

The Inheritance and Development of Legendary Tradition in Modern Chinese Literature

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Abstract: As an important genre and narrative tradition of Chinese classical literature, legend has been inherited and developed with unique personal characteristics by different writers in the historical practice of modern Chinese literature. From the historical perspective of "tradition and development", this paper aims to sort out and summarize different types of legend writing in the history of modern literature, such as Lu Xun's historical myth and legend, Lao She's market legend, Shen Congwen's Xiangxi legend, the later romanticism's urban legend, and the revolutionary war legend in the literature of the Jiefang District. The "legendary" landscape of modern literature contains multiple values such as historiography, aesthetics, and narratology, deeply reflecting modern writers' genuine understanding of folk cultural traditions, artistic aesthetic attitudes, and a proper grasp of elegance and vulgarity. These different types of legend writing are historically and aesthetically prescriptive and self-sufficient. The legendary tradition provides rich national spiritual and cultural resources for modern literature. As an important social history phenomenon, modern literary legend writing is the result of the blending of cultural tradition and historical practice, which reflects the theoretical consciousness of "legend" in a specific social period and literary and artistic background, and has unique value for the current cultural and social development.

1. Overview

Legend is an important genre and narrative tradition in ancient Chinese novels, which has been inherited and transformed in modern literature. The legend tradition has been creatively inherited and developed by different types of Chinese writers in Lu Xun's historical myth novels, Lao She's market legend novels, Shen Congwen's Xiangxi legend novels, late Romantic novels, left-wing literature, and Jiefang District literature. These works, which represent typical schools of Chinese modern literature, have legendary narrative characteristics.[1]

Therefore, it can be said that as an important genre and narrative tradition of ancient Chinese novels, the typical characteristics of legend lie in the pursuit of unconventional, romantic, and unofficial historical consciousness. In the development process of ancient Chinese literature, the legendary tradition, such as the Tang Legend and the fictional novel "Strange Stories from a Liaozhai", transcended the supernatural and had prominent characteristics in literary narrative time, space, and means. In terms of literary narrative time, it does not rely on establishing a physical time

foundation, but has formed its own system of "legendary time": the consciousness of natural time is weak and empty.[2] The literary narrative space forms a unique style of "legendary space": the spatial transformation and amplitude frequency in the textual world are rapid and huge, and readers seem to shuttle freely in the sky, underground, divine, and human realms within a short period of physical reading time, with multi-dimensional spaces juxtaposed. The "legendary tradition" also makes the narrative methods of ancient Chinese literature combine reality with fiction, with winding and graceful storytelling, and an aesthetic style of literary elegance, such as the Tang Legend and "Strange Stories from a Liaozhai", which are very typical.

2. The Starting Point of Modern Chinese Literature and Lu Xun's Legendary Writing

Lu Xun used a large amount of space in his "A Brief History of Chinese Novels" to provide Chinese readers with a detailed discussion of the supernatural and legendary novels in Chinese history since the Six Dynasties, which can also clearly demonstrate the indispensable and important role of legends in the history of ancient Chinese literature. Lu Xun believed that supernatural beings and legends originated from one entity, with supernatural beings first and then legends. Zhiguai was most popular and sought after during the Wei, Jin, and Six Dynasties, when people used a documentary attitude to write about the gods and monsters in the world and the strange things in the human world.[3] In addition to the supernatural, there were also "Zhiren" literature represented by "Shishuo Xinyu" in the novels of the Six Dynasties. It mainly writes about "strange people" and "strange deeds" from the human world. The "human language movement" is not only the most distinctive feature of "Zhiren" literature, but also a transition from supernatural to legendary in ancient Chinese novels.

The more mature Tang Legend is a genre of novels that has had a profound impact on later Chinese literature, formed by the fusion and integration of the immortal world and the human world, as well as the supernatural and the wise. The characteristics of Tang legends lie in: firstly, they are inspired by supernatural phenomena, but their artistic achievements have surpassed the excessive simplicity of supernatural literature, presenting a clear "twists and turns of beauty" in literary expression. The second is that the narrative content, plot, and expression theme of the Tang Legend transcend the singularity of supernatural events, with rich themes, twists and turns, and exciting and diverse plots. Finally, Tang Chuanqi pays special attention to the expression of "literary grace" and the emphasis on "painting" in literary aesthetics.

Lu Xun is the pioneer and founder of modern Chinese novels. There is a significant historical spiritual connection between Lu Xun's novels and the "legendary" tradition. For example, many chapters in "New Stories" belong to typical historical and mythological novels, which are clearly influenced by legendary traditions. For example, the materials, details, and imagery in the text directly come from supernatural beings or Tang and Song legends. In "Li Shui", Da Yu "invited heavenly soldiers and generals to catch the troublemaking monster Wuzhiqi and hold it at the foot of Guishan".[4] This is a legend that has long been passed down in "Gu Yue Reading Scriptures" in "Tang and Song Legends Collection". The legend of revenge between the eyebrows in "Sword Casting" comes from "Legend of Lieyi". The novel creation of "New Stories" is directly based on the supernatural legends, which is related to Lu Xun's love for legends.

