

From Admiration to Equality: "Mirror Image Identity" and the Subjectivity Reconstruction of Chinese Multinational Literature in the 1980s

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Abstract

First, this paper reviews the evolution of multinational literature in the 1980s, and points out that Chinese multinational literature realized the redefinition of self-identity by absorbing foreign cultural resources and mainstream literary resources under the influence of the tide of globalization and Western literary theories. Finally, this paper reflects on the phenomena of historical repetition of multinational literature throughout rewriting literary history, and points out the unsolved problems when national literature faces the challenges of modernity.

Keywords

Multinational literature, mirror image identity, national identity, rewriting literary history.

1. Introduction

After the new period, in the Chinese literary longitude map, the relationship between the center and the margin, the mainstream and the non-mainstream is not static, but fluid. When mainstream literature comes to the margin, the relationship between the mainstream and the non-mainstream actually inverts, and mainstream literature also gains a larger mirror image and a new perspective to reflect on itself in the margin context. It is precisely in the continuous transformation of perspectives that the relationship between the self and the other also keeps changing: the margin is the other for the center and vice versa. Each literature in multinational literature is a mirror to the others, and literary theories also gain mutual visibility in the mutual reflection, thereby jointly confirming themselves as part of Chinese literature and constructing a more complex Chinese identity, but background is unified. The problems of mainstream literature and those of minority literature also influence each other during mutual contrast.

2. Evolution of National Literature in the New Era

Unlike the obvious domination of ideology over all cultural discourses over four decades, since the new era, various cultures have emerged from the suppression of the previous unitary political discourse. 1985 was called the "method year" and "concept year" of literature, the theoretical methods of Western natural sciences such as systems theory, information theory, and cybernetics, flowed into China and were adopted by Chinese scholars to correct the past single literary concepts of "revolutionary romanticism" and "revolutionary realism". Multinational literature also got development space.

Meanwhile, the sweeping tide of globalization has also brought the successful experiences of other countries' writers in exploring their local national cultures while stimulating the rapid development of China's economy. For instance, the Latin American literature boom, Garcia Marquez's "One Hundred Years of Solitude" won the Nobel Prize in Literature, all have proved that the third world writers, who grew up in non-Western centers and are typical modernist

writers, can also gain world recognition through their own creations and let the voice of their nation be heard by the world. Marquez's winning is a strong stimulus to ambitious young Chinese writers. Chinese writers try to recast China's national self with Western mindset to find a way to integrate tradition and modernity. When they aim the "roots" of their search at the national characteristics and national characters, they actively carry out and complete the writing of multinational literature, the marginal experience as a powerful weapon to confirm their own cultural identity in the fierce conflict between Westernization and localization.

The literary space of multinational literature also unfolds here, and national literature also changes from spontaneous literature to conscious literature. The team of minority writers has been expanded, they are not in quantity any more, but in literary contents, forms and related critical products; the research on national literary history and regional literature has also achieved considerable results. The literary works of minority writers such as Hui Zhang Chengzhi, Ewenki Ureltu, and Tibetan Zhaxi Dawa, take their own national life and history as the creative subjects, write in combination with national language and modern writing methods, and answer the question of where the "roots" of Chinese culture are from different dimensions. Although some scholars believe that "the characteristics of national literature were absorbed into the aesthetic tastes of the middle class and became part of a romantic lifestyle in this process [1]," But it's painfully apparent that national literature was discovered and known by more people; it was also expanding its influence while becoming cultural capital in this process.

3. Changes in Mirror Image Relationship

The development of multinational literature brought about by cultural root-tracing seems to be answering where the spiritual "roots" of the people are against the background of globalization, in essence, it is a pursuit of cultural identity. "Identity" has been regarded as an important mechanism for the generation of self-consciousness since Freud. Lacan advanced the mirror theory in *The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function Of The I As Revealed In Psychoanalytic Experience*[2] and proposed that all others can be a mirror of the subject, and the subject is to identify who he is in the constant looking in the mirror. The existence of mainstream literature determines the identity of non-mainstream literature, and the existence of majority determines the identity of majority.

