The Imagination and Translation of Islands in Yong Jin's Martial Arts Novels

Guixia Xie
Sun Yat-sen University

This paper explores the imagination of islands in modern Chinese literature, focusing particularly on Yong Jin's martial arts novels and their English translations. Jin's martial arts fiction, written between 1955 and 1972, has wielded a substantial influence on modern Chinese literary landscapes. Within these works, various islands serve as catalysts for plot development or character delineation. By exploring Jin's conceptualization of islands and their translations and employing the concept of "performative geographies" as the analytical framework, this study reveals that Jin's interpretation of islands mirrors a fusion between his exposure to Western literature's island motifs and his deeply embedded Chinese cultural heritage. Moreover, through a comparative analysis of the translated island names, the study also finds that the conveyance of islandness can be influenced by both cultural elements and the individual inclinations of translators, thereby impacting the cross-cultural transmission of island imagery in modern Chinese popular fiction.

Keywords: literary islands, performative geographies, Yong Jin, Chinese martial arts fiction, translational perspective

Within literary imagination, islands have been regarded as "complex and multifaceted phenomena as well as powerful resources for conjuring up images and narratives related to isolation, despair, exile or memory, belonging and desire" (Dodds & Royle, 2003, p. 495). Nevertheless, the dualistic themes prevalent in island literature have faced criticism for their roots in occidental island discourse and their susceptibility to Eurocentric influences (Redd, 2017; Schälibaum, 2017; Serra, 2017). Theorization grounded solely in this Western-oriented binary perspective are deemed as "missing out on or misunderstanding key aspects of islandness in the cultural imagination" (Luo & Grydehøj, 2017, p. 26). Recent years have seen a growing interest in reassessing literary classics and rediscovering neglected fictional works from different cultural and geographical perspectives (DeLoughrey, 2019; Fletcher, 2011; Kapstein, 2017). However, many literary genres of different geographical areas have remained unexplored. In addition, although studies of the literature have contributed immensely to discussions on the fictional islands across cultures, the potential alterations in islandness, or the essential attributes or connotations of islands, during cross-cultural translation have largely evaded scrutiny.

As Translation Studies underwent a cultural turn in the 1990s, translation ceased to be perceived solely as the second-class industrious intermediaries between languages and literature. Instead, it has emerged as the terrain where cultures intersect. Within these encounters, "difference is perceived, preserved, projected, and proscribed" (Tymoczko, 1999/2005, p. 17). Thus, taking a translational approach to study the cross-cultural representation of islandness not only illuminate how islandness is perceived across various cultures but also reflect how this perception is prescribed during the translation process. Grydehøj, a scholar of Island Studies, once posed that "how can we claim to understand the islands of the world when we ignore the immense archipelago of Southeast Asia?" (2017, p.8) While his inquiry pertains to geographical islands, it equally resonates within the exploration of islands within literary imagination and translation. Indeed, how can we profess to understand the imagination of islands if we disregard the literary works related to islands in Southeast Asia? Moreover, how can we attain an understanding of

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Guixia Xie, School of International Studies, Sun Yat-sen University, Daxue Road, Tangjiawan, Zhuhai, 519082, China. E-mail: xiegx@mail.sysu.edu.cn

islandness without considering the potential alternations that might transpire in the cross-cultural conceptualization of islands during translation? Taking this niche, the present paper examines the representation and translation of fictional islands in Asian popular novels. It aims to provide an endemic and cross-cultural alternative for understanding the essence of islandness.

The focal texts for this study are Jin's martial arts novels. Yong Jin, pen-name of Louis Cha (1924–2018), a famous editorial writer and martial arts novelist in Hong Kong during the latter half of the 20th century, authored a collection of 15 martial arts novels. Within these novels, he introduced a total of 20 islands, including five actual islands identifiable on geographical maps and an additional 15 crafted from his fictional imagination. The novels initially appeared in serialized form in publications such as *Ta Kung Pao*, where Jin worked as an editor, primarily to "fulfill a work request" when the newspaper encountered a shortage of serialized fictional works (Jin & Taisaku, 1998, p. 226). Later on, they were serialized in *Hong Kong Business Daily* by invitation and in Yong Jin's *Ming Pao* during the initial stages of development. Subsequently, these serialized works were either offprinted or published by various entities, including the Ming Ho Publication Corporation Limited in Hong Kong, the Sanlian Book Store, and Guangzhou Publishing House in the mainland, and the Yuan-Liou Publishing Co., Ltd. in Taiwan. The popularity of martial arts TV series and films in the 1980s and 1990s also spurred interest in the translation of Jin's novels in countries such as Japan (Li, 2020), Myanmar (Kong & Huang, 2010), Vietnam (Duanshi & Yao, 2021) and several other Asian countries. In contrast, English translations of Jin's works were not as thriving as in the East. In 1972, the *Bridge*, a magazine run by the Asian American Resource Center in New York, serialized four sections of *Fox Volant of the Snowy Mountain* with the name of *Flying of Snow Mountain* but cast a limited impact on the readers. Regarding full-text English translations, only four out of Jin's 15 well-known martial arts novels have been officially published. These include *Fox Volant of the Snowy Mountain* by Olivia Mok in 1996, *The Book and the Sword* by Graham Earnshaw in 2001, the three-volume *The Deer and the Cauldron*[1] by John Minford between 1997 and 2002, and the four-volume *Legends of the Condor Heroes* by Ann Holmwood, Gigi Chang, and Shelly Bryant between 2018 and 2021.

