Front. Lit. Stud. China 2009, 4(2): 232–252
DOI 10.1007/s11702-010-0011-z

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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View of Literary History and Reconstruction of the History of Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature

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Abstract Probing into and reflecting upon the historical progress and significance of the interpretation of Chinese modern literature, the paper addresses the following several important issues regarding to the standardization and construction of the discipline of Chinese modern literature, namely, how is Chinese modern literature described and interpreted as it is today? How is the concept rationalized and legalized? What are the main factors that compromise the literary concept dominating modern literature interpretation? This paper also examines literary meetings and the formation of contemporary Chinese literature. Because of the specific social qualities of China and its complicated relationship with literature, the literary meetings have become a way for the government and the party to administer and organize literary culture.

Keywords modern Chinese literature, view of literary history, reconstruction, literary meeting, literary culture, contemporary Chinese literature

Introduction

Chinese modern literature emerges as an independent discipline on the premise of the accomplishment literary history and the construction of literary concept. Given that Chinese modern literature is dated between 1917 and 1949, it has become a period of time with historical facts deposited in the passage of time, but our recognition and interpretation of Chinese modern literature has not ended

Translated from *Jianghan luntan* 江汉论坛 (*Jianghan Tribune*), 2008, (5): 84–86 by WANG Xuemei

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yet, and our new literary concept keeps on emerging. Literary concept refers to the recognition, perception, and impression of literature, which is constantly revised and extended during the courses of reading, proliferation, and research of literature. The concept of Chinese modern literature is the rational cognition of literature obtained from literary experience, feeling, imagination, and reflection. The sequence of concepts includes not only classical and canonical disciplinary knowledge but also the day-to-day and popular literary ideas. However, it is the former that I mainly address in this essay.

Literary history belongs to the realm of humanistic knowledge, different from objective and solid object world, and it calls for people's interpretation and recognition to produce meanings before it ultimately turns into a discipline. In terms of the subjective intention, historical context, and conceptual type of interpreters, the concept of Chinese modern literature can be divided into three stages, namely, the personalized new literature concept prior to 1949, the politicalized and institutionalized modern literature concept after 1949, and the diversified new literature concept beginning with 1980s or 1990s.

The Chinese modern literature before 1949 is recognized as new literature, and confined by the idea of historical evolution, "newness" and "oldness" become the value standard for judging and interpreting literature. Tradition is considered as old literature, and writings in the vernacular always mean new literature. Owing to the direct contact between the interpreter and the interpretee, the historical awareness of the comparison between the new and the old, and that the new outweigh the old, have become increasingly strong, and "newness" has turned into the very value of modern literature. Modern writers and critics such as Lu Xun 鲁迅, Zhou Zuoren 周作人, Mao Dun 茅盾, Shen Congwen 沈从文, Li Jianwu 李健吾, Li Changzhi 李长之, and Zhu Guangqian 朱光潜 have been all offering logical testimonies to the literary practices they involved in, which serve as references for interpretation of Chinese modern literature idea later on. In particular, the publication of *Zhongguo xin wenxue da xi* 中国新文学大系 (The series of New Literature in China) compiled by Zhao Jiabi 赵家璧 in 1930s is a collective event of new literature participators participating and interpreting new literature, and a series of new literature ideas constructed by the event exerted an impact on the formation of the view of literary history.

The "Introduction" provides an outline for the view of new literary history, and lays a preliminary foundation for the new literary concept. It is believed that new literature can not be separated from the background and resources of western ideas and literary influences, and that new literature takes a cultural criticism stand; with "live literature" and "people's literature" as value target, vernacular Chinese as the mainstay, it has its own unique discourse space and serves as an important means for modern intellectuals to get involved in the society and life, and convey living experiences, as well as a spiritual symbol of these intellectuals

which embody their free thinking and critical spirit—the spiritual resources of new ideas and creation forms of Chinese new literature.

Literary Meetings and New Literary Order

The top-to-bottom institutionalized ritual use of the meeting is a practical political process particular to China. In contemporary China, almost all the significant changes have happened through meetings and conferences. Combined with the powerful publicity of mainstream media, the interaction between meetings and the society has been realized. Literary meetings guide the institutionalization of social behavior, thoughts and feelings. The meetings continuously absorbed social concepts and feelings, and remolded the narrating insight and the significance structure to understand social changes.

The meeting itself is a collective organization process and the congress is the production of the contemporary parliamentary politics. As far as the literature was concerned, the meeting was the most important form of the literary movement and discussion. Having its political nature and organizational character, "the national representative conference of literary and art workers" was held every few years, which was the one important means to convey and implement the Party's and the country's policies on literature and art, unifying thoughts and understanding, assigning the current tasks, making the literary plans for the future, and correcting the faults and mistakes made in the past.[1] Therefore, the meetings became a sign for the modification and transformation of literary order, and a means for the government and the party to discuss literature.

Because the meeting themselves were based in the political realm, it established the rules and standards that literature must obey, integrated the literary resources in the interaction among the study, criticism, struggle and practice, and established the literary community. By means of literary significance and the orderly constructive discourse, the meeting gave literary workers a high level of identification with the spirit of the meeting, for understanding and appreciating the intentions of the sponsors of the meetings in order to apply the policies and rules concerned with specific literary practice. In ordinary literary activities, literature has to do with one individual's activity. The writers, the editors and critics were individually engaged in their understanding, imagination and design of literary society from their own points and perspectives. In order to make all the different individual desires focus on the same goals and objects, the social ideology needed to be integrated if the resonance of thoughts and the interaction of behaviors should be realized. The literary meeting cannot

[1] Meng Fanhua, Cheng Guangwei, 2004, p. 56.

be construed as a convenient and effective way to achieve this goal.

