

Mao Dun's Literary Advocacy in the Early 1920s

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<Contents>

1. Introduction
2. Inquiry into Western Literature
3. Mao Dun's Approach:
Realism - Neo-romanticism - Realism (Naturalism)
4. Concluding Remarks

1. Introduction

Mao Dun 茅盾 and his writing are second only to Lu Xun as the most-studied writer in modern Chinese literature.¹⁾ Mao Dun, as

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1) Original name Shen Dehong 沈德鴻, Mao Dun's style was Shen Yanbing 沈雁冰. Mao Dun 茅盾 is the most well-known pseudonym, used in 1927 for his first work, *Shi 蝕 Eclipse*. To escape the attention of the Guomindang (GMD) censorship he used this pen name. At first he chose Mao Dun 矛盾 meaning contradiction, indicating his desire to describe the conflicts and confusion prevailing at the time. The term might have come into his mind also because of his own inner conflicts and contradictions. On a second thought, however, he put a grass radical on top of *mao 矛* to camouflage his real intention, because the original term carried with it a strong indictment against the reigning regime and would probably aggravate the precarious position he was already in. Strictly speaking, therefore, we should not call him Mao Dun 茅盾 before 1927. But for the sake of convenience Mao Dun will be used throughout this essay. See Mao Dun, *Wo zouguo de Daolu 我走過的道路* [The road I have taken], vol.2 (Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian, 1984), pp.5-6. For

Marston Anderson indicates, is the most well-known as "the critic and author most responsible for the propagation of a Western-style realism in China."²⁾ Few would disagree with him. Jaroslave Prusek had already observed Mao Dun's status as a writer of realism: "Few are the number of great writers in the world whose oeuvre is so closely and constantly bound up with the immediate present, with important contemporary political and economic events, as is that of Mao Dun."³⁾ In this sense Mao Dun established a reputation for himself as the master of realism of modern Chinese literature. This was established both through his strenuous efforts to advocate the nineteenth-century European realist theories, and by the fundamental principles of realism in his own creative writing in an equally strenuous fashion. Especially, the study on Mao Dun in China by and large has a strong tendency to emphasise his later works as the master of realism judging them from a highly political and ideological viewpoint whereas the West has focused on Mao Dun's early fiction.⁴⁾ In other words the standard

a more detailed account of many other pen names used by Mao Dun, see Marian Galik, "The Names and Pseudonyms Used by Mao Tun," *Archiv Orientalni*, vol.31 (1963), pp.80-108.

2) Marston Anderson, *The Limits of Realism: Chinese Fiction in the Revolutionary Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p.33.

3) Jaroslave Prusek, *The Lyric and the Epic: Studies of Modern Chinese Literature*, Leo Ou-fan Lee ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), p.121.

4) In contrast with China, in West there has been the comprehensive study on Mao Dun's early fiction and nonfiction writing in the 1920s. For instance see C. T. Hsia, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction, 1917-1957* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1962, 2nd ed.), pp.140-164; John D. Berninghausen, "Mao Dun's Early Fiction, 1927-1931: the Standpoint and Style of His Realism," Ph.D. Thesis (Stanford: Stanford University, 1979); Yu-shih Chen, *Realism and Allegory in the Early Fiction of Mao Dun* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); Marston Anderson, *op. cit.*, pp.119-151; David Der-wei Wang, *Fictional Realism*

critical line of later years is that *Midnight* represents the peak of Mao Dun's artistic achievement, whereas the earlier works are qualitatively inferior and artistically unsatisfactory. Secondly, this high evaluation of Mao Dun's works in the 1930s has created the view that all of his writings and social activity previously are of interest simply because they illustrate the progression of his thought towards realist literature and Marxist ideology.⁵⁾ As a result, such criticism, despite the quantity of the studies on Mao Dun,⁶⁾ obscures various aspects of Mao Dun's nonfiction writing and activity in the early period.

The purpose of this study is, therefore, to argue for a comprehensive interpretation of the literary thought of Mao Dun in the 1920s and an interpretation that offers a new explanation. First, I will investigate the critical writing of Mao Dun in which he introduced and translated a quantity of Western literature and writers. Second, it will be debated whether Mao Dun can be regarded as an advocate of realism or not.

in Twentieth-century China : Mao Dun, Lao She, Shen Congwen. (New York : Columbia University Press, 1992), pp.25-110; Hilary Chung, "The Portrayal of Women in the Early Fiction of Mao Dun, 1927-1931," Ph.D Thesis (Durham: University of Durham, 1992); Marian Galik, *Mao Dun and Modern Chinese Literary Criticism* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH, 1969).

5) For instance, see Zhu Defa 朱德發, A Yan 阿岩, Zhai Deyao 翟德耀, *Mao Dun qianqi wenxue sixiang sanlun* 茅盾前期文學思想散論 [Essays on Mao Dun's early literary thoughts] (Jinan: Shandong renmin chubanshe, 1983), p.311.

6) Up to 1990, in main land China over one thousand articles and over forty books of the study on Mao Dun were published. See Qiu Wenzhi 邱文治 and Han Yinting 韓銀庭 eds., *Mao Dun yanjiu liushi nian* 茅盾研究六十年 [Sixty years of the study on Mao Dun] (Tianjin: Tianjin jiaoyu chubanshe, 1990), p.1 and "Appendix: List of the Study on Mao Dun."

