Anthony C. Yu. *Rereading The Stone: Desire and the Making of Fiction in Dream of the Red Chamber*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997. xv, 321 pp. Hardcover, ISBN 0–691–01561–9.

One could write an interesting study of Chinese intellectual life during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries purely in terms of the indigenous critiques of the great late-eighteenth-century novel *Hongloumeng* (*The Dream of the Red Chamber*, also translated as *The Story of the Stone*, from one of its earliest Chinese titles, *Shitouji*; hereafter simply *The Stone* or *Stone*). Over the years, almost every part of the Chinese-speaking literary, philosophical, religious, and political universe (not to mention linguistic, economic, culinary, sartorial, medical, botanical, horticultural, architectural, historical, and art-historical) has become somehow or other engaged with the novel and its interpretation (even Madame Mao considered herself "Half-a-Stonologist"). How should the book be read? Should it be read at all? If so, what should be read into it, or out of it? Is it really a novel at all?[1] Is it a rambling roman-à-clef dealing with dark Imperial or Manchu secrets (the Suoyin School)? A penetrating exposure of the vanity of human passion and of mundane reality, à la Zen? A more general *bildungsroman*, charting the progress to adulthood and individuality of a sensitive young Chinese (or, more accurately, semi-Manchu) adolescent and his girl cousins? An encyclopedic reading of the permutations of the perennial Chinese occult philosophy? An even more generalized treasure-house of Han-Chinese culture and folkways? A perfect record of the refined upper-class Pekinese vernacular of its time? A minutely detailed individual autobiographical recollection and reconstruction of times past? A more generalized and detached portrait of a feudal family in decline? A book about political struggle?[2] A mirror of decaying feudalism in the transitional period to capitalism?[3]

A second study, of equal fascination, and equally based on nothing more than readings of this one book, could be written of its reception in the Western world. Receptions of *The Stone* (which significantly appeared in print in Chinese the very year Lord Macartney set sail for China, and therefore represents the last great self-sufficiency of Chinese literary culture before the doors were forced open) are indeed a litmus test. Certain reactions are wonderfully predictable. Like that of the first published Western critic, the Pomeranian buccaneer missionary Karl Gutzlaff, writing in the 1840s (with his usual verve and mischief), famously

(one is almost tempted to say understandably) coming to the conclusion that Baoyu was a female:

> The author, after making many protestations of his inability to do justice to the subject, which indeed is the only truth in the book, commences his story, like the History of New York, with the creation of the world. . . . As an episode, we find at last a dream in the red chamber. The individual is the lady Pauyu. She lies down to sleep, is met by a nymph, and instantly carried into the fairy land. Everything that can create delight is there presented to her wondering eye. Of jaspers, rubies, and pearls there is no end. There are sparkling fountains of clear nectar, trees that bear ambrosia, and nymphs of perfect beauty and exquisite form to wait upon the stranger. . . . In the intrigues the acting characters behave very grossly, and this part of the work fully shows the coarseness of the author's mind. The monotony of the story is much relieved by scraps of poetry, put in very opportunely. . . . At this point, the story grows more and more uninteresting, and contains scarcely anything but the tittle tattle of the female apartments. These ladies, when left to their own society become very tiresome to their friends as well as to themselves. . . . The leading character amongst the inmates of Ka's family, was a very petulant woman, who committed many freaks, which involved herself as well as the others in considerable difficulties. It was the same Pauyu who had the dream in the Red Chamber. . . . Having brought this tedious story to a conclusion, in expressing our opinion about the literary merits of the performance, we may say that the style is without any art, being literally the spoken language of the higher classes in the northern provinces. . . .[4]

Half a century later, in an even heavier vein, the Rev. E. J. Eitel published a review of the first volume of Bencraft Joly's translation, recently published in Macao:

> Nor does the Red-Chamber Dream possess the general moral tendency of most other Chinese novels. . . . The author's mind is utterly devoid of any trace of Confucian ethics, and conscience is to him a factor absolutely of no account. . . . His heroes have no intellect, no manliness, no conscience. His heroines are utterly devoid of delicacy, piety, virtue. He draws human nature neither as it ought to be nor, we hope in charity, as it really is in China. He works the complicated story of his book without a single lofty ideal and without any moral purpose whatever. How comes it then, one may ask, that a book so utterly non-Confucian, so nihilistic as regards both Chinese religion and morals, is one of the most widely read novels of China? The explanation is very simple. Chinese read the Red-Chamber Dream because of its wickedness. This Chinese novel owes its popularity chiefly to the spice of impropriety which garnishes these passion-tickling descriptions of the harem-life of a bloated aristocracy, to the literary cleverness with which it panders to man's morbid craving after what he knows to be naughty. In one word, the Red-Chamber Dream is Zolaism in its ugliest developments. Virtue and vice are to this Chinese novelist, Tsao Sueh-kin, merely what the colours on his palette are to the artisan painter—so much effective dirt. Juvenal, Shakespeare, Fielding, with all their occasional nastiness, have ethical sympathies: this Chinese novelist has none. What the pornographic

sculptures and mural decorations of Pompeii are, compared with the reverence-inspiring nudities of classic Greece, such are the scenes of Chinese Zenana life which the Red-Chamber Dream depicts, as compared with the moral realism of the ordinary Chinese novel.[5]

In the meantime, the more free-thinking British consular official (and freemason), Herbert Giles, arrived at a few slightly more generous conclusions of his own about the novel. Perhaps as a result of having decided not to translate the book himself (Joly was his consular colleague in Macau and planned to do a complete version, though he never lived to finish it), Giles himself wrote a twenty-five-page synopsis that even today can still serve as a useful guide to the novel. Giles had some rather sensible (and sensitive) things to say by way of general comment:

No less than 400 personages of more or less importance are introduced first and last into the story, the plot of which is worked out with a completeness worthy of Fielding, while the delineation of character—of so many characters—recalls the best efforts of the great novelists of the West. As a panorama of Chinese social life, in which almost every imaginable feature is submitted in turn to the reader, the Dream of the Red Chamber is of the utmost value to the foreign student, and should be carefully studied by all who, for their sins, are condemned to penal servitude upon the written language of China. . . . Reduced to its simplest terms, it is an original and effective love story, written for the most part in an easy, almost colloquial style, full of humorous and pathetic episodes of everyday life, and interspersed with short poems of high literary finish. The opening chapters, which are intended to form a link between the world of spirits and the world of mortals, belong to the supernatural; after that the story runs smoothly along upon earthly lines, always, however, overshadowed by the near presence of spiritual influences. . . .

Giles also had an inimitable way of retelling key episodes, such as this one from chapter 98:

But the bridegroom himself had already entered the valley of the dark shadow. Baoyu was very ill. He raved and raved about Daiyu, until at length Baochai, who had heard the news, took upon herself the painful task of telling him she was already dead. "Dead?" cried Baoyu, "dead?" and with a loud groan he fell back upon the bed, insensible. A darkness came before his eyes, and he seemed to be transported into a region which was unfamiliar to him. Looking about, he saw what seemed to be a human being advancing towards him, and immediately called out to the stranger to be kind enough to tell him where he was. "You are on the road to hell," replied the man; "but your span of life is not yet complete, and you have no business here." Baoyu explained that he had come in search of Daiyu who had lately died; to which the man replied that Daiyu's soul had already gone back to its home in the Pure Serene. "And if you would see her again," added the man, "return to your duties upon earth. Fulfil your destiny there, chasten your understanding, nourish the divinity that is within you—and you may yet hope to meet her once more."[6]

Giles' essay was to be the first in a series of essays in interpretation that over the subsequent century have endeavored to create a critical framework within which Western readers might actually enjoy reading this extraordinary novel. Giles' civilized tone was ahead of his time. An echo of this more sympathetic approach was to be heard fifty years later in the 1930s, when a number of Chinese graduate students, writing doctoral studies of Chinese fiction in France, produced the first crop of *Stone* commentaries from the Chinese diaspora. A good example is to be found in Wou I-t'ai's *Le Roman Chinois*:

> The plot is perfect, the style is finished. It is written in the language of the better classes of Peking at the time of its appearance. Also in this novel, according to the same critics, love is expressed in the most perfect way. Who knows how many readers, men as well as women, have been moved to tears by the death of Qingwen and Daiyu. Every feeling, every gesture in the book is natural.[7]

But this was no more than a recycling of reflections that were circulating among the Chinese intelligentsia. It did not amount to an active effort to insert the work into the currents of world literature, through critical and conceptual interpretation.

The Rev. Eitel's heavy-handed nineteenth-century judgments were certainly not to be the last of their kind, and they were to be echoed fifty years later by those of the Catholic literary inquisitor, Father Jos. Schyns, writing in the 1940s: "Dream of the Red Chamber . . . an interesting social, psychological and emotional study. It is very objectionable because of the sentimental atmosphere, and must not be read by younger people."[8]

The publication in 1961 of Wu Shichang's *On the Red Chamber Dream* by Oxford University Press (using the old Chinese font first purchased by James Legge) marked a turning point. For the first time, a serious Chinese scholarly study of the novel (albeit from a textual, not a literary, point of view), embodying important new findings and insights, appeared in English before it appeared in Chinese. This was one of the products of the important new wave of Chinese intellectuals who traveled overseas after the second World War and the "Liberation" (Wu was teaching at Oxford at the time). Another member of that postwar diaspora was C. T. Hsia. Seven years after Wu, in the fifty-page chapter of Hsia's *The Classic Chinese Novel* devoted to *The Stone*, the English-speaking world was given one of its first truly modern, full-length essays in the interpretation of this great novel, one of the first discussions to be fully informed by Western critical ideas. This was perhaps the first study written in English that it was possible to give (with any hope of success) to a curious friend wanting to know what "the fuss" (the "hyperlatives" thrown around about the novel by Chinese aficionados) was all about. Hsia no longer accentuates the quaintness of the novel, nor does he condemn its morality. He talks in the language that Western readers of fiction had

come to expect. He writes in much the same way a critic like John Bayley writes about Dostoevsky (in fact, *The Idiot* is one of the books Hsia refers to).

> Ostensibly, therefore, he [Cao Xueqin] has written a Taoist or Zen Buddhist comedy, showing man's hopeless involvement in desire and pain and the liberation of at least a few select individuals besides the hero. . . . In devoting his creative career to tracing the history of Baoyu and the Jia clan, Cao Xueqin is therefore the tragic artist caught between nostalgia for, and tormented determination to seek liberation from, the world of red dust.[9]

Hsia's work prepared the way for further studies within the framework of Western literary and comparative studies, such as the books by Lucien Miller (1975) and Andrew Plaks (1976), and the interpretations of the commentarial tradition by John Wang (1978) and David Rolston (1990).

In our own more recent, postmodern times, we have been regaled with studies every bit as bizarre, every bit as much a product of their own strange time and that time's fads and fetishes, as was Gutzlaff's gender-bending analysis a hundred and fifty years earlier.[10] Take this for example:

> In the last instance the abjection of the feminine-Other by the masculine-Self is confirmed by the novel's unspoken sexual ideology. Baoyu's ultimate decision to become a wandering monk, undergoing a metaphoric castration, is the embracing of a Daoist masculine role which confirms the phallogocentric vision of the feminine, the sexualized Other, as an obstacle to male spiritual freedom. . . . The task for the critic then remains to reinscribe these now dismantled metaphysical and rhetorical structures in a manner such that avoids privileging one side of the binary over the other/Other.[11]

