

余英時：紅樓夢的兩個世界

The Two Worlds of "Hung-lou meng"

By Ying-shih Yu

Translated by Diana Yu

紅樓夢

Ying-shih Yu, Professor of Chinese History at Harvard University, is now on leave to serve as President of his alma mater, New Asia College, the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He has also been appointed Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the University for a term of two years, beginning 1973. This article is translated from a lecture delivered by Dr. Yu as one of a series of lectures celebrating the tenth anniversary of the CUHK. In a related study, Chin-tai hung-hsueh te fa-chan yu hung-hsueh ke-ming 近代紅學的發展與紅學革命 to be published in the Journal of the CUHK, Volume II, 1974, Dr. Yu has analyzed the "inner logic" of the past fifty years of "Red-ology" and possible new departures for future scholarship in this classic novel by Ts'ao Hsueh-ch'in (曹雪芹 1716?–1763).

TWO WORLDS in sharp contrast to each other are created by Ts'ao Hsueh-ch'in in his novel *Hung-lou meng* (*The Red Chamber Dream*), two worlds which, for the sake for distinction, I shall call the "Utopian world" and the "world of reality". These two worlds, as embodied in the novel, are the world of Takuanyuan (大觀園)¹ and the world that existed outside it. The difference between these two worlds is indicated by a variety of opposing symbols, such as "purity" and "impurity", "love" and "lust", "falsity" and "truth", and the two sides of the Precious Mirror of Romance. Throughout the book mention of these two worlds constitutes a most important clue which, if grasped intelligently, will enable us to understand the significance that lies behind the author's creative intentions.

These two worlds are so vividly portrayed and so sharply contrasted that all readers of the novel must, in one way or another, to a greater or lesser degree, be sensitive to their existence. However, in the past fifty years the nature of "Red-ology" (紅學)² was such that its chief efforts were devoted to research on the historical aspect of the novel. Our Red-ologists, being mostly historians or adherents to the historical method, had naturally focussed their attention on the world of reality which the novel described, so much so that the other world in the novel—the ideal world, the castle in the air which the author had "laboured ten years" to

¹Various rendered Broad Vista Garden (H. Bencraft Joly), Takuanyuan (Chi-Chen Wang), Garden of Spectacular Sights (George Kao), Park of Delightful Vision (Kuhn/McHugh), Grand View Garden (Wu Shih-ch'ang), Magnarama Garden (Lin Yutang), and Prospect Garden (David Hawkes).—ED.

²Cf. Lin Yutang, *My Country and My People*, 1935: "... the Chinese, men and women, have most of them read the novel seven or eight times over, and a science has developed which is called 'redology'

(*hunghsueh*, from *Red Chamber Dream*), comparable in dignity and volume to the Shakespeare or Goethe commentaries." Liu Wu-chi, in Foreword to *The Dream of the Red Chamber: A Critical Study* by Jeanne Knoerle, S.P., 1972: "The study of *The Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Hung-lou meng*), which continues to attract critical attention today in China and abroad, has acquired a designation of its own: *Hung-hsueh*, or 'Red-ology'." The term is said to have been coined around 1875.—ED.

create—was utterly neglected. In fact, the chief concern of these scholars had been to demolish this castle in the air and restore it to the bricks and stones that belonged to the world of reality. Under the influence of the “autobiographical approach”, restoration efforts went even further with a shifting of emphasis from the world of reality in the novel to the world of reality in which the author once lived. In fact, what has been called for half a century Red-ology, or *Hung-lou meng* scholarship, was none other than Ts’ao Hsueh-ch’in scholarship, or the study of the man Ts’ao Hsueh-ch’in and his family history. This substitution of Ts’ao Hsueh-ch’in scholarship for *Hung-lou meng* scholarship necessarily involved certain sacrifices, one of the greatest of which, as I see it, is the obscuring of the line of division between the two worlds of the novel. The climax of historical research came in the years 1961-1963 when scholars in mainland China conducted an enthusiastic search for the “whereabouts of Takuan Yuan inside the Capital”. By this people are given the distinct impression that Ts’ao Hsueh-ch’in’s garden exists in the world of reality and is part of it. The ideal world in the book is blanked out and, if one may borrow the words of the author, “It is a world wiped clean; only a sheet of white remains!”

Still, it would be unfair to say that during the past few decades no particular notice has been paid to the portraiture of the ideal world in the novel. As early as 1953 or 1954, Yu P’ing-po had emphasised on the idealistic element of Takuan Yuan and observed that, judging from the level of vision on which it was imagined, the garden could well be a creation out of nowhere. He quoted from Chapter 18 Chia Yuan-ch’un’s words, “Now are assembled all beautiful features of Heaven and Earth”, to illustrate that Takuan Yuan was nothing but a paradisiacal mirage conjured up by the author’s pen. In the history of Red-ology the point which he made had the significance of what Thomas S. Kuhn called a “paradigm”,³ and it is certainly lamentable that circumstances had forbidden him to give full assertion to this revolutionary viewpoint. In 1972 appeared the first piece of writing that devoted a full discussion to the ideal world in the novel, a paper entitled “On Takuan Yuan”, written by Stephen C. Soong. It argued that the garden definitely did not exist in the real world, that it was in truth an unreal creation born of the author’s imagination to suit his creative intentions. Soong even went as far as to say:

Takuan Yuan is a garden that isolates the girls from the outside world, whereby it is hoped that the girls would lead carefree and leisurely lives and avoid being polluted by the filthy influences of the other sex. It would be best if the girls could preserve their youth forever, and not marry away. In this sense, Takuan Yuan can be said to be a protective fortress for the girls which exists only in the ideal realm but has no foundation in reality.⁴

This statement, with its unpretentious and apt observation, will be the starting point of my discussion on the two worlds of *The Red Chamber Dream*.

³*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, University of Chicago Press, 1970, *passim*.

⁴Stephen C. Soong (宋淇), “On Takuan Yuan”, *Ming Pao Monthly*, Hong Kong, September 1972.



TAKUANYUAN: A dream world that ends in sordid reality.

From an engraving first printed in an edition of the Shih-t'ou chi (增評補圖石頭記), published during the reign of Kuang-hsu by the Kuang Pai Sung Chai, Shanghai.

