

## COMMUNICATIONS

Editor, *Journal of Asian Studies*

This note concerns Mr. C. T. Hsia's quite unfair review of Mr. S. C. Wu's book, *On the Red Chamber Dream*, printed in the November 1961 issue, pp. 78–80. This review states that it presents new materials. Quite the contrary is the case. Mr. Hsia appears to have read at most only two out of the twenty chapters and three appendices in the book, although he writes a long review.

Mr. Wu's book analyzes and dates various parts of the newly discovered early manuscripts of this book, dates carefully a series of early comments found in them, identifies the commentator as the model for the hero of the book, discovers short prefaces to many chapters written by the author's younger brother, identifies the location of the garden and mansion which is the chief scene of the story, reconstructs stories of the lost manuscripts planned for the author's final forty chapters—all of which and other important items are not even mentioned in Mr. Hsia's review. The result is that Mr. Wu's book appears quite unimportant, instead of what it is—an outstanding piece of literary detective work.

Mr. Hsia accepts the theory that the early commentator upon the book was a certain "Ts'ao Yü-feng," the *posthumous* son of Ts'ao Yung. Now Ts'ao Yung died in 1715, so that his son was born later in the same year. Mr. Wu points out that this early commentator also explicitly states he saw the Imperial Southern Excursion of the K'ang-hsi Emperor. But this Emperor made his last such excursion in 1707 (cf. Wu, pp. 73–4), eight years before Ts'ao Yü-feng was born—an anachronism typical of Mr. Hsia's carelessness. Mr. Wu on the other hand identifies this commentator with Ts'ao Chu-chien (ca. 1679–1775), who was also the model for the novel's hero. The author was this man's nephew, Ts'ao Chan. This identification has since been confirmed in a publication by an eighteenth century Manchu, who quotes close friends of the author (Wu, p. 95).

Unfortunately, Mr. Hsia does not mention and seems not to have seen this important information! It is feared that this lapse is merely an indication of the reviewer's superficial reading in Mr. Wu's long and careful piece of scientific research. Instead he states that Mr. Wu's "structure of research is built on shaky grounds."

Mr. Hsia leaves the reader with the impression that Mr. Wu had added little or nothing to our knowledge of this important novel, which he does by the device of concentration on a feature that is incidental to Mr. Wu's work and to which, for the sake of completeness, Mr. Wu devotes less than a tenth of the book. This is the "Ch'eng-Kao" supplement, consisting of the last forty chapters in the present version of the novel. Referring to a Preface to this novel, written by Mr. Yü, Mr. Hsia states that "in China, this theory [about Kao's authorship] is now regarded by many as no longer tenable and has been abandoned by Yü P'ing-po." But Mr. Yü P'ing-po's long "preface" of almost 22,000 Chinese characters with many long notes, does *not* state, as Mr. Hsia says, that "In China this theory is now regarded as no longer tenable." In fact, Mr. Yü has definitely not abandoned this theory!

Perhaps the motivation of the whole review appears at its end in the praise of Lin Yutang's paper "Re-opening the Question of Authorship of 'Red Chamber Dream'", which actually only discussed the last forty chapters of the novel, assigning them to Ts'ao Chan. In discussing this opinion, Mr. Hsia offers no objective evidence, merely praising Lin Yutang and charging those who disagree with him as guilty of "bias"! The important point is that Mr. Hsia's review is grossly unfair and fails to do justice both to the book reviewed and to the *Journal* in which his review is published.

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*Reply to Professor Dubs*

May I say first of all that my review does

not claim to have presented "new materials." All the materials mentioned in the review are discussed at length by Mr. Wu, with the exception of a group of articles by Chao Kang which had appeared too recently for Mr. Wu to make use of them in his study. Secondly, I hope Professor Dubs does not seriously believe that I "have read at most only two chapters . . . and three appendices in the book": the charge would be grave if it were true.

I am sorry my review has given Professor Dubs the impression that I have deliberately minimized Mr. Wu's contributions. I thought I had given, in the first paragraph of my review, a fair outline of his work, indicating its importance as in the nature of a culmination of forty years of modern scholarship. I could have specified its many scholarly contributions but because space was limited and because the book ultimately failed my expectations, I felt duty-bound to concentrate on one major assumption of the author's which, in my opinion, is mainly responsible for his failure to advance significantly beyond the work of others—his theory that the novel as it now stands suffers grossly from Kao Ê's incompetent authorship of the last forty chapters and his irresponsible revision of the first eighty.

