

Comparative Research of the Publication of Chinese and Foreign Cyberliterature*

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Abstract—Attention has been increasingly paid to cyberliterature which is a newly developmental type of literature. This paper aims at comparing the publication of Chinese and foreign cyberliterature. The research is carried out from the following two aspects: 1. The selection and improvement of publishing topics. 2. The selection of issuing modes and operating models. Through comparison the distinctive features of the Chinese and foreign cyberliterature in terms of publication are summarized. Through this paper people can understand the different features of the publication of Chinese and foreign cyberliterature more comprehensively and profoundly.

Index Terms—Chinese, foreign, cyberliterature, publication

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years internet has developed rapidly all over the whole world, not only greatly influencing the social economic life, but also strongly hammering the traditional ideology and changing the working and living way of people. Literature appeared following the steps of human life, changed with the advent of human life on the internet and entered the time of internet to become cyberliterature. (Guo, 2013).

By the end of 20th century cyberliterature has become a new member of Chinese and foreign literature. Studying the developmental states, different features and cultural backgrounds of cyberliterature and focusing on the technicality and innovation are the subjects of literary research.

Nowadays in a large number of monographs and articles cyberliterature is discussed and studied. Aarseth's book *Cybertext* initiated the discussion of definition and features of cyberliterature in the West. Many foreign scholars participated in the discussion. Domestically a great many academic institutions and scholars are engaged in the research of cyberliterature. The teachers headed by Ouyang Youquan in Central South University published the monograph *An Outline of the Network Literature and Professor Forum of Network Literature*, established the first research institute of cyberliterature and built the website *Research of Online Culture*.

Cyberliterature in China and the West will be studied in the perspective of comparative literature. Chinese and foreign societies have different developmental histories, are pregnant with different cultural spirit and manifest different realistic cultural contexts and own distinct literary traditions. These cultural factors impact Chinese and foreign cyberliterature directly and indirectly. (Wang, 2011).

Chinese and foreign cyberliterature has different traditional spirit and realistic social circumstance. Popular literature has greatly influenced the development and genres of cyberliterature in China and the West. Foreign industrial system and online publishing develop rapidly. Internet becomes the free space for the contemporary young people in China. Those factors contribute to the difference of cultural backgrounds between Chinese and foreign cyberliterature.

The native Chinese cyberliterature emerged in the late 90s of the 20th century. For the past decade, cyberliterature – the new thing, has developed much more rapidly than all the people had anticipated and its influence has extended to the fields of publication of books, film and television, animation, games and so on. Up to date the number of influential literary websites, forums and reading channels is more than 100; there are 240 million literary netizens, 20 million registered authors, 2 million writers who have been contracted to write; literary websites are browsed by 4 billion people per day and 200 million bytes of online works are updated per day. So the cyberliterature in China has become an industrial model far beyond the spiritual and cultural level, which makes the publication of cyberliterature possible and therefore cyberliterature is favored by people consciously.

In fact, internet and digital technology and even the creation of cyberliterature all originated from the West; while because of the cultural difference between China and the West, different market conditions and consuming habits and so on, the publication of cyberliterature in different countries displays its distinctive pattern. Cyberliterature in the West develops most rapidly and becomes the most representative one. This paper aims at analyzing the publication of Chinese and foreign cyberliterature comparatively, which helps us master the developmental state and trend of the cyberliterature in the world, promotes the healthy development of Chinese cyberliterature and therefore has the practical significance.

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II. THE SELECTION AND IMPROVEMENT OF PUBLISHING TOPICS

Publication is the activity to edit, duplicate and issue the works publicly. Editing is the beginning of the publishing activity and includes selection, plan, organization, examination and improvement of the content of the works.

A. *The Chief Content of the Publication of Chinese Cyberliterature*

The chief content of the publication of Chinese cyberliterature is extensive and it has developed into different patterns based on the reading habits and likings of the netizens during the developing process. The number of literary netizens is enormous and the publication of reader-centered cyberliterature has evolved into various types. Take the example of novels in the publication of cyberliterature and the following are the main selecting sources of its content: love, history, urban youth, officialdom, job market, competitive games, horror, new military affairs, martial-arts and so on. The above main sources attract groups of stable and numerous readers.

Love is a universal topic, so it's also the chief content of Chinese literature. From Murong Xuecun's *Chengdu Tonight, Please Forget me* and Annie baobei's *Severn Years* to Xing Yusen's *Live Like an Individual* and Ning Caishen's *Numerous intimate contact*, and then to Mu Zimei's love diary in the internet forum, love becomes the main type of Chinese cyberliterature

Chengdu Tonight, Please Forget me shows a kind of bitter love, which is the mutual feature of Chinese online love novels. In this work love becomes the tramp who has no place to live. Besides the sex drive one day after another, the broken youth memory is the only left thing. Just in the broken bitterness, contemporary young men contemplate love, sex and life. Loss of true love, indulgence of lust and painful sadness are the chief tone of Chinese online love novels.

