


A Survey of Twentieth-century Literary Theory and Criticism in Chinese

Xiaoming Chen
Peking University

Anfeng Sheng
Tsinghua University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>

 Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), [Comparative Literature Commons](#), [Education Commons](#), [European Languages and Societies Commons](#), [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), [Other Arts and Humanities Commons](#), [Other Film and Media Studies Commons](#), [Reading and Language Commons](#), [Rhetoric and Composition Commons](#), [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#), [Television Commons](#), and the [Theatre and Performance Studies Commons](#)

Dedicated to the dissemination of scholarly and professional information, [Purdue University Press](#) selects, develops, and distributes quality resources in several key subject areas for which its parent university is famous, including business, technology, health, veterinary medicine, and other selected disciplines in the humanities and sciences.

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: <clcweb@purdue.edu>

Recommended Citation

Chen, Xiaoming; and Sheng, Anfeng. "A Survey of Twentieth-century Literary Theory and Criticism in Chinese." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 15.6 (2013): <<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2367>>

This text has been double-blind peer reviewed by 2+1 experts in the field.

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

This is an Open Access journal. This means that it uses a funding model that does not charge readers or their institutions for access. Readers may freely read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of articles. This journal is covered under the [CC BY-NC-ND license](#).

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." In addition to the publication of articles, the journal publishes review articles of scholarly books and publishes research material in its *Library Series*. Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: <clcweb@purdue.edu>

Volume 15 Issue 6 (December 2013) Article 14
Xiaoming Chen and Anfeng Sheng
"A Survey of Twentieth-century Literary Theory and Criticism in Chinese"
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss6/14>>

Contents of **CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture 15.6 (2013)**
Special Issue ***New Work about World Literatures***
Ed. Graciela Boruszko and Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss6/>>

Abstract: In their article "A Survey of Twentieth-century Literary Theory and Criticism in Chinese" Xiaoming Chen and Anfeng Sheng survey Chinese-language scholarship that for the reason of the East-West divide is less known in the West. Although heavily influenced by both Western and Soviet Marxist thought, twentieth-century Chinese literary theorization and criticism produced much incisive scholarship based on the vast knowledge existing in Chinese culture and literary scholarship. Chen and Sheng survey pioneering works by numerous Chinese literary theorists and critics who have been influential in their own time and exerted persistent modeling influences until today and the article is meant to adjust the anonymous position of Chinese literary theorization in the West and thus to contribute to the diversity of literary studies.

A Survey of Twentieth-century Literary Theory and Criticism in Chinese

Xiaoming CHEN and Anfeng SHENG

Twentieth-century literary theories and criticism are an indispensable molding force in modern Chinese culture and scholarship. At the same time, many Chinese-language works have been influential in their own time and remain influential today. Unfortunately, not many Western scholars know much about this. When we talk about literary theories, the first thing that comes to mind is Western theory, particularly those emanating from or via US-American scholarship. More knowledgeable scholars about Chinese literature would know about ancient Chinese literary scholars such as Xie Liu or Rong Zhong and a few other theorists (on [contemporary] comparative literature and literary theory in Chinese see, e.g., Wang, Miaomiao <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss6/17>>; Wang and Liu <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1882>>; Zhou and Tong). Some may have heard about a few well-known authors such as Dun Mao, Lao She, and Xun Lu or more recent ones like Mo Yan, Hua Yu, and Anyi Wang. There is no doubt that Chinese literary theories have been influenced by Western thought and in the twentieth century particularly by Soviet Marxist literary scholarship, but questions arise as to how much of twentieth-century Chinese literary theory was Chinese and how much of it was originally created by Chinese scholars, how much of the theoretical landscape was constructed to meet the demands during their own time, and how did it help, influence, or channel the literary creation at that time? In sum, being impacted on the one hand by Western theories and by Soviet Marxist theories on the other, how could Chinese-language literary theory break through this double impact and find its own way?

In Chinese culture from the beginning of the twentieth century literary scholarship and criticism there has been a strong sense towards social reform. Reforms were to a large extent in response to the invasion of Western powers and writers and literary theorists were on the forefront to engage in social reform. In this sense, the landscape of twentieth-century Chinese literature was akin to *littérature engagée* in this case including scholarship and criticism. For example, Qichao Liang (梁启超) (1873-1929) published his article "论小说与群治之关系" ("On the Relationship between Fiction and Mass Management") in 1902 endowing literature the task of promoting social reforms and in 1907 Lu Xun (鲁迅) (1881-1936) wrote "摩罗诗力说" ("Forces of Poetry") introducing Byron, Shelley, Pushkin, Lermontov, etc., and by discussing Romanticism his intent was to criticize outdated traditions and social ailments in China in order to promote social development. The Chinese vernacular language movement — i.e., 新文化运动 (New Culture Movement) — was at first a Chinese form of Romanticism, but later it had to adapt itself to meet the needs of reality and was forced to change into realism. Ironically, Lu himself was regarded primarily as a master of realism, especially after the founding of the People's Republic of China. Further, Shi Hu (胡适) (1891-1962), who was studying philosophy under John Dewey at Columbia University and was influenced by Dewey's pragmatist philosophy, advocated the New Culture Movement in his 1917 article "文学改良刍议" ("A Preliminary Discussion of Literature Reform"). At the same time, another scholar Duxiu Chen (陈独秀) (1879-1942) published his article "文学革命论" ("On Literature Revolution") to criticize the shortcomings of Chinese traditional literature, including aristocratic literature, classical literature, and mountain forest literature (贵族文学, 古典文学, 山林文学), thus joining the New Culture Movement.

