

MYSTICAL SYMBOLISM AND DIALETHEIST COGNITIVISM: THE TRANSFORMATION OF TRUTH- FALSEHOOD (ZHEN-JIA)

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Abstract: One of the central philosophical issues is the problem of Truth-Falsehood (Zhen-Jia) in A Dream of Red Mansions. We may find three positions in this book: The first is "Truth" (Zhen) which also means "Being," "Reality," "Existence," "Physical and Materialistic Substance," and "Actual Social affairs"; the second is "Falsehood" (Jia) which means "Non-Being," "Emptiness," "Nothingness," "Nihilism," "Illusory Fiction," and "Spiritual and Mental Activities;" and the third is "Truth-Falsehood" (Zhen-Jia). The third can be considered "Transformation of Truth and Falsehood," which has the following four attributes in this book: 1) Unification of truth and falsehood; 2) Interrelation of truth and falsehood; 3) Interaction of truth and falsehood; 4) Inter-substitution of truth and falsehood. The transformation of Truth-Falsehood (Zhen-Jia) in this book can be considered a sort of spiritual transformation which is recognized within the context of an individual self-consciousness, or an individual's meaning system, especially in relation to the concepts of the sacred or ultimate concern. In this article, the author will discuss this theme by explaining and examining the relationship and transformation of "Truth" and "falsehood" through the following three perspectives: traditional Chinese glyptomancy, dialetheism and fatalism.

A Dream of Red Mansions——*HONG LOU MENG* 紅樓夢 is one of the four greatest Chinese classic novels.¹ It may be proper to justify that to understand China, one must read this great work because of its tremendous influence on Chinese literary history. Importantly, the study of this novel has become as popular and prolific as the works of Shakespeare or Goethe. This tale, with over 400 named characters from all walks of life, has two main fatalistic threads: one is the tragic love story of young and rebellious Jia Baoyu and Lin Daiyu; the other is the rise and fall of the four decadent clans of Jia 賈, Shi 史, Wang 王, and Xue 薛. There have been certain common

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¹*Hong Lou Meng* was written in 1754 and titled *Shitou Ji* 石頭記 (*Record of the Stone*). This fantastic writing, as we know it today, consists of 120 chapters, with a total of 1,075,000 Chinese characters. Since the first English translation in 1842, it has been translated into twenty languages. In fact, the author Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹 (1735 or 36 - 1763 or 64) completed only the first eighty chapters of the work because of poverty, illness and family tragedy. In 1791, Gao E 高鄂 added the last forty chapters. Though literarily not better than the first author's original writings, those new parts have been recognized due to their significant continuation of the tragic end of the leading roles' romantic love. (See Yu Pingbo's *Zhiyanzhai Reviews of A Dream of Red Mansions*)

interpretations of this book being an “author’s autobiography,” “romantic love tragedy,” “socio-political contradictions,” “women’s positions,” and so on.² More and more, its cultural significance has been disclosed; “dream” may be viewed as a kind of “total vision” of Chinese culture; “Prospect Garden (Daguanyuan 大觀園)” may be considered a sort of cultural metaphor; and the novel itself may be treated as the culmination of China’s rich literary legacy and also a reflection of Chinese aesthetics and world view, including examples of all major types of Chinese poetry. This writing indeed sheds light on almost every field and aspect of social life: elite’s as well as common people’s family life, social roles, moral values, religious practices, thought and behavior patterns, amusements and entertainments, eating and drinking, clothing and housing, medicine and transportation. It also profoundly exposes the gap between theory and practice in Chinese social life.

One of the central philosophical issues among the above mentioned is the problem of *Truth-Falsehood (Zhen-Jia 真假)* in *A Dream of Red Mansions*. In this article, the author will discuss this theme by explaining and examining the relationship and transformation of “Truth” and “falsehood” through the following three perspectives: traditional Chinese glyphomancy, dialetheism and fatalism.

I. The Transformation of Truth-Falsehood: A Perspective of Glyphomancy

So-called Chinese glyphomancy (Cezi, Chaizi, Xizi, Pozi, Xiangzi 測字 拆字 破字 析字 相字), as it is known in Western sinology, is a type of fortune telling by analyzing, dissecting, dismembering, and cracking a Chinese character or some component parts of a Chinese character. These techniques of Chinese glyphomancy have been applied for two main purposes: divination in one case and educated entertainment in the other. Interesting enough, there have been uncountable “riddles” or “puzzles” in Chinese characters. This approach has been applied very frequently in this book.

David K. Jordan says: “I begin by illustrating them with the striking if peripheral custom of glyphomancy. I do so not because glyphomancy is at all central to most Chinese faith maintenance or conversion, but rather because it illustrates these features simultaneously and constitutes a vivid example through which we can keep the issue of faith maintenance before us as we think about conversion more generally” (Jordan, 1993, 285). According to him, the glyphomancy factor has three distinct qualities: 1) glyphomancy asserts theological, philosophical, and sometimes historical priority of Chinese characters (or Chinese tradition) over what are perceived as “modern,” “latter-day,” or “foreign” doctrines; 2) religious belief or practice to which an individual is converted is, in China, added to existing belief, without necessarily implying to the believer the subtraction of anything; and 3) glyphomantic logic has a tendency to assert the equivalences of religious elements.

