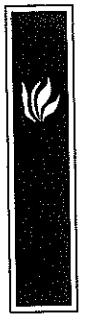
TRANSLATING CHINESE LITERATURE



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INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS
Bloomington and Indianapolis

"Pieces of Eight"

Reflections on Translating *The Story of the Stone*

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The Island

In that never-never land of the mind which some translators (and their readers) inhabit, the language and symbols of one culture, the shapes, sounds, and sensations of one time and space, the structures of one consciousness merge with those of another, as in a dream. I picture this land as an island in the midst of a Hundun Sea (Sea of Primordial Undifferentiated Chaos), its shores washed by the tides of the Collective Unconscious. If we may extend the scope of Lu Ji's *Rhymeprose on Literature* to include translators, we can perhaps imagine strange islanders, to use his words,

> distilling drops afresh from a sea of words since time out of mind ... now blithe as swimmers borne on celestial waters, now sinking like divers into a secret world, lost in subterranean currents.... Those arduously sought expressions, hitherto evasive and hidden, like stray fishes from the deepest ocean bed arise on the angler's "hook."[1]

The difference on *this* island is that the words are lowered down in one language and fished out in another.

I should like to journey to this translators' Atlantis and examine the sort of sea-change that *The Story of the Stone*, beloved of Chinese readers in its original shape and form for over two hundred years, has undergone. The island's Chinese name would surely be *Hua-jing* 化境, that Realm of

Change, to which (as Qian Zhongshu said) all translations aspire. I shall look at a few examples of what happens in this process of change. But before setting sail, I think it would be wise to heed the following warning, a gale warning, as it were, issued by a great German scholar, E. R. Curtius, to all readers of Literature in Translation:

> Spiritual treasures cannot be converted to the standard of a common currency. The best that the great classics hold in store for you will not pass into translation.... The message of the poet must be heard in his own tongue. If people are not prepared to do so, then they must do without the Pearl of Great Price.[2]

Having broadcast the warning, I still urge intending passengers to take heart; it may be possible, with a certain amount of diving, to come home from the island with a reflection at least of the luster of a lesser pearl and—who knows—perhaps an inkling of what the Great One looks like?

Greensickness Peak

Root of Love

On the first page of volume one of *The Story of the Stone*, we read:

> Long ago, when the goddess Nü-wa was repairing the sky, she melted down a great quantity of rock and, on the Incredible Crags of the Great Fable Mountains, moulded the amalgam into thirty-six thousand, five hundred and one large building blocks, each measuring seventy-two feet by a hundred and forty-four feet square. She used thirty-six thousand five hundred of these blocks in the course of her building operations, leaving a single odd block unused, which lay, all on its own, at the foot of Greensickness Peak in the aforementioned mountains.

Greensickness Peak might at first sight seem an odd way to translate the name of the place where the stone "rejected by the builder" first lay. The Chinese expression 青埂峰 literally means Blue (or Green) Ridge Peak, and this is indeed how Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang translate it. Where does sickness come into it?

Listen carefully to the opening words of the novel:

> Gentle Reader,
>
> What, you may ask, was the origin of this book? Though the answer to this question may at first sight seem to border on the absurd, reflection will show that there is a good deal more in it than meets the eye.

While a few pages further on, the author describes his work as

Pages full of idle words,
Penned with hot and bitter tears:
All men call the author fool;
None his secret message hears.

What is this "secret message"? Probably no two readers will ever agree; but we are lucky to have some clues in the annotations written by various members of the author's family and included in the early handwritten copies of the novel. Sometimes the secret remains a secret, as when the notes merely say, "Ah what a marvellous likeness!" But sometimes we are actually told what the secret is.

Our friendly annotator, in this case the most prolific one, a relative with the pen name Red Inkstone, tell us that *qing-geng* (Green Ridge) is one of the many puns used by the author of *The Story of the Stone*, Cao Xue-qin, to hint at his message. It is homophonous with the expression *qing-gen* 情根 meaning literally Root of Love.[3] And because the Stone contained this Root of Love (we would more naturally say Seed of Love, I think) it was found unfit to repair the sky. Root of Love is an expression rather like *bing-gen* 病根 Root of Illness, which figuratively means Cause of Trouble; or *nie-gen* 孽根 Root of Retribution, often used of children. And indeed Love causes a great deal of the trouble in the novel, and children bring much of the Karmic retribution.

But Love is also portrayed as a path to Enlightenment. In this sense the Root of Love is a Positive Root, like the Pancendriyani, or Five Roots of Moral Strength in Buddhism: the Roots of Faith, Energy, Memory, Meditation and Wisdom.

The novel is the personal testimony of the Loves, Disenchantment, and final Illumination of the Stone's earthly incarnation.

Found unfit to repair the azure sky
Long years a foolish mortal man was I.
My life in both worlds on this stone is writ:
Pray who will copy out and publish it?

Vanitas the Taoist and copyist was so affected by this aspect of the story that he changed his own name to Brother Amor or the Passionate Monk, and changed the title of the book from *The Story of the Stone* to *The Tale of Brother Amor*. He had rediscovered Truth by way of Love. Starting off in the Void (which is Truth)—as a monk should—he came to the contemplation of Form (which is Illusion)—the Illusion or Fiction so lovingly depicted in the Inscription on the Stone; this Form engendered Love; and by communicating Love he entered again into Form; and from Form awoke once more to the Void, which is Truth. There is yet a third possible level of meaning in *qing-gen*. Coming as it does after the Incredible Crags of the Great Fable

Mountains[4] *qing-gen* may have the further meaning of Real Basis of the Plot—taking *qing* in the sense of *qing-jie* 情節 and *gen* as in *wugenzhici* 無根之辭. In other words, although the whole mythical introduction in chapter 1 is Incredible, Fantastic, a Great Fable, an Invention for the Purposes of Fiction, it is also an allegorical representation of the True Origin of the Events, their psychological kernel in myth-form.

Green Ridge/Root of Love is in Chinese a pun with a riddling ring to it, as are many of the expressions in this first chapter. It is a play on words, but a play that indicates a key, a meaning. Greensickness has a similar ring. It is not a word in late twentieth century usage. But in order to recreate through translation the intricate fabric of this riddling first chapter, the translator has delved below the surface of everyday English, to angle for those "stray fish that rise from the ocean bed." He, like the author, is playing his line.

Chlorosis, or Greensickness, is (so any curious reader can discover) an old-fashioned word for an old-fashioned condition: an anemic disease which affects mostly young people, usually young ladies, at the age of puberty, and which gives a pale or greenish tinge to the complexion. Dr. Robert Hooper, in his *Dictionary of Medicine and the Various Branches of Natural Philosophy Connected With It*, published at the beginning of the nineteenth century, tells us that this condition is characterized by "a heaviness, listlessness, fatigue on the least exercise, palpitations of the heart, pains in the back, loins and hips, and a peculiar craving for chalk, lime and various other absorbents, together with many dyspeptic symptoms. As it advances in its progress, the face becomes pale or assumes a yellowish hue ... the pulse is quick but small ... and the person is apt to be affected with many of the symptoms of hysteria." Not a bad description of the Ailing Naiad, Lin Dai-yu.

Greensickness, in other words, is a form of Lovesickness. Robert Louis Stevenson, in *Virginibus Puerisque* (1881, p. 104), writes: "There is some meaning in the old theory of Wild Oats; and a man who has not had his Greensickness and got done with it for good is as little to be depended on as an unvaccinated infant." Earlier in the seventeenth century, Thomas Brooks (a Puritan divine) used the expression figuratively, in his *Golden Keys to Open Hidden Treasures* (1867 edition, vol. V, p. 142): "Curiosity," he said, "is that greensickness of the soul, whereby it longs for novelties: and loathes sound and wholesome truths."

