

A Typical Case of "Cross Time" Revision

-- The Version Change of Wang Jingzhi's *The Wind of Cymbidium*

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Abstract. Wang Jingzhi's *The Winds of Cymbidium* is the first true collection of love poems since the May 4th Movement, and it has had a tremendous impact on the new poetry scene. The poetry collection has changed in the 1922 version, the 1957 version, and the 1992 version. Among them, the texts from the 1922 version and the 1957 version have strong changes. Through reading the complicated variant texts in the original text and the auxiliary text of these two editions, this paper deeply analyzes the important influence of new literary contexts such as social ideology and literary policies and norms on the "cross-time" revision of poetry collections, and analyzes the poets' aesthetic mentality trajectories in different periods, the ways of coping with The Times, and their gains and losses.

Keywords: Wang Jingzhi; The Wind of Cymbidium; Version; Literary Context.

1. Introduction

The Wind of Cymbidium is the representative work of the lake poets Wang Jingzhi. The first version was published by Shanghai Yadong Library in August 1922, with 165 poems. It fills the gap in the theme of love in the creation of new poetry and has special significance in the new poetry circle of the May 4th Movement. In the process of the publication, collection, reprinting, and republishing of new poetry works, there is a common phenomenon of modification such as content addition and deletion, articles and items selection, etc. *The wind of Cymbidium* also produces obvious textual variation in its flow to the public space. Of all the versions of the poem, the 1922, 1957, and 1992 versions are the most valuable, with the 1957 version being significantly different from the 1922 version. The 1957 version retained only the 51 poems of the 1922 version, and made obvious changes to what was retained, as well as a second series of *The Lonely Country*, published in 1927, which was combined with it in a volume, still published under the title *The Winds of Cymbidium*. Why did the poet make such drastic changes to the collection in 1957? The variant texts, the poet's motivation, and the socio-cultural factors involved deserve attention. At present, academic research on *The Wind of Cymbidium* focuses on poetic style and literary controversy, but relatively little has been done to investigate the changes in its version, either by providing a general overview of the changes in its version without in-depth analyses, or by studying it among the overall examination of the phenomenon of revisions in modern Chinese poetry, with some room for research on the phenomenon of "cross time" revisions and the complex motifs of revisions that have occurred more than thirty years after the publication of the poetry collection. At the same time, the study of the version of *The Winds of Cymbidium* may provide new research ideas on the relationship between literature, politics, and history, as well as on the modes and scales of revision of literature, and even on the historical narratives of modern literature.

2. Thematic Correction: Pandering to the New Political Environment

2.1. "Cleansing" and "Remodeling" of the Textbook

Xiang Ahong has said that "poets who have significant revisions to their work after the founding of the People's Republic of China have often been influenced by the political environment and literary policies and have responded in a way that meets the standards of the times" [1]. *The Wind of Cymbidium*, published by the People's Literature Society in September 1957, is a product of the poet's



ideological transformation and an ideological text. After Wang Jingzhi became a full-time writer in the Chinese Writers Association, he gradually began to create some political lyrics. During the creation period, Feng Xuefeng proposed to re-publish *The Wind of Cymbidium*, so Wang Jingzhi greatly reduced the first version and merged it with *The Lonely Country*.

A series of poems in *The Wind of Cymbidium* is about love created by poets during the May Fourth Movement. Zong Baihua in *The Praise of the Wind of the Cymbidium* commented that "without the false adornment, without the scruple, praise light, praise love, praise happiness." However, the love narrative deviates from the social ideology and literary policy of the 1950s. In the new system of social ideology, sex is a characteristic of the reactionary classes, and love is a petty bourgeois sentiment [2]. Love narratives and naked words in *The Winds of Cymbidium* that do not conform to current political imperatives and moral standards have been heavily censored. Firstly, this is reflected in Wang Jingzhi's act of "deleting poems". Wang Jingzhi's deletions include explicit erotic narratives and negative narratives. For example, *The Two of Us* tells the story of a young boy and girl who cannot be together, with lines like "Stealing a kiss from you", "Cutting your hair" and "wiping your tears", and "The kisses were so sweet that night, and they are still sweet now" [3], and other physical descriptions. *After Sending You* also has "No you kiss me, no you hold the waist" [3], and other phrases. *Change of Heart*, *Loyal Love*, *Zhi De*, *Butterfly and Rose* were also cut because of too much immersed in love theme. This is Wang Jingzhi's "cleaning" of *the Wind of Cymbidium* to echo the political environment and the moral standards of the Times. In addition, he also cut out some poems that depict negative, gray images. *The Coward* shows that the attitude of "I" to the strong brute "Is resistance? Powerless? [3]" There are lines in *Jin Shi* "The lost Crow, wandering in the grey dusk" [3]. The closing line of *The End of the Road* is "The sound makes me cry and makes me feel the sorrow of the end of life" [3]. These poems do not conform to the era atmosphere of vigorous socialist construction and the new theme of people's literature and art. Secondly, Wang Jingzhi also modified the contents of the remaining poems. In *The Love of the Sun and the Moon*, "They swam naked together" was changed to "They fell together at night and flew together in the day" [4]. *A Couple of Lovers* deleted "They were naked, kissing each other" [3]. The poem originally entitled *Lovers* was changed to *Mates*, and many of the descriptions of nudity were Cleansing. The poem *Sad Youth* was retitled *Searching for the World*, and "The ocean that I can't see through, with no way out" was deleted. *The Lonely Little Monk* was renamed *Little Monk*, *The Sorrow of Waking Up* was split into *Waking Up* and *Hope* and some obvious negative thoughts and grey sentiments were "remodeled", thus bringing the collection in line with the new social trends.

