The Aesthetico-Impressionistic Criticism of Kuo Mo-jo

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Kuo Mo-jo's [1] (born in 1892) critical efforts in the first half of the twenties represent an interesting page in the history of modern Chinese literary criticism. The present contribution intends to survey that part of this criticism which may be termed aesthetico-impressionistic.

In presenting a genesis and development of Kuo Mo-jo's initial views on literature and art several procedures may be adopted. We have decided for the comparative method, pointing out, in the first place the genetic connections with European aesthetics and criticism, then with Chinese tradition, while presenting Kuo Mo-jo's critical and theoretical views all along, throughout the study.

Towards the end of the 18th century I. Kant wrote his work *Kritik der Urteilskraft (Critique of Judgment)* in which he dealt with important aspects of aesthetics. He devoted a short chapter to genius, then a favourite theme of aesthetic, philosophical and critical discussions. Genius, according to Kant, "is the talent (or natural gift) which gives the rule to art" [1]. Kuo Mo-jo's friend Yü Ta-fu [2] (1896—1945) in his article "I-wen ssu-chien" [3] (Personal View on Literature), wrote that "literature is a work of talent (or genius, M. G.) and cannot be measured by any rules" [2]. When the critic Shen Yen-p'ing [4] (Mao Tun) [5] (born in 1896) attacked this statement in a short review published under the pseudonym Sun [6], Kuo Mo-jo reacted to the question of genius in one of his essays [7].

Two statements should be noted in Kuo Mo-jo's and Yü Ta-fu's interpretation, namely the existence of genius, and the nonexistence of the rules by which art is governed. The statement of Yü Ta-fu has just been mentioned. Kuo Mo-jo expressed himself in different terms but he likewise wrote about a "literary world without principles", and about writers "without number" [8]. According to him, true literature is to be sought in the former, and true

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geniuses in the latter. The similarity as regards genius lies in the fact that Kant, but also Kuo Mo-jo and Yü Ta-fu, surmise that "beautiful arts must be considered as arts of genius", or "beautiful art is only possible as a product of genius". This similarity seems to be complete in Yü Ta-fu, and only partial in Kuo Mo-jo. According to Kuo Mo-jo "everybody is able to create literature, but it cannot be said that what everybody creates is literature". Genius in Kuo Mo-jo’s interpretation is a very gifted and simultaneously a very industrious person. According to Kant, it is an ingenium (i.e. an innate mental disposition): art cannot be learned and unlearnable are its laws, rules; art is always original.

Kant’s concept of art presumes the existence of rules. "For every art", Kant writes, "presupposes rules by means of which in the first instance a product, if it is to be called artistic, is represented as possible . . . beautiful art cannot itself devise the rule according to which it can bring about its product. But since at the same time a product can never be called art without some precedent rule, nature in the subject must (by the harmony of its faculties) give the rule to art . . .". This is related to the times in which he lived: at the turn of neoclassicism and romanticism (hence his respect for rules and original genius).

Kuo Mo-jo lived in an entirely different period. He wrote at the time of modern avant-garde movements when respect for literary and artistic rules had long ceased to hold true and every serious artistic product was associated with the principle of originality.

Kuo Mo-jo made use of Kant’s views also in formulating another important thesis of his literary creed. In his lecture "Wen-i-chih shih-ming" (The Social Mission of Literature) he said: "Just as flowers are a manifestation of spring days, so art is an expression of the artist’s inner wisdom. A poet writes a poem, a composer composes a song, a painter paints a picture, all this is a natural manifestation of their feelings: it is as when spring wind ruffles the surface of the lake, it has no purpose." These words express in their own way the conviction of the entire European aesthetic criticism from Kant down to modern times. The aesthetic judgment finds the aim of the object in the object itself: beauty is nothing but "purposiveness without purposes" ("Zweckmäßigkeit ohne Zweck"). "Every one must admit", writes Kant, "that a judgment about beauty in which the least interest mingles, is very partial and is not a pure judgment of taste. We must not be in the least prejudiced in favour of the existence of the things, but be quite indifferent in this respect, in order to play the judge in things of taste". Of course, even though an artistic object in Kant is "devoid of

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6 Kant, "Critique of Judgment", in O. B. Hardison, Jr., op. cit., p. 13.
7 Kuo Mo-jo, "Criticism and Dream", p. 240.
8 I. Kant, "Critique of Judgment", in O. B. Hardison, Jr., op. cit., p. 13.
9 Loc. cit.
10 Kuo Mo-jo, WILC, p. 130.
11 O. B. Hardison, Jr., op. cit., p. 3—4.
12 Ibid. p. 7.

