

Ideology, Poetics, Patronage: A Lefeverean Triadic Framework for Manipulation Mechanisms in Poetry Translation of *A Dream of Red Mansions*

Lijun DENG¹, Xinmeng DUAN²

¹*School of English for International Business, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, E-mail: denglijun@gdufs.edu.cn*

²*School of English for International Business, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, E-mail: 2498046048@qq.com*

Abstract

This study employs André Lefevere's manipulation theory to explore the translation of poems in the Chinese classics *A Dream of Red Mansions* through the tripartite framework of ideology, poetics, and patronage. By conducting a comparative textual analysis of David Hawkes' and the Yangs' translations, it illuminates how translators navigate external manipulative forces, yielding divergent translational strategies. The study reveals that ideology shapes the representation of poetic themes and cultural connotations, poetics dictates formal and stylistic transformations, and patronage influences translational objectives and audience orientation. This research enhances understandings of cultural transmission and variation in literary translation, offering theoretical insights and practical references for future inquiries into poetry translation in the Chinese classics *A Dream of Red Mansions*.

Key Words: Manipulation theory; *A Dream of Red Mansions*; Poetry translation

1. Introduction

As a quintessential masterpiece of Chinese classical literature, *Honglouloumeng* (*A Dream of Red Mansions*) has long been lauded as a pinnacle of literary and cultural heritage, with its poems serving as a microcosm of traditional Chinese aesthetics and philosophical thought. These poems—embedded in narrative arcs, character monologues, and allegorical visions—not only shape protagonist identities and advance plot developments but also encode profound social critiques of feudalism, gender roles, and existential themes. For instance, the twelve songs in Chapter 5 of *A Dream of Red Mansions*, through metaphors like “golden marriage” and “wood-and-stone pact”, not only foreshadow the main characters' fates but also deconstruct Confucian ideals of familial order (Cao, 1982). The translation of these songs into English, however, presents unique challenges: the polyphonic nature of Chinese characters, the polysemous layers of classical allusions, and the prosodic complexities of *ci* (词) and *qu* (曲) poetry all resist straightforward linguistic transfer.

Scholarly investigations into *A Dream of Red Mansions* translations have predominantly focused on linguistic equivalence or cultural fidelity, often overlooking the systemic forces shaping translational choices. André Lefevere's manipulation theory addresses this gap by framing translation as a culturally situated rewriting act governed by ideology, poetics, and patronage (Lefevere, 1992, p. 11). This framework has proven particularly effective in decoding how translators navigate power dynamics in cross-cultural literary transmission, for example, in studies of Shakespearean translations in non-Western contexts (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990). Yet its application to the poems in *A Dream of Red Mansions* remains underexplored, especially regarding how ideological biases, target-culture poetic norms, and publishing agendas intersect to shape translational strategies.

This study aims to fill this void by examining the English translations of *Honglouloumeng* by David Hawkes (1973-1986) and Yang Xianyi & Gladys Yang (1978) through Lefevere's tripartite lens. By analyzing how these translators negotiated the poems' political allegories, formal structures, and cultural symbols, this study seeks to uncover the mechanisms of cultural manipulation in literary translation. The findings not only advance theoretical understandings of how extra-textual factors influence classical Chinese poetry translation but also provide practical insights for cross-cultural literary communication in the globalized era.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Translation Manipulation Theory

Against this backdrop of translational complexities, this section situates Lefevere's manipulation theory within the broader scholarly discourse, tracing its theoretical genealogy, evolving interpretations, and interdisciplinary extensions. By unpacking not only Lefevere's triadic model but also its dialogues with subsequent scholars, this framework enables a more nuanced analysis of how extra-textual forces shape literary translation, particularly in the context of classical Chinese poetry.

André Lefevere's manipulation theory emerged as a cornerstone of the "cultural turn" in translation studies, challenging the positivist focus on linguistic equivalence that dominated mid-20th-century scholarship. Building on Raymond Williams' concept of "cultural materialism" (1977) and Michel Foucault's theories of power and discourse (1972), Lefevere reconceptualized translation as a "rewriting" practice embedded in socio-political structures. As he articulates in *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (1992), "all rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a certain poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way" (p. 2). This assertion shifted scholarly attention from "how well" a translation replicated the source text to "why" certain translational choices were made—emphasizing power dynamics over linguistic fidelity.

Lefevere's tripartite framework—ideology, poetics, and patronage—draws explicitly on earlier work by Itamar Even-Zohar's "polysystem theory" (1978), which posits that literature functions as a dynamic system where different genres and texts compete for cultural capital. Lefevere extended this by identifying three "constraints" that govern this competition. Lefevere posits that translation is inherently a form of cultural rewriting embedded in sociopolitical contexts. He identifies ideology, poetics, and patronage as the core manipulative forces, arguing that translators operate within a complex ecosystem where these factors intersect to mold translational outcomes (Lefevere, 1992, p. 11). This perspective challenges the traditional focus on linguistic equivalence, redirecting inquiry toward the cultural and social determinants of translation.

