

**THE DISSEMINATION AND RECEPTION OF THE
ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF *XI YOU JI* IN THE
ENGLISH-SPEAKING WORLD**

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ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF *XI YOU JI* IN THE
ENGLISH-SPEAKING WORLD**

by

TONG RUOLIN

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>XYJ</i>	<i>Xi You Ji</i>
SL	Source Language
TL	Target Language
ST	Source Text
TT	Target Text
FT	Field Theory
ANT	Actor-Network Theory
TA	Thematic Analysis
TS	Translation Studies
MTI	Master of Translation and Interpreting

PENYEBARAN DAN PENERIMAAN TERJEMAHAN BAHASA INGGERIS

***XI YOU JI* DI DUNIA BERBAHASA INGGERIS**

ABSTRAK

“*Xi You Ji*” ialah karya kanon Cina yang terkenal di seluruh dunia. Memandangkan peranan penting promosi karya fiksi di luar negara dalam penyebaran budaya, terdapat keperluan untuk mengkaji bagaimana *Xi You Ji* disebarkan dan diterima dalam budaya sasaran. Objektif kajian adalah untuk mengenal pasti transformasi imej *Xi You Ji* dalam dunia berbahasa Inggeris, menentukan perubahan dalam penerimaan pembaca Barat terhadap karya ini, serta menganalisis peranan aktor manusia dan bukan manusia dalam proses terjemahan, pengenalan, dan penyebaran *Xi You Ji* dalam arena kesusasteraan. Tesis ini memperkenalkan metodologi hibrid yang menggabungkan teori parateks dan teori sosiologi seperti teori, melalui penggunaan parateks. Kajian ini memilih 11 versi terjemahan bahasa Inggeris *Xi You Ji*. Kriteria untuk dimasukkan adalah buku yang boleh didapati secara fizikal atau digital, meliputi jangka masa yang panjang, diterbitkan oleh pelbagai jenis penerbit dan menikmati populariti yang tinggi di seluruh dunia. Kajian kes dan analisis visual digunakan untuk mengkaji ciri-ciri periteks 11 versi dalam urutan kronologi, dengan tujuan mengenal pasti perubahan imej karya ini sepanjang sejarah. Seterusnya, epiteks *Xi You Ji*, termasuk liputan media arus perdana Barat dari abad ke-19 hingga hari ini serta ulasan pembaca Barat tentang versi bahasa Inggeris *Xi You Ji* yang kini dijual di Amazon serta ulasan pelancong tentang tarikan pelancongan berkaitan *Xi You Ji* yang disiarkan di TripAdvisor pada abad ke-21 dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik untuk mengkaji perubahan dalam penerimaan masyarakat Barat terhadap *Xi You Ji*.

Kemudian, analisis literatur dan kajian arkib diterapkan untuk meneliti bahan peritex seperti prakata versi bahasa Inggeris, berserta dengan bahan epitex seperti memoir penterjemah, surat, dan wawancara yang berkaitan dengan aktiviti terjemahan 11 versi untuk menjelaskan bagaimana aktor manusia memperoleh modal, membentuk habitus, dan membina rangkaian dalam bidang sastera, serta kesan aktor bukan manusia dalam proses terjemahan, pengenalan, dan penyebaran. Dapatan menunjukkan bahawa imej *Xi You Ji* dan penerimaan dunia Anglophone terhadap karya ini telah mengalami perubahan yang ketara sepanjang tempoh masa. Kerjasama lancar antara penterjemah, penulis prakata alografi, dan penerbit, ditambah dengan liputan meluas oleh media arus perdana serta suasana sosial yang positif, merupakan faktor utama kejayaan promosi karya ini. Berbeza dengan kajian terdahulu yang lebih tertumpu kepada analisis teks utama, kajian ini menggunakan parateks serta kaedah daripada sosiologi dan seni. Penemuan kajian ini menyumbang kepada pembangunan paradigma penyelidikan baharu dalam kajian terjemahan, pengenalan, dan penyebaran sastera Cina, selain menggalakkan penyelidikan rentas disiplin dalam Kajian Terjemahan.

THE DISSEMINATION AND RECEPTION OF THE ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF *XI YOU JI* IN THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING WORLD

ABSTRACT

Xi You Ji is a Chinese literary canon which enjoys popularity worldwide. Given the important role played by the overseas spread of fictions in cultural transmission, there is a need to identify the transformation of *XYJ*'s images in the English-speaking world, determining the changes in the reception of *XYJ* by Western readers, and establishing the way human and non-human actors function in the translation, introduction and dissemination of *XYJ* in the literary field. This thesis presents a novel hybrid methodology integrating paratext theory and sociological theories via paratexts. This study selects 11 English versions of *XYJ*. The criteria for inclusion are independent books that are physically or digitally obtainable, cover a long time span, are published by different types of publishers and enjoy high popularity worldwide. Case study and visual analysis are employed to investigate the peritextual features of the 11 versions in chronological order in order to identify the changes of *XYJ*'s image throughout the history. Then the epitexts of *XYJ* including coverage on *XYJ* by Western mainstream media from the 19th century till today, Western readers' reviews on *XYJ*'s English versions currently sold on Amazon and tourists' reviews of *XYJ*-related tourist attractions posted on TripAdvisor in the 21st century are analyzed through thematic analysis in order to examine the changes in Western mass' reception of *XYJ*. Later, literature analysis and archival research are applied to study the peritextual materials such as prefaces of the English versions, together with epitextual materials such as translator's memoir, letters and interviews related to the translation activity of the 11 editions to explain how human actors

