

## Translation as Rewriting: A Descriptive Study of Wang Jizhen's<sup>1</sup> Two Adapted Translations of *Honglouloumeng*

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### Abstract

Applying André Lefevere's theory of rewriting to a descriptive study of the two adapted translations of *Honglouloumeng* by Wang Jizhen published respectively in 1929 and 1958, this paper attempts to investigate the effects the dominant ideology and poetics in a given society at a given time have on the translator's choice of strategies in the translation process. A diachronic study of the two adapted versions of *Honglouloumeng* as rewritings shows that most of the time the translator has to submissively adapt to the ideological and poetical power structures at different periods of time, yet it is possible for the translator to actively subvert the constraints. However, a comparison of Wang's translations with the two complete versions of *Honglouloumeng* indicates that ideologically a translation is first, if not foremost constrained by the dominant ideology of the society where it is initiated and published before it is read, rather than that of the receiving society only. Moreover, when poetical factors are involved, the influence from a source culture where the original enjoys a prestigious status often cannot

be ignored. Wang's rewritings of *Honglouloumeng* also indicate that when translators go against the conditioning factors, their subversion operates much more often on the poetical level than on the ideological level.

**Key words:** Rewriting; Descriptive study; Adapted translation; *Honglouloumeng*; Ideology; Poetics

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### INTRODUCTION

As one of the greatest classical novels in Chinese literature, *Honglouloumeng* has been translated and retranslated partially or fully into a variety of languages all over the world. Among the impressive number of English translations, much attention has been given to the complete versions, especially the two highly acclaimed ones, *The Story of the Stone* by British sinologists David Hawkes and John Minford (hereafter referred to as Hawkes's version), and *A Dream of Red Mansions* by Chinese translators Yang Xianyi (formerly transcribed as Yang Hsien-Yi in Wade-Giles system) and Gladys Yang (hereafter referred to as Yang's version). By contrast, the adapted translations, apparently "incomplete" and thus "unfaithful", are often overshadowed by the "faithful equivalents" of *Honglouloumeng* in traditional source-oriented translation studies, some even completely ignored. However, if we take "translated texts and their constitutive elements" as "observational facts" (Toury, 1985, p.18), and regard translation as a form of rewritings that "reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way" (Lefevere, 2010, p.xvi), the adapted or

<sup>1</sup> To ensure uniformity throughout the paper, all the proper names in Chinese are transcribed in modern pinyin system instead of the formerly used Wade-Giles system (the original transcription of some personal names in Wade-Giles system are given in brackets when necessary).

abridged translations, with their easily recognizable omissions and additions intended to cater for the needs of certain target audience, might serve as better case studies in revealing more obviously how the extratextual factors affect the textual in literary translation when they were put in a wider social-cultural context.

To differentiate it from the term "adaptation", which has a much wider coverage, here the designation of "adapted or abridged translations", as opposed to full or complete translations, is used to refer to the partial renderings of literary works in terms of both language and content that are published and read as acceptable replacements of the original in the receiving culture (hence also excluding the translated excerpts of the original that are published in magazines, anthologies or books on literary history in the target language).

Compared with Florence and Isabel McHugh's *The Dream of the Red Chamber* based on Franz Kuhn's German adaptation of *Honglouloumeng* and Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang's 1986-version of *A Dream of Red Mansions* abridged from their complete work, the translations by Wang Jizhen (originally transcribed as Wang Chi-chen in Wade-Giles system) are unique not only in that Wang translated and adapted directly from the Chinese original, but that he was the only translator who had offered three different abridged editions of *Honglouloumeng* in English, a 40-chapter version in 1929 (hereafter referred to as Wang, 1929), a 60-chapter one in 1958 (hereafter referred to as Wang, 1958a), and a 40-chapter abridged version of the second published in the same year (hereafter referred to as Wang, 1958b). Focusing on a diachronic study of Wang 1929 and Wang 1958a in the light of Lefevere's theory of rewriting which stresses the effects of the power structures in a given society on literary translation, this paper attempts to investigate the ways in which the ideological and poetical constraints influenced Wang's translation and adaptation strategies at different periods of time. It is hoped that researchers' awareness of the value of the partial translations can be raised as one of the most obvious forms of rewriting in studying not only the translation of *Honglouloumeng* into another language, but in literary translation studies in general.

*Research questions:* On the basis of a comparative study of Wang's two translations of *Honglouloumeng* and an analysis of the relevant social-cultural contexts, two research questions are formulated: i) How do the translator submissively adapt to the dominant ideology and poetics at different periods of time on both macro and micro levels? ii) To what extent do Wang's adaptation and translation reflect the translator's subversion in the rewriting of the original? It has to be pointed out that the research corpus will not be limited to Wang's two versions of *Honglouloumeng* only. Examples from the two celebrated complete translations of the novel will be given when necessary to show how Wang's solutions to certain problems are different from other translators.

