ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses stories of love-betrayal in San Yan, a collection of short stories compiled by late Ming scholar Feng Menglong. Feng, in his preface, expresses a desire to educate the public through popular literature. Through analysis of these stories of love-betrayal, we discover that despite Feng’s efforts to caution and educate his readers by depicting suffering for the betayers, what is more obvious from his development and treatment of the plot is an expression of sympathy and understanding towards the betayers. Love is a feeling that stems from the heart. But it is subject to external pressures and often compelled to conform to social rules. These stories offer a channel through which we may detect elements of helplessness and fatalism latent in the author’s outlook of life.

This thesis also attempts to compare and contrast stories of this genre in San Yan with those in the Classical tale of Tang period (chuangqi 传奇 ) and those in the Classical drama of Song and Yuan periods. Whether in terms of character types, plot development or narrative styles and point of view, the stories of love-betrayal in San Yan are unique, and venture into new territories without deviating from the literary tradition of the times.