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**Time in the Literary Constructions of Self, Love,
and Fate in *Honglou meng***

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Declaration

I declare that this doctoral thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

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Abstract

This thesis primarily aims to explore the role temporal aspects play in the narrative constructions of personal experience in the eighteen-century full-length Chinese novel *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢 (*the Story of the Stone* or *Dream of the Red Chamber*) written by Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹(1710?–1765?).

One of the most prominent features of *Honglou meng* lies in its unique narrative constructions of personal experience with great psychological and emotional depth. While most scholars approach the issue from the perspective of the thematic focus on the personal and the private, few have noticed the temporal implication in the narrative manipulation and configuration of characters and their relations to their self, to one another and to the world. Temporal reality in literature intrinsically defines artistic unity as it provides the most basic framework for the characters and events to inhabit. Moreover, it is an important element in the construction of personal and private experiences like suffering, remembering and anticipating. The central hypothesis of this thesis is that the temporal aspects of the fictive experience of characters' inhabitation in the reality of *Honglou meng* greatly contributes to the emotional and psychological depth in its construction of personal experience.

To demonstrate the idea, in the main body of the thesis, I choose the three most representative constructions of ideas in *Honglou meng* that have strong psychological and emotional emphasis, namely, self, love, and fate. To be specific, I first look into the narrative construction of the female protagonist Lin Daiyu, for whom feelings about the experience of impermanence and decay greatly shape her sense of self via her sick body. Then I turn to her romantic relationship with her lover Jia Baoyu, the quality of which is defined by a natural and realistic process of growth and maturation. Finally, I explore a sense of fate that everything has been predestined in the novel and how it

is related to an imaginary understanding of the past and the future that the author establishes in his reader's mind. With the study of these three cases, I argue that the preoccupation with time greatly shapes the way fictive experience is imagined, narrated and represented in *Honglou meng*.

My thesis is firstly and foremost a narrative study of the literary manipulation and configuration of the novel. My research is not to recognise or affirm a certain idea of time and life suggested in the novel. Rather, it is an examination of how the author has managed to dramatise the idea through the feelings, thoughts and actions of the character in their most concrete temporal situations. Another purpose of this thesis, which goes beyond the criticism of the ideological and structural meaning of the novel, is to raise the experiential aspects of the problem of temporality in *Honglou meng*. I hope my study of the literary implication of narrative time and its function will not only renew our appreciation of *Honglou meng*'s significance as a novel of masterful manipulation by literary strategies and devices but also, its significance as a novel emphasising the experiential and existential dimensions of its protagonists.

Lay Summary

This thesis primarily aims to explore the role temporal aspects play in the narrative constructions of personal experience in the eighteen-century full-length Chinese novel *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢 (*the Story of the Stone* or *Dream of the Red Chamber*) written by Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹(1710?–1765?).

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To demonstrate the above idea, in the main body of the thesis, I choose the three most representative personal experiences in *Honglou meng* that have strong psychological and emotional emphasis, namely, self, love, and fate. With the study of these three cases, I argue that the preoccupation with time greatly shapes the way fictive experience is imagined, narrated and represented in *Honglou meng*. I hope my study of the literary implication of narrative time and its function will not only renew our appreciation of *Honglou meng*'s significance as a novel of masterful manipulation of literary strategies and devices but also emphasise its significance as a novel of the experiential and existential emphasis.

Acknowledgements

Part one

I would like to begin the acknowledgements by talking honestly about my difficult relationship with writing, deadlines, and fundamentally with myself during my PhD programme, although this is not how things are usually done.

This difficulty partly stems from the habits of memory. When we look back from our desired destination, our brains tend to overlook the painful and helpless experiences, keeping only the happy and proud ones. Another reason is shame. Public perceptions and PhD students' own expectations—to possess psychological toughness as well as intellectual acumen—further inhibit such narratives. Yet, it is the helplessness, loneliness, and suffering that often constitute the authentic routine of a PhD. For me, the struggle was deeply connected to the meaning of academic work.

I began my PhD out of a desire to understand the human world and my possible place in it, much like many other students in the humanities. As a literature student, this “sense” is intricately linked with the use of rhetoric, language, and narrative.

I cannot recall when exactly I became enchanted by the power of words, phrases, and sentences, and the fictional construction of emotions and feelings. This enchantment led me to believe that the ability to create these illusions with words was the path to the truth and beauty in life. For me, being able to write accurately and expressively was not just a means to a destination; it is the destination.

This belief, however, proved to be quite dangerous during the process of writing my thesis, especially when discussing Chinese literature in English. As I tackled one specific problem after another, I found myself indulging in the vortex of imagery and

experience, unable to find the exit towards concise logic. Every word, sentence, and paragraph I wrote became a facet of multiple prisms, shining, overlapping, and spinning me into a maze of vulnerability, hesitation, and loneliness.

Gradually, writing became the most daunting task in my life. I went to the library, the gym, or parties, telling myself that I couldn't write because I hadn't read every paper in the field, or because I needed to take care of my physical health, or because I had to ensure I wasn't living in intellectual isolation. But these self-deceptions did not ease my anxiety. On the contrary, my writing days were almost always accompanied by a profound sense of worry and fear. I spent much more time battling my disappointment in myself than organising the structure of my thesis.

Right now, almost half a year after my submission, I can see how absurd and pathetic it was. But I suppose this might be the essence of a PhD program. I have changed significantly through the experience of writing my thesis. This change goes beyond becoming more academically skillful and experienced. It's about listening to myself more patiently, reflecting on problems more rationally, and acting with more courage towards my values. I am not claiming that all negative feelings have been "wiped out" completely or that I now write positively and productively all the time. The difference between then and now is that I have gained more patience and resilience to handle difficult situations.

It is in this sense I am grateful for my thesis. The core issue was never about the writing itself; it was about confronting your inner desires and weaknesses. I will never write as "perfectly" as I would like to. But I am wiser now than when I began. More importantly, I graduate from my PhD program with a deeper understanding of my soul and its longings.

Part Two

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my primary supervisor, Professor Joachim Gentz. Beyond his remarkable intellectual vigour and professional capacity, Joachim has shown me wisdom and gentleness from the very start.

Joachim's first lesson to me was to adopt an analytical approach to literary texts, to weigh evidence, and to think critically. This did not mean he dismissed intuitive thoughts and feelings; rather, he valued my initial reactions to the texts and encouraged me to delve deeper. I will always remember his patient guidance in close readings, helping me to articulate the precise points that could substantiate my intuition.

During my time under his supervision, Joachim was always careful with his judgments. He listened, guided, and motivated, continually challenging me with questions: What do others say about this issue? How do you build on it? What are you trying to convey here? Why choose these examples over others? What connects these ideas? Why do you believe this supports your argument? His patience and encouragement have been invaluable in shaping my ability to explore and elaborate on ideas.

What has impressed me most about Joachim is his "academic happiness". He is always eager to discuss new ideas and perspectives with his students. When I and my peers shared our research with him, his curiosity, sensitivity, and enthusiasm were palpable. He has taught me to find joy in the process of exploring, researching, and discovering within academic work.

I am also deeply grateful to my second supervisor, Dr. Xuelei Huang, whose support and guidance over the years have been indispensable. Xuelei has always been a friend, mentor, and role model, exemplifying courage, stability, and grace. My appreciation

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I would like to express special thanks to Mrs. Elizabeth Leith, who not only proofread my thesis but also my “emotional fallacies” with her friendly and sympathetic understanding. I also want to thank Dr Yinlin Guan, Dr Nathan Woolley and Dr Joern Peter Grundmann for engaging with my thesis enthusiastically, and providing valuable suggestions; and Yixin Liu, Siqi Li, Mengke Li, Amadeus Chen, Raven Salemink, William Wei, George Woolven, Enyi Cheng, Jiahua Zhang, Silin Chen, Qianzhi Shan, Yiran Chen, for their wonderful accompany in Edinburgh.

Finally, I am grateful to my family for their unwavering love and support in my academic pursuits. My deepest gratitude goes to them, to whom this dissertation is lovingly dedicated.

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Introduction

The Literary Construction of Personal Experience

Among many celebrated achievements of *Honglou meng*, the most prominent one might be its narrative constructions of personal experience. Since the late Ming, a considerable number of dramas, short fictions, and novellas began to show great interests in the personal, the individual, and the private lives of ordinary men and women in everyday ethics. Instead of using the story's characters as part of the explanation of the moral discourse of grand histories, fables, and legends, more and more works of fiction begin to focus on turning to possibilities of lives devoted to personal desire and emotion and its conflict with the environment and fate. Therefore, the tendency in *Honglou meng* has always been placed in the historical context of personalisation in late imperial China. Andrew Plaks notes that the transformation traces “a nicely-ordered progression” from “a higher to a lower mimetic level”.¹ Martin W. Huang describes this tendency in the late imperial Chinese novel as a “privatizing” process. This could be seen in an evolutionary process of the gradual narrowing of the narrative space in several important vernacular novels since the Ming dynasty: from the “court and battlefield” in *Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義 (*Romance of the Three Kingdoms*), to the “road and battlefield” in *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 (*Water Margin*) and *Xiyou ji* 西遊記 (*Journey to the West*), and eventually to the “bedroom and garden” in *Jin ping mei* 金瓶梅 (*The Plum in the Golden Vase*) and *Honglou meng*.²

¹ Andrew H. Plaks, “Full-Length Hsiao-Shuo and the Western Novel: A Generic Reappraisal.” *New Asia Academic Bulletin* 1 (1978): 163-76: 169.

² Martin W. Huang, *Desire and Fictional Narrative in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge; London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 57-8.

However, compared with *Jin ping mei* which also focuses on private lives rather than the public, *Honglou meng* seems to be able to depict experience with a psychological and emotional depth, in which personal feelings and thoughts are well represented. Scholars' discussions of this unique representation in the novel mainly lie in its construction of an individual truth, in which the author places greater value on his private experience rather than the moral, the collective and the artificial conventions. The attention and characterization of the life and experience of an individual in *Honglou meng* represent not only a shift of the theme, but it also serves as a sign of rebellion against the traditional moral order and the pursuit of individual subjectivity as it provides another way of existence and model of values ignored by traditional ethics and concepts in literature.

In his 1968 study, *The Classic Chinese Novel*, C.T Hsia points out that one of the most important traits of the eighteen-century Chinese novel *Honglou meng* written by Cao Xueqin is its exploration of "deeper layers of private experience". He also compares the novel to its contemporary, *Rulin waishi* 儒林外史 (*The Scholars*) written by Wu Jingzi 吳敬梓 (1701-1754) and argues that although both use the personal experience of the individual instead of history, fable, and anecdote as the primary subject of its narrative exploration, the level of this utilisation appears different. While in *Rulin waishi*, the autobiographical experience of the author only affirms the idea of "a scholar-recluse" and criticizes the vice of "a philistine society", in *Honglou meng*, it produces an "autobiographical compulsion". And it is exactly this compulsion "to tell the private

truth, to recapture a more intimate reality” that makes Cao so much more of “a revolutionary against the impersonal tradition of Chinese fiction”.³

From another perspective, Kao Yu-kung approaches the problem by recognising the novel as a representation of the literati novel with a tendency towards self-realisation and self-containment. Further comparing the novel with *Rulin waishi*, Kao proposes that the two share an “underlying vision of self-realization” and aim to “rethink the traditionally accepted lyric view of life”.⁴ However, while Wu still very much represents the individual response to the public, the social, and ritual experience, Cao’s novel devotes much of its length to the individual and the mythical by adopting the form of domestic stories and “creating a more intimate scale for his very personal book”.⁵

Traditional Chinese literature shows few “personal” features from the very beginning. Even the form of poetry which is usually regarded as being heavily dependent on the personal feelings and thoughts of the lyric subject, is confined within the framework of collective sentiment. Marston Anderson notes that, for the Chinese, poetry is not a “mediated objective correlative that...remains the weak shadow of a private subjectivity; it is rather a clear vessel through which stream emotions that are thought to be essentially shared and public”.⁶ Similarly, the traditional Chinese narrative tend to take collective discourses as its structure, whether these are historical, universal, or

³ C. T. Hsia, *The Classic Chinese Novel: A Critical Introduction* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2016), 226.

⁴ Yu-Kung Kao, “Lyric Vision Chinese Narrative Tradition: A Reading of *Hung-Lou meng* and *Ju-Lin Wai-Shih*.” in *Chinese Narrative: Critical and Theoretical Essays*, ed. Andrew H. Plaks (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 234.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 234-235.

⁶ Anderson Marston, *The Limits of Realism: Chinese Fiction in the Revolutionary Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 19.

ethical. For example, in traditional Chinese historiography, what the literary representation of historical events cares about is their “exemplary value” rather than its specific indication of the individual. And historians “own their fidelity first to an ethical, discursive truth and only secondarily to the reality of the particular events they recorded”.⁷

However, with the rise of the commodity economy, humanitarianism, and the self-consciousness of the individual, there is an intellectual attempt to reconcile the relationship between moral order and personal desire in the late Ming. According to the school of Wang Yangming 王陽明, it is the *qing* 情 or human emotion, rather than the *li* 理, or heavenly principle, that forms the fundamental basis for human motivation and behaviour.⁸ The desire and passion of ordinary people, as the basic emotion between a man and a woman, was in this sense reconceptualised and reinterpreted “as a supreme human value worthy of celebration”⁹ within the framework of moral sentiment. It is within this historical context that Lee Haiyan picks up the thread of Hsia’s discussion. She regards the deep engagement with personal life in *Honglou meng* as a mark of a “new epistemic paradigm”¹⁰ established against the traditional moral order. This epistemology, she proposes, could be encapsulated in the concept of “authenticity”. Borrowed from Lionel Trilling’s *Sincerity and Authenticity*, the idea is essentially a modern problem in contrast to the more congenial and this-worldly concept of “sincerity” and indicates “a more strenuous moral experience than

⁷ Ibid., 22.

⁸ Haiyan Lee, *Revolution of the Heart: A Genealogy of Love in China, 1900-1950* (Stanford University Press, 2006), 34.

⁹ Martin W. Huang, “Sentiments of Desire: Thoughts on the Cult of Qing in Ming-Qing Literature.” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)* 20 (1998): 161.

¹⁰ Haiyan Lee, *Revolution of the Heart: A Genealogy of Love in China, 1900-1950* (Stanford University Press, 2006), 47.

'sincerity' does, a more exigent conception of the self and of what being true to it comprises in a wider reference to the universe and man's place in it, and a less accepting and genial view of the social circumstances of life".¹¹ Lee further notes that the quality of "authenticity" in *Honglou meng* lies in its elevation of the private truth of the individual which is "unmediated or unsullied by artificial conventions"¹² rather than the grand history and fantasy. What has been culturally valued is dismissed, and the personal experience of ordinary people is now "given aesthetic value and moral authority for its simplicity, spontaneity, and experiential authenticity".¹³

It is observed that most of these scholarly discussions has ascribed the psychological and emotional depth in *Honglou meng* to the author's intention to express the private truth rather than the collective. From another perspective, this study holds the assumption that the representation of personal experience in the novel is first and foremost a result of artistic manipulation by the author through narrative strategies, devices and rhetoric. And analysing Cao's literary manipulation more closely, it appears that this representation is strongly related to the temporal aspects in the novel.

Scholarly Discussion on the Problem of "Time"

Scholars have long noticed the effect of time on the construction of experience in literature. However, temporal aspects in a narrative are usually recognised as various and distinctive problematics: it could be a point or period in a chronological successive

¹¹ Ibid., 46.

¹² Ibid., 46-47.

¹³ Ibid., 48.

of events; it could be a form or structure, to arrange episodes in sequence and order; it could also be an aesthetic archetype reflecting the mode of representation. These three recognitions happen to represent three different strands of scholarship on the problem of time in *Honglou meng*. The different theoretical approaches actually reflect different understandings of the fictive construction of experience in the novel. Defining and reflecting on these different epistemic patterns and the approaches, therefore, is important to make clear my own methodology of and approach to the problem. I will try to summarise the characteristics of these scholarships and demonstrate how my approach goes beyond them.

The first scholarship is initially derived from the view of the novel's early scholiasts represented by Zhiyanzhai on how it is to be read. Throughout Zhiyanzhai's comments there runs a consistent suggestion that many events depicted in the novel once happened to the author in his actual life.¹⁴ This specific assumption in *Honglou meng* is adopted by modern scholar Zhou Ruchang 周汝昌 in his study on the chronology of *Honglou meng*. Zhou regards the novel as by and large a chronicle of the lived lifetime events of its author. He constructs a chronology by excerpting all passages on years, dates, seasons, and ages of the characters from the novel and then matches it to that of the author's life experience in reality with the purpose "to use historical materials scientifically to prove that the theory of autobiography is correct".¹⁵ Presenting the

¹⁴ For example, in chapter twenty-five, Zhiyanzhai remarks on the side of a priestess's talk, "every sentence has been heard and witnessed, rather than made up. The author and I both have gone through with it"(句句都是耳聞目睹者，並非杜撰而有，作者與余實實經過). (ZP,25: 458, Jiaxu manuscript; my translation) in chapter 74, he remarks, "because the author has experienced this kind of thing, and the commentator has experienced this kind of thing. (So) it is a straightforward way of writing about the past rather than a deliberate fiction of ostentatious" (蓋此等事作者曾經，批者曾經，實係一寫往事，非特造出，故弄新筆). (ZP,74: 664, Gengchen manuscript; my translation)

¹⁵ Zhou Ruchang 周汝昌, *Honglou meng xin zheng* 紅樓夢新證 [New Evidence on Dream of the Red Chamber] (Shanghai: Tangdi chubanshe, 1953), 566.

congruence of the two chronologies—that the birth year of the protagonist Jia Baoyu is the “second year of Yongzheng 雍正” in which he believes Cao Xueqin was born, and in which Baoyu reaches his thirteenth birthday in the year when Cao Xueqin was thirteen years old too¹⁶—he concludes that Cao Xueqin writes his novel as a chronology and that Zhiyanzhai also views it as a chronology”, since “not only are the characters and the plots traceable (to those in reality), but also the years, months, and days are real”.¹⁷ The directions of this interest show a distinctive feature compared with scholia of other full-length novels in the late imperial time, like *Shuihu zhuan* and *Jing ping mei*, which tend to recognise the arrangement of time in the novel as part of the author’s literary craftsmanship.¹⁸ Similarly Yu Ying-shih 余英時 notes that Zhou Ruchang’s discussion of the relation between the chronology of *Honglou meng* and Cao Xueqin’s birth and death dates reflects a tendency of the school to “equal Cao clan in history with Jia Clan in the novel”, and “the study of *Honglou meng*” of textual analysis had been replaced by “the study of Cao Xueqin”.¹⁹

¹⁶ The deduction is drawn from the record of Cao Xueqin’s contemporary that Cao Xueqin died in the year of *gui wei* at the age of forty.

¹⁷ Zhou Ruchang 周汝昌, *Honglou meng xin zheng* 紅樓夢新證 [New Evidence on Dream of the Red Chamber] (Shanghai: Tangdi chubanshe, 1953), 203.

¹⁸ For example, for Zhang Zhupo 张竹坡(1670–1698), the early Qing dynasty literary scholiast of *Jin ping mei*, what is important for specific dates in the novel is not the accuracy, but the way of its verisimilitude. He argues in *Jin Ping Mei: The First Qishu of Gaohetang Criticism* 皇鶴堂批評第一奇書金瓶梅 that while the precision of “chronology” (*nian biao* 年表) plays an important role in the historical narrative like *Shiji* 史記, what crucial for a fictional narrative are “dates and days” (*shi ri* 時日), which is manifested day by day and festival by the festival. “Dates and days” create an illusion for the reader of living through multitudinous events in the novel and are not mechanically arranged in an order which could be “ticked off one by one” (*pai tou shu qu* 排頭數去). He also believes that the disorder of temporal arrangement in the novel has its connotations: the author has “deliberately introduced incongruities into the chronology” (*gu tete cuohuan qi nianpu* 故特特錯亂其年譜). David T. Roy, “How to Read the *Chin P’ing Mei*” in *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, ed. Rolston, David L. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 223-24.

¹⁹ Yu Yingshi 余英時, *Honglou meng de liangge shijie*, 紅樓夢的两个世界 [The two worlds of *Dream of the Red Chamber*] (Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexue chubanshe, 2002), 10.

Compared with the first study which was largely dominated by autobiographical facts of the author, the second approach appears to be more “compositional” and “structural”.²⁰ It shows more interest in the technical principle of the fictional narrative, where temporal aspects manifested in the objective structure of sequential relation. Traditional critics put stress on the structural consistency when viewing the temporal relation of events in the narrative. They emphasise more the structural connection between one episode and another, especially the deep association of *kaiduan* 開端 (the beginnings) and *shouwei* 收尾 (the endings) of either small units or the overall structure. This reveals the manipulation of the “aesthetic and emotional expectations of the reader to conform to certain deterministic patterns of events in the universe”.²¹ In the study of *Honglou meng*, Qing scholar Zhang Xinzhi 張新之 notices the internal connection between sections operating through temporal techniques. In his comments on the novel he writes, “one need only observe its overall structure, interconnected from start to finish like the Changshan snake formation with its roots planted firmly and its narrative thread laid out in advance, so marvellously responsive that one could make the entire body move by pulling a single hair.”²²

Apart from traditional scholiasts, modern scholars affected by Western narratology and structuralism also show interest in the technical and structural aspect of narrative time in *Honglou meng*. Yang Yi 楊義 suggests that the author of the novel deliberately selects certain seasons, dates and moments with special significance for many events

²⁰ Andrew Plaks divides the critical materials into four categories by the purpose of analysis: 1) informational 2) impressionistic 3) compositional 4) interpretive. See Andrew H. Plaks, “Terminology and Central Concept” in *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, ed. Rolston, David L. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 75.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 90.

²² Andrew H. Plaks, “How to Read the Dream of the Red Chamber” in *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, ed. Rolston, David L. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 335.

and plots. Because of the importance of the human situation, the fate of the characters and the poetic taste is far higher than the accuracy of the time scale in the novel.²³ Yang also believes that the novel inherits the tradition of Chinese historical narration by adopting the pre-narrative in Jia Baoyu's visit to the Land of Illusion.²⁴ Wang Bin 王彬 approaches the text of *Honglou meng* in the framework of modern narratology. He studies the primary narrative elements like narrative structure, implied author, unreliable narrative, pseudo-time, etc. among them, he dedicates a chapter to "the fake time" and talks about the relation between "story time" and "narrative time", the flashback and the flashforward, and the relationship between time and space. He also points out that "the time in the text" and "the time in the story" can be mismatched, based on the narrative theory of Genette.²⁵

The third approach which is mainly adopted by western scholars in a comparative context, shows more interest in the overall model and archetype of time in *Honglou meng*. The temporal indication in western narrative develops a basic allegorical composition that "carries a definite implication of movement, or at least a pronounced sense of direction": "from a state of relative imperfection, incompleteness, or downright evil, towards a goal of perfect truth."²⁶ It is in this sense that the seemingly nonlinear and incoherent narrative time of traditional Chinese narrative confuses

²³ Yang Yi 楊義, "Honglou meng: tian shu yu ren shu de shiyi ronghe" 《紅樓夢》：天書與人書的詩意融合 [The Dream of the Red Chamber: The poetic integration of book of heaven and book of human], *Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan yanjiusheng xuebao* 中國社會科學院研究生院學報, 1994, no. 06: 31.

²⁴ Yangyi 楊義, *Zhongguo xushi xue* 中國敘事學 [Chinese narratology] (Beijing: Renmin chebanshe, 1997), 156.

²⁵ Wangbin 王彬, *Honglou meng xueshi* 紅樓夢敘事 [The Narrative of Dream of the Red Chamber] (Beijing: Zhongguo gongren chubanshe, 1998), 15.

²⁶ Andrew H. Plaks, "Allegory in His-yu Chi and Hung-lou Meng" in *Chinese Narrative: Critical and Theoretical Essays*, eds. Andrew H. Plaks (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1977), 167.

many western scholars. For example, when Patrick Hanan tries to illustrate the formal and structural transformation from classical fiction to vernacular fiction, he notes that in many vernacular narratives, there is “an implied claim to cover all elapsed time, sometimes on an hour-by-hour scale”, unless it is stated to be skipped. He then complains that this “constant reckoning of time” in those novels can “even become wearisome”.²⁷ The underlying point here is that Chinese novels tend to depict the whole period of time mechanically without formal and technical manipulation. In his 1968 book on six classical Chinese novels, C.T. Hsia shares a similar opinion and goes one step further to say that most Chinese novelists fail to utilise the art of fiction fully and show “no comparable concern with form.”²⁸ This is because, as he notes, nearly all traditional novels adopt “episodic structure as the storyteller’s mode of narration” which is characterised by a loose organization and artificial interruption of the progression. In this sense, even in *Honglou meng*, which could be put “alongside the greatest novels in the western tradition”, Hsia observes from the novel an “episodic convention”, which “entails the invention of many subsidiary stories that could well have been removed so that their space could be given to fuller elaboration of the major episodes.”²⁹

Andrew Plaks puts forward his response to the issue by the denial of applying western criteria of a temporal sense of order directly to Chinese narrative works. He observed that, while in western literature, there is an underlying model of transformation featured by a linear, progressive and time-defined form, Chinese novels show a

²⁷ Hanan Patrick, “The Early Chinese Short Story: A Critical Theory in Outline.” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 27 (1967): 176.

²⁸ C. T. Hsia, *The Classic Chinese Novel: A Critical Introduction* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2016), 16.

²⁹ Ibid.

completely different vision. Chinese novelists do not attach a lot of importance to the causal relationship when structuring the plot, at least, not as direct as that within Western novels. These characteristics in temporality result in the lack of recognizable direction of the plot and the illusion of motionlessness in Chinese narrative. He argues that the representation of a progressive sequence of experience in most Chinese full-length novels is largely “spatialized”, in the sense that “it implies the simultaneous inclusion of all phases of temporal alternation”.³⁰ In other words, although the Chinese novel represents the alternation of events and the experience of the characters in the course of time, they are not featured by a temporal representation in a “dialectical progression” like “from crisis to resolution” or “from illusion to awakening” like that in western literature.³¹ Rather, all those events and experiences depicted are meant to be a visible part of a “total vision of phenomenological flux” that is extended in space.³²

This pattern of the literary system, he notes, has been “inherited and advanced” by the author of *Honglou meng*:

Just as the seasonal cycle must include the phases of autumn and winter, and the life cycle must accommodate ageing and death, the recurrent patterns that constitute the texture of the *Hung-lou Meng* are ordered to a sense of fullness that goes beyond the literal concept of plenitude alone. In other words, what we witness in the novel is not a unilinear trajectory of the rise and fall of a great house, or the union and separation of

³⁰ Andrew H. Plaks, *Archetype and Allegory in the Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), 6.

³¹ Andrew H. Plaks, “Allegory in *His-yu Chi* and *Hung-lou Meng*” in *Chinese Narrative: Critical and Theoretical Essays*, eds. Andrew H. Plaks (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1977), 191.

³² Andrew H. Plaks, *Archetype and Allegory in the Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), 7.

star-crossed lovers, but rather a welter of overlapping cycles that obviates any sense of logical direction in the first place.³³

While previous translators tend to adjust this detemporalised structure in the novel by retaining some intensive events and omitting others, Plaks argues that it in a sense contributes to the maintenance of the richness and plenitude of the total vision that arises within the Jia family in the novel.³⁴ At the same time, Plaks is fully aware of “the illusory linearity of time sequence and the specificity of detail” in the novel.³⁵ In fact, according to him, it is exactly this contrast between the total pattern of existence and the temporal illusion in the detailed mimetic that produces the sense of tragedy that is different from that of the west. It is “a ‘tragic’ disjunction of vision between the time-bound perspective of mortal sensitivity and the detemporalized structure of intelligibility that is by definition beyond the scope of mimetic representation.”³⁶ This is because, as he further observes, the “web of existential flux” in traditional Chinese culture is formed by “certain patterns of alternation and periodicity”, whose “perception of intelligibility” comes in only when looking to a “total apprehension of the entire cosmic system” rather than “the specific intersection of bipolar and cyclical patterns”.³⁷ Accordingly, in traditional Chinese narrative, it is by placing the individual and specific figures in “the overall configurations, rather than in the specific patterns, of structure and characterization”, that “they take on a dimension of what we may call

³³ Andrew H. Plaks, “Allegory in *His-yu Chi* and *Hung-lou Meng*” in *Chinese Narrative: Critical and Theoretical Essays*, eds. Andrew H. Plaks (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1977), 200.

³⁴ Andrew H. Plaks, *Archetype and Allegory in the Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), 55-56.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 71.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁷ Andrew H. Plaks, “Towards a Critical Theory of Chinese Narrative” in *Chinese Narrative: Critical and Theoretical Essays* eds. Andrew H. Plaks (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1977), 349-50.

‘meaning’”.³⁸ In other words, the literary representation of certain individual and personal experiences is meaningless unless it is framed in a bigger and more overall configuration. Plaks’s research on the archetypal structure in *Honglou meng* and classical Chinese narrative had a far-reaching influence. Later, many Chinese scholars began to reflect on the narrative time of traditional Chinese fiction from a more allegorical and metaphorical perspective.³⁹

To sum up, the first approach to the problem of time in *Honglou meng*, represented by Zhou Ruchang, shows more interest in time in the author’s actual life and in nature rather than in time in literary work. It takes the assumption that *Honglou meng* is, by and large, a chronicle of the lifetime events of its author, Cao Xueqin, and therefore concerns relating particular points in time and particular periods of time in the novel, explicit or implicit, to those of actual events in historical materials. Anthony Yu is sufficiently insightful to note the danger of this kind of approach by suggesting that “fiction is hereby confused with history” in these studies, which represents at last “a futile undertaking”, because “it demands from the text a kind of knowledge or information that it is not wholly designed to yield”.⁴⁰ By the same token, the attempts to couple dates in the novel with those in history in order to sort out a reasonable sequence and order of events, are also proved to be “futile”, as they demand from the literary text the same understanding of time in human life as well as in nature. The

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ For example, see Li Qingxin 李慶信, “Lun Honglou meng de xushi shikong jiangou” 論《紅樓夢》的敘事時空建構 [On the construction of time and space in Dream of the Red Chamber], *Shehui kexue yanjiu* 社會科學研究 1994, no. 03: 85-91. Zhang Hongbo 張洪波, “Honglou meng zhong de xushu shijian wenti” 《紅樓夢》中的敘述時間問題 [The problem of narrative time in Dream of the Red Chamber], *Honglou meng xuekan* 紅樓夢學刊 2009, no.05: 320-335.

⁴⁰ Anthony C. Yu, *Rereading the Stone: Desire and the Making of Fiction in Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton University Press, 1997), 19.

temporal aspects in my study, on the other hand, are narrative devices in rhetoric, language and emplotment. In other words, they are strategies deployed by the author deliberately and artistically. I, therefore, situate my study in the field of narrative studies by recognizing *Honglou meng* as a literary work adopting narrative strategies to represent ideas and experiences.

The second approach, represented by Yang Yi, pays much attention to the formal, technical, and structural function of narrative time in the novel. It seeks to discuss questions such as how “narrative time” breaks, reorganizes, and reverses the “story time”. Apart from this, the temporal perspective of “order”, “frequency” and “duration”, even the tense of the verb, and the form of statement, are also the subject of study.

The third type of scholarship represented by Andrew H. Plaks focuses on the allegorical and archetypal significance of narrative time in the novel. This significance appears in the relationship between “textual structure” and “meaning” of the text in the fictional narrative. It intends to classify, order and summarise the narrative rules of time in *Honglou meng*, not to prove that the seemingly random and loose temporal structures of the novel can still be an explanation within a given framework. It treats narrative time as an aesthetic projection of traditional Chinese culture and is concerned with the conceptual connotation underneath the narrative text. It also has an underlying theoretical framework of the comparative study, in which the Chinese temporal structure is set against the western.

While the latter two studies have shed light on the problem of time within the narrative studies of the novel, neither manages to elaborate on a more experiential and existential aspect of narrative time. It is my contention that there is a more

fundamental relation between narrative time and the fictive experience of being in the world, in which time has an immediate and direct implication for specific situations in the novel. From my perspective, the ignorance and failure lie in the fact that both of the two approaches take time in the novel mainly as an objective structure of relation rather than a fictive reality against which characters are situated in the narrative. In other words, they equal time in experience to time in nature.

Time in experience is completely different from time and nature. As Hans Meyerhoff suggests, time in literary work has always been related to “elements of time as given in experience” rather than “an objective structure of the time relation” in nature:

The consciousness of time as it is part of the vague background of experience or as it enters into the texture of human lives.....Time so defined is private, personal, subjective or, as is often said, psychological. These terms mean that we are thinking of time as directly and immediately experienced. ⁴¹

In this sense, this level of the two recent scholarly studies reduces the experiential time in *Honglou meng* that is related to the existential condition of the individual to technique and objective structures like sequence, order, model or archetype.

My study, on the other hand, will go beyond these frameworks of understanding and approach by analysing specific temporal strategies in *Honglou meng* in the dynamic interaction between characters and the fictive reality in which they are situated. The temporal aspects studies in my thesis are not structural or allegorical. Rather, they are

⁴¹ Hans Meyerhoff, *Time in Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955), 4.

reality that is immediately and directly felt and experienced by the characters, especially on the occasions of suffering, remembering, and anticipating. In the following section, I will define my theoretical approach to the construction of experience in *Honglou meng* and explain how it could shed new lights on the field.

