

Detecting the Literary integration between North and South through Yu Xin's works in sixth century

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Abstract: Yu Xin is a Chinese poet from Southern and Northern Dynasty. His works reveal the literary integration between northern China and southern China in sixth century. This paper mainly focuses on the factors that promote the integration and the specific literary works of Yu Xin that reveal the integration.

1. Beginning

Yu Xin is one of the most famous poets in Southern and Northern Dynasty. Du Fu, the poet-sage in Tang Dynasty, thought his later creations have the power to shake the Yangtze River. Yu Xin's big success in literature is due to the literary integration between northern China and Southern China in sixth century. Accordingly, this paper mainly talks about the general historical background in that time, the reasons of literary integration's happening, and how Yu Xin combines northern style and southern style in his works.

2. Literature review

There are many research papers and books related to Yu Xin's personal experience, like *Yu Xin Monograph* written by Lu Tongqun. It emphasizes on detecting the specific time of Yu Xin's literary works, his life story, and the literature criticism in traditional way. Aside from the overall book, papers like *The Actual Condition of Yu Xin's Going North and Its Relationship with Yu's Works*, detailedly talking about Yu Xin's experiences in Northern area, amending some misunderstandings of Yu Xin. These books and papers provide the background of our research. However, they concentrate on Yu Xin the person, partly ignoring the historical background. The book *Beacon Fires and Shooting Stars* introducing Liang Dynasty and Liang's literature, gives readers a deeper apprehension of the speciality of that age. In this paper, by combing the historical background and Yu Xin's personal experience, we can better understand the reasons and consequences of literary integration between North and South.

In papers like *Northern Style and Yu Xin's later creation*, although the writer mentions northern literary retro movement's impact on Yu Xin, it was not detailed enough. To improve, this paper quotes and translates a variety of Yu Xin's literary works, in order to reveal the exact northern patterns in Yu Xin's literature.

Furthermore, this paper adds other northern literary movement that Yu Xin had been through, like the compiling work in Lin Zhi palace and the production of royal family ceremonious poems. These experiences affected Yu Xin too, but they were generally ignored before.

3. Introduction

Southern and Northern Dynasty was a chaotic period in Chinese history. It was from A.D. 420 to A.D. 589, experiencing Five Hu and Sixteen States, Northern Wei, Western Wei, Eastern Wei, Song dynasty, Qi dynasty, Liang dynasty, and Chen dynasty. During this period, northern China and

Southern China was controlled by different political groups. In northern China, Han minorities like Xianbei people were the ruling class, but in southern China, Han people were the ruling class. This caused the cultural differences in two regions. Literature, as the subordinate of culture, was influenced by the difference too. In sixth century, the literary style in southern China was flashy and delicate, while northern China's style was vigorous and simple. Therefore, there were many conflicts in literature field between two regions.

Yu Xin was originally the most famous southern scholar, enjoying good reputation. After the Hou Jing rebellion, he was detained in northern China by northern government. He accepted the new literary style, integrating it with his own literature, producing brilliant literary works. Yu Xin's poems and words are the first-rate materials of researching the literary integration between northern China and southern China. Meanwhile, through his personal experience, we can also peep into the general life experiences of southern scholars of the specific time.

4. The reason of literary mingling between North and South

4.1 Politic factor

(1) The revolution of Northern Wei Dynasty conducted by Emperor Xiaowen

Emperor Xiaowen was the seventh emperor in Northern Wei Dynasty. He conducted a series of Hanlizing revolution. It includes converting Xianbei people's last name into Chinese form, moving capital city to Luo Yang which was core area of Chinese, encouraging the marriage or other communication between Xianbei people and Han people, and changing the bureaucrat system according to traditional Chinese institution. This revolution eliminates the difference between Xianbei people and Han people, helping the national fusions. One of the results in national fusions was the literary mingling between Northern China and Southern China, because Southern China at that time was the representation of traditional Han culture.

