

Translating the Culinary Culture in A Dream of Red Mansions: A Comparison Between Two English Versions from the Perspective of Communicative Translation

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Abstract: *A Dream of Red Mansions*, written by Cao Xueqin during the mid-18th century, is widely recognized as one of the most significant literary works in Chinese literature. The novel vividly portrays daily life, customs, and social norms during the Qing dynasty, including the depiction of food and drink. Accurate translation of culinary terms and food descriptions is crucial for conveying the cultural meaning and significance of the original text to readers of different languages and cultures. This is because these terms are deeply embedded in cultural and historical contexts. While there have been many translations of *A Dream of Red Mansions*, Yang Xianyi's and David Hawkes' versions are considered the most influential and significant. Yang Xianyi's translation is known for its faithfulness to the original text and attention to details, while David Hawkes' translation is known for its accessibility and readability to English readers. This study aims to compare the translation of culinary terms and food descriptions in *A Dream of Red Mansions* using Peter Newmark's communicative translation approach. The goal is to provide insights into effective translation strategies and promote cross-cultural communication and understanding through the translation of cultural concepts in literature.

Keywords: culinary translation, *A Dream of Red Mansions*, communicative translation

1. Introduction

As globalization continues to shape the world, cultural exchanges and communication between different countries and regions become increasingly important. Literature plays a crucial role in this process as it offers unique insights into the beliefs, values, and customs of a society, making it a powerful medium for cultural representation and communication. Classic literature can transcend time and place and connect people from different cultures and backgrounds, promoting cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.

In the context of Chinese literature, *A Dream of Red Mansions* is a renowned masterpiece that reflects the cultural and social life of the Qing dynasty and offers valuable insights into Chinese cuisine and the culinary culture of the time. Studying the translation of culinary terms and food descriptions in *A Dream of Red Mansions* is important for several reasons. Firstly, food is an essential part of any cultures, and examining the translation of food-related terms and descriptions can thus help us understand the cultural and historical significance of these foods. *A Dream of Red Mansions*

offers valuable insights into Chinese cuisine and dietary culture during the Qing dynasty, which makes it an ideal research object.

Secondly, the translation of culinary terms and food descriptions can shed light on the relationship between food and culture. By studying how different cultures approach food, one can gain a deeper understanding of how these differences are reflected in literature. This can lead to a better appreciation of different cultures and their culinary traditions.

Finally, studying the translation of culinary terms and food descriptions can also help us understand the historical context of the novel. Analyzing how these terms are translated can provide insights into the cultural and linguistic challenges faced by translators when working with historical texts. This can lead to a more nuanced understanding of the novel and its significance in Chinese literature.

Therefore, this paper uses a communicative translation approach to compare culinary terms and food descriptions in *A Dream of Red Mansions* in two English versions by David Hawkes and John Minford, and Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang. Analyzing the translation of culinary terms and food descriptions in *A Dream of Red Mansions* can contribute to promoting cross-cultural communication and a more nuanced understanding of the novel and its significance in Chinese literature.

2. Background

This section will introduce the textual background, namely the basic information of the original text and the two versions of the target text, as well as the theoretical background, which is typology of translation methods proposed by Peter Newmark.

2.1. Introduction of *A Dream of Red Mansions*

Chinese literature flourished in artistic creativity and cultural richness during the Qing Dynasty. *A Dream of Red Mansions*, written in the mid-18th century, is widely regarded as one of the most exceptional works of classical Chinese literature. The novel depicts the decay of four feudal families and provides a panoramic view of people's lives in the declining empire. *A Dream of Red Mansions* is a beloved work of Chinese literature that has influenced various art forms and is recognized for depicting Chinese society and culture [1].

One of the most notable aspects of *A Dream of Red Mansions* is its comprehensive portrayal of Chinese culture. The novel offers a wealth of information on various aspects of Chinese society, including political and economic systems, aesthetics, traditional folk customs, poetry, and dietary culture. In particular, the novel's detailed descriptions of architecture and gardening have been praised for their accuracy and vividness.

Another interesting feature of *A Dream of Red Mansions* is its extensive coverage of the dietary culture of the time. The novel devotes nearly one-third of its length to describing various types of food and drink, their preparation, and their cultural significance. This has made *A Dream of Red Mansions* an important resource for scholars and enthusiasts of Chinese food culture.