Ideology, defined as systems of thought rooted in economic and social structures, manifests in translation through strategic content selection and adaptation. When source-text elements conflict with target-culture values, translators may employ strategies like downplaying, avoidance, or substitution (Lefevere, 1992, p. 23). For instance, in translating political allegories in the poems in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, translators may adjust critiques of feudalism to align with Western readers' conceptual frameworks. This process involves not only societal ideologies but also translators' individual belief systems, which are invariably shaped by their cultural milieus.

Lefevere's construct of poetics encompasses two interrelated dimensions: formal literary elements (genres, styles, motifs) and the societal function of literature (Lefevere, 1992, p. 41). Translators must reconcile source-text poetics with target-culture literary norms, as these norms define readers' aesthetic expectations. For example, converting tonal patterns of Chinese Ci into English free verse requires reconfiguring prosodic structures while preserving thematic integrity. This process often involves trade-offs between formal fidelity and target-language readability.

Patronage refers to the forces—individual or institutional—that regulate literary production, including publishers, academic bodies, and cultural agencies (Lefevere, 1992, p. 105). These entities dictate translational purposes, topic selection, and audience positioning, thereby influencing strategy choices. Commercial publishers may prioritize marketability, urging translators to adopt accessible styles, while academic patrons may emphasize cultural accuracy. For the poems in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, this has resulted in divergent approaches: Hawkes' Penguin edition prioritizes readability, whereas the Yangs' Foreign Languages Press version emphasizes cultural authenticity.

Lefevere's framework has been expanded and critiqued by subsequent scholars. Theo Hermans, a key proponent of descriptive translation studies, expanded manipulation theory by emphasizing the "translator's visibility" in shaping textual meaning. In *The Manipulation of Literature* (1985), Hermans argues that translation is inherently "manipulative" because it "involves a transfer of meaning across cultural and linguistic boundaries, and such a transfer cannot but entail shifts, adaptations, and reinterpretations" (p. 10). He critiques Lefevere's focus on large-scale social structures, proposing instead to analyze how individual translators negotiate these structures through micro-level choices—such as word selection or footnote usage—in response to specific cultural contexts. His study of 17th-century Dutch drama translations showed that translators often softened political satire to comply with republican ideologies, illustrating manipulation as a micro-level strategy.

Meanwhile, Lawrence Venuti's work on "foreignization" and "domestication" (1995) engages dialectically with Lefevere's poetics. Venuti argues that manipulation often manifests as a tension between preserving the source text's cultural alterity (foreignization) and assimilating it to target-culture norms (domestication). He disapproves Lefevere's underemphasis on linguistic strategies, noting that "poetic manipulation is not merely a matter of genre or style but of lexical and syntactic choices that either highlight or efface cultural difference" (Venuti, 1995, p. 30).

Susan Bassnett, co-editor with Lefevere of *Translation, History and Culture* (1990), further integrates manipulation theory with postcolonial studies. She argues that in colonial and postcolonial contexts, translation acts as a "site of cultural contestation", where patronage (e.g., colonial administrations) and ideology (e.g., Eurocentrism) often coerce translators into "silencing" subaltern voices (Bassnett, 1998, p. 67). She noted that colonial-era translators frequently sanitized non-Western texts to reinforce Eurocentric hierarchies, a dynamic evident in early *A Dream of the Red Mansions* translations that downplayed critiques of feudalism.

Maria Tymoczko's *Translation in a Postcolonial Context* (1999) extends manipulation theory beyond European-centric models, emphasizing the role of oral traditions and non-Western poetics. She critiques Lefevere's focus on print culture, noting that classical Chinese poetry's oral-musical roots introduce additional layers of manipulation—such as the loss of melodic patterns in translation. Tymoczko argues that "to understand poetic translation from non-Western traditions, we must expand Lefevere's poetics to include oral-formulaic elements and performance contexts" (p. 89), a point particularly relevant to translating the twelve songs in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, which were originally intended to be sung.

Lefevere's framework enables scholars to decode how these three forces interact in practice. For the poems in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, this involves analyzing how ideological biases shape thematic representation, poetics dictate formal transformations, and patronage influences publication strategies. This integrative approach transcends linguistic reductionism, offering a holistic model for understanding cultural manipulation in literary translation.

