SUMMARY

In the history of modern Chinese literature, Lao She (1899-1966) represents one of the great realist writers in depiction of the life and fate of urban women. However, most papers only spotlighted on two aspects: first, the intelligentsia and the masses struggling below the poverty line; secondly, the stylistic features of the language used by Lao She. Macro-study and systematic research on the role of women in China as telling in Lao She's fiction are regrettably scarce. In this light, the study focuses on the feminine role characterised. The study undertakes to explore the life of women in the deteriorating Chinese society with an evaluation of the artistic achievement of Lao She in enlivening the personas so portrayed.

Chapter One sets straight the aims, objectives and the methodology adopted for the study as well as an overview of the related research.

Chapter Two focuses on Lao She's scheme of characterisation in relation to his personal life and psychology at the time of shaping the figures in his creative writings. This includes a review on Lao She's family life, upbringing and learning experiences.

The Third to Fifth Chapters categorise the feminine roles in Lao She's fiction under four headings: (a) Young spinsters; (b) Housewives; (c) Old ladies; and (d) Maids. Under each title, several figures are analysed. The focus of the analysis centres around their respective life experiences to touch the depth of their souls. In this respect, the study attempts to search the developmental and inherent link between figures of the same type.
From the macro-outlook of the previous four chapters, Chapter Six turns to a micro-perspective to examine the technique of character portrayal. As a case study, Hu Niu (虎妞) in The Camel Xiang Zi (《骆驼祥子》) is used to illustrate the application of the technique employed by Lao She and the significance of the characterisation with typicality.

In the concluding chapter, the study discusses the contributing elements leading to the tragedy of women in China as described by Lao She. The focus includes traditional social values, the wealth and power, marriage institution and the psychism of the male and female role. To round off, the study comments on Lao She's view of the feminine role based on his attitude in modelling the female characters of his works.

Through the highly profound artistic refinement, the female characters in Lao She's works are able to print a lasting impression regardless of the cast they played in the story line. Lao She has been a high achiever in the portrayal of typical female characters. He depicted their detailed lives in length, from various angles and at different levels. In so doing, he reflected the damages done to the Chinese female population due to discrimination of the female sex in Chinese society in the old days. Through his description, Lao She managed to highlight, in particular, the weaknesses and sorrows of the urban women.