

# New Literature in Chinese



# New Literature in Chinese:

*China and the World*

By

Zhu Shoutong

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New Literature in Chinese: China and the World

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## PREFACE

A huge discipline termed “Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature” has been studied in universities, institutes and writers associations in mainland China. However, this term will lead to three embarrassing situations for research. First of all, how should one determine the belonging of “Overseas Chinese Literature” or “The World Chinese Literature”? If “Chinese” here is understood as a national concept, it runs counter to the modifier “overseas”. So I put forward the concept and term of “New Literature in Chinese”, which makes it clear that “Chinese” means the Chinese language.

Secondly, the term “Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature” suggests that it should cover literature in languages of other ethnic groups in China, such as literature in the Uighur language, literature in the Tibetan language, literature in the Mongolian language, and literature in the Korean language. However, the scholars who are engaged in the research of Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature have been used to working with only the Chinese language. Most of them cannot even read literary works in other ethnic languages. In the short run, this situation can hardly be changed, so I suggest that scholars in the field work conscientiously on literature in Chinese, which falls within their linguistic and academic capabilities.

Thirdly, since “modern” and “contemporary” are temporary terms, “Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature” should comprise literary writings in the traditional Chinese language and traditional Chinese literary genres, for example, modern classical poetry, traditional opera, etc. However, scholars in the field of “Modern and Contemporary Literature” rarely research on literatures in the traditional Chinese language and classical genres, even though these literary works were created in modern and even contemporary times. Moreover, from the 1920s to the 1950s, Chinese writers and critics seldom used such terms as “Modern Chinese Literature” and “Contemporary Chinese Literature”. For these pioneers, “New Literature” used to be the major label of their creative or critical writings in the vernacular Chinese language. In my opinion, the pioneers such as Hu Shi, Lu Xun, Zhou Zuoren, Zheng Zhenduo, Mao Dun, Cai



Yuanpei and Chen Duxiu, who were all giants of the New Literature and New Culture Movement, are correct in their advocating the concept of “New Literature”. Whether “modern” or “contemporary”, they are temporary concepts. However, “New Literature” is tied to literary property and classification. “New Literature” is opposed to “Old literature”; the latter is namely the traditional literature in Chinese. It is well-known that the advocates of New Literature and New Culture had done a lot to criticize Old Literature and Old Culture as their advocating foundation during the May 4<sup>th</sup> Period.

Thus, I seriously propose “New Literature in Chinese” as a formal concept and term to replace “Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature”. I have discussed and even argued for it in this book.

“New Literature in Chinese” will be the most precise and succinct concept. It does not only combine “Modern Chinese Literature” and “Contemporary Chinese Literature” into one, but also incorporates modern and contemporary Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao literatures. No political problems accompany such a concept because it focuses on literary language – the “Chinese language”. In this book, I have expounded on the same tradition among “Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature”, “Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao Literatures”, and “Overseas Chinese Literature”. They need to be combined into one. As for “Chinese Literature in the World”, we must face the lexical ambiguity of the keyword “Chinese”, so it also has to be set aside. I have discussed the importance of language to literature, especially in the current world, and its status in the evolution of Chinese culture. Language is so important for literature that it can formulate thoughts, feelings and images in literary writing; it can also bear and carry cultural thinking, and even embodies cultural thinking routines and methods. Literature is a form of art created through a linguistic act and presented through the carrier of language. Sociologists have confirmed that the property of literature as a part of a “Speech Community” is bigger, more obvious, and more important than its property as part of a “political community”.<sup>1</sup>

In the world, there is English Literature, French Literature, German Literature, Russian Literature, and so on. We know that in concept, they are different separately from literature in English, literature in French, literature in German and literature in Russian. The concept of “Chinese Literature” is in the same situation. The concept of “Literature in Chinese”

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<sup>1</sup> Bloomfield, Leonard. “A set of postulates for the science of language”. *Language* 2:153-4 (1926).

is quite different from it. It is now important that we should turn to world literature. Only “New Literature in Chinese” would be a peer to literatures in different languages in the world as a whole and could build an alliance to combine “Modern and Contemporary Literature”, “Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao Literatures”, and “Overseas Chinese Literature” or “the World Chinese Literature” into one.

The concept of “New Literature in Chinese” has brought about new problems, which require immediate and serious attention; for example, how to deal with the literary creations in Chinese by writers from ethnic minorities in China and international writers, especially those who are not native Chinese speakers. However, it is more important for us to give an equal status to the overseas writers writing in the Chinese language. Some scholars intend to identify overseas literatures in Chinese as foreign literatures, as opposed to Chinese literature, which means that the writers of the Chinese language will be treated the same as foreign writers. For example, since the famous poet, Luo Fu is now a citizen of Canada, he would be viewed as a Canadian poet and his writing would be treated as works of Canadian Literature. It is ridiculous for us and for these writers. Cultural ethics teach us that: even though he does not belong to China or Taiwan in nationality, in terms of cultural belongingness, his creative contributions are part of New Literature in Chinese. When we label such literature as “Overseas Chinese Literature” or even “Chinese Writing of Foreign Literatures”, the cultural ethics stand out in double senses. Firstly, excluding overseas writers who use the Chinese language and identify themselves with Chinese culture, especially Chinese New Culture, is harmful to ethnic cognition and cultural cognition in terms of cultural ethics. Secondly, for overseas Chinese writers, excluding them from the grand framework of Chinese literature is unacceptable in terms of cultural ethics. As a result, it is more reasonable to use the concept of “New Literature in Chinese”, a generalized concept which seldom causes ambiguity, when we deal with overseas Chinese literature and a large number of overseas Chinese writers.