Jordan has given an example as follows: “If Mr. Li visits a fortune-teller to learn about his destiny, however, the fortune-teller may choose to look more closely at his name and to seek ‘hidden’ characters in it, ones that are not conventionally construed as part of its etymology. The fortune-teller may tell him, for example, that Li actually

²Chinese official interpretations concern it as a critique of “feudalism”.

includes the (overlapping) elements “ten” 十, “eight” 八, and “son” 子, thus meaning “eighteen sons,” or (depending upon other parts of the name) that he is destined to have many progenies. (The fortune-teller may then confirm this prediction by pointing out how many Līs there are in the world, for example.) The art of segregating the parts of a Chinese character to discover an esoteric meaning in them is referred to by the neogrecism “glyphomancy” (Mandarin: *chāizi*), and Chinese glyphomancy has been well described in a fascinating article by Wolfgang Bauer (1979), from whom I have borrowed the example of Mr. Lǐ” (Jordan 1993, 285).

The author in *A Dream of Red Mansions* mainly used three ways to play language games by analyzing Chinese characters.

The first is to change or split Chinese character shapes or parts of character shapes (借形析字 *Jie Xing Xi Zi*). The name of the main family, “賈 (*Jia*)” looks similar to the author’s surname 曹 (*Cao*). “賈” can be divided into two parts: “西 (*Xi*)” which means “West”, and “貝 (*Bei*)” which mainly means “treasure”. For instance, in Chapter 93, a poem reads:

“Xi Bei Cao Jin”, a young supervisor, 西貝草斤年紀輕,
To Water Moon Convent came. 水月庵里管尼僧。
One male among so many females, 一個男人多少女,
He’s free to drink, whore and game. 窩娼聚賭是陶情。
This worthless young master set in charge, 不肖子弟來辦事,
Is giving the Jung Mansion a bad name! (Volume III, 185) 榮國府內出新聞。(第九十三回)

Here the four Chinese characters “Xi Bei Cao Jin (西貝草斤)” replace Jia Qin (賈芹) who is a pampered son of the Jia clan and also a corrupted supervisor for some hired Buddhist nuns and female Daoist priests in Jia’s family convent.

The second is to make full use of Chinese character ambiguities or double meanings (借義析字 *Jie Yi Xi Zi*). The novel is normally called *Hong Lou Meng* - literally “Red Mansion Dream.” We may analyze these three characters according to Chinese semantics:

Redness (紅 *Hong*) + *Mansions* (樓 *Lou*) + *Dream* (夢 *Meng*)

“*Hong*” has many meanings, such as symbols or “nicknames” of color, silk, blood, flower, beautiful ladies, celebration and jubilation, prosperity and flourish, profits and interests, and so on. In this novel, *Hong*, namely Redness, symbolizes the pseudo-true, pseudo-real, pseudo-objective, pseudo-substantive, pseudo-tangible and the symbolical. “Red” also suggests the Buddhist idea that the whole world is “red dust (紅塵 *Hongchen*)” - merely illusory and to be shunned. Thus the novel fits in perfectly with Buddhist and Daoist beliefs that to find enlightenment, one must realize that the world is but a dream from which we must awake. “*Lou*” has three main meanings: 1) any architecture that has at least two stories; 2) any significant immovable properties; and 3) any commercial, entertainment, or even pornographic places. In this novel,

Mansions represent the true, real, objective, physical, substantive and tangible. The character “*Meng*” is formalized by three parts: the top is “*Mu*” (苜) which means “cannot see clearly”; the middle is “*Baogaitou*” (宀) which means “anything related to house or family”; the bottom is “*Xi*” (夕) which means “evening or night.” For this reason, “*Meng*” has the following meanings: 1) dreamed; 2) unclear; and 3) dazzled or muddled. In this novel, “*Dream*” represents the illusory, fictional, imaged and intangible. “*Red Mansions*” used to refer to the women's quarters of a traditional family compound. Basically, “*Red Mansion*” was an idiom for the daughters of rich men; thus the title can be understood as a “dream of rich young women.” It can also be understood as referring to a dream that Jia Baoyu has - in a “*Red Mansion*” - at the beginning of the novel, where the deaths of many of the female characters are foreshadowed.

The third is to apply homophone or homonyms, namely different characters have the same sound (借音析字 *Jie Yin Xi Zi*). It has been very popular for traditional Chinese writers to apply “phonetic loan characters,” or adopt characters representing homophones. “*Jia*”, the name of the main family, has the same pronunciation in Mandarin as another Chinese character “*假 Jia*”, which means false or unreal. Thus the author suggests that the novel's family is both a reflection of his own family and simultaneously a fictional - or a “dream” version of his family. (Confusingly, Baoyu occasionally dreams of another Baoyu, whose surname is “*Zhen*”, which puns on “real”.) The author Cao Xueqin claims: “This is the opening chapter of the novel. In writing this story of the Stone the author wanted to record his dreams and illusions, but he tried to hide the true facts of his experience by using the allegory of the jade of ‘Spiritual Understanding.’ Hence his recourse to names like Chen Shih-yin (Homophone for “true facts concealed.”)...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. This should divert readers too and help distract them from their cares. That is why I use the other name Jia Yu Cun (Homophone for “falsehood in rustic language” (*A Dream of Red Mansions*, Volume I, 1-2).