2. Inquiry into Western literature

Mao Dun began to study and translate European literature as early as 1919, mainly under the influence of the May Fourth Movement of that year. When he was about twenty and working as an assistant editor in the Commercial Press, he began to translate works by Tolstoi, Gorky, Maupassant, Galsworthy and Bernard Shaw. At the same time, he also focused his attention on the study of the history of European literature from Greek and Rome down to the twentieth century, in order to obtain a general idea of the development of trends and theories in European literature.⁷⁾

In the column "Reports on Foreign Literature" in *Short Story Monthly* there are a large number of Mao Dun's articles. Mao Dun, for instance,

7) In her book *The Introduction of Western Literary Theories*, Bonnie S. McDougall has identified the Western and Japanese secondary works through which the Chinese were introduced to contemporary Western literary currents: see especially chapter 2, "Modern Literary Movements and Currents in the West," pp.54-84, and chapter 4, "Realism and Naturalism," pp.147-89. In the case of realism the Chinese relied on the following works, among others: Richard Green Moulton, *The Modern Study of Literature*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1915); George Brandes, *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature*, 6 vols., first published in Denmark in 1871-89; translated by Diana White and Mary Morison (London: Heinemann, 1923); and Shimamura Hogetsu 島村抱月 "Bungeijo no shizenshugi" 文藝上の自然主義 [Naturalism in literature and art], first published in 1908 and reprinted in *Gendai Nihon bungaku zenshu* 現代日本文學全集 [compendium of modern Japanese literature], vol.59 (Tokyo: Chiikuma shobo, 1958), pp.150-160. For Mao Dun, see Bonnie S. McDougall, *The Introduction of Western Literary Theories into Modern China, 1919-1925* (Tokyo: The Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1971), especially pp.172-189.

wrote 204 articles relevant to various world writers and news between January 1921 and April 1924.⁸⁾ His articles touch not only most European literature such as Russian, Jewish, Irish, Swedish, Czech, Polish, German, Italian, French, Belgian etc, but also a great number of European writers from a wide variety of schools. This multiplicity is likely to coincide with the edition principle which he asserted in his "Manifesto of Renovation of *Short Story Monthly*": "We shall not be limited to one country or one school in translating Western master pieces."⁹⁾ Although it is difficult to outline those writers and literary trends, several features can be found in the articles.

First, most of the writers and works introduced by Mao Dun in *Short Story Monthly* are after the eighteenth century. Many titles have such words as "latest trends", "new tendency," "contemporary tide," "current issues" and "present appearance." This shows that Mao Dun's articles in *Short Story Monthly* are open to various kinds of literature but at the same time are inclined to 'contemporary and new literature'. These articles show, besides, that Mao Dun was interested not only in realism but in far broader terms in Western literary schools. Non-realism literature is even regarded with gravity. For instance, in the column "Study of Writers" (*Wenxue jia yanjiu* 文學家研究) in *Short Story Monthly*, Mao Dun deals with Western writers, such as Belgian M. Maeterlinck, Norwegian J. Bojer, German G. Hauptmann and

8) See Mao Dun articles in *Xiaoshuo yuebao* 小說月報 [*Short Story Monthly*], vol.12-15, 1921-1924.

9) Mao Dun, "Xiaoshuo yuebao gaige xuanyan" 小說月報 改革宣言 [Manifesto of reformation of *Short Story Monthly*], *Xiaoshuo yuebao*, vol.12, no.1 (1921), p.2.

French Romain Rolland. These writers were treated as neo-romantic or symbolistic writers in Mao Dun's critical writings at the same time.¹⁰⁾ Other writers whom Mao Dun was interested in are Russian writers, such as F. Dostoyevsky, L. N. Tolstoy, I. Turgenev, and L. Andreyev.¹¹⁾ Although these writers can be regarded as realist writers, as noted by Marton Anderson, yet the realism here is a far broader ideological concept than the notion of the nineteenth century literary school or creative method called 'mimesis of social reality'.¹²⁾ Chen Sihe, regarding modern Chinese literature as a whole body combined with various other factors as well as realism, also observes that he wonders that "the great Russian literary tradition is generally regarded as realism." and goes on to say, "I. Turgenev's works correspond with romanticism and there are more symbolistic characteristics in the works of F. Dostoyevsky and L. Andreyev."¹³⁾ In the light of Mao Dun's introduction and study of Western literature, Mao Dun's study of Western literature in the first half of the 1920s, is not limited to such a literary school as realism when he introduced it to China.

10) See Mao Dun's critical writings. Mao Dun's interest in those writers still continued in the late 1920s. See Mao Dun, "Cong Guling dao Dongjin", *op. cit.*, p.177; "Xie zai 'ye qiangwei' de qianmian" 寫在《野薔薇》的前面 [Preface of *Wild Roses*], Sun Zhongtian and Zha Guohua eds., *Mao Dun yanjiu ziliao*, vol.2, p.14.