In the history of New Literature in Chinese, there emerged several literary phenomena such as movements, activities, controversies, societies, trends, schools and so on. Everything above could show us a regular pattern in modern literature and modern culture in China. In this book, I have analyzed the negative background of New Literature in Chinese. The negative background refers to factors playing a negative or passive role in the emergence of New Literature in Chinese. According to normal logic and conventional reasoning, these factors as constituents of the negative

background are regarded as unconstructive or harmful because they are incapable of directly supporting or encouraging the emergence of New Literature. But, in the history of New Literature in Chinese, especially during the beginning phase, the actual unfolding of the history of New Literature was the result of a complicated integration, involving various factors, both positive and negative. Many negative factors which were seemingly insufficient to sustain, or were supposed to impair, New Literature and New Culture actually contributed to them.

As for the background of New Literature in Chinese, the researchers have focused on the time background and its temporal significance. I here submit a new notion named the area background. The area background is the spatial and regional elements in literary conception and cultural writing that provide references and evocations. Sometimes, this kind of spatial-regional element can be directly written into the work. Generally speaking, this element frequently carries with it very strong cultural, ideological and political meanings. Actually, it is the area background that more directly unfolds the colorfulness and variety of New Literature in Chinese, so its cultural, ideological and political implications are equally palpable.

Democracy and science have been considered two flags of the May 4<sup>th</sup> New Literature Movement and New Culture Movement, but I think that they are not of equal importance in the history of New Literature in Chinese. The democratic trend does constitute the core spirit of New Literature in Chinese and it is nearly a reflection of all the factors that represent modern ideas. However, science fell into a status as a disharmonious factor in the construction of New Literature. The pioneers during the May 4<sup>th</sup> Period took Old Chinese Literature and Traditional Chinese Culture as the enemies against science; therefore, they needed science as a weapon so that they could defeat and overcome the old laws, the old rites, the old ethics, the old religion and the old politics embodied in Old Literature. In fact, the spirit of science, rather than science itself, played an essential role in it. The most important view was that science led to substantial awareness overflowing everywhere, and restricted the spirit of civilization. The achievements of New Literature in Chinese were deeply affected in general after the scientific awareness was introduced into literature, which led to the loss of the religious atmosphere and the disappearance of fantasy. Science is a very complicated issue in New Literature in Chinese.

New Literature in Chinese has contributed a lot to creations and experiences. However, it also has defects, which prevent it from making greater achievements. I have used the keyword “flaunting” here to

comment on some writers' creative writings. There seems to be too much flaunting in the thematic expression in their novels and stories and too little flaunting in plot and character relationships. Likewise, flaunting in plot and character relationships is especially indispensable in drama. However, Cao Yu and other playwrights advocated realism and virtually gave up flaunting in plot and character relationships, which leads to the relatively low accomplishment in new drama in Chinese.

The development of New Literature in Chinese owes a lot to foreign literary and cultural influences. Although a lot of research has been carried out into foreign writers and thinkers' influences on New Literature in Chinese, there are still some important premissions to be made up for. That is why I have been devoted to the studies of New Humanism by Irving Babbitt and classic criticism by Georg Brandes, which have been largely unexplored in past research.

Nonetheless, New Literature in Chinese belongs to the world. It has come to the world and has made a great contribution to the world. It has given many literary giants to the world, among them: Lu Xun, Guo Moruo, Cao Yu, Xu Zhimo, Mu Dan, Wang Meng, Mo Yan, Jia Pingwa, Kwang-chung Yu, Keneth Pai, Jin Yong (Louis Cha Leung-yung) and so on. In this study, I would like to research them, review their writings and discuss their merits in an academic way.

This book is so light, but it bears the weight of more than ten years of my academic endeavor and thinking. My friends helped me a lot, especially with English expression; I am very grateful to all of them.

Zhu Shoutong

31 March, 2015, University of Macao

# CHAPTER I

## “NEW LITERATURE IN CHINESE”

### **I.1. New Literature in Chinese in the Overall Field of the World Literature**

The research on literature in the Chinese language has a long history and glorious tradition. After a century's development, New Literature in Chinese, as a rapidly developing research discipline, has become well grounded and has found its place in the broad horizon of world literary research. But, until now, the discipline has been variously labeled as “Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature”, “New Chinese Literature”, “Chinese Literature in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century”, “Literature in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao”, “Overseas Chinese Literature”, “World Chinese Literature” or “Chinese Literature in the World”. These labels also appear in the Chinese official disciplinary catalog, and very often overlap with each other, the ambiguities of which lead to great confusion. As a result, scholars in the field often get lost in the confusion and have to narrow down their scholarship to one field, thus failing to establish their academic identities.

Although there is no positive correlation between academic identity and academic achievement, the failure to put these disciplines in array and integrate them within a broader framework has hindered the further development of the discipline. It is believed that academic operations run under the guidance of constructive rules and directive rules, with the former being core rules.<sup>1</sup> The above-mentioned forms of “New Literature in Chinese” are a result of flouting of the constructive rules, which leads to the malfunction of the directive rules.

Accordingly, the academic norms in the field of New Literature in

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<sup>1</sup> Yang, Yusheng and Zhang Baosen, *An Introduction to Academic Norms*. Beijing: Higher Education Press, 2004. 76.

Chinese remain to be developed and perfected. This chapter is an attempt to build up a norm, which includes constructive and directive rules. What is common to the above-mentioned disciplinary labels is that the modern Chinese language is the language used in everyday contemporary life, a language that differs from traditional Chinese. No matter whether literary works are produced in the Chinese mainland or overseas, this linguistic feature is what integrates them. By integrating the different labels into “New Literature in Chinese”, this intends to pave the way for the further development and possible perfection of the academic norms in the field.

