



A Comparative Study of Methods Employed by the Yangs and Hawkes for Translating Traditional Chinese Medicine Terms in *Hong Lou Meng*

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Abstract: As the quintessence, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is an important part of traditional Chinese culture and contributes to the health of the Chinese nation. TCM gradually captures the attention of more and more people and brings benefits to people from the world. *Hong Lou Meng*, one of China's four great masterpieces, is an encyclopedic novel that involves more than 290 pieces of medical knowledge. Literary master Cao Xueqin is not only good at writing but also proficient in medicine. TCM in *Hong Lou Meng* was selected by Cao Xueqin based on real prescriptions and cases. This article takes the translations of *Hong Lou Meng* by the Yangs (Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang) and David Hawkes as an example to compare and analyze the methods they adopted to translate TCM terms in the Novel in a hope to provide a reference for the translation of TCM terms.

Key words: *Hong long Meng*; TCM terms; translation methods; the Yangs and Hawkes

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I. Introduction

With China's increasing influence in the world, TCM, as one of the four quintessences, has attracted the attention of people from all over the world. Set against the backdrop of the rise and fall of the four major families of Jia, Shi, Wang, and Xue, *Hong Lou Meng* (hereinafter referred to as HLM) vividly depicts all classes of society and unfolds a broad picture of history. Cultural research on HLM is still in the ascendant in China, but there is little research on the English translation of TCM terms. HLM has been translated into many languages, with a wide range of dissemination and influence. The study of the translation of TCM terms is a major impetus for the dissemination of TCM culture. According to statistics, "HLM involves more than 290 medical and health knowledge, over 50,000 words, 161 medical terms used, 114 pathologies described, 13 cases of traditional Chinese medicine, 45 prescriptions, 125 traditional Chinese medicines, and 3 Western medicines (Hu Xiangguo, 2006: 1)." The author believes that more research should be done on the English translation of TCM terms in HLM to better disseminate TCM culture. For this sake, the author takes the translations of Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang and David Hawkes (hereinafter referred to as the Yangs and Hawkes) to explore the translation methods and strategies adopted, to provide reference for the translation of TCM terms.

II. Methods Employed by the Yangs and Hawkes for Translating TCM Terms in HLM

Cao Xueqin's HLM is rich in medical knowledge, which can be roughly divided into five categories, namely Chinese medicine herbs, prescriptions, principles of Chinese medicine, pathological diseases, and diagnosis and treatment. From these five aspects, the author compares and analyzes the translation methods adopted by the Yangs and Hawkes.

2.1 Translation of medicinal herbs

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

The Yangs: "Before very long Mingyan Brought Doctor Wang, who first examined the patient then made a diagnosis very similar to the previous one. But instead of such ingredients as citrus trifoliata and ephedra, his prescription called for angelica, orange peel and white peony; moreover the dosage was smaller (Yang

Xianyi ,1978: 1468) .”

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

Traditional Chinese medicine is usually made of plants, animal minerals, etc., which are pure natural materials, and most of them can be translated literally. Even if there is no exact equivalent vocabulary, it can be replaced by a botanical name of the same genus or species. Because the botanical name is composed of the genus or species name attached to its roots, stems, leaves, flowers, fruits, and other medicinal parts (Peng Aimin, 2008: 33). The “白芍” in the Yangs and Hawkes’ translations adopts the literal translation method, i.e., white peony and white peony root, and directly uses the scientific name of the plant. In comparison, the author is more inclined to Hawkes’ white peony root which accurately points out the site of medication.

“陈皮” is made from the peel of an orange being dried. This “陈” means to transform as time goes by. It is a verb that the reader will not know if translated literally. Both the Yang’s and Hawkes translations are paraphrased, which translates as orange peel and bitter peel, respectively. “Paraphrasing does not pay attention to the form of the original work, including syntactic structure, diction, metaphor, and other rhetorical devices. However, paraphrasing does not mean that the content is arbitrarily deleted or added. (Fan Zhongying, 1994: 90).” The Yangs’ translation is a paraphrase of “陈皮” from the perspective of raw materials so that readers can know what tangerine peel is. The “陈皮” has a bitter taste hence Hawkes translates it from the taste. Readers know that “陈皮” is bitter, but they may still not understand what “陈皮” is. Therefore, the author prefers to translate from the perspective of raw materials.