In conclusion, *A Dream of Red Mansions* is a literary masterpiece that offers a comprehensive and insightful portrayal of Chinese culture and society. Its enduring popularity and influence are a testament to the power of great literature to capture the essence of a time and place and to resonate across generations.

2.2. Introduction of Two Translations of *A Dream of Red Mansions*

The masterpiece has been translated into about 27 different languages [2]. The latest translations include *A Dream of Red Mansions* by Yang Xianyi and his wife, Gladys Yang, and *The Story of the Stone* by David Hawkes and his son-in-law, John Minford. These translations have been highly

praised by both Chinese and international readers. In fact, their versions have been translated into many other languages, including French, Japanese, and Korean [2].

Hawkes, a distinguished British Sinologist and translator, had a profound attachment to *A Dream of Red Mansions*. In 1970, he collaborated with Penguin Publishing House to translate the book, which led him to resign from his professorial position in Oxford. This decision demonstrated his passion for sinology, especially redology. Penguin Publishing House caters to a diverse readership and is known as one of the major publishers in the world. In 1953, Yang Xianyi, a Chinese scholar, was appointed as a translation specialist at the Beijing Foreign Language Publishing House. His task was to translate *A Dream of Red Mansions*. The Foreign Language Publishing House is a government-backed entity, but unfortunately it was not well known to Western readers [3].

Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang translated and published the first two volumes of *A Dream of Red Mansion* in 1978, and the third volume in 1980. Likewise, David Hawkes and John Minford's translation of *The Story of the Stone* was published in three volumes, with the first in 1973, the second around 1977, and the third in approximately 1980.

Both translations offer valuable insights into the rich cultural heritage of China, as well as the enduring themes of love, family, and social class that are explored in the novel.

2.3. Introduction of Peter Newmark's Translation Theory

Translation is a challenging and complex process that requires a deep understanding of the distinct characteristics of each language. One of the biggest challenges in translation is accurately conveying cultural and historical concepts, such as traditions, beliefs, and titles, from the source language to the target language [4]. To address these challenges, Peter Newmark developed concepts of semantic translation and communicative translation, criticizing the conventional dichotomy of free versus literal translation [5].

As a renowned linguist and translator with extensive experience translating various European languages, Newmark's work focused on teaching and interpreting, combining translation and language studies to develop a precise and guided translation theory that continues to shape translation practices today. Newmark summarized the principles of translation practice in his seminal works, *Approaches to Translation* (1981) and *A Textbook of Translation* (1988). These works have been widely used in translator training programs, providing a comprehensive understanding of linguistic theories of meaning and practical examples for translation [6]. He proposed eight alternate translation methods to address various aspects of translation.

Word-for-word translation, literal translation, and faithful translation are three source language and author oriented translation techniques that share the similarity of aiming to preserve the original text's structure and meaning, often at the expense of clarity and readability in the target language [7].

Adaptation and free translation are two translation techniques that prioritize creative freedom and core meaning, respectively, while both may result in a target text that differs significantly from the original [7].

Idiomatic translation is a technique that seeks to communicate the central idea of the original text by incorporating colloquialisms and idiomatic expressions in the target language, even if they are not present in the source text. This approach aims to create a natural and idiomatic target text, but may result in a text that deviates significantly from the original [7].

Communicative translation is an approach that prioritizes the recipient of the translated text. It aims to elicit the same reaction from them as the original text did in its readers. This method takes into account not only the source text but also the intended audience of the target text for optimal translation outcomes. To achieve this, it is crucial to ensure precise communication of the message. Translators must utilize their language skills to produce a high-quality rendition of the original text that can be easily understood by the target audience [8].

Semantic translation is a translation method that aims to accurately convey the meaning of the source text by adhering to its syntactic and semantic structure. This method seeks to reflect the contextual meaning of the source text while also revealing the cultural elements of the source culture to the reader. To achieve this, Semantic Translation evaluates multiple meanings of words in order to find the most accurate equivalents in the target language. Overall, Semantic Translation strives to create a target text that closely follows the source text in both meaning and structure [9].

Among the various translation approaches, the two most important are semantic translation and communicative translation. While word-for-word translation stays closest to the original text, literal translation is relatively more flexible than word-for-word but not as much as faithful translation. Faithful translation, in turn, is less flexible than semantic translation, which, despite being relatively more flexible, still gives importance to the source language. On the contrary, the target language and target audience take precedence in adaptation, free translation, idiomatic translation, and communicative translation. Adaptation is the most flexible approach, while free translation and idiomatic translation are less flexible than adaptation. Finally, among these four approaches, communicative translation is the most rigorous [10].