In a certain period of time, one type may win more favor of the readers; while in the long run, all the types develop well together and they make different readers satisfied.

Many scholars in China tend to analyze cyberliterature from the literary perspective. Some believe cyberliterature is the work written and read by netizens; some believe cyberliterature is a new pattern accompanying the emergence of modern computers and especially the digital online technology; some believe the traditional literature develops well and the prosperity of cyberliterature can't represent the literary developmental direction. The editors of literary publication online help the writers make their works known by people and get paid on the internet, while these writers or works have probably been rejected by the traditional publication for some reason. Therefore the publication of cyberliterature in China is regarded as the improvement and development of the traditional literature. Therefore literature is the first priority that people pay attention to, while the internet is not as important as literature in terms of the content of cyberliterature. When editors select, examine, edit and organize one work, text is part and parcel, the only consideration. Technology gives way to words or to literature in Chinese people's hearts. Internet is considered to be a carrier and a way of transmission.

B. *The Main Selecting Content of the Western Literature Online*

The internet originated from America, so did online writing. However the fixed pattern which is called cyberliterature in China hasn't developed well in the European countries and America and even the scholars' understanding in the west is wide and casual, so there's no unified trend in the academic circle. The American professors represented by Noah Wardrip-Friun define this kind of literature based on internet as digital literature which is created by the digital technology and the literary work, only existing in the digital environment. Electronic Literature Organization tends to entitle cyberliterature electronic literature. Professor Hayles, one of the representatives explains in the work "Electronic Literature" electronic literature doesn't include literature on the paper and is the digital work created and read via the media of computers. Researchers in German University of Siegen define literature via the media of computer as net literature, including all the works on the internet and computer. Some scholars extend the definition to hypertext literature and cybertext. Besides that, there are some other English expressions of cyberliterature, such as hypertext, digital poetry, interfictions, literature in electronic space, new media art, literature online and so on.

C. *The Main Selecting Content of Japanese and Korean Cyberliterature*

If the cultural advantages of three countries in Southeast Asia are compared, Japan is famous for cartoons; however South Korea is good at computer games and China excels in cyberliterature. This is the extremely high appraisal to Chinese cyberliterature. In fact, Chinese, Japanese and Korean cyberliterature nearly emerged at the same time and they have developed into their own distinctive systems.

Cyberliterature in Japan is called "online novels" or "novels on the internet". From that we can judge the main type of cyberliterature is novels, so is Chinese cyberliterature. The selecting content of Japanese cyberliterature is comparatively comprehensive, because Japanese study persistently and pursue innovative and creative spirit and the cultural industry in Japan develops from all the aspects. Currently mobile phone novels are the most important publishing form of Japanese cyberliterature. The selecting content of novels is wide, from historical to detective fiction, such as the urban novel in love and affective novel *Densha Otoko*. Meanwhile Japan lays emphasis on adopting the excellent content to strengthen the publication of cyberliterature. For example, in 2009 one of Japanese websites of mobile phone adopted the hot Chinese cyberliterature novel *candle in the tomb* to extend its space of selecting content.

The development of Korean cyberliterature is the same as that of China. There are some very influential works in South Korea, such as *My Sassy Girl*, *The guy was gorgeous*, *Wolf's Temptation* and so on. While in terms of content,

those movies are similar. Compared with the diversified development of Chinese cyberliterature, Korean cyberliterature is dominated by the novels of youth and the theme is young men's love, fashionable, romantic and a little bit moving. The internet novels in South Korea are different from those of other countries. Writers don't follow the rigid rules of written language, but adopt a great deal of network language which facilitates the expression of characters' ideas and thoughts and appeals to the public readers. Dialogues occupy the novels filled with emoticons and the plots of the stories are almost the same: Cinderella and Prince Charming get together and separate. Because Korean young men adore entertainment and fashion, so the internet novels are mainly about love. By comparison, the content of Chinese cyberliterature is more diverse.

One thing can not be ignored: because the internet is endlessly open and comparatively free, numerous cyberliterature works of the whole world are full of pornography and violence. That is the factor that hinders the profound development of cyberliterature.

III. THE SELECTION OF ISSUING MODES AND OPERATING MODELS

Publication is the main element in the publishing activity and its chief task is to spread the works to the consumers. During the whole process, there are two kinds of publication which exist widely in cyberliterature. One is commercial and profitable, and the other is for the public-spirited purpose. Analyzing Chinese and foreign publishing practice, we find the publication of genuinely influential cyberliterature is for the profitable purpose. As the cultural industry develops rapidly and becomes the focus of competition around the whole world at present, if the publication of cyberliterature can be independent and stronger and stronger, it has to occupy a space on the road of industry. However due to the difference of social economy and cultural conditions, the issuing modes and profitable models of the publication of cyberliterature vary greatly in different countries.

