

A Comparison of Paradigms for Writing Literary History--Thirty Years of Modern Chinese Literature and Harvard's New History of Modern Chinese Literature as Examples

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Abstract:

Thirty Years of Modern Chinese Literature and Harvard's New History of Modern Chinese Literature have significant writing differences, but both of them are representative books on the history of modern and contemporary Chinese literature. In this paper, we will try to start from the perspective of academic history and academic concepts, take into account their different social identities, try to compare the reasons and backgrounds of the differences between the two, and initially discuss the gains and losses and development of each of the two paradigms.

Keywords: literary history, writing paradigms, writing prospects, comparison

1. Correlation and Evolution

From the external background of literary history, if we are to examine the origin and development process of Chinese literary history, we must realize that the history of Chinese literature has been written in the past, and that the history of Chinese literature has been written in the past. If we look at the literature specialization in the Peking University Hall, we must look at the culture of the time, which was based on the idea of "applying oneself to the world", and there was already a prototype of the history of Chinese literature based on "the flow of writings through the ages", and "the history of foreign literatures", which was a clear name for the subject. "As a product of disciplinary reform, the writing of Chinese literary history and the reform of writing are inevitably accompanied by academic reform and educational reflection, and if external research is carried out, attention has to be paid to the connection between the history of modern and contemporary Chinese literature and the history of academia.

From within the history of literature. It is still in a shaping form, and its writing has developed its own evolutionary logic along with the evolution of academic concepts. In the process of evolution, it has always been entangled and contradicted with concepts such as "literature", "historiography", "Chinese tradition", and so on. In the process of evolution, it has always been entangled and contradicted with the concepts of "literature", "historiography" and "Chinese tradition". Especially in the field of modern and contemporary Chinese literature, on the one hand, as

the most prominent part of the cultural movement, it is greatly related to the rising and falling of literary trends in China since 1917, with new ideas in the fields of poetry, novels, dramas, and essays, which are obviously different from the products of ancient Chinese literature in terms of content, implying that it deviates from the tradition in terms of ideology and methodology; on the other hand, no matter what style of literary history, it has always been entangled and contradicted with such concepts as "literature", "historiography", and "Chinese tradition". On the other hand, no matter what style of literary history it is, it also involves the boundary between literature and historiography. Under the influence of the "new historiography", history has attempted to enter a process of "scientization" and to draw a clear line with literature, while literary history has simultaneously emphasized the specificity of literary history and the concept of historiography in the writing of history, both in terms of presenting "The history of the development of human emotion and thought", but also to adopt empirical methods to ensure the accuracy of the content, driven by the spirit of historiography and the influence of the specificity of literature, the writing of the history of literature can not help but be oriented to a wider range of materials and more genres before the emergence of a new concept of historiography, thus constantly updating its own way of writing and shaking the core concepts mentioned above. This is a way of updating one's writing style and shaking the core concepts mentioned above. Therefore, the genetic lineage of the history of modern and contemporary Chinese literature is deeply connected

with the academic background, among which *Thirty Years of Modern Chinese Literature* (hereinafter referred to as “Qian’s book”) and *Harvard History of Modern Chinese Literature* (hereinafter referred to as “Wang’s book”) represent different paradigms in their respective academic environments, and they have been widely recognized as the most important works in the history of modern Chinese literature in China. represent different paradigms in their respective academic environments. Chinese literary history writing is mostly influenced by Langsong, firstly, the task of literary history writers is to describe the process and state of literary evolution, and to accurately express the form, technique, thought and emotion of literary works; secondly, they pay attention to the characteristics of the era’s literary trend, as well as the connection and influence of the environment and time associated with it; lastly, they concentrate their efforts on the introduction of representative writers and representative works, so that they can accurately label the literary spirit of the era. Finally, we concentrate on the introduction of representative works by representative authors in order to accurately label the literary spirit of the times.