Northern Wei Dynasty, as we all know, was established by Xianbei people. After the migration southward of Jin's nobilities, northern part of China sunk into chaos which is called the Five Huns and Sixteen States period. Northern Wei ended the wars in north. However, as Xianbei people took the dominance in politics and military part, Han culture was underestimated. Emperor Xiaowen's revolution changed this situation, bringing Han culture (including literature) back to the center of the stage.

(2) The cultural nobility in Liang Dynasty

As the condition saying in introduction part, southern dynasties have a stricter idea of social class, which means people's social positions are sternly located by their family. Liang dynasty was the third southern dynasty, and it bore the similar problem. According to the book, *Beacon Fire and Shooting Star*, to break the rigid social structure, Liang's Emperor Wu came up with the idea of supporting literati, making them into a new and important social class. Therefore, literature in Liang, to some content, was like Confucianism in Song dynasty which was the content of imperial examination.

People who owned cultural resources were close to royal family, experiencing a sharp increase in social status. Meanwhile, their political influence spread. There are two results of this condition. First, literati were noticed by Northern Emperors, which explained the reason of southern scholars like Yu Xin's detaining in Northern Dynasties. Second, the flourishing of Northern literature. These results both contribute to the literature integration between south and north.

4.2 Cultural factor (Southern scholar went to Northern before Yu Xin)

In the Southern and Northern Dynasty, people were not locked in their original place. Due to various reasons, some southern scholars went to north and unconsciously promoted the literary integration between North and South.

According to Haoxia Liu (2006), there are three stages for southern scholars going to north. First stage happens in Northern Wei Dynasty; second stage is in the period from Eastern Wei to Northern Zhou; and third stage is at the end of Chen Dynasty. (Article: The group consciousness of the literati from south to North) In first stage, few scholars went to north with comparatively low impact. In

second stage, lots of southern scholars headed for north because of the Hou Jing Rebellion. These scholars influenced Northern literature from many aspects. For example, Yu Xin introduced Yongming Style and Yan Zhitui brought traditional Han nationality cultures to northern people. In third stage, the distinction between Southern Scholar and Northern Scholar was smaller. They almost shared the same themes or style in literature because of the approaching of unity.

These southern scholars astonished the mainstream of literature in north. As mentioned above, the southern dynasties were dominant in cultural and literature field. It was a top-down literary impact. But still, the northern style of unadorned also assisted the southern scholars to eliminate the flashy part in poems. Thus, they became the main characters of literary integration.

The differences among three stages come from politic development. During second stage, the political turbulence in southern China caused lots of immigration. On the other hand, it was also the time of Emperor Xiaowen's revolution in northern China. Many southern people went to north when northern people were unwilling to accept Han culture. Thus, the conflicts emerged and literary integration had big influence. But in third stage, the politic condition changed. Southern and northern China was about to unify, and there were less cultural contradictions between the two regions. Therefore, the integration in third stage was placid and calm.

4.3 Mode of Transmission (handwritten copy, speed is quick)

During the age of Southern and Northern Dynasty, the primary transmitting method was handwritten copy, under a premise of the large-scale use of paper. This method immensely increased the transmitting speed of literary works. It indicates a larger political influence of literati. According to *Beacon Fire and Shooting Star*, poet Xiao Zong in Liang Dynasty, wrote "The Theory of Qian Yu" to satirize a malfeasant. Although his poem was prohibited by the Emperor after a few days of writing, the handwritten copy had already spread widely into public. Additionally, the results of literati's increasing political power are the same as above.

5. Yu Xin's southern literature accumulation and northern literature movements

5.1 Southern literature accumulation

(1) Yu Xin's literature roots

According to Lu Tongqun (2018), there are at least five people influenced Yu Xin a lot: His father Yu Jianwu, Ruan Ji, Xie Tiao, Xie Lingyun, and Bao Zhao. He inherits Yu Jianwu's thoughts, and Xie Lingyun's method of scenery description. He form his own language style on the basis on Xie Tiao and Bao Zhao's language usage. He learns from Ruan Ji's intone poems, creating the series of mimic intone poems to express the hidden depression. Yu Xin's literature roots mostly come from southern China, contradicting to northern culture.