Jia Baoyu (賈寶玉) is the principal character of the whole novel: from his previous existence to current life, and finally to his next being. The author applied many fictional ways to portray Jia Baoyu such as mystifying, symbolizing, fantasizing, and so on. By contrast with Jia Baoyu which is a homophone for “Unreal Precious Jade,” the author also provides a reverse character—Zhen Baoyu (甄寶玉) which is a homophone for “Real Precious Jade.” In Chinese culture, nomenclature has been a significant art, especially as a fortune telling technique. Generally, it recognizes the transcending importance of Chinese characters. All figures in *A Dream of Red Mansions* have certain implied meanings. As a Chinese name and as the name of the protagonists in this book, the Chinese character “*賈*”(Jia) has several meanings such as “commercial business or business man,” “seeking or searching,” “courting disasters or stirring up troubles,” “value or price,” and so on. Similarly as another Chinese name, the Chinese character “*甄*” (Zhen) has also several meanings such as “discriminate,” “distinguish,” “examine,” and “select.” The author used “homophonic,” character shapes or forms, character meanings, character riddles,

character punning, and so on. Chinese people have names that can be rendered either through two systems: by sound or by meaning.

In the Jia family, the names of the characters are rendered by sound: Jia Baoyu, Jia Dairu, Jia Huan, Jia Lan, Jia Qiaojie, Jia Qin, Jia Rong, Jia She, Jia Tanchun, Jia Xichun, Jia Yingchun, Jia Yucun, Jia YuanChun, Jia Yun, Jia Zheng, and Jia Zhu. All the people with the family name “賈” (homophone for “false”) have certain negations of positive meanings of their given names. For example, Jia Baoyu’s father is Jia Zheng (賈政), his given name originally means “politics or governing,” however, by the author’s rhetorical device, the whole name becomes a negative one: “pseudo-politics or pseudo-governing.” Accordingly, Zhen Shiyin (甄士隱, 真事隱) means “truth or reality”; Jia Hua (賈化) --Jia Yucun (賈雨村, 假語存) ’s another name which is a homophone for “falsehood or lies”; his name is also styled as “Shifei” (時飛, 實非 Time-Flying) which is a homophone for “actually untrue”; his hometown is “Huzhou (湖洲, 胡謔)” which is a homophone for “nonsense.” The names of the family maids are rendered by meaning: Amber, Aroma, Autumn, Candida, Casta, Crimson, Ebony, Faithful, Felicity, Musk, Nightingale, Oriole, Patience, Pearl, Prosper, Simple, Sky bright, Snow goose, Sun cloud and Sunset, etc.

Politically speaking, one of the reasons that the author uses “glyphomancy” is to avoid “Wenziyu” (文字獄), namely literary inquisition: imprisonment or execution of an author for writing something considered offensive by the imperial court.

II. The Transformation of Truth-Falsehood: A Perspective of Dialetheism

In *A Dream of Red Mansions*, we may divide three statuses: The first is “Truth” (Zhen 真) which also means “Being,” “Reality,” “Existence,” “Physical and Materialistic Substance,” and “Actual Social affairs”. The second is “Falsehood” (Jia 假) which means “Non-Being,” “Emptiness,” “Nothingness,” “Nihility,” “Illusory Fiction,” and “Spiritual and Mental Activities.” The third is “Truth-Falsehood” (*Zhen-Jia* 真假). The third can be considered “Transformation of Truth and Falsehood,” which has the following four attributes in this book: 1) Unification of truth and falsehood; 2) Interrelation of truth and falsehood; 3) Interaction of truth and falsehood; and 4) Inter-substitution of truth and falsehood. We may examine Truth-Falsehood by certain perspectives of “dialetheism” (or more correctly “dialectology”). Dialetheism is the view that there are true contradictions, or dialetheias. Dialetheists believe that for some sentence or proposition P , both P and $\neg P$ are true. Dialetheism opposes so-called *Law of Non-Contradiction* (LNC): for any A , it is impossible for both A and $\neg A$ to be true. Since Aristotle’s defense of the LNC, the Law has been orthodoxy in Western philosophy. Nonetheless, there are some Dialetheists in the history of Western Philosophy. Moreover, since the development of paraconsistent logic in the second half of the twentieth century, dialetheism has now become a live issue once more. Dialetheism appears to be a much more common and recurrent view in Eastern Philosophy than in the West.

In ancient Indian logic/metaphysics, there were four standard possibilities to be considered for any statement at: that it is true (only), false (only), neither true nor

false, or *both*. Buddhist logicians sometimes added a fifth possibility: none of these (Both positions were called the *catushkoti*). The Jains went even further and advocated the possibility of contradictory values of the kind: true (only) *and* both true and false. Contradictory utterances are a common place in Daoism. For example, Zhuangzi says: That which makes things has no boundaries with things, but for things to have boundaries is what we mean by saying "the boundaries between things." The boundary less boundary is the boundary without a boundary (Mair 1994, 218). When Buddhism and Daoism fused to form Chan (or Zen, to give it its Japanese name), a philosophy arose in which contradiction plays a central role. The very process for reaching enlightenment (*Prajna*) is a process, "which is at once above and in the process of reasoning. This is a contradiction, formally considered, but in truth, this contradiction is itself made possible because of *Prajna*" (Priest, 2004, "Dialetheism").

