6-2015

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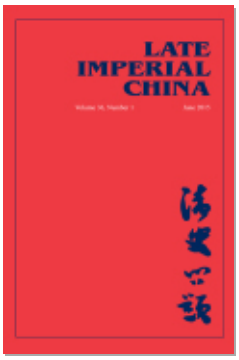

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Late Imperial China, Volume 36, Number 1, June 2015, pp. 53-87 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/late.2015.0002

REFRAMING THE BOUNDARIES OF HOUSEHOLD AND TEXT IN *HOU HONGLOU MENG*[*]

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Vernacular novels such as *Honglou meng* (*Dream of the Red Chamber*, printed 1791) and *Jin Ping Mei* (*The Plum in the Golden Vase,* printed ca. 1618) are an important source for depictions of material culture and emotional dynamics in wealthy late imperial homes. Though fictional, these visions of domesticity offer important insights into the symbolic space of the household and the relationships it defined. The household walls formed a concrete boundary that contained—or failed to contain—the passions of its inhabitants, embodying the ritual principle of separation and distinction. The architectural walls mirrored the ritual boundaries that guided human passions by defining marriage and kinship.[1] In written descriptions of households, a third boundary, between reality and text, comes into play: readers cross this boundary metaphorically when they enter a novel's world. The passionate response of readers to *Honglou meng* through commentaries, notes, and sequel production shows that this novel in particular lent itself to such metafictional boundary crossing through the establishment of emotional connections between its characters and the readers, authors, editors, and commentators who felt for them.

Hou honglou meng (*Later Dream of the Red Chamber*, in print by 1796), by the pseudonymous Xiaoyaozi, was the earliest *Honglou meng* sequel to appear.[2] It situates itself in the fictional and philosophical tradition of exploring *qing* (passion, sentiment) and its limits. Relative to the parent novel, the sequel redraws each of the three types of boundaries—architectural, familial,

[*] My sincere thanks to Tina Lu, Maram Epstein, Keith McMahon, and the two anonymous reviewers, whose guidance and critiques improved the article greatly. The research was funded by the Prize Fellowship administered by the Council for East Asian Studies at Yale University.

[1] On ritual as boundary formation, see Zito, "Ritualizing *Li*" and "Silk and Skin."

[2] Yisu, *Honglou meng shulu*, 91. Xiaoyaozi edited the work and authored a preface stating that the novel was written by Cao Xueqin and discovered by the equally pseudonymous Baiyun waishi and Sanhua jushi. This attribution is followed by the Beijing University Press edition. I follow Yisu and the Qing critic Aisin Gioro Yurui in assuming that Xiaoyaozi is the author; his style name (unlike Baiyun waishi and Sanhua jushi), appears in reference to a real person in contemporary sources.

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and textual—in an attempt to reinforce and re-establish them. In so doing, it expands orthodox ideas of what can be included within the newly strengthened walls, acting to re-contain morally ambiguous aspects of late imperial life. Points of tension reclaimed in the sequel include women's private wealth, wives' continuing loyalty to their natal families, commercial publishing, and the value of fiction itself. Despite the sequel's emphasis on reinforcing boundaries, the reality of rupture never disappears; indeed, at some points, *Hou honglou meng's* undermining of ritual and textual boundaries is more explicit than the parent novel's. It is precisely the strength of the sequel's impulse toward containment that makes its radical rewriting of borders so striking.

Honglou meng sequels as a group have attracted serious attention in recent decades. They have been studied for their relevance to *Honglou meng* scholarship, as women's fiction, and as more or less unconvincing attempts to repair the parent novel's tragedy.[3] Moreover, though the sequels as a group are generally agreed to be inferior to the parent novel in subtlety and power, they still provide a *literary* critique on it. The sequels can be thought of as competing readings and interpretations of the parent novel, existing together with rewriting and commentary along a continuum of critique.[4] *Hou honglou meng* shares a number of broad similarities with other sequels, including its short length and happy ending (in fact, the dramatized version of *Honglou meng, Honglou meng chuanqi*, follows *Hou honglou meng's* plot). However, its vision of the family and society offers a unique contribution to the Qing fictional imagination. Of particular interest are its self-consciously metafictional strategies for rebuilding the Jia mansion, creating new family structures to enable the coexistence of romantic and familial love, and redefining the relationship of the novel to the outside world. These strategies work together to create a conscious mirroring between domestic and textual space and to reflect on the ways that *qing* resists containment on each level simultaneously.

The Jias, Their Jia, and the Virtue of Containment

Honglou meng centers on the numerous and wealthy Jia family, whose size is mirrored in the 120 chapters of Cao Xueqin's sprawling novel. The scale of the Jia family and its mansion is both unrealistic and dystopic. It becomes evident throughout the novel that nobody can control the household, its expenditures, or its members: Wang Xifeng's attempt to do so culminates in financial and moral

[3] For general studies, see Zhao Jianzhong, *Honglou meng xushu yanjiu;* Lin Yixuan, *Wucai ke bu tian: Honglou meng xushu yanjiu*; on women's fiction, see Widmer, *The Beauty and the Book*; on repairing tragedy, see McMahon, "Eliminating Traumatic Antinomies."

[4] Huang, "Boundaries and Interpretations," 31.

failure and in her death from exhaustion and illness. The illicit movement of people and objects throughout the story contributes to the sense of inevitable decline that permeates the novel.[5] Indeed, twentieth-century scholars have often seen *Honglou meng* as a portrayal of the traditional family in decay; the surname Jia puns with both *jia* meaning "false" and *jia* meaning "home, family."[6] The novel's tragedy emerges not only from the tension between Jia Baoyu's romantic passion for Lin Daiyu and his elders' prosaic plans for his marriage to Xue Baochai,[7] but also from the unfortunate consequences of the machinations of a variety of other household members—Jia She extorts fans from a poor collector and abuses maids, Wang Xifeng skims from the household accounts and drives her husband's concubine to suicide, and Xue Pan kills a romantic rival. The novel is about much more than a love triangle: It encompasses a web of household conflicts, loyalties, jealousies and loves, in a dark and sweeping portrayal of the domestic realm of human experience.

Hou honglou meng begins after *Honglou meng's* Chapter 120. Jia Zheng finds Jia Baoyu, rescues him from the monk who (in this version) abducted him, and brings him home. Lin Daiyu returns to life, and we learn of the existence of her half-brother, Lin Liangyu (who does not exist in *Honglou meng*). Liangyu moves into the mansion next door and Daiyu lives with him, while a connecting door is opened between the Lin and Jia mansions. Liangyu divides his inheritance with Daiyu, making her a wealthy heiress. After much ado, Daiyu reluctantly agrees to marry Jia Baoyu as a primary wife, and Xue Baochai is persuaded to share her own primary wife status—a legal impossibility, though a frequent occurrence in fiction.[8] Baochai bears a son, while Daiyu's character changes completely—she takes charge of the household affairs in both mansions and emerges as a manager even more capable than *Honglou meng's* Wang Xifeng. Between the infusion of wealth brought by Daiyu and her management skills, the Jia mansion soon returns to its former glory. Cao Xueqin appears as a close friend of the Jia family throughout the novel and acts as go-between for Baoyu and Daiyu's marriage. Baoyu ends up with a relatively modest marital set-up of

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5 Such moments include Jia Lian's sneaking a second wife into the Garden, the movement of pages and maids in and out of places where they don't belong and their illicit affairs, the ease Xue Pan finds in sneaking out to get in trouble, the constant underhanded pawning of objects, and even the seemingly trivial case of the poria cocos powder (Lycoperdon Snow) in Chapters 60 and 61.

6 Ji Xin, "*Honglou meng* xinping"; Jie Shaohua, "Guizu zhi jia de zui'e shi he shuaiwang shi." The numerous comparative studies of *Honglou meng* and Ba Jin's *Jia* (*Family*) are telling in this regard as well.

7 Wang Daolun, "Zhongguo chuantong wenhua zhong de qingxue yu *Honglou meng*."

8 On the legal principle of marriage to a single main wife plus concubines of markedly different status, see Ebrey, *Women and the Family in Chinese History*, 39–61; Bray, *Technology and Gender*, 351ff; on two-wife polygyny in fiction, see McMahon, *Misers, Shrews, and Polygamists*, 28–34.

two wives, Daiyu and Baochai, and three concubines, Qingwen ("Skybright," Baoyu's maid from *Honglou meng*), Zijuan ("Nightingale," Daiyu's personal maid), and Ying'er ("Oriole," Baochai's personal maid).[9]

Hou honglou meng reverses the parent novel's tragedies by rebuilding the household's boundaries, reaffirming its morals, and replenishing its coffers. Moreover, the process of redefining the mansion serves as a clear parallel for the sequel's revision of the framework of the novel: the changed scale of the book itself presents an ideal of textual containment. *Honglou meng's* lengthy description of unruly passions playing out in an enormous mansion is replaced in *Hou honglou meng* by a concise re-ordering of boundaries that redefine *qing* and re-establish ritual order. Paradoxically, however, *Hou honglou meng* at times both emulates and surpasses its parent novel's transgressive aspects by drawing directly on *Jin Ping Mei* in a number of key scenes.[10] This enables the sequel to threaten even more drastic upheavals before re-containing events in its orderly narrative framework.