The foreign paradigm represented by the *Harvard New History of Modern Chinese Literature* seeks to build a new dialogue between literature and history, breaking the “grand narrative” and focusing on the vivid details of literature in daily life. Compared with Qian’s traditional style of writing, Wang has a broader vision of the world and the media, focusing not only on the changes in the entire Chinese-speaking world, but also on the changes that have occurred in the Chinese-speaking world. The inclusion in literature of many things belonging to the realm of the plastic and synthesizing arts, and the encouragement of free writing, is a break with tradition, but it is also an expansion on the basis of tradition, which can lead to confusion, but it also reflects the fact that, under the impetus of modernity, the boundaries of tradition are certainly breaking down, and more factors are inevitably joining in, and that the writing of literary history must courageously adapt to the present situation in order to welcome more possibilities. The writing of literary history must bravely adapt to this situation in order to welcome more possibilities.

There are many factors that have led to paradigm shifts between the two, and in the view of some historians. From time to time, society requires people not only to reproduce previous events in their minds, but also to embellish, cut, and perfect them, which means that history writers of any nature need to maintain a high degree of vigilance against the phenomenon of the deviation of collective memory, in which only by paying a high degree of attention to the memories and thoughts of the history writers, and in par-

ticular examining the sources of their thoughts and the use of historical materials, can we compare or complement the two. In this regard, it is only by paying great attention to the memories and thoughts of history writers, especially by examining their sources of thought and the use of historical materials, that the two can be compared or complemented.

In conclusion, especially for literary history, its identity is more complicated than that of general history (the highlighting of the identity of academic education, the combination of literature and history), its writing is often combined with a large amount of literary criticism, and the preference and screening of importance are also different, which brings more ornaments to the already chaotic memories of this emotional factor. In keeping with the spirit and goal of historiography, it is pointless to argue about which writing paradigm is orthodox, and equality of status is the basis for comparing Qian’s and Wang’s texts.

2. Outline of Thirty Years of Modern Chinese Literature and its Gains and Losses

The book was first published in 1985, when modern literary research had just been revitalized, and attempts were still being made to get rid of the influence of political movements. As the first batch of graduate students after the ten years of chaos, scholars of the eighties, represented by Qian Liqun, were regarded as radical “New Wave Scholars”, and it took a great deal of courage for young scholars to take on such a large volume of writing in the prevailing environment. Under the circumstances, it took great courage for young scholars to undertake such a large volume of writing. Therefore, no matter how Qianben is viewed from today’s point of view, it is clear that, by the standards of 1985, its birth already had a great pioneering effect, and as a basic textbook, it provided great vitality to the study of modern Chinese literature.

The selection of the “first thirty years” is based on both the nature of the textbook as a response to the university curriculum and the existing academic landscape. The former implies that as a widely influential required reading in Chinese language departments, Qianben has completed the identity change from an advanced book to a relatively conservative textbook, and it must ensure the practicality and operability of the teaching materials in its writing and selection, the historical materials should be as comprehensive and objective as possible, and the content should not be too difficult and obscure, and as a presentation of facts, it also needs to write history in a way that is fully committed to the subjective feelings of the writers. Exclude the subjective feelings of the writer. And learning

and there are primary and secondary, the latter requires in the content as much as possible to grasp the big and put small (at the expense of part of the world perspective), in order to ensure that the content of the system at the same time, in the screening should grasp the mainstream of the academic community and the consensus, too controversial avant-garde content and some of the unfavorable research perspectives of the country should not be the same on such occasions, as a tailor of the historical material, the content of the writer's screening and the information he receives, which involves his academic background as well as his own research perspective. As a tailor of historical material, the writer's selection of content is related to the information he receives, which involves his academic background and the development of scholarship in his time.

In the case of Qian Liqun, the editor-in-chief of the book, the concepts of their generation of scholars were deeply influenced by the university education of the 1950s and 1960s, and their governance was branded with the era of the 1980s. During the ideological liberation, they were awakened through painful reflection, and at the same time, they were fortunate to meet the old scholars who survived the "aftermath of the disaster", who not only possessed solid basic training, but also directly inherited the spiritual genealogy inherited from the May Fourth Movement, and were given the same opportunity as the New Culture Movement to learn and develop the new culture. This group of old men not only possessed solid basic training, but also directly inherited the spiritual genealogy of the May Fourth Movement, which was directly related to the New Culture Movement. Not only Qian Liqun, but also in the field of modern and contemporary Chinese literature, Peking University in the 1980s produced such founders as Chen Pingyuan and Wen Rumin, and a large part of China's existing academic pattern, as mentioned above, comes from the shaping of the first group of Peking University's graduate students of modern and contemporary literature, so that the study of modern and contemporary Chinese literature attaches great importance to the creative fruits of the May Fourth Movement and the New Culture Movement, in addition to the fact that the family was originally characterized by the enlightenment of intellectuals and the Communist student movement, and the fact that the Qian family had a strong connection with the New Culture Movement. In addition, Qian Liqun's family was originally enlightened intellectuals and leaders of the Communist student movement, and under the joint molding of school education and family education, he was able to outline the basic appearance of *Thirty Years of Modern Chinese Literature*, which "speaks of both inauguration and inheritance".

