

An Analysis of Anti-traditional Self-Consciousness: A Comparison of Kawabata Yasunari's and Lu Xun's Works

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Abstract: Both Kawabata Yasunari and Lu Xun are outstanding writers in the history of Oriental literature. They created a large number of influential works with different creative characteristics. Based on some significant literary works of Kawabata Yasunari and Lu Xun, the author analyzes and studies the difference of anti-traditional self-consciousness.

1. Introduction

Yasunari Kawabata, as an outstanding writer in the history of Japanese literature, has reflected the spiritual essence of Japanese people and the traditional aesthetic consciousness of Japanese people in many works through a sharp and extraordinary perspective. Lu Xun, as a pioneer of modern Chinese literary creation, has a clear sense of anti-feudalism and anti-tradition in his works. Both in terms of artistic creation and ideological expression, Lu Xun reflects a strong sense of anti-tradition. The works of Yasunari Kawabata and Lu Xun both reflect the anti-traditional awareness, but they are obviously different from each other. Based on the growing experience and writing characteristics of the two writers, the author made an in-depth comparison and research to better clarify the anti-traditional self-consciousness in the works.

2. Background

Kawabata Yasunari (1899-1972) is a modern novelist, born in Osaka, Japan. Kawabata Yasunari lost his parents when he was young, and his grandparents and sister died in succession. Loneliness and melancholy accompanied him throughout his life. These miserable childhood experiences are reflected in his creation. Kawabata studied Japanese at Tokyo university for some time, during which he participated in the establishment of the magazine *New Thoughts* (the sixth time). After graduation in 1924, he actively established the magazine "Literary Times" with Yokogata and others, and became the representative figure of the new sensation school at that time. After the decline of the new sensation school, he actively participated in the literary movement of new mentalism and created a large number of novels, most of which were short stories. Most of his works are lyrical narration, expressing the pursuit of the beauty of human nature and embodying nihilism and some Buddhist thoughts. Especially in some early works, there are more lower-class women as the main characters in the novel, and the content contains both misfortune and the purity of these women. Moreover, His later works describe the abnormal psychology of some old people and some decadent emotions.

The grandfather of Lu Xun (1881~1936) is Zhou Fuqing, who was *xinwei jinshi* in *tongzhi* ten years (1871), served as an official in Beijing, and was later imprisoned for imperial fraud. After that, Lu Xun sought refuge in his brother-in-law's home. Family misfortune had a profound influence on Lu Xun. At the same time, Lu Xun lived in an era when China was in a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. At that time, the common people faced serious survival threats. In such a background, Lu Xun was full of rebellious spirit since he was young. In August 1926, for his patriotic movements like supporting students in Beijing, March 18th Event, Lu Xun was wanted by the Beiyang government (note: Lu Xun is not wanted, the book about the arrestation is wrong), so he went to south to be an art professor in Xiamen university. Despite all these numerous setbacks, Lu Xun always connects the destiny of the country to his personal fate, and these experiences later

laid the basic ideological foundation for him as a writer and thinker.

3. Research on Works against Traditional Awareness

3.1 Kawabata Yasunari

As an outstanding contemporary writer, Kawabata has been persistently in pursuit of better creation, always adhering to the Japanese inheritance and traditional aesthetics, using the technique of expression in the western modernist, produced a new literary form, and formed his unique style of work. Most of all the works are romantic with quiet elegance, but also full of melancholy, which is inseparable with his growing experience, leading to the tone of regarding sadness as beauty and reflecting the elegant psychology of Japanese people.

Simamura is one of characters from *Snow Country*, she is an empty, intelligent and diligent Japanese woman who has various beautiful aspirations for life. She lives every day earnestly and has the courage to rise to the challenges of life. In order to help the master's critically ill son, she gave up her life and became a geisha and expressed a sincere and enthusiastic affection to a married man. It seems that she was a moth to fight against fire bravely but in vain, brave fire, and longing for future pureness in simple despair. She is a beautiful woman with a pure heart like snow, a benevolent heart like a bodhisattva. While, such a kindhearted and simple woman was consumed by the fire for saving the children who were watching the movie over there. On the whole, Simamura is a woman with anti-traditional consciousness, while the style of this task is woeful but profound, which is conform to the traditional aesthetic consciousness of Japanese people on literary works. It is gripping and vividly reflects the beauty of the sorrow.