One difference between *Hou honglou meng* and *Honglou meng* is evident as soon as a would-be reader picks up the book: the thirty-chapter volume is only a quarter the size of its parent novel. In Chapter 20, Baoyu, Baochai, and Daiyu read and discuss *Honglou meng* and decide to ask Cao Xueqin to write a sequel—but on a very different scale. Daiyu rejects the idea of having Cao simply reprint the original with a different, happy ending:

> This big book both has a huge framework and narrates complex matters. If it didn't intersperse loose and tight description and mingle elegance and commonness, how could such a story be told? Even the fact that it has no resolution at the end makes it like boundless mist and waves, free and unrestrained—if such a book were to end with a chapter describing a happy reunion with a bed full of official tablets [showing many sons gaining examination success] it would have no flavor. In contrast with the dreamlike narration, it would seem too annoying, and anyway it would only be a factual record that couldn't be deleted or changed. So even if this book hadn't been printed already, one absolutely couldn't add or delete passages in a vulgar way. For one thing, it wouldn't be realistic; for another, the writing style would be too different in its lack of antique elegance.[11]

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[9] Translations from *Hou honglou meng* are my own throughout the article. Because of the well-deserved popularity of David Hawkes's English translation of *Honglou meng*, I include his translations of character and place names in parentheses for ease of reference.

[10] On *Honglou meng's* clear debt to *Jin Ping Mei*, see Scott, "Azure from Indigo."

[11] *HHLM*, 267.

Honglou meng's vast scale and open-endedness are treated as two sides of the same artistic coin. The characters agree that *Honglou meng* itself cannot be changed, that the tragically unresolved ending is the best one possible. At the same time, Baochai still wants to set the record straight on Baoyu and Daiyu's happy marriage, so Daiyu suggests commissioning Cao Xueqin to write a sequel. Baoyu balks: "Sister Bao, listen to this joke from Sister Lin! Such a big book, 120 chapters—if I were to ask him to write another 120 chapters, who would ever be willing?" Daiyu laughs back at him, "Those hundred and twenty chapters narrate so many years. If we go along with Sister Bao and just narrate the most recent year or two, a dozen or so chapters would be enough." Baochai chimes in, "The events of one or two years—if you wanted to turn them into 120 chapters, you'd have to spend ten chapters on a month. Even if you wrote about every time Baoyu went to relieve himself there wouldn't be enough material!" The three finally ask Cao Xueqin how many chapters he thinks best. Cao sets an upper limit of thirty chapters, while Baoyu holds out for thirty-two. At this point, Cao Xueqin laughs, "That's easy enough. Just live a few more years, and if you live till you and Daiyu are a hundred years old and white-haired, I could even write 3,200 chapters. But I'll have to ask leave from King Yama, or I won't be able to do the work of writing!"[12] At this Baoyu gives in.

This apparently trivial exchange takes up a great deal of space in the self-consciously medium-sized *Hou honglou meng*. The scale of the original novel is attributed to the complexity of the events described and the minutiae of daily life that form part of the narrative. At the same time, the modest scale of this particular sequel becomes a virtue worth highlighting, indicating the book's careful selection of appropriate and interesting material. While none of the characters criticize *Honglou meng's* scale, the repeated awed mentions of "A hundred twenty chapters! Such a big book!" make it clear that this is not Xiaoyaozi's idea of a typical novel. The scale of *Honglou meng* appears to be as singular as that of the Jia mansion or Prospect Garden.

The potential implications of a book's size extend beyond the finished work's ease of reading and marketability. Form and content are intimately, not contingently, related. If the act of writing a sequel to someone else's novel is always in some way a critical reading and commentary on the parent novel, then *Hou honglou meng's* self-conscious choice to be a smaller novel narrating a smaller slice of life is also a literary statement, not a direct critique by any means, but an assertion of power by a categorically different literary and familial vision. What, then, is that vision? How do differences in length affect narrative fantasies

12 *HHLM*, 267–68.

of the household? How does *Hou honglou meng* present itself as a novelistic alternative to *Honglou meng*? And finally, are the revisions of the household space and of the textual space connected?

One answer emerges from Keith McMahon's work on containment in seventeenth-century fiction. In *Causality and Containment*, he shows that the ideology of containment functions on both a thematic and a formal level. The tension between containment and rupture allows a story's plot to progress. As regards form, the novel is "diffuse and episodic," while the vernacular short story expresses the ideology of containment on a formal level: it consists of a clear beginning, middle, and end that bound the events it narrates.[13] *Hou honglou meng* at thirty chapters is hardly a short story. Nevertheless, contrasting ideals of containment and openness offer one way to understand the literary relationship between *Honglou meng* and *Hou honglou meng. Honglou meng* is indeed diffuse, and the multiplicity of meanings that readers over the centuries have managed to find in it bears witness to its open-endedness. The book's mammoth size and protean openness to interpretation are matched only by the enormity and the porosity of the Jia household. In contrast, *Hou honglou meng* presents a self-contained and self-sustaining household space, a dramatic revision of the original Jia mansion that hemorrhaged wealth and could not balance intake and expenditure. The reformed Jia household is contained both financially and culturally; the maintenance and firming up of boundaries is central to both the ritual and textual viability of the household, to making it "make sense" in the reader's imagination. It is no coincidence that the book itself is more modest in size, more tightly plotted, and more controlled in potential for interpretation. *Hou honglou meng's* literary ethos of common sense and moderation serves as the formal counterpart to its thematic portrayal of the Jia family's retrenchment and renewal, which in turn is articulated by the novel's depiction of wealth recontained and household boundaries redefined.

First, *Hou honglou meng* corrects the Jia family's financial problems by presenting the revived Daiyu as a masterful, strict, and independently wealthy household manager. She is explicitly and favorably compared to Wang Xifeng, the clever daughter-in-law whose attempts to manage the household while skimming profits for herself in *Honglou meng* ultimately fail. In Chapter 7 of *Hou honglou meng*, Lady Wang and Aunt Xue admire Daiyu's management of her brother's household: "All along we've just said that Daiyu was smart and good with pen and ink—how could we have known that she had this magnificent talent for management? You'd never guess it from her appearance. Compared to the situation with [Wang Xifeng] before, it's like comparing the earth with

[13] McMahon, *Causality and Containment*, 8.

the sky above."[14] Moreover, Daiyu's inheritance from her brother provides the Jia household with a much-needed transfusion of wealth. She is both a source of capital in her own right and the means of guarding and increasing it. Daiyu's role as wealth-bringer underlines her status as a moral agent. In *Honglou meng* as in late imperial history, men control the clan property belonging to the patriline, but have little in the way of individual wealth or possessions. Women, on the other hand, have personal wealth (*tiji*) in the form of their dowries, from which they can draw for the benefit of their uterine families; the existence of this wealth is a source of much anxiety in kinship discourse.[15] Women could also turn their dowries over to their husbands to augment the communal property of the marital family. The frequency of exemplary biographies about women who do this suggests that such an action was as rare in real life as it was enthusiastically encouraged in prose. *Honglou meng* presents the full ambiguity of women's private wealth, letting us compare (and sympathize with) Wang Xifeng, who siphons wealth from the household funds for her own stores, and Grandmother Jia, who takes clothing and money from her private coffers to give to her sons when the Jia family meets disaster.

The sequel, *Hou honglou meng*, mediates the tensions attending women's private wealth on several levels. First, Daiyu both keeps and gives her wealth: she uses it for the benefit of the Jia clan, but as manager, she retains personal control of the now-augmented property. By making Daiyu both donor and manager, the sequel simultaneously establishes her right to personal property and her loyalty to her husband's family, and conveniently sidesteps the contradiction between the two principles. The ever-present conflict for a married woman, between marital loyalty and filial piety, is sidestepped at the same time. Daiyu herself frames her contributions to the Jia household as part of a broader goal to renew both the Jia and Lin mansions, making it her ultimate act of filial piety to her mother, Jia Min. As she tells Jia Zheng in Chapter 27:

> "Both of our mansions (*fu*) have been in serious financial trouble. My intent has always been to bring the old foundations back to wholeness and bring that mansion, too, back to full glory, and to do everything fairly and upfront. So I begged to take charge of both mansions. When that [Lin] mansion had come back to its former glory with income exceeding expenditures, and had regained its former state, I left it to others to divide the wealth. As for this [Jia] mansion, I'll only single out Baoyu [as heir], and the remainder will go to Huan

[14] *HHLM*, 85–86.
[15] Bray, *Technology and Gender*, 139.

> and Lan, adjusted for their different ages and statuses as sons of a concubine and a main wife. My own property will go to Uncle and Aunt in the older generation and to Zhi [Baoyu's son by Baochai] in the younger generation. This is your niece's way of leading her life, living by Uncle's dictum of fulfilling filial piety to my mother while not disgracing my Lin ancestors, causing people to call me a daughter who repays her mother."[16]

Thus, the sequel stabilizes the Jia mansion, not only by strengthening its shaky boundaries through stricter management, but also by lessening the pressure on those boundaries by lowering the need to cross them. The Jia mansion no longer depends on an unpredictable influx of rents from external estates, but has a significant source of financial support within its walls. At the same time, Daiyu's potentially transgressive status as a propertied woman is re-contained within the orthodox narratives of loyalty and filial piety. Finally, the conflict between the discourses of natal and marital family loyalty is conveniently harmonized. This harmony is symbolized architecturally by the neighboring Lin and Jia mansions with their connecting door, a spatial arrangement that enables Daiyu to manage both households simultaneously. The expanded and strengthened boundaries of the Jia-Lin complex become capable of containing the wealth of both families, as well as Daiyu's loyalty to both families.

