Abstract

The primary aim of this thesis is to analyze the narrative structure and implications of the eighteenth-century classical novel, *Qi Lu Deng*. The author’s autobiography and motive in writing the novel is briefly introduced at the start of the thesis. Following that, the narrative structure of the novel is discussed. The novel’s happy ending, which we see the lead Tan Shaowen changing for the better has been criticized as being unrealistic and unconvincing by many scholars. However, this thesis shows that according to the Yogacara school of thought, one’s thoughts are changeable and thus a protagonist’s reform is definitely not impossible.

Written for the moral edification of the reader, moral preaching and digressions into unrelated events frequently disrupt the flow of Tan Shaowen’s story. However, the novel displays its strengths structurally in other aspects. The depiction of characters are deepened by their placements in a world of duality and the step-by-step progression of Tan Shaowen’s decline is expressed through a recurrence of identically structured episodes. But with each episode, we see more serious context than the one preceding it. From the analysis of the narrative structure of the novel, we move to its implications. Through the narration of Tan Shaowen’s steps into decadence, the novel emphasized the importance of education and essential of “studying diligently and befriending good people”. Weaknesses of the imperial examination system and corruption of the bureaucracy are also revealed in the novel.