[12] 文藝之社會的使命
any utilitarian function", it is not entirely non-utilitarian. Kant sees in a beauty a symbol of morality, of the morally good. Kuo Mo-jo explicitly asserts that "art has no purpose", but he likewise states that it has two great missions: unification of the feelings of mankind and an uplifting of the individual's spirit in his striving to make his life more beautiful.

Kuo Mo-jo was more of a searcher than his companions. From among European critics the greatest share in the formation of his critical physiognomy goes to aesthetico-impressionistic authors, but he also came into contact with representatives of other schools. We shall come back to the former, while now we shall deal briefly with the latter group.

According to Kuo Mo-jo, literature is a social phenomenon, hence it has a social impact, or acts socially. It acts by means of its own inherent artistic qualities, while exploiting simultaneously the emotional capacity of its consumers. Tolstoy's great critical work What is Art? contributed to the enrichment of the theory of the world's artistic and literary criticism primarily through the original doctrine of "infection". Kuo Mo-jo, too, was taken up by this doctrine. His article "I-shu-ti p'ing-chia" (The Evaluation of Art) makes it evident that he was frequently confronted with the issue of the relation between the artistic value of a work and its emotional impact.

"To evoke in oneself a feeling one has experienced", wrote L. Tolstoy, "and having evoked it in oneself, then, by means of movements, lines, colours, sounds, or forms expressed in words, so to transmit that feeling that others may experience the same feeling — this is the activity of art." And further: "Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that other people are infected by these feelings and also experience them." Tolstoy feels convinced that as regards receptivity, those best prepared for the greatest artistic and literary works are uneducated people whose taste has not been spoiled as yet by modern decadent art. Kuo Mo-jo, on the other hand, believes that a consumer's receptivity is directly proportional to the degree of artistic education through which he has passed. Hence, their views on the action of the infection differ considerably. From what Kuo Mo-jo wrote about Tolstoy's criticism it may be gathered that he did not admire it. He condemned Tolstoy's didactic approach towards questions of art and literature, and considered the introduction of Tolstoy's book What is Art? into China as unfortunate for Chinese literature. He compared its

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13 Ibid. p. 4.
15 WILC, p. 253.
17 Loc. cit.
18 Ibid. p. 100—105.

\[13\] 藝術的評家
action to that of cancer. Practically the only thought he took over from Tolstoy was that of art as a means of progress of mankind.


The first article starts with the words: "There are no fixed measures in criticism. Criticism seeks the meaning of the investigated object on the basis of one's own emotional response." [21]

These words are reminiscent of A. France according to whom literary and artistic criticism is but "an adventure" of the critic's soul "among masterpieces." [22] But this is so only at first glance. Kuo Mo-jo has something else in mind. He believes in certain criteria even though these are not quite fixed. In this article he expounds the idea according to which a critic must know how to apply diverse critical methods and procedures as may be required by the nature of the works under study. That is why he speaks of the non-existence of fixed rules. Kuo Mo-jo was displeased when a certain anonymous author subjected his story Ts'an ch'un [14] (Sad Spring) to criticism. He claimed that it could be adequately criticized only by one who would investigate it psychoanalytically. He admits he knows little of psychoanalysis and therefore, though he examines it himself, he does not do so psychoanalytically. He does briefly mention the views of certain psychoanalysts in the realm of interpretation of dreams, but it seems that the explanation of physiologists is closer to him. It should be noted that Kuo Mo-jo had considerable interest in physiology. Towards the end of the first half of the twenties he studied it and intended to devote all his life to its investigation. [23]

He dismisses Freud's opinion concerning the essence of dreams in a single sentence. According to him, Freud asserted dream to be "fulfilled desire repressed in childhood into the unconscious." [24] This statement is, of course, very dubious and inaccurate. Kuo Mo-jo explicitly says that dreams do not arise the way psychoanalysts maintain, and admits them to be the

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20 Ibid. p. 259.
21 Kuo Mo-jo, "Criticism and Dream", p. 225.
24 Kuo Mo-jo, "Criticism and Dream", p. 234.