Alongside this zigzagging path in critical understanding and misunderstanding, empathy and antipathy,[12] translations have continued to appear. Complete English translations of the novel—Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang, 3 volumes (1978–1980); Hawkes and Minford, 5 volumes (1973–1986)—have now replaced the earlier partial versions of C. C. Wang (1929 and 1958) and Franz Kuhn's German version, *Der Traum der roten Kammer* (1932; English translation by the McHugh sisters, 1958), abridgments on the basis of which Western readers could indeed have been forgiven for wondering what "all the fuss" was about. In a very important sense, these new fuller translations were an integral part of the larger process of understanding and interpretation. David Hawkes, himself a student of Wu Shichang's, had first read the novel with an elderly retired government clerk from Hebei, when he was in Peking in 1948, and had gone on, many years before embarking on his translation, to develop his own powerful humanistic vision of the novel—as, for example, in this essay from 1963, originally delivered in French, which in many ways foreshadows C. T. Hsia:

> It is a tale about a gifted and sensitive young man who, through contemplation of the twelve registers of the passions, represented by the twelve categories of fe-

male characters in the Registers of Beauty, and through the experience of disillusionment, attains a state of mystic contemplation and of liberating peace. The Passionate Monk, whose spiritual odyssey is sketched out in the first chapter, is Baoyu himself.[13]

Professor Anthony Yu's new study, *Rereading the Stone*—sophisticated, witty, passionate, and at times dauntingly verbal—marks a new high point in *Stone* Studies.[14] It is a summit, a summation of two hundred years and more of both traditions, a densely patterned weaving of the finest strands of Chinese and Western thinking. Not only has Yu brought to bear (as a true son of Chicago) his massive scholarship in the Western philosophical, rhetorical, and critical literature (from Aristotle to Foucault, Ricoeur, and beyond), he also demonstrates an awe-inspiring familiarity with Chinese writings, from the Classics of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism to the great novels of the Ming and Qing dynasties and their commentators, and with the intricacies of the textual life of *The Stone* itself.[15] From one page to the next, we never know whether we are going to encounter Mencius or St. Augustine, Tang Xianzu or Dante, Li Zhi or Paul Ricoeur, Wang Guowei or E. R. Dodds, Confucius or Sophocles, Zhu Xi or Derrida, Red Inkstone or Roland Barthes. It makes for heady reading. The book certainly keeps its readers on their toes. At times one seems to be eavesdropping on some multi-incarnational *xuanxue* exchange, a *qingtan* session between one of the zanier medieval Chinese metaphysicians and his modern French or transatlantic reincarnation.

Occasionally Yu's verbal and intellectual pyrotechnics overwhelm, calling to mind the novel's own words of caution (quoted more than once by Yu himself, as if aware of his own temptation):

> "You in your insistence on ferreting out facts are like the man who dropped his sword in the water and thought to find it again by making a mark on the side of his boat; you are like a man playing a zither with the tuning-pegs glued fast."
>
> Vanitas lifted his head and guffawed at this, dropped the manuscript to the ground and went breezily on his way. As he went he said to himself:
>
> "So it was really all utter nonsense! Author, copyist and reader were alike in the dark! Just so much ink splashed for fun, a game, a diversion!" (*Stone,* vol. 5, p. 375)

But Yu's learning is never for show. And, despite the strong postmodern coloring of his book, and its virtuoso ambidextrous erudition, Yu never loses sight of his serious purpose. He has retained the gift of speaking directly to the reader. This is something to which anyone who has had the pleasure of hearing him speak on this subject over the past ten years or so can testify. And he refrains from conducting his critique with reference to an inaccessible Chinese original (thereby sheltering himself from the scrutiny of the Western critical mafia), instead using a widely available modern English translation (occasionally providing versions of his own), and inviting literate Western readers to go and read the book for

themselves, and to agree or disagree with his findings. (For the translators of the Penguin *Stone* this is a cause for both honor and apprehension!)

