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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Mediation, Dissemination, and Reception of David Tod Roy's English Translation of *Jin Ping Mei* in the Anglophone World

Yuhua Fang<sup>1,2</sup>, Noor Mala Ibrahim<sup>2</sup>, and Gang Wu<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Foreign Languages, Wuhan Qingchuan University, Wuhan, China

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Johor Bahru, Malaysia

<sup>3</sup>School of Foreign Languages, Guangzhou College of Commerce, Guangzhou, China

**Corresponding Author:** Yuhua Fang, **E-mail:** [fangyuhua@qcuwh.edu.cn](mailto:fangyuhua@qcuwh.edu.cn)

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| ABSTRACT

Drawing on medio-translatology and a framework of translational mediation adapted from Lasswell's model of communication, this article examines the mediation, dissemination, and reception of David Tod Roy's English translation of *Jin Ping Mei* in the Anglophone world. It further introduces interpretive authority as an analytical concept, placing translational subject, content, channel, audience, and effect within a unified chain of inquiry to explore how a scholarly translation acquires influence in the target culture. Methodologically, the study combines qualitative discourse analysis of translator interviews, quantitative comparison of different English translations, sentiment analysis of platform-based reader reviews, and external dissemination data. The findings show that Roy continually constructs interpretive authority over *Jin Ping Mei* through redefinition of the object of translation, explicit strategic justification, and a proceduralized narrative of scholarly labor. This authority is further materialized in the scholarly textual form of the translation, as reflected in its lexical distribution, syntactic organization, information embedding, and paratextual system. University-press publication, academic reviews, and cultural media together constitute a mechanism for the institutional amplification of interpretive authority. Anglophone readers generally acknowledge the translation's reliability, completeness, and scholarly value, while also displaying sensitivity to the reading friction generated by dense annotation and translator visibility. The article argues that the dissemination and reception of Roy's translation in the Anglophone world should not be understood as the natural outcome of scholarliness itself, but rather as a dynamic cycle in which interpretive authority is continually constructed, amplified, validated, and negotiated among translator, text, institution, and readership.

| KEYWORDS

*Jin Ping Mei*; David Tod Roy; Medio-translatology; English Translation

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

**ACCEPTED:** 15 April 2026

**PUBLISHED:** 19 April 2026

**DOI:** 10.32996/ijllt.2026.9.4.10

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### 1. Introduction

In *Chinese Literature in the Context of World Literature*, Hightower (1953) observed that "In the Chin p'ing Mei and the Hung lou meng Chinese literature has novels which, for scope, subtle delineation of character, and elaborate plot, will rank with the greatest novels of the West ... I would rate the Chinese novel as qualitatively the equal of the European novel—in the two examples mentioned." In the present study, Chin p'ing Mei refers to *Jin Ping Mei* (金瓶梅; hereafter *JPM*), the focus of this research, while Hung lou meng refers to another major classic of Chinese literature, *Hong Lou Meng* (红楼梦; *Dream of the Red Chamber*).

Comprising approximately one million Chinese characters, *JPM* is generally believed to have been written during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). Although its exact date of publication and authorship remain uncertain, many scholars consider the attribution to Lanling Xiaoxiaosheng (兰陵笑笑生, The Scoffing Scholar of Lanling) plausible. To date, however, no conclusive evidence has emerged regarding the identity of the author.

The title *Jin Ping Mei* is commonly understood as a combination of the names of three principal female characters: Pan Jinlian (潘金莲), Li Ping'er (李瓶儿), and Pang Chunmei (庞春梅). At the same time, the three characters in the title also carry rich symbolic associations in Chinese culture: jin (gold) suggests wealth, ping (bottle or vase) evokes wine and sensual pleasure, and mei (plum blossom) is often associated with eroticism. Taken together, these connotations point to the novel's sustained engagement with desire, materiality, and the realities of worldly life.

Through its portrayal of Ximen Qing (西门庆), a wealthy merchant-official whose life is marked by corruption, excess, and social ambition, *JPM* offers a wide-ranging depiction of social life in late imperial China. Centering on Ximen Qing and his household, the novel brings into view both the logic of the marketplace and the operations of officialdom, thereby presenting a broad social panorama of its time. Ximen Qing relies on wealth to cultivate political connections and secure influence, while also exploiting official power to protect and expand his illicit interests. In this way, the novel exposes the close collusion between officials and merchants and reveals the structural corruption embedded in the society it represents.

*JPM* also occupies a distinctive place in the history of Chinese fiction. It is widely regarded as a landmark in the development of the Chinese novel and is often seen as one of the earliest long vernacular works centered on the detailed representation of everyday life. Unlike earlier lengthy narratives, which were largely derived from historical materials or mythological and legendary traditions, *JPM* turns to characters drawn from lived social reality and to the experiences of ordinary households. In doing so, it advances a more realistic mode of literary representation and helps lay the foundation for later masterpieces such as *Hong Lou Meng*.

Over the centuries, *JPM* has been translated into a wide range of languages, including English, French, German, Danish, Spanish, Korean, Japanese, Thai, Vietnamese, and Arabic. Owing to its extensive circulation and sustained scholarly attention, it has come to be recognized as a "priceless literary heritage that is universally cherished" (Ge, 2008). Among its foreign-language versions, the English translations are generally regarded as the most substantial. To date, *JPM* has appeared in English in four abridged translations and three complete translations, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The English translations of *JPM*

Translator	Title of Translation	Year	Publisher	Abridged/Complete
Chu Tsui-Jen	<i>The Adventures of Hsi Men Ching</i>	1927	The Library of Facetious Lore	Abridged translation
Bernard Miall	<i>Chin Ping Mei: The Adventurous History of Hsi Men and His Six Wives</i>	1939	John Lane Press	Abridged translation
Clement Egerton	<i>The Golden Lotus</i>	1939	Routledge & Kegan Paul	Complete translation
Samuel Barker & Kwan Shan-mei	<i>Don Juan of China: an Amour from the Chin P'ing Mei</i>	1960	Tuttle Publishing	Abridged translation
Chai Chu & Winbery Chai	<i>Chin P'ing Mei (included in A Treasury of Chinese Literature)</i>	1965	Appleton-Century Crofts	Abridged translation
David Tod Roy	<i>The Plum in the Golden Vase (5 Volumes)</i>	1993-2013	Princeton University Press	Complete translation
Eugene Ying	<i>Plum Blossoms in a Golden Vase (5 Volumes)</i>	2018	Self-published	Complete translation

Although *JPM* itself has attracted extensive scholarly attention both in China and abroad, with scholars such as Patrick Hanan offering thorough and nuanced discussions of its stylistic structure, thematic concerns, and rhetorical artistry, research on its English translation remains comparatively limited. As Fang et al. (2024) and Fang & Ibrahim (2024) note, scholarship on the English translation of *JPM* is still at an early stage, characterized by a relatively small body of publications and a lack of sustained scholarly engagement.

