ABSTRACT

Symbolism is an important aspect in the study of The Dream of Red Mansions (Hong Lou Meng), the great Chinese classical novel by Cao Xueqin. Together with realism and romanticism, the symbolic meanings are essential for a comprehensive understanding of the themes and artistry of the novel.

This academic exercise examines the symbolism in The Dream of Red Mansions by an interpretation of four symbolic objects selected from the novel. Despite being objects commonly seen in the daily life of the main characters of The Dream of Red Mansions, the objects have profound symbolic meanings. They symbolise dispositions and fates of some main characters, as well as the philosophy which originated from the concepts of Kong Buddhist sect (Kong Zong). Based on the findings, this research affirms that The Dream of Red Mansions is a symbolist novel.