In addition, Kawabata Yasunari was influenced by Buddhism since childhood, and he had a deep understanding of the cycle of life and death, and regarded death as the most beautiful sublimation and symbol. He even believes that there is no fairy tale more beautiful than the cycle of life and death. This is the most beautiful way of lyrical expression for human. It is based on the influence of this ideology that the consciousness of nothingness in Kawabata's works can be seen everywhere. The love of "nothingness" and "illusion" experienced by the dancers and the protagonists from *The Izu Dancer*, despite it goes through the self-conscious resistance and breaks through the shackles of traditional consciousness of women, but in the end it reflects a "deep and mysterious" style. In the works of *The Ancient Capital*, by capturing the subtle sadness of the girl, it imperceptibly adds an illusion to the work. This illusion will make the reader sight the impermanence of the change of the world, and it is also the ideological embodiment of the protagonist Chikako and Miyoko.

3.2 Lu Xun

Anti-tradition is the peak experience of Lu Xun's free will. In essence, Lu Xun is a life thinker. He uses life theory to explain anti-tradition in his works. It not only conforms to the basic logic of Lu Xun's thought development, but also conforms to the theory and practice of life culture. The key to Lu Xun's anti-tradition lies in the discovery of "benevolence and morality" and "cannibalism". "Cannibal complex" is not an Abstract and simple rational judgment, but an image full of personal life experience, and is the sublimation of Lu Xun's youth "cannibal complex." It not only reveals the tragedy of human existence, but also enhances the free will of people to resist despair. The novel *Medicine* was created by Lu Xun on April 25, 1919. At that time, on the eve of the May 4th Movement, because of the compromise between the bourgeoisie who led the Revolution of 1911 and the feudal forces and imperialism, they failed to complete the revolutionary task of anti-imperialist and anti-feudalism. They were separated from the masses and wanted to rely on the power of a few people (including by terrorist means) replaced the revolutionary movement of the masses. On July 6, 1907, Xu Xilin tried to assassinate the Anhui governor En Ming but to no avail, the safeguard of En Ming cruelly dig out his heart and fried to eat. Qiu Jin was also reported and imprisoned to jail and murdered on July 15th in Xuan Tingkou, Shaoxing. With this background, Mr. Lu Xun aims to "explore the suffering and cause the attention of the rescue". It is against this background that Lu Xun created the novel *Medicine*, and the victim of the novel, Xia Yu, was the

Qiu Jin at that time.

Cultural Partiality is an important article reflecting Lu Xun's early thoughts. In this article, Lu Xun deeply exposes the dual transformation of cultural traditions and European social politics. From the theological religion to the feudal monarchy and then to the democratic constitutionalism, the discussion is stretched gradually and individually. In the article, Lu Xun pointed out that partiality is like a cylopodia or a broken arm which can't be cut off. Without foot or arm, how does the body be retained? Lu Xun's point of view is against material and advocating the individual, which fully reflects Lu Xun's anti-traditional consciousness.

When Lu Xun was writing Call to Arms, the society was also at the peak of the May 4th New Culture Movement. Lu Xun experienced a long-term deep observation and reflection on China, with a strong sense of opposing old culture and morality. He actively participated in this great era movement with full enthusiasm and created many new literature works such as essays, poems and novels, especially his short vernacular novels, which mostly originated from the unfortunate people in the morbid society, aiming to expose the suffering and cause the attention of the rescue. With exquisite creative techniques and extremely shocking thoughts, in the history of world literature development, he has won a high reputation.

Superficially, this phenomenon can be understood as the respect of the intellectuals with independent personality in the Chinese cultural circle, but whether there is a deeper cultural psychology. It's believed that the birth of Lu Xun is the inevitable result of Western modernity entering Chinese traditional society. And it can't be advanced or delayed. Lu Xun could only appear in the May 4th movement and the late 1930s. It can be said that Lu Xun is a high summary of the cultural complexity of the May 4th movement and the achievements of the evolution of Chinese modernity.

4. Conclusion

Through the analysis and research of the works of Kawabata Yasunari and Lu Xun, it is not difficult to find the difference of anti-traditional consciousness in their works. As an aesthetically creative writer, the characters in Kawabata Yasunari's works are mostly quiet young women. They have anti-traditional self-consciousness in love and family, but in the end, they are all destroyed by reality and derive a sad artistic conception. Lu Xun's works are more about the resistance to the feudal society and class struggle. The protagonist of the works has the passion of resistance between the life and death of the country. Through the works, the resistance consciousness and spirit of the Chinese people can be aroused.

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