acquire capital, form habitus and construct a network within the literary field, as well as the impact of non-human actors in the process of translation, introduction and dissemination. The findings show that the image of *XYJ* and the Anglophone world's reception of *XYJ* have experienced a major shift throughout the years. The smooth cooperation between translators, allographic preface writers, publishers, together with widespread coverage by mainstream media and favorable social environment and national policy are the key to successful promotion. Unlike previous studies focusing on the analysis of body text, this study is based on paratext with the application of methods from sociology and art. The findings of this study contribute to the development of new research paradigms for the study of Chinese literary translation, introduction and dissemination, as well as promoting interdisciplinary research in Translation Studies.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This is an introductory chapter which outlines the study and reviews a brief background of its most crucial elements. It presents the problem statement, states clear objectives to be achieved, and formulates a number of questions to be addressed. Chapter 1 also sets the significance of the study and clarifies its importance. The scope of the study and its limitations are also clarified. In this chapter, the most significant concepts are also defined. The last section outlines the organization of the study.

1.2 Background of the Study

In recent years, China has greatly strengthened its hard power. However, its soft power has not improved accordingly, and thus is still inferior to that of the Western powers. Cultural export can be seen as an essential source of soft power. In light of the above, in order to improve cultural prestige, the Chinese authorities took the initiative to launch a national strategy called “Chinese Culture Going Global” in 2002, to increase cultural exchanges with other countries, enhance international communication and vigorously promote Chinese culture abroad. In 2022, the Report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China foregrounded that the Chinese people are supposed to “collect and refine the defining symbols and best elements of Chinese culture and showcase them to the world” (Xi, 2022), and “better tell China’s stories, make China’s voice heard, and present a China that is credible, appealing, and respectable” (Xi, 2022).

As literature is directly linked to culture, it is perceived as an essential

component of the culture of any community. As a cultural product, literature, and fiction in particular, draws official state attention at a remarkably high level (McDougall, 2014). Being one of the important compositions of culture, fiction is an art that “fuses fiction, reality, ideology, mythology, and other ingredients” (Alderbashi, 2022, p. 2). In response to the nation’s call, taking translation as the vehicle, a growing number of Chinese literary works, including fictions have already been translated and introduced to the outside world, which is expected to enhance the global outreach and render mass readership of the target language (TL) to comprehend the core and true connotations of the source culture. In view of the fact that English is the hyper-central language in the world, a large portion of Chinese works have been translated into English (Brisset, 2017).

Xi You Ji (Journey to the West or Monkey, hereafter *XYJ*) enjoys high popularity among Anglophone readers. It is universally believed that this Chinese classic mythic fiction was written in the 16th century and its original author is Wu Cheng’en (Wang & Humblé, 2018). The original work is labeled as one of the Four Great Classical Novels of Chinese literature, together with the famous *Water Margin*, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, and *Dream of the Red Chamber* (Luo, 2020). *XYJ* is loosely based on the arduous journey of Xuanzang, who was a Tang monk and who “traveled to India to obtain Buddhist scriptures” (Hao, 2016, p. 78). Aside from the historical accounts, Wu’s fiction compounds extensive fantastic elements into the narrative. It mainly recounts the adventures of four monks in the Tang dynasty (618 to 907 AD), namely the eminent Buddhist monk, Xuanzang (also known as Tripitaka), along with his three disciples – Monkey (also known as Sun Wukong), Pigsy (also known as Zhu Wuneng) and Sandy (also known as Sha Wujing). The team goes on a legendary journey to the “Western regions”(also known as central Asia and

India), which are regarded as “the birthplace of Buddhism and thus the home of the sacred texts they seek” (Luo & Zheng, 2017, p. 255). During the journey, they encounter various demons, monsters and spirits. After 81 trials, the team eventually acquires the sacred texts and comes back to the homeland. The fiction is considered to be a long fairy tale comprised of “folklore, allegory, religion, history, anti-bureaucratic satire and pure poetry” (Brose, 2023, p. 24) among the readership.

XYJ is an integration of high artistic, religious and ideological values. After harvesting high status and popularity in China throughout the centuries-long history, this classic Chinese fiction started to broaden its outreach to the West. According to the data collected by scholars such as Luo and Zheng (2017) and Wang (2017), *XYJ* has been translated into more than 10 languages, including English, French, German, Italian, Russian, Japanese, Korean, to name just a few. The translation forms vary from excerpts of the fiction, abridged versions, complete versions, revised versions and reprinted versions. It was first introduced to the English-speaking world as far back as the 19th century and has been extensively translated since the 1930s. Although the history of *XYJ*’s introduction into the English-speaking world is not a long one, the fiction has received wide attention in the target setting.

