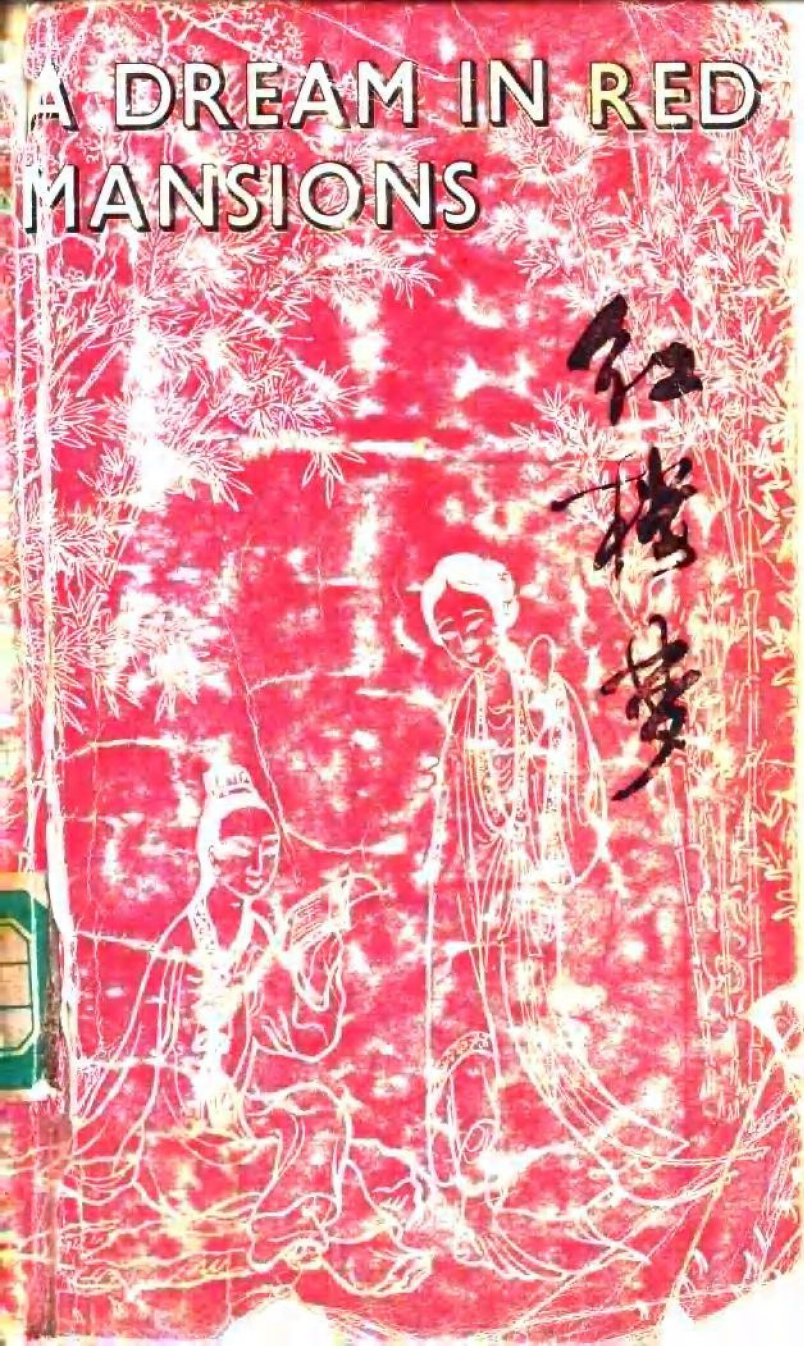


# A DREAM IN RED MANSIONS



# A DREAM IN RED MANSIONS

Saga of a Noble Chinese Family  
(A Simplified English Version)

Written by Cao Xueqin  
Simplified by Huang Xinqu

红 楼 梦

(英文缩写本)

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## FOREWORD

More than three years ago when I was still on a lecture tour in the United States, I received a letter from Lin Xuehong, editor-in-chief of the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, Beijing through Prof. Wang Zuoliang. Mr. Lin asked me whether I would like to make a simplified English version of one of the four great classical Chinese novels. *A Dream in Red Mansions* was my own choice from among the four major Chinese literary classics.

