In Search of the Awakening of Females' Self-Consciousness: David Hawkes' Feminist Philosophical Construction in Hongloumeng's English Translation

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Abstract: There is a close relationship between literary translation and philosophy. Hongloumeng, one of four classical novels in China, has gained much popularity in both Chinese literature and world literature. Its popularity in English countries cannot do without its English translations and impressive philosophical value. Among a range of English versions, Hawkes' translation is widely known and accepted by English readers. The description related to females occupies an important part of Hongloumeng. When dealing with the translation about females, Hawkes adopts the translation strategies of both fidelity and adaption. Based on the theory of feminist philosophy, I construct a feminist philosophical model of literary translation. Then this study analyzes both female characterization in Hawkes' translation texts and the reasons for his translation choice. On one hand, Hawkes is loyal to the original text, conveying females' conservative and dependent images. On the other hand, he makes feminist awareness more prominent in his translation, attaining the awakening of females' self-consciousness. To some extent, Hawkes transcends the public and private dichotomy. In his translation, females have the chance to read books, compose poems, and even manage household affairs. His feminist thoughts reflect intersectionality in philosophy, which reveals the awakening of females' self-consciousness in various social categories, such as race, class, age, and so on. Quite a few characters, such as Lin Daiyu, Xue Baochai, and Wang Xifeng, serve as the best examples. Hawkes' personal experience and translation purposes are the main reasons to explain his translation choice.
Keywords: Feminist Philosophy, Literary Translation, Hongloumeng, Female Characters

1. INTRODUCTION

The translation of literary works not only bridges languages but also cultures, ideologies, and philosophies. Among the numerous translations of Chinese literary classics into English, David Hawkes' version of Hongloumeng (Cao & Gao, 2005), stands out for its fidelity and expressiveness. Hawkes' translation version of Hongloumeng, titled The Story of the Stone, is highly praised and accepted in English countries. Hawkes just translated the first eighty chapters, and his student, also his son-in-law, John Minford translated the remaining forty chapters. Due to

the case that this version is usually referred to as Hawkes' translation version in the academic realm and this paper mainly focuses on the first eighty chapters' English translation, I prefer to, unless particular explanations are made, use Hawkes' translation to stand for this version. Hawkes, a British sinologist, undertook this monumental task after an extensive academic career that included teaching positions at Oxford and a deep immersion in Chinese language and culture at Peking University in the 1950s. His background in both classical and modern Chinese literature equipped him uniquely for the challenge of translating the complex and culturally rich novel—Hongloumeng. Hawkes' translation techniques are notable for their attempt to faithfully preserve stories and plots of the original text. He meticulously conveyed characters' appearances, clothes, personalities, and so on, endeavoring to keep the cultural nuances and the emotional depth intact. His translation is particularly distinguished by its emphasis on both the loyalty of meanings in the text and the adaption of social and historical context in the target readers, making it accessible to Western readers without sacrificing the story's inherent plots. However, the difficulty Hawkes has to face is the different era between the coauthors of the original novel and him. Hongloumeng, generally acknowledged, is written by Cao Xueqin and Gao E. The former wrote the first eighty chapters, while the latter continued to write the sequent forty chapters. Cao Xueqin and Gao E are the writers in the feudal society of the 18th and 19th centuries, while Hawkes is in the 20th and 21st centuries. Undoubtedly, Hawkes internalizes more progressive and inclusive modern ideas. The obvious difference between feudal society and modern society lies in the attitude towards gender. In modern times, females' independence and capabilities receive more attention. Hongloumeng is celebrated for its intricate depiction of females' lives and social statuses in the Qing Dynasty. Feminist philosophy is an interdisciplinary field that combines feminism with philosophy (Fricker & Hornsby, 2000). Feminist philosophy researchers address gender quality and explore how gender molds or influences our values, which provides this paper with a proper perspective to study Hawkes' translation of females in Hongloumeng. In the process of translation, Hawkes may inadvertently reflect, distort, or illuminate the feminist inherent in the original work. Through a meticulous analysis of Hawkes' translation strategies, this study seeks to uncover the feminist thought interwoven into the translation narration and how these aspects are presented to English-speaking readers. The significance of this paper lies in its contribution to the combination of micro-level and macro-level examination of translation strategies and feminist philosophical analysis.

