A Comparative Study of English Translations of Jin Yong's Martial Arts Novels from the Perspective of Reception Aesthetics — A Hero Born and The Deer and the Cauldron as an Example

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Abstract— *This paper selects the English translation of The Deer and the Cauldron by British translator John Minford and the English translation of A Hero Born by young Swedish translator Anna Holmwood as the objects of study. Based on the theory of reception aesthetics of Jauss, it compares and analyses translation strategies and translation methods used by the two translators who are trying to achieve the greatest degree of field of vision integration according to readers' expectation field of vision in the translation of their respective novels.*

Keywords— *Reception Aesthetics, English Translation of Martial Arts, Horizon of Expectations, Fusion of Horizons*

I. INTRODUCTION

General Secretary Xi Jinping said, "The rejuvenation of a nation is always strongly supported by the flourishing of culture, and the progress of an era is always marked by the prosperity of culture." Wuxia culture is a unique characteristic culture in China. In order to promote the dissemination of Chinese wuxia culture to the outside world, carry forward the traditional culture of Chinese martial arts, and inherit the beauty of the excellent Chinese wuxia culture, there are many domestic and foreign wuxia novel writers and enthusiasts. There are also more and more English translations of wuxia novels who are helping Chinese wuxia culture gradually going to the Western world. As a famous writer of Chinese martial arts novels,

Jin Yong, together with Gu Long, Liang Yusheng and Wen Rui'an, is known as the Four Great Masters of Chinese Martial Arts Novels. His martial arts novels have unique characteristics of Chinese martial arts culture, and are a good medium for the dissemination of martial arts and Chinese culture. His many novels have been translated by foreign translators and have received particular attention in recent years.

In this paper, *The Deer and the Cauldron* translated by British translator John Minford and *A Hero Born* translated by young Swedish translator Anna Holmwood are selected as the research objects[1]. Among the many English translations of Jin Yong's novels, these two English translations have won unanimous praise at home

and abroad. John Minford, a British sinologist, scholar, and literary translator, has translated Chinese classics such as *Dream of the Red Chamber* (the last forty times), *Strange Tales of a Lonely Studio*, and *The Book of Changes* into Chinese. Anna Holmwood, a Swedish translator, whose English version of *A Hero Born, Book 1,* was reprinted to the 7th edition in the first month of its publication in the UK and sold like hot cakes. Based on the theory of reception aesthetics of German Jauss, this paper is intended to compare and analyze the translation strategies and methods chosen by the two translators in their respective translations according to the readers' expectation horizons, who are aiming to achieve the greatest degree of integration of readers' expectation horizons.

II.   READERS' HORIZONS OF EXPECTATION IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF MARTIAL ARTS NOVELS

Based on the theory of horizon of expectation in reception aesthetics[2], the author examined the expectation horizons of the readers of western martial arts novels by constructing a corpus of readers' book reviews in the western world. With reference to the current situation of Chinese martial arts works, the author collected readers' book reviews of the English translations of the three works of Jin Yong, *The Deer and the Cauldron* written by John Minford, *A Hero Born* written by Anna Holmwood and *Fox Volant of the Snowy Mountain* written by Oliva Mok. From two authoritative foreign book review websites, namely, Amazon and Goodreads, the author collected 956 reviews. *The Deer and the Cauldron* written by John Minford collected a total of 58 valid book reviews (42 from Goodreads,16 from Amazon), *Fox Volant of the Snowy Mountain* written by Olivia Mok collected a total of 15 valid book reviews on Aamazon. *A Hero Born, A Snake Lies Waiting, A Heart Divided* written by Anna Holmwood collected a total of 883 valid book reviews (795 from Goodreads, 88 from Amazon). The total number of valid book reviews is 956 and 131,192 words. After the corpus was collected, the author pre-processed the corpus, including corpus cleaning, lexical partitioning, lexical labelling and other operations, and finally constructed a corpus of readers' book reviews of the English translation

of Jin Yong's martial arts.

Corpus Analysis

Antconc was used by the author to construct a corpus for data statistics, and the text descriptive analysis of the corpus was carried out from multiple perspectives, such as high-frequency words, collocational word frequency, modal word frequency, etc., to examine the attitudes of readers of Jin Yong's martial arts translations to the existing translations, and to deduce the horizon of expectations of Western readers when reading martial arts translations.