### The Definition

“New Literature in Chinese” as an academic term originally referred to Chinese new literature, which appeared after the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement in the late 1910s and early 1920s. It stands in contrast to Old Literature in Chinese, and intends to overthrow and replace. The term “Chinese New Literature” had been used by Hu Shi, Lu Xun, Zhou Zuoren, Zhu Ziqing, who are all masters of the New Literature and the very first researchers in the field. In the late 1920s and the early 1930s, Chinese New Literature as a course appeared in the curriculum of Chinese universities and schools. Zhu Ziqing taught “Research in New Literature” in Tsinghua University,<sup>2</sup> while Zhou Zuoren lectured on “the Origins of the Chinese New Literature”.<sup>3</sup> The term was officially established in 1935 when the series books *The Anthologies of Chinese New Literature* were published. With the passage of time, it was gradually replaced by a new term “Modern Chinese Literature”, which seems to be more accurate and academically sound. The latter has gained wide acceptance after the founding of the People’s Republic of China, because the term both underscores the new political entity and the temporal feature. As its counterparts, “Classical Chinese Literature” and “Early Modern Literature” cropped up as disciplinary terms.

In fact, in the transition process of “New Literature in Chinese” from “Chinese New Literature” to “Modern Chinese Literature”, besides political and temporary factors, the social and cultural mentality of the particular era also play an important role. When “Chinese New

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<sup>2</sup> Zhu, Ziqing, “The Outline of the Chinese New Literature Research” *A Series of Literary and Art Research*. Shanghai: Shanghai Press of Arts and Literature, 1982.

<sup>3</sup> Zhou, Zuoren, *The Origins of the Chinese New Literature*. Peking: Renwen Press, 1932.

Literature”<sup>4</sup> was newly established as a term, there was a team of scholars who put forward the term “Literature in Modern China” to rival it. The earliest and most representative among them was Qian Jibo who published *A History of Literature in Modern China* in 1933, which should be the forerunner of Modern Chinese Literature. Dissatisfied with the term “New Literature”, Qian Jibo complained that this so-called New Literature was the result of “Hu Shi’s pompous propaganda with the goal of achieving fame for himself”.<sup>5</sup> He disagreed with Hu Shi that Chinese literature after the Founding of Republican China should be termed as New Literature. Instead, he claimed, the so-called New Literature was only a part of the overall literary scenario. The major achievements in the field were made in the sphere of classical literature. The writers in both spheres were modern literary writers. In spite of Qian Jibo’s prejudice toward “New Literature”, his disciplinary term seems to be more academically well grounded than the later orthodox term “Modern Chinese Literature”, because the literary creation in the classical Chinese language was excluded from the studies of Modern Chinese Literature. In recent years, a few literary history books such as Huang Xiujī’s *The History of Chinese Literature in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* embodied a similar academic awareness.<sup>6</sup> It is important to point out that Qian Jibo’s substitution of Modern Literature for the New Literature was not due to his awareness that the concept Modern Literature would be in a better position in the development of literary discipline. Instead, it was due chiefly to the popularity of the word “modern” in 1930s

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<sup>4</sup> The tendency to replace “Chinese New Literature” with “Modern Chinese Literature” was obvious in the 1950s and 1960s. *The Compilation History of the Chinese New Literature* reveals that in the first half of the 1950s, all the three books in the field were entitled with “new literature”; in the second half of the 1950s, three went on using “new literature”, while the other five were entitled with “modern literature”. In the 1970s, nine books in the field were published in Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, most (except Sima Changfeng’s *The History of the Chinese New Literature*) used “modern literature” as the keyword. See: Huang Xiujī. *The Compilation History of the Chinese New Literature*. Beijing: Peking University Press, 1995. 550-553.

<sup>5</sup> Qian, Jibo, *The Literary History in Modern China*. Changsha: Yuelu Press, 1986. 472.

<sup>6</sup> Huang Xiujī claimed: “Ren Fangqiu’s *A History of Modern Chinese Literature* is the first among a large number of books sharing the same title. Ren Fangqiu’s book was published in May 1944 by Henan Xiangfeng Press.” See: Huang Xiujī, *The Compilation History of the Chinese Literature*. Beijing: Peking University Press, 1995. 100.

China. It was an era when China, tortured by continuous wars, opened the door widely for a short time to the outside world, and when Shanghai as China's cultural center was permeated with everything associated with modernity. In that era, the English word "modern" as well as its Chinese counterpart 摩登 were the keywords of the cultural domain. As a part of modern culture, Modern Literature came to the forefront. It became inevitable to be going to replace the New Literature. As is known, the journal *Modern Literature* was one of the most important journals in the 1930s. It was more symbolic than its precedent which was entitled *New Literature*. The change of keywords signified the transition of the disciplinary terms. It is said that Yang Zhensheng began a course termed "Modern Literature" at Peking University in the 1930s.<sup>7</sup> Without the academic standstill caused by the Japanese invasion, the works termed *History of Modern Chinese Literature* would not come out as late as 1944.

Because of the social and cultural mentality at first, and then the requirements of political expression, there appeared a trend to name the main body of New Literature in Chinese as "Modern Chinese Literature" from the early 1930s. In the late 1950s, the term "Modern Chinese Literature" finally prevailed over the term "Chinese New Literature". Paradoxically, at the same time as this happened, the term "Contemporary Chinese Literature"<sup>8</sup> started to erode the field of "Modern Chinese literature". It was originally termed "New China Literature" or "the Literature after the Founding of the People's Republic", which clearly signified its ideological implications. The erosion climaxed around the 1960s when "Contemporary Chinese Literature", with the help of the political advantage of the government, surpassed "Modern Chinese Literature" in both scholastic and critical terms and became a more influential critical term. It is obvious that the term "Contemporary Chinese Literature" better represents a new era in both ideology and literature, which is so overwhelming that any scholar in the field seems to be unable to possibly transcend it with his own subjective terms. Though the concept

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<sup>7</sup> Xiao, Qian. "My Sideline Is to Be a Bridge Between the East and the West". *Historic Data of New Literature* 2 (1992).