It is important for translators to be flexible and adaptable in their approach to translation. Depending on the specific requirements of each sentence, different translation methods may need to be employed [11].

Peter Newmark also introduces the method of transference, a technique where a word from the source language is transferred into the target language text. This process can involve transliteration, which converts different language alphabets into English, leading to the creation of loan words. Although some authorities do not classify it as a translation technique, it is the only suitable term for when a translator employs an SL word in their text [7].

3. Comparisons of Translating Culinary Culture in Two English Versions of *A Dream of Red Mansions*

The following analysis will examine the translation of food names in *A Dream of Red Mansions* categorized into six groups: food names with symbolic connotations, food names with auspicious meanings, food named after places of origin, food names containing ingredients, dishes indicating ingredients and cooking methods, and special tea.

3.1. Food Names with Symbolic Connotations

Table 1: Comparison of translating food names with symbolic connotations.

Food Name	Yang's Translation	Hawkes' Translation
千红一窟	Thousand Red Flowers in One Cavern	Maiden's Tears
万艳同杯	Ten Thousand Beauties in One Cup	Lachrymae Rerum
忽见碗内有半个鸭头……“这鸭头不是那丫头，头上那讨桂花油。”	there was half a duck's head in the bowl... “This duck's head is not that serving-maid, How can its head be smeared with oil of osmanthus?” (“Duck's head” and “serving-maid” are both yatou in Chinese.)	picked out a duck's head... “This little duck can't with those little ducks compare: This one is quite bald, but they all have a fine head of hair.”
枫露茶	maple-dew tea	Fung Loo

3.1.1. 千红一窟 Qian Hong Yi Ku

The name “千红一窟” is a powerful metaphor that predicts misfortune for the intelligent and beautiful women in the Jia family. The name is created through the use of homophones, with “千红” metaphorically referring to the women and “一窟” meaning crying. The name indicates the tragic fate that awaits them. Cao Xueqin, the author, excelled at using homophonic wordplay in names and poems, contributing to the literary richness and ambiguity of the novel’s themes of tragedy.

Yang’s translation of “千红一窟” as “Thousand Red Flowers in One Cavern” is a literal translation that stays true to Newmark’s theory. However, it fails to capture the name’s metaphorical and symbolic significance. By reproducing only the literal meaning of the words, the translation overlooks an essential aspect of the novel that is crucial for readers to comprehend its themes fully.

On the other hand, Hawkes’ translation of “千红一窟” as “Maiden’s Tears” is a communicative translation that successfully conveys both the literal and metaphorical meanings of the name. It appeals to a Western audience by associating “maiden” with “千红” and “tears” with “一窟” and adds another layer of meaning through the concept of tea. By offering readers a comprehensive understanding of the novel’s themes and characters, Hawkes’ translation showcases the translator’s mastery of language and adds to the enduring legacy of this literary masterpiece.

3.1.2. 万艳同杯 Wan Yan Tong Bei

The wine name “万艳同杯” is another masterful example of how the author skillfully wove together language and cultural symbolism to convey complex themes and ideas. The Chinese term “杯” means “cup” and is utilized to establish a double entendre with “悲” meaning “sadness”. This pun forms a potent metaphor for the fate of the women in the Jia family, who are symbolized by “万艳”, meaning “ten thousand beauties”.

In the ancient Chinese culture, flower wine was often used to symbolize themes of unfortunate life and troubled relationships. As a consequence, the Chinese readers can grasp the implicit meaning of the name “万艳同杯”, which conveys the idea that all things pleasant are predetermined to end in sadness, much like the wine held within the cup that is destined to be consumed.

Yang’s translation of “万艳同杯” as “Ten Thousand Beauties in One Cup” is a literal translation that preserves the aesthetic feature of the wine name, but ignores the metaphorical meaning. While the translation is easy to understand, it does not allow Western readers to fully appreciate the author’s intended meaning.

In his translation of “万艳同杯”, Hawkes opted for “Lachrymae Rerum”, a Latin phrase meaning “tears of things”. This choice of an idiomatic translation effectively communicates the metaphorical meaning of the wine name to Western readers. The reference to The Aeneid provides an additional layer of significance to the wine name, allowing readers familiar with the work to draw connections to the tragic destiny of the Jia family beauties. The shared imagery of tears and wine in “Lachrymae Rerum” also helps to preserve the original metaphorical meaning and contributes to the aesthetic appeal of the wine name. However, the use of Latin in a Chinese novel may be disorienting for some British readers.

