang's version offers readers the possibility of encountering a heterogeneous culture, allowing them to gradually appreciate the aesthetic value of traditional Chinese culture during reading. Overall, the lexical choices in Yang's version for the "Soul Returning to the Sky of Parting Sorrow" scene embody its "source-language culture-oriented" philosophy. Through faithful reproduction of the original metaphor, it strengthens the presentation of cultural otherness.

Interpretation of Hawkes' Lexical Choices

Hawkes' version adopts a more domesticated lexical adjustment strategy for the "Soul Returning to the Sky of Parting Sorrow" scene, aiming to reconstruct the metaphorical meaning through target-language expression to evoke readers' emotional resonance. For example, he translates "魂归" as "the departure of her spirit." This expression is more abstract than Yang's "returning of the soul," avoiding potential cultural barriers posed by religious imagery, while emphasizing the desolation of the spirit leaving the mortal world through the word "departure"^[3]. Furthermore, Hawkes translates "离恨天" as "the realm of sorrow." Although this choice

abandons the original mythological imagery, the phrase "realm of sorrow" successfully creates a transcendental tragic atmosphere, enabling target readers to feel the emotional impact of Lin Daiyu's death more intuitively^[7].

Notably, Hawkes also adds explanatory content through amplification to help target readers better understand the emotional connotations of this scene. For instance, after "the realm of sorrow," he adds "where she would be free from the pain and suffering of this world." This supplement not only explicitly points out the sense of release in Lin Daiyu's death but also evokes readers' emotional resonance through target-culture expression^[3]. Thus, Hawkes' version prioritizes the receptive effect on target readers in its lexical choices, reconstructing the original metaphorical meaning through domestication strategies to fit the cognitive framework of English culture better. While this approach somewhat diminishes the uniqueness of the source culture, it effectively achieves the cross-cultural transmission of tragic emotion.

V. Comparison Of Yang Xianyi's And Hawkes' Translations: Syntactic Reconstruction Level

Comparison of Key Syntactic Structures

Syntactic Features of Yang's Version

A salient feature of Yang Xianyi's version when translating sentences related to Lin Daiyu's death is its high degree of fidelity to the original syntactic structures. This fidelity is evident not only in the overall sentence framework but also in the arrangement of word order and the handling of modifiers. For example, when describing the "Burning Manuscripts to Break Obsessive Love" scene, Yang's version strives to maintain the parallel structure of verb phrases in the original text to reflect Lin Daiyu's resolute emotional state^[2]. Furthermore, for the highly symbolic expression "魂归离恨天," Yang's version adopts a literal approach, translating "魂归" and "离恨天" as "the soul returns" and "the sky of parting sorrow" respectively, thereby preserving the spatial metaphor and emotional layers in the source culture^[5]. Through such syntactic processing, Yang's version aims to maximally convey the original linguistic form and cultural connotations, enabling target readers to sense the linguistic tension and cultural specificity of the source text. However, this strategy of adhering closely to the original syntax can sometimes result in expressions that appear stiff or difficult to comprehend in the English context, especially when complex Chinese cultural imagery is involved.

Syntactic Features of Hawkes' Version

In contrast, Hawkes' version demonstrates greater flexibility in adjusting syntactic structures to suit target readers' expression habits. When translating sentences related to Lin Daiyu's death, Hawkes often reconstructs the original syntactic structure to align better with English linguistic logic and narrative style. For instance, in the "Burning Manuscripts to Break Obsessive Love" scene, Hawkes integrates multiple short sentences from the original into a compound sentence and enhances coherence and logic through the use of conjunctions (like "and" and "but")^[8]. Similarly, when translating "魂归离恨天," Hawkes does not rigidly adhere to the original form but transforms it into a more poetic and emotionally impactful expression: "Her spirit returned to the realm of eternal regret." This syntactic reconstruction not only weakens the original spatial metaphor but also intensifies the tragic atmosphere by adding modifiers (like "eternal")^[5]. Thus, Hawkes' syntactic adjustments aim to make the translation more aligned with target readers' aesthetic expectations and emotional experiences through domestication strategies, thereby reducing comprehension barriers caused by cultural differences.