Fictive Experience of Time and Narrative Construction

I assume my study as firstly and foremostly a literary study on the narrative configuration of temporal aspects informed methodologically by poststructuralism. It aims to reveal the configurational process of temporal experience in *Honglou meng* by analysing different interactions between characters and the temporal reality they are situated in. My research is not to recognise or affirm a certain idea of time and life suggested in the novel. Rather, it examines how the author has managed to dramatise the idea through the feelings, thoughts and actions of the character which are set against the specific temporal situation.

While western philosophers and literary theorists have noticed that the way literature is constructed is largely time-defined even since the classical period,⁴² the systematic study of literature did not begin until modern times. Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin is the first to note that the literary construction of temporal reality could affect the generic and aesthetic characteristic in literature. In his 1937 essay “*Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel*”, he builds a classification system for western

⁴² For example, Aristotle observes that narrative adapts a longitudinal development as the plot extends from the beginning to the end, by temporally combing the events according to a causal relationship. See Waugh, P., *Literary Theory and Criticism: An Oxford Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 273.

novels from the perspective of “chronotope”, literally, “time-space”. “Chronotope”, according to Bakhtin’s definition, refers to “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature”.⁴³ Although the dimensions of time and space are inseparable in literary representation, he observes that time is the “primary category” in the chronotope.⁴⁴ Bakhtin believes that it is precisely time and space in literature, of which time is “the primary category”, that defines “generic distinctions”. He examines various literary genres like ancient Greek romance and chivalric romance by summarising their different forms of time, like the “adventure time” and the “mix of adventure-time with everyday time”, showing that different literary genres are dependent on different configurations of time.⁴⁵ Moreover, in Bakhtin's view, representation of time in a genre is always closely related to the value and worldview of a particular class, in a particular society, in a particular era. For example, in the novel, the reality and the advancement of time is related to the "unfinishedness" of humanity. While in the epic, which is a lofty genre, the time tends to represent the past and emphasizes the hierarchy.

From the perspective of the history of literature, Ian Watt notes that the form of time is a crucial factor in defining modern fiction, as it is closely related to the way fictive reality is constructed. He points out that time has played quite different roles in ancient, medieval, and renaissance literature. For example, the “three unities” in tragedy, and the sense of history in Shakespeare’s work, lead to the use of “timeless stories to mirror the unchanging moral verities”⁴⁶ to produce “the same eternally

⁴³ Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. C. Emerson & M. Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 84.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁴⁶ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 22.

applicable *exempla*".⁴⁷ They arrange the time sequence in an abstract space-time setting in order to demonstrate universal or eternal themes. Applying to all historical and cultural environments, those texts themselves become a practical and didactic tool. However, after the 18th century, the form of "the novel" expresses the particular existence in time and space with the individualization and the freshness of experience following the "individualist and innovating reorientation" at the time.⁴⁸ In the work of Defoe, Richardson and Fielding, formal conventions and traditional plots used by classical writers are replaced by the contemporary, unique and new experience of the individual. For example, novels in this period are composed of realised moments from the experience of the protagonists, a kind of "day-to-day time setting".⁴⁹ This kind of multiplicity and complexity of the experience of time can only "be rooted in the temporal dimension", ⁵⁰ that is, every specific moment in life. Most importantly, making past experience as the cause of present events gives the novel a more logical structure. What Watt reveals is that the temporal representation in the novel has a deep connection with modernity. By making the comparison, he finds out that the representation of time in the novel is the key to distinguishing the fictional form from the previous prose fiction.

Moreover, the subject in a narrative has to be situated within the reality of time to gain senses of being. Therefore, time in a narrative may have a more realistic and authentic effect on the characters and their experience. In this sense, it is the German philologist Erich Auerbach who approaches the relationship between fictive characters and the temporal reality in which they are situated, within their most specific context. In his

⁴⁷ Ibid., 23.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 13.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 23.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 24.

comparative studies of two episodes in the *Odyssey* and the Old Testament—Odysseus’s returning home from his two decades of travel, and Abraham’s sacrificing his son Isaac—he finds that there are different representations of experience in terms of temporal arrangement. He finds that even at the moment of crisis, Homer still has the time for “orderly, perfectly well-articulated, uniformly illuminated descriptions” of the past.⁵¹ There is no distinction between “foreground” and “background” at all, and “few elements of historical development and of psychological perspective”. In contrast, in the story of “the sacrifice of Isaac”, the temporal experience of the mind exercises control over the entire work in the biblical narrative. The characters have their “personal history through the development and existence in time and space”. Although they sometimes disappear, the psychological elements of the characters still have the “suggestive influence of the unexpressed”.⁵² In other words, temporal aspects of the narrative are no longer outside of the characters. Rather, it enters into the textual account of their lives and is combined with the psychological construction of the feelings, thoughts and actions.

While the eighteen-century Chinese novel *Honglou meng* is very much a secular work, the way in which human experience and feeling are represented is closely related to the way in which they are situated within the temporal reality. My approach in this thesis is inspired by that of Auerbach, in the sense that I will also situate my analysis of the literary construction of *Honglou meng* into the specific context of the interaction between temporal reality and the character. To make it more critical, this study

⁵¹ Eric Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. W. R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 4.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 23.

investigates these constructions by employing the ideas of “fictive experience of time” proposed by the French philosopher Paul Ricœur.

Ricœur introduces the concept to analyse the configuration of time in fictional narrative. Configuration is the process of emplotment, of making events, agents and objects into a syntactical order, standing between the preparation and the reception of the narrative. A “fictive experience of time” is “projected by the conjunction/disjunction between the time it takes to narrate and narrated time” within this process.⁵³ In other words, a fictive experience of time does not mean the time to narrate, nor the time that is narrated, but a time that inhabits the world of the text itself. It means the “temporal aspects” of the “virtual experience of being-in-the-world proposed by the text”.⁵⁴ Different from the time it takes to narrate and narrative time, it is used to explore the way the world is organized and structured in the world of the text. In other words, it is the analysis of the principle of internal order that gives the work its unity and identity.

I therefore, adopt this concept proposed by Ricœur as an analytical tool to explore the process in which the character’s encounter with certain temporal reality could be organised and structured to construct a certain fictive experience in the narrative of *Honglou meng*. For my analysis, the tool is useful to demonstrate a literary operation and construction in *Honglou meng* between the temporal situations and the final representation of them. This operation, as I will argue in the main body of the thesis,

⁵³ Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative. Vol. 2*, trans. K. McLaughlin & D. Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 77.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 100.

is exactly the reason why the novel could represent personal experience with great psychological and emotional depth, which few people have noticed.

At the same time, the term is introduced by Ricœur to discuss the relationship between the world of the text and the world of the reader. Ricœur proposes that the term is somewhat “precarious” because the fictive experience of time is too subtle to be defined and analysed by the theory of time as well as by the theory of narrative. However, he then further argues that, despite the imaginary and fictive quality of the experience of time in the narrative, it decides certain literary effect on the reader, and trigger certain literary reception which in turn generate certain fictive experiences of time on the side of the reader:

On the one hand, in effect, our temporal ways of inhabiting the world remain imaginary to the extent that they exist only in and through the text. On the other hand, they constitute a sort of transcendence within immanence that is precisely what allows for the confrontation with the world of the reader.⁵⁵

In other words, there is no such thing as narrative constructions of experience on the side of the narrative only. They have to be felt, understood, and reconstructed by the reader through his or her actual and lived experience. In this sense, despite the fact that the textual analysis in the thesis will mainly focus on the level of narrative representation and construction, I will bear in mind that the realisation of the representation has to be achieved through the reading experience of the reader.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 6.

Moreover, Ricoeur chooses three famous fictional narratives—*Mrs. Dalloway*, *The Magic Mountain*, and *Remembrance of Things Past*—to analyse the concept because each of these three works, “freeing itself in this way from the most linear aspects of time, can, in return, explore the hierarchical levels that form the depth of temporal experience”.⁵⁶ It is also in this sense my adoption of this approach to the eighteenth-century Chinese novel *Honglou meng* is reasonable. One basic assumption of the thesis is that *Honglou meng* with its preoccupation with the human world of acting and suffering in both quotidian and mythical contexts, explores a wide variety of fictive constructions of time that are derived from a deeper experience of living in the world. And it is with this analytical tool that these various of constructions in the novel could be best identified, elaborated, and valued.

The narratological approach enables me to go beyond the limitation of conventional studies of the *Honglou meng* firstly by questioning the assumption that the experiences represented in the novel are simply results of theoretical designs and arrangements of the author. The problem of the assumption is that it ignores the fact that the novel is fundamentally a literary form that places certain ideas in a fictive framework of certain time and space, and the way this framework interacts with the characters could have an important effect on the process of the construction. Moreover, the approach also allows me to explore the most fundamental mechanism in the process of experience construction in the novel by looking into the emotional, the sensory, and the affective aspects of the individual in their most concrete and specific temporal and existential situations. The last section then will explain what structure follows from this methodological framework.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 101.

The Structure of the Thesis

To better demonstrate how the fictive experience of time in *Honglou meng* could be related to the novel's psychological and emotional constructions, I choose three most representative personal experiences in *Honglou meng*, namely, self, love, and fate. These experiences include a girl's perpetually perceiving the deterioration of her body with the passing of time, lovers gradually losing their intimate connection in the irresistible process of growth and maturation, and the extended family members constantly being reminded and warned of the family's fate by ominous signs and omens. By analysing what temporal strategies emerge in these fundamental constructions and how they are deployed in the text to achieve certain literary effects, I try to show the importance of the temporal aspects in the novel.

I make this choice because these three literary constructions in *Honglou meng*— An individual imagining her sense of self through enduring and worrying (chapter one), devoted lovers being changed gradually by a slow process of growth and maturation (chapter two), people's activities in the aristocratic clan being foreshadowed by a tragic ending (chapter three)—covers the most fundamental and primary explorations of human emotion, thought and experience of time in the novel. On the other hand, each of these three constructions in the novel stands for, in its own way, representative narrative construction of fictive experience of time, which is achieved by interactions between characters, and the temporal reality within which they are situated.

To be specific, in the main body of the thesis, chapter one focuses on what fictive experience of time is involved in the construction of a sense of self *Honglou meng*, taking the protagonist Lin Daiyu 林黛玉 as the example. In the novel, Daiyu's narcissistic tendency of self-pity and self-commiseration has always been regarded as the result of her overly concerns for worldly and material affairs like her orphanhood and her loneliness. However, apart from these concerns, the narrative construction of Daiyu's sense of self is greatly defined and shaped by the character's temporal experience of living through her life. And this experience, seems to be inseparable from her fragile and sick body. The main hypothesis in this chapter is that two time-related qualities that Daiyu's sick body is endowed with on the mythical level, greatly shape her sense of self and the way she expresses it on the realistic level.

Chapter two then focuses on the fictive experience of time emerged in the construction of romantic love in *Honglou meng*. The sentimental and tragic love between the protagonists Lin Daiyu and Jia Baoyu 賈寶玉 has always been distinguished from conventional Chinese romances by its social and philosophical implications. Rethinking it from a different perspective, this chapter explores the progress of growth and its relationship with the communion of the lovers. In a departure from the social and philosophical accounts, I propose that the destructiveness of the love between Baoyu and Daiyu in the novel is not only brought forth by suppressive forces of the society, but by a growing difficulty in communication running through the development of their relationship.

While the previous two chapters discuss the individual's self-identification and the relationship between individuals, chapter three turns to an individual's relationship

with the world. It begins with a well-acknowledged phenomenon in the novel: all the characters and their actions seem to be foreshadowed by a tragic but inevitable ending right at the beginning. This principle, which could be operated in the name of “fate”, or “what is predetermined” has been well-established in traditional Chinese literature. However, in *Honglou meng* it is constructed within a much subtler fictive reality of time. I argue that by setting an imaginary past in the form of personal memory for the overall assumption and an imaginary future in the form of omens for the detailed emplotment, a unique sense of fate that has great depth of time and consciousness are constructed in the novel.

Notes On Editions and Abbreviations

A large number of editions of *Honglou meng* have emerged in the process of its complex dissemination and reception since the mid-eighteenth century. These editions are usually divided into two main groups: the manually transcribed manuscripts or what we called “Rouge” versions 脂本 and the printed, or “Cheng-Gao” Versions 程高本.

As early as the mid- eighteenth century, even when the composition of the novel was still in process, the early manuscripts began to circulate among the author Cao Xueqin’s friends and relatives under the title of *Zhiyanzhai chongping Shitou Ji* 脂硯齋重評石頭記 (*the Story of the Stone: Re-annotated by Rouge Inkstone*). Avid readers began passing these unfinished manuscripts in varying versions and lengths to others, facilitating a circle of readership. Most of these manuscripts only have the first eighty chapters and are usually accompanied by a large number of marginal notes made by a person named Zhiyanzhai 脂硯齋 (Rouge Inkstone).⁵⁷ At least eleven early manuscripts belonging to the group of Rouge versions are known to exist, including

⁵⁷ Zhiyanzhai is usually believed to have an intimate relationship with the author Cao Xueqin and to know much of his experience in actual life. For scholarly investigation into the identity of Zhiyanzhai, see David Hawkes, “Introduction”, in *The Golden Days*, Vol.1 of *The Story of the Stone*, trans. David Hawkes (New York: Penguin Books, 1973), 15–46. Hao Yanlin 郝延霖, “Zhiyanzhai’ Kaobian” “脂硯齋”考辨 [Examination and identification of Rouge Inkstone], *Xinjiang daxue xuebao (Zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 新疆大學學報(哲學社會科學版) 1978, no. 01: 37-47. Yang Guanghan 楊光漢, “Zhiyanzhai yu Jihusou kao” 脂硯齋與畸笏叟考 [Research into Rouge Inkstone and Odd Tablet], *Shehui kexue yanjiu* 社會科學研究 1980, no. 02: 104-14. Ding Gan 丁淦, “Zhiyanzhai Bian” 脂硯齋辨 [Identifying Rouge Inkstone], *Honglou meng xue kan* 紅樓夢學刊 1996, no. 03: 271-98.

the “Jiaxu manuscript” 甲戌本 (dating to 1754), the “Jimao manuscript” 己卯本 (1759), the “Gengchen manuscript” 庚辰本 (1760) and the “Mengfu manuscript” 蒙府本.⁵⁸

On the other hand, around three decades after Cao’s death, the woodblock print versions of the novel with 120 chapters were published by Cheng Weiyuan (程偉元) and Gao E (高鶚) in 1791 and 1792 separately under the title of *Honglou meng*. According to the explanation of Cheng and Gao in the prefaces of the two versions, the last 40 manuscripts were obtained by Cheng accidentally and were collated and edited by Gao who consulted existing versions before the “complete” edition was published.⁵⁹ However, whether the last forty chapters were genuinely written by Cao Xueqin, and to what extent they represent Cao’s intentions, remains a matter of debate in scholarly discussions.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ For a detailed study on the Rouge versions of the novel, see Chen Qinghao 陳慶浩 ed. *Xinbian Shitou ji zhiyanzhai pingyu jijiao* 新編《石頭記》脂硯齋評語輯校 [A New Compilation of Rouge Inkstone’s Scholia on *The Story of the Stone*] (Beijing: Zhongguo Youyi chubanshe, 1987), introduction.

⁵⁹ Cao Xueqin, Gao’E, *Chengjia ben Honglou meng* 程甲本紅樓夢 [Dream of the Red Chamber: the Chengjia Edition] (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1992), preface.

⁶⁰ In the early 1920s, Hu Shi 胡適 (1891-1962) and Yu Pingbo 俞平伯 (1900-1990), the representative figures of the school of “New Redology” (*xin hongxue* 新紅學), questioned the demonstrations of the source of the later forty chapters as is explained in Cheng Weiyuan’s “preface”, and proposed that Gao’E wrote the later forty chapters himself. See Hu Shi 胡適, and Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培. *Shitou ji suoyin& Honglou meng kaozheng* 《石頭記索隱》《紅樓夢》考證 [Exploration of the concealment in *The Story of the Stone* & Textual research on *The Dream of the Red Chamber*]. Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1989. With the new discovery of the historical materials of Cheng and Gao’s life, many scholars have proposed not to question the authenticity of Cheng and Gao’s demonstration in the absence of solid counterevidence. For example, see the preface written by Bai Xianyong 白先勇 in Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹, *Honglou meng (Cheng yi ben jiaozhu ban)* 紅樓夢 (程乙本校註版) [Dream of the Red Chamber (Cheng-Gao Version)] (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2017),1-19.

In the thesis, I will lay aside the debate about the authenticity and reliability of different editions of the novel. All references to the novel, refer to the edition of *Honglou meng* published by Renmin wenxue chubanshe in 2005 (reprinted from its first edition in 1982),⁶¹ whose first eighty chapters are based on the Gengchen manuscript edition. It is referred to as “**HLM**” in the thesis. For Zhiyanzhai’s scholia, all citations comes from the Chen Qinghao 陳慶浩’s compilation,⁶² with the information of the manuscript version given in parentheses. It is referred to as “**ZP**” in the thesis. For the English translation of the novel, I follow the translation of both David Hawkes and John Minford, and Xianyi Yang 楊憲益 and Gladys Yang. The former is referred to as “**SS**”⁶³ and the latter “**DRM**”⁶⁴ in the thesis. For certain Chinese words and phrases with temporal implications that fail to be translated in English, I modified these myself while noting the modification in parentheses.

⁶¹ Cao Xueqin. *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢 [Dream of the Red Chamber]. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2015.

⁶² Chen Qinghao 陳慶浩 ed. *Xinbian Shitou ji zhiyanzhai pingyu jijiao* 新編《石頭記》脂硯齋評語輯校 [A New Compilation of Rouge Inkstone’s Scholia on *The Story of the Stone*]. Beijing: Zhongguo Youyi chubanshe, 1987.

⁶³ Cao, Xueqin and Gao E. *The Story of the Stone*. Translated by David Hawkes and John Minford. 5 vols. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973-1986.

⁶⁴ Cao, Xueqin, and Gao E. *A Dream of Red Mansions*. 4 vols. Translated by Xianyi Yang and Gladys Yang. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2018.

Chapter One Self, Sick Body and Temporal Feeling

Often described as having a tendency towards self-pity and even self-destruction in the novelistic design, the female protagonist Lin Daiyu may well be one of the most “overtly narcissistic characters”⁶⁵ in *Honglou meng*. Compared with her peers, like her courageous and open-hearted cousin Shi Xiangyun 史湘雲, and her considerate and amiable cousin Xue Baochai 薛寶釵, Daiyu seems to be more consistently troubled by her own emotional problems. Her excessive interest in and mourning for herself gains her a reputation of having an “air of lofty self-sufficiency” (*gugao zi xu* 孤高自許). (HLM, 5: 68; SS1:124) Even Daiyu herself is conscious of this aspect of her character as she reflects on it in her poetic line, “the pages are filled with sorrow and self-pity” (*man zhi zilian ti su yuan* 滿紙自憐題素怨). (HLM,38:512; my translation)

Born into a scholar-official family, Daiyu is raised in the southern city Suzhou. After losing her mother at the age of six, she is summoned to the capital to live with her grandmother, the matriarch of the influential and wealthy Jia family. The whole family has shown a great deal of affection and solicitude to Daiyu, from the very warm reception on her arrival at the Jia Mansion. (chap. 3) Although living in the family as a guest, she enjoys the same treatment as her cousin Jia Baoyu’s, the heir of the family, even outdoing the old lady’s three other granddaughters. (chap. 5) Therefore, when this introverted tendency of Daiyu gradually becomes apparent in everyday life, most of the other characters, even her maids, cannot see any significant cause for her behaviour:

紫鵲雪雁素日知道林黛玉的情性：無事悶坐，不是愁眉，便是長嘆，且好端端的不知為了什麼，常常的便自淚道不乾的。先時還有人解勸，怕他思父母，想家鄉，受了委曲，只得用話寬慰解勸。誰知後來一年一月的竟常常的如此，把這個樣兒看慣，也都不理論了。

⁶⁵ Martin. W. Huang, *Desire and fictional narrative in late imperial China* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 277.

Zijuan and Xueyan knew their young mistress's ways. She would often sit moodily frowning or sighing over nothing or, for no apparent reason, would give way to long spells of weeping. At first they had tried to comfort her, imagining that she missed her parents and home or that someone had been unkind; but as time went by and they found this was her habit they paid little further attention.

(HLM, 27:361; DRM:525)

Suffice it to say, a large part of her self-commiseration come from the “isolation of her orphanhood”. The self-pity become apparent whenever she is reminded that her peers have parents and siblings while she does not.⁶⁶ Apart from this, her fear of losing Baoyu's love has been another lasting source which contributes to her sentimental self.⁶⁷ Despite all these worldly concerns and worries, there seems to be subtler and more complicated aspects embedded in her sense of self that transcends the seemingly narcissistic tendency of her self-pity and self-commiseration.

In *Honglou meng*, the construction of Daiyu's sense of self is intrinsically tied to the construction of temporality. In a broader sense, all literary portraits of men in the novel present a sense of self more or less through the continuous flow of narrative experience.⁶⁸ However, in the case of Daiyu's image, not only does the author deliberately frame the character in a temporal framework, but Daiyu herself, as a

⁶⁶ For example, after witnessing how Baoyu is cared for by his grandmother and mother after he suffered whacks of the bamboo cane from his father, Daiyu talks to herself about how good it is to have parents. (chap. 35) Even when she thinks about the heroine from the play, she cannot help pitying herself, “fate was unkind to Cui Yingying,” she told herself with a sigh, “but at least she had a widowed mother and a young brother, whereas poor Daiyu has nobody at all” (雙文，雙文，誠為命薄人矣！然你雖命薄，尚有孀母弱弟；今日林黛玉之命薄，一並連孀母弱弟俱無). (DRM, 687; HLM,35:462) The same outbursts are provoked in a similar situation when she makes a comparison between her solitary condition and that of Baochai and Baoqin, two of her cousins who also temporarily lived as part of the Jia family. (chap. 45; 49)

⁶⁷ The communication and interaction between Daiyu and Baoyu will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

⁶⁸ Hans Meyerhoff, *Time in literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955), 34.

sentient being, has shown a distinctive tendency to feel, perceive and reflect on herself through the experience of time. Moreover, the construction of temporality is mainly achieved via her body, of which in the fictional design is a “sick” body.

In terms of the problem of “self” and “time”, Baoyu may seem to be a more obvious candidate, as his enlightenment is closely tied to his mythical origins in the novel. When he makes a leap into an unknown future, he is also reaching into his past as well as transcending the present. Compared with Baoyu, Daiyu seems to be a rather weak and unremarkable representation of the literary construction of the self.

However, the construction of Daiyu’s sense of self is achieved from a different perspective from that of Baoyu. If Baoyu’s understanding of time and his own “self” is more like sudden enlightenments achieved through the unexpected changes in life (such as separation and death), Daiyu’s sense of self is realized through the enduring of the successive moments and continuous changes of everyday life.

Secondly, differently from Baoyu’s philosophical, abstract, and universal experience of time (parasitic grass, cherishing spring), Daiyu’s sense of self is gradually developed in the quotidian and private experience of living through her daily life. In other words, Daiyu is more closely tied to the question of how to live through a lifetime with an ending rather than what is a meaningful life. In other words, if Baoyu’s sense of self is achieved through a complete and absolute negation of human life, then Daiyu’s is gained through being trapped in the process of it.

It is in this sense that I choose Daiyu rather than Baoyu as an example through which to explore the literary construction of time and self in *Honglou meng*. By exploring the process and mechanisms used to construct Daiyu’s sense of self through the temporal aspects in the novel, this chapter tries to provide some insights into the construction of self in a natural course of time in the late imperial Chinese novel.

The main hypothesis in this chapter is that two time-related qualities with which Daiyu's sick body is endowed on the mythical level, greatly shape her sense of self and the way she expresses it on the realistic level. To be specific, section one will talk about what kinds of qualities Daiyu's sick body is endowed with, and how these qualities could acquire temporal connotations in the mythical framework. Section two and section three discuss how Daiyu's sick body brings in strong temporal dimensions to her everyday experience and how the complex senses of self are constructed through this process.

1.1 “Sick Body” and Its Temporal Engagement

“他的病一生也不能好的了”

“Her illness will never get better as long as she lives.”

(HLM,3:39; SS1: 90)

兩彎似蹙非蹙眉，一雙似泣非泣含露目。態生兩靨之愁，嬌襲一身之病。泪光點點，嬌喘微微。閑靜時如姣花照水，行動處似弱柳扶風。心較比干多一竅，病如西子勝三分。

Her mist-wreathed brows at first seemed to frown, yet were not frowning;

Her passionate eyes at first seemed to smile, yet were not merry.

Habit had given a melancholy cast to her tender face;

Nature had bestowed a sickly constitution on her delicate frame.

Often the eyes swam with glistening tears;

Often the breath came in gentle gasps.

In stillness she made one think of a graceful flower reflected in the water;

In motion she called to mind tender willow shoots caressed by the wind.

She had more chambers in her heart than the martyred Bi Gan;

And suffered a tithe more pain in it than the beautiful Xi Shi.

(HLM,3:49; SS1:102-03)

This is the best-known and most representative portrait of Daiyu in *Honglou meng*. On their first meeting at the Jia mansion what her cousin Jia Baoyu catches sight of, is her body with an extraordinary and inexpressible grace which is closely related to her sickness. On first reading, the highly formulaic representation—the sorrowful face, tearful eyes and frowning brows—brings to mind countless similar weak and melancholic female figures from traditional Chinese literature which reflects the literati’s portrayal of beauty at that time. Such a body can hardly be regarded as “a solid and well-shaped entity”,⁶⁹ because it is represented by spatialized and isolated body parts⁷⁰ which mainly convey ideas of “passivity, subordination and suffering”.⁷¹ However, despite this highly formulaic depiction, in the main text of *Honglou meng*, the construction Daiyu’s sick body is much more complex than a static icon: it functions as a crucial symbolic site where the existential qualities of temporality and sense of self are intricately connected in the narrative. The metaphorical construction can find its origins in the mythical framework, which is also the prologue of the whole novel:

只因西方靈河岸上三生石畔，有絳珠草一株，時有赤瑕宮神瑛侍者，日以甘露灌溉，這絳珠草便得久延歲月。後來既受天地精華，復得雨露滋養，遂得脫却草胎木質，得換人形，僅修成個女體，終日游於離恨天外，饑則食蜜青果為膳，渴則飲灌愁海水為湯。只因尚未酬報灌溉之德，故其五內便鬱結著一段纏綿不盡之意。恰近日這神瑛侍者凡心偶熾，乘此昌明太平朝世，意欲下凡造歷幻緣，已在警幻仙子案前挂了號。警幻亦曾問及灌溉之情未

⁶⁹ John Hay, “The body invisible in Chinese art?” in *Body, Subject, and Power in China*, eds. Zito, A., & Barlow, T. E. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 51.

⁷⁰ For example, in the “Manual of Beautiful Women” 美人譜, an essay written by the contemporary of Pu Songling, Xu Zhenxu 徐震, lists ten attributes associated with beauty. Weak and fragile body parts, such as “feet like bamboo shoots carved in jade”, “fingers like white shoots of grass”, “a willow waist” and “delicate steps as though walking on lotus blossoms” were essential physical characteristics. See Hong Wu, “Beyond Stereotypes: the Twelve Beauties in Qing Court Art and the Dream of the Red Chamber”, in *Writing women in late imperial China*, eds. Widmer, E., & Chang, K. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 328.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 358.

償，趁此倒可了結的。那絳珠仙子道：“他是甘露之惠，我并無此水可還。他既下世為人，我也去下世為人，但把我一生所有的眼泪還他，也償還得過他了。”

In the west, on the bank of the Sacred River, beside the Stone of Three Incarnations there grew a Vermilion Pearl Plant. At that time the Attendant Divine Luminescent in the Palace of Red Jade watered it every day with sweet dew, thereby prolonging its lifetime. As the months and years went by and the Vermilion Pearl Plant imbibed the essences of heaven and earth and the nourishment of rain and dew, it cast off its plant nature and took human form, albeit only that of a girl. All day long she roamed beyond the Sphere of Parting Sorrow, staying her hunger with the fruit Secret Love and quenching her thirst at the Sea of Brimming Grief. But her heart was heavy because she had not repaid the care lavished on her.

Just then, on the spur of the moment, the Attendant Divine Luminescent was seized with a longing to assume human form and visit the world of mortals, taking advantage of the present enlightened and peaceful reign. He made his request to the Goddess of Disenchantment, who saw that this was a chance for Vermilion Pearl to repay her debt of gratitude and asked her opinion. “He gave me sweet dew,” said the Vermilion Pearl, “but I’ve no water to repay his kindness. If he’s going down to the world of mortals, I would like to go too so that if I repay him with as many tears as I can shed in a lifetime I may be able to clear this debt.”

(HLM,1: 13; DRM:9, modified)

In the next life, readers are told that Daiyu becomes the reincarnation of the Vermilion Pearl Plant. And the Attendant Divine Luminescent turns into Jia Baoyu, to whom Daiyu devotes her lifetime love and tears. Scholars and readers have been amazed poetic arrangement, in which a pre-destined and spiritual communion between Baoyu and Daiyu is designed.⁷² However, the material and realistic aspect of the debt

⁷² For example, Zhiyanzhai remarks, “I ask you readers to stop here and think: has there ever been this kind of literary design in all previous fictions? (This is such) An amazing writing that I have never read” (觀者至此請掩卷思想，歷來小說中可曾有此句？千古未聞之奇文). (ZP,1: 19, Jiayu manuscript; my translation) Qing poet Yao Xie 姚燮 (1805-1864) remarks, “The theory of repaying tears is indeed original. But when feelings in the human world becomes so inexplicable, even repaying tears is not enough to exhaust its enchantment and association” (還淚之說甚奇，然天下之情，至不可解處，即還淚亦不足極其纏綿固結之情也). See Yao Xie, “*Honglou meng huiping*” 《紅樓夢》回評 [Chapter Comment on *Dream of the Red Chamber*], in *Honglou meng ziliao huibian* 《紅樓夢》資料彙編 [Compilation of

embedded in the seemingly poetic design tends to be ignored. According to the myth, the “sweet dew” that the Attendant Divine Luminescent used to water the Vermilion Pearl Plant was not only drops of purity and freshness, but more significantly, the nourishment helping it to prolong its lifetime, as well as to transform from a plant to a girl. In other words, the gift that is bestowed by him is something related to an organism to sustain vital processes of body growth. The debt of water in this way is also the debt of the “body”.

A common way to pay back this kind of gratitude is to marry the benefactor, which is a famous motif of traditional folktales.⁷³ Therefore, when the Vermilion Pearl Plant decided to go down to the world of mortals with the Attendant Divine Luminescent to repay the debt, readers are reminded of many similar stories like Niulang and Zhinü 牛郎織女 (the “the Cowherd and the Weaver Girl”), which features an immortal who marries a human to pay a debt of gratitude or to fulfil the obligations. The story of the Vermilion Pearl Plant apparently belongs to this tradition, as she takes the form of Daiyu and is fatefully entangled with Baoyu in the human world. However, there is one disturbing fact that none of the previous folklore even reveals: that the repayment is never a one-time action, rather, it is a process of enduring a lifetime.

Going down to the world of mortals changes not only the laws of space, but also the laws of time. In the immortal world, there are no limits on the extent of a lifetime

Material of Dream of the Red Chamber] eds. Zhu Yixuan 朱一玄 (Tianjin: Nankai daxue chubanshe, 1985), 643.