At the beginning of modern Chinese literature, there were of course other types of literary expression. For example, influenced by Western Naturalism, Dun Mao (茅盾) (1896-1981), a novelist and critic, was trying to point to another way for novel writing. Criticizing the traditional 章回体小说 novel style (a type of traditional Chinese novel with each chapter headed by a couplet thus giving an indication of its content) and advocating the new forms of vernacular literature, Mao promoted an objective, naturalistic method of describing human life, especially the life of the lower classes. Mao identified also with Romanticism, but believed that it Chinese Romanticism would had to go through the "baptism" of Naturalism first in order to flourish in the Chinese context. Another scholar who supported the notion of Chinese Romanticism was Shiqiu Liang (梁实秋) (1903-1987) — he studied in New York and was influenced by his teacher Irving Babbitt (1865-1933) — and wrote articles in which he discussed Chinese Romanticism and its relationship with Western literature. Overall, the sentimental

ways of representing life and individualistic self-assertion of Romanticism were not fully developed under the reigning social conditions; instead, "historical objectivity" and "objective realism" and their corresponding ways of theoretical constructing were accepted and practiced. Attempts to develop Chinese version of Romantic literature were eventually suppressed and the notion transformed itself to take up the responsibility of reforming society. If the social situation in China then had been more relaxed and the task of national emancipation less pressing, Chinese literature would probably have adopted and modified Western Romanticism successfully.

Prior to and during World War II and under Japanese occupation, it was impossible for most writers and scholars to engage in the way of thinking and writing of the Romantic mode and thus social and political engagement became important and relevant: thus the cause of national liberation and revolution seemed to be the only proper choice for most and Socialist Realism became the mainstream mode of Chinese literature and literary scholarship and criticism. Yang Zhou (周扬) (1908-1989) adopted from Soviet Marxist theory the notion of Socialist Realism (社会主义现实主义) in his 1952 article "关于 '社会主义的现实主义' 与革命浪漫主义——唯物辩证法的创作方法' 之否定" ("On 'Socialist Realism' and Revolutionary Romanticism: The Denial of Materialist Dialectical Creation Method"). Zhou understood well the direction of literary theory building, but he also pointed out that Socialist Realism should be based on the actual needs of Chinese leftist literature. Since this concept was borrowed, but had different political and cultural backgrounds, it was incorrect to apply it to the Chinese situation indiscriminately. According to Zhou, the main task for leftist literature was to solve the problem of proletariat and support it in order to defeat bourgeois liberal literature. Although the concept of Socialist Realism was also somehow enriched and modified with Romanticist elements by theorists like Zhou in the 1930s and 1940s, this effort was never fully acknowledged or supported by the authorities of the time.

Perhaps the only prominent scholar during the late 1930s and 1940s who could possibly counterbalance the notion of Socialist Realism was Feng Hu (胡风) (1902-1985) who published "置身在民主的斗争里面" ("In the Struggle for Democracy") in 1945 to put forward his ideas. He stressed that the writer's task should be to embrace subjectivity and should embrace the realities of his/her own individual life. Hu was trying to say that the writer should use his/her subjective initiative to reflect the social reality more powerfully and effectively. For Hu, politics could be reconciled with art to the largest possible extent and literary theories could sometimes subvert the most rigid politics. If the social and political situation had been more relaxed at that time, Hu's theorization could have helped to build Realism with features more intrinsic to literature itself and with more local characteristics of China instead of relying on Marxist Soviet thought. But Hu, instead of becoming a representative of literary progress, was labeled a "stumbling block" of the socialist and revolutionary literary movement. Hu's "mistake" lay in his insistence on the writer's limited autonomy and freedom. Although he was also a firm communist theorist and a revolutionary, he could not escape the fate of being excluded from the mainstream and was practically exiled from the literary arena and confined to prison in the years 1955, 1967, and 1970 for his ideas of the revision of Socialist Realism. Another scholar who thought along the lines of Hu was Wu Shu (舒芜) (1922-2009) who echoed Hu in his long article "论主观" ("On Subjectivity") in 1945. While the work of the few supporters of Chinese Romanticism and a Chinese Realist mode of literature were influential in literary circles, their notions were soon severely criticized for their opposition to "objective truth" and their work was deemed bourgeois individualism and subjectivism.