Greensickness, while meaning lovesickness, has the great advantage, for the translator of the Chinese pun *qing-gen*, of not directly mentioning the word Love. Instead it preserves the surface Green of the original and sends the modern reader diving for a deeper meaning.

Incidentally, the treatment given for this ailment by Dr. Hooper is "to increase the tone of the system by a generous nutritive diet, with the moderate use of wine, by gentle daily exercise, particularly on horseback, by agreeable company, to amuse and quiet the mind, and by tonic medi-

cines, especially the preparations of iron joined with myrrh." *The Stone's* views on the cure are perhaps most succinctly put in the saying quoted in chapter 90:

> No remedy but love
> Can make the lovesick well;
> Only the hand that tied the knot
> Can loose the tiger's bell.

Reincarnation

Root of Love not only implies a constitutional flaw in Bao-yu's character (what is elsewhere referred to as his *ai-hong-bing* 愛紅病); it also refers to the karma which binds together the main characters in the story. As the Buddhist Mahasattva Impervioso somewhat flippantly puts it in Chapter One, "There is a batch of lovesick souls awaiting incarnation in the world below." To which his jokey sidekick, the Taoist Mysterioso, replies: "Well, well, so another lot of these amorous wretches is about to enter the vale of tears.... How did all this begin?" Impervioso goes on to tell him about the Stone's attachment to the Crimson Pearl Flower, "for which he conceived such a fancy that he took to watering her every day with sweet dew, thereby conferring on her the gift of life." The flower assumed the form of a girl, and this fairy girl wandered about outside the Realm of Separation, eating the Secret Passion Fruit when she was hungry and drinking from the Pool of Sadness when she was thirsty (Alice in Wonderland and the Pool of Tears?). The thought that she owed the Stone something for his kindness in watering her began to prey on her mind and ended by becoming an obsession. "I have no sweet dew here that I can repay him with," she would say to herself. "The only way in which I could perhaps repay him would be with the tears shed during the whole of a mortal lifetime, if he and I were ever to be reborn as humans in the world below."

When Stone and Flower first meet in human form, as Bao-yu and Dai-yu, Bao-yu says with a laugh: "I have seen this cousin before!" "Nonsense," says his grandmother. "How could you possibly have met!" "Well," replies Bao-yu, "perhaps not; but her face seems so familiar that I have the impression of meeting her again after a long separation."

Although reincarnation is a characteristically Eastern belief, it has not been without its adherents in the West. Plato inherited it from the Orphic tradition. In the Phaedrus he explains the experience of love in this way:

> It is the past history of men in the other world that accounts for their destinies here, and also for the effect upon them of beauty. At the sight of it men fall in love. For it is a "copy" of the original beauty they saw elsewhere.... Whenever one who is fresh from those mysteries, who saw much of that heavenly vision, beholds in any godlike face or form a successful copy of original beauty, he first

> of all feels a shuddering chill, and terror creeps over him.... Afterwards follow the natural results of his chill—a sudden change, a sweating and glow of unwonted heat. For he has received through his eyes the emanation of beauty, and has been warmed thereby, and his native plumage is watered.

A French critic, Charles Commeaux, has described Cao Xue-qin as one of the great theoreticians of Platonic Love.[5] I think he meant Platonic in the broad sense of spiritual; I would go further. Plato and Cao share a concept of Love that is based on reincarnation. Love for Cao is karmic debt. In the payment of it (which may take many incarnations) lovers are drawn together as irresistibly as enemies at war. The process must continue until it is broken off by the force of Enlightenment, and the elimination of desire.

Affinity

The bond between Bao-yu and his cousin Bao-chai is commonly referred to as the Affinity of Gold and Jade—Bao-chai's golden locket matches Bao-yu's Jade Talisman—while the bond between Bao-yu and Dai-yu is called the Bond of Old by Stone and Flower Made. These elemental affinities have a close parallel in Western astrology and in the Elective Affinities of the Western alchemical tradition. I am not qualified to pursue this parallel in greater depth. I mention it as a further reason for my belief that to do full justice to a work such as *The Story of the Stone*, which represents the last flowering of Chinese culture in its entirety, we need, as translators, not only to immerse ourselves in Chinese culture but also to continue imbibing our own great European tradition, of which alchemy and astrology were intrinsic parts. To put it another way, the "island" should not be moored just off the South China coast: it should be somewhere, or nowhere, equidistant from both East and West.

Universal Culture

The translator from the Chinese must, at least during the process of translating, suspend any belief that East is East and West is West. He or she must somehow believe in the universality of the human spirit and the possibility of a universal culture. I once dreamed that I was standing in a Byzantine church, with shafts of colored light illuminating vivid little patches in an otherwise dark and claustrophobic interior. The air was heavy with incense and the scent of candles, The shadows had a purplish tinge. The overall effect was suffocating, and I felt a compelling need to escape. When I pushed open the great west door, I found myself at once bathed in light, and looking around me saw a square with on either side palaces built in a Moorish style out of golden stone. I was, I suppose, in Saint Mark's Square in Venice (although I have only seen it on postcards). Straight ahead of me, however, was no Venetian palace but a long, low-lying Chinese mansion,

all airiness and light, grace and delicacy, in contrast to the Byzantine labyrinth I had just come from. It was predominantly a pale gray-blue, with touches of red and green. There were steps leading up to the main entrance, and walking down the steps toward me was a tall elderly gentleman with white goatee and scholar's gown. He smiled at me, took me by the hand, and led me up the steps. As we walked together toward the entrance he introduced himself as Mr. Ito.

Ito Sohei, whom I have never had the pleasure of meeting, is the Japanese translator of *The Stone* and the possessor of one of the rare old manuscript transcriptions of the novel. But to me the enduring interest of this dream lies in the fact that Venice is one of the historical meeting places of East and West. Another is Macau. It is only a faith that such places also exist in the mind that can justify and sustain the attempts of translators, their endeavors to create a never-never land where Chinese aristocrats converse in the Queen's English, Latin and French, while their servants swear in Cockney.

Sometimes, it is true, the material for this alchemy has been lost nearly beyond recovery. As the result of the scientific, industrial, and electronic revolutions, the West has become over the past two hundred years more and more cut off from its own heritage. And this heritage is the translator's own Sea of Words, without which his endeavor will run aground.

Conclusion

Let me end this ramble by returning to Greensickness Peak, and by recalling in the shade of that ominous crag a short extract from *Romeo and Juliet*, one of the great tragedies of star-crossed love.

Juliet's mother, in Act 3, scene 5, has come to tell Juliet that she is to be married to Paris. Juliet replies:

> I pray you tell my lord and father, madam,
> I will not marry yet, and when I do, I swear
> It shall be Romeo, whom you know I hate,
> Rather than Paris.

When her father arrives and is told of her refusal to comply with his plans, he starts to get into a rage:

> How, will she none? Doth she not give us thanks?
> Is she not proud? Doth she not count her blessed,
> Unworthy as she is, that we have wrought
> So worthy a gentleman to be her bride?

Juliet replies:

> Not proud you have, but thankful that you have.
> Proud can I never be of what I hate,
> But thankful even for hate, that is meant love.

And Capulet replies:

> How, how, how, how, chopt logic ... What is this?
> "Proud" and "I thank you" and "I thank you no,"
> And yet "not proud" ... Mistress minion you,
> Thank me no thankings, nor proud me no prouds,
> But fettle your fine joints 'gainst Thursday next,
> To go with Paris to Saint Peter's Church,
> Or I will drag thee on a hurdle thither.
> Out you greensickness carrion, out you baggage,
> You tallow-face!