Among the existing English translations of *JPM*, David Tod Roy's *The Plum in the Golden Vase* is widely regarded as the most accepted version of *JPM* in the Anglophone world (Link, 2015).

Rather than treating Roy's translation simply as a successful translated text, this study argues that its circulation and reception in the Anglophone world are better understood as an interpretive-authority cycle. Roy first acquires the authority to define the object of translation through self-positioning and strategic justification; he then materializes that authority in the linguistic organization and paratextual architecture of the translation; such authority is subsequently amplified and legitimized through academic publishing infrastructures and evaluative institutions; finally, it is both confirmed and contested in actual reader reception. It is through this repeated process of validation and resistance that the scholarly status and mediated influence of Roy's translation are established.

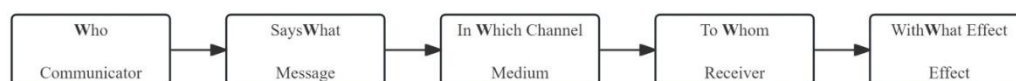
To investigate how interpretive authority is constructed, materialized, amplified, and negotiated in Roy's translation of *JPM*, this study adopts a multi-method design that combines qualitative discourse analysis of translator interviews, quantitative comparison of two English translations, sentiment analysis of online reader reviews, and external indicators of dissemination and reception.

## 2. Literature Review

In the field of translation studies (TS), the cultural turn has brought about important shifts in its central concerns and key analytical perspectives. Translators are no longer regarded merely as language converters; rather, they are situated within a broader social context and understood as cultural mediators (Kardiansyah & Salam, 2020). At the same time, the relationship between translation and society has gradually become a major focus of scholarly attention. Against this backdrop, medio-translatology has emerged as a new research paradigm. It seeks to investigate "what a translation does, and how a translation stimulates and influences target readers—as well as writers—in the recipient context" (Xiong, 2023, p. v). A substantial body of research has examined the communicative dimensions of translation from different perspectives, revealing its strong affinity with the processual and social concerns emphasized in communication studies (Katan & Taibi, 2021; Sun, 2022; House, 2024). Translation has thus increasingly been conceptualized as a form of "social communication accompanied by linguistic variation" (Yin & Yu, 2020). This suggests that concepts drawn from communication studies may provide a productive lens for deepening our understanding of translation research and the social functions of translation.

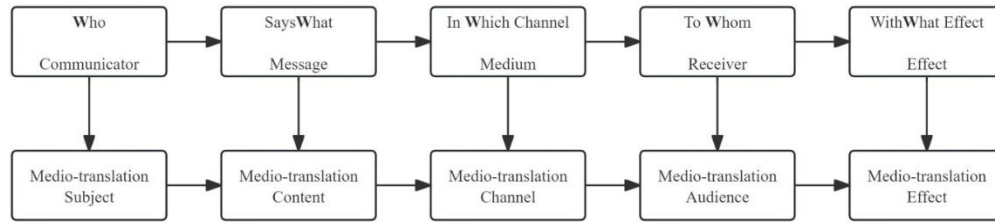
On this basis, the present study incorporates communication theory into its theoretical framework. Lasswell (1948) was among the earliest scholars to formulate a model of the communication process. His well-known "5W" model summarizes the basic elements of communication as follows: who communicates what, through which channel, to whom, and with what effect. Building on this foundation, communication studies gradually developed into five major areas of inquiry: control research, content research, media research, audience research, and effect research.

Figure 1. Lasswell's model of communication



Lasswell's model has also provided important inspiration for translation studies, especially given the strong parallels between medio-translatology and communication activity discussed above. Bao (2014) regards translation as a form of communicative behavior and, drawing on Lasswell's five basic elements, reinterprets translational communication by integrating relevant concepts from translation studies. In doing so, she proposes five core elements of medio-translatology: medio-translation subject, medio-translation content, medio-translation channel, medio-translation audience, and medio-translation effect. Unlike traditional approaches that focus primarily on the transformation from source text to target text, Bao's (2014) framework assigns equal importance to each element of the translation process and clearly delineates the key dimensions of translational activity.

Figure 2. Medio-translation model based on Lasswell's model of communication



Although studies on the English translation of *JPM* have accumulated to some extent in recent years, the overall body of scholarship remains limited, and research specifically devoted to Roy's translation is even scarcer. Since the publication of the first volume of Roy's translation in 1993, relevant studies have mainly developed along two lines. The first concerns translation strategies, encompassing not only discussions of such traditional binaries as domestication and foreignization, but also theoretical explorations from perspectives such as feminism (Tang & Bao, 2018), aesthetic reception (Lin, 2024), and descriptive translation studies (Xiao, 2024). The second concerns translation content. Given the remarkable linguistic artistry of *JPM* itself, studies in this area have paid particular attention to the English rendering of its literary language, including puns (Shi, 2021), metaphor (Xiao, 2022), and slang (Zhang, 2022). In addition, as an encyclopedic representation of everyday life in the Ming dynasty, *JPM* contains a wide range of culture-specific elements that have also attracted scholarly interest, such as tea culture (Zhang, 2018), dress culture (Li & Li, 2022), and medical culture (Qiu, 2026).

