
Disoriented Nationalist Discourse of the Wenxuan Group amidst Manchukuo's Anti-Modern Chorus

Chao Liu
Southeast 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

Liu, Chao. "Disoriented Nationalist Discourse of the Wenxuan Group amidst Manchukuo's Anti-Modern Chorus." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 20.1 (2018): <<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.3149>>

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

The above text, published by Purdue University Press ©Purdue University, has been downloaded 178 times as of 11/07/19.

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 CultureISSN 1481-4374 <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>>
Purdue University Press ©Purdue University

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 20 Issue 1 (March 2018) Article 3**Chao Liu,****"Disoriented Nationalist Discourse of the Wenxuan Group amidst Manchukuo's Anti-Modern Chorus"**<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol20/iss1/3>>Contents of **CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture 20.1 (2018)**<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol20/iss1/>>

Abstract: In his article "Disoriented Nationalist Discourse of the *Wenxuan* Group amidst Manchukuo's Anti-Modern Chorus" Chao Liu analyzes the proposal of "native-land literature" made by left-wing Chinese writers in occupied northeast China. As it turns out, inheriting the nationalist discourse of the May Fourth Movement and further radicalizing it via a "new romanticism," those writers over-emphasized the socio-political function of literary production and took native-land literature as the most effective tool for nationalist mobilization. Accordingly, they repelled modern civilization as it was associated with the colonists, relying instead on natural wilderness and primitive force and thus adopting subject matters as well as stylistic features that paradoxically celebrated the Japanese imperial ideology of "overcoming modernity." In this sense, the *Wenxuan* group involuntarily lapsed into an anti-modern chorus with the colonial regime.

Chao LIU

Disoriented Nationalist Discourse of the *Wenxuan* Group amidst Manchukuo's Anti-Modern Chorus

On 18 September 1931, the Kwantung army stationed along the South Manchuria Railway unexpectedly assaulted nearby Chinese barracks and soon occupied the entire region of Northeast China. In the following year, Japanese occupiers deliberately established a puppet state called Manchukuo and claimed its independence from China. For the purpose of turning Manchukuo into a substantive Japanese colony, they not only launched fierce military campaigns to pacify anti-Japanese rebellions sweeping across Manchuria, but also forcibly implemented a set of high-handed cultural policies to neutralize the national consciousness of the occupied Chinese. Against this background, Chinese writers felt their lives and freedom under dire threat, with Xiao Jun, Xiao Hong, and Luo Binji fleeing to China proper and Jin Jianxiao, a famous Manchu artist and underground CCP (Chinese Communist Party) member, being executed in June 1936. Furthermore, as the colonial regime outlawed almost all literary journals in Chinese and canonical texts of modern Chinese literature like Mao Dun's *Ziye* (*Midnight*) and Ba Jin's *Jiliu sanbuqu* (*The Torrents Trilogy*), the modern-styled "new literature" was pushed to the edge of extinction in Manchukuo.

However, *Mingming's* (*Illuminating the Brightness*) inauguration, as a Japanese-sponsored journal devoted to Chinese vernacular literature under the editorship of Gu Ding, broke the silence of the cultural realm. Due to its putative association with the colonizers, it also aroused a vehement debate over the predominant themes, styles and orientations of Manchukuo literature as well as how to treat the paradoxical influence of Japanese culture. This debate, known as the controversy of "native-land literature" and "write-and-print-ism," generated two opposing intellectual factions, *Yiwenzhi* (*Record of Art and Literature*) and *Wenxuan* (*Selection of Writings*), which respectively appealed to literary modernization and national salvation. The former was organized by Gu Ding, Xiao Song, Jue Qing, and Yi Chi and centered on *Yiwenzhi*, the literary journal they launched in March 1939, whereas the latter came into being in December 1939, as Qiu Ying, Chen Yin, and Wang Mengsu established the *Wenxuan* Publishing House in Fengtian and Shan Ding, Wu Lang, and Wu Ying started the publication of *Wencong* (*Collection of Writings*) in Xinjing. Since contributors of *Wenxuan* and *Wencong* both derived from the same group of writers inspired by Xiao Jun and held similar viewpoints on literature's social functions, they were collectively called the *Wenxuan* group.