(2) Yongming Style

Yongming was a reign title in Southern Qi Dynasty (483-493). The literary style generated in this specific period is called Yongming style. It is known as the premise of Chinese metrical verse, because it first raises the idea of rhythm. According to Shelan Chen (2020), Yongming style contained a theory of "four tones and eight ills". The "four tones" means *Tone Ping*, *Tone Shang*, *Tone Qu*, and *Tone Ru*, representing different tones in Chinese. "Eight ills" are irregular rhymes in poems, including *Ping Tou*, *Shang Wei*, *Feng Yao*, *Da Yun*, *Xiao Yun*, *Pang Niu*, *Zheng Niu*. For example, *Ping Tou* means that the first two characters' tones are same as the sixth and seventh characters' tones within one poem.

Aside from effects on rhythm, Yongming style still affects the subsequent palace-style poetry. There were many famous literati in Yongming style's literati group, including Shen Yue and Xie Tiao. According to Lu Tongqun (2018), these two scholars have a big impact on Yu Xin's works. Although there are arguments about whether Shen Yue was the core person of Yongming style's rhythm, undoubtedly he impressed Yu Xin in writing structure. Xie Tiao was known as "Younger Xie" in Chinese literary history. He affects Yu Xin in the aspect of scenery description.

(3) Palace-Style Poetry

Palace-Style Poetry is a stream of ancient Chinese literature. It was established by the prince and his scholar friends in Liang Dynasty (the dynasty right after Southern Qi). These people gathered in the prince's living palace, and thus it was called the palace-style. In Liang Dynasty, there are two stages of literary development. In earlier stage, literati lasted Yongming style, but in the middle and later stage, palace-style took the dominance. According to Jin Xiaolin (2019), palace-style poetry inherits the rhythm form of Yongming style, further emphasizing the lyricism of poems. Aside from lyricism, the palace-style poems' theme was quite limited, focusing on daily life, scenery description and appreciation towards women's beauty. Its language style used to be criticized for being flashy, but scholars now eliminate the prejudice and admit its artistic achievements.

Yu Xin and his father Yu Jianwu, were both core people in palace-style literati group. Palace-style is also called "Xu-Yu Style", through which we can see the high status of Yu Xin and Yu Jianwu in southern literary world.

5.2 Northern Literature movements

(1) Literature Retro Movement in Western Wei Dynasty

During A.D. 534-535, Northern Wei Dynasty divided into two provincially regimes which were Eastern Wei and Western Wei. The Western Wei's governors set Xi'an as capital city, and its sphere of influence was Guanlong area, where ancient Zhou Dynasty lies (age of wise emperors). Due to this geographically political condition, later Northern Zhou replaced Western Wei, inheriting all its possession.

The literature retro movement happened in Western Wei was conducted by a scholar named Su Chuo. He followed the order of current emperor, using ancient classic, *Da Gao*, to create a new literary style which belonged to itself. This action was also a political announcement. It wanted to show that: first, Western Wei owned political legitimism; second, Western Wei denied the Southern dynasties' flashy literature works. It showed a scramble in cultural field between Northern dynasties and Southern dynasties. Furthermore, northern dynasty wanted to achieve cultural unification through this retro movement, so that the politic unification would evolve smoothly.

In literature field, according to Wu Xianning (1989), being affected by this retro movement, northern literature works became more vigorous and pristine. This northern style had a big impact on Yu Xin's later works.

(2) Linzhi Palace (compiling)

Linzhi Palace was a place of compiling historical records in Northern Zhou. *The Book of Zhou* says, "Emperor Minghuang (Yuwen Yu) gathered lots of scholars, compiling historical records and classics in Linzhi Palace." This activity in Northern Zhou was aimed at fighting for cultural dominance as well. Yu Xin was exactly one of these compiling scholars. This experience let Yu Xin understand more about history, making his literary works be more historically significant.