Data Processing

Firstly, using the Antconc word frequency search function to remove the deactivated words (such as of, a, the, in and other dummy words), the author screened out a total of 25 high-frequency words with a word frequency of 200 and above (see Table 1). Then, the Cluster function was used to retrieve the list of clusters arranged in order around the high-frequency words. In the fourth step, the KWIC terminology index function was used to search for the high-frequency words in focus, and the File View function was used to view the context of the word in the original language.

Table 1 High-frequency Words

Word	Rank	Freq
book	12	1312
story	19	795
read	22	726
chinese	24	639
characters	29	565
series	33	500
translation	35	493
martial	48	380
fu	52	346
guo	54	341
jin	55	338
kung	56	337
reading	63	311
arts	64	306
yong	68	292
english	71	290
jing	74	278
books	77	268
names	78	264

hero	82	251
time	88	238
translated	89	235
heroes	90	232
character	97	207
action	100	200

Analysis Results

According to Table 1, the first three high-frequency words are "book", "story" and "read", which are commonly used by readers when writing book reviews. Therefore, these words can not be analysed in depth. The fourth high-frequency word is "Chinese". Through the search of "Chinese" high-frequency collocations in Cluster (see Table 2), the high-frequency collocations are "Chinese history", "Chinese history", "Chinese history" and "Chinese history", "Chinese Culture", "Chinese Lord", "Chinese Rings", "Chinese literature", "Chinese martial" and so on. The results show that history, culture and other literary elements as the main labels of the English translation of martial arts are also generally concerned by Western readers. Western readers will focus on Chinese history, culture, kung fu and other oriental elements when they read the translation of martial arts, and most of the verbs collocated with them are "know", which shows that Western readers also want to know a certain amount of Chinese culture when they are reading.

What is striking is the high-frequency phrase "Chinese Lord". Western readers think that Jin Yong's martial arts works are the Chinese version of *The Lord of the Rings*, so the author briefly understood and analysed *The Lord of the Rings* and learned that martial arts novels

were indeed similar to Western fantasy novels to some extents. Both of them portray legendary heroes and highlight the theme of upholding justice, which reflects the readers' concern about the portrayal of chivalrous characters.

Table 2 High-frequency Collocations of word "Chinese"

Cluster	Rank	Freq	NormFreq
chinese history	1	54	0.085
chinese culture	2	35	0.055
chinese lord	2	35	0.055
chinese martial	4	28	0.044
chinese names	5	22	0.034
chinese and	6	19	0.030
chinese version	7	18	0.028
chinese classic	8	16	0.025

The next high-frequency word is characters, which is a word that intuitively reflects readers' attitudes and readers' concerns, indicating that readers pay special attention to the characters in the novel. The author conducted a word cluster search for it, and searched for high-frequency collocations in the left and right directions. The search results are shown in Table 3. As shown in the table, readers discuss more about protagonists, female characters, the complexity and variety of characters, and minor roles, which reflect their concern about the image of characters in the novel. In the search to the right, the author obtained the key phrase "character names", and the complexity and diversity of character images in martial arts novels can be reflected by the translation of character names and nicknames.

Table 3 High-frequency Cluster of word "Character"

Cluster(Left)	Rank	Freq	Cluster(Right)	Rank	Freq
main characters	4	20	characters names	14	6
female characters	8	10	characters constantly	32	3
colorful characters	14	5	characters straight	32	3
complex characters	19	3	characters coming	39	2
fictional characters	19	3	characters gliding	39	2
minor characters	19	3	characters guo	39	2

The seventh high-frequency word is "translation", which will directly reflect the readers' attitude towards the evaluation of the translation of martial arts novels, using

the search function to collocate search, the search results are as follows (see Table 4), and using the KWIC function and file view to check the specific context, and screening

the effective readers' evaluations and analyze the readers' attitudes.

