The Dream of the Red Mansion 红楼梦 had been an outstanding novel in the eighteenth century. The author, Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹 provided a wide range of research topics in this novel. This four-chapter dissertation look into Cao’s thoughts as reflected in the first eighty chapters of the novel.

Cao closely related his personal experiences to the characters and events in the novel, expressing his admiration and respect for females. He attempted to elucidate in his narration that the female characters were reflections of talented girls he encountered many years ago. To project impressive images of the female characters, he endowed in them the talents to compose poems and the capability to household management. In upholding their chastity, he depicted the females as pure characters, while the males as being impure. Where polygamy and other restrictions on women are concerned, Cao expressed his sympathy for them.

In view of emotional appeals, Cao classified men into three categories: men like Jia Baoyu 贾宝玉, who displayed genuine interests in talented beauties, were known to be “Yiyin 意淫”; men who disregarded genuine feelings or moral values when they indulged in sexual contentment or emotional satisfaction were known to be “Pifu yinlan 皮肤淫滥”; finally, those who showed affections for both sexes were involved in bisexuality 双性恋. In the opinion of Cao, he
regarded genuine feelings and moral values as important principles where emotions are concerned.

Despite the learning from ancient classics, Cao’s literary views emphasized on the importance of content and the style of writing in literary works such as poems, novels and dramas. He sought after genuine feelings to be reflected in the content, and he blazed new trails in the style of writing.

In his outlook of life, Cao had been able to gain an insight into the realistic world, identifying it as a world full of ironies. However, he clung on to pleasant memories of the past, being unable to see through the vanity of the world. Hence, he sought for consolation from the characters in his novel.

Judging from the different aspects of his thoughts, it is found that Cao displayed an exuberance of feelings for both sexes, his literary work, and his outlook on life. He put in great effort to relate his personal experiences to the characters in his novel, thus reflecting his thoughts.