Translating Heteroglossia: Comparing Two English Translations of Honglou meng

Dylan K. Wang

For Professor Nicholas Koss,
Who fanned the spark into a flame.

Abstract
According to James I. Crump, Chinese vernacular fiction is characterized by extensive use of “pastiche,” which includes both verbatim incorporation of other identifiable texts and generic parodies. This penchant finds its supreme manifestation in A Dream of Red Mansions (Honglou meng 紅樓夢). The vast variety of discourses and voices in Dream can be read as a manifestation of heteroglossia, and are intended to function dialogically, in the Bakhtinian senses of these terms. This essay examines the exact circumstances in which the two widely-read full English translations of Dream were produced and compares them in terms of their recognition and treatment of heteroglossia. I argue that although the Yangs’ translation may be characterized as “literal” in the sense of rendering “word for word,” what Hawkes achieves in his translation should be considered a higher level of literalness in the sense of “text for text.” While Hawkes consistently strives to retain the linguistic hybridity and subtle contrasts in the original, the Yangs often smooth out the checkered texture of the text by adopting a plain “international” English and resorting to copious footnotes.

Keywords
Honglou meng | A Dream of Red Mansions | translation | heteroglossia | M. M. Bakhtin

* Dylan K. Wang (675155@soas.ac.uk) is a Ph.D. candidate at SOAS University of London and a literary translator.

Abbreviations:

SS

DRM

HLM
Zhongguo yishu yanjiuyuan Honglou meng yanjiusuo 中國藝術研究院紅樓夢研究所, ed. and annot., Honglou meng 紅樓夢, 2 vols. (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2008)

These sources are referred to parenthetically with Roman numerals denoting the volume numbers and Arabic numerals the page numbers.
“This is your latest amusement, I suppose. Every time you hear some coarse expression outside or read some crude, disgusting book, you have to come back here and give me the benefit of it.”¹ (SS-I: 517–8)

HETEROGLOSSIA AND THE CLASSIC CHINESE NOVEL

Early Chinese vernacular novels developed in a cumulative fashion out of “plain tales” (pinghua 平話) and other sources.² Shi Changyu 石昌渝 identifies two typical modes of such accumulation: (1) “snowballing” (gun xueqiu shi 滾雪球式), whereby a pre-existing narrative frame was slowly fleshed out by later additions, but the overall structure remained more or less unchanged; and (2) “patchworking” (juhe shi 聚合式), whereby several pre-existing narratives were integrated into a coherent whole, sometimes by a mastermind.³ A major method of producing such texts was what James I. Crump terms “pastiche.” While in the Western tradition this term carries the connotations of “imitation,” “parody,” and “satire of so-and-so,” Chinese vernacular pastiche, as expounded by Crump, emphasizes “incorporation,” “putting together,” and “clipping and pasting.” Indeed, this practice was so prevalent in the early stages of the Chinese vernacular novel that a discerning reader would constantly stumble upon such varied material as bits of well-known verse, historical documents, acts from plays, parts of short stories, courtroom tales, and the like. Besides “verbatim” incorporation of other identifiable texts (allowing for minor changes) into the work in question, equally common is an author’s concoction of an item, theme, or story “in-the-manner-of” other examples of the genre.⁴ Crump takes this latter *modus operandi* to mean that “the authors knew what their readers expected and gave it [to] them.”⁵

This penchant for pastiche finds an extreme manifestation in the sixteenth-century masterwork *The Plum in the Golden Vase* (Jin Ping Mei 金瓶梅), characterized by “its labyrinthine deployment of a bewildering variety of earlier material, ranging from canonical works and liturgical texts to the popular the-

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¹ Thus retorts Daiyu, when Baoyu flirts with her with a quotation from *Xixiang ji* 西廂記 [The Story of the West Wing]. This episode occurs in Chapter 26.
ater and song of the author’s own day.” Many features set *Plum* apart from its predecessors. To start with, nearly all of the latter are the products of multiple authorship or represent the recasting of traditional bodies of material, and they are usually episodic in structure, whereas *Plum* has a tightly controlled unitary plot and can be demonstrated, on the basis of internal evidence, to be the work of a single creative imagination. Even more extraordinary is the fact that, despite the dizzying amount of borrowings from other texts, they are not included to fulfil reader expectations, as Crump believes to be the case with most earlier works, but are repopulated with the author’s own intentions. As pointed out by Patrick Hanan, *Plum* delights in turning the original meaning of a borrowed passage “inside out.” David Tod Roy even believes that “the author uses poems, songs, snatches of dramatic dialogue, and other types of borrowed material as a form of running ironic commentary on the characters and action of the novel.” In short, the anonymous author of *Plum* revolutionized the use of pastiche in traditional Chinese vernacular fiction.

Despite its innovation, however, most items of pastiche in *Plum* belong to Crump’s first category, namely “verbatim” incorporation of earlier texts, and the author did not always do a good job cementing his cullings together with the narrative flow, making it possible for harsher critics such as C. T. Hsia to dismiss it as a work of slipshod craftsmanship, characterized by “low culture and ordinary mentality”: “The author is merely spinning yarn after borrowed yarn to entertain and astound the reader, caring little if each episode fits into

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7 That is, all but chapters 53–7, which are by another hand or hands. See Roy, Introduction, xix.