## 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 1.1 Descriptive Translation Studies

The term "descriptive translation studies" (DTS) was put forward officially in 1972 by James Holmes whose idea back then was to propose an outline of the basic structure of translation studies as a justified empirical discipline. As one of the two main branches of pure research in Holmes' map of the discipline, DTS is further divided into three major kinds of research, product-oriented, function-oriented, and process-oriented. Since the field aims at describing "the phenomena of translating and translation(s) as they manifest themselves in the world of our experience", DTS is set apart "from any direct practical application outside its own terrain" (Holmes, 2000, p.176).

Holme's framework exerted great influence on an international group of scholars including Gideon Toury, Theo Hermans, and André Lefevere, all of whom tried to find fault with the traditional prescriptive approach to translation that "holds the original up as an absolute standard and touchstone" and attempted at "an approach to literary translation which is descriptive, target-oriented, functional and systemic" (Hermans, 1985, pp.9-10). As one of the most representative among these "translation studies scholars", Toury established DTS's key position in the discipline and proposed his own target-oriented theory of translation. Taking "translation" to be "any target-language utterance which is presented or regarded as such with the target culture, on whatever grounds", he claims that any research into translation should proceed from "the translated utterance themselves" through which a retrospective reconstruction of the translating processes (the non-observable facts) is possible (1985, p.20). Influenced by Even Zohar's polysystem theory, Toury emphasizes the interdependency of the three subdivisions of DTS Holmes proposed and gives priority to the functions of an "assumed translation" in the target system since "translations always come into being within a certain cultural environment and are designed to meet certain needs of, and/or occupy certain 'slots' in it" (2001, p.12).

The development of DTS has considerably extended the range of the research objects of the discipline to the translation phenomena that were ignored or given only peripheral status in the conventional application-oriented translation studies. More importantly, while regarding translations as "cultural facts" in the target society and attaching importance to the functions, processes, and products that bear on each other, DTS scholars "set translation practices in time and, thus by extension, in politics, ideology, economics, culture" (Tymoczko, 2004, p.25).

### 1.2 Lefevere's Rewriting Theory

The theory of rewriting proposed by Lefevere, another leading scholar in DTS, originated from an earlier term

“refraction” he used in the early 1980s, developed in an increasingly mature form throughout the 1980s, and got its fullest expression in Lefevere’s widely-quoted monograph *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* in 1992. By introducing “a new set of terms” different from polysystem vocabulary, Lefevere focuses on the effects of powers structures on literary translation in a given society so as to better illustrate “the influence of the extraliterary upon the literary” (Gentzler, 2004, p.136).

Like other DTS scholars, Lefevere draws on the Russian Formalists’ system model and attempts to analyze literature “in systemic terms” as “a ‘contrived’ system” that is composed of “texts (objects) and human agents who read, write, and rewrite texts” (2010, p.12).

Lefevere emphasizes the importance to study rewritings including translation, criticism, editing, etc., because they are “responsible for the general reception and survival of works of literature among non-professional readers” in the literary system (2010, p.1). Of all these professional interpretations of an original text, translation is “the most obviously recognizable” and “most influential” form of rewriting (Lefevere, 2010, p.9). Like all the other forms of rewriting, translation operates under the two constraints that “determine the image of a work of literature”: poetics and ideology, respectively referring to the dominant concept of “what literature should (be allowed to) be” and of “what society should (be allowed to) be” (Lefevere, 2010, p.14). In terms of importance, “the translator’s ideology” (whether willingly embraced or imposed on the translator) precedes “the poetics dominant in the receiving literature at the time the translation is made” (Lefevere, 2010, p.41).

In Lefevere’s theory, there are two control factors on the “subject” level (human agents) to make sure that the literary system “does not fall too far out of step with the other subsystems” in the society. The one functioning outside the system is “patronage” (or “patrons”), namely, “powers (persons, institutions) that can further or hinder the reading, writing, and rewriting of literature”; the one within the literary system is called “professionals” who either “repress certain works of literature” or rewrite them under the poetical or ideological constraints (Lefevere, 2010, p.14).

While laying stress on the constraints that condition translation on different levels, Lefevere never thinks translators have no other choice but to submit. They can, according to Lefevere, choose to be adaptive and “stay within the parameters delimited by its constraints”, or to be subversive and try to “operate outside its constraints” (Lefevere, 2010, p.13). Rewritings, therefore, can be classified respectively as submissive rewriting (when the translator adapts to the dominant ideology and poetics) and subversive rewriting (when the translator actively goes against the dominant ideology and poetics).

## 2. WANG JIZHEN’S REWRITING OF HONGLOUMENG

To facilitate the later discussions about Wang Jizhen’s translations of *Hongloumeng*, it is necessary to give a brief introduction to the extremely complicated textual editions of the novel. Even though the target text/system is “where its observations start” in a target-oriented approach to translation (Toury, 2001, p.36), for translations whose source exists in a complex system of original versions, there is always the possibility for the differences between translated texts of the same novel to be resulted from the discrepancies in the original editions, rather than from the translation strategies the translator adopts.