⁷³ See Liang Yujin 梁玉金, “Zhongguo gudai lingyi baoen xiaoshuo de wenhuaxue fenxi” 中國古代靈異報恩小說的文化學分析 [A cultural analysis of ancient Chinese fictions on repayment of the supernatural], *Qinghai shifan daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 青海師範大學學報 (哲學社會科學版) 2011, no. 01: 99-102. Wang Li 王立 and Wang Lili 王莉莉, “jin ershinian zhongguo gudai wenxue baoen muti yanjiu zongshu” 近 20 年中國古代文學報恩母題研究綜述 [A summary of research on the motif of repayment in traditional Chinese Literature in the past twenty years], *Jiangxi shifan daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 江西師範大學學報 (哲學社會科學版) 2016, no. 01: 115-20.

where time itself is endless and therefore has no measure. Any action taken to repay the debt there would be insignificant because of its infinite nature. On the contrary, the world of mortals with its time-specific human life will produce a real and significant relation between the “creditor” and his “debtor”: people have to suffer from birth, aging, sickness and death. Any payment of debt needs to be placed as part of the process. The implication of the design of Daiyu’s sick body may also be seen as echoing with both the Daoist concept of a body as a source of great distress and the Buddhist concept of a body which is bound to decay and die in the end.⁷⁴ This is exactly how the story of the Vermilion Pearl Plant and Daiyu is the deconstruction of this motif. Because most folktales simply represent the idea of desire fulfilment, while *Honglou meng* goes a step further, to depict how this desire lasts a lifetime in a realistic way: how it grows, how it gets smothered, how it suffers, and how it dies out, as we see in the main body of the novel. Therefore, while the Attendant Divine Luminescent’s decision to experience human life was made “on the spur of the moment”, the Vermilion Pearl Plant had to be there with him, going through all the physical and mental agony day and night. Ironically, the seemingly poetic and romantic design of repaying “water” with a “lifetime of tears” turns into a painful allegory of Daiyu’s bodily experience in the human world: the experience of enduring temporal succession, under the shadow of a prophetic death. A critic of the Qing dynasty remarks, “if the

⁷⁴ The Daoist concept is perhaps best summed up in the famous line in chapter thirteen of *Dao De Jing* 道德經: “What does it mean: ‘Esteem your body with great worries’? The reason why I have great worries, is that I have a body. If I did not have a body, what worry would I have” (吾所以有大患者，為吾有身，及吾無身，吾有何患). In *Dao De Jing*, trans. Moeller, Hans-Georg (Chicago: Open Court, 2007), 33. For Buddhist concept, see chapter two of the Vimalakirti Sutra 維摩詰所說經: “It is false, being fated to be broken and destroyed, in spite of being anointed and massaged. It is afflicted by the four hundred and four diseases. It is like an ancient well, constantly overwhelmed by old age. Its duration is never certain—certain only is its end in death” (是身為虛偽。雖假以澡浴衣食必歸磨滅。是身為災百一病惱。是身如丘井為老所逼。是身無定為要當死). In *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakīrti: A Mahāyāna Scripture*, trans. Thurman, R.A.F. (Motilal Banarsidass, 1991), 22.

tears are not repaid for one day, Daiyu will still be there. But if the tears are out, Daiyu will be dead” (淚一日不還，黛玉尚在。眼淚既枯，黛玉亦物化矣)。⁷⁵

The allegorical plot might shed some light on Daiyu’s bodily deficiency in the realistic framework. Although Daiyu’s being sick is a prominent concern throughout the novel, it appears to be quite vague and even mysterious. Daiyu is born with a body sick from an idiopathic disease and the readers are only told that she has a *buzu zhi zheng* 不足之症 (“deficiency of vital energy”) (HLM3:39; my translation) with only occasional references to her weakness.⁷⁶ On the other hand, a clearer diagnosis of her ailments and a serious medical treatment and prescription are not made until shortly before her death. (chap.83) This is quite unusual in *Honglou meng* which is a novel full of encyclopaedic depictions of the pathology, folk remedies and methods of healthcare.⁷⁷ The obscurity of Daiyu’s bodily condition, however, does not discourage many readers from attempting to identify the definitive disease she had in the light of modern medicine. Some scholars have even made aetiological interpretations, linking her symptoms to tuberculosis and asthma.⁷⁸ However, as is mentioned above, Daiyu’s

⁷⁵ Yao Xie, “*Honglou meng* huiping” 《紅樓夢》回評 [Chapter Comment on *Dream of the Red Chamber*], in *Honglou meng ziliao huibian* 《紅樓夢》資料彙編 [Compilation of Material of Dream of the Red Chamber] eds. Zhu Yixuan 朱一玄 (Tianjin: Nankai daxue chubanshe, 1985), 643.

⁷⁶ For example, When Lady Wang 王夫人 inquires about Daiyu’s cold after taking the doctor’s medicine, Baoyu replied, “cousin Lin suffers from an inherited weakness and has such a delicate constitution that she can’t stand the least little chill” (林妹妹是內癥，先天生得弱，所以禁不住一點風寒). (DRM: 548; HLM, 28: 375). Other members in the family also tend to make allowances for her, “knowing how delicate and hypersensitive she was” (且素日形體嬌弱，禁不得一些委屈). (DRM: 910; HLM,45:605). When the firecrackers were let off on the feast of Lanterns, Grandmother Jia holds her close as “she was too delicate to stand much noise” (林黛玉稟氣柔弱，不禁畢駁之聲，賈母便摟他在懷中). (DRM: 1121; HLM,54:745). Moreover, Baoyu cannot help feeling a tender affection toward her, whenever he sees “how pitifully frail and ill” she looks. See chapter 29, 30, 32, 54.

⁷⁷ See chapter 10 for example for the detailed description of Qin Keqing’s 秦可卿 sickness.

⁷⁸ Chen Cunren 陈存仁 and Song Qi 宋淇, *Honglou meng renwu yi shi kao* 紅樓夢人物醫事考 [A Study on the medical issues of the characters in Dream of the Red Chamber] (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2006), 163.

inborn bodily burden is a form of debt from the previous life as a part of the fictive design, therefore is far from merely genetic or incidental. And the metaphorical significance of her pathological conditions would be better understood in relation to the mythical scheme. In this manner, Daiyu's recounting of her own sickness at the beginning of the novel becomes important. On the day she arrived at the Jia mansion, she recalls an odd anecdote from when she was only three:

黛玉道：“我自來是如此，從會吃飲食時便吃藥，到今日未斷，請了多少名醫修方配藥，皆不見效。那一年我三歲時，聽得說來了一個癩頭和尚，說要化我去出家，我父母固是不從。他又說：‘既捨不得他，只怕他的病一生也不能好的了。若要好時，除非從此以後總不許見哭聲，除父母之外，凡有外姓親友之人，一概不見，方可平安了此一世。’瘋瘋癩癩，說了這些不經之談也沒人理他。如今還是吃人參養榮丸。”

“I've always been like this,” Daiyu said with a smile. “I've been taking medicine ever since I was weaned. Many well-known doctors have examined me, but none of their prescriptions was any use. The year I was three, I remember being told, a scabby monk came to our house and wanted to take me away to be nun. My parents wouldn't hear of it. The monk said, ‘If you can't bear to part with her she'll probably never get well. The only other remedy is to keep her from hearing weeping and from seeing any relatives apart from her father and mother. That's her only hope of having a quiet life.’ No one paid any attention, of course, so such crazy talk. Now I'm still taking ginseng pills.”

(HLM,3:39; DRM: 49)

According to Daiyu, she was born with a mysterious illness. The mystery is further complicated by the appearance of an unidentified scabby-headed old monk. The monk offered Daiyu a “treatment plan” and claimed that the only solution to her illness, other than becoming a nun, was to remove two things: the sound of weeping and contact with any person other than her parents. His words were regarded as nonsense and the ravings of a crazy monk and were summarily dismissed by her family: they did not believe her recovery could be reliant on avoiding emotional attachment and social relations. However, considering the crucial role the old monk, along with a lame Taoist, performed throughout the novel, his prescribed cure may not have been as ridiculous

as it appeared. According to Zhiyanzhai, possessing an air of detachment from the “worldly drama”, the two are adopted by the author in a transcendental role to issue certain warnings to other characters in the story.⁷⁹ The monk’s “diagnosis” to Daiyu indicates that, the “illness” she was born with is not a usual malady able to be cured by normal medicine, but a temporal quality inscribed on her body by her fate. The more Daiyu develops emotional attachments and engages socially, the more her body will decline and the shorter of her lifetime will be. Daiyu’s failure to follow his remedy is what led to her worldly life and bodily condition developing in opposite directions to each other.

It is therefore not far-fetched to associate Daiyu’s unusual sickness to the “debt of tears” from her previous life. According to the mythical arrangement, shedding tears requires a bodily form and this bodily form had to be borne day in and day out until the debt was paid. Moreover, just as the monk predicted, once she begins to form emotional attachments, which is the karmic procedure of repaying her debt, Daiyu is destined to die and inevitably, the final payment leads to the final destruction of her body. In this sense, Daiyu’s sick body is both an enduring body and a doomed body.

⁷⁹ Zhiyanzhai remarks, “the whole (narrative) employs the scabby-headed monk and the lame Taoist to enlighten the beings of bodily form in the world of enchantment” (通部中假借癩僧、跛道二人點明迷情幻海中有數之人也) (ZP,3; 63, Jiaxu manuscript; my translation) Qing critic Wang Xilian 王希廉 (1805-1877) also proposes that Zhen Shiyin, along with Jia Yucun, Mangmang dashi 茫茫大士, Kongkong daoren 空空道人, Jinghuan xianzi 警幻仙子 etc, are all characters who are “created without any foundation” (*pingkong zhuan chu* 平空撰出), with the intention to “narrate a splendour and a fading” (*xu shu sheng shuai* 叙述盛衰) and to “warn (people) off an obsession and an addiction” (*jing xing chi mi* 警醒癡迷). See Wang Xilian, “*Honglou meng zongping*” 《紅樓夢》總評 [An Overall Comment on Dream of the Red Chamber], in *Honglou meng ziliao huibian* 《紅樓夢》資料匯編 [Compilation of Material of Dream of the Red Chamber] eds. Zhu Yixuan 朱一玄 (Tianjin: Nankai daxue chubanshe, 1985), 538.

In preceding passages, I have attempted to describe two inherent qualities related to the sense of time Daiyu's sick body possesses, namely, endurance and mortality. In the two following sections, I will look at how her sick body, with a strong implication of time, could affect and foster a complex sense of self.

1.2 Incense Clock: An Enduring Self

“煎心日日復年年”

“Year by year my heart consumes away”

(HLM,22:304; SS1:449)

In chapter 22, several days after the glorious visit of Baoyu's elder sister, the Imperial Concubine, to the Jia family during Spring Lantern Festival, Grandmother Jia holds a small lantern-riddle party with her grandchildren. Daiyu, alone with the other girls, makes up a riddle, writes it down on a slip of paper and sticks it on a lantern-screen:

朝罷誰攜兩袖煙，琴邊衾里總無緣。

曉籌不用雞人報，五夜無煩侍女添。

焦首朝朝還暮暮，煎心日日復年年。

光陰荏苒須當惜，風雨陰晴任變遷。——打一用物

At court levée my smoke is in your sleeve:

Music and beds to other sorts I leave.

With me, at dawn you need no watchman's cry,

At night no maid to renew a supply.

My head burns through the night and through the day,

And year by year my heart consumes away.

Gradually elapsed time I would have you spare:

Be it windy, rainy, cloudy or sunny, I allow all the changes.

——A useful object.

(SS1:449; modified)⁸⁰

This riddle was not so difficult to people at the time and Jia Zheng, Baoyu's father, solves it immediately, "that must be an incense clock".⁸¹ In ancient China, an incense clock is calibrated to known burning rates and therefore could tell the time accordingly. The first two verses suggest the situations when the incense clock should and should not to be used: it is not for a musical ritual, nor to supply a fragrant smoke, but for telling the time at dawn and at night. The third verse describes the way an incense stick clock works: it is ignited from the head (top) and then glows to the heart (core).⁸² Then the last verse indicates that no matter how fast time flies, the incense clock will remain the same, witnessing all the movements and changes.

However, just like the title of this chapter indicates,⁸³ all the riddles made by girls in the household are somehow unconsciously foretelling their destiny, as we see later in the novel. Therefore, the superficial interpretation of Daiyu's riddle cannot unlock its true meaning. The object which the riddle describes, along with the rhetoric Daiyu uses in her verses, actually carries a profound connotation of her condition of life: a life of continually enduring the passage of time.

⁸⁰ See Cao Xueqin, Gao'e, *Chengjia ben Honglou meng* 程甲本紅樓夢 [Dream of the Red Chamber: the Chengjia Edition] (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1992), 593. The riddle is regarded to be made by Baochai in most of the Rouge version, but Cheng-Gao versions tend to take this as Daiyu's work. My study follows Cheng-Gao versions, as my hypothesis regarding Daiyu's personal experience of suffering coincides with the temporal implication in the riddle.

⁸¹ An incense clock was a popular timekeeping device in ancient China, See Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incense_clock The clocks' bodies are effectively specialized censers that hold incense sticks or powdered incense that have been manufactured and calibrated to a known rate of combustion, used to measure minutes, hours, or days.

⁸² The Chinese word 心 for "heart" has exactly the same pronunciation as 芯 for "core".

⁸³ The title of this chapter is "Jia Zheng sees portents of doom in lantern-riddles Grieve Jia Zheng with their ill omens" (製燈謎賈政悲識語). (DRM: 4; HLM,22:305)

In the third verse, Daiyu makes the incense clock a “sentient being”⁸⁴ with bodily sensations, which become special faculties by which to perceive time: it has a “head” to be burned, and a “heart” to be consumed.⁸⁵ The riddle not only represents time by “successive moments and multiple changes”, but most importantly, by “something which endures within succession and changes.”⁸⁶ In this way, the phenomenon of a device measuring intervals of time technically transfers into an experience of the continuous flow of temporality, or what Henri Bergson called “duration”.⁸⁷ Considering how throughout the novel Daiyu’s bodily condition is designed in parallel with the changes of the seasons,⁸⁸ and how she has been continuously perplexed by her deteriorating body over time—whether her sick body in daytime prevents her from having a healthy appetite,⁸⁹ or at night deprives her of good sleep⁹⁰—it is not unreasonable to believe the burning incense stick clock could be interpreted as the embodiment of Daiyu’s enduring self. Moreover, this allegorical image also resonates

⁸⁴ This is a term borrowed from Buddhism (Sattva; youqing/zhongsheng; 有情/衆生). For the detailed definition in the Buddhist context, see Buswell, R., & Lopez, D, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 787.

⁸⁵ Moreover, the image of a burning incense which keeps moving towards the end (future), leaving ashes (memory) behind in a way is similar to the image of “two spools”, created by Bergson to symbolise “duration”. See Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison, (New York: The Citadel Press, 1992), 164-65.

⁸⁶ Hans Meyerhoff, *Time in literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955), 14-15.

⁸⁷ The notion of “duration” was firstly introduced in his essay, see Henri. Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (London: Routledge, 2013), 104.

⁸⁸ For example, in chapter 45, the novel mentions that Daiyu suffers from a recurrence of her inherited sickness following the spring and autumn equinoxes. (HLM, 45:605)

⁸⁹ For example, in chapter 35, the novel mentions that “no one thought anything of Daiyu’s absence as she never ate more than one meal out of two” (林黛玉自不消說，平素十頓飯只好吃五頓，眾人也不著意了)。 (DRM: 696; HLM, 35: 466) And in chapter 49, Baochai explains why Daiyu cannot eat the meat of deer to her cousin, “cousin Daiyu’s so delicate, it would give her indigestion. If it weren’t for that, she’d like some too” (你林姐姐弱，吃了不消化，不然他也愛吃)。 (DRM: 1000; HLM, 49: 665)

⁹⁰ In chapter 76, Daiyu talks about her sleeplessness herself, “I’ve had insomnia a long time now. In a whole year I probably have only ten nights of good sleep” (我這睡不著也並非今日，大約一年之中，通共也只好睡十夜滿足的)。 (DRM: 1666; HLM, 76:1072)

with the karmic burden from her previous life: Daiyu has to bear the body as a burden, day and night in the world of mortals.

A prominent aspect of her body related to temporal succession is her perpetual shedding of tears. Throughout the novel, Daiyu has been depicted as forever crying over meaningless things. This tendency even wins her the pen name within the poetry club in the household of *xiaoxiang feizi* 瀟湘妃子 (“River Queen”) after the Queens of the Emperor Shun, whose abundant tears became the spots on bamboo branches according to the legend.(chap.37) However, the reader should not forget how, in the mythical plot, the Vermilion Pearl Plant is supposed to pay her debt of water with a lifetime of tears. Read in this sense, this preoccupation of Daiyu is by no means merely a trait of her character but is a part of the temporal construction in the worldly framework corresponding to the framing narrative. The process of shedding tears is actually the process of clearing her karmic debt, which in turn is the process of approaching the end of her earthly life. This could also explain why at the exact moment she is filled with “the ferment of excitement” after receiving Baoyu’s handkerchiefs in secret, the poems she writes are all about her gloomy tears, whether they are wiped on sleeves or pillows or shed on the bamboo:

眼空蓄淚淚空垂，暗灑閑拋卻為誰？

尺幅鮫綃勞解贈，叫人焉得不傷悲！

拋珠滾玉只偷潛，鎮日無心鎮日閑；

枕上袖邊難拂拭，任他點點與斑斑。

彩線難收面上珠，湘江舊跡已模糊；

窗前亦有千竿竹，不識香痕漬也無？

Vain are all these idle tears,

Tears shed secretly---for whom?

Your kind gift of a foot of gauze

Only deepens my gloom.

By stealth I shed pearly tears,
Idle tears the livelong day;
Hard to wipe them from sleeve and pillow,
Then suffer the stains to stay.

No silk thread can string these pearls;
Dim now the tear-stains of the Naiad bygone years;
A thousand bamboos grow before my window---
Is each dappled and stained with tears?
(HLM,34:457; DRM,680; modified)

By the same token, a dialogue between Daiyu and Baoyu later on referring to her drying her eyes is also revealing. In the middle part of the novel, Baoyu expresses his concern over her sickness and her getting thinner and complains about her tendency to work herself up until having a good cry. Daiyu answers while wiping her tears: “I’ve been feeling sick at heart, but I don’t seem to cry as much as before. Though my heart aches, I haven’t many tears to shed” (近來我只覺心酸，眼淚卻像比舊年少了些的。心裏只管酸痛，眼淚卻不多). She appears to sense a gradual change that the passing of time is applying to her body. The explanation is so unreasonable that Baoyu objects immediately, “how can anyone’s tears dry up” (豈有眼淚會少的)? (DRM,994; HLM,49:660) However, what Baoyu does not know is that his “debtor” from a previous life, is for him enduring a temporally defined process within her body.

Correspondingly, there is always a portrayal of an enduring self in her lyrical expression. From spring (“a girl in her chamber mourns the passing of spring, no relief from anxiety her poor heart knows” 閨中女兒惜春暮，愁緒滿懷無釋處) (HLM,27:370; DRM:539) to autumn (“the maid’s weeping in autumn chamber never ends” 秋閨怨女拭啼痕) (HLM,37: 494; DRM:735), from daytime (“awake, to whom can I describe my grief, the infinite melancholy of cold mist and withered grass” 醒時幽怨同誰訴，衰草

寒煙無限情)(HLM,38:515; DRM:767) to dusk (“Silently, shyly, with never a word of complaint, she reclines in the autumn breeze as night has descended” 嬌羞默默同誰訴, 倦意西風夜已昏), (HLM,37:494; DRM:735; modified) Daiyu’s poems represent a sense of continuity by recording the tiniest succession and change in her everyday experience. Among them, the best example to represent this sense is her poem “Autumn Window: A Night of Wind and Rain”:

秋花慘淡秋草黃，耿耿秋燈秋夜長。
已覺秋窗秋不盡，那堪風雨助淒涼！
助秋風雨來何速！驚破秋窗秋夢綠。
抱得秋情不忍眠，自向秋屏移淚燭。
淚燭搖搖蕪短檠，牽愁照恨動離情。
誰家秋院無風入？何處秋窗無雨聲？
羅衾不奈秋風力，殘漏聲催秋雨急。
連宵脈脈復颼颼，燈前似伴離人泣。
寒煙小院轉蕭條，疏竹虛窗時滴瀝。
不知風雨幾時休，已教淚灑紗窗濕。

Sad the autumn flowers, sear the autumn grass,
Autumn lamp flicker through the long autumn night;
Unendurably desolate by the autumn window,
In the wind and rain autumn seems infinite.

The wind and rain speed autumn on its way,
By the window shattering her autumn dream;
And the girl with autumn in her heart cannot sleep
But trims the candle by her autumn screen.

Guttering on its stick, the candle sheds tears of wax,
Evoking the grief of separation, its pain,
As through each autumn courtyard gusts the wind
And on each autumn window beats the rain.

The autumn wind, through silken quilts strikes chill,
Her water-clock the autumn rains spurs on.
All night the pelting rain and soughing wind
Accompany her tears for one now gone.

Chill mist enwraps the court in loneliness,
Bamboos drip by the lattice without pause;
None can tell when the wind and rain will cease,
But already tears have soaked her window's gauze.

(HLM,45:609; DRM:914-15)

On an autumn night, finding it is beginning to rain with persistent dripping on her bamboos, Daiyu was touched and “inevitably drawn to give an outlet to her feelings in composition”. On a first reading, this poem depicts a typical scene when the cold wind and rustling rain are subjects for traditional topos on the lament for autumn. However, more importantly, this poem documents how an enduring self has been through a period of autumn rain: beginning with the “the wind and rain speed autumn on its way” and ending in “already tears have soaked her window's gauze”. During the process, a gradual transition of the sound of rain (from the water-clock-like pounding to the persistent drip) indicates that time has passed. This transition is observed by the lyrical subject with an autumn-like body, who is not only a subject startled from her “autumn dream” at one point, but who has been watching the candle and listening to the “pelting rain and soughing wind” “all night”. Moreover, this is not a subject who simply observes the process as an outsider, but a subject who is sensing the tiniest nuance through her sensations: the sight of withered flowers and leaves, the flickering candle, and the sounds from the wind and rain together “evoking the grief of separation, its pain”. Perhaps this quality of continuity in her poem will be more evident if compared with a poem Baoyu writes earlier with a similar title as one of the “four garden nights poems”:

秋夜即事

絳芸軒里絕喧嘩，桂魄流光浸茜紗。
苔鎖石紋容睡鶴，井飄桐露濕棲鴉。
抱衾婢至舒金鳳，倚檻人歸落翠花。
靜夜不眠因酒渴，沉煙重撥索烹茶。

Autumn

The red pavilion scented with rue is hushed,
Moonlight floods the gauze dyed with madder;
Crows asleep by the well are wet with dew from the plane trees,
And storks roost on mossy boulders,
A maid spreads the gold-phoenix quilt,
The girl coming back from the balcony drops her trinkets;
Sleepless at night and thirsty after wine
I relight the incense and call for fresh tea.

(HLM,23:313; DRM451-52)

While the differences between the two poems are quite obvious in terms of mood and setting, the representations of the experience of time are even more distinctive. If Daiyu's poem describes a sense of continuous flow with a susceptible self, then Baoyu's poem converts this continuous flow into spatialized images, with a completely disinterested observer. These "separate, disparate and unrelated"⁹¹ images like "red pavilion", "crows asleep", "roosting storks", "the maid with the gold-phoenix quilt" and "the girl with dropped trinkets" together create an almost motionless picture of an autumn night.

Moreover, Daiyu's subjective expression of the physical and mental consumption of an enduring self could find its exhaustive exhibition in the paragraph of her experience of sleeplessness. In the latter part of the novel, after awakening from a terrible nightmare in which Baoyu killed himself to prove his love for her, Daiyu is unable to go back to sleep. The novel depicts how she has been tossing and turning all night:

⁹¹ Hans Meyerhoff, *Time in literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955), 15.

黛玉一翻身，卻原來是一場噩夢。喉間猶是哽咽，心上還是亂跳，枕頭上已經濕透，肩背身心，但覺冰冷……又哭了一回，遍身微微的出了一點兒汗，扎掙起來，把外罩大襖脫了，叫紫鶯蓋好了被窩，又躺下去。翻來復去，那里睡得著。只聽得外面淅淅颯颯，又象風聲，又象雨聲。又停了一會子，又聽得遠遠的吆呼聲兒，卻是紫鶯已在那里睡著，鼻息出入之聲。自己扎掙著爬起來，圍著被坐了一會。覺得窗縫里透進一縷涼風來，吹得寒毛直豎，便又躺下。正要朦朧睡去，聽得竹枝上不知有多少家雀兒的聲兒，啾啾唧唧，叫個不住。那窗上的紙，隔著屜子，漸漸的透進清光來。

Daiyu turned over in her bed. So it had all been a nightmare. But she could feel her throat choking, her heart was still pounding, the top of her pillow had been drenched in sweat, and a tingly, icy sensation ran down her back and chilled her to the core....She began to weep, and tiny beads of sweat broke out down the length of her body. Finally she struggled up, took off her outer robe and told Nightingale to make the bed. She lay down again, and began turning restlessly from side to side, unable to get to sleep. She could hear the gentle sighing of the wind outside her window- or was it the drizzle falling softly on the roof? She paused for a moment, then the sound died away and she thought she could hear someone calling in the distance. But it was only Nightingale, who had already fallen asleep and was snoring in a corner of the room. With a great effort, Daiyu struggled out of bed, wrapped the quilt around her and sat up for a while. An icy draught from a crack in the casement soon sent her shivering back under the covers again. She was just beginning to doze off when the Sparrows struck up their dawn-chorus from their nests in the bamboos. First light was gradually beginning to show through the shutters and paper window-panes.”

(HLM,82:1162; SS4:65-6; modified)

The depiction of the nightmare in the previous paragraph has been regarded as the most remarkable exploration of the subconscious mind in traditional Chinese novel writing.⁹² This narrative of “post-nightmare” experience, I argue, with its disturbing realism, is equally important in terms of constructing the protagonist’s temporal experience. In the darkness of night, Daiyu was nothing but senses. Having been completely released from the functions of acting and thinking, Daiyu’s body was only there to move and feel. She turned over, she wept, she sweated, she struggled up, she

⁹² Hsia, C.T., *The Classic Chinese Novel: A Critical Introduction*. (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2016), 251.

lay down, and she turned from side to side. She could feel her “throat” choking, her “heart” pounding and her “back” and “core” which had been left with a tingly icy sensation. Moreover, her movements and sensations are depicted as a temporal succession: at the beginning, her heart “was still” pounding when she found her pillow “had been” drenched. Then after weeping and sweating, she lay down and turned over “again”. On hearing a sound “she paused for a moment” and “then” the sound died away. She then sat up “for a while” and then lay down again. Finally, she “was just beginning to” doze off “when” she heard the sparrows’ dawn-chorus and saw the first light “was gradually beginning to” come through the window. By removing other experience related to spatial motion, temporal experience becomes most prominent. Time in a way takes on flesh and becomes visible and appreciable in this fictional experience. By making subjective sensations a successive changing pattern, the narrative enables time to be perceivable. And Daiyu’s bodily feelings becomes faculties to sense the experience of time. In this sense, just as the riddle at the beginning of this section indicates, Daiyu’s tossing body turns into burning incense, enduring over the passage of time.

1.3 Fallen Flower: A Doomed Self

“未卜儂身何日喪”

“Divine how soon or late my body shall die?”

(HLM,27:371; my translation)

If one experience that Daiyu has to have to be in the human world is to endure the “passage of time”, then another equally important aspect is the experience of imagining the “ending of time”. Death is imagined as “a terminal event” which she must attend in her effort to “locate experiencing in time”.⁹³ And, if Daiyu’s sense of self

⁹³ Frederick J. Hoffman, *Mortal No: Death and the Modern Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), 429.

is presented almost in a spontaneous manner within the duration, it witnesses its most serious crisis when the prospect of death is brought in. This crisis of Daiyu's sense of self is constructed chronologically as a trackable process: first her mind is awakened, then she struggles to find an answer, and finally she seems to adopt the idea that once she refused. This crisis deriving from the "ending" further complicates the portrayal of Daiyu's sense of self and runs throughout her life.

The awakening of the crisis happens in a mimetic context. One day on her way back after burying flowers with Baoyu in the garden, Daiyu happens to hear a song from the romantic tragicomedy play *Mudan ting* 牡丹亭 (*The Peony Pavilion*) sung by their home-raised actresses. The song depicts how the young heroine Du Liniang 杜麗娘 is sighing for the swift passing of youth and beauty after a tour in a wasted garden:

“原來妖紫嫣紅開遍，似這般都付與斷井頹垣。”林黛玉聽了，倒也十分感慨纏綿，便止住步側耳細聽……“則為你如花美眷，似水流年……”林黛玉聽了這兩句，不覺心動神搖。又聽道：“你在幽閨自憐”等句，亦發如醉如痴，站立不住，便一蹲身坐在一塊山子石上，細嚼“如花美眷，似水流年”八個字的滋味。忽又想起前日見古人詩中有“水流花謝兩無情”之句，再又有詞中有“流水落花春去也，天上人間”之句，又兼方纔所見《西廂記》中“花落水流紅，閑愁萬種”之句，都一時想起來，湊聚在一處。仔細忖度，不覺心痛神痴，眼中落淚。

“What a riot of brilliant purple and tender crimson,
Among the ruined wells and crumbling walls.”

Strangely touched by this, she stopped to listen....

“For you are as fair as a flower
And youth is slipping away like flowing water.”

Daiyu's heart missed a beat. And the next line

“Alone you sit in your secluded chamber”

Affected her so much that she sank down on a rock to ponder the words.

“For you are as fair as a flower
And youth is slipping away like flowing water.”

They reminded her of a line in an old poem:

“Water flows and flowers fall, knowing no pity...”

And the lines from another poem:

“Spring departs with the flowing water and fallen blossom,
Far, far away as heaven from the world of men.”

She compared this with the lines she had just read in *The Western Chamber*:

“Flowers falls, the water flows red,
A thousand kinds of grief...”

As she brooded over the meaning of all these verses, her heart ached and tears coursed down her cheeks.

(HLM, 23:316-17; DRM: 458-59, modified)

Zhiyanzhai makes a comment on this scene, “first with the prose of ‘West Chamber’, then the drama of ‘the Peony Pavilion’”, combined with lyric poems of feelings and scenes which are enough tear out her soul and spirit, (the author) is just eager to plant the root cause of Daiyu’s sickness after all.”⁹⁴ Here Zhiyanzhai reminds us that this occasion could be the origin of Daiyu’s later problem. However, what exactly is this “sickness” and how could a few snatches of the arias have such a dramatic impact on her? Those readers recalling the previous scene when Baoyu was deeply moved by a verse “naked and empty-handed through the world to roam with no care” (赤條條來去無牽掛) (HLM, 22:297; my translation) from another Buddhist-themed opera will at once notice the distinction of Daiyu’s responses. In the former case, Daiyu cannot help feeling “amused” and views Baoyu’s “enlightenment” only as “a joke”. (HLM,22:298) But on this occasion, these lines not only render Daiyu’s legs numb and cause her body to collapse, but also her “heart” is moved and torturous.

This moment when Daiyu overhears lines from the dramas and get moved could be seen as a form of “enlightenment through love” (*yi qing wu dao* 以情悟道). The widely accepted character in the novel that got enlightened through love is Baoyu. When discussing the issue, Wai-yee Li argues that Baoyu’s love “rests on a certain nondifferentiation of self and other” which could be seen as “the spontaneity and acute

⁹⁴ “前以《會真記》文，後以《牡丹亭》曲，加以有情有景消魂落魄詩詞，總是急於令顰兒種病根也”。
(ZP,23: 435, Gengchen manuscript; my translation)

sensitivity of a lyrical consciousness that cannot see the boundary between self and other”.⁹⁵ For Daiyu, the love that may bring her enlightenment has to be related to her own personal concerns, namely, the immortality and transience of her own life.

Anthony Yu observes that one apparent reason that Daiyu is so moved by the dramatic texts here lies “not only most forceful in their glorification of heterosexual love, but also most daring in their portraits of young women living through their own sexual awakening”.⁹⁶ Just like Zhiyianzhai’s note on the side pointing out, “warning a ‘maiden of emotion’ with the lyrics of another ‘maiden of emotion’” (情小姐故以情小姐詞曲警之，恰極當極). (ZP,23: 425, Gengchen manuscript; my translation) Only this mimetic context full of “emotion” of fictional heroines Du Liniang and Cui Yingying is able to arouse the sense of self which she was unaware of before. Another aspect which is even more significant lies in the temporal experience related to the emotion. Viewing human emotion as vanity and nothingness, the essence of the Buddhist verse is all about getting rid of normal concerns—the desire to attain good things and to avoid bad things⁹⁷—and to develop “a mind of renunciation, freed from attachment to temporal, worldly things.”⁹⁸ By contrast, the verses which touch Daiyu in this scene all express the emotion stirred by a prospective ending of beautiful things, the flowers, the maiden and the spring, that a Zen master should deny. This “terror of impermanence” not only comes from her anticipating the “short-lived prosperity and impending doom of the

⁹⁵ Wai-ye Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment: Love and Illusion in Chinese Literature* (Princeton University Press, 1993), 220.

⁹⁶ Anthony C. Yu, *Rereading the Stone: Desire and the Making of Fiction in Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 207.

⁹⁷ For example, the idea of “eight world concerns” (the preoccupation with gain and loss, pleasure and pain, praise and blame, and fame and disgrace) are regarded as the criteria to distinguish “foolish” ordinary people and wiser people who practice Buddhism. See Buswell, R., & Lopez, D, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 72.

⁹⁸ Susan J. Stabile, *Growing in Love and Wisdom: Tibetan Buddhist Sources for Christian Meditation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 181.

Jia household”,⁹⁹ but also her own fated decaying just like the garden. It is “because of” the existence of the “flowerlike fair”, that the “flipping youth” becomes unbearable. This plot marks the awakening of Daiyu’s sense of self, because since then, “the prospect of death thus enters, as an integral and ineradicable part”¹⁰⁰ into her experience and a “flowerlike”, doomed image starts to emerge. In this sense, what Zhiyanzhai means by a beginning of Daiyu’s “sickness” may not only refer to a sickness of body, but a sickness of “heart”.¹⁰¹

This crisis of self-identity then sees its strongest outburst in the *Flower Burial Song* she composes, a query about the fate of the flower as well as herself, shortly after the mimetic situation. On the day of the festival of Grain in Ear, when other girls are gathering together enjoying themselves in the garden, Daiyu goes to her flower-grave alone and recites a song she writes, while weeping over the fallen flowers. The first half of the song recalls the flower-burial experience just before overhearing the song from the drama: how the mourning girl comes out of her boudoir to see a scene of the late spring:

柳絲榆莢自芳菲， 不管桃飄與李飛。
桃李明年能再發， 明年閨中知有誰？
三月香巢已壘成， 梁間燕子太無情！
明年花發雖可啄， 卻不道人去梁空巢也傾。
一年三百六十日， 風刀霜劍嚴相逼，
明媚鮮妍能幾時， 一朝飄泊難尋覓。
Willows and elms, fresh and verdant,
Care not if peach and plum blossom drift away;
Next year the peach and plum will bloom again,

⁹⁹ Anthony C. Yu, *Rereading the Stone: Desire and the Making of Fiction in Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 208.