In the academic lineage, Qian Liqun was directly influenced by Wang Yao's academic origin of "studying Zhu and Lu". Zhu Ziqing, as the earliest professor to offer a course on new literature, whose *Outline of the Study of New Chinese Literature* directly influenced the style and structure of Wang Yao's *Historical Manuscript of New Literature*, differed from Zhu Ziqing by greatly increasing the space of introducing Lu Xun, especially under the "leftist" ideology, to maintain the scientific and academic nature of Lu Xun's study. Unlike Zhu Ziqing, Wang Yao's book greatly increased the length of Lu Xun's introduction, especially in the "left" trend to maintain the scientific and academic nature of Lu Xun's study, the "Historical Manuscript of New Literature" takes the time period, genre, trend, and key figures as the main categorization method, and this style and the preference of Lu Xun are also reflected in the *Qianben*. This style and preference for Lu Xun is also reflected in Qian's work. It can be seen that the teaching of Wang Yao was another source of Qian's writing style. In Qian Liqun's recollection, Wang Yao was a warrior who was highly compatible with Lu Xun in terms of spirituality, emphasizing the value standard of "people-oriented", and Qian Liqun's writing stance is also well versed in this, and he has always emphasized the struggle of "refusing to forget, and transforming suffering into spiritual resources", which is his struggle. He has also always emphasized the struggle of "refusing to forget and transforming suffering into spiritual resources", which is an important reason why his textbooks have become exemplary.

Above all, the overview of *Thirty Years of Modern Chinese Literature* can be seen as follows: with the two ideological emancipations of the May Fourth and the 1980s as the main line, and with the tradition of literary history written in the style of Wang Yao (*Langsong*) as the body, and subject to the function of a textbook, it maintains a clear and systematic intellectual framework and a simple writing style, which is to outline the basic clues of the modern literary evolution that has taken place clearly within China.

Concerning the criticism of *Thirty Years of Modern Chinese Literature*, the criticisms of Wang Yao's *Historical Manuscripts* in the last century can also be taken as a reference, in which "cutting off the historical roots of the new literature" and "analyzing literary trends less in relation to the background and social foundation of the times" are still objective, minus the class-consciousness and political correctness. Qian Liqun overcame the latter. Though *Thirty Years of Modern Chinese Literature* is a work ahead of its time, it still has inherent flaws in its writing method. The book reflects a strong "cult of origins", which is not really the same as "cause" or "be-

ginning”, which suggests that a great deal of danger lurks in writing in this way, and that forced interpretations are inherently controversial. The fact that “origin” is not really the same as “cause” or “beginning” suggests that there is a great deal of danger lurking in this type of writing, and that forced interpretation is inherently controversial. In conjunction with the “cult of origins”, time is regarded as a unit of measurement, and the sifting around the core ideas creates a break in the “continuum of history”, turning the writing of literary history into a form of argumentation. In short, the tangles and pitfalls of literary history mentioned in the previous section are typically displayed in *Thirty Years of Modern Chinese Literature*.

3. Outline of Harvard China’s New History of Modern Literature, and Gains and Losses

Wang’s book contrasts with Qian’s in almost every respect; it is a relatively new book, one of many attempts to rewrite Harvard’s series of literary histories, and, freed from the shackles of a textbook, it naturally enjoys a fuller space for growth, and its loose writing and mixed ideas can be more tolerated.