*Hongloumeng* scholars often refer to two branches of the novel’s editions, the early 80-chapter hand-copied manuscripts which are now called **Zhiyanzhai versions**, and the later 120-chapter versions published by Cheng Weiyuan and Gao E (called **Cheng-Gao editions**) with the last forty chapters controversially assumed to be edited or written by Gao E. The latter was further divided into **Chengjia edition** (first Cheng version) which was published for the first time in 1791 and **Chengyi edition** (second Cheng version) which was slightly different and first published in the year that followed. (Shi, 2009, pp.42-47)

It is not our intention to discuss in details which edition above served as the original for each of Wang’s adaptations. Fortunately, the translator himself already identified the version(s) he used in the introduction to his own translations. Wang 1929 is based on a Chengjia edition of *Hongloumeng*, while Wang 1958a seems to be adapted and translated mainly from a Chengyi edition by the translator who also consulted three 80-chapter Zhiyanzhai versions available to him.

### 2.1 A Brief Introduction to the Translator and a Preliminary Comparison of His Two Adapted Translations

Wang Jizhen, a Chinese-born American scholar who died aged 102 in 2001, worked as professor of Chinese at Columbia University from 1929 to 1965. He started his teaching career as a renowned translator of Chinese literature with his 1929 translation of *Honglongmeng*, and established himself as a leading translator of both traditional and modern Chinese literature in the 1940s with the publication of his translations of the famous Chinese writer Luxun’s works and other contemporary Chinese fictions.

All of Wang’s three adapted translations of *Honglongmeng* are entitled “Dream of the Red Chamber”. Due to the limited space, Wang 1929 and the expanded 60-chapter Wang 1958a will be taken as the major research objects for the present analysis, which is essentially a diachronic study.

Table 1 shows a preliminary comparison of the two adapted translations.

**Table 1**  
**A Preliminary Comparison of Wang's Two Adapted Translations**

	Wang 1929	Wang 1958a
Original version(s) used	Chengjia edition	Chengyi edition (complemented by three Zhiyanzhai versions)
Publisher	Doubleday in New York (1929)	Twayne in New York (1958)
Length	40 chapters, 371 pages (main text)	60 chapters, 564 pages (main text)
Division	Prologue Book I: Chapter 1-12 Book II: Chapter 13-57 Book III: Chapter 28-39	Part I: Chapter 1-53 Part II: Chapter 54-60
Preface	by Arthur Waley	by Mark Van Doran
Footnotes	9 footnotes	50 footnotes
Glossary	No Glossary	A combined glossary of Chinese words and Honorific and Relationship Terms and List of Important Characters together with a Few Explanatory Notes
List of the major characters	List of important characters with a family tree	No separated list of important characters
Chapters totally left out or extremely condensed (in the first 80 chapters)	Chapter 21, 24, 43, 51, 52, 53, 54, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 70, 72, 75, 76, 78, 79, 80	Chapter 53, 54, 70, 76

Although it is common for early translators of Chinese literature to abridge the original with a view to catering to western readers' tastes, it is quite rare for one novel to be adapted by the same translator more than once within an interval of about 30 years. How was Wang's translation and retranslation(s) of *Honglouloumeng* made possible? What extra-textual factors can be revealed from the differences and similarities between the 371-page first adaptation and the 564-page expanded version? To answer these questions, the broader socio-cultural context has to be taken into consideration, particularly on the ideological and poetical level.

## 2.2 Wang's Submissive Rewriting of *Honglouloumeng* Within Ideological Constraints

Lefevre not only defines "ideology" in Terry Eagleton's more political sense concerning "the maintenance or interrogation of power structures central to a whole form of social and historical life" (1988-9, p.59), but describes the term as "world view" (1985, p.226), or more specifically as "the conceptual grid that consists of opinions and attitudes deemed acceptable in a certain society at a certain time" (2001, p.48). According to Lefevre, ideology that may dictate translators' solutions to certain translation problems is often enforced by "the patrons, the people or institutions who commission or publish translations" (1992, p.14).

Wang once recounted in an interview how he started his first translation. It was in 1927 that he was invited to translate *Honglouloumeng* after publishing a long article introducing the novel as the best literary classic in China. Because his article opened up an exotic and elegant world that was vastly different from what was described by US missionaries from their memories and by Marco Polo in his travelogue, it greatly whetted the appetite of American readers and aroused the interest of the publishers. However, the eager publishers were not very interested in a full translation of the 120-chapter original with many

trivial details of the extravagant life of a large household in China, so they asked Wang to adapt the novel and keep the main story only. Within a time limit of just six months, Wang rewrote *Honglouloumeng* into a 39-chapter love story with a prologue (Wang, 2000, pp.63-76).<sup>2</sup> This adaptation of the novel, therefore, was initiated by the publishers to satisfy the needs of a target audience in the early twentieth century where the readers had been briefly introduced to Chinese literature and culture through the translations of Chinese poems by Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and other American poets, but were thirsting for more knowledge about the mysterious Orient from other sources.

