SUMMARY

Lao She(1899-1966)’s Four-Generation Family (《四世同堂》) is a novel basically conveying a message of launching the War of Resistance against the Japanese(1937-1945). However, it distinguishes itself from other works of the same type by the excellence shown in its thematic significance and artistry.

The dissertation consists of seven chapters:

Chapter One attempts to examine the work from a macro-perspective. It points out that the Four-Generation Family is an outstanding novel among various successful literary works written by Lao She. It is also an epitome of Lao She’s patriotic works.

Chapter Two probes into the author’s motives in writing the Four-Generation Family. This chapter focuses on two aspects:

1. It focuses on the use of Beiping(北平) as the setting of the novel in relation to Lao She’s personal life in Beiping as well as the city’s sentimental value to him.
2. It explains that the Four-Generation Family is the product of Lao She’s patriotism by examining a series of patriotic works written by him.

Chapter Three examines the painful experiences that the writer encountered in the course of writing the Four-Generation Family and the obstacles that this novel faced before its publication. Finally there is a brief analysis of the storyline of the Four-Generation Family.

Chapter Four discusses the theme of calling for the War of Resistance against the Japanese in four aspects:
1. Through the comments on the Japanese invasion by Qian Moyin (钱默吟), one of the main characters of the novel, the writer urged the launching of the War of Resistance against the Japanese.

2. Through revealing the misery of the people of the conquered city, the writer aroused the people’s indignation and prepared them to resist the invaders.

3. Through the gradual change of the attitude of people in Beiping from enduring the humiliation and dragging on an ignoble existence to bravely and resolutely fighting for their lives and wishes, the writer points out that the only way to survive is to fight for their own lives.

4. Through critically analyzing and identifying the strengths of traditional Chinese culture, the writer inspires the Chinese people to participate actively in the War of Resistance against the Japanese.

Chapter Five analyses several important characters in the novel. They each have their own dispositions and ideology. The author vividly portrays these characters.

Chapter Six discusses three major artistic achievements of the novel: the “web” structure, the craftsmanship of writer in depicting characters and the style and patterns of metaphors used in the presentation of the story.

Chapter Seven concludes that the Four-Generation Family is an extraordinary and successful literary work.

The Four-Generation Family is a great million-character literary work that is hard to come by in the history of modern Chinese literature. It is not only a famous novel in the Chinese literature, but also a gem of world literature.