The second point is that the plot in "New Edition of the Story" presents a characteristic of breaking the boundaries of time, space, and people, ghosts, and gods, which is also consistent with the traditional "strange and treacherous" legend. For example, in "Sword Casting", the portrayal of a black clad man chopping his head into a pot and helping his eyebrows to fight against the head of an enemy shows the rich imagination of the author, but we must also see that this imagination cannot deviate from the "prototype" of the legendary story of the same kind of mythical monster as

in "Legend of Legends", However, the author also exerted creative inheritance and transformation of the legendary tradition of the supernatural. As Lu Xun pointed out in his book "Preface to a New Story"[5], his works possess the historical authenticity of "extensive literature research", while only taking "a little cause and randomly embellishing" and "spreading" history. His creation can be based on current writing with history as the topic. Therefore, "New Stories" also has a "dual directionality" towards the present and history. The author's strong realistic orientation and contemporary consciousness run through it, which also leads to the unique narrative mode of "using the past to express the present" and critical reflection in "New Stories".

3. Lao She's Narrative Art of Marketplace Legends

There is a strong and dense text "intertextuality" between the generation of modern Chinese literary classics and cultural traditions such as legends. The legendary color in Lao She's novels lies not only in its legendary material, but also in the profound influence of cultural traditions such as legends that Lao She received from a young age. The Three Heroes and Five Righteousness "was Lao She's favorite enlightenment reading material during his childhood, and during his teenage years, he" first came into contact with novels such as "Shi Gong An".[6] Chinese classical literature, represented by legendary traditions, provided Lao She with rich spiritual nourishment for his growth. Lao She not only loved folk popular arts such as storytelling and cross talk from a young age, but also enjoyed making various friends in the society, and was enthusiastic about traditional martial arts with a strong chivalrous spirit.

In the preface to "Selected Works of Lao She", Zeng Fuzi said to himself that the works in the collection "all talk about the so-called affairs of the world:" Camel Xiangzi "is about foreign charioteers," Crescent Moon "is about secret prostitutes,"Shangren" is about bandits, and" Soul Breaking Gun "is about boxers." Among them, "Black White Li" only uses legendary writing techniques to describe the death of Black Li. The highly legendary martial arts novel "Soul Breaking Gun" is a small part of Mr. Lao She's long planned martial arts epic "Two Fighters". Taking My Whole Life as an example, the novel uses the first person limited narrative perspective to tell the story of "I"'s not vigorous life as a policeman at the bottom of society. Here are the familiar and habitual literary narrative aesthetic acceptance experiences of readers: the story is told with a focus on completeness, varied plot development, and unexpected fate. The story of the tortuous life tragedy of the low-level city police officers struggling to survive is still full of legendary and absurd colors. The reason why his works have a distinct "legendary flavor" lies in the legendary characteristics of his novel text in the theme content and the pursuit of legendary value of "fake novels sent to the pen". On the implementation path, the legendary quality of its literary world is constructed through the setting of storytelling contexts, the use of folk language, and the use of ironic rhetorical forms.[7]

4. Shen Congwen's Legend Narration of Xiangxi

Shen Congwen's Xiangxi Legend drew inspiration from the legendary tradition in his creation to strengthen his "legendary thinking". This is because the author himself "has read" Strange Stories from a Liaozhai "and" Modern and Ancient Wonders "since childhood. Therefore, the subtle influence of tradition allows him to intentionally draw on the legendary perspective formed by the legendary tradition to express the unique legendary nature of his hometown in the field of Xiangxi, avoiding the "daily" and "ordinary" emphasized by the May Fourth realism literature in Xiangxi border novels.[8] He can avoid the "ordinary" and take the "strange", and convey the uniqueness of the magical land through the stories of Xiangxi.

This also makes Shen Congwen's works full of strange and strange colors. For example, the 15

Buddhist scriptures in "Moonlight Scenery" inherit the legendary Buddhist scripture story, aiming to use the legendary form to express the meaning of objects. For example, Shen Cong's "Love of Witches", "Seven Wild Men and the Last Welcoming Spring Festival", "Dragon Ball" and other mythological stories of the Miao people in western Hunan show readers the strange and primitive experiences and legendary lives of witches, white eared princes, and infatuated Miao men and women in clan mythology. There is another type of work by Shen Congwen that excels in depicting strange people and events in the strange environment of Xiangxi. For example, the mysterious journey of soldiers in "Mountain Trail", the strange "corpse love" in "Three Men and One Woman", and the strange love between soldiers and seductive female bandits in "Storyteller's Story".