Truth and Falsehood are both whatever, and simultaneously NOT so, rather than not." - Alf the Poet (quoted from a post in alt. Buddha. short. fat. guy). According to the *Kalama Sutta*, the Buddha once visited a small town called Kesaputta in the kingdom of Kosala. The inhabitants of this town were known by the common name Kalama. When they heard that the Buddha was in their town, the Kalamas paid him a visit, and told him: "Sir, there are some recluses and brahmanas who visit Kesaputta. They explain and illumine only their own doctrines, and despise, condemn, and spurn others' doctrines. Then come other recluses and *brahmanas*, and they, too, in their turn, explain and illumine only their own doctrines, and despise, condemn, and spurn others' doctrines. But, for us, Sir, we have always doubt and perplexity as to whom among these venerable recluses and brahmanas spoke the truth, and who spoke falsehood (Warren 1896, 284).

We may find the elements of dialectics in Buddhism. In its early days, Buddhism regarded each of the logical alternatives as being either true or false. Transformation of truth and falsehood is involved in the very form of the Buddhist Sutras, for they are attributed unhesitatingly in all their multitudinous variety and voluminous extent to Shakyamuni himself. The dialectical side of Buddhism, the dynamic element, treats reality as something eternally changing and impermanent. The Essence of Buddhism in its original form possesses a rational core, and most of the elements of dialectics were present in it, similar to the early Greek philosophies. This represented the first faltering steps of dialectical philosophy.

Chi-Tsang 吉藏(Jizang 549-623) was one of the key figures in Chinese Buddhism who examined dichotomy of truth and falsehood systematically. For him, if we harbor the distinction between Buddhist and non-Buddhist and dwell upon the division between Mahayana and Hinayana, we fall into the falsehood of one-sidedness and lose sight of the true principle. Only the simultaneous allaying of the thoughts of Buddhist and non-Buddhist and the concurrent subduing of the ideas of Mahayana and Hinayana are known as the true principle. Actually, "Refutation of Falsehoods" is equivalent to "Revelation of Truths." Continuously, falsehoods are innumerable, and truths are also of many kinds. For those reasons, those ideas which are with acquisitiveness are false and have to be refuted; those ideas which are without

acquisitiveness are true and have to be expounded (Liu 1993, 649-673). Chi-Tsang has the following key points on truth and falsehood: 1) So-called conventional truth and ultimate truth are only two different ways of looking at the "same" things and can be found in anything. These two truths are not exhaustive of all truths nor are they two fixed sets of truths. If the higher truth is considered to stand for certain determinate or absolute essence, it would become a "lower" or "ordinary" truth. So a truth can be higher or lower, and whether it is high or low depends upon one's mental condition. The denial of dualistic and non-dualistic metaphysics is ultimate truth (Chi-Tsang, *The Meaning of the Twofold Truth*, 90-91). 2) So-called truth cannot be a right understanding of something real in the world. In fact, no truth is "really true." It is the accurate manifestation or description of Being, Nothingness or some other things (Chi-Tsang 1854, 97-98). 3) Originally there was "nothing to affirm and there is not now anything to negate." So-called "true" and "false" are equally empty; they do not stand for any essence or self-existing thing. A right view is called "right" because all views are abandoned. If it were accepted as a "view," it would become a "wrong" view which ought to be rejected (Chi-Tsang 1852, 6, 7, 11 and 14).

According to Hsueh-Li Cheng, for Chi-Tsang, the act of knowing, the knower, the object to be known, the distinction between the subject and the object, truth, and falsity are all empty (Cheng 1981, 380). The metaphysical problem of Being and Nothingness is related to the epistemological issue of truth and falsity; for metaphysical speculation is concerned with whether ontological assertions about the world are true or false. When Chi-Tsang critically examines Being and Nothingness, he has an interesting analysis of the nature of truth and the concepts of "right" and "wrong." He contends that all things, including Being and Nothingness or "right" and "wrong," are empty. "Since all truths and falsities are empty, it makes no sense to dispute whether a certain metaphysical assertion 'is' or 'is not' true. This refutation of metaphysics is different from the refutation of metaphysics by contemporary Western positivists, for it neither makes a 'true' statement about the world nor finds a 'meaningful' assertion about sense experience or anything" (*Ibid.*, 1981, 372). In his teaching of Twofold Truth on three levels, Chi-Tsang states whether a truth is high or low depends upon one's mental condition (*Ibid.*, 379).

For Zen Buddhism, there is ultimately no distinction between truth and falsehood. Hui Neng 慧能 who was the founder of Zen Buddhism says: "The confused pronounce (*Prajna*) with their mouths; the wise live it in their minds. When it is merely pronounced, there is at that very moment a falsehood; when there is a falsehood, it is not a reality. When *Prajna* is lived in every thought of yours, this is known as reality. Those who understand this truth understand the truth of *Prajna* and practice the life of *Prajna*. Those who do not practice it are ordinary people. When you practice and live it in one thought of yours, You are equal to the Buddha...He who has an insight into this truth is free from thoughts, from recollections, from attachments; in him there is no deceit and falsehood" (Hui Neng, *Tan Jing I*, 26-27).

For Chinese Buddhism, the character "假 *Jia*" means all empirical things are merely unreal, impermanent, temporal, relative, phenomenal, and fallacious. There are the nine views: 1) the three fundamental propositions (三諦 *San Di*): emptiness or

void (空 *Kong*), falsehood or unreality (假 *Jia*) and the mean or middle (中 *Zhong*); 2) the empirical combinations without permanent reality (假合 *Jia He*); 3) the unreal names for all things or nothing which has a name of itself (假名 *Jia Ming*); 4) the world of unreal names (假名世間 *Jia Ming Shi Jian*); 5) the unreal reality (假實 *Jia Shi*); 6) the unreal ego (假我 *Jia Wo*); 7) the unreal being (假有 *Jia You*); 8) the unreal forms (假色 *Jia Se*); and 9) the unreal observation (假觀 *Jia Guan*). All of these Buddhist views are applied in *A Dream of Red Mansions*.