2.2. The "Self-examination" Function of Auxiliary Text

The preface and postscript are the important carriers of the poet's conception and ideal of poetics, and sometimes the preface and postscript also change correspondingly with the change of the version. *The preface and postscript texts cover a wealth of resources for criticism of the version. The preface and postscript texts have important historical value in clarifying the source of the version, explaining the differences between the versions, tracing the reasons for the revision of the version, etc. Therefore, the preface and postscript become important symbols to identify the different editions of the new poetry collection [1].* The changes of preface and postscript of *The Wind of Cymbidium* play an important role in clarifying the information of the version of the poetry collection, exploring the psychological changes of the author, and examining the social and historical changes. Hu Shi, Zhu Ziqing and Liu Yanling personally wrote the preface to *The Wind of Cymbidium*. Hu Shi, Zhu Ziqing and Liu Yanling personally wrote the preface to *The Wind of Wind of Cymbidium*. Zhu Ziqing believes that "Wang Junzhi has a genius in poetry, and his poetry art is mostly the revelation of nature and spirit, although he is clumsy in work" [3]. In the preface, Hu Shi affirmed "Wang Jingzhi's more complete liberation of poetic style and considered him to be the most promising one among the young poets. His poems are full of a fresh flavor in childism. Although Wang Jingzhi's poems are sometimes too explicit, too explicit is far better than obscure" [3]. However, the 1957 version of *The Wind of Cymbidium* used a new version of the preface to replace the author's preface and preface by Zhu Ziqing, Hu Shi, and Liu Yanling in the 1922 edition. In the preface to the 1957 version of *The Winds*

of *Cymbidium*, Wang Jingzhi made a self-examining review and summary of his poetic creation, describing the publication of *The Winds of Cymbidium* as “a history of failure in learning to write new poems”, and arguing that “*The Winds of Cymbidium* was still bad poetry with a lack of artistic refinement”. [4] More critically, he was self-critical about the limitations of his lack of revolutionary understanding. Wang Jingzhi said in the preface: “From then on, I decided to no longer write love poems, no longer sing personal joys and sorrows, and prepared to learn to write revolution, but I did not really understand the truth, only welcomed the revolution emotionally, did not understand the revolution in theory, and had no struggle, and could not feel the pulse of the revolution, and the result was that revolutionary poems could not be written, and love poems were unwilling to write anymore. This is the main reason why I put down my pen” [4]. Wang Jingzhi's poems had been praised by various new literary masters, but he deleted these comments in the new preface and pointed out the excessive love narrative in the poems, the coarseness of artistic quality and the lack of understanding of the revolution. This is the effort of the early vernacular poets to revise the previous self and move towards a new life after they entered the new political environment and literary context. These poets reflected on themselves when recalling the historical time, in order to shape the correct image of the new self in line with the trend of The Times. These preface and postscripts became the ideological products with the nature of "reviewing the text", and also echoed the content deletion and selection of articles in the original text.

3. Formal Re-construction: Transition to a New Paradigm in Literature

3.1. Changes in Non-substantive Variants

The Winds of Cymbidium was “Cleansing” in terms of its ideological content, and adjusted in terms of its linguistic form. In the evolution of the poetic text, non-substantive variant changes were made to punctuation, line breaks, traditional Chinese characters and simplified Chinese characters, variant characters, horizontal and vertical rows, etc. The non-substantive variant changes in 1957 of *The Winds of Cymbidium* was focused on the use of variant characters, the conversion of traditional Chinese characters to simplified Chinese characters, and the change of vertical rows to horizontal rows. Version changes were mainly influenced by the national movement to standardize the Chinese language in the mid-1950s. In 1955, the National Conference on Character Reform and the Academic Conference on Writing on Modern Chinese Norms were held to promote the reform of Chinese characters, the promotion of *mandarin*, and the standardization of the Chinese language. The conversion of traditional Chinese characters into simplified Chinese characters and the proposition of using horizontal rows in newspapers, books, magazines, and official documents became the new rules for the literature of the times. Thus, the "cross-time" revision of *The Winds of Cymbidium* is an obvious and non-substantive variant of a text that was influenced by literary and artistic policies.