8 Hanan, “*P’ing Yao Chuan*,” 216.

9 Roy, Introduction, xxi. For a fuller account of the *Chin P’ing Mei*’s significance in the development of traditional Chinese fiction, see Shi Changyu, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo yuanliu lun*, Chapter 6, Section 3.

10 Other specimens of such ingenious repurposing of borrowed material in Chinese vernacular fiction and drama include the late Qing novella *Hedian* [What Classic], which is almost entirely composed of deliberately misinterpreted Shanghaiese slangs, and Scene 17 of the *Mudan ting* [The Peony Pavilion], “Daoxi” [Sorceress of the Dao], in which an old bawd delivers a lengthy monologue consisting essentially of ludicrously misapplied lines from *Qianzi wen* [The Thousand Character Text], a popular primer for teaching Chinese characters to children. For information on the former, see the appendices and postscripts of Zhang Nanzhuang, *Hedian* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1981); a translation of the latter is found in Tang Xianzu, *The Peony Pavilion*, trans. Cyril Birch, 2nd ed. (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press), 79–86.
the larger narrative pattern. [...] [T]he novel has degenerated into an implausible omnibus of flimsily related stories. [...] One cannot expect a work to possess ideological or philosophical coherence when it manifests such obvious structural anarchy.”

On the other hand, it is virtually out of the question to level a similar allegation at *A Dream of Red Mansions* (Honglou meng 紅樓夢), because the pastiche found in this eighteenth-century classic is of an altogether different nature. To be sure, the text of the novel is replete with verbatim quotations from every level of traditional discourse, but in most cases, these are clearly made out to be mere quotations rather than passed off as part of the narrative fabric. Such items usually take the form of a famous poem discussed by the young protagonists, or a scene from a well-known drama performed for a special occasion. Even more common are examples of what Crump terms *Nacherzählungen* (writing “in-the-manner-of”), namely parodies of the generic characteristics of traditional literary forms. The use of stock phrases and formulaic language is kept to a minimum, and all poems and parallel prose are specially composed to fulfil specific purposes. On a narratological level, the work is widely believed to achieve an astounding degree of psychological realism, and the handful of prototypical plots in the storyteller’s repertoire would have been too feeble to be of any assistance.

The uniqueness of *Dream* in this respect can also be evidenced by the different treatment afforded it in various exegetical and critical apparatuses. A genre especially popular in Sinophone academia is the so-called “collected research material” (*ziliao huibian* 資料彙編 or *yanjiu ziliao huibian* 研究資料彙編), a compilation of documents related to the text at issue. While with any other major traditional vernacular novel a substantial portion is invariably devoted to

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12 See, for example, Chapters 22 and 48.  
13 Crump, “Pastiche,” 616.  
14 This should be self-evident to any reader of the novel. Circumstantial evidence is found in a “Red Inkstone” commentary prefixed to Chapter 75 in one of the manuscript versions which reads: “The Mid-Autumn poems are still missing. [I] await Xueqin [to provide them].” (缺中秋詩，俟雪芹) Zhu Yixuan, ed., *Honglou meng shiping jiaolu* (Jinan: Qilu shushe, 1986), 539. See also Hawkes, Introduction to SS, vol.1, 39.  
the identification of its “prototypes or source material” (benshi 本事) or to the clarification of its “evolution” (yuanliu 源流), it is simply unimaginable to do the same with Dream.17 Another such genre, the “appreciation dictionary” (jian-shang cidian 鑒賞辭典), contents itself with disentangling the novel’s linguistic tapestry and categorizing its building blocks, hence the many titles either on “language” in general or on more specific aspects of it.18

In short, while the narrator of Plum often speaks in a borrowed voice, the narrative voice of Dream is distinctively its own.

In addition to the numerous quotations and items of Nacherzählungen, hundreds of characters speak in a vast variety of registers and tones. These discourses and voices, which represent divergent or conflicting points of view, can be interpreted as a manifestation of heteroglossia, and function dialogically, in the senses of those terms as introduced by the Russian critic M. M. Bakhtin in a series of essays in the 1930s and 1940s.19 According to Bakhtin, “[t]he author participates in the novel (he is omnipresent in it) with almost no direct language of his own”;20 instead, he defines the novel as “a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized.” The novel as a genre relies on the “internal stratification” of the national language and “orchestrates all its themes, the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it, by means of the social

17 All the titles in the “Zhongguo gudian xiaoshuo mingzhu ziliao congkan” series include a section titled “a compilation of prototypes” (benshi bian 本事編) except the one devoted to Dream, whose four sections are dedicated respectively to documents about the author, different editions, criticisms, and influence. Even the volume for Liaozhai zhiyi 聊齋誌異 [Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio], a collection of short stories written in classical Chinese, has such a section. Similarly, the volumes on Xiyou ji 西遊記 [Journey to the West] and Shuihu zhuan 水滸傳 [Water Margin] in the “Gudian wenxue yanjiu ziliao huibian” series reserve whole chapters for “prototypes” or “evolution,” while the six chapters in the Dream tome are concerned with either the author’s biography, contemporary and later reception, or critical appraisals and commentaries.