[14] "西廂" 藝術上之批 判與其作者之性格
[18] 創造月刊
result of a conjoint action of the endings of sensory organs and cranial nerve centres.

As a "very natural" example of the use of a dream in an artistic work, Kuo Mo-jo cites one of the acts in The West Chamber in which the hero Chang Chün-jui dreams of Ts’ui Ying-ying who wants to carry out her longing "in life to live together, after death to sleep in the same tomb". Kuo Mo-jo sees in the dream one of the means of building up an artistic work, a certain poetical transformation of real events — a "genuine description" — in which even the most exacting analysts would fail to find any crack. A dream ought to be as natural as are events of everyday life, it should agree with physiological and psychological realities.

Kuo Mo-jo in his explanation of the essence of dreams consistently adheres to the principle of reality. However, a dream, no matter how beautiful, e.g. the work of Wang Shih-fu may be, is to a certain extent a denial of the principle of reality. A dream generally expresses wishes that in normal life are an antithesis to the world we live in. Dreams often express longings forbidden by the moral and value codex of society. A censor is active in man's psyche that does not permit the unconscious to express every desire. Hence, dreams as we remember them when waking up, are often incomprehensible, absurd, confused. A manifest dream is that which we remember in the morning. It is "the disguised fulfilment of an unconscious wish". It is not logical and generally it is not a poetical transformation of real events.

It is interesting and surprising to note that an article dealing with the problems connected with The West Chamber should be Freudian in orientation. It takes as its starting point the universal assumption that literature is the symbol of the spirit of resistance. The spirit of resistance is the mother of literature. The traditional Chinese society in a certain respect was the nutrient soil of this spirit; i.e. in that of sexual relations. Sexuality is the basis of human nature, a condition of the multiplication of the human race and the evolution of mankind. The view that sexual passion is harmful, bad, if not kept within bounds recognized by traditional ethics, was the cause that China had become a gigantic hospital of sexual neurotics. According to Kuo Mo-jo practically all Chinese men were foot-fetishists because they admired bound feet, and all Chinese woman were masochists because they took pleasure in the fact that their crippled lower extremities served men as a means of sexual satisfaction. It is only natural that Kuo Mo-jo should make a sexual pervert also of Wang Shih-fu.

Just like the majority of Freudian criticism, Kuo Mo-jo's essay is also superficial. The reason is that Kuo did not know Freud well, but also that the

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25 Ibid. p. 236.

Chinese literature possesses few such works as could be investigated by mean of Freudian criticism. And it remains questionable whether even these could be examined with success.

From among the aesthetico-impressionistic critics, the Englishman Walter Pater made the greatest impression on Kuo Mo-jo. To him alone from among the critics, Kuo Mo-jo devoted an entire article, the first part of which is of an informative character, while the second consists of translations of the most important passages from Pater’s “Preface” to Studies in the History of the Renaissance.28

At the beginning of his “Preface”, W. Pater refuted the attempts of earlier aestheticians to define “in the most general terms” what is beauty. Kuo Mo-jo could do nothing but agree with this. For even though he might perhaps have been more closely acquainted with Kant’s views, yet he never manifested any interest in complicated considerations and intricate philosophical premises, often quite incomprehensible to members of other cultural spheres and periods. Pater wanted to define beauty “not in the most abstract, but in the most concrete terms possible, no to find a universal formula for it, but the formula that would express most adequately this or that special manifestation of it . . . .” 29 A critic need not know the correct and at the same time abstract definition of beauty, but must have “a certain kind of temperament” 30. A critic must be conscious that beauty exists in many forms, he must be sensitive to its most diverse manifestations! Beautiful objects then become powers or forces that act on the critic, and he, like a sensitive seismograph, records his impressions, feeling pleasure and the like.31

W. Pater is the only critic whom Kuo Mo-jo recommends for reading, and as he writes, he greatly hopes “that our men of letters will read Studies in the History of the Renaissance” 32.

Kuo Mo-jo was also impressed by W. Pater’s disciple, the well-known adherent of art for art’s sake, Oscar Wilde — but only by his idea of practical aestheticism. It was given a characteristic content by Kuo Mo-jo himself, as will be seen later.