11) For discussion on the influence of Russian literature on Mao Dun's creative writing and literary thought, see Mau-sang Ng, *The Russian Hero in Modern Chinese Fiction* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1988), pp.129-180.

12) For the discussion of realism in the West and China, see Marston Anderson, *op. cit.*, pp.3-26.

13) Chen Sihe 陳思和, *Zhongguo xin wenxue zhengtiguan* 中國新文學整體觀 [The whole aspect of Chinese New Literature] (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1987), pp.117-118.

3. Mao Dun's Approach: Realism – Neo-romanticism – Realism (Naturalism)

While the Chinese literati have mostly viewed literature as functional, as a means of 'literature is to convey the Way' (*wen yi zai dao* 文以載道), the perception of the 'way' had changed substantially among intellectuals by the time Liang Qichao 梁啟超 published his celebrated article, "On the Relationship between Fiction and the Government of the People" in 1902.¹⁴⁾ Liang's article opened up new vistas concerning the function of literature, especially that of fiction, in society. For him, fiction was the most effective means to social and political reform, and the means to any kind of reform, he believed, lay in transforming the mind, and infusing the people with a spirit of duty and responsibility. This concept was not only echoed by his contemporaries, but further developed by the May Fourth writers a decade or more later. Lu Xun's choice of literature as a long life career to "change people's temperament and reform society" is a much quoted example.¹⁵⁾ While no less utilitarian, many May Fourth writers were even more deterministic in their outlook on literature than their late Qing predecessors. This, somewhat ironically, came as a result of their

14) See Liang Qichao 梁啟超, "Lun xiaoshuo yu qunzhi zhi guanxi" 論小說與羣治之關係 [On the Relationship between Fiction and the Government of the People], *Xin xiaoshuo* 新小說, vol.1 (November 1902).

15) Lu Xun 魯迅, "Yuwai xiaoshu ji xu" 《域外小說集》序 [Preface to *Yuwai xiaoshu ji*], *Lu Xun quanji* 魯迅全集, vol.10 (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1981), p.161.

espousal of the theory of evolution. Many fervently applied the same concept in the realm of social sciences and humanities. In literature, leading advocates such as Chen Duxiu, Hu Shi, Lu Xun, Mao Dun and others held the view that there are various stages or periods of development in literary history - from the classical age to the ages of romanticism, realism/naturalism and then neo-romanticism. European literature in the early twentieth century, they believed, had passed through the classical, romantic and realist periods, and now was in the period of neo-romanticism.¹⁶⁾ As for Chinese literature, many May Fourth intellectuals considered that until late Qing, it had remained in the classical and romantic age. Just as industrialisation and modernisation sparked off the age of 'realism' in European literature, many hoped and believed that it would do the same for China. This hope provided them with theoretical basis for the promotion of realist literature.

Realism (Naturalism)

Mao Dun also advocated realism first and then neo-romanticism (symbolism), finally realism (naturalism) again respectively between 1920 and 1922, while Mao Dun introduced and studied not only realism but far broader writers and theories in Western literature.

16) See Bonnie S. McDougall, *The Introduction of Literary Theories into Modern China, 1919-1925*, Tokyo: The centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1971, Chapters 2-4.

Although Mao Dun published his articles concerning symbolism in 1919 and 1920,¹⁷⁾ he officially made it clear that the priority, to provide Chinese literature with a model to follow, should be given to the realist and naturalist schools. In his opening speech for the column "New Tide Fiction" in January 1920 Mao Dun writes:

Nowadays, new thoughts spread out very quickly, and new thoughts need new literature to be tools of propaganda. That's why we realise at once that the translation of fiction in China today is out of the time. Therefore, the introduction of fiction of the new schools has now become very urgent The introduction of the fiction of the new schools in China today should start with the realist school and the naturalist school. And that is the purpose of opening up the present column.¹⁸⁾

He observes that though realism is no more at the cutting edge of world literature, it is, nonetheless, still the most appropriate literary course for China at present. He does not distinguish between realism and naturalism except to indicate that the latter was developed by Zola. For Mao Dun, realism is the best approach to prepare Chinese literature

17) In October 1919, Mao Dun published the translation of M. Maeterlinck's symbolic play in *Jiefang yu gaizao* 解放與改造 [Liberation and reformation] and in January 1920 he published his critical essay concerning symbolic dramas in *Shishi xinbao* 時事新報 [The China time]. See Wang Gongliang 王功亮 and Ding Fan 丁帆, "Lun Mao Dun xiaoshuo chuanguo de xiangzheng secai" 論茅盾小說創作的象徵色彩 [On symbolic favour of Mao Dun's fiction], *Mao Dun yanjiu bianjibu* 茅盾研究編輯部 ed., *Mao Dun yanjiu* 茅盾研究 [Studies of Mao Dun], vol.2, (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 1984), p.145.