The meetings were held under specific social and historical backgrounds. However, as far as one specific meeting is concerned, it has the quality of a "director." The meeting agenda, like the scripts of an opera, were devised before the meeting. The meetings were meant to transform the scripts to a performance situation, and to transform the pre-design to live experiences. Eventually, the meeting was condensed to a kind of spiritual gathering and soon became the majority philosophy of the society. The conference resolutions and documents were issued to all major literary organizations and departmental units within the literary society and before becoming policy and regulations. Thus, the meetings constructed the social emotional attitudes and the idealistic cognition, and finally they become the pre-structure for people to learn the society. To some extent, the meetings helped people to understand the world, but it obviously restricted the people's understanding of certain social realities. In a relatively closed society, the mainstream literary ideology continuously changed people's ideological concepts and cognitive styles by means of conferences and exerted unparalleled influences.

The meeting was the condensation of social realities and it also led to the masking of the consciousness of reality. When people understood the social realities according to the cognitive way and spiritual structure described in the meeting, the society became the one described in the meeting, and the reality became the one which was imaginary, narrow and ideological. On the surface, the writers and critics, as individuals, feel that each of them is independent and that they can understand the realities directly and freely. However, in fact, their ideological concepts and thinking have been already determined by the social ideology. This is also the process of the social idealization in which the meetings played a very important part. The modifications of contemporary literature and the transformation of the literary order show the process of the decolonization, which were mainly implemented and completed through literary meetings.

There were different forms of contemporary literary meetings, which included "the national representative conference of literary and art workers" regularly held, the specialized meeting where certain problems are discussed, forums for writers' works, and the national work meeting. Every meeting had different purposes, intentions and content, and it also conveyed and modified different policies and guidelines of literature and art. In July 1949, the First National Representative Conference of Literary and Art Workers was held in order to ease the tensions and contradictions, conform the benefits, make future plans, and establish the new order of literature of the social democracy. Around 1949, great changes happened to the domestic political situation and the Chinese writers showed their different ideologies: some proceeded northward and others went southward. Hu Shi 胡适, Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋, Su Xuelin 苏雪林, Zhang Ailing 张爱玲

(Eileen Chang), Ji Xuan 纪弦, Cao Juren 曹聚仁 and Lin Haiyin 林海音 "went southward" successively, while more writers "proceeded northward" in succession and were concentrated in the capital of Peking with their great trust in the new state power and their belief in the new society. Therefore, the literary world had various expectations, different benefits and contradictions and it had many different voices. In the liberated areas, literature needed to establish its own leadership, while literary workers from the region of Guomindang and the enemy-occupied areas needed to establish cognitive structure of the ideology. But as to the literature at that time, there was no "literary world" with a common view of literature, nor was there a common literary interests or a uniform literary order.

The characteristics of the socialistic revolution and construction were not an adaptation to the world, but the construction and reconstruction of the world. The First National Representative Conference of Literary and Art Workers addressed contemporary Chinese literature for the first time. The conference was held from May 2nd to 19th, which established the leading-subordinating and subject-object relationship between the Communist Party of China (CPC), the new-born state power and the literary and art workers. At the conference, Mao Zedong's 毛泽东 "Zai Yan'an wenyi zuotanhui shang de jianghua" 在延安文艺座谈会上的讲话 (Talks at Yan'an forum on literature and art) was chosen as the prime example of literature and art in the new China. Around the May Fourth Movement (Wusi yundong 五四运动) and in the debate of "Revolutionary Literature" in 1928, the early communists and revolutionaries actively intervened in the literary practice by means of thoughts initiation. In the 1930s, the "Left League" (Zuolian 左联) did an "organized" exploration of literature. It was not until the 1940s that the literature in the liberated areas which centered on Yan'an, relied on the political power of the districts to strengthen the leadership of the literature. During the First National Representative Conference of Literary and Art Workers, the CPC realized its comprehensive intervention in the literary field in full scale, and its full leadership of literature by means of the "state." It formulated and issued guidelines of literature and art and on literary policies, and established literary organizations. From then on, the entire Chinese literary arena has been fully briefed on the policies of the socialist country led by the CPC, and becomes a convergence of conflicts and contradictions of the socialist political, economic and cultural interests. Actively making use of all social resources, the party and the country put forward a variety of political requests and regulations of the policies for the literary world and exercised a well-planned scenario for its administration.

The "reports" and "talks" at the literary meetings were the formulation of the policies of the literature and art. They were a consistent ideology the central leaders and the authorities convey to the people at the meetings and in society,

and an important measure and method to implement the standards and control of literature on behalf of the country. They were not drafted by individuals, but by the collective, and they were by no means an expression of the reporters' own will, but the public proclamation of the political authoritative remarks and its authority and power were beyond doubt and could not be defied. There was the strict request for who was to draft the report before the meeting. For instance, on the eve of the Second National Representative Conference of Literary and Art Workers in 1953, Feng Xuefeng 冯雪峰 was assigned to draft the report of the meeting, in which Feng was going to give a list of the serious problems in the literary and art world since the founding of the new China, such as the writers' "being ordered to experience the lives," "their being ordered to create works," "finishing tasks hastily," and "making up the policies." The writers' ability to write actively "was deprived," and hence came "the control of thoughts."

