

Inside and Outside the Dream of Red Mansions

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ABSTRACT

The argument of this essay on *The Dream of Red Mansions*, informed by Western critical theory, turns on the tropes of “inside” and “outside” as they are used in Derrida and in architectural criticism inspired by deconstruction, and as they may be applied to Cao Xueqin’s text. The implications of the critique of this binary opposition as it takes place in the novel affect discussion of its dream-nature, its use of the house and the garden, and mirrors, and whether it may, in any sense, be called allegory. The idea of an “inside” which is separated from the “outside” by firm boundaries, or borders, has implications for an investigation of the body and its relationship to the sexual, both male and female, as this appears in the text, and it is explored through the concepts of abjection and textual violence.

KEY WORDS

abjection
deconstruction
dream
illusion
mirror
title

allegory
double
garden
masculinity
psychoanalysis



I. "Nothing Outside the Text"¹

The Dream of Red Mansions begins, in the translation by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang, with a commentary. David Hawkes does not give this, but quotes it in his introduction.² Whether Hawkes is protective of the idea of the text being single-authored, then as always supplemented by commentary, is not easy to decide: perhaps he assimilates the text to western models of the novel; if so, the western model is a conservative one. Metafictional, self-reflexive, the *Honglou Meng* represents something then new in Chinese writing, and because of the writing and commentary it still engenders, still new, and so post-modern.³ The commentary precedes and refers to the first chapter:

the author himself has declared that, having undergone a dreamlike and illusory experience, he deliberately had the true facts concealed and composed instead this book, *The Story of the Stone*. That is why he speaks of Zhen Shi-yin [a homophone for true events concealed] who by means of a dream makes acquaintance with Perfect Comprehension.

It then quotes the author, so giving one reading of the text, that it is an elegy for women who must not "pass into oblivion without a memorial" (H.1. Introduction 21):

In this busy, dusty world, having accomplished nothing, I suddenly recalled all the girls I had known [. . .] all of them surpassed me in behaviour and understanding; [. . .] I,

shameful to say, for all my masculine dignity, fell short of the gentler sex [. . .]. 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. That is why I use the other name Jia Yucun. (Y.1.1.1–2)⁴

Jia Yu-cun is a homophone for “fiction in rustic language” (Yang 1.645). The polarity of Zhen (true) and Jia (false) plays throughout the text. One name for the author and one name for the text are the same, as Zhen Shi-yin, referred to in the opening of the commentary, appears in chapter 1 living in Soochow, figuring the author and true events concealed. His part starts with what happens after the monk and the Taoist take the stone away (H. 1.1.52). Jia Yu-cun also appears in this first chapter, as a poor student from Hu-zhou, living next door to Zhen Shi-yin. Later, he is told of the Rongs and the Nings (chapter 2), which makes him a figure of the reader, as also of the author. The two men imply the plural nature of authorship, its lack of authority.

The text continues with “Do you know, worthy readers, where this book comes from?” adding “let me explain.” But the “me” may be different from either the editor who has begun or the author who has been given an inset passage explaining who he is. It is a liminal paragraph, getting the reader over the threshold, but without quite confirming a narrative voice. The narrative, which declares it may border on the “absurd,” begins with the goddess Nü-wa. She was repairing the sky, and discarded a single block of stone from this purpose; the stone laments—like the author in the commentator’s creation of him—that it has been passed over, rejected, as though heterogeneous, unable to be fitted in. A Buddhist monk and a Taoist come along; the Taoist takes the stone and pockets it. That ends the first part of the first chapter; the second begins “countless aeons” later when another Taoist monk passes the same place, and sees the now engraved stone, which gives an account of the narrative written on it (another plurality): it is the “story of the stone” he says, and he compares it with other forms of romance. This one is superior in not being dated, not insertable into a known history. But who has written the script on the

stone? Not the stone, but the monk who came along with the Taoist; it is another author who is concealed. And the words *on* the stone, as “authorial” and the words *of* the Stone (as a character within the text) never can coincide: an unknowable gap remains between them. The Taoist, lost in thought over it (as though the text was a mirror for him) copies out the story and looks for a publisher. Reading transforms him: having started in the Void (which is Truth)” he has come to “the contemplation of Form (which is Illusion); and from Form engendered Passion; and by communicating Passion entered again into Form; and from Form awoke to the Void (which is Truth).

Because of the book’s love-interest he changes its title to *The Record of the Passionate Monk* (Y.1.1.7), or *The Tale of Brother Amor* (H.1.1.51). It is another title linking three elements: the *author*—the Taoist who has copied out the writing on the stone and who has become this figure of passion in an act of identification with it—and the *book*, and the *character* of Bao-yu, who in the narrative, seems destined to become a monk: as he tells Dai-yu, “If you died, I should become a monk” (H.2.30.95), which should mean the narrative tells how he becomes the title-figure, except that when he is passionate he is not a monk and as a monk he is not passionate.

Then Kong Meixi “from the homeland of Confucius” (which may imply a didacticism within a commentary—but the commentary is part of the text) is said to have suggested another title, *Precious Mirror of Love*. Hawkes adds another title with the words: “Wu Yu-feng called it *A Dream of Golden Days*” and continues:

Cao Xueqin, in his Nostalgia Studio worked on it for ten years, in the course of which he rewrote it no less than five times, dividing it into chapters, composing chapter-headings, renaming it *The Twelve Beauties of Jinling* and adding an introductory quatrain. (H.1.1.51)

This writing makes the author as the commentator, no more, but also—given the status of commentary—no less than that. Commentary begets authorship, not authorship commentary.⁵ The text also adds

Zhiyanzhai's comment that he restored the original title—i.e. *The Story of the Stone*—when he recopied the book and annotated it. That the new old title comes round again indicates that the author and the commentator do not compete; standing outside a text to name it is fictitious.

