ABSTRACT

Yu Dafu (郁达夫, 1896 - 1945) was a prominent Chinese novelist, poet and essayist during the May-Fourth Era. His autobiographical stories were among the earliest crop of the new literary harvest and left their imprints on the minds of a whole generation. Unfortunately, Yu Dafu was well-known for his fiction rather than his literary theories and criticisms. As there has been a notable absence of any type of in-depth study of Yu Dafu's literary theories, this study sets out to provide a systemic analysis of his theories on fiction.

This dissertation is divided into six chapters. Chapter One is an introduction that discusses the purpose and method of this study. Chapter Two takes a chronological look at Yu Dafu's life and creative works. Yu Dafu's views on fiction writing are then organized and categorized under several distinctive theoretical structures in Chapter Three. Chapter Four looks into the factors that affect and shape Yu Dafu's literary theories. Chapter Five takes a look at several novels of Yu Dafu's that are representatives of his writing style. Finally, Chapter Six concludes with an overall evaluation of Yu Dafu's literary theories, and explores the link between his literary theories and his novels.

This study reveals that Yu Dafu has created a unique system of theories on fiction. One of his prominent literary theories states that "all literature is nothing but the autobiography of the author who wrote it". Therefore, he constantly stresses on the need for novelists to write about their own experiences and true feelings. His other theories contain characteristics of romanticism and melancholic sentimentalism. During his later years, some of his theories on fiction contain socialistic overtones. Most of his literary works are consistent with his theories. However, there are some discrepancies between his socialist fiction and theories.

This study gives recognition to Yu Dafu's contributions and achievements as a literary theorist during the May-Fourth Era.