However, the draft was rejected at the symposium chaired by Hu Qiaomu 胡乔木 of the CPC Propaganda Department, and attended by the other members like Zhou Yang 周扬, Shao Quanlin 邵荃麟, Yuan Shuipai 袁水拍 and Feng Xuefeng. Then the report was re-drafted by somebody else.[2] It can be said that the report of the literary meeting was not entirely the individuals' penetrating judgment, or a rational academic paper, or the individuals' personal understanding but was more a literary statement of political awareness, and the State and Party will.

In general, the purpose and the original intention of the meetings were to discuss problems, unify understanding, set clear objectives and strengthen the leadership. The First National Representative Conference of Literary and Art Workers is the large-scale nationwide meeting. There were other smaller literary meetings. For example, the CPC Propaganda Department convened eight consecutive meetings attended by Hu Qiaomu, Zhou Yang, Ding Ling 丁玲, Zhao Shuli 赵树理, Ai Qing 艾青, He Qifang 何其芳, Zhou Wen 周文, Yang Hansheng 阳翰笙 and Lin Mohan 林默涵, etc. The literary thoughts were reviewed and Rectification Movement was launched. The main task of the meeting was to inspect the literary leaders' work, carry out criticism and self-criticism, rectify the opera work, and modify and strengthen the specific plan of the literary publications. The main content of the review was that after "we entered the city," the leaders of literary and artistic work became unstable and shaken because the policies of literature and art and their "leadership" has been usurped by bourgeois ideas.[3]

As an ideological remolding meeting, it played a very important part for the

[2] Hong Zicheng, 1997, p. 61.
[3] "Zhonggong zhongyang xuanchuanbu guanyu wenyi ganbu zhengfeng xuexi de baogao," 1992, p. 463.

writer's identity conversion. Whether the meeting was large, or not, whether the literature questions were discussed directly or indirectly, such meetings as the national propaganda work meeting, the intellectual work conference, the work conferences of the literary publication, or an issuance and edition meeting, they served to, more or less, influence the development of the literary movement and the creative practice of literature. In 1956, a national meeting of young literary workers was held. Zhou Yang regarded it as "a business conference" and simultaneously a conference of a "political nature." He required the young writers to hold a unanimous view on literature causes and the same world outlook. "Literature is not to serve to the individual interests, not to satisfy one's desire to publish the works, but to reflect the people's interests and demands." In his view, "literature is in the service of the capitalist class in the bourgeois society, because money, publications, and theatres are in the possession of the capitalist class. Now the publications and theatres are in the possession of the state and money is not that important." It was comparatively easy to get rid of the material effects of the capitalist class and it was difficult to get rid of the spiritual effects of the capitalist class. "It is a shame to have the desire for fame and fortune." "Among the comrades attending the meeting, few wanted to make fortune, while more want to gain fame. The material relationships are easily broken, while the thought of being famous for 'one book' is not."[4] Obviously, he considered the literary creation meeting as the political meeting of the literature. It was also at this meeting that Mao Dun delivered the welcoming speech and he viewed it as "the pioneering work" in the history of our country, and the first "general inspection" of the new power of literature. On one hand, the experience was summarized and exchanged; on the other hand, the achievements and shortcomings on the cultivation of the new power by literary organizations were reviewed and the problems in the young writers' literary writings were studied. "The meeting, for national literary youth—the reserve force of the literary world, is an encouragement, and meanwhile an ideological education. Holding the meeting successfully was significant for the growth and development of the new power of the literary world."[5] At this meeting, he also gave the speech of "Guanyu yishu de jiqiao" 关于艺术的技巧 (On the art techniques). He emphasized that the literary techniques could not be detached from the writer's outlook on life, but when it came to the extraction of the material, the depiction of the characters, and the arrangement of structure, an experienced writer's profound insight was revealed.

Every meeting established different literary and artistic policies, and the next meeting was likely to rectify the decisions of the previous one. Thus, the Chinese

[4] Zhou Yang, 1985, p. 374.
[5] Mao Dun, 1981. p. 190

literary and artistic policies were continuously revised, and were then rectified and criticized, hence the literary phenomenon of both "construction" and "deconstruction." As time passed, the people were doubtful about the significance of the meetings. Although each meeting had its particular objectives, that there was a more important meeting to come. A great many of the literary meetings, whether they had something to do with literature or not, were held on contemporary literature, which provided the original version of understanding the social realities and literature, made clear the what Chinese literature was, arranged the guidelines for writing literary works and reconstructed the new order of literature. Holding the meeting also played the role in legislation. In 1959, Zhou Yang said at the meeting, "It is necessary to hold the meeting. We need the inner-party unification thought as to how to do the cultural and artistic work in the future." "Concerning the issue of literature, on one hand, 'let a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thoughts contend'. On the other hand, the guidelines and policies concerning cultural works must be unified. The meeting was held in order to discuss problems for one thing, and to enact laws and statutes for another." "We hold the meeting not only to solve the general guidelines of the socialist culture, but also make rules and laws which we all must obey."[6] The laws and rules made for literature by means of meetings had considerable influence in literary creations, on literary practices and literary movement were "turned into agendas." The literary meetings set up agendas for literature and they were well planned from the standpoint of ideology to policy to form, but they do not necessarily achieve the expected effects. Real literature cannot be planned. The writer would inevitably go their own way.