[1] https://www.spcnet.tv/forums/showthread.php/29171-The-Deer-and-The-Cauldron?highlight=the+deer+and+the+cauldron#.YZsDgi1_HL8

According to Fu, Jin "loves reading Western classical literature and has a keen interest in the English language since childhood" (2013, p.46), which suggests a potential Western influence on his perception of islands. Yet, being steeped in traditional Chinese education values due to his education, Jin's islands may also bear the imprint of Eastern philosophical elements. Together with his personal experiences as an immigrant dwelling in island-based Hong Kong, coupled with the proliferating translations of his literary works, Jin's fictional islands thus have their distinctiveness to serve as the ideal texts for studying the literary conceptualization of islandness in Asian popular literature.

The aims of this study are threefold. First, the paper seeks to examine the portrayal of islandness in Jin's martial arts novels, postulating that his conceptualization of fictional islands is a product of his interaction with physical spaces and the Eastern and Western cultural elements. In the discussion of island conceptualization, the paper will use "performative geographies" as a key concept to explore the interaction of reality and representation of islands. Second, this study also aims to bring an interdisciplinary approach from Translation Studies to facilitate the exploration of how these conceptualizations of islands traverse cultural boundaries during cross-cultural communication. A translational perspective will facilitate an examination of how islandness is perceived within different cultural contexts. Third, building upon the discourse surrounding the translation of Jin's fictional islands, the study also tries to investigate the convergence/divergence of islandness in translation between the Western and the Eastern perspectives and tries to discuss the underlying factors contributing to the changes in these conceptualizations.

Islands in Literature and "Performative Geographies"

The significance of islands, as Tuan notes, "lies in the imaginative realm" (1974, p. 118). This assertion holds true when we consider the plethora of insular deployment in the field of literary imagination both in historical and in contemporary contexts. Islands have served as compelling topoi across various literary genres, including poetry (such as Homer's *Odyssey*), drama (Shakespeare's *The Tempest*), and fiction (Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*). However, within most of these literary works, islands are often portrayed through dichotomous lenses, delineated by oppositional categories—

such as "earth and water, land and sea, continental and insular, big and small, enclosed and open, close and remote, connected and secluded" (Dautel & Schödel, 2016, p. 11). Such binary conceptualizations of islands are criticized for being "culturally conditioned and rooted in occidental island discourse" (Schalibaum, 2017, p. 298), which unintentionally privileges the Western epistemologies and marginalizes the Other. For instance, Valentina Serra (2017) adopts a geopoetic approach to conduct a diachronic analysis of island Sardinia's literary corpus from the 17th century onwards, revealing a discernible influence of a Eurocentric perspective on the island's imagery. Similarly, Dani Redd (2017) has found that contemporary novels tend to diminish the otherness of islands within Eurocentric models.

In response to the challenges posed by the Eurocentric portrayal of islands in literature, scholars have suggested new concepts or methodologies for reading literary islands. Redd proposes to use "archipelagraphy", a term raised by Elizabeth DeLoughrey to emphasize that "no island is an isolated isle" (2001, p. 23), as a methodology to destabilize "the concept of the island as *tabula rasa*, an end-goal in a utopian quest" (Redd, 2017, p. 303). The term "archipelagraphy" also emphasizes "the disjuncture, connection and entanglement *between* and *among* islands" (Stratford et al., 2011, p. 114) and views islands "on questions of identity, mobility, and globalization" (McMahon & André, 2018, p. 307). Other methods introduced by scholars opt for more descriptive approaches to observe how islands are actually represented in literary texts. For instance, the "island metapoetics" proposed by the Island Poetics Research Group investigates the intricate poetic mechanisms of island practices and operations across diverse mediums and sensory experiences (Graziadei et al. 2017a; 2017b). These researches aim to challenge the prevailing binary concepts of islands and advocate for a reassessment of the role of island within literary discourse.

