ABSTRACT

In ancient China, those women whose lovers or husbands were away for war, in pursuit of official posts or trading opportunities, etc. are collectively known as Si-Fu (思妇).

Si-Fu poetry (思妇诗) is one of the main subgenres in Chinese classical lyric literature which first appeared in the "Anthology of Classical Poems" (诗经) (600 B.C.). This honours thesis is a theoretical study of this subgenre during the Wei-Jin period (220-420).

Readers usually associate Si-Fu with officials who fell from grace thus imposing a political implication on such poems, whereas Si-Fu poetry of the Wei-Jin period manifests aesthetic qualities beyond the scope of political implications. This dissertation aims to establish the link between Si-Fu poetry of the Wei-Jin period and the so-called Era of Literary Consciousness (文学自觉时代) which began in this period, with emphasis on the aesthetic aspects of literary works.

In order to conduct an in-depth, unbiased study on the topic, a great number of the poems of this category are closely scrutinized with reference to background sources available in China, Taiwan, Hongkong and the United States.

From the observations made, it is concluded that under the influence of the Era of Literary Consciousness, Si-Fu poetry of the Wei-Jin period in general displays a refined and sentimental aesthetic quality which in turn affects the evolution of t’zu poetry (词).