TO SAY THAT Takuanyuan was an ideal world created out of Ts'ao Hsueh-ch'in's imagination automatically brings up an important question: if Takuanyuan was a "fairyland" where "no mortal is allowed to tread", then what would be the position in relation to the whole book of the "Land of Illusion" (太虛幻境) mentioned in Chapter 5? Certainly we can call this Land of Illusion a dream within a dream and an illusion among illusions, but having established this will we not be obliged to follow up by saying that in the novel there are three worlds altogether? On this point the commentator Chih-yen Chai (脂硯齋) made the following observation:

Takuanyuan is the Land of Illusion for Pao-yu and the twelve golden maidens—how can this fact be treated casually?"⁵

As Chih-yen Chai saw it, Takuanyuan was the shadow of the Land of Illusion projected onto the world of man, and originally these two worlds were one and the same and their images fitted each other exactly. There being no doubt that Chih-yen Chai, incognito though he (or she) is, was intimately acquainted with the author and his creative intentions, we should feel safe to count his commentaries as the strongest side evidence if at the same time there is found in the novel itself sufficient internal evidence. On this point the novel does supply the following direct evidence: in Chapter 5, Pao-yu followed Ch'in K'o-ch'ing "to a place where vermilion railings and white stones, green trees and clear streams came into sight, unvisited by man and unpolluted by dust. In his dream Pao-yu was enraptured and thought, 'This place is really interesting. I am willing to spend the rest of my life here, even if I have to forsake my family for it.'" The place described here was in fact the Takuanyuan which appeared later on in the novel, for in Chapter 17 the same line "vermilion railings and white stones, green trees and clear streams" was magnified into a description of the landscape near Hsin-fang Yuan (沁芳園) before which Chia Cheng

⁵ Yu P'ing-po (俞平伯), ed., *Chih-yen Chai Hung-lou meng chi-p'ing* (脂硯齋紅樓夢輯評).

and Pao-yu passed on their tour of the garden. Also, in Chapter 33, the novel tells us that "having moved into the garden, Pao-yu felt completely satisfied, and could find nothing more to be unhappy about." A close comparison between the passages that come before and after these lines will enable us to see the kind of relationship that existed between the Land of Illusion and Takuanyuan.

If this piece of evidence seems a little oblique, a more straight-forward and explicit one can be quoted from Chapter 17 which tells us how, departing from Heng-wu Yuan (蘅蕪苑), Chia Cheng, Pao-yu and others came before a jade-stone plaque. "Here Chia Cheng raised the question, 'What words should we inscribe here?' The crowd said, 'Only P'eng-lai, Land of Fairies, seems fitting', but Chia Cheng shook his head and said nothing. At the sight of this place, Pao-yu was suddenly reminded of something, and, searching his memory, it seemed to him that he had seen this place somewhere before, and yet he could not remember on what day or month or year. Chia Cheng then told Pao-yu to suggest a title, but Pao-yu, with his heart set on recapturing that fleeting scene, could not gather his thoughts to perform this assignment." Then Chia Cheng specially added the remark, "This place is strategic, so you had better come up with a good one." Now where actually had Pao-yu seen this jade-stone plaque before? Maybe he could not recall it himself, but readers will remember that in Chapter 5, while touring the Land of Illusion, Pao-yu had "followed the fairy maiden to a place where they saw a stone plaque, placed sideways, on which were written the words 'Land of Illusion'." Was not this the very place Pao-yu was trying to dig up in his memory? As Chia Cheng had emphatically said, "This place is strategic." Certainly it is, for what place in the novel can be more important than the Land of Illusion? The same jade-stone plaque was later named "Precious Mirror of the Heavenly Fairies" by Pao-yu, and Liu Lao-lao, mistaking the name for "Precious Temple of the Jade Emperor", kowtowed enthusiastically to it. Thus, by alternately using the names "P'eng-lai, Land of Fairies", "Precious Mirror of the Heavenly Fairies" and "Precious Mirror of the Jade Emperor", the author was reminding us time and again that Takuanyuan does not exist on earth, but is in heaven, and that it is not an aspect of reality, but an aspect of the ideal. To put it more precisely, Takuanyuan and the Land of Illusion are indeed one and the same.

Now that we see that Takuanyuan was actually no less than the Land of Illusion for Pao-yu and his female companions, it becomes understandable why the plan for building it must have a pretext as weighty as the home-visit of Yuan-ch'un, the Royal Concubine. One comment in Chapter 16 of the Chih-yen Chai edition says,

Takuanyuan was built to fit the occasion of the home-visit—this key factor reveals the purpose of the author's grand design.

In addition to this significant design, an interesting piece of narrative in the opening pages of Chapter 17 tells us that, after the garden was completed, Chia Chen offered to lead Chia Cheng on a tour of it to see if changes should be made anywhere, adding that Chia Sheh had already made his tour—which seemed to imply that Chia Sheh was the first man to have gone into the garden. This, however, was purposely misleading, for later on it was said, "Because Ch'in Chung occupied Pao-yu's thoughts, causing him unending grief, Grandma Chia gave orders for Pao-yu to

be taken into the garden so that he could amuse himself there”, and right after this we are told that Pao-yu stumbled upon Chia Cheng unawares, and was ordered to follow him back into the garden to write inscriptions for the tablets. The latter part of this narrative implies at least two things: first, that Pao-yu was the very first person to enter Takuanyuan to admire the scenery—he had been there more than once before Chia Cheng, Chia Sheh and others went in to examine the completed works; and second, since Takuanyuan had for Pao-yu and the girls the significance of a Utopia or a Pure Land, it is imperative that they themselves, rather than anyone else, should perform the task of naming the various pieces of architecture there. The fairyland where “no mortal is allowed to tread” would not permit of pollution by outsiders. Thus Chih-yen Chai in his summing-up comment for Chapter 17 said,

Pao-yu is the beauty of all beauties, and for this reason he must take up the task of inscribing the tablets in Takuanyuan.

and another comment of his also said,

The accidental nature of the encounter is precisely what intrigues us. If Pao-yu was specially summoned to inscribe the tablets, the passage would lose all the literary merits that it now has.