"You greensickness Carrion" is a rather strong way of saying "you anemic, unmarried lovesick corpse." Greensickness is that aspect of love that "unmakes" the lover. It seems to me a nearly perfect way to translate *qinggeng*, hinting at some of the deeper meaning, the secret message, of the name of that Peak, where the Stone lay, and in whose shadow the story's theme of Love, Disenchantment, and Enlightenment was born.

In ploys such as this, where verbal wit combines with literary allusion and philosophical depth, author and translator are as one.

Gem-like Ecstasy

Milestones

The Story of the Stone is, among other things, the story of the inner transformation of the stone's incarnation, Jia Bao-yu. It shows us the psychological progress of an aristocratic boy through adolescence.

One of the signposts used to mark the stages in this inner journey is the *dream*. It is in a grand dream (chapter 5) that Bao-yu is initiated into sexual love; it is in a dream (chapter 116) that he finally receives illumination. The riddles shown him in the first dream are only understood by him in the last.

Other milestones are the *books* that he reads. For example, in chapter 21 we see him "setting down to a volume of Zhuang-zi." He finds that the words of Zhuang-zi wonderfully suit his mood, and even dabbles in a little amateur Taoist composition of his own. In chapter 22, a few days later, he still has Zhuang-zi's words ringing in his head, and this time tries his hand at writing poetry with a Zen flavor. For both of these premature "excursions into the void" he is mercilessly teased by his cousins.

In chapter 23, when the young people of the family are allowed to move into Prospect Garden, we are told that life for Bao-yu "became utterly and completely satisfying. Every day was spent in the company of his maids and cousins in the most amiable and delightful occupations, such as reading, practicing calligraphy, strumming on the *qin*, playing Go, painting, composing verses, etc. He was blissfully happy." And yet, we read a few pages

further on, "quite suddenly, in the midst of this placid, agreeable existence, he was discontented. He got up one day feeling out of sorts. 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 still 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."

In the end, the only thing that lifts him out of this state is the gift his page boy Tealeaf brings him, a parcel of novels and plays he has managed to buy from the bookstalls and smuggle in. We are given a short list of them, and watch Bao-yu exploring the world of Chinese fiction and drama—and especially the long Yuan dynasty play *The Western Chamber*, which he and Dai-yu discover together. Only a few lines from the play are quoted, but they are enough to make the point that their love is no longer a playful affair between children.

For the "middle part" of the novel, Bao-yu settles down to an idyllic exploration of the world of poetry, together with the other members of the Crab-flower Poetry Club. His own noms de plume reveal something of the spirit of this hothouse for literary blooms: Lord of the Flowers, Lucky Lounger, and Green Boy.

And again in chapter 36, he reads lyric drama, this time Tang Xianzu's haunting masterpiece *The Peony Pavilion*, or *The Return of the Soul*: "a day arrived when Bao-yu seemed to have exhausted the Garden's possibilities, and its charms were beginning to weary him. *The Return of the Soul* was very much on his mind at this time. He had read it through twice without in any way abating his appetite for more. . . ."

The Other Half of the Garden

By the beginning of volume 4, this idyllic world is already crumbling around Bao-yu. Harsh reality is breaking through the delicate protective structure of the Garden, and he gradually has to bring his perceptions to bear not just on art and literature and idealistic love but on the seamier side of life. One of his cousins, Ying-chun, has been married to Sun Shao-zu, a callous brute, who mistreats her appallingly. The marriage was arranged by her father, Jia She, an unpleasant character throughout the novel, as payment for some of his debts. When Bao-yu learns of her suffering he is profoundly disturbed. In chapter 81, he goes to see his mother and pleads with her to mount a rescue operation. Surely an edict from Grandmother Jia will enable them to bring Ying-chun home again to the sanctuary of the Garden? Lady Wang predictably tells him to stop being so silly, and he leaves

her apartment with his hopes dashed. He goes straight to see Dai-yu and pours his heart out to her.

> "*Why is it that the minute they're grown up girls are married off and have to suffer so?*[6] When I think of the happy times we all had together when we first started the Crab-flower Club, always inviting each other round for parties and holding poetry contests—there seemed no end of wonderful things to do. And now? *Bao-chai has already moved out, which means Caltrop can't come over either, and with Ying gone as well*, our band of kindred spirits is being broken up, everything is being spoiled!
>
> "I had thought of a plan, to get Grannie on our side and rescue Ying. But when I told Mother, she just called me naive *and silly. So I had to give up the idea.*"

> Wang Xilian: . . . captures to perfection the way a pampered young aristocrat, gone a bit soft in the head, *would* speak![7]

> "You only have to look around you! Our Garden's altered so much in such a short time. What could become of it in the next few years just doesn't bear thinking about. Now do you see what I mean, and why I can't help despairing?"

> Wang Xilian: This tearful speech of Bao-yu's about the decline of the Garden etc., touches Dai-yu to the quick (it is so close to her own preoccupations). The whole scene develops a central theme of the novel, an organic link connecting and reflecting at a distance previous and subsequent strands in the plot (與前後文遙遙照應, 通皆血脈貫通).

> As she listened to all that he was saying, Dai-yu *very slowly bowed her head and* moved back almost imperceptibly onto the kang. She did not say a word, but only sighed and curled up facing the wall.

> Yao Xie: How could she express her feelings by more than a sigh?

Later that same day, after his afternoon nap, he awakes in a mood of intense ennui. Aroma advises him to go out into the Garden to shake it off. In the first draft of this section, Bao-yu simply gets up and walks out into the Garden—where sure enough he finds a little respite, a brief afterglow of the old joie de vivre, in the form of a ladies' fishing excursion. But in the final draft, there is a short passage—205 characters long—inserted between his waking up and his walk in the Garden.

> In the afternoon, when he woke from his sleep, he felt very bored, *and picked up a book to read. Aroma hurried off to make tea, eager to sustain him in his studies. He had chanced upon an anthology of early verse, and as he turned its pages found himself reading a stanza by Cao Cao*:
>
> *Come drink with me and sing,*
> *For life's a fleeting thing.*
> *Full many a day has fled*
> *Like the morning dew . . .*

Far from distracting him, this only served to increase his ennui, and he put the book down and picked up another. This time it was The Gathering at Orchid Pavilion and other Prose Selections from the Jin Dynasty. *After a page or two he suddenly closed it, and when Aroma returned with his tea, she found him sitting there, head propped on hand, looking his most dazed and distant.*

Yao Xie: What a vivid touch! What can he have come across this time?

"Why have you given up so soon?" she asked.
Bao-yu took his tea without a word of reply, drank a sip, then mechanically replaced the cup. Aroma was out of her depth and could do nothing but stand there dumbly looking on. Suddenly he stood up, and muttered sarcastically: "Oh gemlike ecstasy . . ."

Yao: He already seems close to enlightenment.... *Very* Zen! So it was the *Orchid Pavilion Preface*! Come across an expression like this in a mood of depression, and the more you understand it the more it compounds your depression.

The intention of this editorial insertion is clear. Indeed, this is one of those cases where the translator (the close reader par excellence) can gain a great deal from looking at the (often complicated) process of textual change. The purpose of the inserted passage is to indicate, obliquely, by an almost casual reference to two well-known pieces of literature, the nature of Bao-yu's depression. Of the two quotations, the first is less problematic to the translator, as two lines from the original poem by Cao Cao are quoted, and by a slight extension of the quotation it is possible to convey to the English reader some of the theme of the poem, the evanescence of human life, and to suggest why it touched Bao-yu to the quick. The second reference is more difficult to deal with.

