

A SIMPLIFIED READING ON TSAO HSUEH-CHIN'S NARRATOLOGY IN HUNGLIUMENG (红楼梦) OF DREAM OF THE RED CHAMBER

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ABSTRACT

This article attempts to analyze the narrative aesthetics in Tsao Hsueh-Chin's Hung Lou Meng or Dream of the Red Chamber through a feminist framework. Hung Lou Meng written in the mid-18th century is regarded to be one of the best and famous Chinese novels. Among several studies on Hung Lou Meng, there are at least two different perspectives that in fact is rooted in the old theoretical battle in viewing literature: one as a mimesis and the other as a linguistic construct. Employing feminist narratology, this article ventures to bridge those two different opposing views to unveil the narrative discourse of Hung Lou Meng. This feminist perspective reveals the rich artistic quality of Hung Lou Meng as well as its flexibility, fluidity, polyphony, and dialogical qualities that enable to liberate different voices present simultaneously including those of the muted and oppressed gender.

Keywords : Asian Novel, Narrative Discourse, Feminist Perspective

1. THE BIRTH OF NOVEL IN CHINESE LITERARY HISTORY

In the history of Chinese literature, the origin of novel as a literary genre can be traced back in the tradition of prose and dramatic narratives under the term *xiaoshuo* (小说). It simply means small talk, petty talk, or gossips from the street market (Gu, 2006: 22). There are many theories on the origin of *xiaoshuo* in China as explained by some Chinese scholars like Ban Gu (32-92), Liu Zhiji (661-721), Hu Yinglin (1551-1602), Zhang Xuecheng (1738), and Luo Fu. Ban Gu is considered to be the first authoritative Chinese scholar who theorized the origin and the nature of *xiaoshuo*, viewing it as an insignificant form of writing (Gu 22-26).

Xiaoshuo is considered as an inferior genre under "lesser discourses" that includes various minor philosophical and informal

writings. The term 'lesser' attached to this early form of novel reflects the Confucian poetics that regards fiction as not useful and unimportant writings (Schellinger, 1998:205). The earlier evidence of the existence of Chinese novel is *pinghua* or "plain[ly-told] tales" printed between 1321 and 1323 written in the form of historical narratives retelling important events and periods in Chinese history or famous individuals (Schellinger, 205). Historical novel was very popular and well loved by the Chinese readers.

In response to the popularity of *xiaoshuo* as a literary genre, Chinese writers prolifically produced historical novels in *xiaoshuo*, and among the most famous ones are *Sanguozhiyanyijior* better known as *The Three Kingdoms* or *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (dated 1494 and 1522), *Shuihuzhuan* (1550) or well known in English as *Water Margin* or in other translated versions as *All*

Men Are Brothers and Outlaws of the Marsh, and *Xiyouji* or *The Journey to the West* (1580).

In general, scholars agree with the view that “the Chinese novel is a product of the Ming period (1368-1644)” and reached its peak by the 17th century (Schellinger, 206). In its development, Chinese novels underwent various literary experiments and not only limited to its origin as a historical fiction; one of its experiments was in the form of romances, a new favorite genre of the 18th century Chinese literature. The first Chinese novel/romance to be translated into European language is *The Fortunate Union* or *The Pleasing History* (*HauKiouChooan* 1761) by James Wilkinson and Bishop Thomas Percy (Schellinger, 207).

2. TSAOHSUEH-CHIN'S HUNG LOU MENG, THE MOST FAMOUS CHINESE NOVEL

Among the prolific production of Chinese novels, however, only few novels are well-known among the contemporary readers; and undoubtedly, the most famous one is the mid-18th century Chinese novel of the Ching dynasty, *Hung Lou Meng*. Tsao Hsueh-chin's *Hung Lou Meng* is widely popular among the English readers as *Dream of the Red Chamber* or *Dream of the Red Mansion*. The best version of its translation is the one that uses the novel's first title, *Shitoujior Story of the Stone*. *The Longman Anthology of World Literature* (2004) also lists this work under the title *The Story of the Stone*.

