学校编码: 10384

分类号 密级

学号: 10120141154603

UDC\_\_\_\_



研士学位 论 文

*当萨特遇见*卢新华

伤痕文学的存在主义解读

When Sartre meets Lu Xinhua

**An Existentialist reading of Scar Literature** 

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论文提交日期: 2016年 4月

论文答辩时间: 2016年 5月

学位授予日期: 2016年 7月

答辩委员会主席:

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2016年 5月

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### 摘要

后毛泽东时代中国和二战后欧洲的文学道路不免于经历深刻的存在主义时期。对虚无主义的倾向,我指的是无能力用新的价值观取代先前已解体的价值观,看起来是 1948 年的欧洲和 1976 年的中国在过去的废墟中徘徊的共同要素。接着就是一个不可能的问题。在讨论过权力与知识分子之间引起争论的反动力—— 一种对任何政府(20 世纪更盛)维持稳定的关键要素的反动力之后,本文将揭露一个文学问题。假如战后欧洲产生了被现代的暴行所创伤的文学,那么在这个意义 上存在主义可以被毫不犹豫地界定为伤痕文学,而后文革时期的中国也产生了无意识的存在主义文学——革命现实主义最终被一种完全荒诞的现实主义取代,它荒诞 因其有时作为历史和现实主义者,而现实主义者常是人道主义的。最后我们将展望中国文学当今面临的主要任务:对身份的探索。

**要点**:存在主义,伤痕文学,现代,后现代,社会主义,后社会主义,文化革命,理性的危机

Perhaps because of an irresistible call

We had no other choice

(Shu Ting)

Abstract: The literary path chosen by both of Post-Mao China and Post WWII Europe had to go through a profound existentialism. The fall into a desolate nihilism, by which I mean the incapacity of replacing the dissolution of previous values with new ones, seems to be at first a common element, both 1948 Europe and 1976 China are left alone lingering on the ruins of the past. What's next is the impossible question. The paper after having discussed the controversial dynamic between power and intellectuals -a key of stability for any government even more in the Twentieth century- will disclose a more literary issue. If Post-war Europe produced all in all a literature that is wounded by the atrocities of modernity, thus in a sense Existentialism can without hesitation be defined as a scar literature, Post-Cultural Revolution China produced a literature that is unconsciously existentialist: revolutionary realism is finally replaced by a realism which is altogether absurd, as absurd is sometimes history, and realist, as realist is sometimes man's humanism. Finally we will indulge in the main task Chinese literature is facing today: the quest for identity.

**Key words:** Existentialism, Scar Literature, Modernism, Post-Modernism, Socialism, Post-Socialism, Cultural Revolution, Crisis of Reason

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#### Introduction

"The very fate of our works was bond up with that of France in peril; (...) our public was made up of men like ourselves who awaited war and death. Of their war, of their death we have to write...We learned to take Evil seriously; it was not our fault, nor was it pour merit, if we happened to live in an era when torture was a daily occurrence (...) We knew that the destruction of the human in man that torture brings about, was a Black Mass being celebrated everywhere in Paris while we ate, while we slept, while we loved; we heard whole streets echo with the shrieks of the tortured ones, and we understood that Evil, the fruit of a free and sovereign will, is absolute as God is. A day may come when a happy generation, looking back serenely, will see in our suffering and our shame one of the paths that led to its peace. But we were not on the side of completed history; we were so situated that every minute actually lived appeared to us as something irreducible." I

Why am I beginning this article with the magnificent outburst Sartre wrote some sixty years ago? Because it is about the relation between intellectuals and their public under the regime, it's about the need to take side against the injustice and totalitarianism, bounding men to the cause of democracy and freedom. More than this, Sartre outburst is about surviving to fear, torture, history itself, in order to re-build again European society, a new consciousness for the previous one had been annihilated by the Holocaust. It is an incontrovertible fact that all modern revolutions have led to strengthen the State: French Revolution brings Napoleon, October Revolution brings Stalin, Republic of Weimer leads to Hitler. But while the idea of Modern State was based on the assumption of democracy, the ambition behind the ideology (fascism, national socialism, communism) shaped the fanatic dream of a world empire. Post-WWII French existentialism was the first philosophical-literary expression that dealt with the historical responsibility left by Western nihilism, Auschwitz and Hiroshima in fact will soon be understood for what they really are: the collapse of a civilization.

And yet if we read backward Sartre's piece and replaced the determination of the location, France with China, Paris with Beijing, we could easily guess it as an article of political realism written by Wang Meng, Wei Jingsheng or Bei Dao soon after the Cultural Revolution. Because Malraux, Sartre, Camus are tragic writers as much as Wang Meng, Wei Jingsheng, Bei Dao: though the theoretical speculation develops through different depth of understanding, the abyss of evil is the same and the same is the human

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Jean Paul Sartre, Qu'est-ce littérature? In Les Temps Modernes, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 2002, p.6

tragedy when at stake there is men's quest for life. The intellectual claim of Post-WWII Europe goes along with those of Post-Mao China. There is within the frame of the narrative a healing agenda using art as a catharsis, *beauty doesn't produce revolution but revolution needs it*<sup>2</sup>, a new set of values in the wasteland beyond the orthodoxy of Marxism and Fascism, a literature of conscience between ideal and reality where men, walking on a godless land, prepare the future resolving the present. A reasonable close parallelism can therefore be drawn between Scar Literature, first literary attempt in Post-Maoist China, and European Post-WWII Literature.

Broadly speaking the Western hemisphere in the first half of the Twentieth century produced a massive account of anxieties and neurosis (Kafka, Musil, Mann, Pirandello) which forced critical thinking and every form of art into some irrational artistic expression. Questioning the nature of real has been the immediate necessity, and escaping into fantastic or absurd elements the prevalent solution, however the apocalyptical vision brought by the end of the war and by the loss of long standing cultural paradigm, is sided by an artistic emancipation offering a jumping off station. The same authors who first surrendered to a moment of paralysis, because of the epiphany of a second, a sudden moment of awakening, moved back to reality adjusting themselves to it. Stephen Dedalus<sup>3</sup> and his struggle for autonomy, K.<sup>4</sup> amazement facing the uncanny of the bureaucratic apparatus, the dichotomy within the young Torless<sup>5</sup> between evil and good, all literary attempts to create a new dialectic which must allow cohabitation between society needs for control and individual needs for freedom. Re-ordering the disorder, overpassing mediocrity through art is the moral imperative they are given. Again reappears the idea of reality as whole, not anymore as objective construct of common meaning, but a fictional construct imposed a-posteriori upon chaos in order to provide a sense of order. Good and bad, tragic and laughable, bourgeois and proletariat will be able to live together under the same narrative plot linked together by a prospective that doesn't follow the pseudo-scientific logic of reality but a personal logic, the vision of the artist. Luckily the most important message we receive from Modernist authors is that art is not

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Albert Camus, L'uomo in rivolta, Bompiani, Milano, 2005, p. 302

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> James Joice, A Portrait of a Young Artist

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Franz Kafka, The Castle

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Robert Musil, Young Torless

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