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Genius is an indispensable condition and simultaneously a basis on which Kuo Mo-jo sets up his aesthetico-impressionistic criticism. It is of course an indispensable condition for and basis of every art and literature.

In 1923 Kuo Mo-jo hyperbolically asserted that there was no other country in the modern world in which more was written on the question of genius

29 W. PATER, op. cit., p. 283.
30 Ibid. p. 284.
31 Ibid. p. 283—284.
than in China. However, two months before Kuo put this statement on paper, Lu Hsün [22] (1881—1936) had declared that there did not exist a single writer in China. Kuo Mo-jo agreed with him. In his opinion there was not such a talented writer as Tolstoy, Chekhov, Gorky, Baudelaire, Verlaine, Verhaeren, Ibsen, Strindberg, or Wedekind in China.

Kuo Mo-jo was undoubtedly acquainted with Benedetto Croce’s famous work *Aesthetic* or at least with its first part — *Theory of Aesthetic* — which deals with the problem of genius in two places and Kuo Mo-jo took careful note of the one and the other. Croce asserts that the difference between a genius or artistic genius and an ordinary man is of quantitative rather than qualitative nature. Kuo Mo-jo agrees with this view: "A genius is a man, he is not a marvel. He differs from others quantitatively only, not qualitatively. Even a primitive man perceives beauty. A writer’s perception is stronger, sharper." Genius is a natural endowment plus adequate education.

B. Croce created the theory of four human activities and of four forms of genius. The four types of activity are: First, aesthetic (done by writers and artists); second, logical (this activity includes philosophers and scientists); third, moral (saints, moralists and spiritual leaders); fourth, economic (politicians, economists). Croce writes: “Men endowed with genius in art, in science, and in moral or heroes, have always been recognized. But the genius of pure economicity has met with repugnance.”

Kuo Mo-jo takes over both these theories. Just like Croce he, too, designates economic geniuses as “geniuses of evil” or “diabolic geniuses.” He asserts that China is full of these geniuses (by them he meant warlords, landlords, capitalists, politicians, etc.). Besides these bad geniuses, the others are not very numerous. How can — according to him — an ethical genius arise where a nation has forgotten the Way (tao) [24] and righteousness (j) [25]? How can a great scientist or scholar be born where there is no logical and scientific hinterland! In the domain of literature and arts nothing great has been created in China for the past hundred years. From a great musical tradition there has remained nothing but the small Chinese violin (hu-ch’in) and drums that only blunt the nerves of ordinary people. There are no longer any of the old dances, literature has petrified. Painting, sculpture and architecture vegetate in the bondage of stagnant tradition.

And yet, it was neither Kant nor Croce to whom Kuo Mo-jo originally referred when he began to lay the foundations of his literary and artistic outlook. The Chinese sources of his conception reach as far as Chuang-tzu [27].

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33 Kuo Mo-jo, "T’ien-ts’ai yü chiao-yü [23] (Genius and Education), WILC, p. 397.
35 Kuo Mo-jo, "Genius and Education", p. 399.
36 B. Croce, op. cit., p. 61.
37 Loc. cit.
38 Kuo Mo-jo, "Genius and Education", p. 405.
(3rd century B.C.). We must take note of Chuang-tzu if we wish to understand Kuo Mo-jo's concept of artistic genius.

Kuo Mo-jo, in one of his studies, quotes in extenso the following passage from Chuang-tzu's book:

"Ch'ing, the chief carpenter, was carving wood into a stand for hanging musical instruments. When finished, the work appeared to those who saw it as if of supernatural execution. And the prince of Lu asked him, saying,

"What mystery is there in your art?"

"No mystery, Your Highness", replied Ch'ing, "and yet there is something".

"When I am about to make such a stand, I guard against any diminution of my vital powers. I first reduce my mind to absolute quiescence. Three days in this condition, and I become oblivious of any reward to be gained. Five days, and I become oblivious of any fame to be acquired. Seven days and I become unconscious of my four limbs and my physical frame. Then, with no thought of the Court present to my mind, my skill becomes concentrated, and all disturbing elements from without are gone. I enter some mountain forest! I search for a suitable tree. It contains the form required, which is afterwards elaborated. I see the stand in my mind's eye, and then set to work. Otherwise there is nothing." 40

Kuo Mo-jo does not report the last words of this confession:

"I bring my own natural capacity into relation with that of the wood.
What was suspected to be of a natural execution in my work was due solely to this." 41

Kuo Mo-jo underlines in particular the words "and I become oblivious of any reward to be gained", "and I become oblivious of any fame to be acquired", and finally, "I become unconscious of my four limbs and my physical frame". And immediately he writes:

"This is the mystery of genius, this imparts life to art. If our artists attain this state, if they renounce merits and a name, riches and honours, if they do not mind either success or failure, profit or loss, when they create so as to be oblivious of themselves, their works will be works of great art and they will become geniuses. Therefore I say that a genius is not an ingenium (aimed at Kant, M.G.), nor a fool (referring to the view of the Italian psychologist C. Lombroso, M.G.), nor is there anything mysterious in it. The mystery is hidden in the few words pronounced above." 42 Genius then, is pure objectivity, oblivion of self. At the same time our little ego fuses with great universe: the result is suppression of the self (mei-wo) [30] 43.


42 Kuo Mo-jo, "Practical Aesthetics", p. 147.
43 Loc. cit.
And this brings us to the source of Kuo Mo-jo's critical views. Before going to Kant, Tolstoy, Pater and Croce, he had been, through his education, in close contact with Taoist artistic tradition — and he believed in it. The words of Chuang-tzu formed a firm basis on which his critical theory was gradually built.

The approach of Kuo Mo-jo to European critics may best be made evident in the case of Oscar Wilde. He mentions him, as far as we know, in two places. First he refutes him. He disagrees with his statement that art is totally useless. He maintains precisely the opposite view. Every art is useful even though is may seem superfluous. In the second case he refers to him when propagating the idea of practical aestheticism.

As regards Wilde's movement of practical aestheticism, its characteristic trait was aesthetic dandyism, manifest in the behavior of its adherents and partly in their inner life and conviction. They went about dressed in an eccentric manner, for instance, men showed themselves in a velvet jacket and knee breeches, with a flower in the hand. Kuo Mo-jo decidedly condemned such a movement which — according to him — was entirely external and had nothing to do with inner problems. He supported, however, the idea of practical aestheticism, but he envisaged it in a totally different manner. And what is of interest — and at the same time fully comprehensible — is that practically aestheticism in his interpretation is nothing but a transplantation of certain Taoist ideals of ancient Chinese philosophers and men of letters. The role of practical aestheticism should be "to embellish, with the aid of art, our inner life, which means that the spirit of art must become our spiritual life."

When pondering over the spirit of art Kuo Mo-jo prefers the ancient Chinese art to the old European art. Only the art of European avant-garde movements of the first decades of our century satisfies, in his view, the postulates of dynamicity (tung). Before that, European art was static (ching). In Pater's words, "All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music", he sees the expression of the most important developmental tendency of modern art, and in expressionism, futurism and impressionism, the first stages of a revolutionary change. Kuo Mo-jo claims that the principle of dynamicity was proper to ancient Chinese art in a far greater measure than to old European art.
Hsieh Ho\textsuperscript{[34]} (late 5th century A.D.) characterized the first method of painting as: \textit{ch'i yün sheng tung}\textsuperscript{[35]} (literal translation: "breath rhythm is life-like"). Kuo Mo-jo explains it as follows: \textit{tung} is the dynamic spirit, \textit{sheng} means that it is capable of life, \textit{ch'i yün} means that it has rhythm.\textsuperscript{50}

Kuo Mo-jo's words are from the year 1923. Less than 30 years later the famous French critic Jacques Maritain in his book \textit{Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry} explained Hsieh Ho's first method in this way: "What does the first of the famous six canons of Hsieh Ho prescribe? — To have life-motion (i.e. \textit{ch'i yün sheng tung}, M.G.) manifests the unique spiritual resonance that the artist catches in Things, inspired as he is by his communion with the spirit of the cosmos."

In these words J. Maritain expressed more than Kuo Mo-jo. But Kuo Mo-jo helped himself with Chuang-tzu, with the passage quoted above, and the result was the same. The spirit of art is in the understanding and dynamic expression of the essence of an artistically processed object, while mutual communion between natural capacity (\textit{t'ien})\textsuperscript{56} of the creator and the object, is a \textit{conditio sine qua non}. The natural capacity of the artist had been characterized by Chuang-tzu, and Kuo Mo-jo, too, underscored it in his reflection on the artist-genius. In this sense the spirit of art has to become the spiritual life of man.