<sup>8</sup> It is generally agreed that the following two books might serve as symbols: *A History of Contemporary Chinese Literature*, collectively written by the Chinese Department of Huazhong Normal College, was published by the Science Press in 1962. *The Contemporary Chinese Literature from 1949-1959*, collectively written by the Chinese Department of Shandong University was published by the Shandong People's Press in 1960.



“Modern Chinese Literature” has clearer denotation and connotation in terms of definition, “Contemporary Chinese Literature” enjoyed more political and ideological advantages. A balance should be achieved between them. With the combined efforts of academic administrative bureaus and literary researchers, the new term “Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature” emerges. In fact, it is a rather random and temporary combination of two terms. However, ever since its emergence, it has been the most authoritative and more prescriptive term in the field. Its dominance has been felt not only on the mainland of China, but also in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, and even in overseas Chinese communities.<sup>9</sup>

The term “Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature” has serious problems, because the combination concept of the old and new terms does not necessarily lead to the self-abasement of academic studies, like the so-called academic terms “British Literature” and “American Literature” which have been widely used and recognized. One problem that is hard to tackle is how to translate it into other languages, especially into English. It is evident that in English there is no clear-cut distinction between “modern” and “contemporary”, with the former covering the latter semantically. Hence, the English equivalent of “Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature” conveys little more than “Modern Chinese Literature” *per se*. In addition, in the context of Chinese language, there is no wide recognition of the distinction between the two periods—modern China and contemporary China. Hence, the rather random combination of the two terms lacks academic seriousness. However, the term has been used for such a long time that it has become conventional and people tend to take it for granted without second thought; its influence has even extended to overseas academia. What is more unbearable lies that the label “modern and contemporary” has even been attached to the world literature—there are books such as *A Dictionary of Modern and Contemporary World Women Poets*. It is an abuse of discourse.

In spite of its long-standing usage and dominance in the official academic catalog, the term “Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature” is not at all appropriate because it also covers the literature of other ethnic nationalities in China. China has always been a country with

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<sup>9</sup> Professor David Der-wei Wang from Harvard University has accepted the concept. In the preface of *Such Glamours*, he points out: “Urban life and literary history are the chief areas of the studies of Modern and Contemporary Chinese literature.” See: David Wang, *Such Glamours*. Shanghai: Shanghai Press, 2006. 1.

many nationalities: “The Chinese as a nation, from its very beginning, is an integration of lots of tribes and nationalities (including ancient tribes and nationalities, and the present day 56 distinct ethnic groups.) In the past thousands of years, Chinese history is a history of interactions and exchanges among these nations, thus unfolding a most colorful and most vigorous cultural panorama. So China is a blood-bound and culturally bound multi-national country”. It follows that “the literature in the Chinese language, whether it is traditional literature or new literature, is just a part of China’s literature, though it is the major part”.<sup>10</sup> The scholars in the field of China’s literature have consciously, or unconsciously, narrow down their academic domain. As a result, its name does not match its nature.

Diachronically speaking, the term “Modern and Contemporary Literature” will literally cover any literary creation in traditional Chinese produced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is what Qian Jibo did in his literary history, which leads to problems in the internal relationship of the literature in China because the nature and name do not match for a second time. This is the second dilemma researchers have to face. Based on the two dilemmas discussed above, the so-called Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature is, in fact, New Literature in Chinese.

As a matter of fact, the past decade has seen considerable efforts in instituting the notion of “New Literature in Chinese”. A consensus is about to be reached. At the end of 2003, a seminar was arranged by the editorial panel of *The Academic Studies of Southeast China*, in which “World Chinese Literature” was subject to “an open-ended interpretation”. The paper entitled “A Tentative Notion: Literature in the Chinese Language” explores the possibility and necessity to use the notion of “Literature in Chinese” from a specific perspective, the perspective of the external relationships of the so-called Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature. Although Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao are indiscerptible parts of China, the literature of these regions has been excluded from the field of Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature. It is embarrassing to note the peripheral yet privileged status of the literature of these regions in the past academic practices. It is also the case for Chinese literature overseas. As a result, “Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature” and “World Chinese Literature” are not proper and inclusive terms. “Literature in Chinese” is an attempt to integrate the various terms, but its domain is

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<sup>10</sup> Yang Yi, *Leading to a Broad View of Literature*. Hefei: Anhui Education Press, 2006. 17.

not clear-cut enough and seems too broad. As for the terms “Literature in Chinese in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century” and “Literature in Chinese in Modern China”, although they contain the connotation of “literature in Chinese”, they are still not inclusive enough, spatially and temporarily speaking. The problem lies in the fact that the old-style literature in Chinese is excluded from such terms. The redundancy of them is another problem.<sup>11</sup>

In fact, the legitimacy of Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature has long been questioned and there have been many attempts to modify it. A good case in point is *A List of Books on the History of Chinese Literature* edited by Chen Fei. There are 184 books listed, among them only 4 are entitled *Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature*, 22 are entitled *New Literature*, 93 are entitled *Modern Literature*, and 53 are entitled *Contemporary Literature*, while 12 are entitled *The 20<sup>th</sup> Century Chinese Literature* or *Centennial Chinese Literature*. All these terms overwhelm the most popular and official term “Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature” in both number and proportion, and “Modern Chinese Literature” and “Chinese New Literature” are preferable choices for most books. The statistics reveal that most scholars are well aware of the sloppiness of this term, although they have not openly challenged it. Their gesture might be a reflection of sophisticated taciturnity, a servile obedience to official norms, or deplorable negligence.<sup>12</sup>

Such mentalities lead to the institution of Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature as an academic concept and the name of a discipline. In spite of its lack of seriousness and logic, it has long been established and it has long guided the academic studies and the development of discipline. The academic inertia, which it brings about, seems hard to be overcome.

