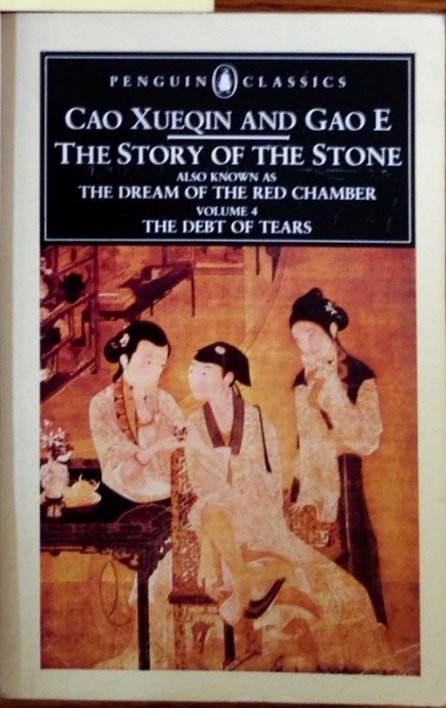
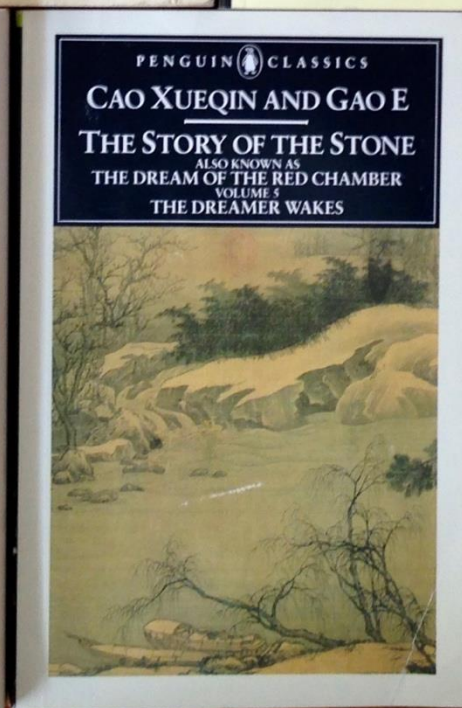
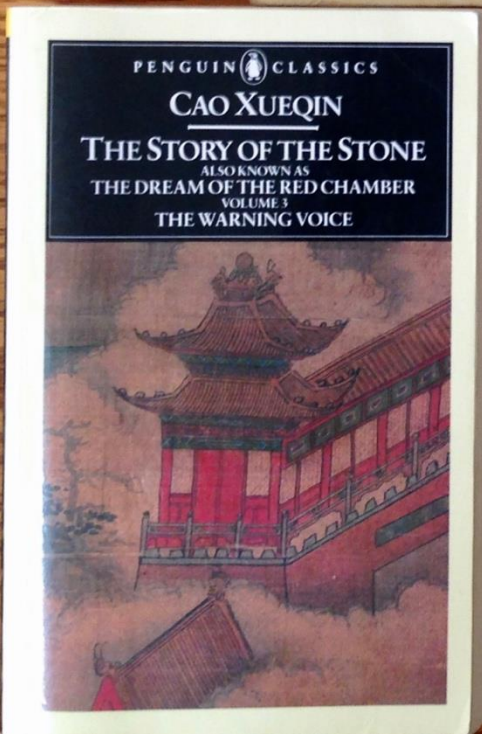
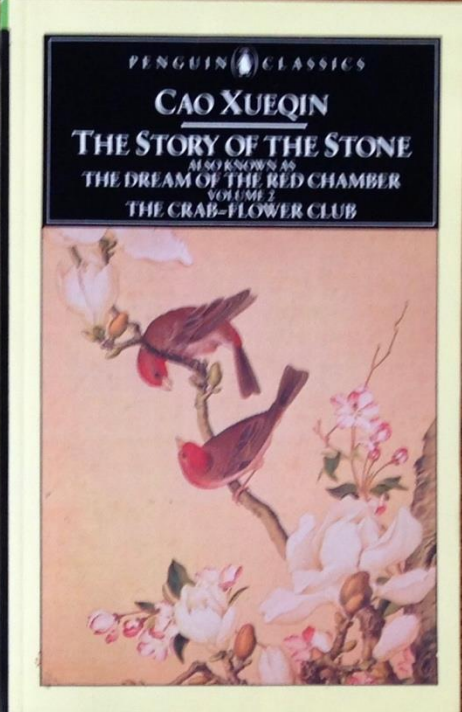
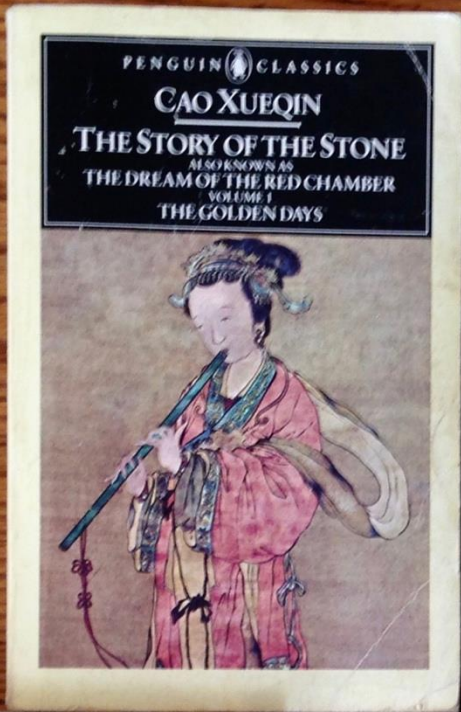