18) Mao Dun, "Xiaoshuo xin chao lan xuanyan" 小說新潮欄宣言 [Manifesto of the column of the new tide fiction], *Xiaoshuo yuebao*, vol.11, no.1 (January 1920). Here refer to *Mao Dun quanji*, vol.18, pp.12-13.

for its future advancement into mainstream world literature.¹⁹⁾ Mao Dun, like most intellectuals of letters in China of the early 1920s, is convinced of the existence of the uniform process of the development of literature, applicable to the entire world. This idea shows that Mao Dun is not exceptional amongst the May Fourth intellectuals under the influence of evolutionism and utilitarianism.²⁰⁾

Insofar as the evolutionary concept is concerned, Mao Dun shares the same idea with Chen Duxiu. Mao Dun writes in the article just above: "Western fiction has already passed from romanticism to realism and neo-romanticism, China has made a stop before realism. This is nothing else but treading in the steps of others. Hence, it is urgent to introduce the fiction of these new trends."²¹⁾ This is in fact an expansion of the following sentence from Chen Duxiu written in 1915: "Chinese literature finds itself in the period of classicism and idealism; from now on it will proceed to realism."²²⁾

19) *Ibid.*, p.14.

20) The May Fourth intellectuals was influenced largely by Huxley's social evolutionism rather than Darwin's evolutionism. See Leo Ou-fan Lee, "In Search of Modernity: Some Reflections on a New Mode of Consciousness in 20th century Chinese History and Literature", Paul A. Cohen and Merle Goldman eds., *Ideas across Cultures: Essays on Chinese Thought in Honor of Benjamin I. Schwartz* (Cambridge (Massachusetts) and London: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp.110-122.

21) Mao Dun, "Xiaoshuo xin chao lan xuanyan [Manifesto of the column of the new tide fiction], *op. cit.*, p.12.

22) Chen Duxiu, "Xiandai Ouzhou wenyi shi tan" 現代歐洲文藝史譚 [Discussion of the history of modern European literature], *Xin qingnian* 新青年, vol.1, nos.3-4 (15 November and 15 December 1915). What Chen Duxiu has in mind by the concept of idealism was romanticism. For more detailed discussion of Mao Dun's adoption from Chen Duxiu in the literary idea, see Marston Anderson, *op. cit.*, pp.33-37. Also Aono Seiji 青野繁治 shows the theoretical relevance between Mao Dun and Chen Duxiu, comparing Mao Dun's article "Xuesheng yu shehui" 學生與社會 [Student and society] in 1917 with Chen Duxiu's article "Jinggao qingnian" 敬告青

Neo-romanticism

However, a month after advocating realism in January 1920, Mao Dun sharply criticises the prevailing pessimistic tone in realist literature, and suggests that symbolism might just be a better alternative in his article "At the present can we advocate symbolistic literature?"²³⁾ Mao Dun states that despite the fact that symbolistic literature (in contrast to realist literature) is not revolutionary, it ought to be advocated. In his view, realist literature translated into or written in Chinese after 1919, shows where the "errors and weak points" of contemporary society and man lie, and also shows that Chinese society and man will not be cured by one medicine only.²⁴⁾ Symbolistic works came to be one of these medicaments. Realist literature, under which Mao Dun understand also some naturalist works, however, also carried certain drawbacks. Perusal of realist literature makes the reader sad and even leads him to despair. It has a depressive effect on his feelings. The advocacy of literary works of European symbolism ought to contribute to a harmonising of feelings and spirit of man that has been disrupted by realist literature. Symbolistic literature, however, is but a transition to the so-called

年 [Call to youth] in 1915. See Aono Seiji 青野繁治, "茅盾初期文藝思想の形成と發展" [Formation and development of Mao Dun's early thought of literature and art], 中國文藝研究會 ed., *Yaso 野草* [Wild Grass], vol.43 (1989), p.29.

23) Mao Dun, "Women xianzai keyi tichang biaoxiangzhuyi de wenxue me?" 我們現在可以提唱表象主義的文學麼? [At the present can we advocate symbolistic literature?], *Xiaoshuo yue bao*, vol.11, no.2, February 1920. Here refer to *Mao Dun quanji*, vol.18, pp.27-28.

24) *Ibid.*, p.28.

neo-romantic literature.²⁵⁾ In this article, Mao Dun idealises precisely this literature which allegedly is one that "has to show mankind the right way."²⁶⁾ According to Mao Dun, Chinese literature, too, should follow the same course to neo-romantic literature.

In the March and April issues of *Eastern Miscellany* in 1920, Mao Dun published the translation entitled "A counter-flow in Modern Literature - the New Literature of Modern Ireland".²⁷⁾ Mao Dun's reason for selecting that particular material, as Bonnie S. McDougall observes, is due to the original writer's suggestion that "a literature of national liberation need not necessarily be written in a realist manner."²⁸⁾

It seeks a new road apart from realism. We all know that realism, as in the case of Ibsen, still contains many elements of theory: later it changed into naturalism, and only impressions remained. Therefore, modern literature has already become separated from reality. In the beginning of the new century, the symbolists and mystics flourished, and the strength of the pure realists declined: and gradually a new

25) As Marian Galik points out in his study, Mao Dun does not distinguish clearly between symbolism and neo-romantism. An example is his analysis of G. Hauptmann's *Die Versunkene Glocke* (*The Sunken Bell*), which was considered as symbolic in one place and neo-romantic in another. See Marian Galik, *op. cit.*, pp.74-75.