In May 1942, during the 延安整风运动 (Yenan Rectification Movement), Mao Zedong convened a special symposium on literature and the arts and he gave the famous speech entitled "在延安文艺座谈会上的讲话" ("Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art"). Mao's talk laid the foundation for revolutionary theories of literature and art in China and clarified the nature, tasks, and directions of writing literature and scholarship. The impact of Mao's talk on twentieth-century literary theorization and creation in China is unsurpassed owing to its progressive significance at the time and more importantly, owing to its political authority to intervene in literary and artistic practice. From the 1949 onward and with the triumph of the communist revolution, literature and art were almost turning into revolutionary politics completely and bogged down in incessant political campaigns and the political approach became the principal form of literary criticism. Good examples include Yemu Xiao's (萧也牧)

1949 story "我们夫妇之间" ("Between the Husband and the Wife"), the 1950 film *武训传* (The Life of Wu Xun), Pingbo Yu's (俞平伯) *红楼梦研究* (A Study of the *Dream of the Red Mansion*), and the critical school of the so-called 胡风集团 (Hu Feng Group). In the 1950s and 1960s, although Socialist Realism was still the mode of imposed writing and scholarship, there appeared some other voices. From the numerous debates held in that period, we could detect various efforts to construct a new paradigm of socialist literary theories and the latent desire to find a new path to a realism sprung from Chinese thought and culture. Immediately after the founding of the Republic when the literary arena became less rigidly institutionalized, Dun Mao published in 1950 an article entitled "目前创作上的一些问题" ("Some Problems in the Current Literary Creation"). On the one hand he stressed the importance of the writer's world outlook and political notion and on the other he emphasized the importance of the writer's life experience and Dun Mao argued for the integrity or at least the compromise of the two perspectives as desirable in literary practice. While Dun Mao was trying to promote the idea of individual life in literature, others like Xuefeng Feng (冯雪峰) (1903-1976) wanted to build a type of Realism with more Chinese features by going back to the rich Chinese tradition, but of course it should be always under the general banner of Socialist Realism. In his 1952 "中国文学中从古典现实主义到无产阶级现实主义的发展的一个轮廓" ("An Outline of the Development of Chinese Literature from Classical Realism to Proletarian Realism") Feng traced realism to Chinese classics such as *诗经* (The Book of Songs) and *楚辞* (Songs of Chu Country). Feng surveyed Chinese literary history from the Zhou Dynasty through the Han and Tang dynasties to the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties. He argued that the spirit of Realism was actually embedded in classical works all along and as such an artistic outlook and creative method, realism actually had its historical ancestry and continuous development although it also bore the marks of the time, especially with regard to social class. We could well see that Feng was using dominant Marxist dialectics so that he could balance his new argument, but Feng wanted to justify realism in relation to the long literary history in China. This implies the hope to find a timeless and classless nature for official Realism: by grounding his thought on Chinese traditions and the May Fourth New Cultural Movement, Feng was able to differentiate Chinese Realism from Soviet Marxist Social Realism. But then Yang Zhou wrote a reply article in 1952 entitled "On Socialist Realism: The Future Path of Chinese Literature" in reply to Feng's argument. Zhou affirmed the importance of the Soviet Marxist Socialist Realism and that it became a factor of impact in many places including the Chinese writers and scholars and emphasized that learning from Soviet-style Socialist Realism could not hamper the development of Chinese literature; on the contrary, it could help the latter to inherit and promote its own traditions. This put an end to Feng's tentative revision. In addition, after the campaigns against the film *The Life of Wu Xun*, Guowei Wang's "Comments on *A Dream of Red Mansions*," and after the "Incident of Hu Feng Group," writing and scholarship was depressed and the problem of stereotyping and stylized rigidity was serious in both literary creation, criticism, and scholarship.

Then in the year 1956 came the period of 百花齐放, 百家争鸣 (Letting a Hundred Flowers Blossom and a Hundred Schools of Thought Prevail) and many articles appeared in newspapers and magazines during some of them commenting on the issues of Realism. Among these articles Zhi He's (1916-1994) "现实主义——广阔的道路" ("Realism: A Broad Way Ahead") and Bo Zhou's (1932-) "论现实主义及其在社会主义时代的发展" ("On Realism and Its Development in the Socialist Period") were the boldest and most influential. His aim was to break the prevalent doctrine, that is, the dogmatic understanding of the concept of Socialist Realism and he questioned the Soviet Marxist definition of the concept and practice by tracing the modern significance in traditional Realism (although the latter also contains seeds of socialist spirit). Socialist was regarded by He as an adjective modifier, instead of an intrinsic defining term, as was the case with Zhou. He was actually denying that there existed an absolute, essentialized Realism with a consistent socialist spirit detached from historical and social conditions. His realism was drawn from rich and extensive real life with an emphasis on the nature of literature and art. Zhou's article echoed He's argument and believed that if we use the concept of Realism to encompass or replace all literary trends and innovation, then the distinctiveness of artistic creation would be underestimated. When we elevate only Realism, then it tends to be understood merely as a kind of political concept. To Zhou realism was born of literary and artistic practice, it was a literary method instead of a transcendental notion. Soon after their articles were published, He and Zhou were criticized by such as Guangnian Zhang (张光年) (1913-2002) and Yong Chen (陈涌) (1919-). Zhang was sensitive

