Abstract

This thesis is an exploratory study on Li Yu’s (1611-1680) unique concept of novel, as reflected in his short stories.

Li Yu is an outstanding dramatist, dramatic theorist and novelist in the late Ming and early Qing dynasty. Influenced by his drama theories, Li Yu’s short stories embody distinct dramatic inclination. His drama is related to his fiction in an obvious sense; half of his plays are related to his own short stories in subject matter and aesthetics. Li Yu closely applies his drama theories to his short stories, creating a unique concept of novel: novel is a soundless play. Although Li Yu’s “soundless play” concept of novel is original and unique, application of this concept to his short stories is of varying success.

Chapter one of this thesis gives a brief biographical note on Li Yu. It also introduces the subject of study, explains the methodology, the objectives and the scope of study.

Chapter two defines Li Yu’s unique concept of novel and analyses the possible reasons leading to the distinct dramatic inclination in Li Yu’s short stories.

Chapter three looks into how Li Yu applies his knowledge of drama theories to his fiction.

Chapter four examines Li Yu’s achievements in applying “soundless play” concept of novel to his short stories.

Chapter five concludes by listing other factors affecting Li Yu’s style of writing and assess Li Yu’s achievements as a novelist.