Yi Zhuan (Commentary on the Book of Changes) tells us: “The Master said: ‘The sages make their emblematic symbols to set forth fully their ideas, appointed the trigrams and hexagrams to show fully the truth and falsehood (of things), appended their explanations to give the full expression of their words, and changed (the various lines) and made general the method of doing so, to exhibit fully what was advantageous. They (thus) stimulated (the people) as by drums and dances, thereby completely developing the spirit-like’” (character of *Yi*) (Section I of *Xi Ci of Yi Zhuan*).

According to Daoism, Dao is explained as being within all things. In translation, Dao literally means “movement above”; when put into the context of *Dadejing (Tao Te Ching)* where everything is explained as being full of contradictions – for life there is death, for happiness there is sorrow; when one exists, its opposite also exists – the Dao encompasses the contradictions and at the same time supersedes them. In this manner Dao can be interpreted as an ancient formulation of the dialectical synthesis. Since its widespread introduction into Chinese culture, Dao took on the meaning of “the way” and also as the “path” of nature. In relation to Daoism, the action of being both encompassing of the contradictions and yet superseding them is called *Wu-Wei* (actionless-action)–the way of water. For Daoism, all is one such as matters of good and evil and of true or false, as well as differing opinions. Daoist as well as Buddhist relativism emphasize that certain patterns are neither true nor false, and all notions of good and evil, true and false are relative. Zhuangzi claims: wherein does the Dao contain “truth” and “falsehood”? We may find some examples of *Yin-Yang* complementarity (juxtaposition and alternation of themes, images, personalities, situations) as follows: 1. Theme of interpenetration of reality and illusion, daily life and dreams (the idea of true and false producing one another)—“Truth becomes fiction when the fiction's true”—the Chinese reader takes delight in his/her disorientation. 2. Juxtaposition of Confucian and Buddhist (or Daoist) elements and themes. 3. Alternation of scenes (situations growing out of one another)—e.g. action and stillness (or excitement and boredom); elegance and baseness; sorrow and joy; separation and union; prosperity and decline; contrasts often emphasized in chapter heads. 4. Characters are often complementary opposites, although some are mirror images of one another.

The following are some determinative antithetical couplets or mystical maxims which expose some relationships between Truth (*Zhen*) and Falsehood (*Jia*):

When false is taken for true, true becomes false; 假作真時真亦假,

if non-being turns into being, being becomes non-being.(Ch. 1) 無為有處有還無。(第一回)

When false gives way to true, true surpasses false; 假去真來真勝假,
though nothingness exists, being differs from nothingness.(Ch. 116) 無原有是有非無。(第一百一十六回)

Joy and sorrow alike are false; 喜笑悲哀都是假,
desire and longing are folly. (Ch. 116) 貪求思慕總因痴。(第一百一十六回)

It is not false, Jia family has halls of jade and horses of gold. (Ch. 4) 賈不假, 白玉為堂金作馬。(第四回)

Pages full of fantastic talk, 滿紙荒唐言,
Penned with bitter tears; 一把辛酸淚。
All men call the author mad, 都雲作者痴,
None his message hears. (Ch. 1) 誰解其中味? (第一回)

As the Qing Dynasty scholar Wang Xilian (1796-1861) says: “The readers should know: truth is falsehood, falsehood is truth; there is falsehood in truth, and also there is truth in falsehood; truth is not truth, and falsehood is not falsehood. If one really understands those meanings, then he can clearly distinguish who is *Zhen* (the true) Baoyu and who is *Jia* (the false) Baoyu” (Wang 1963, 147). According to Francis Bacon, the inquirer should free his mind from certain false notions or tendencies which distort the truth. These are called “Idols (*idola*, it can be translated into illusions),” and are of four kinds: “Idols of the Tribe” (*idola tribus*), which are common to the race; “Idols of the Den” (*idola specus*), which are peculiar to the individual; “Idols of the Marketplace” (*idola fori*), coming from the misuse of language; and “Idols of the Theatre” (*idola theatri*), which results from an abuse of authority. For this great philosopher, the end of induction is the discovery of forms, the ways in which natural phenomena occur, the causes from which they proceed. Perhaps we might add one more: “Idols of the Mansion,” which are reflected as a life of rotten and wanton extravagance.

III. Transformation of *Truth-Falsehood*: A Perspective of Fatalism

The author also uses *Truth-Falsehood* as a symbol of traditional fatalism. There is a sense of fatalism in the language, especially in the poems and maxims. The whole story attempts or even pretends to illustrate predestination, transmigration, reincarnation, and almost all sorts of Chinese religious or even superstitious views. This is natural, because literary works inevitably reflect the beliefs of the age in which they are produced. According to David R. Hawkins, the ego and its structure are revealed to facilitate the understanding of religious and spiritual truths expressed by the mystics and enlightened sages over the centuries. For this reason, the human mind has been intrinsically incapable of discerning truth from falsehood (Hawkins, 2005). The novel begins with Jia Baoyu's supernatural “origins” as a magical stone,

unused by the Goddess Nuwa in repairing the “dome of Heaven,” which wants to enjoy the pleasures of the “red dust” (the mundane world); Baoyu was born with a piece of jade (the magical stone) in his mouth through the machinations of a Buddhist monk and a lame Daoist priest (who make periodic appearances throughout the novel to mock or enlighten people).

