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## **Exploring the New Literary Experience of Guizhou in the New Era: A Review of *The Path of Literary Criticism: Between the Center and the Margins***

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**Abstract:** Local literature has always been an important subject in the study of Chinese modern literature, with New Southern Writing and the New Northeastern Writer Group becoming focal points for researchers in recent years. However, amidst the current boom in local literature research, the study of Guizhou's new literature has not received sufficient attention. As an important component of Chinese modern literature, Guizhou literature, due to its unique geographical environment, ethnic experiences, and cultural traditions, has given birth to literary works with a distinct Guizhou style and provided important experience for the development of Chinese modern literature. It is in this sense that the literary criticism collection *The Path of Literary Criticism* by Professor Sun Xiangyang, Vice Chairman of the Guizhou Provincial Writers Association, Vice Chairman of the Guizhou Provincial Literary Critics Association, and Vice President of Anshun University, deserves attention. Not only does it reposition the aesthetic value and literary-historical significance of Guizhou's modern literature between the "center" and the "periphery" but also sought historical basis and realistic reference for the formation and development of Guizhou literature team in the context of the new era.

**Keywords:** *The Path of Literary Criticism*; Guizhou New Literature; Literature team in Guizhou

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**题目：**探索面向新时代的贵州新文学经验——评《文学批评的路径：在中心与边地之间》

**摘要：**地方文学历来是中国新文学研究的重要对象，新南方写作、新东北作家群更是成为近年来研究者关注的焦点。然而，在当下地方文学研究热潮中，贵州新文学研究却没有得到充分关注，作为中国新文学的重要组成部分，贵州文学因其独特的地理环境、民族经验与文化传统，诞生了独具黔地风格的文学作品，并为中国新文学发展提供了重要经验。正是在此意义上，贵州省作家协会副主席、贵州省文艺评论家协会副主席、安顺学院副校长孙向阳教授的文学评论集《文学批评的路径》值得关注，他不仅在“中心”与“边地”之间重新锚定贵州新文学的审美价值与文学史意义，更为新时代语境下文学黔军的形成与发展寻找历史依据与现实参照。

**关键词：**《文学批评的路径》；贵州新文学；文学黔军

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## Introduction

In the field of Chinese new literature, Guizhou literature is not well-known, even a little strange to many researchers, which makes it difficult for the academic community to have a clear and objective evaluation of Guizhou new literature. In the General Preface of “Guizhou Literary Criticism Series”, Yan Tonglin said that “Guizhou new literature failed to get a proper, fair and objective evaluation. There are two reasons for this phenomenon: the first is that the achievements of our own literary development are not prominent; the second is that the strength of Guizhou literary circles is often scattered, and Guizhou’s literary creation and literary criticism are not tied together, lacking an overall strength.” (Yan Tonglin, 2023, P.1) It is in this context that Professor Sun Xiangyang, vice chairman of Guizhou writers’ Association, vice chairman of Guizhou literary critics’ Association and vice president of Anshun University, deserves attention. He not only provides a personalized criticism path for the rediscovery of the image of Guizhou new literature but also responds to the call of Guizhou literary criticism in the new era with the conscious sense of responsibility and mission of Guizhou geoscientists.

### 1. Contrast field of vision between the center and the edge

How can Sun Xiangyang find a suitable path of literary criticism between center and frontier in the collection of comments on the differences of research objects and the intersection of modern literature and Contemporary Literature (Sun Xiangyang, 2023, P.6) A careful study of the style arrangement and research objects of this review collection can reveal the author’s potential research perspectives and critical intentions. The first part of this book focuses on the study of contemporary Chinese literary system and literary historical data, while the second part focuses on the historical achievements and current situation of the development of new literature in Guizhou. The two seem not to be directly related but imply the author’s thinking on the relationship between “center” and “border” from the perspective of literature. Because the issue of literary system is the core proposition in the study of contemporary Chinese literature, and the political nature is also

