

Drama Nature Literature

— Dramatic Criticism in Later Ming —

by Reiko HIROSE

The history of literature often insists that literature has its origin in nature, in order to justify its value. In China, poetry has been thought to be the first literary work which was born by a strong flow of emotion, which preserved the purity of nature in ancient times.

The author discusses the word *bense* 本色 in the dramatic criticism in Jiajing 嘉靖 and Wanli 万曆 periods of Ming Dynasty, mainly *Nanci Xulu* 南詞叙錄 by Xu Wei 徐渭 and *Qulu* 曲律 by Wang Jide 王驥德. The author rereads them critically and points out how the power of origin, by the name of *bense* 本色, influences even the genre of drama. The drama, apparently, is a play, a fiction, and a kind of pretense, and yet is imagined to be originated in nature. Therefore a good drama is required to be artless as it would have been in ancient times. In this way, drama is also assimilated to poetry, and to the history of literature beginning with poetry.

But, is there any drama, literature, or language so pure and natural?