Rereading The Stone is a sprawling, demanding book, touching on a vast host of important themes. In chapter 1, "Reading," Yu discusses the artifice of reading in the Chinese tradition, the "brush of illusion (*huanbi*)," and the almost endless chain of readings implicit in this many-layered text—Baoyu's reading of the riddling oracles, the Fairy Disenchantment's reading of Baoyu and the family, the implied narrator's reading of the episode, the author's reading of the narrator, Red Inkstone's reading of the author, and our reading of both text and Red Inkstone (and of Yu). In chapter 2, "Desire," he embarks on a learned "partial genealogy" (East and West) of the core theme of the novel, subjectivity or desire (*qing*), a word he also glosses as "affective disposition." He gives us a discourse on "desire's entanglement," including a fascinating excursion into Feng Menglong's *qingjiao*, the "religion of the affects." This chapter presents a taxonomy of the various appearances, phenomena, or forms (*zongzong xiang*) of *qing*, the manifold manifestations of "pathocentrism."

Chapter 3, "Stone," deals with major Buddhist themes, and their relation to its fictional art:

> Both the story of the Stone—told in such profound, human terms—and the reflexive drama of its telling and reading achieve their impact only if we reckon seriously with certain major themes in Chinese philosophy and religions. . . . Just as the real world is considered empty and unreal in the Buddhist vision, so the invented world of story is "baseless" (*huangtang*), "absurd" (*da huang*), "unverifiable" (*wuji*), and "undatable" (*wu chaodai nianji*). Both the inhabitants and geography of that world owe their existence to the play of language.

The author, as Brother Amor, and the Ur-Reader, Vanitas, are, in other words, utterly captivated with the illusion of passion conjured up by *The Stone*'s record, while at the same time they (together with Baoyu) are working their way through it to enlightenment.

In chapter 4, "Literature," the imaginative literature of poetry, fiction and drama is analyzed as a "potent medium for the dissemination of desire," and therefore as a deeply subversive force within the patriarchal context of Confucian ritual and family values, which are undermined by the threat of "errant subjectivity." "Imaginative literature proves itself to be the most puissant means to record, transmit, and glorify the private interest begotten of passion." We look into the "tangled web of [Baoyu's sentimental] ambivalence" (his "lust of the mind"), his extreme susceptibility to "the vision of feminine pulchritude," and to "both desire's suasion and its mimetic simulation." Unlike your average worldly profligate, or creature of physical lust, Baoyu is someone who "feels the grip of desire through vicarious participation in memory or imagination." (Yu is not afraid of the word voyeur.) Yu has a liking for resonant old-fashioned Latinate

words that few of his contemporaries use any more (puissant, pulchritude, suasion), but (unlike his old-fashioned Victorian forebears) he has a highly modern vision of what many agree to be the central issue in this novel, the role of desire and the illusion of desire. Desire is no longer "a bad thing." Indeed, "the protagonist's passage from stasis to change has been induced by the stirring of desire." This is also (as Yu never allows us to forget) Cao Xueqin's vision: "Vanitas, starting off in the Void (which is Truth) came 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)."

Yu is no bashful mealy-mouthed Confucian. (At one public lecture in Hong Kong he asked the question: "Why is it that Chinese critics are so slow to remember that the first climax in *The Stone* is a sexual one, a wet dream?") Elsewhere he criticizes the ubiquitous "discomfort with erotic attachments that leads the Chinese characteristically to allegorical displacement." Yu himself writes eloquently and perceptively about sexual experience and sexual symbolism in the novel.[16]

In chapter 5, "Tragedy," Yu sets off from an allusion to Wang Guowei and his 1904 description of *Stone* as "the tragedy of tragedies." We are given a powerful portrait of Lin Daiyu as tragic protagonist, the over-sensitive maiden with a yearning for spiritual communion with her "knower of the sound" (*zhiyin*), with her obsessive passion for Baoyu, and with her narcissistic anguish. We are left in no doubt as to where Yu's own sympathies lie. "If delusion could create so captivating a life as Lin Daiyu's, and madness so memorable a love, who would want for her enlightenment?"

