Surveillance and Construction of New China Literature: Focused on the Re-classic Project in Chinese Modern Literature (by PLPH) in Seventeen Years

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Abstract. The paper explores the correlation between the People’s Literature Publishing House and the re-classic project in Chinese modern literature in Seventeen Years (1949-1966). Through the close reading in combination with the writers’ preface and postscript, editor’s remarks of publishing, Seventeen Years’ Wenyi Bao and the People's Daily, we have found that Chinese modern literature writer’ works (including complete works, corpuses, selected works) have been revised mostly by the author or editors on the original. They have annotation, avoiding and modification during the publishing procession. In summing up it may be stated that revisions were caused for two reasons in general. On one hand, it is based on maintaining the social legitimacy of the ruling class ideology changes; on the other hand it is to construct the specification of the Chinese nation community language changes. The re-classic project in Chinese modern literature (by PLPH) in Seventeen Years is obviously the product of specific history. The re-classic project in fact promoted New China construction ideology leadership and the positive practice of power of discourse. National authoritative presses revised the original before publication in PRC. On one hand, writers got recognition and new political status; On the other hand works also was made the opportunities for the obtaining of remodeling classic in new society.

Introduction

The People’s Literature Publishing House (PLPH) was founded in Beijing in 1951, in Seventeen Years period a complete works were published (Lu Xun complete works); Seven corpuses (respectively, Qu Qiubai omnibus, Moruo corpus, MAO Dun omnibus, Ba Jin corpus, Ye Shengtao corpus, Zheng Zhenduo corpus, JinYi corpus), a the latter three corpuses once were interrupted; more than seventy selections (respectively, selection on the writer Lu Xun, Guo Moruo, MAO Dun and Ba Jin, Lao She, Cao Yu, Shen Congwen, Ai Qing, Ding Ling, Zhao Shuli, Sha Ting, Xia Yan, Ai Wu, Wu Zuxiang, Tian Jian, Qu Qiubai and so on). As New China’s largest and earliest professional publishing house, the publishing which was revised about Chinese modern literature on the original has far-reaching influence in seventeen years. So we name it a re-classic project in the cultural circle.

The Foundation of PLPH

At the beginning of the founding of New China, there was no professional literature publishing house. Books about literature was mainly composed of three kinds of presses. The first was Xinhua Bookstore which operated as national synthetic publishing units. The second was non-literary stated press such as Workers Press. The third was local press and private publishing house which was the most type. For example Xinwenyi Press in Shanghai, Huadong Renmin Press, Kaiming Bookstore, Beixin Publishing Press, Shanghai Zazhi Company, Zhonghua Book Company, Qunyi Press, Pingming Press and so on (the location what is said above was in Shanghai); Shenghuo Duzhe Xinzhi Sanlian Bookstore in Beijing; Zhongnan Renmin Press in Wuhan, Wuhan Tongsu Tushu Press; Xinshaonian Press, Qiushi Press (above in Hongkong); Renjian Bookstore in Guangzhou;
Tongsu Wenyi Press in Shenyang, all presses above were famous in literature and arts field at that time.

At the end of 1950, Arts Council in Ministry of Cultural has an editorial office, whose duty was to publish Zhongguo Renmin Wenyi Series, Xinwenxue Series and the Soviet Union Literature Series, they were published in Xinhua Bookstore, Sanlian Bookstore and Kaiming Bookstore. But above three presses were busy so Zhouyang (Vice minister and the actual head in cultural circle) was determined to establish a literature press affiliated to Ministry of Cultural. Zhouyang instructed Sha Kefu (Director of the General Office) and Jiang Tianzuo (editorial director) to prepare the press.\(^1\) When Jiang Tianzuo went to the General Administration of Press and Publication(GAPB) to discuss the founding of PLPH, the time came that GAPB wanted to classify the presses to help the specialization and cooperation. On July 17, 1950, the People’s Daily published Hu Yuzhi’s (the head of GAPB) report public-private partnerships and division of labor cooperation in publishing industry in the meeting including Beijing and Tianjin. The report pointed out reasonable adjustment of public-private partnerships in the publishing industry. On the private presses, the policy was to encourage and support them under the leadership of state-owned publishing industry. Meanwhile the report pointed that the government wanted to implement issuing and publishing division and the specialization on presses. Xinhua Bookstore specialized in issuing and the publishing was been banned. To set up books and periodicals trading company, which will agent the issue of the public and private publishing house work. The publication function of the Xinhua Bookstore will be replaced by some professional national publishing houses. PLPH was under dual leadership of Ministry of Culture and GAPB, Ministry of Culture transferred the editorial staff in Arts Council to PLPH, GAPB ordered that parts of staff in Sanlian Bookstore to transfer to PLPH. At the same time, Ministry of Culture recruited a group of young people to participate in the press, the total of about 40 persons.\(^2\) In March,1951, PLPH was set up.\(^3\) On April 25, 1951, the People’ Daily published an ad that Wenyi Bao (Vol.4,No.1) would be published by PLPH. It’s the first time appearing in the country's most important media about PLPH. On June 23, 1951, Chenyun as committee member of the central government and deputy prime minister, director of the finance and economic committee signed a business license for PLPH. At that time the site of PLPH was on Dongsitiao Hutong 4” in Beijing. Then in January, 1958, it was moved to Chaonei Street 166”.