Compared with the traditional method of writing literary history in China, which is based on “history” and organizes events in the flow of time, this method is more effective than the traditional method of writing literary history in China. Wang Dewei summarizes the essence of literary history as “writing,” which seems to be a neutral term with a subjective element (not favoring either “literature” or “history”). His more far-reaching reflections on the “literature” and “history” controversies stem from his fluency in foreign languages and his good training in both Chinese and foreign languages departments, which enable him to build up a comparative and reflective perspective with a more solid theoretical foundation related to the history of literature. In contrast to the functionalism of Russian formalism and Eliot’s “structure of coexistence”, he emphasizes that subjective screening is often guilty of “trimming the toes to fit the shoes” and stifles the emergence of multiple criteria, covering a wide range of standard systems, such as “classics”, “classics”, “classics”, and “classics”. Taking the political novels of the late Qing Dynasty as an experiment, Wang Dewei explains the strong political movement purpose and fictionalization in them, which shatters the possibility of “proving history by literature” and “carrying the truth by literature”, and also puts forward the idea of the “classic”. This has shattered the possibility of “using literature to prove history” and “using literature to carry the message”, and also put forward the urgency of rewriting literary history: 1. the writing of

literary history needs the support of theory, especially the need to gather theories from all sides to make a breakthrough; 2. to break the research method of form/content and periphery/essence, and to show a more complex and multi-faceted creative process, and to recognize the essence of the layers of history; 3. to avoid limiting oneself to a certain area, and to pay attention to the edges that are neglected by the traditional literary history; 4. to avoid the need for the study of literary history and the importance of the history of the Qing Dynasty.

This rewriting of Wang Dewei also requires a distinction of nature. As a matter of fact, as a country that attaches importance to the writing of literary history, the rewriting of China’s literary history has been going on continuously, but this kind of rewriting is only a modification and mending of the theory that comes along with the change of regime and the development of the history of thought, but it is just moving from one cage to another, and it can’t escape from the construction of the “heavenly and earthly right” that is associated with the history of poetry. The core of this construction is the theory of literary evolution and the mode of grand narrative. What Wang tries to do is to utilize two types of resources, namely, the system of educational thought and the system of modernity, which are different from those of mainland China, to fight against this traditional mode. Part of his thinking comes from Chen Sihe’s and others’ reflections on literary history in the 1980s, in which it was mentioned that “the history of Chinese literature is not a history of continuous development, it often falls into stagnation and retrogression”, and this kind of sober thinking is in contrast to the deafening “Peking University School”, in which “Chinese literature is not a history of continuous development, it often falls into stagnation and retrogression”. This kind of cool thinking contrasts sharply with the deafening construction and struggle of the “Peking University School”. The same emancipation of ideas in the 1980s produced different results in Beijing, where the academic style was sophisticated and solid, and in Shanghai, where it was avant-garde and open.

On the basis of the above ideas, Wang Dewei tries to complete the splicing of literary history with a group of writers, utilizing everyone’s respective fields of expertise to show the complex process of literary history, in which more types of more detailed historical materials are encompassed. In his writing, there is no longer a consistent sense of history and core ideas; instead, there is a meticulous reasoning of the possibilities accumulated in more corners and processes, and even more interdisciplinary knowledge is involved. Although similar literary history writing had already appeared in Harvard’s relevant work before the *Harvard New History of Modern Chinese Lit-*

erature, the author still regards it as a kind of experimental writing, and one of the significance of its birth is to “invite” more voices and dialogues, to open up a battlefield, to look for new possibilities of literary history writing, and even to Therefore, his paradigm no longer takes time as the axis of narration, but covers all kinds of issues in an inclusive way, triggering the touching feeling of “seeing the big with the small”, and also allowing him to choose any direction for extension and network connection, just like Lego parts. In the same era, readers can thus see the parallel development of literature within the same period of time. Among the scholars invited by Wang to participate in the book, there are scholars with very different academic concepts such as Yuwen Shaoan and Xi Mi, two diametrically opposed literary propositions of left-wing and right-wing literature, as well as topics such as Han Han and Internet poetry, which are closely related to the current situation, so it can be said that, if one’s writing can’t avoid subjectivity, then to try to absorb a variety of subjectivity is to promote objectivity, and to “write through as many different kinds of writing as possible” is to promote objectivity. Wang Dewei has succeeded in “dissolving the limitations of general history of literature through as many different kinds of writing as possible”.

