

Analysis of Chinese Modernity through Lu Xun's Works

Yuchen Xiao^{1,a,*}

¹Ji Shan high school, Shaoxing, Zhejiang Province, China, 312000

a. jokyshaw1113@163.com

*corresponding author

Abstract: China experienced more than 2,000 years of an imperial system, and finally, the Xinhai Revolution broke out in 1911, ending the imperial system. Because of this turning point, China slowly moved from tradition to modernity. Then came the May Fourth Movement and the New Culture Movement, which brought the wave of China's modernization to its peak, driven by writers and writers, Lu Xun being the most prominent representative. Drawing on the research results of scholars at home and abroad, this paper discusses the modernity expressed in Lu Xun's works. Starting from some of Lu Xun's well-known works, this paper combines the transformation of Lu Xun's works in structure and content to study how Lu Xun's works shift from tradition to modernity. In the end, this paper yielded the result: the new form of modern novels established by Lu Xun's novels is the result of drawing lessons from foreign novel forms and Chinese traditional literary and artistic experience, combined with his unruly creativity, to achieve the unity of "inheriting tradition" and "breaking through tradition".

Keywords: Tradition, modernity, Lu Xun, modern China, ideological emancipation

1. Introduction

The Xinhai Revolution broke out in China in 1911, completely ending the feudal imperial system that had ruled China for more than 2,000 years, establishing the first bourgeois republican government in Chinese history, making the concept of democracy and republic begin to take root in the hearts of the people, promoting the upsurge of national liberation movements in Asian countries, and beginning to move from tradition to modernization, the wave of ideological emancipation in modern China was the most prosperous. Modern China has been baptized by the May 4th Movement and the New Culture Movement. People who hold the banner of democracy and science gradually rise the trend of ideological liberation, and gradually go out of tradition to modernization. These achievements are partly attributed to the works of some literati, among whom Lu Xun is more brilliant. His Madman's Diary is the first work in vernacular in Chinese history, full of criticism of the old society, which fully reflects that his thoughts are turning to modern times, including many of his works, which reveal the dawn of ideological liberation.

The theme of this paper is how China's transition from traditional society to modernity is reflected in Lu Xun's articles, and how Lu Xun himself realizes the transformation of his works from tradition to modernity. In this paper, through the survey, qualitative analysis is used to make the study. The significance of this paper is to enlightenment on old feudalism and new

individualism, it plays a promoting role in the practice and theory of thought and art, inheritance and innovation, openness and self-reliance, western influence and national style.

2. The Development of Lu Xun's Works in Terms of Contents

2.1. Innovation in Subject Matter

The performance of the text is very deep. Mainly in the theme, perspective and novel mode of innovation. Lu Xun once pointed out that his creations were built on the unfortunate in a sick society. He seeks to cause "uncovering pain and eliciting healing" [1]. Note that it is necessary to base itself on the ideas of the Enlightenment, which were brought about by the New Culture Movement and the May Fourth Movement. Thus laid down his main contradiction: the conflict between peasants and intellectuals. This is Lu Xun's transformation in the subject matter.

2.2. Shift in Perspective

In addition, Lu Xun is also accustomed to reflecting on characters from a unique perspective to uncover the spiritual suffering of people in a sick society. Describing the numbness of the peasants, such as the middle-aged leap soil in the article "*Hometown*", "just shaking his head, although his face is carved with many wrinkles, he is completely motionless, like a stone statue" [2]. It fully reflects the numbness of the leap soil that has been smoothed by the world, as well as the ignorance of the peasants, such as in the article "*Medicine*", in order to treat his son's lung disease, Hua Lao even believed what others said about using human blood steamed buns to treat him. Turning to intellectuals, his perspective is more focused on the spiritual aspect, intellectuals no longer have to worry about food and clothing, but in their thinking and spirituality, which is in line with modernity, Lu Xun began to turn from treating people's bodies to treating people's spirits. For example, Juan Sheng and Zi jun in "*Wounded Death*", although they broke the feudal elopement, were oppressed by life and returned to their old families. It is the deep excavation of the pathology and spirit of the characters that makes Lu Xun's works present modernity and introversion, breaking the superficial deception and turning to torture the souls of the characters to express dissatisfaction with reality. This is Lu Xun's innovation at the perspective level.