Literary Meetings and Literary Movements

The continuous meetings brought about with them several literary movements, one after another. The literature produced under these circumstances was exhausting, depressing and uniform. As Zhou Yang said, "When it was time to make speeches at the meeting, you said some words and I said some. The words were roughly the same. Nobody gave incorrect comments. Everyone wanted to ensure that no mistakes were made. Nobody wanted to take risks, were expected to give new suggestions, or wanted to argue with others. We only wanted to echo the view of others. In the end, the comments were made that everyone was a good and obedient cadre. No mistakes were made and nothing new was created."[7] In a society devoid of the democratic frame, the meetings inevitably

[6] Zhou Yang, 1990, p. 94.
[7] Ibid., p. 113.

trained the "close followers" and "obedient ones" to the policies, meanwhile the reactions and comments of people were closely observed.

In November 1951, the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles (CFLAC) held the eighth enlarged session of the Standing Committee and passed two resolutions: one was launching the study movement of the literary world; the other was modifying national literary publications. In 1952, the CFLAC held a study conference on socialist realism in preparation for the Second National Representative Conference of Literary and Art Workers. In the meantime, the CFLAC held the criticism symposium of Hu Feng's 胡风 literary thoughts, which set procedures for criticizing Hu Feng and administered remedies on thought. These preparatory literary meetings served as a foreshadowing for upcoming, more important literary meetings. The basic work should be done in advance either in ideology or in organizational procedure. The literary meeting could be divided into several stages. A meeting, from the beginning to the end, is composed of several stages, though it is, in effect, one meeting.

Like the symphony, the meeting was divided into different lines of the music. In March 1953, the standing committee of the China Federation of Literary Workers held the sixth enlarged session in Beijing. Through "Guanyu gaizu quanguo wenxie he jiaqiang wenxue chuangzuo de gongzuo fang'an" 关于改组全国文协和加强文学创作的工作方案 (The working scheme on reorganizing the CFLAC and strengthening literary creation), a Literary Creation Committee, in charge of leading the national literary creation activities, was formed. And below the Standing Committee, a Publications Committee was established, which was in charge of studying every organ publication of the CFLAC. After many preparatory meetings, the Second National Representative Conference of Literary and Art Workers was held in September 1953. The background of the meeting was that within the four years after the First National Representative Conference of Literary and Art Workers, great progress had been made in literature and a comprehensive summary and liquidation was needed. Meanwhile, the new reality put forward the new tasks for literature. However, the confusion which existed in the literary world went to two extremes: one was giving up the leadership of the party and pursuing the artistic interests of petty bourgeoisie; the other was the understanding of the relationship between literature, art and politics. Artistic laws were ignored, and literary creations were influenced by means of administration. Compared with "the integration of literary order" at the First National Representative Conference of Literary and Art Workers, the Second Conference with more intense political color, had its significance of "laying out the objectives."

Prior to the meeting, Mao Zedong gave important instructions for the agenda, tasks, and guiding ideology of the meeting, and chaired the Political Bureau Meeting of the CPC Central Committee in person to discuss the issues of

personnel employment and the selection of the CFLAC and every association. During the meeting, Party and state leaders Mao Zedong, Zhu De 朱德, Liu Shaoqi 刘少奇, Zhou Enlai 周恩来, Chen Yun 陈云 and Xi Zhongxun 习仲勋 met with all the representatives cordially. At the opening ceremony, Zhou Enlai gave the political report, analyzed the international and domestic situations and elucidated the general guidelines of the transitional period towards socialism. At the closing ceremony, Hu Qiaomu gave the report of "Guanyu wenxue yishu tuanti wei zhengqu woguo wenxue yishu de fanrong de zuzhi renwu" 关于文学艺术团体为争取我国文学艺术的繁荣的组织任务 (The organizational tasks on literature and art groups' striving to make prosperous literature and art in our country) and Guo Moruo 郭沫若 gave "an opening speech" of "Tuanjie yixin, chuangzuo jingsai" 团结一心，创作竞赛 (Let's unite as one; hold the competition of literary creation). At the conference, Zhou Yang and Mao Dun gave the reports on literary tasks, guidelines, and the work of literary creation, literary criticism and literary leadership in the transitional period of socialist transformation. The relevant department leaders were also invited to give reports on "industrial construction" and "rural work."

Like the other meetings, this meeting had its own tasks and topics for discussion: work experience was summarized and literary and artistic creations were further developed in order to meet the needs of the state and the people in the new historical period. Writers and artists were encouraged to create more and better works. Unity in the literary world was to be strengthened and the organization of literary and artistic workers perfected. The tasks were specified and work and leadership improved for the flourishing development of literature and art. Around the central tasks and topics for discussion, Zhou Yang and Mao Dun both gave the reports, concretely presented the criticism of bourgeois ideas and its various manifestations in literature, opposed the anti-realism trend of formalization and conceptualization and defined the socialistic realism as the highest principle of literary creation and literary criticism in the transitional period. Basically speaking, the topics for discussion at the meeting were closely related to literature, and a strong spirit of self-criticism was shown towards literary style. This could be counted as a praiseworthy tradition of the meeting. Meanwhile, the general tasks and directions at the meetings focused on advancing literature policies that would regulate and influence literary output, literary activities and trends, literary creations and literary criticism.