By scrutinizing Hawkes' translation features, this paper endeavors to shed light on the complexities involved in rendering gender-related themes and feminist ideologies across linguistic and cultural dimensions. Therefore, this study aims to explore the feminist philosophical underpinnings within Hawkes' translation of Hongloumeng, examining how feminist ideologies, cultural attitudes, and philosophical ideas are presented and transformed in the process of translation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A large and growing body of literature has examined Hongloumeng's English translation. These studies are examined through various lenses including translation strategies, linguistic analysis, literary criticism, and so on. First, translation strategies studies of Hongloumeng mainly focus on some typical language phenomena. By addressing the translation strategies of culture-specific items, Wang pinpoints that Yang Xianyi's translation mainly employs foreignization to help spread Chinese culture, while Hawkes adopts the domestication method to make the target readers easier to understand (Yuefang, 2012). Additionally, translation strategies of idioms in Hongloumeng are also explored. Su deals with translated metaphorical idioms in light of translation strategies such as removal, retention, and replacement (Su, 2021). He also analyzes the functions and effects of these strategies. Second, some scholars employ linguistic theories to interpret Hongloumeng's English translation. Based on Talmy's (Talmy, 1985) motion event theory in cognitive linguistics, Wu compares the semantic categories of figure, ground, motion, path, and manner in Yang Xianyi and Hawkes versions (Wu, 2008). Another linguistic theory applied to this domain is a cohesive chain (Halliday & Hasan, 1976), which is attributed to the textual function of systemic functional linguistics. Li & Li use cohesive chains to examine Yang Xianyi's and Hawkes' translation versions (Li & Li, 2021). They conclude that the two versions show a different distribution of types of cohesive chains. Third, as a Chinese classical novel, literary criticism also pays much attention to this topic. Under the guidance of ethical literary criticism, Feng (2022) investigates Hawkes' translator ethic in translating Hongloumeng. His research involves both Hawkes' translation text and its paratexts, providing reasonable interpretations for Hawkes' choice of language and cultural elements. The analysis above has divided Hongloumeng's English translation studies into three aspects. There are still some interface studies

of these aspects. Some scholars conduct a corpus stylistic study of Hongloumeng's translation. Based on the multidimensional analysis of the corpus method, Chou & Liu investigate stylistic features in speech and narration of two translations of Hongloumeng (Chou & Liu, 2024). They also explain these features in terms of language and cultural background. What's more, some studies of other disciplines have gradually embarked on this topic in recent years. A cognitive map, a psychology concept, is introduced to analyze the spatial representation of Hawkes' translating Hongloumeng (Zhou, 2021). Despite the breadth of research, there are still two gaps. Firstly, the feminist perspective in the English translations of Hongloumeng remains underexplored (Chou & Liu, 2024). The novel's intricate portrayal of female characters and critique of feudal patriarchy call for a more nuanced feminist analysis. although the original text of Hongloumeng is saturated with the description of females, few studies have taken the feminist view on the reproduction of females' characterization in translation texts. Secondly, the philosophical dimensions of the translations have received scant attention. Nagl-Docekal points out that philosophy can contribute to the construction of gender equality. Therefore, it becomes necessary to combine feminist with philosophy to delve into females' images (Nagl-Docekal, 2008). That is, in this paper, I seek to use the theory of feminist philosophy to explore Hawkes' translation of female images in Hongloumeng. Addressing these gaps could not only deepen our understanding of the novel's complexities but also contribute to broader discussions on the relationship among translation studies, gender and philosophy.

3. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION: FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY

With the development of Western social activities about feminism and various schools of feminism, feminist philosophy emerged in the 1970s. It is an extremely diverse field so not all feminist philosophy researchers have agreed on its definition. Some regard feminist philosophy as a branch of philosophy and attempt to examine women's experiences, relationships, and oppression. Some others take a view of philosophical critique of power, focusing on hierarchies of gender, race, nationality, ability, and so on (Hall, 2021). Even so, central to feminist philosophy is the examination of how gender intersects with other social categories, such as race, class, and sexuality, to shape a multitude of lived experiences. This theoretical paradigm attempts to explore and challenge the assumptions underpinning

