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Poetry as Dreaming, Dreaming as Poetry: The Dialogue Between Dream of the Red Chamber (*Hongloumeng* 紅樓夢, *Story of the Stone* 石頭記) and Middle Tang 中唐 and Late Tang 晚唐 Poetry, Focusing on the Work of Li He 李賀, Li Shangyin 李商隱, and Wen Tingyun 溫庭筠

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by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Poetry as Dreaming, Dreaming as Poetry: The Dialogue Between Dream of the Red Chamber (*Hongloumeng* 紅樓夢, *Story of the Stone* 石頭記) and Middle Tang 中唐 and Late Tang 晚唐 Poetry, Focusing on the Work of Li He 李賀, Li Shangyin 李商隱, and Wen Tingyun 溫庭筠

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This dissertation explores the dialogue between *Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Hongloumeng* 紅樓夢, *Story of the Stone* 石頭記) and Tang 唐 poetry, especially the works of Li He 李賀, Li Shangyin 李商隱, and Wen Tingyun 溫庭筠. Analytical tools and philosophical concepts are developed for approaching Hongloumeng as a deeply intertextual, highly symbolic novel, the specificity of its referential landscape being assessed and clarified. The works of these poets are explored in their capacity as classical inspiration for *Hongloumeng*'s remarkable, in some ways radical vision of alternative spaces where sexuality, gender, art, and identity can be explored freely and openly. It will be demonstrated how *Hongloumeng* engages with these poets' works especially in terms of their critique of existing social hierarchies and of the dismal opportunities afforded for artistic and gender expression. The recurrence of gendered labor in the Tang poetic material that *Hongloumeng* references is treated with a view toward value production and social reproduction as

historical phenomena. To develop an analytical framework capable of representing subtly transforming historical conceptions of dreams, desire, and identity, this work critically engages with notions of serendipity, chance, fate, and morality in *Hongloumeng* and Tang poetry, while reflexively developing new conceptions of artistic serendipity that can capture how meaning and non-meaning interact, and how dreams and desire interweave. In the process, this work attempts to articulate its theoretical and methodological positionality vis-à-vis Freudian psychoanalysis, the structuralism of Claude Lévi-Strauss, the post-structuralism of Julia Kristeva's intertextuality, and liminality studies.

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Introduction

I. Background and Context

Dream of the Red Chamber (*Hongloumeng* 紅樓夢),[1] also known as *Story of the Stone* (*Shitouji* 石頭記), is widely agreed to represent a pinnacle achievement of historical Chinese literature. This classic eighteenth-century novel is remarkable for uniting readers of diverse tastes and reading backgrounds, its canonicity rooted as much in critical appraisal as in popular acclaim. Scores of translations, articles, monographs, lectures, podcasts, and specialist journals have been dedicated to its careful study. Speaking to its ubiquity in Chinese culture, Pai Hsien-Yung and Susan Egan observe that "[t]hrough adaptation into movies, television dramas, and theme parks over the years, even Chinese who have never read a single page of *The Story of the Stone* have become familiar with its basic plot."[2] Another proxy for its influence and popularity, Andrew Schonebaum has identified well over 50 sequels and counting.[3]

How readers and researchers characterize *Hongloumeng* can vary considerably, though patterns are perceptible. Pai Hsien-yung regards the novel as "ha[ving] all the elements of a well-crafted soap opera," imagining it as "*Paradise Lost*, *War and Peace*, *In Search of Lost Time*, and *Pride and Prejudice* all rolled into one."[4] Dore Levy argues that "[t]o appreciate its

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[1] *Hongloumeng* will be abbreviated in footnotes as *HLM*. Versions and translations of the text are discussed below.

[2] Kenneth Hsien-Yung Pai and Susan Chan Egan, *A Companion to the Story of the Stone: A Chapter-by-chapter Guide*, 2021: xv.

[3] Andrew Schonebaum and Tina Lu, *Approaches to Teaching the Story of the Stone (Dream of the Red Chamber),* 2012: 5.

[4] Pai and Egan *ibid.* xv.

position in Chinese literature, we should imagine a work with the critical cachet of James Joyce's *Ulysses* and the popular appeal of Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*."[5] Anthony Yu emphasizes *Hongloumeng*'s exceptionality as a Chinese fictional work that reflexively foregrounds its own fictionality, comparable to the *Odyssey*, *Hamlet, Don Quixote,* Joyce's *Ulysses*, and *The Auroras of Autumn*, but unique, Yu argues, to the history of Chinese literature.[6]

With perceptive brevity, Pai Hsien-yung and Susan Egan in *A Companion to the Story of the Stone* (2022) have captured the sweeping arc of this "dauntingly long" novel:

> The tragic love story of Jia Baoyu and Lin Daiyu is woven into [a] tale of family decline. Even though Baoyu's grandmother and mother know that he is in love with Daiyu, they eventually decide that he should marry his other cousin, the genial and capable Xue Baochai. From a pragmatic point of view, Baochai is much the better choice because Baoyu's bride will one day be responsible for running the large and complicated household—a role that Daiyu is demonstrably unfit to perform. Baoyu is duped into thinking he is marrying Daiyu, and it is not until he lifts up the bride's veil after the ceremony that he learns the truth. Meanwhile, the frail Daiyu dies of heartbreak.
>
> To Baoyu, this betrayal is the final blow in a long series of misfortunes—illness, suicides, and mistreatment by abusive husbands—that, one by one, have befallen all the beloved girls in his life. He comes to the realization that everything is ephemeral and one's destiny lies beyond one's control. After dutifully impregnating his wife to give the family an heir and bringing honor to the family by excelling on the examinations, he leaves the world behind to become a monk.[7]

Readers are regularly bedazzled with exquisite descriptions of historical objects, places, food, drinks, eating utensils, clothing, hairstyles, necklaces, and jewelry. Historians employing the text can peruse curiously lengthy lists of formal gifts, trading goods, taxes-in-kind, and so on, usually in connection with elite members of the wealthy Jia clan. Historical medical and religious practices appear alongside contemporary reactions to these practices.

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[5] Dore Levy, *Ideal and Actual in the Story of the Stone*, 1999: 2, quoted in Ronald Gray, *Reading Dream of the Red Chamber: A Companion to Cao Xueqin's Masterpiece*, 2022: 7.

[6] Anthony Yu, *Rereading the Stone*, 2018: xi.

[7] Pai and Egan *ibid.* xxi, xiii ("dauntingly long.")

Historical prices within its pages, as well as realistic examples of revenue streams, credit and debt arrangements, and so on, can likewise be employed by scholars interested in reconstructing the economics of Qing society or the finances of elite household during this period.[8]

While possessing a great wealth of conventionally stimulating and suspenseful storytelling material, *Hongloumeng* can also be a challenging text, being not only profoundly long but also replete with dense literary and poetic forms that feature prominently in the novel and are discussed in detail by its characters. The great number of people, increasingly international in composition, reading and studying this text should not be taken to indicate that its study is anywhere approaching "completion," or even consensus. Some of the primary challenges facing its serious study include 1) ambiguity over authorship, 2) ambiguity specifically over the authorship of the last 40 chapters, and questions of how to treat and evaluate textual material written by secondary authors, 3) inconsistencies between different versions of the text, 4) evidence that the text in its received form was not edited to the original author's satisfaction prior to his death, 5) ambiguities over the sexual and gender identity of the main character Jia Baoyu,[9] commonly assumed to represent, in some form, the author and elements of his personal experience.

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[8] See, e.g., Tristan Gerard Brown, "The Metaphorical Dimensions of Symbolic Prices and Real-World Values in Hong Lou Meng," Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies 41.4 (2011), discussed below.

[9] For scholarly inquiry into Baoyu's sexuality, compare Louise Edwards, "Gender imperatives in Honglou meng: Baoyu's bisexuality," Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR) 12 (1990): 69-81, reappearing in *Men and women in Qing China: Gender in the Red Chamber dreams*, 1994, Chapter 3; and Zhou Zuyan, *Androgyny in late Ming and early Qing literature*, Chapter 7, "The Dream of the Red Chamber, A Shattered Dream of Androgyny," 2003: 155-198. See also Martin Weizong Huang, "Engendering Chinese Lyricism: Literati Anxiety and the Gender Problem in Dream," in *The dilemma of Chinese lyricism and the Qing literati novel*, Washington University in St. Louis, PhD Diss., 1991: 136-178.

The exact circumstances of *Hongloumeng*'s composition are lost to history and subject to the obscuring effects of conjecture, fantasy, and projection, with relevant historical and textual evidence as tantalizing as it is circumstantial. A consensus has emerged ascribing authorship to the historical Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹 (1715?-1764?).[10] Cao Xueqin's grandfather Cao Yin 曹寅 (1658-1712) edited the *Quan Tangshi* 全唐詩, the largest collection of poems and poetic works from the Tang Dynasty, and one of the largest poetry collections ever assembled in any language and from any historical period.[11] The *Quan Tangshi* has proven critical for researching this dissertation, Cao Xueqin and Cao Yin thereby finding themselves bibliographic neighbors, to somewhat surreal effect.

Hongloumeng has a complicated manuscript and publication history that can present considerable challenges for its scholarly study.[12] The Jiaxu manuscript discovered in Shanghai in 1927, dateable to 1754, is thought to be the earliest extant version of the text, with printed editions of the novel appearing in 1791 and 1792.[13] The manuscript versions only feature at most the first eighty chapters of the novel. There is considerable variation

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[10] Following Pai and Egan on Cao Xueqin's birth and death dates. *Ibid.* xvi. See Haun Saussy, "The Age of Attribution: Or, How the Honglou meng Finally Acquired an Author," Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews, 25 (2003): 119-132. For research exploring Cao Xueqin's biography for material evidence related to *Hongloumeng*, see, e.g., Chen Yupi 陳毓羆, Liu Shide 劉世德, et al., *Hongloumeng luncong* 紅樓夢論叢, 1979; Feng Qiyong 馮其庸, Li Guangbai 李廣柏, et al., *Hongloumeng gailun* 紅樓夢概論, 2002.

[11] See Cao Yin, ed., *Quan Tangshi* 全唐詩, https://ctext.org/quantangshi. All subsequent *Quan Tangshi* references will be to this online version, unless otherwise stated. The address for a specific "juan" can be generated by appending "/n," where *n* is the number of the "juan" in question. For example, the address for "juan" 120 is https://ctext.org/quantangshi/120.

[12] For scholarly dating and evaluation of different extant versions of the text, see Lin Guanfu 林冠夫. *Hongloumeng banben lun* 紅樓夢版本論, 2007; Liu Shide 劉世德. *Houloumeng banben tanwei* 紅樓夢版本探微, 2003; Wei Shaochang 魏紹昌. *Hongloumeng banben xiaokao* 紅樓夢版本小考, 1982; Wu Shichang 吳世昌, et al. Honglou tanyuan 紅樓探源, 2000, and Zheng Qingshan 鄭慶山, *Hongloumeng de banben jiqi jiaokan* 紅樓夢的版本及其校勘, 2002.

[13] Schonebaum and Lu *ibid.* 9-10.

between different received versions, with scholars left to scrutinize significant differences in wording and content.

Scholars and students approaching the study of *Hongloumeng* in English language settings are well-advised to take the 2014 bilingual edition of the translation by David Hawkes and John Minford, edited by Fan Shengyu, as a basis for inquiry.[14] All references to the Hawkes translation in this dissertation will be to this bilingual edition. Hawkes in producing his translation has made careful editorial decisions supported by scholarly research, selecting and adapting material from different received versions. Fan Shengyu years later performed the admirable, painstaking task of going line-by-line pairing Hawkes and Minford's translation with the corresponding version of the Chinese original, in effect reverse-engineering a whole new Chinese edition of *Hongloumeng*, worthy of general consultation regardless of one's scholarly language setting. In Fan Shengyu's own words, "[Hawkes] wanted to create a novel that worked in English, and in order to achieve this he found it necessary to create an edition that worked in Chinese!"[15]

The primary concern of this dissertation is a topic central to *Hongloumeng* whose subtlety and complexity has prevented its full articulation in the secondary literature.

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[14] Cao Xueqin [attributed], David Hawkes and John Minford, trans. Fan Shengyu, ed. *Chinese-English The Story of the Stone*, 2014 v1-5.

[15] Fan Shengyu, "The Translator as Scholar and Editor: On Preparing a New Chinese Text for the Bilingual The Story of the Stone," In *Style, Wit and Word-play: Essays in Translation Studies in Memory of David Hawkes*, Chan Sin-wai and Laurence Wong, eds., 2011: 147. See also Fan Shengyu, "The Lost Translator's Copy: David Hawkes' Construction of a Base Text in Translating Hongloumeng." Translation Review 100.1 (2018): 37-64.

II. Research Questions and Objectives

This dissertation will focus on central themes of *Hongloumeng,* treating the novel in its capacity as 1) an exploration of desire, gender, labor, and identity, 2) a celebration of women, 3) an inquiry into meaning and emptiness, as well as into material versus immaterial value, 4) a rumination on the dialectics of truth and fiction, 5) a vision of dreaming and desire as intertwined phenomena, 6) an expression of dreaming through poetry, 7) an expression of poetry through dreaming, and 8) a vision of the connections between fate, meaning, desire, and identity. These issues are critical to *Hongloumeng* but are so interconnected that their analysis can prove difficult; it can seem as if there is no starting point for analysis, each conceptual form appearing to presuppose the other, with no "base unit" from which to derive subsequent forms.

The hope here is to be able to apply the most advanced philosophical, psychological, linguistic, and theoretical insights to the study of *Hongloumeng* while still taking the work seriously on its own terms, specifically as a *fundamentally intertextual novel*, one that can be understood fully only if approached in intertextual terms, and as a *deeply symbolic work*, viz., a work that, like a dream, makes active use of all available forms of symbolic displacement, extending far beyond "mere metaphor" to encompass a wide range of strange, sublime, and surreal literary manifestations. Intertextual elements and symbolic elements interact and overlap in complicated ways conceptually, and, to nuance the matter further, are being addressed explicitly in the context of a novel that truly revels in the reduplicative and in the reflexive reevaluation of values. This dissertation is intertextual because those are the terms that a meaningful study of *Hongloumeng* presupposes.

In what follows, methodological tools will be developed for approaching and analyzing deeply intertextual humanistic traditions, developing systematic ways of thinking about referential continuity across millennia-spanning longitudinal time while searching for the conceptual nuance to represent subtle transformations within that referential continuity. Attempted is the development of new analytic models in dialogue with, but distinct from, precursor models including Claude Levi-Strauss's structuralism,[16] Turner's liminality,[17] and Freud's psychoanalytic interpretation of dreams,[18] each discussed in detail below. In establishing a precedent for conceptualizing structural transformations in the sinological tradition, the work of Whalen Lai[19] and Sarah Allan[20] on early Chinese mythology also provide models with which to interface.

These tools will prove critical for exploring how and why middle and late Tang poets figure so prominently in *Hongloumeng*'s referential space. At the heart of this preference, it will be seen, is *Hongloumeng*'s reaching for classical inspiration for alternative spaces where sexuality, gender, art, and identity can be explored more freely and openly. What at first glance might appear merely a shared predilection for luxurious language and imagery will, through careful analysis, reveal itself as a resounding critique of key elements of existing

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[16] See especially Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth." The Journal of American Folklore. 68.270 (1955): 428-444; *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, 1971; and *The Story of Lynx*, 1995.

[17] Victor Turner, "Liminal to liminoid, in play, flow, and ritual: An essay in comparative symbology," 1974, and "Liminality and communitas," in *Ritual*, 2017: 169-187; Victor Turner, Roger D. Abrahams, and Alfred Harris, *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure*, 2017.

[18] See especially Sigmund Freud and James Strachey, trans. *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 2010 [1901].

[19] Whalen Lai, "Symbolism of evil in China: The K'ung-chia myth analyzed," History of Religions 23.4 (1984): 316-343, and "Unmasking the filial sage-king Shun: Oedipus at Anyang," History of religions 35.2 (1995): 163-184, also discussed below.

[20] Sarah Allan, *The shape of the turtle: Myth, art, and cosmos in early China*, 1991; "Sons of suns: myth and totemism in early China." Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 44.2 (1981): 290-326; *The Heir and the Sage, Revised and Expanded Edition: Dynastic Legend in Early China*, 2016; and *Shifting Stories: History, Gossip, and Lore in Narratives from Tang Dynasty China*, 2020.

social and gender hierarchies and of the dismal opportunities afforded for artistic and gender expression.

III. State of the Scholarship on *Hongloumeng*'s Intertextual Poetic Engagement and on Dream Interpretation

As *Hongloumeng* scholarship is voluminous, this dissertation will focus its attention especially on that subset of the secondary literature treating *Hongloumeng*'s intertextual engagement with classical Chinese poetry, especially late Tang poetry. Cai Yijiang (2004, 2007)[21] and Liu Genglu *et al.* (2005)[22] have produced some of the most comprehensive analyses of *Hongloumeng*'s poetry, interweaving detailed line-by-line commentary with longer essayistic discussion. These scholars have identified many, but not all, of the most important instances where *Hongloumeng* directly references Tang poetic materials. Additional research on *Hongloumeng*'s intertextual engagement with Tang poetry has been performed by Ou Li-Chuan (2011, 2020),[23] Wang Yu (2011),[24] and other researchers,[25] some writing in English but, for this topic, most writing in Chinese. None of these works is exhaustive. There remains many references, even specifically to late Tang poets, waiting to be discovered. This

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[21] Cai Yijiang 蔡義江, *Hongloumeng shici qufu jianshang* 紅樓夢詩詞曲賦鑑賞, 2004, and Cai Yijiang 蔡義江, *Hongloumeng shici qufu quanjie* 紅樓夢詩詞曲賦全解, 2007.

[22] Liu Genglu 劉耕路, et al., *Hongloumeng shici jiexi* 紅樓夢詩詞解析, 2005.

[23] Ou Li-Chuan 歐麗娟, "Lun Hongloumeng yu Zhongwan Tangshi de xueyuan xipu yu meixue chuancheng 論 "紅樓夢" 與中晚唐詩的血緣系譜與美學傳承." Taida wenshi zhexue xuebao 臺大文史哲學報 75 (2011): 121-160, and Ou Li-Chuan 歐麗娟, *Shi lun hongloumeng* 詩論紅樓夢, 2020.

[24] Wang Yu 王玉. *Hongloumeng yin Tangshi yanjiu* 紅樓夢引唐詩研究. Guangxi Shifan Daxue 廣西師範大學. Master's Thesis, 2014.

[25] See also He Shiming 何士明. *Hongloumeng shici jianshang cidian* 紅樓夢詩詞鑒賞辭典, 2011, and He Xinhui 賀新輝, *Hongloumeng shici jianshang cidian* 紅樓夢詩詞鑑賞辭典, 1992.

dissertation will attempt to consider references previously overlooked or neglected, while also drawing from the widest range of secondary literature.

Efforts have been made here to emphasize less speculative lines of empirical inquiry, specifically regarding the personal lives of Tang poets, which are subject to malicious rumors and idle moralizing, often as false as it is petty. Still, completely neglecting the historical and biographical circumstances in which a poem is composed can also lead to misreading. Pains have been taken to mediate between these two opposing, equally undesirable argumentative extremes.

Though dreaming and dream interpretation appears universal, no consensus, scholarly or even culturally, exists regarding the meaning and function of dreaming. Modern psychology and cognitive science have made only limited progress since the days of Sigmund Freud, Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (2010 [1901]) remaining, to this day, one of the only comprehensive and systematic accounts of the dynamics of dreaming and the relationship of dreaming to desire.[26] Freud in this classic work formulates a wish fulfillment theory of dreaming, for which his model at the time admits no exception; at least in the theory's original formulation, all dreams are considered wishes, however indirect their manifest expression. Later in Freud's intellectual career, in works such as *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1961 [1920]), Freud postulates what he calls "death drive" ("Todestrieb"), a kind of

[26] Sigmund Freud and James Strachey, trans., *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 2010 [1901]. Compare to contemporary scientific accounts of dreaming by Kelly Bulkeley, *An introduction to the psychology of dreaming*, 2017, and, by the same author, *Dreaming in the World's Religions*, 2008. See also James F. Pagel, *Dream science: Exploring the forms of consciousness*, 2014, and, by the same author, *The limits of dream: A scientific exploration of the mind/brain interface*, 2010, as well as Ole Vedfelt, *A Guide to the world of dreams: An integrative approach to dreamwork*, 2017. These "modern" approaches to dreaming possess considerably improved empirical, evidential resolution but their concrete efforts at conceptualizing the basic dynamics involved in dreaming are not necessarily more explanatory. Notably among contemporary research, Mark J. Blechner in *The dream frontier*, 2013, engages actively with the literary and humanistic elements of the psychoanalytic tradition.

primordial will to return to nothingness and non-being, something that he now thought could not be reduced to the "pleasure principle."[27] It's somewhat unclear, even for Freud scholars, how this development in his thought (i.e., this new space "beyond" the pleasure principle) affects his wish fulfillment theory of dreaming. This work will attempt to incorporate insights from earlier and later Freud, without adopting any one theory of dreaming, psychoanalytic or otherwise.

A movement to energize the study of historical Chinese dreams and dream interpretation is underway. Campany (2020) has produced the first monograph-length treatment of this subject in English covering the period from early China to the Tang Dynasty.[28] Campany's primary task is organizing textual evidence pertaining to historical Chinese dream interpretation, dedicating different subsections of his work to different kinds of evidence and different kinds of historical practice. He emphasizes the methodological flexibility needed for dealing with inconsistencies in what even a single individual over the course of a single lifetime might say about dreaming, putting aside the cacophony of opinions produced in the greater culture in which this individual resides.[29]

At times, Campany risks letting his selection of materials affect his outlook. When he says that none of the texts he has chosen "broaches dreaming as a topic of interest in its own right," the reader is meant to believe that this absence reflects a general historical cultural attitude toward dreams, that "usually dreams mattered and were discussed for therapeutic reasons."[30] Is it possible that attentional imbalances in the materials Campany has collected

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[27] Sigmund Freud and James Strachey, trans., *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 1961 [1920].
[28] Robert Ford Campany, *The Chinese Dreamscape 300 Bce-800 Ce.*, 2020.
[29] Campany *ibid.* 2.
[30] *Ibid.* 67.

are producing this impression? An overemphasis on practical textual materials could mislead one into thinking that historical Chinese attitudes on dreaming were more practical than they really were, obscuring the prominent peaks (e.g., Wu Mountain 巫山, discussed below) whereon reside expressly imaginative accounts of dreaming in historical Chinese literature, folktales, and mythology.

Whatever textual materials one emphasizes, there are real challenges to attaining the evidential resolution needed, e.g., to investigate whether specific dreams are or are not associated with specific sets of historically situated cultural values. Combined theoretical indeterminacy and evidential paucity should warn researchers against positing definitive longitudinal trends.

IV. Methodology, Part I: Real and Literary Connections Between Poetry, Dreams, and Conceptions of Fate

The semantic and conceptual space that *Hongloumeng* inhabits is easy to intuit but difficult to conceptualize and to represent formally. Part of this difficulty stems from readers' own necessarily incomplete, imperfect understanding of the subject matter that the novel uniquely foregrounds, especially questions pertaining to dreams and desire. Dreaming as liminal experiential form doubles as a liminal social form, everywhere media citing it as their eternal muse, every historical moment for which there are written records attesting its influence, and yet it remains still strangely, persistently outside the bounds of commodification and market expression, still strangely, at least in terms of its immediate content, unpenetrated by global universalized value forms, by capital, money, and debt. Though, perhaps, the advance of modern pharmaceuticals has corresponded with an overall

decrease in dreaming. This inability of dreaming to articulate itself in the marketplace has intersected with observational difficulties inherent to dreaming as a mental state subject to the vagaries of memory and the editorial role of recollection.

Connections between poetry, dreaming, and desire predate their artistic representation. Taking these phenomena as discrete entities to be treated by discrete scholars, in some kind of Taylorist factory of the mind, seems misguided. First-time students of Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, accustomed as they are to the present-day subdivision of intellectual labor, might be surprised to find a text articulating nuanced literary-seeming theories of metaphor and symbolism (using the language of "displacement," "the censor," etc.) while performing an ostensibly separate task, viz., while articulating a wish fulfillment theory of dreaming. In a comparative study of *Hongloumeng* and *Finnegans Wake*, Zhang Mingming points toward this same processual dualism and mirroring, arguing that "dream mechanisms […] are at work both in dreams and in literary devices" and relating this dualism to the contradiction between conscious and unconscious self.[31] Literary theorist Julia Kristeva takes it a step further, supplementing Freudian notions of displacement and condensation with a novel conception of "transposition" between different "sign systems," maintaining that "every signifying practice is a field of transpositions of various signifying systems."[32] In this way, Kristeva's work problematizes the theorist's tendency to seek out origins by conceptualizing every signification as already translational, already non-original.

[31] Zhang Mingming, *Dwelling in Dreams: A Comparative Study of Dream of the Red Chamber and Finnegans Wake,* UC Riverside, PhD Diss., 2009: 3.

[32] Kristeva, Julia, "Revolution in Poetic Language," in *The Kristeva Reader,* Toril Moi, ed., 1986: 111.

Theorization resisting origination *as such* can also been found (not to originate) in the Daoist classic the *Zhuangzi*, not only in its Zeno-like conceptions of recursively infinite (non-)beginning,[33] but also in its theories of dreaming, particularly in the reflexive image of Zhuangzi's dreaming being a butterfly who is dreaming being Zhuangzi.[34] In a very real way, the humanities researcher, in imagining what dreams are, have been, or could be, is dreaming dreams. And to open themselves up to understanding dreaming, they are acknowledging themselves as fellow dreamers. In investigating traces of dreaming, these pink clouds swiftly dispersing across millennia-spanning twilight skies, they are generously allowing for the possibility that their own conceptions of dreaming, and of the line between dreaming, desire, and some greater "reality," might be affected by their investigations. This is similarly to how Campany relays his experience researching and writing his monograph as a dialectical process whereby learning about the historical Chinese dreamscape forced him to confront his own ignorance surrounding the views on dreaming held by his own community, which in turn helped clarify his inquiries into historical Chinese dreamscape, a methodological feedback loop thus being established.[35]

In his article "Image and Meaning: The Hermeneutics of Traditional Chinese Dream Interpretation" from the collected volume *Psycho-Sinology* (1988), Robert Ong compares historical Chinese dream interpreters with "a Ricoeurian literary critic or hermeneutician, whose concern it is to disclose the meaning embedded in any textual material with which he or she is confronted in terms of the uncertainties to be encountered in the possible world

[33] Zhuang Zhou 莊周, *Zhuangzi* 莊子, "Qiwu lun" 齊物論 Chapter. See https://ctext.org/zhuangzi.
[34] *Zhuangzi* 莊子, "Qiwu lun" 齊物論 Chapter.
[35] Campany 2020: 7-13.

projected by the given text."[36] Ong, in turn, draws a connection between "the Ricoeurian notion of text as 'signifying wholes of a different degree of complexity than that of sentences'" and "Freudian dream interpretation [in which] a meaningful text is substituted for the original narration."[37] In each case, according to Ong, "the interpretive act aims at making manifest the latent."[38]

At the outset, it's important to establish the primary oppositional antagonisms in the semantic space with which one is interested, and to begin consciously mapping out patterns and relations, between, for instance, dreaming/ reality and surplus/ necessity, or between dreaming/ reality and female/ male, or otherwise; potentially dozens upon dozens of such comparisons could be operationalized. To understand *Hongloumeng*, it is critical to be able to conceptualize, in a textbook "structuralist" capacity, the relationship between poetry, dreaming, and fate, which means that the oppositions between dreaming/ reality, freedom/ fate, and chance/ fate need to be foregrounded:

Term 1	*Term 2*
Dreaming	Reality
Freedom	Fate
Chance	Fate

[36] Roberto K. Ong, "Image and Meaning: The Hermeneutics of Traditional Chinese Dream Interpretation," in *Psycho-Sinology: The Universe of Dreams in Chinese Culture*, Brown, Carolyn T., ed., 1988: 51.

[37] *Ibid.* 49.

[38] *Ibid.*

It's important to identify any relationships between the first terms of each pair, especially those between "freedom" and "chance," given that each term here shares "fate" as its second term. One might not immediately associate freedom and chance, but this is partly the purpose of a dialectical method, to reveal subtle correspondences being implicitly posited that are easily overlooked, in this case freedom's presupposing chance (i.e., undetermined elements of reality) and chance's presupposing freedom (i.e., something to be determined, a potentiality to be concretized.) In many societies both historical and modern, one's "freedom" is manifested in the chance, however statistically improbable, of some kind of material and social success.

An applied structuralist insight is that the simple arrangement of these three oppositions can aid in organizing a surprisingly large number of observations. One can see visual representation of patterns in common speech, how people will speak of dreams as being strange and "random" (viz., subject to "chance"), as if they were the product of chaotic or untraceable processes in the mind or in the world, with additional variations depending on one's historical, social, and cultural situatedness. One can also proceed from here to begin thinking more critically about dreaming as a space of freedom, for all people, arguably, but especially for people unfree in their waking hours. One can likewise consider whether or to what extent the apparently incidental elements of one's dreams contain meaning, and in what form. One might "split the difference" between "freedom" and "chance," conceiving of one's dreamscape as a mixture of meaning and non-meaning, some details in a dream being of intentional significance related to one's wishes and aspirations, as well as potentially to one's fears and phobias, other details being possibly incidental or of no direct significance, or a product of the mind's need to produce complete images but

potentially not having the mental resources, or the mental need, to imbue every detail with symbolic import.

Of course, great care is needed to investigate each and every term introduced into dialectical analysis, to ascertain whether ahistorical categories and conceptions are being smuggled into analysis under the guise of abstract, universal-seeming categories, an error comparable to that of the economic historian who attempts to apply abstract social concepts like "profit rates" and "interest rates" to a hunting and gathering society organized around communal production and distribution and lacking a monetary system. At the same time, one needs to avoid the opposite mistake of thinking that rooting one's analysis only in historical categories and historical linguistic units will necessarily make it more substantial or authentic. Likewise, it is fallacious to treat the apparent absence of a word's direct articulation in a particular corpus as indicating the absence of the ideas or emotions usually attendant upon that word's usage.

There is in *Hongloumeng* no term with quite the modern sterility of "chance." Often the term that indicates "chance" or "fortune" but without the full pathos of "fate" ("ming" 命) is either "qiao" 巧, "qiaohe" 巧合, or "keqiao" 可巧, each designating a space of meaning arguably somewhere between the two opposing poles of "chance" and "fate," a mediated form comparable to "fortuity," "serendipity," and "coincidence." Hawkes, translates "keqiao" as, variously, "it chanced that,"[39] "just the right time,"[40] "fortunately,"[41]

[39] *HLM*, Chapter 1. Hawkes 2014 v.1: 23.
[40] *HLM*, Chapter 3. *Ibid.* 57.
[41] *HLM*, Chapter 6. *Ibid.* 161.

"[good] timing,"[42] "a good day [to come],"[43] "just at that moment,"[44] "happy accident,"[45] "by a stroke of luck,"[46] and so on. In addition, "qiao" appears in the chapter title of Chapter 8, Hawkes here adopting the English term "predestined," rendering the title "Jia Baoyu is allowed to see the strangely corresponding golden locket,/ And Xue Baochai has a predestined encounter with the Magic Jade" 賈寶玉奇緣識金鎖,/ 薛寶釵巧合認通靈.[47] According to the above structural analysis, Hawkes has identified a cluster of "qiaohe" instantiations whose general significance falls closer to the "fate" end of the spectrum, the contextual dictates of the story determining the proper rendering at any moment. Though the text clearly favors Daiyu as being Baoyu's predestined love, it does hedge somewhat between metaphysical elements (e.g., the stone that waters the crimson pearl flower in Chapter 1) that favor Baoyu and Daiyu as the predestined pair, and textual and narrative elements that suggest predestined components to Baoyu and Baochai's relationship, especially how, most centrally to the text, Baoyu's jade and Baochai's locket appear fortuitously to match.[48] Poetry, fate, and fortune appear, in this way, co-present, the poetic line on Baoyu's jade as if serendipitously answered, or completed, by a line independently engraved on Baochai's locket.

As the term "ming" 命 "fate" also with some frequency appears in *Hongloumeng*, the question arises of whether and how "qiao" 巧 "chance" relates with it. A lot of potential

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42 *HLM*, Chapter 7. *Ibid.* 167.
43 *HLM*, Chapter 7. *Ibid.* 177.
44 *HLM*, Chapter 8. *Ibid.* 199.
45 *HLM*, Chapter 8. *Ibid.* 209.
46 *HLM*, Chapter 13. *Ibid.* 289.
47 See Hawkes 2014 v.1: 189.
48 *HLM*, Chapter 8. Hawkes 2014 v.1: 194-195.

confusion can be avoided if one possesses the conceptual architecture necessary for conceiving of a whole range of logically possible, cross-culturally-attested concepts of fate. In a Christian context, one could distinguish between Catholic conceptions of chance and fortune and Calvinist conceptions of predestination. Some concepts of fate presume absolute immutability, while others allow for the possibility of an individual's affecting or changing their fate. This is perhaps what Lu Xun (1881-1946) is gesturing toward when he observes that "Chinese do believe in fate, but in a fate that can be averted."[49]

If fate can be averted, can it also be sealed? This is perhaps one way to "square the circle" with regards to Daiyu, who dedicates so much time, energy, and emotion to the question of Baoyu and Baochai's matching jade and locket, that, demonstrably, her worrying over matters of fate really does come to affect her actual life outcomes. If *Hongloumeng's* recursiveness is born out of the reflexivity of remembering, it is a fitting structural contrast to have a heroine struggling with her meta-fate, with the reflexivity of resisting, so to speak. Notice that the most applicable contemporary term, "self-fulfilling prophecy," takes on oblique significances when applied to social and literary circumstances wherein actual prophecies are co-present.

A basic issue underlying "hongxue" scholarship involves the limits of how far one is willing to entertain the possibility that even the most minute plot details, descriptions, and poetic minutia in the novel might be meaningful, and might represent encoded messages. No matter where one's scholarship falls on this interpretive spectrum, it is critical to acknowledge that the question of the maximality or minimality of meaning, in this sense, is

[49] Quoted in Mark S. Ferrara, "Patterns of Fate in 'Dream of the Red Chamber'," Interdisciplinary Literary Studies 11.1 (2009): 16, discussed below.

almost indistinguishable from the question of whether a space is dream-like or not. Of course, "dream-like" as a comparison will depend on one's historically-situated and culturally-situated conceptions of dreaming, particularly as not all theories of dreaming presuppose maximality of meaning, though most theories of dreaming tend to posit some degree of explicit as well as implicit ("symbolic") meaning, whether in connection with a vision of the future, an expression of personal desires and aspirations, a memory from the past, a reconfiguration of one's waking experiences, an effect of ghostly or spiritual interference, or, most commonly, some combination of these things.

Lin Shuen-fu (1992) has produced a fascinating essay attempting a detailed interpretation of Baoyu's dream in Chapter 5, in the process outlining his thoughts on Freudian dream interpretation and its compatibility and incompatibility with traditional Chinese forms of dream interpretation and with dreams as represented in historical Chinese literature.[50] His analysis is weakened somewhat by the reductive way in which psychoanalytic theory is approached, treating it as being inconsistent with "objective scientific fact."[51] Lin regards Freud's insights as "probably to a large extent his impositions on the content."[52]

Literature, along with arguably all artistic creation, has a relation to meaning highly comparable with, but perhaps also distinct from, that relation evidenced by dreams. Whereas one can speculate on whether dreams are the product of one's mind, one's environment, one's historical moment, or all or none of these things, or otherwise, when it comes to literature, there is, at the very least, the appearance of intentionality, and, by implication, the

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[50] Lin Shuen-fu, "Chia Pao-yü's first visit to the Land of Illusion: an analysis of a literary dream in interdisciplinary perspective." Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR) 14 (1992): 77-106.

[51] *Ibid.* 94.

[52] *Ibid.* 94.

appearance of having control over meaning's range and depth of expression. This appearance, at any rate, can help explain Lin's assertion that "[w]hether it is derived from a real experience or not, a literary dream is consciously created by a writer and woven into the design of his or her work."[53]

Lin's scholarly sensibilities most diverge from my own when he argues that a "literary dream is a bona fide text while a real dream is a text only in a metaphorical sense," and that "[w]e are therefore justified to look for meanings–including sexual ones–encoded within a literary dream" that one would not be justified looking for in actual dreams.[54] There is, in my view, reason to take pause before declaring by *fiat* that literary texts are real texts because they are (or appear to be) consciously created, and that dreams are only texts in a "metaphorical sense." Especially in the context of *Hongloumeng*, positing separate, distinctive "real texts" and "fake texts" is a rhetorical strategy at odds with the stated and embodied principles of the novel, in which the liminal space between truth and falsity is foregrounded again and again. Even the basic intellectual trajectory seems reversed, as it would seem ambiguities in one's intuitive conception of what is and is not a "text" should prompt curiosity and wonder, and should prompt one to investigate potential gray areas, conceptual liminal spaces where categorical membership or non-membership is potentially contentious.

It's critical here to acknowledge wonder, in other words, to be able to wonder what it would even mean for a text to be only "metaphorically" a text. It's precisely the isomorphism between, and the haziness of the boundary separating, apparent texts and apparent non-texts that might prompt one to expand outward from an intuitive definition of

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[53] *Ibid.* 95.
[54] *Ibid.* 95.

"text" (and "metaphor," and all these concepts that not only people at large but even scholars of literature and language will sometimes uncritically employ) to formulate definitions that encompass more and more "text-like substances," to include contentious forms like, for instance, mathematics, genetic code, or programming code. Or, perhaps, one could adopt a pragmatist criterion, to include as "text" even something as simple as a series of facial expressions, or, more generally, any series of symbolic manifestations to which historical agents and entities are able to ascribe meaning.

Hongloumeng represents a particular interpretative challenge, as not only does it represent dreams as being symbolic, fateful poetic encodings, so too does it represent itself as a dream-like literary space closer to the "maximally meaningful" end of the spectrum, one in which personal details (e.g., one's name, birthday, etc.) tend to be significant for a character's development, generally assuming indirect, symbolic, and poetic forms of prognostic significance. Names in *Hongloumeng* especially, both given names and surnames, should be assumed to have deep, almost metaphysical significance.

Naming in *Hongloumeng* is a centrally recurring literary element relevant both to plot and characterization. Michael Yang identifies basic naming principles in *Hongloumeng* that include "naming illustrating themes," "naming representing personalities," "names revealing the plot," "names criticizing tradition," and "ironic names."[55] In addition, a lot of narrative energy is spent depicting how poetic names are chosen for locations in the garden. The underlying aesthetic judgment seems to emphasize intentionality and authority, marking every location in the garden as somewhere consciously artistically crafted. Art historian Craig

[55] Michael Yang, "Naming in Honglou meng," Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR) 18 (1996): 69-100.

Clunas recalls how it is the written inscriptions in Prospect Garden, and in Chinese garden culture more generally, that often "complete" the vision.[56]

Sometimes in *Hongloumeng* naming conventions serve to express and reinforce social hierarchies. The unilateral, top-down naming and renaming of servants is a recurrent motif, artistic mastery over the garden contrasting masterly authority over the garden's occupants. Yet in other moments of the text, *Hongloumeng* highlights alternative practices of naming and renaming more reflective of the garden's (semi-)utopian ideals, practices that embody those principles of play, performance, and poetry that flourish in less hierarchical social arrangements, where freer individual, sexual, and gender expression is possible. *Hongloumeng* highlights places, in other words, that allow room for dreaming.

Questions of fortune and fate play a prominent role in *Hongloumeng*'s depiction of the naming of Xifeng's daughter, born on the 7th day of the 7th lunar month. Given an overabundance of feminine "yin" 陰 energy as recognized by traditional Chinese correlative thinking, this day is considered inauspicious, especially for giving birth to a daughter. The holiday is known by many names, sometimes Qixi 七夕 or Qiqiao 乞巧 ("Begging for Skill" Festival), the idea being that, traditionally, female members of a household would pray on this day for the weaving acumen of "The Weaving Girl" (Zhinü 織女), a folk deity. In this cultural context, praying for weaving acumen amounts to praying for happy marriage prospects, one of the more preferred forms of gendered "fate" possible within such limiting historical circumstance.

[56] Craig Clunas, *Fruitful sites: garden culture in Ming dynasty China*, 1996: 144.

Of course, the "skill" 巧 in Qiqiao jie 七巧節 is related to, but also somewhat distinct from, the "qiao" 巧 of "qiaohe" 巧合 "serendipity," though it is clear from the text that these meanings of "qiao" are being associated. Granny Liu's naming strategy for Xifeng's daughter, given her being born on such an inauspicious day, is "to fight fire with fire," in effect to "lean into" one's birth date by positively affirming, indeed skillfully crafting (activating the sense of "qiao" 巧 as in talent or craft) one's identity as a "sister of the Weaving Girl" (i.e., as "Qiaojie" 巧姐):

鳳姐兒道：「正是養的日子不好呢，可巧是七月初七日。」劉姥姥忙笑道：「這個正好，就叫做巧姐兒好。這個叫做『以毒攻毒，以火攻火』的法子。姑奶奶定依我這名字，必然長命百歲。日後大了，各人成家立業，或一時有不遂心的事，必然遇難成祥，逢凶化吉，都從這『巧』字兒來！」

'Ah, that's just the trouble,' said Xi-feng. 'She was born on Qiaojie 巧節 — the Seventh of the Seventh — a very unlucky date.'

'No matter,' said Grannie Liu. 'Call her "Qiaojie" 巧姐 then. That's what the doctors mean when they talk about "fighting poison with poison and fire with fire". You call her "Qiaojie" like I say, and I guarantee that she'll live to a ripe old age. I prophesy for this child that when she's a big girl and the others are all going off to get married, she may for a time find that things are not going her way; but thanks to this name ["qiao" 巧], all her misfortunes will turn into blessings, and what at first looked like bad luck will turn out to be good luck in the end.'[57]

Hawkes is interpolating here to make the translation more legible to non-Chinese speakers, as the original does not explicitly mention the holiday name (viz., Qiqiao jie 七巧節), but instead has "keqiao" 可巧, in this instance understandable as "it just so happens"

[57] *HLM*, Chapter 42. Hawkes 2014 v.2: 403. Unless explicitly indicated otherwise, all quotations of the Chinese original text of *HLM* accord with the Hawkes and Minford (2014), Fan Shengyu, ed., version of the Chinese text. See "Introduction" above for relevant discussion.

or "as it turns out," the original more directly to the effect of, "This child's birthday is bad, it just so happens to fall on the 7th day of the 7th month."

Nevertheless, if there is any residual doubt that Qiaojie's name speaks directly to themes of fate and fortuity, and meaning and meaninglessness, the fate-judgment poem ("pan" 判) from Chapter 5 identified with Qiaojie makes abundantly clear the connection that the author is consciously drawing:

勢敗休云貴，家亡莫論親。偶因濟劉氏，巧得遇恩人。
When power is lost, rank matters not a jot;
When families fall, kinship must be forgot.
Through a chance kindness to a country wife
Deliverance came for your afflicted life.[58]

The poetic parallelism being drawn between "ou" 偶 "on accident" and "qiao" 巧 "as it happens" (also here a double referent to Qiaojie's name) again demonstrates the connection of "qiao" in the novel with concepts of chance, fortuity, and fate. The "country wife" in question is none other than Granny Liu, which speaks to the apparent paradox, seemingly intentional on the part of the author, of having a character divine for a child whose fate is ultimately dependent on that very character's own good graces, and on Granny Liu's appreciation for the kindness that Xifeng has shown her over the years. In a way, Granny Liu and Xifeng's relationship seems to offer a rare example in the novel of a "self-fulfilling prophecy" that is actually good, even as readers are given enough leeway to interpret this fulfillment according to their own preferences and values, both as individuals

[58] *HLM*, Chapter 5. Hawkes 2014 v.1: 121.

and as readers. One has the option, in effect, to lean into supernatural and invisible explanations for character and plot development, even as contemporary readers might find themselves reaching for material social explanations, such as the possibility that, by considering Qiaojie's fate together and by conducting ritual observances earnestly, in a non-perfunctory, emotionally engaged capacity, Xifeng and Granny Liu form a genuine bond that turns out to be critically significant for Qiaojie's life experiences as they subsequently unfold.

Traditional Chinese lunar festivals seem to abide by an easily observable historical form of liminal logic, whereby, in a variety of distinct cultural and historical contexts, liminal moments, spaces, places, people, etc., are treated as potentially significant, dangerous, volatile, unpredictable, inauspicious, to be subject to taboo, prohibition, isolation, separation, and other forms of ritual observance. The same liminal logic that holds the kitchen as a space not to be frequented by noble gentlemen, also speaks to the Confucian proscription from lingering in doorways (i.e., in the liminal spaces between rooms) and from making eye contact with "hun" 閽 amputee doormen (whose exile from mainstream society has been marked by "liminal disembodiment," by the removal of at least one appendage).[59] Likewise, liminal logic in historical Chinese society treats reduplicative dates as holidays (1/1 is a holiday, 2/2 is a holiday, *et cetera*, up to 7/7, the day in question), hence as states of exception, moments at once celebratory but cosmologically unsettled, even inauspicious.

Notice that Granny Liu's explanation almost amounts to a kind of meta-theory of fate. Though the correlative logic is convoluted in a predictable way, there is a clear sense that bad luck and bad fates, if countered properly, can be, within certain bounds,

[59] Albert Galvany, "Debates on mutilation: Bodily preservation and ideology in early China," Asiatische Studien 63.1 (2009): 67-91.

transformed into *good* bad fates—that is to say, bad fates that end up well eventually, making the best of a bad situation. Granny Liu thus invokes the notion of "fighting fire with fire." She offers an example of what could be conceptualized as a "*good* bad fate," viz., her vision of Qiaojie's first having problems in securing her marriage prospects, but ultimately proving in this domain just as successful as, or more successful than, her peers. Qiaojie's own fate in the novel, viz, ultimately living a happy, though materially poor, life in the countryside, seems to bear out the mediated, ambivalent character of its prognostication.[60] It must also be noted, in passing, that Qiaojie's fate in received versions of Chapter 119, and as represented in Hawkes and Minford (2014),[61] Fan Shengyu edition, is, reflexively, *itself serendipitous,* or at least ironic, insofar as, in this version of the story, Qiaojie is secreted out of the compound to avoid her being married to a Mongolian prince, only for that prince, it just so happens, to back out at the last minute (but too late for Qiaojie not to go into hiding in the countryside, thereby forever altering her life course.)

Fortuity and serendipity play such significant roles in *Hongloumeng*, it's difficult even to sketch their outline, especially as the word "qiao" does not adorn every single relevant instance. The text emphasizes, for instance, the serendipity of the original naming of the poetic society, a spray of crabapple blossoms having just been received as a gift. The identification of Qingwen as an "Hibiscus Flower" spirit in Chapter 78, likewise, appears solely to be due to a passing comment to Baoyu by a lesser maid, who moreover is

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[60] Cai Yijiang, "Liu Laolao yu Jia Qiaojie— 'Hongloumeng lunyi' zhong de yizhang" 劉老老與賈巧姐一 '紅樓夢論佚' 中的一章, in *Hongloumeng yanjiu jikan* 紅樓夢研究集刊, Deng Shaoji 鄧紹基, ed., 1980, series 3: 268, argues that Cao Xueqin originally intended for Qiaojie's fate to be worse than what ultimately appears in the last 40 chapters as received, written as they likely were by secondary authors. In Cai's view, Cao intended for Qiaojie to succumb to or to be forced into prostitution, with even the best social option available for her no more than a life of difficult rural domestic and agricultural toil.

[61] *HLM,* Chapter 119. Hawkes and Minford 2014 v.5: 462-493.

fabricating things that Baoyu might like to hear.[62] The novel seems to treat the "accidental" origin of Qingwen's hibiscus association not as a reason for skepticism, but as a sign of mysterious, celestial workings.

