



The Influence of the Two “Speeches” on Contemporary Shaanxi Literary Creation

Yani Li^{1,2}(✉)

¹ School of Arts, Lanzhou University, Lanzhou, Gansu, China
liyn17@lzu.edu.cn

² Baoji University of Arts and Sciences, Baoji, Shaanxi, China

Abstract. Mao Zedong’s “Speech at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art” in 1942 and Xi Jinping’s “Speech at the Forum on Literature and Art” (hereinafter referred to as the two “Speeches”) in 2014 are two glorious Marxist literature and art theoretical guidance documents. Under the illumination of the spirit of the two “Speeches”, contemporary Shaanxi writers Liu Qing, Lu Yao, Chen Zhongshi, Jia Pingwa, Hongke, Jingfu and others, with a strong sense of social responsibility, held aloft the banner of realism, insisted on adhering to the people-centered creative orientation and stand of writing, and created a large number of excellent literary works reflecting the basic spirits of the two “Speeches”, such as *History of Entrepreneurship* (《创业史》), *The Ordinary World* (《平凡的世界》), *The Story of Qinling Mountains* (《秦岭记》), *The Flame Deep in the Sun* (《太阳深处的火焰》) and *Document NO.1* (《一号文件》), which have enriched and prospered Shaanxi contemporary literature and even Chinese contemporary literature.

Keywords: “Speech at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art” · “Speech at the Forum on Literature and Art” · Shaanxi Literature · Influence

1 Introduction

In the diversified pattern of Chinese contemporary literature, the team of Shaanxi writers is an important force. In May 1942, Chairman Mao Zedong’s “Speech at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art” (hereinafter referred to as Yan’an “Speech”) was born in Shaanxi. Over the past 80 years, Shaanxi’s literary and artistic undertakings have continued to prosper and have made remarkable achievements, showing a vigorous development trend. In October 2014, General Secretary Xi Jinping delivered a “Speech at the Forum on Literature and Art” (hereinafter referred to as Beijing “Speech”). Over the past 8 years, under the guidance of Beijing “Speech”, Shaanxi’s literary creation has made great progress and a large number of excellent literary and artistic works have been produced.

Funds: Education Department of Shaanxi Provincial Government Humanities and Social Sciences Special Project “Research on Shaanxi Female Narrative Discourse in the New Era” (14JK1038); 2021 Shaanxi Province Philosophy and Social Science Major Theoretical and Practical Issues Research Project “Speech and Textual Practice of Contemporary Shaanxi Literature from the Perspective of Cultural Confidence” (2021ND0007).

© The Author(s) 2023

Y. Pogrebnyak and R. Hou (Eds.): ICLCCS 2022, ASSEHR 689, pp. 395–402, 2023.

https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-494069-27-5_43

2 Integrity and Innovation: The Influence of Yan'an "Speech" On Contemporary Shaanxi Literary Creation

Yan'an "Speech" was delivered in the Yan'an Liberated Area in 1942, which was an important achievement of the Sinicization of Marxist literary theory and a programmatic and instructive document of the liberated area literature in the 1940s. Yan'an "Speech" was published at a time when the entire nation was united to resist Japan, at the most difficult and troublesome period, so the national conflict was the most important conflict at that time. Therefore, in order to "seek the correct development of revolutionary literature and art and obtain better assistance from revolutionary literature and art for other revolutionary work, so as to defeat the enemy of our nation and accomplish the task of national liberation" [1], Mao Zedong published the literature and art programmatic document that was adapted to the needs of the times and wars. Yan'an "Speech" started from multiple perspectives and its core content—"one center and six basic points" mainly discussed the question about who and how literature and art should serve. In his "Speech", Chairman Mao clearly expressed his main views on issues such as literature and art and life, literature and art and politics, "popularization" and "improvement", "praise" and "exposure", a united front in the literary and art circles, and inheritance of Chinese and foreign heritage. Yan'an "Speech" also discussed the status of writers and artists, namely, it called for "thought reform" for writers and artists to combine with workers, peasants, and soldiers; it proposed the central principle of "literature and art serving the workers, peasants and soldiers", i.e., the author's creation principle. Thus, the problem of ideological unification and the problem of creation source and service object were solved. The literary direction formed by Yan'an "Speech" has a guiding significance for Shaanxi literature in the early stage and Chinese contemporary literature after July 1949. "There is no second direction beyond this, and if there is, it is the wrong direction" [2]. Yan'an "Speech" has always been the criterion of Chinese contemporary literature in the liberated areas in the 1940s and after that, and has had a direct and far-reaching impact on Chinese literature in the past 80 years, especially on Shaanxi literature in different periods. In the early stage, Shaanxi literature originated in Yan'an, the center of the red base. The prosperity of literature in the Yan'an Liberated Area in northern Shaanxi in the 1940s showed the actual achievements of Shaanxi literature in the early stage.