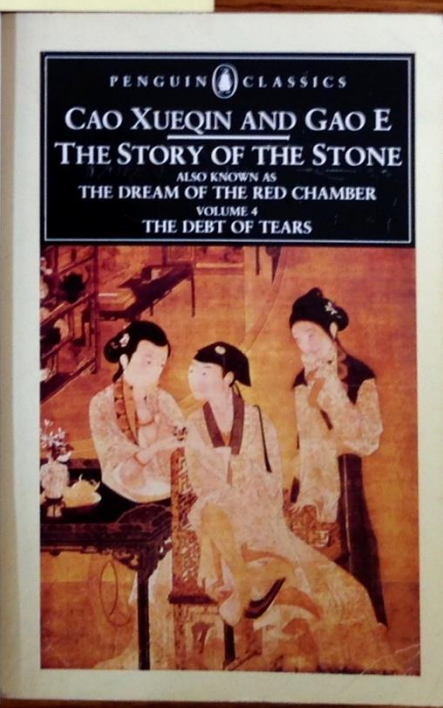
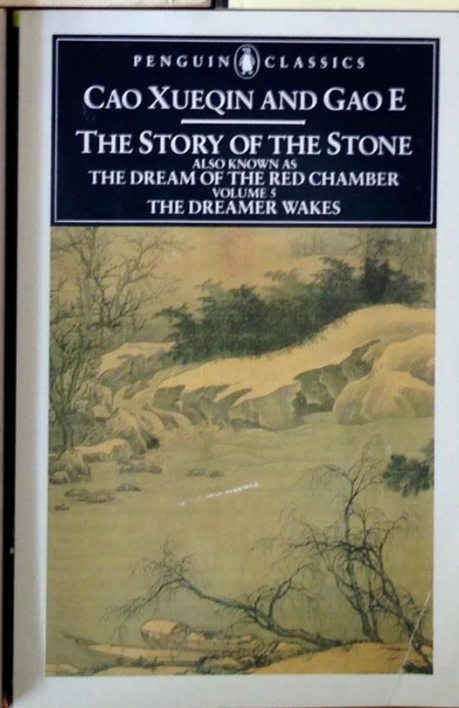
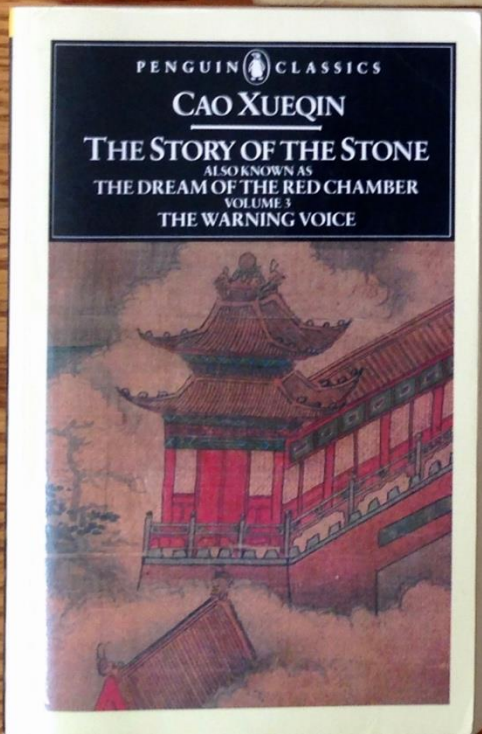
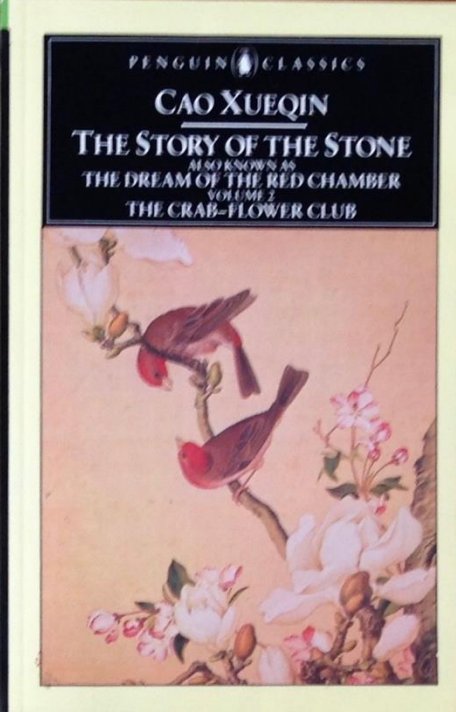
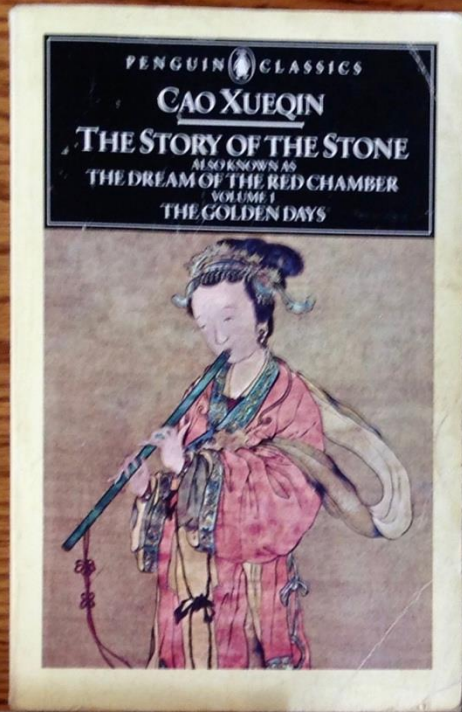
An Introduction to
The Story of the Stone

A traditional Chinese painting depicting a palace interior. In the center, a figure sits on a throne, flanked by two other figures. A large group of people in traditional attire is gathered around, some standing and some kneeling. The room is decorated with a large patterned rug, a golden incense burner in the foreground, and various ceremonial objects. The background features ornate architectural details and hanging lanterns.