The piece Bao-yu was reading, and from which he quotes a phrase, was the famous *Orchid Pavilion Preface* by Wang Xi-zhi, though it is not mentioned by name—the book is merely described as *Jin-wen*, Jin prose. In this short prose idyll Bao-yu finds an echo of the Garden way of life, the "communion of kindred spirits" whose dispersal he had been lamenting only that morning in the Naiad's House. The gathering at Orchid Pavilion was the prototype of the scholars' picnic, a carefree, convivial gathering of sensitive souls. But for Bao-yu the halcyon days of picnics and innocent artistic pursuits are over. He is witnessing the disintegration of the Garden world; he hasn't the time any longer, and even if he had, he no longer has the inclination, to spend his days in the old way. He is being forced to spend hours every day studying the classics and preparing for his exams.

Let me quote the *Orchid Pavilion Preface* at slightly greater length (in a revised version of Lin Yutang's translation):

Here, mid lofty mountain ranges and majestic peaks, among trees with thick foliage and tall bamboos, with clear streams and gurgling rapids catching the eye on both sides, we sit by the waterside. Our cup floats down the meandering stream and we drink in turn. And though we have no strings and flutes to fill the air with music, yet with singing and drinking we can while away the hours in quiet intimate conversation. The sky is clear, and the air fresh; a mild breeze blows. How fine it is to contemplate the mighty firmament and all creation's wonders, letting our eyes wander over the landscape, while our hearts roam at will. When people are gathered together, some like to sit and talk and unburden their thoughts in the intimacy of a room; others overcome by a sentiment, soar forth into a realm of ecstasy.

And then this:

All that is actual in it (this world of impressions) is a single moment, gone while we are trying to apprehend it, of which it may ever be more truly said that it has ceased to be than that it is. To such a tremulous wisp constantly reforming itself on the stream, to a single sharp impression, with a sense in it, a relic more or less fleeting of such moments gone by, what is *real* in our life fines itself down. It is with the movement, the passage and dissolution of impressions, images, sensations, that analysis leaves off—that continual vanishing away, that strange perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves.

A counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life. How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them with the finest senses? To burn always with this hard gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. Failure is to form habits; for habit is relative to a stereotyped world.... We are all condamnés, as Victor Hugo says, condemned to death with an indefinitely suspended sentence. We have an interval and then our place knows us no more. Some spend this interval in listlessness, some in high passions, the wisest in art and song.

This famous (in fact notorious) passage is from the conclusion to Walter Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, published in 1873. The short pieces in this collection were prose idylls rather than critical essays in the conventional sense. Their theme was "art for art's sake" and the cult of the dilettante, in the strict sense of "one who delights in the arts and the things of the mind for their own sake." The phrase "to burn with a hard gem-like flame" became the motto of the late nineteenth-century aesthetic movement in England. Pater the inspirer of aesthetic youth was anathema to the Victorian establishment with its belief in "moral fiber" and muscular Christianity. He was often condemned as the spokesman of hedonism, self-indulgence, and sexual perversion. His writings retain some of their power today, and it has been said that no one who comes under Pater's influence before the age of twenty will ever be content to remain gross and ignorant.

The phrase "gem-like ecstasy" refers, then, by way of its Pateresque echoes, to a world somewhat similar to that of the Orchid Pavilion, and the eccentric aesthetes of Jin times.[8] But the crucial point here (in terms of the novel's development) is that Bao-yu is beginning to see all this picnicking

not with nostalgia but with disenchantment. No number of sessions of the Poetry Club, no amount of gemlike ecstasy, can alleviate the suffering of real people like his poor Cousin Ying-chun. Nor can Grandmother Jia be called upon any longer, to conjure up magic solutions to the complexities of adult life, however much she may have been able to protect her grandchildren in the past.

Walter Pater has been portrayed in his early fifties as prematurely decrepit (burning with a faltering flame), a creature of habit (and therefore in his own terms a failure), addicted to lying in bed till noon reading not lyric verse but a dictionary. And Oscar Wilde, his most flamboyant disciple, describes in *De Profundis*, written late in his life from Reading Gaol, how he became disenchanted with Pater's philosophy:

> Once I knew [how to be happy], or I thought I knew it, by instinct. It was always springtime once in my heart. My temperament was akin to joy. I filled my life to the very brim with pleasure, as one might fill a cup to the very brim with wine. Now I am approaching life from a completely new standpoint, and even to conceive happiness is often extremely difficult for me. I remember during my first term at Oxford reading Pater's Renaissance—that book which has had such strange influence over my life.... I don't regret for a single moment having lived for pleasure. I did it to the full, as one should do everything that one does. There was no pleasure I did not experience. I threw the pearl of my soul into a cup of wine. I went down the primrose path to the sound of flutes. I lived on honeycomb. But to have continued the same life would have been wrong because it would have been limiting. I had to pass on. The other half of the garden had its secrets for me also....
>
> For the artistic life is simply self-development. Humility in the artist is his frank acceptance of all experiences, just as love in the artist is simply the sense of beauty that reveals to the world its body and soul. In *Marius the Epicurean* Pater seeks to reconcile the artistic life with the life of religion, in the deep, sweet and austere sense of the word. But Marius is little more than a spectator; an ideal spectator indeed, and one to whom it is given "to contemplate the spectacle of life with appropriate emotions," which Wordsworth defines as the poet's true aim; yet a spectator merely, and perhaps a little too preoccupied with the comeliness of the benches of the sanctuary to notice that it is the sanctuary of sorrow that he is gazing at.

In other words, the phrase "gem-like ecstasy" hopes (perhaps in vain) to evoke in its English echoes not only the aesthetic creed of Pater, but also the inadequacy of that creed. Bao-yu has reached just such a turning point. He is beginning to see through his own shallow aestheticism, while his father and teacher offer him only the cold comfort of Neo-Confucian philosophy. Rejecting both to follow the compass of his own experience, he is ultimately drawn toward his authentic spiritual goal.

Holy Pretentious Woffle

On the evening of the day we have just been reading about, Bao-yu's father and mother are talking in their private apartment, and the subject of Bao-yu's education comes up.

"Bao-yu's present state of idleness is thoroughly unsatisfactory, and in my opinion the best solution would be for him to resume his studies at the Family School."

"I agree with you entirely," said Lady Wang. "*Since your last posting he has been constantly ill, and what with one thing and another has fallen a long way behind with his studies. I think the routine of going to school would do him good.*"

Jia Zheng nodded, and they continued chatting for a while longer.

Little time was lost. The very next day, as soon as Bao-yu was up and had finished washing and combing his hair, a deputation of pages arrived and sent in the message: "Sir Zheng wishes to see Master Bao." Hurriedly tidying his clothes, Bao-yu went straight over to his father's study. He paid his morning respects *and stood to attention.*

"Tell me," Jia Zheng began, "what you have been doing recently in the way of work? A fair amount, were you going to say? A very *magnum opus* of your worthless doodling, no doubt.... *I have observed you of late. Your idleness goes from strength to strength. I am also constantly hearing of some new ailment of yours, or shall we rather say ingenious pretext to play truant. I trust I find you fully recovered?*

"*Another thing: I gather you spend the greater part of your time fooling around with your cousins in the garden, and that even the maidservants are permitted to participate in your infantile antics. Isn't it time you grew up and acquired a little self-esteem?* You must understand that those verses you write are not going to impress anyone. The only thing the examiners are interested in is a well-written composition. *And the effort you have expended in that direction has so far been nonexistent.*[9]

> Yao Xie: Jia Zheng's exhortation to Bao-yu to study the Octopartite is a preparation for his subsequent success in the examination: without such a detailed section describing Bao-yu's efforts at composition, his later success would be quite implausible. It is the general rule with this book that in its structural organization there is never a superfluous word, and never a word left out.

