Comparative description on the literature situation in general and novel in particular in Romania and China in the interwar era,1918-1939

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Modern literature mainly refers to the new literature which under the conditions of historical changes within the national society and the widely acceptance of the foreign literature. It not only expresses some modern ideas in modern language, but also innovates modern literature in an art form and expression, with the establishment of new literary genre and the creation of new literary content. Literature mainly reflects a certain spiritual world based on the reflection of society. With the development of society, its content and form are also changing. Taking Chinese and Romanian modern literature as an example, it has undergone a long development and has formed a unique modern literary system.

In this paper, I will introduce Chinese and Romanian history, society, economy in the interwar period. Based on these background information, I will present The Transformation of Chinese literature and the golden age of Romanian literature.

Keywords: China, Romania, modern, literature, background

China and Romania belong to Eastern and Western culture. Their historical origin, cultural background and literary tradition and National psychological structure are entirely different. The origin of the relationship between Chinese and Romanian literature can be traced back to the second half of the 17th century. In 20th century, As Romanian and China came into contact more frequently. On the field of literature, we can find a new communication and relationship between these two countries. Romanian had an unprecedented leap in understanding China and Chinese culture.

Chinese and Romanian literature in the first half 20 century were the products in the specific historical period, both of them got through the social change, the progress of the times. On the basis of their own literature, they absorbed foreign advanced culture and innovated. And it is in the process of inheritance of old and new literature. It is in the process of inheritance the old and new literatures, Chinese-Romanian literature in the first half 20 century has been constantly blending and collision.

Chinese-Romanian literature in the first half 20

century also can be called modern literature, it mainly refers to the new literature which widely accepted foreign literature under the condition of historical change within the state society. It not only uses modern language to express some of the modern ideas, but also innovates the artistic form and technique of expression on modern literature. A true sense of modern literature which is consistent with the trend of world literature refer to the establishment of new literary genre, the creation of new literary content. Literature is mainly based on the reflection of society which reflects a certain spiritual world, and with the development of society, its content and form also changed. Take the modern literature of China and Romania as an example, they formed a unique modern literary system with the long-term development. Chinese modern literature and Romanian modern literature have gradually become mature and perfect after long-term development, and it is of great practical significance to study the difference and commonality between the two. Therefore, this paper will analyze the development and characteristics of modern literature between China and Romania, and discuss the differences and comparative significance of Sino-Romanian literature respectively.

Chapter I: 1.1 Political, social, economic, cultural background in China from 1919 to 1939

Both China and Romania are in a period of turmoil, with frequent government changes and huge influence from the Western European countries.

The Xinhai Revolution(辛亥革命) named for the Chinese year of Xinhai (1911), was the overthrow of China's ruling Qing Dynasty and the establishment of the Republic of China. This emancipated the people from the rule of the feudal system. The May Fourth Movement is an intellectual revolution and sociopolitical reform movement that occurred in China in 1917–1921. The movement was directed toward national independence, emancipation of the individual, and rebuilding society and culture.

On May 4, 1919, a vigorous anti-imperialist patriotic movement broke out in the ancient capital of Beijing. The revolutionary wave swept across the country quickly. At the beginning of the year, the victors of the First World War held a post-war peace conference at the Palace of Versailles in the suburbs of Paris. China had also entered World War I on the side of the Allied Triple Entente in 1917 with the condition that all German spheres of influence, such as Shandong, would be returned to China. Instead of rewarding China for its contribution to the Allies' victory, the Versailles Treaty of April 1919 awarded German rights in Shandong Province to Japan. The representatives of the Chinese government put forth the following requests:
the abolition of all privileges of foreign powers in China, such as extraterritoriality; the cancelling of the "Twenty-One Demands" with the Japanese; and

the return to China of the territory and rights of Shandong, which Japan had taken from Germany during World War I. [1]

The Western Allies dominated the meeting and ignored the Chinese representatives' demands. Britain and France were primarily interested in punishing Germany. Chinese diplomatic failure at the Paris Peace Conference became the incident that touched off the outbreak of the May Fourth Movement, and became known as the "Shandong Problem".