Writers in the liberated areas of northern Shaanxi took active actions to practice the literary and artistic line guided by this direction and try to make their positive works as close to life as possible in their specific creative practice and reach the masses. They consciously strengthened the popularity, massification and acceptability of their works, and tried to be consistent with Yan'an "Speech" from the characters to the theme, from the form to the language, from the aesthetic style to the artistic technique, and from the theme selection to the performance object. At that time, most of the people in Yan'an were not literate enough. Taking into account the acceptability of the works, the creative subjects of Shaanxi literature in the early stage tried their best to fit the actual conditions of the people in the base areas in terms of plot settings, narrative methods, narrative language, and communication methods. They went deep into the people, into military camps, and into plants, using street poems, recitation poems, new heroic legends, chapter-titled novels, new yangko operas, living newspapers, square plays and other art forms that people liked to see and hear to create a large number of popular, down-to-earth,

and common literary works that were in line with people’s aesthetic characteristics, such as *Brothers and Sisters Reclaiming Wasteland* (《兄妹开荒》), *Cultivating Millet Log* (《种谷记》), *The White Haired Girl* (《白毛女》), *Liu Hulan* (《刘胡兰》), *Xia Erhei’s Marriage* (《小二黑结婚》) and so on. The teachers and students of “Lu Xun Academy of Arts” in Yan’an created many literary works that were very popular with the common people in the form of collective creation. Under the influence of Yan’an “Speech”, a large number of literary and artistic publications in the main positions of Yan’an Liberated Area, also sprung up like bamboo shoots after rain, such as the “Liberation Daily” literary supplement, “Grain Rain”, “Leaves of Grass”, etc., greatly contributing to the prosperity of Yan’an literature and art.

Zhao Shuli and Liu Qing were the two writers who were most influenced by Yan’an “Speech” during this period and their creations also represented the important achievements of Shaanxi literature in Yan’an period. Zhao Shuli was the writer who knew the peasants best in liberated areas. The rural-themed novels he created are similar in subject matter to the “problem novels” of the May Fourth Period. Through the shaping of advanced characters, Zhao Shuli promoted the image of new socialist people in the countryside, allowing readers to discover the uncivilized phenomenon that existed in the actual life of the countryside through laggards and people in the middle. Zhao Shuli’s works are based on rural areas in the southeastern border area of Shanxi and the objects of writing and reading are peasants. Zhao Shuli criticized the shackles of feudal culture on the transformation of people’s thoughts from the perspective of promoting the development of new democracy, in order to transform the peasants’ thoughts and make them an ally of the revolution. The images of the older generation of peasants, such as “Er Zhuge” and “San Xiang,” created in *Xia Erhei’s Marriage* have become classic images in the liberated area literary character gallery. In his novels, he always described the peasants from an equal perspective and while denying their backwardness and numbness, he also implied their turning point everywhere. The characters in his works were all unenlightened people who couldn’t adapt to the new era. The enlightenment to peasants involved in Zhao Shuli’s novels was very down-to-earth, mostly involving ordinary things that happened in daily life, such as marriage problems, relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, anti-superstition, anti-landlord exploitation and so on. But what behind these questions was all closely related to democracy, science and progressive thought. *Xia Erhei’s Marriage* criticizes the older generation of peasants and sings praises for the new generation of peasants, Xia Erhei and Xiaoqin, who pursue the road of marriage autonomy with the support of the new regime, to reveal the arduousness and twists and turns of peasants adapting to the new society in the new era and reflect the real problems faced by the liberated areas.