Amidst criticism for its Eurocentrism, the literary approach within island studies encounters another contentious issue—its purported excessive reliance on metaphorical interpretations. This issue has sparked debates within the field of Island Studies. Scholars in the field of Island Studies, with the purpose to construct "the study of islands on their own terms" (McCall, 1994, p. 2), have continuously argued for the distinction of studying islands as "locus" from "focus" (Ronström, 2013, p. 154). The former understands islands as physical places and the latter considers them as cultural interpretations or as islands "of the mind". However, such a division is also questioned for deploying "a series of interrelated hierarchical pairs in discussions of the physicality and culture of islands" (Fletcher, 2011, p. 18) and this dichotomized way of thinking could hinder the dynamism and interest of island studies and impede interdisciplinary research in the field (Fletcher, 2011, p. 19). It may even run into the risk of "island aphasia" caused by "the absence of a holistic and dynamic understanding of the spatiotemporal, sociographic coproduction of an island city as both focus and locus" (Hong, 2017, p. 23). In fact, from a cultural perspective, it is difficult to distinguish the island as a "locus" from the island as "focus" in some sense, and many scholars have discussed the interaction of these two. Edward Soja contends that "understanding the world is, in the most general sense, a simultaneous social and historical projection" (1996, p. 2) and that "space is simultaneously objective and subjective, material and metaphorical, a medium and outcome of social life" (1996, p. 45). When discussing islands in popular fiction, Ralph Crane and Lisa Fletcher also argue for the mutual influence of literature and geographical island, saying that "thinking about islands can help us better understand popular genres and reading genre novels can help us rethink islands" (2017, p. xvi), and reading islands in genre fiction can become "a means to developing a more nuanced understanding of the meaning and significance of islands in popular fiction" (2016, p. 648).

Recognizing the intricate interplay between islands functioning as "locus" and as "focus," Fletcher proposes the term "performative geographies," which "privileges neither the geographical nor the literary aspects but insists on their interconnection" (2011, p.19), emphasizing "the mutual constructive relationship of descriptions of islands (in multiple media) and their material and social reality" (2011, p. 30). Fletcher's new concept helps to elucidate the diverse relationships between culture and literature, whether islands serve as "locus" or "focus." "Performative geographies" can be understood in the following three aspects:

First, based on Austin's speech acts theory, "performative geographies" highlights the influence of linguistic and cultural systems on our perception of physical space. Fletcher argues that "human encounters with physical space are always already managed by our position in linguistic and cultural systems of representation" (2011, p. 19), and that "those aspects of human culture which purport to describe social and material reality, in fact, create the vector by which we navigate and comprehend that reality" (2011, p. 26). Besides influencing on our understanding of islands as "locus," "performative geographies," with its insisting on the

interconnection of geography and literature, also implies that linguistic and cultural systems impact our creation of fictional islands, i.e. island as "focus." This viewpoint has actually been demonstrated by other scholars. Paul Kincard shows how British and the world's social-historical events impact the narratives of islands in fiction, such as the evolutionary theme influenced by Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* in Thomas H. Huxley's works, which ascribe different roles to islands in literary works like "fortress and prison, theater of experiment, dreamscape" etc. (2007, p. 470). Luo Bin and Adam Grydehøj's (2017) research also finds that Ancient and Imperial China's conceptions of islands in fictional and non-fictional texts are influenced by the Taoist and Buddhist tradition.

Second, "performative geographies" helps to grant literary islands' role in shaping the conceptualization of islands, i.e. the influence of islands as "focus" on islands as "locus." After criticizing the practice of prioritizing real world over imagined world, Fletcher argues for the convergence of reality and representation, asserting that "[the] physicality of islands is ultimately inseparable from their textual typography" (2011, p. 26). Several research findings can be used to elaborate on this point. Chu-chueh Cheng (2002) focuses on the Victorian period to explore how islands in literature or cartography reflect the collective contending imaginations of Britain as an island nation and a global empire in the imperial period; Kieron Smith, et al. discover that "[i]slands are a key trope in certain areas of Walsh literature and culture" (2017, p. 319). They examine how notions of island space are negotiated in a post-devolution Welsh novel and constructed in various ways in the Welsh imagination. Apart from these serious literary genres, popular genres are also found to be significant in shaping the meanings of islands. In their monograph, Crane and Fletcher aim to account for the meaning and significance of islands in crime fiction, thrillers, popular romance and fantasy fiction, discussing how these popular fiction genres "generate and shape knowledge about island environments and populations" (2017, p. xv). With this concept, we can say that fictional descriptions of islands are not unrelated to the understanding of the geographical islands; they also contribute to "an expanded concept of island studies" (Hayward, 2016, p. 5). In other words, literature is one of the major sites where the conceptualization of geographical spaces traverses itself.

Third, while recognizing language and culture, as well as fictional island's capacity in producing the meaning of islands, "performative geographies" rejects the notion that physical islands merely serve as the backdrops or containers for human action. Fletcher holds that "islands are not passive players in the stories we tell about them, but rather they participate in the production of meaning" (Crane & Fletcher, 2016, p. 640). She also argues that islands are performative space to the extent that "they provide heightened examples of the impact of geography on subjective and social knowledge and experience; [...] they function as *stages* for the affirmation of the meaning and the value of human life" (Fletcher, 2011, p. 28). This viewpoint finds support in various research. For example, by conducting a diachronic study of British science fictional works from the Anglo-Saxons to the present day, Paul Kincard demonstrates that the geographical landscape is the imaginative dividend of British writers' frequent use of islands and that "[n]owhere outside Britain has the island become such a familiar, such an essential part of the imagery of science fiction that it passes almost unnoticed" (2007, p. 463).

It is worth mentioning that, though the different relations of culture and literature with island both as "locus" and "focus" are discussed separately for better distinction of concepts, the intention of Fletcher's "performative geographies" is to emphasize their interconnected nature. Just as Sarah Luria has said when talking about the convergence between geography and the humanities, "geography can help us understand literature and literature can help us understand geography" (2011, p. 67).