enough to discern He's and Zhou's revision of Socialist Realism and what He and Zhou really wanted to do, according to Zhang, was to cancel the Socialist Realism and shake the principle of Marxism in the field of literature and art. Chen's criticism was even more politically vehement. He believed that the essential problem with He and Zhou was what position they would give to the political ideas: "A real Socialist Realist writer," Chen said, "should consciously embody socialist thoughts in his works ... Socialist Realism demands the conformity of artistic truth and socialist thoughts" ("On Socialist Realism" 12; unless indicated otherwise, all translations are by the authors of the article). Another attempt to invigorate Socialist Realism was the proposition of "Revolutionary Romanticism" by the arguing that the fundamental significance of Socialist Realism lies in its purpose of reflecting the reality in the era of socialism from the perspective of idealism and that idealism proper is above reality and could not be readily reflected or explained in the form of rigid realism. Thus, in order to give prominence to idealism in Realism, the term "Revolutionary Romanticism" was proposed to compensate for the deficiency of Socialist Realism. It was an artistic notion or style which was meant to combine revolutionary romanticism with revolutionary realism.

In the late 1950s and 1960s, there was probing towards daily life and experiences as a redressing of the hollowness of revolutionary romanticism. In 1958, Moruo Guo (郭沫若) (1892-1978) published "浪漫主义和现实主义" ("Romanticism and Realism") in which he tried to find some justification from Xun Lu's work. He acknowledged that Lu indeed was a great realistic writer, but he had plenty romanticist elements in his works and that at times the proportion of the two was even half and half (Guo 2-3). Thus, Guo justified the combination of Romanticism and Realism through his analysis of the oeuvre of Lu. This combination indicated that some theorists wanted to build their own literary system; however, the problem was that this effort came out of political ideology and not because of the pursuit of art and literature. The concept of revolutionary realism seemed to have solved the contradictions between Romanticism and Realism, but there were actually not many good literary works in practice. Now that writers were called on to express their ideals and future dreams on such a grand scale, it was easy for their writings to become hollow and over-stylized. In 1962, Quanlin Shao (1906-1971) gave a talk on story-writing on the at the Dalian Symposium on How to Write Stories of Countryside Themes, in which he discussed how to expand writing topics and themes, how to mold "average characters" who were not clear-cut good guys or bad guys, and how to reflect the conflicts among the people. Shao's speech had widened the road of literary creation and influenced literary circles and scholarship of the time. While it is obvious that in the debates about Realism and Socialist Realism there was always political interference, there were attempts of think and write differently: although they did not amount to much, the significance of those efforts should not be dismissed.

During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) political interference in literature and scholarship came to the extreme. The powers of the Cultural Revolution criticized and eradicated, or at least they thought they had, almost all the cultural and literary achievements from the traditional classics and the West. With the end of the Cultural Revolution, China began to reflect on it and itself both politically and culturally and in this literature played the role of pioneer again. In 1978 Guannian Zhang (张光年) published "驳 '文艺黑线' 论" ("Refuting the Theory of Black Line in Literature and Art") in the newspaper *People's Daily* in which he tried to clear up the confusions and set things right in the field of literature and art. Then Yang Zhou published "三次伟大的思想解放运动" ("Three Great Revolutionary Movements of Ideas") in response in 1979. But those discussions about the relationship between literature and politics were only superficial reflections upon the immediate situation after the Cultural Revolution. It could have served well as a starting point, but it did not go further about the possibility of other directions in literature and art or the possibility of reconciling the politics with aesthetics.

When in 1957 Gurong Qian (钱谷融) (1919-) published "论 '文学是人学'" ("Literature Is the Study of Human Beings") in an attempt to merge the idea of human nature into Socialist Realism, it immediately evoked severe criticism and punishment. In 1979 Guangqian Zhu (朱光潜) (1897-1986) published "关于人性、人道主义、人情味和共同美问题" ("On Humanity, Humanitarianism, Human Kindness and Common Beauty") and the article initiated a heated discussion on human nature. Others such as Xiang Gu (顾骥) (1930-) and Ruoshui Wang (王若水) (1926-2002) published articles to discuss related issues, but the discussion of humanism and human nature was still limited. Later, the promoting of Marxist ideas remained restricted to a hermeneutical way of interpreting orthodox Marxist theories. Although still

largely suppressed by the authorities in the 1980s and the political freedom given to intellectuals remained limited, times changed. For example, the rising of 朦胧诗 (Misty Poetry) was regarded as a banner of the time: the earliest discussion of these poems was published by Liu Gong (公刘) (1927-2003) in 1980. From then on, a discussion of Misty Poetry, its artistic features, and its background gained recognition. Further, writers such as Mian Xie (谢冕) (1932-), Shaozhen Sun (孙绍振) (1936-), and Jingya Xu (徐敬亚) (1949-) published articles on Misty Poetry between 1980 and 1983: they deemed Misty Poetry an epoch-making change in literature. For the first time the poet could express ideas and emotions, distinctive thinking of society and history as individual voices.