There are many speculations and debates concerning the authorship of *Hung LouMeng*. Chi-Chen Wang, the translator of the adapted version of *Hung LouMeng* (the Anchor Book abridged edition of 1958) used in this study has explicitly stated in the table of contents that the first 33 chapters of Part I is written by Tsao (1715? – c. 1764). Meanwhile, the rest of the chapters in Part II is its continuation by Kao Ou. In addition, Wang also reveals the obscure authorship of the complete version of the novel with the

evidence that Tsao left this novel unfinished before his death, the addition of notes and commentaries by “Chih Yen Chai,” and also different versions and editions found and provided by different editors and publishers. Finally, KaoOu's edition of rewriting and completing the novel is critically attacked because his happy ending version of the novel contradictsTsao's initial intention to make this novel a tragedy. Moreover, Kao's artistic quality is regarded inferior compared to the superiority of Tsao's aesthetic mastery. However, at the same time Kao is credited for handing out this novel to modern readers; thus, preserving and securing the existence of *Hung Lou Meng* as one of Chinese and world masterpieces.

3. DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON HUNG LOU MENGSTUDIES

In addition to the debates of *Hung Lou Meng's* authorship that has led to various speculation and findings of Tsao's family background and history, there are also controversies in the scope of reception and critical study of this novel. There are two prominent oppositions in *Hung Lou Meng* studies. Firstly, scholars and critics prompted by the authorship aspects focus only on the importance of the biographical backgrounds in studying this so-called ‘biographical novel’ and other relevant aspects that relate the novel's mimetic quality to its historical, social, political, and cultural realities. The other reception and perspective are scholars and critics who consider *Hung Lou Meng* as a fiction, therefore, it should be judged by its aesthetic merit only. The example of the first group is the Red Inkstone circle and the latter in its recent instance can be found in the work of Anthony C. Yu's *Rereading the Stone: Desire and the Making of Fiction in Dream of the Red Chamber* (1997) and Lucien Miller's *Masks of Fiction in Dream of the Red Chamber: Myth, Mimesis, and Persona* (1975).

Those two opposing perspectives in approaching *Hung Lou Meng* are in fact rooted

in the old theoretical battle of viewing literature. One views literature mimetically as a representation of reality that also reflects particular historical, social, and cultural aspects; meanwhile, the other views it as a non-referential system or a mere linguistic construct. Both views have their own weakness and strength. However, both can actually complete one another. Susan Lanser attempted to bridge these opposing views by practicing the so called feminist narratology or structural feminist perspective to critically analyze the aesthetic quality as well as the social, political, historical ideas explicitly and implicitly conveyed in the narrative of the work. Following Lanser's attempt, I employ such feminist narratology to analyze the narrative discourse of Tsao's *Hung Lou Meng*. This structural feminist perspective can reveal how and why the novel uses particular kind of narrative technique and also relate each element of its narrative into a feminist framework. Therefore, it can also unveil the underlying "hidden" gender discourse to maintain its 'balance and neutrality' in discussing the gender role and position depicted in the novel. Accordingly, the life and experience of the fe/male characters in the novel can be revealed, recognized, and well acknowledged, and will not only be drowned in diagrams, categories, and taxonomies of the pure structural narratology; but they can be appropriately set in their own social, cultural, political, and historical experience and contexts. In its actual practice, the feminist structural perspective involves a detailed and elaborate study of all elements of the work, however, due to the limited time, space, and the knowledge provided, I focus on the relationship of Chia Pao-Yu, the central character of the novel and the story experienced by the Stone. Evidently, Pao-Yu and the Stone are two visible elements of the novel, that is, actually only a small part of the novel's entire elements, yet in my opinion it is already adequately useful and crucial in understanding the integral unity of the novel, therefore, I call my study "a simplified reading on Tsao's narratology in *Hung Lou Meng*."

4. NARRATIVE DISCOURSE IN TSAO'S HUNG LOU MENG

The term narratology originated from the French word, "**narratologie**," introduced by Tzvetan Todorov in his *Grammaire du Decameron* (1969). Narratology and its methodology have its root in the tradition of Russian Formalism and French Structuralism. The narratologists in their methodology put more emphasis on the "narrative discourse" (HOW) than the "narrative content" (WHAT). Narratology as a structural discipline is no longer popular after the emergence of Deconstruction and Post-Structuralism. However, many experts have tried to revise the limit and weakness of Formalism and Structuralism and have applied and developed them into their own discipline and expertise. In its development, narratology is not seen as a literary phenomenon only which devotes itself solely to literary criticism, but it has developed into a more interdisciplinary study which includes myths, films, paintings, history books, comic strips, philosophical systems, any great number of numerous other narrative forms both literary and non-literary as well as verbal and non verbal. In its true discipline, a narratological analysis requires an in-depth discussion of all its intrinsic elements including its detail linguistic use such as diction and tone. However, due to some practical reasons and limitation of the study, this paper only discusses some specific intrinsic elements such as point of view, character and characterization, and plot in *Tsao's Hung Lou Meng*