Acknowledging the interaction of our spacial reality with our cultural and literary representation, this study will adopt Fletcher's "performative geographies" concept to analyze the islands in Yong Jin's martial arts fiction. It hypothesizes that Jin's conceptualization of islands in his martial arts novels may be a convergent result of the influence of Chinese culture and his knowledge of Western literature, as well as his own experiences as an immigrant in Hong Kong island. When translating his islands into the English world, the translators, who are endowed with their own conception of islandness in the English culture, may encounter situations in which they have to converge or diverge on their conceoptualization of islands. The translating process is thus an epitome of the negotiation of the Eastern and Western representation of islandness.

"What is an Island" in Jin's Martial Arts Novels

"Performative geographies" draw our attention to the interaction of our spacial reality with our cultural representation. From this perspective, Jin's representation

of islandness inevitably bears the imprint of the culture in which he was deeply immersed. As a resident of Hong Kong island, the then British colony known for the fusion of Eastern and Western cultures, and a lover of Western literature, Jin's conception of islandness is more or less influenced by the Western tradition, which often understands islands through opposing categories, such as utopia and dystopia, heaven and hell. The 15 fictional islands in his novels can be roughly categorized based on this binary understanding. In *The Book and the Sword* (Jin, 2013b), the Boni Island, located outside the boundaries of the Qing empire and with warm weather and abundant natural resources, serves as the place where Chenzhi Yuan the protagonist seeks for refuge from political disaster after completing his adventurous mission. Boni Island can thus be seen as a "refuge" for him to escape political misfortunes. Some other islands feature "heaven-like" situations. For example, Ice and Fire Island in *Heavenly Sword Dragon Slaying Saber* is described as "a desolate celestial-mountain-like island" (Jin, 2013e, p. 237). On the contrary, other islands are hellish. In Mingxia Island of *Legends of the Condor Heroes*, Huang Rong, the protagonist, suffers from the harassment and threat from her enemy, experiencing a period of hell-like psychological trauma (Jin, 2013c). Snake Island in *The Dear and the Cauldron* is described as infected with poisonous snakes and an inhospitable place for anyone from off-island (Jin, 2013a), and so on.

However, it would be overly simplistic to categorize Jin's portray of islands within a strict binary framework. In China, martial arts are closely related to the traditional Chinese philosophy, and as a Chinese writer of martial arts fiction, Jin is no exception to this tradition. When discussing the close relationship between the Chinese philosophy and *qigong*, or the essence of martial arts, Pingyuan Chen has the following remarks:

> [*Q*]*igong* arts are closely bound up with Chinese traditional philosophy; Daoist theories of revitalization, Buddhist meditation and Ru theories of character have all gone towards forming and developing the philosophy of qigong arts. At the same time, the theories used in *qigong* arts, the source of spiritual strength and the methods they follow are all closely tied in with their own specific philosophy and inherently contain a large amount of philosophical thought (Chen, 2017, p.126).

From a performative perspective, Jin not only infuses his erudition of Chinese philosophy into his martial arts narratives but also infuses this wisdom into his conceptualization of islands. Consequently, rather than presenting islands through a binary lens, Jin constructs these landscapes to embody both utopia and dystopia elements. For example, the Peach Blossom Island fashioned as a paradise on various fronts: The island's layout, purportedly adhering to the principles of *Yin* and *Yang* while harboring enigmatic laws of the universe, resembles a labyrinthine garden decorated with colorful trees and shrubs; the island's owner, Apothecary Huang, is described by Botong Zhou, Huang's enemy, as follows:

> The Heretic is exceptionally gifted, you know. He's not just a martial great, he's also a master of the four scholarly arts—zither, chess, calligraphy and painting. And he's an expert in medicine, divination, astrology, physiognomy, agriculture, irrigation, economics and military strategy (Jin, 2019, p. 338).

The island also functions as a realm of escape for Rong Huang and Jing Guo after defending against the impending Mongol's attack. The island can be seen as "a locale where all of these factors draw together under the canopy of a Chinese cultural tradition" (Hamm, 1999, p. 160). Yet, the Peach Blossom Island also has its hellish aspects. There is a paragraph describing how the local people living across the sea from the island perceive the island and its owner Apothecary Huang:

> The young couple travelled east from Jiaxing and reached the coast by Zhoushan. Lotus hired a boat for Xiazhi Island, as she knew the local people feared Peach Blossom Island as much as venomous snakes and scorpions. No amount of money could tempt any boatman to venture even within forty li of its shore. [...] The boatman, having long heard that the murderous Lord of the Peach Blossom Island took pleasure in disembowelling his victims, steered close to the shore without anchoring (Jin, 2019, pp. 314–315).

Similarly, the Seven Heroes of Jiangnan, martial arts masters of another school, all regard Apothecary Huang as an evil person who has committed every kind of sin and call him "the big demon." Even for the central couple, Guo and Huang, the island represents conflicting experiences: it serves as the site where Guo masters the supreme *kungfu* named *Jiuyin Zhenjing*, while also being the backdrop for the couple's most profound misunderstanding. This multifaceted nature makes defining the essence of Peach Blossom Island challenging.