Table 4 Collocates of word "translation"

Collocate	Rank	Freq(Scaled)	FreqLR	FreqL	FreqR	Range	Likelihood	Effect
english	1	2900	78	66	12	1	159.908	2.674
lost	2	810	40	39	1	1	125.656	3.551
literal	4	210	17	14	3	1	69.580	4.264
holmwood	5	700	20	15	5	1	42.936	2.761
anna	7	520	13	8	5	1	24.925	2.569
fu	9	3460	1	0	1	1	21.885	-3.866
kung	10	3370	1	0	1	1	21.176	-3.828
names	12	2640	28	4	24	1	18.102	1.332
exists	13	40	4	1	3	1	18.056	4.569
official	15	80	5	5	0	1	17.925	3.891
inconsistent	15	80	5	2	3	1	17.925	3.891

The readers used English translation to introduce English translations with a high frequency, but most of them were about the English version of a certain book, without a lot of coverage and evaluation of specific contents. The second high-frequency collocation is surprising. According to the search results of the Antconc, we found that "lost in translation" was mentioned in 40 readers' book reviews, which was analyzed by the translator by looking at the specific reviews.

Review 1：And yes details definitely get lost in the translation. I'm frequently disappointed when comparing the Chinese and English sections (the parts i can understand perfectly fine, of course). The dialogue suffers the most in the loss of nuance. it doesn't much matter how the characters express themselves in Chinese-flippant, cutting, incensed, mocking, jovial - once translated into English, they all sound matter-of-fact and devoid of attitude and feeling. Barbs and quips become straightforward statements that convey the meaning of the original words but lack the flavor.

Reader 1 thinks that a lot of detailed information is lost in the translation, such as the most serious loss in the dialogue of the characters, and the emotions of the characters, such as levity, sarcasm, anger, ridicule, and joy are not well translated, which affects the expression of the characters' emotions and the portrayal of their images.

Review 2：Although this only the start of a great saga I can assure one would not be disappointed with it. Yes, the beauty of the book does get lost in translation, yet the translator has done a somewhat good job to catch the essence of it at the end.

Reader 2 thinks that the translated text has lost the beauty of the original text. It is not discussed in detail, but reflects the reader's aesthetic needs for the translation.

Review 3：Right off the bat, I am going to tell you that I am rating this book 3 out of 5 stars. I don't want anyone to think that this detracts from the book. The story is a Chinese classic. When I heard it was being translated, I knew it would be a huge undertaking. Many had said it couldn't be done. I love the basics of the story, I just feel indifferent because I couldn't connect with it. The characters are very dry and the fight scenes are not as epic as I anticipated. I cannot blame the translator, but it does feel like a lot of the substance of the story got lost in translation.

Reader 3 believed that a large amount of content in the book is missing, specifically its evaluation involves the character image is not full, the fight scene is not grand enough, reflecting the reader's expectations of the fight scene. And this reader thinks that the translator should pay attention to the translation of the description of the fight scene in the translation, so that it reflects the coherence and vividness of the fight scene of martial arts novels.

Review 4：My Chinese definitely isn't good enough to read the original, but I feel like there was a significant amount lost in translation. To be clear, I have the utmost respect for the art of translation and imagine that translating this book in particular was a challenge,

considering the differences ranging from syntax to culture that had to be accounted for. That said, I'm puzzled by some of the translatorial choices made here, including translating and flipping some names and not others (ex: Guo Jing and Skyfury Guo, who are son and father and therefore share the last name "Guo"), the specific syntax of the poetry, and a few more little things that added up over the course of 400 pages. I also found the narrative structure slightly monotonous, a predictable cycle of battles (both of martial arts and, to some extent, of strategy) and training and travel.

Review 5：Quite fun though I felt it may have lost something in translation as there were a few times the language just felt jarring or off centre. The huge cast of characters which was a little intimidating but the fighting scenes were really cool and overall this was a decent read. I can't recommend it to everyone but if you really love the wuxia genre this might be worth picking up.

Reader 4 thinks that it is difficult to translate martial arts novels and that the translator needs to consider the differences from grammar to culture. At the same time, this reader has doubts about the translation of some personal names, syntactic translation and the narrative structure of the fight scenes, while Reader 5 directly specifies the rawness of the language in the translation process. This reflects that readers will not only pay attention to the cultural differences but also unconsciously pay attention to the linguistic differences, including vocabulary, grammar, syntactic structure, etc. Translators need to focus on the linguistic habits of the English readers during the translation process, and try to conform to the narrative logic in English in order to avoid causing doubts to the English readers.