PLPH is the first national professional literature press in New China. Hereafter the other national literature presses such as Shidai Wenyi press, Tongsu Duwu press, China Youth Publishing House and Liberation Army Arts Press had less influence in cultural circles. PLPH became the crown in national presses. In the field of literature publishing it was in the most important position. According to introduction of the publishing draft for five year (1958-1962) by Wang Renshu (as the leader of PLPH) in September, 1958, in seven years, PLPH publish 1571 species; Cadres in terms of growth from 97 to more than 280 at the end of 1957. It had manuscripts and books of the translator as many as 1863 persons in 1957, including basic authors and translators, there were more than 640 persons.\(^4\) In the specific publishing business, PLPH contained Chinese Modern Literature (including the May 4th Literature, the contemporary literature), classical Chinese literature, foreign literature classics, the Soviet Union and other brother countries’ literature works and theory books of literature and art and so on. From the point of issue, PLPH also was very successful. Amount from fifty thousand to more than one hundred copies of classic and modern outstanding works, accounts for about 25% of the total varieties of publications.\(^5\) The above results had been related to PLPH strength, concept and the first president and chief editor Feng Xuefeng.

The Planning of Re-classic Project

On July 15, 1952, GAPB drew up a specialization of work about the central level presses, in which planned PLPH as the country's literature books publishing institution. Its tasks could be illustrated as follows: (1) editing and publication of Chinese modern literature; (2) editing literary theory and literary history; (3) editing and publishing the important literature since the May 4th; (4) compiling the outstanding popular literature and folk literature and so on.\(^6\) Thus it can be seen that
PLPH focused on the important literature since the May 4th. On September 5, 1959, Ministry of Cultural adjusted the Literature, Drama, Youth, Children, Art, Cultural Relics Publishing House publishing task in order to further clear the press of the division of labor, strengthen the collaboration among the presses. The main regulation of PLPH was illustrated: selection of publishing excellent literary works in contemporary China (works must be social tested in two or three years, some also should be modified to improve by the original author); selection and publication the higher levels of literary theories, literary research and literature works; Sorting and publication the fine tradition works of China's ethnic brothers; compiling and publication works since the May 4th literature; publications of the most important Chinese classical literary classics and so on.\(^7\)

Compared with professional division of labor in 1952, PLPH in this phase attached more importance to the construction of contemporary literature. This was suit to Great Leap Forward for literature and formulated the tenth anniversary of the founding of PRC. At the same time PLPH also emphasized the editing and publishing the works since the May 4th literature so that it could meet the needs of colleges and universities, research institutes and society. As an important platform for publishing modern literature writer sets, the purport of PLPH ensured the modern literature classic building and the literature since the May 4th was largely out of the show. For the future further more systematic sorting and study of modern Chinese literature, it provided a good foundation.\(^8\)

A former vice President of PLPH Xu Juemin recalled that during the fifties, on Chinese modern literature, besides *Lu Xun complete works*, *Moruo corpus*, *MAO Dun omnibus*, *Ba Jin corpus* had been published in order, each works had more than ten volumes, and PLPH also published *Ye Shengtao corpus*, *Zheng Zhenduo corpus*, the former had several volumes, the latter had two volumes. As for the May 4th writers’ anthologies, PLPH published nearly 50 kinds or so. The circle of culture tended to recall the old time and named it the golden age. Because of publications like a raging and it had high quality, which basically has the spread value.\(^9\)

Seventeen Years, in general, Chinese modern literature writers set list according to the writer's revolutionary credentials, historical position selection, according to the hierarchical power needs of the space. The writers’ publication of the time sequence also had relatively strict definition, thus promoted the forming of new Chinese literature field order. Vice President of PLPH Lou Shiyi once recalled that in 1956 *Lu Xun complete works* with annotations was published for the first time, the readers thought the important writers' selected works since the May 4th could not meet the need of further study so PLPH planned to publish important writer multi-volume corpus. At the beginning it included *Moruo corpus* (17 volumes), *MAO Dun omnibus* (10 volumes), *Ba Jin corpus* (14 volumes). According to the schedule, additionally PLPH published *Ye Shengtao corpus*, *Zheng Zhenduo corpus*, but both was interrupted after only 2-3 volumes. *Ding Ling corpus* was planned in the list but the author suffered the great criticism in 1955 and in 1957 was made the Right so the corpus was cancelled. As for *Lao She corpus*, the author declined. He said that those old works also was out of time and to print Rickshaw Boy was enough.\(^10\)