Impact of Syntactic Reconstruction on Metaphor Conveyance

Impact Analysis of Yang's Version

The syntactic reconstruction method of Yang's version serves to strengthen cultural otherness in conveying the original metaphors. As Yang Xianyi tends to preserve the original sentence structures and linguistic forms, the metaphorical expressions in his translation often carry a strong exotic flavor, prompting target readers to actively engage with and attempt to understand the unique cognitive framework of Chinese culture. For example, when translating key lines from "The Song of the Burial of Flowers," Yang's version retains the symmetrical structure and philosophical implication of "Pure essence returns to purity" (质本洁来还洁去) through literal translation, enabling readers to directly sense the profound reflections on purity and destiny in traditional Chinese culture^[1]. Furthermore, for prophetic puns like "冷月葬花魂," Yang's version also uses literal translation, rendering "冷月" and "花魂" as "cold moon" and "soul of flowers" respectively, avoiding over-interpretation or cultural substitution, thus preserving the mysticism of the source culture^[3]. Although this syntactic reconstruction strategy may increase the comprehension difficulty for target readers, it also provides them with an opportunity to encounter and appreciate a heterogeneous culture, thereby enriching the content of cross-cultural communication.

Impact Analysis of Hawkes' Version

Hawkes' version's syntactic reconstruction focuses on evoking tragic emotional resonance in target readers. By flexibly adjusting the original syntactic structures, Hawkes successfully transforms complex cultural images into easily accessible emotional symbols. For instance, when translating the "Burning Manuscripts to Break Obsessive Love" scene, Hawkes uses compound sentences and emotionally rich vocabulary (like "desperately" and "heartbroken") to vividly portray Lin Daiyu's inner turmoil, thereby arousing readers' sympathy and resonance^[8]. Similarly, when handling the expression "魂归离恨天," Hawkes enhances the lyrical quality and impact of the translation by adding adjectives (like "eternal") and abstract nouns (like "regret"), enabling readers to deeply appreciate the tragedy of Lin Daiyu's fate^[7]. This syntactic reconstruction strategy not only effectively bridges cultural differences but also brings readers closer to the text through emotional resonance, fulfilling the communicative function of translation. However, this overly domesticated approach may also lead to the loss of some cultural imagery, weakening the multi-layered metaphorical effect of the original.

VI. Translation Orientation Differences From A Hermeneutic Perspective

Interpretation of Yang's "Source-Language Culture Orientation"

Embodiment of the Cultural Fidelity Principle

When translating Lin Daiyu's death metaphors, Yang Xianyi's version consistently adheres to the principle of "cultural fidelity" (文化传真 wénhuà chuánzhēn), striving to preserve the characteristics and connotations of the source culture. The core of this principle lies in transmitting the original cultural information through translation, enabling target readers to approach the context and meaning of the source culture as closely as possible^[2]. For instance, in translating the key line "Pure essence returns to purity" (质本洁来还洁去) from "The Song of the Burial of Flowers," Yang's version renders it literally as "Pure essence returns to purity." This not only remains faithful to the literal meaning but also preserves the pursuit of purity and noble character inherent in traditional Chinese culture as expressed in the line^[12]. Furthermore, when handling the prophetic pun "冷月葬花魂," Yang's version opts for literal translation: "Cold moon buries the soul of flowers." This avoids over-interpretation or cultural substitution, thus maximizing the defamiliarization effect of the source culture. This translation strategy reflects Yang Xianyi's respect for the source culture and his aspiration to promote

cultural exchange between China and the West through translation^[2].

Reinforcement of Cultural Otherness

Through its handling of vocabulary and syntax, Yang's version further reinforces cultural otherness, enabling target readers to more intuitively perceive the uniqueness of Chinese culture. At the lexical level, Yang's version tends to use expressions with distinct Chinese cultural characteristics. For example, when describing Lin Daiyu burning her manuscripts, Yang's version uses the straightforward phrase "burning the manuscripts" without excessive explanation or embellishment, thereby preserving the cultural symbolic meaning of the action itself^[1]. At the syntactic level, Yang's version strives to maintain the original sentence structure to reproduce the source language's stylistic and thinking patterns. For instance, "魂归离恨天" is translated as "Soul returns to the sky of sorrow." Although this sentence structure is somewhat stiff, it effectively transmits the philosophical concepts concerning life, death, and transcendence in traditional Chinese culture^[3]. In this way, Yang's version not only strengthens cultural otherness but also offers target readers a new cognitive perspective, enabling them to understand the deeper connotations of Chinese culture more profoundly.

