Abstract

Hong Lou Meng (A Dream of Red Mansions) is unique in Chinese Literature. Since its first publication in 1791, it has continued to attract enthusiastic response and critical interest among literary circles. As most studies of Hong Lou Meng concentrate on various aspects, its "dreams" have never been systematically analysed. Hence, the objective of this academic exercise is to establish the value of its "dreams". The approach to this topic is from two points of view: Psychological and Literary.

The study consists of seven chapters. Chapter one examines the various names given to the novel to show that "dreams" play a significant role. In addition, it discusses the recent trend of studies of the "dreams". Chapter two discusses the main characteristics of dreams in Chinese Literature before Hong Lou Meng. Chapter three gives a statistical analysis of the thirty-eight dreams in the novel. The most important dreams are highlighted. Chapter four explores the artistic aspects of the dreams: (1) The basic dream structure of the novel. (2) The artistry of the merging of "dream" and reality. (3) The realistic elements of one's dreams. Chapter five and six analyse the themes of the dreams in two main aspects: (1) The reflections of the dreamers' infatuation. (2) The inspiration of "life like a dream". Other minor aspects such as the reflection of preposterous social phenomena and religious beliefs are also briefly discussed.

The final chapter concludes with a summary of findings, emphasizing the importance and the value of the "dreams". The findings confirm Hong Lou Meng's achievement in the employment of "dreams" in literature and art.