¹⁰⁰ Hans Meyerhoff, *Time in literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955), 66.

¹⁰¹A sickness of heart can also be understood as a term 心病 referring to mental anxiety and anguish.

But which of your companions will remain?

By the third month the scented nests are built,
But the swallow on the beam are heartless all;
Next year, though once again you may peck the buds,
From the beam of an empty room your nest will fall.

Each year for three hundred and sixty days
The cutting wind and biting frost contend.
How long can beauty flower fresh and fair?
In a single day wind can whirl it to its end.
(HLM,27:370; DRM:539-40; modified)

After making several disturbing inquiries: how long can a fresh flower last and who will pity the fallen flowers, she then begins to “accuse” the “thoughtless” willows and elms for they “care not if peach and plum blossom drift away” and the “heartless” swallows for they will peck the buds as usual, regardless of the disappeared girl, the empty room and the falling nest. Since none of these creatures are able to feel, appreciate, or pity the fallen flowers like her, it actually expresses the anger and shock when she is exposed to a venerable paradox that “only the person of consciousness\feelings (*you qing ren* 有情人)...can best discern the indifference of time, its refusal to accommodate the human longing for stability and changelessness”.¹⁰² Then in the latter part of the poem, all the anger and shock find their real root:

願奴脅下生雙翼，隨花飛到天盡頭。
天盡頭，何處有香丘？
未若錦囊收艷骨，一抔淨土掩風流。
質本潔來還潔去，強于污淖陷渠溝。
爾今死去儂收葬，未卜儂身何日喪？

¹⁰² Anthony C. Yu, *Rereading the Stone: Desire and the Making of Fiction in Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 208.

儂今葬花人笑痴，他年葬儂知是誰？
試看春殘花漸落，便是紅顏老死時。
一朝春盡紅顏老，花落人亡兩不知！

I long to take wing and fly
With the flowers to earth's uttermost bound;
And yet at earth's uttermost bound
Where can a fragrant burial mound be found?

Better shroud the fair petals in silk
And bury the grace with clean soil;
For pure you came pure shall go,
Not sinking into some foul ditch or mire.

Now you are dead I come to bury you;
Divine how soon or late my body shall die?
Men laugh at my folly in burying fallen flowers,
But who will bury me when dead I lie?

See when the spring draws to a close and flowers fall,
This is the season when beauty must ebb and fade;
The day that spring goes and beauty fades
Dead Maiden and fallen flowers will both be insentient.
(HLM,27:370-71; DRM: p540-43; modified)

The lyrical subject's level of self-consciousness reaches its climax when the personal pronoun "I" suddenly appears at this part.¹⁰³ It exposes that all the unreasonable agony and anger are actually the exhibition of her painful confusion over her fortune: will she herself, the "flowerlike fair", will suffer from the same destructive force of time? As she illustrates "beauty" by analogy with "spring", and "maiden" with "flowers" in

¹⁰³ The point of view in the song is rather vague in the original text. See Zhang Junping 張軍平, "lun fanyi zhong yupian shijiao de zhuanhuan: cong zanghuayin yingyi tanqi" 論翻譯中語篇視角的轉換: 從《葬花吟》英譯談起 [On the Transformation of Perspectives in Translation: starting from the English translation of the *Flower Burial Song*] *Xian waiguoyu xueyuan xuebao* 西安外國語學院學報 2005, no. 2: 67-71.

the lines, she is actually seeking herself a clean grave when she inquires: “Where can a fragrant burial mound be found” for dead flowers. In the same way, it would be natural to perceive that she is burying an imagined dead body of herself, when she is burying the fallen petals. Finally, when she cries out “divine how soon or late my body shall die” and “who will bury me when dead I lie”, it is crystal clear that her sense of self, which is haunted by the prospect of death, is the paramount preoccupation of the song.

Furthermore, it is revealing to take a look at Baoyu’s view on the prospect of death as well. As a *zhi ji* 知己 “true friend who understands” (HLM, 32:434; my translation) of Daiyu, Baoyu also talks about his idea of “a glorious death” with his principal maid Aroma:

比如我此時若果有造化，該死於此時的，趁你們在，我就死了，再能夠你們哭我的眼淚流成大河，把我的屍首漂起來，送到那鴉雀不到的幽僻之處，隨風化了，自此再不要托生為人，就是我死的得時了。

In my own case, if I have any luck I should die now with all of you around me; still better if your tears for me were to become a great stream and float my corpse away to some quite spot deserted even by crows or any other birds, to vanish with the wind, never again to be born as a human being. That’s how I should like to die.

(HLM, 36: 506; DRM: 717)

Providing both of them with an imaginative framework to acknowledge and express themselves, the prospect of death outlines rather different implications in terms of their sense of self. Baoyu’s prospect of death is located on an aesthetic scene where all the pretty girls are there crying over his body. His sense of self, therefore, is built on a spatialized experience of being grieved, recognized, appreciated by his “appreciative audience of females”.¹⁰⁴ While sharing an abnormal fear of dirt or contamination (“for

¹⁰⁴ Martin W. Huang, *Desire and fictional narrative in late imperial China* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 278. To read more about this aspect of Baoyu’s self-indulgence, see chapter ten of the book: “Qing and the Reluctance to Grow up in *Hong Lou Meng*”.

pure you came pure shall go, not sinking into some foul ditch or mire”), Daiyu’s sense of self in parallel with fading flowers, is largely defined by the temporalized experience of changes and its movement towards death. (“see when the spring draws to a close and flowers fall, this is the season when beauty must ebb and fade”). Then a paradoxical plight appears in the last line when death renders both the maiden and fallen flowers “insentient”:¹⁰⁵ It is the prospect of death that evokes her sense of self, but it is death itself that will eventually eliminate it.

Being totally different from the childish vows of the possibility of her death that she makes when she is taunting Baoyu,¹⁰⁶ this performance of the flower burial ritual can be regarded as a simulated death experience for Daiyu when her crisis of self is reaching its highest. From then on, the similar painfully queries about what will happen to her body and self in the future are rarely heard from her. She seems to adopt the idea that she is doomed and will suffer from the same fate as the fallen flowers. The crisis turns then into a persistent anxiety with underlying effects on her thoughts, experience and action. Soon afterwards, Daiyu happens to overhear Baoyu praising her unreservedly in front of other people with affection and she realized Baoyu’s true feeling for her. This was a precious acknowledgment that she has been longing for. But at this delightful moment, Daiyu still worries it will not last:

況近日每覺神思恍惚，病已漸成，醫者更云氣弱血虧，恐致勞怯之症，你我雖為知己，但恐自不能久待，你縱為我知己，奈我薄命何！

I have recently been suffering from dizzy spells and I know that my illness is gradually gaining a hold on me. Also, the doctor had warned that my deficiency in vital energy and

¹⁰⁵ The term *bu zhi* 不知 in the last line which I have chosen to translate as “be insentient” rather than “be dead” or “(does not) care for” as David Hawkes and Yang have translated in their versions, carries an implicit emphasis on the ability to sense, to feel and to experience.

¹⁰⁶ We will talk about how Baoyu and Daiyu communicate with each other in detail in chapter two of the thesis.

blood might end in consumption. Even if I am your true love, I fear I may not be able to wait for you long. And what use that you are mine if I am fated to die?

(HLM, 32:434; my translation)

Here, unusually, Daiyu refers to terms from the doctor's medical diagnosis: *qiruo* and *xuekui*, literally, deficient of vital energy and blood. But what should be noticed here is not only what terms she applies, but how she applies the term: she is not only understanding herself as one who suffers from certain kinds of malady temporarily, but one who can feel the way illness is "gaining a hold" because she is "fated to die". In one word, her sense of self is more to be intertwined with the prospect of death than specific physical symptoms. That's also explain why when Baochai suggests inviting a good doctor to come and examine her during their heart-to-heart talk, Daiyu simply declines. She seems to fully anticipate and adopt her own fate as doomed by "Heaven", the mysterious substance of temporality:

黛玉道：“不中用。我知道我這樣病是不能好的了。且別說病，只論好的日子我是怎麼形景，就可知了……‘死生有命，富貴在天’，也不是人力可強的。今年比往年反覺又重了些似的。”

“It's no use,” was Daiyu's reply. ‘I have a hunch I shall never get over this. You know how poorly I am at the best of times, let alone when I'm ill... ‘life and death are determined by fate, rank and riches decreed by Heaven,’ quoted Daiyu with a sigh. ‘It's beyond the power of man to alter fate. It seems to me my illness is worse this year.’ This short speech had been punctuated by several bouts of coughing.

(HLM,45:606; DRM:911)

In the middle of the novel, on the night of Baoyu's birthday, girls in the prospect garden feast to celebrate. They decide to draw lots using flower drawings instead of slips of paper, in a board game while drinking wine. The lots are placed in the box, each lot shows a drawing of a kind of flower with a poem and is accompanied by drinking rules. When the order is given, one person makes a draw and drinks according to the rules. The draw that Daiyu pulls out is a hibiscus flower with the motto “*feng lu qing chou*”

風露清愁 (“Quiet and sad in wind and dew”) and the line “Blame not the East Wind but lament yourself”(莫怨東風當自嗟). (DRM: 1336; modified; HLM, 63:872)

While others are cheering as Daiyu draws out the hibiscus that is compared to her, the implication of the line is in a way neglected. The line Daiyu receives comes from a famous poem on the tragic fate of Wang Zhaojun 王昭君, one of the Four Beauties of ancient China, by the Song Dynasty poet Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072). The previous line is “over the greatest beauties hangs the worst fate” (紅顏勝人多薄命), which was very likely to be known to most people at that time. The doom and gloom prophecy expressed in the poem does not upset other girls as much as it does as Daiyu. Rather, it seems to meet her anticipation or at least, not to displease her when she “smiled too as she drank”. (DRM: 1336)

The readers should not forget that the term “ill-fated beauty” *boming hongyan* 薄命紅顏 in this line has been brought up many times in Daiyu’s thoughts and writings throughout the novel. Literally translated as “a thin life”, *bo ming* indicate a person’s being “ill-fated”, often resulting in death. *Hongyan* means “beautiful face”, often referring to a young and beautiful girl in most cases. There is an overwhelming regret implied by this term that beautiful girls always have a tragic fate. The implications are defined by three elements: “fate”, “death” and “beauty”. A primitive image of a short-lived beauty, driven by mysterious force from fate and time, somehow shadows Daiyu throughout all her life. Of course it is designed by the author in the first place, when Daiyu, as one of those “amorous spirits who had not atoned for their sins” (風流冤家) (HLM,1:9; DRM:9) becomes a human protagonist only to repay the karmic debt from a previous life. However, throughout the novel, Daiyu, as an autonomous and wilful protagonist, almost reinforces the tragic implications of “fate”, “death” and “beauty” in her sense of self.

Right after the feast night of drawing the flower lots, Daiyu writes an *Ode to Five Beauties* (五美吟), which consists of five verses on five famous women in history. Apart from Wang Zhaojun, there are Xi Shi 西施, Yu Ji 虞姬, Lu Zhu 綠珠 and Hongfu 紅拂. It seems that the prophecy she had read the other day has had a subtle impact on Daiyu, so that she writes down her own ode to respond to it unconsciously, in which her first two verses on Zhaojun: “A breath-taking beauty banished from the Han Palace—From where old beautiful girls have a shared a sorry fate” (絕艷惊人出漢宮，紅顏薄命古今同) (DRM:1370; HLM, 64:892) is almost like a paraphrase of the one drawn out in the lot. This action indicates how the idea of an ill-fated beauty from the lot could have an underlying effect on her psychologically.

This encourages the reader to relate the idea to her self-pity and even her self-destruction. Throughout the novel, Daiyu seems to positively look for ways of spoiling her own body and making herself miserable. Xiangyun feels so confused over Daiyu’s behaviour she remarks when the two were admiring the moon on the Mid-Autumn Festival night : “You are an intelligent (*ming bai* 明白) girl, why behaving like this to torture yourself (*zi ku* 自苦) ?” (HLM, 76:1061; my translation) All these comments suggest that it is “herself” who should be, at least partly, responsible for her bodily and mental suffering. In this sense, the prophecy written on the flower lot (“Blame not the East Wind but lament yourself”) might be interpreted another way: her enduring and doomed fate is not caused by the fictional design (East wind), but by her own will. And the scene of her drawing lots by her own hand is of great symbolic meaning. This is a scene where the fictional design and personal will converge: Daiyu is choosing a life to live and a self to adopt, even this is a self of continual endurance, of being cursed to death.

The same choice sees its representation in the song-lyric she writes on the catkins when they resuscitated the poetry club in the latter part of the novel. At that time Daiyu

has just witnessed a tragic death in the family which is very likely to have brought the concern of into her mind:¹⁰⁷

粉墮百花州，香殘燕子樓。一團團逐對成毬。飄泊亦如人命薄，空繾綣，說風流。
草木也知愁，韶華竟白頭！嘆今生誰舍誰收？嫁與東風春不管，憑爾去，忍淹留。

Pink petals fall in Hundred Flowers Islet,
By Swallow Tower their fragrance slowly fades;
Catkins following in clusters
Float off like ill-fated maids;
Vain their close attachment and beauty.
The willow too knows what it is to yearn;
In early prime her head turns white,
She laments her life but has no one to whom to turn.
The east wind to whom she is wedded no pity will show,
Leaving it to chance whether to stay or go.
(HLM, 70:971; DRM:2115; modified)

Even when writing a song-lyric on plants she cannot help connecting their fate to that of people, to think about how catkins “float off like ill-fated maids” and how the willow’s head “turns white” “in early prime”. She is reminded of her sense of a doomed self whenever she finds something helpless and dependent. And Baoyu’s comments on her poem on peach blossom earlier that day that Daiyu could write mournful lines because she understands grief (Chapter 70), applies to this one as well. It would be revealing to look at the way Baochai’s song-lyric on the same subject is expressed:

白玉堂前春解舞，東風卷得均勻。蜂團蝶陣亂紛紛。几曾隨逝水，豈必委芳塵。
萬縷千絲終不改，任他隨聚隨分。韶華休笑本無根，好風頻借力，送我上青雲！

Dancing at ease in spring before white jade halls,
Swirling gracefully in the east wind.
While whirling all around me

¹⁰⁷ Though the narrative does not describe Daiyu’s response to this incident directly, You erjie 尤二姐, the concubine of Jia Lian, swallowed gold to commit suicide a little while ago.

Are butterflies and bees.
I have never followed the flowing stream,
Why then should I abandon myself to the dust?
Constant to ten thousand boughs,
Whether together or parted I keep trust.
Do no jeer at youth as rootless,
But lend me strength, good wind,
To soar up to the azure sky at last.
(HLM, 70:972; DRM:2117; modified)

If the east wind appears to be a destructive force in Daiyu's song, in contrast, it is a beneficial strength in Baochai's. Their different preoccupations are decided by their different experience of lifetime. The novel describes Baochai as "being content with her obligation and able to adapt herself to different occasions". (HLM,8: 119; my translation) In other words, Baochai seems to be resting in "what is happening at present". No matter what the circumstance is, the prospect is not in her mind at all. By contrast, Daiyu tends to be concerned and anxious about the final ending of her fate, which makes the transience of mortal beings prominent. In a word, Daiyu's sense of self has always been experienced in the framework of doom.

Daiyu's attitude can find its subtlest representation in the plot of the kite-flying in chapter 70. Just when the poetry club members were making comments on their song-lyrics on the catkins, an unknown kite became entangled in the bamboo and made a loud sound. The kite drove all the girls to the Prospect Garden, and they began to fly kites together for fun. However, the plot of flying kites is not only a relaxing interlude but may have a deeper implication. As Zhiyanzhai reminds us in his chapter comments, "previously, the novel depicts lantern-riddles and the solving of them; there the novel narrates kites and the flying of them. Actually, the two narratives are making the same

crucial point”(前文敘燈謎，敘猜燈謎，此文敘風箏，敘放風箏，是一樣機軸)。¹⁰⁸ The narrative of Daiyu’s flying kite is rather symbolic, especially for the fact that, releasing a kite means getting rid of bad luck at the same time. After getting their kite, her maiden flew it for a while until ‘the wind’s getting stronger’. She then passed it to Daiyu, letting her mistress release it:

黛玉聽說，用手帕墊著手，頓了一頓，果然風緊力大，接過簞子來，隨著風箏的勢將簞子一鬆，只聽一陣豁刺刺響，登時簞子線盡。黛玉因讓眾人來放。眾人都笑道：“各人都有，你先請罷。”黛玉笑道：“這一放，雖有趣，只是不忍。”李紈道：“放風箏圖的是這一樂，所以又說放晦氣，你更該多放些，把你這病根兒都帶了去就好了。”紫鵲笑道：“我們姑娘越發小氣了。哪一年不放幾個子？今忽然又心疼了。姑娘不放，等我放。”說著，向雪雁手中接過一把西洋小銀剪子來，齊簞子根下寸絲不留，咯登一聲鉸斷，笑道：“這一去把病根兒可都帶了去了！”

Daiyu wrapped a handkerchief round her hand and pulled. Sure enough, the wind was blowing hard. She took the reel and paid out the cord. As the kites soared off, the reel whirred and all of a sudden the whole cord had run out. Then she urged the rest to let their kites drift away.

“we are all ready,” they said. “You start first.”

“Though it’s fun to let it go, I haven’t the heart to.” She replied with a smile.

“Kite-flying is just for fun, that’s why we call it ‘sending off bad luck,’” said Li Wan. “You should do this more often, and then you might get rid of that illness of yours. Wouldn’t that be a good thing?”

“Our young lady’s getting more and more stingy,” put in Zijuan. “We always send off a few kites every year, so why begrudge one today? If you won’t do it, miss, I will.” She took from Xueyan a pair of small silver Western scissors, and clipped the cord tied to the reel.

“There!” She said with a laugh. “That’ll carry off her illness.”

(HLM,70:974-75; DRM: 1522)

¹⁰⁸ See Zhiyanzhai, “*Honglou meng ping*” 《紅樓夢》評 [Comments on *Dream of the Red Chamber*], in *Honglou meng ziliao huibian* 《紅樓夢》資料匯編 [Compilation of Material of *Dream of the Red Chamber*] eds. Zhu Yixuan 朱一玄 (Tianjin: Nankai daxue chubanshe, 1985), 484.

The “tension” and the “force” of the wind are emphasised when Daiyu was flying the kite. The “wind” here reminds the readers of the *Dongfeng* (“east wind”) that has repeatedly appeared in poems related to Daiyu. For example, the verse she got when drawing the flower lots in chapter 63 reads “blame not the east wind but lament yourself” and a line from the lyric she wrote on catkin is “The east wind to whom she is wedded no pity will show”. At the time when they were flying the kites, it happened to be an “early spring” when the wind comes from the east. While the east wind in the spring usually represents warm and gentle power that brings life to the world, for Daiyu, it becomes a symbol of the destructive force, for its implication of the passage of time which could render flowers withered. Therefore, the scene of her striving to hold onto the string, fighting against the wind somehow becomes symbolic, as if she was trying to hold her precious thing from being taken away.

Then at the moment when she should cut the kite-string, Daiyu suddenly hesitated. When other girls urged her to cut her kite to get rid of her bad luck, her response was rather confusing. She seemed to feel “pity” to let it go, even the kite in the context had a more specific reference: her chronic illness which was torturing her. Perhaps the drifting kite should remind her of catkins, of withered lotus, of fallen flowers, of anything that is enduring and fading, and ultimately, her sense of self. Daiyu seems to have a rather ambivalent attitude toward the dark side in her sense of self. On the one hand, she agrees with others that it’s better to let it go; on the other hand, she is somehow attached to it. She is defined by her bad luck, her sick body, and her fate. If she is a girl without a sick body and cursed fate, then who is she?

At the end of this scene, after Zijuan has cut the kite for Daiyu, the narrative does not depict Daiyu’s response at all: whether she was in approval or not, whether she had a satisfied smile or showed unexpected surprise is unknown to the reader. Then the narrative slows down and turns to a detailed depiction of how the kite has flown away.

The course of time is extended by the narrative tempo, as if to imitate a long gazing and an endless pity and sorrow:

那風箏飄飄颻颻，只管往後退了去，一時只有雞蛋大小，展眼只剩了一點黑星兒，再展眼便不見了。

The kite drifted away until soon it seemed no bigger than an egg, then it dwindled to a speck like a black star and the next minute vanished from sight.

(HLM,70:974-75; DRM: 1522)

1.4 Chapter Conclusion

In this first chapter of the thesis, I seek to answer the question: what temporal experiences are involved in the construction of the female protagonist Lin Daiyu's sense of self in *Honglou meng*?

As one of the most narcissistic characters in the novel, Daiyu appears to be rather self-pitying and even self-destructive in her everyday lives. This tendency Daiyu has always been ascribed to her worldly concerns or her unique personality. In departure from the previous studies, I propose that the pessimistic and destructive tendency is actually derived from her individual temporal experience of being in the world, which are achieved via her sick body that she was born with.

As the reincarnation of a fairy plant coming to the world of mortals to repay a karmic debt, Daiyu is born with a sick body of idiopathic disease as designed in the novel. Rather than merely a physical deficiency, the sick body is more like a metaphorical device through which two primary engagements with time are delivered. To be specific, these two engagements with time of Daiyu's sense of self are mainly made up of two aspects: suffering from the present and anticipating the future. On the one hand, like a continuously burning incense clock, Daiyu's sick body seems to be affected and even eroded in the succession of temporal changes. Not only her sick body gradually

deteriorates with the passing of time (like perpetually shedding of tears and sleeplessness), but also herself is consistently conscious of the way her sick body endures over years, as is manifested in her own writings about changes of the seasons.

On the other hand, imagining the prospect of death also contributes to the construction of the sense of self. If Daiyu's enduring and suffering over time is presented in a rather mild manner, the imagination of the prospective death is represented as a series of life crisis for Daiyu: first her mind is awakened, then she struggles to find an answer, finally she adopts and even reinforces the idea that she is ill-fated. The strongest manifestation of the crisis can be seen in the *Flower Burial Song*, in which Daiyu makes a query about the final ending of the flower as well her own sick body. It is through these two engagements with time that the complex portrayal of an enduring and doomed image of Daiyu comes into being through the process. The chapter joined the main argument of the thesis in the sense that the construction of image of one of its most important characters, is closely related to the temporal aspects of the experience of living in the world.

Chapter Two Love, Communication and Temporal Development

At the outset of *Honglou meng*, a discussion about the “breeze-and-moonlight tales”, or the usual run of love stories, is undertaken between a Buddhist monk and a Daoist. According to them, these tales “have never really expressed the true emotionality of men and women”(并不曾將兒女之真情發泄一二), (HLM,1:9; my translation) however, the lover and the love story depicted in this novel would be nothing like those of its predecessors. The comment, which is more likely made by a novelist than a clergy indicates a discontent with clichéd love narrative at the time as well as an ambition to compose a romantic story featured by a redefined sensibility. While there are a variety

of devoted lovers depicted in the novel, this ambition may best be manifested in the love story of its protagonists Jia Baoyu and Lin Daiyu.

We have mentioned in the previous chapter that Daiyu has a close and intimate relationship with her cousin Jia Baoyu. In this chapter, I will focus on the literary construction of their intimate relationship in the novel. Born as cousins, Baoyu and Daiyu are brought up together in the same household of the aristocratic Jia family. With both the engagement in their previous life and a shared passion for arts, they become extremely close and connected to each other at an early age. However, despite their mutual affinity, the development of the relationship is fraught with difficulty and struggling.¹⁰⁹ Eventually, it is arranged by his family that Baoyu should marry Xue Baochai, another of his cousins, and Daiyu dies while they are having their wedding ceremony.¹¹⁰ The sentimental and tragic love story of the two has since it was written strongly engaged the emotionality of readers who find the book not only exciting and absorbing, on occasion to the extent that it has proved fatal.¹¹¹

In discussing the difference between the romantic narrative in *Honglou meng* and traditional romantic narrative such as *Romance of the Western Chamber* and *The Peony Pavilion*, C.T. Hsia observes that, “by placing his hero and heroines of comparable social status and romantic articulateness in a tragic impasse”, the author of *Honglou meng* “may be said to have aimed at a truth at once more socially complex

¹⁰⁹ “As for the relationship between Baoyu and Daiyu, though appearing to be close, it is actually remote. If not, why do all those series of arguments and debates derive from Daiyu? Moreover, even Baoyu’s smashing of his jade, and Daiyu’s drying of her tears—all those obstacles of action, all those depressions and discontents, are all because of being trapped by passion. What is there to say about it” (至顰兒於寶玉實近之至矣，卻遠之至也。不然，後文如何反較勝角口諸事皆出於顰哉？以及寶玉砸玉，顰兒之淚枯，種種孽障，種種憂忿，皆情之所陷，更何辯哉？)(ZP,21: 390, Gengchen manuscript; my translation)

¹¹⁰ Here I follow the plot of the Cheng-Gao versions.

¹¹¹ For example, Qing writer Yue Jun 樂鈞 (1766-1814) records a girl dies from lovesickness as a result of reading *Honglou meng*. See Yue Jun, “*Chi nvzi*” 痴女子 [A Lovesick Girl] in *Honglou meng ziliao huibian* 紅樓夢資料彙編 [Compilation of Material of Dream of the Red Chamber] ed. Yi Su 一粟 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1963), vol.2, 347.

and philosophically meaningful than that reached by his predecessors”.¹¹² These two tendencies to which Hsia refers happen to summarise the two primary scholarly emphases on the communion of Baoyu and Daiyu in *Honglou meng*: the social and the philosophical indications of the love story.

The social implication of the love of Baoyu and Daiyu has been widely demonstrated by critics of Marxist-Leninist literary criticism since the 1950s.¹¹³ Viewing the communion of the two as a symbol of an innocent, spiritual and rebellious nature, and the patriarchs of the Jia family as symbols of oppressive ethics and moralities, this discourse interprets the love story as the lives of young innocent lovers being ruined by federal authorities. Its basic argument is that the tragic love between Baoyu and Daiyu, which is the inevitable result of the conflict between their free-spirited nature and the oppression of the feudal system, shows an uncompromising struggle for and pursuit of individual liberation and autonomy.¹¹⁴

¹¹² C. T. Hsia, *The Classic Chinese Novel: A Critical Introduction* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2016), 239.

¹¹³ Li Xifan 李希凡 Lan Ling 藍翎, “Guanyu Honglou meng jianlun ji qita” 關於紅樓夢簡論及其他 [On A Brief Introduction on Dream of the Red Chamber and Others] (first published in 1954), in *Honglou meng pinglun Ji* 紅樓夢評論集 [Critical Collection of Dream of the Red Chamber] (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1973), 14.

¹¹⁴ This discourse which is apparently filled with political bias has a far-reaching repercussion on the discussion of the issue in the later half century in mainland China. See Guo Yuheng 郭預衡, “Lun Bao Dai aiqing beiju de shehui yiyi” 論寶、黛愛情悲劇的社會意義 [The social meaning of the tragedy of Baoyu and Daiyu’s love], *Beijing shifan daxue xuebao (shehui kexue)* 北京師範大學學報(社會科學), 1963, no. 03: 25-31. Zhang jinchi 張錦池, “Lun Lin daiyu xingge jiqi aiqing beiju” 論林黛玉性格及其愛情悲劇 [On the personality of Lin Daiyu and her tragedy of love], *Honglou meng xuekan* 紅樓夢學刊 1980, no. 02: 113-53. Zhang Jun, Wu Jinghuan 張俊, 武靜寰, “Bao Dai aiqing miaoxie zai zhongguo xiaoshuoshi shang de diwei” 寶黛愛情描寫在中國小說史上的地位 [The status of the description of Baoyu and Daiyu’s love], *Honglou meng xuekan* 紅樓夢學刊 1981, no. 02: 135-56. Yu Lei 于雷, “Bao Dai aiqing beiju de meixue jiazhi” 寶黛愛情悲劇的美學價值 [The aesthetic value of the tragedy of Baoyu and Daiyu’s love], *Honglou meng xuekan* 紅樓夢學刊 1985, no. 04: 45-64. Shi Suying 史素瑛, “Dui Bao Dai aiqing beiju de zairenshi” 對寶黛愛情悲劇的再認識 [Rethinking the tragedy of Baoyu and Daiyu’s love], *Shanghai daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 上海大學學報(社會科學版)1992, no. 06: 48-52. Li Jiandong 李建東, “Bao Dai aiqing beiju xin tan” 寶黛愛情悲劇新探 [Revisiting the tragedy of Baoyu and Daiyu’s love], *Quanzhou shifan xueyuan xuebao* 泉州師範學院學報 2001, no. 03: 69-72. Zhang Ruiqing 張蕊青, “Jinyu mushi meng yi tong bei: Honglou meng aiqing beiju de wenhua yiyun” 金玉木石 夢異悲同: 《紅樓夢》愛情悲劇的文化意蘊 [Cultural indication of the tragedy of love in Dream of the Red Chamber] *Mingqing xiaoshuo yanjiu* 明清小說研究 2008, no. 03: 131-38.

On the other hand, Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877-1927) talked about the problem of desire, especially love between men and women in *Honglou meng* from the perspective of philosophy. Wang believes that the stories narrated in the novel are primarily a literary exploration of the problem of love, which Schopenhauer in his essay “*Metaphysics of Love*” tries to demonstrate philosophically. Through the life stories of the protagonist Jia Baoyu and other characters, the novel aesthetically reveals the “endless” and “metaphysical” pain caused by desire and a possible way to become free from it.¹¹⁵ Lu Xiaojun reads the relationship between Baoyu and Daiyu as a reflection of the fragility of the nature of love, and the impossibility of the absolute accordance between two individuals.¹¹⁶ Tao Xiaohong approaches it from a Buddhist perspective, analysing how the romantic love portrayed in *Honglou meng* manifests a state of obsession caused by desire and an obstacle to the liberation of body and mind.¹¹⁷ More recently, Xiao Ying deems the tragedy of Baoyu and Daiyu to be the result of their different spirits and quality of life: whereas Baoyu holds compassion for human beings, Daiyu defends only her own emotional world.¹¹⁸

It is observed that both perspectives of interpretation tend to prove that the sentimental and tragic love story in *Honglou meng* bears a “profound” meaning, whether for a more complex social reality or a more meaningful philosophical indication. While these interpretations are all meaningful, these tendencies overlook that love is first of all a problem of personal communication and commitment of the individual. In a departure from the perspectives mentioned above, this chapter

¹¹⁵ Wang Guowei 王國維, “*Honglou meng pinglun*” 紅樓夢評論 [On the Dream of the Red Chamber], in *Wang Guowei wenxue lunzhu sanzong* 王國維文學論著三種 [Wang Guowei on Literature: Three Essays] (Beijing: Shangwu yinshu guan, 2017), 8.

¹¹⁶ Lu Xiaojun 魯小俊, “Bao Dai aiqing beiju xin lun” 寶黛愛情悲劇新論 [Re-discussion on the tragedy of Baoyu and Daiyu’s love], *Mingqing xiaoshuo yanjiu* 明清小說研究 2000, no. 02: 145.

¹¹⁷ Tao Xiaohong 陶小红, “Bao Dai Aiqing de foxue qishi” 寶黛愛情的佛學啟示 [The Buddhist inspiration of Baoyu and Daiyu’s love], *Honglou meng xuekan* 紅樓夢學刊 2014, no. 03 (2014): 203.

¹¹⁸ Xiao Ying 肖鷹, “Bao Dai weihe you qing wuyuan: yi Zhuangzi jieshuo Honglou meng” 寶黛為何有情無緣: 以《莊子》解說《紅樓夢》 [Why Baoyu and Daiyu are destined to be parted despite their love: illustrating Dream of the Red Chamber with the Zhuangzi], *Guizhou daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 貴州大學學報(社會科學版) 2021, no. 05: 44.

examines how the communication and interaction of the lovers unfold temporally in a specific and individual situation. I propose that the destructiveness of the love between Baoyu and Daiyu in the novel not only lies in suppressive forces of the society, but also in a difficulty in communication throughout the development of their close relationship. While at the early stage when they self-identify as innocent children, the primary obstacle comes from a lack of appropriate language to express their feelings of love towards each other, as they grow up gradually, it transforms into an increasing anxiety of both their maturation and their relationship.

To better illustrate this idea, I will first examine briefly how some representative traditional Chinese love narratives in the late imperial period construct intimate relationships chronologically. It is observed that the main interest of the usual run of romantic love stories lay in the adventures the lovers experienced to fulfil their desire rather than the development of love as a phenomenon of human psychology. There is little interest in describing what Bakhtin calls an “elementary biological or maturational duration”, in which new changes of personality and emotionality are brought in.¹¹⁹ In sharp contrast, in *Honglou meng*, a realistic, growing and changing development of the lovers’ intimate relationship, through which the lovers have become more aware and heavy-hearted is crucial to the literary construction of intimate relationship.