3.1.3. 鸭头 Ya Tou

The poem that Xiang-yun composed during the drinking game in Chapter 62 is an important reflection of her character. Through a clever pun using the homophony between “鸭头” (a duck’s head) and “丫头” (a maid), Xiang-yun displayed her intelligence and quick wit, impressing the other guests. However, the poem was more than just a demonstration of her linguistic abilities. It also represented Xiang-yun’s outspoken and forthright personality. The humorous comparison between a duck’s head smeared with fragrant osmanthus oil and a maid without such a luxury highlights Xiang-yun’s sharp observations. Additionally, it shows her willingness to speak her mind in a playful yet thought-provoking way.

Yang’s translation of Xiang-yun’s poem is characterized by its strict adherence to the structure and wording of the original Chinese text. His addition of a note to explain the pun based on the homophony between “duck’s head” and “serving-maid” in Chinese may not be sufficient for readers unfamiliar with this linguistic device. Moreover, Yang’s translation fails to convey the humor and playfulness of the original text, potentially leading to the misinterpretation of Xiang-yun’s character as arrogant. Additionally, the inclusion of an in-text note disrupts the reading flow and may detract from the overall reading experience.

In contrast to Yang’s literal translation, Hawkes’ approach aimed to convey the poem’s underlying meaning in a communicative way for western readers. Hawkes replaced the homophonic pun with a pun on polysemy, using the metaphor of a duck and little ducks in a creative and humorous manner. This allowed British readers to appreciate Xiang-yun’s poetic and witty talents. However, this translation resulted in the loss of the metaphor of using the oil of osmanthus, and the poem appeared to lose some of its thoughtfulness.

3.1.4. 枫露茶 Feng Lu Cha

“枫露茶” (Feng Lu Cha), which is not mentioned in any known written material, is a fictitious tea. The name of the tea bears a phonetic resemblance to the phrase “疯怒” (feng nu), meaning “madly angry” in Chinese.

When Nannie Li took Skybright’s bean-curd dumplings without permission, Bao-yu became enraged. Snowpink tried to calm him down by offering him a cup of “枫露茶”. However, when Bao-yu found out that Nannie Li had already consumed the tea he had requested, he threw a tantrum. He smashes the teacup, spilling hot tea on Snowpink’s dress. She was never seen again after the incident. Thus, “枫露茶” is a device to illustrate Bao-yu’s hot-tempered nature.

While Yang’s literal translation of “枫露茶” as “maple dew tea” may give British readers a sense of the tea’s uniqueness, it lacks the subtlety that the original Chinese name conveys. On the other hand, David Hawkes’ transliteration approach to “Fung Loo” captures the sound and strangeness of the original name, providing readers with a sense of the tea’s mystery and allure. However, both translations may require additional explanation to fully convey the layers of meaning behind the name.

3.2. Food Names with Auspicious Meanings

In the context of Chinese culture, special occasions such as the Chinese New Year hold great significance, as they are marked by the consumption of auspicious food. These foods are believed to symbolize wishes for prosperity and happiness.

Table 2: Comparison of translating food names with auspicious meanings.

Food Name	Yang's Translation	Hawkes' Translation
屠苏酒	New-Year wine	herb-flavored New Year's Eve wine
合欢汤	happy-reunion soup	love-feast soup
吉祥果	lucky fruit	lucky-cakes
如意糕	wish-fulfilment cakes	wish-puddings
元宵	New-Year dumplings	little First Moon dumplings of sweetened rice-flour
银丝挂面	“silver-silk” noodles	“silver thread” vermicelli
寿桃	longevity cakes in the shape of peaches	little peach-shaped birthday cakes

In the novel, various traditional Chinese dishes are served during the Chinese New Year dinner, believed to bring longevity, happiness, and good fortune. Examples include “屠苏酒”, “合欢汤”, “吉祥果”, and “如意糕”. During the First Full Moon Festival, “元宵” is a special food that represents the significance of family reunions. Additionally, “银丝挂面” is believed to symbolize longevity due to its similar pronunciation to the Chinese word for “noodle” and “long”. The “寿桃” is another traditional Chinese food shaped like peaches, believed to bring longevity when eaten on one's birthday. It is said that gods and goddesses consume magical peaches during the birthday feast of the Queen of Heaven.