The translation was mainly completed by missionaries, sinologists, diplomats, and professors from Great Britain, America and China. In the beginning, Samuel I. Woodbridge (1895), Herbert G. Giles (Giles, 1901), James Ware (1905a; 1905b), Richard Wilhelm (1921), Edward Werner (1922), Lily Adams Beck (1923), Frances Jenkins Olcott (1925), John C. Ferguson and Masaharu Anesaki (1928), Chi-chen Wang (1946), Chih-Tsing Hsia and Cyril Birch (1972), Yang Hsien-Yi and Gladys Yang (1961; 1966) translated excerpts of the fiction, which serve as an introduction to China’s myths. These scattered translated works were mostly published in

newspapers, magazines, journals and collections of stories. From the 1910s to the 1960s, the English abridged versions of *XYJ* were released successively. The following are just a few among many English versions: *A Mission to Heaven: A Great Chinese Epic and Allegory* (Wu, 1913), translated by Timothy Richard; *The Buddhist Pilgrim's Progress* (Wu, 1930), translated by Helen M. Hayes; *Monkey* (Wu, 1942), translated by Arthur Waley; *Monkey King* (Wu, 1964), translated by George Theiner; and *Dear Monkey* (Wu, 1973b), translated by Arthur Waley. These are the most influential ones till this day. Some of them have been reprinted several times after their debut, which firmly proves their style and readability.

In the 1970s and 1980s, full-length English versions of *XYJ* came out. Anthony C. Yu's *The Journey to the West* (Wu, 1977; 1978; 1980; 1983), which contains four volumes, was the very first of its kind. The four volumes were published by the University of Chicago Press from 1977 to 1983 in succession. After the publication of volume 1, lavish praise from several Western influential journals, such as *The New York Times Book Review*, *The Times Literary Supplement* flooded in and Yu's works were considered as translated classics via which Western readers learned about the Chinese culture. Subsequently, the Beijing-based Foreign Languages Press published *Journey to the West* (Wu, 1982; 1984; 1985), translated by William J. F. Jenner in three volumes in 1982-1985, under a project promoted by the Chinese authorities (Wang, 2017).

Moving forward to the 21st century, the reprinted editions of English translated versions and new abridged versions are equally noteworthy. In some cases, the publishing houses redesigned covers of the reprints. Richard's version was reprinted several times in 2008 and 2012. Waley's abridgment during World War II was the most popular translated version with scores of reprints, while Yu edited and

published his abridgment, *The Monkey and the Monk: An Abridgment of the Journey to the West* (Wu, 2006), on paperback and ebook in 2006, 2012 and 2014 based on his own complete version. What's more, Yu's full-length translation has been revised in 2012 under the same title (Wu, 2012b) with a new cover design and translator's preface. Julia Lovell's abridged version, *Monkey King: Journey to the West* (Wu, 2021) has received numerous positive reviews on Amazon after its release.

Some of the English versions not only circulate in the form of physical books, but also in digital forms, for example, Kindle versions on Amazon as well as other free and approachable versions online. The digital versions of books have been an emerging and booming channel for the circulation of literary translation in the recent decades, which are endowed with fast speed and low cost. Apart from texts, *XYJ* has long been adapted into works in diverse forms, such as cartoons, movies, TV dramas, variety shows, songs and online games.

Meanwhile, since the 21st century, the attention that *XYJ* has received overseas has also been increasing, and its dissemination is no longer limited to texts. In 2001, an American TV drama, *The Lost Empire*, was adapted and produced by NBC based on *XYJ*'s storyline, garnering good view rating. Later in June 2007, a modern opera named *Monkey: Journey to the West*, directed by the eminent Chinese director Shi-Zheng Chen, premiered at the Royal Palace Theater in Manchester, England. This was the first time that *XYJ* was adapted into an opera. It overcame cultural differences, showcasing the content and outline of the original in a sharp and intriguing way. In 2023, an animated movie, *The Monkey King*, produced by Netflix and supervised by Stephen Chow, was released and has been well-acclaimed worldwide after the release. In 2024, an online game named *Black Myth: Wukong* has taken the gaming world by storm. Inspired by *XYJ* and rooted in Chinese mythology,

the game fully demonstrates the global appeal of Chinese classics and greatly fosters cultural exchange. Intrigued by the elements of Chinese culture involved in the game, a great many foreign players have begun to read this literary canon. Apart from the above, *XYJ* enjoys high tourism value worldwide. Not only do the tourist attractions related to *XYJ* attract China's domestic tourists, but they also appeal to tourists from all over the world. The attractions involve the Mountain Huaguoshan in Jiangsu Province, the Bronze Statue of Master Xuanzang in Shaanxi Province, the Flaming Mountains in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and so on. By touring, international tourists can immerse themselves in the scenes depicted in *XYJ*, marvel at the natural and cultural landscapes and pay tribute to Xuanzang, which to some extent can enhance *XYJ*'s cultural dissemination and influence overseas.