Review 6: While some readers may argue that the ingenuity of this masterwork is lost in translation, l would say the translator Anna Holmwood did a great job. It is never an easy feat to translate Chinese into English given the many significant differences between the 2 most widely spoken languages in the world. Yes, some details are not translated but it's all done to maintain the flow of the English prose. Overall, it is a pleasant and enjoyable read even for me who have read the Chinese version twice.

Reader 6, on the other hand, was optimistic in terms of the loss of details in the translation, which was regarded as the translator's way of dealing with it in order to balance the English-Chinese language differences and to maintain the fluency of the English language. This further reflects the necessity for translators to pay attention to the English-Chinese language differences in the translation process and to maintain the fluency of the translation.

The next few high-frequency words, "martial", "art", "kung fu" are all representative words of Chinese martial arts and kung fu, which intuitively reflect the readers' expectation of Chinese martial arts while reading novels. The translator conducted word clusters searches and screened out the high-frequency word clusters, and the results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5 High-frequency clusters of word "martial" and "kung fu"

Cluster(martial)	Rank	Freq	Cluster	Rank	Freq
martial arts moves	2	10	kung fu movies	1	27
martial arts movies	4	9	kung fu movie	3	23
martial arts fantasy	5	7	kung fu moves	4	22
martial arts masters	5	7	kung fu fights	5	12
martial arts novels	5	7	kung fu masters	6	11
martial arts action	12	5	kung fu fighting	7	8
martial arts literature	12	5	kung fu fantasy	9	7
martial arts movie	12	5	kung fu master	9	7
martial art moves	16	4	kung fu action	12	6
martial arts fiction	16	4	kung fu battles	12	6
martial arts film	16	4	kung fu skills	12	6

According to Table 5, in terms of the content of martial arts, readers focus on the specific kungfu moves.

And further word search reveals that readers discuss more about the names of the martial arts moves, which indicates that translators should pay attention to the translation of martial arts moves which contain a large number of cultural connotations or strong imagery, all of which require translators to use appropriate translation strategies and methods. The second cluster is martial arts moves, which requires translators to use appropriate translation strategies and techniques. The second word cluster is martial arts movies. After the translator's in-depth observation of the specific context, he found that most readers are loyal fans of Chinese martial arts movies, which is also one of the major motives for them to read English translations of martial arts novels, and therefore they expect to get the same aesthetic experience as that of watching martial arts movies in reading martial arts novels, and the most important thing is the consistency and vivid imagery of the martial arts scenes. The most important thing is the coherence and vividness of the martial arts scenes.

By analyzing the high-frequency vocabulary in the corpus of readers' book reviews, the author came to the following conclusion: when reading English translations of wuxia novels, Western readers are mainly concerned about character portrayal, description of martial arts scenes, Chinese history and culture, wuxia culture, and whether or not the translated language conforms to the English expression habits, etc. According to the above focuses, the translator, under the perspective of acceptance aesthetics, can surmise that the readers' expectation horizons are roughly divided into three categories: cultural cognition expectation horizons, language habit expectation horizons, and aesthetic interest expectation horizons. Among them, cultural cognition mainly involves the translation of cultural load words such as history and culture, martial arts culture, etc. Linguistic habit expectation horizon should pay attention to the differences between Chinese and English, and strive for the authentic expression of the translated language and the conversion of logical thinking, etc. Aesthetic interest expectation horizon requires the translator to focus on the shaping of chivalrous image of the characters and the coherent and vivid portrayal of the martial arts scenes.

III. HORIZON OF LINGUISTIC HABITUAL EXPECTATION

According to the reception aesthetics, the reader's cultural cognition and aesthetics interests are the higher-level expectation requirements. If the translation wants to achieve the fusion of the reader's cultural cognition and aesthetic interest horizons, the prerequisite is to promote the integration of the reader's horizon of linguistic habitual expectation, so that the translation conforms to the expression habits of the readers of the target language, and the readers are able to accept the translation initially. Therefore, translators must grasp the characteristics of the original text while translating, focus on the selection of appropriate vocabulary expression, jump out of the original sentence form, and not copy the original sentence formation and syntactic structure. In this regard, the two translators studied in this paper are both trying to make appropriate adjustments in vocabulary expression and syntactic structure according to the specific situation[6].