On a symbolic level, Daiyu becomes the cultural center of the household, providing cultured entertainment so abundantly that there is no temptation for its members to stray. The clearest example occurs in Chapter 18, when Daiyu leads the women to create a spectacular array of decorative lanterns within the compound for the Lantern Festival. Her original plan is to distract Baoyu (now her husband) from his sorrowful memories of their separation:

> Now I have a plan: we'll simply make lanterns in the color and shape of every kind of flower; even fish, birds, people, and objects—we'll make those into lanterns too. Anyway, the Lantern Festival is coming up. We'll hang them from the main hall all the way to Prospect Garden, everywhere you look, even in the treetops. Baoyu loves excitement; it'll suit him perfectly.[17]

The other women join in with stunning results:

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[16] *HHLM*, 357–58.
[17] *HHLM*, 229.

> In the Rong and Lin mansions, all the women were making decorative lanterns day and night. By the eleventh or twelfth [of the first month], it was all coming together. Coming and going, everyone was looking and commenting on them. Indeed, it was a spectacle that put the Lantern Market by the East-West Memorial Arch to shame.[18]

The most extended Lantern Festival scene in *Honglou meng* itself occurs in Chapter 18, when the Imperial Concubine and eldest Jia daughter Yuanchun's visit home occurs on the festival day. In that scene, the focus is on the extravagance of the celebration, which Yuanchun comments on disapprovingly.[19] *Hou honglou meng* responds to this scene in particular by emphasizing Daiyu's thrifty ingenuity: the women make their own spectacular lantern array, combining luxury with industry and moderation. In this specific sense, the Lantern Festival serves to highlight the new containment of wealth through fiscal management.

On another level, the sequel responds to the Lantern Festival's role in fiction in general as a topos of both spectacle and chaos. It is a time when women often leave the house to see and—alarmingly—to be seen, leading to the possibility of abduction, rape, and adultery.[20] In Chapter 15 of *Jin Ping Mei*, the women of Ximen Qing's household go out to visit Li Ping'er, another of his future wives, at the Lantern Festival. While viewing the lanterns from an open balcony, they are seen by the rowdy young men below, who take them for prostitutes.[21] The women's lack of decorum has no immediate consequences in this case, but it serves to underline and foreshadow the dissolution of Ximen Qing's household. In *Honglou meng* itself, the women do not leave the household, but the Lantern Festival leads to disaster even without a breach in gender propriety. In the first chapter of the novel, Zhen Shiyin sends his young daughter Yinglian (Caltrop) out to see the lanterns with a servant. She is abducted during this excursion, a prologue to the following tale of tragedies.

Hou honglou meng's version of the Lantern Festival is one instance where the sequel responds directly to *Jin Ping Mei.* Daiyu's lantern project arises from a proper concern for her husband, not from a desire to go visiting; indeed, even the timing of her plan—just when the Lantern Festival happens to be coming up—is presented as a happy accident. Her project results not in an expedition, but in a renewed hum of cultured industry among all the household's women.

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18 *HHLM*, 231.
19 *HLM,* 237, 241, 250.
20 McMahon, *Causality and Containment*, 19.
21 Lanling xiaoxiaosheng, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, trans. David Todd Roy, 1:304; Lanling xiaoxiaosheng, *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 203–4.

When the lanterns are finished, the women have no need to leave the house to visit the crowded, public Lantern Market, because there is nothing to gain. The best parts of the world outside are brought into the compound. *Hou honglou meng* draws on *Jin Ping Mei* and a long series of other Lantern Festivals in traditional Chinese fiction by denying the necessity of this particular site of rupture. Rather than setting up a contrast between licentious women who leave the house to see the lanterns and virtuous women who remain at home weaving, *Hou honglou meng* creates a group of privileged, virtuous women enjoying a spectacle within their walls that surpasses the one without. The best of the public world is brought into the private space.

If this episode presents an uncomplicated fantasy of containing potential transgressions, another interlude centered on a garden swing hints at the difficulty of containment. Like the Lantern Festival, the swing is a common topos of "interstice" or "rupture" in fiction, drama, and painting.[22] *Jin Ping Mei* offers one of the most extended swing scenes in late imperial fiction. In Naifei Ding's analysis, the swing represents not only a threatening pleasure for the women of Ximen Qing's household, but a symbolic crossing and re-crossing of boundaries.[23] In *Honglou meng*, there is one perfunctory scene involving a swing: in Chapter 63, Baoyu is pushing Jia She's two concubines Peifeng and Xieyuan (Lovey and Dove) on the swing when news arrives of Jia Jing's death. *Hou honglou meng's* scene involving a garden swing is much longer. It explores the swing's common associations with voyeurism and the threatening crossing of boundaries. Here is Xiaoyaozi's swing scene, which bridges the end of Chapter 18 and the beginning of Chapter 19:

> The whole crowd of women went to Amaryllis Eyot, where they saw a swing set up. Baoqin said, "Our garden has this swing, but I've only ever heard of its being used once. Why don't we get up on it and play for a while?" Now, the frame of the swing itself was indeed splendid. The uprights were vermilion and gold lacquerwork patterned in golden clouds and dragons, and the crosspiece was a glossy dark green lacquerwork patterned with golden clouds and bats. The soft and colorful silk of the ropes, handholds and waistband were pink and soft green patterned gauze. Mirroring the hanging poplars, floating back and forth, it was indeed beautiful—small wonder that Baoqin became excited. Everyone agreed at once.

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[22] Wang Shifu, *The Story of the Western Wing*, ed. and trans. Stephen H. West and Wilt Idema, x; McMahon, *Causality and Containment*, 19; Cahill, "Three Recurring Themes in the Part-Erotic Albums."

[23] Naifei Ding, *Obscene Things*, 176–79.

Li Wan, however, said, "Sister Qin, that wouldn't do at all. For one thing, what if your legs went soft on you and you fell? For another, you might catch a chill. Thirdly, when we went out yesterday for the Qingming Festival, even if someone had seen us, they wouldn't have known which household we belonged to. But now, if we play on the swing and there happen to be people with powerful connections, or youths from other families, outside the walls, they might see us and spread the story around. If we really want to play on the swing, there's another way: let's just call the girl actresses from Pear-Tree Court to come over. We won't force them, we'll just tell the ones who can swing to swing. If they do the swinging, they'll do a good job, too, and we can just watch from the ground. What could be better?" Everyone agreed.

Li Wan then sent someone to call Fangguan (Parfumée) and the others. They all wore beautifully patterned jackets and pants and flowered shoes. Lingguan (Charmante), Ouguan (Nénuphar), Aiguan (Artémisie), and Kuiguan (Althée) all said they knew how, so the four girls really did get on the swing and hold on. The girl actresses and Fangguan started to push the swing. They did all kinds of maneuvers—"A Ring of Flowers," "Coiling Dragon, Dancing Oriole," "Shuttle Weaving a Hundred Flowers," "Cinnabar Phoenix Facing the Sun," "Two Immortals Crossing the Sea," "Lone Soaring Osprey," "Tilting Line of Geese," "A Sail Full of Wind," and every other kind of trick, flipping as quickly as lightning bolts, floating as high as the clouds. Then they had two flute-players start playing the suite, "Rainbow Skirts and Feathered Robes." Striking the gong, playing the transverse flute, beating the small drum, they kept the rhythm perfectly. After that, the four of them linked arms and went up on the swing again, and the musicians began the "Meeting of Butterflies," which only uses strings and drum and is even more delicate and refined—truly immortal. Just when everyone was having a wonderful time, they suddenly heard a group of people cheering them on outside the walls. Li Wan was so agitated that she immediately called the girls to come down and hastily ordered the instruments put away. Everyone was unwilling to stop, but Li Wan was adamant about not allowing them to keep playing. Daiyu, Baochai, and Baoqin kept asking her, but Li Wan simply said, "It's hardly elegant for people outside to see, and perhaps start casting suspicion on us. We can't go on playing."