It would seem that Kuo Mo-jo had but little need of Wilde for his criticism. The same may be said of other European aestheticians and critics — such as Kant or Croce. An exception is Pater. But here, too, Kuo Mo-jo would probably not have come so close to him if the essential, that which he had already found in old Chinese art and partly also literature, had been in contradiction with Pater, or had failed to support the views professed by this critic.

Earlier in this study we spoke of purposiveness without purpose. But this too — and primarily this — can be found in old Chinese art and noteworthy literary works.

Chang Chung-yuan in his book \textit{Creativity and Taoism} reproduces the following Chinese poem from the 8th century:

\begin{quote}
The wild geese fly across the long sky above
Their image is reflected upon the chilly water below.
The geese do not mean to cast their image in the water;
Nor does the water mean to hold the image of the geese.\textsuperscript{52}
\end{quote}

This poems expresses the process of creation according to Taoist insight. Wild geese flying over the lake do not fly in order to have their image appearing on the surface of the waters; nor does the water surface mean to serve as a mirror. The artist and the writer, when creating, do not set themselves a utilitarian aim. Nor has the work itself any purpose, although it does

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnotesynote{50}{Loc. cit.}
\footnotesynote{51}{Quoted according to CHANG Chung-yuan, \textit{Creativity and Taoism}, New York 1963, p. 8—9.}
\footnotesynote{52}{Ibid. p. 57. CHANG Chung-yuan does not indicate who was the Chinese author of this poem.}
\end{footnotesize}
act aesthetically and socially (hence in a utilitarian manner). Because of this, Kuo Mo-jo does not recognize a division of art into art for life's sake and art for art's sake. In addition — since we are concerned with this question — he asserts that art and life are like body and spirit, they are equivalent, they exist next to each other, there is no relation of superiority or subordination between them. The last words are aimed against the concept of O. Wilde in which he treats art as the supreme reality and life as a mere mode of fiction.

The above Chinese poem expresses the process of creation by means of reflection. This is a Taoist concept, as has just been remarked. The concept of Kuo Mo-jo is similar, only it has shifted towards the creative subject. While in the Taoist concept the reflection per se is already creative, Kuo Mo-jo's concept requires a creative subject presupposing observation, judgment and a synthetical processing of the object. The artist does not go about like a photographer but, in Kuo Mo-jo's words, rather like a bee that from the most diverse sweet plant juices produces honey. Naturally, this subjectivity need not have a utilitarian orientation.

Kuo Mo-jo believed in the enormous power of art. But this faith, too, has its origin in the ancient Chinese tradition — this time oriented towards Confucianism. He relates an alleged event from ancient Chinese history. Soldiers of Hsiang Yü were fighting against the army of Liu Pang. Then Chang Liang, on a clear night, when a warm breeze was blowing, began to play on the flute a melancholic melody from Ch'u, the country from which Hsiang Yü's soldiers came. When they heard it, they became so homesick that they threw away their arms and took to flight. This is not the only fact that can be pointed out in this connection. The enormous power of music (and in a wider sense, of art in general) is evident in the preface to the first poem of the Shih-ching (The Book of Songs). Music meant much, particularly to Confucian philosophers. The concepts of li (propriety, rites) and yüeh (music), were placed nearly on a level with the concept of jen (human-heartedness) and righteousness — two principal virtues of Confucian ethics. According to Fung Yu-lan, "the government advocated by Confucius is one based on li and music, in which administrative machinery and punishments exist only to maintain them."
When Kuo Mo-jo, then, said that the unification of Italy was the result of the influence of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, that Goethe’s power is not inferior to that of Bismarck and that the Great October Socialist Revolution had been preceded by many writers who formed its vanguard, he makes use of European examples to illustrate a thesis that had been proclaimed (though in different terms) long ago in China.  

Already at that time Kuo Mo-jo’s notion of a revolutionary movement fuses with that of an artistic movement and the notion of a revolutionary with that of an artist. The works of art mean for him revolution as much as grenades. But they must truly be artistic works. The artist may be a propagandist: however, his tool in this work must be true art. This idea resembles Lu Hsün’s well-known statement which this writer and critic pronounced some years later when paraphrasing U. Sinclair’s assertion about literature as propaganda. According to Lu Hsün literature is propaganda, though not all propaganda is literature.