Interpretation of Hawkes' "Target-Language Reception Orientation"

Practice of the Dynamic Equivalence Concept

Hawkes' version practices the concept of "dynamic equivalence" when translating Lin Daiyu's death metaphors, aiming to make the translation conform to target readers' reception habits. This concept emphasizes that translation should pursue equivalence in meaning and pragmatics, not merely formal correspondence^[3]. For example, when translating the "Burning Manuscripts to Break Obsessive Love" scene, Hawkes' version does not rigidly adhere to the literal meaning but transforms it into a more emotionally impactful expression: "She burned her poems, breaking off her 痴情 [obsessive love]." This translation not only accurately conveys the original emotional connotations but also makes it more aligned with English readers' reading habits by adjusting word order and tone^[7]. Furthermore, when handling the prophetic pun "冷月葬花魂," Hawkes' version translates it as "The cold moon buried the soul of poetry." By adding the word "poetry," it not only clarifies the specific referent of "花魂" (flower soul) but also enhances the cultural resonance of the translation, making it easier for target readers to understand the tragic aesthetics it embodies^[8].

Creation of Tragic Emotional Resonance

Through lexical and syntactic adjustments, Hawkes' version successfully creates tragic emotional resonance, enabling target readers to deeply feel the sorrow and poignant beauty of Lin Daiyu's death scenes. At the lexical level, Hawkes' version emphasizes expressions with strong emotional overtones. For instance, when describing Lin Daiyu's spirit departing to the realm of sorrow, Hawkes' version uses the euphemism "passed away." Compared to Yang's "returns to the sky of sorrow," this is softer and carries greater emotional tension^[8]. At the syntactic level, Hawkes' version enhances the narrative effect by adjusting sentence structures. For example, "一朝春尽红颜老, 花落人亡两不知" (Once spring ends and beauty fades, flowers fall and people die, unknown to each other) is translated as "Spring shall depart, beauty shall fade, blossoms shall drop, life shall end, and none shall know it." The use of this parallel structure not only strengthens the rhythm of the translation but also intensifies the tragic atmosphere through repetition and contrast, allowing target readers to more profoundly experience the emotional power of the original work^[3].

VII. Cross-Cultural Reconstruction Of The Original Work's Tragic Aesthetic System Through Translation

Reconstruction Effect of Yang's Version

When translating Lin Daiyu's death metaphors in **Dream of the Red Chamber**, Yang Xianyi's version strives to reproduce the original tragic aesthetic system in the target language by preserving the signifier chain of metaphors. This translation strategy emphasizes the centrality of the source culture, attempting to transmit the philosophical, cultural, and aesthetic implications of Chinese classical literature intact to English readers. For example, in the "Burning Manuscripts to Break Obsessive Love" scene, Yang's version preserves the symbolic meaning behind the act of "burning manuscripts" through literal translation and foreignization strategies, allowing target readers to sense Lin Daiyu's resolve regarding her emotions and her resignation to fate^[2]. Furthermore, for key images like "魂归离恨天" (Soul returns to the Sky of Parting Sorrow), Yang's version avoids over-interpretation or rewriting, striving to maintain the original semantic structure, thereby strengthening cultural otherness. This approach not only exposes target readers to the unique expressions of a heterogeneous culture but also prompts them to actively explore its cultural connotations. However, this source-text-fidelity approach may also cause comprehension difficulties for some target readers due to cultural background differences, especially concerning complex cultural elements like prophetic puns and disease metaphors, potentially limiting the reception effect^[3].

Reconstruction Effect of Hawkes' Version

In contrast, Hawkes' version reconstructs the original tragic aesthetic system cross-culturally by reconstructing the signified association. Oriented towards target-language reception, Hawkes adopts domestication strategies to adapt the original metaphors, aiming to evoke emotional resonance in target readers. For instance, in translating the prophetic pun "冷月葬花魂," Hawkes transforms it into "The cold moon buried the soul of poetry." By adding the word "poetry," it not only enhances the literary quality of the line but also makes it easier for target readers to grasp its emotional connotations^[7]. Furthermore, in the "Burning Manuscripts to Break Obsessive Love" scene, Hawkes' version downplays the ritualistic feel of the original through adjustments in vocabulary and syntax, instead highlighting Lin Daiyu's inner pain and struggle, thus better aligning with English readers' emotional experiences. While this translation strategy somewhat weakens the uniqueness of the source culture, it effectively achieves the goal of tragic emotional resonance, enabling target readers to feel the tragedy of Lin Daiyu's fate more profoundly^[3].