Spanning from 1937 to 1940, this controversy mainly focused on two aspects: the direction of the development of Manchukuo literature and the attitude towards Japanese culture. As for the *Yiwenzhi* group, they proposed such notions as "write-and-print-ism" and "directionless direction," emphasizing the autonomy of literature and the freedom of writing, demanding to "productively write and print" with no concern for "any forms of isms or colors," and criticizing Shan Ding, the leading figure of the *Wenxuan* writers, for his "constraint of literature in a little world" and "indulgence in novelties" to create a sensational effect (Gu, "Random Records" 55, if not specified, translations are mine). For the sake of modernizing Chinese Literature and enlightening the masses in Manchukuo, they took the emulation of modern Japanese literature as the most available and effective approach (Gu, "The Third Talk" 116) and objected to proposals of excluding all Japan-related things based on extreme Chinese nationalism. As opposed to "write-and-print-ism," the *Wenxuan* group formulated their own idea of "native-land literature," referring to it as the mainstream of Manchukuo literature and highlighting its preordained dependence on the "reality," namely the Japanese invasion of China. By Shan Ding's definition, native-land literature should "reflect the real life of a majority of people" and demonstrate "an in-depth understanding of the zeitgeist" (Shan, "Native-Land Literature" 27). On this basis, they stressed the socio-political function of literature, denounced "write-and-print-ism" as an "ahistorical" fantasy of "art for art's sake" (Qiu, "Origins of Publishing" 4), and accused the *Yiwenzhi* writers of "political speculation" for their "pro-Japanese" stances.

Caught in the middle of modernity and national identity, the *Yiwenzhi* group and the *Wenxuan* group offered bifurcating choices of engaging literature within the colonial context of Manchukuo, which profoundly influenced Chinese intellectuals in the occupied area and informed their literary praxis. Nevertheless, as they opted for paradoxical ideological devices, they were easily trapped in a snare of self-reflexivity. A closer scrutiny of the *Wenxuan* group's proposals might bring a new dimension that implicitly goes against their standpoints in the aforementioned debate.

In *Modern Chinese Literary Thought*, Kirk Denton generalizes modern Chinese intellectuals' discursive choices as such: "The eternal threat of imperialism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and China's weakness fostered two major responses in the intellectual discourse, at once inextric-

cably intertwined and locked in an uneasy tension: nationalism and iconoclasm." The "iconoclasm" Denton mentions, by his own definition, was "the discourse of liberation from tradition," while "nationalism," in comparison, referred to "the idea of national salvation from the imperialist threat." On one hand, modern nationalistic thought "opened the way for the iconoclastic assault on tradition by offering an alternative basis for unity," and this militant attitude, in turn, "intensified the psychological need for nationalism" (Denton, *Modern Chinese Literary Thought* 7), hence the overlapping of the discourses of iconoclasm and nationalism. On the other hand, there always existed a dialectical tension between them: nationalism required inheriting and carrying forward cultural traditions as the intellectual foundation for a consciousness of national community, but iconoclasm entailed a holistic denial of traditional culture," depicting the core of that tradition as a malignant tumor needing immediate excision" (*Modern Chinese Literary Thought* 8). From Denton's perspective, the very tension was clearly responsible for the complexity and heterogeneity of modern Chinese culture.

In this sense, *Yiwenzhi* and *Wenxuan* embodied a continuum of this critical issue of May Fourth literature, which was further intensified due to Japan's colonial rule and characterized by the seemingly irreconcilable opposition between modernization and national identification. If the *Yiwenzhi* intellectuals' literary agendas can be identified with "internationalism," "rationalism," "individualism," and "skepticism," then their counterparts proposed by Shan Ding and his companions explicitly invoked "nationalism" and "collectivism." Among *Wenxuan's* major goals, namely "describing social realities," "inheriting literary traditions," and "writing by the common people," the first two manifested a firm nationalistic stance, while the third stressed the importance of collective participation by denying the individuality of literary production.

On the surface, what Shan Ding praised as "describing reality" and "exposing reality" was quite similar to Gu Ding's opinion of "undertaking the task of life exploration"; however, they differed from each other in a fundamental way. The "reality" foregrounded by the *Yiwenzhi* group was based on private lives of individual writers. Since "individuals are bound with the society" and "unable to escape it," a writer's faithful representation of his own life, they believed, would reflect the true state of the society. Accordingly, from Jue Qing's perspective, the forcible imposition of a duty of "exposing realities" that required writers to depict unfamiliar social phenomena for political purposes was not unlike "forcing oneself to discuss factory steam whistles and workers' toils in a luxury salon." He privileged the reality of "perception and contemplation" over that of "sublime ethics and grave national affairs," and termed the politicization of literature as "dogmatism" (Jue, "About the Manchurian" 487-88). Xiao Song also claimed that in "dogmatic novels, the author often loses [a sense of] 'self' and readers are often not able to find 'themselves,'" so that "the reality" presented in them appeared to be "empty," "meager," and "inferior," no matter how "sublime and grave" their subject matter is (Xiao, "Present Questions" 217).