(3) Northern Folk Songs

Northern Folk Songs was closely related to northern ceremonious music. It combined the national minority's fete music and Chinese traditional fete music. Its musical features required the composition to be rhymed and limited number of characters. Beside the form, northern ceremonious music mainly focused on praising emperors or royal family members.

The musical feature influenced Yu Xin a lot. During his staying in Western Wei, he was assigned to write ceremonious poems that served the ceremonious music. From his anthology, we can see that ceremonious poems takes a big amount of his works, and the musicality has also shown in Yu Xin's other poems.

6. The specific effect of northern literary style on Yu Xin's later works

6.1 Retro movement's effect

The retro movement happened in Western Wei (535-556), while Yu Xin's detaining in north was from 554 to 581. That is to say he only experienced two years of Western Wei. It seems like the retro movement's effect on Yu Xin should be little. However, it is important to know that the subsequent

dynasty Northern Zhou shared similar cultural politics as Western Wei. Therefore the retro movement still affect Yu Xin's life for a long time.

According to Niu Guihu's research paper, *the Actual Condition of Yu Xin's Going North and Its Relationship with Yu's Works*, we know that at the beginning of Yu Xin's staying in north, he was underestimated by northern governors. This condition was directly caused by the retro movement. Although Yu Xin enjoyed a widespread reputation in literature and had political influence, northern governors disliked his flashy palace-style literary works, preferring the vigorous and simple style. Under this situation, Yu Xin had to learn how to cope with different literary styles. Fortunately, Yu Xin realized the drawbacks in his original works, accepting the advantages of northern style, and finally achieved a better literary career.

The mainly effect of retro movement on Yu Xin is supposed to be language style. In his earlier works, he seldom directly expressed his feelings. But in the later works, such as *Lament for the South* written in 557, he wrote: "Death or living, departure or gathering, cannot be inquired; Let alone old friends vanished and I who alive!" On one hand, the phrase of "death or living, departure or gathering" is an ancient phrase recorded in *The Book of Songs*, which shows a retro meaning. On the other hand, this gut feeling expression of desperation is rare in his past works. In *Mimic Intone Poem the forth*, Yu Xin wrote: "Only the person who suffers from a impasse can understand my hardship." This is a direct emotional expression too.

6.2 Northern Folk Songs' effect

As it is mentioned above, there are many ceremonious poems in Yu Xin's literary works. These poems mainly concentrate on praising emperors and royal family member, which indicates the increasing political position for Yu Xin in norther dynasty.

To be specific, using one ceremonious poem, *Feather Tone Song the second* as an example: "In fire freezes and insulates, while yearly winds and rains; listening to the bell tone, and reminding of battleground". In Wu Xianning's opinion (Northern Literary Style and Yu Xin's Later Creation), this paragraph shows the changing sentence pattern and antithesis within a poem, which are both the consequence of musicality.

The musical features manifest in other poems as well. In *Mimic Intone Poem the eighteenth*, Yu Xin writes: "The waning moon looks like crescent, while present autumn is similar to past autumn; Dew's falling as if tears, and glowworm's fluttering as though fires." Dew's falling contrasts glowworm's fluttering. Waning moon versus crescent, and present autumn versus past autumn are in the form of comparison. Author strictly follows antithesis and the sentence pattern of this poem is flexible. These are the advantages Yu Xin takes from northern folk songs.

6.3 Effect Related to Linzhi Palace

Northern Zhou's emperor Minghuang, who conducting composition in Linzhi Palace, reigned for 3 years, from 557 to 560. Therefore, Yu Xin's participating in compiling historical records should be within these three years. This experience tightened his mental world with historical events, and thereupon affected his literary works.

During 563-564, Yu Xin produced 27 poems, all with the name of *mimic intone poem*. Every mimic intone poem is the expansion of literary allusions. For example, in 1st poem, he writes "Bubing doesn't drink, and Zhongsan doesn't play Qin (ancient Chinese stringed instrument)". "Bubing" and "Zhongsan" are ancient famous people's names, while drinking and playing instrument are what they always do. Yu Xin wanted to present an distressing and boring atmosphere here. In 6th poem, he writes "Dismal Shi the royal". "Shi the royal" was a person in Han Dynasty, being killed because of the witchcraft disaster. This is to indicate the unpredictable political situation at that time.