traditional philosophical discourse, arguing that such discourse often marginalizes or neglects women's experiences and contributions. Some concepts and ideas serve as the foundation for the development of feminist philosophy as a discipline. One of the core ideas in feminist philosophy is the critique of the public and private dichotomy. Feminist philosophers argue that this dichotomy has historically relegated women to the private sphere of home and family, thereby excluding them from the public spheres of politics, economy, and culture. This exclusion, they assert, is not merely descriptive but prescriptive, serving to perpetuate gender inequalities (Freibach-Heifetz & Stopler, 2008). Feminist theorists argue that this division reinforces gender inequalities by valuing public activities over private ones and by ignoring the labor and challenges faced in the private sphere, such as domestic labor (Landry & Landry, 2019). This critique is heated in feminist philosophy as it exposes how this separation contributes to systemic sexism by limiting women's roles and opportunities and perpetuating the idea that women's primary responsibilities are domestic. To challenge this dichotomy, feminist philosophy seeks to redefine the value assigned to private sphere activities and advocate for policies that support the interconnectedness of these domains, promoting gender equality across all aspects of life. In addition, intersectionality is a core concept in feminist philosophy that describes how different social categories—such as race, gender, class, and sexuality—interact and overlap to shape individual experiences of oppression or privilege. Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (Crenshaw, 2013), intersectionality challenges the notion that gender issues are homogeneous and can be isolated from other forms of identity (Gunnarsson, 2017). It emphasizes that factors like ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and other identities influence each other. This framework helps to address the varying impacts of discrimination that cannot be understood when viewed through a single perspective. Intersectionality is a key term in feminist philosophy as it provides a more insightful understanding of how systemic inequalities affect diverse groups of women and other marginalized individuals in different ways, advocating for more inclusive and effective approaches to social justice. Nowadays, feminist philosophy continues to evolve and embrace new disciplines. Literary translation is just a promising area. Both feminist philosophy and literary translation studies examine how gender influences language and representation. The difference lies in that literary translation addresses translation texts of literary works. Feminist philosophy provides critical tools for analyzing power relations, gender biases, and the representation of women in texts, which are essential perspectives in feminist translation

studies. Translation is not just about converting text from one language to another. It involves cultural interpretation and the choice of how to present themes and characters to different readers. Feminist theory can guide translators in making conscious decisions that avoid perpetuating stereotypes and marginalization, particularly of women and other weak groups (Simon, 1996). It encourages translators to consider how gender descriptions in the original text might be lost, altered, or reinforced in translation, impacting the portrayal of characters and construction of themes. Furthermore, feminist philosophy undertakes to reconsider what texts are chosen for literary translation and how they are introduced to new cultural contexts. This is crucial in promoting a more diverse and inclusive literary culture. Based on feminist perspectives, scholars and translators can strive for fairness in literature and translation, ensuring that voices historically silenced or distorted through traditional paradigms are authentically and respectfully conveyed. This integration enriches translation studies by adding deeper layers of ethical and socio-political analysis, making the translations not only linguistic but also cultural acts by reflecting gender diversity and equality. Based on the explication of literary translation, I attempt to construct the feminist philosophical model of literary translation in Figure 1. When translating literary works, the translator injects contemporary feminist philosophical thoughts into female characters. These philosophical thoughts connect with the concept of intersectionality. By the mediation of social and cultural context, the translator conveys feminist awareness to the reader.
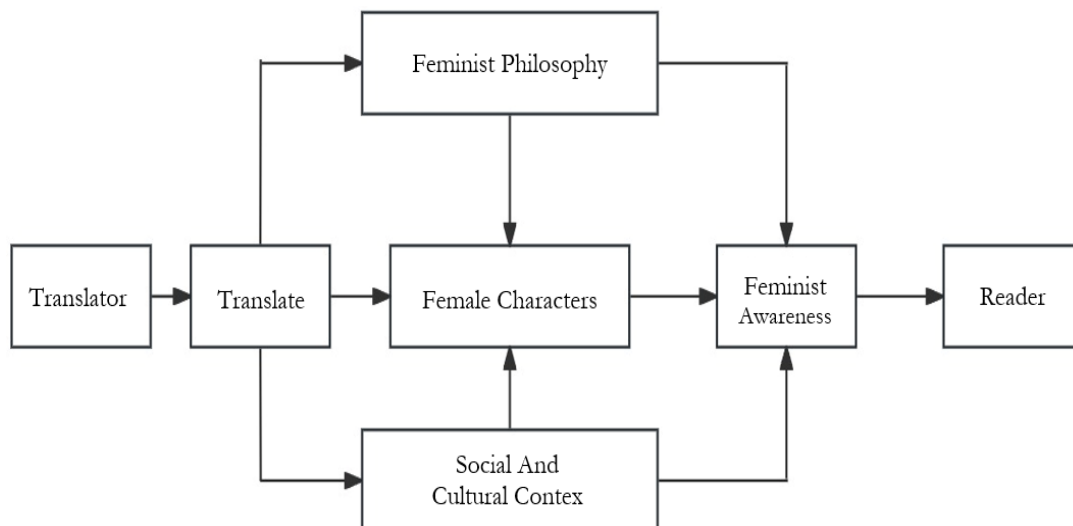

Figure 1: Feminist philosophical model of literary translation

Although Hongloumeng was published in the Qing dynasty, its translation is conducted in contemporary and modern times. Hawkes'

thoughts and opinions towards gender are bound to be different from Cao's and Gao's. It stimulates people to rethink the foundations of our social, political, and ethical worlds, advocating for a more inclusive and equitable society. Therefore, feminist philosophy offers an appropriate theoretical foundation for Hongloumeng's translation studies.