By stark contrast, the *Wenxuan* writers steadfastly clung to the belief that "novelists are born to be members of the nation and the society, and novels of the highest level must be informed by national and social consciousness," thus disavowing the authenticity of the individual's life and defining "reality" as a "socio-historical necessity" "extracted" by writers from everydayness. On this basis, they criticized works by the *Yiwenzhi* group for their "unsound and declining petite-bourgeoisie character" and a sense of "hesitation, suspicion and confusion." Viewing Gu Ding and his friends as spokespeople of an "anti-realistic" tendency, they even called for a war against "individual-oriented literature" that "only shows one's own emotion and fate" (Yi, "Several Questions" 383). In his critical essay entitled "Discussion of Liu Jueqing's Creations," Qiu Ying clarified what he considered as "reality" in a more detailed way: it was not composed of the "individual," "current" and "trivial" life fragments that he identified with *Yiwenzhi*, but should engage "summons of history and slogans of the time" that led to "a new life out of all the ruins" (Qiu, "On Liu Jueqing" 398).

Furthermore, the *Yiwenzhi* and the *Wenxuan* writers debated over distinct narrative focuses and writing styles. Relying upon individual observations and first-hand experiences, Gu Ding insisted on the "realistic" approach that "would guarantee an unbiased and faithful representation of human life." He thus refused to "write works that make people optimistic" and "elicit a sense of pleasure or beauty," which he viewed as a manifestation of "fecklessness" and "ignorance" (Gu, "On the Character" 39). Therefore, his writings were not only focused on miseries of the social underclass and psychological traumas of young Manchurian intellectuals with no "heroic deeds" or "happy endings," but also shrouded by "an unbearable gloomy aura" in a fashion of "plainness" and "simplicity."

Opposed to *Yiwenzhi's* emphasis on "rationalism" and "objectivism" as well as the "dark" character of its publications, the *Wenxuan* group requested an inclination for "brightness." In their opinion, the standpoint of "reason" promoted by the *Yiwenzhi* intellectuals embodied a deeply-rooted sense of cultural elitism, and the appeals for objective representation of individual lives "purely derived from their

intermediate petite-bourgeois status," which led them to linger on the surface of everyday life with "an extremely pessimistic attitude." On the contrary, Shan Ding and his companions suggested to substitute a romantic or symbolic representation of "the bright other shore" for the "mechanical depiction" of social darkness, and to mobilize the Manchurian populace to throw themselves into anti-Japanese struggles by catering to their particular needs. As they pointed out, the fundamental tone of literary writings should accordingly turn "positive and optimistic" rather than "pessimistic or dismal" to reveal "brightness for the entire nation" (Wu, "The Entity" 330).

As for specific measures to convey this "brightness" through literary production, Shan Ding proposed "heat and force" as the foremost principle to embrace "the vigor of youth" and "the indomitable will of the masses." Likewise, Chen Yin formulated his slogan of "calling for life and turning down death," and praised Shan Ding's "treatment of subject matters that defuses cruel realities...prevents their [tears] from dropping, and in turn makes [readers] happy in consolation" (Chen, "Grass of All Seasons" 362). Wang Mengsu also proclaimed that "writing about the miserable destiny of the insulted weak" only formed "the first step towards the real world," and thereafter, the author should offer them "opportunities of advancement" and guide them towards the revolutionary enterprise. Although Wang admitted "the nonexistence of these advancing possibilities in reality," he strongly endorsed them as the "emotional support" for a "dream-like" future (Wang, "Mountain Wind" 440-441).

For the *Wenxuan* group, it was the proletariat who embodied this "brightness" and hope. Unlike the *Yiwenzhi* writers, who regarded the masses as "ignorant mobs" and demanded that "fiction should not fawn on the blind and the silly, but only benefit a minority of people" (Jue, "Fictional Writings" 494), Shan Ding and his companions started from the doctrine of Marxism, claiming the populace to be the driving force of social development and masters of "the future." By this reasoning, literary activities "have to take roots in the masses," "draw upon their blood," and "pluck up their spirit" so as to endow literature with a social-political significance ("The Entity" 326). Literature thus became "a product of a certain group" or "class" and a cultural construct whose ownership "belongs to the commoners." Literary works, in the same vein, should be favored by the working class and subject to their "passions, thoughts and wills," heading towards "a mass literature in Ilyich's (Lenin) sense." To achieve this goal, writers ought to "mingle with the people" and "learn from them." Moreover, when depicting the laborers' life, it is also required to "love them unconditionally" and "take them as completely positive figures," no matter how "ordinary" they were ("Mountain Wind" 438). Little wonder that Qian Liqun refers to this writing style as "literary romanticism and heroism" that relies on imagination instead of the reality (Qian, "General Preface" 7-8).