the unavoidable content of contemporary Chinese literature, understanding the internal operation mechanism of literary system has become the premise of constructing a macro literary and political vision from the center, which has also become the logical origin of Sun Xiangyang's literary criticism. However, if we interpret literary works only from the perspective of macro literary politics, it is easy to turn literary research into a policy exercise. Sun Xiangyang is obviously wary of this problem, so his research object is specific. Under the premise of the institutional rigidity of contemporary Chinese literature, he chose specific cases to enter the field of literary system, from the interpretation of programmatic documents to the research on the cultivation of new Chinese writers, to explore the internal operation mechanism of Contemporary Chinese literature system. At the same time, the contents of the book also have an obvious color of historical data textual research. From the study of the subject history of modern Chinese literature to the investigation of specific literary schools and the study of the canonization of modern writers, the study of historical data has become another color of Sun Xiangyang's literary criticism. The combination of literature system research and literature historical data research makes Sun Xiangyang effectively avoid one-way literature policy deduction or literature policy interpretation. With literature historical data as the basis for argument, the literature system research can be implemented. For example, in the article "the influence of the operation mode of Soviet literature on Chinese Contemporary Literature", Sun Xiangyang based on a large number of historical data, such as the film creation newsletter in the 1950s, the historical data of the publication of the people's Republic of China, and even the internal data of the second National Congress of Chinese literary and artistic workers. This not only shows Sun Xiangyang's historical data skills but also shows that his study of literary system is not an empty macro discussion, but also an empirical study of the details and development of the contemporary literary system under the guidance of a clear sense of problems. Therefore, Sun Xiangyang's literary criticism is a concrete practice with the concept of holistic literature from the perspective of literary politics, but he also uses the empirical thought of historical data research to control the political generalization tendency that may be caused by the study of literary system, and his literary research not only has the holistic vision of Chinese New literature, but also contains the characteristics of moderation and prudence.

The second part of this book is the analysis of specific literary cases. Lu Xun said in the preface of "the great series of Chinese New Literature · novels II" that Jian Xianai's works "although simple, or as the author's modest 'childish', there are few literary decorations, which is enough to write his heartfelt sadness. The scope of his description is narrow, a few ordinary people, some trivial things, but such as "water burial", but it shows us the coldness of the rural customs of 'Guizhou far away'. It is the same as the greatness of maternal love in this coldness -- Guizhou is far away, but everyone's situation is the same. (Lu Xun, 2005, p.254) It is precisely because of Lu Xun's recommendation that Jian Xianai entered the new era. From the perspective of literary researchers, Guizhou has become a classic writer in the history of new literature. Therefore, Jian Xianai naturally became the focus of Sun Xiangyang's attention, but he was not limited to this. Xie Liuyi, Guizhou writers during the Anti-Japanese War, writers in eastern Guizhou, as well as Guizhou's local film and television works and Guizhou's minority literature and art entered his research field of vision. In the last article of the second part, "a summary of Guizhou literature in the past 100 years", Sun Xiangyang returned to the holistic

narration of Guizhou new literature after a case interpretation of Guizhou new literature. The holistic vision reappeared. Behind the case interpretation, there was obviously a holistic thinking based on place, which was consistent with the holistic thinking of the first part. Then the dialogue between the center and the place implicit in the book appeared.

In this collection of papers, although there is a style arrangement between the upper and lower parts, it does not mean that the two topics are discussed independently. The comparative vision of the center and the frontier not only enables Sun Xiangyang to break through the regional restrictions of Guizhou new literature but also gives birth to an interdisciplinary consciousness. Through the investigation of various literary forms, a mutual dialogue relationship is constructed within the local literature/culture, which opens the internal face of Guizhou new literature research. Between the center and the local, he constructed his own critical path. While exploring the creative vitality of Guizhou new literature, he also potentially responded to the structural relationship between the local and the center, which not only sought the historical basis for the renewal and iteration of Guizhou literature and culture, but also provided a personal ideological experience for the creation of new community literature.

## **2. Close reading of texts from the perspective of mutual verification between literature and history**

As mentioned above, Sun Xiangyang's research has obvious characteristics of historical data research. Starting from the specific materials, he returned to the historical scene, treated the research object dialectically with a clear sense of problems, and then read the text carefully in the mutual evidence of literature and history, to obtain a new understanding of the research object. Jian Xianai is a classic writer in the history of Chinese new literature. After Lu Xun's review, how to realize the canonization of his literary history? Sun Xiangyang did not choose to interpret his novels as a case or choose the usual research method -- to determine Jian Xianai's classic status from the comments of famous writers and critics, but to determine Jian Xianai's classic status and its evolution process from the history of modern Chinese literature. Dai Yan believes that "the alliance between the history of Chinese literature and history has given it a strong scientific background. Through education, it has become a universal consensus and collective memory. The discrimination of orthodoxy has made it thoroughly linked with the national ideology and government power, and the determination of a set of classics and classic interpretation has made it obtain permanent authority and standardization." (Dai Yan, 2002, p.11) The "national ideology and government power" contained in the compilation of the history of Chinese literature is precisely an important content of Sun Xiangyang's literary research. Therefore, it is inevitable to choose the perspective of the writing of the history of modern Chinese literature to investigate Jian Xianai's canonization process. A close reading of the article "the changes of Jian Xianai in the writing of the history of Chinese Modern Literature" shows that Sun Xiangyang's arguments are well founded, and the history of Chinese New Literature quoted is the first edition, which not only shows his historical data and rigorous attitude, but also reflects his intention to restore the image of Jian Xianai in the scene of literary history. It is obviously not enough to completely present the problem consciousness behind the evolution of the image of Jian Xianai in the history of literature if only combing the records of Jian Xianai in the history of literature.