Undeniably, political and economic centers such as Beijing and Shanghai have also been indubitable literary centers in the modern age, and these centers have the power to define cultural classics. Usually, intellectuals from the center write literary history and decide "what is a classic"; in order to obtain publishing space, creators and critics from non-central areas need to make their works closer to the "classics" defined by the "center" in literary genre, language style, etc. - namely the writing style recognized by the center.

However, after the trend of "rewriting literary history", China's literary map has increasingly become a complex network; the old center is still the center, but the center is no longer the simple "margin-center" from the founding of the People's Republic of China to before the reform and opening up - the margin that suffer massively, is intellectually incomplete, needed to be enlightened, and the center of a symbol recognized and admired, the emphasis on localism in multinational literature has led to the rise of literary forces outside the discourse center, and has the confidence to express their own heterogeneous belonging.

If we look at the literature history for comparison, poets both from Yunnan, the poem "Looking at Beijing from the Lancang River" of Zhang Chang and "Relatives" of Lei Pingyang can be used as contrasting examples. Zhang Chang's "I don't know, I don't know, you-a Beijinger, living in the heart of the motherland, do you feel honored?!" The envy and belonging of the border areas to the center are revealed between the lines, individual have to confirm themselves through the imaginary "Beijing" mirror a thousand miles away, "but I - a Bai people who grew up in the

upper reaches of the Lancang River, working in the lower reaches of the Lancang River, / let alone coming to Beijing, even if I meet in a dream - I will wake up with a smile. [3]" At this time, "Beijing" is the signifier of the political and literary center, while "I" is the signifier of various individuals. Only by imagining the mirror image of the distant big other "Beijing" can one confirm that he is a member of the big family of the motherland, and the joy of being called and accepted by this mirror image even reaches the level of "wake up with a smile", it can be seen that "Beijing", namely the position of "center", is lofty and inflexible. In this context, Beijing below the horizon, is in a high position in the poet's narrative space due to its high political position; the poet does not focus on the surroundings, but tries to get closer to the imaginary "Beijing".

This reflects is actually the poet's self that longs to be recognized by the center; he also proves that he is not a "Beijinger" while envying Beijing, he does not consider himself part of the center, and the place where he is, although also part of China, cannot become the center. The mirror image relationship between the center and the margin is top-down and rigid; "I" and the margin where "I" am must unconditionally integrate into the "center" and move closer to it to gain the legitimacy to speak for oneself, the heterogeneity of "growing up in the upper reaches of the Lancang River" and "Bai nationality" is very light on the scale of cultural capital.

Lei Pingyang presents a completely different mirror image relationship and self-identity in his works. In "Relatives", he directly wrote, "I only love Yunnan, where I stay, because I don't love any other province; I only love Tucheng Township in Zhaotong City, because I don't love any other township." [4] The poet dares to directly take the place where he is as the center of the poem and as the basis for the formation of his identity; he does not need to imagine a distant center as a mirror image, from his perspective, the place where he is the center, he can have a mirror image within reach. The traditional signifiers as the center - such as Beijing, Shanghai, etc., are even absent at this time and are not in the author's field of vision.

