Abstract

Chinese scholars, who traditionally placed much emphasis on novels which reflected the contemporary social background, paid little attention to the novel, "You Xian Ku" because of its erotic theme. Even today, this novel arouses much controversies. Thus, the aim of this academic exercise is to make an in-depth evaluative study of "You Xian Ku", paying special attention to its ideology and artistry.

For a better understanding of this novel, the study also delves into the following aspects: autobiography, motives behind this work, the originality of subsequent publications of this work, controversies among critics and the novel's influence on the contemporary literary scene.

Zhang's most significant contribution to classical Chinese literature was his literary skill of using first-person narration in this work. His novel also reflected social reality and his personal experiences were elaborated on and carefully developed in "You Xian Ku".

This academic exercise achieves its objective of showing how "You Xian Ku" has successfully emerged as the literary precursor of this genre of Chinese fiction.