Hongloumeng is somewhat exceptional for its maximal approach to meaning; indeed, one could very reasonably argue that *Hongloumeng* is one of the "least random" novels ever written. This is to say, one is hard-pressed to find another novel where so much apparently incidental detail is deliberately charged with symbolic, metaphysical, or prognostic significance. This significative maximality permeates the whole novel and is not limited to more obvious manifestations such as the poetic "pan" 判 (i.e., "panci" 判詞) in Chapter 5 (the "dream chapter.")

As the novel *Hongloumeng* develops its conceptions of dreams and desire, and of freedom and fate, so too readers and researchers will need to interrogate their own bases for evaluating that which *Hongloumeng* develops. Questions of methodology and questions of philosophical significance will tend, then, to intersect and overlap, just as theories of translation and theories of meaning will tend to merge and become inextricable. There are significant philosophical issues that arise, for instance, when translators of Tang poetry decide which aural properties of a poem to translate. Questions might take the form of, "Should I attempt to translate or somehow represent in English tonal patterns from Middle period Chinese?", "How might one represent Tang regulated verse in English?", or "To what extent should one correlate characters with words? Should one, e.g., translate 5-character-per-line Chinese poems into 5 word-per-line English poems?", or "Should I

[62] *HLM*, Chapter 78. Hawkes 2014 v.3: 723.

produce parallel rhyme schemes in the target language?", or "Does the absence of a stated 'I' in a line of poetry need to be preserved in English?", and so on.

In the spirit of critiquing the application of abstract, general, transhistorical (or transhistorical-*seeming*) terms, it's worth observing that even the term and concept "poetry" could be regarded as, at times, an unconscious imposition on the historical materials. Arguably, the term is filling gaps in the historical record, such as the loss of the musical notations needed for performing specific pieces, especially those set to standards ("cipai" 詞牌), as songs with accompaniment. Likewise, in imagining Li Shangyin and Wen Tingyun simply as "poets," one risks diminishing their skills as instrumentalists and composers, and obscuring the extent to which music and rhythm influences their works.

To imagine more clearly the original historical and social context of these works, it might be productive to begin thinking about and relating the experience of rhythmically regular music, the experience of rhymed poetry, and, more generally, the experience and interplay of expectation and predictability. The audience's experience of rhyming is a particularized version of a general form that the experience of art and literature assumes, wherein certain expectations are established, with an accompanying feeling of suspense regarding the fulfillment, or non-fulfillment, of those expectations. The important thing for theorists and scholars to recognize is that, whether one is discussing how poetry sets up a rhyme, and the expectation of its fulfillment, or discussing how a short story establishes a villainous character, and the expectation of his comeuppance, the formal dynamics are, on a certain level, indistinguishable.

Academic standards for translation are greatly informed by convention and precedent. Though no doubt some scholars think that non-rhyming translations, even of originally rhyming poems, are necessarily "more academic," it is an open question whether a translator, in suppressing rhyme, is not similarly abstracting from the work's historical situatedness, reencoding it, rendering it identifiable in some universalized system of value and evaluations. As Tom Mazanec observes, "Despite the fact that nearly all Chinese poetry rhymes, and may be one of the earliest literary traditions to make rhyme an integral part of its verbal art, few translators make any attempt to present this feature to Anglophone readers."[63]

Furthermore, there is a subtle conceptual error in, in this context, adopting *non-rhyming* as a default, and then treating *rhyming* as a divergence from this default, or, in other words, treating *non-rhyming* as a given, and then treating *rhyming* as a decision (either by the poet *or* by the translator). This framing obscures just how often rhyming and related linguistic phenomena (e.g., assonance, alliteration, tonal patterns, etc.) occur by accident—*serendipitously*, in short. Often in translating from Chinese to English rhymes will happen by accident, and the translator will have to make the decision whether to acknowledge that a rhyme has occurred, and what to do about it; if the accidental rhyme in English corresponds with a rhyme in the Chinese original, suppressing its articulation (e.g., choosing a less-suited English to avoid rhyming) might prove more "against the grain" than simply "following through" on other lines, whether by reaching elsewhere for rhyming and near-rhyming forms as complement, or by establishing parallelisms along other perceptual domains.

[63] Tom Mazanec, "Jia Dao's Rhythm, or, How to Translate the Tones of Classical Chinese," Journal of Oriental Studies 49.1 (2016): 33.

The occasional use of original *Hongloumeng* translations in this dissertation corresponds with a need to present word-order-preserving renderings of specific material for argumentative and demonstrative purposes and should not be treated as a critique of Hawkes' translation, though our interpretations do often differ. It is my hope that the theoretical apparatus being developed in this dissertation provides conceptual scaffolding for the thoughtful reintroduction of rhyme into academic translation, bolstering Hawkes' decision, still to this day subject to much academic controversializing, to produce rhyming translations for the poetry in *Hongloumeng*. Evolving historical principles of artistic serendipity, I would argue, underlie rhyming as a human social form whose effects can sometimes be translated between different language domains. My translation of Wen Tingyun's "Shangshan zaoxing" 商山早行 in Chapter 4 is one such attempt at "serendipitous translation," at the outset my not having decided (or not pretending to have decided) whether the translation would rhyme or not, attempting instead to "go with the flow" and wait for limiting circumstances to arise that "fix in place" any emergent sonic scheme. In this case, the ostensibly "natural" outcome evidenced in the final translation eschews strict English rhymes in favor of parallelized assonant single-syllable English words (viz., "haunt," "frost," "wall," and "pond.")

One of the clearest expressions of Freud's thoughts on the relationship between dreaming and poetry occurs in *The Interpretation of Dreams* in the context of a discussion of his concept of "dreamwork," whereby the latent content that he posits to dreaming is transformed into the manifest content that the dreamer directly experiences. This transformation, as Freud conceives it, involves not only modification of content through censorial processes but also transposition of content between perceptual domains. Not only

does this passage encapsulate Freud's thoughts on the relationship between dreaming and poetry, it also reveals Freud's conception for how fate and meaning, precisely those themes central to *Hongloumeng*, manifest at the linguistic level, at the level of individual words and sonic schemes' having their own character and their own "destiny":

> We may suppose that a good part of the intermediate work done during the formation of a dream, which seeks to reduce the dispersed dream-thoughts to the most succinct and unified expression possible, proceeds along the line of finding appropriate verbal transformations for the individual thoughts. Any one thought, whose form of expression may happen to be fixed for other reasons, will operate in a determinant and selective manner on the possible forms of expression allotted to the other thoughts, and it may do so, perhaps, from the very start—as is the case in writing a poem. If a poem is to be written in rhymes, the second line of a couplet is limited by two conditions: it must express an appropriate meaning, and the expression of that meaning must rhyme with the first line. No doubt the best poem will be one in which we fail to notice the intention of finding a rhyme, and in which the two thoughts have, by mutual influence, chosen from the very start a verbal expression which will allow a rhyme to emerge with only slight subsequent adjustment.
>
> In a few instances a change of expression of this kind assists dream condensation even more directly, by finding a form of words which owing to its ambiguity is able to give expression to more than one of the dream-thoughts. In this way the whole domain of verbal wit is put at the disposal of the dream-work. There is no need to be astonished at the part played by words in dream-formation. Words, since they are the nodal points of numerous ideas, may be regarded as predestined to ambiguity […][64]

Poetry is such a powerful representational space, that one should not be surprised just how much of the human and social world can be reproduced within and between its lines. Less obvious, perhaps, is how this mirroring occurs even at the level of poetry's formal properties. Even weighty subjects like fate, destiny, and rebirth can find comparable expression in the formal properties and dynamics of poetry. While obviously poems cannot be said to "have fates" *per se*, one can reasonably, as Freud does above, speak to moments of their formal predetermination. One could say, perhaps, that, given a particular form, sonic

[64] Freud and Strachey 2010: 354-355.

and semantic patterns are, by way of metaphor, "predestined" to be a certain way, at least partly "predetermined" by their situatedness.

This is how Freud can claim that words *as such*, and language itself as a symbolic medium, are "predestined to ambiguity." And this is why Freud's proposed method, to "cho[ose] from the very start a verbal expression which will allow a rhyme to emerge with only slight subsequent adjustment" appears to have similarly "fateful" dimensions, presupposing what could be termed "rhyme determinism," in which the rhyme scheme chosen influences the tone and content of a poem. With English rhyme, for instance, it can readily be observed how poems using "bright," "right," "light," etc., as a rhyme scheme seem as if naturally inclined toward certain images and representations; even though "moon" is sonically unrelated, its image, impression, and *illusion* is everywhere insinuated, in, for instance, the darkness of "night," in how shines the "light" (viz., in silvery rays of pure "white"), in reflective pools clear and "bright," and so on.

The poetry club's composition of chrysanthemum poems in Chapter 37 highlights a clear example of "rhyme determinism," while also illustrating how more skilled poets can rise above it, just as Freud's comments suggest. One can clearly observe how the rhyme scheme the group chooses (lines ending in "men" 門, "pen" 盆, "hun" 魂, "hen" 痕, and "hun" 昏) influences the kinds of poems that are being composed. It's not as if having "hun" 昏 as part of one's scheme necessarily presupposes that one will reference "huanghun" 黃昏 sunsets, but it certainly establishes a certain potentiality, a certain likelihood. If one turns to the *Quan Tangshi*, one can readily observe particular "rhyme

schemes" influencing poets, even those separated by long stretches of time, to make concrete choices whose sum effect favors approaching certain topics in certain ways.[65]

In this way, one can generally speak to unique properties adhering to different rhyme schemes and, more generally, to different sets of sonic properties (to include assonance, alliteration, reduplication, and a whole host of literary and poetic devices). The above chrysanthemum rhyme scheme could be argued to be seemingly cold, even sorrowful, as if, by way of illustrative exaggeration, a trace "hen" of ghostly "hun" is ever-present, ever ready to step out from behind the "men" threshold separating the world of the living from the spirit world, just as sunset "hun" separates the day from the night. Notice that three of the four terms here are distinctly liminal categories (viz., "door," "ghost," "trace"). It's possible that here liminality is contributing to the desolation that the rhyme scheme suggests, as if the liminality that emerges foremost in this sonic context is precisely that between life and death, and the coolness being experienced is a taste of winter, deep sleep, and the threat, and promise, of one's own eventual non-being.

Indeed, there appears in *Hongloumeng* a correlation between types of rhyme and the personality and artistic qualities of the character in question. Daiyu's "Flower Burying Intonation" ("Zanghua yin" 葬花吟) appears especially to employ liminal diction and liminal rhyming words to convey her continuously aggrieved mental state. Some of the rhyme and sound patterns resemble the chrysanthemum rhymes (e.g., "hen" 痕 "trace,"

[65] Even though Middle period Chinese is radically sonically different, many, if not most, of the basic rhyme patterns in Tang poetry are preserved when read in modern Chinese languages. See Cai Zong-qi, ed., *How to read Chinese poetry: A guided anthology*, 2008: 401-402, for a "phonetic transcription of entering tone characters" that is legible to non-linguists.

"hun" 昏 "twilight," "men" 門 "door"), and well as others (e.g., "shen" 神 "spirit," and "hun" 魂 "ghost"; "qiu" 丘 "grave mound," "liu" 流 "to drift," and "gou" 溝 "gutter"; "zang" 藏 "to bury," and "sang" 喪 "sorrowful"). As if to maximize the sorrowful quality of her poetic expression, almost every rhyming term used that would have had a positive connotation is, somewhat amusingly, negated in the line in question ("wuqing" 無情 "unfeeling, merciless," "weiwen" 未温 "not warm," "weiwen" 未聞 "unheard"). Of course, it's important to emphasize that a single character such as "shen" 神 or "hun" 魂 might have a meaning unrelated or only tangentially related to whatever two-character word (or greater than two characters, albeit less frequently) the poet may decide to form from it. Still, as above, certain potentialities and likelihoods are being established and are becoming observable.

During the garden's poetry club meetings, there is a conspicuous emphasis on introducing an element of chance in determining the rhyme scheme, or in choosing upon the type of poetry to be composed, or in choosing some other relevant parameter. In the above chrysanthemum example from Chapter 37, an unnamed maid leaning against a doorway is asked at random to say a word. She answers "door" and "pot," the first things in the moment that her eyes happen upon.[66] The moment is embodied, contextual, specific, yet spontaneous.

One can identify a variety of unique social forms in historical China each of which deals differently with spontaneity and the possibility that coded, cryptic forms of meaning

[66] Hawkes 2014 v.2: 269.

underlie perception. Cross-culturally, dream divination is often observable alongside a number of other divinatory and prognosticative methods that join perceptual phenomena (e.g., the positions of the stars, one's physical appearance, the orientation of moles and blemishes on the body, the apexes of seasons, the phases of the moon, the timings of eclipses, etc.) with abstracted chance-based generative procedures (e.g., playing cards, dice, astrological signs) to generate narrative structures that resonate with the details of one's personal life as one experiences them.

For *Hongloumeng* scholars, there is a basic question of how maximalist or minimalist an approach one should take when it comes to the novel's detail and descriptions. The "minimalist" approach (a phrasing itself vulnerable to same "false default" critique discussed in terms of rhyming/ non-rhyming) has a significant argumentative issue on its hands, as it will have to explain why an author that extensively foregrounds cryptic encoded meaning in the most famous, arguably most important chapter of his novel (viz., Chapter 5) would not continue to do so throughout the whole work. The "minimalist" approach, in this sense, risks maximally ignoring broad swaths of messages that the author is trying to convey.

As has been seen in the case of Qiaojie, when it comes to naming, one's basic hypothesis should be relatively maximalist, with the search for underlying meaning not limited to character names but incorporating all major appellations, whether of people or places. Beyond that, it would generally seem that there are so many elements in the text consistently appearing enchanted with an aura of spontaneous significance, that simply labeling them "foreshadowing" in some dehistoricized, abstracted modern sense does one's analysis a disservice.

While *Hongloumeng*'s conception of dreaming is, in many ways, consistent with earlier conceptions evidenced in historical Chinese literature and poetry, the novel appears somewhat unique both for the depth and complexity of encoded meaning it displays and for its frank depiction of dreaming, desiring, and sexuality as interlocking phenomena. While theories of dreaming evidencing wish fulfillment, including sexual wish fulfillment, can be observed in every Chinese historical period for which there are written records, *Hongloumeng* is somewhat unique for how extensively it foregrounds these elements.[67]

In general terms, this section illustrates just how much literary analysis relies on researchers' understanding the overall semantic context in which a work is situated. In the case of *Hongloumeng*, that context is thoroughly intertextual, particularly as it is mostly through the media of poetry and literature that the protagonists of *Hongloumeng* interact with the past, choosing and selecting specific referential moments as potential inspiration for the formation of new values and beliefs.

V. Methodology, Part II: The Materiality of Dreams and the Ideality of Labor: Additional Orientating Considerations

Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*[68] famously associates dreaming with "the Apolline" and with ideal "illusions," thereby opposing to it the chaotic, dirty, disordered world of

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[67] Lin (1995: 93-95) here somewhat over-argues, taking a lack of emphasis on sexual dreams in historical Chinese books on dream interpretation as evidence of the view that historical Chinese did not consider sexual dreams as possibly possessing latent meaning or significance. An alternative base hypothesis might posit that sexual dreams tend to be so evidently related to desire (and hence to wish fulfillment), that there would be a strong structural disincentive to looking for hidden significances, and, primarily for this reason, are underrepresented in historical Chinese books on dream interpretation, dedicated as they are precisely to such hidden significances.

[68] Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, Raymond Geuss, and Ronald Speirs, trans. *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, 1999: 16, 23, 25.

Dionysian desire. There is something recognizable to this basic typological division, even if it obscures certain basic connections between dreaming, wishing, and desire, and even if it fails to represent how infrequently dreams appear to us as crystalline images, tending instead to assume motley forms intermixing the boring and quotidian with prohibited and restricted sexual and bodily functions, and with elements of the surreal, the sublime, and the strange.

A careful reading of the Tang poetry most relevant to this discussion does not straightforwardly support an idealist view of, and orientation toward, historical dreams and their representation in poetry and literature. This is not to say that there are not, for instance, great works of Tang poetry that represent dreams as at least partly symbolically and aesthetically noteworthy in-and-of-themselves. Li He's "Dreaming Heaven" ("Mengtian" 夢天) or Li Shangyin's "Written after a Dream, while Listening to the Rain Together with Candidates Wang and Zheng, on the 28th Night of the Seventh Month"[69] 七月二十八日夜與王鄭二秀才聽雨後夢作 might be interpretable along these lines, each rather exceptional, for the time period, for the detail with which surreal dream imagery is being portrayed.

It's just that, overwhelmingly, dreams and desire in the Tang poetry that most informs *Hongloumeng* do not tend to be represented with this degree of intricacy. Instead, what one usually observes is a more mixed mode of presentation, with descriptions of landscapes, the seasons, one's physical surroundings, the surfaces of one's domicile, the time of day or night and the corresponding quality of light, etc., all being imbued with the speaker's emotions. It is these attributes of the scene and the emotions being expressed

[69] Liu, James, and Li Shangyin. *The poetry of Li Shang-yin: Ninth-century baroque Chinese poet*, 1969: 114.

through them that often lead the poet to invoke dream imagery, frequently in the poem's final lines referencing either the act of dreaming or its contents. Sometimes the poet's dreamscape is represented as a desirable place, a final destination that is also a return home. This element of desire and dreaming, dreaming in its capacity as a practiced returning, almost as something *rehearsed*, appears especially pronounced in Tang poetry, possibly in connection to how often the socially precarious semi-elites populating the transmitted literary tradition were stationed at the edges of empire, apart from family, friends, and the luxuries and amenities associated with living in the populous centers of Chinese civilization.

In addition, these poets' experiences living at "the edges of civilization," often on or near what were considered at the time borderlands, is evocative of dreaming in its capacity as a liminal experiential form. It is worth investigating, or at least recognizing, how liminal properties might in this way "cluster," such that the experience of one kind of liminality can easily become associated with other kinds of liminality, perhaps in a different perceptual domain. One could term this tendency *liminal clustering*. Stated in the abstract, it might seem difficult to grasp, but the underlying intuitions can easily be appreciated.

To pose the following very simple question: what one motif is most associated with a happy ending to a movie? Perhaps one's first answer is, "riding off into the sunset." For the present purposes, the point is simply to observe how natural and fitting such an ending seems, and then to begin interrogating the implicit reasons why this feeling of naturalness and fittingness occurs. To formulate this dynamic in the abstract would require a whole assemblage of specially developed precise-seeming terms and concepts, but, concretely, it is actually very easy to explain what is going on here. A sunset signals the end of the day, and so, *by extension*, a sunset can be, in effect, "repurposed" for marking the end of a movie.

Different kinds of liminal forms, across different perceptual domains, are sometimes found to be interchangeable, and are sometimes found to complement each other.

A concept of interdimensional mapping can render one's treatment of literature more systematic. One can begin developing transpositional tools, such that any given set of experiential values can be "converted" or "transformed" between different perceptual modalities. The storyteller ending their story could replace the setting sun with a cigarette about to be ashed, to produce a similar but distinct effect, the specificity of whose articulation depends upon the semantic and intentional context of its instantiation.

This is a pre-existent space into which literary theorists and researchers enter. It's misleading to think that metaphor, simile, even projection and displacement, are things that one imposes on reality from without. The experience of a bass drum is not in some simple, abstracted, dematerialized sense "like" the experience of a heartbeat. To understand the experience of the bass drum, one must conceptualize a longitudinal history, an on-going millennia-long dialogue between bass percussiveness and the human heart. The challenge is being able to eschew simplistic social models that over-extrapolate from individual behavior, while still finding a way to understand the dialogue between social forms and one's embodied nature, how it has come to be, for instance, that the bass drum's social role is to reinvigorate one's heartbeat, to remind the heart what pulsing life sounds like.

This is all to say that while liminality as a concept can be used to organize attributes and to predict patterns, its historicity still must be established. There might, for instance, be cross-cultural observable norms or patterns in which the end of the workday does or does not coincide with the fading of the day's light, but liminal analysis still requires that one historicize this "fitting" by considering the social and situational context in which "natural"-

seeming alignments and misalignments are occurring. With practice, researchers might begin noticing specific properties adhering in the kinds of liminality common to their historical moment. While this can all sound rather abstruse, arguably all that is happening is the formalization of humanistic intuitions. Positing a connection between the setting sun, the ends of spring, a departed lover, and the banks of the river where goodbyes were exchanged is to proceed on basic humanistic premises.

Liminality *as such* can likewise be experientially and empirically associated with value inversions, even as the historical specificity might influence, in unpredictable ways, the specific kinds of value inversions taking place, and in what order, et cetera. Or, similarly, the frequency of an event might mediate the degree of value inversion, while still gesturing toward oblique similarities across difference, how, for instance, the celebratory gestures at the end of one's work week appear as lesser versions of the Dionysian festivals that mark the new year or the solstice. Victor Turner characterizes liminal phenomena as "often reversals, inversions, disguises, negations, antitheses of quotidian, 'positive,' or 'profane' collective representations," as individual parts that reflect but also refract the collective whole.[70] He characterizes his liminal method of "comparative symbology" as an "attempt to preserve this ludic capacity, to catch symbols in their movement, so to speak, and to 'play' with their possibilities of form and meaning," conceiving not only social reality but his own methodology as spontaneous (hence, in the terms of this dissertation, "qiao" 巧).

Even after a nuanced system of association and associational dynamics is conceptualized in the abstract, the task of analysis is only half-complete, with additional

[70] Victor Turner, "Liminal to liminoid, in play, flow, and ritual: An essay in comparative symbology." Rice Institute Pamphlet-Rice University Studies 60.3 (1974): 85.

historicization needed to predict specific conceptual arrangements and specific patterns of value transformation. Social reality interacts in complex, and sometimes unpredictable, ways with social abstraction. Arguably, the more complex the social apparatus being instantiated, the more likely that everyday experiences will involve grappling with the lived reality of abstraction and the lived reality of social value's quantification and surveillance, often in support of preexistent hierarchies. To illustrate the contingency of everyday social forms, just imagine taking a time machine and, after learning the language, attempting to explain to prehistoric hunters and gatherers the concepts of money, savings accounts, stock markets, inflation—even putting aside these examples, imagine attempting to explain "getting a job." This is why, to conceptualize liminality, Turner must denaturalize all universal-seeming categories, approaching even ostensibly "self-evident" social forms like "work" and "play" as historical phenomena inextricable from concrete developments in industrial class society.[71]

Two of the most appalling moments in *Hongloumeng* could plausibly be interpreted as the horrifying results of characters' attempting to make sense of dysfunctional social logic, even if, to borrow a dysfunctional expression from modern English, "the price is their life." The first is the death of Golden (Jinchuan 金釧), whose comments portray the well into which she ultimately throws herself as if it were a place of storage, where Baoyu "stores" or "buries" the material things valuable to him. "'Yours is yours, wherever it be,' as they said to the lady when she dropped her gold comb in the well."[72] In death, it is as if Golden is attempting, in a perverse confusion of emotion and logic, to affirm the unaffirmable, to consent to the final objectification of life that is the act of willingly going to an early death.

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[71] *Ibid.* 61-72.

[72] *HLM*, Chapter 30. Hawkes 2014 v.2: 108-109.

That Jinchuan is named "Golden" (literally, "golden bracelet") seems to speak directly to questions of the value of human life and its relation to the economic representation of value and labor. The well into which she "deposits" herself seems to act almost like some kind of perverse banking establishment where one deposits gold and riches, up to and including servants treated less like human beings and more like semi-precious objects. Perhaps the millennia-old Chinese cultural association between "jing" 井 wells, public spaces, and marketplaces is also be contributing to this scene's semantic residue, just as similar associations in traditional English speaking communities contribute to producing social forms like the "wishing well" that physicalize the connections and contradictions between future wishes, reflective mirror-like surfaces, money both in its symbolic and ritual capacities, and buried thoughts and feelings equally loathed and cherished.

Literally self-sacrificing maids could be interpreted as a recurrent thematic device in *Hongloumeng*, though in each case the tone is ambiguous, its representation potentially critical of the entire Jia clan establishment and what it represents. In addition to Jinchuan, one could designate Yuanyang's suicide after the death of Grandmother Jia as semi-sacrificial suicide, the valence of Yuanyan's actions complicated for readers by her vulnerability to Jia She's lecherous advances in Grandmother Jia's absence. Yuanyang's "aligning" her suicide with Grandmother Jia's death appears a morbid shadow of early historical practices such as the live burial of servants in their master's tomb, sometimes termed "renxun" 人殉. The text explicitly makes this connection to "renxun" not only in the title of the chapter[73] but also in

[73] *HLM*, Chapter 111. "A devoted maid renders a final service, and accompanies her mistress to the Great Void/ A villainous slave takes his revenge, and betrays his masters into the hands of thieves" 鴛鴦女殉主登太虛,/ 狗彘奴欺天招夥盜. Hawkes and Minford v.5: 278-279.

dialogue suggesting that devotional suicide was considered Confucian at heart.[74] How the death of Qin Keqing's servant Gem 瑞珠 after Qin Keqing's death is labelled a devotional suicide has similar semantic residue,[75] the waters further clouded by the possibility, albeit speculative, that, as Ou Li-Chuan argues, Gem commits suicide out of fear that Jia Zhen will murder her.[76]

Another poignant example of death by means of the perversion of social logic is the suicide of You Er-jie 尤二姐, whose final suicidal act is to swallow a large piece of gold, dying thereby from the poisonous effects of indigestion. Given its historically situated associations with money, banking, and the representation of value (and values),[77] it seems uncoincidental that, in both cases, gold is the focal point. The direct consumption of gold seems to instantiate a perversion of social logic whereby, instead of using money as a universal representation of value, converting its universality as value into the particularity of a given commodity, one attempts to consume it directly, to imbibe social value in a "pure," "unadulterated" form. With You Er-jie's appearing to readers as someone brutally objectified by a patriarchal, hierarchical society, someone wholly reduced to being a means to

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74 *HLM*, Chapter 111. "Since Faithful had died in the best Confucian tradition, out of devotion to her mistress, Jia Zheng sent for incense and himself lit three joss-sticks before her coffin. 'For her loyalty and devotion,' he said, having made a solemn bow, 'she deserves to be elevated above the rank of a mere maid. The younger generation must pay homage to her.'" 賈政因他為賈母而死，要了香來，上了三炷，作了個揖，說："他是殉葬的人，不可作丫頭論，你們小一輩的都該行個禮兒。Hawkes and Minford v.5: 286-287.

75 *HLM*, Chapter 13. "Qin-shi's little maid Gem, on hearing that her mistress was dead, had taken her own life by dashing her head against a pillar. Such rare devotion excited the wondering admiration of the entire clan." 忽又聽見秦氏之丫鬟名喚瑞珠的，見秦氏死了，也觸柱而亡. 此事更為可罕，合族都稱嘆. Hawkes 2014 v.1: 288-289.

76 Ou Li-Chuan, "Qin Keqing xin lun: caiqing yu qingse de teshu yanyi. 秦可卿新論：才情與情色的特殊演繹." Chengda zhongwen xuebao 成大中文學報 52 (2016): 230.

77 For discussion of the philosophical and theoretical significance of the relationship between material value and social values, see David Graeber, *Toward an anthropological theory of value: The false coin of our own dreams*, 2001: 2-22.

highly questionable sexual and reproductive ends, it is as if, in her swallowing gold, she is gesturing toward some kind of perverse communion with gold as the ultimate means-to-an-ends, as the imaginary ideal from which she "fell short," her "shortcoming" simply being a conscious, willing individual, in having any "ends" her own.

The proper theoretical stance is *not* treating these abstract-seeming forms like money, or even language, as fixed referents relative to which historical circumstance is to be conceived. Quite the opposite, to understand the You Er-jie example, one needs to interrogate the history of gold in China and the evolving relationship of gold with money, debt, value, values, and representation. In interpreting You Er-jie's choice to swallow gold, one needs to ascertain which specific elements of gold, semantic or otherwise, are being invoked. Is gold being evoked in its capacity as a luxury item — hence, in terms of its physical qualities, but also its associations with power and excess – or is it gold as a pure, abstracted "unit of account"? As David Graeber argues, to imagine gold "as symbol, as abstract measure, having no qualities of its own, whose value is only maintained by constant motion […] is something that would never have occurred to anyone were it not in an age when it was perfectly normal for money to be employed in purely virtual form."[78] It's unclear, in other words, whether Qing China reaches the level of social productivity and abstraction that "purely virtual" gold, as a social form, presupposes. Perhaps the greater importance of silver to the Qing economy relative to gold suggests that gold's former "luxury associations" are still being foregrounded. Gold appears related to, but at a distance from, the "bimetallic money system" portrayed in *Hongloumeng*, in which silver is used for

[78] David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years,* 2011: 281.

large purchases (and is associated with wealth and elite status), and in which copper is used for small purchases (and is associated with poverty and commoner status).[79]

Methodologically, then, language and symbolism are being celebrated and foregrounded, but not taken in isolation from society at large. The basic challenge lies in conceiving language and symbolism as social phenomena while also conceiving society itself as potentially a linguistic and symbolic manifestation. It is possible, indeed, that all empirical phenomena possess additional symbolic or semantic dimensions, and that all such phenomena can be treated as signifying series approaching the status of coherent, or semi-coherent, statements and messages. Being proposed, in other words, is an openness to the idea that meaning occurs everywhere in society, and that social reality really might, in oblique ways, "speak" to artists, readers, and everyday people. This outlook challenges the supposition there exists a transparent dividing line between "text" and "non-text" and between metaphorical and non-metaphorical forms.

VI. Qin Keqing, Controversy, and Literary Context: Critical Preliminary Considerations

Hongloumeng presents interpretive issues controversial enough that it's necessary in this introduction to articulate the vantage point from which this dissertation is regarding them. The purpose of this section is to give a preliminary interpretation of the character of Qin Keqing, particularly in light of inconsistencies in how she is portrayed in received versions of *Hongloumeng*, especially the discrepancy between her fate as both literal and figurative "sentence" ("panci" 判詞) read by dreaming Baoyu in Chapter 5 (viz., to die by

[79] Brown 2011: 798-799.

suicide hanging from the rafters of Heavenly Fragrance Pavilion 天香樓) and the specificity of her outcome as depicted in received versions of the text (viz., death due to illness). This effort will prove doubly necessary, as Qin Keqing is critically significant not only to the novel as a whole and to the shape taken by the text's revisions, but also to central questions of this dissertation, to questions regarding the novel's treatment of dreams, desire, sexuality, identity, fate, and meaning.

It is, after all, in Qin Keqing's bed where the longest dream sequence in the novel occurs. This is also, of course, Baoyu's first sexual dream, as well as the dream being referenced in the title *Hongloumeng* (at least, this is one meaning of the novel's title[80]). In foregrounding Baoyu's first sexual dream, adorned as it is with supernatural and metaphysical imagery, *Hongloumeng* is drawing out connections between dreaming, sexuality, desire, and coming of age. In the process, the novel is shedding light on how it conceives of "yin" 淫 and "qing" 情.

The novel's philosophy of "qing" is arguably a lot easier to countenance with modern values than its invocation of "yin" 淫 terminology. Careful scholars and educators face the challenge that while it is important to foreground genuinely exceptional, even, at times, visionary values the novel espouses, it is equally important soberly to ruminate upon moments where its values perhaps should not be accepted, or at the very least should not go uncommented upon in a pedagogical or group setting. One could add that revisions and

80 The song series featured in Baoyu's dream in Chapter 5 appears as a manuscript entitled "hongloumeng" 紅樓夢, which Hawkes here translates not as "Dream of Red Chamber," but rather as "Dream of Golden Days," thereby attempting to foreground *Hongloumeng* in its capacity as a novel of remembrance (Hawkes 2014 v1: 126-127).

annotations to the text of *Hongloumeng* might be interpretable as evidencing tensions developing in the heart of the author, maybe even new attitudes toward his own characters. That the project was left unresolved, incomplete, has had the effect of only heightening a readerly sense that this is a threshold novel, where new values are being born that are potentially destabilizing preexistent value formations.

Remarkably, Qin Keqing and Baoyu are among some of the only characters in *Hongloumeng* explicitly described as being or possessing "yin" 淫, a word for which there is no precise English equivalent. Indeed, it's possible that this translation issue is partly contributing to how the use of "yin"-related terminology in *Hongloumeng* tends to fly under the radar. One hesitates to identify an English word whose semantic range accommodates "licentious," "incestuous," and "obscene," lexical category depending on use and context. Perhaps "illicit" is the best candidate for "yin" as a general term, or even "ill" draws a nice parallel, given the range of, e.g., "ill ways," "ill behavior," "to do ill," "to make ill," "to cause ill," and so on.

Sommer's (2012) discussion of *Hongloumeng* gives an account of the history of *Hongloumeng* as an "obscene book" ("yinshu" 淫書) to be banned by the authorities after its publication. Sommer directly relates *Hongloumeng*'s status as an obscene ("yin" 淫) book to "yin" in Qing legal usage as "a category of criminal motivation," "the 'licentious heart' that motivated rape or adultery."[81] Discussing early Chinese discourse on "yin" 淫 and its attribution to female social roles and activities, Mark Stevenson observes that, in Liu Xiang's

[81] Sommer 2012: 190.

劉向 (77-6 BCE) *Categorized Biographies of Women* (*Lienu zhuan* 列女傳), "[t]hree of the women are described as being debauched and insubordinate ("yinluan" 淫亂), and others are described as deluded and lustful ("huoyin" 惑淫), haughty and lustful ("aoyin" 驕淫), or licentious and dissolute ("yinyi" 淫泆/淫佚). While the most serious crime committed by women selected for inclusion in this section is interference in succession, such seditious and murderous opportunities (and nature) are very closely aligned with adultery, or even with what was simply assumed to be the dissolute influence of beauty."[82] Notably, though, Stevenson emphasizes that "yin (淫)—as dissolution, debauchery and wantonness—is readily acknowledged throughout all the chapters of the *Lienu zhuan* as a failing common to both men and women participating in court life, hence requiring rulers and their consorts to be vigilant in serving as an example to each other, their inferiors, and offspring."[83]

As a formal theoretical system, structuralism is uniquely equipped for explaining the liminal status of "yin"-related terminology, how it seems to occupy the threshold between law and society. For Claude Lévi-Strauss in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1971), the threshold is between nature and culture, "[t]he prohibition of incest [being] where nature transcend itself. […] It brings about and is in itself the advent of a new order."[84] Levi-Strauss's project is a speculative work questioning the deep origins of morality, culture, and social stratification, whose evidentiary basis in kinship terminology needs to be supplemented by more recent, and more broadly empirical interventions. When

[82] Mark J. Stevenson and Wu Cuncun, ed., *Wanton Women in Late-Imperial Chinese Literature: Models Genres Subversions and Traditions*, 2017: 1-26.

[83] *Ibid.*

[84] Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, 1971: 25.

encountering kinship in their survey of prehistorical global communities, Graeber and Wengrow in *The Dawn of Everything* (2021) emphasize a comparable ambiguity, finding institutions using kinship terminology as an element of political strategy and only indirectly, if at all, in observance of cultural norms surrounding endogamy and exogamy.[85]

The logic of politicized marriage alliance, whose historical (or at least empirical) emergence Levi-Strauss attempts to explain, maps onto the Jia clan's marriage strategies in *Hongloumeng*, not only in the case of Yuanchun, who becomes an imperial concubine, but also in the case of Tanchun's frontier marriage. In addition, the logic of incestuous desire appears important to the novel in a way that structural analysis is uniquely equipped for navigating. Baoyu's love for his cousin Daiyu exemplifies the liminal space that Lévi-Straussian structuralism foregrounds, the ambiguous cousin relation that, if viewed in terms of the evolution of historical kinship terminology and the different patterns of marriage alliance that different terminological systems presuppose, presents the empirical enigma of being prescribed in some social arrangements while proscribed in other social arrangements, with the possibility that a proscriptive system can transform into a prescriptive system, depending on historical and social situatedness.[86]

Ming Dong Gu (2006) identifies in Jia Zheng's violent attack on Baoyu "Oedipal fear," Gu interpreting Jia Zheng's anger over the false rumor of Baoyu's having raped his mother's maidservant, as "displacement" in the Freudian sense, to be compared with Laius'

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[85] David Graeber and David Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything*, 2021: 441-456. Graeber and Wengrow's approach to kinship is informed by Marshall Sahlins' *What Kinship is —and is not* (2013), situated as it is relation to, but distinct from, Levi-Strauss's structural approach, Sahlins taking kinship to be "a universal possibility in nature, but […] always a cultural particularity." (Sahlins, *What Kinship is —and is not*, 2013: 44).

[86] Levi-Strauss *ibid.* 29-51. For an applied anthropological study of cross-cousin marriage in *Hongloumeng*, see Eugene Cooper and Meng Zhang, "Patterns of Cousin Marriage in Rural Zhejiang and in Dream of the Red Chamber," 1993).

feelings toward Oedipus.[87] Gu argues that Jia Zheng identifies in Baoyu's alleged transgression a displacement of Baoyu's Oedipal desire toward his mother.[88] In this vein, Gu could also have pointed toward Jia She's lustful desire to possess Grandmother's Jia's most faithful maid servant Yuanyang as a comparable form of Oedipal displacement, illicit desire for the mother figure displaced onto someone in her immediate proximity, physically, emotionally, and semiotically.

If "incest" is conceptualized broadly enough to encompass the full range of nominal familial transgressions, then additional controversies from *Hongloumeng* would be included, such as Jia Rui's attempted seduction of his sister-in-law Wang Xifeng,[89] Jia Zhen's incestuous affair with his daughter-in-law Qin Keqing (to be considered in detail below), and Jia Lian's starting a relationship with You Er-jie at the same time as her sister You San-jie is having intimate relations with his cousin Jia Zhen, who earlier had had sexual relations with You Er-jie as well.

By focusing mostly on Baoyu's various social transgressions and by eliding historical usages of "yin"-related terminology with modern conceptions of obscenity, Sommer's analysis somewhat obscures just how patriarchal the historical standards in question really were. It is worth acknowledging the significance of "yin"-related terminology to deeply questionable historical beliefs and attitudes about the degree of responsibility that individuals, especially young women, bear for the desires they supposedly "activate" in the

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[87] Ming Dong Gu, "The filial piety complex: variations on the Oedipus theme in Chinese literature and culture," The Psychoanalytic Quarterly 75.1 (2006): 172-173. Surname Gu, given name Ming Dong, written "Ming Dong Gu" in the article's title. Compare to Whalen Lai's structuralist interpretation of Oedipal dynamics in mythological accounts of Shun 舜 in Whalen Lai, "Unmasking the filial sage-king Shun: Oedipus at Anyang," History of religions 35.2 (1995): 163-184.

[88] Gu *ibid*.

[89] *HLM*, Chapter 12. Hawkes 2014 v.1: 137.

people with whom they interact. This is especially the case, given how indirectly these values can be expressed in the novel, with many casual readers, and even researchers with a more general focus, running the risk of missing their articulation altogether.

A consideration of Baoyu's "yin" attributes needs, then, to be supplemented by a consideration of Qin Keqing's "yin" attributes, focusing on how differently these attributes are portrayed and evaluated in the text. That the "yin" attributes of these characters are discussed in tandem in the same iconic "dream chapter" (viz., Chapter 5), while not being discussed in comparable detail anywhere else in the novel, suggests that the author is actively prompting readers to make this comparison.

For Qin Keqing, her "yin" status is explicitly articulated in the poetic materials dedicated to her in Chapter 5's dream sequence, both in her fate judgment ("pan" 判) as well as in her song from the song cycle. The "panci" reads:

情天情海幻情身，情既相逢必主淫。

Love was her sea, her sky; in such excess
Love, meeting with its like, breeds wantonness[90]

Notice that this couplet directly relates "qing" and "yin," Hawkes rendering "qing" "love" and "yin" "wantonness." The relationship between "qing" and "yin" in *Hongloumeng* is an open interpretive question, but their co-presence here warns against treating them as absolutely distinct. Ou Li-Chuan, in a 2016 article dedicated specifically to interpretative issues pertaining to Qin Keqing, posits a "boundary" ("fenji" 分際) between "qing" and

[90] Hawkes 2014 v.1: 121.

"yin" where Qin Keqing "loses control," thereby harming the Ning household.[91] Hawkes' "wantonness" is to be treated as synonymous with "licentiousness" above, but the original wording appears deliberately bi-valanced, seeming explicitly to signify "yin" licentiousness (viz., as a character trait being attributed to Qin Keqing) while also implicitly referring to literal acts of "yin" incest (viz., sex with one's father-in-law).

It is no fault of Hawkes that this second meaning is somewhat buried in translation, given the need to produce a singular rendering of a complexly bi-valanced form. The most straightforward way to understand the second poetic line is to treat "love meeting with its like" as two individuals *mutually* falling in love, framing, in effect, any feelings between Qin Keqing, very young and of humble origins, and Jia Zhen, the much older father-in-law, and patriarch of the wealthy Ning household, as basically "reciprocal," also thereby implying that responsibility for what happens is to be shared. This is a standard interpretation of how the novel seems to conceive the issue, and the one adopted by Ou Li-Chuan.[92]

This is also where the values of *Hongloumeng* veer perilously close to the worst excesses of modern conservative rhetoric, to noxious fantasies where female victims are blamed for suffering sexual violence solely on account of their individual behavior, up to and including the kind of clothes they were wearing at the time of assault. Care and subtlety are needed in proceeding. It is possible, at very least, for scholars simultaneously to be aware that, in its original historical context, Qin Keqing might have been meant to be interpreted, as some scholars, including Ou Li-Chuan, continue to interpret the character, as a "chilling

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[91] Ou Li-Chuan, "Qin Keqing xin lun: caiqing yu qingse de teshu yanyi. 秦可卿新論：才情與情色的特殊演繹." Chengda zhongwen xuebao 成大中文學報 52 (2016): 213.

[92] *Ibid.* 223.

lesson, a great warning" 怵目驚心的前車之鑑，戒莫大焉,[93] even as historical value transformations have opened up new interpretative angles. This is how, at least, this dissertation aims to mediate these issues, and the broader solar system of literary interpretative controversies orbiting "the death of the author."

Little else in *Hongloumeng* rehabilitates the role of "yin"-related terminology in the novel. Though the novel is thoroughly critical of most of its male main characters, this criticism comes out indirectly in the novel, with no male characters besides Baoyu having "yin"-related terms explicitly attributed to them. Argumentative deftness is required, as the absence of the "yin" attributions cannot necessarily be taken as evidence of the absence of "yin"-attributable behavior. Arguably in the original vision for the ending of *Hongloumeng*, distinct from extant versions of the last 40 chapters usually believed to be mostly written by secondary authors, moral "rebalancing" for the Jia clan was to have come in the form of the final dissolution of the family's rank, wealth, and power, a storytelling punch that the secondary authors appear to have pulled somewhat, to the extent that currently extant endings bear witness to the Jia clan's reclaiming at least a portion of its rank and position. One could argue that the original, more tragic ending represents, in a moralistic universe, a more critical stance toward the Jia clan's immorality and "yin" excess, and that, by mitigating the clan's downfall, the secondary authors' have inadvertently made the ascription of "yin" licentiousness to Qin Keqing seem even more imbalanced, even more unfair a judgment.

Then again, perhaps the shock to the moralistic reader produced by the mere discrepancy between predicted fates and observed outcomes better represents the possibility

[93] *Ibid.* 240.

for a radical transformation of values than any surplus or deficit determined therein. As Robert Hegel observes, "By generally destabilizing the predictive potential of certain major elements of his narrative, the novelist signals the implied reader about the appropriate way to read and how to regard reality at the same time: in this text the usual 'rules' simply do not apply with any exactness; similar 'rules' may mean no more in the reader's own life."[94] Ferrara pushes back against Hegel (1994)'s more radical stances, though, such as Hegel's view that "inconsistencies in the prophetic poems and songs in Chapter 5 indicate the deliberate subversion of a Confucian moral universe," an intentional "destabiliz[ation of] all predictability of rewards and punishments on the basis of moral action," and his view that the author of *Hongloumeng* was attempting "to create *more* logical inconsistencies, *more* paradoxes" thereby "revealing fundamental skepticism about the moral validity of didactic elements in popular fiction."[95]

In his dream in Chapter 5, the Fairy Disenchantment attributes to Baoyu a special "mental 'yin'," ("yiyin" 意淫, rendered "lust of the mind" by Hawkes,[96] a term also sometimes designating "sexual fantasy") which, though arguably a conceptual innovation of sorts, seems mostly to recapitulate traditional misogynistic projections that treat women as "naturally" embodied and men as "naturally" intellectual, in this way objectivizing female "states of being" while subjectivizing male "modes of thinking." Nevertheless, the attribution to Baoyu of "mental 'yin'" is suggestive of an underlying conception of dreaming that relates intimately with forms of desire. Wai-yee Li argues that the "yin" 淫 in "yiyin"

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[94] Robert E. Hegel, "Unpredictability and meaning in Ming-Qing literati novels," in *Paradoxes of Traditional Chinese Literature*, Eva Hong, ed., 1994: 162.

[95] Hegel, 1994: 158, quoted by Ferrara 2009: 13.

[96] Hawkes 2014 v.1: 137.

意淫 "means 'boundless and excessive'," thereby speaking to "the propensity for excess and for effacement of boundaries in Baoyu's being," seconding Wang Guowei (1877-1927) in foregrounding the homophony between "jade" ("yu" 玉) and "desire" ("yu" 慾).[97] Chan Kar Yue (2020) concurs, arguing that "yiyin" 意淫 "symbolizes an overwhelming obsession that dominates Jia Baoyu's life."[98]

Campany, broadly surveying the representation of dreams in historical Chinese written materials, suggests that "only relatively seldom is the dreamer herself assumed to be the maker of her dream."[99] Does this estimation of rarity risk confusing absence of evidence for evidence of absence? Early Chinese thinkers like Wang Chong 王充 already in the first century CE can be observed articulating the idea that dreams are the product of the individual human mind, and are neither the visitations of external spirits nor the experiences of a wandering soul.[100] Moreover, were "sleeping mind" conceptions of dreaming as rare as Campany suggests, it seems unlikely one would so commonly encounter, as a formal device in historical Chinese literature, the physical environment in which a character falls asleep reappearing in their dreams as metaphorical content (as can be observed in Chapter 4 below, with the story of Zhao Shixiong's 趙師雄 dream).

That Baoyu's dream in Chapter 5 is so evidently, at least on some level, a sexual wish fulfillment dream speaks to a conception of dreaming more readily compatible with classical

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[97] Wai-yee Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment: Love and Illusion in Chinese Literature*, 2014: 204.

[98] Chan Kar Yue. "Love in Dreams and Illusions: Fate and Prognostication in Hongloumeng." Comparative Literature: East & West 4.1 (2020): 36.

[99] Campany 2020: 67.

[100] *Ibid.* 52. See Richard E. Strassberg, *Wandering Spirits: Chen Shiyuan's Encyclopedia of Dreams*, 2008: 97 for an English translation of "Menglie" 夢列.

psychoanalytic models than might be expected. That, furthermore, Qin Keqing's bedroom is depicted from Baoyu's perspective reinforces a sense that Baoyu is psychologically projecting even before he falls asleep, the fantastical, mythologically weighty litany of impossible items adorning this space if not a product of Baoyu's imagination outright then at least subject to its embellishment. Ou Li-Chuan also explains the scene in terms of Baoyu's powers of psychological projection.[101] Zhang Mingming likewise associates this scene with Baoyu's "scopophilic" tendencies, connecting it to general tendencies in the novel whereby Baoyu's desire manifests both as projective gaze and as the desire for its reciprocation.[102] Considering the broader context, one could note that these projective elements are on a spectrum with conceptions of "yiyin" "lust of the mind." One might even argue that "yiyin" is, in some sense, an improvement upon other "yin"-related terminologies, "yiyin" at least acknowledging the possibility that the responsibility for desire could lie at least partly with the desirer themselves. So, even if the author of *Hongloumeng* is unable to express explicit critique of traditional conceptions of morality surrounding "yin"-terminological attributions, at the very least one might be observing structural elements of the story gesturing toward alternative conceptual possibilities.