From the perspective of medio-translatology and Bao's 5W-based framework, existing studies on Roy's English translation of *JPM* have generated insights into certain dimensions, yet they remain fragmented overall. In particular, they focus predominantly on translation strategies and textual content, while paying insufficient attention to how these various elements interact with one another and jointly shape the position of the translation in the target culture. The present study therefore seeks to bring these relatively dispersed dimensions back into a unified analytical framework and further introduces interpretive authority as an analytical concept in order to examine how a scholarly translation acquires influence in the Anglophone world through translator subject construction, textual organization, institutional dissemination, and negotiation with readers.

### 3. Medio-translation subject

This section approaches Roy not merely as the executor of translation, but as a translational agent actively engaged in acquiring and consolidating interpretive authority. What is at stake here is not simply his personal style, but his sustained effort to secure the right to define the meaning of the source text, regulate the terms of its entry into the target culture, and justify the standards by which an adequate translation of *JPM* should be judged, with particular attention to his self-positioning, decision-making practices, and the construction of discursive authority. The analysis draws on seven representative interviews and in-depth media profiles. Methodologically, these texts are treated as a corpus of translator self-narratives and examined through qualitative discourse analysis. Through cross-textual comparison, the section traces three recurrent discursive cues: (1) decision statements articulated through explicit stance-taking; (2) sustained comparison with, and rebuttal of, existing translations and inherited reading frames; and (3) procedural accounts of workflow and knowledge handling. This approach makes it possible to see more clearly that Roy is not merely recounting personal experience; rather, he persistently articulates how a translator ought to define the object of translation, how to structure readers' access to it, and how to provide defensible rationales for translational choices—thereby consolidating a stable and forceful translational subjectivity.

Table 2. The Collected Interviews with Roy on Translating *JPM*

Number	Released Year	Title	Source
1	2013	<i>An Old Chinese Novel Is Racy Reading Still</i>	<i>New York Times</i>
2	2013	<i>A Lifetime Fascination</i>	TABLEAU
3	2013	<i>David Tod Roy, The Plum in the Golden Vase or, Chin P'ing Mei</i>	<i>New Books Network</i>
4	2014	<i>My life: David Tod Roy</i>	<i>South China Morning Post</i>

Number	Released Year	Title	Source
5	2014	英译《金瓶梅》，半生一梦	中国新闻周刊
6	2017	《金瓶梅》英译本：了解中国文学与文化的窗口—— 芮效卫教授访谈	东方翻译
7	2024	他者眼中的中国古典文学走出去——芝加哥大学芮效卫 教授谈《金瓶梅》的译介与传播	文学研究

First, across multiple sources Roy demonstrates a pronounced capacity to define the object under translation. He repeatedly notes that *JPM* has long been labeled in the Anglophone world as salacious erotica, and that such a label-based understanding obscures the work's more consequential social and cultural dimensions. For Roy, the novel's structural significance lies less in titillation than in its dense representation of everyday life, institutional operations, and the dynamics of power and corruption. Importantly, this redefinition is not an abstract value claim but a sustained interpretive practice: Roy continually specifies what the work is and is not, positioning himself at the center of explanation and corrective framing. In other words, he does not passively accept externally imposed interpretive templates; through repeated argumentation he redraws the boundaries of meaning, positioning the translator as a key arbiter of significance in cross-cultural transmission. This arbitration is not performed through a posture of authority alone, but through evidentiary appeals to textual detail and sociohistorical context, rendering subjectivity observable as a set of discursive practices.

Second, Roy's subjectivity is especially salient in the articulability and defensibility of his decisions. In these interviews and reports, he is not content simply to state what he translated; he repeatedly foregrounds why he handled the text in particular ways. Such narration often takes the form of explicit choice structures: he identifies where earlier translations or inherited translation conventions have flattened the distinctiveness of the source text, or where they have adjusted linguistic register and epistemic density to accommodate presumed reader expectations, and he then presents himself as having decided to do the opposite or as insisting on preserving difference. This point is crucial: translational subjectivity is not merely a matter of having an individual style; it consists in turning style into publicly discussable and assessable strategic reasoning, thereby relocating translational decisions into a space of argument. Through systematic comparison with existing translations, Roy is not simply evaluating his predecessors; he is constructing a normative account of what constitutes an adequate English translation of *JPM* and positioning his own version as the realization of that standard. In this way, the translator shifts from executor to norm-setter, with discursive authority derived from the capacity to make choices explicit, reasoned, and systematized.

Third, Roy's subjectivity is further reinforced through a recurring narrative of proceduralized scholarly labor. The materials repeatedly record his concrete descriptions of how he indexed the text, identified sources, built retrieval systems, and undertook sustained reading and training in order to enter specialized knowledge domains. On the surface, these accounts highlight the arduousness of the task; more substantively, they enact a methodological stance: translation is framed not as inspiration-driven writing, but as a self-conscious process of knowledge handling and interpretation. More importantly, such procedural narration supplies an empirically checkable basis for authority. Discursive power is not grounded merely in personal reputation; it is anchored in demonstrable chains of evidence, traceable procedures, and an articulated knowledge base. By making labor processes public as a reviewable practice, Roy casts himself as the most reliable interpreter of the text and elevates translational subjectivity from individual will to an academically legitimized position of interpretive authority.

Finally, Roy's subjectivity is also evident in his active management of the translator–audience relationship. A recurrent stance across the interviews and reports is that he does not treat readers as consumers to be indulged, but as interpretive subjects to be guided into the text. He anticipates likely trajectories of misreading and pre-emptively provides cautions, explanations, and entry points, stressing that approaching the novel with a single-purpose agenda will foreclose its deeper value. This practice suggests that he is not only translating the text but also shaping the mode of reading; he is not merely transmitting content but calibrating the frame of reception. Consequently, translational subjectivity materializes as the capacity to shape reading pathways: Roy occupies a strategic node within the translational circuit from which he can influence how the work is understood, positioning the translator as an active organizer of meaning rather than a passive linguistic intermediary.