Despite the vast span of Yu's book, and its almost overreaching ambition, it is held together by the author's own intense personal vision, and by his constant and detailed references to the novel itself and to its commentators. A vast library of learning opens out from every page, and yet one rarely loses sight of *The Stone*, one is never cast upon a sea of generalization for its own sake. Few *Stone* critics have been able to achieve this balance between the broader view and the minutiae of the text. The "isms" have often been too much in the foreground, whereas Yu keeps the foreground for the novel itself, which he continually illuminates with his insights. As a result, his vision has much of the same complexity, ambivalence, richness, riddling, and mesmerizing attraction as the novel itself. "No single symbol (dream, mirror, gold-and-jade affinity, wood-and-stone affinity) can fully encompass the narrative's plenitude of meaning."

One senses a deep empathy ("the shared truth of an imagined reality is what unites reader and author in every act of sympathetic reading of fiction") between Yu and the authors of *The Stone*, such that they often seem to speak with one voice. When Red Inkstone talks of the mirror as a "symbol of the novel's fabricative and illusory nature" (*yan qi shu yuanshi kongxu huanshe*), he seems to

prefigure Yu. In that sense, despite its dazzling late-twentieth-century intellectual apparatus, this book is indeed (as its title implies) a "rereading" (*chongping*) in the tradition of Red Inkstone, Odd Tablet, and those other reader-participators of the hermetic Chinese tradition of *Stone* commentary. It is inspired by an intellectual and readerly passion that sends its own reader back to the original novel with renewed enthusiasm: like the marginalia of Red Inkstone, like Wang Guowei's powerful late-nineteenth-century essay, like the chapter in C. T. Hsia's book. It has become part of that endless series of palimpsests that includes pre-novel,[17] novel, post-novel, commentaries, translations, readings, and readers, past, present, and future.

At the very outset, the words of Yu's dedication strike a movingly personal note: "For my students at the University of Chicago and *in memoriam* the Dead at Tiananmen Square," while his opening motto, from Umberto Eco, gives a foretaste both of his own linguistic cunning and of his overarching vision as a critic: "Un sogno è una scrittura, e molte scritture non sono altro che sogni." This book is (as were the old nineteenth-century *Stone* commentaries, such as those of Wang Xilian and Yao Xie) a personal rereading, the embodiment of a lifetime of intellectual adventure and excitement. It is itself, to use Yu's words describing *The Stone*, "a passionate *apologia pro vita sua*," speaking with an intensely individual voice, communicating a deep love of life and of literature. Its voice rises again and again above mental and verbal subtlety to utter words of deep personal conviction, words that (like those of *The Stone*) strike straight to the heart:

> The novel's view of the "emptiness" of literary art is perhaps best epitomized in the final quatrain.
>
> *When grief for fiction's idle words*
> More real than human life appears,
> Reflect that life itself's a dream
> *And do not mock the reader's tears.*
>
> Not to mock the reader's tears . . . is to avow both the potency and illusion of fiction, and that is great pity and wisdom indeed!

The intensity and commitment of Yu's own writing bring to mind the simple words of Red Inkstone, which Yu himself quotes in the first chapter of this study: "*The Story of the Stone* is a book of the deepest feelings and the truest words." Yu's list of key words reads like a *Stone* litany: *meng* (dream), *huan* (the imagined, the fantasized, illusion, enchantment), *jian* (mirror), *hulu* (gourd, or riddle), *hulu miao* (marvelous riddle). It is his contention that a "dream assumes exactly the function of fiction," and that "the author has succeeded in turning the concept of world and life as dream into a subtle but powerful theory of fiction that he uses constantly to confound his reader's sense of reality."[18] And for Yu as for so many other readers of the novel, the experience of interacting with this author and his

work is a life-changing one. *The Stone* is one of those books that has that power, the power to change one's perception of life, to change one's life, as that unforgettable character the zany Monk Vanitas (the novel's Ur-reader) knew when he first set eyes on it. To use Yu's words (and he is in many ways a latter-day Vanitas), "As the result of encountering one kind of reality, Vanitas acquires a certain knowledge that alters his perception and understanding of that reality." Yu, like Vanitas, like Red Inkstone, and, of course, like Cao Xueqin and Gao E, beckons the reader to join in the ongoing interweaving of fiction and illusion, to experience and transcend enchantment and enlightenment, to surrender to, and yet see beyond, seduction and desire, to live and to dream. As Novalis said (this time not from Eco, but from George Macdonald): "Our life is not a dream. But it could and must become one."