Since then, contemporary literary creations displayed a national pattern, such as the molding of heroic figures, the writing of the revolutionary historical themes, the themes of collectivism, heroism and optimism, and creative methods of socialistic realism, etc. The literary periodicals and publications improved their work around the central task of the meeting. For example, prior to 1953, *Wenyi bao* 文艺报 (Art & literature) established the column of "Xin yusi" 新语

丝 (New viewpoints), and four or five essays which criticized current social evils were published every issue and exerted great influence. Even the chief editor Feng Xuefeng also published essays under a pen name in the journal. He published four essays with different pen names in the same issue. For instance, in issue 4, 1952, there were essays as "Ouyang Shan dengren de lizi shuoming le shenme" 欧阳山等人的例子说明了什么 (What the instances of Ouyang Shan and others' indicate), "Meijun de hua" 霉菌的话 (The remarks of toxic fungus), "Buyao tingliu" 不要停留 (Don't stay around) and "Meifu de mingyun" 美俘的命运 (The fate of American captives), etc. In 1953, the column of essays was cancelled and reprints of editorials and policy articles were added, which involved literary routes and tasks established at "the National Representative Conference of Literary and Art Workers." And at this meeting, even higher demands were proposed regarding literary criticism. This meeting was obviously directed by politics and it fully reflected the serious and orderly principle of the meetings. The meeting had both supporting and refuting arguments, and criticisms and temptations, which achieved the purpose of modifying the literary order and changing literary channels through the meeting.

Soon, great changes would occur in the literary political environment. 1954 was an eventful year: From March to June that year, Hu Feng wrote "Guanyu jinian lai wenyi shijian qingkuang de baogao" 关于几年来文艺实践情况的报告 (A report of the situation of literary practice in the past few years"), which was submitted to the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee in July. From October to December, criticism was given to Yu Pingbo's 俞平伯 "Hongloumeng yanjiu" 红楼梦研究 (A research of *A Dream of Red Mansions*) and *Wenyi bao* was criticized for its suppressing the "nobodies" and surrendering to the bourgeoisie. During this period, the presidium of the CFLAC and of the Writers' Association held eight consecutive meetings, in which Hu Feng participated, and he expressed some of his own complaints by criticizing *Wenyi bao*. Soon, things were reversed. On December, 8th when the presidium of the CFLAC and of the Writers' Association held its enlarged session, Zhou Yang made a speech that criticized not only Hu Shi's bourgeoisie ideas, but also Hu Feng's literary thoughts.

In January 1955, the CPC Propaganda Department submitted a report on criticizing Hu Feng's thoughts to the Party Central Committee, and suggested publishing Hu Feng's "opinion book," which closed the curtain of criticizing Hu Feng's thoughts. The meeting became a clarion call. The tradition of "reading the meeting" was formed where the people could comprehend changes in national policies. The meeting became the kaleidoscope through which everything could be seen. The meeting became the text in which everything could be read in various ways. Every meeting usually involved different annotations from political, economic and cultural angles. There were official versions and folk

versions derived from the same meeting.

Literary Meetings and Literary Reality

The National Conference of the Intellectuals was held in Beijing from January 14th to 20th, 1956. After the meeting, the intellectual and literary worlds became gradually active. Subsequently, *shuangbai* 双百 policy[8] was proposed and discussed, which caused "Combating Right." In May 1958, at the Second Meeting of the Eighth Party Congress, Mao Zedong proposed that proletarian literature and art should adopt the creative method of combining "revolutionary realism with romanticism," and the Great Leap Forward of literature and art appeared. In an instant, the contemporary literature in the 1960s was created. The literary meetings gave a summary of previous literary struggles and literary criticism, reported on literary policies which needed to be adjusted and suggested redesigns to literary order. Thereafter, there were three policy revision meetings: "Xinqiao Meeting," "Guangzhou Meeting" and "Dalian Meeting" and the literary and artistic policies and literary orders were revised through literary meetings.

Before the meetings, in 1960 when the Third National Representative Conference of Literary and Art Workers was held, the chairman of the CFLAC Guo Moruo gave "the speech at the opening ceremony," and Zhou Yang gave the report on the socialist literary road of our country which was checked and approved by Mao Zedong. The report defended the masses' writing and the literature of the Great Leap Forward in 1958 or so, and it marked a great victory of Mao Zedong's literary thoughts. The report also declared war against modern revisionism and reaffirmed the literary and artistic orientation of arts' serving the workers, peasants and soldiers, and the guiding principle of letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought, completely confirming the past literary struggle. For, Zhou Yang, the report was vindication of sorts. Some changes also happened to the political treatment at the meeting, although Lu Dingyi 陆定一 gave the congratulation speech on behalf of the Central Committee of the CPC, and Zhou Enlai gave the status report. During the eight years' of literary practice after the Second National Representative Conference of Literary and Art Workers, many literary phenomena including literary creation, literary criticism, and literary struggle needed to be summarized, but Zhou Yang's report only concerned the literary practice after the Great Leap Forward on literature and arts, maybe because there was no verdict from the higher authorities and departments, and other activities could not be properly

[8] It means "A hundred flowers are made to blossom and a hundred schools of thought to contend."—translator's note.

summarized. Among the three national representative conferences of literary and art workers before 1976, this one exerted the least influence on literature, and it could not condense popular feelings, or make new plans for literary creation. A good literary report summarized the past and planed the future. Thus, it can play a role of finding the problems and inspiring the people. Meanwhile, it also played the part of advisor and persuader, sincerely consulting and discussing problems closely related to literary output from literary writers and critics, which made the report delve deeper into the literary realities understood and accepted by the writers and critics at the time. In fact, as far as literary realities were concerned, one literary meeting was needed to shoulder the responsibility of purging history, integrating order and planning the future. But, because of restrictions of the international and domestic political movement, contemporary literature's internal situation and the other factors, the Third National Representative Conference of Literary and Art Workers couldn't achieve that goal and was, therefore, mostly a transitional meeting.