Things became different after World War II when there was an increasing need for oriental studies as a result of "the rising importance of Asian peoples in the world", "their crucial role in the East-West struggle", and "the necessity for Asian-American understanding as the basis of an effective foreign policy" in the United States (De Bary, 1959b, p.3). In the 1950s and 1960s, US government and private foundations invested large amounts of money with a view to "enhancing the North American understanding of Asia and beyond" (Berger, 2004, p.95). One of the private foundations is the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which supported the Columbia College General Education Program in Oriental Studies, which in turn facilitated Wang's re-translation of *Honglouloumeng*, as is mentioned in the Acknowledgment of Wang 1958a. According to Edward H. Berman (1983, pp.11-12), foundations like the Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller have been making significant contributions to the "production and dissemination of certain kinds of knowledge and ideas" and through their influence and control have been coordinating education and cultural activities with the overall objectives of the nation's foreign policy. It might

<sup>2</sup> The interview in the book which is written in Chinese is summarized and translated into English by the authors of this paper.

be safe to say that US government's promotion of Asian studies in the 1950s and 60s not only brought financial aid for the translation and publication of oriental classics, but also created a large potential market for publishers in the country. Hence the retranslations of *Honglouloumeng* as the replacement of a celebrated Chinese classic in another culture. As a matter of fact, the year 1958 not only saw the publication of two adapted translations by Wang in the US, one of which almost doubles the length of the 1929 version with more detailed stories, much more footnotes, and a comprehensive glossary (see Table 1), but also the translation of the German adaptation of *Honglouloumeng* into English and its publication by Pantheon Books in New York.

When ideology is understood as the more general "world view", the term is closely related to the fact that we often have to say or write things within a certain "margin" drawn by certain powers (Lefevere, 1984, p.128). In terms of the ways in which this ideological "margin" confines the decision making in translation, how translators deal with obscene language in the original often serve as good instances for Lefevere. The same type of constraint can be clearly shown in Wang's solutions to the obscenity problem in the following comparison between Wang 1929 and Wang 1958a. Because the former version is based on the Chengjia edition of *Honglouloumeng*, while the latter mainly on the Chengyi edition, the original from both editions are given together with the English translation.

(a) *Honglouloumeng* (Chengjia edition): "亲嫂子，等死我了！"说着，抱到屋里炕上就亲嘴扯裤子，满口里"亲爹" "亲娘"的乱叫起来。那人只不做声，贾瑞扯了自己的裤子，硬邦邦就想顶入。忽见灯光一闪，只见贾蔷举着个蜡台，照道："谁在屋里？"只见炕上那人笑道："瑞大叔要禽我呢。" (in the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter)

("Dear Sister-in-law, I've been waiting to death!" Saying this, he carried (the person) to the kang in the room and began to kiss "her" and tear "her" trousers, murmuring wildly "dear Daddy" "dear Mommy". That person didn't give a sound. Jia Rui tore down his own trousers and prepared to thrust in his hard thing. Suddenly there was a flash of light. With a candlestick in his hand, Jia Qiang asked, "Who is in the room?" The person on the kang laughed, "Uncle Rui is trying to fuck me.")

*Honglouloumeng* (Chengyi edition): "亲嫂子，等死我了！"说着，抱到屋里炕上就亲嘴扯裤子，满口里"亲爹" "亲娘"的乱叫起来。那人只不做声，贾瑞便扯下自己的裤子来，硬邦邦就想顶入。忽见灯光一闪，只见贾蔷举着个蜡台，照道："谁在这屋里呢？"只见炕上那人笑道："瑞大叔要禽我呢。" (in the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter, italics given by the authors of this paper)

("Dear Sister-in-law, I've been waiting to death!" Saying this, he carried (the person) to the kang in the room and began to kiss "her" and tear "her" trousers, murmuring wildly "dear Daddy" "dear Mommy". That person didn't give a sound, so Jia Rui tore down his own

trousers and prepared to thrust in his hard thing. Suddenly there was a flash of light. With a candlestick in his hand, Jia Qiang asked, "Who is in this room?" The person on the kang laughed, "Uncle Rui is trying to fuck me.")

*Wang 1929*: "Dearest sao-sao, I have been waiting for ages. I was dying of longing for you." He carried the yielding shadow to the k'ang at the one end of the room and showered on it more passionate kisses.... Suddenly a lantern appeared at the doorway and lit up the room. The man carrying the lantern asked, "Who is there?" The figure that Chia Jui was embracing spoke for the first time. "Uncle Jui is trying to *be playful with me*." (in the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter)

*Wang 1958a*: "Dearest Sao-sao, I have been waiting for ages. I was dying of longing for you." He carried the yielding figure to the k'ang at one end of the room and showered on it more passionate kisses.... Suddenly a lantern shone at the doorway and lit up the room. The man carrying the lantern asked, "Who is there?" The figure that Chia Jui was embracing spoke for the first time. "Uncle Jui is trying to *make love to me*." (in the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter)