2.3. Updates on the Pattern

The third is innovation in the novel model. It is mainly divided into two modes. The first is the spectator mode, taking "*Show*" as an example, and the full text of this text describes only one scene: watching the prisoner. With the binary opposition of the spectator and the prisoner, the novel does not focus on the description of the plot but creates a symbolic atmosphere, that is, to see and be seen. According to the different identities of the spectators, they can be roughly divided into two categories. The first category is the spectators who are numb to matter, taking the fragment in "*Medicine*" as an example, "Hua Lao Shuan also looked over there, but only saw a bunch of people's backs; the necks are stretched out very long, like many ducks, pinched by invisible hands, and lifted upward. After a moment of silence, there seemed to be some sound, then it shook again, and with a bang, they all retreated; scattered until the old bolt stood, almost crushing him" [3]. The spectators watched Xia Yu being beheaded in public, but there was no wave in their hearts, and their faces were expressionless, like a group of numb ducks. This is Lu Xun's critique of the ignorant people, questioning the social model of the time, and such novels permeate Lu Xun's life experience, full of compassion and loneliness. The second spectator is Lu Xun himself. For example, in "*Mistress Xiang Lin*" in the blessing, "She withdrew her hands as if she had been scorched, her face turned gray and black at the same time, and she didn't go to fetch the candlestick anymore, just

stood there absentmindedly. She didn't go away until fourth uncle taught her to go away when he was offering incense. This time she changed a lot. On the second day, not only her eyes were sunken, but her spirit was even worse"[4]. This is what Lu Xun observed as a bystander. Lu Xun tried his best to describe her tragic life, but also added himself as a spectator to directly express his views and ideas, and also hid the author's view in the mode of seeing and being seen, mocking the numb viewer with compassion and anger. The second new mode is the home mode, mainly reflected in Lu Xun's telling his own story when he narrates others' stories. The two permeate each other to form a fetter. Taking the *Hometown* as an example, Lu Xun ran away because of the oppression of his family, returned to his hometown again 20 years later, but left again because of his loss. On the surface, an awning boat is used as the beginning and end to form a circle. On a deeper level, Lu Xun had to leave because of the oppression of the countryside at that time. He came back 20 years later with hope for his hometown. Finally, he left because he saw middle-aged numb Run tu and Aunt Yang, which made Lu Xun completely disappointed. This is the mode of leaving, returning and leaving, which can be understood as the home mode. This deeply expresses Lu Xun's sense of homelessness, and reveals the confusion of people in pursuit of progress and the confusion of realistic choices, which is related to the revolution at that time. Lu Xun was full of confusion about the revolution at that time. Innovation and conservatism are contradictory, but in the seemingly desperate departure, the author left hope. For example, in "*Hometown*", "I was in the hazy, in front of a stretch of green sand by the sea, with a round golden moon hanging in the dark blue sky. I think: hope is nothing, nothing. It is just like the road on the ground; in fact, there is no road on the ground, and more people walk, it becomes a road" [5]. The golden full moon symbolizes hope and gives Lu Xun comfort when he leaves. On the whole, it presents the philosophy of seeking survival from nowhere, which implies Lu Xun's life philosophy of fighting against despair. It reveals that Lu Xun has turned to modernity and bid farewell to the traditional Chinese imperial system. He began to think about the future of modern China, full of despair but with a glimmer of hope for the future.

3. Special Format

3.1. Innovation of Creative Methods

Lu Xun's novels are like experiments. He gradually learned from the form of western novels and changed it. This is his global performance, which is also part of modernity. It can be said that the new form of modern Chinese novels was established by Lu Xun. The *Madman's Diary* is regarded as the first modern vernacular novel in modern China, which benefits from Lu Xun's innovation. First, the new structure arrangement and artistic expression are quite different from the traditional novels. In particular, it completely breaks the traditional novel from beginning to end, which is a complete plot structure. The full text is composed of thirteen diaries, which are connected through the psychological activities of maniacs. The second is to abandon the third-person narrative mode and turn to reveal his psychology with the association of the hero. The third point is that the author combines the narration with the psychological description of the characters, and the emotional color of the protagonist permeates into the consciousness activities. The fourth is to use the body of the diary and the small preface of classical Chinese to form a double narrative, making the opposite factors laugh at each other. The body is in vernacular but in classical Chinese, achieving an ironic effect. These four points make Lu Xun's novels more creative and novel than the traditional novels in the past, which is also an important step towards modernity.