Before getting into Northern dynasty, Yu Xin had abundant historical knowledge as well, but he didn't aware of the close relationship among himself and historical characters, and thus there's no historical poems in his earlier literary works. After going to north, he felt the pain from staying long in a strange place and the destruction of past homeland, which gave him a deeper thoughts about world plus his life.

6.4 Yu Xin and Southern People Who Went North

Undoubtedly, the relationships among these southern scholars who went to north were tight, and they communicated frequently. In Yu Xin's literary works, there are many epitaphs that he writes for these originally southern people. Through these epitaphs, we can comprehend more about Yu Xin's mental world.

To be specific, a epitaph written for a southern general Wu Mingche says: "*The soul might be recalled, but the failure is decided; Ambition fell, and dream broke; Bones are underground, bodies are in soil;; Heroes' grave and general's tomb; When is the time, to take the sword again?*" In these sentences, Yu Xin sighed for southern general Wu. Although Wu survived in destructive wars, he would never be able to conduct the ambitious plan or achieve his own goal again. It was the same condition as Yu Xin. In other words, all southern people who forced to go north experienced the coincident feelings of the broken aspiration. In Yu Xin's later works, many poems aimed at manifesting this feeling. *Mimic Intone Poem* the first is one of them. In that poem he writes "*Life is filled with disappointment, why bother getting into officialdom?*"

Southern people who stayed in north had another coincident feeling as well. They all missed their homeland but could never go back. That explains the flourishing of drifted-themed poetry. The missing of Liang and the reflection of its destruction pushed Yu Xin to write the legendary *Lament for the south*.

7. Comparison between Yu Xin's earlier works and later works

7.1 Changes on Language Style

Yu Xin's earlier works are fresh but still flashy. For instance, in *Ode to Spring*, he writes: "*Going out of the golden palace, leaving the braw house. Hair jewelries are lumbersome and chignons are high.*" This sentence is in order to show the beauty of upper-class women in Liang. "*The lake water's reflection is better than image in mirror, and clothes' fragrance is less than the flower's.*" This sentence creates the atmosphere of leisurely and comfortable.

After going to north, his language style changed a lot. The poems that describe women's beauty disappeared and flashy words were no longer used. In *Mimic Intone Poem* the seventh, he depicted the woman as well, but the image was disparate. He wrote, "*she becomes thinner and thinner, while the tear of departure hurts her eyes*", using simple words but expressing deeper sorrow feelings.

7.2 Changes on Emotion

As it is mentioned above, before going to north, the atmosphere of Yu Xin's literary works are leisurely and comfortable, and the emotion is mainly the plain happiness. After being detained in north and the destruction of homeland, Yu Xin's emotion became complicated. The sorrow of leaving homeland, the unwillingness for giving up ambition, and the sadness because of Liang's destruction all contribute to his literary works.

7.3 Changes on Theme

Comparing to the earlier works, Yu Xin's later works have deeper themes. The earlier works's themes are usually the praise of beauty in scenery or people's appearances. Differently, the later themes are the reflection on historical events, the sigh for his own life experience, and the praise towards royal family which represents the wish of unity. They included more political and historical thoughts, and thus be more significant.

8. Conclusion

Due to the differences between Northern dynasty and Southern dynasty, literary integration was an inevitable outcome. The politics and cultural factors provide the basis of the integration, while specific literary movement in Northern China promote it. Yu Xin, as a scholar full of advanced literary

knowledge, flexibly changed his style from flashy to fresh and vigorous, without losing the delicacy in language. Meanwhile, the experience of detaining in northern China honed his mind, letting him realize the tight connection between himself and the history, deepening his thoughts. Yu Xin's literary integration was a significant event of Chinese poetry development, because his poems influenced lots of poets in Tang Dynasty. His achievement was not limited to the sixth century, but contributed to all the afterward Chinese literature works.

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