“Modernity” is another weapon of Wendell’s, on the one hand. The “Chinese modernity” has been enlarged into the identity of “diversified modernity” and “Asian identity”, by which Wang breaks the concept of “China”, utilizes the resources of “Chinese-speaking world” to grasp more evidence of cultural development, and realizes the transcendence of the internal literary history of mainland China in terms of its compatibility with Western studies. Wang breaks the concept of “China” and utilizes the resources of the “Chinese-speaking world” to grasp more evidences of cultural development, thus realizing the transcendence of the internal literary history of mainland China in terms of its compatibility with Western studies. On the other hand, he also draws on the methodology of modernity. With the expression of subjectivity and openness to give full play to the role of the vernacular as a medium between the literary language and foreign languages, Wang has never boasted of his “comprehensive and objective” character as a writer of history, but on the contrary, it is filled with self-expression, and, as mentioned above, this book does not rely on the self-discipline of a single author to ensure objective writing.

Wang’s book, as a “testing ground”, complements and contrasts with *Thirty Years of Modern Chinese Literature*, so the advantages of Qian’s book are also the disadvantages of Wang’s book. It is undeniable that not only is a smooth chronology the basis for the examination, but even at the level of use and learning, the writing of a gen-

eral history still maintains a great advantage over other attempts, not only as a kind of textbook, but also as a logical guarantee of the efficient dissemination of knowledge, whereas Wang is almost helpless in the face of the expansion of knowledge and information, and it is difficult to say how the result will be if it is utilized to construct a framework of knowledge. More importantly, the boundary that should be clarified in the first place in literary history is in fact the direction in which it should be emphasized, whether it is the educational side, the academic side, or both? Just from the perspective of the general history itself, its implementation and systematic nature is beyond the reach of Wang’s writing method, Wang Dewei has been emphasizing his experimentation, innovation and thinking, but in fact, in terms of social value, Qian Ben’s influence and benchmarking role is obviously greater than that of Wang Ben, and the two can be developed in parallel without contradiction. In terms of comprehensiveness and objectivity. The best scholars of the Annalist school have proved that, with enough effort and a precise grasp of the historical material, it is possible to write the most comprehensively under the present conditions about any part of history. Therefore, instead of blaming these shortcomings on methodology, it is more likely that writers of literary history usually over-abuse their emotions and lack a grasp of historical materials, which, of course, is a characteristic of the discipline and cannot be blamed.

4. Concluding remarks

To sum up, each paradigm of literary history writing is facing different difficulties, and in the process of the world’s change, literary history writing is also in the process of change, and this expansion of information casts more and more solid barriers between various subtle fields, and literary history (history) is formally created to break down such barriers.

In the final analysis, the source of the difference between the two books is not so much the difference between academic history and academic thought, but the long-term cultural and historical situation that shaped this difference, and this kind of subtle influence can hardly be reduced to a few monotonous elements. Wang was influenced by the Western culture, while Qian was also influenced by Soviet Russian thought and Marxism in mainland China, and this difference in the general environment not only shaped them, but also shaped everyone in the era.

Literary history has not found a suitable place for itself with its multiple identities, he can be professional, literacy, spirit, fun, even all the time in the wisdom of the user, the user can be the instructor on the podium, or students to cope with the final assignment, this identity of the plu-

ralism in fact, the history of literature to the exploration of the pluralism of the query: that is, the history of literature should be how the positioning of the pluralism of the construction. This pluralism of identities in fact questions the exploration of literary history into pluralism: how should literary history be positioned to construct pluralism?

In the author's point of view, literature and history are distinct from each other, and literary history must not be written as a literary work, just as history will not give way to literature. In addition, a distinction should be made between historical knowledge and historical data, as the former is always changing and is intimately related to modern issues, and one of the goals of literary history should be to promote the development of the former, and to understand the present in light of the past. In the midst of the rapid iteration of Western academia, which is characterized by a high number of theories and a low number of achievements, it may be time for us to steady our own pace, and to learn from the past once again.

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