> Who on earth was it cheering outside the walls? If you want to know, then listen to the explanation in the next chapter!
>
> Chapter 19
>
> It's said that just as they were playing on the swing in Prospect Garden, they heard people start to cheer outside the walls, whereupon Li Wan immediately ordered the girls to come down. The people shouting outside the walls, it turned out, were none other than Jia Baoyu, Lin Liangyu [Daiyu's brother], and Jiang Jingxing [Liangyu's sworn brother]! They had just returned from taking some pages and young horses out for an outing and had seen the girls on the swing from outside the garden, so they started to shout in approval.[24]

There are several points of interest here. First, this is another passage that draws more from the extended swing scene in Chapter 25 of *Jin Ping Mei* than from the brief swinging episode in the *Honglou meng*. In this scene, as in *Jin Ping Mei*, swinging is not a solo practice but a game to be played with others.[25] The game reveals the players' characters and their sociosymbolic status and power.[26] The wilder and more daring swingers are the women with the loosest morals: swinging symbolizes the crossing of both spatial and ritual or moral boundaries. However, in *Jin Ping Mei*, it is the wives and concubines of Ximen Qing who swing, along with one ambitious maidservant. Moreover, an outsider male—Ximen Qing's son-in-law Chen Jingji—is actually present in the garden, where he does not belong, and this scene catalyzes the incestuous relationship between him and his father-in-law's concubine Pan Jinlian. In *Hou honglou meng*, appropriately, no men are present. Furthermore, Li Wan does not let the young ladies swing. Rather, the actresses do the actual swinging, while the ladies take a vicarious, even voyeuristic pleasure in their skill. Only the actress-servants run the risk of being exposed to the gaze of outsider men.[27] Like the painted swing itself, the actresses as lower-status women are an object of luxury consumption and visual appreciation for their mistresses. The swinging game reveals the power differentials between the women of the house.

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[24] *HHLM*, 245–47.

[25] The swing has a long history in China. As in this passage, it was especially associated with the Qingming Festival. There were different styles of frames allowing for a variety of swing practices including solo, pair, and group movements. These often required a high degree of athleticism and became a spectator sport. In the Tang and Song, watching women on the swing was a common topos in lyric poetry. See Ma Guojun and Ma Shuyun, *Zhonghua chuantong youxi daquan*, 551–54.

[26] Naifei Ding, *Obscene Things*, 176–79.

[27] The threat of exposure and the disgrace of crossing the *nei/wai* boundary are consistent themes in swing scenes. See also the scene in *Xingshi yinyuan zhuan*, Chapter 97, when a disfigured woman insists on swinging above the garden wall and is mocked by a neighbor who sees her. The scene is discussed in Epstein, *Competing Discourses*, 125–27.

The game ends abruptly when a group of unknown men begins cheering outside the walls. Textual and physical boundaries mirror each other in the narration of this episode. Like the wall that hides the identity of the noisy males from the women within the garden, the chapter division here creates a threatening suspense, delaying the reader from learning who the men are. When the wall is crossed and the next chapter begun, both the women and the reader learn their identity with relief. They are Baoyu himself, Daiyu's brother, and his sworn brother, all three of whom are married to women of the household. The reputation of the women is doubly safe—only the actresses were seen, and only by men who had a right to see them.

The apparent rupture is thus sealed, and the temporary sense of threat is eased. However, the resolution undermines its own reassurance by revealing the thinness of the divide between "men of the family" and "outsiders"—until their identity is known, Baoyu, Liangyu, and Jingxing behave exactly as strangers might, and their anonymous shouts evoke exactly the same fear that those of strangers would. This scene suggests that the difference between "our men" and "somebody else's men" is entirely contingent. If all strange men are a threat, their individual identity and character irrelevant, the difference between them and one's own husband and brother can only be one of coincidence rather than character. These are the men that these women happened to marry, that is all. To another household's women on another swing, Baoyu and his friends would have been a true threat, of exposure and embarrassment if nothing worse.

This ominous sense of the men of one's own household as a potential threat to other women recurs even more strongly in Chapter 21. In this episode, Zhen Baoyu (Baoyu's physical double, mentioned frequently in *Honglou meng*) and Jia Baoyu attend the same party. Immediately after Jia Baoyu leaves, Zhen Baoyu rapes a female guest. The next morning, a garbled rumor arrives at the Jia mansion that Jia Baoyu, who has not yet returned home, has been arrested for rape. The household's response is one of unquestioning grief: Daiyu even attempts suicide. It is unclear at this point whether they believe that Jia Baoyu has been falsely accused, or whether they believe the accusations as well as the news of his arrest. In due course, however, Shi Xiangyun revives Daiyu, and Baoyu returns to the mansion. His response shows that he thinks the women have believed the rape accusations, as he says indignantly, "But it was all Zhen Baoyu! Our host invited me to spend the night, so I stayed elsewhere last night…. [H]ow could you pile Zhen Baoyu's crimes on my, Jia Baoyu's, shoulders?"[28] How could Baoyu's family believe him capable of such a thing?

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[28] *HHLM,* 285.

Traditional commentators use the Zhen/Jia doubling as a springboard for a discussion of illusion and reality that deliberately blurs the distinctions between them. The Qing commentator Yao Xie, writing on Jia Baoyu's dream of Zhen Baoyu in the parent novel, states: "No truth is not false; no falsehood is not true.[29] Xiaoyaozi takes a different tack, assuming that both Zhen Baoyu and Jia Baoyu are equally real and inhabit the same world. His use of the Zhen/Jia doubling is more prosaic than Cao Xueqin's, but it has equally ominous implications. Rather than undermining our certainty in reality as Cao Xueqin does in *Honglou meng*, Xiaoyaozi's use of Zhen Baoyu casts doubt on the meaningfulness of differences in character, essence, *qing*. What really differentiates Jia Baoyu the sensitive lover of women from Zhen Baoyu the boorish rapist? If every woman in the Jia household finds the slander so easy to believe, does that mean that they don't know Jia Baoyu at all, or does it simply mean that knowing Baoyu at home means nothing when it comes to predicting his behavior outside the household? In the world of *Hou honglou meng*, the difference between Jia Baoyu and Zhen Baoyu appears very small indeed. Their different personalities count for little. What matters is the difference in their family identity. Zhen Baoyu, not Jia Baoyu, committed the crime: their Baoyu, not our Baoyu; the outsider, not the insider. And that family identity appears not transcendent, but contingent. It is a matter of circumstance that placed "our" Baoyu in the Jia household and "that" Baoyu in the Zhen household, just as it is a matter of circumstance that the actresses were seen swinging by Jia men and not by other men.

In each of these episodes, the real or potential rupture of the physical and symbolic household boundaries is first acknowledged, then denied, minimized, or reclaimed. Each episode explores what "inner" and "outer" really mean for text, household, and family, and there is a progression in depth and dystopic vision from scene to scene. The Lantern Festival scene successfully denies the outside world: no boundaries need be crossed. The swing episode uses physical and textual boundaries, the wall and the end of the chapter, to both create and resolve tension. The danger is embodied by outside men, which foreshadows the drama of the last and most serious incident. In this scene, whose implications remain troubling even after Baoyu's name has been cleared, Xiaoyaozi reflects on the different worlds of the women cloistered in the household and the men who are free to go in and out. On one hand, the men enjoy a freedom that the women do not; on the other, to the extent that they belong to the outer world, they are inherently threatening. The women, for their part, have unreliable access to information about the outside, learning a garbled version of the

[29] Cao Xueqin, *Bajia piping Honglou meng*, ed. Feng Qiyong (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 1991), 1369.

affair from incompetent messengers. Nevertheless, the wrong version is easy to believe, for if outside men are threatening, so is any man who happens to be outside. The world beyond the home is a place where anything can happen and any man can behave in any way. Knowledge of Baoyu's character gained inside the home does not necessarily apply outside it.

From a reader's point of view, the confusion of this episode is surprising in a different way. Baoyu's actions and personality in previous chapters are generally consistent with his childish and emotional behavior in the parent novel, which, in that novel, are generally sympathetically portrayed. Baoyu is prone to a variety of indiscretions, but none of them would be described in *Honglou meng* as rape. The women's unquestioning belief in a serious criminal accusation thus strikes a jarring note in the transition from parent novel to sequel, one that emphasizes a darker vision of Baoyu's foibles. Xiaoyaozi's version of Baoyu himself is immediately recognizable: it is the response by surrounding characters that has changed.[30] Nevertheless, Xiaoyaozi consciously ensures that readers will not be deceived by narrating the true version of events at the party from an omniscient perspective before recounting what happens the next morning from the women's perspective, so that we as readers know of Baoyu's innocence even when the women do not. The implication is that only explicit narration can give the reader the global vision necessary to keep the facts straight. The textual boundaries of the book and of chapters and episodes within it thus reflect a degree of control over the narrative that none of the characters can exert over their surroundings.

Hou honglou meng's rewriting of the Jia family corrects the parent novel's dystopic vision of a hemorrhaging household by stabilizing its boundaries. Its primary strategy in this process is to change Daiyu from a forlorn, lovestruck orphan to a source of internal wealth capable of financing any expenditure, a financial and moral manager capable of governing and policing the boundaries of family and household, and a source of cultural capital obviating the need to leave the house. In that the household is indeed happy, stable, and strictly managed at the end of the narrative, the general cast of the story is both comic in mode and conservative in tone.

Nevertheless, it is precisely the strength of the novel's impulse to contain its characters and their wealth effectively that makes the ever-present threat of

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[30] Baoyu's childish and licentious behavior typically meets with less sympathy in the sequel: his resumed affair with Xiren (Aroma) in Chapter 25 is treated as an embarrassment by everyone, and his childishness is remarked on negatively throughout the book. Moreover, in Chapter 23, Daiyu gives her father-in-law Jia Zheng suggestions about a government dilemma and considers him, not her husband Baoyu, to be her true friend (*zhiji*). This is not only a major transformation in her character, but a remarkable rejection of childlike passion in favor of the orthodox adult masculinity that Jia Zheng represents. *HHLM*, 307.

rupture, leakage, and boundary crossing so clear and poignant. The reality of rupture is carefully minimized but never disappears: This is no hermetically sealed household. Rather, the internal generic logic of the novel demands a certain level of openness and potential for leakage. The narrative dilemma of *Hou honglou meng* as a novel is not how to deny that demand, but how to offset it with the virtue of containment. Indeed, the sequel balances its greater drive toward containment with even more dramatic threats to the new order. It is not a choice between shoring up boundaries and undermining them, but only of the proportions in which to portray the two processes.