The "Xinqiao Meeting" in June, 1961 examined and passed the "Ten Regulations" and summarized the experience and lessons of literary and artistic work. Respecting the creative rules of literature and art was emphasized again. The particularities of literature and art were stressed. Mistaken conceptions and behavior on literary creation and literary criticism were no longer entangled, and literature and art again returned to their own train of thoughts. The classic topics of literary policies and literary theories were also reiterated. Their vitality was activated and played the role of rectifying disadvantages. At the "Guangzhou Meeting" in March, 1962, the problem of intellectuals and the freedom of the artistic creation were discussed, and the productive forces of the literature were liberated. Within internal and external literary relations, only the writers were the productive forces of the literature, and others were related to the process of the literary production, publication and reading.

Once the literary productive forces were restricted and criticized, and even denied, it meant the failure of literary creation. Even if literary relations were well managed, literary productivity could not be replaced. Literary relations could only take subsidiary function. If the writers' motivations for creating work were ignored, the expected achievements could not be obtained. The "Dalian Meeting" held in August 1962, inherited the basic spirit of the "Xinqiao Meeting" and the "Guangzhou Meeting." The issues under discussion were not confined to the creation of short stories and rural themes, but also involved the creation of rural themes, and "how the novels should reflect the contradictions among the people," and the exaggerating thoughts on the creation of rural themes and a unified character image should be corrected.

At the meeting, Shao Quanlin mentioned in his speech that we should write about "the middle character," and he thought the main teaching object in

literature and art was the middle character in life, so the writer should write well the character in the intermediate state. "We should notice that the character's psychological state should be depicted—the psychology is the soul—this is the task of the engineer of the soul."[9] The "speech" given by Shao Quanlin was impromptu, but its logic was strict. From the relationship between life and creation, from the writers' position, to the function and use of literature, to the relationship between the character and the novel, several valuable key propositions were advanced, such as the deepening of realism, the writer's identification with the soul and writing on the middle character, etc. Socialist realism was regarded as the highest literary principle, which was the main premise of the Second National Representative Conference of Literary and Art Workers. It realized the socialization of realism.

Qin Zhaoyang 秦兆阳 tried to connect the socialist realism to the realism of socialism, expanding the socialist artistic space, but he was severely criticized. If we say that Qin Zhaoyang tried to expand realism from the "width," then Shao Quanlin tried to partly discuss the character image from "the depth" of realism. From a general standpoint and literary view, he did not change much. For example, the educational function of literature was still emphasized and the character image of literature was said to be completely equal to the character in life. Meanwhile, other aspects of literature were ignored. The imagination and creative features of literature were also ignored, and the differences between creation of literature and life were masked. The "Dalian Meeting" played a very important role in literary history because the words of "writing the middle character" were mentioned. From the 1950s when he emphasized that literature and art should serve politics, to the 1960s when he advocated "writing the middle character," Shao Quanlin reflected on literary reality as an honest and sincere theoretical writer, which, however, was the final theoretical criticism prior to "the Cultural Revolution."

On the first day of 1961, a forum of literary and art workers was held in Shanghai. At the meeting the forum holders advanced the slogan of "writing on the thirteen years," and they held the opinion that only the works of social life within the thirteen years after Liberation were socialist literature and art. One of the speeches at the meeting was reported on *Wenhui bao* 文汇报 (Wenhui daily) on January, 6th. In 1966, a symposium on army literary work was held and the previous meetings and policies were overthrown. From February 2nd–20th, 1966, Jiang Qing, entrusted by Lin Biao, invited army workers to a symposium concerning several issues of army literary work. Lin Biao gave instructions to the army workers who attended the symposium, and said that Jiang Qing was adept in the politics of art and literary works. He ordered that Jiang Qing's comments

[9] Shao Quanlin, 1981, p. 403.

be carefully implemented in thought and organization. In the future, the documents on literature and art in the army were submitted to her, and any news could be conveyed to her any time in order to make her better understand army literary works, to gain comments from her and improve the quality of army literary work. Jiang Qing read some of Chairman Mao's works to the representatives at the meeting. She talked individually with them eight times, held a collective symposium four times, saw the movie thirteen times with them and attended the opera three times. The comments on ten aspects [of what?] were formed in the process of chatting while seeing the movie and an opera and the summary of a symposium on army literary work entrusted to Jiang Qing by Lin Biao was written and distributed as a Party document of the CPC.

On May, 29th, 1967, the full text of "the summary" was published on *Renmin ribao* 人民日报 (The people's daily). At this literary meeting, it was mainly Jiang Qing who moderated the events, which made it a relatively private gathering, compressed the public participation, and making it a palace gathering and a conspiratorial literary meeting. Afterwards, Jiang Qing entered the arena of contemporary Chinese and became the central figure of the literary meeting. On April 12, 1967, Jiang Qing gave the speech of "Wei renmin li xingong" 为人民立新功 (Rendering new meritorious service for the people) at the enlarged session of the CPC's Military Commission. On May 10th, she gave the speech "Tan jingju geming" 谈京剧革命 (On revolution of Peking Opera) at the performers' symposium on the Peking Opera—a view of modern opera. In 1968, Renmin chubanshe also published a selection of Jiang Qing's speeches, and Jiang Qing placed herself among a group of the contemporary literary policy-makers. During the period of "the Cultural Revolution," when the field of literature was rather desolate, people's views were obstructed and their expectations were low.