If this section has shown how Roy acquires interpretive authority as a translational subject, the next question is how that authority becomes embedded in the translation itself. In other words, Roy's authority must be traced not only in what he says about the translation, but also in the formal organization, lexical distribution, and explanatory density of the translated text.

**4. Medio-translation Content**

If the previous section concerns the acquisition of interpretive authority, this section examines how that authority is materialized in the translated text. The linguistic organization of Roy's version should therefore be understood not merely as a matter of stylistic preference, but as a textual manifestation of his effort to preserve, structure, and transmit a highly mediated understanding of *JPM*.

From the perspective of translational content, this subsection constructs a quantitative profile of David Tod Roy's English translation of *JPM*, with Clement Egerton's version, another complete English translation to *JPM*, serving as a reference corpus to foreground systematic differences in information organization, expressive resources, and narrative pacing. Our core stance is that medio-translatology attends to how translation functions as a medium—its modes of circulation and pathways of influence—such that the linguistic organization of the translated text is not merely a matter of stylistic variation but a prerequisite for how translational content is transmitted and understood.

Methodologically, both translations were processed into UD (Universal Dependencies) annotated `.conllu` files, and all metrics were extracted under a unified, reproducible counting protocol. In computation, punctuation tokens (UPOS = PUNCT) were excluded; multiword tokens and empty nodes were also omitted to minimize distortions introduced by annotation format rather than linguistic substance. The indicators fall into two groups. The first comprises structural/organizational metrics intended to characterize syntactic resources and narrative pacing, including mean sentence length, sentence-length dispersion (standard deviation), UPOS entropy, deprel entropy, and the Jensen–Shannon (*JS*) divergence for both sentence-length distributions and dependency-relation distributions. To assess the stability of structural differences, we implemented sentence-level bootstrap sampling and reported confidence intervals (CIs) for the Roy–Egerton difference. The second group captures lexical distribution and diversity (TTR, Herdan's *C*, and lexical entropy *H*). Given their high sensitivity to text length, we adopted a length-controlled strategy: both translations were repeatedly resampled and recalculated under  $N = 582,280$  (i.e., Egerton's total non-punctuation token count), thereby avoiding spurious differences whereby a longer text appears "richer" simply by virtue of its size.

Table 3. Structural and Lexical Metrics of Roy's and Egerton's English Translations of *JPM*

Metrics	Roy's Translation	Egerton's Translation	diff (Roy–Egerton)	CI_or_js
Sentence count	70831	45187	25644	/
Token count (excl. punct.)	993626	582280	411346	/
Type count (lowercased, excl. punct.)	22019	11549	10470	/
TTR (raw length)	0.022160	0.019834	0.002326	/
h-point	355	273	82	/
a-index	7.884356	7.812798	0.071559	/
Herdan's <i>C</i> (raw length)	0.724135	0.704675	0.019460	/
Lexical entropy <i>H</i> (base 2, raw length)	9.688934	9.041715	0.647218	/
Mean word length	4.241605	3.995645	0.245960	[0.2382, 0.2512]
SD of word length	2.193445	1.901552	0.291893	[0.2862, 0.2965]
UPOS entropy	3.436425	3.422804	0.013621	[0.0115, 0.0168]
Deprel entropy	4.525889	4.431785	0.094104	[0.0913, 0.0973]
Mean sentence length	14.028123	12.886007	1.142116	[1.0443, 1.2275]

Metrics	Roy's Translation	Egerton's Translation	diff (Roy-Egerton)	CI_or_js
(tokens/sentence)				
SD of sentence length	12.097484	7.348505	4.748979	[4.6107, 4.8802]
JS divergence: sentence-length distribution (base 2)	/	/	/	0.060706
JS divergence: deprel distribution (base 2)	/	/	/	0.013334
TTR (length-controlled, N = 582,280)	0.028477	0.016825	0.011652	Roy[0.02831, 0.02866]; Egerton[0.01670, 0.01692]; diff[0.01145, 0.01185]
Herdan's C (length-controlled, N = 582,280)	0.731922	0.692280	0.039642	Roy[0.73147, 0.73240]; Egerton[0.69174, 0.69272]; diff[0.03894, 0.04031]
Lexical entropy H (base 2, length-controlled, N = 582,280)	9.660058	9.026264	0.633794	Roy[9.651, 9.670]; Egerton[9.018, 9.035]; diff[0.621, 0.647]

In terms of corpus scale, Roy's translation is substantially longer than Egerton's: Roy contains 70,831 sentences and 993,626 non-punctuation tokens, whereas Egerton contains 45,187 sentences and 582,280 non-punctuation tokens. This difference in textual volume is itself meaningful for translational mediation, since the extent to which translated content can be elaborated, the density of information it can carry, and the space available for explanatory expression are all constrained, to a considerable degree, by textual length and syntactic capacity. Compared with Egerton, Roy is therefore better able to accommodate details, qualifications, and explanatory elements within the target-text chain, producing a translated text that is more readily searchable, interpretable, and discussable in scholarly contexts.

In terms of structural organization and narrative pacing, Roy shows a more pronounced tendency toward expansive information packaging and variable-paced narration. Excluding punctuation, Roy's mean sentence length is 14.03 tokens, compared with 12.89 for Egerton, a difference of approximately +1.14. The confidence interval for this difference does not cross zero, suggesting that it is not driven by a small number of chapters or isolated passages. More importantly, the two translations differ substantially in sentence-length variability. Roy's sentence-length standard deviation is 12.10, whereas Egerton's is 7.35, yielding a difference of approximately +4.75, again with a confidence interval that does not cross zero. This indicates that Roy shifts more frequently between short and very long sentences, thereby creating a more elastic narrative rhythm. The contrast is also visible at the distributional level: the Jensen-Shannon divergence (base 2) for sentence-length distributions is 0.0607, substantially higher than that for dependency-relation distributions (0.0133). This suggests that the most salient structural divergence between the two translations lies primarily in sentence-length organization and discourse rhythm, rather than in fundamentally different dependency-type repertoires. At the same time, Roy's UPOS entropy (3.4364) and dependency-relation entropy (4.5259) are both higher than Egerton's corresponding values (3.4228 and 4.4318, respectively), and in both cases the confidence intervals for the differences do not cross zero. This indicates that Roy draws on a more dispersed and more evenly distributed range of word-class combinations and dependency resources, thereby expanding the space of syntactic choice. From the perspective of translational mediation, this combination of greater syntactic complexity, more balanced resource distribution, and stronger rhythmic variation makes it more likely that content will be presented through multilayered modification, explanatory structures, and information embedding, thus enhancing its interpretability and citability in scholarly contexts.