4. HAWKES' THOUGHTS ON FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY IN *HONGLOUMENG*'S TRANSLATION

While Hawkes' work is primarily recognized within the field of Chinese literature and translation studies, his approach to the translation and interpretation of Hongloumeng also subtly reflects an underlying understanding of feminist philosophy. Hawkes translated Hongloumeng during the 1970s and 1980s, a period marked by significant social changes and the rise of feminist movements in the West. This was a time when issues of gender equality and women's rights were fiercely debated. Feminist theory was significantly reshaping various academic disciplines, including literary studies and philosophical studies. The feminist movement was motivated to reevaluate literary studies through a dimension that highlighted gender and questioned traditional gender roles. Hawkes' academic journey and personal experiences greatly also influenced his interpretation of literature and his translation work. Educated at Oxford and later a professor at the University of Oxford and the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, Hawkes' academic career was dedicated to Chinese literature and poetry. His years at Peking University and his profound engagement with Chinese literature allowed him to approach Hongloumeng with an understanding of its cultural depth and historical significance. His translation is noted for his careful consideration of gender and the subtle portrayals of characters. Fan (2022) spares no effort to proofread and analyze how Hawkes added, deleted, or altered. To understand Hawkes' implicit feminist philosophy, what must be considered is his translation choices and comments on Hongloumeng's female characters. Hawkes' translation of the novel does not overtly advocate for feminist ideologies. However, his careful preservation of the female characters' complexity and emotional depth, coupled with his scholarly emphasis on their significance within the narrative, align with feminist principles. By foregrounding the experiences, struggles, and resilience of the novel's female characters, Hawkes' work implicitly challenges traditional gender norms and highlights the importance of women's

perspectives and voices in literary works. In translating Hongloumeng, Hawkes strikes the intricate balance between faithfulness to the source text and the cultural and linguistic sensitivities of English-speaking readers. His translation strategy is deeply informed by his appreciation for the novel's literary artistry and its sociocultural background, including the subtle critique of patriarchal society embedded within the narrative. Even so, this is not to say that Hawkes' translation does not preserve the traditional female images in China's feudal society. His female philosophical translation is just a matter of degree. In this way, his translation version thus serves as a bridge not only between Chinese and Western literary traditions but also between classical literature and contemporary feminist thought. The following chapter will elucidate this according to the specific translation phenomenon.

5. HAWKES' FEMALE CHARACTERIZATION IN TRANSLATING *HONGLOUMENG*: A FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY PERSPECTIVE

Hawkes' presentation and transformation of females' self-consciousness stems from the fact that the source text *Hongloumeng* narrates the story about many females. In the Qing dynasty, females' images are not only about gender but also a cultural phenomenon. We then take Hawkes' translation version as a case study, intending to explore its translation features by putting it into the cultural context of that time. Several females such as Lin Daiyu, Xue Baochai, and Jia Yuanchun are specially investigated to study Hawkes' female characterization. We finally make the interpretations on the feminist philosophical level.

5.1 Females as a Cultural Phenomenon in *Hongloumeng*'s Source Text

The reasons why Hongloumeng is widely accepted lie in both its narrative techniques and its female characterization. In essence, female characters in this novel act as a cultural phenomenon. Hongloumeng exhibits females' appearance, personalities, and social status in 18th-century China. In a feudal society, women are often marginalized. Through the female characters' lives in Hongloumeng, Cao Xueqin, and Gao E presents a detailed exploration of women's thoughts, aspirations, and inner lives. This also reflects the social norms at that time. The source text has both traditional thoughts and some burgeoning descriptions of feminist thoughts. Lin Daiyu, for instance, stands out for her intelligence, emotional depth, and artistic talent, challenging the traditional expectations of female

docility and subservience. Daiyu's tragic fate, marked by unrequited love and familial constraints, symbolizes the broader dilemma of females who are often at the mercy of decisions made by male relatives.