26) Mao Dun, "Women xianzai keyi tichang biaoxiangzhuyi de wenxue me?," *op. cit.*, p.28.

27) Mao Dun, "Jindai wenxue de fanliu - Aierlan de xin wenxue" 近代文學的反流 - 愛爾蘭的新文學 [A counter-flow in Modern Literature - the New Literature of Modern Ireland], *Dongfang zazhi* 東方雜誌 [Eastern miscellany], vol.17, nos.6 and 7 (March and April 1920), reprinted in *Xieshizhuyi yu langmanzhuyi* 寫實主義與浪漫主義 [Realism and Romanticism] (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1923). This articles were translated by Mao Dun without acknowledgement two chapters from a book by F. W. Chandler, *Aspects of Modern Drama*, concerning the rebirth of the theatre in Ireland. See Bonnie S. McDougall, *op. cit.*, pp.68-69.

28) Bonnie S. McDougall, *op. cit.*, p.178.

group appeared. Up to the present Romain Rolland and Henri Barbusse in France and Vicente Blasco Ibanez in Spain (Ibanez' Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse was translated into English in 1918, and has so far gone through 130 impressions: it describes the suffering of war) and so on have already established this neo-romantic group.²⁹⁾

In September 1920, Mao Dun published a study under the title "Classicism, romanticism and realism in literature", which has been well-known for its advocacy of realism theory, but in fact it is rather more negative about realism in its critique.³⁰⁾ Mao Dun clearly presents his aim: "I try to discuss the meaning and value of these three schools indiscriminately, so as to draw a sketch of the development of literature and art, and finally to do justice for the wrongly treated classicism and romanticism, and at the same time, to show that realism is not worthy of the fame that is given to it."³¹⁾ Mao Dun points out that old romanticism is the first moment of the triad, the thesis, while realism is the second one, the antithesis, and finally neo-romanticism is the resulting moment, the synthesis.³²⁾ His typically Chinese evolutionary approach to literature is here in marked combination with Hegelian.³³⁾

29) Mao Dun, "Jindai wenxue de fanliu - Aierlan de xin wenxue," *op. cit.*, p.67.

30) Mao Dun, "Wenxue shang de gudianzhuyi langmanzhuyi he xieshizhuyi" 文學上的古典主義浪漫主義和寫實主義 [Classicism, romanticism and realism in literature], *Xuesheng zaazi* 學生雜誌 [The student magazine], vol.7, no.9 (September 1920), pp.1-19.

31) *Ibid.*, pp.1-2.

32) *Ibid.*, p.19.

33) For the discussion of Hegelian concept in literature, see R. Wellek, "The concept of Evolution in Literary History", R. Wellek, *Concepts of Criticism* (Yale University Press, 1963), pp.40-43.

In his two articles, "After Reading the *Recent Tendencies in European and American Literature*" and "One More Explanation for Researchers in the New Literature," composed in August 1920, Mao Dun expresses his strong disapproval of the naturalist school's pessimistic presentation of human life.³⁴⁾ In the former article, he writes that neo-romanticism eliminates the defects of realism which is "rich in its body but poor in its spirit," it clears away deficiencies in the field of exaggerated criticism and waylessness, and rectifies the errors of realism which does not see the good in the bad.³⁵⁾

In Mao Dun's opinion, therefore, neo-romanticism is better than any previous modes of literature because it can reconcile observation and imagination, so that it can present human life more profoundly.³⁶⁾ By observation, Mao Dun refers to the observation and the criticism of social reality; by imagination, Mao Dun means the writer's imagination for the better future which he provides readers in his work. Mao Dun argues that "though observation and imagination are two basic components of literature and art, a more perfect work of the art and literature should be one created by the combination of the two methods."³⁷⁾ However, realism overemphasises observation while

34) Mao Dun, "'Ou mai xin wenxue zuijin zhi qushi' shuhou" 《歐美新文學最近之趨勢》書後 [After reading the *Recent Tendencies in European and American Literature*], *Tongfang zazhi* 東方雜誌, vol.17, no.18, September 1920. Here refer to *Mao Dun quanji*, vol.18, pp.45-49; Mao Dun, "Wei xin wenxue yanjiuzhe jin yi jie" 爲新文學研究者進一解 [One more explanation for researchers in the new literature], *Jiefang yu gaizao* 解放與改造, vol.3, no.1 (Aug 1920). Here refer to *Mao Dun quanji*, vol.18, pp.38-44.

35) Mao Dun, "'Ou mai xin wenxue zuijin zhi qushi' shuhou," *op. cit.*, pp.45-48.

36) Mao Dun, "Wei xin wenxue yanjiuzhe jin yi jie," *op. cit.*, p.38.