The Story of the Stone
aka
The Dream of the Red Chamber



120 chapters.



Five volumes in
English
translation.

My aims today:

01

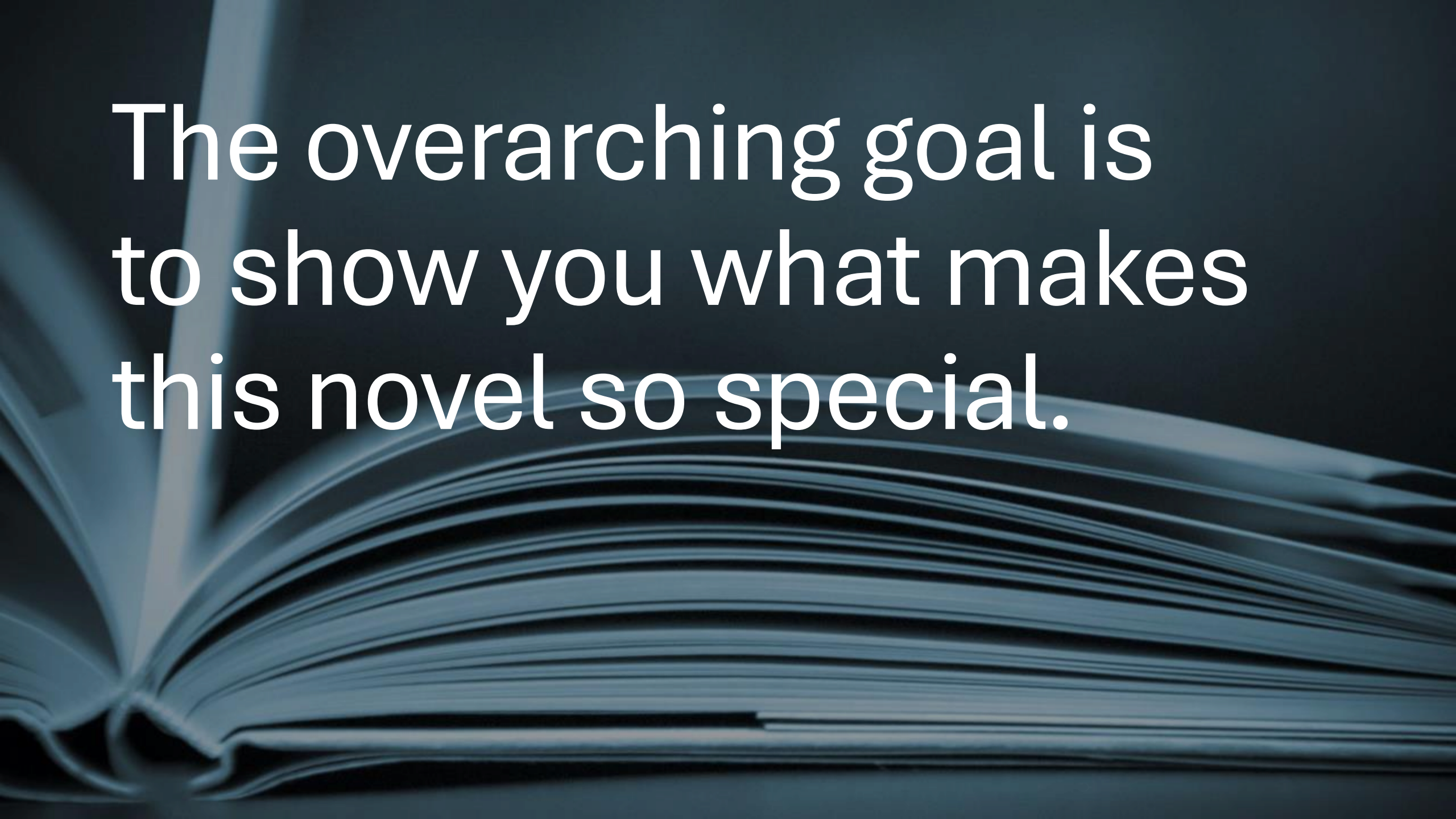
Explaining how important this novel is to Chinese culture;

02

Describing its two levels, the social and the cosmic;