At such points these commentaries help us penetrate the author's intentions and to understand the full meaning of many of his statements. And there is seldom an idle word in the *Hung-lou* narrative.

We all know that Pao-yu did not compose inscriptions for all the tablets in Takuanyuan that day. As a matter of fact, there were so many pieces of architecture in Takuanyuan that Pao-yu could not possibly have coined names for them all. Who else had contributed to this task? The answer came in Chapter 76, when Tai-yu and Shih Hsiang-yun were spending the Mid-Autumn Festival evening together, admiring the moon and writing poetry. Shih Hsiang-yun started praising the names “Convex Blue Hall” (凸碧堂) and “Concave Crystal House” (凹晶館) as being fresh and unconventional, whereupon Tai-yu said, “To tell you the truth, these names were coined by me. You remember that year when Pao-yu was put to the test—he thought up names for several places, some were used, some were changed, but there were places he didn't cover. Afterwards all of us worked together and fixed up names for those places that still didn't have any. We noted the source of those names as well as the location of each place, and handed them in together for Elder Sister to see, then she brought the list out for Uncle to have a look. To our surprise, Uncle liked our suggestions, and even said, ‘If I only knew I would have asked the girls to do it together that day. It would have been such fun.’ So, every one of the names suggested by me was adopted, without so much as changing one single character.”

So finally, in this passage, we are given to know whatever was left unsaid previously about that day's inscription of tablets in Takuanyuan. The truth comes out that, apart from Pao-yu, it was the girls, especially Tai-yu, who performed the task of naming the various spots in the garden. Once again we are impressed by the author's grand design, for there is a span of sixty chapters between the previous

mention of the episode, in Chapter 17, and this passage from Chapter 76, which for the author meant nearly the end of his portion of the novel, and yet, despite this long interval, he was able to link the beginning and end of the narrative together meaningfully.

TAKUANYUAN, being the embodiment of the ideal world, was an unreal world which the author had lavished great imagination to create. To Pao-yu, the protagonist of the book, it was the only world that had any significance. Pao-yu and the girls around him practically treated the world outside Takuanyuan as non-existent, or, if they took note of it at all, saw in it only negative meaning. For this outside world stands for squalor and degradation. Most readers are also inclined to neglect this outside world of reality and instead fix their gaze on the attractions of the Utopian garden. But Ts'ao Hsueh-ch'in himself was not guilty of this negligence, for to the portrayal of the unclean and degraded world of reality he had attached equal importance and devoted an equal amount of care. It becomes obvious, therefore, that a difference in viewpoint separates the author, the protagonist and the reader. It is the inability to settle this important question of viewpoint that impedes the establishment of the "autobiographical approach", which wishfully lumps Pao-yu and the author together as one person.

Successful as he was in creating a Pure Land that existed in the realm of the ideal, Ts'ao Hsueh-ch'in was deeply aware of the impossibility to disconnect this Pure Land from the filthy world of reality. Not only is such disconnection impossible, but actually the two worlds are forever closely integrated, and any attempt to view them as separate entities and to interpret each of them in isolation must result in failure to grasp the novel's internal coherence. To understand this, it is necessary for us to examine the realistic foundations of Takuanyuan.

The construction of Takuanyuan is clearly related in Chapter 16: the site "Begins on the east side, rising from the garden of the East Mansion, and extends to the north, covering a distance which, if exactly measured, amounts to three-and-a-half *li*." This is followed by a more detailed account: "Orders were first given to the workmen to pull down the walls and buildings in the Ning Mansion's Hui-fang Yuan (會芳園), so that it can open straight into the east court of the Jung Mansion. . . . As there is already running water coming into Hui-fang Yuan from under the north corner of the wall, there is no need to look elsewhere for water. Not enough rocks and plants can be taken from the spot for the present purpose, but bamboos, trees, rocks, pavilions and even railings can be borrowed from the old garden of the Jung Mansion, where Chia Sheh lived." It is a pity that so far scholars influenced by the "autobiographical approach" have not probed further into these lines which are pregnant with meaning.⁶ We have already seen that, as the author and critics have repeatedly pointed out, the birth of Takuanyuan was an event of first importance

⁶Chou Ju-ch'ang (周汝昌), in his *Hung-lou meng hsin-cheng* (紅樓夢新證), p. 156, cited the passage about dismantling the structures in Hui-fang Yuan, but his purpose was to press the search in Peking of the original site of Takuanyuan. In his *Tu Hung-lou meng sui-pi* (讀紅樓夢隨筆), Yu P'ing-po, discussing "the question of Takuanyuan's locality", also referred

to the fact of the old Ning Mansion garden being merged into Takuanyuan. Yu was mainly concerned with the impossibility of verifying its true locale, conceding it as another instance of the author's "nonsensical talk". Unfortunately, he failed to probe further into why the author had invented this "nonsensical talk".

in the novel. Judging from this, the author's detailed account of the realistic origin of the garden cannot be without motivation. Of course, all our doubts would be cleared if the adherents of the autobiographical approach could establish that Takuanyuan was erected from the old residence of the Ts'ao family, but, this being impossible, we have to look for explanations elsewhere.

According to the above-quoted passage, the site of Takuanyuan was a combination of the sites of two older gardens—the Ning Mansion's Hui-fang Yuan and the old garden of the Jung Mansion, where Chia Sheh lived. In Chapter 17, with reference to the text, "On it mosses grew in patches, and creepers peeped out from the shadows", Chih-yen Chai made the following comment:

(Takuanyuan) being reconstructed from the two older gardens, it is essential to describe it in such a way—this description reveals an extremely fine perception.