In this example, Jia Rui is a distant clansman of the big Jia family who had obsessive lust for the wife of one of his male cousins, Wang Xifeng (Phoenix). Angry and disgusted, Phoenix set him up by arranging a secret meeting with him in the midnight. Instead of showing up herself, she sent there two nephews, Jia Rong and Jia Qiang. Due to the darkness Jia Rui mistook Jia Rong for Phoenix and attempted to make love to "her", but Jia Qiang suddenly lit up the room and embarrassed Jia Rui. It can be seen that in this excerpt the two original editions only differ in a couple of adverbs, demonstrative pronouns, and conjunctions like 便(bian), 下(xia), 来(lai), 这(zhe) (emphasized in italics in the example), which have no independent meanings themselves and thus do not affect the translation of the excerpt presented here.

In both translations Wang used dots to avoid translating the "obscene" language in the original about sexual parts or acts such as "tearing off trousers" and "thrusting in the hardness". However, in Jia Rong's answer to Jia Qiang's question, the translator's ideological consideration changed obviously in the two versions. For the same character "禽" (meaning "fuck"), a taboo word in Chinese only used in cursing and generally avoided in both speaking and writing, the translation was to "be playful with" in 1929, while in 1958 the word was rendered more directly into "to make love to". It seems that the "margin" became a little wider 30 years later, although not wide enough as the translation still had to be adapted to be considered acceptable within the ideological constraints in the target society even in the 1950s. Actually, the same type of adaptation or suppression in terms of obscenity in publications was not uncommon in the English translations of other Chinese novels published in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century.

Another stereotypical example is the 1939 translation of the medieval Chinese novel *The Golden Lotus* by

Clement Egerton where all the sexually explicit passages are not rendered into English but Latin.

Something interesting can be discovered when we look at Hawks' version and Yang's version of the same excerpt from *Honglouloumeng* translated in the 1970s.

(b) **Hawks' Version** (1973): "My darling, how I have waited for you!" he exclaimed, enfolding his beloved in his arms; and carrying her to the kang, he laid her down and began kissing her and tugging at her trousers, murmuring 'my sweetest darling' and 'my honey love' and other such endearments in between kisses. Throughout all of this not a single sound was uttered by his partner. ***Jia Rui now tore down his own trousers and prepared to thrust home his hard and throbbing member.*** Suddenly a light flashed - and there was Jia Qiang holding aloft a candle in a candlestick which he shone around: 'Who is in this room?' At this the person on the kang gave a giggle: "Uncle Rui is trying to **bugger** me!" (in the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter)

**Yang's version** (1978): "Dearest!" he cried. "I nearly died of longing." He carried her to the kang, where he showered kisses on her and fumbled with her clothes, pouring out incoherent endearments. Not a sound came from the figure in his arms. ***Jia Rui had just pulled down his pants and prepared to set to work*** when a sudden flash of light made him look up. There stood Jia Qiang, a taper in his hand. "What's going on in here?" he demanded. The figure on the kang said with a chuckle, "Uncle Rui was trying to **bugger** me" (in the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter).

In the above two versions, both translators filled in Wang's dots, and reproduced the obscene character "禽" with a taboo word in English, "bugger" (meaning to have anal intercourse with someone) which is even more "literal" than Wang's neutral "make love to". What was considered obscene in the 1920s and even the 1950s and thus created problems for translators was no longer considered so serious in the 1970s. Hawks' translation "prepared to thrust home his hard and throbbing member" seems to be more straightforward and much bolder than Yang's "prepared to set to work", which might indicate that during the same period Penguin Books in the UK that published Hawks' version probably enjoyed looser censorship than Foreign Languages Press in China. In whatever sense, Lefevere's observation is justified when he notices that the translator's decision making was based not so much on the level of language as on "the hierarchically higher level of ideology" (2006, p.91).

### 2.3 Wang's Submissive Rewriting of *Honglouloumeng* Within Poetical Constraints

In Lefevere's theory, a poetics consists of a "functional component" which can be understood as concepts about "what the role of literature is, or should be" in the whole social system, and an "inventory" component which refers to "literary devices" including "genres, motifs, prototypical characters and situations, and symbols" (2010, p.26).