In the 1980s, the vitality of literary theorization and criticism was partly owing to the introduction of Western thought into China. With the impact of Western cultures and China experienced something of a renaissance of the Modernist movement in literature and art. Translation played a critical role during this movement. In 1980, an anthology entitled *外国现代派作品选* (A Selected Anthology of Foreign Modernists; authors included Verhaeren, Valery, Rilke, Yeats, Eliot, Pound, Hauptmann, O'Neill, Kafka, etc.) edited by Kejia Yuan (袁可嘉) (1921-2008), was published and tens of thousand copies were sold within months. Another book entitled *西方现代派文学研究* (Studies of Western Modernist Literature) edited by Kun Chen (陈焜) was published in 1981 and more than thirteen thousand copies of its first edition were sold and it has been reprinted for dozens of times in the following years. But the belated Modernist movement in 1980s China was not a full-fledged movement nor did it have any guiding principles. Rather, it was a spontaneous exploration of and experiment with early twentieth-century Western Modernism. Attempts in writing included not only Misty Poetry, but also stream of consciousness narration represented by such as Meng Wang (王蒙) (1934-) and later Nobel Laureate Xingjian Gao (高行健) (1940-). Wang wrote the first stream of consciousness stories while Gao wrote a popular book to explore modernist techniques. The discussions of this book and modernism in China between Wang, Gao, Jicai Feng (冯骥才) (1942-), Tuo Li (李陀) (1939-), and Xinwu Liu (刘心武) (1942-) exerted nation-wide influence during that period of time. Then more and more articles introducing Western modernism appeared and Modernist writers like Wolf, Joyce, Kafka, Brecht, García Márquez, etc., were introduced to China. Postmodernist writers such as Ionesco, Barth, Barthelme, and Calvino had also been written about and translated. Although somewhat unsystematic and disordered, the introduction of the Western Modernism and Postmodernism had caused sensation and had enormous impact on literary writing, criticism, and scholarship.

At the same time, most of the Western theories in the humanities had also been translated, with an astonishing speed and introduced. New criticism, structuralism, semiotics, hermeneutics, existentialism, post-structuralism, Freudian psycho-analysis, Derrida and deconstruction all found their way into Chinese scholarship. However, these Western theories had to wait a while before they were digested and the new foreign theoretical frameworks had to dialogue and negotiate with existing Chinese theories in order to take root. So it was understandable that the 1980s literary theorization and criticism were basically carried out in connection with the liberation of people's mind and that they were closely related to the literary and artistic creation of that time almost all of which had roots in Chinese culture. At the same time, Chinese theorists in the humanities were trying to open up a space from within the Chinese thought. For example, Zehou Li (李泽厚) (1930-) and Zaifu Liu (刘再复) (1941-) were among leading scholars to dominate cultural and ideological rebuilding. Li reconstructed the Marxist ideas to cater to the need of promoting individual subjectivity and Liu proposed subjectivity. In 1984, Liu brought up again the classical statement that "literature is the study of human beings" and made critical observations about realist literary theories. He pointed out that writers should describe the contradictions and complicatedness of the characters in order to break the rigidity of political conceptualization and the stereotyped realist model ("On the Principle" 25-29). Liu's theorization exerted immense influence on literature, art, and culture in general during the period.

The conflicts between the conservative theorists of Socialist Realism and the open-minded new generation of theorists such as Zhongwen Qian (钱中文) (1941-), Daiyun Yue (乐黛云) (1931-), Qingbing Tong (童庆炳) (1936-), Shuying Du (杜书瀛) (1938-), and Fanren Zeng (曾繁仁) (1941-) were still going on, but the new generation would win the theoretical battle this time. They had absorbed theories not only from Marxism and traditional socialism, but more importantly they were well-acquainted with contemporary Western theories. A still younger generation of scholars began to make an impact: they

not only reflected on the consequences of the Cultural Revolution, but also called out the wishes of the new era and gave literary works close-reading they deserved. They switched from the critical mode of denouncing political discourse to a more literary and aesthetic discourse. These young scholars and critics include Da Lei (雷达), Zhennan Zeng (曾镇南), Liqun Qian (钱理群), Pingyuan Chen (陈平原), Ziping Huang (黄子平), Fanhua Meng (孟繁华), Shuyuan Lu (鲁枢元), and Jiefei Li (李洁非). Well-equipped with expansive horizons and both old and new theories, they were qualified for better interpretation and theoretical discussion of literary works. To many of these scholars and critics, there were no such things as "realistic" standards or principles: they expressed their own thoughts and attitudes without hesitation. For example, Yue's introduction of Western comparative literature initiated the establishment of comparative literature as a discipline in China and many other theorists introduced and expounded theories from the West including not only from the U.S., but also from elsewhere.