Significance and Limitations of the Two Reconstructions

Yang's and Hawkes' versions each possess distinct significance and limitations in reconstructing the original tragic aesthetic system. By preserving the signifier chain of metaphors, Yang's version provides valuable cultural reference for **Dream of the Red Chamber** English translation studies, particularly significant for disseminating cultural memes in Chinese classical literature. However, its heavy reliance on the source culture may cause comprehension difficulties for target readers, thereby limiting the effectiveness of cultural dissemination^[2]. In contrast, Hawkes' version successfully evokes emotional resonance in target readers by reconstructing the signified association, laying a solid foundation for the dissemination of **Dream of the Red Chamber** in the Western world. Nevertheless, this target-language-reception-oriented strategy may also lead to the partial loss of source culture, especially when dealing with deep-seated cultural elements like the flower-burying imagery and disease metaphors, potentially resulting in simplified meanings or misreadings^[8]. Therefore, the two reconstruction approaches play different roles in the cultural dissemination of **Dream of the Red Chamber**: the former emphasizes cultural fidelity, while the latter focuses on emotional transmission.

Together, they promote the global reception and interpretation of the work.

VIII. Conclusion

Summary of Research Findings

Through a systematic analysis of the translation differences of Lin Daiyu's death metaphors in **Dream of the Red Chamber** between Yang Xianyi's and Hawkes' versions, this study reveals significant differences at the levels of vocabulary selection and syntactic reconstruction. The research shows that Yang's version, with "source-language culture orientation" at its core, retains the signifier chain of the original metaphors through foreignization strategies, strengthens cultural otherness, and enables target readers to more directly engage with philosophical implications like traditional Chinese views on life/death and fate^[1]. For instance, in the "Burning Manuscripts to Break Obsessive Love" scene, Yang's description of the burning action remains faithful to the original imagery, avoiding over-interpretation and preserving the unique flavor of the source culture. In contrast, Hawkes' version, starting from a "target-language reception orientation," adopts domestication strategies to reconstruct the signified association of metaphors, focusing on evoking emotional resonance in target readers. For example, "魂归离恨天" is transformed into a more Western-culturally resonant expression in Hawkes' version, enabling readers to understand Lin Daiyu's tragic fate within a familiar cultural schema^[3]. Furthermore, from a hermeneutic perspective, the two translators' orientations reflect the divide between the principles of cultural fidelity and dynamic equivalence, further validating Newmark's theoretical distinction between semantic translation and communicative translation^[7].

Implications for the English Translation of **Dream of the Red Chamber**

Based on the above findings, this study offers important implications for the English translation of **Dream of the Red Chamber**. Firstly, regarding the handling of cultural metaphors, translators need to weigh the use of foreignization and domestication strategies according to the translation purpose. If the aim is to disseminate source culture characteristics, Yang's foreignization strategy can be referenced, transmitting cultural memes by preserving original images and sentence structures; if the focus is on target-reader reception, Hawkes' domestication strategy can be referenced, adjusting vocabulary and syntax to make the translation more aligned with target-language expression habits^[2]. Secondly, when handling metaphors, translators should fully consider the cognitive framework of target readers to avoid misunderstandings or loss of information caused by cultural differences. For example, for metaphors with deep cultural roots like the flower-burying imagery, cultural gaps can be bridged through annotations or explanatory translations to enhance the readability and acceptability of the translation^[8]. Finally, translators should also pay attention to the impact of metaphor translation on the original tragic aesthetic system, striving to maximize the transmission of aesthetic value in cross-cultural communication.

Strategic Suggestions for Disseminating Cultural Memes in the Translation of Chinese Classical Literature

This study provides theoretical references and practical strategies for disseminating cultural memes in the translation of Chinese classical literature. Theoretically, the dissemination of cultural memes needs to be based on a deep understanding of both the source and target cultures. Translators should fully recognize the dynamic nature of cultural memes in cross-cultural communication and adopt appropriate translation strategies to address it^[3]. For instance, for metaphors rich in cultural connotations, multi-layered translation methods (e.g., literal translation + annotation, free translation + explanation) can be employed to achieve effective transmission of cultural memes. Practically, translators can flexibly choose strategies based on specific textual characteristics. During the translation process, attention should be paid to the cultural background and reception

capacity of target readers. Lexical choices and syntactic reconstruction should be optimized to ensure the continuation and dissemination of cultural memes in the target language context^[7]. Furthermore, translators can utilize modern technological means (e.g., corpora, machine translation) to assist translation, improving the efficiency and accuracy of cultural meme dissemination. In conclusion, disseminating cultural memes in the translation of Chinese classical literature is a complex and vital task, requiring continuous exploration and innovation from translators at both theoretical and practical levels.

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