Modern literature writer anthology publication also has a strict hierarchy, it was according to the writers’ close and distant relationship with CPC and the revolution before the founding of PRC. Once Lou Shiyi recalled that the beginning on select material was focus on writers that generally accepted the revolution and the progress of society. As if the earliest works were Sha Ting, Ai Wu fiction anthology, as well as the Leftist writers martyrs and other CPC writers, such as Jiang Guangci, Hong Lingfei, Ying Xiuren, Pan Mohua...the selected works of poetry and prose. Circle was not big but taboo also had a lot. Such as the influential writers since the May 4th who had some distance in the political attitude to the revolution before Liberation, PLPH considered carefully on the list of publishing\(^11\). Thus New China political ecological that formed potential power field on writer selection standard apparently occupied a larger discourse decision-making.

**The Compiling Practice of Re-classic Project**

The Chinese modern literature writer’s works (including complete works, corpuses, selected works) have been revised mostly by the author or editors on the original. They have annotation, avoiding and modification during the publishing procession. Modification refers to the author or
editor revised ideology, language and aesthetic aspects of the original and collected again. Avoiding refers to a writer or editor deliberately cut articles that once were published when presses republished the works. Annotation refers to make a meaningful interpretation without changing the original with comments and excursus except general objectivity of knowledge to explain. Through the change to Chinese modern literature writer sets in Seventeen Years that revisions were caused for two reasons in general. On one hand, it is based on maintaining the social legitimacy of the ruling class ideology changes; On the other hand it is to construct the specification of the Chinese nation community language changes. The former include the revolution of workers and peasants, the underlying laborer, pure personal material interests, the romantic love and sex description; the latter including the classical Chinese to vernacular, dialect to mandarin and keep improving on the individual statements of polishing and modifications.

Such as Lu Xun complete works, editor had a deliberate cut about Trotsky's statement involved in the fourth volume Nanqiangbeidiao. Trotsky was an early leader of Soviet Russia and the Soviet Union. After Lenin's death, as the opposition party leader, he was deported in 1929. As with the Soviet Union's rulers Stalin opposing political dissent, Appreciating Trotsky was a critique of the Soviet government, so PLPH cut Trotsky's statement and had no explains. In the first volume of Qu Qibai omnibus, much modifications exist, in chapter 14 of the original the Returned Guests in Dead House, in chapter 21 New Bourgeoisie, in chapter 24 Nationality were all completely deleted, in chapter 18 Lenin Trotsky was in the title changed to Lenin, involving Trotsky's statement in this article was deleted. The above changing and avoiding apparently considered from the friendly and cooperative relations with the Soviet Union in the early years of the founding of PRC. On the other modern literature writers' editing, for example in the early Moruo works, having an advanced complimentary words about Marx and Engels and class struggle, in MAO Dun corpus, deleting sex description and reprocessing of worker-peasant revolution sanctification, Shen Congwen fiction anthology for catering to the communist regime against Kuomintang in the defacing dwarf modification, Fengzi poetry anthology of so-called influence by the western bourgeois literature and art in sonnet all deleted, emphasizing in Feiming fiction anthology of works on the spirit of struggle, In Huidefeng, Wang Jingzhi rewriting its old works with political enthusiasm in the fifties and sixties of PRC and so on, were all the specific requirements of the new ideology for Chinese literature.

In addition to annotation, avoiding and modification with text, Chinese modern literature in Seventeen Year mostly had a reprint instructions on the paratext such as preface and postscript, editor’s remarks and profiles. Almost all living writers used of reprint the opportunity to carry out further criticism in the paratext such as preface and postscript to the old works. They showed that according to the spirit of MAO Zedong’s speech in Yan’an and adjustment in the new period of the policy and standard to guide their writing in the future. It also worked in a strategy of legitimacy which could publish the old works in the new era when the writers had no time and could not modify them. For example in the preface of Xia Yan drama selection the author reviewed his strong sense of petty bourgeoisie shortcomings. In the postscript of Sha Ting collection of short stories, on one hand, the author according to the new standard after the victory of revolution in literature had an old works self-criticism, on the other hand he actively promoted the mainstream ideology following the era. In the preface of Wu Zuxiang fiction and prose selection, the author first from the angle of history introduced the concept of editing objectively, then under the new historical context, focused on the revolutionary works and recommended to the readers. In more than half a century after the objective rethink in the specific historical context, we can easily see the author's heart with some anxiety and entanglement, longing and tension, introspection and complex emotions to mingle. Reading these writers’ preface and postscript, to better understand the writer’s idea of the text would be helpful.

The re-classic project in Chinese modern literature (by PLPH) in Seventeen Years is obviously the product of specific history. The re-classic project in fact promoted New China construction ideology leadership and the positive practice of power of discourse. National authoritative presses revised the original before publication in PRC. On one hand, writers got recognition and new
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