Hawkes associates *A Dream of Red Mansions* with the *Twelve Beauties* title: the red mansions are a metonymy for the women inside them, as the women are metonymised, for “beauties” are “golden hairpins.” Perhaps twelve is a synecdoche for so many other women.⁶ Hawkes says that *A Dream of Red Mansions* is also the name for the cycle of twelve songs—elegies—which twelve women perform before Bao-yu, which he translates as *A Dream of Golden Days*. (The Introduction says that *A Dream of Golden Girls* might be better: “*A Dream of Red Mansions* can mean both a dream of delicately nurtured young ladies living in luxurious apartments and a dream of vanished splendour” (18–20).⁷ But no title is “authoritative” or can account for the text's excess. *The Story of the Stone* can only apply to the writing on the stone, leaving the writing of the first chapter outside the work, like an ornament, or as the *parergon*.⁸ But also with *A Dream of Red Mansions*, it stands for something *inside* the text—the song cycle—it cannot therefore stand *outside* the text. Compiling titles recognizes that no title, like no author, takes place outside; no text can claim entitlement; the title is part of the text which produces the author as one of its fictions. At the end, the Taoist monk finds the stone again, with extra writings on it—the last forty chapters of the novel—copies them out and brings them to Cao Xueqin (H.5.120.375). The last chapters are then presented as Cao Xueqin's, because he agrees to copy them out, though the actual Cao Xueqin has died. No more than with *Don Quixote* can a founding author be established; as though this fiction recognises its own “postmodernism” in resting on “false language enduring”—Yu's translation (168) for Jia Yu-cun. “False language enduring” is outside historical narrative but not, therefore, nothing. And Bao-yu at the end is “the Realized Immortal of Writing Marvellous” (Yu's translation, p. 171, of H. 5.120.366). The subject of the text (Bao-yu) authors writing; writing authors the text.

The “author” seems a pedant poring over the book in his “Nostalgia,” or “Mourning-the-Red,” studio (Y.1.1.7). He seems more pedantic when seen in chapter 120, “perusing the histories of bygone days” (H.5.120.375). Nostalgia, not the privileged position of the text, is only one stance within it, suiting with pedantry and with impotence of being unable to impose authority. The Cao Xueqin the text creates appears as only one of many possible contributors, like the Bao-yu of the text, who is also a manifestation of the Stone when this becomes human in the “countless aeons” between his first and second sightings. Cao Xueqin, a figure who by his commenting on the text belongs to its history of commentary, (the history of commentary has a prehistory; the novel prepares the commentary) presents himself as limited:

Pages full of fantastic talk
 Penned with bitter tears
 All men call the author mad
 None his message hears.

It opens the question whether he is mad (a “fool” in Hawkes’s translation), though it implies that there is an essence, an innermost flavour, which is to be caught from the text: so if there is folly, it associates with Foucault, or with Erasmus’s praise of folly.

Folly is implicit from the beginning, as when the goddess moulds the stones on the “Incredible Crags of the Great Fable Mountains” (H.1.1.47)—the “Cliff of no Record” and the “Mountain of Great Absurdity.”⁹ “Folly” means that the narrative gives “pages of fantastic talk” which comes close to the meaning of allegory in the western tradition: “speaking other”—speaking as other, speaking differently. The text is allegory, because it speaks “other,” and autobiography, because it speaks of Cao Xueqin. These two are not opposed; the self cannot be spoken of except as other.

II. The Text as Mirror

Plural titles, indicating the impossibility of imposing authority

from the outside, point to moments of energy, or nodal points, within the text. The title *Precious Mirror of Love* reappears in chapter 12, in an episode of Jia Rui's infatuation with Xi-feng, who consistently tricks him in a narrative whose irreverence could be paralleled with many of the *fabliau* narratives from Boccaccio's *Decameron*.

Ill, Jia Rui is "torn by violent and conflicting emotions" (H. 1.12.249) until a Taoist gives him a mirror with reflecting surfaces on both sides, and the words "a mirror for the romantic" on the back. He is told to look only at the back, which shows a grinning skull; this is similar to the images inside the first two caskets (gold and silver) that Portia's selfish suitors choose in *The Merchant of Venice*; it combines, in fact the image inside the gold casket—which shows a "carriage death," a skull being the Renaissance *memento mori*—with the image in the silver, which shows a "blinking idiot."¹⁰ Skulls grin: the fool is the figure of death: both are mirrors for the princes.

The Taoist's mirror combines both senses of the mirror as the Renaissance understood it. The mirror—used in the west since the time of Augustine for book-titles, often with a satirical intention, as in such a book of warnings to rulers as the Tudor *A Mirror for Magistrates* (1559)—showed the subject what he was truly like. To look in the mirror was to see in the glass your true ontological essence. To see this, however, required reading what was in the glass allegorically, not literally.¹¹ The front of the mirror, which Jia Rui turns to, shows Xi-feng inviting him sexually, and that—which is also mocking, so that it corresponds with the back of the mirror—feeds his narcissism. And narcissism is at the core of the meaning of the mirror in Lacanian psychoanalysis.¹² The mirror-stage for Lacan gives to the subject a sense of identity, and to have a woman enticing him revealed in the mirror is an obviously spurious way of giving to Jia Rui a new and complete sense of identity. In his fantasy he enters the mirror, as though it was a doorway, in pursuit of Xi-feng.

The unreal nature of all is revealed when he is dragged away by two figures, holding iron chains, while his body collapses, dead, in a pool of semen. His last words are "Wait! Let me take the mirror with me!"—indicating how he makes it a prop for his identity, and that

identity is associated with the sexual. The relatives wish to burn the mirror, but the voice of the Taoist is heard (the real appears unreal) accusing them of “confusing the unreal with the real.”¹³ The mirror could be thought of as an image of the novel, so the relatives’ desire to eliminate it is the sense that art is dangerous: and indeed it is what Derrida calls, following Plato, the *pharmakon*—both medicine and poison; like the mirror’s two sides.¹⁴

Doubleness necessitates reading allegorically. To take art simply as dangerous, threatening, is the reaction of fear to what it reveals. The hostility of the matriarch, Grandmother Jia, to romances will be recalled (H.3.54.30): it is a reaction that comes from a mind-set that reads in one way only. So does Jia Rui read in one way only. So do the relatives read literally, not allegorically. Jia Rui has read the double faces of the mirror in a way where he lives within sexual fantasy, ignoring the reality of the semen which would tell him that it *is* all fantasy, not contact with another. The mirror disappears into the hand of the Taoist who takes it with him.

This episode with the Taoist is allegorical, but to say so is not to become involved with arguments whether Chinese texts practise allegory in a supposedly Western style (of one thing figuring another). There is already enough in what has been quoted from the first chapter to indicate that the text does not necessarily mean what appears on the surface; the riddling poems (in, for example, the dream in chapter 5 or chapter 51, “A clever cousin imposes some ingenious riddles”) also imply that. There is plenty of symbolism in the text; but allegory as theorized by Walter Benjamin gives a more interesting sense of writing than can be gained from the idea of symbolism. Benjamin distinguishes allegory and symbolism by reading the drive towards symbolism as a desire for a clear and natural referent for what is pictured. Allegory, according to Benjamin, means the loss of such a binary distinction between the real and not real. He sees the ideology that promotes symbolism serving the idea of “natural” forms of expression relating to “natural” meanings. In symbolism, language seems to refer to things spontaneously and to possess a natural sense.