"Now listen carefully to what I have to say. From today, I want you to forget all about your verses and couplets. You are to concentrate exclusively on Octopartite Compositions. I will give you twelve months' grace. If by the end of that time you are still in your present unregenerate state, you may as well give up altogether, and I for my part shall have to think again about owning a creature like you as my son."

He summoned Li Gui. "Inform Tealeaf that he is to take Bao-yu first thing tomorrow morning to collect the required textbooks, and then bring them here for my inspection. I shall be accompanying him to school myself."

Turning to Bao-yu: "Off with you!" he trumpeted. "I shall expect you early tomorrow morning."

Bao-yu returned to Green Delights, where Aroma was anxiously awaiting him. The pleasure with which she received the news of his renewed course of study contrasted strangely with the incredulous horror *that had rendered him speechless while in Jia Zheng's presence, and that now prompted him to send an urgent message through to Grandmother Jia, begging her to intervene. She sent for him at once and said: "You should give it a try, my darling. You don't want to anger your father. Don't worry. Remember, I shall always be here if you need me."*

There was nothing for it but to go back and give the maids their instructions. "Wake me at the crack of dawn, as Father will be waiting to take me to school." Aroma and Musk, took it in turns to stay awake that night.

Yao Xie: If Skybright had still been alive, she too would have had a sleepless night.

In the morning Aroma woke Bao-yu punctually, helped him wash, comb his hair *and dress*, and sent *a junior maid out with* instructions for Tealeaf to wait with the books *at the inner gate. She had to spur him on a couple of times before finally he left and* made his way toward the study. On his way he stopped to inquire if Sir Zheng had arrived yet, and was informed by a *page from the study* that *one of the literary gentlemen had just called, but had been kept waiting outside as,* the Master was still in his dressing room. This calmed Bao-yu's nerves a little, and he proceeded on to the inner sanctum. As luck would have it, a servant was at that very moment coming out on his way to fetch him, so he went straight in. After another brief homily, Jia Zheng led the way and father and son took a carriage to the school, *Tealeaf following with the books.*

A lookout had been posted, and Dai-ru *had been alerted and* was standing in readiness for the party's arrival. *Before the old man could come forward to greet him, however,* Jia Zheng walked into the schoolroom and paid his respects. Dai-ru *took him by the hand and* inquired politely after Lady Jia. Bao-yu then went up and paid his respects. *Jia Zheng remained standing throughout, and insisted on waiting until Dai-ru was seated before sitting down himself.*

"I have come here today," he began "*because I felt the need to entrust my son to you personally, and with a few words of instruction.* He is no longer a child, and if he is to shoulder his responsibilities and earn a place in the world, it is high time he applied himself conscientiously to preparing for his exams. At home, unfortunately, he spends all his time idling about *in the company of children.* His verses, the only field in which he has acquired any competence, are for the most part turgid juvenilia, at their best romantic trifles devoid of substance."

Yao Xie: A salutary warning to all parents blinded by fondness for their children. Jia Zheng is not just mouthing high-sounding platitudes.

"And he looks such a fine lad," interposed Dai-ru. "He seems so intelligent. Why this refusal to study, this perverse streak of hedonism? *Not that one should entirely neglect poetic composition. But there is surely time enough for that later on in one's career.*"

Yao Xie: It is his intelligence that enables him to take the Octopartites in his stride. Dai-ru's approach is rather broader than Jia Zheng's.

"*Precisely,*" said Jia Zheng. "For the present I would humbly suggest a course of reading and exegesis of primary scriptural texts, and plenty of compositions. If he should show the least sign of being a recalcitrant pupil, I earnestly beseech you to take him in hand, and in so doing to save him from a shallow and wasted life."

On this note he rose, and with a bow and a few parting remarks took his leave. Dai-ru accompanied him to the door.

"Please convey my respects to Lady Jia." "I will," said Jia Zheng, and climbed into his carriage.

When Dai-ru returned to the classroom, *Bao-yu was already sitting at a small rosewood desk in the south-west corner of the room, by the window. He had two sets of texts and a meager-looking volume of model compositions stacked in a pile on his right. Tealeaf was instructed to put his paper, ink, brush, and inkstone away in the drawer of the desk.*

Yao Xie: The monkey has been locked up.

"I understand you have been ill, Bao-yu," said Dai-ru. "I hope you are quite recovered?" Bao-yu rose to his feet. "Quite recovered, thank you sir." "We must see to it that you apply yourself with zeal from now on. Your father is most insistent that you should do well. Start by revising the texts you have already memorized. Your timetable will be as follows: *Pre-prandium*—General Revision; *Post-prandium*—Calligraphy; *Meridianum*—Exegesis. And conclude the day's work by reciting quietly to yourself a few model compositions. That should do for the time being."

"Yes, sir."[10]

The author might have been content to leave it at that, and we would then have only a vague idea of what these dreadful Octopartite Compositions were like. But Gao E (if we continue to make the assumption that he edited the last forty chapters) goes to considerable trouble to show us exactly what Bao-yu had to put up with, and writes two further scenes, describing the Octopartite experience in great detail.[11] In the first, the Preceptor supervises Bao-yu's oral exegesis of the classics, while in the second his father inspects some of his written work.

This part of the novel seems to me of great interest. After all, the Chinese intelligentsia went through much this kind of training for over five hundred years. And yet, so violent has been the reaction against Octopartites that very few modern writers acknowledge their existence except to say how sterile and stifling they were, and Gao E has been labeled a reactionary for dwelling on them at such length. Cao Xue-qin, it is argued, would never have compromised himself in this way.

Let me try to give both sides of the picture. At one end of the spectrum is Gu Yan-wu's well-known view that the insistence on Octopartites in public examinations did more harm to Chinese culture than the Burning of the Books. The eighteenth-century poet Yuan Mei had a great natural aversion to them; but when he saw that his only chance of getting a job lay in passing the second- and third-degree exams, he worked at Octopartites furi-

ously for two years, almost abandoning general study and reading, and did indeed become a master in this rather ignoble art. A collection of his model compositions, known as *Academician Yuan's Drafts*, became a standard textbook for candidates. The great seventeenth-century critic Jin Sheng-tan wrote that "in spite of its stifling effects on the intellectual life of China ... when viewed simply as a piece of literary composition, the Octopartite has at least the following two merits to recommend it: first, it teaches the writer how to write tightly woven compositions, in which each segment contributes substantially to the whole; second, it forces the writer to write economically by presenting his main point without bringing in any unnecessary words." Surely these are words that twentieth-century writers of *baihua* prose should take to heart? In his own literary criticism, indeed, Jin used Octopartite technical terms. And the final "witness for the defense" is James Legge's collaborator Wang Tao, speaking in the mid-nineteenth century. "It is very common," he said, "nowadays to show how cultivated you are by attacking the style of writing demanded in the official examinations, and by sneering at those who cultivate it as a lot of pedants. Actually, the examination style is a definite kind of prose style, and cannot be dismissed lightly. Among the works of the best writers of it you will find pieces equal to anything in classical literature and worthy to be mentioned, in their own way, side by side with Tang poetry and Yuan drama."

My first attempt at translating the Octopartite scenes was in terms of my own experience. Like many people, I have memories of having suffered at the hands of pedantic old schoolteachers. The parallel seemed a hopeful starting point. It would be quite a business to translate the *wen-yan* into Latin, but if it would give a real feeling of the dreariness of a classical education to a young mind, while at the same time hinting that there were one or two good things buried beneath it all somewhere; it would be worth doing. Of course, I would have to make allowances for modern readers with no Latin: that meant, in effect, double-translating certain passages. And I provided one or two helpful tips, in the form of commentary. Here is how the "oral exegesis" scene turned out.