The news was brought to the country and aroused strong protests from the Chinese people. On the afternoon of May 4, more than 3,000 students from more than a dozen schools, including Peking University, gathered in Tiananmen Square and shouted "external competition for state power, internal punishment of national thieves", "abolition of twenty-one", "swearing to fight", "return me Qingdao" and other slogans. A large number of military police arrived and arrested 32 students. The arrested students were quickly released under the strong solidarity of all walks of life, but the purpose of the campaign was not realized. On May 19th, more than 25,000 people from Beijing University were held a general strike and a large-scale patriotic movement. On June 3, 4, and 5, more students went to the streets to protest against the warlord government's perverse actions. More than 800 students were arrested and imprisoned. The authorities even used Peking University school buildings as temporary prisons to detain students.

On June 5, Shanghai workers automatically went on strike to support the students' anti-imperialist patriotic struggle. Workers and businessmen in some places responded positively and promoted the development of the struggle. The rapidly expanding struggle situation has put tremendous pressure on the reactionary authorities. On June 7, the Beijing government was forced to release the arrested students. However, on June 17, the Beijing government again ordered the Chinese representative to agree to sign the peace treaty. It triggered a new round of protests, more than 7,000 telegrams were sent to Paris to protest against the signing. The Chinese representative finally did not attend the signing ceremony.

The anti-imperialist patriotic movement achieved a preliminary victory. It is the first complete uncompromising struggle against imperialism and feudal forces in Chinese history. The May Fourth Movement was a student movement based on young students in Beijing. It is the patriotic movement of the Chinese people against imperialism and feudalism. The

May Fourth Movement was the beginning of China's new-democratic revolution, an epoch-making event in the history of Chinese revolution, and a turning point in the old democratic revolution to the new-democratic revolution in China.

Chapter II: The Transformation of Chinese literature

2.1 "The awakening era"

"The awakening era" (1917-1927): the liberation of individuality, ideological awakening, consideration highly of human being, showing personal self-depressed, the Western influence are the main characteristics.

New culture movement background: political system: The Revolution of 1911 ended the feudal monarchy promoted China's social transformation. During the First World War the imperialist powers temporarily relaxed the aggression against China, the development of China's national industry and the growth of new social forces became the material basis for the new cultural and literary movement. Cultural system: the direct cause is at the end of the Qing Dynasty, the new science and education was developed, and the new group of intellectuals appeared. They became the new force of the new culture and the new literary movement.

The Youth Magazine (renamed New Youth Beginning from Vol. 2) started its publication on Sept.15, 1915 in Shanghai. The birth of magazine officially opened the prelude to the modern "New Culture Movement" in China. With New Youth as the center, a large group of new-style intellectuals gathered together. Holding the two banners of "science" and "democracy", they launched a cultural enlightenment campaign lashing out on feudalism that had lasted for the past several thousand years in China. This storm of movement explicitly demonstrated two directions at the outset, destruction and construction, namely, fighting against old morality and old literature and promoting new morality and new vernacular literature, with the former primarily attacking Chinese feudal thought and feudal ethical codes and reassessing the value of traditional culture, and the latter introducing into China trends of thoughts prevailing in the west, such as equality and freedom, personality liberation, social evolutionism and etc. to direct the construction of new morality and new vernacular literature. Literature revolution soon started along with the development of the "New Culture Movement." In Jan. 1917, New Youth (No.5, Vol.2) published an article by Hu Shi(1891-1962)" A Modest Proposal on literature Reform," bringing forward "eight Proposals" for literature reform in Connection with the current conditions in traditional Chinese literature. In Dec.1918, Zhou Zuoren (1885-1967) published People-oriented Literature, starting that new vernacular literature is "people-oriented literature." New vernacular literature must show concern for people's real life and the real society, and reflect the "non-human life" of the common people at the bottom of society in particular.