For Benjamin, the primary allegorical image is the death’s head:

this disallows the idealization of nature implicit in symbolism:

Whereas in the symbol destruction is idealized and the transfigured face of nature is fleetingly revealed in the light of redemption, in allegory the observer is confronted with the *facies hippocratica* [i.e. the death's head] of history as a petrified, primordial landscape.¹⁵

Jia Rui sees the allegorical image which is in a sense “unreal” but turning away from it, steps into something even more unreal. The real is the allegorical. Real/unreal distinctions are ambiguous. The *fabliau*-like comedy of Jia Rui trying to seduce Xi-feng in a series of confusions of the real and unreal expresses something contradictory: the powerful and masculine woman is pursued by the feminine man.¹⁶ That adds to the comic *denouement* in which Jia Rui is found. He has been associated with homosexuality in chapter 9, and is now comically associated with it again through masturbation while pursuing heterosexuality. The contradiction appears also in Jia Rui's divided state in his illness. And the mirror is both front *and* back; the Taoist cannot really be telling Jia Rui not to look at the front of it; to read in only one way denies the plurality of texts of which a mirror is a prime example. As the fact/fiction distinction is dissolved in the novel, there can be no neat distinction between real and non-real in terms of the back and front of the mirror. For Derrida, writing on Rousseau, there is no sharply drawn distinction between masturbation and sexual love: Derrida discusses the “dangerous supplement” of Rousseau masturbating after making love; that he needs the supplement suggests that onanistic sexual fantasy is constitutive of sexual love.¹⁷ The distinction between the front and the back of the mirror cannot be upheld; it is as if both sides of the mirror give the same allegorical sense. For it may be never possible to be outside the sexual fantasy Jia Rui dies of and which he gets from looking in at the mirror's front. The mirror becomes an image of allegory, which, as mirror implies not a single subject to be seen within it, but a plural one. This doubleness, which confounds simple meaning, works through the text itself, which,

as a “precious mirror of love,” gives both front and back of the mirror. Can we link that point with the self-reflexivity of the text, the draft title reflecting the contents of the book, taken in one sense, and each editor/commentator in turn adding another title according to what they see in the book? At that point it becomes clear that there is no possibility of stabilizing meaning within the text, or making it a philosophy.

This doubleness persists in chapter 56 when Bao-yu, who has been told that there is another boy just like him living in Nanjing, falls asleep and dreams that he is in a garden like the all-important Prospect Garden, and that he has become his double. As the “original” Bao-yu, treated in what seems to him a strange manner as the other by the maids, he finds himself in the building of Green Delights in the garden, and sees his double asleep on the bed. In the dream, the double wakes, and speaks to him as though he were the other, the stranger and the double. The moment “couldn’t be more real” Bao-yu says (H. 3.56.86), a thought which, like allegory, occludes the binary distinction of “real” and “not real.” As he wakes from the dream, he finds that instead of looking down through a doorway where his double has gone, he is seeing himself in his mirror (H.3.56.87). The dream has doubled into uncanniness the rational discussion of the possibility of there being a boy similar to him.

The passage, which echoes the episode of chapter 12, illustrates an erotic desire for a double, with the narcissism of wishing to double the subject’s being. The Western interest in the double appears only slightly later than this writing of it in the *Honglou meng*; it is associated with Romanticism, as in the writings of E.T.A. Hoffmann. Freud, commenting on Hoffmann, calls the desire for a double “an insurance against the destruction of the ego,” a narcissistic “energetic denial of the power of death.”¹⁸ But the double threatens the subject, taking away the sense of its uniqueness, just as, in this episode, the mirror is also declared a threat to the subject. “If you’re reflected in mirrors too often it can give your soul a shock which causes you to have bad dreams” Bao-yu is told. The mirror gives and disconfirms identity in the same moment. It requires the subject to see his own difference from himself.

III. Allegory and the Garden

When Bao-yu dreams his double, it is as though the garden acts as a mirror for him. It could be the place for narcissism, as in the Western medieval *Romance of the Rose* (c.1230–1270) with its garden of delight. The garden of European literature is often thought of as an allegorical special space associated with love and the woman, and an image of the divine, of Paradise. Because it is the place of love, it becomes a feminine space, like the Biblical *hortus conclusus* allegorized by the church as the Virgin Mary: “a garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed” (Song of Solomon, 4.14). But the Chinese garden, such as Sima Guang’s in the Song dynasty, is a solitary and masculine space created by the statesman turned scholar and gardener, who created an urban “garden of solitary delight” (*Du le yuan*) in Luoyang, where he spent fifteen years beginning in 1071. This space excludes women.¹⁹

The split between the garden which is real and the idea that it speaks of, is basic to allegorical thinking, which is premised on a sense of one thing signifying another. Andrew Plaks holds that within Chinese culture however, “the concept of ontological disjunction between created and uncreated existence has no place” so that the Chinese garden could not be an allegory of a spiritual existence. He goes on to consider the idea of the Chinese garden as a metonymy for the world, as “an entire world in miniature, in both the spatial and temporal sense.” It follows that “the assumption that the entire range of existence is [. . .] intelligible, and hypothetically at least knowable, remains one of its most fundamental underpinnings.”²⁰ Summarizing this position in another essay, Plaks relates this to an argument that western ideas about duality, which support allegory, do not hold in China where “all the conceivable opposites of sensory and intellectual experience are *contained*, such that the poles of duality emerge as complementary within the intelligibility of the whole.” He speaks of “complementary bipolarity” and “multiple periodicity”²¹ in Chinese narrative, which inclines towards metonymy, rather than metaphor. So

the text shows meaningful links between such things as joy and sorrow, scenes of which alternate in the novel.

Plaks, therefore, renders *Daguan yuan*, as the Imperial Concubine Yuan-chun names it (“Prospect Garden”—H. 1.18.364) as the garden of “total vision” (Plaks, 178), though admitting that this is “forced” (Plaks 8). He also sees the relation of the garden to the universe as synecdochal, rather than metaphorical (see for instance Plaks 207); the latter would associate it more with allegory. But there are problems here: “total vision” fits metaphor rather than metonymy or synecdoche. It poses difficulties for an argument that the work moves in a pattern of “ceaseless alternation,” which sounds more like metonymy, where there can be no ending, and no completeness. If “total vision” was accepted as a translation of the name of the garden, it would also impose the sense that this garden was indeed a model of the universe. But it can only be a model by excluding everything else; it represents the point of view of a particular privileged group, whose privileges are actually on the point of disappearing. It cannot be “total vision” except on the assumption that the point of view that builds the garden is a universal one. But following Foucault, it might be suggested that if it *did* give total vision, that would have to be a form of oppression, constructing the subject and the subject’s perception. And the garden cannot be thought of in opposition to the universe, as a wholly separate space, as is evident when things more appropriate to the space outside the garden happen inside it.