In a remarkable way, "yin" attributions within *Hongloumeng* appear most interesting, most conceptually promising, when they contradict themselves. That the novel has literally, and figuratively, "sentenced" Keqing to suicide by hanging, to be depicted "on the page," only subsequently "commuting the sentence" to death by illness, mostly occurring "off the page," speaks potentially to changes in the author's attitude toward the character, or toward

101 Ou Li-Chuan 2016: 216.
102 Zhang Mingming 2009: 45, 139.

historical views on storytelling and its relation (or non-relation) to moral thinking and moral pedagogy. There is a real temptation to interpret these core inconsistencies as the empirical evidence of a fundamental change of heart, a broader "reevaluation of values" on the part of the author, though this is somewhat speculative.

It's possible, moreover, that readers are observing changing authorial conceptions of how fate, chance, and meaning interrelate. It's possible that Qin Keqing and Wang Xifeng's final outcomes, as reflected in extant versions of the final chapters of the novel, are due not to later authors' ignoring the original intentions of the primary author, as is sometimes suggested. An alternate explanation is that the many years writing this long novel affected the primary author's worldview, leading him over time to adopt, among other things, a more mutable conception of fate.

A highly remarkable Zhiyanzhai "Red Inkstone Studio" 脂硯齋 comment appended to Chapter 13 directly references behind-the-scenes circumstances allegedly leading to key changes to Qin Keqing's death and its depiction. "Zhiyanzhai" is the pseudonym of a writer or group of writers who appear to have given the primary author of *Hongloumeng* – very possibly the historical Cao Xueqin – extensive feedback and commentary during the composition and revision of at least the first 80 chapters of the text, some of this commentary reproduced in the margins of some of the earliest manuscript versions of the novel. Whether these comments are themselves, in some sense, properly "part of" the main text of *Hongloumeng* is more of an open philosophical question than one might initially expect, another reminder that the space between "text" and "non-text" is remarkably conceptually blurry.

The comment in question pertains to the deletion of the chapter explicitly depicting Qin Keqing's death by suicide hanging from Heavenly Fragrance Pavilion 天香樓, whose depiction, according to predominant forms of literary moralism, constitutes a penalty or punishment for her character, allowing the reader to experience in an immoral or unethical character's downfall the reestablishment of justice and the reinforcement of society's self-image as a justifiable system of rules and order. Evoking rather telling legalistic metaphors that speak directly to the merging of "yin"-related terminology with moralistic and legalistic language discussed above, Zhiyanzhai claims to have convinced the author of *Hongloumeng* to "pardon" ("she" 赦) Keqing:

> 老朽因有[其]魂託鳳姐賈家後事二件，嫡是[非]安富尊榮坐享人能想得到處。其事雖未漏，其言其意則令人悲切感服，姑赦之，因命芹溪刪去。[103]
>
> This decrepit one [i.e., Zhiyanzhai's self-address], as for Keqing's spirit's telling Wang Xifeng about the two posthumous Jia family matters, thinks that these are not the kinds of things that rich entitled people are inclined to think about. So, though Qin Keqing's actions are not noble, Qin Keqing's speech and intentions are moving and heart-wrenching, and thus we can pardon her. This is why I've asked Qinxi 芹溪 [viz., the author of *Hongloumeng*] to delete this chapter.[104]

Zhiyanzhai's comment illustrates the incredible sway of moralizing frameworks on the minds of authors and readers during this period. One can almost begin to sense how all novels might appear, from the vantage point of authority and the state, inherently

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[103] Citation and bracketed interpolations by Sun Xun 孫遜. Hongloumeng jianshang cidian 紅樓夢鑑賞辭典. Hanyu da xidian chubanshe 漢語大詞典出版社, 2005: 140. See Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹 [attributed], and Wu Ming'en 吳銘恩, ed., *Hongloumeng zhiping huijiao ben* 紅樓夢脂評匯校本, 2013: 183.

[104] Absent indication otherwise, translations are my own, with additional citations provided for any specific commentarial traditions in which translations are following.

controversial; when every literary representation doubles as a trial and punishment for the characters contained within, perhaps the state cannot help but feel that its authority has been usurped. It's remarkable, additionally, that the great wealth and status difference between Qin Keqing and the Jia family is referenced in the context of discussing the relative justness of her fate.

Comments to this effect, to the extent they reflect the thought processes underlying the composition of *Hongloumeng*, do not seem entirely consistent with the more radical elements of Hegel's (1994) thesis toward which Ferrara expresses skepticism. The author of *Hongloumeng* and his literary circle do appear, in some sense, to be grappling with, probing the implications of different modes of literary moralism, but they do not appear as having already transcended them. That the specific fates represented in the Department of the Ill-Fated Fare ("bomingsi" 薄命司)[105] are described in the text as "judgments" ("pan" 判) further reinforces one's sense that an inherently moral universe is still being imagined. Moderating Hegel's position, Ferrara identifies *Hongloumeng*'s literary innovation as having characters who embody more than one type of "ming" fate. Some of the "ming" fates being imagined abide by traditional storytelling conventions linking moral action with positive outcome, while other "ming" fates are less immediately evaluable in moral terms. These include what Ferrara calls "more transpersonal [rather than simply retributive] modes of 'ming'" like the "mandate of heaven" 天命, the "fate of the times" 時命, "character as fate" 性命, and "even [the fate] of families."[106]

[105] Hawkes 2014 v.1: 137.
[106] Ferrara 2009: 13.

As in the case of textuality versus non-textuality, one is faced with a strange, almost philosophically paradoxical problem, as the liminal status of Zhiyanzhai's writing as "semi-text" (and as a liminal part of *Hongloumeng* itself, existing on the literal margins of actual physically existing manuscripts) raises the question of the reality versus unreality of those plot events that are referenced, but are referenced in their capacity as "not happening." In the topsy-turvy, value-reversing liminal space of "semi-text," sometimes to say that something didn't happen is, in effect, to say that it *really* happened. As the queen learns in Edgar Allen Poe's "The Purloined Letter," the concealment of language tends to signify its own concealment.

Especially as the shadow of the author looms largely for this novel, one of the paradoxical effects of Zhiyanzhai's referencing the author's original intentions is to cast those original intentions as the novel's underlying core reality, from which later versions appear as unfortunate divergences. Hence tendencies to seek out the author's "original meaning" as something pure and true to which one must return. As Louise Edwards argues, particularly since the "new 'Hongxue" movement of Hu Shi 胡適 (1891-1962) and Yu Pingbo 俞平伯 (1900-1990), "greater emphasis [has been placed] on the location of 'the genuine' version or edition of the novel."[107] "Locating a complete and uncorrupted text became vital because only this text could provide scholars with a direct line to the author. Identifying the most 'genuine' text, unadulterated by editors or copyists, became a major fixation."[108]

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[107] Louise Edwards and Yu Pingbo, "New Hongxue and the 'Birth of the Author:' Yu Pingbo's 'On Qin Keqing's Death'," Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR) 23 (2001): 40. See also Yu Pingbo 俞平伯, Hongloumeng bian 紅樓夢辨, 1973.

[108] *Ibid.*

While arguably the last 40 chapters of the completed versions of the novel are not written to the same standard as the preceding 80 chapters, and while it is also plausible that there are key areas in the last 40 chapters where the secondary authors diverge from the primary author's original intentions to ill effect, there is no reason necessarily to treat the changes surrounding Keqing's depiction in the novel as similarly reductive or ill-advised, or as part of one singular trend toward conventionalizing the novel. In the case of the half-completed revisions to the depiction of Keqing's fate in the novel, there is reason to posit a kind of lingering authorial doubt on the threshold of new modes of literary representation.

VII. Chapter-by-chapter Overview

This dissertation will focus on those middle and late Tang poets who appear especially critical for the representation of dreaming, desiring, gender, and identity in *Hongloumeng*. The poetry of Li He (790-816), Li Shangyin (813-858), and Wen Tingyun (812-870) will be treated in historical order. A chapter will be dedicated to each poet's unique contribution to *Hongloumeng*'s vision of dreams and desire, identifying and organizing significant implicit and explicit references and evaluating the relationship between dreams and desire on display in this referential material. Special attention will be paid to how *Hongloumeng*, in the references it chooses to make, hones in on Tang poetic material depicting the ambiguities and tensions inherent to the social construction of luxury and necessity, both in terms of commodities (essential items like basic clothing and foodstuffs versus luxury items like ornate jewelry and fine fabrics) as well as in terms of labor ("essential labor" like basic textile production and clothes washing versus the "surplus labor" that creates music, art, and poetry).

In Chapter 1, Li He and his influence on *Hongloumeng* are reimagined. Li He's reputation as "poet ghost" is reevaluated in light of the critique of gender and class roles implicit to Li He's spectral, ostensibly "otherworldly" imagery. Since Li He is influential for Li Shangyin and Wen Tingyun, effort will be spent exploring intermediary segments of those intertextual threads ultimately leading to and inspiring the depiction of dreams, desire, gender, and identity in *Hongloumeng*.

In Chapter 2, the intertextual relationship between Li Shangyin and *Hongloumeng* is considered. Inquiry is made into the meaning and significance of the series of connections the novel draws between Li Shangyin and the character Lin Daiyu. It is shown how Daiyu's critical comments on Li's poetry belie how centrally his imagery, motifs, and emotional register speak to her personal concerns as well as her poetic style. Also discussed is how and why, both in Li's poetry and in Daiyu's poetry, there is a shared emphasis on liminal spaces, empty and abandoned places, and on dreams, dreams specifically in their capacity as the remnants of a thwarted life, the fading vestiges of the potential for the social and interpersonal realization of human meaning. With the gendered components of Li Shangyin's social critique almost as unsung as those of Li He, special effort will be made to extricate Li Shangyin from the stereotype of his being introspective to the point of selfishness and solipsism, highlighting how *Hongloumeng* inherits elements of his gender-based critique.

Chapter 3 will explore the intertextual dialogue between *Hongloumeng* and the late Tang poet Wen Tingyun. It will be shown how Ween inherits and develops many of the poetic and thematic innovations advanced by Li He and Li Shangyin, while in the process creating a distinctive style in which the languor and listlessness of palace maidens hint at

gendered resistance amid literal and metaphorical dreams of social alternatives. It will be shown, in turn, that it is Wen's treatment of gender and labor issues that has been especially critical for capturing *Hongloumeng*'s referential attention.

Chapter 4 will then synthesize and supplement the insights of the poet-based chapters by means of an extended application of liminal analysis to Tang poetic imagery. Imagery surrounding evanescent sunrise and sunset clouds is analyzed, considering how the articulation of this imagery in Tang poetry influences how *Hongloumeng* represents the dreams and aspirations of its female protagonists. In the process, the subtle, easily obscured historicity of light, shadow, and texture is considered.

The conclusion will offer general observations and ideas for future research. Additional thoughts will be offered on distinguishing between "text" and "non-text," and on determining whether social reality is or is not imbued with layers of unrealized meaning.

Chapter One

Visions of Ghosts and Grief and The Representation of Dreams and Desire in Hongloumeng 紅樓夢 and the Poetry of Li He 李賀

Emerging in what follows is a sense for how deeply the vision of *longue durée* Chinese literary and poetic traditions informing the worldview of *Hongloumeng* is indebted to the late Tang iteration of this vision. To appreciate longitudinal changes in what is being represented, more will be needed than simply identifying recurrent motifs and images. One of the purposes of this chapter is to sketch a critical moment in a process of development, viz., how the Tang poet Li He 李賀 (ca. 790-817) not only directly influenced *Hongloumeng* but also influenced Li Shangyin 李商隱 (813-856) and Wen Tingyun 温庭筠 (ca. 812-870 CE). It will be shown how Li He's poetry expands the bounds of poetic expression, merging conventional themes with uniquely individual modes of expression, all the while exhibiting impressive emotional scope and social consciousness, setting the stage for the unique and idiosyncratic philosophical ethics of *Hongloumeng*.

In Chapter 120, the final chapter of *Hongloumeng*, Zhen Shiyin is portrayed indulging in philosophical speculation, ruminating on philosophies of literature and life. He is conversing with Jia Yucun, a complementary character who in dialogue in Chapter 2 outlines a parallel set of beliefs regarding human nature, identity, and desire. These two conversations bookend the work's main narrative. What seems especially remarkable about Zhen Shiyin's final reflections in Chapter 120, arguably one place where the novel comes especially close to

outright stating a "thesis," is how recognizable most of the referents would have been to an elite educated observer in the Tang Dynasty:

因又說道：「寶玉之事，既得聞命。但敝族閨秀，如是之多，何元妃以下，算來結局俱屬平常呢？」士隱歎道：「老先生莫怪拙言！貴族之女，俱屬從情天孽海而來。大凡古今女子，那『淫』字固不可犯，只這『情』字也是沾染不得的。所以崔鶯、蘇小，無非仙子塵心，宋玉、相如，大是文人口孽。但凡情思纏綿，那結局就不可問了！」

"It is so kind of you to tell me all this about Baoyu," he said. "But may I ask you another question: why is it that of all the ladies in these noble families, none, including Her Grace the Imperial Jia Concubine, has come to more than an undistinguished end?"

On hearing this Shiyin sighed: "Do not take my words amiss, sir! The fact of the matter is that all these noble ladies to whom you refer hail from the Skies of Passion and the Seas of Retribution. Since olden times their sex has been under a natural obligation to remain pure, pure from lust ["yin" 淫], pure even from the slightest taint of passion ["qing" 情]. Thus amorous beauties such as Cui Yingying and Su Xiaoxiao were fallen fairies, their celestial hearts polluted with the base desires of this world, while romantic poets such as Song Yu and Sima Xiangru sinned in like manner through the written word. Consider for a moment: how can any being ensnared in human attachment hope to 'come to more than an undistinguished end,' as you put it?"[109]

The conversation in Part VI of the introduction has already laid the foundation for approaching this passage and evaluating its moral and ethical content, both in its historical context as well as in its relation to the present moment. A basic framework has been established for understanding this viewpoint as possibly representing the author's own personal philosophical perspective, while also representing an area of doubt, uncertainty, and internal conflict, around which inconsistencies in received versions of the novel, especially pertaining to the character Qin Keqing, seem to cluster.

[109] *HLM*, Chapter 120. Hawkes and Minford 2014, v.5: 515-517.

Cui Yingying is an historical figure of the Tang Dynasty first fictionalized by the Tang poet and author Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779-831), whereas Su Xiaoxiao is an historical figure roughly traceable to the Northern and Southern Dynasties period (Nanbeichao 南北朝, 420-589) to whom has accrued folk tales and legends of doubtful veracity. In the stories and legends orbiting each personage, narrative emphasis is on exceptional instances in which female agency is being exercised, especially in relation to sexual and romantic desire. Each story in its historical moment was controversial not only for depicting a young scholar who begins an affair with a young maiden without parental approval, but also for depicting the young maiden exercising agency, at least insofar as actively returning the young man's affections.

The question of how this representation of desire relates to moral and ethical ideology, and to developing conceptions of storytelling ethics and the principles of literature, will be important for historicizing *Hongloumeng* and conceptualizing its intertextual dialogue. Yuan Zhen's "Biography of Yingying" ("Yingying zhuan" 鶯鶯傳) is often treated as a critical precursor to the "caizi jiaren" 才子佳人 ("talented gentlemen and beautiful maiden") genre, a literary form popular during Ming and Qing times that influences *Hongloumeng* but which the novel explicitly and repeatedly criticizes. As Ann Walthner observes, *Hongloumeng* "manipulates the conventions of the genre of the traditional romance" and "breaks its boundaries," even at times treating its conventions as a negative example.[110]

[110] Ann Walthner, "On not becoming a heroine: Lin Dai-yu and Cui Ying-ying," 1989: 77.

There remains, still, the risk of overstating *Hongloumeng*'s innovativeness along these dimensions. Lorraine Dong characterizes Yuan Zhen's "Yingying zhuan" as having been "written with the intent of trying morally to warn people about the vices of lust, especially when enraptured by a beautiful woman."[111] Stephen Owen emphasizes duality, claiming that, actually, Yuan Zhen's story "is unique among Tang tales in sustaining two opposing points of view, each of which tries to take control of the story and compel judgment in its favor."[112] In Owen's view, "[o]n the one side is the venerable cultural image of the femme fatale, ingratiating and manipulative, feigning huffs and passions to gain her will, [and on] the other side are the values of the culture of romance [according to which] the public honor of both parties is at stake [and] lovers are supposed to maintain their commitment."[113] Responding to Owen, Daniel Hsieh argues that "Yingying zhuan" "is a new version of an old theme: the failure, perhaps even impossibility, of love in a world characterized by fundamental differences between the sexes," characterizing Yingying as "in many ways the perfect lover, a 'wenren 文人' dream […] beautiful, fascinating, and mysterious […] sensitive, passionate, poetic."[114] "Yet being the perfect lover," Hsieh argues, "also makes her fate inevitable."[115]

Though James Hightower's analysis, in addition to Owen's, further nuances questions of authorial intention and the influence of moralizing conventions on the composition and reception of "Yingying zhuan,"[116] on a basic level, nevertheless, the kinds

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111 Lorraine Dong, "The many faces of Cui Yingying," 1981: 75.
112 Stephen Owen, *The End of the Chinese 'Middle Ages': Essays in Mid-Tang Literary Culture*, 1996: 149.
113 *Ibid.* 150.
114 Daniel Hsieh, *Love and women in early Chinese fiction*, 2009: 208.
115 *Ibid.*
116 James R. Hightower, "Yüan Chen and 'The Story of Ying-Ying'," Critical Readings on Tang China, 2018: 1326-1359.

of authorial intentions that Dong postulates are not implausible. They are also not dissimilar to those expressed a thousand years later in the preface of *Hongloumeng*, the author claiming to have written *Hongloumeng* to "serve as a source of harmless entertainment and as a warning to those who were in the same predicament [as the author] but who were still in need of awakening."[117]

However, this short passage also betrays an element of its own ambiguity. Rather than repeating Zhen Shiyin's estimation that the female main characters in *Hongloumeng* are "fallen fairies [whose] celestial hearts [have been] polluted with the base desires of this world," the author of *Hongloumeng* is emphatic that the young women from his golden days, on whom the female heroines of *Hongloumeng* are based, really were, at least compared with him, paragons of worth deserving of the grand memorial to them which *Hongloumeng* represents. It is recalled how, "[a]s [he] went over them one by one, examining and comparing them in [his] mind's eye, it suddenly came over [him] that those slips of girls — which is all they were then — were in every way, both morally and intellectually, superior to the grave and mustachioed signior [he is] now supposed to have become."[118]

Now, it's not necessarily the case that these various sentiments, whether expressed by the author or by the author's creation (viz., by the character Zhen Shiyin), are mutually inconsistent, but it's hard to deny that, in some ways, they have opposing valances that might be difficult to reconcile. Even at the level of form, a fictionalized memorial elevating the tragedies experienced by real people of real moral worth is difficult to reconcile with moralistic storytelling norms that presuppose a just universe that guarantees just individual

[117] Hawkes 2014 v.1: 22.
[118] Hawkes 2014 v.1: 22.

outcomes. From the beginning, the authorial vision of *Hongloumeng* as a memorial to young women whom society might otherwise have regarded as unremarkable presupposes a paradigm of virtue and a philosophy of value already at odds with accepted societal norms.

There is a need, then, to assess more carefully the subtle but recognizable longitudinal developments in literary form being evidenced. On the level of explicit rhetoric, some of the ideology and philosophy of *Hongloumeng* appears compatible with traditional values. Simultaneously, *Hongloumeng* appears more active "beneath the surface," not only symbolically but also psychologically, with this added semiotic depth affording readers greater opportunity to find unique perspectives on the novel that suit their historical moment and their own situated values. It could be noted that even interpretative approaches independent of the psychoanalytic project, like that of Zhang Xinzhi, have emphasized the need to grasp holistically *Hongloumeng*'s opposing layers of meaning, arguing that readers most critical of *Hongloumeng* often "recognize only [...] immediate surface ["zhengmian" 正面]" meaning and "[fail] to perceive what lies on the other side ["fanmian" 反面]."[119]

That Zhen Shiyin's remark presents Song Yu and Sima Xiangru in connection with, but distinct from, Cui Yingying and Su Xiaoxiao reinforces readers' sense of an underlying gendered dichotomy, gendered distinctions as to how one's soul can be corrupted by the embodied desires typical of this mortal coil. Zhen Shiyin's framing suggests that whereas women are more likely subject to embodied carnal corruption, men are more likely subject to abstract, even literary temptation, especially the passions of writing and the written word.

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[119] Zhang Xinzhi, and Andrew H. Plaks, trans. "How to Read the Hong Lou Meng," in Rolston, David (ed.), *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, 1990: 323. For an alternate influential reading emphasizing the duality of *Hongloumeng*, see Yu Yingshi 余英時, Hongloumeng de liangge shijie 紅樓夢的兩個世界, 2006.

This framing reflects the discussion in Baoyu's dream in Chapter 5 of his uniquely "mental 'yin,'" his "lust of the mind"[120] ("yiyin" 意淫). Although Zhen Shiyin's remark does not rise to the level of the kind of unambiguous misogyny of "qingcheng" 傾城 "city-toppling maiden" rhetoric,[121] it still seems to posit a variant on what Cynthia Wolff, studying comparable tropes in European and American literature, has termed "the sensuous woman," who "afflicts men in a certain way," "arous[ing] them," "making them tend toward 'sinful' behavior," "intrud[ing] into their domestic arrangements," and, "in short, [...] disrupt[ing] [things]."[122]

Wu Siyuan (2017) has traced how "[f]rom Tang (618-907) to the Qing, a large number of literary works have fashioned [...] Su Xiaoxiao into a charming and talented prostitute out of sheer imagination, rumors, and misinformed accounts," treating her presence in the literary records as a "phantasm from the past [that] became ever more real [the more that] texts about her proliferated."[123] In this way, one is reminded how texts in their capacity as historically-situated objects with symbolic, ritual, and other social significance will sometimes lend what they depict a spectral, otherworldly character. This is partly how Wu attempts to conceptualize what it means to rank Su Xiaoxiao as "among the six famous prostitutes in Chinese history [...] hailed for their beauty"[124] while still fundamentally questioning her actual historical existence.

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120 *HLM*, Chapter 5. Hawkes 2014 v.1: 137.

121 Wai-yee Li, "Women as Emblems of Dynastic Fall from Late-Ming to Late-Qing," in *Dynastic Crisis and Cultural Innovation: From the Late-Ming to the Late-Qing and Beyond*, edited by David Wang and Shang Wei. Harvard University Asia Center, 2005, pp. 93-150.

122 Cynthia Griffin Wolff, "A mirror for men: Stereotypes of women in literature," The Massachusetts Review 13.1/2 (1972): 209. Quoted in Dong 1981: 76.

123 Wu Siyuan, Travels, *Dreams and Collecting of the Past: A Study of "Qiantang Meng" ("A Dream by Qiantang River") in Late Imperial Chinese Literature*. PhD Diss., Arizona State University, 2017: 5.

124 Wu *ibid.*

The popularity of Su Xiaoxiao as a poetic subject appears to have increased during the middle and late Tang periods, if the distribution of poems in the *Quan Tangshi* is any approximate indication. In addition to Li He's well-known poems dedicated to Su Xiaoxiao and to her gravesite, there are compositions by Liu Zhongyong 柳中庸 (d. 775), Quan Deyu 權德輿 (759-815), Li Shen 李紳 (772-846), Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846), Zhang Hu 張祜 (785-849), Li Shangyin 李商隱 (813-856), Wen Tingyun 温庭筠 (ca. 812-870), Niu Qiao 牛嶠[125] (ca. 9th C.), Xu Ning 徐凝 (ca. 9th C.), Luo Yin 羅隱 (833-910), and Xu Xuan 徐鉉[126] (d. 991). As Su Xiaoxiao's presence is more salient in Late Tang poetry than Cui Yingying's, much of the following discussion will foreground matters especially pertaining to Su.

One of the earliest attestations of Su Xiaoxiao in the transmitted poetic tradition is "Song of Qiantang's Little Su" ("Qiangtang Su Xiao ge" 錢唐蘇小歌) attributed to Bao Linghui 鮑令暉 (5th C.), sister of the poet Bao Zhao 鮑照 (414-466). Its specific themes and diction will form a referential basis for several late Tang poets addressing Su Xiaoxiao, especially Li He:

妾乘油壁車。
郎騎青驄馬。
何處結同心。
西陵松柏下。[127]

125 "Yangliu zhi" 楊柳枝. *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 29.

126 "Liuzhi ci shi'er shou" 柳枝辭十二首. *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 752.

127 Xu Ling 徐陵, ed., *Yutai xinyong* 玉臺新詠, "juan" 10. https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=82776.

Your maiden a painted coach rides,
My lord a piebald astride.
Where shall we our hearts entwine?
Under Xiling's cypress and pine.

Li He repurposes some of these images in "Little Su Song" ("Su Xiaoxiao ge" 蘇小小歌, also known as "Little Su's Tomb," "Su Xiaoxiao mu" 蘇小小墓), one of his most well-known, innovative works, whose ethereal tones exemplify the qualities that lend him his "poetry ghost" reputation:

幽蘭露，如啼眼。
無物結同心，煙花不堪翦。
草如茵，松如蓋。
風為裳，水為佩。
油壁車，久相待。
冷翠燭，勞光彩。
西陵下，風吹雨。

Dew on the secret orchid
Like crying eyes.
Nothing *to bind hearts together*
Misted flowers I cannot bear to cut.
Grass like a cushion,
The pine like a parasol:
The wind is a skirt,
The waters are tinkling pendants.
A coach with lacquered sides
Waits for someone in the evening.
Cold blue candle-flames
Strain to shine bright.
Beneath Xiling
The wind puffs the rain.[128]

[128] A. C. Graham, *Poems of the Late T'ang*, 1965: 113, with some modifications, and emphasis added to direct references to Bao's poem quoted above.

Li He's poem infuses the referents surrounding Su Xiaoxiao with an aura as sorrowful as it is otherworldly. In the scene portrayed, every detail and object is imbued with the lingering trace of Su Xiaoxiao's immortal soul. Chen Yunji treats the grass, wind, waters, and coach in the poem as metaphors for Su Xiaoxiao's clothing and personal items.[129] Wu Fusheng speculates that Li's gift for metaphor is reflective of the strength of his artistic imagination, his capacity for bringing together "two different worlds […] not conventionally associated with each other, 'yok[ing] them together' […] by means of figurative language," "'[d]ew upon the lonely orchids' […] made to look like 'tearful eyes' of the singing girl," "wind and water […] forced to resemble her clothes and jewelry, and the will o' the wisp" "replaced by boudoir candles."[130]

The scene seems not to be based on any personal experience, deriving instead from visions akin to dreaming. Notice that the coach appearing on the scene was ancient even by the Tang Dynasty standards, and would have seemed to Tang readers as something eerily out of place and time, hence a sign of supernatural forces at work.[131] As exemplified by how, in the poem, Su herself nowhere directly appears, it is helpful to treat Li He's so-called "ghost poetry" as being less *haunted* per se, and more *haunting*, as it were, everything misty, unclear, but suggestive, a sense that something obscure is happening on the cusp of perception, something fluttering, flickering, glistening, shimmering, fizzing, steaming, sputtering, and shuttering, never quite there but never wholly absent, resonating.

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[129] Chen Yunji 陳允吉, Wu Haiyong 吳海勇, et al., *Li He Shixuan ping* 李賀詩選評, 2011: 218.
[130] Wu Fusheng, *The Poetics of Decadence: Chinese Poetry of the Southern Dynasties and Late Tang Periods*, 1998.
[131] Chen Yunji 2011: 218.

Theorists need to be prepared for historical variation even to one's physical (dis)embodiment. The graveyard can be conceived of as a threshold between the material waking world and the immaterial celestial world, precisely the kind of place Su's eternally aggrieved soul could be imagined to linger. How Su's spiritual essence in "Su Xiaoxiao ge" is depicted ambiently inhabiting the material world after her death is reminiscent of, perhaps even an extension of, the phenomenon captured in the Chinese expression "wushi renfei" 物是人非 (loosely, "their things remain, but they are gone forever"), how one's loved one's possessions acquire added emotive charge after their passing. Still, a question remaining is whether this "charge" manifests only when certain confluences of social, political, economic, etc., conditions occur, or whether some basic human experience is being enacted, or some combination of these and other possibilities.

Li He's poem "Qixi" 七夕 also references Su Xiaoxiao, painting a similarly lonely, desolate scene:

别浦今朝暗，羅帷午夜愁。
鵲辭穿線月，花入曝衣樓。
天上分金鏡，人間望玉鉤。
錢塘蘇小小，更值一年秋。

The farthest shore now darkened,
Behind a gauze screen, midnight worries.
The Magpie leaves the thread-piercing moon,
The flower enters the clothes-drying chamber.
Heaven divides the golden mirror,[132]
Among men can be seen the jade hook.
For Qiantang's Little Su,
It just means another autumn.

[132] Min Zeping 閔澤平, *Li He quanji: huijiao huizhu huiping* 李賀全集: 匯校匯註匯評, 2015: 91, note 3.

As in the previous poem, Li He emphasizes Su Xiaoxiao's eternal discontent. The theme of Qixi reunion, in which, according to traditional mythology, the Herder Boy and the Weaver Girl are allowed once a year to meet among the constellations, appears contrasted with Su Xiaoxiao's perpetual solitude and loneliness, her facing another "year of autumn" alone, "chou" 愁 "worry" punning with "qiu" 秋 "autumn."

The Herder Boy and Weaver Girl myths indirectly evidence traditional ideological concerns over the relationship between desire and excess, and between pleasure and labor, the enforced separation of two lovers in the myth framed as a social necessity, presupposing, as if it were an iron law of civilization, that domestic contentment and agricultural merit are somehow mutually exclusive. This myth cannot entirely be disentangled from class-based and gender-based antagonism and anxiety, appearing ideologically related to classic legalist texts like the *Han Feizi* and syncretic texts like the *Guanzi* that take a similarly top-down view of society, regarding agriculturalists alongside their crops as things to be cultivated.

The Qixi motif speaks to the significance of gendered labor to the intertextual space that *Hongloumeng* is developing. As Susan Mann observes, "Rituals of the Double Seven Festival dramatize […] the basic division of labor in peasant society: men plough, women weave," "[t]he meanings [of these rituals] playing with basic social dichotomies like 'work and rest, denial and desire, [and] separation and reunion.'"[133] Carol Stepanchuk and Charles Choy Wang characterizes Qixi as "mainly a women's celebration" in which "[u]nmarried girls make offerings consisting of paper imitations of combs, mirrors, flowers, and rouge-pots

[133] Susan Mann, *Precious records: Women in China's long eighteenth century*, 1997: 170.

arranged in sets of seven," with "contests [being] held to see who could thread needles the fastest in a darkened room with no more light than the glow of a burning ember or pale moonlight."[134] Given the discussion of Qixi in the Introduction in which Qixi was discussed in terms of fate, chance, and authorial intent, it helps to understand this festival's overall prognosticative orientation, Stepanchuk citing "divination methods [for] determin[ing] one's dexterity in needlework" based on principles of sympathetic and correlative logic.[135]

In this way, Su Xiaoxiao's Qixi associations stem at least partly from the holiday's strongly gendered cultural associations, many of which are subtly embedded in the text of the poem. The first line "The farthest shore now darkened" 别浦今朝暗 references the folk belief that the Milky Way darkens on this day, and this darkening is to be associated, according to correlative belief systems, with femininity. The third line of the poem references the Magpie Bridge, said to form in the night sky on Qixi to bridge the Milky Way. The Milky Way was regarded as having been lodged in the night sky for the express purposes of separating these legendarily overworked lovers. The fourth line, in turn, references clothes-drying, another gendered labor task associated with Qixi, as textually evidenced in historical monthly ordinances ("yueling"月令) like the "Monthly Ordinances for the Four Classes" ("Simin yueling" 四民月令) that references the Qixi customary practice of the "drying out of books and clothing."[136] The next line, "Heaven divides the golden mirror" ("Tianshang fen jinjing" 天上分金鏡) activates another cultural motif, "golden mirror" a reference from Gongsun Cheng's 公孙乘 "Moon Prose Poem" ("Yuefu" 月赋) to the

134 Carol Stepanchuk and Charles Choy Wong, *Mooncakes and hungry ghosts: Festivals of China*, 1991: 83.
135 *Ibid.*
136 Cited by Min Zeping 2015: 90-91.

half-moon that appears on Qixi. Into this semantic space emerges the expression "pojing chongyuan" 破镜重圆 (literally meaning "a broken mirror put back together," figuratively in reference to the reuniting of separated couples) deriving from the story in the Meng Qi's 孟棨 *Benshi shi* 本事詩 of a Southern and Northern Dynasties man Xu Deyan 徐德言 who broke a mirror upon separating from his wife, each taking a part of the broken mirror, these parts to be joined together again upon their reunion.[137] The logic of love and the logic of money and debt appear interacting, these emblems of mutual love taking on a structural social logic comparable to a split tally system (evidenced especially in early China),[138] in which the sender and recipient's identities can be verified by matching the notches connecting the tally sticks.[139]

In the next section, the performative "Zhaohun" "Summoning the Spirit" poem in the Chuci 楚辭 will be relevant, insofar as it directly influences those Li He works that *Hongloumeng* turns to for inspiration. Already in the "Zhaohun," a social "tally logic" can be observed being applied to loved ones who have taken leave of the mortal realm. Similarly, Martin Kern, in a discussion of the "Chu Thorny Caltrops" poem ("Chuci" 楚茨, not to be confused with the *Chuci* 楚辭) in the pre-imperial *Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing* 詩經) recognizes in the call-and-response structure of spirit invocation a "tally-like match between prayer and answer."[140]

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137 Min Zeping 2015: 90-91.

138 See, e.g., Lothar von Falkenhausen, "Bronze Ejun Qi jie tally," *The Golden Age of Archaeology: Celebrated Discoveries from the Peoples' Republic of China*, 1999.

139 See Graeber 2011: 288, 422 note 163.

140 Martin Kern, "Shi jing Songs as Performance Texts: A Case Study of 'Chu Ci' (Thorny Caltrop)." Early China 25 (2000): 79.

I.

To clarify Li He's influence on *Hongloumeng*, focusing analytical energy on Baoyu's eulogy for Qingwen "Skybright" in Chapter 78 is eminently sensible, given that this eulogy is one of only two places in the novel where Li He is explicitly named. In this composition, Baoyu writes and then intones the lines, "And was not the soul of Li He summoned in order that he might write a memorial in heaven?" 李長吉被詔而為記,[141] a reference to the story from Li Shangyin's obituary for Li He about how, after Li He's death, someone wearing scarlet robes and riding a red dragon came to summon him, stating that the Heavenly Emperor had constructed (in the celestial realm) a "White Jade Chamber" ("Baiyu lou" 白玉樓) and needed Li He to write a dedication ("ji" 記) to it.[142] Baoyu invokes this reference to argue that fateful circumstances were likewise compelling him to compose the eulogy, imagining a version of predestination in which circumstance and contingency meet with talent and ability (in this case, joining the dire circumstances of Qingwen's death with Baoyu's talent as a composer of poetic verse).

This sentiment recalls comments from the preface to *Hongloumeng* expressing the authorial intention not to "allow those wonderful girls [of his past] to pass into oblivion without a memorial."[143] Given that Baoyu is widely agreed to represent the author, it seems plausible to suppose that Baoyu's composing a eulogy for Qingwen reflects the author's basic gesture in composing the novel. This example is suggestive, moreover, of just how

141 Hawkes 2014 v.3: 745.
142 Li Shangyin, "Li Changji xiaozhuan" 李長吉小傳. https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=73114.
143 Hawkes 2014 v.1: 22.

much *Hongloumeng*'s stylistic reflexivity is rooted in its origins as a memorial, as something that is *re*membered.

The influence of Li He's poetry on Baoyu's eulogy is sometimes relatively straightforward, sometimes more a matter for speculation. A careful inspection of specific lines of text and specific images and expressions is needed, distinguishing between a common cultural vocabulary and intentional strands of intertextual dialogue:

鏡分鸞影，愁開麝月之奩；梳化龍飛，哀折檀雲之齒。委金鈿於草莽，拾翠盒於塵埃。樓空鳩鵲，從懸七夕之針；帶斷鴛鴦，誰續五絲之縷？況乃金天屬節，白帝司時，孤衾有夢，空室無人。

The phoenix has flown [the mirror] and Musk's vanity-box has burst apart for sorrow; the dragon has departed Ripple's comb, which has broken its teeth for grief. The magpie has forsaken my chamber 樓空; it is in vain for the maidens to hang up their needles on Seventh Night and pray for nimblefingers. My buckle with the love-ducks 鴛鴦 is broken: the seamstress is no more who could repair the silk-work of its girdle. And this being the season of autumn when the power of metal predominates and the White God is master of the earth, the signs themselves are melancholy. I wake from dreams of her on a lonely couch and in an empty room 空室無人.[144]

It's a delicate task to begin reconstructing influences, to imagine the extent to which *Hongloumeng*'s poetry was composed with Li He in mind, but there is enough thematic and linguistic resonance that such assessments can be conducted in a scholarly capacity. Considering the semantic space more generally, one might in places wonder whether *Hongloumeng*'s "forsaken chamber" and "lonely couch [...] in an empty room" speak to stock motifs as much as they do to anything that can be traced to Li He, or any specific individual. The concurrence of "chou" and "qiu," and of worrying and autumn, echoes the above Li He

144 Hawkes 2014 v.3: 743, with modifications.

poem, but it is, again, arguably too commonplace to be traced confidently to Li He in particular. Likewise, a Qixi reference is not itself enough to establish a specific referential conversation with Li He. Still, the convergence of all these factors in one textual location, one in which Li He is explicitly referenced, is enough to give pause during preliminary investigations.

As will be considered in detail below, Li Shangyin, in a poem imitating Li He, shows that he associates Li He with the "luan" phoenix who becomes confused by its own mirrored reflection, an image comparable to the above magpie line. One can observe that though a provoking mirror is not explicitly mentioned in the above quotation, it is implied in the magpie reference, and someone versed in this literary tradition would have been expected to form this association.

This is partly why translation strategies that attempt to reproduce very specific elements of Chinese poetry in another language like English (e.g., making sure that 5-character Chinese lines of poetry are represented by exactly 5 English words, etc.) can be misguided. Over-emphasizing the words appearing on the page can have the effect of obscuring how much meaning is being activated referentially "behind the scenes," while also obscuring instances in which, for the sake of brevity, individual words are being used as shorthand for longer expressions. The sum effect can be to mislead interested parties who do not read or speak a Chinese language into forming erroneous, even potentially orientalist, beliefs about the nature of Chinese language and historical Chinese poetry. Sometimes, these misconceptions will occur downstream of other misconceptions regarding Chinese characters and the significance of their pictographic and phonetic elements, producing a kind of layering of conceptual distortion.

As Baoyu's eulogy continues, the influence of Li He on this ghostly scene becomes more and more apparent:

桐階月暗，芳魂與倩影同消；蓉帳香殘，嬌喘共細腰俱絕。露階晚砌，穿簾不度寒砧；雨荔秋垣，隔院希聞怨笛。

As the moon veils herself behind the trees of the garden, the moonlight 芳魂 and the sweet form 倩影 I dreamed of are in the same moment extinguished; as the perfume fades from the hangings of my bedchamber, the laboured breath and whispered words I strove to catch at the same time fall silent. Dew pearls the pavement's moss; the launderer's beat 寒砧 is borne in unceasingly through my casement. Rain wets the wall-fig; a flute's complaint carries uncertainly from a near-by courtyard.[145]

The intensity of the *intra*textual dialogue occurring, as Baoyu invokes the memory of Qingwen's unparalleled abilities and all the exemplary actions she had performed on Baoyu and the Jia family's behalf, makes it more difficult to evaluate these lines for their intertextual referentiality.[146] A lot of the images harken back to lines of poetry composed by Baoyu, Daiyu, or by other characters during poetry club meetings. For instance, the phrase "lüjie wanqi" 露階晚砌 recalls the second line of Baochai's chrysanthemum poem from Chapter 37, "Rouge rinsed out, [the chrysanthemum is] the image of autumn steps ['jie' 階] / Ice evoking, [it is] the spirit of gathered dew ['lüqi' 露砌]" 胭脂洗出秋階影,/ 冰雪招來露砌魂.[147]

145 Hawkes 2014 v.3: 743.
146 See especially *HLM*, Ch. 51. Hawkes 2014 v.2: 610-641.
147 *HLM*, Chapter 37. Compare to Hawkes 2014 v.2: 270-271.

The "cold stone" ("hanzhen" 寒砧) used for cleaning and fabricating clothing (what Hawkes has rendered "launderer's beat,"[148] on account of the rhythmic sound one produces using it) is another common motif in the Chinese literary tradition associated with autumn, sorrow, loneliness, departure, and separation. This common motif is also heavily gendered and related to issues of class, the lonely night laborer assumed to be a girl or woman, usually of lower social status. The exact phrasing "hanzhen" 寒砧 appears in over a dozen poems in the *Quan Tangshi*, including in a Li He poem prominently featuring its own plaintive flute. In Li He's "Dragon Night Intonations" ("Longyeyin" 龍夜吟), a flute's wailing evokes in an empty-boudoir-bound homesick maiden those "tears of blood" that seem to figure so centrally in those strands of the transmitted Chinese poetic and literary tradition with which *Hongloumeng* is most preoccupied.

In this Li He poem, the conceptual equivalence being drawn between the toil of domestic labor and the toll of lengthy periods of separation is made explicit through poetic parallelism, the literal threads being pounded out in the 11th line parallel to the streaming tears of (at least semi-metaphorical) blood in the 12th line:

捲髮胡兒眼睛綠，高樓夜靜吹橫竹。
一聲似向天上來，月下美人望鄉哭。
直排七點星藏指，暗合清風調宮征。

蜀道秋深雲滿林，湘江半夜龍驚起。
玉堂美人邊塞情，碧窗皓月愁中聽。
寒砧能搗百尺練，粉淚凝珠滴紅線。

胡兒莫作隴頭吟，隔窗暗結愁人心。[149]

[148] Hawkes 2014 v.3: 742-743.
[149] *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 394.

Dragon Night Intonations 龍夜吟

The Curly-haired Hu'er with eyes of green
By the high tower in the still night playing the transverse bamboo
The sound seems to come from the heavens
Under the moon, a homesick maiden begins to weep
In a straight line seven stars are hidden behind his fingers
The darkness joining with the clear wind and tuning to the palace[150]

On the Shu Road autumn-deep clouds fill the forest
On the Xiang River a midnight dragon is startling awake
In the jade palace the maiden, on the frontier her beloved
Through the jade window the bright moon, sorrowful her listening
The cold anvil 寒砧 was built to beat a hundred feet of silk
Her powdered teardrops are freezing into crimson threads

Hu'er, do not sing that "Longtou"[151] song!
You know not through which window a woeful heart is left in knots

The poem compares the laundry stone, strong enough to produce countless measures of silk thread, with the maiden far from home and abandoned by her partner, who cries so much, and so intensely, her tears have turned to threads of blood. Here appears a semantic space in which threads (literal "twine"), clothing, gendered labor, but also writing, even the linearity of poetic verse, are all co-present, "intertwined," indeed, as it were, "in knots."

Her lover or husband has possibly been dispatched to the kind of distant foreign land that in the elite Tang imagination was associated with Hu non-Han ethnic minorities. As Du Fu 杜甫(712-770) observes in the third of his "Meditations on Ancient Sites" ("Yonghuai guji" 詠懷古跡), "For a thousand years the lute speaks a Tartar tongue,/ We

150 Min Zeping 2015: 391.
151 A title of a "yuefu" standard. See Min Zeping 2015: 391-392.

make out grief and hatred expressed within the tune" 千載琵琶作胡語,/ 分明怨恨曲中論.[152] By contrast, the Xiang River dragon reference in line 8 conjures the Shu periphery as an imaginary "inner limit," draped in mist, fantasy, and legend, at the edge but still within the bounds of a Chinese nation. It also conjures associations in *Hongloumeng* between the Xiaoxiang river region and our female heroine poets, especially Daiyu and Xiangyun.

It is remarkable, then, that elsewhere in *Hongloumeng* where laundry stone imagery appears, the context tends to be, again, explicitly poetic, with the poetic imagery in question suggestive of Li He's work. This seems especially the case, for instance, with these lines of Xiangling's poem in Chapter 49 (the first of her compositions to impress Daiyu and the others):

精華欲掩料應難，影自娟娟魄自寒。
一片砧敲千里白，半輪雞唱五更殘。

This radiant spirit [i.e., the moon] to block out might be hard,
Her silhouette beautiful, her essence cool.
One flake anvil strikes a thousand miles of white dawn,
Half-disk cock crow fifth watch ruins.

Here it seems that the connection with Li He is especially strong, entering aesthetic and even philosophical realms that are unique to Li He. The expression "a thousand miles of white [dawn]" ("qianli bai" 千里白) speaks to the literally white colors of the earliest moments of dawn, but also has connotations of "to clear," "to begin anew," to "start afresh."

[152] Translation from Paul Rouzer, *Articulated ladies: Gender and the male community in early Chinese texts*, 2001: 194.

Both linguistically and thematically, third line quoted ("One flake anvil strikes a thousand miles of white dawn" 一片砧敲千里白) seems to draw from Li He's "Zhijiu xing" 致酒行, its tenth line reading, "With the rooster's crowing, the whole world dawns" 雄雞一聲天下白.[153] "Qianli bai" 千里白 and "tianxia bai" 天下白 are tightly comparable expressions, with no other lines from the *Quan Tangshi* so closely pairing them with distinctive aural events that punctuate the passing hours of late night and early morning. Notably, Ou Li-Chuan connects this line from "Zhijiu xing" not to Xiangling's poem but to the penultimate line from Daiyu's poem "Taohua xing" in Chapter 70, which reads, "Upon the cuckoo's call the spring has gone completely" 一聲杜宇春歸盡.[154] It is wholly possible that both lines from *Hongloumeng* are drawing from the same source.

J. D. Frodsham has attempted to count and rank all of Li He's color term usage, establishing "white" ("bai" 白 plus "su" 素) as his most commonly used color term (93 instances), followed by "jade," or "jade white" ("yu" 玉 "jade" sometimes designating whiteness or paleness) (79 instances), then by "gold" ("jin" 金) (73 instances), "red" ("hong" 紅) (69 instances), and so on.[155] Li's whiteness is often of moonlight, the remnants of the laundry stone reliably co-present. Li's whiteness is an exploration, moreover, of death and the undead, and a source of Li's spectral reputation. It is with this white light that Li He paints his "ghastly vision," positing connections between ethereal presences like the spirit of

153 *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 391.
154 Ou Li-Chuan 2020: 347.
155 J.D. Frodsham, trans., and Li He, *The Collected Poems of Li He*, 2016: 64.

Su Xiaoxiao and the injustices, social alienation, and loneliness faced by women as well by the lower classes in Tang society.

Exemplifying the idea expressed above that the content of a poem does not correspond as tightly as is sometimes imagined with the individual words with which a thought is verbally expressed, "po" 魄 in this poem can be read as being short for "guipo" 桂魄, "cassia spirit," though "cassia" is not explicitly mentioned. Notice, in turn, that I have translated "po" 魄 as none of these things, but rather as "essence," due to the parallel the poem draws between "ying" 影 and "po" 魄; "ying" here determines the meaning of "po" just as much as, and at the same time that, "po" determines the meaning of "ying." More specifically, the negativity of "ying" as "illusion" (viz., the "half-disk" portion of the moon that hasn't been occluded) presupposes here, by principles of poetic parallelism, the positivity of "po" as "essence" (viz., the moon as a purely cassia-colored celestial body).