37) *Ibid.*

romanticism relies too much on imagination. It is neo-romanticism, which combines the two methods, that can produce a great work of art. It, therefore, should become a more ideal model for the Chinese new literature in the future.³⁸⁾

Mao Dun sees in the French novelist Romain Rolland and his serial novel *Jean Christophe* the representative of neo-romanticism. By that time Romain Rolland's *Jean Christophe* had been translated into Chinese and published as a series in *Short Story Monthly*. The periodical also contributes a special issue for the introduction of the French novelist and his works. As Mao Dun observes, Romain Rolland, through his work, "presents to readers not only the past and the present, but he also shows us the future."³⁹⁾

In "The Obligation and Effort of the Scholar of New Literature," written in February 1921, Mao Dun asserts again his evolutionary view:⁴⁰⁾

Reviewing the history of Western literature, we see the sequential development and change of literary schools or trends: classicism - romanticism - realism - neo-romanticism, etc. Each stage of development redefines the concept of literature: reevaluates its mission: and always brings literature closer to life. All development aims at one goal: making literature more capable of representing contemporary people, portraying their lives, expressing their feelings,

38) *Ibid.*, pp.38-39.

39) Mao Dun, "Wei xin wenxue yanjiuzhe jin yi jie" [One more explanation for researchers in the new literature], *op. cit.*, p.42.

40) Mao Dun, "Xin wenxue yanjiu zhe de zeren yu nuli" 新文學研究者的責任與努力 [The obligation and effort of the scholar of new literature], *Xiaoshuo yuebao*, vol.12, no.2 (February 1921). Here refer to *Mao Dun quanji*, vol.18, pp.66-72.

speaking out their sufferings and expectations, as well as reflecting their struggles against and appeals to an unpredictable fate.⁴¹⁾

It is clear from the above quotation that Mao Dun still views the history of world literature as a process of getting increasingly 'earth-bound': namely, literature concerns itself increasingly with typical problems confronted by 'common people' (*pingmin* 平民) - a social group or groups whose composition has never been adequately identified by Mao Dun - in the contemporary world. In the same article, Mao Dun observes that "the description of the ugly and the evil has indeed its artistic value: yet presenting only one side of human life is, after all, short of a perfect and honest presentation."⁴²⁾ He finds an alternative in neo-romanticism. Because neo-romanticism, Mao Dun claims, "presents a rounded picture of the human life."⁴³⁾

Marian Galik hence states that "Mao Dun was not very anxious to remain faithful to his own propositions" even though he appeared to be a protagonist of the introduction of realist and naturalistic works at the beginning of 1920 in his "Manifesto of the new column of the new tide fiction."⁴⁴⁾ It seems that Mao Dun is searching for the literary model that reflects the problems confronted by Chinese society in such a way that the problems appear urgent yet not overwhelming.

Here neo-romanticism can be regarded as post-realism, which by and large began to get under way in the closing years of the 19th century

41) Mao Dun, "Xin wenxue yanjiu zhe de zeren yu nuli," *op. cit.*, pp.66-67.

42) Mao Dun, "Xin wenxue yanjiu zhe de zeren yu nuli," *op. cit.*, p.71.

43) *Ibid.*

44) Marian Galik, *op. cit.*, p.41.

and indicates various kinds of literary tendencies; it is generally regarded as modernism. Although the notion of Mao Dun's neo-romanticism corresponds to the post-realism period largely under the influence of his evolutionary view,⁴⁵⁾ as observed above, Mao Dun's post-realism literature is different from general modernist tendencies. It is Mao Dun's neo-romanticism represented by Romain Rolland and H. Barbusse that reconciles observation and imagination emphasising the romantic spirit regarded as "self consciousness" (*zijue* 自覺) by Mao Dun⁴⁶⁾ while modernist tendencies in Europe show that things are not what they seem to be or are made out to be and also doubt the modern rational self.

Naturalism

At the beginning of the second half of 1921 Mao Dun reveals his dissatisfaction with symbolism in the article "Effect of literary criticism."⁴⁷⁾ In his article, Mao Dun writes that symbolism has been

45) Marian Galik regards the post-realism period as avant-garde rather than modernism. According to *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, modernism and avant-garde can be treated as the same category. See Marian Galik, *op. cit.*, pp.98-110; J. A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, Penguin Books, 1992 (3rd edition), p.551.

46) Mao Dun answers the question of the significance of neo-romanticism: "neo-romantic literature leads us to correct Weltanschauung, it helps us to acquire the spirit of self-consciousness, and this spirit is nothing else but staing that I am I, I am one of the people in the world, I do not belong to any *-isms*, to any faith." Mao Dun, ""Wei xin wenxue yanjiuzhe jin yi jie," *op. cit.*, pp.43-44.

47) Mao Dun, "Wenxue piping de xiaoli" 文學批評的效力 [Effect of literary criticism], *Minguo ribao jiaowu* 民國日報 覺悟 (11 July 1921). Here refer to *Mao Dun quanji*,

misunderstood in the Chinese literary world, analysing the article about contemporary symbolic literature published in *Lantern of Learning*, the supplement to the newspaper *The China Time*. Mao Dun's dissatisfaction with the coarse intellectual situation in introducing symbolism, seems to be one of the main reasons for the change of his literary advocacy from neo-romanticism to naturalism. Between 1921 and 1922 Mao Dun writes reviews of a number of contemporary creative works in China in contrast with his previous interest in Western literary works and theory. In other words, Mao Dun's change results from his understanding of the situation of contemporary creative works in China. In his commentary on the situation of literary creation, for instance, Mao Dun observed that the serious mistake he found in some works was that "they failed to present truthfully human life."⁴⁸⁾

In August 1921, Mao Dun writes a letter to Zhou Zuoren, expressing his personal dissatisfaction with the current situation of the Chinese literary world: he points out four major wrong tendencies which he feels need immediate correction:

First, the author writes what he has never personally experienced: second, he creates for the sake of creation, without knowing that literary work comes only after the writer has a deep impression of his object and he feels compelled to express it: third, the author does not take the method of objective observation as his basic means: and,

vol.18, pp.125-126.

