

Fetishizing the Loss: the Phantasms of Eros in Zhu Tianxin's Writings of Melancholia

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the literary articulation of temporal disorders in Zhu Tianxin's mature stage of writings that are produced after 1989. Varied forms of temporal disorders such as fetishism, melancholia, or addiction pervade Zhu's works (mainly *Remembering My Brothers from the Military Compound*, *The Old Capital*, *The Flâneur*, and her latest "A Glance toward the Southern Capital") and indicate the writer's compulsion to have a relationship to loss by suspending or controlling time. The essay begins with the investigation of the phenomenon of temporal anxiety by analyzing Walter Benjamin's allegorical figure of the angel of history. Benjamin's famous angel induces a productive tension between the past and the present, between the dead and the living, and can be usefully factored into our discussion of Zhu Tianxin's continuing obsession and dialogue with loss and its remains. Freud's important essay "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917) further provides us with a ground to explore the temporal dimension of melancholia, a peculiar mental state that is "pathological" and opposes to "normal mourning." However, Juliana Schiesari, Giorgio Agamben, and Judith Butler give us a better understanding of melancholic attachments to loss, making visible not only their social bases but also their aesthetic, ethical, political aspects. These critics' elaboration of the discourse of melancholia furnishes a discursive frame for my reading of Zhu Tianxin's melancholic writings

Keywords: Zhu Tianxin, mourning and melancholia, fetishism, eros, recollection, loss, temporal disorder

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