The few words we used when speaking about A. France imply that a closeness between the views of France and Kuo Mo-jo is only apparent and fallacious. Kuo Mo-jo’s reflections *P’i-p’ing, hsin-shang, chien-ch’a* [49] (Criticism, Appreciation, Investigation) make it clear that he is up against a purely impressionistic criticism. He condemns in them the book by Chou Tso-jen [50] entitled *Tzu-chi-ti yüan-ti* [51] (Cultivating One’s Garden) and his impressionistic opinions expressed in the preface to this book. He is likewise against the critical concepts of A. France [63].

Kuo Mo-jo sees the first modern critic in Sainte-Beuve. According to him, Sainte-Beuve ushered in the history of modern criticism and influenced the evolution of the so-called scientific criticism. Kuo Mo-jo sees the history of literary criticism, like Sainte-Beuve, briefly as follows: scientific critics began to investigate the milieu, the spirit of the epoch and other elements — everything that participates in the creation of a literary work — all except the subject of the author: impressionistic critics, on the other hand, were interested in their own impressions and the feelings they experienced when reading literary works. Kuo Mo-jo was not satisfied with either the one or the other kind of literary criticism. He considers the results of Taine to be obscure and asserts that the criticism of France is no criticism at all. According to Kuo Mo-jo, literary criticism ensues where the critic understands the work. A true critic must strive for unity of the rational and the emotional aspect, he should avoid the purely scientific approach, but at the same time

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remove impressionistic inhibitions. He sees the ideal of a critic in the ideal of Pater:

"The aesthetic critic, then, regards all objects with which he has to do, all works of art and the fairer forms of nature and human life, as powers or forces, producing pleasurable sensations each of a more or less peculiar and unique kind. This influence he feels and wishes to explain, analysing it, and reducing it to its elements". And further: "And the function of the aesthetic critic is to distinguish, analyse, and separate from its adjuncts the virtue by which a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book, produces this special impression of beauty or pleasure to indicate what the source of that impression is and under what conditions it is experienced. His end is reached when he has disengaged that virtue, and noted it, as a chemist notes some natural element, for himself and others...".

A critical sensitivity and a capable analytical spirit ought to be the qualities of a critic who should likewise be a genius. A literary genius is not only creative, but also critical. A creative genius creates something out of nothing, a critical genius washes gold out of sand.

In contrast to W. Pater and O. Wilde, Kuo Mo-jo did not connect a critic's person with that of the creator and did not assert that a critic must simultaneously be also a writer, a poet or an artist.

Yet a further quality should, according to Kuo Mo-jo, characterize a critic and his criticism. Like Mathew Arnold, he demanded that critical activity should be a "disinterested behaviour", only he gave different contents to this key-word. Mathew Arnold had in mind a complete political non-involvement, while Kuo Mo-jo meant a disinterested attitude towards literary opponents. To tell the truth, he himself confessed this disinterestedness only by word of mouth.

The basis of Kuo Mo-jo's views is traditional not only in the area of his critical theory but also his views concerning the poetic genre and rhythm are based chiefly on traditional opinions. The treatment to these views, however, falls beyond the scope of this study.

The critical theory of Kuo Mo-jo went through a certain evolution between 1920 and 1925. In 1923, which also marks the peak of his critical activity, we witness the beginning of a shift in his views from an aesthetico-

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64 Ibid. p. 4—5 and D. G. Hoffman and S. Hynes, op. cit., p. 283.
66 Kuo Mo-jo, "Criticism and Dream", pfl 241.
69 V. Hall, Jr., op. cit., p. 108.
70 It will suffice to remark, e.g. that he expressed himself about the critic Shen Yen-ping saying: "He crows like a cock and steals like a dog". See Kuo Mo-jo, "Pi-p'an I-men-hu i-pen chi ch'i-t'a" [A Criticism of Immensee's Translation and Other Matters], Creation Quarterly, 1, 2, 1922, p. 29.
impressionistic position, to one which might be termed expressionistic. It is noteworthy, though paradoxical, that Kuo Mo-jo expressed his aesthetic-impressionistic views in the most salient form precisely during this year. Expressionistic and activistic moods, then, created the basis for this transition to the platform of proletarian criticism.