The new trends of Chinese literature in the 1980s also helped open many other interpretive possibilities and larger space for literary theories and criticism. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, new ways of literary theorization and criticism also emerged in response to the Western theories and literary practice in China. In addition to the aforementioned Western theories, postcolonialism, ecocriticism, and cultural studies were also brought into the horizon of Chinese scholars. At the same time, literary theories and criticism also came into being and began to exert stronger influence in literature and art. Today, literary theoretical circles are undergoing a significant transition. Some scholars are turning to cultural studies while others are trying to combine theorization and criticism from the inside. The still younger generation born in the 1960s is becoming the leading force in literary studies. Equipped with different knowledge and backgrounds and extensive periods abroad including graduate degrees from Western universities, the new generation is entering the field of literary research in innovative ways.

Looking back on the literary history in twentieth-century China, we can see that most of the time literary theories and criticism was strictly confined by the Realism in its various guises and politics. It was not until the end of the Cultural Revolution when it again met Western theories and welcomed the era of theoretical diversity. However, when in the 1990s Chinese scholarship was voraciously absorbing theories from the West and prepared for the construction of its own theoretical and critical formations, the whole field in the world context has undergone a recession. Some scholars even suggested the death of theory (e.g., Eagleton 2-3). It seems that the transition from theorization to criticism is the inevitable trend now in China. Without the dominance of theories, critics could perhaps find a new path of renovation from and interaction with contemporary literary creation.

In conclusion, it is important to recall the steep and tortuous paths of construction of modern Chinese literature and its scholarship in the past century and to re-experience the predecessors' hardships and difficulties. It can help us understand the complicatedness of contemporary Chinese culture and the conflicts and tensions in theorization, criticism, and the construction of aesthetics. The road is still very long ahead, but Chinese writers, critics, and scholars need to move forward. In the twenty-first century it seems that literary theories and theorization are declining in China and elsewhere. Globalization and the worldwide decline of the humanities is also felt in China and there is the urgent need to design ways to innovate Chinese scholarship in particular and humanities scholarship in general because without the humanities society loses one of its most important and relevant features.

Works Cited

- Chen, Duxiu (陈独秀). "论文学革命" ("On Literary Revolution"). *New Youth* 2.6 (1917): 1-4.
- Chen, Kun (陈焜), ed. *西方现代派文学研究* (Studies of Western Modernist Literature). Beijing: Peking UP, 1981.
- Chen, Pingyuan (陈平原). *小说史：理论与实践* (A History of the Novel: Theory and Practice). Beijing: Peking UP, 1993.
- Chen, Yong (陈涌). "关于社会主义的现实主义" ("On Socialist Realism"). *Newspaper for Literature and Art* 2 (1957): 11-13.
- Du, Shuying (杜书瀛). *李渔美学思想研究* (A Study of Li Yu's Aesthetic Ideas). Beijing: China Social Sciences P, 1998.
- Eagleton, Terry. *After Theory*. New York: Basic Books, 2003.
- Feng, Jicai (冯骥才). "中国文学需要'现代派' — 冯骥才给李陀的信" ("Chinese Literature Needs 'Modernism': A Letter to Tuo Li). *Shanghai Literature* 8 (1967): 88-91.

