Abstract

This honours thesis seeks to explore the influence of the "End of the Century" literary thought ("世纪末" 艺术思潮) on Lu Xun's (鲁迅) literary works, especially his fiction and prose poems.

The "End of the Century" literary thought (fin de siecle in French) refers to a trend of thoughts in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, during which there was a prevalence of poverty, hunger, impudence and prostitution. This was due to the fact that capitalism, having reached its saturation point, had resulted in class polarization. The trend of thoughts was characterized by a state of restlessness, frustration, disappointment and confusion. In literary terms, it is manifested as idealism, decadence and symbolism.

Sun Longji (孙隆基), a historian, pointed out that the "End of the Century" thought had influenced not only the trend of thoughts in 20th Century China but also Lu Xun's works. Yan Jiayan (严家炎) also suggested that the use of symbolism was apparent in Lu Xun's works. However, as the pessimism and decadence shown in symbolism posed a conflict with realism, the mainstream literary thought, symbolism was a taboo in the literary circle until ten years ago.

This thesis explores the following: (1) the influence of the "End of the Century" thoughts on 20th Century China, (2) the influence of the "End of the Century" thought on Lu Xun, (3) analysis of Lu Xun's prose poems and (4) analysis of selected fictional works by Lu Xun. These works by Lu Xun were chosen because studies have shown that the use of symbolism was most
apparent in them.

This study shows that the "End of the Century" thought has indeed influenced Lu Xun's literary works, especially in the use of symbolism to express his deepest thoughts and feelings.