After the Yan’an “Speech”, Liu Qing went deep into the real life in rural areas and walked into his “three schools”—“the school of life”, “the school of politics” and “the school of art”. Liu Qing’s novel “Cultivating Millet Log” in 1947 was the first novel in the history of Chinese literature to describe socialist mutual assistance and cooperation, which laid a solid foundation for his subsequent epic masterpiece “History of Entrepreneurship”. Liu Qing’s original writing plan was to express the socialist revolution in rural China in four series of novels, but for various reasons, he only completed the first two of “History of Entrepreneurship”. “History of Entrepreneurship” is a model

work of socialist realism. Liu Qing described the changes of rural life on the road of rural cooperation and summarized the life course of peasants with a masterly writing. “History of Entrepreneurship” takes old man Liang San and his son Liang Shengbao as examples to develop the plot around the socialist transformation of the countryside. Liang Shengbao is a typical representative of the new socialist and old man Liang San is a typical representative of the older generation of peasants. Through the shaping of typical characters in the typical environment, “History of Entrepreneurship” reflects the constantly changing and developing social and historical content. “The eyes can see through thousands of years of history and the heart is as calm as a plain, without the obstacles of ravines”. Inspired by Liu Qing’s literary spirit, the subsequent Shaanxi writers Lu Yao, Chen Zhongshi and others continued Liu Qing’s literary spirit and created “The Ordinary World”, “White Deer Plain” and other excellent literary works, two of which have become the two most dazzling pearls in the crown of the “Mao Dun Literature Prize”.

3 Inheritance and Transcendence: The Influence of Beijing “Speech” on Contemporary Shaanxi Literary Creation

On October 15, 2014, 72 years after the publication of the Yan’an “Speech”, General Secretary Xi Jinping held a symposium on literature and art work in Beijing and delivered “Speech at the Forum on Literature and Art”. In the new historical context, the core content of Beijing “Speech” includes “five questions”: achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation requires the prosperity of Chinese culture; creating outstanding works worthy of the times; adhering to the people-centered creative orientation; Chinese spirit is the soul of socialist literature and art; strengthening and improving the party’s leadership over literature and art work. Beijing “Speech” is another splendid instructive and programmatic document of Marxist literary theory after Yan’an “Speech”.

Since 2014, Jia Pingwa, Hongke, Gao Jianqun, Moshen, Wu Keqing, Zhou Xuanpu, Wu Wenli and other writers have practiced the spirit of Beijing “Speech” and adhered to the people-centered creative orientation. They pay attention to the life of the people at the bottom and lay emphasis on the harmony and unity of the aesthetics and ideology of literature in their creations. Their creative principle still adheres to the traditional realism principle and continues to implement the popularity, massification, national nature and other principles of literature advocated by the “Speech” in the creation. From the perspective of country, nation, urban and rural areas, family, and human nature, they pay attention to life, human nature, and reality, forming a deep and dignified aesthetic feature with rich inner meaning. Shaanxi writers of old, middle and young generations adhere to their literary conscience and try their best to maintain the dignity and purity of literature. The civilian consciousness, compassion consciousness, realistic care, and humanistic feelings in their works belong to the aesthetic pursuit and aesthetic characteristics of the category of “new people’s writing”. The characteristics of literature’s social function, folk nature, and concern for the masses, which are revealed in the “Speech”, have been well inherited and played into the current Shaanxi literary creation. With the realistic and down-to-earth writing as well as the attention to the bottom and the people’s livelihood,

Shaanxi writers have implemented the basic spirit of Beijing “Speech” with their textual practice.

In the 8 years since the Beijing “Speech” was published, Shaanxi writers have strengthened their cultural self-confidence in their textual practice, advocated the main theme of the times, kept pace with the times, caught up with and surpassed, praised new socialist rural construction and rural revitalization, adhered to the realistic creation concept and creation method, and reflected the positive and progressive spirit of Shaanxi literature and the essence of the times. The cultural self-confidence and other major literary ideas involved in the “Speech” have been running through the creation of contemporary Shaanxi writers. In the creation of novels, Jia Pingwa’s *The Mountain Itself* (《山本》), *Sit for a While* (《暂坐》), and *The Story of Qinling Mountains*, Hongke’s *The Flame Deep in the Sun*, Ye Guangqin’s *Top Scholar as Matchmaker* (《状元媒》) and *Old Pavilion and the Same Weather as in Last Year* (《去年天气旧亭台》), Chen Yan’s *The Stage Shifters* (《装台》), *The Protagonist* (《主角》), and *Comedy* (《喜剧》), Fang Yingwen’s *Graceful Melody of the Mountains* (《群山绝响》), Gao Jianqun’s *My Qara Jorgha* (《我的黑走马》), Wang Hai’s *Paradise* (《天堂》), Wu Keqing’s *First Marriage* (《初婚》), Zhou Xuanpu’s *Near the Sun but Far Away from Chang’an* (《日近长安远》) and other excellent works came out. In other literary and artistic styles, Moshen’s reportage *Document NO.1*, Tian Bo’s biographical film “Liu Qing”, and the TV series “The Stage Shifters”, etc. appeared. The harvest of non-fiction writing is also quite rich, such as Yizhou’s *Empty Nest: I’m Too Lonely in This World* (《空巢: 我在这世上太孤独》) and Du Wenjuan’s *Rock Orchid Blossoms — A Survey of the Living Condition of Wenchuan Earthquake Survivors* (《岩兰花开——汶川大地震幸存者生存状况调查》) and so on.