03

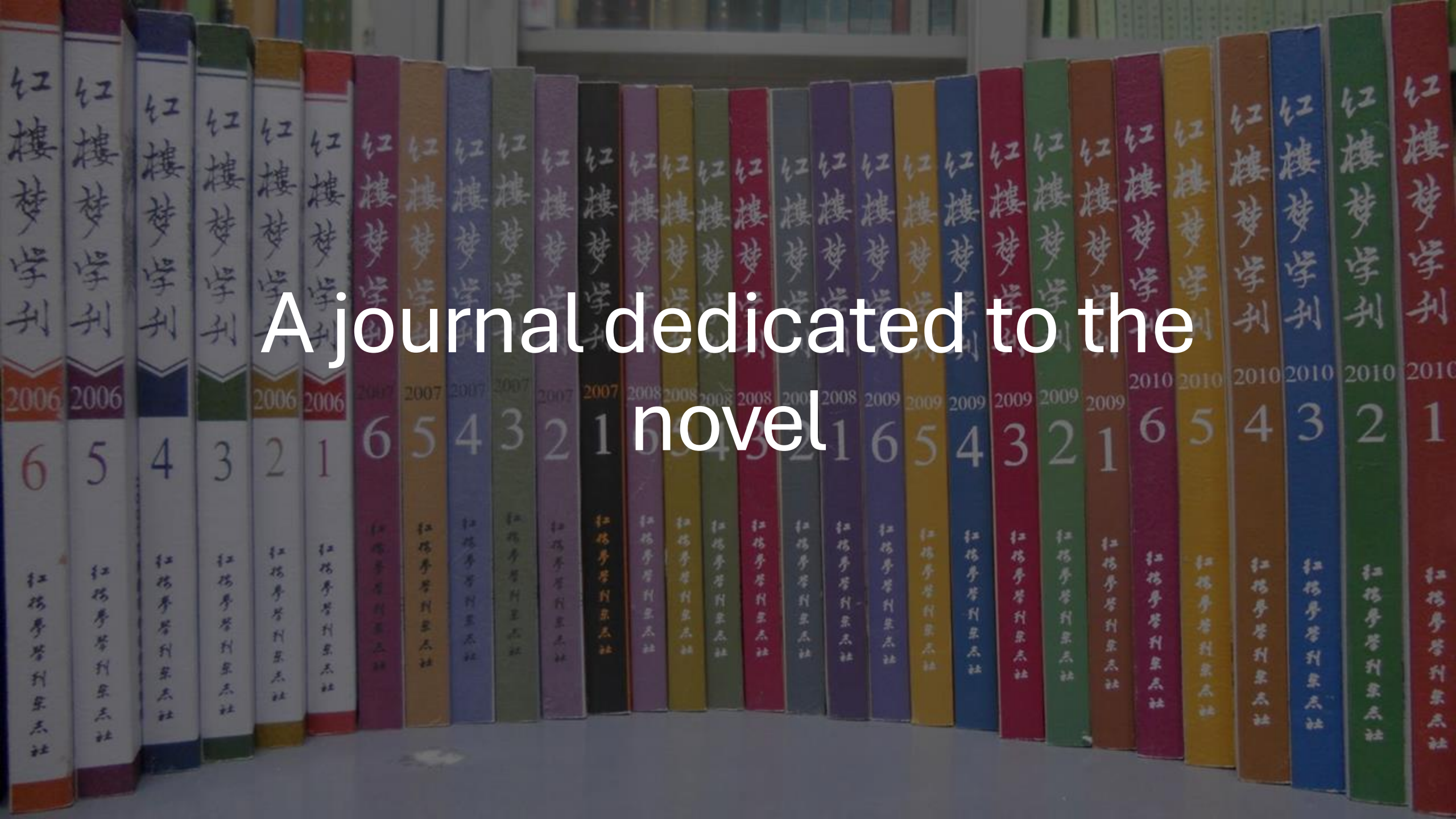
Giving you a sense of the novel's historical context, as well as its textual history.



The overarching goal is
to show you what makes
this novel so special.

A close-up photograph of a traditional Chinese lantern. The lantern has a red fabric body with intricate gold floral and leaf patterns. Below the fabric is a black metal cage with a gold lattice pattern. A red tassel hangs from the bottom. The background is blurred, showing other lanterns and a warm, reddish light.

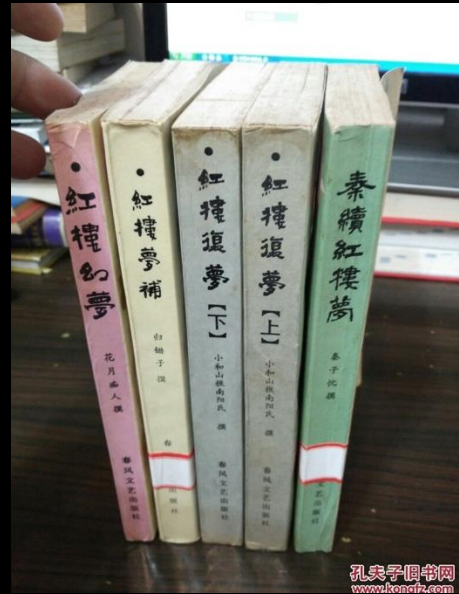
The novel's importance
in Chinese culture



A journal dedicated to the novel



Every medium has had its versions of The Story of the Stone.



Some of its many sequels (obviously all written by other authors)

A group of people, including men and women, are seated around a long table covered with a red patterned tablecloth. The table is filled with numerous small plates and bowls of food, along with several glasses and a large pitcher. The people are dressed in traditional Chinese clothing, with some women wearing elaborate headpieces. The background shows a restaurant interior with dark wood paneling and other diners. The overall atmosphere is that of a formal or traditional dining experience.

Some restaurants recreate
foods from the novel.