Yang and Hawkes strove to convey cultural subtleties when rendering these auspicious Chinese dishes. The name “合欢汤” contains a homophone for the ingredient and the idea of togetherness and happiness. Instead of emphasizing the ingredient, both translators employed a communicative translation that conveyed the underlying meaning. Yang translated it as “happy-reunion soup”, while Hawkes translated it as “love-feast soup”. This approach enables readers to understand the auspiciousness and aspirations associated with this soup without requiring further explanation.

Hawkes added the descriptor “herb-flavored” to “屠苏酒” and “sweetened rice-flour” to “元宵”, emphasizing their ingredients and cultural significance. Yang, on the other hand, emphasized the longevity connotation of “寿桃” while Hawkes focused on its function as a birthday cake.

In Chapter 62 of the novel, Uncle Wang Zi-teng's family sent “银丝挂面” as an auspicious gift for Bao-yu's birthday. However, Yang and Hawkes did not convey the cultural significance of this dish in their translations. Yang's translation, “silver-silk noodles”, only describes the color and texture of the noodles. In contrast, Hawkes' translation, “silver thread vermicelli”, may be understandable to British readers but raises questions about the appropriateness of pasta as a traditional Chinese birthday dish. Without an understanding of the cultural symbolism, English readers may find it difficult to grasp the auspiciousness of noodles as a birthday gift in Chinese culture.

3.3. Food Named after Places of Origin

A cuisine named after a place of origin can provide valuable cultural and historical insights.

3.3.1. Wine

Table 3: Comparison of translating wine named after places of origin.

Wine Name	Yang's Translation	Hawkes' translation
惠泉酒	Hui Fountain wine	the rice wine from the South
金谷酒	the wine from Golden Dell	wine
西洋葡萄酒	some of the Western port	West Ocean grape wine

Yang and Hawkes utilized communicative translation when translating Chinese wine names, including “惠泉” and “金谷”. These names are indicative of the geographical origins of the wine. In Chinese wine, rice and water sourced from different regions produce different fragrances and tastes, which influences the evaluation of the wine, akin to the approach of English wine assessment. To emphasize this feature, both translators retained the geographic features in their translations. Additionally, Hawkes chose to use “rice wine” as the translation of Chinese wine, highlighting rice as the primary ingredient and distinguishing it from western wine. This addition enables English readers to gain a better understanding of the cultural significance of rice in Chinese cuisine.

3.3.2. Tea

Table 4: Comparison of translating tea named after places of origin.

Tea Name	Yang's Translation	Hawkes' translation
六安茶	Luan tea	Lu-an tea
普洱茶	puer tea	Pu-er tea
龙井	Longjing tea	Dragon Well tea

Like wine, the place of origin is highly significant in the case of tea. Chinese teas such as “六安茶”, “普洱茶”, and “龙井茶” are renowned for their quality and regional characteristics. In translating these tea names, Yang mainly used transliteration approach, relying on the use of Chinese pinyin. Similarly, Hawkes also employed this strategy with one exception. For “龙井茶”, he translated it as “Dragon Well tea”. Although this translation accurately conveys the meaning of the name, it is worth noting that “龙井” actually refers to a town in Hangzhou, China, and not to a well, as the name might suggest.

3.3.3. Soup

Table 5: Comparison of translating soup named after places of origin.

Soup Name	Yang's Translation	Hawkes' translation
建莲红枣汤	the lotus-seed and date broth	a concoction of red dates and Fukien lotus-seeds

The soup “建莲红枣汤” has lotus seeds as its main ingredient. In the novel, the soup is made using the finest variety of lotus seeds from Fukien, China. Hawkes maintained the origin of lotus seeds, accurately conveying the cultural significance of the dish, as well as the importance of using lotus seeds from a specific region. Additionally, Fukien was an important trade port, and British readers

may have recognized this place. Therefore, it was a prudent decision by Hawkes to retain the place of origin in his translation.

3.4. Food Names Containing Ingredients

Most dishes contain ingredients in their names. In their translations, Yang and Hawkes relied mostly on semantic translation.

3.4.1. Soup

Table 6: Comparison of translating soup names containing ingredients.