18 Examples of the former include Zhou Dingyi et al., eds., Honglou meng yuyan cidian (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1995) as well as the relevant sections in Feng Qiyong and Li Xifan, eds., Honglou meng da cidian (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 1990) and Sun Xun, ed., Honglou meng jianshang cidian (Shanghai: Hanyu da cidian chubanshe, 2005). Examples of the latter include He Xinhui, ed., Honglou meng shici jianshang cidian (Beijing: Zijincheng chubanshe, 1990), Wang Shichao, ed., Honglou meng shici jianshang cidian (Hohhot: Neimenggu renmin chubanshe, 2001), and Cai Yijiang’s critically acclaimed Honglou meng shi ci qu fu jianshang (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001).

19 For the applicability of Bakhtin’s theory to the study of the classic Chinese novel, I am indebted to Roy, who makes fascinating use of it in his analysis of Plum. See Roy, Introduction, xliii–xliv.

diversity of speech types [...] and by the differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions." As such,

Authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters are merely those fundamental compositional unities with whose help *heteroglossia* ... can enter the novel; each of them permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships (always more or less *dialogized*). These distinctive links and interrelationships between utterances and languages, this movement of the theme through different languages and speech types, its dispersion into the rivulets and droplets of social *heteroglossia*, its *dialogization*—this is the basic distinguishing feature of the stylistics of the novel.

Since Bakhtin's theory posits the existence of a single, recognizable author, it would be inept to apply it blindly to earlier Chinese vernacular novels, which are usually products of multiple authorship and typically repurpose traditional material. However, *Plum and Dream* (at least the first 80 chapters), each with a single creative imagination behind it, keenly invite such an interpretation. In the following paragraphs, I shall explore how this approach may affect the appraisal of existing translations of *Dream*.

**TWO TRANSLATIONS OF DREAM**

There seems to be a general consensus, among scholars and lay readers alike, that of the two widely-read full English translations of *Dream*, the Yangs' (*DRM*) is “quite a literal translation,” while the Hawkes (and Minford) translation (*SS*) boasts greater elegance and readability. I have been able to trace this characterization to an article written in the early 1980s by Zhou Jueliang 周珏良 (1916–1992), famed “Redologist” and scholar of comparative literature:

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21 Ibid., 262–63.
22 Ibid., 263. Emphases mine.
23 Mine is, of course, a narrow interpretation of Bakhtin’s theory. For its application in the study of texts with dual or multiple authorship, refer to the essays collected in Marjorie Stone and Judith Thompson, eds., *Literary Couplings: Writing Couples, Collaborators, and the Construction of Authorship* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), especially the piece by Robert Gray and Christopher Keep on the composition of *Teleny*.
24 I am of course aware of the third full translation completed in the 1950s by B. S. Bonsall, but since it never got into print and exists only in a typescript held by the University of Hong Kong Libraries, I have left it out of my discussion. This translation is accessible via https://lib.hku.hk/bonsall/hongloumeng/index1.html (accessed May 10, 2023).
While the Hawkes translation excels in elegance, the Yangs translation excels in accuracy. This does not mean the one lacks in accuracy or the other excels in elegance. The two translations rather supplement each other and together will give anyone who cannot read Chinese but takes a serious interest in the book a truer and more complete picture of what the original reads like.26

In spite of his effort to preempt hasty generalization, this description has acquired all the stubbornness of a stereotype. Before I delve into details and test the validity of this argument, it is first necessary to examine the respective provenances of the two projects (which, surprisingly, has rarely been done before).

Yang Xianyi 杨宪益 (1915–2009) was commissioned to produce a complete translation of Dream in the early 1960s by the Foreign Languages Press in Beijing (later reorganized as Foreign Languages Bureau) where he worked, and the project came as a political task. He later confessed to an interviewer that Dream was his least favorite among classical Chinese novels; in fact, he had never even read the novel in its entirety when the translation was ordered.27 He started translating the novel on his own around 1961, and had finished a rough draft of about 100 chapters by 1964 when he was ordered to stop. Shortly afterwards, the Cultural Revolution broke out. Being suspected of espionage, the Yangs were imprisoned in 1968 and were not released until 1972. The work only resumed later the same year, and the whole project was finished with Gladys Yang’s (née Tayler, 1919–1999) assistance in 1974.28 Despite political turmoil and constant apprehension, it only took around five years.29

