Abstract

Liaozaizi Zhiyi stories (聊斋志异) and Liaozaizi Melodramas (聊斋俚曲) were written by Pu Songling (蒲松龄, 1640 - 1715) in the early Qing period.

Parts of Liaozaizi Melodramas were based on Liaozaizi Zhiyi stories, and the Liaozaizi Melodramas, on the whole, were written much later compared to his stories in general. Thus, it is meaningful to observe the development of Pu Songling's thought based on these two types of literary works.

This exercise consists of six chapters and a conclusion. The main body of the exercise can be divided into three parts, namely, the life and career of Pu Songling, the times and his thoughts of the Liaozaizi Zhiyi and Liaozaizi Melodramas and the comments on the trend of thought in his life.

The thoughts reflected in the stories and melodramas could be broadly classified into ethical thinking, political attacks, nationalism and criticism of the imperial examination. All these issues were relatively important compared to issues such as women, love and marriage which had less weightage in his melodramas and hence would not be discussed in this academic exercise. The findings of the development of Pu Songling's thoughts are as follows:
1. Ethical Thinking
Throughout his life and writing, Pu Songling consistently encouraged the practice of filial piety and fraternity.

2. Nationalism
In the early stages of his writing, his ideas of nationalism were not very clear. As he developed in his writing especially in his melodramas, his sense of nationalism grew strongly. His support of the peasant insurrection become much more pronounced.

3. Political Criticism
In this area, one notices very strong political criticism in his later years, particularly in his melodramas.

4. Views on Examination
Pu Songling’s view towards the imperial examination was full of contradictions. He hated the ‘darkness’ of the imperial examination centres, yet he was also deeply attracted to scholarly honour. Such contradictory thoughts were clearly reflected in both his melodramas and his short stories.