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<sup>11</sup> Such kinds of statements appeared in a number of important papers and monographs, including *The Ten-year Development of Literature* by Shao Quanling in the 18<sup>th</sup> Issue of *The Newspaper of Arts and Literature* in 1959, and *The Glorious Achievements of the Socialist Arts and Culture in New China* by Mao Dun in *People's Daily* on October 7, 1959. *New Chinese Literature in the Past Decade*, collectively written by the Institute of Literature by China's Academy of Science, was published by Writers' Press in 1960.

<sup>12</sup> It is important to point out that the data collected in the book is not only incomplete, but also erroneous on some occasions. A case in point is *The New Literary History* edited by Wang Ning and published by Tsinghua University Press. As a systematic introduction to the new theories in literary history, it has little relationship with New Literature in question. However, Chen Fei included it in his book. See: Chen Fei, *The Summaries of the Histories of Chinese Literature*. Zhengzhou: Daxiang Press, 2004. 2092-2106.

Yet it is high time for academia to overcome this inertia and take the discipline, its concept and name, seriously; and the conceptual mistakes ought to be corrected.

As mentioned above, in previous decades there have appeared many academic concepts and disciplinary names related to “New Literature in Chinese”, including “Modern Chinese Literature”, “Contemporary Chinese Literature”, “Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature”, “the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Chinese Literature”, “Literature in Modern China”, “China’s Literature in Modern Chinese”, “the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Literature in Chinese”, “Literature in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao”, “Overseas Chinese Literature”, “Literature in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao and the Overseas Chinese Literature”, and “the World Chinese Literature”. For a very long time, they were entwined and overlapped with each other, resulting in chaos and confusion. None of them is comprehensive and clear-cut enough to cover all these concepts, thus ending such chaos and confusion. The term “World Chinese Literature” may transcend and cover the other concepts, but it is a shame to find that “it is still within the research framework and route of ‘Literature in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao and Overseas Chinese Literature’”.<sup>13</sup> Pragmatically, it fails to cover the chief domain supposed to be occupied by Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature. Moreover, Chinese Literature as the keyword proves to be inadequate in emphasizing the difference between New Literature and Old Literature.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the only notion that can comprehensively cover the above-mentioned concepts and terms, and will not lead to chaos and ambiguities, is the term “New Literature in Chinese”. Based on the linguistic facts of literary creation, it delimits the boundaries, clearly and strictly, of New Literature. It also self-evidently reveals its connections with and differences from Old Literature in the Chinese Language, and, when compared with other literature in other languages, demonstrates its relationship and its heterogeneous nature.

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<sup>13</sup> Liu, Denghan, “Chinese Literature: A Transcending Construction” *Transcultural Poetic Probe*. Ed. Jiang Shuzhuo. Guangzhou: Jinan University Press, 2007. 325.

<sup>14</sup> Please refer to Huang Wanhua, *China and Overseas: Literature in Chinese in the 20th Century*. Tianjin: Beihua Culture and Arts Press, 2006; Cao Wanshen, *China’s Literary History in Modern Chinese*. Beijing: People’s University Press, 2007.

## Theoretical Advantages

To define literary domains according to a nation, race or ethnic group, though strongly ideological, does not need ideology as the major motivation, and often turns out to be a natural academic choice. Therefore, in the concepts listed above regarding Chinese New Literature, those with words such as “China” or other political terms make up the majority. These definitions of literary geographical domains, based on nation or government, are self-evident if political or historical factors do not complicate the relationship between the notion of nation and that of region. However, no matter how natural to define and conceptualize of the literary domains based on nation or regime, or how complete to retreat from the ideology in this process, once academic concepts or names of disciplines are established, these definitions inevitably enter academic systemization management or the institutionalization of higher education. Consequently, these definitions are endowed with certain political connotations in accordance with their ideological backgrounds. Ideological and political factors can facilitate literary researchers in perceiving and evaluating the value of a certain regional literature at a certain time. However, a loose grasp of them can also give rise to certain harmful influences on academic rationality and artificially divide the unified literary creations of the same “Speech Community” into various “political community” plates with fissures and gaps.<sup>15</sup>

According to the linguistic theory of Leonard Bloomfield, “Speech Community” refers to the groups communicating with the same language, which is obviously different from “political community” (such as nations). Literature is a form of art created by the linguistic act and presented through the carrier of language. The property of literature as a “Speech Community” is bigger, more obvious, and more important than its property as a “political community”, no matter whether it is seen from the internal process of creation or the outer effect of acceptance. Only under certain historical circumstances, such as the fall of a nation and other disasters, will the creation of literature naturally arouse political passion. Generally speaking, literary creators find it hard to turn to the “Grand Narration”. They would rather become submerged into the cultural meanings of certain social factors to meditate upon and represent the personal aesthetic experience of the time, which would not affect the

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<sup>15</sup> Li, Kai, *A Star in Modern Structuralism – An Introduction to Bloomfield’s Language*. Nanjing: Jiangsu Education Press, 1991. 36.

integrity of the same “Speech Community” because of the different nationalities or political regions. In fact, even at times when the national and political consciousness become prominent, like the era of China’s anti-Japanese war, there was no clear national gap or any regional fissures either on the mainland of China or in Taiwan, Hong Kong or Macao, or even the remote south Pacific regions. All the Chinese literary creations were full of the same passion, which represents the integrity of a “Speech Community” in its contribution to Chinese literature. The practice of literary acceptance shows that, generally speaking, what literature brings to the reader first is not the author’s nationality or its national or ethnic consciousness, but the language style and language itself, which is used to think, create and present. Linguists observe that a “Speech Community” might contribute to the world a unique yet united language style. Thus, it can be seen that the literature as an academic concept is intellectual work which are better grouped together based on “Speech Community”, instead of being defined by national or political communities.