Based on the fact that the new translated versions and reprinted translated versions are continuously appearing, plus the diversification of the overseas transmission mode of *XYJ*, it can be seen that *XYJ* has been gradually introduced to the English-speaking world and its outreach has been constantly expanded to the ordinary audiences. Since this study is concerned about literary translation and the overall aim of this study is to facilitate the overseas promotion of Chinese literature in the Anglophone world, this study primarily concentrates on *XYJ*'s English translations in form of books. This study sets out to explore the history of *XYJ*'s English translations, and to investigate the dissemination and reception of *XYJ* among the extensive mass audience in the Anglophone world in the new era. "Reception" here refers to real readers' reaction and response to the literary works. In other words, reception concentrates on how the books are received on an individual level. Given literary canon is an essential part of any culture's literary heritage, working within the literary translation framework will greatly facilitate cultural

promotion.

In the realm of literary translation, compared with previous research which were mainly carried out on the textual level, today, the foci has been gradually shifting to the dissemination and reception of the literary works among target readers (Wang, 2022). When translation products enter the market, if they are not widely accepted by readers, the effectiveness of introduction cannot be achieved, and the value of their translation and publication is questionable (Xie, 2014). The fundamental purpose of China's literary translation and introduction is to let international readers achieve a deeper understanding of China's traditional culture, spirit and social life through reading, and promote the exchange of cultures and ideas, thus forming the diversified characteristics of world culture (Xu, 2017).

The study by Zhong and Feng (2014) found that currently less than 5% of macro-research focused on the following aspects: the relationship between literary translation and cultural transmission, translation activities during a certain historical period, industry dynamics, translation and publication, and overall review. Similarly, Liu (2015) pointed out that on the whole, compared to Chinese domestic readers who are more proactive and easy to accept and appreciate foreign literary works, Western readers pay little attention to or lack interest in most of China's literary works, and even show an unwilling attitude to accept them. This point echoes the conclusion made by McDougall (2014). "The contrast between the limited success of Chinese literature abroad and the strong presence of Western literature in China" is worthy of careful consideration (McDougall, 2014, p. 49). Faced with the above difficulties in the current domestic research situation and the overseas transmission and reception of Chinese literature, Xu (2017) proposed that paratexts play a key role in the overseas promotion of Chinese literature in the Anglophone world, mainly because

paratextual materials can help readers to interpret the text. In other words, paratexts serve as an important channel in constructing the text.

In 1987, Genette coined the term “paratext” for the first time as supplementary information (Genette, 1987). Paratext refers to “those liminal devices and conventions, both within the book (peritext) and outside it (epitext), that mediate the book to the reader: titles, and subtitles, pseudonyms, forewords, dedications, prefaces, intertitles, epilogues and afterwords” (Haroon & Abdul Majid, 2015, p. 142; Genette, 1997, p. xviii). Genette (1997) classified paratext into two broad categories: peritext and epitext. The role and function of paratext are hard to ignore, for it serves as the threshold of the text.

As for literary translation, when a work is transformed into another language and into a different cultural setting, the need for cross-cultural mediation is naturally much more urgent than in the case of original literature, due to the fact that the work is normally far from its recipients history-wise and culture-wise. Paratexts are regarded as “mediator between the text and the recipients and their potential influence on the reader’s reading and reception of the works” could be considerable (Kovala, 1996, p. 120). Therefore, paratext is much more crucial in literary translation and is now recognized as “a worthy subject of study in its own right” (Pellatt, 2018, p. 165).

In recent years, a number of scholars have become aware of the social nature of translation (Sapiro, 2014; Wolf, 2007a). With the emergence of socio-translation, translation is viewed as a social practice, involving human participants such as authors, translators, editors, and critics, as well as non-human participants such as text, newspaper, press and national policy. Translation itself is a social norm activity. The agents in translation, along with their interaction and joint efforts will affect the

final translation products and intend to make the product well received in the target setting. In this study, the translation of *XYJ* into English is regarded as a socially-embedded activity (Yu, 2019). The fulfillment of the activity is due to the complex interactions among the various human and non-human actors involved in the process. Thus, it is fair to say that sociology has brought new perspectives to translation research, and translation, as the object of study, has also posed meaningful research questions to the field of sociology.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

In the best case scenario, a literary translation can achieve the same dissemination and reception among the target readers and target culture as the source text (ST). It will be able to narrow the cultural gaps and have the same effect in receiving. In other words, the readership of the source language (SL) and target language (TL) can comprehend the meanings of the text in a similar fashion. If the translation products are not accepted by the target readers, the effectiveness of literary translation and cross-cultural communication is questionable. Naturally, the dissemination and reception of literary translation has become a hotly studied topic thanks to the wide recognition of the paramount significance of cross-cultural communication and enhancing national cultural influence.