At the lexical level, Roy already exceeds Egerton in raw-length TTR, Herdan's C, and lexical entropy H. However, greater analytical weight should be assigned to the equal-length results, because they provide a stronger indication of translator style rather than simple length effects. Under the equal-length condition of N = 582,280, Roy's TTR (approximately 0.0285) remains

substantially higher than Egerton's (approximately 0.0168). Herdan's C (approximately 0.7319 vs. 0.6923) and lexical entropy H (approximately 9.66 vs. 9.03) are likewise consistently higher, with confidence intervals for the differences remaining well away from zero. In other words, even under length control, Roy still exhibits a more extended lexical tail, a more dispersed word-frequency distribution, and stronger lexical differentiation. This pattern aligns closely with the widely noted scholarly and explanatory orientation of Roy's translation: a richer and more evenly distributed lexical system enables the translated text to distinguish more precisely among concepts, characters, objects, and culturally embedded meanings, thereby increasing its informational value for academic reading and cross-cultural interpretation.

Taken together, with Egerton's version as a point of reference, this subsection identifies several key features of Roy's mediated content. First, Roy's translation is significantly larger in scale, providing the material basis for a more fine-grained unfolding of content. Second, its longer and more variable sentence lengths, together with its more dispersed syntactic resources, indicate a stronger capacity for information embedding and variable-paced narration. Third, its significantly higher lexical diversity and lexical entropy, even under equal-length control, point to a more marked written and scholarly orientation. Within a translational-mediation framework, these linguistic modes of organization are not merely matters of style. Rather, they function as key mediating mechanisms through which Roy's translation realizes its role as a form of scholarly translational dissemination: they shape how information is packaged, how explanation is embedded, and how readers derive intelligible and citable knowledge structures from the translated text.

Seen in this light, the structural and lexical features of Roy's translation are not simply stylistic markers; they are the linguistic form through which interpretive authority is built into the translation and made available for circulation. Once materialized in this way, such authority can then be carried outward, amplified by institutions, and recognized as scholarly legitimacy in the wider Anglophone world.

## **5. Medio-translation Channels**

What is at issue in dissemination is not simply how Roy's translation travels, but how his interpretive authority is transformed into publicly recognizable and institutionally legitimized translational authority. The scholarly pathways through which the translation circulates do more than increase visibility; they certify, stabilize, and amplify Roy's authority as a privileged interpreter of *JPM*.

Unlike mass-market publications, which often depend on advertising campaigns and short-lived commercial success, the visibility and impact of David Tod Roy's English translation of *JPM*, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, in the Anglophone world were shaped less by mass-market promotion than by a distinctively scholarly chain of dissemination. University-press series publication and standardized marketing provided the institutional infrastructure; peer evaluation and academic book reviews supplied authoritative endorsement; and long-form cultural reviews, interviews, and podcasts facilitated sustained long-tail circulation.

First, Princeton University Press positioned Roy's translation through series-based academic publishing. The translation appeared in the Princeton Library of Asian Translations, a scholarly series under Princeton University Press. Rather than functioning as a translation line for the general literary market, this series operates as a form of academic infrastructure through which major Asian classics in literature, history, religion, philosophy, law, and related fields are systematically introduced into the Anglophone world in forms that are teachable, citable, and researchable. Such positioning makes these works more readily recognizable to scholars and library systems as essential reference editions rather than as ordinary literary reading. This positioning was further reinforced by standard university-press marketing practices. One was the provision of publicly accessible sample chapters or excerpted PDFs, which created an entry pathway from trial reading to course adoption and scholarly citation, thereby enhancing the accessibility of the translation in teaching and research contexts. Another was the maintenance of long-term visibility through paperback reprints and continued presence in mainstream bookselling and library cataloguing systems. This kind of stable, routine visibility is characteristic of the life cycle of major scholarly translations of canonical works.

Second, the circulation of major translated classics within the academic community often depends on mechanisms of peer evaluation, especially journal book reviews and brief notices in professional periodicals, through which scholarly authority is consolidated. Such reviews do more than assess translation quality, annotation, and academic contribution; they also effectively endorse a translation's status as a reference edition for research and teaching. Roy's translation has received numerous reviews and recommendations across different platforms. According to the statistics compiled in this study, thirteen academic journal book reviews discuss Roy's translation alone, a level of critical attention that no other English translation of *JPM* has received. By incorporating the translation into journal review discourse and academic citation networks through references to the series, individual volumes, and publication data, these reviews strengthened its academic circulation and contributed to an institutionalized process of scholarly legitimation.

Third, at the level of public cultural dissemination, long-form reviews and in-depth commentary in cultural media translated the scholarly achievement of the translation into a communicable literary event. For example, the Los Angeles Review of Books organized its extended review around the narrative event that a reliable complete English translation had finally become available, while also tracing the publication and reception of the work. In this way, it functioned as a cultural amplifier. At the same time, Roy's appearances on a range of interview platforms further transformed such professional features as the translator's labor, the scale of annotation, and the interpretive demands of the project into more accessible and shareable narrative material, as shown in the table below.

The core logic of these dissemination practices was not to market the translation as a work of popular consumption, but to establish it as a scholarly edition that could be cited, taught, and incorporated into library systems, thereby securing a stable position within the long-term ecology of academic and cultural circulation. Its impact is therefore more likely to be reflected in sustained course adoption, scholarly citation, and cross-institutional library holdings than in short-term sales peaks.