- Feng, Xuefeng (冯雪峰). "中国文学中从古典现实主义到无产阶级现实主义的发展的一个轮廓" ("An Outline of the Development of Chinese Literature from Classical Realism to Proletarian Realism"). *Newspaper for Literature and Art* 14, 15, 17, 19, 20 (1952): n.p.
- Gao, Xingjian (高行健). *现代小说技巧初探* (A Brief Introduction to Modernist Techniques). Guangzhou: Flower City Publishing, 1981.
- Gong, Liu (公刘). "诗与政治及其它 — 答诗刊社问" ("Poetry, Politics, and Others: A Reply to the Poetry Journal"). *Poetry Journal* 1 (1980): 51-56.
- Gu, Xiang (顾骥). "人性与阶级性" ("Humanity and Class Nature"). *Literature and Art Studies* 3 (1980): 19-23
- Guo, Moruo (郭沫若). "浪漫主义和现实主义" ("Romanticism and Realism"). *Red Flag Journal* 3 (1958): 1-8.
- He Zhi (何直, 即秦兆阳). "现实主义 — 广阔的道路 — 对于现实主义的再认识" ("Realism — A Broad Way Ahead — Reconsidering Realism"). *People's Literature* 9 (1956): 1-13.
- Hu, Feng (胡风). "置身在为民主的斗争里" ("In the Struggle for Democracy"). 1945. *胡风评论集* (A Collection of Hu Feng's Literary Criticism). Beijing: People's Literature Publishing, 1985. 17-23.
- Hu, Shi (胡适). "文学改良刍议" ("A Preliminary Discussion of Literature Reform"). *New Youth* 2.5 (1917): 1-11.
- Huang, Ziping (黄子平). *文学的"意思"* (The "Meaning" of Literature). Hangzhou: Zhejiang Literature & Art Publishing, 1988.
- Lao, She (老舍). *Rickshaw Boy*. Trans. Evan King and Cyrus Leroy Baldridge. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1945.
- Lei, Da (雷达). *蜕变与新潮* (Metamorphosis and the New Trends). Beijing: China Federation of Literature and Art Circle P, 1987.
- Li, Jiefei (李洁非). *中国当代小说文体史论* (On the Stylistic History of Contemporary Chinese Novels). Xi'an: Shaanxi People's Education P, 2002.
- Li, Tuo (李陀). "'现代小说'不等于'现代派'——李陀给刘心武的信" ("Modernist Novel' Does Not Equal 'Modernism': A Letter to Xinwu Liu"). *Shanghai Literature* 8 (1982): 91-94.
- Li, Zehou (李泽厚). *美的历程* (The Journey of Aesthetics). Beijing: Cultural Relics Publishing, 1981.
- Liang, Qichao (梁启超). "论小说与群治之关系" ("On the Relationship between Fiction and Mass Management"). *New Novel* 1.1 (1902): 1-8.
- Liang, Shiqiu (梁实秋). "现代中国文学之浪漫趋势" ("The Romantic Tendency of Modern Chinese Literature"). *Morning Newspaper Supplement* (15 February 1926): n.p.
- Ling, Fei (令飞, 即鲁迅). "摩罗诗力说" ("Forces of Romantic Poetry"). *Henan Monthly* 2-3 (1908): n.p.
- Liu, Xie (刘勰). *文心雕龙*. 502 Ad. (The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons). Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou Classics Publishing, 2013.
- Liu, Xinwu (刘心武). "需要冷静地思考——刘心武给冯骥才的信" ("We Need to Think Soberly: A Letter to Jicai Feng"). *Shanghai Literature* 8 (1982): 94-96.
- Liu, Zaifu. "论人物性格的二重组合原理" ("On the Principle of Duplicate Combination of Characters' Temperament"). *Literature Review* 3 (1984): 24-40, 141.
- Lu, Shuyuan (鲁枢元). *生态批评的空间* (The Space for Ecocriticism). Shanghai: East China Normal UP, 2006.
- Mao, Dun (茅盾). "目前创作上的一些问题" ("Some Problems in Current Literary Creation"). *Newspaper for Literature and Art* 1.9 (1950): n.p.
- Mao, Zedong. "Talks at the Yanan Forum on Literature and Art." *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*. Peking: Foreign Languages P, 1965. Vol. 3, 69-98.
- Meng, Fanhua (孟繁华). *众神狂欢: 世纪之交的中国文化现象* (Revelry of Gods: China's Cultural Phenomena at the Turn of the Century). Beijing: China Renmin UP, 2009.
- Mo, Yan (莫言). *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*. Trans. Howard Goldblatt. New York: Arcade Publishing, 2011.
- Qian, Gurong (钱谷融). "论'文学是人学'" ("Literature Is the Study of Human Beings"). *Literature and Art Monthly* 5 (1957): 39-54.
- Qian, Liqun (钱理群). *心灵的探寻* (Seeking of the Heart). Shanghai: Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing, 1988.
- Qian, Zhongwen (钱中文). *文学理论: 走向交往对话的时代* (Literary Theories: Toward the Time of Exchange and Dialogue). Beijing: Peking UP, 1999.
- Shao, Quanlin (邵荃麟). "在大连'农村题材短篇小说创作座谈会'上的讲话" ("Talk on the Dalian Symposium on How to Write Stories of Countryside Themes"). *中国新文学大系 1949-1976* (Chinese New Literature 1949-1976). Ed. Feng Mu (冯牧). Shanghai: Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing, 1997. Vol. 1, 514-26.
- Shen, Yanbing (沈雁冰, 即茅盾). "自然主义与中国现代小说" ("Naturalism and the Modern Chinese Novel"). *Novel Monthly* 13.7 (1922): 1-12.
- Shu, Wu (舒芜). "论主观" ("On Subjectivity"). *July* (1945): n.p.
- Sun, Shaozhen (孙绍振). "新的美学原则在崛起" ("The Rising of the New Aesthetic Principles"). *Poetry* 3 (1981): 55-58.
- The Life of Wu Xun* (武训传). Dir. Dan Zhao (赵丹). Shanghai: Peak Film Industries, 1950.
- Tong, Qingbing (童庆炳). *中国古代心理诗学与美学* (Psychological Poetics and Aesthetics in Ancient China). Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1992.
- Wang, Anyi (王安忆). *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow: A Novel of Shanghai*. Trans. Michael Berry and Susan Chan Egan. New York: Columbia UP, 2008.
- Wang, Meng (王蒙). "在探索的道路上" ("On the Road of Exploration"). *Journal of Capital Normal University* 4 (1980): 19-25.
- Wang, Miaomiao. "Comparative Literature in Chinese: A Survey of Books Published 2000-2013." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 15.6 (2013): <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss6/17>>.
- Wang, Ruoshui (王若水). "文艺与人的异化问题" ("Literature, Art, and Human Alienation"). *Shanghai Literature* 9 (1980): 4-9.
- Wang, Xiaolu, and Yan Liu. "Comparative Literature in Chinese." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 13.4 (2011): <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1882>>.