Yu is not afraid to offer his own powerful summaries of the novel's message:

> The profound paradox emerging from Cao Xueqin's story seems to be that the illusion of life, itself a painful avowal of the nonreality and untruth of reality (a view that bears strong overtones of Buddhism), can only be grasped through the illusion of art, which is an affirmation of the truth of insubstantiality (that is, *jia zhong you zhen*). . . . What is, for the Chinese, the all too familiar lesson, old as Zhuangzi's butterfly and the Lankavatara Sutra, that "human life is but a dream (*rensheng ru meng*)—a lesson painfully acquired by the book's author, its protagonists, and by many of its characters, driven home by experiences that yield "hot and bitter tears."

His concern with the deeper philosophical significance of the book (a concern readers will already be familiar with from his earlier work on *The Journey to the West*) finds expression in some memorable statements:

> It explains why the intense esteem in which both Stone and Plant hold each other must hurtle them along the karmic path of transmigration. Thrown into incarnation, they must settle their "case (*gongan*)" in the human world by working through a life governed by memory and emotion, illusion and enlightenment. . . . Only when he has tasted the intoxication of romance, the ambivalence of age, the bitterness of betrayal, and the ineradicable pain of mortal separation can he lay claim to the perspicacity of Buddhist vision (the song's *kanpodi* [literally, to see through it]). . . . Emotion is what drives karma forward; it is what causes us to be reborn. (Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *Dreams, Illusions and Other Realities*). Understandably, therefore, Buddhist salvation, which seeks to terminate the karmic motion of samsara, aims at breaking this vicious cycle of memory and emotion.

Nor is he afraid to express his impatience with those scholars who smother the study of the novel in futile and small-minded academic gossip and trivia (see his several critical references to Zhou Ruchang and Zhou's "raging, puzzling and baseless critique").

All too few books such as this cross one's path in the arid life of sinological letters. Few books challenge the reader so fiercely, few tease, stretch, enrich and haunt as this one does on every page ("My act of (re)reading *The Stone* thus participates in what Matie Calinescu has called a form of textual visitation or 'haunting'"). Even fewer books succeed in connecting the modern sensibility, the puzzling wealth of the late twentieth-century heart and mind, with another world so far removed in language, time, and space. Yu brings home to us a rich world, captured in such lovingly intimate detail by this miracle-worker of Chinese literature. He shares with us, through his own way of reading, a passionate sense of the underlying universal links between literature and life. In this life-giving oasis, one can only linger gratefully, and quench one's thirst.

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NOTES

1. Anthony Yu quotes Yu Yingshi: "Within the main currents of Redological research of the last century, it has never truly assumed the place of fiction."

2. See Publisher's Note to *A Dream of Red Mansions*, translated by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang (Peking, 1978).

3. There have been several dry catalog-like "histories" of *Stone* Studies written in Chinese, but we still await one that interprets the movements in *Stone* thought in terms of the wider movements in Chinese intellectual history.

4. Karl Gutzlaff, writing as "Scholasticus," "Hung Lau Mung, or Dreams in the Red Chamber: A Novel, 20 vols.," *Chinese Repository* 9 (Canton, May 1842): 266–273. It is amusing that the contemporary Anglo-Chinese novelist Timothy Mo, in the same book that has Gutzlaff ("that sinister eye") appear under his real name, turns his fictitious character Gideon Chase (a mixture of Williams, Giles, and Joly?) into an early *Stone* translator. See *An Insular Possession* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1986).