*A Dream in Red Mansions* was written by Cao Xueqin (1719–1763) and completed by Gao E in the mid-eighteenth century. This great saga of a noble Chinese family consists of 120 chapters, in which as many as 975 characters are depicted with interesting dialogues. Since the middle of the 19th century, various abridged English versions have appeared in the West. Prof. David Hawkes from Oxford University produced his first volume of the complete translation of this world classic in 1973, published by Penguin Books. This was followed by another complete translation by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang, published in 1978 and 1980 by the Foreign Languages Press, Beij-

ing. However, most of the general reading public both in China and in the West might find it a bit hard to read through the thick volumes of a complete translation. In view of this, I have tried to offer this simplified English version for Western readers who are interested in Chinese literature but cannot afford the time and effort to read the novel in a full translation. That is why I have made it an easy-to-read version in modern English. An attempt has been made to omit and simplify those minor details and unessential episodes, focusing on the chief characters and the main lines of the story, in the hope of presenting a general picture of the work so as to make this world masterpiece readily accessible to a wider circle of readers.

Taking as a basis form the complete Chinese original text published by the People's Literature Publishing House, Beijing (1982 edition) and an expurgated Chinese edition prepared by Mao Dun, the noted Chinese writer, and published by the Kaiming Press in 1935, I first worked out my Chinese version and then did the English version

Of my international friends who have made their comments and suggestions for improvement on various parts of the typescript, I would like to thank Prof. Wilbur Birly (US), Ralene Penner (US), Madeleine Enns (Canada), and Dr. Charles Tyzack (UK). I am

also indebted to Juliet Yu for typing the manuscripts. Steven and Tom Huang for their assistance in proofreading the various chapters. Thanks are also due to Wang Chunli of FLTRP for her efforts in the editing and publishing of the book. Prof. Tsou Jiang and Dr. Kuan Yu-chien from Hamburg University, Germany, have extended their unforgettable support and encouragement to me. Without the warm-hearted help in one way or another by the above-mentioned friends, I could hardly have completed this immense task. Any further comments or suggestions for the improvement of this experiment are heratily welcome.

October 1, 1986

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Huang Xinqu

## 前 言

三年前,我还在美国讲学时,就接到北京外语教学与研究出版社主编林学洪同志通过王佐良教授给我来信,约我编译一部中国古典文学名著的简写本。我选择了中国文学四大名著之一《红楼梦》。

《红楼梦》原著由十八世纪中叶的曹雪芹(1719—1763)写成,后由高鄂续完。这部描写中国封建贵族世家的文学名著共有 120 章,大小人物达 975 人之多。全书情节复杂,对话生动有趣。从十九世纪中叶以来,国外曾出版过几种不同的节译本。直到 1973 年英国企鹅书店才出版了牛津大学霍克斯教授全译本的第一册,然后北京外文出版社又于 1978 年和 1980 年先后出版了杨宪益、戴乃迭夫妇合译的三卷全译本。然而,无论是中国的青年读者,或是西方的一般读者,都要花很多时间和精力才能读完厚厚几大册英文全译本,恐怕还有一定的困难。有鉴于此,我才尝试缩写和编译了这个英文简写本,供国内英语专业师生和爱好英语的广大青年读者使用,也供国外对中国文学感兴趣,但又不愿花太多的时间就可以浏览这部世界名著的读者阅读。为此,本书采用了通俗易懂的现代英语。我力图保持原著的精华,突出主要人物情节,将可有可无的次要人物和情节简化和删削,使人读后可以了解原著的概貌,从而有利于这一世界文学名著的普

及工作。

本书根据人民文学出版社 1982 年 3 月出版的《红楼梦》中文版和由开明书店 1935 年出版,茅盾先生节编的《红楼梦》洁本进一步补充和删削,先改编为中文稿,然后再编译成这个英文简写本。

不少外国友人看过我的译稿,并提出了修改意见。在此我要感谢美国伯克教授、彭纳尔教授、加拿大恩施女士和英国郇则可博士。此外,我还要感谢余玉立为我打字,黄文军、黄越校对了部分章节。还要感谢北京外语教学与研究出版社王春丽同志为本书的编辑和出版付出了辛勤的劳动。

邹绛教授和西德汉堡大学关愚谦博士对本书出版的关注和鼓励也是令人难忘的。没有以上朋友的热诚相助,要完成这部文学巨著的中文缩写和英文编译,是完全不可能的。衷心欢迎专家和读者对本书批评指正,以便今后进一步完善和修订。

黄新渠



## MAIN CHARACTERS

### I. The Honoured Mansion (The West Mansion)

#### *Heads of the Jia Household*

Lady Dowager (贾母), née Shi, Widow of Jia Daishan, ruler of the Jia Household

#### *The Seniors*

Jia She (贾赦), elder son of Lady Dowager

Lady Xing (邢夫人), née Xing, wife of Jia She

Jia Zheng (贾政), younger son of Lady Dowager, master of the Honoured Mansion

Lady Wang (王夫人), née Wang, wife of Jia Zheng, mother of Magic Jade

#### *The Juniors*

Jia Lian (贾琏), son of Jia She

Madam Phoenix (Wang Xifeng 王熙凤), wife of Jia Lian, Lady Wang's niece, taking charge of the Honoured Mansion