5. POINT OF VIEW/FOCALIZATION AND CHARACTERIZATION IN HUNG LOU MENG

The novel has already summed up its main idea of the story in the beginning of each chapter, and it applies Third Person Point of View. The opening of the novel begins with the story of Goddess Nugua who repairs the Dome of Heaven and plans to use 36,501 taken from the Great Mythical

Mountain, but she finally uses only 36,500 stones; thus, there is one unused 'Stone.' Further, the story and the journey of this one magical, rejected Stone from Heaven to the Red Dust (earthly life) will weave and link all the elements of the novel into its integral unity. Nuguaor also known as Nu-kua/Kua Huang/Nu Huang is the "Goddess of Go-betweenes ... a mythic source for marriage and courtship regulations" (Werner in Miller, 1975: 17).

There are some possible reasons of using and blending this mythology with the realistic depiction of the characters, the setting, and the culture and tradition of Chinese society at that time. Firstly, the literary trend and fashion of the day that tends to adopt anti-realism style, therefore, the use of Nugua myth in the beginning of the novel has already established Tsao's conformity to the demand of literary style and convention of his time. However, at the same time readers, scholars and critics as well also recognize and praise Tsao's vividly accurate rendition, and account of Chinese life and history depicted realistically in his novel such as commented in *The Longman Anthology*,

The Story of the Stone also serves as a veritable encyclopedia of the late imperial Chinese society and culture. Over four hundred characters enter its pages, hailing from all walks of life and involved in subplots of often considerable intricacy. Detailed descriptions of buildings, gardens, furniture, medicines, food, and drink are matched by exquisitely described structure, rituals, etiquette, games, performances, and other pastimes of the aristocracy, as well as the extraordinary complexity of running such vast domains (Damrosch, 2004:79)

This precise and detailed depiction is also followed by some similar resemblances of events happened in the novel and in

Tsao's own life and family history. It is quite reasonable to make such connection and to claim this work as an autobiographical novel and to regard Tsao as the first major writer who creates his novel based on his own personal history. Yet, at the same time this very sense and evidence of realism is also juxtaposed with the fantasy widely known by the Chinese readers; many scholars have debated on these two opposing styles. However, with the light of Chinese philosophy and religions, these two modes of narrating the story is not really contradictory at all but in fact both narrative modes reflect the essence of Chinese philosophy and religions (Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Shamanism) in viewing life and all things in its duality, different yet complementary to one another, the idea that the Divine life and the earthly life is indeed one unity as expressed repeatedly by the quotes, poems, and songs in the novel

When the unreal is taken for the real,
then the real becomes unreal; Where
non-existence is taken for existence,
then existence become non-existence.
(*Dream of the Red Chamber*, p.p. 7
and 42)

Another possible reason to blend the fantasy and realism might not be aesthetical nor philosophical but grounded more on political reason and censorship. If this novel is indeed autobiographical and "truly realistic," then it is quite understandable for Tsao to protect himself from the possibility of making enemies and censorship due to his realistic depiction of corruption, violence, injustice, and his criticism toward such practices. Therefore, he masks his social and political intention in the elaborate myth and gives his novel the title "Dream" to avoid offense and censorship.

Chapter I of Part I also introduces the genesis of the novel, of how the novel comes into its existence, explaining how the material of the story comes into being, different people of different time who know this story, its

possibilities of planning different titles for the story: *Transcribed by a Priest*, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, *Precious Mirror of Breeze and Moonlight*, *The Twelve Maidens of Chinling*, and finally *The Story of the Stone*. The name of Tsao Hsueh-Chin and "Chih Yen Chai" are mentioned in third person point of view to include important figures that have the opportunity to know, to study, and finally to tell the story of the Stone.

However, there is a different narrative discourse presented in the novel due to the translation problems and versions. In Wang's translated version, all chapters are narrated in third person in general, meanwhile, David Hawkes's translated version of Chapter I of Part I contains a direct address to the readers from the unnamed narrator "Gentle Reader" and in narratology the shift of point of view in practice will determine the relation between the narrator and narration, furthermore it will also determine **the narrative level** and the **reliability** of the narrator. However, since this study uses Wang's translation, therefore such difference will no longer be problematized further.