Example 1

Original Text	那公子向左侧身，双掌虚实并用，一掌扰敌，一掌相攻。郭靖当下展开"分筋错骨手"双手飞舞，拿筋错节，招招不离对手全身关节穴道。那公子见他来势凌厉，掌法忽变，竟然也使出"分筋错骨手"来。
Anna Holmwood's Translation	The Prince launched forward with both palms, the first in a false move designed to distract. Guo Jing replied with a Split Muscles Lock Bones move, striking rapidly at various points across the Prince's body. The Prince echoed the same technique back.

Chinese makes good use of four-word phrases, short and concise sentences, and focuses on the whole meaning of sentence, while English makes good use of clauses and focuses on form of sentence. In Example 1, Holmwood focuses on the depiction of the gentleman's two palms, and plays down the action of turning to the left in order to show that the gentleman's intention of this action is to disturb Guo Jing. The four phrases are translated into English by focusing on the single word "distract", which

has actually indicated the essence of this sentence. And the next sentence describes Guo Jing's action. And the form of this sentence is consistent with the previous one, using a verb in the main clause and an action clause to present Guo Jing's action. These two people's action descriptions use the same form of expression, which makes the whole scene more contrasting, and is also more in line with the English form of expression.

Example 2

Original Text	哼，打开天窗说亮话。
John Minford's Translation	Huh, if you want it plain, you can have it plain!

In Example 2, due to language differences, Chinese often uses '明、亮' to describe the clarity of a sentence, while in Western countries, straight or plain is used to describe the clarity of a sentence. Although there is a difference in expression, Minford here uses words that are in line with Western thinking to translate the original text, which achieves the integration of the reader's linguistic habits through the selection of fixed expressions that are in line with the English expression habits.

IV.   HORIZON OF CULTURAL COGNITIONAL EXPECTATION

When English readers read the translated wuxia books, what they get most interested in is the rich and unique Chinese wuxia culture in the novels. And the two essential elements of wuxia culture are wu and xia, which complement each other like soul and body containing rich Chinese culture[4]. The most direct way to reflect them in the translated texts is the translation of martial arts moves. Therefore, translators need to focus on the translation of the cultural imagery in martial arts stances, so that the translation can not only take care of the original cultural vision of the Western readers to a certain extent, but also expand their cultural vision and help them understand the Chinese martial arts culture. Anna Holmwood's translations of martial arts stances and other martial arts cultural imagery are mostly direct translations depending on the context, and appropriate methods such as free translation, literal translation and explaining are adopted. Some martial arts moves are more obscure and difficult to understand, which need to be explained. However, free

translation is more suitable to these kinds of original texts, because it's better and easier for readers to understand the culture. It's no harm to sound a bit strange, so as to avoid the loss of cultural imagery. John Minford's descriptions of the movements in the martial arts scenes of The Deer and The Cauldron is very careful, and he also pursued coherence with the original text when translating the movements. His way of dealing with the action makes the basic style of the action appear in the minds of the readers of the translated language on the basis of retaining the image of the stance. While adopting the careful description of martial movements, John Minford also seeks to have coherence with the original text when he translates the action[7].

Example 3

Original Text	九阴白骨爪
Anna Holmwood's Translation	Nine Yin Skeleton Claw

The Nine Yin Skeleton Claw is the most classic martial arts move in Jin Yong's novels[8]. When it first appeared in the original text, it only depicted the consequences of encountering this martial arts move——the skull of a skeleton which happened to be able to be inserted into with five fingers, which was creepy and frightening. In addition, there is no direct description of the specific use of this stance, but rather the power of this stance is reflected through a question and answer from the Seven Monsters of Jiangnan, which is finally brought out in a single sentence by Ke Zhene. In Chinese Taoist culture, nine is also often used to indicate the highest and most powerful degree, such as '九五之尊', which is associated with emperors. In addition, there are many other words in the Chinese language that are related to nine. Nine has a special significance in Chinese culture, and Jin Yong must have considered this aspect when he used nine here. The translator, Anna Holmwood, used both direct and phonetic translations: Yin embodies the viciousness of the move, and since it is not possible to find a counterpart in English, it is translated phonetically to be close to the original expression; and the use of skeleton instead of bone embodies the ferocity of the move. The purpose of the translation is fluent and easy to understand, not necessarily to stick to the word by word or hard translation. A wonderful fight has been presented on the paper in one

breath, so vivid!