Literary order, during the period of the Cultural Revolution, was completely re-established. It became a jail with walls around. Literature became a politically romantic. But, literature from the period also had had vitality, and it was after 1976 that its significance became widely known. Once the vital seeds existed, the beautiful flowers would bloom in the soil of literature in the future.

Reconstruction of Modern Chinese Literature

After 1949, Chinese modern literature entered the phase of disciplinization and institutionalization and was influenced by the historical idea of new democracy. Writings of literary history are not only the description and restoration of the history of literature, but also the demonstration of its validity in reality. Chinese modern literature has been established as an independent discipline, hinging upon not only its historical content, but more importantly, the valid significance

of literary concept, which comes down to the correlation of literary concept and political power, or the distance between literary concept and ideology. Marxist materialist conception of history and *Xin minzhu zhuyi lun* 新民主主义论 (On new democracy) by Mao Zedong, become the scientific works describing the politics, economy, and culture of new democracy. Modern society is divided into three parts: politics, economy, and culture, in which politics and economy are at the center, defining the nature and features of a society, and culture is the ideological reflection of politics and economy, in other words, politics and economy in ideology form. "Any given culture (as an ideological form) is a reflection of the politics and economics of a given society," and, specifically, New Democratism Culture is "the proletarian-led, anti-imperialist and anti-feudal culture of the broad masses," and a national, scientific and mass culture. The materialistic conception of history and revolutionary conception of history provide an approach toward politicalization for modern culture and literary idea, by which Chinese modern literature turns into New Democratism Literature, the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal literature of the masses of the people under the leadership of the proletariat, with such features of class, the masses, and anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism. Chinese modern literature is considered to keep pace with modern society and literary knowledge and ideas become revolutionary knowledge and ideas. Nevertheless, Chinese modern literary idea does not equal to modern revolutionary idea, for it has its own unique esthetic value and linguistic expression ways. Power-oriented and politicalized modern literary idea has won lofty knowledge and social status for Chinese modern literature, but the revolutionary modern literary idea has conspicuous historical limitations, which leads to immense room for interpretation on the part of successors.

This is the headwaters of Chinese modern literary idea of the 1980s and 1990s. Modern literary idea reveals a tendency of multiplication, ranging from the reflection on literary idea to the restoration of history, from the revolution of methodology to the integration of cultural study. Huang Xiuji claims that the change is one from "making study serves the practical purpose" to "analyzing and interpreting." The doubts against and the reflection on the politicalized and revolutionized modern literary idea has promoted a revolution of modern literary idea. The first task it has completed is to put back into place the literary history, especially to interpret from literary esthetic value the writers such as Shen Congwen, Xu Zhimo, Zhang Ailing, Qian Zhongshu, Mu Dan, as well as literary societies and literary trends including Xueheng School, Yusi School, New Moon School, Nine-Leave Poet School, and the School of New Consciousness, which remedies the narrowness and intolerance of modern literary idea. Meanwhile, it is also a hungry learner of ideas and methodology of western literary criticism and has realized innovation in methodology, hence the "methodology craze" in

1980s and the discussion about "humanistic value" in 1990s. Modern western literary ideas and approaches such as psychoanalytic criticism, Russian formalism, British and American new criticism, reception esthetics, structuralism, deconstruction, phenomenology, and cultural research provide modern literary research with new angles. They emphasize on the understanding of text, the selection of readers, the identification of reception, the cultural study of the growing background of literature, shifting the focus of speculation from the writer to the test and the reader. It develops from social-historical approach to textual analysis and cultural research, obviously surpassing the unitary approach mode.

During this period, the literary ideas advocated such as "Chinese literature going to the world," "Chinese literature in the 20th century," and "literary modernity" has activated the research thinking and opened up new space for modern literary research. Chinese modern literature is placed under the historical background of world literature, and is examined and studied from many dimensions of modern culture and traditional culture, political culture and folk culture, regional culture and religious culture, educational culture and publishing culture, from writers to readers, from texts to society, from esthetic value to literary system, generating well-knit research achievements. Chinese modern literary research enters an era of diversified literary ideas, when esthetic stance, ideological background, and academic pursuit construct diverse academic visions.

To reflect and reconstruct Chinese modern literary idea is a key issue facing us. Since 1990s, academic world has addressed Chinese modern literature using loads of historical values of modernity. As a normal formula describing world history, the theory of modernity not only reflects a historical value, but also possesses ideological feature.

Inundated with paradoxes of prejudice and impartiality, truth and power, suppression and integration, the theory of modernity highlights the fracture between modern "historical idea" and "modernity" in historical idea, stressing the transmission from tradition to modernity, and consciously splitting tradition with modernity to view them as two extremities that can not be reconciled. It holds that the development of history follows a liner route in an orderly manner, which is often described as the view of historical progress. The view of historical progress prescribes the objective or terminal of historical process, while the setting of such an objective or terminal reflects, coincidentally, eschatological expectation of Christian theology. The fundamental characteristic of historical progress idea lies in deconstructing the significance and value of history, whereas what is implicit is nihilism and pessimism deeply rooted in modern thinking, as well as a grudge against the present and the past.