2.1 “Growth” in Late Imperial Love Narrative

While the problem of “growth” or “change” in love narrative could hardly be regarded as a systematic analytical tool, the study of the form of time conducted by the Bakhtin is a very enlightening tool by which to examine the issue. In his article “Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel”, Bakhtin analyses in detail how different literary genres

¹¹⁹ Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 90.

and styles come into being with different configurations of time and space. When talking about the Greek romance, he observes that there is an “extratemporal hiatus” between the “arousal of passion” and “its satisfaction” in the novels, in which there is no “elementary biological or maturational duration” and nothing new is introduced into the life of the lovers:

The first meeting of hero and heroine and the sudden flareup of their passion for each other is the starting point for plot movement; the end point of plot movement is their successful union in marriage. All action in the novel unfolds between these two points...But in essence nothing need lie between them. From the very beginning, the love between the hero and heroine is not subject to doubt; this love remains absolutely unchanged throughout the entire novel...it changes nothing in the life of the heroes, and introduces nothing into their life.¹²⁰

Moreover, his study on *Bildungsroman* may be seen as a complementary analysis of the issue. Bakhtin believes that the literary construction of “growth”, or “becoming” plays an important role in the quality of the novel: “changes in the hero himself acquire plot significance, and thus the entire plot of the novel is reinterpreted and reconstructed.”¹²¹ In this sense, although Bakhtin does not demonstrate systematically the relationship between the lack of maturational duration in Greek romance and its literary construction of romantic experience, a series of his studies upon the same issue does suggest that the former has a significant impact on the latter.

It is in this sense that I adopt the criteria of “growth”, or a maturational process, to briefly examine the literary construction of romantic relationship in the late imperial literature before *Honglou meng*. I will conduct this “prehistory” by discussing two representative types of love narratives at the time: Feng Menglong’s 馮夢龍 (1574-1646) realistic romantic fictions, and Tang Xianzu’s 湯顯祖 (1550-1616) romantic

¹²⁰ Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 89-90.

¹²¹ Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, Trans. Vern W. McGee (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 21.

tragicomedy play *The Peony Pavilion* (*Mudan ting* 牡丹亭). These texts are important not only as milestones in the history of Chinese romantic narrative, but also because they have been connected explicitly or implicitly with *Honglou meng* by scholars in terms of the images of lovers and the construction of their relationships.

In the preface of several representative love stories from *Stories to Awaken the World* (*Xingshi hengyan* 醒世恆言) written by Feng Menglong, Patrick Hanan summarises a typical schema of the plots:

With almost no opportunity to meet, lovers had to resort to elaborate stratagems and risky escapades. (Part of the pleasure for the reader of these stories comes from the *romantic adventure* itself; a reader's interest in fiction is commonly driven by either *fear or desire*, and these stories provide both.) Young people fall in love at first sight, and if there is no way to consummate their love, they sometimes become physically ill. When they do meet, usually in intense situations, there is *no time* for the niceties of courtship; they make love *immediately* and then swear undying fidelity. The lovemaking is rapturous and the relationship unproblematic.¹²² (Italicized by me)

Hanan's summary, although it may not be able to account for all the love stories of Feng, in a way suggests a literary concern for and focus on "romantic adventures" deriving from certain moral reality of the period of the time, whose resemblance to Greek Romance is striking. In the fiction he selected for translation it is observable that the development of their relationship relies heavily on a series of coincidences and chanced events like sudden encounters, incidental separations, secret assignations and elopements rather than the emotional construction. In "The Oil Seller" (賣油郎獨占花魁), the courtesan falls in love with the oil seller because he saves her when she was insulted and tricked by an upper-class dandy. In "Shengxian" (鬧樊樓多情周勝仙), Shengxian both meets and gets killed by her lover by accident. In "Marriage Destinies Rearranged" (喬太守亂點鴛鴦譜), Yulang gets access to Huiniang because he is forced

¹²² Patrick Hanan, *Falling in Love: Stories from Ming China* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), x-xi.

to disguise himself as his sister by chance. It gives the impression that lovers only live in those thrilling circumstances when each decision and action is decided by fate. There is no time for the depiction of the process of the perceptual reflection of feelings and their effects on the individual mind. The phenomenon of attraction appears as an instant and direct physical reaction of the lovers, who are simply deprived of all the initiative and remain unchanged throughout all the incidents and accidents until the final reunion or departure.

At the time, for a writer like Feng, the development of love as a part of human psychology was not important. What was crucial is the consequence of its encounter with the pervading moral reality. How the affective feelings come about, how they could evoke subtle emotionality and thought in the minds of the individuals concerned, how they evolve in ethical and moral conflicts—all those scenarios simply did not interest Feng. As Jin Wen observes, “romantic feelings, accompanied routinely by physical impulses, are almost a given” in these stories, indicating little reflection of the characters’ inner struggles over the moral value of the sentiments. In other words, there is little response and expression to the happening and development of the feelings of the lovers. And this leads to a failure to delve into “the complex tensions it produces in individual minds”.¹²³

Individualistic love, on the other hand, has been declared in a more widely-acclaimed tragicomedy play *The Peony Pavilion*. The play has been regarded as a magnificent ode to passionate love and individuality set against the oppressive ethic of orthodoxy. In the play, Du Liniang the sixteen-year-old daughter of a senior official, takes a stroll and falls asleep in the spring garden and meet a young scholar named Liu Mengmei 柳夢梅 in her dream. She then wakes up and dies of lovesickness soon afterwards. Three years later, Liniang’s ghost comes back to the garden that Mengmei is inhabiting and

¹²³ Wen Jin, “Sentimentalism and the ‘Cult of Qing’: Writing Romantic Love in 18th-Century England and Late Ming China.” *Fudan Journal of the humanities and social sciences* 7, no. 4 (2014): 558.

comes back to life with the assistance of Mengmei. Then Mengmei goes on to prove himself to be of great talent in the imperial examination and finally obtains the approval of Liniang's father to marry her.

Unlike short pieces of fiction on romantic themes written by Feng, in *The Peony Pavilion*, there seems to be a significant transformation of the heroine Liniang, who transforms from human to ghost and then back to human. Santangelo Paolo observes that there is an “ideological ‘inconsistency’” in the play: a “passionate part” and a “moralistic part” and “the main issue changes from personal to social: the social recognition of the relationship”¹²⁴ happens from scene thirty-six “Abscondence of the Newlyweds”(hun zou 婚走). I would suggest further that the passionate part serves as a temporal digression from the moralistic part, an unchanging and timeless settlement of moral verities. In other words, love appears to be an ecstatic romantic or erotic legend rather than an experience that has a realistic effect on the changes to her character and life.

At the beginning of the play, Bridal Du settles in a world of orthodoxy in which she practices rituals for her parents and is taught the *Classics of Poetry* (*Shijing* 詩經) by her tutor. However, after she encounters Mengmei in her dream in scene ten “A Surprising Dream”(jing meng 驚夢), she begins to act and think like a passionate girl driven by an unknown desire: not only does she die for an imaginary lover, but she also visits him as a ghost at night to consummate their love. (Scene 28) Romantic experience featuring individual passion and desire, combined with the adventurous experience, indicates a digression from the social norm. Lee Haiyan believes that the “emotional and erotic adventures” of Bridal Du represent “a period of isolated inwardness” which engenders an awareness of interior distance from the traditional

¹²⁴ Paolo Santangelo, “The Cult of Love in Some Texts of Ming and Qing Literature.” *East and West* 50, no. 1/4 (2000): 450-51.

social order.¹²⁵ However, despite the estrangement, once her dead body is exhumed and she is brought back to life, Bridal Du seems to transform immediately from a girl oriented by passion who would die for love arising from a romantic dream to a morality-oriented lady who would strive for the approval of the marriage from the authorities. On Mengmei's request to make love to her immediately, her answer is to find an official matchmaker in the first place. When Mengmei asks her the reason for her changing attitude towards their relationship after her resurrection, Bridal Du ascribes it to the changed condition of her identity from "a wandering spirit" to "a living woman" and while "a ghost may be deluded by passion; a woman must pay full attention to the rites" (*gui ke xu qing, ren xu shi li* 鬼可虛情，人須實禮).¹²⁶

While what is emphasised here is the different social rules and rituals applying to the different situations, it also indicates different levels of tolerance in two different periods towards the expression of the affective emotionality. That Liniang's romantic relationship with Mengmei which is filled with "imaginary emotions" could only be valid when she is a ghost in a temporary digression from her life in the normal track. And since she is reincarnated as an aristocratic girl, a secret relationship without parental consent would no longer be appropriate in the current situation, just like the fantasy in a dream would not be applicable after the awakening. This point marks the ending of the temporary experience of desire and passion and the return to the original course of life. In this sense, the whole experience could be regarded as a dream, an illusion, a temporal digression from her normal course of life. And also, like a dream, it takes no biographical time in her real lifetime and has no impact on her experience in reality.

¹²⁵ Haiyan Lee, *Revolution of the Heart: A Genealogy of Love in China, 1900-1950* (Stanford University Press, 2006), 44.

¹²⁶ See "Scene Thirty-Six: Elopement" in Tang Xianzu, *The Peony Pavilion: Mudan Ting*, trans. Cyril Birch (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 207.

From the above analysis we could see that, in two types of representative traditional Chinese love narratives prior to *Honglou meng*, we find little interest in the construction of growing and maturational development of the lovers and the relationship. This is not to say that the lovers remain absolutely the same from beginning till end, but their romantic experience simply does not induce significant signs of changes in their actions, thoughts, speeches and actions. In the social love fictions of Feng's short stories, the trials and tribulations constituted by "accidents" and "coincidences" do not allow lovers to become mature or their relationships to achieve any substantial development. In the romantic love narrative of *The Peony Pavilion*, lovers usually come to their normal course of life from their isolated experience of desire as if the two kinds of experience and emotionality are heterogeneous. Therefore, lovers would not change their relationship from what it is meant to be, nor would the relationship bring new changes to their life, personality, and emotionality.

2.2 Growth and the Development of Intimate Relationship

In *Honglou meng*, the mode of communication of the lovers' relationship seems to be quite different from that mentioned in the above section. In *Honglou meng*, a schematic chain in the construction of the intimate relationship in the case of Jia Baoyu and Lin Daiyu is replaced by a gradual developing process fraught with difficulty, misunderstanding and struggling in communication. The primary reason for the difficulty comes from the lack of proper language of love. As Wai-yee Li observes that, the sense of *qing*, or love in *Honglou meng* as evinced by the communication between Baoyu and Daiyu, "set itself apart, straining towards a higher ideality of wilful innocence and arbitrary self-containment, suspicious of sexuality and yet bound by idioms that convey intense emotions through sensual longing".¹²⁷ It is

¹²⁷ Wai-yee Li, "Language of Love and Parameters of Culture in Peony Pavilion and The Story of the Stone", in *Love and Emotions in Traditional Chinese Literature*, ed. Eifring, Halvor (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 264-65.

the way this difficulty is depicted and tracked in a natural process of development of the lovers sets the novel apart. Martin Huang notices that the quality that distinguishes Baoyu and Daiyu's love in *Honglou meng* from the stereotypical romance lies in the fact that "theirs is being cultivated" while they "are still *growing up* together".¹²⁸ What interests Cao Xueqin is how love as a private and experiential experience could develop as the lovers grow up together rather than how love as an intensive and extreme power could suddenly change the everyday lives of the lovers. Therefore, in the following passage, I will track the progress of the intimate relationship between Baoyu and Daiyu chronologically. While a clear division is difficult, to demonstrate the changing modes their intimate relationship, this chapter divides their modes of communication roughly into three periods in a chronological order: a period when the lovers believe that they are children, to a transitory stage, and finally to a period when both of the two are fully aware that they are grown up.

2.2.1 The Sound and the Fury

Despite the praise it has received as a model of sentimental love,¹²⁹ the journey of the encounter between Baoyu and Daiyu seems from the beginning to be fraught with difficulties and suffering. Born as cousins, the lovers meet for the first time at a young age when Daiyu was summoned by her grandmother to the Jia household where Baoyu has been brought up as the heir. On their first meeting, Baoyu feels instinctively extraordinarily familiar with Daiyu (Chap.3) and they soon form a special bond with each other which far exceeds what they feel for others. There seems to be a "perfect harmony" (*yanhe yishun* 言和意順) and a "complete accord" (*lue wu shenshang* 略無

¹²⁸ Martin W. Huang, *Desire and Fictional Narrative in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge; London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 295. (Italicised by Huang)

¹²⁹ For example, Qing critic Chen Qitai 陳其泰 suggests the love between the two is based on an unreasoning passion that disperses all the practicalities of life. See Chen Qitai, "Honglou meng huiping" 《紅樓夢》回評 [Chapter Comment on *Dream of the Red Chamber*], in *Honglou meng ziliao huibian* 《紅樓夢》資料彙編 [Compilation of Material of Dream of the Red Chamber] eds. Zhu Yixuan 朱一玄 (Tianjin: Nankai daxue chubanshe, 1985), 704.

參商) between the two: “by day they would spend time together and at night they would sleep in the same room” (*ri ze tong xing tong zuo ye ze tong xi tong zhi* 日則同行同坐夜則同息同止). (HLM, 5: my translation) However, in the meantime, the novel does not hesitate to suggest that there are also unexpected misunderstandings and tiffs between the two that clearly derive from a strong desire to keep this harmony and accord (*qiuquan zhi hui and bu yu zhi yu* 求全之毀，不虞之隙).¹³⁰ For Daiyu, to ascertain that Baoyu has her in mind is vital. There is a longing on the part of Daiyu to have the total attention and devotion of Baoyu, who, with the innate obtuseness of a simpleton, seems to care similarly for many girls.¹³¹ Some of the difficulties in their relationship comes from temporal failures of Baoyu showing such attention and devotion. For example, in chapter nineteen, they have a serious quarrel because Daiyu is under the misapprehension that Baoyu has given away the scented pouch she gave to him earlier. In chapter twenty-seven, Daiyu freezes Baoyu out because she mistakenly supposes Baoyu is responsible for his maid’s refusal to open the gate for her.

This underlying difficulty in their relationship is deepened when Xue Baochai, another of Baoyu’s cousins, comes to the scene. Both are beautiful and talented aristocratic young women, but Baochai distinguishes herself from Daiyu by her mild temper, accommodating disposition, and popularity within the household. (chap. 5) Her characteristics naturally make her equally attractive to Baoyu,¹³² and further, the mysterious inscriptions on the golden locket she wears happen to be in perfect match with those on the Jade of Spiritual Understanding (*tongling baoyu* 通靈寶玉) of Baoyu.

¹³⁰ Zhiyanzhai comments that this is the “basic principle of the writings on their lives of Baoyu and Daiyu” (*er yu yisheng wenzi zhi gang* 二玉一生文字之綱). (RV:47; my translation)

¹³¹ For example, Baoyu would take the hands of his maid Qingwen 晴雯 to warm her in winter;(chap.8) He would go out of his way to visit his principle maid Xiren 襲人 in her parents’ house during her break in the spring festival;(chapt.19) And he would worry over Lingguan 齡官, the opera actress out in the rain when he is getting drenched himself.(Chap.30)

¹³² For example, in chapter five, the girl with whom Baoyu has sex has a charm that reminds him of Baochai; In chapter twenty-eight, when looking at Baochai taking her red bead bracelet scented with musk from her wrist, Baoyu cannot help but stand there admiring her soft white arm.

(chap.8) Although it seems that Baochai shows no intention to get in the way in the communion between Baoyu and Daiyu¹³³ and Baoyu is quite unconcerned,¹³⁴ it bothers Daiyu so much that she refers to it whenever given the chance. For example, in chapter eight, finding Baoyu and Baochai are chatting happily, Daiyu is sarcastic about Baoyu by making a pun in her dialogue with her maid.¹³⁵ In chapter nineteen even in their leisure time together in an afternoon, Daiyu makes fun of Baoyu with the joke of Baochai's "warm fragrance".¹³⁶ And in chapter twenty, on hearing that Baoyu has just visited Baochai, she teases him with biting comments.¹³⁷

While Daiyu's overly exposed sarcasm is a result of her emotional immaturity and narrow-mindedness, it also a manifestation of her secret expectation from Baoyu, "the unambiguous assurance of his love".¹³⁸ However, such assurance has been regarded as morally inappropriate and even dangerous in the household at the time. Moreover, not only expressing such feelings is unimaginable for Daiyu, but also no such "language" exists to express this "adult feeling".¹³⁹ Therefore, she has to "invent" another set of "language" to probe into Baoyu's heart. However, Daiyu's language, which is usually

¹³³ For example, in chapter eight, Baochai does not care about Daiyu's teasing as she knows this is just her way and she pretends not to notice; In chapter twenty-seven, on seeing Baoyu entering Daiyu's house, Baochai just turns to leave in case they don't like her being there. In chapter twenty-eight, on seeing Baoyu and Daiyu talking in the garden, Baochai just pretends not to see them and walks on.

¹³⁴ However, one incident when Baoyu talks in his dream might reveal his secret concern: "Who believes what those bonzes and Taoists say? A match between gold and jade? Nonsense! Between wood and stone more likely, I'd say" (和尚道士的話如何信得? 什麼金玉姻緣, 我偏說是木石姻緣!) (HLM, 36:478; DRM, 714-15)

¹³⁵ "Daiyu retorted, 'So you do whatever she asks, but let whatever I say go in one ear and out the other. You jump to obey her instructions faster than if they were an Imperial edict'" ((黛玉)笑道: "也虧你倒聽他的話。我平日和你說的, 全當耳旁風, 怎麼他說了你就依, 比聖旨還快些")! (HLM, 8:123-24; DRM, 164-65)

¹³⁶ "A warm scent?" He looked puzzled. Daiyu shook her head with a sigh. 'How dense you are! You have jade, and someone else has gold to match it. So don't you have a warm scent to match her cold scent'" (寶玉見問, 一時解不來, 因問: "什麼暖香?" 黛玉點頭嘆笑道: "蠢才, 蠢才! 你有玉, 人家就有金來配你; 人家有冷香, 你就沒有暖香去配")? (HLM, 19:266; DRM, 383)

¹³⁷ "Daiyu, who was also there, asked Baoyu where he had been. 'With Cousin Baochai.' 'I thought so,' said Daiyu tartly. 'Thank goodness there was someone to keep you there, or you'd have flown here long ago'" (正值林黛玉在旁, 因問寶玉: "在那裏的?" 寶玉便說: "在寶姐姐家的"。黛玉冷笑道: "我說呢, 虧在那裏絆住, 不然早就飛了來了")。 (HLM, 20: 275; DRM, 399)

¹³⁸ Anthony C. Yu, *Rereading the Stone: Desire and the Making of Fiction in Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton University Press, 1997), 241.

¹³⁹ Martin W. Huang, *Desire and Fictional Narrative in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge; London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 294-95.

marked by a series of “halting questions, disguised disclosures, deliberate provocations, unintended ironies, and misunderstood remarks”¹⁴⁰ confuses Baoyu in many cases. And Baoyu’s failure to recognise and respond to such language instantaneously leads at an early stage to the misunderstandings and conflicts in their communication. For example, in chapter twenty, on Xiangyun’s visit to the Jia house, Daiyu bickers with Baoyu over tiny little things and would not come outside to play with other girls. Baoyu then comes to comfort her in her room:

寶玉忙跟了來，問道：“好好的又生氣了？就是我說錯了，你到底也還坐在那裏，和別人說笑一會子。又來自己納悶。”林黛玉道：“你管我呢！”寶玉笑道：“我自然不敢管你，只沒有個看著你自己作踐了身子呢。”林黛玉道：“我作踐壞了身子，我死，與你何干！”寶玉道：“何苦來，大正月裏，死了活了的。”林黛玉道：“偏說死！我這會子就死！你怕死，你長命百歲的，如何？”寶玉笑道：“要像只管這樣鬧，我還怕死呢？倒不如死了乾淨。”黛玉忙道：“正是了，要是這樣鬧，不如死了乾淨。”寶玉道：“我說我自己死了乾淨，別聽錯了話賴人。”

Baoyu promptly followed her there.

“Why lose your temper for no reason at all?” he protested. “Even if I said something wrong, you might at least sit there and chat with the others for a bit, instead of sulking alone.”

“What I do is none of your business.”

“Of course not, but no one would bear to see you ruining your health.”

“If I ruin my health and die, that’s my affair. How could it be of any concern of yours?”

“Why talking about ‘dying’ just in the middle of the New Year holiday?”

“I shall, so there! I’m ready to die at any minute. If you’re so afraid of death, you can live to be a hundred—how about that?”

“If it just carries on like this all the time I’m not afraid.” He smiled. “Death would be better.”

“Exactly!” she retorted swiftly. “If it carries on like this it would be better for me to die.”

“I meant better for me to be dead. How you twist my words!”

(HLM, 20: DRM:399-40; modified)

¹⁴⁰ Anthony C. Yu, *Rereading the Stone: Desire and the Making of Fiction in Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton University Press, 1997), 235.

It is observable that confronted by Daiyu's anger, Baoyu tries to comfort her by reminding her of her health, which has been in bad condition for a while. However, while Baoyu's words are well meaning and caring in every respect, Daiyu does not show the slightest appreciation. On the contrary, it seems that the more Baoyu tries to present his concerns and worries for her emotion and health, the more irritated Daiyu gets. The capricious and unreasonable words and behaviour of Daiyu may confuse Baoyu as well as many readers. However, on closer scrutiny, we will find that an inexpressible desire lies hidden as is manifested by a constant emphasis on the distance between "you" and "I" in Dayu's words. Readers who have read the previous episode will get to know that what really upsets Daiyu is Baoyu's possible close relationship with Baochai which makes her anxious about whether she is still the dearest love in his heart. Therefore, the real purpose of her stressing distance between them is to elicit a reply containing a direct and clear denial of any such distance from Baoyu himself. However, the discourse of Baoyu's concern only appears to be justified in the moral ("no one would bear"), public ("the New Year holiday") and therefore timeless sense, rather than an instant and private one, making her even more disappointed and anxious.

This lack of a proper language and the consequent arguments and fights dominates the basic mode of their encounters and interactions in the early stages of their relationship. As a result, there are periodic scenarios in the first half part of the novel in which Daiyu and Baoyu have fallen out over various things, which does not usually make "sense" (*li* 理) yet reflects "feeling" (*qing* 情).¹⁴¹ This feeling that is felt to the point of madness by both has to be expressed indirectly under the disguise of deliberate

¹⁴¹ "From the perspective of Rationality, this (situation) is like the idiom "there is no trouble in this world, but that the simple-minded people become disturbed". From the perspective of love between boys and girls, then these affairs do exist, and these reasons do exist. Moreover, this is something that fictions through the ages are unable to express, people who talk about love are unable to articulate. (This is) indeed writing of love in the extreme" (按理論之，則是‘天下本無事，庸人自擾之’。若以兒女子之情論之，則事必有之事，必有之理。又系今古小說中不能道得寫得，談情者不能說出講出，情痴之至文也) (ZP,18: 313, Jimao manuscript; my translation)

provocations and misunderstood remarks. But these do not seem to be sufficient. Gradually this torturous miscommunication between Baoyu and Daiyu finds its most extreme form: making oaths to each other. For example, in chapter twenty-eight, when Daiyu accuses Baoyu about his responsibility for his maid's refusal to open the gate for her the previous evening, Baoyu could not help but make a dreadful oath, "If I did such a thing, may I die on the spot" (我要是這麼樣,立刻就死了).(HLM,28:375; DRM:547) And later, when Baoyu asks Daiyu to take his Dragon-Boat Festival presents from the Imperial Consort, Daiyu refuses with sarcasm towards his possible association with Baochai. Baoyu is so irritated by this that he protests violently, "if such an idea ever crossed my mind, may Heaven and Earth destroy me! May I never again be reborn in human form" (我心里要有這個想頭,天誅地滅,萬世不得人身)!(HLM,28:389; DRM:567) This extreme and even disturbing mode of expression continues and climaxes in chapter twenty-nine, when Baoyu loses his temper completely on hearing Daiyu trifling with a matchmaking proposal recently offered to him by a Daoist:

寶玉聽了,便向前來直問到臉上:“你這麼說,是安心咒我天誅地滅?”林黛玉一時解不過這個話來。寶玉又道:“昨兒還為這個賭了幾回咒,今兒你到底又準我一句。我便天誅地滅,你又有什麼益處?”林黛玉一聞此言,方想起上日的話來。今日原是自己說錯了,又是著急,又是羞愧,便顛顛兢兢的說道:“我要安心咒你,我也天誅地滅。何苦來!我知道,昨日張道士說親,你怕阻了你的好姻緣,你心裡生氣,來拿我煞性子。”……那寶玉又聽見他說“好姻緣”三個字,越發逆了己意,心裡乾噎,口裡說不出話來,便賭氣向頸上抓下通靈寶玉,咬牙恨命往地下一摔,道:“什麼撈什骨子,我砸了你完事!”偏生那玉堅硬非常,摔了一下,竟文風沒動。寶玉見沒摔碎,便回身找東西來砸。

He went up to her then and demanded to her face, "Does this mean you really want to invoke Heaven and Earth to destroy me?" Before she could fathom his meaning he went on, "Yesterday I took an oath because of this, and today you provoke me again. If Heaven and Earth destroy me, what good will it do you?"

Daiyu remembered their previous conversation and realized she had blundered. She was conscience-stricken and frantic.

“If I wish you harm, may Heaven and Earth destroy me too,” she sobbed. “Why take on like this? I know. When Zhang the Taoist spoke of your marriage yesterday, you were afraid he might prevent the match of your choice. And now you’re working your temper off on me.”

.....

Those words “the match of your choice” infuriated Baoyu. Too choked with rage to speak, he tore the jade from his neck and dashed it to the floor.

“You rubbishy thing!” he cried, gnashing his teeth. “I’ll smash you to pieces and have done with it.”

The jade was so hard, however, that no damage was done. So he looked around for something with which to smash it. (HLM,29:401; DRM:585-8)

It could be observed that in this fierce and passionate fight, disturbing words like “invoke”, “destroy” and “heaven and earth” are articulated intensively and constantly. We have talked about how a rehearsal of death plays an important role in the defining and shaping of Daiyu’s sense of self in previous chapter. In her relationship with Baoyu, similarly, these words and the related imaginary scenario serves as a way through which the tortured lovers would “concealed his or her real sentiments to sound the other out”. (HLM, 29:401; DRM: 586) For Daiyu, she could ascertain how much she mattered in Baoyu’s heart. And for Baoyu, he could justify his feelings for her. However, rather than providing an assurance and communicating efficiently, it usually ends by tormenting both of the lovers and worsening the situation. In desperation, Baoyu tries to smash his Precious Jade, with which he was born as an infant, suggesting the destructive and dangerous consequence of the difficulty in their love. However, the difficulty in their communication could not change as long as no proper and accurate language could be found. This is manifested in their making-peace talk the very next day after this incident as Baoyu says that he would become a monk if Daiyu dies. (chap. 30)

Perhaps their tormenting relationship and the difficulty of finding the proper language to communicate could be manifested by a lyric composed by Baoyu after a standoff

between Daiyu and Xiangyun, in which Baoyu intervenes in an attempt to prevent bad feelings between the two but ends up being blamed by both sides:

無我原非你，從他不解伊。肆行無礙憑來去。

茫茫著甚悲愁喜，紛紛說甚親疏密。從前碌碌卻因何，到如今回頭試想真無趣！

You would have been at fault, if not for me;
But why should I care if they disagree?
Free come, free go, let nothing bar or hold me!

No more I'll sink and soar between gloom and elation,
Or endlessly debate the depth of our relation.
What was the point of all of that past pother?
When I look back on it, it seems scarce worth the bother.
(HLM,22:298; SS: 474-75)

This lyric serves as a metaphor for not only the incident, but also for the inner pain of the relationship between Daiyu and Baoyu. It expresses the nature of the entanglement in the relationship between the two and the profound emotional suffering it brings to the individuals. The “endless debate the depth of our relation” is exactly the reason why the early stage of their relationship is characterised by quarrels and fights. Although there is an attempt by Baoyu to dabble in metaphysics, the temporal enlightenment is far from a sign of absolute detachment from his engagement with Daiyu. As Kao Yu-kung observes, “the tragic outcome of the love relations in the novel is not simply the result of manipulation of villains or of the institution of ‘marriage’ itself, but the consequence of the desire to make this love relationship permanent.”¹⁴² As long as a constant desire to keep the relationship, they are caught in this paradoxical entanglement.

2.2.2 The Silence and the Understanding

¹⁴² Yu-kung Kao, “Lyric Vision in Chinese Narrative Tradition: A Reading of *Hung-lou Meng* and *Ju-lin Wai-shih*”, in *Chinese Narrative: Critical and Theoretical Essays*, eds. Andrew H. Plaks (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977), 235.

The seemingly endless tiffs and arguments between Baoyu and Daiyu die down suddenly and unexpectedly. The event which marks this transformation happens in chapter thirty-two, when Xiangyun, another cousin of Baoyu, comes to visit them in the Jia family home. Fearing that Baoyu might fall for her, Daiyu slips over to Baoyu's place to see if they are indeed intimate, only to overhear Baoyu's unreserved praise for herself being expressed with affection. With a mixture of happiness and sadness, she leaves secretly but is caught by Baoyu unexpectedly minutes later in the garden. As usual, Daiyu teases him about his great concern for the small object of jewellery that Xiangyun wears in an ironic manner. But this time, rather than defending himself with irrelevant vows, Baoyu seems to make up his mind to confront her directly:

寶玉瞅了半天，方說道“你放心”三個字。林黛玉聽了，怔了半天，方說道：“我有什麼不放心的？我不明白這話。你倒說說怎麼放心不放心？”寶玉嘆了一口氣，問道：“你果然不明白這話？難道我素日在你身上的心都用錯了？連你的意思若體貼不著，就難怪你天天為我生氣了。”林黛玉道：“果然我不明白放心不放心的話。”寶玉點頭歎道：“好妹妹，你別哄我。果然不明白這話，不但我素日之意白用了，且連你素日待我之意也都辜負了。你皆因總是不放心的原故，才弄了一身病。但凡寬慰些，這病也不得一日重似一日。”林黛玉聽了這話，如轟雷掣電，細細思之，竟比自己肺腑中掏出來的還覺懇切，竟有萬句言語，滿心要說，只是半個字也不能吐，卻怔怔的望著他。此時寶玉心中也有萬句言語，不知從那一句上說起，卻也怔怔的望著黛玉。兩個人怔了半天，林黛玉只咳了一聲，兩眼不覺滾下淚來，回身便要走。寶玉忙上前拉住，說道：“好妹妹，且略站住，我說一句話再走。”林黛玉一面拭淚，一面將手推開，說道：“有什麼可說的。你的話我早知道了！”口裡說著，卻頭也不回竟去了。

Baoyu fixed his eyes on her (Daiyu). After a while he said gently, “you mustn't worry.”

Daiyu gazed at him in silence for some moments.

“Worry?” she repeated at last after a while. “I don't understand. Would you mind telling me what you mean?”

“Don't you really understand?” he sighed. “Could it be that all this time all my feelings for you have been wrong? If I can't ever enter into *your* feelings, then you're quite right to be angry with me all the time.”

“I really don't understand what you mean about not worrying.” said Daiyu.

“Dear cousin, don’t you think you could fool me.” Baoyu nodded and sighed. “If you really don’t understand what I’ve said, all my devotion of feeling in the past has been wasted and even your feeling for me all the time has been thrown away. It is because you worry so much that you’ve ruined your health. If you’d take things less to heart, your illness wouldn’t be getting worse day by day”.

These words struck Daiyu like a thunderbolt. As she turned them over in her mind, they seemed closer to her innermost thoughts than if wrung from her own heart. – (had seen inside her more clearly than if she had plucked out her entrails and held them out for his inspection.) There were a thousand things she longed to say now, yet she could not utter a word. She just stared at him in silence. Baoyu, too, had a thousand things to say, but he, too, gazed at her mutely, not knowing where to start.

After they both stood transfixed for some considerable time in silence, Daiyu gave a choking cough and tears rolled down her cheeks. She was turning to go when Baoyu caught hold of her.

“Dear cousin, wait. Just let me say one word.”

She dried her tears with one hand, repulsing him with the other.

“What more is there to say? I’ve already known for long.”

She hurried off without one look behind, while he just stood there like a man in trance.

(HLM, 32: 435; DRM: 637-8; Modified)

At first glance, readers may be confused by several repetitive words—“worry” (*bufangxin* 不放心) and “don’t worry” (*fangxin* 放心), “understand” (*mingbai* 明白) and “do not understand” (*bumingbai* 不明白), “my feeling” (*wozhiyi* 我之意) and “your feeling” (*nizhiyi* 你之意)—uttered by the two again and again. However, this is not the result of a deficiency in language. Rather, the echoing both in sound and in each other’s mind renders a literary unfolding and retaining of the struggling feelings experienced by the two right at this moment. In most of their previous encounters, the “privileged means of communication” to declare the intimate feelings of the two is by means of “art and artifice”.¹⁴³ Before this dialogue, Baoyu has twice quoted lines from *Romance of the Western Chamber*, the classical drama, when speaking to Daiyu.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Anthony C. Yu, *Rereading the Stone: Desire and the Making of Fiction in Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton University Press, 1997), 205.

¹⁴⁴ I am the one ‘sick with longing,’ (he joked) And yours is the beauty which caused ‘cities and kingdoms to fall.’ (我就是個“多愁多病身”，你就是那“傾國傾城貌”)。 (HLM, 23:315; DRM: 455) (To Zijuan, Daiyu’s maid) “Good girl! ‘Should I share the bridal curtains with your sweet mistress; How could I give

But this time, he confronts her directly through his own language instead of using assumed voice from the drama, which signals a dangerous moment as the unmasked confession of his personal feelings approaches. Daiyu, while seeming to be uneasy with this confession at the beginning, could not help but be gradually touched by its inner tenderness and affection, because she realises that Baoyu has cared for her all the time with a sincere heart. In the meantime, this unprecedented “language of deep and heavy feelings” (*mingxin kegu zhi yan* 銘心刻骨之言) also aggravates her inner grief because she is fully aware that without a father or mother to “propose a match” (*zhuzhang* 主張) (chap. 32) for her, all his assurances would be in vain. To hide her restless feelings, at that moment Daiyu loses all her clever speeches and repeats Baoyu’s words involuntarily.