26 Zhou Jueliang, “On and Around the Dream: A Survey of Recent Scholarship on Hongloumeng (1976–1982),” in Zhou Jueliang wenji (Beijing: Waiyiu jiaoxue yu yanjiu chubanshe, 1994), 364. This article was presumably written in the early 1980s when both translations were still hot off the press.
29 The first two volumes were published in 1978 after being proofread by Wu Shichang 吴世昌. The last volume saw print only in 1980. See Wang Liyun, “Dawei Huokesi hanxue nianpu jianbian,” Honglou meng xuekan 4 (2011): 111–12, n26. The Yangs were known for the miraculous speed of their work. During the Great Leap Forward of 1958, they too were translating by leaps and bounds, “churning them out day and night.” An extreme example was Lu Xun’s Brief History of Chinese Fiction (Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilüe 中國小說史略), which was finished in ten days. Yang Xianyi, White Tiger, 204. For more on the role of politics in literary translation in China in the 1960s, see W. J. F. Jenner, “Journeys to the East, ‘Journey to the West,’” Los Angeles Review of Books, February 3, 2016: https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/journeys-to-the-east-journey-to-the-west/ (accessed July 28, 2023) and Bonnie S. McDougall, Translation Zones in Modern China: Authoritarian Command versus Gift Exchange (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2011). Jenner produced a complete translation of Xiyou ji as a commission for the very same Foreign Languages Press.
By contrast, David Hawkes (1923–2009) commenced his project entirely on his own initiative. He first read the novel in 1948 during his sojourn in Beijing, and even hired an old-fashioned gentleman to tutor him in it.30 Toward the end of 1950 when he left China, he had already become an aficionado and had produced tentative translations of certain chapters.31 Over the next two decades, Hawkes maintained a passionate interest in the novel until finally in 1970 he began translating it in earnest.32 In order to focus on the enterprise (as well as avoid potential copyright disputes), he resigned from the coveted Shaw Professorship of Chinese and retired to his native Wales.33 His translation of the first 80 chapters was completed around mid-1979.34 Therefore, it took him nearly ten years to translate only two thirds of the whole work.35

As for the versions of the text used, the Yangs translated all 120 chapters but undeviatingly followed a manuscript-based version in the first two volumes (80 chapters) at the suggestion of Wu Shichang 吳世昌 (1908–1986), a renowned “Redologist”;36 Hawkes, on the other hand, realized in the early days of his proj-

32 Ibid., 86–7. His extant notes start with the entry for November 10, 1970, when he was already working on Chapter 9. David Hawkes, The Story of the Stone: A Translator’s Notebooks (Hong Kong: Centre for Literature and Translation, Lingnan University, 2000), 3.
34 The last dated entry in his notes is for June 1, 1979. Hawkes, Notebooks, 251. The last 40 chapters were translated by his student-turned-son-in-law, John Minford, and were finished in 1986. Wang Liyun, “Dawei Huokesi,” 91.
35 Hawkes divided the 80 chapters he translated into three volumes, which were published respectively in 1973, 1977, and 1980.
36 David Hawkes, “The Translator, the Mirror and the Dream—Some Observations on a New Theory,” Classical, Modern and Humane: Essays in Chinese Literature, ed. John Minford and Siu-kit Wong (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1989), 160; Yang Xianyi, White Tiger, 261. The version in question is the so-called Zhijing 脂京, aka Gengchen 庚辰 (1761) manuscript, held by the Peking University Libraries. On the reasoning behind his choice, see Wu Shichang “Ning Rong liang fu ‘buguo shi ge tuzaichang eryi’ ma?—Lun Honglou meng yingyiben de ‘chu-ban shuoming’,” Dushu 2 (1980): 78–83. Wu taught at the University of Oxford for fifteen years (1947–1962) and wrote one of the earliest monographs on the manuscript versions of Dream, On the Red Chamber Dream: A Critical Study of Two Annotated Manuscripts of the XVIIIth Century (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961). It is worth noting that Wu also played an important role in Hawkes’s career as a Sinologist: Wu not only initiated Hawkes into the study of Chinese literature, gave the latter his Chinese name Huo Kesi 霍克思, and wrote him references when he went to China in 1948, but also introduced Hawkes to his own research on Dream when they worked together in the 1950s. Other parallels between Hawkes and the Yangs include: (1) they were all educated at the University of Oxford (Yang Xianyi 1936–1940; Gladys Yang 1937–1940; Hawkes 1941–1943, 1945–1947, then 1951–1955); and (2) both produced translations of Qu Yuan’s 屈原 poems in the early days of their careers—the Yangs’ Li Sao and Other Poems (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1953) and Hawkes’s Ch’u Tz’u, The Songs of the South:
ect that “almost any choice between different versions of the text may involve
the translator in decisions about a number of quite fundamental questions” at
the root of the very discipline of “Redology,”37 and thus decided to make his
own variorum edition with his own emendations as he went along.38