Yet interpretive authority does not become effective simply because it is institutionally endorsed. It must still enter actual reading situations, where it is tested by readers, negotiated through reception, and at times resisted precisely because of the textual forms that make it authoritative.

## 6. Medio-translation Audience

If the previous sections have traced the acquisition, textual materialization, and institutional amplification of interpretive authority, the reception dimension reveals how that authority is actually tested in lived reading experience. Reader responses disclose not a simple measure of approval or disapproval, but a dynamic structure in which interpretive authority is simultaneously validated for its reliability and resisted for the friction it introduces into the act of reading.

This section focuses on the audience dimension of translational mediation and seeks to present, through empirically verifiable data, the overall acceptance, evaluative structure, and major points of controversy surrounding David Tod Roy's English translation of *JPM* among Anglophone readers. Unlike earlier reception studies, which have relied primarily on researcher interpretation or small-scale questionnaires and interviews, this section treats authentic online reader reviews as naturally occurring reader feedback. By using such data as evidence, it seeks to reduce, as far as possible, methodological problems such as feedback from non-readers and inconsistencies in evaluative criteria.

Sentiment analysis, also known as opinion mining, refers to "the process of using algorithms and computer technologies to systematically detect, extract, and classify the subjective information and affective states expressed in a text" (Lei & Liu, 2021, p. 1) The review corpus for this study was collected from three major platforms: Amazon, Goodreads, and LibraryThing. Amazon is the world's largest online bookselling platform, while Goodreads and LibraryThing are large-scale reader communities in which users can rate and review books. Data collection proceeded in three steps. First, the titles of the five volumes of Roy's translation were used as search terms on the three platforms, yielding a total of 118 English-language reader reviews. Second, macro-level sentiment analysis was conducted using the sentiment analyzer in the open-source toolkit TextBlob to assign polarity values to each review and classify it as positive, negative, or neutral, thereby generating a quantitative profile of the translation's overall reception. Third, in order to obtain more specific reader responses, the analysis moved from overall evaluation to a fine-grained examination of particular evaluative objects. After manual screening, 74 review sentences specifically addressing the translation and the translator were extracted and retained as the corpus for further analysis.

Methodologically, the section adopts a two-level analytical framework combining macro-level sentiment analysis with aspect-level sentiment analysis. At the macro level, sentiment scores were calculated for each review and used to determine its overall polarity, thus producing a quantitative picture of the translation's general reception. The results show that, among the 118 reviews, 104 are positive and 14 are negative, with no neutral reviews. Negative reviews therefore account for approximately 11.1% of the total, indicating that Roy's translation has achieved a relatively high degree of acceptance among English-language readers. At the same time, however, the mean positive sentiment score is only 0.24, suggesting that although most readers view the translation favorably, their praise is not strongly enthusiastic. Rather, it is better understood as measured approval that acknowledges the translation's value while still retaining certain reservations. The mean negative score is -0.28, which likewise indicates that the overall intensity of criticism is limited. Negative responses tend to reflect discomfort with particular reading obstacles or with the translator's mode of intervention, rather than a wholesale rejection of the translation's overall value.

Translation- and translator-related aspects constitute the most intensively discussed dimension in the corpus, comprising 74 sentences. Their sentiment distribution is 63 positive, 4 neutral, and 7 negative, yet the mean positive score is only 0.28, lower than that associated with comments on characters and plot. This suggests that readers generally recognize the quality of Roy's translation, but tend to evaluate the translator's strategy in terms of a balance between benefits and costs. While they affirm its

scholarly value, informational density, and textual reliability, they are also more sensitive to such side effects as increased reading burden, interruptions to narrative continuity, and the sense that the translator intervenes too visibly in the reading process.

In terms of positive evaluation, reader approval is concentrated mainly along two lines: accuracy or fidelity, and completeness as a full translation. The first concerns the perceived reliability of the translation. Recurrent descriptors such as faithful and accurate indicate that readers regard Roy's version as an authoritative edition on which they can rely, a quality that is especially important in the mediation of a long canonical work containing a large amount of culturally loaded material. The second concerns recognition of the value of Roy's full-translation strategy. Rather than reducing the work to an abridged text intended merely for entertainment, Roy preserves the structure of the original and retains a wide range of textual components, including prefaces, poems, and allusions, thereby enabling target-language readers to access a resource that more closely approximates the full shape of the source text. At this level, many readers understand the translation as a dual-purpose text that is both readable and researchable: it supports narrative reading while also providing material for understanding historical context, social customs, and textual intertextuality. This helps explain why it has received relatively high overall ratings across the platforms.

At the same time, the points of controversy in reader responses are equally clear and are concentrated to a striking degree on translator visibility and the paratextual system. The study finds that references to Roy occur more frequently in the review corpus than references to the translation itself, suggesting that readers are discussing not merely whether the translation is good or bad, but how the translator, as a powerful organizer of the text, interpreter, and arbiter of value, participates in and reshapes the reading experience. This visibility stems first from the high density of paratextual materials, including extensive annotations, character lists, indexes, and lengthy introductions. On the one hand, these features enhance the scholarly character and retrievability of the translation, providing readers with navigational tools through an unfamiliar culture and a complex narrative, and thereby increasing interpretive certainty. On the other hand, some readers experience them as forced interruptions to the reading process: frequent shifts from narrative progression to explanatory apparatus can diminish immersion and generate reading fatigue. In other words, the paratext produces a distinctly double-edged effect. It functions both as a safeguard for scholarly dissemination and as one of the most likely structural sources of reader resistance in non-specialist reading contexts.

Roy's translation is thus accepted not because interpretive authority removes all reading difficulty, but because many readers ultimately judge its explanatory gains to outweigh its narrative costs. Interpretive authority here is not a static possession, but a dynamic position repeatedly confirmed, negotiated, and limited in the ongoing interaction between translator intervention and reader response.

**7. Medio-translation Effect**

If audience reception reveals how interpretive authority is experienced at the level of individual reading, translational effect concerns how that authority becomes visible in broader external indicators of circulation, recognition, and academic uptake. In this sense, market response and scholarly citation do not merely register popularity; they also provide evidence of the extent to which Roy's translation has succeeded in converting interpretive authority into durable influence.