5. E. J. Eitel, "*Hung-lau-meng; or the Dream of the Red Chamber. A Chinese Novel.* Book 1. Translated by H. Bencraft Joly, Vice-Consul, Macao, H. B. M. Consular Service, China. Hong Kong: Kelly and Walsh, 1892," *China Review* 20 (Hong Kong, 1893): 65–66.

6. Herbert Giles, "The Hung Lou Meng: Commonly Called the Dream of the Red Chamber," *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, n.s., 20 (Shanghai, 1885). Later expanded in *A History of Chinese Literature* (London: Heinemann, 1901), one of the series *Short Histories of the Literatures of the World*, ed. Edmund Gosse.

7. Wou I-t'ai, *Le Roman Chinois* (Paris, 1935); my translation.

8. Jos. Schyns et al., eds., *1500 Modern Chinese Novels and Plays* (Pei-p'ing, 1948).

9. C. T. Hsia, *The Classic Chinese Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968).

10. Or, one might add, as bizarre as the fragmentary *Suoyin* studies published in English by the Rev. Arthur W. Cornaby and Reginald Johnston in the pages of the *New China Review* (1919–1920).

11. Louise P. Edwards, *Men and Women in Qing China: Gender in The Red Chamber Dream* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), p. 48.

12. There have always been, and no doubt always will be, plenty of readers, Chinese and non-Chinese, who find *The Stone* not to their taste, not because they disapprove of its morality, or hold some ideological position concerning its message, but simply because they are personally not attuned to its decidedly rarefied world. The novel's highly refined tone, and its concern with the minutiae of the life of sentiment, are not everyone's cup of tea. Nor is Proust.

13. David Hawkes, "*The Story of the Stone*: A Symbolist Novel," a lecture given in French at the Institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises, 21 March 1963, trans. into English by Angharad Pimpaneau, in Hawkes, *Classical, Modern and Humane* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1989).

14. Some readers may be scared away by the frequent use of terms such as proleptic reading, pathocentric, and oretic (orectic). Even I find myself wondering from time to time if Professor Yu has not been led astray by his own virtuosity, to the point where he occasionally almost sounds more like Jia Yucun discoursing to Leng Zixing in chapter 2 on the "generative processes operating in the universe"—a spoof on the part of Cao Xueqin, surely. Or is Yu making fun of us? One can never be sure. Yu himself seems to be keenly aware of this danger, and points to it more than once. "To resist 'ferreting out facts' is to participate properly in the 'game' and 'diversion' of the text which, in the tongue-in-cheek pronouncement of the narrative, 'author, copyist, and reader' alike seem not to understand." It is one thing, however, to steer clear of the Kaozheng School and its insistence on historical facts, but there is an equal danger, one to which the novel alludes more than once, in taking the book itself too seriously, constructing a message that is too explicit, and thereby spoiling the fun of it. David Hawkes has put this well: "Many of the symbols, word-plays and secret patterns with which the novel abounds seem to be used out of sheer ebullience, as though the author was playing some sort of game with himself and did not much care whether he was observed or not" (Introduction, *Stone*, vol. 1).

15. See, for instance, his decision to choose a *jiaxu* reading, p. 47.

16. Chinese fiction and drama could do with a great deal more of the sensitive kind of analysis of erotic symbolism that Yu provides in his footnote 54 (p. 204), discussing the "falling red petals" in both *West Chamber* and *Stone*.

17. I was sorry not to see any reference to the late scholar Dai Bufan and his brilliant hypothesis as to the novel's origins, first published in *Beifang Luncong*. The implications of this multilayered theory of the novel's creation would have added yet another dimension to Yu's already complex analysis.

18. In this he shares Hawkes' perception: "The idea that the worldling's 'reality' is illusion and that life itself is a dream from which we shall eventually awaken is of course a Buddhist one; but in Xueqin's hands it becomes a poetical means of demonstrating that his characters are both creatures of his imagination and at the same time the real companions of his golden youth" (Introduction, *Stone*, vol. 1).