ABSTRACT

The Casual Talks under the Bean-Arbour (豆棚闲话), which consists of twelve short stories, has long been neglected by scholars, receiving only little critical attention. However, the novel does display certain unique characteristics in its narrative structure, in addition to its realistic portrayal of life. Artistically, the novel distinguish from other quasi-scripts for storytelling in its original form. Hence, the aim of this thesis is to provide a critical analysis of the novel, affirming its significance.

Firstly, an attempt is made to reveal the life of the anonymous author Aina Jushi (艾衲居士) living at the turn of the Ming and Qing dynasties. Also, some explanatory notes on the title are provided in order to better understand the novel. Next, the narrative structure, especially the three complicated levels of narrators and the role the bean-arbour played in the construction of the novel are discussed. Lastly, the implications of the novel are analysed. The novel is valuable in that most of the twelve short stories are works which detest the world and worldly ways by denouncing the realities straightforwardly or by using the past to disparage things of the author’s days, some of them going so far as to level sharp criticisms at Buddhism and Taoism.