However, intriguingly, the island's attributes appear to resonate with the philosophical idea outlined in the *Dao De Jing,* a Chinese classic text written around the 6th century BC by the sage Laozi. In the text's second stanza, it reads:

> In every fair the world considers fair, there's foul; in every good the world considers good, there's ill (Laozi, 2001, p. 30).

This quote suggests that "foul and fair are a twin presence" (Laozi, 2001, p. 31), which rightly reflects the nature of the Peach Blossom Island.

Similar influence from *Dao De Jing* can also been seen in the construction of the Ice and Fire Island. In stanza 28, it reads,

> Acknowledge the male, but retain the female [...] Acknowledge the white but remember the black [...] Acknowledge honors, but remember humility [...] (Laozi, 2001, p. 88).

According to Moss Roberts' interpretation, this stanza means that "one can approach the unity underlying the differences and thus balance the dialectic" (Laozi, 2001, p. 89). The Ice and Fire Island is a typical example of dialectical balance. First, this island has distinct geographical features: The center of the island is a volcano, whose magma forms many pointed hills on its western side. On its eastern side is a plain formed by volcano ash. Since the island is located near the north pole, all the hills are topped with ice, but since it is a volcano, the temperature on the plain is as warm as in spring. Geographically, the island is a coexistence of rocky hills and a plain, a white snowy mountain top and a green warm plain. The residents on the island also represent two opposite forces. Cuishan Zhang and Susu Yin, the newlywed couple, and Xun Xie, their enemy who kidnaps them, accidentally land on this island. Though they initially harbor mutual distrust and suspicion, the three gradually develop strong feelings for each other. After the couple makes their infant boy, Wuji Zhang, Xie's adopted son for the sake of protecting the baby boy's life, the two men even become sworn brothers. Later on, the Zhang couple chooses to die rather than reveal the living place of Xie to Xie's enemies after they return to the mainland with their son. This island thus symbolizes the coexistence of two contradictory forces.

Besides *Dao De Jing*, Sun Tzǔ's *The Art of War* also finds its impact in Jin's conception of islands. In *The Art of War*, Sun Tzǔ writes, "anger may in time change to gladness; vexation may be succeeded by content" (2009, p. 50). In *Ode to the Gallantry* (Jin, 2013d), the changing images of the Gallantry Island form the major structure of the story. At the beginning of the story, the island is presented as evil since 37 *kungfu* masters have been invited to the island in the past 30 years, and were said to have been murdered there. As a result, everyone in *jianghu* society is terrified when receiving an invitation from the island. However, the story turns out to be different. Instead of being murdered, the 37 masters are attracted by a secret *kungfu* sutra carved inside the caves on the island, and all of them are reluctant to leave before they master this supreme *kungfu*. In this novel, the island, that is first taken as being evil, turns out to be the most attractive place in the *jianghu* society.

In the Eurocentric literary tradition, islands are always "gazed" and "belittled" by the continent, being conceived as vulnerable and passive. This has led scholars to call for an "equal foregrounding of land and sea" (Beer, 1990, p. 272). However, in Jin's martial arts novels, islands sometimes play an important role in the continent-island relationship. In *Legends of the Condor Heroes*, the whole *jianghu* is fighting to seek the long-missing *Jiuyin Zhenjing* martial arts sutra. Yet, it turns out that the sutra is well-preserved on the Peach Blossom Island and is practiced by Guo and Zhou, who later return to the continent and take the lead in *jianghu* with their mastery of the *kungfu*. Similarly, Gallantry Island is also a site for reverently preserving the secret manual of martial arts that had been wracked by turmoil on the continent. John Hamm describes Gallantry Island as "both the locale of the story's climax and the site—indeed the geographical embodiment—of the martial enlightenment which represents truth and supreme power within the diegetic world" (1999, pp.198–199). This group of islands, instead of being marginalized, becomes the very place where the truth exists and from where the truth spreads to the continent. Such a conception of islands may be influenced by the Chinese culture, which regards islands as the fairy residence and the place where elixir is kept. This narrative endows islands with a central position in the whole story and provides a new perspective on the defining peripherality feature of islands held in Western culture.

Translation of Jin's Islands

Translation is a process in which different concepts are perceived, negotiated, and represented. Susan Bassnett

and André Lefevere use the term “rewriting” to describe translation, seeing it as a process that “reflect[s] a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate[s] literature to function in a given society in a given way” (1995, p. vii). Therefore, considering translators are influenced by their cultural understandings of islandness, how do they interpret Yong Jin’s concept of islandness, and how do they incorporate or potentially rewrite it to resonate within the English culture?