Soup Name	Yang's Translation	Hawkes' translation
酸笋鸡皮汤	soup made from pickled bamboo-shoots and duck-skin	a hot, sour soup of pickled bamboo-shoots and chicken-skin.
建莲红枣汤	the lotus-seed and date broth	a concoction of red dates and Fukien lotus-seeds
火腿鲜笋汤	ham-and-fresh-bamboo-shoot soup	soup (ham and bamboo-shoots)
虾丸鸡皮汤	chickenskin soup with shrimp balls	shrimp-balls in chicken-skin soup
火肉白菜汤	cabbage soup with ham	ham and cabbage broth
燕窝汤	bird's-nest soup	bird's-nest soup

Yang and Hawkes mostly employed a semantic translation strategy to translate soups. This approach enabled readers to understand Chinese dietary culture better. While Yang's translations were more direct, Hawkes' translations were more comprehensive, providing additional information to the reader. For instance, he included "hot" twice in his translation.

Hawkes' decision to shift to a communicative strategy in translating “建莲红枣汤” was likely motivated by a desire to convey the idea that this soup might be unfamiliar to British readers. This was achieved by using the phrase “a concoction”, which implies that the soup is a unique and possibly exotic blend of ingredients. This approach could pique readers' curiosity and encourage them to learn about Chinese cuisine.

Moreover, in traditional Chinese cuisine, the use of lotus seeds has a long history and is believed to offer several health benefits. Furthermore, lotus seeds are often associated with longevity and good health in Chinese culture. Hawkes highlighted the uniqueness of the soup, emphasizing the sophistication of Chinese cuisine and the cultural depth that certain ingredients can contribute to a dish.

3.4.2. Beverage

Table 7: Comparison of translating drink names containing ingredients.

Drink Name	Yang's Translation	Hawks' Translation
酸梅汤	sour plum juice	plum bitters
合欢花浸的酒	spirits in which acacia flowers had been steeped	special mimosa-flavored samshoo
玫瑰清露	Pure Rose Juice	Essence of Roses
木樨清露	Pure Osmanthus Juice	Essence of Cassia Flower

In their translations of juice, Yang and Hawkes employed different translation strategies. Yang relied mainly on semantic translation, while Hawkes preferred communicative translation. This contrast is particularly evident in their translations of “玫瑰清露”, which refers to the distillation of rose essence. Yang’s translation, “pure rose juice”, fails to accurately convey the production process involved in making this drink. In contrast, Hawkes’ translation of “essence of rose” precisely captures the distillation process and sets this drink apart from more common fruit and vegetable juices. By choosing a more nuanced term, Hawkes helps English readers appreciate the diverse techniques used in Chinese drink-making.

Yang and Hawkes employed different approaches in translating “酸梅汤”. Yang’s literal translation of “sour plum juice” is straightforward, while Hawkes used a communicative translation with “plum bitters” to convey the drink’s ingredients and highlight its similarity to British bitters. However, the appropriateness and effectiveness of the translations can be impacted by the context in which they are used. When Bao-yu is beaten by his father and unable to eat or drink, translating “酸梅汤” as plum juice may be more appropriate than plum bitters, as Bao-yu may be seeking something refreshing and soothing than something bitter. Nonetheless, in other contexts, such as when discussing the cultural significance of the drink or its ingredients, translating “酸梅汤” as plum bitters may be more effective in conveying the intended meaning. The translation is a context-dependent process that must consider the specific audience and situation for which it is intended.

Yang and Hawkes adopted different translation approaches for “合欢花浸的酒”. While Yang chose the more general term “spirits”, Hawkes used the specific term “samshoo”, which conveys the cultural connotations of the drink more vividly to English readers. Hawkes’ approach to emphasizing cultural context aligns with his overall translation strategy, which prioritizes conveying not only the literal meanings of the text but also the cultural contexts and connotations. This way, Hawkes’ translation enables English-speaking readers to better appreciate Chinese culinary culture’s complex and nuanced aspects. Conversely, Yang’s translation may have missed an opportunity to convey the specific cultural connotations of the drink.

3.4.3. Porridge

Table 8: Comparison of translating porridge names containing ingredients.

Porridge Name	Yang’s Translation	Hawks’ Translations
碧梗粥	greenrice porridge	green-rice gruel
鸭子肉粥	duck congee	duck and rice stew
枣儿熬的粳米粥	date congee	a rice and date frumenty

Hawkes’ use of communicative translation is evident in his translations of porridge names. He deliberately incorporated “rice” to emphasize the primary ingredient in Chinese porridge. Additionally, he used a variety of terms such as gruel, stew, and frumenty to convey the different methods of cooking porridge. These carefully chosen words allow English readers to better understand of the diverse techniques employed in Chinese cuisine. Conversely, Yang mainly employed semantic translation, which resulted in a more straightforward and easily comprehensible translation. However, this approach may oversimplify the original text and fail to capture its intricacies.