The ultimate purpose, however, was not a Marxist, but a nationalistic one. Confronted with the colonial regime's heavy-handed rule and the depressed spiritual state of Chinese intellectuals in Manchukuo, Shan Ding and his colleagues were clearly aware of their own powerlessness and therefore, placed hopes on the Manchurian peasants, endeavoring to evoke national consciousness among them and encourage them to join in actual struggles. Out of this utilitarian view of literature, on one hand, rural subjects occupied the center of the literary world with its content and form intentionally brought in line with popular tastes and lower educational levels; on the other hand, the literary representation of the populace, as a consequence, featured an intentional "positiveness," an encomium of typical characters full of "heat and force," and a romanticized revelation of their "bright" prospects. The former imperative might make "new literature" more accessible to the audience, but was heavily compromised by trite ideas and values, and the latter one abandoned the self-claimed principle of "exposing the reality," instead subordinating it to nationalist agendas and political schemes. Therefore, the *Wenxuan* group condemned *Yiwenzhi*'s insistence on literary modernization and realistic representation as a folly that "intentionally deflects our current fight and confuses the direction of our writings" (Qiu, "On Gu Ding" 573).

In actuality, mainly composed of left-wing writers and even underground party members, the *Wenxuan* group were required to comply with CCP's literary policies, whose emphasis on mass mobilization and romanticized description as well the understanding of literature as a propaganda tool can be traced back to the idea of "literature for the proletarian revolution" and the formula of "socialist realism" introduced by Qian Xingcun and other radical theorists in the early 1930s. With the intensification of the threat of Japan as she occupied northeast China and continued to encroach on the territory of north China, national crisis became increasingly urgent and began to dominate all political concerns. On the eve of the Second Sino-Japanese War, CCP's literary organ successively formulated such slogans as "national defense literature" and "mass literature in the national revolutionary war," requesting to reconcile the proletariat's leading role with the establishment of an anti-Japanese united front and reorient "revolutionary literature" to nationalist appeals, which dictated *Wenxuan*'s strategy of using a "native-land literature" framework to mobilize Manchurian masses for the sake of national

salvation. This strategy presupposed the nationalistic and anti-colonialist nature of the native place, and dislocated the "reality" with ideological imperatives.

In the eyes of the *Wenxuan* intellectuals, native-land literature constituted the most effective vehicle for their nationalist agendas. It is Lu Xun, the patron saint of modern Chinese literature, who initially proposed the concept of native-land literature in the 1920s, but he did not clearly define what it was, though mentioning some of its most notable features. As Lu put it, at first, writers of native-land literature were mainly born in the countryside and sojourned in urban areas, bearing deep memories of their native lands while being immersed in modern civilization. Secondly, the subject matter of native-land literature was characterized by local customs and rural lives that were still dominated by traditional culture and placed in a relatively isolated state. Thirdly, as for the writing motivations, native-land literature was composed to convey "an inner feeling" of sentimentality and nostalgia, and to reveal and criticize old-styled ethical codes of rural China through the lens of modernity. Lu Xun's own short stories, dealing with home villages, also committed to "reform of the national character" and inaugurated the realistic tradition of Chinese native-land literature. Thereafter, its development in modern China embarked on a polarized trajectory. On one hand, left-wing writers increasingly engaged it with conflicts between old and new as well as class struggles in the ongoing disintegration of the traditional society, accordingly carrying forth Lu Xun's proposal of social criticism to an extreme. On the other hand, Lu's keen fascination with the peaceful lifestyle of the countryside and the unsophisticated disposition of his fellow villagers in such works as *Hometown* and *Village Opera* was wittingly inherited by Zhou Zuoren, Shen Congwen, Fei Ming, and other romanticists, who dedicated themselves to a variety of idyllic stories that portrayed the rural world as a pure land spared from modern civilization's disorders.

With the Japanese occupation of Manchuria in the early 1930s, writers like Xiao Jun, Bai Lang, and Shu Qun reoriented and reconciled these two divergent trends of native-land literature in their novels to transmit their national identity and an intense sense of anti-Japanese resistance. The target of "exposure and criticism" changed from rural China's outmoded conventions and uncivilized customs to the harshness of the colonial rule, and at the same time, romantic descriptions of Manchuria's beautiful sceneries and imposing landscapes as well as the austere character of the Manchurian people were also frequently involved. In this lineage, their literary enterprises directly inspired *Wenxuan's* promotion of native-land literature. According to Shan Ding's reminiscence, it was Xiao Jun who incited him to invoke the notion of native-land literature: "To work on 'native-land literature' was not my decision, but derived from Xiao Jun's exhortation for me" (Shan, "Northeast Native-Land Literature" 381).