Besides the four officially published translations of Jin’s martial arts fiction mentioned in the Introduction section, there are some volunteer fan translations published in online communities. In the SPCNET forum[2], an online forum for posts concerning Asian movies and TV series reviews, a group of Jin fans and martial arts lovers voluntarily translated nine of Jin ’s works (Net 1). Most of these works are completed by a team, while some are simply revised translations based on previous translations from other personal websites such as the Lannyland[3] (Net 2). What is worth noting is that seven of these online publications have been edited into electronic versions and unofficially published. On these electronic versions, James Gataiant is listed as a key editor, and other lead translators include Noodles, Lanny Lin, Frans Soetomo, Foxs, etc., totaling about 20 persons. Moreover, the translations on the SPCNET forum are also circulated on another website titled “Wuxia Society.” These unofficial translations bring the total number of Jin’s English translations to 11. However, it is notable that among the 15 fictional islands created by Jin, they appear only in six of his novels, with 12 of these fictional islands found in five out of the 11 translated novels (Table 1). This section will focus primarily on the islands present in the five English translations listed in Table 1 to discuss the convergence or divergence of islandness during the process of cultural transmission.

Table 1

Translations of Jin’s Martial Arts Novels with Islands

Chinese Title	English Title	Translator(s)/ Editor(s)	Publisher	Year of Publication
射雕英雄传	*Eagle Shooting Hero*	James Gataiant, Percy Cael, Qiu Shuyi, Elif Kay (eds.)	online	2013
	Legends of the Condor Heroes	Anna Holmwood, Gigi Chang, Shelly Bryant	Maclehose Press	2018, 2019, 2020, 2021
笑傲江湖	Return of the Condor Heroes	James Gataiant(ed.)	online	About 2005
倚天屠龙记	Heavenly Sword Dragon Slaying Saber	Han Solo, Elif Kaya (eds.)	online	About 2003
侠客行	*Ode to Gallantry*	Ian Liew, Laviathan, Huang Yushi, Abhay	online	Unknown
鹿鼎记	The Deer and the Cauldron	John Mindord	Oxford University Press	1997, 1999, 2002
		Foxs	online	About 2006

In translation, plots of Jin’s novels are comparatively easier to render when translators “make a conscious effort to stick as close as possible to the original Chinese text” (Net 3). Therefore, the part of islandness developed through plot structuring and descriptions, which we have discussed in last section, remains basically the same. The major differences and changes in islandness in translations can be seen in the rendering of island names. As Nancy Tsai observes, a name “belies the authority of the namer and the ideology behind the choice of words” (2014, p. 63). From a “performative geographies” perspective, the process of naming infuses the namer’s conception of islandness, and the name can vice versa influence or contribute to the readers’ understanding of these fictional islands. How these concepts are translated or “rewritten” can thus provide us with an epitome of the convergence and divergence of island conceptualizations across this cultural communication process.

Specifically, this study will look into the convergence or divergence of island concepts resulting from the methods adopted in translating island names. By describing the translated texts featuring islands, it is found that transference, translation, and modification are the three methods used to render the island names (Table 2). Transference means the incorporation of the source language (SL) proper name unchanged into the target language (TL) text; it is also known as “zero translation” or “transliteration.” In the cease of transference, the Chinese names of the islands are represented by the sounds of the Chinese characters in *pinyin* format, such as “灵蛇岛” into “Ling She Island” “王盘山岛” into “Wangpan Island,” and “冰火岛” into “Bing Huo Island.” This method is generally regarded as the objective representation of the “other”. Yet, as argued by Tsai, such an “objectiveness” may apply mainly to languages “that employ alphabetic or phonetic writing system” (2014, p. 65). As

[2] https://www.spcnet.tv/forums/showthread.php/38942-Links-to-Completed-Translations#.YZibjy1_EnU

[3] https://www.lannyland.com/translations.shtml

for a language distant from the alphabetic writing system, transference may become "the fallacy of representation" (Tsai, 2014, p. 76) as the audible phonetics may be reduced to a mere referent and abstract entity, conveying little about the islandness and having minimal influence the concept of island in the target culture.

Table 2

Translations of Island Names in Jin's Five English Martial Arts Novels

Name in Chinese	Name in English	Method	Translators	Novel
桃花岛	Peach Blossom Island	translation	Anna Holmwood, et al./James Gataiant, et al.	*Legends of the Condor Heroes*
明霞岛	Rosy Cloud Island	translation	Anna Holmwood, et al.	
	Bright Red Cloud Island [ming xia dao]	translation	James Gataiant, et al.	
大智岛	Great Wisdom Island [da zhi dao]	translation	James Gataiant, et al.	*The Return of the Condor Heroes*
冰火岛	Bing Huo Island [Ice and Fire Island]	transference	Han Solo, et al.	*The Heaven Sword and Dragon Sabre*
灵蛇岛	Ling She Island [spirit snake]	transference		
王盘山岛	Wangpan Island	transference		
侠客岛	Island of heroes	translation	Ian Liew, et al.	*Ode to Gallantry*
碧螺岛	Blue Spiral Island Azure Conch	translation		
紫烟岛	Azure Mist Island	translation		
白鲸岛	Isle of the White Whale	translation		
神龙岛	Snake Island Mystic Dragon Island	translation	John Minford	*The Deer and the Cauldron*
	Snake Island Shen Long Island [divine dragon island]	translation/ transference	Foxs	
通吃岛	Potluck Island	modification	Minford	
	Tong Chi Island	transference	Foxs	
皮岛	Pidao [literally, Hide or Skin Island]	transference	Minford	
	The Pi Island [lit. Leather/ skin/fur]	transference	Foxs	
梨洲	Lizhou [lit. pear island]	transference	Foxs	