On a macro level, the dissemination and reception of a translation product, to a large extent, depend on the historical and cultural differences and unequal status between the nations of the SL and the TL. As Venuti (2017) pointed out, an Anglo-American tradition serves to maintain hegemonic tendencies, which is echoed by Theo Hermans and other theorists. The existence of cultural hegemony and ethnocentrism hinders the overseas cultural promotion of subordinate countries, since

the Anglophone market is lukewarm towards foreign literature in general. Similarly, Xie (2014) echoed that the dissemination of Chinese literature is not merely an issue of translation. In fact, it is the introduction from a weak culture to a strong culture. On the other hand, Wang (2010) suggested that the marginal position of Chinese literature in the broad backdrop of global culture and world literature has by no means changed. The long-standing Orientalism, the disability and even absence of translation and the shrinking of literary market in the West account for the current situation. It turns out that as a peripheral culture, the overseas promotion of Chinese culture in the English-speaking world is not as smooth as expected.

On a micro level, the dissemination and reception of literary translation is intertwined with the composition of a translation product. As a matter of fact, a translation product is not simply a language shift of the text; instead, it is a combination of the translated text and promotional materials so that it is commercialized and socialized in accord with the profile of the publisher and the market demand. Paratext, as a pivotal component of the promotional materials, effectively mediates between the readership and the translated works. Paratext creates the image of a given literary work and plays a decisive role in manipulating how readers perceive the translation even before they get access to it by indicating the genre and highlight of the book (Bai, 2019). In other words, paratextual materials can mould readers' reactions to and interpretation of literary works, whether in their SL or in TL (Alblooshi, 2021). Specifically, the visual elements embedded in the peritexts, especially the book cover, can provide readers in the receiving culture with "a visual summary of the book content" (Sonzogni, 2011, p. 4). Furthermore, this promotional material can reflect the translator's and other agents' voices instilling in the work, along with their assumptions of the market's preferences (Xu, 2017; Bai,

2019).

Since the appearance of its first English version in the 19th century, *XYJ* has gained huge popularity and reputation among Western readers till this day. Previous studies on the English translations of *XYJ* are mainly text analysis, focusing on the translation history of *XYJ* (Zheng & Wu, 2012; Wu, 2018) and the translation strategies and translatability of a single translated version or translator (Zhu & Luo, 2022; Hao, 2021; Yang, 2019). Some are comparative study on the textual feature and the protagonist between two abridgments (Hao, 2016; Cao, 2022; Yang, 2022).

As paratext is considered crucial in shaping the reception of translation, in-depth research that investigates the role of paratexts and the message they convey in the English translations of *XYJ* is needed. As for the existing studies on the paratexts of the English translations of *XYJ*, researchers, such as Zhu (2016), Jiang (2022), Tao and Gu (2020), conducted diachronic analysis on the peritexts of a limited number of translated editions from the 1940s to the 1980s in order to demonstrate the translator's subjectivity and determine how paratexts help in reframing narratives. Significantly, not only the translators but also authors, publishers, editors and other agents take part in the production of paratext. In other words, paratext is the sufficient embodiment of interaction between multiple forces under a certain social background. However, prior studies have neglected the decisive role played by the participants mentioned above other than the translators.

Furthermore, to take a closer look at the images created by the peritexts of *XYJ*, the investigation of the paratext, especially the visual elements is required. In other words, paratext offers a new perspective to investigate the image and its transformation of *XYJ*. In this study, image is not a physical picture but the general impression of a translation product that practitioners involved in the translation

production present to the readers in the target culture. For example, the translators and publishers can shape the image of a work by using cover and preface to manipulate the readers' assumption and expectation of the genre and content of the work. Specifically, the image of *XYJ* can be measured via the analysis of the peritexts which is the venue of practitioners' intervention or adaptation of the text to its target culture. Although a few translation scholars such as Cui (2022) and Zhu (2016) have set foot in the impact of the cover on the translated text, they have not conducted in-depth research and still focus on explaining the text, with less attention to its commercial and aesthetic value.

Additionally, there have been a few studies exploring the dissemination and reception of the English translations of *XYJ* in the West, reviewing the English translation and introduction history of the fiction in a certain time span (Wang, 2021; Wang, 2019; Guo, 2007) or the overall reception of the printed versions of *XYJ* via qualitative research (Luo & Zheng, 2022; Wang, 2017; Wang, 2011). One thing that is noticeable is that the researchers mainly focused on the reception of the English translations of *XYJ* among sinologists and scholars. As a matter of fact, as *XYJ* has already gained popularity throughout the years, its audience is no longer confined to the elites; instead, it has expanded widely to Western mass readers. Apart from the limitation in the target audience, some studies preferred to study the reception of a single translator's translated works of *XYJ* (Chang, 2021; Wang & Humblé, 2019). In addition, as the overseas transmission of *XYJ* is through various forms, such as the digital books, films, TV series, tourist attractions, the research object in this field should simultaneously be expanded. On the grounds of the above, the problems of the dissemination and reception of the English translations of *XYJ* in the English-speaking world are as follow:

First, as for the overseas dissemination and reception of the English translations of *XYJ*, the images and their differences constructed by the paratexts throughout its overseas introduction history is little addressed. The paucity of studies in this matter is mainly due to the fact that the translated versions of *XYJ* are in various forms and the translation history dates back to 100 years ago. As such, the complexity of data collection and analysis is quite a challenge to researchers. Therefore, this research intends to fill a void in the knowledge of paratexts by conducting a qualitative and diachronic study on the images created by the peritexts of *XYJ*'s English versions. Specifically, the verbal elements such as titles, prefaces, blurbs and visual elements such as front cover illustrations of the English translations of *XYJ* throughout the overseas transmission history of this prestigious fiction need to be analyzed.

Second, another problematic aspect is that the pitfalls of quantitative research, the expanding readership and diverse transmission mode have been neglected when studying the changes in the reception of *XYJ* by Western mass readers. The quantitative methods employed by prior studies such as questionnaire and survey could lead to biased conclusion due to the constraints in demographic and selected versions. More effective methods need to be employed to measure whether the recipients can understand the text and Chinese culture in a correct manner via the translated versions. Additionally, in the new era, the English-speaking audience has increased and the overseas transmission mode of *XYJ* has diversified. As such, the study should expand the scopes of the readers to Western mass readership and investigate their reception of *XYJ*'s various transmission forms.

Last but not least, there are limited studies on the participants and their interaction mechanism in the process of translation, introduction and dissemination

of *XYJ* on a macro level from a sociological perspective. Translation is regarded as a social activity (Gündüz, 2021; Sapiro, 2014). Translation products are the result of joint efforts of various participants, i.e., not only human participants, such as the publisher, editors and translators, but also the easily-neglected ones, non-human participants, such as social environment and national policies, which can interact with each other and influence the whole promotion process. Restoring the social and historical background of the production of *XYJ*'s translated works and the mechanism of how the human and non-human actors interact within a dynamic network throughout the overseas transmission history can benefit the overseas introduction of Chinese literary works in the future.

XYJ is a representative work of classic Chinese literature. In general, this fiction has been well-received by Western readers throughout the history. Given the socialized nature of the translation products, the study of its overseas dissemination and reception can be carried out from a sociological perspective. Understanding these questions are of primary importance in investigating the overseas promotion of this fiction. Furthermore, considering the limited success of Chinese literature in the English-speaking world, the experience and lessons drawn from the case of *XYJ* can provide guidance and reference to the spread of China's cultural products in the future.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study sets out to explore the dissemination and reception of *XYJ* in the English-speaking world. Specifically, the study seeks to examine the paratexts of 11 English versions of *XYJ*, including the abridged, reprinted and complete versions translated by different translators. The study has the following objectives:

1. To identify the images created by peritexts in the English translations of *Xi You Ji*,
2. To determine the changes that have occurred in the reception of *Xi You Ji* by Western readers through the epitexts of *Xi You Ji*'s English translations,
3. To establish the way human actors (translators, publishers, editors) function in the translation, introduction and dissemination of *Xi You Ji* in the literary field,
4. To demonstrate the way non-human actors (social environment, national policies, communication media) work in the translation, introduction and dissemination of *Xi You Ji* in the literary field.

1.5 Research Questions

Based on the objectives outlined, the present study of paratextual materials is carried out with a view to elicit data that can answer the following research questions:

1. What are the different images of the translated products presented to the target readers at different historical periods in the English translation history of *XYJ*?
2. How has the reception of *XYJ* by Western readers changed based on the epitexts of *XYJ*'s English translations?
3. How do human actors (translators, publishers, editors) gain capital, participate and construct a network model for the translation, introduction and dissemination of *XYJ* in the literary field?

4. In what way do the non-human actors (social environment, national policies, communication media) function in the process of translation, introduction and dissemination?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is of high theoretical importance. This study emphasizes the socialized nature of the translation products and the pivotal role of the paratexts. Specifically, it uses the paratexts of *XYJ* as the main research object. This research is based on paratextual analysis instead of textual analysis as employed in previous studies, and is combined with visual analysis and sociological theories, which is an exploration in methodology.

This study highlights the English translations of *XYJ* as the result of the joint effort of multiple actors. As part of the final products, paratexts can reflect voices of different actors, such as translators, publishers, editors, etc. Based on sociological theories, this study explores how actors in different cultural fields of different periods interact and construct a network during the translation, introduction and dissemination process, thereby achieving the dissemination and reception of translated works in the target culture.