As for the exact meaning of native-land literature, Shan Ding offered the following definition: "literary works reflecting our real lives or dealing with the indigenous people and things of Northeast China all belong to the category of native-land literature" ("Northeast Native-Land Literature" 370). The first half of this definition foregrounded the exposure of colonial tyranny and a refusal of Japan's cultural influence in Manchuria; whereas the second half of this definition stressed the need to celebrate local characteristics and to curry favor with the populace. While targeting the "dark side" of Manchukuo, his definition also disclosed a promise of "brightness" as represented by the Manchurian peasantry and their distinctive life experiences. On this ground, Wu Lang further elaborated on how to achieve the goal of localization and popularization in specific literary context: "What determine the foundation of mass literature are language, local customs, and culture...[Therefore, we must] collect various resources from the affluent natural world of Manchuria and absorb the cultural essence from the Manchurian society. In order to really approach the masses, we have to rely on 'the cultural essence' instead of an 'exotic taste'" ("The Entity" 327). In other words, it was necessary to present Manchuria's distinctiveness in aspects of nature, culture and language to produce literary works infused with nostalgia and favored by the masses. These three aspects must be united at the level of "the cultural essence," a suggestive expression of national consciousness. In this sense, native-land literature, as Shan Ding declared it, "is a synonym of patriotic literature, since in Russian 'native land' and 'mother country' are indicated by the same word" ("Northeast Native-Land Literature" 371).

Wenxuan's depiction of the sufferings of the oppressed Chinese differed little from that of the *Yi-wenzhi* group, since both of them centered on the social underclass' miserable life, as marked by starvation, homelessness, and the omnipresent threat of death. For instance, in his short story *Luansheng (Twins)*, Shan Ding depicted the destruction of Old Jiuye's family due to the Manchukuo government's compulsory emigration policy. Forcible banishment, incarceration and persecution imposed by the Japanese occupiers on Manchurian peasants formed a notable facet of the colonial violence, and Old Jiuye's demise dramatized the agonies of millions of ordinary Chinese households under the colonial rule. Other works by Shan Ding, such as *Shanfeng (Mountain Wind)*, provocatively revealed the man-made disaster caused by Japan's economic exploitation of rural Manchuria. His exhibition of the opera-

tional mechanism of the colonial apparatus broke new ground in anti-Japanese writings by Manchurian novelists, which recurred as a common theme in the *Wenxuan* writers' literary pieces. In addition, corresponding to his emphasis on nationalism and collectivism, Shan Ding intentionally portrayed peasant figures in *Shanfeng* as a uniform ensemble, as he obliterated their individuality and complexity under the principle of "epitomization" and endowed the story with a hue of oversimplification. Moreover, *Shanfeng's* basic tone was not as gloomy and despondent as that of the *Yiwenzhi* fictions, it overflowed with a strong sense of resistance that featured the omnipresence of "anger" in the story and transformed native-land literature into a reified carrier of "heat and force."

Concentrating on the "persistent struggles" of Manchurian peasants and aestheticizing the spectacular landscapes of rural Manchuria, Shan Ding and his companions carried forward Lu Xun's affective description of the native land and aligned nostalgia with the nationalist spirit. Nature, between lines of the *Wenxuan* writers' works, was magnificent, admirable, and engaged in an everlasting cyclic movement of birth, death and rebirth, which symbolized an eternal continuum of life and embodied bounteous treasures and infinite forces. More importantly, it was personified as a god-like being and appeared empathetic to human feelings and emotions as if it too "lamented" the misfortunes of the colonized and "roared" to spur their resentment. Correspondingly, the fictional heroes created by the *Yiwenzhi* group were mostly "sons of nature" who "grew up in the wilderness," maintained an intimate spiritual bond with the natural environment, and absorbed nature's virtues and strength.

In terms of culture, they also competed to present indigenous customs and cultural conventions of the rural society, sparing no trouble to describe such details of daily life as shamanistic dances and ice fishing, while drawing a vivid picture of the harmonious symbiosis of man and nature. In a similar vein, as they not only recorded dialogues among Manchurian characters in native dialects, but emulated the peasants' voice in telling their stories, a heavy local flavor permeated their language, featuring an "austere" and "simplistic" writing style characterized by the frequent insertion of ballads, folk tales, and anecdotes with regard to local history and culture. These thematic, cultural, and linguistic characteristics symbolically integrated Manchurian peasants with the land, as the latter conferred life on the former, shaped their personalities, and offered them inexhaustible vitality and impetus, and the former incarnated the latter in the human world, shared its fate, and took the responsibility of guarding and preserving it. This union, therefore, framed up a peaceful and harmonious Utopia. On this account, Prasenjit Duara insightfully noted that the pursuit of locality and authenticity by the *Wenxuan* group made their native land "an object of identification and hence an object of political desire," and in turn legitimized Manchurian peoples' claim to national sovereignty (Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity* 229).

