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Project Title: Fact and Fiction: Liu E (1857-1909) and Characters in *Laocan Youji* 老殘游記

Abstract:

Liu E was a writer, entrepreneur, and scholar who witnessed a sharpening conflict between Chinese tradition and encroaching Western influence during the last few decades of imperial Qing China (1644-1911), writing his novel to express concern for Chinese civilization and its future: the political nature of this work confirmed by Hsia (1969). This study addresses the question of how Liu E's treatment of the characters within the novel reflects the author's social, political, and philosophical views. The approach is qualitative, including a field study within China in locations associated with the author/novel, an analysis of the novel, from which secondary scholarship, biographical, and historical data provides evidence to establish research findings: Liu E, in crafting the novel's characters, blends fact and fiction to voice his distress at the state of the nation and also establish his spiritual self.