It would be dangerous, then, to relate the garden to western allegory, or to see it as a microcosm of the universe. The move would be idealizing. The space of the garden is to be contested, as appears in chapter 17, and in the use that the garden is put to. In chapter 16, details of the garden to be constructed have been given.²² Chapter 17 follows, with the task of adding inscriptions to the garden, on tablets which have been left bare. Here, Jia Zheng tests his son, Bao-yu’s, poetic competence. The art of the garden is not only to be described in words, but is to be supplemented by writing framing what is seen, which makes reading each scene allegorical. But the occasion allows Bao-yu to begin a process of *re-reading*, because each time he gives a title for

the loci of the garden, he replaces the suggestions given by his father, whose opposition to him is complex, and those of the scholars with his father.

Bao-yu's choices of names are distinguished by a freedom from artificiality, but he nonetheless enters into a critique of the model rustic village within the garden which is one of the items praised by his father for its "quietness and natural simplicity." Bao-yu's response is that he does not know what "natural" means, in what leads into a virtually text-book instance of deconstruction, recalling Derrida's commentary on Rousseau (1712–1778), Cao Xueqin's contemporary.²³ To his father's comment that "natural is what is of nature" Bao-yu shows that the "natural" here is a product of artifice (deconstruction demonstrates that the concept of nature is produced by culture; culture cannot yield nature) and further, that there are differences in what is artificially produced as natural. For the rustic village has no fittingness here, in what is supposed to be an aristocratic garden, while the rest of the garden at least *looks* natural. Lastly, Bao-yu implies that culture produces the natural by violence. He refers to a "forcible interference" with the landscape (H. 1.17. 336–37).

The argument has implications for symbolism and allegory. The Romantics, who, like Rousseau, spoke for nature as prior to culture (though this is also too simple a view of their position), opposed allegory in favour of the symbol. Coleridge is a famous example of this. But it is relevant to recall the passage quoted from Benjamin aligning allegory and the skull. However remote from Bao-yu, it draws attention to symbolism as idealizing in suggesting that there can be a pure nature which art conforms to. Coleridge typically spoke of an organic unity between the symbol and what was to be symbolized. Bao-yu's argument would imply that such a unity could only come about from "forcible interference," meaning that nature has been artificially produced in accordance with ideological prejudices. Bao-yu's argument implicitly critiques his own education; and in that, he is on the same side as Rousseau, just as Derrida is. Education, too, is seen as a process of bringing out what is naturally there in the subject: and it is a prime subject for this text, because education which produces a single

subject can never work because it cannot ever relate to sexuality which produces the split subject. Bao-yu's father's anger with his son is obviously very understandable—if he understands any of that. Father and son stand together as representatives, respectively, of civilization and its discontents.

The point about education and sexuality is already apparent in chapter 5, where Bao-yu "visits the Land of Illusions, and the fairy Disenchantment performs the 'Dream of Golden Days.'" In the chapter the boy, at a party in the garden of the Ning mansion, feels tired and is invited to lie down in the room and on the bed of Qin-shi, the wife of Jia Rong. But first he has seen in one of her rooms a picture of "Scholarly diligence," with mottoes flanking it. One reads, "True learning implies a clear insight into human activities" and the other, "Genuine culture involves the skilful manipulation of human relationships." Bao-yu's opposition to these exhortations is evident: "skilful manipulation" resembles "forcible interference." The room of Qin-shi, herself a tragic figure associated with incest and suicide, excluded from life and excluded from the text, which excludes the causes of her death,²⁴ is full of indications of the power of the sexual. It begins with a Ming painting of a beautiful woman asleep under a crab-apple tree, and an antique mirror from T'ang times, associated with the "lascivious empress Wu Ze-tian" (H.1.5.127). The painting may be seen as a mirror for the sleeper in the bed. Real and literal mirrors both indicate that any construction of identity is also a construction of sexuality. (Jia Rui could confirm that.) Immediately he has fallen asleep on this bed, Bao-yu is in a dream, and hears a voice; the woman comes round the hill to meet him. She is the goddess of Disenchantment (Y.1.5.91): the fairy who warns against illusion. Education (Confucian, patriarchal, disciplinary) is placed in opposition to this other form of education whose being is allegorical and whose premise is the primacy of the sexual, beginning with the erotics of her voice.²⁵ She disenchants by enchanting; the two modes of being, enchantment and disenchantment, seem to go together, like the *pharmakon*.²⁶ Though she seems to want to bring Bao-yu back to the teachings of Confucius and Mencius, to an education which would lead to the "betterment of society" (5.146) her

way is not likely to make this happen—and indeed, in the plot it does not, for Bao-yu is destined to go out of the world by becoming a monk, not to try to better it.

Drawing out the implications of the debate between Bao-yu and his father, it may be said that a view which sees the garden as giving a total vision has already created for itself the nature that it wants to believe in; an ideal rococo-seeming one which gives peasants rustic cottages as symbols of an ideal nature, ideal for aristocrats to look at. Allegory implies that there is no “nature” but only and always a history that refuses to be sublimated into a vision of redemption. It does not presuppose a set meaning for things; an object can mean anything else (Benjamin 175); nothing can be said to “mean” anything naturally. What the garden means, then, is not fixed. There is throughout, the implication that the garden cannot keep its status as separate; its tendency is to become like the life outside. Bao-yu, under imperial decree, moves into the garden in chapter 23. Since it is associated with girls, it now seems definable as a feminine space, which makes it analogous to the space indoors into which the fairy Disenchantment leads him in chapter 5 (H.1.5.137). This might indicate, as the politics of the book shows, his turning his back on the masculine, unpoetic, believing in the value of single truth: in the real as different from the non-real. Plaks (201) draws attention to the repeated motif in the text of leaving the garden, and that implies the impossibility of a feminine space being allowed to keep its autonomous being.