In the context of translation and modification, names are rendered based on sense rather than sounds. Translation means the rendering of the meaning of a name into another language in the way that the SL author intends; modification means the process of choosing a TL substitute that is unrelated or partly related to the meaning of the SL name. Both methods imply the deliberate choice made by translators. Choice-making is significant by linguists (Halliday, 2013), literary stylists (Fowler,1996; Leech & Short, 1981; Verdonk, 2002), and translation scholars who adopt a cognitive or Critical Discourse Analysis approach (Baker, 2000; Boase-Beier, 2006; Tabakowska, 1993). These scholars describe the selection from available alternatives as "reflect[ing] a speaker's (subjective) choice of a given conceptualization" (Tabakowska, 1993, p. 7) and "can tell us about the translator's world view, or attitude towards the information conveyed" (Boase-Beier, 2006, p. 65). Such conceptualizations and "world views" are again "affected by social and cultural influences (Boase-Beier, 2006, p. 54). Therefore, translators' word choices also reflect their internal negotiation of the concept of islandness. In the following, this study will discuss how islandness is represented through the process of translation and modification.

Cultural Influence on the Interpretation of Translated Islandness

In Table 2, literal translation is the most frequently used method for rendering island names. Some translations provide contextual support, making it neutral for readers to accept the name. For example, consider the translation of " 明霞岛 " and " 碧螺岛 ."

> A. Huang Rong smiled with a negative wave of her hand; she leaned her head to one side to think. She saw a group of red clouds on the horizon, like a cluster of gems hovering gloriously over the island. "Let's call it 'Bright Red Cloud Island' [ming xia dao]!" she called out (by James Gataiant, et al.).
>
> B. Lotus smiled and waved the idea away. She cocked her head and thought. On the horizon, a clutch of ruby clouds were gathering. "Rosy Cloud Island!" (by Anna Holmwood and Gigi Chang).
>
> C. There, he saw a peak rising from the water, a lush expanse of greenery that was pointed at the top and rounded at the base. Since the peak looked just like a spiral shell, Shi guessed that it was the Azure Conch [also as Blue Spiral Island] (by Ian Liew, et al.).

In the three translations, the island names are connected

to their respective natural environments (as indicated by the underlined parts), making it easier for readers to associate the names with the scenery. However, it is important to note that words also carry connotative meanings rooted in culture. Therefore, when the meanings of the island names lack clear referents, the chosen words may evoke a specific conceptualization of islandness among the target readers. This is evident in the translation of "紫烟岛" and "桃花岛."

"紫烟," or "purple mist," is often associated with celestial situations and carries an auspicious implication in Chinese culture. In the context of *Ode to Gallantry*, the island is described as rich in persimmons and seafood, a place that saves lives. However, due to cultural differences, the translation "Azure Mist Island" may not evoke a similar auspicious implication among English readers. "Peach Blossom Island," as previously discussed, challenges the binary heaven-hell conception of islands and can serves as a refuge for the protagonists in the end of the story. Its function as a refuge can be easily implied by Chinese readership familiar with Qian Tao's (365–427) *The Peach Blossom Spring*, an essay that depicts a hidden and idyllic community for political refugees. In Tao's work, the place with peach blossom signifies a tranquil utopia detached from dynastic political turmoil. This symbolic essence might align with Jin's envisioned portrayal of the island. Within the novel, Peach Blossom Island serves as the abode of Apothecary Huang, a reclusive and radical figure among the story's five greatest martial artists, who remains indifferent to courtly offers. The island also serves as refuge for Jing Guo and Rong Huang following their successful defense against the Mongolians' invasion. However, for English-speaking readers, the term "Peach Blossom" might not evoke the same paradisiacal association. Both official and unofficial retain the term "Peach Blossom Island" through literal translation. Yet, from a comparative point of view, the connotative meanings of peach blossoms in English extend beyond merely referencing the flowers of peach trees; colloquially, it is also associated with a "very attractive young woman." Consequently, the name might carry connotations of femininity that could influence the interpretation of Yong Jin's intended island concept.

Translators' Personal Interpretation of Islandness

The rendering of island names also reflected translators' personal comprehension of Jin's fictional islands. The choice of different words to translate the island names also occasionally alter the essence or nature attributed to the island. For example, in *The Deer and the Cauldron*, Minford translates "神龙岛" into Mystic Dragon Island, while in Foxs' version, it is rendered into the Divine Dragon Island. The Chinese character "神" embodies multiple meanings and can be understood as "神秘" (mystic) or "神圣" (divine). The character thus provides translators with alternatives that can significantly diverge in their representation of the island's essence: Mystic Dragon Island implies a potentially negative spiritual power of the island, while Divine Dragon gives the island a divine or godly association. Each option reflects the translators' distinct attitudes or perspectives regarding the island's nature.