Nevertheless, with the Japanese colonial power's invasion, trains, machines, specialized markets, financial trading, and other modern inventions gradually encroached upon this edenic world, which destroyed its harmony, distorted and degenerated rural simplicity, and brought irreparable damage to both the peasantry and the natural environment. Through a binary opposition between native land/authenticity/good and colonialism/modernity/evil, the *Wenxuan* intellectuals not only imputed various social problems to the colonial rule, but confused the purpose of expelling the colonizers and protecting their homeland with that of returning to an imagined natural state. For that reason, they portrayed and lauded characters who were "sons of nature" as great heroes, calling them "lions among beasts and kings of the people" and pinning their hopes of national salvation on them. This intent caused a series of paradoxes deeply hidden in the strategy of rural "glorification." To begin with, since it was impossible for the *Wenxuan* group to defy the colonial regime overtly under its repressive control, they accordingly redirected their criticism against modernization projects promoted by the colonizers and depicted them in a distorted and demonizing way. By contrast, for the sake of "restoring" the "authenticity" of nature and Manchuria's rural life, they were obsessed with a worship of primitive forces and backward conventions, and thus turned the native land into a mysterious entity. As a result, they diverted from the May Fourth Movement's scientific and rational spirit, and regressed into a xenophobic and anti-modern complex, which existed long before the early twentieth century's large-scale mass enlightenment. Furthermore, even though the emphasis on geographical bonds and cultural distinctions might be conducive to eliciting a strong sense of belonging and a resistant spirit against foreign occupation, local attachment per se would not necessarily foster or reinforce one's national identification with his fellow citizens in other areas. On the contrary, in most cases, prioritizing the local tends to pose tricky challenges against a unified national identity. Against the background of Manchukuo's nominal independence from China in both politics and culture, an excessive concern for locality might aggravate this estrangement and weaken the emotional intimacy of the Manchurian people to their Chinese compatriots, thus opening up a possibility for the imagination of a new autonomous community.

As a matter of fact, in order to disorient the identity of the Manchurian intellectuals as Chinese and promote its "ethnic harmony" ideology, the colonial government aggressively advocated literary products that dealt with rural Manchuria and conveyed "an affection for the native land," and even borrowed the name of native-land literature directly in writing contests organized for the celebration of the new year. As Xu Sai noted, Shan Ding "drew necessary inspiration from" the activity, and consciously appropriated and refigured the official propaganda (Xu, "The Idea and Practice" 241). However, the nature of native-land literature as Shan Ding proposed was hardly distinguishable from that forged by colonial propaganda agencies in both subject matters and stylistic features, with the latter also centering on Manchuria's native tradition, simplicity, vigor, and natural beauty and celebrating a "new heroism and romanticism" as well as the spirit of "heat and force."

In this connection, *Wenxuan's* agenda of native-land literature ironically echoed that of "overcoming modernity" prevailing in wartime Japan. Initially formulated by *Nihon rōmanha* (School of Japanese Romanticists) in December, 1934, this anti-modern theory proposed a "reversion to Japan," particularly classical Japanese culture and folk traditions, to "form an indispensable mark to separate themselves from the modern" (Doak, *Dreams of Difference* 41), and relied heavily upon the so-called "poetic spirit," namely literary romanticism that engaged "most beautiful and most sublime objects" (Yasuda, "Manifesto" 330), to challenge the Euro-centric mode of modernization and to construct a unique Japanese cultural identity as opposed to the overwhelming influence of Americanism. Due to its nationalist underpinnings, "overcoming modernity" was soon utilized by the Japanese regime in the Second World War and lapsed into the predominant ideology that justified Japan's military expansion. It's still worth noting that not long after the end of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, Yasuda Yojūrō, the opinion leader of *Nihon rōmanha*, embarked on a long journey to mainland China, and in a series of articles composed henceforth, he claimed the mainland, particularly Mongolian and Manchurian frontiers to be "a sacred symbol of romanticism," "an obscure embryo that leads to new ideals in the future" (Yasuda, "The Mainland and Literature" 65), and "the beginning of Japan's rebirth" (Yasuda, *Mongolian Frontiers* 9), thereby embracing the founding of Manchukuo as well as the wilderness and primitivism of Manchuria as an alternative crux of "overcoming modernity." Following this logic, those members of *Nihon rōmanha* who migrated to Northeast China, including Kitamura Kenjirō, Henmi Yūkichi, Midorikawa Mitsugu, and Dan Katsuo, organized a new literary group called *Manshū rōmanha* (School of Manchurian Romanticists). Focusing on the "omnipresent beauty of nature and human life" (Hasegawa, "Personal Statement" 1-2) in Manchuria and idealizing its "magnificence" and "grandness," they made this "magnificent romanticism" the highest aesthetic principle that could enable them to get over "modern fin-de-siècle disturbances" (Kizaki, "Constructive Literature" 38-39) and ascribed it to a "true nation-building spirit" of Manchukuo.