From this we can see that both author and critic, explicitly or implicitly, took pains to remind the reader that important information was concealed in these two older gardens. But what exactly was concealed? Answer to this must begin with an examination into the character of Chia Sheh, who was one of the dirtiest people in the novel. Chia Sheh's character was not presented with the restraint which the author usually observed when exposing the sins of the older generation, a restraint perhaps we can best understand by remembering the saying, "One should cover up for one's seniors". Conversely, the ugly deeds given full treatment in the book are largely attributed to the likes of Chia Chen, Chia Lien and Hsueh P'an, who belonged to the same generation as Pao-yu—a point that certainly carried "autobiographical" significance.⁷ Nevertheless, the usual restraint on the part of the author did not spare Chia Sheh his lashings. The whole of Chapter 46 was devoted to an account, plus condemnation, of his outrageous efforts to make the maid Yuan-yang his concubine. The author opined through the mouth of Hsi-jen, "Really—we shouldn't be saying this—but this Elder Master is a real sex-maniac. He just wouldn't keep his hands off anyone with a half-way decent face." We suspect, too, that the abundant descriptions of adulterous conduct on the part of Chia Lien were meant to reflect the old proverb "Like father, like son". What this adds up to is that the garden Chia Sheh once inhabited, and the bamboos, the trees, the rocks and stones, as well as the pavilions, the groves and the railings which had been associated with his presence, must likewise be contaminated.

An examination of the garden of the East Mansion reveals even more sordid secrets. As Liu Hsiang-lien's famous remark goes, "Apart from those two stone lions, I'm afraid nothing in your East Mansion is clean—nothing, not even your cats and dogs." Still, this is a general statement and the true character of this place called Hui-fang Yuan requires further analysis. In the chapters preceding Chapter 16, before Takuanyuan came into being, Hui-fang Yuan was in fact the stage on which many of the novel's important episodes had been enacted. Parts of this garden still

⁷I do not completely reject the "autobiographical approach"; I am only opposed to substituting "autobiography" for the novel. Cf. my essay, *Chin-tai hung-*

hsueh te fa-chan yu hung-hsueh ke-ming (近代紅學的發展與紅學革命).

was erected—that ideal world and cleanest of all human abodes. Can such an arrangement be accidental? Even the cleanest element in Takuanyuan—water—had to be obtained from the aqueducts of Hui-fang Yuan. On this point Chih-yen Chai made the following comment:

Water is the feature that matters most in the garden, hence it must be given explicit treatment in the writing.

Thus we become aware of the author's desire to inform us at all times that the ideal world in the novel was actually erected on the foundation of a real world that harboured the greatest vice. He wanted us to bear in mind that in fact the greatest purity was born of the greatest impurity. If the novel were completed by Ts'ao Hsueh-ch'in, or if a complete version were handed down to us intact, we would certainly be told that the ultimate fate of that great purity is to return to impurity. "She wanted to be clean, but clean she never was;/She said her life was a Void, but was it really so?" In these two lines are embodied not only Miao-yu's fate, but also the fate of the whole Takuanyuan, for among the inhabitants of Takuanyuan was not Miao-yu the one who was most addicted to cleanliness? On the one hand, Ts'ao Hsueh-ch'in had devoted wholehearted efforts to the creation of an ideal world, a world he wished could last forever in the realm of man. On the other hand, his pen had mercilessly carved out a world of reality, the exact foil to that ideal world. All the forces of this world of reality will continuously batter at the ideal world until the latter is completely destroyed. The two worlds of *The Red Chamber Dream* are interwoven in an inseparable relationship. Not only so, but the inner dynamics of this relationship is pushing the novel towards a definite direction. It is when this dynamic relationship develops to its utmost that the tragic consciousness of the novel will rise to its greatest height.

IN THE NEXT part of this essay, we shall go a step further to substantiate our two-world theory with an examination of how the people of Takuanyuan themselves looked upon the contrast of squalor and cleanliness. Especially important here are Tai-yu's thoughts as revealed in the famous flower-burial episode, a deeply significant scene that occurs in Chapter 23, when Pao-yu and his female companions were just starting their ideal life in Takuanyuan. The story tells us that

It was in the middle of the Third Month. That day, after the morning meal, Pao-yu took his copy of the *Hui-ch'en chi* (會真記) to the bridge at Hsin-fang Gate (沁芳閣), and sat down on a stone under the peach blossoms. He opened his book and read it carefully from the beginning. As he came to a place where it told of 'fallen blossoms forming a pattern', a wind swept past, and tore down more than half of the flowers from the peach tree, covering his book as well as the ground with petals. He wanted to shake them off, but fearing they might be trampled upon, he held the petals and went to the edge of the pond, and shook them into the water; and the petals, floating on the surface, drifted away out of Hsin-fang Gate. Going back to the original spot, he saw that there were still a lot of peach blossoms scattered on the ground. Just when he was hesitating, he heard somebody speak behind

him, 'What are you doing here?' Turning around, he saw it was Lin Tai-yu, carrying a flower-hoe on her shoulder, from which was suspended a chiffon sack, and holding a flower-broom in her hand. Pao-yu laughed and said, 'Good, good, come and sweep up these flowers and dump them on the water, will you? I've just dumped quite a few over there.' Lin Tai-yu answered, 'It isn't good to leave them on the water. Look, the water here is clean, but once it flows out, it gets mixed up with the dirty and stinking water that people pour from their homes, and the flowers would still be spoilt. In that corner I have a tomb for flowers. Let's sweep these up and put them in this silk bag, and cover it up with soil. As the days pass they will simply dissolve in the soil. Isn't that much cleaner?'

Way back in the last years of the Ch'ing dynasty, Peking opera had dramatized this well-known scene, and the famous actors, Mei Lan-fang and Ou-yang Yu-ch'ien, had made it popular with their adaptations in the early years of the Republic. Because public interest had converged on Pao-yu and Tai-yu's romance, especially the sentimentalism of "Over the flower-tomb Tai-yu shed tears for the fallen petals" in Chapter 27, while Red-ologists too often concentrated on the source of the term "flower-burial",⁹ no one has yet given serious thought to the implications behind Tai-yu's act of burying flowers.

