ABSTRACT

Pai Hsien-yung (Bai Xianyong) is regarded as one of the most famous writers of modern Chinese literature. Novels by him have been such a popular subject of research that it is now termed “Pai Studies”. In recent years, however, his reputation as a modernist writer underwent a transition to that of a revivor of Kun Opera. Pai Hsien-yung has been keenly interested in *kunqu* at a young age and was particularly fond of the Ming dynasty play “The Peony Pavilion”. The play later inspired him to write his short story “Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream” in reminisce of this traditional form of Chinese opera. Thirty-eight years later, he re-adapted the Ming dynasty play and produced the “Youth Version Peony Pavilion” with the aim of reviving the art.

This thesis offers a comparison between the two, focusing on the “interweaving of the traditional and modern” (ITM), a quality evident in both. With this common platform established, further elaboration on their differences will then be presented. The second chapter compares the two with regard to the traditional motif of “dream”, giving a detailed analysis on the content and meaning of the motif. Chapter three examines the similar interpretations of the traditional theme of “love” and “youth” by the two works and chapter four discusses the seemingly modern style of presentation of the motif and the theme. The last chapter identifies the similar ITM element in both works. It also points out the strikingly different effects the element has on their genre forms and hence their positions in the literary/arts field. Throughout the flow of the discussion, the ITM is repeatedly highlighted in the motif, theme and style of presentation of both works, though of varying degree.

It is hoped that this study will provide insights into the links between the novella and the play, and bring to the attention of those who are interested in these works the possibility of a cross-genre comparison between the two. Proving that the ITM is a common quality in the two successfully adapted pieces of work, the study also hopes to provide a reference model for future adaptation works.