So-called fiction itself is an artistic discourse that is both true and false. The possibility of interpreting the entire *A Dream of Red Mansions* can be reduced to a false illusion, namely the opposite of the “true” vision of the Buddhist monk and the Daoist priest. This novel is about a transcendent and the transformative dream of a group of men and women, and it is based on an ontological status of that narrative: true or false, illusion or reality. The true mingled with the false and the false mingled itself with the true. Many statements are absolutely true because they conform to reality, or false because they conflict with reality. A claim is true when it is a mental mirror of its object; it is false if it is against that object. Jia Baoyu is the principal character in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, he is the reincarnated Stone of the book's alternate title. In the Jiaxu version, textually the most reliable, Baoyu is the Divine Attendant-in-Waiting at the Sunset Glow Palace, reborn in the human realm. The Stone and Baoyu are separate, though related entities. Interesting enough, a Daoist priest known as Void of Void (空空道人) caught sight of the spirited Stone and read the story inscribed on it. It was an account of the Stone's rejection for repairing heaven, its transformation and conveyance to the world of men by the Buddhist of Infinite Space and the Daoist of Boundless Time, and the joys and sorrows, parting 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, 無才可去補蒼天，
 I passed some years on earth to no avail; 枉入紅塵若許年，
 My life in both worlds is recorded here; 此系身前身後事，
 Whom can I ask to pass on this romantic tale? (Ch. 1) 倩誰記去作奇傳？(第一回)

There is dialogue between the Daoist and the Stone which provides clues for the human drama that unfolds in the novel. There are also some important fatalistic hints in Chapter 5 “The Spiritual Stone Is Too Bemused to Grasp the Fairy's Riddles (太虛幻境); The Goddess of Disenchantment (警幻仙子) in Her Kindness Secretly Expounds on Love.” In his dream, the Goddess guides Jia Baoyu in reading many mystical maxims: one of them which appears in Chapter one is:

When false is taken for true, true becomes false, 假作真時真亦假，
 If non-being turns into being, being becomes non-being. 無為有處有還無。

The other is:

Gone with the clouds spring's dream, 春夢隨云散，
 Flowers drift away on the stream. 飛花逐水流；
 Young lovers all, be warned by me, 寄言眾儿女，

Cease courting needless misery. 何必覓閑愁。

The Goddess also guides Jia Baoyu to see the “First Register of Twelve Beauties of Jinling (金陵十二釵正冊).” The so called Twelve Beauties are the mystical symbols which represent the twelve real girls who are connected to the main character’s life fatalistically.

The plot of *A Dream of Red Mansions* is innovative and ingenious. The first chapter describes how a piece of stone was left over from when the sky was repaired by the Goddess Nu Wa. This romantic legend leads to the realistic story of the Red Mansions through intricate mists of dreams and illusions – a technique of telling the truth through pretended falsehood. This contributes to the difficulty in understanding the inner world of the characters, Jia Baoyu and Lin Daiyu in particular. Baoyu is the human incarnation of that stone, given a chance to learn the emptiness of human existence, and the novel is the story of his life. As a sign of his supernatural origin, he was born with a magical jade in his mouth. His given name, which literally means “precious jade,” was given him in honor of this. The jade and Baoyu share a mystical link, and the story ends after it is lost for good and Baoyu himself disappears.

On the anniversary of his birth, he was made to go through a future-telling ritual of picking one of a collection of symbolic items randomly displayed before him. Ignoring an official seal, gold and classic books, he picked up a piece of cosmetic used by women, much to his parents dismay. They had hoped that he chose the other items so that he could be an official, a man of wealth, or at least a scholar when he grew up. Now they feared that he would become a man of debauchery. He might not be dissipated, but as he grew up, he began to disdain the imperial examination system and oppose the tradition of treating women as inferior to men. In his eyes, women were made of pure water while men, contaminated dirt. He often said, “Whenever I saw girls, I feel refreshed, but the sight of men really stinks!”

Jia Baoyu is portrayed as having little interest in learning the Confucian classics, much to the despair of his father, Jia Zheng. He would rather spend his time reading or writing poetry and playing with his numerous female relations. He is nonetheless compassionate and thoughtful (perhaps as juxtaposition to the other male characters in the novel). Jia Baoyu's romance with Lin Daiyu forms one of the novel's main plot lines. However, there are several women who play an important part in his life. In particular, he is a darling of his grandmother, who dotes on him and occasionally shields him from his father. His wife Xue Baochai and his principal maid Xi Ren, Aroma, are also worthy of note. Lin Daiyu, said to be the incarnation of a divine herb, was also dubbed by the author “the goddess of Xiao and Xiang,” wives of Fu Xi who was said to be the husband of Nu Wa. Therefore, a scholar of *A Dream of Red Mansions* argues that the author treated Jia Baoyu as the masculine side of the Goddess Nu Wa while Lin Daiyu, the feminine side. Their arrival in the Red Mansions as an alliance of stone and wood was to continue Nu Wa's mission of ridding the world of flood. In their case, it was the flood of licentiousness. Jia Baoyu and Lin Daiyu were two aspects of the same wholeness. When separated, they would certainly be doomed. Indeed, one can infer that by presenting the destruction of two

innocent young lives along with their beautiful dreams, the author made a cruel condemnation against the stifling and debauched feudal society of his time.

