ABSTRACT

This paper aims at examining the values of a critique of the play Xi Xiang Ji (<<西厢记>>), a source which has been overlooked in the field of Chinese literary criticism. Jin Shengtan's critique of Xi Xiang Ji has been selected for this study because of the play's popularity and widespread influence.

As this study focuses on the analysis of the theory of the play of Jin Shengtan, only those relevant aspects which reflect Jin Shengtan's views on the play are included. These include the motives and methods of criticism, Jin Shengtan's views of the play as seen from his critical remarks on Xi Xiang Ji such as the status of the play, the process of play-writing, the plot and characterization of Xi Xiang Ji, the language of the play.

The findings prove that an in-depth study of a critique of the play does provide us with a clearer understanding and a more complete picture of classical Chinese dramatic theory. In addition, this study reveals that some literary critics of Jin's work have been unjust in their assessment. Hence, critiques of plays as in Jin's case are essential sources of material for the study of Chinese literary criticism.