Compared with other concepts, “New Literature in Chinese” enjoys the advantage of overcoming the regulations and restrictions of national plates and political regions; hence, New Literature studies can get rid of the politicalized academic prescriptions and find new academic paths to explore the laws of Chinese aesthetic expression. Sociological studies show that a person’s name usually functions as a hint or correction in shaping of his character. So do the academic concepts and names of disciplines. An influential academic concept or the name of a discipline will imply or emphasize its academic expectation through its embedded keywords or its tension, thus functioning as a self-evident model for the respective academic researchers. An academic concept with the keyword of “China” will certainly reinforce national consciousness, while that with the keyword of “modern” or “contemporary” etc., will surely introduce the political connotation and the huge changes of the time. However, the concepts and terms of “Chinese (language)” and “New Literature” obviously weaken these kinds of academic expectation and guide researchers into the layers of socio-linguistics, culture and aesthetics in Chinese aesthetic expression. This fully reveals the formation of New Literature in Chinese, its history and its future, by making a broad chronological and synchronic comparison with the old Chinese literary tradition and the heterogeneous linguistic and literary forms.

Those who are academic-minded usually blame the ideological factor in literary studies, but this orientation not only results from political control but also from those academic concepts centering on national motifs

like “Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature”. Western scholars have observed that even in those nations claiming academic and cultural independence from politics, the national or group consciousness in the academic concepts and names of disciplines still leads to the politicalization of academics. Harold Bloom, who proposed the famous “anxiety of influence”, “creative misreading” and other concepts of literary criticism, pointed out the severe reality that “literary teaching has been politicalized in universities of the world today”, taking the USA as a reference point.<sup>16</sup> By “politicalization”, Bloom here refers to the improper intensification of national or ethnic consciousness. In Bloom’s views, a classical narration without the limitation of a nation or groups could be extremely creative, in which he can freely talk about Homer, Dante, William Shakespeare, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, Marcel Proust or Franz Kafka.

This contemporary scholar on western classics sadly discovered that literary categories classified according to national or ethnic groups, rather than cultural standards, will give rise to the academic regulations dominated by national or racial consciousness with the least cultural connotations. Louis Althusser realized more clearly than Bloom that the national systemization of the education in literature will inevitably lead to the politicalization of concept and culture, including literary studies. He pointed out in “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”: “The Marxian concept of ideology was always meant to respect and to rehearse and flex the paradox of the mere semi-autonomy of the ideological concept”. “The classical Marxian concept (including the very word ‘ideology’ itself, as opposed to its reality) often broke down in precisely this respect.” “Those seemingly idealistic things all need the careful interpretation as the information for the basic structures like universities of multiple mechanisms and official institutions.” On these, Jameson commented: “The structural concept of Althusser often forms a rebuttal for the materialized specialization of capitalist subjects; therefore, it is in essence an excuse for counter-politics”.<sup>17</sup> They all pointed to the American educational and academic systems, which dared not or would not speak of politicalization, and their criticisms and allegations together show such a situation: once connected to a national system, the

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<sup>16</sup> Bloom, Harold, *A Chinese Preface to Western Classics*. Nanjing: Yilin Press, 2005. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Jameson, Fredric R. “Postmodernism and the Market”. *Socialist Register*. Vol. 26 (1990): 95-96.

materialization of academic disciplines will necessarily take on some ideological flavor. It is especially true in China, a political space always emphasizing ideology. Particular literary contents and creative environments make certain the fact that the so-called Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature cannot avoid ideological valuation, but this should not become an excuse for ideological interference with literary studies. Despite the various attempts to avoid the reinforcement of ideological elements in literary studies, the evasion of national consciousness in academic concepts or names of the disciplines, and the efforts to carry out academic exploration from linguistic and cultural perspectives, can reduce the ideological property of literary research. At the very least, it can weaken the researchers' habits of ideological valuation formed under the suggestion or requirement of certain concepts. Indeed, even a literary historian without any political intentions, once he realizes that his research of literary history is defined by a national or ethnic group, is prone to decide that the country's literary history is complete recording of the most sublime achievements in the national spirit. Once it comes to "the most sublime spirit of a nation and race",<sup>18</sup> the academic perspective will inevitably be led to the external aspect of literature and become involved in ideological criticisms. Ideology is, of course, important to literary studies, but it is not the whole of it, and cannot be the only perspective for literary studies. Sophisticated literary research is supposed to reveal internal laws of literature. Literature as a linguistic art is more closely related to linguistic forms, especially the aesthetic forms of linguistic expression and their development. This is the reason for choosing the concept of "New Literature in Chinese" after reflecting upon several concepts with a distinct national consciousness.

Literature is the art of language, and all literary issues can and should be traced back to the linguistic elements. So is the case with New Literature in Chinese. The definition and academic illustrations should go beyond national consciousness to enter the Chinese language level. In his article "Requirements of the New Literature", Zhou Zuoren defined an ideal new literature, and one of his assumptions is that this kind of new literature "should not be racial, national, local or familial", but it "should belong to the humankind as well as the individual".<sup>19</sup> The theoretical significance of this statement lies in its denial of the national and racial

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<sup>18</sup> Zheng, Zhenduo, *Illustrated History of Chinese Literature*. Beijing: Beijing Press, 1999. 5.

<sup>19</sup> Zhou, Zuoren, *Classic Works of Zhou Zuoren*. Haikou: Nanhai Press, 2001. 16.



bases for literary classification, despite the fact that it is still untenable to replace the national property of literature with common humanity and individuality. Actually, literary critics are now much more inclined to confirm the point that the cultural connotation of a literary work often has a deeper significance than its national consciousness, though literary scholars usually ignore another important issue: any culture represented by a literature has an unimaginably close relation with its linguistic conveyance. Western critics have long discerned that, generally speaking, every literary form takes culture and language as its archetypes, traditions or resources, none of which is separable. Some theorists, who eloquently declare that culture will replace language to be the focus of attention, bear the critical logic of regarding culture and language as “a particular medium”. Such a “medium is language”. Despite the author’s conversion, the language remains firmly idealist,<sup>20</sup> which actually falls into a dilemma of logic.