- Wang, Xiaolu, and Yan Liu. "Comparative Poetics in Chinese." *Companion to Comparative Literature, World Literatures, and Comparative Cultural Studies*. Ed. Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek and Tutun Mukherjee. New Delhi: Cambridge UP India, 2013. 239-53.
- Xiao, Yemu (萧也牧). *我们夫妇之间* (Between the Husband and the Wife). Shanghai: Cultural Works Institute, 1950.
- Xie, Mian (谢冕). "在新的崛起面前" ("When Facing the Newly-Risen"). *Exploring Poetry* 1 (1980): 11-14.
- Xu, Jingya (徐敬亚). "崛起的诗群" ("The Rising Poets"). *Contemporary Literary Thought* 1 (1983): 14-27, 55.
- Yu, Hua (余华). *To Live*. Trans. Michael Berry. New York: Anchor Books, 2003.
- Yu, Pingbo (俞平伯). *红楼梦研究* (A Study of the Dream of the Red Mansion). Beijing: People's Literature Publishing, 1973.
- Yuan, Kejia (袁可嘉), Hengxun Dong (董衡巽) and Kelu Zheng (郑克鲁), eds. *外国现代派作品选* (A Selected Anthology of Foreign Modernists). Shanghai: Shanghai Literature Art Publishing, 1980.
- Yue, Daiyun (乐黛云). *比较文学与中国现代文学* (Comparative Literature and Modern Chinese Literature). Beijing: Peking UP, 1987.
- Zeng, Fanren (曾繁仁). *西方美学论纲* (An Outline of Western Aesthetics). Jinan: Shandong People's Publishing, 1992.
- Zeng, Zhennan (曾镇南). *思考与答问* (Thinking and Answering). Xi'an: Shaanxi People's Education P, 1991.
- Zhang, Guangnian (张光年). "社会主义的现实主义存在着'发展着'" ("Socialist Realism Is Still Here and Developing"). *Newspaper for Literature and Art* 24 (1956): n.p.
- Zhang, Guannian (张光年), "驳'文艺黑线'论" ("Refuting the Theory of Black Line in Literature and Art"). *People's Daily* (19 December 1978): 3.
- Zhou, Xiaoyi, and Q.S. Tong. "Comparative Literature in China." *Comparative Literature and Comparative Cultural Studies*. Ed. Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek. West Lafayette: Purdue UP, 2003. 268-83.
- Zhong, Rong (钟嵘). *诗品* (Grades of Poetry). 514-17 AD. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1991.
- Zhou, Bo (周勃). "论现实主义及其在社会主义时代的发展" ("On Realism and Its Development in the Socialist Period"). *Changjiang Literature & Art* 12 (1956): 37-46.
- Zhou, Qiyi (周起应, 即周扬). "关于'社会主义的现实主义'与革命浪漫主义 — '唯物辩证法的创作方法'之否" ("On 'Socialist Realism' and Revolutionary Romanticism: The Denial of Materialist Dialectical Creation Method"). *Modern* 4.1 (1933): n.p.
- Zhou, Yang (周扬). "社会主义现实主义: 中国文学前进的道路" ("On Socialist Realism: The Future Path of Chinese Literature"). *People's Daily* (11 January 1953): 3.

Author's profile: Xiaoming Chen teaches Chinese literature and literary theory at Peking University. His interests in scholarship include contemporary avant-garde literature and postmodern theories. In addition to numerous articles, Chen's book publications include *无边的挑战 — 中国先锋派文学的后现代性* (1993) (Boundless Challenges: Postmodernity of the Chinese Avant-garde Literature), *解构的踪迹 — 话语、历史与主体* (1994) (The Traces of Deconstruction: Discourse, History, and Subject), and *表意的焦虑 — 历史祛魅与当代文学变革* (2002) (The Anxiety of Signification: Historical Disenchantment and the Contemporary Literary Reform). E-mail: <cxm59@vip.sina.com>

Author's profile: Anfeng Sheng teaches English literatures and literary theory at Tsinghua University. His interests in scholarship include comparative literature and contemporary literary theories. In addition to numerous articles, Sheng's recent book publications include *霍米·巴巴的后殖民理论研究* (2011) (A Study of Homi K. Bhabha's Postcolonial Theory) and the edited volume *智性的拷问 — 当代文化理论大家访谈录* (2010) (Intellectual Interrogation: Interviews with Some Great Contemporary Cultural Theorists). E-mail: <sheng_anfeng@163.com>