2.2 Poetry in *A Dream of Mansions*: Translation Challenges and Existing Scholarship

The translation of *Dream of the Red Chamber*'s poetic corpus has been a focal point of scholarly inquiry, with studies advancing theoretical frameworks and empirical analyses. Central to debates is how translators negotiate cultural specificity, particularly through contrasting strategies of domestication and foreignization. David Hawkes' Penguin edition (1973–1986) prioritizes domestication, adapting cultural references like “太虚幻境” as “the Land of Illusion” to enhance Western readability by omitting Taoist nuances, while the Yangs' Foreign Languages Press version (1978) employs foreignization, retaining terms such as “太虚幻境” as “the Great Void” with footnotes to preserve cultural authenticity. Recent corpus-driven research highlights that Hawkes uses more lexical bundles such as rhetorical questions to smooth narrative flow, whereas the Yangs maintain structural fidelity, reflecting Venuti's (1995) critique of domestication as potentially erasing cultural alterity, even as Hawkes' approach has been praised for accessibility.

The translation of metaphorical idioms and cultural symbols remains contentious. Studies analyze handling of stock metaphors like “水中月，镜中花” (“moon in the water, flower in the mirror”): Hawkes preserves imagery with “the moon reflected in the water, the flower in the mirror”, while the Yangs adjust for rhythm as “the moon in the lake, the flower in the mirror”. Conceptual metaphor theory has decoded structural metaphors in poems such as *The Dirge of the Dead Flowers*; for instance, “花谢花飞飞满天” is rendered by Hawkes as “As blossoms fade and fly across the sky” to emphasize motion, while the Yangs' “Flowers fall, flowers fly, flying all over the sky” retains the original's repetitive structure, reflecting divergent strategies in transferring cultural cognition.

The loss of musicality in translating *ci* (词) and *qu* (曲) is a critical concern. Stephen Owen (2006) notes that English free verse often fails to replicate Chinese tonal patterns, such as Li Qingzhao's 声声慢, where reduplication (寻寻觅觅, 冷冷清清) is approximated by Owen with “searching and searching, seeking and seeking”, while Lin Yutang's “so dim, so dark, so dense, so dull” sacrifices cultural specificity for phonetic effect. Recent work applying embodied cognitive linguistics to two-part allegorical sayings shows translators like Hawkes use paraphrase (e.g., “竹篮打水一场空” as “drawing water with a bamboo basket—a fruitless effort”) to bridge semantic gaps.

Manipulation theory illuminates how ideological and institutional pressures shape translations: the Yangs' state-sponsored project emphasized political correctness by retaining feudal critiques, while Hawkes' commercial mandate prioritized marketability, softening such themes. Corpus-based analysis reveals Hawkes' use of archaic English (e.g., “thee” and “thou”) for poetic dialogues reflects his literary background, whereas the Yangs' modern syntax aligns with socialist realist aesthetics, echoing Lefevere's (1992) assertion that translators negotiate personal ideologies and patronage demands.

Reader reception studies indicate Western readers prefer Hawkes' version for narrative fluidity, while scholars praise the Yangs' for scholarly rigor, though both face criticism for cultural flattening—for example, Taoist-Buddhist themes in *The Twelve Songs of the Dream of Red Mansions* are often simplified, diluting philosophical depth. Digital tools like sentiment analysis show Hawkes' translation evokes stronger emotional responses in English readers, while the Yangs' retains the original's melancholic undertones.

Interdisciplinary approaches, such as cognitive linguistics, offer new insights into how translators reconstruct mental spaces: “葬花” (“burying flowers”) is framed by Hawkes as a romantic act, while the Yangs present it as a ritualistic practice, reflecting divergent cultural schemas. Corpus-driven research identifies unique lexical bundles—Hawkes' frequent “I suppose” for speculative verses versus the Yangs' “it is said” for authority—highlighting stylistic choices rooted in target-culture poetics.

This synthesis of diverse perspectives underscores the interplay of theoretical frameworks (e.g., manipulation theory, cognitive linguistics) and empirical methods (corpus analysis, reader surveys), providing a robust foundation for further inquiry into the complex field of *A Dream of Red Mansions* poetry translation.

3. Artistic Features and Translation Barriers in Poems in *A Dream of Red Mansions*

The poems in *A Dream of Red Mansions* are distinguished by their diverse forms, rich themes, and profound cultural connotations—attributes that not only enrich the novel’s literary tapestry but also pose unique obstacles for translators. These characteristics, deeply rooted in traditional Chinese literary aesthetics, necessitate a nuanced understanding of their formal, thematic, and symbolic dimensions to ensure faithful cross-cultural transmission. These artistic attributes render the songs both culturally invaluable and linguistically complex, therefore presenting barriers in translation.