Interestingly, this kind of introduction in this Tsao's mid-18th century novel resembles the post-modernism idea of "writing about writing" where and when the work itself theorizes the process of creating the work. Not to mention the similar notion of the ending is already in the beginning, the concept that the writing itself has already existed before it is actually being written, the idea of the (pre)existence of "the Grand Idea" and that the endless possibilities of writing and rewriting it and yet all of those are actually merely a copy of the pre-existent idea.

However, the similar notion of post-modern characteristics in Tsao's work is evidently not related to idea and concept of recent post-modernism, such technique is in fact one of the characteristics of Asian literature, and in this case, Chinese literary tradition and the Chinese philosophical and religious influence. In *Hung Lou Meng*, such notion is embodied in the concept that all things have already been predestined in

Heaven and human beings actually can have the knowledge to understand such destiny if only they can see their "true self." Such knowledge is expressed through songs, poems, the wisdom of Goddesses and monks that function as the foreshadowing of many events not yet happened but will finally come true at the end of the novel, a knowledge that Pao-you, the hero of the novel, has the privilege to see it for himself in the "Great Void Illusion Land" under the guidance of the Goddess of Disillusionment, and yet he fails to see it and thus is ignorant of the fate of the women dearly close to his life contained in the cabinet marked "The Twelve Maidens of the Chinling" and as revealed in the series of twelve songs entitled "the Dream of the Red Chamber." (pp. 41-43). In my opinion this post-modern aspect found in Tsao's writing adds the greatness of his writing aesthetic and literary reputation.

6. GENDERING THE CHARACTERS IN HUNG LOU MENG

In addition to the point of view used in narrating the novel and the material of the story, that is, the story of the Stone itself, characters play important roles in the unity of the novel. This novel depicts hundreds of characters, crowding its entire novels with the life and the story of different members of the extended families. The large number of characters in this novel signifies the importance of family and its family connection with its filial duty and responsibility. In addition, Confucian's Zhengming (rectification of names) is also present here, not only that all things should be called by their proper names with verbal precision but also the name stands for and represents its entity in line with its meaning and function in the real world. Therefore, it is important to reveal who connects to whom through their proper last name/family name as well as what the name itself means such as in the case of Cardinal Spring/the Imperial Concubine/Pao-yu sister, whose name signifies the time

of her birth. In many cases, names in this novel also already signify and foreshadow the destiny of the bearer of the name as seen in *Black Jade* and *Pao-yu*.

From a great number of characters depicted in the novel, this study only selects some characters, particularly, *Pao-yu*, the central character of the novel whose name and destiny are evidently closely related to the rejected *Magical Stone* and its wish and desire to experience the life in the *Red Dust*. The importance and urgency to tell and write the story of the *Stone* is expressed in the quatrain in Chapter I of Part I:

Without merits that would entitle me
to a place in the blue sky,
In vain have I lived in the *Red Dust*
for so many years.
These are the events before my birth
and after my death—
Who will transcribe them and give
the world my story?

Pao-yu is evidently revealed as the earthly manifestation of the *Stone*, and through him the destiny of the *Stone* will be fulfilled as it was written in *Heaven*. The *Birth of Pao-yu* is the evidence of this incarnation, he was born with a *jade* in his mouth which he will wear on his neck through his life, it is his soul and his life; therefore, when he was separated from it, he was in the state of complete loss and near death before being reunited with the *Jade Stone*. The bond of *Pao-yu* and the *Magical Stone* is also another example of opposing yet harmonious coupling of the *Divine* and the *Earthly* being. *Pao-yu* in addition to his extraordinary birth is also depicted uniquely compared to other male characters in the novel. He is depicted as rather effeminate and androgynous, eagerly sharing cosmetics and other feminine things with his female cousins and maids. *Lucien Miller* also comments on this attitude,

One of the most important motifs is *Pao-yu's* preference for women over men. Women are made of water and men of mud. At an early age his

feminism shows in his fondness for cosmetics, such as rouge and powder, both of which he relishes eating (*Miller, 1975:281*).

There is indeed a sound possibility to regard *Pao-yu* a feminist; however, *Miller* needs a more elaborate evidence to support his argument. In relation to gender and feminism in particular, there is one striking point to be noted in *Tsao's* narrative discourse.