The relationship between Lin Daiyu and Jia Baoyu is by no means one of lust. Nor is their love platonic. It is, according to some scholars of *A Dream of Red Mansions*, a bond in the dreamland and of predestination. Every day in the garden of the Red Mansions, they “read, write, paint, chant, riddle, embroider, enjoy plants and flowers, and play musical instruments, chess, and word puzzles.” By contrast, in the real world, other male members of their family such as Jia He, Jia Zhen, Jia Lian, and Jia Rong are indulging themselves in unchecked prurient activities. In the Xue family, there is a girl named Baochai. She is beautiful and graceful, scrupulously abiding by the conventional rules that women are made to obey. Shrewd, diplomatic and manipulative, she knows how to make friends and consequently become the favorite girl of all the families. She has a necklace of gold lock. Her mother had very early spread the word that she would match her daughter with one with a necklace of precious stone. Everyone knows whom she is referring to.

Because of the concept of feudal fatalism, the Jia authorities—represented by Lady Dowager, Jia Zheng, Lady Wang, and Wang Xifeng—decide to choose Baochai as Baoyu's bride—instead of the lovely, but sickly (and rebellious) Daiyu. In their opinion, Baoyu and Baochai are a perfect couple. Their marriage will be a symbolic union between a “precious jade” and a “golden locket.” Therefore, when they become aware of the fact that Baoyu deeply loves Daiyu, they decide to play a cruel trick on him. They tell him that he will marry to Lin Daiyu; secretly, though, they plan to have him marry the heavily veiled Baochai. Unfortunately, the secret is leaked to Daiyu, and she falls unconscious and begins spitting blood. On Jia Baoyu's wedding day, Lin Daiyu is left alone—sick in bed, accompanied only by Tzu-chuan. She breathes her last in loneliness, grief, and hatred, while Baoyu goes merrily to the wedding ceremony, assuming that his bride will be Lin Daiyu. When he finds himself married to Baochai, he goes out of his mind.

Meanwhile, the imperial concubine dies and Jia She is deprived of his rank for conspiring with provincial officials to take advantage of the weak. His properties are confiscated, and the house of Jia Zheng also gets in trouble. The grandmother dies, the nun Miaoyu is kidnapped, and Wang Xifeng loses authority dying in regret with a guilty conscience. Jia Baoyu's illness grows worse until he is on the verge of death—when suddenly a monk appears with Jia Baoyu's lost jade. Momentarily, Jia Baoyu seems to be himself again, but suddenly he faints away again at the sight of the monk and regains consciousness only after a terrible nightmare. Jia Baoyu then changes his ways and determines to restore the reputation of his house. The following day, he takes an official examination, and is ranked number seven on the list. Jia Baoyu's wife, Xue Baochai, is pregnant, but nonetheless, he suddenly decides to leave her and disappears after the examination. Jia Zheng, on his way back to Peking after attending his mother's funeral in Nanjing, stays at Piling Station one snowy night, and there he sees a man with a shaved head, bare feet, and wearing a red woolen cape. The man bows to him and, on a close inspection, he recognizes Jia Baoyu. Before Jia Zheng can speak to him, though, a Buddhist monk and a Daoist take Jia Baoyu away. Jia

Cheng runs after them, but they have vanished, and all he can see is a stretch of snowy waste. That is the main thread of the story.

The narrative itself is based on the prediction in Jia Baoyu's dream years ago, when Baoyu found himself in a fairyland, where he met a goddess and was shown the register of the Twelve Beauties of Jinling. He saw pictures and poems which he could not understand. The Goddess ordered her maids to sing twelve songs, the last of which runs as follows: The high official's fortunes will decline; the rich man's gold and silver will melt away; the kind of heart will escape death; the heartless will receive their just deserts; he who takes life will pay with his own life; he who causes tears will weep till his eyes are dry; one who sees through this world will enter holy orders; one enslaved by love will die a fruitless death; when all food is gone, birds will fly to the woods, leaving nothing but bare, naked earth behind.

The story line of the novel roughly parallels these predictions. The outward magnificence of the Jia family cannot disguise its decline and deterioration forever. The Jia family members are accustomed to living in luxury, and certain parasitic landowners (such as Jia She and Jia Zhen) are nothing but dissolute and dissipated people. In order to enjoy a life of extravagance, they put increasing pressure on the peasants and extract heavy taxes from their tenants. Relying on their wealth and political influence, they bully innocent citizens and maids (such as Xue Pan and Wang Xifeng) by contemptible and cruel methods. Therefore, tragedy begins to overshadow the family's splendor. There are many conflicts undermining the network of this enormous household—conflicts between masters and servants, between wives and concubines, between lineal descendants and sons and daughters by concubines. All these internal struggles lead to plotting against each other and several suicides. Qin Keqing hangs herself; Jia Baoyu's good friend Qin Zhong dies young; the maid Chin-chuan drowns herself in a well; Second Sister Yu commits suicide by swallowing gold; Jia Baoyu's favorite maid, Qingwen, dies soon after being dismissed because of Lady Wang's prejudice against her. Even Jia Baoyu himself comes under an evil influence and is the target of an assassination plot by Lady Zhao and her son, Jia Huan. Granny Liu's visits to the Jia family bear convincing witness to the hypocrisy of the landlord class and their extravagance. Her simple and poor lifestyle stands in sharp contrast to their luxurious way of life. The Jia family's arbitrariness towards ordinary people and servants leads to Ho San's collusion with brigands to rob Lady Dowager of her gold and silver so that the Jia family's decline is accelerated. Jia She's treachery and Jia Zheng's lechery result in the confiscation of the family property. Finally, however, the Emperor's general amnesty pardons Jia She, Jia Zhen and Jia Zheng, and they are allowed to return to their original positions, and the confiscated property is restored. It is possible to see almost all kinds of spiritual operations and philosophical perspectives in terms of the transformation of truth and falsehood in *A Dream of Red Mansions*.