Obviously, *Manshū rōmanha* and the *Wenxuan* intellectuals started from two opposing political mindsets, as one intended to reinforce the colonial rule and took Manchukuo as the lifeline of Japan's future, and the other struggled to resist Japanese occupation and eagerly advertised nationalist ideas. In spite of that, both confronted with severe external threat hinging on capitalist modernity—though one mainly from the West and the other Japan—they adopted similar anti-modern schemes by highlighting the distinction of local customs and landscapes, celebrating such aesthetic values as "purity," "passion," and "violence," and committing to a primitive state of nature and society. Furthermore, not unlike the *Wenxuan* group, *Manshū rōmanha* also embraced principles of "socialist realism" and the idea of "mass literature," both originally introduced from the Soviet Union. The so-called "magnificent romanticism" that was claimed to "base itself on the ground of literary realism for its full development" (Kitamura, "Poetry and Truth" 169) turned out to be nothing more than a variation of *Wenxuan's* "new romanticism," which dislocated reality in the name of exposure and criticism. These similarities, especially the shared militant attitude towards modernity, brought the *Wenxuan* intellectuals into an anti-modern chorus dictated by the colonial ideological apparatus and distracted them from their original pursuit of identification with the Chinese nation. It is little wonder that Shan Ding and Wu Ying's short stories, such as *Xiajie (Narrow Streets)*, *Lü (Travels)*, *Baigu (White Bones)*, and so on, were frequently included by officially-endorsed literary anthologies like *The Collection of Literary Works by Peoples of Manchukuo*. Even Shan Ding himself began to applaud Greater East Asianism in public before he left Manchuria in 1943. As Duara points out, "while the group had collaborationist elements but was intellectually autonomous from the dominant paradigms of Japanese and Manchukuo writing of the native land, Shan Ding, who once had a clear political position, was intellectually and discursively much more part of the world of this writing" (*Sovereignty and Authenticity* 228).

Shan Ding's *Lüse de gu (The Green Valley)*, one of the most profound works of the *Wenxuan* group, epitomizes his literary thought and ideological inclinations. In this novel, he described Manchuria as a pure land where "people are never jealous, never suspicious, always happy, and always intimate to

each other," which embraced such state slogans as "harmony among the five ethnic groups" and "paradise of the Kingly Way" and unintentionally reconfirmed Manchukuo's so-called "nation-building spirit." Additionally, the protagonist's affection for Miko, a Japanese girl who "owns a graceful personality of oriental characteristics" and "worships the mainland as a fanatic lover" (Shan, *The Green Valley* 173), also carried on the plot pattern and clichés of the "goodwill literature" promoted by the colonial government. Starting from a resistant consciousness, but eventually lapsing into the ideological framework of colonialism, this novel vividly betrays the intellectual pitfall that ensnared the *Wenxuan* group.

Overall, the *Wenxuan* writers inherited and carried forward the nationalist discourse underlying the May Fourth Movement and further radicalized it in the form of native-land literature. On this basis, they emphasized literature's socio-political function, opposed a realistic depiction of personal experience, and attempted to turn literary praxis into political propaganda as required by the ideology of nationalism. As they undertook the mission of exposing and criticizing the destructive effect of the colonial rule, they repelled all modern enterprises and cultures associated with the colonizers and replaced a mentality favoring modernity with the primitive vitality of nature. While extolling Manchurian peasants, natural sceneries, and local traditions under the principle of heroism and romanticism, they joined in an anti-modern chorus that paradoxically lent legitimacy to the existence of Manchukuo.

Note: This research was sponsored by the Social Science Foundation of Jiangsu Province (grant number: 16WWC004).