The impact of literature revolution was huge, which brought about the transformation of Chinese literature at this historical key point. This transformation was omni-directional, including literature ideas, literature content and literature language, and even the relationship between Chinese literature and world literature.

Significant achievement: 1. the popularization of the vernacular; 2, the influx of foreign literary thought and the rise of journalism communities showed the unprecedented ideological liberation; 3. literary theory construction has achieved preliminary achievements; 4. the remarkable achievement. In May 1918, Lu Xun published the first vernacular novel "A Madman's Diary" which deeply discloses the evil essence of "eating people" of the feudal society and is a fierce attack on feudal thought and culture.

2.2 Literary self-consciousness (1927-1937)

In the 1930s, the literary thought showed a very active state: In the first decade, all kinds of literary and artistic thoughts which have been introduced into China have been selected and combined with national literary and artistic practice movement, and then formed two literary and artistic thinking- Marxism and liberalism. In the 1930s, the basic picture of literature was determined by the proletarian literary movement and its literature and democratic, liberal literary movement and literature.

There are two factors that have a significant impact on literary creation in this period. The first is the great social and historical changes: Under the impact of Western industrial civilization, the coastal city of Shanghai as the center accelerated the modernization of the capitalist model. The Chinese revolution has shifted from the ideological revolution in the period of the May 4th Movement to the social revolution caused by social change in this period.

The opposition, conflict and infiltration between the modern city and the traditional rural areas triggered and intensified the contradictions and confusion of intellectuals in the choice of traditional agricultural civilization and modern industrial civilization, Oriental

civilization and Western civilization.

In this period there are three kinds of literary schools "the League of Left-Wing Writers", "Beijing School", "Shanghai School". "The League of Left-Wing Writers" criticize the feudal tradition of agricultural civilization, capitalist industrial civilization and Western colonialism at the same time and moved closer to proletarian needs. "Beijing School" refers to a group of liberal writers active in Beijing and the cities around Beijing in North China, who shared similar literary value. They pursue literature independence and freedom, oppose the subordination to politics and against the commercialization of literature. "Shanghai School" is the product of the southeast coastal city commercial culture and deformed and prosperous consumer culture which develop around Shanghai.

The three literary schools created different literary landscapes, but they existed in the background of society, thought and culture in the 1930s.

In the early stages of this new period of literature, there have been a large number of works that show personal history towards the social process. The works like Mao Dun's "eclipse", "rainbow", Ye Shengtao's "Ni Huanzhi", Ding Ling's "1936 spring in Shanghai" focuses on expressing the difficulties and pains of this process. Yin Fu's "May 1, 1929" and other poems are full of passion to express the happiness and pride when the "personal" integrated in the "collective".

"Semi-colonialization of Chinese society " has become the themes of the writers' works among which the most important thing is the historical destiny and psychological, moral, emotional changes of people of all social during China's urban and rural capitalism process. (farmers, workers, urban bourgeoisie, ordinary citizens, national capitalists ...) [2]The most outstanding writers in this period are Mao Dun, Ba Jin, Lao She, Shen Congwen, Cao Yu, Tian Han, Hong Shen, Ai Qing, Ding Ling, Zhang Tianyi, Li Jieren, Sha Ting, etc. They are attracted to the theme and theme of this era. On this basis to build their own unique "art world". Such as Mao Dun's swaying in the national capitalist family and Lao She's bankruptcy in the civil society and so on,

The change of literary content inevitably leads to the change of literary form. If the "May Fourth", which focuses on the liberation of individuality and the liberation of ideology, is the era of lyricism, the Chinese literature in 1930s that focuses on social emancipation is the era of narration. In the 1930s, novels that could contain the broad social and historical content, especially the novels, became the most accomplished literary style, and the multi-dramatic drama which has similar functions with the long novels also received remarkable achievements. The most illustrious representative works such as "Midnight", "Family", "Camel Xiangzi", "Border Town" and "thunderstorm", "sunrise", which are produced by the most influential writers, such as Mao Dun, Ba Jin, Lao She, Shen Congwen and Cao Yu, are concentrated in these two areas.