Example 4

Original Text	点穴、打穴
John Minford's Translation	closing point

In martial arts novels, closing points are used to restrict the opponent's movement. For the purpose of conveying the meaning of the statement, John Minford translated the meaning of pointing in the example sentence as opening the opponent's points. His generalisation is intended to achieve a relatively clear description of the specific acupuncture points on the human body. The translation is clearer to the reader of the imported language who lacks knowledge of classical culture.

V.   HORIZONS OF AESTHETIC INTEREST EXPECTATIONS

After analysing the data from the corpus of readers' book reviews, the author concluded that readers have certain expectations for the English translation of martial arts in reading aesthetics, and readers are influenced by early martial arts kung fu movies, expecting that reading the text can bring them the experiences of watching movies. At the same time, they have certain expectations for the characters with different personalities in martial arts novels, which requires the translator to ensure the fluency of the translation, the vividness of the description of the martial arts scenes and the three-dimensionality of the character portrayal in the process of translation through multiple perspectives such as phonetics, vocabulary, syntax and so on. Anna Holmwood's aesthetic interest in this aspect of the present imbalance in the pursuit of truth and pragmatism makes the aesthetic distance between the target language readers and the translated text become larger, which not only makes the readers think that the translated text is boring and tasteless, but even makes it unreadable and impedes the readers' integration of the field of vision. John Minford, on the other hand, seems to be slightly better in the aspect of white space, and the appropriate omission of translation gives the readers enough space for imagination to achieve a better aesthetic effect.

Example 5

Original Text	郭靖心知只要给他声张出来，黄蓉与自己不免有性命之忧，下手更不容情，钩、拿、抓、打、招招是分筋错骨手的狠辣家数。
Anna Holmwood's Translation	Not only had Guo Jing lost the medicine, but he was now in danger of alerting the palace to his presence. Lotus, too, would be in mortal danger. He used a move from his Split Muscles technique in an effort to control the boy.

In the original text, the words such as hooking, taking, grasping and hitting are another portrayal of Split Muscles technique. But here, Anna Holmwood simply translates it as a move from his Split Muscles technique, which makes the vivid and realistic dynamic moves in the original text become static and hard and cuts off the tense atmosphere created in the first half of the translation, which is what some target language readers wrote on Amazon as not fluent reading. The translator's omission of specific martial arts actions to achieve a pragmatic translation makes the translation distorted and fails to convey the essence of the original text.

Example 6

Original Text	那好极了，武当派的武功一遇上咱们少林派，那是落花流水，夹着尾巴便逃。
John Minford's Translation	Shaolin versus Wudang：it's got to be a walk-over! They'll run away from us with their tails between their legs.

In Example 6, Wei Xiaobao thinks that Shaolin martial arts is better than Wudang. The two expressions of 落花流水 and 夹着尾巴 both express the scenario that a person becomes modest and low-profile after a brutal defeat. Repeatedly translating the same or similar images will easily cause confusion to the target language audience, so John Minford omitted the former in the translation process to reduce the reading burden and obstacles. At the same time, he retained a tail of imagery to give the readers a space for imagination, so as to achieve a more three-dimensional aesthetic effect of the characters.

VI.   CONCLUSIONS

In terms of linguistic habits, cultural awareness, and aesthetic interest, both translators' translations have their own strengths and weaknesses. The similarity between the two translators lies in the fact that they both take care of the basic differences between English and Chinese linguistic habits, while the difference lies in the treatment of cultural imagery, adopting different translation strategies and methods according to the contexts, with Anna Holmwood making use of the phonetic translation and annotation, while John Minford makes use of free translation. In terms of the fusion of aesthetic interest horizon, Holmwood pays too much attention to the pragmatic translation and ignores the aesthetic effect of the martial arts movements, while John Minford places more emphasis on the graphic description of the movements and the associations and poetic hints generated by his translations, which makes his translations more aesthetically pleasing.

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