A translation, too, just like what is being translated, has its own "negative spaces," so to speak, where meaning lies behind, buried within, or in oblique connection with "the given," viz., with those specific words iterated in each line of poetry. In a subtle way that speaks to deeper philosophical questions of meaning and value, a reason here not to translate "po" as, for instance, "cassia spirit," is not that here cassia spirit isn't being indicated (it very much is), it's arguably that the cassia spirit is meant to be implied, especially when the "coolness" of the spirit has been explicitly stated. By referencing the coolness of the moonlight, one is implicitly already foregrounding a whole series of cultural and literary connections linking the moon, the cassia tree and its flowers, cool colors, autumn, "autumn waters," Chang'e, The Weaving Girl and the Herding Boy, and so many more stories and

images. Relative to this semantic space, to speak of a "cold cassia spirit" would be almost redundant, and the translation is meant to reflect this aesthetic disposition, this preference for spare expression.

The subsequent lines of Baoyu's eulogy for Qingwen reveal a natural scene reminiscent of Li He's "Su Xiaoxiao's Tomb," where all the elements of a gloomy, desolate landscape seem imbued with the eternally aggrieved spirit of an "unlucky" ("boming" 薄命) young maiden. The eulogy then turns to the kinds of morbid images typical of Baoyu and Daiyu in *Hongloumeng*, to images of death and burial, and to fantasies regarding one's mortal demise, one's funeral, and the specificity of one's corporeal dissolution:

昨承嚴命，既趨車而遠陟芳園；今犯慈威，復拄杖而遣拋孤柩。及聞蕙棺被燹，頓違共穴之情[…]

In her last hour, when I might else have gone to her, I was called in haste from the Garden by a Father's summons; when, grieving, I sought to take leave of her abandoned body, I could not see it because it had been removed by a Mothers command; and when I was told that her corpse had been consumed, I repented of my jesting of my vow that we should share the same grave-hole together, for that were now impossible, and that our ashes should commingle, for ash she is already become.[156]

In what ways does this passage, and the sentiments it expresses, relate to Li He's depiction of Su Xiaoxiao's tomb? Liu Riulian considers Li He's "Su xiaoxiao mu" as having been directly influenced by the "Nine Songs ("Jiuge" 九歌) section of the *Chuci*.[157] Baoyu's "Furong lei" can likewise be interpreted as performatively beckoning a dearly departed soul to return to the world of the living, recalling the soul formally by means of a traditional

156 *HLM*, Hawkes, 2014 v.3: 743.

157 Liu Ruilian 劉瑞蓮. "Cao Xueqin yu Li He 曹雪芹與李賀." Hongloumeng xuekan 紅樓夢學刊. 2 (1980): 294.

cultural poetic practice that treats pre-imperial poems like "Zhaohun" 招魂 ("spirit summoning") in the *Chuci* as its fountainhead.

A more psychologically critical reading might supplement this estimation with its opposite, positing a subterranean desire for the subterranean, viz., a desire to be united if only in death, or a desire to be united even if death is the only place where such a reunion could take place. Or, likewise, here may be posited a desire for death and being dead as something to be experienced, as a mode of being somewhere between metaphor and reality. Similarly, one might posit foundational experiences, memories, pseudo-memories, retroactive realizations, and otherwise. In this way, then, the logic of death interacts with, merges with, but also sometimes diverges from, the logic of sleep and dreaming.

The connection with Su Xiaoxiao is potentially deeper even than these first observations would indicate, as Baoyu's exact reference to shared burial ("gongxue" 共穴) recalls Su Xiaoxiao's treatment in Tang poetic verse, especially Zhang Hu's 張祜 line from his poem "On the Topic of Su Xiaoxiao's Tomb" ("Ti Su Xiaoxiao mu" 題蘇小小墓):[158]

漠漠窮塵地，蕭蕭古樹林。
臉濃花自發，眉恨柳長深。
夜月人何待，春風鳥為吟。
不知誰共穴，徒願結同心。

Vast and empty the arid wastelands
Soughing rustle the ancient wooded forest

Face powdered, flowers springing forth

158 *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 510. Compare with Stephen Owen, *The Late Tang: Chinese Poetry of the Mid-Ninth Century*, 2007: 170.

Brows furled, willows endlessly deep

In nighttime moonlight waiting for what?
In the spring winds but for birds intoning

One knows not with whom you were buried 共穴
In vain you longed for hearts entwined 結同心

Stephen Owen argues that Zhang Hu's poem postdates Li He's and appears to have been influenced by it.[159] As with Li He's poem, Bao Linghui's classic phrasing (e.g., "jie tongxin" 結同心) is directly quoted. Baoyu's "gongxue" wording appears in only two poems in the *Quan Tangshi*, this one as well as "Yearning to Return to One's Hometown" ("Sigui yin" 思歸引), also a Zhang Hu poem.[160]

Baoyu's eulogy for Qingwen continues:

石槨成災，愧逮同灰之誚。爾乃西風古寺，淹滯青燐；落日荒邱，零星白骨。楸榆颯颯，蓬艾蕭蕭。隔霧塘以啼猿，繞煙塍而泣鬼。豈道紅綃帳裡，公子情深；始信黃土隴中，女兒命薄！

In the burning-ground by the old temple, green ghost-fires flicker when the west wind blows. On its derelict mounds, scattered bones gleam whitely in the setting sun. The wind sighs in the tall trees and rustles in the dried-up grasses below. Gibbons call sadly from tombs that are hidden in the mist, and ghosts flit weeping down the alley-ways between the tombs. At such times must the young man in his crimson-curtained bed seem most cruelly afflicted; at such times must the maiden beneath the yellow earth seem most cruelly ill-fated.[161]

The thematic resonances with Li He's depiction of Su Xiaoxiao's tomb really come to the fore, the mist-curled tombs, the mid-autumn chill, the bleached white bones, the

159 Owen *ibid.*
160 *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 510.
161 *HLM*, Chapter 78. Hawkes 2014 v.3: 724-743.

soughing tree branches, up to and including the crimson-curtained chambers, all deployed for the purposes of vocally condemning the ill fate of women. Like Li He, Baoyu's sympathy is especially extended toward younger women of lower station and status, his own mother, by contrast, who bears the bulk of the blame for Qingwen's death, being overtly criticized at the eulogy's outset. Of course, Baoyu's preferences and sympathies align closely with socially constructed forms of desirability, a fact that the novel takes pain to emphasize, reflect upon, and criticize.

As for specific linguistic and textual borrowings, it would seem that another ghostly Li He offering ("Criticisms, 5 Songs" (感諷五首), 3rd Song) is most directly providing concrete inspiration for these lines:

南山何其悲，鬼雨灑空草。
長安夜半秋，風前幾人老。

低迷黃昏徑，嫋嫋青櫟道。
月午樹無影，一山唯白曉。

漆炬迎新人，幽壙螢擾擾。

Southern Mountain how doleful,
Ghost rain sprinkles the desolate field.
Chang'an night mid-autumn,
Upon the winds how many souls are rotting?

Hazily blurring, the twilight lane,
Softly swaying, the green elm road.
The moon midheaven, the tree without shadow,
The whole mountain purely of white dawn.

The will-o'-the-wisp[162] welcomes new arrivals,
The gloomy tombs as if by fireflies beset.[163]

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[162] Min Zeping 2015: 173.

[163] Li He 李賀 "Criticisms, 5 Songs" (感諷五首), 3rd Song. *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 390. For alternate translations, see Graham 1965: 114 and Hinton 2008: 294.

Baoyu's poem echoes Li's in pairing sunsets, decaying bodies, and bone remains. In both Baoyu's and Li He's lines, there appears the same deathly whiteness that is Li He's visual trademark, Baoyu's "white bones" ("baigu" 白骨) matching Li He's "white dawn" ("baixiao" 白曉), an idiosyncratic coinage that is used by no other poets in the *Quan Tangshi*, but which Li He uses twice, in this poem as well as in "Peony Planting Song" ("Mudan zhong qu" 牡丹種曲). The strange, almost paradoxical way that Li He captures "whiteness," it's as if he is channeling an extra-dimensional, otherworldly light, a sublimity parallel to his imagining will-o'-the-wisp phosphorescence as a sign of spirit life, as a faint trace of surreality at the gateway between mortal and immortal realms.

Structural or dialectical analysis can readily explain why exceptional phenomenal forms would become associated with exceptional color categories. *White* and *black* can be considered "exceptional," particularly if one maintains that "white is the combination of all colors" and "black is the absence of color." One might productively conceptualize Li He's white as being, in some sense, "the color of all colors," the color that "transcends color itself," thereby conducive to attempts to "represent the unrepresentable," to represent unbelievable transcendent worlds that lie just beyond this mortal coil.

Baoyu's "In the mist enveloping the tombs, a screeching gibbon,/ Trailing mist through the alleys, a weeping ghost" 隔霧壙以啼猿,/ 繞煙塍而泣鬼 conjure Li He's "The will-o'-the-wisp welcomes new arrivals,/ The gloomy tombs as if by fireflies beset" 漆炬迎新人,/ 幽壙螢擾擾, Li's "gloomy tomb" 幽壙 to be contrasted with *Hongloumeng*'s "in the mist enveloping the tombs" 隔霧壙. Li He's "ghost rain," itself a unique image,

could be interpreted as ghosts crying, to be compared with Baoyu's "weeping ghost" ("qigui" 泣鬼), especially if one interprets Baoyu's ghosts as producing the coiling smoke, either with their tears or with their misty ghostly essence. Both "ghost rain" and "weeping ghosts" could be understood as being celestial events caused by ethereal entities. Both lines, in addition, recall another well-known Li He poem characterized by spectral strangeness, "Dreaming Heaven" ("Mengtian" 夢天), a similarly hallucinatory night scene with another impossibly white moon. Its opening lines describe a night sky wherein the moon peers out from behind clouds, "The old rabbit and the cold toad [i.e., the moon] cry the colors of the sky,/ the cloud chambers half opened upon the wall slanted white" 老兔寒蟾泣天色,/ 雲樓半開壁斜白.[164] The image of the sky's "crying out" supernatural colors seems characteristically Li He. In the terms of this discussion, the image could be situated halfway between "weeping ghosts" and "ghost rain."

Ou Li-Chuan's (2011) analysis appears to demonstrate that Li He is one of the Tang poets most influencing the poetry of *Hongloumeng*.[165] It's a subtle matter estimating such things, whose quantification poses many difficulties. Meanwhile a question arises of why, given this level of influence, Li He is explicitly referenced in *Hongloumeng* less often than other middle and late Tang Dynasty poets.

Perhaps it is fitting that Li He would be more of a spectral presence. Perhaps his moniker "poet ghost," finds, in this way, further corroboration.[166] Baoyu's invocation of Li He in his "Hisbiscus Eulogy" ("Furong lei" 芙蓉誄), quoted above, is, after all, in a

164 *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 390.
165 Ou Li-Chuan 2011.
166 See Ou Li-Chuan 2020: 11.

funerary context. Li He's ghostly appellation, in turn, comes to inform Lin Daiyu's nickname "poetry demon"[167] ("shimo" 詩魔), the spectral qualities of her presence in the novel discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. Ou Li-Chuan takes the argument a step further, connecting Li He in his capacity as "shigui" 詩鬼 with contemporary textual records identifying the historical Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹, by most accounts the true author of *Hongloumeng*, as "caigui" 才鬼 ("talented ghost") or as possessing "guicai" 鬼才 ("ghostly talent"), on account of his poetic ability to penetrate the mysterious and ineffable.[168] In addition, Liu Riulian notes textual records in which acquaintances of the historical Cao Xueqin compare his artistry with Li He. As both Liu and Zhang Yun independently observe, his friend Duncheng explicitly compares his poetry with Li He's, praising Cao for embodying Li He's "eccentric style" ("qiqi" 奇氣). [169] Wang Yu likewise describes Cao Xueqin's poetry style as being just like Li He's, "subtle and aloof, romantic and eccentric" 詩幽情冷豔，浪漫奇詭.[170]

There is for Li He a robust historical cultural basis for his poetic exploration of dreaming and the movement of non-corporeal beings, even as he challenges cultural norms by exploring the limits of their logic. Perhaps this transgressive tendency prompts him to portray not only the dreaming soul that strays but also the posthumous soul that lingers,

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167 Hawkes 2014 v.2: 308.

168 Ou Li-Chuan 2020: 11-13.

169 Liu Ruilian 1980: 281. See also Zhang Yun 張雲. "Furong nü'er lei de wenzhang xue jiedu '芙蓉女兒誄' 的文章學解讀." Hongloumeng xuekan 紅樓夢學刊. 1 (2008): 162 and Wang Yu 2014: 5.

170 Wang Yu *ibid.* 4.

employing an emotional register uniquely capable of capturing haunting visions of the ill-begotten, the whispering winds as if the lingering trace of eternal spiritual aggrievement.

II.

As there is an interest here in conveying the shape of *Hongloumeng*'s engagement with key figures in late Tang poetry, it makes sense not only to focus on intertextual dialogue specifically between *Hongloumeng* and these poets, but also to consider connections between the poets themselves, to begin undercovering intermediary links in the chains of influence. Li Shangyin's poem "Imitating Changji" ("Xiao Changji" 效長吉) is written, as its title indicates, explicitly in Li He's style.[171] Uniquely, this short composition not only offers a nuanced opinion on core components of Li He's artistry, but it documents a remarkably self-reflective moment in the construction of a poetic space.

Stephen Owen posits a discrepancy between extant Li He's poetry, in which boudoir poetry appears somewhat marginalized, and a reputation for sensuousness that accrues to his poetry historically.[172] In historical Chinese boudoir poetry, longing, lonely women are often portrayed in doubtful self-reflection before finely wrought mirrors in exquisite, expensive, secluded domestic settings. Does the fact that Li Shangyin wrote a boudoir poem in imitation of Li He speak to the possibility that the transmitted tradition in its present form gives an incomplete picture of Li He's complete oeuvre? Or is there something specific to the content of this poem, whether stylistically, thematically, or otherwise, that resonates especially with Li He's concerns? The poem reads:

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171 *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 541.
172 Owen 2007: 177.

長長漢殿眉，窄窄楚宮衣。
鏡好鸞空舞，簾疏燕誤飛。
君王不可問，昨夜約黃歸。

Imitating Changji [i.e., Li He] 效長吉

Longingly long Hall of Han brows
Fittingly fit[173] Chu Palace robes
The mirror fine, the "luan" 鸞 in vain dances
The curtains sheer, the swallow in error flies away
On your Lord you cannot call
Just yesternight having with yellow mark returned[174]

It's noteworthy in the context of a study of *Hongloumeng* to see an image of Li He that identifies his poetry with reduplicative motifs. Linguistically, 長長 "changchang" is parallel to 窄窄 "zhaizhai." Imagistically, the simurgh's mistaking itself for its lover is parallel to a swallow's mistaking fine curtains for clear skies (or, perhaps, for fair clouds, depending on how one interprets line four). In this way, the "jia" 假/ "zhen" 真 ("fake"/ "real") dialectic so central to *Hongloumeng* appears at a critical moment in Li Shangyin's poem when representation (necessarily a "false" "construction") appears indistinguishable from what is being represented, and nature has been deceived by art and artifice. This perfectly mirrors (that is to say, *reverses*) how Ong, in his essay from the *Psycho-Sinology* volume discussed above

[173] Following Zheng Zaiying 2015: 31, note 3, who identifies the *Han Feizi* reference to King Ling of Chu 除靈王 (6th C. BCE), who was obsessed with "narrow waists" ("xiyao," 細腰). Owen has "tight-fitting" for "zhaizhai," which is the same idea, although "fittingly fit" is more appealing to me, as I'm keen to mirror the reduplicative parallel of "changchang" and "zhaizhai," and the way that "longingly long" and "fittingly fit" spontaneously present themselves seems especially "serendipitous," in the dynamic sense being developed in this dissertation.

[174] For an alternate translation, see Owen 2007 *ibid.*

in the introduction, characterizes the traditional Chinese dream interpreter as someone who, having been tasked with interpreting and deciphering unclear phenomena obliquely reflective of a complex world, must recognize how "all dreams, no matter whether actual or invented ones, are lies by nature — lies not so much in the sense that they run counter to fact as because they tend to mislead."[175] With the "luan" and the swallow, nature is being deceived by human artifice, whereas, in the case of the dream interpretation, the human practitioner risks being deceived by the nature of dreaming (i.e., by the nature of human dreams).

The mention in the final line of the maiden's (arguably, a concubine or someone of similar social station) having just the day before "applied face makeup" activates the English semantic space where the "vanity" of useless leisure, pleasure, desire, and excess meets with impossible tasks that prove ultimately "in vain," such as visiting the prince in search of his sustained attention and affection. Though the play of signification isn't quite as on the nose in Li Shangyin's original poem, it seems apparent that one is meant to regard the maiden in the poem as having, just like the birds being mentioned, a frustrating relation with the mirror's reflection.

One might resist Owen's portrayal of this poem as Li Shangyin's dismissing, trivializing, or "containing"[176] Li He's artistry. It can at times be difficult, no doubt, to distinguish superficiality from a spare aesthetic. It is far from clear that the poem reduces the application of makeup to empty artifice or pure deception, which are common misogynistic tropes, nor is it obvious that being compared to birds and flowers necessarily degrades one's

[175] Roberto K. Ong, "Image and Meaning: The Hermeneutics of Traditional Chinese Dream Interpretation," in *Psycho-Sinology: The Universe of Dreams in Chinese Culture*, Brown, Carolyn T., ed., 1988: 51.

[176] Owen *ibid.*

person, though feelings to this effect are understandable, relatable, and readily observable, including within *Hongloumeng*, such as when, in a dramatic moment in Chapter 36, the singing girl Charmante condemns the gift of a caged bird, while boldly decrying her own woeful proximity to the bird's kept state.[177]

The direction of analysis hinges somewhat on whether one regards Li Shangyin's imitation as clichéd or not, as parody or not, and, if parody, whether one regards the parody as being sympathetic. That Li Shangyin was called on to write Li He's obituary suggests a substantial connection between their persons and their artistry, and perhaps the parody was meant as a countervailing gesture, as a way for one sensuous, mysterious poet to distinguish himself from another. For as long as questions of what makes artistry clichéd or not continue to elude academic and philosophical articulation, particularly when posed at well over a millennium's remove, these issues will remain subject to speculation.

Lines 5 and 6 of Li He's "Folk Ballad" ("Yaosu" 謠俗) evidence reduplicative structures comparable to those Li Shangyin attributes to him, while the poem as a whole is characterized by, more clearly than in Li Shangyin's imitation, a level of social concern that rises above "mere tropes," beyond merely worrying before a gilded mirror:

上林蝴蝶小，試伴漢家君。
飛向南城去，誤落石榴裙。[178]
脈脈花滿樹，翾翾燕繞雲。
出門不識路，羞問陌頭人。

[177] *HLM*, Chapter 36. Hawkes 2014 v.2: 252-555.

[178] The "pomegranate skirt" ("shiliu qun" 石榴裙) in "Yaosu" prefigures Xiangling's pomegranate skirt in Chapter 62, which is accidentally soiled when she falls, or is partly pushed, into a puddle (Hawkes 2014 v.3: 258-263). The lotus flower and the caltrop are characterized by an ability to rise above worldly concerns despite being rooted in, and growing up amid dirt, foulness, and corruption.

"Folk Ballad" 謠俗

A Shanglin butterfly in youth,
I tried to accompany the Han Prince.
Flying now toward Nancheng,
Carelessly letting slip my pomegranate skirt.
Lovingly 脈脈 the flowers cover the trees,
Flowingly 翾翾 the swallows coil around the clouds.
Leaving [the palace] I don't know the way,
Bashfully asking a man on the street.

This poem is remarkable less for its assumption of a female poetic voice and more for its thematic focus, its portrayal of the insecurity, doubt, and risk, but also opportunity, involved in a young woman's journey through an unequal, patriarchal society. Li He differs from his reflection in Li Shangyin's mirror, at least insofar as the implied female speaker in "Yaosu" seems to react to and deal with discontent differently than how Li Shangyin's portrayal would suggest. In Li Shangyin's version of Li He, the female subject of the poem is ambivalent before the mirror and before the palace fate awaiting her, whereas in "Yaosu" the female subject is decisive in leaving behind the neglect and loneliness of the imperial harem to seek opportunity elsewhere. For a historical artist to represent the latter gesture seems potentially more radical.

Stephen Owen argues that "Xiao Changji" more closely resembles a standard boudoir poem than a take on this genre that is specifically Li He's.[179] Many poems in the *Quan Tangshi* exhibit comparable reduplications, if not comparable thematics as well. It is unclear, furthermore, whether a specific Li He poem is meant to serve as a model for the imitation. The comparatively more radical gesture in "Yaosu," viz., taking leave of gendered,

[179] Owen *ibid.*

hierarchical obligations, appears more distinctly in keeping with Li He's style and reputation, to be compared with his "Song of the Palace Maiden" ("Gongwa ge" 宮娃歌),[180] in which the female speaker of the poem not only begs release from palace servitude but addresses the request directly to the prince who keeps her:

蠟光高懸照紗空，花房夜搗紅守宮。
象口吹香鼉覆暖，七星掛城聞漏板。
寒入罘罳殿影昏，彩鸞簾額著霜痕。
啼蛄吊月鉤欄下，屈膝銅鋪鎖阿甄。
夢入家門上沙渚，天河落處長洲路。
願君光明如太陽，放妾騎魚撇波去。

Song of the Palace Maiden" 宮娃歌

The candles are high hung, through thin shades shining unfiltered
In floral chambers late at night is pound the red palace-keeper[181]

The elephant mouth blows incense, the mats nice and warm
The Seven Stars are strung above the city, audible the dripboard clock

The cold invades the watchtower screen, the palace shadows darken
The embroidered phoenix on the curtain head is draped in a frost dusting

Weeping toads lament the moon a well-wrought balustrade beneath
Behind bent knee buckle and copper knocker this Ah-Zhen 阿甄 locked away[182]

In dreams she passes through family gates upon a sandy shore
Where yonder Heaven's River descends, there lies Changzhou Road

I wish my lord's brilliance could be more like the sun's
Let your maiden mount a fish and, braving waves, be gone!

[180] *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 391.
[181] Min Zeping 2015: 208.
[182] *Ibid* 208.

As with other Tang poets, Li He's influence on *Hongloumeng* can sometimes be observed indirectly in terms of word choice and thematics. Remarkably, "Gongwa ge" 宮娃歌 appears to be the only poem in the *Quan Tangshi* that uses the phrase "trace of frost" ("shuanghen" 霜痕), a phrase describing moonlight (i.e., the moon as if lightly coating the scenery with its frosty light). In *Hongloumeng*, "shuanghen" appears in Chapter 76, when Daiyu and Xiangyun slip away from the mid-autumn moon-watching festivities to compose their own linking couplets, thereby fulfilling, in their own way, the thwarted promise of the reconstituted poetry club. The line in question is Daiyu's, "sky-falling snow frost-tipped" 空剩雪霜痕,[183] a subtle image of falling snow illuminated by the cool light of the moon. In addition to the "bigger picture," more associative parallels to be drawn, it is in part these fine-grained glimpses of influence whose accretion over the course of *Hongloumeng* allows one to posit Li He as one of the novel's primary poetic precursors.

Li He's poetry is exceptional for its sensitivity toward women and the lower classes. Liu Ruilian (1980) also isolates "Gongwa ge" when comparing Li He's poetry with the poetry of *Hongloumeng*, maintaining that the kind of sympathy Li He shows in this work toward female resistance to oppression is shared by the author of *Hongloumeng*, especially in terms of how Yuanchun's difficulties, suffering, and untimely death in the imperial palace are depicted in the novel.[184]

The reference in line 2 to the "red palace keeper" ("hongshougong" 紅守宮) is to a cultural practice partly lost to legend and myth, but which nevertheless speaks to historical

183 *HLM*, Ch. 76. Hawkes 2014 v.3: 665.
184 Liu Ruilian 1980: 294.

attitudes and beliefs regarding socially-constructed notions of feminine chastity and purity and their relationship to certain forms of gendered labor. Min Zeping cites an entry for "red palace keepers" from Zhang Hua's 张华 *Records of Natural Sciences* (*Bowuzhi* 博物志) detailing a kind of lizard that is fed cinnabar until it turns red, the lizard then to be ground into a substance to be applied to the skin of palace women, ostensibly to preserve norms of chastity, hence the name "palace keeper" (i.e., palace guard.)[185] Magical properties were being assumed, as it is remarked that "for [the maidens'] whole lives [the mark of the powder] does not disappear, only if sexual intercourse occurs will it disappear."[186]

Labor that occurs late at night in the inner chambers presupposes its female occupants as the ones performing it. Highlighted is the situatedness of signification, time (late at night) and location (the inner quarters) critical to the articulation of this labor's embodied social meaning. The social form to emerge occupies an interstitial space between labor and ritual, even between reason and unreason. There is a surreal quality to the image of palace women nightly engaged in repetitive ritualized activity producing a strange substance. One might have difficulty imagining magical properties adhering in such a substance, but the possibility of there being real psychological effects of performing gendered ritual labor under these extenuating circumstances is difficult to deny.

Yao Wenxian 姚文燮 in *Annotations on Changgu* (*Changgu jizhu* 昌谷集注) develops an interpretive theory of the exceptional final couplet of this poem, in which the speaker of the poem assumes the maiden's own voice in directly appealing for freedom and release

185 Min Zeping 2015: 207-208.

186 Zhang Hua's 张华, "Records of Natural Sciences" (Bowuzhi 博物志), "Zhongshen bu mie. Wei fangshishi ze mie," 终身不灭. 唯房室事则灭. Quoted in Min Zeping 2015: 208.

from gendered palace servitude. In addition, the details of Yao's account shed light on how, historically, the contents of dreams might appear connected with the fears, and wishes, and desires of its dreamer. Yao recalls the story of how, in the eighth year of the Yuanhe 元和 period, there was a great summer flood. The emperor took it as a sign ("xiang" 象) of excess "yin" 陰 and decided to expel 300 carriages of women from the imperial harem, intending to send away, later on an autumn night, those maidens not yet chosen. Yao describes how, as the autumn flood was about to sweep the remaining maidens away, they could dream of nothing but water, hoping that the king would "valiantly shine like the autumn sun" 願君王皦如秋日 in releasing them (as it releases the day at sunset), setting the maidens free to brave the flood's torrents with ease, as though they had harnessed fish to ride.[187]

This imaginative account offers a fascinating glimpse of how dreams reflect and accent everyday waking experiences, but do so in subtle, complex ways that often lead observers to arrive upon markedly different interpretive conclusions. Researchers finding themselves dealing with semantic spaces that, like this one, are symbolically *overdetermined* will need to develop interpretative strategies. In this case, there is a certain plausibility, independent of historical systems of correlative cosmology, to the idea that palace ladies, beset by floods for which they are being personally blamed, would only be able to dream of water. At the same time, the cultural associations between femininity and water that *Hongloumeng* inherits from the historical Chinese literary tradition can be observed distinctly coloring this anecdote's articulation. That water appears not as a mortal threat but as a

[187] Quoted in Min Zeping 2015: 209.

chance to escape to freedom could be related to conceptions of water as something simultaneously external but also essential to one's humanity.

General trends in the intertextual space that *Hongloumeng* is developing can be observed. Even as specific details vary considerably, again and again women are being depicted pursuing similar kinds of pursuits. Not only is their labor being depicted repeatedly extending into the late night, but, whether that labor is essential (e.g., pounding clothing) or unessential/ ritual (e.g., pounding ritual substances to preserve magically one's sexual purity), and whether it is being performed by upper-class women or by lower-class women, it appears overwhelmingly to be gendered labor, or at least to have prominently gendered components to it. "Yaosu" and "Gongwa ge" appear remarkable, then, for recognizing in the resistance to, or refusal of, gendered duties and obligations something eventful, a meaningful rupture in the reproduction of status quo institutions.

III.

Given the potential complexity of this kind of intertextual investigation, it is sensible to conclude this chapter with some encapsulating remarks. The investigatory method employed has involved the discovery, refinement, and clarification of *Hongloumeng*'s intertextual engagement, focusing especially on the dialogue between *Hongloumeng* and late Tang poetry, in this chapter beginning with Li He, and in subsequent chapters considering Li Shangyin and Wen Tingyun, before considering thematic patterns in the last body chapter.

Already with Li He, outlines of a pattern are emerging. It is becoming clear that the author of *Hongloumeng* is not making arbitrary choices regarding which poems to reference. Rather, the author's preference toward Middle and Late Tang poetry and the central role he

ascribes to female representation in his work appear intimately connected. The spectral version of Li He that influences *Hongloumeng* is one in which the ghosts that emerge retain haunting traces of the effects that historically constructed forms of gender and class have had upon their mortal lives. Meanwhile the boudoir-lamenting version of Li He with which *Hongloumeng* converses is a poet that takes the representation of women in poetry to new places, expressing forms of understanding, sympathy, and ideological support largely unparalleled in earlier poetic works in this literary tradition.

Simultaneously, one can observe how frequently the poems with which *Hongloumeng* interacts also feature images of dreaming, especially dreaming as an expression of longing, loneliness, and romantic desire. The preliminary forms that these patterns assume will be subject in the following chapters to a further nuancing of their articulation. Though elsewhere in the historical Chinese literary tradition one can observe dreams that are being interpreted along purely external lines, as "objective" messages and visions "from without," the vision of dreaming that emerges in the poems that *Hongloumeng* references tend to have, in addition, more personal, subjective elements that reflect the attitudes, beliefs, fears, and desires of their speaker.

In "Little Su Song" and in "Dreaming Heaven," something akin to the external world appears, but it is unclear whether a waking or dreaming vision is being depicted. The universe itself, or at least one's perception of it, appears imbued with personality and emotion. *Hongloumeng* inherits elements of this vision, also depicting a personified Heaven (indeed, the sky itself) weeping for what it observes in the mortal world. In this vision, to dream is to interact with a maximally meaningful semantic space, whose every element contributes to overall meaning. In "Folk Ballad," the aspiration to leave the palace and to

seek greater opportunity elsewhere is paired with the image of the palace maiden as a butterfly, evoking the Zhuangzian association between butterflies and dreaming in the context of gendered, class-based discontent. In "Song of the Palace Maiden," the dream being cited is of escaping gendered subordination in the palace to return to one's hometown.

Exploring this intertextual dialogue can shed light on *Hongloumeng*'s exceptional worldview, not only its celebration of female artistry and ability but also its unrelenting depiction of the hardships faced by women in a patriarchal society. As Han Hujing observes, *Hongloumeng* is unique not only for representing female hardship, but for showing how, regardless of one's social class, occupation, or even religious affiliation, all women in patriarchal society risk suffering the worst of fates.[188]

The vision of dreaming shared by the Tang poets occupying *Hongloumeng*'s referential space is one that recognizes desire and sexuality as being essential to the nature of dreaming, but one that does not presuppose a straightforward, reductive relationship between desire and the contents of one's dreams. While none of the quoted poems exhibits surreal dream symbolism and encoded messaging quite on the level of Baoyu's dream in Chapter 5, a relationship between dreaming, otherworldliness, and surreality is being evidenced, as in the case of the neither-present-nor-absent spirit of Su Xiaoxiao recurrent in Li He's work.

The relatively low resolution of historical and historical literary evidence gives pause to scholars and researchers attempting to locate specific accounts of dreaming and dream interpretation within clean, clear, mutually exclusive categorical spaces. This is why, while developing a pragmatic typology of the kinds of dreams evidenced in historical Chinese

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[188] Han Huijing 韓惠京. "Cong nüxingzhuyi guandian kan 'Hongloumeng' 從女性主義觀點看「紅樓夢」," Hongloumeng xuekan 紅樓夢學刊 4 (2000): 190.

textual records, Campany warns that, "The distinct models of dreaming that [he] ha[s] separated out [...] for purposes of analysis are sometimes found combined."[189] Indeed, this warning seems inadvertently to understate the methodological issue at hand. When it comes to the beliefs held by a given historical individual, one should be assuming, absent evidence to the contrary, a composite model of dreaming, viz., a cluster of different perspectives on dreaming that very well might contradict each other and which likely have not been scrutinized for consistency.

This insight should, then, be applied to questions of the historicity of belief. A conceptual model that admits of "half-beliefs," as well as semi-conscious, and unconscious, modes of thinking and being, will be better equipped for conceptualizing the liminal qualities of dreaming as an historically situated (half-)experience. The question isn't necessarily whether a particular dream manifests, e.g., clear-cut literal belief in "contact by exogenous spirits,"[190] but how, whether consciously or unconsciously, literal belief is being indiscriminately interwoven with half-belief, unconscious belief, and metaphorical thinking to produce the unique accounts of dreaming that play such a major role in historical Chinese art and poetry.

The intertextual character of Baoyu's "Furong lei" lends this sorrowful work the gravity of centuries upon centuries of historical Chinese literary tradition. By resurrecting old ghosts and millennia-old visions of what was already, in the Tang Dynasty, ancient spectral imagery, the author of *Hongloumeng* imbues an impromptu ritual celebrating the untimely

189 Campany 2020: 49.
190 *Ibid* 33.

death of an ostensibly unremarkable maid with all the pathos that the author, activating the more radical components of his "memorial" project, recognizes the event as deserving.

Chapter Two

Hongloumeng 紅樓夢, the Poetry of Li Shangyin 李商隱, and Intertextual Developments in the Representation of Dreams and Desire in Historical Chinese Literature

Even as *Hongloumeng*'s poetic resonance with late Tang poetry is coming into focus, further investigation of this intertextual space appears needed. What emerges from an extended analysis of, and rumination upon, pertinent textual evidence is a bolstered sense for how consistently *Hongloumeng* foregrounds those voices in the Chinese literary tradition, many clustering loosely around the late Tang era (i.e., 9th and 10th centuries CE), who in their artistry portray tradition-defying forms of gendered resistance previously obscured or marginalized. From how these Tang works relate dreaming to gendered resistance *Hongloumeng* draws inspiration, developing key countertrends in Chinese intertextuality.

The task at the outset of this chapter is to organize and outline prominent moments in the text and poetry of *Hongloumeng* where Li Shangyin and his poetry are explicitly referenced (i.e., by name), evaluating the thematic and conceptual significance of these references, paying special attention to the representation of dreaming, emotions, identity, and desire. The scope of inquiry will then be broadened to incorporate more implicit connections, especially poetic material from *Hongloumeng* that can be traced to specific lines of Li Shangyin's poems, or which exhibit thematic concerns manifestly in dialogue with the ideas and values evidenced in Li's work.

The text of *Hongloumeng* references Li Shangyin by his style name Li Yishan 李義山.[191] The first explicit reference to the poet is, remarkably, in a comment that appears at least partly defamatory. In Chapter 40, after hearing the faint remnants of live music, the players' practicing as if carried by the wind, Baoyu and few other garden occupants decide to relocate with Grandmother Jia to Xichun's pavilion. Drawn by its waterside acoustics, they summon the practicing musicians there to play for them. To reach the pavilion, the group splits in two to take specially manned boats, Baoyu commenting that, to his mind, the waterway's fallen and withered lotus leaves ruin the scene. Whereas Baochai comments on the impracticality of removing them, that autumn's never-ending parties having left the servants no spare time for the task, Daiyu references a line of poetry by Li Shangyin that, to her mind, expresses why the withered lotus leaves should *not* be removed:

「我最不喜歡李義山的詩，只喜他這一句：『留得殘荷聽雨聲』。偏你們又不留著殘荷了。」寶玉道：「果然好句！以後偺們別叫拔去了。」

'I can't abide the poems of Li Shangyin,' said Daiyu, 'but there is just one line of his that I am rather fond of: Leaves but dead lotus leaves for the rain to play on. Trust you *not* to "leave the dead lotus leaves"!' 'It is a good line, I agree,' said Baoyu.[192]

The full Li Shangyin poem reads as follows:

宿駱氏亭寄懷崔雍崔袞

竹塢無塵水檻清，相思迢遞隔重城。
秋陰不散霜飛晚，留得枯荷聽雨聲。[193]

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[191] See *HLM*, Chapter 40 (Hawkes 2014 v.2: 362-363), Chapter 49 (Hawkes 2014 v.2: 592-593), and Chapter 62 (Hawkes 2014 v.3: 244).

[192] *HLM*, Chapter 40. Hawkes 2014 v.2: 362-363.

[193] *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 539.

Lodging at Luo Pavilion Thinking of Cui Yong and Cui Gun

Bamboo col without dust, the water beneath the banister clear,
Yearning thoughts of vast scope,[194] spanning the multi-walled city.
The autumn clouds have not scattered, the frost falls late this year,
Upon what's left of withered lotuses listening to the sound of rain.

Seasonally apt, Daiyu's reference evokes an autumn scene of somber tone and hue that nonetheless shimmers with immediacy. The clear waters of autumn are evocative of notions of "qiushui" 秋水, seasonal waters whose clarity and penetrating depth are associated in the Chinese literary tradition with dark brown, usually feminine-coded eyes. The depth and clarity of the first line are contrasted with the persistent haziness of the second line. The reference to the lateness of the autumn frost speaks to the frost's usual role, alongside the autumn blooming of chrysanthemum flowers, both discussed in greater detail below, in signifying the season. The fresh air and clear skies that follow a crisp autumn frost have yet to attain, the overcast skies refusing to part reflective of the poet's lingering anguish.

It's perhaps uncoincidental that Daiyu would be the first character in *Hongloumeng* to reference Li Shangyin by name, the depths of this correspondence to be demonstrated in the remarks to follow. There is reason, at the very least, to search for implicit, unconscious, or otherwise subterranean layers of meaning to Daiyu's remark. If one is not to imagine Daiyu's abhorring Li Shangyin's poetry, and if, on the contrary, the poetry attributed to her appears uniquely influenced by Li Shangyin, what meaning lies in Daiyu's disavowal?

Perhaps the disavowal is reflective of Daiyu's basic contrariness, especially when it comes to Baoyu's statements and opinions. Another possibility is that Li Shangyin's

[194] Following Zheng Zaiying, *Li Shangyin shi quanji: huibian huizhu huijiao* 李商隱詩全集: 匯編匯註匯, 2015: 47, note 3.

reputation for sensuous verse precludes, given norms in Qing Dynasty gendered expression, Daiyu's unqualified approval, either as a young person or, especially, as a young woman. In addition to these considerations, it is sensible to question whether Li Shangyin's poetry speaks to themes of love, loss, and mortality that challenge and trouble Daiyu's sensibilities, while nonetheless influencing her own poetic expression. It would be natural, then, for this ambivalence to be reflected in the qualified, indirect manner of Daiyu's remark. Notice how Daiyu's ostensibly only liking this one line of Li Shangyin belies how centrally images of withered leaves and flowers figure in Li Shangyin's oeuvre. The more one reflects, in turn, upon how centrally these images also figure in Daiyu's poetry, the more robust appear the conceptual and thematic connections beneath the surface of Daiyu's disavowal.

Li Shangyin's poem "Fallen Flowers" ("Luohua" 落花) employs thematic elements that might sit uneasily with a sensitive character who identifies with flowers:

高閣客竟去，小園花亂飛。
參差連曲陌，迢遞送斜暉。
腸斷未忍掃，眼穿仍欲稀。[195]
芳心向春盡，所得是沾衣。[196]

The guests of tall chambers have already gone
The small garden's flowers in disarray falling
Jigjaggedly lining the crooked path
Over yonder sending off the slanting sun
I'm too heartbroken to sweep them away
Staring off into the distance as they're ever more scarce
Of these fragrant hearts by the end of spring
All that remains is a dampened robe

[195] Following Zheng Zaiying 2015: 305 in substituting the last character "gui" 歸 in the *Quan Tangshi* version (*juan* 539) with "xi" 稀. Compare to Liu and Li 1969: 136.

[196] *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 539.

One can readily observe thematic and conceptual parallels with *Hongloumeng*, especially the thoughts and actions of the lead heroine Lin Daiyu. There is the same emphasis on the transient, often heartbreaking character of mortal existence, the guests leaving as quickly as "caixia" 彩霞 clouds scatter at sunset. In this fleeting moment, the flower's falling appears as if midway between life and death. Should one imagine that the flower experiences its fall from grace, or has awareness already fled this existential state? It is perhaps the co-presence of life and death here that renders this evanescence such a clear glimpse of life itself in its capacity as an evanescent phenomenon, if not defined then at least outlined by its own negativity.

There is cause here to pause and consider how the imagery in this poem presupposes a physicalized hierarchy of realms and modes of being that prefigures *Hongloumeng*'s ontology, with immortal souls descending into mortal vessels, and mortals attempting to transcend (and often, as in the case of Jia Jing, observably failing to transcend[197]) mortality through revelation, cultivation, and, eventually, levitation. Speaking to the novel's ontology in more abstract terms, one might try to imagine what follows from postulating a form of finitude that is as much a fall from infinity as infinity is a matter of finitude's own self-transcendence. Already in the poetry of Li Shangyin and the late Tang poets, one can observe clear signs of motifs of upward and downward movement, employed often in dialogue with imagery pertaining to the sun and moon's movement across the sky, or to seasonal changes in the direction and temperature of the wind, or to the migration of birds.

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[197] See *HLM,* Chapter 63. Hawkes 2014 v.3: 265-305.

"Luohua" 落花, "fallen flowers," can be compared to "canhua" 殘花, "withered flowers," or "remnant flowers." David Hawkes in his translation of the title of Chapter 27 renders "canhong" 殘紅 "fallen flowers."[198] Chapter 27 famously depicts Daiyu's practice, as idiosyncratic as it is iconic, of gathering and burying the springtime fallen flowers, a habit or quirk somewhere between obsessive compulsion and personalized ritual. The understated celestial shading to these activities was previewed in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, in the discussion of Li He's "Tianshang yao."

Consider, in this light, Li Shangyin's poem "The Withered Flowers" ("Canhua" 殘花):

殘花

殘花啼露莫留春，尖發誰非怨別人。
若但掩關勞獨夢，寶釵何日不生塵。[199]

The Withered Flowers

The withered flowers weep dew, none to stay the spring.
In winter prematurely blooming, who wouldn't resent now departing?[200]
If merely behind closed doors dwelling on lonely dreams,
How could even a precious hairpin not collect dust?

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198 "Beauty Perspiring sports with butterflies by the Raindrop Pavilion, And Beauty Suspiring weeps for fallen blossoms by the Flowers' Grave" 埋香塚飛燕泣殘紅. *HLM*, Chapter 27. Hawkes 2014 v.2: 2.

199 *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 540.

200 Historical and contemporary commentary on "jianfa" 尖發 in this line is cacophonous; compare Zheng Zaiying 2015: 81 with Liu Xuekai 2011: 1772-1773. I currently favor an interpretation of "prematurely blooming," indicating that the flower in question might be the winter blooming plum blossom. In personal communication on social media, the author Alice Poon once suggested this interpretation, partly based on how Cantonese is presently spoken. This interpretation also seems to cohere neatly with certain historiographic details, whereby Li Shangyin's own "premature blooming" as a scholar and poet was disappointed by later failures as a scholar bureaucrat.

The unnamed winter blooming flower, perhaps a plum blossom, could be interpreted as a metaphor for the premature brilliance, and untimely dissipation, of Li Shangyin's own public intellectual governmental career. In each of these poems, there is a recurrent emphasis on the edge of transitional states, whether the very end of the season, the remnants of a dream remembered, or the fragments of speech or music overheard. These liminalities combine to create dramatic contrast (e.g., the "death of spring," "the final flowers") that speaks to the reflexive morbidity of Daiyu's remarks and the artistic output attributed to her.

Li Shangyin's "Canhua" is explicitly mentioned in *Hongloumeng* in Chapter 62, in a casual debate over whether "precious hairpin" ("baochai" 寶釵, the same "baochai" as in Xue Baochai's name) counts as a classical reference. Baochai at first argues that it isn't a true reference, giving Xiangling the chance to intervene and demonstrate her newfound erudition by citing not one but two relevant Tang poems, one featuring "precious jade" ("baoyu" 寶玉) and one featuring "precious hairpin" ("baochai" 寶釵), viz., Li Shangyin's "Canhua."[201] In a more speculative mode, Ou Li-Chuan argues that *Hongloumeng* evokes this poem to hint at Baochai's own "neglected fate," her being married to Baoyu but ultimately "left to collect dust," so to speak, when Baoyu leaves her forever to become a monk.[202] Ou draws a parallel between being covered in snow (i.e., the fate depicted in Baochai's painting in Baoyu's dream in Chapter 5) and being covered in dust.[203]

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201 *HLM*, Chapter 62. Hawkes 2014 v.3: 243-245.
202 Ou Li-Chuan 2020: 314.
203 *Ibid.*

Li Shangyin also imagines "canhua" in the following, one of his "untitled" ("Wuti" 無題) poems:

相見時難別亦難，東風無力百花殘。
春蠶到死絲方盡，蠟炬成灰淚始乾。
曉鏡但愁雲鬢改，夜吟應覺月光寒。
蓬山此去無多路，青鳥殷勤為探看。[204]

"Untitled" ("Wuti" 無題)

Finding time to meet is hard, parting ways is even harder,
The east wind has faded, the hundred flowers withered.
Only when the spring silkworm expires are the threads exhausted,
Only after the candle turns to ash do the tears dry up.
In the morning mirror she just fears her cloud tresses are waning,
At evening recitations he likely feels the moonlight cold.
To Peng Mountain from here there aren't that many roads,
Green Bird, won't you go for me and have an earnest look? [205]

Again, the emphasis is on the edge of spring, life's rounding its descent, sorrowful before the scattering light. Much of this poem would fit comfortably in the text of *Hongloumeng*, especially, of course, the "worrying maiden before the mirror" that recalls *Hongloumeng*'s "flower before the mirror" ("jingzhong hua" 鏡中花), but also the parallel being drawn between dripping candles and tears. As James Liu observes, "[j]ust as the silkworm imprisons itself in the cocoon formed by its own endless silk, so does the poet enwrap himself in the endless sorrow of his own making, and just as the candle is consumed by its own heat, so is the poet by his own passion."[206] Liu's description of Li Shangyin's poem doubles as a rough characterization of Daiyu, while also recalling the hibiscus card

[204] *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 539.
[205] For alternate translation, see Liu and Li 1969: 66-67.
[206] *Ibid.*

Daiyu draws in Chapter 63, her fortune reading, "Your own self, not the East Wind, is your undoing." 莫怨東風當自嗟.[207] As Ann Walthner notes, this Ouyang Xiu (1007-1072) quotation is from a poem discussing Wang Zhaojun 王昭君 (52-19 BCE);[208] the original "one being self-undone" is Emperor Yuan of Han (Han Yuandi 漢元帝, 1st C. BCE), who too late found out that the court painter, having not received from Wang a bribe, had obscured her beauty.[209]

Indeed, if the candles are thought to be red candles, then this image especially recalls Daiyu's "tears of blood" meant to repay her cosmic debt. Ou Li-Chuan identifies Li Shangyin's "Canhua" as possible inspiration for the idea in *Hongloumeng* that the repayment of Daiyu's cosmic debt would take the form of a whole lifetime of tears. Just like, in Li Shangyin's poem, all the silkworm's thread and all the candle's wax are wholly exhausted in fulfilling their function, so too are all Daiyu's tears singularly dedicated to this one spiritual commitment.[210]

In Daiyu's long "Ode for the Burial of Flowers" ("Zanghuayin" 葬花吟), the expression "withered flowers" ("canhua" 殘花) appears twice:

花謝花飛飛滿天，紅消香斷有誰憐？
遊絲軟繫飄春榭，落絮輕沾撲繡簾。
閨中女兒惜春暮，愁緒滿懷無著處，
手把花鋤出繡簾，忍踏落花來復去？

The blossoms fade and falling fill the air
Of fragrance and bright hues bereft and bare.
Floss drifts and flutters round the Maiden's bower,

207 *HLM*, Chapter 63. Hawkes 2014 v.3: 279.
208 Walthner 1989: 71-72.
209 For discussion of Wang Zhaojun, see Rouzer 2001: 180-200.
210 Ou Li-Chuan 2020: 355.