During this period of narrative works, the psychological portrayal of art has received special attention and development. During this period of narrative works, the psychological portrayal of art has received special attention and development. This is naturally associated with the aforementioned writers' special concerns of various social classes' mentality enduring the large social reform and transition. Therefore, the unity of social structure analysis and psychological structure analysis become an important feature of psychological characterization during this period. The writer clearly reveals the historical background of the mental activity and the social class foundation, while paying attention to grasp and show the development of human mental activity from the development of social and psychological activities which avoided the static psychological description and reached a certain historical depth. Mao Dun is the most outstanding representative of psychological novels in this period.

2.3 Most important Chinese writers and their novels in the first half 20 century

2.3.1 Lu Xun- The Founder of the vernacular literature

Lu Xun(September 1881- October 1936) is not only a leading figure of modern Chinese literature, but also is the founder of the vernacular literature. In May 1918, he published "Madman Diary"in the "New Youth" Volume 4, followed by the second year, he published "Kong Yiji", "Medicine" and other famous novels. Chinese novels have traditionally been regarded as "trails" and can't be compared by poetry and other literature styles. The May 4th Literature Revolution brought the opportunity to the modernization of Chinese novel. This is a wide range of ideological and cultural enlightenment and the driving force of the novel is quite profound. "Madman's Diary" and other modern novels which are anti-feudal spirit directed at the modern awakening of the people and the transformation of the national soul. These novels are first published in the new cultural and ideological publications "new youth" which means the ideological revolution.

2.3.2 Mao Dun and Camil Petrescu - the modern Pioneer Writer



Sursă foto: https://www.icr.ro/uploads/images/posts/camil-petrescu-ultima-noapte-de-dragoste-intaia-noapte-de-razboi.png

Mao Dun(茅盾) (July 4, 1896 – March 27, 1981),his original name is Shen Dehong, Mao Dun is his pen name. He is a famous 20th-century Chinese novelist, cultural critic, and journalist. He was also the Minister of Culture of China from 1949 to 1965. He is renowned as one of the best realist novelists in the history of modern China.

He was born on July 4, 1896, in Zhejiang Province, Jiaxing Town, Wuzhen. This place is most developed area of agriculture in modern China which next to the modern Shanghai and also fully of Cultural atmosphere and Literati and poets.

Mao Dun's father Chen Yongxi is a scholar in the late Qing Dynasty who is proficient in Chinese medicine and has the character with a liberal reformers thought, quite pay attention to the new school, in addition to sound, light, chemical, electricity and natural sciences, such as mathematics, but also like to spread progressive trend of social science books.

Mao Dun's mother Chen Aizhu is a visionary and strong woman. Mao Dun lost his father at 10-year-old,during his childhood, he was taught by his mother literature, geography and history knowledge. Mao Dun said, "My first teacher is my mother."

Mao Dun had already started to develop his writing skills when he was still in primary school. Mao Dun entered the three-year foundation school offered by Peking University in 1913, in which he studied Chinese and Western literature. Due to financial difficulties, he had to quit in the summer of 1916, before his graduation.

The trainings in Chinese and English as well as knowledge of Chinese and Western literature provided by the fifteen years of education, Mao Dun received had prepared him to show up in the limelight of the Chinese journalistic and literary arena.

Under the promotion of Emancipation of the ideas and social development the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia, Mao Dun took part in the May Fourth Movement in China. Mao Dun's early literary activity and revolutionary activities closely intertwined, in 1920 he joined the Shanghai Communist Team and at the same time he initiated and organized Literature Research Association. Lately he helped to establish the Chinese Communist Party in 1921. He was the first writer to join the Communist Party.

The experience of political conflict broadened his horizon in literature; therefore the theme of his later writing was mostly based on this. He then helped to found the League of Left-Wing Writers in 1930. After that, he worked together with Lu Xun to fight for the right of the society and the revolutionary movement in literature. The harvest period of Mao Dun's writing is considered to have been from 1927 to 1937.

