Abstract PhD project: Xiong, Jingjing

The Chinese Female Bildungsroman: 1900-1960

Bildungsroman, as a genre of modernity, is usually regarded as male-oriented literature, in which the development of the hero, as a subject, symbolizes the changes of the country and the nation. However, many Chinese Bildungsromans are centered on a heroine or several heroines. How is “the development of women” constructed into the narrative of modernity in China? How can the development of women, used to be regarded as object, represent the modernization of the nation? How do women find the “self” and integrate into the society?

This project investigates the relationship between gender, genre and modernity by analyzing a series of Chinese modern Bildungsromans centered on the heroine, including the ones written by Su Xuelin, Mao Dun, Jiang Guangci, Pan Liudai, Chen Xuezhao, Yang Mo and Bai Lang, in which the heroines quest in different directions, and have diverse experiences in spirituality and society. As a synthesis of narrative theory and cultural study, the project interprets the multivalence of “modern woman” through combing the close analysis of the narrative mechanisms with the historical investigations of “representing modern woman” in China.