The functional component is often closely related to "ideological influences from outside the sphere of the poetics" (Lefevere, 2010, p.27). Along with the political and diplomatic emphasis on Asian Studies in the 1950s, there was a new attitude towards the roles Asian classics play in college education in the United States during the period. William Theodore de Bary, Chair of the Columbia College General Education Program in Oriental Studies at that time, stresses in one article in 1959 that "novelty or strangeness need not be looked upon today as the main inducements to the Western reader" in approaching oriental classics (1959a, p.4). He further points out in another article that Asian people should be studied as "peoples who can teach us much about ourselves, whose past can give us a new perspective on our own, and whose way of looking at things can challenge us to a re-examination of our own" (1959b, p.3). In this light, Wang 1929, which kept "everything that shows the relationship between Pao-Yu and Black Jade, two of the most important characters" and "episodes and passages that show characteristic Chinese customs, habits, or traits" (Wang, 1929, p.xx), was mainly adapted to satisfy the targets readers' curiosity about an exotic love story and a strange way of life in a mysterious country. In contrast, Wang 1958a, supported by the General Education Program in Columbia, was more intended for pedagogical and edifying purposes to help American college students understand and assimilate Chinese literary classics "for what they are in themselves, for the human values they give expression to" (De Bary, 1959b, p.6) without having to learn the Chinese language themselves. Therefore, in his expanded adaptation, Wang not only translated everything that he himself considered "significant", but did his utmost in introducing and explaining the Chinese language and culture to the readers. He included many "petty jealousies and squabbles" which he viewed as "trivial details" of a "love story" 30 years ago, but later considered a significant part in describing the life of a big Manchu household. In his own words, "fifteen chapters ... are either entirely new or expanded from a brief paragraph to a whole chapter" (1958, p.xx). Moreover, with the help of many footnotes and a comprehensive glossary in Wang 1958a, Wang also offered detailed linguistic and cultural knowledge about the novel, including but not limited to the proper names, titles and forms of address, conventions, festivals, allusions, and literary traditions.

If the expansion from the 371-page Wang 1929 into the 564-page Wang 1958a can justifiably be attributed to a different function *Honglouloumeng's* translation assumed in a new period of time, most omissions in both adaptations are mainly a result of the different traditions between Chinese and English literature. As is mentioned by both Arthur Waley in his preface to Wang 1929 and Wang himself in his introduction to Wang 1958a, Chinese

novels, unlike Western fiction arising from epic and romance, originated from the oral tradition of storytelling at the street corners and in the market place in ancient China (Waley, 1929; Wang, 1958). Directly affected by the art of the storytellers, the later Chinese novels are often extremely long with normally more than 100 chapters as the stories continuously experienced additions or revisions on a snowball basis. Besides, although each chapter is complete to some extent by itself, it often tends to leave one story in a state of suspense, with a view to attracting the readers to read on (in the same way the street storytellers attract their hearers).

Since the immense length of a full translation of 120-chapter *Honglouloumeng* would most likely frighten away the English readers in the 1920s and 1950s who did not know much about the Chinese culture, let alone the Chinese language, what to keep and what to leave out became a big concern for the adapter and translator. One of the easiest and most obvious omissions Wang made is the stereotypical sentence used at the end of each original chapter which often served as a formula for street storytellers to dismiss the audience - "If you want to know what happens next, please pay attention to the explanation in the next chapter". None of these phrases were reproduced in either of his translations. At the same time, chapters from the original are reorganized and redivided so that each can stand by itself by dealing with complete plots only.

A further comparison of Wang 1929 and Wang 1958a shows that there are four chapters in the original which both versions have totally omitted: Chapters 53, 54, 70, and 76 (see Table 1). The former two chapters are about how the big Jia family celebrated two important festivals in China, the New Year's Eve and the Feast of Lanterns on the lunar calendar; while the latter two deal with how the heroines Daiyu (Black Jade), Baochai (Precious Virtue) and other young ladies of the family compose poems to express their understandings about life as well as their happiness and grief. The omission of chapters 53 and 54 can be explained in terms of the unique plotting of Chinese novels. As Wang points out himself, Chinese novels often tend to be repetitious with different parts of the same theme and episodic with usually no unity other than chronological order (Wang, 1958, p.xiii). As there are already numerous detailed descriptions of similar and even the same festivals and celebrations in the previous chapters, to avoid boring the readers and to save space for more important plots, Wang dropped the two chapters whose absence would neither do harm to the main storyline nor create any sense of discontinuity.

As for Chapter 70 and 76 where a lot of poems are involved, one very important reason for the omission could be the widely acknowledged difficulty in translating poems, but another factor concerning the generic forms of Chinese fiction should not be ignored. According to Ming

Dong Gu, a Chinese prose narrative is often "intermingled with storytelling, lyric poems, and dramatic songs" (2006, p.313). *Honglouloumeng* is a representative in this respect as one of its most impressive artistic charms is the large number of poems, couplets, songs scattered throughout the novel which are not only beautiful in themselves, but closely related to the development of the plots or the destiny of the characters. However, these poetic compositions could also be insurmountable obstacles to the western readers who might find them confusing and even interruptive in their understanding of the novel. Understandably, Wang gave up most of them in both of his adaptations except for a few that are indispensable for revealing the theme of the story. Only that in Wang 1958a a few more poems indicating the fate of some major characters are conserved than the earlier version so as to cater for the richer linguistic and cultural needs of the new target readers. Take the translation of the sixth chapter of *Honglouloumeng* for example. In this chapter, the hero Baoyu had a dream in which he paid a visit to the immortal world and found in some cabinets pieces of Chinese poetry, each implying the future destiny of one lady in his family. Fourteen beautiful poems are given in both first and second Cheng versions of the novel, yet none of them were reproduced in Wang 1929 and only three are translated in Wang 1958a.