3.2. Removal of Dialects and Colloquialisms

In the 1950s, the national campaign to standardize the Chinese language was in full swing, and in order to comply with the requirements of "promoting Mandarin" and "standardizing the Chinese language". *The Wind of Cymbidium* changed the "yi" in "she", removing the old-time atmosphere. In addition, Wang Jingzhi also made adjustments in dialect and colloquialisms. On the one hand, the poetry collection was stripped of dialect. First, Wang corrected the dialect rhyme. He wrote in the 1957 version of the preface: "It rhymes very casually. I bet a lot of dialect rhymes because I don't know Mandarin. Now I have corrected the dialect rhyme" [4] Second, he also deleted a series of dialect. For example, in the 1957 version of *The Wind of July*, the words "do not, again, ha" were deleted, and the Wu dialects such as "Mo Lai You", "Nao Re" and "Shua Zi" were deleted, which were in line with Mandarin in language form. On the other hand, Wang Jingzhi also deleted the colloquial content of the poems to make the form more regular and written. The colloquial modal auxiliary words and function words have been deleted from the variant texts. In the first version of *The Wind of Cymbidium*, there are many auxiliary words and function words at the end of the poem,

such as "di", "fa" and "ha", which indicate modality and tone, but this phenomenon is very rare in the 1957 version of the poem collection. In addition, the 1957 version of *The Wind of the Cymbidium* reduces colloquial language by adjusting sentence patterns and adding Mandarin. In *Moonlight Night*, the exclamation "How can I not obey orders?" Changed the statement to " Make me sincerely convinced." [4]. *A drop of dew on a lotus leaf* was changed to " The clean dewdrops so bright, the lotus leaves faithfully loving " [4]. It can be seen that the tone of many verses in the 1957 version has become more formal and serious from the soothing and graceful tone of the first version. At the same time, some non-standard colloquial phenomena have also been eliminated. For example, the 1957 version of *Bamboo Shadow* deleted the "smiled and laughed amiably". As a result, the 1957 version of *The Wind of Cymbidium* has long been different in content and form from the 1922 version.

4. The Lopsided Change of The Wind of the Cymbidium: The Loss is Greater than the Gain

4.1. The Image of the Poetry Collection is Broken

Wang Jingzhi's "cross-time" revision of the poetry collection adapted to the new literary context and literary policy and made the poetry language more standardized in rhythm and wording to a certain extent, but in general, the changes between the two versions resulted in more losses than gains, and the integrity and ideological nature of the poetry collection were seriously eroded. The most intuitive manifestation is that Wang's excessive deletion of poems caused the integrity of the poem image to be broken. Wang Jingzhi mentioned in the 1957 new version preface that his principle of deletion was " just cut off the branches the way a gardener trims trees, "but in the process of modification, his actual operation and deletion principle appeared to be separated. This makes version 57 different from the original version. At the same time, Wang Jingzhi made many changes to the remaining poems, many of which suffered drastic reductions. For example, *The Wish* was changed from 3 verses 20 lines to 2 verses 8 lines; *The Happy Song* was changed from 3 verses 87 lines to 1 verse 10 lines; *I'm not willing to sacrifice* was changed from 5 verses 35 lines to 1 verse 4 lines. It can be said that *Wind of the Cymbidium* is a modification that deviates from the normal [5], which reduces the integrity and readability of the poetry collection. Excessive deletion of the content and not from the poetic art to improve and enrich lost the original style of poetry. From the perspective of versioning, "it adds new confusion and contradictions and unnecessary artificial difficulties for readers or researchers who have not seen the first edition" [6].

4.2. Impaired Character of Poetry Collection

The 1922 version of *The Wind of Cymbidium* had an extraordinary influence on the May Fourth New Poetry Circle and was praised by famous writers. Zhu Ziqing also commented in the preface: "This is the child's white voice, frank young-bearing!" It can be seen that the first version of *The Wind of Cymbidium* freely expresses the true feelings of social life and natural scenery, and passionately expresses the feelings of young men and women pursuing personality liberation, and its most important character is childlike and naive. The slightly loose rhyme style and the use of a colloquial style close to life make his poems very fresh, pure, natural, and free of vanity, highlighting the strong romantic [7]. However, the 1957 version greatly weakened this expression effect, making the precious character of the poetry collection seriously damaged. Many modal words and function words that can strengthen the lyric effect in the poem have been deleted in large numbers, and many poetically rich questions, rhetorical questions, and exclamations have been replaced with flat declarative sentences, which has reduced the poetry and lyricism of the work, and weakened the childlike and naive character of the poem. So that the original emotional exclamation becomes as serious or insipid as instructions, loses its inner anger and charm, and becomes dull and whimper.

5. Conclusion

The phenomenon of "the same name but different in reality" has emerged in the flow of editions of *The Winds of Cymbidium*, in which the disparity between the 1957 version and the 1922 version

witnesses the poet's aesthetic mentality change and the turning socio-historical and cultural changes. The new political environment and the requirements of literary policy made the 1957 version an ideological "self-examination" text. Although the collection still focuses on the theme of love, it lacks passion and lingering charm. Therefore, when revising a collection of poems across time, the poet must correctly deal with the relationship between literature, politics, and history, and must not arbitrarily discard the image and character of the poems while adapting to the literary context. Taking the inner connection between the version change of *The Winds of Cymbidium* and the new context of republican literature as an example, it helps to clarify the relationship between literature and history presented by the phenomenon of poetry revision after the founding of the People's Republic of China and opens up new paths for the study of new poems as well as for the historical narration of modern Chinese literature.

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