In the original Chinese text, the island is alternatively referred to as "Snake Island" (蛇岛) due to its infection of different kinds of poisonous snakes. This name is used only eight times in the first half of the novel, before the protagonist, arrives on the island. In contrast, the name "Mystic Dragon Island" recurrently appears 74 times in the source text. Foxs, the online translator, closely echoes the Chinese text by rendering the names accordingly. However, in Minford's version, he consistently uses "Snake Island" throughout his translation, deviating from the Chinese original text except for a few instances. He also clarifies in translation, borrowing the protagonist's tone, that "Mystic Dragon Island is just a fancy name for Snake Island" (Jin, 1999, p. 237). These variations in translated names and their frequency of use showcase Minford's perception of the island as an unpleasant and evil place, an interpretation that may resonate with the Western tradition of viewing islands as the sinister "Other."

Another example is Minford's modification of "通吃岛" into "Potluck Island." In translation, Minford initially translates the meaning quite faithfully from the Chinese text but adds a few sentences (see the underlined part) to justify his change of the island name from "Sweep Island" to "Potluck Island" as example D below:

> D. Trinket scratched his head. "I've never been much good at things like names. In fact I'm not much good with words at all. Let's think though. What am I any good at cards. All right. Suppose we're playing a game of cards, I'm the dealer, you're the fellow to my left, I win, I clean you out. ... I know! That's it! The main object of our 'game' is to wipe out those Dragons, to make a clean sweep of Snake Island. Why not call the place 'Sweep Island' <u>No, that's no good...Well, what about food. I like food. Suppose this is a meal. After all, war is a bit like a</u>

> meal. Then, the whole object of the exercise is to eat the Dragons! Dragon Fu Yung! We'll swallow them whole! Just munch up whatever comes our way. Take Potluck that's it! Let's call it Potluck Island. Not bad! Don't you think" (by Minford).

This change in the name from "Sweep Island" to "Potluck Island" reflects Minford's understanding and interpretation of the island's significance. Potluck conveys the notion of shared meals, meaning "the practice of throwing leftovers in a pot—with luck determining how good the stew would taste" (*Farlex Trivia Dictionary*) or "A meal at which each guest brings food that is then shared by all" (*American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*). By choosing a term associated with dining rather than gambling, Minford crafts a different image of Wei, the character naming the island. In the source text, gambling appears to be a more favoured pastime for Wei. Given his background—an upbringing in a brothel with exposure to gambling activities, gambling becomes a familiar entertainment for him. He frequently organizes gambling events, even in military camps. Gambling has become part of his mindset, aiding his understanding of situations and structuring his thoughts. In the process of rendering names and concepts from one culture to another, translators often make choices that align with their interpretation of the text and their perception of specific concepts. These choices significantly impact how readers in the target culture understand and engage with the translated work. In this instance, such alternations out of the translator's personal interpretation or preference could influence readers' conceptualization of islandness, as according to the concept of "performative geographies."

Conclusion

This study utilizes the concept of "performative geographies" to examine how Jin conceives islands in his martial arts novels and how his islands are translated into English. It is found that the islandness in Jin's fiction demonstrates the combined effect of both the Western ideology and the Eastern culture. From the performative perspective, this may be due to the fact that Jin lives in Hong Kong, a place with a special geographical and historical status as an island of Chinese culture and a colony of Britain. Jin's conception of islands reflects such an interaction of his knowledge of islands as influenced by Western literature with his cultural identity and mindset shaped by the Chinese culture. As a result, he develops a conception of islandness that is not absolutely binary nor stable. Without doubt, Jin also has his distinctiveness in conceiving islandness. For the Peach Blossom Island, he introduces the element of perspective from different people and the Gallantry Island the element of the effect of time. All these indicate the islandness and value that islands are imbued vary in different spatial and cultural contexts. The exploration of these different representations thus helpes to enrich the island conceptualizations in contemporary literature.

With an interest in how the various types of islandness are understood and transferred across cultures, this study also explores how Jin's fictional islands have been translated into English. It is found that, while the type of islandness that conveyed through plots can be more easily introduced to English culture, the rendering of island names may sometimes pose difficulty for a smooth conveyance of Jin's islandness. Culture may participate to affect the interpretation of islandness by erasing the connotative meanings of island names in the source texts or by endowing the English island names with new connotative meanings irrelevant to or even against the intention of Jin. Island name translation may also be affected by translator's individual perception of islandness. Minford's persistent negative attitudes towards Snake Island may find its origin in the binary understanding of island as the "Other" in the Western culture. His favour of "Potluck Island" instead of "Sweep Island" also shows his reluctant to relate the fictional island with gambling.

From this paper, it can be seen from Jin's case that the creation of fictional islands is performative in that the cultures Jin rooted in or exposed to do interact with his creation of different types of fictional islands. His fictional islands can also help to diversify our understanding of islandness. Moreover, translation is an important arena for different types of islandness to be spread to other cultures and a place where convergence/divergence of islandness across cultures can be seen.

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