It should nevertheless be noted that Wang's adaptation and translation of *Honglouloumeng* is not only constrained by the conventions of the target literary system, but also affected by the findings and opinions of *Honglouloumeng* scholars (also called Redologists, the "professionals" in Lefevre's term) in the source culture. The experts' influence can be most easily seen from his different divisions of the first and second translations (see Table 1), especially his new treatments of the last forty chapters in Wang 1958a. In the early translation, Wang divided the novel into one prologue and three "books" according to the plot development. Although the last forty chapters in the original were greatly abstracted in "Book III", the translator regarded Gao E as "one of the authors of the version" from which the adaptation was made and attempted to "transcribe" his words "wherever an episode is given more or less fully" (1929, p.xx). In a quite different fashion, Wang separated the first 53 chapters of his 60-chapter retranslation from the last seven ones, naming the former "Part I by Cao Xueqin" and the latter "Part II by Gao E". As the translator himself admits, in his first translation, only the 120-chapter Chengjia edition of *Honglouloumeng* was available to him. However, with the development of *Honglouloumeng* Study (*Hongxue*) in the next three decades in China, more 80-chapter Zhiyanzhai versions were discovered and analyzed by scholars including Hu Shi, Zhou Ruchang, and Yu Pingbo. With one Chengyi edition and three Zhiyanzhai versions to work with at the end of the 1950s, although the translator

was still not sure whether Gao E really wrote or edited the last forty chapters, he was inclined to agree with the Redologists that “the last 40 chapters are poorly written”, and thus “reduced the amount of space given to the last forty chapters” to about only one tenth of the entire book, believing that it is “essentially Tsao Hsueh-chin” that he gave to the readers (1958, p.xix).

## 2.4 Wang's Subversive Rewriting of *Hongloumeng*

Even though Lefevere believes that translators in the literary system may choose to rewrite works of literature in such a way that “they do not fit in with the dominant poetics or ideology of a given time and place” (Lefevere, 2010, p.13), he gives rare evidence and thus is criticized for focusing “mostly on translations as merely reflecting the impact of a dominant poetics or ideology” and for giving translation rarely more than “a passive role” (Hermans, 1999, p.129).

Is it possible for translators to assume an active or subversive role in real practice in the face of the constraints? In Wang's case, the answer appears to be a positive one, especially in terms of poetics. When dealing with the specific problems of translating personal names and appellation terms, it is true that in both Wang 1929 and Wang 1958a the translator followed “the general rule of translating the feminine names and transliterating the masculine names” to help the English-speaking readers tell “whether a certain character named is male or female” (1929, p.xxi). However, his solution to the problem of the Chinese appellation system makes his adaptations stand out among all the English versions of *Hongloumeng* as well as the translations of other Chinese novels by his contemporaries because he actually transliterated all the Chinese titles and forms of address throughout the novel. As is known, the Chinese language has a very complicated system of appellation terms due to the importance Chinese people attach to the relationships among a big family. When addressing a relative, for instance, whether the person is female or male, younger or older, on the father's side or on the mother's side are all important elements in deciding the forms of address. Believing that it would be “evidently absurd” to render many Chinese appellation terms literally into English and that the readers would “experience no difficulty” with the help of “the context” (1929, p.xxii), Wang initiated the readers gradually into the transliterated new forms in his first adaptation and offered a detailed glossary and a larger number of footnotes in his expanded version to facilitate the readers' understanding of the same forms.

Table 2 shows a comparison of Wang and Hawks's different translations of four most commonly-used forms of address throughout the novel.

**Table 2**  
**Wang and Hawkes's Translations of Four Most Commonly-Used Forms of Address in *Hongloumeng***

Forms of address	Translation in Wang 1929 and Wang 1958a	Translation in Hawke's version
老爷 (literally “old father”, applied to the master of the house; equivalent to “Your/His Honour”)	Lao-Yeh (Lao-ye)	Master; Sir; Your/His Honour
太太 (literally “great-great”, applied to lao-yeh's wife)	Tai-tai (Tai-tai)	Mistress; Your/Her Ladyship
姐姐 (literally “elder sister”, applied to elder sisters, and elder female cousins of one's own generation.)	Chieh-chieh (Jie-jie)	Sister (when referring to real “sisters” who share one parent or both); Cousin (when referring to a female child of aunt or uncle)
妹妹 (literally “younger sister”, applied to younger sisters and younger female cousins of one's own generation.)	Mei-mei (Mei-mei)	Sister (when referring to real “sisters” who share one parent or both); Cousin (when referring to a female child of aunt or uncle)

Besides introducing new devices of translating appellation terms, Wang's subversion of the dominant poetics is also reflected in maintaining his own judgment when confronted with professionals' suggestions. In the preface to Wang 1929, although the famous sinologist Arthur Waley describes the adaptation as “singularly accurate” and “skillfully performed”, he implies his pity for the translator's omission of a very important dream in the original where Baoyu sees another Baoyu. Maintaining that “It is in his accounts of dreams that as an imaginative writer Tsao Hsueh-Chin rises to his greatest heights”, Waley even offers his own full translation of the dream as a close to his preface. However, Wang disagreed with this professional in oriental studies in this respect and refused to take his advice in his retranslation in 1958 when he was already professor emeritus of Chinese at Columbia University, an expert himself. In giving the reasons for leaving out a number of dreams in the original, Wang (1958, p.xx) explains that even though he respects other people's different taste, to him, “such play on words is tedious and tiresome”, and more importantly, he has given “enough of this sort of thing in Chapters 1 and 5.”