The Boundaries of Marriage: *Qing* and *Li* in Co-wife Marriage

Honglou meng famously centers on *qing* in all its manifestations. In Jia Baoyu's idyllic youth among the talented beauties of Prospect Garden, romance and sisterly affection form a nebulous cloud of undifferentiated *qing*. Baoyu is brother to some girls, distant cousin to others, and master to still others. The complexity of human relationships within the novel is precisely the source of its enduring fascination and most central conflicts. Traditional commentators such as Zhang Xinzhi point out that Baoyu blurs emotions and relationships that ought to be qualitatively different when he lumps together all the girls he grew up with as sisters (*jiemei*) even though some of them are actually his half-sisters and paternal cousins, off-limits for marriage, while others are distant relations and highly eligible marriage partners. For Hong Qiufan, another Qing commentator, this does not represent troubling confusion, but is simply a manifestation of Baoyu's essentially sentimental nature (*duoqing*).[31] Zhang and Hong disagree, not so much on the nature of Baoyu's feelings, but on the relative importance of distinctions within *qing*.

Baoyu's confusion of feelings may be problematic for Zhang Xinzhi and understandable for Hong Qiufan. What is indisputable, however, is that this liminal, adolescent state of feeling must eventually collapse into adulthood and marriage. Normatively, this would mean that Baoyu himself would have only one main wife, who would live in the Jia household as daughter-in-law, while the rest of the girls would marry out, be separated from their natal families, and go to live with their new husbands' families. Indeed, this is how *Honglou meng* ends. Baoyu can have either Xue Baochai or Lin Daiyu, but not both. He loses all the girls that he does not marry, and they themselves lose the sisterly community of Prospect Garden. The sentimental tragedy doubles in poignancy as it functions on both a romantic and a familial level. Keith McMahon's recent work

[31] *Bajia piping Honglou meng*, 2489, 2496.

uses Baoyu's relationship with Daiyu to illustrate his concept of sublime passion, showing that sublime passion is defined in *Honglou meng* by the "missed moment," while the sequels, by creating harmonious and unjealous resolutions to the love affair, tend to undo the image of the two as passionate lovers.[32] While I agree that the overall effect of Daiyu and Baoyu's restored relationship in *Hou honglou meng* is less sublimely passionate, this is not merely because it erases tragedy and jealousy. It is also a result of *Hou honglou meng's* attempt to incorporate passion into the family structure, mingling the sublime and the quotidian. The sequel tries to redraw the boundaries of marriage in order to contain *qing* in its differentiated senses of romantic passion, marital love, and familial affection. Thus, repairing the Jia family dynamics is not simply a side effect of resolving the love triangle and vindicating Daiyu; it is integral to the process. The ultimate resolution of the love triangle and success of the co-wife marriage become a statement about the compatibility of romantic and familial love, in which patterns of feminine relationships drawn from the natal family are both continued into and co-opted by married life.

In *Hou honglou meng*, Daiyu is revived and becomes Baoyu's main wife. The process is far from straightforward, however, because Baoyu already has a wife: Baochai. Since a man could legally have only one main wife, who was his ritual partner and the legal and social mother of all his children, and since *Hou honglou meng* is generally fairly conservative in tone, the novelist spills a great deal of ink making this marriage both believable and palatable. All the characters except Baoyu (including Daiyu herself) are initially resistant to the idea, but when Baoyu becomes seriously ill with longing for Daiyu, they are forced to explore the idea of this unorthodox marriage to save his life. Hierarchy is the central problem: If Daiyu marries Baoyu as his main wife, what will Baochai's status be? Cao Xueqin, the go-between, runs into difficulties in Chapter 12:

> The next day, Cao Xueqin brought back the news that Lin Liangyu was hesitant to agree to the marriage because of the difficulty of deciding on Baochai's status. Jia Zheng said, "I've also been worried about that." … Jia Zheng quietly called Baochai out and gently explained to her, "…How about if you just make do for a little while, and once we get through this difficulty, in the future you can call each other sisters and rank yourselves by age?" Although Baochai was generous, at the idea of this rank and status she began to murmur in doubt.[33]

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[32] McMahon, *Polygamy and Sublime Passion*, 31–37.
[33] *HHLM*, 155–56.

Confucian orthodoxy expected a wife to refrain from jealousy when her husband took a concubine, particularly for the purpose of bearing a son, but it also expected a husband to safeguard his wife's primary status in the household regardless of his sexual vagaries.[34] Even the calm and proper Baochai finds Jia Zheng's proposal of allowing Baoyu to take a second main wife alarming. Though she does not openly demur, she becomes depressed and silent in the days following this conversation. Daiyu's brother and Baoyu's father are hesitant, and Baoyu's mother Lady Wang is even more indignant on Baochai's behalf.

From Jia Baoyu's standpoint of indiscriminate *qing*, the whole conflict is entirely unnecessary. He suggests an alternate form of sisterhood that elides hierarchy and bridges the natal and marital households, in which Baochai and Daiyu's affectionate relationship from childhood and adolescence persists after marriage and enables the two-wife co-marriage to exist:

> "But now Mother's getting involved, and she wants to argue about 'order' on Sister Bao's behalf. What's this 'order' business? Before, when I was with Qingwen (Skybright) and Fangguan (Parfumée) and the rest of the sisters, we didn't worry about great and small. Sometimes they'd be sitting and lying down, and I'd be standing and serving them. Not to mention that Sister Bao is a little older, and Sister Lin gets along well with her and yields to her. Even if Sister Lin did sit above Sister Bao, what would be strange about that? I'm younger than Sister Bao and I've taken precedence over her before ... even our Third and Fourth Sisters have taken precedence of Sister Bao before! Who's ever worried about 'order'?... Now, if I just say that, Mother will have no reason not to go along with it." Baoyu paced back and forth, thinking of nothing but such childish ideas.[35]

For Baoyu, the problem is nonexistent, because he himself never observed status hierarchies with the girls of Prospect Garden. Why should he begin now? What has Baochai to fear? Where status is unimportant, its loss is insignificant. Both the narrator and the characters mock Baoyu's "childish ideas," but in the end, Baoyu's approach prevails. Tanchun persuades Lady Wang that in daily life, the two wives can easily continue to treat each other like sisters. Finally, Jia Lian suggests that when Baoyu receives official honors necessitating a parade—a ritual occasion—his two primary wives can simply be carried shoulder to shoulder in two sedan chairs forming a horizontal line: "As long as you only choose broad streets to go along, it will be fine!"[36] Opposition thereupon fizzles

[34] See above, note 8.
[35] *HHLM*, 164.
[36] *HHLM*, 172.

out, the marriage takes place, and the intractable problem of wifely status is swept neatly under the rug. This sleight-of-hand is accomplished by dividing the state of wifehood into two separate spheres. One is private, and the casual logic of emotion can legitimately prevail. On the rare occasions when a wife has a public role to play, ritual must be observed. There, however, the problem of status can be transposed into a logistical issue of physical space and solved—if the street is broad enough for two, neither wife needs to go in front. What other problems could possibly arise?

This suspension of hierarchy in married adulthood is presented in the novel as exceptional, not as a precedent; indeed, it would appear that even Xiaoyaozi is not entirely convinced of its validity. It is evident from the other relationships in the novel that the absence of hierarchy is possible only because, not only we as readers, but also the characters themselves, agree to a willing suspension of disbelief in their own story. It is a suspension that is fundamentally limited in scope. Daiyu and Baochai may treat each other as equals, but there is a clear hierarchy between them and their personal maids, who are also Baoyu's concubines, and again between the upper maids and the rest of the servants, whom Daiyu governs with legendary strictness.[37] The actresses, too, are clearly considered as an essentially separate class throughout most of the novel, despite Baoyu's insouciance about their status. Recall that, in the swing scene, it is the actresses, not the mistresses, who are available to the male gaze and therefore allowed to swing. Thus, in *Hou honglou meng*, ritual propriety and the hierarchy it entails are presented as an inevitability of adult life that must be acknowledged and negotiated.