Let me state here that Tai-yu's flower-burial episode is the author's first explicit indication of the difference that lies between the two worlds in the novel. I say first because the episode is the first incident that occurred after Pao-yu and his companions had moved into Takuan-yuan. Tai-yu's thoughts were obvious enough—everything in Takuan-yuan was clean while everything outside was dirty and smelt of decay, so that burying the fallen blossoms inside the garden and letting them dissolve in the soil would enable them to remain clean forever. Here, of course, the flowers symbolize the female inhabitants of the garden. Tai-yu's Flower-burying Poem manifests this by saying,

*Better sweet remains in silken purse be saved
And cupp'd in a mound of earth so pure.
That which arrived clean, clean it must go,
Lest in muddy waters it be soiled.*

A particular flower was claimed by each young lady during the Feast of the Flowers described in Chapter 63, and Feng-chieh exclaimed in Chapter 42, "Isn't that the Flower Fairy in the garden!" Likewise, the Chapter 78 story of Ching-wen's transformation into a flower fairy after she died must be interpreted in the same light. Following this flower-symbolism, the only way for the inhabitants of Takuan-yuan to preserve their cleanliness and chastity would be to anchor themselves permanently in the ideal realm and not to venture beyond it. I have said previously that Pao-yu and the girls practically viewed the outside world as non-existent, but this is only to point out how ardently these people wished that their ideal world could last forever, and how they longed for cleanliness of the soul; it does not imply

⁹For instance, Wang Kuo-wei (王國維) pointed out that the term "flower-burial" was first used in Nalan

Hsing-teh's *tz'u* poetry, in the *Yin-shui chi* (飲水集).

that they were entirely ignorant of realities outside the garden. As the author said, the girls in Takuanyuan were "innocent and naïve", but not childish or stupid. On the one hand, they distinguished sharply between the two different worlds, and on the other, they were well aware of the great harm the world of reality could wreak on the ideal world. These two levels of significance are ingeniously conveyed to us through the use of concrete imagery in the flower-burial episode.

The novel sometimes also depicts the hostility of the outside world in explicit and penetrating language. In Chapter 49, when the wonderful life in Takuanyuan was just beginning to unfold with the arrival of such important persons as Hsueh Pao-ch'in, Hsing Hsiu-yen, Li Wen, Li Ch'i, etc., Shih Hsiang-yun gave Pao-ch'in this frank warning: "You can play and laugh and eat as much as you want to in front of Grandmother or when you're in the garden. When you're in Auntie's chamber, and Auntie happens to be in, you can chat with her and stay awhile. But when Auntie is not there, don't you go in. All of those people in that house are bad—they want to harm us." On hearing this, Pao-ch'ai laughed and said, "Talk of you being naïve—well, you're not entirely naïve; but though you're not naïve your mouth is far too honest." Here Shih Hsiang-yun was being quite outspoken, and even betrayed a mistrust for Madam Wang. It seemed that when the residents of Takuanyuan ventured outside their Utopia, the only spot they could tread safely was in the presence of Grandma Chia, while everyone else set out to harm them. Grandma Chia was accepted as a kindred spirit chiefly because of her former status as one of the twelve maidens of Chen-hsia Ko (枕霞閣) and thus, in the eyes of the Takuanyuan crowd, may be accepted as "one of us". This strong in-group feeling—"we" vs. "they"—that bound the inhabitants of Takuanyuan so closely together must have risen from their awareness of the vast differences between the two worlds.

HOWEVER, in the in-group society of Takuanyuan, not everyone was equal, for the ideal world operates according to a distinct order of its own. Wang An-shih had observed that in the Peach-Blossom Fount, the first utopia ever created in Chinese literature, "there were neither king nor subject, only fathers and sons", meaning that in the Peach-Blossom Fount though no political order existed there yet prevailed an ethical order. In Takuanyuan, order was established chiefly on the principle of "love", and quite logically the novel concludes with The Celestial Roster of Lovers. However, this Roster being now inaccessible to us, we have no means of finding out exactly what kind of order the author had in mind to establish in his ideal world, and all we can say is that, because apart from "love" other factors also affect the ranking on the Roster, we should not forget to take into account such attributes as beauty, talent, behaviour and even status as well. Here I shall only mention one vital clue which scholars have more or less neglected—the question of Pao-yu's relationship with the girls. On this point, the 1760 version of the novel gives an important comment by Chih-yen Chai in Chapter 46:

All girls that appear in this Record of Love must register with Brother Stone (Pao-yu) first.

The term "love" here is the same as that in the Roster of Love. Judging from this, it seems certain that each character's position on the Celestial Roster must be greatly affected by the degree of intimacy which she shared with Pao-yu, and a study of how each person registered with Brother Stone becomes essential to our understanding of Takuanyuan's inner structure.

This brings us to the question of architectural design in the garden, which I think is highly relevant to the novel's internal structure and which Stephen C. Soong has, quite correctly, from the point of view of literary criticism, associated with the author's method of characterization. True to the statement, "A man's house is an extension of himself",¹⁰ the hero's character is often revealed by the way his house is arranged. In his design of Takuanyuan's setting, Ts'ao Hsueh-ch'in went even further than this, for he made use of the variations in size and fineness, and the distances between the buildings in the garden to describe the order that prevailed in the ideal world. Some examples illustrating this can be quoted from Chapter 17 which told of how Pao-yu made his rounds to inscribe the tablets for the various buildings in the garden. In this chapter, the narrative dwelt emphatically on four places—Hsiao-hsiang Kuan (瀟湘館), Tao-hsiang Ts'un (稻香村), Heng-wu Yuan (蘅蕪苑) and Yi-hung Yuan (怡紅院), in each case letting the reader in on certain symbolically significant information. As everyone who saw it had enthusiastically exclaimed, Hsiao-hsiang Kuan was a "marvellous place", and Pao-yu gave it the title "Phoenix's Abode", signifying its importance as the first stop on the tour of the Imperial Concubine. In the words of Chih-yen Chai, this "marvellous place" was "the only fitting residence for Tai-yu". Chapter 23 also reported Tai-yu as saying to Pao-yu, "As for myself, I prefer Hsiao-hsiang Kuan", at which Pao-yu clapped his hands and said, laughing, "You feel exactly as I do, for I was about to ask you to pick this place too. I'll live in Yi-hung Yuan. We two will be close together, quiet and undisturbed." A fine example of how distance and setting are utilized to reflect the special relationship that existed between Pao-yu and Tai-yu.