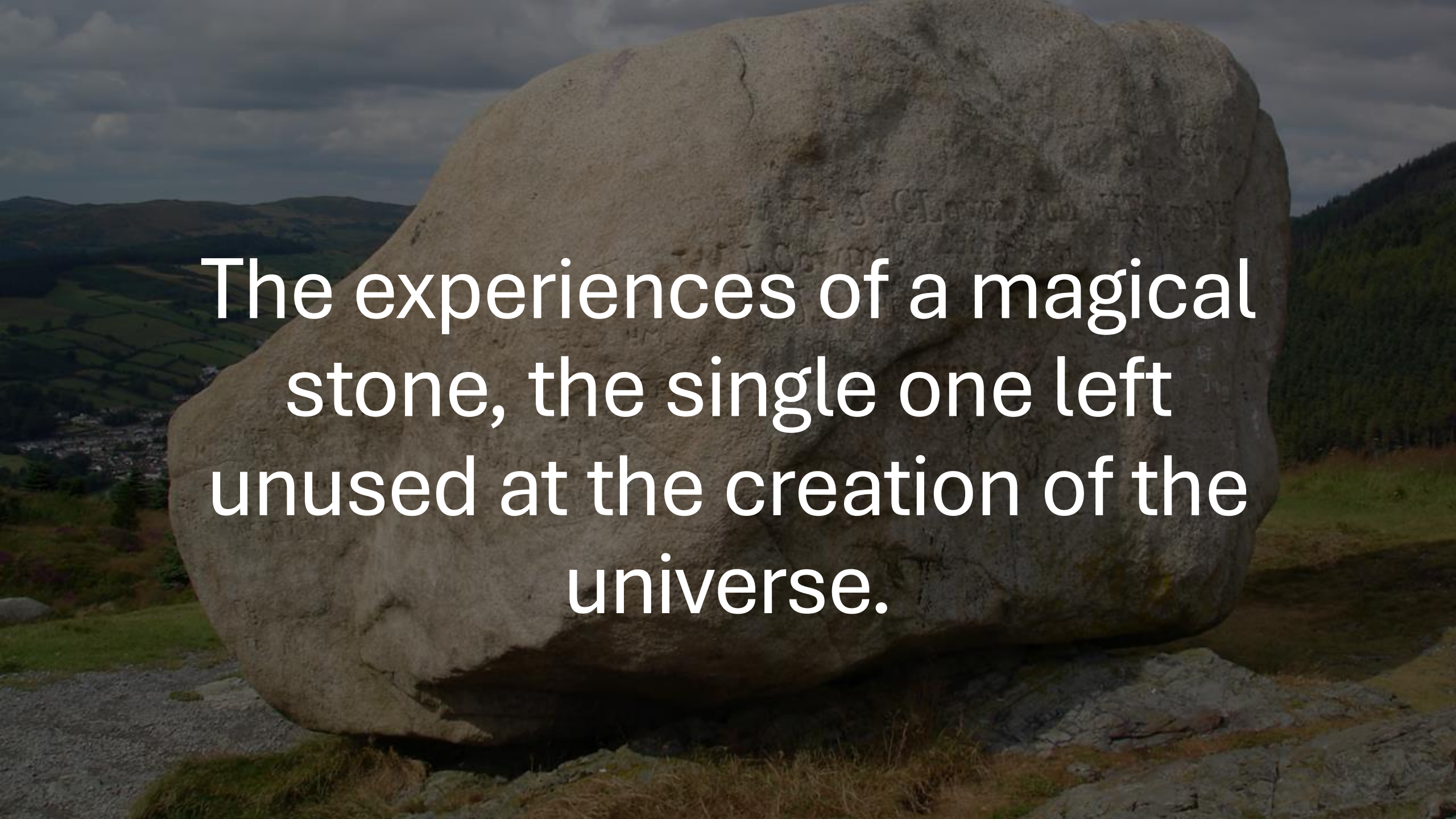
Some parts of this theme park are cool—but some, actively creepy.

The two levels of the novel.

The two levels of the novel

The mythic

The social



The experiences of a magical
stone, the single one left
unused at the creation of the
universe.

Reincarnated as a boy, born with a jade in his mouth and named Baoyu (“Precious Jade”)



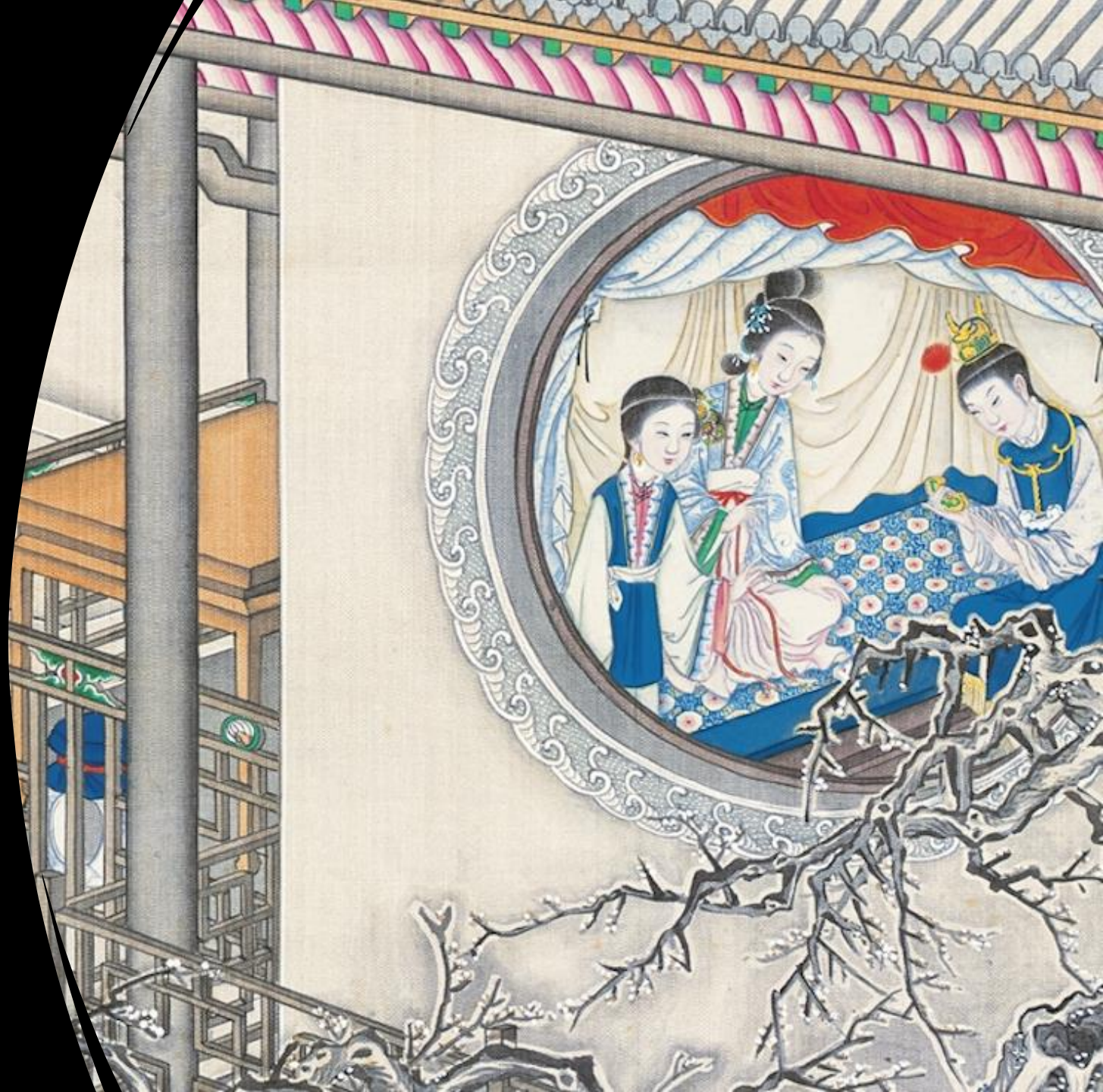
...but also an intricately detailed picture of how hundreds of people lived together.