Given that ritual hierarchy in general appears in the sequel as a fundamental social norm, it is worth examining Baoyu's strategy for persuading everyone to ignore this elephant in the room in the specific case of Daiyu and Baochai. He does so by appealing to childlike structures of affection, and his proposal of sisterhood succeeds even though Jia Zheng's—seemingly identical—fails. This is because, where Jia Zheng treats the marriage relationship as pre-eminent and sisterhood as completely instrumental to it, Baoyu appeals to the logic of an affectionate relationship that previously existed between Daiyu and Baochai. Rather than urging the women to create a new and impossible relationship, he asks them to continue a relationship from their childhood that they would normally have been unable to continue. This realization of the impossible, the

[37] *HHLM*, 251–52. In Chapter 19, Daiyu institutes a set of rules for the household in which she increases the servants' salaries but also the punishments for disobedience, and requires them to behave with far greater respect toward their masters and mistresses. This too reinforces the contrast between the new Daiyu and the parent novel's Wang Xifeng. The latter, of course is also known for her strict treatment of servants (see *HLM* Chapter 13). The difference is again one of attitudes to money: Xifeng's power leads her to accept bribes for favors. Daiyu's wealth inoculates her against such temptations.

continuation of girlish friendship/sisterhood after marriage, mirrors the fascination of sequels in general with continuity as discussed by Martin Huang, along with the nostalgic mode of *Honglou meng* sequels in particular.[38] The "sisterhood" here is of course just as instrumental to the masculine fantasy of unjealous polygyny as Jia Zheng's invented "sisterhood" would have been, the more so because Baochai and Daiyu actually share no blood kinship. Nevertheless, though equally disingenuous, Baoyu's proposal is successful because it appeals to a genuine emotional phenomenon as presented in both novels—Baochai's and Daiyu's relationship is modeled on sisterhood—and in late imperial women's experience.

Marriage for a woman normatively formed a boundary between girlhood and adulthood across which few relationships could persist, and those that did, such as a married woman's continuing but limited filial duty to her parents, did so in greatly attenuated form.[39] Married women could expect little ongoing contact with the sisters they had grown up with. *Hou honglou meng* creates a fantasy of girlhood affections that continue across the divide opened by the marriage ceremony. If Daiyu and Baochai follow Baoyu's naïve plan, it means they can follow the injunctions to women found in every household code and didactic reader for girls, centering their lives and relationships on the marital household, but without leaving their own "sister" behind. Just as Daiyu organizes a private Lantern Festival within the Jia compound, enabling the women to enjoy the spectacle of the market without leaving the safety and decorum of the walls, Baoyu offers Daiyu and Baochai a form of family life in which sisterly affection is contained within the ritually appropriate framework of supreme loyalty to the marital family. Both episodes construct a fantasy in which household and family boundaries are simultaneously enlarged and strengthened. That which is normally both coveted and excluded is now contained and accessible without transgression. It is a fantasy of virtue without sacrifice.

Commentary, Metafiction, and the Borders of the Book

Above, I discussed *Hou honglou meng* as an assertion of the value of literary and domestic containment and as a vision of new forms of *qing* contained within the expanded bounds of co-wife marriage. Another boundary explored by

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38 Huang, "Boundaries and Interpretations," 35; McMahon, "Eliminating Traumatic Antinomies," 98–115.

39 Current scholarship shows considerable flexibility in marriage patterns in some times and regions, particularly the Canton delta in the 19th century (see Weijing Lu, "Uxorilocal Marriage among Qing Literati"; Siu, "Where Were the Women"; Mann, *The Talented Women of the Zhang Family*, 176–89; Bray, *Technology and Gender*). However, the virilocal form of marriage, with incorporation of the bride into her husband's lineage, remained the powerful idealized norm governing the discourse on marriage, and it is to this cultural norm that *Hou honglou meng* responds.

both *Honglou meng* and *Hou honglou meng* is that between reality and fiction. *Hou honglou meng* affirms and participates in its parent novel's metafictional game, but rather than exploring the notions of dream and illusion in depth, the sequel uses metafictional episodes to explore its relationship to the world outside the text through new valorizations of both affective bonds and commercial exchanges between author, characters, and readers.

In *Hou honglou meng's* internal discussion of its own creation, we are told that Cao Xueqin, Baoyu, Daiyu, and Baochai all pity people who are sad after reading *Honglou meng*. As Baochai says to Daiyu and Baoyu in Chapter 20:

> "It's just that you two are enjoying prosperity and happiness to the fullest. Now [*Honglou meng*] is circulating widely, sure to make future generations sorrow and snivel for you; how can one be at ease with that? My idea is to take *Honglou meng's* second part and not change it—keep it the way it is—but we must add on some more again."[40]

The authors of *Honglou meng* sequels respond to readers' sorrow with textual production. This group of novels, then, is conceived of not as a pure expression of the author's will, but as the product of dialogue between author, readers, their fictionalized counterparts, and purely fictional characters. Indeed, the preface to *Hou honglou meng* takes the form of a letter purporting to be from Cao Xueqin's mother requesting him to write a sequel. Dialogue between authors and readers and responsiveness to reader's emotions are valorized even before the story begins.

On one level, of course, the discussions between "Cao Xueqin" and his characters about sequel writing are *Hou honglou meng's* homage to and participation in the metafictional, autocommentarial, and self-sequeling mode of the parent novel. Just as Cao Xueqin appears as a character in the first and last chapters of *Honglou meng's* 1791 print edition, *Hou honglou meng* creates ever more elaborate relationships between Cao and his characters. Moreover, the last forty chapters of *Honglou meng*, with their disputed provenance, read as a self-conscious sequel themselves.[41] In Chapter 120 of the 1791 edition of *Honglou*

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[40] *HHLM*, 267.

[41] *Honglou meng* circulated in manuscript form for decades before its first printing in 1791, but no extant manuscript goes beyond Chapter 80, and all end in medias res. The 1791 and 1792 print editions have 120 chapters and bring the story to a conclusion. These first print editions appeared decades after Cao Xueqin's death and were edited by Cheng Weiyuan and Gao E, who claimed in their preface to the 1791 edition to have pieced together the last 40 chapters from manuscripts by the original author. The three main theories are that 1) Cheng and Gao were telling the truth; 2) Cheng and Gao had the editing role they claimed, but

meng, the Daoist Vanitas passes by the Stone again and discovers a new section added to the previous ending of the story. Whatever this means for Cheng and Gao's claims of Cao Xueqin's authorship, this passage makes a clear statement that this final section of the story is already, in some way, an addition to the original eighty chapters. Every subsequent sequel follows in the footsteps of the 1791 edition's last forty chapters. Indeed, when Baochai states above, "we must add on some more again (*zai dei xushang yixie*),"[42] she confirms that for her (and thus for Xiaoyaozi), *Hou honglou meng* is not the first *Honglou meng* sequel but only the first to be printed separately.

Honglou meng's complicated commentaries are another metafictional game. David Rolston points out that *Honglou meng's* many commentators include its real author, Cao Xueqin; the Stone (the "author" in the text); Vanitas (the reader in the text); and the *Zhiyan zhai* or Red Inkstone commentators who recognized themselves and their family members in the characters.[43] As commentators multiplied, so did the avenues for emotional connection between readers and the novel's world. Anthony Yu discusses the odd intimacy that occurs between author, readers, and characters when commentators use familial endearments to describe characters.[44] For Yu, the deeper message of *Honglou meng's* interplay of reality and illusion or fiction is precisely the opposite of the Buddhist doctrine that life is illusion and one should detach from it. Rather, *Honglou meng* defends fiction, illusion, and dream as worthy of deep and emotional engagement. The novel's final quatrain, "do not mock the reader's tears" (*xiu xiao shiren chi*, literally, "do not mock the foolishness of people in the [real] world") emphasizes both the illusion and the potency of fiction.[45] *Qing* is not only the central theme of *Honglou meng*, but the deepest mode of readerly engagement with it.

Hou honglou meng's portrayal of affectionate relationships between author-as-character, characters, and readers is, on one level, a deliberate participation in this aspect of the parent novel: its defense of passionate engagement with fiction. As in *Honglou meng*, the reader's sorrow at the characters' fates is explicitly pitied. As in a number of other *Honglou meng* sequels, this sorrow

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the fragments they pieced together were by someone other than the original author, and 3) Cheng and Gao wrote the last 40 chapters and attempted to pass them off as part of the original novel. For Cheng's preface to the 1791 edition, see Yisu, *Honglou meng juan*, 31–32; for an English translation, see the Hawkes-Minford translation of the novel, *The Story of the Stone*, 4:385–88; for further details about *Honglou meng* textual history and editions in English, see David Hawkes's introduction to that translation, ibid. 1:15–46; in Chinese, see Zhao Gang and Chen Hongyi, *Honglou meng yanjiu xinbian*.

42 *HHLM*, 267.

43 Rolston, *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction*, 342.

44 Yu, *Rereading the Stone*, 11–12.

45 Yu, *Rereading the Stone*, 149, 169–70.

explicitly motivates Daiyu, Baochai, and Baoyu, as well as the author/character Cao Xueqin, to produce a sequel. Not only does the sequel defend readers' emotional investment in the fictional world, it suggests a fantasy of requited *qing*: members of the fictional world can respond with sympathy to their readers' sympathetic tears in the real world.

However, the metafictionality in *Hou honglou meng* is used to different effect than in the parent novel. In *Honglou meng*, there is a three-way interplay between fiction, reality, and dream or illusion. The fiction or story participates in both reality and illusion and associates itself to both at different points. On the one hand, the novel depicts its characters and their lives in incredibly convincing detail; together with the comments of Red Inkstone and others who say, "Yes, I remember that too," this leaves readers in no doubt that the novel is both realistic and rooted in personal experience. At the same time, the themes of illusion and dream are developed with unprecedented skill, so that we are never sure what dynasty or city provides the backdrop, whether the characters are Manchu or Han, or even whether the Zhens or the Jias are truly "real" within the story's world. The story encompasses and surpasses both reality and illusion, but, despite the longings of generations of real-world readers, it is never quite real. The sequel operates within a simpler dialectic of reality and fiction, playing with the line between the world within the novel and the world outside the novel. Despite occasional fantastic elements, the third dimension of dream or illusion is far less marked in *Hou honglou meng*.[46] Though less sophisticated than *Honglou meng's* tour de force of fantasy, Xiaoyaozi's boundary-crossing between reality and fiction is nevertheless deeply interesting. It allows for a focused exploration of the relationship between fiction and the extra-textual world.