A. *The Issuing Modes and Operating Models of the Publication of Chinese Cyberliterature*

The literary websites are the most successful and influential publishing force in the publication of Chinese cyberliterature. Reading and transmission online become the main issuing mode of Chinese cyberliterature. With more abundant content, Chinese cyberliterature is seeking for the appropriate operating model continuously for its further development.

The earliest Chinese literary websites, including the overseas Chinese ones, are not commercial, but a simple way of entertainment. The first website that charged fees was Ming Yang Reading Network and one of its initiators Yang Zhonghua wrote an online novel "Zhong Hua Zai Qi" which was popular around China and created a new online literary historical genre. In order to maintain the operation of the website and inspire Yang Zhonghua's writing motivation, another initiator Su Mingpu initiated a system that reading one thousand words was charged 2 cents and writers and the website were paid according to a certain proportion. A single spark can start a prairie fire. Soon after that, Chinese Website: *Huan Jian Shu Meng*, *The Sky of Dragon* got their own operating patterns. Up to now, *Ming Yang Reading Network* has disappeared completely, while its charging pattern per word has become the chief way for the websites to make profits in the past decade and it will be kept for a long time. At the moment that the literary websites have begun to operate steadily, competing with all kinds of penetrating piracy, *Sheng Da*, becoming prosperous by selling computer games, has taken over the comparatively influential literary websites, depending on its incomparable advantage of wealth. It resembles a series of takeover in the foreign publishing industry, with the force to rule the whole country. Of course, many independent literary websites own their positions in the publishing market of cyberliterature, due to its low threshold and diverse operating ways. Therefore, the diversity of the publication of literary websites is maintained. Some websites, such as Chinese Online and 17K Literature, encountering rampant online piracy, abandon the reading pattern that readers are charged online, adopt free reading to attract readers and then succeed making people read and pay on the cell phone. Zong Heng Chinese Network firstly adopts the system that writers that sign a contract are used to draw readers' attention. In this way writers are paid and readers have sufficient freedom to choose. The commercial patterns are established, such as charged online reading, copyright operation, film and television, adaption of online games, overseas station and so on. The charged reading on the cell phone, as the representative pattern and a new growth point of the online literary industry in the recent years, is becoming the focus of the industry.

B. *The Issuing Modes and Operating Models of the Western Cyberliterature*

The chief types of American and European literary websites are literary blog, self made online literary magazines, online library. There are small literary parts in the forum of the community and few websites of online serial stories. There's no formal literary website that pays attention to the managing content and profits. Firstly because in the American and European countries, the threshold of the traditional publication is as low as that of the online publication, there is no need to release the enthusiasm of creation only via internet. Secondly, the American and European countries have long thought highly of the protection of copyright and have an effective system to protect it. Readers and writers are used to the free wonderful works. Thirdly, as mentioned above, the understanding of cyberliterature varies in China and the west. The American and European countries pay attention to the technology and cyberliterature is also imprinted with games. The fixed charging pattern is difficult to come into being, such as hypertext fiction, novels created by computers software, collaborative fiction and so on. Although there are a large number of foreign literary websites, their

development is slow.

Self-publishing, a new way, makes cyberliterature hot and popular around America and Europe and extends to the other part of the world, occupying the publishing vacancy of the literary websites. The prototype of self-publishing has long existed in the West and a great many well-renowned writers and works that were first ignored by the publishers turn to self-publishing, such Mark Twain, "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland", "chicken soup for the soul" and so on. Self-publishing is the active and positive choice of the writers, in order to gain more room for the writers to show their talent and gain the economic payoffs. Self-publishing means books or other kind of publications are published by the writer himself without the involvement of the publishers. In the whole process, writing, editing, design, decoration, price, marketing modes and so on are all implemented by the writer himself. The writer can do it by himself or hire other related companies to finish it. If the works of self-publishing spread via the internet, it belongs to the discussion of online literary publication, which is very common and ubiquitous. The British female writer J. K. Rowling sold the electrical version of Harry Potter series directly on her own website. From 2010 Conrat has been trying uploading his novels to the online bookstores of amazon, earns 4000 \$ every day and gets 70% of the royalty of each book.

The works of rookie writers Amanda Hocking and John Rock ranked among the top 100 of the bestselling books of amazon via self-publishing. In August, 2011, 7 novels written by 4 writers of self-publishing were on the list of bestselling e-books of New York Times. The issuing ways of the new self-publishing mainly include self-made websites and electrical platform like the online bookstores of amazon. Accordingly the two ways vary to a certain degree. It's more difficult for the former one to operate and it suits the writers with reputation more, but the publisher can have the most profits; while the latter one is like this: writers sign contracts with the online bookstores away from the publishing house, getting the royalty based on a certain percentage. In the second case, writers play a leading role. Writers and middlemen cooperate with each other.