If the garden is read allegorically, it might be as the expression of a space where the real and the non-real are put together, which would make it relate not so much to the universe as to the book, and would invite comparison with J.L. Borges’s short story, “The Garden of Forking Paths,” where the garden, the book, the labyrinth and plural forms of knowledge which are outside linear time, all come into view.²⁷ When the garden is entered in chapter 17, a miniature mountain blocks off a view of the garden, which must therefore be approached circuitously by a narrow zig-zag path through rocks in the shoulder of the mountain till they pass through a tunnel and out to an artificial ravine. As if remembering how the fairy in his dream came from the

other side of the hill, Bao-yu names the mountain "Pathway to Mysteries (H.1.17.328); it is a recognition that the garden as yet unnamed opens itself to allegory, to constant renaming. The ravine leads to a stream, to pavilions and to a bridge over a pool with a pavilion on it. On the far side, they reach a house behind walls. Passing out from there takes them to a hill, with, concealed in it, a group of reed-thatched cottages and apricot trees: the model village. Beyond the hill is a cave and stream; on the other side of the stream they find a bridge which gives them a choice of paths to other parts of the garden. They find a building, beyond it an enclosure with plants, and a further building, the main reception-hall of the Residence: the imperial concubine's dwelling.

Bao-yu has a sense of the garden as uncanny when he and the men stop in front of a marble arch carved with dragons and serpents:

The sight of this building and its arch had inspired a strange and unaccountable air of emotion in Bao-yu which on reflection he interpreted as a sign that he must have known a building somewhat like this before—though where or when he could not for the life of him remember. He was still racking his brains to recall what it reminded him of, when Jia Zheng ordered him to produce a name and couplet for the arch, and he was quite unable to give his mind to the task of composition. (H.1.17.343).

It is a feeling of *déjà vu*, similar to that which both Dai-yu and Bao-yu have had on seeing each other (H.1.3.101, 103), a mirroring effect, giving a quality of self-reflexivity to an experience. Place and consciousness both become double. The arch suggests the mirror, like the doorway which is the mirror in his later dream of the double. But it is also a space to be crossed, but in the garden, space has *already* been crossed: to go through the arch is to stay in the garden. Space here confutes the idea of knowledge as temporal, growing. And what Bao-yu sees he has already seen in the dream of chapter 5. The arch, inscribed "The Land of Illusion," included the couplet:

Truth becomes fiction when the fiction's true
 Real becomes not-real when the unreal's real (H.1.5.130)

or, to compare this with Yang:

When false is taken for true, true becomes false;
 If non-being turns into being, being becomes non-being
 (Y.1.5.91).

When Bao-yu saw that in his dream, it was *already* for a second time, for in the form of a stone he has been put through the arch by the monk who was described as putting the stone in his pocket in chapter 1 (H.1.1.48) and who appears in Zhen Shi-yin's dream (H.1.1.52–54)—a dream which supplies an answer to the question what happened to the monk, the Taoist and the stone after the stone was picked up. The monk tells the Taoist in the dream that the stone has already met the fairy Disenchantment, and also Dai-yu. In Bao-yu's dream, when he goes through the gateway and into the palace, an "evil spirit" enters his heart (Yang 1.5.92). Hawkes translates this as "the demon Lust" (H.1.5.131), perhaps because the fairy continues to tell Bao-yu that he is "lustful" (H.1.5.145—the word is used in both translations). At any rate it seems that Bao-yu has become a split subject, and it seems as if the entrance is a confrontation with sexuality and sexual difference.

The garden takes Bao-yu back to this awareness. If it is allegorical, allegory and sexuality interconnect, perhaps because sexuality can only be thought allegorically. Gender so modulates in this novel that there can be no sense of a *single* "total vision;" so that any view of the sexual, such as is allegorically conveyed in the garden, would always be fragmented. It may also be seen that the link with chapter 5 conveys the point that the garden is on the site of the dream of chapter 5 which took place in the garden belonging to the Ning mansion, which has now been made over into the Dagan yuan (H.1.5.125, 16.318).²⁸ The garden embodies a sublimation of the sexual violence associated with Qin-shi and her incest with her father-in-law

and who dies in chapter 12. Since the garden is now the pleasant place asking for a re-inscription, it shows an attempt to get away from a history which cannot be repressed but which returns as a symptom, and Bao-yu's discussion of the model village gains more point as it is read as a commentary on a place whose being is an attempt to conceal the past.

The sense of the plural recurs later on in the garden when the men and Bao-yu are on their way back. They reach another building. It is what Yuan-chun will name the "House of Green Delights" (1.18.364—"Yihong yuan"—the house of the pleasures of youth, where "hong" means "red.")²⁹ It will be the house where Bao-yu resides and it is distinguished in the text by being said to have no rooms, but ingenious partitions. There is no possibility of compartmentalization—whether of space, or activities, or ideas. Yet even in a room without rooms, Jia Zheng gets lost when trying to lead his companions out of this structure whose ingenious construction Hawkes evokes in his translation of the state of the room by a use of the term *trompe l'oeil* (1.17.346). (I shall return to this translation: there is no equivalent in the Yang translation.) Certainly, when the man makes two turns he finds that he is lost as though in a labyrinth, and even worse, considering the mirror's associations with the sexual:

To the left of him was what appeared to be a door. To the right was a wall with a window in it. But on raising its portière he discovered the door to be a bookcase; and when, looking back, he observed—what he had not noticed before—that the light coming in through the silk gauze of the window illuminated a passageway leading to an open doorway, and began walking to it, a party of gentlemen similar to his own came advancing to meet him, and he realized that he was walking towards a large mirror. They were able to circumvent the mirror, but only to find an even more bewildering choice of doorways on the other side. (H.1.17.346-7).

The odd effect may be associated with the point that the buildings which are in the garden are all, therefore, part of an outside: the Chinese garden, if anything general may be said of it, challenges the inside/outside dichotomy Derrida sees as basic to western metaphysics. To draw a line between the inside and the outside in an artwork is a possibility frustrated by the *parergon*, which is neither on the inside or the outside. A house, in western thought, is the home, and is therefore a “proper” sphere, giving a sense of the possibility of pure presence, of thought being at home with itself. What is outside the home is superfluous, like ornamentation. Perhaps not accidentally, Bao-yu is fascinated with cosmetics (H.1.2.76), a form of ornamentation, and that may imply his, and the text’s, separation from this viewpoint. For Mark Wigley, who has drawn on Derrida to deconstruct architectural discourse:

the house is always first understood as the most primitive drawing of a line that produces an inside opposed to an outside, a line that acts as a mechanism of domestication. It is as the paradigm of interiority that the house is indispensable to philosophy, establishing the distinction between the interiority of presence and the exteriority of representation on which the discourse depends.³⁰

Distinguishing presence and representation means that the inside is the essence, the home of meaning. Outside is ornamentation, ways of expressing the idea, all deficient.