This stresses the lack of agency afforded to women in the aspects of marriage and personal happiness. Similarly, Wang Xifeng, with her cleverness and assertiveness, breaks the mold of conventional femininity, highlighting the potential for female leadership and autonomy within the domestic sphere. However, her ultimate downfall illustrates the limits placed on women's power. Therefore, although Wang Xifeng has slight awareness to challenge the males' authority, she has to give in to traditional norms. In addition, the Jia family's decline parallels the erosion of traditional values, including the patriarchal norms that governed females' lives. The novel's detailed depiction of daily life within the new garden offers a microcosm of the larger Qing Dynasty society, revealing how the constraints on females' freedom and the commodification of females in marriage transactions are reflective of broader socio-economic forces, including the decline of aristocratic families and the corruption of moral values. To some extent, the masterful females' portrayal highlights their adaptability in the face of societal constraints, offering a feminist critique of gender in its time. Accordingly, Hongloumeng presents females' rich inner worlds and complex social realities in the Qing Dynasty in China. To some extent, Cao Xueqin and Gao E's masterpiece transcends its historical context, resonating with contemporary discussions about gender, power, and social change. The novel's feminist ideas are not merely a reflection of individual characters but a profound commentary on the social and cultural phenomena of its time, highlighting the struggle for female autonomy and equality. However, due to language and cultural differences, Hongloumeng's English translation of female characterization may have both some consistencies and adaptions from the source text. In the next section, what this paper seeks to focus on is the female characterization Hawkes conveys to English readers, taking several representative females as a case study.

5.2 Hawkes' Female Characterization in Translating *Hongloumeng*

In translating *Hongloumeng*, Hawkes reconstructs a multitude of female roles. Lin Daiyu, Xue Baochai, and Wang Xifeng are representatives.

5.2.1 Lin Daiyu

Hawkes employs a range of linguistic features and translation techniques

to capture the complexity of Daiyu's image, resonating with both the source text's intricacies and the expectations of English-speaking readers. In some cases, Hawkes also makes some adaptions to Daiyu's image. Here is an example. I will use ST to stand for the source text of *Hongloumeng*, and HT to mean Hawkes' translation.

ST：一语未了，忽听外面人说："**林姑娘来了。**"说犹未了，林黛玉已摇摇摆摆的走进来。

HT: Just at that moment the servants outside announced 'Miss Lin' arid almost simultaneously Dai-yu came flouncing into the room. The use of the word "flouncing" in the sentence describing Lin Daiyu's entrance into the room addresses her personality. To "flounce" typically means to move in an exaggerated, energetic, or angry manner, often conveying a mood of annoyance or a dramatic display of emotion. This choice of verb suggests that Daiyu enters the room not in a subtle manner, but rather with a noticeable, perhaps emotionally charged, presence. Lin Daiyu is often portrayed as a sensitive, melancholic, and emotionally rich character. Her entrance might reflect her internal emotional sensibility, dissatisfaction with her surroundings, or a desire to be noticed. This manner of entrance could be seen as an expression of her youthful, perhaps volatile emotions, highlighting the complexities and layers of her personality. Additionally, the word "flouncing" can imply a sense of self-assurance or even arrogance. It suggests that Daiyu is not afraid to express herself or to make her presence known, indicating a strong personality. This could be interpreted as a form of defiance or a display of her individuality in a setting where traditional norms might expect a more reserved demeanor, especially from young women. Moreover, Daiyu's flouncing could be indicative of the novel's broader themes of youth, emotional depth, and the struggles inherent in a rigid social structure. Her actions, described in such a vivid manner, serve to make her a more relatable and compelling character, resonating with the readers' sense of individual expression and the complexity of human emotions. Therefore, Hawkes' construction of Daiyu has strong feminist awareness, which is easy to be accepted by Western readers. This is inconsistent with the one in the source text, which only shows Daiyu's thin and weak image. Moreover, in translating Daiyu's poems, Hawkes meticulously translates Daiyu's poetic expressions and emotional outbursts, which enrich the understanding of her sensitivity and fragility. Hawkes does not merely convey the literal meaning but also captures the emotional resonance and aesthetic beauty of her verses. This not only shows Daiyu's talent and depth of feeling but also her vulnerability

when she faces unrequited love and inner anxiety. Hawkes' choice in these translations carefully mirrors Daiyu's fluctuating moods, subtly implying her inner turmoil and delicate health without diminishing her intellectual vitality. What's more, her intelligence and literary talent are evident to the readers. Hawkes' translation of the scenes where Daiyu engages in literary discourse or poetic composition emphasizes her intelligence, positioning her as a formidable intellectual figure. This not only preserves Daiyu's character as crafted by Cao Xueqin and Gao E but also challenges stereotypical perceptions of female characters in classical literature. In this way, Daiyu is represented as a multi-dimensional character. Through a combination of linguistic precision, cultural sensitivity, and an appreciation for the aesthetic qualities of the source text, Hawkes constructs a character that resonates with both the original narrative and the sensibilities of English-speaking readers. His translation invites readers to appreciate the richness of her personality and the intricacies of her inner and physical world, making Hawkes' work a feminist contribution to the global appreciation of this masterpiece of Chinese literature.