"Help!" cried Bao-yu. "I'm late!" He quickly washed and combed his hair, completed his round of morning duties and set off for school. The Preceptor's *severe expression* as he walked into the schoolroom did not bode well. "Tardy, boy, tardy! What is the meaning of this? Small wonder that you have incurred your father's displeasure and caused him to call you his prodigal son, if this is the way you think you can behave on your second day."

Bao-yu told him of his fever the night before, then crossed over to his desk and sat down to his work.

It was late in the afternoon when he was called forward. "Bao-yu, step up here. Oral Exposition of this text." Bao-yu walked up. On inspection, he found to his relief that it was a rubric he knew. *Analects*, chapter IX, verse XXII: *Maxima Debetur Puero Reverentia*—RESPECT DUE TO YOUTH. "What a

stroke of luck!" he thought to himself. "Thank goodness it's not from the *Mag* or the *Med!*" (Young scholars of that time were wont to use these affectionate abbreviations to refer to those two other venerable texts of Scripture, the *Magna Scientia*, or Great Learning, and the *Medium Immutabile*, or Doctrine of the Mean.)

Yao Xie: People writing compositions nowadays are scared of the Great Learning and the Doctrine of the Mean.

"How do you wish me to begin, sir?"

"*Amplificatio Totius*, boy. Give the substance of the passage carefully in your own words."

Bao-yu first recited the original chapter, in the prescribed sing-song intonation, and then began: "In this verse we have the Sage's Exhortation to Youth to Seize the Hour and Strive with Zeal, lest they end up becoming ..."

Bao-yu looked up at Dai-ru. The Preceptor sensed what was coming and tried to conceal his embarrassment with a short laugh: "Come on, boy, come on. What is holding you back? Are you afraid of using a non-licet *expression up to books? Remember: Scriptural Exegesis is exempt from the normal rules of Verbal Prohibition.* Liber Rituum, *Book I:* 'In Canonicorum Classicorumque Librorum Studiis Nomenclationum cessat Prohibitio.' *What may they end up becoming?*"

"Complete Failures, sir," said Bao-yu, barely suppressing a mischievous smile. "In the first Segment, *Sunt Verendi*, the Sage is Spurring Youth on to Moral Endeavor in the Present, while the last Segment, *Non Sunt Digni Quos Verearis*, contains his Caution for the Future." *He looked up again at Dai-ru.*

Yao Xie: A lifelike stroke.

"That will do. *Interpretatio Partium.*"

Bao-yu began again: "Confucius saith: 'For the Duration of Youth each Spiritual and Mental Talent must be held in Due Esteem. For how can we ever Predict with Certainty another's Ultimate Station in Life? But if a man, by Drifting and Wasting his Days, should reach the Age of Forty or Fifty and still be Unsuccessful and Obscure, then it can fairly be said that his Youthful Promise was an Empty One. He will have Forfeited Forever the Esteem of his Fellow Men.'"

"Your *Amplificatio Totius* was passably clear," commented Dai-ru *with a dry smile.*

Yao Xie: Dai-ru's homily is a serious study of the teacher, not just any old pedantic claptrap.

"But I am afraid your *Interpretatio Partium* showed a good deal of immaturity. In the phrase *sine Nomine, Nomen* refers not to Success in the Worldly Sense but rather to an Individual's Achievement in the Moral and Intellectual Spheres. In this sense it by no means implies Official Rank. On the contrary, many of the Great Sages of Antiquity were Obscure Figures who Withdrew from the World; and yet we hold them in the Highest Esteem, do we not? *Nonne sunt Digni Quos Vereamur?*

"You construe the last sentence incorrectly," he droned on. "Here it is not the element of Esteem but the Irreconcilable Nature of the Judgment of his

Fellow Men that is being contrasted with their Tentative Appraisal of him as a Youth (see second sentence of your text). This emphasis is central to a Correct Elucidation of the passage. Do you follow me?"

Yao Xie: Nice speech!

"Yes, sir."

"Good. Here is another."

Dai-ru turned back a few pages and pointed out a passage to Bao-yu. It was Analects *again, this time chapter IX, verse XVIII:* Ego nondum vidi qui amet Virtutem sicut amat Pulchram Speciem—*THE RARITY OF A SINCERE LOVE OF VIRTUE. Bao-yu scented danger ahead and said with his most ingenuous smile:*

Yao Xie: Struck to the quick!

"*I'm afraid I can't think of anything to say, sir.*"

Yao Xie: Bao-yu has plenty of ideas on the love of Beauty. It's a question of where to start, and how to say it in a penetrating, pithy way. Old Fuddy-duddy scolds him for talking nonsense, and completely fails to understand how pupil differs from teacher.

"*Nonsense, my boy! Is that what you would write if it turned up as a* Thema *in your paper?*"

Yao Xie: Good point!

Reluctantly Bao-yu set the wheels in motion. "Confucius saith: 'Men will not love Virtue, and yet they Fall Down and Worship Sensual Beauty at First Sight. The Reason for this Disaffection is that they are Blind to the Intrinsicality of Virtue. Beauty is an Intrinsic Quality too, and as such Loved by All, but it belongs to the Realm of Human Desire, whereas Virtue is a Natural Principle. How can Principle hope to Compete with Desire for the Affections of men? Confucius is both Lamenting the State of the World and Hoping for a Change of Heart. The Love of Virtue he has observed has been for the most part a Shallow and Short-lived Affair. How Fine it would be if only men would feel for Virtue the Devotion they feel towards Beauty . . ."

"*Thank you, that will do,*" *said Dai-ru.* "I have but one question to put to you. If you understand the words of Confucius so well, why is it that you transgress these very two Precepts? I am only an outsider, but *without need of explanation from your Father* I can identify your Moral Shortcomings. One cannot hope to become a Man except by dint of Constant Self-Improvement. You are at present a Youth of Promise, or as our text has it, *Puer Verendus.* Whether or not you Fulfill this Promise depends entirely on your own efforts. Are you to be a Man of Merit, *Vir Nominis,* or are you to be a Man no Longer Esteemed by his Fellow Men, *Vir Non Iam Verendus?*

"I shall allow you an initial period of one month in which to revise your old texts thoroughly, and a further month in which to study models of Octopartite Composition. At the end of the second month I intend to set you your Maiden Theme. If I detect any sign of slackness on your part, you need not expect me to be lenient. As the saying goes, 'Perfection comes through ceaseless effort; effortless ease brings but perdition.' Be sure to bear in mind all that I have said."

"Yes, sir."

Wang Xilian: The Preceptor's texts are most aptly chosen, a perfect remedy for Bao-yu's defects, calculated to bring our young fop into the paths of Virtue.

While working on this scene in the early 1970s in the Bodleian Library (an institution whose connection with China goes back at least to the seventeenth century), I came across *Cursus Litteraturae Sinicae* by Father Angelo Zottoli of the Jesuit Mission at Zikawei. This extraordinary work, in five hefty tomes, covers the entire corpus of Chinese literature systematically, starting with spoken Mandarin, then treating the Classics, the Four Books, Poetry, Prose, and Octopartite Composition. The whole thing is translated and copiously annotated in Latin and took fifteen years to complete. The final volume was published in 1893. For me the most interesting thing about it was the effortless ease with which the Octopartite section (the fifth and most advanced volume) went into Latin. It dawned on me that Father Zottoli was drawing on a far older tradition than my schoolboy Latin prose composition. He was applying to the Octopartite his knowledge of traditional Latin rhetoric, in which as a Jesuit he had been strictly trained in Naples. The Jesuit textbook of rhetoric, the *Ars Dicendi* of Joseph Kleutgen, was still being reprinted as late as 1928. In other words, the Society of Jesus preserved intact a discipline that elsewhere had been extinct for more than a hundred years.