5. Modern Urban Legends and romanticism in Jiefang District

The narrative of modern Chinese cities presented in the New Sensational Literature, which is located in big cities, also has a legendary color. For example, Mu Shiying's novel of the New Sensation School tells various legendary stories of the metropolis Shanghai, while Shi Zhecun's novels such as "The General's Head" are historical novels that draw inspiration from history and are used to develop. The reading narrative of the New Sensation School can integrate historical myths and religious legends to form a certain kind of Shanghai fantasy. However, Xu Jie and Wu Mingshi of the "Later Romanticism" continue the style of the "Shanghai School" of the New Sensation School, and their novel texts have a more typical legendary color than the former. Xu Jie's novels have the style of "Strange Stories from a Liaozhai"[9], creating a true and imaginary atmosphere in literary techniques, deliberately setting twists and turns in plot, expressing philosophy, and pursuing hazy unexpected results. For example, the legendary human ghost relationship in Ghost Love, his representative work, has greatly shocked Chinese readers.

The Goddess of the Arabian Sea breaks the boundaries between human beings and gods (reality and fantasy) and leads readers to the world of human beings and gods. The Tragic Song of the Psychotic, on the other hand, vividly interprets the twists and extremes of the strange love stories in the crazy world. Another author, Anonymous's works such as "Sea Beauty", "Women in the Tower", "Arctic Style Painting", and "Lucia's Love", also tell modern readers many love stories that are winding, magical, and timeless. The classical legendary color in the story allows readers to experience the beauty, beauty, and graceful determination. The legendary novels of the "Late Romanticism" all exhibit extraordinary and abnormal characteristics, with characters mostly being alternative individuals with philosophical ideals and extreme emotional temperament, pursuing spiritual perfection and richness more than secular attachment, which is quite extraordinary and unconventional.

In the history of modern literature, "White Hair Girl" in the 1940s can be regarded as a typical work in the literature of the Jiefang District. This work also inherits the legendary tradition. The story telling of the text also integrates the romantic myth - the legend of the white hair fairy. The "mythological" composition of "The White Haired Girl" comes from the unique and tortuous life experiences and tragicomedy of the White Haired Girl from person to ghost, and from ghost to person. The legendary story form embodies the political themes and ideological concepts of the creators that meet the demands of the times. The legendary nature of 'White Haired Girl' is based on the use of mythological techniques, while also innovating, such as setting up contrasting plots of good and evil, transforming tragic and joyful fates, and adopting a positive tone of drama. In fact, the basic plot mode and narrative aesthetics of legendary literature are characterized by change and transformation, especially change is often associated with contingency and coincidence opportunities. When there are only change arrangements without accidental coincidence and abrupt turning factors, the legendary effect of legendary texts will be greatly reduced. Like the White Haired Girl, in the literature of the Jiefang District, the New Heroes, Wang Gui and Li Xiangxiang, Shrimp balls, Zhanghe River, and a woman's story of turning over, etc.

The "Journey to the South" in the history of modern Chinese literature is also a unique and unique existence. To put it simply, Ai Wu's "Journey to the South" can be called a wandering adventure. He uses a legendary pen to guide modern Chinese readers through the tropical rainforests, cliffs, deep valleys, and roaring rivers in the southwest border, telling the legendary lives of various horse thieves, cigarette dealers, and members of the caravan who are caught in the cracks of life. Many of the works of left-wing writers in modern literature are also quite legendary, such as Duanmu Hongliang's "Horqin Banner Grassland", "Sea of the Earth", "Faraway Wind and Sand", "Great River", etc., presenting readers with magical experiences that are both human and divine, such as "bandit anti-Japanese heroes" such as Kuroko and "Old North Wind".[10] The narrative time and space have a montage transformation style and allegorical nature, The narrative of the text occasionally intersperses myths and legends from the Northeast region and the folk culture of primitive tribes. The arrangement of the novel's story allows the characters to travel in a vast magical space like heroes in the legend. Both of them have distinctive political tendencies and ideological colors, but it lies in the creative inheritance of the legendary tradition, the conscious integration of epic mythology, folk legends and political correctness, which makes such works extremely "new legendary".

6. Conclusion

In terms of literary style, the essence of a novel is originally a legend, or a complex of legends. Although modern Chinese novels belong to the category of fictional literature, many works inherit and carry forward the legendary tradition that existed in ancient Chinese literature, making these works highly legendary. The legendary elements in the legendary tradition nourish many modern novelists, providing them with rich national spiritual and cultural resources for their literary practice activities, and also passing down the legendary traditions in modern novels.

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