Certain aspects of *Hou honglou meng's* metafictionality take on new significance when considered in this light.[47] For example, Lin Daiyu buys a house for Cao Xueqin to express her gratitude for his writing about her, Baochai and Baoyu:

> From the beginning, Daiyu and Baochai greatly revered Cao Xueqin. First, because he was Jia Zheng and Baoyu's close friend, and second, because they were deeply grateful to him for writing both *Honglou meng* books, which were entirely about the three of them as husband and wives. Thus, when they did some discreet asking around

[46] The most notable of such elements is the magical goldfish amulet that preserves Daiyu's corpse, discussed and compared to Baoyu's jade in Chapter 7. Another is the blossoming tree of unknown variety that springs from the grave of the flowers buried by Daiyu in Chapter 18. Though the sequel by no means excludes the unreal, its overall effect remains more matter-of-fact than the parent novel's.

[47] Huang, "Boundaries and Interpretations," 19–45

> and learned that Xueqin planned to return to the south, they knew that he would be proud because of his talent and unwilling to curry favor with powerful people, but at the same time, taking a long and exhausting journey south, he would have no means of alleviating its hardships. Furthermore, his elderly mother was getting on in years, and this Mr. Xueqin was a straightforward person who would find it difficult to humble himself to beg for a few bushels of rice. And with Daiyu's store of money, what could she not accomplish? So they secretly sent out Cai Liang and Dan Sheng [two stewards of the household] to buy a house for Cao Xueqin worth three thousand in gold, with garden plots, orchards, bamboo groves, and lotus ponds, and also laid out ten thousand in gold to buy eight hundred acres of good fields that were not vulnerable to drought, and furthermore gave him several water mills and storehouses that brought in around a hundred in gold of disposable income each month, so that he would have no worries about his daily expenses and could travel around the famous peaks and scenic sites to his heart's content.[48]

This is not only a metafictional in-joke in which a character expresses gratitude to her author, who now appears as a character from the brush of yet another author. It also lines up with Xiaoyaozi's consistent emphasis on reformed fiscal management by women in general and Daiyu in particular as previously discussed. Finally, the scene can be read as a broader ideological defense of the booming print economy beginning in the late Ming Dynasty and continuing through the Qing, which enabled authors to benefit financially from the characters they created. Elite anxiety about the increasing monetization and commercialization of the Ming economy has been well documented.[49] The trade in books was a particularly fraught aspect of the overlap between elite culture and commerce.[50] The anxiety and tension inherent in the overlap between literary and commercial spheres of production is not limited to Ming and Qing literati, however. Contemporary scholarship on *Honglou meng* sequels frequently points out that these sequels were explicitly commercial products that capitalized on *Honglou meng's* popularity to make money.[51] The implied conclusions are 1) that the commodified sequels are qualitatively different from a work like *Hong-*

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48 *HHLM*, 397.

49 Clunas, *Superfluous Things*; Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure.*

50 Brokaw, *Commerce in Culture*; Shang Wei, "*Jin Ping Mei* and Late Ming Print Culture"; He Yuming, *Home and the World*.

51 Lin Yixuan, *Wucai ke bu tian*, 34–35.

lou meng or *Jin Ping Mei* that circulated for decades in manuscript form and is thus exempt from the charge of hucksterism, and 2) this commodification directly leads to the sequels' relative lack of literary quality. Both points are valid: it is undoubtedly true that there is a close relationship between *Honglou meng* sequels and the market, and it is equally true that no sequel approaches the parent novel in scope of vision or enduring power. However, the connection between the two claims is suspect: it need not be true that commercialism and literariness form two ends of a zero-sum game, so that a work can be literary only and precisely to the extent it turns up its nose at commerce. These sequels are self-conscious interventions in the sphere of cultural production with both literary and commercial ramifications; neither their relationship to commerce nor the fact that they fall short of *Honglou meng's* artistry renders their own artistic claims invalid. I suggest that we read this passage from *Hou honglou meng* not only as a metafictional joke, but also as a serious discussion of its own relationship to the book market and of commercial novel publishing in general.

In Daiyu's gift of a home to Cao Xueqin, a character literally puts a roof over her author's head. The financial aspects of the purchase are recorded in great detail. At the same time, it is cast in terms of a generous gift proceeding from an established relationship, rather than a purely commercial transaction. It is tempting to read this paragraph in light of Marcel Mauss's theory of gift exchange as a pattern that establishes and solidifies relationships between people in a way that commerce does not.[52] His classic analysis has been questioned and refined by other scholars, but the idea of commerce as impersonal at best remains pervasive. Mayfair Yang's discussion of gift exchange and *guanxi* in modern China challenges this assumption head-on. She suggests that in the *guanxi* context, gifts are both affective and instrumental, not either-or. Moreover, for Yang, the entire network of unofficial gift giving and relationships is gendered feminine. In response to the discussion of bride exchange in Mauss and in Lévi-Strauss's development of his theory, where women function as objects of exchange between men, she emphasizes the role of women as agents in gift networks.[53] Each of these points resonates with Daiyu's role as a female character created by one male author (Xiaoyaozi) who serves as an owner and giver of wealth in relationship to another male figure, who is both author and character (Cao Xueqin).

Daiyu's gift of a house to Cao Xueqin recalls her gift of a fortune to the Jia family: she contributes from her store of apparently inexhaustible wealth not only to the family of her husband and her mother, but also to the family of the

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52 Mauss, *The Gift*.

53 Yang, *Gifts, Favors, and Banquets: The Art of Social Relationships in China*.

author who created her and *his* mother. Both actions underscore her generosity and virtue, asserting that money may be morally suspect, but it is also a primary instrument through which virtue may be expressed. This passage builds on the earlier section, in which Daiyu's personal wealth enables her to fulfill her two roles as wifely and filial ideal, in order to ameliorate many of the tensions between elite views of writing and commerce.

Essentially, this passage reframes an author's profit from the sale of his books as a spontaneous gift from his female creation. Making Daiyu's gift affective and grateful is one strategy for casting the transaction in a positive light. Another is the triple reframing of commercial book production in terms of values that are simultaneously orthodox and tasteful. Daiyu's gift takes the form of agricultural land in a time when many elites were wringing their hands over the decline in agriculture and rise in commerce as a livelihood for the lower classes.[54] It will enable Cao Xueqin to be a filial son and support his aged mother. Finally, it will enable Cao Xueqin to lead the cultured life of a gentleman-scholar by visiting famed mountains. These strategies effectively recast the monetary relationship between Lin Daiyu (or the text) and Cao Xueqin (or the author), blunting many of its most problematic edges.

Instead of portraying characters who live in a fictional world and explore the boundaries of an even less real world (the dream within the dream), *Hou honglou meng* plays with the boundary between textual and social reality, crossing the divide between author and characters. It is still at one remove from historical reality: the author who would have benefited financially from *Hou honglou meng* and its version of Lin Daiyu is not Cao Xueqin, but Xiaoyaozi. Nevertheless, this metafictional scene represents both a reflection on the relationship between text and society and a positive vision of the relationship between literary and commercial reality, between novel writing and profit earning.

We have less evidence for the reception of *Hou honglou meng* as a sequel than we do for its parent novel, but what we have suggests new ways to understand the book's metafictional expansion of the borders of text. The sequel's first editions were commercial woodblock prints complete with illustrations, poems, prefaces, and *fanli* (readers' instructions).[55] Extant comments on the sequel found in other writings include both praise and critique. Its eighteenth-century detractors typically mock the sequel's inconsistencies with the parent novel and deny that Cao Xueqin could have been the author.[56] Other readers appear to have

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[54] In this context, it is interesting that *Honglou meng's* portrayal of agriculture, unlike its sequel's, is by no means uniformly positive. See Yiqun Zhou, "*Honglou meng* and Agrarian Values."

[55] Yisu, *Honglou meng shulu*, 91–93.

[56] Aisin Gioro Yurui, *Zao chuang xianbi*, 20–44; Yao Xie, *Honglou meng leisuo*, 151–52.

enjoyed the book and accepted the logic of the revised ending: not only was the book reprinted several times, it became the basis for the ending of the *chuanqi* drama *Honglou meng chuanqi* ("Tale of the Dream of the Red Chamber").[57] Still others appear to have copied out selections from the parent novel and the sequel as part of the same manuscript, reversing the common pattern of manuscript circulation followed by commercial printing.[58] These combined editions are no longer extant, but their existence is intrinsically interesting. The fact that some readers became book-makers themselves, combining the sequel with the parent novel (or excerpts of both) in single books need not reflect a conscious acceptance of Cao Xueqin's authorship, but it does imply a fundamental acceptance of the newly expanded story arc. The book's attempt to expand the borders of *Honglou meng* was at least partly successful among its public.