Or softly strikes against her curtained door.
The Maid, grieved by these signs of spring's decease,
Seeking some means her sorrow to express.
Has rake in hand into the garden gone,
Before the fallen flowers are trampled on.[211]

[…]

試看春殘花漸落，便是紅顏老死時。
一朝春盡紅顏老，花落人亡兩不知。

As petals drop and spring begins to fail,
The bloom of youth, too, sickens and turns pale.
One day, when spring has gone and youth has fled,
The Maiden and the flowers will both be dead.[212]

Images of "luohua" and "canhua" appear in tandem. In addition, "Zanghuayin," like "Canhua," employs "the end of spring" ("chunjin" 春盡, what Hawkes renders "when spring has gone"). The use of the expression "spring's sunset" ("chunmu" 春暮, what Hawkes renders "spring's decease") as a synonym for "the end of spring" demonstrates the convergence of liminalities hypothesized in the introduction, in this case, how the end of the day relates to, at the level both of language and of imagery, the end of the season. Daiyu's poem evokes the transience of life, how mortal beings inevitably cannot "remain" ("liu" 留), how all things scatter, disappearing to the "edges" of reality, in this case, to "the ends of the earth" and to "the farthest reaches of the sky" ("tianjintou" 天盡頭), where all is dissipated and nothing stays grounded. In this way, "canhua" 殘花 can be understood not simply as

[211] *HLM*, Chapter 27. Hawkes 2014 v.2: 22-23.
[212] *HLM*, Chapter 27. Hawkes 2014 v.2: 24-25.

withered or fallen flowers but as remaining, or remnant flowers, in a sense, final flowers, flowers that for Daiyu have all the finality of death itself.

This poem evokes the sunset while discussing the cuckoo bird ("dujuan" 杜鵑) whose grievous song heralds the end of spring. Daiyu in this poem connects her own "tears of blood," shed over the fate of fellow fallen flowers, to the cuckoo bird's mythical tears, his anguished bird song and red beak associated in Chinese mythology with Du Yu 杜宇, a legendary pre-imperial Shu 蜀 ruler who is said to have transformed into a cuckoo bird, whose doleful cawing from deep in the forest, those "cries of blood" staining his beak red, is treated as an expression of the anguish and alienation of a king in exile.

The task of tracing connections between different forms of appearance of "remaining," including "liu" 留 and "can" 殘 as previously discussed, can be expanded to include the "traces" and "surplus" ("hen" 痕) that figure prominently in both Li Shangyin's work and in *Hongloumeng*. The following lines from Shi Xiangyun's second crabapple poem in Chapter 37 hinge on this connection:

玉燭滴乾風裏淚，晶簾隔破月中痕。

Like jade candles forming teardrops in northwesterly winds,
Like a crystal curtain making mottled the moon's reflection.[213]

[213] Translation my own. *HLM,* Chapter 37. Compare to Hawkes 2014 v.2: 284-285.

Candle imagery here reemerges, the notion of a "jade candle" that cries wax evocative once more of the character Daiyu. The poem draws a parallel between tears ("lei" 淚), faint traces of liquid materializing one's emotions, and traces ("hen" 痕) of moonlight.

Also from Chapter 37, consider how Tanchun's crabapple poem demonstrates significant thematic and linguistic overlap with Li Shangyin's "Fallen Flowers" ("Luohua" 落花):

斜陽寒草帶重門，苔翠盈鋪雨後盆。
玉是精神難比潔，雪為肌骨易銷魂。
芳心一點嬌無力，倩影三更月有痕。
莫道縞仙能羽化，多情伴我詠黃昏。

Upon slanting sun and cooling grass, closing the inner gates
Moss jade blanketing, after a shower, the flower pot
Of jade the spirit, hard to match in purity
Of snow these flesh and bones, easily enchanting
A fragrant heart a touch frail and listless
Of a fair beauty in the third watch moon a trace
Speak not of white-silk immortals capable of flight
My beloved [white crabapple blossom] joins me in singing the twilight[214]

"Fragrant heart" ("fangxin" 芳心) appears in this poem as well as in "Luohua." "Fangxin" appears no fewer than 26 times in the whole *Quan Tangshi*, with Li Shangyin, in using it three times in three different poems, being the poet in the *Quan Tangshi* to use it the most, followed by Wen Tingyun (who uses it two times in two different poems).

214 Translation my own. *HLM,* Chapter 37. Compare to Hawkes 2014 v.2: 22-23.

In addition, as Ou Li-Chuan notes,[215] the line "Of a fair beauty in the third watch moon a trace" 倩影三更月有痕 echoes the lines "High on the wall the moon leaves its trace" 牆高月有痕 from the Li Shangyin poem "Apricot Flowers" ("Xinghua" 杏花). This poem employs flower motifs to speak, somewhat obliquely, to themes of personal struggle and alienation, fate and fortune, and the relationship between dreams and desire, imbuing the image of apricot tree flowers' falling with all the pathos of a fall from grace in the human world:

上國昔相值，亭亭如欲言。
異鄉今暫賞，脈脈豈無恩。
援少風多力，牆高月有痕。
為含無限意，遂對不勝繁。
仙子玉京路，主人金谷園。
幾時辭碧落，誰伴過黃昏。
鏡拂鉛華膩，爐藏桂燼溫。
終應催竹葉，先擬詠桃根。
莫學啼成血，從教夢寄魂。
吳王采香徑，失路入煙村。

"Apricot Flowers" ("Xinghua" 杏花)

In the capital, once mutual our esteem
Upright and dignified, as if verging on speaking
Now in a foreign land, for the time being, admired
But, their ogling! Oh, how unfeeling!

The paling[216] spare, the wind fierce
High on the wall the moon leaves its trace 月有痕 ["illusion"]

215 Ou Li-Chuan 2011: 128.

216 As Zheng Zaiying 2015: 627 notes, "yuan shao" 援少 here indicates a bamboo fence ("yuan" 援) that, by way of punning, is not helping ("yuan" 援) block the fierce winds. Possibly a metaphor for the poet's own aggrieved sense of being unaided in his professional bureaucrat career. Based on a suggestion by the poet and scholar Walter K. Lew (personal communication, social media), I have translated "yuan" as "paling," the idea being that a "paling" fence would comparably connote "to impale" (in literal cases, usually a demonstrably unhelpful act.)

Being filled now with limitless thoughts
I turn toward innumerable grace [profusion]

Celestial of Jade Capital Road
Keeper of Golden Valley Park
When will you quit these blue skies?
Who will join you in passing the yellowing dark[217] 誰伴過黃昏?

In the mirror brushed with lead powder lustrous
The censor keeps the cassia embers warm[218]
At last to throw back a shot of Bamboo Leaf[219]
Praise of Peach Root one first must intone

Don't mimic crying turning to blood
You ought to dreams have entrusted your soul
The King of Wu on Fetching Scent Trail
Was lost before he reached the misty knoll

Were the exact wording "the moon leaves its trace"月有痕 to appear a couple dozen times in the *Quan Tangshi*, our best proxy for the general state of elite Tang poetic output, one would have reason to withhold judgment on whether *Hongloumeng* is referencing, or influenced by, this particular poem. Given that "the moon leaves its trace" 月有痕 appears, in the whole *Quan Tangshi*, only once, viz., this poem, it seems possible that this is a direct reference.

This possibility appears likelier still, if one compares Li Shangyin's couplet "When will you quit these green skies?/ Who will join you in passing the yellowing dark?" 幾時辭碧落,/ 誰伴過黃昏? with Tanchun's couplet "Speak not of white-silk immortals capable of

[217] In most cases, "yellowing dark" would, of course, be too literal for translating "huanghun" 黃昏 (i.e., "dusk" or "evening"). Here the clear parallelism with "blue skies," and the serendipity of rhyme, justify a more colorful rendering.

[218] Zheng Zaiying 2015: 627, note 9.

[219] *Ibid.* note 11.

flight,/ My beloved [white crabapple blossom] joins me in singing the twilight" 莫道縞仙能羽化,/ 多情伴我詠黃昏.[220] In both couplets, aerial movement is framed by the setting sun; whereas Li Shangyin's poem evokes the image of the apricot blossom's "quitting the blue skies" (viz., falling from the branches of the apricot tree after blooming), Tanchun's poem evokes the image of a white-clad Daoist immortal's mounting the sky in flight.

There are possibly Daoist undertones as well to Li's line, insofar as "biluo" was originally a Daoist term for the sky. A line with somewhat comparable imagery in Bai Juyi's "Everlasting Sorrow" ("Changhen ge" 長恨歌) ("Looking everywhere in blue space, and down in the Yellow Springs,"[221] 上窮碧落下黃泉) describes a Daoist flying high into the air, and deep down into the earth, searching everywhere for Yang Guifei. Stephen Bokenkamp (1991) argues that "biluo" in Tang poetry was originally borrowed from Daoist practitioners, over time to become an ornamental term for general use. Although he does not discuss Li Shangyin's "Xinghua," he does discuss this line of "Changhen ge," treating it as a case of "complex borrowing," a term he adopts from the researcher Erik Zurcher to designate when a group of terms and concepts is imported together as an interlinking unit, some constituent parts retaining their original meaning, other parts losing their original meaning and potentially gaining new meaning.[222]

The "Xinghua" line "Who will join you in passing the yellowing dark?" 誰伴過黃昏 appears unique enough in the *Quan Tangshi*, but, unlike in the case of "the moon leaves its

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220 Compare to Hawkes (2014 v.2: 22-23)

221 Tony Barnstone and Chou Ping, *The Anchor Book of Chinese Poetry*, 2004: 273.

222 Bokenkamp, Stephen R. "Taoism and Literature: the pi-lo Question." Taoist Resources 3.1 (1991): 72.

trace"月有痕, there are a number of Tang poets' employing comparable wording in comparable thematic situations. For instance, Bai Juyi's "Myrtle Flowers" ("Ziweihua" 紫薇花), while also discussing deciduous flowers' fading in fall, has the line "Sitting alone before the sunset, who would join me?" 獨坐黃昏誰是伴?[223] Another comparable image appears in Xue Zhaoyun's 薛昭蘊 "Silk Washing River" ("Huan xisha" 浣溪沙, its "cipai" 詞牌 title); describing a somber autumn scene, "Huan xisha" has the lines "Makeup faintly tearstained,/ In the governor's courtyard falling flowers as the sun's about to set,/ This love expansive and hatred profound, with whom could one discuss?" 粉上依稀有淚痕,/ 郡庭花落欲黃昏,/ 遠情深恨與誰論?[224] Here the thematic response is just as strong, but the textual correspondence appears slightly weaker.

And there is, notably, yet another Li Shangyin's poem, "At Bianshang 汴上 Sending Off Li Ying 李郢 On His Way to Suzhou" ("Bianshang song Li Ying zhi Suzhou" 汴上送李郢之蘇州) with the following highly comparable couplet:

煙幌自應憐白紵
月樓誰伴詠黃昏 [225]

Behind smoke curtains you'll adore the white ramie,
But from moonlit chambers who'll accompany my chant 詠 at dusk 黃昏?

Since Li Shangyin's "Xinghua" speaks more directly than this poem to *Hongloumeng*'s themes, and since it has at least two lines tightly comparable to lines from *Hongloumeng*

[223] *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 442.
[224] *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 894.
[225] *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 540.

(rather than just one), it is sensible to focus more on "Xinghua," ruminating on its general conceptual and ideological orientation, while paying special attention to how its treatment of dreams and desire prefigures their treatment in *Hongloumeng*.

In discussing being stranded in a "foreign land," Li Shangyin is speaking not of non-Han territories, but rather of the Wu 吳 region that in pre-imperial times was under the control of the Wu 吳 state before being defeated by the state of Yue 越. Wu is, of course, within the Chinese empire, but is at a distance from the capital Chang'an, and would have had its own local cultural, linguistic, and political forms that the speaker of the poem, perhaps stationed to this region by the imperial government, would have needed to navigate; the "ogling," then, referenced in line 4 would be over the speaker of the poem's foreignness to the region. The King of Wu being referenced is Fuchai 夫差 (d. 473 BCE), a semi-mythological figure in the narrative mold of "corrupted ruler whose greed and licentious excess lead to the final downfall of his state or domain," to be compared with figures like the final Shang 商 ruler King Zhou (Zhou Wang 紂王, 1105-1046 BCE).

As a devious political stratagem, it was the King of Yue who gifted Fuchai none other than the legendarily "city-toppling" beauty Xi Shi 西施, with whom *Hongloumeng* identifies Daiyu, whose hometown Suzhou was Wu's capital in pre-imperial times.[226] Although the precise identity of the speaker of the poem is open to interpretation, it seems significant that Xi Shi, originally a resident of Yue, would similarly have viewed Wu as a

[226] For discussion of Daiyu's connection to Suzhou and its historical significance, see Sun Juwei 孫菊慰, "Tanfang Lin Daiyu de Guxiang" 探訪林黛玉的故鄉 in *Wo du Hongloumeng* 我讀 "紅樓夢," Bajin 巴金, ed., 1982: 323-331.

"foreign land." It is reasonable, then, to view the poem as being in the poet's own voice, but at times assuming, or employing metaphorically, Xi Shi's perspective, especially given how integral Tang poets were in effecting changes to Xi Shi's mythological narrative. As Olivia Milburn argues, it probably was not until the Tang poet Li Bai (701-762) that two key elements of the Xi Shi mythos absent from earlier accounts were popularized, viz., the image of Xi Shi washing silk, and the image of Xi Shi as a lover of alcohol.[227]

Something akin to "core" and "periphery" logic could explain the geography of class and desire here on display. Depending on the version of the story, one can imagine the initial "discovery" of Xi Shi by the King of Yue as her social elevation, a social shift whose geographical articulation is from periphery to core (i.e., from a peripheral part of Yue to its core in the capital). The subsequent gifting of Xi Shi to the King of Wu might, in turn, be viewed as Xi Shi's moving from the core of Yue to the core of Wu (which, in being Yue's neighbor, is quite literally at the periphery of Yue). These basic core/ periphery dynamics recall the spatialization of rank and privilege that not only Tang poets but even the characters of *Hongloumeng* face, characters like Tanchun in their social descent being forced to marry husbands at far-flung postings,[228] or characters like Jia She and Jia Zhen who later in the novel, as punishment and demotion, are posted to positions at the far periphery of the empire.[229]

The following lines are to be interpreted in this light, as somewhat understated metaphors for social descent:

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227 Olivia Milburn, "The Silent Beauty: Changing Portrayals of Xi Shi, from 'Zhiguai' and Poetry to Ming Fiction and Drama," Asia Major (2013): 30.

228 *HLM*, Chapter 102. Hawkes 2014 v.5: 68-69.

229 *HLM*, Chapter 107. Hawkes 2014 v.5: 178-201.

仙子玉京路，主人金谷園。
幾時辭碧落，誰伴過黃昏。

Celestial of Jade Capital Road
Keeper of Golden Valley Park
When will you quit these green skies?
Who will join you in passing the yellowing dark 黃昏?

The speaker of the poem, stranded in a "foreign land" (i.e., far from the capital), is observing the blooms on an apricot flower tree about to be torn by the season from their elevated perches, lamenting the vicissitudes of life that have led to his own scattered, soul-searching situation. The speaker seems to be imagining the apricot blossoms as if they were celestial beings about to depart an immortal realm of jade, forced to descend amongst the dirt-caked earthbound bodies of this mortal coil. Zheng Zaiying interprets "ci" 辭 as "banishment" or "exile" ("fangzhu" 放逐), the apricot flower's departing the branch like a banished immortal's fall from heaven, associations further shaded by the speaker's own circumstances, having himself been severed from the rarefied comforts of Chang'an.[230] This semantic space seems to mirror closely the basic ontology of *Hongloumeng*, especially the origination of Baoyu and Daiyu in a celestial realm as elemental jade and elemental flower, to descend together upon the earthly realm for a brief foray into mortal existence.

In the imaginary tradition from which *Honglongmeng* draws, lofty elements in the mortal realm, like tree flowers or lotuses, offer mortal perception a glimpse of immortal forms of being. It is in this reduplicative capacity that, in Chapter 17,[231] the impressive

[230] Zheng Zaiying 2015: 627.
[231] Hawkes 2014 v.1: 372-373.

ornamental hill at the entrance to Prospect Garden seems to recapitulate "Greensickness Peak"[232] ("Qinggengfeng" 青埂峰), the mystical summit appearing at the outset of the novel. This recapitulation, combined with other forms of nesting and duplication in *Hongloumeng*, gives readers the experience of entering a dream within a dream, a fleeting sense that the deeper into dream one travels, the more real what one discovers becomes.

When one considers the legend of Green Pearl's death, viz., her committing suicide by jumping from a tall tower in hopes of saving her lover Shi Chong 石崇 (who faced potential retribution for being unwilling to sell her to the imperial court),[233] suddenly the image of jade flowers deliberately departing blue skies takes on distinctly morbid overtones. It is the intertextual depth of the historical Chinese tradition that enables a few lines of poetry to contain so much latent significance, even as it is still the artist's own insight that explains how a falling flower and a tragic fate could be joined so effortlessly.

The experience of Li's poem is subtly reminiscent of the feelings evoked by the dreary "everyday object" riddles in Chapter 22 of *Hongloumeng*.[234] In these riddles, one sees how, when metaphor and personification combine, rumination on the imagined "lives" of various everyday objects can cast shadows of one's own diminished prospects in an instrumentalized, hierarchical social order.[235] In this exercise, Daiyu writes a riddle

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232 *HLM,* Chapter 1. Hawkes 2014 v.1: 2-3.

233 Owen 2007: 372.

234 Hawkes 2014 v.1: 513-539. For an introduction to specific riddles in *Hongloumeng* and a discussion of their general significance, see Irene Eber, "Riddles in The Dream of the Red Chamber," in *Untying the Knot: On Riddles and Other Enigmatic Modes* (1996): 237-251. For broader cultural context, see Andrew Plaks, "Riddle and Enigma in Chinese Civilization," also in *Untying the Knot: On Riddles and Other Enigmatic Modes*, 227-36.

235 Particularly as one of the riddle objects is an inkstone, Dorothy Ko's *The Social Life of Inkstones: Artisans and Scholars in Early Qing China*, 2017, can be approached in these terms. See also Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China*, 2004.

identifying with an incense clock ("gengxiang" 更香),[236] a motif that seems to resonate with the kind of personification evidenced in Li Shangyin's "Wuti" poem discussed above, Li's candle that wholly consumes itself to be compared with Daiyu's "incense clock" that burns all through the night. As this is the clock's assigned, "predestined" task, it appears that, at least metaphorically, the spatiotemporal isolation of gendered labor is again being foregrounded.

The final lines of "Xinghua" address questions of the relationship between dreams and desire, while again speaking from a voice that seems as if designed to elude easy identification:

莫學啼成血，從教夢寄魂。
吳王采香徑，失路入煙村。

Don't mimic crying turning to blood
Just to dreams have entrusted your soul
The King of Wu on Fetching Scent Trail
Was lost before he reached the misty knoll

The first line of this segment is a warning against imitating the aggrieved "dujuan" cuckoo, who, as the story goes, cried (or cawed) so much that its beak turned red. Simultaneously, this line speaks also to Xi Shi's aggrieved crying, whose imitation proves just as ill-fated; as described in the "Tianyun" 天運 chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, Xi Shi's unattractive "eastern neighbor" imitates Xi Shi, but whereas Xi Shi is said to appear more attractive upon crying, the unattractive neighbor is said to appear even less attractive upon doing so.[237] In the case of the *Zhuangzi* example, there are countervailing forces, including

[236] Hawkes 2014 v.1: 536-537.
[237] *Zhuangzi*, "Tianyun" 天運 chapter.

elements of gender-based projection, that make comparison less straightforward, but hardly impossible. The ambiguity of simulation appears an overarching theme, co-present with a sense of the futility, even danger, in nursing emotive extremes.

Given life's vicissitudes, the options open to the speaker of the poem, if not to Li Shangyin as an historical person, the reality and surreality of dreaming might at times represent one's sole refuge. For researchers, positing surreality rather than simulation in this context might prove an efficacious methodological nuance. It is an open question whether references in Li Shangyin and other late Tang poets to the movements of one's "hun" soul represent literal held beliefs, or whether they represent rhetorical or metaphorical flourishes. They could just as well represent a motley combination of these things, a mixed metaphorical expression deriving from a half-held belief.

The parallelism at work in this poem is tightly, imaginatively conceived. The parallelized "to cry out" ("ti" 啼) (like the cuckoo) and "to dream" ("meng" 夢) illustrate the link being drawn between emotions and dreaming. The former modality is in vain and potentially harmful to the self, whereas the latter offers solace, dreams becoming a private space for the representation of one's hopes and aspirations. In the context of "Xinghua," cuckoo mythology speaks to themes of injustice, jealousy, alienation, and exile, while the story of King Wu and Xi Shi speaks to the disorder attendant upon the unharnessed pursuit of what one desires in dreams.

Li's phrasing "Just to dreams have entrusted your soul" 從教夢寄魂 conveys a sense that dreams are intertwined with desire, especially, though not exclusively, sexual and romantic desire. Whether dreaming in this case is being perceived as implicitly social (insofar

as it participates in the use of social symbols like language) or explicitly social (if one believes that one's soul literally visits the places and people one sees while dreaming) will depend on historical specificity, that is to say, on general historical conditions (including conditions of belief) and what can be deduced about the individual values of the particular author or artist in question.

It is on the borderline between falsity and reality, between dreaming and waking, that poetry and poetic expression emerge into social reality. Sometimes poetry and other emotively expressive social forms gain their own spatiality, even beginning to adhere to semi-real "imagined places." Where that "imagined place" or "place of dreams" is precisely imagined to be will depend on the poetic, social, and historical context in which it is being invoked. In some cases, Wu Mountain 巫山 could serve that purpose, where the pre-imperial King Xiang of Chu (Chu Xiang Wang 楚襄王) (r. 328-299 BCE) was imagined to have had his erotic dreams of "clouds and rain" ("yunyu" 雲雨), what Zhang Zhenjun calls "the earliest extant narrative about an erotic dream in Chinese literature."[238] Similarly, the Shu 蜀 and Xiaoxiang 瀟湘 river regions are, especially for Li Shangyin, as much floating signifiers as they are precise geographical determinations.

Li Shangyin's semi-enigmatic "Heyang Poem" 河陽詩 features at points comparable imagery to "Xinghua," including references to "Green Pearl" and Shi Chong, before, as Stephen Owen has noted, shifting geographically to the Chu region, possibly in reference to a secret romantic affair in the poet's personal life.[239] The stanza where this

[238] Zhang Zhenjun 2017: 119.
[239] Owen 2007: 372-373.

southward shift occurs features language comparable to "Just to dreams have entrusted your soul" 從教夢寄魂:

可惜秋眸一臠光，漢陵走馬黃塵起。
南浦老魚腥古涎，真珠密字芙蓉篇。
湘中寄到夢不到，衰容自去拋涼天。

Those pitiable autumn eyes had held just a sliver of light
By Han Mausoleum passing on horseback only yellow dirt kicking up
On the southern shore the old fish smelled of ancient spittle
Like pearls the secret words in the hibiscus volume
Deep in Xiang 湘 *sent* 寄 *where dreams can't reach* 夢不到
Waning faces leave themselves, clearing a cold sky

That "Yeyi" 夜意, another of Li Shangyin's poem to be considered below, also emphasizes meeting in dreams while being stationed far away in the Chu region might be suggestive of there being biographical details underlying composition, though caution is needed, as preexisting commentary connecting Li Shangyin's life to this poetry remains highly speculative, and evidences a diverse, somewhat cacophonous range of opinions, as Owen's summary of extant commentary on Li's "Heyang shi" demonstrates.[240]

It seems remarkable that these poems each describe from a slightly different perspective the dreaming and dream-meeting of distant lovers for whom one yearns, as if the significance and limitations of dreaming – in particular, dreaming in lieu of meeting "in the real" – are being weighed and duly considered. The question has already been raised whether Li Shangyin truly believes that, as "Yeyi" especially suggests, one's soul travels in sleep. Additional ambiguities in this vein emerge, calling into question whether secondary spiritual realms are being posited, or whether immortal spirits are being transposed upon the material

[240] Owen *ibid.* 367-368.

world, or some combination of these and other consistent, semi-consistent, and inconsistent or contradictory beliefs. As for being so "deep in Xiang" that one is beyond even dreams, is this a matter of hyperbolic flourish, or is a deeper issue being addressed in terms of the extent and limits of dreams, desire, and identity? Are readers to conclude that the speaker of the poem is so far from his beloved that his soul, despite its ability to fly at high speeds, cannot travel the necessary distance during the time allotted for dreaming? Or, perhaps, is the image being evoked not quite intended for this line of extended, calculative inquiry?

With these subtleties in mind, the "old fish" filled with "secret words" might, as Zheng Zaiying notes,[241] be provisionally identifiable with a kind of fish-shaped wooden letter case. The hibiscus scent of its contents is suggestive of the gender of its sender and the intimacy of the letter's composition. In many Tang poems, a wooden letter case symbolizes separation and longing, in addition to positively materializing the extra protection needed to send a letter a great distance. This merging of function and symbol – of doing and demonstrating, of performing an action and acting performatively – is a common dynamic that researchers of historical literature need to address. It compels a reckoning with the difficult question of "the reality of ambiguity," of whether one should be formally modeling "real ambiguity" as an historical form with measurable empirical persistence over time. And how, then, should "real ambiguity" be related to factors like chaos, chance, and fortune, if at all? Again, the philosophical question that *Hongloumeng* raises of the liminal space between "jia" "falsity" and "zhen" "truth" reappears as a methodological and analytical issue.

241 Zheng Zaiying 2015: 267.

II.

A basic challenge for literary scholarship is finding a proper perspective from which to perceive especially clearly a complex work of art. Just as not all visual angles equally suit the painter's task, so too not all approaches to analyzing the representation of dreams and desire in the novel *Hongloumeng* seem equally efficacious. One could imagine proceeding character by character, or, perhaps, one could imagine proceeding thematically (e.g., first considering flower imagery, before considering nighttime imagery, or cloud-related imagery, and so on), or otherwise. The risk in pursuing any of these one-dimensional modes of analysis is that critical confluences may go unnoticed. They may not receive proper emphasis, or, conversely, they may need to be treated twice or more, in potentially redundant conversations.

As for *Hongloumeng*, a less schematic way to make the same point would be to argue that the embeddedness of language and meaning presupposes that a discussion of dreams and desire in *Hongloumeng* is already a discussion of the character Lin Daiyu, and is also already a discussion of Li Shangyin, lotus flowers, withered leaves, and falling rain, and a whole constellation of interlinking associations. Regarding what Kristeva says of the sign in its capacity as "as the fundamental ideologeme of modern thought and the basic element of our (novelistic) discourse," each of its three basic characteristics as she outlines them appears relevant: 1) "[i]t does not refer to a single unique reality, but evokes a collection of associated images and ideas," "distancing itself from its supporting transcendental basis (it may be called 'arbitrary')," 2) "[i]t is part of a specific structure of meaning [combinatoire] and in that sense it is correlative: its meaning is the result of an interaction with other signs," and 3)

"[i]t harbours a principle of transformation: within its field, new structures are forever generated and transformed."[242]

It is precisely a pronounced density of determinations that, at any moment, signals to readers and researchers the significance of a given subset of semantic space for the work in question. As research is always temporally bounded, it makes good methodological sense to focus especially on critical points of conjuncture (i.e., moments of "dense determination") when delving longitudinally into a semantic space, in this case, when tracing paths of symbolic referent and meaning all the way from the pre-imperial Book of Poetry (*Shijing* 詩經) and the *Chuci* 楚辭, passing through Han and pre-Tang court and boudoir poetry, dwelling amongst the late Tang poets, to arrive at, and develop within, the Qing Dynasty classic *Hongloumeng*.

Lin Daiyu is the spirit of poetry in the novel *Hongloumeng*. This appellation is more or less explicitly given in the text, Daiyu's being referred to in several places as the "poetry spirit" or "poetry demon" ("shimo" 詩魔). In her chrysanthemum poem in Chapter 37,[243] Daiyu first refers to herself as "shimo," and this name is repeated by Baochai in Chapter 48.[244] Likewise, in Chapter 76, Daiyu writes a line of linked verse "lengyue zang shihun" 冷月葬詩魂 that Hawkes translates as, "Where, moon embalmed, a dead muse lies in state."[245] "Dead muse" could more literally be translated "poetry spirit" or "poetry ghost" ("shihun" 詩魂). That Daiyu is in this line referring to herself is uncontroversial.

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242 Julia Kristeva, "From Symbol to Sign," in *The Kristeva Reader*, Toril Moi, ed., 1986: 72.
243 *HLM*, Chapter 37. Hawkes 2014 v.2: 308-309.
244 *HLM*, Chapter 48. Hawkes 2014 v.2: 580-581.
245 *HLM*, Chapter 76. Hawkes 2014 v.3: 669.

It is clear, additionally, that the poems appearing in the text of *Hongloumeng* are meant to reflect the ability and skill levels of the characters to whom they've been attributed, with Daiyu's poems generally treated in the text as the best, or at least among the best, that the garden occupants have on offer. It makes good methodological sense, then, to treat Daiyu's poetry and Daiyu's commentary on poetry as at least partly reflective of the author's most nuanced aesthetic sense and judgment.

To understand the poetic space that Daiyu occupies, it's necessary to grapple with Daiyu's identification with flowers in general and with hibiscus and lotus flowers in particular, distinguishing Daiyu's vectors of floral identity from those of the other main characters. Floral identities in *Hongloumeng* make up a very busy semantic space, with most female main characters being identified with at least one type of flower. In an article outlining key floral identities in *Hongloumeng*, Lene Bech dubs Daiyu the "foremost flower girl," "associated with the largest number of flower varieties and with the greatest number of attributes connected to the flower metaphor."[246]

Lotus flowers and lotus-flower adjacencies is perhaps the novel's busiest subset of floral identities. The novel identifies "lianhua" 蓮花 with "hehua" 荷花 and "furong" 芙蓉. "Furong" is usually translated "hibiscus," but each of these three categories can be symbolically identified with, or at least are in dialogue with, "lotus," "lotus flowers," as well as, sometimes, "waterlilies."

[246] Lene Bech, "Flowers in the Mirror, Moonlight on the Water: Images of a Deluded Mind," Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR) 24 (2002): 117.

Simply listing all the characters whose names relate to lotuses is itself a difficult task. Xiangling (whose name Hawkes renders "Caltrop"[247]) 香菱 was originally named Zhen Yinglian 甄英蓮. Liu Xianglian 柳湘蓮 also has a "lian" 蓮 in his name. Jia Rong 賈蓉 features the "rong" 蓉 in "furong." The "han" in Jiang Yuhan 蔣玉菡 denotes a lotus blossom. As for the young actresses whose names form a pairing, the "ou" 藕 in Nenuphar (Ouguan 藕官) indicates the lotus root, whereas the "rui" 蕊 in Etamine (Ruiguan 蕊官) designates the lotus stamen and the "yao" 藥 or "di" 荳 in Pivoine (Yaoguan 藥官/ Diguan 荳官) designates the lotus seed.

A full study of the rich associative web all these names represent is beyond the scope of the current work. Though Daiyu and Qingwen are not among the names listed, they evidence some of the closest connections to traditional imagery surrounding the lotus flower. For Daiyu, her connection with "furong" hibiscus is made explicitly in Chapter 63, where, during a card game of prophetic import, she pulls the hibiscus card.[248] For Qingwen, the connection is made most forcefully in Chapter 78, discussed in detail in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, when Baoyu writes a long eulogy to the recently deceased Qingwen who is depicted in the poem as a hibiscus spirit.[249]

Qingwen's association with the hibiscus is prompted by a spontaneous fib told to Baoyu by a younger maid. One might be tempted, on this account, to regard Qingwen's association with the hibiscus as somehow less deep, or more incidental in nature, but, of

247 See, e.g., *HLM*, Chapter 7. Hawkes 2014 v1: 168-169.
248 *HLM*, Chapter 63. Hawkes 2014 v.3: 279.
249 *HLM*, Chapter 78. Hawkes 2014 v.3: 738-747.

course, the novel's own emphasis on fortuity and serendipity, discussed in detail in the introduction, should caution against this reading. This is especially the case, given Qingwen's similarities with Daiyu being noted on several occasions in the novel, such as by Lady Wang in Chapter 74.[250]

This line of reasoning is corroborated by Daiyu's surprise appearance at Qingwen's poetic eulogy, Daiyu's sudden emergence from the ethereal darkness in keeping with her "poetry spirit" credentials.[251] One could even argue that Daiyu's attending the eulogy for Qingwen offers her a wisp of realization of an otherwise impossible desire, viz., the seemingly timeless desire, as strange as its expression is commonplace, to attend one's own funeral as a ghost. Daiyu's presence at Qingwen's eulogy could be conceived, in effect, as her witnessing her own eulogy in advance of her own death. Just as Daiyu's "poetry spirit" appellation is self-derived, it appears here that her presence at Qingwen's eulogy is also of her own volition, a refracted instance, perhaps, of the self-induced troubles that the hibiscus playing card in Chapter 63 predicts.

III.

It is with these considerations in mind that one can begin conceptualizing *Hongloumeng*'s engagement with the poetry of Li Shangyin, paying special attention to how Li Shangyin's perspective on the lotus flower informs the aesthetic and evaluative dispositions of *Hongloumeng*'s "poetry spirit," viz., Daiyu.

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250 *HLM*, Chapter 74. Hawkes 2014 v.3: 590-591.
251 *HLM*, Chapter 78. Hawkes 2014 v.3: 748-749.

Lotus and hibiscus flowers feature prominently in historical Chinese literature from early pre-imperial works like the Classic of Poetry (*Shijing* 詩經) onward. In some transmitted versions of Chapter 78,[252] Baoyu states explicitly that he modeled his eulogy for Qingwen on the "Zhaohun" 招魂 section of the *Chuci* 楚辭. This classic poem is rooted in ritualistic, perhaps "shamanistic," practices[253] associated with the Chu 楚 region, already above traced to Daiyu and the peripheral Xiao 瀟 and Xiang 湘 rivers whence her residence in the garden derives its name. The mottled Xiaoxiang bamboo is said to have been stained by the tears of Shun's wives upon his sudden death touring the region, traveling through what at the time was considered a far-flung "southern" edge of empire. Speaking of the "Zhaohun" 招魂, "Dazhao" 大招, "Lisao" 離騷, and "Yuanyou" 遠遊 poems in the *Chuci*, Richard Strassberg observes that "[w]hile none of these poems" is "specifically cast as a dream, their thematic structure offer[s] prototypes for several kinds of later dream narratives," such as those depicting "ascents to heaven where transcendents 仙 ('xian') who have mastered the techniques of longevity are encountered, journeys to hell and back by those who report religious views of the afterlife, and erotic encounters with goddesses who may seduce, instruct, harm, or disillusion humans."[254]

In "Zhaohun," "furong" and lotus ("he" 荷) represent pure flowers heralding the safety and security of home, where to one's departed soul in this performative poem is being

252 See Hawkes 2014 v.3: 738-747.
253 See Gopal Sukhu, *The shaman and the heresiarch: a new interpretation of the Li Sao*, 2012.
254 Strassberg 2008: 7-8.

beckoned to return.[255] In "Xiangjun" 湘君, the Xiaoxiang 瀟湘 river goddesses appear, regional Chu deities whose stories seem over centuries to have merged with the mythology surrounding Shun's wives. "Furong" lotuses can be observed in this context:

採薜荔兮水中，搴芙蓉兮木末!

I am gathering wild figs in the water!
I am looking for lotuses in the treetops![256]

Lines from other *Chuci* poems like "Fengfen" indicate a comparable tendency to associate "furong" hibiscus with "water-caltrops" ("linghua" 菱華),[257] a connection that recalls Yinglian's 英莲 name change to Xiangling 香菱 in *Hongloumeng*. By way of elite cultural background, one can assume the author of *Hongloumeng* to have been familiar with these lines from the *Chuci*. One can also confidently presuppose his familiarity with Zhou Dunyi's 周敦頤 famous 11th century (CE) composition "On Loving Lotuses" ("Ai lian shuo" 爱莲说), a work that succinctly outlines the traditional literary Chinese reception and poetic treatment of lotus flowers. Zhou bemoans that whereas peony is roundly praised, and the chrysanthemum has received the unmatched endorsement of Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (365-427 CE), none besides the author, so it is claimed, has truly appreciated the "lian" 莲 flowers, unique for being able to "emerge from the mud unsullied" 出淤泥而不染.[258]

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255 "Its lotuses have just opened; among them grow water-chestnuts" 芙蓉始發，雜芰荷些, from David Hawkes, *The Songs of the South: An Ancient Chinese Anthology of Poems by Qu Yuan and Other Poets*, 1985: 227.

256 Hawkes *ibid.* 107.

257 "Hibiscus was my awning, water-caltrops my car." 芙蓉蓋而菱華車兮, from Hawkes 1985: 284.

258 Zhou Dunyi, "Ai lian shuo," from Zhouyuan gongji 周元公集, Zhou Dunyi, ed. Wikisource, https://zh.wikisource.org/wiki/愛蓮說.

In this moment an evaluative space familiar to *Hongloumeng* emerges, as one is reminded of Baoyu's youthful "mud and water" philosophy first articulated in Chapter 2.[259] From this perspective, the lotus is remarkable for growing out of the mud and dirt while still being able to effect a principled stance and an air of aloofness. The lotus flower appears as the supreme detachment from the earthly, mortal realm, the quintessence, it would seem, of all which is floral.

Often in his poems, Li Shangyin ruminates upon the lotus flower's association with purity and untarnished potential, as well as with fantasy and the world of dreams and desire. Li then blends these images with traditionally "southern" images like those of the Xiaoxiang 瀟湘 region, enhancing and refining a tendency to associate this peripheral, liminal region of historical Chinese empire with dreams and desire as peripheral, liminal modes of being and experience.

One of Li's famous "untitled" ("Wuti" 無題) compositions showcases the unique semantic space being developed:

來是空言去絕蹤，月斜樓上五更鐘。
夢為遠別啼難喚，書被催成墨未濃。
蠟照半籠金翡翠，麝熏微度繡芙蓉。

Coming is an empty word; going, you leave no trace.
The moonlight slants over the roof; the bells strike the fifth watch.
Dreaming of long separation, I can hardly summon my cries.
Hurried into writing a letter, I cannot wait for the ink to thicken.
The candle's light half encircles the golden kingfisher;
The musk perfume subtly permeates the embroidered lotus flowers.[260]

[259] *HLM*, Chapter 2. Hawkes 2014 v.1: 40-41.
[260] Liu, James, and Li Shangyin, *The poetry of Li Shang-yin: Ninth-century baroque Chinese poet,* 1969: 62.

The parallelism in the first couplet is between words and actions that leave no perceivable trace of their departure, and the final remnants of the moon as it dissolves into the inchoate dawn. Then in the second couplet the difference between waking and dreaming is questioned—is the speaker unable to speak in a dream, or unable to wake from one? As the memory of dreaming slips away, the feelings it evokes cannot wait for proper words, or even properly prepared ink. The aesthetics of permeation creep into the third couplet, with "furong" imagery appearing upon fine-quality upholstery, clothing, curtains, and bedsheets in a way that prefigures the poetry of Wen Tingyun. Commonly in historical Chinese literature, "furong" images on dresses symbolize femininity and coming of age. As the poem sinks into a haze of desire both literal and metaphorical, the "furong" embroidery's perceptual immediacy is heightened by the lover's absence and the chance that they might never reunite.

Another Li Shangyin poem "Night Chill" ("Yeling" 夜) could lend perspective, emphasizing as it does the waning remnants of fragrance on fine bedding, between glimpses of withered "hehua" reminiscent of the withered and falling flowers discussed above:

樹繞池寬月影多，村砧塢笛隔風蘿。
西亭翠被餘香薄，一夜將愁向敗荷。

Trees surround a wide pool, the moon casts many shadows;
Beyond the wind-blown vine, in the village and on the bank,
The pounding of wash and the sounds of the flute.
In the west pavilion, the kingfisher quilt leaves a fragrance that fades;
All through the night, my sorrow turns toward the wilted lotus.[261]

[261] Liu and Lo 1975: 241.

Though there is no rain on wilted lotus flowers, there are hints that natural elements (viz., the wind, itself nearly implying the rain) continue to threaten the delicate "hehua." In line 3, the sound of pounding clothes on a laundry stone interweaves with the sound of plaintive flute playing. The fragrance on the embroidered quilt in line 3 (i.e., line 4 of Liu and Lo's translation) is suggestive of a lover who has departed, an image parallel to, and complementing, the image of wilted lotuses ("baihe" 敗荷) whose scent is likewise fading. The emphasis on a full night's sorrow recalls images from "Luohua" as well as from Daiyu's poetry and her incense clock riddle, especially the exhaustive completeness of the lament being imagined.

Li Shangyin often employs Xiaoxiang 瀟湘 imagery in his work to explore themes of loneliness, alienation, and thwarted or unrecognized potential. That these themes become preoccupations in Li's work can help explain Lin Daiyu's ostensible aversion to Li Shangyin, even as her own enduring association with the Xiaoxiang region in the novel would make it difficult to avoid this semantic space and Li's influence on its expression.

The poem "Yeyi" 夜意 features imagery that resonates with the above poems cited, while foregrounding the Xiaoxiang region and its cultural connection with dreaming:

簾垂幕半卷，枕冷被仍香。
如何為相憶，魂夢過瀟湘。

Curtains drooping the screen half-closed,
The pillow's cold but the quilt still has your scent.
How is it, just because I missed you,
Your spirit dreaming could cross the Xiao and Xiang?[262]

[262] Following Liu Xuekai 劉學鍇, Yu Shucheng 餘恕誠, et al., *Li Shangyin shige jijie* 李商隱诗歌集解, 2004: 711, note 1, in interpreting the beloved, not necessarily the speaker of the poem (though there is interpretative flexibility here), as the spirit whose flight across Xiaoxiang enables their dream-meeting.

Li's poetry consistently emphasizes liminality, whether it be the liminal, indistinct moment between dreaming and waking, or the liminal hours between night and morning, or the liminal experience of a scent, a ghostly perceptual remnant, of something or someone already departed. The phrase-level manifestation of this stylistic emphasis is a consistent emphasis on doors or screens "half opened," surfaces "partially illumined," or on airs and fragrances "scarcely penetrating" or "faintly permeating," and so on. The "half-rolled-up curtain" in this poem is one such example.

This emphasis on partiality has already emerged above, in the sixth line of the "Wuti" 無題 poem.[263] Similar lines also appear in *Hongloumeng*, including, notably, in poems attributed to the character Daiyu:

半卷湘簾半掩門，碾冰為土玉為盆。

Beside the half-raised blinds the half-closed door,
Crushed ice for earth and white jade for the pot.[264]

Here the Hawkes translation somewhat buries the lede, as the blinds in question are specifically "xianglian" 湘簾, i.e., in a style associated with the Xiaoxiang region.

The hisbiscus in assuming the form "out of the mud but not muddy" crystallizes a liminal state of exception, of qualification (viz., "A but not A"). To imagine lotus flowers in the Xiaoxiang region seems to pose "purity" against peripherality, attitudinal aloofness in

263 "The candle's light half encircles the golden kingfisher" 蠟照半籠金翡翠, from Liu and Li 1969: 62.
264 *HLM,* Chapter 37. Hawkes 2014 v.3: 272-273.

dialogue with geographical marginality. At times, Li Shangyin positively identifies with flowers and with the fates of flowers, sometimes in connection with a tendency to write poems that assume both male, female, and gender-ambiguous voices,[265] sometimes in unrelated modalities. If a primary contrast is to be drawn between Li Shangyin's and Lin Daiyu's dispositions toward flowers, it is that whereas Li Shangyin's thwarted potential is framed in terms of official career frustrations, Lin Daiyu faces frustrations more common to the socially constructed role of women in traditional Chinese society. Her identity with the hibiscus appears reflected in her experience attempting to live life as an educated woman and talented artist outside the protective bounds of her own surname group, left in the dust of the Jia clan that she cannot claim as her own.

One of the longer, more significant poems in *Hongloumeng* attributed to Daiyu is "Autumn Window: A Night of Wind and Rain" ("Qiuchuang fengyu xi" 秋窗風雨夕) in Chapter 45.[266] The poem is explicitly stated in the text to have been written in the style of Tang poet Zhang Ruoxu's "Chunjiang huayue ye" 春江花月夜, one of the most famous Tang poems, an exceptional composition renowned for its passionate intensity.[267] Daiyu's poem mirrors Zhang's in using reduplicative language to produce a sense of urgency and excitement, except where Zhang's spring poem reduplicates water images, emphatically repeating the character "shui" 水 ("water," "river"), Daiyu's autumn poem reduplicates autumn images, emphatically repeating the character "qiu" 秋 ("autumn").

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[265] Hu Qiulei. "Mapping gender and poetic role in early medieval poetry." Early Medieval China 2015.21 (2015): 38-62.

[266] *HLM*, Chapter 45. Hawkes 2014 v.2: 498-499.

[267] For English translations, see, e.g., Tony Barnstone and Ping Chou, *The Anchor Book of Chinese Poetry,* 2005: 95-6, as well as John Minford and Joseph S. M. Lau, *Classical Chinese Literature: An Anthology of Translations*, 2000: 820-823.

One might presume that, were readers meant to understand that Daiyu truly dislikes the poetry of Li Shangyin, this poem would *not* contain yet another Li Shangyin reference. But that's precisely what one observes. Lines 9 and 10 read, "Weeping candle flickering and flashing, burning down to the socket,/ Tugging worries, illuminating resentment, provoke departure emotions" 泪燭搖搖爇短檠,/ 牽愁照恨動離情. That these lines are referencing Li Shangyin's poetry in this case can be confidently determined, as there is both thematic resonance as well as word-for-word borrowing. In Daiyu's poem Li's second line is referenced:

十歲裁詩走馬成，冷灰殘燭動離情。
桐花萬里丹山路，雛鳳清於老鳳聲。
Ten years old and tailoring poetic verse, "on horseback" composing,[268]
Before the cool ash of melted-down 殘 candles having stirred parting emotions.
Paulownia flowers along myriad miles of cinnabar mountain road,
The young phoenix's voice is clearer than the old phoenix's voice.

The poem in question has a curiously long title that explains in some detail the historical circumstances of its composition. The title is: "'Winter Prince' Han [i.e., Han Wo 韓偓] improvised a farewell poem, to the complete surprise of everyone in attendance. In the following days, I recollected the line 'Night after night I sat, pacing back and forth unending,' possessing as it does a mature style. So, I have completed two quatrains to repay the gesture, as well as to present to Landlord Weizhi."[269] Li Shangyin's poem is a response poem to a farewell composition improvised by Han Wo 韓偓, at the time only ten years old,

[268] Han Wo was not literally "on horseback," this is a classical reference indicating the ease with which he was able to compose poems ("he was so good, he could even compose atop a horse.") See Zheng Zaiying 2015: 610-611.

[269] 韓冬郎即席為詩相送一座盡驚他日餘方追吟連宵侍坐徘徊久之句有老成之風因成二絕寄酬兼呈畏之員外. *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 540. See Zheng Zaiying 2015: 610.

hence the childish moniker "Winter Prince."[270] Li's poem is effusive in its praise for young Han's talent and potential, claiming, to hyperbolic effect, that, for fear of Han Wo's outshining him, Li must not link verse with him in the future. The "linking couplets" composition method, which involves improvising alternating lines of poetic verse, appears at several critical junctures in *Hongloumeng*, including Daiyu and Shi Xiangyun's linked couplets improvised in Chapter 76, discussed in detail below.

Li's long-titled poem is somewhat unique in being referenced by *Hongloumeng* on at least two separate occasions. The first time the poem is referenced is in Chapter 15, and it is the poem's last line that is referenced, "The young phoenix's voice is clearer than the old phoenix's voice" 雛鳳清於老鳳聲, the Prince of Beijing 北靜 praising Baoyu by politely claiming that Baoyu has such great potential, he could even outshine his father and his father's generation.