More importantly, the scrutiny of the paratexts in the English translations of *XYJ* uncovers the interaction between translation activity and the ever-changing social environment. By this token, paratext is the result of the joint action of cultural, economic, and political fields. It is worth noting that this study lays emphasis on the social perspectives of translation, which has long been disregarded in light of the linguistic approaches in translation studies (TS) which focus on text.

Overall, this study offers new perspectives and paradigms for the translation

and dissemination of Chinese literature, and provides new insights into interdisciplinary research in the field of translation. Moreover, this methodology may serve as a model for future studies in this area, encouraging more rigorous and innovative research.

This study is of high realistic importance. Studying the dissemination and reception of Chinese literary works in the West is a timely topic. Analyzing the paratexts of the English translations of *XYJ* at various stages in the history of translation is beneficial to explore its image construction in the dynamic political and economic environment, as well as the changes in the reception and cognition of target readers towards this fiction in different historical backgrounds. As *XYJ* is a representative work of classic Chinese literature, the experience and lessons summarized in its century-long English translation and promotion process can serve as a reference and guidance to other Chinese cultural products. More importantly, in a broader perspective, this study can give impetus to the smooth implementation of the “Chinese Culture Going Global” strategy. The study has the potential to impact policy makers, leading to improved practices and policies.

1.7 Scope of the Study

XYJ has many English adaptations in various genres, including books, TV series, films, plays. Since this study pays close attention to literary translation and the overall aim of this study is to facilitate the overseas promotion of Chinese literature in the Anglophone world, the focus of this study is on *XYJ*'s English translations in form of independent books. The audiovisual adaptations have been excluded from this study.

Specifically, this study focuses on the peritexts and epitexts of 11 English versions of *XYJ* that came out in separate books. The justification for this selection is as follows: first, *XYJ* represents classic Chinese literature. Second, as mentioned earlier, *XYJ* has a number of English translations. 11 versions are chosen for this study because they are representative abridgments and full-length translations of *XYJ* which enjoy popularity in the Anglophone world. Also, the publication of these versions covers a long time span, from the early 20th century to 2021, which can provide this study with rich paratextual materials to examine the changes of *XYJ*'s image and readers' reception over time. Finally, the peritextual and epitextual materials that form the focus of the analysis is the concern of this study because these elements exist in various forms and serve as a mediator between *XYJ* and its Anglophone audiences. Additionally, due to the nature of translation as a social activity, the analysis of paratexts can be guided by sociological theories, which have been frequently used in socio-translation studies.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

This study investigates the dissemination and reception of the English translations of *XYJ* in the English-speaking world. To achieve this goal, the study is limited to:

- a. the paratexts of representative English translated versions that appear in separate books in the English translation history of *XYJ*,
- b. qualitative analysis of the obtained materials based on chronological order and research topic.

1.9 Definition of Key Concepts

Culture: refers to “the totality of human knowledge, beliefs, lifestyle,

patterns of behaviour derived from man's ability to absorb knowledge and transmit it from one member of the social community to another from one generation to another" (Ivir, 2003, p. 117).

Fiction: refers to "NARRATIVE writing drawn from the IMAGINATION of the author rather than from history or fact" (Holman, 1936, p. 223).

Novel: stems from the Italian word novella (literally, "a little new thing"), which is an extended work of fiction written in prose and differs from other types of prose in its lengthy nature that allows a more significant variety of characters, a greater complication of the plot (or plots), ampler development of milieu, and more sustained exploration of character and motives than do the shorter, more concentrated modes (Abrams, 1999, p. 190).

Literary Translation: "is, in essence, an act of aesthetic communication for the language of the literary text, [that] does not only inform, i.e., convey lexical meanings, but it also communicates and aesthetically affects" (As-Safi, 2006, p. 7).

English-speaking World: involves the US, the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Ireland. New York and London has become the center of world literature. The reception of Chinese literature in the English-speaking world is the guarantee and access for it to the world literature field (Wang, 2022). The English translations of *XYJ* are mainly disseminated and circulated in the countries mentioned above.

Paratext: is the material that "accompany the text" (Genette, 1997, p. 1), things such as the cover, title page, preface, blurb and illustrations. These additional elements serve as a complement to the main text, and can affect the reception of a text by the recipients in the target culture.

Peritext: is the material that physically attached to the text and elements which "enable a text to become a book" (Genette, 1997, p. 16). It consists of the

textual and visual elements that surround, or are secondary to, the main body of a published work, such as book cover, introduction, editorial notes, blurbs, etc.

Epitext: is the distanced elements located outside of a book, but related to the text. It includes the interview, letters, recording, journal, etc (Genette, 1997).

Human actor: “consists of people who actively affect, in unrestricted ways, the development of any social process” (Luo, 2020, p. 16). Human actors “always act out of social or self-awareness” (Luo, 2020, p. 17). This study focuses on the human actors that have directly affected the production and spread of *XYJ*’s English translations, e.g., translators, publishers and editors.