To compare the external effects of different English translations of *JPM* more clearly, this study draws on several forms of quantifiable evidence. The aim is to examine how different versions of *JPM* are received at the level of platform visibility, printed-book discourse, and academic citation. It should be noted that the translation of Chapter One by Chai Chu and Winbery Chai is excluded from this section because it was not published independently as a separate volume and therefore does not generate comparable sales, review, or citation data.

First, Amazon data are used to reflect platform-based reader engagement with different English translations of *JPM*. As one of the most widely used online bookselling platforms in the Anglophone world, Amazon provides publicly accessible rating and review data that offer a useful, though limited, indication of reader response. Table 4. presents the number of ratings and average ratings for each English translation of *JPM* on Amazon. All data were collected up to March 12, 2026.

Table 4. Evaluation of English Translations of *JPM* by Readers on Amazon

Version	Review Count	Average Rating	Average Rating per Version
<i>The Plum in the Golden Vase by David Tod Roy</i>	Volume 1	59	4.4
	Volume 2	25	4.5

Version	Review Count	Average Rating	Average Rating per Version
<i>The Golden Lotus by Clement Egerton</i>	Volume 3	26	4.6
	Volume 4	24	4.9
	Volume 5	26	4.7
	Volume 1	42	4.2
	Volume 2	28	4.0
	Volume 1	3	3.8
<i>Plum Blossoms in a Golden Vase by Eugene Ying</i>	Volume 2	1	5.0
	Volume 3	N/A	N/A
	Volume 4	N/A	N/A
<i>Don Juan of China: an Amour from the Chin P'ing Mei by Samuel Barker</i>	Volume 5	N/A	N/A
	Volume 3	N/A	N/A
	Volume 4	N/A	N/A
<i>Chin Ping Mei: The Adventurous History of Hsi Men and His Six Wives by Bernard Miall</i>	3	3.9	3.9
<i>The Adventures of Hsi Men Ching by Chu Tsui-Jen</i>	4	5.0	5.0
<i>The Adventures of Hsi Men Ching by Chu Tsui-Jen</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A

According to Table 4, Roy's and Egerton's translations show the strongest visibility and reader engagement on Amazon among the English versions surveyed. Roy's translation has attracted both more ratings and slightly higher overall ratings than Egerton's, suggesting a stronger level of platform-based reader recognition. By contrast, the other translations have received far fewer ratings and reviews, making it difficult to draw equally robust comparisons. These findings therefore suggest that Roy's and Egerton's versions occupy the most visible positions on Amazon, with Roy's translation showing a modest advantage in user engagement.

Second, Google Ngram data are used not as a direct measure of professional reader response, but as an indicator of the relative visibility of different translation titles in English-language books. As a large-scale corpus of published books, Google Ngram makes it possible to trace changes in the frequency with which particular titles are mentioned over time. Because Roy's title contains six words, the initial article "The" was omitted in the search in order to meet Google Ngram's five-word retrieval limit. The starting point for the search was set at 1927, the year in which the first English translation of *JPM* was published.

Figure 3. Frequency Changes of Various English Translations of *JPM* in English Books

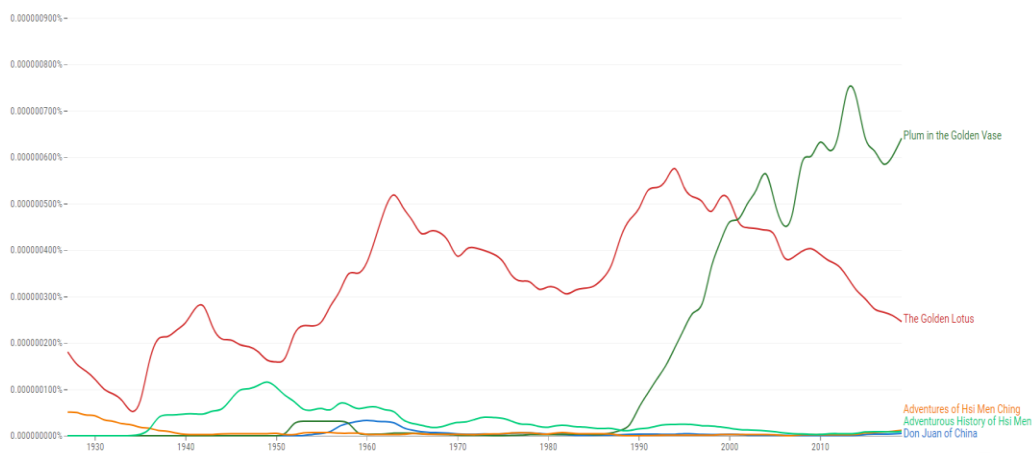


Figure 3. shows that, among the English translations of *JPM*, Roy's and Egerton's titles are far more visible in English-language books than the other versions. It also reveals an important diachronic pattern: since the publication of Roy's first volume in 1993, references to Roy's translation have shown a general upward trend, while the relative prominence of Egerton's title has declined. Roy's title overtook Egerton's in 2000 and has remained more frequently mentioned thereafter. These patterns suggest that Roy's translation has gained increasing visibility in English-language book discourse, though such data should be understood as indicating comparative title presence rather than serving as a direct measure of academic evaluation in itself.

To complement the Ngram evidence, this study further compares the citation counts of Roy's and Egerton's translations in Google Scholar, which more directly reflect academic uptake. The results show that Roy's translation had been cited 185 times across all five volumes, whereas Egerton's translation had been cited 106 times as of March 12, 2026. Although citation counts cannot fully capture the complex status of a translation in scholarship, they do suggest that Roy's version has achieved stronger citation-based academic visibility than Egerton's. This finding is consistent with Qi's observation that after the publication of Roy's translation, it gradually became a preferred reference point in overseas studies of Chinese literature, and that its English title, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, increasingly gained currency in relevant scholarship (Qi, 2015, p. 244).