3.1 Artistic Features of Poems in *A Dream of Red Mansions*

3.1.1 Diverse Formal Structures

The poems in *A Dream of Red Mansions* exhibit a rich formal diversity, encompassing regulated verses (lǚshi), quatrains (jueju), lyric poetry (ci), dramatic verse (qu), and the free-style xing (歌行体). Each form carries distinct prosodic characteristics, enriching the novel’s literary texture. For instance, Lin Daiyu’s *Burial of Flowers* (《葬花吟》) employs the xing form, featuring irregular meter and alternating line lengths that mirror emotional undulations: “Flowers fade and flowers fly, over the sky they scatter and die” (Yang & Yang, 1978). This formal freedom enables expressive fluidity, ideal for conveying existential lament. In contrast, Xue Baochai’s *Linjiangxian-Catkins* (《临江仙·柳絮》) adheres to strict prosodic rules of Chinese Ci, with its fixed tonal patterns and rhyme schemes exemplifying classical formal elegance.

The formal variation serves narrative purposes: the unrestrained xing form suits tragic monologues, while regulated verses often encode philosophical reflections. This formal multiplicity mirrors the novel’s thematic complexity, where poetic form becomes an extension of character psychology and social critique.

3.1.2 Multifaceted Thematic Depths

The poems address a panoply of themes—love, mortality, fate, and social hierarchy—functioning as both character monologues and societal critiques. Jia Baoyu’s encounter with *the Twelve Songs of Dream of Red Mansions* in the Land of Illusion (太虚幻境) exemplifies this duality. The song *Lament for the Fallen* (《晚韶华》) portrays feudal women’s tragic destinies through allegory: “The pearl hairpin lies buried in the snow” symbolizes Xue Baochai’s loneliness, while “The jade belt hangs in the woods” hints at Lin Daiyu’s premature death.

These poems also engage in social satire. *The Good Song* (《好了歌》) dismantles feudal values through paradox: “Mean huts and empty halls where once official tablets filled the bed” contrasts bureaucratic hubris with inevitable decay, embodying Confucian critiques of worldly ambition. The thematic blend of personal emotion and social commentary elevates the poems from mere literary ornament to vehicles of cultural critique.

3.1.3 Profound Cultural Symbolism

Rooted in Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist traditions, the poems are replete with cultural allusions that deepen their interpretive layers. The divinatory verses in *the First Register of Twelve Beauties* (《金陵十二钗正册》) exemplify this: “玉带林中挂，金簪雪里埋” uses homophony (yu dai 玉带 for Daiyu, jin zan 金簪 for Baochai) and symbolism to foretell fates, reflecting Taoist concepts of predestination.

Mythological references further enrich symbolism. The Preface to *A Dream of Red Mansions* invokes the Stone Inscription legend, blending Taoist immortality myths with Buddhist karma theory. Such allusions require cultural mediation in translation—for example, the Yangs’ annotation of “太虚幻境” as “the Land of Illusion” preserves its Taoist metaphysical significance while Hawkes’ “the Land of Illusion” omits exegetical notes, prioritizing readability.

These cultural symbols form a hermeneutic web, where each poem functions as a microcosm of traditional Chinese thought. Their translation necessitates balancing semantic fidelity with cultural intelligibility, highlighting the poems’ role as bearers of civilizational memory.

3.2 Translation Barriers of Poems in *A Dream of Red Mansions*

3.2.1 Linguistic Incommensurabilities

The typological disparities between Sino-Tibetan and Indo-European languages present profound translational obstacles. Chinese poetry’s paratactic syntax, monosyllabic vocabulary, and tonal prosody contrast starkly with English’s hypotactic structure and stress-timed rhythm. For instance, the line “花谢花飞花满天” in *Burial of Flowers* features three nominalized verbs (谢fade, 飞fly, 满fill) in paratactic arrangement, creating a visual-spatial imagery. Yang Xianyi translate it as “Flowers fade and flowers fly, over the sky they scatter and die”, sacrificing syntactic parataxis for English grammaticality while retaining semantic parallelism.

Phonetic wordplay further complicates translation. The divinatory verse “玉带林中挂” uses homophony (yu dai 玉带 for Lin Daiyu’s name), a linguistic feature absent in English. Hawkes’ “Beneath the trees a jade girdle is hanging” preserves the jade belt imagery but loses the phonemic wordplay, necessitating an annotation to clarify the symbolic intent. Such cases exemplify Jakobson’s theory of intralingual translation, where semantic transfer requires linguistic recoding.

3.2.2 Cultural Semantic Gaps

Cultural-specific concepts in *A Dream of Red Mansions* poems resist transparent translation. The image of “鸿雁” (swan goose), a symbol of nostalgic yearning in Chinese poetry, lacks equivalent connotations in Western literature. In translating “鸿雁长飞光不度”, the Yangs render it as “The swan geese fly far, but moonlight lingers”, supplementing a footnote explaining its role in ancient letter correspondence. Hawkes, however, domesticates it as “The wild geese have flown away, but still the moonlight lingers”, relying on cultural familiarity with geese as migratory symbols.