At this time, literary phenomena different from the literature of the previous thirty years occurred: the relationship between the margin and the center is no longer a static admiration and being admired, the writers in the margin have gained enough cultural confidence in the land where they grew up, confirm themselves with concrete and tangible things. Even if "Tucheng Township in Yunnan" is taken as the focus of observation, the so-called Beijing, Shanghai, southeast coast and other places have become "margin" in the eyes of the author. At this moment an equal mirror image is established between the center and the margin. The level of narrative is no longer measured by traditional standards such as economy and politics, the author can put the writing center and emotional focus on the visible and sensible surroundings. In Lei Pingyang's narrative, "Tucheng Township in Zhaotong City" becomes the absolute subject. From a space perspective, Instances such as these were everywhere in China at this time. In his Self-Portrait, Ji Dimaga, a native of Sichuan, recalled the thrilling moments of his own nation with montage means, wrote, "In fact, I have been, all betrayals, all loyalty, all life, all death for thousands of years, oh, world, please listen to my answer/I am a Yi person" [5], directly pointing out his national identity to express his national identity. Bayinboro, a native of Liaoning, also compared the past and present of the Manchus in his "Elegy for the Jurchens" and wrote: "My name is Bayinboro, and I am a pure descendant of Nurhaci. The more distant Nuchen, are my brave ancestors, emerge from the white mountains and black waters, use shining spears and armored horses overthrew a huge dynasty..." [6] giving shape to the abstract national identity, he consciously chooses to write about family history and village history similar to root-tracing literature, completes his spiritual root-tracing while imaginatively rewriting his own national history.

These writers belong to different ethnic groups and absorb different literary resources, however, of one accord, the emotional center of their writing falls on the ground beneath their feet and the others around them, without the need for admiring "Beijing" or other big others

that are traditionally at the center, thus confirming their identity, this kind of writing highlights the poet's personal emotions. Economic and political top is no longer a necessary condition for whether a region is the "center" of the subject, the subject can choose and change "what is the center" and "what is the margin" according to his own emotions. In the active choice of the subject, the relationship between the center and the margin is reversed, on the issue of "which mirror can reflect oneself", the writing subject has gained considerable freedom.

4. Reasons for Change and Problems Caused

So, what has led to this transformation of mirror image relationship and mirror image identity? Returning to the historical scene of multinational literary creation and criticism, the reason why "I" can replace "we" in the first thirty years is also due to the transformation of the writing paradigm of literary history. Under the influence of the "rewriting literary history" trend that emerged in the new era, the concept of "pure literature" was proposed, the "modernization" paradigm was established, "opposing literature and politics, emphasizing the modernization demands of literary practice and literary history writing. [7]"

Not only the mainstream literary history was rewritten. The rewriting of mainstream literary history will inevitably affect the rewriting of multinational literary history and multinational literature. In *Minority Literature in the Writing of Contemporary Chinese Literary History*[8], Zhao Mengyao started from the writing of minority literature in mainstream literary history and counted the mainstream literary history from the 1970s to the 1990s, he pointed out in it that from the 1970s to the 1980s, most literary histories did not add a special chapter on minority literature, and failed to recognize the particularity of minority literature; for example, minority writers such as Lao She and Shen Congwen were often integrated into corresponding literary schools. There are few literary histories that have special records of minority literature, for example, 22 institutions including Shandong University published *Contemporary Chinese Literary History* in 1980, the formulation of "brother nationality writers" is used to replace minority literature. This formulation personifies nationalities and metaphorically uses the relationship between nationalities as brothers in a family.

However, since the new era, during rewriting literary history, minority literature, which has never occupied an important position in literary history, has been noticed, "minority literature" has become a recognized formulation, and the history of minority literature has also been included in the scope of rewriting. For example, the "History of Contemporary Chinese Literature" compiled by five colleges in Jilin Province has listed minority literature as a special chapter, and used the formulation "minority literature", respect the particularity of minorities. According to incomplete statistics of the author, more than 20 histories and works on minority literature were published in the 1980s and 1990s alone. The list is as follows:

It is thus clear that over the decade, the history of minority literature was mainly written by research departments such as the research institute of minority; occasionally, other publishers such as Shanghai Literature & Art Publishing House, Hunan People's Publishing House, and People's Publishing House participated, spreading the north and south China; and not only Chinese was involved, but also minority languages. It could be argued that under the trend of rewriting mainstream literary history, the specialized history writing of minority literature has ushered in a prolific decade.