But the garden reverses a sense of knowing what is outside and what inside. The inside is outside; like a glove which has been pulled off, we look at reversible space. Since the garden, as supplement to the house, enacts this reversal, it implies a different form of knowledge, where nothing is privileged. Significantly, it is the patriarch, agent of single knowing and sceptical about poetry (as double utterance) who gets lost in the house and then lost in the garden, so much that Jia Zhen, head of the other branch of the family (Ning-guo) must lead the way out. Jia Zheng gets lost in two spaces. The house which is in the garden

is the space where the distinction between presence and representation breaks down; all is representation, as Hawkes's word *trompe l'oeil* indicates.³¹ Perhaps the translation takes out the uncanny sense of being that the men have stumbled across, and makes the experience explicable, but it indicates that representation, not presence, is within the house.

IV. Allegory and Sexual Difference

Bao-yu moves into the garden and composes four poems on each of the four seasons, as though the garden was the suspension of linear time and all seasons could be caught in it at one moment. That was a complacent moment, and soon after, "he was discontented":

Nothing he did brought any relief. Whether he stayed indoors or went out into the garden, he remained bored and miserable. The garden's female population were mostly in that age of innocence when freedom from inhibition is the fruit of ignorance. Waking and sleeping they surrounded him, and their mindless giggling was constantly in his ears. How could *they* understand the restless feelings that now consumed him? In his present mood of discontent he was bored with the garden and its inmates; yet his attempts to find distraction outside it ended in the same emptiness and ennui. (H.1.23.462)

It compares with the feeling of the uncanny he had when he came to the arch, in a passage already quoted, and could not give it a superscription. Inability to name, which requires being outside a situation, looking in, and boredom are associated.

The passage looks inward, and is perhaps like the autobiographical and confessional fragment, which was cited by the commentator from the author. That fragment associates the author with Bao-yu. He holds similar views to the author about the status of women versus men. Bao-yu is reported as commenting that girls are made of

water and boys are made of mud. When I am with girls I feel fresh and clean, but when I am with boys I feel stupid and nasty (H.1.2.76).

The materials he chooses for comparison are relevant psychoanalytically, for in terms derived from Julia Kristeva, Bao-yu at this moment seems to have no revulsion from the body inscribed as feminine, which means that he has no sense of the "abject." Julia Kristeva uses "abjection" to describe the melancholia and disgust of the male subject, particularly in western modernist literature, who reacts away from the body as that which threatens to engulf single identity. The desire to be thought of as the single subject is felt to be under threat from a sense of the materiality, which is also the liquidity of the body, felt as oppressively feminine. Bao-yu identifies masculinity with materiality, and femininity with water. Read positively, it seems that Bao-yu feels no pressure towards claiming a single identity, perhaps because like the text and its plural titles, he possesses something plural in him. He is male and attracted to women, not necessarily sexually. In Kristeva, body fluids may be the signs of what the masculine self must thrust aside to live out its dream of single identity. The body's emissions are signs of the feminine. Lack of disgust is apparent in the way his semen is described at the beginning of chapter 6; in his dream he has experienced orgasm, but the only reaction to this is another orgasm, this time with the maid Aroma (H.1.6.149-50). The implications of ejaculation are far different for Jia Rui (chapter 12). What disgusts Bao-yu is different: it is success and identity achieved through the Confucian examinations.

Yet to have identified the feminine with the purity of water is not so clear. His reaction of boredom in the garden in relation to the girls indicates something else in the comparison. As it affects women and men, his statement is repressed in relation to both. He is dissatisfied with life in the garden but he cannot see why girls should leave the garden to marry (H.3.58.123). He is reported by Swallow to have said that a girl before she marries is like a priceless pearl, but once she marries the pearl loses its lustre and develops all sorts of disagreeable flaws, and by the time she's married, she's no longer like a pearl at all, more like a boiled fish's eye (H.59.138-9).

The statement may comment realistically on what women may become after marriage on account of their husbands—indeed, Bao-yu says that “it must be something in the male that infects them” (H.3.77.534). The distaste for what is inside men is clear, but Bao-yu’s idea has misogynistic potential and the “disagreeable flaws” may relate to women’s sexuality. Fascination with purity may be compared with his comments to Caltrop about dirty water on clothes (H.3.62.213) which certainly appear excessive. Further, the comparison with water neglects the association the text makes of women with blood (H. 3.55.45, 3.72.420, 74.479, 5.110.206). The most powerful of these associations is with Dai-yu who coughs up blood (H.4.82.67) which as a “thick wriggling strand” seems to have an autonomous life (H.4.82.68).³² Her death follows with the body breaking out into a cold sweat (H.4.98.377). Perhaps the positive sense in what Bao-yu says when he idealises women is marked by something else: a certain repression towards female sexuality. This has two other concomitants. Chapter 13 shows Bao-yu’s reaction to Qin-shi’s suicide, on account of the incest she has committed with Cousin Zhen; which means that it relates to a deliberate and transgressive assertion of feminine sexuality. But in his dream in chapter 5, Bao-yu has also made love with Qin-shi, under her name of Ke-qing (H.1.5.146–7), which associates him also with incest, for he is the uncle of Qin-shi. The news of her death:

came upon him in the midst of his dreams, causing him to start up in bed with a jerk. A sudden stabbing pain shot through his heart. He retched involuntarily and spat out a mouthful of blood (H.1.13.258).