Observing the poem's mood and disposition, one might be tempted to contrast how the Prince of Beijing foregrounds its basically positive message, whereas Daiyu, in her manifest morbidity, has managed to isolate the one line from the poem with potentially sad and mournful content, adapting both its image of melted candles sputtering away in the late night as well as its phrasing "stir parting emotions" ("dong liqing" 動離情).[271]

Notice also how comparable the lines in question are to those from Li Shangyin's "Wuti" 無題 poem quoted above, especially its lines "Only when the spring silkworm

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[270] Zheng Zaiying 2015: 611.

[271] The secondary literature has somewhat overlooked Daiyu's reference. It came to my attention through *Ctext* database searches. Additional internet searches have also led me to the *Hongloumeng* researcher Qiaomai huakai 荞麦花开 who mentions the reference in passing at https://www.zhihu.com/question/41497566/answer/1337831823. So far, I have not encountered it in traditionally published materials, but the volume of such materials precludes my assuming its absolute absence.

expires are the threads exhausted,/ Only after the candle turns to ash do the tears dry up" 春蠶到死絲方盡,/ 蠟炬成灰淚始乾. Both in Li's "Wuti" poem as well as in his poem for Han Wo, the image of wholly exhausted candles represents the depth of one's sorrow, as if one parting words, these "final threads," are so heartfelt they cannot help but run late into the night, when the candles have burnt down to the socket. James Liu, commenting on the auditory associations evoked by Li's "Wuti" poem, notes that "'thread' ('si' 絲 [...]) is a pun on the word for 'thinking' or 'longing'" and is evocative of "the compounds 'love-thread' ('qingsi' 情絲), meaning 'endless love,' and 'sorrow-thread' ('chousi' 愁絲), meaning 'endless sorrow,' with a pun on 'sorrowful thoughts' ('chousi' 愁思)."[272]

Given that Daiyu's poem is composed in the novel well after the Prince of Beijing compliments Baoyu, an experience that Baoyu would be inclined to share with Daiyu, it's plausible that readers are meant to imagine Daiyu's reference as being shaded by Baoyu's interaction with the prince, at least as she might imagine it. A departure poem being read by Daiyu might also, in a more general way, be shaded by the kinds of departures unique to Daiyu's experiences, especially the premature death of her parents, as well as her fear of having to depart from, or being left by, Baoyu, possibly forever. As Daiyu knows that Baoyu knows this line of poetry, perhaps her reference was specially meant for him. In referencing this poem, Daiyu is, in effect, speaking in an idiom that Baoyu should understand, that, ideally, only Baoyu would understand, a "secret" medium not entirely dissimilar with the

[272] Liu and Li 1969: 67.

soiled handkerchiefs that Baoyu in Chapter 34 sends Daiyu as an oblique expression of his grief and longing.[273]

A detail in the final chapters leading up to Daiyu's death further speaks to the depths of her poetic dialogue with Li Shangyin. In Chapter 89, Baoyu notices a painting hanging on Daiyu's wall, and is chastised by Daiyu for not recognizing the source for its title "The Contest in the Cold" ("Douhan tu" 鬥寒圖), the Li Shangyin poem "Frosty Moon" ("Shuangyue" 霜月):

初聞征雁已無蟬，百尺樓高水接天。
青女素娥俱耐冷，月中霜裏鬥嬋娟。

First calls of the migrant geese, no more cicadas.
South of this hundred-foot tower the water runs straight to the sky.
The Dark Maid and the White Beauty endure the cold together,
Rivals in elegance amid the frost on the moon.[274]

Daiyu's choice to incorporate, among her bedroom adornments, a painting referencing this Li Shangyin poem seems consistent with her character and personality, especially her cool, aloof disposition. The mythological figures in line 3 are legendary maidens famed for their beauty and virtue, the "Dark Maid" (Qingnü 青女) in charge of the frost[275] and the "White Beauty," viz., Chang'e 嫦娥, stationed on the moon. Li is drawing upon associations between the cool white light of the moon and one's perception of frost. The idea behind "The Contest in the Cold" is that these are cool maidens suited to cool climes, celestial deities vying to be the "coolest of the cool" in a chillingly beautiful world.

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[273] Hawkes 2014 v.2: 183-206.
[274] Graham 1965: 155. Compare to Owen 2007: 477.
[275] Zheng Zaiying 2015: 106, note 3.

Ou Li-Chuan connects the "Douhan tu" reference to a line from one of Shi Xiangyun's chrysanthemum poems in Chapter 37, "[The chrysanthemum,] being a Frost Maiden [Shuang'e 霜娥], is partial toward the cold" 自是霜娥偏愛冷,[276] "Frost Maiden" another name for Qingnü 青女, "The Dark Maid." Given how the chrysanthemum in question is exceptionally white, Shi Xiangyun's line speaks to the same theme as "Shuangyue," the idea that certain types of beauty are "predisposed" toward, in some sense "matching" or "complementing," the cool colors of winter scenes.

Grappling with this understated connection has prompted me to review intimate moments in the text shared by Daiyu and Xiangyun, especially the poetic dialogue between Daiyu and Xiangyun reaching its apogee in the linked couplet improvisations depicted in Chapter 76. With Daiyu and Xiangyun improvising poetic verse at the lake's edge, the text describes how "a great white moon in the water reflected the great white moon above, competing with it in brightness."[277] 只見天上一輪皓月，池中一個月影，上下爭輝. The concept and phrasing "competing with it in brightness" in Chapter 76 clearly prefigures Chapter 89's "rivals in elegance", especially as, in both cases, cool moonlight is the subject. The doubling of the moon in the water (itself harkening back to parallel images from Chapter 5 of the "moon in the water" and the "flower in the mirror") likewise recalls the image of two celestial bodies' rivaling each other in their icy allure.

It seems likely, then, that "Douhan tu," the title of the painting in Daiyu's room in Chapter 89, in addition to being a Li Shangyin reference, is also recalling this defining

276 Ou Li-Chuan 2020: 336.
277 Hawkes 2014 v.3: 659.

moment of Daiyu's life. Merging the quotidian with the transcendent, Chapter 76 crystallizes by moonlight the casual rivalry of a poetic game, rendering timeless an intimate moment shared with a close friend who just so happens to be one's most skilled poetic rival, the one character with the requisite skill to compete equally with Daiyu in poetry, her favored artistic arena. That Shi Xiangyun herself has composed a line of poetry that speaks to this scene, as well as to this same Li Shangyin poem, reinforces the sense that the author has consciously created an interlocking web of associations to halo the intimate, heartfelt bond between these two young female poets.

A central theme to *Hongloumeng*, the interplay between chance, poetry, art, games, and dreaming, emerges again in this context to highlight art and gaming as the formalization of types of play that reinforce and promote certain potentialities for human interaction in a recapitulative, microcosmic space, where the universe, or some imagined version of the universe, plays out in miniature. This is how with every coin toss at the beginning of a game, or every time in *Hongloumeng* that a "random maid" is tasked with producing a "random word," a universe is being set into primordial motion, one final particularity (e.g., which player moves first) as if sent down from heaven. In this way, the game's initiation appears as a recapitulation of the novel's initiatory gesture, the image in Chapter 1 of the stone as a superfluous, unneeded piece of the sky, tasked with finding essence in excess, meaning in meaninglessness, as well as illumination in leisure.[278]

[278] For discussion of the connection between leisure, reading, and Daoism in *Hongloumeng*, see Lene Bech, "Fiction that Leads to Truth: The Story of the Stone as Skillful Means," Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews 26 (2004) 1-21.

Michel Strickmann, conducting cross-cultural comparative work in *Chinese Poetry and Prophecy: The Written Oracle in East Asia*, argues that "[t]he bond between poetry and prophecy is primordial," and that "[r]hymed, rhythmic, or assonant[al] verse has at all times been a vehicle for the gods, whether as a direct conduit for oracular voices or through the medium of a divinely inspired poet."[279] Though scholars can stop there, at the moment of simply observing deep structural and processual convergence and alignment, the need remains to historicize these universal-seeming forms, to conceptualize longitudinal processes whereby potentially abstract matters like value, money, debt, obligation, and profit can take on determinative social reality. Although the terms of the discussion can seem, at times, alienating, the kinds of testable formulations that emerge from this strain of analysis can be productively related to scholarly sentiments expressed in less immediately philosophical terms, such as when Martin Weizong Huang speculates that the stone's feelings of uselessness and waywardness in Chapter 1 are reflective of the author's own feelings of alienation, having failed at using his literary skills in public service.[280]

The best way in this scholarly context to operationalize a Suitsian philosophy of gaming[281] might be, then, to expand its scope beyond games and the experience of gaming to encompass all forms of experience connected to the production and consumption of art and media, treating not only game playing but also art and literature more generally as,

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[279] Michel Strickmann and Bernard Faure, ed., *Chinese Poetry and Prophecy: The Written Oracle in East Asia*, 2005. For further application and critique of Strickmann's methods and analysis, see Wang Jiayao, *Games and Play of Dream of the Red Chamber,* PhD Diss., University of South Carolina, 2020. See also Wai-yee Li, "Dreams of Interpretation in Early Chinese Historical and Philosophical Writings," in *Dream Cultures: Toward a Comparative History of Dreaming*, edited by David Shulman and Guy Stroumsa, 1999: 17-42.

[280] Martin Huang, *Literati and Self-Re/Presentation: Autobiographical Sensibility in the Eighteenth-Century Chinese Novel*, 1995.

[281] Bernard Suits and Frank Newfeld, The Grasshopper: Games Life and Utopia, 1978.

according to Nguyen's (2020) conception, "method[s] for inscribing forms of agency into artifactual vessels."[282] With an expanded conceptual scope, a game or a work of art should appear similarly "artifactual," each possessing uniquely "incidental" properties that account for differences in expressivity.

For students of historical literature and poetry, there is a need to interrogate the abstract category "game," considering the broader social totality in which it is being instantiated. General theoretical models are needed for conceptualizing how different kinds of quasi-rules-based modes of social being interrelate, how music, dancing, performance, poetry, sexuality, and even language itself each instantiate a similar basic logical structure. The point in formulating these deep connections is not to posit some kind of "transcendental experience" of gaming, but rather to articulate conceptual models more amenable to historicization, even treating abstraction itself as an historical contingency interacting in complex ways with how gaming, art, literature, poetry, and dreaming are being experienced and perceived. When these social forms are encountered concretely in historical literature, overwhelmingly they appear as composite forms that need to be treated as such, like how the linking couplets in Chapter 76 need to be treated not only as poetry but also as a game and a performance.

Games, literature, and artwork represent idealized spaces insofar as there are systemic predispositions toward eliminating from the game universe forms of inequality that render real-world interpersonal competition persistently unfair (and, arguably, less enjoyable). Games, artwork, music, poetry, literature, and so on, conceived abstractly outside

[282] C. Thi Nguyen, *Games: Agency As Art*, 2020: 2.

of history, cannot be said to be consistently "good" or "bad" in any straightforward sense; some of these social forms might function as realms of possibility and imagination, where new modes of living and being can be imagined more clearly and even experienced in a prefigurative capacity, whereas other social forms might uncritically recapitulate, even promote, pernicious or destructive modes of being.

Daiyu and Xiangyun's "contest in the cold" can be treated as an historically situated mode of artistic and poetic expression that, realized as a competition or as a game, is uniquely equipped to produce positive social feedback loops, each competing poet looking better in her spontaneous artistry than she might otherwise individually appear. As a formalized mode of being, improvising couplets affords ample opportunities for presenting original poetry in a favorable light, exemplifying the kind of "low stakes" gameplaying where one can casually practice one's craft while learning from, and inspiring, one's fellow artists.

Although Daiyu and Xiangyun emerge as vanguard members of the poetry club, their exceptional skills do not adversely affect their less-skilled counterparts. Betraying no evidence of competitive resentment, *Hongloumeng* highlights the sociality of poetry club meetings, foregrounding those spontaneously erupting moments when individual poets lose themselves in escalating rounds of zealous rhyme spinning. As in the case of the moonlit lake, there is no indication that co-present forms of poetic beauty are necessarily in tension with one another. Just as the moon's reflection in the water seems only to enhance the beauty of its source, itself reflected light, so too the overabundance of poetic energy manifested in the garden seems to enhance the effect of any one composition considered in isolation.

Even positing the moon itself as the source of beauty, and the reflection in turn as an "extension" of that beauty, seems to commit oneself to a kind of foundationalism strangely at odds with the spirit of secondhand daylight. Perhaps the beauty of the moon's reflection in nighttime waters is already contained within, is immanent to, the beauty of the moon "as such." Conceptually, this might involve eschewing additive models; the moon in the water is beautiful not because the moon is beautiful, and not because both the moon and the water are independently beautiful. Even if the connections between every constituent part of the scene were mapped, the source of the scene's beauty would continue to elude researchers without additional historicization. Perhaps the moon's beauty cannot be conceptualized independently of the countless bodies of water that, over millennia, have so generously hosted it. Materialist aesthetics might predict that this deep "four-dimensional" situatedness informs every immediate experience.

There are different ways to conceptualize historical situatedness, just as there are different approaches to dialectics, different approaches to structural analysis, and different approaches to conceptualizing liminality. Andrew Plaks' (2015) structural approach emphasizes "paired concepts" along "axes of alternation,"[283] conceiving of Prospect Garden ("daguan yuan" 大觀園) as a "daguan" 大觀 "total vision" of what a garden could be.[284] Plaks foregrounds the "concave" and "convex" lakeside locations wherefrom Shi Xiangyun and Daiyu compose matching couplets in Chapter 76, treating these locations as exemplars of the conscious, holistic artistic vision of the garden's designer. It is Xiangyun who, in the very scene in question (i.e., with Daiyu improvising rhyming couplets), praises this artistic

283 Plaks 2015: 189.
284 *Ibid.* 178.

vision, emphasizing how "[y]ou can see that when they built this garden, they truly had artistic mastery […] Obviously these two spots; one up, one down, one bright, one dark, one high, one low, one on a mountain, one near water, were arranged with the specific purpose of enjoying the moon in mind."[285] In this way, Plaks underscores how the conceptual and perceptual polarities his work organizes are not the external impositions of the researcher, but rather are immanent to the original text, even, as in Xiangyun's remarks, being thoughtfully articulated by main characters as principles of aesthetics and design.

The overall constellation of comparative forms has expanded, then, the cool competition of beauties in Li Shangyin's "Shuangyue" to be compared not only to the cool complementarity of the moon and its reflection in the water in Chapter 76, but also to the complementarity of the convex viewing spot, suitable "for those who like the small, remote moon of the mountains and high places," and the concave viewing spot, from which Daiyu and Xiangyun improvise their couplets, suitable "for those who prefer the silky whiteness of the great orb reflected in the surface of the water."[286]

That their exercise ends on a somber note, the serendipity of rhyme and chance reappearing, Daiyu as if inadvertently foreshadowing her imminent demise, seems to speak to the hinged, multivalent character of dreaming and the semantic spaces dreams presuppose. That dreams encompass both one's most cherished fantasies as well as one's deepest fears presents not only empirical but theoretical difficulties. To similar effect, there remain unresolved controversies over whether dreams are places where things are forgotten or places where things are remembered, or a manifestation of a more complex

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285 Plaks' translation of *HLM*, from Plaks 2015: 189-190.
286 Hawkes 2014 v.3: 657.

multifunctionality encompassing both remembering and forgetting. Maybe the multifaceted appearance of dreaming is due to a basic multifunctionality whose outlines are already familiar to us, or maybe this appearance is an artifact of the absence of some deeper understanding, of the knowledge of some occluded organizing principle that accounts for the patterns, and lack of patterns, presently being observed.

The vision of dreaming that emerges in this scene seems to double (like the moon's reflection in the water) as a vision of death, reinstantiating the paradoxical co-presence of life and death, and of fate and opportunity, observable in Baoyu's dream in Chapter 5 and in dreamscapes cross-culturally. Daiyu's evocation of "lengyue zang shihun" 冷月葬詩魂, literally renderable as "a cold moon buries a poet spirit," is suggestive of a corpse being drowned in the moon's white light. Hawkes' interpolative rendering, "Where, moon-embalmed, a dead muse lies in state,"[287] speaks to the ethereal, dream-like quality of the scene, as well as to the hidden significance of Daiyu and Xiangyun's choosing the concave, hence "water-centric," view of the moon. Daiyu in this moment seems to embody, perhaps to her own peril, elements of the vision of femininity encapsulated in younger Baoyu's philosophy of "women as water, men as mud." Only the Concave Pavilion could have lent itself to this final poetic image, the spirit of poetry drowned by the light of the moon. Moonlight being so essential to poetic expression, the image of poetry's "death by moonlight" is itself evocative of the notion of a self-fulfilling prophecy, something occurring of its own volition, as if by its own "second hand."

[287] Hawkes 2014 v.3: 669.

Shi Xiangyun's comment in this moment ("If only I were in a boat now, with some wine to drink! If this were my own home, I should jump into a boat now immediately"[288]) could be interpreted as a reference to the popular legend of Li Bai's death (762 CE), drunkenly falling from his boat attempting to grasp the moon's reflection in the Yangzi River. The double reference to the death of a poet and to home recapitulates the basic vision of dreaming in Baoyu dream in Chapter 5, that same vision discovered in *Hongloumeng*'s dialogue with Li He, Li Shangyin, and Wen Tingyun, dreaming as spatialized, architectural desire, a place one's never visited yet to which one hopes to return, destination and destiny as habitation, as home. Daiyu's swift dismissal of this suggestion could be interpreted, in turn, as an indirect reaffirmation of this scene's alignment with Li Shangyin's poetry, though this is speculative.

It should be noted that different versions of *Hongloumeng* have "flower spirit" ("huahun" 花魂) instead of "poet spirit." It's an open question whether this variability affects the arguments here in any deep way, as, in either case, the same basic semantic space is being activated. It's interesting that evoking "huahun" here, in addition to recalling and expanding the discussion of "canhua" above, raises the question of whether and in what way the burial of a poet is to be related to the burial of a flower, while also raising the question of what it might mean, or not mean, to be burying a poet versus burying a poet's work.

That the act of burying a poem is neither clearly an act of disposal nor an act of storage and preservation, but somehow, impossibly, both these things, seems to recall the same basic question as to the nature of dreaming, viz., whether in dreaming one is trying to

[288] Hawkes 2014 v.3: 658-659.

remember or trying to forget. In Chapter 97, Daiyu dramatically burns all her poetry, conveying none of the sympathy toward her works that she had had for the fallen flowers.[289] Of course, previous attempts by Daiyu to destroy her works are repeatedly undermined by Baoyu, who is able to read and memorize them before they are destroyed. As Baoyu represents the author's own life experiences, it is plausible to suppose that the novel itself is where Daiyu's poetry finds, in a sense, an eternal resting place. In a way, Daiyu is buried in the only form of ideality that survives *Hongloumeng*'s unrelenting depiction of material hardship and social brutality, the ideality of poetry and literature, arguably, poetry and literature in their capacity as the prefiguration of mutually supportive, mutually sustaining free modes of interpersonal interaction.

The souls of Daiyu, Baochai, and Qin Keqing can be interpreted as forming a tripartite identity, as suggested by Baoyu's dream in Chapter 5. The depth of the connection between Daiyu and Baochai can be seen in how Baochai also evokes images of a "cold moon" ("lengyue" 冷月) and of the "clear frosty moonlight" ("qingshuang" 清霜) in her chrysanthemum poem in Chapter 38. The third and fourth lines of Baochai's poem read, "Empty the fence by the old garden, this autumn still no trace [of the chrysanthemum],/ Only in cold moon hoarfrost dreams can they be seen" 空籬舊圃秋無跡,/ 冷月清霜夢有知,[290] the idea being that this season the chrysanthemum flowers have yet to bloom, and that, if one wishes to see them, one can only do so in dreaming. In this way the poem draws

289 *HLM*, Chapter 97. Hawkes 2014 v.4: 386-417.

290 Hawkes, interpolating and abiding by a particular rhyme scheme, has, "But autumn's guest, who last year graced this plot,/ Only, as yet, in dreams of night appears." Hawkes 2014 v.2: 307. Different versions of *Hongloumeng* have "shou yue" 瘦月 instead of "leng yue" 冷月. The Hawkes 2014 version of the Chinese original text (i.e., Fan Shengyu's edition) has "leng yue," although the translation itself appears to be interpolating over this discrepancy.

a connection between dreaming and memory, as underscored by its set title and subject matter, "Remembering the Chrysanthemum" ("Yiju" 憶菊). In addition, the connection between the space of dreaming and the light of the moon is clearly established in Baochai's lines, setting the stage for Daiyu and Xiangyun's dream-like visions of the bright moon in the glassy lake in Chapter 76.

In *Hongloumeng* and Li Shangyin's intertextual space, dreams appear intimately connected with one's wishes, aspirations, fears, and desires, but in a way faithful to dreaming as historically situated beings tend to experience it, as a place imbued with unplaceable attributes, somewhere halfway between emotion and logic, representing something halfway between desire and aversion. Daiyu's recurrent "dream of death," which arguably finds its clearest articulation in this final rhyming couplet in Chapter 76, fits this mold, as do Baoyu's various visions and fantasies throughout the novel of what a good death would look like. If viewed as a profusion of art and the senses that twilights upon a deathly vision, this lakeside dream, shared between confidantes and buried beneath the waves, seems to recapitulate the basic arc of Baoyu's dream in Chapter 5.

Chapter Three

Wen Tingyun 温庭筠 and The Dream of Poetry in *Hongloumeng*

This chapter continues to trace the threads of *Hongloumeng*'s subtle dialogue with late Tang poetic traditions, this time analyzing *Hongloumeng*'s dialogue with Wen Tingyun 温庭筠 (812-870). Attempts are made to conceptualize implicit and explicit references to the poet and his poetry, and to assess how questions of dreams, desire, identity, and fate in *Hongloumeng* are informed by Wen Tingyun's grappling with these questions. In this chapter, Li He's spectral feminism and Li Shangyin's oblique social critique find their counterpoint in Wen Tingyun's visions of listless female resistance. Additional efforts will be directed toward conceptualizing the different ways that *Hongloumeng* relates Wen Tingyun to the character Baoyu. Wen Tingyun's work will be analyzed especially in terms of its influence on *Hongloumeng*'s dream of poetry (i.e., of what poetry is and could be, socially and artistically) as an aesthetic and artistic vehicle for the expression of new visions of liberated desire and identity.

I.

To get an overview on such a long and challenging novel, it helps to privilege moments in the text of *Hongloumeng* where conscious attempts are made to present a formalized or schematic representation of the novel's values. The first explicit reference to Wen Tingyun occurs in one such philosophically revelatory passage early in *Hongloumeng*, in a section of Jia Yucun's long speech in Chapter 2 outlining his metaphysical philosophy in

which individual fates are contingent upon being born in good or bad times, upon relative levels of good and bad "qi" 氣, and upon social class and gender, though cross-class and cross-gender patterns are emphasized. One is either "born under the influence of benign forces" ("yingyun er sheng" 應運而生) or "born under the influence of evil forces" ("yingjie er sheng" 應劫而生),[291] to contend in the world with "good cosmic fluids" ("zhengqi" 正氣) and "evil fluids" ("xieqi" 邪氣). The surplus of these "qi" 氣 fluids is depicted almost like a literalized weather event, with the collision of errant good "qi" with errant bad "qi" sometimes causing bad "qi" to be "forced downwards"[292] and become lodged in otherwise good people. According to Jia Yucun's system, this confluence of good and bad "qi," itself accidental or "chance-based," results in a third category of person. Baoyu is assigned to this category, as are the kinds of historical artists, poets, and social rebels that the novel valorizes, out of whose conceptions of dreams and desire *Hongloumeng* develops its own unique vision:

假使或男或女，偶秉此氣而生者，上則不能為仁人為君子，下亦不能為大凶大惡，置之千萬人之中，其聰俊靈秀之氣，則在千萬人之上；其乖僻邪謬不近人情之態，又在千萬人之下。若生於公侯富貴之家，則為情癡情種；若生於詩書清貧之族，則為逸士高人；縱然生於薄祚寒門，甚至為奇優，為名娼，亦斷不至為走卒健僕，甘遭庸夫驅制。如前之許由、陶潛、阮籍、嵇康、劉伶、王謝二族、顧虎頭、陳後主、唐明皇、宋徽宗、劉庭芝、溫飛卿、米南宮、石曼卿、柳耆卿、秦少游，近日倪雲林、唐伯虎、祝枝山，再如李龜年、黃繙綽、敬新磨、卓文君、紅拂、薛濤、崔鶯、朝雲之流，此皆易地則同之人也。

Such human recipients [of the evil humour that has been "forced downward"], whether they be male or female, since they are already amply endowed with the benign humour before the evil humour is injected, are incapable of becoming either greatly good or

[291] Hawkes 2014 v.1: 40-41.
[292] *Ibid.* 43.

greatly bad; but place them in the company of ten thousand others and you will find that they are superior to all the rest in sharpness and intelligence and inferior to all the rest in perversity, wrongheadedness and eccentricity. Born into a rich or noble household they are likely to become great lovers or the occasion of great love in others; in a poor but well-educated household they will become literary rebels or eccentric aesthetes; even if they are born in the lowest stratum of society they are likely to become great actors or famous hetaerae. Under no circumstances will you find them in servile or menial positions, content to be at the beck and call of mediocrities.

For examples I might cite: Xu You 許由, Tao Yuanming 陶淵明, Ruan Ji 阮籍, Ji Kang 嵇康, Liu Ling 劉伶, the Wang 王 and Xie 謝 clans of the Jin 晉 period, Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之, the last ruler of Chen 陳, the emperor Ming 明 of the Tang 唐 dynasty, the emperor Huizong 徽宗 of the Song 宋 dynasty, Liu Tingzhi 劉庭芝, Wen Tingyun 溫庭筠, Mi Fei 米芾, Shi Yannian 石延年, Liu Yong 柳永 and Qin Guan 秦觀; or, from more recent centuries: Ni Zan 倪瓚, Tang Yin 唐寅 and Zhu Yunming 祝允明; or again, for examples of the last type: Li Guinian 李桂年, Huang Fanchuo 黃繙綽, Jing Xinmo 敬新磨, Zhuo Wenjun 卓文君, Little Red Duster (Hongfu 紅拂), Xue Tao 薛濤, Cui Yingying 崔鶯鶯 and Morning Cloud 朝雲之流. All of these, though their circumstances differed, were essentially the same.[293]

This list is remarkable for encompassing such a wide range of people, artistry appearing perhaps the one unifying attribute of its members. Wang Yu counts 22 of the 27 individuals listed as being known for their artistic accomplishments (7 known for their painting, and the rest for their music).[294] Wang suggests that Wen Tingyun's talent not only as a poet but also as a musician might have contributed toward his inclusion on the list.[295]

It is notable how prominently women, especially female poets, figure in this list. Though Jia Yucun's metaphysical descriptions evidence the kinds of semantic associations between evil, sin, concavities, darkness, dampness, and stagnant water sometimes found packaged together with gender essentialist rhetoric (e.g., "the cruel and perverse humours,

293 *HLM*, Chapter 2. Hawkes 2014 v.1: 42-43.
294 Wang Yu 2014: 54.
295 *Ibid.*

unable to circulate freely in the air and sunlight, subside, by a process of incrassation and coagulation, into the bottoms of ditches and ravines"), nowhere in the speech is the evil spirit itself in any way gendered.

Historical female poets appearing on the list include Zhuo Wenjun 卓文君 (175-121 BCE) of the Han Dynasty and Xue Tao 薛濤 (768-831 CE) of the Tang.[296] That the list intermingles real historical figures with semi-historical, semi-fictional figures like Little Red Duster (Hongfu 紅拂) and Cui Yingying 崔鶯鶯 seems to speak to *Hongloumeng*'s conceiving of "jia" 假 "truth" and "zhen" 真 "fiction" as intertwined, inextricable forms. Jia Yucun's typology is also remarkable for its sober depiction of class-based and gender-based differences to how one's nature is being historically expressed. What emerges, across these differences, is a depiction of "qing" 情 amorous emotion that moves and inspires the individual, but also, potentially, disturbs orthodoxies and provokes retributive response.

This theory of the "mixed type" is by way of preface to Jia Yucun's sharing with an old friend his strange experiences with the Zhen family and Zhen Baoyu (i.e., Jia Baoyu's doppelgänger). Yucun's friend then describes his own experiences with the comparably peculiar Jia Baoyu. Their conversational theorizing seems to cohere with Fairy Disenchantment's claim in Chapter 5 that Baoyu has one of the most lascivious minds she has ever encountered,[297] particularly as his behavioral eccentricities are depicted as being downstream of his fetishistic "women are water, men are mud" philosophy, in which a

[296] For an introduction to Zhuo Wenjun, including English translations of her poetry, see Wilt L. Idema and Beata Grant, *The Red Brush: writing women of imperial China*, 2020: 108-112. For a comparable introduction to Xue Tao, see *ibid.* 182-189, as well as Bret Hinsch, *Women in Tang China*, 2019: 103-105.

[297] *HLM*, Chapter 5. Hawkes 2014 v.1: 137.

psychological overinvestment in quasi-intuitive notions of purity and cleanliness has become divorced from any scientific or medical justification.[298]

Wen Tingyun isn't again mentioned by name in *Hongloumeng* until Chapter 75, when Jia Zheng orders Baoyu and Jia Huan to compose poetic verse for him. Reviewing their compositions, Jia Zheng, while begrudgingly acknowledging their talents, compares Baoyu and Jia Huan to Wen Tingyun and Cao Tang 曹唐 (9th C.), respectively. This comment functions as much as an insult as a compliment, the implied subtext being that Baoyu and Jia Huan should expect to have as much difficulty in their civil-service examinations as these Tang poets themselves encountered. The reference is ultimately to moralizing, tendentious readings of these poets' personal histories, their reputation for patronizing brothels and licentious dissipation, however earned or not, identified by later generations as cause for their professional stagnation.

Paul Rouzer (1993) characterizes the biographical tales that over time have accrued to Wen Tingyun as "soap-opera vignettes," emphasizing that these stories are often interesting less for the details they convey about the story, and more for the attitudes they betray in the storyteller.[299] In a comment inadvertently speaking to Jia Yucun's "mixed type" quoted above, Rouzer observes that "Wen, like the doomed emperor Li Yu 李煜 (937-74) or the swaggering artist Tang Yin 唐寅 (1470-1524)," the latter also cited by Jia Yucun as

[298] For a sustained discussion of this philosophy in the text of *Hongloumeng,* see *HLM*, Chapter 2. Hawkes 2014 v.1: 39-48. For recent research on the philosophical and sociological significance of the relationship between purity and disgust, see Daniel Kelly, *Yuck!: The nature and moral significance of disgust*, 2011.

[299] Paul Rouzer, *Writing another's dream: the poetry of Wen Tingyun*, 1993: 2.

having a "mixed" nature, "was the sort of semi-legendary figure whom the Chinese have publicly condemned and secretly embraced."[300]

II.

A careful consideration of explicit references to lines of Wen Tingyun's poetry is in order, before opening up the conversation to implied references at the level of thematics, wording, and imagery.

During game-playing in Chapter 28, the third line of Wen Tingyun's most famous poem "On Shang Mountain Setting Off Early" ("Shangshan zaoxing" 商山早行) is quoted:

晨起動征鐸，客行悲故鄉。
雞聲茅店月，人跡板橋霜。
槲葉落山路，枳花明驛牆。
因思杜陵夢，鳧雁滿回塘。

Rising at dawn, rustling the journey bells[301]
A stranger riding on, longing for old haunts

A cock crowing to the thatched hut moon
Footprints in the wooden bridge frost

The oak leaves fall on the mountain path
The orange flowers brighten the postal wall

And so I yearn for Duling dreams
Ducks and geese to brim the curving pond[302]

300 *Ibid.*

301 Liu Xuekai 刘学锴, *Wen Tingyun Quanji jiaozhu* 温庭筠全集校注, 2020 v.1: 359.

302 For alternate translations, compare Michael Fuller, *An Introduction to Chinese Poetry: From the Canon of Poetry to the Lyrics of the Song Dynasty*, 2017: 342 and William R. Schultz, trans., in *Sunflower Splendor: Three Thousand Years of Chinese Poetry*, Liu Wuji and Irving Yucheng Lo, ed., 1975: 246.

The "Duling dream" referenced in the penultimate line can be interpreted as the speaker's recollecting the capital city Chang'an, and the bountiful lands and luxurious gardens surrounding it, as if it were a dreamland, the spatialized realization of the speaker's dreams and desire. Wen's poem is characterized by a delicate balancing of crisp, crystallized moments, traces of nature merging with faint signs of human life to reproduce the experience of waking to a morning frost far from home. Rouzer, attempting to explain the praise lavished on the second couplet, cites an "almost endless" "play of aesthetic content."[303] As Rouzer conceives it, the moonlight and the frost on the bridge are "pale marks of nature set against the constructions of human beings," with "the rooster's cry and the tracks of people [...] indicat[ing] invisible presences."[304]

This overabundance of trace-related imagery (the faint rustling of bells, the echoes of the rooster's call, the early morning traces of moonlight, the fallen leaves yet to scatter, a rustic wall) sustains itself until the very last line, where, in the only impression from memory, a maximal proliferation of ducks and geese appears mirrored in the clear waters of a curving pool. In this way, the poem's crisp waking immediacy becomes for Wen a vehicle for rediscovering life in the capital as a lingering dream to which one longs to return. Using the language of liminal analysis, one could say that, in the final line of Wen's image, out of the *infinitesimal* traces of perceptual immediacy reemerges finally the *infinite* space of memory and dreaming, the clarity of the vision reflective, perhaps, of memory as a revisional form.

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303 Rouzer 1993: 18.
304 *Ibid.* 19.

Wen's vision of the capital as a celestial, crystalline dreamscape prefigures *Hongloumeng*'s Prospect Garden[305] (Daguan yuan 大觀園) in being a "real dreamscape," the realization of an artistic dream of garden ideals. Wen's portrayal of birds and their reflections on pristine bodies of water is recognizable to historical Chinese literary traditions, but in Wen's work the vision crests, reaching levels of "peak reduplication," in a way evocative enough of *Hongloumeng*'s aesthetic to prompt investigating whether intertextual dialogue between *Hongloumeng* and Wen Tingyun is occurring specifically on these terms.

In Chapter 2 of this dissertation, Shi Xiangyun and Daiyu's matching couplets in Chapter 76 of *Hongloumeng* are discussed at length, though the emphasis of the discussion is mostly on Daiyu's final line, the penultimate line by Xiangyun (i.e., the first half of the exercise's final couplet) hardly discussed. As for the exercise's final three lines, two are Shi Xiangyun's, the first ending the penultimate couplet, the second starting the final couplet:

窗燈焰已昏。寒塘渡鶴影，

The candle in the window has already dimmed.
Crossing the cool pond a crane's impression,

Following is Daiyu's final line, ending the last couplet in the exercise (barring Miaoyu's subsequent additions):

冷月葬詩魂。

The cold moon buries the poetry spirit.

[305] *HLM*, Ch. 18. Hawkes 2014 v.1: 420-421.

Xiangyun's "crane's impression" line, which meets great approval in the chapter's dialogue, is spontaneously inspired by the moment, Daiyu and Xiangyun's having just been startled by a dark shape appearing in the garden pond, this shadowy disturbance reminiscent of the time when Musk is startled by a golden pheasant, as depicted in Chapter 51.[306] The crane's common Daoist association with death and the afterlife is reinforced by Daiyu's next line, her vision of poetry's death in the pale moonlight, as discussed in detail in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. At various other points in the novel, cranes are also spotted outside of Baoyu's residence in the garden, usually in pairs, such as in Chapter 27.[307]

Especially given that Jia Zheng compares Baoyu's poetry with Wen Tingyun's, it's notable that Baoyu mentions the cranes outside his residence in two of his seasonal improvisatory poems from Chapter 23.[308] In the second couplet of "Autumn," "Outside, a crane sleeps on moss-wrinkled rocks,/ And dew from well-side trees the crow's wings soaks"[309] 苔鎖石紋容睡鶴,/ 井飄桐露濕棲鴉, the crane is depicted sleeping (and perhaps, it follows, dreaming) on a rock whose veins ("shiwen" 石紋 "stone veins") are lined with green moss, this image arguably self-referential, given that the novel depicts itself in Chapter 1 as the writing appearing on a magic stone ("shiwen" 石紋 "stone veins" homophonous with "shiwen" 石文 "stone text").

In the second couplet of "Winter" ("The pine's shadow covers the whole courtyard, only visible a crane,/ Pear blossoms [i.e., snow] covers the ground, unheard the oriole['s

306 Hawkes 2014 v.2: 656-659.
307 Hawkes 2014 v.2: 16-17.
308 Hawkes 2014 v.1: 552-553.
309 *Ibid.*

song]"[310] 松影一庭惟見鶴,/ 梨花滿地不聞鶯), a solitary crane appears in the massive shadow the pine casts over the courtyard, covering the ground like a fresh snow. The image of "the shadow of the pine" ("songying" 松影) might itself be traceable to Wen Tingyun's poetry. Of the poets in the *Quan Tangshi* who use this exact wording, Wen Tingyun is the poet, alongside Bai Juyi, to use it the most, viz., in three separate poems.

Particularly given that tea preparation is a leitmotif in three out of four of Baoyu's seasonal poems in Chapter 23, the image of "pine shadows" 松影 in Wen's poem "The Tea Song of the Xiling Daoist" ("Xiling daoshi chage" 西陵道士茶歌) could be providing direct inspiration."[311] This poem praises the "pine shadows" ("songying" 松影) alongside the mountain moon, describing in vivid detail the clear, crisp, and clean environs where an old Daoist recluse prepares the finest tea. As an element of Daoist cultivation practices intended for achieving transcendence and immortality, the fragrant impression of the tea's flavor and scent transports its drinker, enabling them to see with the crane's transcendent soul the obscure mysteries of the universe (疏香皓齒有餘味，更覺鶴心通杳冥).

As magnificent birds make for natural pairings with crisp, clean ponds and pools, a brief survey of relevant phrasings and their frequency of occurrence in the *Quan Tangshi* can help provide a provisional sense for how unique a given image really is. The specific wording "heying" 鶴影 appears no fewer than 5 times in the *Quan Tangshi*, including once as a solitary "heying" 孤鶴影 in a poem by Qi Ji 齊己.[312] By contrast, "goose shadow" or

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310 Liu Genglu 劉耕路, *et al.*, *Hongloumeng shici jiexi* 紅樓夢詩詞解析 2005: 162.
311 *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 577.
312 *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 840.

"goose reflection" ("yanying" 雁影) appears to be a more common image, appearing no fewer than 25 times in the *Quan Tangshi*, generally in the context of changing seasons, the hardships and challenges of long-term departure and separation finding analogy in the seasonal movements of migratory birds. Poems in the *Quan Tangshi* that relate "tang" 塘 and "yan" 雁 are comparably numbered at no fewer than 26 instances,[313] with, notably, Wen Tingyun's work featuring prominently, four of his poems relating "tang" and "yan." Likewise, the more generic wording "niaoying" 鳥影 appears in at least 12 poems in the *Quan Tangshi*, including in one Wen Tingyun poem.

Cai Yijiang relates "Hantang du heying" 寒塘渡鶴影 to a line from Du Fu's "A Companion Piece to Pei Di's 'Climbing Xinjin Temple, Sent to Vice-Director Wang'" 和裴迪登新津寺寄王侍郎,[314] "The voices of cicadas gather in the ancient temple,/ reflections of birds cross the cold pool" 蟬聲集古寺,/ 鳥影度寒塘.[315] Wang (2006) organizes different theories explaining this line, some linking it to Su Shi's poetry.[316] Du Fu's using the generic "bird" ("niao" 鳥) instead of "he" 鶴 somewhat weakens referential certainty, especially when the wording "cold pond" ("hantang" 寒塘) itself appears in at least 40 poems in the *Quan Tangshi*, including many featuring birds, clouds, and their movement through the skies, such as "Hantang" 寒塘 by Sima Shu 司空曙 (8th C.), which highlights

313 One can broadly understand "relate" in this context as designating any kind of loose co-occurrence of these words in the body of a poem. The assertion is not that "tang" and "yan" necessarily occur tightly parallel to each other in the poem in question.

314 Cai Yijiang, *Hongloumeng shici qufu jianshang* 紅樓夢詩詞曲賦鑑賞, 2004: 362-363.

315 Owen, *The Poetry of Dufu*, 2015: 321.

316 Wang Renen 王人恩, "Hantang du heying, lengyue zang huahun" kaolun. "寒塘渡鶴影，冷月葬花魂"考論. Honglongmeng xuekan 紅樓夢學刊. 2 (2006): 283-302.

a solitary "yan" goose, or "Staying the Night at Huairen County's South Lake, Writing to Recluse Xun of Donghai" 宿懷仁縣南湖，寄東海荀處士 by Liu Changqing 劉長卿 (8th C.), which has the line "From the cool pond arises a solitary goose" ("Hantang qi guyan" 寒塘起孤雁).[317]

Du Fu's parallelizing the shadows of birds and the echoing sound of cicadas speaks to general patterns in Tang poetry. Most instances in the *Quan Tangshi* in which the wording "niaoying" occurs are parallel to the mention or description of some kind of sound. For shadows in their capacity as remnants of image, an acoustic counterpart has been found in the echoing remnants of voice. For instance, Wen Tingyun's poem "Writing to Du Shaoyin of Henan" 寄河南杜少尹 features the line "The bird shadows jig-jaggedly wind through the upper garden, the neighing of horses intermittently drifts over the central bridge" 鳥影參差經上苑，騎聲斷續過中橋, parallelizing "bird shadows" and "horse sounds" again in a garden environment, though in this instance no "tang" 塘 appears.[318] Likewise, in Li Shangyin's poem "Yinshu" 因書 a parallel is drawn between "orangutan calls" ("yuansheng" 猿聲) and "bird shadows" ("niaoying" 鳥影).[319]

There remains underlying all this analysis unanswered questions regarding what's true and false in Jia Zheng's identifying Baoyu's poetry with Wen Tingyun. Beneath the insult, there is a core of insight with which it is worth grappling. In addition to the shared crane imagery, one can broadly observe both in the poetry of Wen Tingyun and the poetry

317 *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 149.
318 *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 578.
319 *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 540.

ascribed to the character Baoyu the same preoccupation with representing women in lazily languid states, more often than not alone in ornately furnished boudoir settings or fine parks or gardens, often wearing exquisite clothing and jewelry, sometimes, before finely wrought mirrors or sets of mirrors, usually in a contemplative, irritated, longing, or lustful state of mind. Beneath these surface-level isomorphisms, one can observe a shared concern for the conditions of women, especially neglected court women and prostitutes but also common women, a stylistic and ideological development inheriting many of the subtle subversions observed in previous chapters.

If Wen Tingyun's social critique appears less pronounced than Li He's and Li Shangyin's, this is perhaps a reflection of how much of it lies beneath a sparkling, rippling surface, as if shimmering artifice is meant to conceal sentiment and intention. Wen's sensibilities seem, moreover, especially drawn toward the representation of representation. Luxurious things – pillowcases, sheets, makeup boxes, curtains, etc. – and the patterns and pictures written across their surfaces figure so prominently in his work, that one is often left to speculate on whether a line is describing an immediate experience, a personal memory, or an imagistic representation. Rouzer, commenting on Wen's poem "Early Autumn, Dwelling in the Mountains ("Zaoqiu shanju" 早秋山居), observes in Wen's artistry elements of a "love of surfaces" in stark opposition to what Rouzer views as "[t]he dislike of surfaces […] essential [to] traditional aesthetic theory [in] China."[320]

Sensational accounts of Wen's allegedly illicit life arguably have had the effect of obscuring and diminishing Wen's poetic portrayal of women's conditions. Mou Huaichuan,

[320] Rouzer 1993: 4.

"[c]omparing Wen with many of his eminent contemporaries, […] finds the claims that Wen was to any degree 'immoral' to be dubious," further arguing that Wen "evinces a remarkable humanity transcending class and gender bias in a manner extremely rare for his time."[321] Focusing on Wen's poetry pertaining specifically to women, Xu Xiuyan has developed a general typology that includes 1) works depicting the emotions and appearance of courtesans, their singing and dancing, and their living conditions, 2) works depicting the everyday life and love relationships of the peasantry, 3) works discussing merchant women, 4) works involving palace maids and concubines, 5) frontier poems featuring homesick women, 6) works based on the love story of Tang Xuanzong and Yang Guifei, 7) song poems written for Yu Xuanji such as "Gift to a Confidante" ("Zeng zhiyin" 贈知音) and "Jade Zither Lament" ("Yaose yuan" 瑤瑟怨), and 8) works based on Su Xiaoxiao such as "The Song of Su Xiaoxiao"[322] ("Su Xiaoxiao ge" 蘇小小歌).[323]

Many of Wen's most iconic images are from his series of poems "Bodhisattva Barbarian" ("Pusa man" 菩薩蠻). This is its "cipai" title, roughly speaking, the name of the musical standard to which the poem or song is being set. According to the Tang scholar Su E 蘇鄂 in "Duyang Miscellany" ("Duyang Zabian" 杜陽雜編), the "cipai" name "Pusa man" relates to an event from the Dazhong era (9th C.) when, allegedly, the Tang ruler received tribute from a female-governed foreign country. This tale of questionable historical veracity seems almost reminiscent of how "Women's Country" (Nüguo 女國) is depicted in

321 Huaichuan Mou, *Rediscovering Wen Tingyun: a historical key to a poetic labyrinth*, 2004: 215.
322 *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 29.
323 Xu Xiuyan 2005: 18.

Journey to the West (*Xiyouji* 西遊記).[324] The high hairstyle and gold jewelry adorning the women of the tribute mission were said to recall the image of a bodhisattva, with the term "bodhisattva" coming to be used during the Tang to refer to beautiful women, hence the turn of phrase "bodhisattva barbarian."[325] As Liu Zhenqian notes, the term "man" during the Tang period was used by Han peoples living in the Central Plains region (i.e., Zhongyuan 中原) to designate non-Han people in surrounding areas.[326]

This poem famously depicts a languid lady situated between two mirrors that have been placed facing each other, thereby producing a visual regress that gestures toward the infinite. In the terms of liminal analysis, one might relate Wen Tingyun's preoccupation with bird-filled pools to his interest in infinite reflection, in this way connecting maximal forms (filled "man" 滿 "to the brink") with infinite forms. The first in this long collection of short songs reads:

小山重疊金明滅，鬢雲欲度香腮雪。
懶起畫蛾眉，弄妝梳洗遲。
照花前後鏡，花面交相映。
新帖繡羅襦，雙雙金鷓鴣。

On small mountains, layer on layer, gold glints.
Her cloud ringlets are about to cross the fragrant snow of her cheeks.
She is too listless to rise to paint her moth eyebrows
She delays in applying makeup, combing, and washing.
Illumining the flower in mirrors front and behind,
The flowers and her face brighten one another.
Newly embroidered on her gauze jacket:
Pair upon pair of golden partridges.[327]

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[324] *Xiyouji*, Chapter 54. Anthony C. Yu, The Journey to the West, Revised Edition, Vol. 1-4, 2012 v.3: 47-61.

[325] Quoted in Liu Xuekai 2020 v.2: 495.

[326] Liu Zhenqian 劉振乾. Tangsong "Pusa man" yanjiu 唐宋 "菩薩蠻" 研究. Guilin 桂林: Guangxi Shifan University 廣西師範大學, PhD Diss., 2012: 8.

[327] Fuller 2017: 358.