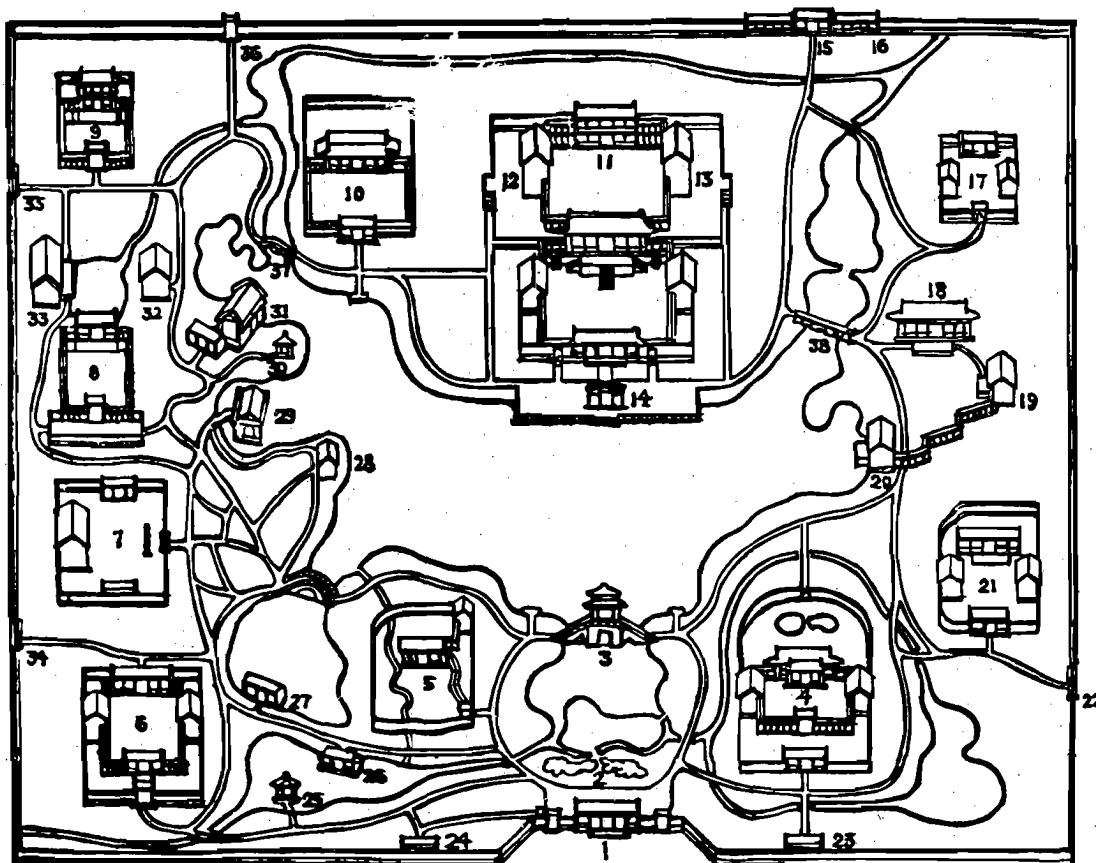
When Chia Cheng asked Pao-yu how he liked Tao-hsiang Ts'un, Pao-yu immediately replied that it was "far inferior to the 'Phoenix's Abode'", and then criticized it for its artificiality and lack of natural flavour, much to Chia Cheng's displeasure. Later, Pao-yu failed to produce a poem using Tao-hsiang Ts'un as subject matter, a task which Tai-yu completed for him. All this shows that Li Wan, who was the occupant of Tao-hsiang Ts'un, stood quite low in Pao-yu's opinion, she being the only woman in Takuanyuan who had had a husband and he, as we all know, one who held definite views toward married women. But it is fit that Pao-yu's critical attitude should be limited to this oblique way of expression for after all Li Wan was his sister-in-law and had an excellent character. The point which is particularly interesting here is the distinction between "artificiality" and "naturalness". It is indeed not without reason that Li Wan is placed next to last, just above Ch'in K'o-ch'ing, in the "Main Register of the Twelve Golden Maidens of Chinling".

Chia Cheng's remark on Heng-wu Yuan was "What a boring place!"—again betraying the author's deprecation, but delivered from the mouth of the father so that Pao-yu's opinion could be reserved. In this way the author ingeniously avoided

¹⁰René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature*, a Harvest Book, 1956, p.210.

the problem, pointed out by Yu P'ing-po, of having to state explicitly which girl—Tai-yu or Pao-ch'ai—was considered superior. Here Chih-yen Chai gave a comment that is quite perceptive of the author's intention: "This treatment makes the later story all the more colourful—before getting any praise, Heng-wu Yuan is criticized first. Otherwise, the balance of power between Pao-ch'ai and Tai-yu is a really difficult subject to treat." And, later in Chapter 56, a remark from T'an-ch'un—"What a pity that two big establishments like Heng-wu Yuan and Yi-hung Yuan should produce nothing profitable!"—reveals almost casually that the two were rivals in size among the residences in Takuanyuan. Thus we see clearly the "balance of power" between Pao-ch'ai and Tai-yu—for although Tai-yu and Pao-yu lived in close proximity, Pao-ch'ai's and Pao-yu's residences were the equals in size.

Where architectural design was concerned, the significance of Yi-hung Yuan can be seen from three features: first, the fact that Pao-yu wanted to give the place the name "Red Fragrance and Green Jade" for its double implication—a thought that was echoed later when he composed poetry on the order of Yuan-ch'un; second, the fact that Yi-hung Yuan was the only house in Takuanyuan furnished with a



TAKUANYUAN: An architect's concept

Some of the places mentioned in this article: (3) Hsin-fang T'ing, (4) Yi-hung Yuan, (5) Hsiao-hsiang Kuan, (7) Tao-hsiang Ts'un, (10) Heng-wu Yuan, (19) Convex Blue Hall, (20) Concave Crystal House, (38) Hsin-fang Gate Bridge.

full-size mirror—symbol of the Precious Mirror of Romance; and third, the fact that all the water in Takuanyuan “collects at this place and then flows out from under that wall.” Chih-yen Chai was indeed right in saying that

Yi-hung Yuan was the confluence of all Takuanyuan—this represents a major theme of the book.

for the author is using the garden's architectural design to show how Pao-yu related with each of the girls, and through this to offer an explanation for the inner structure of the ideal world. It is in this light that we should comprehend Chih-yen Chai's statement about everyone who appeared in the Record of Love must register with “Brother Stone” first. What is more, the fact that all the water, after collecting at Yi-hung Yuan, flowed outside from under the wall, exactly echoes what Tai-yu said when she was burying the flowers—“The water here is clean, but once it flows out, it becomes dirty and stinks.”