The implications in the text are no less pronounced in the Yang translation, even if the first sentence is less erotic: “Roused from sleep by the announcement of Keqing’s death, he sprang suddenly from his bed. At once he felt a stab of pain in his heart and with a cry spat out a mouthful of blood.” (Y.1.236). There are still orgasmic signs here; relating him to the incest, associating him with transgression, and suggesting that Qin-shi is “in” him and must be expelled in the form of

blood. He is not outside what she represents; inside/outside distinctions cannot hold. And spitting blood aligns him with what happens to Dai-yu in chapter 82. Women can only be thought of as water by a process of repression, which, as it were, tries to keep separate water and mud. But the binary distinction will not work. What there is of women in him acts within him and is a source of nausea, to be expelled in an analogous way to the process by which so many women in this text die violently. The text may be an elegy to dead women, but it nonetheless expunges so many. As Louise P. Edwards notes, “of all the suicides in the novel, only two are carried out by men, while drownings, hangings, head-dashing and throat-slitting abound among the females.”³³ Examples include Qin-shi, who dies in chapter 12, as does her maid, Gem (H.1.13.261) whose death is perhaps a way in which she guarantees her silence about her mistress’s incest. In chapter 32, Golden, the maid of Bao-yu’s mother Lady Wang drowns herself in the well. She has been accused, unjustly, in chapter 30, of trying to seduce Bao-yu; in fact the blame goes the other way, but the text drives her out of its confines. In chapter 77 Skybright, Bao-yu’s maid is driven out on account of her beauty—which is felt to be dangerous—and dies, appearing as a ghost as she passes, in an indication of her bitterness at being, virtually, condemned to death.³⁴ Chess commits suicide in chapter 92, as does her cousin Pan You-an. Dai-yu follows. There is You San-jie who kills herself with a sword in chapter 66, because she feels her reputation with her husband-to-be has been compromised and her sister You Er-jie who in a chapter full of the loss of blood from pregnancy, swallows gold and dies (chapter 69). Xia Jin-gui is killed by poison in chapter 103. In chapter 111, thinking about Qin ke-qing, whose ghost appears to her and says how she hanged herself, Faithful, principal maid of the now dead Grandmother Jia, also hangs herself. In chapter 112, Xi-chun, who thinks the only way to escape a destiny inevitable to women is to become a nun, meditates on “Ying-chun driven to her death” (H.5.112.234). The same chapter gives Adaminta’s fate: the victim of thieves who have seen her attractiveness (H. 5.111.219–20), abducted from the convent and taken off to what may be assumed to be prostitution. The text thus excludes women, or it

brings them into a degraded condition; it may perhaps be described as having its own abjection within it which inclines it towards a masculine assertion which associates with denial and exclusion of the feminine. It relates in that way to these moments of abjection, where Bao-yu has to expel something of femininity from him.

As Adaminta the nun feels that a cup is contaminated after it has been drunk from (H.2.41.313), which makes her consequent degradation almost matter of perverse desire, as if she is attracted towards pollution, so Bao-yu's attitude has as a corollary to his misrepresentation of women, a repression evident in his playing down of male/male relationships, as making him feel unclean, and discarding the jade as an aspect of himself, as something that was *inside* him (H.1.2.75, 1.3.104). When he meets Qin Zhong, brother of Qin-shi, there is an eroticism where he thinks Qin Zhong perfect and himself as a "pig wallowing in the mud" (H.1.7.178). Yet it seems impossible that he thinks of Qin Zhong as made of mud: the text knows more than he does. His feeling towards Qin Zhong is reciprocated; so that quasi-incest and quasi-homosexuality become part of Bao-yu's unconscious and the two boys together in school are said to be "beautiful as flowers" (H.1.9.206) and Qin Zhong "timid and bashful as a girl." In chapter 15 Qin Zhong seduces Sapiientia in a moment which Bao-yu intrudes on; it leads to some "settling of accounts" between the two males, which the text describes archly; perhaps it is a homosexual moment (H.1.15.300). Yet in the next chapter Qin Zhong is dead, his death being painful because of his unwilling leave-taking; it expresses the vulnerability of the ambiguity he represents, perhaps its non-survival value.

Violence, whose voyeurism implicates the reader, and which attempts to expel femininity from the text, appears in chapter 33 where Bao-yu is flogged by his father. A chamberlain from the court tells Jia Zheng that an actor, a female impersonator, Bijou, has gone missing. He has been associated with Bao-yu. The homosexual suggestions are complicated since Bijou already "belongs" to the Prince of Zhong-shun. The patriarch, who already has one son dead, tries to beat his son to death, being prevented only from doing so by the intervention of Lady Wang and his mother the matriarch. Jia Zheng, who has been willing to

lose his chance of having a posterity by killing his son, breaks into hysterical weeping. The episode illustrates radical gender-confusions, and something of it recurs in chapter 47, when another young actor, Liu Xiang-lian, is propositioned by Xue Pan who is beaten up for his pains (H.2.47.437-47). Xue Pan deserves little sympathy in terms of the text's presentation of him, and the scene is in carnivalesque mode, but the assertion of masculinity is associated with violence which contains the abject rejection of the other.

The beating of Bao-yu anticipates the collapse of the family, its loss of a future in what is called "the day of confiscation" (H.3.74.471), an event which arrives in chapter 105, just before the garden is left desolate (chapter 108). The fate of the family and its class, and the fate of Bao-yu both install failure which may find its classic symptom in failure in gender-terms. That failure has as a concomitant Bao-yu's own state of mind. His craziness begins in chapter 96, where he and Dai-yu sit staring into each other's faces and smiling like two half-wits (H.4.96.338). Aroma feels that both their minds are disturbed. It is a different kind of folly from that which the "author" might be possessed by; it is a reduction of significance, not a pluralizing of it, as with the author's "pages full of fantastic talk." At the end of the chapter, when Dai-yu gets back to her house, a stream of blood comes gushing from her mouth (96.339). The involuntary vomiting of blood pairs with a state of mind in which everything of significance has been emptied out, where "everything of significance" means everything to do with women.

The text shows something heterogeneous which disturbs belief in the masculinist sense of education and the betterment of society, and whose existence and repression creates disorder that will pull down both the garden and the house. Sexuality, which implicates men and women differently, has problems with femininity within the dominant ideology the text works with and contests; but the discontents implied in the way that ideology articulates sexuality cannot be resolved by Bao-yu's distinction, which polarizes masculinity and femininity. They do not form binary opposites; both are fragmentary qualities which do not make a whole. In chapter 31, Xiang-yun, one of the

“twelve beauties,” tells her maid, Kingfisher, about Yin and Yang which make up everything in different combinations (H. 2.31.122–24). But this is no textual commitment to an ideal combination of masculinity and femininity constituted in this way. The text that gives this account within a novel is dialogic; it is what “they” say about yin and yang, and no conclusions can be drawn from it which would make the discussion authentic. Attempts to give a clear single attempt of it are thwarted by incomprehension; and not necessarily the maid’s. And if yin and yang are constitutive of everything, then there is a limit to the value of this explanation: for what explains everything explains nothing. The third point follows: to say anything about yin and yang would require being outside both. As to be outside is no-one’s privilege, the inside requires speaking “other,” allegorically.