Magic Jade (Jia Baoyu 贾宝玉), son of Jia Zheng and Lady Wang

Jia Huan (贾环), son of Jia Zheng by his secondary wife Zhao; half brother of Magic Jade

Li Wan (李纨), widow of Jia Zhu and mother of Jia Lan

### *The Female Juniors*

Beginning of Spring (Yuanchun 元春), daughter of Jia Zheng and Lady Wang, elder sister of Magic Jade; Imperial Consort

Greeting of Spring (Yinchun 迎春), daughter of Jia She by his secondary wife

Taste of Spring (Tanchun 探春), daughter of Jia Zheng by his secondary wife Zhao, half sister of Magic Jade

Jia Lan (贾兰), son of Jia Zhu, the deceased son of Jia Zheng

### *Relations of the Jia Household*

Lin Ruhai (林如海), Son-in-law of Lady Dowager Black Jade (Lin Daiyu 林黛玉), daughter of Lin Ruhai, granddaughter of Lady Dowager, Magic Jade's love

Aunt Xue (薛姨妈), elder sister of Lady Wang

Precious Hairpin (Xue Baochai 薛宝钗), daughter of Aunt Xue, Magic Jade's wife

Xue Pan (薛蟠), son of Aunt Xue, brother of Precious Hairpin

Lotus (香菱), secondary wife of Xue Pan, kidnapped daughter of Zhen Shiyin (甄士隐), a retired scholar

River Cloud (Shi Xiangyun 史湘云), orphaned grandniece of Lady Dowager

Jia Yucun (贾雨村), a poor scholar claiming relationship with the powerful Honoured Mansion  
Granny Liu (刘姥姥), an old countrywoman patronized by Madam Phoenix and the Jias of the Honoured Mansion

## II. The Peaceful Mansion (The East Mansion)

Jia Jing (贾敬), son of Jia Daihua, retired to a Taoist temple

Jia Zhen (贾珍), son of Jia Jing; in his place master of the Peaceful Mansion

Madam You (尤氏), née You, wife of Jia Zhen

Jia Rong (贾蓉), son of Jia Zhen

Mistress Rong, wife of Jia Rong, also known by her childhood name Qin Keqing (秦可卿)

Grief of Spring (Xichun 惜春), daughter of Jia Jing

Old Mrs. You (尤姥娘), stepmother of Madam You

Second Sister You (尤二姐), elder daughter of Old Mrs. You, later secondary wife of Jia Lian

Third Sister You (尤三姐), Younger daughter of Old Mrs. You

Qin Zhong (秦钟), younger brother of Qin Keqing; Magic Jade's classmate under the same tutor

Jiao Da (焦大), an old retainer of the Peaceful Mansion

## Main Waiting Maids

### Lady Dowager

Lovebird (Yuanyang 鸳鸯)

Amber (琥珀)

Sister Silly (傻大姐)

### Lady Wang

Gold Bracelet (金钏)

### Madam Phoenix

Patience (平儿)

### Magic Jade

Aroma (Xiren 袭人)

Skybright (Qinwen 晴雯)

Musk (Sheyue 麝月)

### Black Jade

Cuckoo (Zijuan 紫娟)

Snowswan (Xueyan 雪雁)

### Precious Hairpin

Oriole (莺儿)

Apricot (杏儿)

### Greeting of Spring

Chess (司棋)

### Taste of Spring

Scribe (侍书)

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## Chapter 1

### A Poor Scholar's Tale

Our story takes place in Suzhou, the garden city situated in the southeastern part of the great plains in China, in one of the rich and mighty quarters beyond the Imperial Gate of that city. It is a region of wealth and nobility in this mortal world. Outside the gate stretched a "Three-Mile Street." In a narrow lane of that street stood an old Buddhist temple known as "Gourd Temple." Beside this temple lived a respected gentleman named Zhen Shiyin with his graceful and virtuous wife, née Feng. Though not rich or noble, this family was most respected in that area. Quiet and easy-going by nature, Zhen was not a lover of honour or rank. However, he took great pleasure in tending his flowers, growing bamboos, or chanting classical Chinese poetry over a glass of wine. He enjoyed his free hours very much like an immortal. Only one thing he missed: he was well over fifty but had no little son to rock on his knees. Fate only granted him a three-year-old daughter named Lotus.

One day, as Shiyin was sitting idly at home, he saw his neighbour dropping in for a visit. The visitor was a poor scholar named Jia Yucun. A native of