When it comes to stylistics, the Yangs, despite their British background,
strove to use a plain style of English that would be internationally acceptable.
In fact, they prided themselves on this choice, and privately ridiculed other
translators for using more regional versions of the English language.39 The fa-
miliar description of theirs as “quite a literal translation” is likely a reference to
its supposed scholarly adherence to the original, which necessitates the use of
copious footnotes. Hawkes, in this regard, made the novel’s positive reception
by a native English-speaking audience his first priority. According to John Min-
ford, his protégé and collaborator, he “was always insistent that what he was
embarking on was a novel in translation, a book that lovers of literature might
find enjoyment in, not a text for scholars to pore over and dissect.” In prepara-
tion for this grand project, he read and reread many favorite classics of English
fiction, including the works of George Meredith and Henry James.40 Throughout
the process, his “one abiding principle has been to translate everything—even
puns.”41 He also excluded any notes, preferring in-text explanations. In other
words, his ultimate goal was to recreate the Chinese novel in English, to produce
an English novel that approximates what Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹 (c.1715–c.1763)
himself would have written had he been born English; the Yangs’ translation,

An Ancient Chinese Anthology (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959). Hawkes’s translation was devel-
oped out of his DPhil research. According to Yang Xianyi, when Hawkes saw his translation
of “The Lament” 離騷 pompously rendered into Drydenic heroic couplets, he remarked that
it “bears as much resemblance to the original as a chocolate Easter egg to an omelette.” Yang
Xianyi, White Tiger, 78–9 and 202; Wang Liyun, “Dawei Huokesi hanxue nianpu jianbian,” 75–6,
79–82 and 89–90.

37 Hawkes, “The Translator, the Mirror and the Dream,” 159.
38 In translating this novel I have felt unable to stick faithfully to any single text. I have mainly
followed Gao E’s version of the first chapter as being more consistent, though less interesting,
than the other ones; but I have frequently followed a manuscript reading in subsequent
chapters, and in a few, rare instances I have made small emendations of my own.” Hawkes,
Introduction, 45–6. On the raison d’être of this approach, see Hawkes, “The Translator, the
Mirror and the Dream.” Fan Shengyu 閻聖宇, collator of the Chinese text in the Shanghai
Foreign Language Education Press bilingual edition, strives to recreate Hawkes’ version. See
David Hawkes, trans., The Story of the Stone, vol. 1, (Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Edu-
41 Hawkes, Introduction, 46. Unsurprisingly, not every pun is translated. See Lin Yiliang, Honglou
by contrast, occasionally borders on an English explanation of the original, ready to simplify and annotate.\textsuperscript{42}

In a 1955 review of Ezra Pound’s controversial \textit{Classic Anthology}, Hawkes sets forth his ideal of translation: “Translators should, I feel, be fairly self-effacing people, more anxious for the faithful interpretation and good reception of the original than for their own creative development or greater glory.”\textsuperscript{43} Paradoxically, in his own practice as a translator, to “efface” his presence in the final product required his maximum participation and mediation (and needless to say, many sleepless nights) to “convey to the reader even a fraction of the pleasure this Chinese novel” had given him.\textsuperscript{44} The Yangs’ translation, instead, constantly reminds its audience of the role played by the translators with its liberal use of footnotes. In this way, though the Yangs’ may be characterized as “literal” in the sense of rendering “word for word,” what Hawkes achieves in his translation might be considered a higher degree of “literalness”—in the sense of “text for text.”

\textbf{TRANSLATING HETEROGLOSSIA}

To convey linguistic diversity (as discussed in the first section) through translation, one obvious solution would be to identify and mark out units of “verbatim” incorporation and \textit{Nacherzählungen}. Roy, in his monumental translation of \textit{Plum}, indents not only all examples of poetry or song, but also most examples of proverbial sayings, stock couplets, formulaic language, and descriptive parallel prose. By setting them off from the surrounding prose, he hopes to achieve “the effect of defamiliarization, highlighting this phenomenon, and alerting the reader to the subtle counterpoint of different linguistic voices in the original.”\textsuperscript{45} In addition to this visual alienation, he also provides a stupefying number of notes in which he strives to identify either the direct sources or earlier occurrences for as much of the borrowed material as possible.\textsuperscript{46} Hanan, in his last translation \textit{Quelling the

\textsuperscript{42} One should keep in mind that the Hawkes-Minford translation was produced under a contract with Penguin, which certainly informed, in part, the strategies employed. Minford, “Truth and Fiction,” 343. See also Wang Liyun, “Dawei Huokesi,” 109–10, n22.
\textsuperscript{44} Hawkes, Introduction, 46.
\textsuperscript{45} Roy, Introduction, xlv. However, Roy’s judgement is not always correct. For an example, see Keith McMahon, “The Language of Sex in Jin Ping Mei,” \textit{Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies} 82, no. 1 (2022): 99–100, n80.
\textsuperscript{46} “Where I believe that the author has borrowed from an identifiable source, I describe it as the proximate or ultimate source. In other cases, where the expressions occur ubiquitously in classical or vernacular literature and can be said to be in the public domain, I merely list
Demons’ Revolt (San Sui pingyao zhuan 三遂平妖傳 published posthumously), employs a similar strategy (albeit on a much smaller scale). Stock sayings and couplets are either placed in quotation marks or set separately, and the set pieces and poems are indented. Another more unusual and very specific instance of this method is Susan Blader’s partial translation of The Three Heroes and Five Gallants (Sanxia wuyi 三俠五義), a prime example of late Qing martial arts fiction, the text of which is characteristically strewn with onomatopoeias in imitation of the storyteller’s voice. These acoustic details enable the reader to imagine a fully auditory experience, and are therefore a distinguishing feature of the genre. In Blader’s translation, the onomatopoeias (when translated) are printed in italics with an exclamation mark so as to underline this feature of the text.