The Beijing “Speech” pointed out: “We must adhere to the position of Chinese culture, inherit the genes of Chinese culture, and show the Chinese aesthetic style” [3]. In May 2022, when he was 70 years old, Jia Pingwa released his long literary sketches *The Story of Qinling Mountains*. *The Story of Qinling Mountains* reflects Jia Pingwa’s profound understanding of the spirit of traditional Chinese culture.

For the Qinling Mountains, Jia Pingwa has a unique feeling. His hometown, his “blood place”—Dihua, Danfeng, is located at the southern foot of the eastern section of the Qinling Mountains. “Across the country, the Qinling Mountains are as deep as the sea.” Jia Pingwa said that the Qinling Mountains are the greatest mountain in China and the “most Chinese” mountain. “There is a dragon vein that lies across there, carrying the Yellow River and the Yangtze River, leading the north and the south” [4]. In Jia Pingwa’s novels, the Qinling Mountains is not only a geographical term, but has become a synonym for his literary background and a geographical image. In fact, the writing about the Qinling Mountains can be found in Jia Pingwa’s Shangzhou series of works in the 1980s and 1990s and was involved in *The Story of Mountain Taibai* (《太白山记》), *Shangzhou* (《商州》), *December and January* (《腊月·正月》), *Initial Records of Shangzhou* (《商州初录》), *Jiwowa Family* (《鸡窝洼人家》), etc. The author’s creative inspiration and sources are mostly based on hometown experience and childhood memories. Jia Pingwa is very familiar with the Qinling Mountains, where he was born and grows up. He once claimed to be an ant in the ditch and ravine of the Qinling Mountains. Most of his daily life experience and the source of his works come from this. The original

title of the novel *The Story of Qinling Mountains* was initially set as *Qinling Mountains*. Later, the writer felt that the title might be confused with the novel *Qin Opera* (《秦腔》), which had won the “Mao Dun Literature Prize” before, so he changed it to *The Story of Qinling Mountains*. Later, he felt that he should take a two-character name and there was *The Mountain Itself* then. In *The Mountain Itself*, there have been written expressions of *The Qinling Chronicle of Grass and Trees* (《秦岭志草木部》) and *The Qinling Chronicle of Birds and Beasts* (《秦岭志禽兽部》).

Jia Pingwa’s latest novel *The Story of Qinling Mountains* is *The Qinling Chronicle of Grass and Trees*, *The Qinling Chronicle of Birds and Beasts* and *The Qinling Chronicle of Characters* (《秦岭志人物部》). The novel was firstly published in the second issue of “People’s Literature” magazine in 2022, and the offprint was published by the People’s Literature Publishing House in May 2022. The novel completes Jia Pingwa’s “method of imagining China” through 57 Qinling stories. *The Story of Qinling Mountains* contains strong traditional Chinese cultural genes, draws on the experience of Chinese classical literary sketches, absorbs the cultural factors of *Shan Hai Jing* (《山海经》) and *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* (《聊斋志异》), and tells the story of the Qinling Mountains for readers, which is also a Chinese story. “Where there are mountains, water, forests and beasts, it is easy to generate fantasies. I have heard and experienced quite a few strange people and things since I was a child” [5]. The first story in *The Story of Qinling Mountains* tells about an “inverted river” flowing from west to east in the Qinling Mountains (Jia Pingwa’s another novel *Lao Sheng* (《老生》) also wrote about the “inverted river”). The subsequent stories revolve around the “inverted river”. The further development of the story, and the life stories of the characters monk and Heishun happen under the witness of the “inverted river”. The final ending of the characters is also full of bizarre and eerie colors like the “inverted river”. “Literary and art workers must tell Chinese stories well” [6]. The 57 short chapters recorded in *The Story of Qinling Mountains* are independent of each other, which are both Qinling stories and Chinese stories. Jia Pingwa uses myths, legends and folk stories to show the rich forms of Chinese folk culture from all angles.