Throughout Mao Dun's life, he has over 100 publications which includes short stories, novels, theories etc. his most famous works include novellas Disillusion(1928), Three people walking(1931), The shop of the Lin Family(1932), rural trilogy: (Spring Silkworms, Autumn Harvest, the last days of winter), novels Rainbow(1930), Midnight(1933) Mao Dun's first actual novel is Disillusion (1927). It is the story of a generation of young intellectuals, who are caught up in the world of revolutionary fervor without a true understanding of the nature of social change.

In 1933 came his most famous and important work, Midnight, which gained great popularity when it was published. Midnight not only has plenty of Chinese readers, it was also translated into French, English, Japanese dozens of language. In 1984, midnight was translated into Romanian, "miezul noptii".

2.3.3 Mao Dun- Ziye ("Midnight")

The translation of Ziye is Midnight. Ramulus Ioan Budura's son in law Viorel Isticioaia- Budura had studied in China. His translated novel Miezul Noptii is the first and only novel of Mao Dun that translated into Romanian.

The story takes place in 1930 in Shanghai. It takes the conflict between the national industrial capitalist Wu Sunfu and comprador capitalists Zhao Botao as the main line of the story, described and reflected the prevailing social outlook during 1930s. The national capitalists Wu SunFu wants to revitalize national industry, trying to build their own "industry Kingdom", increasing its business activity funds, trying to take advantage of the war. But imperialism brokers and financial capitalists Zhao Botao make all sorts of

obstruction. Finally, as the confused fighting between the warlords and the rural economy's bankruptcy, Sun Wu Fu endeavored himself on the industry business, at the same time, he oppressed and exploited the workers even more, under Zhao Botao's powerful economic restraint, he eventually suffered a crushing defeat, completely bankrupt.

Midnight is the representative work of Mao Dun's novels. With the representative figure of national bourgeoisie Un Sunfu's history of struggles as the mainline, Midnight presents a panoramic view of the vast and grandiose social context of the 1930s and the people active at that time and offers a profound analysis of the intricate and complicated class relations and class contradictions that are involved in these people, including contradictions between the national bourgeoisie and imperialism, the comprador bourgeoisie, the governing class the working class and the peasant class.

Chapter III: The political, social, economic, cultural background in Romanian Interwar period

In 1883, the Romanian king Carol I made a secret deal with the Triple Alliance that entailed a defensive alliance with Austria-Hungary. It was not until early 1916 when the Romanians signed the Treaty of Bucharest with the Entente, promising the lands of Transylvania, allied shipments, and military support against Bulgaria and Hungary. On August 15, 1916, Romania officially joined the Entente and declared war upon the Central Powers.

After the First World War, Romania gained control over Bessarabia, Bukovina and Transylvania, since then, Romania became the Great Romania. Romania's population and land area have grown dramatically

Virtually overnight, Romania had more than doubled both its prewar population (from 7.5 million to 16 million) and territory (from about 86,000 square miles to 185,000 square miles [138,000 to 295,000 square km]). Although the expanded borders realized the age-old dream of uniting virtually all Romanians in one single state, they also brought in a much greater number of restive, non-Romanian nationalities. Whereas Romanians had made up 92 percent of the population in the old kingdom, that figure dropped to 70 percent in Greater Romania.[3]

After the First World War, Romanian government enacted a series of political and social reforms.

A new constitution in 1923 established Romania as a modern parliamentary monarchy with a highly centralized administration. Although the charter included a long list of guaranteed civil and political rights (such as universal male suffrage and citizenship for Jews), those rights were often more theoretical than real.[4]

Although it remained a primarily agrarian country, Romania had considerable success in modernizing its industry during this period.

Its industrial output doubled between 1923 and 1938, and by the mid-1930s it ranked second in Europe and seventh in the world in petroleum production. Its per capita income in 1938 was $94 (as compared to $81 in Portugal and $76 in Greece), although most of the wealth remained in the hands of the elite.[5]

Chapter IV: The golden age of Romanian literature in the interwar period

4.1 The golden age of Romanian literature in the interwar period

Romanian literature is influenced by Western literature. Romanians studied in France, Italy and Germany, and German philosophy and French culture were integrated into modern Romanian literature, lessening the influence of Ancient Greece and the Orient over time.