It is a "truth universally acknowledged" that patriarchy is the very powerful system of the Chinese society; accordingly, this sense of patriarchy is also powerfully present in *Tsao's* novel with its rigid gender roles and practices. However, readers are also aware of strong and powerful images of women in this novel such as the presence and concept of *Goddesses* as builder, ruler, and divine guide, and in the *Chia* family itself the presence of the powerful *Matriarch*, the mother of all *Chias*.

Despite their unspeakable plights and unfortunate destiny, many women of different social classes in the novel have unsurprisingly some educated and cultivated minds. *Tsao* also reveals this superior literacy of the female characters in many occasions. Female figures also dominate this novel and influence the central character's coming of age, his physical and spiritual maturity as well because *Pao-yu* is undoubtedly the central male character of the novel who inhabits the feminine world of the *Garden* surrounded by his female cousins, maids, aunts, mother, and grandmother, the dearest and influential figures in his life.

The title "*Dream of the Red Chamber*" selected and used by *Wang* in his translation is actually in line with *Tsao's* narrative technique that gives some space for "the female voice" because the "*Red Chamber*" as noted by *Wang* refers to where the young ladies live. Meanwhile, the "*Dream of the Red Chamber*" in the novel also refers to the title of a series of twelve songs composed by the order of *The Goddess of Disillusionment* to foreshadow the destiny of the *Twelve Maidens of the Chinling*, the women in *Pao-*

yu's life. Therefore, the selected title of Wang's translation is more feminist in its narrative discourse and parallel with Tsao's narrative discourse as well compared to Hawkes's selected title for his translated version, "The Story of the Stone" that gives more emphasis on the Magical Stone and Pao-yu the central male character of the novel.

In the tradition of Western literary history, novel as a literary genre is often related with feminism and female voice, and such relation is also present in Tsao's narrative discourse. Another similar characteristic of Tsao's novel and the Western novel tradition is its quality of *heteroglossia* or polyphonic or dialogical aspect (a term coined by Bakhtin) that enables novel to liberate different "voices" and to be analyzed in many different levels of reading. In this sense, it is explicitly evident that Tsao's novel is the story about the Stone and Pao-yu, the central character; however, the narrative discourse of *Hung Lou Meng* also facilitates multiple reading of different voices at work in the novel. The novel indeed is the story of the Stone and Pao-yu, but at the same time, it is also the story of the twelve maidens of the Chinling, the story of the Chia family, the record of Chinese 'history' and 'herstory' as well.

7. PLOT AND THE FOCUS ON DIDACTICISM IN *HUNG LOU MENG*

The setting of place of the novel is various different places in China, particularly, Ningkuofu and Yungkuofu, two big houses/mansions of the extended Chia family during the last Imperial Chinese power. However, there are also some references to mythical places in Heaven in different eras and periods. The story is narrated in a series of flashbacks in the style of stream of consciousness recalling past and present events randomly. Chronologically, the setting of time and the logical order of setting of place in this novel are not conventionally organized according

to the Western poetics. Seen from its plot, Tsao's novel can be regarded more as a novel of character rather than a novel of action. In terms of Aristotle's definition of plot (384-322 B.C.) concerning a single action with beginning, middle, and ending, this novel certainly seems plotless, only a strain of endless slow and monotonous storytelling. The definition of plot by Aristotle evidently is constructed from the Western style of writing that is definitely designed to express the life in the view of Western culture and philosophy and, is not necessarily proper for Oriental writing style nor appropriate for revealing the life of Oriental people and their different culture and philosophy. Pao-yu's life experience as the hero of the novel is the example of this different perspective of plot that reveals the heroic deed and action of the hero. Compared and contrasted to such Western hero in Western narrative, the depiction of Pao-yu and his life would seem more like in the "mode of idling, waiting, and contemplating" and not really of action, and this effeminate, androgynous Pao-yu's way of life precisely will not match the masculine plot definition of Aristotle.

Besides Aristotle, another classic writer like Horace (35-29 B.C.) actually has already had a more flexible definition of plot. Horace adopts the "in medias res" concept or "in the middle of the thing" that differentiates a single action from the real event when it actually takes place and its chronological order in which the story is told. Therefore, the real event should not necessarily happen in the beginning, but may take place in the middle. The detective story serves as the concrete example of this "in medias res" concept: the story begins with a murder that has already taken place, and then a detective enters "in medias res" and has to investigate this murder and what has already happened. This detective has to reconstruct the plot and the story is actually about this murder reconstruction. Similar to this concept, Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* also develop the term "Rhizome"

the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states ... It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overflows (1997:21).

