Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse the relationship between the "heroic" and "graceful" styles in Song Ci poetry. Since the classification of Song Ci into these two styles by Ming critic Zhang Yan, there had been many discussions and arguments on them. These discussions by the Ming and Qing critics seem to regard "heroic" and "graceful" as two distinct styles with no connection between them. However, this does not appear to be true.

To establish the relationship between the two styles, this thesis studies the following aspects: firstly, how the two styles originated in the Late Tang and Song periods. By discussing their origins, the main difference between the two styles becomes obvious: poets of "heroic" styles are more direct and straightforward in expressing feelings whereas poets of "graceful" style are more implicit and reserved. In spite of their differences, these two styles are not parallel in development in the history of Song Ci. Thus the oncoming chapters will discuss what influence poets of "graceful" style had on poets of "heroic" style and vice versa. This was first done by analysing the works of Ouyang Xiu and Liu Yong (poets of "graceful" style) to see their influence on Su Shi's (founder of "heroic" abandon) works. On the latter part, works of Qin Guan and Zhou Bangyan (poets of "graceful" style) were analysed to see how Su Shi's works had in turn influenced them.

The study shows that works of lyric from both styles influenced each other. There is a close relationship between the "graceful" and "heroic" styles in Song Ci poetry. This finding will aid in enhancing our understanding of the development of Song Ci poetry.