The novel as social and psychological portrait

Three cousins:

1. Bao-yu, the reincarnated stone, and the sensitive favorite son;
2. Dai-yu, orphaned, talented, and thin-skinned;
3. Bao-chai, even-tempered and careful with her words.



Unparalleled
detail about
how people
lived.



Often from the perspective of lower-status characters....



But also
detailed
psychological
observation.

Bao-yu sighed again and shook his head.

'My dear coz, don't think you can fool me. If you don't

understand what I've just said, then not only have *my* feelings towards *yow* been all along mistaken, but all that *yow* have ever felt for *me* has been wasted, too. It's because you worry so much that you've made yourself ill. If only you could take things a bit easier, your illness wouldn't go on getting more and more serious all the time.'

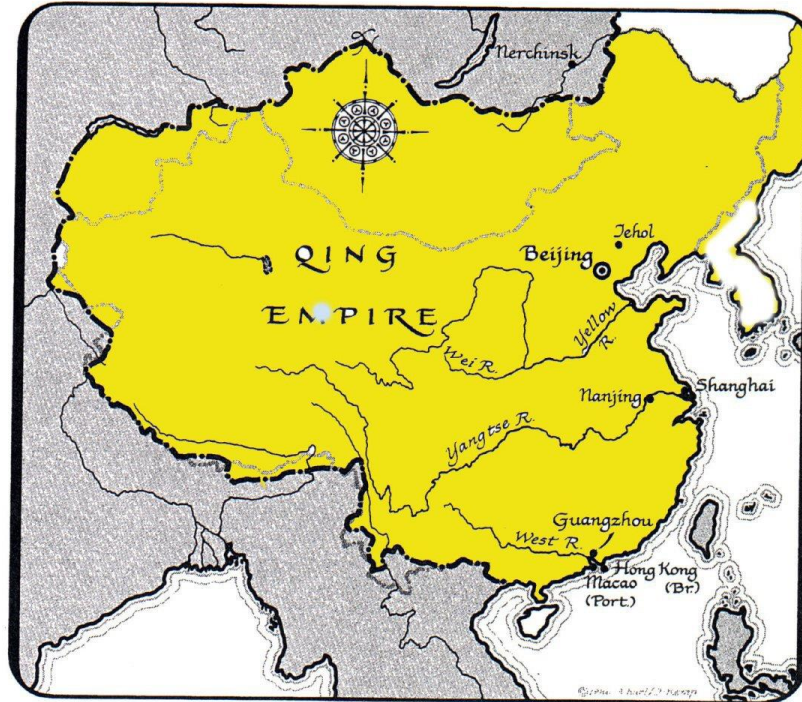
Dai-yu was thunderstruck. He had read her mind – had seen inside her more clearly than if she had plucked out her entrails and held them out for his inspection. And now there were a thousand things that she wanted to tell him; yet though she was dying to speak, she was unable to utter a single syllable and stood there like a simpleton, gazing at him in silence.

Enslaved characters who recognize the injustice of their condition.



Some historical background
before I jump into the mythic

The Qing Empire (1644-1912) was NOT the same thing as China.



Qing Dynasty Empire (1644-1911)

Their rulers
were of a
minority
ethnicity, called
Manchu.



...with a military
organized according
to different
“Banners”....



The Emperor as
a Mongol khan.



The Emperor as a
Daoist adept.



The Emperor as a Tibetan lama



The Emperor dressed as Louis XV



The Emperor is
BEYOND any
local identity.



A few state-sponsored projects under the Kangxi Emperor

The Ming History

The Kangxi Dictionary

A massive, state-of-the-art map of the entire empire

Synthesis of Books and Illustrations of Ancient and Modern Times (5000 vols)



The novel as speculative fiction





A stone converses with a Daoist and a monk

The Story of the Stone

石頭記

What does it mean?

The Story of the Stone

石頭記

According to the novel, what *is* it?

'What words will you cut? Where is this place you will take me to? I beg to be enlightened.'

'Do not ask,' replied the monk with a laugh. 'You will know soon enough when the time comes.'