3.5. Dishes Indicating Ingredient and Cooking Methods

Table 9: Comparison of translating dish names containing ingredients.

Dish Name	Yang's translation	Hawks' translation
火腿炖肘子	fresh pork stewed with ham	boiled gammon
糖蒸酥酪	sweetened junket	sweetened koumiss
桂花糖蒸新栗粉糕	powdered chestnut cake sweetened with osmanthus	chestnut fudge (made of chestnut puree steam-cooked with cassia-flavored sugar)
奶油炸的各色小果子	confection, small colored pastries fried with cream	fried confection consisted of a wide variety of little pastry-shapes deep-fried in butter
糟鹌鹑	Quails cured in wine	Pickled quails
油盐炒枸杞芽儿	fried wolfberry sprouts	salted bean-sprouts
酱萝卜炸儿	salted turnips	fried pickled turnips in gluten batter
酒酿清蒸鸭子	steamed duck with wine sauce	duck steamed in wine
腌的脂鹅脯	salted goose	red salted goose-slices
油炸焦骨头	the fried bones	the bones, crisp-fried in boiling fat

Hawkes' translation approach towards dish names emphasized communicative translation. For instance, he translated “火腿炖肘子” as “boiled gammon” and “粉糕” as “fudge”. By translating Chinese dishes into English foods, Hawkes aimed to enhance the accessibility of Chinese cuisine for English readers. This approach facilitated cross-cultural communication and enabled English-speaking readers to appreciate the unique flavors of Chinese cuisine. In contrast, Yang's approach focused on the text's semantic content, leading to faithful and easy to comprehend translations.

3.6. Special Tea

Table 10: Comparison of translating special tea names.

Tea Name	Yang's Translation	Hawks' Translation
老君眉	Patriarch's Eyebrows	Old Man's Eyebrows
女儿茶	nuer tea	herbal tea-wutong-tips

“老君眉” was named after the shape of tea leaves, which resembles an old man's eyebrows. Yang's use of semantic translation provided a direct translation of the meaning behind the name, while Hawkes' use of literal translation focused on the visual image the name conjured. Moreover, it is worth noting that the name “Old Man's Eyebrows” more directly relates to an English cultural reference, highlighting Hawkes' approach to translate Chinese tea names into more relatable English equivalents.

In Chinese, “女儿茶” means “women's tea”, and it is said that only women can harvest it. Yang translated it using Chinese pinyin as “nuer tea”, while Hawkes used a communicative approach and translated it as “herbal tea” with the addition of the specific type of tea tree. This reflects Hawkes' focus on providing readers with information about the tea itself rather than its

anecdotal history. Additionally, the term “herbal tea” implies medicinal properties, which may be of interest to health-conscious readers.

4. Differences and Possible Reasons

Both Yang and Hawkes strove to convey the cultural and artistic significance of the original work and remain faithful to its content in their translations of *A Dream of Red Mansions*. Despite this, their choices and implementation of translation strategies resulted in distinct stylistic differences between their respective translations.

In terms of translation approach, Yang’s translation was more literal and faithful to the source text, whereas Hawkes’ translation was more dynamic and aimed to convey the essence and meaning of the original work in a way that would be understandable and enjoyable for the target audience.

These variations may be attributed to a range of factors, such as differences in cultural backgrounds, the purpose of the translation, the initiator of the translation, and the historical context in which the translation was produced.

4.1. Different Cultural Backgrounds

It is widely recognized in translation studies that translators bring their cultural perspectives to translating a text. This phenomenon can be observed in both the works of Yang Xianyi and Hawkes, who have distinct cultural backgrounds and viewpoints.

Yang Xianyi is a prominent member of the Chinese literati, having grown up in a scholarly family with a comprehensive education in classical Chinese literature. He possesses a profound admiration and reverence for traditional Chinese culture, which has influenced his worldview and informed his approach to translation. As a result, his translations tend to reflect a Chinese cultural perspective.

In contrast, Hawkes is a sinologist with a keen interest in Chinese culture. However, his cultural perspective is inevitably influenced by his British upbringing and the dominant English-speaking cultural context in which he works. Consequently, his translations may consciously or unconsciously incorporate elements of English culture and ideology, potentially leading to a degree of alteration of Chinese culture.