The reflection on historical progress view aims to rescue the repressed history,

rather than to deny progress. The right thing to do is to emphasize the rationality of the existence of history and reality under the premise of affirming validity of progress idea, as opposed to historical nihilism. As far as modern literature is concerned, we should stress human's experience and understanding of literary history, not allowing literary history view to prescribe our reading and perception. We should not loose our fresh, vivid perception about literature, and our literary interpretation should not be replaced by literary history. Research into literary history within the vision from an historical viewpoint is often tangled with the attitude of deciding on a certain theory and principle, but the problem is the establishment of a theory always has to regulate historical facts within concept and interpretation frames. A concept and interpretation frame always asks for another concept or frame to prop up its validity, thereby generating endless logical deduction. As the remains severed by various theories and thereof concepts, history has become some abstract referent, while the correlation between life or practice and historical process has been taken over by that between history and abstract theories.

In contrast with view of literary history, true literary history consciousness's feature should be based on present continuity, and it follows that, we should not look for the beginning and ending consciousness at the present, but rather, from the continuity and integrity connecting the beginning and ending with the present. The real history is concrete and rich, and real history consciousness is alive and vivid. In the process of modern Chinese literature research, when the view of literary history has banished literary history, political ideology has become a solid theoretical support, and research of literary history has to resort to various concepts and ideologies. Only when we have overcome the fissure between view of literary history and literary history, can we transcend the restriction of modernized "conception of history" and enable the "modernity" of "conception of history" a practical idea of historical narrative. History is multi-dimensional, and specific, full of historical details and historical facts have correlations among them, and need to be analyzed and sorted in a larger spatial and temporal sphere, in spite of the existence of fissures and coincidences. History has its own inherent stipulated nature, with both changeable and unchangeable aspects, so we should describe history on the basis of the richness of history. This is also true with research of literary history. We should perceive the nature and uniqueness of Chinese modern literary problems on the premise of determining the background, connotation, and boundary of western theories.

Modernity is one of important issues. It is also the most influential academic thoughts in the research of Chinese modern literature since 1980s. It should be said that, modernity conveys and touches the social reality and significance of our present time. Superficially, it is a response and imitation of western utterance, and "globalization" thoughts, but in reality, we still have to solve our own

problems. Modernity should not become a theoretical problem in the research of Chinese modern literature, but rather, it is a very practical object issue. Pitifully, our modernity research has excessively been tangled by problems of its existence and the amount of modernity, ignoring the complexity and diversity of the theory per se. Any thought and cultural theory aims to explain things, and the value of a theory lies in the fact that it can explain the object and resolve the problem. Western thoughts and cultural theories have integrated theories such as modernity, post modernity, and globalization, just to illustrate and interpret the social and academic problems that they feel and confront. It not much to blame that cultural academy of China's present society has introduced the conceptions of modernity and globalization to explain some Chinese issues, but the problem appears when a rationalistic, metaphysical tendency arises, which overlooks the social, cultural, and academic background of western modernity theory, hence ignoring the uniqueness and innovativeness of the modernity of Chinese literature. We should not absolutize and essentialize modernity, regarding it as the value scale to weigh the uniqueness and richness of Chinese literature. Any attempt at dividing Chinese literature into those with modernity and those without modernity is a simplification of the richness and an obliteration of the uniqueness of Chinese literature.

Reconstruction of Modern Chinese Literature

Modernity and Chinese literature can be addressed in three ways: the first is to utterly ignore or forfeit the vision of modernity significance to achieve self-sufficient significance world; the second is view modernity as a universal truth and cover the reality of Chinese literature with a essentialism attitude; the third way strives to transcend the thinking mode of modernity China/west, and ego/otherness, universalism and relativism, and to reflect with a modernity insight on the individual truth, and based on which, to probe into the meaning limitations and possibilities of Chinese literature. In this way, modernity will become a spirit of reflection and criticism regarding social history, culture, and academy, thereby activating the meaning truth and life truth covered by history or reality. If ever modernity truly becomes the source of the research of Chinese modern literature, it should not be entangled by concepts, nor should it be used to address the so-called problems of China and Western, and localization and colonization. Instead, it should discuss and find the uniqueness and richness of Chinese literature, free from arrayed, rigid, and alien game of concepts. Modernity should not become a new metaphysics, resulting in the alienation of research object and subject by modernity. The modernity of Chinese modern literature should be inherent, spiritual, and vivid, as well as complicated and

unique. Writers such as Lu Xun, Guo Moruo, Mao Dun, Ba Jin, Lao She, Cao Yu, Shen Congwen, Zhang Ailing, and Mu Dan all had their own experience and creation of modernity, and they did not live and write ahead of a certain theory. Even thoughts with modernity of the time, such as science, democracy, and emancipation of personality, were not taken for granted on the part of these writers. The creation of literature comes from one's own life experience and emotional imagination, and has, as Hu Feng put it, "fights" and "struggles"; that is, the creation not only has to fight against the social reality, but also against all theories and concepts. Only this kind of creation can be called the true literary creation and this naturally give birth to the modernity of Chinese literature. As some scholars put it, "it is not that China's tradition and foreign tradition determine Chinese writers, but rather, modern writers get hold of China and foreign traditions in their own way. The initiative of modern writers lies in the fact that they are pursuing the quest belong to themselves under conditions different from ancient China and foreign countries. Whatever the result is, they are creating for themselves and their era."[10]

The research of Chinese modern literature should go back to the historicity and uniqueness of Chinese modern literature and should be incorporated into the modern consciousness and subjective spirit of the researcher. The object of research is the ontology of research, the researcher is the one performing research, and the consciousness of modernity constitutes academic research resource. The consciousness of modernity should be able to give an adequate explanation for the subject matter of research; meanwhile, it must be able to translate into the true feeling of the researcher.

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[10] Wang Furen, 1995, p 63.

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