Abstract

The novel *Xingshi Yinyuan Zhuan* (《醒世姻缘传》) is usually more noted for its realistic portrayal of life during the Late Ming dynasty, while its achievements in other aspects have often been overlooked. This thesis aims to analyze the narrative structure and allegory of this novel, in an attempt to better understand its artistic characteristics.

First of all, the thesis provides a summary of the findings by various scholars regarding the controversial issues of the time of completion of the novel and the identity of its anonymous author. Secondly, it discusses the narrative structure, that is, the organisation and construction of the novel in its narration. Thirdly, it examines the allegory of the novel. Allegory refers to a story having layers of both surface and underlying meanings, thus allowing the story to be read and interpreted differently.

The thesis shows that the novel displays certain unique characteristics in its structure. Besides having two main lines of action, it is also interspersed with numerous minor lines of action. In addition, the allegorical reading of the novel yields the finding that the novel in fact addresses issues beyond that of retribution.