Conclusion

The transformation of Truth-Falsehood (*Zhen-Jia*) in this novel can be considered a sort of spiritual transformation which is recognized within the context of an individual

self-consciousness, or an individual's meaning system, especially in relation to concepts of the sacred or ultimate concern. According to Friedrich Schleiermacher, "a person's relation to one historical individual and the community founded by him can be the occasion for the transformation of the self through the mediation of the divine love" (Mariña, 2008, 12). For Kenneth Pargament, "refers to a fundamental change in the place of the sacred or the character of the sacred in the life of the individual" (Pargament, 2006, 20). Raymond Paloutzian says: "constitutes a change in the meaning system that a person holds as a basis for self-definition, the interpretation of life, and overarching purposes and ultimate concerns" (Paloutzian 2005, 331).

Ontologically, the transformation of truth (*Zhen*) and falsehood (*Jia*) finally makes up "Natural Being," "Human Being," "Supernatural Being," "Superhuman Being," or "Final Being." The final supreme "*Truth*" as "Ultimate Reality" can be considered the elimination of the distinction between *truth and falsehood*. Even for the author, "Non-Being," "Nothingness," or "Emptiness," fills in the space between *Truth and Falsehood*. The whole story was going through "natural being" such as Prospect Garden; "human being" such as over 400 named characters from all walks of life and the rise and fall of the four decadent clans of Jia, Shi, Wang and Xue; "supernatural being or superhuman being" such as the Goddess Nu Wa, the Goddess of Disenchantment, the Fairy's Riddles, the spiritual stone, and so on. As we mentioned before, Jia Baoyu's supernatural "origins" as a magical stone, unused by the Goddess Nu Wa in repairing the "dome of Heaven," who wants to enjoy the pleasures of the "red dust" (the mundane world); Baoyu was born with a piece of jade (the magical stone) in his mouth through the machinations of a Buddhist monk and a lame Daoist priest (who make periodic appearances throughout the novel to mock or enlighten people).

Epistemologically, there are not any "objective criteria" of the transformation of truth (*Zhen*) and falsehood (*Jia*), since in every falsehood there is truth, and in every truth, falsehood, *the mixture of truth and falsehood* is relative to each observer.

Logically, the separation or dichotomies of truth (*Zhen*) and falsehood (*Jia*) must be rejected, since they actually become each other; truth is a substitute for falsehood, not falsehood itself, and also falsehood is a substitute for truth, not as truth itself. The style of this novel seems similar to Zen Buddhist "*gongan (koan)*". In ancient China, the *gongan* was a type of literature in order to provide certain verifications and judgments of truth and falsehood. For stimulating their students' awareness, Zen (Chan) masters always tried to apply all kinds of riddles, dilemmas, paradoxes, puzzled stories, unusual problems, and perplexed cases, the more amazing, surprising and shocking the better. They just wanted to get some illogical answers from the mysterious, irrational, or paradoxical nature of truth.

Ethically, truth (*Zhen*) could be "evil and wrong" and falsehood (*Jia*) could be "good and right." This writing really sheds light on almost every field and aspect of social life: elite's as well as common people's family life, social roles, moral values, religious practices, thought and behavior patterns, amusements and entertainments, eating and drinking, clothing and housing, medicine and transportation. It also profoundly exposes the gap between theory and practice in Chinese social life.

Aesthetically, truth could be “ugly” and “falsehood” could be “beautiful.” The novel itself may be treated as the culmination of China's rich literary legacy, and also a reflection of Chinese sense of beauty and world view, including examples of all major types of Chinese poetry. The author vividly described many “beautiful things”: beautiful ladies, beautiful gardens, beautiful sceneries, beautiful decorations, beautiful poems, beautiful music, beautiful loves, and beautiful dreams; however everything finally is “ugly”: ugly marriages, ugly families, ugly businesses, ugly relationships, ugly rulership, and an entire ugly society. By presenting the destruction of two innocent young lives along with their beautiful dreams, the author made a cruel condemnation against the stifling and debauched feudal society of his time.

We may find the following nine transformed interactions between Truth (*Zhen*) and Falsehood (*Jia*) in this book: 1) True “illusion” vs. false “reality” (虛真實假); 2) True “subjectivity” vs. false “objectivity” (主真客假); 3) True “entirety” vs. false “particularity” (宏真微假); 4) True “inwardness” vs. false “outlook”(裡真外假); 5) True “awareness” vs. false “cognition” (悟真知假); 6) True “emotionality” vs. false “rationality” (情真理智假); 7) True “popularity” vs. false “elegance” (俗真雅假); 8) True “evilness’s. false “goodness” (惡真善假); and 9) True “ugliness” vs. false “beautiffulness” (丑真美假) .

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