SO FAR IN THIS essay we have emphasized the concept that the two worlds in *The Red Chamber Dream* were a direct contrast between cleanliness and uncleanness, and numerous examples have been quoted to support the argument. However, there is one concrete and empirical question which we still have to face—whether, after all, life in Takuanyuan was all that clean. It is imperative that we answer this question, for if the truth came out that Takuanyuan was actually just as dirty as the world of reality outside, then the point which we are forcing, that the two worlds are exact foils to each other, will fall short of solid proof.

To test this vital point in our argument, we can no longer adopt our hitherto method of proof by example, because there cannot be any evidence of what is non-existent in Takuanyuan—namely, smut. What we can say is that, in principle, within the realm of Takuanyuan, Ts'ao Hsueh-ch'in wrote only about love and not lust. Rather, he had given the most vivid descriptions of the lasciviousness of the outside world so that it could serve as a sharp contrast to the life of rarefied emotions that was led by those who dwelt in the garden.

As every reader knows, Takuanyuan was basically a girls' world, a world in which no male had ever lived, except Pao-yu. Once we made sure that Pao-yu led a clean life there, the chasteness of this ideal world would be initially guaranteed. In Chapter 31 the author gave us an important clue to this question by telling us that when Pao-yu asked Ch'ing-wen to bathe with him, Ch'ing-wen had laughed and said, “That time Pi-hen sent you off to your bath, you took fully two or three hours. Not knowing what you were up to, we didn't dare go in. After you finished, I went in to take a look, and there were puddles of water around the legs of the bed, and even the mattress was dripping wet. Heaven knows how you washed yourself.” A lot seems to be implied in these words, for Ch'ing-wen was the maid who shared Pao-yu's room and looked after him at night, after Hsi-jen had found favour with Madam Wang and, in order to appear proper, stayed aloof from him. If Pao-yu did anything amiss Ch'ing-wen would be the one most likely to blame, and she was finally banished for this reason. But in fact we know that nothing improper had ever occurred between Pao-yu and Ch'ing-wen and that was why, on her deathbed, Ch'ing-wen said she had “borne that (ill) name in vain.” To prove that the relationship between

the two was a clean one, that author had dragged in Teng Ku-niang, the most notorious whore in the book, to bear witness, and these were her words: "I've been in here for awhile and listened carefully outside the window. There were only the two of you in the house. If there were anything fishy between you, surely you would have brought it up. Who would have guessed that you two had actually left each other alone? Well, this is not the first time in this world that people have been wrongly accused!"

As a matter of fact, Teng Ku-niang's testimony not only acquits Pao-yu and Ch'ing-wen of the charges against them, but also brings out the truth about life in the garden. Even when Pao-yu was left alone with Ch'ing-wen, his closest maid and the one most open to suspicion, the two had "left each other alone". It is not hard to deduce from this the truth about everything else in the garden.¹¹

Finally, a thorny point that needs straightening out is the story, told in Chapter 73, of how the maid nicknamed Sha Ta-chieh (Sister Simpleton) by mistake picked up a purse on which was embroidered an obscene picture, something which appeared to be a downright contradiction of what we called the pure Utopian nature of Takuanyuan. However, an analysis of this episode will show that it precisely confirms our theory of the novel's two-world structure. This obscene purse must have been dropped by the maid Ssu-ch'i and her younger cousin P'an Yu-an while they were philandering in the garden back in Chapter 71. However, the narrative at the beginning of Chapter 72 tells us that their love-making was interrupted by Yuan-yang's intrusion, which means that the pure world of Takuanyuan was on the verge of falling apart but had not yet entered the stage of complete collapse. Chapter 74 tells us that after Ssu-ch'i had been pinned down as the suspect in adultery, she only bowed her head in silence but did not show any sign of fear or shame. This attitude can only be explained in terms of our analysis of "love" and "lust" (see Note 11). Ssu-ch'i must be deeply in love with her younger cousin.

¹¹Here we must take a look at Ts'ao Hsueh-ch'in's concept of "love" versus "lust". It is that the two are at once sharply differentiated and mutually related, even as we have repeatedly pointed out to be the case with the two worlds of the *Hung-lou meng*. Not being an ascetic, Ts'ao never regarded lust as an unqualified sin. Nor did he follow some kind of dualism and treat love and lust as distinctly separate entities. In Chapter 5 of the novel he early proclaimed the doctrine that "to be attracted by feminine beauty is itself lust; even more so, to experience the feelings of love is to lust" and took his stand against the kind of hypocritical talk which held that "attraction for beauty" and "feelings of love" can exist independently of lust. In general, he believed that love can, and indeed must, embrace lust. When love leads to lust, then lust is essentially love, which is why love is also called "lust of the mind". Lust, on the other hand, does not have in its makeup the element of love, and this "lust" in the narrow sense of the word he castigated as "skin-deep and promiscuous".

Again, Ts'ao Hsueh-ch'in's concept of ch'ing (情) is not to be equated with the Platonic love of the West. Witness the phrase, "Those who know love must lust

all the more", as inscribed in the Register for Ch'in K'e-ch'ing. To recognize this is to understand why the Fairy Disenchantment should instruct Pao-yu secretly in the art of love and why, subsequently, Pao-yu should want to re-enact it with his maid Hsi-jen. This is what the author meant to tell us: that Pao-yu was a man fully capable of love and lust, but that what distinguished him was that in his case lust was ever at the service of love. From this point of view, we need not insist that Pao-yu was entirely innocent of carnal knowledge with the other maids in his apartment.