Although translators do step out of the constraints of the dominant poetics in the receiving society from time to time, things are more complicated when ideological concerns are involved. In terms of the relationship

between literature and politics, Eagleton (1978, p.66) once noted: "The history of a piece of writing is the history of its functions - of the varied, often conflicting ways in which it is constructed, granted a home, valorized, devalorized, put to use, within the different ideological systems it inhabits."

In the case of *Honglouloumeng*, *Hongxue* of the post 1949 era in mainland China began to undertake "the social function of re-appraising the past culture to help create a new socialist culture" as a result of Mao Zedong's "Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art" given in 1942 (Edward, 2001, pp.143-144). Particularly after the 1954 "Yupingbo Campaign" which marked the establishment of Maoist methodology in studying *Honglouloumeng*, the "ideologically correct" understanding of *Honglouloumeng* "as a realist work that revealed the evils of the feudal society" has been overwhelmingly influencing the *Honglouloumeng* Study in the following decades and "to a diminishing but not insignificant extent through to the current times" (Edward, 2001, pp.143-144) The effect is even apparent in Volume I of Yang's version of *Honglouloumeng* published in Beijing in 1978 where the Publisher's Note offers a detailed introduction to this literary classic as a "political-historical novel" about "political struggle," and as "the product of class contradictions and class struggles in that period of Chinese feudalism" (1978, pp.i-ix).

However, in the introduction to Wang 1958a, the translator did not give a word about the above-mentioned major juncture *Honglouloumeng* Study experienced in its history of development, nor any comment. From Wang's familiarity with Hu Shih, Zhou Ruchang, Yu Pingbo's findings and theories introduced in his translations, it can be seen that he had always been able to catch up with the latest development of *Hongxue* in China and had been affected greatly by these professionals' discoveries and interpretations of the novel in his translation process. Therefore, it is not very likely that Wang had no knowledge about the new ideological interpretation of the novel at that time since there was such a large and influential campaign back in China. Nevertheless, instead of adapting himself to the new ideological trend of *Hongxue* in the source culture, the translator chose to interpret *Honglouloumeng* as "the first and only autobiographical novel in traditional Chinese literature" that gives "a true picture of the complexities of life in a large family" (1958, p.xii). Despite the submissive respect he shows for the power of the Chinese professionals when poetical elements are concerned, Wang attempted to stick intentionally to the pedagogical and edifying function *Honglouloumeng* was supposed to assume in the target culture in the 1950s, which, given the broader social context, reflected the foreign policy and the dominant ideology in the target society during the period.

## CONCLUSION

As is noted by Lefevere, translation, a form of rewriting that is closely connected to the political and literary power structures within and outside the literary system, always results in texts that reflect dominant ideology and poetics. A diachronic study of Wang's two adapted translations of *Honglouloumeng* has shown that certain ideological and poetical constraints at different periods of time do affect Wang's adaptation and translation of *Honglouloumeng*, often in more significant ways than linguistic concerns.

However, the findings from the present study indicate that translations are by no means facts of the target culture only, even though the observation of translated texts starts from the target literary system. Based on the comparison of Wang's translations with the two complete versions of *Honglouloumeng*, it is reasonable to say that ideologically a translation is first if not foremost, constrained by the dominant ideology of the society where it is initiated and published before it is read, rather than by that of the receiving society only, particularly when the two societies do not share the dominant concepts about what the world and the people should be like. When poetical factors are involved, the influence from the source culture, usually exerted by the professionals, is apparent and cannot be ignored, as in the case of the effects of Chinese Redologists' research on Wang's translations. It seems that a literary work's status and its form of existence in the original culture can largely decide the roles the original literary system can play in the translation process. Wang's adapted translations of *Honglouloumeng* also confirmed the possibility for translators to actively go against the conditioning factors. However, the results of this research show that the subversion is more likely to operate on the poetical level than the ideological one in the receiving society. Besides, it appears to be easier for the translator to oppose the dominant poetics in terms of the literary device component than the functional component.

It is important to note that the present study is essentially preliminary and macroscopic in that it does not go into more details in terms of the translator's solutions to many specific linguistic or cultural problems. There is no doubt that more research can and need to be done in this respect. The future research can also include Wang 1958b so that a synchronic study can be combined with the diachronic one to offer more theoretical and practical implications for the study of *Honglouloumeng* translation and literary translation in general.

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