ABSTRACT

Xu Zhenqing (徐祯卿, 1479-1511), one of the Seven Earlier Masters of Ming period, was also a poet and literary critic. His work was varied and held in high esteem but his name was overshadowed by Li Mengyang (李梦阳) and He Jingming (何景明), the leaders of the Seven Masters. His theories on poetry were collected in the treatise Tang Yi Lu (《谈艺录》). The few studies done previously on this treatise had not been satisfactory. This academic exercise attempts to critically analyse Xu’s theory on poetry as developed in the treatise.

This study begins with an overview of the history of literary criticism in the Ming period. Chapter 2 presents Xu’s biography and the structure of Tang Yi Lu. Chapters 3 and 4 analyse Xu’s views on poetry and poetry writing. In particular, his argument that poetry originates from emotions and the emotional activities of a poet is examined. The final chapter compares Xu’s theory on poetry with the Ming Masters such as Li Mengyang and Li Panglong (李攀龙) and concludes with a reappraisal of Tang Yi Lu.

In understanding Xu’s critical writing, scholars can now realise his contribution to literary criticism, thus raising his status in Chinese literary history.