Taken together, these indicators suggest that the translational effect of Roy's version lies not simply in immediate popularity, but in its ability to achieve sustained visibility across multiple domains. At the level of online bookselling platforms, it demonstrates comparatively strong reader engagement; in English-language books, its title has gained increasing discursive presence over time; and in academic citation practices, it shows a higher level of uptake than its principal predecessor. These tendencies indicate that Roy's interpretive authority has been successfully converted into a relatively durable form of external influence. At the same time, the evidence should be interpreted with appropriate caution: Amazon ratings reflect platform-specific reader participation, Google Ngram captures title frequency rather than evaluative judgment, and Google Scholar citations represent only one dimension of academic reception. Even so, when read together, these sources provide convergent support for the claim that Roy's translation has acquired a particularly strong position in the Anglophone circulation and scholarly uptake of *JPM*.

## **8. Conclusion**

Taken together, the foregoing analysis suggests that the circulation and reception of Roy's translation are best understood not as the automatic outcome of its scholarly quality, but as the product of an interpretive-authority cycle. Roy acquires authority as a translational subject, materializes that authority in textual form, amplifies it through institutional channels, and then sees it repeatedly validated, though also partially resisted, in reception and effect.

Drawing on medio-translatology and Bao's (2014) framework of translational communication elements adapted from Lasswell's communication model, this article examines the mediation, dissemination, and reception of David Tod Roy's English translation of *JPM* as a scholarly edition in the Anglophone world. Methodologically, it adopts a multi-source, multi-method design. Translator interviews and in-depth reports are treated as a body of translator self-narrative discourse and analyzed through qualitative discourse analysis. A uniformly UD-annotated corpus of two translations serves as the basis for extracting structural and lexical indicators in order to generate a quantitative profile of mediated content. In addition, evidence from academic publishing mechanisms, platform-based reader feedback, and external response data is integrated to map the channels, audiences, and effects of the translation. The findings can be summarized in three respects. First, the mediation of Roy's translation is not merely a process of textual transfer, but a practice of translator-subject construction and meaning redefinition organized around interpretive authority. Through articulable and defensible decision narratives, together with a procedural account of scholarly labor, Roy continually positions himself as a holder of interpretive authority. Second, this authority does not remain merely attitudinal, but becomes concretized in the organization of the translated text. With Egerton's translation as a point of reference, Roy's version displays greater elasticity in information expansion and textual organization, and, under length-controlled conditions, still demonstrates higher lexical differentiation and a more balanced distributional profile. Coupled with extensive annotation, these features together form a distinctive textual profile characteristic of a scholarly edition. Third, the circulation and reception of the translation are achieved primarily through the institutional validation provided by academic publishing infrastructures and peer-evaluation systems, while audience response reveals a contradictory pattern of trade-offs: readers widely acknowledge its reliability and completeness, yet remain highly sensitive to the reading friction generated by translator visibility and dense paratexts. Overall, the mediated effect of Roy's translation cannot be reduced to the notion that scholarliness naturally guarantees success. Rather, it should be understood as a chain process in which translator subjectivity, textual form, institutional channels, and audience response are dynamically intertwined, with the interpretive-authority cycle serving as its central mechanism.

Taking Roy's version as a prototypical case of a scholarly translation of canonical literature, the discussion can be extended to the broader question of how scholarly translations survive and exert influence in the target-language culture. First, the competitive advantage of a scholarly translation lies less in mass-market readability than in its usability for knowledge production: through completeness, verifiability, and retrievability, it becomes a form of infrastructure for research and teaching. In this way, it becomes embedded in institutional pathways such as course adoption, library cataloguing, journal reviews, and citation networks, thereby gaining long-term visibility and authority. Accordingly, the dissemination of scholarly translations tends to follow a logic of certification and diffusion within the academic community rather than a mass-market trajectory of early breakout followed by decline. Second, the structural risks of scholarly translations are equally generalizable: when interpretive authority enters the text forcefully through prefaces, annotations, indexes, and methodological exposition, it may enhance interpretive certainty while simultaneously reducing narrative immersion and intensifying reading burden. This suggests that scholarly translations do not inherently possess broader public communicability; rather, their advantages are more likely to be amplified in academic settings, while in general reading contexts they may translate into a form of qualified rather than frictionless approval.

On this basis, the study proposes several strategy-oriented reflections for the translation of Chinese classics for international readerships. The key to a scholarly translation lies not in simply increasing the quantity of information, but in designing how interpretive authority is presented—namely, how to lower entry barriers and manage reading friction without sacrificing scholarly usability. This may be pursued along three directions of layered adaptation. The first is layered entry: by foregrounding or modularizing interpretive information through navigational devices such as structured tables of contents, dramatis personae, glossaries, and timelines, compulsory interruptions within the narrative chain can be reduced. The second is layered text: without compromising the rigor of the main text, readers may be offered optional pathways for engaging with paratexts, for example by distinguishing between essential notes and extended notes. The third is layered editions: on the basis of the same scholarly master text, one may develop classroom-oriented or general-reader-oriented teaching editions, abridged editions, or guided editions, so that the scholarly translation can retain its status as an authoritative version while also participating in broader public circulation with reduced friction. In this sense, what Roy's translation reveals is not merely the accidental experience of a single case, but a transferable, mechanism-based understanding: scholarly translations secure institutional validation and long-term influence through interpretive authority, yet their public accessibility must be dynamically negotiated through mediation design. For the future translation and international dissemination of Chinese literary classics, what is most worth inheriting is not a one-way proposition such as "the more notes, the better" or "the more scholarly, the more successful," but rather a sustainable balance that treats translation as a medium of communication, readership as stratified audiences, and interpretive authority as an adjustable strategy between academic authority and public reading.

What Roy's case ultimately demonstrates is not that greater annotation or stronger scholarliness automatically guarantees success, but that the long-term influence of a scholarly translation depends on how interpretive authority is designed, distributed, and negotiated across the interlocking domains of translator, text, institution, and readership.

**Funding:** This study is funded by Philosophy and Social Science Research Foundation Supported by Educational Commission of Hubei Province, China (22G153).

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest

**Publisher's Note:** All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

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