Both the Yangs and Hawkes resort to this approach in treating poems, songs, parallel prose, riddles, and so forth. Hawkes goes a step further and occasionally fashions an item more finely to better conform to the conventions of the target culture. Consider the following example, the funeral banner inscription of Qin Keqing 秦可卿, whose obsequies are described in Chapter 14. Hawkes’s result is deliberately designed to resemble the layout of an actual tombstone inscription:

Mortal Remains of the Much Lamented LADY QIN-SHI of the House of Jia, Senior Great-great-granddaughter-in-law of the Duke of Ning-guo,
Nobleman of the First Rank by Imperial Patent,

a sampling of earlier occurrences in roughly chronological order, without implying that the author was borrowing from any one of them directly.” Ibid., xlvii.


Understandably, he does so only selectively for fear of going too far, but he does overdo it from time to time by singling out rather mundane phrases, and in many instances even rendering them ostentatiously into (rhyming) couplets:

Chapter 2  “成則王侯敗則賊” (HLM-I: 30)
“Zhang victorious is a hero,
Zhang beaten is a lousy knave?” (SS-I: 80)
“... such people may become princes or thieves, depending on whether they’re successful or not.” (DRM-I: 29)

Chapter 9  “貼的好燒餅” (HLM-I: 135)
“Bum-cake!
Bum-cake!
Let’s all have a
Bit to eat!” (SS-I: 208)
“Fine pancakes for sale. Come on, fellows, and buy one.” (DRM-I: 137)

Chapter 16  “人財兩空” (HLM-I: 202)
“the maid and eke the money gone” (SS-I: 303)
“... unlucky enough to lose both girl and money.” (DRM-I: 210)

Chapter 19  “便是朝廷宮裡，也有個定例” (HLM-I: 260)
“Even in palace hall
Law is the lord of all.” (SS-I: 387)
“Why, even in the Palace they make it a rule to [...]” (DRM-I: 275)

The Yangs give us, rather unimpressively:
Spiritual Abode of Lady Chin of the Chia Family, Consort of the Imperial Guard and Defender of the Palace Roads of the Inner Court of the Forbidden City, and Eldest Great-Great-Grandson of the Duke of Ningkuo Enfeoffed with the First Rank by the Heaven-Sent, Splendidly-Established, Long-Enduring Dynasty. (DRM-I: 195)

The term “to rub wheat cakes [together]” (tie shaobing 貼燒餅) is a euphemism for anal sex. For the etymology, see Wu Xiaolong, “Honglou meng ‘tie shaobing’ kaoshi” [On the Term “to rub wheat cakes [together]” in Honglou meng], Honglou meng xuekan 5 (2008): 336–40. Hawkes makes an effort to convey the double entendre, while the Yangs’s rendering hardly makes any sense.
The first and the third phrases are too commonplace to merit special treatment; the second and the fourth are not even idioms, and therefore have been mistaken for set phrases and accorded undue pomp.

Until now, the examples discussed have been but surface matters, and have hardly any bearing on the trajectory of the narrative. The situation becomes far more complicated when different levels of discourse and distinctive voices interact—or function dialogically, in Bakhtinian terminology.

To begin with, I quote a characteristic line of Qin Zhong 秦鈞, a young dandy, from Chapter 15, when the funeral procession for Qin Keqing stops at a small village for a rest and he cannot help ogling a local maid:

秦鈞暗拉寶玉笑道：“此卿大有意趣。” (HLM-I: 195)
Qin Zhong gave Bao-yu a sly tug:
“A comely damosel, thinkest thou nottest?” (SS-I: 292)
Chin Chung plucked at Pao-yu’s sleeve and whispered, “Isn’t she fun?” (DRM-I: 202)

The meaning of this remark is multi-layered: First, here we have a teenage schoolboy showing off his smattering of classical Chinese; second, to jest like this indicates his intimacy with Baoyu; third, he clearly does not want to be understood by the country bumpkins around him. All these layers of meaning are preserved in Hawkes’ rendering while the Yangs’ version hardly retains any of them.