This cultural disparity between the two translators can be manifested in their translation strategies. When addressing contradictions and conflicts between Chinese and English cultures, Yang preferred to adopt semantic translation to stress Chinese culture. In contrast, Hawkes used communicative translation to make Chinese culture more accessible to English-speaking readers.

4.2. Different Purpose of Translation

The purpose and focus of the two translators differ significantly in their translations.

Yang Xianyi treated *A Dream of Red Mansions* as an “encyclopedia” of traditional Chinese culture. As a result, he approached the translation as an academic work on Chinese culture, making a concerted effort to preserve the original text as much as possible. Yang’s translation is source-text oriented, aiming to introduce Chinese culture to foreign countries. Using a semantic translation, he can better promote a greater understanding of China and its rich cultural heritage.

In the introduction of the first volume, Hawkes expressed that his motivation for translating *A Dream of Red Mansions* was to share his love of the novel and to provide readers with a glimpse of the pleasure he experienced while reading it [12]. Similarly, in the preface to the bilingual edition of *The Story of the Stone*, Mr. Minford, the translator of the last forty chapters of *A Dream of Red Mansions*, stated that his and Hawkes’ decision to translate the novel was not driven by academic pursuits but rather by their passion for the original work itself. By using communicative translation,

Hawkes wished to create for his translation as good an edition as was feasible, one that would be readable and consistent [12].

4.3. Different Initiators of the Translation

Yang was a government official commissioned by the Foreign Languages Press to translate *A Dream of Red Mansions*. The publishing house had been systematically translating major works of Chinese literature into English to truthfully introduce Chinese culture to foreign readers. Therefore, the publishing purpose of Yang's translation was to accurately introduce Chinese culture to the outside world. Prior to the text of Yang's translation, there was no standard translator's preface but instead a publisher's preface, which reflected the dominant role of the publisher. Although the preface also mentioned the outstanding literary achievement of *A Dream of Red Mansions*, it emphasized that the novel's theme was the sharp contradiction between different social classes. This emphasis inevitably led to the publisher's demand for the translator's fidelity to the original text. So, Yang employed semantic translation to remain faithful to his mission.

Hawkes, then a professor at Oxford, was granted sponsorship from Penguin Books to translate *A Dream of Red Mansions*. Despite his comfortable position as a professor, he chose to resign from his post to undertake the translation of this work that he was so passionate about. As a translator, he faced no interference from the publishing house. Hawkes' ultimate goal was to transport readers into the vivid and imaginative world of Cao Xueqin's masterpiece, allowing them to be swept away by the sheer brilliance of the novel. So, Hawkes mainly employed target-text-oriented translation strategies, like communicative translation.

4.4. Different Historical Contexts

When Yang translated *A Dream of Red Mansions* during the 1960s and 1970s, it was a political upheaval in China. Official translations during this period stuck closely to the original text and emphasized cultural self-awareness. This trend undoubtedly influenced Yang's choice of translation method.

Around the same time, Theodore Horace Savory was a prominent translation theorist in Britain. Savory believed that when translators encounter a beautiful original work, they are compelled to express it in their language so that others can experience the same pleasure. He emphasized the importance of producing high-quality translations of classical works through comprehensive translation.

5. Conclusion

This study has utilized Peter Newmark's communicative translation approach to compare the translations of culinary terminology and food depictions in *A Dream of Red Mansions*. It has provided insight into the difficulties and possibilities inherent in rendering a historical Chinese novel's dietary and culinary traditions into another language. Both translations demonstrate exquisite use of food vocabulary and offer a deeper understanding of Chinese cuisine and dietary culture during the Qing dynasty, giving English readers a unique window into a foreign civilization. Like a harmonious Tai chi diagram, the source language and the target language are like black and white symmetrical yin and yang fish, gradually reaching a balance under the translators' writing.

However, it is important to note that translation is not an exact science, and both translations have their debatable points. It is vital to consider the historical and cultural context in which they were produced before passing any judgment. Individuals have the privilege of building upon the legacy of those who came before them. To go further, one must inherit the valuable wealth left by the masters in a rational manner.

In summary, this paper emphasizes the significance of studying the translation of culinary terms and food descriptions in literature. By doing so, we can better understand the cultural and historical significance of different cuisines and appreciate diverse cultures' culinary traditions. This study contributes to the broader discussion of communicative translation and encourages further research in this area.

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