And with that he slipped the stone into his sleeve and set off at a great pace with the Taoist. But where they both went to I have no idea.

*

Countless aeons went by and a certain Taoist called Vanitas in quest of the secret of immortality chanced to be passing below that same Greensickness Peak in the Incredible Crag of the Great Fable Mountains when he caught sight of a large stone standing there, on which the characters of a long inscription were clearly discernible.

How are some of the novel's many names for itself.

For a long time Vanitas stood lost in thought, pondering this speech. He then subjected the *Story of the Stone* to a careful second reading. He could see that its main theme was love; that it consisted quite simply of a true record of real events; and that it was entirely free from any tendency to deprave and corrupt. He therefore copied it all out from beginning to end and took it back with him to look for a publisher.

As a consequence of all this, 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). He therefore changed his name from Vanitas to Brother Amor, or the Passionate Monk, (because he had approached Truth by way of Passion), and changed the title of the book from *The Story of the Stone* to *The Tale of Brother Amor*.

Old Kong Mei-xi from the homeland of Confucius called the book *A Mirror for the Romantic*. Wu Yu-feng called it *A Dream of Golden Days*. Cao Xueqin in his Nostalgia Studio worked on it for ten years, in the course of which he rewrote it no less than five times, dividing it into chapters, composing chapter headings, renaming it *The Twelve Beauties of Jinling*, and adding an introductory quatrain. Red Inkstone restored the original title when he recopied the book and added his second set of annotations to it.

This, then, is a true account of how *The Story of the Stone* came to be written.

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

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The origin of *The Story of the Stone* has now been made clear. The same cannot, however, be said of the characters and events which it recorded. Gentle reader, have patience! This is how the inscription began:

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For that matter, how many versions of the novel are there in these pages?

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Again and again and again!

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Are we only,
in the 119
chapters to
follow, only
reading the
inscription
on the
stone?



This is an
olive pit,
about an
inch long.



Its doors
close.



Who wrote it?



Cao (曹)

Cao (曹)

Jia (賈)

Cao (曹)

Jia (賈)

“fake” (*jia*) 假

The paradox of being a Han bannerman



此款甲胄为乾隆大阅兵时，正黄旗兵丁穿用

此款甲胄为乾隆大阅兵时，镶黄旗兵丁穿用

此款甲胄为乾隆大阅兵时，正白旗兵丁穿用

此款甲胄为乾隆大阅兵时，镶白旗兵丁穿用



正蓝旗铠甲

镶蓝旗铠甲

正红旗铠甲

镶红旗铠甲



The emperor's “milk brother” was Cao Xueqin’s ancestor

The textual history of the novel

The novel's author was only definitively identified in 1922. The book was started in the 1740s and started circulating in handwritten manuscripts in the 1750s.

In reading the first few pages...



WHAT DOES THIS TEXT SAY
ITS OWN TITLE IS?



WHO DOES THE TEXT SAY
WRITES IT?



HOW MANY TIMES DOES
THE ENTIRE NOVEL APPEAR
IN THE PAGES OF THE
NOVEL ITSELF?

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The novel starts with an
account of the conditions of
its own arising.

Cao Xueqin (1710-1765)

The Story of the Stone was written anonymously.



The Story of the Stone was not written for the market.



今之人貧者日為衣食所累富者又懷不足之心雖然一時稍聞又有貪淫戀色好貨尋愁之事那有工夫去著那理治之書所以我這一段故事也不願世人稱奇道妙也不要世人喜悅檢讀只願你們當那醉淫飽臥之時或遊事去愁之際把此一玩豈不省了些壽命筋力就比那謀虛逐妄却省了口舌是非之害脚脚奔忙之苦再者亦令人換新眼目不比那些胡塗亂扯忽忽遇滿紙才人淑女文君紅娘小玉等道共熟套之舊稿我師以為何如空空道人聽如此話思忖半晌將石頭記再檢閱一遍因見上面雖有此指奸責佞貶惡誅邪之語亦非傷時罵世之旨及至君仁臣良父慈子孝凡倫常所關之慮皆是稱功頌德者無窮寔非別書之可以雖其中大有諷情亦不過實錄其事又非假擬妄稱一味淫遊艷約私討偷盟之可以因毫不干涉時世方從頭至尾鈔錄回來閱世傳奇因空見色由色生情傳情入色自色悟空遂易名為情僧改石頭記為情僧錄東魯孔梅溪則題曰風月寶鑑後因曹雪芹於悼紅軒中披閱十載增刪五次纂成目錄分出章回則題曰金陵十二釵並題一絕云若言世法原如夢豈知夢裏亦難尋情痴情癡情真情假情到病除情去情歸性



紅樓夢首義 是書題名極奇 夢是總其全部之名也又曰風月寶鑑 戒妄動風月之情又曰石頭記是自警 頭所記之事也此三名皆書中會已熟 矣如寶玉作夢中有曲名曰紅樓夢 二支此則紅樓夢之照暗又如賈瑞病 道人持一鏡來上面即整風月寶鑑四 此則風月寶鑑之照暗又如道觀觀眼 石上大書一篇故事則像石頭所記之 來此則石頭記之照暗處然此書又名

