ABSTRACT

Cao Yu (曹禺) was one of the most established dramatists in modern China. His early works like Thunderstorm, Sunrise and The Wilderness are considered as a trilogy since they all deal with the same subject, that of an individual rebelling against the declining society, finally failing and being dragged into that decline, while at the same time symbolizing the forces of the future. Although these three plays have been written for more than sixty years ago, still they enjoy wide appeal in the drama arena. They are often put on stage and audiences will not find them unfamiliar.

The main purpose of this academic exercise is to examine the two common themes existing in the trilogy, i.e. i) the suppression of women; and ii) class conflicts in the society. These two aspects are very much discussed in the analysis of Cao Yu’s early plays. Thus, the writing of this academic exercise hopes to throw some light on the study of the two aspects in the trilogy.

Chapter one of this academic exercise deals with the aims and scope of the study. Chapter two gives a brief description of Cao Yu’s history from 1910 to 1937, which includes the writing of these three plays. Chapter three uncovers the tragedies of women suppression in the Chinese society during the early twentieth century. Chapter four examines the social discrimination in the form of economic exploitation in the face of class conflicts. Chapter five, the concluding chapter, provides a round up of the earlier discussion.

The study of the themes in the trilogy gives an insight into the Chinese society in the early twentieth century. Cao Yu’s plays provide a glimpse of the social problems prevailing at that time and this earns him the status as a realist writer.