2.2 Translation of Prescriptions

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

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

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

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

“调经养荣丸” is a pill prepared according to Wang Xifeng’s condition, which is mainly used to regulate menstruation and nourish blood. Yang adopted the paraphrase translation method to translate it as the fortifying pills, and if it was back-translated, it would be translated as enhancement pills, in which the hidden functions such as blood nourishing and qi was not expressed. Hawkes, on the other hand, adopts an interpretive approach and clearly describes to the reader the role of “调经养荣丸”. However, as a prescription name, Hawkes’ translation is too long for readers to remember, and it does not conform to the general principles of international prescription translation. Prescription translations should pursue the principle of brevity. The author believes that the method of literal translation and transliteration can be adopted here, and it can be translated as Yang Rong pills for irregular menstruation. If TCM wants to go global, it cannot abandon its linguistic characteristics.

2.3 Translation of TCM Principles

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

原文：脾土被肝木克制者，必然不思饮食，精神倦怠，四肢酸软。（第十回）

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

Hawkes: And if the earth of the spleen is being subdued by the wood of the liver, she would undoubtedly

experience loss of appetite, lassitude, and general enfeeblement of the whole body. (Hawkes, 1973: 137)

The five elements refer to the five substances of wood, fire, earth, metal, and water, and their movements. TCM, on the other hand, uses the Five Elements Theory to explain the organic connection between the part and the part, the part and the whole, the body surface and the internal organs, and the unity of the human body and the external environment (Sun Guangren, 2002: 48). Both Yangs and Hawkes translations translate “earth” and “wood” literally. Literal translation can reduce cultural attrition, and readers who have some knowledge of TCM culture can fully understand it, but readers who do not know the Chinese Five Elements may not know. The author believes that literal translation can well preserve the linguistic form and style of the original language, but we also need to consider the lack of cultural background of the reader. For such linguistic and culturally distinctive words, annotations should be made to supplement the cultural background.

2.4 Translation of Pathological Conditions

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

原文：一月之后，复添了下红之症。（第五十五回）

The Yangs: A month after it she was still losing blood. (Yang Xianyi, 1978: 1554)

Hawkes: A month later it was followed by the beginning of a chronic small discharge of blood from the womb (Hawkes, 1973: 420)

“下红之症” is a gynecological disease in which a woman does not have menstrual periods, but continues to bleed in the vagina or bleeds profusely. Yangs and Hawkes both adopted the paraphrase method. They translated it as “losing blood” and “a chronic small discharge of blood from the womb respectively. “Losing blood” only describes the symptoms, without explaining the cause, and Western readers may misinterpret it as blood loss and cannot associate it with gynecological diseases. In comparison, Hawkes translates it as “a chronic small discharge of blood from the womb”, which expresses the implicit meaning.

2.5 Translation of Diagnosis

“望闻问切” is a traditional Chinese medicine term. “望” refers to looking at the complexion, “闻” means listening to sounds, “问” means asking about symptoms, and “切” refers to taking the pulse. Methods of diagnosing diseases in Chinese medicine.

原文：先生方伸手按在右手脉上，调息了至数，宁神细诊了有半刻的工夫，方换过左手，亦复如是。（第十回）

The Yangs: The doctor first took the pulse of the right wrist, feeling it carefully for a considerable time before he turned to the left wrist. (Yang Xianyi, 1978: 283)

Hawkes: The doctor stretched out his hand and laid it on her right wrist, then, having first regulated his own breathing in order to be able to count the rate, he felt the pulses with great concentration for the space of several minutes, after which he transferred to the left wrist and spent an equal amount of time on that. (Hawkes, 1973: 136)

“调息了至数” means that during the TCM diagnosis process, the doctor first adjusts his breathing and observes the patient's pulse in a stable state. It is a great regret in Yang's translation that the method of omission is adopted, and this process with the characteristics of traditional Chinese medicine is not reflected. Hawkes's literal translation and augmentation translates it as “first regulated his own breathing in order to be able to count the rate”, which complements the purpose of pranayama and helps the reader to understand .

III. Conclusion

This article analyzes the translation of Chinese medicine names, prescriptions, principles of Chinese medicine, pathological conditions and diagnosis methods in the translation of Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang, and the translation of Hawkes. The author found that there are similarities and differences in the translation methods adopted by them. The similarity is that they use literal translations for the natural medicinal materials. The difference is that the Yangs and Hawkes stand from different perspectives. The Yangs mainly adopts literal translation and is eager to convey Chinese culture to foreign readers, while Hawkes likes to use substitution method and considers the reader's acceptance more.

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