I decided to take the parallel one stage further back and to imagine Bao-yu more as an aristocratic schoolboy in the sixteenth, seventeenth, or eighteenth century, when fluency in Latin was still taken for granted. Here is part of the scene in chapter 84, when Jia Zheng decides to take a look at his son's academic progress.

Jia Zheng was waiting for him in the inner study. Bao-yu entered, made his bow and stood attentively to one side.

"As you know," Jia Zheng began, "I have been rather preoccupied recently and have not had an opportunity to question you on the progress of your studies. Let me see, I recall that the Preceptor had set you a month for revision, after which time he was to give you your Maiden Theme. That must have been at least two months ago. You should have made a start by now, I think."

"I have, sir," replied Bao-yu. "I have written three compositions. I have been waiting for my work to improve before venturing to trouble you with any specimens of it. Those were the Preceptor's instructions, sir."

"What were your first three Themes?"

"The first was from Analects, sir, Book Two," replied Bao-yu. "'*Annos Quindecim natus:* The Sage Bent upon Learning in his Fifteenth Year.' The second was also from Analects, Book One: '*Obscuritatem Aequo Animo Toleratam:* Lack of Acclaim Borne with Equanimity.' And the third was from Mencius, Book Three, Part Two: '*Tunc Accedunt Micium*: They Succumb to the Mician Heresy.'"

"And have you kept your draft versions?" asked Jia Zheng.

"I have fair copies of all three, sir, with the Preceptor's emendations."

"Are they at home, or in the schoolroom?" "In the schoolroom, sir." "Then have someone go and fetch them at once. I should like to see them."

Bao-yu sent an "express" message through to Tealeaf: "Go to the schoolroom; in the drawer of my desk is a thin bamboo-paper copybook with *Tasks* written on the cover. Bring it here, quickly!"

In a short while Tealeaf returned with the book, which he handed to Bao-yu, who presented it to his father. Jia Zheng opened it at the first page and began reading the first of the eight "legs" of Bao-yu's Maiden Task.

AMPLICATIO PRIMA
THEMA: ANNOS QUINDECIM NATUS
CRUS PRIMUM: APERTURA
Sapiens perfectusque Vir
a puero quidem
se ad Philosophiam applicavit.

Jia Zheng glanced at the emendation and asked Bao-yu to construe his Apertura orally. Bao-yu began: "The Sage, while still a boy . . . forsooth . . . was wholly Bent upon Learning."

Jia Zheng looked up. "Your use of *puer* betrays an inadequate comprehension of the Theme. I see the Preceptor has substituted the *annos quindecim natus* of the original. Good. *Pueritia*, you see, covers the whole span of boyhood up to and including the age of sixteen, whereas here the Sage is alluding to specific milestones in his own life. We must echo the numbers he uses, if we are to preserve the correct sequence of his moral and intellectual development." Jia Zheng continued with the second "leg."

CRUS SECUNDUM: CONTINUATIO
Tantam autem Applicationem
Rarissimam esse confiteor.

"And what," he asked with a shake of the head, "do you mean by this?"

"That the Sage's application," replied Bao-yu, "is a thing ordinary mortals scarcely ever achieve."

"Childish nonsense, my boy! It only shows what a creature of indolence you are. I am glad to see that the Preceptor has rewritten the entire *Continuatio* for you. Kindly construe, from *romnibus enim*."

Bao-yu obliged: "For many are those who aspire to Learning. But how few alas possess the application necessary for the fulfillment of his Aspiration. Does not the Sage's achievement testify to the strength of his Moral Convictions in his Fifteenth Year?"

"I thank you. I trust you understand the emendation?" "Yes sir."

Jia Zheng passed on to the second Theme: "Lack of Acclaim Borne with Equanimity." (It may be helpful at this point to provide some idea of the pedagogic principles that guided Dai-ru in his selection of Themes for his young pupil. His plan was roughly speaking as follows: First Theme—reiterate need for Youthful Zeal; Second Theme—clarify point raised during second day's oral exegesis, viz., Worldly Success versus Moral Achievement; Third Theme—Orthodoxy versus Heresy). Jia Zheng read the Preceptor's emended version,

translating to himself as he went along: "If a man is able to view Worldly Acclaim with Equanimity, nothing can affect his Pleasure and Delight." He screwed up his eyes to decipher Bao-yu's original: "What's all this? 'Equanimity is the Essence of Scholarship.' You have completely failed to treat the first element in your Theme, *Obscuritas*, and have embarked prematurely on a discussion of *Nobilitas*, which should be kept for a later section. Your Preceptor's emendation shows a correct *Dispositio*. I hope you notice the way in which he uses *Amoenitatem Delectationemque Animi* to allude to the passage in Analects immediately preceding the rubric? Do you recall? *Nonne quidem amoenum? Nonne quidem delectabile?* You must study this sort of thing carefully."

"Yes sir."

Jia Zheng went on to read Bao-yu's *Continuatio*. There was another reference here to the Essence of Scholarship, which had once again been emended by the Preceptor to Pleasure and Delight. "The same fault as in your *Apertura*," commented Jia Zheng. "The emendation is tolerable. Not particularly stylish, but clear."

He moved on to the third and last Theme: "The Mician Heresy." As he recollected the provenance of the quotation, he looked up in surprise and after a moment's thought asked Bao-yu: "Have you reached this far in Mencius?"

"Yes sir," Bao-yu hastened to assure him. "The Preceptor decided to go through Mencius with me first, as it is the easiest of the Four Books. We finished the whole of Mencius three days ago, and now we are doing Analects Part One."

Jia Zheng continued reading. By the time Bao-yu had come to write this third composition, he had more or less mastered the "ignoble art of the Octopartite," and had learned to handle the necessary rhetorical constructions with a certain glib dexterity. Jia Zheng studied the first two "legs" and observed that in this case the Preceptor had paid the young essayist the compliment of a total suspension of the corrective brush. The *Apertura* lamented the fact that those who rejected the Hedonist Doctrine of Yanxius (*Yanxianam illam Voluptatis Doctrinam*) were still unable to find the True Path of Confucian Orthodoxy (*Orthodoxiae Confucianae Veram Viam*), but were instead blindly drawn into the fold of that prevalent (and deplorable) Mician Heresy of Universal Love (*Micianam illam Caritatis Universae Heterodoxiam*).

"Nicely put," Jia Zheng commented, and continued reading. A little further on he paused. "Tell me," he asked, evidently impressed by what he read, "did you write this unaided?" "Yes, sir." He nodded pensively. "Nothing brilliant about it, of course, but for a first attempt not at all bad, I must say. Ah, Mencius! I recall how during my tour of duty as an examiner I had occasion to set as one of my Themes '*Soli Nobilitatis Sapentiaeque Alumni sunt potis*.' All the first-degree candidates, I regret to say, had their heads crammed full of the standard compositions on the Theme, and not a single one of them could come up with anything original. All plagiarisms. Are you familiar with the quotation?" "Yes, sir. Mencius, Book One, Part Two: 'Only Good Breeding and a Heritage of Culture have the power to sustain a man in the face of Adversity.'" "Good," replied Jia Zheng. "I should like you to show me what you can do. Something of your own, please, not another feat of memorization. An *Apertura* will do."

Bao-yu lowered his head in concentration and began racking his brains for a pithy opening phrase, while Jia Zheng stood thoughtfully in the doorway, hands clasped behind his back. Just at that moment, a diminutive page boy went flashing past. As he caught sight of the Master in the doorway, he froze, his body slightly inclined, his arms hanging limp at his side. "What is your errand, boy?" asked Jia Zheng brusquely. "Please, sir, Mrs. Xue has just arrived at Her Old Ladyship's and Mrs. Lian has sent me with special instructions to the kitchen, sir," jabbered the unfortunate boy. Jia Zheng made no reply, and he fled.