Then after combing the history of literature, it discusses the specific problems existing in the evaluation of Jian Xianai in the past history of literature. It is also in this sense that Sun Xiangyang noticed that the past literary history often emphasized Jian Xianai's status as a novelist and ignored his creation of new poetry, so he tried to explore Jian Xianai's status as a poet. In the article *Song of the Loner*: on Jian Xianai's creation of new poetry, Sun Xiangyang combined Jian Xianai's life experience with his poetry creation and found that Jian Xianai's wandering experience was closely related to the "night" image and the "loner" image in his poetry, which also showed Sun Xiangyang's comments on Jian Xianai's understanding of people and the world. His comments on the poet Jian Xianai were appropriate, detailed and full of the understanding of humanistic care, so its conclusion is not only appropriate, but also shows the sympathy of an intellectual for the understanding of Guizhou writers who have a bumpy and positive fate.

This kind of close reading based on literature and history also exists in Sun Xiangyang's research outside Guizhou literature. When inspecting the discipline construction of the history of modern Chinese literature, he combined the sorting out of the "Syllabus" of modern Chinese literature with his intention to return to the scene of history, carefully read the "Syllabus" of various new literature, found the connections and differences between them, and then found that the "syllabus", as a special "statutory promulgation form", had an important impact on the development of modern Chinese literature. At the same time, the "Syllabus" also became the "organizational" support and "statutory" guarantee of the history of modern Chinese literature on another level. Sun Xiangyang has a special feeling for the cultivation of writers. He made an in-depth study of the relationship between the Central Institute of literature, the literary and art correspondent system, the "youth entrepreneurship Association" and the cultivation of socialist Chinese writers, with the purpose of exploring the cultivation mechanism of contemporary Chinese writers. Perhaps every Chinese person once had a writer's dream. When he failed to realize this dream, he investigated the writer's training mechanism in socialist China, or Sun Xiangyang was a way to realize his dream in the field of academic research. It is also under this emotional drive that Sun Xiangyang once participated in the establishment of the Writing Research Institute in his work. He has transformed this internal emotional drive and academic research enthusiasm into a kind of transitive practical action and has made important achievements in the cultivation of young writers and the improvement of students' comprehensive quality. Therefore, his academic research is based on researchers' post consciousness but also shows the human feelings that guide the development of young people. Therefore, after reading this collection of comments, we can find that Sun Xiangyang's academic research is the product of a combination of academic theory and emotional reason. His research has a clear realistic orientation, which not only points to the deep feelings of the land of Guizhou where he was born, but also contains a literary and art worker's thinking on how academic research corresponds to the current youth training and development, which also shows his empathy and sense of responsibility in the face of student groups as a university teacher.

### 3. Internal expansion of regional literature research

When combing the development of Guizhou literature in the past century, Sun Xiangyang said that “standing at the new historical intersection and looking back on Guizhou literature in the past century, we can not only have a historical review of the development of Guizhou literature, but also get some new enlightenment for the prosperity and development of Guizhou literature from this ‘bird’ s-eye view.” (Sun Xiangyang, 2023, p.329) Sun Xiangyang projected the historical enlightenment he obtained into the current Guizhou literature, thought about the future development of Guizhou literature, and then transformed the historical enlightenment into a kind of “sentimental” literary action.