C. *The Issuing Modes and Operating Models of Japanese and Korean Cyberliterature*

The Japanese online novels originated from its own country and it took a long time to explore the issuing modes and operating models of Japanese cyberliterature. At first Japanese amateur writers who were not accepted by the traditional publishing house tried submitting their works to all kinds of websites of novels. Some of the excellent novels drew the attention of the traditional publication and film and TV circles. In order to have more channels and profitable sources, some online websites adopted the pattern of online order and then sent the paper books to the readers based on their orders. Writer Cun Shanglong's online novel *Symbiotic Insect* was just one example. It is like POD in terms of technology, while its content is inferior to POD, so it has disappeared for a long time.

It is the publishing mode of cell phone novels that helps Japanese cyberliterature develop rapidly. The network of 3G in Japan has the lead compared with the other countries. Cell phone novels have actually penetrated into the development of literature. Strictly speaking cell phone novels are different from internet novels, but cell phone transmits information via the internet, so it's perfectly logical and reasonable to regard cell phone novels as part of cyberliterature. Thanks to the development of Japanese cultural industry, the profitable mode of cell phone novels in Japan is very flexible, extending from the single paid reading to publishing the paper books and entering the film and TV circles. Websites and writers are paid according to a certain proportion. Take the example of Japanese writer Mika's autobiography *Koizora* in 2007. All together 12 million readers downloaded the reading and the paper books were published over 2.7million copies. With the sold copyright it was made into a movie, which took 4 billion yen at the box office and the relevant musical works performed impressively too.

Korean cyberliterature emerged in the 80s of 20th century. It is very popular among the youth and large groups of literary young men participate in the writing of cyberliterature. The websites of cyberliterature and the internet writers' society have been established; numerous online literary journals appeared. Computers are the carrier and most of the writers publish works on the internet with pen names, so it is strongly anonymous. Writers can see readers' comment on their works at any time and they are able to rewrite and edit at once. For the serial works writers can continue the following part based on the readers' interests and desires.

IV. CONCLUSION

Cyberliterature which combines modern technology and traditional expressing way is a comparatively new industry. It plays a more and more important role in the worlds of publication and internet with its own special advantage in the different countries and areas from the perspectives of issuing ways and operating modes. The different features have developed further through learning and mixing, with the continuous economic and cultural communication of the whole world.

A. *The Appropriate Evaluation System of the Selecting Content*

From the above analysis which is about the selecting content in the publication, we can see although Chinese and foreign cyberliterature is different, they have the same idea that is to embody the fascinating part on the internet as much as possible. The number of Chinese literary websites is large and their states of development are complicated, so there are no definite unified rules for the evaluation system of the specific content. They both survive depending on the clicking rates and have demands on the publishing speed. About 10000 words are updated and the frequency is the

content is updated twice or three times each day, which makes it impossible for the editors to polish the thoughts and language. At the same time, the literary quality and creative attitude of online writers are uneven, therefore numerous bad and poor works pour into the internet. The success of self-publishing in the foreign countries can't be separated from the good quality of the works. Certainly the whole industry should dedicate to cultivating the reading level and appreciating ability of the readers, so the awful works will perish, rejected by the high-quality readers. In the due course, we can learn from the foreigners to lay emphasis on the online technology, making full use of the new technology to create new online literary patterns, to develop the developmental space of the cyberliterature.

B. *The Excellent System of Intellectual Property Rights Protection*

The law of intellectual property rights protection has a long history in the foreign countries and the earliest one could date back to *Statute of Anne* in 1709 in Britain. Although China also had the relevant law before the liberation, the social environment at that time was special, so there was no due development. Until 1990 new China began to have the law *Copyright Law*. The gap of time of hundreds of years between China and the west directly leads to disparity of law of intellectual property rights and citizens' awareness of law. The arrival of the internet era makes newer and higher demands on the systems of intellectual property rights protection all over the whole world. *Digital Millennium Copyright Act* was enacted in America in 1998, which protects the intellectual property rights of internet companies. According to that law, common people are involved. The violators may attract civil liability and criminal responsibility for copyright infringement, so it provides strong protection for copyright holders to spread their works online. The comprehensive protective measures and strong determination should be adopted by Chinese law. At the same time, we need foster the citizens' awareness of intellectual copyright from the perspective of publishers, authors and readers. Self-publishing in the foreign countries develops fast, which is closely related to citizens' strong awareness of intellectual copyright. So there are well-renowned authors in the team of foreign self-publishing, while in China the noted authors would rather trust the publishing house and many of them turn to the publishing house.

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