Works Cited

- Chen, Yin (陈因). "季季草" ("Grass of All Seasons"). 东北现代文学大系, 1919-1949: 评论卷 (*Series of Modern Northeastern Literature, 1919-1949: Commentary Volume*). Ed. Zhang Yumao. Shenyang: Shenyang chubanshe, 1996. 361-654.
- Denton, Kirk, ed. *Modern Chinese Literary Thought: Writings on Literature, 1893-1945*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996.
- Doak, Kevin. *Dreams of Difference: The Japan Romantic School and Crisis of Modernity*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1994.
- Duara, Prasenjit. *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003.
- Gu, Ding (古丁). "论文坛的性格" ("On the Character of the Literary World"). 古丁作品选 (*The Collected Works of Gu Ding*). Ed. Li Chunyan. Shenyang: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 1995. 39-41.
- Gu, Ding. (古丁). "偶感偶记并余谈" ("Random Records of Occasional Feelings and Additional Talks"). 古丁作品选. Shenyang: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 1995. 52-56.
- Gu, Ding. (古丁). "谭三: 梦境" ("The Third Talk: Dreams"). 古丁作品选. Shenyang: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 1995. 105-17.
- Hasegawa, Shun (長谷川濬). "建国文学私論" ("Personal Statement on Nation-Building Literature"). 满洲浪漫 (*Romanticism of Manchuria*) 5 (1939): 1-8.
- Kitamura, Kenjirō (北村謙次郎). "時評の詩と眞実" ("Poetry and Truth in Literary Reviews"). 满洲浪漫 2 (1938): 168-70.
- Kizaki, Ryū (木崎龍). "建設の文学" ("Constructive Literature"). 满洲文芸年鑑 (*Year Book of Art and Literature in Manchuria*). Vol. 2. Fukuoka: Ashi shobō, 1993. 38-41.
- Jue, Qing (爵青). "关于满洲文坛" (About the Manchurian Literary Circle). 东北现代文学大系, 1919-1949: 评论卷. Shenyang: Shenyang chubanshe, 1996. 486-89.
- Jue, Qing. "小说" ("Fictional Writings"). 东北现代文学大系, 1919-1949: 评论卷. Shenyang: Shenyang chubanshe, 1996. 490-96.
- Qian, Liqun (钱理群). "总序" ("General Preface"). 中国沦陷区文学大系: 评论卷 (*Literary Series of China's Enemy-Occupied Areas: Commentary Volume*). Eds. Qian Liqun and Huang Wanhua. Nanning: Guangxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 2000. 1-11.
- Qiu, Ying (秋莹). "古丁论: 文学乌托邦梦者的悲剧" ("On Gu Ding: The Tragedy of a Utopian Literary Dreamer"). 古丁作品选. Shenyang: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 1995. 567-79.
- Qiu, Ying. "论刘爵青的创作" ("On Liu Jueqing's Literary Creation"). 东北现代文学大系, 1919-1949: 评论卷. Shenyang: Shenyang chubanshe, 1996. 398-401.
- Qiu, Ying. "刊行缘起" ("Origins of Publishing"). 文选 (*Selection of Writings*) 1.1 (1939). 1-4.
- Shan, Ding (山丁). "乡土文艺与山丁花" ("Native-land Literature and Lilac Flowers"). 明明 (*Illuminating the Brightness*) 1.5 (1937): 11-15.
- Shan, Ding. "我与东北的乡土文学" ("Northeast Native-land Literature and Me"). 东北沦陷时期文学国际学术研讨会论文集 (*Collection of Papers from the International Symposium on Literature of the Enemy-Occupied Northeast*). Ed. Feng Weiqun. Shenyang: Shenyang chubanshe, 1992. 360-81.

- Shan, Ding. 绿色的谷 (*The Green Valley*). Shenyang: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 1987.
- Wang, Mengsu (王孟素). "山风及其作者" (*Mountain Wind and Its Author*). 东北现代文学大系, 1919-1949: 评论卷. Shenyang: Shenyang chubanshe, 1996. 429-46.
- Wu, Lang (吴郎). "我们文学的实体与方向" (*The Entity and Direction of Our Literature*). 东北现代文学大系, 1919-1949: 评论卷. Shenyang: Shenyang chubanshe, 1996. 325-31.
- Xiao, Song (小松). "满系小说人的当前问题" (*Present Questions of the Manchurian-System Novelists*). 东北现代文学大系, 1919-1949: 评论卷. Shenyang: Shenyang chubanshe, 1996. 215-17.
- Xu, Sai (徐塞). "山丁乡土文学的主张及其实践" (*The Idea and Practice of Shan Ding's Native-land Literature*). 东北沦陷时期文学国际学术研讨会论文集. Shenyang: Shenyang chubanshe, 1992. 236-49.
- Yasuda, Yojūrō (保田與重郎). "日本浪漫派广告" (*Manifesto of the School of Japanese Romanticists*). 保田与重郎全集 (*Complete Works of Yasuda Yojūrō*). Vol. 40. Tōkyō: Kōdansha, 1989. 326-32.
- Yasuda, Yojūrō. 蒙疆 (*Mongolian Frontiers*). Tōkyō: Seikatsusha, 1938.
- Yasuda, Yojūrō. "大陸と文学" (*The Mainland and Literature*). 新潮 (*New Tide*) 35.11 (1938): 59-65.
- Yi, Fu (夷夫). "满洲文坛的几个问题" (*Several Questions about Manchuria's Literary World*). 中国沦陷区文学大系: 评论卷. Nanning: Guangxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 2000. 381-83.

Author's profile: Chao Liu teaches comparative literature and cultural theories at Southeast University, China. His interests in scholarship include cultural nationalism and its representations, historical memory in literature, and aesthetic modernity. Liu's publications include "*Manshū rōmanha* within the Lineage of 'Overcoming Modernity,'" *Foreign Literature Review* (2015), and "Reinterpreting History and *Gujin's* Cultural Practices," *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* (2013). E-mail: <zapiens@163.com>