E.M. Forster also introduces a more inclusive concept that can be applied to many different narratives written by both male and female writers. Similar to Propp who differentiates fabula and *suzjet*, Forster also differentiates story as a series of events that take place chronologically, and plot that focuses the causal relationship.

In Forster's concept of plot, Tsao's novel indeed does have a plot, even more than one plot in the form of sub-plots, focusing on the journey of the Magical Stone and its education in the Red Dust, the coming of age of Pao-yu as the hero of the novel, the tragic love story of Pao-yu and his cousin Lin, the decline of the Chia family, and many other plots and sub-plots that can be deduced from this novel framework. In fact, in this novel the concept of the main plot, and the sub-plots is also blurred yet open to more possibilities of story line depending on our focus of reading this novel, and not to mention its post-modern notion of the ending is the beginning make the narrative discourse and its poetics more flexible and fluid compared to the Western tradition. In addition, there is also different view on the use of literature. The perspective of *Dulce et Utile* and didacticism is in fact familiar in the Western tradition of critical and literary studies; however, didactic literature tends to be regarded inferior in Western perspective. On the contrary, didacticism is an integral and crucial part of Chinese poetics, particularly from the Confucian point of view, that is, literature should serve for the betterment of morality and ethics of the community and society.

Beside the dichotomy of Eastern and Western poetics that has been revealed in

analyzing the plot of *Hung Lou Meng*, there is also a problem of gender in critical and literary studies in general. Many feminists are reluctant to use structural narratology in their research for many different reasons. Firstly, feminism and structuralism have different theoretical framework in seeing literature. Feminists (particularly the Anglo-American feminists) view literature mimetically as a representation of reality that also reflects gender role. Meanwhile, the French feminists are more interested in linguistic and psychological aspects of narratives. On the other hand, structuralists view narratives semiotically as a non-referential system or a mere linguistic construct. Secondly, structuralists usually use narratives written by men as their research model and theoretical formulation. The third reason is that structuralists tend to analyze variously different narratives from different cultures mechanically regardless of their contextual aspects; therefore, many feminists disagree with their theoretical ground because context plays a very important role in feminist perspective. Many different groups and schools are actually interested in structuralism and they try to revise this structural theoretical limitation by developing the structural methodology into a more awareness toward the cultural and social contexts. Not only feminists who try to do this revision effort, Bakhtin, a well-known early formalist-structuralist, has developed his theory on "sociological poetics." Similar to many revisions and redefinitions that have taken place in literary history, it seems unavoidable to start revisions and redefinitions of literary theories and literary canons as well to be more inclusive and not necessarily exclusive for writers of particular gender, race, class, or culture.

8. CLOSING REMARKS

The birth and the development of novel as a literary genre in Chinese literary history are older and earlier than its Western counterpart. Chinese novel is the product of

the Ming period (1368-1644) and comes to its peak by the 17th century. Despite its prolific novel production, only a few Chinese novels are popular among general readers, and among the famous ones is *Hung Lou Meng*, also known as *Dream of the Red Chamber* or *The Story of the Stone*. Regardless of the debates and controversies of authorship and critical theory of its reception, TsaoHsueh-Chin's novel is widely acclaimed as the greatest and most famous Chinese novel, following and continuing the tradition of *xiaoshuo* as well as historical novel and romance in Chinese literary history.

Through the study of Tsao's narratology, particularly in the perspective of feminist structuralism, it is revealed that the narrative discourse of his novel possesses flexibility, fluidity, polyphony, and dialogical qualities that enable to liberate different voices present simultaneously in his novel. These similar qualities are present and discussed in the Western critical and literary theories yet

having different artistic and theoretical ground in Tsao's case because such qualities and characteristics present in *Hung Lou Meng* are deeply rooted in Chinese aesthetics, philosophy, and religions, reflecting Tsao's aesthetic mastery of writing as well as his in-depth and complex insights of Chinese social, political, economical, cultural, and historical contexts. This study of Tsao's narratology has in some aspects uncovered more aesthetical qualities and integral unity of *Hung Lou Meng*; therefore, it adds to Tsao's excellent literary reputation that is still highly proven today such as in the case of the formation of *Hongxue* or *Redology*, a scholarship solely devoted to the study of *Dream of the Red Chamber*, that started with its Chinese members in the beginning and today its members are from various parts of the world. Thus, *Hung Lou Meng* does not only earn the reputation as the greatest and most famous Chinese novel only but indeed also a world masterpiece.

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