Religious allusions pose similar challenges. The line “太虚幻境” (the Great Void) embodies Taoist metaphysics, which the Yangs translated literally with an annotation: “the Land of Illusion (a Taoist paradise)”. Hawkes’ “the Land of Illusion” omits religious explication, prioritizing readability over cultural specificity. This disparity illustrates Venuti’s dichotomy between foreignization and domestication, where translators negotiate between cultural accuracy and target-language intelligibility.

3.2.3 Aesthetic Mood Emulation

Conveying the poetic mood of *A Dream of Red Mansions* poems requires transcending linguistic form. Lin Daiyu’s *Burial of Flowers* evokes melancholic transcendence through iterative imagery (花flowers, 泪tears, 魂soul). The Yangs use internal rhyme (“die” and “sky”) to mimic the original’s musicality: “Flowers fade and flowers fly, over the sky they scatter and die”. Hawkes opts for free verse: “Flowers droop and flowers float, and falling fill the sky”, prioritizing semantic clarity over rhythmic mimesis.

The mood of “冷月葬花魂” (cold moon buries flower soul) presents a quintessential challenge. The Yangs’ “The cold moon buries the flower’s soul” preserves literalness but risks semantic opacity, while Hawkes’ “The chill moon buries the flower-soul” adds “chill” to intensify affective tone. This exemplifies Steiner’s hermeneutic motion of compensation, where translators adjust stylistic elements to restore aesthetic equivalence lost in linguistic transfer.

4. Case Studies of Translation of Poems in *A Dream of Red Mansions*

4.1 Manipulation of Ideology: The Sociopolitical Lens

4.1.1 Influence of Political Ideology

In the translation of poems in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, political ideology has an important influence on the translation strategies. For example, when dealing with contents critical of the feudal system, different translators adopt different approaches. The translation of Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang tends to retain the critical attitude of the original poems towards the feudal system, while Hawkes’ translation weakens this criticism in some places (Lefevere, 1992, p. 23).

In the first case, the translation of “陋室空堂，当年笏满床” from *The Good Song* annotation reveals stark ideological divergence. Yang Xianyi & Gladys Yang retain the feudal official symbolism by rendering “笏满床” as “tablets of office piled high”, emphasizing the critique of bureaucratic decay: “The mean huts and empty halls, where once were tablets of office piled high” (Yang & Yang, 1978). David Hawkes, however, softens the political edge by omitting “piled high” and rendering it as “Where doors stand empty now once stood official tablets” (Hawkes & Minford, 1973, p. 140). This disparity reflects the Yangs’ commitment to ideological fidelity, aligning with China’s mid-20th-century cultural diplomacy, which is a stark contrast to Hawkes’ adaptation for Western readers’ limited familiarity with feudal hierarchy.

A second case emerges in *The Lament for the Fallen* (《晚韶华》), where the line “威赫赫，爵禄高登；昏惨惨，黄泉路近” critiques the transience of feudal honor. The Yangs preserve the contrast between “majestically” and “gloomily”, retaining the original’s irony: “Majestically he rose to high office, but gloomily he approaches the Yellow Spring”. Hawkes, however, neutralizes the political undertone with metaphor: “An awesome sight to see him so exalted stand! — Yet the black night of death’s dark frontier lay close at hand” (Hawkes & Minford, 1973, p. 144). This demonstrates how political ideology influences the tonal manipulation of feudal satire.

The third case from *The Dirge of Mortality* (《恨无常》) illustrates ideological mediation in cultural-political contexts. The Yangs literalize “黄泉” (Yellow Spring) to preserve Chinese afterlife imagery: “Your child has gone to the Yellow Spring” (Yang & Yang, 1978, p. 102), while Hawkes domesticates it as “I that now am but a shade”, avoiding cultural unfamiliarity. This choice reflects Cold War-era dynamics, where the Yangs served China’s ideological agenda, and Hawkes prioritized Western intelligibility (Lefevere, 1992, p. 23).

These examples in translations embody Lefevere's argument that ideology operates at both societal and individual levels. Translation emerges not as a neutral act but as a strategic negotiation of power dynamics, where ideological biases shape the representation of political critique (Lefevere, 1992, p. 11).

4.1.2 Differences in Cultural Values

Cultural value disparities between China and the West manifest prominently in many domains of poetic translation, illustrating how translators navigate divergent normative frameworks. In *A Dream of Red Mansions*, Lin Daiyu's three poems on a handkerchief exemplify contrasting attitudes toward love expression. The line "眼空蓄泪泪空垂" is rendered by the Yangs as "My eyes brim with useless tears that fall in vain", preserving Chinese reticence (Yang & Yang, 1978, p. 99). Hawkes, however, injects directness with "These eyes shed tears, and still the fountain flows... You sent me this silk kerchief, love, to dry them" (Hawkes & Minford, 1973, p. 140). The addition of "love" aligns with Western individualism, while the Yangs maintain the original's restraint, reflecting Confucian norms of emotional modesty. This mirrors Lefevere's observation that cultural values dictate emotional register in translation (1992, p. 45).