This poem combines two types of iconic Wen imagery, the languid lady lazily and belatedly applying makeup, and the facing mirrors whose surfaces create the appearance of an infinite regress. Liu Zhenqian identifies two types of "evocative imagery" (觸景生愁 "chujing shengchou") that Wen Tingyun uses in the "Pusaman," viz., "toiletry evocative imagery" (梳妝生愁 "shuzhuang shengchou") and "coupling animals evocative imagery," (觸雙生愁 "chushuang shengchou") the latter referring to a solitary individual's feeling of loneliness upon observing a happy couple together.[328] In this poem, it is the embroidered partridge pairs in the last line that utilize the "chushuang shengchou" mechanism, whereas "toiletry evocative imagery" is evoked in line 4 ("She delays in applying makeup, combing, and washing"弄妝梳洗遲).

Exemplifying the "representation of representation" motif discussed above, the first line could be interpreted as referring not to actual mountains, but possibly to a picture of a mountain range appearing on a screen ("ping" 屏). Liu Xuekai also indicates the possibility that a pillow is being referenced, the glimmering golden appearance a product of its painted surface.[329] Deng Shu (2017) suggests two additional possible explanations, firstly, that the maiden's hair is being compared to a small mountain, and, secondly, that the maiden has left combs in her hair that resemble small mountains.[330] Alternatively, or perhaps in addition to

328 Liu Zhenqian 2012: 37.

329 Liu Xuekai 2020 v.2: 496.

330 Deng Shu 鄧恕. Qiantan Wen Tingyun "Pusaman: Xiaoshan chongdie jin mingmie" zhong nuxing xingxiang de suzao 淺談溫庭筠"菩薩蠻·小山重疊金明滅"中女性形象的塑造. Shanxi University 山西大學, Master's Thesis, 2017: 5.

meaning these things, the line could be interpreted as describing eyebrows and possibly the yellow makeup fashionable during the Tang that women placed between their eyebrows.[331]

Brows (especially of the furled sort) in a *Hongloumeng* context often evoke the character Daiyu, as does, of course, a flower before the mirror, one of *Hongloumeng*'s most iconic images, first appearing in the third song from Baoyu's dream in Chapter 5, a song that treats the subject of Baoyu and Daiyu's relationship. Its title, which Hawkes has translated "Hope Betrayed" could more literally be rendered "Frowning Brows" ("wang ning mei" 枉凝眉).[332] Further suggestive of an intentional dialogue, the exact wording "jingzhonghua" 鏡中花 is very rare in the *Quan Tangshi*, appearing only 3 times, including in the Wen Tingyun poem "Dingxi Pan" 定西番 (whose first line reads "Xiyu xiaoying chunwan" 細雨曉鶯春晚):

細雨曉鶯春晚，人似玉，柳如眉，正相思。
羅幕翠簾初卷，鏡中花一枝。
腸斷塞門消息，雁來稀。[333]

Slight rain, dawn oriole, late spring. A face like jade, eyebrows like wispy willows, presently pining away.
The silk screen and jade curtain rolled all the way up, in the mirror a single flower.
Heartbreaking that from the border pass, news and geese are scarce.

331 Liu Xuekai 2020 v.2 *ibid.* See Cui Xinfei 崔心芾, Qingluo fendai: Wen Tingyun "Huajian ci" zhong nuxing de yizhuo zhuangshi 輕羅粉黛: 温庭筠"花間詞"中女性的衣著妝飾。. Nanjing yishu xueyuan 南京藝術學院, Master's thesis, 2020: 11 for a treatment of beautification imagery in Wen's poetry.

332 Hawkes 2014 v.1: 126-129.

333 *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 891.

This poem assumes the voice of a female speaker, pining from an empty boudoir for one's partner stationed at the edges of empire, from whom communication is infrequent. The poem leaves open the question of whether the flower before the mirror is literal, metaphorical, or some combination of these things.

Baoyu's seasonal improvisations in Chapter 23 have been discussed above in connection with the Daoist crane imagery whose articulation exhibits key parallels with some important imagery from Wen Tingyun's poetry. Additional dialogue between the poems in Chapter 23 and Wen Tingyun's poetry can be observed along other thematic dimensions.

The very first two characters in the first line of Baoyu's "Spring night improvisation" in Chapter 23 ("Chunye jishi" 春夜即事) appear possibly to have been borrowed directly from Wen Tingyun. Nowhere in the *Quan Tangshi* besides Wen Tingyun's "Jincheng Qu" 錦城曲 ("Brocade City Song") does the exact wording "xiaxiao" (霞綃, "skypink silk") appear. This short work speaks to several recurrent themes in this dissertation, including the Shu region, the "dujuan" cuckoo, mountains (or their representations) that seem as if to "furl their brows," fine silk and the gendered labor that produces it, passion and longing, separation from loved ones, and the perilousness of long-distance communication:

蜀山攢黛留晴雪，簝筍蕨芽縈九折。
江風吹巧剪霞綃，花上千枝杜鵑血。
杜鵑飛入岩下叢，夜叫思歸山月中。
巴水漾情情不盡，文君織得春機紅。
怨魄未歸芳草死，江頭學種相思子。
樹成寄與望鄉人，白帝荒城五千里。[334]

[334] *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 575.

Shu Mountain furrows its brow, leaving crisp frost,
The bamboo shoots and fiddle heads wind around Ninefold Slope.[335]

The river wind blows just so, cutting the skypink silk,
Upon the flowers on a thousand branches falls cuckoo's blood.

The cuckoo, flying, descends into a cliffside thicket,
In the night, calling me to "guh-Go!" home, [336] the mountain moon beneath.

The Ba 巴 River's overflowing passion, passion without end,
Wenjun weaving on the spring loom crimson threads.

This grieving soul is yet to "Go," the fragrant flowers withering,
At the riverhead studying how to plant "longing seeds."

From the tree fashion a letter to send this homesick soul,
The White Emperor's wasteland fifty-thousand miles.

Many of these images, in addition to "xiaxiao," are critical to poetic expression in *Hongloumeng*. As discussed above, the historical Shu region and the Xiao and Xiang rivers represent a semantic space implicated in dreaming and interwoven with enchantment. The association between rushing waters and overflowing passion is also recognizable, as is the stark depiction of personified flowers' withering and dying, not to mention the parallel being drawn between weaving red threads and, like the "dujuan" cuckoo, crying in vain tears of blood (thereby, as the legend goes, staining the "dujuan" flowers red).

That Wen Tingyun evokes the image of Wenjun means that, according to Jia Yucun's metaphysical philosophy, one "mixed type" poet is referencing another "mixed type" poet, each explicitly listed among Jia Yucun's examples.[337] Song Geng regards the story of Zhuo Wenjun and the poet Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 as arguably one of the earliest prototypes of

335 Following Liu Xuekai 2020 v.1: 16, note 3.
336 Following Liu Xuekai 2020 v.1: 16, note 6.
337 Quoted above.

the "caizi jiaren" 才子佳人 model of storytelling that *Hongloumeng* inherits but heavily critiques.[338] As described in the "Records of the Grand Historian (*Shiji* 史記), Zhuo and recently-widowed Sima eloped to Jincheng (modern-day Chengdu, Sichuan) where at first they suffered economically and socially, partly on account of Zhuo's parents' initial disapproval of Sima.[339] According to the patriarchal moral standards of the time, Zhuo's great transgression was remarrying after the death of her first husband. Paola Zamperini notes that the expression "losing oneself," "losing one's body" ("shishen" 失身) in reference to historical conceptions of female virginity, first appears in the Chinese transmitted literary tradition in Sima Qian's (司馬遷, 145-86 BCE) account of Sima Xiangru and Zhuo Wenjun, relating how, "as the story has it, it was because of his zither playing that she, totally smitten, […] 已失身於司馬 ('lost her body to Sima')."[340] The implication is that "[t]his definition [of "shishen"] was applied to women who engaged in unchaste behavior, like cheating on their husbands, be they alive or dead."[341]

In the case of Jincheng "Brocade City," one gets the impression that elements of geographic peripheralization might be at play, as illustrated by how, in Wen Tingyun's poem, the female speaker of the poem bemoans being separated from her family and hometown. Liu Xuekai relates a historic detail maintaining that "Brocade City" was named on account of the purity of the river water in which new textiles were washed.[342] Li Daoyuan 酈道元 (d.

338 Song Geng, *The fragile scholar: Power and masculinity in Chinese culture*, 2004: 21.
339 *Ibid.*
340 Paola Zamperini, *Lost bodies: Prostitution and masculinity in Chinese fiction*, 2010: 55.
341 *Ibid.*
342 Liu Xuekai 2020 v.1: 16, note 1.

527 CE) in the Classic of Water (*Shuijing* 水經) recalls how the colors of the brocaded textiles washed in this river, running through parts of modern-day Chengdu, were clearer and brighter than if washed anywhere else.[343] Perhaps the clarity of the water is to be taken as a proxy for the degree of social isolation involved.

The "grieving soul" in line 9 explicitly recalls the exiled cuckoo referenced in lines 5 and 6, as well as the mythology connecting the cuckoo to Du Yu 杜宇, the semi-historical ruler of the pre-imperial state of Shu 蜀. One interpretation of line 11 is that, similarly to what was observed in the Li He's "Heyang shi" in Chapter 1, Wen Tingyun is invoking the image of wooden envelopes to signify what great distance the letter must travel, in this case all the way across the imagined "fifty thousand miles" of the "White Emperor's wasteland," viz., modern-day Sichuan.

It's possible that lines 9 and 10 reference the plight of women unable to leave Jincheng, that is to say, unable to abide the cuckoo's imploring and to "go home" ("zigui" 子規 "cuckoo" homophonous with "si gui" 思歸 "want to go home").[344] It is an open question whether to read these lines from the perspective of Zhuo Wenjun during her time in Jincheng. Liu Xuekai interprets the "fragrant flowers withering" ("fangcao si" 芳草死) as due to the influence at the end of spring of the cuckoo's grievous lament.[345] Notably, this concept appears to trace back to a sentiment expressed in the *Chuci*'s 楚辭 "Leaving my

[343] 酈道元《水經注》: 道西城故錦官世。言錦工纖錦，則濯之江流,而錦至鮮明；濯以他江，則錦色弱矣。Quoted in Liu 2020 v.1, 16, note 1.

[344] Following Liu Xuekai 2020 v.1: 16, note 6.

[345] Liu Xuekai 2020 v.1: 17, note 9.

Troubles" ("Lisao" 離騷) poem,[346] the line reading, "Fear only that the cuckoo might call before then,/ Causing all the herbs to lose their fragrance." 恐鵜鴂之先鳴兮,/ 使夫百草為之不芳.[347] The reemergence of yet another *Chuci* connection further demonstrates how the Tang source material from which *Hongloumeng* draws inspiration tends to center around this especially surreal, especially dream-like body of work and the hallucinogenic longing uniquely associated with its peripheral "southern" imagery.

Continuing to analyze Baoyu's "Spring night improvisation," one will notice that the seventh line "Since the 'small knots' to listlessness accustomed" 自是小鬟嬌懶慣) speaks to Wen's most famous motif, his vision of beautiful maidens subordinated to palatial hierarchies whose apparent lazy disinterest signifies an understated resistance to, and skepticism toward, the status quo. Similarly, the last line of Baoyu's summer improvisation ("Curtains closed in vermillion tower, removing the evening's makeup" 簾卷朱樓罷晚粧) also speaks to Wen Tingyun's general thematics if not his exact wording. Additionally in lines 5 and 6 of Baoyu's winter improvisation, there is a subtle critique of the masculine authority figure in the poem (viz., the speaker himself), the male speaker's comfort in his fur coat being contrasted with the maid's having to wear only a thin silk dress when serving him, this exposure to the winter chill possibly due to the master's erratic and sudden demands.

As for Baoyu's autumn improvisation, lines 5 and 6 appear potentially in direct dialogue with lines 15 and 16 of Wen's "Tile-tapping Song of Recluse Guo" ("Guo chushi ji ouge" 郭處士擊甌歌). One can compare Baoyu's "Clutching a quilt the servant girl arrives,

346 *Ibid.*
347 Sukhu 2017: 74.

to spread the golden phoenix [pattern]/ To a balustrade-leaning maiden returning the jade flower [hairpin] she dropped" 抱衾婢至舒金鳳,/ 倚檻人歸落翠花 to Wen's "The palace's inner court, holding fans, stands at attention,/ The 'low knot' maid drops her jade flower [hairpin]" 宮中近臣抱扇立,/ 侍女低鬟落翠花. The song reads:

郭處士擊甌歌

佶栗金虯石潭古，勺陂瀲灩幽修語。
湘君寶馬上神雲，碎佩叢鈴滿煙雨。
吾聞三十六宮花離離，軟風吹春星斗稀。

玉晨冷磬破昏夢，天露未幹香著衣。
蘭釵委墜垂雲發，小響丁當逐回雪。
晴碧煙滋重疊山，羅屏半掩桃花月。

太平天子駐雲車，龍爐勃鬱雙蟠拏。
宮中近臣抱扇立，侍女低鬟落翠花。
亂珠觸續正跳蕩，傾頭不覺金烏斜。

我亦為君長歎息，緘情遠寄愁無色。
莫沾香夢綠楊絲。千里春風正無力。

Tile-tapping Song of Recluse Guo[348]

Trembling golden dragon in Stone Pool from time immemorial
Quepi[349] Lake flowing over with lingering whispers
The Xiang River Queen's bejeweled horse ascends the spirit clouds,
Sparkling girdles stringed with bells fill the rainy skies.
I hear thirty-six palatial flowers outstretching,
A gentle breeze blowing, springtime stars scarce.

In the jade dawn cold stones dispel the haze of dreams,
The heavenly dew is still wet, its fragrant seeping through one's robes.
The orchid hairpin hangs askew her drooping cloud coiffure,

348 For an alternate translation, see Rouzer 1993: 54-55.

349 Rouzer 1993: 54 has "Shaopi Lake." Following Liu Xuekai 2020 v.1: 11, I'm rendering it "Quepi 芍陂 Lake," to make clear that this is a reference to the well-known irrigation project in early China for the Huai river ("Huaihe" 淮河) in Anhui 安徽.

Small bells jingle-jangling in chase of swirling snow.
Azure mist rises from receding mountains,
The silk screen half-closed upon a peach blossom moon.

The Great Peace Son of Heaven halts his cloud carriage [to listen],
The dragon furnace billowing in his double-coiled grasp.
The palace inner court, holding fans, stares utterly dumbfounded,
And a 'low knot' maid drops her jade flower [hairpin][350] [and doesn't notice].
The tangle of jewels clamorous, just so extravagant,
With a turn of the head unaware the golden bird [ornament] has tilted.

I, too, for the River Goddess am forever lamenting 長歎息
But I seal my feelings and send them far away, the worry on my face unseen.
Do not moisten fragrant dreams, green their poplar threads,
For a thousand miles the spring winds have just become still

This poem uses exquisite palatial imagery, including the sort of listless, disinterested female comportment for whose representation Wen is famous, as a metaphor to describe the experience of listening to Recluse Guo's music, which is so transcendent, so the poem goes, it causes the Xiang River Spirits, those ethereal entities celebrated in the "Xiangjun" poem in the *Chuci*, to emerge from the Xiang river and mount the skies, and, likewise, it causes immortals to stop their flying carriages to listen. The music is so moving that – as depicted in the line from which *Hongloumeng* borrows – the palace maids fail to notice when an exquisite "jade flower" hairpin accidentally drops to the ground.

Liu Xuekai regards this poem as having been influenced by both Li He and Li Shangyin. Demonstrative of the dialogue specifically between Li Shangyin and Wen Tingyun, the last line ("For a thousand miles the spring winds just happen to be still" 千里春風正無力) recalls the first lines of one of Li Shangyin's "Wuti" poems, viz., the lines "Finding time

[350] Liu Xuekai 2020 v.1: 11.

to meet is hard, parting ways is even harder,/ The east wind has faded, the hundred flowers withered" 相見時難別亦難,/ 東風無力百花殘, analyzed in detail in Chapter 2.[351] Liu also argues that the poem follows in the tradition of Li He's "Song of Li Ping Playing the Harp" ("Liping konghou yin" 李憑箜篌引).[352] This recurrent triangulation of influences reinforces the sense that the artistries of Li He, Li Shangyin, and Wen Tingyun represent a space of semantic interplay that *Hongloumeng*, in its capacities as an intertextual novel, identifies and develops for its own expressive purposes.

As in Li Shangyin's "Wuti" poem, one interpretation of the "faded" east wind in the last line is that it signifies the end of spring, whose real demise appears contrasted with the "dream" of spring referenced in the penultimate line, the memory of spring preserved in dreams still fresh and green. That the poem warns against "moisten[ing] fragrant dreams [with tears], green their poplar threads" 沾香夢綠楊絲 illustrates the kinds of associations being drawn between dreaming, memory, and desire.

Liu Xuekai argues that final couplet of "Guo chushi ji ouge" references Hu Chonghua's "Song of the White Poplar Flowers" ("Yang baihua ge" 楊白花歌) from the Northern Wei period (Beiwei 北魏, 386-534 CE) that speaks of white poplar flowers' having blown into the inner chambers of one's domicile.[353] In Hu's "yuefu" 樂府 it is not the spring wind, as in Li's poem, but rather the speaker's legs that are almost "without the strength" ("jiao wuli" 腳無力) to complete the task of gathering the fallen poplar flowers.

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351 *Ibid.* 11.
352 *Ibid.* 12. Title as translated in Fuller 2017: 318-319.
353 *Ibid.* 11.

In addition, the line "Sweeping up poplar flowers, tears wetting my breast" 拾得楊花淚沾臆[354] prefigures the couplet from Li Shangyin's poem "Fallen Flowers" ("Luohua" 落花) "Of these fragrant hearts by the end of spring/ All that remains is a dampened robe" 芳心向春盡,/ 所得是沾衣 discussed in Chapter 2.

Notice, in turn, the continuation of this intertextual dialogue within the space of *Hongloumeng*. The flowers in Hu's "yuefu" stir the speaker's emotions, moving them tearfully to sweep up the flowers in a manner that recalls Daiyu's idiosyncratic practice of gathering and burying fallen spring flowers, whose poetic representation finds its apogee in her Chapter 27 poem "Ode to Flower Burial" ("Zanghua yin" 葬花吟). Additional imagistic parallels and developments can be observed. Both "Zanghua yin" and "Yang baihua ge" evoke the swallow ("yan" 燕) and its seasonal migrations. In "Yang baihua" a pair of swallows ("shuang yanzi" 雙燕子) is contrasted with a solitary speaker's sorrow, evidencing the "coupling animals evocative imagery" ("chushuang shengchou" 觸雙生愁) effect discussed above. Whereas "Yang baihua" conceives the swallow as aiding in the task of burying the flowers by using them for its nest, "Zanghua yin" condemns this very action ("This spring the heartless swallow built his nest,/ Beneath the eaves of mud with flowers compressed" 三月香巢初壘成,/ 樑間燕子太無情).[355]

The motif of a maiden's dropping fine jewelry appears at various points in Tang poetry, often as a "fallen earring" ("duo'er" 墮珥, appearing in at least 7 poems in the *Quan*

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354 Guo Maoqian 郭茂倩, ed. Yuefu shiji 樂府詩集, "juan" 73. Chinese Text Project website, https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=108488.

355 *HLM*, Chapter 27. Hawkes 2014 v.2: 22-23.

Tangshi, one of which is by Wen Tingyun) or as a "lost hairpin" ("yizan" 遺簪, appearing in at least 13 poems in the *Quan Tangshi*, one of which is by Wen Tingyun). The significance of the image depends on the poetic context in which it is being evoked, though undertones of conspicuous consumption and waste can reliably be detected. In Wen Tingyun's poetry, a rebellious attitude might accompany a display of frivolity; whereas the casual destruction or neglect of fine jewelry can be used to reaffirm the material (often objectifying) values that bind female identity to luxurious, non-essential ornamentation, such action, in a different context or with a different intention, might signal the rejection of such an identity's even being posited. In the former case, the destruction of ostentatious finery reaffirms the squandering of individual, especially female, potential, whereas, in the latter case, the same act of destruction could symbolize the destruction of those social institutions that reduce women and lovers to objects and reduce art to empty artifice. The famous fan-tearing incident of Chapter 31[356] could be interpreted in this way, as an action that, in another social context, might be identifiable with invidiousness and conspicuous consumption, but which, in the context of the novel, is meant to represent a countervailing gesture, Baoyu's attempting through his actions to persuade Qingwen that he prioritizes human value, in particular the livelihoods of the young ladies who serve him domestically, over whatever material value might be embodied in petty commodities.

In *Hongloumeng*, the image of a precious object's falling to the ground figures centrally in Baoyu's dream in Chapter 5. The main register's ("zhengce" 正冊) depiction of a golden hairpin buried in a pile of snow comes to mind, this image usually taken to represent Xue

[356] *HLM*, Chapter 31. Hawkes 2014 v.2: 128-132.

Baochai's fall from grace, connecting "xue" 雪 "snow" with the homophonous Xue 薛 surname, and identifying "baochai" ("precious hairpin") with "jinchai" ("golden hairpin") in the picture.[357] The other image from the main register that comes to mind is of a fine jade's being dropped in the mud, generally agreed to represent Miaoyu and her fate at the hands of kidnappers who break into the garden.[358] Here arguably a kind of rhetorical "overidentification" swings into motion, in which societal associations between women and precious objects, often in connection with the reaffirmation of traditional values, are taken to their logical, rhetorical extreme. By exposing cruel and bizarre logical implications, overidentification has the surprising effect of undermining its object. In the case of the lantern riddles from Chapter 22, for instance, it is by completing the task too successfully, by following the logic of the prompt too closely, that the garden occupants inadvertently undermine what was supposed to be a value-neutral status-quo-affirming exercise.

A schematic way to conceptualize the relationship between dreams and poetry in *Hongloumeng* is to observe that, generally, the novel's "dream of poetry" (i.e., the dream of what poetry could be, and what poetry might prefigure) tends to be outward, social, freeing, even "utopian," whereas the novel's "poetry of dreams" (i.e., the poetry appearing in dreams as well the poetic representation of dreams) tends to be inward, fateful, fixed, and even, sometimes, frightful. This basic tension between freedom and fate, first addressed in the introduction of this dissertation, also reappears as a tension in the poems of *Hongloumeng*, with banal-seeming symbolic and metaphorical content often taking a sudden turn into dark places.

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357 *HLM*, Chapter 5. Hawkes 2014 v.1: 116-117.
358 *HLM*, Chapter 5. Hawkes 2014 v.1: 118-119.

The same Wen Tingyun poem "Tile-tapping Song of Recluse Guo" ("Guo chushi ji ou ge" 郭處士擊甌歌) is explicitly referenced in Chapter 78 by Jia Zheng's hanger-ons (his "literary gentlemen,"[359] "qingke xianggong" 清客相公) in describing Baoyu's poetry, the only Wen Tingyun poem besides "Shangshan zaoxing" to be referenced by name in the text. At this point in the story, Jia Zheng has prompted Baoyu and his half-brothers to write poems dedicated to "Fourth Lady Lin" (Lin Siniang 林四娘), a late Ming courtesan-turned-warrior-general who fights bravely and ultimately dies heroically commanding an all-female military brigade. Whereas Baoyu's younger, and less poetically gifted, half-brothers choose shorter forms for their contributions, Baoyu chooses a longer form, a decision that the literary gentlemen describe as follows:

眾人聽了，都站起身來點頭拍手道：「我說他立意不同！每一題到手，必先度其體格宜與不宜：這便是老手妙法。這題目名曰《姽嫿詞》，且既有了序，此必是長篇歌行，方合體式。或擬溫八叉《擊甌歌》，或擬李長吉《會稽歌》，或擬白樂天《長恨歌》，或擬詠古詞，半敘半詠，流利飄逸，始能盡妙。」

'You see!' said the literary gentlemen, some jumping to their feet, some nodding or clapping in their enthusiasm. 'We said that his contribution would be quite different! It is the sign of a good, experienced writer to be able to gauge immediately what form will be most appropriate to the subject. With a title like this and a preface, clearly what is called for is either a long narrative poem like Bai Juyi's "The Everlasting Remorse" or an Old Style ode like Wen Tingyun's "Tile-tapping Song of Recluse Guo" or Li He's "Return from Guiji," in which narrative and lyrical elements combine.'[360]

As Wang Yu notes, this conversation reflects the deep influence of Tang forms on the literary mindset represented in *Hongloumeng*.[361] Like the image of a precious object's falling in the mud, the significance of Lin's story depends heavily on the person who is

359 *HLM*, Chapter 78. Hawkes 2014 v.1: 188-189.
360 *HLM*, Chapter 78. Hawkes 2014 v3: 732–733, with some modifications made.
361 Wang Yu 2014: 44.

telling the story and on the context in which it is being told. It is especially unclear whether Jia Zheng's choosing this theme reflects anything even remotely approaching a feminist argument about women's equal abilities or equal potential for bravery. Indeed, that all the women under Lin's command die in battle seems meant to have the effect of reinforcing traditional views of gender roles and of gendered differences in ability and aptitude. An underlying moral of the story seems to be *not* that women are capable of great things, but rather that, if women are capable of great bravery, men *in*capable of great bravery are all that much more shameful; the moral, in other words, is that since these women were willing to sacrifice themselves in battle, even without some imagined "natural aptitude" for war, it follows, supposedly, that any man who balks at the prospect of sacrificing himself in battle is henceforth "less than a woman," a horror among horrors to the misogynistic mind.

Baoyu's Lin Siniang poem is explicitly modeled after Bai Juyi's "Changhen ge" 長恨歌 "The Everlasting Remorse," yet contains wording that is pulled directly from Wen Tingyun's "Tile-tapping Song of Recluse Guo." Compare Baoyu's "I for fourth maiden am forever lamenting" 我為四娘長歎息 to Wen Tingyun's "I, too, for the [Xiang River] Goddess am forever lamenting" 我亦為君長歎息. No other line in the *Quan Tangshi* is quite comparable in this way, and the fact that this exact Wen Tingyun poem is explicitly mentioned in this section of *Hongloumeng* eliminates any doubt as to the connection.

It is difficult not to interpret the implied Wen Tingyun reference as intentional, if not on the part of Baoyu then at least on the part of the author of *Hongloumeng*, given Jia Zheng's earlier comment connecting Wen Tingyun's and Baoyu's poetry. Perhaps one could interpret Baoyu's inclusion of a Wen Tingyun line as a kind of understated provocation. Or perhaps

one could interpret Baoyu's inclusion of a Wen Tingyun line in an ostensibly Bai Juyi-inspired poem as betraying Wen's unconscious influence.

Chapter 78 markedly contrasts Baoyu's poem dedicated to Lin Siniang in the first half of the chapter with Baoyu's eulogy to Qingwen in the second half of the chapter. In each case a woman's death is addressed, but whereas Jia Zheng's exercise operationalizes female death to bolster traditional patriarchal values, Baoyu's eulogy attempts to celebrate Qingwen on her own terms, following Li He, Li Shangyin, and Wen Tingyun in repurposing traditional values and images for a new subject now deemed worthy of artistic representation, viz., women in their own capacities as thinking, willing, and dreaming individuals.

III.

As was the case with Li He and Li Shangyin, *Hongloumeng*'s preference toward Wen Tingyun's poetry appears intimately related with the central role *Hongloumeng* ascribes to female representation. The Wen Tingyun work being referenced is attempting to represent women in new ways within Tang poetic and musical verse. In "Brocade City Song," themes of separation, alienation, loneliness, and yearning emerge co-present with issues of gendered labor (viz., the washing of silks) and purity (viz., the purity of the water in which the silks are being washed).

Dreams also figure more prominently in the Wen Tingyun material being referenced than "pure chance" would allow. It's clear that, when the author is drawing from the historical Chinese literary tradition, the late Tang poetic treatment of dreaming is especially likely to provoke and inspire. Among the Wen Tingyun references, there is a shared

grappling with questions of women's role in society, these issues often refracted through the lens of dreaming.

As the above analysis suggests, crane ("he" 鶴) motifs in *Hongloumeng* appear to have been influenced by Wen Tingyun's poetic treatment of crane motifs in poems like "The Tea Song of the Xiling Daoist" ("Xiling daoshi chage"), prefiguring as it does Baoyu's seasonal improvisatory poems in Chapter 23. *Hongloumeng*'s treatment of these themes appears also to be in dialogue with Wen's broader exploration of literal and metaphorical reflection, of notions of infinity and maximality, and of dreaming as a potentially maximally significant semantic space, as observed in "On Shang Mountain Setting Off Early" ("Shangshan zaoxing"), as well as in a few other poems showcased above.

"Tile-tapping Song of Recluse Guo" ("Guo chushi ji ouge"), both explicitly and implicitly referenced in the novel, speaks to themes of transcendence, specifically the transcendent experience of listening to virtuosic music. Here again, *Hongloumeng* can be observed emphasizing the representation of subordinated female labor in the poetic material being considered. And one again observes how, in the poetry that *Hongloumeng* highlights (and in those parts of the poetry that *Hongloumeng* highlights), female representation appears reliably co-present with a multi-valanced dreamscape.

Chapter Four

Immortal "Caixia" 彩霞 Horizons in *Hongloumeng* and the Tang 唐 Poetic Tradition

"Caixia" 彩霞 clouds, rendered with pink hues in the slanted light of sunrise and sunset, figure prominently both in the Tang Dynasty poetic tradition as well as in the Qing Dynasty novel *Hongloumeng*. A nuanced discussion of the historical Chinese treatment of these visual manifestations will lend critical insight into the representation of dreams in the Tang Dynasty poetry with which *Hongloumeng* enters into dialogue. To facilitate this discussion, new ways of speaking are developed to talk about the interrelationship of different liminal modalities, whether visual and temporal, as in the case of sunrises and sunsets; spatial, as in the case of borders, walls, and lofty things; physical or bodily, as in the case of silk and skin; or experiential, as in the case of dreaming, half-remembering one's dreams, lucid dreaming, and so on. A discussion is needed, in turn, of how, in the Chinese literary tradition, liminal "caixia" skies are linked with dreams of desire and with transcendent, immortal beings occupying fantastical realms beyond space, time, and worldly possibility. It will be shown in what ways *Hongloumeng* transforms these literary traditions by consciously foregrounding the transcendent artistic and personal potential of its female characters, including characters occupying the lower rungs of preexisting social and class hierarchies. Special emphasis will be placed on Li He and Wen Tingyun's use of "caixia" imagery to represent their alternative, subversive visions of female identity and agency.

The term "liminality" derives from the Latin "limen" or "limin" "threshold" and speaks generally to phenomena at, approaching, or significantly characterized by their connection to limits, edges, and spaces in-between different forms, places, modes of being, and so on. "Caixia" clouds can be characterized as a liminal form, given their appearance at the transitional moment between day and night and between night and day. The pink and rosy colors infused in the clouds at this moment (if conditions are serendipitously "just right"), commonly attributed to the angle at which the transitioning sunlight strikes them, are quintessentially rare and fleeting, tending to last no longer than a few minutes at most, and, across cultures, are widely regarded as being beautiful, precious, and remarkable.

An outline, "snapshot" phenomenology of the experience of "caixia" would no doubt emphasize how, in experiencing this fleeting form, one is inclined to reflect upon the fleeting character of life itself, to perceive the beauty and significance of life despite, and even because of, its fleeting character. Indeed, the form's fleetingness seems to contain its transcendence, its gesturing toward the universal and the infinite, as if mirroring the mathematical, algebraic relation between the fleeting or vanishing "infinitesimal" and a limit point of "infinity."

I.

It is helpful briefly to outline some of the most common terms and phrases used in historical Chinese literature and poetry to describe the appearance of clouds illuminated by the rising and setting sun, focusing on those expressions most pertinent to the following discussion.

The character "xia" 霞 should be highlighted. In the *Shuowen* 說文 it is defined as "scarlet [or red] clouds" (赤雲气也).[362] "Xia" can refer either to the color of the sky at sunrise or sunset or the color of the clouds upon sunrise or sunset, if fortuitous conditions hold to produce beautiful coloration. The prototypically pink color is a visual effect of the light's refraction, what happens, to render the matter in more poetic terms, if the "slanted light" of sunrise or sunset strikes the clouds (or their immediate proximity) at a fortuitous angle and passes through them. In this way, one can begin to see how a discussion of "caixia" can directly interface with the discussion in previous chapters of the representation of fate, identity, and serendipity in Chinese literature.

Sunrise "caixia" are commonly designated "zhaoxia" 朝霞, whereas sunset "caixia" are commonly designated "wanxia" 晚霞. Meanwhile "caixia" mist can be termed "yanxia" 煙霞, also metonymically designating a picturesque scene. "Taixia" 太霞 designates "caixia" clouds in sunset and sunrise skies' higher reaches. In Tang poetry, sometimes the expression "jiuxia" 九霞 is used as a designation for the highest level of the sky or the heavens in their totality, "jiu" "nine" appearing in its capacity as "the largest" or "final" number, hence gesturing toward notions of "all of heaven" or "the nine heavens."

This formulation can also be related to notions of "wuyun" 五雲, sometimes designating "multi-colored" or rainbow-colored clouds, comparable to, if not straightforwardly synonymous with, the "caixia" clouds of sunrise and sunset, the "wu" ("five") in this formulation related to systems of pentapartite divisions that eventually

[362] *Shuowen* 說文, 12 "juan," "yu" 雨 "bu." See Xu 1981: 1009.

become organized under "wuxing" 五行 correlative systems. By some accounts, "wuyun" involves a five-part division among "types" of clouds, these types corresponding with "wuxing" color terms (i.e., "wuse" 五色, viz., "qing" 青, "bai" 白, "chi" 赤, "hei" 黑, "huang" 黃). That some early texts like the *Wenshi zhenjing* 文始真經 indicate the use of multicolored clouds for prognostication purposes further reinforces a sense that "caixia" clouds have long been associated with the strange and mysterious and with celestial significance.[363]

II.

"Caixia"-related imagery appears in more poems in the *Quan Tangshi* than can reasonably be treated in a single dissertation chapter. The focus here is more narrowly on how Tang Dynasty poetic traditions relate "caixia" imagery with dreaming, desire, gender, and identity. The task in this section is to outline and analyze "caixia"-related imagery in Tang poetry, especially in the Tang poetry that *Hongloumeng* isolates, and then, in the next section, to consider how *Hongloumeng* reimagines this imagery in a way that transforms its meaning and significance.

As an exemplar of how Tang poetry relates "caixia" and dreaming, consider these well-known lines from Li Bai's "At a Chan Temple Thinking of My Friend Cen Lun" ("Chanfang huai youren Cen Lun" 禪房懷友人岑倫):

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[363] See Guan Yinzi 關尹子 [Attributed], *Wenshi zhenjing* 文始真經, "erzhu" 二柱 "juan." Chinese Text Project website, https://ctext.org/wenshi-zhenjing/zh.

一朝語笑隔，萬里歡情分。沉吟彩霞沒，夢寐群芳歇。

Then one morning talking and laughing departed,
Thousands of miles a joyous friendship divided.
Intoning your poems until the pink clouds die out,
Resting upon a bed of flowers to dream.

The transition from sunset "caixia" clouds to dream imagery represents more than merely a temporal progression from evening to bedtime. Li Bai is praising his friend's vivacious, colorful poetry by comparing it to, and adorning it with, multicolored sunset clouds and a bed of many flowers. One interpretation is that Li Bai is emphasizing how his friend's artistry inspires dreams and provokes pleasurable and meaningful experiences akin to inspired kinds of dreaming. Among other relevant poems from which to choose, I highlight this one in part because the expression "qunfang" 群芳, to be discussed further in the next section, appears conspicuously in *Hongloumeng* (in Baoyu's dream in Chapter 5) representing an imagined totality of flower essences.

A number of the poems to be considered in this chapter have historically been classified as "Roaming Immortal Poems" ("Youxian shi" 遊仙詩), a term appearing in the *Quan Tangshi* to refer to a poetic tradition that can be traced back at least to the times of the first Qin 秦 emperor (3rd. C. BCE). The *Shiji* records an incident of a stone falling from the sky on which was inscribed a prophecy of the emperor's impending death and the division of his lands.[364] In response to this event, the Qin emperor was said to have

[364] Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shiji* 史記, "Qin Shihuang Benji," 秦始皇本紀. https://ctext.org/shiji/qin-shi-huang-ben-ji/zh.

commissioned academicians ("boshi" 博士) to compose a "Real Immortal Poem" ("Xianzhenren shi" 僊真人詩), combining discussion of transcendent beings with details of the emperor's own touring of the empire.

As Sukhu observes, "Traveling Far Way" ("Yuanyou," 遠遊), a poem from the *Chuci* 楚辭 roughly datable to the early imperial Qin-Han era (3rd C. BCE to 3rd C. CE), is "generally recognized as the first youxian 遊仙 ('wandering immortal' or 'wandering among immortals') poem," "the shamanic spirit flight of the 'Lisao' [having been] translated into the spirit flight of later Daoism," becoming a "waking dream" that "meld[s] internal and external geographies" in which one flies to the "paradisiacal realms described in certain Daoist scriptures, which are sometimes interpreted as symbolic of internal states."[365] Importantly for the present study, it is in this poem that one of the earliest attested uses in Chinese poetry of the term "zhaoxia" 朝霞 appears, Sukhu rendering it "reddish sunrise air."[366] Even in this early usage, some of the basic cultural associations this chapter traces are already evident.

Consider, then, these lines from a "youxian" poem by Li Bai, "From Dream Voyage, A Departing Poem for Tianmu" ("Mengyou tianmu yin liubie" 夢遊天姥吟留別):

青冥浩蕩不見底，日月照耀金銀台。
霓為衣兮風為馬，雲之君兮紛紛而來下。
虎鼓瑟兮鸞回車，仙之人兮列如麻。
忽魂悸以魄動，怳驚起而長嗟。
惟覺時之枕席，失向來之煙霞。
世間行樂亦如此，古來萬事東流水。

[365] Sukhu *ibid.* 173.
[366] Sukhu *ibid.* 175.

Azure sky vast depths imperceivable,
Sun and moon illuminating the palace gold and silver.
Reflected rainbows for dress, wind as their horses,
Cloud kings one by one descending,
Tigers playing the harp, "luan" birds pulling chariots,
Immortals arrayed as tightly as a hempen weave.[367]
All of a sudden, my "hun" throbbing and "po" escaping,
With startled surprise arising, I let out a great sigh.
Awaking only to my pillow's bamboo cover,
Slipping away that vision of misty twilight 煙霞.
Seeking worldly pleasure is also like this,
Forever all things running east to the ocean.

Gopal Sukhu traces the roots of this poem back to the *Chuci* and to the "Nine Songs" ("Jiuge" 九歌) section of the *Chuci* in particular, while also comparing the poem's submersion into, and emergence from, a dream in its midsection to how the dream portion of *Chuci*'s "Leaving my Troubles"[368] ("Lisao" 離騷) is positioned.[369] Notice how, in this poetic dream vision, Li Bai counterposes the light of the sun and the moon with the appearance of gold and silver, respectively, as if blurring the line between whether the palace is made from these materials or whether it is these spectacular light sources that have imbued it with this glimmering appearance. Arranging these associations alongside images of "secondary rainbows" ("ni" 霓) and immortals descending from clouds typifies discussion of "misty twilight" ("yanxia" 煙霞) in Tang "youxian" poetry. The wording "yanxia" 煙霞 occurs well over 400 times in the *Quan Tangshi*, sometimes designating an effect comparable to, or synonymous with, "caixia." Whereas "caixia" generally designates the slanting sun

[367] Following Xu Yuanchong 许渊冲 et al., translators, and Li Bai 李白, Li Bai shixuan 李白诗选, 2007: 129.

[368] Qu Yuan [attributed]. Gopal Sukhu, trans. *The Songs of Chu: An Ancient Anthology of Works by Qu Yuan and Others*, 2017: 74.

[369] Sukhu 2017: 30.

illuminating and coloring clouds in the skies, rendering them pinkish, red, or crimson, etc., "yanxia" often designates when smoke, mist, or fog is similarly illumined. In addition, "yanxia" can metonymically refer to beautiful scenery in general.

It's important to distinguish using structural elements in literary analysis from positing inflexible transhistorical concepts. Indeed, the careful employment of structural methods might prove uniquely efficacious for historicizing those elements of social reality most resistant to historicization. In the context of the current discussion, one can use structural methods to consider questions of the historicity, even the deep longitudinal historicity, of light itself and its relationship to equally historically situated shadows and darkness.

That every human community that has ever existed has, on some level, appreciated and valued sunrises and sunsets is a possibility of universality rare enough that any truth to its articulation, however partial and incomplete, however fleeting, is worth pondering. Simultaneously, that such a "golden thread" may exist renders no less critical one's analysis of its subtle transformations. Indeed, there is a risk that, at the present conjuncture, the average scholar and the average reader of literature intuitively understand the sky's workings less clearly than at any other historical moment. Even some of the basic dynamics of sunlight have become obscure, to the extent that outlining a simple dialectical relationship between light, darkness, and its synthesis (viz., shadow), as Tim Ingold does below, would confound most contemporary people:

> Whenever the sun disappears behind a cloud, the shadow also vanishes. This is not – as is often thought – because the cloud blocks out the sun's rays, for were that so, every passing cloud would pitch us into black night! What happens in fact is that these rays are

dispersed in all directions by atmospheric vapour, with the result that the illumination of surfaces is evened out. Thus, areas that were in shadow when the sun is out actually brighten up when the sun goes in. What fades is the contrast. Are things easier to see, then, in or out of the shadows? The default assumption, under a regime of modernity, is that shadows obscure rather than reveal.[370]

In other words, the issue is that modern intuitions of light posit static binaries when really – historically, experientially, socially, or otherwise – one should be thinking more fluidly, more dialectically. Ingold's historicization of light conceives of how "light has been co-opted in the service of the modern project of objectification, and lighting technologies to its architectural and artefactual realization," leading to "light's abstraction from materials and its reduction, in scientific discourses, to radiant energy."[371] Ingold's Merleau-Pontian[372] insights speak directly to the vision of Wen Tingyun, put forth in Chapter 3, as a poet discovering his own values through a subtle exploration of the folds of surfaces and the play of light upon them. Ingold argues, to this effect, that "whether shadows conceal or reveal depends, to an extent, on whether our interest is in the objective forms of things or in the textures of their self-shadowing surfaces," citing the kinds of images easily associated with Wen's poetry – "[t]he weave of cloth, ripples of water, inscriptions in stone, blades of grass" – as those forms conducive to a "light that rakes the surface, coming at a shallow angle," "every crease or bump show[ing] up in the contrast between the relative illumination of [...] light-facing facets and the relative darkness of facets in their shade."[373]

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370 Tim Ingold, "Afterword: On Light," in *The Oxford Handbook of Light in Archaeology*, Papadopoulos Costas and Holley Moyes, ed., 2022: 741.

371 *Ibid.* 742.

372 See especially Maurice Merleau-Ponty,, Claude Lefort, and Alphonso Lingis, *The Visible and the Invisible: Followed by Working Notes*, 2000 [1968].

373 *Ibid.* 742.

For comparable Tang poetic imagery that interweaves light, dreams, and the flight of immortals, see "Dreaming Roaming Immortals" 夢游仙 by Xiang Si 項斯[374] or "Ballad of the Dream Immortal" 夢仙謠 by Li Yan 李洮.[375] In the context of this dissertation, it is sensible here to focus on one of Li He's "youxian shi" offerings, "Heavenly Ballad" ("Tianshang yao" 天上謠):

天河夜轉漂回星，銀浦流雲學水聲。
玉宮桂樹花未落，仙妾采香垂佩纓。
秦妃捲簾北窗曉，窗前植桐青鳳小。
王子吹笙鵝管長，呼龍耕煙種瑤草。
粉霞紅綬藕絲裙，青洲步拾蘭苕春。
東指羲和能走馬，海塵新生石山下。[376]

Heaven's River revolves in the night, floating, spinning stars,
To silver banks dispersing clouds that mimic the sound of water.
The flowers of the jade palace's cassia trees have not yet fallen,
The immortal maiden plucking fragrance for dangling scent purses.
Qin Fei rolls up the hanging screen, daybreak at the northerly window,
Before it planted "tong" trees where "green dragon" birds perch.
The prince blows a reed flute as long as a "goose tube,"[377]
Calling dragons to till jade flowers within view of chimney smoke.
Wearing a pink cloud skirt with red cords and lotus root thread,
In springtime she circumambulates Qingzhou picking orchids,
Pointing Xihe eastwardly to lead his horses,
As from sea the earth reemerges and Stone Mountain crumbles down.

Again, one observes a strong connection between liminal moments (viz., dawn and dusk) and transcendent beings, as if the horizon's limit were a kind of conceptual abode for

374 *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 554.
375 *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 688.
376 *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 390.
377 See Min Zeping 2015: 101.

limitless beings and infinity's embodiment, and the human experience of the sun's cloud-coiled ascent is the experience of what is fleeting and what is transcendent joined in a kind of elemental dance. The "silver banks" of "Heaven's River" (viz., the Milky Way) is reminiscent of Li Bai's heavenly palaces above. What I have rendered "within view of chimney smoke" is "gengyan" 耕煙, a gesturing toward the smoke that arises from, and signifies, a secluded human abode (comparably to how "renyan"人煙 "signs of life" is used) as just one part of the greater "yanxia" scenery.

The Qin Fei 秦妃 being depicted is known as Nongyu 弄玉 ("Jade Flutist"). As the "Biographies of the Transcendent Immortals" ("liexian zhuan" 列仙傳) records, in the time of King Mu of Qin (Qin Mugong 秦穆公, 7th. C. BCE), there was a skilled "xiao" 簫 player Xiao Shi 簫史 to whom the King married his daughter Nongyu, also a "xiao" player.[378] Xiao Shi's "xiao" skills were so exceptional that he could teach Nongyu to summon phoenixes with him. After a long and harmonious life together as husband and wife, Xiao Shi and Nongyu were said one day to have summoned a phoenix to fly them to those immortal realms promised by the metaphysical and spiritual self-cultivational teachings and practices to which they ascribe, those practices that over centuries have been gathered under the broad rubric of "Daoism."[379] Li seems to have been imagining the couple, in their immortal capacities, occupying that cassia-studded jade palace in the sky representing the moon. As in Chapter 2 with Li Shangyin's "Xinghua" 杏花, some of the sky imagery (like the term "yugong" 玉宮 "jade palace" in reference to the moon) retains traces of its origins

[378] Quoted in Min Zeping 2015: 100-101. The "xiao" can be compared with the panpipes.
[379] *Ibid.*

in Daoist cultivation practices that treat the sky in its capacity as an inspirationally infinite trajectory. In a discussion of Nongyu's representation in Tang poetry, Jiang Ling treats "rosy clouds" ("caixia" 彩霞), "incense," and "cranes" as all signifying a specifically Daoist conception of transcendence.[380]

Both of the poems quoted above draw upon a motif in which immortal beings can be observed wearing fantastic clothing of sunrise and sunset "xia" colors and sometimes made, metaphorically or literally, of sky materials, the term "skypink clothing" ("xiayi" 霞衣) appearing at least 24 times in the *Quan Tangshi*. "Xiayi" is comparable to "rainbow dress" ("nichang" 霓裳), a term itself appearing over a 100 times in the *Quan Tangshi* and traceable back at least to the pre-imperial *Chuci* work "Eastern Ruler" ("Dongjun" 東君), believed originally to have celebrated the eastern-rising sun in a quasi-religious or "shamanic" capacity. The Eastern Ruler is described wearing "In blue-cloud tunic and white-rainbow robe,"青雲衣兮白霓裳.[381] This line is immediately followed by what one could interpret as being from the perspective of a religious leader organizing a sun ritual while also speaking as or on behalf of a sun god. As Sukhu observes, in the line "I aim my long arrow and shoot down the Sky Wolf" 舉長矢兮射天狼, "long arrow" ("chang shi" 長矢) references the sun, whereas the "Sky Wolf" ("Tianlang" 天狼) references the star Sirius, part of Canus Major.[382] It is speculative, but one can imagine a religious leader's cupping his hands as if to

[380] Jiang Ling, "A Study of Li He (791-817) and the Images of Female Daoist Transcendents in His Poetry," Indiana University, PhD Diss., 2005: 183. See also Yang Liu, Imagery of female daoists in Tang and Song poetry, The University of British Columbia, PhD Diss., 2011.

