Abstract

Fin de siecle refers to the period of time between 1870 to 1900 in Europe, during which there was prevalent pessimism in regard to the future of the world and of civilization. This pessimism was manifested in the arts as idealism, symbolism and decadence, and it soon developed into a new trend of literary thought in Europe.

During the May Fourth period, the fin de siecle literary thought was introduced into China. Great was its impact on the Chinese intelligentsia and idealism, symbolism and decadence were widely discussed and applied in their works. However, as the pessimism and decadence shown in fin de siecle literary thought conflicted with the propaganda of realism, its influence on the modern Chinese literature of the May Fourth period was denied or ignored.

In late 1980s to 1990s, the Chinese literary circle once again acknowledge the existence of fin de siecle influence in the modern Chinese literature of the May Fourth period. Since then, this topic has been discussed with great interest. The main objective of this academic exercise is to discover the influence of fin de siecle on these literature through the study of the early works of Lu Xun, Yu Dafu and Feng Zhi, three of the most important writers and poets of the May Fourth Era.

The conclusion of this thesis is that fin de siecle literary thought is apparent in the works of these writers and poets. The influence of fin de
sicle on the modern Chinese literature is positive. Not only does it widen the horizon of the modern Chinese literature of the May Fourth era, it also enhances the aesthetic value of these works.