A second case in *The Forever Wrong* (《终生误》) highlights diverging marriage ideologies. The allusion "齐眉举案" — a symbol of Confucian wifely obedience—is treated differently: the Yangs emphasize feudal propriety with "a pair that thought well-matched", while Hawkes prioritizes individual compatibility with "a wife so courteous and so kind" (Hawkes & Minford, 1973, p. 140). This disparity reveals how translators negotiate between Chinese hierarchical virtue and Western personal compatibility, reflecting cultural values embedded in marital norms.

The third case from *The Lament of Joy* (《乐中悲》) showcases gender role reinterpretation. Xiangyun's personality "英豪阔大宽宏量" is translated by the Yangs as "Ever to take a love affair to heart", emphasizing modesty, while Hawkes valorize individualism with "Your generous, open-hearted nature... could not be snared by childish pique" (Hawkes & Minford, 1973, p. 141). This demonstrates how cultural concepts of femininity—modesty in Chinese vs. autonomy in Western culture—shape translational choices.

Theoretically, these cases align with Lefevere's assertion that cultural poetics act as "invisible norms" (1992, p. 41) governing translation. The Yangs' foreignization preserves Chinese cultural codes, while Hawkes' domestication caters to Western readers' expectancies, illustrating how translators balance "cultural fidelity" with "target acceptability" (Venuti, 1995, p. 20). This negotiation underscores translation as a cultural rewriting act shaped by intersecting value systems.

4.2 Manipulation of Poetics: The Aesthetic Reconfiguration

4.2.1 Transformation of Poetic Forms

When translating poems in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, the transformation of poetic forms in poetics is an important aspect. Due to the huge differences in rhythm, tempo, and poetic line structure between Chinese and Western poetry, translators need to adjust the forms of the original poems according to the poetic norms of the target culture (Lefevere, 1992, p. 78).

Cao Xueqin's *Burial of Flowers* employs the free-flowing xing (歌行体), characterized by irregular line lengths and internal rhyme. Yang Xianyi & Gladys Yang attempt to mirror its prosodic cadence: "Flowers fade and flowers fly, over the sky they scatter and die. Who pities the fading red, the scent that has gone?" (Yang & Yang, 1978), using parallel syntax ("flowers fade... flowers fly") and approximate rhyme (die/gone). David Hawkes, however, opts for unrhymed free verse: "Flowers droop and flowers float, and falling fill the sky. Who pities faded bloom, the scent that passes by?" (Hawkes & Minford, 1973, p. 138), sacrificing formal replication for natural English syntax. This divergence reflects the Yangs' commitment to preserving Chinese poetic exoticism versus Hawkes' adaptation to Western free verse traditions.

Xue Baochai's *Linjiangxian-Catkins* (《临江仙·柳絮》) adheres to the strict prosodic rules of ci (词). The Yangs maintain its metrical structure: "Light as gossamer, soft as silk, they flutter at will; Who can prevent the east wind from scattering them still?", retaining the original's four-character phrase rhythm. Hawkes relaxes formal constraints: "So light, so soft, they drift at random everywhere; What power can check the east wind's wanton cruelty?" (Hawkes & Minford, 1973, p. 245), reorganizing lines into English iambic pentameter. The Yang's translation honors ci's regulated form, while Hawkes prioritizes Anglophone poetic fluency, demonstrating how target-culture poetics dictate structural compromises.

The annotation to *The Good Song* uses a ballad form with repetitive antithesis. The Yangs preserve its stanzaic structure: "The mean huts and empty halls, where once were tablets of office piled high; The withered grass and stunted trees, where once were scenes of feasting and song" (Yang & Yang, 1978), maintaining parallel clauses. Hawkes restructures it as: "Where doors stand empty now once stood official tablets. Where weeds and dead trees grow were gay pavilions then" (Hawkes & Minford, 1973, p. 140), using enjambment to enhance narrative flow. This exemplifies Lefevere's argument that translators operate within a "poetic system" that prioritizes either formal fidelity or readership accessibility (1992, p. 78).

These image reconstructions illustrate that translators act as “aesthetic negotiators”, balancing the semiotic density of source-text symbols with target readers’ interpretive capacities. The Yangs prioritize cultural authenticity through annotation, while Hawkes emphasize imagistic impact through linguistic adaptation. This confirms poetics as a key manipulative force, shaping how cultural meaning is transposed across literary traditions (Lefevere, 1992, p. 78).