The subtle undercurrents of the emotions of the two are retained and intensified further by several awkward hiatus in the narrative. Four indications of the hiatus are created by the adverb “for a while” (*bantian* 半天) can be observed in their dialogue. Before Baoyu decides to confess, he fixes his eyes on Daiyu “for a while”. This is followed by Daiyu’s daze “after a while”. And after Baoyu’s suggestion that Daiyu has been ruining her health by worrying about their relationship, neither of the two could utter a word and they are thrown into in a long daze “for some considerable time in silence”. The “considerable time” retained here is important not so much for the clear scale of daily lives in its temporal relation to other activities, as for its symbolic depth in contemplating and responding. In other words, the pauses do not merely indicate time chronologically, they register a subjective perception of time with an emotional significance. It is during these pauses and intervals that not only Baoyu and Daiyu, but also the readers could have the time to reflect on the subtle feelings and sensations emerging at the moment. In a word, it is in these moments of deliberately pressing

you the task of preparing the bed?” (好丫頭, “若共你多情小姐同鴛帳, 怎舍得疊被鋪床”)? (HLM, 26: 355; DRM: 516)

“the pause button”, that the emotions evoked at this moment are unfolded, prolonged and intensified.

Moreover, the layer of emotion at the present moment is complicated by its combination with the shared memory of the lovers in the past. Although the two are caught up in an emotionally charged moment engaging all their faculties, there is still a conscious awareness of what has happened to them earlier. When Baoyu tries to confront Daiyu directly, not only does he bring up the recent gradual deterioration of her health (*yiri zhongsi yiri* 一日重似一日), but also their mutual caring and devotion all the time (*suri* 素日). Baoyu does not specify a certain event. But it does not matter. A reference to the past is suggestive enough to bring in the shared memories in the mind of a devoted lover like Daiyu and to associate the two in one mind combined. Not only is Baoyu making a secret commitment to her right now, but also it is endorsed by what they have already acquired and accomplished in the past. It is in this sense that the mere mention of what they have been “all the time” is sufficient enough to strike Daiyu “like a thunderbolt” and fills her cheeks with tears. The long and silent pause that followed, in this sense, is not only a reflection on what is happening at present, but also on a newly-discovered past that has long been covered. A past that although fraught with pain and suffering, is being shed light on by their communication and commitment at the moment.

This awkward pause is broken off by the departure of Daiyu with the response, “I’ve already known for long”. The reply should be featured not only with the verb “know”, but with the adverb “have already”. By “have already”, the narrative gives away her innermost feelings not only of the present, but also of all these years, indicating a long-buried and suppressed desire. Zhiyanzhai calls the narrative in this scene “brocade-like” and compares it to the “supreme dharma of merit”¹⁴⁵ with the indication that the

¹⁴⁵ Zhiyanzhai remarks, “what Buddha opened his eyes of prajna and suddenly discovered the karma of all mortal beings, therefore bringing out this brocade-like rhetoric, demonstrating this supreme dharma

literary construction of sentimental love is very much alike the religious preaching of doctrines. Zhiyanzhai does not further demonstrate the exact rhetoric and devices through which the construction is achieved. But with the construction of different temporal dimensions described above, subtle feelings like understanding, appreciation (gratification), and commitment between the lovers are indeed woven in a “brocade-like” way.

The overwhelming emotions of Daiyu prevent her from hearing the most bold and passionate confession from Baoyu in the end,¹⁴⁶ but this encounter has a huge impact on the transformation of the mode of communication of the two. Another milestone in the transformation of their relationship happens right after this confession. Soon after, Baoyu was severely beaten with rod by his father for his improper behaviour when playing around. At night when the visitors have left, Daiyu comes to visit him on his sickbed with a face bathed in tears and swollen eyes. On seeing her coming, he immediately could not help being worried about her health in the bad weather. (chap. 34) Although Baoyu is also moved so much by the concern shown to him by Baochai earlier that day, it is quite obvious that it is with Daiyu’s response that all his tenderness and sentimentality are connected. Instead of greeting or criticising him, Daiyu cries even harder as if she would choke, and sobs at long last, “(I suppose) you may never do such things again” (*ni congci ke dou gai le ba* 你從此可都改了罷). (HLM,34:451; My translation) Earlier that day, Baochai expresses a similar emotion on her visit: “if you’d listen to our advice, this wouldn’t have happened” (早聽人一句話, 也不至今日). (HLM,34:448; DRM, 666) While Baochai’s words show her advice

of merit” (何等神佛, 開慧眼照見眾生孽障, 為現此錦繡文章, 說此上乘功德法). (ZP,32: 529, Mengfu manuscript; my translation)

¹⁴⁶ “Dear cousin, I never ventured before to bare my heart to you,” he declared. “Now that I’ve summoned up courage to speak, I’ll die content. I was making myself ill on account of you, but I dare not to tell anyone and hid my feelings. I shan’t recover till you’re better too, I can’t forget you even in my dreams”(“好妹妹, 我的這心事, 從來也不敢說, 今兒我大膽說出來, 死也甘心! 我為你也弄了一身的病在這里, 又不敢告訴人, 只好掩著。只等你的病好了, 只怕我的病才得好呢。睡里夢里也忘不了你”). (HLM, 32: 434; DRM:638-9)

that he should try hard to behave properly, Daiyu's words only show how deeply she could empathize with Baoyu's suffering.¹⁴⁷

Later that night, Baoyu sends his maid to pass two old handkerchiefs to Daiyu. Although puzzled at first, Daiyu gradually understands the suggestion after some careful thought. Although Baoyu does not make it explicit, it is enough for the signal of love to be transmitted and received. Surprisingly, rather than being filled with absolute happiness, Daiyu, seems to be occupied by more complicated and multi-layered thoughts and feelings:

寶玉這番苦心，能領會我這番苦意，又令我可喜；我這番苦意，不知將來如何，又令我可悲；忽然好好的送兩塊舊帕子來，若不是領我深意，單看了這帕子，又令我可笑；再想令人私相傳遞與我，又可懼；我自己每每好哭，想來也無味，又令我可愧。

I am happy that Baoyu could understand my painstaking feelings; and I feel so sad to think where all my feelings for him will end in the future. Also, I feel so amused, I supposed I hadn't understood the meaning behind this pair of used handkerchiefs. I feel so alarmed that he should send me a secret present in private like this; And I am so ashamed of my endless and meaningless crying. (HLM, 34:456; My translation)

As we have mentioned above, Daiyu has been making a painstaking effort to elicit clear assurance from Baoyu. But getting his explicit assurance does not further advance their relationship, as a subtle awareness emerges, that they actually could do nothing about the feelings they both feel. The increasing emphasis on the negative psychological activities in the novel not only indicates a complex tension in their individual minds, but, more importantly, it produces a more thoughtful and reflective image of the lover. Moreover, a subtler sense of sentiment and solitude gradually emerges. After the point, there was no more urge to get an instantaneous assurance of affection on the side of Daiyu, and no more rush to justify his feelings immediately on

¹⁴⁷ Zhiyanzhai observes the density of these words as he remarks, "it is a painstaking care that brews these few words" (心血淋漓釀成此數字). (ZP, 34: 536, Mengfu manuscript; my translation)

the side of Baoyu. Both become more aware, thoughtful, and hesitant about the words they use. For example, in chapter fifty-two, after several young girls having a gathering at Daiyu's place, Baoyu tells them to go on ahead, leaving himself behind so that he could have a private chat with Daiyu:

黛玉便又叫住他問道：“襲人到底多早晚回來。”寶玉道：“自然等送了殯才來呢。”黛玉還有話說，又不曾出口，出了一回神，便說道：“你去罷。”寶玉也覺心裡有許多話，只是口里不知要說什麼，想了一想，也笑道：“明兒再說罷。”一面下了階磯，低頭正欲邁步，却又忙回身問道：“如今的夜越發長了，你一夜咳嗽幾遍？醒幾次？”黛玉道：“昨兒夜里好了，只嗽了兩遍，卻只睡了四更一個更次，就再不能睡了。”

Daiyu asked him: “When will Xiren be back?”

“Not until after the funeral, of course,” he answered.

Daiyu had more to say but hesitated, lost in thought for a while.

“Well, go along now,” she said finally.

Baoyu, too, had much in his heart to say but did not know how to put it into words. After a thoughtful pause he rejoined, “We can talk again tomorrow.”

He walked down the steps with lowered head, turning back suddenly to ask, “Are you coughing much, now that the nights are longer? How often do you wake?”

“I had a good night yesterday, with only two fits of coughing. But I only managed to sleep through the fourth watch—after that I couldn't get back to sleep again.”

(HLM,52:708-09; DRM,1059-60)

The dialogue is quite unique in the communications of the lovers for the contents are extremely simple and ordinary, yet it is expressive and suggestive, showing an unusual scene of deep tenderness and affection. The pauses here are not a sign of awkwardness, but a silent communication expressing a wordless message. Talking about Daiyu's health condition is no longer an expression of their unspeakable feelings, but a realistic and intimate inquiry into her everyday experience. Such dialogue could rarely be seen in their earlier encounters, for what they used to care about was direct and absolute assurance. But now, they begin to learn to slow down the pace and to talk about everyday lives like grown-ups. It can be seen that Baoyu has become more caring and Daiyu has become more relieved and relaxed since their confessions discussed above.

2.2.3 the Solitude and the Alienation

However, this unusual tender and loving period does not last for long, as they gradually approach the end of their process of growing up. While Baoyu seems reluctant to admit this inescapable fact, Daiyu seems to be aware of it much earlier. In chapter fifty-seven, when Baoyu reaches out his hand to feel the thin coat of Zijuan, Daiyu's maid, she censures his flighty behaviour and says that Daiyu has warned them about getting into conversation with him, because now that they are all "beginning to grow up" (*yi nian da er nian xiao* 一年大二年小). (HLM, 57:777; my translation) Later, exactly the same words are articulated by Daiyu herself to Baoyu. When he is reluctant to go to see his mother to discuss the betrothal ceremony of his sister Ying, Daiyu advises, "I would suggest that you grow out of these childish ways. Now that we are all beginning to grow up..." (*wo quan ni ba piqi gaigai ba yi nian da er nian xiao* 我勸你把脾氣改改罷, 一年大二年小) (HLM, 79:1119; my translation) And soon after, when Baoyu complains about the octopartite essays he reads in school, Daiyu advises him to learn them to prepare for officialdom in the future since he is not a child anymore. (chap. 82)¹⁴⁸ While Baoyu seems to be less heavy-hearted than Daiyu, has a great impact on the relationship between the lover, both of whom become more havey hearted.

In the meantime, the pace of the encounters and interactions between Baoyu and Daiyu begins to slow down, and the mode of communication turns hesitant and awkward. In chapter sixty-four, one day, when Baoyu notices tears on Daiyu's face

¹⁴⁸ Many scholars believe this speech of Daiyu as evidence of the inauthenticity of the last forty chapters for its inconsistency of her character. However, as I am about to demonstrate, I would propose that it is exactly a manifestation of a heroine in the process of a growing and changing and maturing. That Daiyu has changed her attitude is not a contradiction in the portrayal of her character, rather, there are several signs that a growing concern about her future with Baoyu makes Daiyu change her attitude towards Baoyu's pursuit of public service and officialdom.

when he visits her residence, he tries to comfort her but could not find proper words. The narrative depicts his struggling psychological state in great detail:

寶玉道：“妹妹這兩天可大好些了？氣色倒覺靜些，只是為何又傷心了？黛玉道：“可是你沒的說了，好好的我多早晚又傷心了？”寶玉笑道：“妹妹臉上現有淚痕，如何還哄我呢。只是我想妹妹素日本來多病，凡事當各自寬解，不可過作無益之悲。若作踐壞了身子，使我……”說到這裡，覺得以下的話有些難說，連忙咽住。只因他雖說和黛玉一處長大，情投意合，又願同生死，卻只是心中領會，從來未曾當面說出。況兼黛玉心多，每每說話造次，得罪了他。今日原為的是來勸解，不想把話又說造次了，接不下去，心中一急，又怕黛玉惱他。又想一想自己的心實在的是為好，因而轉急為悲，早已滾下淚來。黛玉起先原惱寶玉說話不論輕重，如今見此光景，心有所感，本來素昔愛哭，此時亦不免無言對泣。

“You seem much better recently,” he remarked. “You look less flushed. But what’s upset you again?”

“That’s no way to talk,” she retorted. “There’s nothing wrong with me. Why should I be upset?”

“You’ve tear-stains on your face, why try to fool me? I just thought that being so delicate you should take things easy, not distress yourself for no purpose. If you spoil your health, I’ll be....” He broke off here, finding it difficult to go on.

Though he and Daiyu had grown up side by side and were kindred spirits who longed to live and die together, this was simply tacitly understood by both but had never been put into words. Moreover Daiyu was so sensitive that his careless way of talking always offended her or even reduced her to tears. Today he had come to comfort her, but again, without meaning to, had spoken too hastily so that he had to break off, desperately afraid that Daiyu would be angry. And when he reflected that he had really meant well, he started shedding tears of distress. Daiyu had been annoyed at first by Baoyu’s immoderate language. Now, touched by the state he was in, being prone to weep herself, she started shedding tears in silence too.

(HLM, 64:889-90; DRM:1367-68)

The emotion in this scene is quite different from before, for what sends Baoyu into tears is not the conflicts from a miscommunication, but a sense of helplessness and confusion coming from the disability of communication. When they were young, their words, though usually causing misunderstandings, fights to find instant and powerful

expressions. However, right now, their emotions, though stronger, seems to be difficult to articulate. After all these years, their relationship has evolved into an awkward and difficult state. The awkwardness confuses Baoyu, for he does not understand why, when there is such sympathy and love, the two could not communicate. It is an awareness of the tortuous and barren journey that they have been through that rends Baoyu so sad.

A similar awareness also occurs to Daiyu one day, when the weather turns cold, and she asks her maid to get her some fur clothes and finds something unexpectedly:

只見內中夾著個絹包兒，黛玉伸手拿起打開看時，卻是寶玉病時送來的舊手帕，自己題的詩，上面淚痕猶在，裡頭卻包著那剪破了的香囊扇袋并寶玉通靈玉上的穗子……這黛玉不看則已，看了時也不說穿那一件衣服，手里只拿著那兩方手帕，呆呆的看那舊詩。看了一回，不覺的簌簌淚下……紫鵲見了這樣，知是他觸物傷情，感懷舊事，料道勸也無益，只得笑著道：“姑娘還看那些東西作什麼，那都是那幾年寶二爺和姑娘小時一時好了，一時惱了，鬧出來的笑話兒。要象如今這樣斯抬斯敬，那里能把這些東西白遭塌了呢。”紫鵲這話原給黛玉開心，不料這幾句話更提起黛玉初來時和寶玉的舊事來，一發珠淚連綿起來。

Xueyan fetched in a bundle of fur-lined clothes and un-wrapped it for Daiyu to make her choice. The first thing her eye fell on was a silk wrapper. Undoing this, she found the old handkerchiefs Baoyu had sent her when he was ill, on which she had written poems---they still had her tear-stains on them. Wrapped inside were the scented pouch which she had cut up, a fan-case and the tassel from Baoyu's Jade of Spiritual Understanding……The sight of these things made Daiyu forget about putting on something warmer. She picked up the two handkerchiefs and gazed blankly at her old poems, then started weeping……

Zijuan realized that these things had reopened old wounds, making her young mistress grieve over the past, and guessed it would be useless to reason with her.

“Why look at those, miss?” she asked, smiling. “They'll only remind you of the pranks Master Bao and you got up to when you were young, quarrelling one day and making it up the next. If he'd been as well-mannered then as he is now, these things would never have got spoilt.”

To Zijuan's surprise, this banter reminded Daiyu even more of her first years here. Big tears streamed down her cheeks.

(HLM, 87:1223; DRM: 1894-95)

In conventional Chinese romances, using small objects like a ring or a handkerchief as a love token is a common technique. However, the handkerchief held in Daiyu's hands seems to have a more complicated meaning. Apart from connecting lovers who are separated by space, it also connects the past and the present of the lovers: the rediscovery of this pair of handkerchiefs may remind the readers of the previous episode when Baoyu sent them to Daiyu a long time ago. On seeing the two handkerchiefs, Daiyu was so touched by them and was lost in reverie. This moment of reverie is meaningful for it is a moment of memory. It is quite obvious that the action and thought of Daiyu in this episode is explained not only by what is happening to her at this moment, but by her previous memory with Baoyu. The handkerchiefs serve almost as a site of memory, bringing back the very moment of the night when Baoyu sent them to her. The action of looking at the old handkerchiefs combines the psychological categories of memory with the momentary experience of the protagonists at present in the narrative. The weight of memory and the shared experience of the relationship of Baoyu and Daiyu appears to be rather heavy. Perhaps this characteristic is more revealing when compared with other similar situations in other Chinese novels.

Previous narratives give little space to such moments of remembering. We see most lovers wake up as if it is the first day of their life, and act and behave out of natural desire with little reflection on what they have been through. For example, in chapter eight of the full-length novel *Jin ping mei*, Pan Jinlian 潘金蓮, who feels so disappointed at her lover Ximen Qing's 西門慶 not showing up, acts, talks and confesses her inner love and longing like an innocent lovesick girl.¹⁴⁹ Then in chapter thirty-eight, when she gets married with Ximen several years later, in a similar

¹⁴⁹ *The Plum in the Golden Vase or, Chin P'ing Mei, Volume One: The Gathering*, Roy, trans. David Tod (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 155-157.

situation, she behaves exactly as she did when she was young.¹⁵⁰ There seems to be a stereotypical pattern of discourse in depicting what a woman in love is supposed to feel and to think, regardless of the situation. It is enough for the readers to see a gesture that shows Pan is in love with Ximen and is waiting for him with affection and longing. They have little interest in distinguishing the different situations and the effect of past experience on the characters. What is missing in the portrait of a lover in *Jin ping mei*, therefore, is a development of feelings and thoughts of the lovers that involves memory and change.

A growing awareness of the fact that they are no longer children makes both Baoyu and Daiyu heavy-hearted. It seems that the further the story progresses in the novel, the heavier they appear to be as they are weighed down by the effects of previous memories. While the difficulty mainly comes from the lack of language in their young ages, it is also connected with a growing sense of anxiety and the solitude of the lovers. There are no more innocent and childish tiffs and teasing as in the first period, and no more silent companionship with mutual affinity as in the second period. The situation gradually comes to a stage when both Baoyu and Daiyu are deep in thought and heavy-hearted, as they are highly conscious that their undefined relationship has to have a solution since they are no longer children.

Daiyu used to worry about whether she is the right one for Baoyu, but what increasingly worries her is whether their love would receive parental approval and affirmation. For example, in chapter eighty-two, she talks to herself, “my health’s poor and I’ve reached the age to marry. Judging by Baoyu’s behaviour, he isn’t interested in anyone else; but my grandmother and aunt haven’t yet indicated their preference. If only my parents were still alive, or had fixed this match in advance.” (HLM, 82:1158; DRM:1793) In that situation, the only solution to get a marriage is to have it arranged

¹⁵⁰ *The Plum in the Golden Vase or, Chin P'ing Mei, Volume Two: The Rivals*, trans. David Tod (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 394-398.

by a parental authority. Yet mutual affection is the factor least considered when arranging a marriage in the Jia family. Young men and women choosing their own partners was not only unappreciated but was despised by mainstream moral ideas, as the Lady Dowager comments on Daiyu's love sickness.¹⁵¹ This means that it is the parental authority of the Jia family rather than the lovers themselves would eventually decides their fate. To put in another way, without the protection of the institution of marriage, their accumulated affection and love would be in vain.

In this sense, there is a growing sense of alienation inside the communion of the two lovers. If what they used to feel is an abstract sense of solitude, then it is realistic concern that now invades, making their communication subtler and more painful: they are haunted by the weight of memory. One day on his visit to Daiyu, Baoyu mentions a change in the rhymes of the song that Daiyu played the other day. The narrative describes the unbearable awkwardness and sense of solitude of the lovers in great detail:

我正要問你：“前路是平韻，到末了兒忽轉了仄韻，是個什麼意思？”黛玉道：“這是人心自然之音，做到那里就到那里，原沒有一定的。”寶玉道：“原來如此。可惜我不知音，枉聽了一會子。”黛玉道：“古來知音人能有幾個？”寶玉聽了。又覺得出言冒失了，又怕寒了黛玉的心，坐了一坐，心里象有許多話，卻再無可講的。黛玉因方才的話也是沖口而出，此時回想，覺得太冷淡些，也就無話。寶玉一發打量黛玉設疑，遂訕訕的站起來說道：“妹妹坐著罷。我還要到三妹妹那里瞧瞧去呢。”黛玉道：“你若是見了三妹妹，替我問候一聲罷。”寶玉答應著便出來了。”

I've been meaning to ask you: Why did you start with level rhymes, then at the end change suddenly to an oblique one? What was the reason for that?

¹⁵¹ “It's natural for young people who've played together as children to be partial to each other; but now that they've big enough to know the facts of life they should keep at a distance. That's how a girl should behave if she wants me to love her. To get other ideas into her head would be most improper, and all my love for her would be thrown away”(“孩子們從小兒在一處兒頑，好些是有的。如今大了懂的人事，就該要分別些，才是做女孩兒的本分，我才心里疼他。若是他心里有別的想法，成了什麼人了呢！我可是白疼了他了”). (HLM,97: 1332; DRM, 2086)

“Music comes naturally from the heart,” she answered. “There are no set rules-you just play as you feel.”

“So that’s the reason. It’s too bad I don’t understand music and so it was wasted on me.”

“How many understanding people have there been since of old?” she replies.

At that, Baoyu realized that he had been tactless, and feared he had hurt her feelings. He sat there with so much he longed to say, yet not knowing how to word it. Daiyu also felt that her last remark had been thoughtless, and must have sounded cold; she too was silent. This convinced Baoyu that she took this personally, and he rose sheepishly to say:

“I’ll leave you to rest now, I’m off to see Tanchun.”

“When you see her, give her my regards.” (HLM,89:1247; DRM,1945)

It is hard to believe that the two lovers who used to share a most perfect sympathy towards each other would come to this situation. The air between the two here is defined by a sense of suspension and distrust, It is the growing desire to keep the relationship. Upon this significant change, the novel gives its explanation:

只是黛玉雖有萬千言語，自知年紀已大，又不便似小時可以柔情挑逗，所以滿腔心事，只是說不出來。寶玉欲將實言安慰，又恐黛玉生嗔，反添病症。兩個人見了面，只得用浮言勸慰，真真是親極反疏了。

But although she had so much she longed to tell him, now that they were no longer children she could hardly tease him playfully as before or express her pent-up feelings. He, too, wanted to bare his heart to her to console her, yet he feared this might offend her and make her illness worse. So when they met they could only express their concern in the most superficial way. Truly, theirs was a case of “devotion leading to alienation”.

(HLM, 89:1250; DRM: 1950)

The sense of solitude and its resulting alienation between the lovers gradually erodes the intimate relationship of the two, making it fraught with pain and sadness. The situation of the lovers in a way manifests the overall meaning that Plaks observes from the novel, “it is a block in perception rather than a failure of action or a weakness of

will that gives rise to the tragic situation.”¹⁵² And the block in perception between the two is not broken until their last meeting:

(黛玉)看見寶玉在那里坐著，也不起來讓坐，只瞅著嘻嘻的傻笑。黛玉自己坐下，卻也瞅著寶玉笑。兩個人也不問好，也不說話，也無推讓，只管對著臉傻笑起來。襲人看見這番光景，心里大不得主意，只是沒法兒。忽然聽著黛玉說道：“寶玉，你為什麼病了？”寶玉笑道：“我為林姑娘病了。”襲人紫鵲兩個嚇得面目改色，連忙用言語來岔。兩個卻又不答言，仍舊傻笑起來。

Daiyu, disregarding her, (Xiren, Baoyu's maid) went on into the inner room where Baoyu was sitting. Instead of rising to offer her a seat, he simply stared at her with a smile. They exchanged neither greetings nor civilities, just simpered at each other without a word.

Xiren, at a complete loss, did not know what to do.

“Baoyu,” said Daiyu abruptly. “Why are you ill?”

“Because of Miss Lin,” he answered with a smirk.

Xiren and Zijuan turned pale with fright and at once tried to change the subject; but the other two ignored them, still smiling foolishly.

(HLM,96:1329; DRM:2082)

At this moment, Baoyu has been deranged and lost his mind because of the loss of his Precious Jade of Spiritual Understanding. (chap. 94) To help counteract his bad luck, the matriarch of the family decides to prompt his marriage with Baochai, which has been planned already. Daiyu, on the other hand, loses her mind as well because she hears the news by accident. It is in this case the two meet each other for the last time. Baoyu's answer to Daiyu's inquiry reminds the readers of his bold confession to Daiyu in chapter thirty-two when he expresses his feeling for her. Ironically, while last confession ends up in being heard by the wrong person, this confession, in a similar sense, cannot be heard and understood by Daiyu with such a deranged mind. The communication of feeling and love does not succeed even in their last meeting. Soon after, on the night of the wedding of Baoyu and Baochai, Daiyu dies with a deep regret

¹⁵² Andrew H. Plaks, *Archetype and Allegory in the Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), 78.

since she misunderstands Baoyu for his indifference and abandonment. A heart-breaking misunderstanding that is never explained until the last minute of her life.

2.3 Chapter Conclusion

The sentimental and tragic love between the protagonists Jia Baoyu and Lin Daiyu in *Honglou meng* has always been analysed with social and philosophical emphasises. Rethinking it from a different perspective, this chapter has explored how their communication mode evolves and changes in their process of growth. I propose that the destructiveness of the love between Baoyu and Daiyu in the novel is not only brought forth by suppressive forces of the society, but by a block in their communication running through the primary stages of their growth and maturation.

Traditional Chinese love narrative prior to *Honglou meng* shows little interest in the construction of growing and maturational development of both the lovers and their relationship. This is because critical trials and tribulations in the relationship are usually made possible by the “accidence” and the “coincidence”, which deprives the relationship from a natural course of development. Moreover, the isolation of romantic narrative from lovers’ normal course of life also prevents realistic changes being brought into their relationship.

However, the narrative of love in the case of Baoyu and Daiyu is different from the stereotyped romantic stories, as the romantic relationship is for the first time depicted in a natural and realistic course of development, which is fraught with difficulty, misunderstanding, and struggling.

The three different stages in the novel present the growth of the relationship together with the growth of the protagonists to adulthood. Although their feelings for each other

remain the same, how the two deal with their feelings changes over time, proceeding from unconscious and innocent feelings, through period of mutual understanding and eventually to tragic situations of inevitable alienation and estrangement. At the early stage, the block of communication between the lovers comes from the intended ironies and deliberate provocations when expressing their feelings for each other. Gradually as the lovers grow older, a subtler sense of sentiment and solitude emerges, followed by an increasing anxiety about the result of their relationship. This eventually leads to the failure of communication and the alienation of the two.

More importantly, in the later stages of the development of their relationship, the layers of their feelings at the present moment are complicated by its combination with the psychological categories of shared memory of the lovers in the past. Previous lovers in traditional Chinese romantic stories have little knowledge about remembering and recalling as they are depicted only in the present with few perspectives. But for Baoyu and Daiyu, the older they are, the more heavy-hearted they become, as they are fully aware of their tortuous and blocked communication all over these years since they childhood. The increasing moments of memory of the past thus bring in a new awareness of time, growth and change in the protagonists by merging two temporal dimensions of past and present.

By recording the mutual-committed affection of the two in a process of emerging, strengthening and eroding feelings in painstaking realistic detail, the author of the novel emphasises the inner deconstructive force of growth and maturation in pursuing absolute understanding and communication of the lovers. This chapter participates in the main idea of the thesis in the sense that a redefined literary sensibility about love in which personal and individual feelings and sensations are valorised is closely related to the novel's construction of temporal experience.

Chapter Three Fate, Foreknowledge and Temporal Distance

At the beginning of the novel, the narrative depicts a fantastic encounter between a mythical stone and two clerics. Discarded from the celestial repair by the goddess Nüwa, the magic stone rests at the foot of Blue Ridge Peak of the Great Fable Mountain. One day, a Buddhist monk and a Taoist priest come along talking about the glory and wealth in the world of mortals. With its “mind” bestirred, the stone speaks out and begs the clerics to take it to this world of mortals. However, the two find the idea unattractive and warns the stone not to go:

那紅塵中有卻有些樂事，但不能永遠依恃。況又有“美中不足，好事多魔”八個字緊相連屬；瞬息間則又樂極生悲、人非物換，究竟是到頭一夢，萬境歸空。倒不如不去的好！（HLM, 1:3)¹⁵³

Although there are certain pleasures in the world of Red Dust, they cannot last forever. Moreover, the eight words presenting the truth of ‘flaw in every perfection, suffering for the virtuous’ are indivisibly joined. In a little while you will reach the extremity of pleasure that begets sorrow, the passing of humans and the alteration of things. In the end all will be a dream, all phenomena will return to emptiness. It would have been better for you not to go there.¹⁵⁴

This caution, despite its “too banal and too overtly didactic” style,¹⁵⁵ is considered by Zhiyanzhai as expressing “the overall subject of the book” (乃一部之總綱). (ZP,1: 4, Jiaxu manuscript; my translation) While a number of individuals might identify a dreamlike and illusionary quality of human life suggested in the speech, a worse aspect of it seems to be related to a certain rule by which things are in general come to be as

¹⁵³ The detailed dialogue between the stone and two clerics appears in the Jiaxu manuscript 甲戌本, but was deleted in the Gengchen manuscript 庚辰本 and all the subsequent versions.

¹⁵⁴ Anthony C. Yu, *Rereading the Stone: Desire and the Making of Fiction in Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton University Press, 1997), 116.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 117.

they are. It is observable that rather than depicting how fake and unreliable the pleasures of the human world may be, the clerics stress that everything has been predetermined and cannot be changed or controlled, with important adverbs like “cannot last forever”, “in a little while” and “in the end”. In other words, the absurdity of human life that the clerics use to dampen the stone’s enthusiasm is not brought forth by the ontological doubt **about** human life, but by the situation of living **within** it. In this sense, the primary idea suggested here which could be regarded as the overall subject of the novel, is not about the “emptiness” of human life itself, but its fate.

The representation of the sense of fate, or the sense that everything has been predetermined by a natural principle in traditional Chinese literature has been compared by scholars to “tragedy” in the western sense because of the important status of each in their respective culture. For example, Andrew Plaks argues that despite the fact that there are accounts of the tragic fates of individuals in Chinese literature, the “logical interrelation between their particular situation and the overall structure of existential intelligibility” weakens the “pity and fear” the reader usually experiences in tragedy.¹⁵⁶ From a different perspective, Stephen Owen suggests that Chinese literature takes a different aesthetic form to represent the conflict between “amoral necessity” and the “human moral order” which is essential for the genre of tragedy in the West. While the “amoral necessity” in tragedy takes the form of “some arbitrary predestination”, it is usually given to “the impersonal forces of cyclical nature, or nature as mechanism”, or “fate” in Chinese literature.¹⁵⁷ It is the “human trapped in the determined mechanism of nature’s cycles” in Chinese tradition that has the “emotional and intellectual weight” of tragedy. Moreover, he observes that the “process” is usually represented “in retrospect”: “a temporal distance corresponding

¹⁵⁶ Andrew H. Plaks, “Towards a Critical Theory of Chinese Narrative,” in *Chinese Narrative: Critical and Theoretical Essays*, eds. Andrew H. Plaks, (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1977), 352.

¹⁵⁷ Owen, Stephen, *Remembrances: The Experience of the Past in Classical Chinese Literature* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1986), 56.

to the fictional distance that mediates the ‘pity and fear’ of the audience of tragedy”.¹⁵⁸ Owen does not go further to explain what exactly the “distance” looks like nor its mechanism, since his focus is on the paradigmatic force derived from the conflict, his observation does suggest that the temporal aspects could be crucial to achieve a certain literary effect and to invoke certain emotions of the reader in the Chinese construction of the inevitable necessity.

This suggestion serves as the starting point of my investigation into the literary construction of fate in *Honglou meng*. Not only because Owen mentions the novel in particular and considers it as the most important example of this paradigmatic form in the same study, but also because of my own experience of reading the novel: its masterful evocation of a subtle yet strong sense of inevitable loss seems to be related to the manipulation of fictive experience of time. I therefore propose that the sense of fate, or of everything has been predestined in the novel, is closely related to an imaginary understanding of the temporal aspects of the narrative that the author establishes in his reader’s mind through literary strategies and devices. To illustrate this narrative mechanism, I will firstly analyse in section one what the reader’s understanding of the temporality of a novel is in the framework of narrative theory, in the hope that it will provide some clues for the following analysis of how this knowledge is established in *Honglou meng*. In sections two and three, I will try to identify and demonstrate the primary temporal strategies and devices that the author adopts to affect the process of reading and understanding the novel. I hope my investigation will show how certain temporal arrangements of narrative time influence the assumption and imagination of a novel.

3.1 “Foreknowledge” and its Temporal Implication

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 57.