4 The People-Centered of the Two “Speeches”

People-centered is an eternal idea of the Shaanxi writers. Comparing the two “Speeches”, the consistency in the theory and concept of who literature and art serve can be found. It can be said that the two “Speeches” both reflect the “people-centered” main concept of literature and art. During the May Fourth Period, Chinese Marxist literary and art theorists had put forward creative concepts such as “civilian literature and art”, “for life” and “national literature”. In 1917, Chen Duxiu published his famous “The Literary Revolution” in the “New Youth” magazine, an important position of the new literature of the May Fourth Movement, and put forward the call for the construction of “national literature”, “social literature” and “realistic literature”. This preliminarily reflects the directional requirement of literature to serve the people. The core quality of the Yan’an “Speech” was that literature and art “served the masses”, and against the historical background at that time, Chairman Mao explained the “masses”: “Our literature and art serve four kinds of people, workers, peasants, soldiers, and the urban petty bourgeoisie...

These four kinds of people are the broadest masses of the people” [7]. In the Beijing “Speech”, President Xi emphasized that the people are the witnesses and creators of history. “The literature and art of socialism, in essence, are the literature and art of the people” [8]. The people need literature and art, and literature and art also need the people. Beijing “Speech” calls on the majority of literary and art workers to adhere to the people-centered creative orientation and create outstanding literary works worthy of the times and the people. In addition, the two “Speeches” also have the same line of connection in emphasizing the adherence to the principles of realist creation, the writer’s sense of mission and sense of responsibility, the relationship between literature and art and life, and the inheritance and development of excellent literary heritage.

The Beijing “Speech” emphasizes national cultural self-confidence and self-consciousness. Chinese culture keeps pace with the times in keeping upright and innovating. Thousands of years of excellent traditional Chinese culture have filled the Chinese people with confidence and strength. The Beijing “Speech” calls on literary and art workers to tell Chinese stories to the world and show the world Chinese excellent traditional cultural spirit through creation. While adhering to the position of Chinese culture and inheriting the genes of Chinese culture, Chinese people must also learn from the excellent cultural achievements of other countries and nations in the world.

5 Conclusion

To realize the Chinese dream, literature is a necessity. Under the new historical conditions and historical context, Chinese people should “promote the core socialist values, inherit and carry forward the excellent traditional Chinese culture, and adhere to and promote the Chinese spirit” [3]. Shaanxi’s contemporary literary circles should continue to adhere to the fundamental purpose of serving the people in their creation under the spirit of the two “Speeches”, strengthen cultural self-confidence, improve cultural awareness, insist on the realistic creation concept and creation method, and reflect the positive spirit and the essence of the times. Shaanxi writers should continue to inherit the basic spirit of the two “Speeches” in their textual practice, continue the fine tradition, inherit culture to build self-confidence, pay attention to the people at the bottom to tell people’s wellbeing, and at the same time make efforts to maintain their own creative personality and uniqueness, so as to contribute to the further prosperity of Shaanxi literature.

Authors’ Contributions. This paper is independently completed by Yani Li.

References

1. Mao Zedong. Speech at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art [M]. Shanghai: Sanlian Bookstore, 2002: 37. (in Chinese)
2. Zhou Yang. New Demotic Literature and Art. Proceedings of the National Congress of Literary and Artistic Workers [M]. Beijing: People’s Literature Publishing House, 1950:96. (in Chinese)
3. Xi Jinping. Speech at the Forum on Literature and Art [M]. Beijing: Learning Press, 2015: 29. (in Chinese)
4. Jia Pingwa. The Mountain Itself [M]. Beijing: The Writers Publishing House, 2018: 3. (in Chinese)

5. Jia Pingwa. Distant Mountains and Still Waters [M]. Changchun: Epoch Literature and Art Press, 2017: 35. (in Chinese)
6. Xi Jinping. Speech at the Forum on Literature and Art [M]. Beijing: Learning Press, 2015: 17. (in Chinese)
7. Mao Zedong. Speech at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art [M]. Shanghai: Sanlian Bookstore, 2002: 33. (in Chinese)
8. Xi Jinping. Speech at the Forum on Literature and Art [M]. Beijing: Learning Press, 2015: 14. (in Chinese)

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