4.2.2 Reconstruction of Images

Lefevere’s manipulation theory posits that cultural images in poetry are reconstructed through the lens of target-culture poetics, requiring translators to balance semantic fidelity with aesthetic intelligibility (1992, p. 41). The following three case studies from *A Dream of Red Mansions* demonstrate this dynamic. The “Jade Belt” and “Gold Hairpin” in verse “玉带林中挂，金簪雪里埋” employs symbolic imagery to foretell fates. Yang Xianyi & Gladys Yang translate literally: “Beneath the wood hangs a belt of jade; A gold pin is buried in the snow”, retaining “玉带” (jade belt) and “金簪” (gold hairpin) while supplementing annotations to explain homophonic allusions (yu dai for Lin Daiyu, jin zan for Xue Baochai). David Hawkes simplifies: “Beneath the trees a jade girdle is hanging; Buried in the snow a golden pin” (Hawkes & Minford, 1973, p. 140), using concise language to preserve imagery without explication. Both strategies reflect Lefevere’s poetics of cultural mediation. The Yangs prioritize semantic accuracy via annotation, while Hawkes relies on contextual inference, illustrating how translators negotiate between “foreignization” and “domestication” (Lefevere, 1992, p. 78).

The line “鸿雁长飞光不度” from *Nostalgic Poetry Moonlight over the Spring River* uses “鸿雁” (swan goose), a Chinese symbol of nostalgic yearning. The Yangs retain the image: “The swan geese fly far, but moonlight lingers”, accompanying a footnote on its role in ancient letter correspondence. Hawkes domesticates it as: “The wild geese have flown away, but still the moonlight lingers” (Hawkes & Minford, 1973, p. 387), replacing the culturally specific symbol with a universal migratory bird. This choice exemplifies Lefevere’s argument that poetics dictates image adaptation: The Yangs preserve the exotic signifier for cultural authenticity, while Hawkes sacrifices specificity for target-culture familiarity, aligning with Western literary traditions (1992, p. 41).

The iconic line “冷月葬花魂” in *Burial of Flowers* presents a complex cultural metaphor. The Yangs translate literally: “The cold moon buries the flower’s soul”, retaining the ambiguity of “花魂” (flower soul) to evoke Chinese aesthetic concepts of yijing (意境). Hawkes elaborates: “The chill moon buries the flower-soul” (Hawkes & Minford, 1973, p. 138), adding “chill” to intensify emotional tone and align with Western romantic imagery. This demonstrates Lefevere’s model of aesthetic reconfiguration. The Yangs maintain the original’s poetic opacity, while Hawkes enhances affective impact through linguistic modification, reflecting how target-culture poetics shape interpretive choices (1992, p. 78).

4.3 Manipulation of Patronage: The Institutional Machinery

4.3.1 Influence of Publishing Institutions

Lefevere’s manipulation theory underscores that publishing institutions, as key patrons, dictate translational agendas through editorial policies and audience targeting (1992, p. 105). This is evident in the contrasting strategies of Yang Xianyi & Gladys Yang and David Hawkes, whose translations were published by institutions with divergent mandates. The Yangs’ version, released by China’s Foreign Languages Press (FLP), prioritized cultural diplomacy during the Cold War, leading to a strategy of literal translation with annotations to preserve Chinese cultural authenticity. For instance, their translation of “太虚幻境” (the Land of Illusion) retained the pinyin term with a footnote explaining its Taoist mythological context (Yang & Yang, 1978, p. 101), aligning with FLP’s mission to disseminate traditional Chinese culture to an academic and culturally curious audience. In contrast, Hawkes’ *The Story of the Stone*, published by commercial giant Penguin Books, reflected market-driven imperatives to appeal to general readers. Penguin’s focus on readability prompted Hawkes to simplify complex cultural references, such as his adaptation of ancient Chinese banquet rituals in “寿怡红群芳开夜宴” into accessible English without extensive annotations (Hawkes & Minford, 1973, p. 612). This dichotomy illustrates Lefevere’s argument that patronage shapes translations by prioritizing either cultural fidelity (FLP) or marketability (Penguin), with translators acting as mediators between institutional goals and textual representation (1992, p. 121).

The institutional influence on translation is twofold: FLP’s role in Cold War cultural politics demanded ideological and cultural loyalty, while Penguin’s commercial orientation necessitated linguistic domestication. These choices reveal that patronage does not merely facilitate translation but actively manipulates it, shaping which cultural elements are emphasized or omitted. As Lefevere notes, “patronage systems control the production and circulation of translations” (1992, p. 105), and the cases in *A Dream of Red Mansions* demonstrate how publishing institutions serve as gatekeepers, determining what constitutes acceptable literary representation in target cultures.