3.2. Stylistic Innovation

Lu Xun wrote many genres in his life, such as prose and poetry. His most creative is his poetic novel *"Wounded Death"*, the prose novel *"Rabbit and Cat"* and the dramatic novel *"Death"*. It is not only stylistic innovation, but also distinctive in language style, forming a style that expresses subtle moderation but is simple and condensed, but serious and critical. For example, in *"Writing under the lamp"*, Chinese history is only an alternating cycle between "the era when you want to be a slave and the era when you can't be a slave temporarily" and "the era when you temporarily stabilize the slave" [6], and the proverb in the *"Southern Dialect and Northern Transfer, Proverbs"*, "when you are a master, you take others as slaves; in the presence of the master, he must appoint himself as a slave; this is natural and unshakable [7], these two quotations are Lu Xun's focus on criticizing China's feudal imperial system, which also shows that he completely bid farewell to tradition and moved towards modernity. These two sentences are particularly sharp, which is in line with his style, compared to some writers of the time, his language style is very different, he began to focus on criticizing this cannibalistic society, leading a new trend, creating a new model.

4. Ideological Features

4.1. Critical and Combative

Lu Xun's articles take civilization criticism and social criticism as the main ideological content, which are critical and combative. The first aspect is some critiques of old civilization and old morality. For example, in "My opinion on chastity", Lu Xun criticized the feudal three cardinal guides and five constant principles. Later, Lu Xun's essays added content such as criticizing capitalist civilization and semi-colonial cities. The second aspect is to expose and criticize the inferiority of the people, and conduct an in-depth analysis of the cowardly citizens. For example, it is mentioned in *"Scream Preface"*, "any stupid and weak citizens, no matter how healthy and strong they are, can only be used as materials and spectators for meaningless publicity" [8]. The third aspect is Lu Xun's respect for The content of social criticism is broader. Take Lu Xun's "Diary of a Madman" as an example, "I looked at the history, and there is no age in this history. On each page of the crooked slanting, the words "benevolence and righteousness and morality" were written, and I couldn't sleep horizontally, and I carefully looked at it in the middle of the night to see that there were two words written on the whole book: "cannibalism"![9] This work has a strong realistic criticism, pointing directly to the core of Chinese feudal culture, and at the same time mercilessly exposing the darkness in the real society, such as violently attacking all the darkness of society, the brutality of the rulers, and the crimes of imperialism. This kind of criticism has practical significance of combat significance.

4.2. Profundity

Lu Xun's articles discuss various issues extremely profoundly and are full of dialectical philosophy. How profound is the essential judgment on Chinese history from the social status and psychology of the people? Taking *"Bringing Doctrine"* as an example, "In a word, we will take. We will either use it, store it, or destroy it" [10]. It tells the country and the nation's open attitude to the world, as well as the meaning and method of opening up, and the insight is very profound.

5. Conclusion

After the above discussion, Lu Xun's works from tradition to modernity are mainly reflected in these aspects. Mainly innovation in content and formatting. In terms of content, Lu Xun shows great

depth in what he thinks, sees and writes, and there are great innovations in the perspective and mode of the subject. In terms of subject matter, he pioneered two major themes of modern literature: the image of peasants and the image of intellectuals. Lu Xun is also good at observing the world from a unique perspective, making his works introverted. Lu Xun has created two new modes, the homecoming mode and the spectator mode, which make his novels full of criticism of the cannibalistic world and a glimmer of hope for the desperate world. In terms of format, Lu Xun created a new genre, poetic novel, prose novel and dramatic novel, borrowing from Western traditional novels, and inheriting them. In general, the new model of modern fiction established by Lu Xun's novel is the result of borrowing foreign novel forms and traditional Chinese literary and artistic experience, coupled with its unbridled creativity, to achieve the unity of inheriting tradition and breaking through the tradition. Lu Xun began to break the shackles of tradition, and it was his work that modernized. It fully reflects the modernity of Lu Xun's works. In terms of thought, this article concludes that Lu Xun was combative and profound, and began to talk about the country should adopt an open attitude to deal with the world instead of being closed to the outside world. This can also be seen from Lu Xun's works that China is also gradually moving from tradition to modernity, begin to end the feudal conservatism of the imperial system and turn to openness to the outside world.

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