5.2.2 Xue Baochai

Hawkes translates the character Baochai with a blend of fidelity and adaptation, seeking to capture the variety of her personality and her role within the complex social and familial environment in the novel. Hawkes carefully preserved Baochai's steady and intelligent personality, emphasizing her embodiment of Confucian ideals, which makes her a counterpoint to the more emotionally volatile Lin Daiyu. His translation highlights Baochai's diplomatic and often cautious nature, which serves to underline her strategic positioning within her family and the Jia household. By doing so, Hawkes managed to convey the subtleties of Baochai that are crucial in the narrative, such as her inner conflicts and her balancing act between personal desires and societal expectations. His translation makes English readers appreciate Baochai's complex disposition and the critical role she plays in the unfolding drama, thereby maintaining the depth and layers of her character as originally depicted by Cao Xueqin and Gao E. For example, when translating Baochai's laughter, Hawkes is loyal to the source text. However, he also makes some slight adaptions, which changes Baochai's image to some extent. Here is an example.

ST: **幸而**诸人都不曾听见，**只有宝**钗抿着嘴儿一笑。

HT: Fortunately no one heard her but Ban-chai, who made a laughing grimace. The depiction of Xue Baochai's reaction as making a "laughing

grimace" significantly enhances the readers' perception of her characterization in ways that diverge from the original Chinese text. The source text describes Baochai smiling subtly, a gesture that aligns with her characteristically reserved and composed demeanor, reflecting the traditional Confucian virtues expected of women in her social context. The term "grimace", however, commonly connotes a contorted or distorted facial expression, often associated with discomfort, sarcasm, or disdain, which introduces a layer of complexity or negativity not present in the original. This translation choice might lead English readers to perceive Baochai as more mocking or cynical, traits that could alter her portrayal from a reserved, virtuous figure to one who might seem to silently challenge the surrounding circumstances or conversations. Such a translation not only shifts the reader's understanding of Baochai but also affects her relationship with other characters. This example underscores the impact of translation choices on interpretive nuances that are crucial for capturing the original tones and intentions of novels.

ST: 宝钗笑道："宝兄弟，亏你每日家杂学旁搜的，难道就不知道酒性最热，若热吃下去，发散的就快；若冷吃下去，便凝结在内，以五脏去暖他，岂不受害？"

HT: 'I'm surprised at you, Cousin Bao!' said Bao-chai with a smile. 'With all your enthusiasm for out-of-the-way learning, fancy not knowing a thing like that! Wine has an exceptionally fiery nature, and therefore must be drunk warm in order to be quickly digested. If it is drunk cold, it congeals inside the body and harms it by absorbing heat from the internal organs. The above translation of Xue Baochai's dialogue serves to both maintain and subtly enhance her perceived wisdom and articulate demeanor. In the original text, Baochai's speech is a blend of mild disapproval and didactic explanation, which aligns with her character as both knowledgeable and nurturing, typical of an ideal Confucian woman who is expected to be both virtuous and educative in her interactions. Hawkes' translation successfully captures these features by portraying her as both slightly remindful and informative, emphasizing her intellectual engagement with "out-of-the-way learning", This could be interpreted as her respect for and mastery of less commonly discussed knowledge. The translator's choice to frame her speech with "I'm surprised at you, Cousin Bao!" adds a personal touch that underscores her close relationship with the addressed cousin, enhancing her warmth and personal concern. This adaptation not only keeps Baochai's characteristic grace but also stresses her role as a moral and

intellectual guide within the narrative. By detailing the effects of drinking cold wine, the translation also conveys her understanding of traditional medical beliefs, reinforcing her erudition. Such a translation not only accurately reflects Baochai's character traits from the original but might also enrich the reader's appreciation for her role as a voice of reason and care in the novel.

5.2.3 Wang Xifeng

As for Wang Xifeng, a key figure known for her shrewdness and vivacity. Hawkes' translation captures Xifeng's multifaceted features, such as her wisdom, managerial skills, and ruthless behavior. The challenge for Hawkes is to balance these traits in a way that neither softens her sharpness nor overemphasizes her manipulative tendencies, to maintain the integrity of her character as created by Cao Xueqin and Gao E. In the English version, Xifeng's dynamic personality is conveyed through her lively and sometimes biting dialogue, her strategic actions within the Jia household, and her interactions with other characters, which reveal both her capabilities and her vulnerabilities. Hawkes is particularly adept at preserving the humor and irony in Xifeng's speech. His careful choice of language ensures that Xifeng's characterization remains robust and compelling for English readers.