[381] Sukhu 2017: 49.

[382] *Ibid.* 56.

hold up but also guide the setting sun as it "shoots through" the star Sirius on its evening descent. In the *Quan Tangshi*, the term "nichang" often appears in connection with a court tune "Robes of Rainbows and Feathers" ("nichang yuyi qu" 霓裳羽衣曲) popular in the 8th century, depicting the emperor Tang Xuanzong (685-762) transcending the mortal world to visit the immortal maiden ("xiannu" 仙女) of the Moon Palace ("yuegong" 月宮).

Similarly to how Li Bai imagines the immortals using "wind chariots," immortals are also in Tang poetry often depicted driving ornate, "multi-colored" or "rainbow-colored" "cloud chariots" ("wuyun che" 五雲車), this expression or a near variant (viz., "wuseyun che" 五色雲車) being employed at least 13 times in the *Quan Tangshi.* As in the case of "xiayi" and "nichang," these chariots are imagined either literally to be made of clouds or are being compared to clouds and are being thereby praised for their exquisiteness.

In both Li Bai's and Li He's "youxian" poem, immortal sunrise and sunset cloud-coiled skies appear co-present with flower-adorned dream imagery. The flowers being depicted are signs of immortality and transcendence, linkages connecting the mortal mind, the immortal soul, and the dreaming spirit. A holistic conception of flowers as emblems of transcendence, as vehicles for exceptional scent as well as sight, is implicit in Li He's representation of gathering cassia flowers ("gui" 桂) for a perfumed sash. Zornica Kirkova lists cassia alongside other "plants and grasses [such as] sweet basil ('hui' 蕙), and citronella ('maoxiang' 茅香)" traditionally used as aromatics in spiritual and cultural practices. Kirkova observes that "[t]hrough [the] burning of [these kinds of] aromatics deities and 'xian' immortals could be induced to descend," while at the same time the "fragrant fumes could

transport the Daoist adept on a visionary journey through the Heavens."[383] In the *Chuci*, aromas can be similarly observed transporting the soul.[384] Likewise, the name of Baoyu's maid Sheyue 麝月, that Hawkes renders "Musk" but which more literally means "musk moon," can be understood as activating a similar semantic space.

Li He's "Tianshang yao" appears to have influenced later compositions by Wen Tingyun. In particular, consider Wen Tingyun's "youxian" poem "Ballad of the Daybreak Immortal" ("Xiaoxian yao" 曉仙謠):

玉妃喚月歸海宮，月色澹白涵春空。
銀河欲轉星靡靡，碧浪疊山埋早紅。
宮花有露如新淚，小苑叢叢入寒翠。
綺閣空傳唱漏聲，網軒未辨淩雲字。
遙遙珠帳連湘煙，鶴扇如霜金骨仙。
碧簫曲盡彩霞動，下視九州皆悄然。
秦王女騎紅尾鳳，半空回首晨雞弄。
霧蓋狂塵億兆家，世人猶作牽情夢。[385]

The jade princess beckons the moon to return to the Sea Palace,
Its light limpid and pale, permeating the spring sky.
The Milky Way is about to redirect its fading stars;
In turquoise ripples, mountain folds bury morning crimson.
The palace flowers have dew like new tears,
The small garden's luxuriance reaching a cool verdancy.

From embroidered chambers echo the waterclock's meter,
Engraved pavilions traversing the clouds, door inscriptions indistinguishable.[386]
Pearl curtains from afar seem to join the Xiang's river mist,
Her crane-feather fan like frost, her golden spirit transcendent.

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383 Zornica Kirkova, "Sacred Mountains, Abandoned Women, and Upright Officials: Facets of the Incense Burner in Early Medieval Chinese Poetry," Early Medieval China 2018.24 (2018): 58.

384 *Ibid.* 58.

385 *Quan Tangshi*, "juan" 575.

386 Rouzer 1993: 49 interprets this line as meaning that the building's inscription, i.e., its printed name, is, in fact, "Lingyun" 淩雲, what he renders "Transcending Clouds." I follow Liu 2020 v.1: 14 in treating the inscription as being indistinguishable due to its exceptional height and, perhaps, due to the dimness of the dawn light.

With emerald panpipes dispersing final traces of rosy sunrise clouds,
Gazing down upon the manifold world all at peace.

Like the King of Qin's daughter riding a red-tailed phoenix,
In mid-air she reviews the land, with the morning rooster playing a tune.
Fog blankets the wild dust and the millions upon millions of houses,
These mortals still dreaming passion-tethered dreams.

Rouzer argues that this "ambitious "yuefu" [...] shows the influence of Li He's 'Dreaming of Heaven,'" ("Mengtian" 夢天)[387], discussed in Chapter 1 of this dissertation. Liu Xuekai also identifies "Mengtian" as an influence, while treating Li He's "Tianshang yao" as an additional influence, each of these poems distinctive for presenting an immortal perspective on the mortal world from above (rather than, more commonly, a mortal perspective on the immortal world from below).[388] The work portrays a marvelous daybreak scene where, as in "Tianshang yao," immortal beings can be seen beckoning celestial transformations, orchestrating the rising sun, the movement of stars in the sky, and the dispersal of morning "caixia" clouds. As above, alongside "caixia" imagery appears an image of Xiang river mist ("xiangyan" 湘煙). It is also worth emphasizing, in a manner that will be explored in greater detail in the next section, that Wen's notion of "passion-tethered dreams" ("qianqing meng" 牽情夢) prefigures some of the language with which dreams are represented in *Hongloumeng*, in particular the portrayal of Baoyu as an "affectionate prince

387 Rouzer *ibid.* 48.
388 Liu Xuekai 2020 v.1: 15.

whose nagging[389] concern is to no avail" 多情公子空牽念.[390] "Youxian" poems tend to contrast immortal stateliness with mortal transience, in this case, taking the fleeting beauty of a serendipitously cloud-coiled sunrise and sunset to illustrate otherwise indescribable elements of the infinite, a recognition that the beauty and preciousness of these moments lies in their capturing a glimpse of what, like sunlight itself, in defying direct perception, can only be captured indirectly, through the filter of clouds on the horizon.

Bai Juyi's "Jianjian Song" ("Jianjian yin" 簡簡吟) deploys similar imagery, while also exploring the idea of immortals descending upon the mortal world to lead mortal lives, in this way prefiguring basic elements of *Hongloumeng*'s storyline and philosophy. Bai Juyi in this poem depicts a young girl Jianjian comparable to a number of *Hongloumeng*'s female characters, who embodies all the societal ideals at the time identified with feminine beauty and virtue, possessing exemplary talent in embroidery, cosmetics, grace and etiquette (i.e., being "in all affairs prim and proper," 行坐事調品[391]), and composure (i.e., having a "disposition and attitude [that is] unique [and] indescribable" 殊姿異態不可狀[392]). Her fate comparable to that of Lin Daiyu and some of the other female characters in *Hongloumeng*, the poem laments that Jianjian would die only a year before she was to marry, her death being compared to the early demise of peaches and pears hit by a frost in the second month of the

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389 "Nagging," as in persistently pulling. This seems to be the closest English equivalent of "qian" 牽 that retains the connoted sense of a physical pulling or dragging sensation. Hawkes renders "qiannian" 牽念 as "solicitude" (*HLM*, Chapter 5, Hawkes 2014 v.1: 117).

390 From "Frowning Brows" (*HLM*, Ch. 5), what Hawkes (2014 v.1: 126-129) has rendered "A Hope Betrayed," ("Wang ningmei" 枉凝眉), discussed at several points throughout this dissertation.

391 *Quan Tangshi,* "juan" 435.

392 *Ibid.*

lunar year. The poem's final lines beseech her parents not to mourn too much, describing her origins as a "banished immortal":

丈人阿母勿悲啼，此女不是凡夫妻。
恐是天仙謫人世，只合人間十三歲。
大都好物不堅牢，彩雲易散琉璃脆。

Father, mother, do not wail,
This girl was not for a mortal man to wed.
Alas, she was an immortal banished to our living world,
Only joining this earth for thirteen years.
Most good things don't last,
The colored clouds easily scatter, the colored glass brittle.

"Colored clouds" ("caiyun" 彩雲) is comparable to "caixia" above. The image also recalls the description of Jianjian's hair style as a "jangling bejeweled cloud bun" ("linglong yunji" 玲瓏雲髻), the hair being gathered together in a "cloud" shape on top of the head. The expression "colored clouds easily scatter" ("caiyun yisan" 彩雲易散) is a popular set expression associated with this poem, the passing "caixia" clouds reflective of life's evanescence, the brittle "colored glass" reflective of life's preciousness. Its connections to Qingwen's name, fate, and her poem in Supplementary Register No. 2 ("youfuce," 又副冊)[393] in Baoyu's dream in Chapter 5 will be considered in detail in the following section.

[393] *HLM*, Chapter 5. Hawkes 2014 v.1: 116-117.

III.

Having, then, developed a conceptual mapping of the approach to sunsets and sunrises employed by those Tang poets with whom *Hongloumeng* is most inclined to engage intertextually, and having outlined the connections being drawn between "caixia" and evanescence, transcendence, and immortality, one is better equipped for evaluating the literary dream of desire in which *Hongloumeng* self-consciously dwells and lingers.

One of the first indications in *Hongloumeng* that sunset and sunrise "caixia" are of transcendental significance, reflective of an inherent tension between fleeting lives and timeless desires, can be observed in Chapter 1, in a fantastic celestial location where has been stationed the immortal stone that would become Baoyu. The place is "Sunset Glow Palace" ("chixiaguan" 赤霞宮), with the stone's having been granted the title "Divine Luminescent Stone-in-Waiting in the Court of Sunset Glow" 赤霞宮神瑛侍者.[394]

In part because the novel itself does not spell out what "chixia" 赤霞 might signify in this context, it is useful to fall back upon the deeper longitudinal analysis that this dissertation chapter foregrounds. It is perhaps noteworthy that here the term "chixia" and not simply "xia" is utilized; it's reasonable to question whether "chi" 赤 "red, scarlet" here connects back to "hong" 紅 in *Hongloumeng*, the polyvalent "red chambers" ("honglou" 紅樓) acting metonymically, referencing, among other things, the rich and beautiful young ladies that occupy this kind of dwelling in this historical moment.

394 *HLM*, Chapter 1. Hawkes 2014 v.1: 10-11.

Chapter 3 of *Hongloumeng* depicts Lin Daiyu's first experiences navigating the ornate and sumptuous Rongguo 榮國 compound, among whose attractions include, in the main reception hall, a pair of inscriptions gifted by the "Hereditary Prince of Dong'an."[395] The right-hand inscription reads, "May the jewel of learning shine in this house more effulgently than the sun and moon" 座上珠璣昭日月, and the left-hand one reads, "May the insignia of honour glitter in these halls more brilliantly than the starry sky" 堂前黼黻煥煙霞.[396] The former line resonates with Li Bai's "Mengyou tianmu yin liubie," recalling how, in Li's poem, the sun and moon seem to paint the sky palace gold and silver, respectively. In the latter line, Hawkes has rendered "yanxia" as "starry sky," whereas I render "yanxia" in Li's poem as "misty twilight." "Fufu" 黼黻 (which Hawkes terms, somewhat obliquely, "insignia of honour") is an historical expression designating elaborate decorative embroidered patterns usually reserved for imperial court clothing, its usage here signaling the high status of the Rong branch of the Jia clan. "Fufu" appears several times in the *Quan Tangshi* in a specifically imperial context, designating the clothes either of the emperor or of high-ranking servants and officials in his attendance.

Often both in Tang poetry as well as in *Hongloumeng*, "caixia"-related terms are applied to the color and type of fabric, whether used for clothing or sheets and curtains. Arguably, this authorial emphasis inherits elements of Wen Tingyun's "love of surfaces" analyzed in the previous chapter. In Chapter 5, Fairy Disenchantment uses "yanxia" metonymically, referencing rich young ladies in fine boudoirs, behind the "green windows of

395 Hawkes 2014 v.1: 66-67.
396 Hawkes 2014 *ibid.*

wind and moon" ("fengyue") of those "embroidered pavilions of misty twilight" 那些綠窗風月，繡閣煙霞.[397] "Xiu'ge" 繡閣 can be compared to "honglou" 紅樓, even as "xiu'ge" 繡閣 carries its own unique associations. "Xiu'ge" seems to presuppose ornate engravings on the building's doors and panels, as well as, perhaps, embroidered patterns on the building's luxurious and expensive curtains. Both images arguably reflect an exterior view of these dwellings and boudoirs suggestive of visual, "scopophilic" desire. "Fengyue" ("the wind and the moon") is also, of course, itself a common Chinese metonym for romance. That the author employs "fengyue" in parallel with "yanxia" in the poem demonstrates how, just as in the Tang poetry quoted above, connections between fleeting sunsets, romantic love, and sexual desire are being drawn.

Given this referential space, the "caixia" curtains in *Hongloumeng*'s Prospect Garden demand more careful consideration, as it seems increasingly plausible that this color and its attendant imagery are being used to highlight the enchanted and transcendent character of the garden and the young women occupying it. Baoyu conspicuously references these curtains in his "Spring night improvisation" ("Chunye jishi" 春夜即事) from chapter 23:

霞綃雲幄任鋪陳，隔巷蛙聲聽未真。
枕上輕寒窗外雨，眼前春色夢中人。
盈盈燭淚因誰泣？點點花愁為我嗔。
自是小鬟嬌懶慣，擁衾不耐笑言頻。

Behind silk hangings, in warm quilts cocooned,
His ears half doubt the watch-drums' muted sound.
Rain at his window strikes, the pillow's cold;

[397] Compare to Hawkes 2014 v.1: 136-137.

Yet to the sleeper's eyes spring dreams unfold.
Why does the candle shed its waxen tear?
Why on each flower do angry drops appear?
By uncouth din of giggling maids distressed
He burrows deeper in his silken nest.[398]

Has Li Bai's sunset vision been, in a sense, domesticated? After all, the "caixia" beyond which dreams await here appear *fabricated*. Or rather, the referential directionality is muddled. Is it the clouds that are like Li Bai's pillow, or is it Li Bai's pillow that is like the clouds? Are beautiful clouds evocative of fine "qixia" 綺霞 embroidery, or is "qixia" embroidery evocative of beautiful clouds? As a humanities scholar, one should be methodologically equipped for dealing with bidirectional and multidirectional patterns of causal and associative flow, particularly given how often these wondrous ambiguities prove fertile ground for artistic innovation.

It seems especially remarkable, considering Ingold's emphasis on the intimate connection between cloud-infused light and the surface of materials, that the question of "real" versus "fabricated" "caixia" clouds hinges so much on the perception of touch, whose basic experiential dynamics admit of a kind of mutuality slightly more pronounced than what the visual senses tend to exhibit. Whereas the sense of touching, in its most basic form, is arguably already reflexive (i.e., one could argue that the basic form of touching is mutual human touch, *touching beings touching touching beings*), the sense of sight is, interestingly, most reflexive when it appears most like touching. In other words, sight is most like touching when sight is being mutually exchanged, hence how the English expression "eye contact" roots itself metaphorically in touching (i.e., in mutual physical contact). Conversely, sight

398 *HLM*, Chapter 23. Hawkes 2014 v.1: 550-553.

appears most divorced from touching when it is at its least reciprocal. If one assumes that touching is usually, indeed, "automatically," felt by the touched, there appears no ready equivalent in the realm of touching to vision in its imagined capacity as an unreciprocated, ostensibly objective one-directional gaze.

In Baoyu's dream in Chapter 5 of *Hongloumeng*, "caixia" clouds appear in their recursive capacity, offering at the horizon's limits a rarefied glimpse of one's life as a fleeting vision, as especially demonstrated in Qingwen's poem in Supplementary Register No. 2 ("youfuce," 又副冊) in the Department of Ill-fated Fate[399] ("boming si" 薄命司). It is Qingwen's poem that quotes "caiyun yisan" 彩雲易散 from Bai Juyi's "Jianjian ge" quoted above:

霽月難逢，彩雲易散。
心比天高，身為下賤。
風流靈巧招人怨。
壽夭多因誹謗生，
多情公子空牽念。

A clear bright moon seldom seen,
Colored clouds easily scattered.
A heart higher than heaven, a lot lower than low,
Your distinguished grace invites resentment.
An early death born of slander,
The affectionate prince's nagging concern.

Clear ("ji" 霽) skies and colored clouds ("caiyun" 彩雲) reference Qingwen's 晴雯 name ("Skybright" in the Hawkes translation[400]), "ji" comparable to "qing" 晴 and "caiyun" synonymous with "caixia," as well as with "wen" 雯 in Qingwen's name. Arguably,

399 *HLM*, Chapter 5. Hawkes 2014 v.1: 114-115.
400 Hawkes 2014 v.1: 108-109.

Qingwen's name is fateful, albeit in a reversed capacity; it predicts clear skies and pink clouds, but instead, in life, she encounters cloudy skies and occluded moons. The "xin" / "shen" opposition is reflective of the gendered mind/ body semantic space evidenced in previous chapters of this dissertation, in, e.g., the application of "yin"-related terminology to Qin Keqing, as well as in how Zhuo Wenjun's ostensibly illicit "lust" for Sima Xiangru is described as her "失身於司馬 ('los[ing] her body to Sima')."[401]

Poetic material from chapter 50 of *Hongloumeng* further demonstrates *Hongloumeng*'s embeddedness in a semantic space in which "caixia" skies appear inextricable from transcendent immortals and dreams of flying. It is in this chapter that poetic improvisations are composed on the subject of the spray of plum blossom ("meihua" 梅花) that Baoyu has managed to procure from the female monk Miaoyu 妙玉 who resides in an isolated convent within the garden (itself already an isolated space). *Hongloumeng* depicts this spray of blossoming plum blossom as if it were a gift from an immortal maiden like Qin Fei in "Tianshang yao" above. As Cai Yijiang observes, Baoyu's reference to Chang'e in his plum blossom poem ("Fang Miaoyu qi hongmei" 訪妙玉乞紅梅) is to Miaoyu.[402]

Xing Xiuyan and Xue Baoqin each independently evokes imagery relating "caixia" skies with dreaming. Xing Xiuyan's poem reads as follows:

桃未芳菲杏未紅，衝寒先喜笑東風。
魂飛庾嶺春難辨，霞隔羅浮夢未通。
綠萼添粧融寶炬，縞仙扶醉跨殘虹。
看來豈是尋常色？濃淡由他冰雪中。[403]

401 Paola Zamperini, *Lost bodies: Prostitution and masculinity in Chinese fiction*, 2010: 55.
402 Cai Yijiang 2004: 284.
403 HLM, Ch. 50. See Hawkes 2014 v.2: 624-625.

Peach blossoms not yet blooming, apricot blossoms not yet red,
Headfirst into chilly weather, first to laugh at eastern winds.
My spirit soars to Yuling 庾嶺 whose peaks are with springtime hard to distinguish,
My sunset hues distinct from Luofu 隔羅 [Mountain], different from [Zhao Shixiong's 趙師雄] dream.[404]
My green calyxes as if adorned with melting torches [i.e., red candles],
Like a plain silk immortal rosily[405] drunk, for support straddling a faded rainbow.
How could you call these colors quotidian?
The shading is from being born within ice and snow.

The speaker of this poem has adopted the distinguished voice of the plum blossom, using elevated metaphors and imagery to convey the otherworldly, celestial quality of its beauty. In the fourth line, the flower is described as having sunrise/ sunset "caixia" colors, in contrast with those more subdued floral hues recalled in the story of Zhao Shixiong's dream, as preserved in *Longcheng Records* (*Longcheng lu* 龍城錄), attributed to Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773-819).[406] In this story, Zhao Shixiong is portrayed drunken in the chill of dusk, hitching his carriage among the pine trees, beside a wine shop and a domicile. He meets a woman with light makeup ("danzhuang" 淡粧) and a young boy wearing green. When Zhao wakes from the dream, he realizes that he had fallen asleep under a great plum blossom tree, the implication being that the woman's lightly made-up complexion in the dream had represented the faint shades of the flower's blossoms, and that the man in green had represented the flower's calyx.[407]

404 Following Cai Yijiang 2004: 281, note 4, and Liu Genglu *et al.* 2005: 260, note 5.

405 *Ibid.* note 5.

406 Mentioned by Cai *ibid*, note 5.

407 Cai Yijiang *ibid.* See "Zhao Shixiong drunkenly rests beneath the plum blossoms" ("Zhao Shixiong zuiqi meihuaxia" 趙師雄醉憩梅花下), from *Longcheng lu* 龍城錄, Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元, ed. (attributed), https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=580442.

Considering Xing Xiuyan's poem holistically, one can observe the same constellation of associations in which "caixia," dreaming, and flora appear and reappear, replete with Daoist visions of mounting the sky and spanning the horizons of time and space. At the same time, these depictions evidence highly recognizable, highly identifiable conceptions of dreaming in which dream elements interact with, or derive from, the waking world, taking in the sensual characteristics of the surroundings in which one has fallen asleep, while also encoding and transforming them.

What has been rendered "green calyxes" ("lü'e" 綠萼) can be understood also as a reference to E'lühua 萼綠華, a mythological female Daoist immortal ("xian" 仙) said to have, in the 4th century (CE), descended from the sky to stay with a modest household, offering not only gold but also gifts of poetry.[408] Line 6 of the poem ("Like a plain silk immortal drunken, for support straddling a fading rainbow" 縞仙扶醉跨殘虹) also speaks to "youxian" themes. The image of a Daoist practitioner's white silk robes' being stained by a faded rainbow complements line 4's imagery and speaks to the connections between "caixia" and rainbows observed above. The overall impression is of *Hongloumeng*'s active engagement with, and indebtedness to, "youxian" "roaming immortal" poetry. Meanwhile the final line of the poem ("The shading is from being born within ice and snow" 濃淡由他冰雪中) seems to manifest an appreciation for light, shading, and contrast at odds with the contemporary experience of these phenomena, subordinated as it is to light's electronic articulation.

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[408] Fang 李昉 (10th C.), ed., *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記, "Li Nüxian er" 女仙二. See https://ctext.org/taiping-guangji/57/zh. See also Liu Genglu *et al.* 2005: 259-260.

Xue Baoqin's plum blossom poem offers yet another view on these same themes, again the colors of the plum blossom being described using the imagery of dreaming immortals and "caixia" horizons, even in this case using the very phrase "roaming immortal" ("youxian" 遊仙):

疏是枝條豔是花，春粧兒女競奢華。
閒庭曲檻無餘雪，流水空山有落霞。
幽夢冷隨紅袖笛，遊仙香泛絳河槎。
前身定是瑤台種，無復相疑色相差。[409]

Sparse of branch, lustrous of flower,
Like springtime made-up youth jockeying to be the most lavish.
Of idle halls and crooked balustrades without residual snow,
Like flowing water and mountain skies of sunset clouds.
Into hidden dreams, coolly accompanying red sleeves' fluting,[410]
A roaming immortal, the fragrance suffusing a crimson river's raft.
In a previous incarnation [the plum blossom] must have been in Yao Pavilion planted,
Though there's no way of knowing how the colors compare.

Like Xing Xiuyan's poem above, Xue Baoqin's poem showcases a conceptual and semantic framework in which "caixia" clouds are treated as evocative of immortal beings and of dreaming. The importance of parallelism in this poetic tradition is such that it cannot be taken as coincidence that "roaming immortal" ("youxian" 遊仙) is parallel to "hidden dreams" ("youmeng" 幽夢). "Luoxia" designates specifically sunset clouds and is again in this poem a metaphor for the color of the plum blossom spray Miaoyu has gifted Baoyu.

409 *Hongloumeng* Ch. 50. See Hawkes 2014 v.2: 610-642.
410 Following Liu Genglu *et al.* 2005: 262-263. See below for discussion.

Lines 5 and 6 could be interpreted, following Liu Genlu *et al.*,[411] as the plum blossom's dream vision, the flute-playing lulling the flower to dreamful sleep. Cai argues that the substitution of the term "crimson river" ("jianghe" 絳河) in line 6 in place of more common Milky Way terms like "Silver River" ("yinhe" 銀河) or "Heavenly River" ("Tianhe" 天河) suggests that the poet is thinking not simply of stars in the sky but of celestial places among the stars where immortals reside.[412] These images also speak directly to celestial representations in *Hongloumeng*, especially Daiyu's celestial identification as the "crimson pearl celestial flower" ("jiangzhu xiancao" 絳珠仙草). The name of Baoyu's study in the garden (Red Rue Study,[413] Jiangyun xuan 絳芸軒) also seems to gesture toward this set of transcendental images.

This celestial imagery and its attendant visions of floral reincarnation speak to *Hongloumeng*'s general themes, but do so in a way that suggests that even the version of "youxian" 遊仙 poetry that *Hongloumeng* inherits is inflected with the sensibilities of poets like Li He and Wen Tingyun. The image in the penultimate line of Xue Baoqin's poem, that of a flower who, in a previous life, had been planted at the celestial Yao Pavilion ("Yaotai zhong" 瑤台種), recalls the image from Li He's "Tianshang yao" of dragon's "tilling jade flowers" ("zhong yaocao" 種瑤草), the "yao" 瑤 jade mentioned in Li's composition being from the same celestial place referenced by Baoqin. It should be noted, additionally, that "yaocao" is also associated with the female celestial who visited King Xiang of Chu

411 Liu Genglu *et al.*, *ibid.*
412 Cai Yijiang *ibid.* 283.
413 Hawkes 2014 v.1: 204-205.

(Chu Xiang Wang 楚襄王) (r. 328-299 BCE) famed for Wu 巫 Mountain "wind and rain," as recalled by Song Yu 宋玉 (d. 263 BCE) in "Gaotangfu" 高唐賦.

IV.

A tradition of associating dreams and desire, sunset and sunrise "caixia" skies, and immortal beings has been outlined, and a provisional rendering of this semantic space has been offered. Inquiry turns, now, to whether and in what ways *Hongloumeng* is inverting or otherwise transforming this space. Chapters 1, 2, and 3 above explore in detail how *Hongloumeng* consistently isolates those strands of the Tang poetic tradition advancing new representations of female identity and agency. The question for this chapter is whether *Hongloumeng*'s dream of immortal skies is similarly tapped into transformational countertrends in Chinese poetic and literary representation.

Even though *Hongloumeng*'s sustained focus on some of the lowest status maids and servants represents a major stylistic and ideological development, care is still needed when evaluating associations the novel makes between "caixia" imagery and, e.g., female agency. Especially given that the novel is deeply self-critical, one cannot, without considering the greater context, assume that the representation of a phenomenon necessarily amounts to its endorsement.

One can generally observe in *Hongloumeng* clear connections between female names, especially the names of female maids, and traditional poetic imagery. Evoking associations with beauty, love, luxury, leisure, and ornamentation, female names in *Hongloumeng* tend to reference flowers, celestial phenomena, aromatic substances, visually appealing birds and

animals, and precious objects. There is a parallel dynamic to that observed above, whereby references are sometimes to the thing itself and sometimes to its fabricated representation. To the extent that the most poetic names tend to be for maids serving in the most inner chambers, there is a sense that the sound and image of the names ought to complement these intimate surroundings aesthetically.

Specifically "caixia"-related names in *Hongloumeng* are rather numerous. In addition to "caixia" itself being used as a name (viz., the maid Caixia 彩霞, "Sunset" in the Hawkes[414]), "caixia"-related and "caixia"-adjacent names also include (with their corresponding Hawkes' renderings) "Skybright" (Qingwen 晴雯), "Mackerel" (Qixia 綺霞),[415] and "Suncloud" (Caiyun 彩雲).[416] As noted above, the "wen" in Qingwen is comparable to "xia" 霞. "Qixia" 綺霞 likewise approximates "caixia," emphasizing the "embroidered" ("qi" 綺) texture of the clouds, and in the original Chinese does not have any ready association with mackerel fish. Apparently, Hawkes is here evoking mackerel imagery on account of mackerel scales having a rainbow iridescence.

Deng Jin (2009) argues that by having Caiyun and Caixia (along with several other maids) serve alongside Lady Wang (i.e., Baoyu's mother), the author of *Hongloumeng* intended to invoke the image of the Queen Mother of the West (Xiwangmu 西王母), who is commonly depicted surrounded by "caixia" clouds in traditional Chinese paintings.[417] The

414 *Hongloumeng*, Ch. 23. See Hawkes 2014 v.1: 546-547.
415 *Hongloumeng*, Ch. 20. See Hawkes 2014 v.1: 474-475.
416 *Hongloumeng*, Ch. 23. See Hawkes 2014 v.1: 546-547.
417 Deng Jin 鄧進. "Hongloumeng" nüxing mingming yanjiu《紅樓夢》女性命名研究. Hanyu yuyan daxue 漢語語言大學. Master's Thesis, 2009: 41.

Queen Mother of the West is said to live at Yaochi 瑤池, a celestial location comparable to, though not identical with, Yaotai 瑤台 mentioned above. Deng goes on to argue that the name of the maid Caixia in *Hongloumeng* is actually derived from the Li Bai poem "At a Chan Temple Thinking of My Friend Cen Lun" 禪房懷友人岑倫 discussed above, and that the name of the maid Caiyun derives from another Li Bai poem, "Early Departure from White Emperor Fortress"[418] (Zaofa Baidi Cheng 早发白帝城).[419]

At first glance, it might seem that *Hongloumeng* is simply perpetuating naming traditions that tend to objectify women and instrumentalize ornamentality. The luxury and leisure being represented can be viewed in terms of Veblenian conspicuous consumption and waste, whereby socially subordinated labor is used as much for signaling status and power as for performing concrete, specific duties. One has to be careful not to over-argue the point, though, particularly given how higher-ranking servants like Patience (Ping'er 平兒) and Yuanyang 鴛鴦 are often tasked with important and essential household management tasks, even as the overall impression one gets of the Rong and Ning households is of an overabundance of servants whose superfluous repose signifies the abounding wealth and privilege of their masters. Speaking of domestic service in the classic *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), Veblen observes that:

> If the pecuniary situation of the master permits it, the development of a special class of personal or body servants is also furthered by the very grave importance which comes to attach to this personal service. The master's person, being the embodiment of worth and honour, is of the most serious consequence. Both for his reputable standing in the

[418] For English translation, see Owen et al 2000: 732-733.
[419] Deng *ibid.*

community and for his self-respect, it is a matter of moment that he should have at his call efficient specialised servants, whose attendance upon his person is not diverted from this their chief office by any by-occupation.[420]

Veblen goes on to theorize developments whereby servant labor can become increasingly specialized and increasingly symbolic, but reflexively so, as often what is being signified in this labor is an abstention from conventional, "worldly" labor. This special kind of service labor, halfway between form and function, impossibly both indulgent luxury and communicative realpolitik, seems ultimately to arise from, or is at least intimately connected with, the structural conditions attendant upon hierarchical civilizational forms.

As is implicitly always the challenge when performing Veblenian analysis, there is a need to distinguish real labor and value from signaling labor and value while also recognizing the reality of their overlapping. If one can easily imagine a perfectly utopian society in which people are also frequently named after sunset clouds, flowers, and aromatics, then clearly the situatedness in which symbols are being instantiated is at least partly operative.

Likewise, to evaluate properly the historical significance of "roaming immortal" imagery is to mediate between considering historical contingencies and more generalizable structures of human cognition and experience. That, for instance, "youxian" poetry is being composed in a strictly hierarchical society can help explain why these visions of immortality foreground ostentatious forms of wealth and opulence, without necessarily reducing these dreams simply to the desire for material wealth. For *Hongloumeng* to oppose certain traditional hierarchies might require it, then, not simply to destroy or to invert the semantic spaces in which these hierarchies are implicated, but rather to distinguish within these spaces which

[420] Veblen 2008 [1899]: 41.

elements are to be preserved, which elements are to be destroyed, and which elements are to be transformed. As Louise Edwards understands this issue, the "mere reversal of the phallogocentric female/male, yin/ yang binary could reinforce the patriarchal foundation because 'reversing the order only repeats the system.'"[421] Edwards argues that "to accomplish a complete break with a patriarchal gender order the signifying systems which smooth over its inequalities and ambiguities must be deconstructed and not simply inverted."[422]

Naming and renaming figure very prominently as plot events in *Hongloumeng*, with the meaning of a given instance of renaming highly contingent upon the social circumstances of its articulation.[423] Just as the games and activities of the garden's poetry club seem to prefigure the possibility of new expressions of social and gender identity, so too the kinds of mutual renaming performed by the novel's young female heroines seem to prefigure alternative social modalities antithetical to the possessive, objectifying tendencies embedded in hierarchical renaming practices. In addition to the charming poetic names that the poetry club participants give to each other, one can point toward the renaming practices adopted during an exploratory gender-identity phase toward the middle of the novel. In the frenzy of crossdressing and intercultural roleplaying that reaches its fevered pitch in Chapter 63, it can really feel as if the novel comes into its element.[424]

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[421] Louise Edwards, "Women in Honglou meng: Prescriptions of purity in the femininity of Qing dynasty China," Modern China 16.4 (1990): 410.

[422] *Ibid.*

[423] For a general introduction, see Michael Yang, "Naming in Honglou meng," Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR) 18 (1996): 69-100, first discussed above in the introduction to this dissertation.

[424] See especially Hawkes 2014 v.3: 290-293.

The contrast could not be starker with the kinds of naming and renaming in *Hongloumeng* occurring in explicitly hierarchical contexts. This is partly to be expected, given common historical associations between renaming practices and extreme hierarchy. Xiangling's renaming tribulations reflect this social dynamic, as her first renaming was artifactual of her being torn from her social and family bonds, having been stolen from her family and sold into slavery as a child, such that neither she nor her captors initially even knew her original name. Her subsequent renaming by Xue Pan's main wife Xia Jingui 夏金桂 is equally unpleasant, stemming partly from Xia's spite and resentment while also being wrapped up in fetishistic name-tabooing practices and hierarchy-warped conceptions of purity and impurity. For Xiangling, each renaming is a remark upon her continued subordination to the extreme and arbitrary demands being placed upon her.

In Chapter 21, Baoyu, in the midst of a prolonged passive-aggressive argument with Xiren, displaces his anger onto a lower status maid, whom he renames "Number Four" (Si'er 四兒), on account of her being the fourth maid. As is common in the Jia household, this maid had already been renamed upon her arrival on the premises, in this case by Xiren. In her first renaming, one aromatic has been substituted for another aromatic, her original name Yunxiang 芸香 ("rue fragrance") changed to Huixiang 蕙香 ("orchid fragrance," *coumarouna odorata*), "hui" one of the aromatics used in the traditional spiritual and cultural practices discussed above.

Xiren's potential motivations in renaming Yunxiang are open to interpretation. One explanation is that Xiren hopes by renaming Yunxiang to signal her own sophistication and grace, possibly considering "huixiang" to be more elegant and less commonplace than

"yunxiang"; the Zhiyanzhai commentary is silent here on Xiren's motivation, though it does regard "yunxiang" as "su" 俗 ("commonplace," "vulgar").[425] Another explanation is that Xiren is opposed to the name "yunxiang" on account of its sharing the same "yun" with Jiangyun xuan 絳芸軒, the name of Baoyu's study already discussed above in terms of the celestial, transcendent connotations of "jiang" 絳, again entangled with matters of class distinction and invidiousness. As in the case of Xia Jingui's renaming Xiangling, proscribing use of the master's name encodes linguistically the terms of the hierarchical relation, which to be form and which to be shadow.

Multiple levels of meanings appear here co-present, and possibly interconnected. Xiren's judgment (i.e., in renaming) can be interpreted both aesthetically (e.g., the notion that it is aesthetically unappealing for the same word to be shared by the master's studio and by a "common maid"), as well as pseudo-moralistically, in abiding hierarchical naming and tabooing rules, like those rules ostensibly underlying Xia Jingui's decision to rename Xiangling. No matter the perspective, though, objectification appears reliably manifest when the primary criteria for choosing a name are incidental factors (e.g., matching a maid's name with other maids' names, or with the environment in which service is to be rendered) rather than qualities or traits unique to the individual, as arguably is the case with the renaming practices that form a key part of the gender exploration depicted in Chapter 63.

As for maids specifically with "caixia"-related names, it is not far-fetched to wonder in what ways their individual "ill fates" might exemplify "sunset clouds easily scattering"

[425] "Originally commonplace." 原俗. Comment appended to "I was originally called Yunxiang" 我原叫芸香的, *HLM*, Chapter 21. See Cao and Wu 2013: 294.

("caiyun yisan" 彩雲易散). As unfortunate outcomes are so common among the major female characters in the novel, it can be difficult to distinguish the severity of what happens to those with "caixia"-related names compared to those without such names. Perhaps Qingwen's sudden, tragic death especially typifies the fragility of a passionate life.[426] In Baoyu's long eulogy for her in Chapter 78, he suggests that Qingwen's soul has returned to "xiacheng" 霞城 (Hawkes renders it "City of Sunrise"[427]), which seems to designate an immortal city in the sky comparable to that depicted in "Tianshang yao" and directly related to, if not identifiable with, Chapter 1's "Sunset Glow Palace" ("chixiaguan" 赤霞宮)[428]

What seems especially breathtaking about the concept of a sunrise or sunset city, or of an immortal's observing a mortal sunset from the clouds, is how it mirrors and reverses the basic human experience of observing these phenomena. A human being experiences in a marvelous sunrise or sunset the duality intrinsic to liminality, experiencing themselves and their situation as evanescence, as a kind of withering away, limiting toward zero, while also, simultaneously, experiencing themselves as an outward trajectory, as a kind of limiting toward infinity, reaching toward transcendence and a deeper dialogue with the universe. Perhaps observing a sunrise is the closest that immortal beings can come to experiencing mortality, short of entering a cycle of reincarnation like that depicted in Chapter 1 of *Hongloumeng*.

426 See *HLM*, chapters 77 and 78 (Hawkes 2014 v.3: 676-747).
427 *HLM*, Chapter 78. Hawkes 2014 v.3: 746-747.
428 *HLM*, Chapter 1. Hawkes 2014 v.1: 10-11.

Conclusion

Underlying the current research project is the critical estimation of *Hongloumeng* as a deeply intertextual artistic form. Just as a life of memories combines with the details of the day to provide at least some of the source material from which dreams are dreamt, or are otherwise imagined having been conjured, so too *Hongloumeng* dreams in an idiom that merges the details of its immediate historical situation with the cultural memory transmitted in the Chinese literary and poetic tradition. In consciously reevaluating and transforming this literary material, *Hongloumeng* appears as if an exercise in lucid dreaming, its highly reflexive style, then, a manifestation of this lucidity, its foray into higher order recursiveness culminating, in a moment almost as Borgesian as it is Zhuangzian, in the famous dream sequence in Chapter 55 in which "real" and "fake" Baoyu characters mutually dream each other into existence.[429]

There are cultural and scholarly tendencies to resist that treat dreams, dreaming, and even desire itself as uniquely individual, inwardly looking forms of expression. Some might argue that, if dreaming is a language, it is a private one. This conceptual error seems the opposite of, but related to, the pitfalls of positing inflexible transhistorical universals, the former falsely particularistic, the latter falsely universalistic. A lot of work has been performed in the above chapters attempting historically to situate perspectives on dreaming whose abstract qualities are easily mistaken for being universally applicable forms. Simply negating false trans-historicity is not enough, though, especially as *Hongloumeng* seems to

[429] Hawkes 2014 v.3: 34-61.

demand that one understands cultural memory as an interpersonal, intergenerational, longitudinal mode of dreaming. In other words, the research moment that postulates dreaming as an inward turn seems less interesting than the research moment that postulates dreaming as only apparently inwardly turning, its referents instead everywhere revealing an outward trajectory, as social forms attempting to express and manifest themselves.

The current research project elaborates upon, and formally conceptualizes, the insight that dreams, desire, gender, sexuality, and identity appear in *Hongloumeng* as intertwined, historically and socially inextricable forms. Failing to represent these forms in their historical situatedness runs the risk of misrepresenting them altogether. By conceptualizing and clarifying longitudinal moral-libidinal developments in historical Chinese literary norms, it has been possible to portray more accurately what elements of *Hongloumeng* truly are exceptional. This historicization requires readers and researchers reevaluate their own assumptions regarding how storytelling does and does not work, and how story and storyteller do and do not relate.

Analysis has revealed just how easily dreaming as an historical form, as in the case of light and shadows, can be obscured beneath the appearance of unchanging universality. Attempts have been made to situate in a broader sociocultural and historical context the view of dreaming that emerges most clearly in *Hongloumeng*, viz., dreaming as a symbolic, potentially encoded form of meaning halfway between a message from without (a "lesson," "warning," or a "fateful" sign) and a message from within (an expression of one's hopes, aspirations, wishes, and desire). Dreaming in *Hongloumeng* is, in this way, intertwined with conceptions of fate whose form, at once ontological and metaphorical, is of a text articulating itself, or a book reading itself to completion. This vision of fate is clearly relevant

to the various "registers" in the Department of Ill-fate Fare ("boming si" 薄命司) appearing in Baoyu's dream in Chapter 5, but it also speaks to how *Hongloumeng* conceives of Baoyu's jade, how it is that a written inscription could capture in a few enigmatic words its predefined reason for existence.

One of the great challenges of this project has been properly conceptualizing whether and in what ways *Hongloumeng* represents an extended meditation on the tensions, even contradictions, inherent to a conception of dreaming as *both* the expression of a wish *as well as* the articulation of one's fate. Characters in the text responding to these tensions can be observed navigating different attitudinal dispositions, even learning to conceive of life itself as a game that one's immortal soul has been occasioned to play, learning, in effect, how to will elements of one's own fate, while finding ways to accept and embrace life's vicissitudes.

Although the terms of the discussion might feel alien to contemporary sensibilities, it can be observed that similar dilemmas persist in the current historical moment and are just being expressed differently. In place of "accepting one's fate," a modern discussion might advocate "loving what you do," or might problematize the reflexive act of "loving what you love," or might address the issues that arise when one loves someone but doesn't love that they love them. Generally, there are subtle difficulties to being an historical agent whose struggle for agency and identity involves interrogating notions of agency and identity.

In *Hongloumeng*'s intertextual landscape, it can be seen how the author of *Hongloumeng* finds inspiration in the works of middle-to-late Tang poets Li He, Li Shangyin, and Wen Tingyun, particularly in their artistic portrayal of and reflection upon the social conditions of women. In addition, these poets' works prefigure *Hongloumeng*'s representation of dreams and

desire. Again and again in the above chapters, one encounters poetic material that, at first glance, appears to be concerned only with more immediately sensual, or purely aesthetic, modes of representation, but which is revealed to be engaging in subtle critique of status quo hierarchies.

The vision of society that emerges in the poems on which *Hongloumeng* focuses its referential attention is one in which the ostensible ideality of dreaming is inextricable from the materiality of social reproduction. In its capacity as a "memorial" attempting to embody a new vision of female virtue, *Hongloumeng* appears drawn to these poets not simply because they focus on society, but especially because they focus on those social arenas most directly affecting women, not only gendered "essential labor" like weaving and clothes washing but also luxury goods production as well as gendered "ritual labor." *Hongloumeng* inherits an internal dialogue, a sustained soul-searching exploration not only of conventional gender norms but also of the relationship between material worth, economic valuation, and social values.

With Li He, the dialogue is with a poet haunted by visions of female love, loss, and labor. In his works with which *Hongloumeng* most actively engages, Li He can be seen portraying female agency in its own right rather than simply in terms of its patriarchal relation, depicting active and passive female resistance to the social roles being prescribed and enforced. With Li Shangyin, the dialogue is with a poet whose reputation for inwardly searching abstruseness obscures the social critique central to his work, as he rails against the lack of opportunities afforded for individual and romantic expression. With Wen Tingyun, the dialogue is with a poet whose own reputation for "surface-level" sensuousness obscures the seriousness of his critique of conventional gender norms and the centrality of this

critique to his work. If one extracts oneself from the criticism of Wen that Rouzer observes, accusations that underlying Wen's "virtuosic parallelism"[430] was a "deliberate complexity" that amounts to "piling up luxurious details without considering the meaning,"[431] one can begin to see what *Hongloumeng* sees in Wen's work, viz., a uniquely embodied depiction of female resistance to objectification and socially enforced idleness.

Attempts in this research have been made to clarify and specify *Hongloumeng*'s referential space, especially pertaining to these three mid-to-late Tang poets. More comprehensive database analysis than what has been performed here will likely yield some additional referential material not yet considered in any extant secondary literature. It would be helpful to cross-reference the entirety of the *Quan Tangshi* with all received versions of *Hongloumeng*, to generate a list of every identical string of characters of some *n* length (perhaps $n >= 3$). There might be some false positives to work through, but such a sweep could yield up additional references overlooked in the secondary literature.

Additional scholarship will be needed to clarify *Hongloumeng*'s referential dialogue with lesser influences who themselves tend to be less critically studied and less easily appreciated, historically or presently, due often not to any deficit in ability, but rather to trends in taste, or to structural factors, including the quality of the commentarial tradition attending a poet's work. These lesser-studied influences worth considering include poets such as Luo Yin 羅隱 (9th-10th C.), Han Wo 韓偓 (9th-10th C.), who makes a brief appearance in Chapter 2, and He Ning 和凝 (898-955), among others.

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430 Rouzer 1993: 18.
431 *Ibid.* 17.

There are deep philosophical and intellectual issues whose complexity precludes their casual discussion, but which hopefully future research and scholarship will attempt to address. In the above discussion, *Hongloumeng* has been characterized as a work that strives toward maximal symbolic determination, a work whose comprehensive vision seems as if to imbue each detail symbolic communicative import. This is a useful framework for the purposes of discussion, but ultimately a more dynamic understanding will need to be employed. One can observe two general paths forward whereby this framework can be nuanced. One way is by questioning whether or in what ways an author can or cannot truly choose the manner and extent of their work's semantic and symbolic determination. The second way is by reevaluating the extent to which historical social reality is itself a semantic space the extent and manner of whose articulation is open to interpretation and to further empirical inquiry.

One is reminded of the flickering revelations detailed in Borges' "The Mirror of Enigmas," and one wonders what shade of truth lies behind their surreal provocation. Where does one presuppose meaning, and how do one's presuppositions affect the shape of what is considered "knowledge"? As the earth's climate, temperature, and weather have all become emergent properties of human society, perhaps it really is the case that "even the […] brutal sounds of the globe must be all so many languages and ciphers that somewhere have their corresponding keys – have their own grammar and syntax." Perhaps it does follow, then, that, "the least things in the universe must be secret mirrors to the greatest."[432] And one should not too readily dismiss the possibility that "[t]he terrifying immensity of the

[432] Borges 1964: 209.

firmament's abysses" really is "an illusion, an external reflection of our own abysses, perceived 'in a mirror'," [433] or reflected in a moonlit pond. There is a certain truth, likewise, to the proposition that "If we see the Milky Way, it is because it actually exists in our souls." Or rather, what would one accomplish by denying this claim?

When Borges speaks, through Leon Bloy, of "no human being on earth capable of declaring with certitude who he is," of knowing "what his acts correspond to, his sentiments, his ideas, or what his real name is, his enduring Name in the register of Light," [434] it's easy to recall the registers in the "Department of Ill Fated Fare," but the next step is more difficult, as it involves questioning what in one's historically-situated reality might be making this surreal space resonate. Are there really, in some sense, texts "out there," operating both collectively, at the level of society, and unconsciously, at the level of dreaming, desiring, remembering, and forgetting? In what ways might these "emergent texts" be themselves in dialogue, and what is their history, and how is their identity and non-identity to be conceived? Rather than being idle concerns, how humanities scholars perceive their own conceptual firmament deeply affects what they even recognize "scholarship" or "the humanities" to be, especially in this ambiguous, dangerous historical moment, at this dim threshold, when it's so unclear whether the scarce light is of spring or autumn, dawn or dusk.

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433 *Ibid.* 210.
434 *Ibid.* 211.

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