ABSTRACT

Rulin Waishi is one of China’s most famous traditional novels written by eighteenth-century Chinese writer, Wu Ching-tzu (1701-54). The novel gives an account on the kind of society that Wu Ching-tzu lived in. It is a society which materialism and fame rules everything. In this thesis, I shall attempt to use the traditional Confucian basic five relationships to analyze the interpersonal-relationships in the novel. FromConfucian perspective, the five important human relationships are ruler-subjects, parents-children, husband-wife, siblings and friends. By examining all these relationships in Rulin Waishi, I find that many of these relationships are abnormal. This is especially so as the novel reflected social illness such as over concern of materialism and fame has caused people to abandon their moral ethics. And this often creates tensions in their relationships. Besides, the analysis of ruler-subjects relationship shows how strongly Wu’s views on political ethics are related to Confucius and Mencius. The recent discovery of Wu’s Wenmu Sanfang Shihou 文木三房诗说 has further assisted me in the analysis of husband-wife relationships in the novel. Although there are many abnormal relationships in the novel, Wu did write some good one comparatively to show his views on normal relationships. All of these relationships will be the main analysis of this thesis.