48) Mao Dun, "Ping si, wu, liu yue chuanguo" 評四五月創作 [Criticism of literary works of the second quarter of the year 1921], *Xiaoshuo yuebao*, vol.12, no.8 (August 1921). Here refer to *Mao Dun quanji*, vol.18, p.136.

fourth, the author either pays attention to character but ignores circumstance, or vice versa, so that there is little relation between character and circumstance, and the work fails to convince the reader that this kind of character comes out only from this kind of circumstance. …… In my opinion, these shortcomings can be corrected only by naturalism. Recently, I have come to realise that the study of naturalism should be advocated in China and be done for at least one year."⁴⁹⁾

This shows not only Mao Dun's wish to advocate naturalism but also that Mao Dun still has the same idea that post-realism literature is more advanced.

On December 1921, the special issue on naturalism in the name of celebrating the centennial birthday of Flaubert was published in *Short Story Monthly*. Despite Mao Dun's request for Zhou Zuoren's help in introducing naturalism into China, Zhou Zuoren did not write anything for reasons that Zhou did not know about naturalism very well.⁵⁰⁾ Instead, the journal published the translation of "Naturalism in literature and art" by Shimamura Hogetsu 島村抱月, a contemporary Japanese literary historian.⁵¹⁾

49) Mao Dun, "Zhi Zhou Zuoren" 致周作人 [To Zhou Zuoren] (3 August 1921), Sun Zhongtian and Zhou Ming eds., *Mao Dun shujian* 茅盾書簡 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang wenyi chubanshe, 1984), p.11.

50) Mao Dun's letter is followings: "The twelfth issue of *Short Story Monthly* will take the opportunity to celebrate the centennial birthday of the Frenchman Flaubert by publishing a special issue on naturalism, and we hope your are willing to say something. It would be much better if there was a brief history of naturalism, since no one else dares to write on the subject. We wonder if you have the time to do it." Mao Dun, "Zhi Zhou Zuoren" 致周作人 [To Zhou Zuoren], Sun Zhongtian et al. eds., *Mao Dun shujian* 茅盾書簡, p.20

51) Shimamura Hogetsu, "Wenxue shang de ziranzhuyi" 文學上的自然主義 [Naturalism in literature], Chen Wangdao 陳望道 trans., *Xiaoshuo yuebao*, vol.12, no.12

The special treatment of the literature of realism and naturalism⁵²⁾ by *Short Story Monthly* drew great attention from Chinese readers, but at the same time also caused disputes on the subject. In May 1922, readers' letters and other articles relevant to disputes on naturalism were published in the special issue "Debates on Naturalism" in *Short Story Monthly*.

In July 1922, thinking that further explanation was necessary, Mao Dun published his well-known essay entitled "Naturalism and Modern Chinese Fiction," which was the first lengthy study of naturalism and its relation to Chinese fiction written by a modern Chinese critic.⁵³⁾ He first urges writers to ground their works in careful observation of the real world and to know how to depict objectively.⁵⁴⁾

Mao Dun also reveals his view of method in other articles:

Literature aims at depicting human life profoundly whether its methods are realism or symbolism.⁵⁵⁾

(December 1921).

52) As Marian Galik points out in his article on naturalism in China, for Mao Dun, the word naturalism is really only a more technical-sounding substitute for realism, and the fine distinctions which Hogetsu describes are apparently not particularly interesting to him. See Marian Galik, "Naturalism: A Changing Concept," *East and West*, vol.16, nos.3-4, 1966, pp.320-21.

53) Mao Dun, "Ziranzhuyi yu zhongguo xiandai xiaoshuo" 自然主義與中國現代小說 [Naturalism and modern Chinese fiction], *Xiaoashuo yuebao*, vol.13, no.7 (August 1922). Here refer to *Mao Dun quanji*, vol.18, pp.225-243.

54) *Ibid.*, p.235.

55) Mao Dun, "Wenxue he ren de guanxi ji zhongguo gulai duiyu wenxuezhe shenfen de wuren" 文學和人的關係及中國古來對於文學者身分的誤認 [The relation of literature to man and the old Chinese misconception of the writer's position], *Xiaoashuo yuebao*, vol.12, no.1 (January 1921). Here refer to *Mao Dun quanji*, vol.18, p.61.