Non-human actor: refers to entities that are not human. “It is endowed with the ability to act, or be made to act, and to share an equal chance of performing in the networking process” (Luo, 2020, p. 16). This study pays attention to the non-human actors that have a direct and lingering impact on the translation, introduction and dissemination process of *XYJ*’s English translations, e.g., social environment, national policies and communication media.

1.10 Organization of the Study

This study consists of seven chapters:

Chapter 1 is an introductory chapter that presents the basic outline of this study. It includes the background of the study, the problem statement, the objectives, and the questions of the study. The first chapter also introduces the scope, the limitations, and the significance of the study.

Chapter 2 presents a thorough review of the related literature. First, it reviews the TS of *XYJ* from three aspects: the history of the English translations of *XYJ*, the paratexts and TS of *XYJ*, and the overseas dissemination and reception of *XYJ*. Then,

it reviews the current situation of paratext and TS, then combs through the literature related to the development of sociological theories and its applied research in literary translation and transmission field. Finally, the gaps of previous research in this field are identified, and the research objectives for this study are stated.

Chapter 3 describes the research design and methodology, explaining the theoretical framework, and outlining the theoretical structure of the study.

Chapter 4 investigates the images created by the peritexts in the English translation of *XYJ*. This part divides the history of the English translations of *XYJ* into three time periods according to the characteristics of each period. This section examines the images of *XYJ* created by its English versions in different historical periods in the English-speaking world through case study and visual analysis.

Chapter 5 explores the changes in the readers' reception of the English translations of *XYJ* based on the selected epitexts. It selects the coverage of *XYJ* by Western mainstream media, readers' reviews posted on Amazon, and relevant comments from Western tourists on the scenic spots related to *XYJ* posted on TripAdvisor as the epitexts. Thematic analysis (TA) is used to analyze these epitextual materials and to examine the reception of Western readers towards the translation products of *XYJ*.

Chapter 6 examines the peritextual and epitextual materials of *XYJ*'s English versions in different periods. With the help of sociological theories, it investigates the translation and transmission models in the English-speaking world, and explores how various actors in the process of translation, introduction and dissemination interact and form a dynamic network. Finally, it analyzes the function of non-human actors in the process.

Chapter 7, which is the concluding chapter, discusses the findings concluded from the data analysis in the previous chapters. It highlights the need for further investigation to fill the possible gaps related to the topic, and recommends probable areas of further research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter consists of three sections which serve as a thorough review of the literature related to the dissemination and reception of the translations of *XYJ* in the English-speaking world. The related academic works are collected, categorized and analyzed systematically. The first section reviews the history of the English translations of *XYJ* and the relevant literature on the English translations of *XYJ*. The second section focuses on paratext and TS from six perspectives. Finally, the last section involves a theoretical and applied review of sociological research in the field of literary translation and dissemination. The chapter ends up with a discussion and review concerning the existing literature, through which the research gaps are presented.

2.1 Translations of *XYJ*

2.1.1 The English translations of *XYJ*

Although this study focuses on the English translations of *XYJ* rather than its ST, it is important to start with a brief introduction to the fiction. It is imperative to demonstrate the high status and great popularity of *XYJ* in Chinese culture, throughout its several hundred years of history, for this directly leads to the study of *XYJ*'s translations.

The Chinese title of the original, *Xi You Ji*, is 西游记. It literally means “journey to the west”. Despite some disputes regarding its authorship, it is widely acknowledged that *XYJ* is the work of Wu Cheng'en during the Ming Dynasty.

It is considered to be one of the earliest classic Chinese mythic fictions. Its

“classic” trait is due to its logical and intriguing layout, as the story is made up of 100 chapters, each of which is complete, independent and coherent with the following one. The fiction is based on the real historical pilgrimage of Xuanzang to India in search of the Buddhist scriptures in the Tang Dynasty, while the plots and characters of the novel was far away from the ordinary life. It is defined as a “mythic novel” for “most of the characters are not human, but immortals, Bodhisattvas, spirits, demons and monsters, with the ability to use magic arts, tricks, and legendary weapons” (Luo, 2018, p. 40). Aside from the above, a significant portion of the plots in the fiction come from myths and folklore, and unfold in imaginary settings.

The fiction depicts Xuanzang’s journey to the “Western regions” with the escort of his three disciples. The team ventures into numerous challenges and fearlessly engages into epic battles with powerful foes and rivals. The whole story is filled with magic, adventure and absurdity, and also a harmonious fusion of Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism. Since its first publication in the 16th century, *XYJ* has been widely circulated in China as a sought-after work in various forms including printed books, ebooks, TV series, films, animations, video games, just to name a few till this day.

Since this section pivots on the English translations of *XYJ*, an outline of the existing English translations of *XYJ* would be necessary and useful. The start of *XYJ*’s translation dates back to the 19th century. Within the time span of more than 100 years of *XYJ*’s introduction to the English-speaking world, various versions have been accomplished by translators with different nationalities and occupations. Throughout history, three categories of English translations of *XYJ* came into existence, namely excerpt translations, abridged translations in independent book form, and full translations. Although its history is not a long one, as the history