One of the most interesting and sophisticated negative reviews of *Hou honglou meng* came from Aisin Gioro Yurui (1771–1838). He wrote in his *Zao chuang xianbi* [*Idle Notes from the Date-Tree Window*]:

> [This book] is absolutely not from Xueqin's pen, but is Xiaoyaozi's work with a false attribution.… Its opening chapter has a letter purporting to be from Xueqin's elderly mother, placed at the very beginning as a preface, as though begging to present this magnificent proof, which nobody would dare contradict. This is the author thinking himself very clever! Doesn't he realize that Xueqin originally, entrusted with his own family affairs and shamed at his failure, poured out his heart to become this book? He was no outside observer (*juwai pangguanren*)! If an outsider had used the sweetness and bitterness of others' lives to pour out his own gloom in generic words, it would certainly not be as earnest and true-to-life (*kenqie bizhen*) as the [original] book![59]

Yurui is obviously aware of Xiaoyaozi's metafictional games, but he dismisses them as clever gimmicks. His presupposition is that sincere emotion (*kenqie*) and realism (*bizhen*) are both grounded in personal, factual experience, and no one outside the Cao family could possibly write a book with the parent novel's realism and power; authorship of a book like *Honglou meng* depended

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[57] Yisu, *Honglou meng shulu*, 91.

[58] These manuscripts of extracts are mentioned in Zheng Guangzu, *Xingshi yi ban lu*, 10:25b–26a. Yisu, *Honglou meng shulu*, 92, also quotes another mention of such a collection from Liang Gongchen, *Quanjie silu* (Daoguang 28 or 1828), *juan* 4, although I have not yet located a complete edition of this work to confirm the citation.

[59] Aisin Gioro Yurui, *Zao chuang xianbi*, 29–31.

on being a real part of a real family with these experiences, and no amount of authorial cleverness can substitute for authenticity. On the one hand, this lines up with a familiar critique of fiction's falsehood, especially as measured against the veracity of history and the authenticity of lyric poetry, and with a long tradition since of reading *Honglou meng* as a disguised autobiography. On the other hand, it begs the question of how to define the borders of family and novel: If only an insider has the power to tell a story, what defines an insider? For Yurui, *Hou honglou meng* violates the principle that textual authenticity demands the author's real-world "family insider" status. This is a principle that *Hou honglou meng* explicitly rejects—not indeed in specific response to Yurui's critique (which naturally postdated the book's publication), but to the attitudes his critique encapsulates. *Hou honglou meng's* portrayal of author, characters, and readers as existing on the same plane of story is another way of expanding the borders of the book. In contrast to the contingency of birth in or marriage into a family, membership in a textual community is chosen. Outsiders may choose to become insiders to the book.

This fits into *Hou honglou meng's* general thrust of expanding boundaries in order to contain new or renewed forms of *qing*. The important boundary for Xiaoyaozi is no longer the one between text and reality, but between insiders and outsiders to the expanded *Honglou meng* story's "family" or community. By this standard, Cao Xueqin, Baochai and Daiyu, and invested *Honglou meng* readers (who become a collective group of unnamed characters, since Daiyu and Baochai know about them and their feelings), as emotional insiders to the book(s), have more in common than Cao Xueqin as a real historical individual did with other real historical individuals who did not read or enter passionately into his book. It follows that making Cao Xueqin from an author into a character is a comparatively simple process; either way, he is an insider to the story. This is why Cao Xueqin serves as go-between for Daiyu's marriage and why she buys him a house. If the insiders to a story are defined by their *qing*, regardless of their different relationships to the real world, then the idea that Cao Xueqin *owes* it to Daiyu to repair her tragedy from the parent novel, like the idea that she *owes* him a return for her happiness in the sequel, makes sense: the two are both "insiders"; they have a relationship and can contract obligations to each other. The distance between matchmaker and author, between bringing two people together or keeping them apart and writing a happy or tragic ending for a story, becomes negligible.

Hou honglou meng undoubtedly falls short of its parent novel in many ways, but it represents one of the most thorough and interesting explorations of a question *Honglou meng* introduces: what it means to get emotionally involved

with a book. Ultimately, however, like every previous attempt at expansion and recontainment, the sequel's expansion and recontainment of the story begun in *Honglou meng* to include lovers of that story is profoundly undermined. Cao Xueqin, Daiyu, and real-world readers may appear on the same plane, but Xiaoyaozi is excluded from the reframed textual world. We may presume that his decision to write a sequel represents passionate engagement with *Honglou meng.* Nevertheless, he is the one author who cannot appear in the story, who must remain paradoxically even farther outside the text than historical reality would have made him, as "editor" rather than author.

Conclusion

The scale of the vernacular novel is a textual and material embodiment of the genre's open-endedness and the spatial enormity of the world it depicts, whether a massive geographical and temporal span as in *Xiyou ji* and *Sanguo yanyi*, or a luxurious mansion, as in *Jin Ping Mei* and *Honglou meng. Hou honglou meng* reflects self-consciously on the novel as a genre of size, and its artistic choices regarding scale reflect not only commercial pressures, but also the thematic concerns and ideological underpinnings of containment and absorption. The sequel rewrites the tragedy of *Honglou meng* by revisiting the boundaries of household, marriage, and text. It redraws each boundary to maximize the incorporation of desired people, elements, and passions, while still excluding all undesirable people, elements, and passions. Finally, it attempts to remove any taint of moral ambiguity from that which is newly contained, from money and commerce to the conflicted structures of desire. It unravels the tangled knot of affection and passion that characterizes Jia Baoyu's inchoate "lust of the mind" (*yiyin*) in the parent novel, imagining a family and marriage in which an adult Baoyu could conceivably live happily ever after. In so doing, it draws not only on discourses of love, unjealousy, and polygyny, but also on alternative networks of loyalty and affection, especially natal family networks. Meanwhile, *Honglou meng's* ideology of *qing* is expanded to include not only a wide variety of relationships within the text, but also to encompass the connections among authors, commentators, readers, and characters. This is a creative appropriation and reworking, not only of the parent novel, but of the romantic fictional tradition as a whole. It offers new visions of the wealthy household, of the domestic novel as a subgenre, and of a story's relationship to social, economic and print-cultural reality.

Glossary

Aiguan (Artémisie)	艾官	juwai pangguanren	局外旁觀人
Baiyun waishi	白雲外史	kenqie bizhen	懇切逼真
Baoqin	寶琴	Kuiguan (Althée)	葵官
Cai Liang	蔡良	Lingguan (Charmante)	齡官
Cao Xueqin	曹雪芹	nei	內
Chen Jingji	陳經濟	li (ritual)	禮
Daguan yuan	大觀園	li (principle)	理
Dan Sheng	單升	*Li ji*	禮記
duoqing	多情	Li Wan	李紈
en	恩	Li Ping'er	李瓶兒
fanli	凡例	Lin Daiyu	林黛玉
Fangguan (Parfumée)	芳官	Lin Liangyu	林良玉
fu	府	Ouguan (Nénuphar)	藕官
Gao E	高鶚	Pan Jinlian	潘金蓮
guanxi	關係	Peifeng (Lovey)	佩鳳
Hong Qiufan	洪秋藩	qing	情
Honglou meng	紅樓夢	Qingwen (Skybright)	晴雯
Honglou meng chuanqi	紅樓夢傳奇	*Sanguo yanyi*	三國演義
Honglou meng ying	紅樓夢影	Sanhua jushi	散花居士
Hou honglou meng	後紅樓夢	Shi Chengjin	石成金
jia (false)	假	Shi Xiangyun	史湘雲
jia (family)	家	Tanchun	探春
Jia (surname)	賈	tiji	體己
Jia Baoyu	賈寶玉	wai	外
Jia Huan	賈環	Wang Furen (Lady Wang)	王夫人
Jia Jing	賈敬	Wang Xifeng	王熙鳳
Jia Lan	賈蘭	Ximen Qing	西門慶
Jia Lian	賈璉	Xiren (Aroma)	襲人
Jia She	賈赦	Xiaoyaozi	逍遙子
Jia Zheng	賈政	Xieyuan	偕鴛
Jia Zhi	賈芝	*Xingshi yinyuan zhuan*	醒世姻緣傳
Jiang Jingxing	姜景星	xiu xiao shiren chi	休笑世人痴
jiemei	姐妹	*Xiyou ji*	西遊記
Jin Ping Mei	金瓶梅	Xue Baochai	薛寶釵

Xue Pan	薛蟠	Yurui	裕瑞
Xue Yima (Aunt Xue)	薛姨媽	zai dei xushang yixie	再得續上一些
Yao Xie	姚燮	*Zao chuang xianbi*	棗窗閑筆
yiyin	意婬	Zhang Xinzhi	張新之
Ying'er (Oriole)	鶯兒	Zhen Shiyin	甄士隱
Yinglian (Caltrop)	英蓮	Zijuan	紫鵑

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Abbreviations

HHLM Baiyun waishi and Sanhua jushi. *Hou honglou meng* (Later dream of the red chamber). Beijing: Beijing daxue, 1988.

HLM Cao Xueqin. *Honglou meng* (Dream of the red chamber). Beijing: Renmin wenxue, 1982.

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