ST：凤姐因他自投罗网，少不的再寻别计令他只改，故又约他

HT: Seeing him hurl himself so willingly into the net, Xi-feng decided that a further lesson would be needed to cure him of his folly and proposed another assignation. In this translation of a scene involving Wang Xifeng, Hawkes conveys the manipulative and strategic aspects of her personality, reinforcing her image as a cunning and assertive figure. By choosing the phrase "hurl himself so willingly into the net", Hawkes emphasizes the victim's obliviousness and Xifeng's opportunistic tendencies. The phrase "a further lesson would be needed to cure him of his folly" suggests an assertive, almost didactic approach to her manipulation, adding layers to her character as someone who not only seeks to control but also to teach or reform, albeit through questionable methods. This translation paints Xifeng as a complex character who combines intelligence, foresight, and a ruthless streak in dealing with others, making her both formidable and morally ambiguous. The choice of words like "hurl", "net", and "lesson" not only conveys her manipulative abilities but also subtly enhances the perception of her as a masterful controller, adept at weaving plots and schemes to maintain her power within the Jia family. This portrayal aligns

with the original text's depiction. Wang Xifeng's image is also constructed in her management of the neighboring establishment. Here is a representative example

ST: 那凤姐素日最喜揽事，好卖弄能干，今见贾珍如此央他，心中早已允了。

HT: Xi-feng for her part had always loved managing things and enjoyed showing off her ability to do so. When Cousin Zhen first made his request, her mind had at once consented. In the above translation describing Wang Xifeng, Hawkes reinforces her role as a strong, proactive figure within the narrative. The translation effectively conveys Xifeng's images of taking charge and displaying her capabilities, which are key traits that define her assertive and somewhat dominant character. The phrase "had always loved managing things and enjoyed showing off her ability" highlights her assertiveness and competence, which in the context of the novel, set her apart from typical female roles confined to domesticity and subservience in the Qing Dynasty. This portrayal not only affirms her leadership within the Jia household but also subtly subverts traditional gender norms, presenting her as a woman who is not only capable but also takes pride in her managerial ability. By translating in such a way, these characteristics are foregrounded. Therefore, this translation not only accurately reflects but also enhances English readers' understanding of Xifeng's ambitious and multifaceted personality.

5.2.4 Other Female Roles' Construction in *Hongloumeng*

Except for the central figures of Lin Daiyu, Xue Baochai, and Wang Xifeng, Hawkes also devotes considerable attention to other female characters in the novel in his translation. One of the important female characters is Granny Liu, a rural outsider who provides a contrast to the elegant world of the Jia family. Hawkes presents Granny Liu's dialect and earthy wisdom without reducing her to a mere joke. His translation shows Granny Liu's dignity and provides a critical social evaluation of the disparities between the rich and the poor. Her interactions with the main family are translated in a manner that highlights her acuteness and adaptability. She acts as a symbol of the external world's harsh realities against the background of the rich life of the Jia household. Qingwen, Jia Baoyu's maid, is another character whose frank temper and tragic end are conveyed in Hawkes' translation. Through her dialogue and interactions, Qingwen's defiance and pride are effectively revealed. This reflects her as

more than just a servant but an independent female with a distinct personality at the time of the feudal society. However, as a translator rather than a writer, Hawkes has to be loyal to reproduce Qingwen's tragic fate although he has accepted many modern ideas about gender. Moreover, Hawkes' female characterization is also reflected in translating the poems in the novel, particularly those composed by the female characters. These poems are crucial for expressing female characters' inner thoughts and feelings. Hawkes manages to reproduce the lyrical rhymes and emotional state of these poems. This description of females' writing poems also reflects their intelligence and wisdom. Therefore, in translating *Hongloumeng*, Hawkes not only ensures that the females in the novel are represented as complete characters but also considers English-speaking readers' knowledge and culture. His translation reflects a deep respect for the original text and its cultural consideration. Through this careful and insightful translation, Hawkes gives Western readers the chance to get an acknowledgment of Chinese female culture.