Table 1. Histories and works on minority literature in the 1980s and 1990s

Publication Year	Book Title	Publisher
1980	Selected Works of Chinese Minority Literature	Editorial Committee of "Selected Works of Chinese Minority Literature"
1981	Selected Folk Stories of Chinese Minorities (Volume 1 & 2)	China Ethnic Literature Society
1981	Selected Works of Chinese Minority Literature	Shanghai Literature & Art Publishing House
1983	Volume 2 of Collected Works of Yunnan Minority Literature	Yunnan Branch of Chinese Minority Literature Association
1983	Chinese Minority Literature	Hunan People's Publishing House
1983	Minority Literature Essays	China Ethnic Literature Society
1983	Volume 1 of Selected Folk Stories of Chinese Minorities - Mongolian	China Ethnic Literature Society
1984	Reference Materials for Compiling the History of Chinese Minority Literature	Institute of Ethnic Literature, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
1985	Chinese Minority Religions	
1985	Collected Works of the History of Chinese Minority Philosophy	China Social Sciences Press
1985	Selected Works of Chinese Minority Literature (Yang Liangcai, Deng Minwen, et al.)	People's Publishing House
1987	Minority Literature Essays	China Ethnic Literature Society
1990	Papers and Work Indexes of Chinese Minority Literature	

5. Crisis Behind the Discourse

In the "rewriting literary history" since 1980, whether it is the rewriting of mainstream literary history or the rewriting of minority literary history, or the creation under the influence of these rewriting trends, it is inevitable to avoid the recurrence of trend of thought, namely the recurrence of questions of the times.

Under the observation of mirror image of Chinese mainstream literature, for national literature, this recurrence is manifested in the repeated writing of national fables and the huge contrast between the glorious national cultural tradition and the decline of national culture in modern capitalist society. Just as the May Fourth Movement has become a mirror image representing the problems of Chinese mainstream literature, the writing of the history of each nation in national literature is no longer a rewriting of the history of national literature, and become a bailment for returning to the prosperity of the past in imagination. The return of the suppressed

mainstream literary intellectuals in the 1980s and personalized literature in national literature are essentially a kind of homogeneous narrative, and the occurring problems are also the same problems in the development of literature.

Just like “The recurrence of the May Fourth Movement at each historical transition, it is the symbol of the unresolved modern Chinese problems that erupted with the May Fourth Movement”[9], a large number of works recalling the glorious moments of national history during historical transformation often emerge in national literature, and it is a symbol that some of the problems erupted during the development of this nation remain unsolved to this day. Various minorities within the Chinese nation have formed a real community language by way of language movements such as “unity of speech and writing” and “speaking Mandarin and writing standard characters”, and Mandarin has also included people of each nationality in an “imaginary community”. However, when will national literature can get rid of the curse of “returning to the May Fourth Movement”? this is still is a problem that should be solved quickly. Incomplete modernity is also manifested in national literature at this time.

6. Conclusion

The reform and opening up in the 1980s, especially the ideological emancipation movement, brought opportunities for the development of multinational literature. With the rise of the tide of globalization and the introduction of Western literary and artistic trends, multinational literature has gradually broken through the traditional national and regional restrictions, began to actively absorb foreign cultural resources and theoretical concepts to carry out self-renewal and reconstruction. In this process, multinational literature is no longer limited to show folk customs and local conditions, but deeply explores the complex relationship among national identity, cultural identity and modernity. Especially driven by root-tracing literature, minority writers explore and construct new literary expressions by returning to the cultural roots of their own nationalities, thereby re-examining and confirming national culture.

When reviewing the evolution of multinational literature in the 1980s, the dual changes in the form and content of literary creation during this period are revealed. The multinational literature of this period not only innovated in literary expression, but also explored how the literatures of various nationalities formed a complex and dynamic identity relationship through mutual contrast and reflection in the interaction between cultural centers and margin. However, theoretical and practical dilemma are also lurked behind the prosperity of multinational literature in the 1980s. During rewriting literary history, although minority writers tried to reconstruct their own cultural memory and historical narrative through epic creation and national fables, in addition to using past resources and writing about current problems, is there any other way out for national literature?

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