In sum, Ts'ao Hsueh-ch'in created in Pao-yu a character in whom love and lust, purity and pollution, are equally represented. It is a character to mirror and bridge over the two worlds of his creation. The significance of the author's putting in Chapter 6 the incident of Pao-yu's sexual experiment with Hsi-jen lies, to my way of thinking, in his desire to show that Pao-yu's leaving those pure maidens in Takuanyuan alone from now on was due to an unwillingness rather than an incapability. Were it not for this one explicit incident in Chapter 6, there is no telling where the reader's speculation on this score might lead him to!

What the world looked upon as unforgivable "adultery" may not be a sin to the author, for he was known to have said, "Those who know love must lust all the more" and "When two people met in love, they must end in lust." Indeed, compared with what the outside world knew as "dirty T'ang and stinking Han", this kind of adultery was really nothing at all.

If we change our angle and think of the author as having intentionally presented this case as a scandalous affair, then we must acknowledge that this internal occurrence was an inevitable development in the course of the novel's unfolding tragedy. We have already pointed out that in the end the ideal world must be destroyed under the constant attacks launched by the forces of the world of reality. The appearance of the obscene purse in Takuanyuan was precisely the result of this invasion from without. But obviously one internal factor had permitted the invasion—the factor of "love" in the ideal world. "Love" in the ideal world was certainly pure and chaste, but, like the water in Takuanyuan, it was not static, and must eventually flow away into the outside world. In this sense, the tragic character of the novel was determined from the start. As we have maintained, a dynamic relationship existed between the two worlds of the author's creation; we can now add to the statement and say that this dynamic relationship was rooted in the concept "when two people met in love, they must end in lust."

A number of signs indicate that from Chapter 71 to Chapter 80 Ts'ao Hsueh-ch'in was already actively planning the final annihilation of the ideal world of Takuanyuan. The most noticeable of these signs is found in Chapter 76, when Tai-yu and Shih Hsiang-yun amused themselves with poetry-writing on the night of the Mid-Autumn Festival. It turned out that the last line completed by Tai-yu was

And the cold moon buries the souls of the flowers.

They were interrupted by Miao-yu who came forward and said, "You had a good line in the one I just heard, only it sounded much too ominous. It may have something to do with one's destiny, so I tell you: don't go on." As we know, flowers and plants are symbols for the female denizens of the garden, so if the "souls of the flowers were buried", as Tai-yu sang in her dirge, it must mean that Takuanyuan's destiny was about to end. We see, therefore, that it was no coincidence that the obscene purse should make its appearance in the pure world at such a time. In fact, C. T. Hsia has compared the appearance of this purse to the appearance of the Serpent in the Garden of Eden which made Adam and Eve fall from Paradise into the world of Man, a comparison cited by Stephen Soong as having hit the nail right on the head.¹²

IT IS GENERALLY accepted that the present 120-chapter novel came from the hands of more than one person. We have no way of knowing how Ts'ao Hsueh-ch'in, who had written the first eighty chapters, wanted to depict the fall of Takuanyuan, as the garden was superficially still enjoying "splendid prosperity" at the end of those eighty chapters. As far as we can guess, the author might make use of strong contrasts to emphasize a sad ending. Thus, while commenting on Chapter 42, Chih-yen Chai revealed, "Portions after [the 80th Chapter] are so disturbing that one finds it

¹²"On Takuanyuan", *op. cit.*

unbearable to finish reading them". In the judgment of Chou Ju-ch'ang, "In the second half of the novel the original statuses and positions of all characters are to undergo a 'complete reversal'",¹³ a remark to which every scholar who studies the novel will assent. Perhaps the reversal would not be limited to the characters alone; following them, the ideal world of Takuanyuan, clean and unmolested though it was, could not but undergo a reversal too, perhaps in the nature of a fall from prosperity to ruin. As for the people in the novel, reversal would not stop at the level of status and position—our two-world theory suggests that it must to a certain extent involve also a reversal of cleanliness and uncleanness.

All the residents of Takuanyuan had a love for cleanliness, but it seems that those with the cleanest habits always attracted the most dirt, a fact best seen in Chapters 40 and 41. These two chapters described how Grandma Chia led a group that included Liu Lao-lao to look at T'an-ch'un's house. The old lady was reported as saying laughingly, "Don't let's stay here. The girls don't like people to come in to sit, they fear it might dirty the house." After T'an-ch'un, all smiles, pressed them to stay, the old lady laughed and added, "This third lassie of mine—she's good, but the two jades (Pao-yu and Tai-yu) are nasty. In a while, when we've gotten drunk, we'll pick on their places to make a row." These lines paved the way for the next chapter entitled "Liu Lao-lao lies drunken in Yi-hung Yuan" in which Pao-yu, who hated most the filthiness of old married women, suffered Liu Lao-lao's having taken the liberty of lying flat on his bed in Yi-hung Yuan and making the whole room stink with "her drunken smells". Obviously the author had done it on purpose—he had stained the ideal world's beauty and cleanliness with ugliness and squalor from the world of reality. In the same chapter Liu Lao-lao also had tea in Lung-tsui An (櫛翠庵)—again highlighting the contrast to Miao-yu's making a fetish out of being clean. This is why after Chapter 80 the worst of fates befell Miao-yu. The Album of the Twelve Golden Maidens said of her,

*She wanted to be clean, but clean she never was;
She said her life was a Void, but was it really so?
Alas, that this quality of gold and jade
Should end up mired in mud!*

The song which Pao-yu heard in his dream in Chapter 5 also said, "She ended up dirt-laden and filthy, much against her own wishes, like a piece of white jade mired in the mud; no use for princes and knights to sigh for lack of chance to approach her"—concrete proof that Miao-yu after Chapter 80 had completely fallen down in the world and met with a fate worse than death. She was the cleanest person in the ideal world of the novel, and yet, after that ideal world had broken up, she had dribbled into the dirtiest corner in the world of reality. This one example is enough to show how violent is the contrast between the two worlds as the author depicted them.

As cleanliness originally came from squalor, so in the end to squalor it must ineluctably return. I feel this is the central significance of the tragedy of *The Red Chamber Dream*, and, to Ts'ao Hsueh-ch'in, it must have been the greatest tragedy known to man.

¹³In his article in *Wen Wu*, Peking, 1973, No. 2.