Now Bao-yu assumed that if Aunt Xue had come over for a visit, then Bao-chai (whom he had greatly missed since her departure from the Garden) was sure to have come with her. His excitement at the thought of seeing her again spurred him on. "Sir," he ventured, "I have a draft *Apertura* for your approval." "Go ahead." Bao-yu intoned his opening sentence: "*Non amnes Sapientiae Alumni sunt, neque possunt carere Stabili Patrimonio.*" Jia Zheng nodded. "Thank you. That will do for today. In future, please bear in mind these two Golden Rules for Composition. Before raising your brush, always be certain of the sequence of your *Dispositio* and the clarity of your *Inventio*. Tell me, was your grandmother aware that I sent for you?" "Yes sir." "Off you go then. You had better go over and see her now." "Sir!" Bao-yu maneuvered his way backwards out of the study and set off along the covered way, imitating to perfection the scholar's leisurely gait. As soon as he reached the moon-gate, however, and had placed its large protective screen between himself and the study, he broke into a run and raced ahead toward Grandmother Jia's apartment. "Careful you don't trip!" Tealeaf shouted after him. "The Master's coming."

We have only to compare this with the following account of the sixteenth-century learning of rhetoric in Europe:

> In their reading as in their own writing they were taught to observe the larger processes of rhetoric (the five parts of an oration, the three styles, how to write using a formulary system) and to know the name, definition and use of a large number of figures of speech. In the fourth year (at the age of about ten) they would use that seminal work Erasmus's *De Copia* "On the Copy (i.e., amplification) of Words and Things" and in the fifth form they would graduate to the list of figures in Susenbrotus's popular collection or in *Ad Herennium*, Book Four. What pupils actually did when confronted with these compilations may be expressed in quite a bald way: "first learn the figures, secondly identify them in whatever you read, thirdly use them yourself.... In the last stage (that of the pupil using the figures himself), the pupil when given the topic for his theme, should first take his notebook, look up everything that might be useful, sketch the argument, and then put it into the five-part form, endeavouring to use the formulae "proper to each part, so as to bring their matter into handsome and plain order." (From T. W. Baldwin, *William Shakespeare's Small Latine & Lesse Greeke*)

And for a detailed example, we can do no better than Edward VI:

> ... the teaching of royalty was of sufficient importance for the notebooks of King Edward VI to have been preserved. The king had the best humanist teacher in England, Sir John Cheke (who was to have such an enormous influence on Cambridge), and one can trace the progress of instruction in his pupil's exercise-book. In 1547–8 he was taught the figures and the parts of an oration from the *Ad Herennium* (the King's own copy of this has also survived and is well thumbed, especially in the relevant parts) and he simply memorized them like everyone else. We can trace too the next stage, rhetorical analysis of the works studied. In 1548 he was reading the most popular book of moral philosophy in the Renaissance, Cicero's *offices*, extracting *sententiae* and phrases from it, then making an analysis of its structure. More interesting is the evidence that on 28 January 1549 he made a rhetorical analysis of Cicero's famous first speech against Catiline, noting the "figures and phrases" used in it. Of the celebrated direct opening "Quousque tamen abutere Catilina patientia nostra" ("In heaven's name, Catiline, how long will you abuse our patience?") he wrote *Exclamatio*; of another passage repeating "nihil" at the beginning of 6 succeeding clauses he wrote *conduplicatio* ... It is a formal enough exercise but at least as good as that performed by a modern historian of rhetoric. The third stage of the schoolboy's absorption of rhetoric can also be seen here, for in 1549 the young King Edward wrote a Latin composition on the theme "Love is a greater cause of obedience than fear," an especially interesting topic for a ruler. First he collected all his main arguments (*inventio*), also listing similes and examples which he intended to use; then he divided the material up in the form of the five parts of a speech (*dispositio*); lastly he wrote the whole thing out, neatly using up all his quotations.
>
> King Edward VI may have had more individual supervision than other Renaissance schoolboys, but the teaching system and its dominance by rhetoric was the same for him or for Queen Elizabeth as for thousands of other pupils including all the great writers of this period. (From Vickers, *Classical Rhetoric in English Poetry*)

Father Zottoli's Latin translation of the terminology of Octopartite rhetoric is startlingly effortless. No wonder the Jesuits made such good Mandarins! Here are a few examples:

Structure of Octopartite Composition

1. Apertura 破題	2. Continuatio 承題	3. Exordium 起講
4. Transitio 提股	5. Adventitia 虛股	6. Medium Crus 中股
7. Extremum crus 後股	8. Conclusio 收題	

Compare *Ad Herrenium*

1. Exordium	2. Narratio	3. Divisio
4. Confirmatio	5. Confutatio	6. Conclusio

Types of Apertura

1. Evidens 明	2. Obtecta 暗	3. Directa 順	4. Inversa 逆
5. A Recto 正	6. A Contrario 反	7. A Parallelo 對	8. Distributa 分

Faults of Style

1. Si continuat praecedentia 連上文　　2. Si invadit subsequentia 犯下文
3. Si fiat manca, ita ut necessaria thematis verba non exponantur. 漏題

Envoi

Having dumped Jia Zheng into the sea and fished up Father Zottoli, it is probably high time to leave the island, or else its heady alchemy will turn our heads altogether. And yet that is what makes translating a great work of the imagination, such fun, such an adventure. The island is alive with magic, it is peopled with Ariels and Calibans. It was after all Chapman, the translator, not Homer, the blind bard, who caused Keats to feel like "some watcher of the skies, when a new planet swims into his ken." Translating is an exciting creative endeavor, even though at times the island (like Treasure Island) does seem accursed, and (in Robert Louis Stevenson's immortal words) "the worst dreams that ever I have are when I hear the surf booming about its coasts, or start upright in bed, with the sharp voice of Captain Flint still ringing in my ears: 'Pieces of eight! Pieces of eight!'"

NOTES

1. Ch'en Shih-hsiang's translation, from Birch's *Anthology*.
2. See his *Medieval Bases of Western Thought*.
3. Cf. Inferno, Canto V, ll. 124–25: "Yet, if so dear desire thy heart possess / To know that root of love which wrought our fall" (Sayers translation).
4. I should like to pay tribute to C. C. Wang's "Nonesuch Bluff," one of his inspired strokes in that early version, which was all we had for so many years. The double entendre in *Bluff* and the teasing nomenclature of *nonesuch* are wonderful.
5. In *La Vie quotidienne en Chine sous les Mandchous*.
6. In this and following quotations, passages in italics are editorial additions or changes in the so-called Gao Draft manuscript. I believe a study of these changes to be of huge benefit to the translator searching for innuendo, or the "secret message." I have used Pan Chong-gui's excellent black and red edition.
7. I occasionally add the comments of two nineteenth-century commentators, Wang Xilian and Yao Xie, again because I find them helpful in interpreting the "subtext."
8. Bao-yu's quip also refers to Zhuang-zi, and it is fascinating in this context to note that Oscar Wilde was greatly taken with Herbert Giles's translation of Zhuang-zi, describing it in 1890 as "the most caustic criticism of modern life I have met with for some time."
9. Passages in italics and underlined are even later editorial additions, i.e., they are nowhere to be found in the Gao Draft but are present in the Cheng/Gao printed text.
10. I give these passages in full, since it may not be easy to refer to the published text.
11. In so doing he put to good use his own considerable expertise in this field. Extracts from two of his own collections of model Octopartites are included in the 1955 *Gao Lanshu ji*.