SUMMARY

The eighteenth-century Chinese masterpiece *The Story of the Stone (Honglou meng or Dream of the Red Chamber)* is well-acclaimed for its art of characterisation and also notable for its multitude of female characters. The art of characterisation has been well examined, but largely in relation to the key figures. This thesis therefore attempts to explore the conceptual framework of the whole gallery of characters, and to discover the underlying principles which govern the construction and organisation of the characters in the novel.

By abstracting the patterns from the text, this study shows that the characters in the novel are organised as a holistic system which is a unique feature in this novel. The Introduction elaborates on the concept of a holistic system in various forms of Chinese art, and how the concept can be applicable to the organisation of fictional characters in a novel.

Chapter One examines the "rejected stone" depicted in the opening chapter of the novel which functions as the source of origin of the characters. The boy-hero, Jia Baoyu, being the incarnation of the rejected stone, becomes a vessel of the spirit of the stone, which in turn is diffused to other main female characters who experience similar tragedies in their life. This idea establishes how the female characters are interlinked. The naming of Jia Baoyu, meaning "False Precious Jade", and his two cousin-lovers, Lin Daiyu, meaning "Black Jade" and Xue Baochai, meaning "Precious Clasp", with each sharing half of his name, is a subtle reflection of this device. Symbolising Jia Baoyu's celestial and mundane combination, Lin and Xue are portrayed as "the two beauties combined", who serve as the "primal images" for the projection or reproduction of the so-called "Twelve Beauties of Jinling". "Twelve" is a symbolic figure of "completeness". The twelve beauties, divided into three categories, represent the "earth's choicest spirits".

Chapter Two explains the essence of "completeness" that the novel tries to encompass, and how it is reflected in the conceptual framework of characters. The whole gallery of characters reveals a cyclical recurrent pattern on two levels. At the
mimetic level, the five generations of the aristocratic Jia household form not only a
domestic hierarchy, but also a diachronic sequence in terms of the origin,
development and ending. Within the enclosed Jia household, Jia Baoyu and the
"Twelve Beauties" form another cyclical pattern which is marked by the
synchronic juxtaposition of characters.

It is evident that the seemingly scattered and unrelated characters are
delicately formulated and bound together as “image clusters”. Chapter Three
focuses on the underlying principles governing the combination and organisation of
characters, and their aesthetic and paradoxical effects.

Chapter Four highlights the use of allegorical devices which not only make the
mimetic characters in the novel abound with symbolic meaning, but also help
organise the characters as an interrelated whole, thereby distinguishing the novel from
other classical Chinese novels.

In the conclusion, the study emphasises the features that make this novel
unique in Chinese literary tradition.
提要

本文的重点在于探讨《石头记》建构人物体系的概念和法则。《石头记》人物世界呈整体组合，本文于绪论中阐明中国艺术传统中整体组合的概念以及此概念如何应用于小说人物创作，接着分四章探讨《石头记》的人物观念。

第一章说明《石头记》以一块“无材补天”的顽石作为人物之源的艺术构思，以及小说主人公贾宝玉作为顽石的载体及“众钗之源”的艺术设计。黛玉和宝钗同源，十二钗是以她们俩为基调“衍化”而成的。小说以“千红一窟、万艳同杯”来概括十二钗共同的悲剧命运，也点明十二钗整体组合的概念。

“十二钗”有“全”和“反复回环”的含义，第二章探讨小说如何以“全”的概念来架构人物世界，以及人物世界的不同序列的组合。写实层人物世界呈现出一个由“源”而“演”至“止”的有始有终的整体，贾宝玉与十二钗则构成另一个观念化的人物世界。前者代表自然生命的必然消亡，后者则象征精神生命的无穷。

第三章以“十二钗”为重点，探讨小说建构人物体系的形子系统。形子系统将看似零星的人物聚合成为形象群，也使“十二钗”成为一个能囊括各类人物的富于伸缩性的框架。

第四章说明《石头记》人物意蕴系统的建构，以及意蕴系统的整体性关联。小说也将人物化实为虚，使他们具备更普遍的象征意义。

《石头记》打破了人物创作的观念，成为一部千古未见的作品。