The foreknowledge that the reader is provided with in *Honglou meng* has always been an important issue for scholarly investigation. From the beginning of the novel, it is suggested to the readers that things will inevitably come to be as they are supposed to be, and events will happen as they are supposed to do. Moreover, throughout the narrative, there is also an implicit but consistent suggestion of what is to happen to the family and the characters conveyed by a series of signs like lyrics, dreams, prophecies, and omens.

Due to the novel's complex textual history, the detailed suggestion is firstly adopted by some scholars as direct evidence of the inauthenticity of the last forty chapters, which are considered to have been written by Gao'E 高鶚(1758-1815), a Qing scholar and writer. Therefore, great effort has been made to decipher traces of evidence for this and its relationship to the final outcome of the characters.¹⁵⁹

On the other hand, scholars and critics approach the suggestion in the novel in the framework of narrative theory. In his *Narrative Discourse*, French literary theorist Gérard Genette coins the term “prolepsis” to express “any narrative maneuver that consists of narrating or evoking in advance an event that will take place later.”¹⁶⁰ Along with others literary devices like “foreshadowing” and “anticipation”, it is conveniently

¹⁵⁹ For example, see Zhu Tong 朱彤, “Shi ‘baishou shuangxing——guanyu Shi Xiangyun de jieju” 釋“白首雙星”: 關於史湘雲的結局 [on “A Pair of Unicorns Suggest a Match” : about the outcome of Shi Xiangyun], *Honglou meng xuekan* 紅樓夢學刊 1979, no. 01: 59-76. Bai Xianyong 白先勇, “Jia Baoyu de suyuan: Jiang Yuhan yu Hua Xiren: jian lun Honglou meng de jieju yiyi” 賈寶玉的俗緣: 蔣玉函與花襲人: 兼論《紅樓夢》的結局意義 [Jia Baoyu's worldly affinity: iang Yuhan and Hua Xiren: on the significance of the Ending of Dream of Red Chamber] *Honglou meng xuekan* 紅樓夢學刊 1990, no. 01: 95-104. Shen Xinlin 沈新林, “Honglou meng zhong Lin Daiyu jieju kao lun” 《紅樓夢》中林黛玉結局考論 [Research on the Final Ending of Lin Daiyu in Dream of Red Chamber], *Nanjing shifan daxue wenxueyuan xuebao* 南京師範大學文學院學報 2011, no. 02: 61-67.

¹⁶⁰ Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1980), 40.

adopted to refer to an advance suggestion of later events in *Honglou meng* without defining the exactly meaning and context. Therefore, the term becomes a large container, in which literary phenomena, devices, and effects related to predictions are all used indiscriminately. For example, Chen Guojun summarises three categories of foreshadowing in *Honglou meng* according to modes of symbolism including the myth, the lyric, and the sign.¹⁶¹ Wang Ping proposes that the foreshadowing in *Honglou meng* goes beyond that in traditional Chinese narrative as it adopts an extensive variety of forms like lyrics, riddles, dreams and omens to reinforce the theme of an anticipatory tendency.¹⁶² Miao Huaiming argues that *Honglou meng* creatively adopts both explicit and implicit modes of prolepsis throughout the novel, creating a tragic, depressive and ominous atmosphere.¹⁶³

Differently from the above approaches of informational and technical devices, foreknowledge in *Honglou meng* in this chapter is not merely being informed in advance of what events and incidents will happen later but is an imaginary understanding that the author wants to establish in his reader's mind achieved through literary devices related to the temporal aspect. To illustrate this idea, I will firstly discuss the literary mechanism of "followability" of a narrative following the theory devised by Paul Ricoeur, to provide some clues around the temporal implication of foreknowledge and its relationship with narrative structure.

¹⁶¹ Chen Guojun 陳國軍, "Yuxu: honglou meng de yizhong xushi jiqiao" 預敘:《紅樓夢》的一種敘事技巧 [Pre-narrative: a narrative technique in Dream of Red Chamber], *Honglou meng xuekan* 紅樓夢學刊 1993, no. 04: 96.

¹⁶² Wang Ping 王平, "Lun honglou meng de yuxu fangshi jiqi gongneng" 論《紅樓夢》的預敘方式及其功能 [On the pre-narrative in Dream of Red Chamber and its function], *Honglou meng xuekan* 紅樓夢學刊 2001, no. 04: 127.

¹⁶³ Miao Huaiming 苗懷明, "lun honglou meng de xushi shixu yu yuyan xushi" 論《紅樓夢》的敘事時序與預言敘事 [On narrative time and prophetic narrative in Dream of Red Chamber], *Nanjing daxue xuebao (zhexue-renwen kexue-shehui kexue)* 南京大學學報(哲學·人文科學·社會科學) 2017, no. 03: 133-36.

In his book *Time and Narrative*, Ricœur talks about three ways in which plot is mediated. The third way concerning temporal configuration is about “grasping together” the “succession of events” and drawing the “unity of one temporal whole” from these events. This is better demonstrated in “the story’s capacity to be followed”. According to Ricœur:

To follow a story is to move forward in the midst of contingencies and peripeteia under the guidance of an expectation that finds its fulfilment in the “conclusion” of the story. This conclusion is not logically implied by some previous premises. It gives the story an “end point”, which, in turn, furnishes the point of view from which the story can be perceived as forming a whole. To understand the story is to understand how and why the successive episodes led to this conclusion, which, far from being foreseeable, must finally be acceptable, as congruent with the episodes brought together by the story.¹⁶⁴

By drawing an analogy between the process of emplotment and knowledge, Ricœur highlights a synthetic process in narrative in which successive actions and incidents are grasped together into a configuration of knowledge. When analysing the “configurational dimension” of the emplotment, Ricœur talks about its “temporal features”. Apart from transforming the succession of events into “one meaningful whole”, another important aspect of this configuration is the plot imposing a sense of ending on the “indefinite succession of incidents”. And this “structural function of closure”, according to him, is better manifested in the “act” of “retelling” a story rather than in that of “telling”, because “as soon as a story is well known, to follow the story is not so much to enclose its surprises or discoveries within our recognition of the meaning attached to the story, as to apprehend the episodes which are themselves well known as leading to this end”.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative. Vol. 1*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), .66-67.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 67-8.

Before continuing to the detailed textual analysis, I would like to draw attention to an often-neglected episode of a human character's first encounter with the mythical characters in chapter one of the novel. If we accept that the reading and understanding of a narrative is decided by the successive flow of events, then the following absurd episode depicting a human character's first encounter with two religious masters and the Precious Jade in the same chapter, goes further to challenge us to consider how this kind of narrative is to be learned and understood through a series of literary strategies and devices.

In chapter one of this thesis, we have discussed the fantastic story of the Vermilion Pearl Plant and the Attendant Divine Luminescent, whose reincarnations becomes two protagonists Jia Baoyu and Lin Daiyu. What has not been mentioned is that the story is told by a Buddhist monk and a Taoist priest who are going to send their souls down into the world. What is more strange is that the dialogue actually happens in the dream of Zhen Shiyin 甄士隱, a country gentleman who lived in the city of Suzhou. In his dream, Shiyin overhears the dialogue from two clerics but has no idea of its meaning. After hearing the confusing conversation, Shiyin cannot help but say:

“適聞仙師所談因果，實人世罕聞者。但弟子愚濁，不能洞悉明白。若蒙大開癡頑，備細一聞，弟子則洗耳諦聽，稍能警省，亦可免沉倫之苦。”二仙笑道：“此乃玄機，不可預泄者到那時，只不要忘了我二人，便可跳出火坑矣。”士隱聽了，不便再問，因笑道：“玄機固不可洩露，但適云‘蠢物’，不知為何？或可得見否？”那僧說：“若問此物，倒有一面之緣。”說著，取出遞與士隱。士隱接了看時，原來是塊鮮明美玉，上面字跡分明，鑄著“通靈寶玉”四字，後面還有幾行小字。正欲細看時，那僧便說“已到幻境”，就強從手中奪了去，和那道人竟過了一座大石牌坊，上面大書四字，乃是“太虛幻境”。兩邊又有一副對聯，道：“假作真時真亦假，無為有處有還無。”士隱意欲也跟著過去，方舉步時，忽聽一聲霹靂，若山崩地陷。士隱大叫一聲，定睛看時，只見烈日炎炎，芭蕉冉冉，夢中之事便忘了一半。

“Rare indeed is the opportunity to listen to such a discussion of cause and effects as I have just heard. But I am too dull to [understand] it. If you would kindly elucidate to

enlighten [my benighted understanding], I promise to listen most attentively. For profiting by your wisdom may improve my salvation.”

“This is a mystery which we cannot divulge.” The two immortals smiled. “When the time comes, think of us. Then you may be able to escape from the fiery pit.”

Shiyin could hardly press them. “I mustn’t probe into a mystery,” he said, “but could you show me that object you mentioned just now?”

“If you want to know, you are destined in your life to meet with it,” said the monk.

With that he produced a beautiful piece of translucent jade and handed it to Shiyin. On the obverse were carved the words Precious Jade of Spiritual Understanding. Before Shiyin could [examine] carefully the columns of smaller characters on the reverse, the monk snatched it away from him saying:

“We’ve reached the Land of Illusion.”

He passed with the Taoist through a large stone archway on which was inscribed: Illusory Land of Great Void. A couplet on the two pillars read:

When false is taken for true, true becomes false;

If non-being turns into being, being become non-being.

Shiyin was starting after the two immortals when he heard a fearful crash, as if mountains had collapsed and the earth split asunder. With a cry he woke up and stared about him. There was the fiery sun still blazing down on the rustling plantain leaves. Already half of his dream had slipped his mind.

(HLM,1:9-10; DRM, 10-11; modified as suggested by the square brackets)

The mythical episode in the opening chapter is extensively acknowledged and interpreted in the dialectical framework of “the true” and “the false\fictional”, for the punning name of the character.¹⁶⁶ The glimpse of The Land of Illusion, and the couplet on “the true and the false” and “the being and the non-being” inscribed on either side of the arch have attracted a great deal of scholarly attention.¹⁶⁷ However, few have noticed the dynamic relationship between the masters and Shiyin in their behaviour

¹⁶⁶ Zhiyanzhai observes that “the name is used as a pretext for making ‘the true events concealed’” (*tuoyan jiang zhen shi yin qu ye* 托言將“真事隱去”也). (ZP,1: 15, Jiayu manuscript; my translation) as the pronunciation of the former in Chinese sounds exactly the same as the latter.

¹⁶⁷ Mei Xinlin 梅新林, “Zhen Shiyin yu Jia Yucun de fuhao gongneng” 甄士隱與賈雨村的符號功能 [the symbolic functions of Zhen Shiyin and Jia Yucun], *Zhejiang shida xuebao* 浙江師大學報 1992, no. 02: 42.

and in their dialogues from which an important narrative drama derives. From the beginning of the episode, what has been stressed implicitly is the gap in knowledge between the masters and Shiyin. The two masters appear to know the “cause and effects” of mysterious things in the world which Shiyin, as an ordinary “dull” man, struggles to “understand”. And when Shiyin requests the masters to “enlighten” his “benighted understanding” of the narrative of life of the soul as well as of himself by “elucidation”, the masters who know all the “causes and effects” refuse him because the “mystery” cannot be “divulged”. As a comfort or as a trick, they agree to show him the mysterious “object”, which turns to be a precious piece of jade named “Spiritual Understanding”. However, at the moment when Shiyin is about to “examine carefully” the “columns of smaller characters” on the Jade, he is unexpectedly presented with a land of “illusion” and the jade is “snatched” from his hands by the monk.

The transformation from the stone to the jade is as crucial as it is decisive in marking the stone’s entry into the mundane world from the mythical world. It symbolises the beginning of its involvement with life experience in the world of human beings, as well as with its narrative. The name in a way has a strong indication of a kind of learning and understanding that is crucial to the experience of human life. This knowledge is not acquaintance with or understanding of transcendent and ontological truth, but rather grasping together the successive events and drawing a complete experience from it. And if we accept the transformation from the magic Stone to the Precious Jade of Spiritual Understanding, this could have some indication of the beginning of the formation of a kind of life narrative, then the absurd episode depicting a human character’s first encounter with two religious masters and the Precious Jade could also be seen as a challenge to us to consider how this kind of narrative with a series of literary strategies and devices is to be learned and understood.

There is a huge gap between the masters and Shiyin, which could not be shortened by the empirical experience. When the masters hand the jade to Shiyin, it is not far-

fetches to say it is a symbolic action to show him a certain kind of knowledge. However, the moment when Shiyin was trying to “examine (the jade) more closely” is interrupted by the arrival of the Land of Illusion. Staying with Ricœur’s theory on the “operation of emplotment”, we should not hesitate to compare this little drama of a human character’s attempt to examine the pre-destined Jade of “Spiritual Understanding” to a first-time reader’s learning and understanding of the novel as he is trying to get a “unity of one temporal whole” from “the succession of events”, both of whom are constantly being interrupted and hindered by the narrator\masters through a series of fictional\illusory devices. By drawing an analogy between the process of emplotment and knowledge, Ricœur highlights a synthetic process in narrative in which successive actions and incidents are pulled together into a configuration of a narrative.

What I want to emphasise here is that in this scene, the masters are manipulating the understanding of Shiyin by manipulating the temporal gaps. Although Shiyin can have the chance to hold the jade in his hand, he is not given enough time to “examine it more closely”. Because when he wants to do that, the masters will confuse his sense of judgement by providing him with an illusory land. The dramatization of the masters and the jades’ encounter with Shiyin can also be taken as a symbolic example of the author’s reflective imitation of the interaction between narrating and reading. It imitates playfully and masterfully a first-time reader’s reading and understanding process of the novel *Honglou meng* itself and goes on to challenge us to consider how this kind of narrative is to be learned and understood in the framework of literary arrangement.

This section discusses the literary mechanism of narrative followability of the reader following the theories of Paul Ricœur to demonstrate how the foreknowledge in *Honglou meng* could have temporal implications. Generally, if a narrative can be regarded as the illusion of a succession of events, then following a narrative is to move forward towards the endpoint of this succession to fulfil the expectation at that point.

However, as Ricoeur proposes that as long as a story is well known, then following and understanding the story is not to discover the surprise in the conclusion as to understand the events that led up to that conclusion. In a self-referential manner, this intention of the author and its possible effect on the reader is manifested in an often-neglected episode of a human character's first encounter with the Precious Jade, in which the reader's knowledge about the narrative is manipulated masterfully and playfully by the manipulation of temporal distance.

With this assumption, I will then analyse separately two forms of temporal distance in *Honglou meng* namely, between the past and the present, and between the present and the future, and I will explain how they contribute to the literary assumptions and imagination of fate in the novel.

3.2 In Retrospect: A Sense of Conclusiveness

Narrative closure not only completes and finishes a story, but it also affects how the reader understands the meaning of the story. In his famous book, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*, Frank Kermode takes "clock's tick-tock" as a model of "plot" and takes the interval between two sounds are "purely successive disorganized time" that we need to make sense of. It is the fact that we use fiction to "enable the end to confer organization and form on the temporal structure" that bestows "significant duration" upon the interval in between.¹⁶⁸ In a similar sense, Barbara Smith also notes that the ending in a poem provides "the sense of stable conclusiveness, finality, or 'clinch'", because "the occurrence of the terminal event is a

¹⁶⁸ Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 45.

confirmation of expectations that have been established by the structure of the sequence, and is usually distinctly gratifying”.¹⁶⁹

Mainly deriving from historiographical and folk writings, most traditional Chinese novels choose to initial their narrative by depicting an overall and collective pattern of the order of the world, whether it is historical, universal, or ethical. For example, *Sanguo yanyi* begins with a historical statement about the wars of states before the appearance of the protagonists;¹⁷⁰ *Xiyou ji* first describes the entire progress of the formation of the human universe before telling the story of the Monkey King.¹⁷¹ And *Shuihu zhuan* starts with the destruction of a mysterious seal, which is the symbol of the law of heaven before introducing the stories of the heroes. Even in short works of fiction and in novellas, historical stories or anecdotes are often used as a prologue offering explanation and evaluation.¹⁷² On first glance, *Honglou meng* seems to follow this tradition, as it begins its narrative with a mythical story of how Goddess Nü Wa makes stones to repair the sky in the Baseless Cliff of the Great Waste Mountain. However, instead of continuing with the grand history of the Goddess and her celestial repairing, the narrative turns to an individual stone that is excluded from this “grand project”.

¹⁶⁹ Barbara H. Smith, *Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 2.

¹⁷⁰ “The empire, long divided, must unite; long united, must divide. Thus, it has ever been” (話說天下大勢，分久必合，合久必分). See Luo Guanzhong 羅貫中, *Three Kingdoms: A Historical Novel* (Fifteenth Anniversary Abridged Edition with A New Foreword), trans. M. Roberts (Beijing; Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: Foreign Language Press; University of California Press, 2014), 3.

¹⁷¹ “We heard that, in the order of Heaven and Earth, a single period consisted of 129600 years” (蓋聞天地之數，有十二萬九千六百歲為一元). See Wu, Cheng'en 吳承恩, *The Journey to the West*, trans. Anthony C. Yu (Revised edition, Vol. 1) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 99.

¹⁷² Patrick Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1981), 20.

While thirty-six thousand five hundred and one blocks of stone were made, one was discarded by the Goddess at the foot of Blue Ridge Peak. Since it “has gained certain spiritual understanding” (*lingxing yi tong* 靈性已通) after being tempered it “laments night and day in distress and shame” (*zi yuan zi jie, riye beihao cankui* 遂自怨自嗟, 日夜悲號慚愧). (HLM,1:1;my translation) The regret and sorrow of the stone is usually perceived by scholars as “a literatus’s rationalization of his political misfortune” as the rejection from the celestial repairs represents the lack of opportunity to use its talent (*cai* 材).¹⁷³ However, another indication of this rejection that is equally important is related to the significance of repairing the sky. The myth of Goddess Nü Wa repairing the sky in traditional Chinese culture suggests restoring the order of the universe from some dreadful disasters. According to *Huainanzi* 淮南子, Goddess Nü Wa goes to repair the sky because “the four pillars (at the compass points) had broken down, the nine provinces (of the habitable world) were split apart, Heaven did not wholly cover (Earth), and Earth did not completely support (Heaven)” (四極廢, 九州裂, 天不兼復, 地不周載).¹⁷⁴ Being rejected by the Goddess, therefore, does not only mean merely exclusion from making the best use of the stone’s talent, but also means being expelled from being enrolled in a grand history of immortality in which the order of the universe is restored. It is in this sense that the stone’s pity and sorrow is so great.

One day, a monk and a priest come along, talking about the glory and wealth in the world of mortals. Overhearing their talk on this topic, the stone gets very agitated, and begs the clerics to take it down to this mortal world to enjoy it for a few years. The clerics then transform the huge stone into a small jade, which is taken down to the world of human and appears in Baoyu’s mouth when he is born. The Jade\Stone thus experiences human life with Baoyu until it returns the same place bearing the

¹⁷³ Martin W. Huang, *Literati and Self-Re/Presentation: Autobiographical Sensibility in the Eighteenth-Century Chinese Novel* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995), 86.

¹⁷⁴ Andrew H. Plaks, *Archetype and Allegory in the Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), 28.

inscription of the whole story, which accounts for the other popular name of the novel, “The Story of Stone”.

The indication of the stone’s choice to enter the human world is often associated with the dialectical problem of desire. Highlighting the puns on jade (*yu* 玉) and desire (*yu* 欲), Wang Guowei regards the stone’s decision to enter the human world which is fraught with worry and trouble instead of wandering around a symbol of the desire-oriented “decadence” (*duoluo* 墮落) of a human being.¹⁷⁵ Anthony Yu suggests that the plot shows the stone’s assertive behaviour to take responsibility for its own fate, and thus suggests the “ironic contrast” between “its refined condition and implied numinous intelligence (*lingxing yi tong* [靈性已通])” and “its mocking denomination by self and others as a “stupid thing (*chun wu* [蠢物])”, which also serve to define the male protagonist concerning “the perplexing problems of ignorance and perception, renunciation and desire.”¹⁷⁶ While these explanations are all very plausible, another issue that is equally worth discussing here is the quality of the human world, the object of the stone’s desire: why does the stone yearn for the human world, and what does it mean for a rejected stone to go to there? As an individual stone rejected from a grand history, there seems to be no possibility to change its situation and to alter its fate. It therefore chooses to embark upon a new “project”, despite the fact that it will not last. It is from this perspective that we may reinterpret the temporal indication of the stone’s insistence on going to the world of mortals despite the warning of the masters: it is rejected from entering a history of eternity and immortality but is chooses to enter a history of human with a predictable and predestined ending.

¹⁷⁵ Wang Guowei 王國維, “Honglou meng pinglun” 紅樓夢評論 [On the Dream of the Red Chamber], in *Wang Guowei Wenxue lunzhu sanzong* 王國維文學論著三種 [Wang Guowei on Literature: Three Essays] (Beijing: Shangwu yinshu guan, 2007), 8-9.

¹⁷⁶ Anthony C. Yu, *Rereading the Stone: Desire and the Making of Fiction in Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton University Press, 1997), 117.

The ending of this human life, however, is depicted right after the little drama between the stone and the two clerics. After no one knows “how many generations and aeons” (*ji shi ji jie* 幾世幾劫), the stone comes back to the same place after its journey in the world of morals:

因有個空空道人訪道求仙，從這大荒山無稽崖青埂峰下經過，忽見一大塊石上字跡分明，編述歷歷。空空道人乃從頭一看，原來就是無材補天，幻形入世，蒙茫茫大士、渺渺真人攜入紅塵，歷盡離合悲歡、炎涼世態的一段故事。後面又有一首偈雲：

無材可去補蒼天，枉入紅塵若許年。

此系身前身後事，倩誰記去作奇傳？

詩後便是此石墜落之鄉，投胎之處，親自經歷的一段陳跡故事。

A Taoist known as Reverend Void, searching for the Way and immortality, came to Great Waste Mountain, Baseless Cliff and the foot of Blue Ridge Peak. His eyes fell on the inscription on a large stone which was still discernible and he read it through. It was an account of the Stone's rejection for repairing of heaven, its transformation and conveyance to the world of men by the Buddhist of Infinite Space and the Taoist of Boundless Time, and the joys and sorrows, partings and encounters, warm and cold treatment from others it had experienced there. On its back was a Buddhist verse:

Unfit to mend the azure sky,

I passed some years on earth to no avail;

My life in both worlds is recorded here;

Whom can I ask to pass on this romantic tale?

There followed the name of the region where the Stone fell, the place of its incarnation, and the story of its adventures.

(HLM,1: 4; DRM 1:4)

Great scholarly attention has been paid to the thematical significances of this passage because of its mythical design. Some stress its heavenly, spiritual, and transcendental quality that is in contrast to the human world in the main body of the novel. For example, Miller Lucien reads the mythical narrative of the stone in chapter one as an integral part of the whole vision of reality, in which a heavenly and earthly construction

are unified.¹⁷⁷ Robert Hegel presents dreams in *Honglou meng* as a means of communication between spiritual and mundane levels of existence, with realistic detail from actual life, setting these images against the great cosmic order to which individual action must conform.¹⁷⁸ Others focus on the problem of the fictionality and authenticity of the narrative itself. Qing critic Wang Xilian 王希廉 (1805-1877) notes that the intention of including the story of the stone is to narrate a lifetime experience in the name of an “eyewitness”(qinli 親歷), and to suggest that it “narrates the thing as it is rather than making fiction out of it”(shi xu qi shi, bingfei niezao 實敘其事, 並非捏造). In stark contrast to Wang Xilian’s remarks, modern scholar Wang Jing regards the literary design of the inscribed stone as “a critique of the previous generic convention” which stresses eye-witnessing and true record, and “a defense of the authority of fiction in its own right”.¹⁷⁹ In a departure from the discussion on the problem of fictionality, I suggest that the large, inscribed stone resting at the foot of Blue Ridge Peak of the Great Waste could be taken as a physical symbol of an individual’s lifetime memory.

In his study on historical continuity in France, French historian Pierre Nora coins the term “lieux de mémoire”, or “sites of memory” to define a physical place, object, or event that has “acquired the meaning of a symbol in the memorial heritage of a community”.¹⁸⁰ In a similar sense, in his study on images of “ruins” in Chinese painting, art historian Wu Hung notes that “historical traces and erasure” stimulates a sentiment of mourning for the past, which is defined by “an introspective gaze, a gap

¹⁷⁷ Lucien Miller, *Masks of Fiction in Dream of the Red Chamber: Myth, Mimesis, and Persona*. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1975).

¹⁷⁸ Robert Hegel, “Heavens and hells in Chinese fictional dreams.” *Psycho-Sinology: The Universe of Dreams in Chinese Culture* (1988): 4.

¹⁷⁹ Jing Wang, *The Story of Stone: Intertextuality, Ancient Chinese Stone Lore, and the Stone Symbolism in Dream of the Red Chamber, Water Margin, and the Journey to the West* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1992), 256.

¹⁸⁰ Pierre Nora, “General Introduction”, in *Rethinking France: Les Lieux de Memoire, Volume 1: The State*, ed. Nora, P. & David P. Jordan (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2001), vii.

of time, effacement and memory”.¹⁸¹ While Nora mainly talks about place as related to a community or a nation, and Wu discusses visual places in the painting, their indication that a physical place could be regarded as an embodiment of certain memory is enlightening for us in re-examining the temporal indication of the inscribed stone resting at the foot of Blue Ridge Peak after experiencing a lifetime in the world of mortals.

Despite the stone’s declaration that it has passed “some years on earth to no avail”, it has changed fundamentally from what it was before going there. By the time the Reverend Void saw the stone, it is no longer the stone which tried to fit into the grand history of mankind as a whole, but an individual site loaded with personal memory because it has “inscriptions” of its lifetime experience on its back. Being, witnessing, remembering will not keep the experience of past, it has to find a way to recover this period of time: the stone chose to use the structure of language to represent it. As Nicola King notes, “all narrative accounts of life stories...reconstruct memory according to certain assumptions about the way it functions and the kind of access it gives to the past.”¹⁸² In the case of the stone, the inscriptions of a lifetime of experience are the entry point to remembering and recalling. Narrative provides the individual with a unique form of access to past experience. More importantly, the whole story, therefore, is built on a retrospective individual fictive gesture. A temporal paradox lies in the emplotment: the story of the stone in the world of mortals that the readers will be reading has already been completed and even inscribed on the stone: what will happen has already happened. The mythical arrangement not only indicates the fictive quality of the story but also reveals the retrospective rhetoric of the narrative. However, by its nature every fiction has to be retrospective, because only in retrospect do we

¹⁸¹ Hung Wu, *A Story of Ruins: Presence and Absence in Chinese Art and Visual Culture* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 18.

¹⁸² Nicola King, *Memory, Narrative, Identity: Remembering the Self* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 2.

recognize what is significant and what is not. However, in *Honglou meng*, the whole story is designed in the form of the recounting of the stone's past experience as an explicit dramatization. As Anthony Yu observes, "the account of the stone's life in both worlds (*shen qian shen hou shi* 身前身後事) is told in its entirety initially only as a summarized, hence completed, process of reading and reception by a dramatized figure in the narrative named Vanitas or Kongkong Daoren, and the details are then to be filled out at great length in retrospect."¹⁸³

While the author creates a retrospective vision through the mythical story of the inscribed stone, he also reinforces the vision through a monologue in the preface of the novel, in which a frustrated literati talks about his regret for his misbehaviour during his youth:

今風塵碌碌，一事無成，忽念及當日所有之女子，一一細推了去，覺其行止見識，皆出於我之上。何我堂堂之鬚眉，曾不若彼裙釵哉！實愧則有餘，悔又無益之大無可奈何之日也！當此時，則自欲將已往所賴，上賴天恩，下承祖德，錦衣紈綺之時、飫甘饜美肥之日，背父母教育之恩，負師兄規訓之德，已至今日一事無成、半生潦倒之罪，編述一記，以告普天下人。我之罪固不能免，然閨閣中本自歷歷有人，萬不可因我之不肖，自護其短，則一併使其泯滅也。雖今日之茆椽蓬牖，瓦灶繩床，其風晨月夕，階柳庭花，亦未有傷於我之襟懷筆墨者。雖我未學，下筆無文，何為不用假語村言，敷演出一段故事來，亦可使閨閣昭傳，復可悅世之目，破人愁悶，不亦宜乎？”

In this busy, dusty world, having accomplished nothing, I suddenly recalled all the girls I had known, considering each in turn, and it dawned on me that all of them surpassed me in behaviour and understanding; that I, shameful to say, for all my masculine dignity, fell short of the gentler sex. But since this could never be remedied, it was no use regretting it. There was really nothing to be done. I decided then to make known to all how I, though dressed in silks and delicately nurtured thanks to the Imperial favour and my ancestor's virtue, had nevertheless ignored the kindly guidance of my elders as well as the good advice of teachers and friends, with the result that I had wasted half my life and not acquired a

¹⁸³Anthony C. Yu, *Rereading the Stone: Desire and the Making of Fiction in Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), 117-8.

single skill. But no matter how unforgivable my crimes, I must not let all the lovely girls I have known pass into oblivion though my wickedness or my desire to hide my shortcomings...Though I have little learning or literary talent, what does it matter if I tell a tale in rustic language to leave a record of all those lovely girls.

(HLM,1:1-2; DRM:1-2) ¹⁸⁴

This famous preface of the novel could remind readers of Chinese traditional lyrical writing of remembrance like poems by Li Shangyin 李商隱(c. 813–858), Qian Qianyi 钱谦益(1582–1664), and Wu Weiye 吴伟业(1609–1671); song lyrics by Yan Jidao 晏几道(1038–1110), Jiang Kui 姜夔(c. 1155–c. 1221), and Wu Wenying 吴文英(c. 1200–c. 1260); accounts of how collections are lost, such as those by Li Qingzhao 李清照(1084 – c. 1155), Zhou Mi 周密(1232–c. 1298), and Yuan Haowen 元好问(1190–1257); memoirs of cities in the aftermath of political turmoil like *The Eastern Capital: A Dream of Splendour* (*Dongjing menghua lu* 東京夢華錄), *Memoirs of Wulin* (*Wulin jiushi* 武林舊事), *Record of A Golden Millet Dream* (*Mengliang lu* 夢梁錄) and *Reminiscences in Dreams of Tao An* (*Tao an meng yi* 陶庵夢憶). ¹⁸⁵

In this sense, the confession in the preface has been analysed with an autobiographical emphasis by Hu Shi 胡適 (1891-1962), the famous scholar on *Honglou meng* of the Republican period. Hu corresponds the details suggested in this paragraph to the historical material of Cao Xueqin. He proposes that the narrator of this preface is the

¹⁸⁴ While some scholars argues that the paragraph is written by Zhiyanzhai, (For example, see Feng Qiyong 馮其庸, “lun zhiyanzhai chongping shitouji jixu ben fanli” 論《脂硯齋重評石頭記》甲戌本“凡例” [On the preface in the Jiayu version of “The Story of the Stone: Re-annotated by irst”] *Honglou meng xuekan* 紅樓夢學刊 1980, no. 04: 175-207.), there is little doubt that the idea is a personal recollection of the author Cao Xueqin himself.

¹⁸⁵ Qing critic Wu Chongyao 伍崇曜 (1810-1863) remarks in his postscript to *Reminiscences* that the narrative is full of “emotions of one’s life experience” (shenshi zhi gan 不勝身世之感) after the “the vicissitudes of life over time”(dilaotianhuang cangsang 地老天荒滄桑). See Zhang Dai 張岱, *Tao’an meng yi* 陶庵夢憶 [Reminiscences in Dreams of Tao An] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2016), 105.

protagonist Jia Baoyu, who was in a state of utter poverty and misfortune when writing the novel. This, he then argues, coincides exactly with the basic “facts” of Cao Xueqin’s life experience that is derived from poems dedicated to him by his friend. Therefore, the readers could deduce the conclusion of the novel that the Jia family is bound to decline and Baoyu is bound to be reduced to poverty according to the self-statement in this paragraph.¹⁸⁶

While one judges an interpretation like this as sensible or farfetched depends on one’s recognition on the literary essence of this text, whether it is a factual account of the narrator’s autobiographical experience in reality or a part of the narrative designs of fictional assumption. However, what I want to suggest here, is that what the author of *Honglou meng* tries to do in the preface is less to remind the reader of his actual experience in reality, than to construct a retrospective gesture as well as a mode of narrating and reading. In other words, the primary function of this preface is to show the attempt to recapture the meaning of an earlier life through literary representation. The whole story is built on a fictive premise of retrospection, of a remembering gesture from the point of present. The arrangement not only indicates the fictive quality of the story but also reveals the retrospective rhetoric of the narrative. Although by nature, every fiction has to be retrospective. In *Honglou meng*, this perspective has significantly changed not only the events depicted in the novel but also their relationships.

¹⁸⁶ He summarises three basic “facts” of Cao Xueqin’s life experience from poems that are dedicated to him by his friend: a) He had an “old splendid dream” (*fanhua jiu meng* 繁華舊夢) (quoting a line from Cao’s friend 敦誠) b) he had a talent in art and literature c) his last years were spent in a state of poverty. See Hu Shi 胡適, Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培, *Shitou ji suo yin & Honglou meng kaozheng* 《石頭記索隱》《紅樓夢》考證 [Exploration of the concealment in The Story of the Stone & Textual research on The Dream of the Red Chamber] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1989), 95.

