Abstract

Palace-style Poetry in the Six Dynasties has always been sidelined in past literary criticisms as erotic literature and largely ignored by mainstream critics. This dissertation hopes to shed new light upon Palace-style Poetry in the Liang Period of the Southern Dynasties via an analysis of its unique narrative viewpoint and its object of description.

This study first introduces modern theories on alienation and voyeurism and their relevance towards Palace-style Poetry in the Liang Period. Then it defines what constitutes Palace-style Poetry from a historical point of view. It discusses the alienation of the poet from the object of his description, due to the influx of Buddhistic philosophy, ideologies and aesthetics during the Southern Dynasties. The identity of the Poet’s self is also questioned as he largely concerns himself with the feminine aesthetes. The act of gazing upon feminine objects that the male poet is engaged in suggests undertones of both alienation and voyeurism, which allows for an ambiguous reading on the part of the critic.

Although this dissertation is not about psychoanalysis or gender study in its strictest sense, it hopes to incorporate these theories as a twentieth century reflection upon the unique aesthetics of the Palace-style Poetry in the Liang Period of the Southern Dynasties.