It (Symbolism) is the method of expressing the author's subjectivity and of seizing reality inside things. It is nothing but a kind of method of literary description, as is naturalism: it cannot be regarded as superior or inferior.⁵⁶⁾

What Chinese literature needs is not the naturalist worldview but naturalism as a literary concept: what we need to adopt is the technique of naturalism.⁵⁷⁾

If we say that naturalism is worth considering, we point out that the scientific descriptive method of naturalism is worthy: it does not matter what Zola's prejudice is.⁵⁸⁾

This view shows more concern for naturalism as a literary method than for the moral issues raised by naturalism. In other words, Mao Dun advocates naturalism as a medicine (method) in the same manner that he advocated symbolism as the medicine (method) for the 'sick' Chinese literature in the early 1920s. Mao Dun, therefore, insists that "naturalism and the thought of naturalist works must not be confused. The adoption of naturalist methods of description never means acceptance of material and mechanical fatalism."⁵⁹⁾

56) Mao Dun, "Wenxue pibing de xiaoli," *op. cit.*, p.126.

57) Mao Dun, "Zaranzhuyi de huaiyi yu jieda" 自然主義的懷疑與解答 [Doubt and answer concerning naturalism], *Xiaoshuo yuebao*, vol.13, no.6 (June 1922). Here refer to *Mao Dun quanji*, vol.18, p.206.

58) Mao Dun, "'Zuolazhuyi' de weixian xing" 左拉主義的危險性 [Danger of Zolaism], *Wenxue xunkan* 文學旬刊, vol.50 (September 1922). Here refer to *Mao Dun quanji*, vol.18, p.286.

59) *Ibid.*, p.240.

4. Concluding Remarks

As can be observed from the above, in Mao Dun's literary theory such terms as realism, naturalism, romanticism, symbolism and neo-romanticism represent just artistic and aesthetic methods rather than historical literary schools; they all combine ideology with the creative method. As a result, the sense and the actual value of literary *-isms* are in Mao Dun's view factors of primary importance and he is mostly concerned with them. He is not concerned with one concrete *-ism*, whatever its name. This utilitarian view on literary schools or *-isms* makes Mao Dun's literary discourse able to reconcile the observation and analysis of realism with the imagination of romanticism without any trouble. Consequently, "art," writes Mao Dun, "must not lay stress on anything only what is objective, and it must not emphasise only what is subjective. If it emphasises only what is subjective, its deficiency lies in non-reality; if it emphasises only what is objective, its deficiency lies in insipidness, there is no life and easiness in its expression."⁶⁰

Mao Dun seems to find the concept of all literary activity as a chain of successive, mutually related changes in the literary methods of realism, naturalism, neo-romanticism and symbolism to be congenial to

60) Mao Dun, "Wenxue shang de gudianzhuyi, langmanzhuyi he xieshizhuyi" 文學上的古典主義、浪漫主義和寫實主義 [Classicism, romanticism, and realism in literature], *Xuesheng zazhi* 學生雜誌, vol.7, no.9 (September 1920), p.19.

his own spirit. It is evident that Mao Dun finds agreeable the use of various methods by Western literary schools current at that time, such as realism, naturalism, symbolism and neo-romanticism.

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<국문제요>

1920년대 마오둔의 문학론은 서양문학의 수용을 통한 신문학의 건설이라는 측면에서 리얼리즘, 신낭만주의 그리고 자연주의의 순서로 이루어졌다. 리얼리즘의 요구는 당시 신문학의 문학론을 계승한 것이지만 리얼리즘이 마오둔에게 유일한 문학방법론은 아니었다. 그것은 신낭만주의로 가는 준비이며 '과정'이었다. 진화론적 색채가 다분한 이러한 사고는 다른 신문학 논자들에게도 공통되지만 茅盾에게 특징적인 것은 리얼리즘의 다음단계로 상징주의를 비롯한 신낭만주의를 제창했다는 점이다. 리얼리즘을 사조와 정

신 그리고 방법으로 이해했을 때 중국 리얼리즘 논자들이 처음에 '사실'이라는 글자 그대로의 해석에 입각한 오해에서 출발하여 러시아 문학과 만나면서 '정신'으로서 리얼리즘을 이해하는 데 반해 茅盾은 상징주의와 신낭만주의를 논하면서 문제적 상황에 대한 치료약의 하나로서 상징주의를 위치시키고, 관찰과 상상의 종합으로서 신낭만주의를 제창함으로써 중국의 신문학 논의에서 간과된 '상상과 낭만'의 가치를 재부여하는 것이다. 특히 로망 롤랑을 대표로 하는 신낭만주의 논의는 서정적 이상주의의 색채가 짙게 드리워진 것으로 오늘날 논의되는 모더니즘의 개념과는 구별된다. 당시의 리얼리즘 논의에서 리얼리즘이 '정신'으로서의 개념으로 확장되는 데 비해 茅盾은 신낭만주의에 기댈으로써 '방법'으로서의 인식을 유지하고 있음을 확인할 수 있다. '방법'으로서의 인식은 쉽게 현실의 문제적 상황 즉 문제소설의 관념화 경향과 현실을 무시한 공허한 작품을 대량 생산하는 당시의 통속소설을 예의주시하면서 이에 대해 치료약의 의미로 자연주의를 제창한 것이다. 그러나 茅盾이 자연주의를 제창하면서 신낭만주의를 포기하지 않는 것은 아직도 신낭만주의를 정점으로 하는 서양문학의 양상을 자신의 중심논리로 인식하고 있음을 의미한다

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