It can be observed that in the text the narrator begins with a confession in a sentimental and regretful tone, saying that he is responsible for the decline of his family and the disappearance of past happy times. However, while the author attributes the loss to a moral flaw, when he recalled those experiences, no detail is mentioned at all. All those splendid gatherings and wonderful banquets of aristocratic life have been simply summed up as “dreams and illusions”. And if we scrutinise more closely, we could find that the centrality of his emotion of guilt and pain seems to be affected less by what he had done wrong than the relationship with certain moments in the past when the devastating event has not yet happened and when he had all the privilege and chance to be different: when he was “dressed in silks”, when he “was delicately nurtured”, and when he was blind to kind advice and good and wise companions. The issue at stake is not the meaning of past, but the tension between the moment when everything has ended and the moment in the past when things have not yet happened. And what he really wants to emphasise is less a moral reflection than a temporal gap between the past when everything has yet to happen, and the present, when everything is completed. It is for this huge gap in time that the author feels regretful. It is first and foremost created by a temporal gap. It is a gap of loss, of regret and of unfulfillment, an unspoken wish to relive the past once again and to act differently. Yet the ending is placed here, fixed and unchangeable. And in the present moment of writing this preface, possessing the knowledge of which he was ignorant before, he would like to write and narrate (*bianshu* 編述) his experience as if the things that were done and the people he has let down could be remedied through the making of a narrative.

This section has analysed how the author generalises and summarises the stories in the novel in its entirety as completed and finished in the form of recollection and remembrance. The construction of this assumption is twofold: it assumes that all the stories of the novel derive from the inscriptions on a mythical stone which has returned from the world of mortals in chapter one, but also draws on the early aristocratic life

of the frustrated narrator in the confessional preface. The reader thus learns that the whole story is finished and is derived from a personal remembrance and recollection of the past and portrays a sense of conclusiveness that the author wants to establish in his reader's mind right at the beginning of the narrative.

In the following section, I will then turn to the narrative level in the main body of the novel, where the author constructs temporal distance between the present and the future by suggesting the prospect of the predestined decline of the family and the scatteredness of Baoyu and his female companions of the family.

3.3 In Prospect: a Sense of Impermanence

Suggestions of future developments made in advance and predictions of the outcomes of characters are not rare in traditional Chinese texts. As early as the Warring States Period, the historical text *The Commentary of Zuo* (*Zuo zhuan* 左傳) informs of the destiny of a character, a city, or a country through dreams, oracle inscriptions and celestial phenomena at an early stage of their development.¹⁸⁷ This tradition was widely adopted in most full-length novels from the Ming Dynasty in the form of advance suggestion and warning of the final outcomes of main characters. For example, in *Sanguo yanyi*, when the talented military strategist Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 leaves his rustic retreat to enter into the service of the warlord Liu Bei 劉備, his friend Sima Hui 司馬徽 remarks, "Sleeping Dragon has found his lord but not his time. A pity!"¹⁸⁸ In *Shuihu zhuan*, when the monk Lu Zhishen 魯智深 leaves the Mount Wutai monastery, the abbot gives him a verse: "Capture Xia when you meet him; Seize La when you

¹⁸⁷ Liu Xiqing 劉希慶, "lun zuozhuan zhong de yuxu" 論《左傳》中的預敘 [On the pre-narrative in The Commentary of Zuo], *Guangxi shifan daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 廣西師範大學學報(哲學社會科學版) 2001, no. 03: 49-53.

¹⁸⁸ Luo Guanzhong 羅貫中. *Three Kingdoms: A Historical Novel*, trans. Moss Roberts (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2020), 126.

encounter him. When you hear the tide, complete the circle; When you see the faithful, enter silence”.¹⁸⁹ In *Jin ping mei*, a physiognomist foretells one by one the fortunes and outcomes of people in the household of Ximen Qing. All these predictions are proven to be closely related to the construction of the plot in the later parts of the novels.

The predestination in *Honglou meng* definitely belongs to a literary tradition which comprises those texts. However, in *Honglou meng*, it shows a much more meaningful manipulation. With more carefully prepared signs such as lyrics, dreams, prophecies, and omens, a more persistent appearance of the reminders of the prospect, a more complicated engagement with the construction of plot, it seems to manage to evoke a strong yet indescribable sentiment in the readers’ mind. The purpose is not to prove that the prediction is testified, but to create a temporal gap between the present and the future. Instead of drawing more connection between the signs and the characters, in the following analysis, I will take the literary suggestion of the destinies of the main characters in the novel as literary devices affecting the foreknowledge of the novel. In other words, I take the episode as structural rather than merely informational.

In chapter five, Baoyu, the young heir of the Rong Mansion of the aristocratic Jia family, is guided by a fairy called Goddess Disenchantment (*jing huan xian gu* 警幻仙姑) to visit the Land of Illusion (*taixu huanjing* 太虚幻境) in his dream. The most well-known plots in this chapter are a series of mythical adventures that Baoyu experiences. After entering the realm, Baoyu first reads perplexing poems from a stack of pamphlets, then he watches a performance of a suite of musical drama in the name of “Dream of the Red Chamber”. Both are actually previews suggesting the prospective collapse of the family and the dispersal of Baoyu and his female companions in the end, despite the fact that they are enjoying a luxurious and innocent life at the moment.

¹⁸⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lu_Zhishen

While most scholarly attention has been paid to the interpretation of the metaphorical meaning of the dream experience, what is equally important is the situation in which Baoyu is given the chance to encounter the experience. Before the performance of the drama, the Goddess Disenchantment makes a long speech to explain the reason why she takes Baoyu to the Land of Illusion to other fairy maidens who blame her for bringing in a stranger:

今日原欲往榮府去接絳珠，適從寧府所過，偶遇寧榮二公之靈，囑吾云：“吾家自國朝定鼎以來，功名奕世，富貴傳流，雖歷百年，奈運終數盡，不可輓回者。故遺之子孫雖多，竟無可以繼業。其中惟嫡孫寶玉一人，稟性乖張，生性怪謔，雖聰明靈慧，略可望成，無奈吾家運數合終，恐無人規引入正。幸仙姑偶來，萬望先以情欲聲色等事警其痴頑，或能使彼跳出迷人圈子，然後入於正路，亦吾兄弟之幸矣。”如此囑吾，故發慈心，引彼至此。先以彼家上中下三等女子之終身冊籍，令彼熟玩，尚未覺悟。故引彼再至此處，令其再歷飲饌聲色之幻，或冀將來一悟，亦未可知也。

I did set off to the Rong Mansion today to fetch Vermillion Pearl, but as I was passing the Ning Mansion I met the spirits of the Duke of Ningguo and the Duke of Rongguo who told me, “Since the start of this dynasty, for some generations, our family has enjoyed a fine reputation as well as riches and rank. But after a hundred years our good fortune is at an end, gone beyond recall. Although we have many descendants, the only one fit to continue our work is our great-grandson Baoyu. Even though his is headstrong and eccentric, lacking in intelligence, we nonetheless had certain hopes of him. However, our family’s luck has run out and there seemed to be no one to show him the right way. How fortunate we are to have met you, goddess. We beg you to warn him of the dangers of lusting after women, so that he may escape from their snares and set his feet on the right path. Then we two brothers will be happy.”

Sympathizing with their request, I fetched him here. To begin with I made him look at the three registers of the girls in his own household. When he failed to understand, I brought him here to taste the illusion of carnal delight so that later he may perchance awaken to the truth.

(HLM,5:79-80; DRM:98)

Baoyu's entry to the place and his experience of these adventures are not an accident but a prepared plan. As the great grandson of the late Duke of Ningguo 寧國 and the Duke of Rongguo 榮國, Baoyu is regarded with great expectations by his ancestors to choose the right path because the fortune of the family is "at an end". Therefore, the Dukes beg the Goddess to awaken the young boy by presenting the dangers of lust to him. However, before enabling Baoyu's sexual experience with her sister named "Combining Beauties" (Jianmei 兼美) later, what the Goddess shows him is hardly related to lust.

According to the Goddess herself, it is when Baoyu fails to "understand" the meaning of the previews that she adopts the "illusion of carnal delight" as a tool to help him. In other words, the preview of destinies seems to fail in her attempt to awaken and enlighten Baoyu. This unsuccessful attempt has been related to a literary construction of temporal gap between the present and the future. Anthony Yu proposes that the "knowledge" of the declining prospect of the family that the Goddess tries to teach Baoyu cannot be learned quickly because when he wakes from this dream, "the waking reality he encounters is for many years itself a dream, the 'golden days'", and "not until he has tasted the sweetest and bitterest of experiences does he come to the true awakening".¹⁹⁰ There a paradox of time lies in the warning from the Fairy Disenchantment to Baoyu in his dream, that "only time can proffer to us a sense of the brevity and insubstantiality of our world".¹⁹¹ In other words, the "knowledge" of life has to be gained through "experience" of life. And between the knowledge and the experience, there is an "implied delay" that is produced by the gap between the "knowledge" of the dreamlike nature of human life, embedded in the poems and the songs that the Goddess Disenchantment tries to teach the young protagonist Baoyu and the "experience" he will be having in his lifetime in the novel. There is a gap of

¹⁹⁰ Anthony C. Yu, *Rereading the Stone: Desire and the Making of Fiction in Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), 138.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

knowledge between what Baoyu had not yet known and what he will know in the future. It is exactly this gap that serves as a reminder to the reader that every moment from now thus become a slow but inevitable march towards a point in the future that is unknown to him at the present. In this sense, the musical dramas that the Goddess shows to Baoyu afterwards could be seen as a preview of a future prospect that he has no idea of at present:

〔紅樓夢引子〕

開辟鴻蒙，誰為情種？都只為風月情濃。

趁著這奈何天、傷懷日、寂寥時，試遣愚衷。

因此上、演出這懷金悼玉的《紅樓夢》。

“Prologue to the Dream of Red [Chamber]”

At the dawn of creation \Who sowed the seeds of love? \From the strong passion of breeze and moonlight they came. \So in this [weather] of sweet longing, \On a day of distress, in an hour of loneliness, \Fain would I impart my senseless grief \By singing this Dream of Red [Chamber] \ To [recall and to] mourn the Gold and the Jade.

(HLM, 5:82; DRM: 101; modified)

This is the opening song of the suite of musical drama that Baoyu watches. While the first three lines trace the origin and history of love back to ancient times when the world was just created, the fourth line turns to the very moment of “right now”: this “weather”, this “day” and this “hour”. This moment is not only about sentimental emotions and feelings, but also marks the divide between two temporal realms in the viewer’s life. Before this moment, Baoyu has been living in the present of his life; after it, he is suddenly involved into experiences of the future. When analysing the chapter, Wu Hung proposes that compared to the form of poem, the drama represents the preview of the destinies of Baoyu’s female companions in a different manner. If the poems represented their fates through the “medium of the law (i.e., through the files containing the verdict of their fate)”, then the dramatic representation of it could be associated with the “staging and illusionism of a play” as different actresses “embody

the voices and feelings” of those girls.¹⁹² In this sense, the beginning of the drama could also be regarded as Baoyu’s involvement “into” that illusion of experience rather than reading meaning “from” that experience.

And that experience, according to the last two lines, is retrospective. No matter what exactly the meaning of the “Gold” and the “Jade” is, the experience of them is finished and therefore is to be “recalled” and to be “mourned”. What will happen has been predestined, casting light back at this moment when Baoyu is completely innocent about what will happen to him and the people he loves most. From this perspective, the dramatization of the present when the performance of the drama is about to begin and the moment of ending when everything has finished and could not be retrieved draws a temporal gap between the present and the future.

The following twelve songs presented to Baoyu taking the voices of different subjects are usually considered predictions of the final results of twelve girls that are most close to him. Both the poems and the lyrics, as most critics and scholars agree, contains predictive information to the family and the main female characters of the novel. The suggestion has been acknowledged since the earlier stage of the critiques of the novel. In chapter five, Zhiyanzhai remarks besides the poems that the whole chapter, which has borrowed the method adopted in a prophecy book called *Tui bei tu* 推背圖 from the seventh-century Tang dynasty, are a “crucial point for the fates and destinies of those men and women”(wei er nv zi shu yun zhi ji 為兒女子數運之機). (ZP,5: 120, Jiaxu manuscript; my translation) He also identifies several characters from the predictive poems like Lin Daiyu, Xue Baochuai, who both end tragically, Qingwen 晴雯, Baoyu’s beloved maid who dies at young age, and Miaoyu 妙玉, a haired nun who stays at the Jia’s mansion and finally is taken away by a bunch of robbers. Qing critic

¹⁹² Hung Wu, “Beyond Stereotypes: The Twelve Beauties in Qing Court Art and *the Dream of the Red Chamber*.” In *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*, eds. Ellen Widmer and Kang-i Sun Chang (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1997), 319.

Wang Xilian 王希廉 observes that the chapter adopts pamphlets and lyrics to point out implicitly one by one the “origins and results of lives” (*yisheng yin guo* 一生因果) of the main characters, from which events which happen later in the novel are derived.¹⁹³ The entire chapter could be seen as the overall program of the whole book which is independent from other episodes, as “all the affairs of emotion” (*quanbu qing shi* 全部情事) have already been “covered inside” (*longzhao zai nei* 籠罩在內).¹⁹⁴ With this understanding, he goes further to identify the characters of each poem and lyric in the episode with short analyses of each. Similarly, the Qing critic Zhou Chun 周春 also devoted an article identifying the poems and songs with the characters in the novel.¹⁹⁵

However, an aspect that is often overlooked is a sense of absurdity shared by these songs: they all, despite different subjects and situations, present what Owen calls the “conflict between the human moral order and amoral necessity”. In his *Remembrance*, Stephen Owen proposes that while the “amoral necessity” in western literature takes the form of “some arbitrary predestination”, it is usually given to “the impersonal forces of cyclical nature, or nature as mechanism”.¹⁹⁶ For example, “A Life Misspent” (*zhongshen wu* 終身悞) the first song, how true lovers are kept apart by a mismatched marriage. “Spurned by the World” (*shi nan rong* 世難容) the sixth song, portrays a girl of precious grace and purity who ends up drifting into prostitution. And “Ruined by Cunning” (*congming lei* 聰明累) the ninth song, depicts a girl whose cunning in plotting and scheming costs her life.

¹⁹³ Wang Xilian 王希廉, “*Honglou meng huiping*” 《紅樓夢》回評 [Chapter Comment on Dream of the Red Chamber], in *Honglou meng ziliao huibian* 《紅樓夢》資料匯編 [Compilation of Material of Dream of the Red Chamber] eds. Zhu Yixuan 朱一玄 (Tianjin: Nankai daxue chubanshe, 1985), 547.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 549.

¹⁹⁵ Zhou Chun 周春, “*Honglou meng yueping*” 《紅樓夢》約評 [Rough Comment on Dream of the Red Chamber], in *Honglou meng ziliao huibian* 《紅樓夢》資料匯編 [Compilation of Material of Dream of the Red Chamber] eds. Zhu Yixuan 朱一玄 (Tianjin: Nankai daxue chubanshe, 1985), 523-24.

¹⁹⁶ Stephen Owen, *Remembrances: The Experience of the Past in Classical Chinese Literature* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1986), 55-6.

The “necessity” is best demonstrated in the epilogue of the songs, in which all different shapes of lives are summarised in prospect:

〔收尾·飛鳥各投林〕

為官的，家業凋零；富貴的，金銀散盡。有恩的，死裡逃生；無情的，分明照應。欠命的，命已還；欠淚的，淚已盡。冤冤相報實非輕，分離合聚皆前定。欲知命短問前生，老來富貴也真僥幸。看破的，遁入空門；痴迷的，枉送了性命。好一似食盡鳥投林，落了片白茫茫大地真乾淨！

Epilogue: The Birds Scatter to the Wood

An official household declines, \ Rich nobles' wealth is spent. \ She who did good escapes the jaws of death, \ The heartless meet with certain retribution. \ Those who took a life have paid with their own lives, \ The tears one owed have all been requited in kind. \ Not light the retribution for sins against others; \ All are predestined, parting and reunions. \ Seek the cause of untimely death in a part existence, \ Lucky she who enjoys rank and riches in old age; \ Those who see through the world escape from the world, \ While foolish lovers forfeit their lives for nothing. \ When the food is gone the birds return to the wood; \ All that's left is emptiness and a great void. (HLM,5: 86; DRM:108-09)

What the readers will get to understand later, are actually prophecies suggesting the final collapse of the family and the scattered dispersal of Baoyu and his female companions of the family in the future, who are enjoying a luxurious as well as innocent life at the moment. These points contribute to the construct of the sense of closure by suggesting the fates of the main characters at the early stage of narrative, thus creating temporal gaps between what is “already known” at the present and “not known yet” in prospect. By creating a temporal gap between knowing and not knowing of the prospect, the blind innocence of the characters is stressed again and again throughout the novel.

Apart from mystifying the occasions, the bringing in of a foreknowledge of what might happen in the future also serves during the reading process as a sudden break in the

continuity of the “present” moment. The consistent line of the course of action is thus broken, creating a sense of discontinuity and alert. For example, in chapter thirteen, the ghost of late Qin Keqing 秦可卿 sends her last wish in the dream of Wang Xifeng 王熙凤, Baoyu’s sister-in-law and the actual holder of the Jia household:

秦氏道：“……常言‘月滿則虧，水滿則溢’；又道是‘登高必跌重’。如今我們家赫赫揚揚，已將百載，一日倘或樂極悲生，若應了那句‘樹倒猢猻散’的俗語，豈不虛稱了一世詩書舊族了！”……秦氏道：“若目今以為榮華不絕，不思後日，終非長策。眼見不日又有一件非常喜事，真是烈火烹油、鮮花著錦之盛。要知道，也不過是瞬息的繁華，一時的歡樂，萬不可忘了那‘盛筵必散’的俗語。此時若不早為後慮，臨期只恐後悔無益了。”鳳姐忙問：“有何喜事？”秦氏道：“天機不可洩漏。只是我與孀子好了一場，臨別贈你兩句話，須要記著。”因念道：

三春去後諸芳盡，各自須尋各自門。

鳳姐還欲問時，只聽二門上傳事雲牌連叩四下，將鳳姐驚醒。人回：“東府蓉大奶奶沒了。”

“Is it possible you don’t know the saying that ‘the moon waxes only to wane, water brims only to overflow,’ and ‘the higher the climb the harder the fall’? Our house has prospered for nearly a hundred years. If one day it happens that at the height of good fortune the ‘tree falls and the monkeys scatter’ as the old saying has it, then what will become of our cultured old family?”……

“It would be very short-sighted not to take thought for the future in the belief that our present good fortune will last for ever. Before long something marvellous is going to happen which will really ‘pour oil on the flames and add flowers to brocade.’ But it will simply be a flash in the pan, a brief moment of bliss. Whatever happens don’t forget the proverb, ‘Even the grandest feast must have an end.’ Take thought for the future before it is too late.”

“What marvellous thing is going to happen?” asked Xifeng.

“Heaven’s secret mustn’t be divulged. But because of the love between us let me give you some parting advice, and do remember it, anut!” With that she declaimed:

“After the three months of the spring, all flowers will fade
And each will have to find his own way out.”

Before Xifeng could ask more she was woken with a start by four blows on the chime-bar at the second gate. And a servant announced, “Madam Jia Rong of the East Mansion has passed away.”

(HLM,13: 169-70; DRM: 234-45)

This is the famous episode depicting a supernatural warning from a ghost right before the Royal Consort Yuanchun pays her visit in the Jia household. At this moment, the wealth, prosperous, and cultivated lives within the family has taken the major length of the novelist depiction. Both the author and the reader cannot help but being caught by the vivid and colorful feature of life for the moment. Therefore, the warning from the prospective future serves as a break into the continuous and permanent flow of “now”. It tries to remind the reader not to be bewildered by the prosperous experience at present, but to be alerted by what is predestined to happen in the future.

In chapter one of the thesis, we have talked about the riddle made by Daiyu and how it could be related to the feelings of enduring and suffering in her every experience. What has not been mentioned is that apart from Daiyu’s riddle, other riddles made by other girls in the family, including Baochai, Jia Yuanchun 賈元春, Jia Tanchun 賈探春, sister of Baoyu, and Jia Yingchun 賈迎春, and Jia Xichun 賈惜春, cousins of Baoyu, also suggests certain aspects of their final fate. While all of the girls are enjoying prosperous life at the present, their riddles seem to suggest that they were all destined to be unfortunate and short-lived. In this sense, Jia Zheng, the patriarch of the family, feels so depressed because of the tragic and inauspicious tendency suggested in the riddles they made. (chap. 22) It is in this sense that Zhiyanzhai is eager to reveal the intention of the author to the reader. By the end of the chapter, he remarks:

作者具菩提心，捉筆現身<設><說>法，每於言外警人再三再四。而讀者但以小說<古><鼓>詞目之，則大罪過。其先以《莊子》為引，及偈曲句作醒悟之語，以警覺世人。猶恐不入，再以燈謎試伸致意，自解自嘆，以不成寐，為言其用心之切之誠。讀者忍不留心而慢忽之耶？

The author has a feeling of the final enlightenment. ...adopting writing, (the author) presents various forms to talk about the “Dharma”, and always warns the readers beyond the lines again and again. It is a great sin if the readers regard (them) only as fiction. The author first makes (the sentences in) the *Zhuangzi* as an introduction. Then follows the sentences of Buddhist verses, when (the author) makes speeches of enlightenment to get ordinary people alert and

conscious. Also worried that (the reader) could not enter (the entrance of Dharma), again (the author) makes use of the lantern riddles to state and express (his) meaning for the moment. (The author) himself explains as he exclaims that he could not fall asleep, just to express the sincere and earnest feelings from his heart. How could the reader not be careful, and ignore or look down upon it?

(ZP, 22: 426, Mengfu manuscript; my translation)

Here, rarely, Zhiyanzhai devotes a lengthy remark to explain how the author struggles to remind the reader of the implication of certain narrative constructions by interfering into the middle of the reading process of the reader. According to him, the function of the poems, lines and riddles cited are not only served as part of the fictive construction of the plot, but most importantly, deconstructions of the illusion that are presented to the reader. In this sense, the reader will miss the key point of the author if they just read the lines as they are.

Later, in Chapter twenty-five, when Baoyu is taken possession by witchcraft and loses his mind, a Buddhist monk and a Daoist priest comes to Jia family, claiming that they could cure the illness. But when people ask what miraculous remedy they have, they reply it is the Magic Jade of Spiritual Understanding that could serve as the remedy:

賈政聽說，便向寶玉項上取下那玉來遞與他二人。那和尚接了過來，擎在掌上，長嘆一聲道：“青埂峰一別，展眼已過十三載矣！人世光陰，如此迅速，塵緣滿日，若似彈指可羨你當時的那段好處：

天不拘兮地不羈，心頭無喜亦無悲；

卻因鍛煉通靈後，便向人間覓是非。

可嘆你今日這番經歷：

粉漬脂痕污寶光，綺櫳晝夜困鴛鴦。

沉酣一夢終須醒，冤孽償清好散場！

Jia Zheng took the Jade from Baoyu's neck and passed it to them. The monk laid it reverently on the palm of one hand.

“Thirteen years have passed in a twinkling since we left you at the foot of Blue Ridge Peak,” he said with a sigh. “How quick time flies in this human world! Yet already you are full of worldly desires. Alas, how much better off you were before!

Untrammelled by heaven and earth,
From joy and grief alike your heart was free;
Then smelting gave you spiritual perception,
And you came to this world in search of misery.

What a deplorable state you are in now!

Power and rouge have dulled your precious lustre;
Days and nights within silk chambers entrap your heart;
But you must wake at last from your sweet dream;
Poor lovers, when all debt are paid, must part.”

(HLM, 25:346-47; DRM: 503)

According to the masters, the reason why the Magic Jade does not work for Baoyu lies in the fact that it is full of “worldly desires”. The “diagnosis” is understandable for readers who are familiar with the traditional Buddhist ideas, as it draws an analogy between physical sickness and mental sickness, harmful substances and worldly desires. However, in Baoyu’s case, the enchantment that damages his spiritual understanding not only suggests a kind of material desire, but also the way he has been indulged in the “present”, when everything seems to be permanent and will last forever. It is in this sense that the prayers sung by the two masters refer to its past and its future respectively. Firstly, they recall the period when the stone lived in perfect liberty and was free from human feelings, and then they suggest the ending of the stone in the future when the play will be over. Both poems are composed to break the permanent “now” in the narrative within which Baoyu and the reader are caught up, and to alarm the reader that the prospective ending is imminent.

Moreover, in chapter twenty-six, two maids of Baoyu chat with each other when discussing future prospects, reinforcing the temporal gap between the present and the future:

紅玉道：“……俗語說的‘千裡搭長棚，沒有個不散的筵席’，誰守誰一輩子呢？不過三年五載，各人干各人的去了。那時誰還管誰呢？”這兩句話不覺感動了佳蕙的心腸，由不得眼睛紅了，又不好意思好端端的哭，隻得勉強笑道：“你這話說的卻是。昨兒寶玉還說，明兒怎麼樣收拾房子，怎麼樣做衣裳，倒像有幾百年的熬煎。”

“It’s hardly worth being angry with them,” retorted Xiaohong. “The proverb says ‘Even the longest feast must break up at last.’ Who’s going to stay here for life? A few more years and we’ll all go our different ways. When that time comes who will worry about anyone else?”

These words brought tears to Jiahui’s eyes, but not wanting to cry for no reason she forced a smile.

“That’s true, of course,” she agreed. “Yet only yesterday Baoyu was talking about how he’s going to rearrange the rooms and the clothes he means to have made, as if we had hundreds of years to put up with here.”

(HLM, 26:350; DRM:508; modified)

Here from the reporting of Baoyu’s maids, the readers are told how Baoyu plan to rearrange his rooms and make his clothes. But most importantly, all these speeches and behaviours are told through the mouths of two maids as total observers. This is also one of the most important techniques of Cao Xueqin. In this sense, the experience of Baoyu is alienated from the reader, thus showing a sense of absurdity and uncertainty. And the readers are reminded again the unreliability of the present and the impending of the doom.

Following the overall assumption constructed in section two, section three has turned to the detailed emplotment in the main body of the novel, where the author begins to create a gap of time between the present and the future. By consistently warning the reader of a tragic prospect of the decline of the clan and the scatteredness of Baoyu and his female companions through various predictive devices like dreams, prophecies,

and omens, the novel manages to evoke a sense of impermanence: the present moment will not last for long.

3.4 Chapter Conclusion

The representation of fate, that everything has been predetermined by a natural necessity, in Chinese literature has been compared to tragedy in the West for its intellectual and emotional complexity. This chapter investigates the mechanism of this representation in the eighteenth-century Chinese novel *Honglou meng*.

In *Honglou meng*, the representation of fate is closely related to the reader's fictive understanding of the temporal aspects of the novel established by the author. According to narrative theory, if a narrative can be regarded as an illusion of a succession of events, then following a narrative is to move forward towards an endpoint of this succession to fulfil the expectation. However, as French philosopher Paul Ricœur proposes, as long as a story is well known, then following and understanding the story is not to discover within the recognition of its meaning, as to understand the events leading to the known ending. The quality of time is changed from this new understanding, as the initial course of action is illuminated by the terminal consequences. It is within this narrative framework that I have re-examined the construction of foreknowledge in *Honglou meng*, through which the reading and knowing process of the reader is greatly defined and shaped.

To be specific, this foreknowledge is constructed primarily via two approaches in the novel. For the overall structure, by introducing stories of a frustrated man of letters and an inscribed stone coming from the world of mortals in their entirety as completed and finished, the author creates an assumption in readers' minds that the narrative is a remembrance and recollection of the past from the present. However, the temporal gap is not only generated from the reminder of the end point, but also from the delay

of time. Therefore, in the detailed emplotment, by inserting warnings and alarms of a tragic ending in prospect through various predictive devices like dreams, prophecies, and omens, an understanding that every moment becomes part of an inevitable march towards the future from the present is also constructed.

By reaching into the past and the future separately, the two approaches manage to break the continuous and permanent flow of “right now” with the evocation of senses of conclusiveness and impermanence respectively. The two senses together, greatly shape the reading and understanding of the inevitable fading and loss represented in the novel. In this sense, this chapter joins the previous two chapters to the main argument of the thesis in demonstrating that the certain literary constructions of personal experience in *Honglou meng* are closely related the novel’s temporal arrangements.

Conclusion

Time, Personal Experience, and the Modernity of Novel

Temporal aspects are significant in defining the fundamental characteristics of the modern novel emerging in eighteenth century Europe. These characteristics are derived from modern ideology of personal autonomy through a theory of the intrinsic worth of the individual in the west. As Ian Watt notes , the genre of novel is the one form of literature which most fully reflects the “individualist and innovating reorientation” of Descartes’s assumption that “the pursuit of truth is conceived of as a wholly individual matter”.¹⁹⁷ This is manifested in the temporal constructions of the novel: not only does the novel replace the classic didactic stories of coincidence and accident with the personalized stories which happened in personalised time and space, but also its extremely intimate temporal scale replaces the traditional timeless form with an irreplaceable moment of unique consciousness to represent a modern sense of “individual truth”.

The best literary form to represent this individual truth and its relationship with temporal aspects is the *Bildungsroman*, which presents an individual as a constantly growing and changing personality. The significance of the *Bildungsroman*, according to Bakhtin, lies in the fact that the protagonist is a man in the process of “becoming” rather than a “ready-made and unchanging hero” because time has been introduced.¹⁹⁸ Moreover, Bakhtin believed that *Bildungsroman* connects individual private time with historical time by bringing the originally closed individual to the world. The “individual emergence” is not merely one’s private affair but is inseparably connected to “historical emergence”,¹⁹⁹ as if the essence of the world is changing, and the

¹⁹⁷ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 13.

¹⁹⁸ Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* eds. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 21.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

individual is changing along with it.²⁰⁰ In this sense, “the image of the emerging man” begins to go beyond its “private nature” and enters into a new state of “historical existence”.²⁰¹

However, such an implication is hard to identify in the eighteenth-century Chinese novel *Honglou meng*. While several western studies assign the theories of the *Bildungsroman* to the protagonist Jia Baoyu,²⁰² it is obvious that the underlying temporal assumptions of the *Bildungsroman* and *Honglou meng* are quite different. A similar type of narrative did not appear until the revolutionary novels written since the period of the Republic of China. In these types of novels, individuals who used to be members of a big dynastic family or clan are eager to get out of their home, and to throw themselves into the revolutionary movement of the crowd as well as into the “historical time” of the world. This can be seen in the experience of the protagonists like Gao Juehui 高覺慧 in *The Family* 家(1933), Lin Daojing 林道靜 in *Song of Youth* 青春之歌(1958) and Chen Wenxiong 陳文雄 in *Three Lanes* 三家巷(1959).

On the other hand, in addition to integrating the individual into “a totalizing temporalization of history”,²⁰³ another temporal aspect in the process of modernisation of the novel that is of equal importance is the individual experience of being in the world. Characters and the temporal reality within which they are situated are the most basic elements of all narrative work; however, representing their emotional and psychological aspects, even the meaning of their existence through a specific temporal structure is a modern, rather than a classic mode. In earlier traditional narrative, the temporal structure is simply a reflection of a timeless and unchanging world and the existence of an individual often serves as a footnote to the

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 23.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 24.

²⁰² Lewis S. Robinson, “Pao-yu and Parsifal: Personal Growth as a Literary Substructure,” *Tamkang Review* 9 (1979): 407–426. Margaret Berry, “The Apprenticeship Novel in China: Hung-lou meng.” *Proceedings of the Eighth International Symposium on Asian Studies* 8.1 (1986): 11–21.

²⁰³ Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and the Avant-Garde*. (London, New York: Verso, 2011), x.

existence of the universe as a whole. In the modern ideology, however, the individual truth, on the other hand, could be found in its encounter with the structure of existence.

It is this second perspective in *Honglou meng* that this thesis has aspired to explore. As I have demonstrated in the previous analysis, one important feature that distinguishes *Honglou meng* from other novels of its time is its exploration of the temporal experience of being in the world that are related to feelings and emotions like suffering, remembering, and anticipating. Whether it is about a girl's perpetual perception of the deterioration of her body with the passing of time (Chapter one), or lovers gradually losing their intimate connection in the irresistible process of growth and maturation (Chapter two), or the people of the clans constantly being reminded and warned of their fate by ominous signs and omens (Chapter three), these all together demonstrate that the meaning of the characters' individual minds and emotions, and even the meaning of the characters' existence, are interpreted precisely from the dimension of time. It is in this dimension of exploring the emotional and psychological depth of the individual within a temporal and existential framework that the characteristic of modern thought emerges from the narrative of *Honglou meng*. And this is also the dimension that is lacking in the modern Chinese novels which rely heavily on important historical events and dates. The existential perspective created by *Honglou meng* would not see a successor until the twentieth century. For example, in *To Live* 活著 (1993) by Yu Hua 余華, *Song of Everlasting Sorrow* 長恨歌 (1995) by Wang Anyi 王安憶 and *Big Breasts & Wide Hips* 豐乳肥臀 (1996) by Mo Yan 莫言, thrilling possibilities of an individual's painful collusion with their temporal reality are fully represented.

It is with this comparative view that I hope my doctoral thesis on the fictive experience of time in *Honglou meng* will not only renew our appreciation of *Honglou meng*'s significance as a novel of masterful representation of the experiential and existential experience of human life, but also, its significance as a novel with

implications of modernity. Moreover, based on the essential correlation between the fictive experience of time, emotional and psychological depth of the narrative, and the existential structure of the individual established in this thesis, the study undertaken here, could be extended further to examine the implication of modernity of other traditional novels in late imperial China, or the potential association between modern Chinese fiction and *Honglou meng* in terms of the construction of temporality.

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