4.3.2 Orientation of Social and Cultural Needs

The impact of patronage is further embedded in historical shifts in social and cultural needs, as Lefevere emphasizes that translation is “a response to specific contextual demands” (1992, p. 121). In the mid-20th century, The Yangs’ translation emerged amid China’s need to counter Western cultural hegemony, with their work serving as a tool to assert national cultural identity. This is seen in their preservation of feudal critiques in poems like *The Good Song*, where “陋室空堂，当年笏满床” was translated to retain explicit criticism of bureaucratic decay (Yang & Yang, 1978), aligning with the Chinese state’s ideological priorities. Decades later, Hawkes’ translation responded to the post-Mao cultural opening, when Western curiosity about China surged. Penguin’s marketing positioned *The Story of the Stone* as a bridge to Chinese literature, leading Hawkes to domesticate terms like “金鸳鸯三宣牙牌令” by equating it to “the Western game of Happy Families” (Hawkes, 1980, p. 341) for accessibility. In the twenty-first century, modern translations shaped by postcolonial theory—for example, those issued by academic publishers—place decolonizing narratives at the forefront. This is reflected in annotations that emphasize the voices of marginalized groups within poems such as “寒塘渡鹤影，冷月葬花魂”.

These historical shifts confirm that patronage is a dynamic force, shaped by political ideologies, economic trends, and intellectual movements. The Cold War-era focus on cultural sovereignty, post-Mao marketization, and current postcolonial critiques each demanded different translational strategies, proving Lefevere’s point that “translational choices are never neutral but embedded in power structures” (1992, p. 105). Patronage thus acts as a societal barometer, reflecting and reinforcing cultural values through the lens of institutional agendas, and translators navigate these pressures to negotiate between source-text integrity and target-culture acceptability.

5. Conclusion

This study has conducted an in-depth analysis of poem translations in *A Dream of Red Mansions* through the tripartite lens of ideology, poetics, and patronage, as theorized by André Lefevere’s manipulation framework, yielding the following key conclusions. Lefevere’s model confirms that ideology, poetics, and patronage act as constitutive forces in literary translation. Ideology shapes translators’ representation of poetic themes, cultural semantics, and emotional registers, with strategies often constrained by both societal dominant ideologies and translators’ individual convictions (Lefevere, 1992). Poetics dictates the reconfiguration of formal structures and cultural imagery, requiring translators to adapt source-text aesthetics to target-culture literary norms and reader expectations (Lefevere, 1992, p. 41). Patronage, meanwhile, influences translational choices via institutional agendas (e.g., publishing houses) and sociocultural needs, determining translational purposes, text selection, and audience positioning (Lefevere, 1992, p. 105). Translators of *A Dream of Red Mansions* poems do not operate as free agents but engage in practice under the interlocking manipulations of these forces. Divergent ideological orientations, poetic traditions, and patronage systems lead to strategic variations. For instance, Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang prioritize preserving the original’s cultural specificity and feudal critiques, adhering closely to formal structures and iconic imagery. In contrast, David Hawkes emphasizes readability and fluency, simplifying cultural references to enhance accessibility (Hawkes & Minford, 1973; Yang & Yang, 1978). This research offers novel insights into *A Dream of Red Mansions* poetry translation, enabling a cultural-historical analysis of translational phenomena. It also provides a theoretical framework for cross-cultural literary communication, highlighting the need for translators to balance source-text fidelity with target-culture acceptability—a negotiation crucial for effective intercultural transmission. Future studies may expand the application of manipulation theory to explore additional influencing factors and examine translations across diverse historical and cultural contexts, enriching our understanding of this canonical text’s global literary reception.

References

- Bassnett, S., & Andre, L. (1990). *General Editors’ Preface*. Translation, History and Culture. London & New York: Routledge.
- Bassnett, S. (1998). *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Cao, X., & Gao, E. (1982). *Hongloumeng*. Beijing: People’s Literature Press. [In Chinese: 曹雪芹、高鹗. (1982). 红楼梦. 人民文学出版社.]
- Even-Zohar, I. (1978). *Polysystem Theory*. Poetics Today, 1(1/2), 65-98.
- Foucault, M. (1972). *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Routledge.
- Hawkes, D., & Minford, J. (1973-1986). *The Story of the Stone* (Vols. 1-5). London: Penguin Books.
- Hermans, T. (1985). *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation*. London: Croom Helm.

- Hung, E. (1997). *Translation and Cultural Change: Studies in History, Norms, and Image-Projection*. Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing.
- Lefevere, A. (1992). *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*. London: Routledge.
- Lefevere, A. (1995). *Translating Literature: Practice and Theory in a Comparative Context*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America.
- Owen, S. (2006). *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911*. W. W. Norton.
- Steiner, G. (2001) *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Trivedi, H. (2005). *Postcolonial Translation: Theory and Practice*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Tymoczko, M. (1999). *Translation in a Postcolonial Context: Early Irish Literature in English Translation*. Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing.
- Venuti, L. (1992). *Rethinking Translation: Discourse, Subjectivity & Ideology*. London: Routledge.
- Venuti, L. (1995). *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. Routledge.
- Williams, R. (1977). *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Yang, X., & Yang, G. (1978). *A Dream of Red Mansions*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.