5.3 Cultural Context and Philosophical Interpretation of Hawkes' Feminist Translation

Hawkes' translation conveys the feminist thoughts underlying the female characters, which is attributed to both the complexity of the original text and the influence of his life experiences and cultural context. Hawkes, a famous Sinologist, studied in China during the early 1950s, which deeply influenced his views on Chinese literature and culture. At that time, China had a burgeoning feminist wave that advocated for gender equality. It is reasonable that this phenomenon is reflected in Hawkes' translations. This perspective was further enriched by the flourishing feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s in the West when Hawkes was devoted to his translation of Hongloumeng. These movements aimed to highlight and challenge the oppressive social structures females encounter. By foregrounding the resilience, intelligence, and emotional multi-dimensions of female characters in Hongoumeng, Hawkes' translation is in line with feminist thoughts. To some extent, he conveys and sometimes reconstructs these women not just as passive figures within their social and familial environment, but as active agents who have their independent awareness and resist the constraints imposed upon them. His translations of female characters, like Lin Daiyu and Xue Baochai, challenge traditional gender norms and highlight their resistance and autonomy. Moreover, having spent much time of his academic career in the West, particularly during a time when literary studies including feminist theory, were increasingly

embracing diverse and critical perspectives, Hawkes aligns his translation with these emerging trends. This translation strategy not only makes Hongloumeng accessible to Western readers but also consistent with universal themes of gender struggle. Thus, Hawkes' translation is a combination of his deep engagement with Chinese culture, his exposure to progressive ideas both in China and the West, and a scholarly commitment to presenting a text that speaks to universal themes of human rights and gender equality, making Hongloumeng a seminal work that bridges cultural and temporal boundary. This translation version illuminates both the complicated inner lives and social challenges of its characters. In terms of feminist philosophy, the ideas around social constructivism suggest that gender roles are created by social expectations rather than innate differences. This can be reflected through Hawkes' translation choices. His portrayal of characters like Lin Daiyu, Xue Baochai, and Wang Xifeng underscores their complex inner lives and their varied responses to the gendered limitations of their environment, illustrating how social structures shape personal identities and destinies. By foregrounding these characters' multifaceted personalities, Hawkes' translation mirrors the feminist philosophical discourse on the intersectionality of oppression. That is, how gender, class, and traditional norms impose effects on characters' thoughts. This opinion aligns with the opinion of feminist theory, which argues that any human being is a socially concrete character (Fricker & Hornsby, 2000). In some cases of Hongloumeng, female characters are described not merely as victims of their circumstances but as active participants shaping their narratives within and against the oppression of feudal society. This emphasis is particularly apparent in his portrayal of Wang Xifeng, whose manipulative tactics and assertiveness challenge traditional norms and display a woman exerting her existential freedom, albeit within the constraints of her role as a manager and wife within the Jia family. Additionally, Hawkes' translation process itself can be seen as an act of feminist reinterpretation. He conveys and reinforces the awakening of female characters' self-consciousness. By doing so, he introduces a broader cultural context that reevaluates and often challenges historical narratives and the roles females play within the original text. Based on a feminist philosophical perspective, Hawkes not only makes the translation narrative accessible to Western readers but also enriches the text with a modern understanding of gender. This interpretation encourages readers to appreciate the text not just as a historical artifact but as a real masterpiece that continues to be valuable in modern society. This is the contemporary requirement of philosophical axiology research. Humans act as the basis of

philosophical axiology. Therefore, feminist philosophical studies of literary translation deserve more attention.

6. CONCLUSION

The description of female characters is the distinguishing feature of Hongloumeng. Owing to the constraint of feudal thoughts about females, Cao Xueqin and Gao E tend to present females' conservative behavior in their daily lives. In feudal society, males occupy the dominant position, while females can just give way to males and their powers. Even so, there is still some feminist awareness that emphasizes females' independence in this novel. In the process of translation, Hawkes both presents the traditional females under the background of feudal society and makes feminist awareness more prominent. Under the guidance of feminist philosophy, this paper explores some main female characters, such as Lin Daiyu, Xue Baochai, and Wang Xifeng. Employing the translation strategies of fidelity and adaption, Hawkes makes his translation more accessible to English readers. To a large degree, Hawkes criticizes the public and private dichotomy of gender difference. Females, who are the same as males, have the right to learn, manage, and socialize. Intersectionality, the core concept of feminist philosophy, provides stable support for his translation thoughts. In modern times, philosophical studies should lay much emphasis on studies on the topic of humans. Gender equality serves as the foundation of human's long-term existence and development, which meets with the requirement of philosophical axiology. Except for Hawkes' translation, Hongloumeng has an array of translation versions from other translators, such as Yang Xianyi, Bondall, Joly, and so on. In future studies, the other translation versions and their comparison studies deserve more attention.

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