In the Romanian literature between the two world wars, the realist genre still dominates, but we also can find the trails of the western literary trends such as naturalism, surrealism, Dadaism, Impressionism, and Expressionism. Some modernist writers have embarked on the path of democratic progress because they are dissatisfied with the capitalist system,

The year of 1918 is a splendid for Romanian literature, and the Romanian novel has a great development since that time. Plenty of works were written influenced by the social and political events such as Liviu Rebreanu's Răscoala ("The Uprising"), which, published in 1932, was inspired by the 1907 Romanian Peasants' Revolt, and Pădurea Spânzuraților ("Forest of the Hanged"), published in 1922 and inspired by Romanian participation in World War I. Camil Petrescu (Ultima noapte de dragoste, întâia noapte de război—"The Last Night of Love, the First Night of War") is regarded as the pioneer of the modern novel. George Călinescu , Mihail Sadoveanu, Tudor Arghezi, Lucian Blaga and Mircea Eliade they all have a great contribution to the Romanian literature.

In 1918,Mihail Negru published his Aspecte si fragment din civilizatiunea si gandirea chineza dela origina si pana astazi. In 1936, the well-know Romanian novelist Mihail Sadoveanu wrote The Nest of Invasions(Cuibul-Invaziilor) inspired by Thomas Witlam Atkinson's travel accounts Oriental and Western Siberia; a Narrative of Seven Years'

Exploration and Adventures in Siberia, Mongolia, the Kirghis Steppes, Chinese Tartary, and a Part of central Asia, which was published in 1860.

4.2 Camil Petrescu — the foundation of the modern novel era

Camil Petrescu(April 22, 1894 – May 14, 1957) is a famous Romanian novelist, philosopher and poet. He is the symbol of the ending of the traditional novel era and the foundation of the modern novel era.

Camil Petrescu showed his talent since he is very young. He wrote his first poem when he was in the high school at Saint Sava National College. Because he doesn't have financial support, he has to work to support himself. Only at 29,he began his studies in philosophy at the University of Bucharest.

Between 1916 - 1918 he participated as an officer in World War I and the experience now to be found in the novel Ultima noapte de dragoste, întâia noapte de razboi ("The Last Night of Love, the First Night of War"). In 1933, Petrescu wrote the novel Patul lui Procust ("Procrustes's Bed").

The novel "The last night of love, the first night of war" by Camil Petrescu is a psychological novel that addresses the insecurity of the main character,

The protagonist Stefan Gheorghidiu is a progressive young man, married to a poor wife, but after his wife enters the upper class, she began to "transform", vanity, greed, frivolity, and finally Stefan Gheorghidiu found his wife's behavior and chose to break up. Perhaps to avoid the emotional dilemma, perhaps to think about the country's destiny, Stefan Gheorghidiu came to the front line as a sub-lieutenant.

In the novel "Ultima noapte de dragoste, intaia noapte de razboi", Stefan Gheorghidiu as a lieutenant in an infantry regiment is the main character in the novel who was sent for the fortification of Prahova valley. Stefan Gheorghidiu describes the revolutionary story, the experience of love and is aware of all the events that it is updating through writing. In this type of focus the narrator knows more than any character and no character can hold secrets to the narrator.

Chapter V: Conclusion

Although China and Romania were all in the social turmoil during the interwar period, it's the same that both countries wanted the unification. Despite this vicious environment, China was constantly seeking its own development methods. After the World War I, Western countries have no time to consider about China, the Chinese national industry has achieved relatively high development. While at the same time, the reunification of Romania caused the dramatically increase of Romanian population and land area. Romania had probably succeeded in modernizing its industry during this period. Although politically and economically interfered by Western countries, intellectuals were actively seeking new ways and learning new literary ideas from the Western countries.

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The Columbia History of Chinese Literature