Just like Qin Zhong, Jia Baoyu 賈寶玉, the male protagonist, also relishes speaking in a borrowed voice. In Chapter 23, his cousin Lin Daiyu 林黛玉 catches him reading *The Story of the West Wing* 西廂記, a light-hearted romance and therefore a banned item in a strictly-run Confucian household. In a moment of guilty pleasure and confused excitement, Baoyu confesses his pubescent love by lip-syncing the lines of Zhang Junrui 張君瑞, the handsome young scholar in the play:

寶玉笑道：“我就是個‘多愁多病身’，你就是那‘傾國傾城貌’。”林黛玉聽了，……指寶玉道：“你這該死的胡說!好好的把這淫詞豔曲弄了來，還學了這些混帳話來欺負我。我告訴舅舅舅母去。”……寶玉著了急，向前攔住說道：“好妹妹，千萬饒我這一遭，原是我說錯了。若有心欺負你，明兒我掉在池子裡，叫個癩頭黿吞了去，變個大忘八，等你明兒做了‘一品夫人’病老歸西的時候，我往你墳上替你馱一輩子的碑去。”說的林黛玉嗤的一聲笑了……：“一般也唬的這個調兒，還只管胡說。‘呸，原來是苗而不秀，是個銀樣蠟槍頭。’” (HLM-I: 315-6)

Bao-yu laughed:
“How can I, full of sickness and of woe,
Withstand that face which kingdoms could o’erthrow?’ [...] 
“You’re hateful!”—she pointed a finger at him in angry accusal—“deliberately using that horrid play to take advantage of me. I’m going straight off to tell Uncle and Aunt!’ 

[...] Bao-yu rushed after her and held her back:
“Please, please forgive me! Dearest coz! If I had the slightest intention of taking advantage of you, may I fall into the water and be eaten up by an old bald-headed turtle! When you have become a great lady and gone at last to your final resting-place, I shall become the stone turtle that stands in front of your grave and spend the rest of eternity carrying your tombstone on my back as a punishment!”
His ridiculous declamation provoked a sudden explosion of mirth [...] :
“Look at you—the same as ever! Scared as anything, but you still have to go on talking nonsense. Well, I know you now for what you are: ‘Of silver spear the leaden counterfeit!’” (SS-I: 464–5)

“I’m the one ‘sick with longing,’” he joked. “And yours is the beauty which caused ‘cities and kingdoms to fall.’”
Tai-yu [...] pointed a finger at Pao-yu in accusal.
“You really are the limit! Bringing such licentious songs in here and, what’s more, insulting me with nasty quotations from them. [...] I’m going to tell uncle and aunt.” [...] 
In dismay Pao-yu barred her way.
“Forgive me this once, dear cousin! I shouldn’t have said that. But if I meant to insult you, I’ll fall into the pond tomorrow and let the scabby-headed tortoise swallow me, so that I change into a big turtle myself. Then when you become a lady of the first rank and go at last to your paradise in the west, I shall bear the stone tablet at your grave on my back for ever.”
Tai-yu burst out laughing at this and wiped her eyes.
“You’re so easy to scare, yet still you indulge in talking such nonsense,” she teased. “Why, you’re nothing but ‘a flowerless sprout,’ ‘a lead spearhead that looks like silver.’” (DRM-I: 336–7.)

This episode is of particular interest because Baoyu, newly initiated into the world of romance, is still struggling to find a voice of his own. In a clumsy attempt at flirtation, he blurts out a pinched couplet, enraging the hypersensitive Daiyu. Ironically, the embarrassing bathos in the contrast between his high-register literary language and his ridiculous declaration marks his emergence, for both Daiyu and us, into articulate being with a voice that is distinctively his own. Daiyu, in her turn, teases him also with a quotation from this “nasty”
play, exploding her façade of prudence and bashfulness. As a result, the young couple become closer than ever.\(^{51}\) That they have to overcome the impulse to borrow someone else’s voice to reclaim themselves further attests to the author’s aversion to pastiche in the traditional sense.

Another comparable example is found in Chapter 37, when Baoyu receives two letters in succession, the first from his sister Tanchun 探春, suggesting that they form a poetry club, and the second from his distant cousin Jia Yun 賈芸, presenting him with a rare variety of crab flower. Tanchun’s letter is written in high-register literary (classical) Chinese replete with parallel structures and allusions, and Baoyu is deeply impressed by her elegant style. Jia Yun, on the other hand, is an aspiring young man of humble means and not versed in the classics. Since Baoyu has joked that Yun could be his son (though Yun is four or five years his senior), the latter plays along to please his rich cousin (Chapter 24). His letter is a hodgepodge of phrases classical and vernacular with many grammatical errors, which Baoyu naturally finds hilarious. Again, comedy is derived from bathos. In the original the beginnings of the two letters read respectively:

前夕新霽，月色如洗，因惜清景難逢，詎忍就臥，時漏已三轉，猶徘徊于桐檻之下，未防風露所欺，致獲采薪之患。

父親大人萬福金安。男思自蒙天恩，認于膝下，日夜思一孝順，竟無可孝順之處。（HLM-I: 486–8）

Hawkes gives us:

Some nights ago, when the moon came out in a sky freshly clear after the rain, the garden seemed veritably awash with moonlight, and sleep in the face of so rare a spectacle was unthinkable. Thrice the clepsydra had been turned, and still I lingered beneath the tall paulownias, reluctant to go in. But in the end the treacherous night air betrayed me, and by morning I was lamentably indisposed.

...  