Indeed, a literary archetype is not simply the representation of a culture, because it can never go without the linguistic carrier; the cultural archetype of literature is inseparable from the linguistic expression as a carrier. The cultural archetype deposited and accumulated in a foreign literature is always closely related to the classical tradition in that language. If translated into Chinese, many notes should be added to help people understand. Besides a lot of information, the symbolic meaning and aesthetic flavor of this cultural archetype will undergo fragmentation, deformity and loss. It is the same with the cultural archetypes in Chinese literature to foreign readers. Rene Welleck once remarked, “Language is a material of literature as stone or bronze is of sculpture, paints of picture, or sounds of music”, and language “is itself a creation of man and is thus charged with the cultural heritage of a linguistic group”.<sup>21</sup> This statement hits the nail on the head and reveals the phenomenon that cultural archetypes and cultural traditions will finally be condensed into language. Because a certain language brings certain information and images of its cultural tradition, the high-level literary communication among different languages becomes a rather complicated issue. Therefore, those theories of “literary untranslatability”, though radical, are somewhat reasonable. An

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<sup>20</sup> Geoffrey B., Williams, *The Reason in the Storm—A Study of the Use of Ambiguity in the Writings of T. S. Eliot*. Lanham: University Press of America Inc. 1991. 177.

<sup>21</sup> Wellek, Rene and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature*. 3rd ed. London: Peregrine Books, 1963. 22.

extension of this reasoning seems to challenge the influential theory of Goethe's "World Literature", and this challenge is not necessarily unscrupulous or unorthodox. Since Dionyz Durisin, a leading Slovak literary theorist, published his monograph *Theory of Inter-Literature Process*, the theory of "World Literature" that transcends the linguistic prescription began to receive increased debate, and researchers now show much interest in Durisin's theory of "inter-literariness"<sup>22</sup>; the symbolic dividing line of the inter-literature is, of course, language and culture. Therefore, the first question of "inter-literariness" facing researchers of New Literature in Chinese should not be whether it belongs to "China's" modern and contemporary Chinese literature, but whether it is written in Chinese and whether it demonstrates the cultural message and cultural identity conveyed by the Chinese language.

The emphasis on the close relationship between the cultural archetype and the linguistic carrier is the common ground between Northrop Frye's theory of archetype and Althusser's "homology" theory; hence, they have become widely used terms in the current literary and cultural analyses. Homology is "fully possible only when we have a presumed identity among phenomena in different traditions".<sup>23</sup> From the same perspective, Derrida defined the writing forms including literary creation as the cultural center with the language as the carrier and confirmed that, "the latter is omnipresent and always controls the concept of writing".<sup>24</sup> This is a reliable academic revelation of the inner laws of development of literature, which shows that language always acts as a decisive factor whether for the historical form or for the value form of literature. Thus, the differentiation of "inter-literariness" is deeper and more accurate when it is based on language categories than on national or political categories. The reasons can be analyzed from the perspectives of the natural context, style and cultural community.

In the first instance, the same language naturally forms the same context, and literature written in the same language objectively forms a

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<sup>22</sup> Galik, Marian. "The World Literature and Interculturability". *The Journal of Xiamen University* 2 (2008).

<sup>23</sup> Miner, Earl, "Some Issues of Literary 'Species, or Distinct Kind'" *Renaissance Genres—Essays on Theory, History and Interpretation*. Ed. Barbara Kiefer Lewalski. President and Fellows of Harvard College, 1986. 29.

<sup>24</sup> Derrida, Jacques, "On Language". See: J. E. Elliot, "From Language to Medium" *New Literary History*. Vol. 1. Ed. Wang Ning. Beijing: Tsinghua University Press, 2001. 106.

natural integrated whole that cannot be divided by national classification or political alienation. Therefore, the same kind of language (that is, the same “Linguistic Community”, rather than the same nation or the same political entity) becomes the criterion of the categorization of the same “literary community”. All the literature written in the modern Chinese language, no matter whether it is written on the mainland or in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao or in other political regions, no matter whether it is published in China or overseas, all belong to an integral and inseparable body of New Literature in Chinese. The national or political division is only needed when a work is undergoing ideological analysis or when a critic is making a summary of a local color. What’s more, to a researcher of New Literature in Chinese, this kind of categorization does not bring any emotional pleasure, nor represents the rationale of academic logic.

Secondly, the obvious consistency of the same language on the flavor, aesthetics and symbols in literary expression forms the major features of a literature. These kinds of literary styles and aesthetic characteristics often make more essential contributions to human civilization than a national literature as well as its folk tradition in the common sense. Some linguists assert that the overall style of a language is completely in accordance with the national culture of the language: “Language style first of all refers to the total of all its differentiating features of a certain language among all the languages of the world. This can also be called the national style of a language”.<sup>25</sup> The aesthetic experiences and accomplishments of human beings require different languages, even all languages, to demonstrate themselves. In this huge and abundant accumulation, literature in Chinese objectively appears in an unified form and differs from literature of other languages; as long as they are not Sinologists, for the international readers, the Chinese literary works they read, appreciate and accept are the contributions of Chinese language. They neither need nor can judge whether the Chinese works are from Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao or places outside China. In fact, as far as New Literature in Chinese is concerned, the Chinese writing all over the world bears and develops the great tradition of the May 4<sup>th</sup> New Literature. The huge aesthetic expressiveness and the gradually maturing style of modern Chinese brought about by this tradition are more and more obviously embedded into the aesthetic memory of human civilization, and every Chinese writer

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<sup>25</sup> Wang, Xijie, “Language Style and National Culture” *A Collection of Papers on Style*. Ed. Cheng Xianghui and Ni Yunhan. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 1994. 110.

makes his contribution and shares the glory.