Far from being "incidental to Mr. Wu's work," as Professor Dubs has maintained, this theory underlies, to my mind, the largely unprofitable labor that has gone into Parts IV and V, and much of the research that has gone into Parts I–III, with all its undeniable independent merits, is apparently designed to support the thesis of Kao Ê's authorship. This thesis is so basic to Mr. Wu's understanding of the novel that he provided one long appendix and one section of his "Summaries and Conclusions" for its defense.

Professor Dubs accuses me of "carelessness," but he himself quotes twice from my review, and both times inaccurately. While the first misquotation is harmless enough, the second distorts my meaning. I did not write, "In China, this theory [about Kao's authorship] is now regarded by many as no longer tenable. . . ." I wrote, "In the light of the new materials recently discovered in China, this theory . . . is . . . no longer tenable," which makes quite a difference. The new materials affect not only

scholars in China, but scholars everywhere. I referred to Yü P'ing-po in this connection because as its one-time champion his changed view seems characteristic of the new, and more sensible approach to the problem of authorship. On the evidence of the striking resemblance of the 80-chapter Chia-ch'en (1784) copy to the corresponding text of the 1791 version, he thinks it highly unlikely that Ch'eng Wei-yüan and Kao Ê could have fabricated the text of the last forty chapters. He is even disposed to believe their prefatory statements concerning the acquisition of the lost manuscripts. Professor Dubs is advised to reread Mr. Yü's preface to *Pa-shih-hui Chiao-pen*, Vol. I, particularly p. 17 and Note 28 on pp. 30–31.

I endorse neither Mr. Wu's theory nor Mr. Chao's in regard to the identity of Chih-yen Chai. In the case of Chih-yen Chai's identity, I believe Mr. Wu has done a brilliant piece of "literary detective work," but so has Mr. Chao in his article, "Chih-yen Chai yü *Hung-lou Meng*" (*Ta-lu Tsa-chih*, XX, Nos. 2–4). Chih-yen Chai frequently assumes an avuncular manner: the comment cited by Professor Dubs (Wu, pp. 73–4) along with many others would certainly place him in the position of an uncle. But his other comments, equally numerous, would suggest a younger person of Ts'ao Chan's generation. Mr. Chao has given four reasons why the commentator could not be older than the author by three or four years; furthermore, he has identified Ts'ao Yü-feng as the owner of a red ink-slab (a treasured heirloom), thus explaining the puzzling pen name Chih-yen Chai. Mr. Chao's proofs in support of his theory, of course, do not invalidate Mr. Wu's equally cogent proofs in favor of his candidate, Ts'ao Chu-chien; this only shows the baffling nature of the problem. It simply won't do to suppose, as Professor Dubs has done, that Ts'ao Chu-chien's identity with Chih-yen Chai "has since been confirmed in a publication by an eighteenth century Manchu, who quotes close friends of the author." This same Manchu, Yu Jui, whose work, *Tsao-ch'ung Hsien-pi*, has long been known to scholars, was the first to assert that the last forty chapters were a forgery, and much of his information was based on hearsay.

In fairness to Lin Yutang, I would like to

point out that his article does not deal only with the last forty chapters. In fact, Dr. Lin's signal service has been to direct attention to the large number of discrepancies and inconsistencies in the first eighty chapters so that the comparable faults of the last forty chapters appear much less glaring in comparison. My review may have given the impression that I endorse Dr. Lin's article without reservations, but of course it is common knowledge that he has uncritically accepted some of Chou Ju-ch'ang's implausible theories and has had no access to

new material that would have strengthened his argument against Kao's authorship. But I share completely Dr. Lin's impatience with scholars who attack the "Kao   supplement" on inappropriate ideological grounds. Those who would prefer the reconstructed novel with its advanced social consciousness and its "grander, more tragic and complicated episodes" (Wu, p. 282) to the much humbler version that we now have may accuse me of being guilty of bias.

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