

## DOCTORAL THESIS

### Localities of global modernism: Fei Ming, Mu Dan and Wang Zengqi

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to map out the development of literary modernism in the 1930s and 1980s People's Republic of China (PRC). Despite the long temporal halt, these two periods are innately and historically related to each other. Much as Chinese literary modernism was a literary legacy of Western modernism, its decades-long development provided it with the conditions for a second life. When it reemerged in the 1980s, it bore unique national characteristics that, in turn, enriched the realm of global modernism. In short, the distinct historical and national context of the twentieth century China dictated that Chinese literary modernism could not be a mechanical reproduction of its Western counterpart. The importation and translation of Western modernist creative and critical works, together with the modernist practices of modern Chinese intellectuals, contributed to the formation and rise of modernist literature in the 1930s, as well as its revival in the 1980s PRC.

Structurally, this thesis identifies three localities of global modernism in the works and literary theory of Fei Ming, Mu Dan, and Wang Zengqi. It argues that these writers' modernist practices and distinct writing styles not only represented the characteristics of Chinese literary modernism, but also added diversities to modernist literature in the global context. Methodologically, I pair the Chinese modernists with their Western counterparts, including Virginia Woolf and T.S. Eliot. This comparison helps to find similarities between modernist works across time and place, and to identify the unique features of Chinese literary modernism. In practice, when studying the three modernists' first encounters with literary modernism in Republican China, as well as their respective experience in the PRC, I seek to (i) present three modes of initiation of literary modernism at the beginning of the twentieth century; (ii) trace the development of literary modernism both in the republican era and its revival in the PRC; (iii) show the process of Chinese literary modernism growing its distinct characteristics and evidence its second life. In short, Chinese modernists' participation in the building of global modernism and their contributions to the enrichment of literary modernism in the global context are two foci of my thesis.

In the final analysis, this thesis engages research on Chinese literary postmodernism. No matter the literary movement's status in the PRC, then and now, how and why it differs from the development of postmodernism in Western literature and culture are valuable research questions.

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