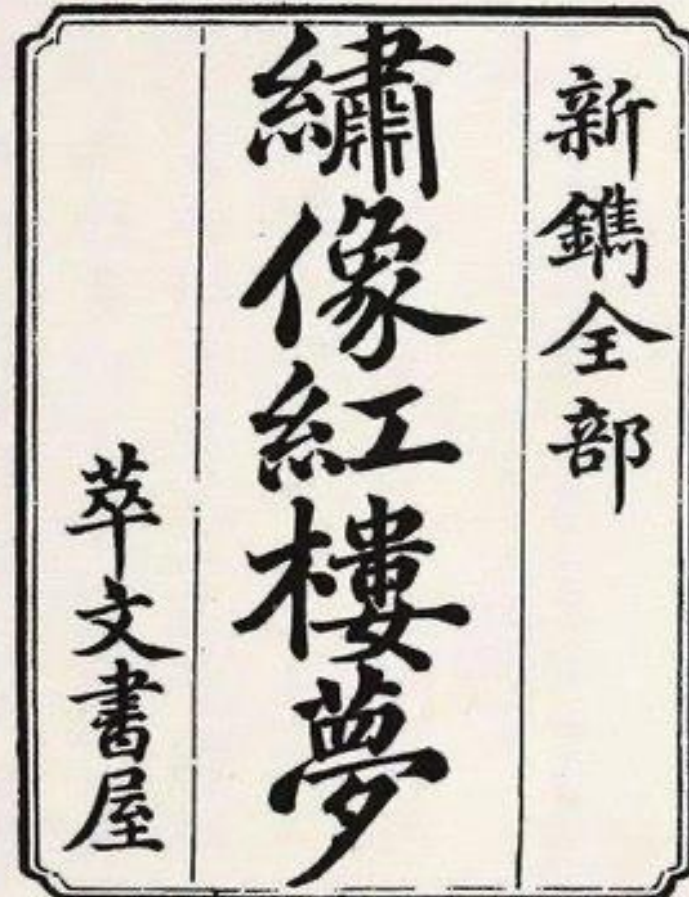
一曰甄士隱夢幻識通靈 賈雨村風塵懷秀 但看官道此書從何而來說起根由雖 層層細則深有趣味待在下將此來歷注 使閱者了然不惑原來女媧氏煉石補天 于大荒山無稽崖煉成高經十二丈方經 四丈頑石三萬六千五百零一塊瑤皇氏 了三千六百五塊只此一塊 便在此山青埂峰下誰知此石自經煅 後靈性已通因見眾石俱得補天獨自己 不堪入選遂自怨自嘆日夜悲號慚愧一 當嗟悼之際俄見一僧一道遠逝而來

來黛玉一面喫茶 衣襟舉止行動果 見穿紅綾襖青緞 笑說道太說請 了于是又引黛玉 內正面炕上橫設 具靠東壁面西設 人却坐在西邊下 見黛玉來了便往 政之位因見換炕 舊的彈墨椅袱 四携他上炕他方 有兩個錦褥對設 向東邊椅子

It circulated in handwritten copies (manuscripts) that only went to chapter 80

*The Dream of the
Red Chamber*
紅樓夢

(the title of the
first print copy,
1791)



原敘

紅樓夢小說本名石頭記作者
相傳不一究未知出自何人惟
書內記雪芹曹先生刪改數過
好事者每傳鈔一部置廟市中
昂其值得數十金可謂不經而

Mysteriously
it has 120
chapters!

Titles the
book went
under in its
first decades

新評繡像紅樓夢全傳

孫崧甫先生評點紅樓夢

新增批評繡像紅樓夢

新譯紅樓夢

桐花鳳閣評紅樓夢

繡像批點紅樓夢

繡像紅樓夢

新評繡像紅樓夢全傳

妙復軒評石頭記

妙復軒評本繡像石頭記紅樓夢

增評補圖石頭記

繡像石頭記紅樓夢

增評補像全圖金玉緣

增評夾批金玉緣圖說

This complicated
textual history is
mirrored in the TEXT
ITSELF.

For a long time Vanitas stood lost in thought, pondering this speech. He then subjected the *Story of the Stone* to a careful second reading. He could see that its main theme was love; that it consisted quite simply of a true record of real events; and that it was entirely free from any tendency to deprave and corrupt. He therefore copied it all out from beginning to end and took it back with him to look for a publisher.

As a consequence of all this, 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). He therefore changed his name from Vanitas to Brother Amor, or the Passionate Monk, (because he had approached Truth by way of Passion), and changed the title of the book from *The Story of the Stone* to *The Tale of Brother Amor*.

Old Kong Mei-xi from the homeland of Confucius called the book *A Mirror for the Romantic*. Wu Yu-feng called it *A Dream of Golden Days*. Cao Xueqin in his Nostalgia Studio worked on it for ten years, in the course of which he rewrote it no less than five times, dividing it into chapters, composing chapter headings, renaming it *The Twelve Beauties of Jinling*, and adding an introductory quatrain. Red Inkstone restored the original title when he recopied the book and added his second set of annotations to it.

This, then, is a true account of how *The Story of the Stone* came to be written.

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

*

The origin of *The Story of the Stone* has now been made clear. The same cannot, however, be said of the characters and events which it recorded. Gentle reader, have patience! This is how the inscription began:

Long, long ago the world was tilted downwards towards the south-east; and in that lower-lying south-easterly part of

'What words will you cut? Where is this place you will take me to? I beg to be enlightened.'

'Do not ask,' replied the monk with a laugh. 'You will know soon enough when the time comes.'

And with that he slipped the stone into his sleeve and set off at a great pace with the Taoist. But where they both went to I have no idea.

*

Countless aeons went by and a certain Taoist called Vanitas in quest of the secret of immortality chanced to be passing below that same Greensickness Peak in the Incredible Crags of the Great Fable Mountains when he caught sight of a large stone standing there, on which the characters of a long inscription were clearly discernible.

Think how many versions of the novel (or its events) are to be found here.

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One of the novel's
“introductions,”
when Lin Daiyu gets
to see the
household for the
first time.





Thank you!