Dear Father,  
I have the Honour to present my Humble Duty and hope this finds you as it leaves me in the Best of health, ever since you did me the great Kindness to recognize me as your Son I have been looking for some means of showing my ap-

\(^{51}\) A similar example is the epigraph at the beginning of this essay.
preciation of your great kindness but so far no opportunity has presented itself, to date. ... (SS-II: 214–5)

The Yangs translate:

The other night the moon was clear after the rain, and it seemed such a rare chance to enjoy the moonlight that I stayed up until midnight strolling under the trees. As a result, I caught a chill in the dew.

Your unworthy child Chia Yun sends his respectful greetings and wishes his noble father boundless health and happiness. Since I had the good fortune to become your son, I have been longing day and night to please you but found no way to show my filial piety. ... (DRM-I: 532–3)

Apparently only Hawkes makes an effort to reproduce the sound of high register in imitation of Tanchun’s elegant prose; he then seeks to recreate Yun’s clumsy style in English with constituent redundancy, abuse of capitals, and a mixture of formal and informal language. The contrast between the two different registers is retained in his rendering but is almost entirely lost in the Yangs’.

Lastly, we consider the question of voice. See for example this amusing episode from Chapter 20:

黛玉笑道：“偏是咬舌子愛說話，連個‘二’哥哥也叫不出來，只是‘愛’哥哥‘愛’哥哥的。回來趕圍棋兒，又該你鬧‘幺愛三四五’了。”……湘雲笑道：“這一輩子我自然比不上你。我只保佑著明兒得一個咬舌的林姐夫，時時刻刻你可聽‘愛’‘厄’去。阿彌陀佛，那才現在我眼裡！” (HLM-I: 277)

Daiyu burst out laughing:
“Lisping doesn’t seem to make you any less talkative! Listen to you: ‘Couthin!’ ‘Couthin!’ Presently, when you’re playing Racing Go, you’ll be all ‘thicktheth’ and ‘theventh!’” [...] 
“I shall never be a match for you as long as I live,” Xiang-yun said to Dai-yu with a disarming smile. “All I can thay ith that I hope you marry a lithping huthband, tho that you have ‘iithee-withee’ ‘iithee-withee’ in your earth every minute of the day. Ah, Holy Name! I think I can thee that blethed day already before my eyeth!” (SS-I: 412–3; emphases mine)

“The lisper loves to rattle away,” said Tai-yu with a laugh. “Fancy saying ai instead of erh like that. I suppose, when we start dicing, you’ll be shouting one, love, three, four, five...” [...]
“Naturally I’ll never come up to you in this lifetime. I just pray that you’ll marry a husband who talks like me, so that you hear nothing but ‘love’ the whole day long. Amida Buddha! May I live to see that day!” (DRM-I: 295–6; emphases in original)

Shi Xiangyun 史湘雲 is a talkative lisper. The quintessential ingenue, she often prattles away despite her thick tongue. In the Chinese original, her inarticulacy is manifest only when addressing Baoyu (“Second Elder Brother” [er gege 二哥哥]), yet Hawkes gives her a recurrent lisp. An English reader unable to read Chinese can easily understand this speech impediment—though technically speaking, to confuse “s” with “th” is different from confounding “ai” and “er.” Just like the onomatopoeias in martial arts fiction, the inclusion of acoustic details helps conjure up a more vivid vision of the young maid. By contrast, the Yangs try, rather awkwardly, to explain this joke with a footnote: “Erh means ‘two’ or ‘second’ and ai ‘love.’” (DRM-I: 295)

This little quirk of Xiangyun’s is brought into full play in Hawkes’ rendition of her rejoinder to Daiyu’s diatribe, as her quick wit and thick tongue complement each other in bringing her character into relief. By comparison, the Yangs’ version relies solely on the reader’s memory of the aforementioned footnote for dramatic effect.

Later in Hawkes’ translation, when Baoyu reaches out for the rouge-pot for a little taste, Xiangyun snaps at his hand and reprimands him: “Nathty habit!” (SS-I: 417; emphasis in original). One cannot help but burst out laughing.

However, Hawkes knows only too well the danger of overdoing it. In Chapter 22, after enraging Daiyu by pointing out the resemblance between her and an actress, Xiangyun enters into a lengthy, angry exchange with Baoyu. Instead of rendering every “s” as “th,” Hawkes has Xiangyun speak quite articulately but for the last word: “Don’t try it on me; it makes me thick!” (SS-I: 437; emphasis in original). In this particular case, to change every “s” into “th” would be sheer frivolity as well as a distraction, considering the serious nature of the conversation, so here Xiangyun speaks as clearly as anyone. Yet the finishing touch reminds us of who Xiangyun really is—the vivacious and innocent young girl that she will always be.

EPILOGUE

In the preceding pages, I have sought to furnish some preliminary thoughts on (1) the applicability of the Bakhtinian concepts of heteroglossia and dialogicality in the study of the classic Chinese novel; (2) the implications of such an approach for the evaluation of translations; and (3) the relative merits and demer-
its of the two English translations of A Dream of Red Mansions. I am fully aware
that it could easily take a book-length study to scrutinize any one of these top-
ics in any detail, but if I can bring a little more attention to these questions than
has been paid to date, I shall not have labored in vain.

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