Guizhou is a multi-ethnic province, and it is in this land of multi-ethnic exchanges and blending that a large number of influential ethnic minority writers have been born across the country. However, Sun Xiangyang said in “the power of the edge -- a review of contemporary Guizhou ethnic minority literature creation” that “in the discourse hierarchy of Chinese literature, Guizhou ethnic minority literature has always been in a marginal position, and has not yet created epic works with great historical value and soul shock like the history of the soul and the dust settles down... Therefore, the real rise of Guizhou ethnic minority literature will be possible only after it has established a meaningful connection with the mainstream discourse (or the central discourse) and has broken through the encirclement. This undoubtedly brings dual anxiety of expression and influence to Guizhou ethnic minority writers, that is, on the one hand, they should always face the pressure of the central discourse right, and look for some adjustment, correction, resistance and local flavor to the depressed state.(b) the; On the other hand, the potential influence of the older writers who have successfully used their local experience to participate in the mainstream narrative should be avoided.” (Sun Xiangyang, 2023, p.263-264) He believes that to get rid of this “double anxiety”, we need to be more open and inclusive, “open the bottleneck of literary innovation from the aspects of human nature excavation, artistic aesthetics, theme expression and so on”. Therefore, Sun Xiangyang cast his eyes on the eastern Guizhou region he was familiar with and further considered how to “open the bottleneck of literary innovation” within the geographical territory of Guizhou, or under the background of “double anxiety”, consider the differentiated development path within the provincial literature. Sunxiangyang believes that the “East Guizhou writers’ group” has jointly constructed “a regional homogeneous culture”. Although there are great differences in the aesthetic pursuit and creative methods within this group, “the magnificent Wuling mountains and the vast eastward blue Wujiang River are the cultural background and aesthetic objects faced by this group, and the essence of ‘benevolence’ forged by Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism is the spiritual power of this group.” (Sun Xiangyang, 2023, p.275-276) He found the important characteristics of East Guizhou writers in Guizhou literature, that is, the spirit of 'benevolence' built in Wujiang culture. It can be seen that Sun Xiangyang, starting from a hundred years of Guizhou literature experience, and then investigating the internal differences of provincial literature, has developed his ideological experience of breaking through the “double anxiety” of Guizhou literature and art, that is, based on the literary tradition, exploring the internal new quality of provincial literature, and then obtaining the possibility of breaking through the “anxiety”.

It is obvious that literary research cannot accommodate the literary and artistic scope that Sun

Xiangyang's ideological experience can radiate. Therefore, he explored the important experience of breaking through the "double anxiety" in Guizhou's literature and art from movies, TV dramas and Miao epic. For example, he noticed that the local TV play "twenty four abductions" in Guizhou is not only a visual presentation of Guizhou's experience in the war of resistance against Japan, but also that this TV play "on the basis of inheriting the narrative advantages of previous Anti-Japanese War dramas, jumped out of the traditional narrative mode of 'two armies against each other', used unique innovative thinking and refreshing narrative strategies, provided a new idea and opened up a different paradigm for the exploration and development of Chinese Anti-Japanese War dramas." (Sun Xiangyang, 2023, p.290)

This is the unique contribution of Guizhou literature and art in the field of Anti-Japanese war dramas. In the context of accelerating the process of modernization, the inheritance and protection of intangible cultural heritage are also facing great challenges. For example, the Miao epic King Yalu has the problem of low digitization. Sun Xiangyang also puts forward specific suggestions on the inheritance and protection of King Yalu from the perspective of digitization of intangible cultural heritage. The protection and inheritance of the Miao epic King Yalu is not only the protection of intangible cultural heritage but also involves exploring the unique content of Guizhou literature and art, that is, the core issue of creating a unique intangible cultural card in Guizhou in the national intangible cultural map. Another example is the discussion of the film extreme crisis, which also notes the Guizhou revolution in the history of the long march of Red Army. Sun Xiangyang is very good at comparing and analyzing Guizhou literature and art with Chinese literature and art. He examines the unique artistic charm of Guizhou literature and art under the overall background of Chinese literature and art. He also notes the internal differences and richness of Guizhou literature. This is his thinking on local literature in the current hot wave of local literature research.

To sum up, Guizhou literature is an unavoidable historical existence in the study of Chinese local literature. Guizhou literature not only provides unique historical experience and aesthetic form in southwest literature but also contributes unique Guizhou experience in the development of Chinese local literature. Sun Xiangyang's collection of reviews not only shows his rigorous academic attitude and solid academic foundation, but also combines the historical experience of Guizhou literature with the practical problems he is facing, and explores the development path of Guizhou literature through literary criticism, which not only opens up the meaning space of Guizhou literature's internal orientation and foothold in China, but also shows a Guizhou critic's conscious value adherence and mission of the times.

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