That may be the text’s mode to articulate sexuality, which requires thinking of the “other” in a mode not rejecting otherness, including the self’s otherness. The father wishes to expel it; Bao-yu with girls cultivates the otherness in his personality as proper to him but at the cost of making masculinity other. Towards the end, a process of disambiguation pairs with the day of confiscation. The double appears in reality in chapter 115 (H.5.115.273), in the meeting with Zhen Bao-you, but he is a careerist with whom Bao-yu feels he can have nothing to do. The jade is restored, but in a dream, Bao-yu visits “the land of death” (H.5.116.294) in a scene replaying chapter 5, but now death means the loss of doubleness and ambiguity, producing clarity which is the end of feeling. “He awakens from the dream a changed and cold person, determined to sever all human ties [. . .] in reacquiring his spiritual essence, Bao-yu has turned into a stone.”³⁵ A continuing exclusion from the text as allegory gives the sense of a drive towards asserting single space: this is implicitly tragic. Perhaps it maps onto political and social realities that surrounded the text’s production. It certainly implies the text’s modernity that makes its construction of a debate about gender so richly ambiguous and double, showing that if it finds its own positions so difficult, that is because it is not outside what fascinates it.

NOTES

¹ Derrida (1976) 158. The French reads: “il n’y a pas de hors-texte”—there is no outside-text. I use the concept more restrictedly here than Derrida, for whom it is the impossibility of being outside textual representation. This essay uses *Of Grammatology* for the questioning of the inside/outside dichotomy; Rousseau on nature and culture and Rousseau on sexual fantasy in its relation to sexual love. I also use Derrida for the *pharmakon* and the *parergon*.

² The *Hung lou Meng* (A Dream of Red Mansions), was published posthumously in 1792 near the end of the Qianlong reign (1736–1796), nearly thirty years after Cao Xueqin’s death in 1763. Before publication, with the title *Shitouji* (The Story of the Stone), its first eighty chapters had circulated in different manuscript forms with commentaries already included, one by “Red Inkstone” (Zhiyanzhai). The complete version, compiled and published by Gao E, contained 120 chapters. Cao Xueqin had either written these other forty chapters, or their appearance is a further exfoliation of the power of commentary, the reading of the text becoming its writing. Quotations from the novel by Cao Xueqin (chapters 1–80) and Gao E (chapters 81–120) are taken from Hawkes (vols 1–3) and Minford (vols. 4–5); I have referred to this edition as H by book, chapter and page number. Translations from Yang (1994) are referred to as Y plus book, chapter and page number. See also Hawkes (1989). Since I do not read Chinese, I have sought also for other translations: here, Yu 14; see also his discussion of the passage.

³ See Yu for the newness, “the hero and the heroine are permitted prolonged and intimate association in an hospitable setting” (130), as opposed to the normal arrangements made for young people with regard to marriage; and Dai-yu’s love of Bao-yu is seen as an affirmation of him as an individual (238). See also Wong 218, on fiction being fashioned out of autobiography—“the vision of the author has been turned inward and a personal past has been objectified for discovery of its meaning” and Wong 225 for discussion of the non-

episodic nature of the text.

⁴ See Hawkes' Introduction, H.1.20–1 for the passage which does not appear in his translation at the start of chapter 1. Critics have emphasized that the narrative has been revised extensively, perhaps from a text with the title *A Mirror for the Romantic* (Fengyue baojian): see Huang, who uses this to account for so-called anachronisms of age in the text.

⁵ On the commentary, see Rolston 329–50.

⁶ See Wu Hung 306–65.

⁷ Cp. Yu 138: “the lesson that a dream purports to teach concerning the dreamlike impermanence of life and fortune cannot be quickly learned, for when the young initiate wakes from that immediate dream [chapter 5], the waking reality he encounters is for many years itself a dream, the “golden days” (literally in Chinese the dream of the red towered buildings) celebrated by the songs he heard in his sleep.”

⁸ See Derrida (1987) 37–82.

⁹ Translation of Michael Yang 71.

¹⁰ Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* II.7.63 (the death's head); II.9.53 (the fool's head).

¹¹ See Grabes for the Renaissance mirror.

¹² See Lacan (1977) 1–7.

¹³ Cp. Zhuang zi's dream of the butterfly (24). Zhuang zi is referred to in chapter 21 (H.1.21.421); cp. Yu 138–9.

¹⁴ Jacques Derrida (1981) 61–171.

¹⁵ Benjamin 166

¹⁶ See discussion of Xi-feng's masculinity in Edwards 71–2.

¹⁷ Derrida (1976) 151–57.

¹⁸ Freud 358.

¹⁹ For translation of his account of the garden, see Ji Cheng 123–24; see also Keswick, 84–5. For a critique of the essentialism implied in the notion of a “chinese garden” see Clunas.

²⁰ Plaks (1976) 161, 163, 166.

²¹ Plaks (1977) 168, 169.

²² For this, see Johnson 40–3.

²³ Derrida (1976) 171–92.

²⁴ She has committed incest with Jia Zhen, for whom see H.1.2.74. The drunken servant, Big Jiao refers to it: H. 1.7.183. See Hawkes 42, and Levy 44–46. See also Haun Saussy.

²⁵ With all the differences, this woman initiating Bao-yu compares with Matelda whom Dante meets in the Earthly Paradise: “una donna soletta che si gia/e cantando e scegliendo fior da fiore/ond’ era pinta tutta la sua via”—a lady all alone, who went singing and collecting flowers from flowers with which all her path was painted” (Purgatorio 28. 39–42). Here again, the subject’s education can only be through a figure radiating sexuality.

²⁶ Li, quotes a Qing commentator, “although the realm is called “Illusory,” to enter into illusion is already tantamount to experiencing reality; and if the ford is called “Delusion,” how can holding on to delusion lead to enlightenment? The fairy goddess is indeed muddle-headed. Passing on stories of passion, the Master of Emptiness [. . .] [the Taoist monk] [. . .] is actually the Master of Passion [. . .] teaching the art of love. Disenchantment might as well be called Enchantment” (197).

²⁷ Borges 119–28.

²⁸ See Scott 91. She also discusses the mirror as a “traditional symbol of the mind” (92)—if so, the mind is textually formed.

²⁹ Translation of Dore J. Levy 111.

³⁰ Wigley 104.

³¹ Lacan (1977a) 111–12 discusses *trompe l’oeil* effects in painting as a means whereby the subject is fixed and given the sense of a privileged presence.

³² Hsia 278, translates “a coil of purplish blood throbbing with a life of its own.”

³³ Edwards 57.

³⁴ I refer to my discussion of the ghost, Tambling 52.

³⁵ Hsia 288, 290.

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