As already mentioned, in the third instance, the so-called national manner (in China it is usually called “Chinese manner”) or folk color that forms this kind of contribution to the human civilization is no more than the linguistic representation of the cultural archetype. Any culture, especially the community culture represented by literary works, is conveyed through linguistic expressions; a culture has many different forms such as national, racial and social forms, etc., but the most practical cultural form is the aspiration and flavor of a “community” conveyed by the same kind of language, that is, the cultural identification of the same language. “Language and culture are not only the image of the social environment people live in, but also the essence of people’s identification.”<sup>26</sup> Culture, as the essence of people’s identification, is still conveyed and demonstrated through language. Thus, the essence of a nation’s cultural identification finally boils down to language.

Driven by various mentalities, many immaterial cultural heritages of China’s traditional civilization are understood or interpreted as the common heritage of different nations in East Asia, but the spiritual and cultural heritages that are expressed in Chinese, namely texts in classical Chinese, cannot be appropriated by any other nations or other languages. With Chinese language employed as a rigid carrier, the splendid cultural traditions like Confucian doctrines will not be identified in other cultural systems. As an art of language, literature is the liveliest part of the cultural identification in one linguistic community, and the national manner and cultural style represented in literature is finally fulfilled by language itself.

In different regions, New Literature in Chinese may express different social and life experiences. However, the theoretical basis and even the ethical basis of the aesthetic treatment and value judgment which come from the life experiences in such regions are still the conventions of the new culture. What’s more, these two bases also form innovative thinking of the new culture that is closely related to the May 4<sup>th</sup> new literary traditions and condensed in the modern Chinese language. In spite of the indelible influence of exotic cultures and literature on the New Culture and the New Literature, modern Chinese and its modern way of thinking have experienced a creative transformation through literary creations. What has been handed down and become spiritual heritage must be the finished

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<sup>26</sup> Poole, Ross, “National Identity and Citizenship” *Identities: Race, Class, Gender and Nationality*. Ed. Linda Martin Alcoff and Eduardo Mendieta. Hoboken: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2003. 270.

product of the classic expression of modern Chinese. Though the Chinese word “幽默(you mo)” is transliterated from “humor”, it has been creatively transformed when it is used in modern Chinese. The Chinese information makes it no longer the exact equivalent of the English word “humor”, and no other word in Chinese can evoke the same rich and vivid image as “you mo”. This is but a typical example of the cultural influence on vocabulary, and the creative transformation that is reflected in personal portraits, scenario depiction and narrative strategy is more common. In the early 1980s, literary historian Tang Tao made the following incisive statement on the phenomenon that western literary influence should fit the language style of Chinese: “There is a natural elimination process when the Western thoughts and foreign forms are combined with the aesthetic habits and artistic tastes of the Chinese people...it is not unprecedented in the literary history that the inability to fit the Chinese language and life pattern causes failures (of acceptance of western thoughts and foreign forms)”.<sup>27</sup> He listed, as examples, the unpopular symbolic poetry of Li Jinfa and the failed introduction of the sonnet form.

Due to the profoundly and remarkably decisive function of language to the quality of literature and the “inter-literary” relationship, when a literature is defined as a science or a discipline, the linguistic categorization should be made first. Only under this premise can other qualities be reckoned with; this is the logic and reason for more appropriate and more scientific concept of “New Literature in Chinese”. This is also the academic advantage of this concept in comparison with other existent concepts, like “Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature”. New Literature in Chinese, according to the theory of genetic epistemology, represents the essence of Chinese vernacular literature. What its historical and its present development demonstrate is still the elevation of the level of artistry and aesthetic capability of modern literature in Chinese. Therefore, practically speaking, to design and initiate the concept of “New Literature in Chinese” from the perspective of the Chinese language is in accordance with the historical development and the future trend.

### Practical Value

As an academic concept, “New Literature in Chinese” is firmly supported by a strong theoretical base; and as an independent discipline, it

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<sup>27</sup> Tang, Tao, “Western Influences and National Style” *Western Influences and National Style*. Beijing: People’s Literature Press, 1989. 22-23.

enjoys significant practical value. During its infancy, New Literature in Chinese unprecedentedly highlighted the importance of language itself. As it grew up, the dispute was virtually focused on the choice of language between the classical and the vernacular. The new elements of New Literature in Chinese depend on the aesthetic construction of modern Chinese language. As a matter of fact, differentiating literature by using language as the criterion has been widely adopted and recognized as being efficient in the concept design and application in cases of foreign literatures and has proved to be feasible in the academic field and educational undertakings in China. From the linguistic perspective, New Literature in Chinese, in accordance with its historical development and contemporary expansion, integrates domestic and overseas writings in the Chinese language and reflects the experiences shared by all Chinese writers around the world. More importantly, the concise notion, with its powerful force, is able to cope with the trend of development in modern Chinese writings in different regions and at different times, with all of them being combined into an academic integrity.

Theoretically speaking, the cultural archetype of literary representation is inseparable from the language, which serves as the carrier; therefore, the most reliable criterion evaluating various categories of literature lies in the language itself. Practically speaking, the decisive role played by the modern language in the formation and development of the New Literature has not received due recognition. Diachronically speaking, the substantial development of the New Literature normally finds its best expression in the improvement of the artistry and craftiness of modern Chinese literature. The improvement has often been accompanied by the increasingly fierce debates on the issue of the Chinese language. Synchronically, New Literature in Chinese in different regions or even different countries displays a similar Chinese language strategy and artistic level during the same period. The former reveals that language is the essential character of New Literature in Chinese, while the latter demonstrates the excessively high degree of crystallization in the notion of “New Literature in Chinese”, which goes beyond regional and national constraints, both of which jointly explain the historical reasonableness and practical feasibility of the concept.

Researchers have noticed that the birth and initial development of the New Literature should be attributed to the widespread application of vernacular Chinese. During the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement, the New Literature, which broke from Old Chinese Literature by abandoning the bondage of deeply ingrained classical Chinese in a high-profile fashion, was